

# Information Sheet No. 9



## Heritage Services

## Geraldton Regional Library

### SISTER MARY ALBERTUS BAIN OP – Historian

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**1911, Sep 22** - Born in Kurnow, New Zealand.  
**1999, Oct 6** - Died in Perth, WA.

#### Books

**1975** - Ancient Landmarks.  
**1982** - Full Fathoms Five.  
**1996** - A Life of its Own.



Photo Geraldton Regional Library, P 12.

Sr Mary Albertus (Rosalind) Bain was born on 22 September 1911, in Kurnow on the South Island of New Zealand, and was educated at Waitaki High School. Following graduation, she travelled to Australia, living first in Sydney and eventually moving to Perth where she worked in a law office.

At the age of 24 she moved to Dongara, near Geraldton, to become a nun with the Dominican Order. In 1941 Sr Albertus became a foundation member of the Dominican Sisters' first metropolitan school, St Peters in Bedford. After completing a degree in economics at the University of Western Australia in 1945, Sr Albertus was then posted for a short time to the town of Reedy in the Murchison goldfields. In 1950 Sr Albertus was appointed Foundation Superior of the Dominican Convent in Scarborough and in 1955 she moved to St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School at Bedford where she taught history and economics.

During the early 1970s, a request by her superiors to compile a history of the Dominican Order in Western Australia led to a career in historical writing for Sr Albertus.



Her first book was *Ancient Landmarks*, a social and economic history of the Victoria District of Western Australia and the early settlement of Geraldton between 1839 and 1894. *Full Fathoms Five*, her second book, is a study of the pearling industry and charts the relations between the many races that contributed to the success of the early pearling industry. Her third book, *A Life of its Own*, is a social and economic history of the City of Geraldton and the Shire of Greenough, covering the years 1846 - 1988.

The research material and interpretations created by Sr Albertus have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of Geraldton and the Victoria District. Sr Albertus travelled widely throughout Western Australia in the course of her research. She said, "I believe that to write about a place or its history, you must have visited it, so don't ask me to write about Timbuktoo: I have not been there."

Prior to her death on 6 October 1999, Sr Albertus was working on a biography of Governor John Steven Hampton, Western Australia's Governor between 1862 and 1868, and an historical record of the early merchants of Fremantle.

### *References*

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 7.*

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

