

THE FOUNDING OF MELBOURNE

30 AUGUST 1835

THE RACE FOR HISTORY



MELBOURNE DAY COMMITTEE

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WAS IT JOHN PASCOE FAWKNER OR JOHN BATMAN?



NEITHER FOUNDED MELBOURNE

They shaped early Melbourne but John Pascoe Fawcner, left, and John Batman weren't here when the city was born.

In the 1830s, the impetus for settlement in the Port Phillip district (Victoria) came from the pastoralists of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania).

They wanted grazing land as they had already occupied most of the readily accessible and suitable crown land in Van Diemen's Land.

They could not afford the price the government was charging for any that had not been sold, and the recent Fencing and Impounding Acts had made it difficult for them to graze livestock on any land which they had not purchased.

WHY MELBOURNE?

However, they knew from reports of whalers and sealers, who were active in Bass Strait, that there was good land along the northern shores of Bass Strait.

Taking the law into one's own hands

Since Hume and Hovell had travelled overland to Corio Bay from Sydney in 1824, and a short-lived penal settlement had existed at Corinella in 1826-27, a number of Van Diemen's Land pastoralists, including John Batman, Thomas and James Henty and a Hobart lawyer, Joseph Gellibrand, had repeatedly asked the authorities in London and Sydney for land grants on the mainland.

They had been consistently refused because neither government wanted to incur the expense and trouble of setting up a new settlement.

So settlement became a matter of taking the law into one's own hands and the Henty family moved across Bass Strait to settle at Portland where whalers had seasonally set up a whaling station. Spurred on by the Henty initiative, Batman, banker Gellibrand, Charles Swanston, and John Helder Wedge, a government surveyor, decided that they would do the same.

And they would reinforce their claim by buying land that they found suitable from the local Aborigines.

WAS ONE OF THE SETTLERS PREGNANT?

Yes, Mary Gilbert — the first female settler. She was 18, the only white woman in Melbourne, and gave birth to a son, the first white child born on 29 December 1835.

As servants of John Pascoe Fawkner, Mary and husband blacksmith James Gilbert were in the original party of settlers who landed from the *Enterprize*. There is a statue of Mary in the Fitzroy Gardens' conservatory by sculptor Ailsa O'Connor, right.



TRIVIAL TRINKETS

BATMAN'S PRIORITY WAS TO FIND CHIEFS OF LOCAL ABORIGINES

In April 1835, Batman chartered 35-tonne sloop *Rebecca* and after being forced back twice by bad weather finally sailed from Port Sorell on May 26, reaching Indented Head on the Bellarine Peninsula in Port Phillip Bay on May 29, 1835, where he established his base camp.

Before the Batman party left Launceston, the lawyer, Gellibrand, had drawn up a Sales Treaty under which the Indigenous people purported to sell a vast tract of Victoria to Batman's party for a trivial sum of trinkets. It was a priority for Batman to find the chiefs of the local tribe of Aborigines to sign his Treaty, and he set off from Indented Head with a small party, with that objective.

He first traversed the country around Corio Bay without success, then boarded the *Rebecca* and sailed to the head of Port Phillip, where the *Rebecca* was anchored off the Williamstown Peninsula.

The search for sellers

Next morning the ship's boat, with Batman as a passenger, was taken into the lower reaches of the Yarra River and soundings were taken to ensure it would be safe to anchor *Rebecca* while Batman went ashore in his search for Aborigines who would sell him land.

Batman went ashore at the mouth of Stony Creek, where West Gate Bridge now crosses the river.

John Batman monument at Indented Head on the Bellarine Peninsula.

BATMAN'S 'TREATY'

Batman walked along the west side of the Maribyrnong River towards what is now Footscray, not noting the junction where the Yarra joined the Maribyrnong and by the second day had gone as far as Horseshoe Bend, Keilor.

The deal is cut

Next day while the party rested at Redstone Hill south-east of Sunbury, which Batman named Mount Iramoo, smoke from an Aboriginal fire was sighted in the east, and it was decided to move in that direction instead of continuing towards Mt Macedon. Contact was made with a party of Aborigines and the Treaty was signed on June 6, 1825, near Edgars Creek, Thomastown.

With this agreement, Batman claimed to have purchased 500,000 acres, (about 200,000 hectares) for the total price of about \$400.00 of goods handed over immediately and the promise of similar payments ever year.

Batman returned to the Maribyrnong, which he reached about the Flemington Racecourse, then followed down the east side of the river through marshy country. In his journal, Batman noted "after crossing the marsh we passed through tea-tree scrub, very high and thick" and they were surprised to find themselves on the bank of "a much larger river". The party had reached the junction of the Maribyrnong and the Yarra flowing in from the east.

Batman could not cross the Yarra.

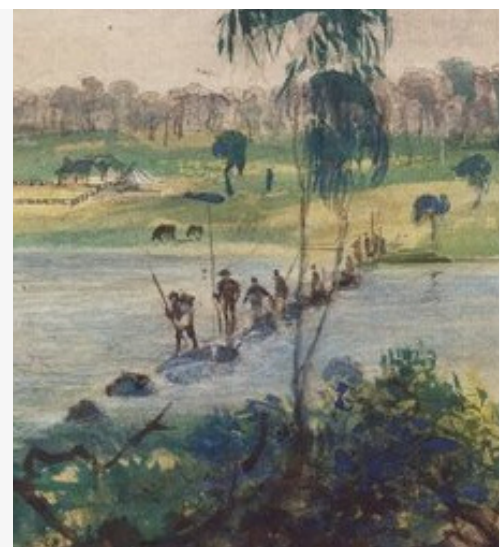
So he dispatched two members of his party to swim the Maribyrnong, walk to the *Rebecca* and bring the ship's boat upstream to pick him up.

Next day the *Rebecca* attempted to sail out of the river to return to the base camp at Indented Head, but the wind was adverse.

It was then decided to send the ship's boat to explore the river which Batman had encountered on his return, namely the Yarra.

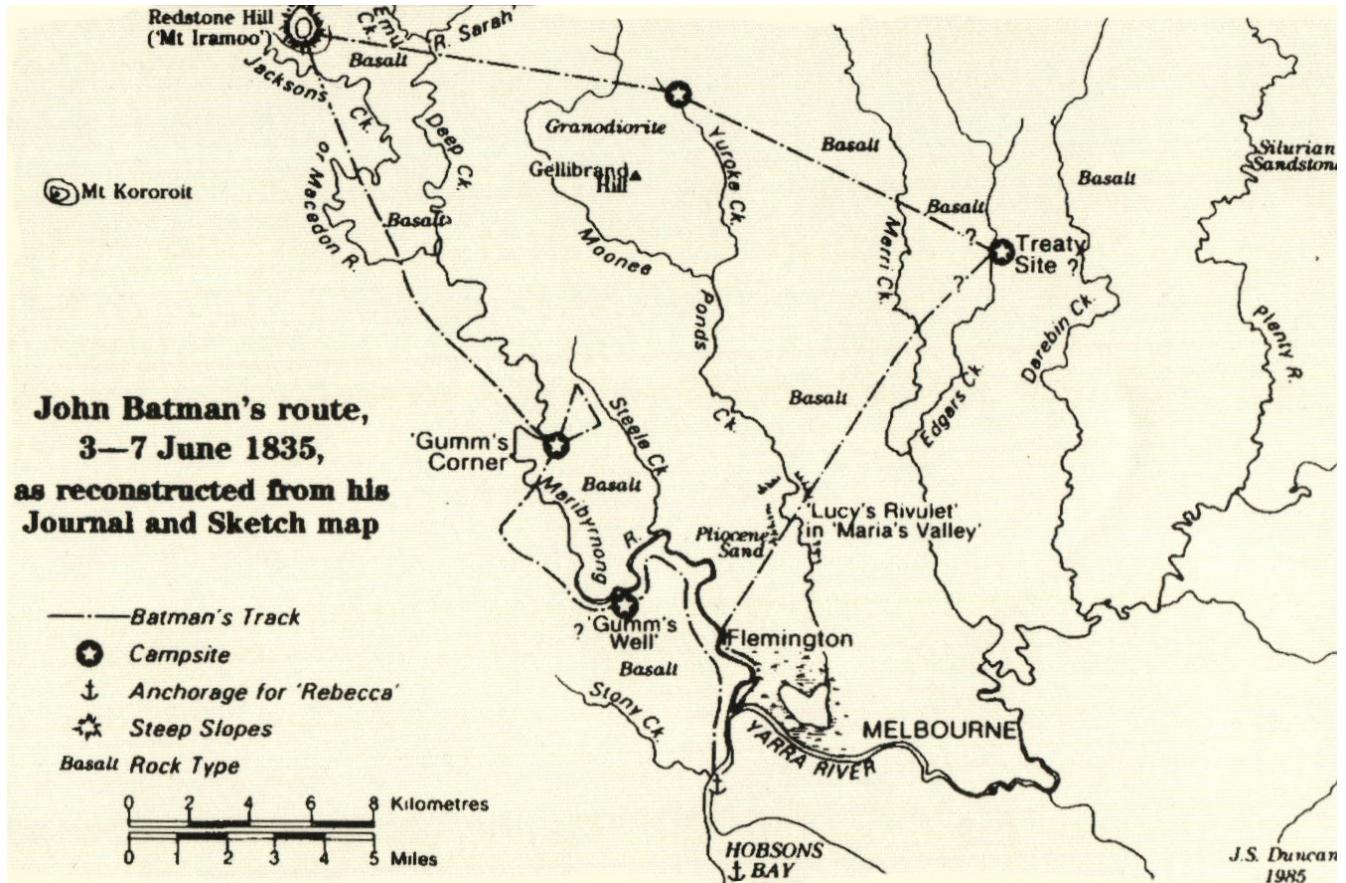
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WATERFALL?

Originally alongside today's Queens St Bridge at Enterprize Park, the Falls, alternatively called the Rapids, were dynamited in the 1880s in civic works to stop the Yarra River flooding.



MELBOURE, SHAPED BY THE YARRA

NOT BIG BY WORLD STANDARDS BUT THE RIVER AND ITS SUPPLY OF FRESH WATER HAD A CRITICAL IMPACT ON SHAPING MELBOURNE



On its return, the boat's crew reported "good water" six miles up. They had certainly reached the falls in the river where Queen's Bridge now stands and where the brackish tidal water met the fresh.

In his journal Batman noted "this will be the place for a village."

On June 9, 1835, Batman sailed from Indented Head leaving a party of eight to look after his interests, and to prevent any other ships entering Port Phillip.

IN HIS JOURNAL BATMAN NOTED "THIS WILL BE THE PLACE FOR A VILLAGE."

Reconstruction of John Batman's route 3 to 7 June 1835.

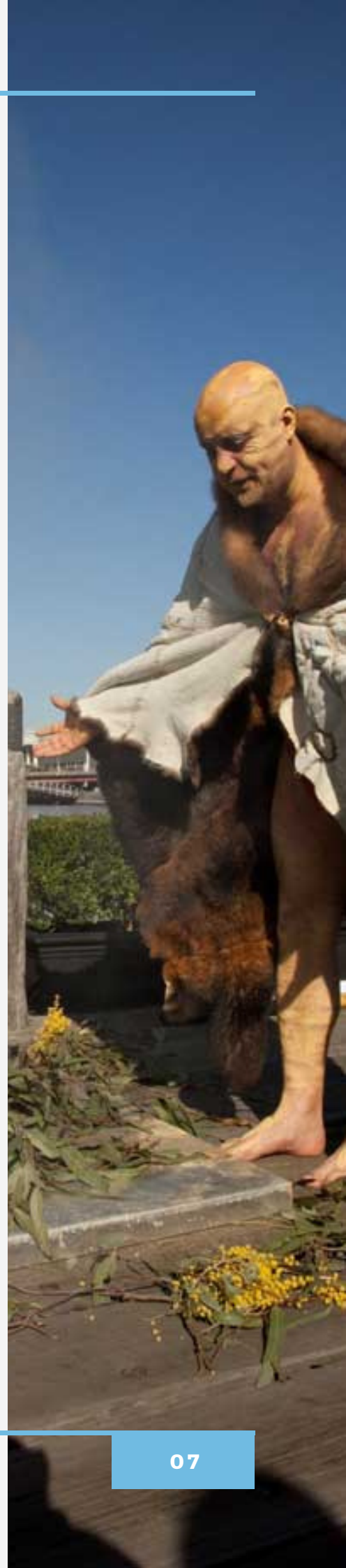
ABORIGINAL MELBOURNE

SHOULDN'T ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE FIRST PEOPLE?

The five Kulin nation groups are acknowledged as the first people and Traditional Owners of Country and waters that became Melbourne, and who lived here for tens of thousands of years before European settlement — representing one of the world's oldest culture.

On Melbourne Day, we celebrate our city's fascinating Indigenous heritage and remember the impact of European arrival on the people of the Kulin nation: the Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung), Boon Wurrung, Taungurong, Djajawurrung and Wathaurung.

**Wurundjeri Elder Bill
Nicholson Jnr at Melbourne
Day celebrations at
Enterprize Park.**



AN ILLEGAL START

Much later, and now back in Van Diemen's Land, surveyor John Helder Wedge and Batman prepared a map of the area which showed a reservation for a township on the south side of the Yarra.

The map also showed "Batman's Track" on his way back as meeting the Yarra about the subsequent site of Melbourne.

This was not consistent with his Journal and was apparently an attempt to include the new settlement within the area that he claimed to have purchased.

When Lieutenant Governor Arthur in Hobart and Governor Bourke in Sydney learned of the land "agreement", neither was willing to recognise it or the settlement at Indented Head without authority from London.

It would take at least a year to receive instructions, and Bourke declared that in the interim he would regard those settling at Port Phillip as trespassers. When the orders did arrive, in September 1836, settlement was permitted.

Enterprize at "the Falls" in 1835. Source: Gordon H. Woodhouse, photographer; and Frederic B. Schell, artist. Circa 1925, State Library of Victoria.



THE RACE IS ON

But the Batman land “purchase” was declared invalid.

This decision accorded with the Government’s general land policy, and there were grave doubts about the claims of Batman.

The contents of the Batman Journal were not known to Governor Arthur in Hobart, but a report was submitted to the Governor, together with maps prepared with Wedge after Batman had returned from Port Phillip in June 1835.

This report claimed Batman and the local Aborigines had marked trees at the corners of the purchased land.

This was clearly impossible for such a large area, in the time Batman had spent there. His journal recorded the marking of only one tree.

By the end of June, Batman and his backers had formally organised the Port Phillip Association with 15 members, to start sending sheep to Port Phillip. George Evans, a Launceston builder, later claimed that when he heard Batman tell his story in the Cornwall Hotel he had turned to the landlord John Pascoe Fawkner and said, “Well, Fawkner, what do you say about going to Port Phillip?”

They were soon to go, for the acquisitive Fawkner, builder, merchant, publican and newspaper owner, son of a convict who had come out to Sorrento in 1803, had already shown an interest in settling and trading there.

In April he had bought the 55-tonne schooner *Enterprize* to take him to Port Phillip, but he did not get possession of it until July 18, 1835.

The *Enterprize* sails without Fawkner

Fawkner and his associates – master mariner Captain John Lancey, George Evans and carpenters William Jackson and Robert Hay Marr – prepared for the journey. They were joined by Fawkner’s ploughman Charles Wise, blacksmith James Gilbert and his wife, Mary, and Evan Evans, servant to George Evans.

Mary Gilbert later gave birth to the first white child born in Victoria.

Unfortunately for Fawkner bad weather delayed their departure from Van Diemen’s Land allowing his Launceston creditors to stop him from leaving, meaning he was not on board when it left George Town on August 4, 1835.

A CAT CAME, TOO?

The story is true. One of the first settlers, Mary Gilbert, brought a cat, since dubbed Gilbert, the Tassie tabby. In those days, cats helped keep ships and dwellings free of rodents.



HOW MELBOURNE GOT ITS NAME



Governor Sir Richard Bourke on his visit in March 1837 chose Melbourne — after the then British Prime Minister William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne, who lived in the village of Melbourne in Derbyshire in the English Midlands. Our Derbyshire namesake is also known for the birthplace of Thomas Cook, founder of the global travel agency.

**THE FIRST PROPOSED
OFFICIAL NAME WAS
GLENELG**



MELBOURNE IS BORN

**ON AUGUST 30, 1835, OUR FIRST
SETTLERS FROM THE ENTERPRIZE
LANDED AND STARTED BUILDING**

Fawkner put Captain John Lancey in command of the party, and searching for a place to settle they first looked at Western Port, then along the east coast of Port Phillip. Finally, they entered the lower Yarra, and warped the *Enterprize* along its course until being able to sail upstream where the schooner was tied up alongside the Yarra's northern bank about where William Street and Flinders Street meet today, near the Old Customs House. On August 30, 1835, our first settlers from the *Enterprize* landed and at once discharged cargo.

They also commenced the building of a thatched storage hut and the clearing of land along the river bank. With the settlement of Melbourne well under way, the *Enterprize* left to return to Launceston on September 3 to collect Fawkner. He returned later to play his part in shaping the settlement, along with Batman, Lonsdale, Hoddle, and other pioneers. But none of them was present on the day when the site of the future Melbourne was first settled on August 30, 1835. The founders of Melbourne were those who landed from the *Enterprize*.

**The topsail schooner
Enterprize is a full-size 27m
replica of the one that
brought the first settlers.**

LOVE MELBOURNE

**CELEBRATE WHAT'S GREAT AND
MELBOURNE'S FASCINATING
INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND HERITAGE**

On behalf of all Victorians, Melbourne Day Committee works with businesses, government authorities, community groups and tourism industry partners to raise awareness of Melbourne's story, celebrate its anniversaries, and showcase everything that's great and our city's fascinating Indigenous culture and heritage.

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country — the Wurundjeri (Woiwurrung), Boon Wurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung and the Wathaurung groups who form the Kulin Nation — that has always been an important meeting place for social, educational, sporting and cultural activities.



CELEBRATING TOGETHER

JOIN THE EVENTS MARKING 30 AUGUST AS OUR CITY'S BIRTHDAY
– MELBOURNE FOUNDATION DAY



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- The LaTrobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
- Professor A.G.L Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria Before Separation*, Melbourne University Press, 1996
- Dr Stuart Duncan, *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol 17, No 2, June 1986, pp 1-12
- Al Rados.

KEEP MELBOURNE MARVELLOUS

Historic Block Arcade getting behind the annual Melbourne Day celebrations, above.

Cover photo: A 20m flagpole at Enterprize Park, part of a permanent monument.

MELBOURNE DAY CELEBRATIONS

