9.1 THEMES

This Section describes thirty-six themes of Gold Coast history as identified in Part 4.2 of the Study, which relate to time and activity.

Nineteenth Century/Early Settlements

While much of the urban form and fabric of the Gold Coast is of recent construction, the early settlement of the region dates back to the mid-nineteenth century. By the early part of the twentieth century, several towns were well established.

Only Southport and Coolangatta survive and have, still, some sense of their earlier independent form and character.

In the hinterland, Beenleigh, Nerang and Mudgeeraba similarly survive and although changed through subsequent growth and development, retain their status as independent settlements.

Of these early places, Southport developed as a resort. The construction of a retreat by the Queensland Governor (now The Southport School) and the subsequent construction of resort hotels and boarding houses facing The Broadwater, established Southport as a satellite of Brisbane and in time, a major administrative centre for the region.

Coolangatta was, in the period, the gateway to the coastal strip and hotels, boarding houses and associated commercial activity flourished.

 Beenleigh, Nerang and Mudgeeraba were centres of primary production. Sugar, its processing and associated products including rum, was its commercial focus although its position on the motor route to Southport and the coast made it part of the more intimate experience of early tourists.

Nerang and Mudgeeraba were true hinterland towns. Focused on primary production of timber-getting and dairying, these places were, to other than their residents, stops on the rail journey to the coast and later part of the contrasting experience of the hinterland to coastal holiday makers.

Before the War

Before the Second World War the Gold Coast was very much a city of primary production and low key holiday development along the coastal strip. Centres of population in both the hinterland and the coastal strip were scattered between vast tracks of undeveloped land.

While some of those centres were substantial for examples Beenleigh, Southport and Coolangatta most of the Gold Coast was open and undeveloped.

Land values were low and the development that occurred was simple and unpretentious. Farming communities struggled for existence and both the farms themselves and the rural centres they supported were modest.
At the Coast the beach houses were similarly modest. While the railway and motor road joined these centres the level of infrastructure generally was poor.

Throughout the Gold Coast evidence of that period and of this theme exists. Simple and early farm buildings low level crossings creeks in the Tallebudgera and Currumbin Valley beach houses framed in timber and clad asbestos cement are some of those.

The memory of the Gold Coast at this time as a place of simple pleasure is often raised by older residents.

1960s

From the mid 1950s the Gold Coast and particularly the coastal strip began to develop in the form in which it is known today.

By the 1960s this development was dominant.

The confidence and new wealth of the nation following the end of the Second World War created consumer society in Australia. The culture of the beach became dominant drawing on the more readily available and acceptable American culture. The Gold Coast embraced and developed those opportunities.

The ready availability of travel and in particular air travel gave the Gold Coast added importance with the migration of southerners, and in particular Victorians, to the coast to celebrate the perfect year around climate.

Land values increased as a result of renewed interest in the Gold Coast as a tourist destination and buildings reflecting the new culture of escape and excess were constructed.

The shortage of land to accommodate this new wave of immigration to the coast was overcome by the construction of canal estates in the low lying land immediately behind the coastal dunes.

An architectural form developed that was characteristic of the Gold Coast. Modernism came to its first and full flowering in this city. Hotels such as the Chevron and Lennons Broadbeach were supplemented by motels and apartments in the same style. Flat or butterfly roofs the use of colour and American Imagery abounded.

Beach housing too was characteristically modern and focused on the culture of the motor car. The first highrise towers were constructed in this period and the strip of that development along the highway saw its first flowering in the 1960s.

1970s and 1980s

From the 1970s onwards the era of tall buildings became the dominant image or theme at the Gold Coast. Despite some economic setbacks the Gold Coast moved from its generally low rise form to one based on tower apartments.
Town planning encouraged development of resorts and tower apartments and the initiatives of the 1960s were further developed and widely promoted.

The excesses of 1980s internationally were given full rein of the Gold Coast. Large scale resort developments such as Sanctuary Cove and Marina Mirage and Jupiter's Casino, shopping centres and golf courses were part of the development of the Gold Coast during these two decades. Buildings not only became taller but developed an architectural style that set them apart from similar buildings in other parts of Australia.

In this period the first notion of redevelopment took place and earlier buildings were demolished and land holdings enlarged for larger developments.

**Remnants**

The nature of development in any city or region is such that evidence of earlier land use is not completely obliterated. Often, small sites or vestiges of early use remain within areas that at first glance appear to be comprehensively redeveloped. Within the coastal strip, even within the primary nodes at Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach and Coolangatta, close observation reveal earlier housing, commercial development, tree planting and infrastructure.

In the hinterland, within areas recently redeveloped for housing, similar remnants remain. Early natural and man-modified landscapes, vestiges of early development and lifestyle are visible in most areas.

Sometimes the remnants are difficult to distinguish and some understanding of the history of a place and its setting will be necessary - for example, the remnant flood plain as the site of the earliest pastoral holdings or later land reclamation initiatives.

Often the remnants consist of only small items such as early fence posts or kerbing that individually do not constitute heritage nor contribute meaningfully to the broader understood character of the place or region but have value, nevertheless as survivors.

**Canal Development**

Flood Plain Reclamation: In the early 1960s the first canal estate was developed at Miami Keys. Low-lying land was raised above the level of the surrounding tidal water by dredging and the land reshaped to maximise water frontage for the newly created residential sub-divisions.

In the succeeding years, this initiative was extended into large sections of low-lying land, river and flood plain particularly in that area immediately behind the coastal dunes and stretching from Hope Island in the north to Palm Beach in the south.

Housing within the canal estates developed its own unique form facing both its street and waterfront address. While many residents of the canal estates keep boats moored at the water frontage, the canals are not primarily a transportation or communication infrastructure but rather a part of the recreational system or open space at the Coast.
Arrival/Destination

The Gold Coast as a holiday destination is one which exists in the imagination of visitors in a manner quite different to that of its residents.

The sense of anticipation of arrival at the Gold Coast is an important part of the experience of holiday makers. To many, the image of the Gold Coast as sunshine, sandy beaches and holiday apartments (towers) is not satisfied until those elements are seen or experienced. The anticipation of those experiences however, on approaching the Gold Coast is equally important.

Historically, arrival was by train which, while no longer existing, is reflected in remnants such as the location of early bathing pavilions adjacent to the site of the former railway station at Southport or by boat from Brisbane.

Today, by air, visitors experience the terminal buildings at Coolangatta and the transfer to their accommodation through a series of developing images and sensory clues. 'Gateways' of urban form play a large part in that experience. The gateways or entry statements of smaller units is also part of the experience.

By road, the same type of developing images and visual clues exist. To some, the Gold Coast experience begins at the freeway in Brisbane. Certainly the visual approach to the strip of tall buildings from across the Nerang River at Southport is dramatic and is one commented upon by many.

To the resident, the sense of arrival or destination is probably less critical. Within the total area, the sense of demarcation between the various sub-areas, and in particular character and style, is however, important as is the sense of arrival at those places.

Shopping

Shopping was, until quite recently, considered the provision of necessities rather than the entertainment and separate industry that retailing has become at the Gold Coast.

Shopping was centred historically at Southport and at Coolangatta and research shows that the range of shops and the goods offered were limited. Although some goods were related to the Gold Coast such as beachwear and recreational fishing but generally the range was limited to necessities. Certainly holiday makers at Surfers Paradise and other coastal centres were not provided with anything other than corner milk and bread shops and the occasional fish and chip shop. Visitors travelled to Brisbane to the nearest department store.

It was not until the development of a supermarket at Broadbeach and the later establishment of shopping centres at Coolangatta and Southport that shoppers were consciously catered for as part of the holiday experience.

In recent years shopping has become an entertainment in itself with retailers offering goods from southern and international markets that are available only at the Gold Coast.
Food, Restaurants and Eating

From the 1950s and the first influx of southern tourists, dining out has been an enduring theme of life at the Gold Coast. While restaurants at Brisbane were limited to those associated with major hotels and motels, the Gold Coast establishments, offering a range of food to all sectors of the market, flourished.

Establishments such as the El Rancho Barbecue at Surfers Paradise and the Chuck Wagon Barbecue at Tugun served one sector of the market. While at the other end of the spectrum, restaurants such as Margot Kelly’s Hibiscus Room, The Captain’s Table and the Jolly Frog offered international standard cuisine to more wealthy patrons.

Hotels such as the Surfers Paradise and Chevron offered not only food but the experience of drinking in other than bars, with the provision of beer gardens where entertainment was provided and more broadly based social interaction was encouraged.

These establishments represented a shifting focus from the Gold Coast as a family holiday place to one where eating-out became part of the experience of holiday making. Most were dominant aspects of the urban townscape located on or close to the highway.

Boating

The earliest access to the Gold Coast was by water with patrons arriving at Southport by boat from Brisbane. Many of the hotels facing The Broadwater had their own jetties to receive goods and to welcome guests.

Recreational boating in that part of the city soon developed and the Southport Yacht Club was formed to provide for the needs of cruising yachtsmen who anchored in the Southport yacht basin during holiday periods and used the club as a base for holiday making at both the nearby surfing beach and within the southern reaches of Moreton Bay.

Further north at Steiglitz more modest boating facilities were available at sites such as Rudy Maas where permanent moorings and slip facilities were provided.

The development of marinas and canal estates since the 1960s has given this theme new impetus. Individual householders now have the opportunity to keep their boats literally at their front door. The extent to which boating is now part of the Gold Coast has never been higher.

Signs/Advertising


Certainly since that time, the neon and illuminated signs that lined the highway and identified motels, restaurants and more general products have been a characteristic of the coast. The ‘Coppertone’ girl sign which stood at
the highway at Surfers Paradise was a much loved icon in that part of the strip. So too, was the animated Cafe dragons which identified a Chinese restaurant of the same name in Cavill Avenue.

Signs still tend to be large and architecturally dominant. Neon at the Gold Coast adorns not only commercial establishments but even church buildings. Indeed, even the billboards on the Pacific Highway are of a scale and density and unusual in the Australian context, anticipating the glamour and recreational opportunities to be savoured within the city.

The Beach

Of all the elements of the Gold Coast, the beach is the most visible, dominant and enduring. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century when surfing was promoted as a new recreational and sporting activity, the beach has been the centre of tourist-dominated activity. It remains so today providing an image of cleanliness, openness and lifestyle for tourists and residents alike.

Stretching from Main Beach to Coolangatta, the beach generates the linear form of development in that part of the city. The Gold Coast Highway running parallel to it and the development along the strip is never far from the beach.

Punctuated by headlands and streams running in from the hinterland, the beach is the raison d'être and the essential link at the Gold Coast.

Tourists/Visitors

Since before the turn of the century, the new activity of tourists and visitors to the coast have been the commercial mainstay of the city. In the last part of the nineteenth century, tourism was centred in Southport and The Broadwater. Since early this century, when surfing became a popular pasttime, surf beach has become the focus. The natural environment of the hinterland has more recently attracted its share of tourist or visitor trips.

Since the 1930s the Gold Coast has unashamedly promoted itself as a tourist destination and it is now widely acknowledged that the city is Australia’s premier tourist destination.

Tourism generates the form and expression of the coast and establishes a lifestyle enjoyed not only by tourists but by permanent residents in the city.

Introduced Landscaping

Introduced landscaping was a part of the earliest development of the coastal strip. Figs and similar shade trees planted at The Broadwater adjacent to the Southport town centre at the time of its settlement survive today.

As the coastal strip developed with accommodation for tourists, visitor facilities along the coastal strip similarly developed. Shelter sheds, kiosk and boating facilities were provided and tree planting shifted from the more urban figs to the Norfolk Pine, a tree long associated with bathing resorts. Records exist of a substantial grove planted at Burleigh Heads in the 1930s.
Today, the Norfolk Pine is found along the length of the coastal strip from Main Beach to Coolangatta.

The availability of ground or spear water from the 1960s encouraged the planting of domestic gardens in the housing estates developed at that time. clipped lawns and hibiscus dominated introduced landscaping in this era of the Gold Coast history.

Although palms were planted in the Broadbeach area from the 1960s the palm has become the dominant introduced species only in recent years and has, in a relatively short time, become synonymous with development and the image of the Gold Coast.

**Tall Buildings**

Since the 1960s, the construction of tall apartment buildings has been a primary theme at the Gold Coast. Beginning with Kinkabool - now listed as significant by the National Trust - apartment buildings have flourished in that section of the coast between Main Beach and Coolangatta and beyond.

The resultant impact upon the image of the Gold Coast has been dramatic. The buildings are unlike commercial high-rise buildings in plant form and presentation, set apart from each other and each pursuing its own characteristic and architectural style in a joyous celebration in which the building becomes its own advertisement or marker.

While other cities in Australia have tall buildings, the tall building at the Gold Coast has established its own architectural language and style that speaks a fantasy and of individualism that is unique to this place.

**Highway**

As a linear city, motor car travel along the length of the highway from north to south of the Gold Coast is an important part of the experience of the city. From 1921 when the bridge at the Nerang River was opened, until the 'new' Pacific Highway was opened, the Gold Coast highway was the traffic artery that served both as a through road and a focus of residential and commercial development.

The two highways today serve different but associated roles. The Pacific Highway provides a neutral traffic artery re-establishing the centre of the city to the west of early development and feeding both the hinterland and the coast. Natural planting screens the traveller from the pleasures and experience to be held on either side of that road.

By contrast, the Gold Coast Highway continues in its role as an artery on which 'the strip' is centred. Cluttered with visual images and immediately accessible development, it remains the focus of those who cruise the coastal strip seeking stimulation and easy access to the multitude of opportunities offered by the Gold Coast.

Each highway has its place in understanding the city.
Skylines

One of the more dramatic visual images of the Gold Coast is the postcard image of the coastal strip marked by tall buildings. The skyline is dominated by the expression of the coast as a holiday destination is however, visual not only from the sea or from the air but from every part of the Gold Coast.

The arrival to that part of the coast from Southport as one approaches the Nerang River from the mountain resorts and from other places within the city is equally dramatic.

The reliance upon artificial skyline in an essentially flat and featureless coastal plain began with the construction of the second Surfers Paradise Hotel when its segmented domed tower marked that place and symbolised the coast until the construction of taller apartment buildings in the late 1950s and 1960s.

The theme of skyline is supported in the mountain rim which forms an enclosing backdrop to the city to the west and indeed, in the coastal headlands which still dominate the skyline in those locations.

Natural Environment

Despite the intense development that characterises Gold Coast City, the dominant impression beyond the coastal strip, is the extent of natural environment surviving.

Historically the natural environment at the coast was reviled as being of little value and this attitude has led to the wholesale development of canal estates in the swamp lands and deltas of the rivers flowing to the coast. Some evidence of these systems remain to the north of the city and in the bay islands but to a large degree that particular natural environment has been lost.

By contrast, the river valleys and mountain escarpments and headlands largely remain intact and are now seen as an essential part of the Gold Coast. The natural environment is not only a visible part of the city but an easily accessible one.

Images

Throughout the history of the Gold Coast certain images of the place have prevailed in both the coastal strip and the hinterland.

At the coastal strip images relating to the beach and beach culture have become part of the understanding of this place by residence and tourists alike. Early photographs of Southport focus on the hotels and boarding houses and on individuals bathing, boating and fishing.

Later photographic images of the development at the surfing beaches stretching from Main Beach to Coolangatta similarly are centered upon beach culture and the pursuit of pleasure.
More recently, imagery of the Gold Coast has merged that of beach culture with the tall building especially that represent and reinforce the fantastic and the idea of a holiday experience that separates the city from others in Australia.

The majority of postcards for example contain images of the portion of the coastal strip centered on Surfers Paradise with the "great divide" of tall buildings fronting the beach. It is incidentally a view or image of the Gold Coast that few actually see. Usually an aerial view from over the sea it has nevertheless come to represent the essence of the Gold Coast.

At the hinterland both early and current images focus on the dense and over-scaled forests. While early images show trees being felled the current images of the hinterland is just as dramatic with arctic beaches densely forested valleys and waterfalls the primary focus.

**Icons**

In any city a space or objects may become icons representing the essence of the place and in turn being regarded as essential even sacred. The Gold Coast is no different in this regard and contains icons which are important in representing the meaning of the city. These may range from items such as the Norfolk Island Pines at Burleigh Heads to the illuminated neon sign at the 1960s Pink Poodle Motel at Northcliffe or the Cascade Gardens at Broadbeach.

Icons need not be major structures and indeed even minor elements such as the sign at Narrow Neck identifying Main Beach or even the subtle reminders of the former border gates and fence at Coolangatta maybe important. Some icons will be important at a citywide level but others maybe important at a local level.

The Rocky Point Sugar Mill and the brightly coloured rollercoaster at Dreamworld may equally be considered icons for their respective localities.

Their value to the urban heritage or character of the Gold Coast transcends normal heritage criteria which rely for their value on comparative analysis with other similar places. These places stand alone and represent in their own right the very essence of the heritage and character of the city.

**Sporting/Recreation**

As a city whose culture is largely based on recreation the themes of sporting and recreational activity is important in the understanding of the Gold Coast. Early recreational activity was centered upon sea bathing and fishing. Interest in surfing which developed at the turn of the century moved the focus to that activity and soon afterwards to the surf carnivals that are still an important part of Gold Coast life. In more recent years there has been a developing interest in golfing as a primary sporting and recreational activity within the city and much of the landscape is now influenced by golf courses and the residential estates associated with them.
The annual motor racing through the streets of Surfers Paradise is an important event which leaves evidence of itself in the black and white chequered starting line painted on the roadway adjacent to Macintosh Island, Surfers Paradise.

The theme parks on the highway at Oxenford and at The Spit and the various rides and bungy jumping are all part of this theme - more concentrated and visible at the Gold Coast than in any other Australian city.

**Clothing**

Because of its position as a premier tourist destination, its cultural position is a place of fantasy and escape and because of its sub-tropical climate and easy lifestyle clothing plays an important part in understanding the Gold Coast.

In turn the preferred clothing styles of the Gold Coast shaped the environment of the city. It is, in its most basic form, a place to watch people.

The beach in particular is a place for display of health and sexuality - clothing designed and worn within these broad perimeters in turn creates a culture of promenading and display that is unusual in the Australian context. That attitude flows to the broader city. The general informality of clothing worn at the Gold Coast equally shapes and is reflected in the more urban environment and the way of life of residence and visitors.

Urban spaces, plan form and even architectural expression picks up the sense of display visibility social interaction and informality of lifestyle and clothing.

The influence of white linen and gold accessories, the absence of layers of clothing and conventional systems of rank and status can be seen in the urban environment in similar distinctive urban and architectural form of openness and informality.

**Fishing**

Recreational fishing has been a theme of the Gold Coast since its inception as a resort late last century.

Commercial fishing too was important in those early years both within the protective water of Moreton Bay and on the surf beaches where fishermen would cast their nets of the shoals of mullet in the waves close to the beach.

Both those aspects of fishing continue to the present day. Recreational fishing takes place in the Broadwater and indeed in the Pacific Ocean where tourist centered expeditions are conducted for that purpose.

At the surf beaches early morning and late afternoons inevitably reveal lone fishermen casting their lines to the deep gutters adjacent to the beach. They provide a scenic and occasional incongruous contrast to the more dominant beach culture of surfing and sunbathing.
Commercial fishing continues at the Gold Coast. Within the marinas at the Spit and surrounded by expensive pleasure craft small fleet of fishing trawlers still operates. Oyster beds, too, still operate within the Broadwater.

Long Views

Part of the pleasure of the Gold Coast are the long views of the city. The topography and geography of the area are unlike other places and allow and encourage vistas of the city from within its own boundaries.

For example the views from the beach toward the hinterland and mountains is one that is well recognised. So too is the view of the beach from the mountain resorts in which the tall buildings mark the coastline.

The view of those buildings from the Broadwater and importantly from Southport as the road approaches Surfers Paradise is one that creates a sense of excitement and arrival.

Equally the view from the elevated vantage point of Burleigh Heads looking back towards Surfers is a popular and familiar long view. Indeed the view down the surfing beach at a number locations within the coast is important.

At a smaller scale long views are equally notable. Part of the pleasure and characteristic of Mudgeeraba is the view from that place across the flood plain. The views at Steiglitz across the sugar cane fields uninterrupted by other forms of development adds to the importance of that area.

Wetlands

The natural geography of much of the Gold Coast is of low lying river plains and wetlands behind the coastal dunes.

Much of that area has since the late 1950s been reclaimed for development for housing and golf courses. That reclamation is not entirely recent and schemes to drain and develop the flood plain were initiated in the 19th Century.

The wetlands and their history are a visible and important theme at the Gold Coast. While little remains of their original form the low country and its characteristic vegetation is a constant reminder of the early form of the city.

The preservation of some of that early landform in environmental parks and in surviving natural areas is only one part of this theme. The wetlands are visible throughout the city areas beside the highway and in remnants surviving in areas recently reclaimed.

Wildlife

Studies by others indicate that the diversity of wildlife at the Gold Coast is exceptional. The visible evidence of that phenomena extends to both the hinterland and coastal strip.

While there is some evidence that the current rate of development is likely to have an adverse affect on wildlife the juxtaposition of coastal development with
the hinterland and the relatively undisturbed waterways of Moreton Bay means that wildlife is a visible part of the experience of residents and visitors to the city.

Sea birds are common on the coastal strip and within the hinterland parrots, cockatoos, koalas and flying fox are commonly sighted.

**Motor Cars**

The culture of the motor car and its development in the years immediately following the Second World War is an important theme in the history of the Gold Coast.

From the 1920s when the highway from Brisbane was extended to Southport and later to Coolangatta motor transport has been central to the development of the city. It was not until the 1960s however when the motor car became more universally available to Australian families that its influence at the Gold Coast began to shape the city, its form and culture.

The linking of the various centres along the coastal strip began to develop at a pace. Access to the entire coast was made easier. The motor car became not only the principal mode of transport but, in turn, part of the experience of being at the coast.

The visual scale of the city moved from the personal or pedestrian to one governed by speed and movement. The motor car continues to shape the city and dependence on and pride in the motor car are both characteristics of the Gold Coast.

**Housing Estates/Suburbia**

As one of Australia's fastest growing cities the residential population of the Gold Coast and their housing is an important theme.

Differing in architectural form to the holiday accommodation of the coastal strip it occupies a large proportion of the land area between the canal estates and the highway.

Early residential housing at Southport has been the object of recent studies by the National Trust and others. It represents the role of that centre as the administrative and residential focus of the Coast until 1960s.

More recent estates are of two main types. The canal development and the estates closer toward the west. These constitute some of most cohesive and visually dominant aspects of the built environment within the city.

Generally no different to the typical suburban estates of other Australian cities their recent construction and uniform style nevertheless draw something from the essential ethos of the Gold Coast in their focus on entry statements the use of palms as planting and their tendency in architectural expression toward the fantastic.
Government

The evidence of State and Local Government at the Gold Coast reflects the various changes in boundaries of the area since last century and the city’s growth since the 1960s.

Early Council Chambers at Mudgeeraba and at Southport reflect the early shifts of centres of government. More recent developments at Evandale and Nerang are still used as offices for the present Gold Coast Council. Libraries, sporting venues, parks, beach kiosks and shelters dating from different periods equally help to tell the story of government at the Gold Coast. Indeed even tree planting and street furniture is part of this theme.

The court house and hospital at Southport are evidence of State government presence. Their location and architectural form helps to tell the story of the growing influence of the city in this broader sphere.

Residents (new)

One of the more extraordinary characteristics of the Gold Coast is its history of immigration. A large proportion of its present population has recently arrived in the city. No other place in Australia has such a high percentage of "new" residents.

While some come for opportunities related to work or family many choose to retire to the Gold Coast or have come in pursuit of a particular lifestyle.

Their vision of the Gold Coast is therefore unique. They have no family associations nor affection for the history of the city in terms of family history or long associations with place.

Their appreciation of the culture of the Gold Coast and their contribution to it is therefore dependent upon short term memory and of a constructed image.

Residents (old)

Within the Gold Coast are many whose association with the city goes back several generations - some to the earliest settlement of the region.

Of these perhaps 20 or 30 family names recur in the history of the city. Many of these are from the hinterland and of early farming communities. Their knowledge of and interest in the city and its history is extraordinary and is an important characteristic and theme of the Gold Coast.

Perhaps the most visible of these occurs in the sugar cane area where early families not only maintain the historical links with the city and the cultural traditions of that community but hold to a traditional land use and practice.
Farming

The early history of the Gold Coast is a lengthy history of its settlement and development for agriculture.

Large tracts of land encompassing both the hinterland and the coastal strip were taken up for cattle grazing and some evidence of that period of development survives in early farm buildings such as the cottage adjacent to the Mudgeeraba Showgrounds.

Later, closer settlement saw the introduction of crops such as cotton, maize, sugar and bananas and even a short period in which experimentation with arrowroot was carried out.

Sugar cane farming occurred in the north of the city in the Steiglitz area in a substantial and significant form. Some grazing and agriculture continues in other parts of the city although not generally in a productive form. Farm land has been largely subdivided and is now residential or ‘hobby’ farms.

Evidence remains however of the early farming practices and their important role in the city’s history.

Loggers

Cedar trees covered much of the Gold Coast in the period in which the Gold Coast was first settled and developed. Cedar getters moved through the area cutting the trees for shipment to Brisbane and southern parts. Logs were rafted up and floated down rivers to where waiting ships loaded the timber. Cedar getters by nature lived a transient life and set up camps adjacent to the supply of timber. Little therefore remains of that period of the Gold Coast’s history.

Throughout the hinterland however and particularly in the mountain ranges to the west, evidence remains of logging in the remnant forest. Some trees survive, many still showing signs of the notches cut by loggers to establish a platform above the ground from which the tree was felled.

Logging continued after the cedar was cut out and the eucalypts of the region also provided a living for timber getters through the first decades of the present century. Much of the rainforest that covered the river, valleys and mountains of the Gold Coast was felled, not for commercial purposes but simply in order to clear the land for grazing or agriculture.

Holiday Houses

Sir Anthony Musgrave led the trend for holiday housing at the Gold Coast when he built a vice-regal retreat at Southport in 1884. Queenslanders, eager to be seen at the right address competed to build holiday houses nearby. With the opening up of surfing beaches and availability of (relatively) easy transport by rail and road the Gold Coast became the major site for holiday housing.

Hotels and boarding houses of the early twentieth century gave way in later decades to individual family houses. Many were lightly constructed, some
from second hand material and were truly beach shacks - little more than permanent camp sites.

With the intensive development that followed the second world war however more substantial houses were constructed. Many were architect designed or incorporated design features that set them apart from the more conventional suburban houses of other cities. The city was a test bed for modern design and unusual forms.

Apartment buildings occurred in the 1950s at a scale not seen in other places of Queensland in a trend that continues today. Again architectural forms and experiments in colour set holiday houses apart from other places. The Gold Coast holiday house makes an important contribution to the city and to Australian architectural history.

Camping

Early holiday makers at the Gold Coast took advantage of the near perfect weather and ample land on the beach front and camping became an important theme in the city’s history. Whole headlands and beach front reserves were transformed in holiday periods as campers came to the coast, at first by train but later by motor car and established extensive tent cities along the length of the coastline.

The trend was not without its problems including the need for public toilet facilities and rubbish disposal on which some local authorities were reluctant to increase ratepayer funds. Coolangatta ratepayers repeatedly petitioned Nerang Shire for the provision of these and other facilities. The chairman of the rural Nerang Shire in 1912 responded negatively to these requests stating that he "thought the camping business was objectionable from many points of view".

Most of the beach front camping grounds have now been closed but camping remains an important part of holiday making at the Gold Coast. The former camping grounds have been declared open spaces or parkland and generally remain as evidence of that period of the city's history.

Weather

From its earliest history the Gold Coast has promoted the concept of a place where the weather has been warm and supportive of a relaxed and easy holiday lifestyle. The linking of lifestyle and climate has been central to the idea of the Gold Coast as a tourist and retirement centre since the 1960s. The reality of a "perfect" climate but more importantly the belief and culture of sunny weather has in turn shaped the form and nature of the city.

Places and buildings within the city are created and seen in the context of blue skies and sunshine. The profile of tall buildings against the sky is one expression of this phenomena. The effect of light and shadow is on their architectural expression is another. The balconies to each unit, the preponderance of outdoor areas of swimming pools and golf courses is a further expression of the confidence and belief in good weather.