



Figure 22 - Hotel, Post Office & Store Lake Austin c.1900 (Courtesy State Library of Western Australia, The Battye Library n.d: BA598)

When May Vivienne passes through The Island (Austin) c.1899, she states that:

[the] reefs are highly auriferous...the Golconda [owned by an English syndicate] is the largest mine, giving very rich yields.... [and] the Island Eureka [of which a Mrs Hurfit, who lives nearby, is part-owner] is a small but rich mine owned by a syndicate on the Island (Vivienne 1901: 318).

Mining lease information confirms that a Thomas Hurfit was one of the registered owners of the Island Queen, Eureka, and Eureka Extended leases between 1894 and 1898 (Department of Mines 1892-1907; 1893-1907; 1897-1907). However, the only woman appearing as a registered owner is a Jane Philbin in 1896 (Department of Mines 1893-1907) who was also possibly the proprietor of a hotel at The Island in 1895 (*MTDDG*, Saturday 21 December 1895: 1). Thomas Hurfit and Jane Philbin are both residing at the Miners' Arms Hotel by 1898 so it is probable they are in some way related (Wise 1898: 177-178) and she may be the 'Mrs Hurfit' referred to above.

The Murchison District vaccination register indicates that between 1894 and 1900 five children were born at The Island, Lake Austin (Murchison Registry District 1894-1900). Two of these children were born to Elizabeth and Charles Hossack. Charles is listed as an amalgamator in 1896 but by 1898 he is working at the Cue One mine as an engine driver, so they appear to have left the Island after only a short stay (Murchison Registry District 1894-1900: 9, 14, 24). It is unknown how long the other three children resided at the site. Another child, Ruby (b.1899, Day Dawn), the daughter of William Carlsen, the clerk at the Island Eureka Mine, is known to have lived at Lake Austin in 1902 due to a report outlining an accident at the Day Dawn railway station that led to her death. She was three years old (Day Dawn Police Station 1902). Additionally, one marriage license was issued for Olive Hutton and John Bawden who were residing at Lake Austin when they were married in 1903 (Murchison Registry District 1903).

Two hotels are listed in the 1901 Directory, the Railway and the Miners' Arms, while the majority of the other occupants are listed as miners (Wise 1901: 156). No women are specifically mentioned (Wise 1901: 156) but this does not mean they were not present as it is likely they were not always included in such directories, and a number of the men listed may be married.

The population of the LKA site fluctuated over time with a small group of Italian miners recorded between 1901 and 1904 (Wise 1901: 156; 1902: 160-161; 1903: 177; 1904: 190; 1905: 191-192; Figure 23). It is likely these are the same ten foreign workers employed by the Island Eureka mine in June 1902 (Hartley 1992: 141). Hartley (1992: 141) suggests the mine employed no Anglo-Australian men at this time. However, these estimates are primarily taken from Post Office Directories so may not reflect the entire population (i.e. women and children are largely excluded from these sources).

The Cue rate books for 1904 list a number of entries for both the Island and the Mainland (Cue Municipality 1904) indicating that residents paid their rates to this authority and Austin (The Island) probably did not elect its own council.

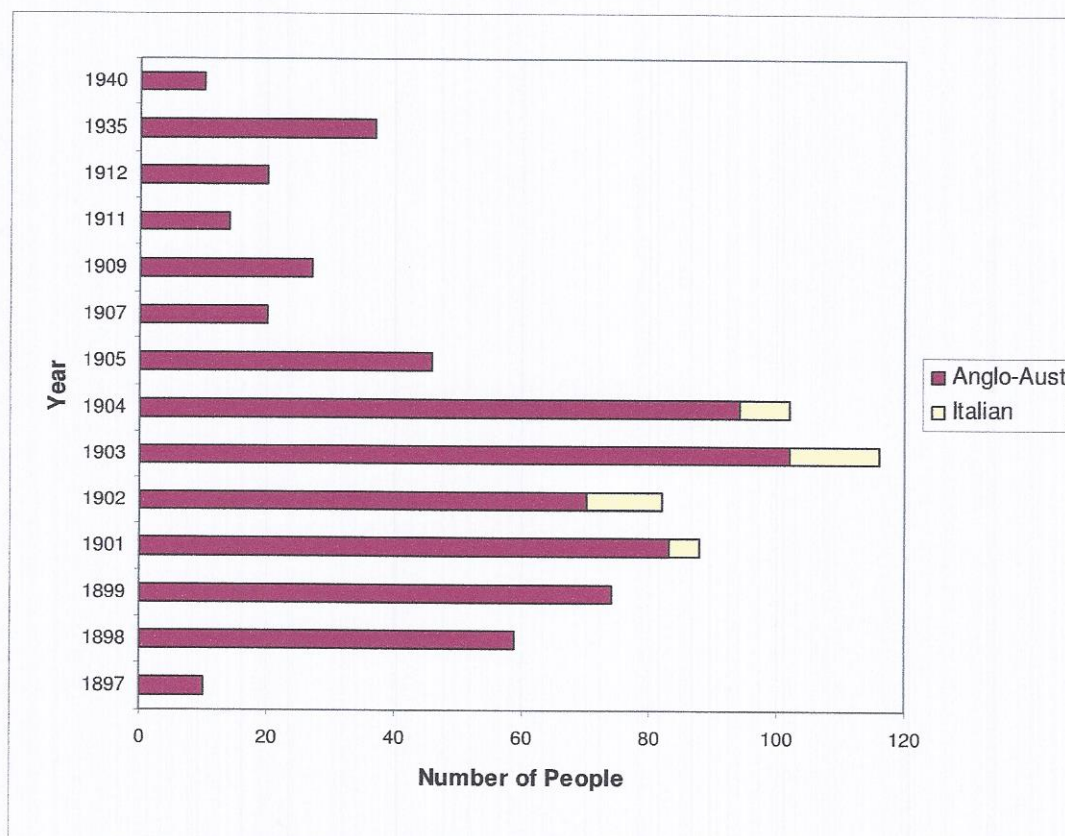


Figure 23 - LKA site's approximate population 1897-1940.

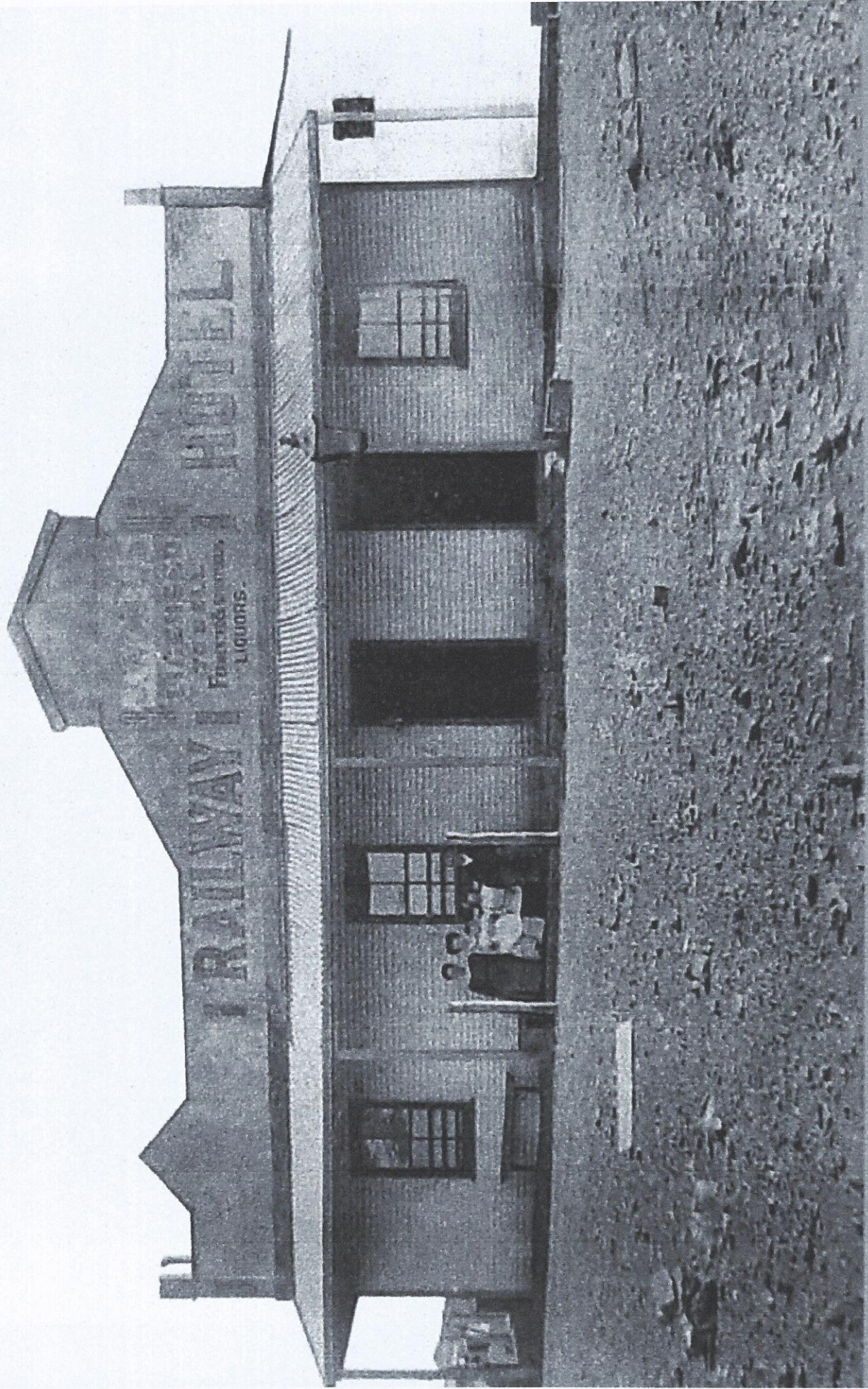
A Field in Decline

Sources suggest that between 1912 and the 1930s the population at Lake Austin (including The Mainland) fluctuated from around twenty to thirty-seven (Wise 1912: 227; 1913: 230; 1914: 289; 1915: 227; 1917: 138-139; 1920: 145; 1923: 148; 1926: 261; 1928: 285; 1930: 303; 1935: 310-311; Figure 23). Notations on a 1912 townsite plan (Department of Lands and Surveys 1912) indicate a Mechanics' Institute and a Government Hospital site though evidence indicates these were probably never built, and when the railway closed the only surviving hotel followed suite with the site all but abandoned by the 1960s.

The Mainland - MAI

Environment & Geology

The Mainland is approximately 18 kilometres south southeast of Cue, 1.7 kilometres west of Great Northern Highway, and is almost identical in general configuration to The Island.



THE RAILWAY HOTEL, LAKE AUSTIN. BUILT 1892.

The home of Mr & Mrs John Daniell & children Eva, Nellie & Robert. 1900-1914.



Golconda Gold Mine, Lake Austin.

(Mines Dept. 1062)