

Chronograph

September-December 2022

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Coolangatta Estate

200 YEARS AGO.....COOLANGATTA BECAME THE FIRST EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT ON THE NSW SOUTH COAST

Early on the morning of 22 June 1822, Alexander Berry, a Scottish surgeon, merchant and explorer, sailed on the ship *Blanche* from Sydney Cove to settle on his 10,000 acre (4047 Ha) land grant at Coolangatta NSW. On board were a number of convicts who were to work on the property in exchange for board and lodgings. A condition of the grant was that Berry would maintain 100 convicts (one for each 100 acres of grant) for 10 years. Also on board, apart from the crew, was the explorer Hamilton Hume and an Aboriginal man named Charcoal Will.

Berry's plan was to sail up the Shoalhaven River to reach Coolangatta. However, the mouth of the Shoalhaven River was treacherous for ocean-going vessels to navigate due to huge and powerful waves leading into a narrow and shallow entrance. A small boat was sent out from the ship with two men on board to assess the situation and see if the entrance could be crossed. Sadly, while trying to enter the river, this boat capsized with the loss of the two men on board. The *Blanche* then sailed further south and entered the Crookhaven River where it anchored for the night.

The next morning, Berry put the convicts to work to dig a channel through a low sand bar between the Crookhaven and Shoalhaven Rivers so that the rivers joined and the ship could enter the Shoalhaven River. This was as much to make a safe passage for ships as to keep the restless convicts occupied. Under the watchful eye of Hamilton Hume, the convicts, using

spades and pickaxes, dug a 200 metre-long channel in 12 days. The channel was soon enlarged by the action of the waves, and is now called Berry's Canal. It was the first navigable canal in Australia. Not only did this canal alter the dynamics of the river, it separated a land mass, thus creating Comerong Island.

Berry took up the land grant of 10,000 acres and based his headquarters at the foot of Coolangatta Mountain. This was the first European settlement on the south coast of NSW.

The Coolangatta Estate expanded by further land grants and purchases to 40,000 acres (16,187 Ha) and soon became a source of much produce that was transported by ship to Sydney for sale. Maize, tobacco, wheat, barley, potatoes, pigs, cattle, sheep and dairy products were for the Sydney market. Cedar was exported to Europe and thoroughbred horses to India. In the early 1900s tinned condensed milk was exported to such places as China, Africa and New Zealand.

In the 1850s Berry began to lease out small acreage farms on the condition that the land be cleared and fenced. Coolangatta became a vibrant small town that supplied the needs of these 400 estate tenants, with trades such as builders, carpenters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, tanners, tailors, coopers, etc.

It was these tenant farmers, the pioneer settlers, who commenced the development of the Shoalhaven District, primarily as a dairying area.

Christine@pelicangraphics

Gardening News

Every 2 weeks, weather permitting, Museum members Hazel King, Jenny Swan, Trish Knevitt, Kay Ison, Sandra Berner, Annette Frohling and Janet Fingleton meet at the Museum Garden to weed, trim, prune, plant and generally tidy up.

Its always a fun day, we don't work too hard, and after an hour or so we all sit down on the verandah for a tea or coffee and biscuits – sometimes cake – have a good chat and solve the problems of the world.

If you are interested in joining this group, you would be most welcome. Please contact them through the Museum email – berrymuseum@bigpond.com.



Hazel working 'flat out'.

Our Society was very fortunate this year in receiving a donation from the Berry Garden Festival via the owners of Garden 1, Di and James Auld.

At the Berry Garden Club Meeting on the 15th November, 2022 Hazel King and Keith Houston were very happy on behalf of our Society, to receive the donation of \$4,000.00.

There are plans to spend the money on improvements in the Museum, including a leaf blower for the gardening ladies.



Sandra Berner

Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society Outing



Front door – Gail and Julie

A party of museum members drove up to Campbelltown to visit Glenalvon House run by the Campbelltown & Airds Historical Society. These were Robyn Simond, Gail Paton, Mary Williamson, Hazel King, Janet Fingleton, Sue Davidson, Margaret Cullity, Sandra Berner and Julia Woinarski. This trip was organized by Robyn Simond as she used to live in Campbelltown.

We were greeted by Kay and Christine Haynes, Anne Ross, Julie Crowley and Clarice Stretch. Kay gave us a short talk about the history of the house, then we had a delicious morning tea of scones, cream and jam and chocolate brownies. Julie took our group of members on a tour of the house, garden and Alex Goodsell Exhibition Centre. Julie was very knowledgeable about the house's history, as she had played a part in the production of the booklet Glenalvon Campbelltown, NSW sold by the Society. A lot of information can be found on their website – www.cahs.com.au

The house is a two-storeyed sandstone house of Colonial Georgian design listed by National Trust. It was built by Michael Byrne in 1840. It consists of _Drawing room, Dining Room, Library, Strangers room, Display room, Hallway, Nursery, Upstairs sitting room, Servants quarters, Master bedroom and Children's room.

After our tour we all went to the Campbelltown Art Gallery café for lunch. It was a very enjoyable outing.



Back Court yard – Margaret, Julie, Julia and Sue



Front verandah – Sue, Julia, Margaret, Gail and Julie

Janet Fingleton

The Hay Sisters of Coolangatta and the Astor Flats

When Sir John Hay of Coolangatta died in 1909, he left the Estate to his half-brother [Alexander Hay](#). However, he made provisions in his will for his stepmother and half-sisters who had been living with him since 1889. To his stepmother Jessie and four unmarried half-sisters Mabel, Kate, Nona and Agnes (Daisy) he left a life interest in the building called "The Cottage" and also the furniture contained within it. He also left each of them £10,000 which allowed them to become financially independent. Kate married soon after and so the other four women lived together at "The Cottage" until the late 1920s.

John's stepmother Jessie died in 1929 and Agnes (Daisy) died the following year. It seems that after this the two remaining half-sisters Mabel and Nona moved to [Sydney](#) and lived in the prestigious Astor apartments in Macquarie Street. The two women lead a very outgoing life and were frequently mentioned in the social pages of the newspapers.

Kate, Blanche and Mabel Hay of Coolangatta were regular tenants, and over the two decades many letters were to and fro between Macquarie Street and wherever they happened to be. Their Astor "home", allowed them to see friends, shop, go to theatres, Government House etc, and being inveterate travellers, they always had somewhere to stay at either end of their overseas or interstate adventures. Blanche had married Howard Joseland, architect, on 6th April 1897.



Nona and Agnes (Daisy) Hay at Coolangatta 1913

The Hay sisters didn't mind having a noisy flat but they had definite tastes and needs.

Menzies Hotel, Melbourne, 16th October 1929

...I mentioned on several occasions to the house manager that No. 2 on the 1st floor would be better with a lighter paper in the lounge and dining room...

On 5.2.1930 Miss Daisy having died, there was a letter of condolence from the Board.

Coolangatta 23 October 1933

Dear Mr Jones. We will be arriving tomorrow (Thursday) evening about 5.30pm, so will you please leave some ice for us and also a pint of milk to oblige. Yours truly, Mabel Hay

Coolangatta

Dear Jones,

We are going up tomorrow afternoon arriving about a quarter to six and I hope you have the flat cleaned and ready for us and that Mrs Joseland will tell you to order milk and a shoulder of lamb to be there for us. Thanks for letting me know about the flat Mrs Foster rents and I'll write to her this mail about it and she will probably cable a reply to you – I will have to find out from you what rent the Astor are charging before writing to her.

Thanking you, Yours truly, Mabel Hay

Orient Line England Australia, SS Otranto, 8.10.34

Dear Miss Hutchinson

Just to remind you that we will be back to Sydney on Wednesday afternoon October 10th and hope No. 3 on the Ground Floor, will, as usual, be ready for our arrival. We are at present half way between Colombo and Freemantle, which is a long way off from Sydney and its very rough, but we have been told the above is the time we are due in Sydney. I shall write to the house manager and given him the order for stores required later on and if there is any change. All are well and have enjoyed our flying visit very much, with kind regards and hoping that everything will be all right at the Astor and all well. Yours sincerely, Mabel Hay.ⁱ

Social Life in Sydney
From the pages of the press

October 1930

Nona and Mabel Hay, of Coolangatta, are this time making a rather long stay in Sydney than usual, and have taken a flat at the Astor. With them is their Auckland sister, Mrs J. Foster, a recent arrival from the Dominion, so the little group in the luxurious flat make a real family party.ⁱⁱ



Nona, Blanche, Mabel and Agnes (Daisy) Hay

The Miller family archives
Berry & District Historical Society

July 1936

The Misses Mabel and Nona Hay gave a cocktail party at their flat at the Astor, Macquarie Street, for Mrs Cline Leonard of Melbourne. With her daughter Hazel, Mrs Leonard left yesterday by the Monterey on her way to England.ⁱⁱⁱ

October 1936

The Misses Nona and Mabel Hay, who have one of those charming flats at The Astor, Macquarie-street, where you are in the city, and yet by reason of their being just opposite to the Gardens and Domain quite in the country, as it were, gave a very nice after-the-festivities cocktail party on Monday afternoon 12th October 1936. Their guests were Mrs Howard

Joseland, Miss Rachael Joy Morton, Mrs Sep Levy, Mrs Ambrose Gaffney, Mrs S. Hardy, Mr and Mrs Louise Neiken, Dr Grant Lindeman, Mr Norman Hill and Mr Leon Lyons.^{iv}

April 1937

To say farewell to Mrs R.J. Watt, who with her husband will leave shortly on a trip to England, the Misses Mabel and Nona Hay, of Coolangatta, entertained at a luncheon party at the Macquarie Club yesterday. Bowls of red roses decorated the table. Among the guests who joined in the farewell were Mrs A.H. Wittingham, of Brisbane, and Mrs F.L. Cavaye, the two sisters of the guest of honour. Lady Sheldon, Lady Barraclough, Lady Reading, Mesdames T.H. Kelly, Ambrose Gaffney, Penfold Hyland, Leonard Darby, J. Gordon of Wirriwa, Alan Potter, Miss Marjorie Bowker, Mrs Bassett Christian and Mrs Leon Lyons. The two hostesses are staying at their flat at the Astor, Macquarie Street.^v

February 1938

The Misses Nona and Mabel Hay entertained at their flat at The Astor, yesterday afternoon, in honour of their sister, Mrs Neil Crowley, of Melbourne.

December 1938

Some of the gayest parties this week were to welcome home from their trip to London, Mrs Howard Joseland and her sisters, the Misses Nona and Mabel Hay, and to wish all of the best to their niece Miss Rachel Joy Morton, and Mr Colin Bell, whose marriage will take place shortly. At their flat at the Astor, Macquarie Street, on December 3, the Misses Hay will entertain many old friends.^{vi}

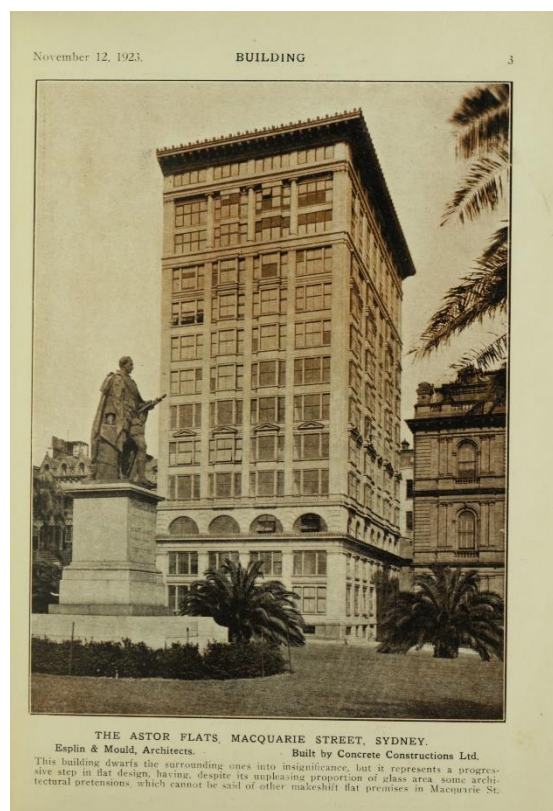
The Astor

123 Macquarie Street, Sydney - built 1923.

The Astor was an early attempt to popularise the concept of high-density inner city living. A magnificent structure that has been described as the Grand Dame of apartment buildings, it is 13 storeys high with one apartment on each floor and a small shopping area at street level. Stylish and Elegant, it became one of Sydney's most sought-after addresses, its owner/occupants over the years including Dame Edith Walker and author and actor Barry Humphries.

Designed by architects Esplin and Mould, it was inspired by the skyscrapers of New York, which were marvels of concrete and steel. With a magnificent roof terrace and manager's residence,

The Astor is a true emblem of Sydney's past discreetly modernized, that still appeals to those seeking the very best in City living.^{vii}



i Information found in the John Robson Papers – Alexander Hay- Berry Museum

ii *Daily Pictorial Monday 29th October 1930*

iii *The Sydney Morning Herald Thursday 23rd July 1936*

iv *The Maitland Mercury Saturday 17th October 1936*
v *The Daily Telegraph Tuesday 6th April 1937*
vi *The Maitland Daily Mercury Saturday 3rd December 1938*
vii *The City of Sydney Archives*^{vii}

with thanks to Robyn Florance

Articles for the Next Issue

If you have any interesting stories about the Berry region or its history that you would like to share, please forward them to the editor for inclusion in our next issue.

Email: berrymuseum@bigpond.com
