

# Marian State School

David McEachram owned all the property around the old school site and around the Marian Mill before 1870. His secretary's name was Martin Smith, whose daughter's name was Marian and this name was the name given to the township of Marian.

In the early 1880's many cane farmers took up settlements near the Pioneer River, from here came the establishment of the Marian Mill in 1882, where these farmers sold their cane. The first crushing took place in 1883.

In a letter dated 30th August 1884 to the Department of Public Inspection Queensland, Mr J.A. Platt, the then District Inspector, wrote of being approached by Mr Dan Markey on behalf of the selectors with a view of establishing a Provisional School at Marian. Mr Markey stated there were up to 30 children in the neighbourhood of school age.

No further correspondence appears in the archives during 1884 or 1885. However, a letter dated 1st May 1886 was despatched to the Department by Mr Markey himself, stating that, *"I beg leave to call your attention to the following statements. About 18 miles from the town of Mackay on the railway line to Hamilton (changed to Mirani later) there are a number of selectors and farmers situated near the Marian Mill. We have sufficient children to form a school. The nearest schools are at Walkerston (Alsatia) and Eton each 8 miles distant from here."*

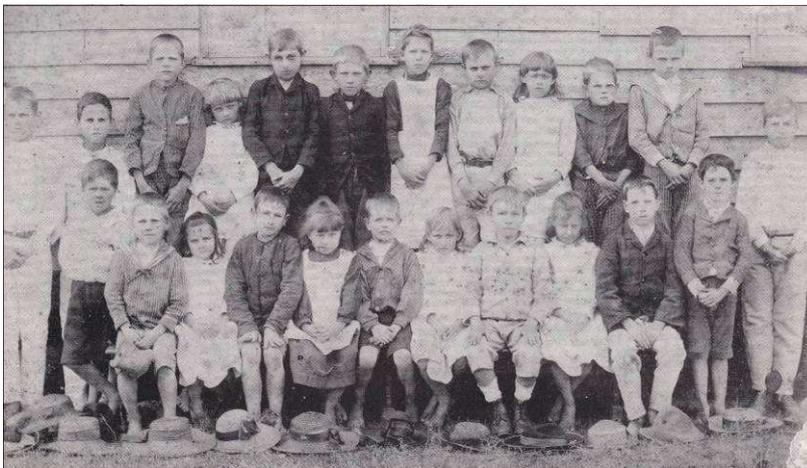
Mr Markey's letter goes on to say the selectors were willing to contribute to the building of the School and Marian Mill owners had already granted 2 acres of land. All that was now needed was the Department's approval. With this letter Mr Markey sent a Government printed form signed by parents with children's names and ages attached - 15 in all. Also Mr A. McKenzie, Daniel Markey, James McHardie and David Coyne signed their approval with David Coyne explaining, £46.2.0 was already on hand and £77 was promised.

It would appear that the building was duly erected on the same site as the old school (across from the Marian Mill), but further to the west and nearer the road. This first school consisted of a low level building 30' x 15' with a small veranda. Mr Charles Fitzherbert MacQueen was the first teacher, being recommended by his brother Arthur MacQueen of Walkerston, *"Charles had newly arrived in the colony and had considerable experience in Business matters both in England and Foreign Countries."*

The school was opened on the 15th November 1886 as the "Provisional School Marion Mill" \*\*, with an enrolment of 14 children. Mr MacQueen did not stay long and resigned after only three months on the 28.2.1887. The school was closed in the first quarter of 1887 until Miss Isabel Maclaren, sister of one of the Mill owners took up the position on 5th May 1887. Miss Maclaren served approximately sixteen months until September 1888 when she left for England and her resignation was regretted by all. The Mill owners requested the position be given to Miss Mary Byrne who stayed for only eight months. There must have been a little trouble with the accommodation because a letter stated that, *"lady teachers were too fussy about accommodation."* We wonder today what they must have had to endure in those early times.

The Marion Mill School Committee quickly appointed Mr John Phillips as teacher. He had taught previously at Augathella and Charleville.

It would appear Mr Phillips was not looked on favourably by the Department, but because *"Teachers for northern district schools were hard to find they would approve the appointment, with a Salary of £80 per annum."* In November 1889 Mr Phillips was appointed the Receiving Officer at Marian Mill. His appointment to this position as well, was approved by the Department *"as long as his Post Office duties do not interfere with his school duties."*



*Thought to be students of the Marian Mill Provisional School about the late 1880's - early 1890's.  
Photo owned by Vickers family*

# . . . from the beginning . . .

On checking the Post and Telegraph Archives we find that the Receiving Office was a place where mail was received and dispatched and stamps were sold but little else took place there. Mr Phillips stayed as teacher for only 12 months. He was followed by Miss Jane Ross for four years then Miss Ida Laking for two and a half years, until December 1896.

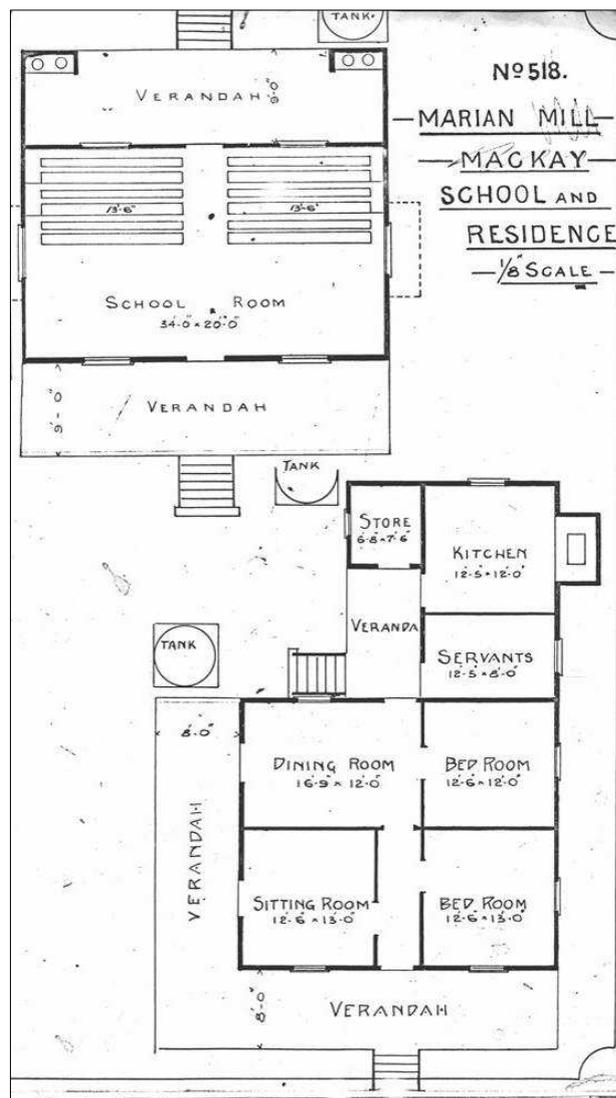
During the early 1890's submissions were being made for a State School. By 1895 Mr David Coyne writes that, "60 children were on the roll and larger increases were expected, requesting that a State School was now required." The Marian Mill Co. still owned the land but would give it to the Department for a State School. The school committee also wrote to their Member of Parliament, Mr D.H. Dalrymple for his support. The Department approved the State School at Marian Mill in June 1895, setting aside £705 for the school and residence. As was the practice in those days awaiting payment of one fifth of the cost from local contribution.

It is apparent a "fracas" thus developed, with South Side residents versus North Side residents, for the site of the new school. Letters and comments went back and forth to the Department stating facts as to which site would be the best. The present site was too swampy and unhealthy, the low level bridge posing problems in wet weather.

This was a real "hornet's nest" and the Department sent Mr Canny, the District Inspector of Public Instruction to meet with the Provisional School Committee. Mr Canny found none of the men would agree on the site - all proposed sites were held by shareholders. Mr Canny called a meeting of residents on 11th October 1896 to settle the disagreement among themselves. He found 44 children attending from the south side and 19 from the north side and recommended site 2, which is opposite the last site of the 'old' school.

This disagreement continued for two more years and meetings appeared very heated. By May 1897, Mr A.B. Martin had written to the Department stating that, the Mill had agreed to sell two acres, on which the old school buildings existed, for £10.0.0. Also he stated the road had been formed to drain the swampy area. The once considered site on the opposite side of the road, had situated almost in the middle of it, the Mill Manager's Residence, so was too small an area.

Plans were drawn up in 1895 for the new school and residence. They were then built on the site where the old school buildings remained until 1998. Mr George Routh was the last Head Teacher of the Marion\*\* Mill Provisional School. Mr Ernest Muller took charge of the new State School on 1st January 1899, reporting to the Department that all was in good order. However, the fence around the old Provisional School was in terribly bad condition. The playground was not yet cleared or levelled; it being full of stumps, trees and scrub, and the School needed a clock. A quote was forwarded in February for construction of a fence, large gate and two wicket gates, all for the cost of £12.0.0.



\*\* The spelling of Marion was correct until the school was declared a State School in 1899 but there was still some controversy regarding the school's name. It was referred to in various correspondences as Provisional School Marion Mill, Marian Mill Provisional School, Marian Mill State School and Marian State School. The spelling had already turned to Marian by June 1899 when the school was confirmed as Marian State School with its identifying number as 0518.

In June 1899 Mr Muller requested the correct name of the School, was it Marion\*\* State School or Marion Mill State School? This must have been quite a concern for him as he requested the Department to clarify this and definitely inform him as to the correct name. It is from here on, that the school was referred to as No. 518 and the Marian State School.

In June 1900 Mr Armstrong, a school parent, wrote for a subsidy to improve the grounds - holes, devildevil ground, burrs and weeds were seriously interfering with "drilling of the children." Some children rode horses to school which were let loose in the playground. The area was tick infested and the horses were continually using the Residence and buildings as scratching places, disfiguring them and being a nuisance to the teacher's family. Twenty-five pounds was proposed to fence the residence and plough, level and roll the grounds.

Mr Muller continued as Head Teacher for almost 16 years and was under immense pressure by 1915 as he was a German Immigrant and World War I had commenced. The whole affair was just too much for him and it ended in the taking of his own life. All Mr Muller's pupils around today confirm he was the teacher who brought confidence and stability to the education of Marian children.

Mr Martin followed for a two year period as did Mr Fulcher in 1919 and 1920. Mr Grant followed as Head Teacher and by 1921 the enrolment was up to 122. The school was once again over-crowded, with one teacher taking three classes of 44 children under the school. The teacher and students had to stand in water up to their ankles in wet weather. It was also stated about this time that the teachers continually repaired stools, desks and tried unsuccessfully to make the area under the school more comfortable. It is hard to imagine in this day and age how those teachers and pupils managed to get ahead.

In 1924 Mr Grant, the Head Teacher at the time, writes that he was worried as Marian and North Eton sugar mills proposed to merger and he was concerned with the influx of expected pupils, the accommodation problem would be unbearable.

This merger did not eventuate and the problem was relieved on 22nd April 1924 when the Convent School opened taking 41 pupils, leaving the State School enrolment at 65. There is a big gap here in the records and it appears that both teachers and pupils had to work under these difficult conditions for many years. Mr Grant stayed on for 18 years until 1939.

Mr Sharp followed in 1940 and was very active in improving all aspects of education. He also proposed the buying of the back paddock. It was now the middle of World War II and only very urgent works were undertaken. Great concern was felt for the children's safety as the school became dilapidated. The heavy canvas blinds that used to protect the classes held on the verandas were in a very sad state of disrepair. It is here we will mention that during the war years, trenches were dug on the eastern side of the school, in a zigzag

pattern and practice drills were regularly held to educate the pupils in case of an air-raid. The mill whistle was the signal to evacuate the classrooms.

By March 1945 approval was granted for the remodelling of the school and again we see how the school and mill worked closely together. The mill kitchen thus became the temporary school. There was great excitement because there were to be 3 classrooms and even an office in the remodelled school. The exact date of the move back to the bigger school is not evident, but no further classes were held under trees.

The horse paddock at the back of the school was eventually bought, levelled and graded. Past pupils remember the "Emu Bobs," when they lined up across the paddock to pull 40 or so weeds, as they moved the length of the grounds. This preparation preceded the annual Sports Day which became a big event at Marian.



1951



1974



1986



1998

*(information mostly from 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book)*

\*\* Known as "Marion" until 1899 when it became "Marian" State School