



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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PO BOX 77-002 MT ALBERT AUCKLAND 1350 • PH: 09 846 4509 • WWW.MTALBERTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.NZ

The Boundaries of Mt Albert Borough/City

The name of the Mt Albert Historical Society suggests that its focus is the present-day suburb of Mt Albert, but that is misleading. Our area of interest includes all the suburbs that came under the former Mt Albert City Council, including Morningside, Kingsland, part of Western Springs, St Lukes, Sandringham, and part of Owairaka. We aim to be relevant to people interested in this whole area, and this is the scope of the Society's book *Mt Albert: Then and Now* by Deborah Dunsford (available from MAHS).

On the MAHS website there is a list of the street names, including former names, of the whole area covered by Mt Albert City - there was a major street renaming exercise in 1938, and other streets changed names at various times. We will be developing this resource over time to include more detailed information about individual streets.



Leightons Street Map of Auckland City and suburbs c1930 (modified).

Auckland Libraries Map 6409. Negative 7-C1018

Mt Albert Borough Council Chambers Building

This imposing building sits at 615 New North Road, just opposite the intersection with Morningside Drive. It was the administrative centre of Mt Albert Borough from 1927 to 1978, and then for Mt Albert City Council until amalgamation with Auckland City in 1989. It was to this building, strategically located at a geographically convenient address, that the residents of Mt Albert Borough/City came to do official business. It was the symbol of Mt Albert's independence.

This building replaced an earlier wooden office across the road on a leasehold section on the corner of what was then Argyle St (now Morningside Drive). This had been erected in 1901 for the Mt Albert Road Board at the cost of £51,100, and by 1906 it housed a full-time Clerk, H.C. Haselden, whose office hours were 9am-4pm three days a week, and three mornings (including Saturday). Initially very small, it was enlarged in 1910 to accommodate the growing Board. In 1911 the Road Board was dissolved, and the Mt Albert Borough Council took over responsibility for the area.

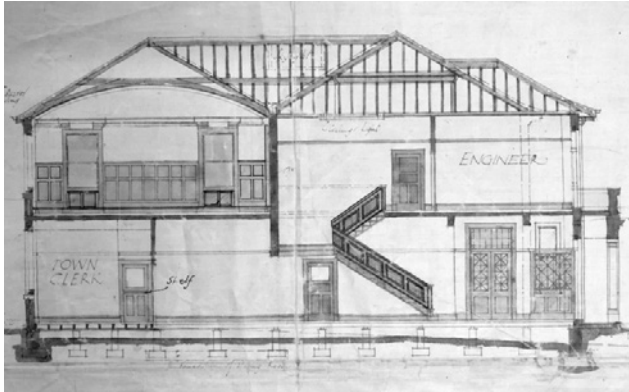
After the First World War, Mt Albert Borough was one of the most rapidly growing areas in New Zealand,

which placed considerable pressure on the Council to fund roading and infrastructure. There was a serious typhoid outbreak in 1922 caused by raw sewage contaminating drinking water, and homes built in low-lying areas, particularly in parts of Sandringham, were subjected to annual flooding. For the ratepayers, there were higher priorities for expenditure than re-housing their Council, despite the old building being clearly inadequate, and in 1920 and 1923 funding proposals for a new Council building failed to gain public support. It was 1926 before ratepayers voted to support the funding of new Council Chambers, when Mayor Leonard Rhodes gained approval for it as part of a huge loan proposal of £749,500, which included £500,000 for roading and £200,000 for drainage.

The budget for the new building was £8000, and the architect chosen was Daniel Boys Patterson, well known for designing many public and private buildings around Auckland. It was built by contractor W.E. Johns. Proudly modern in design, it was opened with great civic fanfare on 11 June 1927.

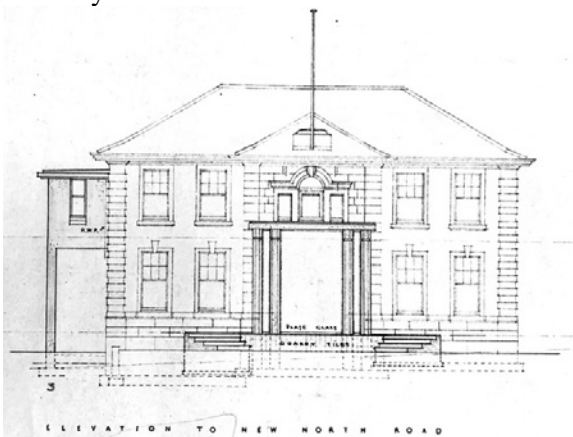
Upon entering the building through the grand portico from New North Rd, on the visitor's left was the Traffic Office, and on their right was the General

Office. Straight ahead was a corridor with the Mayor and Town Clerk's offices, alongside the staircase to the first floor which rose over the Strong Room in the centre of the building. Upstairs there were office spaces for the Engineer, Inspectors, Clerks, and the Drawing Office. The large Council Chamber was at the rear of the upper floor. The lower part of some of the interior walls were covered in wood panelling. There was a kitchen, a ladies' cloakroom, and toilets. Out the back there were sheds for Council vehicles including a steamroller shed.



*D.B. Patterson. 1926 Section showing interior detail.
Auckland Council Archives Record ID478676*

The Traffic Office was an integral part of the Council's operations: traffic officers were employed by local authorities and were members of the local community. It was only in 1992 that a national traffic service was achieved as an arm of the New Zealand Police force. People visited the Council building for a range of reasons, including to pay their rates, get building consents, register their dogs, and sit their drivers' licenses. It was possible for an ordinary resident to speak directly with the Mayor about an issue that concerned them, and there was a strong sense that the staff and elected officers of the Council genuinely understood and cared about their community.



*C. Sanderson. 1954 Entrance Elevation drawing.
Auckland Council Archives Record ID478683*

Over time, internal changes were made to the Council building to better meet the needs of the staff, and a small annexe was added at the rear. Plans drawn up in 1954 by architect Clifford Sanderson show how the original portico was replaced by the current columned entrance. In this new design, visitors entered the building from steps on the side of the entrance, rather than from the front. A ramp was added later.

During the 1950s and 60s, Mt Albert continued to grow, and while residents had a strong sense of Mt Albert Borough as a distinct place where they belonged, there was also growing emphasis on the need to develop infrastructure for Auckland, which could not easily be handled by separate borough or city councils. This included things like public transport, sewers and stormwater systems. To manage these, region-wide bodies were created such as the Auckland Regional Authority. The times were changing, and the Council building was not immune.

A minor scandal erupted in April 1966. Mel Ensor, the Town Clerk, saw an advertisement in the *Herald* for a building for sale, which turned out to be the Mt Albert Borough Council building in Morningside. An investigation showed that the advertisement had been placed by the Mt Albert Mayor, Frank Turner, who was testing the water to see if there was any market interest in the building. Mayor Turner was censured by Council for this unauthorised action.

The 1927 building served the Council well for over 40 years, but by the 1970s it was clear more space was needed. Under Mayor Frank Ryan the Council briefly considered relocating its offices to a new location adjacent to the St Lukes Mall, near the Mt Albert Library which opened in 1975, but this was not pursued. After the Borough achieved City status on 22 August 1978, there was more impetus for the City Council Chambers to be expanded. A two-storey addition was erected at the rear of the building in 1979, designed by Rigby James and Partners, and the 1927 building underwent a major internal facelift. A new public entrance was installed at the rear between the old and new buildings, with access off Western Springs Rd. The offices of the Mayor, Town Clerk, Engineer, and other key staff of Council moved into the upper floor of the new block, The main public counters remained on the ground floor of the 1927 building, and the inspectors and town planning staff occupied the ground floor of the new wing.

Mt Albert was subsumed into the wider Auckland City Council ten years later, in October 1989, and in December 1992 the building was sold to British

Jewellers (NZ) Ltd. For more than 25 years it was leased to Auckland Healthcare (which became Auckland District Health Board), and it continued to be a space for the Mt Albert community, housing the St Lukes Community Mental Health Centre (which became Kainga Tiaki). Of course, extensive internal modifications were made to meet their needs.

The building was sold again at the end of 2017 and since the DHB's lease has ended, refurbishment has begun to make it ready for the next stage in its history.

In 2019 the former Mt Albert Borough Council Building was listed as a Category B Historic Heritage Place in Auckland's Unitary Plan, recognised for its considerable historical and social impact on Mt Albert. It remains a Mt Albert landmark, and we honour its history as the heart of local government in our community.

Written by Lynley Stone, drawing heavily on the work by Richard Bollard and Lisa Truttman in the 2017 Heritage Assessment by Salmond Reed Architects Limited

Sources:

Civic Trust Auckland. (2019). *Plan change adds to Auckland's Heritage Schedule*. <https://civictrustauckland.org.nz/plan-change-adds-to-aucklands-heritage-schedule/>

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Mount Albert City Council chambers – building has been sold. (1992). *Central Leader*, p.5.

Salmond Reed Architects Limited. (2017). *Former Mt Albert Borough Council Chambers Building: 615 New North Road, Kingsland: Heritage Assessment prepared for Auckland Council*. <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/pc7-02809-mt-albert-borough-chambers.pdf>

True Commercial. (2017). Kingsland property's wide appeal. *New Zealand Herald*. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/property/kingsland-property-wide-appeal/PPNUJJ5HDABJ7IOHKXTX5I3DVU/>

GET INVOLVED:

Do you have memories of the Mt Albert Borough/City Council Chambers Building? Did you work in it, or visit it to do official business? What were the reasons why you visited the Council Building? Can you remember what it looked like inside? Do you have photographs? Please share your memories with us.

April 1921: 100 years ago

- The 5-yearly census, taken on 18 April, showed that the Borough's population was 11,345. This was second to Mt Eden in the Auckland region, and about the same size as Hamilton and New Plymouth.
- Mayor Thomas Clay was advocating for a deep water canal between the Waitemata and Manukau Harbours through the Whau portage.
- The Minister of Education, Hon. C.J. Parr, laid the foundation stone for Mt Albert Grammar School.
- A tender had been given to construct the Kowhai Street School, which would relieve overcrowding at the Mt Albert School, which had housed 693 students in 1920.
- Sections were for sale in the Maybeck and Oakley Park Estates.
- Brand new bungalows were available for £1250-£1980. Deposit was around 30%.
- Second hand bicycles were for sale for £7-£12.
- The Council was dealing with larrikins vandalizing gates, railings and fences.

Sources: Papers Past and the New Zealand Official Year-Book 1921-

Newsletter Editor Changes

Janet von Randow has stepped down as Newsletter editor. Janet has done a superb job over the last three years, and we thank her very much for her hard work. She continues to be a member of the MAHS Committee.

Lynley Stone is the new editor, and looks forward to working with you to record and share the history of Mt Albert via its Newsletter and website.



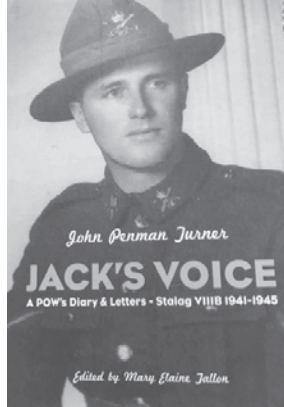
You will notice that this Newsletter includes two specific requests for your input into gathering the history of Mt Albert. Winter is coming up, and it is the perfect time to write some notes, or talk about your memories and experiences.

We are also keen to obtain digital copies of photographs that show the streets and houses of Mt Albert through time. If you are looking through your albums and spot something you think might be useful, please contact us. Lynley is very happy to help with digitising photos.

*Contact Lynley via the MAHS website, or on
lynley@informationworkshop.com
027 290 2843*

Report on Events

20 March. Mary Tallon spoke to a large and enthusiastic audience at Ferndale House about her recently published book, *Jack's Voice*. It is a memoir of her father, John Penman Turner, who lived his entire life in Mount Albert apart from his years as a prisoner of war in Upper Silesia, now Poland. His prisoner of war diary and letters are an account of his four years in Stalag VIIIIB.

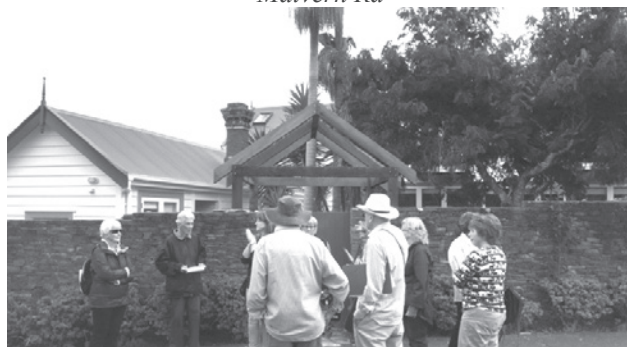


Copies of *Jack's Voice* are available from Mary – her contact details are on the MAHS website.

18 April. John Childs led a *Heritage walk through Fowlds Park and environs*. John shared stories about the history of the area, and discussed architectural styles and changes over time. .



John explaining the transitional bungalow style in Malvern Rd



At the Sander Stables in Wolseley St

Mt Albert Shops Project

The Mt Albert shopping area, at the intersection of New North, Carrington and Mt Albert Roads, is a key part of the Mt Albert community.

The Mt Albert Historical Society is embarking on a project to capture and share the history of these shops, which will be made available on our website. We want to gather together work already published in various places, to record factual information, and to gather stories, memories and images of how these shops have developed over time. We are interested in information and memories about shops right up to the present day.



Shopping area at terminus, Mt Albert, Radcliffe, Frederick George, 1864-1923, photographer, PH-2014-107-8. Auckland Museum.

Although our focus is currently on developing the webpage about this specific shopping area, we are also interested in gathering information on other shops in the Mt Albert area, so please, tell us about them too.

GET INVOLVED:

Please share your memories of the Mt Albert shopping area. Do you remember the names of the shops and shop owners? What were the shops like when you first remember them, and how did they change over time? What part did the local shops play in your life? Do you have any photographs of street scenes?

M.A.H.S Dates To Remember

Thursday 13 May 2021. Outing to The Whittaker's Musical Museum on Waiheke Island.

We will meet at the Ferry Buildings between 9.30-9.45 and catch the 10am ferry. We will bus up to the Museum and the event will begin at 11am. Reg Towers, a member of our committee, will then talk about and perform on many of the instruments. After the performance you will have time to enjoy Oneroa and then head back to the bus to the ferry. \$10 admission to the event.

There is no need to register for this event, but please make yourself known to the group before you board the ferry.