As a very small boy in the early part of this century, I remember several times visiting "Lota," the gracious house overlooking Moreton Bay, and being fascinated by the hunting trophies in the hall.

Later I spent much of the school holidays in the Logan District, followed by frequent visits in succeeding years.

Having known the descendants of Hon. W. D. White, M.L.C., for many years, but very little of him, I was pleased to learn recently of the existence of a family history in their possession compiled by Mrs. Mills, nee Maude White, a grand-daughter of W. D. White, who is still living in Tasmania.

A GOLDEN ERA

She spent a good deal of her childhood at "Lota" during its golden era and remembered her grandparents well during the twilight of their lives.

I was very grateful to be permitted to read and to compile a paper from Maude White's story of the pioneer Whites, which was obviously a labour of love. As she says—

"These memories written for my grandchildren begin with what I know of my Irish grandparents, because so many of my young days were bound up with the life they made for themselves in Queensland. What is known is chiefly what older members of the family have told me. My grandparents were probably too busy pioneering, often under very difficult conditions, to keep many records and diaries."

How much of our pioneering history has gone unrecorded for want of some interested family member to set it down as it was told.

Too often, when pioneers themselves have written their own accounts of their doings, these have been lost or destroyed by descendants with a complete lack of interest.
As Maude White’s Uncle Ernest came with his parents to Australia, whilst her father, Albert, the second son and her Aunt Helena were born during the pioneering days of the family, it is obvious that from these, with her intense interest in the family, she gleaned much which her retentive memory enabled her to set down.

One might wish for more information of early days after White left the Richmond River, when Maud says

“it was to a cattle run in country on the Logan River that my grandfather came to make a new beginning, being given the management by Sprott, a wealthy Englishman, and the great Benjamin Boyd who leased the property from the Government.”

This would appear to be in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales, as records do not show Sprott and Boyd having interests in the Logan district.

Maude White continues—

“My Irish grandfather, the Hon. William Duckett White, M.L.C., was a son of William Duckett White, one of the branch of the Anglo-Irish Whites living in Co. Westmeath, where they had bred cattle and horses for generations.”

“Grandfather was born on October 5th, 1807, at Moate Castle, the childhood home of his mother who was a Clibborn; both his parents were Quakers. The coupling of the names of White and Duckett came about through the marriage of Walter White of ‘Tubber,’ a landed estate in Co. Wicklow, and Ann Duckett of Duckett’s Grove, Co. Carlow. Their estates adjoined, she being an only child and heiress; my grandfather was their grandson. . . .”

“In his twenties my grandfather married Jane Simpson whose people lived in Co. Cork. ‘Lota,’ their home overlooking Cork Harbour, was famed for its beautiful garden.”

The name “Tubber” was given to one of his pastoral runs, as was “Lota” to the lovely old homestead overlooking Moreton Bay with its gardens; this historic landmark, well preserved, still stands.

He was, his grand-daughter relates, “not a tall man, with blue eyes, fair complexion and very fair hair. He was not able to grow much hair on his face nor, therefore, the big beard which was fashionable in those days.”

In his twenties, W. D. White enlisted, incurring the displeasure of his father: later his Uncle Pike of Pike’s Bank, Dublin, came to the rescue and gave him a position in the Bank. This life did not appeal to him: growing more restless and unsettled, he determined to leave Ireland.

Once more Uncle Pike proved a friend in need and lent him money to come to Australia with his wife and two
children, Ernest, then four years old, and a younger child, a little girl, who died soon after they reached Sydney.

Obtaining lodgings in Sydney, he left with his wife and small son very soon afterwards for the Richmond River (Maude White, in her narrative, says she understood that the death of the little girl may have hastened their departure from Sydney).

With what remained of his Uncle Pike's money, land was bought at Richmond on the river frontage and pioneering began the hard way. Heavily timbered, the property had to be cleared and planted: a house of some kind had to be hurriedly built, as, shortly after their arrival, a daughter, christened Helena, was born on 3 December 1841.

This, the White's first venture in Australia, met with no success. They saw their sugar cane, cotton and the very land itself, which had been cleared, swept away in gigantic floods. They had to begin all over again.

THE REAL BEGINNING

Early in 1842, Henry Hawkins came to the valley of the Logan, bringing stock belonging to William Henry Sutton of Bathurst, for whom he established a stock run on the river, which he named "Beau Desert". The run had an area of 50,000 acres.

The Government records for many years showed this name in two separate words, though the township which was later established around the site of the original homestead has been called "Beaudesert" written as one word.

The property was registered in the name of William Henry Suttor in the first de-pasturing licence dated 19 September 1842. In November 1844 Beau Desert came into the possession of Joseph Phelps Robinson, in whose name it stood until the Government gazettal of runs in 1848.

Maude White says that Joseph Phelps Robinson was a cousin of William Duckett White and was the first member for Port Phillip, also a resident director of the Royal Bank of Australia in Sydney. Whilst under Robinson's ownership Ned Hawkins was left in charge.

Then, after being owned for three years by R. T. Campbell and M. E. Murmin, "Beau Desert" was acquired by W. D. White and a cousin, George Robinson. White later became the sole owner and extended his holdings until it was said his stock ranged from the Logan to the seashore and from the Tweed, with the addition of the Moreton Bay run, almost to Brisbane. "Lota" was built on the Moreton Bay run later in the 1850's. The remains of his stockyards and workmen's huts were for many years landmarks at Coombabah, Nerang, Worongary, Mudgeeraba and Tallebudgera.
STREET NAMES IN BEAUDESERT

A number of streets in Beaudesert, Nerang and Beenleigh bear the Christian names of members of the White family.

A boundary rider's hut was the first building in the area which was later to become the town of Southport: it was situated on the hill overlooking Moreton Bay on the site where the Star of the Sea Convent now stands.

W. D. White later gave the land for the Convent and also areas for other denominations.

A forebear of the well-known Tuesley family of boat owners at Southport was a stockman at Beau Desert and one can well imagine that from his visits to the hut after long and lonely rides, he decided that here was the place to live.

To this day the White and Tuesley descendants hold each other in mutual regard.

In the middle of last century White built "Warraby" at Southport as a seaside home on what is now the Esplanade. For many years "Warraby," recently demolished, was the home of the Western Walsh family.

He was one of the largest holders of freehold land upon which Southport was built in the 1870's and, earlier, he played an important part in the establishment of Beenleigh.

When White arrived to take charge of Beau Desert, as there was only Hawkins' hut, he had once again to build a home for his family.

To begin with, this was a typical early pioneer's home: the walls made of slabs, the house and verandah roofed in bark. Maude White recalls her Aunt Helena telling her that the stump of a large tree was used as a dining table in a room built around it. Later, a more comfortable home was added:

Beaudesert Homestead, built by William Duckett White. Photo dates from 1850's. Mrs. White and three children, with two members of the domestic staff, are standing on the verandah.
this had a shingle roof and is shown in a photograph taken in
the 1850's which is submitted with this paper.

Fences and yards were urgently needed and much of this
work was done by Chinese and also Kanakas, brought into
the district by Captain Robert Towns. Local aborigines were
also employed, especially as stockmen.

When the convicts were removed from Brisbane in the
early 1840's after the days of the penal settlement had ended,
a limited number of good conduct men were left to carry on
necessary work, but very few of these were available for work
in the bush. Maude White says that her father remembers
only one of these "free men" being employed as a stockman
on Beau Desert and that he received £8 per year besides his
keep. It was this shortage of labour which brought about the
introduction of Chinese coolies and Kanakas.

TIME OF HARDSHIP

On becoming sole owner of Beau Desert, White experi­
enced a time of great hardship, money having become very
scarce. This was due paradoxically to good seasons and a
tremendous natural increase of stock everywhere, when he
found it almost impossible to sell his cattle in the glutted
markets. Local markets were the only ones available in those
days.

With the needs of his growing family to be met, White
found that the climax to the hard times came with the
discovery of gold in 1851-2, which brought disruption to
the work in the country. Workers joined in the mad rush to
the diggings and life became increasingly difficult for those
left to carry on.

Then, with dramatic suddenness, times again changed for
the White family and those others who stuck to it on the land;
this time for the better.

The Crimean War, which commenced in 1854, created a
rise in the price of tallow, so that now the cattle and sheep
so greatly increased in numbers and decreased in value, were
slaughtered, boiled down and the tallow shipped in casks to
England. Says Maude White—

"My little grandmother, I have been told, worked at
the boiling vats like a man (or should it be said like a
woman?), quite literally keeping the pot boiling. Thus
began more prosperous days for my Irish pioneer grand­
parents."

As well as leasing Beau Desert, as before with help from
Uncle Pike, more and more country was leased, with the runs
of Tubber, Pimpama, Coombabah and Murry Jerry added—
until W. D. White's cattle runs were continuous from Beau
Desert to the coast and border including Southport, where a small outstation was built on what is now the site of the Convent on the hill overlooking the Southport jetty.

White also leased country at Tweed Heads and around the coast on Moreton Bay. In conjunction with William Barker, he bought from Captain Robert Towns the freehold property of Nindooinbah. This beautiful cattle property was given to his eldest son Ernest, on his marriage to Annie Barker in 1867. A photograph of old Nindooinbah house is submitted with this paper.

When Ernest died, his three children, Duckett, Eaglesfield and Ernestina, were still minors: his executors sold “Nindooinbah” to the Collins Brothers and it became the home of William Collins and his family.

Miss White says that her grandfather, apart from his indebtedness to his Uncle Pike, had the greatest affection and admiration for him, also that both must have been proud that every penny sent from Ireland for them was repaid.

On 13 April 1847, White’s second son, Albert William Duckett White, the father of Maude White, was born. With the exception of his brother Ernest and his sister Helena, his earliest playmates were the young blacks from the camp not far from the homestead, from whom he, like his brother, learned to throw spears and boomerangs and to hunt wild game.

A HARD TASKMASTER

After being educated at Macquarie Fields near Liverpool in New South Wales, later to amalgamate with the King’s School, Parramatta, Albert left school and returned to Beau Desert which his brother was managing for his father. From all accounts, he found Ernest a hard taskmaster, which
probably accounts for Albert becoming such a fine horseman and cattleman. Whilst Ernest was managing Beau Desert he was named amongst the 600 men entitled to vote in the electoral district of Moreton Bay in the first election of members to the newly-formed Queensland Legislative Assembly.

In 1857 the William Duckett Whites, with their daughter Helena, moved to Eagle Farm on the bank of the Brisbane River. Here they lived until their new home “Lota” was built overlooking Moreton Bay. From their home at Eagle Farm, Helena White was married to Captain Graham Mylne, a retired British Army officer who had served with a Scottish regiment in the Indian Mutiny.

The Whites were living at Eagle Farm when Queensland’s first Governor, Sir George Bowen, arrived. It was White’s carriage with its two white horses which was sent to meet Sir George Bowen and Lady Bowen when they landed in Brisbane.

A letter in possession of the White family from R. W. G. Herbert, the Governor’s Private Secretary, asked White to accept a seat in the first Queensland Legislative Council. The letter also thanked him for lending his carriage and pair.

**DESCRIPTION OF LOTA**

White did not take a seat or become a member until 1861. According to Maude White, her grandmother said that this was because he was too busy superintending the building of his new home “Lota.” This two-storied building, built of brick and plastered white, with its outbuildings and gardens, was completed in 1863; the Whites then moved into this beautiful home. The property was given by W. D. White to his wife, who named it “Lota” after her home on the shores of Cork Harbour. The house, roofed with dark grey slates, with wide stone verandahs on the front and sides, had french windows opening to the ground floor rooms. Tall cedar shutters painted green, guarding these windows, ran on iron rails let into the stone floor of the verandah. “Lota” had a drive curving down through an open grass paddock to a Lodge Cottage beside the big white gates; on either side of the drive stood Moreton Bay figs.

To the East lay the wide bay with its many islands, whilst on the North the big flower, fruit and vegetable gardens stretched to the northern boundary fence dividing the property from the bush.

Behind the house, a grassed courtyard separated it from the line of stables, coachhouses and haylofts opposite, whilst, at right-angles, dividing the courtyard from the garden, were
Residence at Lota built by William Duckett White in the 1850's.

the kitchen and maids' rooms; the kitchen wing was connected to the house by a covered way which, on the garden side, ran up into a high wall.

The fences on the eastern side, with a high hedge of flowering vines and its gate through which the horses and buggies came to the stables, completed the enclosure of the courtyard, in which, set in the grass, were two large circular stones, beautifully cut, covering the deep wells from which rain water was pumped to the house, kitchen, stables and gardens.

IMPERIOUS GRANDFATHER

In the paddock behind the stables in a little hut, two Kanakas lived, Maude White remembers, the remnants of a number of South Sea Islanders who had worked at "Lota" and perhaps at "Beau Desert." Miss White says—

"These two fine old Kanakas would come running from their hut when wanted for some imperious reason, and grandfather on the back roaring for them, his face a deep pink and his wonderful head of white hair, tossed by the wind, was something this grandchild will never forget. His quick, hot temper scared us, but fascinated too, and his sudden change to geniality and good-humoured fun was irresistible."

Miss White describes a great open space behind the stables
sloping down to the paddocks and the bush, with barns for the maize, sorghum and hay, grown on the muddy flats near the muddy tidal creek, also a great machine for cutting the green feed for the cows and horses worked by a horse.

In a wide grassed paddock, the fowls, guinea fowls and turkeys roamed at large, where she and the other children sometimes had a thrilling race to the fence when the big turkey gobblers gave chase.

GRANDMAMA WHITE

Miss White says—

“But the chief glory of ‘Lota’ even to a child was the garden. No other garden has since seemed to me so enchanting. My grandmother was the genie—or was it the genius?—who waved the wand. The wand, of course, was the memory of the garden she had known and loved in Ireland, and although my memories of it are so clear, it is not easy to tell of the loveliness of this Queensland garden.”

Nevertheless, Maude White does then describe in charming detail the garden and vineyard, giving also her memories of feasts of oysters and bunya nuts.

Continuing, she remarks—

“Vivid as are my memories of the ‘Lota’ garden, they are not so clear of the grandmother who created it. I was only a child of 10 when she died, and when I last saw her a year or so before, she seemed shadowy and remote.”

“Only one memory is distinct and clear, of a little upright figure, her head and shoulders wrapped in a great dark shawl and her quick walking up and down the long verandah facing the sea. I don’t ever remember her speaking directly to me or to my brothers.”

SIR GEORGE BOWEN A FREQUENT VISITOR

“How very different she must have been when the older grandchildren knew her, with her keen intellect and wide interests in books and the thoughts of the day. My cousin Ethel has told me something of what she remembered of her.

“Sir George Bowen was a frequent visitor and enjoyed discussing books and politics with her.

“The ‘Lota’ people,” Ethel said, “saw many visitors and R. W. G. Herbert was their closest friend. Grandmama never cared much for women, but I can remember how she would keep Sir George and the other men in fits of laughter with her Irish wit.

“Ethel remembers driving from ‘Lota’ to the church at Tingalpa one hot Sunday, sitting with grandmama in the wagonette, grandpapa on the box beside Stone, the coachman, who drove the two white horses. Grandmama, quick and
impatient, kept tapping with one shoe and saying, ‘Do drive a little faster, my father would not have tolerated this pace!’ Ethel was shocked when her grandfather looked down from the box seat and said ‘Damn your father!’”

The Tingalpa Church was a small wooden building enclosed by a paling fence, to which the horses from the buggies were hitched during the service. It was a peaceful spot in those days with the natural bush around it.

What Maude chiefly remembers of her church-going there was the singing of the birds, the sound of bees and the effort of keeping her eyes open for seemingly endless hours.

Her grandmother, Jane White, died on 2 August 1887 aged 76, and is buried in the little Tingalpa Churchyard.

“Lota, grandfather’s home whilst he was alive, belonged to his younger son, Albert, my father. His mother had left it to him when she died in 1887. In 1873 when Beau Desert was resumed by the Government partly and the remainder in 1875, grandfather had thrown up all his other leases. The cattle and horses from Beau Desert except some mares were sent to his son, Ernest, at Nindooinbah, as W. D. White had taken up property in North Queensland in equal shares with his sons Ernest and Albert. This property had been taken up by the Hanns when the Burdekin River country was first open for settlement in 1860. It was called Red Bluff by them and re-named Bluff Downs by the Whites; its area was about 400 square miles and other properties were added later.”

**CATTLE FOR BLUFF DOWNS**

Bluff Downs, 72 miles north-west of Charters Towers, had been stocked by the Hanns with sheep, which proved a failure due to the spear grass seeds, and the Whites on taking over the property stocked it with cattle, the first mob arriving in 1874.

Maude’s father, Albert White, started with the mob from Colinton on the Brisbane River, but became ill and returned to Ipswich where he remained for some time before regaining his health. A man named Graham Haygarth continued with the cattle, eventually delivering them after many delays and losses, having been nearly a year on the way. A few mares from Beau Desert, carrying the brand W W 7, travelled with these cattle. They, with one exception, were the progeny of the famous horse, Charlton, owned by Ernest White of Nindooinbah and their mothers were Etonsville mares bred by Captain Mylne, W. D. White’s son-in-law.

Albert, in 1876, returned to Ipswich to marry Fanny Lord, whom he took North to Bluff Downs, leaving Brisbane in the old “Leichhardt” in December of that year. In 1892 Albert
mortgaged "Lota" to the estate of his late brother Ernest White of Nindooinbah, buying the estate's share of Bluff Downs. By this, he owned a two-thirds share in W. D. White & Sons, Bluff Downs. His sister, Helena Mylne, held the third share, as Maude's grandfather White had left his share to her at his death.

Maude White here returns to her memories of family gatherings and parties with the White grandchildren at "Lota" and, in the hall, the heads of animals shot in India by Captain Mylne, who gave them to Helena White's father when he married her. As Maude mentions—

"These glassy-eyed heads high up around the walls did not worry us much in the daytime, but at bedtime when we came out of the brightly lit rooms into the shadowy hall, I, for one, was scared stiff."

THE ESCAPED PRISONER

At "Lota," Maude says they got a "tremendous thrill" with the sudden appearance of a strange man who frightened the maids in the kitchen and sent them screaming into the house, where the grown-ups and children were. The door bell rang at this stage and, to quote Maude:

"Father opened the door and in the dim light a sinister-looking figure could be seen in a long black overcoat and black hat pulled well down over his eyes. Grandfather, catching sight of him, shouted 'Take the children away and shut the doors!' However, we had a good look around the dining room door before somebody closed it. The mysterious stranger took to his heels whilst this commotion was going on and grandfather began shouting for his two old Kanakas and his muzzle-loading gun and thrust his tall bearded son aside when he tried to dissuade him from going in pursuit.

"Loud cries were now heard from the drive and the man from the Lodge with his wife and baby appeared at the front door, calling out that they had been threatened by a desperate looking man, given him some bread and he had made off down to the mangroves.

"Grandfather, now more determined than ever, ignoring all efforts to stop him, departed with his two old henchmen, one carrying a hurricane lamp, the other the muzzle-loader. To everybody's relief, they returned without finding the man.

"Some days later we heard that a prisoner, a Frenchman knowing no English, had escaped from New Caledonia, landing somewhere on the Queensland coast. The police searching for him told us this. The unfortunate man must have been starving and it is no wonder that his appearance and behaviour were desperate and frightening."
GRANDFATHER TOOK CHARGE

“We grandchildren had another thrill about that time when the dining room chimney caught fire. Grandfather, who always treated his six-foot-two son as if he were still a little boy, shouted to him to keep out of the way and, as usual, took charge of the situation. From the drawing room we children with mother watched an amazing scene. The maids had been told to bring wet bags and these they held up in a half-hearted way on either side of the fire place, while the master of the house, with his snow-white hair and, by now, very red face, knelt down on the hearth and with hands that trembled with age, not fear, fired the muzzle-loader up the chimney. Is it any wonder we loved ‘Lota’?

LOTA: THE END OF THE ERA

“As the grandchildren grew up they found ‘Lota’ growing more sober and silent each year. The thrills and excitement had vanished; the shouting too had gone, and with it the fun and laughter. Grandfather was growing old, life was changing swiftly all around him, but for him there was no thought of temporising with the new ways . . . no thought of meeting them half way.

“When the railway from Brisbane was built to and around Moreton Bay, running for part of the way through ‘Lota’ paddocks, people came in increasing numbers to live in the small townships beside the Bay. The township of Manly with its railway station was only a mile or so to the north of the house.

“As the house was very near the property’s northern boundary, the boundary fence ran alongside the cliff to the sea, quite close to the boat-shed, the jetty and the little beach. This meant, inevitably, the oysters discovered by week-end trippers who picnicked along the seashore began to disappear rapidly.

“Those famous oysters came into two, at least, of the many stories of grandfather told and retold by the family with amusement, not unmixed with pride. One is of the fence he had built along the cliff above the beach and the wild bull kept there with a large notice to the effect, put up as a warning to trespassers. When this was of no avail, he began patrolling the top of the cliff with his old muzzle-loader.

“Still the oysters went on disappearing, if not in the daytime, then at night, when men came in boats and took both rock and mud-oysters.

“His precious oysters! This surely convinced him, if nothing else could, of the uselessness of fighting the new conditions.
"He shut himself up in the big house, isolating himself from the life around him and even from his own people, choosing to live quietly and leave everything to his housekeeper.

"He died, aged 86, on 11 August 1893, in his big room upstairs, with windows facing east and south. On that night the curlews came flocking in great numbers with their strange haunting cry, so his grandchild Nina was told by the old housekeeper.

"That touch of fantasy and legendary Ireland makes a fitting end to the story of the genial, fiery-spirited Anglo-Irishman who was my grandfather.

"He was buried in the Tingalpa Churchyard."

RUNS HELD BY W. D. WHITE & WHITE AND J. P. ROBINSON UP TO 1870

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<th>Years</th>
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Eight square miles of Beaudesert resumed 1 January 1873. Balance resumed 1 October 1875. William Duckett White then threw up his remaining leases.

Nindooinbah (freehold) bought in conjunction with William Barker from Captain Robert Towns.

Tweed Heads cattle run leased from the Government.

Moreton Bay run (with Lota built on it in the fifties and completed 1863).

Bluff Downs taken up by W. D. White & Sons in 1870 (Leasehold.)

The above list is from the Lands Office, Brisbane, Queensland. Any information prior to 1860 may be obtained from the New South Wales Lands Office. Queensland became a separate colony on 10 October 1859.