



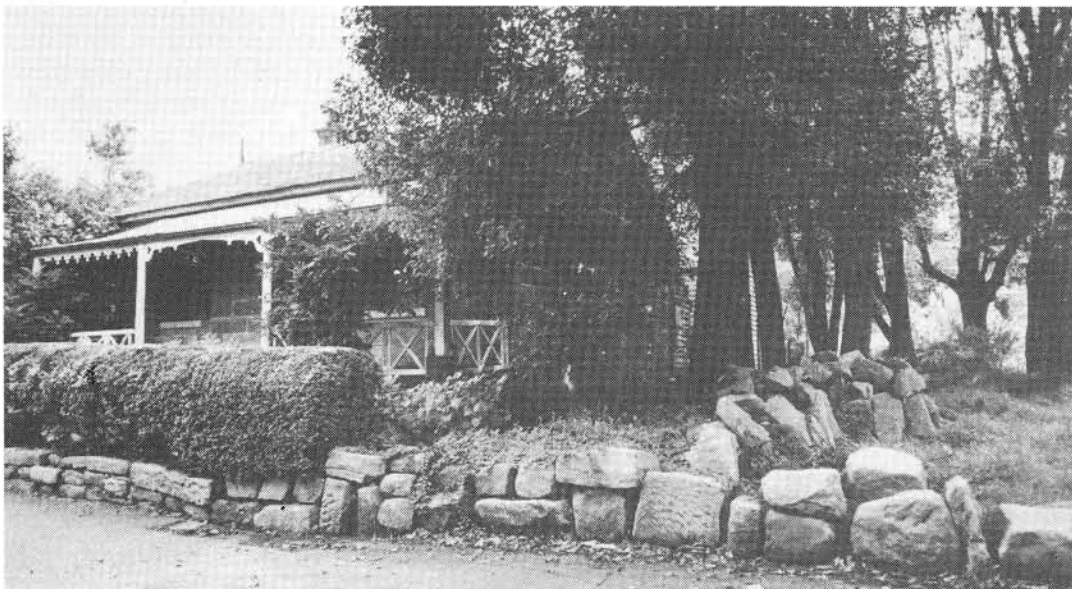
Hunter's Hill Trust Journal

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'Vienna'

A HUNTER'S HILL BICENTENNIAL PROJECT



"Vienna", Alexandra St.

Photograph by Douglass Baglin.

THE COTTAGE — "Vienna" is a sandstone cottage at 38 Alexandra Street, just down from the Town Hall. It was built in the 1860s and has been in the Hillman family for over 100 years. Jules Joubert first owned the property and sold it to John Hellman, a shoemaker, in 1875. It is in original condition and consists of four rooms with a detached kitchen, a garden behind with a vacant block next-door. However, it is in urgent need of restoration.

THE PROJECT — Hunter's Hill, unlike Lane Cove and Ryde, has no historic house open to the public. There is a real need for such a house, which could also serve as an information centre and as a venue for selected community activities.

Clive Lucas O.B.E., specialist restoration architect and Senior Vice President of the National Trust, in a report on "Vienna" says, *"It is rare to find an intact mid-19th-century cottage and it is particularly valuable because it is in Hunter's Hill, a district which itself is of acknowledged Heritage value ... Nowhere else in Sydney has a small 19th-century cottage been restored as a house museum. It would be of great educational value and could illustrate how ordinary people lived in the second half of the 19th century and would have wide appeal."*

THE BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE — Sheila Swain, the then Mayor of Hunter's Hill, called a public meeting on 16 September, 1982, to enable citizens to select a Committee to organise projects for Australia's Bicentenary. The Committee decided that one project should be the acquisition and restoration of "Vienna", and a Sub-Committee with Phil Jenkyn as Chairman was formed.

OPTION TO PURCHASE — A one year's option to purchase "Vienna" has been obtained, expiring 7 September, 1983. The price is \$125,000. A separate one year's option to purchase the adjoining vacant block has also been granted. Consideration is being given to the most appropriate use for this block. The Hillman family have made an exceptional offer to the people of Hunter's Hill in granting these options.

YOUR SUPPORT — The Sub-Committee on "Vienna" is establishing a fund-raising appeal. It is clear that this project will involve much hard work as time is limited. The Hunter's Hill Trust urges you to support the project. Help is needed in many areas, not only financial but in time and effort. If you think this is worthwhile and want to help, please contact **Philip Jenkyn**, Chairman of the Sub-Committee (H. 89-2677, W. 233-1282), or **Jo Rees** from the Hunter's Hill Trust (H. 816-2746).

THE ITALIANS OF HUNTER'S HILL

by

Roslyn Maguire

One of the best-known facts of our early local history is that Jules Joubert claimed to have imported stonemasons from Lombardy to build his Hunter's Hill houses. The claim is repeated in almost every published article relating to Hunter's Hill and has resulted in the impression that he was our major speculator and that the early stone homes were the result of his inspiration and far-sighted commitment. He wrote,

Building having always been a favourite hobby of mine, led me to put up a good many houses 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.

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, wharves, etc.

This is from Jules Joubert's **Shavings & Scrapes**, an autobiography written in the 1880's providing a broad overview of his various enterprises.

The arrival of the Italians was not so straightforward. There were, in fact, three groups who came and worked as stonemasons at the time that Jules Joubert was involved in speculative building in Hunter's Hill, from 1856 to 1863.

Group 1 — In 1855, a year of record immigration, several hundred Swiss-Italian and Italian immigrants arrived in Sydney. Predominantly young, single men, they had left small mountain villages of the Italian-speaking Swiss canton of Ticino and lakeside towns such as Locarno, Lugano and Como in Italy. Others came from Genoa and Milan. All paid their own passage moneys to agents of German shipping companies. They came in response to advertisements in their newspapers, enticing them to the goldfields and a life of new opportunities. Over 2,000 men left Ticino for Australia between 1854 and 1856, (see list of emigrants in **L'Emigrazione Ticinese in Australia**, by Giorgio Cheda, published 1979, and at present being translated by A. Pagliaro, La Trobe University).

In August 1855, the Legislative Council had debated the urgent need to relieve the pressure on Immigration Depots at Sydney and Parramatta, by sending immigrants to find work in the interior — (this debate is reported in **The Sydney Morning Herald**, August 25, 1855). Hence, when the "Santa Ludovina" arrived in October 1855, with 176 Italians on board, those men who remained in Sydney faced poor employment prospects made poorer by the fact that they were unable to speak English. On 5th January, 1856 it was reported that, 'there are some Italian masons who might prove serviceable to employers building of stone as these men are good

hands at this work'. Some Milan-based missionaries were staying with the Marist Fathers at Villa Maria, on Tarban Creek, at that time. Didier Joubert was then closely connected with the French Marist Fathers negotiating various purchases and shipping requirements for their South Pacific missions, and it is highly probable that he would have been encouraged by the missionaries to find employment for the Italians. Indeed, when many of them became naturalised early in the 1860's, Didier and Jules Joubert stated that they had known them since their arrival in the Colony. Their names appear on many early Hunter's Hill documents, and include Antonio Bondietti, Joseph Carmini, Angelo Ramperto and Julian and Augustine Righetti.

Group 2 — Another group of Swiss-Italians who found work in Hunter's Hill were from the canton of Grisons. Most came from the village of Poschiavo, near the resort St. Moritz and only six miles from the Italian border. Large numbers left there in 1856, again quite independently, and those who came to Hunter's Hill seem to have done so after being at the goldfields. Many of them lived in Madeline Street houses, such as Antonio Rinaldi who left Poschiavo when he was only fourteen years old, Jacob and Stephen Ferari and Francesco Zala. Others were Pietro Vassella who is said to have built the Carey Cottage buildings, and the Giuliani and Mini families who bought orchards at Ryde after many successful years at different goldfields.

Didier and Jules Joubert had nothing to do with the immigration of these two groups, and extensive searching amongst existing Immigration Records at the State Archives fails to trace a single immigrant directly sponsored by a Joubert. Several of the Swiss-Italian and Italian builders must have enjoyed regular employment since, by 1860-61, they began to buy land, build their own houses, marry and have families. Antonio Bondietti was confident enough to submit tenders, in 1861, for the construction of local bridges, walls etc., and he, a J. Canova, and Joseph Carmini signed Joubert's 1860 petition to incorporate Hunter's Hill as a Municipality.

Group 3 — Jules Joubert's exact words were that he 'sent home to Lombardy for some artisans ...' and there was indeed a third group of Italians, from the Lombardy region near Milan, who arrived after 1860. They may have emigrated in response to Jules' suggestion, but he was not directly involved nor is there any extant evidence that they came bound by special contract. What happened was that, in August 1859, new Regulations were introduced allowing 'Any naturalized Foreigner, resident in the Colony, who may be desirous of introducing from the Continent of Europe any of his or her relatives' to do so, on payment of £4 for each immigrant between the age of 12 and 40 years of age. Those eligible were, 'mechanics of every description, domestic servants, and all persons of the laboring class', (**Government Gazette**, Friday, 26 August, 1859).

A Milan-based missionary who had stayed at Villa Maria, Revd. Angelo Ambrosoli, became involved with the Italian community of Sydney at that time and he was joined by his brother, Giosne. Two weeks after the introduction of the new Regulations Giosne Ambrosoli became naturalized, 'to avail himself of the new governmental-facilitating-regulations for the introduction in this Colony of some friends of his...'. Perhaps Jules Joubert encouraged such a move and possibly contributed towards the £4 to ensure the arrival of Giosne Ambrosoli's friends and relatives.

However, they came tentatively. Luigi Ambrosoli arrived first, in 1860, but went immediately to the goldfields and does not appear in local directories before the 1880's, suggesting that he did not come under contract. An Ambrosoli cousin, Carlo Ceruti, arrived the same year on a different ship, and apparently came directly to Hunter's Hill. In 1861 Ambrose Ambrosoli arrived and his brother Giovanni in 1863 – both worked as stonemasons with another relative Pietro Zanolla. The three names appear on an 1881 lease to quarry land at the river end of Herberton Avenue.

So, contrary to the impression given by Jules Joubert's oft-repeated claim, the Italian builders of Hunter's Hill did not all come here in one neat exercise of sponsored immigration. Nevertheless, they were a vitally important element in the sudden increase in building in the late 1850's. Their skills, and those of men of different nationalities, were employed by numerous wealthy residents and speculators.

The Hunter's Hill Italian community gained new members after 1861: John Cuneo (from Genoa) built a store which soon became extended as the Garibaldi Inn; Angelo Tornaghi (from Milan) bought Bondiotti's first house and named it 'Milano'; and Charles D'Apice, a professor of music from Naples, lived with his family in Villa Floridiana.



27 Madeline Street, 1982
 (Joseph Carmini purchased this land from Jules Joubert in 1860, and sold it in 1869 to Antonio Bondiotti, for £210).

Photograph by Douglass Baglin.

Aspects of the 1850's in Hunter's Hill, including the Italian settlers and building speculators, are to be contained in a forthcoming book by Roslyn Maguire. It will also include a chapter on the French Marists by John Hosie.

TRUST'S NEW BOOK LAUNCHED

Heritage of Hunter's Hill, published by the Hunter's Hill Trust, was launched on October 17th at 'Vineta', View Street, Hunter's Hill. The Trust wishes to thank Mr. and Mrs. Tattersall for lending their home for this occasion. The speaker was Professor Michael Taylor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney. The 150-page book is a revised and expanded version of **Old Buildings of Hunter's Hill** (1977). It deals with the history, architecture and environment of Hunter's Hill and is copiously illustrated with photographs by Douglass Baglin, who is untiring in his work for the Trust. Under the leadership of Alice Oppen, who was the driving force behind the entire project, a team of people worked together to produce the book. The research and writing, which involved thousands of hours' work over a period of one and a half years, was done voluntarily by -- Alice Oppen, Diana Drake, Beverley Sherry, Roslyn Maguire and Sybil Blanton. This book is a triumph of team work and if anyone should ask what the Trust can do -- **this is what it can do!**

MAIL ORDER NOW

Send \$21.00 plus \$2.00 postage to:

The Hunter's Hill Trust, P.O. Box 85,
 Hunter's Hill N.S.W. 2110.

ALSO AVAILABLE AT:

HUNTER'S HILL BOOK SHOP
 "Cuneo", Alexandra Street,
 Hunter's Hill.



ADDENDUM TO LAST ISSUE:

In the article on "Henry E. Budden", Volume XI No. 2, July, 1982, the illustration was of *Mornington*, 16 Vernon Street, photograph by Douglass Baglin.

The Hunter's Hill Trust is again resolved to tackle local problems which concern it.

The new edition of **Old Buildings of Hunter's Hill**, revised and including some Federation houses, will be used by the Trust in any townscape submissions to the local Council and other Government agencies when the "pre"-prepared Town Plan is presented. It is anticipated that this long-awaited plan will be on view this fiscal year.

The already appointed Committee of Hunter's Hill citizens, selected to prepare and follow through with a local contribution to Australia's bicentenary celebrations in 1988, includes a Trust nominee. The Trust was kindly asked to appoint a member to this 7-person committee. Mrs. Jo Rees, I am delighted to write, our executive Secretary, has accepted our nomination for this exciting but doubtless demanding task.

The future headquarters of the Hunter's Hill Trust, in a typical Hunter's Hill cottage, is no longer an armchair dream. Whilst we certainly do not yet have the money, this naissant project is a challenge and will require immense Trust and community support.

Rumours of foreshore encroachments, including a second harbour bridge, development of Kelly's Bush and the Lane Cove River "Freeways", have been voiced. The Committee is obtaining informed advice from concerned people. We urge all Members to participate in the cause of ongoing, living conservation.

MALCOLM LANE-BROWN.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Let's celebrate the end of the year with a great Christmas party!

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28th, EVENING

Villa Maria Hall, Gladesville Road

6 p.m. — drinks
7 p.m. — dinner

ALL WELCOME AND BRING YOUR FRIENDS

For bookings, tickets, please ring by Nov. 23rd:
89-2035 (day); 89-5175 (evening)

ROLE OF THE JOURNAL

Members of the Trust are invited to send in suggestions on the subject of the role of this journal. It is, after all, your journal, so what do you think it should be doing — in what ways do you think it can serve a useful purpose? All opinions are welcome, and please indicate whether you would like your views published.

One thing that seems fundamentally important is that the **Journal** should be an avenue of expression for all Members of the Trust and indeed for all those who care about Hunter's Hill. In this way, people could contribute articles, brief notes, and letters, so that the **Journal** might become a forum for many voices.

THE VALUE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

On a recent trip to Europe I was struck by the fact that, in a world bent on moving towards the grey uniformity of high-rise apartments, the value of traditional architecture is greater than ever. Each place I visited had a character of its own, defined most of all by its people but also by its physical environment and traditional architecture. Many European towns have taken particular care to preserve "*the old part of the city*" — Geneva, Zurich, Innsbruck and Salzburg are excellent examples — but here and there the advance of the high-rise straight lines threatens this individuality. It would be a sadly impoverished world without the individuality of traditional regional architecture, without, for example, the low-gabled timber chalets of the Swiss Alps, the grey stone cottages with slate roofs of Scotland, the terracotta-coloured villages with turrets and spires between Paris and Lyon.

In Australia we are becoming more conscious of the value of traditional architecture. This is reflected in efforts to preserve the old part of our cities and in the publication of such books for popular consumption as Balwant Saini and Ray Joyce's **The Australian House** (Sydney: Lansdowne, 1982) — as its subtitle, "*Homes of the Tropical North*", indicates, this book is really about that unique phenomenon, the Queensland house.

Here in Hunter's Hill we have a traditional architecture surviving from the nineteenth century in a largely unspoilt setting. Its value increases every day.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name Telephone

Address Postcode

Willing to help with

Type of Membership	1982-83	Due March 1
Single	\$ 5.00	
Family	\$ 10.00	
Pensioner	\$ 1.00	
Student	\$ 1.00	
Life Member	\$ 75.00	

*The Hunter's Hill Trust,
Box 85, Hunter's Hill, 2110.*