



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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Children of Auckland Industrial School, Mt Albert



*Auckland Industrial School building circa 1900's.
ID A15263 Special Collections, Auckland City Libraries, NZ.*

While browsing through an 1872 copy of the NZ Herald (i) I was horrified to read of two children aged six and eight years of age being found guilty of stealing 16 shillings, sentenced to 7 and 14 days imprisonment and ordered to be privately whipped.

The Herald was also appalled and protested strongly against the practice of imprisoning children and the lack of care for the waifs and strays of the streets. Twenty years later prison inspectors were still complaining in their annual reports of "the pernicious custom of sending infants to prison." This in spite of the Neglected & Criminal Children's Act of 1867 that established the system of industrial schools which dominated the scene until the end of the century. These schools were residential institutions intended for the care and education of neglected children but to some degree were often used unsuitably, as orphanages and reformatories. (ii)

The Mt Albert Industrial School came into existence through the Government's £1400 purchase in 1900 (iii) of the Wilkinson Home of 16 rooms and 6 acres of grounds, part of which is now the Alice Wylie Reserve on New North Road. (A plaque marks where the front step of the house was.) In 1902 the average number in residence at the school was about twenty and the number on the roll one hundred. (iv)

The Auckland Industrial School Particulars of Admission for 1902 range from neglected abandoned babies to

uncontrollable or delinquent children. A large number however were removed by the terms of the Act from their parent(s) if the mother was a prostitute, regardless of whether she was a good mother or not.

The children did not have an easy time of it. Ada Mathews (v) remembered the attendance at Gladstone School in 1916 of the children from the industrial school. They were walked to school in charge of a warden and it is typical of those hard times that upon being admitted to the industrial school both boys and girls had their hair shaved off and wore woollen caps when they attended Gladstone School. They were allowed to keep these on during class but must have felt disadvantaged.

The majority of children under fourteen years of age were boarded out amongst the country settlers. The Auckland Industrial School Particulars of Admission for 1900 show being farmed out was a matter of luck. Admission records for 1902 state William Lewis, an abandoned infant, stayed with the same foster mother from one year of age until he was sixteen and old enough to go into service - but others were less lucky.

A Brutal Guardian (vi). A farmer named John Hill, at Pukekohe East, was sentenced to-day to 14 days' imprisonment for gross cruelty to a girl, aged 13, who had been an inmate of the Industrial School. She had been "farmed" out to him and, contrary to the

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Auckland Industrial School cont...

terms of agreement, was taken from school and ill-used by being knocked about and compelled to work in the field.

On the 10th May 1906 Mr A.G. Purchas Medical Officer for the Industrial School at Mt Albert, stated in his report to the Secretary for Education “Many of the children give promise of becoming a credit to the country and to the system under which they have happily been brought up.”(vii)

Well I’m not too sure about the “happily” and neither was John Beck. He was a forceful opponent of the industrial schools system. His dislike of the system whereby neglected and delinquent children were sent to institutions led him to advocate that, except for the most serious of handicapped cases, they should be boarded out in foster homes. Beck's outspoken campaign against the industrial schools drew strong opposition and he quickly became a controversial figure. His arguments, more than any other single factor, induced the Government to close its three industrial schools—in Auckland, Dunedin, and Burnham.

In 1924 the Government sent Beck to study child welfare methods in the United States and Canada. When he returned

he wrote a report which laid the foundations for the Child Welfare Act of 1925. When the Act came into force in the following year, Beck was appointed Superintendent of Child Welfare. Among the innovations contained in the Act were provisions for the establishment of Children's Courts and for the appointment of Child Welfare Officers. By his singleness of purpose, Beck inaugurated widespread reforms in the New Zealand child welfare system.(viii)

I hadn't heard of John Beck before I researched this article but it is clear the children of New Zealand are greatly in his debt.

Reference to the Auckland Industrial School, Mt Albert, can also be found in the MAHS newsletter #6 March 2008.

Mary Inomata, January 2012

(i) *NZ Herald* 14 Dec 1872, (ii) *An Encyclopedia of NZ* 1966, (iii) *Auckland Star* 19 Feb 1900 pge 5, (iv) *Cyclopedia of NZ* 1902, (v) *Gladstone Centennial 1887-1987*, (vi) *Evening Post* 23 June 1886 pge 2, (vii) *29th Annual Report of Minister of Education 1906*, (viii) *An Encyclopedia of NZ* 1966

About Mt Albert Heritage Property Listings

Members have often mentioned the difficulty in accessing the Auckland City Council Schedule of Heritage Properties so below is the current list (as at December 2011) of properties within the Mt Albert area.

Originally Mt Albert had three categories of Listings - A, B and C when it was handed over to Auckland City on amalgamation in 1989. Auckland City promptly dropped any C listings.

Summary of Auckland City Council Schedule of Buildings, Objects, Heritage Properties or Places of Special Value, and those subject to Heritage Orders in Mt Albert.

Address	Scheduled Item	CAT	INT	SUR
Alberton Ave, 40	MAGS	B	•	•
Alexis Ave, 4	Epworth Guest House	B		•
Alexis Ave, 20	Stone Garage & Fences	B		•
Linwood Ave, 46a	Fortification	A		•
Lloyd Ave, 39	Clay House	B	•	•
McLean St, 15	Caughey House	B		•
Mt Albert Rd, 1	Edward Allen's House	B		•
Mt Albert Rd, 18	Phillipps House	B		•
Mt Albert Rd, 100	Alberton House	A	•	•
New North Rd, 460-466	Pages Buildings	B		•
New North Rd, 463-475	Portland Buildings	B		•
New North Rd, 468-470	Pages Grain & Forage Store	B		•
New North Rd, 478	Kingsland Post Office	B	•	•
New North Rd, 704	St Lukes Church	A	•	•
New North Rd, 830	Ferndale House	B	•	•
New North Rd, 837	Mt Albert Methodist Church	B	•	•
Oakfield Ave, 9	Oakfield House	B	•	•
Oakley Hospital (UNITEC 1995)	Main Building	A	•	•
Sainsbury Rd	House	B	•	•
Stilwell Rd, 29	Winstone House	B	•	•
Woodward Rd, 10	Chapman Taylor House	B	•	•

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

25th February (Saturday) 2pm: Postcards from New Zealand Past. Ferndale House, 830 New North Road, Mt Albert. Hear Ted Scott assisted by a full presentation on the subject of NZ. \$2 payable on entry. Everyone welcome, refreshments. Any queries please phone Brian on 626 6664.

24th March (Saturday) 1pm: Bus trip to Birkenhead Historical Society. Meet at the Senior Citizens Room, Wairere Ave, Mt Albert for a 1pm departure by bus. Trip will include a tour of the museum and surrounding areas of historical interest, followed by afternoon tea at 3.30pm in the museum. Members only. Cost \$15 (inclusive of bus, museum entrance fee and afternoon tea). RVSPs are essential. Phone Brian on 626 6664.

5th May (Saturday) 2pm: Show & Tell. Ferndale House, 830 New North Road, Mt Albert. A popular perennial event. Hear and tell your stories. See and bring along your photos and artefacts. \$2 payable on entry. Everyone welcome, refreshments. Any queries please phone Brian on 626 6664.

Tidbits

- Congratulations to MAHS member Anuschka Meyer's husband David Shearer on becoming the Leader of the Labour Party.
- The council have finally started work on the Alice Wylie Reserve and it is already looking much brighter and safer.
- Are you on the internet? If so you will enjoy looking at the Online Regional Exhibitions of Archives NZ (visit <http://gallery.archives.govt.nz/v/auckland>) There are three Auckland Exhibitions currently online. **Auckland Underground** - Images for Schemes for Central Auckland Railway link from 1929-1976. **Auckland Harbour Bridge** - the building and opening of. **Auckland Chinese** - this relates to early Chinese living in the Auckland area.

News from the Past...

HUNT FOR AN ESCAPER

September 19, 1925

Hunters with firearms and beaters with sticks and pick handles are searching for the female leopard which escaped from the Auckland zoo three days ago.

Yesterday the spoor of a strange animal was found in Jagger's tannery. It was clear that the animal had tumbled into one of the tanning vats and had scrambled out, only to fall into another.

A Western Springs family reports the absence of a large cat not hitherto given to long absences from home. It is feared he may have met the leopard.

A number of children have been kept home from school, their parents fearing to let them traverse the roads bordered by scrub-covered country in which the leopard might be lurking.

September 23, 1925

The leopard was seen at noon yesterday by Mr J. Delugar in a garden in New North Road, Mt Albert. The animal was watching him from the long grass, but vanished when he took a step toward her.

There was excitement in Alberton Avenue when someone announced that he had seen an animal run into the gorse bushes. The bushes were diligently beaten and were then set on fire. The sole reward was the discovery of a well-roasted rat.

It is reported that Mr J. McNair noticed a disturbance in the bush behind Jagger's tannery on Monday evening. He sent his three dogs into the scrub and as the disturbance became greater he recalled them. One of the dogs, however, returned to the bush. Three short yelps were heard and the dog is still missing.

September 25, 1925

The City Council announced last evening that it is offering a reward of £20 for the return of the animal alive, or £10 if dead.

Leopards are now marching nightly through the dreams of young folk from Point Chevalier to Morningside, and the boy whose uncle is said to have caught a glimpse of the escaped animal is by way of becoming a school hero. Another result is the sudden popularity of natural history. The Biblical story of Daniel in the lion's den and the tragic episode of the young mockers and the bears are said to have been followed with bated breath in Sunday schools.

September 26, 1925

At 8.30 last evening a lady living in Walters Road, Edendale, heard a commotion in a wattle tree and telephoned the police. In a few minutes a small army of searchers, armed with all varieties of weapons, assembled in the garden, headed by a party of policemen and a traffic inspector. While the searchers were debating how to get the animal down from the tree it descended of its own accord and proved to be an opossum.

There is a report that Mr A.F. Naylor, who has a butcher's shop in New Lynn, saw two large luminous eyes glaring at him out of the darkness on Thursday night. Mr Naylor stooped to pick up a stone, tripped and fell against the brick wall of his shop as the animal made a dash past him. When he gathered himself from his fall it was gone.

October 12, 1925

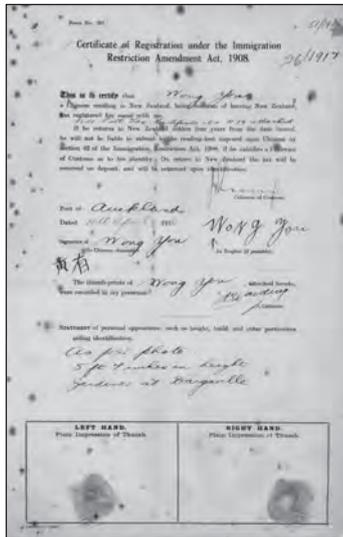
The escaped leopard was found drowned in the harbour at St Heliers Bay yesterday. It was brought to land by four young men in a boat. The £10 reward will be shared by them. It is 25 days since the animal made its escape.

The curator of the zoo, Mr L.T. Griffin, supports the theory that the animal became stuck in the mud in the creek at the back of Jagger's tannery, was caught by the rising tide and washed out into the harbour.

The Chinese Mt Albert Connection

Chinese people have been in NZ for over 130 years since 1865, when the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce invited them to rework the goldfields in Otago. There was much dissension over this, the basic reason being the considerable difference in race and culture from the Europeans. These differences fostered recurring controversy on the advisability of permitting Chinese immigration, out of which grew the belief that Chinese and other Asians should be kept out of NZ. On the whole though, NZ discrimination did not take on the anti-Chinese extremes seen in Canada, the USA and Australia. (i)

Sir George Grey at a public meeting in 1888 gave his opinion of 'the Chinese question.' He was very much against Chinese immigration "and what was more, he would if necessary retire to private life rather than give up his conviction that NZ should be a pure Anglo Saxon country." (ii) (He does not seem to have noticed the Maori population already in residence!)



Wong You Certificate of Registration 10th April 1916. Archives New Zealand
Fig 1. BBAO 5575 7a 26/1917.

exemption were available to Chinese already resident in NZ and to Chinese who were leaving temporarily. In 1896 the Poll Tax was increased from £10 to £100 under an amendment to the existing legislation.

From 1881 the Chinese population fell, possibly as a result of the poll tax. The 1891 Census shows a decrease of 16.49% of Chinese in the colony (3711 against 4444) (iii) so one wonders why the 1896 Chinese Immigration Amendment Act of increasing the poll tax by 1000% was necessary. Was it just to fill the government coffers or was it the White NZ Policy? A bit of both I suspect.

Under the Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1908, Chinese leaving NZ to travel overseas temporarily were required to fill in a certificate of registration in duplicate.

(i) *Chinese Settlement in NZ Past & Present* –James Ng, (ii) *Auckland Star* 16 May 1888 p.2, (iii) *Bay of Plenty Times* 25 Jan 1897 p 2, (iv) *Helen Clark, Prime Minister* 12 February 2002, (v) *Customs Department Auckland. Immigration Restriction Act 1908 and Poll Tax Registrations. Archives New Zealand*, (vi) *Customs Department Auckland. Inwards letters. Archives New Zealand*.

Thumb or fingerprints were added to the certificates and the individuals also provided 2 photographs to the Collector of Customs. On his return, once positively identified, the individual was allowed to enter. Fig 1 shows an example of a registration with thumbprints and photo. (v) The absence of this registration forms the basis for the following letter of appeal to the Collector of Customs on behalf of Ah Leong –formerly of Mt Albert but then stranded in China.

The Collector of Customs Auckland June 9th 1911

Dear Sir,

We are acting for the friends of Ah Leong, a Chinaman formerly of Mount Albert, Market Gardener, who left the Dominion for China about the month of April 1909. He was accompanied by his brother Ah Foo, Wong You and Wong Wei, all of whom have returned to New Zealand. Ah Leong, however, omitted to register his name and thumb-print in your office before his departure, and now, wishing to return, is of course refused by the steamship companies trading from China.

We think that the Minister would perhaps consider his return to New Zealand if satisfactory evidence of identification were produced. Ah Leong was well known to many people both here and at Thames, and we are informed that there would be no difficulty in obtaining such evidence. Mr A.W. Page, Merchant, of Kingsland, who met him in business frequently, is one who could identify him.

We hold a photo of Ah Leong which was taken before he left New Zealand. We might mention also that this is his third visit to his native country, having been home and back twice previously.

Yours faithfully,

Nicholson & Gribbin, Barristers & Solicitors

Did Ah Leong make it back to NZ? At this point I don't know but I hope I can continue the search (or perhaps if anyone knows the story, please let us know). We can take heart that even then there were people in the Mt Albert area like Mr Page of Kingsland, who could rise above racial prejudice and the 'White NZ Policy' and support individuals such as Ah Leong.

The poll tax was finally abolished in 1944.

In February 2002, the then Prime Minister of NZ Helen Clark made a formal apology to Chinese New Zealanders (iv) who had paid a poll tax and suffered other discrimination imposed by statute. Chinese people were deprived of their right to naturalisation in 1908 and this was not rescinded until 1951. No other ethnic group was deprived of this right.

Mary Inomata, January 2012.