



# MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Issue 41 • January 2018

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## A Basil Hooper House Changes Hands



*The Basil Hooper-designed home at 40 Kitenui Avenue, courtesy of MAHS Archives.*

On Sunday October 15th 2017, at 2pm on a summer-like afternoon, 82 people arrived for the Heritage Festival Guided Walk, titled the Arts and Crafts Heritage Walk, which included the Basil Hooper and Chapman-Taylor houses in Mt Albert. John Childs and Mary Inomata led two groups of walkers, giving excellent commentaries along the way. At the end of the walk the 15 remaining participants were invited into the Chapman-Taylor home at 10 Woodward Road, which John Childs describes as an important part of Mt Albert's and Auckland's architectural history given its mostly unaltered design. It is a local landmark complemented by its corner location and the tall trees that largely remain. It is a fine reminder of one of New Zealand's great craftsmen architects. (Refer to Issue 35, MAHS Inc. for a description of the houses viewed).

The first Basil Hooper house at 40 Kitenui Avenue had an open home on the day of the Arts and Crafts Heritage Walk and was sold on October 27th. The details of that sale were reported in [www.mtalbertinc.co.nz](http://www.mtalbertinc.co.nz) and are summarised below.

One of Mt Albert's most distinguished homes sold under the hammer, bringing claps of joy from the woman who has lived there for the last 70 years. The Basil Hooper-designed home at 40 Kitenui Avenue, known for decades as "the house on the corner", sold at auction for \$1.82m (against a 2014 capital value of \$1.38m). Bidding opened at \$1.5m and reached reserve of \$1.8m with four or five bidders in the auction.

The owner was just five-years-old when she arrived with her parents shortly after the end of the Second World War. She was there, supported by neighbours, at the Anne Duncan Real Estate auction rooms to watch as the grand old property passed into new hands.

She lived at 40 Kitenui Avenue all those years with her mum and dad, and the sale was forced by her declining health.

At the corner of Oakfield Avenue, the house sits on 984m<sup>2</sup>, and was described by the auctioneer as being as close to original and unmolested as you could hope to find.

It was built for J. T. Walleit in 1924, across the road from another of Hooper's local masterpieces, and became part of the celebrated ensemble of Mt Albert homes bearing his architectural stamp.

Mary Inomata wrote in a Mt Albert Historical Society newsletter: "The entry porch 'articulation' is a very good example of how Hooper reduced the entry to human scale by using a low, stepped roof and the wooden brackets to reduce the apparent height of the supporting walls. The diamond shaped windows are one of Hooper's hallmarks in the North Island. I adored this house the first time I saw it and became a Hooper fan from then on."

Other examples of Hooper's design work in Mt Albert are 2 Oakfield Avenue, 7 Ferner Avenue, 42 Allendale Road, 5 Summit Drive, and 23 Mt Albert Road. All were built between 1924 and 1938.



*Glen Orchard at 91 St Heliers Bay Road, courtesy of Bruce Paine.*

## The Alberton Family: Vivienne Wilson's memoir

I am the great-granddaughter of Allan and Sophia Kerr-Taylor who lived in Alberton, Mt Albert. I am also the great-great granddaughter of General William Taylor, Allan's father, who owned and developed farms with his older sons in East Auckland. The farms were named Glen Orchard, Glen Taylor, Glen Innes and Glendowie. Taylor's Mountain is named after the General.

Scottish-born General Taylor had been with the East Indian Army, serving in India for over 50 years. In the 1840s, as a widower nearing retirement, he bought, sight unseen, a large tract of land at St Heliers from his Colonel, Colonel William Bunbury. This land stretched back to East Tamaki.

William sent his two eldest sons, then in their early twenties, to New Zealand to set up farms on the land and to buy more land if it was available. Two years later William took 10 months' leave to sail to New Zealand to see his land and his sons. He then sailed back to take his army to quell an uprising in China.

Three family homesteads were built: Glendowie in Maskill St, where the catholic church stands today, Glen Innes where Glen Taylor School is today, and Glen Orchard which is still standing at 91 St Heliers Bay Road.

General Taylor returned to New Zealand in 1850 after his retirement, bringing with him an Indian couple who acted as housekeeper and gardener and were a rare sight in colonial

Auckland. The General was noted for his integrity and generosity.

His youngest son, Allan Kerr-Taylor, was next to sail to New Zealand after finishing his schooling in Edinburgh. He arrived on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, January 1949, and was given £1,400 to buy more land. His older brothers laughed at him when he purchased 500 acres in Mt Albert and they jokingly referred to his land as "Morningside" after the Morningside Asylum in Edinburgh, because the Mt Albert area was pock-marked with scoria outcrops, swamps and volcanic lakes at the time.

At the end of 1850 Allan set sail for the Californian goldfields and was marooned on Pitcairn Island with New Zealand notables, Baron de Thierry and Samuel Vaile. After little luck in the goldfields of California he sailed back to New Zealand and set about clearing his land with teams of men building rock walls to create paddocks.

In 1860 Allan again set off, this time journeying to England and Scotland and taking a lengthy trip around Europe. He met and married his first wife, Martha Meredith from Shropshire. They sailed to New Zealand and lived with General Taylor in 1863 while a basic farmhouse, named Alberton, was built on the Mt Albert land. Unfortunately childbirth was not easy for Martha. Her first child was stillborn, and she died in 1864 at the birth of her second child, who outlived her by only 5 months.

In 1865 Allan married Sophia Louisa Davis, an unusually well-educated girl, whose Cambridge University-educated father had been a tutor to missionaries in the far north of New Zealand. As time went on and the family grew, Alberton was added to and became grander. However, Allan had further ambitions and in 1867 he purchased large holdings in the South Kaipara area at Waimauku for the purpose of Kauri milling, and a small weekend cottage was built on the land. The farm was named Glendale and later became known as The Hunting Lodge. The family would journey out there for holidays and weekends.

Sophia gave birth to 10 children, the eldest, Vincent, being my grandfather. In order of birth the children were: Vincent, Winifred, Mildred, Adeline, Violet, Daisy, Hector, Theodore, Lancelot, and Muriel. Adeline and Daisy died of childhood illnesses and Hector, aged 33, died in an epileptic attack. Sadly, when the youngest, Muriel, was 18 months old, Allan, aged 58, died of a cerebral haemorrhage and Sophia, only in her early thirties, was left a widow. Her frustrating experiences managing her family, her husband's business interests, as well as the land up at Waimauku started her on the road to fight for women's rights and to give speeches supporting Women's Suffrage (see also Issue 36, MAHS Inc). She became a compelling and amusing speaker at franchise rallies in Auckland.

Vincent, her eldest son, then 18 years old, became her right-hand man and moved to live at the Northwest Waimauku property to control farming and timber milling interests there. As a 23 year-old he unsuccessfully stood as an MP for Ponsonby, a start to his long career in local politics. He later became Chairman of Waitemata County, in the days when it stretched from the West Coast beaches to Takapuna and Devonport, and north past Helensville.

He was a well-known horse judge at all AMP Shows around Auckland and many prominent Aucklanders asked him to choose their horses before purchase.

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

**March 3, 2018 (Saturday) 1.30pm** Visit to Sir Harold Marshall's home at 2 Springleigh Avenue followed by Devonshire Tea at 869 New North Road.

**March 10, 2018 (Saturday) 2pm** Ferndale House. Presentation by Geomaps Dept, Auckland Council. How online Geomaps can help in the search for the history of your house and how to navigate it.

**April 2018** A visit to Crown Lynn and West Lynn Gardens planned. Details to be supplied later.

While County Chairman he was responsible for encouraging two brothers from Mt Albert, who were experimenting in concrete structures, to build the first concrete bridge in New Zealand. This is the small bridge named Taylor's Bridge on the Coatesville-Riverhead Highway.

Vincent's sisters Winifred, Mildred and Muriel never married, so all lived and died at Alberton. They were my great-aunts and all the children of the extended family spent many happy holidays staying with them. All of them were very kind and generous. Winifred spent many years teaching Sunday School at St Luke's Anglican church and she was the business head of the household. Muriel was quietly intelligent with a quick wit. She was a great sportswoman, excelling in golf and tennis and she became one of the first Auckland tennis champions. Her name is on the honours boards at Parnell, West End, and Mt Albert Tennis Clubs.

In 1970, when she became concerned about the DSIR taking her house under the Public Works Act, she gifted it to the Historic Places Trust, after discussions with brother Vincent and her lawyer Mr Duthie.

Violet was the only daughter to marry and have children. After her marriage to Edward Gilmore she sailed to England and lived her remaining years in Exeter. She had two sons and a daughter. It was two generations later that her descendants came to New Zealand to visit Alberton and meet the extended family.

Lance was a promising athlete in his youth, excelling in sprinting, hurdling, swimming, rugby and tennis. When he and Theodore were in their late teens, Sophia sent them both up to farm on the Waimauku property because she was getting increasingly embarrassed about their "laddish" behaviour at Mt Albert dances. Lance enlisted in the First World War and served in Egypt and the East. He later took over the Chairmanship of the Waitemata County after Vincent and also Chairmanship of the Waitemata Electric Power Board. His son, Innes Kerr-Taylor followed him in this role. Theodore lived a quiet life as a farmer and had a love of unusual cars.

All of the Kerr-Taylor family down through the generations have been involved in local politics and have given many hours of dedicated service to community organisations.

**Vivienne Wilson (nee Kerr-Taylor)**

August 2017

(For previous notes on the Kerr-Taylor family see also: MAHS Inc. Issue 9, May 2009; Issue 10, August 2009; Issue 36, October 2016.)

**Christmas High Tea 2017**

On Sunday November 26 at Ferndale House, we held our annual Christmas function with a high tea. The tables looked magnificent with bone china cups and saucers and tiered cake plates, all borrowed from Alberton. The afternoon tea was delicious and members were entertained by the talented violin and piano duo, David Rawnsthorne and Reg Towers who played throughout the afternoon and gave an excellent concert once the afternoon tea was over. Debbie Dunsford, author of Mt Albert Then and Now, was presented with flowers in acknowledgement of the book and her promotional visits. Founder members of the Society, Alice Wylie (with her two daughters) and Arnold and Marjorie Turner were present.

**Congratulations**

Our member Michael Bassett was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year's Honours awards, for his services to history.



*David Rawnsthorne, violin & Reg Towers, piano, at Ferndale House, November 2017.*

## Dave Brown and his Mt Albert Houses

*as interviewed by Mary Inomata, 2017.*

Dave's father, Ernest Brown, left Somerset, England, and came to New Zealand when he was 19. His mother Kate's family came from Staffordshire and was related to the Ainslie crockery people in Staffordshire.

The Brown family came to live at 64a Lloyd Avenue in 1942. The paddock behind 64a was owned by the Page family (of Kingsland Pages stores fame) and Jack Morgan's horses used to graze there. They sold it to the Auckland Education Department, who had earmarked it for a new primary school for Mt Albert. This subsequently proved unsuitable and the land was subdivided for housing and is now Francis Ryan Close.

Mrs Griffith had the dairy on the corner of Lloyd and New North Rd (now in private ownership). On his way home from Seddon Technical College, Dave would get off the tram outside the shop, pick up the bread, and trudge his way up the steep hill to his home at 64a Lloyd Avenue.

Dotted around on the tram routes they had clocks on an island between the trams which is where the tram drivers clocked in. There was a clock right opposite to where the Little Flower Shop is now. In 1942 it was a small grocery shop, later becoming Harvey Real Estate Agency.

When they brought through the trams, they had to lower Kingsland Hill as it was too steep. So by horse and dray they took the spoils to Eden Park. The tram terminus came out to St Lukes Road and when there was enough custom it extended to Mt Albert, then later to Richardson Road and finally to Avondale. When Dave first came to Mt Albert the ladies used to talk about "going up to the Terminus to do my shopping."

Dave mentions that Mrs Griffith's son was the very first apprentice ever taken on by Keith Hay. He also noticed that the water reservoir was underway when he came back from his apprenticeship in Taranaki.

Dave's wife Laurel was an only child and she lived at 10 Willcott Street with her parents Mr and Mrs George. When Dave and Laurel married, he tendered for a State Advances section at 47 Kiwi Road, Pt Chevalier. They were successful with the tender and built there but:

*"We didn't like the neighbourhood as there were some pretty rough people there. A real estate agent came along and offered us fancy money so we took the money and ran."*

Laurel's parents said that they could alter the old villa at 10 Willcott St so they could all live there. It was a high-pitched villa with a lean-to on the back, so Dave added onto the back and they had separate entrances. At a later time when Laurel's parents were gone, Dave lowered the front portion.

Dave conducted a joinery business from there for about 30 years. The Georges had bought the house from people named Drummond – a horse and cart carrier. The big

shed at the bottom of the section was partly stable and partly shed for the cart and was in great disrepair. Dave saw the building inspector in the street one day and asked what the chances were of his getting a permit to take down the shed and rebuild it.

*"He asked why I wanted a permit and he looked at me a bit funny. I said I was just trying to be legal for a change. He said there was no law against repairing a ruined shed and that I could make it new. So I did."*

Sullivan the Saddler lived on the corner of Willcott Street and Carrington Road, and during Dave's time, two elderly women lived there. The house had a big piece of land that came well up Willcott Street.



*64a Lloyd Avenue, courtesy of Dave Brown.*



*The view from 64a Lloyd Avenue, now Francis Ryan Close.*



*10 Willcott Street, courtesy of Dave Brown.*