

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Joseph Tarry Houses

Other names: -

Citation No:

2418

INSERT MAP



Address: 149 & 151 Argyle Street and 1 Queen Street, St Kilda East

Category: Residential: House

Style: Victorian

Constructed: 1872 and 1876

Designer: Joseph Tarry (builder)

Amendment: TBC

Comment: New citation

Heritage Precinct: Not applicable

Heritage Overlay: TBC

Graded as: Significant

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Significance

What is significant?

The attached houses at 149 & 151 Argyle Street, built 1872, and the detached house at 1 Queen Street, built 1876, are significant. The houses were all constructed for, and presumably by, Joseph Tarry.

149 & 151 Argyle Street are an attached pair of single storey timber houses. The surviving original format is composed of an undivided transverse gable roof section shared by both dwellings, separate skillion roof rear wings aligned to the outside boundaries, and a full width front verandah (though the extant fabric is not original and the original detail is unknown). The roof is clad in corrugated sheet metal and the walls in weatherboards. The façade compositions are mirrored, with one window and one door to each dwelling. Windows to the original sections are timber double hung sashes, with multipaned upper and lower sashes divided into six by narrow timber glazing bars and retaining some original glazing. The windows to the front have moulded architraves and those to the Queen Street side have plain architraves. Above the doors (which likely date to the early 20th century) are multipaned highlights. Two brick chimneys with corbelled caps survive at the rear.

1 Queen Street is a single storey freestanding timber house. The surviving original format is composed of a transverse gable roof section with an asymmetrical pitch and a full width front verandah. The roof is clad in corrugated sheet metal and there is a chimney at the rear. The walls are clad in weatherboards, including some which are shingled (the latter probably a later introduction). The façade has a symmetrical composition with a window either side of a central door. Above the door there is a highlight.

Alterations and additions are not significant. The current paint colour schemes are not significant.

How is it significant?

The attached houses at 149 & 151 Argyle Street and the house at 1 Queen Street, St Kilda East, are of local historical and representative significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The houses are historically significant for their association with an early phase of development in the St Kilda East area which accelerated following the 1859 introduction of the railway. By the 1870s, modest timber houses proliferated in pockets of St Kilda East and Balaclava, particularly on the lower lying land to the south of Argyle Street known as the 'Balaclava Flats', contrasting with more substantial houses on nearby surrounding higher ground. They were originally part of a group of seven timber houses of various sizes built for, and presumably by, bricklayer/builder Joseph Tarry who in 1871 purchased half an acre of land bounded by Chapel, Argyle and Queen streets and developed it over the ensuing five years. The houses are amongst the earliest surviving in Balaclava/St Kilda East and a now comparatively small number dating from pre-1880. (Criterion A)

The houses are of representative significance as uncommon examples of modest pre-1880 timber houses in the municipality, of which many were built (particularly in the St Kilda East/Balaclava area) but few survive. 149 & 151 Argyle Street are one of only two known surviving pre-1880 paired examples in the St Kilda East/Balaclava area, the others being located opposite at 2 and 4 Queen Street. Although altered, like early surviving timber cottages almost invariably are, they largely retain their original formats and where fabric has been replaced it has generally been in a similar manner or in keeping with the character/period. Typical of the period, they have symmetrical façade compositions, transverse gable roofs, brick chimneys and full width front verandahs. 149 & 151 Argyle Street are an unusual early paired example that share an undivided roof, whereas the freestanding double-fronted house at 1 Queen Street conforms to a more typical format. (Criterion D)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.1 Early dwellings, 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.2 Workers and artisan housing)

History

Contextual history

The development of St Kilda began following the first land sales in 1842 and by 1854 there were over two hundred houses. The plan compiled in 1855 by James Kearney shows that most of these were situated to the west of Brighton Road (later High Street and now St Kilda Road). The St Kilda East and Balaclava areas by comparison, were largely undeveloped, particularly east of Chapel Street.

In 1859, the railway to Brighton was opened, spurring subdivision and development in the St Kilda East and Balaclava areas. Throughout the 19th century, modest timber cottages proliferated in pockets of St Kilda East and Balaclava, particularly on the lower lying land known as the 'Balaclava Flats', contrasting with more substantial houses on nearby surrounding higher ground.

149 & 151 Argyle Street and 1 Queen Street

The subject sites formed part of Crown Allotment 138A Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke. The approximately 5-acre allotment was purchased in the 1850s (probably 1853 or 1854) by E De Carle and H Holmes. In or by 1854, the allotment was subdivided and land containing the subject sites was purchased by John Green (CM).

The Kearney plan of 1855 (Figure 1) shows that Queen Street and the short section of Argyle Street east of Chapel Street had been formed and there was some sparse development. The 1864 Cox plan (Figure 2) shows some limited further development in the vicinity. Both plans show the subject sites vacant.

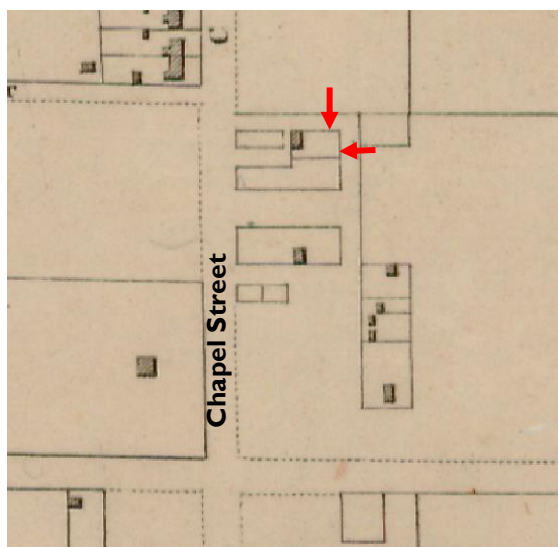


Figure 1 - Plan dated 1855 'Melbourne and its suburbs' compiled by James Kearney. Figure 2 - Plan dated 1864 'Hobson Bay and River Yarra leading to Melbourne' surveyed by Henry L Cox. (Source: State Library of Victoria)

In May 1871, a parcel of land containing the subject sites was acquired by bricklayer Joseph Tarry of 289 Lygon Street Carlton (CT). In the same year, Tarry also acquired adjacent land parcels, bringing the total to approximately half an acre bounded by Chapel, Argyle and Queen streets. Over the ensuing five years, Tarry proceeded to develop this land with seven weatherboard dwellings, presumably constructing them himself.

By October 1871, Tarry had erected a weatherboard house for himself and new wife Elizabeth fronting Chapel Street (situated at current day no. 18), which was described in the rate book for January 1872 (entry no. 766) as having six rooms with a NAV of £40. Joseph and Elizabeth named their house *Bideford Cottage* (after Elizabeth's hometown in Devon) and they lived there until the late 1880s (Age 10 Oct 1874 p4).

During 1872, Tarry built two pairs of attached weatherboard cottages, including the subject pair in Argyle Street. These four dwellings were first recorded in the rate book for November 1872 (entry nos 798 to 802). The subject pair were described as three-roomed with a NAV of £16 each, and occupied by tenants William Alison, carpenter, and Frederick Holt, draper. Throughout the 19th century, the subject pair had a high turnover of tenants, with occupants rarely staying more than a couple of years. The other pair (sited at current day nos 145 and 147) were larger, having four rooms, with a NAV of £20 each.

The Vardy plan of 1873 (Figure 3) shows the aforementioned houses associated with Joseph Tarry, including the subject pair (nos 127 and 128 on the plan), the adjacent pair (nos 125 and 126 on the plan) and *Bideford Cottage* (no. 111 on the plan).

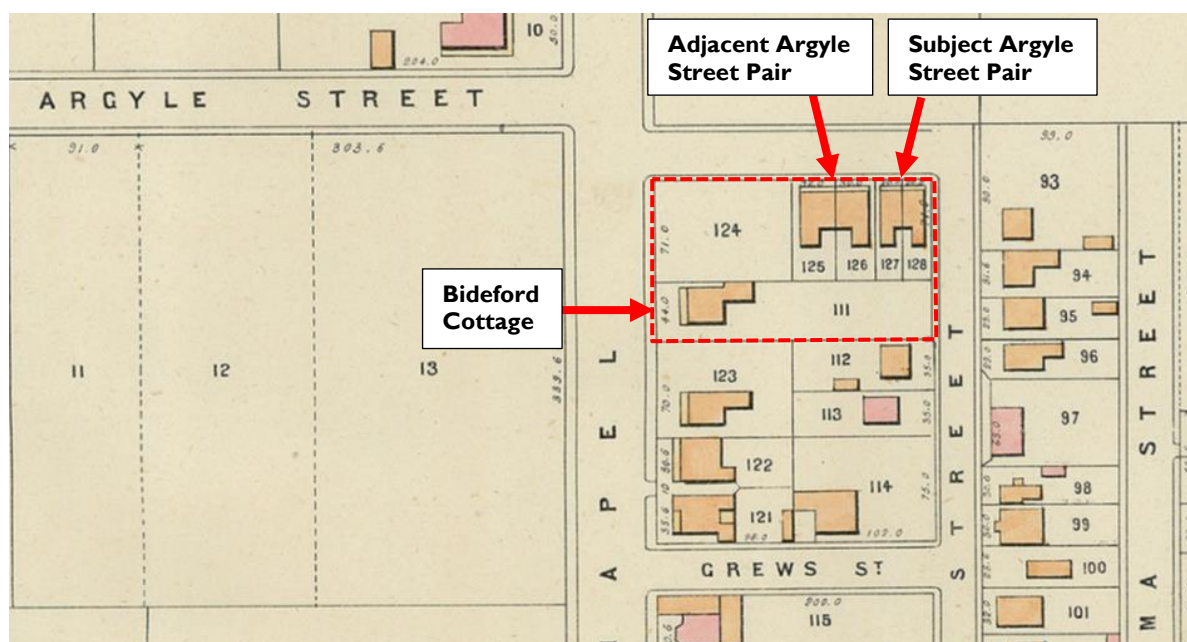


Figure 3 - Plan of the Borough of St Kilda, North Ward No. 6 (J.E.S. Vardy, 1873). The houses associated with Joseph Tarry are indicated. Timber buildings are shaded orange and brick buildings are shaded pink. (Source: St Kilda Historical Society)

In 1874, Tarry built another weatherboard house in Chapel Street, at the corner with Argyle Street, with five rooms and a NAV of £42 (1874 RB entry no. 812). It can be seen on the 1897 MMBW plan.

Lastly, in 1876, Tarry built the subject cottage in Queen Street. It was first recorded in the rate book for December 1876 (entry no. 867). It was described as four-roomed and weatherboard with a NAV of £18 and occupied by clergyman C B Fairey. It can be seen on the 1897 MMBW plan.

In October 1888, the four Argyle Street cottages (on land measuring 100 feet to Argyle Street and 70 feet to Queen Street), together with a right of carriage way over a 10-foot wide rear lane accessed via Queen Street, were acquired by the Langridge Mutual Permanent Building Society of 64 Smith Street Collingwood (CT). Subsequently, in December 1889, the Queen Street cottage (on land measuring 25 feet to Queen Street and 70 feet deep) was also acquired by the Langridge Mutual Permanent Building Society (CT).

The 1897 MMBW plan shows all seven of Tarry's houses. The subject Argyle Street pair, then numbered 3 and 4, had mirror image 'L' shaped footprints, full width front verandahs and small recessed rear verandahs, and outbuildings containing water closets in the rear yard. The subject Queen Street cottage had an approximately square footprint with an attached rear section, a full width front verandah and rear verandah, and a freestanding water closet in the rear yard.

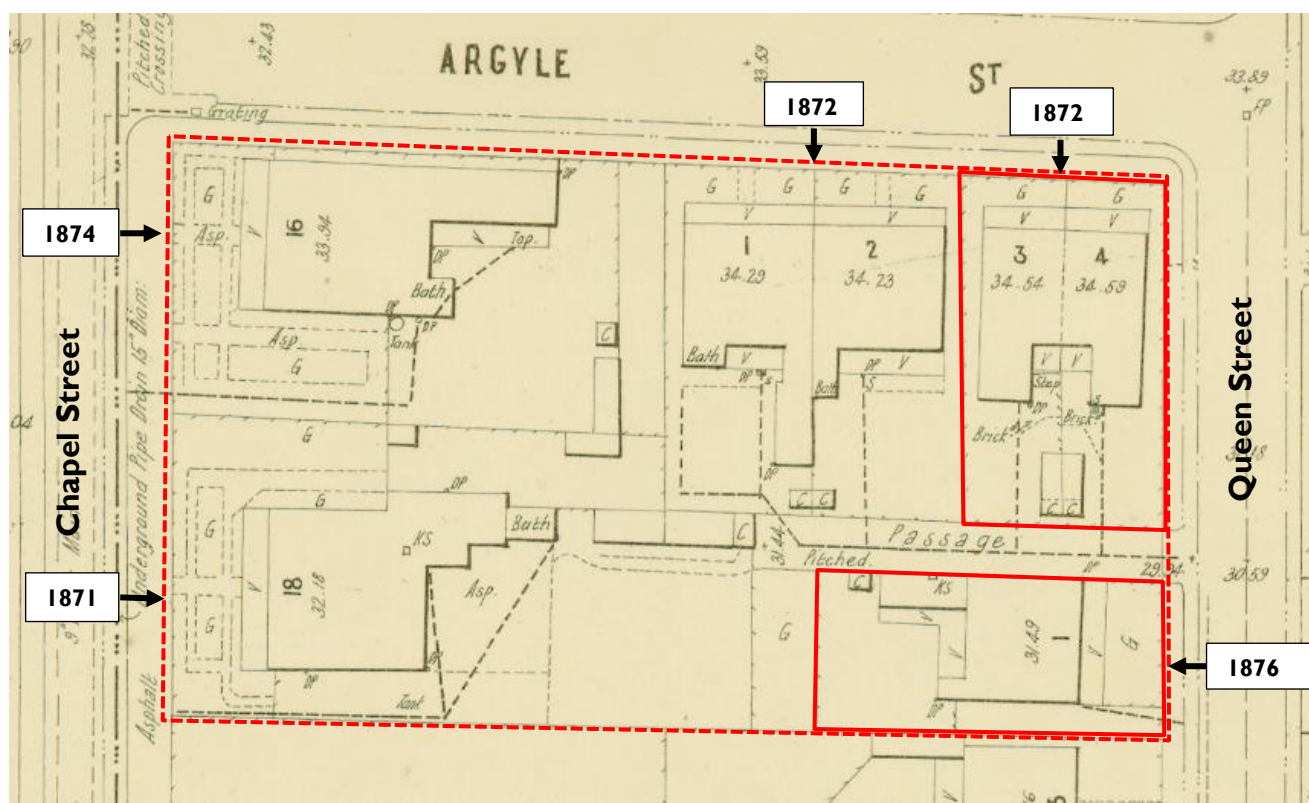


Figure 4 - MMBW Detail Plan No. 1423 (dated 1897), showing the subject pair (red solid line) and the other four dwellings owned/built by Joseph Tarry in the 1870s (red dashed line).

In 1903, the parcel associated with 149-151 Argyle Street was excised from the adjacent land to the west when it was purchased by Angelo Piezzi of 17 Foster Street, St Kilda (CT). Piezzi, who was originally from Switzerland, died the following year in 1904 (Argus 3 Sep 1904 p9).

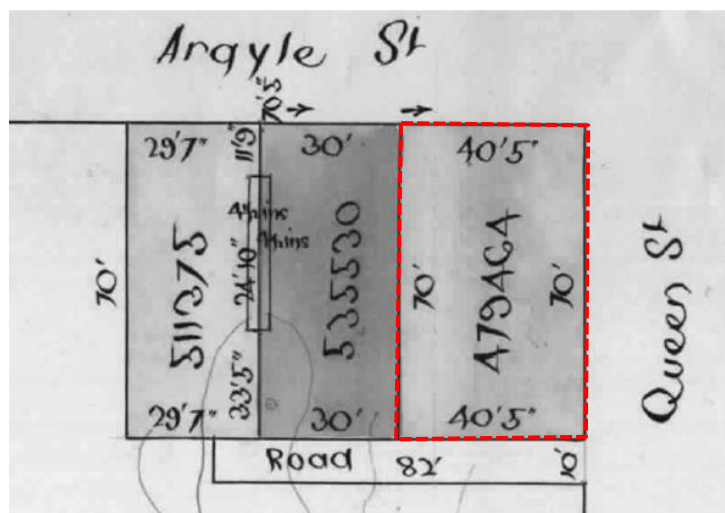


Figure 5 - Certificate of Title Vol. 2160 Fol. 824, showing the 1903 excision of the parcel associated with 149-151 Argyle Street.

The subject cottages can be seen in the 1945 aerial photograph below, with building footprints consistent with those shown on the earlier 1897 MMBW plan. The other four dwellings associated with Tarry can also be seen.



Figure 6 - Aerial photograph dated 1945, showing the subject houses (red solid line) and the other four dwellings owned/built by Joseph Tarry in the 1870s (red dashed line). (Source: Landata, Proj No 5, Run 17E, Frame 58013)

In 1944, a photograph (Figure 7) of the subject Argyle Street pair accompanied a story in the *Herald* newspaper, detailing an unusual incident whereby an erroneous for lease advertisement led to the occupants of no.151 being inundated with keen would-be applicants calling at the house (*Herald* 29 Jan 1944 p3). The photograph shows that the front verandah was altered during the Interwar period with the introduction of fluted columns atop masonry piers (replacing earlier posts). It also shows other details of the house at that time, including a front central chimney (now removed) and a timber picket fence to the front boundary.

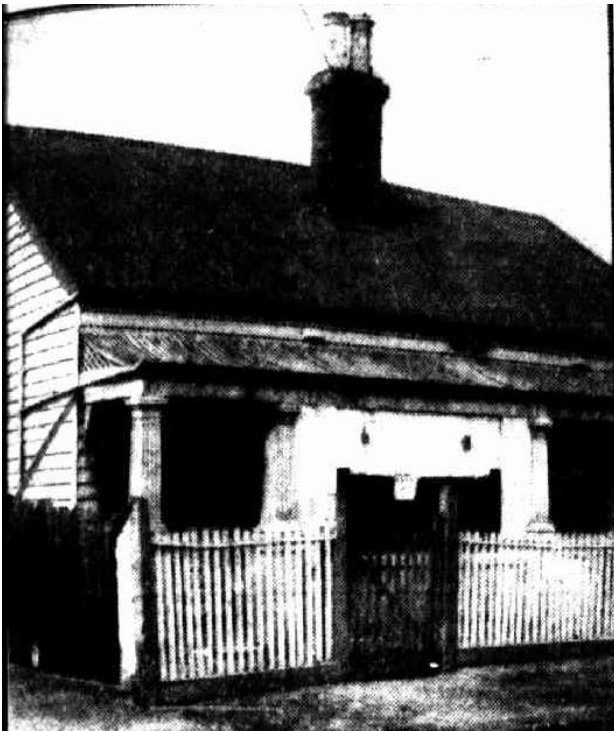


Figure 7 - Photograph of 149-151 Argyle Street in 1944. Note: there was a blind was hanging in the central part of the verandah at the time of the photograph. (Source: *Herald*, 29 Jan 1944, p3)

The subject properties changed hands multiple times throughout the 20th century. The subject Argyle Street pair were consistently transferred together.

During the mid-20th century, four of the seven dwellings associated with Joseph Tarry were replaced; the two Chapel Street houses were replaced with flats and the larger Argyle Street pair were replaced with houses.

Joseph Tarry

Joseph Tarry was born in Northamptonshire, England, in 1812, and migrated to Australia at the age of 40 in 1853 with his first wife Penelope and two of his children. Tarry's occupation was recorded as a bricklayer in the 1841 and 1851 English censuses, and he continued to work as such after his arrival in Australia. Tarry died in 1892 in Heidelberg when he was described in probate records as a retired builder.

References

Cooper, J.B., 1931, *The History of St Kilda. From its settlement to a city and after. 1840 to 1930*, Volume 2

Certificates of title (CT) Vol. 361 Fol. 128; Vol. 406 Fol. 082; Vol. 414 Fol. 790; Vol. 447 Fol. 333; Vol. 2160 Fol. 824; Vol. 2160 Fol. 824; Vol. 2958 Fol. 439 1st Edition; Vol. 2958 Fol. 439 2nd Edition.

Newspapers, various

Cartographic Material (CM): 'Pahran sections 137 a & b & 138 a & b', hand-drawn map copied 22nd March 1854, held in the Vale collection at the State Library of Victoria.

Parish Plan - at Elwood, Parish of Prahran, P81-13 (PP)

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH), February 2021

Sands and McDougall's street directories (SM)

St Kilda Rate Books (RB) 1859-1900 viewed at Ancestry.com

Description

The subject sites are adjacent to each other, albeit they front different streets.

149-151 Argyle Street

This is a rectangular site located on the south side of Argyle Street containing a pair of single storey attached weatherboard houses. The pair are similarly presented and developed, a result of having always been in common ownership.

The main building footprint largely survives consistent with the MMBW plan from 1897. It is comprised of an undivided transverse gable roof section which is shared by both houses, with separate skillion roof rear wings aligned to the outside boundaries. The small rear verandahs shown on the MMBW plan have been infilled. Further to the rear are mid-20th century weatherboard additions which may partly comprise the earlier, smaller outbuildings shown in this location on the MMBW plan.

The roof is clad in short sections of corrugated sheet metal. It is likely that the original roofing material was corrugated sheet metal. Two brick chimneys with corbelled caps survive to rear skillion wings. A third brick chimney had been centrally located in the front face of the roof (evident in the 1944 photograph) but was removed in the latter half of the 20th century.

The walls are clad in horizontally oriented weatherboards. In the gable end to Queen Street the weatherboards (evident in the 1944 photograph) have been replaced with battened metal sheeting.

The façades compositions are mirrored, with one window and one door to each dwelling. All visible windows to the original sections are timber double hung sashes, with multipaned upper and lower sashes divided into six by narrow timber glazing bars and retaining some original panes. The windows to the front have moulded architraves and those to the Queen Street side have plain architraves. The west side windows are not visible from the street. The front doors are obscured by security screens but Real Estate photos show them to be early 20th century timber panelled types with glazed sections. Above the doors are multipaned highlights.

The full width front verandah is supported by non-original turned timber posts. The verandah roof is clad in corrugated sheet metal, and comparison with the 1944 photograph suggests that the pitch has been lowered. The brick dividing wall with arched niche appears to be a later alteration (c.1970s). The decks are concrete.

The front garden of no. 151 has low plantings, while no.149 contains a palm tree and a coniferous tree, neither of which appear in the 1945 aerial photograph. The front fence of solid sheeting and timber lattice is not original or early.

1 Queen Street

This is a rectangular site located on the west side of Queen Street containing a single storey weatherboard cottage. The building footprint largely survives consistent with the MMBW plan from 1897. It is comprised of a transverse gable roof section at the front and a skillion roof section at the rear. The gable roof is asymmetrical, having a steeper pitch at the front and a broader pitch at the rear. The rear skillion roof section has replaced the smaller rear wing and verandah evident in the 1897 MMBW plan.

The roof is clad in colorbond corrugated sheet metal. All the roofing materials are recent. The original roofing material may have been corrugated sheet metal or slate. There is one chimney to the rear face of the gable section which is largely hidden, and may have been truncated. The walls are clad in horizontally oriented weatherboards, some of which are shingled to the front (shingled boards were probably a later introduction).

The façade has a symmetrical composition with a window either side of a central door. The windows are timber framed double hung sashes (single pane) with moulded architraves and sills and are unlikely to be original. The front door is obscured by a security screen. There is a highlight above the door. The full width front verandah is supported by non-original square timber posts. The verandah roof is clad in corrugated sheet metal. The deck is timber.

The driveway on the north side was once a shared carriageway but has now been absorbed into 1 Queen Street. The front garden contains low plantings. The timber front fence is not original.

Comparative analysis

These houses are examples of modest 1870s timber dwellings in the St Kilda East/Balaclava area, of which many were built but few survive. Such houses were commonly replaced with brick from the latter part of the 19th century onwards.

While there are comparatively many modest timber cottages dating from the late 1880s and early 1890s represented in the Heritage Overlay, examples from pre-1880 are much rarer. Other surviving examples of comparable pre-1880 single storey timber houses within the St Kilda East/Balaclava area include:

- 34 Young Street, St Kilda East, built 1870. (Citation 2309, HO401). Double fronted, symmetrical, full width verandah, transverse gable roof, brick chimney.
- 16 Balston Street, Balaclava, built c.1863. (Citation 2303, HO395). Double fronted, symmetrical, full width verandah, transverse gable roof, brick chimney.
- 62 Octavia Street, St Kilda, built c.1862. (Citation 2389, HO6). Double fronted, symmetrical, full width verandah, transverse slate-clad gable roof, brick chimney.
- 41 Rosamond Street, Balaclava (thought to be pre-1873). (Contributory within HO439). Double fronted, symmetrical, full width verandah, hipped roof, brick chimney.
- 22 Blenheim Street, Balaclava (1872, additions 1890s). (Citation 2437). Asymmetrical (although originally symmetrical), full width verandah, transverse gable roof, brick chimneys.
- 2 and 4 Queen Street, St Kilda East (1878). (Citation 2442). Attached pair with mirrored façade compositions, transverse gable roofs, brick chimney (one surviving) and full width front verandahs.
- 51-57 Leslie Street, St Kilda East. No. 53 thought to be built in 1873 and nos 51+55 in 1875. The date for no. 57 is unclear. (Not in Heritage Overlay). Double fronted, symmetrical, full width verandahs, transverse gable roofs, some with brick chimneys.

The subject houses and the examples listed above have all undergone some level of change, as almost invariably occurs with early timber cottages. Importantly, they retain original building formats, and where fabric has been replaced it has generally been in a similar manner or in keeping with the character/period.

The subject houses at 149 and 151 Argyle Street are an unusual early (pre-1880) paired example that share an undivided gable roof. They are one of only two known surviving pre-1880 paired examples in the St Kilda East/Balaclava area, the others being located opposite at 2 and 4 Queen Street. They are otherwise typical of the period having a symmetrical composition, transverse gable roof, brick chimneys and full width verandah.

The house at 1 Queen Street, built 1876, conforms to a more typical format, that is, a freestanding double fronted cottage with a symmetrical façade, transverse gable roof, chimney and full width verandah.

Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

Recommendations

Add to the Heritage Overlay as a group listing with a single HO number.

Apply external paint controls in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (to ensure complementary colour schemes are employed).

Primary source

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2*, 2021

Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Other images



149+151 Argyle Street





East side of 151 Argyle Street



I Queen Street

Area to be included in HO

