



Voices Queensland Women

Queensland History Week
22 - 26 May 2023

The Queensland History
Teachers' Association
presents



Queensland History Week

22 – 26 MAY 2023

QHTA

Above:

Image: ·David and Mary McConell

Reference: Unknown Photographer and Date; uploaded in 2013 via John Oxley Library , State Library of Queensland.

Right:

·Image 2: Dr. Lillian Cooper

oReference: Unknown photographer and date; uploaded in 2016 via John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

Reference list:

De Vries, S (1995) Strength of Spirit Pioneering Women of Achievement From First Fleet To Federation. Millennium Books: National Library of Australia.
Queensland Government (2023) Achievements and milestones for Queensland women. Available from : <https://www.qld.gov.au/about/about-queensland/history/women/achievements>



Voices - Women and Medicine

The voices of women whom have advocated for medical equality are a large silent majority of historical and contemporary populations. Many women throughout communities have had an impact before Australian suffrage movements and recognition, one such woman is Mary McConell. McConell (1824-1910) arrived in Brisbane in 1849 and was appalled by the lack of basic medical care available in QLD especially for women and children. Using medical knowledge taught to her by family in England she would provide unofficial medical council, books for patients to educate themselves and medicine (when suitable) to people around Brisbane, Ipswich and Esk. After an incapacitating injury McConell was rendered, wheelchair bound; she used this time to raise awareness and funds to establish Brisbane's first children's hospital The Royal Children's Hospital in 1878. She was a lifelong passionate advocate for the rights of female voices to be heard when it came to medical care.

The founding of the hospital predates the first suffrage group, the Queensland Women's Suffrage League (1889) and the arrival of QLD's first female doctor, Dr. Lillian Cooper, in 1891.

What injury?

Mary McConell developed a lump on her knee a doctor informed her husband she was dying with gangrene and her choices were no treatment (and ultimately death) or attempt amputation (and potential painful infection/ death). Disgusted at this, and after a discussion about the doctor's own alcoholism, she encouraged her husband to listen to her treatment advice and to let her treat herself, she:

- thoroughly cleaned the area and applied bandages twice a day.
- made a wheelchair out of an armchair
- sat outside in the sun as much as possible
- avoided food except for bread, champagne, and herbal tea

One day she woke up and the lump had receded, enough for her to try to walk. She tried to walk on crutches, but her foot was having trouble straightening and was unable to touch the floor. She demanded a set of high heel shoes and just wore the one... after a year she was walking normally.

Thinking Activity

Step In, Step Out, Step Back

Step In: What do you think women at this time might feel, believe, know, or experience with healthcare?

Step Out: What would you like or need to learn to understand this perspective better?

Step Back: What do you notice about your own perspective on women's advocacy for healthcare?

Extra for experts

Read:

Gray G. (1998). How Australia came to have a National Women's Health Policy. *International journal of health services: planning, administration, evaluation*, 28(1), 107–125 Available from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2190/PCPL-8XA9-WKXU-D1A3>

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (2020) The secret history of our medical women. Available from: <https://www.racgp.org.au/the-racgp/history/women-in-general-practice/the-secret-history-of-our-medical-women>

Think about what you have learned about the topic and complete the following sentence stems:

I used to think...

Now I think...