19th Century Pioneers

Based on present knowledge, there was a minimum of 28 known settlers in the Seventeen Mile Rocks farming district at some stage during the 19th century. Below are brief profiles of 7 pioneer landholders whose descendants continued to be associated with the area in the 20th century. Our book When River Was Roadway contains chapters on 17 pioneer families, including the 7 below. Nineteen genealogical charts are included. An additional 11 pioneer settlers are known to have been in the area: see When River Was Roadway for much shorter accounts of these 11 settlers. Twenty seven additional names of people who were in the district at some stage during the 19th century are also provided. http://cshsoc.wordpress.com/when-river-was-roadway/

The more southerly part of the district, occupied by Wolston Estate in the 19th century, was pioneered by Stephen Simpson and two generations of the Goggs family. The book Pastoralists of Brisbane Town’s Fringe, provides information on these pioneers and also on workers associated with the Wolston Estate during the 19th century. Four genealogical charts are included. http://cshsoc.wordpress.com/pastoralists-of-brisbane-towns-fringe/
Peter Belz and Wilhelmine Belz were German immigrants who, after marrying in Brisbane, had seven children. Their first-born child William died very young but they raised the other six children at Seventeen Mile Rocks. From small beginnings as half-owner (with Franz Walz) of a 29-acre block in 1865, Peter Belz had acquired 196 acres 1 rood 24 perches by the early 20th century and his eldest surviving son Francis Peter held an additional 17 acres at that time.

Francis Peter stayed on in Seventeen Mile Rocks until his retirement in 1946. He married Mary Angela Magee, daughter of another local pioneer, John Vincent Magee. They had five children, four daughters and a son. Francis Peter is known particularly for the establishment and operations of Round Hill Dairy, a highly successful dairy farming enterprise. He eventually owned 335 acres 3 roods 30 perches in Seventeen Mile Rocks.

The Pioneer Belz Park off the Centenary Highway near the Centenary Bridge was named in recognition of the Belz family contribution to the area’s history. It was opened in 2008.

Two Belz descendants researched, wrote and published a book on Peter and Wilhelmine Belz and their descendants - The Belz Family of Seventeen Mile Rocks by Gaylene Bourguignon & Deirdre Farbotko, 2007 (Copies of this book are held at the Brisbane Square, Indooroopilly (reference only) and Mount Ommaney Libraries).
HENRY: James and Mary Ann

James, eldest son of Robert and Frances Henry, was already a young man when he accompanied his parents to Seventeen Mile Rocks. His father Robert purchased a block of land and settled there with the family in 1865. While Robert senior moved with the family to the Kenmore area, James stayed on in Seventeen Mile Rocks. He settled in the area of Rocks Riverside Park, living in a home on the escarpment overlooking the river and working the fertile river flats below.

James married Mary Kilpatrick. They had eight children of whom two died as infants. James is credited with having built the Seventeen Mile Rocks Uniting Church in 1888 and possibly also the State School in 1877 (opened 1878).

The Henry family owned land in Seventeen Mile Rocks until about 1920, but descendants of the family have lived in the Centenary suburbs area until the present day.
MAGEE: John Vincent, Maria (first wife) and Mary (second wife)

John Vincent Magee is the only one of the long-staying pioneers to have purchased land at the October 1864 land sales. Some of his descendants, members of the Counihan family, still owned land in the district when suburban development commenced almost a century later.

John Vincent Magee was from County Dublin, Ireland. His own parents and some of his siblings also emigrated to Queensland and assisted him in developing the Seventeen Mile Rocks property in the early years. John Vincent also acquired land across the river in Fig Tree Pocket and lived there with his family. He continued to work land on both sides of the river.

John Vincent had four children with his first wife Maria English. After her early death, he married Mary McCullough and had another six children. Mary Angela, eldest daughter of John Vincent and Maria his first wife, married Francis Peter Belz, son of another local pioneer family.

In the 20th century, his daughter Ellen Cecilia Counihan with her husband Tom and their family, lived on the original Magee portion in Seventeen Mile Rocks and had a market garden. They raised their family of five children there. Tom expanded the market garden after World War II, acquiring land on the opposite side of Counihan Road in the area of Rocks Riverside Park.

The John Magee Park, on land adjacent to the original Magee portion, is named in honour of John Vincent Magee. Counihan Road and Jennifer Street are named for his descendants, members of his daughter Ellen Cecilia (Cis) Counihan’s family.
MAURER: August and Pauline Juliane (Julia)

August Maurer, a German immigrant, arrived later than the other long-staying settlers, but by the early 20th century owned the largest amount of land held by any individual in the district. From his initial purchase of portion 337 in 1873, August started increasing his land from 1881. By 1905 he held approximately 306 acres in the area.

August and Julia migrated separately from Germany and met and married in Brisbane, after August’s arrival in Seventeen Mile Rocks. They had 13 children of whom 12 lived to adulthood. The family remained in Seventeen Mile Rocks, including several members of the second generation as adults with their own families, well into the 20th century.

August’s son George owned and lived on land in the Mt Ommaney area for many years, including where the quarry operated. August’s son Fred and Fred’s own son, also Frederick, held hundreds of acres of land in the Westlake-Middle Park area in the pre-development suburban 20th century period. Another of August and Julia’s sons, Edward, still owned and was living in the south-western end (Riverhills-Westlake) of the Centenary area when development commenced. With their spouses, they each raised families in the district.

Maurer Street in Middle Park recognizes the contribution of the Maurer pioneers to the district.
George Oldfield, an Englishman and brother-in-law of Dr Joseph Bancroft, held a portion of land on Oldfield Road from 1867. He never lived in the area but was a well known identity in the northern suburbs. He married late to a young German woman, Emma Maria Theresa Heine. George and Emma did not have children.

Some years after George’s death, Emma moved to their Seventeen Mile Rocks property which was known as Evergreen. Her niece Mieta (Maria Therese Fikuart, later Maria Brandes) lived there with her for part of the time. Emma lived at Evergreen until her death in 1941.
SINNAMON FAMILIES

James Sinnamon senior purchased four portions of land in Seventeen Mile Rocks during 1865 and 1866. It appears likely that he and his wife Margaret did not move to the area immediately as sources indicate that he was living on a clearing lease in Corinda at the time of his unexpected death in November 1869. James senior and his older sons may have been living in makeshift accommodation part-time at Seventeen Mile Rocks, clearing and working the land in the early years.

Margaret and the younger children, along with the eldest son John, lived in Beechwood after James senior’s death. John stayed on there after his mother’s death in 1904.

Meanwhile, several of the second generation had acquired property in Seventeen Mile Rocks in their own right: James junior who built Glen Ross in 1887, George who owned Rosemount, Benjamin who owned Avondale, and also daughter and son-in-law Sarah and Colin White. John never married but the other four, with their spouses, raised families in Seventeen Mile Rocks. Another son, Samuel, also owned some land in the area around the turn of the century (19th-20th), though he did not live in the area as an adult nor was he a farmer.

Descendants of George and of James junior were still living in the area in the 1950s. George junior’s son and two daughters, honouring their father’s wishes, donated the family property to the Uniting Church after their own deaths. This is the land on which the Sinnamon Retirement Village is built.

James junior’s son Sir Hercules Sinnamon continued to live at Glen Ross until his own death in 1994. He re-purchased some former Sinnamon holdings including the Avondale property. Hercules continued farming using farm managers and/or share farmers at the same time as Jindalee and other suburbs were established. Hercules donated the land on which the Church now stands when it needed to be shifted to make way for roadworks. He also purchased the Seventeen Mile Rocks State School, to protect it from destruction, and relocated it on his land on Seventeen Mile Rocks Road. His intention to create a historic precinct, including with these two properties and the three Sinnamon houses on Seventeen Mile Rocks Road, was recognized with the 1992 Heritage listing of the Sinnamon Farm historic precinct. The listing includes the three Sinnamon houses, the school and the Macleod aviation site.
WOLF: Henry and Sophia

Henry and his wife Sophia (née Littman) were both from Germany. They met and married after arriving in Brisbane. Sophia’s mother, Augusta Korber, was a half-sister to Peter Belz’s wife Wilhelmine Korber.

Henry acquired a 17-acre portion of land in 1872. He gradually acquired three more portions, eventually owning 86 acres 1 rood 34 perches. These Wolf holdings later formed a substantial part of the first Centenary suburb, Jindalee. Henry also acquired two subdivisions of the Wolston Estate, in the Westlake-Riverhills area, when the Estate was broken up in 1901.

Sophia and Henry had 12 children, five girls and seven boys. All survived to adulthood except the second child, a male. Most of the second generation moved away from the area. George Wolf, who never married, still lived on and worked three of the original Wolf holdings in the Jindalee area until suburban development commenced when he sold the land to the developers. George’s brother William (Billy) farmed land in the Westlake-Riverhills area. Later, after Billy’s death, another brother Herb was dairy farming on Billy’s former land. Like George, he sold the property to the developers.

Wolf's Farmhouse on crest of hill, slightly left of centre, 1950s. Photo taken from Coolooie Farm. In 2011 terms, the view is from the site of the Direct Factory Outlet looking up Sinnamon Road across Centenary Highway and Jindalee Creek toward Jindalee; Wolf’s house being near the top of Coolaroo Cres., Jindalee. Gladys M. Bailey collection, SLQ.

Further details (including genealogical charts, land holdings and land usage) about each of these families, and other pioneer families, can be found in CSHSoc’s publication, *When River Was Roadway* [http://cshsoc.wordpress.com/when-river-was-roadway/]