

EARLY COLLINGWOOD MEMORIES

First Settlement

The first European settlement of Melbourne commenced in 1835 with the arrival of John Pascoe Fawkner's ship 'Enterprise' from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). The site of Melbourne had long been the home of Aboriginals who numbered about eight hundred when the early settlers arrived. The general locality at the junction of the Merri Creek and the

Yarra River was of particular importance to the Aboriginals and both rivers still bear their Aboriginal names.

One pioneer, Garryowen, wrote: 'Studley Park and the Yarra Bend . . . with two or three nooks in the Merri Creek, were the favourite haunts of the Aborigines.'

One of the larger camps, where about 90 of the Wurundjerri tribe lived, was on Dight's land near the falls on the

Yarra. The Aboriginals were soon to lose their camp sites as European settlement expanded and land was fenced and cleared.

In its earliest days Melbourne consisted of a haphazard scattering of houses and tents concentrated in the area bordering the Yarra near the western end of Flinders Street. The population grew steadily as settlers arrived from Van Diemen's Land, Sydney and overseas. In February 1838,



JOHN PASCOE FAWKNER

in Sydney, a Government land sale was held for town, suburban and country lots in distant Melbourne. The suburbs now known as Fitzroy and Collingwood, but then as a parish of the Jika Jika or Newtown, were divided into 25 acre lots and sold for an average of £7 per acre. These lots were in turn subdivided by their owners and re-sold.

Settlement increased in the region which is the present suburb of Fitzroy, and in 1842 was officially named 'Collingwood' after a British Admiral. As settlement expanded further the area east of Smith Street became known as East Collingwood. Until 1851 East Collingwood remained almost rural with only a handful of cottages and inns, a factory or two, and a few homes of pastoral pioneers along the Yarra. It was not until 1873 that the 'East' was dropped from the name, long after the western area had been re-named Fitzroy.

Pioneers of the 1840s: Georgiana McCrae

One of the early families who chose to live in what was to become the City of Collingwood was that of Andrew and Georgiana McCrae.

Georgiana, with her children, arrived in Melbourne in March 1841 to join her husband, a solicitor, and recorded much of her life in the new colony in her journal. This has been published as *Georgiana's Journal: Melbourne 1841-1865*. The McCraes built their house 'Mayfield' on the river-fronted site they were purchasing in Abbotsford.

Georgiana described the area: **The 'Mayfield' site, 'Carran-Carranulk', so called by the natives after the Carran, or prickly myrtle, consists of nine and a half acres of land badly encumbered with boulders, requiring much labour to raise them out of the soil. The allotment is bounded on the north by the Yarra, on the west by Nicholson's Paddock, on the east by a fence enclosing the space reserved for a road to a future bridge across the river, and on the south by a track leading to the bend of the stream, eastwards . . .**

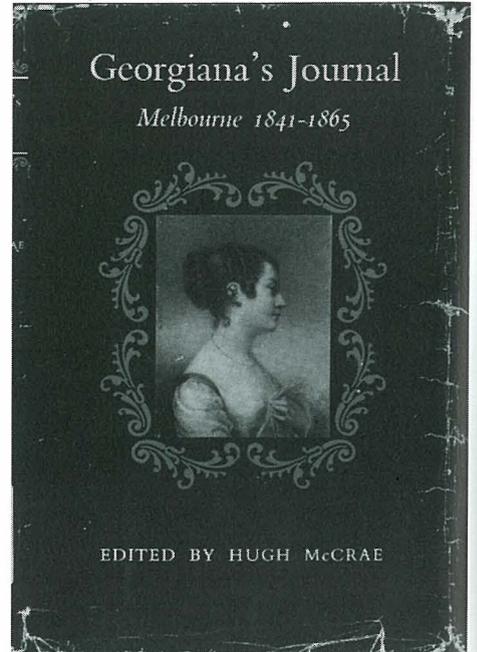
In the 'reserve' the boys kept a kitchen-garden where they grew quantities of pumpkins, etc. Here, too, the women servants carried on their laundry arrangements . . .

From the dormer-windows of 'Mayfield', looking south, nothing was to be seen but the tops of gum-trees all the way to Richmond Hill . . .

In 1842, about seven acres were sown

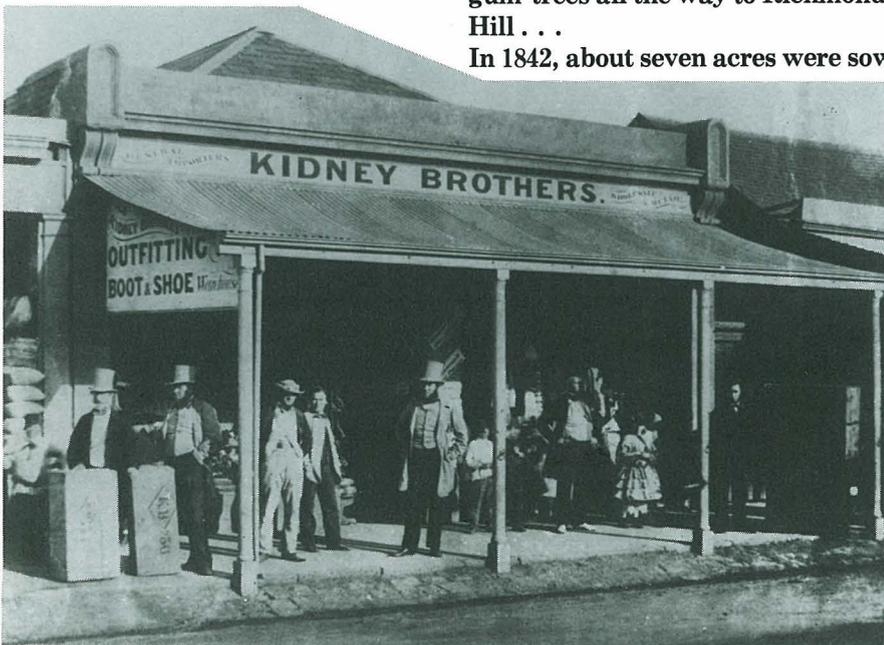
with barley, which yielded a fair crop — and in the following year, with oats, which yielded well.

The road from Melbourne to 'Mayfield' Georgiana described as 'an everlasting chain of bog-holes, with figures of eight and many deviations on account of fallen trees and other obstacles; only the first mile from town is in repair'.

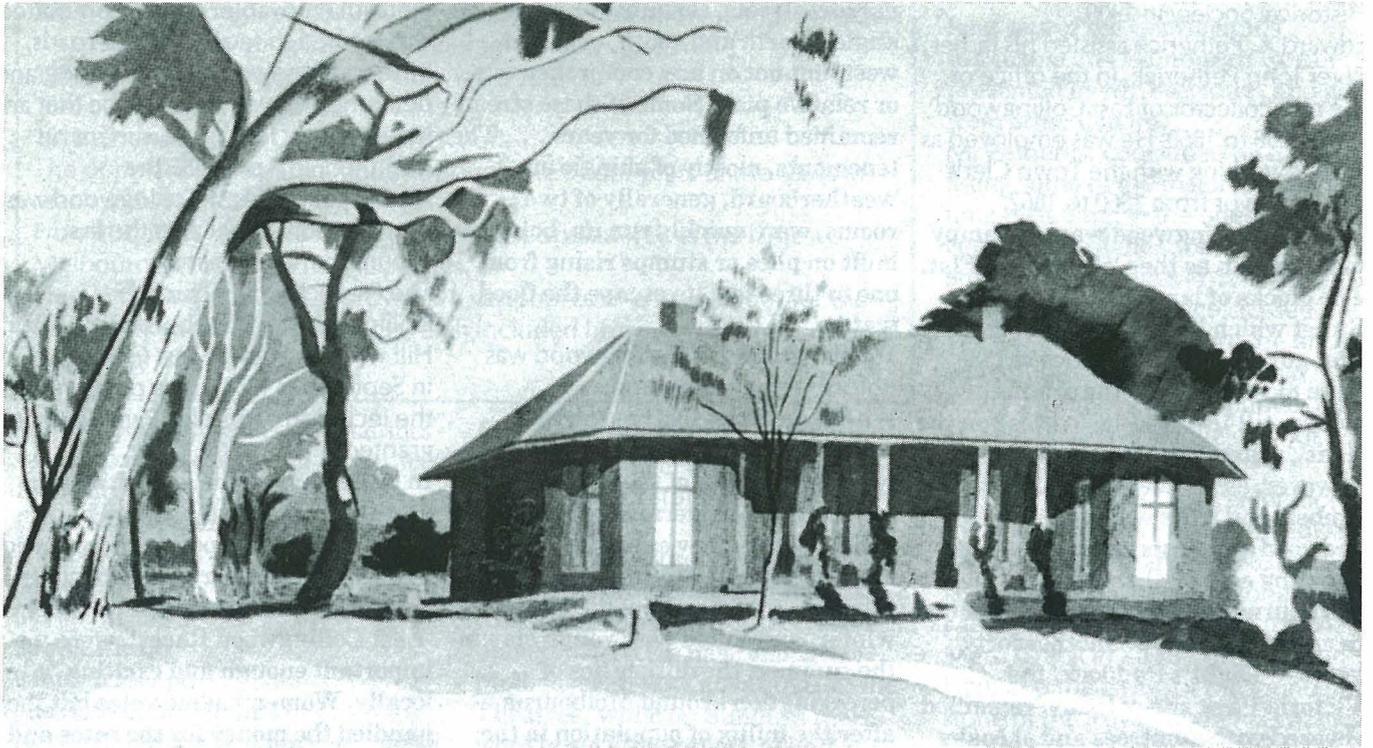


Of February 1843 she wrote:

At this time, our contract with Mortimer, the butcher, for beef and mutton was at the rate of three ha'pence the pound; veal, pork etc. at fourpence. The cart used to bring us a side of mutton twice a week with a shin of beef for soup. The driver invariably added a sheep's head and pluck for the dogs, but Ellen prepared these Scots fashion for the master and allowed the dogs the leavings. The mutton was so fat, Ellen used to make candles for her own use and for the nursery of it. On Friday afternoons, troops of blackfellows and their gins used to assemble at the slaughter-houses to collect sheep's heads and plucks which they roasted at their fires by the Merri Creek. Georgiana's journal mentions the road-making project of their neighbour Mr James Simpson and she describes the path beside it: **There was also a raised footpath, about four feet wide, with sloping sides and a ditch to carry off rainwater. The sides of this path in springtime, were gay with orchids and other strange flowers, while in the ditch next to the roadway, slender**



KIDNEY BROTHERS OUTFITTERS AND BOOT AND SHOE SHOP, SMITH STREET, 1860s



MAYFIELD, JUNE 1843, FROM A SKETCH BY GEORGINA

frogs disported themselves, silent by day, but at sunset deafening us with their vespers.

(Simpson's Road was in time re-named Victoria Street.)

Our opposite neighbours, though on the same side of the Yarra, were the Edward Curr's, from Circular Head, Van Diemen's Land. Their property

is called 'St Helier's'. Then there were the Orrs at 'Abbotsford' and the Hodgsons at 'Studley'.

Edward Curr was one of the leading men of the day and became known as the Father of Separation, the separation in 1851 of the Colony of Victoria from that of New South Wales.

The Orr residence 'Abbotsford' gave its name to the locality and John Hodgson's 'Studley' gave its to Studley Park.

The McCraes left 'Mayfield' because of financial difficulties and moved to the area near Rosebud now known as McCrae. 'Mayfield' was demolished in 1962.



HODDLE ST, EAST COLLINGWOOD C. 1858

Collingwood in the 1850s and 60s:

Edward Petherick

Edward A. Petherick recalled Collingwood of the 1850s and 1860s in a paper he read to the Victorian Historical Society in 1909.

Edward A. Petherick assisted his father, Peter John Petherick, in the office of the rate collector of East Collingwood from 1856 to 1860. He was employed as a clerk working with the Town Clerk and Surveyor from 1860 to 1862.

Much of Collingwood was a swampy plain known as the Collingwood Flat. The blocks of land east of Smith Street which had been sold in those first government land sales of 1838 were mostly held by the original owners till 1849 and 1850; those on the 'Flat', sparsely timbered, were, however, early 'cleared' of fallen timber, and trees were felled for firewood and posts and rails — the axe rang early, all around Melbourne. Three blocks were fenced in and preserved for another forty years — Dight's Paddock, the Victoria Park site of today, remained covered with gumtrees and sheoaks until a comparatively recent period. The open spaces and that 'park' were frequented by the aborigines late in

the 'forties'.

The Gold Rushes brought thousands of immigrants to Victoria and many eventually settled in Collingwood:

When the land was cut up into allotments to suit immigrants, the owners or auctioneers, laid out narrow streets, certainly at right angles, north and south, east and west, but not on any comprehensive or relative plan. Some of these streets remained unformed for years . . . The tenements, mostly of shingle or weatherboard, generally of two rooms, were quickly run up, being built on piles or stumps rising from one to three feet, to escape the flood waters.

The flat ground of Collingwood was notorious for its flooding:

Within an hour, I have seen the results of a thunderstorm covering two square miles of the Flat. Some have suggested mermaids swimming about. I never saw one. They would have floundered around in the mud. Slippery, miry, and puddle all the winter, and caked with rough clay in the summer, the difficulties of peregrination around Melbourne after the influx of population in the early fifties were at their worst on Collingwood Flat . . . Half-Wellington boots were much worn by

women folk as well as by men in the winter months. A lantern on dark nights was a most desirable companion.

Being outside the City of Melbourne the area had no local government and the general lack of facilities made life far from enjoyable. A local committee was formed to secure proper roads, pure water, sewerage and lighting and petitioned Governor La Trobe that an independent local government be instituted. In April 1855 the Municipality of East Collingwood was proclaimed and became the first suburban municipality.

The Municipality included Collingwood and Abbotsford; Clifton Hill was annexed by East Collingwood in September 1855, but a petition for the inclusion of Studley Park was not granted.

In those days — the late fifties and early sixties — Collingwood had a very considerable political reputation and a large number of platform politicians . . . Municipal elections, 'East Collingwood Races', were important enough and exciting locally. Women had no votes but they handled the money for the rates and insisted on their husbands voting for the men who would make their paths and streets passable.



SMITH ST, EAST COLLINGWOOD 1866

- 1851 The beginning of the rush to Victoria's goldfields. Collingwood boomed in both population and buildings as the gold immigrants who had flooded into the colony started to return to Melbourne from the diggings.
- 1854 Census showed population in the area as 8,738
- 1855 East Collingwood proclaimed a municipality.
- 1863 The Borough of East Collingwood had a population of approximately 19,000 crowding into its increasingly subdivided land.
- 1873 Proclaimed the Town of Collingwood.
- 1875 Population of 21,000.
- 1876 Renamed the City of Collingwood.

The population increased rapidly through the Boom years of the 1880s to reach 35,000 in 1891.

From the 1850s to the 1870s Collingwood's population was the largest of Melbourne's suburban municipalities.

This increasing population provided a vast source of cheap labour for the development of local industries which included brewing, tanning, boot and textile manufacturing.

Mr Petherick presented the statistics he had collected showing that in 1860 the Municipality contained:

**Court House and Municipal Offices,
3,142 dwellings,
33 hotels,
362 shops,
30 shanties,
9 foundries and
one flour-mill (Dight's).**

He also listed the buildings of

Collingwood according to their construction material: of wood 2,560, of brick 686, of stone 310 and of iron 54, total 3,610.

He spoke of leisure activities: **We had our local entertainments — concerts, readings, lectures, strolling players. We were near enough to Melbourne to take advantage of the Theatres, while on Sundays there were large attendances in half a**

dozen wooden Churches and Chapels. A Free Public Library was established in 1859, the Council allowing the use of three rooms in their Chambers for books and readers, in the evenings. The library started with 500 volumes, including long sets of the Gentleman's Magazine and Edinburgh Review presented by Mr Fawkner, and gifts from other donors.

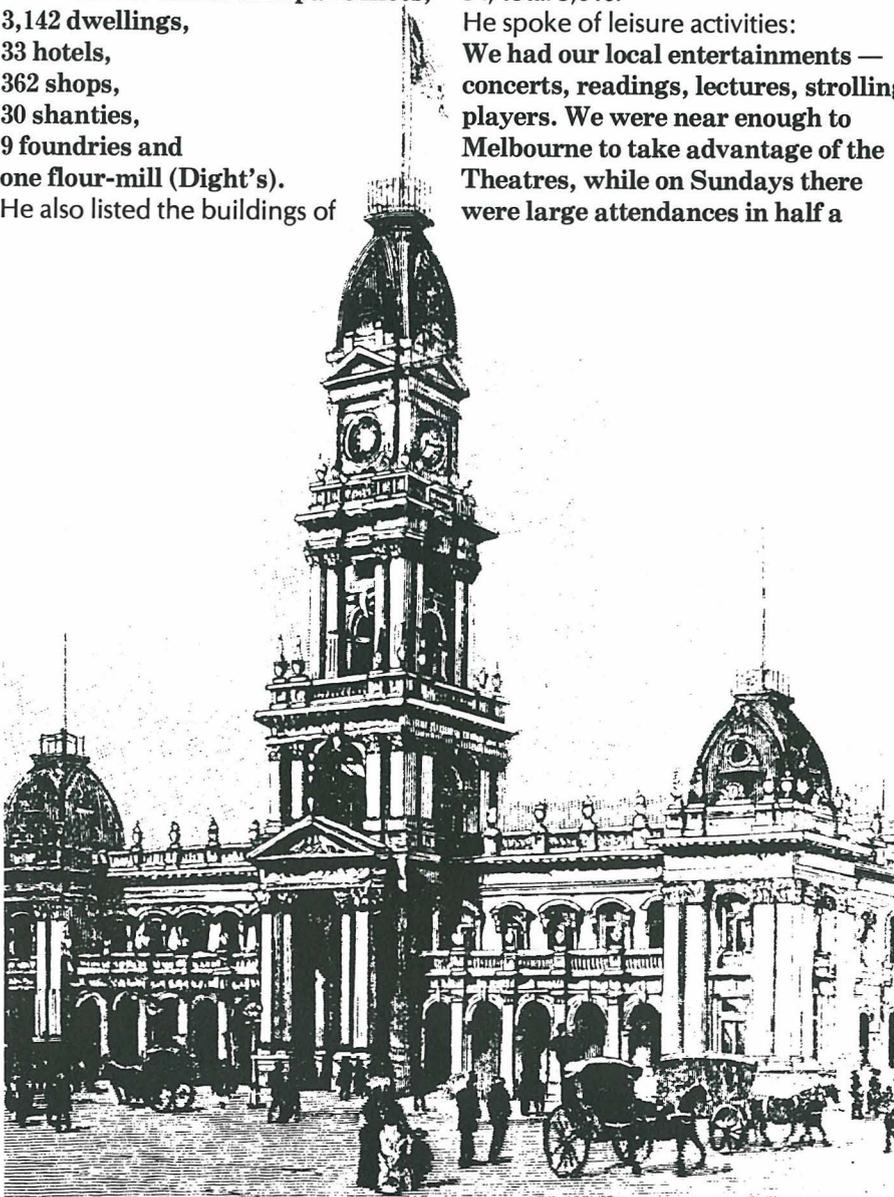
Mr Petherick concluded his paper by listing some of the major 'Events' of the time including:— the opening ceremonies of the Johnston St and the Studley Park bridges in 1856 and 1857 (the Studley Park Bridge crossed the Yarra at Church St. Before the bridges were built, one crossed the Yarra to Kew by John Hodgson's punt at Clarke St. The Victoria St Bridge was not built until 1882).

He also mentioned the celebrations of the marriage of Prince Albert Edward and Princess Alexandra (1863); the laying of the foundation stone of the Municipal Abattoirs in 1861 (beside the Merri Creek in Ramsden St, Clifton Hill); and the laying of the foundation stone of the Royal Albert Mechanics Institute and Free Public Library by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867.

Another event of the time mentioned by Mr Petherick was Collingwood's own gold mine. The Collingwood Gold Mining Company was formed in the 1860s and 'a shaft sunk through bluestone to a depth of more than 100 feet, at the south east corner of Gipps Street and Hoddle Street, opposite the 'Royal George', not far from the present Town Hall, which is on a basaltic bed.'

The *Argus* of August 13, 1865 described the scene when a pennyweight of gold was gleaned from the first half bucket of wash dirt brought through the shaft: **Directly gold was found the workmen knocked off and no slight amount of dissipation followed. Crowds collected and the street was during the afternoon crowded with buggies full of anxious visitors eager to gather hints for a little speculation. It is worth telling that while the secretary of the company was exhibiting the gold to the Honourable Colonial Secretary the precious morsels got spilt on the carpet and were not recovered.**

The company did not prosper and finally lapsed.



COLLINGWOOD TOWN HALL IN THE 1880s

A Young Gentlewoman in the 1860s-70s: Mildred Snowden

The municipality of Collingwood was socially diverse and the lives of the well-to-do families who lived along the Yarra in Abbotsford were very different from the lives of the families living in the tenements of the Collingwood Flat.

Mildred Demaine (nee Snowden) in later life recorded memories of her girlhood in Abbotsford. Her father was Sir Arthur Snowden, a Solicitor who became an MLA and Mayor of Melbourne.

The house in which Mildred Snowden was born and grew up in was named 'St Heliers' after the street in which it is situated (the street was named after the Currs' house). It is near the Johnston Street Bridge and next door to 'Abbotsford House' which in 1863 was bought by the Sisters of the Convent of the Good Shepherd.

I was born in 1860, at Abbotsford. We rarely left the home garden and grounds, except for walks to the Park, or to see the nuns at the Convent of the Good Shepherd. The

Convent then consisted of a large villa with wide verandahs and rooms entering from the verandah. The chapel was in one of the rooms of the convent, and we were often taken to see it, and nuns explained how one of them was up all night to ring the bell and other duties. In those early days the convent villa was enclosed with an iron fence in Clarke St and a paling fence in St Heliers St, and in the grounds where fine gum-trees grew and cattle grazed, there was a railed-in pathway from the house to a comparatively small brick building where the penitents started the laundry . . . There was no garden in the convent and it was my father's pleasure to send baskets of flowers for their altar.

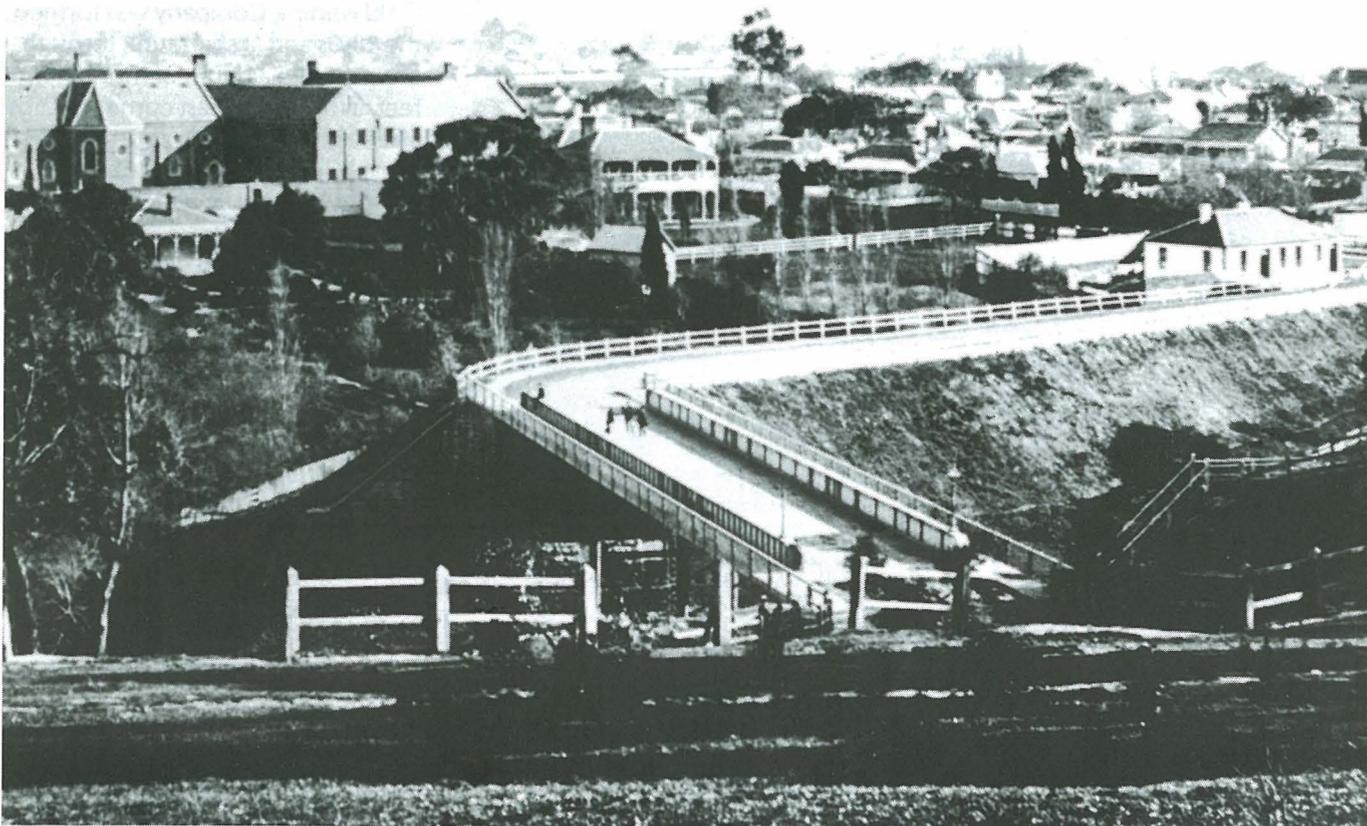
The old bridge was very shaky and we were amused to feel it shake when the heavy wood carts went over it and to see the flowing river between the cracks in the floorings. The new iron bridge was built over the old wooden one at Johnston St. It was a matter of great interest to us to see the large supporting pillars being filled with stones and cement and then the rivetting of the ironwork on the top. The embankment on the Eastern side

was cut away too as the curve on the road was considered dangerous for traffic.

(The old bridge was the one Mr Petherick remembered being opened in the 1850s. The new bridge was opened in 1876 and was replaced by the current bridge in 1956.)

Another interesting memory was to see the old lamp lighter run up twice a day with a ladder on his bent back, in the mornings to trim the four lamps on the old white wooden bridge over the Yarra at Abbotsford, and in the evenings to light the lamps . . . Lamps and lamp trimming were very important work in the household, also the polishing of the brass candle sticks . . . The Yan Yean (water supply) was laid on, but never fit for drinking water — a tank of rain water was always kept for drinking . . .

There was no sanitary drainage at that time. Every man had to make his own drains, very often on to the streets where the gutters grew weeds and collected rubbish. As our home was high and sloped to the river the drainage was not difficult. Our bathroom was primitive too — a tub under a shower in a tiled room next to



THE JOHNSTON ST BRIDGE WHICH MILDRED SNOWDEN SAW BEING BUILT IN 1876



LANGRIDGE ST IN THE 1880S

the kitchen.

(This was considerably less primitive than many homes on the Flat several decades later.)

For our early education we had governesses, as there were no suitable schools near enough. The first one, a Miss Watnuff, we adored, and of course commenced music. We had three following governesses and learned to write a ladylike pointed hand very well, Little Arthur's history etc., and to play operatic airs as duets as well as solos.

Later Mildred and her young sister went to Mr and Mrs E. A. Sampson's School for Young Gentlewomen at Torrington House, the site of the present St Vincents Hospital, Fitzroy. We nearly always walked there and back from Abbotsford.

Singing and embroidery were major activities at school:

Before machines were general, dressmaking was a busy time. French hems and scallops both much worn had to be gone over twice. When I was very little I remember the bell sleeves and fringes and the

beautifully embroidered muslins and linens under sleeves fastened with tiny pearl buttons.

Of course these were worn with crinolines and very full skirts . . . For parties and pantomimes we always wore white book muslin dresses tucked by Mother, low necked and short sleeves, and blue sashes and shoulder ties and hair ties, for years our party dresses were of that pattern.

As we got older our dresses extended to delaines, dimity prints and muslins, and velvet and silk in the winter. And for best, bronze shiny kid boots with elastic sides trimmed with little pearl buttons. My sister used to wear out her toes very quickly and she used to be teased and told she would have to wear leather boots with copper toes the same as many poor children wore — of course she did not.

Croquet matches were very fashionable as we were growing up and I was considered quite an expert for my age.

At 17 Mildred left school and took

music, cooking and singing lessons from Herr Julius Herz. In 1879 her father took her for a trip to England and the Continent. On her return to Melbourne, 'we commenced to have a gay time with parties, garden parties, concerts, theatres, etc.' In 1882 she married, at St Phillips Church, Hoddle Street, Mr Robert Alfred Demaine, a young member of her father's law firm, and moved to Kew.

The Less Fortunate: The work of Dr Singleton

Edward A. Petherick described Collingwood's state of health in the 1850s and 60s:

Infant mortality was very great and the Health Officer's reports for years were of the prevalence of scarlet fever, diphtheria, dysentery, and other zymotic diseases due to bad drainage and lack of sewerage — diseases, however, not then peculiar to Collingwood, or the "Flat". In 1861 ten per cent of all Collingwood children under 5 died. In the 1880s



DR SINGLETON

Collingwood's death rate was the same as for the whole metropolitan area.

However, in those boom years Melbourne's death rate from typhoid was in fact worse than London's and diphtheria was almost as bad.

Dr John Singleton in his autobiography *A Narrative of Incidents in the Eventful Life of a Physician* wrote of a different side of life in the City of Collingwood from that which Mildred Snowden recorded.

Dr Singleton (1808-1891) came from Dublin to Victoria in 1851 only a few months before gold was discovered. He writes of his early years in Melbourne:

I had for some time the most extensive practice perhaps in the city, as medical men had gone with the rest to the goldfields.

His activities extended well beyond his medical practice and he was a most active evangelist and fighter against

'the Demon Drink'. In 1868 he decided to combine his interests in the setting up of a medical mission:

I resolved to commence one in the poorest and most densely populated suburb in Melbourne. The municipality of Collingwood seemed most to answer the description. After much inquiry I found that a great number of the poorer classes, artisans with large families, labourers, aged people, widows and deserted women, often with many children to provide for, with others of the same classes had gone to Collingwood, where the rentals were then very moderate, and the cost of food, vegetables etc., equally so.

I found also that although, as a rule, many of them were unable when ill to pay for medical attendance, there was yet at the same time no place but the Melbourne Hospital where they could get medical relief . . .

Accordingly in January 1869, I opened the Collingwood Free Medical Dispensary in Wellington St, the first institution of the kind attempted in Victoria . . . Within the first year 3000 patients applied for medical aid. The Collingwood Municipal Council had agreed to provide the rent — I to furnish every other requisite; but within a fortnight the council refused to pay as agreed, on the ground that I distributed tracts to the patients, left in the waiting room such periodicals as *The British Workman*, *The Cottager*, *The Band of Hope Review*, and others similar, and generally,

that I conducted the Dispensary for the spiritual as well as for the temporal welfare of the patients.

Out of 168,000 attendants for free medical treatment I prescribed (up to April, 1891) for 82,000, or nearly half the entire number, myself.

The mortality of the municipality, considering its crowded and badly drained condition, was exceptionally low, owing, as I am persuaded, to the prompt, conscientious, simple, non-alcoholic treatment adopted in every case . . . I have no hesitation in saying that hundreds of lives of the young especially, were thus preserved and prolonged, and much suffering prevented. And, more important still, thousands of men and women were brought under the influence and heard the truths of the gospel story, to their present and their eternal salvation.

In addition to the Wellington Street Dispensary, Dr Singleton established in Islington Street, a Temporary Home for Friendless and Fallen Women where he noted:

The training includes cooking, washing, ironing, needlework, keeping house, tending rooms, cleanliness.

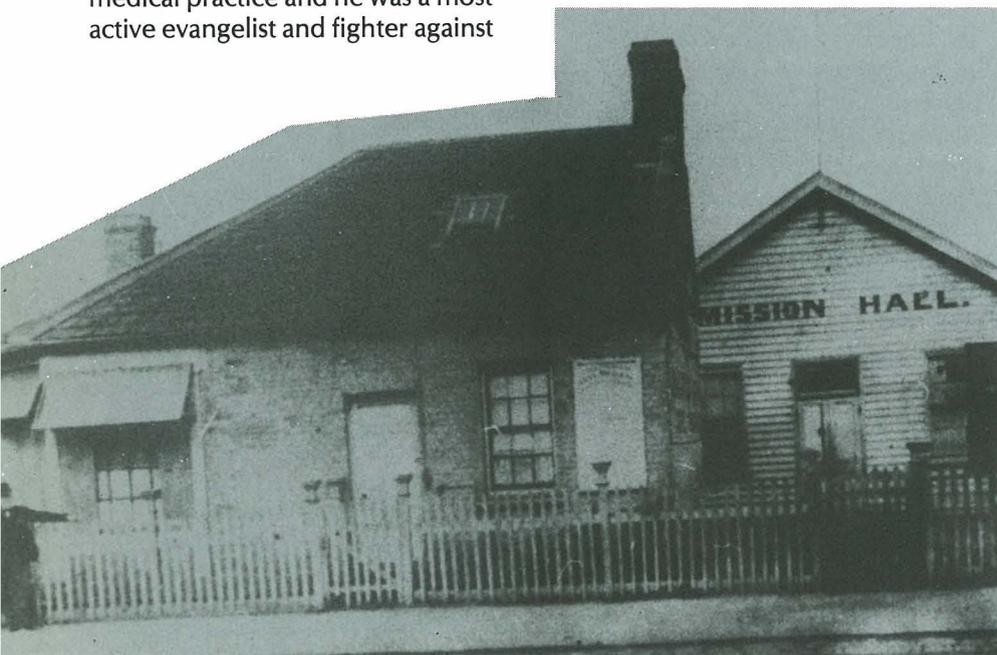
He quotes dozens of cases of girls thus 'saved'.

Subsequently, he set up a Night Shelter for Destitute, Homeless Women and Children on adjacent land. In the first year, he wrote, 10,000 women and 300 children slept and breakfasted there and some were helped to find employment. Widows Cottages for Aged Christian Women were later built on the same site.

Soon after the night refuge for women was established, he opened one for men, the Blue Bird Shelter, in Berry Street.

Dr Singleton was also involved in a wide range of activities outside the immediate Collingwood area, and has been called 'perhaps the greatest single charity worker in Melbourne'. Dr Singleton died in 1891 and his family carried on the work of the Dispensary. In the 1930s it became the responsibility of the Victorian Charities Board who developed its services to include social relief work.

In 1977 Singleton's Dispensary was re-located in Hoddle Street as the Collingwood Community Health Centre.



THE ORIGINAL COLLINGWOOD FREE MEDICAL DISPENSARY, WELLINGTON ST

The Boom of the 1880s

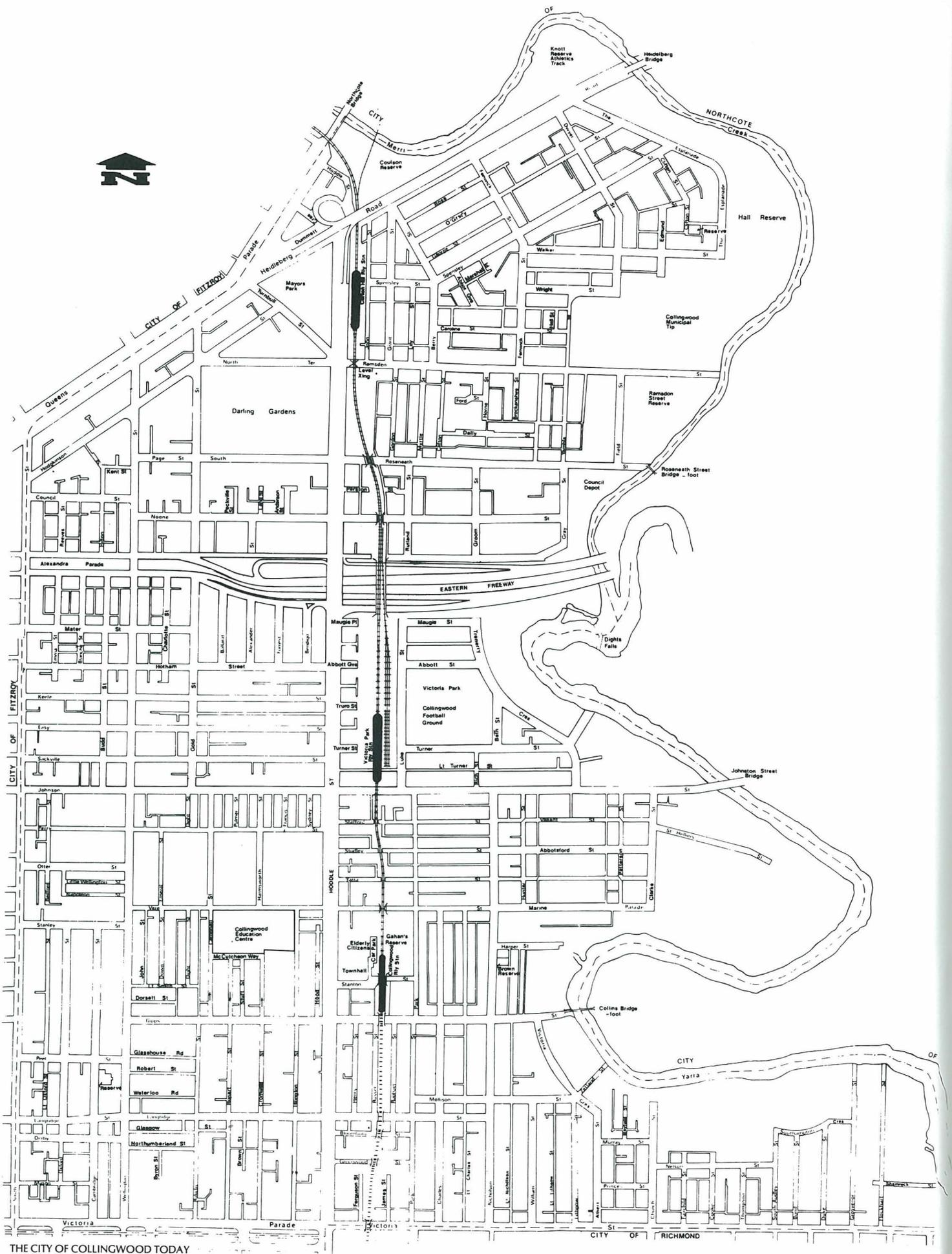
In 1888 the comprehensive volumes of 'Victoria and Its Metropolis Past and Present' were published, and contained the following descriptions: **COLLINGWOOD** (originally Newtown), a suburban city lying to the north-east of Melbourne, and on the Yarra River, to which it has a frontage, as the river runs of about five miles, is essentially a manufacturing city, and has a large and busy population of 29,000 persons, mostly engaged in various handicrafts, within an area of 1139 acres. It is connected with Melbourne by three lines of cable tramways and has the finest and most commodious Town Hall outside Melbourne. Smith Street, the principal thoroughfare, contains many large

and handsome stores and other buildings, amongst them being the Royal Albert Institute and Free Library, of nearly 4000 volumes. There are three reserves in the City, the Mayor's Park of six, the Recreation Grounds of seven, and the Darling Gardens of 16 acres. It has also the largest state school in the colony, and three other state schools. The local newspapers are the *Mercury* and the *Observer*. Collingwood is an electoral district, and returns two members to the Assembly. **CLIFTON HILL** is a residential suburb lying within, and forming part of, the city of Collingwood, which has of late years been extensively built on with a good class of houses and numerous handsome shops. It has an elevated position,

and commands an excellent view of the metropolis. In this suburb are the City of Melbourne bluestone quarries and stone-breaking works, in which extensive machinery is used. Clifton Hill has one newspaper, the *Gazette*. The Boom of the 1880s collapsed and the 1890s brought the devastating Depression to Melbourne. When suburban growth recommenced, changes in Collingwood included the demolition of many of the oldest houses to make way for large factories such as Foy and Gibsons and Whybrow Shoes, and in 1901 for the Melbourne-Collingwood direct railway. In the 20th century, Collingwood was also affected by events which influenced much of the world, the First World War (1914-1918), the Depression of the early 1930s, and the Second World War (1939-1945).



LADY PEACOCK PLANTS A TREE, DARLING GARDENS, 1907



THE CITY OF COLLINGWOOD TODAY