



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter 25 • January 2014

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The Pickens Family



The house that Thomas Snr built at Owairaka

Often times over the years as I drove along Richardson Road I would see La Veta Avenue and wonder how it came to have a name so unlike the usual New Zealand/English worthy personage name.

Recently I was fortunate enough to read the Pickens Centenary 1893 - 1993 book compiled by Pat Couper, a member of the family. It was written by the family for the family and has not been published for sale to the public.

The oldest Pickens ancestor ever recalled by his New Zealand descendants was William Pickens who married Anne Innes c.1830 probably in County Cavan, Ireland, where he was born.

Life was hard in Ireland during and after the potato famine which lasted until 1851 and three of William and Anne's sons Joseph, William and Thomas emigrated to America. Thomas, the youngest child born in 1856 and the direct descendant of the New Zealand Pickens, was only fifteen years old when he left for America to join his two older brothers Joseph and William who had preceded him to America some years before. About

five years later Thomas and William returned home to Ireland to visit their family. They stayed for two years during which time Thomas joined the Irish Police Force as a constable – a job he did not enjoy. William and Thomas decided to return to America and stayed together working in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they met and married the Weir sisters Agnes and Annie who were of Scottish descent. Later the brothers moved to La Veta, Colorado.

But Thomas was still seeking the land he wanted his descendants to live in and so bought his family to New Zealand. On arriving in Auckland Thomas found that sections were being balloted and he was successful in obtaining around a 100 acres at Tutukaka (20km from Whangarei).

After his wife Annie died, Thomas moved to a house he had built on land he owned in Owairaka so his younger children could receive an education. The land was 33 acres and extended along Richardson Road roughly from Bollard to the junction of Stoddard Road (which was then just a dirt road) and ran back to Oakley Creek. He bought sections, built shops and

houses and sold them. The land at Mt Albert was increased in acreage and a milk round established. He later bought 28 acres on the western side of the mountain which included the pit. Thomas died in 1928.

Thomas and Annie's eldest child George Joseph and his younger brother Tommy had previously purchased from their father Thomas Pickens Snr, the property on the western side of the mountain between Vincent Road (now Owairaka Avenue) and Richardson Road. Over the years they built ten more houses which were rented or sold.

Sometime after they had moved to Mt Albert, Joe (as George was called) and Tommy decided to try their skill at roading the property. La Veta Avenue, named after where they had lived in Colorado, USA was the first. This ran from Richardson Road almost to the quarry and they were able to sell a number of sections on either side of the road. These sections sold for about £100 for a quarter of an acre. The next road was Mt Royal Avenue which ran from half way up La Veta Avenue to connect with another street and so more sections were available for sale.

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

To The Pickens Family Cont...

Joe's home was at 107 Owairaka Avenue. Tommy's at 8 La Veta Avenue.

After her husband Fred Braithwaite died, their sister Ethel moved to Mt Albert in 1929 and settled at 12 Mt Royal Avenue, though in 1937 she built and lived at 4 Ranleigh Road.

From 1955 Joe's daughter Mary and her husband George Duncan lived at 12 La Veta Avenue.

Not long before Joe's death in 1955,

he and Tommy completed another road near the top of La Veta Avenue and this was named Pickens Crescent. Following Joe's death there were only about four acres of land including the quarry left so La Veta was extended right into the quarry and the remaining sections sold.

Tommy died later the same year as Joe and the family felt that Pickens Crescent was a memorial to a life of hard work from the Pickens brothers and father.

The Pickens were a close knit family and the grandchildren all adored their summer holiday stays in the old Pickens home in Mt Albert.

Pat Couper states in the book she compiled, "I also think of the great times we had at Mt Albert as children with our cousins and our grandparents."

All people bearing the name Pickens in New Zealand are of the same family.

Mary Inomata January 2014

Ref: Pickens Centenary 1893 - 1993

An interview with Ivan Pickens

Ivan is the son of Thomas Pickens Jnr and his wife Ivy Scanlan. He was born in Mt Albert on September 12, 1930 and grew up in the family home at 8 La Veta Avenue. To try to make up for Ivan being an only child, his mother, whilst he was at Owairaka School took in foster children. Later when he attended Mt Albert Grammar School she took boarders from the country. Ivan didn't get on too well with the foster children and remembers a rather forbidding woman from Child Welfare sweeping in to pick up a girl who had stolen his mother's rings, but he really enjoyed the Mt Albert Grammar School boys from the country. He had a happy childhood in Mt Albert, spending a lot of time with his cousin Russell Braithwaite in the outdoors, in what was then a semi-rural area, consisting of the farm, scoria pit and the creek and swamp below.

During Year 8 at Owairaka Primary a lesson on chemistry fascinated him and set the path for his future study. At Mt Albert Grammar he took chemistry and went on to complete a degree in chemistry and bio chemistry at university.

The family acquired a batch at Laingholm in 1939 and Ivan went on his first tramp, the precursor to a lifelong love of tramping. In 1954 Ivan climbed Mt Aspiring from the northeast ridge in the company of three others. One of whom was his university lecturer who had failed him for Botany ("where you never tempted to push him over?") I queried. The north east face had never been climbed before, so it was a triumphant group that finally made it to the top.

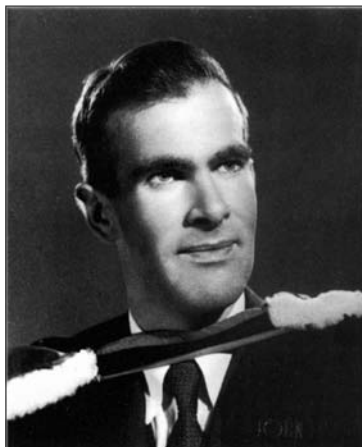
It was in fact through tramping he met his future wife Nancy as they were both members of the Auckland University Tramping Club. Nancy and Ivan became engaged when he finished his degree in 1956 and married in August 1958.

Ivan remembers during the 1951 summer holidays from university, he helped his father, Tommy and uncle, Joe in handpacking the lava block from the quarry, for the base for Pickens Crescent. Tommy had a license to use gelignite and as his left forearm had been removed due to a wound turning septic some years earlier, this was his forte.

The Pickens brothers had a milk round in Mt Albert and after the death of their fathers in 1955, Ivan and his cousin Jack carried on with the milk round for a year or so and then leased it out as they were both beginning their teaching careers.

Ivan has lived in his home in Oratia since the early 1960's.

Mary Inomata January 2014



Ivan Pickens at Graduation



L to R Ivan's aunt Hattie, father Tommy and uncle Joe

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

February 22, 2014 (Saturday) 2pm. Ferndale House, Mt Albert

Antiques and Collectables Mr Keith Rushden from the Blockhouse Bay Historical Society will be our guest. He will be pleased to offer his opinion on estimated values of antiques and collectables, which we invite our members to bring along. **Members only. \$5 entry**

March 22, 2014 (Saturday) 2pm. St Luke's Anglican Church, 704 New North Road, Mt Albert

A picnic in the grounds of the St Luke's Church. We will be given a talk on the history of the church and of the burial grounds. Members need to provide their own transport and refreshments. We hope the weather will be kind to us. Gold coin for the church.

March 30, 2014 (Sunday) 11am - 3pm

Garden Gala at Alberton House, 100 Mt Albert Rd.

Fun festive family occasion with stalls and entertainment to celebrate 150th anniversary of Alberton being built email albertonmanager@historic.org.nz for further information

May 10, 2014 (Saturday) 2pm. Ferndale House, Mt Albert

Mr Harvey Stewart will give us a presentation on the **construction of the Waitakere Dams.**

He is a retired engineer having been with Watercare. All welcome. \$2.00 entry



Were you one of the children in this photo?

Do you know where the Mt Albert Day Nursery was located? Or do you have any information about it? If so please contact Mary on 09-846 4509 or email her at memories@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz

Staff of the Mt Albert Day Nursery guiding children into the Nursery vehicle. New Zealand Free Lance : Photographic prints and negatives. Ref: PAColl-5936-51. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22319178>

News from the Past...

SCHOOL OR NURSERY

Sir – As some confusion seems to exist in the minds of many people as to the difference between a day nursery and a nursery school, we should be glad if you will publish the following explanation, which I am sure a great many of your readers will appreciate “nursery school” and “day nursery” are not synonymous as many people believe. A day nursery is a place which caters for babies and young children generally under school age. The attendance at a day nursery may be for a short period, such as a day or a few days, or a long period, according to the requirements of mother and child. Day nurseries are usually staffed by a matron and helpers. The matron, whilst chosen because of her interest in and experience with children

(nursing experience is considered an advantage), does not necessarily hold specific certificates. Whilst the children at the day nursery receive every care from the staff, many of the educational facilities of the nursery school or Kindergarten, on the other hand, is, as the name indicates, a school for little children who are at the “nursery” stage. Babies are not catered for. The children attend regularly “casuals” are not catered for. The work of the nursery school is on a sound educational basis. The staff comprises certificated nursery school kindergarten teachers who have had a specialised course of training for the work. The term nursery school probably grew out of the need for “nurture and education”, both necessary when children of the toddler stage are provided for during several hours a day.

We are etc., Catherine W Doctor, President, Enid T Wilson, Principal. Wellington Free Kindergarten Association.

Evening Post Issue 34, 10 February 1944 page 4

SELWYN ARCHITECTURE IN AUCKLAND

The Society recently organised a bus trip to visit “Anglican Parnell” which included the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Old St Marys and the Selwyn Library with glimpses of Bishops Court / Selwyn Court and the Old Deanery.

This provides a fitting introduction into what is known as Selwyn Architecture and the Selwyn Churches and other church buildings in Auckland.

This architecture was inspired by George Augustus Selwyn an Anglican Bishop in New Zealand from 1841 to 1868. He was the first and only Anglican Bishop of New Zealand.

Professor Cyril Knight in his excellent publication **The Selwyn Churches of Auckland** described the Selwyn buildings as

“Delightful little buildings established a design pattern for the district (Auckland) which remained constant for over twenty years. Those that have survived the vicissitudes of time are still venerated for their quality as well as for their historical associations.” P7

The Bishop brought with him mainly Gothic style designs from the Camden Society in Cambridge of which he was associated. The predominant building material to be used was to be stone. Most of the buildings were subsequently built of stone because of problems with Auckland red clay. This includes the first St Thomas Church in Kohimarama which lies in ruins.

The designs were assisted by Frederick Thatcher, an architect cleric who designed Old St Pauls in Wellington.

Surviving Selwyn churches / buildings in Auckland include:

- St Johns College Chapel Kohimarama.
St Barnabas Mt Eden (rear portion)
- St Matthais Panmure.
St Marks Remuera
- St Andrews Epsom.
St Stephens Chapel Parnell
- The Old Deanery – Brighton Road.
Court – St Stephens Avenue
- Guiding N.Z. Auckland Headquarters (relocated from Symonds Street) in Grange Road Mt Eden.
All Saints Howick

The main features of Selwyn buildings include:

- They were wooden using local timber.
- Sloping roofs.
- They had a belfry or tower depending on their size.
- They were simple with a rectangular nave sometimes a transept/chancel for the choir and a sanctuary (All Saints).
- Steeply pitched roofs with shingles.
- White painted walls.
- Modest porches and entrance with smaller gabled roofs.
- Small windows either square headed or early English pointed Gothic.
- Gable ends contained larger windows.
- Often they had a graveyard associated with them i.e. St Andrews.
- They often had sympathetic accessory buildings i.e. Lych gates.

They were often located in conspicuous locations i.e. on hills / ridges (St Stephens) and street corners i.e. the Old Deanery in Parnell and All Saints in Howick.

Many have remained in their original state or have been sensitively altered such as the Chapel at St Johns College.

Others have been lost i.e. at St Peters Onehunga or added to i.e. St Barnabas Mt Eden or relocated i.e. the Guiding N.Z. building.

Those that have been retained contribute to our knowledge of Auckland’s history. They are beautiful to look at and usually have spacious grounds. They remind us of the old adage “A city without old buildings is like a man without a memory”.

Local examples for members to view are:

- The nave at St Barnabas Mt Eden (Corner Mt Eden Road and Bellvue Road).
- The Guiding headquarters in Grange Road (moved from Symonds Street).
- St Andrews Epsom in St Andrews Road.

They are well worth a visit.

John Childs Dec 2013

I acknowledge the information contained in his publication **The Selwyn Churches of Auckland** by Professor Cyril Knight.



St Barnabas



Guide Hall



St Andrews