

# history

## Lachlan Swamps

Centennial Park was once a huge catchment area of creeks, swamps, springs, sand dunes and ponds fed by ground water. In 1811 Governor Lachlan Macquarie designated the area as the Second Sydney Common. Nine years later he set aside part of the Common as the Lachlan Water Reserve, later known as Lachlan Swamps.

## Busby's Bore

In 1825 John Busby, city surveyor and civil engineer, surveyed the swamp after Sydney's original water supply, the Tank Stream, was found to be 'foul and almost empty' and reported that the water was 'free from every taste and smell, and so soft as to be fit for every purpose'. Convict labour was used to build a 3.5 kilometre underground aqueduct known as Busby's Bore from the swamps to Hyde Park. The swamps served as Sydney's main water supply between 1837 to 1859.

## From dams to ponds

Grazing and garbage dumping gradually polluted the swamps. The pollution worsened in 1874 after dams were constructed in the wake of large scale flooding. When Centennial Park was opened in 1888, these dams were remodelled into the ornamental lakes now known as the park's ponds. By 1887 about 65 percent of Sydney's population lived within a five mile radius of the reserve. The Governor, Lord Carrington, and the Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, envisaged turning the reserve into a grand public park to be the focus for the centenary of European settlement celebrations on 26 January 1888. The park would also transform land that had become an eyesore into a place of serenity and beauty.

## Two new parks

After Centennial and Queens Parks were created under the Centennial Celebrations Act 1887, the site was handed over to Charles Moore, Director of the Botanic Gardens. Moore enlisted hundreds of unemployed men to turn swamp, scrub and rock into a grand park in the European tradition, with formal gardens, ponds, statues and grand avenues. Centennial Park's main circular road, Grand Drive, was Sydney's first public suburban drive.

## Federation of Australia

Centennial Park is a living monument to the birth of our nation. On 1 January 1901, thousands of people gathered in Federation Valley to celebrate the union of six independent colonies into the Federation of Australia. The ceremony saw the signing in of the Governor-General and new Federal Ministers. The Federation Pavilion now stands on this site.

## Queens Park

Set in a natural amphitheatre at the foot of sandstone cliffs, Queens Park contained an 11-hole golf course between 1895 and 1899, but since the 1930s has been mainly used for organised sports such as soccer, rugby and touch football.

## Moore Park

In 1866 the western part of the Second Sydney Common was transferred to Sydney City Council, which set aside the land for public recreation. Between 1867 to 1869 the park was laid out and planted with grass and trees. The Park is named after Charles Moore, Mayor of Sydney during this period. By the end of the 1800s Moore Park was Sydney's most popular sporting and entertainment precinct. It had a cricket ground, sporting stadium, golf course, racecourse, agricultural society showground and sporting fields. In 1879 it became the site of Sydney's first zoo and included a circular bear pit and an elephant house.



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