

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0192

Schenk, Isobel May

Occupation Matron

Summary

Isobel May Schenk worked for many years alongside her husband, Reverend Rodolphe Samuel Schenk (1888-1969), at the Mt Margaret Mission in Western Australia. Rev. Schenk established the mission, located between Leonora and Laverton, in 1921, under the auspices of the Aboriginal Inland Mission (later the United Aborigines Mission). According to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry for Rev. Schenk, Isobel Schenk was 'a typist' who 'taught crafts to the women' on the mission. The mission was made a central 'rationing station' and was visited by anthropologists and researchers including A. P. Elkin, Phyllis Kaberry, J. B. Birdsell and Norman Tindale. Along with the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, these researchers engaged in the assimilation debates of the day. Rev. Schenk's 'unsympathetic and fundamentalist interference with traditional practices' attracted criticism from Elkin, and resistance from Aboriginal elders. Many Aboriginal children were taken to the mission, which had a children's home and a hospital, and mining- and pastoral-related work was carried out there.

Isobel Schenk was appointed to the Order of the British Empire (31 December 1977) for work in Aboriginal welfare.

Published resources

Journal Article

Visionary, vassal or vandal? Rod Schenk - Missionary : A case study in Western Desert missions., Duckham, Ian, 2000

Report

Annual report, United Aborigines' Mission. Mt. Margaret Station., 1938

Book

The educability of the native, Schenk, R. S. (Rodolphe Samuel), 1937?

Mt. Margaret Mission, W.A. : reproductions of the school work of a full-blood aboriginal boy., Ninggeerr, Reggie, 1936?

Loving protection? : Australian feminism and aboriginal women's rights 1919-1939, Paisley, Fiona, 2000

Edited Book

The First ten years of Mt. Margaret, W.A : as given in a letter, following a visit to Mt. Margaret by Mr Robert Powell and extracts from prayer-letters, written during the years by Mr. R.S. Schenk, Smith, H.P., 1933

Resource Section

Schenk, Rodolphe Samuel (1888-1969), Reece, R. H. W., 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110547b.htm>

Site Exhibition

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

State Library of Western Australia

[Claremont Cameos] [sound recording] : [oral histories of women teachers] / [devised by L. Hunt and J. Trotman].

[Interview with Kathleen Claire Mack, nurse] [sound recording] / [interviewed by Gail O'Hanlon].

Records of Mt. Margaret Aboriginal Mission, 1921-1969 [manuscript]

Papers, [19--?]-1999 [manuscript]

Author Details

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