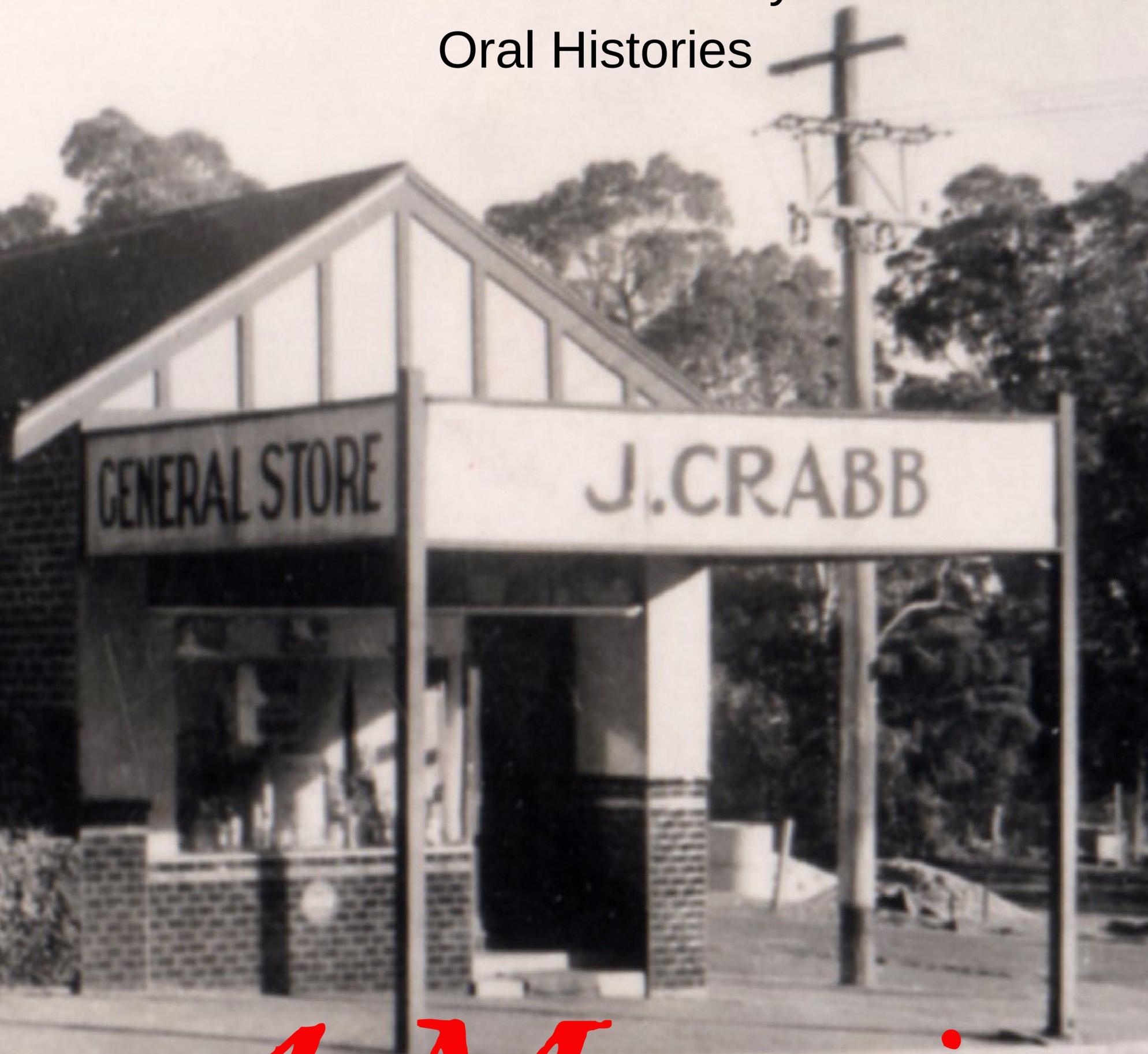
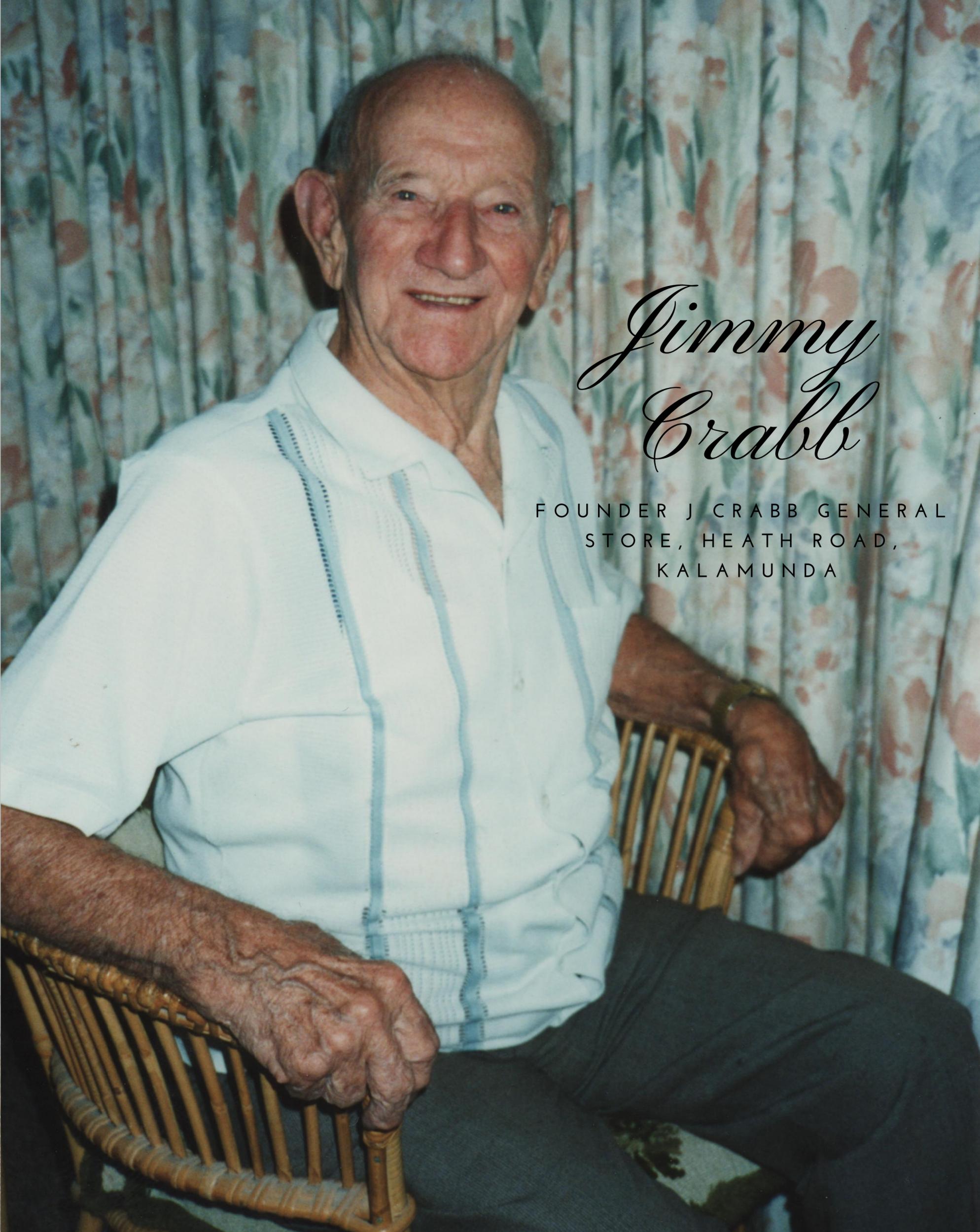


Kalamunda & Districts
Historical Society
Oral Histories



A Memoir

James Crabb



*Jimmy
Crabb*

FOUNDER J CRABB GENERAL
STORE, HEATH ROAD,
KALAMUNDA

An interview of Mr James Crabb was conducted by Donald Dawson on 27 February 1996

on behalf of the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society.

This summary of the original interview was prepared

on behalf of the Bill Shaw Oral History Group



Jimmy Crabb second from right with Nestor Butcher shop staff, circa 1930.

The Butcher

James (Jimmy) Crabb, born in Motherwell near Glasgow in 1905, was twenty when, on the spur of the moment he decided to travel with his aunt and cousin to Western Australia.

His uncle lived in Fremantle and about three weeks after Jimmy arrived a family friend, Mr Nestor the Kalamunda butcher, offered him a job delivering meat with a horse and cart.

With no prior experience of horses or the bush Jimmy found himself in a completely different world.

Jimmy learned all aspects of being a butcher and loved his job but when the depression of the 1930s hit, Mr Nestor had to lay a man off. As he was a single man Jimmy lost his job.

So with ten pounds in his pocket he bought a car which was converted into a delivery van and started a grocery delivery round.

He started his own business by servicing the meat customers that he knew in Kalamunda and then travelled further out to Barton's Mill, Bickley and Karragullen.

Every day Jimmy would travel to Perth to buy stock and deliver these to his customers. He was able to sell his produce ten to twenty per cent cheaper than the local green grocer.





Cottage where Jimmy Crabb began his business. 11 Canning Road, Kalamunda

The Grocery Store

Jimmy met Aida Giles whilst she was working at the Nestor's house. She had recently arrived from Kookynie in the Goldfields. After she had lost her mother and father she came to live with her aunt. Jimmy and Aida married in 1931 in the Anglican Church in Maylands.

It was after this that they opened their grocery shop in Heath Rd, Kalamunda. Jimmy continued to do deliveries whilst Aida ran the shop.

She did everything to make sure the business ran smoothly from placing orders, serving in the shop and keeping the books in order.

With forestry a prominent industry in the surrounding areas, and many of the towns centred on timber mills, business thrived for the Crabbs.

Despite direct competition from Woolworths, Tom the Cheap and Freecorns over the years, the small business continued to flourish and became an intergeral part of the Kalamunda community.

These larger stores were very powerful so a group of independent grocers, including the Crabbs, joined together to form the 'Independent Grocers'. This small group had a warehouse in East Perth from where they obtained their supplies. It was out of this group that Foodland was formed.





Water supplies

The Crabbs were without a water supply for many years with water being collected from the roof catchments and stored in tanks.

Mr Farrell, the water carter and a neighbour, was considered a very important person in Kalamunda. He would haul water and supplies all over the place and bring the Crabbs many of their business provisions.

It was not until about the mid 1950s that the district was hooked up to a mains water supply.

Jimmy and his wife would go to the dances and often helped the Methodist Church with some of the arrangements. This was one of the main social activities in Kalamunda in those days with church groups playing a key role for the community.

The Crabbs' first shop on Heath Road, was long ago demolished but their three children, David, Ailsa and Don, have followed in their parent's footsteps to keep the legacy going.



Cover: Jimmy Crabbs shop and house attached, 14 Canning Road, corner Canning Road and Heath Road, Kalamunda. Circa 1934

The Kalamunda Oral History Series
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Readers of this memoir should bear in mind that the information provided is summarised from a verbatim transcript of the spoken word.

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