



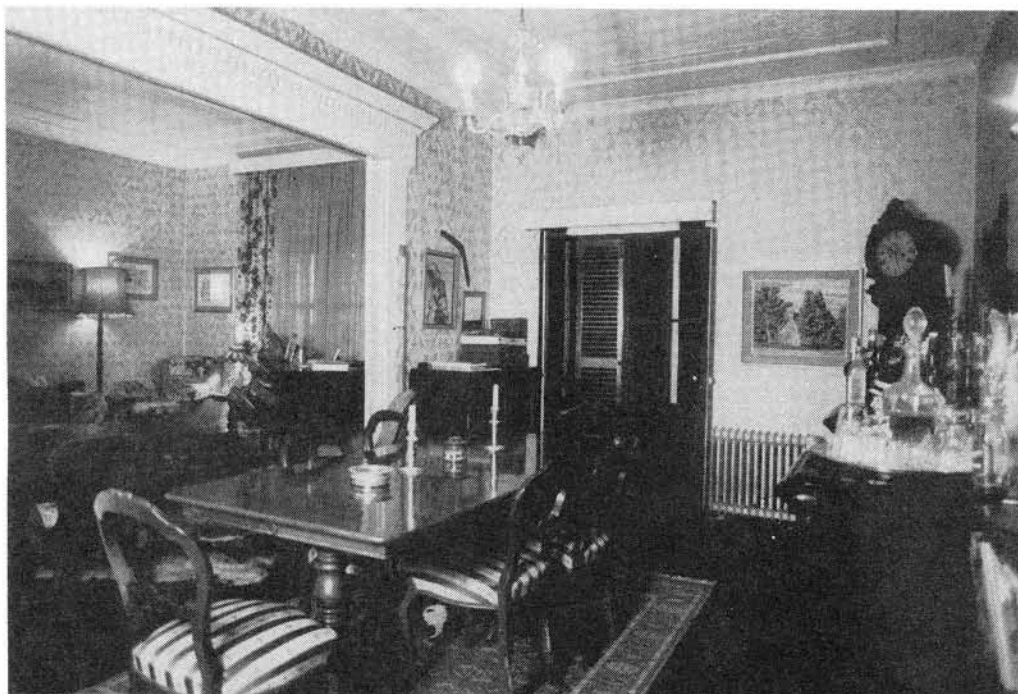
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NEW EVIDENCE CONFIRMS "VILLA FLORIDIANA" AS JULES JOUBERT'S HOME



Interior of Villa Floridiana in the mid 1980s, when occupied by Elaine and Douglass Baglin.

Photo: Douglass Baglin

On December 23rd, 1989, the Land and Environment Court decided to allow demolition of **Villa Floridiana** (1 Sea Street, Hunter's Hill). The Assessor accepted the connection of Didier Joubert with the house, but stated:

As to where and exactly when Jules [Joubert] settled at Hunter's Hill after his marriage to Adelaide Levi it is not possible on the evidence to say. (Judgment, p.60).

Some new evidence has been found which goes against this statement and strongly endorses the Hunter's Hill Council's argument that Villa Floridiana was Jules's first home.

JULES JOUBERT (1824-1907) married his second wife Adelaide, in Adelaide, on 27th February 1855 (his first wife and two children having died of typhoid). Submitted as evidence in the court case was a copy of a letter Jules wrote from Sydney to his fiancée on 4th January 1855, telling her about their new home he was building which was nearing completion – the description could fit Villa Floridiana.

Jules arrived back in Sydney with his bride on 9th March 1855 (reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 March 1855, p.6). They settled in their new home and their first child was born on January 7th, 1856. The entry in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of January 9 (p.5) says: 'At Gros-Caillou (Lane Cove River) Mrs. Jules F. Joubert of a daughter'. A similar entry appears in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on March 24, 1857 (p.1): 'On Saturday March 21st at Gros-Caillou (Lane Cove River) Mrs. Jules Joubert of a son'.

Madeline and Jules E. were followed by Charles F. (1859), a son (1861), Edward (1865), Alfred L. (1868), George A. (1870), Adelaide L. (1872 lived only sixteen months), Leah Gabrielle (1875), and Leslie Russell (1877).

Jules lived in this first house, **Gros-Caillou**, for about two years (1855-57) before moving to the next house he built.

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A letter dated 10th February 1938 from Jules's son, Alfred L. Joubert (born 1868), addressed to C. A. Fairland says:

*With regard to the Houses which Father built on the River – After Father and Mother married, Father built and resided in the House under the cliff at Mount Street, which was afterwards occupied and known as D'Apice's, and the second House he built was Brooke's House on top of the Cliff.**

The next House he built was Lenahan's House, known as Pottsdam – and the next House was the House next door, also facing Riverview, and in your day I think was occupied by Bindley, and the next House further along, almost opposite, we knew as Brown's, where the first Council Meeting was held – and then I think he built your Grandfather's House, but whether the family lived there or not I do not know ... The next House was "Moocooboolah" in Alexandra Street where most of us were born.

This information added to the *Electoral Roll* entry in 1856 which says 'Joubert, Julius – Lane Cove River – Household', leaves no doubt that Jules did live in Hunter's Hill on the Lane Cove River from 1855, initially in a house called **Gros-Caillou** which was later owned by the D'Apices.

From 1847 DIDIER JOUBERT (1816-1881), Jules's brother, owned a property of many acres in Hunter's Hill called Figtree Farm, the site of Figtree House and of St. Malo (since demolished for the expressway). In 1854 Didier bought adjoining land which included the two acres on which Jules built **Gros-Caillou**. Jules had creditors and very little money. These two acres with the house were sold by Didier Joubert to Archibald Campbell on 22nd June 1857 (Conveyance 856 Bk.49).

A few weeks later, on 16th July 1857, an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* announces that a meeting will 'be held in Jules Joubert's new cottage for the purpose of deciding on a plan for the proposed church ...'. A report in the *Empire* of Monday, 20th July 1857 says the meeting was held 'in an unfinished house belonging to Mr. Jules Joubert'. This was probably Jules's **second** house

'on top of the Cliff' (Walshale), or Pottsdam (now Windermere) where he lived for a few years.

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL (c1834-67), who bought **Gros-Caillou** in 1857, was involved in the pioneering beginnings of Hunter's Hill. He came there in 1848 as a boy of fourteen; his father was Dr. Francis Campbell, Medical Superintendent at Gladesville Hospital (1848-67) and a mayor of Hunter's Hill (1865). Archibald and his father attended the meeting referred to above, which proposed a school as well as a church. Archibald Campbell was a warden of the Anglican Church at Hunter's Hill in 1859, a member of the regatta committee, and in 1860 he and his brother (Francis George Campbell) were signatories of the petition to form a municipality. He bought **Gros-Caillou** a few months prior to his marriage to Anne Baker, a relative of the Windeyer family; the marriage took place on 16th October 1857 at Tomago, the Windeyer homestead on the Hunter River. Like Jules Joubert, this second owner brought a bride to the house.

Archibald Campbell's work in the Customs Department took him away from Sydney and he sold **Gros-Caillou** on 10th July 1861 (Conveyance 442 Bk.74) to CHARLES D'APICE (1817-88) who named it **Villa Floridiana** – the name it is known by to this day. Charles D'Apice also married soon after he purchased the property. The D'Apices, like the Jouberts and the Campbells, were pioneers of Hunter's Hill. They made a civilizing contribution as educators, Charles as a professor of music, Madame D'Apice with her French School. The house remained in the D'Apice family for over 60 years.

With this history behind it, the house should not be allowed to lie and rot, nor should it be demolished.

(PRIMARY SOURCES: *Sydney Morning Herald*; *Empire*; *Index to Births*; All Saints' Hunter's Hill Archives; *Electoral Roll*; NSW Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; Diocese of Newcastle Parish Registers; Manuscripts, Mitchell Library; Title Deeds; Court Case exhibits.)

*The French name, **Gros-Caillou** ('big boulder') probably referred to the cliff. Mount Street was the address of **Villa Floridiana** before Sea Street was formed.

VILLA FLORIDIANA: Beverley Sherry sums up the demolition controversy.

We have something quite rare in **Villa Floridiana**. Here is a cottage, made of timber, whose history goes back 135 years. It has been added to, its timbers of necessity have been replaced periodically, at times there may even have been major rebuilding – such is the nature of timber. But whenever its various occupants did anything to the house over the course of the years, they seem to have respected its basic form and dimensions. No one has ever eradicated the essential character of the modest linear bungalow, such as it appeared in the 1886 *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*. Hunter's Hill was described in that grand three-volume work as 'less imposing' than suburbs nearer the city like Elizabeth Bay with its 'magnificent mansions, castellated, turreted, mimic citadels of peace'; yet Hunter's Hill was

deemed exceedingly 'picturesque', and the scene chosen to illustrate it focused upon a simple cottage on the banks of the Lane Cove River – the **Villa Floridiana**.

Today, its stone outbuildings have not survived, but remarkably the wooden cottage still stands in its setting, bearing witness to the waterfront development around Sydney Harbour in the mid-nineteenth century. Through its associations with the Jouberts, the D'Apices, and the Baglins, it also bears witness, in special ways, to the history of Hunter's Hill.

Dr. BEVERLEY SHERRY
(Author of **Hunter's Hill: Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb**)

HUNTER'S HILL REMEMBERED

ROBERT DAVID FITZGERALD (1864-1950)

These previously unpublished reminiscences were assembled in the mid 1940s. Robert David FitzGerald was the son of Robert David FitzGerald II, the Deputy Surveyor General and noted botanist. He was the father of Robert D. FitzGerald IV, A.M., O.B.E., poet and Chief Surveyor with the Commonwealth Survey Office.

Adraville or Croissy, of which he writes, was demolished in 1968. It is illustrated on page 78 of the recent Sherry/Baglin book on Hunter's Hill.

Our house at Balmain was sold, and in the year 1871 I was taken to see the new home at Hunter's Hill. Being then only seven years of age it was a great adventure.

At King Street Wharf we boarded the good steamer **Adelaide**; Captain Harry Mance, and incidents of the voyage are still quite clear. I remember being told that the foam and boil-up churned by the paddle wheels, was ginger beer, but not good for little boys to drink. A Sentry in a red coat, musket on shoulder passing to and fro in front of a shore sentry-box on **Biloela** (Cockatoo Island), is a feature of that trip. Then Hunter's Hill and the new home. We called it **Adraville** after my father's old home at Tralee, Ireland.

To us children (six – three of each kind) a more delightful spot could not have been conceived, and as time went on, with a wonderful garden, a boat, two tennis courts, fishing, shooting (flying foxes and gill birds) and Hunter's Hill itself mostly virgin bush, a field for botanical and bird lore and a true sport in our father, could more be said

"Adraville" subsequently called **Croissy** by Mons. Biard-d'Aunet the French Consul is one of the most interesting buildings on the Parramatta River. It has been the home of a prominent member of the Church of England, Canon Bellingham; my father (then Deputy Surveyor General N.S.W.); the French Consul Mons. Biard-d'Aunet; and subsequently another clergyman Revd. Mr. Bennett; and finally sold, subdivided, and built upon, its beauty is rent into pieces.

The western boundary wall (along Ferry St.) terminates at the edge of a sandstone cliff, almost overhanging the Parramatta River. The top of this cliff is level bare sandstone about 50 feet above high water mark, a splendid look out point for both up and down the River. We called it **The Fort** – "The Grand Stand". The wrought iron railing still exists. In the early 1860s regattas were held at Hunter's Hill. Rowing events started up Tarban Creek, ending about opposite the **Grand Stand**. There were two wharves at the foot of the cliff with a small area between. The up-river wharf was in general use for the river service, the other used for coaling purposes. Vessels from Newcastle discharged at this wharf. The coal was lifted in baskets, by the vessels' winch, and emptied into a truck operating by hand-push, or more frequently carried on a sailor's back along a high timber trestle extending some distance parallel to **The Fort**.

The coal was then tipped into a heap at the base of the cliff, and used as required by the steamers – The S.S. Emu and S.S. Pelican always coaled at about 9.30 a.m. on the 9 a.m. run from King St., Sydney.

Large stocks of coal were frequently delivered, piling into a very high heap. It was a special feat on the part of us children when we could keep the pot boiling by jumping from the cliff below the walling onto the coal, slide down with the coal, and return up the road for another slide. Needless to say we didn't do it often. It sometimes ended painfully when caught at it – a stern reality.

In 1848 a Frenchman, Leonardo Etienne Bordier possessed, and on 17th April 1855, Bordier sold to Didier Numa Joubert Lots 2 and 1 for £2,000.

In the early days of the Colony difficulty had been experienced by carpenters in dealing with the native hardwoods, and four wooden houses were imported from Hamburg, and erected at Hunter's Hill. They came out in sections or pieces, numbered as in a picture puzzle, and put together by a special party of Carpenters from Germany under an agreement with Leonardo Etienne Bordier, dated 28th July, 1854.

(Continued on page 4)

They builded well, three of the houses are alive and healthy. The fourth was pulled down by Gerald Halligan to enable a larger house to be erected.

Under date 3rd Dec. 1857, D.N. Joubert sold Lot 1 (**Adraville**) to Francis Bellingham. "2 acres more or less ..." with the cottage and buildings erected thereon, for the sum of £1,000. C.E. Jeanneret occupied the house on Lot 2 (now **The Hut**), and Mr. Emmott and Mr. Maeder were the first occupants of 3 and 4.

The famous Paris Industrial Exhibition of 1854 was held prior to the sending the houses to N.S.W., and our old house was actually erected in the grounds of that Exhibition, "as a sample house for supply to the Colonies, where no suitable timber was available ...".* Ironbark turned the edges of the tools, and the old squared wrought iron nails were difficult to manipulate in the hardwood. The timbers in the framework are pine 2" thick, tongued and grooved. A slate roof extends in one span over the whole house, as does the upper room or attic, with only two very small hinged windows on each side of roof – clearly designed to withstand a winter storm of snow. This attic was used by us merely as a lumber room reached by a steep stairway. White ants raided the building despite arsenical treatment, and other even less successful reputed preventatives. Little harm was done to the timbers; the ants merely ate out the middle of the 2" wood, converting them into hollow walls.

Repairs were being effected in 1885, and the kindly carpenter told my unsuspecting father, "that the timbers in the flooring of the attic were ant infected, dangerously destroyed, and should be at once removed, and replaced by new timber, adding that some was sound, and being of a thickness needed by him for a certain job, he (Kindly Soul) would lay the new flooring (to be provided by my father,) for a small sum, plus all sound timber in the old flooring. He would also remove all debris. He did, all of it. Some years later another carpenter who had been assisting, told me the timber was sound English Oak of very considerable value.

However even white ants can be a reason for amusement. A small outer room was occasionally used when a friend or a stranger was "within the gates". It was a summer's evening, and a dance at the Town Hall. A stranger had been invited thereto. White ants have an abominable habit of swarming in the early warm summer nights; ours did anyway, and in the small room aforesaid – Our friend was also in that room, changing raiment for the Ball. Being, as ever, a true sport, he said never a word. Alas! during the dance the ants trickled through his clothes like treacle through a sieve. Brushing several off his face and shirt front, as they emerged from his clothing, he gave to his partner a graphic description – as he was well able to do – of his evening's special experience.

The house is built upon a series of sandstone columns some six feet in height at the front and levelling to the ground at the rear – a splendid ghost haunt and hiding ground. Fear of an earthly character entered the family somewhat fully when an escaper from the Gladesville Lunatic Asylum hid there for half a day, and would not respond to the very careful requests of a thoroughly scared local "Bobby" to "Come along oot now wid yer". The Asylum Authorities were scouring the country, but no telephones then, and we had to row our boat up Tarban Creek to let them know.

*Beverley Sherry suggests that there may be some confusion here, as the "famous Paris Industrial Exhibition" – the Exposition Universelle – was held in 1855, after the Hunter's Hill prefabs had arrived in Australia. She suggests that when Bordier was in Hamburg in 1854, the design of the bungalows could have been ready for display at the Exhibition and a "sample house for supply to the Colonies", identical to the FitzGerald's house, could well have been erected in the Exhibition grounds in 1855.

Robert FitzGerald's memoir was kindly made available by Marjorie FitzGerald. It will be continued in the next Journal.

A few copies of the Baglin/Sherry book **Hunter's Hill : Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb** are still available to financial Trust Members at the special price of \$39.95.

Inquiries Patti Mackenzie, 816 2728.

The Committee of the Hunter's Hill Trust unanimously resolved to support Hunter's Hill Council's "Villa Floridiana" Appeal with a donation of \$1,000 from Trust funds. The cheque was presented to the Mayor, Ald. Ross Williams, by Trust Treasurer, Patti Mackenzie.

NO. 36 FARNELL STREET: A "BATTLER" BUNGALOW OF THE 1920s

At the October 1989 Meeting of Hunter's Hill Council, a report was tabled from the Heritage Advisor, Penelope Pike, regarding No. 36 FARNELL STREET, Boronia Park.

Ms Pike's account highlighted those characteristics of the house which made it typical of its period, and also the features which made it unique.

The house was built c1915, and is one of the earliest houses in Boronia Park. Until its auction on October 9th, it had been occupied by the same family since it was first built.

Shipwright's House

It appears that the rear kitchen was built first; to which was then added a typical four-roomed timber cottage. This is probably an "off-the-peg" Hudson House – an identical one has been sighted in Burwood. Asbestos tiling originally covered the roof, and is now stacked in the back yard.

Internally the house appears to have been finished by the owner, and is largely intact.

The first owner was a shipwright, and some of the furniture (which was to be sold with the house) was made by him. Today the house is interesting for the evidence it provides of the use and adaption of the house by the original owner/handyman to suit his needs. He kept it up to date where necessary, altering roof materials and changing verandah posts (the originals are now part of the side fence).

The internal walls are of asbestos cement sheeting covered with a prepared finish applied in the factory of tone on tone marbling. It is most commonly remembered today in service rooms – bathrooms, laundries, but here it is used in the major rooms.

Internally, therefore, the house provides an intact example of an "ordinary" Sydney cottage of 1920s, and provides an interesting contrast with today's fashion and practices. Its character, and its fittings are such that it could not be expected that they would be retained by new owners.

Greyhound Sheds and Chook House

The backyard is also most important. It provides evidence of the owner's interests – sheds for greyhounds, for storage of building material, and a chook yard. In its very ordinariness No. 36 Farnell Street indicates the use and value of backyards to supplement the income of the average "battler" Australian family in the first 30-40 years of this century. It stands in marked contrast to the use of the suburban back garden today – lawns, barbecue, swimming pool.

Ms Pike advised that the Historic Houses Trust had made a full photographic record of the house and backyard, and that the National Maritime museum had made a record of the artifacts relevant to its interests. She recommended that an oral history of the house and life in the early days of Boronia Park be recorded with surviving family members, and that measured drawings of the house and its backyard structures be made to complete the record.

PULPIT POINT MARINA

The Hunter's Hill Trust, together with CRUSHH, continue to campaign against the construction of a 132 berth marina in Fern Bay, beside the Pulpit Point development. Both groups consider the marina's size excessive, and describe it as turning a large area of the municipality's harbour-side into a floating car park.

VIENNA EXHIBITIONS

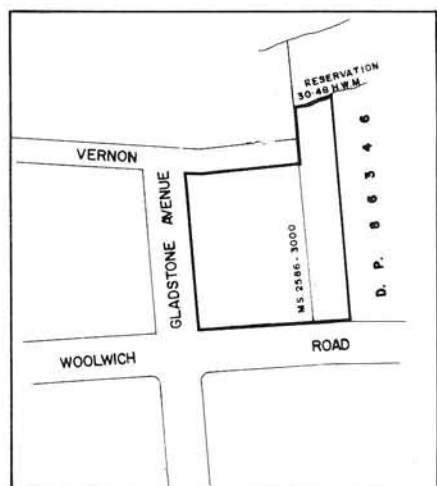
In December, the **Vienna** Committee and the Hunter's Hill Trust arranged for Comrealty to present an exhibition of their plans to develop the Pulpit Point site.

In January/February an exhibition was mounted to examine the issues surrounding the threatened demolition of **Villa Floridiana**.

Changing exhibitions will continue to focus on architectural, historical and environmental issues that affect the community.

Become a **FRIEND OF VIENNA** for only \$5 per year, and enjoy free admission to **Vienna** and its changing exhibitions.

WOOLWICH SCHOOL SITE TARGETED FOR REZONING



The N.S.W. Department of Education intends selling a number of school sites, especially on the North Shore, to fund building programmes elsewhere. These include the sites of Castlecrag, Woollahra and Woolwich primary schools. The State Government proposes to allow redevelopment of these properties for medium density housing (including town houses, villas and cluster houses).

The Hunter's Hill Trust prepared a submission for the State Department of Planning, deploring the proposal to permit such a concentrated development of the Woolwich site. The submission recalled Dr. Beverley Sherry's introduction to her recent book **Hunter's Hill Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb**:

In Australia a suburban ideal emerged in the nineteenth century which was connected with the Australian dream of a house of one's own set in its own grounds.

The Sydney suburb of Hunter's Hill may lay claim to be our oldest surviving example.

The submission called for any development to respect the site's location in the heart of Australia's oldest garden

suburb, with any rezoning being for detached residential buildings. The Trust's concern about this sizeable plot being alienated from the suburbs's overall garden-suburb pattern reflected the views of Mr. Michael Rolfe, Consultant Townplanner to Hunter's Hill Council and Chairman of the Sydney Harbour Foreshores Committee. Speaking in Hunter's Hill Town Hall at a public meeting convened by Hunter's Hill Council, he warned that with overly concentrated urban development, "gardens and landscapes will be lost".

The Trust also called for the preservation of the Woolwich Public School building. It was built in 1892, and remains in very good condition.

The existing right-of-way from Gladstone Avenue to the waterfront reserve would no doubt need to be relocated in the event of any development of the site. (This reserve, facing the Lane Cove River, is owned by the Lands Department.) The Trust insists that some right-of-way (wherever relocated) be retained. Otherwise we would be left with a reserve surrounded by houses, which could only be reached by the public by boat.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Trust's Annual General Meeting will be held on

WEDNESDAY, 2 MAY at 7.45 p.m.

Location: VILLA MARIA HALL

Guest Speaker: Dr. BEVERLEY SHERRY
(author of "Hunter's Hill :
Australia's Oldest Garden Suburb")

will give an illustrated talk on

"AUSTRALIA'S HIDDEN WORLD OF
STAINED GLASS".

TRUST MEMBERSHIP 1990-91

MEMBERSHIP fees are due on March 1 each year. Types of membership:-

Single \$10.00; Family \$15.00;
Pensioner \$2.00; Student \$2.00;
Individual and Institutional Life Member \$100.00.

Please post to Hunter's Hill Trust, Box 85,
Hunter's Hill, 2110.

