

ALEXANDRA



CHEMIST
FREDERICK
WHEELER



**PEOPLE
SERIES**

ALEXANDRA CHEMIST FREDERICK WHEELER

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

TIMELINE

GALLERY

NEWSPAPERS

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

Name: Frederick Wheeler JP
Born: 1847 (Henly-on-Thames
Died: 26 June 1917 Korumburra
Known for: Councillor, Shire President,
Dentist, Chemist & Businessman

To our knowledge, Frederick (Fred) Wheeler JP was Alexandra's first Chemist, Dentist and operated Alexandra's first surgery early doctors also used in the course of their practices.



Early life

Frederick was born in 1847 at Henly-on-Thames, England, to parent Charles Wheeler and Sarah (née) Williams. This was Charles' second marriage after his first wife Elizabeth (née) Lyford has passed away. Frederick had nine half brothers and three half sisters. He was educated at Henley Grammar in London. Upon leaving school he worked in a pharmacy in London.

His family tree informs us that he arrived in Australia on 25 January 1863 aboard the *Princess Royal*, however his obituary says he migrated to Australia in 1864 and was first employed in 1865 as chemist dispenser under Dr James Boyd in Bendigo. It is believed that the family tree date is correct.

In 1865 he joined a half-brother in St Kilda, before returning to Bendigo in 1866. He then travelled to Hobart, Tasmania where he worked for a year.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

In 1867 he left Tasmania and travelled to the small rural township of Ghin Ghin in Central Victoria, near Yea. While there he starting a pharmacy in the nearby township of Yea in 1868. He retained interests in Yea, selling has pharmacy there in 1889.

He then moved to Gobur around 1869 which was during the prosperous gold rush days of Gobur. As the gold ran out, he wisely moved to the larger nearby township of Alexandra in 1869, where he remained until retiring to Melbourne 1914 and then Korumburra.

Life in Alexandra

Frederick was in Alexandra by 1869 where he established the townships first profitable chemist business and also operated as a dentist. He was officially registered as a pharmacist from 1878, as a result of a the government creating the Pharmacy Board of Victoria in 1876, which required chemists to be registered.

His dental surgery, at the pharmacy, was also used by local doctors to avoid them having the need to rent their own premises. This room was therefore likely to be the first professional doctors surgery in Alexandra. For a time he practices from a shop between the Shamrock Hotel and Peterkin's store, moving across the road into Raeuber's Harp of Erin Hotel in 1877. This new building, along with some others, was damaged by fire in 1899, leaving only the front brick facade of Wheeler's pharmacy standing.

Frederick was a well respected central town figure of prominence and was elected to the Shire Council 1873 and twice served as Shire President (1889/1890, 1890/1891). He is remembered as a good samaritan who helped those in need and was a strong advocate for the Alexandra township. He was a JP for 26 years, Magistrate, Chairman of the Bench and Deputy Coroner.

He was a supporter for the need of a railway to Alexandra and was the first treasurer of the Upper Goulburn Railway League. He was active in the erection of a hospital at Alexandra, which then profited from his services. He served as a Commissioner of the Water Trust, the first President of the Tourist and Anglers Society—one of the districts first tourism organisations. He served on the Alexandra School board from its beginning and was also the Chairman a number of times. He was president of the Bowling Club



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

and president and Captain of the Bowling Club, and served a record six times as Master of the Albert Edward Lodge.

Family

Frederick married Sarah Marie (née) Henry in 1876, and they went on to have eight children before Sarah died. Their children were: Edith May (b1877, d1956), Frederick Joseph (b1879, d1947), Alexandra Henrietta (b1880, d1967), Mabel Victoria (b1882, d1960), Edwin Charles (Peter) (b1884, d1951), Charles Edward (b1886, d1955), Albert Henry (b1886 d1962), Ruby Marie (b1888, d1889).

Frederick then married Catherine Louise (née) Chrystal on 31 July 1890 and they had one son Eric (b1892 Alexandra, d1962).

Cordial factory and telephone line

Always a keen businessman, he opened a aerated waters and cordial factory in 1881 on the south-east corner of Webster and Nihil Streets. The factory was said to have gone all the way back to Villeneuve Street and a local resident later told of how bottles were often found buried at that property (long since a residence). In late 1881, Frederick installed a private telephone line between his Grant Street pharmacy and his cordial factory after receiving permission to install poles in the streets between the two premises. This enables orders to be made at the Grant Street pharmacy, and a call made to have the order dispatched forthwith. He also purchased a similar factory at Mansfield.

Three years later (4 July 1884) it was announced that a telephone had been connected between Dr. Lethbridge's surgery and residence 'The Mount' and Wheeler's pharmacy. The establishment of this private telephone line in Alexandra predated telephone connection between Melbourne and the Alexandra Post Office at a time when telephones were still rare in the metropolitan area.

Wheeler's Bitters and Dandelion Pills

In 1885 a letter written by friend Thomas Carison and published in the Alexandra Standard mentioned Wheeler's Dandelion Pills. He was also widely acclaimed for



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

discovering the tonic compound then sold as 'Wheeler's Bitters'. He eventually sold his pharmacy business at Alexandra and Yea, as well as his aerated waters factories in Alexandra and Mansfield, to give him more time to promote his tonic nationally.

Leaving the District

Frederick left the district early in 1914 after nearly half a century in the area. He settled in Korumburra, buying a pharmacy in Commercial Street. He paid a visit to Alexandra in September 1914, then again on 19 February 1915 when it was reported 'The many acquaintances of Mr F. Wheeler J.P., will be pleased to know that their old familiar friend is in business in Korumburra and progressing satisfactory.' Frederick visited Alexandra a further time for Easter of 1916.

Death

Frederick died suddenly of natural causes 26 June 1917 at Korumburra while 'attending to a customer'. His body was removed to Alexandra where he was buried (site 1129/30) with his first wife Sarah (died 16 December 1888 aged 36) and infant daughter Ruby Marie (died 17 January 1889). Sarah had died of peritonitis on 16 December 1888 and had left eight children, the eldest being 11 years of age.

At the time of his death he was survived by his second wife was Catherine. She died at Elsternwick in 1928.

TIMELINE

BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

1847	Frederick Wheeler was born at Henly-on-Thames.
1864	Migrated to Australia.
1865	Worked as a Chemist Dispenser at Bendigo.
1865	Left Bendigo and Joined his brother in St Kilda.
1866	Returned to Bendigo.
1867	Worked in Tasmania.
1867	Moved to Ghin Ghin and in 1868 was described as a 'chemist of Yea'.
1869	Established his Chemist and Dentist business in Alexandra (Door sign read: F. Wheeler, Chemist & Dentist - Est. 1867).
1869	Moved to Gobur.
1871	Moved to Alexandra.
1876	Frederick married Sarah Marie.
1878	Frederick Wheeler official registered as a pharmacist.
1885	Mention of Wheeler's Dandelion Pills appeared in the <i>Alexandra Standard</i> in an article written by Thomas Carison. (<u><i>Alexandra Standard</i>, Friday 30 October 1885</u>).
16 December 1888	His wife Sarah Marie also died aged 36. Sarah <u>died of peritonitis 16 December 1888</u> . She left eight children, the eldest being 11 years of age.
1914	Moved to Melbourne.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

26 June 1917

Frederick died at his Korumburra pharmacy business while serving a customer. He was buried at Alexandra Cemetery (site 1129/30).

October 2019

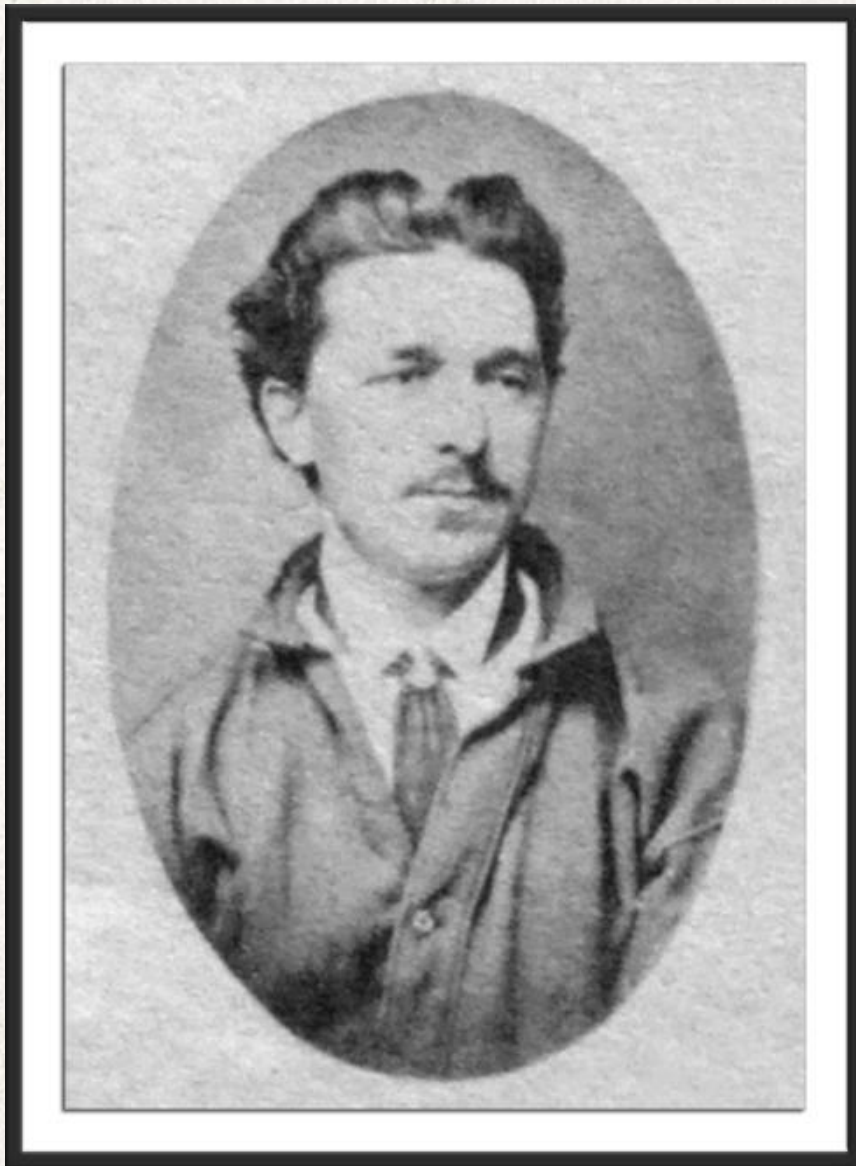
Bottle collector Mr M Stanton of Wangaratta found the first Wheeler bottle we have seen. He posted it on facebook seeking further information. He has collected bottles for over 30 years and this is the first Wheeler bottle he has seen.

GALLERY

RELATED IMAGERY

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY

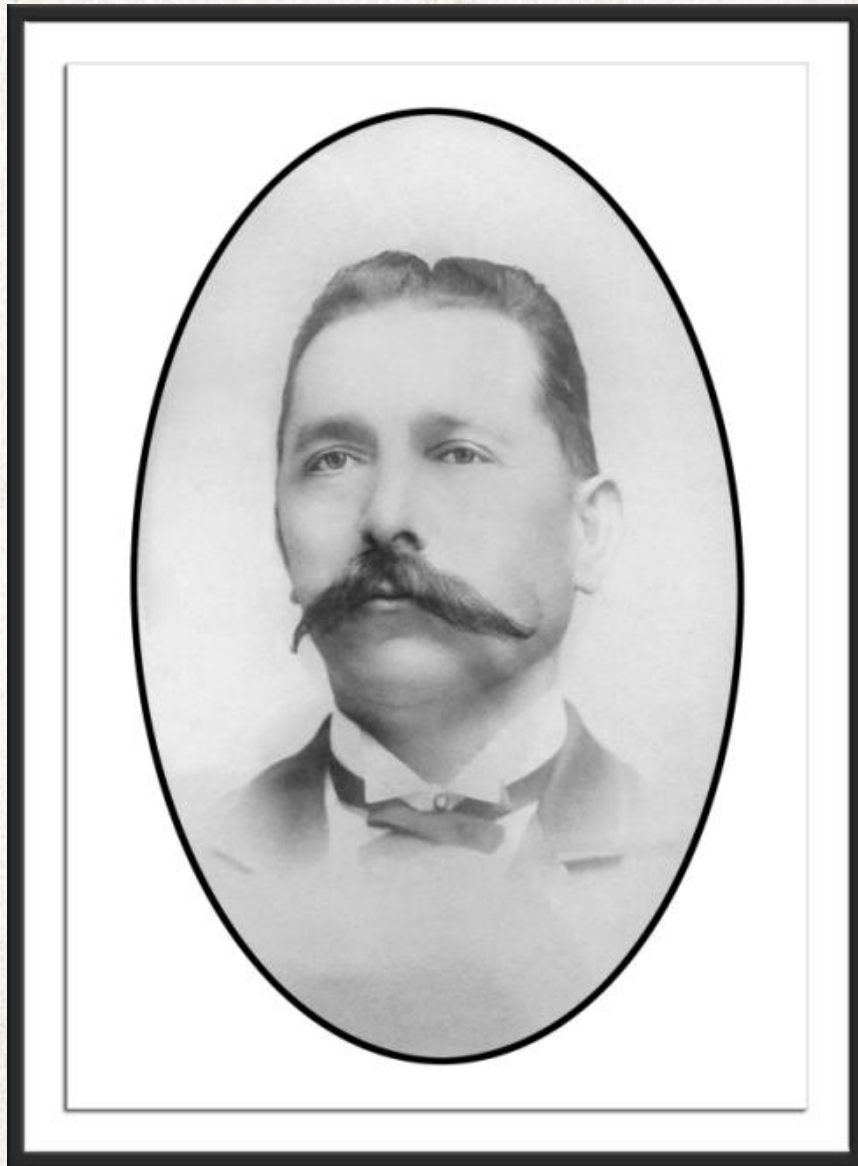


Frederick (Fred) Wheeler in 1872 as a member of the Alexandra Fire Brigade

Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Frederick (Fred) Wheeler circa 1890 as President of the Shire

Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY

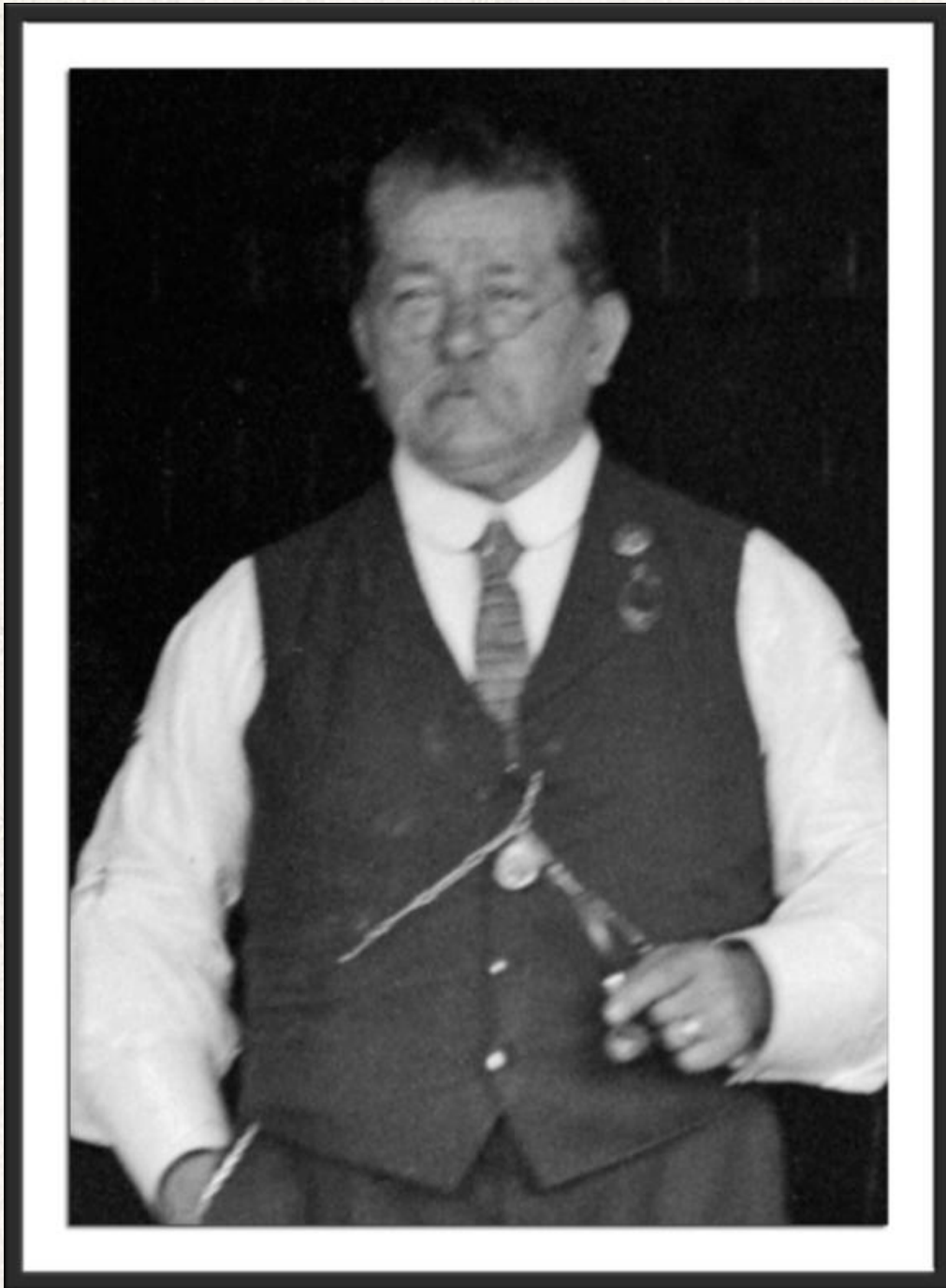


Frederick (Fred) Wheeler outside his Alexandra pharmacy circa 1910

Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY

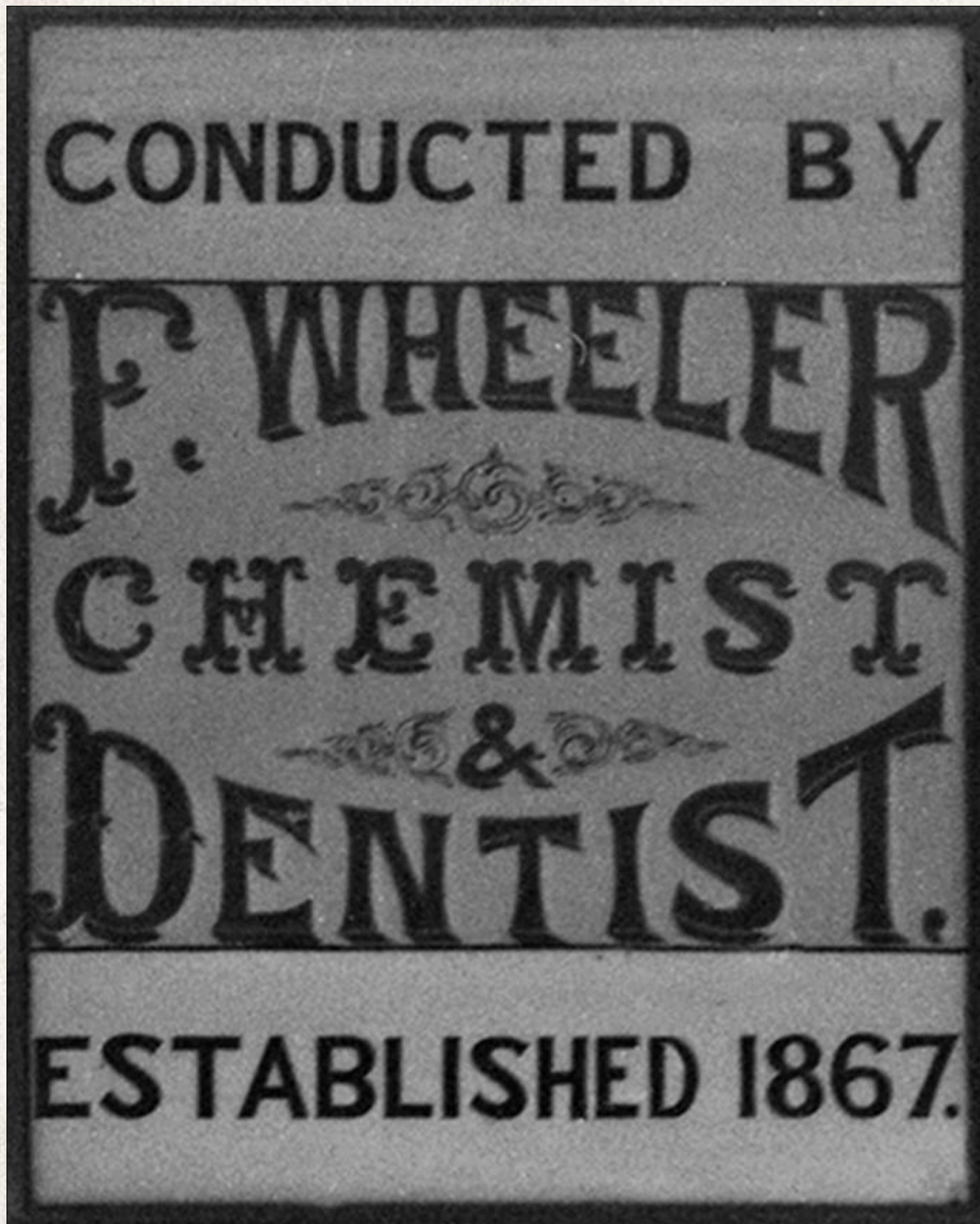


Frederick (Fred) Wheeler circa 1910

Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

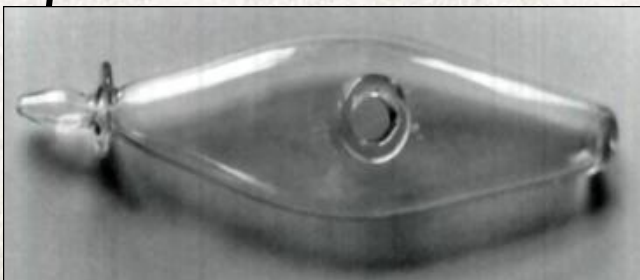
GALLERY



Frederick (Fred) Wheeler circa 1910. Business established 1867
Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Window of Frederick (Fred) Wheeler circa 1910. Business established 1867
Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Window of Frederick (Fred) Wheeler pharmacy (est. 1867) circa 1910
Courtesy State Library Victoria

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE

Sarah Marie, Wife of Fred Wheeler J.P.
who died December 16th 1888, aged 86 years

Also

Ruby Marie Wheeler, Who died January 17th 1889 aged 8 months

Also

Frederick Wheeler, Dearly beloved husband of Catherine Louise Wheeler
Died suddenly at Korumburra, June 26th 1917 aged 70 years

AT REST



Grave site of Frederick Wheeler (1129/30)

NEWSPAPERS

RELATED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES & DOCUMENTS



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

F. WHEELER'S CORDIAL FACTORY.

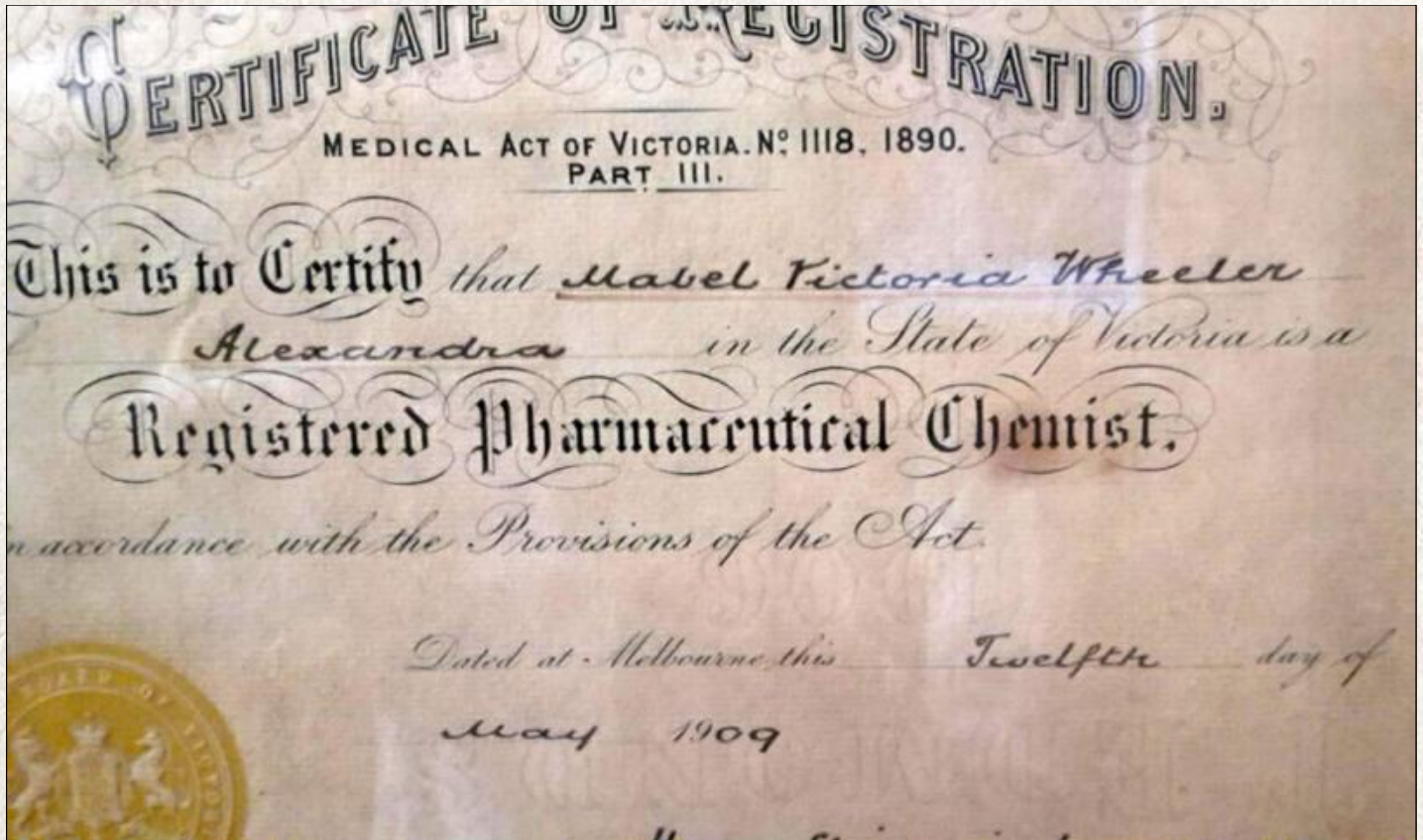
It is with pleasure we give prominence to anything in the shape of local industry, and the one we have selected for our present issue partakes in some degree of the character of a novelty, inasmuch as it is neither wholly old, nor wholly new, although assimilating to both. It is what one may call an old new, or a new old industry. For many years the manufacture of cordials had been conducted in the old premises that stood close to the site of the present commodious building, but in a very small way. After an interval of what we may term suspended animation, the present spirited proprietor (Mr. F. Wheeler) purchased and undertook the business, and the spirit of life has taken possession of the new factory, from one end of which to the other may be heard the hum of industry and the sound of occupation. The building facing Webster and Villeneuve streets is built entirely of iron, being 40 feet long by 30 feet broad, the roof of which is lined throughout with wood, and with the excellent system of ventilation in force, is remarkable for its coolness. Within the building important changes and alterations have been made, so as to render it better adapted for the several purposes which the present proprietor has in view. Having been shewn over the building quite recently, we can say from actual observation that no expense has been spared in securing effective plant, machinery, and appliances for all the purposes contemplated, so that success has been insured from the start. The manufacturing room is fitted up with a splendid 3 horse vertical engine by Robey and Co., the well-known engineers of Lincoln, England, with which is connected one of Hayward Tyler's No 1 soda-water machines and a patent gasometer, also appliances for filtering water which cannot be surpassed in the colony. With the steam power at hand, Mr Wheeler intends to, utilize it, among other purposes, for washing bottles and brushes, cutting wood for the use of the engine and boiler, and in a variety of other useful ways. The cordial department—in which is fixed the telephone—contains unlimited supplies of Lime Juice, Raspberry, Peppermint, Lemon Syrup, Cloves, Sarsaparilla, and a variety of Bitters, the general get up of which cannot be excelled. We were shewn in this department several large bins of the finest white chrystalized sugar it has been our pleasure to sample.

This, we were assured, was the only kind used in all Mr Wheeler's preparations, sacks of corks and enormous quantities of bottles are also stored in this room. The syrup room adjoins the cordial department, and as its name denotes is filled with every variety of syrups. Here also are large copper boilers into which descend a full supply of pure rain water obtained from the immense iron roof with which the building is covered. Altogether the building is well fitted for the purpose, and furnished with all the most approved requisites and appliances. With the present staff the proprietor can turn out 300 dozen bottles per day, which, we were assured, could be trebled should circumstances demand it. It is also intended to introduce a patent bottling rack, which with Lamont's patent bottles in use, a boy could bottle from 80 to 120 dozen per hour. We trust that the new industry will make for itself "a local habitation and a name." From what we have heard and observed, we felt certain that the day is not far distant when the brands of Wheeler's cordial factory will find their way into the principal markets of the colony.

Alexandra & Yea Standard
Friday 8 December 1882
Courtesy National Library Australia

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

DOCUMENTS



At least one of Frederick's children followed in his footsteps as a pharmacist,
as the certificate above (dated 1909) attests.



Artworkz

Serving the Community

