



JUNE 2006

**EAST
MELBOURNE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**

Contributions and Suggestions

We invite contributions relating to the history of East Melbourne from our members. Articles of up to 1500 words will be considered for publication. Small articles and items of interest are also welcome.

Contact Sylvia either by post at: P.O. Box 355, East Melbourne, telephone: 9417 2037 or e-mail: sylvia.black@bigpond.com.

We would be pleased to receive your suggestions and ideas for activities, guest speakers, excursions or anything else you might like us to organize on your behalf.

Aims

A full Statement of Purposes appears in our Documents of Incorporation but briefly the aims of the Society are as follows:

- To foster an interest in the history of East Melbourne.
- To build an archive of material relevant to the history of East Melbourne.
- To promote interchange of information through lectures and tours.
- To promote heritage preservation.

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Committee

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Membership

Membership of the East Melbourne Historical Society is open to all who are interested in the history of East Melbourne.

Enquiries: Merrilyn Murnane: 9419 2560

Annual subscription: \$25.00

Guests are welcome
at individual meetings \$5.00

**Affiliated with
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria**

President's Column

An historical society needs to be a thing of the past. It is nice to think of the good old days, and by reading and research and dissemination of information to find out more about those times, although it was not all good in the days when we had no sewerage system, when streets turned to mud in winter, when horses left a trail behind, when there was a log fire in every room but smoke belching out of every chimney, and when many diseases did not have a cure.

An historical society also needs to be a thing of the present. Our descendents might like to think of the good old days of 2006 and, by having access to information that we compiled in 2006, to find out about the people who lived and worked in East Melbourne, about the camaraderie that existed among its citizens, about their determination to preserve its heritage and about their pride in their homes, about community organisations like the East Melbourne

Group and the East Melbourne Historical Society, about our parks before they were developed, about our hospitals before they moved to the suburbs, and about our wonderful buildings before they grew ever upwards.

What we need to do at the present time is to compile, to collect, and to preserve family trees, family photos, personal histories, plans and photos of our houses, tales from our cafes and community organisations, photographs of our streets and parks and private gardens, paraphernalia used in our daily lives, and details of our work and recreation. Our Society is compiling, collecting and preserving and we know that the task will never end. In reality it is great fun, and I am sure that our grandchildren and their grandchildren will thank us for it.

Kind regards to you all,
MALCOLM HOWELL
June 2006

Maurice Brodsky

Dr. Harry Lew spoke at our February meeting on the eventful life of journalist, and East Melbourne resident, Maurice Brodsky, who founded the *Table Talk* magazine.

We learnt that Maurice was born illegitimate and claimed to be the son of Israel Brodsky who was a member of one of Russia's leading families. Israel and Maurice's mother were fully occupied leading a celebrity life and

Maurice was handed over to a teacher of Hebrew from the time he was two until he was seven. After his father's death his mother collected him and took him to Vienna and his first school, then London and later France. He commenced medical studies at the Sorbonne and all was going well until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war when he was imprisoned as a suspected German

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spy. He could get out if he joined the French army. This he did for a short time before emigrating to Australia. He arrived in 1872 on the *Sussex* which sank in Bass Strait. He was rescued but lost everything.

Having learnt a different language every time he changed school, and also acquiring along the way proficiency in Latin and Yiddish, it was inevitable that he become a language teacher on his arrival here. His lively and enquiring mind soon led him to journalism. Always on the lookout for a good story one of his escapades involved him smuggling himself into the gaol in Paddington in order to interview the bushranger, Captain Moonlight. In 1885 he founded *Table Talk* where he could let his investigative skills run

free. Many scandalous (but true) stories of the political and financial worlds were revealed in its pages. However its aims were not merely to muckrake; its opinions were thoughtful and in many cases ahead of their time. It supported the vote for women and equality for aborigines. It provided serious literary and arts articles and was again ahead of its time in supporting the famous 9 x 5 exhibition.

Having escaped charges of libel for many years he was finally bankrupted by one such case and left Australia to start afresh in San Francisco, only to be welcomed by an earthquake. He survived and continued in freelance journalism in London and New York, where he died in 1919.

Robert Hoddle

Robert Hoddle: a man of a decisive countenance' and a 'kindly reserved demeanor'.

On March 4, 1837, Governor William Bourke and senior surveyor Robert Hoddle rode on horseback over the proposed site of the city of Melbourne and traced the outline of the future town. Hoddle began the plan from Batman's Hill, now the site of Southern Cross Station, drawing two primary section lines – the first going one mile to the north, approximately the present corner of Capel and Victoria Sts. North Melbourne, and the other two miles east, to the corner of Victoria and Hoddle Sts. These lines formed the basis of the road network of the city of

Melbourne and of all land sales in the area.

So Hoddle is remembered in Melbourne's early colonial history, but in April our guest speaker, Hoddle's great-granddaughter, Berres Hoddle Colville, was able to give us a much broader view of his life and work. Using some of Hoddle's original drawings and paintings, she showed part of his work in surveying the NSW colony, a task he finished in 1834, his survey with John Oxley of Moreton Bay, the future site of Brisbane, and a charming drawing tracing the source of the Yarra River. As for Melbourne, Hoddle's goal was 'To quarrel as little as possible. To make myself as happy as I can. Not to be too intimate with any.'

Mystery of the Missing Church

Heather Flint from WA has forwarded to us information about her great-great-grandfather, Robert Huckson. In East Melbourne Huckson is known as the builder of the old Treasury, "the Gothic House" at 157 Hotham Street and Clarendon Terrace, 108-112 Clarendon Street. Heather asked if we knew the location of the East Melbourne Congregational Church as she had a record that it, too, was Huckson's work.

Whereupon a mystery was revealed.

Winston Burchett's *East Melbourne 1837-1977* provided the information that the church was on the corner of Victoria Parade and Simpson Street and is now St. Nicholas Orthodox Church of Antioch.

Amongst Heather's information was a news item from the *Illustrated Melbourne Press* written on the occasion of the laying of the church's foundation stone in May 1862 which announced that "the church will be built in the early Gothic Style, its dimensions, in the clear, being 60 feet by 36 feet, and with a gallery it will seat altogether 450. The cost will be 1,200 pounds." This description fits with the existing church.

Burchett agrees that there was a church on the site as early as 1862 but goes on to quote his ancestor, the Rev. James Burchett, a Congregational minister, who wrote that "The present beautiful church edifice was erected during the pastorate of the Rev. D. Nimmo, at a cost of £10,000." The



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, VICTORIA PARADE.—PERCEY OGDEN, ARCHT.

Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria

Rev. David Nimmo was minister of the church from 1869-1872. Apparently the cost of the church greatly exceeded the estimates and left the congregation heavily in debt. This seems convincing evidence that a second church was built.

In addition, a search of the Picture Catalogue of the State Library of Victoria came up with an engraving of the "Congregational Church, Victoria Parade – Percy Ogden, architect". The engraving was published in the *Illustrated Australian news for home readers* on 28 February, 1870. It shows a very elaborate church with a tall spire, totally unlike the existing building.

Continued

What happened to this second church, and if it was never built: what happened to the £10,000?

A further search on the internet found that the Mitchell Library in Sydney holds an actual photo of this church which proves that it was built.

The mystery was unexpectedly solved during the production of the invitation which was sent out for our society's Christmas function in 2004. On the front of the invitation we used an illustration of a view of Eastern Hill and Fitzroy in the 1880s taken from the dust cover of the book of the Victorian Artists' Society history. This view clearly shows the same church standing in Victoria Parade on the corner of Fitzroy Street, Fitzroy, now the site of St. Vincent's Private Hospital.

Unlikely as it seems there were two Congregational Churches in Victoria



Parade. One in East Melbourne, designed and built in 1862 by Robert Huckson, which still stands; and the other in Fitzroy, designed by Percey Ogden in 1870 at great expense, and now demolished.

Robert Huckson

(1824-1902)

Robert Huckson left an impressive body of work when he died in 1902. Apart from the buildings listed above, in Victoria he built the GPO and the Gabo Island lighthouse; in South Australia he was responsible for the construction of Martindale Hall, the grand homestead which was featured in "A Picnic at Hanging Rock"; while in Tasmania, as architect to the Marine Board, and building on his experience at Gabo Island, he

constructed several lighthouses, along with the Hobart docks.

Robert Huckson was born in 1824 in Hereford. His father, too, was a builder. In 1849 Robert and his wife, Sarah, arrived in Adelaide, and moved to Melbourne soon after, first living in Collingwood. From 1859-1863 he is listed as living in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne. But after building a house in Powlett Street between Albert Street and Victoria Parade apparently for himself, it seems financial difficulties forced him to sell it before he even moved in, whereupon he moved to Dandenong.

There he continued his contracting work, successfully tendering for many of the roads and bridges required for this newly developing area. In 1868 he was elected to the Dandenong District Roads Board and two years later was one of the committee appointed to take steps towards the formation of a Shire. He continued to take private commissions, and as well had a farm in South Gippsland.

He returned to Melbourne during the 1870s before moving back to Adelaide. He finally settled in Hobart around 1883. In Hobart he was at his busiest with a wide variety of commissions coming his way; besides his maritime constructions he built theatres, hotels, churches, offices, and many houses. He died in Hobart in 1902.

Lost Paintings

Part of East Melbourne's Past

Recently (16 May 2006) *The Age* ran an article giving publicity to the National Gallery of Victoria's search for four missing paintings by Charles Blackman. The Gallery plans to exhibit the entire 46 paintings which make up Blackman's *Alice in Wonderland* series and needs the four paintings to complete the show.

The article went on to say that "The series was painted while Blackman was a chef at East Melbourne's Café Balzac, owed by artistic and culinary visionaries Mirka and Georges Mora."

Barbara Blackman in her book *Glass by Glass* says Georges "bought into the

Eastbourne Café in East Melbourne, a plain menu for its working-class local regulars, within cooe of our first tin-shed habitat, and, as it soon happened, the 1956 Olympic games. He got a liquor licence for their duration but waited a couple of years for a permanent one." It was, in fact, the first licence in Victoria to allow alcohol to be served with meals until 10 p.m.

The tin shed referred to was where the Blackmans lived when they first arrived in Melbourne in 1951. It is described by Barbara as being "probably some sort of store room" associated with a disused commercial laundry "at the end of a weed-stained alley between tall houses off George Street." The lane is between 129 and 135 George Street. The building that housed the laundry appears to be still there, but there is no sign of the tin shed. By the time Charles was working as a "short-order cook" and creating the *Alice* paintings he and Barbara had moved to Hawthorn.

Housing Survey

Update

Thank you to those who completed the housing survey form enclosed with the last newsletter. Not quite as many responded as we had hoped but several interesting snippets of information turned up which definitely made it a worthwhile exercise. If you have not filled in the form it is not too late to do so. There

Continued

is no dead-line and the information will always be welcome. If you need a new form contact Sylvia on 9417 2037 or sylvia.black@bigpond.com. Rather than letter drop the entire suburb as previously proposed we are instead planning to do it on a block by block basis. After the new library opens and we have settled in we hope to encourage small groups to join together in some informal communal research. Terrace houses and apartments, after all, have a shared history.

Coming Events

Wednesday, 21 June at 8.00 p.m.

In her charming memoir, *The Girls*, Robin Levett tells the story of growing up with her sisters in Sorrento

and Melbourne in the 1930s. Her grandfather shared pastoral interests with Sir William Clarke of Cliveden, where she herself lived with her family for a short time, after its conversion to apartments.

Robin will share many interesting and amusing stories with us.

Wednesday, 16 August at 8.00 p.m.

Nanette Carter, lecturer in Design History and Critical Theory at Swinburne University, will talk on the life and work of Frances Burke, well-known textile designer, and long time resident of East Melbourne,

Both events will be at Clarendon Terrace, 210 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne

Membership Subscriptions 2006

Membership to the East Melbourne Historical Society Inc. is open to all interested in the history of East Melbourne.

Complete the details below and return with your payment of \$25 to:
Membership Secretary, PO Box 355, East Melbourne, Victoria 8002.

Receipts will be issued only on request. All members are issued with an annual membership card.

Enclosed is my cheque/cash for the amount of \$25.

TITLE: [Mr/Mrs/Ms/Prof/Dr etc]

SURNAME:

FIRST NAME:

MAILING ADDRESS:

PHONE NO:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

