

A Walk

THROUGH HISTORY

WITH JOHN CLEMENTS



© Martin Butterworth, 67-71 Russell Street with suggested original verandahs, from his 1994 study for Toowoomba City Council, entitled "Russell Street: Toowoomba".

Toowoomba's Russell Street

Allow a minimum of 1 hour for a brisk walk and longer for a leisurely stroll

Roaming along Russell Street

Russell Street was originally known as Farm Road. It was a dirt track used by squatters from the west to transport their sheep and cattle to Brisbane for sale and return with supplies to their properties. By 1854 it was renamed Russell Street after Henry Stuart Russell. Russell was an early Toowoomba resident whose various occupations included grazier, explorer, politician, author and gentleman.

Commence the walk at the Railway Station.



- 1 The original Railway Station was opened on 1 May 1867. It was a major engineering feat to build the line up the Great Dividing Range from Brisbane. The present building was opened on 26 October 1874 and was completely renovated in 1998/9. It is constructed in a classical revival style using Murphy's Creek stone. The station was the centre of trade in Toowoomba for many years, governors and royalty travelled to Toowoomba by train. The dining room is open for meals during the week except Mondays and is open Saturday for evening meals. The room has remained virtually unchanged since it opened for passengers in 1874. Just across from the station there is a solid brick structure constructed during World War II for use as an air-raid shelter. Walk up the stairs to Station Street and then head left

to Russell Street. Note the Antique Store, Outdoor Cafe and associated businesses now attracted to this location. At Russell Street turn right and commence walking up the hill.

- 2 St James' Anglican Church - The foundation stone for this church was laid by the Governor of Queensland on St James' Day, 1 May 1869. The church is reminiscent of an English parish church. The tablets inside the church are reminders of Toowoomba's most famous families including the Taylors, Renwicks and Grooms. Note the beautiful stained glass windows throughout the building. The windows along the centre aisle were erected by the parishioners in memory of those who died in World War I. A window in the baptistry commemorates a former parish priest. Rev. John Barge who was killed by the Japanese in New Guinea during World War II.



- 3 Continue up Russell Street to the next site. Iona Medical Centre formerly Wesley Hospital, Wislet and Drynane, 127-129 Russell St was owned for many years by Ms Nell Robinson, the first woman Mayor in Queensland. Ms Robinson was elected to that position in April 1967 and served 15 years as Mayor of Toowoomba. She died in September 1992. This house is an unusual Interwar Bungalow, with features uncommon in Toowoomba, though not unusual in southern States. {Some of its features are easier to view from Rens Street} Built in 1908 as a combined residence and surgery.

- 4 Vacy Hall, 135 Russell Street was designed by the architect James Marks & Sons in the late 1880s for Mayor Gilbert Gostwyck Cory. The property was built of double cavity brick and has many attractive internal features. The original house was destroyed by fire but was rebuilt in 1900.

The Marks family had a significant role in designing buildings in the area. James' sons Henry {Harry} and Reginald, and his grandson Charles also became architects. The firm practised from c1881 until 1962 and favoured red brick buildings with white painted/rendered detailing.

As Vacy Hall is a private property, we request that you respect the privacy of its occupants by not wandering through the grounds or buildings without the approval of the manager.

Cross Russell Street before the intersection with Kingston Street to view the next property.

- 5 Kensington, 126 Russell St - Built in the early 1900s and renovated for a legal firm, the property has many features including metal work on the ridge of the roof and landscaping appropriate to the design of the house. Continue down Russell Street to the following sites.



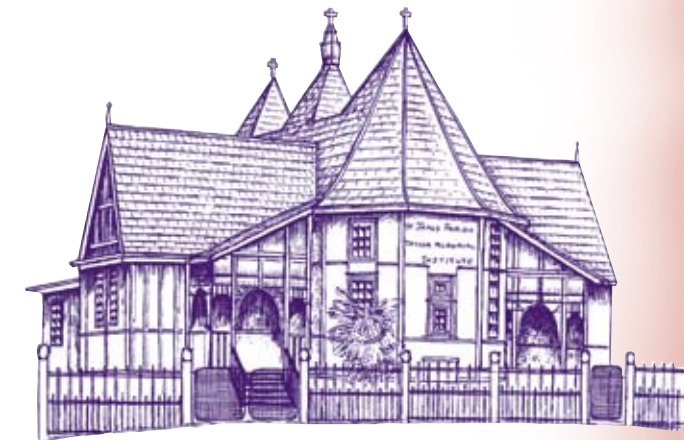
- 6 Clifford House, 120 Russell Street is a magnificent sandstone building which is one of several impressive buildings in Toowoomba. It was built in the early 1860s as a residential squatter's club but never

fulfilled that purpose. The Lands Office later occupied the building.

In 1869 the property was bought by James Taylor who was at various times Mayor of Toowoomba, Member of Parliament and Minister for Lands. He was often described as the "King of Toowoomba" because he was involved in every major development in Toowoomba during his lifetime.

Features of Clifford House include cedar doors and huge landscaped gardens. Again public access to this building is limited, so please do not enter the building without permission.

- 7 Taylor Memorial Institute, 112 Russell Street - This Anglican Hall was built from funds provided by the Taylor family in memory of their father and mother, James and Sarah Taylor. The Hall was opened on St James' Day, 1 May 1912. The hall was designed by James Marks & Sons and is unusual in style. The external walls were made of concrete covering over wire netting.



- 8 The Hotel at 80 Russell Street (corner of Station Street) was the site of the first hospital in Toowoomba. The hospital was a bark hut when it opened in 1859. Much of the old hotel building is now hidden.
- 9 Central Coffee Palace, Corner Station and Russell Streets - The property was built between 1885 and 1890 and was known as "The Coffee Palace".



If you have some more time to enjoy Toowoomba's heritage you may like to try other walks around Queens Park, Caledonian Estate, Mort Estate and the City Centre. Brochures on these walks are available at various outlets including the Visitor Information Centre on the corner of James and Kitchener Streets. Further information on Toowoomba's history can be gained from a wide range of sources. The Council's Local History Information Centre at 476 Ruthven Street and the Historical Society at 49 Lindsay Street are two excellent starting points. If you have no further use for this brochure, please consider recycling it by returning it to where you collected it, so that others may enjoy this walk.

Thanks to: John Clements for preparing the text and Ivy Lindsay for providing the drawings. The cover illustration is reproduced with permission of Martin Butterworth ©.

Published by Toowoomba Regional Council - June 2001
Reprinted June 2010

www.smartprintgroup.com 296 16018

The building was owned by Francis Schaffer who placed the sign "Schaffer's Boarding House" on the arc across the roof. The arc is still visible today. The stables were located where the liquor barn now stands in Station Street.

In 1919 Mrs Ada Cross purchased the business and renamed it "The Central Coffee Palace." She advertised accommodation (bed only) for two shillings and meals for one shilling and sixpence.

- 10 The Hotel Norville was formerly the Grand Hotel. This building was designed by James Marks & Sons and completed in early 1903. The building was described as the first 3-storey building in Toowoomba. The balconies are interesting and guests must have enjoyed seeing passengers arrive and leave from the busy Railway Station nearby. {This building is best viewed from the railway yards across Russell Street.}



- 11 Queensland Rail built a deviation line in 1915, which cut across Russell Street as well as other streets and changed the nature of the street.

- 12 The Male toilet and urinal is believed to be the first sewerage connection in Toowoomba in 1926 {The building itself was constructed in 1919}. Note the close proximity to several hotels. It should be noted that the building has no roof.

- 13 The toilet is located at the area previously known as West Swamp. The Premier Bridge was opened over the Swamp on 25 February 1862. The bridge is visible behind the gardens near the toilet. Water is now channelled through the area.

Cross the road keeping to the southern side.



Look at the side of the Rowes building taking particular note of the rear of the buildings. Many of the buildings in this section were built between 1890 and 1903 and can be viewed better from the opposite side of the street. This is a good place to get a better view of some of the features of Sites 15 & 22.

- 14 This area was occupied by the Police Station, Court House and a paddock in the 1860s. In 1898 the first Defiance Flour Mill [originally known as Crisp & O'Brien's Flour Mill] was built on this site. It was designed by James Marks, as was the 2-storey flour mill storage built at the rear in 1897. After the machinery for the flour mill was moved, the property was subdivided internally and became known as the "Peoples Palace" c.1915 and provided inexpensive accommodation and meals. The buildings were then sold in 1958. Following remodelling the building commenced its current use. Rowes Furniture had operated from an adjoining site since 1927 or thereabouts. The business expanded into adjoining premises as the need for space grew in the 1950s and 1960s.

- 15 Saddler, Mr A Gaydon had his saddlery at 26 Russell Street for many years. Note the date 1892 on top of the building. The building features tracery motifs decorating the facade which was another common theme used by James Marks & Sons; Reginald designed this building.

Another interesting tenant, in the 1960s, was May Bremner, a milliner who sold hats to ladies from many parts of Queensland.

- 16 In September 1865 the Toowoomba Post Office was opened on the south-west corner of Russell and Ruthven Streets where Beresford's Shoe shop now stands. The Post Office moved to Margaret Street in the late 1870s. The present corner building was later known for many years as Jubb's Corner after the pharmacist whose shop was located there.

Cross Russell Street and walk back toward the Railway Station.

- 17 The National Australia Bank, on the corner of Russell & Ruthven Streets was erected in 1961 and is typical of modern post-war redevelopment of such older sites. The building was setback from Russell Street to comply with a 1940 regulation by Council, which at the time was seeking to widen and straighten the street. This proposal was relinquished in 1988. However the amenity of the street had already been changed through an associated direction from Council in 1953 to remove verandah posts and provide tie-suspended metal awnings.

The "Darling Downs Gazette" was printed on this site in the 1860s and a store owned by William Henry Groom, former convict turned Mayor, politician, businessman and newspaper proprietor, previously occupied the site. Mr Groom announced in January 1869 that he had registered his commodious brick premises opposite the Post and Telegraph Office as a wine and spirit store. He added that he had "one of the coolest and most capacious cellars in the country".

As you walk down this side of Russell Street note the verandah roofs, which are often made of "Wunderlich" pressed metal.

- 18 37 Russell Street, formerly H.G. Wyeth's hardware store, was designed by Henry Marks and opened in 1907. At the time, the facade was described as "elaborate" with natural lighting being given priority. Note the cast iron verandah supports, which are also used as downpipes.

- 19 Yat Lowe Electrical, 41a Russell Street - Many people knew this shop as the Electric Shop Limited. Before the turn of the century, Toowoomba's stockyards were nearby and it has been said that Toowoomba's first show was held in the vicinity in 1861.

- 20 The National Hotel, 55-63 Russell Street was originally the European Hotel, built c1883. In 1893 floodwaters were 4 feet 6 inches deep inside the hotel. The building has been renovated over the years, with major changes in the 1930s. Inside are numerous old photos and intricate ceilings, which are quite interesting.

- 21 The Cossart family has continuously owned Cossarts Saddlery at 65 Russell Street since 1906 when they bought the business from McDonald & Quinn. The current facade was built in 1958. The inside of this building is mostly original.

- 22 The ornate appearance of 71 Russell Street again reflects Marks' family architectural influence. This building was designed by Henry Marks and constructed around 1906. The building has been used for numerous purposes. Originally the site of Neden Bros Flour Mill, the present building has housed cafes, dentists and Maies Book Exchange. The site is featured on the front cover of the brochure with original verandahs shown.

Return to the Railway Station.