

# FORESTERS HALL

**1873:** 24th Nov 1873. Mr William Fraser agreed to construct a Hall on his land, and leased it to Mr James Hay, as part of a lease agreement, for 5 years at an annual rental of £300, payable half yearly. The conditions set out under which William Frazer let to James Hay the "Prince of Wales Hotel, the Punt Hotel and the Punt. Part of the contract stipulated the Fraser should erect a brick building 13 x 30 feet, a saddler's shop and if required a butcher's shop. Hay was required to pay the rent and to build a new punt 20 feet wide by 60-70 feet. It was the first public hall in the town and was in great demand for many purposes.

**1874:** Shepparton only has at this time a couple shops, a general store, a blacksmith shop and police station.

**1875:** It was this year (1875) Court House was established at the rear of the punt house and post office in a brick room. Court proceedings were all held in Benalla until now, there was no court in Shepparton until 1880.

**1877:** The first Roman Catholic services were held in the Hall, and the first marriage ceremony, that of Mr James O'Connell (1843-1918) and his bride Mary Walsh O'Leary (1858-1893) .

**1885:** The premises was sold to Thomas Allard Pettit, who with Mr Challendar, set up the Shepparton Steam Printing Works, where they briefly printed the second paper in Shepparton, "The Farmer's Gazette". The Victorian Farmer's Gazette, commenced publication with the issues for November 12th, 1887 and ran until it was discontinued in February 1890. Victorian Farmers Gazette, circulated throughout Victoria. Special organ of the Agricultural and Pastoral interests Protection League ect. Cheapest and the best weekly journal in Australia. Chief advertising medium of stock salesmen, stock, and station agents, wool brokers, produce merchants, financial agents, machine and implement manufactures and agents ect".

**1887:** Thomas Allard Pettit sold the premises to Mr William Sheil, Senior. Mr Sheil leased the Hall to different lessee. The Hall and surrounding land remained with the Sheil Family until 1933.

**1888:** The first Shepparton Presbyterian Church service in the Public Hall prior to the opening to the new Church Building. The first wedding service was held in the Public Hall of Mr Erastus Henry Robertson (1858-1920) and his bride Miss Jessie McLean (1866-1946). Their daughter Isabella Ivy Robinson (1889-1955) was the first Christened

**1925:** Mr J Gould leased the hall and established a plumber's workshop. The hall had been used previously for many purposes including a pensioner's club, a ballet group, and a Highland band.

**1926:** Mr J Gould daughter Doris Evelyn Gould was born in the front cottage on the 22nd of July 1926.

**1929:** 24th Of October 1929. William Sheil Will & Probate

**1933:** The Hall and surrounding land was purchased by Mr Henry Goodwill.

**1934:** 12th Feb 1934. Mr Henry Goodwill and Cordella Goodwill (Vendors) sold the hall and land. William Thomas Lightfoot, William Edward Dear and Harold Arthur Pink (Trustees) on behalf of the Ancient Order of Foresters, in Victoria Shepparton Court No. 8715 purchases the hall and land. Therefore, now known as Foresters Hall. The Ancient Order of Foresters used the Hall up to 1967.

**1966:** "The old Foresters Hall and land on which it is situated has been bought by Shepparton City Council for \$8000.00. This includes \$500 for furnishings and fittings. The purchase includes an old residence situated on the same land which is at the corner of High and Welsford Street. Council's public works committee appointed a sub committee to negotiate for the purchase. This included The Mayor Cr. Alex Rigg, Cr L.W.P Gribble and Cr V.E Vibert".

**1967:** The Shepparton City Council purchased the Hall and adjoining land.

**1967:** 2nd Feb 1967. Letter requesting that Shepparton & Goulburn Valley Historical Society for the use of the newly acquired Forester's Hall and the old Victorian Farmer's Gazette cottage in Welsford Street, for the exhibition of some of the collection of historic relics of the Society, during the "Back to Shepparton" celebrations on the 11th, 12th and 13th March 1967.

**1967:** The name of the journal the Victorian Farmers Gazette, is still faintly visible on the wall (just above the window height) facing Welsford Street. The old building of two substantial rooms was not listed in the Directories of Victoria as having an address attached to the buildings and business ran in them.

**1968:** The Mayor Councillors and Citizens of the city of Shepparton (Purchases) April 6th 1968, Shepparton City Council purchased the land directly behind the Hall, known as 4 High Street, from Mr Henry Goodwill, for £8000.

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**1970:** The Shepparton and Goulburn Valley Historical Society put forward a proposal to the Shepparton City Council to preserve the Hall by accepting full responsibility and meet the costs to restore the Hall to its former glory. During renovations papers were found in the ceiling relating Pettit's Steam Printery. Wrought nails used as part of the woodwork and lead washed roof nails were found and associated with the mid-19th Century.

**1970:** Foresters Hall was painted white as part of the restoration. "The Foresters Hall in Shepparton had some historic merit and could be worthy of trust classification, according to the administer of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria)".

**1970:** "The Forester's Hall, is threatened with demolition unless the Historical Society can persuade the City Council to reconsider its attitude. The little hall is inconspicuously tucked away at the south-western corner of High and Welsford Streets. If the old building was actively obstructing constructive progress there could be a case justifying removal but no valis reason has been offered for the destruction of the rare link to the past. The Historical Society suggestion to convert the building into a museum is worthy of consideration". The Forester Hall in Welsford Street, Shepparton has been given a reprieve. City Council will not act on a previous resolution to demolish the hall or dispose of it until the matter is further discussed". "It is just a little old building sitting on a busy intersection". "It would have to be rewired, spouting and downpipes replaced, the ceiling is up and down and the iron roof is sagging".

**1971:** Hall was added to the National Trust of Australia, Victoria No. 2410.

**1971:** 22nd Nov, 1971. First Contact of Lease. Conditions of use of land situated at No.154 Welsford Street Shepparton and the Building thereon known as "The Forresters Hall" for a period of twelve months (12) signed by Town Clerk, R.O'Brien.

**1972:** An additional of 42 ft x 21 ft was added onto the Hall with a subsidy authorised by Sir Henry Bolte, Premier of Victoria. This extention created was an area double the size and an Historical Precinct was created.

**1973:** Sunday the 25th of November the Hall was officially opened by the Mayor, Cr Kevin Riordan.

**1974:** 1st July 1974, Received a photo of James Hay from his grandson Harold Jackson from Reservoir, Victoria. The Vibert Gallery extension proposal.

**1976:** A subsidy of \$10,00.00 from the Ministry if Arts was granted, with the Shepparton Historical Society and the Council to contribute \$2000.00 and \$3000.00 respectively. Referred to the 1978/1978 Loan Schedule.

**1979:** The extensions were completed at a cost of \$10,000,00. The balance of funds were used for associated works, fittings, and fixtures.

**1980:** The extension of Gribben Gallery. Sunday 30th of March, the extension-1980: The extension of Gribben Gallery. Sunday 30th of March, the extensions were officially opened by Mr Peter Ross-Edwards, M.L.A.

**1982:** The building was added to the Register of Historic Buildings Preservation Council. A submission was sent to Mr Race Matthews, Minister for the Arts, for an extension of 195 square meters at an estimated cost of \$63,700 to display horse-drawn vehicles, vintage tractors and implements.

**1984:** A mural was painted on the west wall by volunteers from Shepparton Jaycees. The artwork was completed by Geoff Wilson and Peter Lawer. The paint was donated by Warehousing Services of Shepparton. The mural is a reproduction of an oil painting of McGuires Punt by Eugene von Guerard.

**1985:** An additional \$7016 was granted by the Council towards increased costing.

**1986:** Sunday the 7th of September, a wall panel was unveiled dedicated to the life and achievements of Raymond West.

**1987:** February. The old Bren Cannon was brought from the John Pick Playground to the Historic Precinct for restoration. The cannon was given to the Historical Society by the Council. With a contribution of \$500 was given to the restoration.

On Sunday 12th of April, a wall panel depicting the life and achievements of V.E.Vibert, prepared by the family, was unveiled. The Mayor, Cr. W.B Hunter opened Heritage Week then introduced a member of the Vibert Family to unveil the panel. The original building of the Museum has been named "The Vincent Vibert Gallery".

**1988:** Extension of The Ford Gallery.

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**1991:** Letter to The National of Victoria, planning on stripping the white paint off the building back to the original 'red brick'. Inspection completed by Darien Cassidy, Architect on the 21st May 1992.

**1992:** 26th August Proposal to build two replica cottages next to their Welsford St museum. The cottages will provide extra research room, a display area, kitchen, toilet and conference room. The Society also plans to extend the existing museum building to provide extra storage.

**1993:** Quotation Submissions Advertised for Construction of an Extension to the Shepparton Historical Society Museum by May 7th 1993.

**1993:** Museum Archive Room was added.

**1993:** Received a letter dated 31st Aug 1993 from a Mrs A Hamilton.

Regarding the rebuilding of the replica cottages adjoining the museum. "As a girl, 15yrs I lived in the home and the Hall was my father's workshop. Mr Gould's Plumbers Shop Mrs Hamilton would be about 87 yrs old at this time. There were 2 large peppercorn trees on the footpath outside the house and as children we had a great time there. My youngest sister was born in that house. My father extended the kitchen and built a bathroom".

**1995:** Replica Cottages built by Shepparton City Council contractors.

**1995:** The Shepparton Historical Society receives an Art's Victoria Museums and Visual Arts Grant Programs to install Infa-Red Security System of \$3,500.00. The system monitors the entire museum, including the recent heritage cottage extension. The system will be unveiled to the public on Australia Day as part of the official opening of the heritage cottage.

**1995:** January 26th 1995, Shepparton Heritage Centre "Heritage Cottage" official opening as part of the Australia Day Celebrations. The cottage was designed by members of the Shepparton Historical Society and Family Historical Group was opened by Mayor Mr Bruce McNeill. The cottage will provide research opportunities for the community and meeting facilities for history groups.

**2000:** Shepparton Historical Society received an Australian Centenary of Federation Grant, to refurbish Forresters Hall.

**2000:** Forresters Hall Refurbishment was in conjunction with Shepparton Heritage Centres Time Capsule to be re-opened in 2025 and again in 2050. "Federation Find in Time For Capsule" Mr Peter Gibbs.

**2001:** The opening of our restored Public/Foresters Hall component of our Museum by Dr. Sharman Stone, MHR, on Australia Day 26th. January 2001. It was Blessed by Mons. Jeffries as an acknowledgement of the part it has played in the religious life of Shepparton Guests included Don Kilgour MLA, Mayor Chris Hazelman, Mons. Peter Jeffries and Messrs. John Dunn, Mat Tricarico, Don Rochester and Lew Davis.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- The replacement of the original roof to the building, at the organisations expense. This was undertaken following a member pointing out the poor condition, and the exposed electrical wiring in the ceiling beneath. There was some discussion about what colour the replacement roofing should be, with red and green being advanced. The present grey, was eventually accepted, and later agreed as being the better choice.
- The replacement of the original pine flooring. This was becoming an uneven surface, and we were introducing sometimes weighty exhibits into the room. It was agreed that a concrete slab would suit our purposes.
- When the original flooring was being pulled up, we found there were none of the expected stumps; perhaps due to an awareness of the white ant problem in the area, there were instead lines of (unmarked) red bricks, which the timber substructure was placed upon.