Explore the history & architectural wonders of Colac.

Colac Heritage Walk – 29/5/2011

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Heritage Walk

Colac

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Explore the history & architectural wonders of Colac.
The first reference of Aboriginal tribes in Colac was made in 1839, about the clan Gulidjan / Kolacant (also known as "Coladjin" (meaning fresh water) which belonged to the Wathaurong tribe. They lived on the north side of Lake Colac. The name Colac comes from this clan. In 1837 Hugh Murray set up camp on the banks of the Barongarook Creek. In 1864 Colac became a Shire and was gazetted as a City in 1960.

Start the tour from the car park of the Visitor Information Centre
1. Visitor Information Centre – situated on the corner of Queen and Murray Streets, was built in 1987 as a 50th Anniversary project by the Colac Apex Club. Volunteer labour and donated local timbers from the Otway timber industry helped this project. The centre is managed by the Colac Otway Shire with the assistance of volunteers.


3. No. 1 Murray Street – built in 1844 as an inn "Crook & Plaid" this was the sight of the first magistrate hearings. The present building was erected in 1871 for Adam Rae's "Western Stores". It has also been used by Dalgety's Stock Agents, a solicitor's office until 1978, a restaurant named The Crook & Plaid and has since housed various restaurateurs.

4. No. 4 Murray Street, former Post Office – built in 1876. A telephone exchange began operations in 1904 with 25 subscribers. The building now houses a Chinese restaurant. The building is protected by the National Heritage Committee, therefore the current tenants are not permitted to erect advertising signs.

5. No. 6 Murray Street, Shire of Colac Hall – the present building was erected in 1879 when the first Shire hall was declared unsafe just 14 years after completion. (1865-1879), Colac Adult Education and Aged Care Services now occupy the building.

6. 10 Murray Street, Commercial Hotel – established by Mr. Willis in 1875. Recently refurbished it is now called Colac Central Hotel.

7. No. 15 Murray Street, Former Union Bank – built in 1916, now houses an antique shop.

8. R.S.L. – originally opened as The Regent Theatre in 1925. It was the early site of the Methodist Church built in 1874.

9. No. 26 Murray Street – built in 1885. This building was formerly used as a gentleman's club, then the National Bank and is now occupied by building surveyors.


12. St. Andrew's Uniting Church – built in 1877. It was Colac's 3rd Presbyterian Church. The bluestone apparently came from New Zealand as ballast for sailing ships on their way to the gold rush.

13. St. John's Church of England – built in 1891 by Mr. Humphrey Hearn. View the stained glass window honouring pioneers of the Irrewillie area, south-west of Colac.

14. Colac Botanic Gardens – the land was reserved by the government in 1865. Mr. William Guilfoyle, a director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, redesigned the layout in 1910. The slope facing the Lake was terraced to provide a viewing point for the public for events such as rowing regattas. The caretaker's cottage now houses The Botanic Gardens Cafe and Gallery. The Bilson Gates were donated by Mr. Bilson whose general merchandise store was located where the Target store now stands. A road and paths throughout the gardens allow access for driving or walking to view the gardens (This is only one of two drive through botanic gardens in the state.)

15. St Mary's Catholic Church – built in 1980 on the site of the original church. The current church was designed by architect Bryan Dowling. Notice the leadlight windows depicting the Stations of the Cross. The original church, which was built in 1883, was demolished as repairs became impractical and the congregation had outgrown the church.

16. No. 15 Queens Avenue – former Convent of Mercy was built in 1889 for the Sisters of Mercy who brought Catholic education to Colac in 1888. This is now a retirement village.

17. No. 19 – former Presbyterian Manse. No 21, also a former Presbyterian Manse, was built in 1855 and is now a private residence.

18. No. 16 The Elms – built in 1883 for Dr. Foster and now operating as a B&B. The wooden building beside the house is the original billiard room.

19. No. 29 Derrinook – built in 1890 for Dr. William Brown for use as a private hospital. It was converted into flats in 1935.

20. Duffs Café – built in 1870 as the Lodge Hall for the Independent Order Of Odd Fellows. Further extensions were added in 1891 and 1910. The building was later used as a community hall and by The Colac Players before being used for many years by panel beaters. Restored in 1999 as Duffs Café.

21. No. 45, Legacy House – this is thought to be the first brick veneer house in Colac. Built as a dental surgery.

22. Memorial Square – Home of 6 day race held annually in November. Also known as Market Square. The Elms Memorial was erected in 1876 for Colac and unveiled in 1924 to commemorate those who had fought in WWI.

23. Union Club Hotel – built in 1877 by J. Henric on the site of an old wooden Market Square Hotel. It has operated as a residential hotel ever since.

24. Colac Railway Station – the Colac to Geelong line opened in 1877 amid great festivities. The wooden building was erected as a temporary station, a poor relation to the other brick and blue stone stations along the line. The turntable was recommissioned in 1984 after being restored (one of the few very in Victoria). The rail service is now operated by V/Line. Start of the Beechy Line Rail trail from Colac to Beech Forest, this new 45.2km bike walk trail follows one of the state's former narrow guage railway lines through an area of scenic forest, rich farm land and rolling hills. Pick up your Beechy Line brochure at the Colac Visitor Information Centre for more information.


27. 2-6 Rae Street, Colac Otway Shire Offices – built in 1960, but since renovated.

28. Colac District Hospital – now operating as Colac Area Health. Land was reserved in 1873 for the hospital but the building wasn’t completed until 1879. The hospital officially opened in 1882. Treatment was free for some years. In 1934 this became the first Australian Commonwealth Hospital. In the 1960’s need for care of the elderly became apparent and so began the construction of Otway Pioneer Ward which opened in 1966. The hospital is currently undergoing major renovations. cont. over page