

AMBLESIDE

Other names: Ambleside Park/Hansen Homestead

Location: 3 Olivebank Road, Ferntree Gully

Date of Construction: 1899

Type of Place:

Farm house, later a private residence, currently headquarter of the Knox Historical Society

Listing Status

Listed by the National Trust Aust (Vic.) as of historical interest.
F.N. 3128



Description

This single storey former farm house of the very late Victorian era was built on one of the early Crown Allotments in the Berwick Shire (Scoresby Riding) later known as Ferntree Gully. A mixed farm of 210 acres, the selection was taken up in 1872. The house represents the later stability of the settlers. Ephraim Hansen gained the Crown Grant in 1887 and built the house in 1899 having first lived in a modest timber dwelling. The solid practical Hawthorn brick house is built in the Italianate style of multi-chrome brick and is a reflection of progressive building techniques of the time. Built in the transition between the Victorian and Edwardian era just before Federation, the house is on a slight rise with views to the City of Melbourne and a backdrop of the Dandenong National Park.

The garden has significant trees and shrubs dating from the 1870s, 1890s and 1950s.

History

Selection of what was later to be known as Ambleside Park dates from 1872. This coincides with the first use of the Land Act (1869) which allowed wider powers to revoke proclamation in areas previously reserved for timber, according to political pressures of the day.

The Victorian Selection Legislation 1860-1880 Part 2, stated 'that after survey a person may select a block no more than 640 acres, may pay purchase money for whole allotment, or purchase money for part and rent the rest. No infant or married woman whose marriage is still valid to become a selector, to cultivate 1 acre in 10 or erect a habitable dwelling or enclose his selection with a substantial fence.' Payment was 1 pound per acre and 2/6 per acre per year for eight years for the balance.

The original selector was recorded in 1875 in the Berwick Shire (Scoresby Riding) as William Edwards, whose licence was revoked and forfeited. A series of selectors followed, Edward Perry Amesbury 1875-76, Edmund Wicks 1876, E P Newcombe 1877 - 1880, Edmund Wicks 1880-81, Janet Wicks 1881. Edmund Wicks died on 29th November, 1880 and the leasehold was transferred from the widow to Ephraim Hansen who received a Crown Grant for 210 acres in 1887.

The history of multiple leases between 1872-1887 is indicative of the inability to comply with conditions of selection under the Land Act. In addition to there being heavily timbered country, isolation and no transport, there was no running water on the property. The Hansen brothers however, had many years of working on other settlements in Victoria.

In the decade 1889-99 several events occurred. The railway reached Upper Ferntree Gully from the Ringwood Branch (1889), Ferntree Gully Shire came into being with its own administration, and the alienation of further Crown Land in the Dandenong (1893 Land Settlement Act) increased the population.

The Hansen Family

The Hansens were well and truly settled and experienced before the village settlement occurred, and began to contribute to civic affairs. A nearby street is named after the Hansen family.

Andrew and Ephraim Hansen were Swedish immigrant brothers who came to Australia in the 1860s. They worked for 14 years around Victoria including the Henty property at Portland in 1865.

Andrew settled at the site of the plains of the Dandenong Ranges (where Knox City Shopping Centre stands today) and grew flowers and vegetables. Ephraim settled at Ferntree Gully on the site now known as Ambleside (only 2 acres remain). A general farm, the land extended from Forest Road to Mountain Road (now Olivebank Road). Later subdivision, 92 northern acres in 1919 and 89 acres in 1921, left 29 acres. In 1952 on the death of Ephraim's son (also

Ephraim), the property was sold to O and M David. After provision for their family, the David's bequeathed the house and 2 acres to the City of Knox in 1970. It was made available to the Knox Historical Society in 1977.

The House

The House of solid brick construction has been adapted to Australian conditions with verandahs facing north-west. Facing south with views to the west where the Melbourne city skyline can be seen, it has a central passage leading to a rear vestibule. Four bedrooms and a parlour lead off this passage. (A rear kitchen, bathroom and laundry were added later). Certain Victorian features give the house a more sophisticated look than the average farmhouse. For example, stained glass leadlighted side door panels and fanlight, ceiling roses, picket fence and six feet wide verandahs.

Sheds (outhouses) for farm implements and a dairy room are intact.

The Garden

There are easily identifiable trees and shrubs in terms of each stage of settlement. At the rear, an oak and magnolia, date from 1872/76. Another oak tree to the west is of similar age. At the front of the house a hedge of camellias, an arch of rhododendrons, a holly, a magnolia and a blackwood are attributed to the late 1890s when the house was built. To the east the garden contains a row of roses along the drive, two Lorraine Lee roses from the 1950s, a strawberry guava (date unknown) and feijoa dates from the 1940s.

The small climbing rose between the rear shed and the house is said to be a descendant from the Henty property at Portland (originally from Tasmania). The cuttings were first sent to the Hawthorn farm of Edward Henty on the Yarra, then to the property manager's (Collings) land at the corner of Canterbury Road and Station Street, Box Hill. Cuttings were later distributed to Kleinert family members at Bayswater. From more cuttings, a sixth generation of the rose was planted at Ambleside. A pear tree to the south east of the drive grew from a slip from the Clow property, Tirhatuan. (Rev James Clow (1838-1850) was the earliest pastoralist of the Dandenong and Ferntree Gully area. The curving path from the front verandah to the picket gate was upgraded by the City of Knox in recent landscaping (1990).

Summary

This former farmhouse represents an historic era of settlement in Ferntree Gully and is now surrounded by suburbia. Owned by the City of Knox, it is being cared for and preserved as closely as possible to the original. The Knox Historical Society has the right of occupation for a peppercorn rent and has the best collection of records and memorabilia in the Knox area. The original furniture and chattels were removed by request in 1976. Very little structural history remains of the district pioneers but this beautifully preserved house represents this important period of early Ferntree Gully.

Significance

Of local significance. The solid but modest farmhouse, is representative of the end of the land settlement of the last quarter of the 19th century following the boom and bust 1880s and 1890s although not connected with this. Ferntree Gully gained an identity and stability and, although not as grand as the "boom" houses, this home nevertheless shows that families were able to become established and to identify with the township they helped to build. This is a heritage of struggling pioneer families who carved a living out of the bush and became active in the local community as well as contributing to the agriculture of the area.

BUSHY ROSE

Other Names: Henty rose or Kleinert rose.

Location: Ambleside, Olivebank Road, Ferntree Gully

Age: Thought to be a descendant from the first garden in Victoria at Portland in 1834.

Species: Not known. Probably descended from one of five old European roses. These came to Europe and the British Isles from the Near East before the introduction of rose species from China in the 18th and 19th centuries.

There were five main groups, R.alba, the red R.gallica, R.cannina, the scarlet R.damascena and R.arvensis.

Size: A small spindly bushy rose with large sharp thorns, shiny leaves and nondescript carmine flowers. Each bush is about 1.5 x 1.5 metres.

Foliage: Thin, small leaves

Historical Background

There is a great deal of family folk lore in the Kleinert family of Bayswater concerning the rose. Mr Edenev Kleinert's maternal grandfather (Ellis Collings) worked around the Portland area in the 1850s and for a time on the Henty properties. The rose was purportedly brought to Melbourne by Collings.

The Henty Family

The Henty family came from West Tarring in Sussex. Thomas the father, a stock breeder and banker, was attracted by the promise of a liberal grant of 80,000 acres in Australia, and influenced by the state of his son James' health. James was sent on a mission to the Swan River area in Western Australia in 1829 but disillusioned by the land there, he went to Van Diemen's Land. Thomas set out on the barque 'Caroline' from England at the age of sixty with farm implements, 10 draught horses, ten choice cattle, 180 pure merino sheep he acquired in Spain, (a great rarity and the first in England), stores and seeds. Three sons and 30 labourers accompanied him.

There is no mention in early Henty records of ornamental seeds and plants. All stocks and provisions were purely for survival.

No land was available in Van Diemen's Land as the grants ceased while the Hentys were on the ship. James stayed in Launceston as a merchant banker and the responsibility of exploration devolved on Edward who visited Western Australia in 1832. He found the first reports to be correct and on the return journey surveyed Portland.

In 1834 Edward crossed from Launceston on the 'Thistle' with labourers, 33 head of cattle of which 16 were lost, a plough, seeds, trees, vegetables and other provisions. The crossing took 34 days. He was followed in December 1834 by brothers Francis, Stephen and John.

There are no early records of plants other than those used for food. However, when Thomas Mitchell the explorer arrived overland from Sydney down the Wannon he was 'inexpressibly amazed' at the sight: the schooner Elizabeth anchored in the bay, sheds, whaling stations, and a fair garden attached to the houses abounding with vegetables, potatoes, turnips,.... surpassing anything. Regular communication was kept up with Launceston with a ship turning around every month.

In addition by this time there were women in the settlement, including Jane Henty, Stephen's wife from Fremantle. With the rapid village development and enormous traffic to and from Launceston it is most likely that ornamental gardens were growing at this time.

James was to later return to England following the economic crisis of the 1840s with the slump in the price of wool, but he finally settled in Melbourne at Richmond. He would almost certainly have brought plants on the return journey.

Early in the history of Van Diemen's Land plants were imported such as hawthorn, sloe, rambling roses, stray briars and a variety of fruits and seeds, walnuts, filberts and mulberries, the idea being to recreate the English hedgerows and country lanes. Apples were planted as early as 1788 at Adventure Bay (Capt. William Bligh).

By 1840, the Hentys had 6 sheep runs, 1 house (12 rooms), 6 cottages, sheds, barns, stores, stables, dairies, blacksmiths and carpenters huts as well as miles of fencing for stock and vegetable gardens.

All of the brothers later built mansions in and around Kew, and shared in market gardens produce on the Yarra. In the 1850s Edward Henty had an early portable house on St Kilda Road on which site he later built 'Offington', a mansion with the finest garden houses in Melbourne (1873). He had sewage pumped from the Alfred Hospital directly on to his gardens.

The Collings Family

Ellis Collings (sic) Collings, or Collins (he was unable to read or write), was born at Cambridgeshire, England on August 26, 1831. He arrived with his wife in Victoria on January 9, 1854. He first accepted situations for a short time and began business as a carter, conveying goods to the goldfields for four years.

There is no record of him working for the Hentys at this stage but descendants are sure that he did. (Mr Edenev Kleinert).

In 1859 he obtained a contract from the Crown to lay out the Kew cemetery, Boorandara. The plans were drawn up by Fred Acheson and the architect responsible for the ornamentation was Albert Purches. Collings subsequently entered the employment of the Hon James Henty MLC, as manager of his gardens on the Yarra until 1865. Collings then rented the property from Henty which he cultivated as a market garden for six years. This property was off Muir Street and today is between the Bridge Road and Barkers Road bridges. The address was Hawthorn. Properties along the Yarra suffered badly when the river flooded during the 1860s and the gardens of George Pearson, Joseph Roberts, James Palmer Henry Creswick and James Henty were ruined in 1863.

In the newspaper advertisement and rate books of the day it is recorded thus: James Henty's garden, (Ellis Collings) Muir Street, oranges, pomegranates etc. Collings is known by the family to have brought the Portland rose from the Henty garden on the Yarra to his house in Box Hill.

In 1860 Collings purchased half an acre at Kew and also several suburban allotments, upon which he built. In 1866, he secured 30 acres at Box Hill, part of which he cultivated, and the rest he disposed of to his brother-in-law. He lived at Box Hill, his property being (present day) on the corner of Canterbury Road and Station Street, Box Hill.

Collings took a deep interest in the development of the area and was a Shire councillor for 10 years in Box Hill (1876-85). He secured many first class prizes from the horticultural and agricultural societies of Victoria for fruit and flowers.

Collins Street, Box Hill is named after Collings.

The Kleinert Family

Collins daughter Esther married Ernest Kleinert, and they became the parents of the living descendants in Bayswater.

Martin Kleinert the elder (father of Ernest) a Prussian who fled from towns on the border of Poland following the general unrest in Europe after the 1848 revolution, had a market garden at Merri Creek, and then settled at Bayswater in the 1860s. His original wattle and daub hut was adjoining the Bayswater school. A later house was built at Bona Vista Road of hand made bricks on the site. The property was subdivided in the 1950s and 1960s but the house still stands.

Cuttings from the 'Henty Rose' were grown at both these houses and today are growing at Mr Edene Kleinert's House at Elm Street, Bayswater, his sister's house in Orange Grove, Bayswater and Ambleside, Ferntree Gully.

Significance

The 'Henty Rose' is of local and state significance because of the continuous association with the Collings and Kleinert families and also because it is associated with early settlement of the Hentys in Tasmania and Portland.