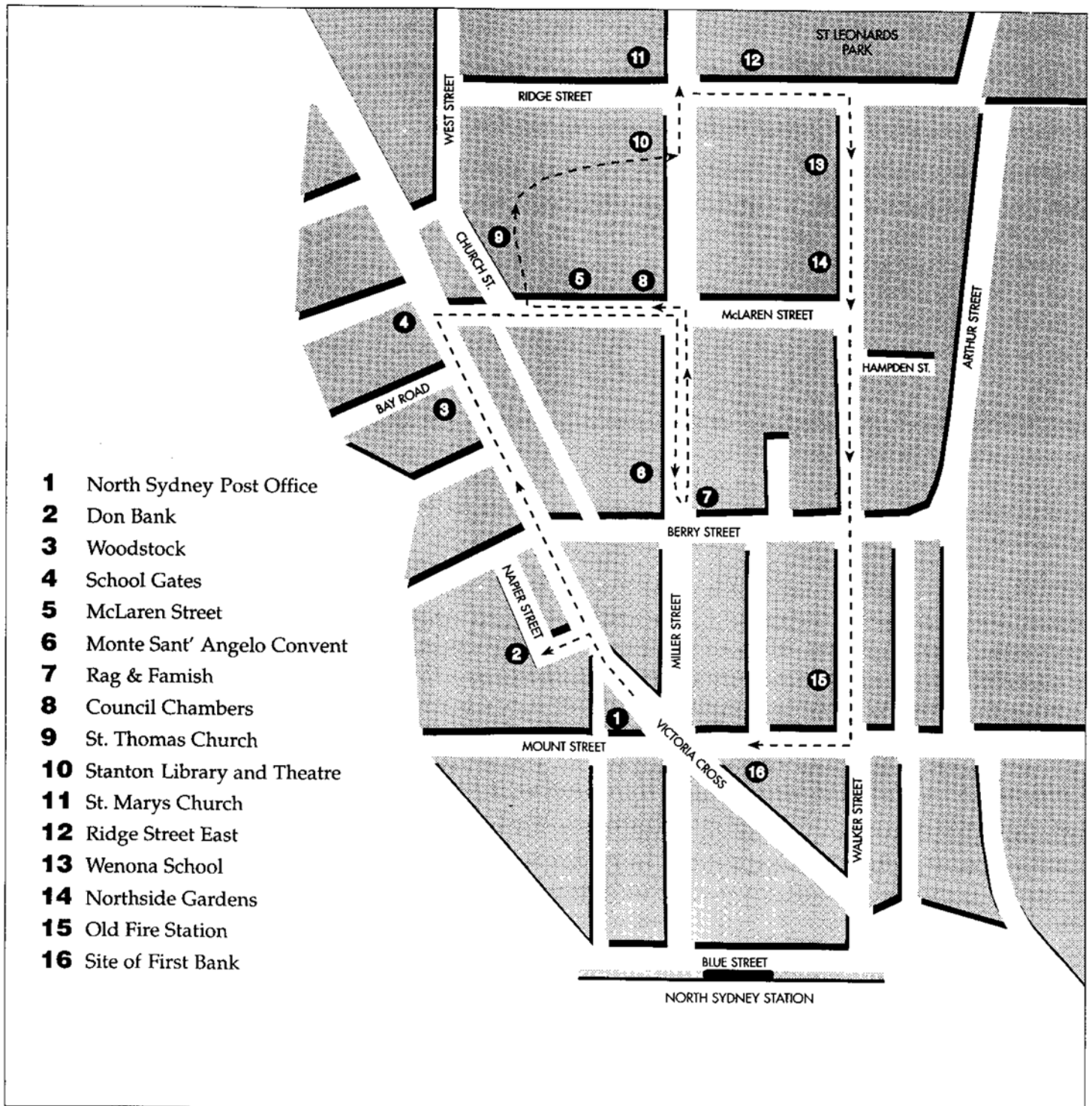




Walk 7

North Sydney Post Office to Ridge Street and Victoria Cross

NOTES PREPARED BY THE NORTH SHORE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1994



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We suggest using a street directory to supplement this map.

Walk No. 7

1. POST OFFICE: COURT HOUSE, 1886, VICTORIA CROSS

The first township of St. Leonards, planned by Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell and gazetted in 1838, now forms the heart of the commercial North Sydney. The Government Gazette advertised half-acre residential blocks for as little as £20. By the 1840s, the population of small settlers, waterside workers or timber getters began to need more shops.

An official St. Leonards Post Office had opened in shop premises in 1854. On 31st January 1889, it moved into this handsome building, which is on the 1978 Register of National Estate. The adjoining Court House replaced an old Watch House. Police horse stables were added at the back. The name was changed to North Sydney Post Office on 28th August 1890. The clock was installed in 1900.

Pacific Highway was the first road north, long called Lane Cove Road, or the Gordon Road. Diverted to the Harbour Bridge when it opened in 1932, it became Pacific Highway, leading to Queensland.

2. DON BANK LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Soon, as you walk north on the highway, at the corner of Charles Street, look left to this restored timber cottage. It is believed that its four original rooms were a cottage built in the 1820s on Edward Wollstonecraft's land. Earlier called St. Leonards Cottage, after enlargements and successive ownerships, its name was changed to Don Bank. At 6 Napier Street, it is believed to be North Sydney's oldest surviving dwelling. The museum is open Wednesday 12 noon-4 pm; Sunday 1 pm-4 pm or by appointment through the Stanton Library. There is a small admission charge.

3. WOODSTOCK, 1870

Continue up Pacific Highway. No. 172 was John Brown's house when he had a timber mill in this area. Stripped of its later additions, it was restored in 1982 as commercial premises retaining its name. Browns Lane passes behind the property.

4. CROWS NEST HOUSE GATES, NORTH SYDNEY DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL

Across Bay Road, pause at these gates. The land

was part of Edward Wollstonecraft's 1820 grant. On his death in 1832, it passed to his sister and her husband, Alexander Berry, who was Edward's partner. Wollstonecraft had built an early cottage, The Crows Nest on the heights. Alexander and Elizabeth planned a larger home but she died in 1845. Crows Nest House was completed here in 1850. Berry, surgeon, ship's master, pastoralist and Member of the Legislative Council, lived here until his death in 1873. His estate passed to his brother, then a relative, Sir John Hay. It was probably then that these massive gates, stonework and iron railings were added. After the deaths of Sir John and Lady Hay, the property was divided, the house demolished in 1936 and a school built. Local residents often mistakenly called it "Lady Hay's School". A new bus stop shelter has been named after Lady Hay.

Cross the highway at the school traffic lights, into McLaren Street, eastward.

5. McLAREN STREET FEATURES

The street takes its name from an early merchant, James McLaren of Craignathan, Neutral Bay.

St. Thomas Church School and Hall: The 1848 stone schoolhouse was then the second in North Sydney - the first being St. Peters Presbyterian small wooden church school at 12 Miller Street, Lavender Bay. Its master was George Buchanan. About 1914, Miss Edith Hooke founded Wenona School in this building. Later it was a Scout Hall, now a kindergarten. The hall foundation stone was laid in 1922 by Governor-General Lord Forster.

Site of Old Montrose: A long time occupant of this home was John Whitton, Engineer-in-Chief (1857-89), NSW Railways. He designed the Blue Mountains Zigzag Railway. (See plaque on gateway of a Monte Sant' Angelo house here).

From this corner, walk briefly down Miller Street to the gateway of the convent.

6. MONTE SANT' ANGELO CONVENT

In the centre of the grounds is the original building, Ma-Sa-Lou, 1855 home of the Hon. Francis Lord, MLC (son of wealthy emancipist Simeon Lord). Francis named it after his daughters Mary, Sarah and Louisa. It has been extended at the bay windows and upwards and had harbour views. In 1873, the Sisters of Mercy started

a school in a nearby cottage. Outgrowing this, Ma-Sa-Lou was purchased in 1878 and the girls' college opened in 1879. The hall was built in 1906 and a magnificent chapel in 1915, designed by architect Joseph Sheerin (noted for his St. Patricks College, Manly). Look across Miller Street.

7. RAG AND FAMISH

In the 1860s it was the Sailors' Return. In 1866, Charles James Bulivant, who came to the colony in the 46th Regiment, renamed it with Army slang Rag and Famish. In 1892 it was rebuilt as North Shore Hotel and was later known as North Star. It reverted to Rag and Famish in late 1982.

Walk back to McLaren Street and across to the Council Chambers corner.

8. COUNCIL CHAMBERS

In the garden and inside the Miller Street entrance are several commemorative plaques. The centenary of the township was 1938 and of Local Government 1967. The three old Boroughs, St. Leonards, East St. Leonards and Victoria amalgamated in 1890 to become the Municipality of North Sydney. The site was the 1870 home of James Husband and family. A new house, designed by E. Jeaffreson Jackson, was owned by Dr. Capper and his mother. From this a hand-carved mantelpiece remains in the front building. It was used at times as a home and hospital. (Some old people say they were "born in the Council Chambers".) Remodelled, this was opened in 1926 by the Rt. Hon. W M Hughes as the Council Chambers, enlarged again in 1938. The northern end was burnt out in 1976, restored and re-opened in 1978. McLaren Street wing was completed in 1977. On a week day, go into the foyer to see long panoramic photographs of the 1870s from the Holtermann collection, and the 1970s.

The adjoining Civic Centre was opened in 1982. The plaque on the wall of the amphitheatre records that the honour of opening was given to the Hon. Secretary of North Shore Historical Society. The site had been terrace houses built of stones from the 1846 St. Thomas Church, given as part payment to the builder. The Queen Victoria 1897 Jubilee fountain was moved here from St. Leonards Park in 1983.

9. ST. THOMAS CHURCH

Walk across the Civic Centre to the adjoining church, the second on its site. The first, designed by Conrad Martens in 1843, opened in 1846. He carved the font also. The present church, designed by Edmund Blacket, was built over and around the first, which served as a nave at this time. This was then taken stone by stone out the front door. St. Thomas is the largest parish church in Australia - its original plan was for Goulburn Cathedral, which bears much resemblance. Note the varied stone carving, patterned slate roof, ventilators, ironwork, etc. The builder was John Jago. Completed after the death of the architect in 1883, it was opened in 1884.

The first Rector (1846-70) was Rev. William Branwhite Clarke, headmaster of Kings School, Parramatta from 1839. Though he came to Australia because of poor health, he rode far and wide on geological research, with a portable Communion Set. In fact, he discovered gold in 1841 but was told by Governor Gipps to keep it a secret. He was later granted £3,000 for the discovery.

In 1881, the foundation stone of the tower was laid by Princes Albert Victor (Eddy) and George (later King George V) then midshipmen on HMS Bacchante.

10. STANTON LIBRARY, 1964 AND THEATRE

Cross the lawn back to Stanton Library in Miller Street. Look across to the theatre, built about 1910 on the site of the car shed for the old trams. Cable trams ran here from Milsons Point 1886-1900. Electric trams then took over. When the lines extended the depot here was closed in 1909. This building was the well loved Independent Theatre 1939-78. (See plaque in foyer.) This and the adjacent one, the Coliseum buildings, had served as a roller skating rink, cinema, amusement arcade, mini golf course and munitions factory in World War I. Home units are being built on the Coliseum site.

11. ST. MARYS CHURCH

Walk to the corner of Ridge and Miller Streets. The original parish covered the area as far as Berowra, Pittwater, Manly and Lane Cove (Pymble). The first "church" in 1855 was a tent set up by Father Powell. In 1856, a small church of upright boarding had the roof supported by

tree trunks. The walls were papered and the earth floor covered with reeds and bracken. The rest of the two acres raised corn for the priest's horse, which he swam across the Spit. In 1868, the first stone church was built by John Jago. This was enlarged by William Wardell (architect of St. Marys Cathedral) and opened in 1896. It was rebuilt and opened in 1938, each stone from the earlier building being cut in two and used to cover brick walls. Slates, marble, glass and the original bell were re-used. 1888 and 1916 school buildings face Ridge Street. The 1885 Presbytery, Miller Street, is much enlarged.

Notice restored terraces west along Ridge Street and the bus shed with Edwardian tiles on St. Leonards park corner. Walk eastwards.

12. RIDGE STREET EAST

Of the houses with delicate iron lace, No.75 was the home of the late Dame Doris Fitton, founder of the Independent Theatre. Others belong to adjoining Wenona School. Note the War Memorial in the park. Admire the view and rest by the bridge over Warringah Expressway on the old Arthur Street corner.

Site of North Sydney Community Hospital: The main building was 1884 Lamorna, home of Methodist Rev. Dr. Kelynack, who left it in 1887 to be President of Newington College. Renamed St. Malo in 1903, nurse Gertrude Walker started a hospital in it. (Famous American author Jack London was a patient in 1908.) Later a hospital St. Ives, in a nearby house, used St. Malo as nurses' quarters. In 1941, a local board opened St. Ives Church of England Hospital in the two buildings. In 1887, Francis Punch (first Mayor of united North Sydney) had built St. Helens next door. In 1967 it was bought for nurses' quarters. In 1970 the name was changed to North Sydney Community Hospital, now closed.

Walk back along Ridge Street and down Walker Street, noting some house restorations. William Miller and Thomas Walker, Assistant Commissaries-General, owned North Sydney land in the 1830s.

13. WENONA SCHOOL

In 1922 Miss Edith Ralston moved the school from St. Thomas Church Hall to a mansion here that she had purchased from Mr. Turton.

Nearby buildings were acquired and modern facilities built.

14. NORTHSIDE GARDENS

On the north corner of McLaren Street, beautiful trees and palms remain from the gardens of Charles Palmer, Secretary of the Bank of New South Wales, who built elegant Kedron here in 1870. In 1930 it was bought by Dr. Erasmus Bligh, a descendant of Admiral John Bligh (governor Bligh's cousin), who renamed it Cobham. It was demolished in 1970, the stables being made into a pretty cottage.

Continue south down Walker Street, noticing the fine terrace in Hampden Street.

15. FIRE STATION, 1895

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade Station of the horse drawn era closed here. Water was available from a spring nearby. In recent years the building became a restaurant. Just across Spring Street, the 1870 Albert Hotel stood until 1982. Turn right up Mount Street to see old Sydney GPO column, one of six Doric columns from the Post Office, which was demolished in 1863. Here was the heart of old North Sydney domestic shopping and entertainment, with H C McIntyre's tent picture show down by Arthur Street corner. Up near Victoria Cross, Dymocks Bookshop preserves the handsome stone facade of J Thompson Est. 1870, then a butcher shop.

16. SITE OF BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The facade of the 1931 Bank remains on the corner of Mount Street and Pacific Highway. It had been the first bank this side of the harbour, in 1877, on the corner of Mount and Miller Streets. Road widenings had pushed its rebuilt premises further back. In 1974 it moved north along Miller Street and is now Westpac.

You are now back to North Sydney Post Office.
