LAND SUBDIVISION OF FITZROY

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INTRODUCTION

In this report I have attempted to establish the land subdivision and building settlement in the Fitzroy area (Victoria Parade end). The author has found considerable difference in "dates" relevant to the origin of these buildings. For example, the "Century of Collingwood" and the "Century of Fitzroy" magazines believe, and I quote - "The fine Victoria Parade terraces were built in 1852 - 1853". However, these reports fail to realize three things -

- that the land (Fitzroy) was sold in 25 acre lots for agriculture.
- the only roads surveyed with the subdivision were on a 3,000 yard square grid.
- there were at least two phases of building before the houses which stand today were constructed.

Research has shown that the majority of houses which exist at present in the area were built after 1855, and a considerable number not until the years between 1864 - 1873. These buildings represent a "second phase" - or rebuilding in brick or stone, replacing the timber and iron cottages of the original settlement.

The Municipality of Fitzroy was not created until the 9th September, 1858. Previously it was part of the Melbourne "Latrobe Ward", then in 1855, when Collingwood became a municipality, Fitzroy became part of Collingwood, some time referred to as "West Collingwood". However, this position was short lived as, in 1858, the Municipality of Fitzroy was created.
I mention this because the years up to 1858 were most vital to the research and it appears that many municipal records are well scattered, if not missing, particularly because, between 1849 (earliest Melbourne Rate Book) and 1857, Fitzroy was first part of Melbourne Municipality and then part of Collingwood. The destiny of Fitzroy was indefinite and rather unsettled during these years. There was a section of the community of Fitzroy who wanted to establish their own municipality. Yet their boundaries were, and still are, despite extension, very small. Both Collingwood and Brunswick curtailed any hope of expansion.

There is in existence one particularly good map which shows East Collingwood in 1857 (Surveyed by J. Wilkinson, under the instruction of Mr. Hodgkinson). The map was compiled for a road contractor working for the public works department. His job being to survey the land, then establish a street pattern which worked.

There were in existence unmade roads and narrow lanes but, as they had been established to suit the pocket of the individual subdivider, they barely served each subdivision let alone co-ordinated with adjacent subdivisions. For example, the roads narrowed or stopped, then started again a few blocks further on. These roads, which were typical of the municipality, had to be widened to a uniform width and lined up.

The map is particularly vital because it shows the dwellings, the predominant type being small, two or three-roomed timber cottages, in 1857. The author, through searching rate books, titles, etc., has concluded that these timber cottages were typical of Fitzroy.
at the same time (refer later to William Hoffman estates - Gore Street). As yet the corresponding map "West Collingwood" (Fitzroy) has not been discovered. It is, of course, possible that the Collingwood Council did not bother much with their western section as they anticipated that it would break away (to form its own municipality) and no comprehensive survey was done.

However, the Fitzroy Council Minute Books refer to street widening schemes and the demolition and removal of houses so that certainly some surveys must have been done.

The earliest conception of the land that now constitutes Fitzroy was that it should be used for farming and supply the Town of Melbourne with produce. Consequently, the land subdivision was drawn up in 25 acre lots. (See Diagram No.1. taken from the plan of the County of Bourke, Parish of Jika Jika).

This land was sold in Sydney on 13th February, 1839, being bought by people who had never been to Melbourne. The land relevant to this essay were Crown Lots 49, 50 and 51, each with a 1,000 yard frontage to Victoria Parade and a 2,500 yard depth. Unfortunately as will be seen from the diagram, the only streets planned for in this subdivision survey were Victoria Parade, Smith Street, Johnson Street and Brunswick Street.

The population of Melbourne was so large that this land could be sold immediately to a ready market for housing, not farms and consequently some of it was immediately sold up and built on, either with 'Shacky' weatherboard cottages (or 'tent' towns which moved along ahead of the rent collector).
Because the crown survey only set out the four boundary roads, internal roads, i.e. within the 25 acre lots, were allocated at the discretion of the subdivider. Consequently, the roads varied from the fine 3-chain roads of Henry Gore to the meagre 1-chain and less roads such as Young Street and Fitzroy Street. Not only did the size of the roads vary but so too did their position (relative to each of the 25 acre lot), this in turn influenced the later housing subdivision both in layout and size.

If you compare say, Regent Street (which runs to an unexplained dead end), Vaughan Street and Princess Street with Gore Street, Little Gore Street and Little Smith Street, the resultant subdivision giving either good or substandard lots on which dwellings were built.

The names and addresses of the planners, if any, who drew up the subdivisions seem to be lost for ever and I have taken the name of the landowners in each case. It should be noted that quite often the subdivider of the land did not appreciate the size of the typical dwelling and you had often 3 building lots sold, on which later appeared 6 row houses (see McGlone - Core Street). Or consider Dinwoodie Estate, Victoria Parade, having built his impressive row of terraces he found that the remainder of the site (about 100' square did not subdivide as favourably.

As there was no council control of the land subdivision and buildings until after 1858, the landowner could sell any sized lot to suit the pocket of the purchaser (see 12' wide frontage, Napier, Diagram No.3). The community was desperately short of houses and would buy anything available.
Research indicated that passing of land from one hand to another generally brought about further subdivision, until finally approximately the 20 foot frontage was reached. Some land was sold with row housing on it but seems that when the land was subdivided and re-sold the existing timber shacks (which would not have matched the new smaller lots) were replaced by a row type housing.

The material for this thesis has been accumulated by studying three blocks of real estate. Each of these will be analysed to show some of the more typical aspects.
LOT 7 & 8 TO WILLIAM HOFFMAN.
LOT 7 TO CHARLES RUPERT HAY.
LOT 6 TO J. A. SMITH.

EIGHTH GRAND - F.R. LOOK 1850
REALIZATION.

NAGELA NO. 4.
CHARLES RIDGWAY, ESTATE & SUB-DIVISION.
1891 TO 1896.

Victoria Rd.
In 1853, William Garrity bought the 30' block adjacent to Davidson (price undisclosed). In the same year (June 1853) the property on the corner of Smith Street and Victoria Parade was sold to Sh... £630, indicating that the land must have been built on during 1852 - 1853 period. In 1854 a 60' frontage to Victoria Parade sold to J. Mayne and W. Brinley for $1200, two large 30' wide terraces having been built on this site. (see photograph and diagram No.5)

The property on the corner of Little Victoria Street, Mason Street and Smith Street, with a 30' frontage was sold in March 1855 for £520 to a W. Main, two row houses had been constructed on this site. The two remaining properties, 30' wide were sold in April 1856 to W. Collis - £157 and J. Bennie for £165. Two houses, each with 30' frontages, were subsequently built on these properties.

William Hoffman, a Frankston gentleman, who owned two properties in Bourke Street in 1848 (extract Rate Book Burke Ward, 1848).

"T.H. Melbourne - William Hoffman, Bourke Street, North side.
Shop, 2 rooms, kitchen, stable and slaughter house.
Agent - Fred. Cooper".

He had bought lots No.5 and No.6 on the 24th January, 1851. The interesting fact is though, that unlike his neighbours, who were vigorously subdividing and selling, he held his land until the late 1860's. In March 1869 he sold the side on the corner of Mason Street and Core Street (Now No.22 Core Street) to Marshall for £187, on the land was built a wood shop (Marshall was a furniture maker). The decorated brick dwelling was originally 4 rooms, extended later to 10 rooms.
WILLIAM HOFFMAN ESTATE & SUBDIVISION.
1969 - 1974

DIAGRAM NO. 6.
In the year 1870, Hoffman sold to McGlome (14th June) for £1180, three building lots (see diagram No.6), on which were later built 6 row houses. Theo Smith bought the corner block of Gore Street and Victoria Parade for £900 on the 10th October, 1870, indicating that the very large house with 45' frontage was constructed in the late 1860's (brick courtyard, stables, etc.)

Later Theo Smith bought for £1050, on the 27th July 1873, lots 6, 7 and 8, giving him an additional 70' frontage to Victoria Parade. (see diagram No.6) Only two of these three sites were ever built on. Richard Wade paid £350 for the remaining lot No.9 (probably 1873) and indicating that a dwelling had been erected.

Although William Hoffman did not sell up his land until late 1860's, it will be seen, for example, that Marshall was paying rates for his property, No.22 Gore Street in 1859-1860. (see 1860 Fitzroy Municipal Rate Book entry - 321) This occurs because the title does not transfer to the new purchaser (Marshall) until such time as he has paid the full contract price, i.e. for land and house. Hence the conveyancy title was not granted until 1869. It might also be pointed out that this house is identical in detail and style to the buildings immediately behind it facing Smith Street and owned and built by Charles Ridgeway for W. Main in 1855 and I suspect that the builder who constructed dwellings for Ridgeway later, say 1857 - 1858, built the home for Marshall.

A further extract from the 1859 - 1860 Fitzroy Rate Book, Gore Street, shows William Hoffman (the owner) paying rates on three "timber shacks" which he rented to different gentlemen, one of whom was L. Scanlon - bootmaker. Around the corner in Victoria Parade,
William Hoffman (rate book entry - 57) reads - "Two vacant shacks
wood" and the next entry is J. Mayne - large brick house", which
was bought from the Charles Ridgeway estate in 1854.

A later rate book - Fitzroy 1868 - 1869 entry No. 68 reads -
"William Hoffman - Gore Street (off) wood yard and land 90' X 100'

No.8. wood cottage 4 R. value £35
No.4. " " 4R & 5R " £33
No.2. " " 2R & 3R " £33

So in fact, wood cottages owned by Hoffman were in Gore Street until
the year 1870. The overall picture from the rate books seems that
the area was well settled yet there seemed to be as many timber
cottages as there were brick or stone.
CASE STUDY 2

The portion of land bounded by Victoria Parade, Gore Street, Little Victoria Parade and George Street, part of F.R. Gore estate. (see diagram No.7).

J. Mullaly
Purchased lot No.4 from F.R. Gore in January 1851 for £148. Mullaly sold portion on 21st May 1851 to T. Beckett (see diagram No.8) with a 157' frontage to George Street for a tidy £165. T. Beckett and his wife sold the property in August 1853 for £1020 to a G.W.Porter. Mullaly subdivided his land facing Victoria Parade and introduced an 18' R.O.W. at the rear (see diagram No.8), these 24' lots were sold thus -

T. Telstar 3rd May 1851 for £63
R. Jones 12th Feb 1852 for £98
R. Russell 19th Oct 1852 for £51

Jones later built two sand stone and rubble stucco cottages on his piece of land (see M.M.B.W. plan No.28 extract). Telstar and Russell each built row house.

Gore and Woolaston
Henry Hanslappe, Gore and John Woolaston bought lots No.2 and 3 for £305 on 10th May 1851. (Henry Hanslappe being a nephew of Frederick R. Gore). Henry sold his portion on the same day of the sale to John Woolaston, and John Woolaston sold the whole lot a fortnight later to Dinwoodie for £490 (24th May 1851). A good example of real estate fever. Dinwoodie then passed the title of the land over to his prospective bride and together they built a row of 6 terraces "Blanche Terrace". The value of the property in 1864 was £1400, which would indicate that only 3 of the 6 were at this stage built.
SALFS OF EXPIRED CROWN PORTION '50'.
These fine terraces (see photograph), having a 24' frontage and a depth of 180' were typical of the rather naive and wasteful development of some landlords because, behind the back of the terrace remained a large paddock of 100' square.

Knight & Guthrie

Knight & Guthrie bought lot 1 of Crown Grant No.50 from F.R. Gore (see diagram No.8). They subdivided and sold the corner site (George and Mason Street 70' X 60') for £66 to a W.H. Sloane on the 18th September 1851 (land only).

W.G. Bell bought and subsequently subdivided the adjacent block with a 95' frontage to George Street on 18th September 1851. (price undisclosed - see diagram No.8).

Sam Walker bought the block on the corner of Victoria Parade and George Street for £152 on the 26th September 1851 - land 100 X 49'.

W. Cummings bought the remaining portion for £55 on the same day.

Building activity was starting between 1851 and 1853. For example Sloane sold his property to Thomas Rae on the 7th May 1853. Rae was able to secure a mortgage from Oliphant.

Thomas Rae went broke and was sold up by his creditors. His property passed to a James Rae (no relation) in January 1861 (valued at about £1000). James Rae later sold the property in 1868 for £1225 to Lagarins. (See M.M.B.W. plan extract)
LOT 11  LOT 10  LOT 9  LOT 8  LOT 7

BEACH HED 100' 50' 50' 100' 100'

J.W. PEDERSEN
MARCH 1904

VICTORIA PDE.

LOT 6

OF SUB-DIVIDED CROWN PORTION

[Signature]

AN. NO. 10

[Stamp]
CASE STUDY No.3

In 1849 the entire portion of lot No.49 was bought by G.W. Cole from a J. Taylor (see diagram No.10). G. Cole paid £3237 for the land on the 23rd October 1849.

Cole
Cole sold portion of his land for £109 to Brady and Hood in March, 1850 (see diagram No.11). Cole then conveyed the remainder of his property to a John W. Peppers for £541 in April, 1850.

Peppers
Peppers sold the northern section of his property to a Rachel Blackburn (and introduced an 18'6" R.O.W.) for £62 in March 1850. Rachel Blackburn was the wife of Blackburn, Collins Street, Solicitor, who bought many pieces of real estate throughout Fitzroy and particularly North Fitzroy. Peppers sold to William Kayne the remainder of his land, i.e. the southern portion being 180' X 174 (see diagram No.12). Hood sold his lots, No.7 and No.8 to Kaye for £318 in August 1850.

Kaye (1853)
Kaye sold his land in three portions -
(i) A small section to McKenzie in August 1853, who built two large free standing villas on this land, one still remains. (see photograph)
(ii) He sold to Charles Holmes in January 1853, the block on the corner of Napier and George Street for £722. Charles Holmes sold all his property to G. Grave for £2020 in July 1853. (refer to diagram for Graves Estate subdivision).
Diagram No 19

Victoria Pde

Napier St

W. Candy

W. Mullan

W. Mcbride & N. Mcnaul

Cork St

Legend

Legend

Brock Graves & Vaughan Estates

Little Victoria St. (Mason St)

Brooke Estates

Kilmer

Kilmer

Cole

Row

Row

Vaughan

W. Mullan

Legend

Cork St

Legend

Cork St

Victoria Pde
Craves Estate sold -
24th August 1853
7th Decem. 1853
27th Decem. 1853
19th March 1854
27th Octob. 1854

In 1855 Brook subdivided and so.
17th March 1855  G. Atkinson  £205
17th March 1855  G. Calvert  £93
17th March 1855  G. Calvert  £93
23rd May 1855   Cole

(see subdivision diagram No.13)

(iii) The remaining portion of
Charles Vaughan in June

Vaughan
The land that Vaughan had bought
into 20' lots and sold then in
  e.g. Lazarrus
  Folk
  Folk
re
In 1868 he cut up and sold the rema
wide blocks. (see diagram 13)
In conclusion a comparison should be made between the real estate subdivision of Carlton (Grattan Street - Barkly Street area).

Both these subdivisions were done by private speculators. The properties fronting the main streets were generally of a size suitable for building a dwelling of a respectable size for an acceptable standard of living, but the areas left behind the main rows of street housing, with access only by narrow lanes and paths were unsuitable both from daylight, fresh air and land size, often 15' X 25' (only enough for one 2 roomed cottage with no yard, kitchen or bathroom). This was the depraved development which was established by the self interested landlord.

The First (Progress) Report 1936 - 1937, by the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board - an excellent document, makes this point not for just Carlton and Fitzroy but exposes "slum pockets" scattered from Williamstown to St. Kilda. Refer to Map No.14 for "slum pocket" subdivision comparison study. However, it must be emphasised that the area from which the 3 case studies are taken is comparatively free of pockets by comparison with other Fitzroy areas. In fact, due to F.R Core's subdivision and his introduction of the Little streets, the majority of lots are the same size as the subdivision of Gatehouse Street, Parkville. However despite the fact that the pocket housing in Little George Street has been demolished, a certain Fitzroy lady has returned to the now vacant lot and lives in a deserted car. (see photograph)
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