

SHORTHAND HISTORY TOUR OF MELBOURNE

SELF-GUIDED

INTRODUCTION

“Silently and inconspicuously” shorthand writers and shorthand educators have contributed to the legacy which has shaped the City of Melbourne. Shorthand has preserved our post-European arrival history with records that include those of parliaments, businesses and courts. Although the legacy which shorthand has afforded Melbourne is largely hidden, it is nonetheless entrenched and woven through multiple and varied facets of our society today.

From the 1840s, educated Melbourne men learned and wrote shorthand. It was a fundamental skill which, as part of their repertoire, empowered them to succeed in business, law or politics. Soon after, women believed they were entitled to the same possibilities, and actively commenced the struggle. Two World Wars assisted female shorthand writers in their quest, however, many obstacles still remained. With the rise in popularity of shorthand, and therefore its demand, educators took advantage of opportunities to open shorthand colleges in Melbourne, and women took advantage of the opportunities to advance their financial independence.

For decades, the streets of Melbourne echoed daily with the footsteps of thousands of promising and accomplished shorthand writers as they completed their commute to shorthand colleges, business houses, courts and parliament. By the 1950s most emerging shorthand writers were female, who had won the right to work in business houses, even if they were yet to achieve equal working conditions.

Melbourne’s central grid is brimming with shorthand history and stories, all of which contribute to the endowment shorthand has left to our society. As you walk around Melbourne, you will read and visualise how these scenarios and opportunities materialised.

We acknowledge that these opportunities have taken place on the land of the Wurundjeri people, who are the traditional owners. We pay our respects to the Elders, both past, present and emerging of the Kulin Nation and recognise that First Nations’ sovereignty was never ceded.

When you click on this link to open the self-guided [Shorthand History Tour of Melbourne](#), each purple number on the map will guide you around Melbourne’s CBD. Open each number to read the shorthand stories, with photos, of the following:

1. Parliament House
2. Adam Lindsay Gordon
3. The “Great Petition”
4. Morningside Guest House
5. The Princess Theatre

6. Austral Building
7. ANZAC House
8. Zercho's Business College
9. The Assembly Hall
10. The Athenaeum
11. Nicholas Building
12. Pitman's Phonographic School
13. Cole's Book Arcade
14. Presgrave Building
15. Capitol Theatre
16. Original T & G Building
17. The Blue Triangle Business Girls Club
18. State Library of Victoria
19. Mitchell House
20. Shorthand Writers & Typists Bureau
21. Temple Court
22. Supreme Court of Victoria

REFERENCES:

Taylor, Carmel, "With Pencils Poised...A History of Shorthand in Australia", Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2021

State Library of Victoria Collections.

Trove, National Library of Australia

"The Australasian" newspaper

Google Maps