



MOUNT ALBERT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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Sleeping Porches in Mt Albert Homes

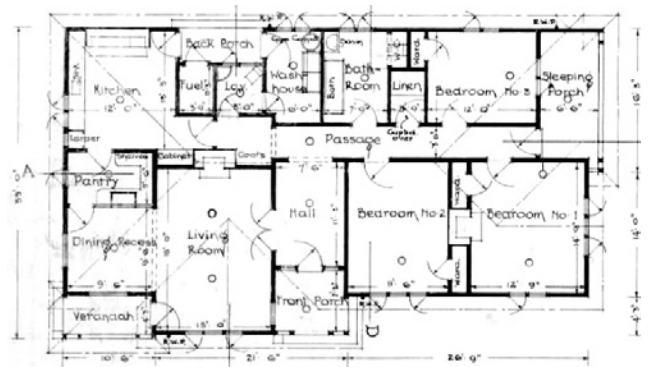
Amongst Mt Albert's many beautiful features are its bungalows, mostly built in the 1920s. I am fortunate to live in one, and we spent last summer renovating the sunroom at the back of our house. Spending time in this space, sanding back generations of paint, replacing decaying folding windows, finding traces of long-gone features and uncovering scraps of match lining under wallboard, made me reflect on how this much-modified indoor-outdoor room defines our home. It set me thinking about bungalow porches, and my reading led me to sleeping porches.

Sleeping on verandahs or rooftops has long been a feature of life for people in hot climates, but there was a longstanding distrust of night air in European cultures. However, by the end of the 19th century there was greater understanding about how disease was spread, and experts in Europe and North America advocated the health benefits of sleeping in the open air; indeed, it was thought it could prevent and even cure diseases such as tuberculosis. In addition, it was a pleasant experience that brought the individual closer to nature. Sleeping porches started to be seen in domestic architecture, particularly in temperate climates such as southern California.

Most Auckland cottages and villas had verandahs, which were attractive places to sleep in the heat of summer, but these were not specifically intended to be sleeping areas. However, before the First World War, dwellings began to be designed with sleeping porches as a deliberate feature, including some in Mt Albert. One example is the Penman House (1909) on the corner of Woodward and Carrington Rds. It is a two storied wooden villa, featuring a double open return verandah which served as sleeping porches. Another is the two storey transitional villa known as 'Greenlee' at 103 Richardson Rd, designed in 1912 by Arthur Henry White. It has covered sleeping porches on the upper level (in later decades the sleeping porches on both these houses were walled in). The 1918 influenza epidemic raised New Zealanders' awareness of the value of fresh air, and contributed to the popularity of sleeping outside, just as the bungalow building boom was starting.

The 'California bungalow' architectural style, with influences from the English Arts and Craft movement, was widely adopted in New Zealand's expanding

suburbs. Mt Albert was growing rapidly in the post-war period, and new bungalows filled our streets. The 'sleeping porch' – or at least a porch which could be used for sleeping – was a common feature of these dwellings. Some two-storey bungalows included sleeping porches on the upper floor, but most Mt Albert bungalows are single storey, and most sleeping porches were built at the back or side, for increased privacy.



Floorplan of a symmetrical 1925 bungalow, designed by Atkins & Mitchell architects in Wellington for J.R. Frethey, showing sleeping porch, front porch, back porch, and a verandah.

There were different types of porches on New Zealand bungalows: entry porches, sun porches which were linked to the living room, back porches that were the rear entry to the house off the kitchen, and sleeping porches. Unlike the verandahs on villas, bungalow porches were explicitly seen as rooms and living spaces, blurring the boundaries between inside and outside. A symmetrically planned bungalow sported a central entry porch at the front, while an asymmetrical plan would see the entry porch on the side of the house. Perhaps there would be one or more additional porches further around the house. All porches were elevated above ground level. Sometimes, these had steps which provided access to the path or garden, but a common design feature was a porch where there was only access through the house: a 'loggia' ('open sided gallery') design. While technically a sleeping porch was a loggia, both loggia and stepped porches could be used for sleeping, and indeed some families even placed a bed in the smaller entry porch.

Sleeping porches in bungalows effectively created an extra bedroom, which was very handy for growing families or for accommodating guests. They were often linked to a rear bedroom or other living area via

french doors, although access through somebody else's bedroom was not an ideal situation. While some families would have used a sleeping porch as a permanent bedroom with ordinary bedsteads, an open porch was more suitable for summer-time use, and it was common to use folding camp-beds or wall-mounted fold-down beds which could be moved out of sight so the space could be utilised in other ways during the day. For many households, the porch was a comfortable informal living space. Porches could be shady or sunny conservatories overlooking the garden, and a safe play space for children. Meals could be eaten there, and informal tea parties could be held.



*Frethey bungalow west elevation.
Front porch on left, sleeping porch on right*

Bungalow porches tend to have a solid parapet which forms a low wall along the open side. There might be parapets on one or two additional walls, or the end walls might be solid, or permanently glazed. Some had folding windows that could be opened or closed as needed. Because they were an outside space exposed to the weather, their inner wall cladding was generally the same weatherboard as the rest of the house's exterior, while solid parapet walls commonly had horizontal or vertical match lining on the interior.

Although sleeping in an open porch was healthy, Auckland's weather is variable, even in summer. Canvas awnings or roller blinds were widely used to shade the patios during the day, and to provide shelter across the open space for sleepers. Mosquito net curtains were used, and many porches were fitted with folding windows.

100 years after they were first built, open air porches are still popular outdoor living areas for bungalow-dwellers, but many that were originally built as sleeping porches have been enclosed and turned into ordinary bedrooms or sun rooms, while sliding or folding doors letting onto modern raised decks have been added to enclose others. In today's security-conscious world, few people would routinely choose to sleep on the porch of their house.

Do you have memories of sleeping porches in Mt Albert houses? We would love to hear them.

Written by Lynley Stone

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Illustrations are details from: Alexander Turnbull Library Plans-2002-058-066-023. Gooch, Mitchell and MacDiarmid Ltd: [Architectural plans. 1906-1995].

July 2021: Mt Albert 100 years ago

- After a settled few months, the weather became cold and unpleasant.
- The Mayor of Mt Albert petitioned Auckland City council for an urgently needed tram line down Edendale (now Sandringham) Rd to provide public transport to residents in the growing suburb.
- More than 40 men were employed by W.J Gravall & Son building Mt Albert Grammar School, and they were advertising for more carpenters.
- A Krit motor car caught fire and was destroyed on Mt Albert Rd after the driver lit a match to investigate an engine problem and ignited the fuel. He had borrowed the car from a friend.
- 90 "beautiful sections" were for sale in the Euston Estate. It was being developed by J.S. Palmer.
- Mt Albert was one of the busiest areas in the country for new dwellings. 58 building permits (value £50,132) were issued between 1 April and 9 July. Permits were also being issued for new shops and additions and alterations.
- Mr J.R. Whitaker, Headmaster of Mt Albert School, advocated for improvements for school playgrounds to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities. They already had special outdoor education programmes.
- Although Mt Albert Domain was a popular destination for walkers on fine days, vehicle access was difficult and there was a problem with larrikinism, including seats being pulled up and used as toboggans. *Source: Papers Past*

Report on Events

25 April 2021. ANZAC Day service at Mt Albert War Memorial Hall.

A large crowd gathered for the 9.30am service. Speakers included the Rt Honorable Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister and MP for Mt Albert) and Colonel Esther Harrop (Logistics Commander in the NZ Army). The choir of the Mt Albert Methodist Church sang. The theme was Service and Sacrifice, with a special focus on women who have served, and currently serve, in the military.

The Mt Albert Historical Society laid a bouquet on the Cenotaph.



MAHS Committee members Pam Mayes, Mary Inomata, Caroline O'Connor and Lynley Stone at the Cenotaph
(photo by Irene Wan)

13 May 2021. Visit to Whittaker's Musical Museum, Oneroa, Waiheke Island

MAHS Committee Member **Reg Towers** regaled us with stories of the history of the Museum and of the musical instruments in its collection. He played many of the instruments, and entertained us with fascinating tales about lives of Irving Berlin and Ignacy Jan Paderewski, whose beautiful 1897 Bechstein Concert Grand piano (brought to New Zealand in 1904 when he embarked on a tour of Australasia) is a central feature of the museum. Few of us knew that the great opera singer Oscar Natzke was a Waiheke boy, and Reg laid out some of Oscar's background.

The oldest piano in the collection is a tiny 1837 ship's piano. There is a piano with very fashionable (for the time) Egyptian decoration. We were all intrigued by the transposing piano with its sliding keyboard, enabling the player to play in any key. Reg compared the sound quality produced by two pianos made by the same company in 1914 – even an untrained ear could hear the difference.



Reg Towers playing Paderewski's piano

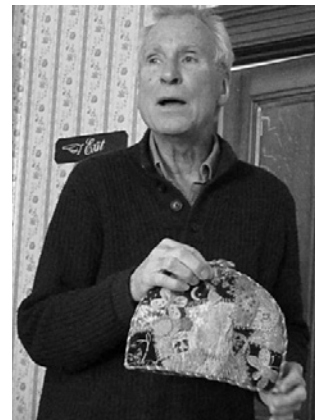
This is a "live" museum, with frequent concerts, and group educational tours can be booked. Interested parties can sign up for their newsletter, to be alerted to upcoming events. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day, and we heartily recommend a visit to this Museum.
<https://musicalmuseum.org/>

4 July 2021. Show and Tell Event, Ferndale House

Ferndale House's main room was packed out with members for this fun event. 18 people each spoke for three minutes about an interesting object they had brought along, with fascinating background information and associated stories.

The objects discussed were: a pocket camera that went to Gallipoli (Lynley Stone); an ebony ruler that may have come from the Boyd (Reg Towers); a teapot handed down in the family for 206 years (Eleanor Clemeau); an antique teddy bear and doll (Sue Aitchison-Windeler); traditional whitework embroidery from the Adriatic coast and modern needlework (Shirley Alack); a Japanese warrior's helmet, and information about Japanese women warriors (Mary Inomata); an 1890s tea cosy (Don Bassett); a carved logo of the 12th Field Ambulance (Jan Alldritt-Miller); photographs and stories of two mayors (Beth Wood); City of Auckland Morris Dancer baldricks (Eric McKenzie); a tantalising tantalus (locked decanter set) (Caroline O'Connor); a very special seashell and a photograph of the shops at the corner of Alberton Ave taken in the 1950s (Victoria Turner); an ornate card box (Alice Wylie); photos and a cup, saucer and plate relating to a 112 year old woman (Pam Mayes); cowbells (Judith Goldie); a tiny cloisonné teapot (Jackie Wright); Portia's speech in calligraphy (Diane Dorreen); and a metal vase from Shanghai (John Childs).

After the speakers finished, we enjoyed a very sociable afternoon tea which featured home made scones and pikelets before venturing out into the chilly afternoon.



Don Bassett and Caroline O'Connor showing and telling
(Photos by Sue Aitchison-Windeler)

Brian Corban CNZM QSO

(1946- 2021)

We mourn the passing of Brian Corban, and extend our sincere condolences to his family. A Mt Albert resident for 50 years, Brian supported the Society, serving as the Committee's honorary solicitor for several years, hosting and speaking at events, and being one of the key people who facilitated the production of our book, *Mt Albert Then and Now* by Deborah Dunsford.



Brian was a leader in community and business spheres, including a period as a Councillor on the Mt Albert Borough Council. Together with fellow Councillor Alice Wylie, he was actively involved in protecting the heritage character of Mt Albert from unsympathetic development. A detailed tribute to Brian that outlines many of his activities and achievements can be found in this article:

<https://businessdesk.co.nz/article/politics/kiwirail-chair-brian-corban-has-died-a-mighty-kauri-has-fallen>

Houses Disappearing

Every week it seems, Mt Albert houses are being moved or demolished to make way for new builds. We need to record this heritage before it is too late.

If you become aware of a house that is about to disappear, please can you take some photos of it from the road and other useful angles and send them to us, or alert a member of the MAHS Committee so we can take photos for our records. Thank you.

MAHS Date to Remember

Saturday 21st August 2021. Mt Albert Historical Society Annual General Meeting. All Welcome
2pm at Ferndale House, 830 New North Rd

Our guest speaker will be Dr Bill Hodge, recently retired Professor of Law at the University of Auckland. He taught in the Law School for 50 years, is an expert in employment law and has often been interviewed by the media. Bill has an impressive history as an author and researcher, and also as a long-distance runner. He will be telling us of his life and how he came to be in New Zealand.

Refreshments will be served.

Supporting Your Research

Here are a few of our favourite research tools for local and family history.

PAPERS PAST <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>
Full-text access to 165+ historic NZ newspapers (many up to 1950), as well as many magazines and journals, Parliamentary reports, and other sources.

DIGITALNZ <https://digitalnz.org/>
Search the heritage collections of 300+ museums, archives, libraries and other NZ databases in one place. A great time saver, particularly when searching for photographs.

AUCKLAND LIBRARIES HERITAGE COLLECTIONS

<https://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/Pages/heritage-collections.aspx>

A range of databases about Auckland history. Includes access to *Heritage Images* and *Kura Heritage Collections Online*. Search them both for photos of people or places.

*** FREE ONLINE ACCESS ***

Auckland Libraries are currently offering free access from home to two major genealogy databases: *Ancestry* (free until 30 Sept at least) and *FindMyPast* (free until 30 Aug at least). All you need is an Auckland Libraries membership.

*** LIMITED PHYSICAL ACCESS***

The Heritage Collection floor in Auckland Central Library will be closed for the rest of the year. If you want to use resources from this collection, phone ahead and get advice from staff.

2021 Auckland Family History Expo

13-15 August. Fickling Convention Centre, Three Kings. All welcome.

Programme and tickets for Friday night opening available at:

www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/AFHExpo

Saturday and Sunday events free.

Auckland Libraries and the Genealogical Computing Group (a special interest group of the NZ Society of Genealogists) proudly present a weekend-long event covering a wide range of topics on researching genealogy and family history. This includes seminars for researchers at all levels, tutorials, ask-an-expert sessions and research assistance.

Over 20 industry-related exhibitors and generous raffle prizes.