

CHAPTER TWO: Power's Paddock, 'The rich and picturesque vale of Gardiner's Creek'.¹

Crown allotments 19 and 20: 1850-1900

The pastoralists looked to the fashionable suburbs to build their town houses and, as the population increased during the gold years, the Toorak area attracted Melbourne's newly rich. Thomas Power's lush pastoral lands, bordering Gardiner's Creek, were an invitation to the wealthy merchants, pastoralists and politicians of the colony to purchase large estates. As William Kelly observed in 1859 -

To keep the profane multitude at a distance, paddocks instead of patches of land were put into the market, and the purchasers, who were mostly of the settling class were thus enabled to build fine dwellings and surround themselves with gardens and pleasure-grounds ... the price which the land fetched debarred any one but persons of means from invading its exclusive neighbourhood.²

Suburbs convenient to the City, such as Parkville and South Yarra; and Kew and Hawthorn, bordering the Yarra River, were popular choices for those who could afford to purchase land and establish homes in these fashionable locations. At the same time, the 'rich and picturesque vale of Gardiner's Creek' with its fine views and fresh country air, ranked alongside Brighton and St Kilda and became 'a quarter of fashionable resort'.³ Prosperity followed the gold rush and by 1853 Victoria's building boom was in full swing. With the Governor's arrival at 'Toorak House', Toorak became the new and fashionable suburb.

Power first subdivided his land with the line of Moonga Road separating the two allotments.⁴ At an 1856 auction of land fronting Gardiner's Creek, purchasers were assured 'that the land was well watered, beautifully grassed and magnificently timbered; a finer specimen of parkland cannot be found ... the

¹ Kelly, William, *Life in Victoria*, First published 1859, Historical reprints, (Kilmore 1977), p.112.

² Ibid. p.212.

³ Ibid. pp.112-113.

⁴ Bower, plan 1, p.27, MA.

rising ground to the high land affords a splendid site for a mansion.⁵ Purchasers were not deterred by Toorak's rural environment, primitive roads and distance from town and in 1855, Power sold four allotments, each of more than four acres, to gentleman James Kidd; parliamentarian John McCrae; landholder James Brown and stock and station agent, Gideon Rutherford.⁶

In Gardiner's Creek Road and Boundary Road, brick houses were built on each of the four allotments. Two years later, in 1857, nine acres in Boundary Road were purchased by Western District squatter and MLA, John Quarterman.⁷ For politicians living on country estates, parliamentary duties often demanded a second house close to town and Quarterman built a modest villa of five rooms with detached kitchen, stone cellar and stables.⁸ Within three years of its establishment in 1856, Quarterman was elected to the Gardiner Road Board.⁹ The Central Road Board had been established in 1853, followed by the Gardiner Road Board, in order to construct and repair roads, bridges and river crossings.¹⁰ Twenty years later the Board agreed to Quarterman's request to place a lamp at the intersection of Boundary Road and Gardiner's Creek Road.¹¹

As a result of the Land Acts of the 1860s, when squatters used dummies to secure the freehold to their own runs, an association was formed by pastoral entrepreneur Hugh Glass to protect his own and other pastoralists' interests. The opportunity for parliamentary corruption arose when Glass bought the votes of a number of parliamentarians and certain squatters were treated favourably in the land selection process.¹² John Quarterman became involved in the ploy, was briefly

⁵ Cooper, p.30.

⁶ Bower, plan 1, MA.

⁷ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p.430; Robb, p.77.

⁸ Gardiner Road Board, rate book, 1856-7, no.157.

⁹ Minutes, Gardiner Road Board, 10 December 1859.

¹⁰ The Gardiner Road Board was the forerunner of the Malvern City Council

¹¹ Minutes, Gardiner Road Board, 1 June 1876.

¹² Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, (Melbourne 1961), p.248 and de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, pp.99-100.

imprisoned and his house in Boundary Road was leased out. Following Quarterman's death in 1878, his widow Martha (left with their eight children) enlarged the house to twelve rooms, added a coach-house then leased the property to merchant, pastoralist and parliamentarian, Donald Wallace.¹³

During the 1880s land values rose rapidly and the property was sold to Thomas Power's son, neighbour Robert in 1889.¹⁴ Robert Power had owned part of his father's land in Boundary Road since 1863,¹⁵ but when land values plummeted in the 1890s depression, Equity Trustees then the National Bank took possession of the property. Sometime prior to its purchase in 1905 by Crown Prosecutor John Gurner, the house in Kooyong Road had been named 'Glyndebourne'.

The same year John Quarterman had been elected to the Road Board, his neighbour John McCrae was appointed its honorary treasurer.¹⁶ McCrae's five-roomed brick house had been built in 1855, with detached kitchen, stables and cellar, at the corner of Boundary and Gardiner's Creek Roads.¹⁷ From 1840 Boundary Road was a wide, unmade track, with deep ruts made by carts and muddy, swampy patches. For the first forty years, local authorities saw little need to drain the track or construct a road, and property owners continued to pressure for much-needed drainage and maintenance. Although tenders were called in 1857 for the construction of culverts from the 'log fence to the Yarra,' a request for the road to be formed the following year was not granted.¹⁸ A creek ran from a gully in the road, through McCrae's land to Gardiner's Creek. At that point the road became impassable in winter, a common problem faced by these early settlements. In 1857, the Gardiner Road Board called for tenders 'for a bridge or

¹³ Shire of Malvern Valuation book Western riding, 1883-4, no. 2. Wallace owned several Melbourne Cup winners including Carbine, the winner in 1888 and 1890. de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees* p.345.

¹⁴ Shire of Malvern Valuation book Western riding, 1889, no. 3.

¹⁵ Bower, plan 1, MA.

¹⁶ Minutes Gardiner Road Board, 10 December 1859.

¹⁷ Gardiner Road Board, rate book, 1856-7.

¹⁸ Minutes Gardiner Road Board, 6 November 1857, 20 March 1858.

passing opposite Mr. McCrae's property.'¹⁹

McCrae had purchased his allotment for £800 in 1855. Ten years later he sold the property to James Stewart Butters for £3000.²⁰ Within three years of his arrival in Victoria in 1853, Butters had become a stock and share broker and gold-buyer and by 1860 he was involved in the establishment of a stock exchange. Butters was elected to parliament as MLA for Portland, and along with his neighbour, John Quarterman, his involvement with Hugh Glass led to his expulsion from the Legislative Assembly.²¹ Butters continued his association with Glass and in 1868, the year Butters was re-elected to Parliament, his land in Toorak was transferred to Glass, who was the mortgagor.²²

James Butters' outstanding success in business was made possible by the prosperity of the gold rushes. Extraordinary opportunities had presented themselves to men with ambition, and the increase in population with its new rich, had overturned the familiar world of the colonial upper class.²³ Although the establishment had worked hard to protect the gentry from outsiders, from the 1850s social advancement was comparatively easy to achieve. The gold era brought to Victoria a new breed of merchants, manufacturers, traders, speculators and financiers, who used their new-found wealth to enter 'society'. One, Henry Miller, a 'mere audit clerk' from Tasmania, took advantage of Melbourne's extraordinary growth when he established some of the city's insurance companies, building societies and banks.²⁴ Miller was elected to parliament and made a fortune from the increase in land values.

Edward Miller, Henry's second son, 'inherited his [father's] mantle as Melbourne's leading figure in banking, insurance and real estate.'²⁵ Edward was

¹⁹ Minutes Gardiner Road Board, 17 October 1857.

²⁰ Bower, plan 1, MA.

²¹ Kiddle, p. 251; de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees* p.365.

²² Gardiner Road Board, rate book, 1868; *ADB*, vol. 3, p.316.

²³ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees* p17.

²⁴ Cannon, *Life in the Cities*, (Melbourne 1975), p.208.

²⁵ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, p.509.

considered 'a careful conservator of his inheritance, constantly developing and modernizing his valuable city properties and managing the family's Victorian pastoral interests and further property.'²⁶ He became involved in mining ventures and shared the family interest in horse racing.²⁷ The Miller family was well established in Melbourne 'society', when in 1905 MLA Edward Miller purchased 'Glyn' the nine-roomed brick and weather-board house previously owned by James Butters.²⁸

Meanwhile in Gardiner's Creek Road, James Kidd had also paid £800 for his six acres, cleared the land for cultivation and pasture and built 'Mayfield Villa'. According to architect and social historian Robin Boyd, 'about 1855, structural technique, building organization and working methods took up a distinct pattern from the haphazard practices of the pioneers.'²⁹ New standards for double-hung and casement windows, roof framing and waterproofing with galvanized iron, came into practice.³⁰ Colonial villas, usually built in a symmetrical cottage style with rendered hand made bricks, featured corrugated iron verandahs, a parlour, drawing room and a detached kitchen at the rear.

In 1858 'Mayfield Villa' was sold to stock and station agent, Gideon Rutherford, for £2000.³¹ Auctioned in 1876, 'Mayfield Villa' was described as having 'five rooms, detached kitchen and servant's room, stable, coach-house, cellar, tanks and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Shire of Malvern Valuation book Western riding, 1889, no.4. Butters had previously sold the property to a syndicate of Melbourne Club members; Melbourne's best known grocer Germain Nicholson, the Hon. George Harker, and squatter and company director, Joseph Sutherland. Germain Nicholson, successful merchant, philanthropist and anti-transportation agitator, expanded his tea importing business during the gold rush. Michael Cannon, *Melbourne after the Gold Rush*, (Main Ridge 1993), p.203. Ownership of 'Glyn' as recorded in National Trust file '224 Kooyong Road'.

²⁹ R. Boyd, *Australia's Home*, (Melbourne 1991), p.27.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bower, plan 1, MA.

other accommodation.’³² ‘Mayfield’s’ new owners were Scottish Presbyterians, merchant Robert Harper and his sons, Andrew, a clergyman and headmaster, and Robert, also a merchant.³³

Aided by rapid technological advancements and cheap labour, manufacturers were able to amass considerable fortunes during the Victorian era³⁴ and Harper presents a good illustration of the relative ease by which astute men achieved prosperity. Robert Harper and Co. packaged spices and other foodstuffs and Harper’s new-found wealth funded extensive alterations and extensions to ‘Mayfield Villa’ to the design of noted architect Thomas Watts.³⁵ Typical of so many of the ‘nouveau riche’, the Harper family settled into this fashionable suburb with all its associated trappings and respectability. Robert Harper became a prominent member of the Legislative Assembly, an acknowledged authority on finance, chairman of the Commercial Bank and was a founder of the Toorak Presbyterian Church.³⁶

Another successful merchant was Harper’s neighbour, parliamentarian and Commissioner of Customs William Froggatt Walker. Walker had purchased James Brown’s house, surrounded by four acres of pasture and cultivated land, in 1880.³⁷ Walker ran a successful general store in Bourke Street, before establishing Walkers’ Bonded Stores, which became the Melbourne Storage Company, in 1881.³⁸

³² *Argus*, 9 December 1876, p.2. Miles Lewis (ed.) *Australian Architectural Index*, University of Melbourne, 1977.

³³ Shire of Malvern valuation book Western Riding, 1878, no. 297.

³⁴ Cannon, *Life in the Cities*, p.197.

³⁵ Shire of Malvern valuation book Western Riding, 1880, no. 19. *Argus*, 7 May 1877, p.32, Tenders for additions and alterations to Mayfield, Toorak for Robert Harper. MLAAI.

³⁶ See de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p. 399; *Fred John’s Annual, Australia’s Prominent People 1914*, (London 1914), p.92; Sutherland, vol. 2, p.481.

³⁷ Shire of Malvern valuation book Western Riding, 1880, no.67.

³⁸ Thomson & Serle, *A Biographical Register of the Victorian Legislature, 1851-1900*. (Canberra 1972), p.216; W.F. Walker and Co. were general merchants and importers of coal, lime and cement, Sutherland, p.506.

As the boom years progressed, houses became larger and more elaborate, with no shortage of money to convert previously modest villas into mansions with ballrooms, banquet halls and lofty reception halls. By 1890 Walker's two-storey house, 'Metford', included sixteen rooms.³⁹ At the turn of the century 'Metford' ('Mitford') was leased to barrister Stewart McArthur. Mrs McArthur recalled later that:

Eddie Manifold used to be in town on a Saturday, when he had a horse running at Flemington or Caulfield, and always spent Sunday with us – going to morning service at the cathedral, and then walking through the botanical gardens and along Toorak Road. When the cable trams were laid down they stopped at the Presbyterian church as there were only one or two houses beyond, and a few in Glenferrie Road, where all had horses and carriages in those days. On Sunday afternoons, Eddie and Uncle Potts (Dr Norman McArthur) would play golf on a very rough 9-hole course with one hole in Mrs Herbert Power's paddock.⁴⁰

As those known to Mrs McArthur 'all had horses and carriages', it is clear that this barrister's wife mixed only with the well to do. A carriage was not only a prized social asset but seen as a mark of respectability and for those who could afford it, stables and coach-houses housing one or more horses, became necessary additions to the family home. Social distinction was aligned with transport; while the rich travelled in a carriage, barouche or landau pulled by two horses, the middle classes used a wagonette or brougham drawn by a single horse.⁴¹ A carriage drive around the lake at Albert Park or to St Kilda was considered a fashionable afternoon's entertainment. For those without carriages of their own, horse omnibuses could be chartered for trips to the city, or to attend balls and parties in the evening and hansom cabs did a busy trade. Horse bus services grew rapidly from the 1860s gradually extending to Toorak.⁴²

³⁹ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western Riding, 1889 & 1890, no. 6.

⁴⁰ Recollections by Mrs McArthur to her granddaughter Diana Baillieu. Baillieu letter to Malvern Archives, 25 October 1997, MA.

⁴¹ Cannon, *Life in the Cities*, p.52.

⁴² Subdivision plan of the Great Toorak Estate (1888) shows a bus route down Malvern Road, Glenferrie Road and Toorak Road. Malvern plan collection, MA.

The McArthurs' golf course extended to 'Mrs Power's paddock', on the east corner of Moonga Road. On the west corner, Gideon Rutherford's allotment became the site of 'Ettrick' a nine-roomed brick house with kitchen, cellar, coach-house & stables.⁴³ Gideon had married Mary Anne McCrae in 1847 and two sons and three daughters were born. In 1858 ill health forced Rutherford's resignation as the first chairman of the Gardiner Road Board and he died two years later at the age of 41.⁴⁴ From 1867 Mrs Rutherford's property was leased to new arrivals, solicitor Hugh Chambers, his wife Margaret and their seven children.⁴⁵

For new arrivals 'calls' were the first point of social contact. As discussed at length in Penny Russell's study of colonial gentility, 'the system of calls, a ceremonial with implications for social judgements of acceptance and condemnation, was a major feature in the bonding of society'.⁴⁶ After organising the children with their governess, and the servants with their duties, the lady of the house was expected to maintain the custom of afternoon and morning calls.⁴⁷ 'Calls' signified social acceptance and society women announced an afternoon in the week when they would be at home to callers. Toorak usually kept open house on Wednesdays.⁴⁸ A visitors' book was kept and the ladies presented their cards to the maid when making calls. Melbourne 'society' was made up of a number of groups, including those with prestigious occupations, such as the army and law; squatters and families with property; and businessmen including merchants and bankers.⁴⁹ Calls made by wives and daughters strengthened social networks, helping to maintain the exclusiveness of the gentry.⁵⁰ New arrivals were judged by their manners and dress and the diary of Thomas Anne Cole (McCrae) records

⁴³ Gardiner Road District rate book 1856-7, no. 111.

⁴⁴ Rev. C. S. Ross, *Victorian Historical Journal*, no. 10, December 1913, pp.81-83, extract in Rutherford file, M.A. On his resignation from the Gardiner Road Board, Rutherford was presented with a testimonial engraved on parchment and a silver snuff box. Minutes Gardiner Road Board, 16 January 1858. M.A.

⁴⁵ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p.381.

⁴⁶ Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction, Colonial Gentility and Femininity*, (Melbourne 1994), p.50 ff.

⁴⁷ Davison, *The Rise & Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, (Melbourne 1978), p.206.

⁴⁸ Kiddle, p.345.

⁴⁹ Russell, pp.7-8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.50.

the Chambers' girls as being 'dressed in the Elizabethan style with frills round the throat, none of them are pretty – but the eldest seems a gentle mannered girl'.⁵¹

In 1878 the Rutherford property was sold to pastoralist and racing enthusiast John Inglis.⁵² Ten years later it was sold to solicitor Robert Whiting for £6600 and named 'Grong Grong'.⁵³

'Glyndebourne', 'Glyn, 'Metford', Mayfield', and 'Grong Grong', were surrounded by the large estates of Thomas Power and his sons, Herbert and Robert. The brothers had joined Gideon Rutherford in Power, Rutherford & Co. stock and station agents.⁵⁴ The Power family was well known in racing circles and Robert and Herbert were considered the 'beau ideal of young Irish gentlemen amateur riders'.⁵⁵ Harry Peck recalled that 'Herbert was very handsome, but Robert was sterner, and the one clean-shaven man I can visualise in the stock agency business of those days, when beards, sideboards or moustaches were the order of the day.'⁵⁶

Robert Power was only twenty-five years old in 1860 when he commissioned noted Melbourne architect Francis Maloney White to design his new home in Boundary Road.⁵⁷ The site for 'Myrnong' was carefully selected on seventeen acres of high land with views across Gardiner's Creek. Adam Lindsay Gordon, a friend of Power, is known to have helped supervise 'Myrnong's' stables.⁵⁸ The condition of Boundary Road near the creek had become impossible and in 1867, it

⁵¹ Thomas Anne Ward Cole was the wife of noted public figure, George Ward Cole. *Ibid.*, p.53.

⁵² de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees* p.307; Gardiner Road District Rate book 1878, no. 53.

⁵³ Malvern valuation book Western Riding, 1888, no. 7.

⁵⁴ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees* p.328

⁵⁵ Harry H. Peck, *Memoirs of a Stockman*, (Melbourne 1974), p.19.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Francis Maloney White. Tenders wanted for erection of a house for Robert Power, Gardiners Creek Road. *Argus*, 27 October 1860, p. 8. M.L.A.A.I. F. M. White commenced his architectural practice in 1851, was a founding member of the Victorian Institute of Architects and designed a large number of buildings in Melbourne, including the Melbourne University Law School. Sutherland, p. 537; see also Andrew Francis, 'A Biography: Francis Maloney White, Architect (1819-1888)' Investigation Project, 1984. Thesis T.1753 held at Architecture Library, Melbourne University.

⁵⁸ Flo Pearce, 'Powerscourt, its owners & occupiers', unpublished manuscript, undated, MA.

was reported that ‘Myrnong’s’ trees overhung the road. Ten years later requests were made to have a fence erected across the end of the road by the creek to prevent accidents.⁵⁹ The road continued to cause problems and in 1890 Power wrote complaining of a road pitted with ruts and without adequate drainage.⁶⁰ Five acres of ‘Myrnong’s’ land near the creek were flood-prone, but in the same year the river flats were cut off by the construction of the railway.⁶¹

The new railway line from Burnley to Darling was opened just before the bank crash of 1891. Following the devastating collapse of the land boom, it was not uncommon for homes to be vacated by their owners. England was regarded as the mother-land and although few returned permanently, those with the means to do so, made extended business or family trips home, leasing out their colonial properties. Although squatters on their visits to town stayed at their club or at a preferred hotel, if travelling with their family many chose to lease a house in the suburbs.⁶² For a brief period during the depression, ‘Myrnong’ was leased to Charles Fairbairn, brother of politician Sir George Fairbairn.⁶³ However Robert Power returned to ‘Myrnong’ where he lived with his wife Harriett (French), an ‘accomplished and intrepid horsewoman’, until his death in 1914.⁶⁴

Robert’s brother and business partner, Herbert, pastoralist and stock and station agent, was born in 1836. Herbert married Constance, the daughter of wealthy pastoralist William Hamill and in 1880 Power built a lodge-house at the entrance to his future home in Toorak Road. The small cottage was surrounded by shrubbery, garden and pasture and occupied by gardener and lodge-keeper Myles

⁵⁹ Minutes Gardiner Road Board, 23 September 1875. MA.

⁶⁰ Robert Power to Prahran Public Works committee, 14 May 1890, Kooyong Road file, 1244, Prahran Archives.

⁶¹ Shire of Malvern valuation book, Western Riding, 1889, no.1.

⁶² Kiddle, pp.332-4.

⁶³ Shire of Malvern rate book, Western Riding 1892, no. 1.

⁶⁴ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p.139 & p.328.

Dillon.⁶⁵ Francis White was commissioned to design Power's new home facing Gardiner's Creek and 'Moonga' was completed in 1884.⁶⁶

A brisk walk along Toorak Road brings the pedestrian to a valley in which weeping willows grow luxuriantly. To the left (looking between the tree-strands), standing on a low terrace, is 'Moonga', Mr. Herbert Power's home. ... Moonga drive is perhaps, one of the prettiest in Victoria, winding through high banks of well-kept shrubs and flowers, backed up by a dense growth of trees.⁶⁷

As the homes of the upper class became larger and more elaborate, more intensive and skilled domestic labour was required.⁶⁸ 'Moonga', with its thirty-six rooms, was built to accommodate Power's family of seven children, plus a 'battalion' of domestic staff.⁶⁹ Herbert Power, a 'well-known Melbourne citizen', employed the services of William and George Dean, Melbourne's 'leading firm of house decorators'.⁷⁰ The Deans were skilled paper-hangers and lavish decorating was the fashion.

Richness and elegance were the keynote ... Rooms were decorated with elaborate panels designed by famous artists of the day... Walls sheathed with wood panelling were popular in the mansions of Toorak ... William Morris papers were greatly in vogue. A type of paper that resembled leather was popular ... and was used to paper smoking rooms and libraries ... Chinese decorations were very popular about the 80s. Some exquisitely lovely wall papers showed delicately rendered flowers and birds, or sweeping decorative landscapes.⁷¹

The Power brothers, along with their architect F. M. White, who was one of the first architects to be elected, joined their father as members of the Melbourne Club.⁷² 'Squatters and Government officers ... make this Club their home when

⁶⁵ Shire of Malvern valuation book Western Riding, 1880, p. 62. *Sands & McDougall's directories. 1900-1927*

⁶⁶ Sutherland, p. 53; Shire of Malvern valuation book Western Riding, 1884, no. 8

⁶⁷ Ixion, in the *Australasian*, 1892, p.232.

⁶⁸ Russell, p.168.

⁶⁹ Herbert Power's children were Reginald, Herbert, Eric, Constance, Gladys, Nora and Meta. Family history notes, Mrs Faith Whitehead, daughter of Reginald and Phyllis Power. Power family history file, Malvern Archives. See also de Serville, p. 328. In 1896 Hubert Power bought the homestead at Bungowannah Park and sold it to Sir Rupert Clarke. Reginald Power married Sir Rupert's daughter Phyllis and for some years made Bungowannah Park their home. Peck, p. 286.

⁷⁰ 'Romance of Melbourne business houses' in the *Age*, 7 January 1933, p.5.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² de Serville. *Pounds and Pedigrees*, pp.257, 328 & 346

they come to Melbourne from the country; they can live more reasonably here than at an hotel, and have the advantage of being in the centre of their friends,' wrote Clara Aspinall in 1862.⁷³ Police Commissioner Captain Frederick Standish, a member of the Melbourne Club, was a friend of the Power family with a mutual interest in racing, at a time when 'the riding, breeding, and racing of horses commanded a wide following of city and country men'.⁷⁴ In 1864, Herbert Power, Captain Standish, James Blackwood and others, established the Victoria Racing Club (VRC).⁷⁵

The Melbourne Cup was the highlight of the social season and on the day Toorak Road would be lined with the carriages of the elite. At Flemington Race Course, social class was defined by the entrance fee, with 'Toorak' allocated the better vantage points, in the stands and on the lawns.⁷⁶ Fashionable clothing was important to the wives and daughters of Melbourne's upper bourgeoisie as dress was an acknowledgement of status.⁷⁷ The Melbourne Cup was an opportunity to display the latest fashions, which became more extravagant as the boom years progressed.⁷⁸ Take for example, the 1885 Melbourne Cup, where the Power ladies were splendidly attired, with Mrs Herbert Power, wearing 'black lace over blue'. Mrs Robert Power was seen in a 'pink ottoman petticoat, with draperies of cream china crepe, trimmed with lace, and pink and brown velvet bows, a small bonnet of crepe also trimmed with velvet bows.'⁷⁹ The Power brothers were expert riders and in 1899 Herbert won the Melbourne Cup on his own horse 'Merriwee'.⁸⁰

Herbert Power was also one of the founders of the Victoria Amateur Turf Club (VATC),⁸¹ a 'flourishing institution [which] owed its origin to the public spirit

⁷³ Clara Aspinall, *Three Years in Melbourne*, (London 1862), pp.11-12, as cited in Grant & Serle, p.114.

⁷⁴ The diary of Captain Frederick Standish records a picnic at Eltham attended by Standish and members of the Power families. de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p.57 & p.138.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.339.

⁷⁶ Davison, p.210.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.200.

⁷⁸ Cannon, *Life in the Cities*, p.216-7.

⁷⁹ *Table Talk*, 6 November, 1885, p.11.

⁸⁰ Flo Pearce, 'Powerscourt, its owners & occupiers', unpublished manuscript, undated, MA.

⁸¹ James Smith, (ed.) *The Cyclopaedia of Victoria*, (Melbourne 1905), p.115.

and love of sport exhibited by half a dozen gentlemen warmly interested in racing.’⁸² Within a few months of the club’s first race at Ballarat in 1876, land already in use as a rough racecourse, was selected at Caulfield. Original members included Herbert and Robert Power, pastoralists and neighbours John Inglis and William Leonard, and Robert Power’s father-in-law, civil officer and pastoralist, Acheson French. Coming from a titled and landed background, French was one of the few colonists known to be ‘gentlemen’ by birth.⁸³

This was a time of prosperity when many of the social occasions were designed to preserve the infant colony’s upper class and exclude those who did not meet standards of respectability. The blackball was used to exclude candidates from the gentlemen’s clubs and invitations to private subscription Assemblies were limited to ‘presentable colonists’.⁸⁴ The established families brought trained servants, expecting to maintain the old country’s traditions and standards of behaviour. Social activities reflected those in England and these traditions were transferred to Australia through balls, dinners, race meetings, garden parties, theatre productions, the opera and picnics. A house with any measure of social standing had its own ballroom, but a ball or fancy dress party at Government House was considered a highlight of the season. Initially when located at ‘Toorak House’, Government House ‘was not too small for the vice-regal hospitalities of those early days, when ‘Society’, consisting of the official classes and a few opulent people was limited in number.’⁸⁵ However, the gold-rush era modified much of the class system inherited from Britain and in colonial Melbourne, new wealth quickly gained respect while those with good breeding and background, often struggled with colonial life.⁸⁶ As Graeme Davison explains, ‘wealth, brazenly displayed, and income, conspicuously consumed, together defined the layers of prestige and the natural boundaries of social intercourse’.⁸⁷

⁸² Ibid.,p.120.

⁸³ de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen*, p.176.

⁸⁴ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, p.28.

⁸⁵ James Smith, *Historical Sketch of Victoria*, 1886, Facsimile edition, (Sydney 1974), p.98.

⁸⁶ Cannon, *Life in the cities*, pp.207-8.

The choice of invited guests to Government House became a dilemma for Colonial Governors and inclusion of the middle classes at vice-regal functions did not necessarily mean acceptance into the right social circles.⁸⁸ As one observer noted 'Everybody goes to Government House, of course, and the entrée to the rooms of our good Governor has long ceased to be any criterion of respectability.'⁸⁹ Following the Governor's move to his new home in the Domain, social commentator Richard Twopeny reported that 'the centre around which society revolves is naturally Government House, although a great many people go to Government House who cannot be considered in Society.'⁹⁰

With the rise of commercial and industrial wealth resulting from the gold era, survival of the colonial gentry had relied for a time on the gradual acceptance of new wealth, through marriages and business partnerships.⁹¹ With the initial shortage of marriageable girls, it was not unusual for members of different social classes to marry.⁹² From the 1870s however, this attitude changed and the boom years of the 1880s ended this era of social mobility. The new upper class, which had expanded to include the inheritors of the gold era wealth, closed ranks.⁹³

Nevertheless, in 1885, society journal *Table Talk* observed the flimsy barriers 'with which society has surrounded itself' and that 'not only the wealthy' but 'any man of good reputation' could obtain admission into the best society.'⁹⁴ Later, concern was expressed with regard to 'the numerous pests of society', those 'with empty pockets and a social status of the flimsiest character' who attempted to 'gain admission to society'.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Davison, p.190.

⁸⁸ Russell, p16.

⁸⁹ Marcus Clarke in Hergenhahn, *A Colonial City*, p. 39 as cited in de Serville, p.108.

⁹⁰ R.E.N. Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia*, 1883, Facsimile edition, (Sydney 1973), p.108.

⁹¹ Russell, p.9.

⁹² Cannon, *Melbourne After the Gold Rush*, p.214.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.207-8.

⁹⁴ 'Victorian Society' in *Table Talk*, 24 July 1885, p.1.

⁹⁵ 'Pests of society' in *Table Talk*, 20 August 1886, p.9.

Table Talk also reported society's social events; balls, dances, engagements, 'fashionable weddings' as well as vice-regal occasions. Take 1885, when it was reported that Miss Maud Power was the bridesmaid at the wedding of woolbroker, pastoralist and company director Arthur Blackwood to Miss May Cunningham at Toorak's St Johns Church.⁹⁶ Social links came through clubs, business and racing connections. Robert Power was on the board of the pastoral house Dalgety & Co., of which Arthur's father, James, was partner and manager and both families were members of the same racing and gentlemen's clubs.⁹⁷ At the same time, the Botanic Gardens and Collins Street became fashionable rendezvous for the wives and daughters to maintain their social networks.

The Power brothers' landholdings dominated this section of Toorak. Nonetheless, in 1888 in anticipation of the railway and with the opportunities for speculation and development provided by the inflated economy, the north east corner of 'Power's Paddock' was subdivided and Warra Street, first known as Station Street, was created.⁹⁸ At the same time the Progressive Land Company subdivided pasture-land at the corner of Glenferrie and Toorak Roads and four houses were built in the newly created Glenbervie Road.⁹⁹

This was a time of land speculation and building, but the scattered mansions and villas north of Toorak Road standing in relative seclusion on large estates remained tightly held and generally escaped the subdivisions of the boom years. Elsewhere many thousands of acres, particularly those near railway lines, were being rapidly developed. During the 1890s depression few changes occurred to the built environment and it was not until the Federation era that development began to affect the semi-rural landscape of 'Power's Paddock'.

⁹⁶ 'Miss May Cunningham - only daughter of Surgeon-General J. M. Cunningham, late of the Indian Service. *Table Talk*, 16 October 1885, p.10.

⁹⁷ de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, pp.276-7.

⁹⁸ Station Street, LP2167, 12 October 1888. Bower, plan 1, p.29, MA.

⁹⁹ Glenbervie Road, LP2633, 15 August 1889, Bower plan 1, p.25, MA.