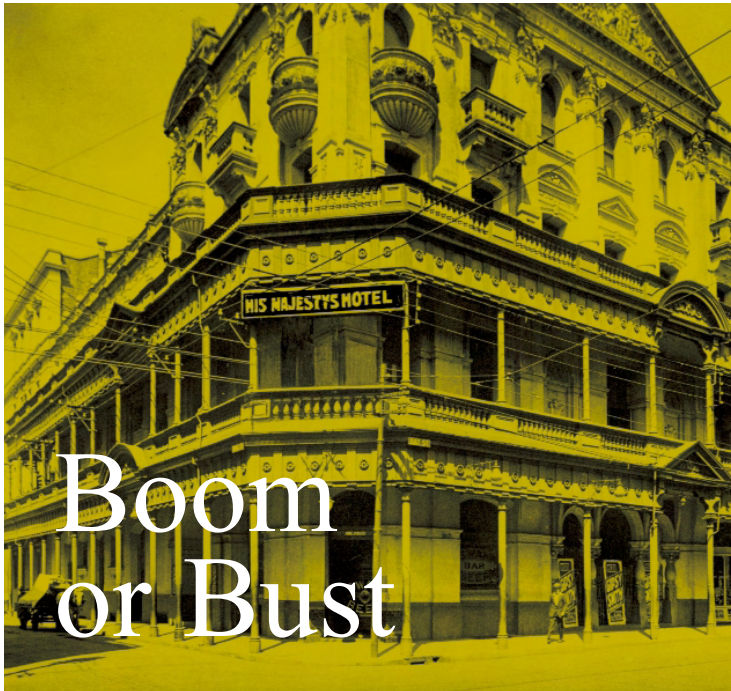


# Welcome to the Boom or Bust trail

This historical walk through Perth city will highlight the “boom” created by gold and the resultant surge of growth, wealth and prosperity in Western Australia. The city population swelled, buildings were erected and it seemed Perth would “bust” as this remote town turned into a buzzing cosmopolitan city.

## 1 Perth Town Hall Corner Hay and Barrack Streets

The Perth Town Hall was officially opened on July 1, 1870 and is the only town hall in Australia built by convicts. Major restoration works have revealed the original brickwork, undercroft and arches of the Victorian Free Gothic style building. The Perth Town Hall has served numerous roles over the years, including as a government meeting place, marketplace, camel stable and fire station. During the Goldrush years, the city's fire fighting equipment, including a 12-man carriage, was stored in the undercroft. However the firefighters were located some distance away in what is now known as Barrack Square and the horses were tethered to taxis. In the event of a fire, the Town Hall bell rang out and the burly firefighters would dash up the street, while the taxi drivers harnessed their horses to the fire carriage.



# Boom or Bust

Gold! It is 1892 and the world's most precious commodity has just been discovered 550kms east of Perth, Western Australia.



This self-guided trail will take up to two hours. You can join in or depart from the trail anywhere along the way.

The trail intercepts with the city's free CAT bus service accessing the foreshore, East Perth, Northbridge and West Perth (excluding public holidays).

### Other City Walking Trails:

- Icons of Influence
- Convicts and Colonials
- The Secret of Point Zero children's trail
- Art City
- City Parks & Gardens

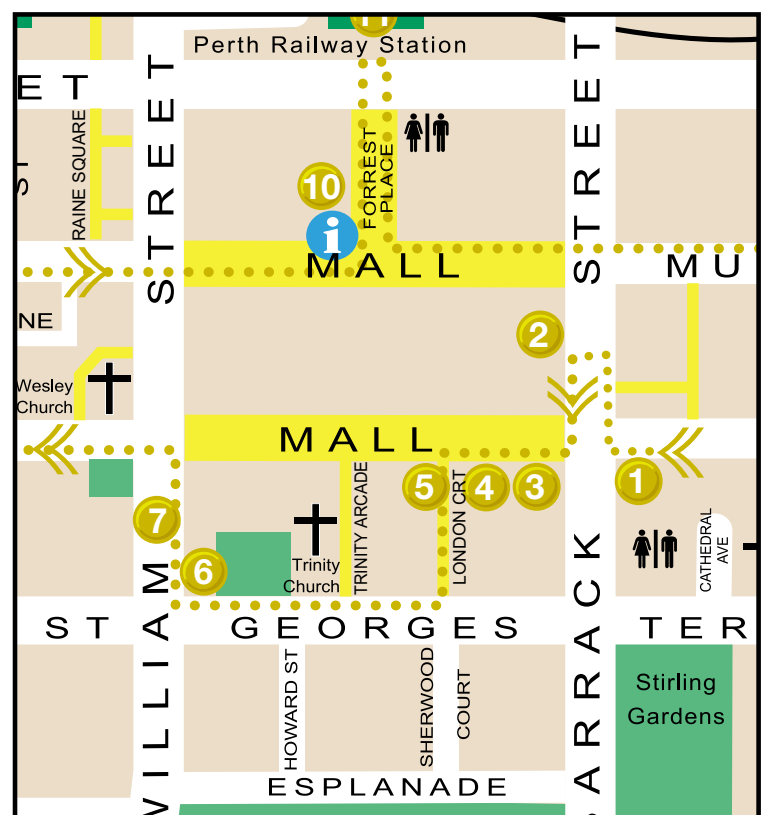
i-City Information and Police Kiosk  
Murray Street Mall near Forrest Place, Perth 6000

City of Perth  
Council House, 27 St Georges Terrace  
Perth WA 6000

Trail prepared by the City of Perth with the kind assistance of The Perth Mint, His Majesty's Theatre, the Chung Wah Association and the Fire & Emergency Services Authority.

This information is available in alternative formats.

[www.perth.wa.gov.au](http://www.perth.wa.gov.au)



Such an arrangement impacted on the effectiveness of the service! Guided tours of the Perth Town Hall are conducted by the i-City Volunteer Hosts. Telephone 9461 3444 for information.

*Walk 25 metres north up Barrack Street to view the Tea Rooms, best seen from the opposite side of the road.*

### 2 Tea Rooms 91 Barrack Street

Still recognisable in Barrack Street is the classically inspired pink façade of the Albany Bell Tea Rooms (c. 1896). Australian born Albany Bell seized the opportunity of the rapidly expanding population to build his small confectionery business into a large factory, eventually running 11 tea rooms in Perth. The growth in popularity of tea rooms demonstrates the extra spending money that was available in the newly wealthy society. Albany Bell introduced the delights of the American-style soda fountain and the ice-cream "sundae", which he had learnt about in a trip to New York.

*Albany Bell provided some sweet conditions for employees in his confectionery factory in Maylands. He established the factory riverside to provide pleasant surroundings for his workers, provided two weeks annual leave on full pay before awards required and paid the rail fares and the cost of a two week annual stay at a seaside resort for his Kalgoorlie-based workers. His face is immortalised in the frescos of these tea rooms.*

*Return to the intersection of Barrack Street and the Hay Street Mall.*

### 3 McNess Royal Arcade

*Corner Barrack & Hay Streets*

Along Barrack Street many buildings retain their goldrush character. McNess Royal Arcade (1897) is a great demonstration of the wealth that poured into Perth from the goldfields. Designed by American architect William Wolf, it was described as an extravagant building with a generously designed interior and exterior. The owner of the building, Charles McNess, was a scrap metal trader and ironmonger who made his fortune during the gold boom by purchasing property, eventually expanding into mortgage broking.

*McNess was a sober and retiring man who distributed much of his fortune to charitable institutions and didn't spend a lot on himself. When he was eventually knighted his appearance in London excited comment, as with snowy hair and moustache "he looked like a down-and-out swaggie".*

*Proceed ten metres west along the Hay Street Mall to the building to the left of London Court.*

### 4 The Metropole Hotel & Theatre Royal

*Hay Street Mall*

Built in 1897, the Theatre Royal was the first purpose built theatre in Western Australia. The locals

considered the theatre exceptional for its time, with its "red plush and glitz, and a roof that could slide open on hot nights". The notoriously thrifty Thomas Molloy built the theatre next to his Metropole Hotel and went on to create the landmark His Majesty's Theatre less than a decade later. Molloy, the son of a Pensioner Guard, started his working life as the manager of Cooperative Stores in Perth, then became a baker in Goderich Street. He progressed to become a prominent member of the community, serving terms as a town councillor, Mayor, and as a member of the Legislative Council. However, many believed that his greatest achievement was the introduction of barmaids to Perth!

*Molloy was determined to be knighted, although he was not to achieve this dream officially. Instead he simply began calling himself Sir Thomas and insisted all who did business with him did likewise. He took this dream into immortality when, scandalously, he buried his wife under a headstone reading "Lady Mary Molloy".*

### 5 London Court off Hay Street Mall

Next to the Theatre Royal, this mock Elizabethan reproduction of an old London street was built in the 1930s as a gift to Perth from the charismatic and debonair millionaire, Claude de Bernales. This arcade demonstrates the early Perth residents' attachment to England and features ornate mechanical clocks depicting two jousting knights at the Hay Street entrance and St George slaying the dragon at the St Georges Terrace end.

De Bernales made his fortune buying and selling mining equipment in the Goldfields, although his business practices came into question when the machines gained a reputation for poor quality. His acceptance of mine leases in payment for machines



also angered the miners. Despite this, he always focused on making a good first impression with the miners, changing into a full business suit, carried in a suitcase on his bicycle, before cycling into each miner's camp.

*Walk through London Court and proceed west along St Georges Terrace to the corner of William Street.*

### 6 **Palace Hotel** Corner St Georges Terrace and William Street

By the mid-1890s, there were so many gold seekers looking for a place to stay that hotels could not be built quickly enough to accommodate everyone. The Palace Hotel was built in 1885 by John De Baun, who was determined to build one of Australia's most noteworthy hotels. No expense was spared in the construction of the Palace, which upon opening was considered one of the most beautiful and elegant hotels in the country. Part of the original building is preserved with the current BankWest site.

*Henry Lawson, a famous Australian writer, and his wife Bertha honeymooned in Perth in 1896. After walking around Perth knocking on the doors of hotels and guesthouses, the already celebrated author discovered no beds were available due to the accommodation shortage. Foot weary and desperate, the honeymooners camped for a night or two by the railway line, under the cover of the Barrack Street Bridge.*

Turn right from St Georges Terrace into William Street.

### 7 **William Street**

First known as King William Street after King William IV, the uncle of Queen Victoria, this street served as a major thoroughfare for the camel trains that supplied the Goldfields. The camel trains, harnessed with between 20 and 100 beasts, were unable to reverse and had to carefully manoeuvre to change direction. Look down William Street and imagine a 100-strong camel train loaded with supplies performing a U-turn to return to the Goldfields. The necessity of this procedure had a direct influence on the width of the street. The same wide streets are found at the end of the supply route in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.

*William Street was also known for activity other than the camel variety. Parents only let their children walk down the eastern side of the street due to the houses of ill-repute and gambling dens that were situated on the western side.*

Proceed north up William Street and turn left into Hay Street. Walk a block west to cross King Street.

### 8 **His Majesty's Theatre** Corner Hay and King Streets

His Majesty's Theatre was opened on Christmas Eve 1904 with a large celebration attended by all of Perth's notable people. The theatre's design reflects the class structure that was starting to emerge in the city, partly due to the new wealth created in the gold boom. The balcony was created for the upper echelons of society, and "the gods" for the working class. The poorer folk entered the theatre from a side entrance on King Street to ensure that the classes need not mix. His Majesty's Theatre is the only Edwardian theatre operating in Australia. The Museum of Performing Arts in the



theatre basement tells the story of the many famous people who have performed there and is open weekdays 10am to 4pm.

*During the ceremonial opening of His Majesty's Theatre in 1904, the key stuck in the lock of the ornate black gates at the front of the theatre. To its builder Thomas Molloy's dismay, the gates had to be broken open with a pickaxe. In 1981, before the reopening of the theatre after an extensive restoration, an employee was sent to unlock the gates. Again the key stuck and the gates had to be broken open with a hammer!*

Walk up King Street to the Murray Street intersection.

### 9 **King Street and Murray Street**

Also named for King William IV, King Street is one of the best preserved goldrush-period streetscapes in Perth. First a residential street with working class cottages surrounded by coal yards, blacksmiths and laundries, the wealth brought by gold turned it into a bustling area for small business. Milliners, shoemakers, dentists and chemists had shops here and the proximity of the railway made it a choice site for warehouses and wholesalers supplying the goldfields. The City Hotel, designed by William Wolf, was built on the corner of King and Murray Streets in 1898 and still operates today as Belgian Beer Café.

*The area around King and Murray Streets was famous as a location for Chinese businesses. The Chinese were prevented by Government legislation from mining for gold and consequently they became merchants, market gardeners and servants. The illegal gaming houses of Murray and King Streets were very popular social venues for the Chinese, providing a meeting opportunity for many men who had to leave their families in China because of the restrictive immigration policy.*

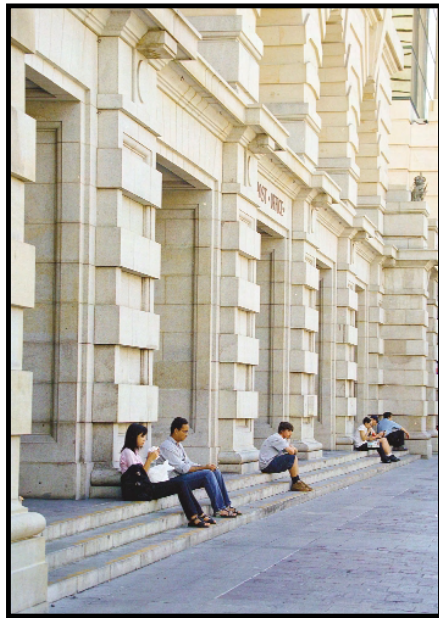
*The police once raided the gambling house located at 375 Murray Street, arresting 24 Chinese gamblers with a grand total bank of £1, which was duly confiscated.*

Walk back along Murray Street through the Murray Street Mall into Forrest Place.

**10 General Post Office Forrest Place**

Forrest Place is named after Lord John Forrest, who was pivotal in the development of the gold industry in Western Australia. As State Premier during the goldrush period, he instigated the development of the water pipeline from Perth to Kalgoorlie, the railway and the Perth Mint. Forrest Place is Perth's major civic space and the site for free public events and rallies.

The General Post Office, built between 1914 and 1923, is one of few large buildings in Australia constructed in the imposing Beaux Arts style and was the tallest building in Perth at the time of its construction. The General Post Office was where the



more isolated prospectors sent their gold by post to be forwarded to the Perth Mint. The Mint would refine the gold, then send payment to the Post Office for the prospectors to collect.

*Cross to the Perth Central Railway Station at the traffic lights at the northern end of Forrest Place.*



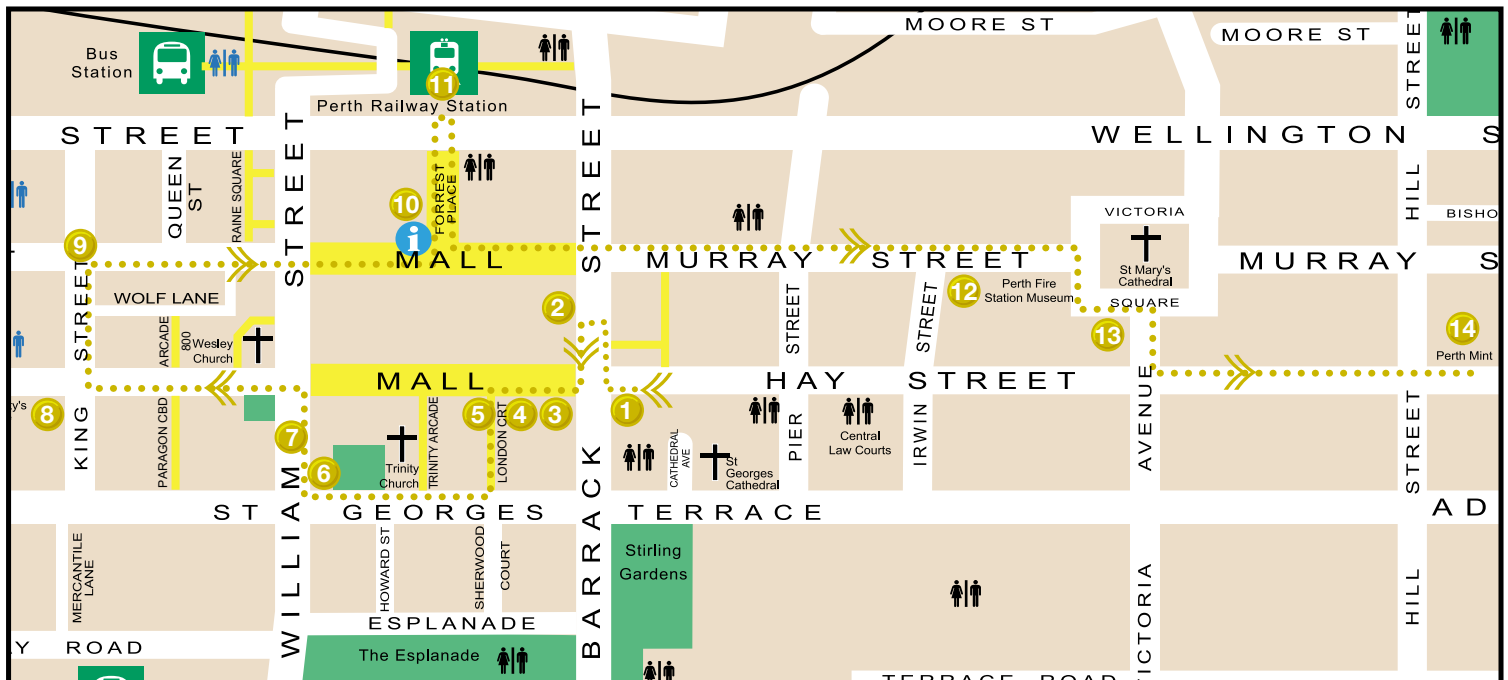
oldest operational central train stations in Australia. The original station was built in 1881, but the railway network grew rapidly. The station building and platform facilities quickly proved inadequate and were replaced by a larger building in 1894. Additional wings to the east and west completed in 1897 doubled the size of the station and created the building that exists today.

*To avoid hijacking of gold, shipments were transported in unmarked carriages with two security guards locked inside with food and beer. It was not unheard of for a gold shipment to go missing when it arrived at the station, as railway authorities would move the unmarked, unclaimed carriage to the side of the tracks. Within a few hours, the Perth Mint staff would be frantically searching for the missing gold and the unmarked carriage would be discovered, often containing as well as its valuable cargo, two slightly inebriated security guards!*

*Cross back to Forrest Place and walk through to the Murray Street Mall. Turn left to follow Murray Street east to Irwin Street.*

**11 Perth Central Railway Station Wellington Street**

The Perth Central Railway Station, opened in 1894, is a vital location in the story of gold in Western Australia. The station was the unloading point for much of the gold transported from the Goldfields and is one of the



## 12 Fire Station Number One & Museum Corner Murray and Irwin Streets

At its time of construction in 1901, this fire station was state-of-the-art and was the first purpose built fire station in Australia, replacing the Perth Town Hall in this duty. By this time the fire department was more financially sound and could afford to purchase its own horses, which were kept in unlocked stables and were trained to respond to the sound of the alarm bell. On the sound of the fire alarm the horses would trot into place under the fire equipment harness, where the firefighters would harness them up and be under way within 18 seconds. This was a vast improvement on previous procedures at the Perth Town Hall. The Fire and Emergency Services Authority operates a museum at Fire Station Number One, open from 10am to 4pm daily. Telephone 9323 9460.



Walk east along Murray Street to the location of the Royal Perth Hospital.

## 13 Original Royal Perth Hospital and Museum 24 Murray Street

Perth's water supply could not adequately support the rapidly growing population during the gold boom years. The resulting diseases, including dysentery, diphtheria and typhoid, put an incredible strain on the Royal Perth Hospital, built on this site in 1855. The State's first case of german measles failed to be contained within the hospital and spread to the community, causing great illness and death, particularly among Aboriginal people and children. The Royal Perth Hospital Museum is open Thursdays 9am to 2pm or by appointment. Telephone 9224 2244.

*One of the worst public health issues in the settlement was alcoholism, which can be partly attributed to the difficulties of life at the time. In the early days of the city it is reported that there was a licensed house for every 75 people, and labourers were supplied with nearly 12 gallons of spirits per annum. Even hospital workers were affected, with many complaints made about the alcohol and morphine addictions of the nursing and assisting staff. One can imagine why they chose a form of escape, with operations conducted in open wards in full view and the cries of the mentally ill patients constantly drifting up from the basement where they were housed.*

Walk south around Victoria Square and down Victoria Avenue to Hay Street. Turn onto Hay Street and walk one block east to the Perth Mint.

## 14 The Perth Mint Corner Hay and Hill Streets

This was the final destination for the raw product from the Goldfields. The Perth Mint formed the prospectors' finds into coins to be used as currency in the burgeoning economy.

The Perth Mint was one of three branches of the British Royal Mint in Australia. It was constructed in 1899 to process the huge amounts of gold that were coming from the Goldfields and was seen as a symbol of Perth's status in the British Empire. By the time of the Perth Mint's construction, income from gold was responsible for nearly 90 per cent of the colony's wealth. The Mint operated under British control until 1970, when ownership was transferred to the Western Australian Government. Today the Perth Mint is renowned as Australia's specialist precious metals mint and a major tourist attraction, open to the public daily. It is one of the oldest mints in the world still operating from its original location. Telephone 9421 7402.

*Although the Perth Mint never fell prey to a large robbery throughout the gold boom years, small thefts occurred. One of the supervisors, Mr William Dark, forced workers to stay back late on a number of occasions searching for missing gold which he accused them of stealing. The gold was never found and it was later discovered that Mr Dark himself was the culprit, slipping the gold into his pocket!*

**The goldrush was responsible for making Perth into the city of regional and international importance it is today by**

**stimulating its first major stage of development. The population of the city quadrupled in size, important buildings were constructed and the people could see a golden future for this distant outpost.**

**The mineral riches of the land form the basis for Western Australia's growth and prosperity to this day, duly reflected in its capital city of Perth.**



**Extract from "The Roaring Days", by Henry Lawson**  
**The night too quickly passes**  
**And we are growing old,**  
**So let us fill our glasses**  
**And toast the Days of Gold;**  
**When finds of wondrous treasure**  
**Set all the South ablaze,**  
**And you and I were faithful mates**  
**All through the roaring days.**