RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF A BUILDING

How to use resources from Moonee Valley Libraries to research the history of a building in Moonee Valley

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Moonee Valley **Libraries** | City of **Moonee Valley**

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Introduction

This is Moonee Valley Libraries' guide to researching the history of buildings in the Moonee Valley area.

It lists key resources which you can use to discover more about the age, architecture, past uses and occupants of buildings, as well as advice on where to look for pictures.

Most of the resources mentioned can be found at Sam Merrifield Library in Moonee Ponds.

Where to begin

1. Consult a few guides. The one you're reading now is a good start! There are a number of others available online that can help you with resources available at State and National levels. Those produced by the Public Records Office Victoria, the State Library of Victoria, and the National Library of Australia are all recommended reads.

2. Check a copy of the property title (if you have access to it). This will tell you the names of previous owners of the property. More information on this can be found via the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

3. Check whether your place is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, the Victorian Heritage Inventory or is affected by a Heritage Overlay in a local planning scheme via Heritage Victoria here. This may provide further links to more information.

4. Check the Moonee Valley Council heritage pages here. These provide information on heritage guidelines and resources relevant to the City of Moonee Valley.

Estimating the age of a building

You may have a rough idea of when the building was constructed (19th century, post-war, etc). Moonee Valley Libraries hold a number of resources that can help you narrow this time frame down by examining architectural details. The below titles can be found in the Moonee Valley Libraries catalogue.

What house is that? : a guide to Victoria's housing styles – Heritage Council of Victoria
A guide to aid identification of the major domestic architectural styles found in Victoria. Includes colour swatches and advice for renovating/decorating. This title is also available online.

That's our house : a history of housing in Victoria - Nicholas Hudson and Peter McEwan
A history of housing in Victoria from settlement through to the 1980s. Although not intended as an architectural guide, much can be gleaned from its chronological and in-depth approach.

Our inter-war houses : how to recognise, restore and extend houses of the 1920s and 1930s - Bryce Raworth
Prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Includes descriptions, images and advice about inter-was styles such as bungalows, Tudor revival, Spanish Mission, Georgian Revival and Modern houses.

Australian houses of the 20s & 30s - Peter Cuffley
Illustrated guide to Australia's 20s and 30s domestic architecture, including exteriors, interiors, furniture and fittings. Includes a chapter on renovating and choosing appropriate colours, including a colour chart.

Australian houses of the forties and fifties - Peter Cuffley

Illustrated guide to Australia's post-war architecture, including exteriors, interiors, furniture and fittings. Includes a chapter on renovating and choosing appropriate colours, including a colour chart.

Street names of Essendon, Moonee Ponds, Ascot Vale and Strathmore – Lenore Frost & Essendon Historical Society

Lists the names of streets in several Moonee Valley areas. Where available provides the earliest record of the street, as well as information on the origin of its name, as well as any other historical details.
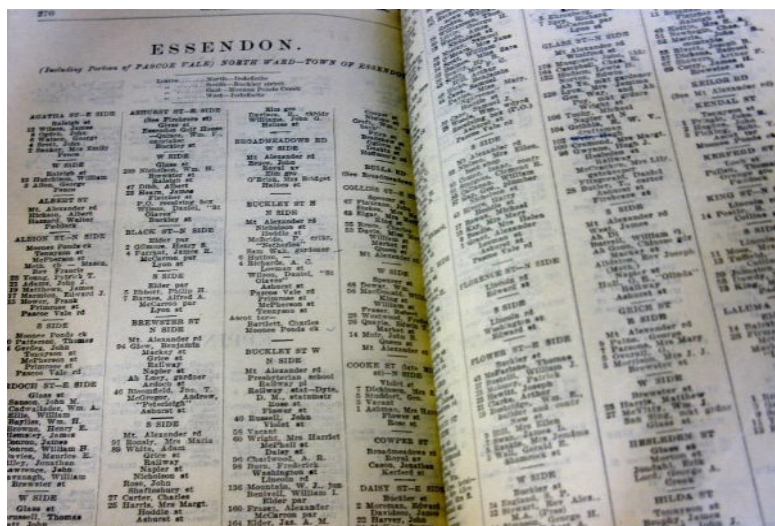
Finding more information

Once you have an idea as to the era in which the building was constructed, it becomes easier to narrow construction down to a particular year. There are several ways to discover when an older building was first constructed. It is best to use a couple to cross-check your information.

- Check a post-office directory.
- Find the street name in the book *Street names of Essendon*. This item is available at the Sam Merrifield Library, it lists when streets first appeared in directories and maps, as well as notes on the origin of their names.
- If the building is in Essendon, Flemington, or Kensington, check the relevant conservation study (keeping in mind that boundaries may have changed). Other libraries may also have conservation studies (for instance, City of Melbourne and Merri-bek libraries hold a number for their areas). Try searching 'conservation study' in their catalogues.
- Visit the PROV to examine historical rates books and building plans.

Post-office directories:

Post-office directories were the predecessors of phonebooks (quickly becoming historical phenomena themselves!). They list the primary occupant of each house and building in every street of each Melbourne suburb.

As directories were produced annually, by checking old directories you can get an idea of when a particular building may have been constructed. Start by finding the listing for your building in the annual directory at a point in time when you know the building existed. Then work back year by year though earlier directories until the listing disappears - now you know the earliest likely date of construction.

The most comprehensive residential directories are the Sands and McDougall's directories. These were produced between 1862 and 1974. The Sam Merrifield Library holds a number of copies of these in book and microfiche format. Copies are also available digitally via the State Library of Victoria here. You will need to know the street name; it will also help to know which side of the street your building is on, as well the nearest cross-streets. Keep in mind that past suburban boundaries may be different to present ones, especially in the earlier years.

Directories reveal the primary occupant of an address, the occupants of neighbouring properties and businesses, and, when multiple editions are examined, how an area developed over time. They do not say who owned the property, nor do they list every occupant. So, for example, Mr John Smith may be listed but not his wife, their six children, or their lodgers.

Conservation studies:

Many local councils around Melbourne published conservation and heritage studies in the 1980s and 1990s. These studies sometimes provide brief summaries on a number of local buildings and houses. You can learn some basic information, such as the date (or estimated date) your building was first constructed, as well as information on heritage features. Moonee Valley Libraries holds copies of locally relevant conservation studies at the Sam Merrifield library. Other library systems (such as City of Melbourne and Merri-bek) may hold studies relevant to their areas.

Essendon Conservation Study - Graeme Butler
Begins with a brief history of Essendon, then lists the most architecturally important houses and buildings in the area, such as the Burley Griffin Incinerator, Laluma and Mar Lodge. Then lists less significant buildings from the area, providing basic information such as estimated date of construction.

Flemington and Kensington conservation study - Graeme Butler & Associates
This is a collection of "building identification sheets" which list houses by street, and identifies them by levels of importance, and lists notable features, alterations and recommendations. Images from this study are available online via the City of Melbourne Libraries heritage collection. These can be found through their website here.

City of Moonee Valley index of heritage sites - City of Moonee Valley
Describes over 100 heritage homes and buildings in the Moonee Valley area. Provides construction dates, architectural information, description, history, context, and significance. It also includes photographs (of a low quality).
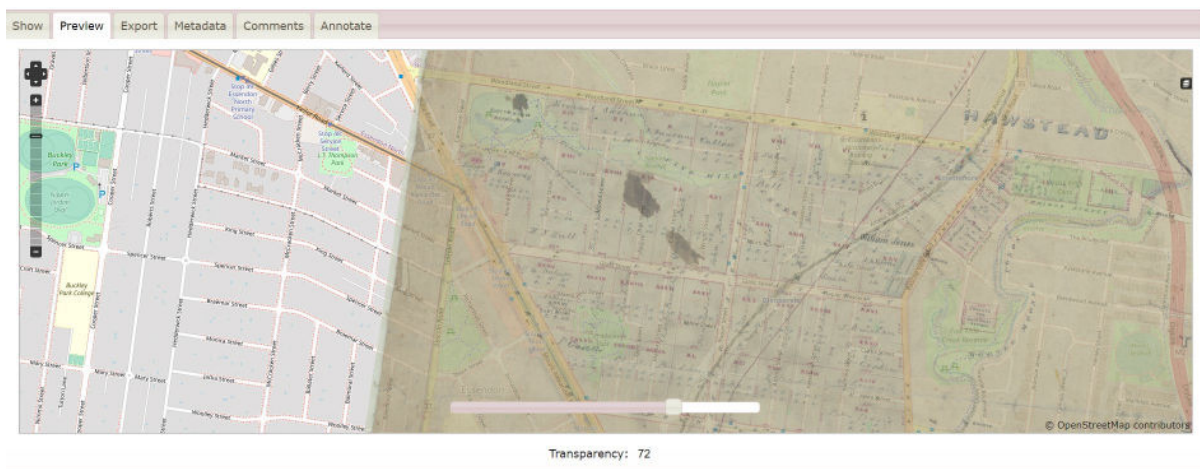
Maps:

Historical maps can be useful for discovering when a building was constructed.

M/DEF88; DOUTTA GALLA DETAIL; FLEMINGTON AND ESSENDON, courtesy of PROV.

Over several decades the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) mapped suburbs of Melbourne. By checking relevant maps, you may discover if your building existed at that point in time. If it did, you will also be able to see the shape of the building, and sometimes even learn the materials from which it was built. These plans, as well as many other historical maps, can be found via the State Library of Victoria here.

The PROV also hold historical maps, many of which are available online. The PROV Map Warper tool allows you to view historical maps overlaid on contemporary maps. The tool also allows you to find historical maps by location; finding your location on a contemporary map will alert you to historical maps that cover that area. You can find it here.

PROV Map Warper

A number of maps are held by the Moonee Valley Libraries. Digital copies of these can be viewed on request.

Newspapers:

Places may have been mentioned in local newspapers. Notices and articles in newspapers can be an important source of information on how places were used (for instance, if businesses were run from there), and who used them. Family and funeral notices often make mention of addresses, and advertising can provide insight into what was happening at particular addresses. Real estate notices can be useful in placing a construction date.

ASCOT VALE, MARIBYRNONG.
£4500. New Brick Ven. Villa.
Attractive finish, made rd., elev.
position, 6 rms. (3 bedrms.), robes,
tapestry brick fireplace, D. Doors,
S.S.S., 2 stoves, concrete paths.
V.P. 30 days. S.S.B. finance ar-
ranged. W. J. HARPER PTY.
LTD., 216 Union rd., Ascot Vale.
FU5174.

Advertising (1955, March 11). The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957), p. 13.
Retrieved December 21, 2022, from http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article71638223

Real Estate.

A. E. Young, local auctioneer, re-
ports having recently effected the fol-
lowing sales:—Cottage, Wilson street,
Moonee Ponds, on 40ft. land, £280;
cottage Athol street, Moonee Ponds,
£275; property, Laluma street, Essen-
don, £320; cottage, Robinson street,
Moonee Ponds, £250; villa, Eglinton
street, Moonee Ponds, £380; allotment
Glass street, Essendon, £3 3s per ft.,
£104; cottage, Tennyson street, Moo-
nee Ponds, £350; cottage, Tennyson
street, Moonee Ponds, £300; land,
80ft., Margaret street (conjunction
Pook and Co.), £385; 4 allotments,
Imperial avenue, Coburg (conjunction
Roberts, Stanley and Co.); and lots
Napier street, Essendon (conjunction
G. W. Park); brick villa, 21 Hall
street, Moonee Ponds, £500.—Total
sales, £3734.

Real Estate. (1916, April 6). *The Essendon Gazette and Keilor, Bulla and Broadmeadows Reporter (Moonee Ponds, Vic. : 1914 - 1918)*, p. 2 (Morning.). Retrieved December 28, 2022, from http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74592544

Books and other Moonee Valley Libraries resources:

These are resources held at Moonee Valley Libraries which deal directly with houses.

Federation times in Essendon and Flemington: a pictorial record - Lenore Frost (ed.)
Black and white photographs of buildings, businesses, streetscapes, events and people in and around Essendon and Flemington from the 1890s to 1910s. Brief background information also provided for each image.

The fine homes of Essendon and Flemington 1846 - 1880
Historical information and black and white pictures of some of the grandest historic houses in the Essendon and Flemington areas, including some buildings which had previously been demolished. Photographs include both recent and historic images. Some images of interiors, gardens or past occupants are included.

The grand mansions of Essendon and district 1880-1892
Historical information, and in some cases illustrations, of some of the grandest mansions of the area. Provides details about the homes and their previous occupants.

House names of Essendon and district
Origins of the names of houses in the Essendon area. Two volumes, the first compiled by Samuel Merrifield and edited by Lenore Frost, the second by Bob Chalmers.

Local character study – City of Moonee Valley
Describes the typical house styles and character of various Moonee Valley neighbourhoods. Provides advice on how the local character of each precinct can best be preserved. Includes: Airport West, East Keilor and Avondale Heights, Niddrie, North Essendon and Strathmore, Essendon, Moonee Ponds, Ascot Vale and Flemington/Kensington.

The stop-over that stayed: a history of Essendon - Grant Aldous
A history of Essendon from settlement to 1979. Includes some photographs and other black and white images.