

## Ruddles Drapery Corner of Bay Street & Cochrane Street

The Ruddle drapery business was a prominent part of Bay Street, on the north west corner of Cochrane Street, from 1861 into the twentieth century. The business was founded by James Williams Ruddle in 1861[1], who had arrived in Victoria in August 1859, age 31 on the sailing ship *Key Stone*[2]. James Williams Ruddle married Margaret Mitchell in 1861.[3]

The property was owned by William Hewitt, who was a baker in Brighton. He leased it to James Ruddle in 1861, with a number of successive mortgages on the property before he finally sold it to James Ruddle on 22 April 1875 for £750. James Ruddle took out a mortgage on the property at this time for £750.[4]

**AUTUMN AND WINTER 1884.**

**J. W. RUDDLE**  
*Family Draper and Outfitters.*

IS SHOWING A LARGE ASSORTMENT OF

For Gents, White Coats, Cheviot and Tweeds,  
Blue Suits and Checks, &c. &c.  
Coloured Cassimeres, from 12/6.  
Black Cassimeres, in 6/6, 7/6, 8/6, 9/6, and 10/6, and Vests and  
in all the leading colors.  
Black and Colored Suits, Breeches, Umbrella Covers, Hats, and other  
articles.  
Ladies' Dresses, Blouses, Bonnets, and other articles, with  
Fur-trimmed White and Colored Blankets,  
Shawls, and Umbrellas.

Men's and Youth's Clothing Overcoats, Hats, Suits and Ties  
at the lowest prices.

417 1884—

**Opposite Commercial Bank,**  
CORNER OF BAY AND COCHRANE STREETS,  
BRIGHTON.

This advertisement from the Brighton Southern Cross of 4 October 1884 shows the large range of items stocked by the business.

James and Margaret had six children in Brighton, Frank Ernest born 1862, Alice Maud born 1864, Harold born 1867, Maggie born 1870 and Arthur Exley born 1872. James Ruddle died in 1893 and the drapery business was carried on by his wife Margaret and two of his children Alice Maud and Frank Ernest. The photograph is from the Brighton Historical Society photographic collection shows the drapery store decorated for the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee of 1897. In the doorway of the store from left to right are Alice Maud Ruddle, Frank Ernest Ruddle and their mother

Margaret Ruddle. The identity of the local children is unknown. The photographer was R.M. Geehan, Carpenter Street, North Brighton.



Two interesting descriptions of the store appear in early issues of the Brighton Historical Society Newsletters (3 & 4). The following is an edited extract from these newsletters.

The first is by Mrs Kathleen Kane:

"On the north west corner of Cochrane and Bay Streets, stood Ruddle's little drapery shop - almost sunken into the ground with old age, Miss Alice Ruddle and her brother were great friends of mine. He was a Boer War veteran... I also met Mrs Ruddle, their mother and founder of the store many times. In the early twenties she was in her eighties, and described to me how she had seen a gathering of aborigines on the opposite corner when she was a young woman.

"Ruddle's shop had old wooden shutters which Frank carefully put up each night. I could draw a plan where the tape and ribbons were kept - and the 'Menswear', presided over by Mr Ruddle himself - naturally."

Another description was provided by Mr G. Dockendorf who had the business opposite - "I forget the exact year in which the Ruddle's left and the shop was demolished...It was probably in the mid thirties. The building, which fronted Bay Street, was a rambling structure. The family lived behind it (on the Cochrane Street side)..."

Mrs Dorothy Abry provided another description:

"I remember being sent to Ruddle's as a little girl for cotton, pins and haberdashery lines. Mr Frank was most often in the shop. If you wanted something not at the counter where he was serving he would say loftily, 'Next Department down, please'. Then Miss Ruddle would hasten into the shop to serve you. Even to a small girl it all seemed vaguely funny and theatrical as the shop was so tiny. However it had been an institution, even in my mother's girlhood."

## **Robin Bailey**

Footnotes:

[1] Registrar General Office, (RGO) Conversion Application Notes, 27148.

[2] Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV), Unassisted Passenger Lists.

[3] Victoria, Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1861/3239

[4] RGO, 27148

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