

Open Foundation Course  
Australian History.

Thursday 10-12

Margaret Henry.

Research Paper:

Margaret Loguyn.  
Interviewed

Annie McGeer

12 Park St

Maitland.

The journey took five and a half weeks and on arrival Annie and her mother were reunited with their family. Annie's grandfather worked at the Barracks building. Annie's mother came to live with him. Being a bachelor he lived in a shack outside the colony. Conditions were very rough, a cramped area for three people for six months they lived here and then moved to a house in Stahel.

Annie went to school at Adamstown travelling on a train to school and walking three miles home each day. Annie became the next male. The once thriving town had become very deserted in those years and Annie's mother had remarried to her father's uncle, stepfather and Annie lived in a shack on the outskirts of the township.

Life here for a young teenage girl was very difficult. Separation from friends Annie and her grandfather had become good friends with one another.

Annie met her future husband at the Mount Catholic Church. He was twenty years old and was an altar boy for the priest who travelled

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Margaret Loquyn

Annie McSpicer was born 1st August 1911 at Edinborough Scotland. Annie was an only child. Annie's father worked as a mine deputy at Smeaton. A mine explosion on the 8th August 1918 killed Annie's dad.

As Annie's grandfather and four uncles had migrated to Australia Annie and her mother set sail for Australia aboard the ship 'Ventura'.

At Many port calls, the passengers were not allowed to leave the ship because on shore the flu epidemic was very bad.

The journey took five and a half weeks and on arrival Annie and her mother were reunited with their family.

Annie's grandfather worked at the Burnwood Colliery. Annie and her mother came to live with him. Being a bachelor he lived in a shack overlooking the colliery.

Conditions were very rough, a cramped area for three people. For six months they lived here and then moved to a house in Kajibah.

Annie went to school at Adamstown, travelling on a train to school and walking three miles home each day.

Minmi became the next move. The once thriving town had become very deserted in these years and Annie's mother had remarried so grandfather, mother, stepfather and Annie lived in a shack on the outskirts of the township.

Life here for a young teenage girl was very difficult. Separated from friends, Annie and her grandfather had become great friends with one another.

Annie met her future husband at the Minmi Catholic Church. Cecil was twenty years old and was an altar boy for the priest who travelled

by horse and sulky and covered the areas of Lambton, Wallsend and Minmi.

Cecil was born at Blackhill a member of a family of nine children.

He used to travel by bicycle or horse to call and see Annie.

The next move was to a share dairy farm outside of the township of Thornton. Cecil worked on the farm with Annie parents.

Romance blossomed and Annie and Cecil married at East Maitland, December 1st 1934.

The farm was taken over by the young couple and married life began with Annie looking after her new husband plus three other men who were working on the farm.

Cooking, cleaning and washing for five adults was Annie's start to married life.

Life and living was not an easy one. Long hours of work, exposure to the elements a seven day week of work.

Alongside the man on the land is usually a woman. Rearing children and having to cope to the best of her ability.

Annie had a busy schedule to maintain. Early morning rising to light the fuel stove so that the breakfast could be ready for the men, dishes to be washed. Beds made house tidied before lunch and the afternoon milking.

The washing of the men's heavy working clothes had to be done each day. Washing consisted of having to build a fire outside, a large tub with two handles a copper stick the clothes were boiled then removed to another tub put through a hand wringer then hung on the line. This tub was also used for bathing.



purposes. Annie only weighed 6 stone 7 lbs a very slight young woman facing a very heavy job. Annie continued to wash this way even when pregnant.

Water supplies were dependant on rainfall. No electricity. Transport was horse and buggy. Groceries were delivered once a week from 'bosbetts' general store at Thornton. Meat would be collected from Maitland. Butchers would often put an extra free pound of meat with the order. Refrigeration was non-existent for Annie. Gauze meat keepers were used in summer.

Annie and Cecil bore four children whilst at the farm two boys and two girls. When labour started Annie and Cecil would travel to East Maitland. Annie had her children at Nurse Hanks nursing home.

Nurse Hanks was a local midwife and would travel by bicycle often to visit the patients when they needed attention.

For the first two children Annie had to travel to East Maitland by horse and sulky. It certainly wasn't the most comfortable way to travel for a pregnant woman.

Women were then kept at the hospital for 10 to 14 days, giving the mother a little time to recuperate. Annie and Cecil borrowed a car when she delivered her last two children.

Now Annie had four children. Bathing feeding and rearing children plus cooking washing and the usual household duties. Annie's mother was very supportive and regularly helped.

Another move after nine years living at the farm. Annie really appreciated this move and it became

a very happy time for her. The year was 1941 the move was to Arderton St. Islington.

Annie's mother had bought a shop near Newcastle hospital and with the difficult times of depression many times helped with food for the struggling family.

The best and most important feature of the house was a bricked in gas copper inside the house. A toilet, inside bathroom, hot water, gas stove, refrigerated electric lights no more having to go outside regardless of the weather to wash the clothes. A great many friendships with neighbours <sup>formed</sup> that were to last for many years to come.

Becil worked at Paul Bros laundry at Patrick St. Merewether. Cecil picked up and delivered laundry in and around the suburbs of Newcastle. Laundry was also picked up and delivered to and from the ships berthed in the Newcastle port. A truck was supplied and at weekends many trips were taken in the laundry van.

Money was not very plentiful but Annie was very contented with what she had.

Entertainment for the adults was usually neighbours and friends getting together for a game of cards and a chat.

Sing songs around a piano were a regular part of the fun. The ladies would each bring something to eat and this became a regular part of the fun and companionship.

Many deliveries were made to the door. The Baker would arrive in a horse and cart. The horse would wander up the street almost knowing where to go. The baker had a large covered basket to display the loaves of bread.

The year, now 1948 Cecil's parents had died the family homestead at Blackhill was to be sold and Cecil decided to make another move.

Blackhill was a small farming community about four miles away from Minmi. Earlier years Blackhill boasted a wine salon and (Lenagan's Family Hotel a large two storey brick building built in 1886. After its opening a race meeting was held on the flat. The family hotel has long been delicensed and is occupied by Mr. Harder who combines dairy farming with training and racing fine trotters) The Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society Monthly Journal January 1949.

Annie was again isolated, fuel stove, lino over wooden floors, kerosine telly and hurricane lights, outside toilet, toilet paper was newspaper cut into squares and hung from a nail. The Laundry although covered was very primitive, clothes were boiled on the fuel stove. Ironing was done with flat irons. Two irons rotated and heated on the fuel stove.

The fuel stove would be kept on both summer and winter. The kettle was always on the boil for washing and for washing dishes.

Sunlight soap was used often. Hair washing was done with sunlight soap and dishes were washed not with detergent but the good old standby sunlight soap in a wire small basket with handles & shaken in the water to make suds.

The bath was a chip heater. Wood would be gathered, lit and the water would trickle through. Again water depended on the rainfall to fill the water tanks.

The mantle radio became



the source of entertainment. The family would gather in the large kitchen each night to listen to the news, quiz shows hosted by Jack Davey and Bob Dwyer, and the Serials.

Becil and Annie's eldest son both worked at Paul Bros laundry and travelled to Merewether each day. Annie spent many long hours of isolation.

Shopping would be done once a week with Annie having to leave early in the morning and having to spend all day at Newcastle until the men returned home.

Many times during winter if the rain had fallen heavily the truck wouldn't be able to drive to the house and everyone would have to take off their shoes and pitch dark they walk through the mud to get to the house carrying the groceries and on arrival have to light the fuel stove and cook tea.

The two youngest children would travel to Taro convent school riding horses again regardless of weather through the bushland.

Often Annie and the girls would tend the vegetable garden feed the calves a house cow was kept for milk and making butter plus pigs for meat for the house.

Annie had another five moves many of them were equally as bad as the next until finally with the children all grown up Annie and Cecil's last move was to 12 Park St. Maitland

Now widowed, Annie lives at Madland with one of her sons. She now has her modern conveniences and has been settled for the last twenty five years. Annie is quite prepared to see out her days in comfort.

Resources used: Donald J. K and Hungerford  
"Exploring the Hunter Region"  
1984. Kenthurst

Turner J. W. "From Stockton to Minmi"  
Photos of Old Newcastle"

"The Newcastle and Hunter District Historical  
Society Monthly Journal January 1949."  
from the Regional Library  
Newcastle.

Since finishing this assignment (by word  
of mouth only) it appears the family  
house at Blackhill was built by  
Patrick Lenaghan - a convict granted  
a pardon and given land which is now  
Blackhill. Blackhill also boasted a  
wine saloon. A stretch of road  
off John Renshaw Drive has been  
named Lenaghans Drive.