

Land, Places and Local History – City of Melbourne

Melbourne was founded in 1835 and was incorporated as a town in the Colony of New South Wales in 1842. It was created a Cathedral City by Letters Patent of Queen Victoria in 1847 and began referring to itself as the City of Melbourne about this time. The New South Wales Act conferring Melbourne with the status of City was not passed until 1849. On separation of Victoria from New South Wales in 1851 Melbourne became the capital of the Colony.

The beginnings of the City of Melbourne can be traced to the establishments of markets. In 1839 the New South Wales government passed an act authorising the establishment of markets in towns in the Colony and the appointment of commissioners to manage them. Market Commissioners were to be elected from proprietors of land and householders within the town limits. The voters were householders or occupiers of dwellings valued at more than £20 and proprietors of land or buildings to the value of £200.

In Melbourne markets were not established until 22 October 1841 at which time Melbourne was divided into four wards for the purpose of electing the Commissioners. When Melbourne was created a town in 1842 the powers of the Market commissioners were transferred to the newly elected Council. The four wards of Bourke, Gipps, LaTrobe and Lonsdale remained.

Between 1850 and 1860 the structure and boundaries of the City changed markedly. New wards were created and the boundaries of the city altered as some districts became separate municipalities. Collingwood and Fitzroy wards were created in 1850, Collingwood becoming a municipality in 1855, Fitzroy following in 1858. In 1856 Smith Ward and MacArthur Ward were created. In 1860 MacArthur Ward became the Municipality of Sandridge, later to be renamed Port Melbourne. The municipalities of Emerald Hill (later South Melbourne), Richmond and St Kilda were established in 1855, while Brunswick was created in 1857. The Victoria and Albert Wards were added in 1869. At the turn of the century there were seven wards.

In 1905 the City of Melbourne was united with the Borough of Flemington Kensington and the Town of North Melbourne. Hopetoun Ward was created to accommodate the new citizens within the City. In more recent years the number of wards has changed frequently and on two occasions elected councillors have been replaced by commissioners.

Public Record Office Victoria has an extensive collection of records from the City of Melbourne. The records document the activities of the City Council from the 1840s to the present. They reflect the wide range of matters for which the Council had responsibility and are a rich source of information about the City.

The powers and responsibilities of local authorities concern such matters as building control, land ownership, health, town planning, land valuation and transport regulation. Councils are empowered to make and enforce by-laws on a wide range of matters including road and traffic regulation, building construction, health, drainage, sanitation, environmental protection and planning. Local authorities have traditionally been responsible for road construction and maintenance, public health matters such as the inspection of premises, food and drug sampling and immunisation. They provide a wide range of social services including child day care, infant welfare, social welfare and domiciliary care services such as home help and meals to the elderly and others requiring assistance.

The Acts incorporating the Town of Melbourne in 1842 and 1849 provided for lighting, street construction and maintenance, drainage and sewers, construction of waterworks and water supply. An Act of 1863 gave local government districts responsibility for roads, streets, wharves, cemeteries, public health, water supply, drainage, charitable institutions, recreation facilities, libraries, pounds, licensed premises, markets, slaughter houses, weights and measures.

Major record series transferred to Public Record Office Victoria by the City of Melbourne include:

Council Records

VPRS 8910	Minute Books of Council Meetings	1842 – 1989
VPRS 54	Notice Papers and Proceedings of the Council	1842 – 1887
VPRS 8911	Proceedings of Council Meetings	1869 – 1990
VPRS 8945	Committee Meetings	1851 – 1990

Search [PROV's Online Catalogue](#) for Committee minutes registered as separate series.

Correspondence Records

VPRS 3181	Town Clerk's Correspondence Files	1842 – 1909
VPRS 3183	Town Clerk's Correspondence Files	1910 – 1982
VPRS 8904	Subject Index to Town Clerk's Correspondence Files (online digitised index)	1913 – 1983
VPRS 8907	Town Clerk's Register of Inward Correspondence	1910 – 1983

Rate and Valuation Records

VPRS 5708	Rate Books	1845 – 1975
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Available on microfiche (1845-1900) and microfilm (1901-1975) in the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room.

VPRS 3102	Valuation Books	1843 – 1860
VPRS 5709	Valuation Books	1853 – 1861
VPRS 8915	Valuation Field Books	1864 – 1980

Citizen Records

VPRS 4029	Citizen Lists and/or Citizen Rolls	1843 – 1994
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Available on microfiche (1877-1891) in the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room.

Building Records

VPRS 9289	Building Notices Register and Index	1850 – 1916
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The Index is also available on microfiche in the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room (ie. [VPRS 9463](#) Burchett Index).

VPRS 9288	Notices of Intention to Build	1850 – 1916
VPRS 11202	Building Application Index	1916 – 1993

Available on microfiche in the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room.

VPRS 11200	Building Application Plans	1916 – 1946
VPRS 11201	Building Application Files	1916 – 1960

Cemetery Records

VPRS 9583	Alphabetical Records of Burials – Old Melbourne Cemetery	1866 – 1917
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Available on microfiche in the Victorian Archives Centre Reading Room.

VPRS 9585	Chronological Record of Permissions to Bury – Old Melbourne Cemetery	1877 – 1917
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