

Stawell Historical Society

Fact Sheet 2

Great Western

- Situated almost halfway between Stawell and Ararat on the Western Highway, Great Western came into being when gold was discovered there in February of 1858.
- While the fortunes of gold seekers waxed and waned, vineyards soon became the dominant feature of the area. Hence its well known name from early days – The Wine Village.
- French settlers J.P. Trouette and his wife's brother Emile Blampied planted the first vineyard, "St Peters" in 1863.
- Their success was soon followed by Henry Best's "Concongella", Joseph Best's "Great Western" (now Seppelt), George Skyrme's "St George's" and Edward Headdey's "St Ethels"
- Dozens of smaller vineyards flourished in the area until the early 1900's when depression and low wine prices forced them to plough in their wines. Today Best's vineyard remains a thriving enterprise, while Seppelt retain the Cellar Door operation and Tours of the Underground Drives, with grapes from the vineyard being transported to South Australia.
- Several other small vineyards have been established in the area over the past 30 plus years.
- Today, Great Western is a pleasant village with an Hotel, Primary School, General Store, Garage, Church of England and several smaller businesses – including galleries, cafes, and the well known "Salingers" Restaurant. Many new houses have been built there in recent years, with active sports clubs, the famous Race Meeting in January and the popular Rodeo on Good Friday.
- The Stawell Historical Society holds quite a collection of Great Western's history including Family stories, Sporting Clubs, Cemetery and School records, Vineyards and Mining.