

# Information Sheet No. 25



City of  
Greater Geraldton  
Regional Library



## Heritage Services

## Geraldton Regional Library

### HOSKEN FAMILY – Miners and Hoteliers

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|--------------|--|
| 1814, May 29 | - Martin Hosken Sr baptised in Gwennup, Cornwall, England. |
| 1823, Dec 7  | - John Hosken Sr baptised in Gwennup, Cornwall, England.   |
| 1841         | - Martin Hosken Jr born in Brazil.                         |
| 1844         | - John Hosken Jr born in Brazil.                           |
| 1847         | - William Hosken born in Gwennup, Cornwall, England.       |
| 1848, Mar 20 | - Hannah Hale born in Westminster, England.                |
| 1871, Nov 4  | - Sydney Hosken born in Northampton, WA.                   |
| 1872, Dec 26 | - Martin Hosken Sr died in Dongara, WA.                    |
| 1881, Mar 14 | - John Hosken Jr died in Northampton, WA.                  |
| Aug 17       | - William Hosken died in Geraldton, WA.                    |
| Aug 18       | - Martin Hosken Jr died in Geraldton, WA.                  |
| 1882, Sep 23 | - John Hosken Sr died in Ballarat, VIC.                    |
| 1906, Oct 8  | - Hannah Hosken died in Geraldton, WA.                     |
| 1951, Feb 3  | - Sydney Hosken died in Northampton, WA.                   |

When the mining industry in Cornwall suffered a downturn, many Cornish miners drifted around the world plying their trade. The Hosken family was part of this migration, travelling a well-worn circuit beginning with San Janeiro, then Brazil, California, Ballarat and finally Northampton and Geraldton. These young men developed interests in mining, hotels, roads, railways, sport and church affairs in the new colony. When three of John Hosken's sons died in 1881, two of them on successive days, the editor of the *Victorian Express* commented sadly, "The almost simultaneous death of two such men as the brothers Hosken creates a gap in our sparse community, which will be but all too painfully felt".

Captains of mining, Martin and John Hosken arrived in Western Australia in 1852 to take charge of underground activities at the new Geraldine Mine growing up around deposits of copper and lead in the Northampton district. The Hoskens' arrival coincided with a great increase in production at the mine. The brothers were later involved in the Miner's Arms and

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the Railway Hotels. Martin married Agnes Catherine Shearman at Geraldton in 1861 and died childless, aged about 63, on 26 December 1872 in Dongara, where the Irwin Hotel was managed by his nephew William.

John Hosken and his first wife, Elizabeth Luke, had seven or eight children, but only four survived to adulthood; a daughter, Elizabeth Ann, and three sons, Martin, John Jr, and William. The sons are believed to have been educated in England and eventually followed their father and uncle into mining and the hotel trade. In 1874 John Hosken married a second time, to Elizabeth Hazelhurst at Creswick, Victoria. In the same year he was a member of a special committee formed in the Victoria District to supervise the decorations and general arrangements for a festive ceremony known as 'cutting the first sod', to mark the start of work on a long-awaited railway line connecting Geraldton and Northampton. John Hosken died ten years later on 23 September 1882 at Ballarat.

John Hosken's eldest son, Martin Jr, was born in Brazil in 1841 and married Elizabeth Morcombe Bennett of Falmouth, Cornwall, in 1861. Martin Jr spent the first few years of his time in Australia as a Land Surveyor. In 1868 he was started in business by Mr Daniel Scott who built the Geraldton Hotel for him. Martin Jr kept racehorses and was Secretary to the first Race Club in Geraldton. At the end of September 1875, his wife Elizabeth died at Narra Tarra after a long illness, aged only thirty-three. In the same year he resigned the management of the Geraldton Hotel to his brother William and took on the management of the Trefusis Aerated Waters and Cordial Manufactory opposite the Geraldton Hotel. The beverages manufactured were sold locally and also supplied to passenger vessels travelling north and south, as well as to Singapore and Hong Kong. Martin Jr married a second time in 1876, to Emma Mills of Narra Tarra. After suffering ill health for some time and pursuing treatment in Perth, Martin Jr returned to Geraldton where he died of heart disease on 18 August 1881, aged only forty years. His obituary in the *Victorian Express* in describing his character reported, "Besides his qualities as a shrewd and energetic man of business, he had many others, which will render his loss to our district a severe one. An ardent lover of true sport, he was a staunch promoter of everything connected therewith. In him the Volunteer movement loses a generous friend. Not an institution in the district but will miss the support always so cheerfully accorded by him. In many and various ways, the death of Martin Hosken, will be regarded as a public calamity to our district".

John Hosken Jr was born in Brazil in 1844. After travelling the goldfields of the world with his brothers, John took over the management of the Railway Hotel in Northampton. In 1868 he married Annie Sainsbury. A son, Sydney Martin John Hosken, was born to John and Annie in November 1871 and five more children soon followed. John Hosken Jr died at the age of 37 on 14 March 1881. After his death, his wife Annie took over the management of the Railway Hotel.

Born in Cornwall in 1847, William Hosken is thought to have arrived in the Colony in 1879 where he began working for his father. In 1869 William married Hannah Hale at Gwalla, Northampton. Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1870 and a son was born in 1875 while William was in charge of the Irwin Hotel in Dongara. When his brother, Martin Jr, took over the Trefusis Factory, William, became the landlord of the Geraldton Hotel. After



inheriting land from Martin Sr William built *Belvedere*, an impressive homestead which he used as a gambling centre and venue for Balls. This was managed by caretakers and drinks were supplied by William's hotel. Not long after William Hosken took over the management of the Geraldton Hotel he became ill. His condition rapidly deteriorated and aged only 34, he died of enteric fever on 17 August 1881, one day before his brother Martin Jr.



Hannah Hosken. Photograph courtesy of Jean Smallacombe, P 287.

In November 1881, William's wife Hannah advertised the fact that she intended to apply for the licence of the Geraldton Hotel and William Jose took over the management of the aerated water factory. Widowed suddenly after only twelve years of marriage, Hannah was left with five children to support, and she soon proved to be an able businesswoman. In 1885 she opened new premises, the Club Hotel, which at the time was claimed to be the most modern two-storey building in the Colony.

When Hannah died after a short illness in 1906 the *Geraldton Express* summed her up thus, "Mrs Hosken was a kind generous-hearted lady, ever ready to respond to a call of charity or to help any praiseworthy undertaking. She had the misfortune to lose her husband, the late Mr William Hosken, by the hand of death 25 years ago, but with much success and credit to herself, continued the business in which he had been engaged, and eventually built the Club Hotel at Geraldton, which now forms part of her estate". Hannah was survived by one son and three daughters.

## References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 90.

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).

