

A History Of Rouse Hill, Box Hill and Nelson

Laurie Hession 1977

A large parcel of land in this area, namely Portion 124 of 1,000 acres and known as the *Copenhagen Estate* was granted by Governor King to William Bligh, later Governor Bligh, by Crown Grant on 10th August, 1806. This large area stretched north-westwards from Second Ponds Creek, Rouse Hill, for almost 1½ miles, bounded on the south-west by Windsor Road, running to a depth of about 1 ⅓ miles, taking in some of the Rouse Hill area, practically all of Box Hill and part of the Nelson district. (see Nelson Parish map).

The early history of Rouse Hill and Box Hill is bound up with that of two families, the Rouses and the Terrys. Richard Rouse arriving here in the Colony in 1801, was appointed Director of Government buildings in Parramatta. Rouse Hill was formerly known as Vinegar Hill, but this name had tragic associations after the “Battle of Vinegar Hill” the convict uprising of 1804, and so upon the suggestion of Governor Macquarie, Richard Rouse renamed his property Rouse Hill in 1816. Rouse House was built by Richard Rouse, using convict labour, the building was commenced in 1813 and completed in 1820, the stone being quarried at Parramatta. Rouse was granted 1,500 acres of land on which a few sheep and cattle grazed, very little of this land being cleared for production. He also held land for grazing beyond the Blue Mountains.

Samuel Terry arrived here, as a convict in 1801, and became the richest man in New South Wales, dying in 1838. He acquired much of the *Copenhagen Estate* (mentioned earlier) another of his many properties was an area of 1,700 acres at Box Hill, granted in 1816 to Robert Fitz and conveyed to Samuel Terry in 1819, when Fitz was in financial difficulties, thus Terry became a neighbour of the Rouses, Richard Rouse having supervised Sam’s labours as a convict.

Samuel’s son, John, married Eleanor Rouse, one of Richard’s daughters in 1831. They lived in the homestead at Box Hill, (now McCall Garden Colony), John being accidentally killed in 1842, falling from his horse. He was aged 35 years. The Box Hill Estate passed on to Samuel Henry Terry, one of John’s sons.

Samuel Terry’s foreman was Charles Hynds, an English yeoman and forebear of the Hynds’ family in the area. He lived on the Estate for about 50 years dying at the ripe old age of 94 years. It was during this time that wheat was grown in the Box Hill area, the crop one year being worth one thousand pounds (\$2,000).

Samuel Henry Terry became a private member of the Legislative Assembly in 1859 at 26 years of age and later in life, until his death in 1887, was a Member of the Legislative Council. From S.H. Terry the Estate passed on to his son George A. Terry, who married Nina Rouse at Christ Church of England, Rouse Hill, in 1895, and lived in the Box Hill homestead.

Annie Hynds was nurse for the family of George and Nina Terry, two boys of this family, Roderick and Gerald, are still living on the Rouse property at Rouse Hill.

George Terry was Master of the Sydney Hunt Club and also Master of the hounds. Hunts were held on the Box Hill and neighbouring properties, a trail being laid by a horseman dragging a rag soaked in aniseed, hounds followed this scent, followed by the huntsmen. The Whip was Frank Mason, whose job was to control the hounds. Frank was a one-armed man having lost his left arm at the shoulder, the result of a shooting accident while duck-shooting at Broadwater. He would hold the reins with his teeth while he took another hold with his one hand. The huntsmen would jump their horses over the three rail fences from one property to another, having little respect for growing crops at times. Horse races were also held on a Racecourse on the flat paddock of Box Hill homestead, lying between Windsor Road and Terry Road.

George Terry ran sheep on the Box Hill property, having as many as 4,000 head and 100 bales of wool in the shed. Terry Road was in these days a private entrance, known as Terry's Drive, with a white gate at the entrance not far from Windsor Road and terminating at the homestead. Terry Road was constructed through to Old Pitt Town Road when the Estate was subdivided into about 170 blocks and offered for sale in 1919. The homestead property of 211 acres was sold later.

Old Pitt Town Road, as the name implies, is believed to be the original road through to Pitt Town. Before coming to Boundary Road, Old Pitt Town Road ran through property owned by S.H. Terry, this property passing from Terry to Rumery then later Bill Andrews. Where Old Pitt Town Road crossed Boundary Rd. there was a gate, known locally as "The Blue Gate". This apparently was to stop stock straying as Old Pitt Town Road was not fenced at this time during the land ownership of Terrys and Rumerys, this property was part of the 1,700 acres Samuel Terry acquired from Robert Fitz. 1,100 acres was sold by George Terry to James Ouvrier who married Maria Hynds. Ouvrier cut timber on this property, carting it with a team of horses and drays to a mill at Riverstone. This property has been a large dairy farm for some decades now, Mr Robert Hurrell being the owner for many years. The present owner is Mr Scheinberg, the property being known as *Red Gables*, some blocks at the present time being subdivided and sold along the frontage to Old Pitt Town Road.

When the Terry homestead (Box Hill House) and property was sold it was bought by a Mr Neville, other owners were Mr Singer and Mr Bingham. In 1956, the homestead with 40 acres of land was donated to the Sub-Normal Children's Welfare Association by the then owner, Mr W.V. McCall, the property being named "The McCall Garden Colony".

Other names associated with the early times of Box Hill include those of James Hynds snr., who lived on Hynds Road opposite Robbins Road, Bob Hynds and sisters lived at the corner of Windsor Road and Nelson Road (Rouse Hill side) - the Sargeant family living where Mr and Mrs Pederson now live,

some forty to fifty years ago Mr and Mrs Foley were here, an old stone building is on this property but I haven't found out its origin - Jim Robbins living on the corner of Nelson Road and Robbins Road had an orange orchard on the property where Vincent Hynds now lives. Jim lived with his sister Lucy and together they reared their three nieces Emily, Lucy and Caroline Roberts, their parents dying and leaving these three children orphans. Emily married Frank Mason, Lucy never married living alone in Jim Robbins' house, with Caroline marrying James Hynds Jnr. Another orchard growing apples, pears and plums on the northern side of the junction of Nelson Road and Edward Road was owned by brothers, Peter and George Berry.

Entertainment in these days consisted of house parties. For instance, one such party an account of which is in the *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* of 26th May, 1900, mentions a gathering of forty friends at the home of Mr & Mrs Pat Hession, Master John Hession of the 3rd Regiment and Master John Robbins supplying the music. I believe a dance was held on the decking of Murphy's Bridge on Annangrove Road to celebrate the opening of the bridge.

Rouse Hill used to have its own Police Station, situated on Windsor Road between Annangrove Road and Second Ponds Creek. In 1892, Mr E. Grace was transferred from Rouse Hill to be the first policeman at Riverstone. Rouse Hill was established before the advent of Riverstone township.

During the first World War of 1914-1918 the women of the district sewed and knitted articles of clothing to be sent to Australia's Forces overseas, meeting at Rouse House. Robert Smith's son, Austin, of Nelson and Alfred, son of James Ouvrier, answered their country's call to arms. Alfred Ouvrier being killed in action.

During the second World War of 1939-1945, Euchre parties were held on a regular basis, in private homes, to raise funds to buy comforts for the troops.

After Box Hill was sub-divided and sold some names associated with the area are Roderick Terry, living for a while on the late Bob Hynds' property, later setting up business as a general carrier, having nine or ten motor-lorries on the road, public weighbridge, sawmill and mechanical repairs, on the hill at the corner of Windsor Road and Terry Road - Mr Robertson ran sheep on the flat bounded by Nelson Road, Robbins Road and Hynds Road - Mrs Masters and Bob Munro on Windsor Road - Jack Dean of Alan Street. Along Terry Road, was Harold Cox coming here in 1928, Thomas Lackey and Paddy O'Brien (before 1928), Denmeade, McNamara, Scotty McLinden, George Hurst, Wilson, Scully, Harriett, Gardner, Aksamentoff, Stepanoff. Roy Turnbull a well-known name in the area moved in later. Along Old Pitt Town Road there was George Ritchie, Reid, George Higgins, Butson, Kamaralli, Owie, (later Leonar Holmes had Owie's place) Thorpe and Bert Hughes. Charles Stocker and Christopher Brown moved on to Old Pitt Town Road later. In George Street there was Sid Tull and Carr-Wynne. Michael Hanrahan lived on Mason Rd, with Sid Dege and Frank Picone coming

later. Along Hynds Road there was Miss Murray, Mrs Staunton, Herb. Newham, Gardner and Lawrence. Three of these people, Aksamentoff, Kamaralli and Owie had been members of the Russian Cossack Choir. Mr Owie was also the local egg carrier for some time. Many of these people set up poultry farms, others rearing calves, or keeping pigs.

During the early 1930's a small glider club operated off the hill where Mrs Dege now lives. The gliders were kept in a galvanised iron shed at the bottom of the hill, pulled into position for launching by Mr Butson with a horse, and launched into the air pulled by a car. Further along this hill in the vicinity of where Mr Cole is now living, motor-bike hill climbs were also conducted about this time. During all these times, just about everyone knew everyone in the district, far different from to-day when there are more people moving into the area following further subdivisions into five acre lots.

Adjoining Box Hill is Nelson, so named in honour of Lord Nelson the famous British Admiral of around 1800. In this area the Mason and Hession families are to Nelson as the Rouses and Terrys are to Rouse Hill and Box Hill. These two families also intermarrying. Other families of this era were that of Robert Smith and William Hynds. Robert Smith married Cecelia Hession living on Blind Road where Noel Crawford now resides. Robert's brother Daniel married Margaret Hession, they lived at Plumpton, this was another instance of two brothers marrying two sisters. William Hynds also lived on Blind Road on the property Miss Cleary sold a few years ago, their old home being burnt down in the bushfire of January, 1939. Uncle Bill, as he was affectionately known, built the house still standing on this property, Portion 155, for his nephew James Hynds Jnr.

William Mason arrived in Australia with the first load of Irish convicts in 1793, on the boat *Boddington*. He was convicted in County Armagh receiving a seven year sentence. He had a property at North Rocks, apparently this was an early name for the rocky area around Maraylya and Nelson. He had two sons William and Samuel. Samuel married Harriett Norris and it is this family that the Masons are descended from. Samuel took possession of an 80 acre block at Nelson on 31st March, 1831, the property to be known as Iron Bark Park. He was a stonemason and had a small quarry on this property. The pillars in front of the altar in the Catholic church, Windsor, being built from stone quarried here. Samuel and Harriett had fourteen children - Samuel, who operated a sawmill at Riverstone, married Sarah Hession, were parents of the Mason family of Marsden Park; - John married Susan Hession, parents of the Nelson Masons, these two couples having a double wedding ceremony on the 17th June, 1856; - Maria married Thomas Hession, my grandparents - thus three Masons married three Hessions; - Harriett and Emma married brothers James and William Hynds; - another son James married Emily Robbins, he operated a sawmill at Riverstone for a time, then moved to Mulgrave, getting killed there in a sawmill accident, being only 38 years old, leaving his wife with nine children, ranging in age from seven weeks to under 17 years.

Another two daughters Annie and Mary never married and living on their father's property, ran a dairy selling butter in Windsor; the remaining daughter Elizabeth married John Cusack.

The Mason family acquired just over 340 acres of land in Nelson, now it has all been resold, no member of the Mason family residing here now.

Thomas Hession and his wife Bridget, were married in Ireland, lived in the Parish of Tuam, County Galway, arriving here in 1841 as assisted migrants, and, I believe, they lived at Pitt Town before coming to Nelson in 1856, when Thomas was granted by purchase, Portion 154, 50 acres for fifty pounds. One pound (now two dollars) per acre seems to have been the general price for land at this time.

The original home of timber-slab walls with bark ceilings is still standing, the original roof I imagine would have been shingles, the present roof being galvanised corrugated iron. The homes of four generations of Hessions are standing almost side by side on this property. Thomas and Bridget had ten children, three of these, Patrick, Michael and my grandfather Thomas, were carriers over the mountains, driving to Bathurst long before a railway was thought of. "Mick" Hession had the champion scratch-puller in those days, a horse named Billy. Billy was recognised as being these best horse that ever crossed the mountains and was never beaten. Scratch pulling was a contest of brute strength between two horses linked back to back, and I understand was declared illegal early this century. Harry Rumery, Robert Smith and Sam Mason II, were mountain carriers also. Most carriers settled in the Hawkesbury district after the railway was built to Raglan, near Bathurst. Harry Rumery moved to Bourke.

Down through the years, members of the Hession family acquired 338 acres of land in Nelson, including Samuel Mason's original grant, 112 acres being still retained to-day by four of their descendants, including the original grant of 50 acres.

A few years ago Baulkham Hills Shire Council constructed a net ball court and play area off Alan Street, Box Hill. It is known as the Turnbull Reserve, so named in recognition of the work Mr and Mrs Roy Turnbull did for the district through the Rouse Hill Public School Parents' and Citizens' Association and the Box Hill and Nelson Progress Association.

Sources:

Compiled from personal knowledge and from information provided by my mother - Mrs. M.A. Hession, Mr. Edwin (Ted) Terry, Mr. Ronald F. Mason and Mr. Harold Cox.