

FREDERICK MARIA STAUBWASSER

German Engineer : Australian Dispenser and Hospital
Administrator

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FREDERICK MARIA STAUBWASSER

German Engineer, Australian Dispenser and Hospital Administrator

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Diamantina Hospital for Chronic Diseases opened in 1901 on the site of the Princess Alexandra Hospital at the corner of Ipswich Road and Cornwall Street, Woolloongabba, Brisbane.¹ The foundation senior staff of the Diamantina Hospital in 1901 was the Matron (Miss Florence Chatfield), Medical Superintendent (Dr. Francis Hare), Dispenser/Head Wardsman (Mr. Frederick Staubwasser) and Visiting Medical Officer (Dr. Alfred Jefferis Turner). These persons worked very well together with mutual respect in this independent public hospital (replacing an orphanage)¹ initially of 32 patients with chronic diseases (mostly pulmonary tuberculosis, cerebro-vascular diseases, cancer and epilepsy). The hospital was declared to be a Public Charitable Institution under the Charitable Institutions Management Act of 1866, and was under the direct control of the Home Secretary and his Department until 1942.^{1,2}

Frederick Staubwasser's role and life is less well known than the other three foundation staff. Of great value in exploring his story is his retrospective autobiography written for his family in 1933 - but for the period of his life 1872-1901, until he began his professional work and family life at the Diamantina Hospital.³ Primary Australian sources have been sought to confirm and understand the autobiography; but his life 1901-1938 has required most research to explain his great progress at the Diamantina Hospital, and the two enigmas - his delayed registration by 26 years as a Pharmacist, and his avoidance of internment etc. during the anti-Germanism during and around World War 1.

Frederick Maria Staubwasser

Biographical Summary of life in Germany

Born: Sunday May 5 1872, at Regensburg, Bavaria, Germany.
8 siblings (7 brothers, 1 sister; sister and two brothers died in infancy)

Mother: Sophia Kolb, only daughter of the Mail Contractor between Bavaria and Italy (horse drawn coaches). She was well educated (music and art her best subjects). Family was wealthy after mother's death, father remarried; on his death the step-mother squandered the inheritance.

Father: Joseph Staubwasser (son of a saddlemaster) was born in Wertingen, Bavaria. He became a Lieutenant in the Bavarian Army; he fought for Bavaria and Austria against Prussia (1866), and then in the Franco-Prussian War (1870) as a Captain.

Education and Training (1872-1889)

Primary education was in the State School, and Secondary in the Grammar School, Regensburg. "Most of the teachers were anti-militarists, and they had no time for the sons of officers". Then he became an Apprentice for 3 years in the Engineering Section, Bavarian Government Railways (5.5 days at work, 1 day lectures). 1889-91 services in Naval Artillery.

Work in Germany

On October 8, 1891 he commenced work as a fireman for the Austrian Steam Navigation Company (Danube Navigation); then after passing his examinations he became the Assistant Engineer and served on three steamers.

He and his brother Emil decided to emigrate to Australia, beginning their departure to Munich on September 19, 1892.

Frederick Maria STAUBWASSER 1872-1938

2. CHRONOLOGY

- 1872 Born, Regensburg, Bavaria, Germany - 8 siblings.
- 1889-91 National Service (Naval Artillery)
- 1891-2 Assistant Engineer (Austrian Steam Navigation Co.)
- 1892 + brother Emil emigrated to Australia, departing GENOA, 29 October 1892.
S.S. Oldenburg to Sydney (arrive 14 December 1892)
S.S. Wodonga to Townsville (“ 27 “ “)
- 1893-99 CHARTERS TOWERS district work, including goldmining.
Consultation Dr. F. Hare (Charters Towers Hospital)
(Physician, and Inspector-General of Hospitals, Queensland).
- 1899 Warder (Charters Towers Hospital)
- 1900 + Apprentice in Dispensing
- 1901-38 Dispenser, DIAMANTINA HOSPITAL, BRISBANE.
04 - 34 + Assistant Superintendent
34 - 38 Superintendent
- 1907 Marriage to Eliza Jane Louisa Harrison, 26 December 1907
(Reg. No. 1907/006134)⁴
- 1909 DISPENSER'S HOUSE (DIAMANTINA HOSPITAL)⁵
- 1912 Naturalized (17 July 1912, Number 14013)⁶
- 1927 Registered Pharmacist (11 August 1927, Reg. Number 890)⁷
- 1933-4 + A/Secretary, Mt. Isa Hospital.
- 1934 Superintendent, Diamantina Hospital.
- 04.02.1938 DEATH in Brisbane Hospital (Septic shock)
(Registration No. 1938/038486)⁴
Cremated, Mt. Thompson Crematorium Brisbane.^{8,9}
- Religion Presbyterian (in Australia)^{4,9}
[Unreferenced information is from indices^{1,3}]

3. **REASONS FOR EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA**

Frederick Staubwasser apparently was happy in Germany, but in 1872 he and his brother Emil decided to emigrate to Australia.

1. In his autobiography³ he indicates that the main reasons were to board the steamer “to take us to land of gold and most extraordinary freedom.” Their final destination was Charters Towers, Queensland, where successful gold mining began in 1872, but boomed from 1886 following the Colonial Exhibition of London. After 1900 the gold mining slumped.¹⁰

2. Charters Towers also was the residence of a former German friend (Max Schmidt) previously from Munich.³

3. The family believed that the urge to see the world also was a factor.¹¹

4. When studying in Saxony, Germany in 1889, he “met students from all over the world, and they gave me some wonderful descriptions of their country”.

4. **SS. OLDENBURG**

The Staubwasser’s travelled as unassisted (free settler) passengers in this passenger cargo vessel of 5006 tonnage (415 feet in length), Clyde-built and maiden-voyage February 18, 1892 from Bremen. Thus they travelled in its second or third voyage.^{12,13}

5. **“MEDICAL HALL”, CHARTERS TOWERS**

Three lodges started in Charters Towers from 1875, then in 1880 they combined to erect the Oddfellows Hall which is of brick and still intact.¹⁰ However in 1886, in front, the Friendly Societies Dispensary opened in a wooden premises; it was known as the Manchester Unity Medical Hall, but locally known as the Medical Hall.¹⁰

It was in this Dispensary where Frederick Staubwasser was apprenticed to Mr. J. Wilkinson, Pharmacist in 1900 and 1901. However after Dr. Hare appointed him Dispenser at the Diamantina Hospital, he resigned his job at the Charters Towers Hospital and worked full-time, seven days weekly at his dispensing. In his autobiography³ he thanks all who helped - Dr. Hare, Dr. Huxtable, Dr. Forrest, Dr. Lister, Dr. Vorse, Dr. Gladsworthy and Mr. Wilkinson. Further he describes “Dr. Francis Hare, my greatest benefactor since I left Germany He was one of those English gentlemen who would do his utmost to help others to rise in the profession they had adopted.”

6. **F.M. STAUBWASSER AT THE DIAMANTINA HOSPITAL**

The Diamantina Hospital opened on August, 5, 1901.¹

The foundation senior staff is described in the Introduction. When Dr. Hare resigned in 1901, Miss Chatfield was appointed Superintendent; then in 1904, F. Staubwasser as Assistant Superintendent.¹ Both were residential, and worked 70 set hours weekly; one was on call at all times.¹ By 1930, there were 216 beds. The Patients Welfare Committee was busy and organized many concerts, in which the Staubwasser children participated.¹

On May 5, 1907 Mr. Staubwasser wrote to the Under-Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, Brisbane requesting both increased salary and a cottage in the hospital grounds;⁵ now he was engaged and "his prospects in the Diamantina Hospital were more settled." This was followed by one from Miss Chatfield on May 11.^{5,14} It was approved in 1908 and built by Works Department, so that it was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Staubwasser in early 1909.¹ This cottage indicated great support and confidence in F. Staubwasser by the Superintendent, and the Home Secretary. Of Miss Chatfield, he notes "At the Diamantina Hospital I met Miss Chatfield and from the first day I could see that we would work well together."^{11,3}

On Miss Chatfield's retirement in 1934, F. Staubwasser was made Superintendent, and another Dispenser appointed. Further indication of his strong support from the Home Secretary, was his added appointment in 1933 as Acting/Secretary of Mt. Isa Hospital on its opening, and for about one year - until it was properly established.¹

7. **F. STAUBWASSER AS DISPENSER/PHARMACIST**

Frederick Staubwasser began his training in dispensing with Mr. J. Wilkinson, at the Friendly Societies Pharmacy, Charters Towers in 1900 part-time whilst working as Warder at the Hospital; in 1901 he made it full-time. He was not registered as Dispenser/Pharmacist in Queensland until 1927⁷. No reason can be found in archives of the Pharmacy Board of Queensland¹⁵ or Pharmaceutical Society of Queensland¹⁶ for this long delay, but it is noteworthy that neither records failures at the examination conducted by the Pharmaceutical Society or College of Pharmacy¹⁷. However, registration required an apprenticeship followed by examination.

The turbulent history of pharmaceutical training from 1884 is well documented in the centennial history of the Society in 1980,¹⁷ noting that most of the difficulties came from State politicians and the territorial "war" by some leaders of the medical profession. It stabilized when pharmacy training became a course at the University of Queensland from 1960.¹⁸ Also, there is no information that Hospital Pharmacists were exempt from the requirements as for other contemporary Pharmacists, and that no registered Pharmacist was employed at the Diamantina Hospital until 1934, when F. Staubwasser became Superintendent.

Ironically, the Brisbane Hospital in 1904 employed Mr. D.F. "Pa" Brown as Pharmacist, but he was unable to pass the pharmaceutical examination, and he was unable to be registered in Queensland.¹⁹ Then they employed a registered Pharmacist to work over him. It is surprising that this did not alert the Home Secretary to this anomaly.

8. ANTI-GERMANISM, QUEENSLAND

- (a) 1900-1925 (especially 1914-1918)
- (b) From 30 January 1933, when Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany.

These periods of anti-Germanism cover the time when Frederick Staubwasser lived and worked in Brisbane. It posed a real challenge to his loyalty, created a risk of internment and to his family life. It needs to be discussed.^{20,21,22,23,24} He was never accused of being a Disloyalist, was not sacked and was not interned.

1900-1914

Britain and Germany were in "cold war" mode, when Kaiser was Chancellor. This led to the slow development on anti-Germanism in the British Empire.

1914

The outbreak of World War 1 provoked immediate and continued escalation of bitterness, hysteria and discrimination. Australians at the time feared that they too might be invaded. The Commonwealth Government introduced the War Precautions Act in October 1914, in which "The Minister of Defence is empowered to arrest and intern not only enemy aliens, but also any persons thought to be behaving in a way detrimental to the national security."

On 9 August 1915, the German and Austrian Embassies and Consulates were closed, and Australian citizens of German and Austrian birth were subjected to legal and social discrimination. German born aliens were required to report to C.I.B., Brisbane (Police Department) to give name, address and occupation; then, any suspected of disloyalty to Australia were required regularly to report. List of Disloyalists was kept and updated by State and Commonwealth Police (these lists are in National Archives Australia).²⁶

Soon after the Commonwealth instructed that "all enemy subjects whose conduct ... was unsatisfactory" should be interned. This led to 3986 of 33,000 German-born Australians being interned, many ultimately deported and some never permitted to return.²³ Many were not naturalized Australians.

In April 1915, the Germans intensified their war in Belgium by the horrific use of Chlorine poison gas on the residents of Ypres, and even more deaths of rural Belgians and the sinking of the "Lusitanian". This escalated greatly the anti-Germanism with greater bitterness. These reactions were encouraged by hysterical views expressed by many high-ranking Loyalists.

Next, in January 1916 the Ryan State Government passed a regulation that

required German or Austrian born Australian public servants to be sacked and replaced by “Britishers” if they were available and willing to be employed. This led ten Councils in Queensland to follow, but not Brisbane City. The next month, continuing this push, the University Chancellor informed the Premier of his Senate’s decision to waive the granting of three government University Scholarships to children of alien parentage.²⁸

Even names were changed from German to Australian of appropriate streets, suburbs, districts.

Nevertheless, no German spy was charged in Australia, even though many German-born Australians were accused or suspected.

An example of the devastating effects of anti-Germanism is exemplified in Dr. Eugen Hirschfeld.²⁵

In brief:

- (i) Immediately he ceased being German Consul.
- (ii) Although Honorary Physician and Bacteriologist to the Brisbane Hospital, he was publicly attacked by the B.M.A. (now A.M.A.) to resign from the B.M.A.
- (iii) He was forced to resign from the Queensland Legislative Council and U.Q. Senate.
- (iv) His son was not given a Government U.Q. Scholarship because of his father.
- (v) He was interned in 1916, deported 1920, then allowed back in 1923.

Frederick Staubwasser was not interned (although he was very anxious²⁷) probably because:

- (a) He had strong support from the Home Secretary (e.g. with promotion to Superintendent and building of his house)
- (b) There is no evidence of friendship or political association with local German born Australians. He was not a member of the German Club.
- (c) His was not on the list of Disloyalists in 1916.²⁶
- (d) He was naturalized Australian in 1912.
- (e) His religion was Presbyterian, and never Lutheran in Australia.
- (f) Obviously he was a loyal Australian whose life centred on his work and family. He was not on the list of aliens reporting regularly to the C.I.B. and he did not lose his job to a “Britisher”.

It is appropriate to conclude this section with the conclusion by Kay Saunders in 1988²⁴ “All too frequently supposed disloyalty was confused with subversion. Civil liberties were sacrificed to the altar of xenophobia and a confused and flexible sense of national security.”

9. **GERMAN CLUB**^{24,29,30}

This opened in 1890 at Woolloongabba, and, although non-German born Australians were admitted, they had very restricted membership. All meetings were conducted in German from 1890-1915.

It was considered by Police (State and Commonwealth) and journalists as being loyal to Germany until 1915, and highly suspected of sedition²⁹. Many persons interned were members, but Frederick Staubwasser was not a member.³⁰

The Commonwealth Police (now A.F.P.) closed the German Club from 1915-1921 because of the above suspicions.

10. **PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (P.O.A.)**

The only political activity that has been found for Frederick Staubwasser, is in the Professional Officers Association (Qld).

He joined in 1917, and was elected to its Council as the Hospitals representative from 1921-2 to 1935-6. They elected him on to its Executive in 1921-2.

On his death in February 1938, in that month's edition of its journal "The Professional Officer" they published an obituary.³⁴

11. **NAME CHANGE**

Frederick Staubwasser did not change his name, but regulations made it very difficult; as a result of regulation changes to the War Precautions Act on 10 January 1917, and applying after 28 February 1917 in relation to alien registration.³¹

However, his widow and family by deed poll on 7 September 1939 changed their surname to her maiden surname of Harrison, and christian names were anglicized (e.g. Oscar to Andrew)³².

12. **SOCIAL CONTACTS AND PERSONALITY**

Frederick Staubwasser's work and social contacts were from the Diamantina Hospital staff and his children's school (Junction Park State School, Annerley, Brisbane).

1. Harry Lenning (neighbour and friend, from the Deaf School, Cornwall St. Woolloongabba - adjacent to the hospital)³³

"Oscar was a gentleman, and his father a real gentleman"

2. P.O.A. Obituary "Remarkable for his sagacity, and good temper" "has given valuable and faithful service"³⁴

3. Dr. Ron Wood (school friend of children, participant in concerts, and friend of son).

“The most charming man you could ever wish to meet.”

“A real good nice happy man”

“Great administrative ability”

“He was a conscientious and efficient officer whose first consideration was the welfare of the patients.”

4. David Rex (son-in-law) and other family³⁵

“A friend man, very keen on gardening; also he and all family were involved in the whole fabric of the hospital.”

13. **CONCLUSION**

This study has described a new and successful life as a good Australian citizen, family man and hospital dispenser/administrator by a 20 year old German emigrant to Australia in 1892, whilst living in a most difficult era for Australians of German birth. He succeeded by ability, integrity, study, personality, along with great rapport and support from his work peers and employers, his friends and most importantly his family. Yet further anti-German angst in his last 6-7 years led his widow and family to seek a less stressful life by name change. The anti-German bitterness 1900-1925, and again beginning in 1932, associated with internment of other Germans is discussed.

Further discussion is on the politics and registration of Pharmacists in Queensland, and the life and administration of the Diamantina Hospital for Chronic Diseases, Woolloongabba, Brisbane, including the building of the Dispenser's House for him in 1909.

The Dispenser's House has become the home of the Diamantina Healthcare Museum (2004-) at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane.

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