

PH.D THESIS PROPOSAL.

Topic:- How depressing?: The Impact of the 1890s and Great Depressions on Bendigo and District.

My plan is to undertake a comparative study of the 1890s and 1930s Depressions, as they impacted upon Bendigo and district. Were the day to day effects of these two Depressions on everyday people similar/different? What factors were at work? What do local people remember about the 1930s Depression?

With the goldmining industry being still so strong during the 1890s, did this earlier Depression affect this region of Victoria at all? If the impact was minimal on indicators such as unemployment, house and business ownership, evictions from rental houses, how atypical then was the Bendigo scene? In the *Annals of Bendigo* (a precis of the main Bendigo newspaper *The Advertiser*), Mackay noted that Bendigo "unquestionably had the honour of being the soundest city, commercially, in the colony". Was this observation correct? If yes, was goldmining the only reason why the Depression's impact was minimal? My job will be to prove or disprove Mackay's statement.

When I research the 1930s Depression, I want to take advantage of my Oral History training, my previous experience of conducting historical interviews with past and present staff at both the Bendigo Bank and North West Country Credit, and the many people aged 80+ years old residing in nursing homes in Bendigo and district.

My criteria for choosing interview candidates are-

- a. they must have been born c. 1918-1923. (earlier only if b. is applicable)
- b. they must have a clear memory.
- c. they must have resided in Bendigo, or within a 50 km. radius, during the Depression.
- d. their parents must have had a home or business loan with either the then Bendigo or Sandhurst Building Societies.

The last criteria allows me to make use of Bendigo Bank's extensive archival records which incorporate all their subsidiary companies amalgamated over previous years to form Bendigo Bank. I should be able to track my interviewees' parents financial records, and see what financial, and therefore day to day, impact the Great Depression had on specific families in Bendigo and district.

I will make contact with the numerous Aged Homes in Bendigo and surrounds early in 2004, and send a Letter to the Editor of the local papers, to locate suitable interviewees. I am aiming to find a mix of male and female interviewees, from different economic and geographic backgrounds, in order to gain maximum insights into the realities of day to day life for people during the Great Depression. This should then enable me to make intelligent comparisons, and place Bendigo into the wider picture of the studies undertaken of other cities/regions in Victoria eg. Janet McCalman's Struggletown.

This research will be ground-breaking on a number of levels. No one has examined the effects of either Depression on Bendigo and district. No one has conducted a series of interviews with older residents, focusing on their memories of the 1930s Depression. No one has made extensive use of Bendigo Bank's records to research an aspect of local History by following through particular families' experiences.

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2 pages on final
copy.

I have access to many primary source records in Bendigo to assist me. The City of Greater Bendigo's records incorporate ex Bendigo, Strathfieldsaye, Marong, Huntly, and Eaglehawk shires' records. These contain correspondence, Councils' Minutes, and Councils' Rate Books. The main local newspaper is on microfilm, plus ones from surrounding areas eg. Elmore paper (Huntly Shire). I have already referred to Bendigo Bank's records. Richard Pope's and I.E. Dyason's diaries both cover the 1890s.

M.S.M.

Bgo.

Dec. '03.

Thoughts (9th Jan '04)

1. Cross cuts of Nationalities
in families followed /
+ (pr) Interviews .
eg German (influenced by Vahland)
Irish (one at Stom - Sweeney??)
Cornish (wa Lurnow at Stom)
English