

# Introduction to the Heritage of Hunters Hill

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## THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF HUNTERS HILL

The leafy streets, the stone walls, the tree-framed water glimpses, the cliff-lined coastal walks, the mangroves and the old buildings combine to make Hunters Hill a special place.

Hunters Hill was neither an extension of the central settlement of Sydney, nor a rural township. Its original nature, a suburb of villas and cottages in wooded allotments, was established in the 1840s and through several modifications has remained. Not only its initial character has been perpetuated, but numerous buildings and landscape elements remain from the district's earliest decades. Those facts, taken together, make Hunters Hill Australia's oldest surviving suburb of detached houses. Hunters Hill has been recognised as a Conservation Area by the Heritage Commission of Australia, The National Trust and the Heritage Council of NSW.

## THE FIRST SIXTY-FIVE THOUSAND YEARS

The Hunters Hill peninsula may have been the eastern limit of the Aboriginal tribe known as Wallumatagal, with a group called Tharbane centred around Tarban Creek and the Gamaraigal extending to the north and east of the Lane Cove River.

The Gamaraigal were known for their practice of removing a front tooth and their funerary customs, but the language of most of the tribes in this region has been lost due to their early displacement. They had lived for many thousands of years in balance with a fragile environment, moving from one food source to another as depletion or season dictated.

Shellfish and wildlife made the foreshores of Sydney Harbour an important source of food and the advent of white settlers was devastating. In his 1979 book on the destruction of the tribes of the Sydney Region from 1788 to the 1850s, *When the Sky Fell Down*, Keith Willey wrote: *"All over Australia there was a general belief that the sky rested on props. In the late 1700s, news went around to tribes that the eastern prop was rotting, and that the old man in charge of it would not repair it unless he was sent presents. Many possum rugs and stone-axes were sent eastwards; all the stories locate the danger in the east, the direction from which white men had come. For the people living around Port Jackson and Botany Bay the cataclysm had been immediate and inescapable. The ships had arrived, the pale strangers had poured ashore. Their landscape and food supply were lost to the Aboriginal people, their weapons were stolen for souvenirs, smallpox and famine killed half their population. The sky had indeed fallen."*

Parts of the coast around Hunters Hill are preserved more or less as they were when Port Jackson was charted in 1788. These natural coastal strips conceal at least 51 Aboriginal sites that have been registered with the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management system. This includes middens in rock shelters, rock engravings, shelters with art and other deposits as well as axe-grinding grooves.

The Lane Cove River below Boronia Park harbours mangroves, which continue to enhance the river view, to filter the stream, and to shelter rare bird life, as they were doing before Europeans reached Australia. On the River foreshore stands of tall Eucalyptus trees have been preserved. Important remnants of native vegetation exist within Boronia Park, including several Endangered Ecological Communities. Along the Parramatta River foreshore there is regenerating bushland such as at Kelly's Bush, including mature Coastal Banksias, *B. integrifolia*. The environment was strange to Europeans, as Joseph Fowles, chronicler and artist, wrote of the Antipodes: "*The sun is North at noon - the North is hot and the South is the cold wind - the east the most healthy and the west the reverse... to these diversities may be added the swans are black, the eagles white, the cod fish is found in the rivers and perch in the sea, the vallies are cold and mountain tops warm, the trees shed their bark annually instead of their leaves.*"

Lucy Willerri was a well-known Aboriginal woman who lived in Gladesville in the 1920s. She was from the Alligator River in Queensland and known as Black Lucy [https://dictionaryofsydney.org/person/lucy\\_black](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/person/lucy_black). She lived with her dogs in a humpy of scrap iron and wood in the lantana and blackberry bushes on the banks of Tarban Creek. When her home burnt down in 1923, the concerned citizens of Gladesville organised to build a cottage for her in Auburn Street. More than 200 people attended the ceremonial handing over of keys by the Mayor of Hunters Hill. When Lucy died in 1928 and was buried in the Presbyterian section of Field of Mars Cemetery, and the costs were met by the residents of Gladesville.

There were 489 Aboriginal people living in Hunters Hill at the time of the 2016 Census.

## THE NAME HUNTERS HILL

A claim originated in the nineteenth century that the name "*Hunter's Hill*" derived from Thomas Muir, one of the "*Scottish Martyrs*" transported to Australia for sedition in 1794. This was on the basis that Muir's ancestral home in Glasgow was called "*Huntershill*" (one word). Research by Beverley Sherry reveals that there is no evidence for this claim; more importantly, she documents Australia's recognition and honouring of Muir as a pioneer of democracy. (See Bibliography)

Doubt was first cast on Muir as the originator of the name by local historian, Mrs R. Hamilton. Her research showed that the official register of Land Grants recorded that, on October 3, 1794, Henry Hacking the explorer was granted "*in the District of Hunter's Hill 30 acres situate at Lane Cove on the North side of the harbour of Port Jackson*". Mrs Hamilton pointed out that Muir's ship the *Surprise* did not arrive in Sydney Cove until later, on October 25, 1794. (See Bibliography)

It is now accepted that Hunters Hill derives its name from Captain John Hunter, later Governor, who charted Sydney Harbour in 1788. On his *Map of the County of Cumberland*, he marked "*Hunter's Hill*" in his own neat handwriting to designate the high land on the north side of the Harbour around Lane Cove/Gore Hill. As P.R. Stephenson wrote of Sydney Harbour, "*at various times the different names applied to a region were stretched or contracted like elastic to apply to the whole region, or*

*to one part of it in both popular and official usage. From the earliest years of settlement, the whole of the northern shore of the harbour was called Hunter's Hill. That name is lettered on early maps of land grants as far up-river as Meadowbank. The name Hunter's Hill became localised to one part of the northern shore - the peninsula between Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers at their confluence."*

## EARLY SETTLEMENT

Farmlands were taken up to the west of Hunters Hill during the 1790s, and the farms are said to have supplied the city with fresh produce. In the western end, along Tarban Creek, were the allotments of John Doody and Ann Benson (1795-6), James Everard (1798), Thomas Jones (1798) and William Johnson (1799), 30 acres.

The area to the east, being rocky and without fresh water streams, received few settlers until the 1830s. Few who purchased land lived on it, much was for investment, and perhaps some were "*dummying*" for speculators, as that was not uncommon in early Sydney. John Clarke built several homes near Clarke's Point, one of which can still be seen. Ambrose Foss, an apothecary, gathered into his ownership the pick of the central part of the peninsula, but only a hut was mentioned for him. During the 1830s Hunters Hill was defined as a Parish. Most of the land on the peninsula was sold by 1839, all by 1844. Early grants were to Wm. Morgan, Wm. Chisholm, Samuel Onions, John Tawell, Isaac Nichols, Mary Reibey, and John Rochester. In the early 1830s the advent of steam ferries passing from Sydney to Parramatta (run by Edye Manning who came to live in Hunters Hill) and the punt, allowing road travel to Sydney, must have greatly increased interest in the area; government release of land grants resulted in considerable delays in processing title deeds all around Sydney.

The land around Luke's Bay had been set aside as Whalers' Grants by the Government in order to encourage whaling, to be used as places where ships could be careened. Although the whaling industry elsewhere flourished, the Secretary of State wrote to Governor Darling on January 9, 1831, stating that the grants (none of which had been purchased) were to be suspended since it was not the most desirable way of having the land developed, and in future land would be auctioned (10% deposit and the minimum price was to be five shillings per acre).

Land descriptions were often similar to John Terry Hughes' "*Lot 2 of the allotments for ship and boat building commencing at a marked honeysuckle tree at the South West corner of No. 1 allotment and bounded on the East by that Allotment, being a line North by part of the Morgans 32 acres being a line North 46° West four chains and ten links, on the West by No. 3 Allotment, being a line South 45° West, nine chains and 75 links to a dead oak tree ..."*

## ROUGH BEGINNINGS

*"At an early hour on Monday evening last, two men entered the house of Mrs. Reibey at Lane Cove, and carried away a musket and sundry property; shortly after, about nine o'clock, they attempted to pull Mr. Walker's boat from the moorings opposite Cockatoo Island; failing however in their attempt, they obtained Mr. William Clarke's boat, and proceeded across the water to Greenwich, attacked and robbed ..."* *The Sydney Morning Herald*, February 5, 1842.

*The Sydney Morning Herald* was later to write, on February 14, 1851, "that locality has for years been notorious as a rendezvous for runaway sailors and persons committing robberies in various parts of the country, depositing their booty with persons keeping wood boats and through some of them conveying their plunder to and from Sydney. It has also been celebrated as a place where the very worst characters find an undisturbed place of abode and where they are, as it were, licensed to carry on their system of plunder throughout the neighbourhood."

## CREATION OF A SUBURB

### **The French Settlers**

Didier Numa Joubert, agent for wine and spirit merchants in Bordeaux, arrived in Sydney in 1837. Two years later, aged 23, he married Lise Bonnefin in New Zealand, then settled in Macquarie Place, where he probably met Mary Reibey. In 1847 he purchased her farm, which extended from the present Mount to Augustine Streets, on the northern side of the beginning of the peninsula. He commenced building additions to the existing cottages and other stone houses on the property.

Eight years later, his younger brother Jules came to Hunters Hill. Jules Francois de Sales Joubert had arrived in Sydney in 1839, aged 15. He worked as an interpreter in the corvette *Aube* and in 1841 became Chancellor at the French Consulate. After the French Revolution of 1848 he resigned in protest and in the same year, 1848, married. The following year, lured by copper discoveries, they moved to Adelaide. In 1850 a baby daughter died, followed three weeks later by his wife and three weeks old son, of typhoid. Jules lost heavily on his Adelaide investments and in 1851 he was imprisoned for debt.

After trying the Victorian goldfields, contract building and running a store, he returned to Sydney as victualler of French troops "annexing" New Caledonia, then sailed to Madagascar with cargo. He married his second wife, Adelaide, in the city of that name, in 1855 and they came to Hunters Hill and lived near Didier Joubert, in a house on land Didier had bought in 1854.

In his autobiography, *Shavings and Scrapes from Many Parts*, Jules in 1889 took entire credit for the development of Hunters Hill, without mentioning his brother once: "*I bought the place with a perfect and thorough knowledge of its foul reputation, and set to work in real good earnest to redeem it - the position being good, the proximity to town an advantage, and above all the fact that this peninsula, with a main thoroughfare on top of the hill, running from Ryde to Onion's Point, admitted of subdivisions giving deep water frontages to every allotment. All that was needed was some easy mode of access to and from the city and, if possible, the closing up of the Field of Mars Common.*"

Jules was a noted publicist, and as a result has received much of the credit for transforming Hunters Hill in the 1850s and 1860s into a suburb of villas with ferry connection to Sydney.

Count Gabriel de Milhau, also a wine and spirit merchant, and Leonard Bordier arrived on the same ship in 1849; each was responsible for the erecting of four or five houses. Viel d'Aram invested in land while remaining in France. Stonemasons emigrated from the north of Italy and were encouraged to send home for members

of their family to come, which they did in numbers for the next few years, leading Jules to write: "*Building having always been a favourite hobby of mine, led me to put up a good many homes at Hunter's Hill. In order to carry out my building scheme, and to do so profitably, I sent home to Lombardy for some artisans under special contract. This, as might be expected, gave rise to a good deal of discontent among the working class. However, I made a very binding agreement with my men, and held them more particularly by the fact that they had no knowledge of English. When my operations at Hunter's Hill came to an end, the assistance of these seventy-odd tradesmen enabled me to take contracts in and around Sydney for large buildings ...*" Jules's claim of sending home to Lombardy for artisans cannot be verified, according to Rosyln Maguire. (See Bibliography) In the 1860s the Jouberts established a ferry company run from the north end of Joubert Street; they campaigned for bridges, advocating sale of the Field of Mars Common to fund them and to get rid of squatters, all to make the area more desirable for development. They had interests in land in Balmain and Birchgrove, a wine and spirits partnership with Joseph Henriques in George Street, Sydney, and Didier Joubert had business connections with Charles Smith in complicated land and mortgage transactions. Each brother held municipal office.

Jules Joubert's mercurial career continued outside Hunters Hill; in 1866 he was declared insolvent and by 1867 he was honorary and later paid secretary of the Agricultural Society. He ran shows and exhibitions for the Society, and then in 1875 was excluded from it for having "*shipped out private property as returned exhibits*". He then ran exhibitions in Perth (1881), Christchurch (1882), Calcutta (1883), became a theatrical agent and again went bankrupt (1887). By 1888 he was running exhibitions again. He died in Melbourne in 1907 aged 83. Didier Joubert had died in 1881, and his descendants lived in his stone houses on what had been Figtree Farm, son Numa running the ferry company.

Houses have been accredited to each brother largely on the basis of land ownership, but it is possible that there was some cooperation in the brothers' building industry just as there was in their other ventures. Differences can be detected in their architectural styles, however, with more variation noticeable among Jules's houses than among Didier's, although construction of the latter was over a period of more than twenty years. After Didier's first buildings on Figtree Farm, Jules built Villa Floridiana (now demolished), Walshale, Windermere, and Passy by 1858, The Haven and Innisfree by 1868, and Moocooboolah in 1864. Further houses (now demolished to make way for the expressway) were built by Didier in the Figtree area; he ended with those still standing on the hill to the west, Coorabel and Annabel Lea, Warrawillah and The Bungalow, the last in 1881. By this approximate count, including demolished houses, the brothers were responsible for about fifteen houses. Even with fewer than seventy stonemasons, it seems likely that they were involved in the building of more than these, but documentation is almost nonexistent. The stonemasons lived in places such as The Garibaldi, then built cottages for themselves.

Other French names appeared, Delarue, Viret, Fesq, Du Bois , and Madame D'Apice ran a French school in Villa Floridiana for the children of the French settlers.

### **C.E. Jeanneret**

Charles Edward Jeanneret was responsible for the building of many houses on the southern side of the peninsula. English, though descended from a Huguenot family, his father was Henry Jeanneret, who practised medicine in an Aboriginal settlement on Flinders' Island. Dr Jeanneret's friendship with Truganini is reflected in the name of his principal home, Wybalena, which Truganini said means "*blackfellow sit down here - by campfire*"; Wybalena was the name of the Aboriginal settlement there. Dr Jeanneret laid complaint against the military guard, charging malpractice with the natives; he also charged the catechist with cruel treatment and neglect of native children. Dr Jeanneret was suspended from office but later reinstated and remunerated. After the settlement was abandoned in 1847, Dr Jeanneret returned to England, but his eldest son, Charles Edward, returned to Sydney from England in 1856 and was an employee of the Bank of New South Wales. In 1857 he married Julia Ann Bellingham, of a Hunters Hill family, and began his long career of investment in land, building, municipal involvement, transport and State politics.

The Jeannerets first lived in Somerville, one of the new, prefabricated timber houses imported by Leonard Bordier and erected in the Ferry Street area. In 1858 Jeanneret built Cambridge and Lyndcote, and lived in Lyndcote. In the 1870s he acquired 11 acres of land and built Wybalena, where the family with its eleven children lived. St. Claire and Waiwera were built at the end of the decade. Jeanneret's importance had increased; he had been Mayor, first manager and then owner of Edye Manning's ferry company, Parramatta River Ferries. In the 1880s he ventured into tram services, was elected alderman to the Sydney City Council and in the next year, 1887 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly. In 1888 he had Glenrock, Glencairn and Glenview built, and in 1889 Lugano and Meryla. In 1893 Norwood and Eurondella were built, in 1894 Yandra, Herne and Gomea, in 1895 another Wybalena, this one in Woolwich Road. After this, Jeanneret retired to the country property of his four sons until his death in 1898. Mrs Jeanneret returned and lived in the second Wybalena until her death in 1919, and this area was populated by their children and their families; two sons continued the ferry company. Several of the houses had been built for Jeanneret children on their marriage.

## THE MUNICIPALITY

By 1860 Hunters Hill had grown into a settlement, with a growing number of large stone homes overlooking the water, the mental asylum at Gladesville, the Marist Fathers' establishment, the farms, dairies and small shops which serviced the area. There were such residents as fine furniture maker Andrew Lenehan, schoolmaster Robert Gale, ironmonger Henry Brookes, fancy stationer Mader, with professional or commercial addresses in Sydney and Pyrmont. A petition was drawn up for the incorporation of a municipality; the first one failed, so a second included areas of Gladesville, and succeeded. Proclamation of the Municipality of Hunters Hill was signed by the Governor on 5th January 1861 and published in the New South Wales Government Gazette of 7th January, the 5th Supplement to the Gazette of 4th January 1861. On March 14, 1861, the proclamation was read to residents of Hunters Hill in a ceremony held in the house of Henry Brown, Innisfree. Jules Joubert was the first Chairman of Council, and a list of the early mayors reads like a street directory: Joubert, de Milhau, Campbell, Jeanneret, Gale, Palser ... Such men were active in community affairs, donating land and building effort in order to build

churches and establish schools. In 1861 the population was 479, in 1871 the population was 1,425. The first rate was sixpence in the pound.

An 1862 map drawn up to assist the disposal of the considerable estate of the late Ambrose Foss shows that several distinctive stone walls of Alexandra and Ferry Streets were already constructed. It is likely that many other of the stone walls are equally old. Outstanding examples of stone-walled streets are Stanley Road, Madeline and Ady Streets, and De Milhau Road. The stone walls of Hunters Hill were mapped by the Hunters Hill Historical Society and the Hunters Hill Trust in the 1970s.

*The Illustrated Guide to Sydney* of 1882 gave its view of Hunters Hill:

*'The village is so clothed and hidden by forest and garden that we are surprised on hearing that it contains twelve miles of road, three churches, fine municipal chambers, two hotels, a population exceeding 1,000, and house property valued at £200,000. The village centre is prettily situated on a plateau between the two rivers. The gardens around are laid out in excellent taste, and the main avenue is widely planted with ornamental trees. Pursuing the River further: The indent beyond the wharf is Tarban Creek, on the banks of which is the mission station of the Marist Brothers, an institution to aid the co-workers of the fraternity in their labours among the islanders of the South Seas... The Gladesville Lunatic Asylum, ... more pleasant viewed from without than within. Everything that care, forethought, and science can suggest or command has been made available for the benefit of the inmates.'*

By the end of the 1880s the form of the suburb had been set. Sites away from the main spine roads, overlooking the water, had been chosen first for the early stone mansions; the grander houses were built by those with large acreages, in the best position. Cottages for those in servicing occupations were built along the main roads (many of the side roads were entrance drives to estates) and dairies, stables, shops as well as tradesmen and women's own homes were built. In this way, the mix of dwellings, occupations, economic and class levels was established. Later subdivision of estates has meant proliferation of much later houses along foreshores and clustered in the grounds of formerly spacious homes. Ferry wharves, with the passing traffic, were determiners of shop locations.

## FERRIES

Hunters Hill's greatest advantage was then, as it is now, the waterways on either side. The first vessel able to carry cargo, which stopped at Hunters Hill, was the Rose Hill Packet, called *The Lump* (ten tons powered by oar and sail). In 1829, a petition from Kissing Point requested a punt. In addition to Edye Manning's steam ferries (the first was *Experiment* in 1835) which went past to Parramatta, there were less formal services. Jules Joubert later told of "*French Louis*", who had run away from a whaler and in a drunken spree sold his property for a bottle of rum and a near-worthless coin; French Louis failed to regain his property when sober, returned to drunkenness and took refuge under a rock at the entrance to the Lane Cove River, eking out a living by selling oysters and ferrying passengers in an outrigger, *S.S. Island Canoe*.

In 1856, a meeting was held to consider "*the best means of establishing a direct and regular communication with Sydney*". Mr. Edye Manning, of the Parramatta Steam Ferry Company, was complained about, as his profit of £6,500 per annum was

thought excessive. Proposals were made to establish a ferry company.

The Joubert brothers chartered the *Ysabel* in 1860, and there was immediate competition. The new company undercut the other, charging sixpence instead of one shilling for some time, and it provided more frequent services. In 1865 a committee was formed, then a company, with the Joubert brothers, C E. Jeanneret and others; this company appears to have amalgamated at least briefly with Edye Manning's Parramatta service. Didier Joubert and later his son Numa carried on the Lane Cove ferries until 1906, with an entertainment complex beside the main wharf at Figtree. In 1869 Charles Jeanneret took over the management of the Parramatta River Ferries, and in 1876 he purchased the company from Edye Manning. It ran passengers from Parramatta to Darling Harbour. Paddleboats, drawing 2½ to 3 feet, ran right up into town, but when these were replaced by screw boats, the run terminated at Queen's Wharf, and in 1884 a steam tram line was started by Jeanneret, running between the wharf and the park gates.

Hunters Hill was a popular place for picnics, and ferries would bring parties to Seymour's Pleasure Gardens (where All Saints Church now stands), the Fern Bay Pleasure Gardens (now the site of the Pulpit Point estate), and the Avenue Pleasure Grounds, the land now occupied by the High School.

The old Gladesville Bridge introduced the first competition for ferries east of Parramatta when it was completed in 1881. It was 896 feet long, an iron, opening-span bridge. As the ferries stopped at many points along the peninsula, they remained a part of the way of life in Hunters Hill.

#### GLADESVILLE HOSPITAL

Transport to the locality by the Parramatta River had also been stimulated by the creation of two major institutions, the convict settlement on Cockatoo Island in 1838, and the Tarban Creek Asylum of the Insane, constructed in 1834-38. As the Asylum, forerunner of the present Gladesville Hospital, the initial buildings were designed by the Colonial Architect, Mortimer Lewis. There are many outstanding stone buildings, stone walls and major trees in the grounds above the foreshores.

#### THE MARISTS

Among the Frenchmen there was a second and distinct group, the Marist Fathers. They arrived in 1847, with the purpose of establishing a recuperation centre for their South Sea missionaries. Their first building stands now in the Gladesville Hospital Grounds. Known as The Priory, it was sold to Thomas Salter in 1874, because by that time the Marist Fathers had re-established themselves across Tarban Creek, where today their Villa Maria monastery stands. Its chapel was built in 1854-58, residence in 1863-64, and church in 1867-71.

The neighbouring St. Joseph's College, a boarding school for boys, also belongs to the Marist Order, and was opened in 1881. Stone buildings were begun in 1882, the main wing being built in 1889. The Marists extended further east along the peninsula, building a second church in 1890-1901, the Church of St Peter Chanel, and in 1908 the Marist Sisters opened their school on Woolwich Road.

## INDUSTRY

There was much early industrial activity at Woolwich, particularly boat building and repair. The climax was the excavation in 1898-1902 of the Mort's Dock Company's dry dock, then the largest dry dock in Australia. The Dock closed in 1959 and the site was abandoned until 1963, when the Army acquired the site. In 1997 the Commonwealth Department of Defence decided to sell off substantial parts of its property around Sydney Harbour. There was a concerted battle by the local community to keep these lands in public ownership. Finally, in 2001 victory was achieved. The government established a commonwealth trust to preserve the Defence Department lands, including those at Woolwich, for future generations.

On the foreshore below Kelly's Bush was the Sydney Smelting Works, owned by T.H. Kelly and his sons. From 1896 to 1967 it produced tin and, according to Connie Ewald, "*the smelter workers regarded themselves as a rung above the dock workers*". (See Bibliography) The Smelting Works closed in 1968. Subsequently, through the efforts of a group of remarkable women, the thirteen Battlers for Kelly's Bush, and greatly assisted by the Builders Labourers Federation, the world's first Green Ban was placed on Kelly's Bush in 1971.

In 1895 Colonial Oil of Australia bought Jeanneret's Fern Bay Pleasure Gardens and established an oil storage depot there. It expanded greatly when taken over by Mobil Oil and covered the whole area of Pulpit Point – a hazardous industry on Sydney Harbour and in a residential suburb. In 1988 Mobil moved out of Hunters Hill and the Pulpit Point residential estate was developed.

Industry was an important part of the early history of Hunters Hill but there is none today. Over the years, the local community has fought to secure public open space on former industrial sites and to strengthen and preserve the residential character of Hunters Hill.

## EVOLVING ARCHITECTURE

The buildings of Hunters Hill reflect architectural styles covering a period of one hundred and sixty years, with the Victorian stone houses remaining the dominant feature.

Early vernacular dwellings can be seen in Batemans Road and Mars Street, where the nucleus of a present house may be a 1830s farm hut. Later workmen's cottages, including those by the stonemasons for themselves, were built as simple vernacular sandstone cottages from the 1840s well into the 1880s: houses were symmetrical, with the door in the centre matching windows or French doors on either side, hipped roof with twin chimneys, verandah scaled to protect in summer but admit the lower winter sun. Rows of such houses now dressed in Victorian lace may still be seen in Alexandra and Madeline Streets.

Some larger houses, such as Loombah in Stanley Road, still retained a plain dignity influenced by the Georgian style.

Hunters Hill was known for the French flavour of its architecture, begun by the French settlers; Coorabel and Annabel Lea with their high dormer windows, Oatlands, Paraza, The Priory, Merilbah and Passy - the many buildings by Frenchmen

by 1870 had set a taste and a type.

An increasing interest in decoration characterised the Victorian houses built in Hunters Hill. Examples of the Gothic Revival style are the Congregational Church and the Hunters Hill Primary School facing each other in Alexandra Street with their steeply pitched roofs and long narrow windows with pointed arches. Bargeboards drew their inspiration from the curving and twining borders of Gothic art, and were used by the Victorians to outline gables; an elaborate example is Huntley's Point House, others are Wandella and 1 Ambrose Street. From carved wood the Victorians turned to cast iron, which was being mass-produced in Sydney by the 1870s. Houses were festooned then and later with cast iron lace, it was used to decorate eaves, as balustrades for verandahs, even to adorn roofs, in the cresting as seen on Wybalena in Jeanneret Avenue and on the delicately pinnacled turret of St. Claire and Waiwera. Stained glass was being manufactured in Sydney from the 1870s, and by the 1890s it was being used in houses in Hunters Hill, principally around front doors; Australian birds were a favourite motif, and sometimes the name of the house was worked in leadlights or etched above the door.

The Classical Revival style is evident in the stone portion of Hunters Hill Town Hall, as it is in many public buildings of the nineteenth century. The Victorian Italianate style is characterised by rendered brick walls with classical mouldings around windows and doors, ornamental brackets under eaves, panelled and moulded chimney stacks, mosaic tile or marble porches, sometimes a square tower; Burnham is a good example, and Araluen displays some features.

Towards the end of the Victorian period, a desire for more picturesque effects led to use of rusticated sandstone and a projecting bay on one side of the front; the later houses by C.E. Jeanneret are a good example of the change when contrasted with his earlier ones.

The 1893 depression hit the building industry, and with the altered economy altered tastes and materials became evident; red brick replaced sandstone, terra cotta Marseilles tiles replaced slate, carved wood in new patterns replaced cast iron lace. Diverse influences (Queen Anne, picturesque, art nouveau, shingle, arts and crafts, Edwardian) combined with an impulse to produce something genuinely suited to Australia. 52 Woolwich Road makes use of shingles and a rugged sandstone base; 7 Campbell Street has an octagonal turret; 4 Prince Edward Parade reflects the Queen Anne style with its terra cotta frilled ridges on the roof; 18 Woolwich Road has Art Nouveau patterning in the balustrade. Houses by the Hunters Hill architect Henry Budden show a predilection for angular geometric shapes and his imaginative use of site, as the houses were designed to take advantage of river views and the movement of the sun around the house. Mornington, 16 Vernon Street, is his masterpiece. By the 1920s, the preferred form was the wide-gabled Californian Bungalow. Constructed of "*liver*" brick, frequently on a sandstone base, and with terracotta roof tiles, the Californian Bungalow has distinguishing details such as diamond-paned leadlight windows, shingles and rough-cast render. Examples are 20 Woolwich Road, 10 Jeanneret Avenue, 31, 38, 53 and 55 Blaxland Street; more may be seen along Park Road, Pittwater Road, Hillcrest Avenue and Sunnyside Street.

## PLANNING AND PROTECTION

In the years following the formation of the Trust in 1968, the proliferation of buildings out of character in Hunters Hill slowed. However, in the twenty-first century the struggle to protect the existing fabric of the Municipality and to prevent ugly and unsympathetic development is a continuing battle. The Trust has been instrumental in preventing high-rise development within Hunters Hill but there is much pressure from developers to increase heights dramatically above the six storeys now permitted in the Gladesville commercial precinct on the perimeter of the Municipality.

Over seventy percent of Hunters Hill Council is within a Heritage Conservation Area, which includes the buildings in this collection. This requires any proposed works to comply with the controls and objectives set out in the Hunters Hill Council's Local Environment Plan (2012) and its Consolidated Development Control Plan (2013) that relate specifically to heritage. Council's Conservation Advisory Panel – a body arising from a proposal by the Trust for the Draft Town Plan of 1968 – has an important role in maintaining the integrity of local heritage by providing advice on development applications potentially impacting the special character of our historic area.

The Hunters Hill Trust has stated, and it has been proved, that buildings can be effectively ruined by over-development or incongruous development in proximity. It is for this reason that the Trust has urged the formation of historic districts with special provisions for area preservation. In 1981 the Heritage Council of NSW moved to protect over three hundred old buildings in Hunters Hill. Many had been built from stone quarried from the Hill itself, and they blend with the stone walls and are enhanced by the magnificent and now rare trees which have been their companions since the houses were built. The Trust's mission is to work for the permanent protection of this unique historic environment of national significance. The character of Hunters Hill and the houses pictured in this collection merit such a future.