

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE3711

Litchfield, Jessie Sinclair

(1883 - 1956)

Born 18 February, 1883, Ashfield, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Died 12 March, 1956, Richmond Melbourne Victoria Australia

Occupation Journalist

Summary

Moving around parts of the Northern Territory while her husband worked in the diamond mines, Jessie Litchfield raised her family and worked as a journalist. She published *Far North Memories* in 1930. After the death of her husband, she worked as editor of the *Northern Territory Times* and *Government Gazette*. In 1955 she became the first woman in the Territory to be appointed a justice of the peace.

Details

It is said that a letter Jessie Litchfield wrote in 1909, which somehow ended up in John Flynn's hands, was instrumental to his involvement in the Australian Inland Mission. Had he not seen it, might well have become 'Flynn of Korea' rather than 'Flynn of the Inland' once he had completed his training to become a Presbyterian minister.

Litchfield's letter pleaded for the Presbyterian Church to send a married, male Presbyterian missionary to the Northern Territory, so that he and his wife might start to 'civilise' it. Her greatest concern was the extent of informal and abusive interracial relationships that had been established between indigenous women and non-indigenous men, but she was also concerned about the impact of drink and drugs on public health. The place needed a missionary 'to teach the people right from wrong'.

Flynn used the letter to encourage women he knew in Melbourne to support initiatives to help women in remote, inland regions. The initiatives were, of course, highly racialised.

Published resources

Resource Section

Litchfield, Jessie Sinclair (1883-1956), James, Barbara, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A100107b.htm>

Book

Flynn's Outback Angels: Casting the Mantle - 1901 to World War II, Rudolph, Ivan, 2001

Jessie Litchfield: Grand Old Lady of the Territory, Dickinson, Janet, 1982

Far-North Memories: Being the account of ten years spent on the diamond-drills, and of things that happened in those days, Litchfield, Jessie, 1930

Edited Book

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988

Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Northern Territory Archives Service

[NTRS 3169 Copies of historical notes relating to the Northern Territory](#)

Author Details

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