

THE HISTORY OF YERONGA PART 9 THE 'O' STREETS

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In 1889, *Rhyndarra* was under construction for William Williams on about 140 acres at the far end of Kadumba Street.¹ At that time, Williams was the manager of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company prior to its merger with the Queensland Steam Shipping Company which created the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company. An important footnote is that when the Suez Canal was opened the Queensland Steam Shipping Company was part of what became the longest mail service in the history of shipping from London to Brisbane.²

Many of the 'O' streets in that part of Yeronga were part of the original Williams' estate with the 'O' coming from the Orient Line ships' names which all started with 'O'.³ The Orient Line held the head contract for the mail service and eventually acquired the entire Australasian United Steam Navigation Company in 1914.⁴ As did so many of the state's highflyers, Williams ran into financial problems in the economic downturn of the 1890's and moved to Western Australia in 1897 when his Yeronga house was leased by the Salvation Army for 'The Yeronga Girls' Industrial School' for 'orphaned and endangered girls'. In 1905 Williams was declared insolvent and the *Rhyndarra* estate passed to the Australian Mutual Provident Society and then on-sold to the Salvation Army in 1907.

At that time, tennis courts and croquet lawns were usually part and parcel of the large up-market Yeronga homes. A newspaper using the terminology of the time describes these playing fields as the places 'hereon athletic maidens wield racquet or mallet with winsome grace'.⁵ The Yeronga Bowling Club was also established in this period with the major moving force being Denny Day, the general manager of the Royal Bank of Queensland.⁶

The 1880's ebullient era came to a sudden end with the economic stagnation brought about by the onset of a financial depression exacerbated by the 1890 flood which unfortunately was quickly followed by an even worse flood in February 1893. Water and debris inundated the low-lying areas of Yeronga and flowed back up the various creeks and gullies which still existed from pre-colonial times. This disaster brought land sales to a grinding halt and this situation not reversed for another 10 years.⁷

In May 1893, the Queensland government sought to deal with the greatest financial crisis it had ever faced by introducing its own currency displacing the previous banknotes which had been circulated by private banks. In so doing, Queensland became the only Australian colony to issue its own currency. These notes stayed in circulation until 1910 when the Commonwealth government used its powers under the Constitution to introduce an Australia wide currency based on the Queensland model.⁸

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhyndarra>

² The service was inaugurated on 12 February 1881 and reached Brisbane on 13 April taking two full months to complete. The idea was largely that of Queensland's forceful Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, the Premier at the

time, who knew that emigrants from Britain travelling by the conventional route landed at ports such as Adelaide, Melbourne or Sydney. It is likely that migrants would stay there rather than make their way to Queensland. He managed to convince the Parliament to provide £55,000 a year for a mail contract with British India. They were obliged to come into Brisbane from the north via the Torres –Strait and go home again by the same route. This led to the demise of the service since ships were not able to pick up a payload from southern ports for the homeward voyage. The direct London-Brisbane service finished in 1895.

³ Streets include Orestes, Osterley, Orari, Oriel, Orcades, Ormadale, Orama, Orlando, Ormuz, Orvieto, Orsova, Orantes, Ormonde, Otaki, and Orient.

⁴ <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/pando.shtml>

⁵ ‘Brisbane’s Suburban Beauties. A World of Fair Scenes’, *BC*, Saturday, 21 July 1906, p. 12.

⁶ Scriven, ‘Yeronga: A Early History’, p. 20.

⁷ However, this did help lower the cost of land and indirectly led to the establishment in 1921 of the delightfully named ‘Yeronga Refuge of Aged and Starving Horses and Lost and Strayed Dogs’ which was the inspiration of Mrs Weinholt. The refuge was taken over in 1927 by the Queensland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and turned into its state headquarters until it closed in 2013. It has now been redeveloped as apartment housing.

⁸ Jon Stanford, ‘Queensland’s own money, 1893-1910: Model for the Australian note issue’ [online]. *Queensland History Journal*, vol. 22, no. 11, Nov 2015, pp. 829-40.