

Donovan News

Number 12

Celebrating Thirteen Years of Donovan & Associates

Spring 1993

... keeping in touch with clients and other friends ...

Call in a Historian

An important theme frequently promoted in this newsletter is that historians are versatile people whose skills in researching and writing can be put to many purposes in addition to producing learned books for people to read. We have regularly pointed out that historians' skills can be used in many diverse business-related activities because there are many issues in which companies become embroiled which are essentially historically based. That is where historians could probably be used more efficiently and be more effective than many other consultants. They could be less expensive too!

Earlier this year CRA contested the ownership of Mt Kare Mine with another company in Papua New Guinea. The resolution of the dispute turned on the original agreement between the parties; it was a historical rather a legal question. More recently, CSR faced a heavy damages suit in the United States over the supply of blue asbestos to the market there. This case was also about an essentially historical issue: the date when CSR first shipped blue asbestos to America.

In the United States, in particular, historians have long been used as expert witnesses for both the prosecution and defence because of the credibility they are able to lend to an issue. This has been rare in Australia except in issues associated with heritage buildings.

In the February 1991 edition of *Business to Business South Australia*, Peter Donovan pointed out the problems confronted by companies overseas because of the earlier contamination of sites and the costs associated with decontaminating these. This issue also looms large in Australia where historians are admirably trained to provide site histories for companies and organisations intending to acquire and develop new sites but which are concerned not to assume the expense of having to clean up these sites.

There are many instances - other than the need to produce a commemorative history - when it makes sense to consult a historian.

... I SWEAR ON
MAKING CLARK'S
A HISTORY OF
AUSTRALIA TO
TELL THE TRUTH...



PROJECT UPDATE

Donovan & Associates has been active since the previous *News*. Several projects continue and new ones have commenced.

The Roche and O'Neil projects have virtually been completed but await final presentation.

Perhaps the most significant of the continuing projects has been the oral history of the Australian Medical Association (AMA). To date interviews have been conducted in Adelaide and Sydney. At this stage the project has targeted older members who are able to shed light on the early days of the AMA. Since the Association started as recently as 1961, there remain several people who can provide this information.

Our site history of Sunnybrae Farm, Adelaide's one-time sewage farm, was completed in accordance with arrangements with the Corporation of Enfield. A report on the project is included on page 3.

Late in August Peter Donovan was invited to lecture students at the Port Adelaide College of TAFE about aspects of writing local history.

Peter was back to Port Adelaide later that week to attend the launch of *Collins*, the first of Australia's new submarines. **D & A** has had a continuing association with the Australian Submarine Corporation which has given Peter the opportunity to see the first of the submarines through from keel laying to launch.

New Projects

Donovan & Associates has won several new projects since the previous *News*.

Perhaps the most interesting, and certainly one of the more unusual projects, was the commission from Tourism South Australia to prepare a strategy document setting out a plan whereby various interested organisations in South Australia could respond suitably to the imminent beatification and eventual canonisation of Mother Mary MacKillop. A report on this project and some of its implications adjoins this column.

Then, in August **D & A** was commissioned to write a history of the South Australian Pastoral Board in order to commemorate a century of operations. The Board was created under the *Pastoral Act* of 1893 to manage the pastoral leases in South Australia. The project will be conducted over two years and progress will be reported upon in more detail in a subsequent issue of the *News*.

In mid-September, **D & A** in a joint venture with Austral Archaeology was successful in winning the tender to undertake a heritage survey of the Flinders Ranges for the Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment and Resource Management. The team brought together for the project includes Peter Donovan, Barry Rowney, Patricia Sumerling and June Waters under the **D & A** banner, with Justin McCarthy and Greg Jackman from Austral Archaeology. This project is to be conducted over 18 months and more detailed reports will be included in later issues of the *News*.

Continued on page 3

Marketing Mary MacKillop

IF WE RATE A DEVELOPMENT WITH ONE HALO-IT'S TACKY.. TWO HALOS IS BETTER..



In June, Tourism South Australia appointed **D & A**, with The Marketing Centre, to prepare a strategy document designed to promote and interpret the life and achievements of Mary MacKillop, whom the Pope is expected to beatify early in 1994. Key personnel of the team included Peter Donovan and Barry Rowney, with Clark Reschke of the Marketing Centre.

This project grew from an awareness by the Minister of Tourism of the opportunities available in Mary MacKillop's

beatification and later canonisation to attract tourists to South Australia and key MacKillop sites. At the same time there was an awareness of the unique features of any promotion of Mary MacKillop and the need to minimise the possibilities of crass commercialisation.

Interest in Mary MacKillop is - or will be - particularly associated with sites, dwellings and other physical items identified with her and with important incidents in her life. Perhaps the most significant site is the chapel at Mount Street, in North Sydney, where Mary MacKillop is buried. This site, however, is outside the scope of the strategy document as are other sites in Victoria and elsewhere beyond South Australia.

Nevertheless, there are many sites in South Australia, the relative significance of which can be distinguished by the manner in which they are identified and associated with key events and developments in Mary MacKillop's life. There is the Woods-MacKillop Schoolhouse in Penola in the State's south-east, built in early 1867 and in which Mary taught before she took her vows as the first Sister of St Joseph. There is also the original convent at St Mary's College in Franklin Street, Adelaide. Here, in the chapel in 1871, Mary MacKillop was excommunicated and several of her colleagues were expelled from the infant Institute. Another important site is the chapel and crypt at St Joseph's Convent at Kensington which was built under instructions from Mary MacKillop in 1875-76 and which served as the motherhouse of the Sisters of St Joseph until 1888.

At one level the implementation of this strategy document can be considered as a plan to manage, promote and develop the several key sites associated with Mary MacKillop. Indeed, in addition to preparing the general strategy document, **D & A** was also commissioned to prepare development options for the key sites at Penola, Franklin Street and Kensington.

Both projects were given a sense of urgency when, on 7 July 1993, Pope John Paul II announced that he was to beatify Mary MacKillop at a date to be determined.

A Farm by Another Name

An interesting project noted in the previous *News* and completed since that time has been the compilation of a site history of Sunnybrae Farm for the Corporation of Enfield. Sunnybrae Farm is the current name of what was Adelaide's sewage farm.

Adelaide was the first city in Australia to have a water-borne sewerage system, and the one-time sewage farm was an integral part of this system when it was established in the 1880s.

The sewage farm was designed to operate on a broad irrigation principle. After passing through strainers to remove the solid waste, the effluent passed through filter beds and was then spread over the farm by means of a network of cement concrete channels and wooden troughs. Work on constructing the farm buildings began in 1882 with the cowshed and dairy, and the roothouse and cheeseroom. The following year construction began on the homestead, stables and implement shed. By 1884 the farm was cultivating about 50 acres of lucerne, 35 acres of rye grass and had 165 acres of barley and wheat under cultivation.

No sooner was the farm established when those responsible for its operation had to contend with criticism of its activities and concern from people who feared that the deep drainage would actually promote the spread of contagious diseases rather than help eliminate them. As a consequence, the dairying activities ceased soon after they started, thereby setting the pattern for the gradual curtailing of the farm activities in response to concerns of the public. By 1886, the farm was primarily concerned with grazing and fattening stock and growing root crops and other fodder plants.

Regardless of complaints about the farm, it continued to be used until the new sewage treatment works at Bolivar became operational in 1966. No longer required for its original purpose, the site of the sewage farm was progressively subdivided and sold off in several large parcels, primarily for commercial and light industrial use as part of the Regency Park Industrial Estate.

The State government transferred control of the farm buildings and 1.8 ha of land to the Corporation of Enfield on 31 December 1981. Since then the corporation has been responsible for attracting grant funds for the conservation and re-use of the complex. The homestead was the first part of the complex to be restored and, late in 1984, it was opened as a restaurant. Since then, the remaining buildings have also been restored with the work being finally completed in June 1993.

Having expended considerable sums on the conservation of the remaining buildings, the Corporation of the City of Enfield has been eager to collect the history of the farm in order to aid the interpretation of the surviving buildings.

OH YES—THIS TABLE WAS
IN THE THICK OF THINGS
WHEN SUNNYBRAE FARM
WAS A SEWAGE FARM...

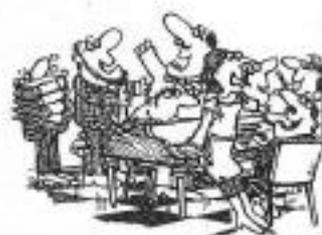


New Projects, continued

Donovan & Associates has also been associated with a publication proposed for 1994 when South Australians celebrate the centenary of women's suffrage. Ms Karabi Mukherjee, a lecturer at the University of South Australia, completed an oral history project during which she collected the experiences of Indian women who had migrated to Australia. **D & A's** task has been to edit the transcripts to make them suitable for publication.

D & A has again been associated with Bernie O'Neil, this time transcribing interviews undertaken during the course of his work on the history of the Department of Mines and Energy.

D & A has planned a new publication for 1994, a collection of stories in which historians have recounted their more memorable experiences. These are the sorts of stories that have generally been recounted only in bars or commonrooms and have remained in oral form. The idea for the collection sprang from reflections on the experiences encountered in the course of many **D & A** projects, but are of the type experienced by most historians. Thus, many historians can relate to the stories associated with having to spend precious research time in unfamiliar and noisy archives overseas.



In the Media

History research and writing rarely takes place in the public spotlight and most of the work of **Donovan & Associates** is accomplished with little fanfare. However, there was something of an exception when Peter Donovan undertook a visit to Penola in South Australia's south-east during the course of work on preparing the MacKillop strategy document.

A week prior to the visit, Peter organised interviews with three people in Penola who have particular perspectives on visitation to the Woods-MacKillop Schoolhouse. He arranged the interviews for Tuesday, 6 July, and slipped quietly into Penola late on the Monday afternoon.

Because of the low profile of the project to that time he was surprised to learn from ABC regional radio at 7.30 am on the Tuesday that he was that day in Penola to document sites associated with Mary MacKillop: the news story was not quite accurate, but in the circumstances was of little real consequence. The early surprise was compounded later in the morning while Peter was at the District Council offices after having spoken with the Mayor. When just about to leave for lunch the secretary informed him that a reporter from the ABC at Mount Gambier was on the phone wanting to speak to him. Not able to do so immediately he promised to ring back later in the afternoon and correct some of the misinformation that had been given earlier in the morning.

After lunch Peter went to the Woods-MacKillop Schoolhouse and had no sooner arrived when he was bailed up by a reporter and photographer from the *Naracoorte Herald* seeking details about the project. The mystery as to how so many people knew of Peter's itinerary remained until the District Clerk confessed that he was the one to have spread the word.

Peter returned to Adelaide on the Tuesday evening, but was not yet free of attention from the media. That evening, Australia heard the news that the Pope was to beatify Mary MacKillop at a date to be determined. The forthcoming beatification was big news next morning and so too was news of **D & A's** MacKillop project which was officially acknowledged in a press release from the Minister of Tourism. During the next few days Peter once more had to contend with reporters from the *Advertiser* and the *Border Watch*.

However, the news remained current for a few days only and matters soon returned to relative normality, enabling the project to be completed without any more distractions.



Barry Rowney in front of the Woods-MacKillop Schoolhouse at Penola



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