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Wyoming, Heritage Mansion

This grand mansion in Wharf Road, Ballast Point, is extremely important for its connection with a number of historical figures, its rarity and architectural intactness. *Wyoming*, described as a Victorian Italianate Marine Villa, was built in 1880 for Quarton Levett Deloitte from a much smaller house, *The Hermitage*.

Deloitte amalgamated three blocks and commissioned an architect to design a grand mansion with a frontage to Sydney Harbour. The Deloitte family were well established in Snails Bay with a number of houses along Wharf Road — *Simla* and *Oneida* 33-35 Wharf Road, *Devon Villa* 27 Wharf Road and 17 Wharf Road.

Quarton Levett Deloitte (pictured) was a well-known business person and was secretary of CSR for 50 years. He was called the "Father of Rowing" and was patron of the Sydney Rowing Club for decades. He travelled the world, collected orchids for his garden house which still survives. He was a Trustee of Birchgrove Park and he is celebrated in the waterfront walk, Deloitte Avenue.

Another resident of the house was Mr J J Yeend, a business man of the Victorian period after whom Yeend Street is named. The most significant occupant of *Wyoming*

was Nicholai Miklouho-Maclay, an eminent Russian scientist, anthropologist, humanist and explorer who travelled throughout New Guinea, Indonesia and Melanesia during 1860s and 1870s. On his arrival in Sydney in 1878, he was introduced to the local scientific community by William Macleay of Elizabeth Bay House. His proposal to build a Marine Biological Station at Watson's Bay (the first in the southern hemisphere and still standing)

brought him into contact with Sir John Robertson, the Premier of NSW. He met the Premier's daughter, Margaret, and they were married with the Czar's consent. They moved to *Wyoming* in 1884, as Miklouho-Maclay wrote to his brother in Russia: "Address your letters: Wyoming, Snails Bay, Sydney, Australia". Their first son, Alexander Nils, was born at *Wyoming* in November 1884.

Miklouho-Maclay's association with the property has aroused great interest with a number of political identities including the Prime Minister of New Guinea, the Prime Minister of Russia, Mr Ryshkov (while in Sydney in February 1991), the former Consul-General of the Soviet Union, the late Igor Shtcherbakov, who personally addressed Leichhardt Council with a plea for the permanent preservation of *Wyoming*.

The architecture of the house is not to be overlooked. It is a significant example of a Marine Villa on the waterfront with its original curtilage. Its design is simple with two elegant rooms downstairs, a central hallway and staircase (picture lower left), three bedrooms and dressing room upstairs and a servants' wing. The interior is intact with cedar joinery and staircase; etched glass in the front door panels and surround. The verandahs have been filled in but the iron columns are still in place.

Wyoming's association with the Nicholson Brothers, of the ferry and tugboat company, goes back to the 1940s when it was purchased as accommodation for employees. Stannard Brothers bought out Nicholsons in 1959 to extend their tugboat facilities.

Leichhardt Council has included *Wyoming* as an item of local and regional significance in its Heritage Study. At present a working party is looking at options for the retention of the house. It could be restored to a grand mansion as a single residence or, in memory of Miklouho-Maclay, an Institute of South Pacific Studies with support from all interested parties including the Maclay Museum of Sydney University, University of NSW South Pacific Centre and the Ukrainian Studies Centre.

Diana Garder

Below, c 1900 view of *Wyoming*

