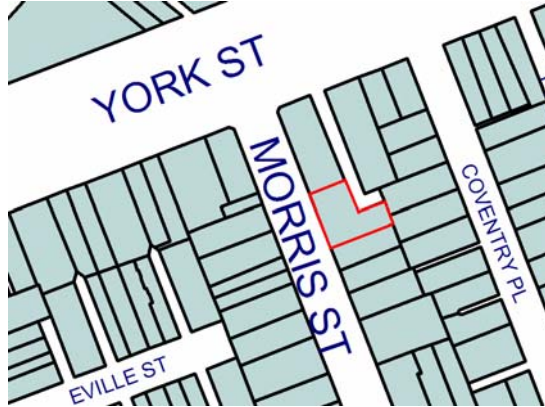


**Identifier** House

**Formerly** House



**Heritage Precinct Overlay HO3**  
**Heritage Overlay(s)**

**Address** 1 Morris St  
SOUTH MELBOURNE

**Category** Residential:detached

**Constructed** unknown

**Designer** unknown

**Amendment** [C 70](#)

**Comment** [New Citation](#)

**Significance** (Mapped as a Significant heritage property.)

What is significant?

The house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne was constructed in 1855 or earlier for Stephen Dorman. It is a small weatherboard building, which faces south, perpendicular to the street, illustrating how the house was built before the rest of the street was subdivided. Its early 1850s origins are reinforced by its high-hipped roof and casement windows. The main part of the house has a high-hipped roof, which was originally covered in timber shingles and is now clad in new corrugated metal. It does not have any external chimneys. Behind the hipped roof section is a skillion roof addition (north end).

There is a skillion-roofed verandah to the façade, with very narrow chamfered posts. The fascia above them appears to be original, though the roof structure of the verandah has been reconstructed. There is a central front door between two long casement windows; all three openings retain moulded architraves. The door is a typical four-panelled Victorian door with raised mouldings. It has a fine transom with diamond-shaped panes and deep muntins. The double casement windows have three large panes each (originally the panes probably would have been smaller). The weatherboards of the façade have a rectangular profile and appear to be original.

The house has a moderate level of external integrity – changes to the c.1855 fabric include the presumed removal of the chimney(s), replacement of weatherboards, particularly on the east and west elevations, replacement of the verandah superstructure, paving the verandah floor with tiles, replacement of window architraves on the west elevation, removal of the rear verandah (which began in the 19th century) and construction of rear additions.

The interior has not been inspected and its level of integrity is not known.

How is it significant?

The house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne is of local historic and architectural significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne is historically significant as it is one of the oldest houses in South Melbourne (and Port Phillip generally) and provides evidence of the earliest phase of development of South Melbourne (then known as Emerald Hill) in the years immediately after the first land sales of 1852. It is significant as a representative example of the type of simple cheap housing erected in Melbourne in the wake of the gold rush. Its significance is enhanced by its rarity value as one of only a small number of surviving examples of an 1850s workers cottage in South Melbourne and one of only a few in the metropolitan area (AHC criteria A.4, D.2).

The house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne is architecturally significant as a rare surviving example of an early building type, which retains its characteristic form with a steeply pitched roof and some early detailing including to the front façade and verandah. (AHC criteria D.2)

The house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne is aesthetic significance as an important contributory element within the nineteenth century streetscape of Morris Street (AHC criterion E.1).

Levels of significance

Primary significance – all c.1855 fabric as noted above. Note: The interior has not been inspected and it is possible that further significant fabric may survive, for example, the original shingles under the later iron.

Secondary significance – nineteenth century additions to the rear.

No or limited significance – twentieth century alterations and additions.

## **Primary Source**

## **Other Studies**

## **Description**

Description

The house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne, is a small weatherboard building. Its façade faces south, perpendicular to the street, indicating that the house was built before the rest of the street was subdivided (Figure 4.2). Its early 1850s origins are reinforced by its high-hipped roof and casement windows. The west side of the house abuts the footpath, and the rear of the house abuts the boundary with the former Marine Hotel on York Street. There is a small garden on the south side of the house and a small open area on the east side of the house.

The main part of the house has a high-hipped roof, which suggests that it was originally covered in timber shingles (this appears to be confirmed by the history, as noted above).

It is now clad in new corrugated metal. It does not have any external chimneys. Behind the hipped roof section is a skillion roof addition (north end). There is a skillion-roofed verandah to the façade, with very narrow chamfered posts (Figure 4.3). The fascia above them appears to be original, though the roof structure of the verandah has been reconstructed. There is a central front door between two long casement windows; all three openings retain moulded architraves. The door is a typical four-panelled Victorian door with raised mouldings. It has a fine transom with diamond-shaped panes and deep muntins. The double casement windows have three large panes each (originally the panes probably would have been smaller). The weatherboards of the façade have a rectangular profile and appear to be original.

The west, or street, elevation has three windows: a one-over-one sash window near the back of the hipped-roof section and two small fixed windows to the rear skillion extension (Figure 4.2). All three have narrow, plain 20th-century architraves. The join between the hipped-roof section and skillion extension is clearly delineated by a narrow timber post. This side of the house has largely been reclad with curved-profile weatherboards (c1930s or later). Square-edged boards remain on the hipped-roof section, between the sash window and the join with the rear extension, and a few boards at the top of the wall between the window and the front of the house.

The east elevation is partially visible from a laneway. The rear third of the hipped-roof section is obscured by a small weatherboard extension (which abuts the rear skillion extension). Most of the cladding on this side of the house has been replaced with curved-profile weatherboards.

The rear elevation of the house forms the boundary with the former Marine Hotel to the north, without even

a fence to separate them. This elevation has no windows. The west half of the skillion extension is clad in painted corrugated iron (Super-8 profile) in very good, undinted condition. Considering its location in a high traffic area (providing access to the hotel and its bins), this siding does not appear to be very old. The east half of the skillion extension is constructed of rendered brick and extends further east than the hipped-roof section.

#### Condition and integrity

As noted above, the 1895 MMBW detail plan indicates that the house (then 5 Nimmo Street) originally had a rear verandah as well. By 1895 part of it had been filled in (on the street side), plus an even narrower extension to the rear boundary. In summary, alterations to the 19th-century fabric include: the presumed removal of the chimney(s), replacement of weatherboards, particularly on the east and west elevations, replacement of the verandah superstructure, paving the verandah floor with tiles, replacement of window architraves on the west elevation, removal of the rear verandah (which began in the 19th century) and construction of rear additions.

As previously noted the house was assessed and documented in 1987 by the South Melbourne Urban Conservation Study. The description of the building noted, in part, that:

“the front and side weatherboards are beaded to their lower edge in a manner typical of the 1850s.”

It appears that the majority of the original weatherboards to the street elevation have been replaced at some time in the intervening period. It is not known whether this was done with or without a planning permit.

## History

What would become Nimmo Street (and later Morris Street) was within Block 4 of the 1852 township survey and the subject property, now known as 1 Morris Street, is part of CA14, which was purchased together with the adjoining allotment CA13 by F. Clarke in November 1852. A key factor in the development of this area is that it was outside the control of Melbourne Building Act and therefore enabled the construction of cheap buildings. It is said that many of the buildings erected within Block 4 were prefabricated or portable types, mostly from Britain with a lesser number from Singapore (Heritage Victoria).

The exact date of the house at 1 Morris Street, South Melbourne is not known, but valuers and rate book information shows that it was in existence by August 1855, and so it was built sometime in the period before that date and after it was purchased late in 1852. As noted above, the municipality of Emerald Hill was created in May 1855. In August of that year a valuation for assessment of all rateable properties was carried out by George Avery Fletcher, ‘surveyor and valuator’. The subject property, location given as ‘off York St’ was described as a wooden house of 4 rooms with ‘64 yds & garden’. It is owned and occupied by Stephen Dorman and has a rateable value of £32. A notation in the ‘Remarks’ column appears to say ‘no frontage’. Stephen Dorman also owned the building immediately to the north facing York Street, which is described as ‘Brick 2 stories’ of 9 rooms with kitchen with a rateable value of £117. This building, later known as the ‘Halfway House Hotel’, was the predecessor of the Marine Hotel (RB,1855i:680, 681; Daley, 1940:Map in Appendix A).

Over the next 25 years the description for the subject property remains very similar and there are only three changes in ownership. In 1856-57 the house is noted as being ‘behind’ the adjoining brick building, now referred to as the ‘Halfway House Hotel’ RB, 1856-7:316, 317). In 1857-58 the house is described as having 5 rooms and as having a ‘shingle roof’, while the valuation has increased slightly to £35 (RB, 1857-8:330, 331). By the following year, it is listed in Nimmo Street for the first time and the valuation has increased to £48. Stephen Dorman is still owner of both the house and the hotel, but the house is listed as ‘vacant’ (RB, 1859-60:1775, 1776). By this time there are another 6, 2 or 3 room weatherboard cottages on the opposite side of the street.

The rate book for 1861-62 records that Stephen Dorman has sold to R. Howarth and the house is tenanted to Peter McGregor (RB, 1861-2:1928). Howarth in turn sold to Sarah Murray by 1864 (RB, 1864-5:2051). Murray lived in the house until she sold it to George Birnie, a storeman, by 1867 (RB, 1867-8:2365). Rachel Birnie later replaces George as the owner and from 1870 to 1876 the house is tenanted to a variety of people including John Monfleet (a clerk), Charles James (boilermaker) and John Gale (bricklayer). From 1877 to at least 1880 (when it is listed as 5 Nimmo Street) Rachel is listed as both owner and ‘person rated’ and presumably lived in the dwelling (RB, 1877-8:3269; 1880- 1:3712).

Title information shows that Rachel Birnie was owner until 1895 until it was sold to Donald McArthur. McArthur remained owner until 1902 when it was sold to Joseph Arbuckle (Land Victoria). The house can be seen in the 1895 MMBW Detail Plan Nimmo Street is fully built-up by this time.

## Comparative analysis

Very few 1850s era dwellings survive in Port Phillip or the metropolitan area. Within the former City of South Melbourne examples include the weatherboard cottage at 51 Church Street (1857), a bluestone house at 414 Coventry Street (1859), a two storey timber house at 337 Dorcas Street (c.1857), and Park House, a two storey brick rendered dwelling at 352 Moray Street (1856). Of these, none have the early cottage form of the house at 1 Morris Street. Perhaps the most directly comparable example is the prefabricated cottage just one street away at 17 Coventry Place, which is included on the Victorian Heritage Register. This is an example of 'Singapore' cottage, and although it has been significantly altered retains its simple form with a hipped room. Also of comparative interest as simple early pre-fabricated building types are the portable iron houses at 399 Coventry Street (1853 -1854).

In St Kilda, comparative examples include the pre-fabricated house at 7 Burnett Street (c.1855), a cottage at 63 Argyle Street (c.1853, still extant?), a two storey pre-fabricated house at 2 Lambeth Place, and 'Wattle House' at 53 Jackson Street (c.1850).

The form of this cottage also compares with the simple surviving early 1850s timber cottages in the Cox's Gardens precinct in Williamstown.

## Thematic Context

Settlement: Growth and Change; Three settlements: Sandridge, St Kilda and Emerald Hill

## Recommendations

Recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme

## References

Primary sources

Land Victoria, Certificate of titles

Municipality of Emerald Hill Rate Books, as cited

'Valuation for assessment of all rateable property in the municipality of Emerald Hill made August by Geo. Avery Fletcher, Surveyor and Valuator' – referred to as '1855i' (VPRS)

Secondary sources

Allom Lovell & Associates, City of South Melbourne Urban Conservation Study, 1987

Daley, Charles, The History of South Melbourne: From the foundation of settlement at Port Phillip to the year 1938, Melbourne, 1940