MOUNT ALBERT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
Issue 57 • January 2022
PO BOX 77-002 MT ALBERT AUCKLAND 1350 • PH: 09 846 4509 • WWW.MTALBERTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG.NZ

Street Numbers and House Names in Mt Albert

We take street numbers for granted: these days, our street addresses are fixed and clear, but this was not always the case. Before street numbering was uniformly applied in the late 1930s, it was often necessary to ask for directions to find where a particular person lived.

From the 1910s Mt Albert grew rapidly, and the lack of clear identification of individual properties started causing significant headaches, particularly for taxi drivers, postmen and other delivery people. While some families stayed a long time in a single home, there was a high turnover in rented properties, and even home ownership changed quite frequently, which made it even more difficult to find people.

House names

From the earliest settlement, some Mt Albert homes were given names to help identification. We still have a few built in the 19th century where the name is in common use, including *Allendale, Ferndale* and *Alberton.*

In the 20th century, many householders continued this tradition and named their homes, affixing plaques to the front wall of the house where they could be seen from the road. These names were both statements of individuality and useful for location purposes, and were particularly common during the bungalow-building boom of the 1920s that transformed the streetscape (in 1926, 323 new houses were completed in Mt Albert, one every working day).[1]

House names came from a range of sources including family names such as *Allendale*, geographic locations in New Zealand or elsewhere such as *Islington*, physical descriptions such as *The Rocks*, and humourous or domestic names, such as *The Doggery*. Māori names were common, such as *Rahiri*. Some residents took their house name and plaque with them when they moved (e.g. the Stone family named all their residences *Stoneleigh* and moved the same plaque from house to house), while others left the name plaque for the new owners of the house (e.g. the Wallett family left the plaque *Orakau* on their first house in Kitenui Ave).

Assigning street numbers

Numbers were assigned in a street once all the large blocks of land were subdivided into individual sections. However, not all subdivisions occurred at the same time.[2] Because of this, some Mt Albert streets remained un-numbered into the late 1930s.

Renumbering, renaming and realignments

Even if a street number is given in an historical source (such as the *Electoral Roll* or *Wise's Post Office Directory*), this may not match today's street number. Over time, subdivisions and building of multiple dwellings created numbering bottlenecks. A major exercise occurred in Mt Albert in 1927 when the Borough Council employed a clerk to work 4 days a week on renumbering streets,[3] but renumbering of some streets has occurred much more recently. Because of renumbering, researchers who are looking at Council records for the history of their house may find they need to also examine the files for neighbouring properties to obtain a complete historical record.

Alongside this, a researcher needs to be aware that many streets have been renamed. There was a major renaming exercise in 1938, as well as many small scale changes and realignments over the years. For example, Mary's Lane was renamed Lloyd Ave West in 1916, while Kitenui Ave was known as Mountain Rd up to 1938. The St Lukes Rd extension caused significant changes to the layout of streets between New North Rd and the motorway.

By laws

There had been various official attempts to enforce the display of street numbers within Auckland City since the late 1800s. In Mt Albert, a by law was created in 1917 giving the Borough Council the right to require the display and maintenance of street numbers at the occupier's expense[4] but this right would seem to only have been exercised on the main roads where numbers had been assigned. In May 1925 the Mt Albert Borough Council issued an order requiring all householders and building owners to ensure their buildings "shall be numbered with such numbers as the Council may decide," again at the occupier's expense (1s 6d for one figure, 2s 6d for 2 figures and 3s for 3 figures).[5] The fees were dropped 18 months later.[6]

The numbers

It is likely that Mt Albert Borough Council's street numbers were physically similar to those provided by Auckland Council. There, the official street numbers were initially on a small enamelled plate with numbers one inch high. These were replaced with a larger porcelain plate: some of these early numbers can still be seen around the city. In 1931 Auckland Council replaced these with 2 inch high brass numbers that were issued to all occupiers free of charge, requiring them to be affixed in a place where they were legible from the footpath.[7]

Problems

While cost would have been one barrier for householders to comply, as noted above not all streets had numbers assigned, and therefore it was not possible for residents to comply with the by law, resulting in much frustration. This is illustrated in a letter to the editor of the New Zealand Herald in June 1927: "Sir, Can you tell me why such an up-to-date borough as Mount Albert is so out of date in reference to the numbering of the houses. I have been canvassing in the district lately, and it is laughable the addresses I get, such as the sixth on the right, fourth past the motor garage, etc. All the residents are complaining of the inconvenience caused and delays through goods being left at wrong houses… MOUNT ALBERT RATEPAYER".[8] Around the same time the Post Office made a formal complaint to the Mt Albert Borough Council saying it was impossible to deliver mail efficiently.[9]

Not everyone liked the street number they were allotted. It was not uncommon for people to refuse to accept the number 13, and in November 1927 the Mt Albert Borough Council agreed to send a homeowner number 13 "and he can please himself whether he puts it up or not."[10] There were also instances reported in other parts of Auckland where occupiers chose a number that they liked to display on their gate, without reference to the sequential numbering of properties.[11]

Two roads caused particular problems, because they ran through different council territories. The first was New North Rd. Until mid 1927 it had two numbering sequences: the first was from upper Symonds St to the Dominion Rd intersection, then numbering restarted at 1 as it progressed west through Mt Albert Borough.[12] The second problem was Mt Albert Rd which ran through three different council territories. There was a lengthy tussle between Mt Albert Borough Council and the Mt Roskill Road Board over renumbering of this road. Although numbers did not change much on the Mt Albert Borough end of Mt Albert Rd, when discussing the logic of street numbering along the whole 4 miles of the road in March 1936, Mayor of Mt Albert Mr R. Ferner echoed the complaints of taxi drivers and delivery men: "The present numbers in Mount Albert Road give no indication of where anyone lives."[13]

By the late 1930s, the building boom was largely over and almost all streets were numbered. There were adjustments as needed from time to time, but street numbering had become a normal part of Mt Albert life.

Be part of this

We are keen to hear from readers of any stories or additional factual information on this topic. Does your house have a name, or do you know of a named house from the past? Mt Albert Historical Society has begun collecting house names, and the stories behind them. This is a fledgling project which we will continue to develop as we come across more information. You can find the list so far on our website under the ABOUT MT ALBERT menu.

For more information on the changes in road names, please see the A-Z list of street names page on our website under the ABOUT MT ALBERT menu.

Lynley Stone

SOURCES

[1] News of the Day: Mount Albert builds a house a day. *Auckland Star,* 26 January 1927, p.6.
[2] Numbering of Houses: City Council Scheme. *New Zealand Herald,* 25 August 1931, p.11
[3] Local Bodies: Mount Albert Council: Question of street numbering. *Auckland Star*, 13 July 1927, p.12
[4] Borough of Mount Albert: Special Order making By Law no 3. *Auckland Star,* 26 July 1917, p. 10.
[5] Borough of Mount Albert: House numbering and registration. *New Zealand Herald,* 30 May 1925, p.6.
[6] Mount Albert Council. *Auckland Star,* 3 November 1926, p.17.
[7] Numbering of houses: City Council's scheme. *New Zealand Herald*, 26 August 1930, p.12.
[8] Mt Albert street numbers. *New Zealand Herald,* 10 June 1927, p.14.
[9] Mount Albert affairs: Meeting of Borough Council. *Auckland Star,* 30 June 1926, p.15.
[10] Local and general news. *New Zealand Herald,* 16 November 1927, p.10.
[11] Misleading figures: House-numbering campaign. *Auckland Star*, 30 August 1927, p.3.
[12] Puzzling numbers on shop and house front. *Auckland Star,* 16 November 1927, p.16
[13] Local and General: Confusing street numbers. *New Zealand Herald,* 18 March 1936, p.12.

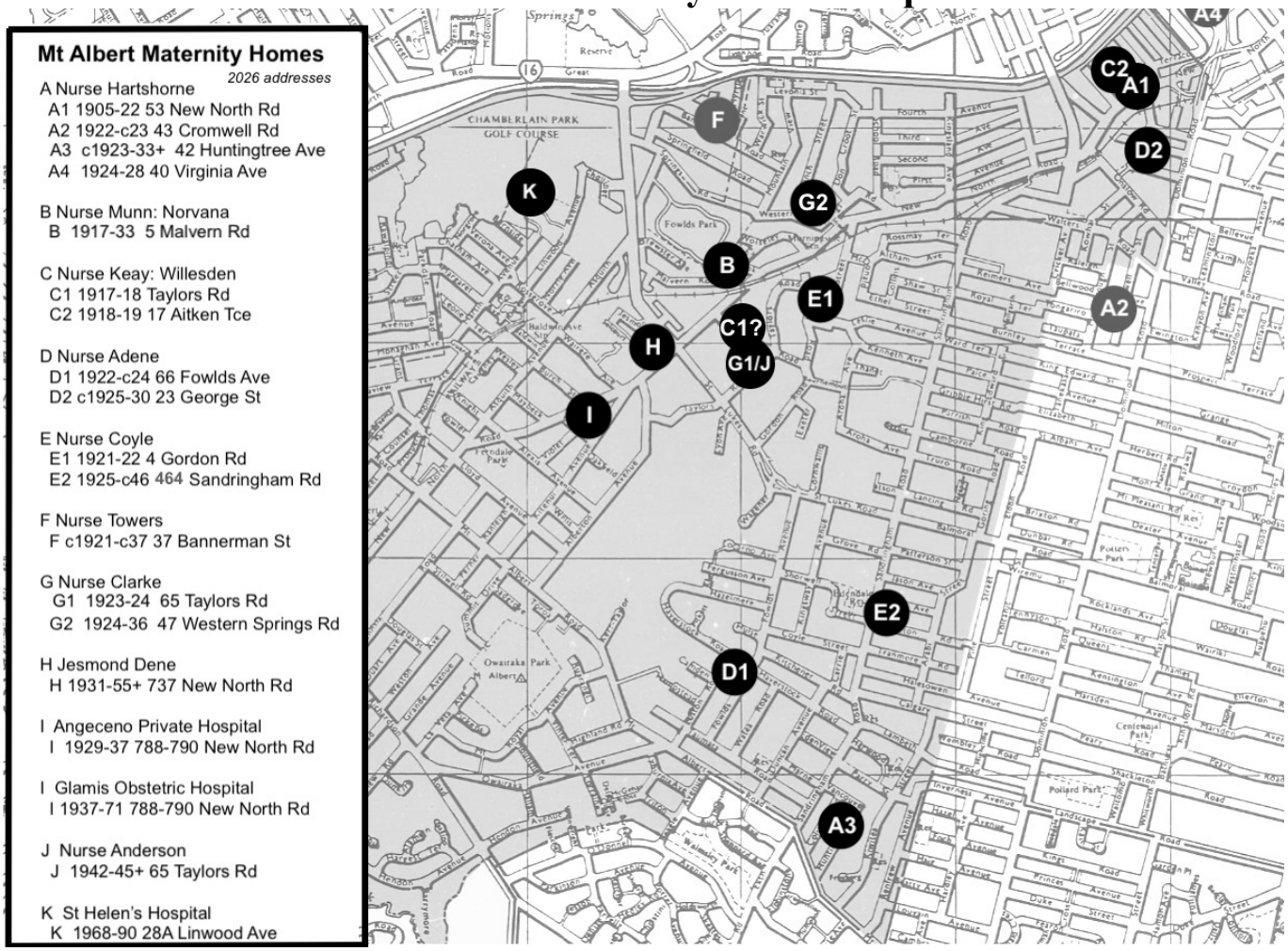
MAHS Street Photos Project

MAHS has embarked on an ambitious project to photograph the houses of Mt Albert, street by street. These photos will be kept in an archival file that we own the copyright for. We have completed about 10% so far this summer.

Would you like to assist with this project? Please contact us – info@mtalberthistoricalsociety.org.nz

If you have any old photos of houses and street scenes, we would love to obtain copies. We can help with scanning.

Mt Albert Maternity Homes Map



Have you ever wondered where, exactly, somebody was born in Mt Albert? Birth certificates, official documentation, newspaper birth notices and family stories are sometimes very precise, but other times, frustratingly vague.

At the start of the 20th century, most babies were born at home with the assistance of local midwives. However, many midwives also offered a bed in their own home, or ran a small nursing home, to provide additional care to mothers. These homes were variously referred to by the name of the nurse who ran them, or by the name of the home, or by their street address. Larger private maternity hospitals emerged during the 1920s and 30s, and by the 1940s state-run maternity hospitals were becoming dominant, and these are easier to track down.

We have created a map of these private nursing homes and maternity hospitals in Mt Albert, and will add to it as we find more. This has been posted on the MAHS website, along with information about the homes and midwives who ran them.

Please share your information and stories about maternity homes and hospitals in Mt Albert with us.

November 1921-January 1922: Mt Albert 100 years ago

- Mosquitos were a big problem in swampy areas.
- Sections were for sale in the Maybeck Estate, Hilfont Estate, Ferndale Estate and McLean Estate.
- A ban was introduced in January prohibiting the use of a hose for watering gardens and similar activities, due to dry weather.
- Mr Page's land near the top of Mountain Rd (now Kitenui Ave) was purchased by the Education Department as the site for a possible new school.
- The "business site at Mt Albert, now occupied by the Presbyterian Church" was sold for £2500 in November. This would result in the Church being relocated to its present position on a larger site and shops being built on the corner of Mt Albert and New North Rd (now Goodwins Realty).
- A "big brother" scheme was introduced at the Mt Albert Government Receiving Home whereby each child admitted would be buddied up with a member of the YMCA.

Source: Papers Past

MAHS AGM Report

Lockdown prevented MAHS from holding its in-person AGM in August, so we held a much cut-down online meeting on Saturday 4 December via Zoom. We thank all those who participated in this meeting. The highlight of the meeting was the awarding of a Life Membership of the MAHS to Dr Michael Bassett.

We hope that Dr Bill Hodge, who was scheduled to speak at the August AGM, will be willing to join with us for an event during 2022.

MAHS Patron's 98th Birthday

A Garden Party was held in January 2022 at the home of Alice Wylie, our Patron, to celebrate her 98th birthday in the company of family (including children, grandchildren and great grandchildren) and friends. Among those attending were Julie Ryan, last Mayoress of Mt Albert, and Melissa Lee, National MP.

Happy birthday, Alice!

Mary Inomata and Alice Wylie

MAHS Life Membership Award

Photo from http://www.michaelbassett.co.nz

At the 2021 MAHS AGM, Life Membership of the Society was conferred upon Michael Bassett. Here is the text of the citation:

Michael was a foundation member of the Mount Albert Historical Society when it was established in 2006.

In 2012 he became an officer/committee member of the Society. Based on his extensive experience as a professional historian he was made Chair of the Book Committee. His principal responsibility was to facilitate the writing of a new history of Mount Albert. This included the appointment of a professional historian/writer, raising funds and editing the document. The result was a very readable document titled "Mt Albert then and now."

The book was published free of debt and has subsequently sold over 1800 copies. This success is largely due to Michael's commitment and knowledge.

In addition, Michael has generously given of his time and knowledge to the society including as a regular speaker at its meetings. This involvement still continues.

Combined this work makes him a worthy recipient of Life Membership of the Mount Albert Historical Society.

MAHS PLANNED EVENTS FOR 2022

The MAHS Committee has ideas for a range of events for 2022, including walks, bus trips, speakers and events similar to last year's very successful Show and Tell. Because of the uncertainty created by Covid19, we are keeping our plans flexible. Our first scheduled event will be:

MT ALBERT GARDEN VISIT & TALK by Heather Shingles. Sunday 19 March 2022. 2pm. 17 Vinter Tce, Mt Albert. Heather Shingles, long time Mt Albert resident and knowledgeable gardener will talk on the typical historical garden planting and suitable plants for Mt Albert soil.

Open to all, subject to Covid Level restrictions. Vaccine passes will be required and masks strongly recommended. Numbers limited to 50. We cannot guarantee that this event will proceed but will stay in touch with all who express interest in attending.

Please RSVP to Janet von Randow 021 188 3726 or janetvonrandow@gmail.com.

SELF GUIDED WALKS

Have you explored the SELF GUIDED WALKS section of the MAHS website? This has links to all the self-guided walks that have been published in issues of the MAHS Newsletter, and also links to Auckland Council local walks.