

## THE McGEE'S - AT HOME

Let Kath McGee guide you through the house she lived in for seventeen years of her life. She arrived here when she was five years old.



Step inside the front door from the veranda. You are now in the 'best' room or lounge. Young people were rarely allowed in this room.



In Kath's day there were only candles and kerosene lamps for lighting in all the rooms, and to keep warm, there were only open fires.



The best furniture was reserved for this room. On the large cupboard called a chiffoniere are two family photos - Kath and Fred and a tennis party outside on the veranda and - Kath and Fred Cleaver on their Wedding Day - 25 April 1915!



Kath's father, Frank, the teacher, would have used this room for writing his poems. Can you see one on the round wooden table! Kath's father would have loved the peace and quiet of this room - away from all the children!

Next - look inside the **main bedroom**. Adults and very small children slept in this room. Clothes, shoes, books and very precious and valuable things were stored in this room. Babies were born in this room - can you see the cold grumpy one on the bed? Toddlers often slept in cots in the room with their parents. The one in this cot is dressed as a boy - how times have changed!



Because there was no bathroom in the house, in fact no water in the house at all, adults washed in the basin on the washstand. Water was brought to the bedroom in the jug from a tank outside and adults washed, in private! The toilet was too far away, so, at night, everyone used to sit on a chamber pot, also in the privacy of the bedroom!



Can you see the copper bed warmer on the bed? Hot coals from the fire were put inside it and it was slipped between the sheets. What a surprise if you forgot to take it out before jumping into the bed!



Kath and members of her family lived here from 1898 until Frank retired in 1927 - 29 years. They helped establish the local Roman Catholic Church in 1902 so they would have had religious items like rosary beads, holy statues and pictures to help them with their prayers.

The clothing, hats, boots and shoes in this room are a hundred years old - or older! Some items are stored in the wardrobe, but sometimes the large bottom drawer made a great bed for a very small baby! Don't wake it up!



Step through the door into the sitting room, or family room. Notice how small the wooden doors are, and look at the beautiful timber which has been used throughout the house. Most of it is Australian cedar, a timber which is no longer available. A lot of it was grown near where Frank was born, near Milton on the NSW coast. The lump of wood on the floor was saved from a fireplace!



Wow! There's a lot going on in this room! From 1880 until 1898, when Kath and her family arrived - eighteen years, this was the kitchen/dining room. The fire was very important in this room because this is where the family, especially the McGee's, would gather. Cooking, eating, washing up, playing, sewing - everything would have happened in this room.



Close family and friends would gather in this room for singing, poetry reading and storytelling, particularly about old Ireland, where the McGee and Mary Anne's Morrison ancestors came from. Frank played the violin magnificently, as did Kath and others in the family. But, the family would not be around when it was bath time!



Buckets of water were brought from the tank, heated on the fire, and then they were poured into the hip bath in front of the fire. Parents bathed when the children were tucked up in bed. Most of the children used the same bath water - it was a bit murky for the last one in! The parents, wisely, had clean water brought in!

Step into the **children's bedroom**. As well as being used for sleeping, clothes, hats, shoes and some toys were stored in this room as well. There were seven children in the McGee family. At first Kath slept in this room until a new bedroom was built in 1899 attached to the new kitchen.



Kath's brothers slept in this room. One of her brothers, Jim, while he enjoyed old fashioned games such as hoops and spinning tops like the one above the fire place, would have been interested in other things. The little steam engine, and an early type of radio called a crystal set, like the one in the little suitcase on the floor, would have fascinated him.



There are displays of dolls through the ages and teddies and other popular children's games, because this room has been the bedroom for many children for over one hundred years.



Even with a fire the bed was the warmest place to be. There are four children in bed under the animal skin rug. The cold little one using the potty will be quick smart back into the warm, cosy bed!



Step out of the family room into the Hall/Breezeway which leads up the steps to the 'new' kitchen. This was the back door and would have been used by Kath and her sister and brothers, and family and friends.



The tank was close by for water and this area was handy for storing useful items like brooms, candle moulds, hat stands, baskets, blanket beaters and watering cans. It was also used to store some farm equipment like milking buckets and stools, for easy access.



To the left an indoor garden leads to the old laundry, with a copper for boiling water, which was added much later. There is also a modern public toilet and basin in the laundry where the first bathroom used to be. Kath was married and had left home by the time these modern inventions were in the house!



To the right is the back door which leads to the yard where there is a 1930's garage. The driveway from the garage went straight down the hill until it joined the old Tharwa Road. This is how the students came to school. The McGee's did not have a car when they lived here but later teachers did. Near the garage, under cover, are some old toys which can be played with.



The kitchen, when it was built in 1899, was a very important part of the household. Kath and her little sister, Mary, would have been trained here on how to look after a family, cooking, cleaning and the all important - laundry! Poor Mary Anne, mother to seven children - think of all the nappies she would have had to wash - by hand!



There are two wood burning stoves in the kitchen. Mary Anne would have used one similar to the one on the right. Pie dishes and trays for making little cakes are in the oven. Bread was baked in this type of stove and the big iron pot with the tap was kept on the top of the stove to supply hot water.



The laundry items are in this room because of the hot water. Washing boards were used and the 'modern' invention of the copper washing plunger made washing day for all the ladies much easier.



Lucky Mary Anne had five year old Kath to help with her little brothers and, of course, to help with all the chores, that is, when she was not hard at work with Dad in the classroom next door!