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Milton State School



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Images:

Cover: Milton State School, viewed across Gregory Park, 10 May 2023 (Author's photograph)

Portion of Plan of portions 203 to 257 in the environs of Brisbane, parish of Enoggera, County of Stanley, NSW ([State Library of Queensland](#); Surveyor General's Office; Out of copyright).

Detail from Sheet Seven of government lithographer A.R. McKellar's thirteen-sheet collection of maps of Brisbane and Suburbs (Collection of the Centre for the Government of Queensland; Department of Lands; [Queensland Historical Atlas](#))

1908 Advertisement for auction sale: Auchenflower Estate with map, conditions of purchase, and a brief description of the land, public transport and utilities available. (John Oxley Library, [State Library of Queensland](#), Out of copyright.)

Milton State School

Undoubtedly, Auchenflower House would have been a centrally-located site for a new State School in Brisbane's inner western suburbs. ¹ The hilltop location was the *only* substantial centrally-located site that might become available in the foreseeable future. There were literally no alternatives. Across the railway line, the Mayne family's Moorlands might have been suitable if the owners were willing to part with it. ²

Public officials reserved land as future sites for schools and other facilities in other areas, but that didn't happen as the first wave of settlement spread west from Brisbane's original footprint in the Yuggera Turrbal people called *Meanjin*. ³ Through Moreton Bay's convict era, the settlement's footprint was limited to a few enclaves; ⁴ once the convicts were gone and rival centres ⁵ in the area bypassed, *Meanjin*, Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane all had claims as the location for the settlement's wharves.

Until those matters were resolved, no one could be sure how the settlement would expand. Once they were, astute investors could set themselves up in what would become the north side's inner suburbs.

The J. D. Lang-sponsored emigrants who arrived on the *Fortitude* famously established themselves in what became known as Fortitude Valley. Others followed on the *Chaseley* and the *Lima*. Those who did well invested in property on the outskirts of the growing settlement. Initially, they did not need to go far in search of acreage.

John Markwell arrived on the *Chaseley* and prospered in business but had more than his share of personal tragedy. ⁶

¹ Based on the distances from Mrs Blakey's elegant Queenslander to the other schools in the area according to Apple Maps: Milton State School or Toowong State School: 1.2 kilometres or 17 minutes walk; Rainworth State School: 2 kilometres or 27 minutes up hill and down dale with a 40 metre overall climb.

² Moorlands remained in the Mayne family until the last of the children (Mary Emelia Mayne) died in 1940. After it was bequeathed to the University of Queensland, United States service personnel occupied the site during World War II. It was subsequently sold to the Legacy War Widows and Orphans Fund's Brisbane branch and served as an orphanage until the Methodist Church bought the property in 1971 and built the Wesley Hospital behind the house, which has been on the Queensland Heritage Register since August 1992.

³ Today, Brisbane's central business district.

⁴ *Meanjin*, New Farm, Eagle Farm, South Brisbane with Cowper's Plains (Cooper's Plains) and Limestone (Ipswich) as outstations.

⁵ Squatters in the hinterland favoured Ipswich as the main population centre and bayside Cleveland as the port.

⁶ Markwell's first wife died in 1853. His second wife, Georgina and three of her children died early. "Two children died at 10 months, one at 15 months, a seven-year-old drowned and their daughter did not survive her 12th year. The sixth child, the first son Henry John Markwell, was thrown from a galloping horse in River Road and died aged 23." (waymarking.com)

After his first wife died, Markwell married butcher George Edmondson's daughter. He received a substantial estate from his new father-in-law and built the original Moorlands, looking across the river from the hill beside Langville Creek.⁷

This survey map shows Markwell's four acreage blocks and the other substantial holdings between Milton Road and the Brisbane River. Langville Creek flows through what will subsequently become Moorlands Park.⁸



Portion of Plan of portions 203 to 257 in the environs of Brisbane, parish of Enoggera, County of Stanley, NSW (State Library of Queensland; Surveyor General's Office; Out of copyright.)

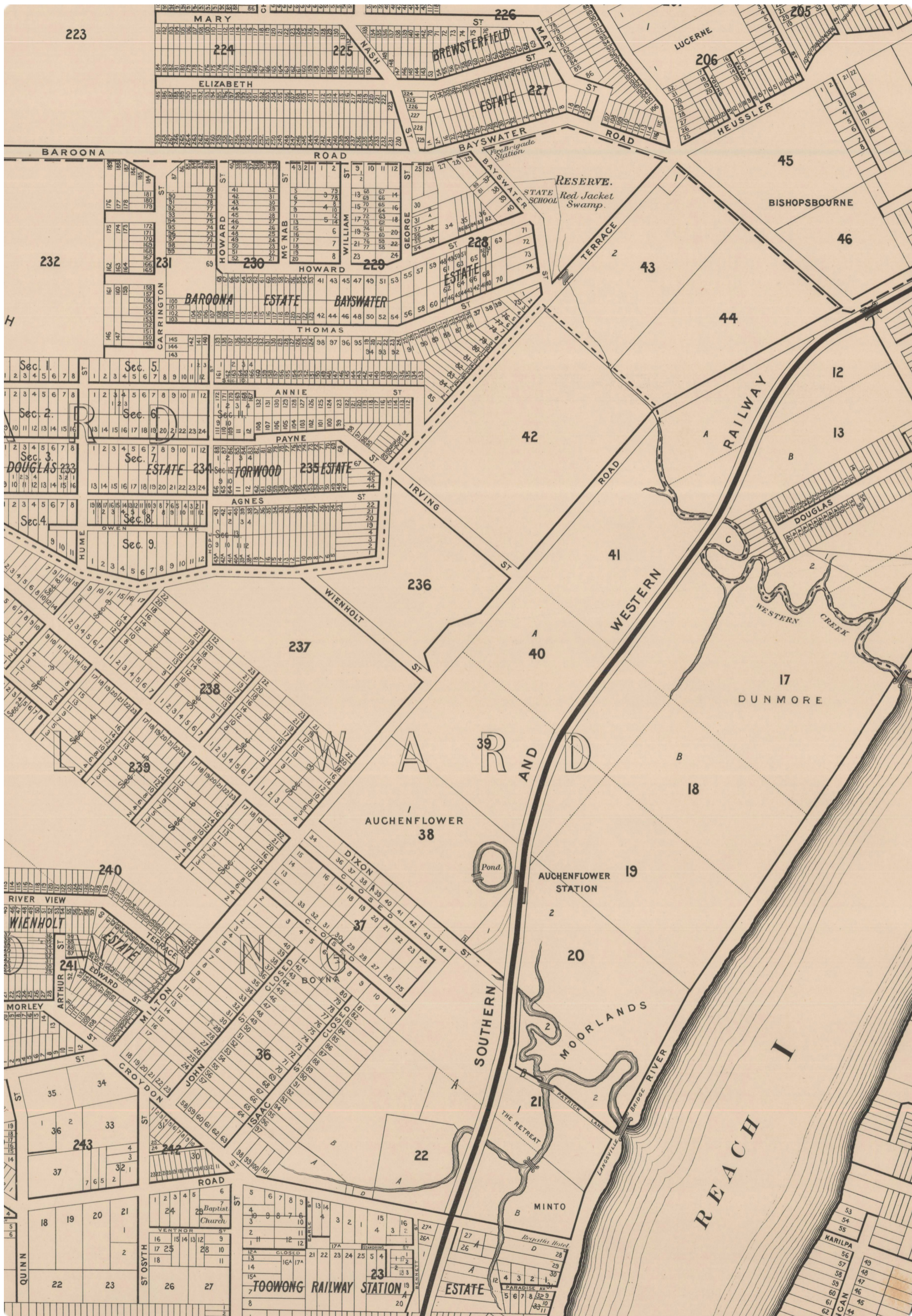
The substantial holdings on the 'town' side of Markwell's blocks belonged to prominent Brisbane identities.

- P. Mayne was [Patrick Mayne](#): butcher, businessman and alderman on Brisbane's first municipal council whose widow later bought Markwell's Moorlands.
- A. Eldridge was former Sydney pharmacist Ambrose Eldridge, whose Milton House was the area's first substantial building. His thirty-acre Milton farm produced prize-winning Sea Island Cotton.
- G. F. Leslie was probably the well-connected Scots-born grazier and politician George Farquhar Leslie, whose brother Partick led the first party of settlers onto the Darling Downs.
- R. Cribb would have been London-born baker Robert Cribb, a *Fortitude* migrant who welcomed Queensland's first governor when he arrived in Sydney en route to the newly separated colony.
- Surveyor and explorer J. C. Burnett was the head of Brisbane's first Survey Office, established in 1844.

On the 'town' side of Cribb and Burnett's blocks, Western Creek drains the area between modern-day Paddington and Bardon and Auchenflower, extending much further than the map suggests.

⁷ The waterway that flowed through what later became Moorlands Park, draining the area on the western side of McIlwraith's Auchenflower House and Toowong Memorial Park.)

⁸ Today, much of the former park has become parking for Wesley Hospital.)



Western Creek rose in the hills around Rosalie and ran south of Government House into Red Jacket Swamp (today's Gregory Park, marked *Reserved for Water*) and past the former Milton Tennis Courts to flow into the Brisbane River on the city side of Lang Parade.

Most of those eight blocks between the two creeks on the river side of Milton Road remained unsubdivided until the late 19th century, with McIlwraith's Auchenflower Estate remaining intact until 1903. The Mayne family's Moorlands survived until the Methodist Church bought the site and established the Wesley Hospital.

Meanwhile, suburban development leapfrogged the nascent Auchenflower. The Western Railway played a vital role in the process. Stations went in at Milton and Toowong when the line opened in 1875.⁹

Various routes between Brisbane and Ipswich had been touted. The eventual decision to take the line north of the river made the route slightly more challenging to build, less likely to be affected by floodwaters and, since the land was largely 'waste' and 'unenclosed', cheaper.¹⁰

Government officials made provisions for a school there as a village developed around Toowong station. Meanwhile, suburban development looped around the Anglican bishop's residence¹¹ from Red Hill and Paddington into Torwood, Rainworth and Bardon as various subdivided estates went under the auctioneer's hammer.

A slice of high ground on the western side of the water reserve at Red Jacket Swamp gave Milton its State School in 1889.¹²

So, by the end of the century, most of the area *around* what I have termed my familiar territory was already subdivided. However, most of the area I roamed as a boy remained unsubdivided until the 20th century.

⁹ Initially from Roma Street to Indooroopilly and from Ipswich to Oxley Point. When it opened in July 1876, trains could run from Roma Street to Ipswich. After Milton and Toowong, stations at tops at Indooroopilly, Oxley, Oxley West and Goodna were there from the start. Others appeared as localities developed, and demand warranted the expense. A short-lived stopping place at Cemetery Road (modern-day Sylvan Road) made access to Brisbane's new cemetery easier until the tram line went in along Milton Road in 1905. (Penny Cook, **Brisbane spreads west: a local history 1840 - 1901**, p. 31.

¹⁰ "although the land between Indooroopilly and Toowong had been the most intensely sub-divided by the 1870s, only two allotments are noted as having houses built on them". One was the former Toowong Retreat Hotel, "the Indooroopilly farmers old refreshment stop on their track back from town"(Penny Cook, **Brisbane spreads west: a local history 1840 - 1901**, p. 21.

¹¹ Bishopsbourne, next door to the Castlemaine Perkins XXXX brewery.

¹² Initially, Rosalie State School. A detailed Wikipedia entry outlines the school's history.

Anyone inclined to question suggestions that Auchenflower served as Sir Thomas Mcllwraith's personal railway station ¹³ only needs a glance at the 1895 cadastral map to see the point.

After an inbound train crossed the bridge at Cemetery/Sylvan Road, it left subdivided suburbia behind until it reached Bishopsbourne.

Predictably, when those acreage blocks were eventually subdivided, it was all about maximising the return, so there was no thought of leaving space for facilities like schools.

The poster advertising the auction sale for the Auchenflower Estate has a 16-perch block (#90) on the extension of the lane on the southern side of Auchenflower House. ¹⁴

After the subdividing was done and dusted, pressure from the Auchenflower community delivered an Infants' School. The lack of facilities designated for educational purposes meant it operated on the ground floor of Auchenflower's Methodist Church on Munro Street. The unsuccessful delegations to the state's education authorities suggesting Auchenflower House as the site for a new State School were parents of children attending Auchenflower Infants. Still, demographic changes saw the Infants' School close in 1960. Primary school-age children were relatively few and far between in our neighbourhood. ¹⁵

So while I'd had the short walk down Ridley Street, across Milton Road, and down Munroe Street for

¹³ "Sir Thomas Mcllwraith's 'Auchenflower' ... acquired a private station". (John Kerr, *The evolving railways of Brisbane* in Rod Fisher (ed.) **Brisbane: Public, Practical, Personal**, Brisbane History Group, 1981, p. 33.)

¹⁴ By my reckoning, Mrs Blakey's elegant Queenslander occupied Lots 91 and 92 along with half of Lot 93; Forno's was the other half of Lot 93 and Lot 94; Miss Hartley's 95 and 96, with the fourth house on the block on 97 and 98.

¹⁵ Apart from my brother and I, the only primary school-age children I knew of in our neck of the woods were John Baird in Mcllwraith Street, David Rees-Thomas over the railway line in Chasely Street and the Copas brothers at the bottom of Ridley Street. Several of my Milton classmates lived on the heights around Birdwood Terrace.

my first two years of schooling, my brother had to make the 1.2-kilometre hike to Milton State from the start of Grade One.

While I suppose we could just as easily have walked over the hill along Milton Road to make our way to Toowong State, and the school's **Wikipedia** entry details an intriguing history, the alternative would have denied a future historian:

- A school playground that encompassed Gregory Park (formerly Red Jacket Swamp);
- The chance to attend inter-school athletics carnivals on the site of the former Paddington Cemetery ¹⁶after hiking along the part of Heussler Terrace that was not renamed after British generals in World War I's patriotic anti-Teutonic fervour;
- The option of a homeward route passing tennis courts that hosted eight Australian Open Championships, including the first tournament of the professional era, three Davis Cup finals (1958, 1962 and 1967) and a Rolling Stones concert I might have attended in 1973 if the logistical arrangements from Palm Island had permitted. Once we crossed Milton Road, one possible route ran across the area where Ambrose Eldridge grew his Sea Island cotton and Dunmore Park. ¹⁷

A dozen years after my family moved North, a keen Year Five teacher might have melded those elements into a neighbourhood excursion. ¹⁸ In the early sixties, those of us who absorbed the contents of our Social Studies books while we waited for the next classroom activity to begin remained convinced that history (or, at least, its interesting manifestations) was something that happened a long way away.

¹⁶ Which we knew as Lang Park; currently Suncorp Stadium until the next naming rights arrangements.

¹⁷ Along with Land Parade, Dunmore Terrace, Chasely, Lima and Fortitude Streets, one of Auchenflower's numerous references to the formidable Reverend John Dunmore Lang.

¹⁸ By that stage, the Year Five Social Studies syllabus began with a Local Study.