Port Fairy HISTORIC WALKS

1. **Former Joseph Goble's Flour Mill.** c.1866, later Port Fairy Butter Factory.

2. **Prefabricated Cottages,** Gipps Street c.1853. Note the common chimney between 61 and 63.

3. **Capt. Mills Cottage,** 40 Gipps Street, c.1843. The back section is believed to be the oldest house still standing in Victoria.

4. **Former Courthouse** c. 1859. Now the Port Fairy History Centre.

5. **Former Customs House,** 28 Gipps Street c.1861.

6. **Merrijig Inn** c.1846. Note the stone mile post on the Campbell Street frontage.

7. **Wishart Street,** a street full of interesting 19th century villas and cottages.

8. **"Emoh",** 8 Cox St., c.1844. Once home to William and Eliza Rutledge.

9. **Former Anglican Church School,** 4 Princes Street, c.1852.

10. **Paired Cottages** 6-8 Princes Street, c.1859.

11. **Railway Goods Shed** c.1890. The railway station was slightly to the west of the building. The line closed in 1977.

12. **Sackville Street Cottages.** This block features several interesting mid 19th century cottages.

13. **Star of the West Hotel** c.1856 Once the staging post for Cobb & Co. coaches.

14. **Lecture Hall** c. 1882.

15. **Former Mechanics Institute Library** c.1865. Still in use as the local branch library.

16. **Former Gazette newspaper office** established in 1849. 46 Sackville Street.

17. **Largely unchanged retail premises of the 19th century.** 44 Sackville Street.

36. **The foundation stone for St. Patrick's Catholic Church** was laid in 1857 with the Blessing Service held on January 17, 1861. 600 people attended this service.

33. **The Market Hotel** c.1871 was ideally located opposite the saleyards. Run by members of the Osmond family they also ran a butchers shop next door.

24. **Built on the site of the Colonial Inn The Victoria Hotel** was operated by Margaret Bermingham from 1875 until 1901. The license was not renewed in 1910.

The area occupied by the Botanic Gardens was once described as a "low swampy morass". With advice from The Government Botanist, Baron Von Mueller the gardens became a beautiful and peaceful retreat.

18. **Former Bank of Australasia** Cnr Cox & Sackville Sts, c. 1857.

19. **Former Post Office,** Cnr Cox & Sackville Sts, c.1880.

20. **Former Stag Inn,** Cnr Cox & Sackville Sts. c.1847.

21. **Paired Cottages,** Sackville St., once used as a bank and council offices. c.1853

22. **Motts Cottage,** built by William Hooper, 3 Sackville Street. c.mid1840s.

23. **19th Century Cottages,** This block of Campbell Street contains a number of mid c.19th cottages

24. **Former Victoria Hotel,** now in disrepair. 36 Bank St. c.1856.

25. **St Johns Anglican Church,** foundation stone laid in 1854, although the tower was not completed until 1955.

26. **Uniting Church,** formerly the Wesleyan Methodist Church. c.1856.

27. **Former school established by Dr Braim,** c.1854.

28. **Caledonian Hotel,** c.1844.

29. **30 James Street,** interesting house of 3 stories. c.1890s.

30. **51 Cox Street,** c.1862 Originally built for Tucker and White, undertakers & cabinet makers.

31. **1 William Street,** c.1856 built from limestone rubble.

32. **29 William Street,** former Webb Bros. Cordial Factory and former drill hall of the Belfast Volunteer Rifles.

33. **Former Market Hotel,** 51 William Street, c.1873.

34. **Somerset House,** 16 Albert Road, c.1858

35. **Port Fairy State school,** number. 1188 c.1874

36. **St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church,** c.1859

35. **Children from the Port Fairy State School in patriotic dress** c.1916. Built from stone quarried on site in 1874 the school became a consolidated school in 1949.

17. **John Sickler, tailor, conducted his business from his shop at 44 Sackville Street.** The exterior of this shop remains largely unchanged today.

Commercial fishing provided the livelihood for many Port Fairy families and the Moyne River wharf was a safe anchorage for the fleet.

The lighthouse keepers cottages on Griffiths Island were demolished in the late 1950s after the last lighthouse keeper left and the light became automated.

Princes Highway

Historic Port Fairy Cemetery

N

Regent Street

Bank Street

Cox Street

Campbell Street

William Street

James Street

Albert Street

Sackville Street

Princes Street

Wishart Street

Gipps Street

Botanic Gardens *

Car & Foot Traffic

Foot Traffic

Historic Wharf Precinct

To lighthouse

Port Fairy HISTORIC WALKS

The first attempt to settle the area we now know as Victoria took place in 1803 at Sullivans Bay near Sorrento. Due mainly to the lack of fresh water this settlement was subsequently abandoned and it was not until around thirty years later that a permanent settlement was established.

In 1801 Lt. James Grant explored the coast of Victoria on behalf of the British Government in the survey vessel, The Lady Nelson. He named many features along the coast including Portland Bay after the Duke of Portland.

William Dutton a sealer, whaler and master mariner had been visiting the Portland Bay area for several years. In 1829 he erected what he described as a house there and in March 1833 he established a whaling station on behalf of Capt. John Griffiths. Edward Henty, a pastoralist from Tasmania, called at the whaling station while returning from the Spencer Gulf in a failed attempt to find suitable land to expand his pastoral interests. He was impressed by the land he saw at Portland Bay and in November 1834, Edward sailed into the bay aboard the schooner Thistle, to form a settlement. The British Government had not sanctioned this arrival in the Portland Bay area of the Port Phillip District of NSW (as this area was then known) but in many ways it seems that the floodgates had opened.

The Governor of NSW was keen to see orderly settlement of Victoria and to control that settlement. Major Thomas Mitchell. Surveyor General for NSW made an expedition into Victoria's western districts in 1836—37. Mitchell named many features along the way including Mt Shadwell at Mortlake and the Hopkins River which rises near Ararat and flows to the sea at Warrnambool. Mitchell was surprised to find the Henty Brothers living at Portland although they had not ventured inland. When Mitchell's glowing reports of "Australia Felix", as he had called it were published, settlement began in earnest. It was against this backdrop that the Port Fairy area was establishing itself.

As in Portland the first regular European visitors were Bass Strait sealers and whalers on seasonal hunting expeditions from Tasmania. These were tough hard working men who had little time to leave written records so the exact dates are uncertain. It was probably around 1828 that Captain Wishart, on a sailing expedition in his cutter "Fairy", became caught in a storm. Luckily he found shelter for the night in a little bay and at daybreak, he found that he was at the mouth of an excellent river. He named the bay "Port Fairy", in honour of his tiny ship.

News of this safe anchorage and fresh water soon spread and two men Penny & Reiby established a bay whaling station on the island at the mouth of the river. In 1835 John Griffiths purchased the whaling station and the island now bears his name. Whales were harpooned in the bay and dragged up on to the island for processing. So many whales were taken that the supply was exhausted by the mid 1840s and the station closed.

During the mid 1830s some of these early seamen crossed over from the island and began to clear and cultivate the rich volcanic soils. They brought sheep and cattle from Tasmania and established a permanent settlement. In 1843 James Atkinson and William Rutledge each purchased 5120 acres from the Crown at the cost of £1 per acre. A condition of buying the land (called a Special Survey) at this low price was that the buyer was required to establish a town and encourage settlers. Atkinson laid out his township and named it "Belfast" after his birthplace. William Rutledge failed to establish a town on his survey and it was considered a failure. Irish immigrants were encouraged to settle here and this strong Celtic influence is still evident in the areas place names, architecture and culture.

Atkinson operated his township under the tenant system where the occupier of the land would pay rent to the land owner. Settlers would build a house at their own cost on land they rented from Atkinson. Because of this system it appears that Atkinson was disliked although this was perhaps unfair as he gave land for community purposes such as schools, churches, lecture hall and library. He also wanted the residents of the town to invest in businesses in the town rather than putting all their financial resources toward purchasing the block of land that their house was built on. Atkinson died in 1862 however his family held onto his lands and it was not until 1886 that the land became available to purchase freehold. In 1887 the residents of Belfast petitioned the Government to rename the town Port Fairy.

In 1862 the disastrous collapse of the local mercantile firm, William Rutledge & Co. dealt the town a paralysing blow. In the ensuing years investors abandoned Port Fairy in favour of other towns such as Warrnambool and the early promise that Port Fairy had shown failed to materialise. Today we have that economic downturn to thank for the many 19th century houses and buildings that remain.

While Port Fairy was finding it's way in this new colony other towns and villages began to spring up. Batman and his party had arrived in Melbourne in 1835 and it was only sixteen short years later on July 1, 1851 that Victoria was declared a state in it's own right. And the rest, as they say, is history.....................

Further Reading :-
Port Fairy, the First Fifty Years—J.W. Powling,
The Belfast Fantasy—Marten A. Syme,
Historic Buildings of Port Fairy—Port Fairy Historical Society
Our Side of the Country, The Story of Victoria—Geoffrey Blainey

Port Fairy History Centre, 30 Gipps Street, Port Fairy 3284
—open Saturday, Sunday & Wednesday 2pm—5pm

Walk maps for other regional towns, Koroit, Macarthur, Mortlake and Hawkesdale
are available at the Port Fairy & Region Visitor Information Centre.