



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter 8 • October / November 2008

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Mt Albert is Watching!

We are demonstrating our commitment to Mt Albert's heritage by exploring Mt Albert Rd from number one to one hundred. This is not a 'walk' in the strict M.A.H.S sense (though you can probably just about follow it as one by walking along the 'odds' side from number one and crossing over near ninety-nine). Rather it is a celebration of a rich part of our history.....

The area of Mt Albert Rd between Allendale Rd and Ferner Ave was once owned by William John Brooks and Letitia (Letty) nee Pegler. They lived in the beautiful villa shown in the accompanying photograph. The villa was square fronted with a return verandah. The side bay defined the biggest room which at the time of building (late 1870s to 1890s) was typically the dining room. (1)



Brooks' villa at 25 Mt Albert Rd shortly before demolition in 1950s. Photo taken by Rich Afford.

Rich Afford described the house as a 'honeymoon home' in that it was lived in by the Brooks from their marriage as teenagers until Letty died in her late nineties. We can surmise that they bought

the land from Edward and Jane Allen (Letty's grandparents) and subsequently built the house. (Letty's parents were John New Pegler and Eliza nee Allen. Letty was the eldest daughter with Amy being the eighth child arriving many years later.) (2) The couple were childless and following her husband's death, Letty was joined in the home by her sister Amy. Amy died in the 1950s having been pre-deceased by her sister.

Alice Wylie writes about this house 'It was with dismay that I saw another of these grand old Mt Albert homes being bought for the building of 'sausage flats.'...The developer was sympathetic to Council's concern and offered to sell the property for what he had paid for it. But no provision had been made in the estimates for that amount of money, and with no community use for the property, the offer had to be declined.' 'The house was in perfect condition, absolutely immaculate with a beautiful garden always boasting a show of flowers' (1) but was summarily demolished. Alice continues 'Not without some disagreement as to desirability the Mt Albert Borough Council altered the zoning to protect this area from subdivision into smaller sections.' (3)



'A Dusty Road'.

*Taken by William John Brooks from his home circa 1900.
Sheep being herded along Mt Albert Rd.*

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Brooks was a keen amateur photographer with his own darkroom. He took the photo of the sheep being herded down Mt Albert Rd, on their way to the abattoir at the top of the Bullock Track, from his property. The photo entitled 'A Dusty Road' was taken around 1900. It was rescued from the house before it was demolished.

Now back to number one! The Allen's farm originally ran in a 100 acre rectangle from Mt Albert Rd to Richardson Rd. The Mt Albert shops are standing on one long edge of the farm with Belmont Ave/Ferner Ave possibly running the length of the other side. The existing houses from one to thirty one Mt Albert Rd are on the northern side of the old farm. (The original homestead of Edward and Elizabeth Allen is down the right-of-way at number one. This is the house where settlers met in 1866 to form the Mt Albert Road Board which established Mt Albert as a separate entity. The front lawn was further subdivided in the 1950s and houses 1a and 3 were built.)

Early certificates of title tell us land was transferred to Thomas Allen, Edward Allen, John Allen and Annie Schnackenberg (nee Allen) following the turn of the century practice of families staying together in the same locality. This pattern is clearly repeated with the Sadgroves too. (Family cohesion seems to start to disintegrate in the 1930s.)

The land between New North Rd and Allendale Rd shows a mixture of housing types reflecting the subdivision over time. The bungalows from number five to thirteen are prominent in one of the few Mt Albert postcards we have found in the Radcliffe collection. Continuing past the villa subdivision at 15a we come to 'Astley's Corner'. The Mrs Astley of local memory would have been Audrey (born 1915) who married Frank (known as Lloyd) in 1937. Lloyd's father, Frank, was the son of John Edward Astley who originally bought the land from the Allen's in 1893. A villa belonging to the Astley family stood on this site but has been replaced by the town houses. However, a beautiful stone wall still graces the site.

Allendale Rd was the original farm road that went along the middle of the farm and was lined with stone walls on either side. The farm was laid out in a typical English fashion and stone walled paddocks were entered from this road which was transferred 'to the Public' in 1897 following the subdivision of the farm.

Ferner Ave was first called Belmont Ave and this area of land to Domain Rd/Summit Dr was owned by Joseph Gailey. Wises 1911 and 1920 list him as sole owner. In 1930 this land had been sold to George Rhodes and Wises 1949 shows it had been divided into three and owned by Thomas Hewer, Edward Chamberlain and Eva Rogers.(4)

The Sadgroves owned the land from Summit Dr along to Toroa Tce and possibly along to Highland Rd. We know that William Sadgrove acquired farm land on the northern slopes of Mt Albert in 1865. He purchased thirty acres for the sum of eight hundred pounds. Notes from the Fred McGehan Collection say the Sadgroves had a large family; three sons and seven daughters. (5) William worked as a roading contractor and at least one of his sons, Robert, also worked as a carrier supplying scoria for roading. (In Wises 1920 Robert (carter), William (railway employee) and Angus (carpenter) are listed as living in close proximity to each other on Mt Albert Rd.)

For a number of years the Sadgroves were also dairy farmers and the family churned 40lbs of butter each week that was sold locally. Latterly, they also sold milk. One must assume that this aspect of the family business was largely run by the Sadgrove women. In the late 1930's the cows would walk along Mt Albert Rd for milking. Margaret Badley remembers being told as a little girl 'If you don't behave, I will get Sadgrove's cows after you!'(6).

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

5th December (Friday) 5pm- 7pm. Christmas Cocktail Party. Alberton House. This year it's going to be even more fun. We've got someone tinkling the ivories for us while we sing carols and Cathie Harrop will entertain us with her harp from 5.30 on. Bubbles, nibbles. Please come! Cover charge \$5 per person payable at the door. Members only. RSVP Jackie 846 6250 by 28th November.

15th February (Sunday) 2pm. Guided walking tour of Shaw Estate and Burnley Tce. Then afternoon tea in a café. Meet outside 1 Ethel St. Wear hat, walking shoes and bring water bottle.

MAHS have organized bi monthly historical talks at the Senior Citizens Club Rooms, Rocket Park for next year. The first of these will be on **14th March (Saturday) 2pm.** Retired Judge Mick Brown (formerly of the Children's Court) will reminisce about his life spent in Mt Albert. Future dates are **9th May (Saturday)**, **11th July (Saturday)**, **22nd August (Saturday)**, **14th November (Saturday)**. Speakers to be announced in March newsletter.

The fete for Alberton's 35th has been cancelled. Rendell McKintosh informs us that the celebrations are going to take some other form so we don't need your jams and jellies after all! Phone Rendell at Alberton 846 7367 for info.

Have you paid your subs? Thank you to all those who have paid and a reminder to those who haven't! Please send your cheque and completed form to: Treasurer, Mt Albert Historical Society, P.O. Box 77-002, Mt Albert 1350.

Want to join? You're welcome! Write to address above or phone Suzanne, MAHS secretary, 846 6569 and she'll organize it.

Thankyou to the Eden-Albert Community Board and the Auckland City Council- Community board Local Funding for the two grants they have awarded us. These grants have assisted us in producing the July and October/November newsletters.

Historical Botox

Re: Ack-Ack in Mt Albert (Newsletter7)

Apparently the ack-ack hall was used subsequently by the Gladstone School as its hall. From the Gladstone School centenary booklet draft.

'At a committee meeting one night we were talking about having a war memorial for the school. And it was decided that we would put in an application to get the ack-ack battery hall at Mt Albert. We made enquiries to see if it was for sale and yes it was.'..... 'But the problem then arose about how we would get the hall to Gladstone School. We called for help and got about 300 parents and we cut the hall in half sawed it down from the roof to the ground. The first half was transported on a trailer and then with the help of the 300 people we lifted it over the fence and put it on the ground where we had piles ready for it. Then we went back in the afternoon and transported the second half. This was done by the same process. It then took about another four to six months of hard work with voluntary labour to join the building together, brace it up, line and paint it'

Rich Afford reminds us that there are the remains of a bomb shelter clearly visible next to 18a Mt Albert Rd

Does anyone know when Mt Albert Rd itself was formed?

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

In the 1940s house numbers were changed and there is local memory of a Sadgrove living at today's number 47 in the 1940s house that was subdivided from the Sadgrove villa at number 49. Number 49 is seen in the 1920 photo (ID 4693) with smoke blowing from its chimney. A Gardening Informant said that the garage at the bottom of the drive was formerly a milking shed which from a townies perspective looks right. The small square fronted villa at number 55 was a Sadgrove house as was the villa at number 61.

However, the original Sadgrove house was built where the second block of flats are at number 75. It was sold to the Barrett family who ran a small garage called 'Hillside Motors' in front of it. Hillside Motors opened directly onto the footpath. There was no forecourt in front of it and the building was built into the bank. Zaida Croad lived for many years just along from the motors. She is now ninety-five years old and gave the following information to Marjorie and Arnold Turner. 'Hillside Motors was originally the Barretts' property. They bought a bus and excavated for and built a large garage on the street frontage. But the bus business was not a success. Eventually Howard Duncumb took over occupation of the garage and established a motor workshop there (early 1950s?)'

Now follows two versions of the same story!

'Howard Duncumb made some representations to the Council about his workshop. It was probable that he asked for an appropriate Zoning at the time the first district town planning scheme was promulgated. However, we did not want a commercial use entrenched on that site (for perhaps obvious reasons) and refused his request'(7)

and

according to one of my Gardening Informants (G.I) there was a strong move to replace the garage and old house with a large Caltex petrol station. One of the neighbours was particularly keen on the idea and gathered a petition of locals who supported the idea. The signees ran from the garage towards the township. However, another of the neighbours was not so keen and so drafted letters opposing the new petrol station. Signees ran from his home down towards Alberton. Explaining his decision to take the contrary view this G.I. said his neighbour was very shortsighted! 'He just wanted the Caltex there so he could pop over the road to get a tin of petrol for his mower!' Following a Council hearing the Caltex station wasn't built.

The house and garage were demolished and subdivided for the existing town houses you can see at number 75 and 77. Numbers 71 and 73 were also part of this property, there was a well in the corner of number 71.

Here is a brief note about a home we have already passed by....In what one must assume is a fairly typical story of farm subdivision is the brick and tile house at number 41 built in 1941. I was lucky to talk to Colin Bridge the nephew and namesake of Colin Smyth who bought the land for five hundred pounds from the Sadgroves. The house was built for 2,500 pounds and sold twenty years later in 1960 for 7,500 pounds. Colin Bridge repurchased his uncle's house in 1980 and gave me a copy of the 1933 photo of this area of Mt Albert Rd. It contrasts well with the 1920 view showing the increased suburbanization following the bungalow building that took place during the twenties and early thirties. In both photos number 41 is a vacant lot at the apex of the ballast line and Mt Albert Rd. (8)



Part of Mt Albert panoramic view taken 3 September, 1920. Looking north from the northern slope of Mt Albert across Mt Albert and Point Chevalier towards the Waitemata Harbour. Mt Albert Rd (left to right across centre), Summit Dr(left of centre), railway leading towards quarry(left to right across foreground) ID 4693. House at number 49 with smoke blowing from chimney.



View taken 1933 possibly by Keith Sutton of 'Montana' 30 Mt Albert Rd. Given to Colin Bridge who subsequently donated it to M.A.H.S. Looking north from the northern slope of Mt Albert across Mt Albert and the Waitemata Harbour. Contrast with 1920 view shows Kitenui Ave now going from Mt Albert Rd left to right across photograph. Below Kitenui Ave is number 30 'Montana', number 34 villa (no longer there) and number 36 bungalow which belonged to Molly Whitley in 1940s. (See text) The ballast railway lines have been pulled up.

In the year 1878 the government, under the Public Works Act and by proclamation, acquired a large piece of Sadgrove's property for the purpose of constructing a railway ballast line to the mountain pit. This railway line became Toroa Tce when it ceased functioning and the adjoining land was subdivided for housing. (5) The land up to our arbitrary cut off point at number ninety-nine is occupied by flats, bungalows and two spectacular art deco houses up right-of-ways.

MT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Taking care to cross Mt Albert Rd we come to Alberton, now designated number one hundred, it was number seventy in 1930 and number ninety in 1949. The story of this spectacular home and its occupants, the Kerr-Taylors, has been well researched and so we move on to return in another newsletter. The land along this side of Mt Albert Rd to the township was owned by Allan and Sophia Kerr-Taylor. Their farm covered five hundred acres of prime Mt Albert land. Sub division began in 1865 and by 1890 most of this farm had been sold except for the home estate of allotments 41, 42 and 43.(9) Allan Kerr-Taylor died in 1890 and Sophia had the remaining land surveyed. In 1916 she sold 16 acres for Mt Albert Grammar School. The 1916 District Plan 1125 shows the subdivision of the land between Mountain Rd/Kitenui Ave and Rob Roy Rd/Alberton Ave. The area from Alberton House to Alberton Ave was subdivided in 1933 although plots may have sold before then. The housing stock on the northern side of Mt Albert Rd is built on the Kerr-Taylor estate. There are two homes which exemplify the subdivision of this farm.

The first at number eighty two was lived in by Wilf Begbie, one of Mt Albert's famed ABC (Anderson, Begbie, Congalton). Wilf Begbie was appointed Borough Engineer in 1926 and served the council until 1966. The year of his appointment the Borough gained authority to raise a large 'Works' loan. It was intended to finance the formation of all the streets which had not been fully formed to modern standards. This work proceeded slowly because of the Depression and the War. Wilf Begbie was responsible for planning and supervising this development work which was carried out during difficult times. He also had great foresight regarding the provision of parks and open spaces. Much of the open space Mt Albert now enjoys is because of his efforts. (10)

The second home at number sixty two makes an ideal case study of a bungalow built on the Kerr-Taylor farm and I have used the memoirs of the owner's daughter, Marjorie Pictor, for information. The house was built for William Latimer Vickery and his wife. The couple moved in a few years after their marriage in 1922. William preferred higher ceilings so the house was built with a higher stud than is typical of a bungalow. The house is still occupying its original ¼ acre section. Marjorie wrote 'Our house section had been purchased by our dad from the Kerr Taylors ...and we loved living there. With the farm at the back fence we could imagine we were in the middle of the country. A large vegetable garden was kept and we used to surreptitiously feed the cows with the silverbeet and chokos which we didn't like. It was very funny to us to see cows eating lemons and beetroot as they would slurp and dribble'.(11) (The MAGS citrus orchard was nearby.)



John Lesnie studio photograph of number 62 Mt Albert Rd

Other information about some of the houses on this side of the road, showing in both the 1920 and 1933 photos, was given to me by Colin Bridge at the time he donated his photo to MAHS. He mentioned that in the 1940s the bungalow at number 36 belonged to Molly Whitley. It is now two storeyed, a flat being added to supplement income in the 1980s. In the backyard of this home there is, according to Colin, a *Fagus sylvatica* (copper beech) that has a protection order on it. The property is surrounded by beautiful original stone wall. The tennis court next to it in the 1933 photo may have become the existing grassed area next to the house.

At number 34 in both the 1920 and 1933 photo there is a large villa on the site. This home was owned by Enoch Arblaster in the 1940s. It was 'removed bodily' from the site and the current tudor style home was built in the 1990s.

Roughly in the middle of the 1920 photo we can see a large villa with three chimneys. It appears just below Kitenui Avenue (which had been developed in the meantime) in the 1933 photo. This was the Penman's house and today is number thirty. When a half storey was added in the 1980's the chimneys were demolished but the bricks were used to make the wall seen today. According to Colin Bridge's informant, Keith Sutton, this villa was known as 'Montana.' (8)

Between Kitenui Ave and Ranleigh Rd are a collection of two bungalows and two arts and crafts houses. Crossing Ranleigh Rd we come to Frank Phillipps' (original owner) house on the corner. This is next to John Phillipps' (original owner) home at number eighteen which is the oldest home in Mt Albert privately occupied. Rich Afford is now the proud owner of this lovely villa and tells me that it sits so well on its wide frontage because the right side garden was just two feet shy of being wide enough for subdivision! The left hand garden wasn't so lucky though and the house at 18a was built on subdivided land in the 1950s. (More about number eighteen appeared in newsletter one.) However, Rich's neighbours proved to be very pleasant and they positioned the house so as not to obstruct the view of their putting green from Rich's place. They also placed

their house so they could enjoy the view of number eighteen's wonderful front garden. Note: As well as the beautiful wall outside number eighteen (recently partially demolished by a boy racer!) there is a seat inset into the wall, by Rich. He built it in response to a local woman, carrying heavy shopping, who rested there 'puffed out' saying she wished there was 'somewhere to sit'.

In these 'snapshots' we have briefly noted the subdivision of three local farms (the Allen's, the Sadgrove's and the Kerr-Taylor's), plotted the sites of some notable villas and acknowledged the emergence of a 'bungalow burb' in the 1920s. The thirties and forties were relatively quiet on the building front (depression and war) but afterwards we can see renewed optimism expressed through the further subdivision of land and the brick and tile houses and apartments built on it.

We have acknowledged some ill advised subdivision and learnt about the houses that were demolished to make way for it. On the positive side, let's all make sure we notice and celebrate the magnificent stone walls, some of which date from the 1860s, that line much of this thoroughfare. Also, let's give thanks to those home owners who are treasuring their homes and preserving them for the future. Thanks also to those who helped by sharing their knowledge for this issue: Rich Afford, Margaret Badley, Colin Bridge, Zaida Coad, Mary Gould, Bob Kinnear, Marjorie Pricor, John Stacpoole, Marjorie and Arnold Turner, Alice Wylie and some Gardening Informants (generally men of a certain age encountered while they are 'in the garden' who do not wish to be named!)

References

- 1) *Conversation with John Stacpoole 9/10/08*
- 2) *Around Raglan. R.T.Vernon*
- 3) *Handwritten note from Alice Wylie. September, 2008.*
- 4) *Wises Street Directories*
- 5) *Fred McGehan Collection*
- 6) *Quote from Margaret Badley in letter to Mary Gould*
- 7) *Email from Arnold Turner September 17, 2008*
- 8) *Conversation with Colin Bridge 27th June 2008.*
- 9) *Alberton and its Family. Jan Harris. New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Wellington, 1999.*
- 10) *Email from Arnold Turner August 2008*
- 11) *Telephone conversation Majorie Pricor 2/09/08*
- 12) *Memories of Mt Albert, Mt Albert Library*

Our Streets

Thank you to Ruth Williamson for providing the following memoirs of Flossie May Marshall who was born in 1903. (She arrived 'before Aunt Eunice could jump over the back fence to summon the doctor whose property adjoined hers'.) The extracts printed below are as written by Flossie in her ninetieth year. We have chosen the parts that highlight the street names referred to in passing : Woodward Road, Mark Road, Springleigh Avenue and Harbutt Avenue.

'On my side we are concerned with the Woodwards and the Bonds. The two families were friends, and lived in Hinckley, Leicestershire, England, and they emigrated to New Zealand on the sailing ship "Liverpool" in 1866. They came under what was called the "Forty Acre Scheme". The British Government offered 40 acres of land in N.Z. for each paid-up adult passage to N.Z - also an allowance for each child.'

'The Woodwards were farming folk in England. Sarah Basset was very attractive, and Grandpa Bond is supposed to have proposed to her unsuccessfully. Later she chose the young and handsome **Mark Woodward** - (five years her junior according to the family Bible.) We have no photograph of Mark Woodward, but he was reputed to be better looking than any of his sons. He was a stern father and typical English husband of that day, but his sons respected his sound business acumen, and regretted his early death at 60 (in 1895)..... Grandma (Sarah) Woodward lived to be 84, beloved by all who knew her, rich and poor alike. She is the only Grandparent whom I remember - the others were all dead before I was born.....The Woodward family consisted of Father and Mother (Mark and Sarah) and 5 boys - Henry aged 10, Walter, Matthew, Frederick (aged 4) (Flossie's father) and Andrew 2 ½.'

'The family had expended their savings on the trip out, so father and sons went to work for the Gribble family at what is now Sandringham, but was then Cabbage Tree Swamp. The next move within a year or two was to buy their own cows, and lease Mt.Albert (the mountain). Uncle Frank was born on August 4th 1869 - 70 in the cottage in Summit Drive. They also lived in the Sadgrove House (still standing) further along Mt.Albert Rd., opposite Kerr

Taylor's. It would be at this time that my father, now aged 7 or 8 was employed as footman, I suppose on state occasions, to open the carriage doors for the guests at the great house. I can imagine his bright young face and winning ways on these duties.'

'Next big move was the purchase of the **Springleigh** farm from Sir John Logan Campbell. It was an extremely rocky piece of land and the work involved in clearing the stones and building the stone walls which divided the many paddocks must have been enormous. The original farm house was built, and then cowsheds and stables in the old English style round a central yard, with hayloft above the cow bails. At the first Agricultural and Pastoral Show held in Auckland in 1875, Mark Woodward exhibited a stallion (Albert Nobleman) and won first prize. The certificate used to hang in our house when I was young - I am sad to say it seems to have disappeared.'

'It was during these years (1895-1900) that the paths of the two families from Hinckley recrossed.... I think that Grandma Woodward somehow heard that her old friend was ill in town and visited her, and thus began the romance which resulted in the marriage on Nov.24 1900 of Frederick Woodward to May Minnie Bond. He aged 39, and she 35..... After the wedding breakfast, my father drove his bride straight home in the buggy drawn by the highstepping stallion Active. As they came through Kingsland, they were spotted from afar by Vida **Harbutt** who was out riding with a boy friend. They galloped ahead, purchasing a bag of rice on the way and hid behind the trees by the big gate. As the bridal buggy turned into the gateway they let fly the rice, bag and all, which landed on Active's back. Active reared up on his hind legs, and Vida and her companion feared that there would be a major disaster, but all ended happily to their relief. As I have mentioned Vida, I will now write about the adjoining farm.....Mr.Harbutt had brought the corn broom industry to NZ and tried unsuccessfully to grow the corn on the property. He had married twice, and a big family of boys and girls from the two marriages grew up there. They were dear friends of the Woodwards.'