



historical  
walking  
tours

CITY OF SYDNEY



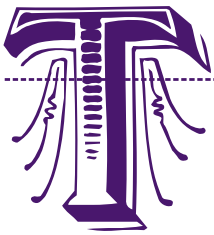
# SKIRTING SYDNEY PUTTING WOMEN'S HISTORY ON THE MAP

Historical Walking Tour



Miss Nellie Stewart as 'Sweet Nell' in 1909  
(Image: National Library of Australia,  
David Elliott theatrical postcard collection)

# SKIRTING SYDNEY

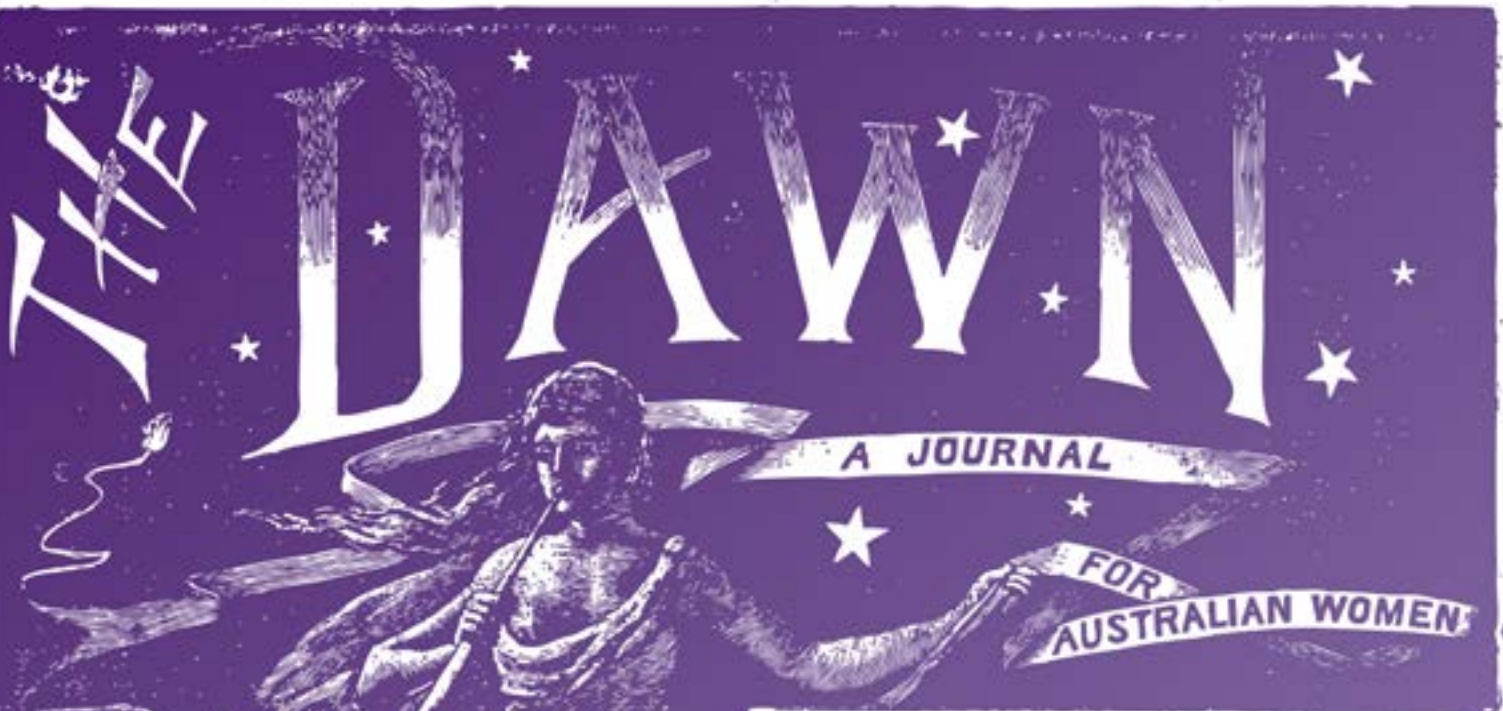


**he majestic Queen Victoria Building stands in the heart of the city as a monument to a much-loved and long-reigning Queen, although she never visited Sydney.**

But what of the other, less obvious, city spaces where Sydney women went about their daily lives?

This map pinpoints key sites where girls and women lived and worked, where they were educated and entertained, and where pioneering activist women held meetings, published journals and sometimes in the process expanded the

Detail from The Dawn – December 1889  
(Image: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)



*"A day, an hour of virtuous Liberty,  
Is worth a whole Eternity in bondage."*  
—ADDISON.

DECEMBER 1889.

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Putting  
women's  
history  
on the map

**Sydney's  
history  
is all around us.**

Our walking tours will lead you on  
a journey of discovery from early  
Aboriginal life through to contemporary  
Sydney.

*Clover Moore*

Clover Moore MP  
Lord Mayor of Sydney





**KEY LEGEND**

-  Train
-  Light Rail
-  Monorail

**Sites**  
 25 26 27  
 are not shown  
 on this map

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## 01 MARY REIBEY

THE ARGYLE STORES, 12–20 ARGYLE STREET, THE ROCKS

Mary Reibey (1777–1855) was a convict who became a highly successful businesswoman with interests in hotels, trading, shipping, farming and city buildings. She briefly owned the land around the Argyle Stores in 1828. Mary Reibey was a governor of the Free Grammar School and a founding member of the Bank of New South Wales, as well as active in church and charity work.



(Image: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

## 02 FORT STREET GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

NOW NATIONAL TRUST CENTRE, OBSERVATORY HILL

Established in 1849 by the new Board of National Education, the Boys' and the Girls' Schools stood on the site of the Old Military Hospital at Fort Phillip and were the first government high schools in Australia. The Girls' School remained at Observatory Hill until 1975. Many distinguished Sydney women were students of this school.



Cooking Class at work, 1910  
(Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

## 03 LOUISA LAWSON AND THE DAWN

OFFICES, 26 JAMISON STREET

Louisa Lawson edited the monthly newspaper, *The Dawn*, at 26 Jamison Street from 1888 to 1905. It was written, laid out and printed solely by women and advocated women's rights to vote and hold public office. In 1891, the NSW Women's Suffrage League printed its pamphlets at *The Dawn* offices free of charge. The NSW Woman's Suffrage Bill was passed in 1902 and Lawson was described in Parliament as "the Mother of Suffrage in New South Wales".



The Dawn December 1889  
(Image: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

## 04 FEMALE ORPHAN SCHOOL

SITE, CORNER OF GEORGE AND BRIDGE STREETS

The Female Orphan School was set up by Governor King in 1801 to house destitute young girls. It was officially opened on 17 August 1801, housing 31 girls between the ages of 7 and 14. By 1829 there were 152 inmates, including some Aboriginal girls.



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05

## FLORENCE TAYLOR, ARCHITECT

16-20 LOFTUS STREET

The Building Publishing Co, founded by Florence Taylor (1879–1969) and her husband George in 1907, operated out of 20 Loftus Street from 1924–1962. Florence edited a number of trade journals, providing contemporary comment on architecture, design and urban planning issues. She was a founding member of the Town Planning Association of NSW. Despite completing her articles, having a flourishing domestic architecture practice and obtaining glowing references, the NSW Institute of Architects knocked back her application for associate membership in 1907. It was not until 1920 that they finally invited Florence into their ranks.



Florence Taylor with her staff in front of the building at 20 Loftus Street in 1950 (Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

06

## WUGANMAGULYA (FARM COVE)

SHORELINE, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, FARM COVE

A ceremonial site before European arrival, modern-day Farm Cove was where Aboriginal women fished and swam. Colonial paintings show women in their canoes, with fires burning to cook their catch for their children, just offshore here. In the pathway along the shore, *Wuganmagulya*, an artwork by Aboriginal artist Brenda Croft, honours the original owners of this land.



(Image: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)

07

## FEMALE IMMIGRATION DEPOT

HYDE PARK BARRACKS, MACQUARIE STREET

Hyde Park Barracks, a former convict dormitory, was adapted in 1848 as Sydney's Female Immigration Depot, to protect and process women arriving in the colony under various government schemes. Up until 1886, thousands of impoverished working-class women were housed here, some with their children, before starting new lives in Australia. A contemporary monument in the compound wall commemorates the many Irish immigrants and "workhouse" girls who came to New South Wales fleeing the Irish Famine.



Cotton bonnets, mid-late 19th century (Photograph: Christopher Shain / Historic Houses Trust of NSW)

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## LUCY OSBURN, FOUNDER OF MODERN NURSING IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY HOSPITAL, MACQUARIE STREET

Sydney Hospital was the first in Australia to employ female nurses on the Nightingale model. Lucy Osburn, Lady Superintendent here from 1868 to 1884, laid the foundations of modern nursing in Australia. The Lucy Osburn-Nightingale Foundation Museum on level one commemorates her.



Sydney Hospital c1920  
(Photograph: City of Sydney Archives)

09

## MILLICENT PRESTON STANLEY, FIRST WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIAN

PARLIAMENT HOUSE, MACQUARIE STREET

The first woman elected to the NSW Parliament in 1925, Preston Stanley combined a lifelong interest in women's rights and political participation with conservative politics and a cutting turn of phrase. Called a battleaxe by a heckler at a political meeting, she retorted: "A battleaxe is a pretty useful weapon if it's kept sharp and bright." President of Sydney's Feminist Club from 1919–34 and again in the 1950s, she fought for better maternal health, government family payments and maternal custody rights.



(Photograph:  
NSW Parliamentary  
Archives)

10

## MAYBANKE ANDERSON AND THE WOMAN'S VOICE

OFFICES, 348–352 GEORGE STREET

Maybanke Anderson, founding member of the Womanhood Suffrage League of NSW, and campaigner for women's and children's rights, produced her journal, *The Woman's Voice* from offices in a previous building on this site. It is said that the strategy for including women in the federal constitution was devised here in about 1897.



Maybanke Wolstenholme  
(later Anderson) c1890  
(Photograph: Mitchell Library,  
State Library of NSW)

11

## JESSIE STREET, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

OFFICE, CHALLIS HOUSE, 4 MARTIN PLACE

Jessie Street was a pioneering feminist who helped found the United Associations of Women, and was an activist for women's and children's rights, full equality for Aboriginal people, equal pay, international peace and universal human rights. She co-chaired the first union equal pay committee with Lucy Woodcock, and represented Australia at the UN Conference in 1945. She had an office in this building from 1924. She is remembered with a statue in the Jessie Street Memorial Garden at Loftus Street, Circular Quay.



Jessie Street representing Australia at the United Nations  
(National Library of Australia, NLA MS 2683)

12

## QUONG TART'S TEA ROOMS

SITE, 137 KING STREET

The women-only upstairs room here was the site of the early meetings of the Womanhood Suffrage League of NSW, founded in 1891. A decade of organised activism followed, and NSW women got the vote in 1902. Chinese tea merchant Mei Quong Tart's tea-rooms here, and later in the Queen Victoria Building, were also used for meetings of other women's organisations, such as the Kindergarten Union. Maybanke Anderson was a founding member of the League and the Union.



(Photograph: Society of Australian Genealogists)

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## NELLIE STEWART, SINGER AND ACTOR

WALL TABLET, INSIDE ST JAMES CHURCH, KING STREET

Nellie Stewart (1858–1931) toured England, India and the USA, building a solo career in comic and grand opera. In May 1901, she sang at the concert celebrating the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament. In 1902, she first played Nell Gwynne in *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*, a production so successful that she became known as Sweet Nell. In 1910 she raised £3000 to buy radium for Sydney Hospital which named its Children's Ward after her. There is also a Nellie Stewart monument in the Botanic Gardens, erected in 1938 by the Nellie Stewart Old Drury Club.



Miss Nellie Stewart as 'Sweet Nell' in 1909 (Image: National Library of Australia, David Elliott theatrical postcard collection)

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## SYDNEY GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL SITE

NOW DAVID JONES, CORNER ELIZABETH AND MARKET STREETS

Sydney High School was established on this site in 1883. Boys were taught on the ground floor and girls on the first floor, with separate entrances. The first school in NSW to prepare girls for entrance to university, Sydney Girls' High remained on this site until 1921, when it moved to Moore Park. Many distinguished Sydney women are ex-students.



(Photograph: Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria)

15

## THE WOMEN'S CLUB

LEVEL 4, 179 ELIZABETH STREET

The Women's Club was founded in 1901 by Dr Mary Booth, an early doctor, as a place where women interested in public, professional, scientific and artistic work "might spend their leisure moments and associate together". The first committee also included Rose Scott, pioneer of women's suffrage in NSW. It had 807 members by 1929. Sydney University Women Graduates Association and the Professional Women Workers Association were also associated with the Club.



Dr Mary Booth  
(Photograph: National Library of Australia)

16

## YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

WENTWORTH AVENUE, NEAR OXFORD STREET

The Sydney branch of the YWCA dates from 1880, providing accommodation for female migrants from 1881, an employment agency in 1890, an early savings bank for women in 1904, and the first women's gymnasium in 1912. From its foundation, "The Y" has been in the forefront of advocacy and services for women in Sydney and throughout NSW.



YWCA women at the Lotus Judo Club  
(Photograph: National Archives of Australia)



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## 17 SYDNEY WOMEN'S LIBERATION HOUSE

25 ALBERTA STREET

This two-storey terrace house became Women's Liberation House after the move from 67 Glebe Point Road. It was the venue for meetings of many groups as well as the general meeting place for women's liberation. The Rape Crisis Centre's first telephone counseling service and Control, the birth control and abortion referral service were located here. The Mejjane, Scarlet Woman and Refractory Girl collectives met here as did Women in Education and Theory and Action groups. The Women's Liberation Library is in the Jessie Street National Women's Library collection.



*Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter, March 1976 (Jessie Street National Women's Library collection)*

## 18 AUSTRALIAN HALL

150-152 ELIZABETH STREET

Australian Hall, Elizabeth Street was the site of the Day of Mourning protest held on 26 January 1938. Women, Aboriginal and white, were active in the campaign for full citizens' rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



*Day of Mourning protest, 1938 (Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)*

## 19 WOMEN'S ELECTORAL LOBBY

66 ALBION STREET, SURRY HILLS

The Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) was established in Melbourne in 1972 by Beatrice Faust. At a meeting at the Sydney house of Julia Freebury, Caroline Graham, June Surtees and Wendy McCarthy agreed to convene a Sydney group. Forty women attended the first public meeting in Sydney on 17 June 1972. The founding members had been involved in childbirth education, women's health issues, abortion law reform and Women's Liberation. WEL continues to be an independent, feminist, non-profit lobby group working to protect the rights of all Australian women.



*WEL Badges (Private collection, Helen L'Orange and Jessie Street National Women's Library)*

## 20 CROWN STREET WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

CORNER ALBION AND CROWN STREETS, SURRY HILLS

This was designed as a 75-bed maternity hospital with visiting nurses who provided pre-natal and post-natal care in homes within a mile's radius. The foundation stone, laid by the Governor's wife, Lady Chelmsford on 24th August, 1912, can be found on the old building on Albion Street near the corner of Crown Street, now converted into apartments.



*Nurses with babies c1936 (Photograph: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW)*

## 21 SALVATION ARMY YOUNG WOMEN'S HOSTEL

348 ELIZABETH STREET, SURRY HILLS

The Salvation Army Young Women's Hostel for working girls was set up here in 1912 to provide budget accommodation for single women working in the city. In 1924, a new hostel for young women was opened at Moore Park but this building at 348 Elizabeth Street continued to be used as a shelter for destitute women. The building is now a residential rehabilitation service for women, still run by the Salvation Army.



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## CHINESE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

MEETING PLACE, CORNER PITT AND GOULBURN STREETS

The Chinese Women's Association was set up in 1954 by Phyllis Wang, wife of the Chinese Consul in Sydney. It met in the Chequers Restaurant at the corner of Pitt and Goulburn Streets, later the Mandarin Club. Phyllis was a moving spirit in the Chinese community. She organised community activities, among them fashion parades to raise money for Chinese and Australian charities.

23

## BERTHA MACNAMARA, "MOTHER OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT"

PLAQUE, INSIDE TRADES HALL FOYER, 4-10 GOULBURN STREET

From the 1890s to the 1920s, Bertha ran a radical bookshop and boarding house in Castlereagh Street. One of her daughters married poet Henry Lawson; another married Labor Premier, Jack Lang.

24

## JESSIE STREET NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBRARY

523-525 HARRIS STREET, ULTIMO

A specialist women's library was established in 1989, the centenary of Jessie Street's birth, and named in her honour. The Library is self-funded, supported by the City of Sydney, and staffed by volunteers. It has a large collection of feminist archives, books and posters.

25

## WOMEN'S COLLEGE, SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

CARILLON AVENUE, NEWTOWN

Women's College, Sydney University, was opened in 1892, 10 years after women were admitted to the university, and was the first university college for women in Australia. Louisa Macdonald was its first Principal. Many distinguished Sydney women have been residents.



(Photograph:  
Women's College Archives)

26

## BESSIE GUTHRIE, DESIGNER, PUBLISHER & ACTIVIST

97 DERWENT STREET, GLEBE

Bessie Guthrie's feminism spanned many decades. Her Viking Press published women's writing during World War II. When Women's Liberation arrived, Bessie was in her sixties. She welcomed it, announcing "I've been waiting for you women to get here all my life". An advocate for girls' rights in the child welfare and justice system from the 1950s, she led a successful campaign to improve conditions for girls in custody in 1973-74. Inspirational to, and inspired by, a younger generation of feminists, she died in Glebe in 1977.



Bessie Guthrie  
(Photograph: Toni Robertson  
/ Jessie Street National Women's Library Collection)

27

## COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION RESIDENTIAL CLUB

11 GREENKNOWE AVENUE, POTTS POINT

Founded in 1922, the CWA has provided women and children with facilities and services, and built a social and cultural organisation with branches throughout New South Wales, as well as advocating on behalf of women, especially rural women, of all backgrounds. The founding president, Grace Munro, believed that improved conditions for country women would come about only by their own efforts.

Discover more of historic Sydney with the other walking tour brochures in this series.

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More information can be found at the City's website:

[www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history)  
or call the City of Sydney on 9265 9333

We welcome your feedback:  
[history@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:history@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

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*This story is one of many layers*

[www.dictionaryofsydney.org](http://www.dictionaryofsydney.org)

Front Cover Image:

Miss Nellie Stewart as 'Sweet Nell' in 1909  
(Image: National Library of Australia,  
David Elliott theatrical postcard collection)



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After reading, pass it on to  
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useful or recycle it.



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[council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

Translating & Interpreting Service (TIS): **13 14 50**

**STOP!**

ON THE FOOTPATH

---

**LOOK!**

RIGHT, LEFT AND RIGHT AGAIN

---

**LISTEN!**

FOR ANY OTHER TRAFFIC  
INCLUDING PUSH BIKES

---

**THINK!**

IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO CROSS?

---

**CROSS!**

WITH CARE AND KEEP ON  
LOOKING FOR OTHER VEHICLES