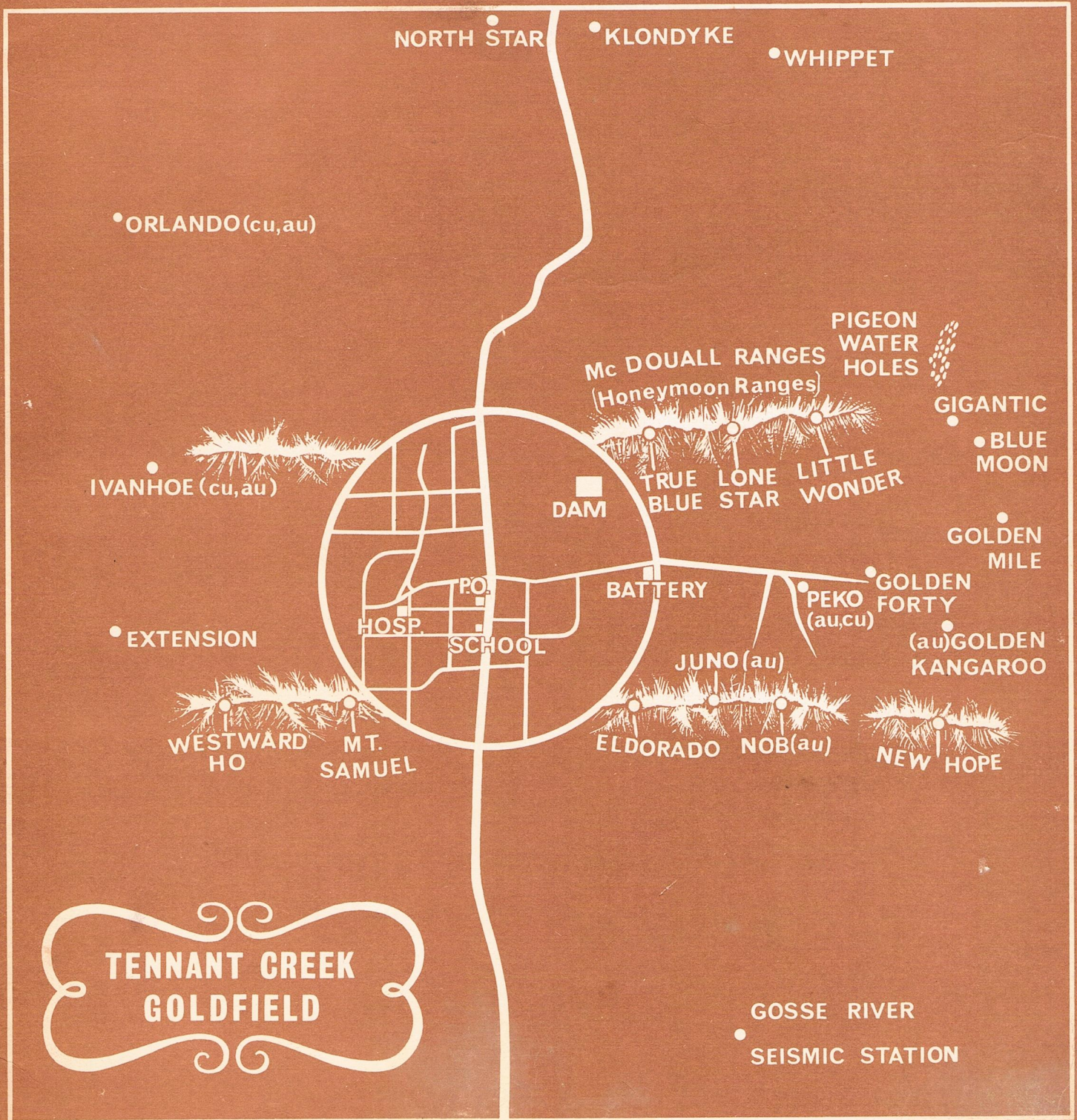


TENNANT CREEK YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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EARLY DEVELOPMENT

In the year 1860 John McDouall Stuart, on his first attempt to cross the continent from south to north, came across an easy flowing creek which he called Tennant after his associate, John Tennant, of Port Lincoln, South Australia.

When the Overland Telegraph was completed in 1872 a repeater station was located at the Creek ; and the original stone building, at present the station home of Mr. Con. Perry is in a wonderful state of preservation.

By 1920 several cattle stations were established as at Helen Springs and Banka Banka and travellers camped in the vicinity of the repeater station for water supply, and company.

The Great Northern was the first mine worked by gougers in the late 1920's and the early 1930's. The first ore treated at Peterborough was 9 tons from the Weal Doria going 50 dwts. to the ton and tailings 25 dwts. This mine was prospected by Jack Noble and Ralph Hadlock for Woodruffe, officer-in-charge of the Telegraph Station, to whom a native stockman by the name of Frank had brought in a specimen from that area.

By 1935 there were 140 leases being worked by gougers but not all proved successful.

"The smallest hotel in Australia" was the Dolly Pot Inn, built on the old Orlando Road, about 25 miles north-west of Tennant, in 1935 by Harold Nelson, father of Jock Nelson, who worked the original Orlando. The Inn, 6' x 10', was not big enough to handle a "rush" but served Orlando and several gouger shows. The method of disposal of the empties was to stand at the back door and throw them onto an ever-increasing heap, which, by the time the gallant little Inn closed its doors, was higher than the building itself. Although the building has since succumbed to white ants, the pile of empties still stands.

The town now consisted of iron huts and bough sheds sprawling around an hotel and store started by D. Kilgariff in 1932 on the site of the present Tennant Creek Hotel.

In 1934 the famous "Goldrush" or landgrab took place. The men desirous of owning a town block were armed with leases or "rights" and at a given signal were to race and peg a site pre-chosen. All these sites were east and west of the existing wagon route which is now Paterson Street. The Mining Warden, Norman Bell, was in charge of these proceedings with Constable Harold Frank Cameron of the Northern Territory Constabulary, to keep law and order. The starting point was the Wardens office and Mr. Bell fired a pistol into the air and approximately twenty men dashed to their chosen spot and pegged. Among these men was Paddy Ford who pegged on the south end of the town but this block has since changed hands. Al McDonald pegged a block and this has changed hands also. Mrs. C. Myers lives on the block pegged by her husband and is the only original owner living on a block pegged on that day.



THE MINES

In 1966 five company-owned mines are in big tonnage production — Peko Mine with its subsidiaries, Orlando, Ivanhoe and Juno. At Warrego, approximately 14 miles from Orlando, development commenced in June this year. This mine will be a challenge to all associated with its development as it contains a relatively low grade ore for the Tennant Creek Area.

Nobles Nob also has a large tonnage production and its subsidiary, Golden Kangaroo is to come into production shortly.

A few men are treating sands on old dumps.

It is a notable fact that Nobles Nob, the richest mine for its size in the world, was discovered by two men, Jack Noble with sight in one eye only, and Billy Weaber who was completely blind. Noble would find a likely looking specimen, describe it minutely to Weaber, who would handle it for some time, "seeing" with his fingers. The two men would then discuss it, pool their conclusions and decide yes or no.

BUILDINGS

Although in the hard rough years there was little time or facilities available for the finer arts, culture is slowly taking its part in the community.

From 1938 churches have been here. The Catholic Church of Christ the King was brought down in pieces from Pine Creek during 1936 and 1937 and reconstructed and completed in 1938. Father Dew was the first priest and Father Taylor, M.S.C., is now the parish priest. The Australian Inland Mission's first building still stands with Reverend O'Reilly in charge. This church has had its

"ups and downs" but has been always a haven for country folk and now a new church is under construction. The Church of England is established with Brother Paul of the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd in charge. Both Reverend O'Reilly and Brother Paul go "on patrol" around their far-flung parishes.

The Public School has expanded from one room with ten pupils in 1935 to a present enrolment of two hundred and fifty students. The staff includes the Headmaster and eight teachers. Evening classes are now available to adults in some subjects.

The C.W.A., a strong organisation here, has built a hall, which in the absence of a Civic Hall, is used by visiting artists including the Elizabethan Trust and Ballet Company, and also for local productions by talented members of the "Limelighters" local theatre group. A Children's Theatre has produced its first play with dancing supplied by the local ballet group.

A lending library by the Administration plays an important part, and it is encouraging to see a great number of children as members.

Sporting clubs are numerous and quite strong covering tennis, golf, basketball, softball and baseball. Strangely, it is the latter sport, baseball, which appears to be strongest and six teams compete annually. A team comprising all natives travels 100 miles from Warrabri Settlement to compete, in competition each Sunday.

Swimming can only be enjoyed at the pool at Nobles Nob mine and, after a few good showers of rain in the "Waterhole" in the Tennant Creek, 7 miles from the township. However, the "Waterhole" has been completely dry for many months.

The town water supply has progressed from delivery to home tanks by water cart, or to less fortunates sold at 6/- for 44 gallon drumful in 1935, to the present system of reticulated water from wells 9 miles south of the town at £12 per 100,000 gallons with excess rate charges. This has changed a drab brown town to one of growing colour as trees, shrubs and lawns begin to flourish.

Football, although popular, was abandoned as too many players received severe injuries, particularly extensive gravel rash, after contact with the dry, gravelly ground.

Two hotels, the Tennant Creek Hotel built in 1932 and the Goldfields Hotel established in 1936 cater for a continuous summer thirst for a population of 1,500, of which half would be hardworking men. They do a good job and there is very little disorder for such a vigorous town.

Trading stores cover a good range and a chemist has joined the ranks, which gives, with the other stores, a good comprehensive range and excellent service to the people of Tennant Creek.

Medical services were primitive in 1932, when a trained nurse gave voluntary help to the injured in a room in an old Mines Administration building south of the Post Office and the flying doctor flew in to remove critical cases to Alice Springs. On one occasion he landed in the light from cars on a spot between the Memorial Club and the hospital after the ground had been cleared of spinifex. The first hospital building was one of the weatherboard opened in 1937 and the first Resident Medical Officer was Doctor Rupert Catalano. During the war the army constructed a concrete front onto this building. Opposite the hospital the army erected a signals office which eventually became the Memorial Club.

Battery No. 3, now the only one of three Government batteries is at present treating sands. The original purpose of the erection of these plants, for the treatment of gougiers ore, no longer exists.

The police station and courthouse are situated on the east side of Paterson Street. The courthouse was erected in 1962 and there are also new barracks. The staff consists of two sergeants, four uniformed constables and one plain clothes detective. They patrol an area north to Banka Banka station, south to Wycliffe Wells and east to Frewena. The first constable, stationed in a tent at the Repeater Station at the 7 mile was Harold Frank Cameron. Constable G. Stott who succeeded him moved the tent to the present site in Paterson Street, Tennant Creek.

The Old Timers Home situated in Ambrose Street was built by the Australian Red Cross and is administered by a local committee and run entirely by local donations. The personnel of Nobles Nob, Peko, Orlando and Ivnhoe Mines contribute regularly with supplementary donations from the companies. Generous help is also given from the town residents. All senior citizens who have resided in the Tennant Creek district for a number of years are eligible to live in the Old Timers Home.

Tennant Creek has been honoured by a visit from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh on March 16th, 1963. A large area was canopied at the aerodrome with hessian to protect the visitors and a large crowd from the relentless sun.