Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00318

Bedford, Mary Josephine

(1861 - 1955)

Born	18610101, England
Died	19551222, Brisbane Queensland Australia
Occupation	Charity worker, Philanthropist

Summary

Josephine Bedford worked tirelessly to improve the lives of impoverished woman and children in Brisbane. She was instrumental in founding the Crèche and Kindergarten Association in 1907 and the Playground Association in 1913. The Bedford Playground in Spring Hill commemorates Josephine's outstanding contribution to Queensland children. Josephine volunteered with the Scottish Women's Hospital when World War I broke out and served in Serbia for 12 months as head of the ambulance service. She was awarded the fifth class of the Order of St Sava by the King of Serbia.

Details

Josephine Bedford arrived in Brisbane in 1891 with her longtime friend and companion Dr Lilian Cooper, with whom she shared accommodation during their student days in England. She helped Lilian establish herself as Queensland's first female doctor while pursuing her own interest in improving the welfare of the state's women and children. As the city's population rapidly grew, Josephine noticed that the inner-suburbs, with their unpaved and unsewered streets, were unsafe for children to play. This realisation, along with the help of the local Reverend, led to the creation of the Crèche and Kindergarten Association (C & K) in 1907. By 1911, four centres were operating in Brisbane and a college for kindergarten teachers had been established. On an extended trip overseas, Josephine studied the concept of 'supervised play' and returned to Brisbane in 1918 to help open two supervised playgrounds (in Paddington and Spring Hill).

Miss Bedford was a committee member of the Queensland Society for the Prevention of Cruelty, first provisional secretary of the National Council of Women in 1906 as well as a member of the Queensland Women's Electoral League. Another of her interests was the Women's Auxiliary of the Hospital for Sick Children.

Dr Lilian Cooper died in 1947, leaving all her assets to Josephine. To commemorate the work of Queensland's first female medical practitioner and her lifelong companion, Josephine Bedford donated their historic home, "Old St Mary's", at Kangaroo Point to the Sisters of Charity, on the proviso that it be used to build a hospice for the sick and dying.

Published resources

Book Section

Lilian Cooper (1861-1947) and Bedford, Josephine (1861-1955), Grant, Heather, 2005, http://www.women.qld.gov.au/q150/1900/index.html#item-josephine-bedford

Cooper, Lilian Violet (1861-1947) and Bedford, Mary Josephine (1861-1955), Moore, C. R., 2001

Resource Section

Lilian Cooper and Josephine Bedford: Lifelong companions who travelled against the tide, State Library of Queensland, 2008, http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on/exhibit/online/travelling/cooper_bedford

Lilian Violet Cooper, Cazalar, Lorraine, 2006, http://eresearch.griffith.edu.au/brisbanememories/index.php/Lilian_Violet_Cooper

Lesbians in 1900s Brisbane, Carole Ferrier, 2005, http://www.emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/Act_Centenary/lesbianbrisbane.htm

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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