

Woollahra Library

presents

Rose Bay Memories



An exhibition of photographs taken by the family
of Dr Leslie Parker at Rose Bay, 1918 to 1920.

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Unfortunately, Jeannie R Mollison and her family were not listed on the births, deaths and marriages indexes, perhaps indicating that they had immigrated at some stage from either overseas or interstate. *Sands* discloses two Mollisons living in Sydney at the time of her marriage: a Jack Mollison of 145 Victoria Street and a James Mollison of 8 Bent Street, North Sydney. Since the Parkers were married at Mosman, and it was common practice to marry in the bride's church, we could take a long guess and say that James Mollison was her father.

Library staff selected 100 of the images for inclusion in the *Rose Bay Memories* exhibition. A few of the images that were duplicates or could not be identified were omitted.

The Parker Rose Bay photographs were obviously taken by an amateur cameraman -they have flaws, and can be off-centre. The ravages of time and the limitations of the glass plate medium have also left their mark. In spite of (or maybe because of) their flaws, the images convey a lot of "atmosphere". They show something of what life was like for a family in Rose Bay in the early part of this century when the area was well and truly settled with 'modern' conveniences but still had lots of wide open space.

For many years Woollahra Library staff have been aware of two small boxes hidden away amongst the Local History collection which contained about 100 glass plate negatives. Although they have been in the Library since before any current staff member worked there, their origin was not documented and where and from whom they had come was something of a mystery.

A cursory examination of the negatives indicated that they were of interesting scenes from the life of a family who lived in the Rose Bay area sometime around the First World War. However, as glass plate negatives are difficult to handle in a modern library setting and most photographic labs are not willing to work with glass plates, staff have "left well enough alone" and worked on other more pressing local history collection development matters.

During 1994 when the Library's reference staff were considering a theme for an activity for 1995 Heritage Week activities, it seemed that a project to develop the images on these glass plate negatives, and to provide public access to them, would be ideal.

A small photographic lab which was able to take contact prints from the negatives was located. The next step was to attempt to discover the origin of the subjects of the images.

A visual inspection of the images indicated that the subjects were a family comprising a couple, two children aged about 5 and 8 years old and a baby. A number of other children were in the scenes but we thought they were playmates of the children of the family who happened to be about at the time. The location of the photographs was obviously Rose Bay.



Mrs Parker and the children in the garden of Amadown

Many of the negatives were in paper envelopes with handwritten notes to indicate dates ranging from August 1918 to August 1920. There were also notes relating to the subjects of the photographs. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that someone had rifled through the negatives in the past and had not replaced them in the envelopes to which they belonged! Still, the notes gave some clues about the origins of the negatives:

- Bubble blowing
- Fishing Nielsen Park
- R & D dress togs[?] out
- Parsley Bay
- On Nielsen Park
- D & Stephen mending cart
- Dover Road Aug '18
- Dick & Ruth on side grass Aug '18
- LRP & Ruth near Rose BCh Aug '18

Going back to *Sands Directories* for 1911, we find that Josiah Parker JP was a chemist of 221 William Street, Sydney who had a private residence at Livingston Street, Burwood. The discovery that Josiah Parker had a shop in William Street in the early part of this century brought to mind a very famous work by Professor Max Kelly (*Faces of the Street : William Street Sydney 1916*, Paddington : Doak Press, 1982), in which he presents photographs taken by Sydney City Council planners in 1916 prior to the demolition of the buildings of one side of the street for road widening. Sure enough, the photographs of 221 William Street in 1916 show the signs of “Stanley and Josiah Parker, Chemists.”



Richard and Ruth display their toys and books

Leslie Richard Parker married Jeannie E Mollison at Mosman in 1911. They had two children. Richard G. was born in 1913 and Ruth L. in 1915. (A third child was also born in 1920, however the indexes cease at 1918).

Leslie Richard Parker was born at Orange in 1874 to Josiah and Henrietta Matilda (nee Gand) Parker who in turn had been married at Goulburn in 1863. Josiah Parker was born at Bathurst/Hill End in 1841. The Parkers were therefore a relatively old established family.

Dr. Leslie Parker would have been 37 at the time of his marriage in 1911, and 85 when he received the letter from the bank in 1959. Dr Parker last appears in the *Sydney Telephone Directory* (copies of which are held by the Library on microfiche) in 1961.

Woollahra Council's Rates Books also show that in the later 1950s ownership of the property was transferred to a company called *Amadown* until it was sold in 1968. Dr. Parker's address in the Rates Books is also given as being *Amadown*, Berringa Avenue, Warrawee from 1949, so it is possible he may have lived in Warrawee from 1949 while continuing his association with a medical practice at Rose Bay.

Long term residents remember Dr Parker's son Richard practising medicine in Rose Bay. Dr Richard Parker seems to have used *Amadown* as his surgery and is remembered by other local medical practitioners testifying to professional relationships that endured for at least half a century.

Tree and caretakers cottages Nielsen Park
Dick photograph Ruth Aug 1918
Dick bicycle Ruth cart Aug 1918
Ruth watering garden Aug 1918
D Wheelbarrow R old car Aug 1918

So the children (Dick and Ruth) had a father ('LRP') and they lived at Rose Bay, perhaps at Dover Road, from where they visited Rose Bay Beach, Nielsen Park and Parsley Bay. The best clue to the origin of the negatives was from an addressed envelope which was used as a lining for one of the boxes. When we prised it from the bottom of the box and examined it, it turned out to be from the Commercial Banking Co of Sydney, postdated August 1959 and addressed:

Dr L R Parker
738 New South Head Road
Rose Bay NSW

Was this the LRP who appeared to be the father in the photographs? If he had been at least 25 when the photographs were taken, then by 1959, he would have been somewhere around 65 - entirely possible. Or perhaps this was a son or daughter.

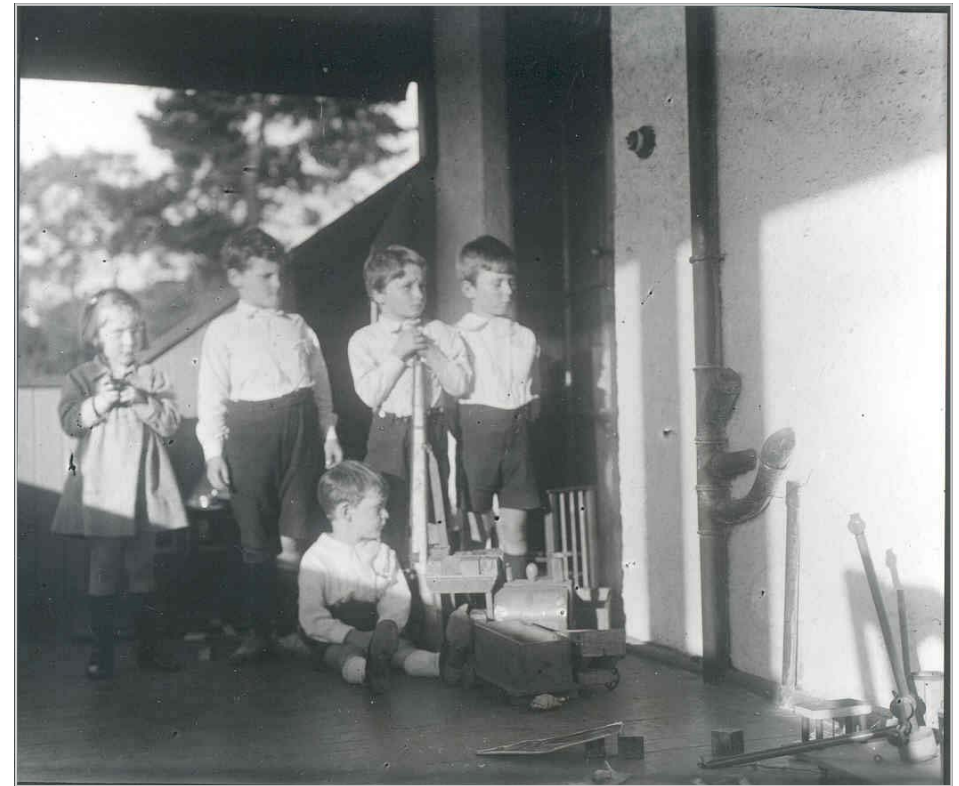
Copies of the *Sands Directories*, which are held at the Library on microfiche, were then checked. These directories were produced by the *John Sands Company* from 1859 to 1932 and in the days before telephone directories were common, were an important aid to commerce. As well as arranging householders and businesses alphabetically, *Sands* also arranged them by street address so that it was a relatively easy matter to discover who lived at a particular address year by year.



Dr Leslie Parker and Ruth

The 1932 edition of *Sands* disclosed that “L R Parker MB Ch.M” lived at 736-738 New South Head Road, Rose Bay on the corner of Caledonian Road. (The 1925 entry also showed that the numbering of New South Head Road had changed so that prior to 1925, the property was numbered 402). Woollahra Council’s Rates Books from the period (which the Library holds on microfilm) show that the property was known as *Amadown*, and was built in 1915. 736-738 New South Head Road, Rose Bay is now a series of shopfronts on the corner of Caledonian Road built in front of a 1915 style house. The house behind the shops appears to be the same as

the house featured in the photographs - substantially altered, but still standing!



The children playing soldiers

Being reasonably satisfied that the photographs were of the Parker Family, it was then an easy matter of finding out a little more about the family by checking the computerized births, deaths and marriage indexes the Library holds on CD-ROM: