

Port Phillip on Postcards

This exhibition presents a nostalgic snapshot of the history, development, and diversity of the City of Port Phillip using postcards from the Port Phillip City Collection.

The cards encapsulate the history of the local area. They enable us to gauge change and are reminders of stages in the growth of the municipality.

The 270 historical postcards in the Collection span a period of over 100 years, dating from 1905 to 1991. Their images and text give a fascinating insight into the pastimes, working life and environment of many individuals over this period.

When introduced to Victoria in 1876, postcards were simple pieces of paper with an imprinted stamp and no image. By the 1890s they had become picture postcards and the image had gradually expanded to incorporate one entire side of the card. Over this time they had gained widespread popularity as a means of staying in touch with loved ones or communicating with business acquaintances.



Scenes in Australia, Railway Pier Port Melbourne, 1920s

Port Phillip City Collection pm0039

Just for fun

The many open spaces around Port Phillip encouraged the pursuit of fun and the establishment of sporting clubs and leisure centres. Whether enjoying informal family outings, organised sporting activities or the pastimes offered through commercial ventures there was plenty to do. The postcards depict the variety of these activities.

Official clubs for cricket, tennis, cycling, shooting, swimming, football, bowling, angling and yachting flourished. Several bathing facilities were built, catering for local residents and the multitudes of visitors.



Bowling Green, St Vincent Gardens, South Melbourne, c. 1914

Port Phillip City Collection sm0345

Beaconsfield Parade, the beachfront boulevard stretching from Port Melbourne to St Kilda, quickly became a popular destination for family occasions and individual pleasure seekers. Here day-trippers, bathers and picnickers enjoyed the simple pleasures of the sea.



St Kilda beach in summer time, c.1905

Port Phillip City Collection sk0787

Other modes of entertainment established the City as the leading resort in Victoria. In South Melbourne, in the vicinity of today's Arts Centre, the Glacarium ice skating rink was a popular attraction. Another in this same locale was Wirth's Olympia, which included The Chute, a circus and a zoological garden.



**Shooting the Chute,
Prince's Court, Melbourne,
1908**

Port Phillip City Collection sm0302

By 1912 St Kilda's Luna Park was the ultimate destination for those seeking the excitement of the world's newest and greatest amusement park.

Waterways

The lagoons, lakes and sea set the scene for both state business and local pleasure. It is interesting to see these activities reflected in the postcard images.

The piers, particularly in Port Melbourne, played a pivotal role in Australia's maritime history. Troop departures in wartime, the arrivals of migrants and goldseekers, family farewells and the movement of imports and exports have given them a rich history.



**Railway Pier, Port Melbourne,
c. 1905**

Port Phillip City Collection pm0037

The earliest picture postcard in the Port Phillip City Collection is dated c1905 but shows a photograph taken in the 1870s. It illustrates the early shipping activity around Railway Pier, Sandridge.



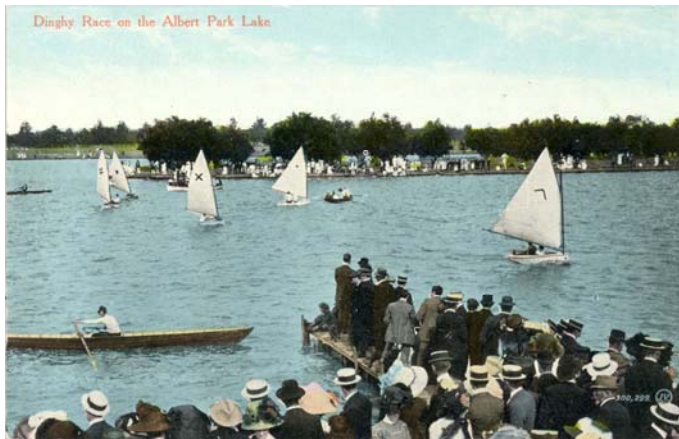
**Town and Railway Piers,
Sandridge, c. 1870**

Port Phillip City Collection pm0733

Out on the bay, pleasure trips on paddle steamers were popular. The Weeroona regularly sailed to Queenscliff and

Sorrento and is believed to have operated legal gambling schools once it was three miles out to sea.

On shore, residents and visitors alike enjoyed a range of water sports and activities. Boat sheds were erected at the Albert Park Lake and boats were available for hire to the general public. The Albert Park Rowing Club and Yacht Club regularly staged regattas on the lake and on the bay at St Kilda and South Melbourne.



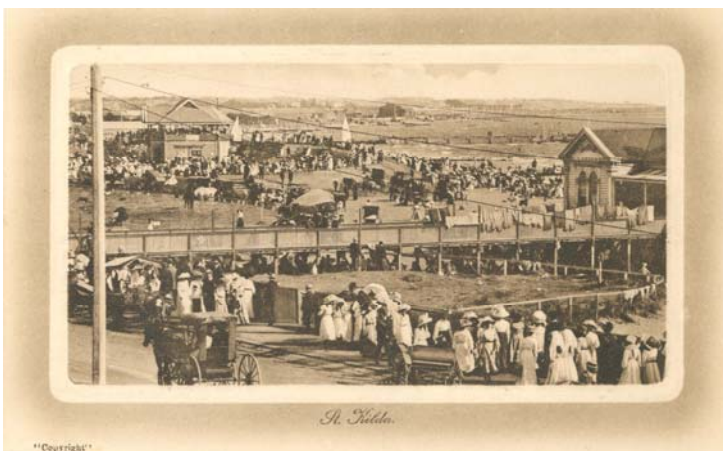
Dinghy race on Albert Park Lake, c. 1910

Port Phillip City Collection sm0259

Promenading in St Kilda

Promenading became a popular pastime for locals and day-trippers to the bay area. The piers, boulevards and gardens along the St Kilda waterfront provided the ideal setting. These attractive spaces were obvious subject matter for postcards.

The introduction of the railway, and later cable trams, made an outing to the sea and its attractions accessible to all.



St Kilda, c. 1900-1914

Port Phillip City Collection sk0790

St Kilda Pier was a favourite attraction. A walk to the end of the pier afforded visitors unlimited views along the bay and back to the shore. The pier pavilion offered an opportunity to enjoy the sea breeze or gaze at the stars at night.



**St Kilda Pier,
c. 1900-1914**

Port Phillip City Collection sk0894

The Esplanade, its lawns scattered with flowerbeds, rockeries and palms, was also a place to take in the spectacle of the surrounding amusements.



**The Lawns, St Kilda, c.
1928-1938**

Port Phillip City Collection sk0699

Parks and gardens

There are a number of significant parks and gardens in the Port Phillip area. Many historical postcards capture these gardens in their early development with young plants and open spaces. Planning for the gardens was prompted by a desire to beautify the local environment and to provide clean sites for social activity.



**Cleve Gardens St Kilda,
Victoria, c. 1930s**

Port Phillip City Collection sk0295

The drive to develop local parks and gardens was partly based on the 1830s English philosophy of providing free public spaces for local residents. St Vincent Gardens, for example, was modelled on the formal early nineteenth century gardens in London. Its unique design enabled a shared outlook for all residents.



**St Vincent's Gardens, Middle
Park Melbourne, c 1911**

Port Phillip City Collection sm0790

The beautification of the local area was also an important aspect in planning local reserves. Those such as Albert Park, Blessington Gardens (now St Kilda Botanical Gardens) and

Railway Reserve (now Smith Reserve) in Port Melbourne provided a space for social activity and respite for local residents.



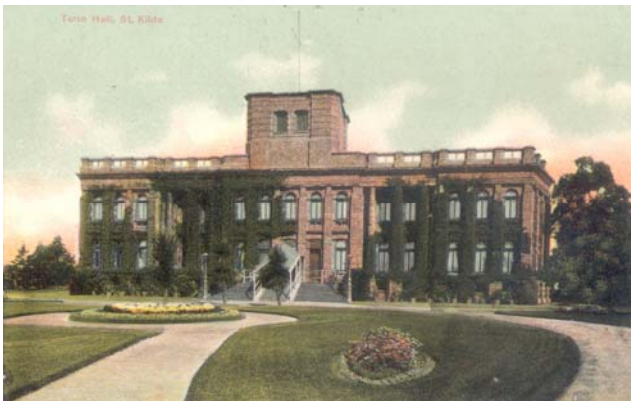
Railway Reserve, Port Melbourne, Victoria, c. 1905

Port Phillip City Collection pm0038

Growing communities

By the late nineteenth century Emerald Hill, Sandridge and St Kilda were distinct towns, each with its own character and purpose. Local business and commercial industry were strong; road and rail infrastructure was well-established and public building and residential expansion was admirably funded. These features were all celebrated and promoted through the postcard.

The three towns saw the establishment of landmark buildings. Local town halls were erected, signifying municipal independence. Grand hotels like The George and Hotel Victoria were built and the St Kilda Baths opened at this time.



St Kilda Town Hall, pre 1925

Port Phillip City Collection sk0241

Many schools, churches and sporting facilities also commenced operation. Prince Henry's hospital was built on the site of the old Homeopathic hospital.



Homeopathic Hospital, St Kilda road, c. 1905

Port Phillip City Collection sm1989

Companies and manufacturers turned to postcards as an inexpensive way of corresponding and advertising. In many cases traders would pay a fee to the publisher to have their signage incorporated in the photograph. It is likely that such an arrangement had been made with J. E. Earl, whose business was situated in Bay Street for 100 years.



J. E. Earl, Bay Street, Port Melbourne, c. 1905–1914

Port Phillip City Collection pm0515

Surveying the streets

Streetscapes depicting grand buildings, public transport services, made roads and lighting were frequently subjects for postcards. They showed off a wealthy community where local councils shared in the benefits brought to Victoria by gold. Money turned dirt tracks into roads and boulevards with rail and cable facilities. Rapid growth and subdivision of local areas transformed small trading areas into bustling high streets.



St Kilda Junction, c. 1905

Port Phillip City Collection sk0235

As habitation of the town precincts increased, tracks and roads were slowly extended and by-laws were passed to regulate building construction. Traffic was initially confined to the centre of the dirt roads. A more permanent type of road construction was required with the advent of the motorcar. Concrete foundations, reinforced with steel fabric, were laid and the roads were surfaced with wood paved blocks. Gradually the principal streets were supplied with oil lamps, which were replaced in the 1870s with gas lamps.



The Terrace, Beaconsfield Parade, c. 1906

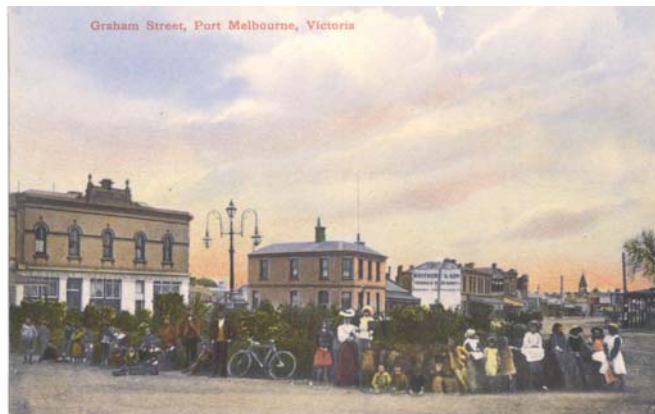
Port Phillip City Collection sm0541

Many of the streets in the three towns were named after people of importance. In St Kilda, for example, Fitzroy, Canterbury and Barkly Streets derived from the names of Victorian Governors. In South Melbourne, Bridport Street, Nelson Road and St Vincent Place were named after naval heroes. In Port Melbourne, Liardet Street was named after one of the earliest settler's and founding father W.F.E. Liardet.



Bridport Street, South Melbourne, pre 1914

Port Phillip City Collection sm0540



Graham Street, Port Melbourne, pre 1914

Port Phillip City Collection pm1415

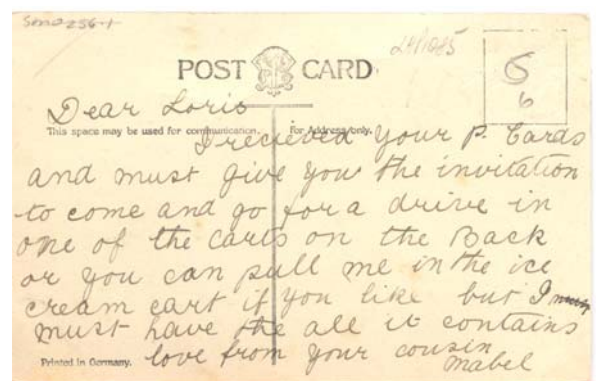
Back to front

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the immediate appeal of the postcard was the photograph. Yet a glance at the reverse of some cards indicates they were a useful medium for personal messages or swift business communication.

A surprising range of emotions are recorded between correspondents. This is despite the fact that personal messages would have been subject to viewing through the public mail system. The postcards record an intimacy and affection between loved ones and good humour between friends. Their affordability meant that they became an accepted means of communication and a popular object for collecting.



Departure of Troop Ship, 1915
Port Phillip City Collection pm0413



Kerford Road Pier, c. 1905
Port Phillip City Collection sm0256

They also contain messages relating to more serious business. The cards were used for arranging appointments and changing plans, in a manner similar to the way that we would use the telephone or email today. The immediacy of these messages is evidence of the efficiency and frequency with which mail was delivered at that time.



The Christian Brother's College, East St Kilda, c. 1905

Port Phillip City Collection sk0783