



The Cammeraygal People: The Cammeraygal people of the Guringai nation lived in the Willoughby area until the 1820s and are recorded as being in the northern parts of the Sydney region for approximately 5,800 years. By 1830 there were no Aboriginal people following a traditional lifestyle in the area.

Geography: Middle Cove is a secluded, verdant suburb bounded to the north, east and south by Middle Harbour and to the west by Eastern Valley Way approximately. It is 7 kilometres from the Sydney CBD in the Willoughby local government area. Middle Cove is the smallest of the Middle Harbour peninsulas and is flanked by Crag Cove and Castle Cove.

Demographics: Middle Cove is a relatively small suburb of Sydney with a population of 1,271 in 2011 of which 65.9% are Australian citizens. It has a population of UK born residents at 7.5 %, New Zealand 1.3%, South Africa 1.3% and China 2.8 % with a mere 466 dwellings.

Name: The name Middlecove (one word) was the name assigned to the estate by the Greater Sydney Development Association in 1941 which had bought the land in 1920. Prior to this it was known as Middle Harbour or North Willoughby though Middle Cove was originally known as the Big Sugarloaf Peninsula after the prominent hill — The Sugarloaf — overlooking the waters of Middle Harbour. Middle Cove (two words) was gazetted by the Geographical Names Board in 1976.

Land: The land around Middle Cove remained virgin Crown land until the first property boom following the gold rushes of the 1850s. James William Bligh and George Woodcock both acquired land in Middle Cove in 1858. James William Bligh became the first Mayor of Willoughby, although the title then was “Chairman”. More land was bought in 1878 by William Bulard, Stephen Mallarky, J. B. Wilson and S. Caird, but the area was so isolated and precipitous that it was not developed in any major way until 1958. This was when G. J. Dusseldorp’s company, Civil & Civic went into partnership with the Greater Sydney Development Association who had been the owners of the land for the past thirty years. Dusseldorp was the founder and the largest shareholder of Lend Lease, GPT and MLC. There was no sewerage in the area so Civil & Civic paid for the Water Board to install sewerage.

Early industries: Early Industries in the area included salt panning on the foreshores and bays, timber cutting and market gardening. Chen Ah Teak purchased James Bligh’s land in 1882. He erected a weatherboard house and developed market gardens, which were taken over by Quong Lee in 1896. The market gardens continued until 1908, although they had become the property of the English, Scottish & Australian Bank in 1900.

Public Utilities: Due to its land being hemmed on 3 sides by the harbour and developed later than other parts of the Municipality, utilities were installed relatively recently. Mains water was connected in 1892 when the North Shore Water Supply Scheme was completed delivered to two service reservoirs on the corner of Pacific Highway and Mowbray Road. The North Shore Gas Co. Ltd supplied gas from 1896 and in 1983 this was taken over by Australian gas Light Company. Natural gas was first distributed in a year later in 1984.

Electricity, supplied by the Sydney City Council was first available to the Willoughby Council area in 1916, with the Sydney County Council assuming responsibility in 1936.

Dusseldorp’s Civil & Civic Company was instrumental in the provision of sewerage to Middle Cove as he convinced the Metropolitan Water Sewerage & Drainage Board to include it at the planning and initial building phase of the subdivision, installed by Civil & Civic to government specifications.



Tennis Cove Club: The Tennis Cove Club, originally the Valley View Bowling Club, is on Eastern Valley Way in Willis Park (which straddles Middle Cove and Castle Cove). The Clubhouse was opened on 5 November 1960. The bowling club was at first very successful but gradually declined in members and was eventually taken over by the tennis club.

Glenaeon School: Glenaeon was established in 1957 by Miss Sylvia Brose and Eric Nicholls based on Steiner principles of education. The site covers 11.75 acres. A number of the school buildings were designed by Eric Nicholls business partner of Walter Burley Griffin and May Nicholls, Lute Drummond, Alice Crowther, all of whose names now grace major school buildings. They were pioneers in Australia of the path developed by Dr Rudolf Steiner and known as 'Anthroposophy', which literally translated from the Greek means "the wisdom of humanity", a non-denominational path of knowledge leading from the spiritual in the individual human being to the spiritual in the universe.

In 2007 the school celebrated its 50th birthday over its now three campuses at Middle Cove, Castlecrag and Willoughby and in 2010 a new hall; the Marion Mahoney Griffin Hall and new classrooms were completed at Castlecrag in order to accommodate higher enrolment.

Harold Reid Reserve: Containing just under 89 acres (36.9 hectares) of bushland and picnic facilities, Harold Reid Reserve covers a large portion of the peninsula. It was known as Sugarloaf Reserve until 1963 when it was named in honour of Harold J. Reid (1896-1984), a town clerk for the Municipality of Willoughby for over 50 years. The park includes lookouts, walking trails and picnic facilities. It has also been declared a protected area for wildlife, which includes goannas, sugar gliders, buff-banded rails, swamp wallabies, snakes and eastern spinebills.

Streets: Sugarloaf Crescent was the earliest street in Middle Cove, built between 1926 and 1928. The majority of the streets were built in 1941 including Covelee Circuit, Glenroy, Greenfield and Lincoln Avenues and The Lee. Several of these were named together with Cawarra Road and Heights Crescent, were named by the Greater Sydney Development Association by 1947. In fact, Griffin is credited with the naming of Eastern Valley Way and his design intention was that it form a commercial access road with businesses located closer to its junctures and residential development further onto all three peninsulas. Later street names such as Highland Ridge, North Arm Road, Rembrandt Drive and The Quarterdeck, were named by Dusseldorp in 1956.

Transport: Water was the most logical mode of access in the very early days of Middle Cove (and Castle Cove) with the original residents, the Henry Willis family having their own wharf and travelled to the city via The Spit and then by tram to Milsons Point.

Local Chinese market gardeners used hors and cart to deliver produce to city markets again to Milsons Point to connect with supply boats/ferries.

From 1930 bus services to both East Roseville and Chatswood were established to connect to train stations at Chatswood and Roseville by the Forest Coach line company. Government bus routes through Middle Cove go via Castlecrag or Northbridge to Wynyard bus stop in the Sydney CBD via Eastern Valley Way when it opened in 1939 and continue to the present day.

Further reading:

The Development of Castle Cove and Middle Cove by Esther Leslie at 994.411/WIL

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