

Vincenzo Fazio (1865-1962)



Vince (Vincenzo) Fazio pictured balancing a tray of crabs on his head in front of his home, later known as 'Keepsake Cottage', Tuncurry, NSW. c1905. Photo courtesy of Great Lakes Museum.

Driving around Tuncurry, you begin to notice some iconic sites and locations. The Great Lakes Cinema, the abandoned BI-LO, and the Rockpool are well-known examples. But one lesser known locale, in my opinion, has a far more interesting (and far older) history, and it all starts with a family of Italians. This location is Fazio's Transport and Bricks, number 5, Lake Street.¹

Our story begins on the Italian island of Lipari, everyone's either a farmer or a fisher, or both. Local housewife Anna Fazio gave birth to her son Vincenzo on the 11th of July, 1865, almost 100 years before the Vietnam War, with his fisherman father, Giuseppi Fazio.²

Not much is known about Vincenzo's youth except that at the age of 21 he left his life in Lipari and immigrated aboard the 'Jeira' to Melbourne, Australia, arriving on the 20th of October, 1886. He lived in Sydney for 10 years operating as a fisherman and later moved to various locations on the Mid-Coast, his final settlement being in what was known at the time as Cape Hawke, or as you may know it better, Forster-Tuncurry.³

He once again operated as a fisherman in Tuncurry. By now, his brother-in-law Phillippo Sciacca (also a fisherman), had relocated from Lipari to Tuncurry as he arrived in Sydney in October 1889.⁴ Maria Sciacca (née Fazio) was the name of Vincenzo's sister and Phillippo's wife; she eventually sailed to Australia. She arrived on the 8th of May, 1899.⁵

¹ Yellow Pages, Fazio's Transport Pty. Ltd.: <https://www.yellowpages.com.au/nsw/tuncurry/fazios-transport-pty-ltd-13604927-listing.html>

² NAA: A659, FAZIO, Vincenzo – Naturalisation; NSW BDM, Death Index for Vincenzo Fazio: 27617/1962

³ Ibid.

⁴ NAA: A1, Phillippo Sciacca, Naturalisation

⁵ NAA: A1, Maria Sciacca - Naturalisation

At the turn of the century, Vincenzo Fazio had married a local woman named Lilian Hardy and had opened the first fishery in Tuncurry.⁶ The building in which it was situated, Keepsake Cottage, was composed of wreckage from the Empress of India, which sank in Wallis Lake. To the side of the fishery, the Fazios also ran a convenience store, at which Lilian created and served a locally famous ice cream. This store would later be owned by another Italian immigrant, Enrico Bonventi.⁷

Throughout his time as a fisherman by profession, it is said that Vincenzo (along with the other Italian immigrants), introduced many Mediterranean fishing methods that are still used today in the local area. But Vincenzo wasn't just a fisherman, he was a truck driver too.

As electric cooling hadn't yet been invented, the issue of transporting fresh fish from one place to another whilst maintaining the quality of the fish was still present. In 1913, a railway was established that permitted travel to Sydney from Taree. This was perfect for the local fisherman as they could transport their fish to the city market without the fish being spoilt.

Vincenzo wanted to be able to maximise the efficiency of transporting the fish to Taree and then to Sydney, thus he founded Fazio's Trucking. Fazio trucks can still be spotted in the Forster-Tuncurry area.⁸ The trucks don't transport fish these days, of course.

Author: Luke Maher, Year 9, Great Lakes College Tuncurry.



Enrico (Rico) Bonventi, George (Gunner) Belton, Sid Mayers and Vince Fazio pictured with Vince's REO speed wagon in front of 'Keepsake Cottage' in Tuncurry, N.S.W. c. 1930. Photo courtesy of Great Lakes Museum.

⁶ NSW BDM, Marriage Index for Vincent Fazio and Lilian J Hardy, 177/1896.

⁷ Susan Gogarty, *Tuncurry: Tapestry of a town*. Tuncurry: N.S.W.: Great Lakes Historical Co-operative Society Ltd, 2011.

⁸ Ibid.