

VII - Woolloomooloo Area

(Denise Burden - 487 1590)

7.1. Woolloomooloo Estate/History:

On some miles of foreshores of Sydney Harbour, the little great men of the local establishment parcelled out among themselves the choicest portions of land.

Lavish (improvident ?) land grants to colonial secretary and treasurer, judge advocate, attorney general and judges, to architects and millers.

Extended from edge of the settlement of the original Sydney, from the bay just around the corner from where the fleets come in - eastward a mile or so along the shoreline - inland about a mile. In 1967 it was a densely populated part of the southern hemisphere - not only industries, workshops, but also great blocks of tenements. This hollow of land between what is now the city proper and the next ridge was once 'Palmer's Grant'. Palmer's Grant and the neighbouring grants now comprise Kings Cross.

Grants of land were given by governors to bribe men not to return home and to tie them to the new country - also they wanted crops and harvests.

Palmer's Grant stretched from Woolloomooloo Bay (Palmer's Cove) to the present Albion Street, Surry Hills and from Hyde Park to present Forbes St., Darlinghurst.

Palmer made a model farm of 5 acres, but also was busy enriching himself with the proceeds of whaling and cedar-getting ventures.

Aborigines called the place where he built his fine house "Wall Mulla" which was variously interpreted to mean 'place of blood' and there was grim evidence for this meaning, or 'place of plenty' where they fished.

Commisary John Palmer - officer of the First Fleet - was fond of good company and entertaining. "Could dance on a dinner table without spilling the wine out of the glasses". In his veins ran the blood of James Palmer, Gentleman of the Privy Chamber of Charles II and of the notorious Barbara Palmer who had a close relationship with the King.

He was the first of a long line of colonists who made a fortune and lost it almost as quickly - living beyond his means and gambling. However he was a good and sympathetic master of servants.

Sailors came ashore to take their pick of George Commin's "Cottage of Content" hotel, or "The Little House under the Hill".

Land granted to Thomas West for the first water mill - just over the hill from the Cross and East Sydney Tech College of today (1967) was surrounded by the fiercest of the Port Jackson Aboriginal Tribes - the Womerah.

In 1822 the part around what is now Elizabeth Bay was known as 'Blacktown' because Macquarie had it reserved for aborigines.

There is evidence of greed, abuses, petty squabbles, such as between Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell and Stuart Donaldson which ended in a duel, Mitchell being shot in the neck.

The main need of the colony was water. A tunnel was built to bring the waters of the Lachlan swamps (Centennial Park) to a reservoir in Hyde Park. The convicts were unskilled and difficult to manage. Busby, the Mineral Surveyor in charge, feared to go into the tunnel and was forced to rely on reports. It took 10 years to complete

Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay, received a grant of 54 acres of land from Governor Darling, with the choicest harbour frontage on the shores of Elizabeth Bay. (Why did he receive this grant?) Elizabeth Bay House was splendid - grounds a veritable nursery with 4000 entries. Also a small museum. His collection of insects was the finest of his time. His eldest son, William, considered he had a right to chase anyone off the beach at Elizabeth Bay.

The Hon David Jones MLC bought two houses in Elizabeth Bay and lived in both of them - a young welshman in search of a fortune.

There was continual friction between Governors and Chief Justices. (Jill note - Poseidon?)

For 130 years Potts Point has represented a kind of exclusive West End life in Sydney. (Aborigine word for Potts Point meant 'Cranky Woman')

Potts began as 'porter and servant' - first employee of Bank of NSW - became Accountant to the Bank. (Is there more to be known about him?)

The female factory at Parrammatta was the 'Belsen' of NSW - a hell to which the women and girls from the convict ships were sent, to be employed spinning wool until they were permitted to marry or assigned as domestic servants.

Petty squabbles and litigation, party spirit.

Rev Samuel Marsden was reprimanded by Earl Bathurst for 'part spirit', intemperance and vehemence of temper unsuited to his profession.

1836, 37 and 38 were years of drought.

1842 was the year of the great drought and depression - fortunes lost.

Discovery of gold in 1851. Fortunes made overnight. Merchants who remained in the city (like Chailis - benefactor to Sydney Uni) made more than men on the goldfields.

Snow fell in Sydney in June - either 1836, 37 or 38.

1843 depression. "Mr Scott tells me he intends boiling down 30,000 sheep. Sheep selling by auction for 8d each with wool on."

Eminent, affluent people like 'China' Jones and Spark (a Christian) went bankrupt. Spark regained his self esteem.

Macquoid - Sheriff - flamboyant, extravagant - committed suicide when the depression began, leaving his son to face his debts. The son succeeded him repaying everything then drowned in the ill-fated Dunbar off South Head.

Bishop Broughton moved into their home, 'Goderich Lodge', and lived there until his fatal voyage to England in 1852 concerning the problem of a constitution for the C of E in Australia. He contracted yellow fever on a West Indian mailboat. (In order to bring about the division of his enormous diocese, the Bishop had offered to give up half his income).

In 1835 there were 10 breweries operating in Sydney. By 1845 only 3.

Frederick Tooth - owner of Kent Brewery - friend of Edmund Blackett who built the tower and spire of Christ Church St Lawrence. Tooth donated to cost. Both Robert and Frederick Tooth were presidents of the Bank of NSW, also sugar refinery and meat industry. (Investigate Tooth Bros and CSR ?)

The NSW Corps had kept trade in their own hands, forcing the settlers to buy from them at extortionate prices, until the merchant Campbell broke the stranglehold in 1798 by refusing to enter into retail trading and establishing connections with India, China and Great Britain - imported horses and cattle from India and England. (Campbell's Wharf and store house was close to Sydney's Overseas terminal). Campbell was a philanthropist and established a bank for poor settlers and convicts.

(Mr Leslie Duguid was Managing Director of the Commercial Bank of Sydney 1834)

Edward Hallen - architect, surveyor and engineer - drew up plans and superintended the erection of the Baptist Chapel without payment.

Mitchell (of the Mitchell Library) was very generous - giving without people knowing the giver.

Darlinghurst in c1850 was a mixture of wealth and prosperity, poverty and bohemia. (like today)

John Fairfax arrived in Sydney in 1838 with his wife and family and 5 pounds.

Darlinghurst in 1831 extended from Woolloomooloo Bay, Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay to Macleays Point and southwards to about Darlinghurst Gaol.

Surry Hills extended from Woolloomooloo's swamps, southwards across South Head Road (Oxford Street) to Strawberry Hills.

Darlinghurst Gaol - first known as the Woolloomooloo Stockade. Wall begun in 1824, gaol begun in 1836 and completed in 1836. The stone was quarried in Barcom Glen by convicts working in chains, drawn by the convicts up the east slope of the hill to the stockade site where it was cut into blocks.