

THE PIONEER

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Harry Board, builder, farmer and boarding house proprietor.

by Bill Lavarack and Helene Cronin

Harry James Kerle Board was born in January 1859 in Huntspill, Somerset, to Lucy Board (née Hembery), age 20, and George Board, age 21. He was described in the English census for 1881 as a carpenter. He arrived in Australia at Cooktown on 12 October 1883 aged 23 on board the *Duke of Devonshire* (see right) which sailed from Plymouth England at noon on August 18, with 571 emigrants on board bound for Queensland.¹



There was one notable event on the voyage. The ship passed just south of the volcanic island of Krakatoa in October 1883. The island had exploded in May that year blocking the more commonly used Bezee Channel to the north of Krakatoa with a new island of 'considerable magnitude'.² The final volcanic activity was in October 1883. It must have been quite a sight for Harry and the other passengers as they sailed close to the remains of Krakatoa only a few months after the eruption.

Harry arrived at Cooktown from England in October 1883, but his subsequent movements are not clear. The first record appears to be on the Quarterly Electoral list for the Electoral District of Moreton, on which he is listed as living at 'Mooloolah' in 1886.³ It is also reported that he tendered

¹ Information from Ancestry.

² *Capricornian* (Rockhampton,), Saturday 20 October 1883, page 19.

³ The locality 'Mooloolah' is a broad one, referring to more than just the Mooloolah River. It does not exclude the possibility Harry was on Buderim in 1886.

for, and then built the Buderim Mountain School in 1886¹. It must be a strong possibility that he moved to, or was living on, Buderim in 1886 when he built the school.

He is said by local historian Stuart Weir to have been involved in the construction of J.K. Burnett's house² which is reported to have been built in 1882. This date that does not agree with the 1883 date of Harry's arrival in Australia. Information from Joan Hogarth's book on Pioneer Cottage³ raises doubts about the date of 1882 as she states that the Caboolture Divisional Board Valuation Register shows that there was only a slab hut on the block in 1883 and a 'sawn house' in 1884. If the house was built in 1884 it is possible Harry was involved.

Prior to Harry's arrival on Buderim most settlers built their own houses or huts or made use of itinerant tradesmen passing through Buderim on their way to or from the Gympie gold diggings.⁴ Harry was a carpenter and pit-sawyer, skills in demand in the growing community of Buderim in the 1880s and 90s. Pit-sawing involved sawing a log into planks with one person in a pit underneath and another above handling a long saw vertically. The man in the pit had to deal with all the sawdust.



Harry Board purchased Portion 64 of 56 acres on the south west of Buderim Mountain (now 75 William Street). He built a small cottage probably in the period 1884 to 1887 (see left) from local timbers including pine, white beech, red cedar and a local hard wood.⁵ He used tools he had brought with him from England. The house had a shingle roof, later replaced with corrugated iron. It was typical of many houses built at that time, probably having a central corridor, four rooms and a front veranda.



Harry, Polly and Percy with Harry Collard c. 1907



Polly Board (Mary Briggs)

¹ Tenders were called for the building of the Buderim Mountain State School in *The Queenslander*, 16 Jan. 1886.

² Stuart Weir, 1981, Site Reference Card, Site no. 50, H. Board's House, held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

³ Joan Hogarth, 2006, *Pioneer Cottage the House that Buderim Saved*, Buderim Historical Society Inc., page 28.

⁴ Stuart Weir, Meg Board and Alec Stewart, 1990, *Historical Background in Bruce Brown Architects Pty Ltd*, in Assoc. with Marris Design Consultants, Conservation Study, page 2.

⁵ Stuart Weir et al. 1990, page 19.

In 1890 Harry married Mary Briggs (b. 1871 d. 1949) usually known as ‘Polly’. She was a granddaughter of John Potts who was manager of William Pettigrew’s store at Mooloolah Heads from 1877/78 to his death in 1890.¹ Polly aged 5, arrived in Australia from England on the *Woodlark* in January 1877 with her grandfather and mother and other family members. Harry and Polly had two sons, George H. Kerle Board, who died from eating poisonous berries at the age of nine in 1900 and Percy Herbert Board, (b. 1901 d. 1989), who was to manage the farm after his father’s death.²



Buderim Mountain State School, built by Harry Board and John White in 1886.

In 1886 Harry tendered for and won a contract to build the Buderim Mountain State School in Main Street.³ (see left). This is the first definite record of Harry’s presence on Buderim. He also built several other early houses in the 1880s.

TENDERS are invited by the Department of Public Instruction for the erection of State school buildings, Buderim Mountains, and for improvements, &c., at the Dalby State school.

Advertisement in the *Queenslander*, 16 Jan 1886.

E.J. Burnett and Richard Westaway of Meridan Plains took up land at Montville in the 1880s. They cut a bridle track through dense scrub to the site and they employed Harry Board and H.O. Burnett to pit-saw timber, largely white beech, on site before building the first house at Montville.⁴

In 1899 Harry and Polly saw an opportunity and opened their house as Buderim’s first boarding house, naming it ‘Sea View House’ and Polly took in the first boarders.⁵ It is likely that most of the early visitors who stayed at Sea View House arrived uninvited and made ‘on the spot’ arrangements for accommodation. This was apparently common at that time in several tourist locations.⁶ The boarding house went well and, in 1901, to meet the growing need for accommodation on Buderim, two wings were added to the eastern side to form a U shape. The southern veranda was partly enclosed and the southern wing had a brick fireplace with ‘1901’ inscribed in the cement.⁷

SEA View House, Buderim.—Good Accommodation for Visitors. Charges moderate. Buggy or Horses meet Visitors at Railway Station by arrangement. Buderim is situated six miles from Woombye, North Coast line. H. J. K. Board, Proprietor.

¹ The Potts/Briggs family did not arrive in Australia until January 1877 (see earlier on this page) so Weir’s date of 1876 is incorrect. Elaine Brown, in her thesis on William Pettigrew (2004) page 256, gives the year as 1878 which is more likely.

² Stuart Weir et al., 1990, page 4.

³ Stuart Weir, et al., 1990 pages 3 & 4.

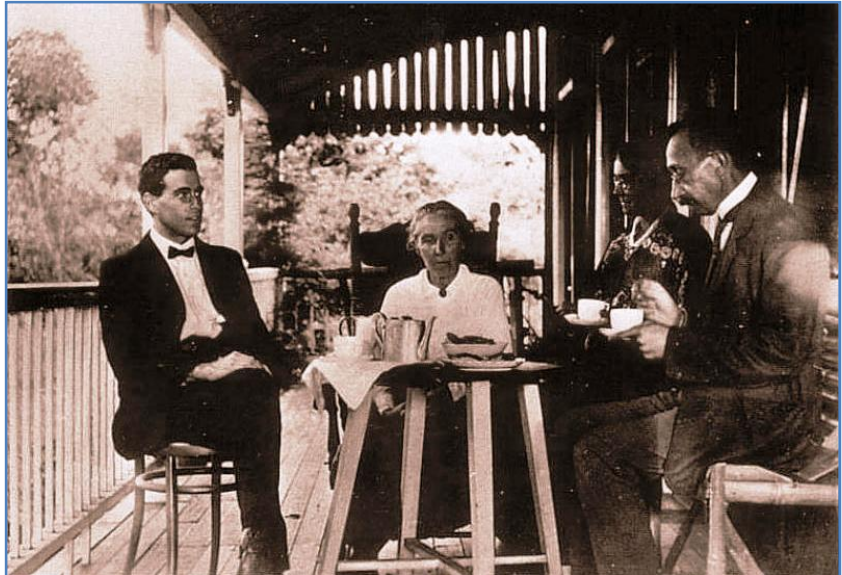
⁴ *Nambour Chronicle*, March 29, 1940, page 1, ‘The late Mr. Ernest Jones Burnett, The first house erected at Montville’. No date is given for this, but it was probably about 1888.

⁵ Advertisement in the *Brisbane Courier*, 29 November, 1899.

⁶ Stuart Weir, et al., 1990, page 18.

⁷ Stuart Weir, 1981, Site Reference Card, Site no. 50, H. Board’s House.

In the 1890s Harry planted 10 acres of coffee, which was becoming a booming crop on Buderim at that time, and became one of the leading growers. In the early 1900s he extended his interests to include the processing of coffee. He installed an imported machine to treat the beans in the processes that resulted in the production of ground coffee ready for domestic use. It was sold in tins labelled 'Buderim Coffee' and bearing the name of 'H. Board'.¹



Tea on the veranda of Sea View House, about 1920. The woman is probably Polly Board. Note the formal attire.

When his father became ill Percy, who was in his late teens, took over the business. Harry died in 1919 but Percy continued until 1926 when he sold to J.J. (Jack) Simpson who had worked on the plantation for several years.²



Harry Board's House, now Harry's Restaurant, in its new location in Buderim Forest Park.

J.J. Simpson and his family, ran the plantation until 1948. The Simpson family occupied Harry's house until the 1960s after which several families lived in the old building for some 30 years until the then tenants, Eric and Lyn Moses brought it to the attention of the Maroochy Shire Council. By this

time the building was in run down condition, but still retained its historic value. The owners, Brian and Victoria Kimbell, donated the house to the people of the Maroochy Shire in 1990. The Council had it removed to the Buderim Forest Park in 1991 and renovated it, retaining as much of the original character as possible. It has been operating as a restaurant since 1994 with diners making use of the wide verandas as they did in Harry and Polly Board's day over a century before.

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Acknowledgements The photographs (with the exception of the first which is from the Internet and the last which is by Bill Lavarack) are from the Photographic Collection of Buderim Historical Society Inc.

¹ Joseph Tainton, *Memoirs of Buderim*, 25 pages of typescript, held by Buderim Historical Society Inc.

² Stuart Weir et al., 1990, page 4.