

Thank you for your support!

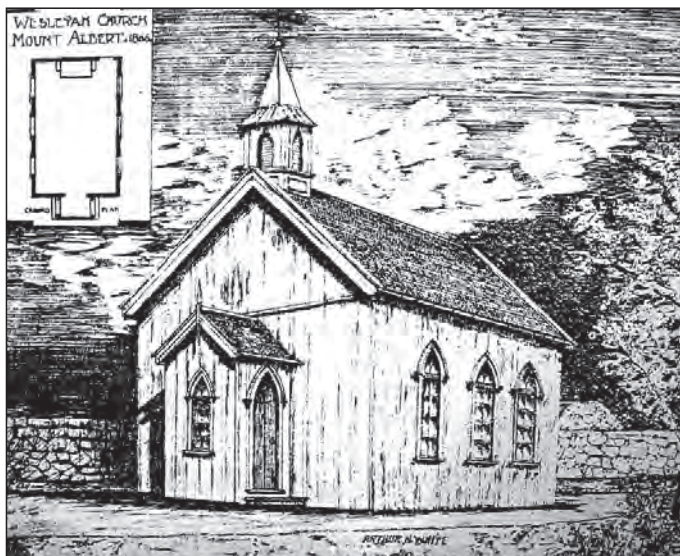
The Mt Albert community has responded very well to the setting up of our historical society. Our newsletter seems to have met the needs of local residents who are hungry for their local history. Within hours of the first one being delivered I was rung by a new member (admittedly a close friend) who had just come in from 'doing the walk'. He was thrilled to have had a 'guided tour' around his locality and very impressed with the story of the Irish soldiers who dug and blasted their way through the Asquith Rd lava flow. This has been typical of the response to the newsletter. There seems to have been a collective sigh of relief that our history is being recollected, retrieved and represented.

The first six weeks after the newsletter release have been phenomenal. From the envelopes of the first sixty subscribers fell \$1,500 in donations! We are very touched by your generosity. We also need to acknowledge Lindsay Rea and the Eden Albert Community Board. Lindsay attended an executive meeting, told us about grants and now we are in receipt of a further \$1,5000....Of course, we must acknowledge again Rich Affords initial donation of \$5,000.

Thanks also to Kathryn Twort, our secretary, who very effectively bribed, bullied and cajoled us through the 'incorporated society' process. So, now we really can claim to be an Inc.!

Another 140th birthday.....

The Mt Albert Methodist Church celebrates the 140th anniversary of the opening of its first church building on the eleventh of November, 1866. However, the first service had been held at the home of Edward and Elizabeth Allen earlier in the year. In fact, this initial meeting was held on the 28th of January 1866 (just a couple of weeks before the highways district meeting). The service, unlike the subsequent meeting, was held in the kitchen which was the largest room at Allendale. A few days later a meeting of some of the worshippers was held at Frank Phillipps house and a decision was taken to build a church.



Mt Albert Methodist Church (Old Church 1866)

This photograph shows the first methodist chapel which was built on land donated by Allan Kerr Taylor. It was completed quickly and opened and dedicated on the eleventh of November, 1866. In 1882 the original church (Old Church) was moved to the rear of the section where it was used as a Sunday school. A second church was built in its place. The Old Church's windows can be seen to the rear of the existing church buildings although the Old Church itself occupies the middle portion (where there are several multi - paned windows). (1)

Sharpen your quills, refill your pens, click your bics.....

Rich Afford encourages us all to become local historians. He advises us to 'record what you know before it is too late.'

It may be interesting to reflect on the opinion of Polybius, the Greek historian who said 'History offers the best training for those who are to take part in public affairs.'

However, I am inclined to think this does not apply to we lesser mortals and that we are more interested in the purity of the definition, concentrating and recording as we do on past events great and small that add to the richness of our lives. So we might well ask ourselves what past events are worthy of record for the interest and delectation of future generations. Other than the recording of memories there is the importance of retaining the tangible evidence of the past, old architecture, old paintings and scripts, but also on a personal level every experience we have in life actually becomes to a greater or lesser degree an historical event. The proliferation of Historical Societies is evidence of a growing awareness that in this fast changing world we must save and record what we can before such events fade into the mists of the past. Whoever can should record and present their memories so that we all may share in events which in point of fact become our history even on only a personal basis.

The personal may yield to the future but more importantly cements in yesterday's historical past. Perhaps as example of what I mean is reflected in the following words I must have penned sixty years ago, a personal reminiscence but reflecting a life and era now long past. Mount Albert is not as I remember it as a schoolboy and tomorrow it will not be as it is today. Record what you know before it is too late.

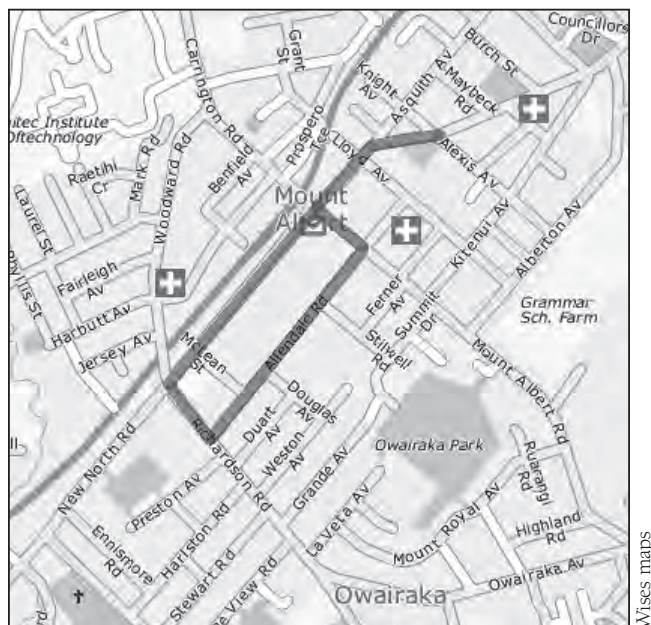
'If you know the district in the vicinity of Newton Road, Auckland, it is quite probable that you have seen my Aunt Florrie on her daily round of the shops, which includes a short respite and refresher at the wine parlour, and a few words of endearment to every mangy animal that scavenges the rubbish bins or sprawls uncouthly on filthy door mats. If the creature even faintly resembles a dog or a cat it will touch a sympathetic cord in her heart, but you will always find her hustling despite her bunions and corns past the house that harbours nude monkeys on its front lawn. Newton Rd is a very steep road with a dip in the middle, which connects the shopping centres of Symonds Street and Karangahape Road. Being one of the oldest residential areas in the city, it is not surprising to find its length ornamented with almost overlapping and rusty roofed accommodation and other type houses, several third rate manufacturing premises and an occasional shop with dilapidated verandah which transforms a mild shower into a deluge. The house wherein Aunt Florrie occupies a single room, is undoubtedly the most respectable one in the road, with its patchy green roof, its polished name plate 'Home Sweet Home' on the wall near the front door, its trimmed hedge, and its six foot of concrete path bounded on either side by two six feet squares of lawn; undoubtedly the most respectable and the most secluded despite the three foot gap between its wall and the walls of its neighbours. To me, as a child Aunt Florrie's room was always an intriguing source of interest but in those days there was also Aunt Lilly, her sister who has since departed this life – a life which to her must have seemed one long worry. I remember how I used to sit in shy wonderment in a room that held so much, and thrilled with half fear in its atmosphere which savoured of the last vestige of Victorian aristocracy.

Continued on page 7

Local walk 2

The Founders walk

This walk starts at Ferndale House, goes along New North Rd to Mt Albert Rd, proceeds a short distance along Mt Albert Rd before crossing over and turning down Allendale Rd. It takes us down Allendale Rd, turning right onto Richardson Road and returning back along New North Rd to Ferndale House.



This walk is intended to recreate the ambience of Mt Albert in the 1860's roughly around the time of the first meeting in February 1866 to establish the highways board. Reference will be made to some of the thirteen who attended. These thirteen important settlers were:

Jonathon Tonsen Garlick, James Kenyon,
Edward Allen and two of his sons,
Allan Kerr Taylor, John Phillipps, William Kemp,
James Palmer, Frederick Bacon, Horatio Peatfield,
Henry S. Myers, and ? Greaves.

Our walk starts at 'Fernvilla' or Ferndale House as it is known today. A two acre piece of land was bought from Allan Kerr Taylor by twenty four year old Jonathon Tonsen Garlick in August 1865. He immediately built a small four roomed cottage on the site for his seventeen year old bride Anne Elizabeth Jane Houghton who he married the following December. They had just been married a month at the time of the historic meeting and their home consisted of the back part of Ferndale (four larger, grander rooms were added changing the frontage). One of Garlick's neighbour's was James Kenyon. He owned the property to the east of Ferndale and attended the meeting too. Jonathon bought James' land off him in 1868, but at least until then, James was a concerned ratepayer. Over the next few years Jonathon added to his property until he owned an area from Alexis Avenue and the New North Road through to Lloyd Avenue East.

Leave Ferndale walking through the avenue of norfolk pines towards the New North Rd.

Jonathon Tonsen Garlick would have walked or ridden down his drive recently edged by Anne with norfolk pine seedlings. These were a gift for his young bride which he brought back from the Hokianga. One story says that these seedlings were commonly bartered by sailors who had procured them off shore, another is that Anne planted seven of them in memory of her six sisters. (The first tree was supposedly named Eva for her eldest sister.) The pines are widely known as 'the Seven Sisters' and are an iconic part of local history.

Turn left onto New North Rd and walk along it until you reach Mt Albert Rd.

At the end of Garlick's driveway was the New Great North Road, today known as the New North Rd. On September 3rd 1864 Allan Kerr Taylor conveyed to the public 'in dedication' parts of allotments 170 and 171 (Suburbs of Auckland) and 38, 39, and 40 (Parish of Titirangi) ' to the intent that the same be used as and be a public highway' (8). He clearly envisioned the route to be taken by the New North Rd! From 1865 Kerr Taylor sold many sections along it culminating in the creation of the Highways Board for its 'formation and repairs'. In 1867 we are told (3) at the first A.G.M. that forty pounds had been spent on 'pitching and forming' 20 chains (approx. 440 metres) and 'forming' another 14 chains (approx. 308 metres) of the New North Rd. This road was formed and metalled as far as the schoolhouse on Whau Rd (we understand that this was held in the Methodist Chapel).

This photograph below shows how the roads had developed after many years of work from active, energetic farmers and forty years of attention from the local highways board. Most notably, we can see the low, scoria walls that came to be such a feature of Mt Albert and had, in fact, been built ever since the initial settling as a way to clear the land of rocks. It is fair to suppose that this road was in a far rougher condition in 1866. As we walk along we must remember that none of the buildings existed except for the few we will visit.



Looking west from Alexis Avenue across New North Road towards Asquith Avenue, Mount Albert, Mount Albert Methodist Church (left), the Knight family home (centre, now Knights Avenue),(right) is the family home of the Stones, James and in 1963 was the Mount Albert Guest House

Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries (N.Z.) I.O. 7-A11261 Photographer: Unknown

From the Mt Albert Rd intersection New North Rd was developed by adjoining property owners. It was standard for each to contribute half of the land for the road and standing for half of its cost. Edward Allen was clearly proud of his farm and valued it so highly that he did not want to give any of it up. He offered to make the entire road if his neighbour gave all the land. His offer was accepted, Allen's farm remained intact and because of this we have a slightly peculiar kink in the road at the lights!

Turn left onto Mt Albert Rd and walk along until you get to number eighteen.

This home was the dwelling of John Phillipps and his family. Phillipps was a staunch supporter of Allan Kerr Taylor's efforts to kick start the highways board. He was present at the first two meetings, moving five out of ten items and seconding one. He is reported to have defended Kerr Taylor from attack by disgruntled settlers in 1867 who felt their rates had been set too high by saying he 'did not like to hear insinuations against Mr Taylor as having spent the money (collected from the rates) on his own property.' This house is very well preserved (unlike the home of John's brother, Frank, on the corner with Ranleigh St). It looks much as it would have in 1866 except for the addition of the front bay window.

THE MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

THE CENTRE OF AUCKLAND

Allan Kerr Taylor who convened the meeting was the largest property owner in Mt Albert originally owning approximately 600 acres. His home at Alberton, 100 Mt Albert Rd, was built in 1863 and was, like Fernvilla, a reasonably modest home. It was substantially added to in 1870.

William Kemp had an eighty acre pig and dairy farm on the eastern slopes which he managed with the help of his wife and eleven children

Take care crossing the road and walk back along Mt Albert Rd to number one.

Edward Allen and Elizabeth Allen nee Dodd arrived in New Zealand in 1861, quickly bought their 99 acres of Mt Albert land and built a home (making it the oldest wooden built home in Mt Albert). Edward was descended from several generations of English farmers and immediately applied his skills to creating an exemplary farm based on traditional mixed farming methods. They were also staunch Methodists holding the first Methodist service here just a few weeks before the highways meeting.

The meeting room was in the small front room roughly where the fire escape is in the photo. This ten room house was built from pit sawn kauri brought over from the Kaipara bush.(4) The roof was made from kauri shingles and there was a well in the backyard. An old Star article says that corrugated iron was affixed over the top of these shingles which were still considered to be in good condition(5).

This unusual photo of Allendale is taken from the back. It does not demonstrate typical Victorian proprietary but gives the impression of a working farmhouse, making a distinctive contrast with the front page of our last issue.(6)



Allendale

Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries (N.Z.) I.O. A11588

Walk back along Mt Albert Rd turning right along Allendale Rd. Walk along this road to the end.

Allendale Rd runs along the length of Edward and Elizabeth's farm, slightly to the west of the old farm road that divided it in half. Apparently the old road was about seven metres wide (20 feet), formed and walled with stones that worked their way to the surface. It would have looked similar to the view down Alexis Ave. About forty four metres (2 chains) behind the farmhouse and the same distance inside the tram terminus was the Allen's barn. Hay was carted along the length of the road terminating in the 'corner paddock'.

Paddocks named by the English system opened off the central road. The 'ten acre' was where Edward grew wheat. This occupied the area where the Tattersfield home was later built and extended almost up to the site of the Winstones home at 29 Stilwell Rd.

Frank Astley's home was later built in the middle of the 'home paddock.' We don't know what it was used for but possibly Edwards flock of Shropshire sheep were temporarily kept here as they were moved from 'pillar to post'. With some bitterness our reference (7) describes this paddock as being 'mutilated by the ballast line'. At this stage of the road it detoured slightly to avoid a 'stiff rise' thus making an entrance to the 'lucerne paddock'.

The walled road terminated at the 'corner' paddock' which occupied the land built on by the Worralls, the James Marsden Caugheys, the Webbs on the corner of Richardson Rd and taken up by Murdoch / McLean Rd. The 'corner paddock' was where Edward bred four or five Clydesdale horses every year. They usually could be seen here grazing with their mothers.

There was also the 'strawberry paddock' situated behind J. Walkers house (?)

Turn right onto Richardson Rd and right again onto New North Rd.

We need to remind ourselves that neither the road nor the buildings were here in the mid 1860's. Walking along the road we can see at no.1007 two large conifers. They marked the entrance to Wesley Spragg's home (since moved off site) which had been built on the Allen's 'garden paddock.' This may have been what the Reverend George Marshall referred to in his 1881 diary as 'the kitchen garden where we saw maize growing to the height of 8 or 9 feet, pumpkins, watermelons, also many varieties of English vegetables, but they all grow so large here that they are not always recognized.'(3) Assuming our dates are correct, this description is of part of the Allen farm just as it was being sold.

In 1878 the Government 'by proclamation' acquired part of the Allen farm to enable the building of the railway ballast line to the scoria pit on the mountain. Edward decided that having a railway running through his farm was not in the best interests of stock breeding and so he decided to sell up. In 1880 he subdivided his land into blocks of a half to three acres and advertised them as

'47 Large and Beautifully Situated Sites
Volcanic Soil
Close to Railway Station
Buses pass four times per day'.

References for Mt Albert: Local Walk 2

- 1) *Minute Book of Mt Albert District 1866, Auckland City Archives*
- 2) *The McGehan Papers, Mt Albert Library*
- 3) *Scott, Dick 'In Old Mt Albert'*
- 4) *Auckland Star 19/11/57, 'Where pioneers met to form local body.'*
- 5) *Mt Albert Endeavour, June 1957, 'Birthplace of the Local Authority', Auckland City Archives*
- 6) *M.A.H.S. Newsletter 1.*
- 7) *Auckland Star. 30/ 6/ 1923 . 'The Karitane Hospital formerly a pioneer's farm. A glimpse into the past. (By an old resident.)' Auckland City Archives, Hebron Christian College.*
- 8) *Mount Albert Methodist Church 1866 to 1991 A Brief History of the Land And Its Buildings*
Thanks to Auckland City Archives (09) 307 7792

References for main newsletter

1. *Mount Albert Methodist Church 1866 to 1991 A Brief History of the Land And Buildings. Meurant and Marshall.*

Every nook and cranny, every trinket, the old bellows near the open fire place, the ornaments on the mantelpiece, the lace curtains at the windows, all whispered mystery.

I wish you could have seen those two dear old spinsters, Florrie some nine inches taller than her sister, and still handsome despite her seventy five years handicap. The reluctantly fleeing features seemed to hesitate behind the kindly wrinkles and whispered of a beauty of rare charm and loveliness; a beauty that would have been the envy of a princess.

‘ Oh! She was a greedy girl’ she would say, ‘she ate ten buns and bust,’ as if the indignity of it far out weighed the consequence. I never could quite fathom how any person would bust by eating ten buns but at the same time I always registered a shocked look at the gross indecency.’

It is here that for some unaccountable reason my narrative cuts short, but to me and I hope to you it depicts a scene that whilst no longer existing, reflects the fabric of the times.

Dates to Remember

25th –9th September ‘Dolls through the Ages.’ Alberton. A display of over 60 dolls. Presented by Auckland Dollmakers and Collectors. \$5 entry.

15th –23rd September ‘Out of the Closet.’ Alberton. Victorian period clothes from the Kerr-Taylor collection. \$5 entry.

16th - 24th September Auckland heritage Week. Two walks organised by M.A.H.S.

17th September (Sunday) Walk 1 meets at Mt Albert Community Centre, New North Rd, 3pm. Includes Asquith Ave, bungalow and villa territory, Fowlds Park.

24th September (Sunday) Walk 2 meets at Ferndale House, New North Rd, 3pm. This is the ‘founders walk’ which covers people and places important to the 140th celebration. Contact Carron at rumbaugh@xtra.co.nz for more information. All welcome. Free

16th –24th September Mt Albert Methodist Church 140 year celebration. For details.Ph (09) 846 7264 Email mount.albert.methodist@xtra.co.nz

16th September Celebration dinner Mt Albert Methodist Church

17th September Opening service Mt Albert Methodist Church

23rd September Display Day Mt Albert Methodist Church

16th September Blockhouse Bay Mainstreet Heritage Dinner. Bookings essential. Phone Davina (09) 232 9442 Mondays or evenings.

16th September Art Deco Ball, at Sorrento in the Park, One Tree Hill Domain, phone Sue Olsen (09) 832 9493

1st December Christmas Cocktails at Alberton may be metamorphosing into a Victorian Soiree... 5pm – 7pm RSVP and for more information phone Alberton 846 7367

6th January-17th March 2007 Music in the Parks. Free concerts at Alberton.

Our Streets

Thanks to Marjorie and Arnold Turner who have shared details of their long association with Alexis Avenue and Violet Street. We have supplemented it with the origins of the street names from the Auckland City Library website and 'Street Names of Auckland' by John Davenport.

Alexis Avenue was probably first known as Chapel Street as it was called this in the works budget of the 1874 Mt Albert Highways Board. One assumes that this name comes from the Methodist Chapel opposite the end of it. It was later changed to Alexandra Avenue but then changed to Alexis Avenue during the big re-naming programme of 1938 which followed a post office appeal to end duplication. In Mt Albert the new names were coined to suggest the sound of the old name. **Violet Street** was previously known as Victoria Avenue. It may have been renamed for an early coastal vessel.

In 1896 a Mr Noah Wood built the wooden villa house now known as No 20 Alexis Avenue. The land on which the house stood was extensive – nearly 3/4 acre – and included the sites of what are now 18 Alexis Avenue and 11 and 11a Violet Street. (His purchase may have included the land on which Nos 16 and 16a Alexis Ave now stand but the Turners are not sure.)

At the time that Mr Wood built that house, the stone 'garage' which stands on the corner of Alexis Ave and Violet St was already there. It was built originally as a stables, with a loft for fodder. The split door – long joined as one – opens into the present yard and there was a stone cistern attached at the rear. Noah's was not the first house on the property, there had been a cottage of some sort sited where No 11A Violet St now stands. The stables must have been associated with that cottage.

Marjorie's father, Mr C.W.Coles, bought the wooden villa at No 20 from Mr Wood in 1923. The land he purchased included the sites of 18 Alexis Ave and 11 and 11a Violet St but not the land on which Nos 16 and 16a Alexis Ave now stand. Until about 20 years ago these two were one property. Marjorie recalls that when young (in the 1930s) her neighbours spoke of the well down near the back of their property. Then in about 1940 the said that they had filled it in because of the danger to their young children. No 11a Violet St and No 16 Alexis Ave share a common boundary. About 1992 Mrs Palmer at 16a drew the Turners attention to a depression in her back garden which had turned into a hole. The hole was enlarged and a brick lined well was discovered. Obviously, the soil which had covered the rocks (with which the well had been filled) had settled to the point where the hole had opened up.

Marjorie's father and mother subdivided the site of 18 Alexis Ave in 1959 and built and moved into that house. Arnold and Marjorie moved into No 20 with their young family. They demolished the stone cistern which stood at the rear of the 'stables' in order to make a driveway from Violet St into the carport they built onto No 20.

Later the Turners subdivided the remainder of the property, creating the sites for Nos 11 and 11a Violet St. They built the house at No 11a in 1976 and moved there as most of their family were married. While preparing the site for that house they uncovered the remains of an old brick fireplace and tarred path. These must have been the relics of the pre – 1896 cottage which had been destroyed by fire.