

MATRON CATHERINE JACKSON HALLEREN

1869 - 1955



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Although Catherine Halleren was born in Scotland, she spent more than 35 years of her life in Australia, dedicating herself to caring for the sick and infirm, and contributing greatly to the health and welfare of countless Australians - in fact she was responsible for the safe 'arrival' of nearly 4000 Australian babies!

She was, indeed, a pioneer of nursing and health care in this country.

Born in Stranraer, Scotland, in 1869, she trained at the Queen Charlotte Hospital in England. She married Martin Halleren, who died when their youngest children (twins), were only 10 months old. After his death at the turn of the century, Matron Halleren opened a private nursing home in Belfast, Ireland - caring for medical, surgical and maternity patients - to support herself and six children: Elizabeth, Thomas, Martin, Margaret, Charles and Jean.

After serving in the Queen Alexandra Nursing Corps in France during World War One, she came to Australia, accompanied by her daughter, Jean.

Matron Halleren settled in Victoria and, at Yarraville, on January 25, 1925, opened her 12-bed "Granville Private Hospital" for general and maternity patients.

The City of Footscray (including Yarraville), then had a population of 46,000 and an area of almost 4000 acres. The nearest public hospital was the Melbourne Hospital in the city and the closest maternity hospital was in Carlton. So the new hospital was welcomed by the people of the western region. Patients came by hire car or horse and cart. Private cars were a rarity.

During its thirty years of operation, nearly 4000 babies were born at 'Granville'. Mothers brought their children for minor operations and convalescent patients were also treated.

No one was ever turned away or refused treatment.

As well as being a tireless and dedicated nursing sister, Matron Halleren, (accustomed to helping those in hardship after many years' devotion to the poor and needy in Ireland), was always generous with provisions and care for those who had suffered hard times.

Her daughter, Margaret, joined her at 'Granville' in 1927, after completing nursing training and staff experience at Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital, and St Mark's Hospital in London. Margaret worked at the hospital for 28 years, until her mother's death.

Throughout her time at 'Granville', Matron Halleren not only supervised administration of the hospital, but worked long hours tending patients, cooking, washing and cleaning. Yet she still found time to attend the local Presbyterian church regularly, sing in the choir and be an active member of the Ladies Guild!

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She made a trip back to the 'old country' in 1948-49, travelling to England by ship, and celebrating her 80th birthday on board during her return to Australia.

In the early 1950's, Matron Halleren suffered a fractured hip and wasn't able to maintain her previous workload.

Matron Catherine Jackson Halleren died peacefully on April 7, 1955.

It was 30 years since she opened her hospital to the people of Melbourne's West. This remarkable woman was remembered with affection and gratitude by two generations of local people.

Her example of care and devotion to the sick has since been carried on through three generations by her daughter, grand-daughter and great grand-daughter.

She was surely one of the quietest achievers of all.

