

LOCAL HISTORY



Linden Clinic, ca1960
bun01356, *Picture Bundaberg Collection.*



Linden Medical Centre, 8 Aug 2010
Photo: Peta Browne

Dr Egmont Schmidt and Linden

'Uncle Mont was the most wonderful person'.

So remembers Mrs Margaret Olsen, great-niece of one of Bundaberg's most well-known medical men, Dr Egmont Schmidt. Dr Schmidt built the beautiful Linden on the corner of Barolin and Woongarra Streets, diagonally opposite the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, in 1913 as a home and the site of his medical practice.

Egmont's Father and Grandfather - Paving the Way

Martin Christian Friedrich Schmidt, Egmont's father, was better known as Pastor C.F. Schmidt. Pastor Schmidt worked in Maryborough with his father-in-law Pastor Carl Hellmuth Jnr (who is regarded as the founder of the Lutheran congregation in Bundaberg). Before there was a permanent Lutheran pastor in Bundaberg, Pastor Hellmuth, and then Pastor Schmidt (from 1889), would visit Bundaberg periodically from Maryborough to minister to the Lutheran population of Bundaberg. When Pastor Schmidt was called permanently to Bundaberg in 1892, he still continued to serve his Maryborough congregation until 1908. He served Bundaberg's Lutheran community until his death in 1914.¹ Schmidt Street in Kepnock is named in his honour.²

Although service to the Lutheran Church and its congregations was a common calling for the male members of the family, Egmont wasn't the first doctor in the family. His grandfather, Carl Hellmuth Jnr, first trained as a doctor at his mother's insistence. Carl had wanted to study theology but his mother persuaded him otherwise. He gained his Diploma of Medicine and Surgery from the University in Jena, Saxony, Germany, but did not sit the State exam which would have officially licensed him to practice.¹

He reportedly handed his diploma to his mother with the words "Here mother, I have obeyed your will, but now I mean to earn enough to follow mine", and, after first working in a cotton factory, did go on to study theology.¹ Carl, his wife, and first four children, including Egmont's mother Anna, travelled to Adelaide aboard the *Sophie* in May 1866, only six weeks after Carl was ordained.¹

He did use his medical training though, as many members of his first Queensland congregation in Bethania (near Loganholme, Brisbane) could not afford to travel to a doctor in Brisbane. Pastor Hellmuth also used his medical training while in Maryborough, much to the disgust of some local doctors who didn't believe he was fully qualified.¹

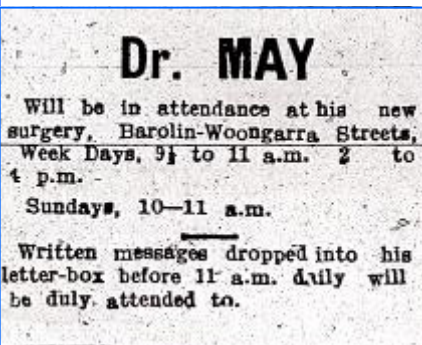


Dr Egmont Schmidt, *photo courtesy BRAG.*

Dr Egmont Theodor(e) Carl Schmidt, 1886-1956: Birth to the building of Linden

Dr Egmont Theodor(e) Carl Schmidt was born in Maryborough on 25 January 1886, the third of six children to Anna Marie Henriette (nee Hellmuth) and Martin Christian Friedrich Schmidt.¹ Egmont moved to Bundaberg with his parents at the age of six.³

In 1909 Egmont earned his Bachelor of Medicine (BMed) and in 1910 his Master of Surgery (MSurg) from the University of Sydney's Medical School.⁴ He completed a 12 month residency at Warwick hospital in southern Queensland and came back to Bundaberg to enter into practice with Dr T.H. (Thomas Henry) May. Dr Schmidt took over Dr May's practice when Dr May retired.³



Dr May's practice was on the corner of Barolin and Woongarra Streets, most likely where Wide Bay Australia is now (although this is not known for certain).¹ It was thought he retired in 1912¹, however, advertisements in the *Bundaberg Mail* up to at least early August 1913, proclaim Dr May as being "in attendance at his new surgery, Barolin-Woongarra Streets" (probably Linden).⁵

Pre-Linden

Before Linden was built the land was the site of the Pioneer Schoolroom, a hall also used for large meetings, entertainment, lectures, and Sunday School;^{6,7,8} and where the Schmidt children attended at least some of their schooling.¹ It was a wooden building most likely built in 1876-1877 and the Lutheran congregation held services in the Pioneer Schoolroom when Pastor Hellmuth visited from Maryborough^{1,6}. This occurred until around 1882 when an old store in Tantitha Street became Bundaberg's first Lutheran Church.⁹ (For more information on the history of the Lutheran Church in Bundaberg, see *Arts Bundaberg*, vol 4 no 1, available at http://bundaberg.qld.gov.au/library/ab_vol_4.php).

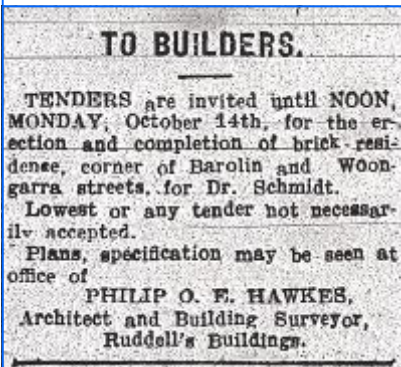


Corner of Barolin Street, running top to bottom, and Woondooma Street, running left to right, before Linden was built (on empty block at right of picture) in 1913. *Photo courtesy Mary Round.*

Linden

The Schmidt family purchased the land on which Linden now stands. It is not known exactly when, but it was possibly around 1890. The Church sold the Pioneer School land in order to buy the land on the corner of George and Boundary Streets where St John's Lutheran Church now stands.¹ The decision to purchase this land occurred in 1890.⁹

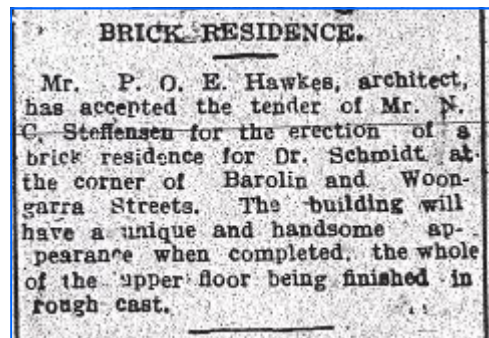
Apparently, "Egmont decided that this would be an ideal site on which to build his home, and also to conduct his medical practice from the same premises, so plans were made."¹



On 21 September 1912 a notice to builders was placed in both Bundaberg newspapers of the day calling for tenders for the erection of a brick residence for Dr Schmidt on the corner of Barolin and Woongarra Streets.^{10,11} And on 20 November 1912 the *Bundaberg Mail & Burnett Advertiser* carried news that the tender of Mr N.C. (Neils Carl) Steffensen had been accepted.

The architect was Mr Philip O. E. Hawkes and

he called for the building of a brick residence for Dr Schmidt which was to have "...a unique and handsome appearance when completed, the whole of the upper floor being finished in rough cast".¹² Originally the house was exposed brick on the lower floor and rough cast on the top floor. Today the entire façade is rough cast (see images on page 1).



Linden has been referred to as being of the Queen Anne style.¹³ However, in Australia the Queen Anne style has been corrupted somewhat and blended with the Federation style.^{14, 15} Linden may be an amalgam of the Federation Queen Anne and Federation Anglo-Dutch styles, although the Federation Anglo-Dutch style is more often seen in commercial buildings.¹⁴ Federation Queen Anne characteristics include the tower feature with the conical roof which begins on the upper floor of Linden and projects through the roof, the ridge ornaments at the ends of the roof ridges, and the rough cast work on the walls.¹⁴ The round windows are features of both styles.¹⁴

The name Linden is thought to have come from Berlin's lindenstrasse (a pretty avenue lined by linden trees)¹³. However, there is some conjecture that it may have been named for the suburb of Linden in the city of Hannover, Germany, where Egmont's mother Anna was born.¹ Just to confuse the issue even further this same source says that Egmont's daughter Dorothy thought the house was named after the Linden tree, as they did not know of their grandmother's birthplace.¹



Dr Egmont Schmidt's mother Anna (middle), her older sister Marie (left), and younger sister Christiane (right).
bun02119, *Picture Bundaberg Collection*.

Linden Memories

Margaret Olsen, Egmont's great-niece, remembers that 'Uncle Mont' had a lawn tennis court beside Linden on Woongarra Street where John Fidden Real Estate and Suncourt Arcade are today. Margaret learnt to play tennis on this court.¹⁶ Dr Schmidt also had his own little hall behind the tennis court where some brethren used to meet.¹⁶

The lovely gardens at Linden were looked after by full time gardener Mr Nash, who Margaret remembers, was always pushing around a wheelbarrow full of tools.¹⁶ Margaret also remembers nurse Sister Jessie Cairns with her stiffly starched nurse's veil, and Miss Minnie Finger, Linden's housekeeper. Both lived in downstairs rooms at Linden and were with Dr Schmidt for a number of years.¹⁶

Medical Practice

Dr Egmont Schmidt was joined in practice at Linden by his son Dr Eric Schmidt in 1947. Margaret Olsen remembers a Dr Sales in attendance at the clinic around 1956.¹⁶ In 1960 Dr B. Freeman joined, and Linden as a medical practice began to grow.¹⁷ The surgery went through extensions and modernisations and began operating as a group practice from about 1975.¹³

Interior Renovations

In the mid 1970s Dr Schmidt's son, Dr Eric Schmidt, and his wife Betty had extensive renovations done to Linden in order to modernise the interior, but preserve the exterior. They worked for several years with their architect to achieve the desired changes.¹⁸

The original kitchen became the new dining room slash galley-style kitchen, the pantry became a casual family room, and the original dining room became the main drawing room (formal lounge room). This main drawing room (the old dining room) and the new adjacent dining room had their ceilings lowered for a more modern look. Also replaced was the narrow staircase which led up to the living room. A wider staircase was fitted and the living room became a large family/guest lounge room with access to the bedrooms and guest wing. The home's front entry also changed and entry to the house was now through a garden conservatory.¹⁸

Egmont Schmidt - Doctor

Dr Egmont Schmidt has been described as an "old school" doctor and "a typical family doctor".¹ His son Eric once said of Dr Schmidt "he was everyone's idea of what a G.P. should be".^{17,1}

Dr Schmidt used to make house calls around Bundaberg and also to outlying areas including Gin Gin. He first travelled in a horse and buggy and then in a motor car. The long distances and odd hours did not phase him and his patients received a very high level of care.¹

He was assisted in his travels by his brother-in-law Jacob Althaus (a long-time Head Teacher at Oakwood School).¹ Jacob quite often drove Egmont on his rounds and visits, sometimes in Jacob's 1927 Rugby car, and sometimes in one of Egmont's cars.¹ Margaret Olsen recalls that Egmont had many beautiful cars, and at one stage owned a De Soto with a dickey seat.¹⁶

Being driven by Jacob allowed Egmont to catch up on his sleep. Egmont also used to catch up on his sleep in unlikely places:

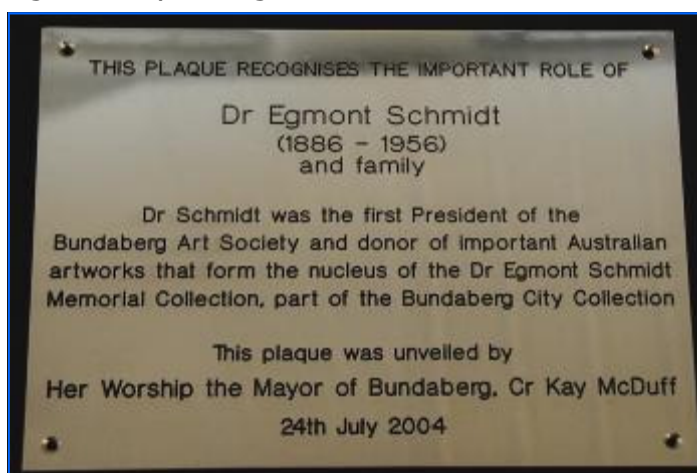
*Betty [Jacob's daughter-in-law] also recalls that once when they went to a music group, Egmont was given the best chair to relax in, and not long after was having forty winks. His sister Louise was always fearing that he would snore in the wrong place, but he never seemed to.*¹

Egmont was known as a very kind and benevolent man. Margaret Olsen remembers that Dr Egmont used to anonymously leave a box of nourishing food on the doorsteps of new mothers from poorer backgrounds. He treated many people for free because in those days there were no medical benefits or Medicare.¹⁶

Egmont Schmidt - Community Man

Dr Schmidt served as Government Medical Officer and Railway Medical Officer for many years¹ and was president of the local sub-branch of the British Medical Association.³ He helped found the Bundaberg branch of the RACQ and at one stage served as the club's vice-president. On a sporting note, Dr Schmidt was a foundation committeeman of the Bundaberg Golf Club, and served as president for a period.³

He had a keen interest in the arts including music, painting and ceramics, and was also interested in numismatics (the study or collecting of coins, medals, paper money, etc¹⁹).³ In 1939 he helped found, and was first president of, the Bundaberg Art Society.²⁰ Upon his death he bequeathed his private art collection to the City, with hope that an art gallery befitting the city of Bundaberg would be established.^{3,20} It became the Dr Egmont Schmidt Memorial Collection and from 1962-1982 was housed in the Civic Centre. The Bundaberg Art Gallery, in the School of Arts building, opened in 1982 and the collection was moved to this new home under the care of the Bundaberg Art Society²⁰. In 1995 it reverted back to the care of the Bundaberg City Council and was moved to the Bundaberg Arts Centre (now Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery).²⁰



Plaque, Dr Egmont Schmidt Memorial Collection, *Photo courtesy BRAG.*

Egmont Schmidt - Family Man

Egmont Schmidt married Edith Lily Ward in St Mark's Church of England in Warwick on 16 April 1913.^{1,21} The *Bundaberg Daily News* report on Saturday 19 April mentions that the wedding took place "yesterday". However this report was copied from the original article in the *Warwick Argus* newspaper²¹ - it took a few days for the news to come from Warwick. Dr and Mrs Schmidt spent their honeymoon in Sydney and arrived back in Bundaberg on 7 May²², presumably being able to take up residence in the newly built Linden.

They had three children, Arthur who became a Solicitor in Sydney; Eric, a doctor, who joined his father's practice and later took over upon his father's death; and a daughter Dorothy who trained as a nursing sister.²³

Dr Schmidt died at Linden on 9 April 1956, aged 70³, and is buried in the Bundaberg General Cemetery.²⁴

References:

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- ² Bundaberg City Council Street Name Register, updated to 15 March 2008.
- ³ *Bundaberg News Mail*, 9 Apr 1956.
- ⁴ University of Sydney, <http://www.medfac.usyd.edu.au/alumni/alumnibyname.php?In=S>
- ⁵ *Bundaberg Mail*, 2 Aug 1913.
- ⁶ Rackemann, Neville. 1992. Bundaberg: from pioneers to prosperity, Bundaberg City Council, Bundaberg.
- ⁷ Cullen, Enid (comp.). 2000. 'The History of Bundaberg Schools, Book 5 of 10', *Bundaberg Institutes*.
- ⁸ Walker, J.Y. 1890 (reprint. 1977). *History of Bundaberg: a typical Queensland agricultural settlement*. Dryden Press, Sydney.
- ⁹ Gammon, Sue. 'St John's Lutheran Church', *Arts Bundaberg* vol. 4 no. 1 2007, http://bundaberg.qld.gov.au/library/ab_vol_4.php
- ¹⁰ *Bundaberg Daily News*, 21 Sep 1912.
- ¹¹ *Bundaberg Mail*, 21 Sep 1912.
- ¹² *Bundaberg Mail & Burnett Advertiser*, 20 Nov 1912.
- ¹³ Linden Medical Centre, <http://www.lindenmed.com.au>
- ¹⁴ Apperly, R; Irving, R & Reynolds, P. 1989. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture...*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde NSW.
- ¹⁵ *Queen Anne Style architecture*, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Anne_Style_architecture
- ¹⁶ Interview between Peta Browne & Margaret Olsen, 20 July 2010.
- ¹⁷ *Bundaberg News Mail*, 18 Jul 1979.
- ¹⁸ *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 'Re-styling a Family Heirloom', 11 Oct 1978.
- ¹⁹ <http://www.dictionary.com>
- ²⁰ 'Works from the Dr Egmont Schmidt Memorial Collection', Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery (BRAG), rcd Nov 2009.
- ²¹ *Bundaberg Mail & Burnett Advertiser*, 19 Apr 1913.
- ²² *Bundaberg Mail & Burnett Advertiser*, 8 May 1913.
- ²³ *Bundaberg Daily News*, 19 Apr 1913.
- ²⁴ Bundaberg Regional Council Cemeteries, <http://bundaberg.qld.gov.au/services/cemeteries>

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