

The old home of the Antonio family was situated on the west side of Deep Creek Rd., not far from the corner of Whitehorse Rd. For many years the only other house on the westside of Deep Creek Rd., was Schwerkolt cottage

The Antonio family lived originally at Sandridge (Port Melbourne). In the late 1800's Thomas Antonio purchased a bush block in Whitehorse Rd. Mitcham (Where school now is) with the intention of building a week end shack. The adjoining land stretching to Deep Creek Rd. was bought at a later date, when it came on the market. The family would travel from Melbourne by steam train, to spend week ends camping on the block, whilst they cleared certain sections of it. They eventually built a shack, which was burnt down in a bush fire & rebuilt again. (Approx. position, in line with toilet block in park, further back from Whitehorse Rd.) In later years this cottage was rented out, until it was burnt down again in the 1962 bush fires.

The house in Deep Creek Rd. was built when the family came to live in Mitcham & the smaller place was not adequate for their needs. (Possibly early 1900's).

There were five boys in the family & one girl who died at an early age.

John & Ernest were the two bachelors who lived on in the old home -stead until they died. When Alfred Antonio married, he went to live in Camberwell & Walter went to Melbourne. The other brother Joe was a wanderer who travelled the world (possibly in the merchant navy). He would disappear for years at a time, then without warning would return home, & stay a few weeks with his brothers before setting off again. John & Ernest spoke of him with affection, even though they considered him 'a bit of a scoundrel'.

The house in Deep Creek Rd. was a basic weather board building of the time, with a pitched corrugated iron roof & a verandah across the front on a lower level. Inside there was a central passage with living room & bedrooms running off it - the kitchen & the bathroom were at the rear. The wash house was built some distance from the back of the house & in between there was a well, with a black cast iron pump, from which water was drawn for domestic purposes. North west of the house were fowl pens, approx. 100 ft. long. The fowls provided eggs & poultry for the table & manure for the gardens. Surplus eggs were sold. In later years, when John worked at the Metropolitan Gas Co. he took eggs in to regular customers.

Mrs Antonio made bread, fruit trees supplied fruit for eating & excess was made into jam & preserves. Beehives in the paddocks were robbed for honey. Everything hinged around existence, nothing was wasted.

John Antonio was a well known figure, when he walked to Mitcham railway station each working day to travel by train to Melbourne, He was always smartly attired in a suit & a bowler hat, with a flower in his lapel & he usually carried an umbrella. He worked at the Metropolitan Gas Co. all his working life & retired at the age of sixty five.

Ernest, the younger brother, had gardens between the house & White-horse Rd., where he grew flowers. When the blooms were picked, they were packed in banana boxes & sent to Mitcham station & despatched by train to a florist in Melbourne. He grew a variety of flowers, but specialised in Irises, which were in great demand. Any flowers which had to be handled with care were delivered personally by John.

There was no water on the property in the early days, so the entire gardens had to be watered by hand, with water taken from the dam in 4 gal. kerosene tins. The dam was situated approx. 100ft. west of Deep Creek Rd. & 30ft. in from footpath along Whitehorse Rd. It was only a small dam, about 25ft. across. When the board of works laid a main past the property, the Antonio brothers had the water tapped & laid right their land, where the park now is. A series of pipes was laid, with stand pipes every so many feet. Hudson & Keen (Boxhill plumbers) did the job. Before the council took over, it was still possible to see the furrows & the formation of the garden beds.

In the early years, the site now occupied by the school was cleared. It had pasture & was lightly timbered & was used for grazing horses.

After John Antonio retired from the Metropolitan Gas Co., he lived for another 19yrs.

Ernest, left alone, lived on at the old house. In 1962 the bush <sup>at the site of the house</sup> fires ignited near Schwerkolt cottage & raced along the west side of Deep Creek Rd. towards the Antonio home. Mr. Antonio was evacuated from his house by the fire fighters & all his belongings were carted out onto the street. Fortunately the house was spared, as the fire stopped about 50ft. away at the rear. The original cottage was burnt out for the second time & ~~this~~ this time it was not replaced. Friends cared for Mr. Antonio over night, & next day he was able to return to his house again. Even though he was blind & frail he did not want to leave the old home. With the help of his doctor & neighbours, he was kept in residence until his death in Oct. 1963. His brother John pre deceased him by 8yrs.

The house was demolished by the Nunawading Council in 1964. It was pulled down carefully & materials which were in good condition were taken to be re-used. The dome of the well was broken away, filling put into the hole & then it was levelled.

Mr. Ernest Antonio remembered Whitehorse Rd. as a narrow dirt track, winding down the hill from Mitcham, between small trees & scrub, to the "Coach & Horses" hotel at Ringwood. The wheel tracks were deep & undulating & the vehicles would sway from side to side in the troughs which were cut with the constant use of the coaches & wagons carting timber from Mount Dandenong.

When Whitehorse Rd. was sealed & made, there was a row of tents pitched outside Antonios, along the side of the Rd., where Chinese workers camped. They were employed by the contractor to knap the boulders. Large boulders from local quarry were dumped on the side of the road & the Chinese workers used long handled hammers (a cross between an ordinary hammer & a sledge hammer) to crush the rock to the size required for the road construction. They were paid according to the amount of rock they knapped.

Mr. Antonio also recalled the steam trains coming slowly up the hill towards where the Heatherdale station now is. They went so slowly it was possible to jump off the train opposite Deep Creek Rd. & so save themselves the long walk from Mitcham station.

Written & Researched  
by Phil Johnson

Passed on to her by

Mr. Colin Bull  
Antonio Park  
State Primary School.

c1985.

b.c. 1850	ANTONIO Thomas	- Italy	F: ANTONIO Joseph	M: UNKNOWN
d. 1934	84 yrs	- Mitcham	( d. cert. 18729)	
m. 1872	SWALES Emily			
b.c. 1851		- Hull	F: SWALES John	M: CURLE Mary Ann
d. 1926	75 yrs	- Mitcham	( d. cert. 11159)	

Issue

1. 1873 ANTONIO John Thomas - Sandridge (Port Melbourne)  
d. 1956 83 yrs - Mitcham
2. 1875 ANTONIO Edwin - Sandridge  
d. 1878 3 yrs - Sandridge
3. 1876 ANTONIO Alfred - Sandridge  
d. 1958 82 yrs - Camberwell
4. 1878 ANTONIO Joseph Edward - Sandridge  
d. - Sandridge
5. 1880 ANTONIO Ernest - Sandridge  
d. 1963 83 yrs - Surrey Hills
6. 1889 ANTONIO Walter Herbert - Mitcham  
d. - Mitcham
- m. 1913 BOND Ivy Myrtle
- b. -
- d. 1913 58 yrs - Paynesville
7. 1893 ANTONIO Frederick William - Mitcham  
d. 1897 3 yrs - Mitcham

*There are records in Box 411 Cemetery for these names*

*ANTONIO - Alfred - 1958  
- Gwen - 1963  
- Joe  
- John - 1956*