

The Industrious Settler Inn, St Albans NSW (Matt Kenny, Director HHA)

1.5 km north of St Albans on the western side of Wollombi Rd on a small hillock above floodplain paddocks is an imposing two storey Georgian sandstone homestead. This is the former inn, *The Industrious Settler*, perched picturesquely on a high rock outcrop.

Built in 1833 by Aaron Waters (later spelt Walters), it was the earliest inn at St Albans and was licensed to him in 1834, being then the only inn between Solomon Wiseman's *Branch Inn* (1832) and John Sullivan's *The Travellers Rest* (1836) at Laguna. Nearby was the customary blacksmith's shop, necessary adjunct to all isolated inns and run by Aaron, later aided by his two sons who also helped him farm his 1820s grant of 50 acres. The inn itself was managed by Aaron's wife, Susanna, aided by their six daughters.

This is an important survival of an early colonial farmhouse group comprising a stone farmhouse erected about 1833 by Aaron Walters and used as an inn in 1834; a c1823 timber slab cottage to the northeast; a timber building to the west transferred in 1912 from the neighbouring property of one time owner Mark Bailey; an eastern building probably the former kitchen, various associated timber outbuildings; and the Walters family grave site with early burials of one of the principal pioneer families of the Macdonald Valley.

Aaron Walters had arrived in the colony in 1814 as an armourer and crew member on board the *Broxbournebury*. He jumped ship in Sydney and early in 1815 married convict girl Susanna Lilbemont, a fellow passenger on the same ship. They moved to the Macdonald River, living in the slab cottage till their inn was built. Aaron was a significant pioneer figure until his death in 1866.

The Industrious Settler Inn became a dominant landmark in the district and is now a carefully preserved private house. Aaron was converted to Methodism soon after he began innkeeping. He immediately surrendered his liquor licence, embraced temperance and legend says he poured all the cellar's liquor content onto the garden lawn which ever after displayed a bare patch of grass used as a salutary moral lesson against the evils of alcohol to several generations of Walters' children.

After the *Industrious Settler* became a private residence the interior was remodelled somewhat, especially the saloons. With the amended licencing laws, Aaron Walters was required to have two public rooms and two vacant rooms to let, which were the four rooms, two on either side of the central stone hallway. The room with the flagstone floor was the public bar. The family needed separate accommodation in the slab house at the bottom of the hill dated to c1823 by the National Trust.

Aaron and his family lived in the small slab house before and during the building of the big sandstone house and for a short time while it operated as *The Industrious Settler* Inn. Descendants continued to live in the slab house until 1967. Once the big house was completed Aaron Walters applied for and received an innkeeper's licence.

The Industrious Settler has had some renovations and alterations over its long life including a barely changed roofline to accommodate a solar energy panel, but it remains in particularly good condition with its stone cellar intact. The buildings retain much of their original detailing. On the south side under the house is a roomy little cellar approached by a descending flight of stone steps, cool and dark but not damp.

The basic structure is unchanged with its distinct jerkin head roof. The ancillary features are of great interest. Below the house at the base of the rock outcrop, there is a slab house, partly raised on stilts

approached by a ramp to avoid small floods, erected by Aaron Walters in 1823. The slab house can be seen below *The Industrious Settler* from Wollombi Road and from the private road approaching the house which branches off to the left from Wollombi Road. Dated to around 1823 by the National Trust it is certainly significantly early. There is also a private burial ground on the breast of the rock halfway down the hill at the rear of the house where Aaron (d. 1866 aged 82) and Susannah (d. 1840 aged 47) are buried side by side on their farm. This small cemetery is located to the southeast halfway down the hill back towards Wollombi Road on a gentle slope that leads down to grazing land. A remarkable number of wooden outbuildings, including the Walters' smithy survive around the residences.

Aaron put a second storey onto the house as his family grew. It was in the form of twin gables and a ladder going up to the two upstairs rooms facing west. One of his daughters eloped with a Catholic by letting herself down from the northwest window onto the back of her lover's horse in the middle of the night and galloping away before they could be stopped. Her name was erased from the family bible and it is only recently that the family learned of her existence.

Reverend Taylor's 1837 Visit, Sketch & Diary

In 1837 the Reverend Richard Taylor visited Mrs Walters and dined on tea and eggs and "talked to her on the subject". He kept an incredibly detailed diary which is now in New Zealand where he eventually went as a missionary. Taylor spent three years working in NSW and recording his thoughts. The Mitchell Library has a copy of his diary. He also drew a picture of the Walters' house which is in New Zealand. Gay Shannon, the current owner of *The Industrious Settler* has a copy of it. It shows a single storey house with a high roof and a verandah at the front. There is a road winding up to it in much the same place as the road is today and there appears to be a road going down the hill between the stone house and the roof of another house believed to be the slab hut. There is evidence of a retaining wall and an old path going down between the two houses which can still be seen today.

Aaron Walter's Two Sons Inherit the Land & Residences

Aaron and Susanna Walters had six daughters and two sons. When Aaron died in 1866, he left the land to be divided between his two sons. Daughters generally missed out on inheritance because it was customary to presume they would marry and be adequately provided for by their husbands. Under old marriage laws the eldest son inherited all property through primogeniture (first born male issue). Otherwise a Deed of Settlement could provide for some or all other children. The father's will could stipulate the disposal of his property.

In the will of Aaron senior, the farm was divided between his two sons; Aaron II receiving the stone house and the property on one side, and Moses the remaining property on which was the slab cottage. His will bequeathed "to my well-beloved daughters Elizabeth Roberts, Jane Walker, Susannah Fernance, Sarah Thompson and Ann Thompson" all his money, horses, horned cattle, and other property to be equally divided.

Mark Bailey's ownership

Little is known from Aaron senior's death in 1866 until his son Aaron 2nd's death in 1909 but Aaron 2nd is described as "Retired Storekeeper of West Wallsend" so he can't have been living in the "Big House" during that time which may be why termites had destroyed the timber skirting boards, window frames and doors and they had to be replaced by Mark Bailey when he purchased the

southern half from Aaron Walters 3rd's estate when he died only three months after his father Aaron 2nd in April 1909.

According to W L Chapman's 1977 National Trust of Australia (NSW) listing proposal, the stone farmhouse was left vacant in the 1880s for about 30 years and when acquired by Mark Bailey was renovated with ceiling level being raised into the attics and fireplaces etc being replaced.

From 1909 Mark Bailey and his large family repaired all the sheds, rebuilt the blacksmith's forge, ran an abattoir's shop, planted a mixed orchard, and ran a poultry farm. They rebuilt the two fireplaces on the southern side of the hall, removed the bake oven from the cellar, and moved the wooden kitchen from across the river and put it beside the front door, in addition to cement rendering all the walls. Mark Bailey died in 1933 and left the farm to his daughter Amy Gunn, but the family still farmed it.

The Shannon Family Reunite the divided Aaron Walters Grant

Mrs Alex (Lily) Gunn a Bailey of 'The Branch', but connected with the Walters through marriage lived in the old Waters home, *The Industrious Settler*, for many years but on her death in 1972 the provisions of the family will required that the property be sold. When Mrs Gunn died in 1972 the Shannon family bought *The Industrious Settler* at auction. They had already bought the other half of Aaron Walters original grant bringing together the two parcels of land that were divided in 1885.

Moses Walters took possession of his half of the inheritance and when he died in St Albans in 1899 it was sold to John Joseph Walters, who left it to his son Stanley Walters in 1952. He sold it to Fred Buckland in 1965 and the Shannon family bought it in 1968.

Bailey Pioneers: John of The Glen & William of Clyde Farm

The Baileys are a prominent pioneer settler family of the Macdonald Valley. *The Glen*, known as First Farm, established by 'Governor' John Bailey in 1823 on a grant of 60 acres, is less than a kilometre north from *The Industrious Settler* on the eastern side of Wollombi Road. The 1890 single storey sandstone cottage was built higher up away from flood risk using the stone dismantled from the larger 1840s two storey house after it was damaged in the 1889 flood. The private Bailey family burial ground at *The Glen* has the oldest known headstone in the Macdonald Valley, that of William Bailey Senior (John's Father) who arrived in the colony in 1791 and died in 1826.

John Bailey's brother William Bailey established *Clyde Farm* in 1831 at Higher Macdonald at a site one km beyond the gothic ruins of the 1841 *Our Lady of Loreto* Catholic Chapel with its earlier cemetery. To distinguish William Bailey of Clyde from John Bailey of The Glen, John was known as Governor Bailey, William as Squire Bailey. The Squire was born near Windsor in 1798 and with his extensive family by two wives he farmed Clyde from 1831 until his death in 1866. Sadly, the two-storey sandstone house of 1831 was demolished sometime in the 1970s or early 1980s. The private Bailey cemetery of some dozen graves at Clyde Farm was covered over with silt and several graves were washed away in the 1949 flood, three grave markers being uncovered in 1965.

Aaron Walters (1784 -1866)

Aaron Walters was born 18 March 1784 in Croydon, Surrey, England. He arrived in Sydney on 28 July 1814 a free seaman aboard the female convict ship the *Broxbourbury*. He was the armourer, the crew member in charge of the maintenance and repair of the metal parts of the ship. This role was the equivalent of a non-commissioned officer. Susannah Lillemont was a convict on that ship. She had been convicted of stealing ten pounds and sentenced to death which was commuted to

transportation possibly because she was only 17 at the time of the crime. Her grandfather, John Lillemont, aged 76, who'd spent time sentenced to Newgate Gaol in the past, was acquitted of the same crime so its possible that she took his punishment to save his life as he would have certainly been hanged on a second conviction.

Susanna's trade was lace maker and she was employed by a wealthy family in London. Because she had a French name and was a lace maker her family were probably French Huguenot refugees who came to England during a time of intolerance toward protestants from French authorities, the state religion of France being Catholicism.

Another notable passenger on the *Broxbournbury* was Mary Moore, the free wife of Francis Greenway, who took the following ship, with her three children, to the convict transport *General Hewett* which arrived earlier with Francis Greenway, convict painter Joseph Lycett, Surgeon John Harris of Ultimo House, Captain John Piper, Captain James Wallis and other notable early figures of the colony on board.

When the convict ship *Broxbournbury* reached Sydney on 28 July 1814, Aaron Waters "jumped ship" and the following year he married Susannah Lillemont on 23 January 1815 at St Phillips Church Hill. The Sydney Gazette of 12 Nov 1814 reported that a reward of four pounds sterling per man would be paid by the Commander on the apprehension and return of 'seaman Walters' to the *Broxbournbury*. Elsewhere a price was put on his head of ten pounds to go to anyone knowing his whereabouts and an advertisement appeared in the "Herald" to this effect.

It is unknown whether they found him, but he certainly did not go back to England on the *Broxbournbury*. His name was on the list of crew members of the Brig *Trial* which left about a month later. There is no certainty that he went although their first child was not born until two years later. The *Trial* was captured in an act of piracy by convicts and wrecked at Trial Bay on her next voyage.

Aaron made his first application for a grant of land in 1817 and there are several letters in the Mitchell Library dealing with this. At that time, they were living at Caddie (Cattai). In 1823 he was granted 50 acres in the town of Howick Village (now St Albans), on an order of 1821. A family record has it that Aaron was selling spirits in the Valley before 1820 which appears likely but certainly Aaron had been in the area since the early 1820s and with his son, who also became a blacksmith, was a central figure until his death in 1866.

Aaron had the first blacksmith's shop in the district, probably on the eastern bank of the Macdonald River in the vicinity of *The Settler's Arms*. It is assumed that his first house was the hut at the bottom of the hill below the stone farmhouse. It was certainly there in 1837 because the Reverend Richard Taylor's drawing shows it.

In 1830 Aaron Walters asked for 6 convicts and in 1834, with the stone house built, he was granted the licence for an inn, which he named *The Industrious Settler*. The name was well chosen, for with the help of his family, Aaron was the industrious settler. It is likely, that Aaron, in building his inn on the Bulga road, the new north road, and a smithy nearby, combined the two businesses without additional expense, as well as farming his land. Aaron, so the family story goes, left his wife and daughters to run the inn whilst he and his two sons attended to the farm and the smithy. About the time *The Industrious Settler* was built in 1833 the 'new north road' (The Bulga Road now Settlers Road and Wollombi Road) was opened to supersede Thomas Mitchell's 'Old North Road' (now The Great North road) along the eastern range and to become the main thoroughfare to Wollombi and the Hunter district.

Aaron's Wesleyan Conversion

Wesleyan influence was strong in the Macdonald Valley and Aaron converted to Wesleyanism (later known as Methodism). With his conversion he embraced temperance and surrendered the liquor licence he had held for only a short time. A family legend has it that after conversion at a meeting Aaron returned home and swept all the spiritous liquors off the shelves, smashing and emptying the bottles and closing the house as a licenced inn. This story may be true as Aaron was later one of the leading Methodists and in 1839 Aaron and his wife became members of the first Methodist class held in the Valley.

Shortly after Aaron had acquired the licence for an inn, he was converted to Wesleyan Christianity but was not allowed to become a member of the Wesleyan church while he was selling 'evil' liquor so he pulled all the casks and bottles up out of the cellar and emptied them down the hill. A bare patch apparently remained in the garden for many years. It killed all the grass which did not grow again and the children for the next two generations were taken to the spot and told the story of how the alcohol had killed all the grass, and if it could do that to the roots of the grass what would it do to your stomach. Aaron Walters never renewed the licence. He was however an elder of the Methodist church for many years and was an ancestor of the well-known preacher Reverend Sir Alan Walker, superintendent of the Wesley Central Mission & founder of Lifeline.

The descendants of Aaron and Susannah lived at the *Industrious Settler* until well into the second half of the twentieth century.

The name Waters becomes Walters

There are two distinct families descended from old Aaron, one calling themselves 'Waters', the other 'Walters'. The name was spelt 'Waters' on the 1828 Census and the Valley Census of 1841 when as 'head of the family' Aaron completed and signed the Census Return. The 1828 Census indicated he was farming at Lower Portland Head (Later known as Wiseman's Ferry). Nineteenth century records are notoriously unreliable because often the clerks and those making the records had no real geographical knowledge of remote settlements with separate towns or areas given names used interchangeably. His death was registered at the Registrar Generals as at 2nd July 1866 in the name of 'Waters' by his son Aaron II however the inscription on the headstone has the incorrect spelling of 'Walters'.

Walters Family Graves

Across the Wollombi Road from the *Industrious Settler*, a short distance north of the township of St Albans, in the Methodist section of St Albans General Cemetery, there are the graves of eleven members of the family, the surname being spelt 'Walters' in all cases.

Private family burial grounds throughout the Macdonald Valley demonstrate the isolated nature of the rural settlement pattern of the area. The private cemeteries provide important historical documentation and primary physical evidence of many of the areas pioneer families. Aaron and Susanna Walters were the second official settlers in this part of the Macdonald Valley. The verse on the headstone of Susanna Walters is of particular social interest as it indicates the deliberate choice of the burial site.

The Walters Family graves are located on sloping ground to the east of the main house. The plot contains plantings of fishbone fern with a rose on the north side and a seedling peach tree. There are three headstones with matching footstones:

- a semicircular topped sandstone stele with cutaway shoulders to Susanna and Harriet Walters, 1840.
- a semicircular topped sandstone stele to Aaron Walters d.1866.
- a sandstone stele of a complex profile with multiple arches and peaked shoulders to Mary Ann Lilbemont Walters and Louisa Dorcas Walters d. 1866.

The inscriptions read:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF SUSANNA WALTERS Who DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE 3Rd OF JULY 1840 Aged 47 years Also IN Memory of HARRIET WALTERS Aged 6 months. Beneath this silent grave doth lie a meek and tender wife It was God that called her from on high to inhabit eternal life Before the vital spark had fled one favour did she crave When she was layed among the dead This spot might be her grave

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF AARON WALTERS Who Departed This LIFE THE 2nd July 1866 AGED 82 YEARS IN sure and steadfast hope to rise And claim his mansion in the skies A Christian here his flesh laid down The cross exchanging for a crown

IN MEMORY of MARY ANN LILBEMONT WALTERS ALSO LOUISA DORCAS WALTERS WHO DIED 24/12/1866 AGED 10 MONTHS

Susanna (Lilbemont) Walters' Epic Journey to NSW

Susanna Lilbemont was an 18-year-old servant to Mr and Mrs Newton, chandler, of No 2 Temple St White Friars, London. She was found guilty on 1 May 1812 in the Old Bailey, London, for feloniously stealing a 10-pound bank note from her employer. Her father (or grandfather?), John Lallefont, (aged 76) was found not guilty for the same offence. He had tendered the note in payment for five and sixpence for some calico to John Tomlins, shopman. Susanna was sentenced to death but recommended for mercy due to her age.

Susanna with 40 other female convicts (some with babies) were put on board the 40 ft brig the *Emu*, which was armed with 10 guns and had a crew of 22. The *Emu* set sail for Hobart on 11th November 1812 in convoy with the *James Hay*.

At the time, England was fighting the Napoleonic wars and the United States had closed its ports to British ships and was at war with the British in 1812 over Canada. Cotton imports from the US were also banned by the British government. Within a few weeks of departure, the two ships separated. The *Emu* was then spotted by the U.S. Privateer ship the *Holkar*, an 18-gun brig manned by 150 men.

Outgunned and outmanned with only Captain Alexander Bisset and a gunner prepared to defend the *Emu* it had no choice but to surrender. The Americans took Bisset, the crew and the convict women to the island of St Vincent in the Cape Verde Islands on 17 January 1813. The *Emu* was taken to New York and sold as a prize of war.

The abandoned crew and women spent a desperate and difficult year on St Vincent. By the time they were rescued by the *Isabella* they were in a state of nakedness and starvation. They arrived back in early 1814 but being convicted felons the women were denied access to land and held in a hulk in Portsmouth Harbour until the next convict transport sailed to New South Wales.

Susanna eventually boarded the much larger 720 tonne *Broxbornebury* joining 120 other female convicts being transported to New South Wales. They sailed on 22nd February 1814 in convoy with *Surry*, another convict ship. On route only two women died on board *Broxbornebury*, but the fate of

the *Surry* was much worse. Fifty-one crew, convicts and soldiers including the captain perished of typhus on board the *Surry*. With no one left on board who could guide the vessel through the heads at Port Jackson, some of *Broxbornebury's* crew, despite the infections, had to board the *Surry* to take it through the heads.

However, Sydney authorities refused to allow the *Surry* to come further and crew and passengers were made to camp on North Head until the typhus epidemic had cleared. The origins of the North Head Quarantine Station.

Susanna, still only 20, disembarked *Broxbornebury* and was apparently taken to the Female Factory at Parramatta. The *Broxbornebury* lay in the harbour for a few weeks but on the day of her departure, her armourer, Aaron Walters, who befriended Susanna on the voyage, jumped ship to be with his love.

Susanna and Aaron were married on 23 January 1815 at St Phillips Sydney and settled at St Albans where their six daughters and two sons were born. Both are buried on their farm *The Industrious Settler* at St Albans. All the children married descendants of convicts, marrying into some prominent Macdonald Valley pioneer families such as Walker, Fernance, Thompson and Jurd.

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The Industrious Settler



Susanna & Aaron Walters Headstones



View from Wollombi Road to the Macdonald River



Walers Family Graves behind the Industrious Settler