

The Verran House at the Corner

By Beryl Verran



Charles Verran's house in Coromandel

Most of you have seen the petrol station at Verran's Corner on Verran Road and Verbena Road. How many of you can remember the HOUSE which was on the property prior to the petrol station?

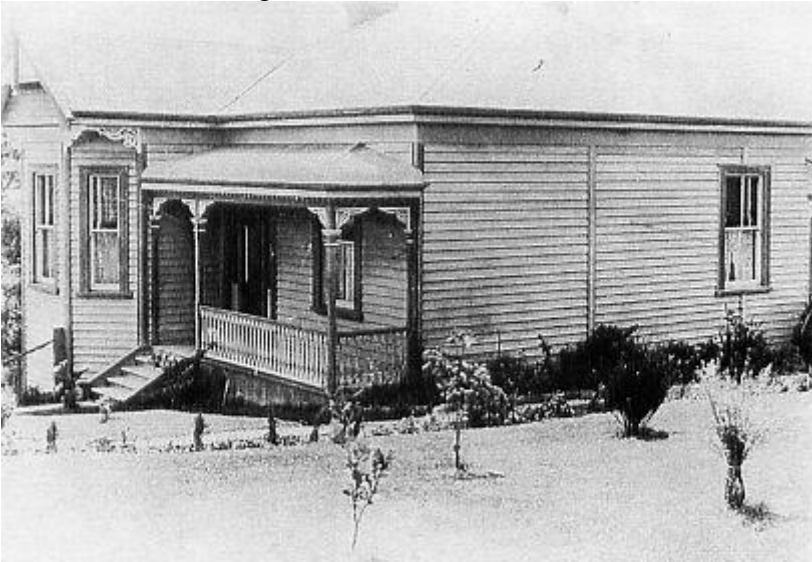
The VERRAN HOUSE, as I will call it, commenced as a grand house on a section in Coromandel. Some years ago, my late husband, Noel and I found the section in Coromandel township and the concrete steps were still visible in the rough grass on the section. We have surmised that it was a Maori lease section as there has been no family data of ownership of land in Coromandel.

On 10 July 1905 Mr. Charles Polmear Verran (Grandfather of my late husband) owner of Verran House purchased a Postmastership, Store and Carrying Business from W. McKenzie which was situated just up from Birkenhead Wharf, and later purchased 14 acres at Bagot's Hill (later Verran's Corner). On 17 December 1908 he obtained a Permit from the Birkenhead Borough Council to resite the dwelling from Coromandel to Bagot's Hill. The land there had three frontages; Verran Road, Verbena Road and Birkdale Road. The house was dismantled into sections and brought up from Coromandel by barge to Birkenhead.

Can you imagine in circa 1909 the dismantling of the house into flat section? No skilsaws, bulldozers or hoists in those days; only human manpower, draught horses, handsaws, and perhaps bullock power. The long haul from the section, load after load to Coromandel Wharf to the waiting barge. Coromandel to Auckland is a notoriously bad piece of water, storms come out of nowhere and there are rocky banks in the water off Coromandel. Auckland's Coromandel Quick-Cat caught on one just recently. Wouldn't

the arrival in Auckland Harbour have been a great relief to all and then the slow trip up the Harbour to Hellyers Creek.

Mr. McGee who lived in Vermont (now Verbena) Road and owned around 20 acres told the late Mr. Oliver Woods that the barge was hauled up Hellyers Creek and pulled up onto "the hard" at high tide. The house portions were then loaded onto sledges and pulled by horses up Salisbury Road, Birkdale Road to the Corner. The house was reassembled on the section although the house as reassembled bore little resemblance to the grand house of Coromandel being a much smaller and less elaborate dwelling. Charles Verran, his wife Bessie, daughter Elsie and son Charles Jnr lived in the house.



Charles Verran's house relocated at Verran's Corner

The Verran's lived there until the widowed Mrs Verran died in March 1937, when the property was sold, I think, to Mrs Hannah. The house subsequently became a Hair Dressing Salon, a Rest Home, and was also owned by Mr Danny Beattie and his wife Elsie (nee Madsen). Danny was a painter and paperhanger, by trade. Later it was purchased by Birkenhead Transport. In July 1972 the house was pulled apart and mostly burnt on the site. Noel had a brass door knob which he gave to his brother Ray. I do not know who now has it or if they realise the significance. Noel could remember horsehair upholstery on the parlour furniture at his Grandparent's home.

I still have a largish china statue of Garibaldi the Italian Patriot and his grey horse which came from the Verran House. The late Mr. Charles Verran Snr bore a strong resemblance to Garibaldi, and also adored his horses.



Charles Verran outside his Post Office Store, Birkenhead Wharf
Birkenhead Library