

# MARY CARSON

# Midwife and Nurse

Mary Carson came to Western Australia with her husband JAMES CARSON in the early 1860's. Mary, nee Fitzgerald, had been born in Ireland in 1833.

**JAMES CARSON, born in 1817,** was an **Enrolled Pensioner Guard** who had served as a private in the 57<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the British Army.

At this stage, little is known about his life as a British soldier, but after retirement, ex private James Carson received a pension of One Shilling a Day. (Broomhall B 48) (1.)

In 1865 James served as a Temporary Assistant Warder at the Champion Bay Depot in 1865 and again in 1866 (Warders & Gaolers).(2)

In December of 1868 James was granted 31 acres of land on Lots 5 and 6, at Greenough. Children born to James and Mary Carson included Patrick James born 1863; Maria Esther born 1865; William John born 1868, Joseph born 1871, died 1886; Richard born 1873, died 1946.

(Bicentennial Dictionary v 1 p 485) (3)

In April 1884, James Carson, ex soldier, Warder and long time resident of Geraldton died, leaving a widow and family.

His wife, **Mary Carson**, 'a splendid figure of an Irishwoman' could be seen dressed in black, attending Church'

Mary, having had six children of her own, was considered by many to be experienced enough to act as the local Midwife.

Sometime after a married son moved in to the house and when her work as a midwife became known, Mary added a separate bedroom for herself opening on to a verandah "so the family would not be disturbed if someone came for her in the night. A well outside her bedroom provided water for a small flower garden she maintained all year round. Mary also had built two corrugated-galvanised-iron rooms, one a kitchen and living room, the other a bedroom to house country patients."

When a baby was born, Mary would cadge a jug of rainwater for the baby's first bath. Pear's soap, Fuller's earth and powdered orris root were placed in the baby's basket and a clean piece of old linen was toasted and placed on the baby's navel. The baby was then wrapped in swaddling clothes and presented to the mother. Mary came night and morning to attend to the mother and baby."

As **Mary Carson, wife of James Carson, Enrolled Pensioner Guard,** found herself no longer able to physically undertake the role of the local midwife, other local women who had learnt their craft from Mary Carson, took over her role and they in turn handed on their knowledge to the next generation.

On December 28<sup>th</sup> 1900 Wife, Mother and Midwife, died at Geraldton at the goodly age of 68.

At her death, Mrs. Mary Carson, nee Fitzgerald was "widely known through the district as a capable and kindly nurse and hundreds of families testify to the skill and gentleness of her ministrations."

(Geraldton 150 Years, 150 Lives. )(4)

## References:

1. Broomhall, Frank. "The Veterans: A History of the Enrolled Pensioner Force in Western Australia 1850-1880." Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, 1989.
2. Barker, David J. "Warders and Gaolers A Dictionary of Western Australian Prison Officers 1829-1879." Publ. Western Australian Genealogical Society Inc. 2000.
3. Erickson, Rica; "The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians" pre 1829-1888" Volume 1 A-C p485.UWA Press. Nedlands. 1987.
4. "Geraldton 150 Years, 150 Lives." Geraldton Regional Library, Cathedral Avenue, Geraldton. 2001.

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