

Public land in Victoria: An overview of Victoria's history and public land heritage using the Framework of Historical Themes

Prepared for the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

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Introduction

This narrative documents a brief thematic history of Victoria and identifies examples of notable heritage places on public land that have evolved from this history. A list of reference and source documents is provided at the end of this report.

The history is structured using the nine main themes of *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*. The *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* defines public land broadly as Crown land and freehold land owned by public authorities (i.e. state government departments, agencies and bodies). It does not include private, local government owned freehold, or Commonwealth land.

Public land provides a range of community uses and values. Nature conservation and appreciation is offered in national, state and other parks, nature conservation reserves and some natural features reserves. Recreation occurs across most public land but is specifically provided for in regional and metropolitan parks, and smaller recreation reserves of various kinds such as sports fields. Public land also provides for government services or administration in public buildings including court houses, schools, government offices, hospitals, cemeteries, fire stations and police stations; and for community use in public halls, libraries, and public memorials. In addition, government infrastructure and utilities are located on public land including roads and railways, gas and electricity, piers, jetties, water supply and storage reservoirs, as well as sewage treatment plants.¹

1.0 Shaping Victoria's environment

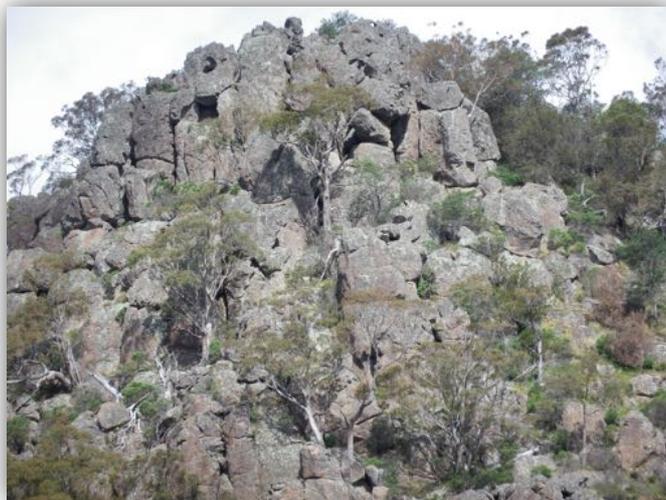
Victoria's distinctive geology, landscapes, flora and fauna have evolved over millions of years. This unique natural environment has played an active role in shaping Victoria's human history.

About 50,000 years ago, in the early era of Aboriginal occupation, the landscape was very different to that of today. The last glacial maximum, peaking between 25,000 to 17,000 years ago, brought cold, dry and windy conditions. After about 15,000 years ago, the world's climate began to warm, and seas invaded the coastline of Victoria. Temperature and rainfall increased, and forests expanded. The Holocene (the last 10,000 years) has been

¹ *Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation Discussion Paper*, (East Melbourne: Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, October 2010), 64.

generally characterised by conditions similar to those of the present.²

Permanent white settlement of the Port Phillip District (from 1851, the colony of Victoria)³ was first attempted at Sorrento in 1802, with permanent occupation commencing in 1834 in the Portland area and at Melbourne. With technology introduced by white settlers from this time, Victoria's natural environment experienced a rapid period of change.



Hanging Rock Reserve is historically significant as an early and popular recreational destination and meeting place for Victorians. The distinctive and rare geological formation of Hanging Rock attracted large numbers of visitors from as early as the 1860s. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

The need to protect the Port Phillip District's physical resources for community benefit and future use was recognised when squatters took over land from the mid-1830s. In 1839, surveyor Robert Hoddle marked out public purpose reserves in and around Melbourne, for quarrying, brickmaking and lime production. An 1848 Order in Council put aside land for towns and villages, Aboriginal reserves, water reserves, inns, mineral reserves and timber reserves. By 1853, there were nine timber reserves and

² Geoffrey Blainey, *A History of Victoria* (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2013); 4. M. Archer et al., *From Plesiosaurs to People: 100 Million Years of Australian Environmental History, Australia: State of the Environment Technical Paper Series (Portrait of Australia)* (Canberra: Department of the Environment, 1998), 21.

³ On 1 July 1851 the Port Phillip District separated from New South Wales to become the colony of Victoria.

185 water reserves in Victoria, and by 1859 there were nearly 3,000 acres of public purposes reserves.⁴



Dating from 1890-91, the Split Point Lightstation at Aireys Inlet is an important component of the system of lightstations built by the Victorian government along the coast during the nineteenth century to ensure the safety of shipping. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

The first Land Act passed by the Victorian Parliament (the *Sale of Crown Lands Act 1860*) provided for the reservation of lands permanently or temporarily for a wide variety of public purposes.⁵ Because of the significant impacts of gold mining on forests and watercourses, to ensure that the needs of the colony's rapidly increasing population were catered for, a high number of reserves (1,770 sites embracing approximately 1.3 million acres) were put aside between 1857 and 1870.⁶ Crown coastal foreshore reserves were put aside in 1879. By 1884, two million acres of land had been set aside for what was termed 'the public

interest'.⁷ The Commonwealth government took over management of lighthouses, customs offices, defence barracks and post offices in Victoria following Federation in 1901.⁸

The process of Crown land reservation by government continued until after World War One, when 'wise-use' conservatism was championed by scientists and technologists in the Victorian public service to ensure that Victoria's water and forest reserves were managed by trained 'experts'. As a result, river basin units were adopted as part of regional planning, a more sophisticated network of forest reserves was created, and wildlife sanctuaries were established.⁹

2.0 Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes

Victoria is a place settled by migrants. People from diverse cultural backgrounds have arrived and settled for over 50,000 years in myriad ways, influencing economic, social and political developments, and interacting with the natural environment to create the places and landscapes of today. Today the population of Victoria is approaching six million people with some 97,000 arrivals in the year 2014-15.¹⁰ Government policies, designed to settle people on the land, have played a key role in the evolution of settlement in Victoria.

The lives of Victoria's Aboriginal peoples, estimated to number 10,000 at contact,¹¹ were irrevocably changed by white settlement. Spiritual and physical disruption to country led to the collapse of traditional socio-political structures, diseases were introduced, and massacres of Aboriginal people occurred. However, despite the massive upheaval to their rich and intricate culture, Aboriginal people adapted their lives and today continue to live on country.

Evidence contained in a series of French maps suggests that sailors from a Portuguese expedition in 1522-24 were the first

⁷ R. Wright, *The Bureaucrats' Domain: Space and Public Interest in Victoria, 1836-84* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989), xiii.

⁸ Jane Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 58.

⁹ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, (Melbourne, Vic.: Land Conservation Council, January 1996), 94.

¹⁰ *3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, March 2015*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; available from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

¹¹ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 91.

⁴ Jane Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria* (Melbourne, Vic.: Department of Conservation and Environment, 1992), 9.

⁵ *Series VPRS 242 Crown Reserves Correspondence*, Public Records Office of Victoria, 2005; available from <http://www.access.prov.vic.gov.au>. Legislation relating to Crown reserves remained under the 1860 Land Act until the passing of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act* in 1978.

⁶ Jane Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 10.

Europeans to sight the coast of what was to become Victoria.¹² However it was the British who exploited their own discoveries, including James Cook's sighting of the coast in 1770, to settle the Port Phillip District. After Nicholas Baudin led a French survey party to Westernport in 1802, in the same year Lt. John Murray and Matthew Flinders, on separate explorations, sailed into Port Phillip Bay. In 1803, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, Charles Grimes, and Lieut. Robbins surveyed Port Phillip Bay and reported on the Yarra River. Two land explorations: by Hamilton Hume and William Hovell in 1824-25, and by Surveyor-General of New South Wales Thomas Mitchell in 1836, were influential in recording and promoting further information about the natural resources of the Port Phillip District.



A cairn marks Surveyor-General of New South Wales Thomas Mitchell's 1836 campsite on the River Murray at Swan Hill.

White settlement in the Port Phillip District began with whaling and sealing established on the coast in the early 1790s. Because of concerns about the interest of the French in the area, in October 1803 the British government established a settlement at Port Phillip Bay at Sullivans Cove, near today's Sorrento. Lt. Governor Collins led the colonising party of 467, comprising mostly convicts. In February 1804 Collins moved the settlement to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). From 1803 to 1835, Wathaurong people sheltered William Buckley, an escapee from

¹² J. S. Duncan, ed., *Atlas of Victoria* (Melbourne: Victorian Government Printing Office, 1982), 74.

the failed convict settlement.¹³ The Collins Settlement Site, evidenced by four graves, was reserved in 1875, and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

Squatters from England and Scotland established extensive sheep enterprises in the mid-1830s, including the Henty family who established a settlement at Portland in 1834, and in 1835, John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner, who claimed land beside the Yarra River at a place that was to become the site of Melbourne. In 1836, in an effort to control the expansion of squatting into Port Phillip District, Governor Richard Bourke introduced the *Crown Lands Occupation Act*, which disallowed depasturing of lands beyond certain limits around Sydney unless they were taken up under an annual lease or licence of £10.¹⁴ Because one of the major aims of the 1860s Land Acts was to break the squatters' hold on Crown land by making it available freehold to farmers, only limited material evidence from pastoral settlement in the era of 1830s-1870s remains on public land.

In 1841, on average one British immigrant ship per week arrived in Port Phillip, with the first non-British immigrant ship arriving from Germany in 1848.¹⁵ However, in 1851, the same year the colony of Victoria separated from New South Wales, gold rush immigration swelled the population of the colony from 77,000 people in 1851 to 237,000 in 1854. During 1852, the peak year of the rushes, 90,000 people arrived in Melbourne; by 1857, the colony had a population of 411,000.¹⁶ By 1861, Victoria held one half of Australia's population.¹⁷

During the nineteenth century and first six decades of the twentieth century, settlement policies were directed by government intervention and were underpinned by the assumption that the expansion of settlement and agriculture was

¹³ *Immigration to Victoria - a Timeline*, Museum Victoria; available from <http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/websites-mini/immigration-timeline/>.

¹⁴ The term squatter first applied to those pastoralists who took possession of land before legislation was introduced in 1836 but came to be applied more generally by the society of the day. The 'limits of location' referred to the nineteen counties of settled area extending from Sydney.

¹⁵ *Immigration to Victoria - a Timeline*.

¹⁶ Cate Elkner, *'Immigration and Ethnicity'*, *E-Gold*, University of Melbourne, 2011; available from <http://www.egold.net.au/biogs/EG00004b.htm>.

¹⁷ D. T. Merrett, *'Banking and Finance'*, *E-Melbourne*, School of Historical Studies, Department of History, The University of Melbourne, 2008; available from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00155b.htm>.

essential if Victoria, and the nation, was to prosper.¹⁸ Thus, with the waning of alluvial gold, from 1860 a series of Land Acts were legislated by the Victorian government to encourage the settlement of Victoria's burgeoning population on farms. By the mid-1880s, 25 million acres had passed from the Crown to private control.¹⁹ Sheep farming on extensive tracts of land continued, but by the 1890s, a wheat industry on the northern plains and in the Mallee, and dairying enterprises in Gippsland, had been established. A rare example of a selector's home on public land exists at Terrick Terrick National Park.



An original house built near the Terrick Terrick township by the Davies family, selectors under the 1869 *Land Act*, was pulled down ca1912 and this new four-roomed residence built in its place. The former hotel bar from the township was shifted onto the site and incorporated into the building as a living room. The house is now part of the Terrick Terrick National Park.

Closer settlement policies were pursued by consecutive Victorian governments from the 1890s through until the 1970s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Australia lost its preferential treatment in British markets, and industry efficiency and global competition replaced nation-building as the rationale for both water and farm policy.²⁰

¹⁸ Ian Reeve et al., *Overview Report Agriculture and Natural Resource Management in the Murray-Darling Basin: A Policy History and Analysis Report - Report to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission* (Armidale, NSW: Institute for Rural Futures University of New England, April 2002), v.

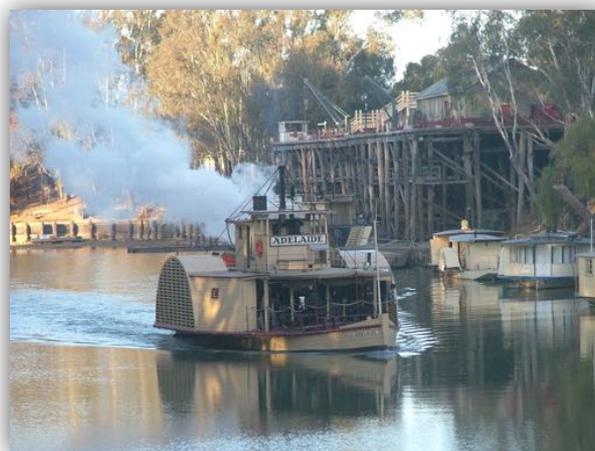
¹⁹ Wright, *The Bureaucrats' Domain: Space and Public Interest in Victoria, 1836-84*, xiii.

²⁰ Reeve et al., *Overview Report Agriculture and Natural Resource Management in the Murray-Darling Basin: A Policy History and Analysis Report - Report to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission*, v.

3.0 Connecting Victorians by transport and communications

Early European routes often followed the pathways by which Aboriginal people moved through country over thousands of years. Extensive networks of routes and connections were subsequently established to move both goods and people, and played a key role in the economic development of Victoria.

Before the widespread establishment of railways in the 1880s, shipping was the dominant mode of transport between the colonies, within the colony of Victoria, and between the colony and overseas. The first white settlers arrived in Victoria by sea, their ships guided into the narrow channel of Port Phillip Bay by a system of buoys; from 1840, a light on Point Gellibrand; and from 1843, a high light set in a sandstone tower at Queenscliff.²¹ Many ships did not reach the safety of Port Phillip Bay however, and at least 650 shipwrecks are known to be located along Victoria's coastline.²²



Echuca Wharf is the only wharf still in existence that illustrates the nineteenth century river trade on the Murray-Darling River system. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

Early ports were established on the Victorian coast at Port Albert, Western Port, Melbourne, Geelong and Portland. On the River Murray, the first steamboats were introduced in 1853 to exploit trade on the Murray-Darling river system. Squatters relied on ports of entry and clearance established on the River Murray under the *Customs Act* of 1857 for supplies of food, and to export livestock and wool. Steamers were first introduced to the Gippsland Lakes in 1864 and a permanent entrance to the lakes was constructed and opened in 1889.

²¹ Susan Priestley, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark* (McMahons Point, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, 1984), 56.

²² Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 8.

Squatters and overlanders, in moving their stock and wool, and by travelling to and from Melbourne and Sydney, established new tracks across the Victorian landscape. Some of these tracks were later surveyed as three and six chain roads and were used as major stock routes. Sydney Road, the main route between Melbourne and Sydney, was surveyed in 1837, and by 1866, it was estimated that 350,000 sheep were being moved along a track that followed the River Murray to Adelaide, leading to violent clashes between Aborigines and overlanders.²³ Other squatters and overlanders in the Port Phillip District followed Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell's 1836 exploratory track, known as the Major's Line.

Tracks were turned into roads when the Central Road Board was established in 1851 to oversee the construction of a road network in the colony of Victoria. The responsibility for road works was handed over to local districts, with support given through government grants, rates, and tolls under the *Roads Act* of 1853. Machinery was purchased for road making and tollgates erected to collect the necessary funds for road building. The building of roads enabled the establishment of a network of coach routes to transport passengers and mail throughout the colony.



The former Yea Railway Station complex, built in the late 1880s, is the most intact example of a small group of standard Gothic-styled Railway Station buildings. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

The construction of railway lines in the colony of Victoria mostly followed settlement, with the first railway lines built with private capital. Surveyor-General, Captain Andrew Clarke, was authorised to undertake surveys for railways throughout the central portion of the colony in the 1850s. By the end of 1855, sixteen survey parties had completed surveys for lines, including the Main Trunk Lines from Geelong to Ballarat, opened in 1862,

²³ J. Macdonald Holmes, *The Murray Valley: A Geographical Reconnaissance of the Murray Valley and a New Design for Its Regional Organization* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), 37.

and from Melbourne to the River Murray at Echuca, opened in 1864.

The first overland mail was carried from Melbourne to Sydney in 1838, and post and telegraph services were subsequently established across the colony.

4.0 Transforming and managing the land

Victoria's rural economy today is based on four key agricultural specialities: dairy; meat and livestock; fruit and vegetables; and wheat and other cereals, sectors that were all established in the nineteenth century.

The human occupation and use of land, and the exploitation of natural resources to develop Victoria's economy have changed the environment and produced varied cultural landscapes. Even before European settlers arrived, Aboriginal people had transformed Victoria's landscape through their use of fire.

By the mid-1840s, wool exports from the Port Phillip District were worth almost 5 million pounds,²⁴ however, the profits came at an environmental cost. The flocks and herds owned by squatters and graziers massively transformed Victoria's pre-European grasslands and open woodlands and caused soil erosion problems.²⁵

In the 1850s, Chinese settlers established market gardens on creek and river flats to provide vegetables for the growing populations of the goldfields. Other settlers took up land under the Land Acts of the 1860s close to the goldfields, in the Wimmera, on the northern plains, and in the forested hills of south Gippsland, and from the 1880s, in the Mallee. Areas were also opened up for farming under government closer settlement policies introduced from the early 1890s. With irrigation programs established under the 1886 *Irrigation Act*, dairying and fruit and vegetable growing were established near Melbourne, in the Goulburn Valley and along the Murray River.

Clearing the land for settlement was achieved through ringbarking, grubbing and burning. Broad-scale clearing, overgrazing, and rabbit and hare invasion have led to gully, rill and sheet erosion, have impacted significantly on flora and fauna species, and have caused salinity.

²⁴ *Immigration to Victoria - a Timeline*.

²⁵ Duncan, ed., *Atlas of Victoria*, 78.



The Lauriston Reservoir is part of the Coliban water supply system, which opened in 1877. It is still essentially operating in the manner that was first proposed by engineer Joseph Brady in 1862. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

Water resources have been vital to the growth of industry and settlement across Victoria. The need for adequate and reliable water supplies occupied both the energies of settler families and engineers in government and private employment. The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, a joint project managed by the federal, New South Wales, and Victorian governments, commenced in 1949, and was the largest engineering project undertaken in Australia. Learning to adapt to Victorian conditions required the testing of imported notions and techniques in a new environment; as a consequence, stream flows and water quality have been detrimentally affected.

Historically, Victoria owes much of its economic development to gold mining. In the period 1851-60, Victoria produced 20 million ounces of gold, one-third of world output.²⁶ The hoarding of vast quantities of Californian and Victorian gold by banks in America, England and France provided a basis for currencies and financial systems around the globe, and supported a huge credit expansion that bankrolled world trade, shipping and manufacturing.²⁷ Gold mining impacted significantly on the landscape of Victoria. As historical geographer J. M. Powell

²⁶ Davison, Graeme, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Vic, 1999, p. 284.

²⁷ Jane Lennon, "Victorian Gold – World Heritage Status?" Bendigo: Nothing But Gold 150 Years of Gold mining Conference Papers Bendigo, Vic., 2001, 45.

notes, most of the goldfields were situated in 'wooded hills, ranges and valleys which had been lightly used or ignored and those finely balanced ecosystems were maintained by a mutual adjustment of slopes, drainage and vegetation cover which could not survive the miners' ferocious attacks'.²⁸ The evidence of human interaction with the environment in which gold seekers lived and worked has become a large-scale artefact exemplified by the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park.



Eureka Reef, Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park. The Park comprises the remains of an authentic early 1850s goldfield, the site of a massive gold rush, which was influential in shaping Australia's history. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

The forests of Victoria have also contributed to Victoria's wealth. The massive demand for timber for fence posts, bridge construction, underground timbering for gold mines, housing, railway sleepers, domestic firewood, fuel for boilers, eucalyptus oil, and charcoal, as well as clearing to make agricultural land, had taken a significant toll on forests by the early 1870s. Timber cutters initially worked from camps in forests, living in huts and tents, but more permanent settlements that focused on large sawmill enterprises were established from the 1860s. Evidence of the early forest industry and settlement can be seen on public land today in the form of sawdust heaps, mill sites, huts, cross-log bridges, make-ups, trestle bridges²⁹ and grave sites.

The exploitation of other resources, especially gas, oil and coal reserves, particularly from the 1960s, has also played an important role in the development of Victoria's economy.

²⁸ Powell, J M, *Watering the Garden State: Water, Land and Community in Victoria 1834-1988*, Allen and Unwin Australia, North Sydney, NSW, 1989, pp. 47-8.

²⁹ Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 44.

Quarrying and salt harvesting comprise other significant industries.

5.0 Building Victoria's industries and workforce

The development of Victoria's industrial and manufacturing base and service industries has been vital to the state's economic development. Victoria has moved from an industrial, tariff-protected economy to a knowledge based economy led by a rapidly growing services sector.

Sealers comprised the first European processors of a product in Victoria, killing seals for their skins, meat and oil from seasonal semi-permanent camps on the coast of the Port Phillip District. However, by the 1820s, they had reduced seal numbers to below a profitable level. Sealing stations at Portland, Port Fairy and Wilson's Promontory subsequently became shore bases for ships hunting whales, whose blubber was used for oil and baleen for corsets.³⁰ Another early industry was lime burning, which processed shells or limestone by burning for use in mortar, lime cement, whitewash and plaster. Lime burning was established on the Mornington Peninsula, Geelong and elsewhere along the coast in the 1830s.

Victoria's manufacturing sector, historically concentrated in metropolitan Melbourne, can be traced back to industries established in the first years of European settlement: blacksmiths, bootmakers, coopers and brewers, as well as enterprises associated with the wool, tallow and hide industries. From the 1850s, the expanding gold mining industry drove demand for local foundries and engineering works. By 1861, 531 factories operated in Victoria employing approximately 10,000 people. The first woollen mills were established in the late 1860s and the building of railway lines led to the establishment of commercial ventures such as sawmilling, brickmaking, quarrying and specialist foundries.³¹ By the end of the 1860s, the manufacturing industry employed about 20,000 people.³²

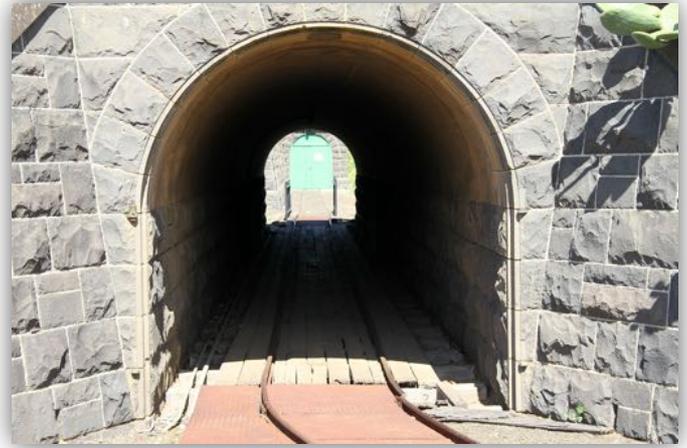
When readily accessible gold reserves declined, the Victorian government introduced tariffs in the 1860s to provide employment for the large numbers of the population no longer employed in digging for gold; these tariffs were influential in establishing the clothing and textile industries. Because of long distances and high transport costs, Victoria's manufacturing industry was involved with the making of products for the domestic market.

³⁰ Priestley, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark*, 14.

³¹ Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 28.

³² Duncan, ed., *Atlas of Victoria*, 109.

During the late nineteenth century, railway and transport infrastructure were substantially expanded, and the Port of Melbourne developed to facilitate increasing international trade.



Built in the period 1876-78, Jack's Magazine in Maribyrnong is the largest gunpowder magazine complex ever constructed in Victoria, a direct manifestation of the importance of mining in Victoria's history. The magazine was used to house the Footscray Ammunition Factory from the 1920s. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

Federation in 1901 removed interstate trade barriers and created a uniform countrywide tariff, reinforcing the dominance of Melbourne and Sydney as Australia's centres of manufacturing. With the advent of World War One in 1914, skills in fabrication and machining were developed in Victoria, leading to the establishment in the 1920s of vehicle building, the making of electrical and other equipment, and the manufacturing of goods for use by other manufacturing industries. It was in the 1920s that manufacturing overtook rural output in value.³³ By 1939, 200,000 people were employed in the manufacturing sector.³⁴

Manufacturing in the period of economic growth after World War Two was characterised by steady growth accompanied by a major expansion in the iron and steel industry. The petrochemical industry was the key industry in the late 1950s and 1960s. Over the last decade, manufacturing has recorded a decline in employment.

Food processing has also contributed to Victoria's manufacturing base. Fruit and dairy production in the Goulburn Valley, dairy production in Gippsland and on the northern plains, and dried fruit manufacture in the Mildura region have relied on processing plants, some of which were historically located near these centres, with Melbourne housing factories of larger, national

³³ Tony Dingle, *The Victorians: Settling* (McMahons Point, NSW: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, 1984), 204.

³⁴ Duncan, ed., *Atlas of Victoria*, 109.

processors.³⁵ The grain industry depended on mills, many of which were established in rural areas.



Anderson's Mill Complex, Smeaton, was built for the Anderson brothers from 1861 onwards to service Creswick's prospering agricultural district. The mill operated as a flour and oatmeal mill before it closed in the late 1950s. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

With settlement came the establishment of the first retail services, followed closely by the founding of banks and financial services. With the discovery of gold in 1851 and the accompanying booming economy, banks grew in number and prominence, first in Melbourne, then in other areas; for instance, the number of trading bank branches in Victoria rose from six in 1851 to 531 in 1892.³⁶ Stock exchanges were also established in Bendigo, Ballarat and Melbourne.

6.0 Building towns, cities and the garden state

Surveyor-General Charles Grimes, sent by New South Wales Governor Phillip King to explore Port Phillip Bay, reached the future site of Melbourne in February 1803 and reported it a 'most eligible place for a settlement'. Later, in 1835, John Batman, one of a group of investors and pastoralists (later the Port Phillip Association) from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), and John Pascoe Fawkner, a Launceston businessman, arrived and established a settlement. Melbourne town was officially declared by Governor Richard Bourke on 19 May 1837 on land occupied by Aboriginal people, chiefly members of the Wurundjeri clan of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁶ Merrett, 'Banking and Finance', *E-Melbourne*.

the Woi wurrung people, who had been there for more than 50,000 years.³⁷

The pastoral industry gave the town a firm economic base. Settlement proceeded apace on the north side of the Yarra River where surveyor Robert Hoddle drew up a plan for the town based on the familiar rectangular grid. South of the river, difficulty of communication and flooding restricted settlement. By 1850, over 75,000 people were living in the Melbourne area, with 23,000 living in the town itself.³⁸ Through suburban expansion, particularly during the economic boom of the 1880s, by the end of the nineteenth century Melbourne featured one of the most extensive areas of low-density urban settlement in the world.³⁹

Large regional towns, established in Victoria in the 1830s-1850s, are still prominent today. Geelong, surveyed in 1838, developed at the head of Corio Bay, its port used to export wool by squatters who took up sheep runs on the western volcanic plains and as a port of entry for gold seekers in the 1850s. The city operated as a manufacturing centre from the 1860s, the focus of which shifted to North Shore where fertiliser, car component, agricultural machinery and oil refining industries were established.⁴⁰ Ballarat was founded on gold in 1851 and experienced two decades of rapid development based on gold mining. After the decline of gold, Ballarat became an important centre for agriculture, manufacturing, transport, commerce and education. Bendigo, too, was established on gold, discovered in 1851. It later serviced the region's rural industry, and developed secondary industries, including engineering, metalworking, building products, and the Commonwealth Ordnance Factory.⁴¹

³⁷ A. G. L. Shaw, 'Foundation and Early History', *E-Melbourne* School of Historical Studies, Department of History, The University of Melbourne, 2008; available from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00602b.htm>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ 'Suburbs and Localities', *E-Melbourne*, School of Historical Studies, Department of History, The University of Melbourne, 2008; available from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00022b.htm>.

⁴⁰ Duncan, ed., *Atlas of Victoria*, 97.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 98-99.



Tasma Terrace in East Melbourne once comprised seven three-storey buildings constructed over the period 1878-87 by William Ireland for George Nipper, grain merchant and shipowner. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

Smaller settlements and townships developed across Victoria from the 1830s at river crossings and ports, on stock routes and rail lines, and at the sites of early inns. With gold mining from 1851, a rush of small settlements formed, with many only lasting months before the populace raced off to the next diggings. After the introduction of selection under the Land Acts in the 1860s, official township surveys were undertaken, often at the sites of earlier settlements. Townships were also surveyed in anticipation of demand for farmland in newly opened areas for selection. The establishment of railway lines resulted in the further survey of townships. As part of the survey of townships, public land was reserved for schools, halls, police and court buildings, churches, cemeteries, post offices, parks and recreation grounds. In some towns, substantial public buildings and churches were erected. Plants to generate gas and electricity were installed in later years and water supplies were provided and drainage infrastructure constructed. The planting of street trees and the establishment of public parks and botanic gardens provided important aesthetic and recreational elements. Avenues of Honour were also planted to commemorate the sacrifice and service made by local volunteers during World War One (see section 8.0 'Building community life'). Today, over 220 Avenues of Honour remain, and approximately twenty surviving botanic gardens in Victoria⁴² are

⁴² Janette Hodgson, Personal Communication, 28 June 2014. *Avenues of Honour Education and Celebration Program*, National Trust, 2014; available from <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/vic>.

important examples of documented collections of living plants established for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, display, retention and education.



Fitzroy Gardens in East Melbourne were proclaimed in 1848 and have been in continuous use since the 1850s as a public garden. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

7.0 Governing Victorians

Various forms of government were established in Victoria, including the establishment of institutions that oversaw the management of defence, law and order, and local and state government.

The Port Phillip District was at first governed from New South Wales. In response to concerns about the declining state of Aboriginal people in the Port Philip District, an Aboriginal Protectorate was established in 1838 and divided into four geographical areas. The goal of the Protectorate was to protect and re-socialise Aboriginal people through the teaching of agriculture, house construction, reading and writing, and religious instruction. The Protectorate was abolished in 1849, and in 1859, the Aboriginal Reserve system was legislated. By 1863, seven reserves and 23 camping places and ration depots were in place. In country Victoria, 39 honorary correspondents managed 23 depots on behalf of the Central Board.⁴³ Under the 1869 *Aboriginal Protection Act*, the Central Board became the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines and provided for the setting up of Aboriginal reserves at Lake Hindmarsh, Coranderrk, Ramahyuck, Lake Tyers and Lake Condah.

⁴³ Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800*, passim.

After separation from New South Wales in 1851, Melbourne became the capital of the colony of Victoria, and, from 1901, the state of Victoria. The Victorian parliament, based in Melbourne, was originally a single House of wealthy landowners; in 1856 the first elections for a democratically elected Victorian parliament were held. Work on Parliament House started in the same year. Melbourne was also home to the first Federal parliament from 1901 to 1927.



Parliament House was built in six stages from 1856. It has housed the Victorian government since that time and was the seat of the Commonwealth Parliament between Federation in 1901 and 1927. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

Local government existed in Victoria before its separation from New South Wales. The Town of Melbourne was established in 1842 and the Borough of Geelong in 1849. The *Local Government Act* of 1863 consolidated the 1853 *Roads Act* to provide for Road Districts and Shires to administer local affairs. Subsequently, municipal governments were formed throughout Victoria to take over the responsibilities of the Road Districts.

From the late 1830s, Aboriginal resistance to pastoral invasion in the Port Phillip District was controlled by a combination of mounted and border police, and the Native Police Corps, which formed in 1842. By the late 1840s, 40 constables comprised the police force in Melbourne. Because of the large number of ex-convicts in the community (about 5,000 in 1850), both petty street crime and more serious larceny were more common in Melbourne than in London.⁴⁴ In 1853, control of policing was removed from local magistrates when the colony's seven

⁴⁴ Shaw, 'Foundation and Early History', *E-Melbourne*.

autonomous police forces were amalgamated to form the centrally controlled Victoria Police.



The former Castlemaine Court House, originally constructed as a police office in 1852, is one of the earliest extant public buildings in the colony of Victoria and is possibly the earliest surviving public building on the Victorian goldfields. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

The Eureka Rebellion took place in Ballarat at the end of 1854, and had a major impact on how the goldfields were administered. Local self-government of mining affairs was introduced via Local Courts, which were instrumental in framing regulations for the conduct of mining, determining the area of a claim and the conditions for occupying a claim. In rural Victoria, police reserves were gazetted as part of early town surveys and often featured a police station, residence, stables, lock-up, and, in later years, a courthouse.

Because of the rapid rise in Melbourne's population and prosperity in the 1850s, in 1852 British authorities sent four companies of the 40th Regiment, despatched the sloop *Electra* in 1853, and transferred the military headquarters from Sydney to Melbourne in 1854.⁴⁵ Troops were housed in Melbourne in barracks known from 1866 as Victoria Barracks. British units maintained a presence until 1870, the year that the Victorian Artillery was established to provide standing garrisons for fortifications in the colony and instructional staff for Volunteer Forces artillery units. The first volunteer military unit in Victoria was the Melbourne Rifle Regiment, formed in 1854 because of fears raised by the Crimean War of the 1850s. A paid 'Militia'

⁴⁵ John Lack and R. S. Billett, 'Defence', *E-Melbourne School of Historical Studies*, Department of History, The University of Melbourne, 2008; available from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/blogs/EM00452b.htm>.

organisation replaced volunteer forces from 1884. After the Victorian Mounted Rifles were formed in 1885, with companies recruited in rural centres, in the 1880s rifle clubs, military camps and school cadet corps flourished.

Fort Queenscliff was established in 1860 when an open battery was constructed on Shortland's Bluff to defend the entrance to Port Phillip Bay. Over £1,500,000 was also spent on Fort Nepean, part of a defence complex commenced in 1881, because of fear of attack.⁴⁶ In 1883-84 Victoria became the first Australian colony to create a Ministry of Defence, which remained in Melbourne until the Department of Defence transferred to Canberra in the 1960s.⁴⁷

A volunteer Naval Brigade formed in 1859. The first permanent naval forces were established in 1867 with the acquisition of the obsolete, Napoleonic era, line-of-battle ship HMVS *Nelson*.⁴⁸

The introduction of compulsory training for volunteer militia forces in 1910 saw large camps established at Kilmore, Seymour, Ballarat and Heidelberg. A number of army training bases were set up in Victoria by the Commonwealth government in preparation for Australia's contribution to World War Two, including Puckapunyal Army Base near Seymour in 1939, the Balcombe Army Camp at Mount Martha in 1939, Bonegilla Army Camp in 1940 near Wodonga and the Beersheba Barracks established in Wangaratta in 1943.

The Federal Government acquired Point Cook in 1913 to construct the nation's first military flying school, where, during World War One, the Australian Flying Corps was established. A depot was opened in 1942 at Lake Boga to repair and service flying boats during World War Two.

8.0 Building community life

Churches, schools, hospitals and community halls transferred old-world belief systems, ideals and institutions to the new colony of Victoria.

A church was often one of the first buildings erected as the nucleus of a settlement. By 1839, all the major Christian denominations were represented in Melbourne.⁴⁹ Prior to the erection of permanent structures, services were conducted wherever shelter was available. Churches in Victoria were offered

⁴⁶ Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 63.

⁴⁷ Lack and Billett, 'Defence', *E-Melbourne*.

⁴⁸ *Colonial Defence Personnel Records Held in Melbourne – Fact Sheet 134*, National Archives of Australia, 2014; available from <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs134.aspx>.

⁴⁹ Shaw, 'Foundation and Early History', *E-Melbourne*.

land grants and limited financial aid by the government and buildings were erected as settlements grew and funds were raised for the establishment of permanent structures. Early structures were often constructed on Crown land. Most of these titles were passed over to the occupants under the *Abolition of State Aid to Religion Act* of 1871.



The former Franklinford Common School building was erected in the mid-1860s as the result of local initiative for a new common school. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

In the 1830s, children on station homesteads attended boarding schools in Melbourne; others were instructed by governesses and tutors at home. National schools were introduced to Australia in the 1840s. By 1851, Melbourne churches were providing 74 denominational schools, supplemented by seven newly founded national schools.⁵⁰ A new Board of Education in Victoria took over control of all national and church schools under the *Common Schools Act* of 1862. State schools were erected in Victoria in the 1870s after the *Victorian Education Act* of 1872 established a central public school system based on the principles of free, secular and compulsory education. Local residents, often represented by Progress Associations, petitioned the Department of Education to give approval for the opening of a school. Consolidated schools were established in the 1940s.

Early settlers in the Port Phillip District were unable to access medical services due to the remoteness of settlements and lack of facilities. The first public hospital, the Royal Melbourne, opened in temporary premises in 1842 to accommodate those who were too poor to pay for care at home. Childbirth and the treatment of women's illnesses were carried out at home with the help of visiting midwives or relatives, with hospitals established in private homes from the 1880s. Bush Nursing Centres were introduced in

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Victoria from 1911 to provide essential nursing care in country areas that were isolated from regular medical services.

Public, memorial, shire and church halls became the focus of district social life. The erection of a public or memorial hall, often through the efforts of the local Progress Association, symbolised progress and stood as a measure of faith in the future of the community. Often built of timber, or only partly finished, halls required regular upkeep and often rebuilding in later years. Communities came up with creative ideas to raise the funds to undertake the required work.



The Moyston Avenue of Honour, planted in 1921, exemplifies rural Victoria's methods to commemorate World War One, where each individual, regardless of rank, was equally recognised for their service.

Australia commemorated its participation in war, including the Boer War, World War One, World War Two, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, with the installation of memorials such as obelisks, cairns, fountains, statues, honour boards, memorial halls and gates. Avenues of Honour were planted to commemorate the sacrifice and service made by local volunteers during World War One. By 1918, the high casualty rate in Australia from World War One of 64.93 per cent, the highest of all allied forces, meant that every Australian was related to, or was closely associated with, someone who had been killed. From 1917 to 1921, Victorians planted at least 128 avenues, with trees mostly of European origin. Although avenues exist in other states of Australia, they were most popular in Victoria, and over 220 examples exist today.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Avenues of Honour Education and Celebration Program*, National Trust, 2014; available from <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/vic>. Janine Haddow, "Avenues of

Cemeteries are other important places of commemoration. These sites trace a community's history and are often all that remains of early settlements.

9.0 Shaping cultural and creative life

Creating culture, including the arts, sport and recreation, and popular culture, has played an important role in shaping Victoria's history and identity.

Intellectual and social pursuits were reflected in the establishment in Melbourne of the Melbourne Club (1839), the Mechanics Institute and the first Masonic Lodge (1840), and a debating society (1841).⁵² The Melbourne Public Library opened in 1853 and for much of its history shared premises with the National Gallery of Victoria, the Museum of Victoria, and the Public Record Office. Art galleries were opened in regional Victoria centres from the 1880s. Of the five regional galleries operating in Australia by 1900, four were located in Victoria. Galleries in Ballarat (1884), Bendigo (1887), Castlemaine (1913), Geelong (1896) and Warrnambool (1886) began as incorporated associations.⁵³

The mechanics' institute movement was established in 1800 when Dr George Birkbeck of the Andersonian Institute in Scotland gave a series of lectures to local mechanics.⁵⁴ Mechanics' institutes (also named Athenaeums, Schools of Art and Free Libraries) were established in 80 per cent of townships across Victoria from the 1850s and provided lectures and library services. Nearly 1,000 were built in Victoria and 562 remain today.⁵⁵

Honour: A Victorian Cultural Landscape," *Landscape Australia*, no. 3 (1988). Hodgson, Personal Communication.

⁵² Shaw, *'Foundation and Early History'*, E-Melbourne.

⁵³ Margaret Rich, *'The Development of Regional Galleries'*, National Museum of Australia, 2011; available from nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/MRich_2011.html ISBN 978-1-876944-92-6

⁵⁴ The nineteenth century term 'mechanic' referred to an artisan or workingman. The movement spread quickly throughout the British Empire.

⁵⁵ *What Is a Mechanics' Institute?*, Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc, 2005; available from <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~mivic/history.htm>.



Built from funds raised by locals, the Fryerstown Mechanics' Institute was opened in 1863 to commemorate the Burke and Wills 1860-61 expedition.

Dances and musical events were staged from the first years of pastoral settlement, often in shearing sheds. In later years, residents used public garden reserves, gazetted as part of the official survey of towns 'to take the air'. Boating became popular in the 1870s, and kiosks and tea gardens were constructed next to boat sheds on rivers and lakes.

Horsereading was Victoria's first organised sport, beginning in Melbourne in 1837, with the first meeting held on the site of the future Flemington Racecourse in March 1840.⁵⁶ This racecourse is now recognised on the National Heritage List together with the Melbourne cricket ground. Horse racing clubs were established throughout the colony. Racecourses were often used in the mid-nineteenth century by displaced Aboriginal people seeking refuge.⁵⁷

Early settlers formed football and cricket teams. Invented in Melbourne in the late 1850s by Tom Wills and codified in 1859, Australian Rules is the oldest code of football in the world.⁵⁸ Irregular cricket matches began in Melbourne in 1839, and three regular clubs came into existence in 1842.⁵⁹ Games were played in available paddocks until funds enabled the erection of permanent facilities on recreation reserves set aside by the

⁵⁶ Shaw, *'Foundation and Early History'*, E-Melbourne.

⁵⁷ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 76.

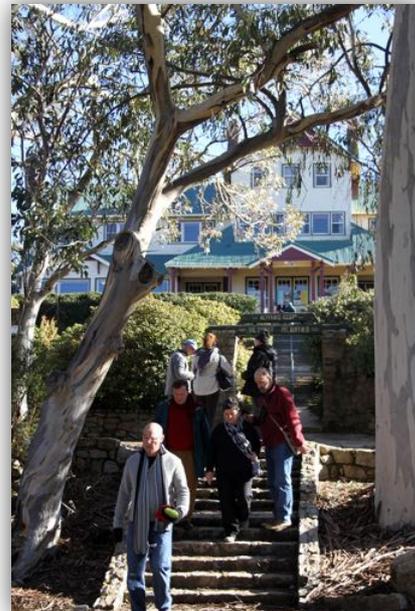
⁵⁸ Robert Pascoe, *'Football - Australian Rules'*, E-Melbourne, School of Historical Studies, Department of History, The University of Melbourne, 2008; available from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00593b.htm>.

⁵⁹ Shaw, *'Foundation and Early History'*, E-Melbourne.

government. Clubrooms, grandstands and score boxes were amongst the structures built. Trees were also planted at recreation reserves, particularly pine, cypress and sugar gums, and often memorial entrance gates were erected.

People picnicked and swam at their favourite spots on in the sea, rivers and lakes. Bathing establishments operated at St Kilda from the 1860s and sea enclosures were established at Queenscliff and Geelong by 1868.⁶⁰ The construction of Olympic size swimming pools was undertaken across Victoria in the 1960s.

Recreational activities in national parks and state forests were encouraged by the establishment of government infrastructure and facilities from the 1880s. The Mount Buffalo Chalet, for example, provided luxury accommodation for visitors from 1910.



The Mount Buffalo Chalet, completed in 1910, was built after the first road to the summit was opened in 1908. It has been continually operated as a government-run tourist destination for over ninety years. Source information: Victorian Heritage Database.

⁶⁰ Priestley, *The Victorians: Making Their Mark*, 121.

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