Remembering Territory families

Alice in the 1920s

The Afghans were there with their camels. I supposed in those days the camels, might’ve been about 400 there – I’m going to digress a little bit – and there would be no fences or anything like that, or very few. Where the hospital is now used to be the government well, and that’s where all the stock used to water – the camels, the horses, the cattle, donkeys too, were there. As a result there was a lot of animals wandering around Alice Springs, and so my recall of Alice Springs in those days is, it was a pretty dusty place.

Alice Springs’ main street was then Todd Street, as it is now, and that was just a dusty road down the centre – no footpaths, no water reticulation, no power. The lucky ones who might’ve had water reticulation was the government buildings and places like the Stuart Arms Hotel. Of course, there was no sewerage...

Because Oodnadatta used to be the rail-head for many years in South Australia, and eventually as the train – the Old Ghan – found its way into Alice Springs in 1929, it was quite interesting to see the number of old Oodnadatta people who picked up their houses – literally picked up some of their houses – and shifted to Alice Springs, because that was the rail-head. This was the new chance. This is where Wallis Fogarty’s and the other places gradually put in their general stores, to supply the people in the bush.

I might say too, I guess, about that time, the first bank came to Alice Springs – maybe a little later, the ES&A Bank – and so that was opposite the Stuart Arms Hotel, in an old tin building. That was in Todd Street. In those days there were some magnificent river gums in Todd Street, and there was on huge one outside the front, or the side of the ES&A Bank, which regularly – one of its boughs fell on the bank and gave it a bit of a squash.

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