Portland’s History

In 1800 Lieutenant James Grant and the ship’s company of the “Lady Nelson” named Portland Bay after the Duke of Portland, England’s influential Secretary of State. Because Grant was committed to a speedy passage, he had no time to explore Portland Bay or the inland.

Portland Bay received little attention after Grant’s sighting, until the late 1820’s when sealers frequented the area on a seasonal basis. Season whaling stations were set up by whalers in the early 1830’s, with large quantities of whale oil being transported to Tasmania.

On November 19th 1834, Edward Henty and his party arrived at Portland Bay to establish Victoria’s first permanent European settlement. In time, other Henty family members and settlers arrived to seek their fortune. In 1836 Major Mitchell’s expedition reached Portland by land, leading to expansion inland. And so the settlement grew.

The ‘Walk Portland’s Pride’ Tour and Guide was created by

Greencorps Project VIC 3407 as part of their project “On Track Portland”
Left to Right: Kim Walker, Melany Stokes, Ben Jones, Heath Gillespie, Ben Priddham, Craig Rosier (Team Leader), Casey Merrett, Michael Kelly, Erin Stockdale, Mary-Anne Porter, Georgina Deans.

The team engaged in many environmental and heritage activities including track construction, environmental and historic research, koala counts, bird and vegetation surveys, tree planting, eradication of weeds, development of tourist walks, plant identification, seed collection, water quality testing, community venture, works at Portland, Heywood, Bridgewater, and more!

This project was delivered by Portland WorkSkills Inc.

Greencorps is a Commonwealth Government Initiative
Walk Portland's Pride

The Portland Visitor Information Centre and Maritime Discovery Centre
The start/finish of your walk. Visitor information, maritime history and toilets.

Port Panorama
The waters of Portland Bay have some 20 shipwrecks over time. The large, deep-water port now protects shipping and creates job opportunities for the region. Cross road, make way up steps.

Indigenous and European Past
A range of plaques commemorating elements of Portland's rich history.

Historic Precinct
Including War Memorials, History House and a range of commemorative monuments.

Court House
 Constructed in 1844-5, this historic building still operates as a Court House.

Almond Tree Triangle
Commemorates the site of Portland’s Immigration Depot, which processed thousands of immigrants in the 1850’s and was demolished in 1891.

Portland Botanical Gardens
Established in 1857 by William Allitt. The Curator’s Cottage was built the same year. The gardens house special collections of Dahlia and Callistemons, with 200+ native species on display. There are shade and plants available to the public. Open 7 days, sunrise to sunset. Free entry. Picnic tables and BBQ area are available. Exit through BBQ area, turn right when you reach the Canal.

The Canal
Links Fawthrop Lagoon to the sea.

Geothermal Water Cooling Tower
Portland makes significant use of Geothermal Energy. Water comes from deep bores at 58°C. Cooled water is used for domestic consumption. Extracted heat is used in a range of public and commercial buildings. Follow track beneath underpass and later turn left over the Rotary Bridge.

Captain James Fawthrop
Look to your left: the old Norfolk Pine you see marks the site of Fawthrop’s house, Windsor Cottage, demolished in 1969. James Fawthrop was born in Plymouth, England in 1804. He visited Portland for the first time in 1837. In 1853 he became Harbour Master, a position he held until 1868, when he retired to Windsor Cottage. A major figure in the history of Portland, James Fawthrop died in 1878 and is buried in the Old Portland Cemetery. He is remembered by the people of Portland by way of Fawthrop Street and Fawthrop Lagoon.

Birdlife at the Lagoon
Fawthrop Lagoon is a natural wetland in the middle of the city, where around 150 species of birds have been recorded. Approximately 40 of these call it their home, while ground, representing a small selection of original remnant vegetation. Some of the species still found here include:
- Manna Gum
- Swamp Gum
- Cherry Ballart
- Woolly Tea-tree
- Austral Bracken

The second communities at the lagoon are the plants that occur in and around the fresh water swamp. Some consist of:
- Chaffy Saw-sedge
- Coast Saw-sedge
- Sea Rush
- Austral Sea-bite

As salt marsh communities continue to vanish along the Victorian coastline, it is of great importance to preserve this unique habitat.

The Powerhouse Museum
Constructed in 1930’s and supplied electricity to Portland until 1959. Now a quality motor and car museum.

Round House
Formerly a Pumping Station, now provides a great observation point for a panoramic view of Fawthrop Lagoon and it’s surrounds. Head towards BBQ Gazebos on right, then down Hood St and turn left into Benink St.

The Portland Cable Trams Depot
The starting point for a journey linking some of Portland’s major tourist attractions.

Portland Leisure & Aquatic Center (YMCA)
A great example of use of Geothermal Water for indoor/outdoor heated pools, spa, fitness etc.

The Steam Packet Inn
Built in 1842 from fine Tasmanian timbers. One of Victoria’s oldest timber buildings. Now privately owned.

The Old Post Office

Mac’s Hotel
A fine bluestone building erected in 1856 for Hector Mac Donald. One of Portland’s few three-storey buildings.

Bentinck Street
Walk along Bentinck St, with option to rest your feet and have a bite to eat at one of the many cafes and shops. Feel free to continue back to the Visitor Information Centre, or take the opportunity to further explore Portland’s other attractions.