

Chapter Eight

'T'll say it was good': Mount Morgan women, their place and space

A traditional male work ethic predominated in the Mount Morgan not only in patriarchal authority within the domestic sphere but also the driving oppression of the Company.¹ Thus, generations of working-class women were unheard in the public arena, most seemingly marginalised by the demands of housework and family care.² However, they were women of a time, their activities dictated by work and economic survival within a domestic paradigm that, by their very presence, women helped to form. In such a social framework, a single phenomenon set apart the many women living in the psychological shadow of the mine and who waited for men to return after shift. For these women, the demands of toil and responsibility paled before a spectre that haunted their days: the unspoken fear of disaster at the mine.³

Death of a breadwinner could reduce a family to abject poverty.⁴ Male survivors of major or minor accidents were maimed perhaps for life, losing limbs, fingers, toes or perhaps ears. With each accident case assessed according to the severity of injury, the victim received minimal cash payout if his subsequent condition prevented him from undertaking mine work.⁵ However, the future of the family was even darker should the

¹ Shani D'Cruze and Jean Turnbull, 'Fellowship and family: Odd fellows' lodges in Preston and Lancaster, c.1830-c.1890', *Urban History*, vol. 22, pt. 1, May 1995, p. 33.

² Penny Russell, 'In search of woman's place: an historical survey of gender and space in nineteenth century Australia', *Australian Historical Archaeology*, no. 11, 1993, p. 28.

³ Winifred Mitchell, 'Women in mining communities', Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), *Women, class and history: feminist perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, Melbourne, 1980, p.157.

⁴ *Morning Bulletin (MB)*, 5 November 1908. The consequences of calamities were discussed in chapters two and four.

⁵ Sr. Joanne Molloy, R.S.M, interview with the author, 4 September 1998, Oral History, (OH).

breadwinner suffer a slow demise from miner's phthisis. In this situation, the financial relief paid until death was so low as to reduce any family to destitution whatever their previous economic level. Many women were the survivors who worked constantly to rear large families until boys as young as twelve left school and went to work, a necessity for some until the leaving age was raised to fourteen years in 1912.

In the interests of poor relief, some Mount Morgan women were active on committees for charity. Most were the spouses or family members of clergy, petite bourgeoisie, professionals, mine senior staff or upper management. The intermittent press reports of charitable and church events related only to women who, depending on their domestic commitment and social status were of the 'service' class who saw a duty to assist in the welfare of others.⁶ Whilst such service on church committees and other organisations might bolster the standing of the institutions, a question remains whether charity work was in the spirit of care or a perceived social obligation to the lower orders.

Circumstance and women's own limitations influenced their expectations. Most girls and young women worked at home, some caring for siblings and perhaps a widowed father. Within their domestic milieu, young women experienced the vicissitudes of low family income, shiftwork routine and mateship.⁷ Most local girls received no more than primary level education to the ages mentioned above. Some simply 'stayed at home' until marriage, an expectation and a hope.⁸ However, in 1912, the first state secondary school in Queensland, the Mount Morgan High School, opened in the technical college and provided secondary education for boys and girls eligible to

⁶ Mike Savage, 'Urban history and social class: two paradigms', *Urban History*, vol 20, pt. 1, April 1993, p. 70.

⁷ Vera Hayes interview with the author, 4 November 1992, Mount Morgan Oral History Project, (MMOH).

⁸ Gertrude Marcombe, interview with the author, 3 March 1998, OH.

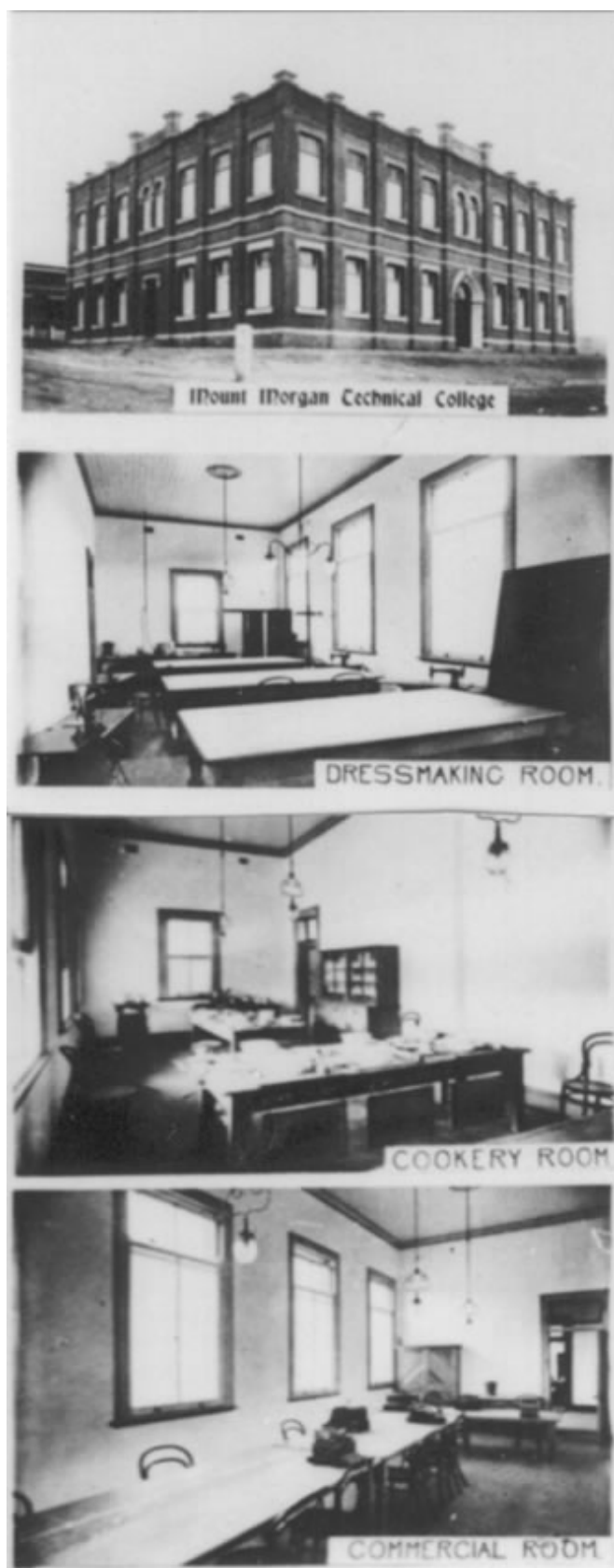


Fig. 36. Mount Morgan Technical and High School, c. 1920. Girls' Instruction Rooms.

enrol after primary school. Girls might also attend classes for cookery, dressmaking and the 'Commercial' subjects at the college. Fee-paying or scholarship students continued to private boarding schools at Rockhampton, the only institutions that provided secondary education until 1919.

Bill Thorpe suggests that the female workforce in late nineteenth century Queensland increased by only one per cent over three decades to 1901. At Mount Morgan, by World War I the proportion of women working outside the home influenced marginally a culture that placed domesticity before employment.⁹ Domestic work was available at the town hospital and lying-in hospitals, boarding houses, hotels and some private residences, particularly those of mine management on the 'Range'. Domestics were also at Carlton House and the single staff barracks. However, the work carried no status, which perhaps explains why respondents recalling the period were adamant that very few local girls and women took outside domestic work.¹⁰ Notwithstanding, females were engaged in outside domestic work, although the percentage who 'lived-in' at Mount Morgan is not known. The size of residences suggests that few households would provide accommodation for a servant and suggests that domestic work at Mount Morgan involved menial labour rather than the staggered hours of cooking and serving meals. The hazard of male residents' sexual abuse of female domestic servants existed at Mount Morgan as elsewhere, leading perhaps to the loss of employment and destitution of a girl or woman.

Bill Thorpe suggests that 'women shop assistants' and 'female domestic servants' in Queensland were paid 10s. per week in 1893.¹¹ However, the disparity between occupations saw employers of domestics demand 40 per cent more hours per week at

⁹ Gail Reekie, 'Decently dressed?: sexualised consumerism and the working woman's wardrobe 1918-1923', *Labour History*, no. 61, 1991, pp. 42, 43.

¹⁰ Marcombe, 3 March 1998, OH.

¹¹ Bill Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland: perspectives on a frontier society*, St. Lucia, 1996, pp. 177, 178.

the same rate. For example, the local press at Mount Morgan reported that hotel domestics at Charters Towers worked eleven hours per day for 8s. per week.¹² Moreover, some female wage rates - particularly those for casual employment in the regional sector at least - remained static for decades. Thorpe declares also that 'washerwomen were paid 5s. a day for casual work in 1897'.¹³ On a property at Mount Morgan half a century later, Violet Daniels paid the same casual rate to a woman who laundered one day per week for the family of eleven.¹⁴

Queensland demographic statistics of female employment at Mount Morgan were not available until 1908. At that time, comparison of female employment with Rockhampton showed a ratio of 5:1 in favour of the port city. This difference applied to almost every comparison with Rockhampton, except the population ratio which, with Mount Morgan population at 13 400, was less than 3:1. Whilst chapter three points out that almost 50 per cent of the Mount Morgan town workers in 1911 were female it is suggested here that of these, 50 per cent were engaged in domestic service, some at rates less than half the adult female Drapery and Tailoring Classification of 26s. per week.¹⁵

By 1917, the Australian Workers' Union had 17 female members at Mount Morgan, in occupations ranging from domestic, housemaid, waitress, laundress, cook, shop assistant, tailoress, drapery assistant and nursemaid.¹⁶ However, expanding work categories did not suggest that female employees at Mount Morgan were agents in their own right or involved in local union action. Increasingly, Mount Morgan traders employed female shop assistants, the 1920s reflecting the 'general emigration' of the

¹² *Charters Towers Eagle*, cited in *Critic*, 25 September 1903.

¹³ Thorpe, *Colonial Queensland*, p. 179.

¹⁴ Violet Daniels, interview with the author, 19 September 1992, MMOH.

¹⁵ 'Statistics of the State of Queensland 1910, Appendix B, p. 86, *Queensland Votes & Proceedings*, Brisbane, 1911.

¹⁶ Australian Workers' Union, Membership lists, Southern District 1917-1920, Bundaberg, Australian Workers' Union Archives.

female domestic servant to town and office work. By the 1920s, Duffy's large emporium employed 20 females and 7 males. Some young women 'apprenticed' to tailoring worked

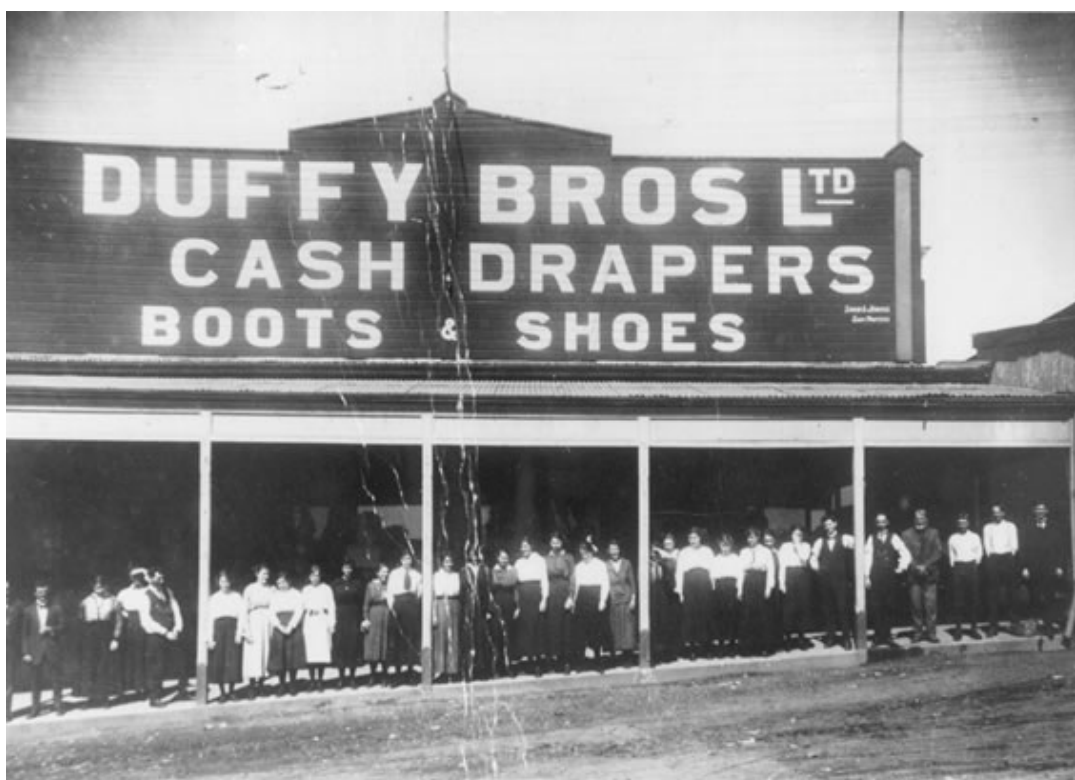


Fig. 37. Duffy Bros., c. 1920. The 29 staff and assistants included 21 females.

a four-year course before commanding higher wages than some other workroom employees. Ironically, the apprenticeship course devised by a Mount Morgan tailor was not recognised elsewhere.¹⁷ This reflected a gender difference whereby male apprenticeships at the mine earned gazetted qualifications.

Female teachers in Queensland outnumbered male teachers in 1901, but did not receive equal salary or status.¹⁸ Women were on staff at every school in Mount Morgan, but with the exception of the Catholic school conducted independently by the

¹⁷ Jim Leigh, interview with the author, 15 September 1992, MMOH.

¹⁸ Katie Spearritt, "'Toil and privation': European women's labour in colonial Queensland", *Labour History*, no. 61, 1991, p. 141

Sisters of Mercy, outside male teachers held the senior appointments until the 1900s. Local students advanced through the pupil teaching system to attain the required qualification.¹⁹ Others completed senior studies at Rockhampton colleges before moving to teaching or continuing to university, usually on government scholarship.²⁰

The long-established nursing profession that gained social respectability in the late nineteenth century remained a demanding, thankless vocation. On the long hill east of the town and facing the mine was the privately funded Mount Morgan Hospital, where entrenched traditions of the Nightingale nursing system, authoritarian seniority and discipline permeated an institutional work ethic.²¹ Established in 1890, the hospital boasted a twenty strong medical staff by the 1920s, including a resident doctor, matron, four trained sisters, second and third year nurses and probationers. Female domestics and some male employees complemented medical staff. The hospital became a teaching institution that drew nursing enrolments from the Central Queensland region, particularly the Dawson Valley south of Mount Morgan. Familial relationship or social acquaintance was as much a criterion for nursing enrolment as educational standard.²² Despite this influence, the probationer – also known as a 'dirty nurse' - learnt her profession from the lowliest level of ward work, washing soiled linen in an old bathtub, cleaning up and cleaning the wards, serving staff meals and washing dishes.

¹⁹ Marcombe, 3 March 1998, OH.

²⁰ Sr. Felicitas McCabe R.S.M., interview with the author, 10 September 1998, OH; Betty Cosgrove, *The Spirit of the Range: a social history of the Convent School of Our Lady of Good Counsel*, Rockhampton, 1990; *The Wider View: a social history of the Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School*, Rockhampton, 1992. Other students won government scholarships to university entrance level. Scholarship student at the Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School, Hilda Cleminson of Mount Morgan gained her B.Sc. (Hon.) in 1915 and after returning to Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School as mathematics and science mistress, gained her M.Sc. in 1916.

²¹ Charlie Fox, *Working Australia*, Sydney, 1991, p. 90.

²² Lorna Moulds, interview with the author, 29 July 1992, MMOH.

Nursing staff of the Mount Morgan hospital became a separate social group. They lived in, working long hours that often led to double shifts, and spent their irregular and infrequent leisure together. They attended the 'great social events' in the town, the Ambulance Ball, and Hospital Ball, also dances and sporting fixtures, but did not mix

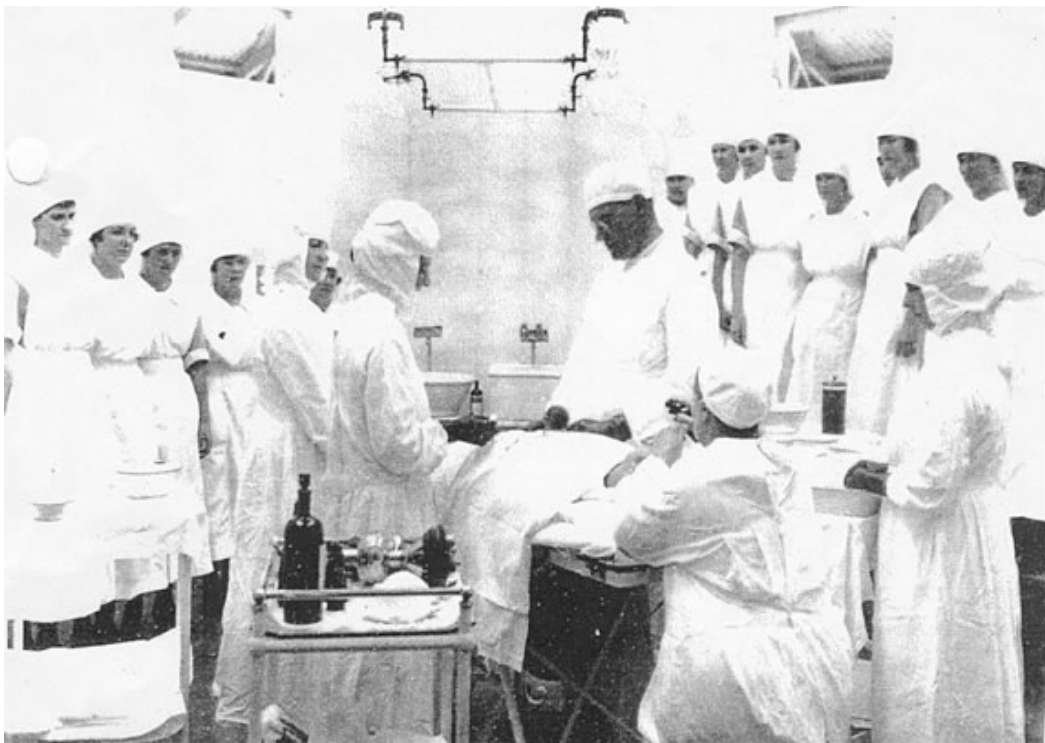


Fig. 38. Dr. T.T. Luddy, theatre staff and observers at Mount Morgan Hospital, c. 1924.

with their local peers.²³ Not only were most nurses from other districts, but also, their compulsory, regulated and boarder lifestyle and the challenges of their profession prompted boisterous social conduct at times. Thus, at Mount Morgan as elsewhere, those outside the sphere of hospital duty, ward experience and the close-knit camaraderie of the quarters tended to perceive nurses as 'different' and as such, socially threatening.

²³ Daniels, 19 September 1992, MMOH.

Most independent midwives in the late nineteenth century were unqualified operatives but many gained the respect of the women they attended.²⁴ Conversely, qualified medical practitioners in Queensland saw midwives as a threat to the integrity – and economics – of the medical profession:

The certified midwife is a by no means insignificant poacher upon the medical domain. Armed with a certificate obtained after a few months' residence at a lying-in hospital, she boldly launches forth as an experienced accoucheuse, and attends confinements without a doctor being present, and handing over the patient when confined to the care of a relative or neighbour, carries out her daily round of visits like a medical practitioner.²⁵

The Albert private hospital held the status of the main provider of maternity nursing care at Mount Morgan. At Rockhampton, a similar sense of place attached to those who knew they were born at Nurse Berrill's private hospital in Denham Street. These establishments operated through the 1920s, until the period that Glenda Strachan suggests saw the transition from outside midwives to hospital care and attendance of a medical practitioner at childbirth.²⁶ Numerous midwives operated in Mount Morgan; one who rode sidesaddle to confinements was an icon of local maternity care. Others, including a midwife of Tipperary Point whose husband was an underground miner, simply walked to cases:

The husband would come for my mother, sometimes through the night and Mum used to go straight away. She had a little bag with her instruments. She had the breast pumps and all that sort of thing, enema, thermometer, cotton wool and things for dressings...we wouldn't see her till the next day...she'd be there with a lady a long time in labour. Of course Mum would have to send for a doctor and did the cleaning up after the confinement...if there were little ones and no one to attend to them, my Mum used to do it...every day until the mother was ready to get out of bed...she charged three guineas...she only charged for the confinement.²⁷

²⁴ Charlie Fox, *Working Australia*, pp. 121, 122; Hayes, 4 November 1992, MMOH.

²⁵ W.F. Taylor, 'The position of the medical profession, with special relation to the State of Queensland', *Australasian Medical Gazette*, 20 December 1901.

²⁶ Glenda Strachan, 'The reproduction of labour power: the work of midwives and 'handywomen' in rural New South Wales, 1850-1888', *Sixth Biennial National Labour History Conference, Labour and Community*, Wollongong, 1-4 October 1999, typescript, p. 170.

²⁷ Hayes, 4 November 1992, MMOH.

The same midwife opened a lying-in hospital about 1918, in large premises in Dee Street conducted previously as a boarding house. At a distance from the mine, the place was a double-storey structure rather than 'built in' at ground level after original elevated construction on high stumps. As a lying-in hospital, the use of space on the ground floor included kitchen, spare room, dining room and verandahs. An outside staircase and landing led to the upper verandah and five rooms, where every bed featured 'a mosquito net...white honeycomb quilt...and blankets for the winter'. An interior staircase led down to the kitchen from the largest room, used previously as a dining room. The lying-in hospital catered mostly for out of town women, mainly from the Dawson Valley. Some stayed for long periods, arriving perhaps a month before their birthing date, and remaining some weeks later. The pregnant women were not confined to bed, but remained in the hospital, during which time the midwife's young daughter shopped on their behalf for toiletries, magazines and embroidery materials. For bathing, women used a large tub in the spare room downstairs with water brought from a copper over the 'washing fire' in the yard. After the birth, a woman rested in bed for ten days, sponged and cared for in her room.²⁸

By 1900, the activities of women whose social contribution to the town was more than duty defied the misogynist, unidentified verse in the *Mount Morgan Argus*:

The Young Woman of Today

She warbled the soprano with dramatic sensibility
 And dallied with the organ when the organist was sick;
 She got up for variety a brand new church society,
 And spoke with great facility about the new church brick.
 For true, unvarnished culture she betrayed a great propensity;
 Her Tuesday talks were famous and her Friday chats were great;
 She grasped at electricity with mental elasticity
 And lectured with intensity about the marriage state.
 And while she dwelt on density, or space and its immensity
 With such refined audacity, her mother darned the socks.²⁹

²⁸ Hayes, 4 November 1992, MMOH.

²⁹ *Mount Morgan Argus* (MMA), 1 June 1900.

The role of the housewife escaped such criticism. She was secure in her domestic sphere, the place where she lived, worked and administered the family unit with the finances the breadwinner made available. But behind the external facade of domestic buildings were the spaces and structures that either aided or hindered the housewife. It is probable that, from the late nineteenth century, the domestic work for city women diversified more rapidly than the urban lifestyle at Mount Morgan. Peter Bell has suggested that houses of any era resulted from changing sexual and economic relations and reflected the ideas and values which shaped them: domesticity, femininity, masculinity, respectability, order and cleanliness.³⁰ At Mount Morgan, the constant, critical factor of a polluted and dirty environment affected every aspect of existence. This was typical of slum areas of old cities like Kentish Town, London, where inhabitants lived cheek by jowl with the enveloping pollution of their locality.³¹

In mining towns, many women tended to leave the grime outside and concentrate on maintaining a clean household interior. In the coal-mining town of Throckley in Northumberland, only the housewife dedicated to hard work might attain a standard of domestic cleanliness - even to public display in 'lines of white washing' - that marked her self-respect and personal dignity.³² At Mount Morgan, housewives toiled to keep domestic interiors and laundry clean from the copper coloured dust that shrouded the town. Most houses were unpainted, testament to the sense of impermanence the mine engendered, and to the constant fall-out from the crushers.

Despite the levelling aspect of copper hued houses, large or small, family location and reputation were critical. Working class women tended to spend their time in the immediate neighbourhood. Social support networks were vital to many household

³⁰ Peter Bell, *Timber and iron: houses in North Queensland mining settlements 1861-1920*, St Lucia, 1984, p. 199.

³¹ Gillian Tindall, *The fields beneath: the history of a London village*, London, 1985, p. 144.

³² Bill Williamson, *Class, culture and community: a biographical study of social change in mining*, London, 1982, p. 126.

'survival strategies', and sharing, borrowing and lending were essential for managing low and unstable working class incomes. At Mount Morgan,

Everyone knew one another; if you had trouble, they were all in to help you...they'd take a turn around, [to] help, that's how they'd do it...the people probably only put in a shilling, but it was a lot of money those days...we got over it.³³

The 'clustering of kin' at Mount Morgan embraced working-class households where family and finances reflected close occupational relationships.³⁴ Rising living standards in some societies might diminish the necessity for women's survival networks,³⁵ but at Mount Morgan, familial support prevailed. For example, Margaret, born in 1897, was an eighteen-year-old dressmaker when she married a mine labourer in 1915. Her miner brother married her husband's sister, and the parents of both couples lived nearby. Margaret moved to a rented house as a bride:

It wasn't far from where my parents lived...we got furniture from the furniture people, a chest of drawers, a washstand and a basin, a bed and a centre table for the sitting room, and four chairs and two little gypsy tables...that's what we had for our front room. My husband never drank...he earned good money...we built our house [later] it was wooden, on high blocks on a corner. It was very steep, high at the front and then it fell away...we were at the bottom of the hill.³⁶

The inclusion of a domestic bathroom reflected the era, town circumstance, and household economics. As discussed in chapter two, the town was without reticulated water, and several standpipes from the main pipe to the mine were available to residents. However, only those who had a well or tanks had water at hand, whatever its quality. The home of a surface boss might have a bathroom 'under the house', but an early tradition in the town saw a 'back' bedroom used for female bathing. This confirms the advantage to men who showered at the mine, although early ablution rooms used cold water; but, as pointed out in chapter six, the Linda Works provided hot showers, so all

³³ Margaret O'Brien, interview with the author, 9 July 1992, MMOH.

³⁴ McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

³⁵ D'Cruze and Turnbull, 'Fellowship and family', p. 41.

³⁶ O'Brien, 9 July 1992, MMOH.

miners had access to bathroom facilities at the workplace to ensure cleanliness and removal of toxic residues and infectious matter. Margaret recalled that:

You didn't have a bathroom then...it was a back bedroom, you had to shut the door...and take a bucket of water, heated on the stove and put it in a tub and that was our bath...some [baths] were downstairs...there wasn't such a lot of high houses.³⁷

Few dwellings 'wasted' space on a central passage. The front door opened to a living room, where doors led to bedrooms and to kitchen and laundry areas at the rear. In early structures, these were detached from the main dwelling or spaces in the yard. At the end of the nineteenth century, kitchen and laundry areas might be semi-detached or located in a skillion-roofed lean-to at the rear of the house. Men's working hours narrowed ultimately to an eight-hour day, but women's domestic labour escalated as families increased and dwelling extensions meant additional cleaning.³⁸ Most women at Mount Morgan boiled clothes in kerosene tins on the stove, or used a copper in the yard. Mine clothes were boiled separately in Borilla Soap or Bolderman's [Rockhampton] Kerosene soap and rinsed in large tubs, perhaps on a bench in the yard. After boiling, house laundry was hand wrung or put into a drainer box with a tub underneath to save the water for the next washing. A woman might have three tubs³⁹ - 'it depended on how wealthy you were' - which suggests that in a time and at a town where laundry remained extreme drudgery, women saw status in terms of household amenities.

Exceptions to the water problem occurred in some domestic environments. One example was at the home of William Tuesley, surface boss at the mine. He owned the family residence along the Dee River toward the 'Big Dam'. The property had a well near the river and a windmill to pump water for the house. He grew vegetables, fruit and flowers and was proud of his rose garden. The family kept fowls, but not a cow. The

³⁷ O'Brien, 9 July 1992, MMOH.

³⁸ Marilyn Lake, 'Historical homes', in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt, *Packaging the past*, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 47, 50.

³⁹ Violet Heberlein, interview with the author, 21 October 1992, MMOH.

children had a pony, and Tuesley's walk-in aviary extended the full length of one side to the house. Wide verandahs were at the front and off the kitchen at the rear. A daughter of the family recalled her childhood home:

It had low steps and a big verandah at the front...lattice halfway, from the railings up. When you walked off the verandah, you walked into the sitting-room - not a lounge in those days. I know there were beds on the back verandah, with a screen or something...nineteen steps at the back...the back went down to the river.⁴⁰

In time, Tuesley bought the larger, more impressive residence across the road, where he developed an extensive garden and continued to indulge his love of birds.

Jennifer Craik⁴¹ and Gillian Whitlock⁴² suggest that the image of the verandah is of social and community space. Verandahs at Mount Morgan provided shade and weather protection, in a sub-tropical climate, but in terms of spatial significance, they became central to the division between public and private areas.⁴³ From the external barriers of fence, gate and front steps, the verandah to a miners' dwelling and other residences in the town offered a domestic corridor between interior, private space and the outside world. Thus, verandah use, even as social space, remained the domain of the residents. By the late nineteenth century, verandahs might be used exclusively by family as utilitarian sleeping areas. Depending on the degree of privacy required, the verandahs were 'closed in' with timber lattice, otherwise they remained open to take advantage of prevailing breezes.⁴⁴

The McCabes of Pattison Street reared a family of three sons and seven daughters, the youngest born in 1914. Their home was a three-bedroom dwelling with a wide, front verandah. The 'front room' and parents' bedroom were on either side of a short passage

⁴⁰ Marcombe, 3 March 1998, OH.

⁴¹ Jennifer Craik, 'Verandahs & Frangipani: women in the Queensland house', in Reekie, *On the edge*, p. 147.

⁴² Gillian Whitlock, 'Speaking from the warm zone', in Reekie, *On the Edge*, p. 175.

⁴³ Bell, *Timber and iron*: p. 91.

⁴⁴ McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

from the front door to a large kitchen that extended the width of the house. Two bedrooms were to the rear off this main room. Boys slept in one room, and in the other, up to four girls slept to a double bed. Older children slept on the verandah. The family ate all meals in the kitchen, where a large wood stove was at one end and at the other, a table to seat ten. A bench along one wall and behind the table supplemented kitchen chairs. A dresser was against the opposite wall. The kitchen had two kerosene lamps, one on the table, another near the stove. For many years, the girls' bedroom was used as a bathroom where all family members took turns to 'sponge all over' in a large tub filled with tins of water heated on the stove. McCabe senior considered that drawing water from a Council well was men's work and whenever possible, he used a shoulder yoke with a kerosene tin at each end to carry water to the house. The McCabe bathing space changed with construction of a bathroom at the rear of the house, but water for domestic use was still carried from the Council well.⁴⁵

Not all dwellings were roomy or comfortable. A 'Baree' man named Charlie Stratford lived at the back of the clay pits and said his parents had spent their lives there. The family dwelling was a low set cottage of four rooms and front and rear verandahs. The 'walls' of the small rooms were sewn sackbags whitewashed with a mixture of lime, laundry 'blue' and prickly pear juice. In the drying process, the composition stiffened the sacking. Charlie and his siblings went to the bush to get wood for the one fire stove and for his mother's backyard washing fire.⁴⁶

Craik suggests that the verandah was male space and the kitchen female space, both circumstances affecting cultural and sexual politics in the domestic sphere.⁴⁷ At Mount Morgan, the breadwinner did not entertain his friends in domestic space - the socially unacceptable back area of the premises where a skillion roof secluded a

⁴⁵ McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

⁴⁶ Charlie Stratford, interview with the author, 10 July 1992, MMOH.

⁴⁷ Craik, 'Verandahs and frangipani', p. 147.

bedroom-bathroom, kitchen and perhaps washhouse. Similarly, housewives preferred to receive visitors in the 'dining-room' or 'front room',⁴⁸ so called as the nineteenth century term 'parlour' faded with the rising vernacular of the town's first generation of native-born. The Tuesley family ate breakfast in the kitchen and had other meals in the dining room. Gertrude was adamant that her mother entertained friends in the dining room, its French doors open to the breeze and screened by long curtains. On a large easel by the window was a large portrait of William Tuesley.

A difference in domestic arrangements between the Tuesley and McCabe households indicates levels of social stratification. Tuesley was a surface boss who on occasion went to Brisbane on behalf of management. He also managed to retain a certain after hours independence from the mine by refusing to have a telephone connection. McCabe was a shift boss at the smelters and a typical victim of mine accident. A serious leg and foot injury occurred when a bucket of molten slag tipped over and fiery waste poured into his boot, burning and crippling his foot. His impaired mobility limited opportunities for further advancement. For their part, Mrs. Tuesley and Mrs. McCabe demonstrated social stratification. Mrs. Tuesley was a member of the successful pioneer family Cross of Gracemere and at Mount Morgan, her social interests and aspirations were different to those of Mrs. McCabe. This paper contends that, quite apart from the work status of the breadwinner, early cultural experience of the women influenced social mores in their Mount Morgan life. Moreover, Tuesley was a lapsed Catholic, Mrs. Tuesley a non-Catholic, so none of the family attended Mass, although Gertrude and siblings attended the Catholic School where Gertrude became a pupil teacher for a time. Mrs. McCabe took at least one child to Mass every morning and on Sunday, the entire family, including McCabe senior, a marriage 'convert', sat in 'the McCabe pew'.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Marcombe, 4 March 1998, OH.

⁴⁹ McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

Many women lived their religious faith. For some, it was a panacea to the trials of their lot. The celebration of service and the responsibility of church administration remained firmly under the control of male clerics, priests, elders or a committee, but women were 'religion's most able and effective agents'.⁵⁰ Sustained by prayer or the temporal fellowship they found at church, the women who predominated in the pews were mostly mothers from whom the culture of family life evolved and whose faith impacted on their children.⁵¹ For many Catholics at Mount Morgan, the Mass offered not only spiritual peace and eternal salvation, but also, on a temporal level, a sense of euphoria for many whose economic circumstances ensured their homes were poor and unadorned. In an atmosphere so far removed from their own space, the church environment and mysteries of Latin incantation, incense, candlelight and icons, statuary and stillness, emotive music and lyric held many in thrall.

Pam Hourani suggests that middle-class women might pursue male driven ideologies and so isolate themselves from generally acceptable social interaction with other women.⁵² At Mount Morgan, upward mobility that depended on appropriate income defined social stratification. Some women, if not aloof, were reserved and independent of others.⁵³ For example, whether residents of the 'Range', or preferred suburbs, women might remain at a distance from some sections of the community. This neither argues the existence of a paradigm for social interaction, clannishness, or involvement in the wider community. Residents from the Upper Dee River area were not necessarily social companions of people at Baree or Walterhall, both villages on the railway line north of the town. Gertrude's mother socialised with women in her

⁵⁰ Anne O'Brien, 'Sins of omission? Women in the history of Australian religion and religion in the history of Australian women. A reply to Roger Thompson', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 28, no. 108, April 1997, pp. 127, 128.

⁵¹ Marion Stratford, 10 July 1992, MMOH.

⁵² Pam Hourani, 'Spatial organisation and the status of women in nineteenth century Australia', *Australian Historical Archaeology*, no. 8, 1990, p. 74.

⁵³ Marcombe, 4 March 1998, OH.

locality along the Dee River, but not with those at Baree, her action simply exercising an individual right to choose her associates. Press advertisements that promised well-organised festivals encouraged community activity, but patronage reflected social preference, family commitment or domestic economy. This selective approach and interaction within separate communities suggests echoes of early village life in which residents had limited contact with those at a neighbouring village.

Social distinction between suburban locations existed at Mount Morgan. Female respondents declared that they did not go to either Tipperary Point or the adjacent Red Hill and did not know the residents.⁵⁴ Gertrude Marcombe (nee Tuesley) lived in the town until adulthood but had 'never been to Red Hill', where her husband spent his youth, and less than two kilometres from her childhood home. However, Gertrude said that although she could not recall the Tipperary Point environment, she had visited the home of a Catholic classmate, where they 'did fancywork'.

Sunday School teachers included women who might be employed in town, home duties, or as day-school teachers. Whatever their secular work, faith was integral to and empowered their influence on the young to whom they offered religious instruction. By comparison, a Congregation of Religious, the Order of the Sisters of Mercy, came to Mount Morgan in 1895,⁵⁵ lived outside male reference and had a measure of control in the community at large. They were women whose authority extended to the lower members of their Order, generations of Catholic children, and parents who were obliged to contribute to the cost of education.⁵⁶ Over decades, the sisters brought spiritual influence in secular education to more than 3 000 pupils at Mount Morgan.⁵⁷ The nuns emerged infrequently outside their consecrated space, their archaic, flowing black

⁵⁴ See Map 2, p. 38.

⁵⁵ W.J. Long, *Catholic history of the Mount Morgan parish*, Rockhampton, 1958, p. 22.

⁵⁶ Anne O'Brien, 'Sins of omission', pp. 128, 129.

⁵⁷ St. Mary's Anglican Parish Council, Mount Morgan, Minutes, 1919, Rockhampton Anglican Diocesan Archives (RADA).

habits only relieved by snowy coifs seeming to challenge an image of shadowy figures who shunned public display. Yet, within their aura of discipline, service, and constant if impersonal presence, nuns were a strong force in the intellectual culture of the town.⁵⁸

The Presbyterian Church encouraged congregations to practice personal thrift in the knowledge that the church could not finance social welfare 'which has not been the forte of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland'.⁵⁹ This is not to say that the laity failed to provide aid in kind to the needy in their church community. Despite limited numbers, the Presbyterian Ladies Church Aid Society was an active association. A branch at Mount Morgan, with a total membership of 15 and an average meeting attendance of nine raised funds and marked the needs of widows and orphans as charitable causes.⁶⁰

Middle class Anglican women worshipped at St. Mary's Church where religious furniture and icons were memorials donated to honour man's contribution to the church, society, or a nation at war.⁶¹ Costar suggests that Anglicans did not have a strong tradition of church giving; they considered adherence to the 'established church' exempted them from that fiscal necessity.⁶² Notwithstanding, and albeit women had no seat at Synod, the charitable mission of the Anglican Ladies' Guild at Mount Morgan, as elsewhere, included fund-raising events and fetes to provide support in kind for widows and families.⁶³

⁵⁸ Hayes, 4 November 1992, OH.

⁵⁹ Brian Costar, 'Christianity in crisis: Queensland churches during the Great Depression', *Journal of Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 13, no. 6, May 1988, pp. 205.

⁶⁰ Mount Morgan Presbyterian Church, *Annual Report*, Rockhampton, 1907, 285/M, Mitchell Library.

⁶¹ F. Golding, N. Chardon, *Centenary History of Mount Morgan*, Rockhampton, 1982, p. 39.

⁶² Costar, 'Christianity in crisis,' pp. 201-203.

⁶³ St. Mary's Anglican Church, Minutes, 1919, RADA.

Many desired everyday assistance as much as the promise of spiritual redemption. Until the limited benefit of pension or workers' compensation, the future for disadvantaged mining families could be bleak. Nancy Renfree observes that for some native-born or immigrant families the experience or fear of absolute poverty prompted membership of benefit societies. Lodges were specific interest groups, espousing ideologies to influence local members. However, a lodge also supported family members, taking the role of concerned 'guardian' for the payment of money to widows and orphans. Depending on the merits of the case, this might extend to shouldering the patriarchal duties of a deceased member who, at the time of his death, was either suspended from the lodge or unfinancial in terms of membership dues.⁶⁴

The Mount Morgan Branch of the Benevolent Society, established in 1900, was a lifeline to financial relief for many. This was not a social society, but an organisation that raised contributions for female members to arrange the purchase and delivery of goods as relief in kind for the needy. Males controlled meetings of the Society and were expected to contribute to relief funds. To provide sustenance orders, the committee appointed different local tradesmen each month, a baker, a butcher and two grocers, perhaps one in the town and another at Tipperary Point. It is not known if the allocation of trade changed due to quality of service and price, or whether the Society shared purchases between town traders. By 1908, 34 adults and 37 children, three widows of 'advanced years', and seven aged people received assistance in kind. They included recipients of relief not only for an entire year, but also permanently from the Society's year of formation. For families receiving relief over the entire year, goods included blankets and flannel during winter and double rations at Christmas. The 'orders' provided at a cost of 4s. each might include kerosene, candles, rolled oats, soap,

⁶⁴ D'Cruze and Turnbull, 'Fellowship and family', pp. 39, 40.

golden syrup and flour, but scant funds remained for meat or dairy products. The total of 733 orders for 1908 reflects the extent of sustenance at any time during that year.⁶⁵

Widows and other women in need might attempt to survive financially by keeping a cow, fowls and goats. Many of the 18 women included on the register of licensed 'cowkeepers and milksellers' at Mount Morgan between 1898 and 1904 held licences renewed over the years. The annual price of a cowkeeper's licence was 20s. per annum whether for one cow or a herd, and brings the cost into question for those in straitened circumstances.⁶⁶ However, the matter of a keeping a cow for family purposes or business did not mean women lived outside the town. One woman conducted the St. Elmo boarding house, another was the licensee of the Imperial Hotel, another had the Arctic Saloon in East Street and one was a shopkeeper. Goatkeeping was not licensed, and many women kept these animals, probably for milk and meat, whilst numerous children used goat carts to carry goods and firewood. A woman charged two men in 1905 with stoning five of her goats, but as they were probably culled from a plethora of feral goats in the bush, the magistrate simply dismissed the action as a misdemeanour.⁶⁷ By 1911, a local by-law declared goats a public nuisance and animals caught unrestrained within town limits were incinerated at the sanitary depot.⁶⁸

Many women at Mount Morgan were not involved in social activities reported and applauded in the local press. It is questionable also whether the Methodist driven Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Tent of the Independent Order of Rechabites, the moralistic Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union or the Catholic Women's Association provided adequate opportunities for social interaction to women

⁶⁵ *MB*, 10 September 1908.

⁶⁶ Mount Morgan Court of Petty Sessions (MMCPS), Register of Cowkeepers and Milksellers 1897-1904, Mount Morgan Historical Museum (MMHM).

⁶⁷ MMCPS, Deposition Book, 2 June 1905, CPS 7B/P4, QSA.

⁶⁸ Mount Morgan Town Council Sanitary and Health Committee (S&HC), Minutes, 2 May 1911, Mount Morgan Shire Council Archives, (MMSC).

who had few outlets for leisure.⁶⁹ Organisations that inculcated the 'bonds of sisterhood' included the Lady Foresters Branch and St. Mary's Branch of the Hibernians.⁷⁰ The small number of female Rechabite activists might be seen but rarely heard by most men,⁷¹ many of whom frequented hotels but were not confronted by the women.

The most 'socially influential' of women's groups was the Women's Christian Temperance Union, its causes prohibition and women's suffrage and its credo family relief from poverty and violence resulting from alcohol abuse.⁷² Membership was more active in cities than in regional areas, where promotion of the Union depended primarily on the executive support of the wife of an incumbent cleric who was perhaps the leader of the local Temperance branch.⁷³ Paradoxically, a political and religious male elite dominated the Queensland Temperance Union that was the controlling body of the WCTU. Mrs. J. Williams, a senior officer in the Brisbane Branch of the WCTU, transferred to Rockhampton with her Methodist minister husband. As foundation president of the WCTU Rockhampton Branch from 1903, Mrs. Williams remained in office until her husband transferred to the Toowoomba circuit. The Mount Morgan branch was a powerful influence in pursuing teetotalism rather than temperance, but was applauded for its efforts only rarely.⁷⁴ The 1911 *Queensland Licensing Act* limited employment of barmaids to the hours of 9 am to 9 pm. The *Act* was attributable in no

⁶⁹ Roger C. Thompson, 'Women and the significance of religion in Australian history', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 78, no. 108, April 1997, p. 118.

⁷⁰ Return of registered benefit friendly societies, Statistics of Queensland 1910, Table B, *QV&P*, Brisbane, 1911 pp. 23-26.

⁷¹ By comparison, at the permanent coal-village of Throckley, Durham, a Tent of the Independent Order of Rechabites was the main temperance body and boasted 588 members. Williamson, *Class, culture and community*, p. 63.

⁷² Roger Thompson, 'Women and the significance of religion', 1997, p. 121; Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing brotherhood: class, gender and fraternalism*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1989, p. 179.

⁷³ Noeline J. Kyle, "'Give us the franchise...we will show how we will use it!': The story of Euphemia Allen Bowes, a leading "older citizen", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society (JRAHS)*, vol. 84, part 1, 1998, pp. 57, 58.

⁷⁴ A.E. Lather, *A glorious heritage 1885-1965: history of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Queensland*, Brisbane, 1966, p. 25, Coll. 14/B/1, Fryer Memorial Library, (FL), University of Queensland.

small part to the prolonged moral crusade of the Temperance Union, including the WCTU at Mount Morgan.⁷⁵ By 1912, the Rockhampton Branch was in recess, and although the Mount Morgan sub-branch persevered, membership and meetings declined in consequence of the pervasive influence of liquor legislation to control hotel hours, liquor sales, and employee wages and conditions.⁷⁶

Women employed at hotels were ridiculed, endured low status and a heightened risk of sexual abuse in the workplace. Conversely, for the female licensee, the standard of the hotel reflected the quality of service, the dining room, and the status of customers. The highest profile hotel employee was the barmaid, who operated behind the high counter of her workplace barricade. Her wages exceeded domestic rates, but she was scorned by town women. It is argued here that their attitude was not towards bar keeping *per se*, but that the barmaid communicated with customers, albeit within their male reserve. The 1911 *Act* prompted a local journalist to write under his press header 'Ourselves':

'Lament of the Boys'

The hoper with the tealeaves in his hair-
Who wanders round, bent on a royal spree,
Will miss the Hebe; surely 'tis not fair,
To remove the honey from the bee.
She's off the map, the one with golden hair,
And pearly teeth that gleamed beneath the gas-
The girl we worshipped when out on a tear,
Stamping ourselves a blithering, blighted ass.⁷⁷

Mount Morgan was a typical town in its response to national need, but the high rate of local contribution during World War I contrasted starkly to the customary, if fragmented style of charity work and donation. Contribution to wartime funds seemed

⁷⁵ Ian Tyrrell, 'The anti-tobacco reform and the temperance movement in Australia: connections and differences', *JRAHS*, vol. 84, part 1, 1998, p. 11; Lather, *A glorious heritage*, p. 9, FL.

⁷⁶ Lather, *A glorious heritage*, p. 16, FL.

⁷⁷ *Critic*, 25 August 1911. Legislation for hours of work at hotels might be implemented in Queensland, but the state refused 'six o'clock closing' legislation passed in the southern states by 1916. See also Walter Phillips, "'Six o'clock swill': the introduction of early closing of hotel bars in Australia", *Historical Studies*, no. 75, vol. 19, October 1980, pp. 263, 264.

a contradiction in terms in a town where charity was such a daily need. The Women's Sewing Guild branch of the War Committee despatched nine consignments of goods comprising in total almost 6 000 articles to the Red Cross, the Soldiers Comforts and other organisations. Similarly, the women of the Sock and Comfort Committee, Mount Morgan Branch, also sent 'many hundreds of socks and other comforts' during the period. Mount Morgan branches included 65 women and 400 children, evidence that they were drawn from all sections of town society and a far cry from the less than the barely double figure attendances at meetings of church societies and associations to raise funds for poor relief.⁷⁸

The development of a town culture reflected differences in lifestyle between suburbs at Mount Morgan to embrace traditional celebrations of birth, marriage and death. Social mores emanated from immigrant culture, modified or modernised through succeeding generations. Interestingly, Margaret Maynard suggests that 'regional factors, especially the climate, shaped women's approaches to dress'.⁷⁹ However, clothing style and quality in the mining town indicated the workplace and social status, but climate and geography did not determine clothing characteristics at Mount Morgan until the early 1900s. Cost and availability of ready-made clothes dictated style, and local tailoring and dressmaking reflected town trade, but home sewing was a staple of the family wardrobe. Some self-taught women sewed at home for various reasons, but primarily for economy. Margaret, who left school to commence work immediately in a dress-making workroom, saved to pay the cost of the best seamstress in town to make her wedding gown. Margaret sewed when her husband was on late shift, 'There was nothing else to do'. Perhaps busying herself dulled fear for her husband's safety.⁸⁰ She took outside sewing - 'made money at it, too' - and charged

⁷⁸ *Just the Link between*, 1916, pamphlet, Rockhampton, p. 41.

⁷⁹ Margaret Maynard, "'A great deal too good for the bush': women and the experience of dress in Queensland", Reekie, *On the edge*, p. 52.

⁸⁰ O'Brien, 9 July 1992, MMOH; Hayes, 4 November 1992, MMOH; McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

2s. 6d. to sew a dress in the simpler styles of 1920s, cutting garments to registered paper patterns available through the local newsagent. A selection of monthly magazines for women offered patterns, and dressmaker Miss McBryde ordered patterns from *Weldon's Journal* at 1s., *Weldon's Dressmaker* at 9d. and *Australian Home Journal* at 1s. 6d. However, for the use of dressmaking students, the technical college chose the English *Children's Fashion* at 1s. 6d. and the American quarterly *Butterick* pattern book at 2s. 3d. In an era of selection 'on approval' before charge or payment, newsagents delivered knitting books, crochet patterns and embroidery transfers to certified town customers.⁸¹

Mining housewives with large families were obliged to sew. If Margaret sewed for pleasure and therapeutic satisfaction, Mrs. McCabe sewed from necessity, making clothes for her ten children. By comparison, Mrs. Tuesley sewed for her four children, but a local dressmaker made her own 'better dresses' at rates lower than town workroom charges or retail prices. Fashion was in the public eye at any time and reflected the influence of dress and appearance on social status in the town. Some women bought clothes at Rockhampton. Gertrude's parents boarded out their family at Mount Morgan in order to spend a week at Rockhampton for the June 'Carnival season' that included the annual agricultural show. Stores provided vast stocks in this main season of the year when women shopped for clothes, piece goods and household items.⁸² Rockhampton ready-made fashion followed southern styles, but Brisbane's image as a country town in the far north did not provide the flair of Sydney and Melbourne. However, Rockhampton press published overseas articles describing in detail the passing parade of couture. Commercial paper patterns that home dressmakers used tended towards basic design, but it is probable that the five town dressmakers at Mount

⁸¹ Newspaper Account Book 1926-1927 Sundry Debtors, Mount Morgan Newsagency, Mount Morgan Historical Museum.

⁸² Marcombe, 23 March 1998, OH; McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

Morgan drafted patterns, however successfully. Furthermore, by 1920, larger stores and general drapers featured showrooms and workroom fashion.⁸³

The material celebrations of marriage were diverse. Many early marriages were celebrated in private homes, and the wedding breakfast might be served at a large house, possibly that of a relative or family friend. The main social gathering to precede a marriage included the ubiquitous 'kitchen tea' arranged to provide gifts of household necessities. The traditional, formal wedding received detailed coverage in the local conservative press and one such read, in part:

A pretty wedding was celebrated at the Roman Catholic church when the bride, Mollie O'Brien, was given away by her brother. She was handsomely attired in a gown of costly white silk, made and designed in the latest fashion by D.D. O'Connell's, with embroidered veil and wreath of orange blossom and carried a shower bouquet of white roses and asparagus fern. Her two bridesmaids were dressed in Japanese silk with hats to match.⁸⁴

Not every wedding was elaborate, for whatever reason. A generation and a world war later, fashion was lighter, shorter and simpler. Vera was married at the Catholic church and recalled: 'I wasn't a bride, my sister came to town with me and we bought a nice frock and little hat and white shoes'.⁸⁵

Separation from the family milieu after marriage was problematic for some women. Margaret, who lived with her parents at Cemetery Road south of the mine, said, 'I was with Mum all the time', but after her marriage a sense of isolation developed:

⁸³ McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

⁸³ *Pugh's Queensland Almanac and Directory*, Brisbane, 1921, pp. 502, 503.

⁸⁴ *Critic*, 27 November 1908.

⁸⁵ Hayes, 4 November 1992, MMOH.



Fig. 39. Mount Morgan wedding, c 1913. Vehicles dressed with white curtains, fringes and bows, the bridal buggy, centre, drawn by two greys. The wedding group are probably at Lundager's photographic studio that was at his newsagency, Morgan Street. The Caledonian pipe band (centre) arrives to entertain onlookers.

It was lonely...when the baby came, I was lonely, but we could manage it; the world was different...I don't know how, but they were...my mother didn't live far away and my sisters...they had to pass our place to go to town, so it was not so bad.⁸⁶

Most town residents had limited expectation of social life or upward mobility: 'Mount Morgan was a good place to live...every year they [the Company] put on the mine picnic, at Bell Park, Emu Park'.⁸⁷ Whilst the significance of leisure and sporting pursuits at Mount Morgan is addressed in chapter nine, it should be mentioned here that for many women, the picnic was their main social outing for the year. Yet, it was not a relaxing event. Responsibility for family care was relocated for a day, confirming the ongoing role of victim played by working-class women on their everyday stage.

Doubtless, most Mount Morgan males experienced a compulsory mateship away from the domestic scene. The thundering mine bonded men as they worked in pairs or small gangs, they drank together at hotels and played sport together. Most family

⁸⁶ O'Brien, 9 July 1992, MMOH.

⁸⁷ Marion Stratford, 10 July 1992, MMOH.

women had little time to spend with church or charity groups, a mainstay of female involvement outside the domestic sphere. At her home in Pattison Street, Mrs. McCabe was surrounded by family and friends. A devotee of cards, she enjoyed regular Euchre evenings with visitors and older daughters. They played at an oval table in the 'front room' lit by a double-burner lamp, and sat on the round-backed 'good' chairs of superior quality to seats in the kitchen.⁸⁸

Shiftwork caused domestic routine to extend over many hours and cast upon women the additional responsibility of caring alone for children during night shift periods. Staggered work hours influenced every resident, mineworker, tradesman, senior staff, merchants, wives and children:

He took his lunch box...he worked shift work...I used to hate shift work...it was at night...it was lonely. He would have a little sleep...at 11 o'clock he would start work...and then I'd go to bed.⁸⁹

The effects of shiftwork on family and social life never changed. Half a century later, a woman recalled,

I hated it, it interfered with everything. Afternoon shift, you couldn't get anything done until they had gone to work. They started at four, they left here about half past three...they'd come home at midnight, you'd get woken up again.⁹⁰

As pointed out in chapter three, Mount Morgan offered few benefits to the housewife in terms of town infrastructure, but town enterprise provided a widespread service that extended throughout the town and suburbs of valleys and hills. In comparison to neglect from the public purse, the delivery of household orders was typical of the era: groceries, bread, milk, meat, and other domestic requirements were brought to the door.⁹¹ Adult males delivered wood and ice to households, and

⁸⁸ McCabe, 10 September 1998, OH.

⁸⁹ O'Brien, 9 July 1992, MMOH.

⁹⁰ Kath Lamb, interview with the author, 30 October 1992, MMOH.

⁹¹ Eric Eklund, 'The "Anxious class"?: Storekeepers and the working-class in Australia, 1880-1940', Robert Hood and Ray Markey (eds.), *Labour and community: Proceedings of the sixth*

generations of boys of school leaving age were 'basket boys' who rode horses to make deliveries during the week for grocers and butchers, and fishmongers on Fridays. The convenience of home delivery also afforded women the opportunity for social contact in town during shopping visits.

Politics did not enthuse all at Mount Morgan, particularly women enmeshed in a female domain of child bearing and rearing, domestic organisation, budgetary problems and health care against infection and disease in an unhealthy town. It is argued here that involvement in family and domestic matters mitigated active interest at least in politics, although many women were of union families. The daily round in a woman's domestic space continued until the breadwinner returned from work and the place reverted to a male domain, but it is not known whether political discussion occurred between male family members. Yet, not all domestic life was a mix of the humdrum and hard work. Issues of law and order discussed in chapter four reveal that in most cases involving women, either deserted, disadvantaged, abused or unpaid for outside work, decisions in the Court of Petty Sessions at Mount Morgan found for the female claimant.⁹² Conversely, the chapter also suggests that charges against women tended to reflect names and offences that appeared repeatedly in the Bench books and Deposition Books of the local court.

The entire town of Mount Morgan reacted to the mine hooter that indicated the change of shift at different times of the day. However, social divisions between the workplace and the town were more significant than they might have been in a rural centre. Circumstances historically true of mining towns probably accounted for the presence of prostitutes at Mount Morgan, where the number of unattached males suggests an opportunity for the sex industry to flourish. In the American west, the

national conference of the Australian society for the study of Labour history, Wollongong, 1999, p. 79.

⁹² MMA, 6 April 1900; MMCPS, Bench Book, 29 May, 12 July, 1906, CPS 7B/S4, QSA.

women might be self-employed and work out of a saloon or dance hall.⁹³ In Australian towns they might also work the street near a hotel or boarding house, usually in the poorest working-class area where over time, the location carried the stigma of their enterprise.⁹⁴ Moreover, Rockhampton was a regional centre and port of entry that suggests arrival at the immigration depot of members of the 'tainted sisterhood', who either remained in the well populated city or moved on to the nearby mining town.⁹⁵

Camps existed at Mount Morgan throughout the period under study and beyond. As many Europeans and Aboriginal fringe-dwellers were at these camps as Chinese at their market gardens.⁹⁶ Whilst camp dwellers might be victims of circumstance, townspeople ignored or ridiculed women of the camps, where the anti-social behaviour or illegal activity of some caused camps *per se* to be suspect.⁹⁷ From the earliest years, prostitution, unspecified as it might have been socially or in local court records, was a thread of Mount Morgan culture. Furthermore, in depositions to police, both males and females used substitute expressions of verbal abuse for the term 'prostitute'.⁹⁸ As pointed out in chapter four, girls and young women convicted of moral misconduct or 'neglect' were incarcerated in Brisbane for perhaps five years.⁹⁹ Adult women charged and convicted of 'vagrancy' might be found guilty of unsound mind. They were committed to the Rockhampton Reception House and Lock Hospital for medical examination, assessment, and treatment for one month before transfer to the Insane

⁹³ Alexy Simmons, 'Red light ladies in the American west: entrepreneurs and companions', *Australian Historical Archaeology*, no. 2, 1989, p. 61.

⁹⁴ Chris McConville, 'The location of Melbourne's prostitutes 1870-1920', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, April 1980, pp. 92, 93.

⁹⁵ Raymond Evans, "'Soiled doves': prostitution in colonial Queensland", Kay Daniels (ed.), *So much hard work*, Sydney, 1981, p. 133; McConville, 'The location of Melbourne's prostitutes', see footnote no. 65, p. 96: McConville observes that a married male suburbanite was implicated in prostitution: 'Scraps of evidence...occasional letters reached police from suburban addresses asking for discreet inquiries regarding lost personal property'. See also *Critic*, 24 July 1903.

⁹⁶ William Toby, interview with the author, May 1993, MMOH.

⁹⁷ MMCPs, Deposition Book, 13 December 1898, CPS 7B/P4, QSA.

⁹⁸ MMCPs, Bench Book, 16 January 1905, CPS 7B/S4, QSA.

⁹⁹ MMCPs, Bench record and summons book for children's court cases 3 December 1908-15 August 1911, 25 February, 9 September 1908, CPS 7B/S3(b), QSA.

Asylum at Goodna.¹⁰⁰ Some were sent to the Magdalen Home in Brisbane, one of an international chain of asylums for prostitutes, unwed mothers and others, that provided institutionalised care, treatment, and practical training in domestic and laundry work.¹⁰¹

The Mount Morgan press reported on young females who attended spectator sports and were acquaintances or friends of males known to local journalists. However, the press derided as unseemly and morally dangerous the behaviour, strident voices and garish clothing of some other young females.¹⁰² Within the prevailing strictures of public behaviour before World War 1, the street at night was not a place for respectable females. The press alerted readers that roaming teenage girls were at moral risk:

If the parents of these street-paraders are too thoughtless of the well being of their daughters, it is up to the police to put a check on their giddy gadding and singularly suggestive language.¹⁰³

The local desire for the town's public image to be known as healthy and wholesome led townspeople to ignore environmental and moral evils. Dense smoke and dust visible by day reflected a haze through acetylene street lamps at night. For Margaret O'Brien, who saw beauty in a fearsome workplace, the lights at the mine shed a 'shiny glow':

And then at night, it was a lovely sight, it was lit up like a city...I would often stand on the verandah and watch the mine...we had a full view of it...I used to stand gazing, and he used to say, 'come inside', and I said, 'the mine, it's lovely'...It was too.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ MMCPS, Deposition Book, December 1897-7 July 1898, CPS 7B/P4, QSA; J.T.S. Bird, *The early history of Rockhampton, Rockhampton*, 1904. The Rockhampton Reception House and Lock Hospital was an early institution at Rockhampton, located by the 1860s near the Fitzroy River wharf. It later became known as the Immigration depot. See also Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, *Constructing a culture, a people's history since 1788*, Melbourne, 1988, for discussion of Lock hospitals, Magdalen asylums and refuges, pp. 44-49.

¹⁰¹ Paul W. Werth, 'Through the prism of prostitution: state, society and power', *Social history*, vol. 19, no. 1, p. 6; Russell, 'In search of woman's place', p. 29.

¹⁰² *Critic*, 12 May 1911.

¹⁰³ *Critic*, 27 November 1908.

¹⁰⁴ O'Brien, 9 July 1992 MMOH.

While Margaret admired the lights, men were working underground, but her husband no longer worked. He suffered already from miner's phthisis: 'It took him...it killed him.' Margaret's bittersweet recollections of an era of mining culture seemed to challenge her pragmatic assessment of Mount Morgan life: 'I'll say it was good!'¹⁰⁵

In seeking to collapse time to interpret life chances as perceived by the mostly 'unheard and unseen' women of Mount Morgan, this chapter has presented working class women of the town and mine families, disadvantaged women and a sub-culture of women who lived outside the law. The themes addressed relate to the significance of their place and space within a milieu of comfort or poverty, community care or enterprise, spiritual faith and temporal fear. Each theme that sought to 'find' the women revealed threads of their quintessential need: economic stability within an entrenched social system. Working class women worked, enjoyed and endured an era that reflected its own social change, but an image of busy housewives and working women veiled the commonality of their concern - a constant fear for the lives of miners and the continuity of the mine itself was. Thus, as women reflected dependence or independence within their own space, resilience and self-reliance were nurtured threads of a survival *mentalité*.

¹⁰⁵ O'Brien, 9 July 1992 MMOH.