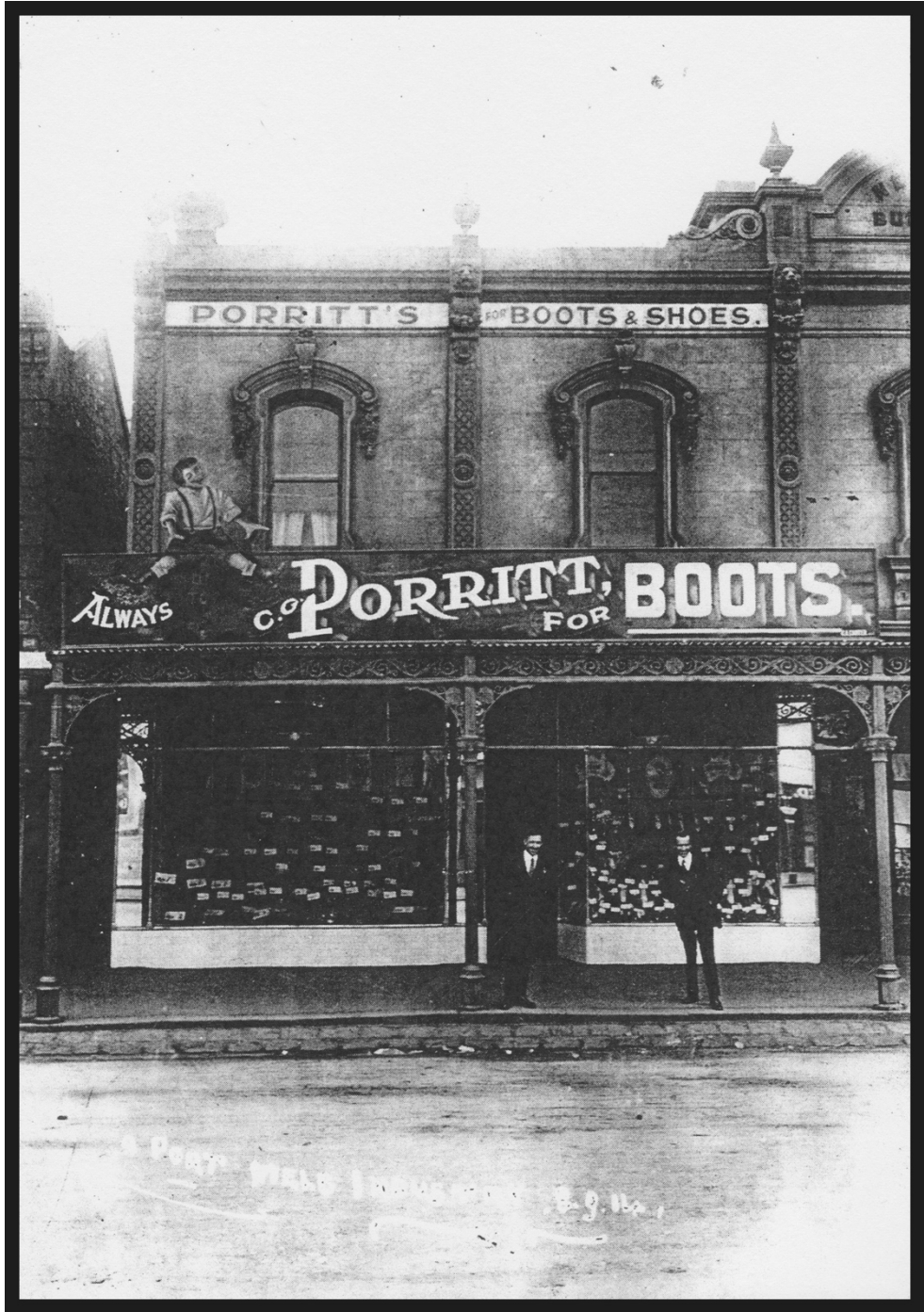


PORT MELBOURNE  
**R**ECOLLECTIONS  
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Port Melbourne life as remembered by Jack Porritt of Princes Street: a few reflections written in 1991 for the Vintage Port - Worth Remembering Project, with comments added in 1998 for publication by the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society





PORRITT'S BOOT SHOP 1911

# PORT MELBOURNE RECOLLECTIONS

I was born on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1917 in the dwelling over a boot shop at 243-245 Bay Street, Port Melbourne. My father George Porritt managed this shop for his father, at one time a successful businessman who had shops in Flinders Street, Melbourne, South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and St Kilda. Due to bad times he went insolvent and my father bought the Port shop from the liquidator.

I suppose one of the first things I took notice of as a child was cable trams which ran past our shop to the city at very regular intervals. For the younger generation I may say that these trams consisted of an open dummy on which the driver or grip-man drove the tram, and the passenger car which was all enclosed. Passengers also could sit around the dummy but in bad weather there was no protection except a roof. These trams were propelled by a steel cable which ran in a trench under the track and which was in constant motion. The driver operated a lever which gripped the cable and moved the tram along the rails; hence the name 'grip-man'. He also operated two other levers which were the brakes. On the downhill runs the conductor could assist the driver as he had a manual brake system on the passenger car. The Port Melbourne line ran from Beach Street to Spring Street in the city, the cable power house was in City Road, South Melbourne, and there was a depot for the rolling stock in Beach Street. The fares were 3d for an adult to the city and 2d for the section to Clarendon Street, and a child could travel any distance for 1d. Transfers could be obtained to any other line which was crossed, such as South Melbourne Beach.

One of my memories which was worrying was the Police strike in about 1929. The news was about the rioting and the looting going on in the city with shop windows being smashed and premises entered and robbed. Towards evening every day there were detachments of armed Navy personnel carried in open charabancs (as we called buses) headed toward the city to guard strategic points. My father, being a shopkeeper, was very worried and we lived in fear of our windows being smashed and the place looted. He somehow obtained a small revolver and bullets for our protection but thank goodness he did not have to use same.

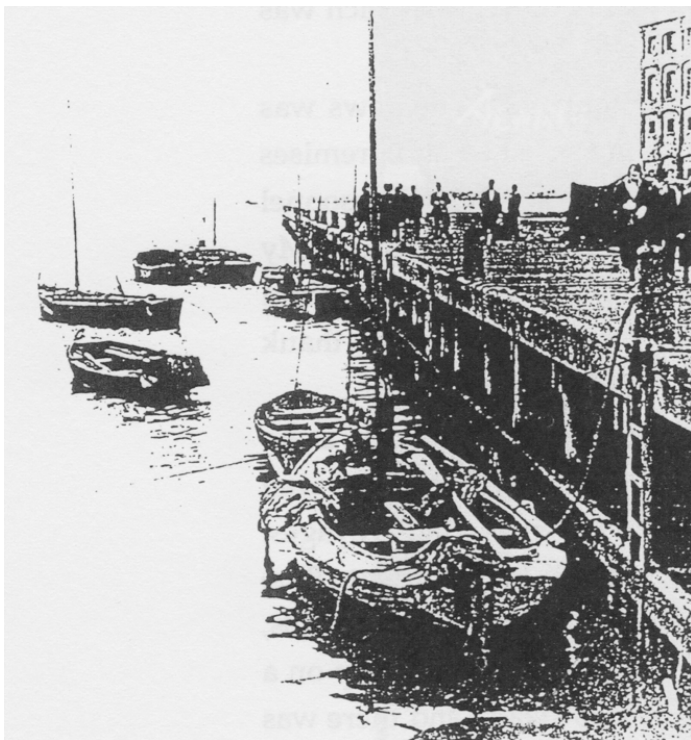
Many of my earlier recollections revolve around the waterfront, and I really loved the ships. Long before the present Station Pier was built the big overseas liners came in to Princes Pier, and I well remember being taken over there when two of the great P&O liners made their maiden voyages, namely *Mooltan* and *Maloja*. All the big companies used Princes Pier, such as P&O, Orient, Blue Funnel, Shaw Saville, White Star, Bay Line and P&O Branch. Later, I think about the middle '20s, Station Pier was built and the beautiful liners berthed over there. For many years at 5 pm sharp on a Tuesday one of these great liners would depart for London (about 5 or 6 weeks away), and there was no better show. With people cheering, bands playing, and thousands of multi-coloured streamers from pier to ship as these beautiful vessels slowly eased away from Station Pier. Most of the general cargo ships went up the river to Victoria Dock, and Princes Pier was mainly used as a berthing pier for idle coastal ships.

While still thinking shipping we must recall the Bay boats which were a great feature in Port Phillip Bay. From one wing of the pier we had the sailings of the paddle steamers *Weeroona* and *Hygeia* and from the other wing the *Rosny*. The two former vessels had very large side paddles, and their engines were powered by coal fired boilers. These two carried passengers round the Bay, mainly during the warm months. The *Weeroona* mainly ran to Queenscliff and Sorrento and the *Hygeia* to Mornington. They each carried 1,500 to 2,000 passengers, many of them just picnickers on a day return. The fares were very reasonable at about 5/- on weekends or 3/6 mid-week, with children half fare. They both had regular annual engagements for trade picnics such as butchers, grocers or hairdressers. And finally, they were used at night for cruising round the bay by social clubs etc. and were known as the 'Moonlights'.

The other little vessel, the *Rosny*, ran a regular passenger service from Port Melbourne to Williamstown for about 1/-, and on weekends she did the tour of Hobson's Bay, Port Melbourne, Kerferd Road Pier, St Kilda Pier, Williamstown and back to Port for about 2/-. The trip from St Kilda Pier to Williamstown was usually taken with a swell coming from the side in a cross sea, and she often rolled quite steadily, and seasickness was not uncommon. The *Rosny* had propellers fore

and aft and so did not have to turn when leaving any jetty. In later years she went to Hobart, and for many years ferried passengers across the Derwent to Bellerive. On the same subject I should make mention of the *Edina* on which many Port people travelled. She left 1 North Wharf at Queens Bridge and down the river and Bay to Portarlington and Geelong, return trip costing about 3/6. During the week she carried some cargo to these ports. She had a further interest in that although she was a coal-fired steamer she once carried sail, and history tells that she once carried British troops to the Crimean War.

Before leaving the waterfront, I must mention the old Town Pier at the bottom of Bay Street. As I recall it was pretty dilapidated, but old pictures have Town Pier as a hive of industry with sailing ships tied up in twos or threes alongside. I remember when they berthed colliers there with coal from Newcastle. This coal was discharged into rail trucks on a narrow gauge railway. These trucks were formed into trains of three, and a horse took them in tow off the pier, along the railway line in Beach Street up past the Lagoon and into the South Melbourne Gas Works. Needless to say much of the coal that fell off or was lifted off made good fuel for many Port Melbourne fireplaces.



That now brings me to the Lagoon, which in those days ran alongside Harper's factory right up to Rouse Street. My father has told me that in earlier times it ran right up to Bridge Street. However it was in my time the great place for the fishermen to tie up their boats, and sell their catch direct to the public. They sold beautiful fresh fish of all kinds, and it certainly was a centre of attention for people who enjoyed fresh fish and all pretty cheap.

The Lagoon had one big problem: the seaweed that would wash into the dead end would rot and stink. We could always tell which way the wind was blowing, as when from the North we had the stench of Kitchen's boiling down works, or from the South the good old Lagoon was very ripe. On the opposite side of the Lagoon from Harper's rice factory there was Preston's Distillery. Here in season, we would watch hundreds of tons of grapes being shovelled into an opening in the wall from big lorries drawn by draught horses. No doubt this

was the raw material for the finished spirit product.

I started school at Nott Street State No 1427 in 1923 and although I was six and a big boy, I had to go through the infant school. Miss Ankebell was my first teacher and Miss Davis was the head teacher of the infants. Both appeared to be elderly ladies to me, but I must say they were very kind and I believe started myself and many others on the right foot education wise. I went through all classes to the 6th Grade, and the names of some of the teachers at that time were Miss Griggs, Mrs Giblett (taught multiplication tables so thoroughly that one could not forget them in 100 years), Miss Bourke, Miss Richards, Miss Rees, Mr Maclean, Mr Dunton and Mr Kirmzee.

The Headmaster was a seemingly very elderly and distinguished gentleman, 'Sandy' Richards, and to us as smaller kids he appeared to be almost next to God. The pupils were a very mixed bag and while some were comfortably dressed and came from comfortable homes, the majority were from very poor homes, poorly clad and a few cases quite dirty. Some were barefooted even in the coldest days and probably their parents could not afford a pair of boots. I am sure many kids came to school in those days without a decent breakfast and they appreciated the days when hot soup was handed round in tin pannikins provided by some benefactor. There were often fights in lunchtime

or after school over some little argument, and I recall boys fighting over their fathers, where one's father was a waterside worker on strike and the other father was known as a 'scab'.

There were many happy times and kids in those days played all sorts of games which don't seem to interest kids today. These games seemed to come in seasons or rotation, and some of them I remember were pitching cigarette cards to the wall, marbles, tip-cat, cherry bobs, spinning tops, French cricket, tennis ball cricket, hoppo-bumpo and so on.

After Grade 6 I went to Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, to do the first two years of secondary education, and it was then a central school. I thought Nott Street was a wild and tough school but Dorcas Street in those days would have left it in the shade. However, I survived with many happy memories, and later went on to Melbourne High School at South Yarra.

During my primary school years there was an event which took place annually called the Schools and Citizens' Picnic. All schools and all businesses in Port Melbourne closed down for that day and off we all went to Dandenong, Diamond Creek or some such place. The Victoria Railways provided three or four special trains, and these would be packed. Whole families would go and take a picnic lunch and of course there were races and novelty events, but the highlight of the day for a lot of kids was when free raspberry vinegar was supplied. I can still taste it today.

On one such picnic day, which turned out to be a wild and windy day, a ship, the *SS Malaita*, which was at anchor in the Bay along with other ships being idle, broke adrift. The gale blew it up onto the beach at South Melbourne, and it went clean through Stubbs Baths. It was there for many weeks; the baths were beyond repair and were later demolished. However, for some years after that we were taken for school swimming in the wrecked baths.

The reconstruction of Bay Street was a major project in my school days. It had been a rough blue metal road with very deep bluestone gutters, with the two tramlines running down the middle. They ripped out the old road with a steam roller fitted with a heavy frame being towed. This frame had heavy steel spikes which dug up the old road and loosened the surface, which was then shovelled into horse drays and carted away.

Yes, Port did have a massive steam roller, and we kids thought the driver Bill Paxman was the king of the road in control on his lofty perch. The area next to the tram tracks was boxed into road width and the concrete was poured on the steel reinforcing. This boxing was carried on in sections, one side of the road at a time, and we finished with a fine concrete road which is probably still the base of our fine road today. In the 30s the cable trams were taken off and buses put in their place. Later on, the tracks were removed and the median strips placed over the area.

At that time the Graham Street school and houses in Clark Street were the end of the built-up area. Beyond was the vast expanse of Fishermens Bend right to the Yarra River; although Williamstown Road was formed, and this enabled people to go down to the short road Williamstown Ferry which was a steam powered chain propelled ferry that carried vehicles and people across the river. The road itself was very rough and was liable to flooding and subsiding, so about the time Bay Street was done they also made Williamstown Road into a reliable concrete road. This was a very big job at the time, and much of it required piles driven deep into the sand and mud to give it a solid base.

This brings me to the Bend, almost a vast wilderness in the 20s and 30s. However, there were many things of interest long since gone. Round Sandridge Beach from Princes Pier, well down to the river mouth, there was this line of fishermen's huts or houses. Many local families were raised in them and a few of them remained in occupation until quite recent years. One family, the Losewitz family, ran a small dairy farm in this area and became the dairymen for Port Melbourne. I understand this round was taken over by the Woodruff brothers and grew to be one of the biggest milk businesses in Melbourne.

Well in from the beach there was another such house (they were mainly galvanised iron) and in it lived an old gent we all called 'Doggy' Turner. He was the collector of dog fees for the local

council, hence the nickname. He also ran a herd of goats and was often pestered by the Indian cooks from the ships who used to roam over the Bend and pinch his young goats to supplement their diet.

On another part of the Bend was a large, galvanised iron hangar in which a Mr Carey had his Farman biplane. This old plane he flew on special occasions such as the Melbourne Centenary in 1934, when the big American and British fleets were tied up at the piers and I think even for the Port Melbourne Centenary in 1939. It was a quaint old plane, and Mr Carey sat in front of the engine and propeller and was as such a pusher style biplane. When it flew low over Port Melbourne the word would go around, 'Carey's Chaffcutter is in the air again'. The Carey family lived on the spot, and I am told that their house was an old church carried to Port and converted into a house. One of Mr Carey's daughters, now an elderly lady, is living in Baimsdale. A friend of mine somehow acquired one of the spare propellers and really treasures it.



Moving a little to the north there was a cinder trotting track which was used for training harness horses, and I played cricket on a pitch in the centre of this track. We used to keep our gear in the shed of a house nearby, and this was the only place to get a drink of water. This house was the home of the ranger of the rifle butts, which was very busy every Saturday afternoon with the shooting. We usually played to the accompaniment of the barrage of rifle fire, luckily directed to the butts in the opposite direction.

Down on to the river was the Sandridge Golf Club, a course I believe was 18 holes and occupied much of the south bank of the Yarra and right down through the area later built on by General Motors Holden. Many well-known golfers of the day played there, and it was said to be a fine course.

A thing I will never forget about the Bend in those days was the skylarks. These tiny birds would leave the ground and fly almost vertically till just about out of sight. They whistled continuously as they rose into the sky and the words of the poet were most appropriate when he wrote of their 'profuse strains of unpremeditated art'.

About 1926 the Bend started to develop when the State Bank started their building scheme now known as the Garden City, and later the commission built the area now known as Fishermens Bend. For the sake of comparison it may be noted that the State Bank built these excellent solid homes and sold them for about £750 (\$1,500), with a tiny deposit and many years at low interest. Later the area along the river was developed for the motor and aircraft industries and during the war large woolsheds were built to store the wool waiting for export. The whole area now is quite industrialised, but the council has preserved a large area in the Murphy Reserve with excellent sporting and picnic areas.

On to trains, and I understand until the trains were taken off the Port Melbourne line it was the oldest railway line in Australia. However, I have seen much of the railway service we have had and have used it extensively. I can only remember the passenger service as electric, but I have memories of the steam engines on the goods trains handling the cargoes to and from the piers. In the area between Graham station and Port Melbourne there was an enormous rail yard and much time was spent in shunting rakes of trucks on to the various sidings. Much of this shunting being done through the Graham Street gates where there were two sets of gates operated by the man in the signal box high above the lines. There was also a fairly large goods yards between Graham and North Port, mainly used for local goods, such as timber, coal, briquettes and steel.

The electric passenger service was most efficient, running about a 12 minute service usually spot on time. The station staff were always very friendly and always in neat and clean uniforms. Many of these people lived locally and often became well known personalities such as Mr Clarey, Mr Fallon and Mr Harry Clarke, just to name a few.

The trains themselves were always kept clean and for many years this line and the St Kilda line were serviced by the well-known 'dog boxes'. These carriages were all single compartments with no corridor, and outward swinging doors. First class seats were fully padded right up to head height, and second class had a loose cushion over the seat area and wooden backs. They were probably made at Newport workshops and had solid polished woodwork. It took 5 or 6 minutes to Flinders Street, and as I recall the fares in the 30s were 1st return 7d, 2nd return 5d.

I now turn to the Port Melbourne Football Club and ground, and I have many happy memories of great teams and certainly a wonderful club. When I was very young, I did not see a lot of Port football as my father was an Essendon supporter and we were taken to the League's game. However, on some days, possibly wet days or when Dad was too busy to get to Essendon, we went to see Ports. Also we saw a lot of them in finals matches as they were usually well up the list. The ground by the war was pretty rough and the players had some nasty falls with bad gravel rashes as a lot of the ground was bare. During the war the Americans had a camp on the ground, and when they left they probably paid to have it restored for football. This was a very good job and since the war the Port ground has been one of the best playing surfaces in Melbourne, even on a very wet day. The local council also takes good care of the ground, and it remains a top sporting venue.

The club has won a swag of premierships and certainly a bundle of runners-up in the Association. I submit the names of many great players over the years and apologise to so many notables that I haven't included: Bob Skilton (father of triple Brownlow medallist), Ginger Rudd, 'Buffy' Rees, Bob Merrick, Bill Lovett, Ted Freyer (12 goals in first League game), Ray Julier, Ted Hyde, Joe Garbutt (the greatest kick), Bill Bedford (another Brownlow medallist's father), Tom Murphy, Harold Lowry, Billy Barfoot, 'Chick' Trembath, 'Cadge' Perrett, Henry Barnes, Stan Plumridge, Norm Goss (and later his sons), 'Turk' Lahiff and so many more. The club is held in high esteem by all football followers and has produced many champions, Recorder Cup and Liston Trophy winners, and so many of them have been local boys who have worked up through 3rds and 2nds.

I now come to a very sad era in the history of Port Melbourne and that was the great depression, although in many cases it brought out the best in some people. There would be no place, I believe, that would have been more severely hit than Port Melbourne. This was largely due to the two great strikes which took place in the late 20s, namely the waterside and timber strikes, as so many local men were involved in these two industries - and of course practically all the population were working class families. Many people were thrown out of work and in those days, there was no Government welfare. Many families had really hard times and there was much poverty. Hard-pressed welfare organisations did a great job and organised soup kitchens, gave handouts, and supplied second hand clothing to the poverty stricken.

An amusing sidelight of the tough times was an incident which involved the closing down of the quoit club, which was on land between Princes and Nott Streets at the Raglan Street intersection. This was quite a substantial timber building; it was to be demolished and the land was to be used for a reserve or playground. In the colder months people could not afford firewood or coal, but the word got around that the council workers were to move in on a certain day to carry out the demolition. On the night before, that building completely disappeared and there was nothing to demolish. No doubt it made good firewood and warmed a number of homes for quite a while.

Incidentally, the game of quoits that had been played here was carried out by throwing heavy iron rings (or quoits) into patches of wet clay at quite a distance from the thrower. Nearest to a given marker was the winner.

In my own case I left school in 1932 with an Intermediate Certificate which was in that time considered a good standard. I had another year of a scholarship to go but gave that up because I felt that I should go to work to assist my parents, who were having a very hard time in the boot shop.



I tried for six months to get work and went out early in the mornings to firms that had advertised for a boy, only to find long queues for one job. I eventually got a job with a big chain store grocery and worked for 17/6 per week, from which they deducted 1d for a tax stamp for unemployment relief. When the company made me an apprentice for three years, I felt that I had some security. I rode a push bike around the city delivering grocery orders. The work was hard and the hours long and no overtime was ever paid, even though work had to go on after the shop was closed, and until all the jobs were done.

Round about this time the Government brought in the sustenance idea, in which men were given work to do and received food vouchers to help feed their families. Many were sent to country areas and chopped down trees which should never have been chopped down, and many worked on the Bend shifting sand from one place to another, while the next group shifted it all back again. One of the few useful things which came out of the 'Susso' was that part of the 'Yarra Boulevard' was completed round the Kew area. In this sad era many families were disrupted as many men went to the country after work, and many went off 'humping the bluey' to seek odd jobs round country towns and farms as there was at least usually a feed for the odd jobber.

Many of the business people in Port Melbourne were very good and kept on supplying goods and services to poorer people and extending credit which they knew would never be repaid. Groups banded together and organised services of assistance, such as hair-cutting, boot repairing, and distribution of whatever food became available. Port Melbourne was badly affected, and this went on for many years, and even at the beginning of World War II there were many very poor families.

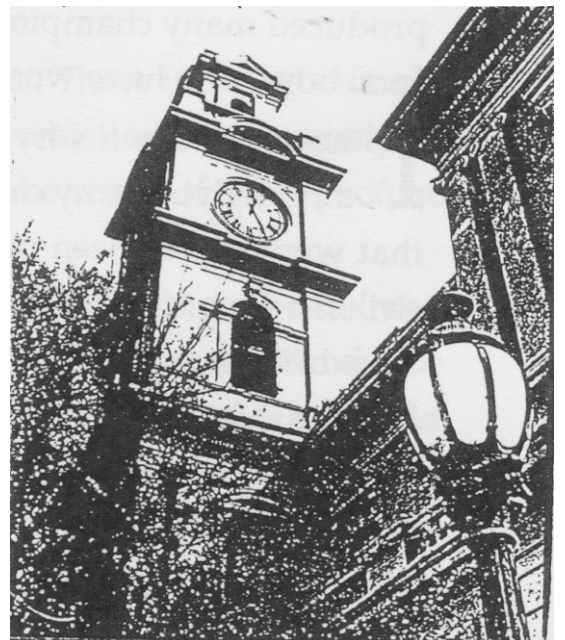
Just to wind up on the bad times I can remember an incident to indicate the squalor in which some people lived. My grandparents bought a small solid brick house in Bay Street for about £200. When it was vacated and inspected it was found to be alive with bugs. He had us stuff up all door frames and windows with paper and then lit sulphur candles in every room and locked up for days. He certainly cleaned up the bugs but my grandparents never occupied this house. Recently this house was sold for about \$50,000 and was then demolished to make way for a development.

We had always had a good council in Port Melbourne, and their efforts had always been directed to the welfare of local people. They had all been locals themselves, and we have had many prominent citizens occupy the Mayor's chair. The people had confidence in their council as for most years the councillors were returned unopposed. Our Town Clerks have also been very competent men and given great service to the community. In my time Mr Syd Anderson, Mr Andy Aanensen and Mr Fred Jackson all served long terms in office and contributed greatly to the benefit of the city.

The main shopping street has been continually improved and is quite a good area for business. All the banks have nice branches and the shops always are well kept and have a good supply of wares. Two of the hardware stores, JE Earl and Faram Bros, were both in the 100 year class and Faram's still has a wonderful supply of goods.

Most of our streets are wide and well kept, and one has fond recollections of the gutter men with their old horse and dray, doing the job. Our parks and gardens are also quite attractive, and there was much consternation when there was the plan to replace our garden along the railway with a freeway to the city. I think the local reaction to this plan scared off its instigators.

Industry has flourished in Port Melbourne and has employed many locals over the years. Swallow & Ariell (Uneeda biscuits and 100 others, cakes and plum puddings), J Kitchen and Sons (Velvet Soap, Persil etc), Robt Harper (rice, Silver Star Starch etc), J Gadsden's (tins), Preston's



distillery, and just over the boundary, Dunlop's, Union Can and the gas works. In later years came General Motors Holden, two large aircraft factories, Malcolm Moore, Daniel Scott & Harman and many more. It is sad to see some of the old firms swallowed up by bigger groups and consortiums, but they say that's progress.

To get back to sporting clubs other than football, Port has a very good record in other fields. The cricket club has played in sub-district for many years and has an excellent record, with a number of premierships. It has produced many top cricketers over the years and most have developed from local boys.

The bowling club in Spring Street has been in existence on the same site for over 100 years and also has produced many top line bowlers. Its teams have not produced a lot of premierships, but it is most respected in the bowling fraternity in this State. The tennis club has also been in existence for many years and in more recent years it, too, has had success in winning titles. The courts are kept in good condition and are of the porous type so play goes on in most weather. The baseball club of more recent origin has also made its mark in the baseball leagues and is a very successful club in winning flags. The swimming clubs are very popular in the warmer weather and the local people appreciate their work in the training of youth.

The friendly societies were well represented in Port Melbourne, most of them out of the old Dispensary Hall. They all had fairly big memberships as in those days they were the key to medical and pharmaceutical benefits. Most young people joined once they started work as they could no longer claim benefits on their parents' membership. We only paid a couple of shillings a quarter, but this gave us a dispensary book which gave us access to a doctor. Prescriptions written in this book were made up at the Dispensary and so we had a reasonable health cover. Friendly societies were wonderful institutions in that they provided this cover at a minimum cost, brought about by the co-operative idea, with the large membership covering those who needed a doctor or medicine. Most friendly societies also had sick and funeral funds which provided a small sick pay for the out of work due to illness and a small amount to help pay a member towards funeral expenses in case of a bereavement. Due to the changing value of money most societies have cut out all sick pay (it was about \$2 a week which was a help years ago), but most still retain the fund as a funeral benefit. These societies were often the centre of social activities and quarter night was usually a scene of many members coming along. In some cases they had sporting activities such as cricket competitions.

In more recent years friendly societies have changed greatly, mainly due to the provisions under the welfare state. However, they still take a big role in the community and are very prominent in the business of private health care. They also provide many avenues in the insurance and investment world and most now are large financial institutions. They have become much more centralised and there are now very few suburban branches meeting regularly as in earlier years.

In the 30s there were two important Centenaries, that of Melbourne in 1934 and Port Melbourne in 1939. In 1934 the Melbourne Centenary was held in pretty bad times, but this at least had the effect of lightening people's lives and was responsible for a few more jobs and a little more money going around. Port Melbourne was fortunate in that the Harbor Trust built the Centenary Bridge over the railway at Station Pier (cost £58,000 or \$116,000). The Duke of Gloucester opened this when he was driven over it after leaving *HMS Shropshire*, tied up at Station Pier, on his way to open the Melbourne Centenary.. This fine bridge has been demolished for new development, which is taking over much of the traditional Port. [Ed: *With the benefits of Trove we can read The Argus from Friday 19 Oct 1934 and realise that Jack has misremembered and the Duke actually arrived in Melbourne on board the HMS Sussex which berthed at Princes Pier - <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10965477>*]

In 1939 the Centenary of Port Melbourne took place. This was a great affair locally. Many people became acquainted with the history of Port Melbourne from the landing of Capt Liardet in the area known as Liardet's Beach (which became Sandridge in about 1850). In 1860 a municipal council was elected and in 1863 the Borough of Sandridge was proclaimed. In 1884 the Borough of Port

Melbourne was proclaimed; it became the Town of Port Melbourne in 1893 and in 1919 it became the City of Port Melbourne.

A very fine programme of events was planned and these functions took place over about four weeks in October and November. There were receptions, carnivals, processions, sporting events, the re-enactment of Liardet's arrival, visits to all schools and civic church services. The Governor of Victoria attended one such service at Holy Trinity Church in Bay Street.

The celebrations wound up with a Grand Ball at the Town Hall, to which many people came in fancy dress wearing the fashions of the early settlers in 1839. The whole of the celebrations certainly lifted the spirits of the community and many people became aware of the great history of the locality. Although World War II had begun it had not yet had any great impact, and people were able to enjoy the celebrations to the full. The Mayor Cr J P Crichton and councillors were very active during the time and their involvement in all functions was most welcome.

World War II had a great impact on the community as the time went by and it became more serious. Large numbers of people enlisted in the services, and people at home worked harder and longer hours in the war effort. Rationing was introduced and many items of food and clothing and petrol required ration tickets in order to obtain them.

One of the very noticeable things early in the war was that there was a very marked increase in the amount of jobs and more money circulated through the community. More and more women joined the work force and people lived more comfortably without the fear of unemployment and lack of money. The war is very well documented so I will not go on with the events of those six years. Suffice it is to say that the people of Port Melbourne did their share in the duties required to win the war, and we came out of the conflict in 1945 a very different local community and a changed world from 1939.

The St Kilda - Port Melbourne bus service which is now a well-run operation and an asset to the locality had its beginning in the early 30s as I recall. This began with a small vehicle which may be described as a motor-cab with seating for about six on the inside, which was reached by steps at the rear of the cab. About six more could stand inside the cab, about four hang on the back steps and a couple sit alongside the driver. I think the fare was about 6d and it was a very reliable service. Many nights after going to a dance at St Kilda and finding the local bus to Port completely full, we would walk home to Port along the beach, as no one had the money for a taxi.

I have very fond memories of the picture shows in Port Melbourne and in my time there were three: the Port Theatre (Bay and Liardet Streets), the Eclipse (Crockford and Pickles Street) and the Port Town Hall, known as the Ozone Theatre. The Eclipse was the latest of the three. I think Hoyts built it in the 20s and at the time it was really their latest showpiece. Something in the laws or by-laws at the time allowed Port theatres to operate on a Sunday night and the cable trams did good business bringing people from other suburbs to the shows. All showed silent pictures and I have memories of the piano playing under a shaded light as the pianist played according to the type of picture being shown. The Port also had a trumpet player named Sol accompanying the piano and adding to the atmosphere which the movie was portraying. The Town Hall or 'Ozone' did not carry on after the advent of talkies, but the other two installed sound equipment and carried on.

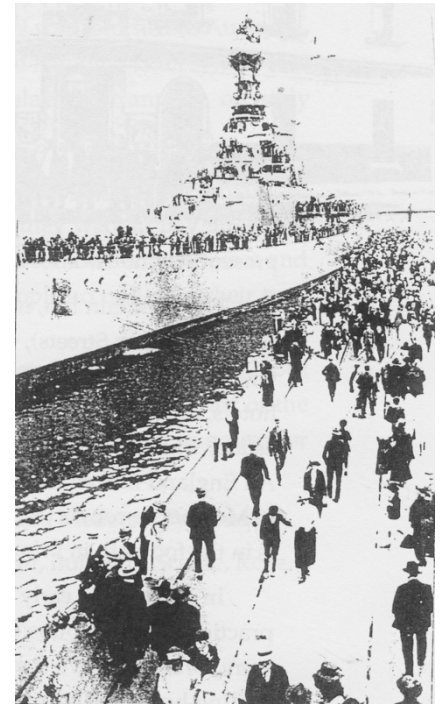
Incidentally the Town Hall had an opening roof which could be opened or closed according to the weather. So the Flinders Park Tennis Centre is not the first with a sliding roof. Actually, I think some of the live theatres in the city had similarly operating roofs.

A kid could go to the movies at the Port Town Hall for 3d and with 1d to spend could buy twelve aniseed balls, two licorice straps or two silver sticks. The picture shows always gave good value for the admission price of about 1/ (kids half price), showing a newsreel, a cartoon and two feature length movies with a change of programme twice a week.

I often meet a Mr. Reg Oldham at Templestowe Bowling Club, now in his 80s, and he was a projectionist at various times in all three theatres. He tells of the primitive conditions in which he had to work, veritable death traps in case of fire.

After the Town Hall pictures closed down and during very bad times, there were groups who used the Town Hall for variety concerts. Admission to these was by silver coin, and I need hardly say the 3d bit was the most popular silver coin in those days. These concerts had a wide variety of performers, and many of them went on to bigger and better things in the entertainment world. The shows were always bright and the comedian with the odd smutty yarn was most applauded. They usually commenced after the Church services although they did not get too many who had been to Church. They went on non-stop for about two hours and were in the main very bright entertainment.

My memories again take me back to the waterfront and I recall the two great naval fleets that came to Port in the early 20s. The great British Royal Navy fleet had two mighty battle cruisers, *HMS Hood* and *HMS Repulse*, both tied up at Princes Pier. There were also smaller ships accompanying them and these were at anchor in the Bay with some berthed up the river. *HMS Hood* (42,000 tons) was the pride of the Royal Navy and probably the biggest warship afloat at the time. Both *Hood* and *Repulse* had eight 15" guns and it was reported that some of their armour plate was 12" thick. In World War II both were still in service, and both were sunk in great naval tragedies. In the icy North Atlantic the *Hood* engaged the German battle cruiser *Bismarck* and in a direct hit from *Bismarck* the magazine blew up and this mighty ship went down in minutes with the loss of all hands. *HMS Repulse* was in a naval fleet off Malaysia during the Japanese drive to Singapore. From out the blue came a massed attack from Japanese torpedo bombs and *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* were both sunk with great loss of life. Then came the great American fleet and these were similarly berthed to the British ships i.e. the big ones tied up at the pier and the smaller ones at anchor in the Bay or up the Yarra River. One of their massive capital ships I recall was the *USS Pennsylvania*, but none of them had the sleek appearance of British ships, in fact some of them were quite ugly.

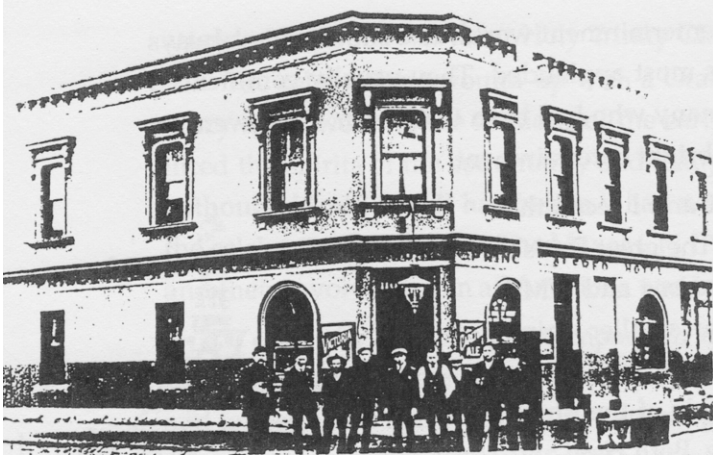


One of the first lessons we learned about Americans was their amazing respect for their flag; the ceremony of the lowering of the stars and stripes at sunset was something to behold. It was a solemn ritual carried out with military precision and at no time was the flag ever allowed to touch the deck. I guess the sunrise ceremony was as good, but we never saw that. Another thing that hit young Australians was the American accent. Since the days of talkies, TV and a lot of radio, youngsters today practically live daily with the American accent. But to us it was new, unusual and quite an experience to have a talk with an American sailor. They were very friendly, and I am sure felt much at home in our country. I think half the kids in Port Melbourne were wearing the unusual 'gob' caps before this fleet departed.

In 1927 we had *HMS Renown*, another Royal Navy battle cruiser in Port, as she was carrying the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, now Queen Mother) on a world cruise. The object of their visit was to open the new Parliament House in Canberra and they received a wonderful reception in Melbourne. We as school kids had a stand built at the Port Town Hall where we were placed during the civic reception to Port Melbourne by the then Mayor, Cr A. Tucker. At the time we had a new Canberra florin (2/-) minted, also a postage stamp depicting the new House.

Round about 1938 we had a visit from two of the world's finest passenger liners, Britain's *Empress of Britain* and Germany's *Reliance*. I think at the time the *Empress* (about 45,000 tons) was the largest ship ever to enter Port Phillip Bay. At the time we were living above the shop in Bay Street and about 3 am the traffic started and continued till the ships berthed about 8 am. The sight of these headlights streaming down Bay Street was unbelievable, and also in a time when not too many people were in possession of a motor car.

The fleets and great liners were always a great attraction and Port Melbourne became the focal point of great crowds.



The hotels in Port Melbourne have always been part of its history and in my lifetime, there have been many changes, part due to changes in the licensing laws, and part to the crack-down on drinking and driving. My father told me that in his youth there were 66 hotels in Port but in my time these had been reduced to 22 and at the present time there are 20. Many of the original 66 have been demolished but all around Port there are still many of the solid old buildings still left and serving as apartment houses, flats or home units. Most of the present-day hotels are still in solid buildings, many of them dating well back into last century.

The Fountain Inn, now a National Trust building, was built about 140 years ago. The Pier Hotel (Bay and Beach Streets), while not the original building, was built on the site of Liardet's hotel which was established about 1840 by Capt. W.F.E. Liardet, the founder of the locality. Of the demolished hotels, the Chusan Hotel in Bay Street, later the Stevedores Club, later a bus depot and now a housing estate, was the meeting place when the first municipal committee was formed in 1853. Another, the All England Eleven (corner of Princes and Rouse Streets), now used for houses, was the first building in Melbourne connected to the Board of Works sewerage system. A plaque commemorating this event is in the footpath in Princes Street.

In most of my early years the laws made 6 o'clock closing essential, with no Sunday trading, and practically all the pubs were patronised by the workers of the locality who after the 6 o'clock swill were forced to leave the premises. Today with very different licensing laws most have much longer trading hours including Sunday, and many have gone up-market and cater for a much different type of clientele from earlier years. I would say that a lot of local pubs today would not welcome local people in working clothes and certainly their prices do not attract any but the well-heeled.

In earlier days practically every laneway in Port Melbourne had an SP bookmaker, and certainly those lanes adjacent to the pubs. Bets of 3d and 6d each way and all up were quite usual for the less affluent, but there were also some very good gamblers, and many SP bookies built a very comfortable life. Then there was the great two-up game over on the Bend - people came from far and wide and made a big school. The local police did not worry either the SP bookies or the two-up, although all of these had good cockatoos (spotters), but it was when the gaming squad made a raid that there was a great scatter. Many of them developed into professional runners and got away, but the slower ones were caught by the raiding squad. The order of the day then was to give a fictitious name and address and, of course, when summoned there was no appearance, your Worship.

Freemasonry has been closely associated with the history of Port Melbourne and in 1858 a Lodge was formed, named Sandridge Marine Lodge. The locality was then known as Sandridge and as the members had close association with the mariners who crewed the sailing ships using the port, the name Marine was added to the title. They built a Masonic Hall in their first year in Stokes Street, at the rear of the Sandridge Hotel (formerly the Freemasons Hotel) and this building is still there today. It was once purchased by Swallow & Ariell for use as a lunch and recreation building for their employees. The Lodge built a fine new Masonic Hall in Liardet Street which is used at the present time by a number of newer Lodges. The Sandridge Marine Lodge, now in its 133rd year, was a foundation member when the United Grand Lodge of Victoria was formed in 1889. William Howe, an estate agent and five-time Mayor of the city, was Secretary of this Lodge for 52 years.

A little piece of interesting history is the account of the laying of the foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church in Bridge Street (now the Uniting Church) in August 1863. The Lodge marched in procession and in full regalia from the Masonic Hall to the church site where the Master of the Lodge laid the foundation stone. For this purpose an ornamental silver trowel with a blackwood

handle was crafted and used for the ceremony. This trowel was evidently presented to some dignitary and somehow found its way to England. In 1980 the then owner of the trowel made it available at a price of \$800, as the National Gallery of Victoria was interested in obtaining early silver crafted items. The Sandridge Marine Lodge and the Grand Lodge paid the price and the trowel was returned to Australia. In November 1980 a formal presentation was made to the directors of the National Gallery and this trowel subsequently went on show with other items in a fine display of examples of early silversmithing in Victoria.

Port Melbourne memories would not be complete without mentioning the shopkeepers, many of whom played a big part in the atmosphere of the locality. In the main they were in Bay Street but some of these had businesses in other streets. The shops were often one person owner businesses and they usually worked long hours to make a reasonable living. I list these people according to their type of business as it's easier to remember them in this way:

These are the names I recall and no doubt there were others, which I regret I may have missed. But these are the people who provided the people of Port with good service and were a vital part of the community. Two hardware and timber businesses, J E Earl and Faram Bros, I mentioned in an earlier part of these memoirs.

**Butchers:** King, Conole, Skehan, Rice, Daws, Martin, Killick, Caton, Russ, Mellett & Parsons

**Grocers:** Ratcliffs, Moran & Cato, Crofts, Bums, Parsons, Bonds, Sinclair, Bulloghs, Scoble, Rose, Littlepage

**Boot shops:** Porritt, Rooks, Partridge, McKays, Wilmot

**Tailors:** Tliley, 'Watty' Power, Gotz, Briggs, Carter & Hunt

**Bakers:** Insall & Patterson, Robinson, Borers, Denhams

**Newsagents:** Winslow, Coakleys

**Fruit shops:** Zeeno, Manuel, Steeles, MacBeth, Paulin

**Chemists:** Watson, Griffin, Mowat (much of the equipment, drawers, drug bottles etc from Mowat's is now in the pharmacy at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat)

**Delicatessens:** Brown, Read, Hotopp, Vagg

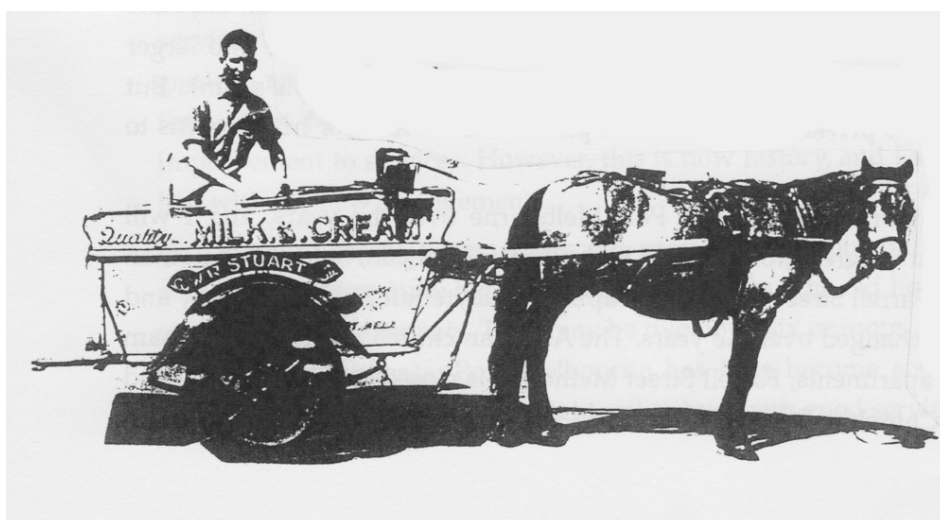
**Wood merchants:** 'Fatty' Denham, Berry, Foster

**Confectioners:** Smith, Craig, Carpenter

**Estate Agents:** Trewavis, Crichton, Chapman, Howe. (These people had to work hard for a living as their income was mainly commissions on collecting rents as little as 7/6 a week. House and land sales and auctions also were very small returns, with values starting about £200.)

**Dairies:** Woodruff, Sawtell, Gay, Butcher, Spain, Barry, Stuart. (Milk was delivered usually

early in the morning from small horse-drawn milk carts. These carried big milk cans and the milk was measured out into the householder's billy, which was usually left in a convenient position for the milkman. During the week a collector would call and collect the week's bill from each customer. Later on this system changed and milk bottles became the order of the day.)



**Hairdressers and tobacconists:** Whitlock, Clifford, Miller, Engleby, Ballard, Bruce, McCarthy (Haircuts were 1 /, shaves 9d and tobacco 11d an ounce. Cigarettes: most brands were 10 for 6d, but one brand introduced a small pack of six for 3d.)

There were also a number of **speciality shops**, some of these being: Wakefield's (men's wear and radio), Smith (men's hats), Jobson's (ladies' unmentionables), Bevan (wool), Dowsett (haberdashery), Read (ladies' hats) and Stuart (infant wear).

Having named quite a number of people who were in business in Port Melbourne during my lifetime I must mention a group of people who were important in the community and that was the medical practitioners. In those years many of the doctors were like family friends and attended to the medical needs of the people with great sincerity. To mention some, I name Dr Grover, Dr Potter, Dr Hart, Dr Sabelberg, Dr Brenton and Dr Danziger (Danby). More recently, Dr Skene, Dr Wodak, Dr Goldberg and Dr Freeman. Dr Goldberg came to Port Melbourne as a young doctor over forty years ago and is still in practice here. The earlier doctors had most of their patients on the friendly societies scheme (explained earlier), but when a patient went privately they were charged half a guinea (10/6). In these days the community is still served by a number of very competent doctors, although the system has completely changed with the advent of Medicare and other services financed by Government assistance.

We have had good local dentists over the years and the names Frost, McKenzie and Hill come to mind. Mr. E.A. Frost practiced in Bay Street and had two fine assistants, namely H. Evans and C. Claxton. They charged one shilling for a tooth extraction, five shillings for an amalgam filling and one guinea (21/) for gold filling. Mr Frost was an early dabbler in X-ray equipment and helped to establish the identity of a murder victim known as the 'pyjama girl'. She had been murdered, her body burnt and disposed of under a bridge at Howlong, NSW, and her identity had been unknown for quite a long time.

Banks were also important in the life of the community and in my earlier years we had the Bank of Australasia, E S and A Bank, National Bank and the State Savings Bank of Victoria, while the Commonwealth Bank had a small operation which was located in the Post Office. The four bigger banks all had substantial buildings with accommodation usually occupied by the bank manager and his family. These families in most cases were prominent in local activities and often were stationed here for some years.

The State Savings Bank was really the people's bank, and many of their depositors started their association with the bank at school through the school bank, where small deposits were accepted. Later these accounts were taken into the 'main' bank and depositors remained customers. These savings accounts received an annual interest and I have no recollection of any fees being charged. Earlier on these pages I mentioned the magnificent project in the Garden City, but in later years politicians and governments allowed this fine State Bank to be dominated by economic 'geniuses' who started competing with private banks, lending money indiscriminately and chasing huge profits, and who finally destroyed it. It was a sad day for Victoria and for Port Melbourne in particular, when the State Bank closed its doors. The Commonwealth Bank, which had moved from the Post Office into larger premises, took over the business of the State Bank and for some time tried to be a people's bank. But again at the whim of politicians, it was privatised and became part of the rat race for huge profits to satisfy their shareholders.

Churches have been a very important element in Port Melbourne over the years, and I will remember a good type of church and congregation. We had Holy Trinity Anglican, St Joseph's Roman Catholic, Graham Street Methodist, Farrell Street Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Salvation Army and Melbourne City Mission. Much has changed over the years. The Anglican church is a wreck, Graham Street Methodist is now a block of apartments, Farrell Street Methodist is closed and Methodists and Presbyterians are now the Uniting Church in Bridge Street.

In my school days we had three primary schools in Port Melbourne, namely Nott Street, Graham Street and St Joseph's. Graham Street is the only remaining school, as Nott Street and St

Joseph's have both closed down. The buildings of Nott Street have been converted, and that is now a special school for handicapped children.

I had better round off my recollections of Vintage Port by referring to some of the questions raised on the leaflet from the Port library: Yes, I can recall all those things mentioned, and conclude Port Melbourne has been a good place to live. It has changed in many ways, first by the departure of so many local families to other areas. Many of these families had been part of the community for generations. Since the war we have had an influx of ethnic people of varying backgrounds, including Italians, Greeks, Turks and many others. More recently we have an increase in yuppies, or wealthier professional people. All these people have been welcomed and many have realised this is a great place in which to live, and they have fitted in and adjusted to much of our way of life.

What in the late 1980s appeared to be a great threat to our community was the proposed development known as Sandridge City. Against the wishes of the Council and the community the Government pushed this proposal in favour of wealthy interests, had sold valuable public land for a song, and were paying to have it cleaned up or decontaminated. Practically all the waterfront was to be handed over for this project. Canals were to be cut, and the piers used as marinas for wealthy residents. The residential areas built along the canals were to form an enclave or ghetto with tight security and no access for other local people. Fortunately for some reasons, possibly financial ones, this grandiose scheme was abandoned and the whole area returned to the melting pot.

Some time later a Sydney company called Mirvac took over the land and commenced a residential housing project known as Beacon Cove. It is now nearing completion and has been a huge success. Houses are quite expensive, but the sales have been good, and many new families have been moving in. One unfortunate thing has been the demolition of Centenary Bridge, opened by the Duke of Gloucester in 1934, which has forced a great increase in traffic through the residential streets of Port Melbourne. While on the subject of new housing: two local landmarks are now part of the new order. The old factories of Swallow and Ariell and Robert Harper's have been converted into modern apartments, some of them bring astronomical prices, especially those with bay views. Much of the two old factories have been retained as they are under the protection of Heritage Victoria.

One of the most recent changes to affect Port Melbourne is the change made by the Government: we are now residents of the City of Port Phillip. The City of Port Melbourne is abolished, and all the councillors sacked. We have been amalgamated with South Melbourne and St Kilda, with headquarters at St Kilda Town Hall. For some time we were ruled by Government-appointed commissioners who probably knew very little of local affairs. There was then an election for a new council, very much reduced in size to seven, and Port Melbourne has only one councillor. At the time we were promised that the amalgamation would bring vast improvements such as a reduction in rates and greatly improved services. The fact is that we are probably worse off, as the rates are still the same and the local services have deteriorated quite considerably. Most of the services such as roads, footpaths, parks and gardens and gutter sweeping is now done by private companies, and we don't see great efficiency there. Port Melbourne is like the dog's tail of the municipality and seems to come last in any improvement to services. However, this is now history, and I suppose all we have to do is to learn to live with the new arrangements.

In more recent times, many old properties are put on the market and developers move in, sometimes giving quite high prices to obtain them. The old houses are then demolished, and the land used to build apartments. They may be two, four, six or more, and are then usually sold at good prices for single apartments. Port Melbourne has thus become something of a dormitory suburb with convenient travel to the city by light rail or bus (both good services).



I trust my recollections may have some value to those who are compiling the history of this city of ours and wish that I could have been more interesting in some of my writing. There may be some who disagree with my recollections on certain subjects, but I have written as I have recalled and I believe, in the main, as the way things have been.

In my later years I have had the opportunity to travel and have seen quite a lot of the world including the British Isles, Europe, USA (45 states), Canada and a little of the Far East and Indo China, and I have no hesitation in saying we are lucky to have such a great country and way of life. Melbourne is one of the finest cities in the world, and the climate has a wonderful four-season sequence, in spite of what some people say of it.

Port Melbourne is a very important part of that great city, and all in all is a very pleasant place to reside in. I believe most of the present residents and also many of those who have left have that feeling, and I can only hope that our way of life and our Vintage Port will remain for future generations.