

### Subdivision of the Melanesian Mission Estate.

The chief reasons for the Melanesian Trust Board's decision to subdivide the Mission estate were (1) that they believed the construction of a waterfront road would soon be under way and (2) that they thought it advisable to market their own estate before the Orakei block was subdivided.

When addressing a session of the Auckland Synod in 1924 Bishop Averill commented on the Trust Board's decision thus:

"The Melanesian Mission Trust Board has given much time and thought to the question of the proper way to deal with Mission Bay, Kohimarama, in the best interests of the Mission, and has decided to undertake the subdivision of the property itself. On the most conservative estimate, the Mission should benefit to the extent of over £100,000 when the property is all sold. We hope to place a number of sections on the market at the beginning of the year. The roading problem is a problem indeed and will necessarily be the first charge upon the revenue derived from the sale of sections, but the prospects for the financial stability of the Melanesian Mission in the near future are very bright indeed."<sup>1</sup>

Survey work on the estate began early in 1925 and contracts for the roading were let to two firms, Grinter Bros. and Gosse & Mullan. Most of the existing buildings were dismantled or removed. The hangars which had used the planes of the Flying School were moved by the Public Works Department to the site of the railway deviation works and other buildings used by the school were sold for removal. The two storeyed cottage built in 1866 for the Rev. Dudley remained until 1926 when it was bought by the foreman of the Tamaki Road Board for £5 and re-erected as a one storeyed house at 28 Rarangi Road, St. Heliers.<sup>2</sup> Newcombs' farmhouse was bought by Captain Jim Biddick who used the wood in the construction of three houses he was then erecting in Hapimana Street, Bastion Bay.<sup>3</sup> The "Captain's House" was not demolished until the roading of the estate was completed as it was used as a bach by Messrs. Gosse and Mullan and three of their employees. Beside it, on the reserve, seventeen tents were erected for workmen.

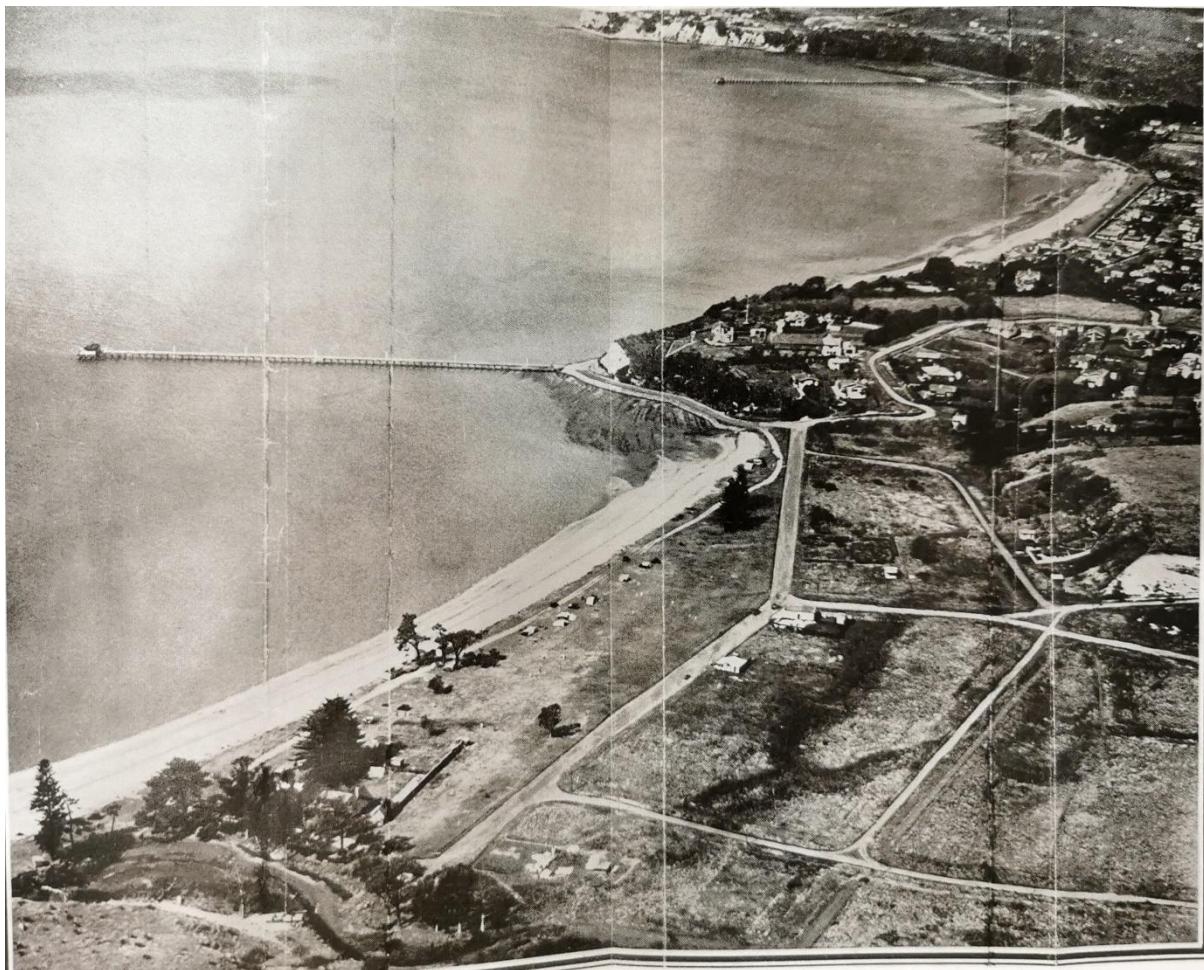
The first part of the subdivision, the eastern half of the estate between Raumati (Ronaki) Road and Orakei (Kepa) Road, was offered for sale by auction on the evening of October 19th 1925 in the Chamber of Commerce. The auctioneers, AF. Bennett Ltd., had considered this hall would be large enough but interest was so keen that people were unable to gain admission. That night 82 of the 200 sections available were sold at prices which ranged from £200 to £780, the sales totalling over £26,000. Sections in the block bounded by Kepa and Dudley Roads were popular securing up to £440 but the bidding was not nearly as heated as it was for the Raumati Road sections which secured up to £780. Sections sold well, too, in the vicinity of the site between Patteson and Atkin Avenues which had been purchased by the Education Board for the proposed Mission Bay School - a school which did not eventuate. Part of the site, however, is now used for a kindergarten.

It had been arranged to hold a second auction on the following night, October 20th, in the same hall but, owing to the large attendance on the 19th, the Town Hall Concert Chamber was used instead. On the second night bidding was not so keen only 38 sections being sold, the prices ranging from

<sup>1</sup> From Diocesan of Auckland Yearbook 1923 - 24, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> It was demolished in 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Often called Biddicks Bay.



£50 to £440. The total sales for the two sales amounted to £40,000. The terms were 10% cash, 5% in one month and the balance in five years at 6%.

Many of the buyers wished to proceed with the erection of new homes but were unable to do so until the following year as the roads were not dedicated. However, one enterprising couple who had purchased section in Patteson Avenue - now number 52 - erected a tent on their property within a month of the auction, took up their residence there and conducted an open air "tea room" and cabaret among the trees. This couple were Mr. and Mrs. Nixon, both of whom had been long associated with the bay. Mrs. Nixon was a daughter of Captain Jim Biddick while her husband, who was a brother of the late Dame Hilda Ross, some years ago M.P. for Hamilton, had worked on Biddick's scows and run ships of his own. For a few years, too, just prior to the opening of the Kohimarama Wharf in 1912, he had run a steam launch service between Mission Bay and Auckland during the summer months to cater for picnickers and campers. The Nixons, who erected their own house as soon as building permits were given, were the first residents on the new estate.

Shortly after midnight of February 4th 1926 the entire camp and most of the residents of Mission Bay and Kohimarama were awakened by a terrific explosion when an attempt was made to kill Mr., Gosse by igniting a bomb under his bed room. However, though the front window was blown out and a hole of about 16 feet square was made in the floor, Mr. Gosse, whose bed was by the inner wall, suffered no injury. An immediate search was made by Mr. Gosse and men from the Camp but no sign could be found of the miscreant who had fired the bomb. The remains of the bomb were found - a tin which had been filled with raw cement, pieces of iron and other material, and a



quantity of some high explosive. A stick has evidently been used to push it under the floor of the house which was raised on low brick pillars about 12 inches from the ground. Beside the bomb was a piece of spent fuse about 8 inches long. After the search Mr. Gosse went calmly back to bed and slept until morning. A detective who was summoned the next morning made inquiries into Mr. Gosse's relationship with his employees and learnt that he was regarded as an exacting employer but that he paid high wages and therefore expected an adequate return. He had paid men off from time to time but had not quarrelled with any.

Two more auction sales were held following the subdivision of the rest of the estate, the first on April 29th 1926 and the second on May 3rd. These sales were held in the Town Hall and were again well attended. Prices obtained ranged from £1.6.0. per foot in the middle of the estate to £12.10.0 in the vicinity of the recreation reserve.

That year the trustees of the Melanesian Trust Board reported that the Mission Bay property was "in process of subdivision and sale" and that 189 sections had already been sold at a total price of £61,368, leaving 378 still to be disposed of. "The market has been very quiet for some time past," the report stated, but it is hoped that there will be a big demand for these sections during the spring and coming summer." In the same report it was recorded that the cost of subdivision of the estate was being met by a bank overdraft and that the balance of capital uninvested stood against the overdraft. Interest at the rate of six per cent was being charged to the "Mission Bay Subdivision Account and paid to the Income Account of the Trust."

A deterrent to the sale of sections was the transport problem. Since March 1925 the residents of Mission Bay had found transport to and from the city difficult for, at the end of that month, the ferry service to St. Heliers and Kohimarama had been discontinued permanently. This necessitated a walk around the point or over the hill and down Kohimarama Road to catch a bus ; for in 1923 Mr. L.J. Keys had inaugurated a service between Kohimarama and the city via Remuera Road, Long Drive and

Speight Road. In 1926 he began running buses to Mission Bay via Remuera, Kohimarama Road and Selwyn Avenue but only on Sundays and public holidays. For a few months, too, from the beginning of March, 1926, a launch service was run by Mr. Inglis, the owner of the "Olive Rose" and the "Olive Jean". The launches plied between the city and St. Heliers every day, calling at Orakei and Kohimarama wharves; but, though the service had been inaugurated at the request of the residents of Tamaki who were disgruntled at overcrowded buses and high fares, the launches were not well patronised and the service was terminated. It was not until Anzac Day 1931 that "Tamaki Drive", as the new waterfront road was called, was opened to traffic<sup>4</sup> and became the chief bus route to all the eastern marine suburbs.

The inauguration of bus services through Mission Bay did not make any appreciable increase in the demand for sections there as at that time New Zealand was in the throes of an economic depression; but by 1935 sales appear to have increased for in 1936 the Melanesian Mission Trust Board stated:

"The Mission Bay subdivision has caused the Board considerable anxiety for some time past, but the Board is thankful to report that there has been a considerable improvement in the affairs of the subdivision during the past year. A careful scrutiny has been made of the sales which had taken place and the Board has resumed a considerable number of sections, the purchasers of which were unable to fulfil their obligations. The Board... has engaged the services of a collector who also supervises work on the Estate.... During the year sections have been sold at a total price of £12,122.108. The total number of sections sold, not including those resumed, amounts to 307 and sale price to £99,420. The number of sections remaining unsold is 260, the sale prices of which amount to £77,400.10s., plus the value of 7 waterfront and 8 other sections which have been withdrawn from sale and are at present in process of resubdivision into business sites.... In order to develop the Estate and attract purchasers the Board has undertaken, to a limited extent, the financing of the erection of buildings for approved purchasers. The advances are made on Agreements which provide for the reduction of the amounts advanced by regular monthly payments, and it has been found that this system is working satisfactorily.... This step has attracted purchasers to Mission Bay and the Board hopes that during the coming year considerable development will take place."<sup>5</sup>

In naming the streets, the Mission Trust Board commemorated the names of many who had worked on the mission staff at the bay or at St. John's College and of a few others who joined the staff in later years. Hence we have Patteson and Atkin Avenues, Codrington, Marau, Godden, Palmer, and Comins Crescents and Cullwick, Tagalana (Tagalana), Dudley and Bongard Roads. (Refer to the chapter on the Melanesian Mission and to the aerial view of the estate facing page 90 ) The name "Bice"<sup>6</sup> Esplanade was given to the Mission Bay portion of the waterfront road but was later dropped for "Tamaki Drive" when it became part of the continuous road from Hobson Point to St. Heliers.

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<sup>4</sup> The road around Pipimea Point was not completed until 10 months later; so buses from the city to St. Heliers had to make a detour from Mission Bay to Kohimarama waterfront via Selwyn Road.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Trustees of the Melanesian Mission Trust Board, Diocese of Auckland Yearbook 1926 - 27.

<sup>6</sup> The Rev. Bice after whom this was called served the Mission from 1867 to 1892.

Raumati<sup>7</sup> Road which was later re-named Ronaki Road, was a continuation of Bond St. which was cut through the former Atkin estate.

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<sup>7</sup> The name was changed when Mission Bay became part of Auckland City as there was another road thus named in Remuera.