

Royal Western Australian Historical Society's
Annual Pioneers Memorial Service
on Sunday 28th May 1995 at St Bartholomews Chapel, East Perth Cemeteries,

Commemorating Frederick Sherwood. A Rugged and Stout Hearted Pioneer

Citation by Margaret Love nee Sherwood

Nine years before Enoch Barratt there arrived in the colony another of Western Australia's pioneering quiet achievers, our great-great-Grandfather Frederick Sherwood. Five members of his family are buried here, at the East Perth Cemetery. They are Frederick himself, his wife Jesse, his sons Henry and Alfred and his son in law George Young.

Frederick Sherwood was the son of Richard and Elizabeth Sherwood. He was born somewhere in Dorset in the year 1810. He had a very solid classical education, probably at one of those small classical schools that were to be found in vicarages all over England. The family seems to have moved to London in about 1821 where Richard Sherwood had a large and successful building company at 20 Cornwall Road, in the Parish of St. Mary at Lambeth, Surrey. In 1835 young Frederick married Jessie Hay daughter of Ninian and Ann Hay, of the Parish of St Giles-in-the Fields, Middlesex. By then England was in the grip of a terrible economic depression, there was mass unemployment, endemic disease and poverty on all sides. The situation must have offered no hope for the future and these two young people escaped to the colonies in August 1842.

They arrived in the Swan River Colony on the 4 January 1843 in the Brig the Lady Gray with their three small children, Jessie, Thomas and Frederick Junior. Five more children were born to them in the colony. They were Henry, Alfred, Charles, George and Annie.

Frederick Sherwood came out to the Swan River under contract to Marshall Clifton at Australind, as a surveyor, but by the time he arrived the Western Australian Company was in financial trouble and the expected job did not eventuate. To make matters worse, the colony was experiencing an economic depression nearly as severe as that in England, and Frederick must have feared that he had made a terrible mistake in coming. They lived in Fremantle for two years (where two more babies were born) until December 1845 when they moved to Perth. Sherwood found that in the Swan River Colony it was necessary to diversify in order to earn the kind of living that he expected for his family, and over the course of thirty years he worked variously as Accountant, Architect, Builder, Surveyor, School Teacher, Brewer and a part time Farmer. But he always called himself an architect/surveyor.

His first job in Western Australia was in 1843 as Civil Administrator (whatever that may have been, probably a kind of Town Clerk) in Fremantle. In August the same year, he advertised that he would survey land, make architectural drawings and adjust accounts. Two years later he successfully tendered for repairs to Perth Barracks (opposite Government House) and was congratulated for completing the job so cheaply. When he moved to Perth he was appointed a Clerk in Civil Service, and in the same year leased (later bought) from George Leake, the eastern moiety of Perth Town Lot L4, where Sherwood Court now is. There, "halfway down his block he built a brick house"-(If we look very closely at Horace Samson's painting of Perth from Mt Eliza we can see the house just where it ought to be.) In 1846 the Sherwood's were part of the St George's Cathedral Congregation.

In 1848 Frederick began his career in education when he was appointed Administrator to the Perth Boys School and in the following year, in 1849, he opened the Perth Classical School putting his solid classical education to good use in the evenings, for senior pupils of Perth Boys and any others. This school seems to have continued until 1865 and it is reported that he "enjoyed a reputation for the success with which he developed the abilities of his pupils" and that "a great number of the sons of early settlers received a good part of their education there". In 1850 he was appointed Assistant teacher at Perth Boys School (But the salary was very small).

When the convicts arrived to provide more labour for the colony, he clearly hoped that there would be an increased demand for his architectural skills and he advertised to that effect in 1851. But he had only limited response and took instead an administrative post in Fremantle which must have been more lucrative.

It must have been a very trying time for his wife Jessie, short of money and holding the fort alone in Perth while Frederick worked in Fremantle. Not only did she have a new baby and two unsuccessful pregnancies at that time but she also had the anxiety of coping with nineteen-year-old daughter Jessie who was in love with a young man of whom they did not approve. Letters from her uncle in England tell us of her homesickness and her dreams of returning for a holiday. But she and Frederick didn't allow their homesickness to interfere with their resolve to build a new life for their children. By 1855 the family included eight strong healthy children. Eldest son Thomas had started his pupilage in accountancy in the Commissariat Department, and elder daughter Jessie was an essential help to her mother in the house. Although they were still struggling to make ends meet the Sherwoods must have been feeling that at last things were starting to pick up a little.

But then, without any warning, like a bolt from the blue, tragedy struck Jessie was riding in a vehicle on the Fremantle road when it overturned and she was very badly injured. Worn out by the hardships of colonial life and too many pregnancies she had little chance of recovery. She died twelve days later on the 22nd July 1855. Like most of the pioneering mothers in the Swan River Colony Jessie had always been a full time mother and homemaker. She made everything they wore and everything they ate; she made the candles, the soap, grew the vegetables, looked after the children and did all the washing. On top of this it seems that she was also schoolmistress to her family. When she died they must have been absolutely devastated.

It is at this time too that George Young, who is also buried here, came into the story. He was a ticket-of-leave-man, born in 1828 in Frome, Somersetshire, the son of a weaver. He was a boot and shoemaker, was literate and a Church of England. He arrived on the Pyrenees on 1851 and quickly obtained work in his trader. Just one week before the tragic death of her mother he eloped with young Jessie, the beloved nineteen year old daughter of Frederick and Jessie Sherwood. These two headstrong young people were married on 14 July 1855 at the Congregational Church in Fremantle. (The fact that they were both Anglican and married in a Congregational Church is one of the clues that tell us that they eloped). Their children were Charles, Clara, (who married Joseph Ulrich), and Dora (who married Reuben Lewis), some of whose descendants are here with us today. George prospered, had his own boot making business in Barrack Street, between Hay and Murray Streets on the east side. Their house on the corner of Barrack and Murray Streets had a beautiful flower garden and a trellis with grapes. George always made beautiful shoes for his grandchildren and Jessie is remembered as a wonderfully warm and generous grandmother.

However, the star of today's story, is Frederick Sherwood. When his wife died he immediately returned to Perth to look after his children. It is more than likely that young Jessie and her new husband moved into the family home and that she took over her mother's housekeeping role. Frederick became Acting Senior Ordnance Clerk in the Control Department in Perth, a position which he held until his death. The following year in 1856 he advertised for additional pupils in the family schoolroom.

Ever on the look-out for ways to increase his income, in 1857 he founded the Swan Brewery at the southern end of his property. The land once occupied by the brewery is now under the road at the Esplanade end of Sherwood Court, but in those days it was the corner of Bazaar Street and what was called "Sherwood's Lane", just a lane nine feet wide which had originally allowed access to George Leake's little store on Bazaar Terrace. For sixteen years with the help of his two teenage sons Frederick and Henry, and some ticket of leave men, Frederick Sherwood owned and ran the Swan Brewery until his death. The brewery prospered. Its success allowed him to expand his interests and in 1860 he bought a section of farmland at The Springs, (just near what is now Tranby House), and progressively bought the rest of that location, owning all 960 acres of it by 1867. (The land stretched from the river at Maylands out to what is now Mt Yokine. Sherwood Street in Maylands is named after him). In 1861 the cottage there burned down, and he is reported to have "built a substantial brick house and barn with shingled roof. In the early 1860s he owned several properties in the Victoria District (which the family still owned in 1875) but disasters in those districts seem to have absorbed much of the income from the brewery.

In 1873 tragedy struck the family again taking the life of fourth son, twenty seven year old Alfred. He had toiled alone in the wilderness for ten years, trying to establish those farms at Champion Bay. But drought, flood, bushfires and repeated crop failures had broken his health. We don't know how he died but he was in Perth, in the care of his father and youngest sister Annie, and is buried here, at East Perth Cemetery.

The energy and intellect of the man who was Frederick Sherwood must have been quite extraordinary his lively mind constantly alert to opportunities to increase his income. At the age of 59 he was still working as Chief Ordnance Clerk in the Control Department, at the same time coordinating his family's interests, and running the Swan Brewery. That he continued to follow his interest and maintain his skills in architecture is evidenced by the fact that in 1872, when a hurricane blew down St Matthew's Church at Guildford, a new one was built to his design. Early in 1874 he won a competition for the best plan for improvements to the city's drainage system. After so many years of professional disappointment he must have been absolutely delighted. It is easy to imagine the warm smile and the inner rejoicing of the quiet and unassuming man as he at last accepted the approval of his peers. Several months after his death a barrel drain at Claisebrook was built to his design. (This would have helped Enoch Barratt's garden!)

On the 13th May 1874 an announcement inserted by his grieving family in the *Inquirer* read simply

Sherwood. At Perth on the 9th May, after a short and painful illness
Frederick Sherwood, Clerk in the Control Department: aged 64 years.

An obituary in the same edition reported that he had "devoted himself in his peculiar and unostentatious manner to promoting the best interests of his adopted country", and referred to him as "the designer of some of the principle edifices in Perth", (Unfortunately the writer did not identify those buildings for us.) He was what Australians today call a "quiet achiever". A much later writer who seems to have remembered him well described him as a "rugged and stout-hearted pioneer", and whatever that might mean, it sounds like a recommendation.