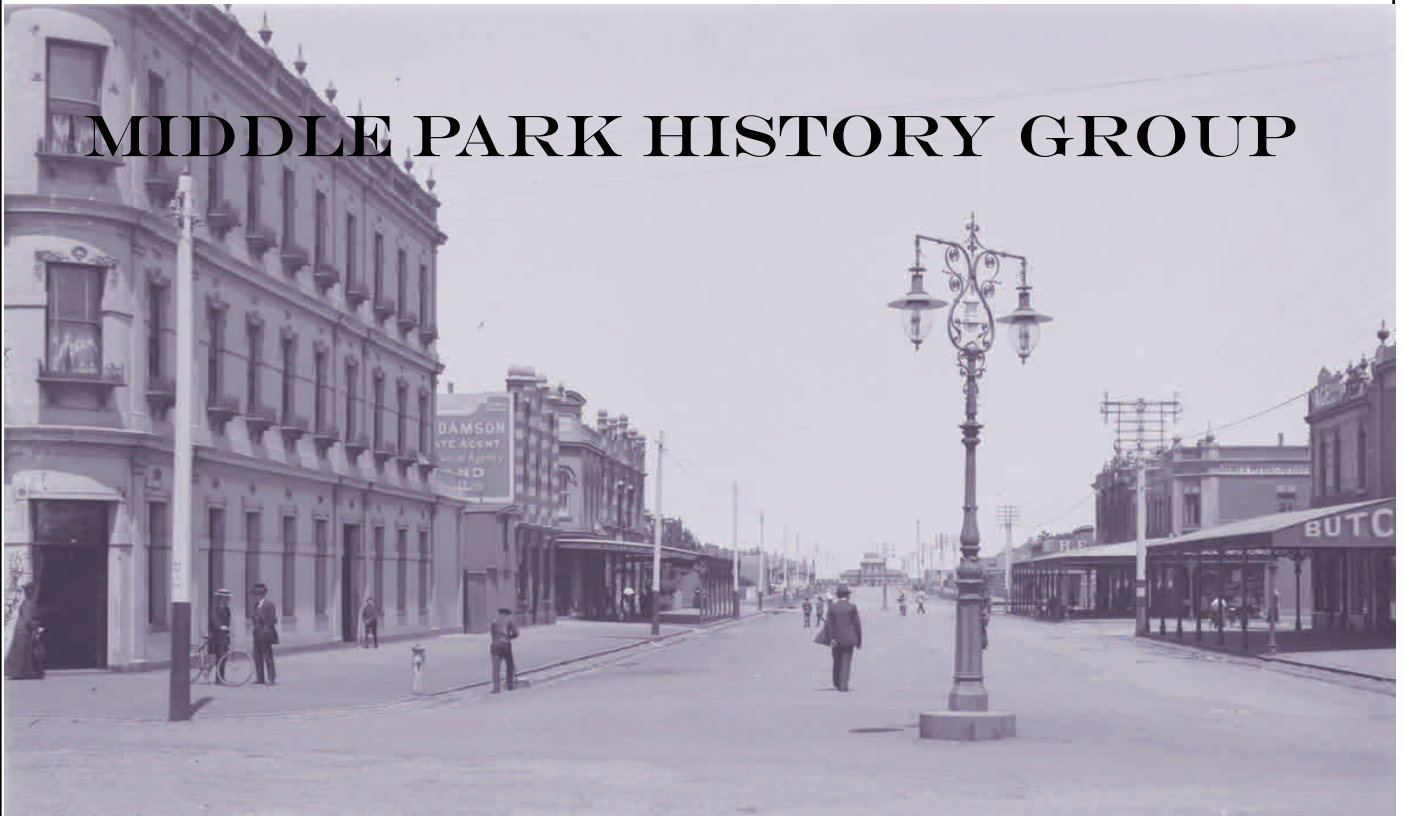


MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP



Editorial

The MPHG held its AGM by Zoom on 9 November 2020. More than 20 members “attended” and a new committee member, Abramo Ierardo, was elected.

As Meyer reports in his president’s report the history program at the Middle Park Primary School continued. Students were asked to submit an illustrated essay about a place or person in Middle Park. Despite the severe disruption of the pandemic, we were delighted to receive fifteen submissions which included every year level. I was able to assemble the contributions into a booklet. At a ceremony at the end of the school year each student

received a bound copy of the booklet plus a gift book voucher.

The essay collection, which is an inspiration to read, is now on the MPHG website:

<https://middleparkhistoryg.wixsite.com/mphg/special-publications>

The newsletter relies on Sonya Cameron for its report on what was happening here 100 years ago. Would a loose slate falling on a “lady’s” head get reported in a newspaper today?

Gary Poore

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The Middle Park History Group
Supported by The City of Port Phillip



101 years ago : Wesleyan Chapel

Sonya Cameron

This former church was built in 1891 and was originally known as the Wesleyan Chapel but had become the Methodist Church by 1902. Unfortunately, the belfry that adorned the roof had to be demolished in 1921 due to parts of it falling onto a pedestrian passing by. It was never rebuilt, as a larger church, a few doors down

Richardson Street, was already in the planning stages. Unfortunately no images exist of the church with its belfry.

The building is now occupied by the Vitality Group.

WIND SHAKES BELFRY.

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LADY'S NARROW ESCAPE.

A lady was passing along the footpath in front of the Methodist Church, Richardson street, close to Armstrong street, Middle Park, at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, when a loose slate fell off the belfry of the building and, grazing the rim of her hat, buried itself in a dress basket which she was carrying. A man who witnessed the lady's narrow escape from serious injury at once reported the incident to an officer of the church. Then it was observed for the first time that the belfry was swaying slightly in the wind. A light superstructure consisting of six supports and a pointed cover, a replica of the gabled roof of the church itself, the belfry rose about 8 feet above the roof of the church, and in line with the facade, which stands about 12 feet back from the footpath. There was no bell in the tower. Naturally her sensational experience gave the lady a great shock, but she departed without leaving her name. At once the footpath in front of the church was barricaded off in the interests of public safety, and an effort was made to get into

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touch with a builder to dismantle the belfry. An opinion was expressed that the storm which passed over Middle Park with considerable force late on Sunday afternoon, must have shaken the belfry and loosened some of the slates.

When spoken to on Wednesday the Minister at the church, Rev. Bride Barber, said that it was not probable that the church authorities would re-erect the belfry or replace it with another tower. The church had been erected 20 years. During the past two decades the number of local worshippers had increased to an extent that to accommodate them all a larger place of worship would be necessary. Consequently the church council was now, and had been for some time, giving consideration to a proposal to erect another church on the same side of Richardson street, but on land situated about the middle of the next block beyond Armstrong street. This site, now covered with residences, the church council had already acquired. It was expected that within 12 months the work of building a new church would be commenced. When the new church is erected the present one is to be altered for use as a school.

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Former Wesleyan Chapel/Methodist Church, 282
Richardson St in the 1970s

Reproduced from the *Record* (Emerald Hill, Vic. :
1881 - 1954), *Saturday 15 January 1921*, page 2

The Parker Sisters

Meyer Eidelson

The Parker Sisters – Pat, Marie and Eula Parker – of Middle Park were famous and creative talents during the golden era of radio and live entertainment, achieving great success both as a group and as individuals. In 2014 their memory was celebrated on an ABC Radio National program.

Their parents Bert and Elaine were musicians who ensured that the girls attained high skills in piano and musical structure. Being a very community-minded family, the girls often performed for local fund-raising events. During the family annual holidays to Hepburn Springs, they were the best entertainment at the guest house. So, the Parker girls were well used to the stage when they commenced singing in 1937 between movies with Harry Jacobs' band at the Palais Picture Theatre down the road. In 1939 Pat bravely wrote to orchestra leader, Harry Bloom at the ABC. Their success at this audition led to a long national and international career.

Over the next twenty years they shared stages and performed with other well-known radio and stage stars. Despite fame, the girls set about making all their own clothes for their ABC performances with limited wartime materials, took the local tram from Middle Park, and even maintained secretarial jobs.

During the war years they entertained injured soldiers, Australian and American troops and recorded the War Bond song for the government campaign. In 1954 the sisters performed at the

State reception for the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth.

Eula eventually moved to the UK where she enjoyed hits such as the TV series *The Stargazers* and international success when a song was recorded by Andy Williams.

Pat and Marie stayed in Australia, highly active in the formative years of television, radio and literature – writing songs, radio and TV scripts, pantomimes and books. Marie married Lou Toppano in 1945 and the couple later created their own band and school, nurturing the next generation of stars. Lou was musical director for HSV7's *Sunnyside Up*.

Active in TV and radio, Pat went on to become an author of children's books, her well-known *Hustler's Gold* included her father's stories of life as a child in gold-rush Bendigo.

Marie died in 1979. Eula passed away in Surrey, England in 1985 and Pat lived to be 91 and died in Queensland in 2009.

These three amazingly talented Australians played a major role in the success of radio and live entertainment but like many other stars of the time have been lost in history.

Reference: RN Radio ABC
www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/rarecollections/remembering-kathleen-mccormack-eula-parker/5167550



Parker Sisters at the microphone (Courtesy Marianne Young) Source ABC



The Parker Girls, circa 1932 (Courtesy Marianne Young) Source ABS

Neville Street

Neville Street is one of the narrower streets in Middle Park. Unusually, it runs in two parts, north and south of the Middle Park Primary School which occupies a whole block along its length.

James Flett Neville (1861–1942) was born in Port Melbourne, and worked as an architect. Later he was an inspector for the Public Works Department. Neville was a successful junior cricketer with local clubs. He was a South Melbourne Councillor between 1891 and 1894. James Neville was survived by three sons and two daughters.

Source: Robert Grogan, *Colonels, Colonials and Councillors: The Origin of Street Names of South Melbourne*, Cygnet Books, 2007



Mystery object of October 2020

The mystery object posted in October 2020 was a section of a mural at the Middle Park Primary School. Many will have recognised it as the work of Mira Morka (18 March 1928 – 27 August 2018), a local artist and identity in St Kilda. The whole mural is reproduced below. Legend has it that Mira worked with the school students to

realise this work. But so far we have not been able to discover when it was completed or how the school managed to arrange for her visit or residency. The Middle Park History Group would welcome further information from a parent or student from that time.



MPHG President's Report

Best wishes to everyone for this New Year. Hopefully it won't be too long before we can exchange greetings in person.

Recently the City of Port Phillip asked us to suggest some significant woman, past or present, of Middle and Albert Park for the commemoration of Women's History Month in March. A difficult task as we all know many women in our immediate circle who have played significant roles in both our lives and our community. In fact, there are some pretty formidable women who are my neighbours in Wright Street! I also immediately thought of our redoubtable members Rosemary and Diana who initiated MPHG less than ten years ago. Artist Esther Paterson was chosen as a significant Middle Park woman. Look out for posters of her around the local streets.

At the end of 2020 our editor Gary Poore had the pleasure of awarding book vouchers as prizes to Middle Park school children who wrote essays for us on significant people and places. Student Gavin Hazelwood of Grade Two wrote about his legendary grandmother Donna or 'Ding Dong' (circled) who was also once a student at his school. A bit of research also uncovered women I had not heard of before such as the 'Vegemite Girls' (Hilda and Laurel Armstrong) who coined the brand name and the amazing songster Parker Sisters whose story I have included in this newsletter.

I am sure you all have many further suggestions!

Regards

Meyer

President, Middle Park History Group



MPHG activities

Meeting schedule 2021

Until restrictions are eased MPHG will resume its regular two-monthly meetings by Zoom. At our next meeting:

**Dr Sophie Couchman will speak on
Mee How Ah Muoy – Architect**

Monday 1 February 2021 at 7:30 pm

Invitations and a link to the Zoom meeting will be sent to the email addresses of all members in the week beginning 25 January. Most of us should have some experience with Zoom by now – if not the app is easy to download.

Website

Thanks to the efforts of webmaster Paul Connor the website continues to improve. Recent additions are links to the Primary School booklet of essays, the new Historic Industries Walk, photos of our street facades in the 1970s, and an amazing video of a ride along our own Urban Forest.

Parts of just 15 streets have now been added to the “Committee for Urban Action photographic survey 1970–1974 street-scapes”. The MPHG is interested to learn of any errors in the data provided. We urge you to review your address on the website. You may get a surprise.

Your MPHG committee

President:	Meyer Eidelson
Vice-President:	Vacant
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison officer:	Diana Phoenix
Committee members:	Abramo Ierardo, Gary Poore