

Bringing the Past to the Future

THOSE WERE

THE DAYS

NEWSLETTER OF THE UPPER CLUTHA HISTORICAL RECORDS SOCIETY INC.

(Upper Clutha includes Cardrona, Albert Town, Luggate, Queensberry, Tarras, Hawea, Makarora, Wanaka and Lakes Wanaka and Hawea)

SUMMER 2020 - VOLUME TWELVE

DECEMBER 2020

UCHRS HISTORY PRIZE - 2020

Joel Suddaby of Mount Aspiring College was awarded the Upper Clutha History Prize for 2020 on the 4 November at the MAC Prize Giving. Joel's subject was on the Environmental Impacts that the Otago Gold Rush had on the Upper Clutha. We wish Joel well with his future and thank the other students for their submissions.

ASHER SMITH – CARPENTER AND SHIP BUILDER



SEASONS GREETINGS



The Committee wishes everyone all the best for the festive season that is just about upon us and we all hope that the New Year is kind to you and all of your family.

Asher, apparently known sometimes as George (his grandfather's name), is another of those early pioneers who perhaps have not been given the recognition they are due as the years have passed by. He left no family behind to carry on his name, nor any huge land and business assets. He did, however, contribute a large amount of his energy and time in helping develop the future Upper Clutha.

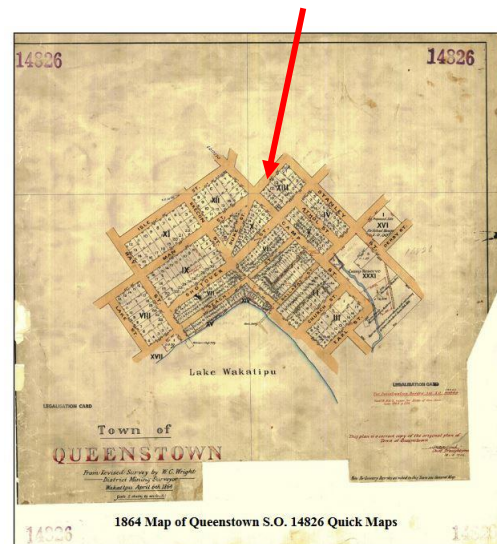
We know very little of Asher, the man, but I have discovered that he was born in New York, USA in 1834¹ (not about 1829 as suggested in his newspaper obituary). He was the 7th child of Richard Smith (b.1897) and Elizabeth Davis They had 10 children all told. In 1850², Asher was living with his parents and siblings in Brooklyn. His father was listed as a Machinist and owned property valued at US\$2,000, a not inconsiderable sum in those days. Asher had left school and was employed as a 'Ship Builder'. That is the last record I can find of him in the USA. In one NZ newspaper, it was reported that he had married in the USA and he had a son named Richard, but I have found no evidence of this, nor has his living relatives. Nor have I found evidence of the 90 slaves his father was supposed to have owned – very unlikely given my research!

It is not known when he arrived in New Zealand though a living relative in the US stated he first went to Australia and thence to New Zealand. The first report on him was as a builder working on the Wakatipu Hospital at Frankton in August 1863.

There is evidence that he was living in a cottage at Queenstown on Block 13. This is between Camp Street and Stanley Street

as indicated on the map following (also see the 1864 photo of Queenstown on the last pages of this Newsletter).

Asher lived here until about 1880 when he then moved permanently to the Lake Wanaka area.



(Thanks to Lakes District Museum for the map)

Before that, along came Theodore Russell and Charles Hedditch with the idea of building a hotel at Pembroke in 1867/8. They needed a builder but there were none in Pembroke at the time – not even any residents! It is claimed that Asher was employed to build the hotel, and so triggered, not only the start of development in Pembroke, but development of essential waterborne transport.

Newspaper cuttings from 1880 and 1881 suggest that Charles Hedditch and Asher joined forces to create a ship that would be designed and built by Asher. This coincides with Asher's move in residence from Queenstown to Lake Wanaka. Whilst it may have been Theodore Russell's wish to build a sizeable boat, remember that he died in

¹ www.myheritage.com

² US Census July 1850

1877 so despite comments in some other publications, Theodore did not start this project.

Asher designed a paddle-steamer with a relatively flat-bottomed hull. It was to be 67 feet in length and with a 16-foot beam and had four berths. The wood for the construction was all obtained by Asher from nearby to where construction took place near the mouth of the Matukituki River. During this time, he lived in a nearby hut.

On 9 March 1881 Florence Hedditch launched the boat naming it the 'Theodore'. However, it had no engines and boiler etc. It was towed to Pembroke and there it stayed moored until the machinery finally arrived from England and was installed. The maiden voyage for the public took place on 16 August 1883, nearly 2½ years after the launch! I suspect that lack of finance was the principal cause of the delay, something that continued to haunt the operation of the 'Theodore' until it ceased operation on the Lake about 1905. All the details are too extensive to record here but they are available in our Records Room.



PS "Theodore"

Asher's next major project was the SS Makarora which was owned by William Allan (no relation of mine), who was also an

important early pioneer of Pembroke. The building of the 'Makarora' started about 1894/5 but Asher never saw it completed and launched (in 1901). It was a fine-looking vessel.



Asher fell ill in 1899 and he was at the Frankton Hospital when he passed away, aged 65. Such was the respect he was held in, William Monteith, a well-known local Pembroke storekeeper, brought Asher's body back to Pembroke and he was buried in a grave in the Wanaka Cemetery. It was raining the day he was buried, but the service was well attended by a large number of local residents and was conducted by a Mr Smith, a retired Wesleyan clergyman from Queenstown.

Asher died Intestate and his estate was valued at £12-15-0. It is stated in his Probate correspondence that relatives were known so perhaps he corresponded with family back in the USA.

Asher's grave is unmarked and the location unknown (a 1940s fire destroyed the records). I note his name has not been recorded on the Memorial Wall of known missing gravesites.

BUYING LAND IN WANAKA – 1860'S PROBLEMS

Questions have followed the article about Theodore Russell in the previous newsletter re his acquisition of the Wanaka Hotel land. The answers have their origin in 1858 when the General Assembly of NZ passed the Waste Lands Act. Waste Lands had been loosely described as “unoccupied land on which Native Title had been extinguished”. In reality, the situation is a lot more complicated than that description but we need not go further into that for the purpose of this article.

Land was to be sold for not less than 5/- per acre (this figure subsequently increased) and this opened the door for the farm settlers such as McLean, Roy, Wilkin etc. As we already know, little settlements like Albert Town sprung up, usually at crossing points on the Clutha and the few people that were there, just built on the land at that locality – a simple process. This is all circa 1859-1860.

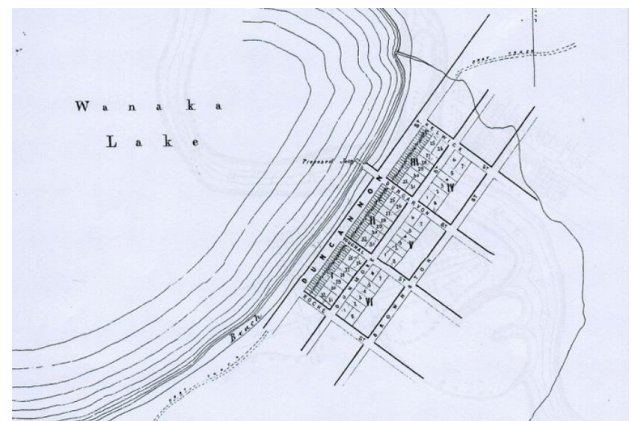
Also in the background are the subsequent introductions of additional Acts relating to Waste Lands – at least four just in relation to Otago in one four-year period. The rules kept on changing!

In 1863 John Connell drew up surveyed plans for towns at Gladstone (John Creek, Lake Hawea), Newcastle (Albert Town at the junction of the Hawea and Clutha Rivers) and Pembroke.

At Pembroke, he surveyed and named streets and sections along the lake front, stretching from Helwick Street through to Roche Street. Pembroke Park was not even thought about. The rest of what we now know as Wanaka was not surveyed into

sections, but what was, became classified as Townland. Anything outside that surveyed area was known as Rural Land, yet it is clear in referring to Connell's map, there was some expectation that the town would be larger in the future (the streets to nowhere).

At least one later map from 1871 strongly suggests that the Wastelands Board had a vision of a much larger town than Connell had mapped out. It showed a rough boundary for the proposed town bounded by Stone Street, Bullock Creek to the east and the Dray Track (now known as Ardmore St).



Connell's Survey Map - 1863

The surveyed land stayed in its natural state, uninhabited for the next two years. Then in August 1865, the Waste Lands Board for Otago decided to auction off the surveyed sections with the auction to occur on 29 September 1865. It has to be said that the advertisements were confusing (see next page) and they even continued to be published in the local newspapers after the auction date.

V.



R.

SALE OF TOWN LANDS.

NEWCASTLE.

THE township of Newcastle, commonly called Cardrona, situated at the junction of the Hawea river with the Clutha.

The Sections in the township of Newcastle will be offered for sale by auction, at Albert Ferry, on Thursday, the 28th day of September next, at 12 o'clock noon.

THE TOWNSHIP OF PEMBROKE, commonly called Alberton, is situated on the south bank of the Wanaka Lake.

The Sections in the Township of Pembroke will be exposed to sale by auction, at Pembroke, on FRIDAY, the 29th day of SEPTEMBER next, at 12 o'clock noon.

You might ask the question "Did the Waste Lands Board in Dunedin even know what they were selling let alone where the land was?" Alberton???

I have found no evidence that auctions actually took place. Certainly nothing is reported in the newspapers, though this appeared in December 1865:

The town lands sold in the Province during the month of November are as follow:—**Pembroke** Township, 7 sections, 35 perches, L45 10s. ; **Moeraki**, 1 section, 1 rood, L101.

That aside, until Russell and Hedditch came along in 1867/8 and built the Wanaka Hotel, no other buildings had been erected in the surveyed area. The site selected for the hotel was un-surveyed land and clearly not part of the Townland area. I think it important however, to consider Connell's map, as I previously suggested there was a probable intention to survey a larger area sometime in the future i.e. some of the streets lead to vacant rural land. Russell was clearly an astute businessman and he had identified a piece of land that would be ideal for a hotel with a magnificent view stretching out from Roys Bay to the mountains beyond.

In 1866 a new Act, The Otago Wastelands Act came into being and it limited the land that could be purchased as being either Townland or Rural Land. It was not Townland that Russell wanted but there was a clause requiring Rural Land to be of at least 50 acres, more than 4 times what he wanted (12 acres). Without spending hours researching old land records in Dunedin, I suspect that The Otago Waste Lands Board granted him a licence to occupy (or some similar agreement) at least 4 acres on which to build the hotel, along with an expectation that at some future point in time, a survey would be undertaken by the Board to extend the Townland Area and then he would be able to apply to purchase the land. Otherwise, Russell would have been in clear breach of the legislation and subject to a substantial fine for having occupied the land and built a building thereon. Then again, maybe they decided just to take the risk and build – who knows!

Then along comes The Otago Waste Lands Act 1872 which introduced a new category of land – Suburban Lands. This covers land adjacent to surveyed Townlands that might well become Townlands at some future time. Possibly, Russell sees an opening here for him to purchase the freehold, except that the legislation only allows for surveyed land to be included and it must be auctioned. In 1873, at his own expense, he surveyed 12 acres of land and in early 1874 petitioned the Board to purchase this land. This was declined but he returned to the fray and continued to apply. I suspect that the 12 acres he applied for was the area bounded roughly by Bullock Creek, Ardmore Street, and a point eastward of Brownston Street.

To cut a long story short, eventually the Board authorised a new survey to be completed (see the 1875 Map) but this did not include the whole 12 acre block Russell wanted. It did however include 4 acres of the ground on which the hotel stood. It is interesting to see the outline of the hotel and stables buildings outlined on the survey map – See the Maps and Random Photos section of this newsletter. See also the cutting from another much later map. It shows the hotel land extending from about the boundary of the current Speights Ale House to the eastern side of Dunmore street and then over to Ardmore Street. This map is also interesting in terms of the names of early residents who ended up owning some of the sections around it, including Russell's wife Celia and his brother Thomas. Another early settler and prominent businessman, Robert McDougall, has his name shown in many many places.

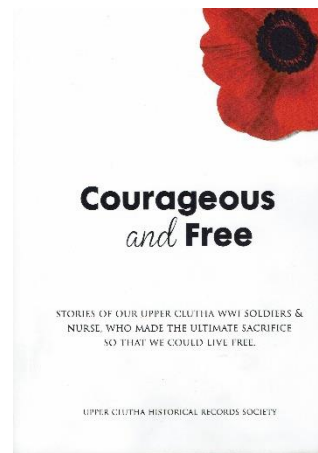
I do not doubt that “politics” and bureaucracy had some influence on the delays that Russell experienced in getting a final decision on the land purchase except that it did not occur until after he died in 1877.

It might seem that not a lot has changed over the last 150 years!

COURAGEOUS & FREE – 2ND EDITION

We are pleased to advise that a 2nd edition of our book “Courageous & Free” has been published and is available in limited numbers for purchase. The purchase price is \$30 (plus postage if required). The book is about the soldiers and one nurse from the Upper Clutha who died during WW1

service, but also contains other related information e.g. a list of returned servicemen and a timeline for WW1.



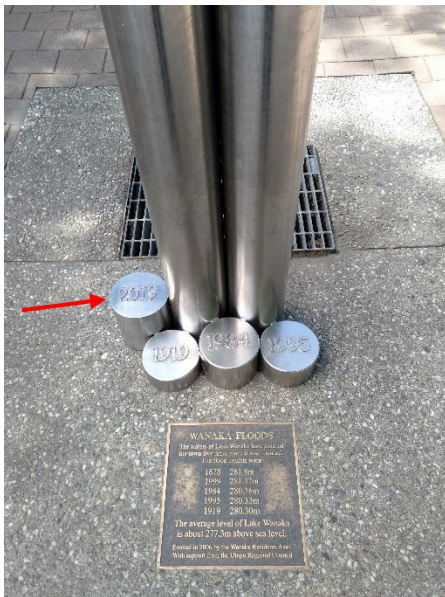
Copies are available at the Wanaka Library and at the Wanaka Paperplus shop, or email a written purchase request to admin@uppercluthahistory.org and we will send you details to enable a purchase to be arranged.

LE QUESNOY WW1 MEMORIAL

We had a visit from Hon. Don McKinnon who is leading a group trying to raise funds for the completion of a NZ Memorial Museum at the town of Le Quesnoy. The building has been acquired and apparently NZ is the only country that does not have a WW1 Museum in the WW1 battlefields. The NZEF attacked and rescued the town of Le Quesnoy on 4 Nov 1918 without any significant damage to the ancient buildings and little loss of life. There are streets in Le Quesnoy named after NZ places and people. The residents welcome NZ travellers with open arms apparently. If you wish to make a donation or know more about the project, contact Don's helper, Jenni Giblin, at jenni@giblingroup.co.nz .

THE 2019 FLOOD

Remember it? It was only 12 months ago but then I suppose we can be excused given all that has occurred during the year! The flood high-point has now joined the previous big floods in the memorial just outside Kai on the corner of Helwick and Ardmore Streets.



THANK YOU'S

This has been a very unusual year to say the least, and we have to thank the volunteers and members for your patience and understanding during the various lockdowns. Work did continue to some degree “behind the scenes” thanks to our new computer network, but not everything could be accessed.

Special thanks has to go to the Librarians at the Wanaka Library, as without their assistance we would struggle to manage everything.

Thanks to the ITCentre, especially Zane for his patience and help. We cannot forget the IT staff from QLDC either.

To our principal funders, QLDC, Central Lakes Trust and Otago Community Trust, thank you for your support which enabled us to create a better framework for doing our work for the community and visitors to our town.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Are you interested in reading or history or just contributing to our Charity? We are seeking help from anyone with a little spare time. We have a very small group of active members and the volume of outstanding work just keeps on growing. Can you please help? It may be as simple as reading a book and just identifying names and places on each page – things that can be done from the comfort of your own home. All the jobs may not be like that but if you are interested, please phone Jo Wilton on 021 104 0405 or leave your contact details with the Librarians at the Wanaka Library.

JO'S UPDATE

The last three months have been challenging, not only in sorting out our computer issues but also having access to the internet somewhat arbitrarily restricted (now fixed) – and of course Covid19.

We are grateful to have received significant donations from donors of material relating to the Upper Clutha. We have also digitized

the Map Collection and we are working on a new catalogue for the maps.

As mentioned before, the 2nd Edition of *Courageous and Free* has been printed and we have almost sold out the 3rd Edition of *Skirt Tales*, so be quick if you want a copy.

Barbara Chinn (who has been helping us digitize our records) has received local assistance in cataloguing the Hawea archives. The archive is in the Hawea Community Centre and in due course a summary of the records will be made available to the Society.

The Records Room will be closed from 9 Dec through to 3 Feb 2021 but feel free to contact us via the website during this period if you have any queries.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

The Society has published a small number of books and booklets over the years. Four are still for sale:

Postage & Packaging is extra – 1 copy \$5-90, two copies \$8-60 (using NZ Post bags)

Skirt Tales – 100 Historical Stories of Women from the Upper Clutha Area, Central Otago - \$25. This is the 3rd Edition and is available from the Society, and the Wanaka Library. Very few copies are left.

125, Look Alive – 125 Years of Schooling in the Wanaka District - \$12.00. Available from the Society or the Wanaka Library.

The Upper Clutha – 150 Years - \$5. A short history of the Upper Clutha district. Available from the Society or the Wanaka Library.

Courageous and Free – Stories of Upper Clutha WW1 Soldiers and Nurse – 2nd Edition – \$30

Available from Paperplus Wanaka and the Wanaka Library.

PHOTOS

Copies of the photographs held in our records can be provided either as a digital file or a printed copy.

Costs are:

For individuals:

Digital file:	\$10-00
Printed Copy:	\$10-00 plus the cost of printing the Photo at Kodak, Wanaka.

For Non-profit Community organisations:

There is generally no fee for digital copies but a donation would be welcome. For printed copies, the Community organization will need to pay for the Kodak Wanaka printing cost.

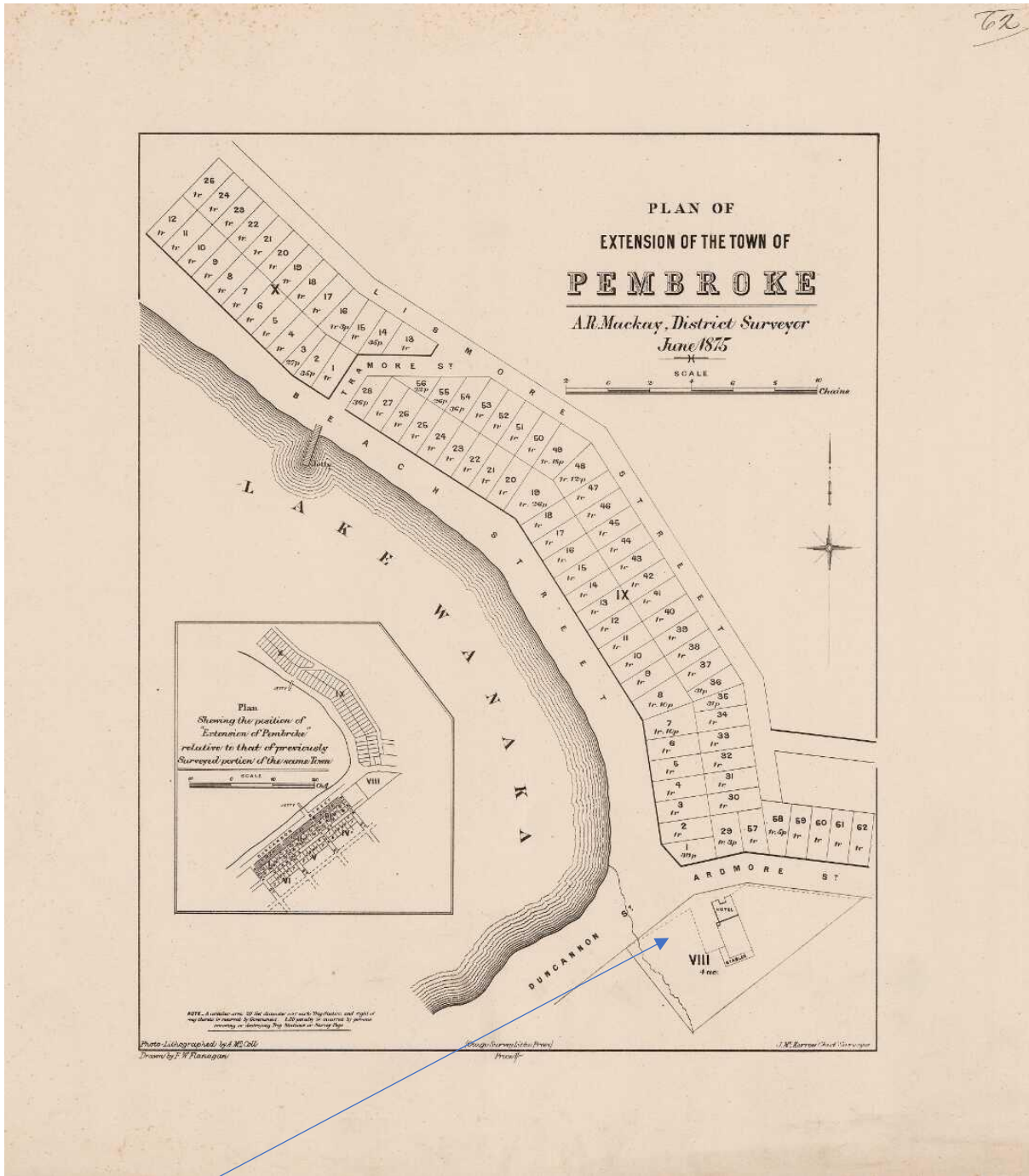
For Commercial Organisations:

The fee is \$30.00 plus the cost of any printed copy.

Please note that ownership of the image lies with UCHRS and further copying requires our written approval and possibly an additional negotiated fee.

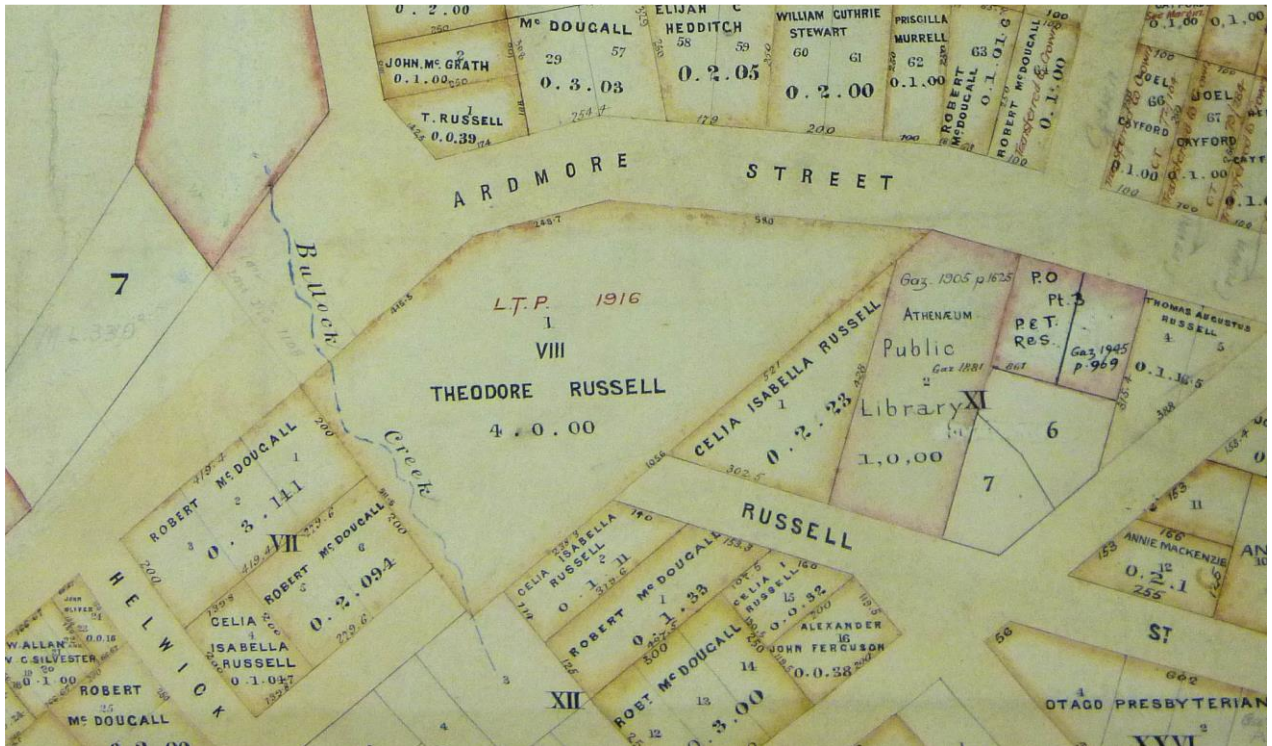
MAPS & RANDOM PHOTOS

62



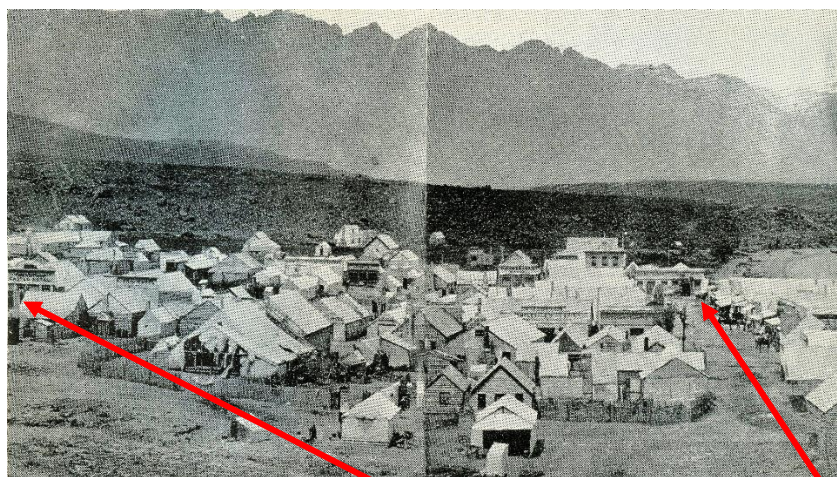
1875 Survey Map

THE HOTEL



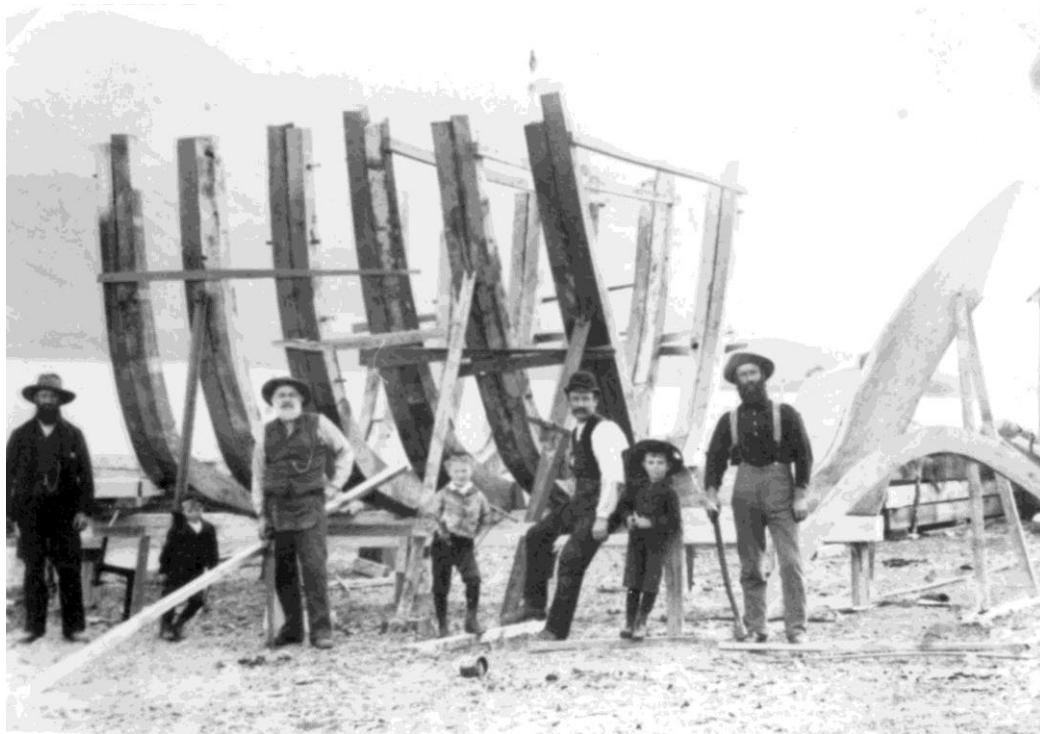
MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE WANAKA HOTEL PROPERTY

This map is interesting in terms of the names of early residents who ended up owning some of the sections around it, including Russell's wife Celia. Robert McDougall's name is also prominent in many places. Certain public utilities were approved on Ardmore Street e.g. land set aside for a Post Office, Athenæum/Public Library, etc. so the chances of a 12 acre block were unrealistic given the time that had passed since 1867/8 and the development of Pembroke as a settlement.



Reportedly a photo of Queenstown in 1864. Area where Asher Smith lived – Eichardts Hotel

Thanks to the Lakes District Museum for this image



About 1896 – Building the 'Makarora'. Asher Smith 3rd from left; William Allan at far right.



On the left the PS 'Theodore' and on the right the SS 'Makarora'

WHO ARE WE?

President: Graham Dickson

Vice President: Jo Wilton

Secretary: David Simmers

Treasurer/Editor: Ken Allan

Committee Members: Ken and Margaret Thomlinson, Bruce Foulds.

The Society was established in 1985, Incorporated in 2010, and became a Charity in 2014, to collect and preserve records and images of the history of the Upper Clutha region and make them available to members of the public. The records are held in a special room in the Wanaka Library and a small team of volunteers provides research assistance (appointments are necessary) to members of the public who may be looking for their family history or for persons searching for aspects of NZ history. Copying costs apply.

Please contact a Librarian at the Wanaka Library who will pass on the request, or send us an email to admin@uppercluthahistory.org.

The Society is a Registered Charity. Funding is reliant on the assistance of a variety of community funders and individual gifts. Donations are very welcome, as are new members.

Donations may be made to our bank account 03-1739-0012311-00 with the reference – Donation. As we are a Registered Charity, donations over \$5 are tax deductible – please ask for a receipt. Please note that the IRD require donor's full name and address

Membership Subscriptions for year ending 31/3/2021 are \$10-00 per person.

Website:

<http://www.uppercluthahistory.org/>

Email:

admin@uppercluthahistory.org