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A FASCINATING HISTORY OF A REMARKABLE BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Blacktown City, for a thought, is no doubt, one of the oldest city in Sydney dating all the way back to the 1700s when, not even, ¹European settlement on 18 January 1788, existed, the Blacktown City was inhabited by the Darug Aboriginal tribes or also known as the Aboriginal people of the Western Cumberland Plain. In its historical context, Blacktown was officially dated when the Europeans one of which was Governor Phillip, were on an exploratory expedition to the Hawkesbury and travelled across the areas. ²In August, 1791, the first European settlement occurred in Prospect Hill. Ever since, three Clans of the Blacktown areas came into existence: the Gomerigal in South Creek; Wawarawarry in Eastern Creek; and Warmuli in Prospect. This brings it down to the fact that Blacktown consists one of the largest Aboriginal population in the state of New South Wales as of its initial foundation in Hawkesbury. It is because of its modern history which makes Blacktown a historical city in Sydney, in fact considering the Battle of Vinegar, the Aboriginal Heritage and the history behind Blacktown becoming a city, are indeed, the foundational properties of the Blacktown City Council.

Blacktown's history without the recognition of Aboriginal heritage being thought as its cornerstone, is not worth mentioning because it is the Aboriginal heritage which was the root of the development of Blacktown and had founded Blacktown itself. Interestingly, evidence has shown campsites in Eastern Creek, South Creek, Rickabys Creek and Second Ponds Creek. Not only that, but also trees in the surrounding areas have been scarred and have also shown that barks have been removed from them to make shields and dishes, hence the Aboriginals living were upon these natural sources. Using these environmental resources, Aboriginals made spears and a very unique stone, known as Red Silcrete in which they gathered the sources from Eastern Creek and South Creek Ridges.

Concerning food, Aboriginal women and children gathered most of their food from waterways and ate plant foods, including berries, yams and fern root, the flowers of different banksias, and honey. While the women and children did their job, men hunted possums, birds, rats, bandicoots, wallabies using their handmade spears, hence why the trees were scarred. In addition to their food consumption, Emus, ducks, swans, and other water birds and their eggs were hunted and collected as well as the Aboriginals diet partly formed snakes and lizards. Since they hunted their food from the waterways, it is not unforeseen that their campsites were located nearby rivers and creeks as it was the prime location where some of their camping remains have been washed away after several floods. An Aboriginal observer, David Collins,

¹ Unknown author, "Blacktown City Council - Aboriginal Heritage", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/The_Region/Aboriginal_Heritage.

² "Blacktown City Council - Important Dates", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/The_Region/Important_Dates

said that their huts were made out of bark and made a simple description of these huts as, "made of the bark of a single tree bent in the middle and placed on its two ends on the ground".

Unfortunately, the Aboriginal dreams of living in freedom was diminished after the Europeans arrived and competed with the Aboriginals over the land. This competition was over using the lands which were closer to water, but these lands were already inhabited by Aboriginals, for farming as the Europeans wanted it for their advantage in growing crops, and the Aboriginals used these lands for hunting. However, after issues of conflicts over the land, it drove away animals from the Aborigines' traditional hunting areas and made them lack food and starve. Not only were lack of food and starvation a problematic issue for the Aboriginals, but the fact that the Europeans having to take the Aboriginal resourceful lands, they brought with them diseases in which the Aboriginals had no control over.

At the time, the ³Europeans had the power to have control over the Aboriginals considering their weapons, as they formed schools such as school for Aborigines which was started by Governor Macquarie in Parramatta in 1814 and later on moved to Richmond Road and Rooty Hill Road North after the local residents in Parramatta complained about the Aboriginals living near them. Ever since the Aboriginals school was moved to Richmond Road and Rooty Hill Road North, the surrounding area granted to the Aboriginals became known as the Black's Town, hence the name, Blacktown.

Knowing that Europeans or technically, the British troops, landing in Australia and having a monumental impact on the history of Blacktown, it is nevertheless that after a couple of years, the Battle of Vinegar occurred. The ⁴ Battle of Vinegar was the first battle to be fought on Australian soil, one which was between the Government troops and the rebel forces fought in Rouse Hill on 5 March 1804. The overall issue was that convicts were marching and stealing weapons from small farms. Seeing that the convict leaders were Irish, the battle became known as the Battle of Vinegar Hill or the Vinegar Hill Rebellion. Doubtably, the battle was thought to be in Castlebrook Lawn Cemetery.



A
photograph featuring the 1988, Battle of Vinegar Memorial

³ "Blacktown City Council - Battle of Vinegar Hill", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/The_Region/Battle_of_Vinegar_Hill.

⁴ "Blacktown City Council - Battle of Vinegar Hill", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/The_Region/Battle_of_Vinegar_Hill.

Most importantly, Blacktown becoming a city in which it had and has a huge reputation for itself modernly known as "Blacktown City Council", came into being in 1906. However, prior to the ⁵ 1905 Shires Act, there was no Council in the area. On 16 May, 1906, council was appointed to Shire of Blacktown by the NSW Government Gazette, in supervising the preparation of list and rolls of electors and to make the necessary arrangements for the election of the first Council. Making the first meeting of the Provisional Council in Rooty Hill, a Chairman was elected whom was Mr Sherlock. Meanwhile, police were instructed to make lists of electors and a clerk to be appointed for matters. During the 1911 census data, there were about 3, 847 in population. It was not until 1979, the Blacktown City Council became a city.

On the other hand, the ⁶municipality in 1961 was what proclaimed the shire of Blacktown. This was the period when lands were been transferred from Blacktown to Parramatta on 1 July, 1957 until 1 April, 1972. However, in 1969, lands were been added from Holroyd to Blacktown, with furthermore land transfers from municipalities of Holroyd and Fairfield to Blacktown Municipality. Moreover, following the municipality counselling, Blacktown's population was 159, 724 in 1976. The city council of Blacktown after working extremely hard for 15 years, on 7 March, 1979, the Governor of NSW, Sir Roden Cutler declared Blacktown's status Municipality. After this occasion, the council of Blacktown met in many locations. The first meeting was in the School of Arts at Rooty Hill and then in Blacktown Public School in Blacktown. The Blacktown Council was served by a building built on Flushcombe road, Blacktown in 1912, just before the commencement of World War One in 1914, served until 1939. At its first meeting the Blacktown Council resolved to adopt the Coat of Arms on 1 April, 1981.

Blacktown City Council 'Coat of Arms' consisted of Aboriginal head, wattle & boomerang. The reason for the inclusion of these features in the Coat of Arms was to prepare a submission outlining the history and the aspirations of Blacktown for the purpose of submitting a proposal to Herald of Arms, College Arms, London. The symbols in the a Coat of Arms represent Australian flora and fauna, when colonisation would have been abundant in the Blacktown area. Lands were added to Blacktown from Holroyd in early 1969. The first ever held meeting was in the School of Arts at Rooty Hill, then in the Blacktown Public School in Flushcombe Road, Blacktown. A new building was built and constructed in Flushcombe Road, Blacktown in 1912. In 1961, a multi-storey building was built next to the 1939 site and the Council has occupied these premises (with additions) ever since.



Blacktown's Coat of Arms

photo

⁵ "Blacktown City Council - Becoming a City", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/Becoming_a_City.

⁶ "Blacktown City Council - Becoming a City", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/Becoming_a_City

In its marvellous and continuation of its history, not only the events of its history has made blacktown very historic, but also of its patriotic people has been very memorable for their amazing works and generous deeds as well as its involvement in serving their people who have been involved in their own country especially in times of need. In the period of World War Two, Blacktown⁷ Shire had a group of people known as the Blacktown Shire WW2 Patriotic Fund, who organised a committee in its aims to raise funds to help the military personnel from their district and operated under the Charitable Collections Act 1934.

This Committee along with other Committees, raised funds to provide Comfort Boxes which contained numerous variety of goods from homes. Such goods were socks, scarves, pyjamas, towels, pullovers and many more. These goods once received by welfare organisations and families of those whose members were fighting for their country were truly enjoyable. Thanking and appreciating the support Blacktown Committee has provided to families of those in WW2 was in an article in the⁸ Argus Wednesday 24, February, 1943 titled: "Prisoners Thanks" Gunner Gordon Alexander Stevenson was a prisoner of war in Germany, had sent the following message of thanks to Blacktown Shire Patriotic Fund, "I received your parcel containing cards, tobacco, and books, for which I wish to convey my sincere thanks to all the members of the Fund."



Indeed, Blacktown is a well known city as it traces its history all the way back to 1900s when not even World War One had started. Its history has given present society an insight into its roots of development and a number of special occasions which did take place in which Blacktown had taken part in such as the World War 2 fund. This had enormously illustrated the generosity of Blacktown council as the council who donated and funded materialistic support to at least contribute in supporting its war fighters in defending their own country. This has proven the rich and diverse influence of Blacktown and its benefaction.

⁷ "Blacktown City Council - Shire Patriotic Fund", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/The_Council/Shire_Patriotic_Fund.

⁸ "Blacktown City Council - Shire Patriotic Fund", Blacktown.nsw.gov.au, 2015, http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/Discover_Blacktown/Our_History_Heritage/The_Council/Shire_Patriotic_Fund.