

PARRAMATTA'S EUROPEAN HERITAGE

Captain Arthur Phillip's arrival in Sydney

In 1786 the British Government appointed Captain Arthur Phillip to establish a penal settlement at Botany Bay. Arriving on 20 January 1788, he found the Bay to be unsuitable and proceeded north to Port Jackson and Sydney Cove. There was only enough food to support Sydney Cove for a short time and the soil around it proved too poor to grow the thousands of kilos of food that 1000 convicts, soldiers and administrators needed to survive.



Governor Arthur Phillip

Exploration and settlement at Parramatta

During 1788 Governor Arthur Phillip surveyed several places before choosing Parramatta as the likeliest place for a successful large farm. On Sunday, 2nd November 1788, Governor Phillip took a detachment of marines along with a surveyor and, in boats, made his way up the harbour to what was called The Crescent, now part of Parramatta Park, where tents were set up and the work of determining the best places to farm began. A work team of convicts followed, who had the tasks of hoeing the land by hand, and clearing trees to grow wheat, corn and barley. Initially they grew these grains mainly for seed in order to establish farming in the new colony.

The farming at what became known as Rose Hill, proved successful and enabled the early colony to survive. In 1791, on the King's Birthday, Governor Phillip changed the name of the growing town to Par-ra-mat-ta, a name which approximated the term used by the local people to describe their place.



Crescent at Rosehill c1791. Government farm buildings on left and Redoubt buildings on right

Governor Arthur Phillip built a small house on Rose Hill for times he spent in the town. Another house replaced that in 1799 and has remained until today - this house Old Government House was used as a retreat by Governors until the 1850s, and one Governor (Governor Brisbane) made it his principal residence for a short period in the 1820s. The house remains as an historic site and museum and is Australia's oldest surviving public building.

Building a town

A town plan was conceived by Governor Phillip for Parramatta which was configured on an east-west axis along the line of George Street, leading from the Governor's house eastwards towards the river. The first buildings were huts for the convict workers and the Governor's residence. These were followed by places for work and its products, such as storehouses and accommodation for the military garrison guarding the convicts. The foundation stone for St Johns Church of England, an essential part of society, was laid in 1797.

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In 1810, Governor Macquarie initiated plans for new streets and other alterations and improvements. High Street, was renamed as George Street (in honour of the King) and renaming others as Phillip, Macquarie and Marsden. By 1814, additional streets were planned running north-south including Pitt, O'Connell, Smith, Charles and Elizabeth (later Harris), and east-west including Hunter and Argyle Streets.

Macquarie also ordered the construction or rebuilding of a range of official buildings -- Government House itself, military barracks, the military hospital, commissariat store, jail and Female Factory and a weir across the river to improve the water supply. By 1814, the colonial government had established a textile factory (at the female factory), tannery, slaughterhouse, salt mill and attempts had been made to brew beer and operate a watermill. Also, the Female Orphan School was completed in 1818 on the site of the present Rydalmere campus of the University of Western Sydney.

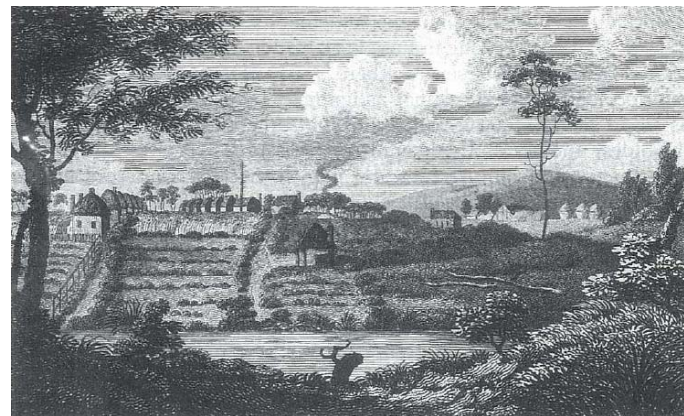


Female Orphan School c1822

Parramatta's location at the head of a navigable waterway made it an ideal place for siting government Institutions. The sick, criminal and undesirable could be located away from Sydney, the growing commercial metropolis. Parramatta became a town of institutions. When transportation of convicts ended, the buildings of the convict period were quickly adapted for the needs of a free society.

The role of convicts

Convicts provided the muscle power of the new colony for the benefit of the government and, later, for free or freed settlers. An important part of the government settlement at Parramatta was its sister community at Toongabbie which was founded as a government farm in 1791. Toongabbie, as farm and as place of punishment, was an integral part of the convict establishment of New South Wales.



Toongabbie Convict Settlement c1792-3

Between 1788 and 1840, around 12,500 female convicts were transported to NSW. Many shared the common experience of travelling up the Parramatta River to be incarcerated at the Female Factory. Designed by Francis Greenway, the Female Factory provided accommodation and work for the women and was also promoted by the Reverend Samuel Marsden as a marriage bureau. Eligible women were lined up for inspection by prospective husbands and led down the line by Marsden and if a match was made they were whisked off to the church to be married.

In 1804 the harsh conditions experienced by convicts resulted in an organised uprising against the government when large groups of mainly Irish convicts gathered in the Castle Hill and the Parramatta area. Initially threatening Government House, some 233 convicts marched towards the Hawkesbury along Windsor Road. The following day the rebels were routed by soldiers at "Vinegar Hill".

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The birth of agriculture

The Parramatta district is linked with the birth of European agriculture in Australia. In 1789 the convict James Ruse; a Cornish farmer, was nearing the end of his sentence. On his release, Ruse convinced Governor Phillip to grant him an acre and a half of land and enough tools, seed and livestock to attempt self sufficiency. Phillip set aside land to the east of Rose Hill and Ruse's venture was a success. The site became known as Experiment Farm and he later sold his farm to the surgeon John Harris, who built a fine dwelling on the site.



Elizabeth Farm c1822

Nearby to Ruse's landholding is Elizabeth Farm, the base of John and Elizabeth Macarthur who pioneered the colony's wool industry. The Macarthurs also planted the first vineyards and olive groves in the area, some of which still survive within the grounds of Elizabeth Farm. A few hundred metres away the Macarthurs built Hambledon Cottage for their governess, Penelope Lucas.

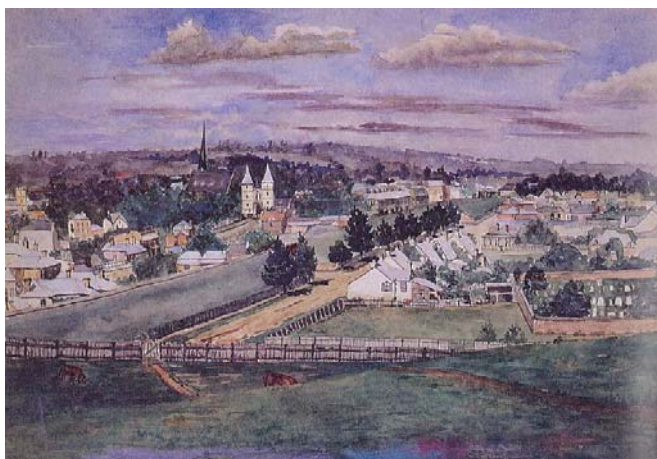
Other early experimental crops in Parramatta included tobacco, but it was vineyards and orchards growing such things as oranges, peaches and loquats that dominate agriculture in the Parramatta region until the early 20th century. Commercial nurseries to support the agricultural community included Silas Sheather's Camellia Grove Nursery on the Elizabeth Farm estate at Granville and Knaus and Shepherds & Sons nurseries on the banks of the Parramatta River.



Pye's Orchard, Windsor Road c1871

New phase of civic development

In all written accounts of Parramatta the first seven decades from 1788 to 1855 remain the golden years of heritage significance. Physical relics of it include the Old Government House and the Parramatta Park, the gaol, female orphanage, hospital, military barracks, St Johns Church, Old Kings School, the gentry homes of Elizabeth Farm and Experiment Farm Cottage and the basic street pattern of the town of Parramatta.



Parramatta viewed from the east (now golf course) c1897

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New phase of civic development continued

This first phase of early European history ended abruptly with the cessation of convict transportation in 1840 and the contraction of institutions identified with the convict system. Leaders were now less concerned with the colonial administration than with the immediate role of Parramatta as a service, retail and commercial centre for the County of Cumberland.

Following self-government from Britain in 1856 and new legislation for local government in 1858, the citizens of Parramatta petitioned for incorporation in 1861. The first council met initially in the old courthouse (now demolished), then leased Elder House until the Parramatta Town Hall was opened in 1883.



Trademark of
Wilson's Parramatta
Blend Teas c 1897

Local pride justified the
adaptation of the seal
of Parramatta
Municipal Council to
identify Parramatta

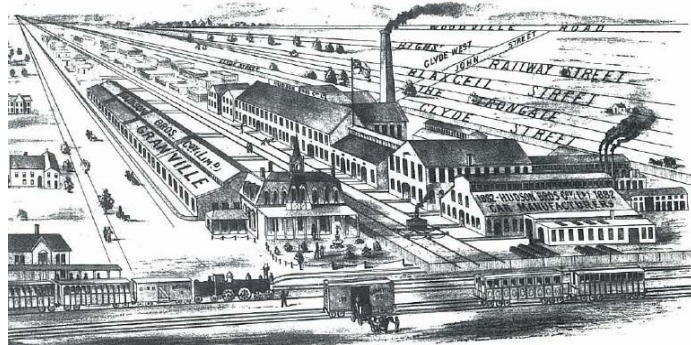
Extension of the railway to Parramatta

The arrival of the railway at Parramatta Junction (now Granville) in 1855 was an important step in reinforcing Parramatta's role as the crossroads of the County of Cumberland, the funnel through which most goods and people travelled between Sydney and the bush. Opposition delayed the extension of the railway westward through Parramatta township until 1860 but within a few months it continued on to Blacktown.

Meanwhile settlement increased around Parramatta Junction and followed the Great Southern railway at Guildford and Merrylands. Granville by 1882 had about 80 houses and by 1890 had nine churches, three public schools, a Roman Catholic school, several small private schools, three railway stations, two banks, 52 commercial premises and three hotels.

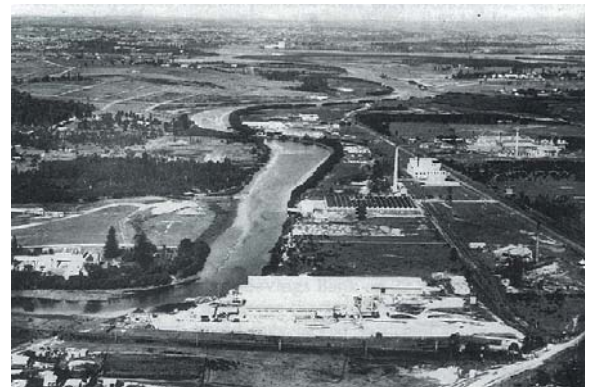
Manufacturing enterprise

Heavy industry moved outside Parramatta Township to Granville in the second half of the 19th century. Among the firms locating in Granville in the 1880s were the Springfield Abattoir (1880), Ritchie's Agricultural Implement Works (1882) J. Byrnes and Co (tweed manufacturers 1882) and Marsh Brothers Tannery (1882). Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company had extensive works between the river and railway. The Clyde Chlorination Works on Duck River treated ores.



Hudson Brothers Works, Granville c1882

Textile production was associated with the Parramatta district. In 1852, the four woollen mills in the colony (two in Sydney, one at Parramatta and one at Penrith) produced 230,000 yards of cloth. The concentration of industry in the southern part of Parramatta continued between the wars with David Fell's oil works being taken over by Shell Oil in 1928. Nearby, the Australian Aluminum Company built premises during World War II and was the only local manufacturer of aluminum for the war effort.



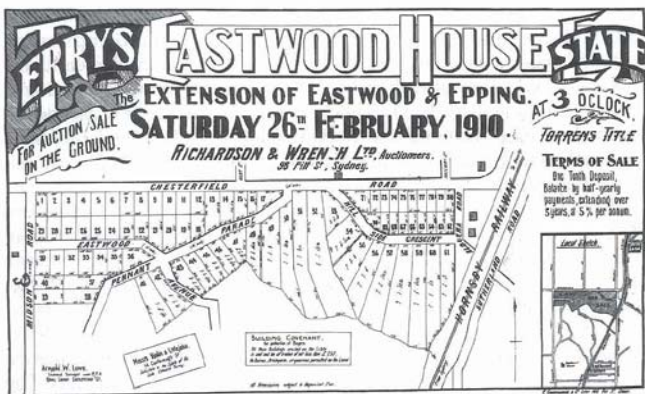
River separates agriculture and industry c1928

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Subdivision and suburban development

Subdivision of the old gentry estates started in the 1830s but was not until the 1870s that sufficient land was subdivided to dramatically change the pattern of the town's expansion. The old government domain was subdivided in 1859, Harris Park estate (on which Experiment Farm Cottage is located) in 1875 and Elizabeth Farm estate in the 1880s.

The residential population near Epping and Eastwood railway stations increased markedly after 1910. The expansion was stimulated by the subdivision of the Terry estate, close to the railway at Eastwood, where housing blocks were protected by covenants which ensured high-quality brick construction.



Terry's Eastwood House Estate Subdivision Sale c 1910

There was dramatic population growth in the municipality of Dundas between 1911 and 1947, growing by almost 6000, as new estates were subdivided and the demand for houses and in the cooler upland areas grew. Out of this expansion came the suburban village of Telopea, superseding the original railway stop at Adderton Road on the Carlingford railway line.

In the south, the village of Guildford developed with the opening of the Guildford Railway Station in 1876. Rapid growth came in the first two decades of the 20th century, spurred by the access which the railway provided to employment and the attraction of industries, such as brick-works, to the neighbourhood.

The population growth between the wars was followed by a different type of development in the postwar period, the Housing Commission, established in 1942. Its first group development was in Montgomery and Oakleigh streets, Granville. Housing Commission estates by 1950 included large areas of Westmead, North Parramatta, Rydalmere, Dundas and Granville. These estates featured shopping facilities as well as residential and playground areas. By the mid-1970s the Housing Commission's largest estate included Dundas (2558 houses).



Preparing buildings sites and roads in Rydalmere for the Housing Commission c1945

Growth of Parramatta City Centre

The proposals of the County of Cumberland Planning scheme of the late 1940s changed Parramatta from an inward looking country town into an urban metropolis. It identified Parramatta as a major regional centre, the most important after Sydney. To achieve that aim, state and local government administrative services would have to be provided in Parramatta so that it could provide for a clientele wider than its immediate neighbourhood. Since then, Parramatta has become the centre of many other government agencies and has slowly become an important commercial centre.

Sources:

Parramatta Heritage Study 1993

'Parramatta A Past Revealed', Terry Kass, Carol Liston, John McClymont