

# Nine Near Nile Walk



Close to the Hardy Street entrance to **Queens Gardens** **1** beside the eel pond is a charming miniature mill wheel marking the site of the 1844 mill built by The Nelson Flour Milling Company to serve the community. An elevated water race carried water from the Brook in Manuka Street down Alton Street to the mill, until it was replaced with underground pipes around 1862. Matthew Campbell, also known as a teacher, was the miller there from 1845, and he lived at the corner of Hardy and Alton Streets. Along with A.G.Jenkins, he nursed the temperamental mill machinery along. When the water race went, the Dun Mountain railway track took its place, where carriages were pulled by horses to take copper and chrome to the Port.

Walk past 9 **Alton Street** **2**, a large boarding house built by Mrs Fanny S Akers that today is still used as flats. Fanny was the widow of Richard Hadfield and ran his chemist shop in Trafalgar Street after his death in 1880. With two young sons, she must have been very busy. She subsequently married music professor John B Akers. Part of Alton Street is now designated as a heritage precinct and has an interesting information board with more details of local history.

The corner of Alton and Nile Streets, now occupied by NMIT, was once the site of the old **Griffins factory** **3**. John Griffin and his two sons had biscuit making machinery there, supplying their bakery shop in Trafalgar Street, but the premises burnt down completely in 1894. As there was no insurance, capital was raised by forming a public company and another factory was built. This had chocolate making machinery installed but burnt down in 1904. Yet another factory was built, and after 1938 the Nelson site concentrated on confectionery production. The Nelson business closed in 1987 and building was subsequently demolished.

Across the road at **94 Nile Street** **4** is the house originally built by Henry Hounsell around 1865. It was bought by the widow Mrs Gibbs and her nine children in 1877, after they all miraculously survived the shipwreck of the 'Queen Bee'. Her son Frederick became the first headmaster of Nelson Central School and planted many of the large trees there.

Part of **Nelson Central School** **5** was once the drive and grounds of **Renwick House** **6**, which has been restored and is used as a school facility. Formerly known as Newstead, it was the home of Sir David Monro. The rest of the school grounds were bought by the Education Board from the descendants of Frederick Schumaker, who had a small mud house there and grew wheat, and later cherries.

In Manuka Street is **St Marys Church** **7** built in 1882 on an acre of land bought by Father Antoine Garin, Nelson's first parish priest. The church was renovated in 2000. In 1932 **Saint Josephs School** **8** was built in Collingwood Street, and the school was staffed entirely by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, an international religious order of French origin, until the 1940s. The Sisters lived in a three storeyed Monastery next to the church. This building had its top level relocated to Founders Heritage Park and is now known as the Redwood Granary and used as an events venue. The lower levels were destroyed by an arsonist.

The **Presbyterian Church** **9** in Nile Street was built in the early 1900s on the site of an earlier church built in 1849. The first Presbyterian minister was Reverend Thomas Dickson Nicholson who preached his first Nelson sermon in Mr Campbell's schoolroom in June 1848. He lived with his family in Alicebrae, which he built on a 9 acre block in Collingwood St. The house can still be seen nestled in the trees.

# Nine Near Nile Walk

Nile street and nearby Alton, Manuka and Hardy streets are some of Nelson's oldest streets. Discover some interesting sites around this area relating to early settlers and the development of the city.

For more information on people and sites on this walk see [www.theprow.org.nz](http://www.theprow.org.nz) and for other heritage walks go to [www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz](http://www.nelsoncitycouncil.co.nz) (search phrase heritage walks)

See the information panel in Alton Street for more local history.

