

SOUTHPORT HERITAGE TOUR

Sound files provided by Jacqueline Pearce, Architect -
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Southport is one of the Gold Coast's most historically significant areas, offering a rich heritage that reflects the city's evolution from a quiet seaside village to a thriving urban center. As the Gold Coast's original commercial hub, Southport has long been a focal point for development, boasting iconic buildings, heritage-listed sites, and a deep connection to the region's maritime and military history. The area's early days are still visible through its well-preserved architecture and historic landmarks, which provide a glimpse into the past while Southport continues to adapt to modern city life.

Southport Bathing Pavilion, Southport, 4215



[Southport Bathing Pavilion](#)

Located near the Broadwater in Marine Parade, the Southport Bathing Pavilion was constructed in 1934 by the Southport Town Council as part of its program to improve public facilities. The bathing pavilion is designed in a Spanish Mission style which was seen as a fashionable, and attractive option during the interwar period.

The influence emanated from California and typically contained features such as round headed arches, preferably in groups of three supported on plain or 'barley twisted' columns, cream stucco walls in reference to adobe masonry, sometimes a tile ornament or on the Bathing Pavilion, a shield cartouche with its date of construction.

Half round terra cotta roof tiles were typical, although the Bathing Pavilion was previously roofed with 'super-six' a 6 inch, corrugated-asbestos, cement sheet, that had a similar proportion.

The Southport Bathing Pavilion was originally used for public change rooms and showering supporting recreational swimming activities in the nearby Broadwater. The Pavilion is now refurbished and was re-opened as a function room and gallery. The Southport Bathing Pavilion is of heritage significance and is entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.

Southport Ambulance Centre - 45 Nerang Street, Southport, 4215



[Southport Ambulance Centre](#)

The Southport Ambulance Centre was established in 1919 to service the area from Coomera to Burleigh Heads. Funding of the building was raised by a volunteer committee and the station was opened 2nd December 1922.

Situated adjacent to the Southport Town Hall and the Southport Courthouse, the Ambulance Centre serviced the region for more than 50 years. The double gable frontage, hipped roof and brick base expresses a California Bungalow style with its thick columns, more horizontal proportions and broad overhangs.

A range of modifications were undertaken during the 1950's, 60's and 70's. 1970s work included the removal of some of the street façade and the erection of a screen wall. The two-storey building was 80 years old when Burling Brown Architects were engaged to design and document the restoration of the exterior and repurpose the interior as co-share office space. It is home to about 30 businesses with meeting rooms, kitchens, outdoor and balcony entertainment space, parking for 11 cars and coffee shop.

The former Southport Ambulance Centre makes an important contribution to the heritage of the Gold Coast through its architecture and history.

Southport Town Hall - 47 Nerang Street, Southport, 4215



[Southport Town Hall](#)

The Southport Town Hall was constructed in 1935 as an important seat of local government in a flourishing seaside town. It replaced the earlier timber Town Hall and its Art Deco design was considered to be progressing and reflective of the anticipated prosperity and development of the shire.

The Art Deco style came to prominence in the mid-1920s where its design motifs came to be favoured for both interiors and exteriors of distinctive 20th century building types such as cinemas, and the skyscraper.

The accomplished architects, Hall and Phillips, presented an excellent example of the exciting style which typically contained vivid decorative elements, series of parallel lines, vertically and diagonally in geometric arrangements, sometimes with curves and incorporating low relief sculptural elements.

The Southport Town Hall served as the Council Chamber and administrative centre for four local authorities until the amalgamation of a number of nearby town councils lead to the formation of

the South Coast town council in 1949.

During the 1950s the Chambers became the administrative centre for the Gold Coast Town council before changing the name to the Gold Coast City Council, and relocating to new facilities at Evandale in 1976.

The Southport Town Hall is of heritage significance and is entered in the Gold Coast Local Heritage Register.



St Hilda's School - 52 High Street, Southport, 4215



[St Hilda's School](#)

St Hilda's School is just north of the intersection with Nerang Street. As described in the St Hilda's Gold Coast Open House booklet, the school origins date to 1880 when Miss Helena Davenport and her mother Anne came from England and travelled to Ipswich to establish a small, private boarding school for girls.

By mid-1882, they relocated to Southport, bringing their students with them by paddle steamer. They chose the name of Goyte-Lea for the Southport school, named after the Davenport family home in England.

The first Goyte-Lea was a rented house in Bauer Street. The school moved in 1883 to a house they built at the corner of Bay and Davenport Streets, Southport. It was reputedly the largest house there! This schoolhouse was purchased by the Brisbane Anglican Diocese in 1912.

Miss Catherine Bourne was appointed by the Church as St Hilda's first Head Mistress. There were 23 boarders and seven staff at the school. Due to cramped accommodation and increasing

enrolments, Miss Bourne purchased 25 acres of land in 1915. This is the land upon which St Hilda's School stands today. She called the land 'Whitby Estate' and her dream was for the church to build a substantial school upon it. In 1918, the dream was realised when the first brick building, now called 'Whitby' was completed. It was designed to house up to 80 boarders. When the building was finished, Miss Bourne gifted the deeds to the land to the Brisbane Anglican Diocese.

The original two storey, 'L' shaped building was constructed in brick with timber verandahs extending across the elevations of both levels. The building was a conservative Federation influenced design with several similarities to St Mary's girls boarding school in Ipswich. The original building has been adapted and extended while the school's substantial campus has since expanded to contain a number of high quality buildings and sports facilities, across its landscaped grounds.

St Hilda's School makes an important contribution to the heritage of the Gold Coast through its architecture and history.

Surrey House - 159 Nerang Street, Southport, 4215



[Surrey House](#)

Located at the top of the hill of Nerang Street, Surrey House is a fine example of a substantial timber, colonial 'Queenslander' dwelling. Originally the elevated, single story dwelling was the heart of the Lather's farm, and home to one of only approximately 30 people residing in the Southport area in around the early 1880s.

Over time, several of the Lather and Cowderoy families lived in Surrey House through to the mid-1900s. Then with the surrounding farm land subdivided into residential lots and suffering some neglect, Dr Paul Larkin, a distant relative of John Cowderoy purchased the property in 1968.

The residence was renovated and adapted at the rear with an extension along with two cottages set to the side and rear of the house. The house was raised, enabling rooms underneath to accommodate a surgery for Dr Larkin and two other doctors.

Today Surrey House is a private residence which continues to provide as a specialist medical practice and has undergone further refurbishment by its current owners.

Surrey House also makes an important contribution to the heritage of the Gold Coast through its architecture and history.
