

Introduction.

In 1905 the Town of North Melbourne was absorbed into the Melbourne City Council. On the centenary of this event the City of Melbourne and Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) host an exhibition examining the life of people living and working in North Melbourne, in and around 1905.

The exhibition includes documents from PROV, the City of Melbourne Art + Heritage Collection, the North Melbourne Public Library and private collections.

With the aid of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) base plans, the exhibition features stories about the people, businesses and industries within the different neighbourhoods of North Melbourne.

The exhibition will first go on display at the City Gallery in August 2005. It will examine three areas of North Melbourne – Errol Street and Victoria Street precinct, the district around the Melbourne Metropolitan Meat Market, and the Hotham Hill area near the intersection of Flemington Road and Dryburgh Street.

At the Victorian Archives Centre in 2006, the second stage of the exhibition will display an additional two neighbourhoods.

Overview.

The Town of North Melbourne grew out of the need to house the large number of immigrants coming to Victoria as a result of the discovery of gold in 1851. A report in the 'Argus' from July 1852 records that the Honourable Mr O'Shanassy in the Legislative Council moved that 'an address be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor embodying the anxious desire of the Council that His Excellency would cause several blocks of land to the north of the City of Melbourne, and immediately beyond the operation of the Building Act, to be surveyed in convenient sized allotments and sold without delay, with a view to enable purchasers to erect thereon houses of timber in sufficient numbers to provide that house accommodation now so imperatively required by the rapidly increasing population arriving in the colony.'

Overview cont.

The motion passed, and the land which had made up part of the Bourke Ward was surveyed and cut up into allotments. The land sales took place in the Elizabeth Street offices of Tennant & Co. in September 1852.

With its proximity to Melbourne's many markets, abundant water supply for industry, and port and rail terminals, the town of North Melbourne became the storehouse, transfer depot, and processing and manufacturing centre for much of Victoria's produce. These activities and associated trades influenced the character of the surrounding community.

A brief chronology.

1855 – as housing and business grew, the town was incorporated as the Hotham Ward of the City of Melbourne, named after the then Governor of Victoria.

30 September 1859 – the town was proclaimed the Municipality of Hotham by His Excellency Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of the Colony of Victoria. The area of the original municipality, which was one of the smallest in the metropolitan district, grew from 204 hectares to 224 hectares.

14 October 1863 – the Municipality of Hotham became the Borough of Hotham and in 1870 it was divided into three wards – Eastern, Middle and Western.

18 December 1874 – the Borough of Hotham was proclaimed the Town of Hotham and by 1884 was the most densely populated of all the Melbourne municipalities.

26 August 1887 – the name Town of Hotham was changed by proclamation to Town of North Melbourne.

30 October 1905 – the Town of North Melbourne was re-incorporated into the Melbourne City Council, together with the Boroughs of Flemington and Kensington this combined area became the Hopetoun Ward of the City of Melbourne, named after Lord Hopetoun, the first Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Markets and Metal.

MMBW base plans 761, 763, 764 encompasses the area within Flemington Road and Wreckyn, Villiers, Courtney, and Blackwood streets. The North Melbourne Metropolitan Meat Market is located in this quarter, as is the Queen Victoria Market and the now defunct Horse, Cattle and Pig, and Corn and Hay markets.

Trades in this area were mainly those associated with animals and agriculture: saddlers, corn merchants, carters, carriers and iron works, implement factories and foundries. The rate books and the citizens roll show the identities of butchers, horse brokers, horse harness and collar makers, carriage makers, small goods manufacturers, engineers, tanners and wireworkers, blacksmiths and hay, grain and produce merchants.

The factory of John Buncle & Sons (also known as Parkside Iron Works) was located in Wreckyn Street. It produced iron work for several large bridges in Melbourne, including the Johnson Street Bridge over the Yarra. Among the local identities of this area were the members of the Reynolds

family who were key figures at the Metropolitan Meat Market, and old Ma Dalley, an entrepreneurial scrap metal merchant.

Asylum, Town Hall Shops.	Hotham Hill.		
<p>MMBW base plans 748, 749, 750 have been reproduced from a half plate negative. This area, bordered by Victoria, Errol, Curzon, Abbotsford, and Queensberry streets, is the centre of North Melbourne's identity. Errol Street's busy shopping strip was serviced by the North Melbourne cable tram – the cable tram engine house still stands today – and the precinct featured two of North Melbourne's most imposing landmarks: the Benevolent Asylum and the North Melbourne Town Hall.</p>	<p>The North Melbourne Town Hall, located at the northern end of Errol Street, was designed by architect George Johnson. It opened in 1876 and its design became a model for many other town halls of the day.</p>	<p>MMBW base plan 742 shows the area bordered by Dryburgh, Curran, Brougham, Melrose streets and Flemington Road.</p>	<p>Names in the rate books and directories give a glimpse of the social strata of this largely residential precinct of North Melbourne. A major landmark of this area was Milton Hall, a large and beautiful house located on the corner of Dryburgh and Curran streets. The house was built by local entrepreneur, and one-time Mayor of Hotham, Robert Langford.</p>
<p>The huge asylum for the homeless and destitute dominated the area. It was located on a four hectare site that straddled the North Melbourne and West Melbourne boundaries by cutting across Victoria Street. Completed in 1851, the neo-Gothic structure of the Benevolent Asylum was the only building standing prior to the initial land sales for Hotham in 1852. The site had magnificent views of the bay and the western plains. The asylum was demolished in 1911.</p>	<p>The Errol Street shopping strip, which was the social and commercial hub of North Melbourne, offered unique goods and services from colourful local retailers. Among them was Brettena Smyth, who had a health shop in Errol Street where she sold a wide range of birth control devices as well as more orthodox medicines. She was a tireless campaigner for equality of the sexes and a friend of Dr W. Maloney MLA. The pair often addressed large gatherings on the topics of women's rights and the need for better working conditions.</p>	<p>The area shown in this plan is the part of North Melbourne known as Hotham Hill. The detail of the plans shows a cross-section of the activities going on in the homes and backyards of the local residents. Details show fowl sheds, cow and carriage sheds, a coach house, a hen house, ferneries, a shoeing forge and a summer house.</p>	
		<p>Incomes and diets were supplemented by produce from backyards. While the well-to-do had gardens that were more decorative in nature, families on lower incomes had more utilitarian open spaces with room for a clothes line and 'closet' (outdoor toilet). Rotting debris and effluent in open drains caused a major problem within the borough. Whenever heavy rains occurred the problem was only washed into the residential area of 'the valley'.</p>	

The Railway.		Football and Gas.	
<p>North Melbourne and West Melbourne share a bond that goes beyond their common boundary. While the Benevolent Asylum straddled the border, the North Melbourne Station was actually located in West Melbourne. In 1880 Ned Kelly was secretly ushered off a train from Benalla at North Melbourne Station on his way to imprisonment, trial and finally execution at the Old Melbourne Goal.</p>	<p>Dr William Maloney was born in West Melbourne in 1854 and received his medical training in London. In 1887 he opened a general practice in Melbourne and a year later was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly. Dr Maloney was also instrumental in introducing one of the first Bills in the Empire for women's suffrage in 1889. William Maloney was actively associated with the Australian Women's Suffrage Society that was founded by Mrs Brettina Smyth. The 'Little Doctor', as he became known, established the Medical Institute in Elizabeth Street which provided treatment and counselling to the poor and needy. He maintained this establishment for the rest of his life. Dr Maloney was elected to the federal seat of Melbourne in 1904. He held it until just before his death in 1940.</p>	<p>Shiel Street lies near the western end of North Melbourne. Local landmarks included the site of the old gasworks and the Arden Street oval, home of the North Melbourne Football Club, dubbed the 'shinboners'. James Henry Gardiner is recognised as the key figure in establishing the club in 1869. The Metropolitan Gas Company owned the gasometer which supplied gas from the West Melbourne station to Fitzroy and Essendon outstations, as well as to the north of the city and surrounding country areas.</p> <p>The North Melbourne rate journal of 1874 lists Albert Mattingley living in a property on Shiel Street. The Mattingley family were among the first to settle in North Melbourne. Members of the family undertook many civic roles in the community, such as establishing the Errol Street School. Perhaps one of the most enduring legacies of Albert Mattingley are his recollections of the early days of North Melbourne.</p>	<p>In 1915, as a member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Mattingley delivered a paper entitled 'The Early History of North Melbourne'. This work is often quoted in historical accounts of North Melbourne.</p> <p>The house Mattingley lived in at 54 Shiel Street faced what was Batman's swamp. A scene from this now forgotten landscape is evocatively described in his recollections:</p> <p>'On the waters of the large marsh or swamp lying between North Melbourne and the Saltwater River graceful swans, pelicans ... and other aquatic birds disported themselves; while curlews, spur-winged plover cranes, snipe, sandpipers and dottrels ... waded in its shallows ... Eels, trout, a small species of perch about 2 inches long, and almost innumerable green frogs inhabited its waters, and the last-named on warm nights held a regular serenade that could be heard over the greater part of the town.'</p>
<p>Roden, Stanley and Rosslyn streets radiate out from Railway Place in West Melbourne and spread like fingers into North Melbourne. With its proximity to Spencer Street rail terminal, goods sheds and port facilities, this locale was a clearing house for Victorian produce entering and leaving the city by train and ship. The railway yards, engine sheds, workshops, kitchens and laundries of the Victorian Railways were major employers of the local men and women of North Melbourne. Another employer of local residents was the printing firm Sands & McDougall which operated from a site in West Melbourne.</p>			

Description.

The City of Melbourne and Public Record Office Victoria have produced this catalogue in partnership to accompany two exhibitions that commemorate the centenary of the 1905 merger of North Melbourne and Melbourne City Council.

1. City Gallery, Melbourne
Town Hall, Swanston Street,
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2. Victorian Archives Centre,
99 Shiel Street, North Melbourne,
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Curator.

Daisy Searls

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Captions.

a. & inside cover. Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW), Detailed Base Plans 40' = 1 numeric, VPRS 8601/P2, unit 2, detail plan nos 761, 763, 764.

b. MMBW, Detailed Base Plans 40' = 1 numeric, VPRS 8601/P2, unit 2, detail plan nos 749, 750, 758.

c. MMBW, Detailed Base Plans 40' = 1 numeric, VPRS 8601/P1, unit 15, detail plan no. 742.

d. MMBW, Detailed Base Plans 40' = 1 numeric, VPRS 8601/P2, unit 2, detail plan no. 729.

e. MMBW, Detailed Base Plans 40' = 1 numeric, VPRS 8601/P1, unit 16, detail plan no. 746.



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