During the 1850s only the fledgling business empire created by Henry Hopwood, Echuca’s founder, existed around Little Hopwood Street, the hub of early Echuca. At that time Hopwood’s punts and pontoon bridge were the only means of crossing the Murray and Campaspe Rivers.

The 1870s were the peak years of the steamer trade at Echuca. Wool was the lifeblood of the port, and the wharf became a place of bustle and activity, with the constant arrival and departure of steamers during the ‘season’, when the river was high enough to allow them to travel. Forwarding agents were at their wits’ end trying to find a place to store wool while waiting for rail trucks to take it to Melbourne and this led to several wharf extensions. By 1900 competition from railways had killed the river trade.

From the 1860s the town centre was concentrated in the vicinity of the wharf in High Street and the northern end of Hare Street. By the mid-1870s increasing wharf activity created a spirit of optimism and at that time many single-storey shops erected ten years earlier were replaced by the impressive two-storey brick buildings seen in High Street today.

The opening of the Iron Bridge in 1878 and the decline of the river trade led to consolidation of Echuca’s commercial centre in Hare Street. Shops gradually moved south towards the railway station, which by then was a busy transport terminal. This trend continued until the 1960s when the transfer of more shops to Hare Street led to the near-demise of old High Street.

The area became run-down and neglected and it was not until the re-creation of the old Port of Echuca, opened in 1974, that rejuvenation began. Echuca was ‘put on the map’ by the filming of “All the Rivers Run” early in the 1980s. Shopowners restored their buildings and increased visitor numbers led to revitalisation. The movement of commerce away to Hare Street and southwards has left old High Street undisturbed, evoking memories of the 19th Century, when Echuca was Australia’s leading inland port.
Walk to historic Echuca. We hope you enjoy your stroll around the buildings and reading the plaques using this self guided tour. As you wander let your mind drift back to experience the thriving era of Echuca when steam ruled the river and rail.

Welcome to historic Echuca. We hope you enjoy your stroll around the buildings and reading the plaques using this self guided tour. As you wander let your mind drift back to experience the thriving era of Echuca when steam ruled the river and rail.

Permewan Wright (Site 64) and Shackell’s Bond Store Buildings (Site 26)

Water Towers located in front of the current municipal offices (Site 16 - Circa 1860)

The Bridge Hotel (Site 33)

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ECHUCA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Feel free to send your feedback to the Shire of Campaspe.

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Complete citations can be purchased from the Echuca Historical Society located at site 35.