

Westgarthtown suffrage connection



Johanna Wuchatsch and her family, c. 1887

In 1891, Johanna Caroline Wuchatsch was a signatory to a groundbreaking petition to give women the right to vote in Victoria. As we get set to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of women's suffrage in this state, Robert Wuchatsch traces the life of this remarkable woman.

INSIDE

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Vale Muriel Wuchatsch | p3 |
| Forgotten Germans | p4 |
| Image Gallery | p6 |
| Out & About | p7 |
| Heritagecare | p8 |

In January 2008, the Victorian Government called on descendants of Victoria's first suffragists to come forward and be part of celebrations to mark 100 years since women won the right to vote in November 1908. Victoria's decision to grant women votes was preceded by New Zealand (1893), South Australia (1894) and Western Australia (1899). Women gained the

right to vote at a federal level in 1902, before England and America.

The right to vote for Victorian women came 17 years after a monster petition had been presented to the Victorian parliament. Johanna Caroline Wuchatsch (née Graff) of Epping was a signatory to this petition.

Victoria's 1855 constitution did not give women the right to vote. In 1891, Premier James Munro said he would introduce a bill for women's suffrage if it was demonstrated that ordinary women wanted this right. During a six-week door knocking campaign, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Victorian Temperance Alliance, together with other women's suffrage groups, collected signatures from women throughout Victoria. The Women's Suffrage Petition, as it has become known, stated 'that government of the People, by the People and for the People should mean all the People, not half'.

The now historic petition, which consists of 30,000 signatures pasted on a fabric backing rolled onto a cardboard spindle, was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in August 2007. It has also been nominated for a UNESCO Australian Section of Memory of the World. Notable signatories include Jane Munro, wife of the Premier; Margaret McLean (as Mrs William McLean), head of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; author Bessie Lee; and Margaret Higinbotham, wife of controversial politician and lawyer George Higinbotham.

Johanna Caroline Wuchatsch, the daughter of Johann and Johanna (née Hobrack) Graff, was born in Preske, near Bautzen, Saxony on 2 February 1841. She arrived in Australia with her parents, three sisters and two brothers aboard the *Pribislav* on her ninth birthday — 2 February 1850. The Graff's, like the Gruetzner, Rosel, Wuchatsch and Zimmer families who also settled at Westgarthtown, were Wends, a Slavic race which has lived in Germany for about 1,500 years and have their own language and culture.

The Graff family's first few weeks in Australia were spent at the Immigrant's Home in King Street, Melbourne. They moved to Westgarthtown in March 1850 and settled on 50 acres on the corner of today's High and Main Streets, Thomastown (see *Friends of Westgarthtown News* Vol. 2 No. 1, March 1998). The old bluestone house Johann and Johanna Graff built in 1873, the family's third at Westgarthtown, still stands at 1 Thomas Street.

In 1853, when she was 12 years old, Johanna 'was working for Mrs Neumann of where is now Mernda [Cooke's Road]. The Yan Yean reservoir was being constructed and they used to carry milk and sell it to the navvies and masons who were engaged in the work'. On 1 November 1864,

Johanna married Johann Wuchatsch Jr (1838-1892), in a double wedding ceremony at the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church. Also married that day were her husband's sister Johanna Wuchatsch and Johann Seeber.

Johanna and John, as her husband was known, moved to 158 acres of land he owned in Cemetery (now Ahern's) Road, Epping where they built a four-roomed bluestone house, milking sheds, stables, yards and fences. There Johanna bore a family of 10 and possibly more children, although several died in infancy.

John was active in community affairs. He served on the local Schools Board of Advice and was a member of the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church, Salvation Army, Thomastown Blue Ribbon Mission and the Independent Order of Rechabites' Fidelity Tent No 75, a temperance movement. Johanna was also a member of the Salvation Army and it was through her temperance interests that she came to sign the 1891 suffrage petition.

Following John's death in 1892, Johanna carried on the farm at Epping with the help of her eight surviving children, seven of whom were sons. One son, Albert Wuchatsch, was a councillor for the Shire of Epping from 1914-16 (see *Friends of Westgarthtown News* Vol. 7 No. 2, September 2003). During the 1890s, she also donated prizes for students at Caulfield Grammar School, which her son Frederick William (Bill) Wuchatsch had attended from 1889-92.

On her death in 1923, aged 82, the Preston Leader noted:

"A brother of Mrs Wuchatsch, Charles, was killed [while gold mining in 1852] at Forest Creek, near Castlemaine, by a burning tree falling on him. The late John Graff, of Doreen, was another brother, & Mrs Lehmann & Mrs Zimmer [of Epping], both long dead, sisters. Strange to say Mrs Wuchatsch was always the most delicate of the family, but lived to a ripe old age of 82 years, then succumbing to an attack of pneumonia...During her lifetime Mrs Wuchatsch was a woman of fine character, her hospitality and goodness of heart being a by-word throughout the whole district. Never a deserving case was turned away from her door, and her good works were known far and wide. She was laid to her long rest in the Westgarth[town] cemetery, a large cortege of friends following the remains to the place of interment."

■ To find out who else signed the petition, go to www.parliament.vic.gov.au/WomensPetition

■ Back issues of *Friends of Westgarthtown News* mentioned in this article are available for download at www.westgarthtown.org.au/archives

Muriel Jean Wuchatsch

20 March 1918 – 23 December 2007

Muriel Jean Wuchatsch was born on 20 March 1918, the fifth of seven children to John and Caroline Dunn (née Hudson). She was born in their small weatherboard house which stood just east of the railway line from Robert Street, where a pine tree still stands, at 398 Station Street, Lalor.

Muriel attended Thomastown and Epping Primary Schools and Sunday School at the Thomastown Methodist and Epping Anglican churches. In 1933, aged 15, she was sent to Wuchatsch's Farm to housekeep, when her future husband Norman Wuchatsch's elderly Aunt Christina took ill. Norman's mother, Elizabeth Martha Wuchatsch (née Proposch) died in 1905 when he was just 3 years old, so his Aunt did all the housework, as well as the milking. Norman and his father Charles, then aged 73, did all the other work on the 92 acre farm. Muriel later told her children she didn't have any choice about going there to keep house. One Sunday when she arrived home from Sunday School, her mother said "You've got to go to Wuchatsch's" It was an order, not a request. 74 years later, she was still there and had grown to love the place. So her whole 89 years was lived within one kilometre of her birthplace, first when the area was part of Thomastown's northern farmlands and later when it became known as Lalor.

Aunt Christina Wuchatsch died in 1935. Not long after, Norman sold the cows and took up roof tiling with his brother-in-law, Ted Iles, of Reservoir. Later, Muriel's youngest brother Alan Dunn joined them.

On 22 December 1941, Muriel and Norman were married at Regent. In 1943 Dorothy was born, followed by Betty in 1945 and Robert in 1950. Muriel looked after the home and children while Norman worked. Her father-in-law, Charles Wuchatsch, whom she had looked after since 1933, died in 1946.

During the Second World War, Norman gave up roof tiling and worked at a number of different jobs over the next few years. In 1949, he leased the sheds on the farm to Northern Fibrous Plaster, a new company formed to make plaster sheets and cornices for the booming post-war housing industry. In 1950, he joined Northern as a fixer and stayed with them until he retired in 1966. One of the perks of working for Northern was that Muriel had the phone connected, but she had to wait until 1966 to



Muriel Wuchatsch on her wedding day

get electricity.

After Norman's retirement in 1966, he sold all but two acres for subdivision, keeping the old farmhouse and outbuildings. Following his death in 1978, Muriel's life remained active. She had spent years looking after Norman as his health failed, then continued to look after her grandchildren well into her 80's. She had cats, dogs, chooks, turkeys, the garden etc. She continued to attend church services at Thomastown Lutheran Church until 1997, when she fell at home and dislocated her shoulder.

Over the last ten years she also suffered terribly from arthritis, particularly in her hips and knees. While her mind remained sharp right to the end and her memory prodigious, her mobility gradually became more restricted, and increasingly painful. After a short time at the Northern Hospital and Bundoora Extended Care in October and November 2007, she came home, but was soon re-admitted to the Northern Hospital where she died on 23 December 2007. After a service in the Thomastown Lutheran Church, Muriel was buried in the Westgarthtown Lutheran Cemetery.

More forgotten Westgarthtown Germans

BY ROBERT WUCHATSCH

RUDOLF GRASSMANN

Although he lived at Westgarthtown during its first year of settlement, little is known about Rudolf Grassmann and his wife.

Mr and Mrs Grassmann, from Freyenwalde, Germany were cabin passengers aboard the *Pribislaw* during its 1849–50 voyage from Hamburg to Melbourne, indicating they were wealthier than most German immigrants to Port Phillip at the time. Rudolf was, however, a signatory to the letter of complaint sent from Rio de Janeiro to Germany by many of the steerage passengers on the *Pribislaw*. The only evidence he ever lived at Westgarthtown, or Dry Creek as it was then known, is contained in a brief report by the Melbourne *Argus* of 8 January 1851, which states:

“The German settlement on the Dry Creek...is progressing rapidly. The high road thither is in capital repair, whilst the settlement, which comprises a section of 640 acres, and contains ten houses, offers a very pleasing view. Mr Ziebell’s establishment is the most prominent feature in the scene, whilst Mr Grassman’s ranks next all the necessary garden requisites being found on these two establishments. The other residents have made the best of their time and of the advantage of the locality. Sites have been reserved for a church and a school; whilst the settlement bids fair to become one of the finest in the colony, if we may judge from the progress it has made within the last twelve months.”

It is not known where the Grassmann’s lived at Westgarthtown. They must have left soon after, as Rudolf did not purchase land in 1851 when Westgarth & Carr sold it to the German settlers. In an 1852 list of unclaimed Victorian mail is a letter addressed to Rudolf Grasmann of Cattetine Farm, but it is not known where this property was located. The Victorian outward shipping lists include a Rudolf Grassmann, aged 60, as a departing passenger for London on the ship *Calphurnia* in October 1852. Rudolf was presumably returning to Germany and the fact he was alone indicates his wife probably died sometime between his arrival in February 1850 and his departure in 1852.

If any readers have more information about the Grassmann, Gruenberg or Grosse families, please contact Robert Wuchatsch, who would be pleased to hear from you. E-mail him on enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au

JOHANN FRIEDRICH GRUENBERG

Johann Friedrich Gruenberg arrived in Australia in February 1849 aboard the *Godeffroy* with his wife Caroline. Both were aged 31 and had emigrated from Altona, a town on the Elbe River in Schleswig-Holstein, near Hamburg.

Friedrich Gruenberg was an original landholder at Westgarthtown, or Dry Creek as it was then known, purchasing 20 acres on 24 May 1851 (Lots 27 & 28) for £20. This narrow portion of land with creek frontage was located each side of today’s Gardenia Road, in the vicinity of Melaleuca Drive. In order to legally purchase his land, Friedrich was naturalised as a New South Wales citizen on 3 May 1851 and in his application for citizenship, gave his address as Melbourne, occupation as carpenter and age as 33.

It is not known, however, whether Friedrich and Caroline Gruenberg ever actually lived at Westgarthtown. On 18 February 1852, Friedrich purchased two blocks of land in Richmond for £25 12 shillings (National Trust Victoria, File No. 4966). Soon after, he built a single storey timber house on one of the blocks, which still stands today at 36 Lesney Street. This house has been described by Celestina Sagazio of the National Trust (*Trust News* August 1990) as standing ‘on spindly timber stumps which characterised the jerry building of the gold rush period, and has an elegant concave-roofed verandah and trellised valence’. Stables were also erected at the rear of the house.

By 1854, Friedrich had bought several more blocks nearby, on which he built further houses. On 4 May 1855, Friedrich sold his land at Westgarthtown to Gottlieb Knobloch, an adjoining landholder there, for £50. According to Richmond rate records, Friedrich’s occupation was given as cabinet maker and he and Caroline lived at 36 Lesney Street until 1861, when they moved to another of his houses in the same street. In 1865 Friedrich transferred ownership of several of his properties in Lesney Street to Caroline, although he retained others. He owned 36 Lesney Street until the early 1880s when it was sold to Henry Vanheems, an architect. The house is today included on the Victorian Heritage Register (H0711) as a relatively intact and rare representative of the gold rush inspired boom in Melbourne’s inner suburbs.

It is not known when or where Friedrich and Caroline died.

FRIEDRICH AND CHRISTIAN GROSSE

Friedrich and Christian Grosse, probably brothers, were only brief landholders at Westgarthtown, but among its more interesting occupants. They were not original settlers at Westgarthtown, purchasing Gottlieb Knobloch's 30 acre farm on 7 December 1858 for £450, with the aim of establishing a vineyard.

According to Thomas A. Darragh's entry in Joan Kerr's (ed.) *Dictionary of Australian Artists: Working Paper I: Painters, Photographers and Engravers 1770–1870 A-H* (1984), Friedrich Grosse (1828–94), a wood engraver and vigneron, was born at Aschersleben, Prussia and arrived in South Australia aboard the *Caesar Godeffroy* in January 1854. A few days later he left for Melbourne on the *Mazeppa*. After spending time on the Bendigo goldfields, he returned to Melbourne and in 1856 set up business as a designer and wood engraver. Over the next 12 years he engraved for most of Melbourne's illustrated magazines and newspapers and at times also engraved punches for Victorian postage stamps. From 1868–80 he was employed by Victoria's Government Printing Office, where he produced hundreds of wood engravings for departmental publications, such as Robert Brough Smith's *The Goldfields and Mineral Districts of Victoria* (1869) and *The Aborigines of Victoria* (1878). Friedrich, or Frederick as he was generally known, had been naturalised on 27 August 1857.

Christian Grosse was naturalised on 27 March 1860, having stated in his application that he was from Prussia, had arrived in Victoria in 1854 aboard the *Godeffroy* [*Caesar Godeffroy?*], was a gardener aged 40 and lived at Keelbundora, which was an early name for Westgarthtown. Nothing more is known about Christian. As Friedrich lived and worked in Melbourne, Christian may have looked after the property at Westgarthtown during the week, with Friedrich only attending at weekends or when able to.

Friedrich and Christian Grosse did not remain long at Westgarthtown, selling their land on 14 November 1860 to Amos Layton Drew for £500. An article about Friedrich in *The Australasian Vigneron and Fruitgrowers' Journal* of 1 November 1893 referred to his brief sojourn at Westgarthtown, stating:

“As far back as 1857 Mr Grosse with great foresight came to the conclusion that the country and climate were admirably suited for vine growing, and established a vineyard at Thomastown, between Preston and Whittlesea, and for the purpose of increasing his vineyard ordered from South Australia 20,000 choice vinecuttings which were lost when the *Admella* went down off Cape Bridgewater [9 August 1859]. The heavy soil at Thomastown was, however, found to be unsuitable for a vineyard and Mr Grosse in 1864 purchased a forty acre farm on the Emu Creek near Bendigo and by degrees has planted the whole area with vines of the Hermitage, Reisling, Verdeilho and Carbinet kinds. His one object from the start has been to produce those dry clear wines that have made the produce of the Tooronga vineyard famous for many years past.”

From 1880, when he was retrenched by the Victorian Government during budgetary cuts, Friedrich Grosse was fully engaged in winemaking. As well as his Tooronga Vineyard, he also operated the Bendigo Wine Cellars at 465 Collins Street, Melbourne. The *Australasian* of 13 October 1894 stated that he:

“gave to the public a pure wine of high quality, the produce of carefully cultivated wines, skilfully treated in the cellar... The Tooronga wines have taken high honours at Australian shows and have been awarded distinctions at Vienna in 1873, Bordeaux in 1880, and Paris in 1878 and 1889. A few years ago Mr Grosse increased his holding by the purchase of an adjoining vineyard belonging to Mr. A. Bruhn.”

Friedrich, whose wife Sophie (née Hanstein) predeceased him, died on 5 October 1894. The *Australasian Vigneron and Fruitgrowers' Journal* of 1 November 1894 noted:

“Mr Grosse died after a very short illness on the Friday, having been ill since the previous Sunday. The dread enemy influenza — from which so many of us have suffered, turned to pneumonia, and doubtless the amount of worry he had undergone since the phylloxera vastatrix attacked his vineyards had much to do with the failure of his health, for it will be remembered by our readers that he was the first to report the discovery of phylloxera in the Bendigo district. He was interred at the St Kilda Cemetery.”

■ Further information about Friedrich Grosse's Tooronga Vineyard can be found in the *Australasian* of 22 May 1880 p. 666 and 5 July 1884 p. 11.



HAY CARTING at Nebel's Farm, c. 1920s. Ernie Nebel on dray with neighbour Ben Seeber. The old redgum tree behind the dray still stands in the grounds of Peter Lalor Secondary College, near the corner of Duncan Road and Lyndon Street



EDGARS CREEK, c. 1950s
(anti-clockwise from left):
Wuchatsch's waterhole in
Edgar's Creek; Dorothy, Betty
and Robert Wuchatsch in the
waterhole; the creek in flood
and Robert Wuchatsch on a
raft at the waterhole.



Tour report

BY TATIANA JOUKOFF

Last year was an extremely successful year for tours and visits by the general public. We had over 1,100 people pass through our doors, some sampling our lunches, morning teas and produce made by our small but hard working group of volunteers.

The groups visiting have been school children, Probus clubs, elderly citizens, walking clubs and members of historical societies. All have praised the displays, garden and the general ambience of the farm house.

This year we have had 220 people come through the house so far with further bookings well into the year.

If you are interested in what we are doing at Ziebell's and would like to help or know of someone who would be interested, we would love to hear from you. Our tours are not regular and some months are busier than others — we would even train you up as a guide, if that is where your interest lies.



Members of the Probus Club of Pascoe Vale (top) and the Ringwood Uniting Church Walking Group visit Ziebell's Farmhouse

Guided tours of the Westgarthtown Heritage Trail

As part the 2008 City of Whittlesea Heritage Program, the Friends of Westgarthtown will be conducting guided tours of the Westgarthtown Heritage Trail. Commencing at Ziebell's Farmhouse, tours will be conducted on Sunday 23 November at 1 pm, 2 pm and 3 pm.

For further information contact the Friends of Westgarthtown on 03 9464 5062 or enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au.

Visiting Ziebell's Farmhouse

Ziebell's Farmhouse is open to the public on the second Sunday of each month between 1-4 pm. For enquiries, call 03 9464 1805 or nmj1@bigpond.com

Tours can be organised for groups of ten or more people. For information and bookings contact Tatiana Joukoff on 03 9464 5062 or tatianajoukoff@hotmail.com

Thomastown Lutheran Church Services

Services are held on the second and fourth Sunday of the month at 11.15 am at the Thomastown Lutheran Church, German Lane, Lalor. For further details, contact Irma Hatty on 03 9338 9064 or see the Calvary Lutheran Church website at www.calvarychurch.com.au

Friends of Lutheran Archives

Do you have Lutheran ancestors? Have you checked with the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide to see whether they hold information about your relatives? Would you like to join the Friends of Lutheran Archives and help support the collection and preservation of important Australian and New Zealand Lutheran archival material.

For further details, contact Lutheran Archives
27 Fourth Street, Bowden South Australia 5007.
Phone/Fax: 08 8340 4009.
Email: lutheran.archives@lca.org.au

Calling for volunteers

A unique opportunity exists to gain skills in cataloguing Westgarthtown's Heritage significant collection.

Come and be a part of the Heritagecare team helping to catalogue the collection at Westgarthtown. The collection needs to be catalogued and information entered onto the database. Volunteers will be involved in the fascinating process of researching the collection to discover the story behind them. Ziebell's Homestead houses a wonderful collection and the history of the homestead and the surrounding property will make this project a rewarding volunteering experience.

All volunteers will receive:

- Accredited Certificate in First Aid Level 1
- Training in Occupational Health and Safety
- Uniform and personal protective equipment
- Training in cataloguing

Your commitment:

- Willingness to attend 1-2 days per week for 6 months
- Enthusiasm for the project
- Willingness to work in a team environment

Benefits:

- Sense of achievement
- Work with a strong and active community group
- Learn about our history and heritage
- Skills to be involved in ongoing heritage projects

For further information about joining the project please contact

Erin Schroeder

Heritagecare Project Officer, Conservation Volunteers Australia

Office: 03 9326 8250 Mobile: 0428 367 118

e-mail: eschroeder@cva.org.au

Recent additions to the collection

Recently there have been two very useful additions to the heritage collection at Ziebell's Farmhouse—Lyn Ziebell has kindly loaned the Ziebell family buggy which was constructed by Carl Alfred Ziebell, and the Adams brothers, Francis and Joe, have constructed a very interesting scale model of the former Ziebell farmyard. More about these new additions in our next newsletter.

FRIENDS OF WESTGARTHTOWN INC.

ABN 74 674 258 165 Inc. Reg No. A0032721Y

Enquiries (03) 9464 5062

PO Box 95 Thomastown VIC 3074

enquiries@westgarthtown.org.au

www.westgarthtown.org.au

| | |
|----------------|--|
| President | Geoff Borrack |
| Vice-President | Sylvia Schultz |
| Secretary | Pauline Atkins |
| Treasurer | Gillian Borrack |
| Committee | Rob Wuchatsch Lorraine Flanders |

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Historian | Rob Wuchatsch |
| Heritage Architect | Geoff Borrack |
| Tours Coordinator | Tatiana Joukoff |
| Memberships | Gaye Wuchatsch |
| Caretaker | Nanette Jelleff |
| Editor | Rob Wuchatsch |
| Design | Léon Borrack |

Westgarthtown is the oldest and most intact German/Wendish settlement in Victoria. Established in March 1850, it will celebrate its 160th Anniversary in the year 2010.

The Thomastown Lutheran Church at Westgarthtown is the second oldest surviving Lutheran Church building in Australia and the oldest still used as the principal worship centre of a Lutheran congregation.

Heritage Victoria has included the Lutheran Church, Cemetery and Reserve; and Graff's, Siebel's, Wuchatsch's and Ziebell's houses on its Heritage Register, recognising their outstanding heritage value and providing legislative protection for the future.

Ziebell's Farmhouse is Victoria's oldest German immigrant building.

Siebel's Farmhouse, erected in 1860, is the birthplace of Albert Siebel, who in 1934 established the Pura Dairy at Preston, to retail Westgarthtown's milk. Pura has now developed into a leading national Australian brandname.

Wuchatsch's Farmhouse is believed to be the oldest house in Melbourne to have been constructed, owned and continually occupied by the same family.