



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

April 2019

Meetings

Thursday 11 April 2019 – 8.00 pm

Speaker: John Haward

Topic: Wartime Experiences in Vietnam

John Haward, a Vietnam Vet and member of Box Hill RSL, will share with us some of his recollections of the Vietnam War.

Thursday 9 May 2019 – 8.00 pm

Speaker: John Barnao

Topic: Orchards & Fruit Shops in Doncaster & Box Hill

John Barnao plans to cover the heyday of farm production in the Doncaster area and responses by towns and retail businesses along the Maroondah Corridor, mainly Box Hill, to meet the needs of the district's orchardists.

Thursday 13 June 2019 - 8.00 pm

Speaker:- Dr Max Lay AM., FTSE

Topic - The Roads and Streets of Balwyn

Dr Max Lay former executive director of the Australian Road Research Board, independent reviewer for the City Link project and a past President of the RACV. has also published widely. Although retired, he has acted recently as a consultant to Roads Australia, ConnectEast and the United Nations (UNCTAD).

**Meetings are held at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre,
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

Email: balwynhistory@gmail.com website: www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs

Recent Speaker: Bob Kerr

Bob Kerr spoke about Henry Elgar c 1816 – 1852, having researched his life for over 2 years using Ancestry, digitised books, Gwen McWilliam and Geoffrey Blainey. Henry was baptised on the 16th of April 1816, in Kent, England his father being William who died in 1827 after being bankrupt 3 times in 1813, 1817 and 1827. He had three sisters, Margaret, Harriet and Hannah. Bob's talk focused on Henry's life from 1836.

Between 1836 and 1837, Henry worked in China as a merchant. He then travelled to Manilla marrying and working there until 1840. With his wife and child (who died at only three months), he arrived in Sydney in June before moving to Melbourne in September.

Supreme Court evidence of the 28th of October 1840 indicated Henry described himself as a trading merchant, ship owner (of the Anita) and much at sea.

Bob believes Henry Elgar made a Special Survey purchase in 1841 of 1,600 (not 5,120) acres for 1,600 pounds, one pound per acre, in the parishes of Boroondara in the County of Bourke. Alex Dyce lent Henry Elgar, soon after, 2,167 pounds.

In January 1842, Henry left Sydney with his wife (who died in 1842) and a servant for Manilla where he spent the next 9 years often trading sandalwood, also having an interest in a greenstone quarry in New Zealand near Milford Sound. Henry's three sisters joined him in Manilla. In 1842, Henry transferred his 1,600 Special Survey acres to Alex Dyce who married Henry's sister, Margaret, on the 17th of October 1844.

Henry Elgar left Manilla for Hong Kong in early 1852, later dying at sea off Macau on the 19th of August 1852. Alex Dyce sold the 1,600 acres in 1857.

President's report – April 2019

The first two meetings of our historical society this year were reasonably well attended. We were fortunate to have two very interesting speakers: Bill Mackie in February and Bob Kerr in March both of whom are long-standing members of BHS. However, both meetings were marred by disturbance from an adjoining room. Those of you who attended our March meeting will recall the cacophony that, at times, completely drowned out Bob Kerr our speaker. I complained to Ken McQualter, the CEO of Balwyn Evergreen Centre, who apologised and said this would not happen again.

I spoke to you earlier about the proposal by the Boroondara Council to develop a Canterbury Hub which will be located in the Canterbury gardens. The Council plan to accommodate a number of community groups in the Hub including the Canterbury History Group, Surrey Hills Historical Society and Balwyn Historical Society. It is anticipated that the three historical societies will share office premises, conference rooms, archive storage and exhibition space. These plans are proceeding and committee members of the three societies will meet with Kate Brewster (Manager, Community Information and Libraries) and the architects early in April to discuss plans in more detail. I will keep you informed of progress.

Despite our guest speakers who provide talks on a variety of interesting subjects, our membership is diminishing. I urge you to persuade family, friends and neighbours to join BHS. Friends and visitors are always welcome and it would be great to increase membership numbers this year.

Marilyn Poole

German Speaking Immigrants- the Fankhauser family part 6

By Marilyn Poole

Introduction

This is the final article on the German speaking migrants who arrived on the *Pribislaw* at Port Phillip in February 1850. Frederick Traugott Fankhauser was born in Erdmannsdorf, Silesia, Prussia on 8 July 1848, the youngest child of Johann Gottthard Fankhauser and his wife Elizabeth Geisler. In 1837 his parents were expelled from their homeland in the Zillertal, Austria on account of their Lutheran beliefs and sought religious freedom in Silesia. They were provided with land and homes in Erdmannsdorf (now Myslakowice in Poland) by King Wilhelm III of Prussia. However, their freedom from religious persecution was short-lived and they and other Lutherans emigrated to Australia.

Frederick Traugott Fankhauser (1848-1918)

Frederick was a small child when his father Johann acquired and farmed land in Hawthorn in the area which came to be known first as German Paddock, then Weinberg Road (now Wattle Road) in 1850. By 1856, the Fankhauser family (Johann and his eldest son George) had acquired land in Elgar's Special Survey, portion 18B on Ewart's Road (now Belmore Road, Balwyn).

In 1873 Frederick is listed as the owner of 20 acres of land on Balwyn Road (McWilliam) and in 1877 was a farmer with a house and land on the property. He married Elizabeth Ann Sell on 3 February, 1874 in Camberwell. Elizabeth was born in 1853 in Cambridgeshire, England. She was the daughter of John Sell and his wife Sarah Ann Caldecott. In 1861, according to McWilliam (2010 pp 147-149), John Sell was a property owner and by 1865 a market gardener and owner of a house and land of 15 acres on Whitehorse Road, Balwyn next door but one to the property of Andrew Murray and roughly opposite where Balwyn Cinema now stands.



Frederick Fankhauser and his wife Elizabeth Ann Fankhauser

Frederick established the Balwyn Nursery on his land in Balwyn Road (between Yongala and Frederick Streets) and quickly became well known as a fruit grower. By 1880, at the Boroondara Horticultural Society Frederick was exhibiting several varieties of apple (*Weekly Times* Saturday 24 July 1880 p. 21). He won prizes at numerous shows including the third Horticultural Show Melbourne International Exhibition where he won first prize for 30 kinds of apples (*South Bourke and Mornington Journal* Wednesday 23 Feb 1881 p. 3). At the Horticultural Society of Victoria, he showed twenty-two kinds of apples, all very well grown (*The Leader* Saturday 10 June 1882 p. 10). Frederick Traugott was active as chair of the Boroondara Horticultural Society where he won numerous prizes at their shows for cherries and apples including the incomparable Moses apple (*The Australasian*, Saturday 5 May 1883 p. 27). In 1885, he showed ‘a large and varied collection of fruits, many of which were splendid specimens of cultural skill. Very noticeable were Henry Morning, Margil, Newtown Pippin, Kentucky Red Streak, Old Nonpareil, Ben Davis, Jonathan, Honey’s Seedling and Damelow Seedling. He also showed some splendid peaches and good figs and pears’ (*Leader* Saturday 7 April, 1883 p. 14).

Frederick’s grandson Edmund Samuel Fankhauser wrote ‘Father claimed that grandfather Frederick ws one of the first nurserymen in Victoria, the first being Chas. Cole of Hawthorn. Grandfather ws the first man here to get fruit of the Rome Beauty apple. Mr Cole imported buds of it and sold one bud to grandfather for £2, quite a big sum in those days. This bud turned out to be the only fruit bud in the lot, and when the apple ripened, grandfather took it to a meeting of the Horticultural Society, held at Burnley. Mr Cole was greatly upset, and said as he had imported it he should have been the first to show it, but grandfather said :”I paid you £2 for it so I think I am entitled to show it”.

Father also told me that Grandfather imported from Canada an apple called ‘Montreal’. He sold trees of it to customers in Adelaide, Ballarat and Mildura. All of these men lost the name of it, so one re-named it Brown’s Seedling, one called it Ballarat Pippin, and the other Stewart’s Seedling. As Montreal it was never popular, but all the orchardists wanted Stewart’s Seedling. They would not believe grandfather when he told them it was Montreal, so he just sold it to them as Stewart’s Seedling, though he never had stock of the “new” apple in his nursery. There were thousands of Stewart’s Seedling planted in Victorian orchards that were Grandfathers’ old Montreal’(E.S. Fankhauser)

Frederick and his wife were active members of St Barnabas’s Church, Balwyn. At a ceremony laying a memorial stone for an extension to the church building in 1884 Frederick is mentioned as a key member of the group supporting an extension to the building so that it could house more worshippers. (*The Church of England Messenger for the Diocese of Melbourne and Ballarat* Wed 4 June 1884 p 4).

In an article titled ‘Prize Gardens’” (*The Leader* Sat 4 Dec 1886 p.14) Frederick’s orchard and nursery were described as “situated in Balwyn, about four miles nearer to Melbourne and about half -a-mile from the White Horse-Road. He is well known for the variety and quality of his fruit, which is frequently exhibited at shows and other meetings in Melbourne, His garden is in first rate condition, clean, with good, well-kept walks, the soil loose and free from weeds. He also had a new house built, of which the joiner work was done by himself, and a commodious, comfortable and good-looking house it is, and, being surrounded by a well-kept flower garden in which good taste is displayed, it presents a very pleasant appearance. The cherry crop is good and the plum crop is medium, but apples and pears are light” “A fine hedge of Cherry Plum affords shelter to the house and a part of the garden.

Mr Fankhauser does not need to stand the market; his fruit being sold to the fruiterers in their shops. A portion of the ground is devoted to a nursery, the fine fruit shown to the public bringing numerous customers”.

There is little doubt that Frederick Traugott Fankhauser was a leading orchardist and nurseryman well known throughout Victoria. In 1886 at the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria Frederick showed a splendid collection of 12 varieties of cherries (*The Australasian* Sat 4 December 1886 p 13. There were regular articles written over the years in newspapers regarding yields of fruit crops by Mr F T Fankhauser of the Balwyn Nursery.

Frederick, like many others in the Fankhauser family, had acquired cheaper land in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. He owned land in East Burwood from Burwood Road down to Highbury Road. Frederick's three sons who were orchardists *'settled in East Burwood had a verbal agreement with him that they would work with him till they were 23 and would then be given 20 acres of land with a house on it and 10 acres of it planted to fruit trees* (E. S. Fankhauser). *This land consisted of 30 acres fronting the Dandenong Creek in Burwood Road was sold and the remaining 80 acres divided into 20 acre lots, one kept and planted as an orchard and 'stock tree portion; to help provide scions and buds for the Balwyn Nursery. The other three blocks were divided between his three orchardist sons, the one at the top of the hill going to the eldest son Frederick John* (ibid). The second block went to the next son Oswald Traugott.

The younger son, Edmund Charles born in Balwyn in 1888, made a 'gentleman's agreement' with his father to stay working for a further 5 years in which case he would get his land, house and orchard and 12 months to wind up the Balwyn Nursery where he worked. Unfortunately, Frederick Traugott died before he could honour this agreement *'although he had arranged to do so the day he died, and actually had the money for the house in his pocket, when he had a stroke and died* (ibid). The executors of Frederick's will considered the agreement a verbal one and as such could not be enforced. The 20 acres of land, situated on the main Ferntree Gully Road, was in Edmund Charles' name. However, it was a bush paddock with no house and only 5 acres had been cleared and planted. Clearing this took many years and Edmund Charles had to take on outside work to support his family and clear his paddock on Saturday afternoons and Sundays.

Not all Frederick and Elizabeth's children were orchardists. Herbert William Fankhauser was appointed Lieutenant -Surgeon in the Army Medical Corps shortly after he qualified for his MBBS degree at the University of Melbourne (*Ballarat Star* Tuesday 16 February 1915 p. 4). Interestingly, Herbert William abandoned his father's name after World War I (Ibid).

Frederick continued working at the Balwyn Nursery until his death on 19 June, 1918. He is buried in Boroondara Cemetery, Kew with his wife Elizabeth Ann who died on 19 March 1938 and their 4-year-old daughter Sarah Bethanar who died in 1882.

Unfortunately, matters arising from Frederick's will came before Mr Justice Mann at the Practice Court (*The Argus* Saturday 4 December 1926 p. 38). Frederick's estate consisted principally of land in Balwyn, Burwood, Camberwell and Canterbury. Frederick left all his property to his wife for life and on her death to be divided equally between his children. By 1923, it had been agreed by all parties that the properties should be sub-divided and sold at reserve prices. However, the reserve prices could not be obtained and only a few allotments

were sold. The parties could not agree on reserve prices for the land and finally the widow and Equity Trustees were made trustees of the settlement.

Postscript

The Fankhauser family are one of the oldest pioneer families in Victoria. The first settlers cleared their land 'an unknown wilderness, no roads or bridges, tracks to be laid with saplings over very bad patches, a country that relied on human endurance and tireless work' (*German Pioneer Families* p 38). The descendants of Johann Gotthard Fankhauser and his wife Elizabeth Geisler were known for their fruit growing in Balwyn, East Burwood and beyond. Between them not only did they win prizes at various horticultural shows but also belonged to a progressive group of orchardists who established nurseries and orchards throughout the eastern suburbs.



Frederick and Elizabeth Fankhauser with their nine surviving children.

Sources

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