

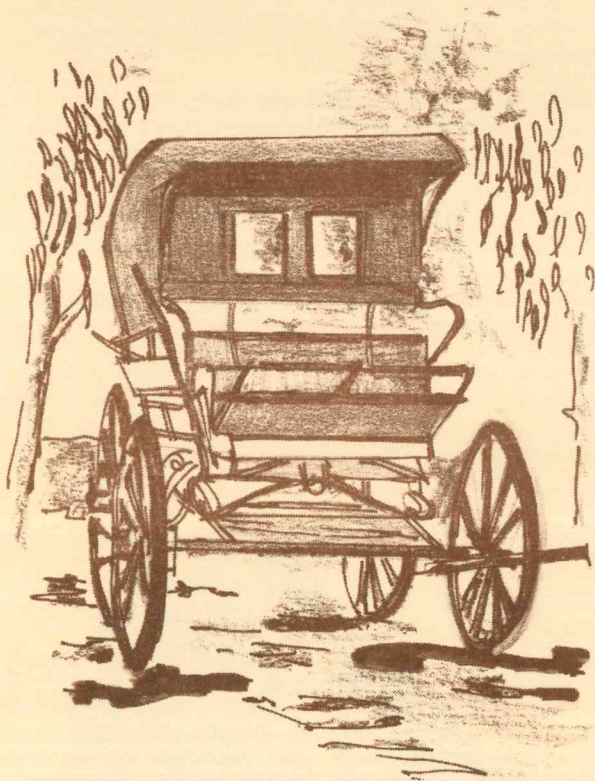
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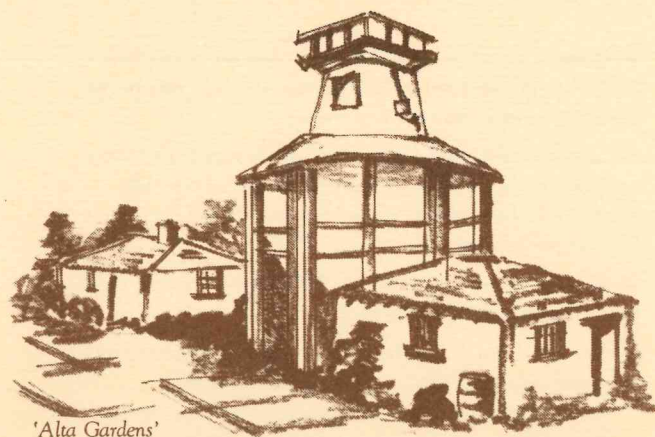
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Several people owned the mill later and attempted to operate it but it was badly situated for its purpose — too far away from the wheat-growing areas — and could not compete with other mills built in 1846 at Yunderup at the mouth of the Murray River on the Peel inlet, at Wonnerup and later in the major wheat-producing areas.

According to the records the last flour was produced there in 1859, just a century before it was decided to restore the old place and give it a new significance in the city scene.



In 1880 an architect named T.H.J. Brown leased the mill with the intention of making it the central feature of a picnic resort. He added a verandah to the original structure and built a new roof. He called the spot Alta Gardens and had high hopes of making it popular; but it was too far away from anywhere and his project soon languished for lack of public support.



'Alta Gardens'

Various people used the mill house as a residence. For a few years it was a wine saloon; then a poultry farm. All the time it was getting to look run down and neglected.

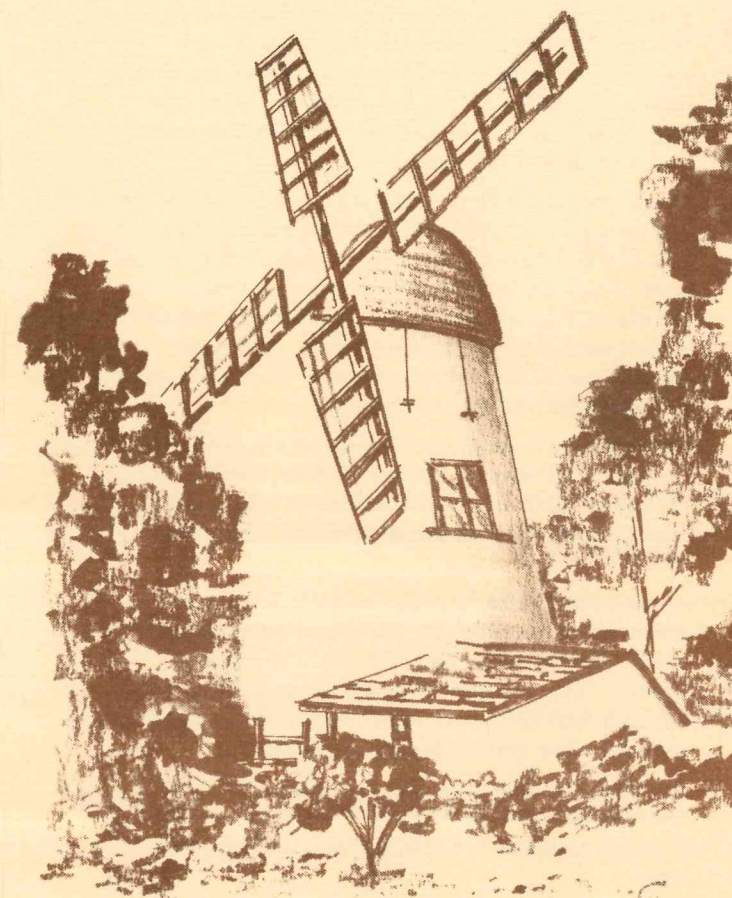
Various attempts to have the old building preserved as a link with the pioneers of our primary producing State resulted in only piecemeal patchings. To protect the site and buildings, the Western Australian Government declared the area a State public recreation reserve in 1932 and vested it in the Secretary Premiers Department and Under Secretary for Lands. In 1957 the reserve was leased to the company H.L. Brisbane and Wunderlich Limited, which offered to restore it to its early appearance and make it a repository for historical relics.

#### Footnote:

There is history, too, in the point upon which the old mill stands. Known familiarly as Mill Point it is really Point Belches and was named by Captain James Stirling, R.N., after Lieutenant Peter Belches, R.N., who was a member of Stirling's party when he surveyed the Swan River in 1827.

As a result of that survey Stirling strongly espoused the settlement of the Swan River area which took place in 1829 with Stirling as the first governor.

Peter Belches also returned to Western Australia. He resigned from the Royal Navy and in 1834 took up land at Albany. For some years he was harbourmaster at King George's Sound.



## The Old Mill



## The Story of the Old Mill

The old mill at South Perth is the oldest surviving physical link with the pioneering days of the Colony of Western Australia. History has surged past it but it remains as a memorial to the courage of those few British people who, taking all they had with them, sailed half way around the world to claim for Great Britain a new land in an unfamiliar hemisphere.

Despite this tale of brave beginning the old mill grew out of a failure. In October, 1829, a young engineer from Winchester, England, arrived in the ship "Lotus" as the agent of Colonel Peter Augustus Latour, of Little Staughton, England, who was the sponsor of a plan to settle a number of people at Australind. This young engineer was William Kernot Shenton. With him came a mill and other property worth £852.

Shenton came to the Swan River Colony to put in train the plan of his sponsor. The project languished for lack of drive at the London end and Shenton returned to Fremantle where he had acquired several lots on his arrival in the new Colony.

A man of enterprise, he built a mill which was horse driven and at the same time established a newspaper called "The West Australian Chronicle and Perth Gazette". This was the first printed paper in the Colony although there had been earlier manuscript newspapers, each with short periods of irregular publication.

The first issue of the newspaper, on April 25, 1831, recorded that while printing was in progress at one end of the building, wheat was being ground into flour at the other.

This mill was fitted with sails to reduce costs but it had been badly sited. Shenton had put it at Fremantle to grind wheat imported from England but none came, the only wheat then being grown in the Colony was at Guildford.

Shenton sought Government aid to move the mill to Guildford but the treasury was virtually empty and no help could be given him.

But Shenton was not easily put aside from his purpose; he designed another mill which he put at Point Belches (now Mill Point). It was so placed to make use of the Swan River which was the main highway of the pioneers.

This was a small mill, probably all that the dwindling resources of Shenton could command but it was burnt down soon after its erection.

So Shenton designed a new mill which was built by the contractors Lockyer and Son and operated by "Mr. Steel". The foundation stone was laid by the Governor (Sir James Stirling) in October, 1835.

In its issue of April 22, 1837, "The Perth Gazette" had this to say about the new mill:—

We were much gratified in visiting the windmill at the point opposite Mount Eliza to find that the construction of the building had assumed a business-like appearance, surpassing anything we have seen in this Colony. The warehouse appeared to be well stocked with wheat and the mill was in full operation, grinding on the average about 25 bushels a day, with one pair of stones; another pair will soon be added when this mill will have sufficient power to grind all the wheat produced in the Colony. Mr. Shenton erected the mill but it has been brought to its present state of perfection by Mr. Steel whose practical experience has much improved the original design.

Shenton corrected this latter statement in a later edition of "The Perth Gazette". He wrote to say that his design had been faithfully followed and added —

Mr. Steel's experience and knowledge as a miller has enabled him to bring the machinery to its present efficient state. It is one thing to build a mill — another to work it.

But there was still another viewpoint. An independent observer claimed that the success of the mill was due to the millwright Paul Lockyer. Without his skill and knowledge the plans could not have been converted into a practical proposition.

Despite the successful co-operation of the three principals the mill was never successful. Shenton saw that it could not be operated profitably and he looked around for better opportunities to employ his energy and enterprise. In 1840 he mortgaged the mill and the land to Edward Hammersley and went off to Australind. He was returning there after a visit to Perth in 1842 when the schooner "Devonshire", on which he was travelling, was lost with all hands.

