

# History of the Victoria Hotel, Geraldton

Research by Trudi Cornish

Some historical sources have claimed that the Victoria Hotel first appeared on Marine Terrace in 1872. However, this overlooks information recently unearthed at the Geraldton Regional Library.

The Victoria Hotel first opened for trading in 1862. A Publican's Licence was applied for and successfully awarded to George Baston on the 3 March 1862.

Baston was a prominent local business man, who arrived in Geraldton in 1857 and who was a Chairman of the Geraldton Municipal Council in 1881 and 1884. Later he became Geraldton's first Mayor in 1885.

Research conducted by local history researcher Ron Bertelsen on behalf of the Library some years ago shows the Geraldton Hotel slightly ahead of the Vic in claiming to be the first licenced premise in Geraldton, with Daniel Henry Scott of the Geraldton Hotel successfully applying for a Publicans Licence in February 1860.

Following the Ship Hotel which was licenced to H.L. Cole in May 1860, the

Vic was the third licenced premise in Geraldton to be opened.

In 1862, popular newspaper of the day (*Inquirer and Commercial News*, 22 Oct 1862, p.2) reported that His Excellency the Governor and the Lord Bishop were visiting Geraldton from Perth and were welcomed by local officials at a gala dinner at the newly constructed Victoria Hotel.

Trade was brisk and by 1867, the papers reported, "We are glad to see, for the comfort of travellers, the proprietor of the Victoria Hotel being now preparing to add an upper storey for visitors requiring sleeping apartments" (*Inquirer*, 27 Feb 1867, p.2).

However, in November 1867, Baston advised locals he was retiring from the local hotel business. Baston subsequently relocated his family to Fremantle, where ran the Emerald Isle Hotel from 1870-1873.

By February 1873, the Baston family were back in Geraldton and running the Victoria Hotel again. However, in 1894

George Baston (Senior) died, leaving a widow, four daughters and a son, George Baston (Junior) who later became the first Mayor of Carnarvon.

A photograph of Baston (Senior) was presented to the Council in 1925 and hung in the Mayoral Office for many years. This original photo is still held by the City in the Local History Collection at the Library.

A photo of Marine Terrace in 1879 featured in the history booklet, "*Original Railway Station, Geraldton*" by Gary Martin shows the first locomotive leaving Geraldton for Northampton (courtesy of the Geraldton Historical Society). The photo provides a clear view of the old Vic, prior to significant renovations which were taken in later years. The 1879 photo shows a simple three windowed stone structure and second storey.

Recent drone photos published by the ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt show the small original hotel hidden away in the frontage of the building (left of view), and enveloped by later extensive brick and concrete extensions.



**VICTORIA HOTEL,**  
Geraldton, Champion Bay.

**T**HE proprietor of this Hotel being about to retire from business for a short time, begs to return his best thanks for the very liberal support he has received at the hands of the settlers of the Victoria District and the colonists generally, for the past seven years he has had the conduct of the Victoria Hotel, during which time his efforts to cater for the comfort of his customers, he trusts, have been appreciated.

**MR. BASTON** solicits that all those against whom he has claims, or who have current accounts with him, will make a close of the year, as soon afterwards he proposes removing from the district.

November 13, 1867.

Above: (*Inquirer*, 13 November 1867, p.2)

Below Left: Front view of the Victoria Hotel and adjacent Baston's Store, 1879. Courtesy Geraldton Historical Society.

Below Middle: Source - ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt Facebook page, posted 23 Feb 2021.

Below Right: Early view of Marine Terrace with the Victoria Hotel in the background, 1869. Courtesy Geraldton Regional Library.

