

TOWNSVILLE — A GREAT TROPICAL CITY OF THE NORTH

Its Century of Progress

(By P. N. FYNES-CLINTON)

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EARLY in the year 1864, when Ernest Henry was stocking his new found pastoral lease on Hughenden Station, Andrew Ball and Mark Watt Reid with their pack team descended the coastal range to explore the foreshores east of Mt. Elliott.

A few months earlier, Henry had trekked northwards from the south Burdekin basin to see what lay beyond the main range some 230 miles west of the point where Ball and Reid left the coastal plateau to look upon the broad outlines of Cleveland Bay.

Somewhere about Jardine Valley, Henry caught what was probably the white man's first glimpse of the rolling downs which were bisected by the Flinders watershed. Pushing on a little further, he staked his claim to a vast pasture sward almost on the site of the present town of Hughenden.

The two expeditions were independent, but complementary in object. Henry was pursuing his self-appointed role of pioneer, bent on extending the pastoral frontier. Ball and Reid had come from one of the large properties in the coastal hinterland acquired by Robert Towns, a Sydney ship owner and business man of many parts.

Ball and Reid were charged with assessing the potential of "The Bay" as a new seaport.

Although history is not explicit on the point, it is believed Towns had had some disagreement with the authorities at Bowen concerning his plan to establish a boiling-down works at that port, and was anxious to find an alternative outlet where he could "make his own arrangements."

Towns was also anxious to promote sugar cane and cotton growing as additional sources of profit in his expanding commercial enterprises.

Ball and Reid reached the coastal plain somewhere along the Ross River. The stream was in flood, but they managed to ford it next morning, and they pitched camp on the shore line near the mouth of Ross Creek, a tidal stream

which, by its confluence with the Ross itself encloses that portion of the present-day city commonly and affectionately called Ross Island.

The opinions of Ball and Reid apparently were favourable and on 5 November, 1864, John Melton Black, manager of the Towns northern interests, arrived to organise the establishment of a new port.

From the time of Black's arrival Cleveland Bay became a settlement which, despite many natural disadvantages, has in 100 years emerged as Queensland's largest provincial seaport and the site of the largest city north of the tropic in the Commonwealth.

AN ABSORBING SAGA

The growth of Townsville makes an absorbing saga in the history of Queensland development. As a harbour it could not compare with the sheltered haven of Port Denison where Bowen was already established, but in the immediate hinterland it did have what Bowen lacked at the time—a rising potential in land settlement.

As Austin Donnelly said in his informative volume, "*The Port of Townsville—95 Years Progress*," what Townsville might have lacked in natural advantages was more than countered by the enterprise, faith and determination of its first settlers. They overcame the odds which faced them, the worst of which was the shallow water extending for miles from the shore.

From those brief introductory observations the story of Townsville may begin, but first a short digression to place some historical facts in their right perspective.

Ball and Reid were not the first white men to walk the shores of Cleveland Bay.

That distinction belongs to James Morrill, survivor of the barque *Peruvian*, which foundered off the north-eastern coast in 1846. Morrill's story has been told here in complete detail. He is relevant to this narrative for his six years sojourn with friendly natives and his eventual rescue near Clare, on the Burdekin, not far south of Townsville.

Morrill, as an employee of the Customs Department, was at the first sale of Townsville land, held at Bowen in 1865, and actually purchased a block for £45. That allotment to-day would command a fortune if re-submitted. It is the site of a well-known chain store enterprise.

Morrill, however, had one ambition. That was to escape from his enforced environment, and when the opportunity

presented itself he took sail and left for what he regarded to be civilisation.

And we cannot dismiss Ernest Henry at this stage, because in due course it will be necessary to refer to a valuable mineral trade which accrued to Townsville as the result of Henry's prospecting adventures in the Cloncurry district.

TOWNS THE NAME—BLACK THE FORCE

Although the name "Townsville" is derived from the identity of his principal, it was Black's drive and initiative that laid the firm foundation for all that followed.

Black was the settlement's first commercial leader and the town's first mayor.

It is doubtful if Towns himself ever saw Townsville after his initial visit in 1866, but he must have acquiesced in all that Black did in developing the port and in conducting the firm's business. On that score Towns must be accepted as the new settlement's patron.

Black's published letters to his principal in the period covering 1864 and 1865 indicate that Black himself was a man of keen business acumen. Apart from pioneering the erection of landing facilities in the vicinity of Ross Creek, on the eastern end of the city's present commercial heart, he transacted some astute land deals on behalf of the firm. He appears also to have consolidated personal gain for himself with the knowledge of his employer. Black also negotiated the direct purchase of timber from southern interests, thus avoiding transshipment costs by dealing through an agent at Bowen.

By the use of small ships with full cargoes his essential materials bypassed the lightering process and landed their cargoes adjacent to his developmental projects.

Robert Towns' efforts at cane and cotton growing, probably on Ross Island, were disappointing, but Black evidently had developed a profitable trade in merchandise and other goods shipped by the company from Sydney.

In 1865 Black claimed that the local population was three times that of Rockingham Bay (Cardwell).

Black's efforts in constructing harbour facilities were concentrated in the area adjacent to the mouth of Ross Creek which opens into the swinging basin of the present-day outer harbour. These works were progressively extended by succeeding authorities until finally completed in 1911 at a cost of £255,000.

In the formative years goods were landed by lighter from

the outer anchorage, although small schooners operating from Bowen and Rockhampton used the inner harbour.

FIRST BOILING-DOWN WORKS

The first boiling-down works was built at Alligator Creek. This was subsequently replaced by a canning and export works by Thomas Cordingley and a partner named Tindal, which operated until purchased in 1914 by Swift Australia Limited. The plant was gradually extended until it became one of the largest export abattoirs in the State. It will be superseded within two years by a completely new plant which the Swift organisation is to build at Stuart, nearer the city by some ten miles.

To-day the Alligator Creek meatworks and the works opened at Ross River in 1891 by the Queensland Meat Export Company handle up to 200,000 cattle for beef export in a single season.

The trade of Townsville had expanded so rapidly that in the mid-seventies business leaders began to plan for a harbour capable of giving safe berthage to larger vessels. Construction of the outer harbour breakwater began and first wharfage accommodation at the eastern breakwater became available in 1881.

Until the creation of the Townsville Harbour Board in 1895 Government assistance was needed for wharf construction.

However, by 1870 the Hann, the Allingham and Anning families were on the Burdekin to the north and west of Charters Towers, and well-established. Most landholders had come to realise that sheep were more profitable beyond the Great Divide, although what wool they produced went to Townsville to Bowen's loss. From this time development of the beef industry along the Burdekin and its tributaries began.

In 1875 a new and imposing figure entered the commercial scene. Robert Philp became the partner of James Burns and the operations of Burns, Philp and Company Ltd. began to expand. B.P.'s were the first to open branches in the towns of Hughenden and Winton, later extending to Burketown and Normanton in the Gulf, in opposition to the older Townsville firm of Aplin, Brown.

SUGAR AND WOOL

The Herbert River district produced its first sugar in 1870 at the MacKenzie Bros.' Gairloch mill. As the sugar boom extended to the Lower Burdekin around the town of Ayr, Burns, Philp established a fleet of lighters to carry

heavy machinery for the new mills being built in both districts.

The first far-western wool shipment loaded at Townsville was four months on the road by bullock team from Oondooroo Station, near Winton, but it arrived in good condition. This was the first consignment in a new trade initiated by the firm.

Burns, Philp expanded into copra and beche-de-mer in the islands. Philp, unlike many of his competitors, did not rely too much on mining, although he judiciously exploited the gold discoveries at Ravenswood and Charters Towers, and later the processing of copper in the Cloncurry area.

It is on record that B.P. ships also carried recruited labour from the South Seas islands, although one historian credits Towns with being the first importer of this human cargo to the Queensland canefields. Some were reported as being used in Townsville where they proved very useful for heavy labour.

COMING OF THE RAILWAY

Townsville entered a new era of prosperity with the opening of the railway to Charters Towers in 1882, which it is supposed to have wrested from Bowen.

It was claimed by some that Bowen lost this vital rail connection through the influence of Philp who had departed to enter politics. He was probably Minister for Works at the time the decision on diversion was reached. Philp later became Premier.

The "Towers" greatly stimulated the trade already flowing to the port from pastoral activity. A mere 83 miles from Townsville, it was an amazing treasure chest. In one year only did it exceed the value of the Palmer's production, but it was longer lived and was a consistent producer for more than 30 years. In its heyday Charters Towers had a population of more than 30,000 which far exceeded that of Townsville itself.

MARCH OF PROGRESS

When Charters Towers' gold production declined early in the present century, Townsville's march to progress was at a gallop and the deflated volume of loading to and from the goldfield was scarcely felt. The "Towers" has survived as an educational and pastoral centre, but Ravenswood, its ill-starred neighbour, has become one of the ghosts of civilisation that thrived in northern gold, tin and copper booms of yesteryear.

The seaport found ample compensations from the extension of the railway to Hughenden and its gradual development beyond. By the time Cloncurry was connected in 1908 the two-way traffic along nearly 500 miles of track was in full swing.

THE SUGAR BONANZA

And hand-in-hand with it came a new bonanza from sugar. John Drysdale, following the example of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company on the Herbert River in the eighties, had abandoned the plantation scheme in favour of cane growing by individual farmers supplying central mills which his company owned. At the turn of the century Drysdale adopted the spear system for direct irrigation of crops, and laid the foundation of the immense raw sugar trade that now flows through the Townsville bulk terminal to the extent of about 300,000 tons a year.

SAGA OF THE SHIPS

Although the first wharf on the eastern breakwater was ready in 1881, development of the inner harbour was being continued as late as 1900.

However, because of the increasing trade of the port and the larger ships seeking to call there, the inner harbour scheme was eventually abandoned in favour of outer harbour development.

Along with the continuous stream of cargo carriers which called for beef, wool and sugar principally, the Royal Mail steamers gave added colour and bustle to an expanding trade.

The mail and passenger ships which were regular visitors until the rail connection from Brisbane to Cairns was effected, recall some famous names, among them *Wyandra*, *Wyreema*, *Warialda*, *Wodonga*, the ill-fated *Yongala* and her sister ships *Grantala*, *Bingera*, *Bombala*, and the *Cooma*, *Canberra* and *Kanowna*.

Kanowna has a special place in maritime history. Four days after the outbreak of war on 4 August, 1914, she was commandeered to transport the Kennedy Regiment, the Australian Garrison Artillery Regiment based at Townsville, and members of rifle clubs to New Guinea.

Kanowna sailed from Townsville on 8 August, 1914, and berthed at Cairns the next day to embark further contingents. On leaving Cairns she had more than 1,000 troops on board and this number was augmented by the garrison men from Thursday Island's two ports—Green Hill and Millman Hill.

On arrival at Port Moresby crew trouble developed over the ship's presence in hostile waters and she was recalled. Despite the brief duration of the voyage *Kanowna* was actually Australia's first troop ship in World War I.

TOURIST TRADE

After mail transport was diverted to the railways, Townsville became a regular port of call for the ships operating in the expanding tourist trade between southern capitals, and eventually Fremantle and Cairns.

The early ships in this service which brought thousands of southern tourists to the winter sunshine and the tropical wonders of the Cairns hinterland were *Canberra*, *Ormiston* and *Orungal*. In 1929 the motor luxury ship *Manunda* joined the tourist fleet and, as the pilgrimage increased, *Kanimbla* and *Duntroon* and the triple-screw steamer *Katoomba* were introduced.

The tourist service was suspended with the outbreak of war in 1939. *Manunda*, first of the 10,000-ton motor ships, became a hospital ship, *Manoora* was converted to an armed cruiser and the others became troop transports to Papua and the island war theatres.

Resumption of the service after hostilities had ceased was short-lived. The shipping companies announced that repeated wharf disputes had made the service unprofitable. Frequently ships had to sail leaving cargo on the wharves. Passenger ships, the owners said, had to run on schedule and passengers alone did not pay.

It was not unusual for a ship returning south from Cairns to load 500 or more tons at Townsville alone during the winter season extending into September. The freight comprised bagged sugar for southern refineries, cased and frozen meats, and tallow and other meatworks by-products.

THE "MOSQUITO FLEET"

The inner harbour was the off-season overhaul and fitting-out base for the "Mosquito Fleet"—the little ships that carried raw sugar from Innisfail, and sometimes Lucinda and Mourilyan, to Cairns for shipment. Among these was the m.v. *Wortanna* which had quite a history until she finally grounded on the bar at the entrance to Mourilyan harbour. Others were the *Katoora* and the much older steamers, *Goondi*, *Toorie* and *Carroo*. This fleet was finally laid up this year with the conversion of Cairns from bagged to bulk sugar handling.

The *Lass o' Gowrie*, afterwards replaced by the *Innisfail*, and later the *Kintore*, ran a transshipment service between

Townsville and Innisfail and Mourilyan. When either of these was slipped for overhaul in the inner basin, one of the sugar lighters filled in.

ALWAYS BUSY

Townsville has always been a busy seaport. It is by far the largest of Queensland's provincial harbours, with a present annual cargo turnover of more than one million tons. Half of this, and probably more, represents direct exports.

It is a man-made harbour, but a very efficient one, with simultaneous berthage accommodation for nine ships. It is highly mechanised, the available equipment including two 20-ton capacity mobile electrically-operated cranes, which facilitate the speedy handling of Mt. Isa and other heavy cargoes.

A bulk sugar terminal commissioned in 1959 has a capacity of 150,000 tons which is to be duplicated by 1966. An isolated berth for oil tankers is on the draughting board to ensure maximum security to all shippers.

GREW WITH A RAILWAY

In recent years Townsville has blossomed into a seaport and commercial city and has fulfilled the future foreseen by its founders.

It grew as the Great Northern Railway extended beyond Charters Towers over the Great Divide to Hughenden, to Richmond, to Cloncurry, to the copper smelters north and south of that town, and in more recent years to Mount Isa.

The three major export commodities from earliest times were wool, beef and minerals, and not so long afterwards raw sugar from the immensely fertile Burdekin Delta to the south. Until it was transported by rail, wool arrived by wagon train, as I have already mentioned.

LOSS OF WOOL

Until the outbreak of World War II wool was a major cargo. In fact, somewhere around 1938 or 1939, the late David Green, veteran editor and managing director of the Townsville "*Bulletin*," composed for transmission to metropolitan newspapers a press message which claimed Townsville as the top direct exporter, in value, among Queensland ports, including Brisbane.

The "*Courier-Mail*" was silent on the point, but we who relied for our living upon "The Boss," as we affectionately regarded Green, read the item with a sense of pride in

the "*Bulletin*," near the leader under a single column head.

The wool trade was lost on the outbreak of war. With the diversion of shipping to war purposes and the introduction of the appraisal system at selling centres, wool freights went to the railway which has retained the trade despite the efforts of the harbour authority to induce selling agents to forward by ship.

BIG BEEF CENTRE

Early in the century Townsville already had within the precincts of the harbour two of the largest export abattoirs in the Commonwealth. During World War I the Q.M.E. works at Ross River reached daily tallies of 1,500. The greater portion of this huge beef output found its way in cans to the Australian and British armed forces on the French and Flanders and Desert battlefields. Later it was a staple diet for the men of the new-found Flying Corps, many of whom in after years pioneered commercial aviation in their own country and across the seas. These two plants treat up to 200,000 cattle a year.

As a sidelight I offer from personal experience the information that during the Second World War, in New Guinea United States servicemen would gladly trade the extra niceties of their daily ration for Australian "bully beef." In this barter Swift and Q.M.E., and I must concede in all fairness, the Imperial trademark of Lake's Creek, were the popular brands.

MINERAL HIATUS

On the closure of the smelters in the Cloncurry copper-field area in the early 1920's, Townsville lacked any substantial mineral trade until the first silver-lead ingots from Mount Isa were shipped in 1931.

And thereby hangs a tale.

In 1916, at the height of the Cloncurry copper boom, W. H. Corbould, Australian representative and local general manager for the London-based Mt. Elliott Company, applied to the Townsville Harbour Board for the lease of land adjacent to the wharves on which the company proposed to erect copper smelters.

The proposal had a mixed reception amongst Board members, some of whom feared a health risk to the community from fumes which would be distributed over the city area from the smoke stack. Approval for the scheme was given by a narrow majority, but the smelter was never built.

However, full compensation arrived with the opening of Mount Isa and the subsequent erection of the copper refinery at Stuart, an outer suburb. This plant not only supplements the tonnage passing over the wharves, but provides permanent employment for a large work force.

Exploration drilling by the Mount Isa Company has given that field a permanency which was always in doubt at the Hampden and Mt. Elliott enterprises years earlier.

PERSONALITIES

Townsville's steady but assured growth over a hundred years has enrolled some outstanding personalities in the history of the State. Many found their way into the Legislature and some to high office.

When the Townsville Harbour Board was constituted in 1895 its first chairman was William Lennon.

Lennon opened a branch of the Bank of Australasia in Townsville in 1881. He later managed Burns, Philp & Company Ltd. after the departure of Robert Philp to politics. In 1890 he entered into business on his own account. In 1907 William Lennon became State Parliamentary member for Herbert, and on Labor assuming office in 1915 he became Minister for Agriculture and Stock. His subsequent political career is well known and needs little elaboration here.

It will suffice to mention the historical chapter in Queensland's political history which began when the acting Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Pope Cooper, refused to sign a minute appointing the Lieutenant-Governor, Hon. William Lennon, as President of the Executive Council.

Lennon returned from a holiday on the Tweed River and signed that momentous document addressed by the Lieutenant-Governor (William Lennon) to William Lennon:

"To our trusted and well beloved, the Honourable William Lennon, of Brisbane, in the State of Queensland: We, confiding in your loyalty, wisdom and integrity, have constituted and appointed you, the said William Lennon to be President of the Legislative Council of Queensland, etc."

William Lennon's successor, Matthew Rooney, completed his predecessor's term in the chair, but would not accept reappointment although he continued to sit as a member. Rooney's fifteen continuous years of service was abruptly ended when, with his wife and daughter, he perished in the wreck of the *Yongala* which disappeared during a storm between Mackay and Townsville on 24 March, 1911.

Matthew Rooney and a brother founded the timber, joinery and hardware firm of Rooneys Limited. The company's sawmill was located near the junction of Ross River and its tidal neighbour, Ross Creek, the railway siding there being named Yenoor (Rooney backwards).

A PROFITABLE TRAMWAY

The first Harbour Board chairman to serve a full term was Joseph Hodel, who had come to Queensland as a boy of 13 from the Channel Islands. He lived for a time around Brisbane. He arrived in Townsville in 1870 and first entered business as a baker. Later he conducted hotels and became a shrewd freeholder. He was prominent in civic and business affairs for many years, and was a member of the Legislative Council at the time of its abolition. Until his death at 94 during the war years, Hodel had long been chairman of directors of the North Queensland Newspaper Company Limited, proprietors and publishers of the "*Townsville Daily Bulletin*" and the "*North Queensland Register*."

One of Joseph Hodel's outstanding public efforts in the interests of Townsville and the Burdekin sugar industry was his support, and his direction as chairman, of the Ayr Tramway Board.

When the Townsville Harbour Board was first constituted there was no rail connection between the Burdekin Delta and its outlet at Townsville. Sugar was transported by lighters including the *Carroo*, a subsequent member of the "Mosquito Fleet" to which I have earlier referred.

As the sugar tonnage increased the capacity of the small-bottomed ships was overtaxed.

Hodel had the distinction as a civic representative of having been an alderman and mayor of the city and a foundation member of the Thuringowa Shire, of which he was chairman for 18 years. Thuringowa Shire in those days embraced in its administrative fold areas like Stewart's Creek, Oonoonba and Cluden, which have since been incorporated in the municipality of Townsville. A traffic bridge crossing the Ross at Yenoor—or Rooneys—has brought them within close travel to the heart of the busy city.

But to return to the tramway. Land communications being outside the province of the harbour authority, the three local authorities concerned—Townsville, Thuringowa and Ayr—agreed to build the tramway in the proportions of 2-2-1.

Austin Donnelly, in his work, "*The Port of Townsville*," epitomised this project in these words:

“The line was a triumph for work carried out by day labour. When tenders were called the amounts were considered too high and, after some discussion, the consulting engineer for the project, Peter Minehan, undertook to construct the 44 miles from Stewart’s Creek to the town of Ayr. The work was carried out in ten months, the line being completed on March 27, 1901. It cost £74,501, or £1,693 per mile.”

By arrangement the tramway was operated by the Railway Department, but controlled by the Tramway Board, until purchased by the Government for £85,000 in 1910 to be rebuilt as part of the main trunk railway from Brisbane to Cairns.

In its first year of operation the line showed a small surplus after payment of interest and redemption on the Government loan, and continued to operate profitably. In its last year the tramway hauled more than 18,000 tons of sugar. In the final realisation £29,702 was available for distribution between the three local authorities.

THE AYR TRAMWAY

The Ayr Tramway had a greater influence on the stability of the port than another proposal brought forward in 1908 could have done. At this time the outer harbour was connected by rail with the Great Northern Railway terminal at Townsville. At a joint conference between municipal and port representatives a railway line through Flinders Street to the inner harbour was discussed. Fortunately the main thoroughfare of the city was not desecrated by rattling locomotives and their pungent smoke, because the inner harbour became redundant and the railway link was not built. In later years the main business section of Flinders Street was concrete paved by a wise council, and with its central foliage plots and waving palms, is a place of beauty.

Among the other chairmen of the Harbour Board who also served on the City Council for a term as mayor were P. F. Hanran, who is credited with having cut a passage from Flinders Street to the Strand, W. A. Ackers, J. E. Clegg and Anthony Ogden.

E. P. Willmott (chairman for 14 years) and W. J. Wakeford were aldermen.

Ogden had also sat in the State legislature and actually took part in the debate when the Bill constituting the Townsville Harbour Board was introduced. During his term as mayor, Ogden cleaned up a slum and vice area in Flinders Lane, in the heart of the city, and the street was renamed in his honour.

An interesting family relationship with the Board was the uncle-and-nephew combination of R. D. Arida and A. J. Anthony.

Arida was a Government representative and when a change of Government came in 1929 he offered to resign. The reply from the Government was, in effect, "We are not concerned with your politics, but we do value your business ability."

Richard Arida was the head of a Charters Towers drapery firm which had branches at Hughenden and Cloncurry. He travelled abroad extensively and it was mainly through his influence that the port authority installed a 20-ton electrically operated mobile crane, and subsequently a second. He had seen them in operation in other countries.

On R. D. Arida's death in 1944, after 27 years as a member of the Harbour Board, he was succeeded by his nephew, A. J. Anthony who became chairman in 1958 until his unexpected and lamented death in 1961.

Robert C. Katter, who represents the distant western shires of Cloncurry and McKinlay, is a grand nephew of the late R. D. Arida and completes a triumvirate in the history of Townsville's port administration.

Another Charters Towers representative who served a term in the chair was J. W. Ward, a man who, like R. D. Arida, tried to introduce new industry to the goldfield after its mines had closed.

James Vernon Suter, of Hughenden, sat as a Board member for 40 years from 1896 to 1942 with a break of six years. Suter Pier, the latest wharfage addition, was named in his memory.

Charles W. Wordsworth, chairman of the Thuringowa Shire, sat from 1933 to 1949.

Arthur Shepherd, of Milray, Pentland, was chairman of the Dalrymple Shire during his term of membership from 1928 to 1943. His son, A. W. Shepherd, succeeded him as the Dalrymple Shire representative; the only father-and-son combination in the Board's history.

The present chairman, Lionel Edlyne David ("Bill") Tomlins, an Ayr solicitor, replaced the Ayr representative of many years, J. H. Dossetto, in 1939. Tomlins was chairman from 1946 to 1958, and took over again on the death of A. J. Anthony.

Tomlins, a man of outstanding administrative ability, had the direction as chairman of most of the post-war harbour development. He has been chairman of the Queensland Harbour Boards Association, and is a member of the per-

manent committee of the Australian Port Authorities Association.

Tomlins is the elder son of a well-known North Queensland family. He was born at Oolbun, near the site of the Alligator Creek meatworks from which his father, George Tomlins, graduated to the management of the Brisbane Abattoir, a position he held until his retirement some years ago. Tomlins senior now conducts a butchering establishment in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

"Bill" Tomlins' mother is a member of the Riordan family which produced three parliamentary representatives in two generations. The late D. J. ("Darby"), Federal member for Kennedy and previously in the State legislature, and E. J. ("Dick"), for some time a Queensland Cabinet Minister, were uncles. A cousin, W. J. F. Riordan, barrister-at-law, succeeded his uncle "Darby" as the Federal member for Kennedy, and was Minister for the Navy in the last Chifley Government.

Angus J. Smith, present mayor of Townsville, has served on the Board.

THE CIVIC SIDE

I think it is time to leave the port, although in truth it is the life artery of a sprawling provincial city, to look at the civic side, brief though it must be.

Arthur Fadden (now Sir Arthur) first hung his commercial shingle in Townsville in 1918. Fadden arrested a swing against the Moore Government in 1932 by winning the Kennedy seat on a narrow majority. He was then a sitting alderman, but did not seek re-election in 1933.

At the 1935 State election Sir Arthur unsuccessfully contested Mirani, but a few years later entered the Federal House and made his mark on the national political stage. For a short term he was Prime Minister and, after some years in the wilderness, returned in the Menzies-Fadden coalition as Federal Treasurer, an office in which he distinguished himself by his grip of finance.

Sir Arthur Fadden's long career at Canberra has clouded in the minds of some the outstanding services he gave to North Queensland. He was the first public figure to expound the suitability of the north for tobacco leaf production. Although politically opposed to the late Forgan Smith, he backed that astute politician in his advocacy of a harbour at Mackay, a public enterprise that has silenced its critics.

The entry of Arthur Fadden into municipal government coincided with the public appearance of George Keyatta who was to remain in the public eye until his death in 1962.

Keyatta, in 1936, was elected a public representative on the Townsville Harbour Board. In the same year he gave the sitting mayor, J. S. M. Gill, the closest contest of his long mayoral career. Gill survived by less than 200 votes in a straight-out contest.

Gill had been clerk of the Thuringowa Shire Council while sitting as an alderman on the Townsville City Council. Prior to the 1933 municipal election an Order-in-Council precluding local authority employees from contesting council elections was issued. Gill placed the responsibility for this restriction on Ogden because of the latter's Labor affiliations.

However, Gill promptly resigned his position with the shire, contested the mayoralty as an independent against Ogden and Clegg, and won handsomely. After the shake-up Keyatta gave him three years later, he remained invincible until he retired from the mayoral chair in 1952, but he was re-elected as an alderman for the first mayoral term of Angus Smith.

George Keyatta entered the State legislature at a by-election in 1939 to succeed M. P. Hynes, who had died in harness that year as Minister for Labour and Industry. Hynes had unseated W. H. Green, mayor at the time, in 1923.

A TURBULENT POLITICAL FIGURE

In the meantime a turbulent political figure had emerged in the person of Thomas Aikens.

At the 1936 election Aikens was elected to the Council along with other A.L.P. colleagues. Three years later his party had the majority and from that time, until swept out in toto by Angus Smith and Co. in 1949, Labor ruled with Aikens, a polished orator at his best, the principal mouth-piece of Labor policy.

During the war years Aikens and his Hermit Park A.L.P. branch quarrelled with the Queensland Central Executive on the Aid to Russia issue and the branch defected from the party.

The Aikens group formed the North Queensland Labor Party and, under that banner, Aikens won the Mundingburra seat in 1944.

Ironically enough, his endorsed Labor opponent was L. E. D. Tomlins. When George Keyatta retired because of ill health in 1961 Tom Aikens won the newly-created seat of Townsville South and has retained a strong hold on that seat despite the strenuous efforts of his former Labor allies to dislodge him.

Over the years the city has been fortunate in its selection of aldermanic representatives. With one exception councils progressively developed the municipality as it grew and prospered.

With one exception!

WATER SUPPLY PROBLEM

For more than half a century Townsville, although subject to severe flooding in the monsoonal seasons, and at least four times smitten by cyclonic devastation, had one of the poorest and most unreliable water supply schemes for any city half its size.

Two small weirs on the Ross River provided the only conservation and in most years pumping from wells was resorted to to supplement the supply. The first major attempt at conservation was the Black School weir further upstream designed by the City Engineer, Felix H. Brazier. Replacement of three-inch mains with nine-inch improved the service to householders. Soon after the war, during the premiership of the late Frank Cooper, Brazier's scheme for a gravitated supply from Mount Spec was approved.

This source is now being supplemented by the provision of additional storage and Townsville, for the present, has adequate water to serve its growing population and industrial activity.

Brazier also designed the city's sewerage scheme, and supervised its installation by both contract and day labour. In collaboration with the late W. J. Young, of the Main Roads Department, Brazier also surveyed and selected the site of the Garbutt airport which today serves both the R.A.A.F. and commercial aviation.

Despite this water paucity, councils were able to maintain a programme of park development. Townsville is lavishly served with parks and its seaboard has been transformed into one of the most attractive esplanades in Australia.