

Information Sheet No. 10



Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

GEORGE AND ELIZABETH BASTON – “Mr Vic and Mrs Vic”

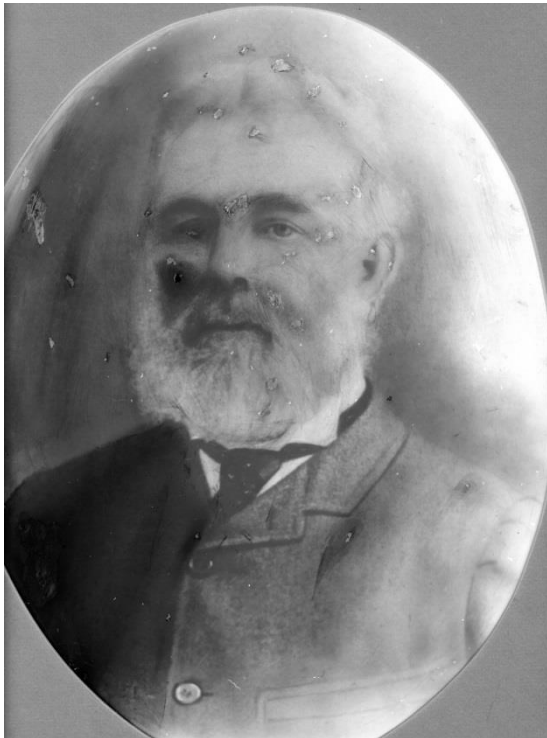
1829, Nov 28	- George born in Abingdon, England.
1829, Jun 16	- Elizabeth Sutton born in Newgate, London.
1855	- Both emigrated to Western Australia on the <i>Avalanche</i> .
1857, Apr 14	- Married at St George’s Church, Perth.
1857	- Baston appointed manager of Gray’s Store, Geraldton.
1867	- Family moved to Perth.
1870-1872	- Leased the Emerald Isle Hotel, Fremantle.
c1873	- Family returned to Geraldton.
1873	- First elected as Member of the Geraldton Municipality.
1877	- First elected Chairman of the Geraldton Municipality.
1885	- First Mayor of Geraldton.
1891	- Created a Justice of the Peace.
1894, Nov 27	- George died in Geraldton, WA.
1914, Jan 7	- Elizabeth died in Geraldton, WA.

George Baston and Elizabeth Sutton sailed to Western Australia as servants on the same ship. George was responsible for taking care of Mr de Lisle’s dogs, cow and two horses, whilst Elizabeth was children’s nurse to the family of Mr S.P. Phillips. The two did not form a harmonious relationship on board as George refused to supply the Phillips’ children with milk. However, their marriage two years later was possibly influenced by George’s appointment as Manager of Gray’s store in Geraldton. Single, marriageable women were very scarce at the time in the remote settlement of Geraldton. Until they had sufficient finance to build a house, the couple lived in a tent on the corner of Fitzgerald Street and Marine Terrace, where their first daughter, Mona, was born.

George soon realised that money was to be made by owning licensed premises. A wattle-and-daub inn, the Pig and Whistle, was built and from the profits, blocks of land along Marine Terrace were purchased and a row of small terrace cottages built (commonly known as “Bottle Row”). The Inn soon developed a disreputable



reputation, partly because George had the reputation of being one of the biggest gamblers in the Bay. It was said that he could shuffle cards faster than the shifting sands of Geraldton! By 1867, George was in financial difficulties and left for Fremantle with his wife and eight children.



After managing the Emerald Isle Hotel for two years, the Bastons returned to Geraldton, where George resumed the proprietorship of the Victoria Hotel. The two-storey Victoria House was built alongside the hotel, and served as a general store and family home until the Bastons moved to Sutton House in Gregory Street. By now staunch members of the community and supporters of the Church of England, the Bastons were well regarded in town. George was nominated to the Municipal Council, appointed director of some local institutions, joined the committee of nearly every group that existed in town and was soon regarded as one of Geraldton's leading citizens.

George Baston, first Mayor of Geraldton, 1885.
Photo courtesy of Geraldton Regional Library, P 1578.

In 1877, Baston was elected Chairman of the Municipal Council and to celebrate this occasion, invitations were sent to the leading 96 residents of the town, inviting them to a Ball at the Baston's residence. This social event was a highlight unsurpassed for many years and received extensive coverage in the newspapers.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth took as her role model Queen Victoria, whom she grew increasingly to resemble.

References

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 12.*

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

