

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUBURB

MOUNT LAWLEY

The portion of the suburb of Mount Lawley within Vincent is bounded by Walcott Street, Guildford Road and Mitchell Street in the north, the Swan River in the east, Vincent, Harold and Pakenham streets on the southern side and Norfolk Street to the west. The area, which was proclaimed in 1901, was named after Governor Sir Arthur Lawley and Lady Lawley.

HISTORY

Pre-1829

It is believed that Aborigines camped from time to time before European settlement and according to early residents, for some time afterwards in the area of Banks Reserve and near Clarence Street. The springs near Clarence Street provided them with fresh water and they were able to hunt kangaroos and other food in the surrounding area, whilst fish and crabs were trapped or speared in the nearby Swan River.

1829-1870

The eastern portion of the district was known as Swan Location A5 following European settlement in 1829. This area, with a river frontage was owned by Peter Wicks until 1836 when it was purchased by Sir William Henry Drake for £100. Sir William retained the property until 1881 after which it passed through several hands. In each case it was bought for investment purposes and remained undeveloped as did the rest of Mount Lawley which was retained as Crown Land.

During this period a track developed between Perth and Guildford and it passed through Swan Location A5. This was used mainly by pedestrians and those on horseback as the river was the main means of transport in the early days.

1871-1885

The City of Perth was established under the 1871 Municipal Institutions Act. Its northern boundary was Walcott Street thus taking in a considerable portion of that part of Mount Lawley which is in the City of Vincent today. The remaining portion came under the jurisdiction of the Perth Roads Board. Funds were limited, as both authorities had to rely on government grants initially, and there was little development other than the Guildford Track which was transformed into a proper road, Guildford Road, at this time.

The government's resumption of land for the construction of the Fremantle to Guildford railway in 1881 cut a wide swathe through Swan Location A5 but the opening of the East Perth Railway Station provided access to cheap transport. The section where tracks crossed Guildford Road became known as Fenian's Crossing because a group of Fenian convicts had built that section of road. Unfortunately it proved to be very dangerous for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic and it was the scene of several serious accidents before the Mount Lawley Subway was erected.

1885-1919

Population increases, the result of the Western Australian gold boom, led to the suburbanisation of the areas north of Perth. In fact, such was the pressure on housing that tent cities sprang up along the river in Mount Lawley. Chinese market gardeners also attempted to work the land in the Joel Terrace area but it was subject to severe flooding and they were forced to abandon their plots.

Subdivision of the crown land and farmland began to occur in response to the demand for housing in Mount Lawley – north of Vincent Street and along the railway line. The first of these subdivisions was Highgate Hill, which took place in the area bounded by Walcott, Burt, Harold and Curtis streets. Building began in 1889 on the eastern side of Beaufort Street, which had recently been extended as far as Walcott Street. The first house was a small cottage on the corner of Barlee and Beaufort

streets erected by John Marriott. Marriott was an ex-convict who had been transported to Western Australia for setting fire to farm buildings. He set up his own dairy at the rear of his dwelling which he operated for some years.

In 1898 the East Norwood Estate was established on Swan Location A5 in the area between the railway line and the river by a syndicate consisting of GF Sala, CHD Smith, CW Garland and Zebina Lane. Lane, a wealthy mining engineer and mine owner, was also involved in the adjoining Westralia Estate. The Mount Lawley portion of the East Norwood Estate was on higher ground away from the industries of East Perth. Sale of these blocks was aimed at middle class buyers, with the larger blocks with river frontage of particular attraction. Further attractions were its proximity to the East Perth Station and the Swan River. A number of these blocks were advertised as 'splendid building blocks' while others had small, speculative ('spec'), homes erected by the developers which were offered for rental or for sale for investment purposes. Private speculators were also involved (often with just two or three homes) and Thomas Plunkett was one of the builders used.

Other subdivisions around this time were the North Perth Estate, the Hyde Park Heights Estate (Tramways Estate) and the Forrest Hill Estate. Vincent Street was part of the Hyde Park Heights Estate, the eastern end of which was also known as the Tramways Estate after the Tramway Sub Station in Vincent Street. A number of blocks in this subdivision were owned by Roman Catholic Bishop Gibney, who erected his home at No. 50 Vincent Street.

The northern boundary of the Forrest Hill Estate was Walcott Street and it included Forrest, Shenton (renamed Wasley in 1917), Burt, Marmion, Robinson and Venn streets – these streets being named after members of Sir John Forrest's cabinet. One of the main attractions of this estate was the nearby terminus of the tram. Trams had replaced horse-drawn buses in 1900. The tramway ran along Beaufort Street almost to Walcott Street and a further extension was proposed. This would connect the existing Fitzgerald and Beaufort Street routes via a small section of Walcott Street and Forrest Street but it was not carried out. Instead the route was extended west along Walcott Street to York Street in 1906. The cost of this extension was subsidized by J Robinson and S Copley, the developers of the Mount Lawley Estate (City of Stirling) which stretched northwards from Walcott Street.

The subdivision of the North Perth Estate, which adjoined Forrest Hill's southern boundary, took place in the 1890s and covered the area between John, Alma and Walcott streets and Grosvenor Road. According to the land agents Peet & Co., the attractions of the area were 'charming views of the Swan River, Mt Eliza and progressive Perth'. This attracted lower middle class workers such as teachers, dressmakers, grocers, police officers and carriers. One resident, Mrs E Cohen at number 12 Hutt Street (known to the locals as 'Granny' Cohen), operated a market garden on her property and the adjoining vacant land before it was developed.

Cesspits or earth closets were used as there was initially no sewerage and almost no drainage. The only exception was Highgate Hill which by 1911 had a storm water drain with an outlet at Claise Brook. People in portions of that area were fortunate in having government-supplied mains water laid on and in 1914 electricity was connected.

The population was centred initially in the vicinity of the railway line and gradually spread along Guildford Road, Walcott (for about one quarter of a mile) and Beaufort streets. The Beaufort Street shopping strip developed during this period to cater for the needs of the local residents. There had been difficulties encountered in making Walcott Street as it was a boundary between Perth City Council land and the Perth Road Board. Eventually the Perth Council made a 12-foot strip on the south side and the Perth Board did the same on their side, leaving a strip of sand in the middle which remained for many years. About this time the Perth City Council introduced a scheme to standardise street names and Clifton Street, one of the north-south streets in the Forrest Hills Subdivision was subsequently renamed William Street along with a portion of Hutt Street which also joined William in that era.

1920-1946

As a result of the Great Depression (which began in 1929) and the unemployment that followed, many families found themselves unable to keep up with their rent payments. Many were evicted or forced to keep moving to keep ahead of the debt collectors. For some the solution was to share accommodation with another family but this often led to unhealthy overcrowding. The Perth City Council did provide some forms of relief work for the unemployed, as well as sustenance payments. While this did help many families – and helped develop the roads, footpaths, drains, etc., in the district – for many relief only came with the outbreak of World War II as the call for men to enlist provided the first full-time employment for many in nearly a decade. However, shortages and the rationing that followed still kept many families in reduced circumstances.

In 1924 a single track extension was constructed from an existing tram terminus on the corner of Lord and Lincoln streets in Highgate along Lord Street and via the Mount Lawley Subway to Maylands.

Flats became popular in the 1930s and several blocks were erected, including 'Parkside' (104 Vincent Street) and several at the northern end of William Street. A number of the larger residences were also converted to flats, often with new façades.

1947-1972

Some residential infill occurred in the post-war period due to further pressure on housing as a result of the government's immigration and refugee policies and the 'Baby Boom'. Building materials were in short supply and remained under the control of the State Housing Commission until mid 1952. This lack of supplies led to makeshift alterations, often carried out to increase living space or divide houses into flats in order to accommodate more than one family. As time went on some of the alterations reflected styles reminiscent of the migrants' home countries.

The pressure for space also led to small factories being set up in backyards, sheds and the older homes, particularly in the eastern parts of the suburb. The number of residents in the East Norwood Estate began to decline as the houses deteriorated and more commercial enterprises moved in, such as printers, photographers, painters and decorators and so on.

Transport began to change as the Beaufort Street trams were phased out during the 1950s and trolley buses were introduced. Later on these were gradually replaced by diesel buses and the trolley bus service ended in 1968. Private car ownership was increasing rapidly by this time and William and Beaufort streets and Lord Street/Guildford Road and East Parade became popular arteries in and out of Perth, carrying heavy loads of traffic each day. Traffic lights also became necessary as the volumes of traffic increased.

1973-2014

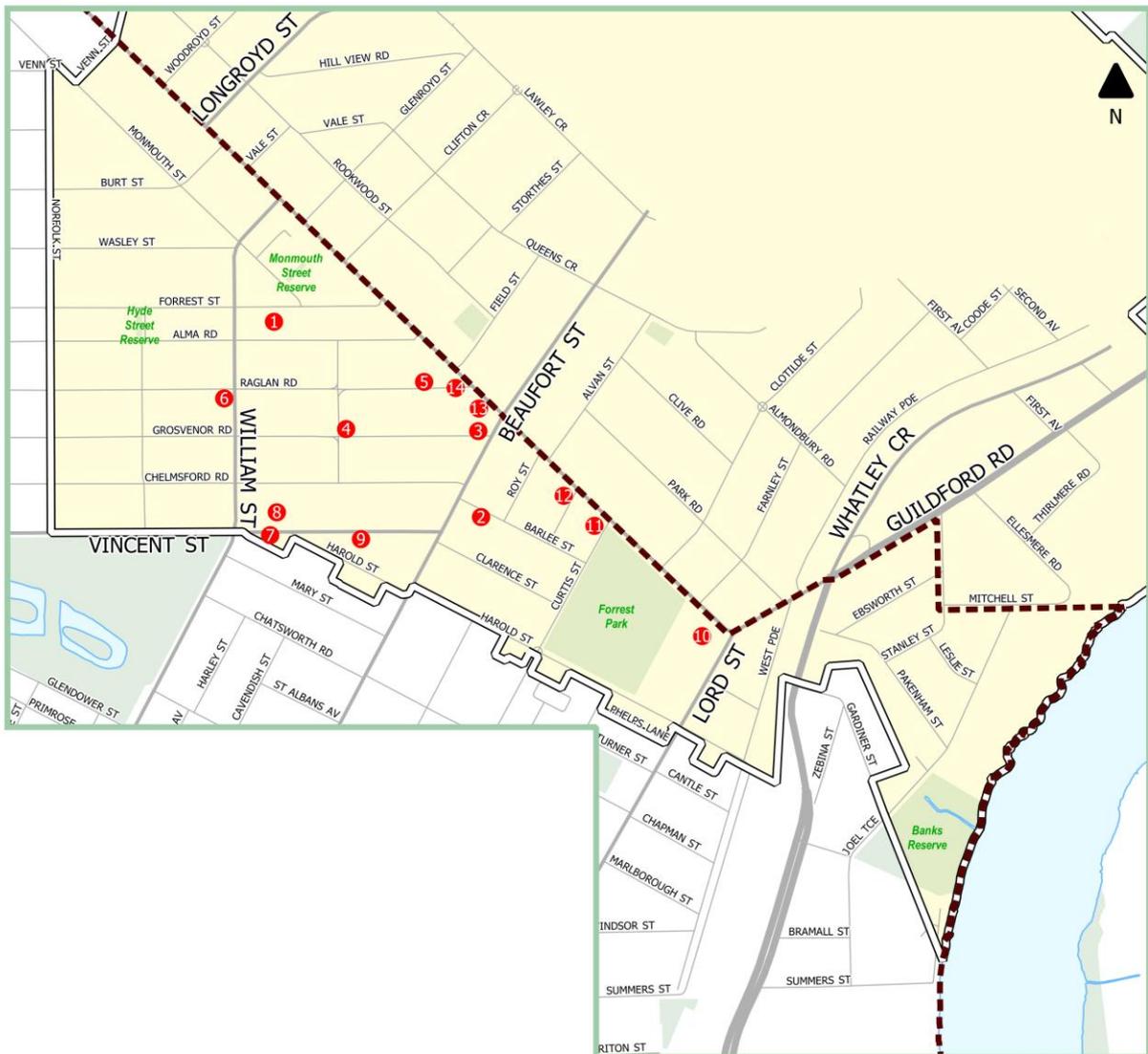
There was a huge revival of the suburb as young people began to move in and renovate and extend the older homes. In some cases backyards were subdivided or houses demolished by private owners or developers to make way for new homes or a group of units, town houses or larger apartment blocks.

In 1994 the City of Perth was divided into four separate local government areas and Mount Lawley came under the jurisdiction of the newly formed Town of Vincent.

There was a commercial revival in certain parts including the area around the Mount Lawley Subway where some of the older businesses were demolished to make way for modern purpose-built retail outlets. A number of older dilapidated houses were also demolished to make way for the widening of East Parade which, as well as having become an important artery for Perth, provided access to the Graham Farmer Freeway which was constructed in 2000.

Considerable change also took place along Beaufort Street and its surrounding area as the opening of restaurants and coffee shops turned it into a popular entertainment area. New businesses took over the old shops and rejuvenated them, thus injecting the area with a new vibrancy and attracting patrons from a much wider area. The Beaufort Street Network was formed to enhance and promote the amenity of the area. One of the outcomes was the Beaufort Street Festival, an annual event which attracts up to 100,000 visitors.

PLACES OF INTEREST



1. Freemasons Lodge Hall (Northern Suburbs) (former), 50 Alma Road
 Designed by prominent architect Herbert Parry and constructed in 1928 by Todd Brothers builders. A distinctive two-storey brick hall constructed for the Freemasons Lodge with a single-storey lesser hall attached. It was opened by Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master AC McCallum MBE on 7 September 1928. The hall was used by the RAAF during World War II, possibly for intelligence purposes. In 2009 approval was given to convert it to a single residence.



2. Salvation Army Citadel (former), 69 Barlee Street



Constructed in 1919. One of the few buildings in Perth designed in the Federation Chicagoesque style. It was converted in 1973 into a hall for the Cracovia Club and in 2003 for a residential building.

3. Clarke's Building, 639 Beaufort Street (cnr Grosvenor Road)

Two-storey retail building erected in 1934 in the Art Deco style. From 1938 William Beattie was operating a wine saloon there. Subsequent businesses on the premises included The Cat and Fiddle Tavern from 1972 for many years, followed by the Candy Store Bar and Garden Restaurant, Lawleys and from 1999 it has been The Flying Scotsman Restaurant & Bar.



4. Six former shops, 45, 50, 52, 53 & 61 Grosvenor Road (cnr Hutt Street)



Constructed between 1900 and 1909 with attached residences. Early businesses were a laundry (which by 1910 was run by a Chinese laundryman), fruiterers, draper and grocery store.

5. Community Hall (former), 2 Raglan Road

Erected in the early 1930s using the modest materials available in the inter-war years. Later used as a gospel church and then an office before being converted to a single residence in 1999. In 2007 it was once again used as an office.



6. Church (former), 65-67 Raglan Road

Constructed in 1903 by the Trinity Church and purchased by the North Perth Congregational community in 1906 – a former church, church hall and cottage. The original brick exterior was rendered post 1953. After becoming St Margaret's Uniting Church in the 1970s, changed use to The Wasley Centre for social services in 1975. The church and hall were converted to 'Greenwich Apartments' with 12 residential units and the manse refurbished in 2004-05.



7. Catholic Women's League building (Downey House), 49 Vincent Street



Constructed 1902, on land purchased by Bishop Gibney, who commissioned 20 houses in the vicinity. Originally named *La Mascotte*. The first resident was Alfred Mayer, a Jewish tobacconist. At the suggestion of former resident Carmel Downey it was purchased by the Catholic Women's League in 1972. Mrs Downey was both a State and National President. In 2010 the property was subdivided into two duplexes.

8. Bishop Gibney's House (Lourdes), 50 Vincent Street

Federation Arts and Crafts style brick and tile residence erected in 1911, for Matthew Gibney, Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth, following his resignation in 1910. Following his death in 1925 it was sold, but purchased again in 1942 by Highgate Hill parish priest, Father Wallace for his Presbytery. It is still owned by the Catholic Church and occupied by the Franciscan Friars.



9. Former Substation, 21 Vincent Street



Constructed in 1954, initially as a power source for the tram and soon afterwards the trolley buses. Power from the East Perth Power Station ran underground to the substation which contained equipment required to convert electricity from AC to DC. The substation provided a current boost and allowed sections to be isolated if there was a breakdown at any point. Between 1956 and 1969 the tram and trolley bus system was phased out, with the Beaufort Street line closing in December 1968, leaving the Vincent Street sub-station redundant. The building was converted to a dental surgery in 1990, retaining most of the external features.

10. Walcott Centre, 399 Lord Street (3 Walcott Street)

This is the oldest government run institution providing child welfare services in WA and was the only government receiving home for children from 1921 to 1984. Children assisted included wards of the state, foster children, orphans, destitute and delinquents. This complex has had a variety of names and uses: Government Receiving Depot (1921-c.1955), Child Welfare Reception Home (c.1955-1968), Walcott Street Reception Home (1968-1980) and Walcott Centre (1980-present). From 1984 it was no longer residential and until 1993 housed the Community-Based Offenders Programme (C-BOP) and the Mount Lawley College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) from 1987 to present. Counselling services also still operate from the Ministry's rooms and two original workshops are used for community programmes. The complex was State Heritage listed in 2002.

11. Church Restaurant, 41 Walcott Street (cnr Curtis Street)

Originally Forrest Park Methodist Church, constructed in 1933. A church hall named Wesleyan Hall had been at the rear of the lot from 1929. Designed in the Gothic style by architects Powell, Cameron and Chisholm. It was deconsecrated following an oversupply of churches after the amalgamation of churches to form the Uniting Church in 1977. From 1982 it was converted for use as a restaurant, which it remained for many years. In 2014 it is the Walcott Street Surgical Centre for dental surgery.



12. Hallyburton House, 49 Walcott Street (cnr Gerald Street)



Wooden dwelling erected in 1893. Built for James and Janet Hallyburton, it was the first house built fronting Walcott Street. James was a stone mason and Janet was a nurse who acted as the local midwife. As the house was at the top of a hill, the light in the turret could be seen from lower down on Beaufort Street, causing some locals to refer to it as 'the lighthouse'. Extensive internal and external conservation works were completed in 2013.

13. Alexander Building, 71-77 Walcott Street/ 645-649 Beaufort Street

Originally constructed in 1911 by architect Simon Alexander and known as the Broadway building. His son John refurbished the building and changed the façade to Art Deco in 1938, renaming it the Alexander Building. There are retail shops on the ground floor along both streetscapes. (The Astor Cinema, originally the Lyceum Building, on the opposite corner was also developed by Simon and later John Alexander.)The building underwent restoration in 1999.



14. Tram Pole, Walcott Street (cnr Raglan Road)



Surviving pole used to carry the electric wires for the no.19 tram which linked the district to central Perth. This line, an extension to the existing Beaufort Street system, was subsidised by Mount Lawley property developers, J Robinson and S Copley, and laid in 1906. The Walcott Street line ceased operation in November 1953.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING IN THE LOCAL HISTORY COLLECTION

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Subject Vertical Files, Street Vertical Files

Real Estate subdivision posters

Oral History Interviews & Transcripts

City of Vincent Municipal Heritage Inventory: www.vincentheritage.com.au

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