



Emu Plains – Timeline

Emu Plains is located on the west side of the Nepean River extending to the foot of the Blue Mountains. Part of this name (i.e. “Emu”) is thought to have originated with the sighting of emus there when the country was first explored by Europeans in the late 1700’s. A survey map of 26th August 1790 has the annotation “saw three cassowaries” marked near the ford. Early explorers often confused emu with cassowary. The locality was first known as “Emu Island” – the name thought to have originated with Captain Watkin Tench (1758?-1833), who first explored the region.

In Government Orders of 16 July 1814, Governor Macquarie referred to “Emu Plains (hitherto erroneously called Emu Island)”, which officially heralded the area’s change of name. And again in October 1814, [George Suttor](#) in his correspondence with Sir Joseph Banks, mentioned that the name Emu Plains had recently been changed from Emu Island. Up to this date the area had obviously been thought of as an island. The reason for this can possibly be explained by a contemporary observer, Barron Field (1786-1846), Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. Field noted that Emu Plains had been called “Emu Island” because the plains had, at times, been turned into an island by the “washing of the mountains when the Nepeanflooded”. Another more recent explanation (offered by the late local historian and resident Arthur W. Street) claims that the name Emu Island originated because the Nepean River was divided near Emu Ford, thus forming an island. The island, Mr. Street claims, has slowly disappeared through constant excavation of gravel for building purposes. A further resolution of the confusion is detailed in the book *Emu Plains* by Joan Steege, where she explores all the divergent theories regarding its naming.

1789	26 June	Captain Watkin Tench set out to explore western-most parts of the colony
1790	26 August	Tench & Dawes explored the Nepean river and ‘saw three cassowaries’ – a precursor to naming Emu Plains
1806	12 September	Proclamation by William Bligh to prohibit crossing of the Nepean River
1808	8 July	Rebel Governor, Major Johnston, issued a land grant at Emu Plains to his son
1813	20 November	Surveyor Evans set out from Emu Plains to explore inland
1814	18 July	William Cox began construction of the road over the Blue Mountains
1815	14 January	William Cox completed first road over the Blue Mountains from Emu Plains to Bathurst

1815	26 April	Governor Macquarie's tour over the Blue Mountains
1818	4 January	James 'Toby' Ryan born at Castlereagh, well known Emu Plains and Penrith identity
1819	11 September	Proclamation to set up a convict Agricultural Establishment with Richard Fitzgerald as Superintendent
1822	22 April	Scotsman Lieutenant Peter Murdoch appointed Superintendent of the convict farm at the resignation of Fitzgerald
1823	24 March	Tenders called for toll collector at Emu Ferry
1824	December	Alexander Kinghorne appointed Superintendent of the convict farm at the resignation of Murdoch
1825	16 May	First performance held at the convict theatre of Barissa or the Hermit Robber, The Farce of the Mock Doctor or the Dumb Lady Cured, and the favourite Bombastes Furioso
1826	February	James Kinghorne took over from his father as Superintendent at the farm
1826	6 October	Land grant to Francis Forbes, Chief Justice of the colony of 120 acres at Emu Plains (now Leonay) which he named Edinglassie
1829	10 September	Superintendent at Wellington Valley, John Maxwell became Superintendent at Emu Plains and Superintendent of Government Stock for the colony
1831	August	Superintendent at Grose Farm and Longbottom government farms, James Smith appointed as Superintendent at Emu Plains
1832	20 May	Village of Emu was laid out by the Government Surveyor
1832	31 August	Emu Plains Convict Farm officially closed
1832	1 October	David Lennox appointed to work on "Lennox Bridge"
1841	8 June	First licence of Arms of Australia Inn granted to John Mortimer
1845	13 August	Government land was sold to Michael Hogan
1848	8 November	St Paul's Church School opened
1857	25 July	Bridge over Nepean River washed away in flood
1863		Methodist Church built using the stones from Edinglassie house
1864	19 February	Mary Ryan died at Emu Hall and is buried at St Paul's Cemetery, Emu Plains
1867	17 June	First passenger train crosses Victoria Bridge
1868	August	First railway station opened called Emu on south side of Old Bathurst Road
1872	16 August	St. Paul's Church of England consecrated
1873	19 May	Eliza Bisset appointed as postmistress at Emu Ferry
1878	30 January	Emu Plains Railway disaster. A Katoomba train carrying kerosene shale collided with the up train
1880	Circa	Quarry site opened on alluvial gravel pit on a bend of the Nepean River at Emu Plains
1885	20 March	The town of Emu was proclaimed
1886	22 November	A new railway station building and stationmaster's residence opened

1887		A Telegraph Office opened at the railway station using Morse code
1890		At his Westbank farm, orchardist Richard Sheppard creates -by chance - a new variety of mandarin called the imperial
1896		The Telegraph Office converted to a Telephone Office
1899	17 October	James 'Toby' Ryan died at Woolloomooloo and was buried at Emu Plains. He was a well known Emu Plains & Penrith identity
1907	2 June	New Railway Bridge opened over Nepean River. Victoria Bridge becomes road traffic only
1914	December	Emu Plains prison farm commenced
1929	4 January	St. Paul's Church Rectory was destroyed by fire. All church records lost
1930	8 April	The Mudgee mail train is robbed as it leaves Emu Plains station. The armed bandits steal £17,000
1934	21 December	Melrose Hall opened. Named after C.J. Melrose a famous aviator of the time
1956		Electrification of the railway line between Penrith and Emu Plains
1963	29 May	Nepean High School opened
1963	25 October	Emu Plains transferred from Blue Mountains Council to Penrith City Council
1973	11 October	Official opening of F4 Freeway Bridge over Nepean River
1976	27 March	Arms of Australia Inn opened as a museum
1980	3 July	Old Emu Plains Post Office destroyed by fire (formerly the Australian Arms Inn)
1981		Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest is opened
1982	15 October	Edinglassie Retirement Village opened
1982	14 December	Lennox Bridge reopened for traffic after major restoration
1986	28 January	McCarthy Catholic Senior High School (now Penola Catholic College) took in its first students
2018	July	Penrith Council calls for community suggestions to name the new pedestrian bridge across the Nepean River
2018	October	The pedestrian bridge is officially named Yandhai Nepean Crossing