**Essays on Mount Crosby - Holts Hill Work Camp 1915**

For much of the early days there were too few houses in Mount Crosby for all of the workers. Though Mount Crosby was quite isolated in those days that pre-dated car ownership, the Board only provided houses for a narrow range of speciality occupations, such as engineer, fireman, reservoir keeper, blacksmith and drayman. That left a lot of jobs to be performed by itinerant workers whose digs were tents or living rough.

Around the town, at numerous times and places dictated by the big projects of the day, these digs took the form of work camps where hard lives were played out (for men and women) until the project and the jobs finished, and forced a move to the next thing.

During construction of the pumping station one of the work camps was described by a passing journalist for the Queenslander magazine. I urge you to imagine the scene revealed to the journalist as he approached the top of the Works Hill:

*For there is quite a little town here. On the left at the top of the hill are the pleasant residences of the assistant engineers. Further down on the right is the handsome brick bungalow occupied by the resident engineer, Mr. Joseph Stewart. Below, its calico structures dotting the hillside at every eligible spot, lies the calico township of Mount Crosby, in the midst of which the great brick chimney stack of the boiler-house rears its lofty head to a height of130ft. above the ground.*

*A "slapped-up" building or two of timber, used by the contractors and others for office and residential purposes, combine with the calico, canvas, and flour-bag dwellings of the workmen to make a curious and picturesque conglomeration, while beneath all the waters of the Upper Brisbane ripple over their gravel bed.*

Other camps came and went, including one long running example associated with the development of water treatment at Holts Hill (near the start of Lake Manchester Road). Work commenced at Holts Hill in about 1915 and various projects provided periods of work up until 1936. Some itinerant workers became more permanent than the name suggests and set up "squats" of sorts on the Board lands. It suited everyone; these were hard times for workers and families, and the Board (and later Council) was happy to have the labour available (though it was not always needed).

Some of the old camp sites are still discernable, often giving themselves up with a few mango trees or other exotics, on resumed land, near a creek, near an old project, and otherwise forgotten.

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