

In this interview, Mary France gives evidence of the early
follies of the lives of the people of the western district
and the practices and adventures encountered as a mainly
rural community and reveals and illustrates the geographic
and economic factors that determined the relatively slow
rate at which progress reached Morisset and surrounding areas.

Mary Theresa France **ANGELA BENTLEY** was born March 23rd, 1922.

She was the youngest of seven children born to John and Mary
Morisset, and lived until her marriage in the family home

at 11/11/11, in the town of Morisset, now the head office of
New South Wales.

The house was built by her father, who was a farmer, and
purchased a 2 acre house on 20 acres of land at Morisset
and cultivated a market garden, that not only provided
food for his growing family but yielded a surplus which
was sold at the Morisset market.

The Growth of Morisset

The children were raised in the family home on the
farm, which was well stocked with sheep and cattle
and horses, as well as their share of household items.
Although she did not attend school, she was given the opportunity
to read and write, and was particularly interested in the
work of the local school. She was particularly interested in the
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In her early years, Mary France was particularly interested in the
work of the local school and was particularly interested in the
work of the local school.

In this interview, Mary France gives evidence of the major influences on the lives of the people in the Morisset District. Both the drawbacks and advantages encountered as a mainly rural community are re-lived and illustrate the geographic and economic factors that determined the relatively slow rate at which progress reached Morisset and surrounding areas.

Mary Theresa France was born at home on March 27th, 1927. She was the eldest of eight children born to John and Mary Wilcock, and lived, until her marriage in the family home at Eraring, on the site of what is now the head office of Newcom Collieries.

Leaving Newcastle Post Office to become a farmer, her father purchased a 2 bedroom house on 10 acres of land at Eraring and established a market garden, that not only provided food for his growing family but yielded a surplus which was sold enabling the purchase of necessities.

The children were expected to help with the work on the farm, which varied with the crop and the seasonal planting and harvesting, as well as their share of household chores. Although hard and often tedious, the work gave the children a sense of responsibility that proved invaluable in the years preceding and following their parents premature death.

In her early years, Mary attended the tiny school at Eraring with her brothers and sisters, and later travelled by train to

high school in Wyong. Mary considers herself fortunate to have gone to high school at all, unlike the majority of children who remained at the small school for two years to complete two years by correspondence.

The medical services available were confined to one doctor in Morisset, and a small hospital in Cooranbong which was run by Nurse Connolly. In the event of the doctor being unable to be contacted Nurse Connolly would drive her horse and sulky, often in foul weather to attend the sick or to deliver babies. For many years the nearest chemist was in Wyong, however to overcome this, the doctor often prepared his own medicines and kept a supply for emergencies.

Although social lives were dependent upon the amount of free time available, there were dances in the local halls in the district which doubled as picture theatres on weekends. The necessity for local entertainment and shopping facilities was heightened by the inadequate roads and unsatisfactory train schedules. and compounded by a distance that was too great for horse and sulky.

Local industries provided the basis for settlement in the area and lack of suitable employment for young adults completed the cycle of movement away from the district, in this way the population remained constant by never stagnant.

Throughout the interview with Mary France, it is apparent

that hardships were never dwelt upon and that any drawbacks served only to strengthen the appreciation of the simplest of conveniences and luxuries. Similarly, today the advantages of living in Morisset outway the many disadvantages that still exist due to the geographic and economic position of Morisset.

copies to be lodged in the Newcastle University Archives, for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Given at London, this 17th day of August 1976.
Date 17.8.76
Signature: [illegible]

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I *Mary France*..... give my permission
to *Angela Bentley*..... to use this
biography/interview or part there of, for
research, publication and/or broadcasting
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researchers.

Signed *M. France*.....(Interviewee)

Date *29-9-87*.....

Interviewer *Bentley*.....