

# Dubbo Heritage Trail

(updated 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010)

The Heritage of a City, as reflected in those buildings and other structures, which have been handed down from earlier times, is an important component in the total scheme of development. Old buildings – particularly if they are handsome structures in themselves – are like old friends. We are sorry to see them go and we are happy when we can face them, especially if they are in good shape.

Like many other towns and cities throughout Australia, Dubbo has lost some of its fine old buildings, as any comparison of Macquarie Street shown in early photos will reveal. This in itself may not necessarily be a bad thing – but if the loss of GOOD buildings is not paralleled by the creation of quality replacements then we have a net loss situation.

Changes commonly outlive those who bring them about. The bigger the change, the more likely it is that its effects will persist well into the future. The replacement of farmland with Orana Mall has been a major catalyst for change in East Dubbo – and will continue to be so for a long time to come. Similarly, the retention of a valuable heritage building – no matter how small – will be a catalyst for change of a different kind – and will be remembered as a positive step towards strengthening the links between past, present and future.

The staff of the Dubbo Museum hope you enjoy your visit to our past. If your stroll creates more historical queries please contact the Western Plains Cultural Centre on 6801 4444. We will do our best to find answers for you.

## **HISTORY OF DUBBO**

John Oxley was the first man to report on the area we know today as Dubbo. His expeditions of 1817 and 1818 noted the rich potential of the area for grazing and agriculture. It was not, however, until 1824 that George Thomas Palmer and John Wylde took up land along the Macquarie River. The stockyards of George Palmer and John Wylde's property "Dibalambil 2" were on the site of what is now the Old Dubbo Gaol. In 1828 at the time of Sturt's expedition there was a white stockman George 'Dusty Bob'

Smith already resident in the area and working for those stockyards. Robert Venour Dulhunty took up land in the area but did not occupy it until 1839. His property was named "DUBBO" (taken from the aboriginal word meaning 'Red Earth' referring to the red ochre used as a body paint). In the early 1840's a settlement developed approx. 6 miles (10kms) north and took its name from Dulhunty's property.

In 1847, Dubbo consisted of a store owned by Jean Emile Serisier, the Carriers Arms Hotel, owned by Nicholas Hyeronimus, a slab court house, gaol and police hut. In 1848 the area was surveyed by George Boyle White and was proclaimed a village on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1849. By 1851 Dubbo was established, but its growth was slow. Most of the surrounding land was held by large pastoral concerns, which purchased their own supplies from the coast. They operated their own stores and some even had their own Inn. Most of the town's trade was passing trade, so businesses set up along the stock route (Fitzroy Street), coach route (Macquarie Street) and around the river crossings.

By the 1860's, the town was experiencing its first boom. The gold strikes in Victoria meant an increase in the north-south trade, and a continual stream of wagons and stock passed through the town. The population grew from 381 in 1861 to 836 in 1871. Settlement became closer with the arrival of small landholders, and in February 1872 the town was proclaimed a municipality. The coming of the railway in 1881 resulted in another boom period. During this time most of the town's impressive buildings were constructed.

It was not long before other town services were provided. A gas works opened in 1881, and town water was available from 1891. Electricity was connected in 1923. Sir Roden Cutler proclaimed Dubbo a city in 1966.

*The Heritage Walk begins at the City Information Centre, and takes approximately 1½ hours.*

*It is hoped this walk will reveal some of the treasures and hidden history of Dubbo.*

1. **MACQUARIE VIEW HOTEL** was situated on this corner. The only section still identifiable is above the shop of Janome. When in existence the Hotel had several verandahs including one on the corner section. This building was the subject of two terrible tragedies. The 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1936 Newspaper reported *'This horrific accident, one of the worst in Dubbo's history, was caused by a regrettable combination of the weight and movement of far too many persons over-taxing a ramshackled, unsafe wooden verandah on one of the town's oldest existing hotels.*

*At least eighty persons, predominantly middle aged and elderly women, were assembled on the top floor of the Macquarie View Hotel for an auction of the hotel's furniture.....Eye witnesses reported a sudden groaning, tearing sound peculiar to the ripping of dry timber and twisted metal, a gasp of fear from the victims on the verandah as they realised what was happening, shrieks, a muffled crash of timber, metal and human bodies as the lot smashed to the footpath, a shower of dust and splintered wood, cries of pain and groans of agony. 28 people were admitted to hospital with moderate to severe injuries. There is only one fatality recorded although it is believed there were others.*

In the same year a Ladies Apparel occupied the downstairs shop (Janome) and the section above was alleged to be operated by the owner as a brothel. One of the young 'ladies' became pregnant and died following a botched abortion. The famous black Tracker Sgt Alec Riley was called on for help. He found a site on the riverbank with marks, which he identified as made by the hair of a person lying on the sand. He, with the assistance of one of his sons, launched a boat and discovered the body. The person is buried in Dubbo Cemetery.
2. **BOOTH, BROWN, SAMUELS & OLNEY.** Built in 1941 as an annex to the Lithgow Small Arms Factory. It was manufacturing components of the Vickers machine gun. During 1942/43 it was the subject of a military intelligence operation, as it was believed German spies had infiltrated the factory and were engaged in sending information out of the country.
3. **THE CASTLEREAGH HOTEL.** The original building was erected in 1882. It was burnt down and rebuilt three times, the latest being the building here today in 1922 by A.J.Taylor. The Talbragar Street hotels did much business in the early days of train travel because of their proximity to the Railway Station.
4. **SHAKESPEARES FUNERAL PARLOUR** This building was in existence by the late 1890's occupied as a Stock & Station Agent. On the front of the building you will find a plaque 'FLOOD MARK' recording the highest flood in Dubbo to date - 25th February, 1955.
5. **THE PASTORAL HOTEL** was built in 1890 and originally known as Mostyn's Hotel. This building features elaborate iron lace work, bull nosed verandahs and cantilevered verandah down the western side. In the flood of 1955 a heavy glass panel from one of the doors was found, unbroken, several kilometres down the river, high in a gum tree. The panel is now in the possession of the Dubbo Museum.
6. **121 TALBRAGAR STREET** This building operated as a pharmacy for nearly 100 years. The original shop front, terrazzo steps and leaded windows have survived.

7. **THE LANDS BOARD OFFICES**, designed by W.L.Vernon and opened in 1897, however the building lacked verandahs. These were added in 1902 to shade the building from the western sun. The corrugated iron and timber construction, turned verandah posts, and elaborate fencing are all features of this building. The wooden flaps at foundation level were for ventilation and helped the building dry out after flood. The height of the 1955 flood is also recorded on a plaque near the door. This Queen Anne style building is one of Dubbo's finest public buildings.
8. **GRAPEVINE CAFÉ (144 BRISBANE STREET)** Erected in 1936 as the shop & residence of the Stroud family and occupied by them until 1999. A two-storey building, with a downstairs shopfront. Features a skillion roof sloping away from the front parapet, solid verandah posts. It is now a commercial establishment. A two story building at the rear of the property was operated as a Ham Radio Station during and after WW11.
9. **THE COURT HOUSE**. Dubbo's original Court House was built in 1848 on the site of the entrance to Old Dubbo Gaol. In 1863 a second Court House was built the front of the original one. This was a fine stone building, which featured what is now the Telstra Building clock. The Court House you see today was built between 1885 and 1890 (architect James Barnet) and included the Caretakers cottage, which can be viewed in the grounds. The building is Italianate in style, and features a central portico with symmetrical wings. Marble Corinthian columns support the stuccoed pediment and raised (British) Coat of Arms. Internally there are twin sweeping staircases and two Italian marble fireplaces. Heavy iron gates hanging from massive stone pillars enclose the well-maintained gardens of this complex. There are three dates referring to this building. 1884 the date the Coat of Arms was commissioned however the builder went bankrupt and as the Coat of Arms was already on a ship on its way here it was erected with that date showing. Across the front of the building the roman numerals record 1887 the year the building was finished and 1888 on the gatepost was the time the gates and fence were finished. The gardens you see today are a small remnant of the massive gardens of times gone by when the prisoners from the Gaol maintained them.
10. **THE HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN CHURCH**, designed by Edmund Blacket and built of local sandstone by William Moffatt in 1875. It is Australian Gothic in style. The stained glass windows and square bell tower (added in 1923) which houses a Carillon of Bells. Brotherhood House was built in 1905 and the Rectory, in 1908 (now a commercial establishment). There are many plaques and memorials on the walls and windows inside the Church.
11. **THE COMMERCIAL HOTEL** is Dubbo's oldest licensed hotel. It was built in 1859 by M. Phelan and licensed to J. Guidice. The building stood for many years without its verandah. Now replaced, the verandah does much to recapture the building's original charm. Mr Guidice also conducted his undertaking business from a shop on these premises.

12. **'WESTBURY'** Erected in 1914 as home & surgery for Dr Edmond Henry Burkitt. He named it for a town in his home country of Wiltshire. A substantial home with tennis court and extensive gardens. During the summer of 1924 the Earl of Cassillis, (the First Grand Principal of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland) and his servant were touring Australia and stayed at Westbury as a guest of Dr. Burkitt. Part of the Lodge meeting was held in the back garden as it was considered a cooler option at that time of year. Following Dr. Burkitt's death in 1925 the house remained in the hands of various doctors. Over time it became very run down until 1999 when it was restored. It is now operated as a very comfortable and attractive Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

Extensions have been added at various periods over the years. In 1927 a two storey 'boys department' was added. The original building features decorative bargeboards and the adjoining extensions have two lower pitched gabled wings. A principal's residence, situated to the north of the school, was added in 1927. It was felt to be more important for the residence to face the school rather than the traditional position of facing the street.

In 1890 a 10-year-old girl, who was later to be known as the Sly Grog Queen of Sydney's Underworld (Kate Leigh), took her fathers gold watch to school to show it off. It was taken from her by the school bully. But she was not taking any risks with her Dad's watch. She pulled a paling from the school fence, battered the bully over the head, and so recovered the watch.

13. **SAINT ANDREWS UNITING CHURCH** formerly the Presbyterian Church. The original church was built in 1876 by William Moffatt. It was demolished and a new church was built on the same site in 1926 by Wallace & McGee. (Architect R.B.McDonald). The slate roof, dormer ventilators and the slender shingle-roofed square spire were all building features of the time. The interior is strongly Arts and Crafts in style with leaded glass windows. There are many fine memorial windows. The red brick hall was built in 1892. Note the fish-scale pattern in the slate roof, and the iron finials on each gable.

The white sandstone seen here is from the original 1876 church. An enclosed walkway was added between the two buildings in 1989

14. **DUBBO CENTRAL PUBLIC SCHOOL** Dubbo's first school was built in 1858 at 232 Macquarie Street. It was a simple ironbark building. The first buildings on **this** site were built in 1873. In 1880 an infant's school was erected across the play area to the west. That building now serves as an assembly hall.

15. **93 and 95 WINGEWARRA STREET.** This pair of single storey semi-detached cottages (now commercial establishments) were erected in the 1880's to provide accommodation for teachers. Brick construction with a dividing fin wall, and parapet party wall. Roof hipped at each end. Central main door with French doors on either side. The decoration at the gutter corners (acroteria) and the shuttered windows are pleasing characteristics.

*\*If you have limited time save yourself 40 minutes, head west towards Macquarie Street and resume walk at Number 29 (Commercial Union Building)*

16. **SAINT PATRICK'S CONVENT** was built in 1884 for the Sisters of Mercy. It has a hipped roof with a central gable. This form is repeated in the skillion verandah below. Note the pointed arched windows and the lighter brickwork below and between the windows.

17. **ST BRIGIDS CATHOLIC CHURCH.** When built in 1874, this building the second for the Catholic Church consisted of the nave. A four-year delay hindered the construction. The Bishop was quoted as stating 'the builder had done a bunk'. Calico covered the window openings, as at the time of the first mass, the stained glass windows had not arrived from England. The sanctuary was added in 1881 and the transepts in 1909. The church is Victorian Gothic in style, built from local sandstone adorned with an attractive bell tower featuring a pyramidal steeple.
18. **CATHOLIC PRESBYTERY** was built in 1902 by W. Sutton. The building is symmetrical in design and features pointed arched windows, ornate iron decoration and a central front gable.
19. **VICTORIAN COTTAGES.** Built in the late 1800's, this pair of cottages feature cast iron lace brackets and fringe similar to the Presbytery opposite.
20. **'RATHGORRAH'** is one of the few corner buildings in Dubbo that retains its posted verandah. Built in about 1915, this building features original glazing, arched windows and French doors.
21. **L.J.HOOKERS OFFICE.** Built in 1927 'Ais Lynne' as one of the many private maternity hospitals that abounded in Dubbo. This was the site of the original Catholic Church, which was blown down in a storm in 1868. Louis Massart a child of 8 told the story of playing among the ruins of the church when he discovered some money amongst which was some that he referred to as 'pretty papers', (pound notes). He filled his cap with the money and took it home to his mother, who asked him where it had come from and was there any more. On telling her YES, she sent him back for the remainder and he collected another half cap full. In all it amounted to over £200 (\$400) in gold, notes and silver, a considerable sum for those days.
- The money was placed in the care of the police. It was not claimed within 12 months and the money was handed back to Mrs. Massart.
22. **STICKS AND STONES/TWO DOORS**  
This is possibly the oldest residence in the CBD area of Dubbo. Erected as the home and surgery of Dr. Walter Tibbitts in late 1850's. He, his wife and their seven daughters lived here. Unpretentious from the front, the house contains a ground floor built of solid sandstone with strong timber beams and lintels. Carefully restored the old home is now in use for two popular restaurants.
23. **KEMWAH BUILDING/MILESTONE HOTEL**  
was built in 1881 as the Imperial Hotel and licensed to Rene Bertaux in 1882. The licence changed hands a number of times. At one time it was operated as a gambling house by a woman known as 'Flash Kate'. Some years later it became the Bushman's Home - a boarding house for itinerant workers. In 1949 converted into shops and flats. In the record flood of 1955, family members were removed from the top floor windows by rowboat.
24. **MILE PEG.** Bultje Street once led down to the 'White Bridge'. The first bridge at this crossing was opened in 1866. It was a high-level truss bridge or ironbark and took 18 months to build. It was a toll bridge for five years. The second bridge - a Prate type was built in 1905. When the current Bridge was completed in 1969, the old 'White Bridge' was demolished. This mile peg, showing the distance to Narromine and Wellington is all that remains as a reminder.

25. **WHITE BRIDGE.** Nothing remains of the structure of this bridge however the story of its opening day is quite strange. Each end of the bridge had an opening ceremony with all the fanfare of pianos and bands, each conducted by opposing factions of the towns ladies. One end was christened "The Oxley" the other end was "The Albert". But as things happen in country communities it was ALWAYS known as "The White Bridge" and is still referred to by that name when discussed by residents.
26. **HOGS BREATH - THE OLD SHIRE BUILDING** was built in 1867, of local sandstone, by W. Sutton for the Commercial Banking Company. The Bank's original offices were located across the road at Serisier's store. In 1907, the Bank moved to new premises, further to the north of Macquarie Street, and the building became the Talbragar Shire Council Office. The middle windows of this building (above the door) are false, in order to maintain the symmetry which is characteristic of Georgian architecture. Inside many original features are preserved. The building is now a popular restaurant.
27. **SID'S BOTTLE SHOP.** This is the site of Jean Emile Serisier's 3<sup>rd</sup> store. In 1850, Jean Emile Serisier purchased the first Crown Land in the village of Dubbo. In 1865 he erected a brick and stone building on this site. The store, with residence above (called "BoAllia"), was burned down in 1880. There is a plaque on the wall of 242 Macquarie Street commemorating this site. Serisier is remembered as Dubbo's first man of business and the Founder of the Town.
28. **232 MACQUARIE STREET** was the site of the National School until 1876 when the present building was constructed for the Bank of NSW with the manager's residence upstairs. It was built of local sandstone with a slate roof and was occupied as the Bank until 1919, when it became the Soldiers Club (forerunner of the RSL). It was also used as the Lighting Company and a temporary Police Station. In 1964 it was handed over to the Historical Society who established a Museum on the site. Today it is commercial premises. Upstairs still contains the marble fireplaces, ornate Wunderlich ceilings and the cedar staircase of the old residence. During the period when the building was occupied by the Museum there were several reported ghost sightings. One had the appearance of a nursemaid and two were of children, a girl and a younger boy.
29. **THE COMMERCIAL UNION BUILDING** was opened in 1893 as the Bank of Australasia, which later became known as the ANZ Bank.
30. **MYER.** A trading store has functioned on this site since 1851. The store became the Western Stores in 1916 when J.G.Brown and store holders from surrounding towns amalgamated. In 1928 it joined Edgley's stores at Bathurst and Orange. An interesting ceiling can be seen in the upstairs departments. During refurbishment in 1994 the well was found under the northwest corner of the store.
31. **THE MASONIC BUILDING** was originally the Protestant Hall. In 1935 it opened as the Roxy Theatre. A lion statue is mounted high on the facade.
32. **COLONIAL MUTAL BUILDING/AROMA COFFEE HOUSE.** This was, for many years, the tallest building in Dubbo. Erected in 1884 for the Australian Joint Stock Bank, it is a superb piece of 19th century urban architecture. Italianate in style, it features stuccoed brickwork, mansard slate roof, and dormer windows. When originally built, the main entrance was on a splayed corner protected by an ornate portico.

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33. **FORMER NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK.** The Commercial Banking Company moved here from its original site at 193 Macquarie Street. Built in 1907 by Kent and Budden, this building features white marble steps and arched portals. was restored and opened as a tourist attraction in 1974. The gallows, on which eight men took the 13 steps and were hanged, is on show for viewing. The Old Dubbo Gaol is open daily from 9.00am to 4.30pm.
34. **MACQUARIE CHAMBERS** The symmetrical facade of this building is formed by seven bays. It is Mediterranean in style and features Tuscan columns, French doors, metal balustrade and terra-cotta roof. Built in the late 1920's Macquarie Chambers is a rare example of this style of architecture. A pressed metal ceiling can be seen under the awning and in some of the shops the original plaster ceilings survive. In the entrance, ceramic tiles, tessellated tiles and terrazzo thresholds can be seen.
35. **BRIAN BARNES SPORTSCENE** features recessed upper bays with their decorative brickwork. Built in the 1930's, this building was originally the National Bank and is a rare example of Art Deco architecture.
36. **THE TELSTRA BUSINESS OFFICE** was built in 1887 as Dubbo's Post Office. This two-storey building was designed by colonial architect James Barnet. Dubbo's first Post Office operated from the 1<sup>st</sup> slab courthouse. In 1853 Jean Emile Serisier became postmaster and moved the Post Office to his store. The clock tower was part of the original Court House.
37. **OLD DUBBO GAOL.** The original Gaol at Dubbo was a crude structure built as an annexe to the Court House in about 1848. It was replaced in 1863 by a stone lock up incorporated into a new Court House built that year, on the site in front of the Old Dubbo Gaol walls. It was from here that the bushranger Johnny Dunn escaped in 1866. The buildings you see today, were thought to have been built in 1871, and the wall and gates added in 1887. The Gaol was officially closed in 1966. It