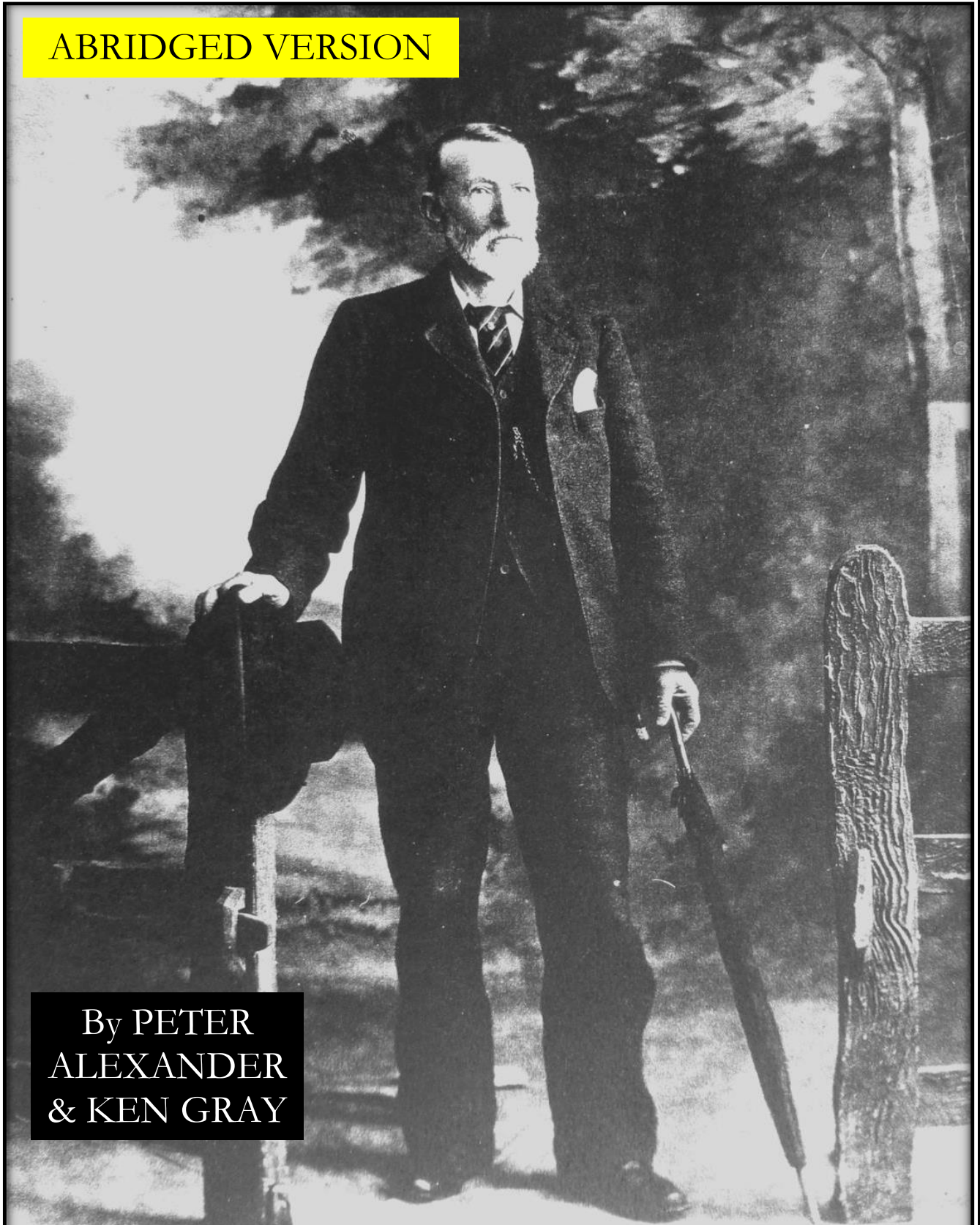


# WE'VE ALL COME FROM SOMEWHERE

Part 2: The Alexanders Ancestry and the Queensland Story

ABRIDGED VERSION



By PETER  
ALEXANDER  
& KEN GRAY

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Cover Image: Charles Booth Alexander in his later years.

# INTRODUCTION

Peter Gray Alexander and his wife Robyn, live in Mullumbimby in northern NSW. Peter is a retired builder who never dreamed that he would one day write a book, yet he did so after years of researching his family history. The book is in three parts and Part 2 is about the Alexanders and Queensland.

His aim was to create a record for his family and others so they could see who came before them and could add to the story over time. Peter traced his ancestors back to Nathaniel Lucas on the maternal side of his family who arrived as a convict on the First Fleet in 1788. Like Peter and others in the Alexander clan, Nathaniel was a carpenter and quickly made his mark as a successful builder in the colony.

The Mission Beach Historical Society published *Bicton: The Cuttens of Clump Point* in 2021 and this included some history of the Alexander family when they lived in the district on and off from 1885 to 1954. While this gives us some understanding of the Alexander family at Bingil Bay, it says little about how they got here and where the family came from. Peter's story fills in many gaps in the *Bicton* story.

The Alexanders made their mark on this district in many ways, being early farmers, influencers, and among the first to start tourism ventures here. Alexanders Inn at Bingil Bay housed our first post office and telephone services, and the family name is etched in our memories with the naming of Alexander Drive. Hence, knowing a little more about the Alexander family is important and this also delves into the history of the Atherton Tablelands district, a place that has always had close links to Mission Beach.

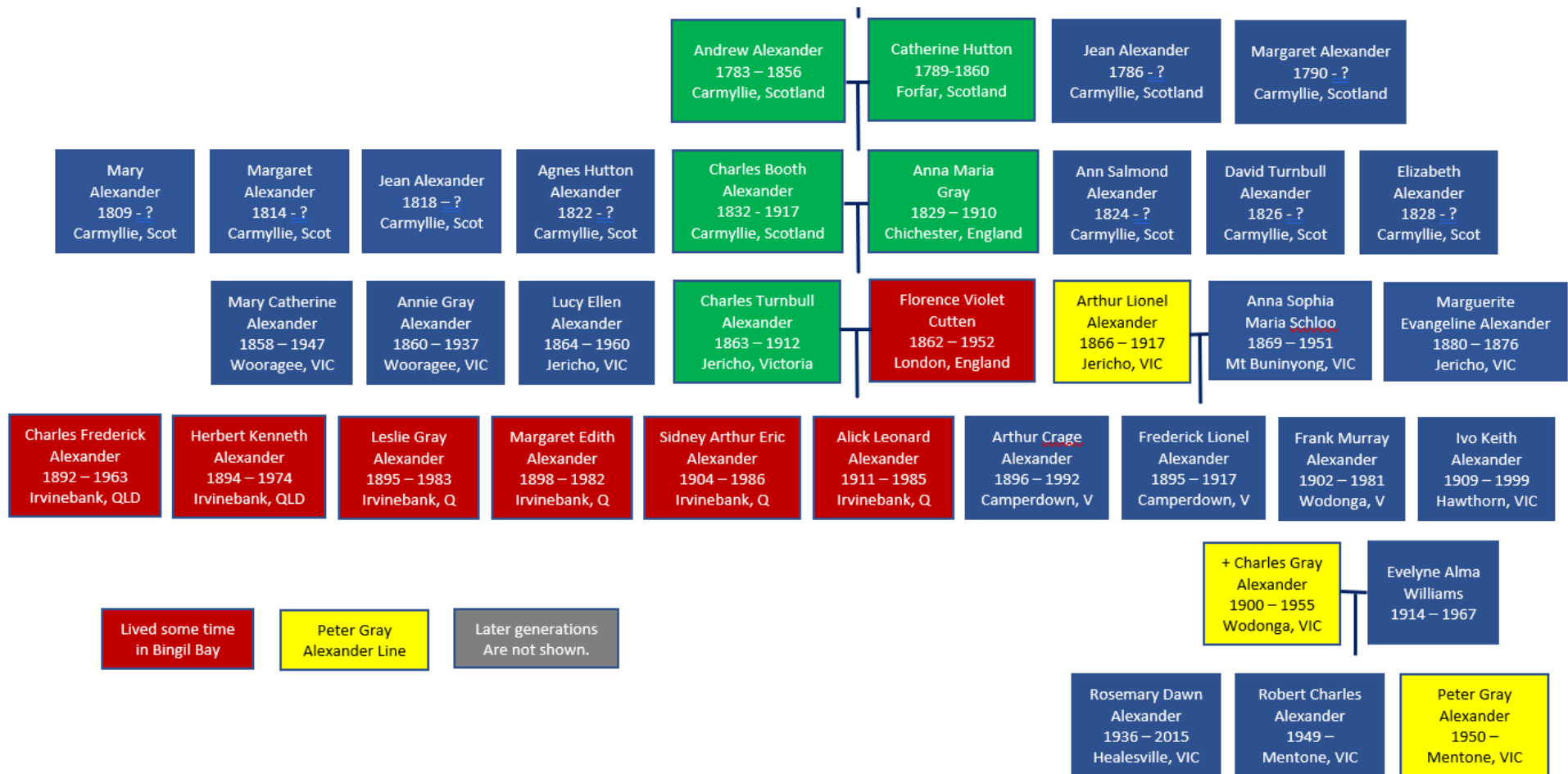
Part 2 of Peter Alexander's book explores the history of his paternal grandparents, Charles Booth Alexander, and Anna Maria Gray; Part 3 looks at the maternal side - George Frederick Schloo and Mary Crege, in Victoria, as does Part 1 which documents the stories of the Lucas and Williams families in NSW.

The Alexanders came from the Forfar region in Angus Shire, Scotland. Forfar is a small town of 16,000 population today just north of Dundee. The 1841 Census was the first recorded British Government document to count all the people in each house at midnight on the night of 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> June 1841 and record some specific details about them. Up until this time, Births, Deaths, and Marriages were recorded by the church. The 1841 Census for the Parish of Forfar in Glamis Road, Forfar, shows Andrew Alexander, 55 years old, farmer; Catherine, 50 years old, wife; Jean 23 years old, handloom weaver; David 14, Elisabeth 11, and **Charles** 8. The other three older girls, Mary 32, Margaret 27, and Agnes 19 had left home.

There were 19 people recorded in the house, so maybe it was a poorhouse.

In 1854, Charles Alexander, Peter's great-grandfather, was a carpenter, and at only 22 years old he migrated to Victoria, with hundreds of thousands scrambling to the goldfields seeking riches. Charles married Anna Maria Gray. In 1880, Charles moved to the tin mines of Herberton, Queensland and it was there that his son, Charles Turnbull Alexander met the amazing Florence Violet Cutten and the strong family link with Bingil Bay was created.

# ALEXANDER FAMILY TREE – BINGIL BAY BRANCH





# CHARLES ALEXANDER & ANNA GRAY

In the early 1850s, gold was discovered in the New World. Scotland and Ireland were in serious trouble with a potato famine and crop failures. Landlords realized that it would make a better business to evict crofters who eked out a bare living farming their lands and replace them with more profitable flocks of sheep as the price of wool and mutton were at a peak.

Whole families were evicted, and their homes burnt down. Scotland's largest export was people. A mass migration scheme started, when places like Australia, which had only been settled for 60 years, needed more free settlers to populate the vast country. The shipyards of Glasgow were kept busy building sailing clippers, some weighing around 2,000 tons and carrying up to 600 passages plus cargo and provisions.

In September 1854, **Charles Alexander** was a 22-year-old carpenter of high spirits out for an adventure. The family encouraged him to go to Australia for the good of his health, and the local policeman, a friend of the family, suggested the same as Charles was often on the edge of trouble. Charles had money and bought an Unassisted Passage on the brand-new clipper, *Storm Cloud*, which was claimed to be the fastest ship ever built. He travelled on her maiden voyage to Melbourne, leaving his large family, who he never saw again. In 1854, on B Port, Melbourne, Charles stepped foot on Australian soil and for the next 63 years made Australia home. He became a husband, father, Gold Miner, Builder, Hotel Owner, Publican, Undertaker, Investor, Engineer, and Mine Owner. Leaving Scotland was the best thing he ever did.

**Anna Maria Gray** (Annie) lived in Chichester, England, with two brothers, James and Henry. James became a notable clergyman and author while Henry was a Hops Seller. Anna's uncle, Henry Comper Esq., and her cousin Harry Comper, Esq., were Bankers and listed as gentry. However, Chichester had a reputation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as being an unhealthy and unsanitary place. In some areas of the town, people used cesspits. There was also a lot of poverty and overcrowding and the New World beckoned:

*No place but Australia or Tasmania, from what we learn, nearly 5,000 women will be sent out in the course of this year to the Australian Colonies! It will be the happiest, perhaps the only happy incident in their lives. They will obtain service, high wages—and husbands as soon as they please. The male population in Sydney is four to one. There could be no better matrimonial speculation, therefore, for ladies in want of husbands, than to ship themselves off for this part of the world.*

Newry Telegraph - Friday 27 April 1832

**Female Emigration to AUSTRALIA.**  
**COMMITTEE:**  
 The Committee for promoting the Emigration of Single Women  
 "David Scott," of 773 Tons Register.  
**GRAVESEND**  
 On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> of July next,  
**SYDNEY.**  
 On payment of FIVE POUNDS only.

**EMIGRATION to Van Diemen's Land.**  
**COMMITTEE:**  
 The Committee for promoting the Emigration of Single Women  
 "AMELIA THOMPSON,"  
 of 471 Tons.  
**GRAVESEND**  
 On Thursday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of April next,  
**LAUNCESTON.**  
**A FREE PASSAGE**

**Agent:-T. P. Feaston, Printer, &c., Tavistock.**

For some unknown reason, in October 1852, at the age of 23, Anna Maria Gray left her family, friends and home and travelled to Southampton by train. There, she obtained an assisted passenger ticket on a sailing clipper called *Persian* which was headed for Melbourne, Australia. When Anna arrived in Melbourne, she would have walked into a very different world from the one she left.



Port Melbourne where thousands of migrants arrived each week during the 1850's gold rush.

Anna was part of a huge influx of people arriving in Victoria, all by sea. The population of Melbourne doubled within a year and in 1852, 75,000 people arrived in the colony. Immigrants leaving Britain in 1852 bought more tickets to Melbourne than any other destination in the world. Lodging houses and hotels were packed to bursting point. Makeshift houses of iron, timber and canvas sprang up on the city's edge. The wharves were constantly jammed with shipping, cargo and migrants disembarking.

The enormous wealth of the goldfields fueled a boom that lasted 40 years. The influx of educated gold seekers from England, Scotland and Ireland led to rapid growth. Two decades of high consumer confidence, easy access to credit, and steep increases in land prices led to massive construction. Melbourne reputedly became the richest city in the world and the largest after London in the British Empire.

Anna found a job as a Governess, as she was an educated lady. Eventually, she caught a Cobb & Co. stagecoach for Beechworth. This was a time of bushrangers and the courthouse at Beechworth sent many bushrangers to the town jail. Robberies were a constant occurrence with six constables and one sergeant on patrol and in 1853, the Beechworth gold escort took 123,000 ounces of gold back to Melbourne. The town population reached 20,000 by 1857, then the gold ran out around the turn of the century.

Charles Alexander was also in this area mining at Woolshed. After Charles had arrived in Victoria, he had headed straight for the goldfields, but had he made his quick fortune in building rather than gold-digging. Charles caught Annie Gray's eye and they married at the Kings Hotel at Wooragay in January 1858.

Charles and Anna Maria Alexander settled there for 3-4 years and had their first two children (Mary and Annie) before moving on to the Gippsland Goldfields at Jericho in the Walhalla District in 1862.



Charles Booth Alexander.



Anna Maria Alexander (nee Gray).



Annie and Mary Alexander, Jericho 1862.

Within six months following the discovery of the Jordan goldfield, Jericho town had grown beyond imagination. The air was rent by a cacophony of sounds, by timber cutters and shingle splitters. The rattle of sluice boxes and the clatter of picks and shovels echoed constantly around the steep ranges. Wood smoke flowed lazily from bark and stone chimneys, and slowly drifted down the Jordan River following this muddied stream all the way to the new villages of Red Jacket, Blue Jacket, Violet Town, and Walhalla.

Charles Alexander built many houses in the town as well as some of the first hotels and was the owner of *The Niagara* and the *Camp Hotels* in Jericho, as well as being the Publican. He also had a sideline job as the town undertaker. Charles had other buildings for rent, as his wealth grew.

In 1865, Charles sold both hotels for a fortune and invested in some mining companies. It was around this time that Charles gave himself the middle name Booth. He had a cousin in Scotland that he was close to, Robert Booth, whose mother was Charles' Aunty Agnes who married into a wealthy family. That is probably the source of this name.

The family next moved to Dry Creek and Mary and Charles were rescued from the Jordan River by a schoolteacher in 1868. In 1874, Annie 14, Charles 11, Lucy 10, Arthur 8, and Marguerite 5, were all enrolled at school while the oldest child, Mary, (16) helped her Mum with domestic duties. Annie (senior) was now a part-time sewing mistress at the school and became embroiled as a witness in a long-standing and sensational court case about a missing man named Tichborne. Charles left his family in 1874 without providing significant monetary support, so Annie had to fend for her young family alone.

Annie became a schoolteacher to earn a small income and started at the nearby Happy Go Lucky town school. The Education Department provided scant support or income because Annie was not deemed a qualified teacher. Despite that, she managed to handle a class of 48 pupils competently.

In 1876, Annie's heart was broken when her youngest daughter, Marguerite, died of Scarlet Fever at only seven years of age. She eventually left the school and became a Librarian at the Walhalla Mechanic's Institute and Public Library and later moved to Melbourne and set up her own private school. In 1887, Annie published *A Golden Jubilee Ode* to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

Annie died in 1910 and her children erected a gravestone:

*Erected in Loving Memory of our Mother Anna M. Alexander, died 16<sup>th</sup> September 1910 aged 80.*

*A Wise and Faithful Mother.*



The ultimate tribute has been made to Anna Alexander with her Gray family name passed down to:

Annie Gray Alexander, Anna's daughter, born 1860. Stella Gray Buchanan born 1887. Leslie Gray Alexander, Irvinebank Qld born 1895. Charles Gray Alexander my father, born 1900. Grace Gray Cromb, born 1901. Leslie Gray Bunting, Bingil Bay Qld, born 1919. Peter Gray Alexander (me) born 1950. My son, Levi Gray Alexander, born 1981. And my grandson, Noah Gray Alexander, born 2009.



Back L-R, 2nd Anna Sophia Maria Alexander, 4<sup>th</sup> Arthur Lionel Alexander, their sons in front L-R 1/ Arthur Craze Alexander, 2/ Fredrick Lionel Alexander, 5/ Frank Murray Alexander 6/ Charles Gray Alexander (my father) (Photo c. 1903/04).

Arthur Lionel Alexander married Anna Sophia Maria Schloo in 1894 (Peter's grandparents.)

## CHARLES ALEXANDER MOVES TO QUEENSLAND

Charles Booth Alexander spent six years moving around the goldfields of Victoria after leaving his wife, then moved to the Atherton Tablelands, QLD, with his first son, Charles, in 1880 where he spent the next 40 years. He invested in tin and silver mines at Irvinebank and purchased many mining leases with partners John Moffat, Nicholas Hardman, and others. He was a partner in a major tin mine called the *Tornado* and for a time managed John Moffat's first tin mine at Irvinebank. Charles Turnbull Alexander became a mine owner as well, calling his mine *Now or Never*.



Charles Turnbull Alexander.



Author, Peter Alexander visiting Irvinebank North Queensland 2017.

Charles Booth Alexander established himself as a builder, an engineer, owning a large property portfolio and part owner in several mines. He became the Construction Engineer overseeing all of Moffat's major works then



managed his *Loudoun* mill on startup in 1885. He travelled to Victoria to see his family every now and again. Today, the stark reminders of mining dot the Tablelands landscape while nature reclaims its hills. The former home of the legendary mining entrepreneur John Moffat is still called *Loudoun House*. It is built mainly of red cedar and is now a living museum with a remarkable historical collection. The house is the oldest high-set timber and corrugated iron house in Far NQ and was built by Charles Alexander and his son Charles in 1884. It was from this house that John Moffat controlled his vast mining empire until his retirement in 1912.



Loudoun House at the left and the Battery (Royal Historical Society of Queensland.)



Loudoun House 2017.

Hard-won wealth brought conflicts and responsibilities. As his capital and influence grew, Moffat continued to promote mines, speculate, and aggressively defend his interests. Through his interlocking enterprises, the local town population reaped a bounty of security and wages. Moffat's skill was manifested in the combined achievement of the town's social development and his own financial success.

Moffat decided to concentrate on obtaining control of Irvinebank's new tin mine, the *Volcano*, discovered in September 1888 by a party of Italian miners and woodcutters. The name *Volcano* changed to *Vulcan*, indicating its surface form. The mill produced 12,000 tons of tin ore from a depth of up to 1,440 feet from 1890 to 1921. Moffat built tin smelters and a tramline that serviced the mills in the area as well. The *Vulcan* Mine was largely responsible for the expansion of mining in North Queensland



John Moffat.



The *Tornado* Mine.

Charles Booth Alexander and John Moffat took on the lease of *Tornado* Mine which operated successfully until 1903 when testing of deep ground failed as the ore body disappeared below 368 feet. There were court cases over the *Tornado* lease from 1907 to 1909 with Moffat and Alexander eventually prevailing but the case caused a worker strike. The strike in 1909 was followed by the 1914 – 1918 World War outbreak. Both had a disastrous effect on Moffat's Irvinebank Mining Company which was eventually sold to the Queensland State Government in 1919.

Over thirty years, John Moffat had grown an empire that engaged in numerous ventures that extended as far west as Cloncurry. His ventures were responsible for the development of 34 towns. Those that gained most from the railways that he constructed, or influenced parliamentarians to build, survive to this day - Mareeba, Atherton, and Ravenshoe. Loudoun House was made a museum and trusted to the people of Irvinebank. It is Queensland Heritage and Australian Heritage listed and is now managed by the Irvinebank School of Arts & Progress Association. Irvinebank offers the visitor a glimpse of a village that was once the centre of a vast mining empire stretching across North Queensland and beyond.

On 8 April 1891, Charles and Anna Alexander's son Charles Turnbull Alexander married Florence Violet Cutten at California Creek, near Irvinebank. Charles was 28 years old. Florence was the daughter of Frederick and Margaret Cutten of *Bicton* in Bingil Bay. They had six children, as shown in the family tree earlier and when Charles died on 17 November 1922, aged 49, of miners' phthisis, his wife Florence returned to *Bicton* a year later, with her six children. Florence and her children made significant contributions to their district and their stories are told in *Bicton: The Cuttens of Clump Point*, published by Mission Beach Historical Society Inc.

Florence Violet Alexander (nee Cutten) died at Tully on 20 November 1952, aged 90, survived by six children, 11 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She had left *Bicton* late in life and had lived with her son, Les, on Bingil Bay Road for some time in a small cottage.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter was born in 1950 and raised in Melbourne (Beaumaris). He became an apprentice carpenter in 1965 and is now retired after 50 years as a builder. He moved to the Northern Rivers of New South Wales to Mullumbimby in 1979 and still lives there. He is married to Robyn and has three sons; all are builders in the Byron Shire. Robyn and Peter have four grandchildren and have travelled extensively in Australia and overseas. Over the last 10 years, Peter has researched his family ancestry extensively and has become intrigued with early Australian History. Family, photography, surfing, and adventure travelling are his passions.

In 2012, Robyn and Peter Alexander trekked the Himalaya from China to Kashmir for 40 days. Peter published a photo-book, *Himalaya Sojourn*, to capture their magic memories of this epic journey with long-time friends, Louis, and Robin DeGrosbois.



Peter Alexander.

Robyn and Peter Alexander Himalayan Sojourn, 2012

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