

History of our suburbs: Green Valley

The Green Valley suburb originally covered a much greater area than it does today. In 1961, before the development of the Housing Commission Green Valley settlement it appears to have covered an area which included the Green Valley District as well as the present Green Valley suburb.

The present Green Valley is on land originally granted to Peter Miller, C.A. Scrivener, James Bull and Bridget Peters. Peter Miller was brought to Australia from Limerick, Ireland, by his parents when he was a baby. His father, Amos Miller is credited with having grown the first crops of wheat at Carnes Hill sometime about 1840. Amos Miller later moved to Cawdor, near Camden where he died on 30 May 1895, aged 82. His wife Joanna had died 20 years before at the age of 58. There were eleven children of the marriage. Two died in infancy and there were three boys, including Peter and six girls, all who grew to adulthood.

As a young man in his early twenties, Peter left Cawdor to look for work and obtained a job on a farm at Hoxton Park, where, after a time his employer died. Peter married his late employer's widow. It is not certain whether Peter eventually inherited the property. Peter and his wife (possibly Janet) had one child, George. After the death of his first wife, Peter married Mary Dickie of *Bernera* and they had 5 sons and 5 daughters, all of whom were born at *Poplar Hall* their home on the property later known as *Miller's Flat*.

About 1880 Peter Miller sold a portion of his property, including *Poplar Hall* to a syndicate led by Varney Parkes, the architect of *Rosebank* which still remains, in Speed Street, Liverpool today. Peter built a new home *Mountain View* on a hill on the remainder of his estate which appears to have included a number of separate blocks of land. He and his sons worked the property as an orchard, vineyard and dairy farm. James Bull Snr arrived in the Colony in January 1800 with his wife Ann and infant daughter Jane. He was serving as part of the company guarding political prisoners being brought out from Ireland. In 1807 he was discharged from the army and concentrated on his business interests, including the selling of beer, wine and spirits, possibly at an inn in Clarence Street Sydney. He also owned land in the Liverpool area.

He and Ann had eleven children, including James who was born on 31 December 1815 and married Maria Elizabeth Smith at St Luke's Liverpool in 1837. As James Snr died in 1823 it would appear that it was this James who owned the land at Green Valley.

Charles Ambrose Scrivener was born in 1801 in England and migrated to the colony after his marriage to Jane Passfield at the age of 21. Their first child was born on the voyage out to Australia. Charles was apparently brought out under licence by the Church of England to be schoolmaster at the church school on the corner of Moore and Bigge Streets.

His name appears in the directories of the fifties as a storekeeper. He was also an auctioneer, became a Justice of the Peace and later became Returning Officer for Central Cumberland. He was an Alderman on the Liverpool Council for many years, serving as Mayor seven times. It was during one of his terms as Mayor that he signed the application form for a school to be built at Green Valley where he owned land. Green Valley School was established in 1882 under slightly unusual conditions. The original request had been for a school named Summer Hill Public School but this was denied as there was already a Summer Hill school in the Hunter Valley. So the name suggested and accepted by the Department was Green Valley.

Now that the school had a name, site, plans and a list of proposed pupils, things were finally getting under way. However finance was not available for such 'grandiose' plans as brick schoolrooms with teachers' residence so these were deferred.

In May, the architect was instructed to procure a tent to meet temporarily the educational needs of the district. It could perhaps be better described as a canvas building rather than a tent. The floor was of tongue-and-grooved boards with a light timber framework to support the canvas. It was actually a portable 'dismountable' building (which no doubt some people found out during strong winds).

Other drawbacks included the unbearable heat in summer, the freezing cold on frosty winter days and unspeakable noise during heavy rain or storms. Despite its drawbacks, the tent was raised at a cost of twenty-two pounds eleven shillings and sixpence – a good deal less than the six hundred pounds for a brick schoolroom. It was ready for occupation at the end of August, 1882. (Haggart, Don, Sanderson, Sue and Fletcher, James. *Green Valley Public School 1882-1982: a history*. Heckenberg Curriculum Centre, 1982, p. 5).

The replacement school was still a temporary solution, designed by the Department's architect. It was a semi-portable building with a distinctive curved iron roof which earned it the nickname of 'beehive'. Slightly larger than the tent, it was 20' x 16' with a verandah along one side with a combined hat room and washroom at one end. The walls were unlined tongue-and-grooved weatherboards and exposed framing timbers inside. Not really much improvement on the tent. (Haggart, Sanderson and Fletcher, 1982, p.7)

Finding the right teacher was not so easy either. The first teacher, who had fourteen children enrolled by the end of the first week and thirty by the end of the year, was Mr Thomas Lane, a bachelor who had no teacher training. He did not remain long and after taking time off because of illness resigned in 1884.

Green Valley as a suburb has been largely a small farming area until quite recently. One family, the Winnalls after whom Winnall Reserve was named, may be typical of many early settlers. Miriam and Alexander Winnall travelled with their four children for three days in a horse and sulky to their seven acres in Rundle Road. Shortly after their arrival the horse died. Their first home was a bag and bark humpy with a dirt floor. Water had to be fetched from Green Valley Creek, a journey of about 800 metres each way. After a number of years this home was replaced with a whitewashed cement and canvas dwelling with corn bags on the floor - an improvement from the dirt floor. Mrs Winnall would look after the house, the increasing family (eventually the Winnalls had nine children) and her market garden, from which she was able to grow enough to sell the excess at Hoxton Park and Bonnyrigg. At first she would have to walk there until she made enough money to purchase a horse and cart. In 1936 the government built the family one of the first Unemployed Homes houses in the district, which Alexander and Miriam paid off at a few shillings a week. The Winnall's children, grandchildren and great grand children all attended the Green Valley School (article by Evelyn Winnall).

In the 1960s the Green Valley Housing Estate, comprising the suburbs Ashcroft, Busby, Cartwright, Heckenberg, Miller and Sadleir was carved out of the Green Valley area. This caused problems for the people of the Green Valley suburb who considered that they should not be affected by what happened in an area quite separate from theirs. Unfortunately the Green Valley Housing settlement did experience a number of problems in the early days and stating that one lived at Green Valley would immediately conjure up a picture of the Green Valley district rather than the suburb. People living there tended to say they lived in 'Old Green Valley'. For many years the individual suburbs of Green Valley have had their own names, allowing the Green Valley suburb to develop an identity of its own.

However in 1986 the boundary between Hoxton Park and Green Valley was changed to allow the suburb of Hinchinbrook to be formed. An attempt to enlarge Hinchinbrook in 1993 met with strong protest from the people of Green Valley. One resident in a letter to the paper (*Champion* 10 November 1993) said "Hands off our Green Valley - the greedy developers will soon be off somewhere else, leaving our historic suburb diminished forever". This appears to be the general opinion of the people of the area who did win out in this case and Green Valley has not been reduced.

In recent years Green Valley has been developed into a residential area with new homes being built. Now people tend to say that they live in "New Green Valley" but these people don't know the history of the area. Green Valley now has a population of 7870 with approximately half the population being born in Australia, while 6,831 are Australian citizens (1996 census figures).