

In the Mists of Time: Searching for traces of the first settlement of four Southland families

Christina Mackay, Interior Architecture Programme, School of Architecture, Victoria University

ABSTRACT: During the 1870s, the Provincial government terminated grazing licences on large runs in Eastern Southland and West Otago. In a series of land sales, this land was surveyed into 200-acre farms and auctioned to prospective farmers on a delayed repayment scheme. 150 years later, this research searches for traces of the first buildings from this time. It focuses on the housing of eight ancestors, great grandparents of the author, who settled within a 30 km radius in the districts of Waikoikoi, Maitland, Waikaka Valley and Otama. Information was gathered from National Library collections, district and family history books, old photographs and maps, 2018 surveys of the homestead sites and interviews with cousins still living in the area. In 1870, the rolling hills were covered with open tussock. Found artefacts suggest that Māori camped in the area during expeditions to gather food from Mataura river sites. The new settlers, often in extended family groups, travelled by horse and dray overland from Dunedin or Bluff. The Dunedin to Gore railway did not open until 1879. Their first shelters were camp-sites and wagon tilts lined in felt. Soon after they arrived, established families were able to fund the building of modest timber houses often constructed by carpenter uncles and brothers. Young single men "bached" in sod and/or timber huts until they married. One great grandmother spent childhood years "comfortably" in a "half-sod and half-timber shepherd's cottage" but her teenage years at the "Big House," the 20-room homestead on the Otama Station. It was built in 1867 of "white pine" from the forest at Tapanui. By the turn of the twentieth-century, simple cottages had received additional rooms, porches and decorative verandahs or they were upstaged by new grand timber villas. In 2018, only one homestead, originally named *Hopetoun*, is still standing although it is substantially altered. Family photographs, usually of the front façade, provide a limited perspective only. Memoirs and local histories offer a few more clues. While buildings from the 1870s exist, historical touchstones in these country districts are more elusive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I acknowledge the generous help and assistance from local archivists Bruce Cavanagh, Heritage Research Officer, Gore District Council and Wilma Brock, West Otago Vintage Club Inc. and my cousins Ross and Grant Dickie, Neil McPhail, Jeanette and Jim McIntyre, Hamish Mackay and Heather Baskiville Robinson. I thank the current owners of historic family farms for permitting me to view and photograph the homestead sites.

Introduction

This paper reports on an open-ended search for information on settler housing from the 1870s in a rural area in West Otago and Eastern Southland. Found artefacts suggest that the area was a traditional seasonal hunting ground for Ngāi Tahu.¹ In 1855, the Waste Lands Board of the Provincial Government issued grazing licences of the land to run holders. As an example, the Knapdale Run included 55,000 acres and was

bounded by the Waikaka and Mataura rivers.² In the mid-1870s the Provincial Government terminated these licences and surveyed the runs into approximately 200-acre sections which were auctioned to prospective farmers on a delayed repayment scheme. At time of the 1876 and 1877 land sales, the rolling hills were covered native tussocks and grasses and without fences or roads. While the Dunedin to Balcutha and Gore to Invercargill railway lines opened in 1875, the whole line was not

completed until 1979.³ Timber for building was available locally from the native forest at Tapanui. In 1879, it was identified by Blair as a "principal isolated bush (area) in the interior" of Otago⁴ and that in "the seventies there was not only a strong demand for timber to build houses on the goldfields, but also for timber to construct wool sheds and for better dwellings for the pastoralists' properties throughout the province."⁵

¹ *Pioneers of Wendon* p 4.

² Kerse *The Knapdale Run* p 11.

³ "Main South Line" np.

⁴ Blair *Building Materials* p 145.

⁵ Blair *Building Materials* p 74.

Methodology

For ease of gathering information and photographs, I focused this search on the housing of my ancestors who settled within a 30 km radius in the districts of Waikoikoi, Maitland, Waikaka Valley and Otama. The research was undertaken during October and November 2018. Local history books were scanned for information relating to farm sites and early buildings. Using 1870s' land survey maps and Google maps, the farm sites and addresses were identified. Family history books provided dates of occupation and also dates of births, deaths and marriages useful in dating photographs. In late October, I visited the area, including historical collections held at the Gore District Council and the West Otago Museum. I interviewed six cousins and reviewed historic photographs in their possession. Current owners of properties kindly accompanied me in site visits and allowed me to take photographs.

In order to provide a framework, the findings are presented in relation to my eight great grandparents who, during the 1870s, were young adults in the process of becoming married and setting up their homes. The story starts with the family of great great grandparents Hugh and Grace McIntyre.

Merino Downs Run: Hugh McIntyre (1821-83) and Grace Young (1813-80)

Hugh McIntyre was a grazier in Victoria, Australia when he visited the *Knapdale* Run in 1866 and signed the grazing lease for the *Merino Downs* Run. In 1867, after landing in Bluff, he travelled with his wife and seven children with "a buggy, a dray and twenty-two horses" over country covered in tussock to their new home.⁶ On their arrival, the existing *Merino Downs* house reportedly had "five rooms and no conveniences."⁷ By 1871, *Merino Downs* run had 15,000 merino ewes over an area of 22,000 acres. Although no further descriptions or photographs of the original house have been found, a 1940s' image of original shearing shed exists.⁸ In 2006, the location of the first *Merino Downs* homestead was described as being in the Cook farm "down among the trees of the orchard and the stables and other buildings were further up behind it."⁹ In 2018, a cousin pointed out the site as a grassy slope behind old timber house positioned close to 1695

⁶ Falconer *McIntyres of Merino Downs* p 8.

⁷ Maitland School Jubilee Committee *Maitland School Jubilee 1896-1947* p 72.

⁸ Falconer *McIntyres of Merino Downs* p 8.

⁹ Falconer *McIntyres of Merino Downs* p 8.

State Highway 90.¹⁰ The construction date of this old timber replacement house is not known.

Hugh McIntyre is reported to have fought the sub-division of his runs bitterly but he purchased many sections in the land sales which were passed onto his family.

Hopetoun and Lilliesleaf: John McIntyre (1847-1930) and Beatrice Nichol (1859-1926)

John McIntyre, aged 17 years, arrived with his family and attended high school at Otago Boys before returning to work on his father's runs. In 1876, when the run was surveyed into 200-acre farms and auctioned, 27-year-old John McIntyre was one of the first to take up a Maitland farm on the deferred payment scheme.¹¹ He named the property *Hopetoun*¹² possibly after the stately home near Kirkliston, Scotland, the village where his mother's family lived. Initially a bachelor, John reportedly lived in a hut but sometime before his February 1885 wedding to his neighbours' daughter, Beatrice Nichol, the

¹⁰ McIntyre. Pers Comm.

¹¹ *Golden Reflections* p 185, confirms *Lilliesleaf* farm as Section 5, Blk VIII Chatton S.D.

¹² *Golden Reflections* p 190, confirms *Hopetoun* farm as Section 6, Blk VIII Chatton S.D.

Hopetoun homestead was built.

Beatrice had arrived, aged 17 years, with her parents and three siblings at Port Chalmers in September 1875. Along with 21 other passengers and freight, the ship *City of Tanjore*,¹³ had been their home for 108 days. The family lodged in Dunedin while looking for a farm. In April 1876, the Nicholls bought the farm and named it *Lilliesleaf*, after a district near Minto on the Scottish borders where he had managed an estate. From Dunedin, the family "travelled in a large dray drawn by three horses" along "bridle tracks." In an account by Adam John, Beatrice's brother, the family camped (spending nights under the dray) at the Tairei, Lovell's Flat, Waiwera, Wairuna, at the foot of Landslip Hill, and by the Waikaka steam. After a quiet sabbath they arrived on Monday to *Lilliesleaf*. Their first home was a tent and a hut with a chimney¹⁴ on the banks of the Waikaka stream. At the time, a house was being built by Beatrice's uncle, a Dunedin builder, and his apprentice son.¹⁵ By springtime, her father William, a keen horticulturalist, had developed a lovely

¹³ *City of Tanjore*.

¹⁴ Maitland School Jubilee Committee *Maitland School Jubilee 1896-1947* p 67.

¹⁵ Harper *Petticoat Pioneers* p 166.

garden around the homestead.

This research did not locate an image of this first house, but "a second home was built at a cost of 400 pounds in 1902." A third house was built in 1952. These two houses are featured in a 1990 local history, *Golden Reflections*.¹⁶ In 2018, they accommodated the manager and workers of a dairy farm, which includes both the original *Lilliesleaf* and *Hopetoun* farms.¹⁷

In contrast, *Hopetoun* homestead was passed on through four generations of McIntyres and family photographs illustrate its history. An image of the front façade was found in a 1907 photograph of John and Beatrice's daughter Grace's wedding party.¹⁸ The rusticated weatherboard house appears to be a "T" plan with the longer 45° gable-roofed section running along the south side and abutted on the north side to a wider shorter gabled section of a lesser pitch. Roof eaves are minimal at approximately 8". The adjoining west facing hipped-roofed verandah has alternating coloured corrugated-iron roofing and boxed fine wooden fretwork decoration. The

¹⁶ *Golden Reflections* pp 185-189.

¹⁷ Gollan. Pers Comm.

¹⁸ Wedding of Grace McIntyre and Henry Smith, 1907.

verandah post mouldings are square cut rather than moulded. The front triple double-hung windows are well proportioned giving an overall fine aesthetic quality to the house. The weatherboards are rusticated rather than flat and at the corners are butted to "solid angle stops." Salmond suggests that this detail was replaced in the 1870s by a "boxed corner" and that rusticated weatherboards "became popular in the 1980s."¹⁹ The date of the availability of rusticated weatherboards in Tapanui might indicate a more accurate date of the house construction.

Hopetoun homestead was "renovated and modernized" by the McIntyre family until it was sold in c1995.²⁰ In 1947, the homestead was described as "altered and renewed, but on the original site."²¹ A 1970s' aerial shot²² and a 1990 black and white photograph²³ of the front elevation both show a bay of casement windows replacing the triple double-hung set and the front verandah glazed in. In October

¹⁹ Salmond *Old New Zealand Houses* p 115.

²⁰ McIntyre. Pers Comm.

²¹ Maitland School Jubilee Committee *Maitland School Jubilee 1896-1947* p 66.

²² UC 324.20 [photograph].

²³ *Golden Reflections* p 191.

2018, I photographed house exterior.²⁴ It was divided into two flats and housed the farm's workers. Many openings had been replaced with aluminum frames with only the front entrance door and one double-hung window remaining. Interior glimpses revealed a classic 1970s' lounge renovation with a lowered sloped ceiling with exposed beams and a "crazy" paved stone fire surround. In a hallway, I noted a nineteenth-century style cupboard door.

Valleyfield: James Smith (1842-1927) and Mary Carson (1851-88)

In the land sale April 1876, a second great grandfather, James Smith, purchased a farm in the neighbouring district of Waikaka Valley.²⁵ Later in the same month, James married Mary Carson on the James Shand Estate on the Tairei plain where they both were working. James, as a single man of 23 years, from Fifeshire, Scotland, had landed in Port Chalmers in 1868. Mary, aged 14, had arrived in 1863 with her uncle and aunt via the Goldfields in Victoria, Australia.²⁶ This extended family settled at *Valleyfield*, possibly

²⁴ Photographic survey of *Hopetoun* homestead 2018.

²⁵ *Golden Reflections* p196, confirms Valley field as Section 2 Block IX Glenkenich S.D.

²⁶ *Golden Reflections* p 196.

named after the Scottish estate in Kirkcudbrightshire where Mary's family had lived. An early photograph of the first homestead built "in stages with the kitchen, washhouse and a couple of rooms to sleep in first" shows a simple gabled room attached to a hipped roof block.²⁷ This house was located on the lower section of the farm, close to the Waikaka Stream. Mary's uncle, David Hannay, purchased adjacent farmland but lived with his sister Euphemia in a small cottage next to the *Valleyfield* homestead. A photograph depicts a front elevation of a weatherboard-clad simple box cottage with a gable roof with central doorway and two double-hung windows and two chimneys at either end.²⁸ Pipe-smoking suffragette "Auntie Effie" cared for her six grand nephews and nieces after their mother's early death in 1888 and lived there until she died in 1905, aged 95 years, as a result of an accidental fire in the cottage.²⁹ In 1904, James retired to a timber villa in East Gore.³⁰

Valleyfield farm was home to four generations of Smiths until 1980. A new "brick and

²⁷ Baskiville-Robinson *Forging Ahead* pp 52-53.

²⁸ Baskiville-Robinson *Forging Ahead* p 43.

²⁹ Baskiville-Robinson *Forging Ahead* pp 43-47.

³⁰ Baskiville-Robinson *Forging Ahead* p 37.

roughcast" homestead³¹ was built in 1924 by James' newly-married son. Further up the hill, a second house nick-named "top house" was built in 1951 as a retirement house for my grandparents Henry and Grace Smith. In 2018, both houses are occupied.³²

Churchfield: William John Stark (1856-1933) and Sarah Jane Cunningham (1858-1943)

From Cadder, near Glasgow, William John arrived in Port Chalmers in 1868 with his widowed mother and three sisters to join his older brother James, a master tailor in Onepoto, now known as Herbert, North Otago. In the 1877 land sale, he and his two brothers-in-laws bought farms in Waikoikoi. His brother-in-law, Patrick Scott, and family carted the material for their house by train from Onepoto to Waipahi and then by horse and dray to construct the first new settler's home in the district. Their Crawford cousins were then hosted there while their house was being built.³³ William John, at 21 years, lived in a hut on his land. It was said to be the site of the first church services in the district, and

³¹ *Golden Reflections* p 200.

³² *Valleyfield* homestead 2018; "Top house" *Valleyfield* 2018.

³³ *A Rich Harvest* p 54.

thus named "Churchfield."³⁴ His sister, Jane, worked as a maternity nurse in the burgeoning saw mill town of Tapanui, 13km from Waikoikoi.³⁵ She lived with her mother Mary, who had spent her childhood in Borough, London. An 1870 painting of Tapanui shows a small sparse settlement of small single-storey cottages with the forest in the background.³⁶ In contrast, a photograph from the early 1880s depicts many two-storey dwellings and commercial buildings.³⁷ This research did not uncover any information on the Tapanui cottage of my great great grandmother Mary and her daughter Jane. In mid-winter 1979, William John married Sarah Jane Cunningham from a neighbouring farm. The exact date and builder of their Churchfield homestead is not known. Sarah Jane's brother David was a carpenter who reportedly built "many of the early homesteads in the surrounding area."³⁸

Sarah Jane arrived with her parents and four brothers from County Tyrone in 1876. In the 1876 land sale, her father William Young

Cunningham bought a section of rolling land set back off Glenshee Road. No images have been located of the original home. In 2018, the 1930s style house, built by Sarah Jane's son Matt, is nestled amongst the hills in the house of site the original homestead.³⁹ Huge tree roots are the only sign of prior occupation.

The earliest photograph found of the Stark family was taken c1883 by Carl Hagan. He is reported to be first Gore photographer practicing from 1871 to 1891.⁴⁰ A series of later family photographs provide glimpses of the development of *Churchfield* homestead. A pre-1900 photograph⁴¹ shows the farmstead covered in snow. It is sited in a hollow, 120 metres from the road. The plain cottage is surrounded by out-buildings including two small huts, one of which may have been William John's first shelter. A c1895 image⁴² depicts the young family including seven children on the west facing "front" elevation. The groundwork suggests this section may have been a new addition. It is clad in rusticated weatherboards, rather than the flat weatherboards which clad the simple gabled

box and its lean-to behind. In a 1912 wedding photograph,⁴³ a view of butted weatherboards at the likely junction of the addition supports this proposition. A c1909 image,⁴⁴ possibly on the engagement of the eldest daughter, confirms the addition to this façade of a partially-glazed verandah with decorative cast-iron filigree. In 1920, the verandah provided a decorative setting for the wedding of the youngest daughter.⁴⁵ In 1927, William John and Sarah Jane retired to a bungalow at 16 Kamura St, Anderson's Bay, Dunedin where William John died in 1933. The farm remained in the extended Stark family until after 1969. It has since been demolished. In 2018, with amalgamation of farms into economic units, the *Churchfield* land is not occupied.

Kaka Flat and Otama Station: Jane McKinna (1860-1948)

Jane, aged three years, arrived with her parents at Bluff in 1863. Around five years later, Jane's father John was working as a shepherd on the Otama Station. In 1936, Jane reminisced on her journey to a new home, a shepherd's cottage on an isolated site on the

³⁴ *A Rich Harvest* p 57.

³⁵ Miller *Beyond the Blue Mountains* p XXXI.

³⁶ Tapanui 1870-1871 [Anonymous painting 1992.5].

³⁷ Miller *Beyond the Blue Mountains* p VII.

³⁸ *A Rich Harvest* p 46.

³⁹ House built by Matt Stark Glenshee Rd 2018.

⁴⁰ Register of Gore photographers.

⁴¹ Churchfield homestead in the snow.

⁴² Churchfield house c1895.

⁴³ Churchfield house 1912 (wedding of Mary Stark).

⁴⁴ Churchfield house c1909.

⁴⁵ Churchfield house 1920 (wedding of Jane Stark).

east side of the valley at Kaka Flat. The site was 500m from the wagon route from Dunedin to Switzers gold-mining settlement. Jane described the house as "half of timber and half of sods" which she remembered as being "very comfortable." (Perhaps she was comparing to her later experiences of uninsulated timber cottages on frosty nights). It is difficult to be sure of the design and construction from Jane's brief description. The timber might have been sourced from the adjacent gully of beech trees. Sod cottages are mentioned in several local histories. A "first house as one of sod walls roofed with snowgrass tussocks and it proved quite comfortable and snug."⁴⁶ Perhaps the "half of timber" description referred to a roof of shingles, also common at the time: "Sod houses were not uncommon in the early days. One pioneer lady white-washed her sod home and thereby considerably improved its appearance."⁴⁷ An image of a timber shepherd's hut at Otama Station Homestead could suggest a possible form and size.⁴⁸ Another reference describes the 1875 "hut at

Kaka Flat" as one room.⁴⁹ The Heritage New Zealand list includes one sod Canterbury cottage which includes an upper level⁵⁰ but the sod cottage 12km southwest of Milton restored by South Otago Historical Society perhaps offers the best example of the likely design and construction. The cottage "was built in the 1860s as a stopping place for miners heading to the Tuapeka Goldfields."⁵¹ In considering the Scottish heritage of the many Southland early settlers, it is likely that the skills in constructing sod cottage were well known. Turf cottages of a similar form were a well-known construction in Scotland.⁵²

The Kaka Flat site has been a pilgrimage destination for McKinna descendants as a cairn marks the grave of Jane's mother, Isabella. She died in 1869 after giving birth in a snow storm. Unable to travel, her husband buried his wife himself. In 1969, I visited the grave site. The flats were covered in high broom. Remains of the sod cottage may have still existed, but it is likely they were flattened

when the area was bulldozed in 1990s to create pastureland.⁵³ In 2018, the site is in green pasture by a creek with a back drop of native beech trees.⁵⁴

As a teenager, in the 1870s, Jane went to learn work, cook, knit and sew at the Otama station homestead. Known as the "big house," it was built in 1870 by a new owner Charles Swanson.⁵⁵ In 1887, a *Southland Times* reporter described it as "nestling in Otama Valley amongst its surrounding gardening and plantations."⁵⁶ The dwelling was "a large, two-storied one of a peculiar but artistic style of architecture, and containing sixteen rooms" and "of picturesque external appearance and a model of comfort, brightness and convenience within."⁵⁷

An image of "the original Otama Station Homestead" depicts a roof of both plain and Dutch gables, generous eaves, an upper porch glazed in small glass panes and generous simply decorated "L" shaped verandah in the

⁴⁶ Waikaka Valley Jubilee Committee, Waikaka Valley Jubilee p 30.

⁴⁷ Archibald "Mr Alex Archibald reminiscences" p 73.

⁴⁸ *Pioneers of Wendon* p 20.

⁴⁹ Evans *Waikaka Saga* p 195 (John Roderick Henderson was born in 1875, BDM NZ Reg No 10845).

⁵⁰ Heritage New Zealand "Burnham Grange Sod Cottage" np.

⁵¹ "Sod Cottage" *Milton District* np.

⁵² Walker et al. *Earth Structures* p 14.

⁵³ Anderson. Pers Comm.

⁵⁴ Site of McKinna cottage, Kaka Flat October 2018.

⁵⁵ Fraser & Wilson *Book of Pioneers* p 30.

⁵⁶ "The Otama Station" p 2.

⁵⁷ "The Otama Station" p 2.

ground level.⁵⁸ The architect of the house is not known. In 1950, two old residents of the homestead recounted their 1898 childhood memories and later alterations.

In 1910 the house was altered by the removal of a large part of the kitchen end, including the back stairs, and the working part of the house (kitchen, pantry, etc was rebuilt in much more convenient lines).⁵⁹

In 1930, its demolition was reported in the Gore newspaper *Mataura Ensign*.

The contractor discovered many novel features in the workmanship of the old dwelling. White pine had been used almost entirely in the building, it being ascertained that the timber was milled at Tapanui some 70 years ago and transported to the site where it was hand-dressed. It is surmised that this tedious work must have occupied a considerable time, for not only were the door and window frames and sashes made on site, but the weatherboards and the linings were all painstakingly dressed by the carpenters engaged in the work. One of the most surprising features was the discovery made when the paper had been removed from the walls. Between the weatherboarding and the inner lining of battens pug (or clay) had been packed to make the walls solid and eliminate draughts as far as possible. The removal of a section of the corrugated iron roofing revealed another novel feature: red tussock formed a thatching battened under the roofing. Although white pine had been used both outside and inside building, the

⁵⁸ *Pioneers of Wendon* p 20.

⁵⁹ White & White *The Old Otama Homestead in 1898* p 16.

timber is in a remarkable state of preservation. Dry rot and borer have only been discovered in localized places in the back rooms of the lower floor.⁶⁰

William Blair's 1879 book provides insight into this successful use of white pine (or kahikatea). He noted that "Professor Kirk says that white pine is subject to the attack of a minute double-winged insect, but so far as I can ascertain it has no such enemy in Dunedin" but that the timber "is not durable in any situation where exposed to damp."⁶¹

In 2018, the property owner pointed up a grassed platform as the site of the "big house."⁶² It is 150m further up the hill from its replacement; a spreading 1930s' beautifully crafted brick and rough cast bungalow.⁶³

At the 4 October 1877 land sale, two adjacent farm sections 5km south in Otama Valley were purchased in the name of Jane, aged 17 years, and her father John.⁶⁴ This research has uncovered little information about this

⁶⁰ *The Pioneers of Wendon* p 17.

⁶¹ Blair *Building Materials* pp 179-180.

⁶² Gardyne. Pers Comm.; Otama Station 1870 homestead site.

⁶³ Otama Station homestead 2018.

⁶⁴ Kerse *Knapdale Run* p 312, confirms McKinna Farm as Block III Otama Survey District Section 23 and 24.

McKinna farm. John McKinna died in 1900, leaving a second family of six young children, and the farm was sold. As a child in 1960s, I vaguely remember travelling in the school bus past the dilapidated house of bachelor Arthur Dillon, but until this research I had no knowledge that this was the house built by my great grandfather.

In August 1879, at 19, Jane married the neighbouring farmer, John Mackay, my great grandfather.

Braemar: John Mackay (1847-1927) and Jane McKinna (1860-1948)

Scottish highlander, John Mackay landed in Bluff in 1868. He worked with his uncle at Longbush, then around the Queenstown area and ploughed on the Waimea plains before purchasing his Otama section in 1877.⁶⁵ This land named *Braemar* has been farmed by his descendants for four generations. In a 2018 visit, the owner and my cousin, Hamish Mackay, pointed out an approximately five by nine metre rectangular shaped indentation in the grassed farmyard.⁶⁶ He understood this to be the site of bachelor John Mackay's original

⁶⁵ Fraser & Wilson *Book of Pioneers* p 43, confirms Section 17 Block 3 Otama S.D. (2018 address is 287 Kemp Road).

⁶⁶ Mackay. Pers Comm.

sod hut. It was practically sited, east-facing, settled down from the brow of the hill behind and with a view down over a gulley with a spring and out to the hills beyond.⁶⁷ It is not known whether his new wife Jane, arrived to live in the hut or in the new *Braemar* homestead.

Two family photographs, possibly taken in June 1901 on the occasion of the wedding of their eldest daughter Isabella, include a misty distant image of this house⁶⁸ and a backdrop of a side wall of plain flat weatherboards and also what appears to be 2"x2" exterior decking.⁶⁹ In the early 1960s, as a child, I visited the house as a friend of the daughter of the farm's "married couple." I remember washing dishes in the small narrow scullery lean-to on the sunny back side of the old house. In the early 1980s, as a young architect, I made a return visit prior to its imminent demolition. It had not been lived in for some time and was described by my Uncle Lewis as being "riddled with borer." I retrieved a plain unadorned rimu fire surround from a bedroom and a green cut glass lamp shade from the hallway. I did not have the presence

⁶⁷ Braemar sod cottage site.

⁶⁸ Hayward *A Personal Memoir* p 5.

⁶⁹ Kennedy *Letters to a Family* p 84.

of mind to photograph the house about to be lost. In October 2018, Hamish and I sifted through a large apple box of old photographs. We found only a mid-century aerial photograph of the old homestead⁷⁰ and, ironically, a photograph of our ancestors' home burning.⁷¹ Demolition was carried out by the local volunteer fire brigade. It may be possible that the design of the house could be pieced together from the photographs and personal memories of my Mackay cousins.

Conclusion

This research aimed to discover what I could find out about the first houses of my family around the time of 1870s' land sales in West Otago and Eastern Southland. In summary, I uncovered limited exterior views of my great grand parents' four homes. Although descriptions of two houses of my great great grandparents were located, four other houses remain a mystery. It is possible that photographs may exist in the possession of third or even fourth cousins and could be located through a more extensive search. Only one ancestral house *Hopetoun*, built sometime between 1877 and 1885, still stands. For over

⁷⁰ Braemar homestead aerial photograph.

⁷¹ Braemar homestead fire.

100 years, it was renovated to suit family lives of four generations of McIntyres. In 2108, as two flats, it is home for dairy farm workers. An indepth building survey and study of council records could reveal its story of transformation further including its additions and alterations, the timbers, construction details and the original paint colours.

In terms of New Zealand's architectural history, findings were consistent with the evolution of European settlement as described in Jeremy Salmond's *Old New Zealand Houses* and other descriptions. First shelter was in temporary camps and small huts of timber and/or sod. As Salmond noted,⁷² a series of Stark family photographs confirmed that as families enlarged and funds allowed, a simple box cottage was progressively enlarged with a lean-to, a double gable then a decorative verandah. The houses were built of local timber from the Tapanui forest. Weatherboard profiles evolved from flat to rusticated profiles. Further research could confirm the source of other building materials, including roofing materials. The fate of nineteenth-century timber houses is another question. In cities, economics may support up-grading and

⁷² Salmond *Old New Zealand Houses* p 71.

on-going maintenance which maybe not the case in the rural Southland.

At this time, when architectural history from the 1870s is sketchy, lessons from the search process are noteworthy. Local history books provided various amounts of information. The 1936 *Book of Pioneers* focused on the people rather than their houses but at the time of writing "early pioneers" offer reminiscences of the first settlement. In later histories, the farming activities are described in-depth but descriptions of home life are absent. A Waikoikoi history⁷³ is illustrated with pen and ink sketches of buildings, but, as with all local history books reviewed, photographs and figures are not referenced. Houses are often captioned as "original" but without any date evidence. The 1990 *Golden Reflections*, a 150th New Zealand Anniversary project, presents unreferenced black and white photographs of all the farm homesteads that were taken specifically for the publication.⁷⁴ They provide a useful baseline. Published family histories provided more specific detail and family photographs but again the source and location of the original photographs is often

not known. Photographic collections of five cousins were retrieved from apple boxes, suitcases and top cupboards.

From this limited study, it appears that knowledge of rural housing from 1870s could be in danger of being lost. My cousins and the current owners of the farms I met expressed curiosity about this research and were keen to learn more about local architectural history. In 2018, the internet, communication, digital and search systems could provide the means to retrieve and document remaining evidence of our architectural heritage. In the same way as the 2018 remembrance of World War I brought families and communities together, national and local initiatives could promote and facilitate the research and safeguarding of knowledge about early houses and their sites. It reveals the enduring values, achievements and identity of our forebears and is too precious to be lost to the mists of time.

⁷³ *A Rich Harvest*.

⁷⁴ McPhail. Pers Comm.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, Denise, Personal communication (2 November 2018) interview.
- Archibald, Alex "Mr Alex Archibald Reminiscences" *The Book of Pioneers: Otama, Knapdale, Chatton* Gore, NZ: Ensign Print, 1936.
- Baskiville-Robinson, Heather and Allan McKechnie Allan *Forging Ahead: The Smith family migration from Scotland to England to New Zealand* Havelock, NZ: Waikakahi Publications, 2004.
- Blair, William Newsham *The Building Materials of Otago and Southland generally* Dunedin: J.Wilkie &Co, 1879.
- Evans, Alistair *Waikaka Saga: The History of Waikaka, Greenvale, Wendon Valley and the Waikaka Gold Fields* Waikaka, NZ: Waikaka Historical Committee, 1962.
- Falconer, David *The McIntyres of Merino Downs from 1866: Your Clan Heritage* Gore, NZ: David Falconer, 2006.
- Fraser, Robert and Elizabeth Wilson *The Book of Pioneers: Otama, Knapdale, Chatton* Gore, NZ: Ensign Print, 1936.
- Gardyne, Neil Personal communication (2 November 2018) interview. *Golden Reflections: A History of Waikaka Valley: Maitland, Willowbank, McNab, Benio* ed JF McArthur, Waikaka Valley, NZ: Waikaka Valley Historical Group, 1992
- Gollan, Mary. Personal communication (1 November 2018) interview.
- Harper, Barbara *Petticoat Pioneers: South Island Women of the Colonial Era: Book Three* Wellington, NZ: AH Reed & A.H. Reed Ltd., 1980.
- Hayward, Vivienne *A Personal Memoir... in love and gratitude* Auckland, NZ: V. Hayward, 2018.
- Heritage New Zealand "Burnham Grange Sod Cottage" Historic Place No 7710 <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7710>
- Kennedy, Brenda *Letters to a Family 1911-1918: A Mackay Family Record* Whangarei, NZ: Brenda Kennedy, 1992.
- Kerse, Elizabeth *The Knapdale Run: Its Land and People* Gore, NZ: Knapdale Book Committee, 1984.
- Maitland School Jubilee Committee, *Maitland School Jubilee 1896-1947* Gore, NZ: Gore Publishing Co. Ltd, 1947.
- Mackay, Hamish. Personal communication (31 October 2018) interview.
- Mackay, William *The Acheilidh Mackays 1794-1966* Gore, NZ: Gore Publishing Co. Ltd, 1971.
- McIntyre, Jeanette. Personal communication (14 November 2018) interview.
- McIntyre, Jim. Personal communication (14 November 2018) interview.
- McPhail, Neil. Personal communication (29 October 2018) interview. "Main South Line" *Wikipedia* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_South_Line
- Miller, FWG *Beyond the Blue Mountains: A History of the West Otago District* Dunedin, NZ: Otago Centennial Historical Publications, 1954.
- Miller, FWG *History of Waikaia* Waikaia, NZ: Waikaia Historical Committee, 1966.
- "The Otama Station" *Southland Times* (25 May 1887):2.
- The Pioneers of Wendon: A Brief History of the Wendon District from the Early Days of Settlement to 1950* ed Walter Fowler and J. Findlay McArthur, Gore, NZ: The Wendon Booklet Committee, 1950.
- Register of Gore photographers, The Gore District Council, Arts & Heritage Department.
- Residents and Former Residents of Merino Downs District *Merino Downs, Wakatipu*, NZ: D. L. Gardyne, 1990 ISBN 0 473 01099 2.
- A Rich Harvest: a History of Waikoikoi West Otago* ed Ian Simpson, Waikoikoi, NZ: Waikoikoi District Centennial Committee, 1980.
- Salmond, Jeremy *Old New Zealand Houses 1800-1940* Auckland, NZ: Reed Methuen Publishers Ltd, 1986.

"Sod Cottage" *Milton District* <http://www.milton-district.co.nz/history/sod-cottage/>

Waikaka Valley Jubilee Committee, *Waikaka Valley Jubilee 1874-1924: a compendium of reports, personal interviews etc., which appeared in the columns of the "Mataura Ensign" undated.*

Walker, B, C McGregor and R Little *Earth Structures and Construction in Scotland* Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 1996.

White, R. & V White "The Old Otama Homestead in 1898" *The Pioneers of Wendon: A Brief History of the Wendon District from the Early Days of Settlement to 1950* Gore, NZ: The Wendon Booklet Committee, 1950.

IMAGES

Braemar homestead aerial photograph, Braemar Collection, Otama.

Braemar homestead fire, Braemar Collection, Otama.

Braemar sod cottage site, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Churchfield homestead in the snow, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Churchfield house c1895, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Churchfield house c1909, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Churchfield house 1912 (wedding of Mary Stark), Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Churchfield house 1920 (wedding of Jane Stark), Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

City of Tanjore [oil painting reportedly painted by an officer on the ship], Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

House built by Matt Stark Glenshee Rd 2018, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Otama Station 1870 homestead site, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Otama Station homestead 2018, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Photographic survey of *Hopetoun* homestead 2018, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Site of McKinna cottage, Kaka Flat October 2018, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.

Tapanui 1870-1871 [Anonymous painting 1992.5] 355 Historic Records Room, West Otago Museum

"Top house" Valleyfield 2018, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington

UC 324.20 [photograph], McIntyre Collection, Waikaka Valley.

Valleyfield homestead 2018, Mackay Collection, Kelburn Wellington

Wedding of Grace McIntyre and Henry Smith [image], 1907, Mackay Collection, Kelburn, Wellington.