

Missing a Museum

Bendigo writer, John Holton, once quoted a Melbourne friend as saying, "I can't believe you guys don't have a museum. It's the only thing missing from this town."



A museum, along with an art gallery, library and a theatre are visible signs of a liveable and civilised city. Bendigo has a magnificent Art Gallery and a new library and a state of the art performing arts theatre, the Ulumbarra, in the grounds of the former Bendigo Gaol, which will compliment the present Capital Theatre in View Street. A museum which would feature the rich history of Bendigo is sorely needed. In the past there have been two reports on the question of a regional museum. The Chief Executive Officer of the City of Greater Bendigo has said when referring to the need of a museum and a place to house the Bendigo Historical Society's 3D objects, held in four shipping containers at the Nolan Street Archives Storage site, said: "Then it's about a building and making sure it is accessible and museums cost money, they don't generally make money."

Art galleries, libraries, theatres and museums are not necessarily expected to make money in other cities. People do flock in great numbers to these institutions, which are an integral part of the life of any city. Practically every town or city in Australia has a history museum. Bendigo, the biggest inland city in Victoria, has not.

Bendigo once had a museum in the School of Mines (Bendigo TAFE) building in the 19th and early 20th centuries. At the first meeting of the original Bendigo Historical Society in 1935,

the first motion was to work for a museum. The Bendigo Historical Society of today has a vast, varied and valuable collection, with many items screaming out to be part of a historical museum. A Significance Statement, prepared in 2007, listed a great number of items which have importance, not only to Bendigo, but nationally and even internationally. Some of these artefacts have been on display in exhibitions at the National Museum in Canberra.

Bendigo has fine displays today in the Post Office Gallery in Pall Mall, in the Golden Dragon Museum, Military Museum, Bendigo Pottery, Bendigo Tramways and Central Deborah Gold Mine, but none of these gives a full overview of Bendigo's history. There are over twenty historical and heritage groups within the City of Greater Bendigo, plus individual collectors, all of them with items of historical interest. The iconic 'Fortuna Villa', formerly the home of the Commonwealth Survey Regiment, has at least one building that would surely be able to be turned into a mapmaking museum.

Surely locals and visitors would love to see, in the one place, panoramic images of Bendigo's Pall Mall and other main streets. Then there are all those mines!