

Inquiry Questions

- Was life better in the past?
- Where is the past in the present?
- Were we more sustainable in the past?

Wain's Cottage (Speedwell Street - Opposite brick house MAP 74)

Wain's cottage is a small timber cottage lived in during the late 1850s by Mrs. Wain and her small children. Her husband died in a mining accident and she was able to support her family by mending bonnets and clothing. In the house, you will notice that there is no plumbing or taps in the kitchen, located at the back of the house. Women would cook over an open fire, which would have been very warm in the summer, but cosy in the colder months. There was no electricity and no refrigeration. A meat safe was used to keep food cool – just like a fridge, it would be placed somewhere where there was a breeze and a damp cloth would be placed on top to help cool the contents. It is made with flywire so that the breeze can blow through and cool the contents, slowing down how quickly the meat would go off. Women would make their own butter using a butter churn and butter paddles, make preserves and jams as well as pickle foods to last between seasons due to the lack of refrigeration.

Q. Where would the people in this house get their water from and how would they heat it? A. People would collect water from a creek/river and then heat it over a fireplace.

Q. What foods can you see preserved in the kitchen? A. There are pickled onions, preserved lemons, and jams.

Q. Where is food stored in this kitchen? How is this different from how food is stored in your kitchen? A. The food is stored in a meat safe, jars, and foods like flour are in small sacks. None of the food is packed away in a cupboard like we use in a pantry today.

Chamber's cottage (Speedwell Street, Opposite Map 74)

This small, two-room cottage would have been found in Ballarat in the late 1850s. Like most cottages in that period, there is an outhouse located in the yard. However, the family used a chamber pot at night or when it was too cold to go outside. There was no indoor plumbing; no taps sinks or drains. The contents of the chamber pot would be thrown out into the garden or the outhouse. The Night Cart Man would go around to outhouses during the night and empty the waste into his special cart. This job was done at night as the smell was not pleasant. Even though the flushable toilet was invented in 1596, it was not until 1851 that it became popular in England and much later in Ballarat.

Q. Ask students to locate bathing and toilet facilities in this house. Why would people have an outhouse and a chamber pot? A. The chamber pot would have been used at night and when it was too cold to go outside.

Q. How many rooms does this house have? What are they used for? How is this different from your house today? A. There are only two rooms in this house. One is the bedroom, which the children share with the parents and the other room is used as a kitchen/living room and for all other activities.

Davidson's cottage (MAP 74)

This cottage was lived in by the Davidson family. Mr Davidson was a mining engineer and Mrs Davidson cared for their 3 children and completed household duties. This family would have had some wealth, due to the additional gable built to house a growing family, as well as there being an external laundry and extensive kitchen. Some wealthier families who lived in more established houses in Ballarat had laundry rooms with copper tubs in which they would wash their clothes. Water would be boiled in a copper tub from a fire underneath. Large tongs were used for lifting items out of the water as it was often scalding hot. Women from poorer families mainly did their washing by hand in a washtub. This was usually done outside using water fetched from a creek.

Q. What can you see in this cottage that people would use to clean their house with, remember there is no electricity? A. A rug beater instead of a vacuum cleaner, people would hang their rugs up outside and hit them with a rug beater to get all of the dirt and dust out and use feather dusters, buckets, brushes, and brooms.

Q. Visit the kitchen, what can students see that is similar to their kitchens at home, and what is different.

Linton cottage (Corner of Speedwell Street and Golden Point Rd MAP 74)

Just behind Linton cottage is an extensive vegetable garden. Growing your own fruits and vegetables was sometimes the only way to have them in your diet on the goldfields, especially if you did not have much money. Gardens were mostly dedicated to potatoes; the rest to cabbage, parsnip, and beans. Apples, pears, and other soft fruits were popular choices to plant. People would grow herbs to use in their cooking and for medicinal purposes. Peppermint was grown in cottage gardens for cooking and used for cleaning teeth after meals (this is where the term 'after dinner mint' is derived from). All work in the garden would have been the work of the women and children.

Q. Why would most families grow their fruits and vegetables? A. To reduce costs and to be available to use in their diets every day.

Q. What vegetables/fruits can you see being grown in the garden? Why do you think one house would have such an extensive garden? A. The produce from this garden would be used to feed the family throughout the year. They could pickle and preserve foods to make them last. They could also sell produce for additional income.

SOVEREIGN HILL LEARNING



VISIT THE PRECINCTS

THE DIGGINGS

1851 - 1854: Daily life in a tent city, including housing, mining, business, law and order as gold seekers searched for a better life. **Why was gold so valuable, and how did it change peoples lives?**

SPEEDWELL STREET

1856 - 1861: Aligned to Main Street, highlighting the change in living conditions, business and technology that improved daily life. **How do we measure change? Were we more sustainable in the past?**

MAIN STREET

1855 - 1861: Ballarat as a town with the building of permanent structures and amenities to service the needs and wants of the community, economically and socially. **How did the gold rush shape modern Australia?**

STEAM, MINING INDUSTRY

1861 - 1914: Showcasing technology and innovation that contributed to the rapid development of Ballarat and the broader region. **How does technology shape and change lives?**

CHINESE VILLAGE

1857 - 1860: The cultural and social living conditions of Chinese immigrants within the larger narrative of the gold rush, exploring their struggles and successes. **Why do people risk everything in search for a better life?**

WADAWURRUNG CULTURAL

First Nations artists share their reflections of culture, history, and heritage. **What creates a sense of belonging and connection to the place you call home?**

VISITOR SERVICES

- Information
- Food & Drink
- Toilets
- All Gender Toilets
- First Aid Kit
- Beware of Horses
- Suggested Stroller & Wheelchair Route
- Accessible Toilet
- Parenting Room
- Water Tap
- Post Office
- Gift Shop
- Ramps

Emergency Evacuation Point

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR OUR INTERACTIVE MAP



We acknowledge the First Nations of the land upon which Sovereign Hill and Narmbool sit, the Wadawurrung, and their ongoing connection to this land and pay respect to their culture and their Elders past, present and future.