

## THE PARKINSON FAMILY

Arising from her research on the Parkinson family, our member Anne Wood has received a document described as a "copy of a letter from papers in Wollongong regarding the Parkinson family," headed Wollongong, Feb. 4th, 1953.

The unnamed author, evidently James Parkinson's eldest son, William, is writing to mark the passage of 70 years since the father brought his wife and family to Wollongong. Hence it may be assumed that William Parkinson is possibly 80 years old at the time of writing, and that the story begins about 1883.

The writer describes how his father operated a cordial factory in Bombala from 1872 to late 1882. From Bombala the family travelled by coach to Eden, thence on a Tasmanian ship, *Tasman Esk*, to Sydney. Having spent a short spell in Sydney, which he describes in some detail, the family moved to Wollongong. With only minor alterations to punctuation or spelling, and some editorial comment in square brackets [ ], we will let him take up the story from there:

"In the meantime father was looking around for something or other and the talk then in Sydney was all about the new railway and the South Coast. Father made a trip down to Wollongong per steamer, for apart from going per rail to Campbelltown and then coach, the only other way was by steamer. Father had a trip to Wollongong and whilst [there] he was engaged to manage a factory at Wollongong for Mr Osborne [Robert's son William, b.1837] so that was the end of our stay in Sydney. In the new year 1883 father booked our passage to Wollongong for the end of January or the first week in February. So the first week in February we boarded the steamer *Illawarra*, a paddle-boat, and the weather was rough, so much so that we had to lay off Wollongong for a day and a night and we were all on deck huddled together on a big seat behind the boat covering the entrance to the cabin. We had plenty of blankets and rugs and the officers were very kind to us. The boat was packed with passengers and I think there was something on down at Wollongong, either races or show or some kind of sport. [Wollongong show was always held in early February]. Anyhow I remember a man who was very kind to us and I remember him talking to father and explaining the big fires burning ashore and I can remember him telling father they were colliery fires. Of course it conveyed nothing to me or I think ..... to father and mother. The same gentleman was or became well known to us all in later times. He was Mr. F. A. Franklin, who was a retired gentleman living in Wollongong and who a few years earlier represented Australia at the Indian Exhibition in the '70s.

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Anyway, on with my story. After beating about the coast for a day or two, we had to return to Sydney and wait a few days for another steamer to bring us to Wollongong and it was whilst we were waiting in Sydney, staying in some boarding house near Erskine St. not far from the I. S. N. Coy's wharf that passing a shop outside which was displayed a big sign on which was chalked up in big letters "Wollongong butter for sale here," I said to father is that where the butter comes from and he said yes, coal and butter come from there and that is the place we are going to in the steamer. Anyway in a day or so we started again on another steamer called the Kameruka, so this was the steamer that brought us to Wollongong. On our arrival in Wollongong there was almost as much excitement as when we landed in Sydney. There were coaches and a great number of people to meet the steamer on arrival and I remember we were all put on a bus driven by Mr Joseph Makin and we had our first drive through Wollongong up Crown Street and to the Freemasons Hotel kept at that time by Mr. George Osborne and it was for his brother that father came here to manage his aerated water factory which was then situated at what is now Tattersalls Hotel, present proprietor Mr. Sam MacCauley. And after a day or two the family moved into the premises which at that time was an old single storey building. Mr. W. Osborne, owner of the factory had been living there but just moved to a residence at the crossroads lately owned by the late Mr. W. G. Robertson manager of the Commercial Bank. [this was almost certainly the house now known as Cleary's at 24 Mt Keira Rd.] We lived there [at the cordial factory] for a few months and I must say that during this period old Wollongong seemed to be waking up, for here and there all around surveyors seemed to be at work subdividing different parts of land for sale."

### **WOLLONGONG EXPANDS**

From this point the writer diverges from the family history and proceeds to relate how urban Wollongong began to expand beyond the confines of the 1834 town plan. Doubtless much of this development was due to the steady growth of the town, but the westerly direction of it must have been strongly influenced by the coming of the railway. At this point the reader is warned to treat with caution the dates given, as their accuracy has not been verified:

"I will tell you all I can remember from my observations at this time, and in doing so I will give a list of the different subdivisions and the date as near as I can remember of their sales. Of course at the time the principal surveying going on

was for the new railway to Wollongong from Sydney. At this time on our arrival in Wollongong [February 1883] there were many places that you could not go as you can today [February 1953]. Now the Smith Hill estate was subdivided about 1875 [This was not done until after C T Smith died in 1876] and until that subdivision Smith St. was the northern boundary and of course Flinders St. was also the boundary on the Western side and then all that land on the Western side of Keira St. from the top of old Hospital Hill to Manse next to Freemasons Hotel. You could pass up Crown St. and after passing Church St. at the Commercial Hotel corner you would not find a street entrance as far as the Cross Road. The only entrances were private entrances to different properties; and again on Market St., passing what is now the Hotel Illawarra and the end at Young street, but at that time that is where the pound yard was situated and was then the boundary of the Garden Hill property at this time under survey. After the Smiths Hill Estate Sale in 1875 was the first big sale of the Garden Hill Estate [which] was held in the year 1884 and the sale was held on a site now occupied by Davids Foundry and today the business is one of the oldest in Wollongong. Well on the day of the sale the vendors held a days sports meeting and it was quite a gala day. I cannot remember what the land bought in price but I suppose I could have found out by enquiring at some of the land auctioneers in town. Anyway it was the means of opening up Wollongong for the next sale was the sale by C.F. Smith of the subdivision comprising Market St. Victoria St. and part of Smith St. and join up with the Garden Hill estate and that was also in 1884 and was sold by Mr. C.F. Smith, [son of C T Smith]. The next sale was then the Glebe Estate in or I should say the Kenny Estate in 1886 by Mr. W. Osborne. The sale opened up the Rly (sic) and Atchison St., Kenny Lane. Keira St. extension south as far as Ellen St., and the sale was held in a cottage which stood where now Marcus Clarke & Co boot store stands and for the benefit of city buyers the vendors ran two steamers from Sydney for the sale. The steamers were the City of Grafton and the City of Sydney and both were paddle steamers and the sale was a good one, and caused a lot of excitement in Wollongong. It was at this sale that Keira St. was extended across Crown St. and opened up that busy spot known as the Picture Show Street. Of course up to this time there was a laneway opening to the paddock below but no street. Well to go ahead a little in my story I have just told about the Kenny Estate sale, the adjoining estate the Glebe Land Estate which was the Church of England's Glebe estate and this sale was held by Stumbles and O'Donnell in 1913. Then in the year 1891 the Perry's Paddock estate, Smith Hill. These comprised all the

land from Keira St. to Church St. and Kembla St. and on the north by Bourke St. and on the south by Edward St.. This property was sold by Andrew Armstrong and the block comprising the Presbyterian Manse and land adjoining belonging to the Manse property being subdivided into allotments and farming. Richardson St. was sold in 1905 by Mr. W.H. Rees and G.H. Hindmarsh, then in 1913 the Buena Vista Estate which was the late F.A. Franklyn's property was sold to Mr J.A. Mayo in conjunction with Stumbles & O'Donnell; and then in the year 1903 part of the estate of Mr. A.A.Lysaght was sold by Mr. W.H.Rees. Then later on we had a few big land sales. In the year 1916 O'Donnell and Stumbles sold the estate of Mangerton Park and it was a wonderful sale; and then we had the Gilmore Estate and the sale was also by Stumbles and O'Donnell. Then we come to the opening up of the Gladstone Park estate. The first No. 1 Gladstone Park sale was held in the year 1925 (1923?) and the second sale of No. 2 Gladstone Park was held in the year 1925. Over the years and in between the sales I have mentioned there have been dozens of other small subdivisions and so my friends I think I have shown you how in the early years, I mean the 80's and 90's how Wollongong having burst its bounds started to stretch out. In referring to some of the early subdivisions I would like to draw your attention to the names given the streets. In the Garden hill subdivision every street is named after a Governor of the colony starting with Young St., Belmore St., Loftus St., Robinson St., Darling St., Bligh St., Hercules St., Macquarie St.; and then in the Kenny Subdivision you get Kenny St., Ellen St.; and then again in Church St., this street ran as far as Swan St. and then turned around passing the cemetery belonging to the Church of England, the Catholic, Presbyterian, Wesley, Congregational and the road then goes on to Spring Hill and in the early days this crossed over the Spring Hill Flats to Charcoal Creek."

This concludes the document.

### **William Michael Parkinson**

When William Parkinson died in 1961, he had attained the grand old age of 89 years. A picture of his life can be gleaned from various sources within the family papers.

Having come to Wollongong in February 1883 with his parents at the age of ten, he was the eldest of twelve children of James Lemarie Parkinson and Margaret

Ryan. James had come to Wollongong to manage a cordial factory for William Osborne, but soon branched out on his own in premises adjoining Bode's Hotel, now the North Wollongong Hotel.

Young William continued his education at the Mount Keira school, to which his father had sent him because of the reputation of the headmaster, James Murphy. On leaving school he joined the postal service as a messenger boy, eventually resigning in November 1901 to join his father at the cordial works.

He often recalled his days in the post office, which included hoisting a signal over the office at noon midday so the harbourmaster on Flagstaff Hill could fire the 12 o'clock signal gun.<sup>1</sup> Another of his recollections was taking the mail on horseback to Port Kembla, for despatch to South America or Noumea on the outward-bound coal ships. On these occasions he had to wade or sometimes swim across Tom Thumb lagoon. [Supposing that he started with the post office at the age of 15 in 1897, this would have been at the old post office in Market Street, now the Illawarra Museum, and served there until it moved to lower Crown Street in 1892, taking its black ball with it, as confirmed in old photographs.]

During his long life, Bill Parkinson took a keen interest in community affairs. He was actively associated with St Francis Xavier's Cathedral Church, where he served on the committee for many years and was one of the founders of the local branch of the Hibernian Lodge. He was also one of the oldest members of the local branch of the Druids' Lodge.

He was one of the earliest members of the Wollongong Bowling Club when it was located in Corrimal Street and continued his active interest when the club moved to its present site.<sup>2</sup> Other interests mentioned include the Agricultural Society, the Wollongong Choir and the Illawarra Historical Society.<sup>3</sup> He was also one of the townfolk to volunteer in the rescue operations at Mt Kembla Colliery following the explosion of 1902.

Although active in all of the above, his major interest was in the Wollongong Hospital, an institution to which he gave a lifetime of service. He said he joined the Hospital Committee just after the nucleus of the present hospital was built, about 1907,<sup>4</sup> and remained on the board for 53 years until the end of 1959,

when a new government regulation compelled the retirement of all hospital directors once they reached the age of 70 years. He had been president of the Board for many years [one source says 15 years, another 23 years], had served on all the sub-committees and been chairman of each at some time during the half-century. On his retirement from the board he spoke of the improvements in health services during his time, in particular the virtual disappearance of diphtheria, a great reduction in the number of TB cases and a decrease in infant mortality.<sup>5</sup>

On the death of his father, James, in 1903, William Parkinson became the head of the family's cordial manufacturing business which by then had become a household word on the South Coast: "The toast of the Coast." In 1898 the business was moved to premises in Crown Street, [said to be the site of the Commonwealth Bank] which it occupied for 26 years before moving to 21 Kenny Street, where it remained in the family until sold to Shelleys in 1966.

When William married, he and his wife went to live at 50 Atchison Street where they lived for the rest of their lives. When William died in December 1961, he was survived by his wife and one son, William J, who in 1960 was working at the steelworks. Of the original family of twelve only three of his siblings remained alive: Mr Vince Parkinson of Kenny Street, and the Misses Gertrude and Cecelia Parkinson of Mangerton.<sup>6</sup>

Thus closed the life of one of the Grand Old Men of Wollongong.

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December 1999.

1 South Coast Times, 14 December 1961 stated noon, but in actual fact was 1 pm.

2 Presumably Stewart St on the site now occupied by Howard Court.

3 South Coast Times, 22 June 1959.

4 Unnamed newspaper, 23 June 1860

5 Ibid.

6 South Coast Times, Dec 14, 1961.