Mount Morgan: images and realities-dynamics and decline of a mining town

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August 2001

Abstract

Most histories and reports of Mount Morgan concentrate on the mining experience and financial achievements of the first Company rather than the mining town. This dissertation presents a social history of Mount Morgan that addresses the establishment, rise and fall of the town during the period of the first syndicate and succeeding company, 1883-1927. The thesis contends that the transformation of the landscape was to industrial, urban space where the working-class attitudes of miners and others defined a town character, despite the aspiration of many to social status through private enterprise and public influence. Further, the scope of research encompassed local involvement in colonial and state politics, and the presence of local government authority, law courts and press that placed an urban stamp on the town. Issues discussed also relate to geographic, climatic and single company influences that caused the difference between Mount Morgan and other mining towns that did not survive. The traditional perception of mining town impermanence was contradicted at Mount Morgan, where town and suburban communities were witness to a range of collective support in religious adherence, benefit associations, fraternalism and ritual, leisure, sport, education, and social cohesion in times of mining disaster. Moreover, despite increasing familial connections, antagonistic attitudes prevailed between the defensively parochial town of Mount Morgan and the nearby regional centre of Rockhampton.

The rise of unionism at Mount Morgan challenged an apathetic working-class population to workplace solidarity in reaction to the Company's long established, almost feudal control of the town as well as the mine. It is argued that, despite a decade of failing ore markets and soaring production costs at the mine, the attitudes and actions of a union dominated workforce were paramount in decline of the town and ultimate closure of the mine. Mount Morgan survived the exodus of thousands of residents. A defiant place, the town exhibited a pride bolstered by the perpetuation of myths that presented a public image shielded from the life-long realities of economic and social adversity.

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Acknowledgements

Declaration

I declare that the material contained in this dissertation is my own work except where properly acknowledged and that the substance of the thesis has not been submitted for assessment elsewhere.

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Abbreviations

Australian Workers' Union	AWU
Amalgamated Engineers' Union	AEU
Brisbane Courier Mail	*BC*
Capricornia Collection	CC
Central Queensland University	CQU
Central Queensland Times	*CQT*
Daily Northern Argus	*DNA*
Daily Record	*DR*
Electrolytic & Refining Company Limited, Port Kembla	E&RC
Fryer Memorial Library	FL
John Oxley Library	JOL
Journal of Australian Studies	JAS
Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society	JRAHS
Journal of the Royal Queensland Historical Society	JRQHS
Morning Bulletin	*MB*
Mitchell Library	ML
Mount Morgan Argus	*MMA*
Mount Morgan Chronicle	*MMC*
Mount Morgan Council (Municipal, Town, Shire)	MMSC
Mount Morgan Clerk of Petty Sessions	MMCPS
Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Limited	MMGMC
Mount Morgan Historical Museum	MMHM
Mount Morgan Oral History Project	MMOH
Oral History	OH
Queensland Government Gazette	*QGG*
Queensland Government Mining Journal	*QGMJ*
Queensland Parliamentary Debates	*QPD*
Queensland State Archives	QSA
Queensland Votes & Proceedings	*QV&P*
Rockhampton Anglican Diocesan Archives	RADA
Rockhampton & District Historical Society	RDHS

Women's Christian Temperance Union   WCTU

Introduction

At the mention of an old mining town, the stereotyped image might be conjured as a place dilapidated, useless, unwanted, allusions that in human terms might signify the waiting for death. The mental mapping that perceives such a town of a century ago might be lost as the image fades. Reasons for the collapse of mining towns come to mind: exhausted ore bodies, failed markets, conflict in labour relations and isolation from a large regional town.

Mount Morgan was settled in 1882 with the establishment of the mine as the town's raison d'être.[1] By 1927, some of the above reasons, but not all, caused the closure of the mine and liquidation of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Limited. Alongside this calamity, the town suffered the threat of complete decline. Mount Morgan survived, for perhaps the most obvious reason, because of its proximity to Rockhampton, the largest regional town in Queensland and a mere forty kilometres from Mount Morgan. Yet there was another, quintessential reason, unique to the place and indicative of the mining town people and their very difference - the spirit of Mount Morgan.

Fluctuating fortune is a constant theme in Australian mining history.[2] This thesis addresses town life at Mount Morgan during the period from establishment, through the

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[1] F.W. Sykes, (comp.), *A practical treatise on Mount Morgan, its history, past, present and probable future*, Mount Morgan, 1888, p. 3. For the purpose of this thesis, the term 'Company' appears throughout in the context cited in paragraph 2 above.

[2] Alaric Maude and Graeme Hugo, 'Mining settlements in Australia', in Cecily Neil, Markku Tykkylainen, John Bradbury (eds), *Coping with closure: an international comparison of mine town experiences*, London, 1992, p. 68.

rise and fall of the first Company. Changing states of the town that mirrored the vicissitudes of the Company and its mine were played out on the rapidly developed urban stage that set Mount Morgan apart from many other mining towns. In foregoing the 'uncritical nostalgia' of local history this thesis explores the times of ordinary men, women and families of the town: mine employees and others, tradesmen, labourers, store assistants, self-employed workers, and women in gainful employment. In a town whose character and culture were forged before the social changes of world war and later economic depression, entrenched local attitudes discounted the peculiarities of a mining environment. Within the bonds of kinship, community and culture, these attitudes reflected conceptual images that obscured undesirable realities, an essence of the town. It is argued here that the town was a victim of pseudo-feudal existence that reflected acceptance of capitalist paternalism under the dominant agency of the Company. Paradoxically, despite the absence of core income from any other industry, Mount Morgan developed an enduring, self-serving character.

The spatial history of Mount Morgan relates to the use and changing use of public and private space. Gillian Tindall has pointed out in *The fields beneath*: *a history of one London village* that the townscape of Kentish town, a village of London dating from the thirteenth century, 'is simply disguised countryside'. In being built over, Kentish Town became by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries an increasingly sharply defined landscape of human endeavour. Tindall's work collapses time to bring the reader to a sense of place between present and past where history as it *actually* happened might be comprehended. Taking the reader on this time journey through the centuries of Kentish Town, Tindall looks beyond the revelations of empirical research and legend to seek the changing social and cultural life of Kentish town inhabitants. Coincidentally, Tindall questions whether, because of physical change that leaves scant evidence of earlier haphazard settlement, a place becomes a matter of myth and romantic conjecture rather than historical fact.[3]

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[3] Gillian Tindall, *The fields beneath: the history of a London village*, London, 1985, pp. 73, 174.

To provide an understanding of the Mount Morgan environment and the changing use of land, a brief background in the first chapter documents the geographical location of the region. Aboriginal habitations were not centred in the inhospitable terrain that became the location of the town and the mine. The area was part of the moving frontier where by 1854 a European landholder took up three large runs that included the 'ironstone mountain' in the Dee Range. Here early fossicking activity occurred more than a decade before ultimate and devastating change in the land with establishment of the mine. The major themes in the first chapter deal with early European settlement at Mount Morgan and address consequences of the ongoing impact of the mine on the landscape and town. Moreover, the mobility of inhabitants within the town or elsewhere led to layers of land use, while environmental concern at denudation of trees and pollution of natural waterways emerged at Mount Morgan in the 1880s, albeit such disquiet remained for decades merely a paper-based issue.

In an awareness that the past remains static and verbal or physical action cannot be undone, the thesis addresses the changes and mental barriers that occurred in the perception and interpretation of past actions, as told or written over generations. Most existing historiography of Mount Morgan deals with the mine experience during eras of gold and copper production, and tends to rationalise any criticism from whatever quarter. Selections noted below are taken from a plethora of late nineteenth century and early 1900s pamphlets, booklets and papers relating to the mine and written variously by a shareholder, member of the mine hierarchy, director, general manager, or senior staff member.[4] Most of these works were mine-sponsored and scrutinised by the board or major shareholders prior to circulation or publication. Further, the complimentary

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[4] Wm. H. Dick, *The famous Mount Morgan gold mine*, Rockhampton, 1887; Wm. H. Dick, *A mountain of gold*, Brisbane, 1889; F.W. Sykes (comp.), *A practical treatise on Mount Morgan*, Brisbane, 1888; Aleck Ivimey, *Rockhampton and Mount Morgan*, Brisbane, 1888; J. MacDonald Cameron, *Report on the gold mine, Mount Morgan, Rockhampton, Queensland*, Rockhampton, 1887; F.W. Sykes, *The Mount Morgan gold min*e, Sydney, 1893; Rees Rutland Jones, *Gold Mining in Central Queensland and the Mount Morgan Mine*, Rockhampton, 1913; B.G. Patterson, *The story of the Mount Morgan Mine*, Rockhampton 1950; W.J. Long, (comp.), *The early history of Mount Morgan, Dawson and Callide Valleys*, Rockhampton, 1962; R. G. Casey, *Australian father and son*, London, 1966; F.L. Golding, 'An old mining town in Queensland, Mount Morgan', *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol. X, no. 3, 1977-78, pp. 75-86.

tone of prestigious gold mining journals and Company annual reports[5] ignored the town which, although a child of the mine, provided crucial infrastructure, utilities and physical support, and a population of men, women and children. Greg Dening observes that 'the transformation of the past that is History is always made in social circumstances'.[6] This work seeks to penetrate the silences in empirical research to discover a past dynamics of everyday life, and attitudes to decline at Mount Morgan. To find the real town behind the image is to challenge enduring myths that for generations have been extrapolated and refined to represent historical truth.

Leading the way in any contemporary social history of Mount Morgan, Lorna McDonald's *Rockhampton*: *a history of city and district* published in 1981 includes a substantial chapter, 'Marvellous Mountain: the Mount Morgan story'[7] that presents some aspects of town life but relates predominantly to the mine. The narrative deals in depth with the discovery years, the early syndicate, the mine's purchase by shareholders and formation of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Proprietary Limited, demise of the Company and subsequent revival of the mine with the establishment of a new company, Mount Morgan Limited. John Kerr, in *Mount Morgan*: *gold, copper and oil*,[8] draws significantly upon empirical research of mine records and regional press to document Company production, administration, and the wealth the mine brought to shareholders. Kerr's text is tempered with occasional descriptions of the town. In contrast, Cyril Grabs presents *Gold, black gold and intrigue the story of Mount Morgan*[9] in the genre of the novel. This text is a blend of historical fact, autobiographical comment, and fiction, which for the reader, raises several social questions relating to Mount Morgan. A recent comprehensive and conclusive study of the second Company's hierarchical structure and the influence of mine management on

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[5]   *Queensland Government Gold Mining Journal;* Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Pty. Ltd., *Annual Reports;* Mount Morgan and District Historical Society, unpublished papers, various, typescript.
[6]   Greg Dening*, Performances*, Melbourne, 1996, p. 49
[7]   Lorna McDonald, *Rockhampton: a history of city and district*, St. Lucia, 1981, pp. 328-330.
[8]   John Kerr, *Mt Morgan gold, copper & oil*, Brisbane, 1982.
[9]   Cyril Grabs, *Gold, black gold and intrigue: the story of Mount Morgan*, Sydney, 1982.

administration, workings and production is presented in a thesis by Ray Boyle, 'A study of the management and growth patterns of Mount Morgan Limited, 1929-1950'. However, as indicated by the time frame cited in the title, historical reference to the first Company is limited.[10]

In his 1986 thesis, Bill Thorpe described Queensland historiography as 'parochial, conservative and narrow in focus.'[11] A decade later, in *Colonial Queensland*: *perspectives on a frontier society*, he would define Queensland historiography prior to 1980 as 'antiquarian.'[12] Doubtless, most narratives of Mount Morgan have ignored aspects of mining town life that illustrated a difficult and generally deprived existence in which primitive living conditions and disease threatened survival, and a mining town mindset of impermanency that eroded any long term ideals. Geoffrey Blainey, doyen of Australian mining history, has pointed out that for many 'nomads' of mining,[13] a transient life was the norm.

Whilst research for this thesis was not to be based upon the history of the once fabulous mine, an awareness of its absolute influence was essential to the investigation of town lifestyle and attitudes. Here was a culture forged primarily by those who came and stayed, complemented by the changing presence of transients that imposed perennial threads of otherness. It should be pointed out here that source materials for this thesis were relatively adequate and limitations to research similar only to any difficulties that might arise in any approach to comprehensive study. By 1991, Mount Morgan Limited lodged the extant records of the mine in the Capricornia Collection, Central Queensland University. The Mount Morgan Collection is so extensive as to incorporate perhaps 100 metres of compactor and cabinet space, but a large majority of

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[10] Ray Boyle, A study of the management and growth patterns of Mount Morgan Limited 1929-1950, MA thesis, Central Queensland University, 1995.

[11] William Thorpe, A social history of colonial Queensland: towards a Marxist analysis, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1986, pp. i, 371.

[12] Bill Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland: perspectives on a frontier society*, St. Lucia, 1996, p. 186.

[13] Geoffrey Blainey, *The rise of Broken Hill*, South Melbourne, 1968, p. 113.

the holdings deal with Mount Morgan Limited of the post-1927 era. The small holding of Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Limited records includes few references to town or district.

A large body of primary source material held in the Capricornia Collection relates to Mount Morgan. The holdings include many photographs and maps, a source that offers adequate illustrations for this thesis. Other essential sources include local authority offices, state and interstate archives, university and regional collections, diocesan offices, church and school records and newspapers of the region. All have been critical to research, their information encompassing the needs of the thesis and filtering through every chapter. Newspapers were an important source of public notices, political or sporting commentaries, commercial and leisure advertisements, and controversy or crisis at the mine. However, token space only was devoted to news of the town scene, suggesting, not unexpectedly, that here was 'a man's town'. The paucity of records that relate to Mount Morgan women, particularly mining women, cannot be overemphasised. The relevant records available are generally in archives of association, church and court. However, as described below, a diversity of research provided some insight into the world of the Mount Morgan woman in terms of social attitudes and an unsung and routine existence.

A threat to balanced research exists for the outsider confronted with a body of unreferenced historical writing at local level, much of which displays unbridled parochialism. Moreover, some oral history interviews directed towards reflection on personal experience and insights into perspectives and attitudes within living memory yield verbal images of the 'superiority' of the town and people of the time. Most of the interviewees volunteered for an earlier project and provided considerable local history. However, interviews excluded hearsay, providing detail of personal experience and opinion. On occasion, conflicting information between primary records and oral history has necessitated appropriate authentication of sources. Moreover, this thesis addresses

evidence of realities in Mount Morgan that contradicted entrenched public images of the town.

It will be seen from the above that historical narrative of Mount Morgan provides mere snippets of town life and times. No *explanation* is forthcoming of the actual happenings at the place in which the strengths of domestic, commercial and social life coexisted in strange harmony with the hegemony of the Company. Power and authority was reified by local deference to the status of management and senior staff, and public ceremony accorded to the numerous visiting dignitaries who came for one reason - to see the mine.[14] By comparison, the growth of mine workers' solidarity stemmed from fear of potential loss of this omnipresent 'master' that controlled their destiny. Ultimately, when this did occur, the people and those who worked the ore, the machines and smelters, mechanics and maintenance tradesmen and labourers were left to make their own way. At the same time, significant change of status of a higher social level of residents occurred with the collapse of the mine hierarchy and town trade. A question arises, whether, after closure of the mine, a cultural ethic that caused people to remain perpetuated the town's laboured breath of life.

Post-modernist Clifford Geertz addresses the 'conceptual morass' of cultural theory in relation to Kluckhorn's definition of culture which includes the deceivingly simplistic 'a way of thinking, feeling and believing'. Taking analysis of culture to be ethnography - interpretation in search of meaning - Geertz uses the term 'thick description' - borrowed from Gilbert Ryle's theory of social anthropology.[15] Rhys Isaac, in his monograph *The transformation of Virginia 1740-1790,*[16] described at once as comprehensive and 'graceful',[17] adopts an ethnographic approach to the search for understanding of space, place and people. He presents changing physical and material

[14] Greg Dening, *History's anthropology: the death of William Gooch*, Lanham, MD, 1988, p. 31.
[15] Clifford Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*, New York, 1973, pp.4-6, 27.
[16] Rhys Isaac, *The transformation of Virginia 1740-1790*, Virginia, USA, 1982.
[17] Phillip Morgan, 'The medium and the message: *The transformation of Virginia*', *Historical Studies*, vol. 20, no. 81, October 1983, pp. 590-599.

landscape in eras and slices of history, tracing the hierarchy of living standards, social mores and culture reflected in architectural interiors and design. He also compares the ethnicity of European and African Negro populations through investigation and interpretation of lifestyle, and description of social change. To explain his hypothesis and historiography, Isaac includes the substantial and intriguing 'A discourse on the method: action, structure and meaning'.[18]

Greg Dening's[19] ethnographical method interprets rather than rationalises attitudes and happenings that empirical research has left unexplained.[20] In his premise that the abiding grace of history is the theatre in which we experience truth, Dening contends that truth is 'clothed by story' that at times seems uncertain, contradictory, obscure, or blindingly clear.[21] By contrast, Keith Windschuttle acknowledges 'a realist and empiricist' account of history and refutes Dening's philosophy of ethnography as 'cultural literacy'.[22] Yet, Windschuttle seems to overlook Dening's commitment to empirical research, as discussed in *History's Anthropology as* 'History in the making, discovery, discipline, discourse'. Here Dening asserts also that historical fact changes with author and narrator and that the circumstances of history have more than one meaning.[23]

The action play which sees individuals as actors on their town stage is evident in Bill Williamson's *Class, culture and community*: *a biographical study of social change in mining*.[24] The author stands aside as Chorus to introduce the players in the presentation of his grandfather, a miner and family man in the village of Throckley in the Northumberland coal mining region, where the consequences of war and industrial

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[18] Isaac, *The transformation of Virginia*, pp. 323-357.

[19] Greg Dening, 'Ethnography on my mind', in Bernard Smith, John Mulvaney, Greg Dening, Henry Reynolds and Graeme Davison, *Boundaries of the past*, Carlton, 1990.

[20] Greg Dening, *Performances*, p. 62.

[21] Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures,* p. 38.

[22] Keith Windschuttle, *The killing of history*, Sydney, 1994, p. 90.

[23] Dening, *History's Anthropology*, pp. 15, 23-47.

[24] Bill Williamson, *Class, culture and community: a biographical study of social change in mining*, London, 1982.

unrest are reflected in social change. Williamson uses to advantage the family records and reminiscences that reach back to nineteenth century Throckley. Throughout, his graphic descriptions of micro aspects of life - family, town and mine - maintain a powerful sense of atmosphere in the narrative.

Williamson's socially informative study contrasts with the comprehensive social history of the colony of Queensland in which William (Bill) Thorpe asserts that the hierarchical status of communities followed a more established pattern in new towns of the 1890s. He is adamant that Queensland exhibited class, status, racial and gender divisions, and also questions the study by Ronald Lawson, *Brisbane in the 1890s*, that claims a status hierarchy existed rather than class consciousness.[25] Thorpe's approach toward a Marxist analysis uses statistics strategically and cuts across traditional time-frames as he writes decisively of climatic, economic, topographic and demographic influences on society. Whilst Thorpe presents an intriguing investigation of class, he admits to minimal discussion on mining.[26] However, June Stoodley provides in her thesis a case study of the Mount Morgan influence in Queensland politics in the McIlwraith government, particularly by Rockhampton member, William Pattison, MLA, wealthy shareholder in the Mount Morgan mine. In other chapters and several associated published articles, which relate mostly to Gympie and Charters Towers, Stoodley presents aspects of the seemingly accepted character of the gold-miner in the late nineteenth century, nomadism, larrikinism, lack of thrift, and disregard for safety.[27] By contrast, this dissertation provides a close study of the Mount Morgan miner during the period 1883-1927, in terms of his attitude and reaction to the workplace, fellow workers, and more critically, to his family, social milieu, and environment.[28]

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[25] Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland*, p. 133.

[26] Thorpe, A social history of colonial Queensland, p. v.

[27] June Stoodley, The Queensland gold miner in the late 19th century, his interests and influence, MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1964, pp. 82-132.

[28] In the interests of simplicity, and except where the reference refers to the entire workforce of 'miners', this dissertation uses the term 'miner', for those working underground, whether at the face, or as tradesmen and labourers, whilst 'mineworkers' refers to surface workers. These terms of reference derive from a tradesman electrician who spent his life at Mount Morgan and the mine and stated that 'miners' were underground men, and that open-cut men were 'mineworkers'. James Leigh, interview with the author, 14 October 1992, Mount Morgan Oral History Project, (MMOH).

The era during which a mine was established reflected difference between mining towns in eastern Australia. The Mount Morgan mine was opened more than forty years after the first colonial gold rushes that saw Ballarat, Broken Hill, Bendigo, Gympie and Charters Towers rise in the glare of gold and fade as seams petered out, mining costs rose and gold prices fell. Most early gold-miners were alluvial diggers and in terms of claims were individualists rather than collectivists, but were not necessarily capitalists. The comparatively late opening of the Mount Morgan mine (1882) saw the short-lived syndicate replaced by the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company in 1886. With substantial capital investment, the single company operation developed during a period of drought and economic depression to be the greatest gold mine in the world. Coincidentally, the immediate, nascent working-class population at a tent village showed signs of permanency with the emergence of Mount Morgan town.

Most mining town histories concern a particular place, but investigation here relates aspects of the Mount Morgan experience to other mining towns. Comparisons that filter through are drawn from substantial sources: Geoffrey Blainey's *The rise of Broken Hill,* mentioned earlier, presents the silver city that created a 'Barrier' to capitalism, and a searching thesis by Diane Menghetti documents gold-mining at Charters Towers.[29] Lush hills and valleys were the places for mines at Ballarat as Weston Bate observes in *The lucky city*, a seminal social history of early mining in Victoria to 1920.[30] Raymond Paull describes graphically the flood prone valleys that harboured mining at Walhalla in Gippsland.[31] At Moonta, South Australia,[32] Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia, a pattern of early mining confined settlement to the shadow of mine workings.[33] The reasons for this were that individual diggers occupied and guarded their claims or lived as close as possible to their

[29] Diane Menghetti, Charters Towers, PhD thesis, James Cook University, 1989.
[30] Weston Bate, *The lucky city*, Melbourne, 1978.
[31] Raymond Paull, *Old Walhalla: portrait of a gold town*, Carlton, 1980.
[32] Jim Faull, *The Cornish in Australia*, Melbourne, 1983, p. 75.
[33] Geoffrey Blainey, *The rush that never ended: a history of Australian mining,* Melbourne, 1978.

workplace. At Mount Morgan also, rapid settlement followed the traditional pattern of crowding adjacent to the mining operation. Gradually, however, abysmal living conditions and escalating threat of disease spurred relocation to higher ground and at a distance from the mine.

Mining towns were located in a variety of terrains including Charters Towers, documented in Geoffrey Bolton's *A thousand miles away,*[34] and Diane Menghetti's thesis. Edward Stokes addresses the problem of conditions and lifestyle in a graphic slice history of Broken Hill, 1908-10, a period of industrial unrest and strike.[35] Geoffrey Blainey briefly discussed the social consequences of mining in his biography of Broken Hill,[36] the history of Mt. Lyell in south-west Tasmania[37] and other mines in *The rush that never ended*: *a history of gold-mining in Australia.*[38] However, he discussed the phenomenon more closely in *The Golden Mile,* a history of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie in Western Australia.[39] Historiography of mining in North Queensland is substantial, with the diversity of essays in *Readings in North Queensland Mining history,* and *Lectures on North Queensland history* including profiles of the ill-fated Ravenswood[40] and Gilberton.[41] In his 1996 thesis on Cooktown, Glen Ormston includes discussion of questions relating to the Cooktown experience that were left unanswered in earlier historiography of the region.[42]

The first chapter of this work sets the background to Mount Morgan history and concerns the changing use of land. This includes the geographical description of the

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[34] Geoffrey Bolton, *A thousand miles away: a history of North Queensland to 1920,* Canberra, 1972.
[35] Edward Stokes, *United we stand: impressions of Broken Hill 1908-1910: recollections and photographs from the period*, Canterbury, 1983.
[36] Geoffrey Blainey, *The rise of broken Hill*, South Melbourne, 1968.
[37] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell,* Melbourne, 1978.
[38] Geoffrey Blainey, *The rush that never ended*, Melbourne, 1978.
[39] Geoffrey Blainey, *The golden mile*, St. Leonards, NSW, 1993.
[40] D.C. Roderick, 'Ravenswood: surveying the physical evidence', Kett Kennedy (ed.), *Readings in North Queensland mining history*, vol. 1, Townsville, 1980.
[41] L. Brown, 'The desertion of Gilberton', *Lectures on North Queensland history*, Townsville, 1974.
[42] Glen Ormston, Cooktown: the rise and fall of a frontier mining town 1873-1885, PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 1996.

region under investigation and addresses, briefly, the circumstance of Aboriginal habitation, the moving frontier, and the first European land holders in the Mount Morgan area. The period of the mine establishment is significant in terms of land use in mining method. The chapter argues the environmental impact of the mine and single industry town. The difficulty of access to Rockhampton and the consequences of the Company's repeated moves from the 1880s for a railway; the delay in government construction necessitating continued use of a dangerously steep track over the Razorback Range.

Rockhampton, a large port town on the Fitzroy River and in close proximity to Mount Morgan, influenced the development and continuing life of the mining town. It will be seen also that, in a not unusual situation for neighbouring towns, a deep-seated sense of pure rivalry or social conflict arose and remained between the towns. Perhaps this was an attitude of defiance on the part of the smaller, distanced, and less advantaged but intensely proud mining town as opposed to a long-established regional town that became a city.

Most mining locations soon lost their natural beauty and some simply endured as empty space, denuded and excavated. For example, in the rugged, unwelcoming country of south-west Tasmania, mining at Mt Lyell diminished dense forest landscape to the perspective of a moonscape. This terrain might not have been more inhospitable in its virgin state than the Razorback and Dee Ranges that dictated accessibility to Mount Morgan. A theme of the first chapter documents the denuding of Mount Morgan and its environs in the name of mining and its lesser offshoot, domestic building. Discussion of a timbergetting industry cites independent timber cutters and others contracted to supply the mine mill, an operation that functioned to satisfy the seemingly insatiable demands of capitalist enterprise and its derivative, the mine.

Located initially on the slopes or at the base of the mine hill and close to the Dee River, tents at Mount Morgan preceded temporary dwellings of wood and canvas, these followed by small timber cottages. The first permanent settlement at Tipperary Point across the Dee River from the mine extended later to suburban locations among the seven hills that became the town. Peter Bell, *Timber and Iron*[43] investigates the North Queensland mining house style, and declares that building styles derived from southern colonies rather than creating an immediate vernacular style. By contrast, Rod Fisher and Brian Crozier[44] attribute influences of need, economy and social stratification to the evolving architecture of the Queensland mining house, from the two roomed cottage to the four roomed cottage and verandah. In almost any early development, including mining towns, and in whatever era, the small size of dwellings inhabited by the large families of the working-class poor was a common feature of the townscape.

The timber dwellings of Mount Morgan are compared to the hot and uncomfortable corrugated iron houses at Broken Hill[45] and underground habitations and later stone terraces of Cornish miners at Burra Burra.[46] Moreover, the Mount Morgan Company provided housing for the general manager and later upper management and senior staff in residences of superior size and quality to the dwellings of mine employees of lesser status. This policy instigated inherent divisions in the town at the social level and within the physical landscape. Yet, in its rush to urban style development in isolated space, Mount Morgan home builders demonstrated their independence by ignoring the benefits of government assistance. In a recent article, Judy Rechner discusses the government designed 'Queensland worker's dwelling', made available through government finance to working class applicants from 1910.[47] Mount Morgan's rejection of the scheme suggests that much building contracted by capitalists

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[43] Peter Bell, *Timber and iron: houses in North Queensland mining settlements 1861-1920*, St. Lucia, 1984.

[44] Rod Fisher and Brian Crozier (eds.), *The Queensland house: a roof over our heads*, Brisbane, 1994.

[45] Edward Stokes, *United we stand:* p. 10.

[46] Jim Faull, *The Cornish in Australia*, pp. 48, 49.

[47] Judy Rechner, 'The Queensland worker's dwelling 1910-1940', *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol. XV, no. 6, February 1994, pp. 265, 279.

was for rental to working class tenants. This and other perceived reasons are discussed further in the second chapter.

Urban history was at the core of numerous theoretical categories, areas for study, research methodology, and formal discourse in the thesis. Richard Rodger, in his substantial 1992 article 'Urban history, prospect and retrospect' asserted that guidelines relating to the temporal and thematic approach to urban history were minimal, and that prior to 1960, most urban history works were 'gilded centenary or celebratory accounts of a mainly antiquarian nature.'[48] Since the mid-1970s however, urban history has embraced wide issues of land ownership and use, spatial and morphological features, medical and demographic topics which indicate subgroups studied in urban history research, including class, the influence of elites, family, gender and culture.[49]

Contemporary urban history is different to local history in its commitment to the pervasive historical process of explaining the development and use of the urban milieu. This is different from sociology in the concern to explain a dominant past, and from economic history and geography in its deep interest in the humanistic and functional elements of life.[50] Graeme Davison's definitive study, *The rise and fall of 'Marvellous Melbourne*[51] offers diverse documentation of urban history. Geoffrey Bolton provides an insightful commentary on the cultural mores of Australians at and away from the workplace in *Spoils and spoilers*: *Australians make their environment, 1788-1980,* relating to urban beginnings and suburban spread in Australia.[52] The lively narrative leaves no doubt of the general and alarming lack of town planning, roadways, transport, and the public necessities of water and sanitation essential to regional development. Wherever and for whatever reason rapid European settlement occurred in Australia, it

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[48] Richard Rodger, 'Urban History: prospect and retrospect', *Urban History*, vol. 19, pt. 2, 2 December 1992, p. 3.
[49] Discussion of societal groups and sub-groups as they existed at Mount Morgan are integral aspects of the thesis chapters.
[50] H J. Dyos, *Urbanity and suburbanity*, Leicester, 1973, cited in Rodger, 'Urban history', p. 9.
[51] Graeme Davidson, *The rise and fall of marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne, 1978.
[52] Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and spoilers: Australians make their environment 1788-1980*, Sydney, 1981.

followed the urban style of towns that became cities, reflecting paucity of local authority finance that ensured inadequate infrastructure similar to those described by Davison.[53] However, until his subsequent discourse in *The outcasts of Melbourne*, Davison addressed public health in nineteenth century Melbourne only marginally.[54] Limited resources denied regional municipalities or city councils the opportunity to provide infrastructure that kept pace with burgeoning settlement. Stringent budgets reflected minimal investment in road and transport systems, public health facilities, water, waste disposal and sanitation, so the threat to life from accident, infection and disease was ever present. In her 1960s study, Stoodley discussed life hazards in mining towns and two decades later, Menghetti provided disturbing narrative relating to water and sanitation at Charters Towers, the deadly consequences of mining accidents, miner's phthisis and diseases that encompassed the town.[55] The main thrust of Vera Whittington's history of Western Australian mining, *Two fevers - gold and typhoid*: *a social history of Western Australia during the decade 1891-1900,*[56] concentrates on the dominance of human greed within the mining industry, whereby all involved disregarded the threat to survival from disease epidemics caused by lack of town water and public sanitation.

As observed earlier, histories of Mount Morgan address difficulties of access to Rockhampton and elsewhere in terms of trade and merchandise. This necessitated a hazardous ride on a bridle trail or by coach or wagon up the Razorback track. The second chapter documents the hazards of transport and pedestrianism on roads, or tracks, to and within the town. Moreover, from the late 1880s pamphleteers writing of the mine provided single sentence warnings relating to problems of town water, health

[53] Davison, *Marvellous Melbourne*, pp. 233, 234.
[54] Graeme Davison, et. al., *The outcasts of Melbourne*, Sydney, 1985.
[55] June Stoodley, The Queensland gold miner in the late nineteenth century, p. 117; Diane Menghetti, 'Mine and town - health and safety on Charters Towers', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. XIII, no. 7, August 1988.
[56] Vera Whittington, *Two fevers - gold and typhoid a social history of Western Australia during the decade 1891-1900*, Nedlands, WA, 1988.

and hygiene.[57] By the 1900s, government medical officers who reported to the Mount

Morgan Town Council were alarmed at the increasing threat of disease and the absence

of pure water and sanitation.[58] The reports were direct indictments of Company greed

and neglect in terms of commandeering local watercourses for mine use and the

pollution of natural water courses by mine waste. Yet the problems surfaced only

intermittently through the press, probably because Company reaction to criticism might

threaten trade or job security. Progressively, local opinion was left in quiet ferment.

The focus of the third chapter is on the business life of the town. Themes address

early and subsequent trade, competition for local custom between town and Company

enterprises. Essential issues include the benefit of railway connection with Mount

Morgan and the town's dependence on Rockhampton for inwards trade and outward

transport of ore through the city's port facilities. The chapter also cites fundamental

similarities and differences in Mount Morgan trading style with other mining towns.

For example North Queensland goldfields, mentioned earlier, struggled to survive

without railway or proximity to a regional centre or port. The chapter also addresses

the consequences of fire at Mount Morgan, which on three occasions over thirty years

changed the location of the central business area.[59] Moreover, the establishment of

suburbs that decentralised trade contrasted with the initial settlement of Tipperary Point

that remained over time to become a suburb adjacent to the mine.

European enterprise was not the only form of business. The chapter addresses the

attendant problems of racism directed at Chinese storekeepers and gardeners who

commanded a significant niche in the fresh produce market at Mount Morgan from the

1880s, and confirms Ormston's discussion of anti-Chinese attitudes at Cooktown in the

same era.[60] In his *Working Australia,* Charlie Fox describes the white miner as one

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[57] Jack Ivimey, *Rockhampton and Mount Morgan*, Brisbane, 1888.
[58] Municipality of Mount Morgan, Sanitary and Health Committee Minutes, 15 December 1900, Mount Morgan Shire Council Archives (MMSCA).
[59] Mount Morgan did not have a fire brigade during the period under study.
[60] Ormston, Cooktown, pp. 257, 321.

who 'rushed from find to find, following rumour upon rumour', compared to the clannish Chinese groups who 'tended to stay...fine-combing abandoned mines and diggings'.[61] Moreover, racist attitudes on which Charles Price asserts 'the great white walls were built' was reinforced by legislation throughout the colonies for exclusion of non-Europeans including Chinese.[62] At Mount Morgan, Chinese were storekeepers and market gardeners who also suffered persecution. The fourth chapter investigates conflict between Chinese, and court charges against Chinese for unlawful trading and activities.

Exercise of the law by police officers and in the courts at Mount Morgan probably occurred similarly at any other mining town of the era. Crime was not gender specific, and local courts dealt with most cases from social and moral offences to matters of licensing and illegal trading. Yet this chapter addresses a number of issues pertaining to application of the law in the town. For example, the chapter contends that an anomalous situation existed involving members of the mine hierarchy who, as appointed Justices of the Peace, presided on occasion at the Court of Petty Sessions. Here the influence of the Company was apparent in the manipulation of sentencing, whereby mine workers charged with drunk and disorderly or obscene language were dismissed with a caution if they were mine employees required for shift.[63] Moreover, theft of gold was an ongoing crime at Mount Morgan mine just as theft of equipment and materials continued throughout the era of the Company.[64] As counterpoint to this, and ostensibly to avoid press publicity, the Company sought always to control and settle unlawful matters at the mine, whether of petty larceny or illegal demonstration by union labour during industrial conflict. It should be pointed out that Rockhampton was the regional centre for the District and Supreme Courts, where in matters of law, all major

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[61] Charlie Fox, *Working Australia*, Sydney, 1991, p. 51.
[62] Charles Price, *The great white walls are built: restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia 1836-1888*, Canberra, 1974, pp. 53-60.
[63] Clerk of Petty Sessions Mount Morgan, Deposition Book, CPS
[64] Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company Limited, Pilfering file, 1920-1930, D15/541.2, Capricornia Collection, Central Queensland University CC/CQU.

cases of crime, from murder and sex charges to grand theft at Mount Morgan were conducted in the Rockhampton courts, thus emphasising the encompassing 'difference' between the towns.

E.P. Thompson, in his seminal work *The making of the English working class*,[65] states that the influence of membership of building societies and mutual benefit associations was critical to the establishment of working class culture of eighteenth century England. These associations were supported generally by petite bourgeoisie or artisans including miners, rather than unskilled labourers on the lower scale of wages and status.[66] Membership of associations ensured particular support in relation to the dangers of mining, and the future of families in case of death or incapacity of the breadwinner. As Shani D'Cruze and Jean Turnbull point out in their investigation of fellowship and family in nineteenth century Britain, 'local societies developed as working people sought solidarity and an elusive security in the uncertainties of early industrialisation.'[67] It will be seen in the fifth chapter that benefit societies and associations brought British traditions to Mount Morgan, which over time became integral to the town ethos. Moreover, the transience of an unattached male workforce at Mount Morgan contrasted with a permanent mining population influenced by religious adherence and secular associations, enterprise, education and cultural institutions. The social and economic influence of the nineteen friendly societies and lodges at Mount Morgan by 1917[68] was evidence of intersecting social networks that evolved through some lodges.

[65] E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, London, 1980, p. 457.
[66] Merfyn Jones, 'Of men and mines: radicalism and protest in North Wales, 1850-1914', in Deian R. Hopkin, Gregory S. Kealey (eds), *Class, community and the labour movement: Wales and Canada, 1850-1930*, Llafur/CCLH, 1989, pp. 101-118.
[67] Shani D'Cruze, and Jean Turnbull, 'Fellowship and family: Oddfellows' lodges in Preston and Lancaster, c.1830-c.1890' *Urban History*, vol. 22, pt. 1, May 1995, pp. 25-47.
[68] *The Morning Bulletin* (*MB*), 12 July 1917.

Patrick O'Farrell has declared that members of the Catholic church in Australia supported chain migration, and with the incidence of large families, found security in networks of kinship and the Hibernian association, a benefit linked with the Catholic church, and with the Australian Natives Association.[69]   In the name of religious adherence also, the Caledonian society[70] of the Presbyterian church was the stimulus for education and financial enterprise.   Non-conformist sects embraced many immigrants; Jim Faull accredits Methodism[71] with providing the cornerstone for self-improvement studies, demand for free speech and democratic government in Britain.   Thompson has reservations about this claim, and declares that the anti-intellectual influence of Methodism remained embedded in English popular culture.[72]   At Mount Morgan, Catholic services were claimed as the first held at the mountainside diggings.   However, this thesis contends that itinerant preachers of the Primitive Methodists also held service.   Moreover, Methodism was enmeshed in principles of moral discipline, the ethics of the Rechabites and the American driven Women's Christian Temperance Union.   By 1900, in addition to Catholic, Methodist and Anglican, the non-conformist Baptist chapel and the Salvation Army citadel were places of worship.   With minimal exceptions, the male hegemony of church, hospital or government school board, association, or School of Arts committee prevailed.

Essential to investigation of the mining town was the masculinist 'presence' that was also demonstrated in the mass of miners, mineworkers and those at any level of mine staff and hierarchy, town commerce, trade and local government.   However, in this thesis, the sixth chapter deals with the attitudes and actions of men who dug and treated the gold and copper, and those who took the bounty and left the town.   For miners, close proximity in the confines of the workplace led to a workers' ethic.   Men who grouped together might be expected to have like attitudes, and with the rise of

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[69]   Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Kensington, NSW, 1987, pp. 88-90, 290.
[70]   Malcolm D. Prentis, *The Scottish in Australia*, Melbourne, 1987.
[71]   Faull, *The Cornish in Australia*.
[72]   Thompson, *The making of the English working class,* pp. 811, 812.

unionism, exert their combined influence to protest their lot. Greg Patmore's assertion in his article 'Community and Australian labour history', confirms that a sense of community can inhibit working-class militancy, especially in towns where there is a narrow economic base or single employer.[73] Further, Andrew Metcalfe suggests numerous aspects of working class attitudes that seem related to the psyche of the Mount Morgan miner: larrikin values, claims of masculinity in physically demanding labour, and unity against the common bourgeois threat. Yet Metcalfe declares also that miners' interest in defeating political or economic oppression was contradicted by claiming an abiding sense of their own dignity - their worth just as they were.[74]

The bonds of mateship, fraternity and patriarchy at Mount Morgan might subsume issues of collective identity and difference on occasion. Conversely, by 1908, as a result of the two fatal disasters at the mine, union membership escalated rapidly and was entrenched years before World War I.[75] Yet the image of union solidarity that seemed integral to the miners' ethos was fragile. By 1912, the men took the decision to strike, but attitude shifts driven by subjective interest – to return to work and safeguard individual jobs – hinted at capitulation, despite a claimed influence of union representation that dictated solidarity.[76] Investigation of the effects of mining culture and unionism also reveals an increasing community conscience for the welfare of families in terms of death benefits and worker's compensation.

It should be pointed out here that despite the assertion in historiography that the miner's attitude to safety was careless and nonchalant,[77] the sixth chapter suggests that the miner's persona of larrikin confidence blanketed a deep-seated fear of the

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[73] Greg Patmore, 'Community and Australian labour history', Terry Irving (ed.), *Challenges to labour history,* Sydney, 1994, p. 184.

[74] Andrew Metcalfe, 'Sex and solidarity: fraternity, patriarchy and labour history', Irving (ed), *Challenges to labour history*, pp. 91-93.

[75] *MB*, 21 November 1908.

[76] Raymond Evans, *Loyalty and disloyalty: social conflict on the Queensland homefront, 1914-1918*, Sydney, 1987, pp. 65, 66; *MB*, 24 July 1917.

[77] Blainey, *The rush that never ended*, pp. 296, 302; Stoodley, 'The Queensland gold miner in the late 19th century', pp. 174-179.

workplace.[78]   Moreover, intrinsic to mining *mentalité* was the collective attitude towards death from accident, this heightened at the most atmospheric of celebrations in a mining town, the *en masse* funeral attendance. This was the stuff of mining town culture - the cathartic outpouring of public grief at multiple death in the workplace and manifested symbolically in the display, ecumenical religious ceremony and secular ritual of the funeral. Conversely, the horror of lingering death from the disease known commonly at the time as miner's phthisis - brought sorrow and mourning, but did not engender the same emotive anger and frustration as those deaths that were the result of underground accident, fuelled by press reports that laid bare every ghastly detail of the macabre event, thus engendering a sense of public mourning even if the victim was unknown to readers.

The conservative press in Central Queensland supported the Company and its mine from the outset, whilst the Liberal press fluctuated and the ostensibly a-political press demonstrated profound Labor bias. Chapter seven contends that as newspapers changed hands, and editors came and went, journalism fluctuated between conservative, Labor, or pragmatic liberal. In the event, the attitudes of townsmen, Council, or miners were swayed by the power of press that reflected the attitude of owner-editor of the newspaper. Readers were privy to differing viewpoints from various press in relation to international or local news, colonial, state or federal politics, social or wartime conflict. A profile of local journalism during the Boer War suggests that nationalist and imperialist reaction to the South African conflict each had its place in the press.

The political rivalry of Rockhampton candidates equalled antagonism between organs of the press. It seems that until Labor candidates were elected to representative government, Mount Morgan politics remained in the shadow of publicity accorded to Rockhampton candidates who would represent Central Queensland. June Stoodley's thesis includes a chapter on 'Mount Morganism' in Queensland politics during the term

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[78] S.J. Rachman, *Fear and courage*, New York, 1990, pp. 94, 95.

of the McIlwraith government when, as might be expected, the conservative press supported the influence of Company politics in the House. Mount Morgan press, the *Chronicle* and the *Argus* provided a blend of conservative, Liberal and Labor opinion until 1902, when local Labor candidate Henri Cowap won the first seat of the new Mount Morgan electorate. From that time, Labor journalism in the town was positive rather than rhetorical. This was stimulated from 1903 by *The Critic*, a new Rockhampton owned and edited press that declared unbiased journalism, but overt Labor press was its forte. A *Critic* journalist visited Mount Morgan weekly and seemingly, radical local news appeared in the press. For example, the *Critic* exposed and deplored the Company's perceived coercion of the mine labour force to vote for a preferred, conservative candidate.[79] That this occurred was local knowledge, if unpublicised. Undeterred by public opinion or press, and unchallenged legally, *Critic* adhered to the rule of 'no fear or favour' and, on occasion, drew aside the town image to present the reality of place and people. By the late 1920s, when most trade faded, shopkeepers closed their doors and Mount Morgan newspapers folded. The Rockhampton and Brisbane press cavilled at liquidation of the Company, Labor journalism blamed the Company for the fire and flooding of the mine, and the conservative press harangued the erstwhile labour force for being union dominated and ignoring arbitration or Company compromise.

Fear of the mine was a social commodity for most women at Mount Morgan, whether as a dangerous workplace, controller of domestic economy or the means of family survival. The circumstance of women from the first of the families to arrive at Mount Morgan introduces the eighth chapter. Not unexpectedly, little is known of early working-class women, so few at first and arriving to a brush shelter, tent or hut, the customary accommodation for initial settlers.[80] The town that evolved in two decades

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[79] *Critic*, 24 July 1903.

[80] See chapter two. Not only miners, but also early staff lived in tents: engineer Henry Trenear, metallurgist H.G. Neill, and chorinator G.A. Richard, who married Neill's daughter. Richard became general manager in 1903.

consolidated into a heterogeneous society where the family unit became the spindle of community. However, as historical moments of Mount Morgan move through the pages of each chapter of this thesis, women's social and cultural influence in the town demonstrates that they were at once agents and victims within and outside their place and space. The primary role of women in the gender division of labour was indisputably domestic and socially subservient, albeit some women conducted boarding houses, shanties and tent kitchens of canvas or shingle in the 1880s.[81] By 1900, female enterprise included small stores and home enterprise from primary produce of milk, butter and eggs, to dressmaking. Given the customarily gendered trading ethic of the town, this chapter identifies the substantial number of women who engaged in town enterprise and wage labour outside the home.[82] From the outset, midwives attended maternity cases at Mount Morgan whilst female staff at the hospital included nurses and domestics. Other women conducted independent lying-in hospitals.

By the new century, a certain status was evident for the majority of women who aspired to a rising middle-class. Social involvement at Mount Morgan might include membership of church and charity groups in which the wife of the mine general manager might hold office or be accorded the role of patroness.[83] This was not the lot of most mine women, whose life meant the constancy of housework and family duties, albeit for some women this brought a measure of control, a least in the domestic sphere. Others, for whom the family budget might be scant and irregular, were as victims dependent on the agency of the breadwinner. More than that, families lived with the underlying fear of loss of a wage earner by mine accident or mining related illness. For its part, the town was fearful of the ever-present threat of mine closure that was politically motivated by the Company for its own manipulative purposes to perpetuate workers' concern for job security.

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[81] See chapter two, 'Mrs. Burke's boarding house' was at 'Burke's Flat', adjacent to the mine.

[82] *Pugh's Almanac*, Brisbane, 1911, 1925; Aldermen of the Municipality of Mount Morgan, Rate Book, 1890, Mount Morgan Shire Council Archives.

[83] Alice Richard, wife of G.A. Richard, general manager of the mine (1904-1912) was an association patroness, see chapter eight.

The numerous contemporary monographs and articles relating to women's history include *On the edge*: *women's experience of Queensland*,[84] in which editor Gail Reekie writes 'Women, region and the "Queensland difference"', Jenny Craik discusses the Queensland house in terms of 'cultural politics', where public and private living intermingled as women 'took a range of roles in diverse spheres', and in 'Speaking from the warm zone', Gillian Whitlock addresses the effect of a sub-tropical climate on northern society.[85] In addressing the subject of 'historical homes' in relation to building size and occupancy, domestic servants and labour relations, Marilyn Lake declares that 'buildings are important documents in the history of class relations as well as gender relations.'[86] For housewives and daughters at Mount Morgan, house size depended on economic and social status and, essentially, family increase. For the most part, female employment came slowly, through domestic labour, shop and clerical work and, after World War I, to office work at the mine, this last ensuring a social standing of its own. Throughout, hospital nursing staff were an individual group that remained apart.

It might be expected that mining wives at Mount Morgan were overtly supportive of their men in times of turmoil, but empirical research and oral history yield slight reference to this circumstance.[87]   Rather, in an attitude of guarded pride, female respondents demonstrated loyalty - outwardly at least - to the company, their husbands' employer. Perhaps the reticence of many women stemmed from entrenched familial subservience, or a sense of the vulnerability of their own dependent situation. For most women, power lay in the social space of domestic and life-style boundaries, the significance and use of the home, their language and protocols.[88] For women anchored

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[84] Gail Reekie (ed.), *On the edge: women's experiences in Queensland*, St. Lucia, 1994.

[85] Jennifer Craik, 'Verandahs and Frangipani: women in the Queensland house', and Gillian Whitlock, 'Speaking from the warm zone', in Reekie (ed.), *On the edge.*

[86] Marilyn Lake, 'Historical homes', in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt, *Packaging the past*, Melbourne, 1991.

[87] Numerous respondents interviewed for the Mount Morgan Oral History Project (MMOH) 1992-1994 are now deceased.

[88] E. Marcombe, interview with the author, 27 March 1997, (OH).

to the social status of the family breadwinner, his workplace promotion or success in enterprise might bring status and provide opportunities for change in attitudes and lifestyles. On the other hand, the independent woman who had from necessity assumed the role of breadwinner or self-employed worker at Mount Morgan had no expectation of status in a mining town where entrenched masculine values were more profound than elsewhere.

Aspects of forty years of popular culture at Mount Morgan addressed in the final chapter reveal mores and traditions that reflected the essence - and eclecticism - of early European heritage in social behaviour, leisure and sport. In his comprehensive history of popular culture, *Private pleasures, public leisure*, Richard Waterhouse provides the researcher with an opportunity to compare and contrast aspects of pleasure and sporting pursuits at Mount Morgan with those elsewhere.[89] For his part, Mark St. Leon defines the changes in popular entertainment from vaudeville, to film, but concentrating on the circus ethos that existed within this milieu.[90]

Male group relationships at Mount Morgan extended from the workplace to leisure, at hotels, sport or other pastimes. For women, home and family, church and localised community gatherings encompassed social life. Yet, in addressing the concomitants of leisure pursuits, amusements and sport at Mount Morgan, the final chapter reflects the overlapping of political, religious, gender and economic boundaries. The predominantly working-class town showed a plebeian preference for variety entertainments, skating rink and dance hall. However, as counterpoint to these institutions, the pervading influence of music crossed every social barrier. Classical, sacred and secular music entertained audiences and congregations whilst town brass bands roused working-class fervour in open-air recital and ceremony. Within the male

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[89] Richard Waterhouse, *Private pleasures, public leisure: a history of Australian popular culture since 1788*, Melbourne, 1995.

[90] Mark St. Leon, 'The circus in the context of Australia's regional, social and cultural history', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 72, part 3, December 1986.

domain, changing levels of sport developed over time from earliest footrunning, horseracing and tennis, to the ubiquitous Rugby and cricket.

The chapter considers the significance of the annual end of year exodus by rail from Mount Morgan for holidays at the 'seaside' on the nearby coast. There, low-cost camping and a simplistic menu were the accepted conditions of the holidays.[91] However, the thesis argues that miners and local employees had limited leisure choices when the mine closed for two weeks during the searingly hot Christmas period. The Company provided an annual April picnic to the coast by train for all employees, but was not obliged to take responsibility for a compulsory unpaid two weeks period that meant added financial difficulty for those in poor economic circumstances.

Association and club picnics that were annual or seasonal events incorporated competitive events that were pastimes typical of the era and included social sporting events for women. However, investigation of competition between the vast number of sporting clubs in the suburbs of the geographically fragmented town marked the leisure time of many hundreds of local men and boys dedicated to team sport. This led also to comprehension of the entrenched rivalry, both on and off the field, between Rockhampton and Mount Morgan and its effect on their seemingly generic social conflict.

Whilst the rise of unionism and claimed solidarity in industrial conflict was a powerful force for the social and economic progress of miners, strengthening unions and company failure at Mount Morgan saw the mine close in 1927. This followed the physical removal of breadwinners and family members who in the years of winding down of the mine were compelled to find work elsewhere. As thousands left the town, hundreds of houses were dismantled and removed. Moreover, life changes for those who stayed were significant and compounded the profoundly defensive attitude of a

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[91] Margaret O'Brien, interview with the author, 9 July 1992, MMOH.

town in despair. The loss of the mine to industrial relations, fire, flood, falling markets and a Company in liquidation, all brought the dearth of town enterprise. Unforced leisure became the lot of those who could not or would not leave Mount Morgan. Many, unwillingly perhaps, played sport regularly and social functions continued despite decline in patronage and audiences. Mount Morgan town was no longer in the news, or regular glossy supplements in the esteemed bi-monthly *Capricornian.* After more than five years of public uncertainty that veiled private conviction that the mine would close, town pride that had prompted a flourishing folk lore to mask earlier disadvantages changed to defensive parochialism.

Comparison of Mount Morgan town experiences when the company mine was stable or in a state of flux included periods of satisfaction at full employment at the mine interspersed with a sense of angst at strikes, gradual retrenchment, mine closure and the decline of the town. This was during the years of Labor government which, whilst connected with the unions, did not control the unions which led the men in demands that were not met by management. The Company was brought down ultimately in a time of national economic disadvantage, social and political turmoil. Whilst the mine hierarchy moved on, Mount Morgan saw the years of threatened disappointment manifested in stark relief as the image of optimism dimmed on the closing stage of a town in crisis.

In attempting to provide insights into the encompassing cultural strengths and perpetuating style of the first forty-five years of one regional town, this work aims to further an understanding of the historical fabric of the region and the wider community of erstwhile mining towns. Many who left Mount Morgan and relocated as the mine declined and closed retained ties with the mountain town. This perpetuated the network of familial relationships throughout Central Queensland and beyond that was stronger than any economic or political affiliation. The continual if shifting relationship with Rockhampton, remained through kinship that tempered long-term rivalry between the

towns. Yet, as the unforgiving minute passed into a new decade, Mount Morgan defied the realities of a threatened existence and tenaciously promoted memories and images of a perceived golden past embued with a spirit that would not die.