

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4793

Saunders, Clara

(1878 - 1957)

Born 1 January, 1878

Died 31 December, 1957

Occupation Hotel owner, Midwife, Nurse

Details

Clara Saunders, accompanied by her mother and younger sister Susan, arrived in Southern Cross in Western Australia in 1892. She worked for her brother in law Tom Farren at the Club Hotel. In 1893, aged fifteen, she travelled alone to Coolgardie to take up a new job at the Exchange Hotel assisting the housekeeper Mrs Fagan.

Clara and Mrs Fagan also provided nursing care for miners ill with dysentery and typhoid, feeding them nourishing food and caring for them in clean and comfortable surroundings. One of these miners was the successful mining pioneer Paddy Hannan, who discovered gold at Kalgoorlie. He gave Clara a gold nugget in recognition of her service to him.

Clara continued to work in hotels, running the dining room at the Great Western Hotel in Bayley Street where she met her husband Arthur Williams who ran the billiard room at the same hotel. Clara married Arthur Williams on 1 July 1894. She was the first settler woman to be married in Coolgardie. She wore her gold nugget mounted on a brooch for good luck on the day.

Arthur and Clara moved to Goongarrie, where she continued to nurse and care for ill prospectors and act as a midwife to local women. She had two children, Lillian and Mary.

Arthur died in 1902 and Clara took over the licence of the Mt Morgans Hotel, running the business. Successfully until her second marriage to Joseph Lynch. Clara, Joseph and their two sons John and Edward sold the hotel and began farming in Narrogin. They lost their farm during the Depression and Clara opened a boarding house in Marvel Loch. Joseph died in 1939 and in 1944 Clara married for the third time to John Paton.

She died in 1957 at the age of 80.

Published resources

Resource Section

Coolgardie Wedding, 1894,
<http://www.outbackfamilyhistory.com.au/Coolgardie/coolwed.htm>

Clara Saunders - a pioneer of Coolgardie, 1894, 2006,
<http://www.valuingheritage.com.au/learningfederation/5509.html>

Book

Daughters of Midas. Pioneer Women of the Eastern Goldfields, King, Norma, 1988

Site Exhibition

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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