Portland - A Short History

In 1800, Lieutenant James Grant, Commander of the "Lady Nelson", sighted and named Portland Bay after the English Secretary of State, The Duke of Portland.

Western Victorian waters received little attention after this sighting, but were frequented by sealers and later whalers, as they searched for a new source of oil.

Several whaling stations were set up along the shores of Portland Bay when it became known for the quality of the whales that frequented these shores.

William Dutton, the most famous of these whalers built a house near where the Port of Portland's offices stand today. His grave may be seen at the Narrawong Cemetery.

Whale bones can still be found at the foot of cliffs or buried in the sands of Portland Bay.

On November 19th, 1834, Edward Henty arrived to establish Victoria's first permanent settlement.

On December 6th, his plough turned the first sods to commence Victoria's agricultural development.

His first home - a hut and land, were in the vicinity of the present day Richmond Henry Hotel.

Later, some of Edwards brothers - Francis, Stephen (Richmond was Stephen's son) and John - arrived to 'squat' on the land.

Major Mitchell's expedition passed through in 1836. And so the settlement grew...

Portland today is a city of some 12,000 people, and making progress in excess of most other Victorian Rural centres.

Monuments such as the obelisk opposite the hospital remind us of the pioneers; a look around the port and the city provides evidence of a thriving, progressive community.

Walk in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop

A self guided walk tour of Portland's Mary MacKillop related sites.
Tour of Mary MacKillop's Portland

This self-guided tour of Portland's Mary MacKillop sites commences and finishes near the Mac's Hotel. The tour also takes in many of Portland's historic buildings—buildings that formed part of Portland's streetscape at the time Mary MacKillop lived and worked here. Many of Portland's early buildings bear inscriptive plaques highlighting their age or historic and cultural significance.

1. **Mac's Hotel**
   Corner Benstuck & Gawler Street
   Mac's was built in 1856 for Hector McDonald. This impressive building reflects the prosperity of the Gold Rush era. The Mac's was added to in over time and has become a Portland Landmark. Portland's only true six-storey building.

2. **Keens Ship and Chardley**
   17 Gawler Street
   Constructed in 1859 for Thomas Keen, and used as a Ship Chardley—a specialist supplier of merchandise to local and visiting vessels. Extensively renovated in early 1900's.

3. **Builder's Inn**
   25 Gawler Street
   Constructed in the 1840's, the building briefly served as a pub from 1849 and 1850. Over time the complex served as commercial premises, a private house and a boarding house. Extensively renovated in 1980's.

4. **Loreto Convent**
   Corner Gawler and Percy Streets
   The Loreto Sisters occupied and purchased the site of Mary MacKillop's first school in Benstuck Street and operated the Loreto Convent until 1977. The site moved to this site in the early 1980's.

5. **Benjamin's**
   23 Percy Street
   Built in 1854 by the merchant, Thomas Smith. Since passed on of the Smith family hands in 1920's the building has had many commercial tenants.

6. **Sandilands**
   33 Percy Street
   This imposing Georgian mansion was built in the early 1830's. Sandilands was a private residence until the early 1900's. Since then its uses have been commercial. Currently a prestigious local restaurant.

7. **The Portland Club**
   35 Percy Street
   Constructed in 1860 for use as G.G. Crouch's auction rooms. Purchased by the Portland Club in 1919 and still used by that group.

8. **St. Stephen's Church Hall**
   The hall was constructed in 1867-43 and served as a Parish school during the week and as Church on Sundays. Site of Portland's earliest school and one of Portland's oldest buildings.

9. **St. Stephens Church**
   Corner Julia and Percy Streets
   A fine limestone building from the prosperous 1850's. Built in 1856 and generously endowed by the Henry's. Various sections added over time.

10. **Flora MacKillop's Residence (Siesta Motel)**
    66 Julia Street
    In January 1866 Mary MacKillop returned to Portland to assist John Woods in setting up a school. Her mother, Flora, remained in Portland with several of the MacKillop children. Flora rented and lived in a stone cottage facing Julia Street. This dwelling had been constructed by John Joans, a Portland stonemason. Flora MacKillop was the occupier of this cottage between 1867 and her departure from Portland in 1871. Mary MacKillop visited her mother on several occasions in the late 1860's. In 1968 the cottage was demolished and the site now forms part of the grounds for this motel. The vast stonework associated with Flora MacKillop's dwelling remains. A Commemorative garden is being developed on this site.

11. **ANZ Bank**
    44 Percy Street
    Built in the 1890's, Portland's blue stone era. Premises of the Union Bank, which over years evolved into the ANZ Banking Group.

12. **Clyde Alley Shoes**
    60 Percy Street
    A charming two storey bluestone shop and residence built in 1860-61.

13. **Uniting Church**
    69 Percy Street
    Built between 1865 and 1867 as the Wesley Church. In the days of Mary MacKillop this church enjoyed fine views of the bay.

14. **Cooper's Store**
    82 Percy Street
    This commercial building was constructed in 1858 by Tronge and Crouch, two of Portland's leading merchants and citizens.

15. **All Saints Church**
    Portland's first Roman Catholic Church Service held in 1844. A Roman Catholic Church was constructed near the site in 1848. The construction of dwelling stand and were added to in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century. The structure is of additional significance in that Portland's former Parish Church Julian Teetor Woods stood in these stables when he visited Portland and the MacKillop family in the 1860's. Today, the stables form an integral part of the picturesque Christian Community College.

16. **Christian Community College (Bay View House)**
    119 Benstuck Street
    Bay View House, also known as Bay View Cottage, was constructed in the 1850's. The building was owned in the 1860's and 1870's by Stephen Henry, one of Portland's earliest settlers. Bay View was rented by Mary MacKillop and her family in the late 1860's. In 1864 Mary established her first school on this site. It was a non-denominational day and boarding school for young ladies. "Bay View House Seminary for Young Ladies" The MacKillop family is believed to have rented Bay View House until the beginning of 1866. The Loreto Sisters established a school on this site in 1884, purchased the building in 1894, and greatly extended the school over time. In 1977 Loreto Convent became an ecclesiastical co-educational school - the Christian Community College. The original house was a substantial 6 room stone and iron house built in a modified Georgian style. Bay View House still stands but is completely incorporated in the structure of the Christian Community College.

17. **Site of Fitzroy Cottage**
    131 Benstuck Street
    Mary MacKillop came to Portland in June 1862, aged 19, to be governess to the daughters of Mrs Duncan Cameron, a relative of the MacKillop family. On her arrival Mary lived with the widowed Mrs Cameron and her children at their house, Fitzroy Cottage, on the Bluff. Overlooking the sea, this dwelling was a simple Victorian cottage, with several rooms and of timber construction. Members of the MacKillop family are also believed to have lived in Fitzroy Cottage in 1865-66. The cottage was demolished in 1878 to make way for the railway. Today the site forms part of a house block.

18. **Richmond Henty Hotel**
    101 Benstuck Street
    The Henty's were active on this site from 1854 onwards. Stephen Henty constructed a residence on this site in 1846, and named it "Richmond House" in honour of his first born son. Became the Richmond House Hotel in 1879.

21. **The London Inn**
    93 Benstuck Street
    The first stage of this building was erected in 1844, in an era when Portland had but 12tant and motels for a population of about 1500. Progressively added to over time. Gave up licence in 1923, whereupon it became a guest house.

22. **Gordon Hotel**
    63 Benstuck Street
    The Gordon started life as the Commercial Inn. The hotel's licence was revoked in 1845 - one of the longest, continuous licences held by a Victorian hotel. Became the Gordon Hotel in 1885.

23. **Whaling Trypot**
    Whaling was vital to Portland's economy for several decades. Although whaling had virtually ceased by the 1860's, Portland was in good Mary MacKillop would have beenfamiliar with whalebacks. Boiling down pots such as this one were in evidence on the foreshore.

24. **Port Panorama**
    During the years Mary MacKillop lived in Portland, the bay was underdeveloped. There were two small piers and no breakwaters or port infrastructure. Some 19th century wharves have occurred in Portland Bay.