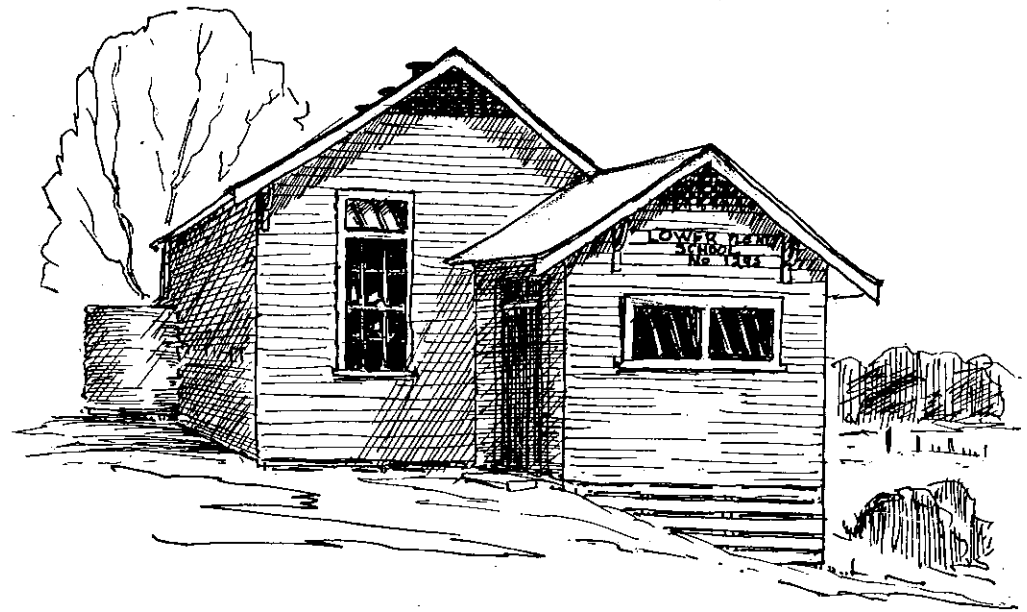
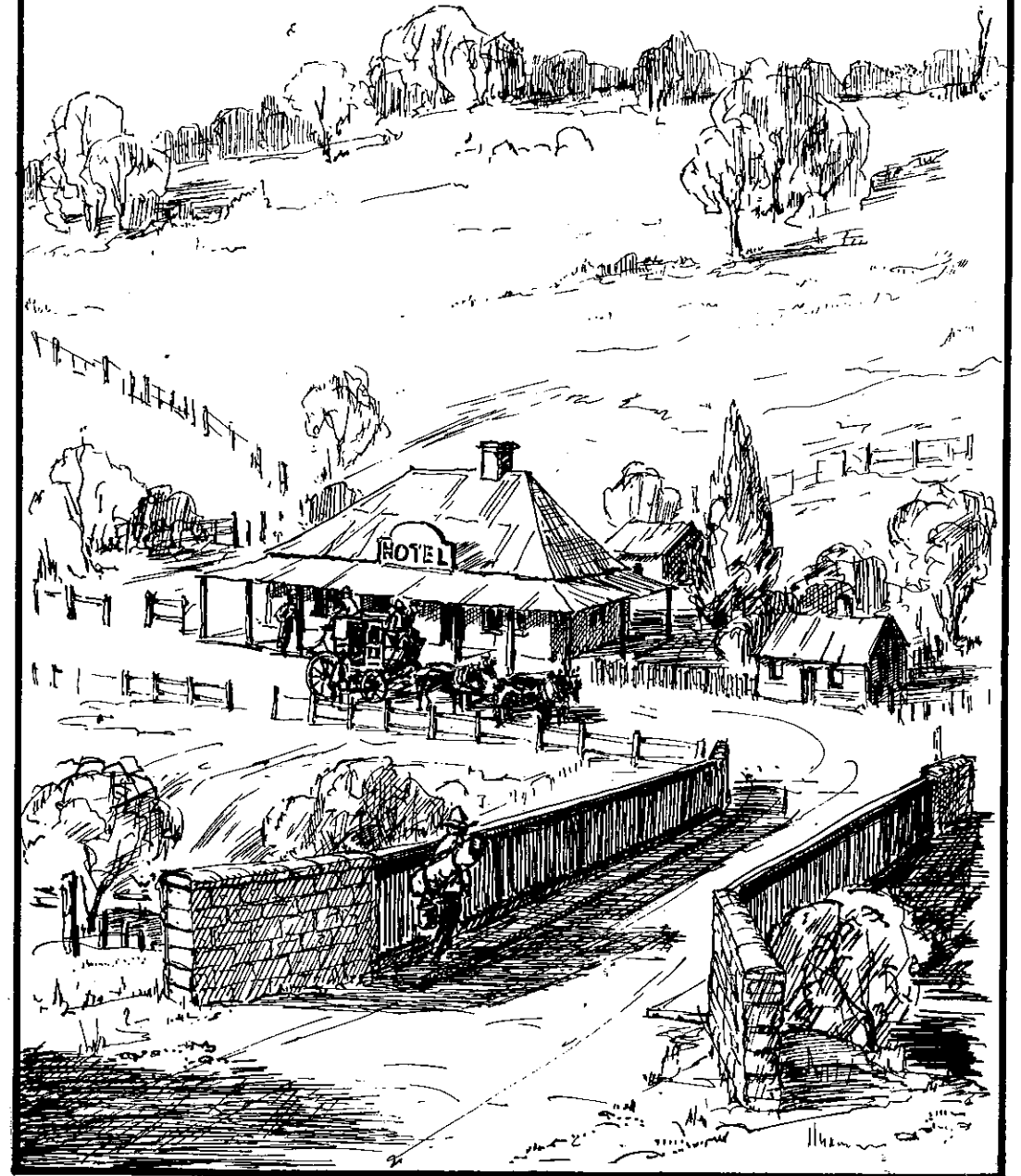


# SCHOOL AT THE CROSSING PLACE



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LOWER PLENTY PRIMARY SCHOOL No. 1295  
1874 - 1974

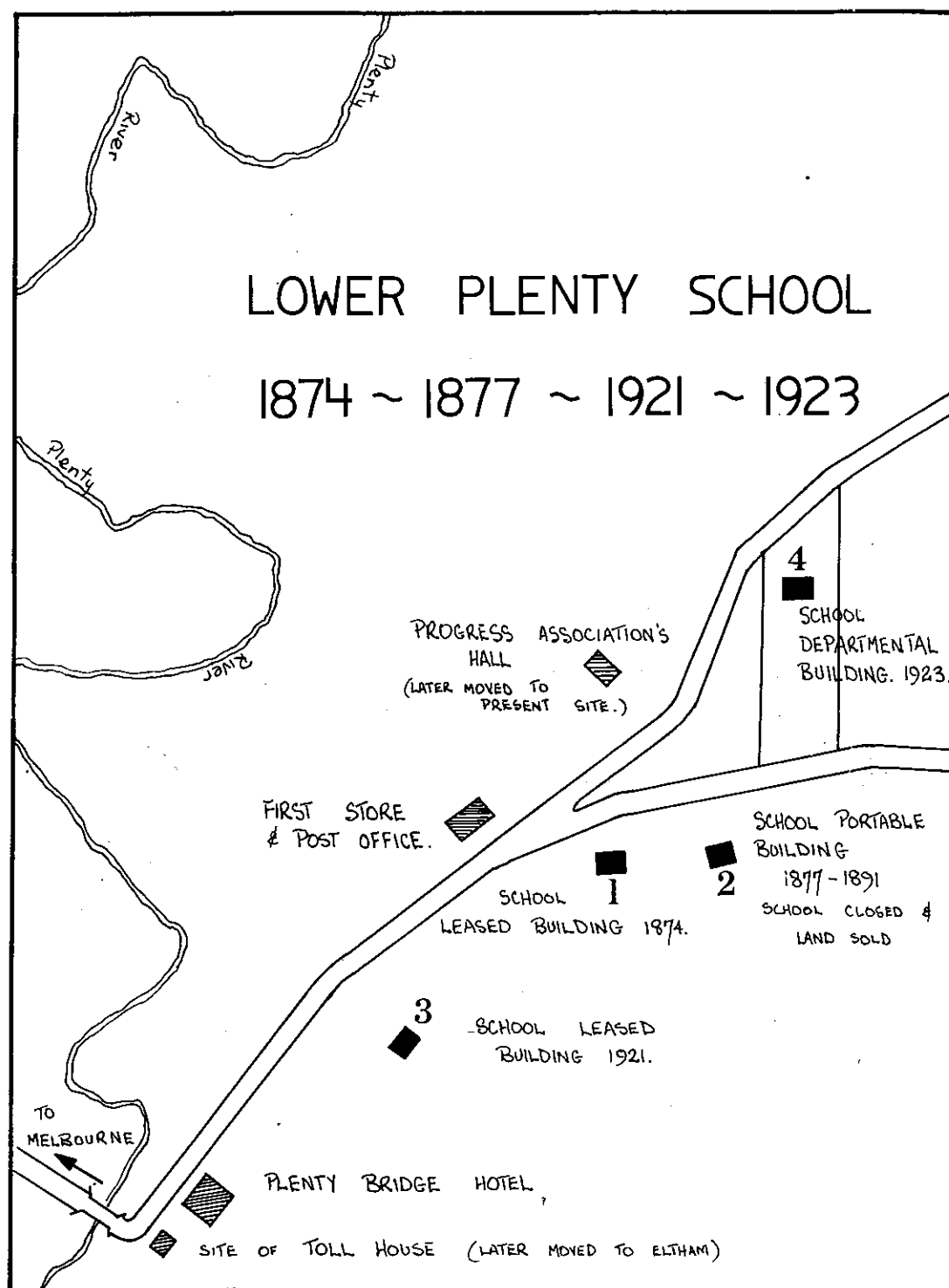


W. F. HENDERSON



# LOWER PLENTY SCHOOL

1874 — 1877 — 1921 — 1923



Acknowledgements. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance received from all those people who provided information and photographs. Special thanks are due to Mr. Neville Drummond (Education Department) and to my wife Rosemary for her patience and help.

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# LOWER PLENTY SCHOOL

1840-1894

1873-1894

The land surrounding Lower Plenty was sold by the Crown in 1840. Farming was carried on by a few tenants who rented areas from the few large landholders, but population was insufficient to allow any community to develop.

### Crossing Place:

The settlement at Lower Plenty is a result of the New Caledonia Gold diggings. Several routes to the diggings were developed, but the route through Clifton Hill, Heidelberg, and then on through Lower Plenty, avoided the need to cross the Yarra River. However the Plenty River still needed to be crossed. It appears that the first route was approximately along what is now Martins Lane, fording the Plenty at the bend, and then round the hill and on through Eltham. A slab hotel was built near the ford. The building of a bridge shortened the route, and later the Toll House and the Plenty Bridge Hotel were erected near the "Old Bridge". The old bridge, which still stands, is not the original. The first bridge was a wooden structure which was destroyed by floods.



A home on the New Caledonia diggings. From homes such as this came the pupils of 1874.

### Need for a School:

In 1873 the local population petitioned for a school to be established, and Mr. John Brown (owner of the land which is now the Golf Club) offered the lease of a slab building with shingle roof, as temporary accommodation for the school.

In April 1874, Mr. John Higgs opened the school in the premises leased from John Brown.

"Dear Sir,

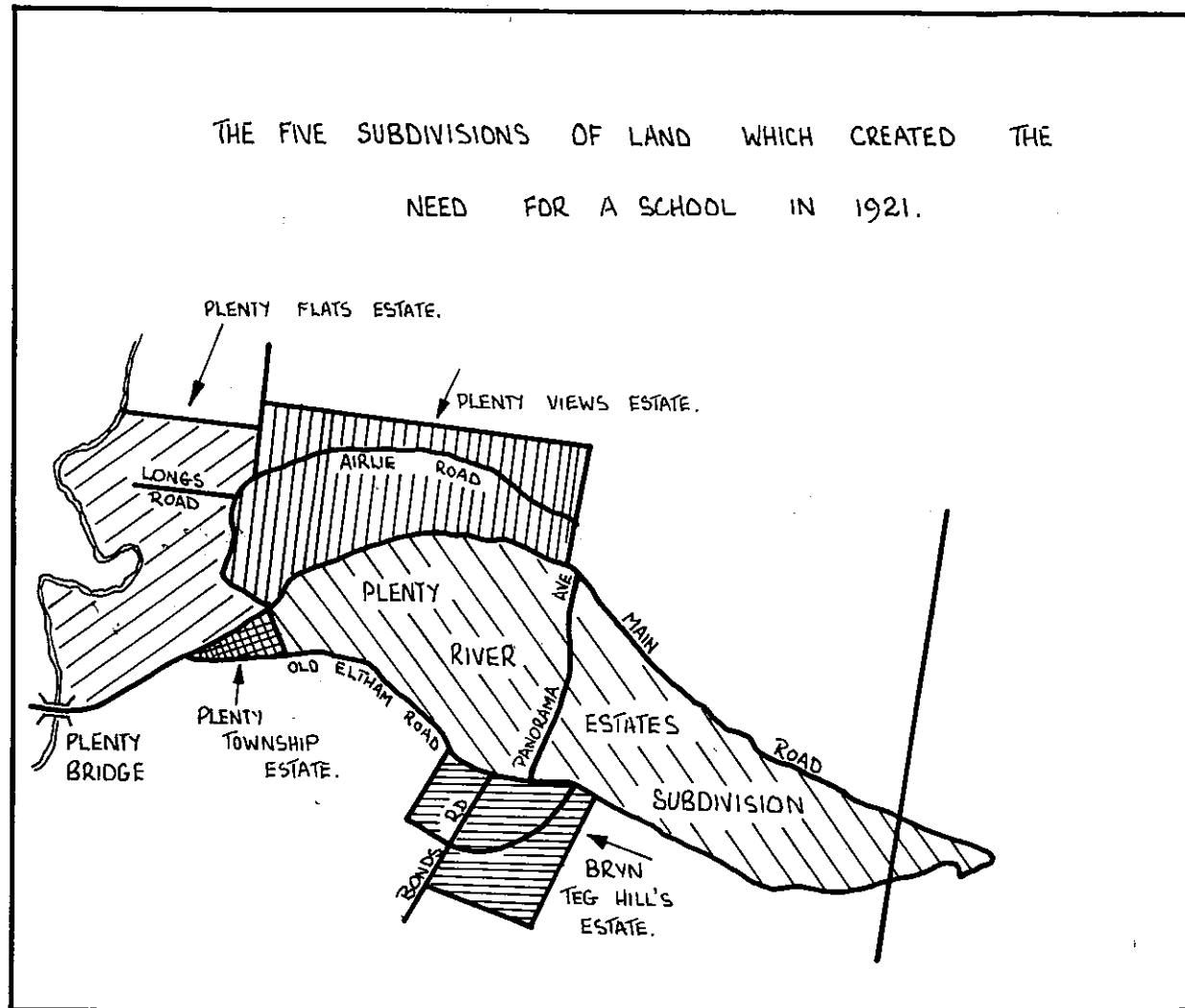
In reply to your note of the 13th, Mr. Higgs arrived on Saturday night and went round to all the parents of the children on Monday and opened the School on Tuesday.

I have the honor to be  
Sir  
Your Obedient Servant  
John Brown. 15/4/1874."

### A View of Lower Plenty 1918:

Lower Plenty at this time was an isolated community. Steam trains ran to Eltham — a day in Melbourne meant walking to Rosanna and catching the train to Melbourne, and returning the same way at night. That walk home from Rosanna would have been hard work. Mail came by horse and jinker to the Hotel, which also served as the Post Office. No other shop or public building existed. Apart from the Hotel it was difficult to identify a community.

Early in 1919 five estates were sub-divided into 2 to 8 acre residential and farm lots and offered for sale.



This subdivision of land resulted in some housing being built, and as a consequence, there were petitions for the opening of a school. Mrs. Bond was an active leader in the school movement, and first attempts were made in September 1920. At that stage Mrs. Thomas offered the use of her barn as a temporary facility. Mr. Saxton, Inspector of Schools, described it thus —

*"This is a stone structure on a high position adjacent to the homestead. It has a good floor but no ceiling. Its dimensions are about 20 by 40. The parents assert their willingness to clean the place thoroughly, to make openings and insert windows (4) and to affix a suitable door."*

By February, Mrs. Thomas had withdrawn her offer and Mr. Paragreen made a new offer.

*"Mr. Paragreen offers to purchase from Mrs. Thomas a dis-used timber Motor Garage 40 by 15 feet, which he undertakes to move to his land, and alter it to make it suitable for use as a school room."*

There seems some underlying tension within the community. Mrs. Bond insisted upon her mail going to Heidelberg — not Lower Plenty. *"I reside at Lower Plenty but object to the Post Office methods at this latter place."* There were offers, withdrawal of offers, and counter offers for the provision of a temporary building, but finally on June 27th, 1921, the School opened in temporary accommodation, leased from Mrs. Thomas for a period of three months.



"BRYN TEG". The home of Mrs. M. Thomas.

Mrs. Thomas has been described as a rather prim, stout lady. Her home must have been something of a show place, but the school was some embarrassment to her. For some months she bore patiently with the school, but at the termination of the three months lease, she asked that the school go elsewhere. However, while struggling with the bureaucracy, she still was kind to the pupils. One pupil remembers that she would make some sweets and ask some children to partake — *"We would all eventually get a turn. In the hot weather she would make home-made lemon syrup."* Ivy Murray was one of the first pupils in the school when it re-opened in the stables. She remembers *"We were outside peeping through the cracks to see some pupils punished, when out came Mr. Gilsenan and we got the strap around the legs"*.

Mr. Gilsenan was apparently a firm man, whose authority extended beyond the school ground, as is shown in this anecdote:—

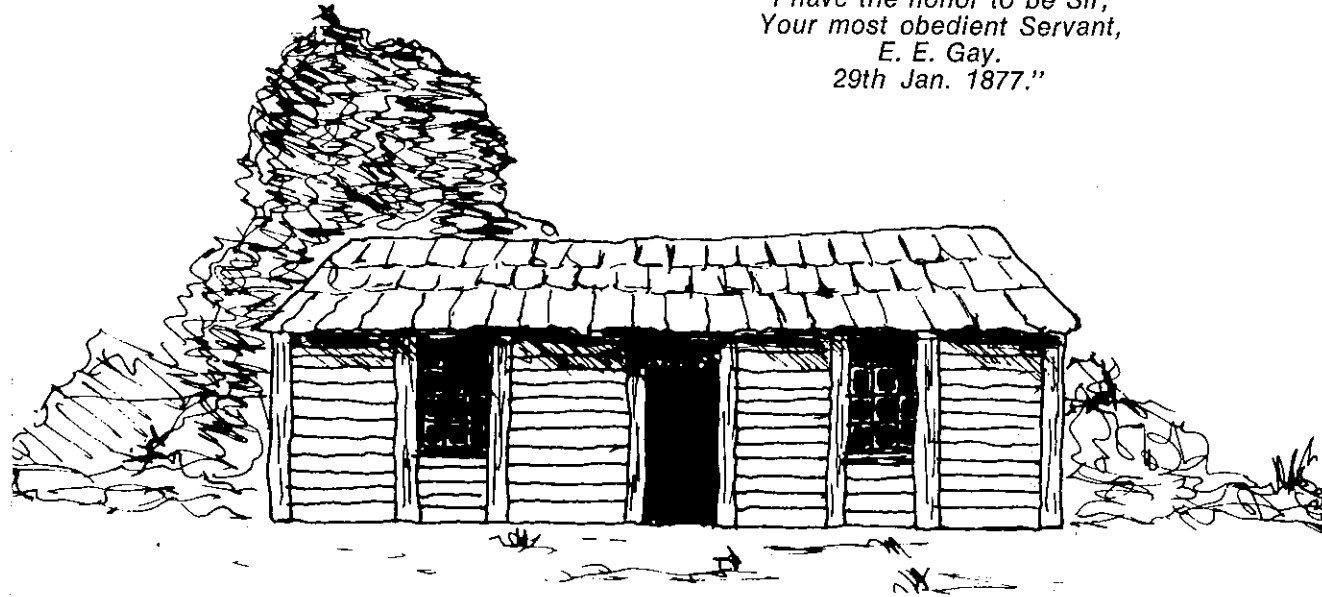
*"Someone had written a love note on the footbridge. Next night as we were walking home, suddenly Mr. Gilsenan was there behind us, strap in hand. He was good with the strap — one minute late and you got it — boys and girls, no difference at all. The parents liked and respected him, but then they never got the strap."*

For eighteen months officialdom virtually refused to move the children from the stables owned by Mrs. Thomas. In spite of protests and legal letters from the solicitors representing Mrs. Thomas, the school did not move from her premises until teaching commenced in the new building on June 11th, 1923. This must have been a trying time for that lady, for the stables adjoined her dwelling, the girls used her private toilet facilities, and the number of children was steadily increasing. The frequent letters from her Solicitors to the Education Department merely resulted in the Inspector being told each time to *"persuade her to let the lease continue for a little longer."*

Mr. John Higgs remained until December 1876. His successor, Mrs. E. E. Gay, was not impressed with the school building.

"Sir,  
I have the honor to inform you, that I visited the 'Lower Plenty School' on Saturday, the 27th inst. and found the School building in a most wretched condition, being constructed of slabs, with shingle roof, which excluded neither rain, wind nor dust, and totally unfit for School purposes. It is attached to a farmer's dwelling-house. The School furniture is very deficient. As for a residence for myself and little children, there is none to be had of any description, and I am compelled to take lodgings at a poorman's house, of a very indifferent kind, pending the erection of "Teacher's quarters" by the Department. I beg most earnestly to request that you will be good enough to have a School and residence of some sort, erected at once. I was told that some parents are keeping their children from School in consequence of the dilapidated state of the School house.

I have the honor to be Sir,  
Your most obedient Servant,  
E. E. Gay.  
29th Jan. 1877."



Leased building — 1874

Negotiations proceeded with Mr. Brown for the purchase of two acres of land upon which the school was to be built. Mrs. Gay lost no opportunity to emphasise the need for haste.

"Sir,  
I am in receipt of your favor of the 7th inst., and thank the Department for the promise therein contained, viz. that they will build as soon as a settlement is made with Mr. Brown, with reference to deeds of land. But I must again most respectfully urge the absolute necessity of immediate action in this matter. Last week there were nearly thirty of us crowded together in a place only large enough for twelve or thirteen. The slabs which compose the sides of the building are all one and two inches apart, and the shingles of the roof are so decayed that there are holes in it one and two feet in circumference. There are three apologies for windows, with nearly every pane broken. If it rains we shall be all thoroughly saturated. Besides all this, there is a dirty out-house only a few feet from the premises, which is used by the boys and girls of the school and the farmer's family. The effluvium proceeding from it is highly offensive and dangerous — considering the heat of the weather. There is literally no place to teach in and nothing to teach with —

I have the honor to be Sir,  
Your most obedient Servant,  
E. E. Gay.  
11th Feb. 1877."

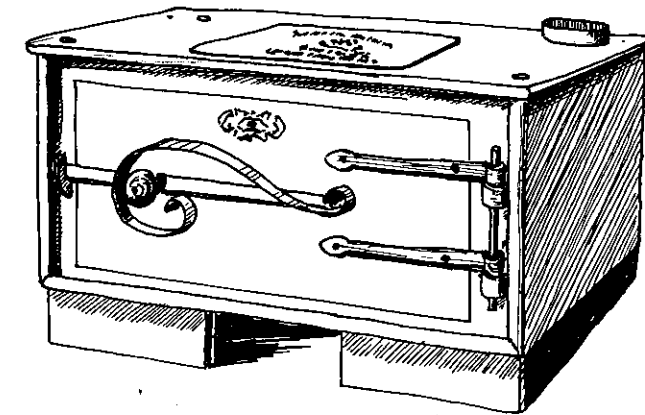
In late June 1877 the school building is available but certainly not equipped, so Mrs. Gay again puts pen to paper.

"Sir,  
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 23rd inst. instructing me to take possession on the 1st prox. of the new portable School which the Department has been good enough to provide for this District. Mr. Brown has informed me that all the slab stools on his premises are his property, and that all he will allow me to remove as belonging to the Department are two desks about 8 feet in length, one small blackboard, without an easel, and one map of the World. As I have over 30 children in attendance, and the new school not containing any furniture whatever, I thought I had better report the matter to you.

I have the honor to be  
Your most obedient Servant,  
E. E. Gay.  
26th June, 1877."

#### Residence for the Teacher:

Together with the Portable School, a portable residence of two rooms was supplied. Mrs. Gay found this insufficient, and received permission to erect two more rooms at her own expense — the cost for this amounted to £30. The Education Department later purchased these from her (18/10/80) at £10. The Chief Architect's comment was "They are of hardwood and would have cost £30. It is thought desirable to purchase — they are cheap enough." The teacher's residence apparently provided an open fireplace for cooking purposes, but on 23/10/1882, a colonial oven was authorized.



Colonial Oven.

Later teachers regarded Mrs. Gay's two rooms as a nuisance — they were close to the road, and became a sleeping spot for undesirable travellers. When the school was closed at the end of 1891, the school and buildings were sold to Mrs. Thomas, who purchased the adjoining farm land from John Brown. No residence was provided in the second period of the school's history.

Correspondence from the school over the whole period of its existence was much concerned with caring for buildings and grounds. Fire, wind, straying cattle, noxious weeds were all cause for complaint. Certainly the following letter would cause some concern.

"Sir,  
I have the honor to inform you that the high winds we have had in this district have blown one of the outhouses down.  
I also beg to inform you, that the above school has not been supplied with a School Report — will you please forward one.

I have the honor, to be,  
Your Obedient Servant,  
E. E. Gay.  
15th Jan. 1879."

**Closure:**

In September 1891, Samuel Summons, Inspector of Schools, recommended closure of State School No. 1295.

"Sir,  
I have the honor to report that this is the only school in my district with an average under 20.  
I have drawn a sketch from plans forwarded and have indicated thereon Schools 294, 1295, 209. Also the dwellings of scholars attending 1295. This school is on the main road about half way between Heidelberg and Eltham. They are about 6 miles apart and 1295 is nearer Eltham than Heidelberg.

A coach passes the school for Heidelberg at 9 a.m. and leaves Heidelberg at 4 p.m. for Lower Plenty, and another passes the school for Eltham at 9 a.m. and leaves Eltham at 4.30 p.m. for Lower Plenty.  
Of the 11 children in attendance, two (W. Robertson and A. Ross, both in cl. 6) are certd., two (A. Stuart and W. Walsh) live much nearer to 209 Eltham. Only 2 families [Robertson (3) and Ross (1)] are more than 3 miles from S.S. 209 or 294.

In my opinion the school should be closed, there being only 7 children to consider, and I hesitate to recommend the expense of conveying these children to either 209 or 294.  
If considered advisable to convey them to one of the neighbouring schools, I recommend that Mr. Lewis, coach proprietor of Heidelberg be requested to tender for the conveyance of 7 children to and from Heidelberg. The 2 tenders submitted are reasonable. It is to be noted that Mr. Long's is for the conveyance of the children to Eltham. Mr. Long is not in a position to provide as suitable a means of conveyance as Mr. Lewis.

I have the honour to be  
Your obedient servant,  
Samuel Summons."

List of Scholars attending 1295.

Name	Cl.	Age	Remarks
W. Robertson	6	13. 2	This family lives about two miles from the school, the eldest is certificated (May 1890).
J. "	4	10.10	
A. "	3	8. 6	
A. Ross	6	12. 2	This girl lives about 2 miles from school. Certificated (May 1890).
P. Long	4	10. 4	Lives opposite the school.
C. Long	4	12. 8	
A. Smart	4	13. 0	Lives within ½ mile of 209 Eltham.
W. Walsh	4	13. 8	Lives within 1 mile of 209 Eltham.
H. Wragge	3	11. 5	½ mile from 1295 on the road to 294.
Thomas Barry	1	6.11	¼ mile from 1295 on the road to 294.
R. Barry	1	5. 6	¼ mile from 1295 on the road to 294.

19/9/1891.

At the time of closure the total teaching equipment was:—

State School 1295 — Lower Plenty.

Inventory.

Maps	The Agricultural Teacher
World	Irish Reading Books
Europe	3 fifth
Asia	4 fourth
Africa	1 doz. third
America	11 second
Australasia	School Register
Victoria	Inspector's Register
Dangerous snakes	Roll sheets
Insectious birds	1 desk
Plan sphere of the southern sky	Teacher's stool
Sheets	4 desks and forms
Treatment: Apparently drowned	3 forms
Snake bite	2 blackboards
	1 easel.
Mechanical powers books	Select Plants
Manual of drill	Botanic Teachings
Manual of health	Morells Grammar
Manual of physics	Empire History
School History of Australia	Art of Needlework
The Students Primer	Morals.



VICTORIA.

No. 36072

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

CERTIFICATE OF A CHILD BEING SUFFICIENTLY EDUCATED.

I hereby certify that Catherine Hopkinson

has been educated up to the standard of education required by "The Education Act 1872."

Dated at Sancton Hill this 20th day

of July A.D. 1890

Charles A. Sapp  
Inspector.

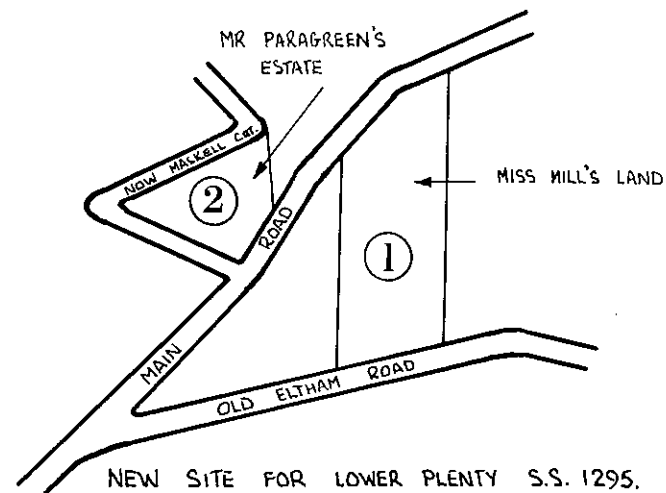
The term "certificated" against a child's name meant that the child had received schooling to the standard which entitled the child to leave school.

On February 8 1892, the residents petitioned the Minister for Education to re-open the school, but nothing resulted.  
By 1894, the land and building had been legally taken over by Mrs. Thomas, and Lower Plenty returned to being a farming area — the only building to give any community feeling was the hotel.  
Little, if anything, is recorded about Lower Plenty after the closure of the school. No records remain of a specific Lower Plenty War Effort — no monument exists — no War Honour Roll now remains. The changes begin after the 1914-18 War.

Just as there was controversy within the community as to what temporary accommodation should be used, so there was some debate about the site for the new school.

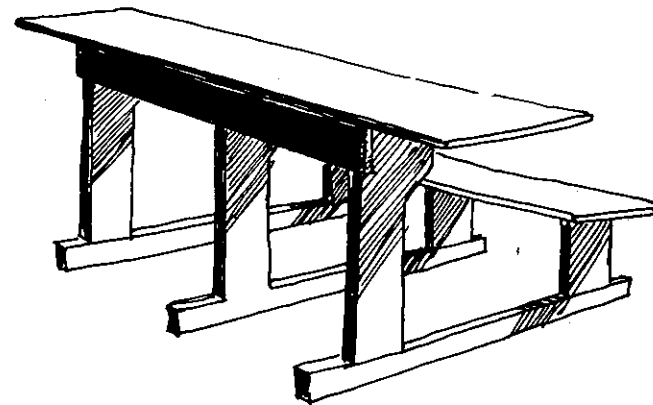
Some four and a half acres in the Plenty River Estate were offered by Colonel McColl on behalf of a Miss Mills, at £50 per acre. Mr. Paragreen offered two acres from the Plenty Flats Estate also at £50 per acre. Mr. Paragreen argued that his land would involve the Crown in less expense, and that two acres were quite sufficient. Fortunately the Inspector of Schools, Mr. Sexton, considered the smaller site poorly drained and inadequate, and thus the present site was purchased.

18.11.1921.



**Moving Day at the Village:**

The move from the stable of Mrs. Thomas to the new school was a great event, vividly remembered. It was a beautiful sunny day, and the children carried whatever equipment there was to the new building, but as one states "We didn't manage to lose the whistle or the strap." At the stables, the desks had been seven feet long, lids did not lift, and the seats had no backs.



Seven feet long — four or more children per desk.

Miss Brotchie is remembered for a clean, well kept school, with pot plants in sculptured kerosene tins hanging from the rafters. Not all the children were as clean, and one ex-pupil remembers watching with glee, as head lice from one of the pupils crawled up Miss Brotchie's dress. Mr. Gilseman has also been plagued with cleanliness problems, and took action. He courageously treated the children's hair with a metal fine tooth comb.



The opening of the new school. Friday, June 29th, 1923.

Once the new building was occupied there was the task of providing furniture and equipment. From the correspondence, it would seem that every item of necessary furniture was the subject of letters and delays. Desks were obtained from the Eltham school, blackboards from Hurstbridge. January, 1925, there were 38 children accommodated in 10 dual desks, much writing took place to secure more furniture.

It is fascinating to see how some public spirited people were determined to give children a chance to experience culture. The piano was taught by Mr. Harry Scriven who came from Heidelberg. Mr. Paragreen made his home and piano available, so that the school pupils could be taught music. Mr. Paragreen's piano must have been a much moved instrument — it was taken to the new Progress Hall.

The purchase of the School piano was a major undertaking. Money was borrowed, the piano bought, then the debt slowly repaid through the efforts of monthly dances and euchre parties. Obviously some people saw the school piano as community property, while others believed it should not leave the school. A letter was written to the Department.

"Dear Sir,  
I beg to inform you that the piano belonging to Lower Plenty School No. 1295 has been removed to the Public Hall for purposes of Dancing etc. . . .  
'Parent' Lower Plenty."

The Secretary wrote alongside — "anonymous letter — No Action."

By early 1928, the school population was consistently over 40 children, and the parents pressed for enlargements to the school. The Departmental response was to compulsorily transfer some families to Montmorency School. This is the first note on a problem which was to plague the school, and cause conflict for nearly twenty years. In 1931, and again in 1946, the School Committee asked the Department to compel children then attending Montmorency to return to Lower Plenty. On both occasions the Department supported the right of these children to bypass their local school.



In February 1929, six members of the Committee resigned, allegedly as a protest against the treatment which they had received from the Education Department. It is sad to note that one of those resigning is Mr. Paragreen, who had been actively engaged in securing the school in 1920. Of the six resignations, only two were people involved at the formation of the school some nine years earlier. Was this a case of local politics, with the newcomers of the 1920's clashing with the established families?

The Secretary  
Education Department.

Dear Sir,

We the undersigned desire to resign from the committee of the Lower Plenty school for the following reasons:

(1) The inability of the committee to secure the additional accommodation urgently needed at the school, resulting in gross overcrowding whereby the health of the children has suffered and their studies been retarded.

(2) The obvious contempt with which the committee is held by the Department as evidenced by the different treatment meted out to us when we asked for necessary accommodation from what shown to the Lower Plenty Association when asking for a kindergarten school.

Yours faithfully,  
A. Thompson  
T. Robinson  
H. Smith  
C. Taylor  
C. White

Certainly Mr. Berridge (Head Teacher) found the local politics difficult to manage, and with a note of despair he wrote on April 7th, 1930.

" . . . . Many years ago local quarrels began and gradually increased in bitterness. A local hall was built, and caused more trouble, and the community seemed divided into two factions. I began duty in January 1928, and since that time the local disagreements have become worse. In February 1928 a Committee was formed, and for a time worked with their own party for the benefit of the school, (the other side would not assist) but very soon owing to disagreements all but one resigned. . . . . I wish to point out that the quarrels amongst the parents themselves have become so acute that two law cases have resulted, and it would be difficult to find three families who were friends. At the beginning I found it very difficult, but now they are much worse.

The January meeting was poorly attended but two men were persuaded to go on the Committee. Unfortunately one resigned very soon after, and after the February meeting a violent quarrel took place and resulted in the treasurer resigning. . . . .

Owing to the quarrels among the people themselves they will not meet and will not go on the Committee and I cannot now get work done at the school.

I wish to point out that the quarrels have not been with me but amongst the parents themselves."



Thirty pupils, one room, eight grades, two teachers.

**The Golf Club:**

In 1928, the land and homestead owned by Mrs. Thomas were sold to the Heidelberg Golf Club.

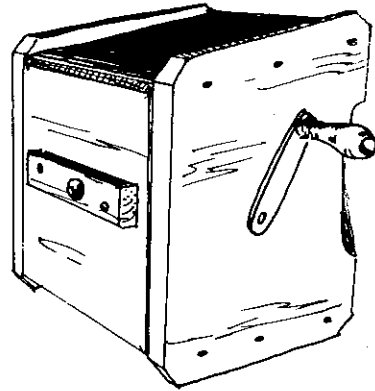
Thus the two early sites, and the first school building at Lower Plenty are now part of the Golf Club. The Golf Club has had little influence upon the school, although some of the older boys did earn a little money caddying.

**Depression 1931:**

Lower Plenty, like the rest of Australia, was hit by the economic crisis of 1931. There was little work to be had, and many of the families were on the dole. Lack of income had great effect on the children at the school — some children had no shoes and came to school barefoot, even in winter. Children were aware of the differences in their school lunches — some had only bread and dripping and were envious of the more sumptuous lunches eaten by others. Second hand clothing was collected by some of the ladies, and distributed to those in need. Such help was offered in all good faith, but it did give some children an opportunity to tease others and thus cause conflict.

Fortunately, many families had a cow, and almost everyone had fowls, so that milk and eggs were usually available; firewood was there for the collecting and everyone had tank water.

Dairying and cutting firewood were the main industries. Some whole milk went to the Austin Hospital and a milk round in Ivanhoe. The remainder was separated, then sold to Moran and Cato (Grocers) to be made into butter.



Butter Churn.

In the 1930's entertainments were few, and holidays beyond the reach of all but a few. One of the great events was the District Picnic organized by the Greensborough Station Master. The train took the party to Port Melbourne, where they boarded the Paddle Steamer Hygiea for a trip to Queenscliff.

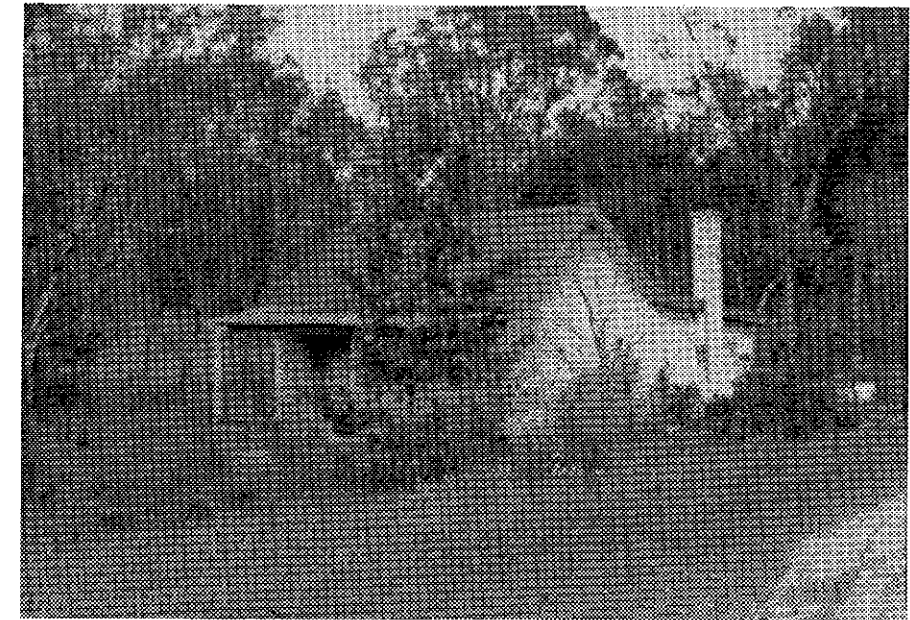
Christmas treats were for some time provided by Mrs. Murdoch and Mrs. Bush, owner of Yallambie.



Lower Plenty Shopping Centre 1923.

**Vandals:**

The School had trouble with vandals from the beginning, and breaking and wilful damage were frequent. Young trees were chopped down. The Head Teacher complained that most damage was caused by week-end cyclists from inner suburbs. It was stated that they were so mobile on their modern cycles that they were not easily caught. Groups of campers were known to use the school in the long vacation.



One of the cottages built in the 1920's.

**Electricity:**

The first written request for power to be connected to the school was in March 1938. Following eight years of correspondence, success was achieved in 1946. Prior to 1946, it was a case of come to the school and bring your own lamp.

**Grass Fires:**

March 1943, an egg collection truck equipped with a Gas Producer, passed the school, dropping hot coals as it went. A grass fire broke out and destroyed fencing to the value of £39.0.0. With considerable persistence the Crown Law Department pursued the case, and extracted damages from the owner of the vehicle. Fire struck again in January 1944, more fencing was destroyed, and the girls' toilet seriously damaged. The egg collection truck reflects one of the main industries of the area.

**Cows at School:**

In November, 1945, the Committee requested a parent to graze four cows at the school to reduce the fire danger from the long grass. Almost immediately, an official complaint was lodged that the cows constituted a danger to the children.



### School Band:

A brass band was formed in 1948 by Mr. G. Law. Initially Mr. Law provided some of the instruments. More instruments were provided by the Committee, and from the funds of the Gillies Bequest. Many residents of long standing have described the ear shattering effect of living near an unskilled, but enthusiastic band member.

The band led local functions, particularly the Empire Youth Rallies at the Eltham Oval. Indeed, the Lower Plenty School Band is the forerunner to the Eltham Municipal Brass Band. Many of the original Eltham bandsmen were ex-pupils, and the school instruments were used by the Municipal Band for its first three years.

Possibly the band's most memorable occasion was when it stopped the Governor, Sir Dallas Brooks. The Governor was to officiate at a function in Eltham and the Councillors had proceeded to the Lower Plenty Bridge to receive him into the Shire. There had been no intent to stay at the school, but Mr. Law had the band assembled, and as the Vice-Regal car drew level with the school gates, the band struck up with God Save the Queen. Immediately the motorcade halted, and all sat to attention while the anthem was played. The Governor was delighted, took the salute, and talked to the children.



Square dancing in the school room.

### Community Centre:

Primary schools naturally tend to be centres for local activities, and in the first years of settlement they were often the only public buildings. Also they are normally within walking distance for most of the community. Almost as soon as the 1877 building was completed, it was used for Sunday Church services — even after the school closed in 1891, the building continued to be used for Anglican Services until 1894.

When the new school was built in 1923, Sunday School classes once again were held in the building.

Until the mid 1950's, when new cars became readily available, Lower Plenty was a very isolated community. Local bus services were infrequent, and stopped at 7 p.m., so unless a car was available the family could not attend the nearest picture theatre. The need for local entertainment had been a major factor in the community supporting the purchase of a Sound Movie Projector for the school.

For a time, films were shown once per month in the school room, which was usually packed out in this pre-Television age.

### Our School Hall:

Many stories have been told about the hall, but the truth as revealed by the official files certainly showed a vital young community using self-initiative to develop the school.

The building was purchased at auction on July 6th, 1955. After the purchase, the P.W.D. approved of the building and set standards for siting at the school and for re-erection. On site at Watsonia, the army hut was cut into four sections. Over a period of five Saturdays the Clark Mobile Crane Co. moved the sections to the school free of charge. The hall was ready for use on Monday, October 17th, and immediately was used as a temporary classroom.

The total operation cost £600 (\$1200); of this £485 (\$970) was loaned by parents. Eventually the Department made an ex gratia donation of £150 (\$300).

For most of the 19 years the hall has been in existence it has been in use as a class room, something which has been a source of considerable contention between the Committee and the Department. The community has always felt that the Government gained a school room "on the cheap".



The original 'Community Centre' which served for over one hundred years.

One of the treats at the school in 1940's and early 1950's was the hot cocoa provided at the school.

When the school was small, with Mr. Law as the only teacher, the cocoa was prepared by the Grade VII and VIII children. There was no free milk at the time, but most of the families at least had one milking cow. The oldest child in each class would carry a billy of milk to school, and empty it into the "kero tin" which served as a boiler. This was duly heated on the fire — sometimes in the classroom fire place, and at other times on an open fire outside.

Later an electric "cocoa urn" was supplied by the Mothers' Club. In the last years before free milk, the cocoa was prepared by the Mothers in the "Cocoa Kitchen" at the rear of the hall.

One pupil remembers —

*"The head teacher always had a five gallon tin of boiled sweets, and he had two straps, — The Cat Strap — it had a cat's face on it, and the Tickler — a very thin one rather like a boot lace.*

*Correct answers were rewarded by sweets, and some mistakes by the Tickler. It was really a rather good humoured affair."*

A parent also remembers those tins of sweets —

*"The big boys did the gardening on Friday afternoon — not only did they do the school garden, but they crossed the road and weeded the head teacher's. They were given a bag of sweets for their work, but could I get my boy to weed at home? Not on your life. There they were, doing his garden, and reckoning he was the best bloke in the world. It made me mad I can tell you."*

One wonders if all the good scholars could be identified by their bad teeth. The sweets came from the shop of Mr. "Toddy" Kett, after whom Kett Street is named. "Toddy" was a bachelor, but appears to have been loved by children because of his generosity. He was chairman of the School Committee for a time, in spite of his having no children. Such was the affection with which he was held, that the school children were well represented at his funeral.

Pupils of this era certainly seem to have many fond memories of school, the school garden, the school band, of swimming in the Yarra. Some assert that even their dogs were welcome at the school. Its significance was as a period of change, from the one teacher rural school to multi-grade suburban school.

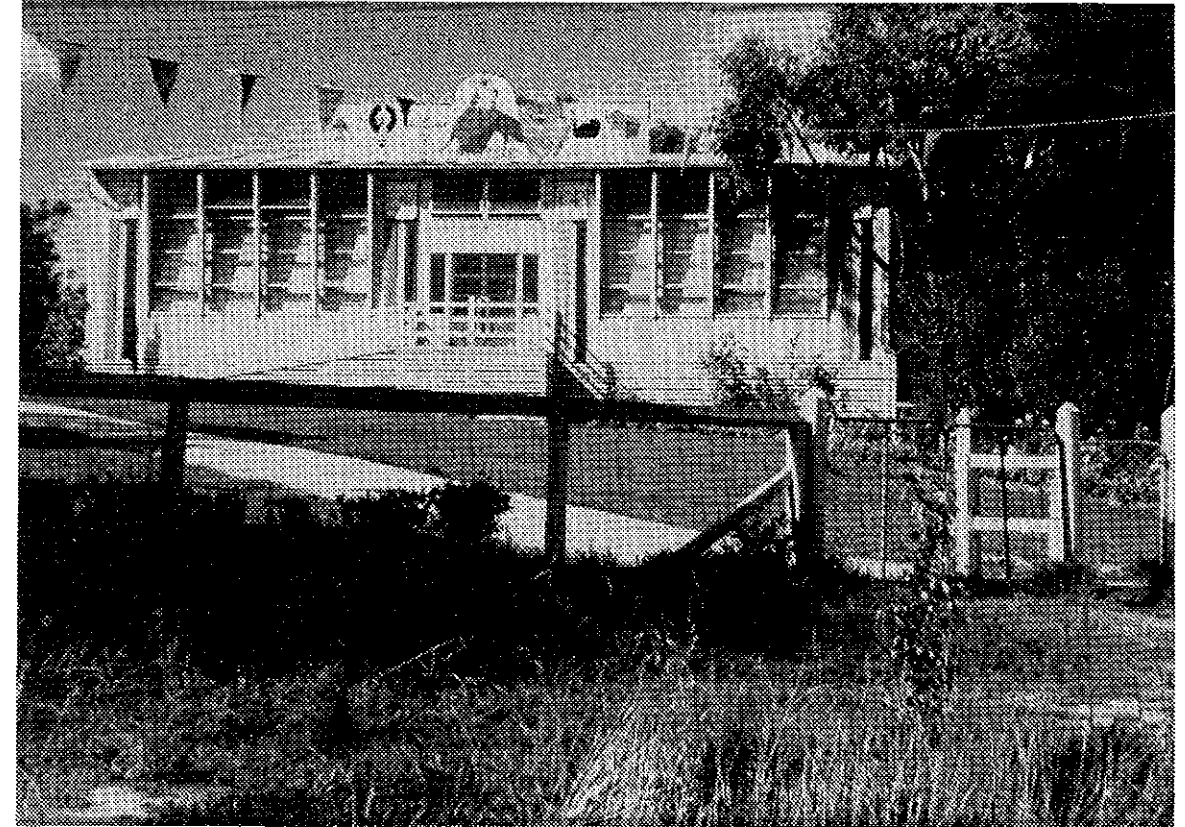
**Swimming Pool — Drowned Dreams:** In 1952 the minutes of both Mothers' Club and School Committee contain constant references to the Swimming Pool Project. Some fund raising activities were conducted, and funds earmarked. In 1953, there is a note that the scheme was to be abandoned and donations already received were to be returned to the donors. A later note states that the funds were transferred to the projector appeal.

**Long Grass — Snakes — Meadow Hay — Fire Brigade:** Grass and snakes received much discussion in many minutes. In December 1952, Mothers' Club minutes note that *"Mrs. Whitlock now has the snake bite serum in her refrigerator, and she is in a position to give the necessary injections if called upon to do so."* An identical minute is found in the records of the Kindergarten.

The prevailing rural nature of the area is shown in notes for 1953, when a parent is given permission to mow the rear portion of the school ground and bail the meadow hay. In later years the Lower Plenty Rural Fire Brigade is regularly given permission to burn off the school ground in December.

#### The Royal Visit, 1954:

This first visit of a ruling Monarch was the occasion of great patriotic fervour. Lower Plenty of course took part — the school was decorated, and the Mothers' Club had the whole school taken to the movies to celebrate the Queen's visit to Australia.



The Bristol classrooms decorated for the Royal Visit 1954.

### Trees and Gardens:

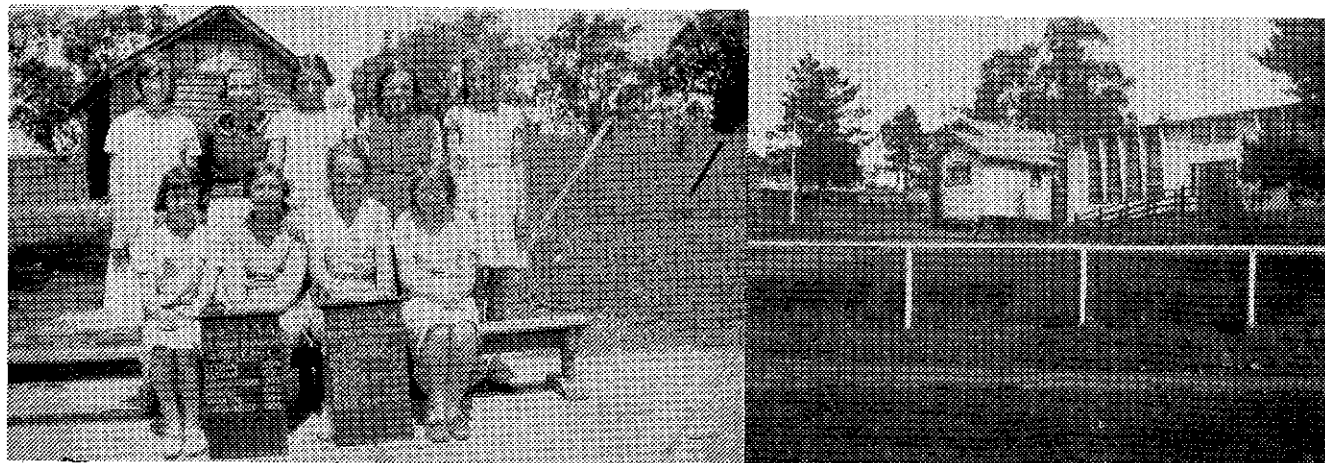
Photographs of the area indicate that when the school was built in 1923, there were few trees on the site. Trees were planted at the official opening on Friday, June 29th, 1923. In subsequent years, Arbor Days were held with the Mothers' Club providing the "Arbor Day Treat". As a result of these early efforts, the school was surrounded on three sides by exotic trees, mainly pines and cypresses, with a few large eucalypts. For many years, the school looked most attractive sitting on the hillside, surrounded by giant trees.

The school garden reflects the change in public opinion on what constitutes a desirable garden. In the 1940's and 1950's the records talk of planting new lawns and more exotic trees. Photographs show flowering annuals.

In the early 1960's, the front section of the school ground was sold to the Crown, to enable the road to be made into the present dual highway. The double row of pine trees along the front of the school were in this section of land, and their removal left the school looking most bare and unattractive. Building extensions had destroyed many sections of established garden, and by mid-1960's the grounds were in a poor state.

Fortunately, a far sighted committee launched a great ground improvement scheme. Native trees and shrubs were propagated by parents. Working bees were held to plant the tiny trees and shrubs, fences were built, and water connected into the top fence rail to provide a watering system.

The improvements to the grounds are still proceeding as more and more native trees are planted. Mr. John McCutchan and Mrs. Beth Wykes must be acknowledged as the leaders in the development. With the growth of the native plants, large numbers of Australian birds have returned to the school ground. On some mornings the bird calls give a feeling of being well into the bush.



1934

School Grounds.

1954

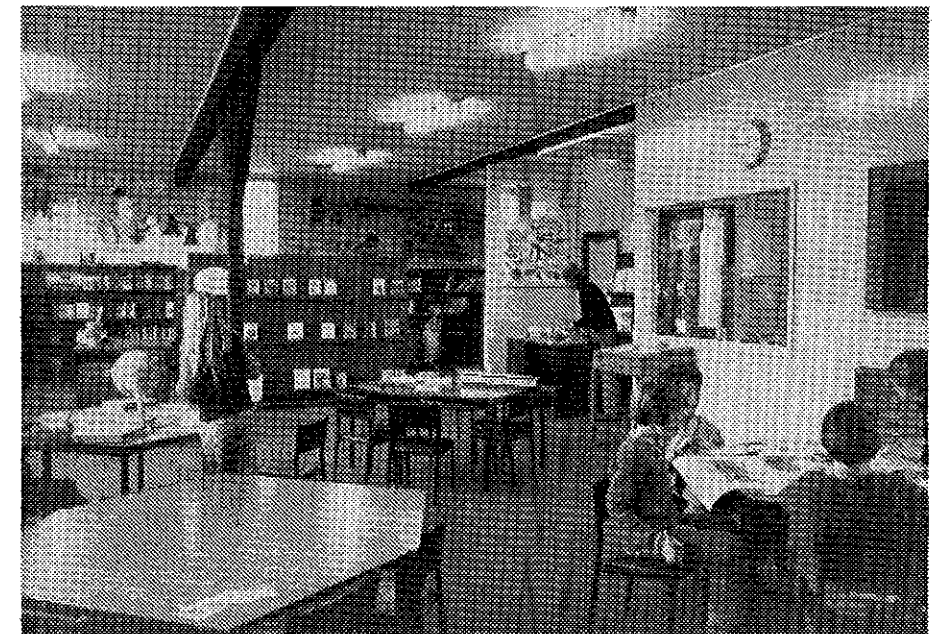
### The Library:

Parents of Lower Plenty have been concerned with providing library facilities for many years. Each year some books have been purchased. In 1927 there was a request for a Library cupboard. Book appeals were made at various times and some books were actually manufactured by parents pasting serial stories from magazines on cards and sewing these together. In the early 1960's the library was at the rear of the hall, and some mothers volunteered to act as librarians.

1969 was the year of decision. The Committee formed a Co-operative Society, borrowed the necessary funds, and built the library which was officially opened in 1971.



Library Interior 1973.





## EDUCATION 1874 - 1974

When the first school closed in 1891 the total school equipment consisted of eleven maps, twelve reference books, and four sets of readers. Children sat rigidly in desks and copied notes from the blackboard in perfect handwriting, or chanted their lessons. Great emphasis was placed upon the 'right' answers being learned by heart. The body of factual knowledge to be learned was quite detailed. More enterprising teachers turned these facts into amusing chants which were never forgotten by some pupils. The following is a selection of the 'lessons' remembered by one lady.

"Echua on the Murray — red gum blocks"

"Mitta Mitta, Ovens, Goulburn, Campaspe, Loddon."

"Austria, Hungary, ate a bit of Turkey, dipped in Greece, long legged Italy, kicked little Sicily, into the Mediterranean Sea."

"Bay of Biscay, West of France,

Get a stick and make him dance."

"Two A's two R's, two M's and a G

Put them together and spell them to me

G-R-A-M-M-A-R Spells GRAMMAR."

Today the inventory of school equipment covers several pages. Children move from classroom to library as needed, and they have a great range of materials at their disposal — construction sets, attribute blocks, cassette recorders, musical instruments.

The school takes children away for camp experiences, and many lessons are out of doors. The strap has almost disappeared, and children no longer come to school with bare feet covered in chilblains. School is a much kinder place for the children of 1974, than for those of 1874.



## A TEACHER'S VIEW

Teachers come and go, but the community remains, so it tends to be community view which fills the history. But particular schools do have great impact on many staff members. Memories of particular pupils are dear to teachers, and some pupils in turn, go to great effort to seek out former teachers who have influenced them. The following passages from a letter received illustrate this very well.

*" . . . I was a teacher at Lower Plenty School in 1961: It was my first year out of college, and between the Head Master and Infant Mistress (Miss Cooper) I was helped on to a happy, and, I hope, successful year there. I had grade 2 in the original building. It was so lovely to have so much space in the room to put my freshman ideas to work in a class of my own. I only had 25 pupils and loved each one.*

*One of my biggest thrills since my sad farewell to my first class came last year, when 2 of my former pupils came to visit me. Faye Brown and Lurline Keatly came to my home and we had lunch together.*

*Stuart was one of my favourites. He was a little terror, and I would be really cross with him in the morning, and he'd come to school after lunch with a gorgeous smile and a bunch of flowers. How I loved him! Then there was Keith who could draw outstanding pictures for his age and had an undying love for animals, especially the creepy, crawly kind. He had a lizard in the cloakroom. I never dared to lift his desk for some creature would always jump out.*

*One boy Russell had a deformed hip, but could hop about on crutches at a pace that made my heart thump. I think I could tell a story about each child in the class, and as I look at the picture of my grade 2 all grown men and women now, I have happy memories, and I like to think that I played some small part in their education.*

*At my parents' place in Templestowe there is an old puss called Ginger. I rescued him from a pack of dogs in the school grounds, one kitten had already been torn to pieces. Miss Cooper drove me home after school on the day I rescued Ginger.*

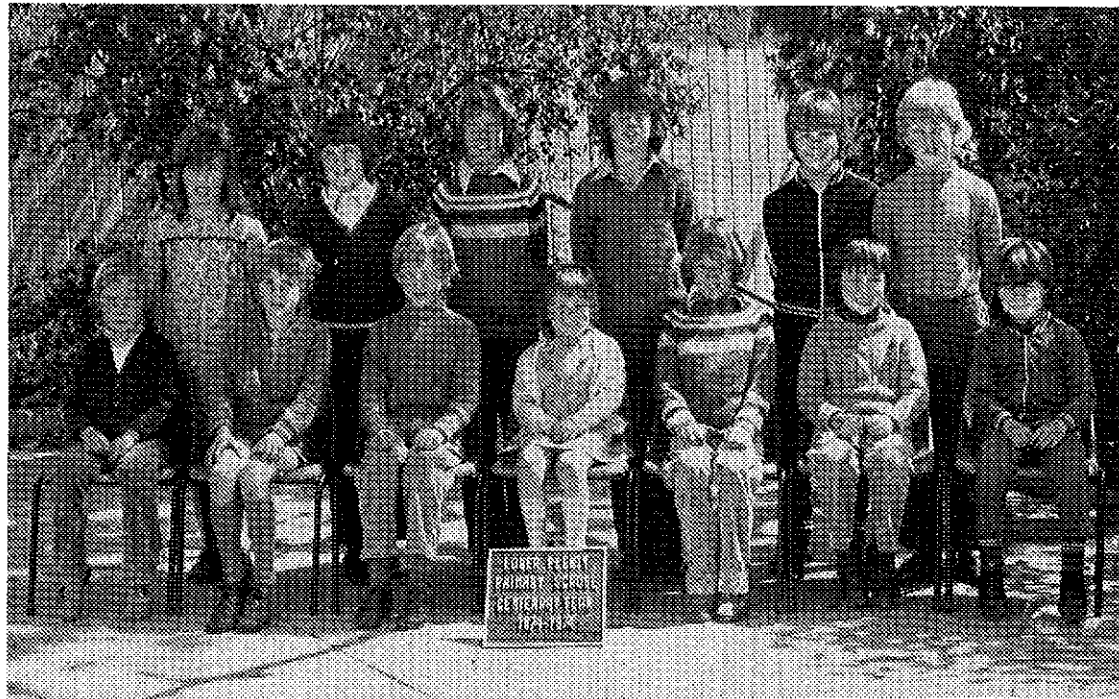
*I must close although many memories of Lower Plenty are flooding through my mind."*



*" . . . and each one loved . . . "*



THE SECOND GENERATION — CHILDREN OF EX-PUPILS



Standing: Joanne McLennan, Gary Franceshini, Danny Hick, Stuart Blackburn, Peter McLennan, Bart. Yuncken.  
Seated: Bradley Hick, Michael McLennan, Jamie Yuncken, Kathryn McLennan, Alan Hick, Douglas Yuncken, Craig McLennan.

THE THIRD GENERATION — GRANDCHILDREN OF EX-PUPILS



Standing: Peter McLennan, Joanne McLennan, Stuart Blackburn.  
Seated: Michael McLennan, Kathryn McLennan, Craig McLennan.

HEAD TEACHERS

John Higgs	1874-76	Mr. L. Whyte	1945
Elizabeth E. Gay	1877-79	Richard Costello	1946
Elizabeth Phipps	1879-88	Geoffrey A. Law	1947-56
Christina Berg	1888-91	Stewart G. Dawson	1957-65
(School closed 1891 - 1921)		Robert E. Grey	1966-69
Frederick H. Gilsenan	1921-25	Geoffrey A. Law	1970-71
Edith E. Brotchie	1925-28	Leon F. Huon	1972
Thomas L. Berridge	1928-41	William F. Henderson	1973-
Alec McAndrew	1941-44		

THE STAFF 1974



Standing: Paul Dare, Dawn Bowran (Secretary), Myra White, Helen Webb, Shirley Belcher, Gay Stewart, John Anderson, Geoffrey Barnard.

Seated: Glenda Hellemons, Lesley Whittaker, Francis Hamilton (Vice-Principal), Bill Henderson (Principal), Jim Jennings (Vice-Principal), Luba Wlasenko, Marilyn Ellis.