

ON THE STREETS WHERE YOU LIVE



Amalfi Place

Amalfi Place Longueville takes its name from the grand mansion named *Amalfi* which stood in the area until 1958.

The original property was about four acres bounded by William Edward, Mary and Kenneth Streets. Richard Sim, a Sydney flour miller, leased the property from North Shore land speculator, Richard Hayes Harnett in the early 1870s and built a single-storey sandstone cottage on the site in 1873. In 1881 Joseph Palmer, a prominent Sydney stockbroker bought the property at auction.

By 1882 Palmer had moved his wife, eight children and 90 year old father into the home. He named the house *Amalfi* after the Italian terraced sea fort, near Naples. The house was set among beautiful native bushland and the land sloped down to the water's edge overlooking the Lane Cove River. Another three children were born to the family at Longueville.

In 1885 *Amalfi* was the only home on the Longueville peninsula, until architect, Ernest Bonney, built a home nearby. Palmer then commissioned Bonney to enlarge his own house by adding a second storey with a cedar staircase, a new wing and a tower, sixty feet high. The wooden railed verandahs were replaced with castiron balconies and balustrades. The sandstone used for the extensions was quarried nearby by Italian and French stonemasons from Hunters Hill. The completed house became an impressive grand home boasting twenty-six rooms with a four storey tower and electric lift. The design of the tower was copied from the original tower built in the grounds of Shore School. The house gained the name 'The Castle' from local children.

Amalfi became the focus for many activities in the district. Its double drawing room was used for musical evenings and amateur theatrical productions. Sunday Services were conducted by visiting Ministers and attended by family and neighbours. Local residents would gather to watch the popular Venetian carnivals on the river. The grounds included a tennis court, bowling green, orchards and gardens laid out with broad pathways.

Joseph and his wife, Annie Maria celebrated both their golden and diamond wedding anniversaries at the home before Joseph died in 1930. *Amalfi* remained within the Palmer family until sold in 1958 to John Benjamin, of *Benjamins* department stores. It was demolished to make way for the subdivision and sale of the land.

With the demolition of *Amalfi* in 1958 not all was lost to Lane Cove. The iron fence and smaller gates of the house were reconstructed at Carisbrook on Burns Bay Road and some of the sandstone was also used to construct a garage and laundry block at Carisbrook since both properties were built from similar sandstone. Some of the timbers were used for an extension to the local sea scouts boatshed.

Amalfi Place, Longueville first appeared in the Lane Cove rate book of 1959 and in Gregory's Sydney Street Directory of 1962.



Mister Joseph Palmer Snr. (back row, far right) and Mrs. Annie Marie Palmer (seated centre in dark dress) with the Palmer children, circa 1887
(Courtesy of Ms Nettleship)



Amalfi, home of the Palmer family, circa 1922
(Courtesy of F. Knowles)

