Shops, 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran

Heritage Place: Shops
Address: 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran

HO Reference: HO163
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 5 April 2024

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1889



Photograph of 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Location map and extent of HO163.

Heritage Group: Commercial
Heritage Type: Shop

Key Theme: Retailing and hospitality
Key Sub-theme: Serving local communities

Significance Level: Local

Controls:	☐	External paint controls	☐	Internal alteration controls	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Include on Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐	Outbuildings and fences not exempt
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	■	Solar energy system controls

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is significant. Specifically, the form, scale, detailing, materials, and fenestration of the pair of Victorian Italianate shops is of local significance. Later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is of historical significance as a pair of Victorian Italianate style shops constructed in 1889. Located on a busy suburban arterial road near the heart of Prahran, the shops are an outcome of commercial growth in Prahran during the 1880s land boom period, which saw the establishment of large and more impressive shop fronts along the busy strips of Chapel Street, Commercial Road, High Street and Malvern Road. Over their lifetime, the shops have housed a myriad of shopkeepers and businesses which serviced the local community. (Criterion A)

296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is of aesthetic significance as a pair of substantially intact Victorian Italianate style shops. The 1880s land boom period and Italianate style influences can be seen in their composition and heavy use of ornate detailing. Their modest lower-level detailing maintains its symmetrical layout with mirrored shopfronts that are visually distinguished by recessed entryways. One of the shops retains its original timber door with rectangular fanlights. The mirrored upper-level facade is highly ornamented, with arched timber sash windows, arched architrave, vermiculated keystone, and arched pediment with dentils, all with decorative mouldings capped off with an elaborate parapet. These features, along with retention of the original form and some original shopfront joinery, combine to create a visually pleasing exemplar of a late Victorian era commercial property. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is of historical significance as a pair of Victorian Italianate style shops constructed in 1889. Located on a busy suburban arterial road near the heart of Prahran, the shops are an outcome of commercial growth in Prahran during the 1880s land boom period, which saw the establishment of large and more impressive shop fronts along the busy strips of Chapel Street, Commercial Road, High Street and Malvern Road. Over their lifetime, the shops have housed a myriad of shopkeepers and businesses which serviced the local community.

B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is of aesthetic significance as a pair of substantially intact Victorian Italianate style shops. Boom period and Italianate style influences can be seen in their composition and heavy use of ornate detailing. Their modest lower-level detailing maintains its symmetrical layout with mirrored shopfronts that are visually distinguished by recessed entryways. One of the shops retains its original timber door with rectangular fanlights. The mirrored upper-level facade is highly ornamented, with arched timber sash windows, arched architrave, vermiculated keystone, and arched pediment with dentils, all with decorative mouldings capped off with an elaborate parapet. These features, along with retention of the original form and some original shopfront joinery, combine to create a visually pleasing exemplar of a late Victorian era commercial property. (Criterion E)
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran is an attached two-storey commercial building with ground floor shopfronts. The stuccoed masonry building is designed in the Victorian Italianate style, as seen in its composition and heavy use of ornate detailing of classical elements. The double hipped roof is clad with a corrugated sheet metal however it is obscured from view by the ornate front and side-stepped parapet. Two wide face brick corbelled chimneys extend from the main roof.

The highly ornate front façade is symmetrical across both shopfronts. At the ground level, the glazed shopfront layouts are mirrored. The layout of the fenestration and recessed centred entrances remains intact. While they are largely similar, the right shopfront appears to be slightly more intact having retained its original glazed timber door with raised panels. The rectangular fanlights of both entrances feature stylised numbering of the property address. The ground level lacks any decorative mouldings, in contrast to the highly ornate upper level. The cast-iron awning has been removed.

The upper-level façade begins above the level course with vermiculated end mouldings. The mirrored upper-level facade has centred paired arched timber sash windows. Each window is ornately detailed with aedicules consisting of expressed flanking pilasters supporting an arched architrave with a vermiculated keystone and pre-cast botanical mouldings. Fluted console brackets extend from the pilasters to support the expressed arched pediment with dentils. Larger fluted pilasters frame the bays leading to the elaborate parapet.

The parapet is characterised by an expressed cornice with moulded brackets and terminating vermiculated console brackets. The parapet is capped by a projecting archivolt with moulded numbering reading ‘1889’. The archivolt is flanked by two pedestals with cornices and a vermiculated face and moulded scroll devices.

The west elevation, which addresses Essex Street, lacks the elaborate ornamentation of the front façade. It includes simple rectangular sash and hopper windows. A two-storey later brick addition extends to the south. The bagged brick extension is laid with a stretcher bond and includes groups of hopper windows and a garage entrance.

The structure has no setback from both Malvern Road and Essex Street, and wholly occupies the property lot. The site is attached to a group of Victorian two-storey terraces to the east. The building is set within an area largely characterised by medium to high-density residential development, although it overlooks open spaces to its immediate east and north.

296-298 Malvern Road remains in use as a commercial property. The external render and paint on the west elevation fronting Essex Street appears to be in poor condition. However, the building is considered to be in good condition overall. The internal spaces are altered to suit the commercial use. The ground floor façade is considered to be of moderate integrity and the upper façade of high integrity.

- ### Alterations and Additions

- Cast-iron awning removed from the shopfronts (pre-1998).
- New glazed door added to 298 Malvern Road.
- Two-storey extension added to the south (rear)

- Some windows replaced with aluminum hopper windows on the east elevation of the original structure.
- Roof reclad with corrugated sheet metal.

History

• Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant, and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

European settlement in what would become the suburb of Prahran grew gradually following the 1849-1850 Crown Land Sales, which saw the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). George Langhorne, the Commissioner of an 1837 Aboriginal mission in the area south of the Yarra River around Punt Hill, called this area 'Pura-ra-ran', a compound of two Bunurong words believed to mean land partially surrounded by water (O'Callaghan 1922, 54). In 1840 the name was changed to Prahran for official use.

While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite following the 1840 Crown Land Sales, the majority of present-day Prahran, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands, was primarily purchased by land speculators. These areas were subsequently and re-sold for farming, industry and housing the working classes. The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). By 1856, the land encompassing Prahran was primarily characterised by a scattered series of timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments to the west of Williams Road, while land to the east and south remained undeveloped or in use as paddocks (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The area was also distinguished by its strong market garden character during this period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom, which spurred the replacement of many small, mid-nineteenth century cottages with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style terraces that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing brick manufacturing, food processing and textiles industries around Chapel

Street and Commercial Road. Additionally, upper-middle class enclaves and mansion estates in the formerly undeveloped area of eastern Prahran were also developed to house the wealthy settling adjacent to the suburb of Armadale (Malone 2000, 20). Comprising higher ground with no major drainage problems, this area attracted comparably wealthier residents (Malone 2003, 1). These transformations were also compounded by the construction of impressively detailed shops along Chapel Street, solidifying the strip as a popular retail and commercial centre by the late nineteenth century (Allom Lovell 2000, 45).

Pockets of the suburb continued to be used as a centre for small-scale manufacturing into the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Although business restructuring and trade liberalisation in the late twentieth century ultimately resulted in the closure and demolition of many of these factories, built remnants of this era can be seen at the c.1910 Former Kia-ora Cordial factory chimney at 181-187 High Street, Prahran and at the former milliner factory at Grattan Street, Prahran (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 95). Today, Prahran's working-class history is best represented through the relatively modest late nineteenth and early twentieth century single fronted cottages and dwellings that dominate the suburb's building stock. Meanwhile, traces of late nineteenth century middle-class residential development are best seen in the grand Victorian dwellings adjacent to Armadale along Grandview Grove.

- ## Place History

The land on which 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran currently sits, comprised Crown Portion 42 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor General's Department 1849). Consisting of 34.5 acres of land bounded by Chapel Street, Malvern Road, the line of present-day Bangs Street, and High Street, the allotment was purchased by George Augustus Robinson. Robinson was a colonial official and "Chief Protector of Aborigines" in both Tasmania and the Port Phillip District, in 1850 (Malone 2001, 1-2). Purchased as an investment, Robinson subdivided the lot into smaller allotments for re-sale, and by the mid-1850s most of the allotment had been partially re-sold (Surveyor General's Department 1856). Indeed, by 1856, the allotment was characterised by a scattering of cottages set on small allotments (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The land at 296-298 Malvern Road comprised a deeply setback building fronting Essex Road at this time (Surveyor General's Department 1856) (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. 1855 map showing the approximate location of present day shops at 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran (then occupied by another building with a deep setback) in red. Source: Public Record Office Victoria.

By 1888, a weatherboard building on Malvern Road on the east corner or Essex Street was erected for musician and music seller John Ayers (Prahran Rate Books, Prahran Ward). In 1889, Ayers replaced the small timber building with a substantial pair of two-storey buildings of nine rooms presently known as 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran (Prahan Rate Books, Prahan Ward). From this period, John Ayers used the building as a music warehouse along with Adele Ayers. The pair of buildings can be seen in an 1896 MMBW map. Noticeably, 298 Malvern Road, Prahran is longer and slightly narrower in form (MMBW 1896) (see Figure 2). Its extended length likely reflects the two-room extension that took place during the use of the building as a music warehouse (Prahran Rate Books, Prahran Ward). This extension, however, has since been removed.

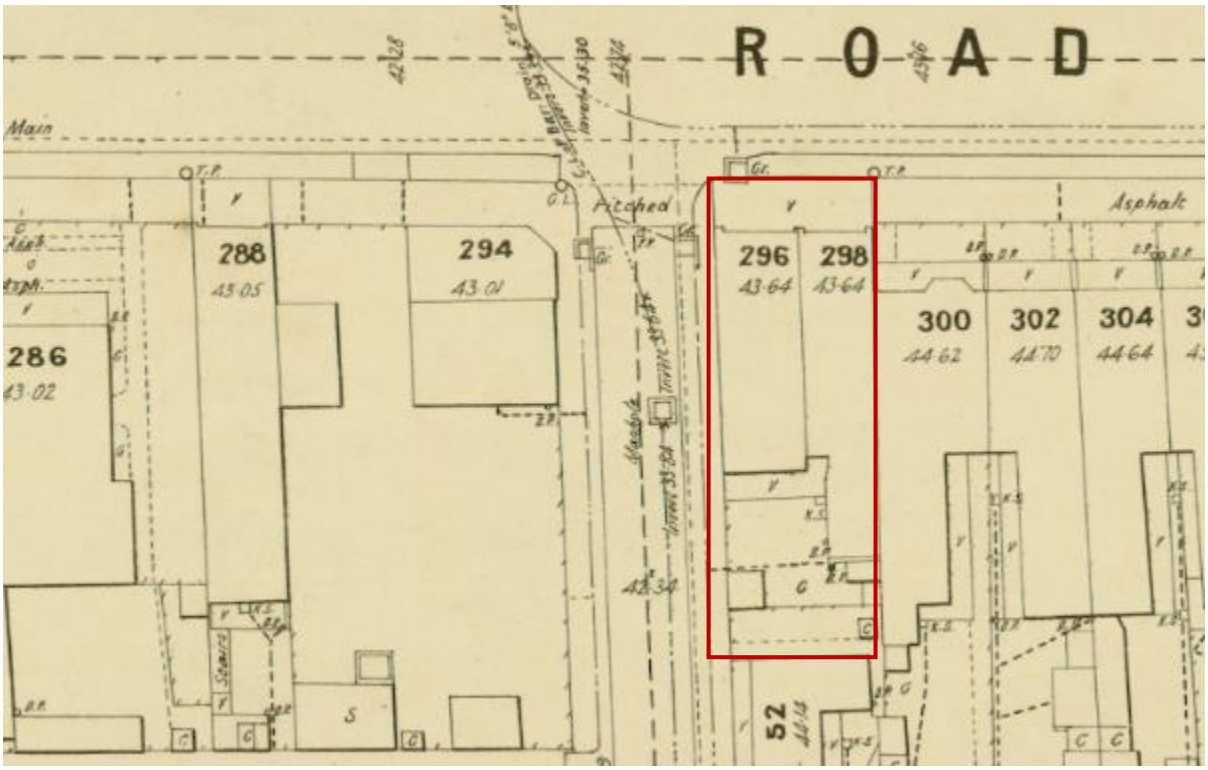


Figure 2. 1896 MMBW detail plan 959 showing 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran in red. *Source:* State Library of Victoria.

While John Ayers retained ownership of the building into the early twentieth century, records indicate that it was being rented out to musician and singing Professor George Webb in 1900, and subsequently to clothing manufacturer Charles Wright in 1910 (Prahran Rate Books, Prahan Ward). A changing series of businesses ran from 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran, for the next several decades, including as a bookseller and furniture retailer from 1910, Arthur Boardman's mechanic business known as Torpedo, Motor and Cycle Works from 1920, and Ernest Grunfeld's manufacturing business from around 1953 (Prahan Rate Books, Prahran Ward). Known alterations in the late twentieth century period include a two-storey rear brick addition by architects Genzer and Shepherd in 1963 (Prahran Building Inspection Cards 1963). Substantial alterations, including window alterations and removal of the shopfront awning, were made to the ground floor level in the late twentieth century. Today, the building remains in use for commercial purposes and is currently being occupied by an architectural firm.



Figure 3. c.1967 photograph of Malven Road depicting shops at 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran. *Source*: Stonington History Centre.

Comparative Analysis

Heavily ornamented, the pair of semi-detached two-storey Victorian Italianate style shops at 297-208 Malvern Road, Prahran is typical for commercial development that took place within the municipality during the 1880s land boom period. More embellished than their mid-Victorian predecessors, the influx of wealth during this period precipitated the development of impressive ornate shops along the busy commercial strips of High Street, Chapel Street and Malvern Road. Within the City of Stonnington, there are several contemporaneous boom era shops that directly compare to 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran in terms of style and level of detailing. These include:

- **Shops, 463-465 High Street, Prahran (HO426).** 463-465 High Street, Prahran, are comparable as an example of semi-detached, two-storey late Victorian era shops designed in the Victorian Italianate style. Although distinguished by its polychrome brickwork as opposed to a stucco render finish, the pair nevertheless share key similarities, including recessed entrances and highly ornate upper-level façades, including arched fenestration, and highly detailed parapets supported by prominent console brackets. The shopfront at 463 High Street has been entirely modernised except for its remnant decorative cast iron lacework. Both sets of shops have upper levels of high integrity and lower-level shopfronts of moderate integrity.
- **Shop, 256 High Street, Prahran (HO427).** This standalone shop at 256 High Street, Prahran, is comparable as an example of a Boom style commercial property with highly ornate stucco detailing. Key comparable features include largely intact upper levels with

timber sash windows, arched pediment with dentils, pilasters and an elaborate parapet with moulded ornamentation. As with 296-298 Malvern Road, the ground floor of 256 High Street has also been altered through the introduction of a new, though sympathetic, shopfront. Most of the original fabric has been removed from the ground floor façade, or substantially altered, except for the masonry plinths. The ornate detailing at 256 High Street, Prahran is arguably more impressive owing to its incorporation of a central pediment, expressed Corinthian pilasters and decorative balustrade.

- **60 Chapel Street, Windsor (significant in HO126 Chapel Street Precinct).** The corner shop at 60 Chapel Street is another comparable example of a two-storey boom era shop. Formerly known as 'Corner J. T. Moffitt House,' it is designed in the Italianate style. Key comparable features include recessed entryway on the ground levels, an ornamented upper-level façade with arched timber sash windows, pediment with dentils and pilasters. Chapel Street has a 1930s shopfront with an original cast iron corner column, metal frame, black tile stallboard, pressed metal soffit and tiled floor entry along with double glazed timber doors. Unlike Malvern Road, screen doors have been added on the exterior of the recessed entryway and glazing has been added to the side elevation. The two are comparable in terms of integrity, having altered ground floors and highly intact upper floors.

The above comparative analysis demonstrates that the shops at 296-298 Malvern Road, Prahran are characteristic of late Victorian boom era shops currently included on the Heritage Overlay. They are not only directly comparable to similar examples in terms of style and detailing, but also maintain comparable levels of integrity and intactness, as exemplified by similar examples with highly ornamented and intact upper floors and altered ground floor shop fronts.

References

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

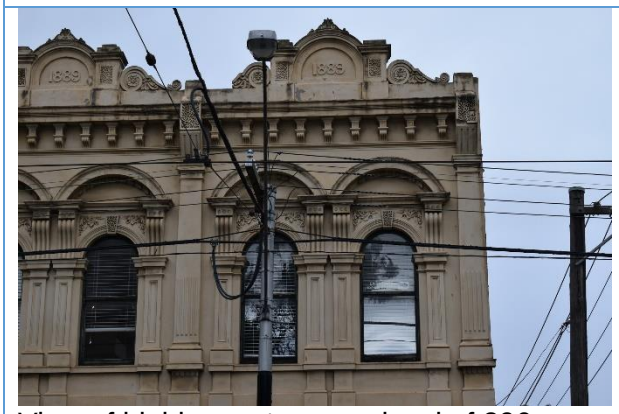
Images



Overview of the property from Malvern Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



View of 296 Malvern Road shopfront with original glazed timber door (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



View of highly ornate upper level of 296 Malvern Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



View of highly ornate upper level of 298 Malvern Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



View of 298 Malvern Road shopfront with new glazed door (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).

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