Information Sheet No. 22

Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

STANLEY GORDON GRATTE OAM – Local Historian

1930, Jun 25	**- Born in Northam, WA.**
1957	**- President, Geraldton Pistol Club.**
1965	**- Joined Historical Society.**
1967	**- President, Spalding Horse & Pony Club.**
1971-1994	**- President, Geraldton Historical Society.**
2003	**- Author of *A Boy and the War***
2005	**- Author of *Bootenal Spring History.***
2009	**- Awarded Medal of the Order of Australia**
2014	**- Author of MWHS Booklet, *Geraldton's Story***

Stanley Gordon Gratte was born in Northam on 25 June 1930, moving with his family to Geraldton in 1934. Educated at the Geraldton Primary and High Schools, his working life was varied with stints as a photographer with Gilda Studios, sales of radios and bicycles at Young Motors, kangaroo and goat shooter and then joining the Railways where he became Western Australia's youngest railway driver at the age of twenty-three.

Stan's interest in shooting led him to become a foundation member of the Geraldton Gun Club in 1947 and President of the Geraldton Pistol Club in 1957. In 1963, Stan was a member of the Western Australian Rifle Team competing in Adelaide where WA won the National Title.

Stanley Gordon Gratte. Photograph courtesy of Geraldton Regional Library.

While still with the Railways, Stan tried his hand at tomato growing and when the local market began to suffer from competition in the Eastern States, Stan moved into poultry farming. He spent thirteen years driving engines for the Railways and by the end of this time he had also built up a large poultry farm. When he left the Railways, Stan expanded his poultry operation into two farms and, as his knowledge of poultry grew, he became known as the 'Chook Doctor'. In 1955 Stan married Joy Criddle.

In 1965 Stan joined the Geraldton Historical Society where he made a huge practical contribution to the preservation of the town's history. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Greenough Pioneer Museum, Walkaway Railway Station Museum, the Lighthouse Keepers' Cottage Headquarters of the Historical Society and collecting material for both the Archives of the Geraldton Historical Society and the then Geraldton City Library. The Historical Society's Archives include over 3,000 historical photographs and much of the photographic work was done by Stan. Stan is the author of a range of books on the Geraldton and Murchison regions. He was a founding member of the Geraldton Historical Society and President from 1971 until 1994.

During the 1960s Stan also voluntarily recorded, for posterity, the memoirs and knowledge of many elderly Aboriginal people. Copies of these oral history tapes and some transcripts from tape, film and notes are lodged with the Geraldton Regional Library.

Stan's contribution to the community of Geraldton is not limited to history and shooting. He was heavily involved in the improvement of the Horse and Pony Club during the 1960s. Many children would remember the rides offered by Stan on 'Charabanc', drawn by a Clydesdale horse. Stan and Joy would open their property Our Selection to tourists during the Sunshine Festival. Our Selection was a popular venue for many picnics, including the annual picnic run by Geraldton North Rotary Club for aged pensioners.

In 2009, Stan was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the community through the Geraldton Historical Society and continues to be actively involved with this group, as well as the Wonthella Progress Association and the Walkaway Station Museum. In 2014, Stan authored the Mid West Heritage Series title, "Geraldton's Story" on behalf of the City of Greater Geraldton.

References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, *Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 77.*

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for $27.50 (plus $6.50 postage and handling).