

## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Bro. FRED WALKER (1884 - 1935)

### THE VEGEMITE STORY

The merchant and industrialist responsible for the introduction of BONOX and VEGEMITE, Fred Walker was born in the Melbourne suburb of Hawthorn on 5 January 1884.

He was educated at Caulfield Grammar School and in 1899 he joined the produce and export merchants J. Bartram and Sons where he quickly acquired a knowledge of canning and refrigeration.

In January 1903, Fred Walker, just 19 years of age, travelled to Hong Kong where he began his own import and export business. He returned to Melbourne in 1908 to establish a local import and export business, which concentrated primarily on food products.

He began to can meat, butter, dripping and cheese which he branded Red Feather and these products were successfully exported to Asia and South Africa.

Although prior to the First World War, Fred Walker had served in the volunteer Australian Garrison Artillery and as a Captain in the 13th Infantry Brigade, his canned foods, which were exported to England, were considered essential and Walker, as a consequence did not join the AIF.

In 1918, Walker began manufacturing BONOX. It created the slogan 'Coffee, Tea or Bonox' and it was a favourite with a dash of rum.

Walker extended his business to Sydney in 1918 and to Adelaide and New Zealand the following year.

World trade arrangements following the war left Walker's business floundering and he faced heavy financial losses. His foresight and flair for technology were not matched by his business skills and he became indebted for £80,000.

Nevertheless, he convinced his bankers and creditors to support the formation of a new company, Fred Walker and Co, and with his creditors accepting debentures to the value of his debts and with a Board of Directors chaired by Sir Edwin Nixon, Fred Walker as managing director, set about re-building his business.

Walker realised that if the business was to succeed, he would need professional help and, in 1923, with the business still struggling, he decided to develop a yeast extract for retail sale.

He then employed Cyril Percy Callister M.Sc. (1893-1949) to develop the product

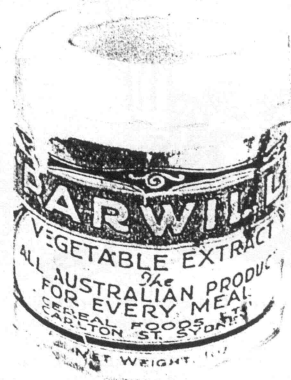


## YOU NEED VITAMINS

The dependence of health on diet is receiving more recognition to-day than ever before. Without Vitamins food is useless and even injurious.

THERE IS NO FOOD RICHER IN VITAMINS THAN

# Vegetemite



By using VEGEMITE daily your system will receive ample Vitamins.

Delicious on Sandwiches and on Toast. Improves the flavour of Soups, Stews and Gravies.

Sold in 1, 2 and 16 oz. Jars.



Adults also enjoyed the product and VEGEMITE has gone to war with Australian troops ever since.

VEGEMITE has been extensively advertised and the ads included leading sportsmen such as tennis great Ken Rosewall and racing driver Peter Brock.



**I'M STILL A VEGEMITE KID**  
 VEGEMITE Yeast Extract has been part of my life since the time I was too small to see over the net. It tastes good and it is good, because it has those essential B Group Vitamins. That's important, because it helps me to keep my energy longer. You could say VEGEMITE Yeast Extract helps me stay on the ball. And I still am a VEGEMITE KID. You bet I am.  
*Ken Rosewall*



**I'M STILL A VEGEMITE KID**  
 From the time the only driver I did see in a half-century, VEGEMITE Yeast Extract has been helping me over the rough spots. It tastes great and it is good, because it has those essential B Group Vitamins I need to stay sharp. VEGEMITE Yeast Extract helps me maintain my energy and concentration even on the toughest drive. I'm still running with VEGEMITE. That's why I'll always be a VEGEMITE KID.  
*Peter Brock*



He's doing his bit for his Dad...  
 VEGEMITE is with the Troops!

Australians now go through more than 24 million jars each year.

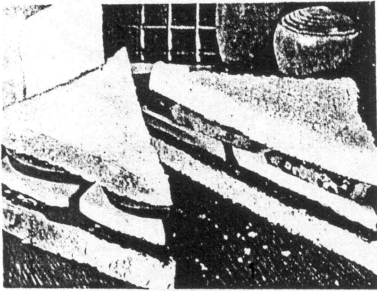


Fred Walker, the battling entrepreneur did not know what he and Callister had started.

In 1924, Fred Walker and Co. began the canning of meat and fish pastes at Launceston and Dandenong and, in 1925, with the help of patents held by Canadian James L Kraft, a Chicago manufacturer, and the expertise of Callister, Walker began the manufacture of processed cheese in the Melbourne factory.

In May 1926, a separate joint-venture company, The Kraft Walker Cheese Co. was registered. This new company, managed by the staff of Fred Walker and Co. began the manufacture of processed cheese in September 1926.

In the late 1930's, with the depression behind them, both companies consolidated and Fred Walker had traded himself out of his financial difficulties.



This is the most mouth-watering, completely balanced sandwich you can give your family.

The remarkable KRAFT Cheddar, Tomato and VEGEMITE Sandwich



KRAFT the good food and good food ideas



Teacher always knows best!



Makes Tasty, Delicious Sandwiches  
Contains the healthful vitamins of vegetables...

Vegemite is not only the tastiest and most delicious sandwich spread and flavouring agent in cooking, it is also a perfect, highly concentrated vegetable extract superlatively rich in all the valuable vitamins and food properties contained in vegetables. Always have Vegemite on your table. It removes ready digestion, complete assimilation, and promotes radiant health. So economical! Just a little goes such a long way!

VEGEMITE PURE VEGETABLE EXTRACT  
FOR SOUPS, SAVOURIES, SANDWICHES AND ALL COOKING

In 1931, Cyril Callister, one of Australia's foremost food technologists, was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science.

Fred Walker, a somewhat shy man, with initiative and enthusiasm, became President of the Rotary Club of Melbourne in 1933-34, a keen and generous benefactor of the Boy Scouts programme for underprivileged children during the depression years and a director of the YMCA.

He began to suffer ill health and he died aged 51 on 21 July 1935 survived by his wife, Mabel and their daughter, Sheilah.

The Fred Walker Prize for postgraduate chemistry at the University of Melbourne commemorates his name.

Fred Walker was made a Mason in Melbourne on 9 July 1919 in the Austral Temple Lodge No 110, United Grand Lodge of Victoria. He was passed Fellowcraft on 7 November 1919 and raised a Master Mason on 14 April 1920. He received Grand Lodge membership certificate number 34732 and he remained a member of his Lodge until his death.

Fred Walker would not have been impressed, but it probably would have come as no surprise, to find Kraft, involved since 1925, take over the Company after his - and - another Aussie icon bit the pre-war dust.

### REFERENCES

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