

OLD ILLAWARRA HOUSES: 65 Smith Street, Wollongong.

Since the opening of the new wing of the Y.W.C.A. Hostel with its front entrance and postal address in Thomas Street we tend to forget the spacious old cottage, 65 Smith Street, which was quite old when the Y.W.C.A. started a hostel there nearly twenty years ago.

With its large rooms, high ceilings and cast iron trimmings, I always felt that it had a story to tell.

The property was part of the original grant of Charles Throsby Smith promised by Governor Macquarie in 1821 and granted by Governor Bourke in 1835. Part of this grant had already been surveyed into blocks for the town of Wollongong.

On October 31st, 1850, four lots on the south side of Smith Street, Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8, were conveyed by Charles Throsby Smith, in consideration of marriage and 10/-, to Benjamin Marshall, who married C. T. Smith's daughter Emma.

It is on lot 6 that 65 Smith Street stands. I have not found out the exact date of the building of the cottage, but it was sold by B. Marshall to William Robson, J.P., of Wollongong, in 1887. He died less than a year later, and in September 1888 Rev. J. W. Dowson, Wesleyan Minister of Wollongong, bought it.

In 1898, when he sold it to Thomas Musgrove and his wife Martha, 33 feet of lot 7 had been reserved for making Thomas Street.

In 1913 the house again changed hands, when Martha Musgrove sold to Clara Finlayson, wife of Robert Finlayson, Bank Manager. The house became a family home, and was not sold until after the deaths of both Robert Finlayson and his wife. In 1936 the executors of their estates sold to Miss Carleen A. M. Foss, who for a time ran a small private school for girls there.

In 1943 she married Alexander J. C. Angus, and in December 1945 the property was sold to Robert Alan Brandon and John F. McGovern, both of Wollongong, Trustees of the Margaret Wakehurst Girls Club. The club, which was to be a recreation and residential club for service women, did not last very long, as the need for it diminished when the war ended. In 1948 they were negotiating an amalgamation with the Y.W.C.A., but next year went into voluntary liquidation and passed over their assets to the Y.W.C.A.

The trustees of the Y.W.C.A. of Australia became owners of the property, and the local association began the long hard struggle to pay off the debt.

This was achieved by 1959 and since then the association has twice added to the hostel.

Recently during spring cleaning at the hostel three old wedgwood dinner plates dating back before 1870 were found in a cupboard, and have been given to our museum — a pleasant reminder of the long association this Society has had with the Y.W.C.A.

(Members will recall that at the April 1966 meeting of the Society Mr. A. P. Fleming gave an address on the history of this building. The writer desires to thank Mr. Fleming for making available the notes of his address, from which this account has been compiled.)