



# PIMPAMA QLD



Pimpama School of Arts as it appears today

**Name: Pimpama School of Arts**

**Address: 15 Clark Way, Pimpama, Queensland 4029**

## **The Town:**

**Pimpama** is a suburb in the northern part of Gold Coast City in South East Queensland. The name Pimpama, from the Yugambah language of the indigenous people of the region, derives from 'pimpimba' which means place of soldier birds.<sup>1</sup> It is located on the Pacific Motorway 30 kilometres (19 miles) north of Surfers Paradise and 48 kilometres south-east of Brisbane. It is the last remaining rural town on the Pacific Motorway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The population at the 2011 Census was 3,211.<sup>2</sup>

The southern banks of the Pimpama River were set aside for cotton production in 1863. A Brisbane-based Committee for the Relief of the Distressed Cotton Operative sent £1633 to Manchester in England not only to assist the current plight of the cotton industry workers but also to entice their immigration to Queensland. The Lancashire Company was a cooperative formed to settle these workers in the Albert Region around Pimpama, and in other parts of Queensland. This plan was successful and thousands of passengers arrived on 15 ships in 1863, mostly from the distressed cotton towns of England.<sup>3</sup>



From about 1868 Pimpama was the terminus of Cobb and Co coach services from Brisbane. The route was extended to Nerang in 1882.<sup>4</sup> The South Coast Railway Line was extended from Beenleigh in the 1880s providing an essential link for passengers and freight north to Brisbane. It closed in the 1960s and the more recent Ormeau Station is located south of the original Pimpama township.<sup>5</sup>

Pimpama Run was open to selection from 1869 and in 1870 town and farm lots were subdivided and sold. The settlement was surveyed in 1867 and a small farming community of mostly Irish settlers was established. The selectors found that the soil, climate and the pure water were ideal for the cultivation and manufacture of arrowroot. The Lahey family introduced a successful processing plant which led to the establishment of additional factories in the district which then produced almost the whole of the supply of arrowroot in Australia. Saw-milling, cotton and sugar, and dairying were also successful industries.<sup>6</sup>

Rural sub-divisions in the 1970s led to extensive urban development 30 years later with large scale re-zoning in the Pimpama District. This has resulted in the construction of the Pimpama Waste Water Treatment Plant, residential development and housing sub-divisions, and the Gainsborough Greens Golf Course.<sup>7</sup>

### **Establishment:**

Writing on March 6, 1873, a correspondent of Pimpama says:-

*The Pimpama School of Arts will soon, I believe, be an accomplished fact. Messrs. Lenneberg and Watkins deserve the thanks of the community for the willingness with which they have undertaken a generally unthankful job; they are now collecting funds for the erection of the building. Athletic sports are to come off on St Patrick's Day, to be wound up by a soiree and musical entertainment, and the proceeds to go to the building fund.*<sup>8</sup>

William B Bailey was appointed as a 'trustee of the land set apart for a School of Arts and mechanics institute at Pimpama', as cited in the Queensland Government Gazette on 14 May 1881.<sup>9</sup> A meeting of subscribers was held on 12 June 1888 to discuss financial and administrative matters relating to the construction. Four trustees were elected to the Committee, D. Lahey, W. Doherty, R. Hayes and J. Murtha, and the Treasurer, Mr W. Bailey.<sup>10</sup> Tenders for the construction (labour only) were invited by order of the Committee of the School of Arts.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Building:**

*The Telegraph* reported on Thursday 27 September 1888 that tenders had been called for the erection of the building, with the Committee to provide the building materials. Following extensive discussion amongst the committee members of the merits of the various bids, the tender for a cost of £35, proposed by John Fortune, was accepted.

The Pimpama School of Arts building was completed in November, 1888.<sup>12</sup> It was formally opened at a function in the facility, described as a 'neat and serviceable building'. For the opening 'ample repast was provided' for 80 persons. The musical concert was acclaimed and



the Members for Albert and Logan, Mr Plunkett and Mr EJ Stevens attended and addressed the meeting.<sup>13</sup>

The Doherty family had been prominent members of the local community since 1870 with their involvement in church and community activities. William was a trustee of the School of Arts as was Mr David Lahey who became Secretary and later President of the School of Arts.<sup>14</sup> On completion of the building and some days after the formal opening ceremony in December 1888 a function, comprising concert, supper and ball, was held to celebrate. The news report stated that ‘the building was still encumbered with a little debt, which the efforts of the Committee will soon extinguish’.<sup>15</sup>

The third anniversary of the opening of the School of Arts was celebrated by 80 attendees with a dance and entertainment on 13 November 1891. Mr Castles presided and reported on additions to the property – Furniture £50, piano £50, books £40, fencing and building construction £45 - and he noted the intention to paint the building in the near future. Mr D. Lahey acknowledged the contribution of the Committee. Takings for the night were £5.17s. The evening concluded at 4am.<sup>16</sup>



The Pimpama School of Arts in the early 1900s (upper left) with the Clark house behind

The School of Arts was destroyed by fire in 1926.<sup>17</sup> At 6.30pm on Friday 19 February the fire was observed by Mr M Clarke who was first on the scene. A piano, three chairs, and the hall crockery were the only items saved. The building, valued at £800, was totally destroyed. It had recently undergone renovations costing £250 and was insured for just £250.<sup>18</sup> On 6 October 1926 the successful tenderer, Mr A.E. Lohrinch of Beenleigh, was chosen to rebuild the new School of Arts. The news report stated that ‘the new building will be 65 ft long and 37 ft wide and will include a stage and dressing rooms.’<sup>19</sup>

Re-painting of the interior was completed after a decision at a Committee Meeting in 1962.<sup>20</sup>



### Uses:

Monthly Committee meetings were held in the Hall and a dancing school was held weekly.<sup>21</sup> A meeting early in August 1898 to establish the Mutual Improvement Association elected officers and both ladies and gentlemen to the Committee. The President, Rev. Muscio read a paper on a Mutual Improvement Association and its advantages. No one questioned its benefits. The program at the School of Arts for the latter part of the month was advertised as ‘A Lecture and Lantern Views on Astronomy’.<sup>22</sup>

A branch of the Queensland Patriotic League was formed at a meeting of the School of Arts Committee in February 1900 to organise fund-raising for troops fighting in the Boer War.<sup>23</sup> A night of entertainment which was held on 25 June 1915 at the School of Arts raised £43.00 for the Fund for wounded WW1 soldiers.<sup>24</sup> The local community attended political meetings in the School of Arts to support local or state candidates.<sup>25</sup> While the institution began as a community meeting place for lectures, serious meetings, and fund-raising, it was not until after the 1920s that the facility became more a venue for social gatherings.

### Social History:

Concerts, balls, anniversary dinners and other celebrations assisted in fund raising for the building and various worthy causes. Judith Hollindale (nee Muntz) confirms this stating that the School of Arts ‘played a large part in shaping the cultural and social fabric of our district’ where library services and music lessons also allowed the locals to interact in different ways.<sup>26</sup>



Debutante Ball of 1965.

The debutantes were presented to Sir Francis Nicklin (Qld Premier 1957-1968) who was accompanied by his sister Mrs Beryl Lind (seated together at front of photograph).

Judith Muntz (now Hollindale) is third from right.  
Mr Muntz, Judith’s father, was Chairman of the School of Arts Committee for many years.



Bevan Love recalls learning to dance at the concerts where his mother played the drums and his grandmother the piano; another early resident, as a baby, was placed in a bassinet under the table during functions.<sup>27</sup> The Mad Hatter's Ball held in the School of Arts on 23 November 1928 raised funds for the building as well as the Ormeau Cricket Club. The Hall was 'gaily decorated' and prizes were awarded for the maddest hats to Miss Clark and Mr W. Murtha.<sup>28</sup>

Noted Queensland artist, (Frances) Vida Lahey, was born in Pimpama in 1882. She was the daughter of Jane and David Lahey, of the pioneering Irish families which established the production of arrowroot in Pimpama. The eldest of a large family, Vida grew up in Pimpama where her father was one of the Trustees of the School of Arts and also served as Secretary and later, as President.

After study with some of Australia's finest artists of the time and later at art school in Europe, Vida Lahey returned to Brisbane, where she energetically promoted the cause of art in education, especially in Queensland. She died in Brisbane in 1968.<sup>29</sup>

The family name is commemorated by the Vida Lahey Memorial Travelling Scholarship, funded by a legacy from her niece Shirley Lahey and offered biennially. Valued at \$40,000, the scholarship is administered by the Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA).<sup>30</sup> The inaugural award was made in April 2015.

### **Currently (2015):**

The School of Arts is now leased and managed as a not-for-profit community organisation which is responsible for bookings such as private functions and community activities, including dance classes, karate and keep fit.<sup>31</sup> It has a capacity for 100 people in a theatre style layout.

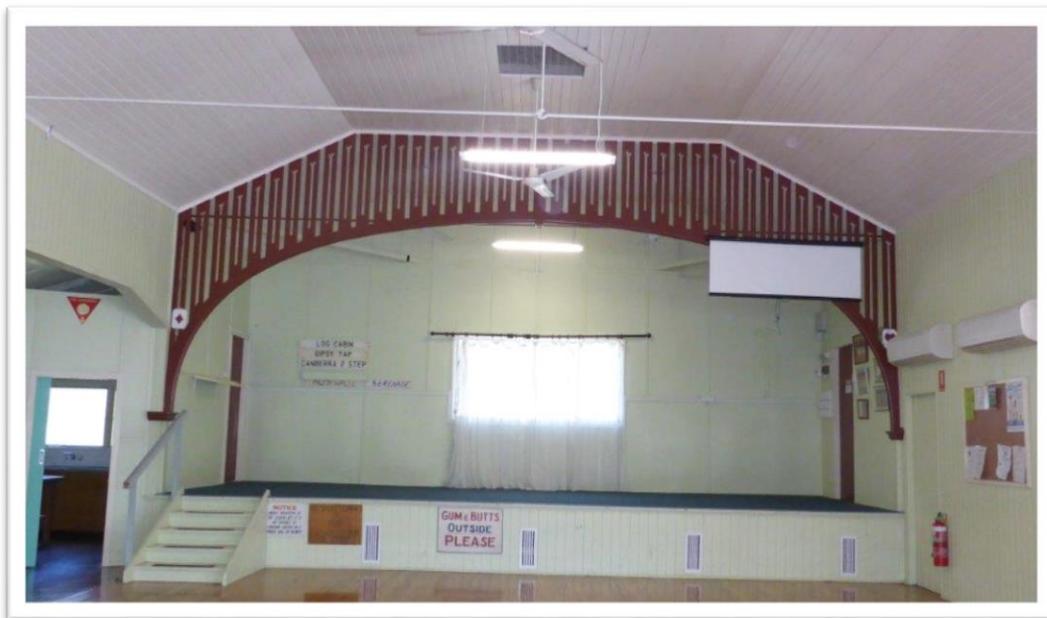


Photo of interior and stage School of Arts, Pimpama.

The sign on the back wall reads – 'Log Cabin, Gypsy Tap, Canberra 2 Step'.



## Acknowledgements

Judith (Muntz) Hollindale, ex-Pimpama resident  
 Bevan Love, ex-Pimpama resident  
 Pauline Weatherley, Booking Officer, Pimpama School of Arts  
 Librarians at the Southport Local Studies Library

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## Archival photos

Judith (Muntz) Hollindale, former resident of Pimpama

## Photos

Moira Lockhart, photographs of School of Arts, Pimpama.

## Contributors



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Moira Lockhart (ADFAS Gold Coast)




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## Notes

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