



Altona Laverton Historical Society Inc.

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The Story Behind our Street Names

(Graeme Reilly)



Paris might have the Champs Elysees, London - Downing Street and New York Wall Street but Altona has streets and roads that are packed full of history.

The stories behind some of Hobsons Bay's oldest street names have been acknowledged through the installation of heritage street signs. There are currently seven streets in Altona receiving heritage treatment and two in Altona Meadows and three in Laverton.

However, there are many more streets within these three suburbs, as well as Seaholme and Altona North, which provides a link to the history of our area, as well as the early colonisation of Melbourne.

The first surprising thing we discovered is that there's an actual word for the name given to a street and that is 'odonym' (*From Ancient Greek*). They're also fascinating markers that, "Encode the culture and geography of our area," reflecting local landmarks, people, families, events, history, birds and flora.

While, in the main, street names remain a local government responsibility, many are chosen by landowners or developers. The first subdivision in Altona, surveyed by Nathaniel Munro in 1888 for the Altona Bay Estate Company Limited, provided the names of a large number of the original streets in subdivision grid at that time.

To commemorate the anniversary of the first sub-division land sales 130 years ago, next year, we are planning to publish the story behind the naming of many of these original streets as well as others throughout Altona, Laverton and surrounding suburbs. In 1988, the Altona and Laverton Freehold and Investment Co. Limited subdivided Langhorne's property into the Laverton Homestead Estate, also known as the Altona and Laverton Bay Estates consisting of about 2,720 acres.

In July 1988 six men formed the Altona Bay Estate Co. Limited with £30,000 capital divided into six equal shares and purchased the land from the Altona and Laverton Freehold and Investment Co. These men were John Blyth, David Munro, James Seves Hosie, Henry Upton Alcock, William Huxtable Peryman and Ross Kenneth Macartney. Of the six men, David Munro was the only member that was also a member of the Altona and Laverton Freehold and Investment Co., the purchase price was £180,000.

Look out for updates on our website page: <https://alhs.com.au/local-history/streets/>

Pioneers of Altona

The Miller Family.

Millers Road Brooklyn is named after Thomas Miller, who arrived from Durham to go to the Goldfields, he later became a carrier and transported goods and supplies to the miners.

About 1867 he purchased a farm at the road junction with Geelong Road ,and grew hay for the Melbourne market.

In 1876,Wyndham Council began construction of the road section within its territory at the junction.



Thomas Miller started the “Half Moon Inn” at the junction which was used by migrants who arrived at Williamstown and were heading for the goldfields, pictured above is the original building,Mrs. Miller is one of the ladies standing under the verandah section.

The verandah was later removed and the building became a post office for about 42 years.



Family member Stan Miller constructed a brick house on the site for his family the house later made way for a Milk Bar, and Caravan park, the land was sold in 2010, and the Caravan park removed, the site now awaits redevelopment.



The photo, left above shows Stan Miller and family and the photo on the right, the family residence .

The photo below taken from a silo looking west in 1941 shows the residence and farm site.
(Photos courtesy of the Miller Family)



BUILDING ALTONA

Vera Wells was a well known local identity who often wrote articles on the history of Altona for our community newspapers. The following is an excerpt from one of her contributions that was published in the Star-Advertiser on 16 January 1976, reflecting on how homes were built in the 1920s in Altona.

“In Altona there are still some of the single-fronted houses built by our first local builder, Mr F. Leay, in 1923, also some of the larger houses with bay windows and pillared verandahs put up by Mr Stuber, another local builder of those early days.

“However, the early residents mainly built their own dwellings, and I don’t know if there were any building regulations here in the early twenties. If there were, no one seemed to pay much attention to them.

“I can almost see them as I think of some of the material that was used.

“Some of the most popular lining was hessian bags stitched tightly, newspaper pasted on that, then given a coating of kalsomine¹. It gave the same appearance as plastered wall. Our old home had it for many years.

“One old house near ours had heavy bags on the walls from halfway to the top. This was covered with a heavy lime mixture to make it waterproof.

“Kerosene was widely used in those days, and the square four-gallon tins were plentiful. Tin was the wall in many houses. I remember one large house built of these tins and a hessian and paper lining and a malthoid² roof; it caught fire one windy night. A terrifying sight — flames leaping high and burning pieces of hessian and paper flying through the air.

“With all the modern easy materials now available you never see people building their own homes. I wonder what the old timers would have done with it — a darned good job, I bet.”



1. Kalsomine: low-cost type of paint made from slaked lime

2. Malthoid: felt material impregnated with bitumen used for waterproofing flat roofs



THE STUBER FAMILY

Reproduction of an article published in the Altona Star 28 April 1971. The writer interviewed Albert Karl Daniel Stuber [1904-1981]

Albert August Ferdinand Stuber [1877-1946] came to Australia from Germany in 1901 and moved to Altona with his family in 1915.

When the first world war started, things became hard for him because there was much bitterness against any Germans at the time.

He could find no employment so he took up fishing for a living.

His son, Albert Karl Daniel Stuber of Civic Parade, Seaholme, married Ivy Neale when she was 18. The couple were the first residents of Seaholme.

Albert junior remembers the dramatic night when he was netting with his father and brother Rudolph between the Altona and Magazine Piers.



A group of horsemen came galloping from all directions. It was about midnight. Some of them rode into the sea, completely surrounding the boat and net.

They were members of the Australian Light Horse stationed at the powder magazine.

SCARE

The raid was made because someone had reported that a rendezvous was about to take place with a German submarine which was landing bombs. The raiding party only found a few schnappers and these were taken as evidence. After Albert Stuber senior paid a visit to the Victoria Barracks, he was never bothered again.

Later a large military camp was established at the Altona racecourse. There were about 10,000 lads camped in Altona and many buildings were hastily built for them.

The whole of Altona was lit up by benzine arc-lights and everyone living in the area had to have a pass. Nobody was allowed to move around after 7pm.

NO TRANSPORT

There was no transport, so many of the locals did good business by transporting relatives and friends of the soldiers from North Williamstown to the camp at weekends.

The beach was out of bounds because the soldiers bathed in the nude.

Albert junior said, "Nearly all passengers travelling to Altona had to disembark at Davies Street so that their horses could pull their vehicles through the sand which extended from Davies Street past where the Civic Offices are to Pier Street, where the cobblestone started again at the railway line and extended to the shore end of the pier.

"The only other semblance of a made road was a pitched short section in Queen Street extending from Pier Street to Sargood Street.

"At the opposite end of Altona there was an almost impassable track through great sand holes along the powder magazine fence leading into Laverton."

FIRST CAR

The first motor car Albert junior remembers was of the horseless buggy type, steered with a tiller.

This was parked on the block of land now occupied by the Altona Post Office.

Albert junior said, "North of the railway line there was one house, the one we moved into. This house was later altered and became Altona's first community hospital. It was next to the Star office.

"There were two unoccupied bungalows and a recluse named Goodson lived in a bag tent among some box thorn bushes on the block at the corner of Pier and Railway Streets. This man had between 30 and 40 cats and he went fishing every day for food to feed them.



The Stubers' punt they used for fishing on Cherry Lake

"So north of railway line from the racecourse to Laverton, there were eight people living, seven members of the Stuber family and Mr Goodson.

"South of the railway line in what is now known as the Seaholme end, nine families lived. As I recall it there were, Sands, Flemings, Rayners, Harringtons and Carrs. Walkers in the homestead, Missens, Stones, McAgrees, Spriggs and Grants.

"There were a number of shacks scattered around the beachfront and these were fully occupied during the holiday season.

“Altona was one of the happiest places you could find. Visitors came by the thousand even before the advent of the railway and motor cars. You had to provide your own transport. Each family had a spring cart or jinker and some had pushbikes.

“Shopping was done in North Williamstown as a rule, but a grocer and baker would call once or twice a week. Many old timers will recall with affection the service rendered by the baker, Mr Elsum of Union Bakeries, North Williamstown.

MAIL, TOO

“He would make his journey unfailingly and would pick up meat and other commodities needed as well as the mail from North Williamstown Post Office.

“Altona provided all the delights schoolboys could desire. There were huge sand dunes right in the centre of Altona, a wonderful beach, swamps to canoe on, plenty of fishing and rabbit hunting.

“The greatest delight of the local boys was to go to the pier after school and fish for leatherjackets. Each boy had his own place through the planking where he would fish. The leatherjackets, very big ones too, could be seen around the piles which were thick with mussels.”

HUGE HAULS

There were many huge hauls for a single shot in one net as old timers can testify.

Albert junior said, “In the very early days, Altona already had a club within a couple of hundred yards from the Working Men’s Club at Seaholme. This club comprised a gigantic box thorn bush on the foreshore near the old tin shed at Seaholme. The bush was undercut on four sides to give shelter from the weather. There were more fish caught under this bush than in any other part of Port Phillip Bay.”

Albert junior recalled that the water supply was an old four inch cast iron main brought into Altona from Kororoit Creek Road which followed the railway line and ended in Blyth Street. The main frequently burst and pressure was extremely poor. There was no reticulation from this main and most houses relied on tanks for their water supply.

When the Stubers first arrived the Altona State School was a one-roomed affair.

12 PUPILS

It had 12 pupils and was located at the rear of the late Mr Fleming’s house in Blyth Street. Altona owes a big debt to Mr and Mrs Fleming for providing school accommodation.

Albert said, “Miss Brennan, our schoolteacher, boarded with us for the five school days and each Friday afternoon I would drive her to North Williamstown Station by horse and cart and picked her up again the following Sunday evening.

“The journey was often cold and wet in winter under the worst possible road conditions with only a candle burning in an old carriage lamp.”

When it was time for Albert junior to go to technical school, he had to walk home from Newport three nights a week.

He said, “Altona’s first steam train service must have been unique. If there was a passenger running late, even if the train had already left the station, it would stop and reverse back into the platform to wait for the latecomer.

TRAIN WAITED

“On Saturday the local football or cricket match would be played on a large open space at Seaholme. The train crew would uncouple the engine and drive it down the track to watch the game for a couple of hours in between trips.”

He said Altona’s railway was also noted for its torpedo carriages. These looked just like the name implies, although Albert junior thinks the term spaceship would have suited them better with their round windows.

When the Stuber family moved to Altona in 1915 there was only one shop. That was in Pier Street run as a small general store by Ben Carr and his family.

The next shop was a temporary one built at the front of Mr Fleming’s home for supplying the soldiers camped in Altona. Albert remembers the roaring trade the Flemings did until the camp dispersed.

With the help of his father, Albert junior built Altona’s first houses. Both were carpenters.

Albert junior has a daughter, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He added, “We all like living here very much in spite of the bad conditions which exist from time to time because of the pollution caused by factories. I still say Altona is a pretty good place.”

EMU BRICK MACHINE for making house bricks

Donated by: Harry Walker

The Emu brand mould for making house bricks was used circa 1945 by Harry Walker to build his home at 41 Bent Street Altona, pictured below.

At the end of WWII building materials were scarce and landowners made do with whatever resources were to hand.

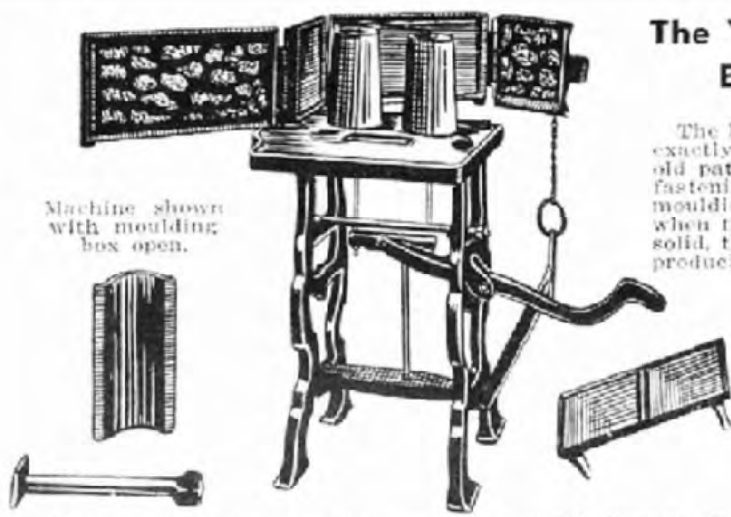
Harry would scoop up sand from the unmade street area fronting his property, mix it with water and concrete, then load the mixture into the mould leaving it to dry.



Harry repeated this process thousands of times to produce all the bricks he needed to build his family's home.

Harry's house still stands today and can be seen between Civic Parade and Railway Street North, on the west side of Bent Street.





Machine shown with moulding box open.

Two men with one machine can turn out **200 Cement Blocks per day**, roughly equivalent to 1,000 ordinary bricks; slightly more than four bags of cement being required for this number.

With four plain plates, £7/15/-; with four each plain and fancy plates (as illustrated), £8/5/-; complete outfit (with 15 face plates) for £8/19/-.

With this, all bricks required to build a full-sized house can be made. The plates are quickly interchangeable by means of thumb screws.

The "Emu" Cement Block Building Machine

The latest pattern. Makes BRICKS exactly SQUARE and TRUE. The old pattern of machines, with spring fastenings and loose parts, have the moulding box securely fixed, so that when the cement mixture is stamped solid, the sides spring outwards, thus producing an irregular block.

A special feature of the "Emu" Machine is the right hinged box, which cannot possibly get out of square.

Each cement block measures 12 x 6 1/2 x 6 in., or equal to 5 ordinary bricks.

The bricks require no trimming after leaving the machine, as no moulding lines can be detected.

The 'Emu' Cement Block Building Machine, by D & W Chandler of Fitzroy. D. & W. Chandler Ltd., General Hardware Catalogue. Issue No 51, (D & W Chandler, Melbourne 1939), p 27

ALTONA HOMESTEAD MUSEUM
Altona Laverton Homestead Historical Society Inc

Altona-Laverton
Historical Society
invites members,
volunteers and friends to
celebrate Christmas at
Altona Homestead
Tuesday 12 December

7pm

Everyone welcome for light
refreshments!



Current - Altona High School Memorabilia Display at the Homestead

Coming Up:

Christmas Function December 12



**Australia Day January 26, 2018 - Cruzin'
Knights Car Club Display**

