

## **Fred Matson** (1899 – 1993)

### **Fred's Boatshed 1909, Yowie Bay** 1987

Watercolour

Three generations of the Matson family were boat builders. From 1894 Fred's father and grandfather (Frederick Francis) had a boat shed at Audley in the National Park. By 1904 they had established the Matson Pleasure Grounds at Yowie Bay (on the site of the current Camellia Gardens), but as leisure patterns changed this business expanded into boat building. Although the business closed in 1924, it was not until 1974 that Fred demolished the last boatshed at Yowie Bay.

This boatshed was made from corrugated iron with a wooden slatted floor. It was perched on cemented sandstone pillars with a slip rail running alongside a small sloping jetty towards the water.

An accomplished artist, Fred's drawings are included in his *Life Album* in the Sutherland Library's Local Studies section.

## **Fred Matson, Jr (1899 – 1993)**

### **Fred's Boatshed 1909, Yowie Bay, 1987**

Fred Matson Jr's grandfather, Francis Frederick Matson, had been a Finnish sailor who jumped ship in Sydney in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1894 he and his son Fred (known as Fred Senior) established a boatshed at Audley in the National Park, one at Wonga Road, Yowie Bay which they sold in 1903, and one at the head of the Hacking River in Yowie Bay, along with 24 skiffs. They added attractions - including a scattering of summer houses, a dance hall, built by Brinsley's Joinery of Sutherland, three restaurants which seated 200 people, a rifle range, cricket pitches and a children's playground. They called the enterprise Matson Pleasure Grounds.

With the growing popularity of surfing, Cronulla became the drawcard for day trippers and holiday makers at the expense of venues such as Matson Pleasure Grounds, and from about 1909 until 1921 the Pleasure Ground's dance hall was used for boat building. The business closed altogether in 1924.

Fred Matson Jr and his twin brother Oscar, born to Fred Sr and Ethel in 1899, were taught the boat building craft by their grandfather, and had boat building businesses of their own in Audley, Lakes Entrance and at Kareena Road, Yowie Bay from 1946 until 1964. Their grandfather, Francis, died in 1921 by his own hand.

Fred Jr demolished the last boatshed at Yowie Bay in 1974, 50 years after the business had closed.

#### References:

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- Merle Kavanagh, 'The Enterprising Matsons', *Echoes from the Bay*, Ch. 6, Sutherland 2004
- Pauline Curby, *A Pictorial History: Sutherland Shire*, Kingsclear Books, Sydney 2004