

WALKS IN MIDDLE PARK: 4

HISTORIC INDUSTRIES

OF MIDDLE PARK



Middle Park History Group



Our suggested route is marked with the numbers on the map, or you can start and stop where you please.



Middle Park is now a suburb consisting mainly of houses and apartment blocks, with a couple of shopping strips to service the immediate needs of its residents. It is hard to imagine the many dairies and thriving small manufacturing businesses that were once tucked away in the back streets and laneways. Although some of the buildings of these former industries have been demolished, many still remain and have been converted into dwellings.

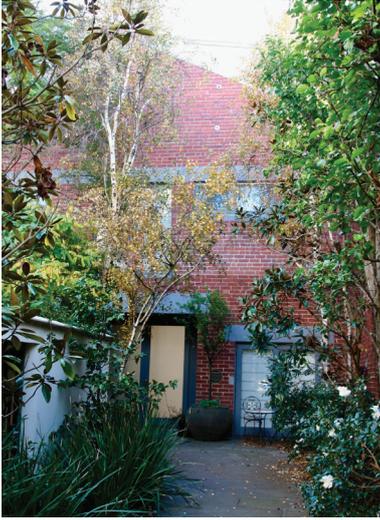
1 Tuck’s Asbestos Company: 36 Patterson Street



From 1902 to 1989, this building housed Tuck’s Asbestos Company. Tuck’s manufactured asbestos products at the site, before the dangers of asbestos were known. The factory has now been converted to apartments.

2 Savage and Oxley Warehouse/Factory: 38a Langridge Street

Easily missed from the street, the warehouse behind 38 Langridge Street was built in 1898 by John Joseph Savage, a boat builder. Boats were launched at a concrete launching ramp at the end of Langridge Street. William Clark Oxley, manufacturer and importer of fisherman’s requisites and quoits, built a factory directly behind Savage’s warehouse in about 1920. Oxley’s residence at 295 Beaconsfield Parade



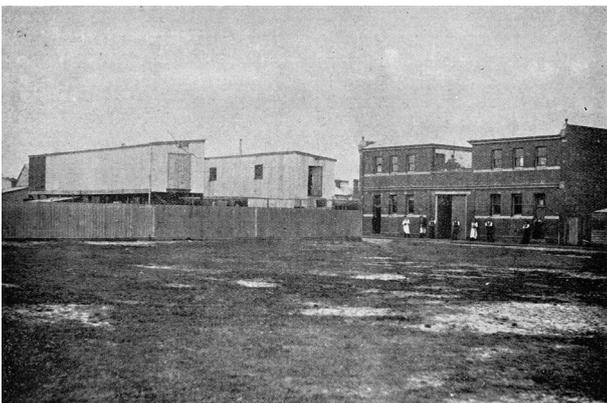
still stands. Savage's boat-building business eventually moved to Williamstown and continues to this day. The warehouse housed Tuck's products for a period afterwards and was later home to a photography studio and an underground nightclub before its conversion to a residence in 2002.

3 Milkap Factory: 202–208 Little Page Street



The original occupier of this factory, built in 1926, was a button manufacturer. The main occupier, however, was the Australian Seal Company, an enterprise that was also known as the Milkap Factory. The latter name appeared on the wall of the factory. Some faint sign-writing is still visible above the main entrance. Milk-bottle tops were manufactured on site. Initially, these were cardboard circles which were pressed into the neck of the bottle. Later, the factory produced aluminium foil caps and crown seals. By the end of 1950 bottle-top production had ceased.

4 Honeybone's Hat Factory: 145–151 Neville Street



John Mitchell Honeybone and John Ludwig arrived in Australia from London in 1884, and by 1888 were listed as operating 'hat and bonnet' works in Richardson Street. Honeybone and his sons continued with the business after Ludwig died in 1892, erecting a wooden factory off Armstrong Street which was later donated to the community and became known as 'Honeybone's Hall'. In 1900 they opened a new brick factory at 145–151 Neville Street, employing as many as 60 to 120 hands until the business closed in 1940. If you look closely on the south wall you can still see the faded signage.

5 Godfrey's Hat Block Company: 136–142 Neville Street



By 1912, Honeybone's had expanded with a second brick factory opposite at 136 Neville Street. It produced wooden blocks for moulding hats into shape. By 1923, Robert Godfrey, a former employee and hat moulder, was the owner and occupier of the factory. Godfrey lived in the cottage at 134 Neville

Street. His business was listed as the occupier of 136 Neville Street until at least 1974. The factory has since been converted to a residence.

6 Gillespie's Bakery: 44 Nimmo Street (Cnr Richardson Street)



The original baker in these premises was Coppard Bros until 1925 when it became known as Gillespie's Bakery, operated by Ron Gillespie. The building contained the bakehouse, flour lofts and stables, with a shopfront on the corner. The kindergarten occupies the site of the original stables

and the library occupies the shopfront. There were once four baking ovens on the ground floor. The bakery closed in 1941. The grandson of Ron Gillespie, Roger Gillespie, founded Baker's Delight. Gillespie's was not the only significant bakery in Middle Park. Patrick John Esmonde ran a popular bakery from the site at 18 Armstrong Street from 1899 until 1928.

7 Mardell's Straw Hat Factory: 62 Harold Street



Phillip Mardell operated a straw hat factory at this site from 1895. In or around 1910, the academic and historian Kathleen Fitzpatrick moved to Harold street as a child with her family. In her memoir, *Solid Bluestone Foundations*, Fitzpatrick recalls that '...when the big gates [of Mardell's Hat Factory] were occasionally opened up for the horse-drawn transport, we could catch a glimpse of a courtyard in which there were racks holding strips of straw in all kinds of wonderful colours.' Post WWI, the factory was demolished to make way for the Tudor Revival-style apartment block that currently occupies the site.

8 Harold Street Wood Yard: 5 Harold Street



In the early 20th century there were five major wood yards operating in Middle Park. At that time, a steady supply of fuel was essential because open fireplaces were the only form of heating in most homes. Gas fires for living spaces appeared in the 1920s and by the 1940s they had become the preferred method

of heating the home. The last continuously operating wood yard was at this site in Harold Street. It opened in 1886 and closed in 1971.

9 Chinese Laundry: 117 Hambleton Street

There were three 'Chinese laundries' servicing Middle Park in the early 1900s. The house at 117 Hambleton Street was once one of these laundries. Following the Great Depression of the 1890s, many Chinese immigrants who had been cabinetmakers turned to running laundries in Melbourne's suburbs. Their clients would have been landladies running boarding houses, single men or those otherwise wealthy enough to avoid the copper in the backyard and send their washing out. By the 1960s the Chinese laundries had either closed or become dry cleaners.

10 Farnsworth's Dairy: 86 Carter Street and 103 Hambleton Street



The local supply of milk to Middle Park began in the mid-19th century, when cattle were allowed to graze in Albert Park. As the population increased, so did the demand for dairy products. By 1910, there were five separate dairies operating in Middle Park. H.C. Howell and later Joseph Richard Farnsworth operated a dairy at 86 Carter Street from at least 1910 until 1950. It went under the name Seaford Dairy, Parkdale Dairy or Farnsworth's Dairy. Stables for the dairy were at 103 Hambleton Street. The derrick (or hoist) used for lifting feed to the upper storey of the stables remains visible, as does the dairy signage (Parkdale Dairy) on the eastern wall.

11 Albert Park Steam Laundry: 4-14 Mills Street



There were once three large-scale commercial laundries in Middle Park – Albert Park Steam Laundry, Beale’s Laundry and the Magdalen Laundry at the Convent of the Good Shepherd – but nothing remains of the buildings that housed them. The Albert Park Steam Laundry was founded by Harry Grey at a different site in 1889. The business moved to larger premises at 4–14 Mills Street in 1901 where it continued until the late 1980s. The business employed between 25 and 35 staff and catered mainly to the needs of hotels, steamers and ships.

By 1909 a dairy operated by Martin Dobeli was well-established at 10 Herbert Street and 24–26 Herbert Street (with brick and weatherboard stables behind at 5 Carter Street). The building at 24–26 Herbert Street consisted of a cold chamber, ammonia plant, gas engine, boiler and preliminary cooling troughs. In 1941 the business was sold to Morris Brothers Union Dairy Pty Ltd. In 1973, Morris Brothers sold the last of their horses from the Carter Street stable when trucks began servicing their round.

12 Hambleton Dairy: 24-26 Herbert Street

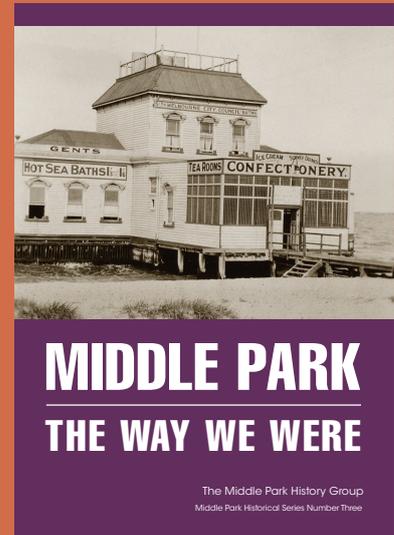
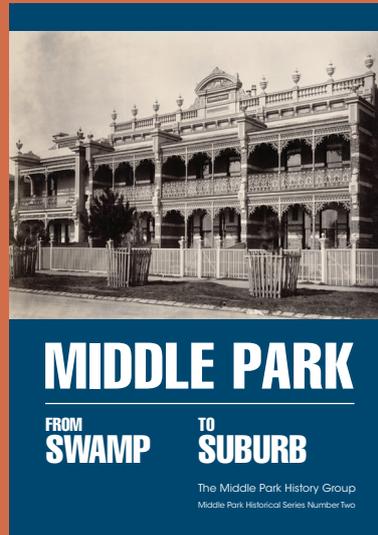
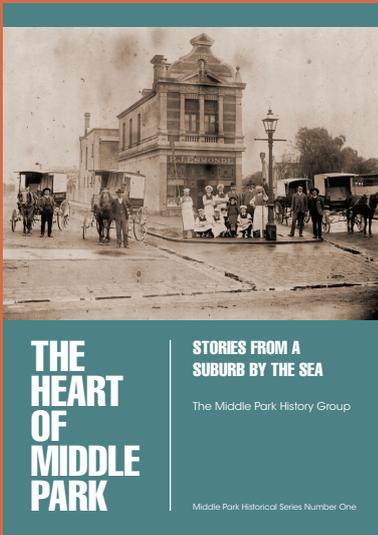


Publications such as this walking tour are produced by the Middle Park History Group, dedicated to helping residents and others appreciate the history of Middle Park.

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