

East Darling Harbour History

Indigenous Occupation

East Darling Harbour was part of the Cadigal territory, they called it Coodye, and the clan fished, hunted and gathered shellfish from around the area. It was extensively used as witnessed by the large shell middens just of the south of the site, which later gave Cockle Bay its name.

It is unknown how long the indigenous people were there, but radiocarbon dates from other parts of Sydney indicate that the wider area was occupied for at least 14 500 years. East Darling Harbour was formed when the sea levels settled around 6 000 years ago, and it is very likely that the ancestors of the Cadigal were in there at that time. The large shell middens and numerous rock engravings close to East Darling Harbour attest to a lengthy occupation. The Cadigal people and other local clans were decimated soon after the arrival of the First Fleet by a smallpox epidemic, to which they had no immunity. The remnants of the different Port Jackson clans banded together, but their numbers continued to decline. However some people survived and continued to occupy the area.



Aboriginal People Fishing in Sydney Harbour by Phillip Gidley King 1788-1792¹

In the years following European occupation the Indigenous people continued to use the land around East Darling Harbour. In 1980 archaeological excavations of the Moore's Wharf site revealed a campsite. A ten-centimetre thick shell midden was excavated beneath the rubble floor of the building. Within this midden stone tools were recovered in association with four sherds of blue and white transfer printed ceramic². Unfortunately, the archaeological report does not indicate if the sherds of ceramic had been adapted to be used as tools. This practise has been reported from several other areas in Australia. Two of the sherds were from the same piece of ceramic, they may have been deliberately broken to provide a sharp cutting tool. The four sherds have been identified as being typical of the types of ceramics available

¹ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Images Library

² Lampert & Truscott 1980. *The Archaeological Investigation of The Bond Store, Moore's Wharf* Draft Report for the Maritime Services Board and the Heritage Council of NSW Appendix 1

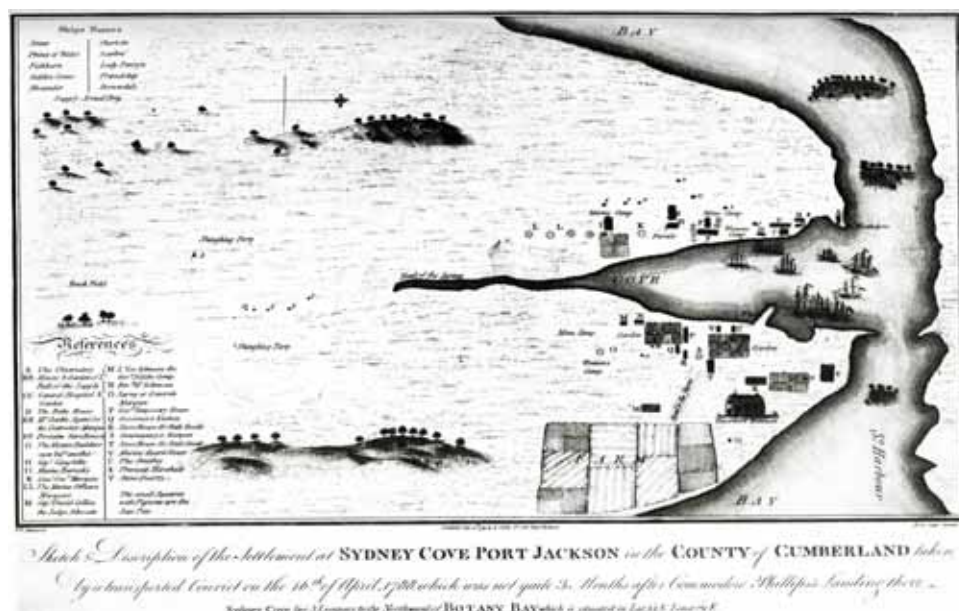
during the 1830s³. This indicates that Indigenous people were still using the site at least until that date, four decades after the arrival of the First Fleet, and the smallpox epidemic. The midden also demonstrates the continuation of traditional tool making, and diet, in what was probably very difficult circumstances for the people. Years later Aboriginal people are known to have been employed on the wharves in the area.

Earlier European artists depicted the Aboriginal people in many of their images as part of the picturesque scenery, and showed them in what they imagined them to be their 'natural state'. The Romanticism of the Noble Savage wore off eventually and this is reflected in the images as time passes. Eventually the Aboriginal people disappear from the images, but this does not mean that they disappeared from the area. Depictions of convicts also follow this pattern, as the novelty of their appearance wares off; they too are no longer featured in the images of the colony.

European Occupation

Millers Point and East Darling Harbour did not develop as quickly as the nearby Sydney Cove and The Rocks. The steep terrain and lack of easy land access kept the area fairly quiet and undisturbed for the first few decades of European occupation in the area.

The first map of Sydney produced in April 1788 by 'a transported convict' probably Francis Fowkes shows the harbour to the west of the entrance of Sydney Cove stretching off into the unknown. The shoreline curves to the south at the unnamed island that would later be called Goat Island, but is featureless. Another island is shown behind Goat Island on the southward curve of the shoreline and could possibly represent the Balmain peninsula. Three months after arrival the land beyond the little settlement was unknown to the Europeans, or at least to the convict who drew this.

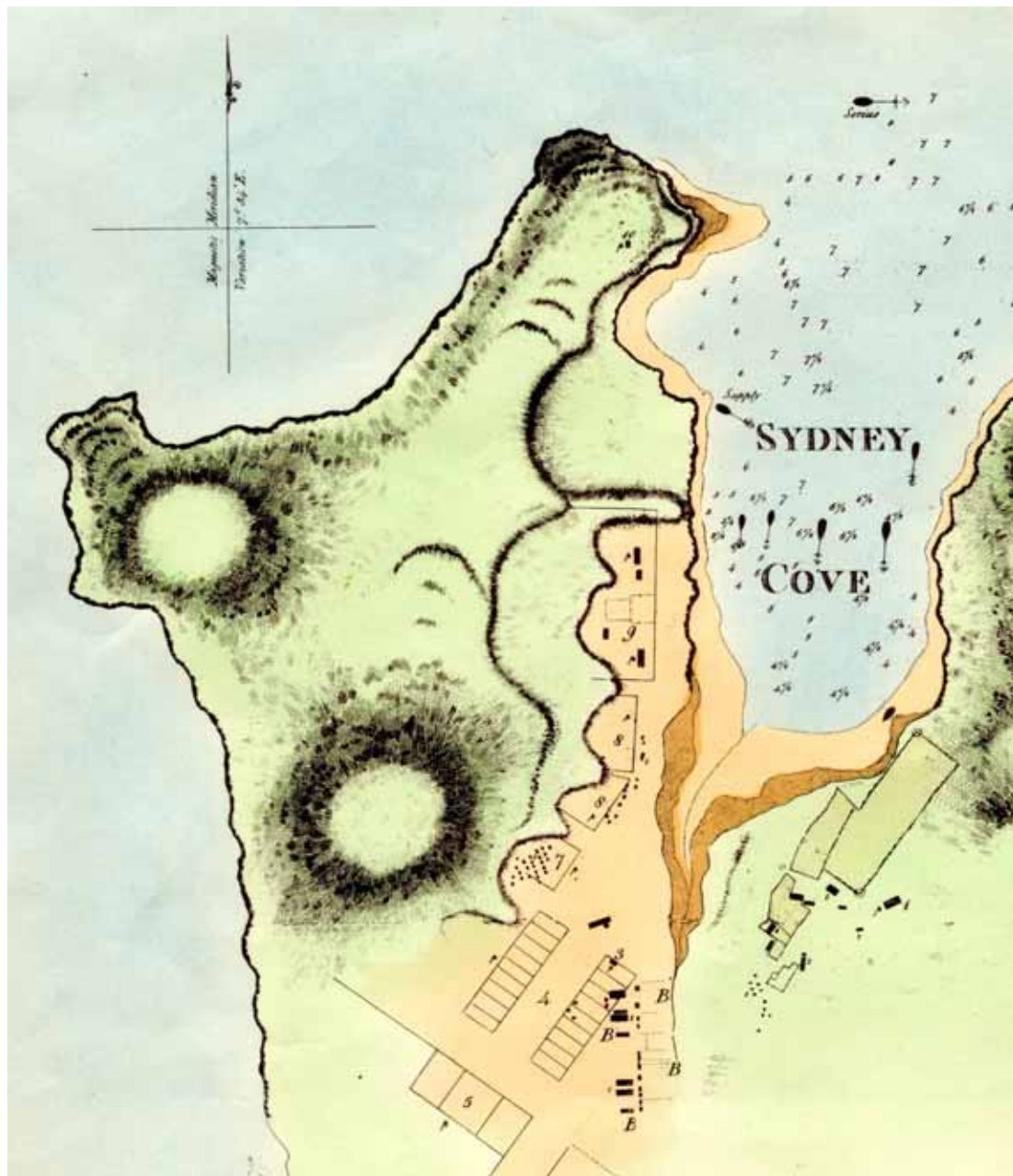


Sydney Cove, Post Jackson in the County of Cumberland, New South Wales April 1788. ⁴

³ Ibid pg 19

⁴ From Ashton & Waterson 2000 *Sydney Takes Shape* pg 7

Lt Dawes and Capt Hunter produced a more accurate map in July 1788, although they somewhat modestly called it a sketch. This map shows the subject site with a large hill depicted on the point, which juts into the harbour to the west. The original shoreline curves back to the east and then to the south to form the eastern side of Darling Harbour. The hill was an appropriate site for the windmills, which would later contribute to the Point's name. The map also depicts the rocky ridgeline, which became the traditional separation point between the two later suburbs, The Rocks and Millers Point.



Sketch of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland July 1788. Dawes & Hunter⁵ (Detail)

⁵ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

The plan of the settlement in 1792 shows the development around Sydney Cove, there is still nothing depicted at the actual subject site. There is, however the outline of what is labelled the magazine just to the south of the site. Unlike the previous maps there are no ships moored around the shoreline, and there is little indication of the later importance of the maritime trade to the development of the area.



A Survey of the Settlement of New South Wales. New Holland⁶

Lesueur's beautifully drawn 1802⁷ French map (detail below) shows the settlement around Sydney Cove has spread to the south and to the west and is starting to encroach upon the western side of the ridgeline. A few buildings are scattered around what will later become known as Walsh Bay with tracks meandering down to them. The first windmills are also shown along the ridgeline. The hill jutting into the

⁶ From Ashton & Waterson 2000 *Sydney Takes Shape* pg 13

⁷ From Ashton & Waterson 2000 *Sydney Takes Shape* pg 15

harbour is drawn as being very steep and still no development shown on the subject site, although to the south a few houses and gardens are drawn.



Lesueur Plan of the town of Sydney 1802 (Detail)

Meehan's *Plan of the Town of Sydney* of 1807 (detail below) was ordered by Governor Bligh. The point of East Darling Harbour named "Cockle Bay Point" it appears that this could be the first European name given to the area. Fort Phillip is the

only development depicted on this map, it stood where the Observatory is now, and would have commanded views over the settlement, up the harbour and down the Parramatta River. Fort Phillip was designed with both landward and seaward defences, and in conjunction with the Battery at Dawes Point covered the defences for the infant colony. A beach or mudflat is drawn at Walsh Bay and another just to the south of the subject site. The excavation at Moore's Bond Store in the 1980s did not record the natural ground layer for the northern part of the site. However several sandy layers were recorded, and it is unlikely that the sand would have been transported from a great distance.



Meehan's *Plan of the Town of Sydney* 1807⁸ (Detail)

By the 1820s Millers Point had started to develop. Three windmills had been erected on the hill with a few small buildings. There are other buildings show scattered around the area and a trail runs from Dawes Point Battery along the shoreline to

⁸ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

Cockle Bay. This track would eventually become Kent St and Lower Fort Street. The 1822 *Plan of the Town and Suburbs of Sydney* depicts a stone quarry, and the soundings along the shoreline are marked. This could indicate the intention to use the area for ship moorage. The Military hospital, in close proximity to Fort Phillip had been constructed by this date. Fort Phillip in association with Dawes Point Battery and the later Garrison Church (1840) indicate the importance of the Military in the areas early history.



1822 *Plan of the Town and Suburbs of Sydney*⁹ (Detail)

The view of Fort Phillip c1814 (below) could be inaccurate, the Fort may never reached this stage of completion, and a later map helps to confirm this supposition. However, a Capt Taylor of the 48th Regt painted the picture, and a military officer is

⁹ From Ashton & Waterson 2000 *Sydney Takes Shape* pg 19

not likely to reveal the shortcomings of the colonies defences. The earlier maps also show the fort in full. Dawes Point is just visible in the right side background.



Fort Phillip c1814 Capt Taylor¹⁰

The rather idyllic lithograph produced c1823 (below) shows two of the windmills on the point, and the rocky terrain. There are also the roofs of a few buildings evident on the shoreline, and sailing vessels and an aboriginal canoe on the Harbour. The foreground shows the variety of activities occurring in the area. Aboriginal people are living here in a bark gunyah, continuing their traditional lifestyle. Cattle and sheep are grazing on the lush meadow. And the convicts in their gay yellow coats aren't really doing much at all, except for one swinging an axe. Goat Island and what would become Balmain are in the background. The road is approximately on the alignment of the later Kent St.



Part of the Harbour of Port Jackson, and the Country between Sydney and the Blue Mountains New South Wales (detail) after Taylor 1823¹¹

¹⁰ McCormick 1987 *First Views of Australian 1788-1825* pg 208

As idealised as this lithograph is, it does give a very good impression of the relationship between the land and water at Millers Point before the landscape began to be modified. The undulating topography and the sandstone ridges were later cut down until today there is a sheer vertical cliff beyond where the road on this image is. Quarrying in the area began around in the early 1820s, eventually changing the landscape dramatically. Other paintings also show this relationship of the land to the water, and the sandstone ridges, although there is a suggestion that artistic licence may have been employed to enhance the view at the expense of topographic accuracy.

Below is a c1820 painting by an unknown artist, but attributed to Taylor, entitled *Sydney looking south from Flagstaff Hill*. It shows a rather dramatic hill with only the windmill on it, which is estimated to be about where No 1 York St now stands. The shoreline appears relatively flat from the track, which leads to Cockle Bay and follows the approximate alignment of Kent St. Today the difference in height from Kent St to the waterline appears rather larger than depicted here. This painting may be unfinished; there is a horse and cart drawn in pencil on the track.



*Sydney looking south from Flagstaff Hill*¹².

The area was named on early maps as Cockle Bay Point. By the 1820s there were a few cottages and windmills scattered around. John Leighton (Jack) ran three of the windmills, and the point was referred to as “Jack the Miller’s Point” eventually shortening to Millers Point. One night in June 1826, Jack had imbibed rather too heavily and fell from the ladder of one of his mills to his death¹³. He was a convict who arrived in the colony in 1804 and gained his freedom in 1815, by which time he had acquired several acres of land on the Point. It is uncertain when Jack first began operating the mills in the area, he purchased the land from Lucas and Wall, but there is no record that details if there were any structures on it.

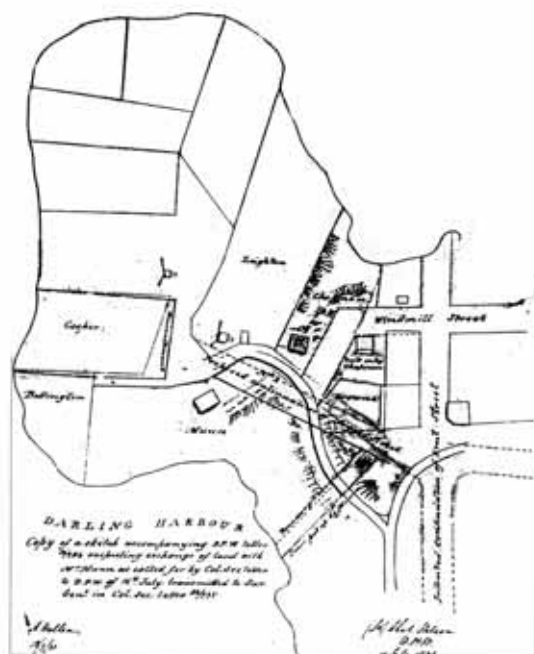
¹¹ National Library of Australia 2000 *The World Upside Down Australia 1788-1830* pg 26

¹² McCormick 1987 *First Views of Australian 1788-1825* pg 209

¹³ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 *Millers Point, the Urban Village* pg 11

By the 1820s much of Millers Point was under private ownership but the history of how this came to be is complex. Much of the land may have been granted, but lack of records and poor administration meant that some of it may have been acquired by squatting. Once the land was sold onto other people, the Government found it difficult to prove and therefore 'difficult legally and morally to divest later owners of their land'¹⁴. In 1823 the Bigge Report stated that 80 per cent of the houses in Sydney were permissive occupancies¹⁵. The legal difficulties in relation to land ownership were a feature of the early history of Sydney, not just in Millers Point. In some cases it took ten years to sort out the legalities of land ownership. When John Clarke was challenged about his right to fence land on the southern side of Windmill St in 1831, he produced a legal transfer from David Leighton, Jack the Miller's son and heir. David Leighton claimed to have purchased the allotment from Patrick Marmount, who said Governor Macquarie had granted him the land. The grant was recompense for an allotment he had that the government resumed to build the Military Hospital in 1815. Government resumptions on the peninsula would become an important feature of the later history. Sixteen years later Clarke pleaded that he had come to the colony free and had saved 'with the greatest frugality and industry' the considerable amount it had cost him for the lot. It took until April 1841 for the grant to be formalised.

A plan of the point with the landowners and their holdings was produced in 1831 (below). Later, a few of the landholders, such as Munn and Bellington, were commemorated with street names. It appears that Millers Point never became an area where many people owned their own homes. Most of the housing in Millers Point was rental, a trend that did not change, although in later years the Government was the landlord.



Millers Point 1831 Land Holdings¹⁶

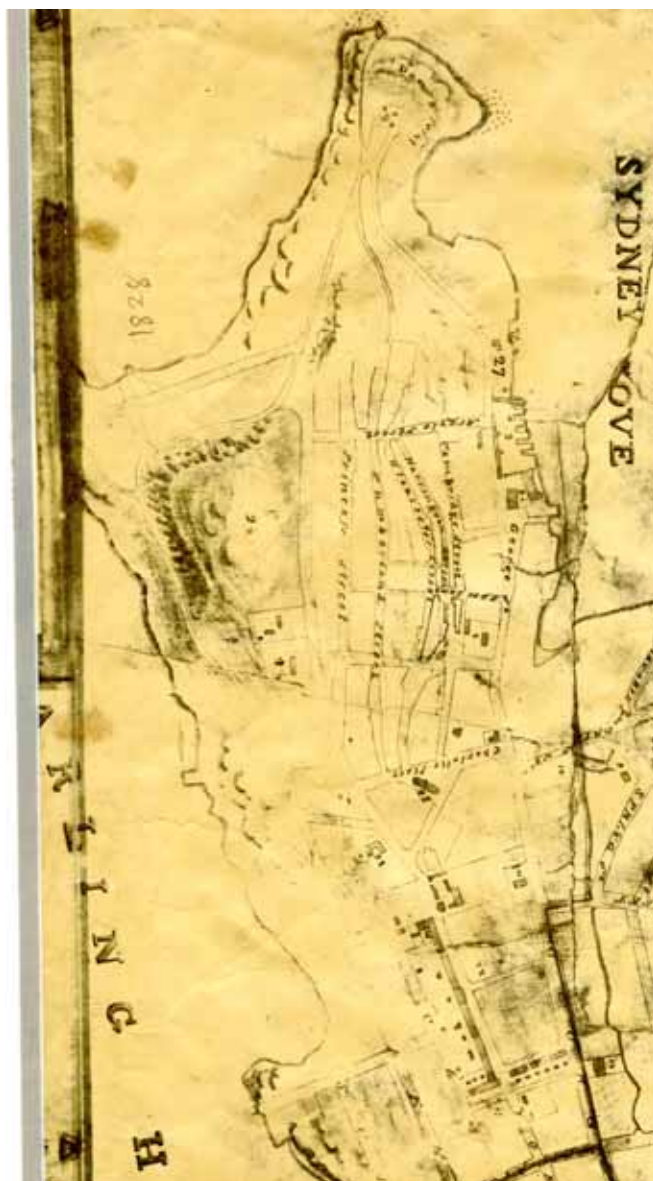
¹⁴ Kass Quoted in Fitzgerald & Keating pg 20

¹⁵ Fitzgerald & Keating pg 20

¹⁶ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 21

The whaling and sealing industries were in full swing in the early decades of the 19th century and the black hulled ships were a common sight moored off Millers Point. Combined with the rise of the wool industry, the demand for wharves and docks began to grow. In the early decades Millers Point was mainly used as moorage, a standing-off point for ships waiting to load or unload their cargoes at the wharves in Sydney Cove and the newly named Darling Harbour.

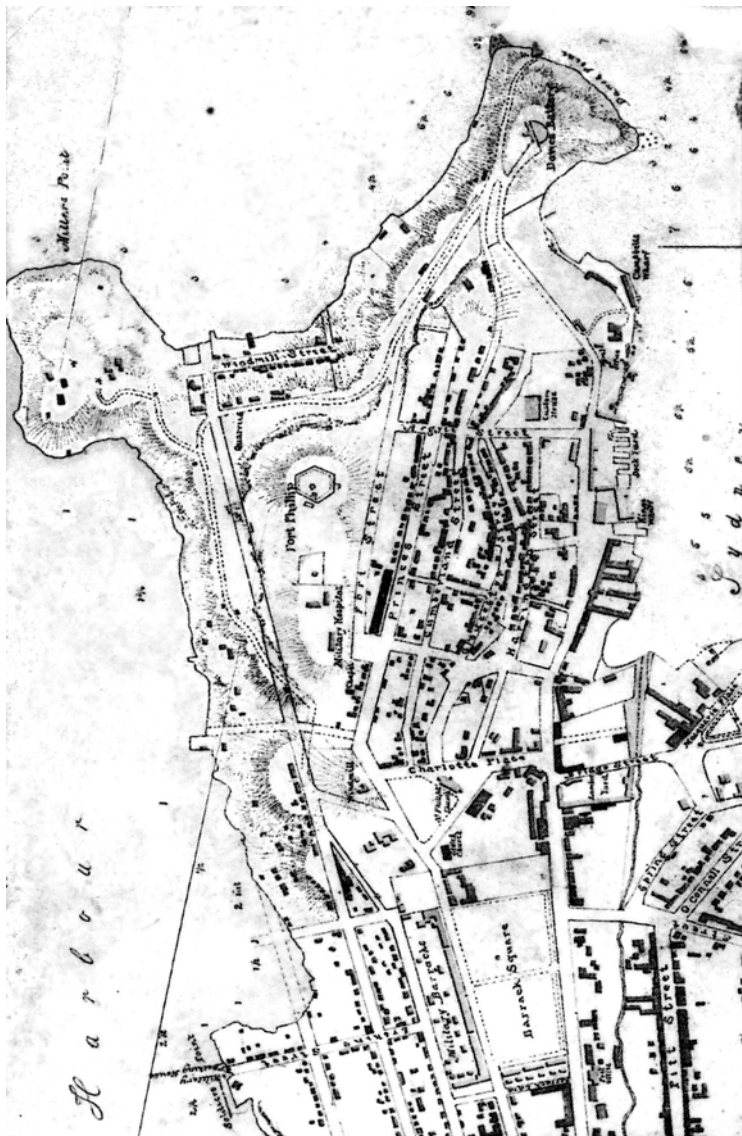
Part of Millers Point appears on the 1828 *Map of the City of Sydney* (detail), there is evidence of a small wharf or jetty around the middle of the subject site. Unfortunately the northern end of the site, the point, is not included on the map. However there are a few more streets depicted, including what would be later, the appropriately named Windmill St. The northern end of the later Kent St is also shown running to Walsh Bay and the first small jetty there. It is evident on this map that the area was being encroached upon from the south and the east.



1828 *Map of the City of Sydney*¹⁷

¹⁷ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

Forty years after settlement was still no direct route to Millers Point, carts had to go up to Dawes Point and around, and pedestrians had to navigate the steep alleyways and flights of crude steps. However agitation for a passage capable of taking carts had begun as early as 1803. This lack of a short cut to Millers Point was responsible for keeping the area relatively undeveloped whilst expansion was occurring at an energetic pace around it. This is very obvious on the 1831 *Map of the Town of Sydney*. Windmill Street is the only named street in the area and has buildings along either side, there are also a few scattered along what would become the western end of Argyle St. Kent St has been partly built and connects Windmill St with the busy southern end of Darling Harbour. A few more buildings can be seen scattered along the shoreline, and along the lower end of Kent St. The stone quarries on the corner of what would be Kent and Argyle Streets are marked on this map, and the area was frequently referred to as “the Quarries”¹⁸. At one stage Fort Phillip was almost surrounded by them.



1831 *Map of the Town of Sydney*¹⁹.

¹⁸ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 17

¹⁹ Ashton & Waterson 2000 *Sydney Takes Shape* pg 21

At the southern end of the subject site the map shows the intention of extending Sussex and Margaret Streets. This indicates the early planning of land reclamation and straightening the shoreline to facilitate shipping. Today the subject site demonstrates the ultimate end of this policy, being a long straight concrete apron built upon mostly reclaimed land, with no evidence of the distinctive point left.

The maritime industry and its demands came to be the largest influence on the evolution of Millers Point. The first wharf in the area was built at Walsh Bay near Dawes Point in the 1820s. The access to Walsh Bay was more convenient than East Darling Harbour and therefore the shipping facilities were constructed there first. After the wharves of Millers Point began to be built the maritime influence of the area was obvious:

“The ships gave to the locality the scent of the sea. Whaling and South Sea Island trade were in their hey-day. In the stores lining the waterfront a strange, motley array of products appeared. Sugar, dark brown in colour, known as ‘custard sugar’, packed in big bamboo baskets; seal skins; salt from Cape Verde; sandalwood; wheat; sperm and black oil and whalebone spoke of other lands. In the street wandered the crew of many ships – Europeans, Americans, Colonials, tattooed New Zealanders, Chinese and South Sea Island boys...²⁰”

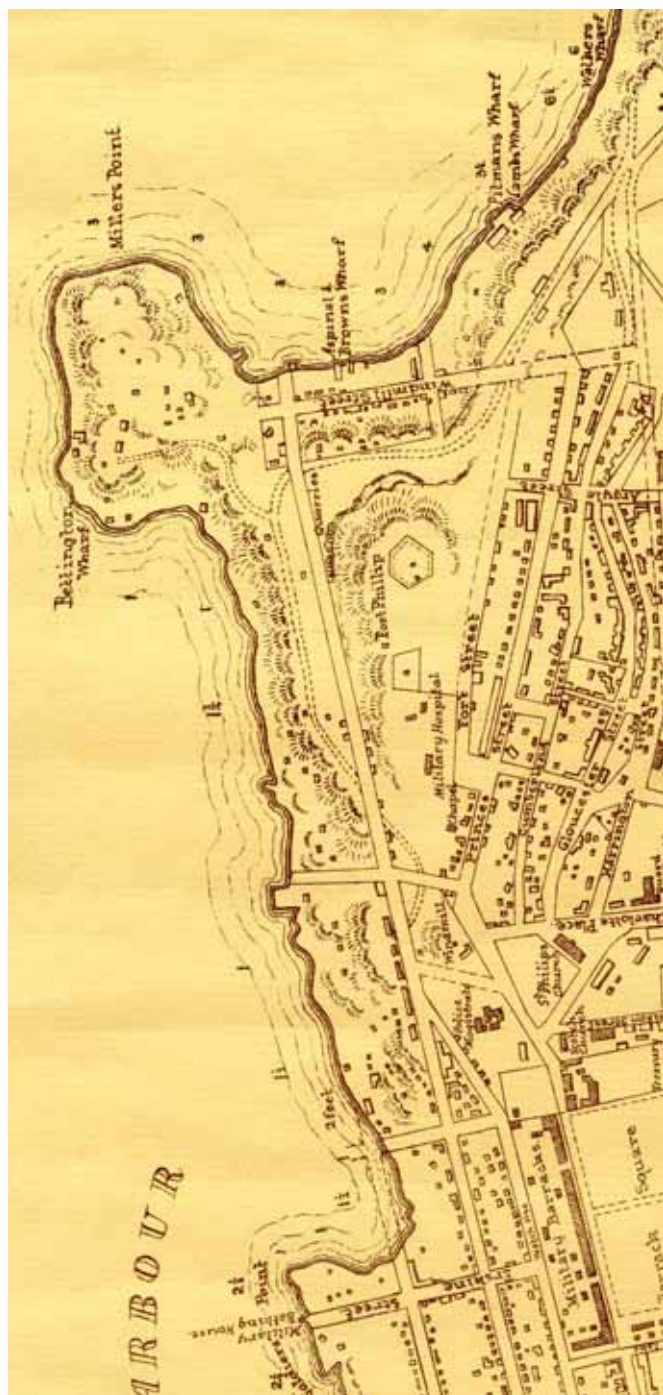
By the 1830s there are several wharves at Walsh Bay, and south of the subject site, Darling Harbour is beginning to bristle with them. Darling Harbour’s wharfage facilities grew in response to the relocation of the markets there by Governor Macquarie. The industrial revolution in Australia also began at the very southern end of Darling Harbour with the establishment of Dickson’s Steam Engine in 1813, followed by Barker’s Steam Mill in 1827. Industries such as these also stimulated the building of waterfront facilities.

Recreation amenities were built just south of the subject site in the 1830s. Erskine Street ran from the Military Barracks to ‘Soldiers Point’ where a Military Bathing House was built, probably the earliest harbourside pool. Later another harbour side pool would be built at Dawes Point and this one was open to the public. It is very likely that people were swimming off Millers Point for years, for example, in the 1930s young men took advantage of the wharves as diving platforms.



²⁰ Quoted in Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 24

The 1836 Map *of the Town of Sydney* (detail below) shows the first named wharf on the subject site ‘Bettington Wharf’ and there are a few buildings scattered along the roads and tracks. The subject site is still relatively untouched, but this is about to change dramatically.

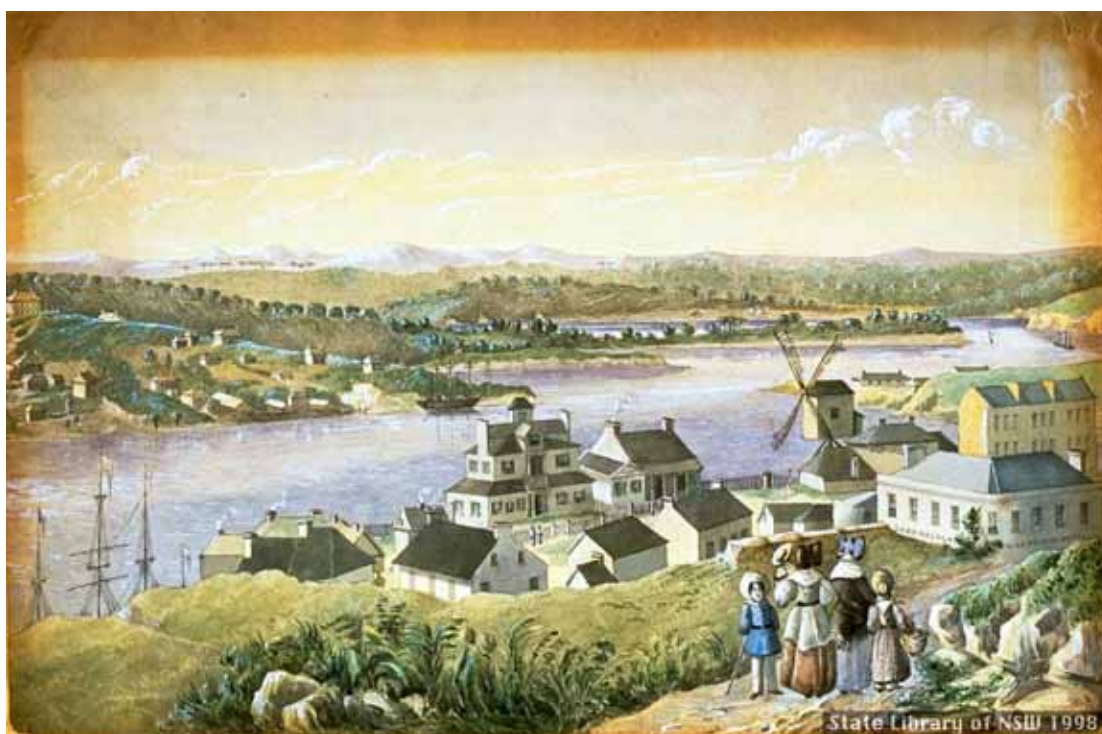


1836 Map *of the Town of Sydney*²² (Detail)

²¹ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Photograph Collection

²² Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

The population of Sydney doubled in the ten years between 1833 and 1843 to 35, 000 people. In the same year Sydney was incorporated and could begin to call itself a city. Millers Point began to really develop into a village with two of the area most famous pubs, The Lord Nelson Hotel, and the Hero of Waterloo beginning trading at this time. The Lord Nelson is shown in the c1845 watercolour below, with the unusual Albion House. Boat builders and tradesmen ran the pubs in Millers Point during the early period. Their names reflected the clientele they hoped to attract, there was the Shipwrights Arms, the Blacksmiths Arms, the Quarryman's Arms, for the tradesmen. There were also many pubs for the seamen, including three Whalers Arms in Millers Point and another in Gloucester St, The Rocks over the years. Other pubs reflected the loyalty to the British Throne, with the Young Princess and the Royal Oak, or the major current events of the day; The Napoleon Inn stood directly opposite the Lord Nelson. When the Gas works opened so to did the Gas Hotel, and when the British mail first arrived by steamer and was offloaded in Millers Point, the Pacific Mail Hotel opened on the corner of Bettington and Merriman Streets²³. A least one pub took its name from the effects of accepting too much hospitality and the steep rocky terrain, the Tumble Down Dick opened at the top of the ridge separating The Rocks from Millers Point in 1837²⁴. The pubs were important to the local people as a social gathering place, and as a source of accommodation for immigrants to the country. There are some colourful stories of tunnels, smuggling and shanghaiing sailors from these pubs. The pubs would become important meeting places to discuss industrial relations matters in later years.



Millers Point c1837²⁵

The architect Henry Cooper built Albion House for T Horton Jones proprietor of the Albion Mills at Haymarket in the late 1820s. Cooper also built the Argyle Stores²⁶. It

²³ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 37

²⁴ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Hotel Catalogue

²⁵ State Library of NSW Historic Image Collection

is not known when the house was demolished, but it disappears from images after the 1850s. In the early decades of the settlement those with money were built grand homes on the more salubrious positions around The Rocks and Millers Point. They were usually constructed on the higher ridges, taking advantage of the views and the breezes, and away from the drainage problems plaguing their less well off neighbours. Some of these houses still exist, such as Clyde Bank on Lower Fort St and Darling House on Trinity Ave. However others such as Spencer Lodge built for Capt John Lamb a partner of Parbury, or Cumberland House built for the Campbells have since been demolished. These grand houses reflect what happened in the area on a smaller scale, many became run down and boarding house before being refurbished in the later 20th century, if they survived.



Albion House c1830²⁷

The Garrison Church was built in the 1840s and local legend suggests that the Hero of Waterloo Hotel used the rejected stone from the Church. In any case it is more than likely that the sandstone used in the construction of these and other local buildings came from the quarries that were busily cutting down the sides of Flagstaff Hill and from the Argyle Cut. The ‘cutting down’ of Millers Point for building lots, maritime facilities and roads continued well into the 20th Century and it has radically altered the original topography of the area.

Another surviving sandstone building from this time is Moore’s Wharf Bond store. It was built on the eastern edge of Millers Point where it forms Walsh Bay. William Long and James Wright built it about 1837, however they did not hold it for long. The Title was transferred to Joseph and his son Henry Moore in 1838 who erected another bay onto the building soon after to increase storage capacity. This is another facet of the history of Millers Point, increasing need for warehousing and storage facilities over the years in response to changing shipping. In 1844 the title was again

²⁶ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Heritage Database

²⁷ From Broadbent 1997 *The Australian Colonial House* Plate 10

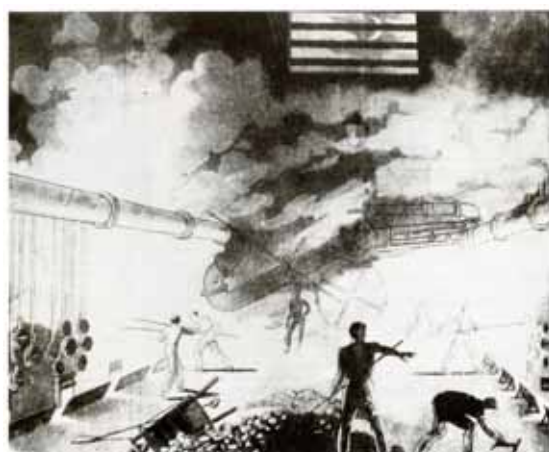
transferred to wool brokers Thacker, Mason & Co before it was leased back to Henry Moore in 1851, just in time for the Gold Rush²⁸. The many changes of title in these years reflects the economic vicissitudes of the period. Wool began to replace the products of the earlier industries to be exported from Sydney. The whaling and sealing industries were becoming unsustainable through over fishing and gas had began to replace whale oil as a lighting fuel.

The Australian Gas Light Company was formed in the late 1830s and purchased land at East Darling Harbour. In 1841 over 600 private gaslights had been installed in Sydney and the first public demonstration of it occurred on nearby Church Hill. The gas works were constructed and up and running by 1843²⁹.



WS. Hatton. Darling Harbour c1850³⁰

The works also included the construction of wharves to receive the vast quantities of coal needed to produce the gas. Providing employment for numerous men, on the wharves and inside the gas works, although the conditions would have been very hard and dangerous. Coal was removed from the holds of ships manually, a dirty arduous job that required a sizeable workforce. This workforce had to be available locally and this required the provision of housing for the workers. The increasing number of houses can be seen in the watercolour above, joining Millers Point to Darling Harbour along Kent St. In the 1840s a worldwide economic depression hit and work, despite the conditions, would have been welcome.



Inside a 19th Century Gas Works c1821³¹

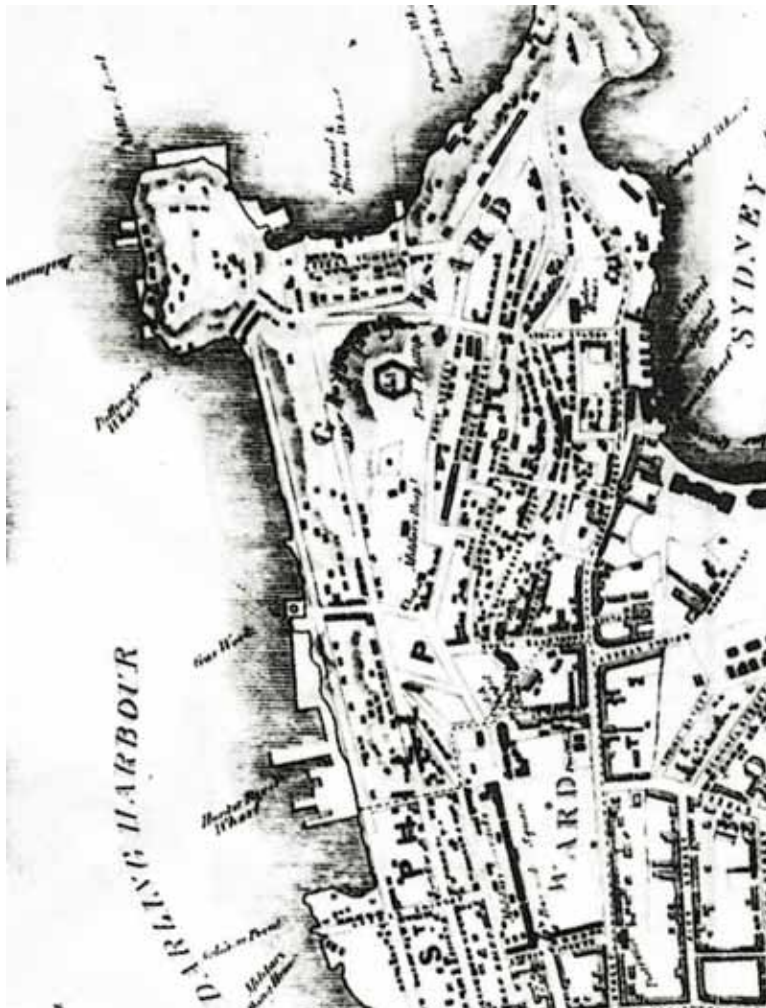
²⁸ Lampert & Truscott 1980 *The Archaeological Investigation of The Bond Store, Moore's Wharf* pg 3

²⁹ Bromham 1987 *First Light, 150 Years of Gas* pg 30

³⁰ Bromham 1987 *First Light, 150 Years of Gas* pg 14

³¹ Bromham 1987 *First Light, 150 Years of Gas* pg 24

By 1842 it was clear that the colony was in economic trouble, there were 649 estates in that year, and 539 in 1843 surrendered as a result of insolvency³². This trend just became worse over the next couple of years. Land sales collapsed, the whaling industry was in decline, and the production of wool had not yet taken up the slack. Transportation of convicts had ceased to NSW, with it free labour, and free and assisted immigration slowed to a trickle. Sydney's growth was checked as many went bankrupt and auction sales outnumbered the buyers; the banks could not recoup their losses even when the securities were surrendered. Many joint stock companies went bankrupt, but the Gas Light Company was still doing well. Perhaps because of this, the slowing of growth experienced in the rest of Sydney does not seem to have affected Millers Point. The 1843 *Map of the City of Sydney* and images from around that time show a village that is starting to take off. It also appears that land reclamation had occurred just to the south of the point. The new Hunter River Wharf is marked on the map, just beside the new Gas Works. (see watercolour above, note sail and steam powered ships moored behind gas works) Another development that brought people and small business to the area was the establishment of the ferry service between Balmain and Millers Point.



1843 *Map of the City of Sydney*³³ (Detail)

³² Bromham 1987 *First Light, 150 Years of Gas* pg 30

³³ Ashton & Waterson 2000 *Sydney Takes Shape* pg 25

The Hunter River Steamship Navigation Company was formed in 1840 and a wharf and head offices purchased at Margaret St. This was Australia's first steamship company. Their first ship the *Rose* arrived in 1841 from England, and they started a service to Moreton Bay in 1842, and at that time were the only company running a steamship service between Sydney and Melbourne.

The establishment of the company at East Darling Harbour and the progress of others like Towns Wharf and Moores Wharf helped the village to grow. Robert Towns was heavily involved with the trade between the colony and Asia, especially China and India. He speculated in almost every product the South Seas had to offer. By the mid 1840s he was importing coolie labour from China and exporting 'whalers' colony bred horses to India. Today on the site personal transport in the form of vehicles is being imported not exported.



Garling c1845 Shipping Horses³⁴

Another development that assisted the development was the building of a direct route to Millers Point from The Rocks. The Argyle cut was begun in 1843 by convict labour to provide a transport link between The Rocks and Darling Harbour. Agitation for this had been going on for many years, mainly from private enterprise. Alexander Berry, one of the colony's richest landowners and merchants put a proposal to the Legislative council to build the cut and charge a toll. This proposal was rejected, and the Government decided to undertake the work. The job proved too much for the convicts and their crude tools, despite the encouragement of their overseer. Tim Lane, a rather cruel man, promised his workers that 'by the help of God and the strong arm of the flogger, you'll get fifty before breakfast tomorrow.' The residents of the area were rather unsettled by the sight of convicts working in chains and the

³⁴ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

exhortations of their overseer to work harder. The project was abandoned when it was half completed. Eventually the Sydney Municipal Council completed the job using explosives and council labour in 1859. The cut was an important transport route until the building of Hickson Road in the 20th Century.

1850-1880s Gold Rushes and Intensive Development

After the depression ended in 1845 the price of wool rose steeply and combined with the Gold Rush had a large effect on development in Millers Point. Wharf development around the shoreline increased until there were facilities from Dawes Point down to Darling Harbour by the mid 1850s. Smith & Gardiner's *Map of the City of Sydney 1855* shows this development. Some of the most important companies had established shipping facilities by the time this map was produced. They included Town's, the Australian Agricultural Company, Cuthbert's shipyard and P & O. The newly named Australasian Steamship Navigation Company expanded their holdings and their routes from the original ones serviced when they were the Hunter River Steamship Navigation Company. All of these shipping facilities required a labour force that was locally available. Dwellings were built along all the streets to house these labourers and their families, but much of the work was seasonal.



1855 Smith & Gardiner's *Map of the City of Sydney*³⁵ (Detail)

³⁵ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

The Balmain Steam Ferry Wharf moved from the tip of the point to just south of the Gas Works. On the 1855 map it appears that there is the intention to build a new wharf for the ferry at the end of Erskine St. The National School, later known as the Fort Street School also features on this map. It took over and extended the premises of the old Military Hospital on Flagstaff Hill. Fort Phillip is also shown on this map; however, it appears on this map as having only three sides, not the hexagonal shape of earlier times. This may indicate that the importance of the fortification as defence of the city had lost importance by this time with the construction of other harbour defences such as Fort Denison.

The Gold Rushes had a profound effect on the colony, the population almost doubled and the price of labour increased. Men deserted their jobs and families to try their luck on the diggings and this led to a shortage of labour. In Millers Point, Robert Towns complained that 'workmen were scarcer than nuggets'³⁶. The larger ship owners found themselves at a disadvantage competing for experienced seamen, Towns experienced problems 'those fellows with only one ship can afford to bribe officers with higher lays (percentage of profits) than I can with twelve or thirteen.'³⁷

The Australian Gas Light Company was forced to award its workers a pay rise of a shilling a day. They took a stern attitude to workers deserting the company and any man who left for the diggings was not to be re-employed. The company had to engage skilled tradesmen from England, and the extreme labour shortage meant they had to accept a shortening of the indenture period from five to three years. The company also had to pay something towards the tradesman and his family's fares and expenses for the trip. Wages were raised several times during the period 1851 and 1855, with four increases between 1852 and 53³⁸. Workers began to understand the value of their labour and organise. In 1856 Melbourne stonemasons and building workers walk off the job and protested for the eight-hour day. Their protest was successful and they were the first workers in the world to be awarded it³⁹. These initial beginnings of the labour movements would help to shape the character of the community of Millers Point in later years.

Despite the initial chaos caused by the Gold Rush, it brought unprecedented growth and economic expansion, especially to shipping industries. Business boomed in Millers Point. Much of the gold discovered in the colony was transported from the wharves in the area. The flood of immigrants coming in and the exports of gold and wool going the other way coincided with a revolution in transport and communications. Steamship and the telegraph meant that travel was faster and safer than ever before. This change in technology also meant that wharfage facilities would have to be enlarged to accept the larger steamships later in the 19th Century, and dramatically altered again in the 20th with the advent of much larger ships and containerisation of cargoes.

³⁶ Quoted in Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 41

³⁷ Quoted in Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg

³⁸ Broomham 1987 pg 44

³⁹ Ross (ed) 2000 *Chronicle of Australia* Viking Press pg 321



Wharfage at Darling Harbour c1860s, note combination of steam and sail powered ships and a paddlesteamer⁴⁰.

From the 1850s specialised firms began to replace the general merchants as the major wool shippers⁴¹. The ships became highly specialised; Clippers that would race each other to get the first cargoes of wool back to Britain. On the leg to Australia they would carry immigrants and general cargo. By 1861 there were several large Bond Stores in Millers Point. The seasonal nature of the wool trade regulated all the other trades in Millers Point. When the wool was in there was plentiful work for both the skilled and unskilled. The pubs and boarding houses did a vigorous trade during these months, and the shipwrights were kept very busy refitting and repairing the ships for their return journeys.

One of the major shipbuilders in the colony, John Cuthbert took over Corcorans yard in 1853. Cuthbert specialised in three masted schooners, and in 1855 built the first war vessel produced in Australia, the 60-ton ketch *Spitfire*. Cuthbert was the largest employer of local labour employing more than 150 tradesmen in the 1850s, by the late 1860s the yard started to build steamships and was capable of producing vessels up to 500 tons⁴².

⁴⁰ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Images Collection

⁴¹ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 43

⁴² Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 43



Cuthbert's Shipyard c1870s⁴³

The residents of the area were continually putting pressure on the Sydney Municipal Council to provide basic services, such as sewerage and running water. Millers Point was on the most northerly extension of the pipes and even a slight drop in pressure would cut off water supplies. It was not unusual in the 1850s for a cut in water supply to last for more than a week. Like much of Sydney, sewage and drainage in the area was rather basic and it was not uncommon for water closets to be badly connected to the mains, or for there to be a backflow from the sewer system, causing them to flood and spew their contents into the backyards and streets. The roads and access to streets were also of concern for the residents and visitors to the area. The steep rocky terrain and constant quarrying left many areas rather dangerous. The Assistant Harbour Master petitioned Council to build a wall or fence and install a gas lamp on the southern side of Munn St to stop 'drunken persons or young children falling over the precipice'. The Council refused arguing that a fence would be torn down for firewood. Residents from the North Shore petitioned Council about the steep and dangerous nature of Pottinger St where the North Shore Steam Ferry docked. Council also brushed this aside with the remark that the commuters could attend to such 'trifling requirements' themselves. People were injured or killed as a result of the dangerous nature of the streets, eight houses were left stranded in Kent St after another round of quarrying. The houses were almost inaccessible and one tenant fell from the cliff to the street below, the rest left the houses en masse⁴⁴.

Millers Point in the 1860s was at its prime as a residential neighbourhood. It was still a largely self-sustaining community with 58 per cent of those with a stated occupation working in jobs connected with the waterfront. Many others were employed in service roles supporting them. In 1861 there were just over four hundred houses in Millers Point, many of them substantial stone buildings, and some that were judged to be on par with their middle class counterparts in London. 52 per cent of these homes boasted more than five rooms, however over 90 per cent were rental properties.

⁴³ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

⁴⁴ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 44

The reclamation of land had been underway for years by the 1860s, and the narrow neck of the Point was encroached upon. The merchants there, mainly Henry Moore and Robert Towns, smoothed the irregular shape of Walsh Bay out, and Cuthbert and Smith filled the southern side of the Point with parallel wharves and short jetties. The original shoreline was obliterated by the end of the 1860s, with the jetties and wharves stretching from Dawes Point to Darling Harbour.

From the 1870s wool began to be the dominate export cargo and more warehouse space was needed in Millers Point. The land was becoming too valuable to support other industries and Cuthbert's Shipyard was one of the first to go. In 1868 there were at least 16 major wharves operating around Millers Point, by 1875 the foreshore was said to be 'entirely occupied' by wharves, stores and commercial premises. Many of the wharves were rebuilt and enlarged.



Grafton Wharf 1870s⁴⁵

1880s- 1900 Specialisation of the Waterfront

By 1886 the storage and berthing capacities of Millers Point had increased to cope with the boom in imports and wool exports and to handle the larger ships. Dibbs wharf alone could handle seven 40 000 ton ships at once and store 10 000 tons of goods. The older wharves like Towns and Moores were dwarfed by their new neighbours like Dalgety's who had a 340ft long jetty.

The introduction of hydraulic power was welcomed on the waterfront and was quickly exploited. It meant that much larger loads could be shifted in a much shorter time, and that meant more storage faculties were required. This increasing pressure saw the

⁴⁵ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

loss of many of the smaller but vital local services like the wood and coal merchants and the shipyards. The loss of the skilled artisans from the shipbuilding industries had a significant local effect of Millers Point, as the diversity of the local workforce was reduced. One observer in 1886 noted that the rapid increase and demand for 'new and commodious stores' saw the artisans of Millers Points being pushed out into the suburbs. Balmain was one of the suburbs that benefited from this influx of skilled tradesmen. The wealthy locals were also deserting the area. Many of the fine old houses were turned into boarding houses, or demolished to make way for stores. The Birds Eye View produced to celebrate the Centenary of white settlement in 1888 demonstrates the crowding that was occurring on the waterfront. In reality it was probably worse than depicted, because only a certain level of detail could be drawn on these views.



1888 Birds Eye View (Detail)⁴⁶

The increasing specialisation of the cargoes shipped from Millers Point shank the economic base of the area and narrowed the class structure of those who lived there. It became, by the last decades of the nineteenth century an area occupied mainly by the semi-skilled and unskilled workers for the wharves. At this time Millers Point really lost the separateness that had marked it off from The Rocks in earlier years. The wharfage facilities surrounded the peninsula and those who lived in both suburbs were mainly employed working on the waterfront or in supporting industries. It became more difficult to define if some places were Millers Point, or The Rocks; streets like Princes St blurred the boundaries and men worked anywhere they could find it. Families moved between the two places, sometimes in Millers Point, sometimes in The Rocks. It was not until the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the 1920s that the separation of Millers Point and The Rocks occurred again. The local larrikin pushes had well defined territories; this was more of a mindset than a reality. However there was a distinct separation in the minds of the locals between

⁴⁶ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

them and the more industrial Darling Harbour. In 1879 the residents petitioned Council to rename Kent St North to Loftus St to show this separation. The residents believed that properties in their part of Kent St were being devalued because of the association of Kent St; 'the disrespect which the press and public attach (in many cases unduly) to Kent Street, does not apply to Kent St North.'⁴⁷ The residents, especially the shipping owners were also petitioning the council to upgrade the roads in the area. In dry weather they could cause huge clouds of dust, and become unpassable quagmires in wet. In response to this, some of the roads were woodblocked in the 1880s, but others were left.



Kent St from Flagstaff Hill c1880s note the stone terraces⁴⁸

In the late nineteenth century Millers point was relatively still a fine location for the working classes to live. Although there were sewage and drainage problems, water supply problems and roads that were inadequate for the heavy traffic they carried, Millers Point compared favourable with The Rocks, Darling Harbour, Pyrmont and other waterside suburbs. However there were still health problems and George Dansey the City Health Officer warned of the danger of communicable diseases caused by the 'rapid communication by steam with foreign lands'. He was also concerned about the risks facing people who lived and worked amidst the 'impregnated atmosphere' and 'poisonous gasses given off at the principal wharves'.⁴⁹ His warnings about the control of overseas shipping and the wharves would be realised when the bubonic plague broke out in Millers Point in 1900.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 53

⁴⁸ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

⁴⁹ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 54

Of more concern and probably having more effect on the residents was the seasonal nature of the work on the wharves. Shifts of 30 hours straight were not uncommon and could begin at any hour of the day when the ships and the wool was in. Ramsey McKillop of the Wharf Labourers Union recalled in 1891 that he had seen ‘pretty well all the men employed one day, and the following morning I have seen 600 or 700 men sitting idly on the wharves.’⁵⁰ In winter work was scarce and it was not unusual for no work to be available for weeks on end. The most hated aspect of the job was the ‘bull system’, men stood around the wharf gate to be picked by the clerk. This advantaged the large men and pitted the workers against each other. It gave enormous power to the employers who could discriminate at will between the loyal and tractable workers, the ‘constant men’ and those who were seen as troublesome or militant, the ‘spotted men’. For those not being picked the going rate to bribe the stevedore to obtain work was 2 to 3 shillings a week⁵¹.

For the families of these men life was often difficult, the irregular nature of the work forced many women to find ways to supplement the income in a time when married women working was completely unacceptable. Many took in washing, or lodgers in an attempt to guarantee some sort of regular income. Children often supplemented the family’s income in ways like minding younger siblings, fishing, collecting firewood and scrounging things like scrap metal that could be sold. A Ragged School was established in Kent St in 1871 and operated until the 1920s⁵² to provide education for children whose families could not afford regular school fees. The name of the school was deliberately chosen to shame parents into sending their children to regular schools if they could afford it.

Until the 1890s organised opposition to the shipowners had not been successful. In 1872 waterside workers formed the Sydney Labouring Men’s Union, and it was succeeded in 1882 by the Sydney Wharf Labourer’s Union. Although this union called the men out on strike that year it did not translate to any significant gains. In 1890 the Union took action in association with the coal miners and shearers unions and this escalated into a real battle. The Great Maritime Strike had begun and it ended up in riots and armed troopers attacking the mobs. The unions were smashed and did not reform until the very end of the century⁵³. Many of the strikers were blacklisted and could not find work and the depression of the 1890s must have made life very hard for them. This routing of the unions ensured the survival of the hated ‘Bull system’ until well into the 20th century. Many of the men of Millers Point were politically radicalised by these events and became staunch supporters of Labour movements, the ALP and later the Communist Party.

The vilification the people and the area received from newspapers gave Millers Point a bad reputation, and the demographic of many men without families living there helped to reinforce it. The activities of the local pushes did nothing to help this and the murder of Tom Pert, kicked to death outside the Gladstone Hotel reinforced the reputation in the minds of many Sydneysiders. Tom Pert was a sailor from the ship

⁵⁰ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 57

⁵¹ Fitzgerald & Keating pg 57

⁵² Ramsland 1986 *Children of the Back lanes. Destitute and Neglected Children in Colonial New South Wales.* pg 99

⁵³ Fitzgerald & Keating pg 61

Royal Tar and he had given evidence against one of the larrikin leaders. This resulted in a jail sentence for the larrikin leader. None of Tom's attackers were convicted, there were allegations about intimidation of witnesses.



The Millers Point Push on Trial for Murder⁵⁴.

By the end of the 19th century, Millers Point was not seen as a desirable location at all. The wharves did not have adequate seawalls and were a haven for rats and vermin, and the Harbour around them was awash with rubbish, but the Council's Inspector of Nuisances met any complaints with dismissal because cleaning them up may 'cripple our commerce'⁵⁵. Although there had been discussion of the Government taking over the waterfront and running the Port nothing was done about it, until 1900 when the plague broke out.

20th Century

In January 1900 Arthur Payne, a van driver from Ferry Lane was the first person diagnosed with the Bubonic plague. This triggered a chain of events that would see the peninsula of The Rocks and Millers Point changed forever. Altogether 303 people contracted the disease and 103 people died from it. Although the death toll every year from other diseases such as typhoid and cholera were higher, the plague caused an unprecedented 'alarm boarding on panic'⁵⁶. Government response was at first slow, perhaps because the shipping companies kept the large numbers of dead rats they were finding around their wharves quiet for fear of injuring their businesses. They dealt with the problem by shovelling the rat carcasses into the harbour. The City Council increased its rat catching but simple measures such as rat proofing ships ropes, and drawing up gangplanks at night were not carried out⁵⁷. However once the government decided to do something about the plague, its measures were intrusive and invasive. Not only plague victims were taken to the Quarantine but also all those

⁵⁴ From Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 61

⁵⁵ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 63

⁵⁶ Curson 1985 *Times of Crisis: Epidemics in Sydney 1788-1900* pg 137

⁵⁷ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 66

who had come into contact with them. This could include almost a whole street in the crowded inner city suburbs like The Rocks and Millers Point.



Ferry Lane where Arthur Payne was living when he caught the Plague. c1901⁵⁸

Almost 2000 people were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to North Head. After the first death from the disease at the end of February the Government began to quarantine large sections of the city. The area from Darling Harbour to Kent St and along the foreshore to Millers Point, Walsh Bay and a large section of The Rocks were fenced with the residents left inside. However the plague did not comply and spread beyond the quarantine area to other working class suburbs such as Newtown, and also to the suburbs of the wealthy, like Woollahra⁵⁹. These areas however were not subject to the Government intervention that eventually changed The Rocks and Millers Point permanently.

The Quarantined areas were inspected and reported upon, they were the subject of a vigorous cleansing and disinfecting operation, and much housing was demolished. After months of enthusiastic cleaning and whitewashing the plague victims continued to rise. The people themselves began to be blamed for the outbreak, with the City Health Officer showing a remarkable ignorance in the reality of working life for the wharf labourers declaring “if those who worked among the wharves were stricter in their personal cleanliness, they would lessen the danger of infection⁶⁰”. There were no bathroom facilities or even water taps on the wharves. The waterfront was brought to a standstill. It was not until something was done about the rat problem that the disease began to subside. However the direct effect on the East Darling Harbour site was that the wharves were subject to inspection, and demolition. The amount of rubbish that

⁵⁸ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

⁵⁹ Curson 1985 Chap 8

⁶⁰ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 69

was collected was extraordinary, in 1902 the Harbour Trust reported that they had retrieved from Sydney Harbour:

‘2524 rats, 1068 cats, 283 bags of meat, 305 bags of fish, 1467 fowls, 25 parrots, 23 sheep, 14 pigs, 1 bullock, 9 calves, 9 goats, 5 hares, 3 Kangaroos, 162 rabbits, 18 bags of chaff, 8 bales of straw, 3 flying foxes, and 2 sharks⁶¹.



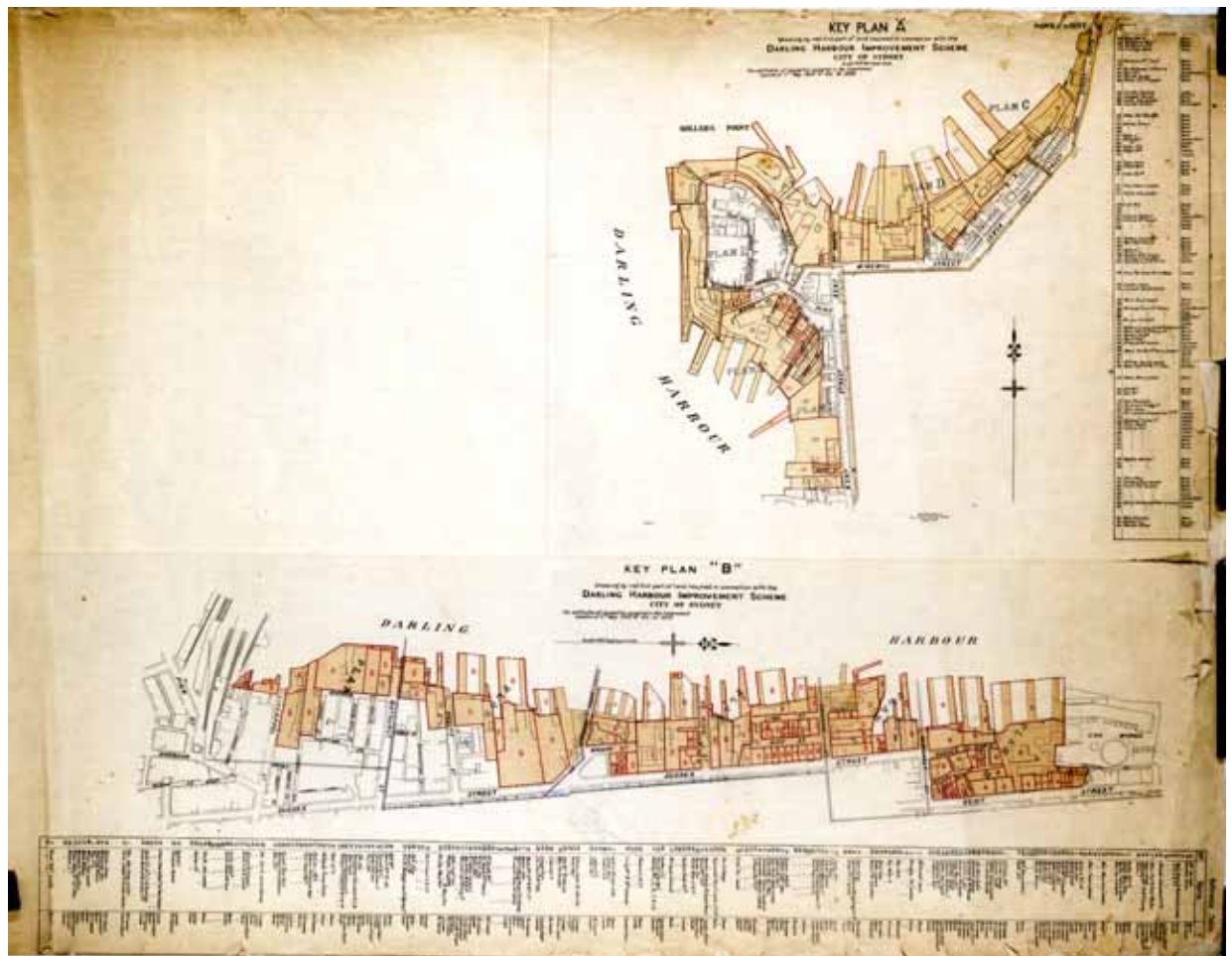
Rubbish Barge at Smith's Wharf 1900⁶²

Despite the fact that only 3 people died in The Rocks and Millers Point, the Bubonic Plague outbreak was used as an excuse to buy up the harbour foreshores, stretching from Woolloomooloo to Pyrmont. The Resumptions covered a large area but the infrastructure for administering it was not in place. There was a great deal of talk about slum clearance and rebuilding but little was done. The Gipps Ward, which contained The Rocks and Millers Point enjoyed one of the lowest death rates from infectious disease in Sydney in 1900 and very few of the plague victims lived there and even fewer worked there⁶³. The ward did not contain the worst or most crowded housing in Sydney. However the plague gave the excuse needed to grab a large chunk of real estate.

⁶¹ Sydney Harbour Trust, Report 1902 quoted in Kelly 1997 *Anchored in a Small Cove* pg 91

⁶² Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

⁶³ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 70-73



Key to the Plans of Resumed Area⁶⁴

The City Council was outraged; it bore the brunt of the criticism for the plague, and than management of the crisis taken from it⁶⁵. The Council had tried for years to resume and rebuild substandard housing, to very little avail, even after a hotel that it had condemned for years collapsed killing several people⁶⁶. The Council had only been able to pass a bill that could force landlords to fix defective drainage and carry out other maintenance on their properties that impacted on public health two years before in 1898. The Town Clerk was of the opinion that the Resumptions were ‘seizing of a political opportunity more than the safeguarding of the city’s welfare which motivated the government.’⁶⁷ Whilst the resumptions were done in response to the plague it was obvious that the Government had other agendas in mind. One was the construction of a Bridge to the North Shore; another was the upgrading of the shipping facilities to more modern standards.

Government ownership of the Ports was not a new idea; there was agitation for control previous to the plague. Private control of the wharves had led to a varied collection of shipping facilities in conditions that ranged from acceptable to appalling. The worst were the wharves used by the coastal traders and more marginal shippers,

⁶⁴ Sydney harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plan Collection

⁶⁵ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 74

⁶⁶ The Volunteer Artillery Hotel Collapsed in the late 19th Century after years of warnings by the City Council

⁶⁷ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 70

but the overseas wharves around Millers Point were larger and in better condition. However, very few of the wharves had adequate seawalls, most were of rubble construction and perfect for sheltering rats. The 'antiquated latrine conveniences' that discharged directly into the harbour from the wharves had been complained of many times before, were very common. The nearby crowded housing lead to pollution in the Harbour, it was a very convenient dumping ground. By placing the emphasis on the worst of the shipping facilities and the rats around them, those critical of government intervention could be silenced in the wake of the plague.



Demolition of Substandard Wharf at Millers Point c1901⁶⁸

The Sydney Harbour Trust was formed to administer the shipping and bring the facilities in line with world standards; the Trust was also to be in control of the housing in the Resumption area, making it a landlord. To begin with the Trust had control of buildings immediately behind the wharves, 152 properties in all.



Area Vested in Sydney Harbour Trust⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

⁶⁹ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 72

In August 1900 the first demolitions in the area occurred, but there was no new buildings constructed to replace them. The Council petitioned for land to build workers houses and they continually accused the Government of breaking faith with the residents by failing to provide accommodation to replace that which they demolished. The Harbour Trust was not interested in building workers housing and viewed its role as improving the waterfront facilities. The Department of Planning set up the City Improvement Advisory Board to provide plans and specifications and to 'advise the Government as to the best and most effective means of dealing with the properties resumed.' Their brief did not include housing under the control of the Sydney Harbour Trust. The Advisory Board worked with the Bridge Committee and they drew up plans for a new street layout to accommodate the approaches to the Bridge. They also included the provision of public tenement housing. The Harbour Trust's response to the setting up of the Board was to request more properties be transferred to them.



Millers Point 1900 Resumption Plans (Composit)⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

In June 1901 the Trust gained another 401 houses, 82 shops, 23 hotels, 70 bond stores, and 45 factories from the original resumptions. A Further transfer saw the Trust in charge of 803 properties altogether. 71 of the worse properties were demolished, the rest were rented. The rents helped the Trust's coffers, in the first year they added £20,758 from rents and expended £1,634 in repairs and improvements. The Trust did not want to become a State Housing Authority and they started to charge market rents, they were also not loath to evict. When this was questioned the Harbour Trust said that they had a responsibility to ensure that the property of the state was productive, but there was no talk of providing new housing⁷¹. The task of the Trust was to rebuild the Port of Sydney and it had the powers to demolish housing to facilitate the wharf construction. Eventually streets disappeared for new wharves and facilities and as the cliff was cut down to form Hickson Road.



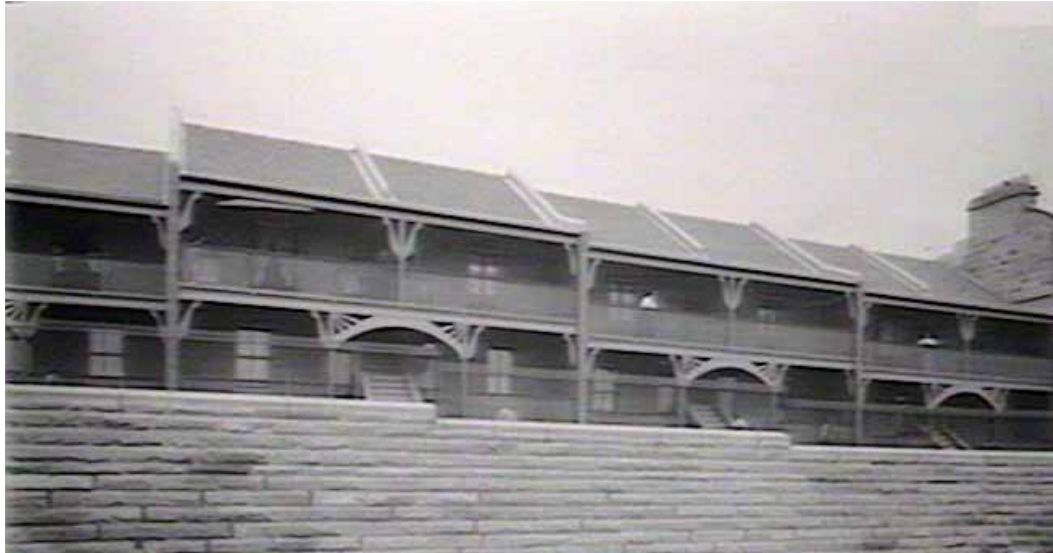
Clyde St Millers Point, one of the streets that disappeared. c1901⁷²

By 1908 there was more work available in Millers Point than ever before, the Trust employed a large workforce on its jobs, there was also a tramway being built and the wharves were still operating, but there had been many more demolitions of the housing stock. The 'Gipps Ward Progress Association' was formed in that year and they put pressure on the Government to provide working class housing. In response to this the Trust finally started building 22 flats in Dalgety Terrace, and in 1909 they finally admitted as policy to provide housing for waterside workers, although they continued to argue that the land was much too valuable for this use.

⁷¹ Fitzgerald & Keating 1991 pg 70-76

⁷² Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

In 1912 the State Housing Board was set up and between 1908 and 1915 the bulk of Millers Point's new housing stock was constructed. This included 72 flats in High St, 12 houses in Munn St and shops flats and a restaurant on the corner of Kent and Argyle St.

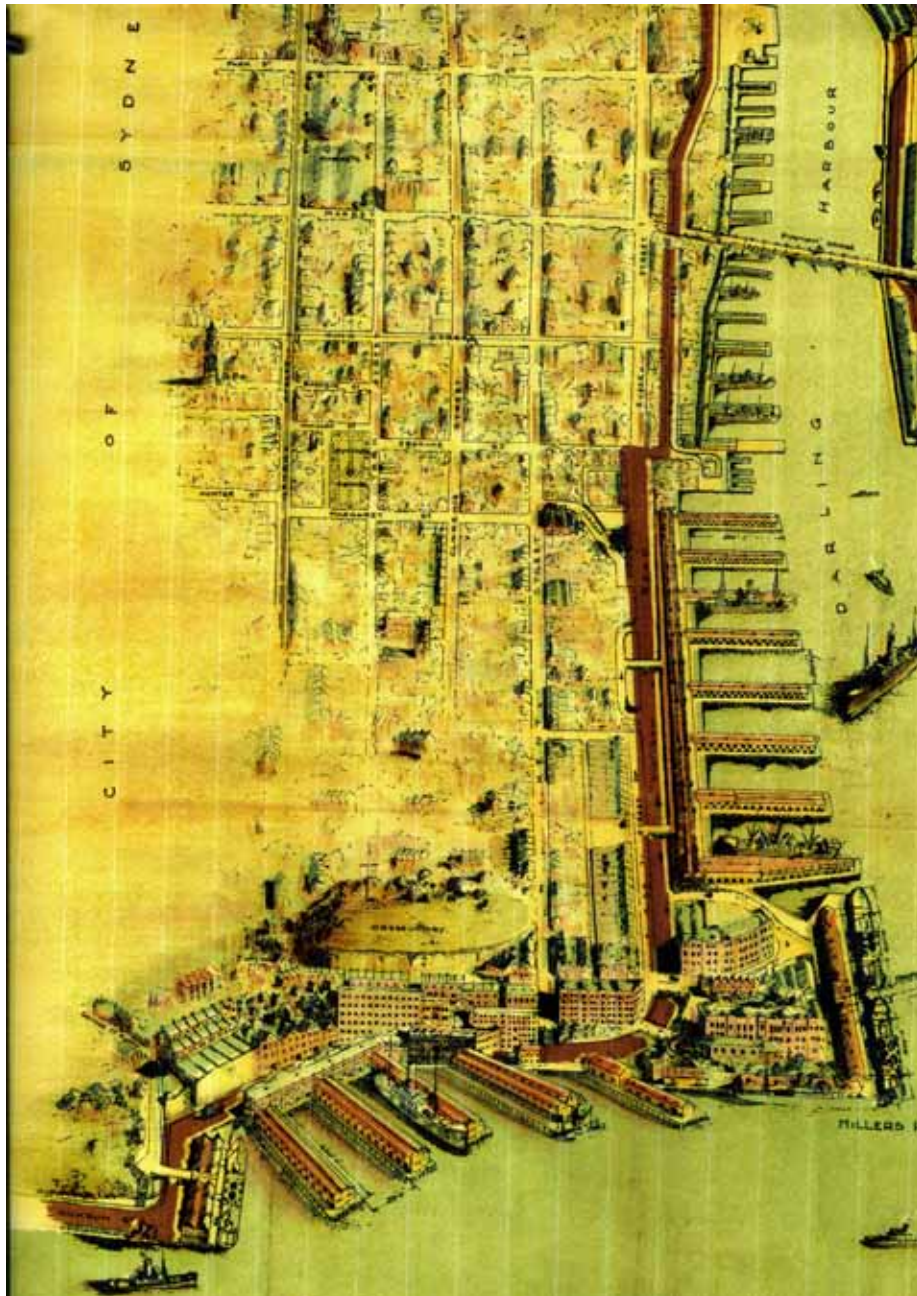


Waterside Workers Housing in High St built 1910⁷³

The Board was disbanded in 1924 leaving the Harbour Trust in control. The Trust rented its housing to people associated with working on the wharves, they did not provide it on a needs basis, but in order to maintain its own workforce. Therefore, this housing can more properly be called state housing rather than public housing. It was built for a specific purpose, to house employees, and it was built begrudgingly. In the end less was rebuilt than was demolished and it caused enormous upheaval to the residents, some of whom had been living in the area for generations. In 1901 there were 473 house, shops and shops with residences by 1928 there were 433, including 163 flats. This was also to change as hundreds of buildings were being demolished to make way for the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Although it could be argued that these buildings were in The Rocks, in reality people lived and worked in both places and moved between them. These demolitions put pressure on the available housing stock in both Millers Point and The Rocks, and the depression was just starting.

Whilst the number of houses and pubs declined the task of the Trust resulted in a vast amount of construction on the waterfront. The Trust's plan was to create the most modern and up to date facilities possible, which would be leased back to private companies. An enlarged and varied export industry was necessary to service a large overseas debt; the plan was to trade the way to prosperity in the new century. The Bird's Eye view produced by the Sydney Harbour Trust in 1912 shows what they considered to be the most important task they faced, the reconstruction of the waterfront. Housing is not depicted with any importance.

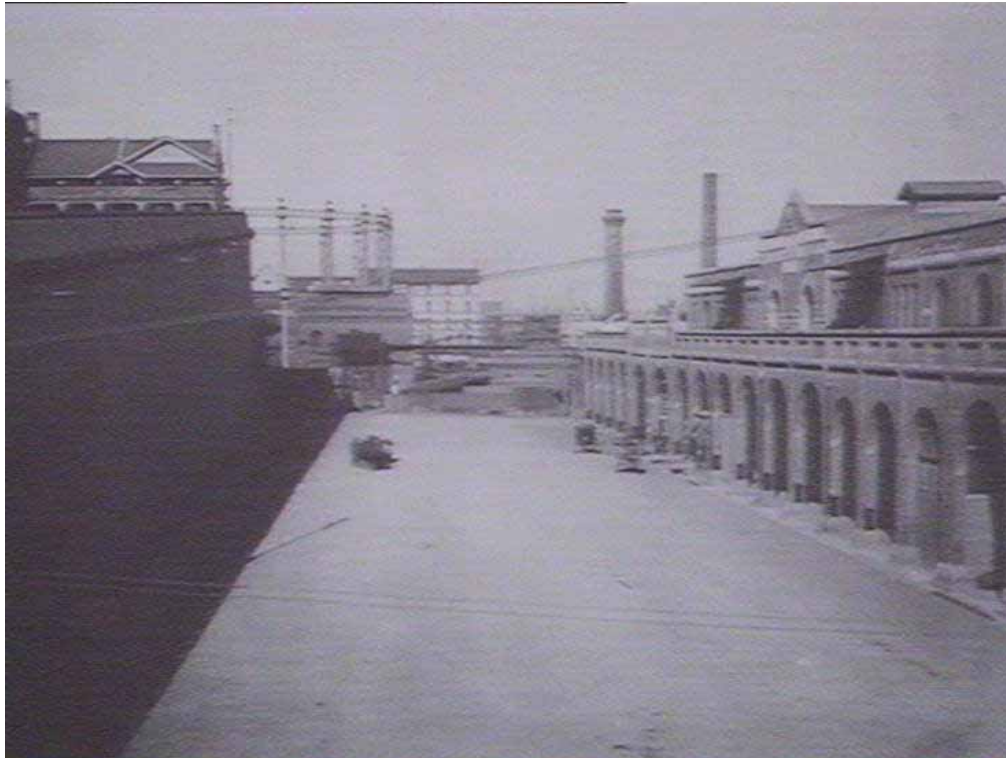
⁷³ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection



Sydney Harbour Trust 1912 Bird's Eye View (Detail)⁷⁴

The first major work to be completed was the new Dalgety's wharf on the point itself. Bond stores and warehouses soon followed and in 1909 the major work of constructing Hickson Road began. The cliff had to be cut down to wharf level, and in the end this proved advantageous because it meant that bridges could be constructed over it to the higher streets above providing twice as much access to the two storey wharves. Hickson Road was not just constructed to provide shoreline access to the wharves, but it was to extend to Darling Harbour connecting to the railhead there. It would also provide access, via Pyrmont Bridge, to the warehouses and wharves on the Pyrmont Peninsula. The road was built particularly wide because the original intention was to construct a railway line to Millers Point along the road.

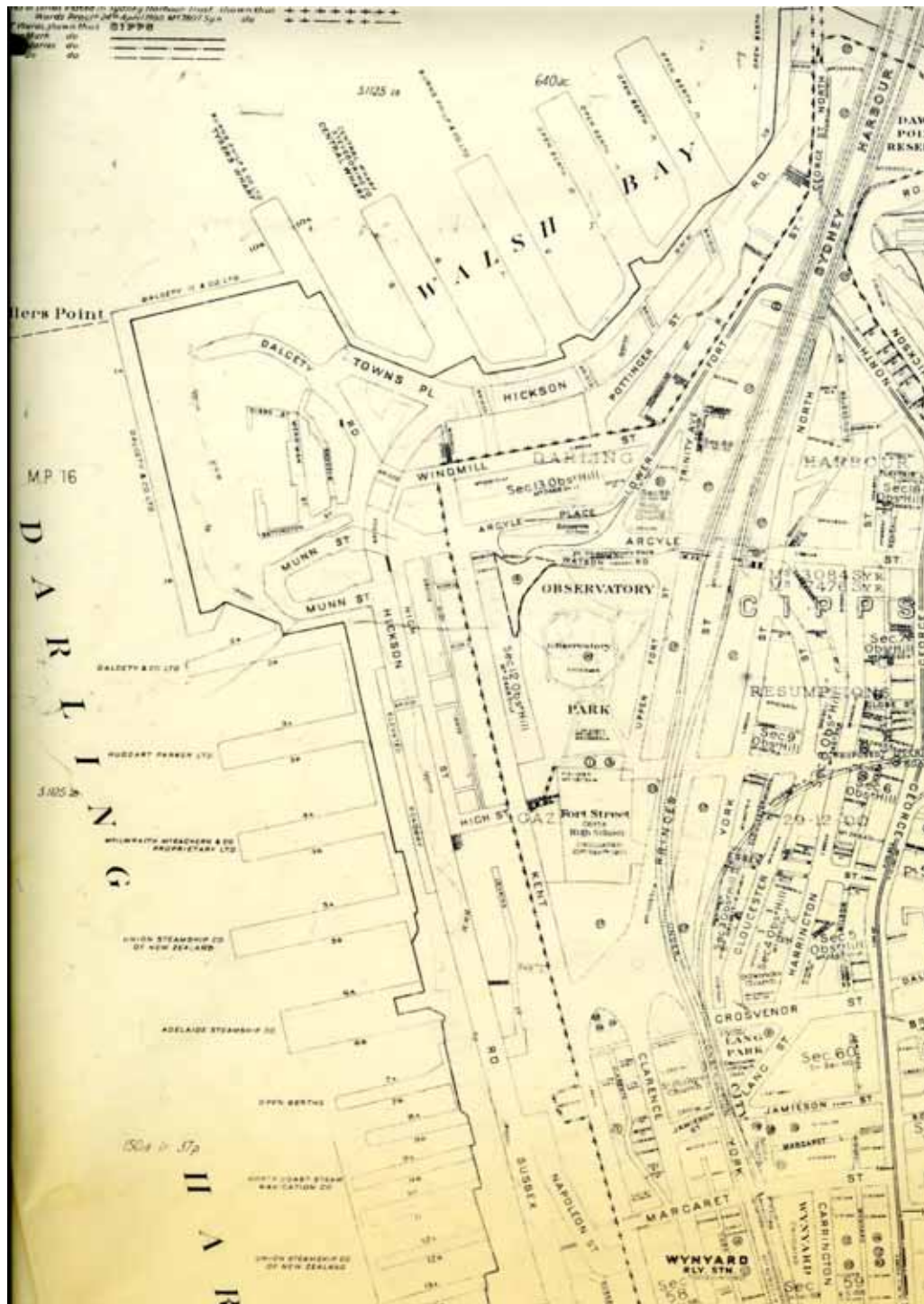
⁷⁴ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection



Hickson Road to Gas Works c1918⁷⁵

Hickson Road construction continued into the 1920s, but up to the Gas Works was completed by 1915. There were several delays in the construction during these years, the major one being the outbreak of World War One when labour became scarce and the cost of materials rose and then became difficult to get. This did not entirely lessen with the end of the war, in 1921 cement and steel were still difficult to get and expensive. The steel bridges that were to be constructed at that time were put on hold and the Trust proposed to build the bridges with wood. Another difficulty the trust faced was access to the land occupied by the Gas Works. Hickson Road was to run right through the site. This land was not owned by the Trust because the Gas Works were exempt from the resumptions. The land was finally resumed in 1911 but the Australian Gas Light Company continued to lease the works as it rebuilt the new plant at Mortlake. Progress on this was slow and it was stopped altogether with the outbreak of WW1, in 1917 the dismantling of the plant was stopped and it was brought back into temporary production. By 1921, the Trust still did not have control of the Gas Works site, but they had been able to construct a temporary road through it, which immediately filled with heavy traffic.

⁷⁵ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection



1930 Parish of Saint Phillips (Detail)⁷⁶

By the end of the 1930s, ten new wharves, besides Dalgety's, had been constructed on the subject site. A standard modular timber design was developed for the wharves, wharf sheds and shore sheds so that they could easily be adapted to the requirements of individual sites. The wharves were constructed of turpentine piles spaced on a 10ft grid. The wharf sheds (typically two storey) were of simple post and beam construction. Ventilation and clerestory lighting were features of the wharf shed roof

⁷⁶ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Maps & Plans Collection

which was galvanised iron or asbestos cement. Overpass Bridges above Hickson Road gave access to the upper levels of each shore shed. Hickson Road, which was quarried from the sandstone cliffs, gives sea level access.



Construction of the Wharves on Turpentine Piles⁷⁷

The Wharves were leased to various shipping companies; the smaller wharves closer to Erskine St were open births or leased to coastal traders. 'Deep sea' shipping used the larger wharves on the north of the site. As impressive as these new wharves were, they did not provide the necessities for people working on them. There were no water taps, toilets or other bathroom facilities provided.



Dalgety's New Wharf for the White Star Line⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

⁷⁸ Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Historic Image Collection

The smaller wharves started to become redundant as rail and road transport took over from coastal shipping. After the establishment of the Maritime Services Board in 1936 these passed out of private leasing to Government control. By the late 1960s the southern end of the subject site had been transformed into a concrete platform to service container ships. The northern end of the subject site was to undergo this transformation in the 1970s.

Unionism & the Waterfront Disputes

Depression in 1930s & the Hungry Mile

WW2 lead to improvement of conditions

Rise of the power of unions in the 60s & 70s

Maritime strike of 1997?

(NB: Need to check detail re Patrick's phase – any detail re this wld be appreciated)
Patrick's had the lease to the East Darling Harbour site and they decided not to renew it when it came up in 2006. The site was no longer commercially viable as a freight-shipping terminal. The city had developed since the large concrete apron was built in the 1970s. The railway goods lines and warehouses had been removed from Darling Harbour and it was redeveloped into an entertainment and tourist precinct opening in 1988. The industrial heart of the city moved from the areas around Darling Harbour and Pyrmont, which also underwent a transformation to a residential precinct and the industries in the area now are 'clean' industries requiring knowledge, not machinery, such as telecommunication industries. East Darling Harbour became very difficult for road transport to access, trucks have major problems negotiating the busy city streets to and from the site. Containerisation is getting large and therefore larger double trailer trucks are needed to shift cargo, it is not possible to get these vehicles to the site without disruption of the traffic in the city centre. Ships are also becoming larger, and the new 'Super Freighters' require much more space, if they will fit under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. More space is not available on this site without extending it, either into the Harbour or back into Millers Point. The opening of Port Botany in 1979 saw much of the shipping move to that area, and Patrick's have followed them. However, this does not mean that it the end of shipping into East Darling Harbour entirely. Instead of being a cargo receiving facility, the rise of cruise liners has seen the need for a docking facility for them. The passenger terminal is to remain on the site, continuing the association of shipping with the area, and appropriately the passenger terminal is at the southern end of the site, where the coastal traders used to dock. These coastal traders were used for the transportation of people as much as for cargo in the past.

The waterfront at East Darling Harbour has changed over the years to reflect the change in technology. Windmills were the first built for of power provision in the area. The early whaling ships whose products provided power for lighting gave way to gas lighting, and the Gas Works were built here in the 1840s, although they remained on the site until the 1920s. Sail gave way to steam, and ships became much larger, requiring larger wharves to service them. Manpower and horsepower began to be supplemented with hydraulic power from the 1870s, increasing the weight and height that loads could be lifted. Eventually Gas lighting and hydraulic power was replaced by electric power and machinery such as forklifts, and diesel-powered ships replaced steamships. Containerisation is the last step in this process and required the

modification of the wharves yet again. In response to this long finger wharves became redundant and large concrete aprons built for the roll on, roll off, method of unloading large ships. Warehousing became much larger and without separate floors as containers could be stacked on one another. The change in the goods coming though the wharves also required a change in wharfage facilities. Large open spaces began to be required for the storage of large amounts of vehicles that are imported into the country before they are trucked to their various destinations. The development of Port Botany and the increasing land value of the areas close to the CBD have seen large companies, such as Patrick's move their operations away from the area. Today there is a large concrete apron with several large empty warehouses on the site, and magnificent views over the western part of the Harbour.

This change in the use of a Port facility is not unique to Sydney, it has happened in almost every Port City in the world.