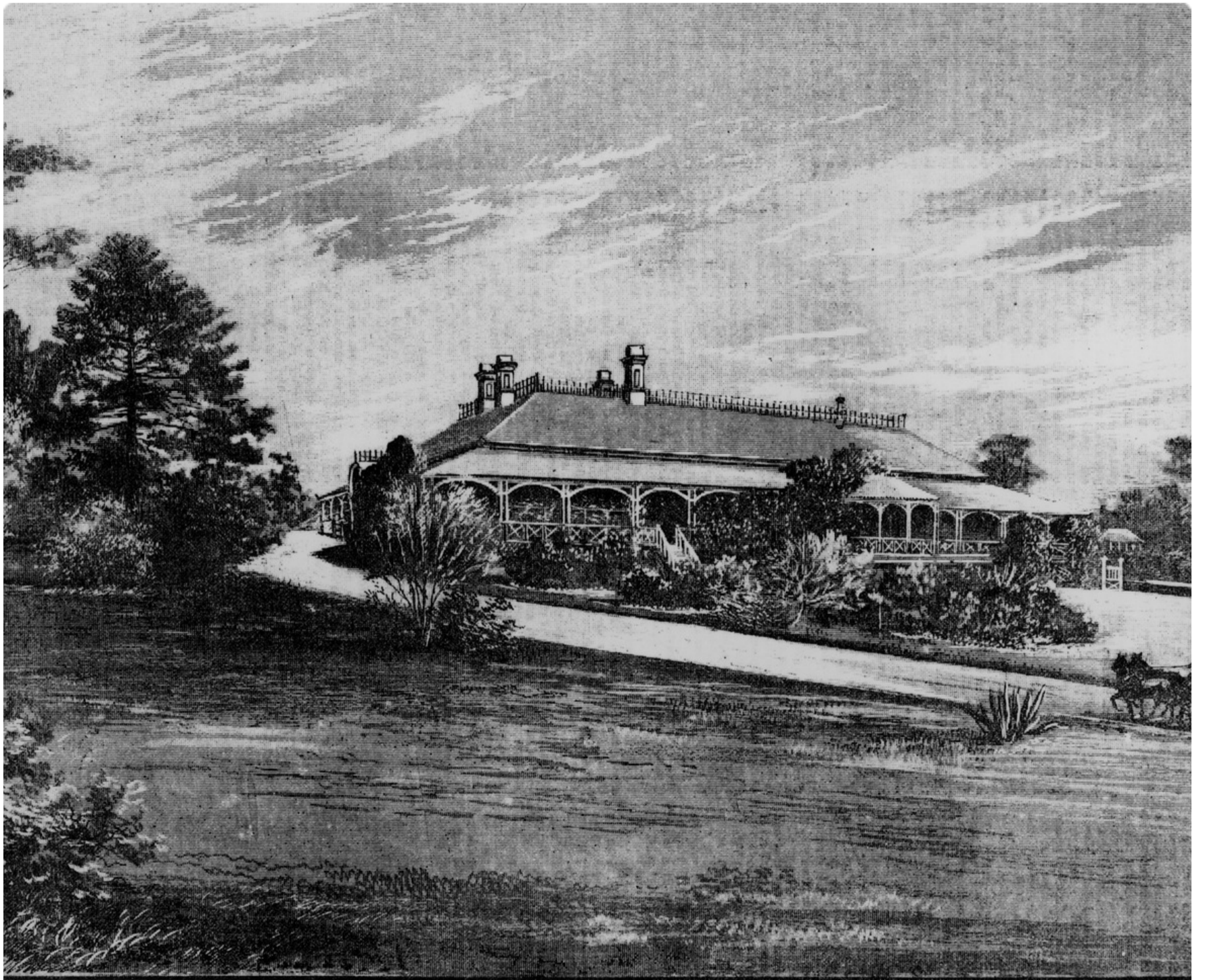


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McIlwraith's Estate



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Version History

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Illustrations:

Cover: Sketch of Auchenflower House, Brisbane, 1891 (***The Queenslander***; State Library of Queensland) (Copyright expired)

Grounds of 'Auchenflower House' in Brisbane, ca. 1885 (State Library of Queensland) (Copyright expired)

The Piazza at Auchenflower House (State Library of Queensland) (Copyright expired)

Sketch of the rustic fountain at Auchenflower House, 1891 (State Library of Queensland) (Copyright expired)

Mcllwraith's Estate

Auchenflower's *migaloo* story starts in the 1850s as surveyors mapped out rural estates between Milton and Toowong. However, the name 'Auchenflower' did not emerge until Queensland premier Sir Thomas Mcllwraith ¹ arrived in the neighbourhood.

Mcllwraith bought a thirteen-acre (five-hectare) hilltop property on the river side of Milton Road from John Ward. ²

After Ward acquired the property from John Markwell in 1876, ³ he built "one of the most substantially built and elegantly finished residences in or out of Brisbane" with several bedrooms, a ballroom and verandahs. ⁴

The site boasted views towards the city and Mount Coot-tha on

"one of the prettiest villa sites in the neighborhood of the metropolis; the centre of the block being very high, with gentle slope in all directions, thus securing a thorough system of drainage, uninterrupted view, and the full benefit of the sea breeze; or in fact from any and every quarter the wind may come from." ⁵

Mcllwraith, who had become Queensland's premier the year before, added stables, a coach house and other features after he purchased the property for £2700 on 30 June 1880. ⁶

Mcllwraith had recently returned from London, where he had arranged the capital to prop up his business affairs ⁷



The premier named his new semi-rural retreat after the McIlwraith family estate in Ayrshire. The Gaelic name refers to a field of flowers. ⁸

However, a scandal was never far from a man whose three terms at the helm of Queensland's colonial government were

"characterised by dispute and squabble among politicians, squatters and the general constituency over Sir Thomas' preoccupation with developing land grant railways into the interior of Queensland." ⁹

The scandal preceded McIlwraith's move into Auchenflower.

After following his brother John from Scotland to Victoria in 1854, and a brief stay on the goldfields at Bendigo, he worked as a surveyor and engineer on the colony's railway lines.

An unsuccessful attempt to gain a seat in Victoria's Legislative Assembly preceded a move to Queensland, where he and his business partner Joseph Capel Smyth ¹⁰ had taken up eight pastoral runs in the Maranoa district.

In the meantime, McIlwraith had married his brother's sister-in-law, Margaret Whannell.

When he relocated to Queensland, Margaret was reluctant to live outside Brisbane.

After a visit to McIlwraith's property at Merivale with their two daughters, she returned to Melbourne for the birth of a third in 1872.

She allegedly drank to excess when she returned to Brisbane two years later.

As a result, McIlwraith sent her home to Scotland with their three daughters. She died there in mid-October 1877. ¹¹

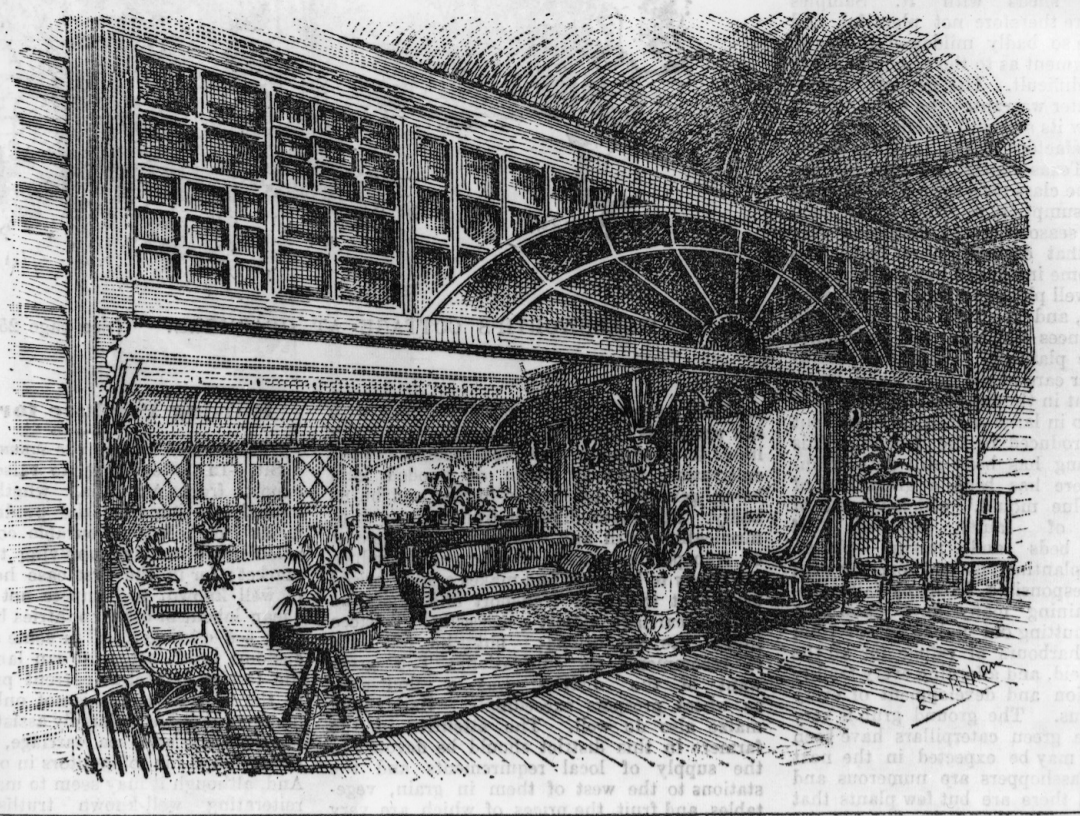
Two years later, McIlwraith's second marriage connected him to influential figures in Queensland politics. Harriet Mosman's father discovered gold in Charters Towers, and her sister married Sir Arthur Palmer.

⁸ "The name 'Auchenflower' is derived from the Gaelic 'Achaidhean Fleur'. Achaidhean (pronounced 'ach-en') is the plural of achadh, meaning fields, meadows or high level ground. 'Fleur' is the genitive of the Gaelic 'flur' meaning flowers, used in the sense of bright flowers such as nosegays. There is also a secondary meaning in the sense of "fertile" coming from the concept of 'flowering'. Thus Auchenflower is 'fields of flowers' or 'the fertile fields'. "(J. H. Pearn, **Auchenflower: The Suburb and Its Name**, p. 92.

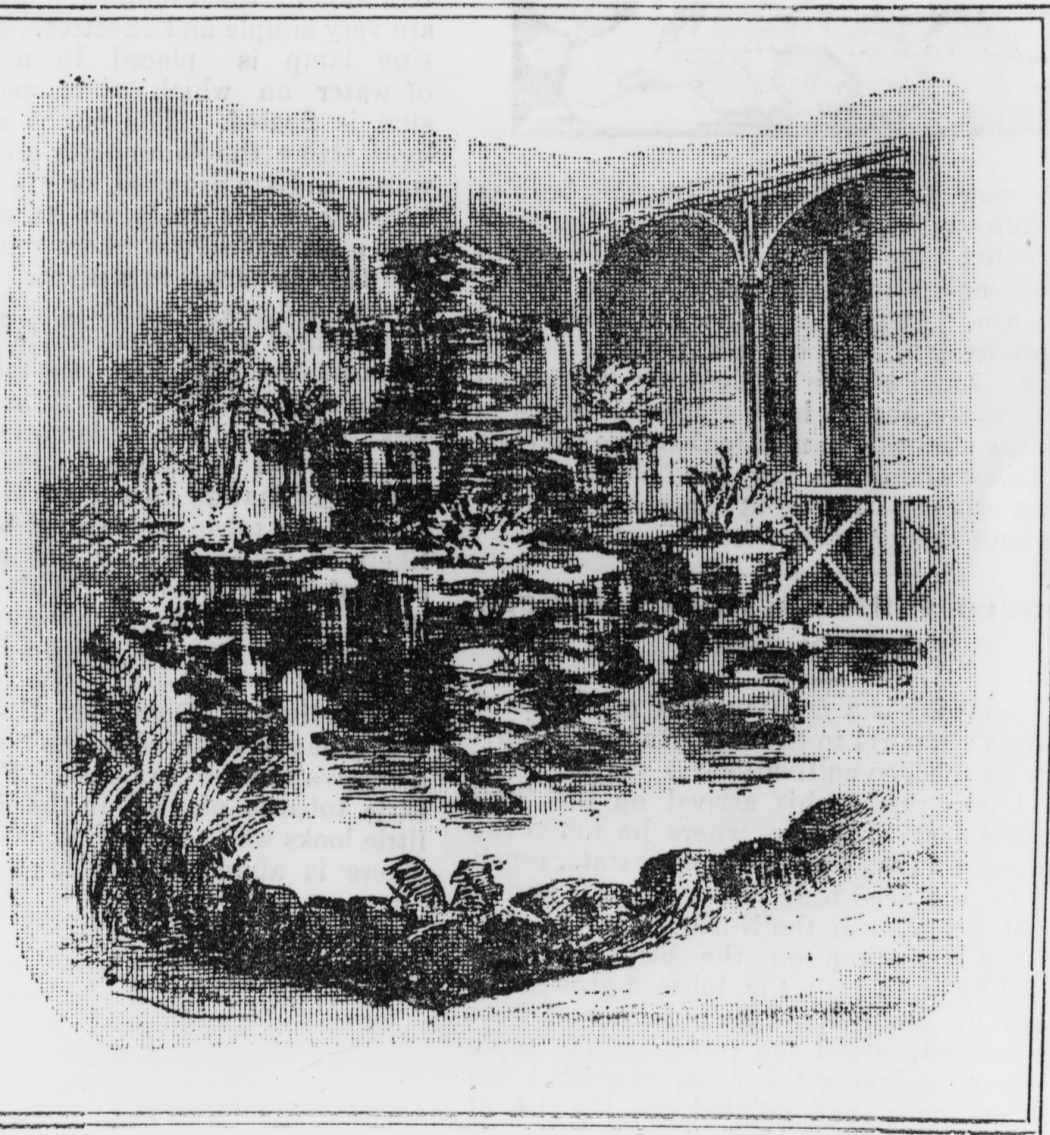
⁹ [Auchenflower History](#)

¹⁰ [Wikipedia](#).

¹¹ One suspects that (for whatever reason) Margaret no longer fits with McIlwraith's ambitions: "McIlwraith's ethics displayed the harsh double standards of many Calvinists. He once reproached a politician for reading a newspaper on Sunday although he himself drank to excess, fathered an illegitimate daughter in Victoria and did not emerge blameless from the three largest financial scandals in Queensland history." Don Dignan, *McIlwraith, Sir Thomas* **Australian Dictionary of Biography**.



THE PIAZZA AT AUCHENFLOWER. (See page 250.)



RUSTIC FOUNTAIN AT AUCHENFLOWER.

After McIlwraith bought the property in 1880, the house was re-designed and extended,

"the result being a gentleman's residence vying with some of the best in the colonies. The billiard room, ball room, a piazza, and the smoking rooms, with suites of apartments for visitors, were grouped round a large quadrangle, with a fernery and fountains in the centre of it. Corridors and verandas from 12ft. to 14ft. wide surrounded the house, and gave access from outside to all parts. The floor space of the ballroom and piazza together was 60ft. by 30ft, so with the wide verandas closed in for refreshment rooms there was no scarcity of accommodation for dispensing what has been described as the knightly hospitality for which Sir Thomas and Lady McIlwraith have always been noted." ¹²

¹² F. E. Lord, *Brisbane's Historic Homes*. XXV. – Auchenflower, *The Queenslander*, 31 July 1930 ([Trove](#))

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