

West End and South Brisbane Historical Walk

This walk traverses an area that is part of the land of the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples called Kurilpa, meaning the place of the kuril, a small rodent known scientifically as *Melomys cervinipes*. Before the arrival of Europeans, it comprised a rich landscape of wetlands and rainforest, and it was an important source of food for both its owners and visitors to the area.

We start and finish at the corner of Vulture and Boundary Streets and pass 30 heritage listed locations. The walk passes through commercial, industrial and residential areas, giving glimpses into the past.

1. The Boundary and Vulture Street corner

In 1843, the Brisbane Town boundaries were drawn in preparation for free European settlement following the closure of the convict station. The western boundary became known as Boundary Street and the southern Vulture Street, making this point the south-west corner. At the time it was a remote bush location.

From the 1850s, Aboriginal people were illegally compelled to remain beyond the boundary during the hours of darkness and on Sundays. They frequently camped across the boundary in the West End area at this time.

Bus stop 8 in Vulture Street was the location of the terminus of a horse-drawn tram service that started operation in 1888. Within months, a two year old and then a four year old boy died here when run over playing under trams. The streets were no longer the playground they had been.

The large brick building on the corner was built circa 1929 by grocer Vincent Birchley. In 1950, the early supermarket chain Brisbane Cash and Carry opened a store here. From 1963 until around 2000 it was home to various hardware stores.

There has been a pharmacy on the opposite corner since the Thomason Brothers, pharmaceutical chemists and mechanical dentists, opened in 1887. From 1889 until 2008, four generations of the Davies family ran the shop, at what was known as Davies Corner. Around the turn of the 20th century, it operated as an unofficial first aid centre with people suffering from the results of such diverse incidents as being kicked by a horse, bitten by a shark, or slipping on an orange peel, coming for help.



Air Raid Wardens at Davies Corner in 1941. J. P. Davies was the West End Chief Warden.

2. Boundary Street

Through the 1880s, this part of Boundary Street developed as a major shopping strip. The row of shops on Boundary Street behind Birchley's building was built by local baker Richard Rogers in 1886 to meet the demand of the rapidly growing local community. It's been occupied by a wide variety of shops over the last 140 years.



Birchley's grocery store at 195 Boundary Street in 1909. (Fryer Library)

Continuing down Boundary Street, we come to another imposing set of 19th-century shops. The building was constructed by Thomas Pearson, a Kangaroo Point contractor, in 1890.

At number 142, the shop built circa 1885 was owned by Maria O'Connor, whose husband Henry Farling started a tobacconist shop here in 1896. John Condie purchased the property in 1913, and continued with a tobacconist business. William Condie ran his dental practice here from around the mid 1920s.



The Boundary Hotel in 1930. (State Library of Queensland)

Donald and Margaret Wilson and their children arrived from Glasgow in 1848, and two years later purchased a 3 acre block of land in West End. Here in 1864, Donald built the original Boundary Hotel, which was a wooden structure.

After he died in 1883, his son John built a red brick hotel which still stands underneath the many alterations and extensions of the intervening years. Adjacent Wilson Street is a memory of

this family and their long association with West End.

In 1970, the Queensland Liquor Act was amended to allow women to drink at public bars, rather than being limited by law to the more expensive beer gardens and ladies lounges. However, when a group of women arrived at the Boundary Hotel on Friday 13th November 1970 to test the law, they were refused service by the publican, Mrs. Pitt. She called the police from across the street, but they were unsure of the new law and retreated back to the Police Station. The women remained at the bar but had to ask men to buy their beers.

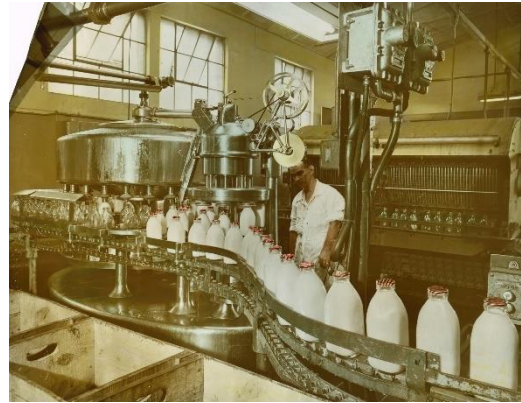


Looking down Boundary Street from the Russell Street corner in 1949. (BCC)

The old West End police station across the street from the pub was constructed in 1884 and was progressively extended as the local population grew. It was closed in 2014. The low ground behind the police station marks the path of a creek, that flowed down from the Dornoch Terrace ridge, and continued from here parallel to Melbourne Street to an extensive swamp along Merivale Street, and then into the river. In dry spells, a queue would form at a waterhole here with people from far and wide collecting water in buckets, barrels or whatever else they could find to use.

“Westella” on the corner of Jane Street was designed in 1939 by noted architect George Rae. It was unusual for the time, as it combined retail space with apartment living on the floor above. A newspaper article at the time described the shop having “*palatial curved plate glass windows and attractive tiled front*”. The owner, Thomas Halbert, was manager of the Lyric Theatre, that we will discover later on this walk.

A little further down the street is Peter's Arctic Delicacy factory built in 1928, and now incorporated into the West Village development. Staff at Peters developed such products as Frosty Fruits, Billabongs, Hava-Heart and the Drumstick. In the mid-1800s, this was the location of Davidson's orchard, known for its *"peaches, strawberries, grapes, oranges, and almost every other kind of known fruit"*.



The production line at Peters in the 1930s. (State Library of Queensland)

We cross Melbourne Street to get a view of the Tristram's factory. This corner is low lying and has been completely flooded numerous times in recorded history.



The corner in 1974 with Tristram's factory in the background. (Queensland State Archives)

3. Tristram's

Close to the regular water supply of the Melbourne Street swamp, this land was the location of a Chinese market garden for many years. In 1930, the Tristram family built a new soft drink factory here, after the widening of Grey Street removed the front of their old premises. Its Spanish Mission style made the building a local landmark. The factory shut in 1976 after changes in the market structure made the business unviable and in the early 1980s, it was repurposed as the West End Market shopping centre.

From here, we head up Melbourne Street.

4. Malouf's

In 1913, fruit sellers Saleem and Alice Malouf built their two-storey shop and residence across the street at the corner of Edmondson Street. In the 1940s, the shop became a general store and milk bar. The Malouf's grandson, author David, recalled the shop as *"...a big general store and milk bar"*

with high ceilings made of beaten tin, electric fans, soda fountains and several marble topped tables of wrought iron feet”.

It was later well known as Squirrels vegetarian restaurant.

5. Bobby Bond's Folly? Dream?

Panageotis Bombonidis, who anglicised his name to Bobby Bond, was a leading Brisbane confectioner. By 1950, he had three sweet shops and cafés in the city and a factory in Fortitude Valley. Hiding behind trees across the street, his Art Deco style confectionary factory with a penthouse apartment, estimated to cost £12,000, was completed in 1951 for £40,000.



Nitsa and Bobby Bond. (State Library of Queensland)

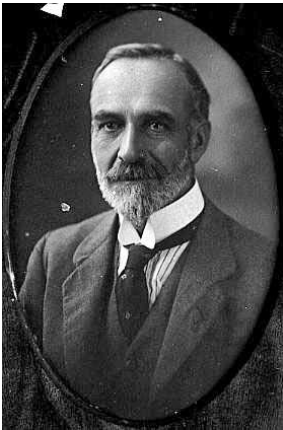
Unfortunately, Bobby never enjoyed his new home, as in July of that year, his body was found on a Pinkenba mud flat. He had been seen walking out of his Hamilton home early that morning in his pyjamas. Bobby was 43.



Bobby Bond's building in 1952. (State Library of Queensland)

The building has had many occupants, including Universal Pictures in 1954, the Museum of Contemporary Arts for a few years around 1990, Stefan's Hairdressers and an English Language school.

6. Federation style houses



David McCullough (Brisbane City Council)

We cross over Manning Street, named after senior Queensland public servant Arthur Wilcox Manning. In 1869, he was attacked in his office by a disgruntled employee using a tomahawk. Believing Manning would soon die, the government awarded him a very generous pension. Manning lived for another 30 years.

The set of brick houses on the left was built circa 1910 for rental by David Ballantine McCullough, a real estate agent. They were all given names – “Ariba”, “Tyrian”, “Ambeena” and Maroomba”. In 1923, the Council decided that Melbourne Street needed to be widened by 20 feet (6m) due to the increased traffic from the new South Brisbane railway station. McCullough eventually received compensation of £13,000, awarded by the Land Court.

After crossing Cordelia Street, named after the ship that brought the first Governor of Queensland George Bowen and his family to Brisbane, we turn left into Merivale Street and head up the hill.

The building on this corner is a block of flats “Merivale”, designed in 1938 by architects Chambers and Ford in functionalist style for Pierce Williams.

7. St Mary’s church

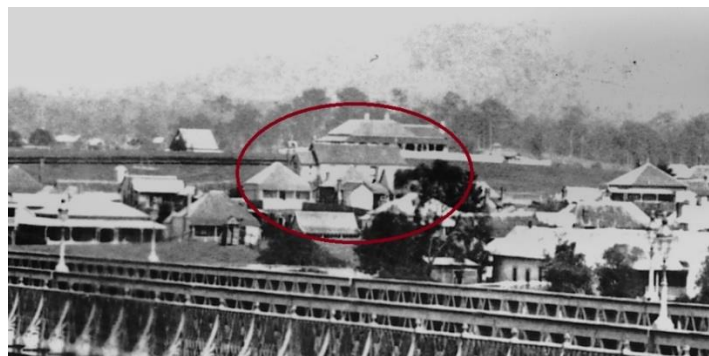
Catholic Bishop James Quinn invited the Josephite nuns to come to Brisbane to open schools for the poor and working class. Saint Mary MacKillop, accompanied by five companions, arrived in Brisbane from Adelaide late in 1869.

By mid-January 1870, the sisters were teaching here using the small church built in 1859 that stood at the location of the car park next to the existing church. Every Monday morning the furniture had to be arranged for classes and rearranged for services on Friday afternoon.

Mary made several long visits to Brisbane between 1875 and 1879. However, following disagreements with Bishop Quinn about how things were being run, the Josephite sisters left in 1880. By that time, 190 local children were attending the school, which was subsequently run by the Sisters of Mercy.



Mary MacKillop



St Mary's viewed from across the Victoria Bridge ca. 1875 (State Library of Queensland)

The existing church was built in Roman basilica style in 1893 for £2,150, with the funds raised by the local community.



An 1893 drawing of what were the existing and planned new churches.

In 1909, new school buildings were built, and the original church was demolished sometime after 1926. In 1915, a convent for the Sisters of Mercy was constructed, diagonally opposite the school on the corner of Cordelia and Peel Streets.

In 2009, the church made news around the world when Father Peter Kennedy was sacked by the then Archbishop of Brisbane, John Bathersby, for unorthodox practices. Father Kennedy still conducts St. Mary's in Exile at a nearby location.

From here, we walk up Peel Street and left into Boundary Street, crossing over at the safety zone and continuing down Boundary to turn into Norfolk Road.

8. Norfolk Road

Norfolk Road appears in Post Office Directories from 1878, and with 6 heritage listed houses as well as numerous other 19th-century dwellings, it's not hard to imagine yourself transported back in time walking down to Montague Road.

In 1883, the Sholl family built their home at number 4 and named it "Bulwer". They had lived at the Bulwer pilot station on Moreton Island for 22 years from 1859. Richard Sholl was the senior pilot, and his daughter Louisa was operator-in-charge of the Bulwer telegraph office.



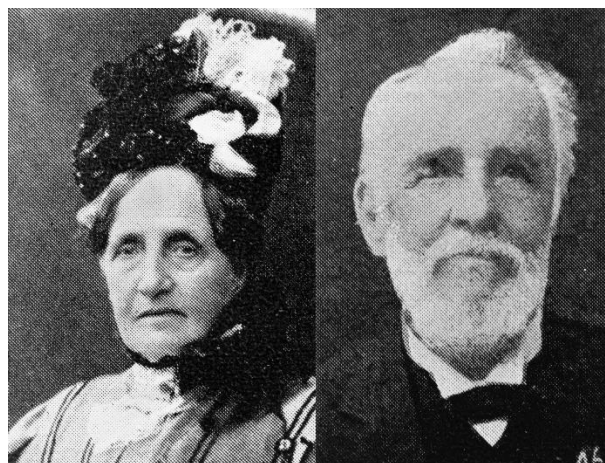
The Bulwer telegraph office in the 1870s.

Richard died in 1892, but his daughter Louisa, who never married, and his wife Charlotte continued living in "Bulwer" until 1900. Thomas Just, an accountant, purchased the house, and late in 1900, his 9 year old son Oliver caught the bubonic plague. Too sick to be moved, Oliver recovered at home and subsequently lived until 1952.

Scots John Macfie, a shipwright, and his wife Christina, built the house at number 10 in around 1878. Their daughter, Mary, married Robert Macmillan in 1898 and it became their family home. They called it "Ailsa-Craig", derived from the Gaelic for "Fairy Island" which lies off the western coast of Scotland. The house remained in family hands for 110 years.

The house at number 11 was built ca.1883 and has been called "Dockerie", "Crofthead", and "Inverness". In 1945, Michael Bergin, a retired police inspector, and his wife Mary celebrated their golden wedding anniversary here with their 7 sons, 5 daughters-in-law and 18 grandchildren.

"Pickwick" at number 12 Norfolk Road was built ca. 1878 by Margaret and her husband lithographer John Costin. Across the street at about the same time, John's brother William and his wife Maria Costin built their house at number 13 which has been called "Greenvilla and "Werdau".



F Maria and William Costin.

William Costin was a pharmacist and property developer, and he lost ownership of the house through insolvency.

The Heathwood family then lived here for about 10 years. In 1899, Sarah Hendry, the Heathwood's daughter, was staying here with her week old son David. Her nurse came into the bedroom with a kerosene light and accidentally set fire to the bed's mosquito net. Sarah died from burn injuries the next day and baby David died a few weeks later.

Number 16 was constructed in around 1876 by John Reynolds, a printer, as an investment, and rented out. The Reisky family bought the house in 1887 and named it "Wendouree" after their former home in Ballarat. Daughter Ida married Gustaf Augstein and they brought up their family here. Despite their German heritage, all 3 of their sons volunteered for service in World War One.

Eldest son Rudolph was already known as a poet when he enlisted in 1914. Rudolf served in the Field Ambulance at Gallipoli and in France. Along with others in the family, due to anti-German sentiment he changed his name. As Peter Austen he published books of poetry, then moved to Cairo where he had another name change to Ali Azir-el-Din and began a career as a carpet seller. In 1939, he went to Beirut for hospital treatment and died after falling down a set of stairs.



Rudolf Augstein in 1914

Sarah Else ran "Camden Villa" at number 21 as a boarding house until she died in 1898, aged 76. Sarah, the widow of a coachman, had purchased large blocks of land on Norfolk Road after she immigrated in 1874. The source of her funds remains a mystery.

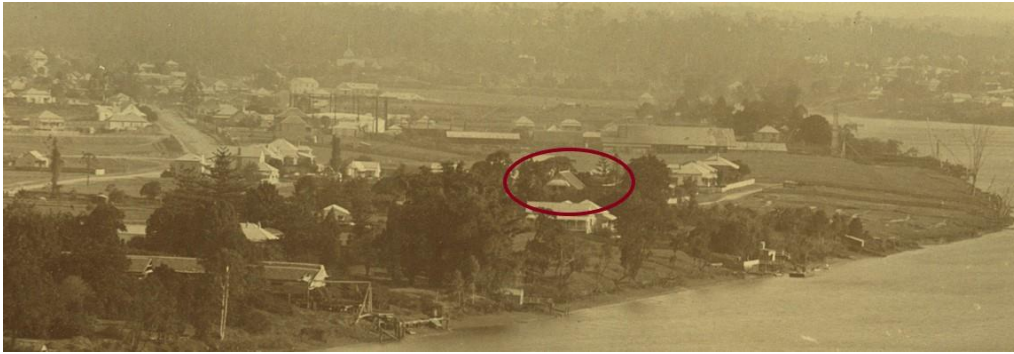
After this quiet stroll through the past, we turn left onto busy Montague Road.

9. Montague Road

Montague Road developed as a bush track following the property line of farms surveyed for sale in the 1840s. The thick rainforest along the river was cleared at that time. It's said that the skeleton of a convict, still with leg irons, was found when land was cleared near here. We turn left and walk along Montague Road.

Across the street, the 1938 Stewarts and Lloyds tube manufacturing plant and warehouse is a surviving example of the ongoing industrial expansion in the area in the first half of the twentieth century. During World War 2, the company manufactured cannon shells and air-craft engine cylinder barrels and liners.

Continuing down Montague Road, Hockings Street marks the location of the 10 acre Rosaville Nursery established by Alfred Hockings circa 1854. Here he experimented with plants he imported, especially from the Calcutta Botanical Gardens. The Hockings family lived in an adjacent house that they called "The Oaks".



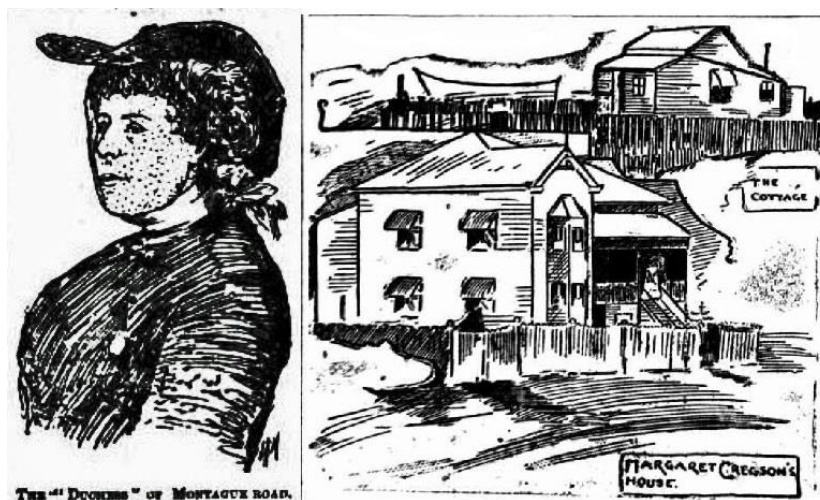
Hockings nursery with "The Oaks" circled.

The land was progressively subdivided from the late 19th century and was later the location of the Hume Pipe factory and the Australian Chemical Company. By 1922, neighbours were complaining of noxious fumes. We'll cross here at the lights.

Completed in 1928, Stronach's Workshop at number 222 across the street is an example of an Art Deco style industrial building. George Stronach used it as a warehouse for building and contracting business.

The large white building at number 225 is where Margaret Gregson had what was probably Queensland's largest ever brothel campus. Known as the "Duchess of Montague Road", she got into the business in 1888 to support her children when her husband was found guilty of embezzlement and jailed for 18 months.

Margaret had 4 houses on her land, including the large "Botany Villa". She ran her business here for around 20 years and then left it in the hands of a manager after retiring. In all those years, Margaret was jailed just once for two months, for selling alcohol without a licence. Margaret left a large part of her £25,000 fortune to provide for her grandchildren's education. Although she stipulated that none of her properties were to be used for immoral purposes after her death, one house here, "San Foy", was once again operating as a brothel during World War 2.



10. Davies Park

The land for Davies Park was purchased by the South Brisbane City Council in 1900, with a loan from the Queensland Government eventually paid back in 1966. It was named after Alderman John Davies in recognition of his efforts to secure the site.

The park has been a major sports and recreation venue ever since. From 1927 to 1932, a motorcycle speedway operated here. You can still see what's left of the oval inclined track near Montague Road. The crowds were so big that a tram loop was built down Montague Road past the gate.

Heading down Jane Street, we come to the rowing sheds. [age of trees?] Here, in 1921, the Davies Park swimming baths were opened. Unusually for the time, mixed male and female bathing was permitted, but only on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Unusually, its bottom sloped from side to side instead of the usual end to end.



1Davies Park Baths

Continuing along the river, we come to the location of the West End Gasworks, built in 1885. Soon after, gas street lighting became more common. The cast iron gas stripping tower was relocated in the park in 1979. It was manufactured in Yorkshire and transported in parts to Brisbane in 1912 as part of an upgrade to the works.

We head up the ramp, cross the park, and turn right to continue along Montague Road. At the Vulture Street intersection, we cross with the lights and head up the street.

On the corner of Hardgrave Road, Drayton Court comprising 10 flats was built by Clyde Bryan circa 1938 and is a good example of the beginnings of increasing density in the inner city area at the time. The shop on the corner was originally a general store but has long been the home of the locally famous Micks Nuts.



The view from Hamstead Road in 1968. The large building on the right is the can factory.

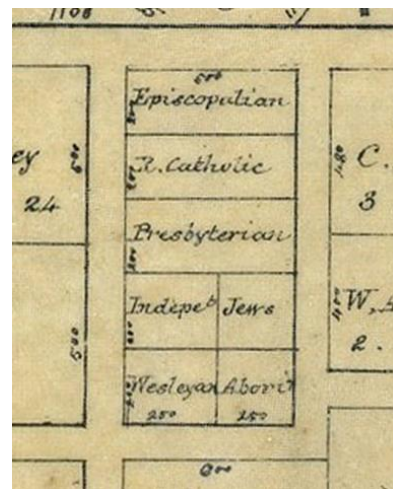
11. West End State School

The land that the school stands on was set aside as a cemetery reserve in the 1840s. In 1875, when the colonial government decided to establish a school here, investigations revealed that only one person had ever been buried on the site.

As was the custom at the time, there were 3 separate schools, for infants, boys and girls. With the rapid growth of the surrounding area during the 1880s land boom, in 1884 a new boys' school was constructed with a fence separating the boys from the infants and girls. The girl's school was expanded in 1920 and these two buildings remain on site.

Despite this work, by 1936, with 885 pupils overcrowding had become a major issue, and a group of parents lobbied for an expansion of the school.

The current brick school building was built as part of the government's work creation scheme during the Depression years and was completed in 1936. Recently, history repeated itself with a major expansion of the school on adjoining land.



The 1858 segregated cemetery layout.



The original school buildings in 1920 with the teachers and children of the infant school .(State Library of Queensland)

12. Queensland Can factory

In 1896, James and Sarah Cole relocated their expanding tinsmith business to the corner of Vulture and Turin Streets. It steadily grew over the years, and in 1926 the family company merged with Queensland Can Ltd. This was a major local employer until the factory closed in 1965.



Coles Cannister Works on Vulture Street in 1896, 1902 and 1919.(Fryer Library)

The front of the main factory building has been demolished, but the rear, as well as the crown seal building in Paris Street and the bulk store facing Bond Street, are still standing.

13. The West End Estate

Lots in the West End Estate, which probably gave the suburb its name, were put up for sale by auction in 1863. A trigger was the planned first bridge across the river, which unfortunately took 10

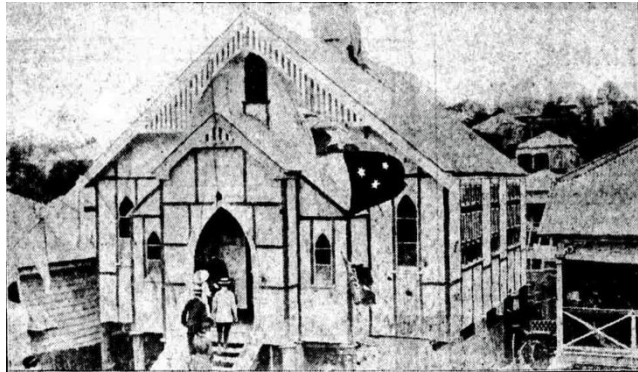
years to complete. From then, the streets on our right started to fill with houses. The lots were all quite small at around 11 perches (290 square metres).

Turning right into Exeter Street, we soon come to number 12. This brick terrace house was built in the late 1870s by bricklayer Thomas Jackson and is one of the oldest houses in West End. The Jackson family lived here until 1941.

Continuing down the street past other 19th century houses we arrive at Corbett Street and turn left.

14. Corbett Street

In 1915, the South Brisbane Gospel Hall was built at number 38. It was used for various community activities such as church services, and the local Good Templar Lodge[more]. Abandoned, it was demolished in 1936.



The South Brisbane Gospel Hall in 1915. (Trove)

Next door, on the large block extending through to Granville Street, the West End branch of the Creche and Kindergarten Association was opened by Premier Denham in 1913. It was the fourth branch of the Association that was founded in 1907 and continues today.

Mentions of the street in newspapers were usually of incidents such as fires, accidents or court appearances, such as when John Lee accused his son of assault. On New Years Day of 1911, a scuffle broke out at number 14 between Lee and his son Cyril. John took Cyril to court for pushing him down the stairs, but the evidence pointed to them losing their balance.

In 1931, August Carsberg, who lived at number 2, started throwing stones on the roof of the house next door, which unusually shares a side wall with number 2. When the occupant Fred Atwood came out, Carsberg reportedly shouted at him "I'll knock the ____ with a bottle. We'll get you, you ____, we'll fix you!" His wife came out and coaxed him back home. The case against Carsberg was also dismissed..

15. Boundary Street again

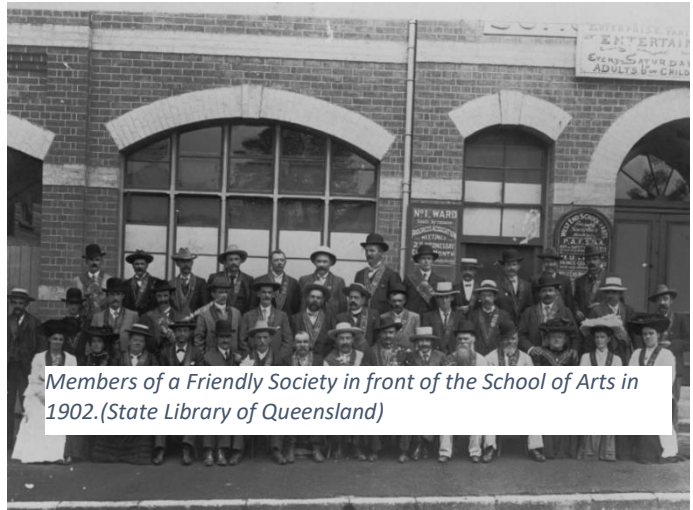
Here we turn left and head back to our starting place. An option is to head either up Brighton Road or right into Boundary following my Highgate Hill walk in different directions.

On the corner is a two story shop built in 1895 by brothers William and Patrick Gorman as a grocery store. Patrick and Ann Gorman lived upstairs. It remained a grocery until at least the 1950s. The attractive house at number 227 was built circa 1879 for Charles and Mary West who lived here until their deaths in 1931. It's one of the oldest surviving houses in West End. The Greek Evangelical Church has occupied the building next door since 1960. It was built in 1908 as the West End Gospel

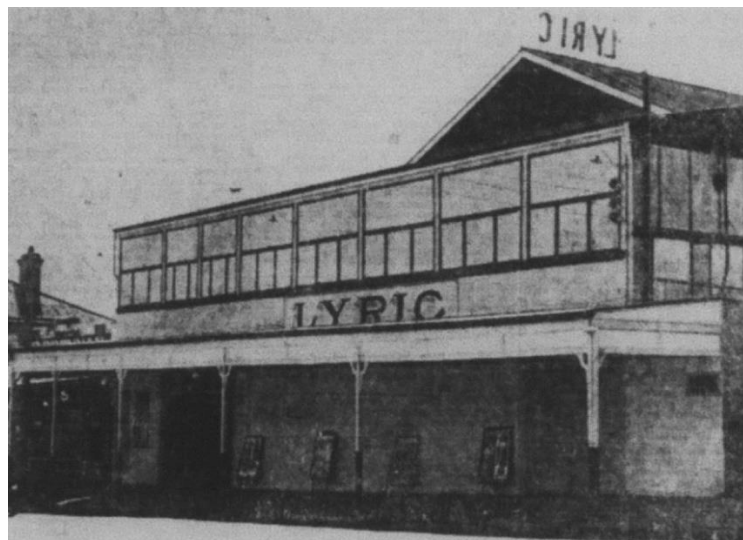
Mission. Across the street is the Kurilpa Library. Completed in 1929, it was Queensland's first purpose-built municipal library. The clock has a chime that you can hear on the hour. It was provided by the Kurilpa War Memorial Ladies' Committee as a memorial to the fallen of World War One.

The library was an extension to the 1889 School of Arts building, sadly destroyed by an arsonist's fire in 1968. It stood on the location today of the Kurilpa Seniors Centre.

A little farther down the street stood the Lyric Theatre. It started life as the open-air West End Picture Gardens in 1910. The theatre closed in 1961 and was for a few years home to a toy shop. It burnt down circa 1967.



Members of a Friendly Society in front of the School of Arts in 1902. (State Library of Queensland)



The Lyric Theatre in 1935. (Trove)

Stop for a moment to admire the fine detailing of the circa 1884 house at number 219, built by local joiner James Bradley as a rental home.

The building on the corner was built ca 1942 by Peter Aroney. The small wooden building at the rear, occupied by Bent Books, was used during WW2 by the Aroney family to make sweets. The corner shop has been an optometrist practice for over 30 years, but in the early 1950s it was occupied by Pickham's milk bar, famous for its pineapple juice which sold for 6d (5c) a glass. At intermission, moviegoers would flock across the street from the Lyric for milk shakes and ice creams.



2 Pickham's in 1950. (State Library of Queensland)

This brings us back to our starting place. I hope you enjoyed your walk through the past. If you are interested in finding out more about a given topic, I may have written a blog post about it. You can check using the search button at the top of the Posts tab.

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