

YOUNDEGIN POLICE STATION

ESTABLISHED IN 1865 AS A POLICE OUTPOST.  
 IN 1880, CONSTABLE ALFRED EATON, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE MARY  
 ANNE & FAMILY, ARRIVED TO TAKE UP DUTIES.  
 IN THE 1890'S ALFRED EATON TOOK UP LAND IN THE AREA AND BECAME  
 THE FIRST FARMER IN THE DISTRICT.

Drawing by Nancy Godfrey

#### YOUNDEGIN -- THE FIRST SETTLEMENT

Youndegin is the site of the first Police Station, first hotel, and the first farm in the Cunderdin district.

In 1864 the explorer, Charles Hunt, travelled the area in search of new grazing lands. He was well satisfied with the abundant supply of grass and water, and returned on a journey of confirmation the following year. This time he was accompanied by a party of convicts and as they travelled, they blazed the track known as "The Old Goldfields Road", -- one of the most historic roads in our State. The Well, still to be seen, was dug and stoned at this time. In the wake of Hunt's party came the sandal-wooders, and later the shepherds with their flocks.

In 1865 Mr. E.J. Clarkson was murdered by natives at his lease in the Kellerberrin district. As a result of this tragedy it was decided to establish a police station at Youndegin to provide protection for settlers in remote areas. A solid building of stone and mud bat with a thatched roof was built. The jail was an enormous York Gum. Strong rings were hammered into it and law breakers were tied to these, whilst waiting transport to the court at York. Constable Allerly was the first man in charge of the outpost. He was followed by P.C.s McCreery and Prairie. Little is known about these men because no police records earlier than 1885 can be obtained.

Constable Eaton of York was appointed to Youndegin in 1880. He was accompanied by his wife Mary Ann, four daughters, three sons, and two aboriginal police boys.

The discovery of gold in 1888 brought great changes to the little settlement. The road became a busy thoroughfare as men flocked to the fields to try their luck. All mining equipment and general supplies were hauled along this track in every mode of transport available. Mrs. Eaton and her daughters provided meals for teamsters, miners and travellers, and soon developed a thriving business.

Constable Eaton built the "Youndegin Arms", to accomodate the steady stream of traffic. This building consisted of a large kitchen, Inn Parlour, bar and several bedrooms. It became a stopping place and horse changing depot for Cobb and Co. coaches, and the excellent table and comfort of the Inn became a State byword. A traveller, writing an account of his travels in a Queensland paper said, that he had never tasted a dish more delectable than a parrot pie he had eaten at the 'Youndegin Arms', a small hostelry in Western Australia.

During the 1890's a township was surveyed at Youndegin. Shortly after, the Police Station closed down. The Eaton's had become attached to the settlement, and so confident that the proposed township would become a reality, that they had taken up land in the vicinity. The "Youndegin Arms" continued to flourish until 1894, when the railway to Southern Cross was completed, and it became apparent that the township would be located at Cunderdin, not Youndegin. Traffic on the road became less and less, and, finally the family was forced to close the Inn, and become the first farmers in the district.

The surrounding land was gradually taken up by other settlers, and Youndegin became their social centre. It was the venue for Church Services, Sunday School, the Annual District Picnic, and later, Tennis. Mary Ann and Alfred continued to live there until they passed away in the early 1920's.

Compiled by Normah Fox -- from two papers written by,  
Em. Sherrington B.E.M.

1. "Early History and Settlement of South Cunderdin".
2. "Mary Ann Eaton, First White Woman in the Cunderdin Shire".

#### MARY ANN EATON

In 1970, the Cunderdin Historical Society erected a plaque in honour of Mary Ann Eaton -- the first white woman in the Cunderdin district. The plaque was unveiled on the 5th October, 1970 by Mrs. Em. Sherrington B.E.M., a member of a Youndegin pioneer family. Among the 130 people who attended the unveiling were many descendants of Mary and Alfred, some of whom live in the district. Others had travelled long distances to see their courageous ancestors thus honoured.

## MARY ANN EATON. Pioneer Woman.

This account of the life of Mary Eaton, the first known white woman to settle in the Cunderdin district, is vividly told by Mrs E. Sherrington, who knew her personally.

"She was born Mary Ann Farmer on October 3, 1838, in a little cottage where the Wesley Church now stands. Her father, John Farmer, was one of WA's first settlers & her mother was Miss Spence, the daughter of a land holder south of the Swan River, whose holdings included all that portion of land where the South Perth Zoo now stands.

"Mary Farmer spent the early years of her life in Perth, which in those days consisted of a few business houses, the Government barracks & a handful of private homes. She married a dashing young man from Kent - Constable Eaton who claimed, he was a man from Kent, not a Kentish man. This fine distinction being achieved by his having been born on a particular side of a certain river in that country.

**York:** During the first years of their married life, the Eatons were stationed at York until 1880, when they came to Younegin, a small isolated police station, 36 miles from York. Set in virgin bush, this little outpost had become necessary following the murder by natives of Mr Clarkson at Dalbercuttin in 1865. To this small home Mrs Eaton arrived, bringing with her their 7 children, the youngest a boy of 18 months. With them also came 2 native police boys, Tommy Domba & Boondong.

With 11 people to cook & care for, one would have imagined her time would have been fully occupied, but she quickly set to work to bring to this little haven a graciousness & charm to make it for all time a joy to remember.

The police station, which also did the duty of housing the family, was sturdily built with thick, low, white-washed walls & a heavily thatched roof.. Windows in the building were small & were made up of a number of small square panes of glass. A large kitchen was separated from the main building by a very wide open passage & nearby stood the jail, an enormous York gum with stout iron rings driven into it. To these rings

erring natives were chained while they were awaiting escort to York or Northam for trial.

**Beautiful things:** With her Mary Ann had brought many things of beauty. Lovely framed prints adorned the walls & a beautiful rose-wood table held pride of place in the centre of the parlour, polished to such a degree, the little white vase of flowers, which always stood upon the table looked back at itself in reflection. A comfortable sofa stood against the wall & a little low rocking chair & high backed chair were adorned with hand embroidered antimacassars. A little bureau stood in one corner. On the mantle shelf stood pretty pieces of pottery & small framed photographs of gentlemen with huge beards & moustaches. There were also likenesses of ladies in high-necked blouses with their hair dressed high upon their heads. Floors in the main rooms consisted of crushed ant-hill, which had been broken & beaten to a hard smoothness resembling today's cement. These floors were polished with a preparation made from melted blackboy gum & methylated spirits. To break the chill of their coldness, home tanned mats of kangaroo skins were placed where feet would rest. The floor in the huge kitchen was flagged with flat stones, which had been scrubbed smooth with white sand from the creek bed, then painted with glue from the manna trees, to give them a smooth shiny surface.

**Brooms:** Mary Ann made her own brooms for household chores from a suitable, hard wire-like shrub, which was gathered locally.

Her bedrooms had beds in them covered with frosty white quilts & always contained a delicious scent of lavender. Her housewifely ability was perhaps better shown in the kitchen, where the great range was always black & shining. On its white hobs stood big boilers with shining lids, on the walls hung dark blue enamel pans & bright copper ones which always gleamed. Gleaming china stood in the spotless kitchen dresser, which was constructed of a dark heavy wood. Huge cupboards had been built in the kitchen & these opened to show row upon row of jams, pickles & sauces. A large table in the centre of the room was always scrubbed to a snowy whiteness & was flanked by long forms. White lace curtains or dainty sprigged muslin always were to be seen on the windows.

**Garden:** Mrs Eaton surrounded her home with a

garden in which she planted many of the fragrant English flowers. Roses, lavender, pinks, wallflowers, rosemary, eggs & bacon, flag & spring flowering bulbs ran riot. Surrounded by a stout Harper fence, further reinforced by a thick box hedge, the garden was towered over by tall cape lilac trees planted by a previous constable. A well tendered vegetable garden helped to provide the daily needs of the family.

In the evening, Mrs Eaton supervised the lessons of her children & taught her daughters to ply the needle. She made friends with the shy native women & helped them to care for their sick babies, learning as she did so a smattering of their tongue. Recipes she used & taught them included the use of dried pomegranate skin in cases of dysentery & making an ointment from the leaves of the marshmallow plant to cure sores which plagued them.

In his "Memories of Kellerberrin", Mr B. Leake paid tribute to her nursing ability, his father having been brought back to health following concussion after falling from a horse by her ministrations.

**Orchards:** With the help of Jonathon Parish, an old shepherd & sandlewooder who was frequently in the district, Mrs Eaton planted 3 thriving orchards. Remnants of these orchards still survive today. When it is remembered, although Youndegin was well watered, every drop had to be hand drawn with a whip & poured onto the trees, some appreciation of the magnitude of the task may be obtained.

Albert, her eldest son, became an expert shot as was her father & was a great help in keeping the larder supplied with fresh meat. All supplies had to be brought from York once a month.

**Patrols:** Constable Eaton's duties regularly took him on patrols lasting several days, taking him to Mt Caroline, Mt Stirling, Dangin, Kumminin, Murranoppin, Cuttinin, Wogalin & Meckering. How great must have been Mary's anxiety when these patrols meant he had to hunt down & bring in a native wanted for murder. In her husband's absence, she cared for all the livestock, which meant looking after pigs, cattle, dogs & the police horses.

In the late eighties, it became apparent the days of

the police headquarters were numbered, as settlement spread out from York & Northam. So greatly had they become attached to the little settlement, they applied for & were granted several hundred acres bordering the area. The 2 police boys were assigned as shepherds to Mr Leake at Kellerberrin & the man of Kent & his devoted partner became plain Mr & Mrs Eaton, the first farmers of the district.

In 1888 with the discovery of gold further east, the road at their doorstep became a thoroughfare, featuring every mode of transport from Shank's Pony to Camel team & Bullock Drays. Providing meals for travellers became a lucrative business undertaken by Mrs Eaton & her daughters.

**Inn:** Mr Eaton was also quick to seize opportunity, so he constructed an inn, rejoicing in the name, "Youndegin Arms". This was to become the stopping place for the regular service of Cobb & Co's coaches. Business was brisk & many people, both famous & infamous enjoyed its hospitality. Among these latter was the notorious criminal & murderer Deeming. Booking in as Baron Swanson, Eaton had given him all the deference & service his high sounding name warranted. Ever after, the room he had occupied was known as 'Deeming's Room.' His grandeur was short-lived however, for the coach was apprehended before reaching Southern Cross, where an armed guard removed the gentleman & transferred him to safer quarters.

An excellent table became a byword in WA. & its fame even spread to Queensland where a newspaper revealed, a traveller recalled no dish more delectable than parrot pie eaten at the Youndegin Arms.

Mary Ann Eaton died in 1921, to be followed within a fortnight by the man of Kent, so passing a pioneer woman of Western Australia, of whom all may feel proud.

Published in the Northam Advertiser, May 25, 1967.

# He helped to pioneer the Cunderdin district

IN these days of modern homes with almost every conceivable labour-saving device it is interesting to look back on the lives of some of our pioneer women. One of these was Mary Ann Eaton—the first-known white woman to settle in the Cunderdin district.

Born Mary Ann Farmer, daughter of John Farmer, one of WA's first settlers, Her mother before her marriage was a Miss Spencer whose

father owned the land where the South Perth Zoo is now housed.

Mary Farmer's early life was spent in the hamlet of Perth, which then consisted of a few business houses, Government barracks, and a few private homes. She later married Constable Eaton, a dashing young man from Kent, who always loudly declared he was a man of Kent, not a Kentish man.

This fine distinction was achieved by being born on a particular side of a certain river in Kent.

The Eaton's early married life was spent at York. In 1880 they went to Youndegin, a small isolated police station, 36 miles from York. Set in virgin bush the little outpost had become a necessity after the murder of Mr Clarkson at Dalbercuttin by natives in 1865. To this isolation the Eatons brought their seven children; the youngest a boy of 18 months, and two native police boys, Tommy Domba and Boondong.

With eleven people to cook and care for, one would have imagined Mary Eaton's time would have been fully occupied, but she quickly set to work to bring to their little home a graciousness and charm.

The police station, which also housed the family, was sturdily built with thick low, white-washed walls and a heavily thatched roof. The windows were small consisting of a number of smaller square panes. The big kitchen was separated from the main building by an open passage, and nearby stood the gaol, an enormous York gum tree with stout rings driven into it. To these rings erring natives were chained awaiting escort to York or Northam for trial.

Mary Eaton had brought with her many things of beauty. Lovely framed prints adorned the walls, a beautiful rosewood table held pride of place in the centre of the parlour, polished to such a high degree that the little white vase of flowers

which always adorned it looked back at itself.

The floors of the main rooms consisted of crushed anthill mixed and beaten down to a hard smoothness resembling today's cement. These were polished with a polish made from melted blackboy gum and meth-

by  
Em Sherrington

ylated spirits. The result, a hard shiny surface.

Mary Eaton fashioned her brooms from a hard wire-like shrub which grew locally. The bedrooms had beds covered with frosty white quilts, and always smelt of lavender.

## Attractive garden

To frame the cottage Mary Eaton planted and tended a garden which was enclosed by a stout harper fence, and further reinforced by a thick box hedge. She grew the fragrant old English flowers, roses, lavender, pinks, wallflowers, rosemary, eggs and bacon, flags, and spring flowering bulbs ran riot.

Many a tired disillusioned Englishman traversing the old goldfields track and suddenly coming upon this sight must have rubbed his eyes in disbelief and said, "No it cannot be, Anne Hathaway's cottage in this wilderness."

A well-tended vegetable garden helped to provide the family's daily needs. In the evening Mary Eaton supervised the lessons of her children and taught her daughters to ply the needle. She made friends with the shy native women and helped them to care for their sick babies. Learning a smattering of the native tongue she taught them the value of dried pomegranate skin in the treatment of dysentery, also how to make an ointment from the leaves of the marshmallow plant to cure the sores that plagued them so.

Mr Bruce Leake, in his Early Memories of Kellerberrin, paid great tribute to her nursing ability. His father on a trip to York was thrown from his horse. Found

unconscious suffering from severe concussion, he was brought to Youndegin and nursed back to perfect health by Mary Eaton.

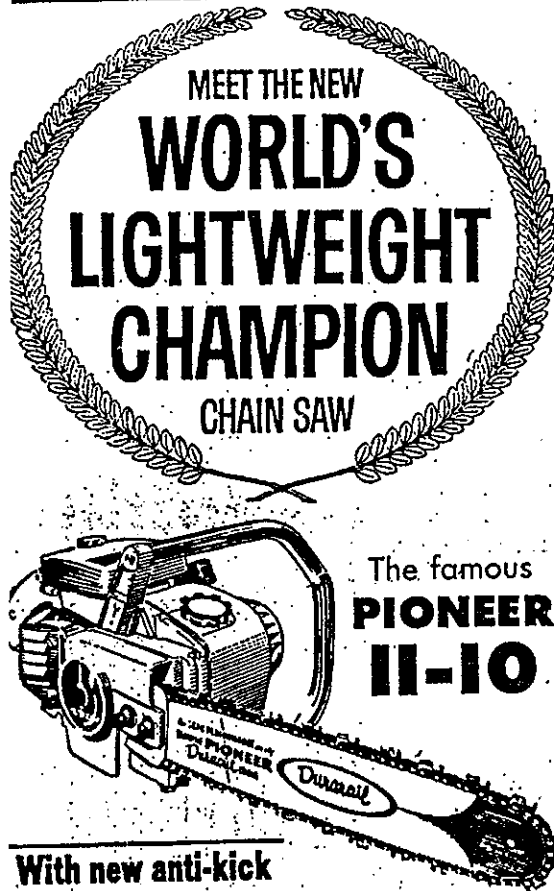
With the help of Jonathan Parish, an old shepherd and sandalwooder who was frequently in the district, she planted three thriving orchards where every known fruit grew. So green was her thumb that passion fruit, persimmons, and damsons each year fruited in the same abandon as the harder varieties. Remnants of these orchards still survive today. When it is remembered that although Youndegin was well watered, every drop of water had to be hand-drawn with a whip and then applied to the trees by hand some magnitude of the work entailed may be realised.

Her eldest son Albert, like his father, soon became an expert shot and was a great help in keeping the larder supplied with fresh meat. All other stores had to be brought from York which meant a monthly trip.

Constable Eaton's duty regularly took him on patrols that lasted several days as his district included Mt Caroline, Mt Stirling, Dargin, Kuminin, Murrannoppin, Cuttinin, Wogalin, and Meekeering. How great must have been her anxiety when these patrols included the hunting down and bringing in of a native for murder. Records show that one Tommy Dampier spent a day chained to a tree. He was later tried at York.

## Took up land

In her husband's absence Mary Eaton cared for all the livestock which included pigs, cattle dogs, and also the police horses. In the late 1880's as settlement began to extend from York to Northam it became apparent that the days of the police station were numbered. But so greatly had they become attached to the settlement and still confident that one day the surveyed townsite would become a reality, the couple applied for, and were granted several hundred acres bordering the area. The



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## WESTRALIANA

two police boys were assigned as shepherds to Mr Leake at Kellerberrin, and the man of Kent and his devoted partner became plain Mr and Mrs Eaton, the first farmers of the Cunderdin district.

Their first wheat crop was broadcast by hand. That required for hay was mown with a scythe, while for seed it was cut with a scickle, and with a flail, which was made with two sticks, the grain was knocked from the heads. A dirk was used to throw it up into the air to blow the chaff out and the whole family helped with the operation.

In 1888 with the discovery of gold at Coolgardie the road that passed the Eaton's door became a bustling thoroughfare, featuring every mode of transport from Shank's pony, and the humble donkey to camel team and bullock dray.

### Youndegin Arms

Providing meals for all the travellers and teamsters became a lucrative business for Mrs Eaton and her daughters. Her husband who was quick to see an opportunity, built an inn which was named The Youndegin Arms. This consisted of a big kitchen, inn parlour, bar, and several bedrooms. It became the stopping place and changing stables for the regular service of Cobb and Co's coaches. Business was brisk and many famous and infamous people enjoyed its hospitality and comfort. Among them the notorious criminal and murderer Deeming.

Booking in as Baron Swanson he had given to him all the deference and service that his high sounding name warranted. Ever after the room that he had occupied became known as Deeming's room. However, his grandeur was short-lived, and before the coach reached Southern Cross it was stopped, and an armed guard removed Deeming and transported him to safer quarters.

The excellent table and comfort of the inn became a State byword. For years my father treasured a cutting from a Queensland paper, in which a traveller writing an account of his travels said he had never tasted

a dish more delectable than a parrot pie that he had eaten at The Youndegin Arms, a small hostelry in WA.

Between the years 1888 and 1896 the Eaton's five eldest children married. Their youngest daughter, Eleanor, was the first white woman to be married in the district. In July, 1895, their daughters Alice and Grace had a double wedding at Youndegin.

As the railway pushed further east followed by more and more settlement, less traffic passed along the York Road and it became apparent that the township would be built at Cunderdin not Youndegin. The inn, for want of customers, closed its doors and farming once again became the occupation of its owners. For several years they regularly supplied the early settlers of Cunderdin with fresh meat, milk, ~~vegetables~~ fruit, eggs and butter.

However, Youndegin was still the centre of the district. It was the venue for Church services, Sunday School, and the annual district picnic, and over all the gracious little silver haired lady presided. But as the years took their toll she became more and more frail. A granddaughter always stayed with the old couple, but Mrs Eaton still tended her flowers, and took an active interest in the affairs of the farm and family.

During the last two years of her life the thatch on the old police station began to leak, thus necessitating a move to the inn as a permanent residence. With the help of family and friends this was soon accomplished and so great was the homemaking propensity of this little lady, that in a week or two no one could have told that she had not lived there for ever.

Her seven children presented her with 42 grandchildren who are now scattered all over the world.

In the early 1920's Mary Eaton died after spending half of her 84 years at Youndegin. Her husband died two weeks later.

19<sup>th</sup> May 1966