Leila Street Precinct, 9-31 Leila Street, Prahran

Heritage Place: Leila Street Precinct
Address: 9-31 Leila Street, Prahran

HO Reference: HO785
Citation status: Draft
Date Updated:5 April 2024

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Uknown

Year of Construction: c. 1885-1889



Photograph of the Leila Street Precinct.
Source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.



Location map and extent of the Leila Street Precinct.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Residential precinct

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

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 Leila Street Precinct, comprising a group of twelve Victorian-era cottage dwellings on Leila Street, is locally significant.

The precinct is characterised only by contributory properties. Refer to the grading maps below for designations.

Character elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The distinctive pattern of the 1870 Leila Street subdivision, and subsequent c. 1886-1888 development created by the group of Victorian era cottages sited close together on narrow allotments;
- A high degree of integrity and visual homogony stemming from all structures being constructed in same period with no infill development;
- The regularity and harmony of the Victorian-era cottages characterised as freestanding structures with a single-storey presentation to the street, modest single fronted façades with either an exposed projecting gable roof form or hipped rooves clad with corrugated sheet metal, bullnosed or convex verandahs with corrugated sheet metal, turned and square timber posts and cast iron lacework, corbels and brackets, timber weatherboard cut to appear like stone blockwork, paired pendant eave brackets, single timber sash windows, and polychrome brick chimneys;
- The retention of original or sympathetic, low to medium height timber picket fencing.

Later alterations and additions to the properties are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Leila Street Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Leila Street Precinct is historically significant as an intact collection of Victorian-era weatherboard and brick masonry cottages constructed during the height of Melbourne's 1880s land boom, which ushered in a period of intense and far-reaching growth and development in Melbourne's metropolitan suburbs. The Leila Street Precinct represents this historical wave of development as a highly intact collection of working-class cottages constructed to accommodate and house the rapidly expanding industrial workforce who were taking residency in Prahran in the late nineteenth century. (Criterion A)

The Leila Street Precinct is aesthetically significant as a visually cohesive and homogenous collection of residential workers cottages, comprising twelve single-storey Victorian weatherboard cottages and brick duplexes. The residences are of high integrity as a group and demonstrate consistent built form and materiality, detailing, property sizes, heights, scale, and setbacks. These features, as well as the intact polychrome brick masonry chimneys and the sympathetic low to medium height timber picket fencing, make for a visually consistent residential streetscape. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Leila Street Precinct is historically significant as an intact collection of Victorian-era weatherboard and brick masonry cottages constructed during the height of Melbourne's 1880s land boom, which ushered in a period of intense and far-reaching growth and development in Melbourne's metropolitan suburbs. The Leila Street Precinct represents this historical wave of development as a highly intact collection of working-class cottages constructed to accommodate and house the rapidly expanding industrial workforce who were taking residency in Prahran in the late nineteenth century.
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*	The Leila Street Precinct is aesthetically significant as a visually cohesive and homogenous collection of residential workers cottages, comprising twelve single-storey Victorian weatherboard cottages and brick duplexes. The residences are of high integrity as a group and demonstrate consistent built form and materiality, detailing, property sizes, heights, scale, and setbacks. These features, as well as the intact polychrome brick masonry chimneys and the sympathetic low to medium height timber picket fencing, make for a visually consistent residential streetscape.
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*	This place does not meet this criterion.

	social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions	
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

The Leila Street Precinct consists of a group of twelve late nineteenth century, late-Victorian workers' cottages. The group is situated along the southern side of Leila Street, which extends west from York Street, turning south and terminating at Murray Street. Leila Street is a narrow 7.3 metre-wide street with on-street parking, bluestone kerbing and guttering, and juvenile maple street plantings.

The residences along Leila Street consist of a group of both freestanding and duplex single-storey Late Victorian workers cottages. The majority of the residences consist of rectilinear weatherboard freestanding cottages. Six of these residences are built with a front-facing gables clad in corrugated metal sheeting, some with decorative bargeboards and all with verandahs clad in the same metal sheeting. Two of the freestanding abide by an earlier late-Victorian workers' cottage design with a hipped roof rather than a gable, with turned timber corbels in the eaves. Four residences are part of two separate, brick masonry, double-fronted late-Victorian duplexes. These duplexes, at 9-11 and 29-31 Leila Street, are the only brick masonry residences in the precinct.

The residences on Leila Street have a consistent setback from the street, allowing for a narrow front garden. Street boundaries are demarcated by medium-to-low timber picket fences with some examples of twisted wire fencing, with some built with painted brick bases. The residences are set on narrow, long properties of a consistent. There are no garages or carports, and all rear portions of the houses are well concealed from the street save for No. 31, which has its western elevation fronting York Street.

Overall, the Leila Street Precinct presents as a collection of highly intact and visually cohesive late-Victorian timber weatherboard workers' cottages and brick masonry double-fronted duplexes with a consistent form, scale, setbacks, roof profiles and materiality. All front façades are largely intact, and all chimneys constructed using polychromatic brick masonry are still present. All verandahs are intact and share a largely consistent form, most still retaining their original wrought iron lacework. Despite some minor alterations and variations in boundary fences, the Leila Street precinct presents an overall strong and consistent streetscape. The Leila Street Precinct is considered to be in good condition overall with high integrity.

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 the Leila Street Precinct is located was first subdivided as Lot 43 and sold to W. and J. Payne in the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales. The partnership was associated with the wealthy pastoralist Payne family, who would construct in 1856 the substantial mansion 'Maritimo' in South Yarra. Thomas Payne, who emigrated to Melbourne in 1839, is recorded as one of richest Australians in history.

Lot 43 was subdivided for residential development in 1870, and Leila Street was formed. An advertisement in The Argus October 1870 published that:

> *'AUCTIONEER'S NOTICE. - THE SALE of 74 BUILDING ALLOTMENTS, situate in Williams-road, Ross [Murray], York and Leila Streets, Prahran, advertised to take place this day at three o'clock p.m., is unavoidably POSTPONED until Tuesday, October 25, at three o'clock p.m., on the ground.'* (The Argus, 18 Oct. 1870, 2).

Though the auction was announced for the sale of property on Leila Street in 1870, the street is not recorded in the Prahran Rate Books till 1882, and then only partially developed. Additionally, the Sands and McDougall Street Directories in 1885 still do not record a fully developed street, with only six buildings recorded on the southern side of the street.

By 1889, the Prahran Rate Books record a fully developed street with all properties in the precinct present. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plan for 1896 further records the precinct, showing the twelve cottages. The street is still a residential street.

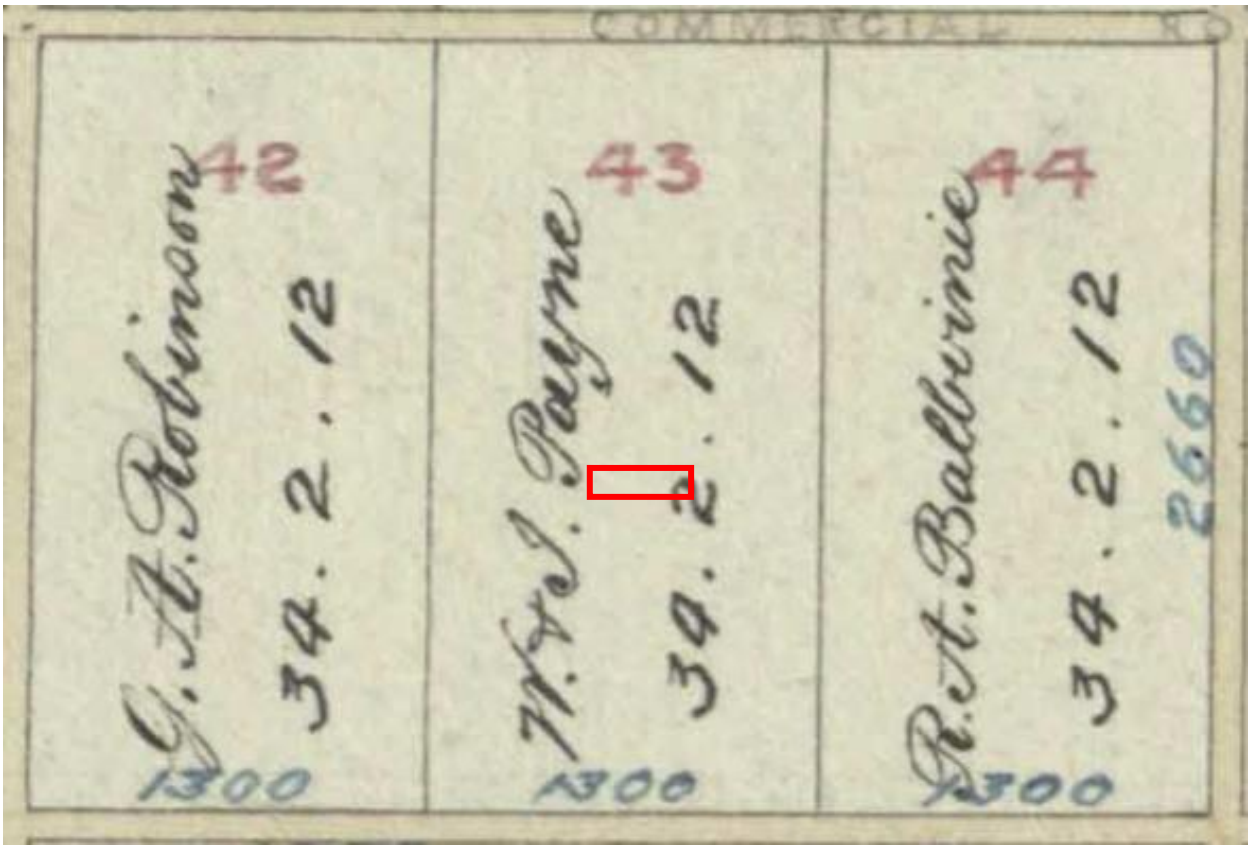


Figure 1. 1865 map showing the approximate location of the Leila Street Precinct, Prahran, (then vacant) in red. Source: State Library of Victoria.

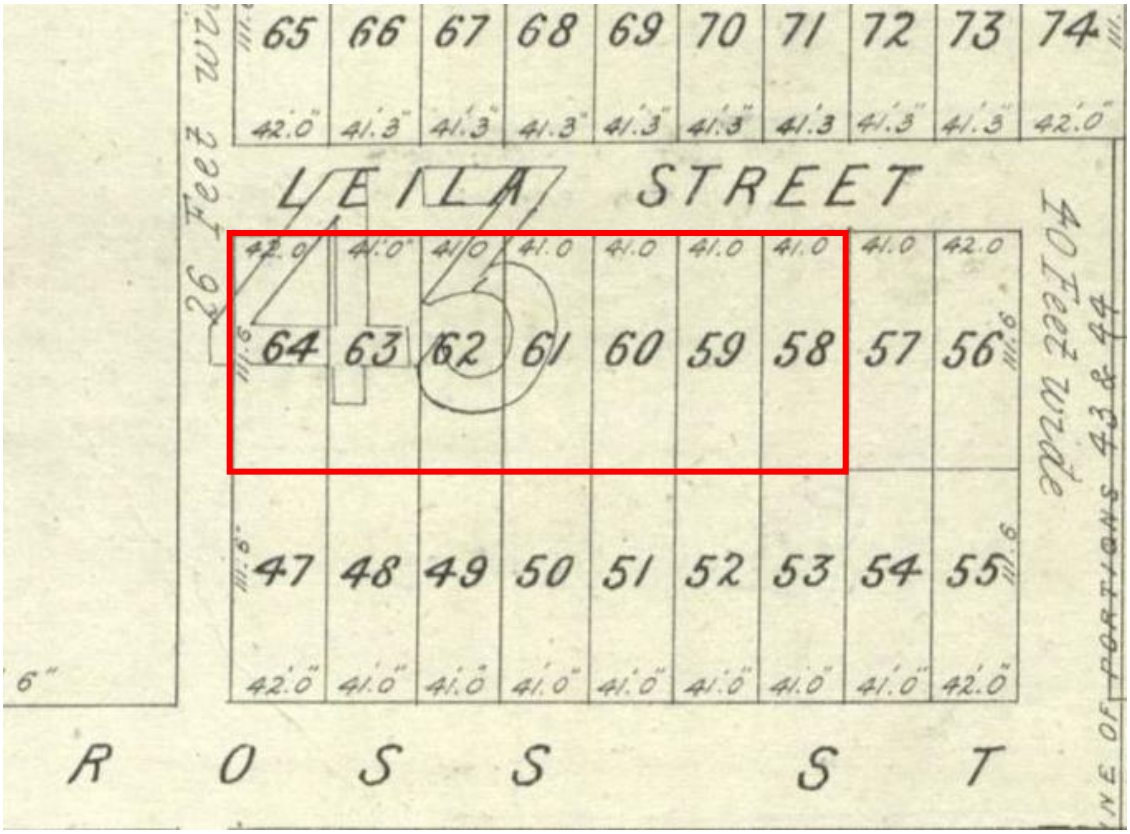


Figure 2. Leila Street subdivision plan, with the precinct marked in red. Source: *Plan of building lots, being subdivision of part of portions 43 & 44, parish of Prahran [cartographic material]./ George Wharton, Surveyor, Melbourne.* (1870). Melbourne: Fergusson & Mitchell, Lith.

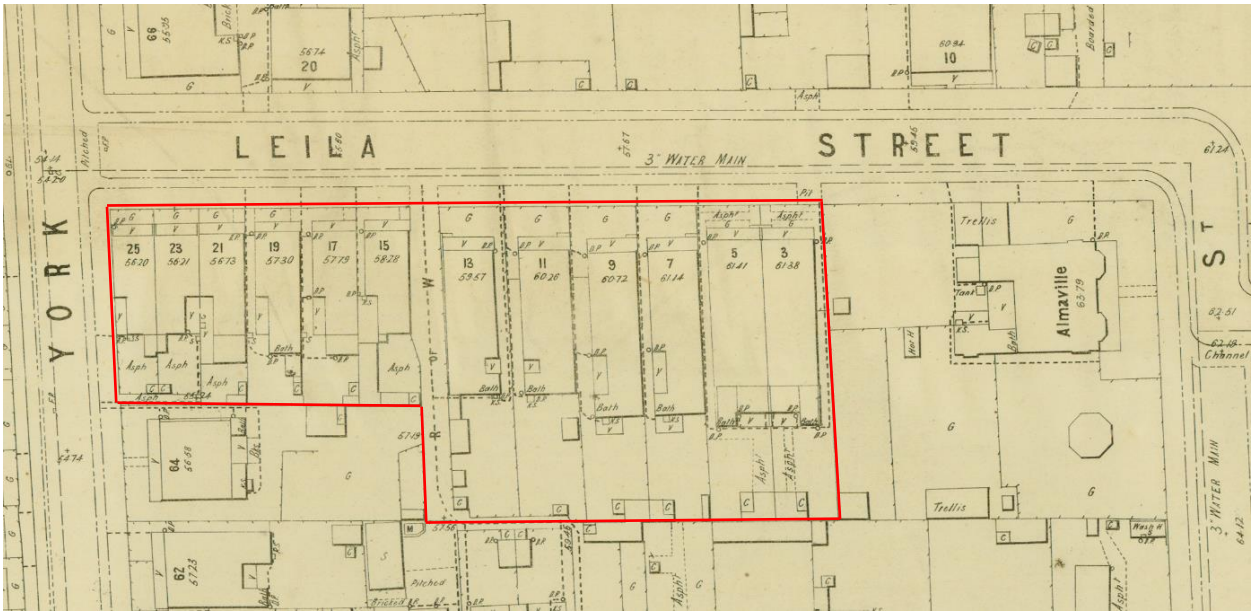


Figure 3. 1896 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plan, showing the precinct marked in red. Source: *Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works detail plan. 984, Prahran [cartographic material].* (1896). Melbourne: MMBW.

Comparative Analysis

In the late nineteenth century, following the subdivision of Prahran and surrounding suburbs in 1849-1850 and the subsequent mass migration and growth that followed the commencement of the Victorian Gold Rush, Prahran like many other metropolitan suburbs experienced levels of development which were physically characterised by high density workers cottages and duplexes. Within the City of Stonnington, precincts comprising rows of workers cottages and single-storey terraces are well represented, marking the 1870s and 1880s boom-era which swept Melbourne before impending economic crash of the 1890s.

In the City of Stonnington, comparable precincts include:

- **Bowen Street Precinct (HO124).** The Bowen Street Precinct comprises intact streetscapes of freestanding Victorian cottages, predominantly constructed in weatherboard. The Bowen Street Precinct shares similarities to the Leila Street Precinct in terms of its visual harmony stemming from consistency and homogeny in building forms, heights, setbacks, materials and detailing. Of the two, Bowen Street is somewhat more intact owing to the greater retention of original detailing, materials and finishes. Additionally, the Bowen Street Precinct is also comparatively larger in scale than the Leila Street Precinct and includes buildings on both sides of the street. However, Leila Street is still of comparable significance due to its high integrity and consistent form.
- **Aberdeen Street Precinct (HO121).** The Aberdeen Street Precinct comprises a small group of modest Victorian weatherboard and masonry workers cottages characterised by masonry corbelled chimneys, verandahs with cast iron lacework, timber framed sash windows, and front-facing gable ends with finials. While it differs to the nominated area in terms of its dense character, illustrative of the high-density residential development which characterised working class metropolitan areas in the late nineteenth century, it nevertheless draws similarities in terms of degree of integrity, visual consistency and form, building materials being both weatherboard or brick, as well as the retention of original detailing including chimneys and verandahs.
- **Wrights Terrace Precinct (HO369).** The Wrights Terrace Precinct comprises a varied streetscape of late nineteenth and early twentieth century workers cottages ranging from single-storey, single-fronted timber cottages to more modest double-fronted villas. While more varied than the Leila Street Precinct due to variations in form and detailing, it nevertheless compares in terms of its streetscape rhythm, setbacks, scale and materials. It shares a similar degree of integrity to the Leila Street Precinct, however a number of dwellings have lost their original verandah lacework and fencing is inconsistent – unlike on Leila Street. Regardless, both precincts are comparable as two examples of high density working class developments in Prahran during Victoria's boom-era.

The above comparative analysis illustrates the degree of representation Prahran and the City of Stonnington more broadly has with regards to boom-era Late Victorian residential cottage precincts. However, it also highlights how intact the Leila Street precinct is in comparison with similar sites in the City of Stonnington. This reflects the significance of the precinct as a highly intact, small but visually cohesive boom-era cottage precinct.

Precinct Map



Grading Table

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria's Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

Note: the Style/era column follows the architectural style categories set out in Heritage Victoria's HERMES Orion heritage database and does not necessarily reflect the date of construction. For details on construction era(s) where available, refer to the Place History section.

Street address	*Place type*	*Style/era*	*Grading*
9 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
11 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
13 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
15 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
17 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
19 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
21 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
23 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
25 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
27 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
29 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
31 Leila Street, Prahran	Residential	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C

References

Advertising (1870, October 18). *The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, p. 2.

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Division of Survey and Mapping. c. 1850. *Plan of Allotments at St. Kilda and Prahran For Sale on the 15th May 1850*. Historic Plan Collection. Public Records Office Victoria.

Malone, Betty. 2000. *Discovery Prahran, Area 3*. Prahran: Prahran Historical & Arts Society.

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Plan of building lots, being subdivision of part of portions 43 & 44, parish of Prahran [cartographic material]./ george Wharton, Surveyor, Melbourne. (1870). Melbourne: Fergusson & Mitchell, Lith.

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Stonnington City Council. 2008. Heritage Citation Report: Aberdeen Street Precinct, Prahran, Hermes ID 30699. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2009. Heritage Citation Report: Wrights Terrace Precinct, Prahran, Hermes ID 43879. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Surveyor-General's Department. 1849. *Plan or Portions measured in the Parish of Prahran, County or Bourke*. Survey Plan. Historic Plan Collection VPRS8168. Public Record Office Victoria.

Surveyor-General's Department. 1856. *Prahran Municipality*. Map. Historic Plan Collection VPRS8168. Public Record Office Victoria.

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.

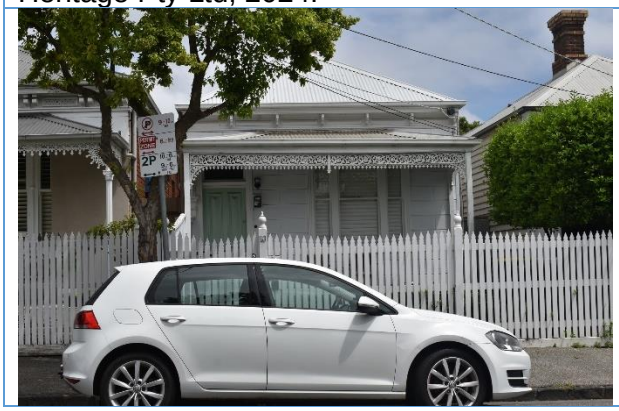
Images



Oblique view of 9 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024.

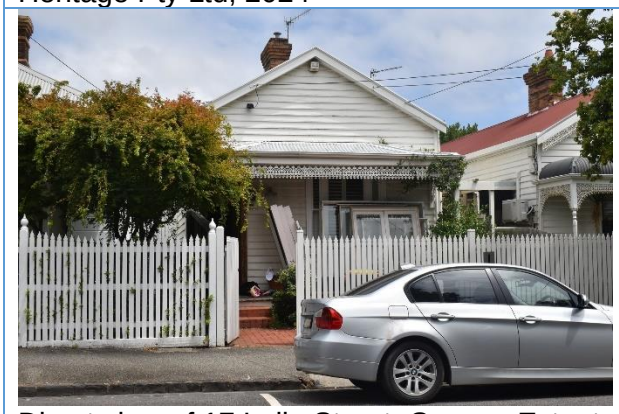


Oblique view of 11 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024





Direct view of 13 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 15 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 17 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 19 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 21 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 23 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 25 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024

Direct view of 27 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 29 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024



Direct view of 31 Leila Street. *Source*: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2024

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