

The Early Days

By the middle of the nineteenth century the area we know as West End was a thriving farming community growing fruit and vegetables for the people of Brisbane. It had been named 'Kurilpa' meaning "place for rats", by the local Turrbal people and consisted of blocks of rich alluvial soil along the river bank which were able to produce strawberries, grapes, oranges, melons, bananas and peaches. A creek ran down Montague Road to Jane Street where it met the river.

Building the New School

Around the 1870s the close proximity of West End to the city and the increasing commercial interests in South Brisbane led to a greater increase in residential development. By 1874 it was clear that a primary school was needed and tenders were called. Mr. Ebenezer Chapman was successful and with a budget of one thousand six hundred and fifty pounds built the first school which opened on August 16th 1875.



The First West End School

In fact it was three schools in one, for in those days boys, girls and infants were segregated. The T shaped building at the southern end of the block bounded by Vulture, Hardgrave, Horan and Jane Streets, housed 76 boys under the Headmaster Mr. Walter Scott, 54 girls under Headmistress Miss Jessie Robertson and 106 infants under Headmistress Miss Marianne Horan.

The First Inspection

The first inspections reveal a good report on the teaching at the new school, but concerns about the building: "The schoolroom devoted to the use of the infants is un-provided with verandahs, and, the windows not being frosted, is found to be very hot in the afternoon; it also stands in such a position that it is screened from the prevailing easterly breezes".

1890 – The First Arbor Day

The report in the Brisbane Courier records the day – "The day's work began by the scholars marching with their implements to the scene of their labours.....Mr. Atkinson, the gardener of the Queensland Club superintended the planting of the trees and he was ably assisted by the teachers and scholars of the boys' school.....Twelve trees were planted.....and two figs." One of those fig trees still stands in the centre of the school grounds today and is a familiar landmark – "Meet me under the fig tree".

