

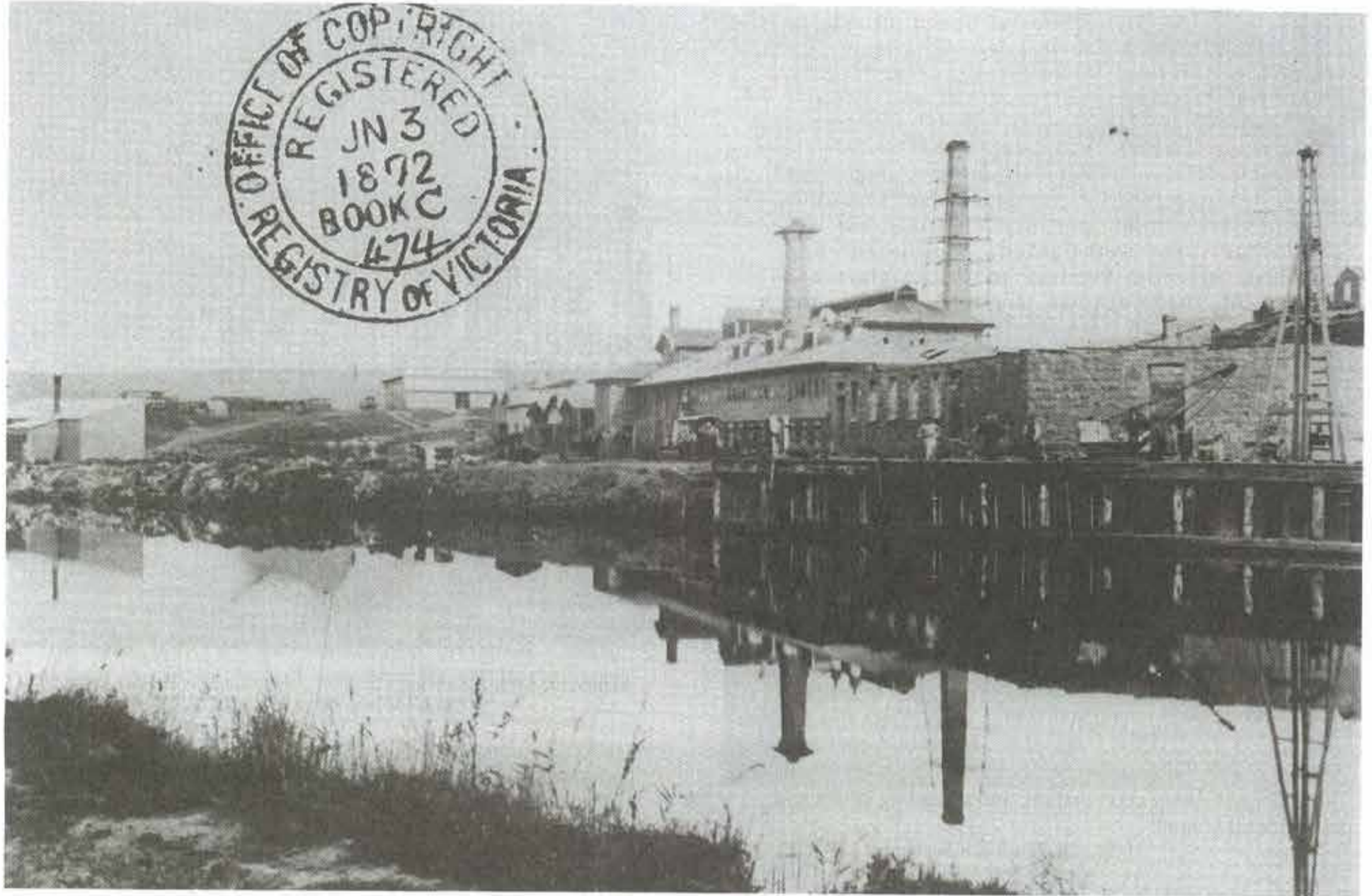
ECOMUSEUM BROADSHEETS



1 FACTORY ON THE RIVER

A series of information sheets on the history and environment of Melbourne's West

INNOVATIONS IN INDUSTRY



Melbourne Meat Preserving Co. 1872 with new machine and tinsmith's shop under construction, (State Library of Victoria)

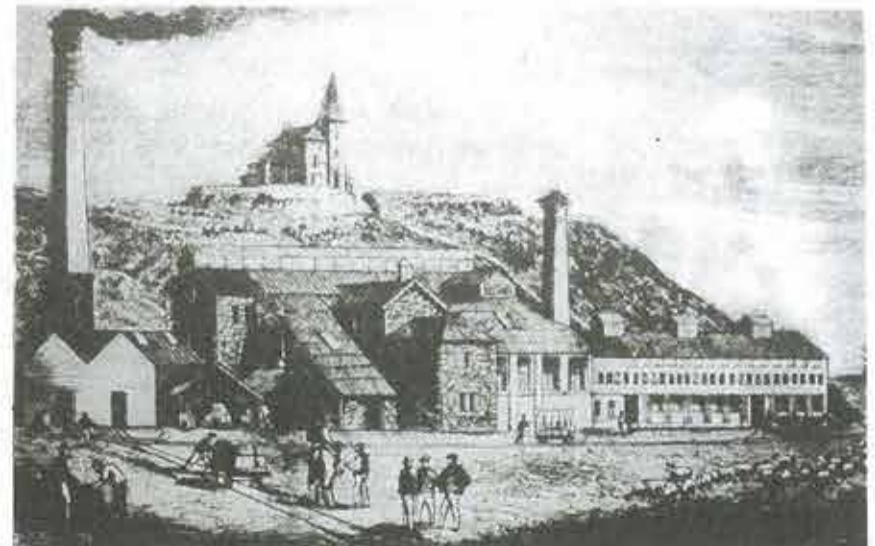
One of Melbourne's earliest industrial complexes still stands on the banks of the Maribyrnong River after nearly 150 years of innovation and adaptation in several fields of manufacture. Now set in a peaceful park the old buildings are being conserved and new uses found for them. The Living Museum of the West has its offices and visitor centre here.

First Industries

Pastoral activity dominated the Western Plains from the 1830s to the 1860s although bluestone quarrying took place on a small scale west of the Maribyrnong River. The only other industrial activities were located along the river itself and were linked directly to nearby grazing and dairying.

These industries were slaughterhouses, boiling-down works and meat works where sheep and cattle were killed for processing meat, tallow and hides for markets in Melbourne and overseas. Tallow, extracted from animal fat, was used to product candles and soap. The demand for such goods and the ready supply of livestock enabled more than twenty slaughterhouses, boiling-down works, glue-works, tanneries and other related industries to operate along the river which they used as a drain for disposing of wastes.

Joseph Raleigh's Boiling Down Establishment was one of the first and largest of the noxious trades located in and around Melbourne during the nineteenth century. Raleigh also opened nearby bluestone quarries, (now the excavation where Highpoint City stands), constructed 'Raleigh's Castle' (to house his workers) overlooking the works and operated a punt across the river. Today there is no obvious evidence of the earliest buildings which were destroyed in a fire in 1873. Later buildings may have incorporated some of the original stonework and foundations.



Melbourne Meat Preserving Co. 1868, (*Illustrated Australian News*, 5/10/1868)

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Funded by the Ministry for Conservation Forests and Lands

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Van Ness Avenue
Maribymong

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By the 1860s Joseph Raleigh had died and the factory closed down. But in 1868 the Melbourne Meat Preserving Company began a vital and burgeoning industry in the vacant buildings. *The Argus* newspaper praised the factory, its role in the Australian economy, the quality of its product and its amenities for workers:-

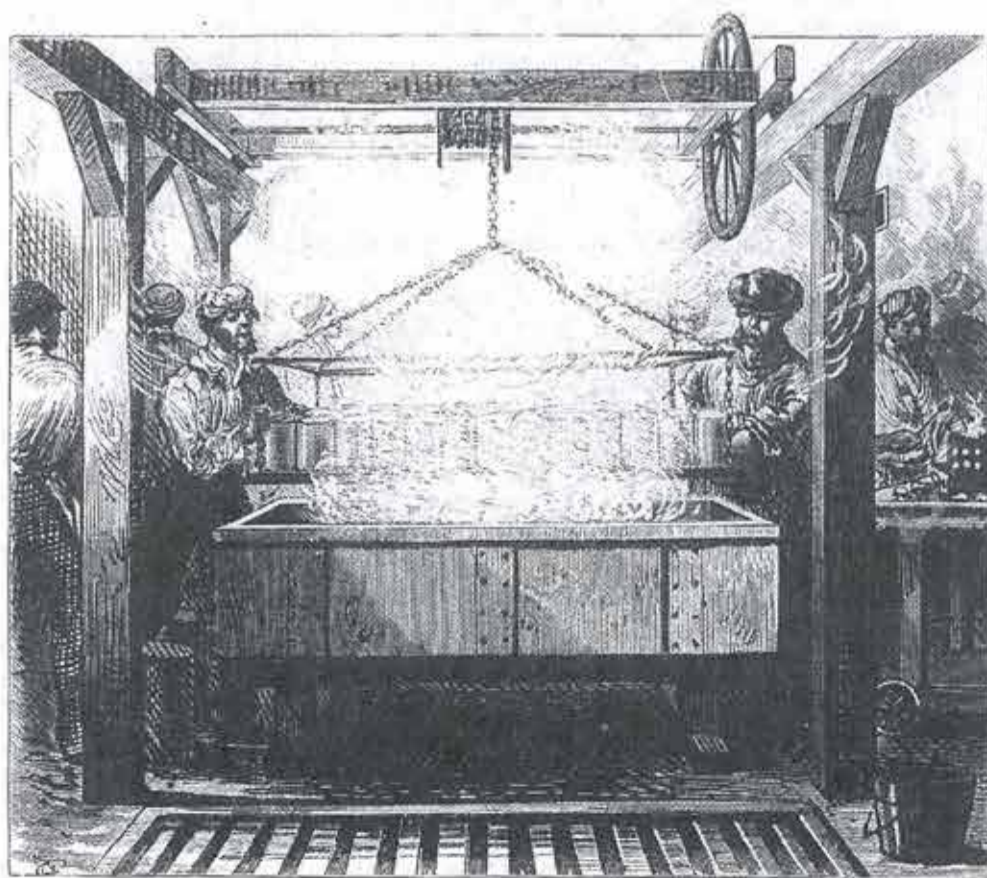
...Some improvements have been introduced in the process of manufacture [of tinned meats] and the company's establishment is now probably the largest of the kind in the world, as well as the most complete in its arrangements and effective in its working ... Railroads extend all through the premises for the more convenient transfer of materials from one place to another, and there are all kinds of lifts, elevators and travelling cranes for similar purposes. Throughout the buildings are well-lighted, ventilated and drained, so as to conduce to the comfort and health of the workmen engaged and to the wholesomeness of the meats manufactured ... Beautifully situated in a picturesque bend of the Saltwater River, among gently sloping hills that are now beautifully green, and surrounded by orchards in the full glory of efflorescence ... handsome managers' and foreman's residences, long rows of worker's cottages ... a garden of some four acres ... on a well-sheltered alluvial flat, and here all kinds of vegetables and pot-herbs are raised for use in the factory.

Argus 6th October, 1874, p.6

This picture contrasts strikingly with the findings of the Royal Commission into the Noxious Trades in 1870 who examined several sites along the river. The frock-coated and top-hatted gentlemen found nauseating smells from open-air piles of bones and boiling vats of fat, heaps of entrails and offal in "hideous bluestone structures, reeking with blood, filth, offal and every abomination, and spreading stinks and pestilence all around".

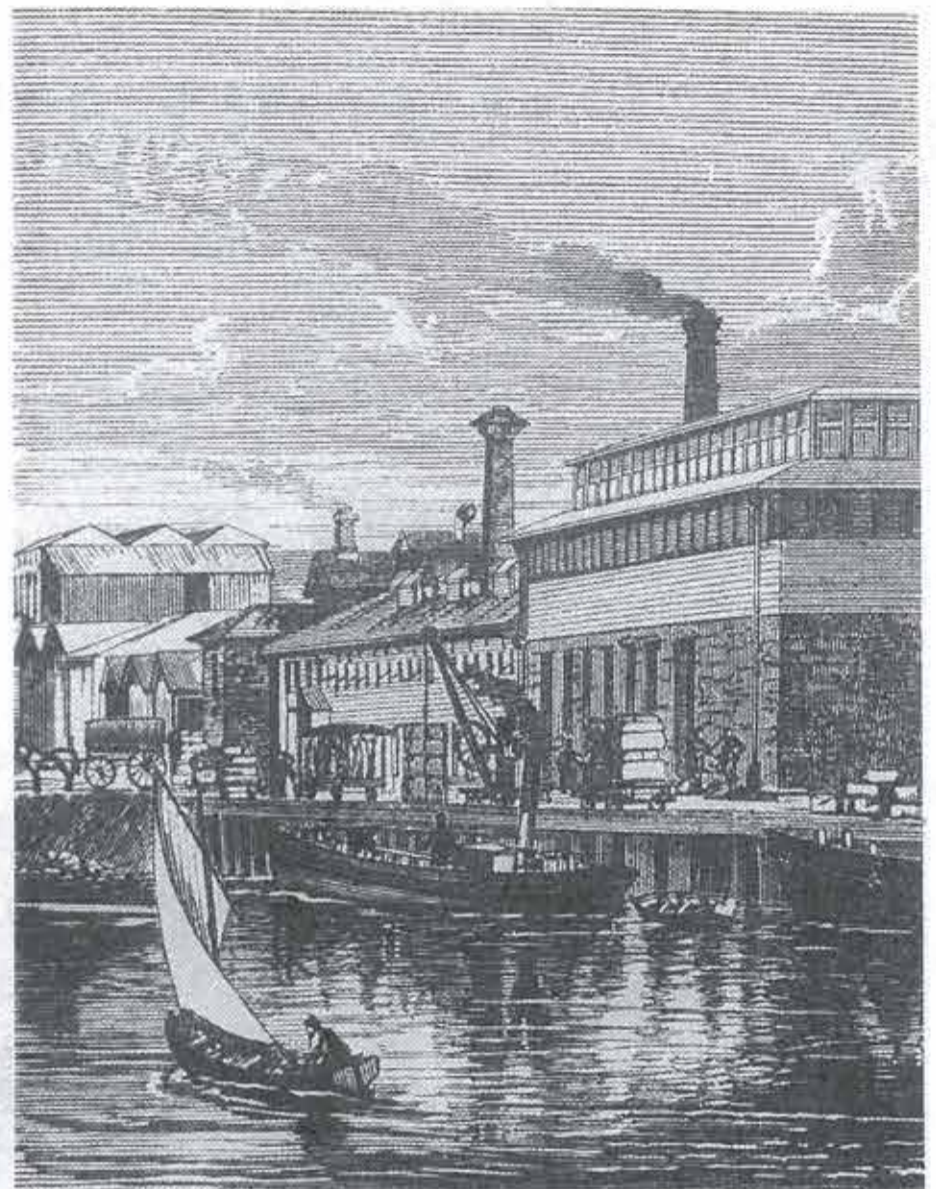
Melbourne Punch 8th September 1870 p.73

Two other industries on the site were Robertson, Martin and Smith's ironworks of the 1850s which was connected with the manufacture of Australia's first steam locomotive and in 1880 the Australian Frozen Meat Export Company which pioneered the shipment of frozen meat to England.



THE PRESERVING ROOM.

The Preserving Room of the MMPC showing tins being placed into steaming pans, (*Australasian Sketcher*, 19/4/1873)



Melbourne Meat Preserving Co. 1873, (*Australasian Sketcher* 19/4/1873)

Chronology of Occupation

Pre-1835 Land on the Sunshine side of the Maribyrnong River occupied by two Aboriginal tribes: the Bunurong and the Woiworung (sometimes referred to as Wurundjeri).

1835-c.1847 Land around the Maribyrnong River occupied by European settlers: graziers, quarrymen and others in small-scale, associated industries.

c.1847-1852 *Raleigh's Boiling Down Establishment*: one of the earliest industries in the Port Phillip District and the beginnings of noxious trades on the river.

1854-1855 Possibly the *Victoria Works of Robertson, Martin and Smith* who built the first steam locomotive in Australia.

1868-1888 *Melbourne Meat Preserving Company* used a new vacuum process to can meat for export. This factory pioneered such work on a large scale and its exports to Europe were important to the Australian economy during the 1870s. The site's bluestone buildings date from this era.

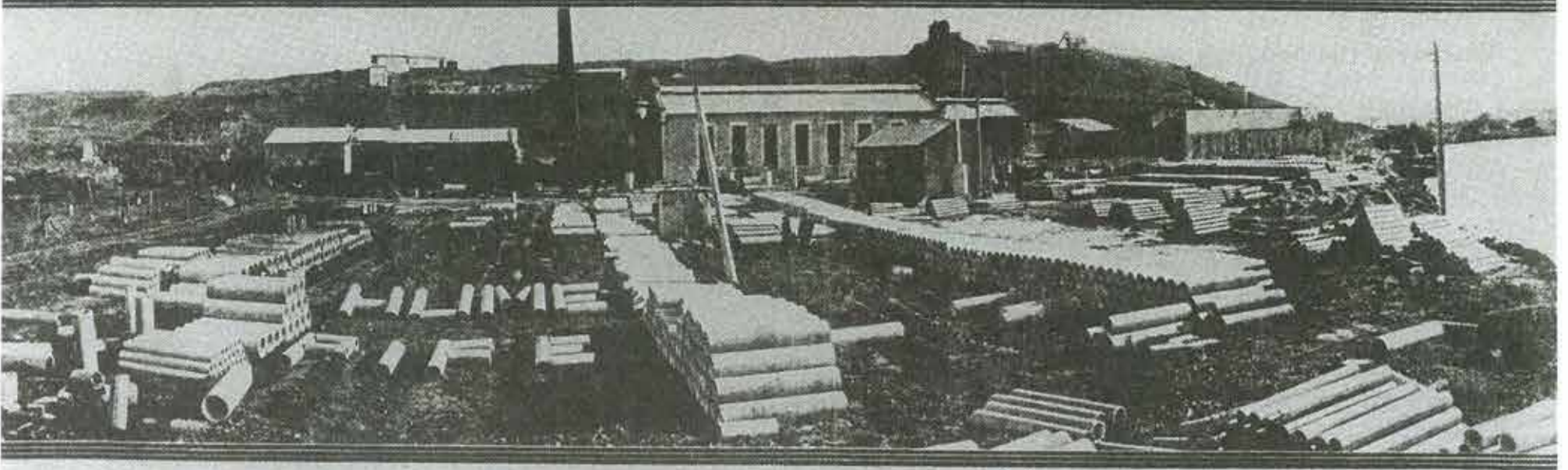
1880-1882 *Australian Frozen Meat Export Company* (first of its kind in Australia) used the facilities here for experimental shipments to the U.K.

1889-1910 *Maribyrnong Quarrying Company* operated the old bluestone quarry above the site.

1911-1978 *Hume Pipe Company works* producing reinforced concrete pipes by the application of centrifugal force. Invented in Adelaide in 1910, this was an innovative new process of international significance.

1980- *Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works* developing the site as an historic parkland which will reflect the significance of the site's industrial past. Restoration of bluestone buildings for public access and use by Melbourne's Living Museum of the West.

THE HUME PIPE COMPANY LIMITED



Works Headquarters - Maribyrnong, Victoria. Extensive Area of Storage
Manufacturing all grades and sizes of Hume Pipes

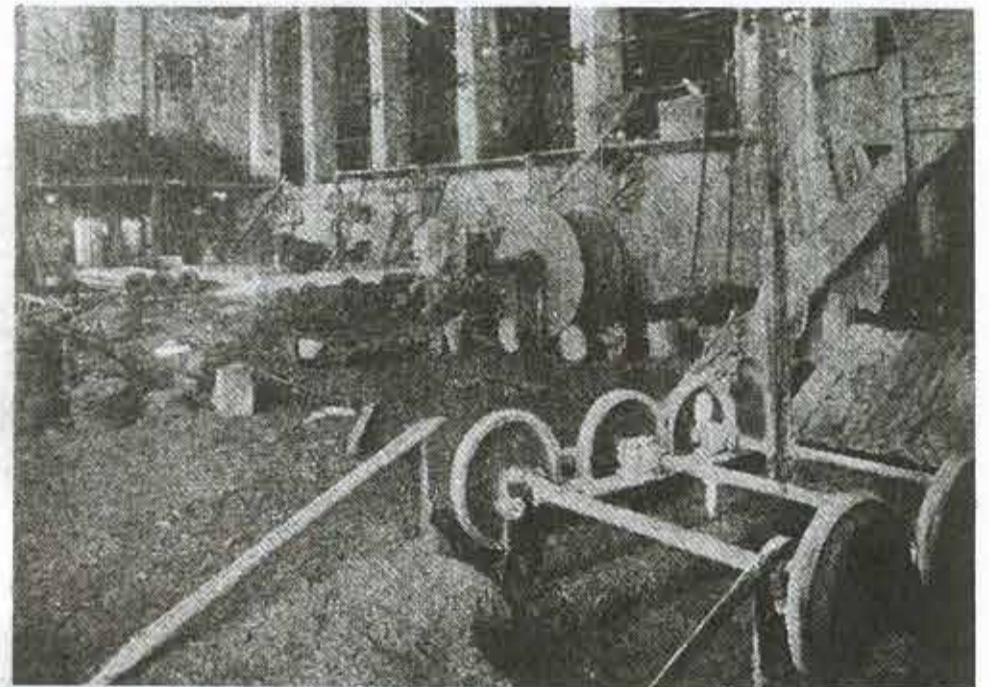
The Twentieth Century

Hume Brothers Cement Iron Company Limited, from Adelaide, occupied the site longer than any other industry. In 1910, Walter Hume had invented a process by which steel fencing could be painted using centrifugal force. When applied to the making of concrete pipes, the process had enormous popularity, becoming world famous. It is still the basis of production for concrete pipes today.

The force of a swiftly-rotating cylindrical mould containing a wire reinforcement and into which wet concrete is shovelled, forces the concrete into the shape of the mould. Once set and removed from the mould, a strong length of pipe is formed - suitable for use in drainage, sewerage and hydraulic (water supply) work.

This was a modern revolution in the production of piping and by 1912, large-scale production had begun on the Maribyrnong site, a world first. Expansion of Melbourne's sewerage and drainage systems in the early 20th century depended heavily on these new cheap pipes.

Local bluestone was used and a stone crusher was installed. The making of reinforcements and the actual moulding process was originally located inside the main bluestone buildings. Early on, metal reinforcement was made by unravelling and treating old cable used to pull cable trams. Many innovations and improvements were introduced to keep Hume's concrete pipes competitive against similar products which began to appear in the 1920s. Although the factory remained slow to mechanize, new buildings were erected in the 1930s to assist the Company's expansion. However, the site continued to be a harsh and primitive work environment:-



Machinery inside old MMPC buildings for concrete mixing and pipe moulding.

We had to make everything spin out as far as possible in the factory, and if anything had to be renewed or replaced it was imperative that a very good and sound reason be given, in fact even then it was not always forthcoming! Maribyrnong in 1930 was a very inaccessible spot, and during the rainy spells we could easily have utilized a barge to get through the floods. There was no convenient transport to Maribyrnong, the tram stopped about one mile away at the terminus [at the] old Angler's Hotel. Men would report to work, but if it had been raining, were told they could not start, and had no alternative but to go home again ... Unfortunately the Maribyrnong factory, adjoining the River, was often flooded, or under water in parts, that it was not possible for the men to work. Further, the buildings or shelter were of the primitive type, and afforded no relief from the weather.

Mr. Gerald Kelly, Archives of Business and Labour, ANU.

The factory continued to expand sporadically from the 1940s through to the 1970s. Although other factories were established around Victoria, Australia and overseas, the Maribyrnong site was the largest concrete pipe maker in the southern hemisphere in 1951 and produced machines, spare parts and moulds for Humes factories around Australia.

In 1979, Hume Pipes left the site for more modern premises in Laverton.



The Humes factory in the 1920s with trucks loaded with pipes and slabs. (Living Museum of the West)

What were the buildings used for?

1, Chimney c.1868,

The tall chimney was the outlet for boiler fires and was demolished in the 1920s. The base was excavated by the Board of Works in 1987

2, Tallow Store c.1872,

Originally with a timber second storey. Tinsmith's shop on top floor, tallow store and machinery room below. Converted to tool and oil store by Humes

3, Main Meat Preserving Building

Preserving Department and Kitchen with adjoining cooling room.

Became the main part of the pipe factory in early years of Hume Pipes with wire drawing and moulding. The welding and carpentry shops, fitters' shop and stable were attached. (Between 2 and 3 was an earlier tinsmiths shop)

4, Fitters shop c.1870s,

Possibly the Testing Room (to test tins under high temperature) when a meatworks and extension to Boiling Down Department (converting fat to tallow)

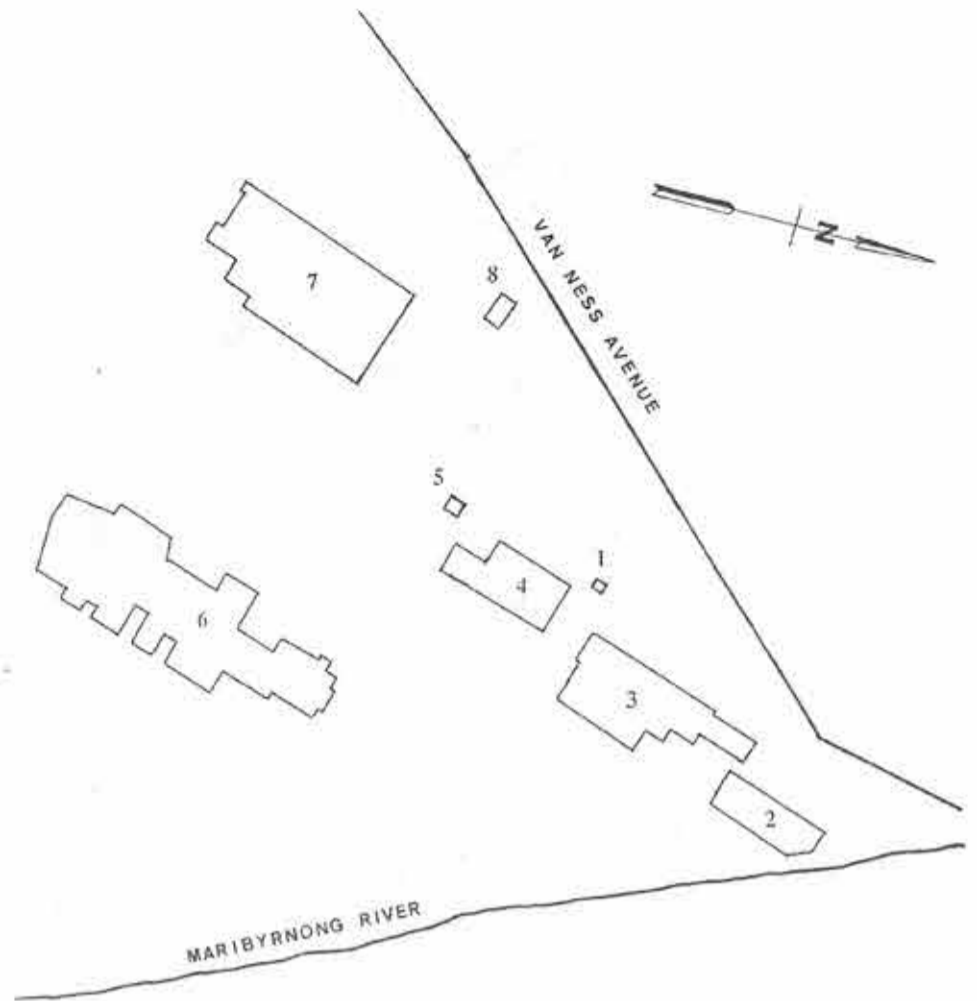
From the 1920s it became the Fitter and Turners' Workshop (producing parts for machines used in pipe manufacturing, for distribution to other Humes factories around Australia)

5, Substation c.1920s

Electricity sub-station to power machinery, including overhead cranes, concrete mixers, moulding machines, etc.

6, 'Bottom Factory' c.1920s,

For eight foot pipe and reinforcement manufacture

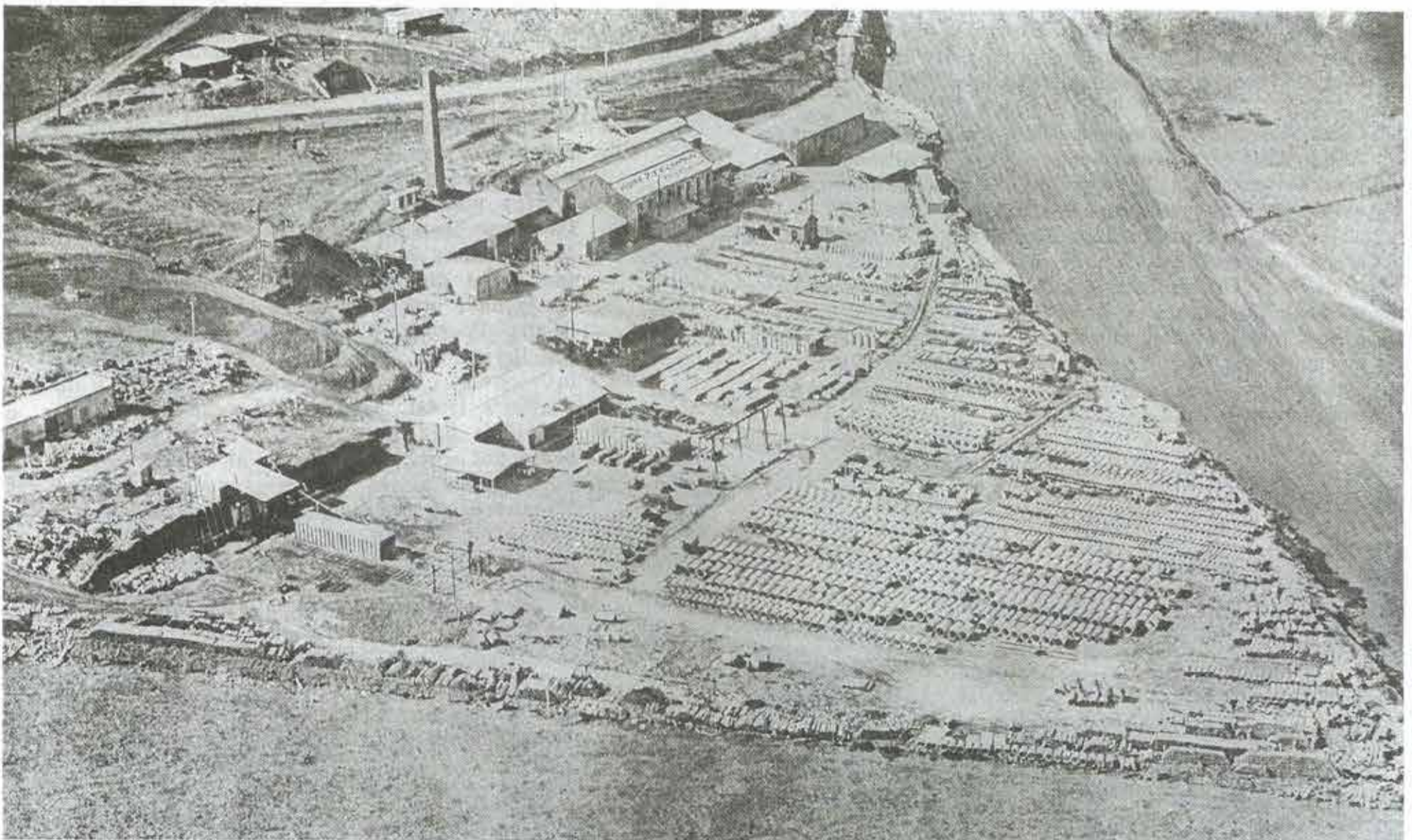


7, Stone crushing machine c.1930s,

Foundations of machine for crushing and grading bluestone for making concrete

8, Top Factory c.1940

For production of four and six foot pipes and reinforcement manufacture



The Humes Factory from the air in the 1930s showing large areas of pipe storage.