

NUMINBAH VALLEY QLD



Name: Numinbah Valley School of Arts

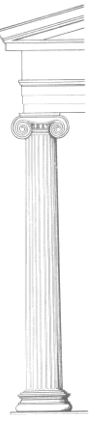
Address: 2136 Nerang-Murwillumbah Road, Numinbah Valley, Queensland.

On entering the Numinbah Valley hamlet, the School of Arts is the first structure on the right hand side of the road.

The Place:

Numinbah is a small township, population 295 (2011 census). It is located in the Gold Coast hinterland, a little over 100 kilometres south of Brisbane in south eastern Queensland. The name is thought to derive from *nyummin*, an aboriginal word in a dialect of the Bundjalung language meaning 'hold the country tight', since the native people of the region believed that the narrow valley held the mountains together. The word is also associated with a type of palm tree. The Numinbah Valley strikes north from the McPherson Range on the Queensland New South Wales border and is enclosed to the southeast and the southwest by the plateaus of Springbrook and Beechmont. The Nerang-Murwillumbah Road runs along the valley floor adjacent to the banks of the Nerang River. The cliffs, narrow ridges, forested slopes and open farm lands combine to create a fertile rural area in the region known as Scenic Rim.

Settlement of the area is associated with timber getters moving north from the Tweed and Richmond Rivers in search of valuable Red Cedar trees in the 1870s. A wave of settlers moved to the area when the Queensland Government opened up the timber reserves for selection in the Numinbah area. These timber resources supported the economy of the local farmers



and supplied timber for a number of local and regional saw mills. Dairies, banana plantations and beef and pig production played a significant role in the economic development of the area.

This valley is isolated from the sea and it was not until the early 1900s that it was linked to Nerang by a mountainous track, some 18 miles in length.

Establishment: 1915-1925

Before the Numinbah Valley School of Arts was built, dances and games were held in Batten's Barn, used for the storage of corn, in an area known as The Pocket. Proceeds from these events went toward the building of the hall.



**Batten's Barn with girl and horses, The Pocket, Numinbah Valley, Queensland
circa 1919**

(Photographer unknown)

Mr L.M. Yaun wrote to the Lands Department about the acquisition of land and the local community agreed to pay for a survey. On September 8, 1916, 2 roods and 3 perches were gazetted as reserve. In 1923, Mr Yaun again wrote to the Lands Department requesting the area be used for a public hall.

The timber for The School of Arts was felled in the Numinbah Valley and donated by several settlers, including Joe Hinde, Dick Cummings, Bill Zimmerman and Yaun Bros Sawmills. The timber was delivered free of charge by local bullock team owners. David Yaun offered the use of his saw mill and the mill hands donated their labour free of charge.

Nick Holden related his experience at the mill as the 'tailor-out', the person who made a final plane of the wood, and as such, "would have most likely handled every piece of timber used to build the hall".



Charlie Dyer and his apprentice, Cyril Duncan, were contracted to build the Numinbah Valley School of Arts hall for approximately £100 (pounds). Only the roofing iron and the nails had to be bought.

When the Numinbah Valley School of Arts was opened on September 18th, 1925 by David Yaun, it was debt free. In his speech he proclaimed “this feat was a credit to the district and a monument to people’s magnanimity”. The building has since undergone many alterations and improvements as each generation found new community interests and as the population grew.

The Building: 1926-1934

The single storey, weatherboard-clad building was 50 by 25 feet, capped with a corrugated iron gable roof over the core and a lower gable over the entrance porch. The roof was well braced and a side entrance was included. Inside, there was a ten foot stage at the rear, with a room either side. The flooring was of Crows ash and seating was around the walls which were 12 feet high.

A letter, dated July 10 1926, to the Queensland Government from the parents of children in the Numinbah Valley requested that the School of Arts be used as a school. The following year, on February 7 1927, a ‘provisional school’ opened with a total of 16 pupils, 13 boys and 3 girls, who continued to use the building until a purpose built State school opened in 1934.



Numinbah State School group, 1927

(Photographer unknown)

Coral Wellington, now aged 88, remembers attending school in the hall while visiting her relatives, the Yauns, for extended periods.



1937-1975

A 25 foot extension was added to the rear of the School of Arts in 1937 by brothers Arthur and Malcolm Mills and the front entrance was altered to provide both male and female cloak/changing rooms on either side of the entrance. The many concerts and theatrical productions were organised by Nancy Yaun.



Extensions under construction on Numinbah Hall, circa 1937.

(Photographer unknown)

During the 1960s the hall was further enlarged with the construction of a side veranda on the southern elevation, which now serves as a seating and supper area. The community, especially the local branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association, helped raise the necessary funds. Julius Born donated a box log of approximately 150 feet and some flooded gums from his property for this purpose. Plans for the extension were prepared by Les Yaun.

With the introduction of electricity to the valley in 1961, a quote from the State Electricity Authority was accepted for the installation of mains, wiring, a switchboard, 15 light points, 7 fluorescent light points and 3 power points. This meant the end of kerosene lanterns and petrol powered generators during functions.

Other alterations around this period included the lining of the veranda extension and a kitchen which was installed by Jeff Thompson in 1962. The kitchen was later remodelled by James Panitz in 1975. The front entrance was again modified with the left-hand side room converted to a ticket office, the right-hand room being converted to a mothers' room.



Side veranda extensions 1960s



Kerosene lanterns now hang in the hall



Framed memorabilia displayed around the walls



1981 to Present

An open annexe with a corrugated iron roof was added to the northern wall in 1981 and this has been subsequently extended. 1983 saw a Bar added to the supper room by prison labour from the nearby Numinbah Valley State Farm. One prisoner painted Australian themed murals on three walls of the Bar area and these continue to be a point of interest.



Interior: Mural painted by a prisoner in 1983



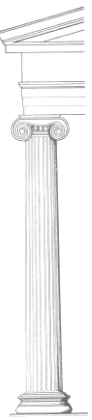
Post and rail fence enclosure

A post and rail fence encloses much of a large semi-open space on the northern side of the hall. This area stretches from the Nerang River to the main road.

A more recent alteration is the installation of a galvanised iron roof with the addition of a solar panel array.



Northern and western aspects of the hall with new roof and solar panels; and the open annex.



Uses:

The Numinbah Valley School of Arts was and is significant as part of a rural landscape which has a scattered population. It has provided an important focus for the people of the valley and the surrounding area as a recreational and social facility since 1925.

It has been used as the venue for many diverse activities, both social and physical, including community organisations and clubs ranging from State education, a sewing circle, dance classes, wedding receptions and church services, a cinema for film nights, exercise classes, cookery demonstrations, table tennis, school sports, Parents and Citizens' fundraisers, the Ratepayers Association, the Water Board, Country Women's Association, the Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and the Bachelors Club which was formed during the late 1940s. Indoor bowling was a favourite function on Friday nights during the 1950s and 1960s.

Social History:

After the official opening on September 18, 1925, a dance was held, the Master of Ceremonies being Jim Strong, the music provided by nine members of the Nerang Brass Band led by Ted Batten. The appointed trustees of the hall were John Cummings, Frank Stafford Snr., Nick Holden and Spen Yaun. A sports program had commenced at noon, with wood chopping, sprint running races, high jump, throwing, cross cutting and ladies' nail driving competitions on the programme.

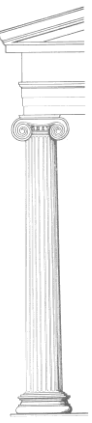
A Social Club Ball is recorded by the *South Coast Bulletin* as being held on August 14, 1936 at the School of Arts with people from local districts being present.

"Miss Hazel Powell of West Burleigh looked very smart in an apple green silk frock cut low at the back and front, with a clever tailored collar over the shoulders. Little Miss Just from Nerang wore a pretty frock of floral silk with a latticed yolk. Iris Faust from Advancetown wore a pink frock of crepe de chine and silk lace, with a garland of pink flowers in her hair. Competitive dances and a 'confetti battle' were held. The orchestra from Canungra, with Miss Page at the piano, was appreciated by all. The proceeds are to go to the School of Arts towards the building of a veranda, where supper will be served in future".

On September 18, 1937, the same newspaper reported on a dance held to celebrate the School of Arts newly improved, long hall, with arrangements being made for the provision of supper beneath the building. A record crowd justified the work of the committee and its helpers, "the building being decorated with streamers and flowers, an orchestra from Canungra providing the music".

"Most of the younger set looked particularly charming as did several of the matrons. Mrs R Zimmerman wore a pale blue georgette frock, Mrs C Watt was gowned in pink georgette with large scarf sleeves which were very effective. Mrs Jack Morgan wore a white silk frock finished with pink rosebuds at the neck and throat. Mrs Joyce Slingsby looked very sweet in a saxe blue frock with coral flowers. Miss Evelyn McKavanagh wore a backless floral creation. Flowers worn in the hair by most of the lassies lent an added charm to their youthful beauty and the dance went along with a swing the whole evening".

Coral Wellington, mentioned above as attending school in the hall, recalls sleeping under the 'forms' or benches and sleeping behind the piano on the stage at such events as a small child.



The Bachelors Club organised the annual 'Christmas Tree' festivity for the children of the valley. When the Club ceased, the Country Women's Association continued the event, later handing over the function to the Parents and Citizens Associations of nearby State Schools. The first 'Miss Numinbah Valley' Ball was held on August 29, 1964, with prize money of 2 guineas (two pounds and two shillings). Entrants were judged on their appearance and demeanour.

The Golden anniversary of the opening of the Numinbah Valley School of Arts was celebrated on September 27, 1975. The attendants wore 1920s style clothes with the two surviving trustees of the Hall, Spen Yaun and Nick Holden, cutting the celebration cake which had been baked and decorated by Winnie Lentz. A newspaper article headlined "The Numinbah Valley has a Birthday Party" and commented that the hall was "used for wedding receptions, gift evenings, dances, socials and church services".

With the decline of interest by the younger generation in the 'Miss Hinterland' competition, the hall committee tried a novel approach to boost attendance by incorporating a 'Mr and Mrs Numinbah Valley' event in 1976.

On June 11, 1977, the Golden Jubilee of the school, which existed first in the School of Arts from 1927–1934, was celebrated by a gathering of more than 100 people. A roll call was held by Mrs Shirley Wilmott, who as Miss Nolan, was a young teacher who took over from the original teacher, Miss Healey. Six pupils of the original class of 27 were present: Arthur Mills, Les McGregor, Frank Stafford, Ivan Zimmerman, Mabel Freeman and Malcolm Mills.

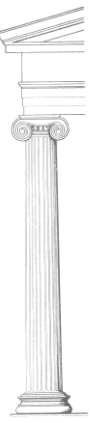
More recently, in 1986 a 'Mrs Hinterland Ball' was held and this continues to be an annual event, taking place in September at the hall, when the finalists from other hinterland communities meet for the judging process. Val McPherson, representing Ormeau, was selected from the ten finalists at the first event.

On November 22, 2012, farmer Phillip Thomson used ten of his bullocks to pull his original log wagon for 10 kilometres through the Numinbah Valley carrying a large iron bark tree from the Numinbah Valley School of Arts. The tree, which had grown to be a problem, was removed in the old fashioned way and rolled onto the bullock wagon while being observed by students from the current Numinbah Valley State School who sat in the School of Arts building.

Currently (2014):

The Numinbah Valley School of Arts is now a Heritage Listed building which continues to be representative of an intact, community hall as each generation has found new interests and activities.

Since the deregulation of the Queensland dairy industry in the year 2000, the attendance at the hall has dropped, now numbering some 60 to 80 people at community barbeques. Michael Spittle commented that whereas previous School of Arts committees had numbered some 20 members, this was now reduced to five or six.



The outside grassed area stretching to the Nerang River continues as a popular picnic area and is used for sports days and other recreational activities. The local State school holds its Christmas play in the hall where the Christmas tree is in place and a 'cent' auction is held annually.

A Blues Stomp is held each October bringing some 14 bands together and the Woodford Small Halls Festival is held in November. Bush walkers stay in the hall overnight and the building has become a popular venue for weddings and other social events.

On the very morning Naomi and Carole¹ visited the Numinbah Valley to interview three local people, an amazing spectacle occurred. The last third of the felled ironbark tree mentioned previously was being relocated that day. Farmer Phillip Thomson, his team of 12 yoked bullocks, each responding to its name and complete with chains, rolled the huge log on to an original, well-maintained dray. His father had previously owned a bullock team in the valley.



Phillip Thomson with his bullocks and dray transporting the log to the sawmill.

Numinbah Valley 28 August 2014

After being sawn and treated, the timber will be taken back to the School of Arts where it is to be used to provide ramp access for people with disabilities and for a new extension to the building, an outdoor kitchen.

¹ Naomi Wright and Carole Byron have researched and compiled this contribution to the ADFAS Schools of Arts/Mechanics' Institutes project.

Their article is submitted on behalf of ADFAS Gold Coast of which both Naomi and Carole are members.



Phillip Thomson, Coral Wellington, June French, Michael Spittle and other local folk

Numinbah Valley 28 August 2014

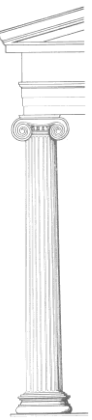
The Numinbah Valley School of Arts stands as a symbol of community spirit and remains held in high esteem. It would not continue to exist if not for the tenacity and generosity of the residents, both past and present, of the Numinbah Valley and nearby hinterland areas over the many years.

It remains a hall used for the purpose for which it was built, namely recreation and education, and continues to be an integral part of the social life of the current population.

Acknowledgements:

Residents of Numinbah Valley: June French; Michael Spittle; Phillip Thomson; Coral Wellington.

Staff of City of Gold Coast Local Studies Library



References:

Numinbah Valley: A Social & Natural History: 1840s -1988.

Compiled and edited by Pamela Hall, Diana Yaun and Noela Yaun 1988

An Official Bicentennial History Project for the Numinbah Valley

Place name: Queensland Government Department of Natural Resources and Minerals

www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/land/place-names/search (accessed 2/09/2014)

Archival photos:

City of Gold Coast Local Studies Library: *Picture Gold Coast*:

- Batten's Barn with girl and horses. LS-LSP-CD034-IMG0064
- Numinbah State School group. LS-LSP-CD044-IMG0016
- Extensions under construction on Numinbah Hall. LS-LSP-CD043-IMG0112

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South Coast Bulletin. Numinbah Valley Hall Dance: 24/09/1937 p.3

Gold Coast Bulletin. 'Back to the Twenties at the School of Arts': 24/09/1975

The Sunday Mail. 'Still Here, Miss after 50 years': 15/06/1977

Gold Coast Bulletin. Lift out. 'Locals line street as bullocks remove problem tree the old way': 23/11/2012 p.7

Photographs (2014): Naomi Wright

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