

F A Stow & Co

Greg Ryan

After serving in World War I, Frederick Alan Stow (known as Alan) finished his training as a carpenter and joiner in Melbourne. After working for the railways in Wangaratta and Wodonga he was taken on by Logans, Albury builders.

Stow worked on construction of the Regent Theatre (now Cinema Centre) where, because he was young and venturesome, he was put to work on the ceiling.

Alan bought land in Buckingham Street back to Pauls Lane, and linking with Mate and Frauenfelder Streets. Before his marriage to Emily Muriel Fitch in 1923. he built what became the family home on the Mate and Buckingham Streets corner,

Leaving Logans, Stow began to speculate with house building and established himself as a contractor. His houses were distinctive, many with arched or corner verandahs and hip roofs. Several house designs used by Stow are repeated in different areas of the town. Alan used Canadian Redwood for the deep window sills, mantelpieces, architraves and skirtings.



A 1950s photo of the FA Stow & Co headquarters in Mate Street, North Albury.
It is one of the most distinctive art deco buildings in the city.

Stow erected a factory facing Buckingham Street (Albury North Timber and Joinery Co) in the late thirties. During WWII his main work was making windows for army huts going up at Bonegilla. After the war he built a new workshop facing Mate Street. This saw the birth of F A Stow and Co, developing the timber supply business and later expanding into hardware and special machining.

It was usual for a builder to be a sub-agent for an insurance company and FA Stow was a sub agent for British Traders Insurance Company. The builder would offer insurance to the new home owner and receive a commission on the premiums.

F A Stow employed his three daughters in the business. Merle glazed three windows at 5 pence per pane and also did some bookwork. Dulcie learned to copy plans drawn by her father onto transparencies and developed blueprints. She did bookwork as well as helping her father do machining. Youngest daughter, Yvonne, joined the office staff in 1951.

Stow spent his last years in a nursing home, but kept interest in what was happening with the business. He was still signing the firm's cheques in his nineties. He died in 1994.

Joining the staff of F A Stow in 1954, son-in-law Neville became paymaster, manager and stock controller. Grandson Ron became manager in 1990 and later purchased the business. The building fronting Mate St is one of the most distinctive Art Deco buildings in Albury. It was sold in 2002 and DLG are there in 2021.