THE SETTLEMENT OF MELBOURNE 1851-1893

INTRODUCTION

Melbourne was the obvious choice as a prototype of a nineteenth century colonial city in the following study in urban history. It succeeded early to a pre-eminent position within Victoria, indeed of the entire Australian continent and its position of supremacy went unchallenged until the twentieth century. It was never seriously threatened by the claims of rival cities such as Ballarat, Sandhurst or Geelong. In this respect, Melbourne was a classic primate city with a whole-state hinterland and was justly described as 'the commercial metropolis of the South'. Its favourable geographic location, centrally placed between eastern and western halves of the colony, together with its position at the northern end of Port Phillip Bay provided the logical point of convergence for a railway network spanning the reaches of the interior. This gave a nodal quality to the city which made it the sole effective input-output point for all commerce with the mainland interior. As such it was 'the heart of the entire colony', a surpassingly great city. In 1872 James Ballantyne saw Melbourne as the symbol of the colonial achievement, the distilled essence of the colonial ideal and thought that the many rising townships throughout the colony were miniature Melbournes.

Looking back in 1901 after 30 years residence in the colony, Ada Cambridge though Melbourne had been a greater city for its age in 1871 than at any later date. The central concern of this thesis is the continued ascendancy of the capital during the period. The rate of population increase in Greater Melbourne was 48% 1861-71 compared with 35% in the Colony as a whole; in the next decade 1871-1881, the respective rates were 37% and 18% and in the final decade 1881-1891 Melbourne grew by 74% compared with Victoria's 32%.

1. H. Butler-Stoney, Victoria (London, 1856) p.29
   See also C. R. Carter, Victoria, the British 'El Dorado' or Melbourne in 1859 (London 1870) p.72.
   E. Carlton Booth, Another England (London 1869) p.268
   P. Just, Australia (Dundee 1859) p.281
   See also W. Westgarth, Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne & Victoria (Melbourne 1888) p.21
   The Victorian 23 August 1862 p.119
3. J. Ballantyne, Homes and Homesteads in the Land of Plenty (Melbourne 1872)
p.46
5. Table 1.
That is especially notable here is the fast-growing accumulation of urban population. Within these 3 decades, Melbourne was transformed from a small city of one-seventh of one million inhabitants to a Metropolis of one-half of one million people.

In examining the stages of Melbourne's development, we can identify two great spurts occurring almost thirty years apart. They effectively set the limits of metropolitan expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first vital change in the 1850's embodies the transformation from town to city, a sudden expansion following hard on the discovery of gold in the colony in 1851, by which the confines of town settlement were burst by the inflow of men and money into the colony and the outflow of gold. 6 The characteristics of the older town were altered by 'the reality of the rapidly running torrent of immigration'. 7 As early as 1853 immense changes were becoming apparent in the city and its environs. There was prodigious growth in the number and size of buildings, in commercial activity, in the provision of many of the necessities of city life, in institutions of government, culture and education and in the birth of the suburbs. This was the evidence of 'the colonising power of raw gold' that R. H. Horne had seen at work transforming the landscape of Melbourne. 

The second period of immense growth c.1884-1888 is in one way the inevitable outcome of the earlier changes but it also differs from that earlier phase in several important ways. It marks the effective culmination of Melbourne's expansion within the century, population additions to Greater Melbourne 1891-1901 being 310 compared with 207,949 for the previous decade. 8

1. C. Aspinall, Three Years in Melbourne (London 1862) p.7.
2. J. Freeman, Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life (London 1888) p.3
3. Fowler, Southern Lights and Shadows (London 1859) p.15
4. Butler-Stoney op.cit. pp.25-26
6. A. Polehampton, Kangaroo Land (London 1862) pp.55-56
7. W. Westgarth, The Colony of Victoria (London 1864) pp.2-4
11. See also Carlton Booth op.cit. p.80
12. 1901. Census of Victoria
By 1891 also, an important shift had occurred in the ratio between the two main groups of industry and commerce. The former retained its previous 1/3 of the total percentage while commerce rose to nearly 1/4, an internal 90% increase within the commercial category in the 1880's.\(^{10}\) Another difference in the second phase is that the stresses and problems of urban living are revealed. Here the timing is significant. Although recognised by some enlightened individuals as early as the late 1850's, urban problems had not then been precipitated on the vast scale of the 'eighties. In the growing metropolitan agglomeration they emerged in all their starkness and bred a new awareness of their complexities. The prevailing early tendency towards centralisation in trading and financial operations noted by Westgarth in 1871 had continued throughout the period, together with steady industrial growth. This concentration of population in the metropolis so nourished speculation in real estate, endemic since 1837, that the suburban dream, a distortion of the widespread land-property ideal was expressed in miles of housing development and had generated whole new suburbs. The essence of the ideal was to be dissipated by 1892-3 when the optimism of the 'eighties had given way to disillusionment. By then, the realities of ill-considered and over-ambitious property speculation, un-coordinated physical expansion, sub-standard housing and public health problems had become paramount.

By 1891, then, Melbourne's urban characteristics and patterns of growth had been firmly established during the three preceding decades and the metropolis had reached its maximum growth. In 1886 Francis Adams likened the city and its suburbs to a giant chess board flung on the ground.\(^{12}\) This was no radically new development since the spiderweb pattern of settlement and the steady outward movement of landholding had operated since the earliest days of Melbourne landbuying. Even in 1872 one observer saw the city as 'the reflection of yesterday'.\(^{13}\) Closer examination of the important factors

\(^{14}\) Table IX, 4. overleaf
See also Howitt, op. cit.
J. Ballantyne, op. cit. p.47
conditioning the expansion 1881-1891 produces evidence to support the contention that the 1880's are an exaggerated version or intensification of trends and patterns of growth which were in existence long before 1881. In tracing their origins in this thesis, 1860-1861 was chosen as the starting date for the statistical tables as it marks the changeover in the colony from a gold-oriented economy to one with a more diversified base. By 1861 the lines of future development in banking, commerce, in the industrial growth and occupational structure were clearly laid down and do not alter greatly during the period. The only important exception is the shift noted above, which occurred in the industrial : commercial occupational categories in the eighties. By 1861, Greater Melbourne contained 26% of the total population of the colony of Victoria and the ascendancy of this urban sector continues markedly throughout the three subsequent decades to reach 43% by 1891. This capacity for expansion never failed to impress contemporaries, many of whom also remarked on the speed and pace of colonial living. In 1873, Trollope thought Melbourne's growth had been exceptionally rapid in the forty years since its foundation. He saw the urban phase of living greatly accelerated in the colony whereas in England it had matured slowly over the centuries. To him, the old-world cities had a slow-motion quality of growth compared with the swifter colonial version. This rate of change in the colony and in Melbourne in particular, was frequently commented on by social observers from the 1850's onwards.

The question which arises is why some cities grow more rapidly than others. In this instance, why did Melbourne continue to outstrip Sydney in the second half of the nineteenth century? Prior to 1851, Melbourne had been, from the accounts of contemporary observers, a small town grown from an earlier village settlement; but by the early 1860's, a mere decade later, it resembled an English-type provincial city.

14. Table I.
15. Horne, op.cit. p.193
   Carter op.cit. pp.97-98
   Victorian Review 1 March 1861.
16. A. Trollope, Australia and New Zealand (Melbourne 1873) p.249
17. Victorian Review 1 March 1861 No. XT.
   Horne, op.cit. p.193
18. Carlton Booth, op.cit. p.39
   Fowler, op.cit. p.5
   Ballantyne, op.cit. p.43
   F. Lancelott, Australia As It Is (London 1852) pp.57-58
   Howitt, op.cit. Vol. 1 p.57
A city however, does not evolve from the simple projection of a village pattern of settlement, so that a qualitative change had occurred in the gold decade which clarified the character of Melbourne as the mercantile, financial and population centre of the entire colony. Demographic statistics can describe the physical dimensions of growth, but they cannot in themselves make clear the dynamics of change nor explain why the process was a relatively swift one. Demographic analysis in urban history is limited, then, by the fact that it gives dimensions but not explanations. The 'why' remains unanswered.

The 'city' may be defined in many ways - as an area of population concentration, a demographic unit; as an economic organisation with obvious measurable characteristics; as a centre for political activity and organisation and intellectual debate; and in its social structure, especially that of class, it exists as a micro-society. But in all these aspects, with the possible exception of a purely demographic treatment, the vital fact is that the city is inhabited by people and must in a sense be shaped by their attitudes and values. The physical attributes of cities may be similar in essentials and yet all cities are different, often markedly so. It is for this reason that the 'spirit' of Melbourne and the Melburnians is examined as it illuminates the statistics of the thesis. Underlying explanations of metropolitan growth include such intangible qualities as confidence in the colony's future, the aspirations of immigrants and their problems of identification, the desire for individual independence, the status deriving from the ownership of real property and the prevailing nineteenth-century mores of an ethnically homogenous population. To have ignored non-quantitative aspects of Melbourne's character would have largely limited the area of enquiry to conclusions deriving from the statistical tables, whereas it seemed more important to establish a broader historical framework in order "to try to tell the story whole". 16.


Throughout the thesis, the principal area of enquiry consists of a detailed treatment of the visible aspects of growth, namely housing and land. Part I is concerned with the early city in the context of contemporary social and economic change and existing patterns of urban growth. Part II treats the spread of the suburbs in terms of physical expansion, seen in conjunction with the organisation of the building trades, types of construction and colonial building materials, obsolescence of structures and the evolution of an Australian style of architecture. Melbourne land was equally as important as housing in the concept of home ownership, as frehold ownership of housing land prevailed, not the English ground-rent system. Thus, in Part III, land speculation and its effects, together with current theories of land use, are closely linked to the immigrants' ideals and aspirations of property ownership. The final part analyses the scale, rate and extent of metropolitan expansion and evaluates the Melbourne ethos or the 'spirit of the Melbournians' in the nineteenth century phrase. Here two chapters of historical demography deal with sex-ratios and birthplaces to give part of the population profile for Melbourne during the period, together with some observations on ethnic, cultural and social class attributes.

The main concern of this thesis therefore, is the growth of Melbourne, especially during the period 1861-1891. The statistical tables provide the basis for an assessment of the continuity or the modification of the trends between these dates. While a number of local and regional studies exist, there has been no examination of the overall growth of Melbourne from a small town to a metropolis. It is as a segment of urban history that the thesis aims to define the essential configuration of metropolitan Melbourne in the nineteenth century. Gold had precipitated this urban change. From the leisurely existence of the pre-gold era, the discoveries served to catapult the colony, and Melbourne in particular, into a more complex and urban society. The remainder of this thesis is concerned with identifying selected trends of growth which dominated the city's development throughout our period.
PART I

THE EARLY URBAN PHASE
CHAPTER I.
THE EARLY URBAN PHASE

INTRODUCTION:

The years 1860-1 were a turning point in Victoria's development and served to clarify the main issues at stake in colonial society. The following section is a study in depth of this vital transition phase. There are two areas of enquiry, the first into the nature and effects of the socio-economic changes taking place, and the second into the existence of trends in occupations, land, housing and trade which were to be intensified with later growth.

From a "quiet orderly colonial city" before the gold discoveries, Melbourne grew amazingly c. 1853-1857. Before then, many scrubby wastes and vacant lots existed in the city proper, and there was nothing more than bush and swamp on the northern outskirts; the roads and streets were muddy or dusty in turn and there were no pavements, drainage, reticulated water or gas supply. In 1846, Haydon wrote of the miserably dirty and

1. Age 3 January, 1860
3 February 1860 & 17 February 1860
2 July 1860
Argus 13 April 1860
10 May 1860.

Bear's Circular and Rural Economist
18 June, 1859
5 January 1861
19 January 1861
23 February 1861
16 August 1861
10 December 1859
31 December 1859
10 March 1860
2 June 1860
9 June 1860
30 May 1861

Journal of Commerce of Victoria

The Australian Builder, 2 February 1861 p.9
C. Mayes, Victorian Government Prize Essays 1860 (Melbourne 1861) p.255

The Victorian, 12 July 1862
26 July 1862
2 August 1862
23 August 1862

2. P. Just, Australia (Dundee 1859) Ch.VIII.
H.P. D'Arc, Les Champs D'Or de Bendigo (Paris 1863) pp.203-204
J. Freeman, Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life (London 1888) p.2
4. W. Westgarth, Australia Felix (Edinburgh 1848) p.201
Wathen, op.cit. p.23
A. Polehampton, Kangaroo Land (London 1862) p.55
J. Singleton, A Narrative of Incidents in the Eventful Life of a Physician (Melbourne 1891) p.103
neglected state of the streets and of the stench which pervaded the town from the boiling-down establishments on its perimeter. In 1853, one immigrant landed in mud at the riverside and three years later could only marvel at the gas-lit paved streets. In 1852 W. Burrows had walked the three desolate miles from Sandridge to Melbourne; by 1859 the new arrival found himself in a suburban district as soon as he landed and found that "The aspect and character of the town are also greatly changed. Formerly, the name of Melbourne conveyed the notion of a dirty, ill-paved, badly lighted place ... (Now) the streets are well planned, and are now tolerably well lighted ... they are paved and macadamised also."  

Thus by 1861 Melbourne had assumed an urban composition visibly defined in its essential aspects. This maturation was evident in the population accession; in the marked increase in the size and solidity of the buildings, warehouses, shops, stores and private dwellings whereby the city proper had assumed a substantial appearance by 1858 and "old weather-board sheds had given place to large and handsome stone and brick buildings" in the provision of housing and accommodation which marks the beginning of the spread of suburbs; in a general improvement of the streets by flagging, kerbing, channelling and paving; in the operation of a relatively efficient suburban transport system of railways and omnibuses; in the provision of gas and reticulated water supplies; in the setting up of municipal governments and the inauguration of the colonial Parliament; in the provision of cultural and educational institutions such as the Public Library, Art Gallery and the Museum of Natural Science, the latter soon after the foundation of the University of Melbourne. All these factors contributed to and were evidence of Melbourne's early phase of city growth.

9. *ibid.*, p.69
In the 1850's the city also acted as the entrepôt for immigration arrivals and their subsequent distribution to country districts. It functioned as the hub of the import-export trade of the colony with wholesale trading houses and warehouses dominating the western end of the city. It operated as the headquarters of the colony's banking system by 1861, with 9 Banks of Issue, 5 Savings Banks, 24 Insurance Companies, 11 Benefit Land and Building Societies, 10 Shipping Companies and 42 Mining Companies. In addition 72 Importers and 260 Merchants are listed in the 1861 Melbourne Directory.

Melbourne itself illustrated the essence of the colonial dilemma, and this the metropolis must be set against the background of changes occurring in the colony at large. Not only was it the commercial, industrial and financial heart for Victoria, but it also operated as a centre of radical socio-political thought and of agitation for changes in the land legislation, for the activities of the Land Convention Party interested in land and electoral reforms and as the hub of the Protectionist movement which held frequent and well-attended meetings in various suburbs and the city in 1860.

The years 1860-1 show a vitally important change occurring in the population profile of the colony, a state of affairs unparalleled before or after until the depression of 1892-3. As the following tables show, three developments took place simultaneously at this time. Firstly, there was an actual decrease in the total number of males in the colony over the 1859 figure; secondly, the numbers of the total population were almost stationary; and thirdly, the migration figures showed an excess of emigration over immigration. On these three counts, the population position was unique. Once previously in 1843 there had been an increase of emigration over immigration but no drop in the total number of males.

11. Journal of Commerce of Victoria, 16 April 1859
12. Economist, 16 April 1859
7 May 1859
### TABLE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Males</th>
<th>Relationship of Previous Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>335,708</td>
<td>+12,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>328,251</td>
<td>- 7,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>321,724</td>
<td>- 6,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>324,107</td>
<td>+ 2,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>327,249</td>
<td>+ 3,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>343,296</td>
<td>+16,047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Increase in Total Population of the Colony in 1,000's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1858-59</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859-60</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860-61</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-62</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862-63</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863-64</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>Emigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>+ 13,120</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>+ 7,348</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td></td>
<td>- 8,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td></td>
<td>- 367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>+ 4,138</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>+ 14,377</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** "Statistical Summary of Victoria from 1836 to 1893 Inclusive" in 1893 Census of Victoria. (fold out sheet inside front cover).
The effects of this near-stationary population were felt in many ways in Victoria in 1860-1. It was in conjunction with other factors such as the current trade and property depression, widespread unemployment and changes in the organisation of the gold-mining industry, that all these changes served to heighten the disruption of the transition phase.

Some of the more important changes occurring at this time will be dealt with in relation to Melbourne in the following pages; the broad issues facing the colony may be briefly summarised to give definition to the whole context of the changeover from a gold-dominated economy to one with a more diversified and stable base. Certain matters were under constant discussion and concerned the continuing annual decline in the gold yield and in the value of exports, consequent changes in the organisation of mining operations and the mining labour force, and the low wage rates prevailing generally on the fields; the growth of inland towns at the expense of Melbourne in these uncertain years; widespread unemployment in most places in the colony, with large numbers of building workers out of work and the employment of substantial numbers of men on railway building and public works as a relief measure; the lack of alternative industrial employment for those leaving the mining districts and those looking for work in the towns, which in turn generated the movements for Protection of Native Industry and Agriculture; and the wisdom of assisted immigration 'dumping' large numbers of unskilled labourers and domestics on the labour market at a time when unemployment was rife; in addition to the above changes, a commercial depression and current reorganisation of the import trade was taking place in Melbourne which in conjunction with the high level of unemployment in the metropolis was causing hardship and distress among wage-earning groups.

The following chapters examine in detail selected aspects of Melbourne's situation 1860-1 and the degree of interrelationship between the Metropolis and the colony. The city is set in the context of contemporary social and economic change. For the above reasons, 1861 was chosen as the effective initial statistical date for the thesis because in the late 1850's and early 1860's we can identify the formulation of factors in Melbourne population, land and housing which profoundly affect the form of later urban development.
By 1860, gold was no longer a long term resource in the colony of Victoria and the yield was declining by £1 million annually.¹ Uncertainty as to the future clouded contemporary thinking. Gold digging was by its very nature an unsettled mode of existence without a permanent base, but for many, the not-very-successful speculative mining ventures were no longer feasible in 1860.² Hence we have the "floating population" characteristic of Victoria, and speakers at Melbourne protection meetings and contemporary newspaper writing made constant reference to the large numbers of unemployed men walking the streets of the metropolis as well as inland.³ Thus,

'Men in the prime of life, with scarcely the means of subsistence, without hope of settled employment, without aim, hope, motive, scope or opportunity for industrious exertion in founding for themselves homes upon the soil, rove about, unsettled wanderers, from one gold-field to another ... In the towns of the interior and in Melbourne, matters are in no better state with the general body of the people ... the condition of all sections of the town population — merchants, shopkeepers, professional men and 'the working classes' [is] a desperate struggle with endless embarrassments and overwhelming difficulties. All persons feel and admit that a grand change in the internal condition of society is imperative ... Homes we must have for our population.'⁴

A concurrent reorganisation of the goldmining industry was taking place. The formation of quartz mining companies c.1859 with outside capital and of co-operatives among miners⁵ resulted in an increase in the numbers of quartz miners but a much larger decrease in the body of alluvial diggers, with a consequent displacement of large numbers of miners overall. The crowded state of the labour market and the fall in actual wages for many workers were a result of the exhaustion of the alluvial fields.

1. Bear's Circular and Rural Economist 2 April 1859; 9 May 1861
   Age 2 Jan 1860.
2. Economist 18 June 1859
   See also, The Convention and True Coloniser No. IV 19 March 1859
3. Age 17 October 1860
   Economist 11 June 1859
   See also Economist 18 June 1859
   Age 3 Jan. 1860
5. Journal of Commerce of Victoria 20 August 1859, 7 Jan. 1860
   28 April 1860, 30 June 1860,
   4 August 1860, 25 August 1860
   26 Jan., 1861, 28 March 1861
   29 August 1861, 25 Sept. 1862
The employment situation on the goldfields was also aggravated by the purchase by the new quartz mining companies of reefs and claims in alluvial ground and the subsequent displacement of miners who had worked them until then. Few of these large companies had started to work by mid-March 1860 as a severe drought was hampering mining operations and the puddling mills and steam engines were lying idle. Over the summer period, when actual mining work usually almost ceased, some of the larger joint-stock mining companies had made enormous additions to their power in the form of machinery. The construction of dams, the sinking of shafts, the erection and installation of machinery and many other operations had given employment to hundreds of men at steady wages, many of whom were previously unemployed diggers but overall it amounted to only a temporary alleviation of the unemployment situation and only relatively few out-of-work diggers were involved.

The result of this goldfields unemployment plus the subsistence wages of many diggers was the large-scale migrations off the fields from 1859 on. The gradually increasing difficulty of getting gold in payable quantities from the alluvial diggings was forcing many men to look for work elsewhere. Unsuccessful miners were seeking employment on the railways and other public works, and from private employers, or in farming. But in the latter field, their inexperience often led them to overreach themselves and they failed at it through the lack of 'colonial' experience. Even during the 'fifties, many erstwhile diggers had found their way back to Melbourne. One instance quoted is that of an ex-digger who used his profits to buy land in Collingwood. S.T. Gill treated the same topic in one of his watercolours entitled "Provident Diggers", which shows two miners standing in front of a land agent's office inspecting the plans of subdivision in the window. The most general demand of the displaced miners was for opportunities to return to their former or alternative trades.

6. Argus 17 March 1860 (Supplement) 
Economist 2 March 1861 
7. Age 17 Jan. 1860 
Argus 17 March 1860 (Supplement) 
9. Economist 20 October 1860; 13 June 1862 
10. J. Singleton, A Narrative of Incidents in the Eventful Life of a Physician (Melbourne 1891) p.119 
See also G. Booth, Another England (London 1869) p.69
J. Freeman, Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life (London 1888) p.3
11. Age 24 October 1861, 26 Jan. 1860, 28 Feb. 1860 
Argus 21 Feb. 1860
This would, in turn, mean a more settled existence for the bulk of the population for whom so frequently the social effects of gold were hardships for families, either in primitive living conditions on dreary goldfields or in deserted wives and families left in Melbourne while husbands tried their luck in the mining districts. Underlying much contemporary writing and social commentary, one detects a desire for permanence and a more settled living, together with reasonable employment possibilities. All of these hopes remained unfulfilled in 1860–1 but this yearning for security could conceivably have been a powerful catalyst in urban growth. In the towns some work was usually available for men in building trades, manufacturing, transportation or labouring. Women could get work in the clothing trades, usually 'sweated', or in domestic service. Up-country few of these opportunities offered except the latter.

A brief examination of the labour market and the level of employment in the colony and in Melbourne in 1860 and 1861 underlines several important factors – the seasonal nature of much work; marked unemployment among artisans and labourers, many of whom were looking for jobs as rural workers or servants; the high wage rate demands of skilled workers set against a background of growing unemployment; and the gradual fall in wages which became apparent by the first quarter of 1861. We have evidence of these trends in the following paragraphs based on weekly reports on the Labour Market in contemporary journals and newspapers.

On 14 January 1860 a review of the Labour Market stated that the demand for agricultural workers was slack and had ceased for harvest men. Only a few calls had been made for stackers and thatchers and for men to attend the thrashing machines, bullock drivers and a few generally useful men. Married couples without children were in good demand at fair wages. (Childless couples were generally preferred and commanded a higher rate.) Male domestic servants were little called for but there was a great demand for efficient, high-class female servants. Men for cattle and horse stations had been asked for in limited numbers. Mechanics and skilled labourers still appeared out of employment in large numbers, particularly carpenters who were willing to hire out at reduced wages.

12. *Age* 2 Jan. 1861, 2 Feb. 1861
"Plasterers, brickmakers and bricklayers are willing to hire out for jobs in the country at much less than the current or demanded wages in Melbourne."

A month later, in mid-February, a large number of agricultural men were walking about the country districts seeking employment and this was causing little demand in Melbourne. Wages had not undergone any marked change but were not as firm as they had been at the height of the season. By mid-March the labour market was dull in all areas and considerable distress was in evidence, with skilled labourers out of work in large numbers, although carpenters hired out at 30/- a week in the country. By April 1860, a large number of servants in all classes were unemployed with more expected to be so in the coming winter. Rural labour was over-supplied and "Farmers do not get their men from Melbourne as they formerly did". Mechanics and artisans, especially paperhangers, carpenters and joiners were out of work.

In May, there was evidence of a fall in actual wages paid; much depended on the "necessity", i.e. desperation, of men and women seeking work. From the labour market reports it is obvious that by now the quoted wage rates were no real indicator of the prevailing wage rates, with much lower figures than those stated being offered and accepted. June was even duller. Thus "Builders have no difficulty in getting carpenters to take work by the piece, at which they cannot make more than 6 shillings a day, while they will not work by the day for less than 12. Masons will take jobs by the piece at which they cannot make much more than 8 shillings a day, their nominal rate per day being 16".

Evidence before the Tariff Committee which sat in February and March 1860 was that unemployment was rife among all classes of artisans.

14. ibid. 21 January 1860.
15. ibid. 13 February 1860
16. ibid. 17 March 1860
17. ibid. 14 April 1860
18. ibid. 5 May 1860
19. ibid. 10 March 1860
20. "Progress Report from the Select Committee upon the Tariff", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly Session 1859-60. 2 p. 7 para. 165
p. 12 paras. 315-317
p. 88 para. 2687
p. 91 para. 2557
p. 93 para. 2633
In the building trades and manufacturing only half the numbers had constant employment.

"The majority of our artificers and artisans, our labourers and laboring manufacturers, are almost destitute. They find little encouragement on the goldfields, where the majority of the diggers are as badly off as the unemployed in Melbourne." 21 On this last point, although the actual average goldfields wage was thought to be 24/- a week, 22 Mayes thought that probably the majority of diggers were not earning half this amount.

A general downward trend in wages noted during the first quarter of 1861 is observable in the difference of quoted rates between January and April. 23 The further fall to July and October could have been no more than the normal winter drop but one would need to analyze wage rate trends at each quarter from 1856 onwards in order to establish the usual % of the fall in mid-year. Those affected in 1861 were farm labourers, shepherds, stock keepers, all artisan labor - masons, plasterers, bricklayers, carpenters and blacksmiths, married couples as servants and cooks. The January and April rates for most of these groups, and general labourers also, are considerably lower still for 1862. 24

Hence we find evidence of widespread and prolonged unemployment in all trades in Melbourne, capitalist investors chary of undertaking new ventures in the climate of uncertainty and a high degree of population mobility within Melbourne and the colony. "Where is the surplus population to go and what are they to do? For men without capital, the goldfields are no longer a resource." The extent of unemployment was probably greater than the percentage given in the 1861 census because many workers were on half-time. The weekly Labour Exchange reports 1859-61 make constant references to the large numbers of unemployed, including artisans and mechanics and to the dearth of employment opportunities. Much writing of the times bears witness, then, to unemployment as a major socio-economic problem in Melbourne; the emigration


22.Age 28 February 1860, 2 April 1860

23.Age 7 April 1860, 8 May 1860

24.Statistics of Victoria 1861 p.70

figures bear this out. In April 1860 the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce estimated 45,000 had left Victoria 1858-9. In October 1860 there was a report that large numbers of Chinese who had been successful on the diggings were leaving the colony for Hong Kong. The coaches from Beechworth and Ballarat had been almost filled with them for several days. On one day, 70 arrived in Melbourne by train from Geelong. Mr. Elderton, proprietor of one of the largest Labour Exchanges in Melbourne reported throughout 1860-61 that many of the diggers leaving for New Zealand had been relatively successful in Victoria whereas many who wished to go could not because they lacked the money. Towards the end of the first quarter of 1861, large numbers were emigrating from Victoria and there was a great enquiry for passages to the East Indies, South Africa and California.

The quality and calibre of those emigrants in 1861-2 excited some comment, as they were felt to be a better class of settler and thus a considerable loss to the colony. The Age thought that three-quarters of the 2nd and 3rd class passengers on outward bound ships were men who had realised a small amount of capital on the goldfields and were returning home to find a safe investment for their savings and their labour, opportunities which the colony had failed to provide.

Two years later an account was published of the men who were to be seen embarking from Melbourne.

"To realise to its full extent the loss thus sustained [to the colony] it is necessary to witness the embarkation at the railway pier of the passengers of any of the Blackwall ships, and to compare the men who are leaving us with those who have come to fill their places. Apart altogether from the mere personnel (sic) of these emigrants, which cannot be surpassed, the most casual observer cannot fail to be struck with their comfortable independent bearing—sure evidence that they have done well in the colony, and are carrying away with them substantial proof of their success; and he must be an indifferent spectator indeed, who does not [reflect]... how it comes that we fail to offer such men sufficient inducement to settle permanently here, and that they should prefer returning to the already over-crowded walks of the old world."

See also *Journal of Commerce*, 26 May 1860, 6 October 1860, 26 Sept. 1861, 24 Oct. 1861, 25 September 1862, 5 Feb. 1863
26. *Age*, 23 March 1860
27. *Economist*, 16 March 1861
28. *Age*, 26 January 1860
29. *Journal of Commerce*, 22 May 1862
The declining annual yield and the change from alluvial to quartz mining are reflected in the shrinking percentage of the total population engaged in mining pursuits. From 21.3% in 1857, it was down to 7.3% by 1871. One suspects there was a considerable degree of inter-urban and intra-urban population movement in those unsettled years 1858-62, but no indicators are available except scattered references to the restless habits and pursuits of the bulk of the population.

It is not possible to plot or establish any trends of rural-urban population movements between the country districts, towns and Melbourne at this time, 1860-1, but from the incidental information available, there is evidence, unfortunately fragmentary, of a high degree of mobility among the male population of Melbourne c.1859-61. Mobility is here defined as physical movement from place to place. Just how widespread this movement was in Melbourne and what numbers were involved is difficult to estimate. The importance of this mobility for our purposes lies largely in its possible conditioning effect on the composition of the building trades workers and a tradition of job and occupational mobility established by this time.

In September, 1860, it was noted that the increase of population was greatest in the interior districts. A year or so previously the Argus had thought that the dullness of retail trade in Melbourne was probably "caused by the transference to the interior of a large portion of our floating population".

In March, 1861, the Economist commented on the remarkable decrease in the numbers enrolled on the electoral lists which had just been collected in Melbourne. These showed that a large proportion of the population had left the city. The paper thought it highly probable that many had gone up-country to work in 'productive Pursuits' and if this were the case, then it was thought to be a favourable development.

In the "ill-occupied floating population" of Melbourne and the Colony in 1860 were to be found many skilled workmen as well as unsettled nomadic types. Hundreds of artisans who had left England thinking they

30. Economist 8 September 1860
31. Economist 26 January 1860
32. Economist 4 June 1859
33. Economist 9 March 1861
would get work in Victoria had been obliged to take up other callings. They could no longer turn to the goldfields to tide them over. "Gold digging is no longer the profitable, fascinating and romantic pursuit it used to be and ... thousands all but starving upon the various goldfields only adhere to their employment, unprofitable as it is, because they have no alternative".  

At a Protection Meeting in Elizabeth St. in February 1860, it was asserted that not one-half of the mechanics who had emigrated to follow their trades were in full employment, consequently they were leaving the townships of Victoria to seek other employment.

Alternatives broached revolved around agriculture and closer settlement opportunities involving the Land Laws, and the question of access to the land for both small-scale capitalists of £1,000 and upwards and for the poor class of settlers. The effect of the existing laws was "to confine the great mass of the people to Melbourne and other great centres of population" and the importing of agricultural produce at Melbourne and Geelong meant that a disproportionately large section of the population was engaged in the import trade. To counteract this, it was maintained that "Property... should be brought within ready reach of the struggling poor man... otherwise he] will only form a portion of that floating population which is perpetually hovering about, like Arab tribes, to and from the goldfields and the neighbouring colonies."

In its "New Land Manifesto", the Land Convention's two main points concerned firstly - "The deplorable and almost hopeless condition of poverty in which the great bulk of the population at the goldfields and in the towns is plunged;" and secondly, it was agreed that the cause of this was the exclusion of the people from the land and that immediate settlement was the only available remedy. The Conventionists wanted a Land Act to firstly, end the squatter monopoly, and secondly, "to fix the great body of the people in freehold homes on the soil of the country."  

33. Age 28 February 1860.  
34. Argus 21 February 1860. See also Argus 17 Feb. 1860 (supplement).  
35. Age 2 July 1860, 22 December 1860.  
36. See chapter 4.  
37. Age 4 May 1860.  
38. Economist 11 June 1859.  
39. Ibid.
The second avenue of large-scale employment lay in industrial development and the encouragement of colonial manufactures, which in turn involved questions of the current wage and price structure, the reluctance of capitalists to promote new undertakings and general costs of production of colonially made goods, which finally raised the issues of Free Trade versus the Protection of colonial industries.

Some form of Protection of Victorian industry, and to a lesser extent, of agriculture was advanced as a means of providing employment for the surplus population of the diggings and the unemployed skilled and semi-skilled workers in the towns. The Protectionist "Age" thought "reliance upon our goldfields alone as a means of settlement is a vain Trust... The great desire of the miner is to make his pile and be gone". It thought the bulk of miners would take up less physically exacting occupations but Victoria in 1860 presented few attractive or practical openings. Former artisans and mechanics tried to return to their old occupations without success. Thwarted in these approaches in 1860, they turned their energies to supporting the demands for a more liberal land law and closer settlement.

Against these claims, the implacably anti-Protectionist "Argus" argued the opposing case with increasing frequency in its Editorials and leading articles by March 1860.

"What each trade gains is at the expense of each other trade... Universal Protection is Universal taxation... All that results is a disturbance of capital and labour... labour can never be so productive as when free of all restraint and interference."

   *Argus* 22 July 1861 (Letter)
   *Economist* 25 Feb. 1860
41. *Age* 26 Jan. 1860
42. *The Convention and True Coloniser*, 19 March 1859
43. *Argus* 16 March 1860
   See also *Argus* 1 March 1860
It saw the majority of the colony's unemployed consisting of the indolent, the restless, the exacting and the incompetent. The changes in society were a natural and even healthy stage in the colony's growth although it conceded that a critical stage of development had been reached. Nevertheless it thought 'The crisis is the most serious at which we have arrived... a colony like ours cannot remain stationary.' 44

The years 1859-61 then, produce a wealth of evidence that this was a transition period in the social and economic life of Melbourne and the colony, with important changes visible in trade, employment and property. A dearth of employment opportunities had combined with the virtual exclusion of large numbers of would-be small holders from the land to produce a state of uncertainty as to the colony's future. It was a time of questioning of certain assumptions which had underlain the previous quarter-century in Victoria - the ideal of the yeoman farmer, the right of every immigrant to acquire land, the opportunities for independence and advancement allegedly offered by emigration, the newcomer's right to a reasonable job and the potential lines of future colonial development. All these are, of course, aspects of the nineteenth century colonial ideal that a man could 'rise in the world' after his arrival. 45 But in 1860-1 we find a forced re-thinking of these hitherto 'easy' assumptions. At the same time there was a growing desire for security and stability which, if it could not be realised in rural landholding, was at least feasible in the form of a home for every man. It is highly significant that both then and later, many writers and social commentators thought that the overall effect of the landlaws was to give impetus to urbanisation by effectively excluding the bulk of the immigrants and small men from the land. This interpretation is examined in detail later. 46 Its significance here is that we find a clear statement and realistic appraisal of this trend apparent in 1860-1.

44. Argus 1 March 1860, 6 March 1860
45. See chapters 14, 15 & 16.
46. See chapter 23.
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<th>Sub-Class</th>
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<td>PROFESSIONAL (not in gov't. employ) - Clergy, priests, missionaries, sextons</td>
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<td>III PROFESSIONAL - teachers, music and governnesses, school inspectors</td>
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<td>1846</td>
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<td>IX CARRYING - Goods traffic-carriers, draymen, bullock drivers, lightermen</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>1754</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>X FOOD &amp; DRINK - Animal food, butchers, poulterers, fishmongers</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>Veg. food &amp; drinks - bakers, confectioners, greengrocers, wine &amp; spirit merchants</td>
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<td>St. Andrew's</td>
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## SUMMARY OCCUPATION S - 1861 - MALES

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CHAPTER 3

MELBOURNE LAND AND PROPERTY PRICES c. 1859 - 1861.

The following section represents a detailed analysis of a representative sampling of Melbourne property prices around the beginning date of the thesis. The following data is a selection based on the 'Landed Property' and 'Houses and Land' columns of Bear's Circular and Rural Economist, the Australian Builder and Land Advertiser, the Age and the Argus, 1859-1861. It provides information on sizes of building allotments, the types of dwellings built on subdivided land and comparative prices between different areas which in turn illuminate class aspects attached to various districts. Evidence is to be found here that the later patterns in real property dealings were already clearly in evidence at this early stage.

In the first quarter of 1861, vast numbers of houses and building land in Melbourne's suburbs were offered for sale in the Argus. The reason for this was the current property depression which had existed since the early months of 1859.

In January 1859, the Melbourne building trade was depressed. Land in the city had been offered for sale in such quantities during the previous six months that it could be obtained at prices so low as to be equivalent to first cost from the Government. In the suburbs of Melbourne, land was selling at a reduction of 30% on prices ruling a year before. In April it was noted that rents were falling rapidly and did not give an adequate return for capital at the present price of building; this foreshadowed an even greater fall, which was borne out a year later by a report which stated:

'House-rent is falling, and there is conclusive evidence that many of the men in business cannot long continue to pay the rents... so building, as an investment, is not to be thought of, except under peculiar circumstances.'

However, in June 1859, "the extravagant rate of rents" in Melbourne was put forward as one of the main grievances of retailers suffering from intense competition and reduced turnover in retailing. This complaint probably applied

1. See also, Victorian Review 8 February 1861.
2. Australian Builder & Land Advertiser, 23 Feb. 1861
3. Bear's Circular and Rural Economist, 2 April 1859
4. Argus, 17 March 1860 (Summary for England)
more to the city proper and possibly some suburban commercial properties rather than to housing.

By June 1859, there was still no improvement in the Landed Property market; although several fine properties had been offered for sale at auction one week, they had been withdrawn for want of bidders. Sales which did take place were of a lower order e.g. 2 cottages £430, 1 allotment £50, 2 small brick cottages £300 and land in East Collingwood 25/- to 35/- per foot. In July, 1859, it was reported there was not the slightest demand for any description of property except good dairy farms, and by September property sales were very dull, with the only properties enquired for being large farms near towns.

Early in 1860, the Argus reported that comparatively few buildings were being undertaken in Melbourne except public works and in April, small allotments in the suburbs were not receiving any attention from buyers, with the exception of a few choice villa allotments. By mid-1860 the Age thought property almost unsaleable and 1½ columns of Land for Sale and Houses to Let were commonplace. The property depression in Melbourne was by now fully evident.

"Building has ceased in spite of the low value of all building materials." Commenting on the quietness of the city and suburbs as a result of the commercial and property depression, there was apprehension in mercantile circles that "a continuance of the present depression ... will turn our suburbs and outlying townships into a waste of tenantless houses and deserted streets... The value of property in the very heart of Melbourne [has fallen]... and stores which four years ago, brought in a rental of a thousand a year are going begging for tenants at £150."

5. Economist, 11 June 1859.
6. Ibid, 23 July 1859
7. Ibid, 17 September 1859
8. Argus, 17 February 1860
9. Age, 2 July 1860
10. Argus 3 April 1860, 14 May 1860
11. Argus 17 May 1860
12. Economist 1 June 1860
The property depression continued in this manner throughout 1860 and 1861 with very few sales occurring in the Landed Property columns. By January 1861 a gradual reduction which had been taking place in the cost of house building was by then apparent\(^4\) and in February, many houses built a year before with every convenience and offered at low rentals had never been unmanned and were not paying for their cost. By August 1861,\(^5\) property of every description was said depreciated in value, and the Age thought property remained largely unsaleable.\(^6\)

The following represent the lowest-priced class of housing on the market c. 1860. Among the cheapest housing prices recorded were two weatherboard cottages each 2-roomed in Durham Lane, Hotham, on land 24' x 42' which sold for £80 cash in March, 1861. In June of the same year a 3-r. brick cottage in Lt. Lonsdale St. sold for £100, in January 1860 a cottage at Windsor brought £176, a weatherboard cottage in Courtney St., Hotham, £100, Waterloo House, Cremorne St., Richmond, £150, a 5-r. plastered house on land 26' x 90' in Rose St. Richmond, £130 3-r. brick in Brick St., 25' x 200' £167 and a weatherboard house on 1/4 acre land in Williamstown sold for £110. In Collingwood two allotments and one stone cottage in Hunter St. £200, a weatherboard house on land 30' x 80' in Lt. Oxford St. £200, two 2-r. brick and stone cottages 33'x210', £500, 4-r. brick cottage in Stafford St., 25' x 95' £205, a 2-r. stone house in Gore St., 60' a 40', £200, and a 3-r. weatherboard in Vere St. 40' x 59', £150.

At the same time sales of houses in a higher price bracket generally indicated better-class areas. A brick cottage on land 25' x 60' in Clarendon St., Emerald Hill sold for £350, two stone houses in Hotham £375, a 10-r. iron house in Walsh St., South Yarra with land 124' x 145' brought £900, a house in Avoca St., South Yarra £3,000 and a 12-r. house on ten acres in Orrong Rd., Toorak sold at £2,900. The La Rose Estate at Moonee Ponds, with a house and

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\(^{4}\) *Australian Builder* 23 February 1861

\(^{5}\) *Economist* 16 August 1861

\(^{6}\) *Age* 26 July 1861
improvements sold for £6018, Dr. Beany's house in Collins St. on land
26' x 156', £2,000 and three 2-storey adjacent, 86' x 156', £4,400. And
a 2-storey brick house of 9-r. and kitchen, 40' x 127', £2,500. A plot
of land 22' x 84' to Lt. Lonsdale St. on which were two 2-storey brick
houses and a weatherboard cottage producing a rental of £160 per annum
sold for £665.

By 1860, it is obvious that certain suburbs and localities
were regarded as more desirable for residential purposes than others.
Only detailed research could reveal the extent and significance of this
differentiation. St. Kilda and Brighton were considered 'better-class'
suburbs than Footscray or Brunswick. A secondary distinction also occurred
within municipalities such as Fitzroy and Richmond and Emerald Hill where
substantial middle-class streets and minimal working-class subdivisions
existed in close proximity.

Land prices were normally given in a price per foot. The depth
of the block could vary from 40' to 330' but this does not seem to have had
an obvious effect on the frontage price, except to discriminate roughly
between better class land of say 1/3 - 1/2 acre lots with proportionately
wider frontages and the smaller allotments, which could sometimes also
have a considerable depth; an example of this were 3 weatherboard houses in
Otter St. Collingwood on land 20' x 175' which sold for £143. The rights-
of-way and lanes had been intended as private back entrances to houses
fronting on to the main streets, but had been converted into public lanes as
streets and as a result of high prices for building lots became second class
frontages. 17 The price of a lot in a right-of-way was usually about half
that of a main street frontage. In Richmond's better streets prices were
£2.2.6, £3.0.0 to £3.15.0 per ft. in Rowena Parade, with allotments at the
rear fronting onto Miller St., £1.17.6. Back allotments fronting onto
rights-of-way brought 14/- per ft. In Lennox St. land was £3.0.0 -
£4.13.0, Erin St. £3.2.6 -£3.17.0 and Bowen St. £2.2.6. In Stephenson and
New Streets front allotments sold at 18/- - 23/- and back allotments at 10/-
- 17/-. per foot.

17. For an example of this, see Illustration No. 3.
As noted above, the property depression in Melbourne had resulted in a marked building slump. Land in St. Kilda was relatively cheap, 20 allotments selling in June, 1860, for £530 or an average of £26 each, land in Invermay Road brought 10/- per ft. in January 1860 and quarter-acre lots on the Brighton Road were advertised at 35/- per ft. in May 1860. In August 1860 land in Avoca St. South Yarra brought 44 per ft., while land in Market St., Emerald Hill was 53 per ft. and in Arden St. Nottam (82'6" x 165') was 25/- per ft. Land in Emerald Hill was relatively expensive in the better areas, 66' allotments in Park and Bank Sts. fetching £2.50 - £3.50 per ft. A half-acre allotment in Sandridge at the corner of Don St. and Beach Rd. sold for £2,100 in October 1859. At Essendon Crown land sales of one rood (1/4 acre) allotments averaged £11 - £31 per lot. Three thousand allotments at Maidstone Township each 26' x 60' were offered for sale in April 1859 and sold at £4 - £14 a lot, the prices being lower than expected. At Newport six small lots sold for £136, an average of £22 each. At an Easter land sale at Yarraville in April, 1860, some of the smaller lots brought £15 which was considered a good price.

The question of the distinctions between various localities and suburbs is treated in Chapter 7, the Genesis of the suburbs. From the price differential operating in land and housing prices in Footscray and Brighton, for example, it is apparent that significant differences did exist by 1860 of which the inhabitants of Melbourne were fully cognisant.
CHAPTER 4

MELBOURNE TRADE

The following section portrays in some detail changes taking place in the nature and organization of Melbourne commerce c.1858-1861. This was one of the main areas in which a forced reorganisation of Melbourne life was occurring in the post-gold period.

The Melbourne depression of 1860-1 was concentrated in trade and commerce; it was also reflected in the current depreciation of property values affecting land, shops and housing and was characterised by widespread unemployment both in Melbourne and the towns and goldfields of the colony. Commenting on a 20% fall in retail prices over the past three months, the extent of the trading depression and the struggle for solvency, the "Age" in February 1860 believed that this state of affairs did not appear before the public since it could not be statistically shown.1

"There has been during the last six months a monetary and commercial revolution working which in its ramifications has affected the pecuniary resources of every individual in the colony disadvantageously."

Commenting on the high number of insolvencies, 959 in the colony for the 12 months to 30th September, 1859, the Age remarked on the fact that the insolvency lists comprised large numbers of small storemen on the goldfields and in the new country towns, which taken individually did not affect the large Melbourne trading houses but their sum total was important.2 Prior to 1858 the diggers had been Melbourne metropolitan customers with not many 2nd or 3rd i.e. intermediary houses operating. Seeing the immense profits accruing to these first houses, many of their former clerks and employees set themselves up in business, hoping to emulate some of the success of their employers.3 This led to keen retail competition and small men found it increasingly difficult to obtain credit accommodation from the banks, whereas in the earlier stages, up until c.1859, the banks' lending policy had been too generous, especially to the weaker concerns.

1. Age 17 February 1860
2. Age 3 January 1860
3. Age 3 January 1860
The second half of 1858 and the first half of 1859 saw a change in the character of the wholesale trade and import business. A system of auction sales came into operation, mainly to dispose of excess orders, and had the effect of cutting 10% off the importer's previous profit margin under the private sale system. The advent of the auction system was a result of cargo speculations in 1858, especially in softgoods, hardware, tea, spirits and groceries. Because the auction system depended heavily on credit, there was an inducement to over-trade and the least disruption or withdrawal of credit could lead to disaster. In this event, only those merchants with ample capital backing and resources would be secure.

In its "Summary for England" the Journal of Commerce of Victoria noted that with the proliferation of goods now entering the colony, good buyers willing to buy in bulk as the goods arrived could not be found for the majority of imports. All the best buyers were by then importing their own goods and retailing them at low prices. Consequently, wholesale prices were continually falling. Because of this trend, begun two years before, only wholesalers that dealt also with the retail trade and kept open stock could do well. Another result of the increasing competition year by year was that the lucrative business of supplying the interior was extended to many more parties than it had been and thus the wholesale nature of the import trade was greatly modified in this way.

By mid-March 1859 the general tendency of prices was still downward as it had been for the preceding four months. The increase in auction sales during this time meant that certain goods such as tea, sugar, rice, timber and slates were being sold only by auction.

Late in 1859 the restriction of business and falling tendency of the market were causing uneasiness and anxiety among the mercantile community of Melbourne and the week ending 26th November saw numerous business failures announced, so that by 10th December, "throughout the colony both in town and country, prices of everything are depressed to the utmost ... the normal condition of every gold country seems to be a chronic state of over-importation."

4. Journal of Commerce of Victoria 5 February 1859
5. Ibid, 19 March 1859
6. Ibid, 10 December 1859
Mid-December saw a slight seasonal pick-up in the employment of mowers, hay-makers, balers and harvesters, with wages firm for the time but it was not expected the labour market could maintain its state for long and wages were expected to come down shortly. In the last 2 weeks of 1859 the market declined almost hourly under the pressures of forced sales and continuous large arrivals, with the result that business was almost suspended by 24 December. Almost daily business failures had been announced during the past 2 months. Now "a severe crisis — far severer than anything we passed through in 1854 — is drawing closer and closer and threatens to explode with violence. Our markets during the year have been constantly illegitimately and unnaturally sustained — Never perhaps since the first foundation of the colony did a year close amid darker prospects and gloomier predictions". 7 The first week of March 1860 was one of business panic with credit suspended and widespread distrust among trading associates. The Argus noted that "the crisis is the most serious at which we have arrived." 8

The real factor precipitating the crisis in Melbourne was the Banks' policy decision not to extend further credit to weak or shaky business concerns, one which they had been quietly and discreetly implementing during the previous six months. General apprehension and alarm were created with the prospect of the inevitable fall of some of the weaker trading houses and the difficulty of obtaining legitimate finance. The Melbourne mercantile community feared that if credit were to be further restricted, either the squatters or the Government would obtain money preferentially from the Banks. 9

Despite the commercial depression, the Bank returns of the first quarter of 1860 showed a significant increase in deposits. There were two sources of this. In the country there was an increase in the amounts lodged to the credit of co-operative mining companies; in the towns the savings, averaging £40-£60 p.a. of those receiving weekly wages accounted largely for the increased deposits. The irony of the situation in which servants drawing wages from their masters became, through the medium of the Banks, lenders to them was commented on. 10

8. Argus 19 March 1860
9. Journal of Commerce, 10 March 1860
10. Ibid, 28 April 1860.
By the first week in April, goods were accumulating in the warehouses and proper storage was becoming a problem. Melbourne importers claimed they were carrying the whole weight of the trading slump while other sections of the trade were trying to depress prices still further so they could buy cheaply and by a variety of ruses, attempting to "bear" the market.

Although the *Journal of Commerce* labelled April 1860 the worst month for trade since 1854, it could also point to country consumption being as large as ever, stimulated by railway construction and other public works and the diggers' prosperity. The goldfields drought had broken early in March. So that it found little apprehension for the ultimate prosperity of the colony "If we look at the Bank returns just published, though the Town may have done ill, the country has prospered, and although the mercantile and borrowing interest may be much depressed, the monied, labouring and loaning interest are in a very prosperous condition". And later in June, the severe prostration of the import and retail trades had no counterpart in the relative prosperity of the mining and agricultural population.

When the question of possible control over the market fluctuations was raised, the *Journal of Commerce*, implacably Free Trade, thought that the "power to control the market does not rest...with one set of men. It depends on 50 matters beyond even the reach of speculation and calculation... and in this market, where changes are sometimes so rapid, improvement could occur suddenly." The keen anticipation of the shrewd speculator was almost impossible to subdue for long in a market where changed sometimes occurred very quickly. Even when the market was at its lowest point, there was always the upswing to be anticipated and the depletion of retailers' stocks in a lean period would, with continuing demand, bring the inevitable re-stocking.

By the beginning of 1860, it was apparent that a "powerful and new set of shippers to the colony" had entered the market with the threefold aim of carrying on large-scale operations, of assisting speculation in Britain by their purchases for the colonial market and of relieving overstocked or cheap home markets by chance large ventures to Victoria.

11. ibid., 7 April 1860
12. ibid., 28 April 1860
13. ibid., 2 June 1860
14. ibid., 7 April 1860
15. ibid., 14 January 1860
It was claimed that a volume of goods three times in excess of the colony’s needs were being shipped and that importing was becoming by now a speculation on a grand scale involving a tie-up and adjustments between the English and the Colonial market, with Melbourne as the outlet. The aid was partly to force up British home prices of commodities by buying up in bulk, and partly to monopolise a substantial part of the colonial trade. The leading import auctioneering firms in Melbourne had threatened to raise their rate of commission from their 2½% for sale and guarantee, but instead reduced their charges early in February. The importers charged that the auctioneers had lost money by their large volume of legitimate business; losses arose mainly from “queer” transactions, where, in order to get a large commission, they would take hazardous risks.

The types of imports were by this stage roughly divisible into two classes, leading and secondary and minor. The first of these attracted speculation because of their importance. The second group was seen as a mixed assortment which should be subdivided into classes but at present this trade was carried on “with a fecundity of business talent found only in the colonies, combining the sale of softgoods with hardware and metals, of boots and shoes with Eastern produce, and of slops with Martell’s brandy, Holloway’s ointment and assorted groceries.”

By Mid-year 1860 the depression centred in Melbourne had reached its lowest point. March had marked the acceleration of the irreversible downward trend, now June, July and August were to indicate the bottom. Melbourne was described as having a holiday—look of listless apathy, almost as quiet as Williamstown or any other small town and turning “suburbs and outlying townships into a waste of tenantless houses and deserted streets...” The value of property in the very heart of Melbourne [has fallen] and stores which, four years ago, brought in a rental of a thousand a year are going a—begging for tenants at 5150".

The volume of trade was by now shrinking and a very low level of activity in business and importation was the result. "Experience furnishes
no parallel to our existing depression". The ramifications of Melbourne's economic malaise were being felt in a random way in various parts of the colony. Although undoubtedly important in the multiple role of capital, main port and financial nucleus, Melbourne was not the linch-pin of the whole colony. In fact, as the symbol of the "unproductive" importing and trading pursuits, and in this sense a relic of the 1850's trading pattern, Melbourne seems to have acquired a mild disrepute in the columns of the Argus where the city was claimed to be a harbour for the unemployed. In England, those out of work would search for it but "This is not the case ... in Melbourne. To a large proportion of our metropolitan fainéants this city is the colony. They do not care to travel beyond its municipal boundaries, certainly not beyond the suburbs, in quest of work ... there are hundreds of men in this city who lack the courage to confront [their difficulties]; hundreds who are "waiting for something to turn up", and who are dissipating the slender means they brought with them, as well as health, hope, and energy, by obstinately clinging to Melbourne... instead of boldly pushing their fortunes in the interior. In all parts of the colony, townships are springing into existence or rising in importance". 19. We need then, to examine the relationship of Melbourne with the rest of the colony, and the role played by the premier city in several vital aspects.

19. Argus, 1 March 1860
CHAPTER 5
INTERRELATIONSHIP AND INTERDEPENDENCE OF CAPITAL AND COLONY

The beginnings of the changeover from gold can be traced with some degree of definition back to the second half of 1855 and the process continued in its more obvious aspects until c.1863. One question of great importance which arises is that of how far Melbourne was representative of general trends in the colony and conversely, to what degree the capital pursued an independent or divergent course of growth. Melbourne’s relationship with the rest of the colony, especially with the provincial towns and the goldfields was a fairly complex one in 1861 and it is possible to see both an interdependence and a dissociation, so that differing views of Melbourne’s role in the colony were possible. A network of dependence was clearly visible in trading activities. Melbourne followed a seasonal pattern imposed by the annual cycle in the agricultural and pastoral life of the colony at large. This interrelationship which existed between Melbourne and the colony generally was evident in such matters as the state of the harvests and wool clip and the seasonal pattern of activities which conditioned the Melbourne markets and to a certain extent, Melbourne banking; Melbourne’s importing and wholesale trade was dependent on country orders which later were in turn influenced by weather and the supply of water to the goldfields; seasonal hiring of temporary farm labour traditionally took place in Melbourne as well as in country centres; as Melbourne was the only centre for organized benevolence in the colony, large numbers of destitute persons especially women and children, found their way there to seek relief and charity; there was much coming and going to and from the goldfields as there had been since 1851 - new arrivals making their way up-country and in 1860-2 large numbers of dissatisfied Victorian miners emigrating from Melbourne to the New Zealand goldfields.

1. Argus, 4 May 1860.
2. Economist, 23 March 1861.
3. Economist, 13 April 1861.
   Age 25 August 1860, 9, 17, 19 October 1860, 2 Feb. 1861, 28 June 1861.
   Argus 27 July 1860, 13 Sept. 1860, 26 November 1860
   The Victorian, 19 July 1862
The seasonal pattern in Victoria really began in October when harvesting and the wool season commenced; then the flock owners began to lay in their year's supplies, and simultaneously the circulation of money increased as the wages paid to hay and corn harvesters, shearsers and other seasonal workers went into circulation and consumption increased greatly. In November, 1862, the Journal of Commerce of Victoria noted an improvement in Melbourne trade with the activity in wool growing, agricultural and mining interests:

"The country trade has been tolerably good and seems to be improving; the numerous wagons which have been arriving with wool, are now returning to the stations loaded with stores, and those whose business it is to supply the farmers, are now expecting orders against the approaching harvest, which will also bring their payment of outstanding balances... the activity with which the new clip is being shipped, and the animation which characterises the wool sales this season are relieving the dull monotony which has so long prevailed in the city."

This buoyancy and activity in Melbourne usually continued until March. In that month when the roads were in good order and with cartage cheap, storekeepers from the interior flocked to Melbourne to make purchases. The second part of the year from March to October was usually quiet for Melbourne trade; wet weather made country roads difficult for travel and cartage rates increased; the lack of seasonal work meant an increase in the unemployed within Melbourne itself; Spring usually saw an increase in suburban land sales - even in 1891 with the onset of a general depression, Spring brought the annual revival of the Saturday suburban land sales, although the auctioneers were giving reductions in price and many purchases were Time Payment transactions.

The seasonal nature of employment was very marked and illustrated in the Labour Exchange Reports of Mr. Elderton in the Economist 1859-63. Farmers discharged much of their farm labour seasonally and other employers often took advantage of the pool of unemployed to cut wage rates. One proposal made to break this winter unemployment pattern was that the letting of government contracts should be timed so as to take up the slack periods. An ample illustration of the effects of the seasonal movement occurred late in 1859.

November-December 1859 had seen an impending crisis staved off, with large wool supplies reaching town and a good trade with the interior in January and February 1860. Both of these factors mitigated financial pressure and eased the banks. January and February were traditionally the busiest trading

4. Journal of Commerce of Victoria, 6 November 1862.
5. Table Talk, 9 October 1891.
months on the calendar and 1860 was no exception to this. The state of
the roads was good and so was the weather, wool prices were firm and con-
sumption of nearly every article was high, with the country houses stated
to have transacted a larger volume of up-country trade than ever before.
Towards the end of February, however, changes were apparent. The wool clip
was all shipped and mining operations on the gold fields had ceased until the
autumn because of lack of rain. This meant a great contraction in business
transactions on the goldfields with the Melbourne houses supplying the interior
becoming anxious, but more seriously still, the decreasing weekly gold yields
meant that the means of payment were becoming smaller while liabilities were
increasing.

The annual upturn in the economy and labour market which usually
occurred around October–November in a normal year was keenly anticipated by
the merchants and traders as well as the working groups. For example, in
September, 1863, scarcely any demand for rural labour existed, as well,
large numbers of every class of servants were out of work although willing
to work at moderate wages. Mechanics, bricklayers, paperhangers and painters
were out of work in large numbers and distress was increasing. An upswing
was anxiously awaited. "It is expected a better season will soon open for
all classes of labour." 6

The period of demand for seasonal workers was usually brief however.
Thus on 17th January, 1862,7 it was reported that the demand for harvest men
exceeded the supply but by 7th February the demand for harvest and farming
men was quite over. A week later, all the large towns were fully supplied
with male and female servants and many were out of places. Temporary seasonal
employment was probably diverted into domestic service and unskilled labour
once the higher paid farm work had given out.

It is noteworthy that in May 1869, when the slow downturn towards
the depression of 1891 was in evidence in Melbourne and the disastrous nature
of much land speculation of the previous year was becoming apparent, Table
Talk printed a hopeful report of some economic recovery in which it linked
the good prospects for wool and grain markets to the money market, with a

6. The Victorian, 19 September 1863 p.366
7. Economist, 17 January 1862
recent break in the drought and substantial rains. It saw benefits for the farmers and wool growers. The reverse had been the case in 1888, a short harvest, deficient exports and low wool prices in London caused shipments of gold to London as cover for drafts there and a consequent reduction in local advances. This, of course, was not the main concern in the Victorian Banks withdrawal of credit to many speculative concerns in 1888, but it was seen as a contributing factor.

It is apparent, then, that in the early 1860’s, the level of trading activity, the hiring of workers from any of the 13 Labour Exchanges in the city, temporary seasonal employment and the increase in the Melbourne Banks’ liquidity in the final quarter were all related to the cycle of activity in agriculture, in the pastoral industry and on the goldfields. This was obvious in March 1861 when lack of water on the goldfields north of the Divide, and especially in North-East Victoria meant a cessation of mining operations. As a result, trade on many goldfields was almost suspended and this in turn was affecting Melbourne trade as "Everyone knows how much Melbourne depends on country orders and the effects of this trade suspension will be most injurious". Two months later in May, there was a scarcity of cartage and cartage had risen. As a result, many parties had delayed in forwarding supplies, and this partly explained the prevailing trade depression in Melbourne. The confidence of the town dealers had also received a setback so that many small provincial merchants and retailers were buying only from day to day for current consumption. In June and July, credit was greatly restricted on the goldfields. Melbourne importers were wary of granting credit and up-country trade was restricted; as a result, the lowest level of trading for the previous 12 months was noted in Melbourne in the first week of July. A similar situation developed a year later in May 1862, when a very dry season affected goldfields operations and all branches of trade and industry associated with mining; the country districts also felt the lack of water with all agriculture suspended, an absence of pasture and the poor condition of flocks and herds. The total result of this was felt in Melbourne as a noticeable lessening of consumption in many classes of goods. Later that month good rains fell and the Melbourne import trade picked up.

8. Table Talk, 3 May 1889
See also ibid 18 April 1889, 26 April 1889.
9. Economist, 2 March 1861
10. Ibid, 6 July, 1861
11. Journal of Commerce, 1 May 1862
Then the usual winter lull set in with the bad state of the roads, cartage expensive and trade quiet generally.

This then, was the network of interdependence of capital and colony which existed. Nevertheless, it did not characterise all phases and areas of Melbourne life. While Melbourne always occupied the position of a primate city in relation to other urban centres in population concentration, overall size and as the headquarters of colonial banking and commercial operations, certain developments in the metropolis were not duplicated elsewhere. The intensity of the depression in Melbourne trade and property was not paralleled in the rest of the colony 1858-62, where agriculture remained prosperous as did the pastoral industry. Inland towns were growing at a proportionately faster rate than Melbourne, as seen especially in the consolidation of the gold-mining townships. Changes which were taking place in the structure of the wholesale-retail trade within Melbourne could not be duplicated outside the city as the wholesale and import operation was confined largely within its boundaries. Although most major banks in the city had branches in country towns, the change in banking policies and advances by Melbourne banks appeared to be directed mainly at industrial and trading concerns operating within the metropolis. The Argus noted an increase of £305,000 in bank deposits in the first quarter of 1859 and thought this improvement would be reinforced by similar buoyancy on the goldfields and with the agricultural and pastoral interests, all of which had benefitted by the recent rains. The only unfavourable feature in the economy of the colony as a whole was the extreme dullness of the retail trade in Melbourne. "The evils existing in Melbourne do not in the least invalidate the universal testimony showing the substantial advance which is taking place in the country generally."

Again in September 1862 we have an illustration of the disparate situation in Melbourne and the colony at large. The month saw great prosperity on the goldfields. There were satisfactory reports of private mining associations successfully working the quartz reefs, whereas this optimism was not paralleled in Melbourne trade.

13. Argus, 26 May 1859
"The very aspect of the city during the last few days tells of the stagnation which prevails in all departments of trade, and the quietness of Saturday afternoons and holidays appears now to extend to the business hours of each day."15.

And although the city concentrated in itself the early 1860's banking operations, Melbourne was also regarded as constituting a sort of bottleneck in the outward flow of capital to other parts of the colony. There was a "constant tendency to an injuriously excessive accumulation of money in that city".16. This alleged capital accumulation was seen as encouraging commercial speculation in the metropolis and subsequent depression there.

"Melbourne is no doubt the reservoir into which the money-capital of the colony naturally flows, and from which it does NOT distribute itself in fertilizing streams over the whole country, for the simple reason that Melbourne capitalists know little or nothing of the interior, or of its abundant and diversified resources."17.

The importance of Melbourne's role in this interaction between colony and capital is assessed in the following chapter.

15. ibid, 4 September 1862
16. Victorian Review 1 March 1861
17. ibid 1 March 1861
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

We are able then, to set Melbourne as the premier city of Victoria against the general background of the colony at large. The complex of interactions between the two was recognised and constantly assessed by contemporaries. In this sense therefore the growth of Melbourne as a study in urbanisation is not that of a self-contained entity, a phenomenon in isolation from the rest of Victoria but rather as an analysis of the patterns of growth of the urban center related to the broad total environment.

This then raises the question of how far Melbourne exemplified general trends in this stage of the colony's growth and how far the capital at certain periods represented a divergence from the overall pattern. In the beginning phase we have changes in the goldfields mining industry and the relocation of large numbers of the mining labour force together with the economic repercussions of the declining gold yield on the structure of Melbourne trade and importing, together with the obvious incapacity of Victorian industry and colonial manufactures to absorb the surplus work-force. At this critical stage of colonial development, Melbourne's role appears to have been more passive than active in shaping the direction and configuration of the changes occurring. The physical factors of a declining gold mining industry and restrictive operation of the land legislation lay beyond the metropolis. Certainly at the same time the political force of the conservative landed groups in Victorian politics was clearly evident in Melbourne and widespread dissatisfaction with the failure of the land laws to settle substantial numbers of small men on the land is a recurring theme throughout these years. Thus,

'The great monetary interests in Melbourne are bound up to a considerable extent with the pastoral tenants of the Crown, whose position they are anxious to uphold and strengthen, for many obvious reasons. The title deeds of at least one-third of purchased land in Victoria (speaking of large areas) lie in the strong boxes of the Melbourne banks, of the Australian Trust Company, the Victorian Insurance Company, and the various solicitors; while the return annually published by order of Parliament shows the amount of the advances made to the squatters on the security of their flocks and herds and wool. To consolidate and enrich this class is therefore the policy of the various institutions we have named; and none of those who have been 'behind the scenes' can imagine the amount of influence which the monetary magnates of Melbourne exert upon the Legislature, or how many of the wires which set Legislative puppets in motion are worked by gentlemen sitting in the quietude of bank parlors, or managers' rooms.'

1. Age, 13 April 1861
By 1861, Melbourne's essential character was threefold — as a trading nucleus, a financial centre and an industrial city. The latter aspect is important, notwithstanding the reputation of Melbourne as a commercial and financial city. In that year, 15% of the total male population were engaged in commercial pursuits and 26.6% in industrial occupations. This proportion was to change little until the 1880's, when by 1891, commercial occupations had risen to 23.5% compared with industrial whose percentage had increased only slightly to 30.8%, but was still predominant.

If we include from the % figures the large body of dependents it is obvious that from 1861 to 1881 industry contained almost or more than double the workers in commerce and banking, which are grouped together (see Occupations of the People 1861). By 1891 however an important shift had occurred in the ratio between the two main groupings of industry and commerce. The former retained its previous 1/3 of the total percentage while commerce had risen to nearly a quarter, an internal 90% increase within the commercial category from the 1881 figure.

The disparity here between Melbourne's common image as a commercial city and the reality of an obvious industrial occupational profile based on the actual percentage of workers in industrial employment is extremely interesting. It points up the imprint of the powerful mercantile groupings on Melbourne's character, their inherent influence on the life of the metropolis and quite probably the great economic value of commercial operations in Melbourne in relation to industrial activity, the latter's greater absolute employment numbers notwithstanding. Capital investment and accumulation and profit-making are here demonstrably not tied down precisely to the occupational structure of the Melbourne work force. A mere head count in varying occupations does not reveal intrinsic economic value.

1. Melbourne Guide Book (Melbourne N.D.) [1894] p.8
E. Carlton Booth, Another England, (London 1869) p.271
P. Just, Australia (Dundee 1859) pp.286-290
J. Ballantyne, Homes and Homesteads in the Land of Plenty (Melbourne, 1872) 2nd edition p.p.107-111
By 1861, we see the Harvellous Melbourne myth already in existence, although not promoted with the flamboyance of the later 1880s version. Melbourne's role in the functioning of the colony's economy, the solid value of city and suburban property and the impressive banking system centred in the metropolis were all cited as evidence of the city's prestige. "Whilst we have exported this mass of [gold] treasure, we have built a metropolis richer than Bruxelles."  

In conclusion, then, the interrelationship existing between Melbourne, the goldfields and the interior of the colony conditioned in part the character of the city. Melbourne was the main trading centre for the colony and was to remain increasingly impressive in this role throughout the period. In this way, the patterning evident in the early urban phase persists throughout the intervening decades.

Although it was claimed that Melbourne outstripped any other city in the British Empire in growth over our period, certain important differences characterized its development from that of contemporaneous European, British or Imperial towns and cities. One question emerges which the following sections of the thesis attempt to answer - Did the unsettled, impermanent mode of living on the goldfields in temporary structures and without the amenities of civilized living in the early 1850s somehow combine with the dislocation of large numbers of people and the consequent social dislocation of 1859-62 to produce a catalyst to the almost universally-held desire for self-betterment of most immigrants entering the colony? Which in turn was to prove a powerful generating factor in the land-home ideal underlying the sale of Melbourne suburban land? If a large number of would-be smallholders were frustrated in their attempts to go on the land, could a diversion of aim have occurred by which the property ownership ideal was transferred to a small suburban block of land with a home on it? The proportion of the total Victorian population engaged in agriculture was 6.57% in 1857 and grew slowly to 7.67% in 1861 and 7.46% in 1871. A jump occurred in 1881 to 12.73% which fell back to 10.29% by 1891. Against this slow increase we must contrast the
dramatic expansion of the metropolis with its lion's share of total colonial population.

In addition, the evidence available points to the fact that the building trades 1856-1893 were geared to supplying domestic dwellings on a speculative building basis. We must then ask whether they were in fact filling an existing need for home ownership rather than rental and thus implementing the small man's property ideal or whether their activities were instrumental in helping to generate a desire for home ownership.
PART II

MELBOURNE HOUSING
CHAPTER 7

GENESIS OF THE SUBURBS

The growth between 1860-90 represented a filling in of the interstices in the existing settlement together with a continual peripheral expansion to the north, east and south-east of the city. The outward movement began in the 1850's as the population spilled from the inner suburbs. "The limits of Melbourne were too small to confine the people, who began to scatter themselves over the adjoining country." This was the genesis of the suburbs, which were a characteristic feature of Melbourne's plan by 1861. At that date the city of Melbourne (which included Carlton) and the surrounding municipalities of Collingwood, Fitzroy, Moonee, Richmond and Emerald Hill all exhibited a high population density, the effect of the earlier and continued speculation in town lands. Beyond this concentrated area lay the cheaper land and a dispersal of settlement. Plenty of suburban land was available to newcomers but price was always a factor. Sustained speculation had resulted in higher prices and smaller allotments in the inner municipalities by the 'fifties; by 1861 the cheaper land and larger blocks lay further out and by this date, people of moderate income were beginning to move out several miles from the city in search of reasonably priced land.

This outward movement was facilitated and in part generated by the expanding suburban railway and tramway systems. One fact of paramount importance in the early spread of Melbourne is that reasonably efficient and relatively cheap forms of public transport had existed from the 1850's on, by which time it was possible to travel by omnibus from say Collingwood or Fitzroy to the city for a 3d. fare; the service was frequent with vehicles leaving the city or suburbs every few minutes. And by 1861, the railway network in existence spanned out to Hawthorn, Richmond, Prahran, St. Kilda, Brighton, Sandridge and Williamstown. Although some complaints were voiced by railway travellers, the suburban railways appear to have functioned tolerably well for a city merely 25 years old.

From all these places, near and far out there was a considerable traffic to and from Melbourne of people on foot, on horseback or in

1. T. McCombie, The History of Victoria (Melbourne 1858) p.237
2. See also E. Carlton Booth, Another England (London 1869) pp.77-78
   T. McCombie, op.cit. pp.232-3
   H. H. Archer, Statistical Notes on the Progress of Victoria 1835-1860
   (Melbourne 1861) Pt. I p.25 para. 45.
3. The Victorian Gazetteer 1871-2 p.42, p.63, p.143
different types of horse-drawn conveyances, carriages, drays and carts. Such were the daily commuters to work in the city, the market gardeners of Brighton and Malvern, the woodcutters of Numawading and Boroondara, the fruit growers of Doncaster and Templestowe, the brick-carters of Hawthorn and Brunswick. James Bowick, after taking up residence on a few acres not far from Kew village, walked into the city daily in the company of several friends and out again in the evenings. The main roads leading to and from the city were thronged with travellers in the morning and late afternoon. Thousands of clerks and business men walked in and out of the city in groups. "Melbourne has its great living tide, night and morning, flowing towards it, and again ebbing from it, as regularly as London has".

Superficial, polite or laudatory observers saw the spread of Melbourne's suburbs during the three decades as a desirable type of development and commented on the pleasant aspects of plein air suburban living and the merits of home ownership. Thus Julian Thomas lauded 'les milliers de charmantes petites maisons qui s'entendent jusqu'à plusieurs kilomètres en dehors la ville ... offrent à la vue une diversité délicieuse, et annoncent le bien-être.' In like manner, M. Gaston Thiery, who wrote a book after having been associated with the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1888, thought Australians lived luxuriously with everybody in a cottage with a well-kept garden crowded with fruit and flowers. And only mild criticism tinged A. Sutherland's remarks when he noted 'a certain monotony' in the vast suburban spread.

David Syme, however, deplored the inevitable loss of the rural idyll in the growing metropolis. Melbourne at the time of the first land sale in 1837 had been an open forest of gum, messmate and box with a few scattered dwellings, a few head of cattle grazing and small craft moored to the trees lining the banks of the Yarra; from this scene 'all that is pleasant to the eye and landscape gave place to miles square of weatherboard, brick and slate.'

4. C. Booth op.cit.p.291
9. J. Thomas, Victoria in 1869 (Melbourne 1889) p.19
10. G. Thiery quoted in Table Talk, 18 April, 1890 p.20
11. A. Sutherland op.cit. Vol. I p.559
12. The Melbourne Review, No. 15 July 1879 p.223
Nonetheless, even in 1890, Gresswell thought a strong semi-rural quality still persisted in much of the outer portion of Greater Melbourne within the M.M.B.W. or 10-mile boundary line and he thought the density between areas varied considerably. To his mind, marked crowding existed only in certain blocks in the older suburbs of the city. Further out, many of the residential groups were still separated by extensive tracts of open country. 'Some localities present the appearance of old country cities; and others, at the outskirts, are as yet of essentially rural character.'

Not all the development was substantial and enduring however. Beyond the pleasant park-like environs of the city, whole suburbs of wooden houses were appearing so rapidly in the early years of the gold decade, that a few month's absence from the city produced astonishment at the extent of the changed occurring. In 1853 four thousand buildings were built with "mushroom rapidity", and a large proportion of dwellings in the suburbs were canvas, slab and wattle and daub. Hundreds of temporary houses and tents appeared in unhealthy situations in the suburbs because this was where the cheapest land lay. Canvas Town at Emerald Hill catered to the immediate housing needs of hundreds of newly arrived immigrants, and at the same time, thousands of unsuccessful "diggers" had found their way back to the capital to swell the teeming population of the town and suburbs. By mid-1854, Melbourne had expanded in all directions and the distances between previously isolated villages and settlements were rapidly filling up with houses. Prahran and St. Kilda each stretched for 1½ miles while Emerald Hill, Collingwood and Richmond were becoming densely populated. A preview of the new suburban dimension of Melbourne could be had from the Bishop's Palace across Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond. There were to be seen "thousands of little tenements, chiefly of wood, and almost every one of them of only one storey high... Here is a new settlement in all its newness... a balder and more unattractive scene cannot meet the eye of man. Every single tree has been


T. McCombie, op.cit. p.308
F. Just, Australia (Dundee 1859) Ch. 8 & p.281
H. Butler Stoney, Victoria (London 1856) pp.25-26
W. Burrows Adventures of a Mounted Trooper in the Australian Constabulary (London) 1891 p.160
levelled to the ground; it is one hard bare expanse... a wilderness of wooden huts of Lilliputian dimensions; and everywhere around and amongst them, timber and rubbish, delightfully interspersed with pigs, geese, hens, goats and dogs innumerable. The streets, so called... are not roads, but quagmires, through which bullock drays drag fresh materials... These diminutive tenements are set down on the open fields, as if they were the abodes of a race of squatters, but they are all built on purchased allotments. But why so small? Why no gardens? Simply because the ground is so preposterously dear". 13.

But outlying land also held an appeal for the wealthier class of colonist in search of a small estate yet still within practicable travelling distance of the city. These settlers sought and found in land 10-15 miles distant, the opportunity to buy several acres or large-size building blocks where they could live in semi-rural seclusion on often almost self-contained holdings. 14. Two men thought the Australian townsman had inherited the English love of living far distant from one's place of work. 15. E. H. Horne likewise observed that

"Very few of the larger shopkeepers of Melbourne reside in town. Nearly all of them (like the professional men, bankers and merchants) have their villas at St. Kilda, Richmond, Prahran, Heidelberg or Hawthorn. In short, the principal shopkeepers here live in the manner of our London and Liverpool merchants, so far as their wealth and their taste enable them." 16.

Clara Aspinall remarked that "nearly everyone lives in the many pretty suburbs where the air is much purer and finer than in the city." 17.

In 1838 when the first sale of Collingwood land was held in Sydney, John Hunter Patterson, a member of the first Town Council of Melbourne, bought 20 acres which he converted into garden and built the first house in Collingwood. 18. Similarly Abbotsford, still 'a small hamlet' adjacent

13. Howitt, op.cit. Vol I p.15
14. Mathen, op.cit. p.42
15. N. Kelly op.cit. vol.II p.295
17. T. Lancelott, Australia As It Is (London 1852) Vol II p.76
18. E.S.N. Tweedie, Town Life in Australia (London 1883) p.17
17. C. Aspinall, Three Years in Melbourne (London 1862) p.16
to suburban Melbourne in 1872, was sold as a 20-acre estate at the earliest landsale in the late 'thirties.' St. Kilda was especially sought after as a 'favourite marine residence' and in the 'fifties was the most fashionable suburb of Melbourne, a fact which land speculators were not slow to appreciate.

This early social cachet of St. Kilda may have left a lingering 'imprint in the form of its high female sex ratio for the remainder of the century as seen in Table II. It may have been a genteel residential area for spinsters and widows. Certainly the female occupation structure there shows a high ratio of female servants.

By 1856, a large area between Brighton and St. Kilda had similarly been subdivided into suburban lots and sold, but at the same time, Brighton managed to retain a certain distinctive character. "The village still keeps its distance; and there are farms and neat villa residences scattered at intervals on the road between it and the town." It was abundantly apparent to the citizens of Melbourne that the best of both worlds, metropolitan and semi-rural could be combined in an outer suburban residence.

In this way, in the entire area between St. Kilda and Brighton, we read that "Handsome residences of every style of architecture abound, from the Turkish cupola to the Italian villa, the cottage ornée, the Gothic and Elizabethan. Good roads intersect the district, and public conveyances are continually passing to and from the city."

Economics however, conditioned one's choice as Westgarth noted when he commented that picturesque villas were available to those who could afford them, and Lancelott saw the indulgence of a taste for a country seat in the vicinity of the city as a characteristic of the affluent. W. Howitt recounted a visit to such a house at Brighton, situated with views to Mt. Macedon and the Dandenongs. Built around a courtyard because of the winds, the house was roomy and commodious and surrounded by native bush, flower gardens, a vineyard and an orchard with quinces, figs, peaches, almonds and

19. ibid, p.55
20. H. Butler Stoney, op.cit. p.32
   See also: E. Carlton Booth, op.cit. p.284
   C. Aspinall, op.cit. p.16
   W. Kelly op.cit. pp.23-24
22. H. Butler Stoney, op.cit. p.34
24. F. Lancelott, op.cit. p.76
cherries. The lusciousness of the vegetation and the overall expansiveness of the property appealed to him greatly and he wrote, 25.

"Such places...make one cease to wonder that intelligent men like to spend their lives in these distant colonies. There is a wild, fresh beauty and novelty about them, that affects the imagination agreeably. You have wood and sea and a wild vegetation around you that can only be cultivated at home under glass and at great expense. Within doors there is a rural abundance... But the gold has disturbed the pleasant quiet,"

and he went on ruefully to describe the infectiousness of the prevailing property speculation by which the owners were debating whether they should sell their holding to take advantage of the current high prices.

The vitally important question of the extent to which regional, ecological, social class and status differences characterise different areas and suburban districts in nineteenth-century Greater Melbourne is one which could only be approached through detailed research far beyond the scope of this thesis. Some comments are, however, pertinent.

Areas differed quite markedly in value, even by the 'fifties. The suitability of a site for the class of building, either for personal residence or for letting was an important consideration. 26. "A residence quite proper for one district would be quite out of place and of far less value in another, though the actual case may have been the same". Also in evidence were land vendors' attempts to keep property values high in a certain area by ensuring a certain class of development by the sale of reasonably sized blocks. On one estate we find that "The land is subdivided with careful attention to prevent the estate being crowded out with small cottages." 27. The smallest allotment was 50' x 150' and all were proclaimed suitable for villa and mansion sites. This was probably intended solely as a reassurance to intending buyers or in the maintenance of premium prices on the vendor's part rather than denoting any genuine

25. W. Howitt, op.cit. Vol I p.34
26. Builders' and Contractor's News, 8 April 1893
27. Table Talk, 19 Oct. 1888 p.9
concern for the ultimate character of the development. In similar fashion in 1861, land on a 1/4 mile frontage of the Brighton Rd., St. Kilda, adjoining T. Monahan’s little estate and near the Ulsterwick hotel was said to be “pre-eminent for private residences; and every allotment will prove to the fortunate purchaser a daily increasing fund.” To ensure a respectable neighbourhood, only a minimum size of 1/4 acre lots were to be sold. 28. Duffy’s scheme for subdividing the land on the south side of Gardiner’s Creek Rd. (which did not proceed) which was to cut up the land into 1/4 or 1/2 acre allotments and to bind the purchasers to erect buildings of approved design and stated value was “well calculated to promote a desirable object, as tending by the erection of tasteful villa residences to guard the neighbourhood of South Park from unsightly buildings”. 29.

By contrast were the working class area subdivisions. The advertisement for the sale of 330 allotments at Yarraville in April, 1860, was an undoubted forerunner of the advertisements for land sales a quarter of a century later. 30. The land sale was launched with all the trappings of a military brass band and the successful ascent of eight large balloons. Free railway trips, free refreshments and a private marquee for ladies and children were added inducements. The auctioneer, Mr. Henningham of 10 Bourke St. West, was careful to stress the proximity of the land to the new government workshop and its convenient position on the Williamstown railway line. The monthly ticket, Melbourne to Williamstown was then 36/- 2nd class, 46/- 1st class. As Yarraville was approximately half-way, a monthly ticket 2nd class was probably about 20/-. For the blocks terms of payment were 25% cash deposit, the balance of payment over three—eighteen months without interest. All parties beginning building within three months of purchase would have 10% of the price refunded and would receive permission to procure stone free at the proprietor’s quarries 1/4 of a mile distant. In the best tradition of land sale jargon, the land was claimed to be high and dry, commanding picturesque views across Melbourne, of bay shipping and to the in—

28. Age 3 May 1860. 29. Australian Builder 5 Nov. 1859 p.347 30. Age 31 March 1860. See also Argus 13 June 1860 (advertisement) "To all
There was good garden soil and a never-failing creek of fresh water available at the southern boundary of the township.

Nearly three decades later, A. Sutherland was at pains to point out the often subtle differences which existed between suburbs, even working class ones such as Collingwood, South Melbourne, Footscray, Brunswick, and Moonee Ponds. In the absence of any ethnic clusters and a consequent cultural uniformity, we must ask how important and profound these discernible regional differences were. They could conceivably have been variations in the visible social trimmings, and so directly related to income and the economics of land-buying in less or more select areas. The question also involves the central problem of social status and prestige in so far as it is amenable to quantitative analysis. Were 'St. Kilda and Brighton, with their smart little villas and still smarter owners' merely a more elaborate version of their Prahran counterparts? Is the difference between say, Collingwood Flat and 'Richmond-on-the-Hill' one of degree or a qualitative one? One writer thought that on entering St. Kilda the visitor met there 'a different class of people and places' but he may have been unduly affected by the affluence of the place.

It is here that an investigation of Collingwood and Fitzroy with possibly Richmond as a third reference could probably penetrate to the heart of the problem of the degree of significant ecological and social patterning. For example, in 1869, Carlton Booth thought the Nicholson St. end of Fitzroy 'a highly select suburb', conservative and quiet, with all the staid respectability of a cathedral town. Here were found the homes of colonial magnates and the monied gentry. By contrast, other areas in Fitzroy suffered from the narrowness of the streets and the smallness of the allotments which were the legacy from early successful speculation there. There was in Fitzroy a marked lack of open space for public recreation, the Edinburgh Gardens in North Fitzroy being the only reserve in the whole area.

31. Sutherland op.cit.-Vol. 1 p.570
32. " ibid. p.571
33. " ibid. p.572
34. " ibid. p.574
35. " ibid. p.574
36. Carlton Booth op.cit. p.223
37. ibid. p.283
38. ibid. p.279
Collingwood showed a similar socio-economic division between high and lower class residential areas. Upper or West Collingwood had an imposing appearance with its large villas and impressive terraces. But the East and North dwindled away into crowded rows of tenements and minimal weatherboard cottages. The working classes had flocked there in the 'fifties when cheaper land was made available by speculators. As it was only 1 - 1½ miles from the city, a crowded suburb grew up there and the population density naturally attracted industries. Nearly 20 years later in 1869, it was still a predominantly working-class area covered with older, shabby dwellings, with its boundary merging almost imperceptibly with that of the city. Dr. Singleton established a Home and Night Shelter in this 'poorest and most densely populated suburb of Melbourne'.

The political complexion of the Collingwood area was also significant in the 1850's and early 1860's, embodying as it did a politically-conscious and loquacious working class, whose public utterances and demonstrations of political solidarity behind radical politicians such as C. Don and G. Berry continually provoked the conservative journals into decrying the stump orators and the rabble of Collingwood who marched in the streets and turned out in force at the political meetings.

This was particularly acute at the time of intense discussion surrounding the proposed land laws legislation of the early 'sixties. One senses more than mere intolerance on the part of the conservative 'Argus' and 'Economist'. It is more a fundamental incomprehension of the basis and strength of the radical and reforming groups, almost an apprehension of the social implications of the democratic demands. The conservative group was so firmly tied to mid-nineteenth century social mores and assumptions concerning the operation of society that all it could do under the circumstances to apply moral strictures to those who presumed to query the validity of the operative social principles. It is in this context, interesting to note that in the lusty,

40. Carlton Booth, op. cit., p.278
41. ibid., p.278
43. Economist 16 August 1861. See also 15 October 1859, 1 Sept. 1860, 26 January 1861.
The Victorian 30 August 1862, p.135
politically-oriented inhabitants of Collingwood, Carlton Booth saw an
adaption to the colonial milieu in its most advanced form 'an acclim-
atising process of some sort' visible in the faces of Collingwood citizens
which showed as a jauntiness of manner and a look of independence and
satisfaction. 44.

In Richmond, he noted interestingly that 'the character of the
people and the appearance of the place differs very materially' from that
of Collingwood, 45. although they shared a common boundary and both covered
approximately the same area. Richmond appeared entirely self-contained,
as did Brighton and Williamstown throughout our period. In Richmond,
the undulating ground gave a pleasant light and shade effect, while
the shops and shopkeepers had a comfortable and composed look about
them, which was in marked contrast to the mildew-looking Collingwood
shops and houses which tended to run to seediness. 46.

The suburbs then, were an integral and characteristic part
of Melbourne life by 1861, but the question which remains is how impor-
tant locality differences and distinctions between areas were. The inhab-
itants of Williamstown and Brighton, of Footscray and Collingwood,
appear to have thought in terms of distinctive local identity but the
validity of this notion could only be established by the use of socio-
logical techniques combined with relevant local histories.

44. Carlton Booth op.cit. p.277-278
45. ibid. p.280
46. ibid. p.280
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* 1857 basis for comparison
(o) new 1881 boundary a reduced one
(b) new 1881 boundary an extended one

Table 1
### Table IV

**Density of Population and Dwellings**

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<td>923</td>
<td>35.16</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2366</td>
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<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>4101</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>2320</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td><strong>3840</strong></td>
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<td>1871</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>4525</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1866</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>3075</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2046</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>2.02</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HAWTHORN</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>2236</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>2540</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>2236</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>2540</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.59</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>2389</td>
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<td>.45</td>
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<td>2775</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>2389</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2775</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In 1861 and 1871 known as East Collingwood

** A portion of this borough was ceded to the Shire of Braybrook during 1871
## Table VI

### INCREASE IN POPULATION & DWELLINGS OF PRINCE SHIRES

*(1881 - 1891)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population 1881</th>
<th>Population 1891</th>
<th>% Inc.</th>
<th>Inhabited Dwellings 1881</th>
<th>Inhabited Dwellings 1891</th>
<th>% Inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berwick</td>
<td>3477</td>
<td>4080</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boroondara</td>
<td>1525</td>
<td>6204</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1241</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braybrook</td>
<td>1107</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadmeadows</td>
<td>1751</td>
<td>1779</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caulfield</td>
<td>2488</td>
<td>8005</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>1524</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburg</td>
<td>2659</td>
<td>5752</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong</td>
<td>1414</td>
<td>2450</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eltham</td>
<td>2344</td>
<td>2874</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>2775</td>
<td>4413</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>8136</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>1561</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorabbin</td>
<td>3733</td>
<td>6542</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>1240</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunawading</td>
<td>1573</td>
<td>4449</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1410</td>
<td>3569</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE MELBOURNE BUILDING TRADES

The intrinsic character of the Melbourne building trades and the composition of the classes of building workers throughout the period throw considerable light on Melbourne housing trends. The bulk of the scattered information available on both these topics relates substantially to Melbourne.

Collingwood, Emerald Hill, Fitzroy, South Melbourne, Prahran and Richmond were the home of the building trades in 1861 and 1871 as the following table shows. The suburban distribution of building trade workers in 1861 and 1891 is impossible to ascertain from the censuses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>Male Pop. 15-65 y.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>Paperhanger</td>
<td>Slater</td>
<td>Tiler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coll.</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Em. Hill</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotham</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melb.</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: "Census of Victoria", 1861 and 1871. "Occupations of the People".

The significance of this concentration of building workers in the inner suburbs, 1861-1871 lies in the fact that these 7 suburbs contained the greatest number of dwellings\(^1\) and inhabitants\(^2\) of the 16 suburbs, 23,276 out of a total 29,051, dwellings and 98,444 out of a total 124,641 persons in 1861.

These 7 municipalities also represented the highest density of dwellings and persons per acre\(^3\), and in 1871, contained the greatest numbers of houses being built. (The numbers are hardly significant in 1861). In both 1861 and 1871, they show a considerable number of unoccupied dwellings. The widespread property depression in Melbourne in

1. Table III.
2. Table I.
3. Table IV.
In 1860-1 (see chapters 2 & 2) is reflected in the greater number of unoccupied houses at this date but in 1871 we can reasonably assume, in the absence of such a depression, that a sizeable proportion of these unoccupied dwellings were newly built and awaiting occupancy.

By 1881, building activity was still concentrated in these 7 inner suburbs although the remaining 11 were beginning to move and by 1891, a tremendous shift had taken place in the centre of building activity, reflecting the marked increase in % rates, for population and total dwellings, with Essendon, Prahran, Brunswick and Hawthorn showing the greatest number of houses being built. The numbers of unoccupied houses in 1891, either newly built and awaiting occupancy or vacated by tenants, would have been affected by the onset of the depression and the beginnings of widespread unemployment in 1890-1 which was seriously affecting the building trade. The rate-books for 1891-93 in the municipalities sampled show considerable numbers of unoccupied houses held by building and investment companies.

Throughout the period of this survey, several issues relating to the internal organisation of the building trades were under constant discussion. These were the Apprenticeship and Improver questions and the practices of the sub-letting of contracts, Piecework and "Sweating". Underlying these various issues was the fundamental one of standards of quality and construction, which was to be seen in its negative aspects as "Jerry" building.

The Building Journals available unfortunately do not span the period 1862-1886. We can assume, however, that practices which were in existence by 1861 and were widespread by the mid-1880's would have had a reasonable continuity throughout the interim period. Many were thrown more sharply into focus by the increased level of residential building activity from 1883-4 onwards and by the increasing prominence these issues assumed in the forums of public debate within the organisations of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects, the Builders and Contractors Association of Victoria, the Federation of Builders' 4. Tables I & III.
and Contractor's Associations of Australasia, the Victorian Architectural
and Engineering Association, the Victorian Trades Hall Council and various
Union Societies, as well as in the columns of the daily and weekly press.
The tradition that any man could turn his hand to a building trade
occupation had been firmly established during the 1850's. Many building
workers of the 'fifties were not trained or skilled workmen, nevertheless
they got work readily as the demand for housing exceeded the supply.
"Many handy men... tailors and others... started, on their arrival here,
as full-blown carpenters and joiners... they readily obtained employment.
How they executed their work need not be stated. Good mechanics, who
knew their business, were chiefly engaged in sub-contracting; ...
Employers [had] only one proviso, to get the building done."

In 1854 Wathen thought half the workers in Melbourne were engaged in
"new" occupations and singled out building workers as a prime illustration
of this occupational switch. "Some take to carpentering, and, after two
or three days' apprenticeship advertise themselves in the papers as
'rough carpenters'. Others try painting or paper-hanging."

Polehampton's own experiences bear out this last statement. After road-
breaking, which he found heavy work, he read advertisements in the
Melbourne papers for mechanics and noticed that men who had little prac-
tical knowledge of the various trades professed to be carpenters, painters
and paper-hangers. They were reasonably successful in putting up rough
wooden houses, and huts, "after a fashion". Skilled artisans were very
scarce. He noted these men getting on and he applied to paint the outside
of a new house, even though he had never handled paint before. He man-
aged tolerably well, but was dismissed after knocking over a paint pot.

Much later, the Builder could recall the type of "bush carpenter" in the
early days who ultimately found his way to the towns. In 1852 Lancelott
remarked on the numerous bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters and joiners
in Melbourne and thought them a rough, illiterate, money-making class,
but in general good workmen.

5. The Australian Builder and Land Advertiser, 7 August 1856 p.182
7. A. Polehampton, Kangaroo Land (London 1862) p.113
8. The Builder & Contractor's News, 23 Nov. 1856 p.499
The actual building operation frequently involved the supply of materials by the owner with the building workers contracting for labour only. James Bonwick bought a couple of acres in the 'fifties in thin bush at Yea, where a few other rough huts and tents were visible through the trees. After camping out in a tent with his family for five months, a benevolent carpenter at length came by, and contracted to put up a two-roomed cottage for thirty shillings a day and his food. The wood cost me a fabulous amount. Another generous man, upon my purchase of some bricks at £18 per 1,000, gave his labour at a small chimney for £5. With lowered rates, we managed afterwards to add to our rude wooden abode. 11

Another alternative venture was commonly practised, which appears to have been an early version of speculative house building carried out by individual building tradesmen. Lancelott commented that almost every bricklayer in Melbourne possessed freehold land and houses, some bringing them in £2-£4 weekly. 12 It is not clear from his passage just how the system operated but here it appears to have been speculative housing for rental, though later purchase by the tenants would have been feasible. We added that despite this adequate income "their love of gain is so great" that they lived frugally and continued to work at bricklaying for longer hours than they would have done in England. This surely indicates the profits to be made by individual skilled workers and the early organisational details of the trade. A similar reference, equally ambiguous, occurs in Shorner, when he stated that most Melbourne bricklayers were "free house and landholders". 13

Concerning the extravagant rents obtained

10. ibid., p. 98
12. Lancelott op. cit., p. 99
for indifferent accommodation, he remarked that many householders took in tenants and labourers and even started building enterprises, tempted by the large profits to be made from house rent. "In the suburbs and adjacent villages, a great increase in the amount of temporary [weatherboard] accommodation, chiefly put up by the labour of mechanics possessed of small portions of land, may be observed."  
These then are the early speculative builders and the small landlords.

Carpenters and joiners could ask high prices for their labour and usually saved the equivalent of their previous total weekly wage in England. Cabinet makers, many German, turned out rough strong work that was seldom veneered. The timber splitters lived in the forests of stringy bark and worked in pairs, living in a wooden hut of their own building. Sawyers worked in similar fashion, digging a saw pit for their operations. Some were migratory workers, who roamed from place to place with their tents.

In the 'fifties, contractors and builders experienced great difficulty in pricing their contracts in Victoria. Some used London price books while others used colonial precedent or relied on their "more dearly bought colonial experience". Charles Mayo in his "Victorian Builders and Contractors price book" adopted the system of "Costantes" - the time required to perform a certain quantity of work using the hourly unit as the basis of computation. However, he recognised the flaws in his method as "the present unsettled state of the market for both labour and materials, independently of the item of cartage and profit, precludes the possibility of giving a fixed price for any item "all materials" sufficiently accurate to be made generally applicable."

One vitally important and highly significant development within the Melbourne Building trade of the later 'fifties worked as a strong contributing factor to urbanisation. This was the role performed by the skilled and semi-skilled building workers in furthering the prototype of

14. ibid. p.331
15. Lancelott, op.cit. p.99
16. ibid. p.104
17. ibid. pp.115-117
the urban worker. Here the effects of the working of the Land Laws in momentum. They led to the practical effective exclusion of many workers from the land, who as a result accumulated in the towns.18. After Mr. Duffy's resignation as Minister of Lands in 1859, the Victorian Government promoted land sales which reached £375,000 in the 3rd quarter. The Economist charged that instead of using this money to open up the interior and promote settlement and agriculture, the bulk of the money was being expended in and around Melbourne on public buildings such as the Customs House, the Treasury, Parliament House and offices for the Colonial Secretary, to the detriment of the country as a whole.19. It was claimed the Government had prematurely undertaken this large-scale public building programme "to propitiate the skilled artisans, the democracy of our large towns."

With the immense influx of population in the early 1850's, a disproportionate number of building workers had been required to erect buildings and houses but when these needs were satisfied, much of this building labour should have been directed to other employment to assist in developing the permanent resources of the colony. "Instead of which they remained in town and called upon the Government to employ them."

A retrenchment in the public building programme was suggested to curb this misappropriation of revenue. Butler-Stoney concurred in his analysis of this urban aspect to the organisation of the building trades. Many self-taught masons, joiners and others were the result of the great housing demand and high artificers' wages. Favourable reports from the colony as to the opportunities for profits to be made induced the emigration of many building workers who even after the demand for their labour declined with the property depression current in Melbourne from c.1860 on, "were reluctant to leave the towns...and thus the attraction of the town, and the difficulties which lay in the way of settling on the lands, co-operated to keep the urban population unusually large, when compared with the Gold Fields and the country in general."

19. Economist, 15 October 1859
At this stage, a further contributory factor requires mention. With the decline of the alluvial goldfields from c.1858 onwards, many miners sought new employment. The unsettled mode of life on the diggings and later off the fields, would have pre-disposed many ex-miners to take up a type of employment such as building work which did not mean long-term residence in one place, and which also provided a certain variety of jobs.

Economic reality was also a stringent force. Openings for alternative employment were restricted by the commercial and industrial depression of 1860-61 and by the current Free Trade policies. Many artisans were forced into unskilled labour or casual rural work. Do we have then, in the diggers and diggers' sons, the reservoir of the building trades labour force of the decades which followed? Formal organisation and enforceable standard wage rates were apparently almost non-existent throughout most of the nineteenth century Melbourne building trades.

From both earlier and later reports it is obvious that the standard of workmanship in many buildings, particularly domestic, suffered at the hands of unskilled workers.

"Quite enough [scamping] has been done for one generation. We blame no-one for the negligence of the past; it may be laid to the account of the "times" - the state of the social atmosphere - or anything else."²¹

But criticisms of the standard of workmanship were to continue and intensify in the 1880's so we have here a minor tradition of relatively unsatisfactory workmanship in many smaller buildings - and parallel criticism of the lack of expertise of many building workers. It was claimed in 1891 by the Federated Building and Contractors' Association of Australasia that but for the importation of overseas tradesmen the quality of work in Melbourne buildings would have deteriorated.

"It must be obvious to all observant builders that the colonial youth as workmen have not reached the state of proficiency equal to that of their fathers who learned their trades in the Old Country."²². These

²¹, *Australian Builder*, 7 August 1856 p.182
remarks would have referred largely to the great numbers of
"improvers" and boys found in the building trade as well as to
poorly trained building artisans.

I have found only scattered references to the prospects
of the diggers' children and their lack of schooling but they add
up to a significant picture. Marked anxiety was felt as to the
future hopes for the children of the gold decade. "What are the
prospects for our children?" was an all-important question to
which the reply was that under existing circumstances, the colony
was nothing short of a snare. At a Protection Meeting in 1860, it
was stated that with only half-time employment, many mechanics were
leaving the townships of Victoria in search of employment. They
saw no chance of apprenticeship to a trade for their children. Mr.
Wardle, M.L.A., maintained that men wanted a good education and
apprenticeship to a useful trade for their sons and not jobs sell-
ing fruit and newspapers.

A digger's letter in the Argus typified the goldfields'
arguments against Protection and Immigration. He claimed many diggers
had families and many wanted for the necessities of life.

"We can, some of us, hardly buy meat and bread, and have to
scrape and save and dig in order to have our young people clothed and
shod... you should make this a cheap country to live in, not a dear one,
if you want young and healthy boots...it is cheaper that children should
be born here than that paupers should be imported,"

Likewise, it was stated that working people could not obtain
employment for their children and mention was made of children without
bread and clothing, "this in the promised land for which we left our
English homes." There was a marked degree of destitution in Melbourne
in 1860-1, particularly among wives, widowed and deserted, and children.

23. Age, 28 February 1860.
24. Argus, 21 February 1860
25. Argus, 14 March 1860
26. Age, 29 February 1860
See also, ibid., 3 April 1860.
Argus 18 September 1860, 26 November 1860.
55 persons applied for relief from St. Peter's Church Poor Fund in Collingwood in mid-1860. 17 were widows with 41 children uncared for and destitute and 18 were deserted wives with 59 children in a similar condition. The writer thought this to be the same in all suburbs of Melbourne. 28.

The Melbourne Ladies Benevolent Society believed that, in the absence of a Poor Law, all in distress flocked to Melbourne where the only benevolent institutions existed. The "Victoria" remarked on the high degree of poverty, destitution and sickness existing in the colony, and of the prevalence of pauperism and wife and child desertion "throughout [Melbourne's] lanes and alleys are found the starving wives and children of men who are scattered all over the colony". 29. The boys, the idle "precocious youngsters daily swarming in the streets and suburbs", potential vagrants selling newspapers and oranges, and cleaning shoes, together with the thousands of children to be seen running around barefoot in the depressed gold-winning districts, "half clad, half starved, totally uneducated", 30 these boys could well have been the "improvers" of the building trades in the 1880's.

In August 1859, a special meeting of the Builders & Contractors Association was held to consider the questions of subcontracting and piecework. 32. It was claimed that men were tempted by subcontracting to take jobs at very low prices, sometimes with 2 or 3 workers banded together but even then they did not earn a journeyman's wages between them. The consequence of this practice was poor workmanship and the use of defective materials in order to keep the price down.

In February 1861, Labour was easily obtainable below the fixed day rates of the trade societies. Piecework earnings were in some cases as much as 50% below nominal day rates but the difference was even greater as piecers were said to work 25% harder in order to obtain this half-wage.

29. Economist 7 July 1860. See also letter in Age 10 April 1861.
30. Age 9 October 1860.
31. Age 3 January 1861
32. Australian Builder 20 August 1859
Current average piecework earnings were masons 10/- c.f. 14/- nominal, bricklayers and plasterers 8-9/- c.f. 11-12/- nominal, carpenters 7-8/- c.f. 11/6 nominal. By Jan. 1862, these nominal rates had dropped by 2-3/- and by April of 1862 another 2/-. General labourers got 7/-7/6 throughout 1861 (nominal) which averaged 5/- throughout 1862. The contractor who brought out 500 German masons in 1859 claimed in a letter to the Deutsche Zeitung justifying his action that he had received thousands of applicants in Germany willing to work at 9/- a day in Victoria.

Three decades later in September 1889, the subletting of contracts was discussed at the monthly meeting of the Builders and Contractors Association of Victoria and the same charges were made. Mr. Fitzgerald of the Operative Masons saw subletting as a growing practice; with piecework it was impossible to pay a fair day's wages as the work passed through so many hands. Some contractors consistently undercut their competitors in price then sublet the work, thus exploiting the men. If only one contract was let the practice of subletting would be stopped. It also bred a race of "improvers" i.e. boys working in the stoneyards who never learned their trades properly and drifted out on to the market after 5 years or so as inferior workmen, able to do only stone and sill work but not ordinary mason's work.

Mr. Brown of the Bricklayers thought subletting had grown in his trade to such an extent that some firms had practically no legitimate workmen but subcontracted almost entirely to inferior workmen. Men (i.e. "mushroom" or "bogus" contractors) went out into the suburbs and when they succeeded in getting a contract to build a villa residence, got 2 or 3 boys or youths as "improvers" to do the work. There were probably not more than 100 proper apprentices in bricklaying in Melbourne at that time, as employers shielded away from giving apprenticeships, and the result was boys who never learned the trade of bricklaying. He raised the question of whether it was

33. *Statistics of Victoria*, 1861 p.70
34. *Statistics of Victoria*, 1862 p.63
35. *Australian Builder*, 26 November 1859
36. *Builder and Contractors News* 20 Sept. 1890
37. Ibid.
fair to ask and expect trained skilled workmen to work alongside improvers. Mr. Robb of Carpenters maintained that in the suburbs, jobs were let 2 or 3 times over - in roofing, sill, studding and so on. Mr. Reynolds of the Plasterers stressed that there was a dearth of apprentices in his trade.

In October 1890, the R.V.I. sent an official letter to the Australian Union of Progressive Carpenters and Joiners and to the Operative Masons and Bricklayers in which they stated their opposition to the excessive use of improvers and the abuse of subletting, and maintained that the contract gave all necessary control over such matters to architect, where his judgement and discretion would be paramount. However, they thought moderate use of both practices to be necessary in view of "a long experience of labour market conditions of colony" and that the imposition of rigid restrictions would harm both the building trade and its allied industries. A sound apprenticeship system would be one answer to the problem.

The subletting and acceptance of contracts at extremely low prices precluded the employment of competent journeymen on regular wages. Thus three quarters of the work was carried out by "improvers" or boys. Improvers were partially skilled and untrained workmen who had never been fully apprenticed.

The Unions composed of trained workmen were in favour of an apprenticeship system but its practical implementation often foundered in the face of difficulties. So much depended on the attitude of employers. Some such as A. Linacre were prepared to pay union rates and employed good quality workmen to train apprentices but other contractors and builders who were themselves ex-building workers were not so concerned with the niceties of a situation requiring properly indentured apprentices whose work was to be supervised by skilled tradesmen and whose position in the trade was to be under legal control. The Trades Hall Council thought a minimum age of 14 acceptable but would have preferred 15 as "the best mechanics are always the men who have been educated fairly well." They also concurred in the payment of a premium by the

38. Ibid., 25 October, 1890
39. Ibid., 20 July, 1889.
apprentice's father to the master. An employer with dozens even hundreds of men often found it impossible to arrange adequate supervision of apprentices and the question of an alternative mode of training arose. A course of training in technical schools or a similar institution was put forward as a substitute but the question of practical opportunities and the necessary experience of working under the discipline of a workshop still remained.

It appears that the small numbers of apprentices were not only the result of the employers' attitudes. Some of the reasons and causes of the lack of training and expertise evidence in colonial workmanship were attributed to the easier conditions of existence in the colony compared with those in the older countries; a relatively easy life was possible in Australia and therefore the necessity of learning was less. Love of sport was also given as a distraction from work. As a result, overall standards of Australian building craftsmanship were thought to suffer by comparison with those of Britain.

The practice of sweating was claimed to be the most barefaced of all in the building trades by a journeyman carpenter. In a letter to the Builders News in 1890, he gave as an example of operation a job in which the contractor employed a number of carpenters to do the heaviest and most dangerous work of laying the joists and putting on the roof. Then they would usually be dismissed and the sub-contractor or "sweater" would move in and install the flooring, lining, fencing and any other work he could get, for this work employing boys and improvers at 3-6/- a day; he verified that pieceworkers frequently took jobs at half the standard price. Another wrote "I am a pieceworker myself and do not pretend to be any better or more philanthropical than the rest of them. We simply have to do it."41.

Another writer made the point that although a daily wage of 8-9/- might be considered low within the building trades, when this amount compared to wages of 1/3 the sum paid in the tailoring trades, together

40. Ibid. 19 July 1890
41. Ibid. 26 July 1890
with unhealthy working conditions in rooms and also considering the thousands of unemployed in Melbourne in mid-1890, building workers in employment were not badly done by.\textsuperscript{42}

The charge that middlemen "sweated" the workmen out of a large % of their proper wages came to the fore with the large contracts being let by the M.N.B.W. Some of the tradesmen were working for 12/- per week, plasterers on piece work were averaging 2-3/- day, bricklayers were working at 3/-2 yd. when 7/- was ordinarily paid and skilled masons were getting 15/- to 24/- week on these sublet M.N.B.W. contracts. Mr. Fitzhibbon, Chairman of the M.N.B.W., had interviews with Trades Hall members who wanted subcontracting outlawed from M.N.B.W. system of contracting so that the workmen might have a chance to share in the large prospective expenditure of M.N.B.W. The M.N.B.W. did subsequently decide to enforce restrictions on subletting and sweating in their contracts.\textsuperscript{43}

The practice of "jerrying" was also widespread in all branches of the building trade, from architects down to casual workmen.\textsuperscript{44} "Jerrying" was a term applied to dishonest workmanship and/or the use of defective or poor quality materials. The two were usually found in combination. Writing in October 1891 the Builders News thought the recent landboom responsible for the development of a class of speculative and jerry builders, which had brought discredit on the building trade. It saw some summary justice in the insolvencies of many jerry builders due to the collapse of the landboom and the consequent cutback in the scale of building operations.\textsuperscript{45}

There is, however, evidence to indicate that while the events of 1885 onwards did highlight and encourage the operations of speculative jerry building, it had antecedents well established by 1860 and indeed had characterised much domestic building in the decade of the 1850's.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} ibid. 9 August 1890
\textsuperscript{43} ibid. 18 February 1893
\textsuperscript{44} ibid. 17 October 1891
\textsuperscript{45} ibid. 31 October 1891
\textsuperscript{46} Australian Builder 16 August 1855, 24 July 1856
Demolition often revealed the extent of previous jerry-building in Melbourne.

The jerrying principally will be found amongst the speculators who buy allotments of land and run up cottages of the cheapest description. The lowest-priced bricks and the sloppiest of workmanship, plenty of plaster and paint and then the production is sold to some good easy man who thinks he has acquired an honest dwelling at a bargain. There has been quite a large and thriving business of this nature going forward for years past. Dishonesty in construction, dishonesty in sale, sham and fraud throughout... The absorbing hunger after cheapness naturally produces the jerry in every branch of business... there are many opportunities for jerrying in the building line."

The activities of jerry plumbers were regarded as particularly reprehensible as the health of the inhabitants was thereby put in jeopardy. Jerry carpenters had usually acquired such skill as they possessed by rough and ready means.

It was thought that the unions should police the employment of this substandard labour by low class builders. "They have the power and they ought to use it. It should be one of the most potent levers in their possession for putting down the "jerry" builder and the "speculating" gamblers."

Jerrying was found not only in the ranks of the building workers and in the buildings they erected but many building contractors themselves were unqualified. Frequently, the contractor had previously been an ordinary mason or house carpenter who had risen. Jerry architects also operated and were often no more than self-styled ex-carpenters and builders. There were instances where auctioneers and house agents had been transformed into fully fledged "architects" without the benefit of any formal training in the subject."

Thus any one problem in the building trades was invariably tied in with a whole set of others. The subletting of contracts was in practice dependent on piecework and cheap labour. The unions appear to have been

47. *Builder & Contractors News*, 30 November 1889. See also *Ibid.*, 26 October 1889
49. *Australian Builder*, 16 August 1889
50. *Builder & Contractors News*, 2 November 1889
virtually powerless to control the situation at any time after 1860 as their stated wage rates were frequently undercut. This arose largely from the inescapable fact that building was at bottom an economic undertaking; before all other considerations, this in turn led to quality becoming in many instances a secondary concern, and with architectural merit being relegated to the position of a poor last. 51.

The working relationships existing between the three main groups, the architects, the builders and contractors and the operatives reveal differences of approach to and stance adopted on some of the main matters arising out of planning, estimating and costing and the actual building procedures. Such differences in viewpoint and opinion as did exist seem to have been reconciled reasonably amicably with compromises taking place.

The more important questions concerned the arbitration procedures for disputes arising out of architect-supervised building operations, the effective limits of an architect's or builder's responsibility in the finished building, definition of the powers of control exercised by either over the building procedure, all of which more specifically involved matters such as conditions of contract, the role of the Clerk of Works, the Lien Law, responsibility for defects in construction and the mode of payment of builders.

On 20th April, 1881, an important conference 52 took place in Ludstone Chambers, Collins Street, between representative Committees of the R.I.V.A. and the Victorian Builders and Contractors Association. The main topic of discussion was the Arbitration Clause, Article No. 27. The contractors maintained that if in cases of dispute there was only one arbitrator whose appointment rested with the architect, it would be unlikely that the builder would receive fair or satisfactory treatment. Other matters under discussion concerned the insurance of buildings in course of erection, the question of whether the architect should have the power of discharging a workman, and the matter of ordinary extras.

51. ibid. 25 April 1891
52. ibid. 25th October 1888
Here the architects wanted the contractors to have a written order before beginning ordinary work, but the contractors maintained that delays would occur if they could not proceed without a written order.

At a second conference in May,\(^3\) the Association objected to the building owner having a lien on the contractor's plant during the progress of the work. They also raised the question of what was to be done when the problem of discrepancies arose between drawings and specifications and the scale, i.e., if written or figured dimensions differed from the scale, which set was to be followed? The contractors demanded to be supplied with levels and boundaries as well as starting points.

In the event of a strike, they wanted an extension of the contract time. They stipulated that the Clerk of Works should be named before the signing of the contract. The appointment of a particular supervisory Clerk of Works could in some cases have a direct bearing on whether a builder would sign the contract or not.

The Institute put forward its set of conditions, one of which would have empowered the architect to suspend the building work for an unlimited period. The Association wanted a reasonable time limit to be imposed. The architects stated that if at any time after the completion of the work, had workmanship or materials were to be discovered, compensation was to be made by the contractor. The contractors suggested a 30-day limit for the discovery and their liability for defects. The Association wanted progress payments of 80% on large contracts. The owner often delayed in paying the 25% due on completion of the job. When the matter of the architect's power to dismiss workmen arose, all the Association deleges unanimously condemned "interference with the workmen".

When the architects subsequently wanted a deposit to accompany each tender submitted as a guarantee of good faith, the Builders & Contractors Association indignantly replied that "[their] members...were as honest and respectable a body of men as could be found anywhere - quite as much so as the architects themselves." However, it was probably the builders and contractors operating outside the association that the architects had in mind with their proviso.

\(^3\) ibid. 2 May 1891
A very large percentage of the difficulties that occurred in building operations were thought attributable to a lack of understanding between three sets of persons concerned, namely the architects, the contractors and the operatives. Each group had its own special troubles and difficulties to contend with. However, a reasonable working relationship between the various bodies seems to have prevailed for most of the period, one notable exception being during Mr. Hunt's presidency of the R.V.I.A. when he succeeded in antagonising not only outside organisations but a sizeable body of architect members of his own institute, especially the more junior and associate members. A similar body, the Victorian Architectural and Engineering Association was formed with less restrictive membership but conditions within the R.V.I.A. were improved with its next president.

Evidence relating to the composition of the building trades workers of the 1820's points to the fact that many were untrained and often inexperienced. This largely unskilled building labour force, together with the great housing demand of the mid 'fifties meant that most Melbourne housing was speculatively and skimpily built. Boys drifted into the building trades as "improvers" and often never graduated from this status. In this way, the early tradition of jerry-built housing was firmly established for the 1880's to exploit to the full.
In 1861 only the two municipalities of Fitzroy and Melbourne showed a majority of brick and stone dwellings over weatherboard construction. In all other municipalities, including the old established ones of Collingwood, Emerald Hill, Hotham, Prahran, Richmond, Sandridge, St. Kilda and Williamstown, there was a predominance of weatherboard structures.

The predominance of one of these two main types of construction is not related to density of population, as although Fitzroy had the greatest number of persons per acre in 1861, 14.76, it was followed by Hotham with 14.05, Collingwood 10.54 and then Melbourne 9.22. In density calculated on the number of dwellings per acre, the order was only altered slightly; Hotham 3.40, Fitzroy 3.38, Collingwood 2.90 and Melbourne 1.90.

Over the three decades, 1861-1891, these two municipalities of Fitzroy and Melbourne maintained their predominance of brick and stone dwellings throughout, while conversely, the other municipalities of Brighton, Emerald Hill, Essendon, Toorak, Kew, Richmond, Sandridge and Williamstown always contained a majority of weatherboard dwellings. The latter two showed the greatest differential between the numbers of brick and stone and of weatherboard dwellings over the three decades. Toorak in 1881 shows an interesting deviation in its internal ratio of the two main types. Two suburbs, Hawthorn and St. Kilda alternated between a predominance of either one of the two categories, while the last group of municipalities are those which show a shift from more than 50% weatherboard in 1861 to more than 50% brick and stone in 1891, namely Brunswick, Collingwood and Hotham, with Prahran also exhibiting this trend overall but with only slightly more brick and stone dwellings by 1891 and still less than 50%.

Certain municipalities show a steady increase in their internal percentages of brick and stone dwellings at the four dates. They are in Brunswick, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Hotham, Melbourne, Sandridge and Prahran. Two, Emerald Hill and Richmond, remained almost stationary on a percentage.

1. Table V (1)
2. Table IV
3. Table V (1)
basis 1881-1891, while the remaining municipalities of Brighton, Essendon, Footscray, Brunswick, Kew, St. Kilda and Williamstown showed a drop in their percentages of brick and stone dwellings 1881-91. This latter group corresponds roughly with the grouping above of always predominantly weatherboard municipalities.

Additional research might reveal data on aspects of housing which could further illuminate the statistics enumerated here. But only a detailed land-use and housing study could reveal the extent of similarities and differences between, say, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Melbourne and North Melbourne in the second half of the nineteenth century. How many, for example, of the dwellings in Fitzroy were two-storey structures compared with Collingwood? Within any one suburb, what were the number of terrace houses, either single or double-storey, having party walls necessarily of brick or stone in relation to the number of detached dwellings? The majority of two-storey houses in Melbourne were brick or stone. 'Two-storey wooden dwellings are comparatively rare by contrast with North America and Europe (Illustrations Nos. 6, 12, 21). Although the 1848 Building Act stipulated that party walls had to be of brick or stone, there are a few uncommon examples of wooden party walls still in existence in Melbourne, as seen in illustrations Nos. 12 & 19. No. 12 is especially notable as a double-storey wooden partition wall in Verity Street, Richmond, and is an extremely uncommon example of this in a domestic dwelling.

An Abstract of the 1848 Melbourne Building Act is contained in C. Mayes' Builders' Price Book for 1862. Provisions for party walls are laid down for first class buildings which includes dwelling houses.

In 2-storey houses, third rate party walls were to be 13" thickness throughout; fifth rate party walls were to be 13" thickness to the underside of the topmost floor (p.124).

Schedule C, Part 3, treats the Division of Buildings by party walls. In Construction and Materials, we read,

"Every party wall must be built of sound bricks or stone or of such bricks and stone together, laid in mortar or cement, in such manner as to produce solid work." (p.132)
It was stipulated that no woodwork was to be placed within
2" of the centre of any party wall and the top of every party wall must
be finished with one course of hard bricks. (pp.132-133)

The social class composition based on the occupational
structure of each suburb shown in detail for 1861 and 1871 could
explain differences in the standard, size and quality of housing
between Collingwood and Fitzroy. In 1888, A. Sutherland pointed out
differences between what he saw as two equally densely settled suburbs.
In fact, Fitzroy was more densely populated and built up at all times.4
He commented on the numbers of two-storey dwellings in constant rows
in Fitzroy, which were the houses of city workers living within walking
distance of their jobs, 5 whereas in Collingwood he saw a concentration
of factory employees clustered around the bootmaking, hat-making and
similar trades. 6 However, Twopeny had thought Fitzroy likewise a
working class suburb.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Manufactures and Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Estab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. aged 15-64y</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>4950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>4528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Statistics of Victoria, 1871, 1881, 1891
Census of Victoria, 1871, 1881, 1891

The occupational structure of the 2 municipalities of Colling-
wood and Fitzroy differed at the 3 dates above. In 1871 in numbers of
male industrial workers in relation to the male workforce, both were
approximately the same but with females there were far more in Fitzroy.
In 1881 Fitzroy was more markedly industrial with 1/3 more factories.

4. Table IV
5. A. Sutherland, Victoria & Its Metropolis (Melbourne 1888) Vol.I, p.571
6. Ibid. p.376
7. F.E.N. Twopeny, Town Life in Australia (London 1883) pp.16-17
than Collingwood, more horsepower and a larger industrial male and female workforce. Nevertheless, there had been a notable increase, viz. Lenfald, in the number of female industrial workers in Collingwood. By 1891, Collingwood had shot ahead with much greater industrial development than Fitzroy, and a higher degree of mechanisation, $3\frac{1}{2}$ times more Horsepower than its neighbour. The number of male and female factory workers had doubled in Collingwood during the decade, whereas Fitzroy shows an actual decline in the number of industrial workers of both sexes. Thus there was a marked change in the occupational character of Fitzroy population, 1861-1891, but there are no details in the Census to illuminate this key point.

From 1861-1891, most suburbs show an overall steady decrease in the percentage of weatherboard dwellings. The exceptions to this are Brighton, which is unique in that it alone shows a steady increase; next are the five municipalities of Footscray, Hawthorn, Kew, St. Kilda and Williamstown which exhibit an up-and-down movement in the % of weatherboard dwellings in relation to the figures for the previous decade within that municipality.

Those municipalities which by 1891 contained the highest % of weatherboard houses in their total dwellings were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>% Weatherboard Houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandridge</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flemington &amp; Kew</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>% Weatherboard Houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Hill</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kew</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 16 municipalities chosen for this analysis, Williamstown at any given decade and also overall contained the lowest % of brick and stone dwellings within its municipal boundaries with Sandridge next lowest and of an equal 11.3% in 1861.

Or viewed in reverse order, the highest % of weatherboard dwellings was to be found in Williamstown which averages out over the 3 decades at 84.5% 1861-1891, followed by Sandridge averaging 78.6%, although in 1861 Sandridge shows a higher %. The 43 "All others"

8 Table V (1)
9 Table V (1)
category in Williamstown in 1861 comprises tents and dwellings having canvas roofs and slab, bark and mud huts and which, if included in an assessment of the type of domestic housing, would have the effect of adding to the impression of a poorer and smaller type of house construction.

Other factors, however, enter into any overall assessment, two particularly important ones in the case of Williamstown being an occupational one in the number of government employees housed in government weatherboard dwellings and secondly, a survey of the average number of rooms per dwelling, 3-6 rooms being typical. Both these facts tend to mitigate the impression of a preponderance of small, cheap weatherboard houses in Williamstown. With the first factor, the Williamstown ratebooks 1861-1893 show a noticeably high proportion of government owned timber dwellings (which were excluded from the count to determine tenancy and owner occupancy on p. 138).

A third factor would be that of a possible local building tradition combined with the proximity and easy availability of various types of building materials. The nearest stone quarries would have been the not too distant bluestone ones worked in Footscray, Yarraville and Spotswood (Spottiswood); cartage to Williamstown would not have been difficult over the flat terrain. But bluestone was used more extensively in public buildings, churches and stores and warehouses, partly because of the difficulty of working the stone, so brickyards are more relevant. None existed in Williamstown 1871-91. The nearest one, Footscray, had 3 small brickyards and potteries in 1871, employing 9 men in all and producing 563,000 bricks annually. For one at Braybrook no output is given.

An analysis of Table V(ii) showing the average number of rooms per habitation indicates a decrease in the relative numbers of 1-2 room houses to 3-6 room houses over the three decades, with a corresponding marked increase in the number of 7+ room houses.

10. Locality figures are not available for Williamstown, only Bourke County in Statistics of Victoria 1861.
While Emerald Hill in 1871 and Footscray and Kew in 1871 and 1891 showed an increase in the actual number of 1-2 room dwellings over the figure for the previous decade in the same category, this absolute increase does not however, affect the constantly widening ratio between 1-2 and 3-6 room dwellings. All other municipalities show a steady decrease in the number of 1-2 room dwellings over the entire period, both absolutely and proportionately, and concomitantly exhibit an unbroken upward movement in the numbers of 3-6 and 7+ roomed dwellings.

The gain is particularly noticeable in the numbers of 7+ room houses in relation to 1-2 room dwellings at the two terminal dates of 1861 and 1891. Only in St. Kilda did the number of 7+ room dwellings exceed the number of 1-2 room dwellings in 1861. The relative decrease in 1-2 room structures after 1861 was caused by the addition of extra rooms, by demolition and total replacement by larger dwellings or by the fact that most new houses were of 3 or more rooms. These would have been the later larger, more permanent dwellings so frequently noted by observers who had also known the earlier temporary housing. Many smaller dwellings had been erected, often hastily in the 1850's to meet the housing demand generated by the influx of population 1852-1858, and even expensive ones, were put up with "an utter ignorance of even the rudiments of construction".12

Many would have been weatherboard cottages similar to the elevation and plan shown on the following page. Although this is from a Building Society Pamphlet of 1883, the type of structure changed little. No. 15 Lytton St., Carlton, soon to be demolished is an extant example.13 It was in existence some time before 1870 as a 2-room dwelling and the plan attached shows the later additions made to the original structure. Around the corner at 428 Cardigan St. was another example of a one-room wood shanty built in 1860 to which a second room and a shed were added in 1863. 435 Lygon St. had a 2-room wooden house erected in 1865 and No. 437 Lygon St. a similar dwelling built 1869-70. With 2 rooms on a narrow frontage e.g. 16'6" at 15 Lytton St., Little

12. Australian Builder 2 August 1855
13. See Illustration No. 7.
EXPLANATION OF PLANS.

The accompanying plans and estimates have been prepared by Messrs. N. Billing and Son, architects. Any person depositing the deeds of a piece of land with the Society can have a building erected thereon, as shown in any of the plans, or in accordance with any other plan he may wish carried out, without any payment being made until the building is completed, and then he will only be required to pay under the ordinary scale of the Society.

On application, plans and specifications for any description of building that may be required will be drawn, and when approved by the owner of the land, tenders will be called. If a tender is received to the satisfaction of the architect and the applicant, the buildings will be at once commenced. After the plans have been drawn, should the applicant decline to accept any tender, or for any reason not wish to proceed with his application, his deeds will be returned to him, on payment of a small sum, being the expense of drawing the plans, the amount of which will be agreed upon before the plans are made.

The Society will advance all moneys as required, including mortgage fee, architects’ fee, and payments to contractor. The amount of the architects’ fee will be agreed upon before the contract is commenced. Interest will be charged on only the actual amount paid to the contractor during the progress of the building. The repayment to the Society will commence on the first pay day after the building is completed. The estimate on each plan in this book is for houses to be built and finished to the satisfaction of the architect of the Society, and includes mortgage fee, architect’s fee, and all other fees.

Every facility will be given to Builders transacting business with the Society. The Society is open to make arrangements with Builders erecting houses for sale to advance such sums as may be required on simple mortgage for twelve months, interest to be payable only on the actual amount advanced from time to time, and liberty to be given to pay off as soon as property is sold, the Society to then advance to the Purchaser under the ordinary tables.

Tenders will be received for the erection of any of the buildings shown in plans in this book, and whenever a building is required, the lowest tenderer will receive the first offer of the work. Specifications will be supplied by Messrs. N. Billing & Son.

Owners of land suitable for building purposes should at once apply to Society to have buildings erected thereon.
ingenious would have been possible so that the plans would have been almost identical. Similar cottages are seen in illustrations No. 5 in Abbotsford, a single weatherboard with pretentious ironwork trim to cover the plainness of the facade, and illustration No. 16 in Richmond, a minimal cottage with a 12' frontage.

The following table illustrates the ranking of Melbourne municipalities in size of dwellings related to construction materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest internal proportion 1-2 room dwellings</th>
<th>Highest % weatherboard dwellings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>Sandridge 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotham</td>
<td>Williamstown 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Williamstown 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>Hotham 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandridge</td>
<td>Sandridge 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>E. Hill 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandridge 86</td>
<td>E. Hill 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>Brighton 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footscray 83</td>
<td>Flem./Kens. 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandridge 73</td>
<td>Prahran 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>Prahran 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotham 71</td>
<td>E. Hill 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown 83</td>
<td>Richmond 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotham 71</td>
<td>Richmond 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick 73</td>
<td>Prahran 69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandridge 86</td>
<td>Williamstown 87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williamstown 83</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Hotham 71</td>
<td>Prahran 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick 73</td>
<td>Richmond 69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Internal in the municipality itself 1-2 room : 3 - 7+ rooms

Source: Thesis Tables V (i), and (ii)

In comparing the 2 columns it is interesting to note the correlation between numbers of rooms and construction material. Melbourne dwellings were predominantly brick or stone, so Melbourne is excluded from the second list. The houses in Brunswick were small but the brickfields nearby would have provided cheap building bricks. Footscray's % of weatherboard dwellings was probably higher than the 61% shown in Table V(i), because of the relatively high number of "not stated". There is, then, a rough connection between smaller dwellings and weatherboard construction. By contrast, St. Kilda, Brighton and Melbourne contained the highest proportions of the largest types of dwellings in 1861, even although the first two suburbs were also predominantly weatherboard. The size of the houses is explained by the fact that both were regarded as high-class residential areas, and fashionable seaside villas can be equally as distinctive in wood as in more durable materials.

Over the whole period 1861-1891, two trends are evident in the type of housing in Melbourne. The first is an increase in the average
size of dwellings, as seen in the marked decrease in the numbers of 1-2 room houses in all Melbourne suburbs, accompanied by a corresponding increase in 3-6 and particularly 7+ dwellings. This steady increase in size holds good for all Melbourne municipalities over the entire period. The ratio of 7+ : 3-6 room dwellings in 1891 would be a reliable indicator of the socio-economic status of certain Melbourne suburbs. Applying this standard, Brighton, Hawthorn, Kew, St. Kilda and Melbourne (including Carlton) are outstanding as high-class residential areas followed by Fitzroy, Emerald Hill, Prahran and Essendon in the second rank. Carlton Booth had commented on the Essendon/Flomington residences of well-to-do merchants in 1866.16

The second trend is a fairly slow but steady increase in the % of more durable brick and stone structures in most Melbourne municipalities, except Brighton and Williamstown which actually declined and Footscray which shows a sharp drop from 1881-81 to register only a small % gain by the end of the period. Overall in place and time, the statistical evidence supports the impression gained by contemporaries of the increasing solidity and permanence of Melbourne houses.

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In his inaugural address as first president of the Victorian Institute of Architects on 9 Oct., 1856, Mr. J. C. Knight proposed that some scientific testing of building materials should be carried out as a means of overcoming "the peculiar circumstances of the colony, the want of proper data to guide the enquirer, the absence of sound local information and the non-existence of any standard work of a scientific or practical character is somewhat limited." Small wonder, then, that in the early 1860's a few years after their erection, many dwellings were thought to be in need of replacement!

Professionally trained men thought that the overall quality of colonial building materials were good. High quality materials such as lime, cement stones or argillaceous limestone, brick earths, building stones, together with all the materials for the manufacture of earthenware, porcelain and roofing tiles were to be found in accessible places in the colony. Australian timbers and stones generally were thought equal to the best imported. 

An example of this was Mr. T. Edwards who took out a patent in October, 1859, for the manufacture of lime and cement from materials discovered during the excavation of the Reilly St. drain at the north end of Fitzroy and East Collingwood. A layer of magnesium limestone or dolomite was discovered lying over the basalt or bluestone of that locality. On analysis it was found to contain the essential constituents of good cement stone and would also make good hydraulic lime. In 1859, £13,593 worth of cement had been imported into the colony, an increase of £2,387 on 1858.

But good quality materials were not in themselves enough. It was stressed that high quality sound workmanship was needed for permanency and to this end, the intelligent supervision of a building overseer was vitally important. By 1888, one Victorian builder thought that apathy, indifference and ignorance had prevented the fullest

1. The Australian Builder and Land Advertiser, 16 October 1856.
exploitation of the colony’s natural building materials, both as to how they could be obtained and how they should be worked.

An interesting discussion had developed in the later 1850's around the question of cheap substitute walling materials instead of the conventional ones. Mayes thought bark, slab or weatherboard dwellings did not insulate or keep out the intense summer heat, whereas cheap and comfortable pisé walls of loam, brick-earth, cob or soda, concrete or beton pisé could be used to much greater advantage. Pisé is the moulding of earths in situ by compression and a rare recorded instance of its actual use was a pisé dwelling built by William Kelly in Great Lonsdale St. W., soon after he arrived in Melbourne in 1853. Its erection aroused great interest among the local citizens and provoked a hostile reaction among the masons, brickburners and quarry-men. The Governor of Victoria also showed marked interest and ventured the opinion that it should have been built on a stone foundation. This proved correct as the base of the walls were affected by flood water, but Kelly abandoned the project because the legality of his title to the land was in doubt.

Cob walls were a mixture of earth and straw made wet like mortar and if properly compacted would last 50 to 60 years. Gravel walls consisting of a graded mixture of fine to coarse stones mixed into a lime and hydraulic cement mortar which set almost instantly were seen as another possibility.

All these cheaper materials were seen as a means of circumventing high labour costs and expensive materials in the building of economical dwellings for the poorer classes in the colony. Expensive housing meant overcrowding, discomfort and proneness to disease among these groups, and C. Mayes saw great possibilities in the use of cheaper materials in providing "the numerous, comfortable and cheap"

class of buildings required in this colony, such as cottages, houses
[and] homesteads.\(^6\). But their use never became widespread. They could
not have been unfamiliar materials to emigrants from the rural areas of
Britain or Europe, yet they were not widely accepted in the colony.
Probably social factors militated against this. If cob and pisé were
associated with poorer-type rural dwellings in the old world, then they
could have been shunned for this reason in the new. Dampness was also
a persistent problem with solid wall construction. In addition, working
with them would have required a degree of knowledge and expertise which
perhaps was not to be found in the average building worker or contractor.

The quality of Melbourne bricks manufactured in the 1850's was
considered poor.\(^7\). They were light, porous, fragile and the fracture was
ragged and uneven. Frequently they contained embedded quartz pebbles and
lumps of unmixed clay. This latter defect was attributed, however, to
deficiencies in the manufacturing process and not to an inherent in-
feriority of the quality of the raw materials. The Australian Builder
advised that the clay should be thoroughly ground and tempered in
suitable kilns, that better proportions of different clays should be
blended and used and the bricks vitrified by throwing salt into the
furnace.

Bricks were in two main categories, common and firebricks, the
latter comprising the bulk of brick imports into the colony from the
mid-1850's onwards. Colonial bricks supplied practically all of the
local building trade by 1860, despite the above reservations about
their quality. Mayes thought the process of brickmaking to be very
important in developing one of the greatest resources of the colony,\(^8\),
but thought economy of manufacture a paramount consideration and saw
a great advantage in the use of machinery in the face of high labour
costs. By 1860, machines capable of tempering and producing 1,000

\(^6\) Victorian Government Prize Essays, 1860 p.348
\(^7\) F. Lancelott, *Australia As It Is* (London 1852) p.115
\(^8\) Victorian Government Prize Essays 1860 p.277
bricks per hour had been imported into Melbourne. He rated the bricks made at Phillipstown, Brunswick, Northcote and Hawthorn as excellent and all were produced within 3-4 miles from Melbourne. Cartage was a relatively expensive item, so distance was important. Victorian bricks were heavier although not larger than English bricks and weighed upwards of 3 tons per 1,000. Cartage from the above brickfields to, say, Melbourne was seldom less than 12/- per 1,000 including all handling. As their cost ex brickworks was £3-85 per 1,000, he saw an opportunity opening up in the form of rail transport. If Hawthorn bricks could be transported on the Melbourne and suburban Railway, this would cheapen the price, provided that handling costs could also be cut, and he suggested delivery of the bricks on a tramway away from the brickyard to the railway, where they would be loaded by crane on to the train. If an enterprising firm could deliver good bricks into Melbourne at around £2 per 1,000, he thought they would soon capture most of the market as well as giving a much-needed impetus to building.

The economy of brickwork was stressed against the great expense of working bluestone and granite. Brickwork in cement was said to be stronger than stonework and the cost half that of bluestone masonry. Success in brick-making depended on the quality of the brick earth used, with the best alumina or pure clay mixed with sand in the right proportions. Prahran bricks contained too much sand and were of inferior quality.

Mayes made the interesting suggestion that if the washed clays or sludges of the goldfields were mixed with the washed sand deposited from the sludge in the proper proportions, it should be possible to produce excellent "cutters" - bricks that could be sawn, rubbed or bevelled. At that time, the Brunswick works were producing several fancy lines in bricks, among them "whites" used for window trims and bevelled bricks for gauged arches and costing 4 times as much as the best ordinary colonial bricks. He thought other lines in moulded bricks could be used to replace stonework in copings, cornices, strings, stretchers and window jamb. Colonial firebricks selling at £5-6 per 1,000 were not entirely satisfactory despite the opening of a steam-
powered works on the Saltwater River in 1856 – their use in furnaces required that they cool without cracking and English or Baltic firebricks at double the price were considered of higher quality.

The only available set of ledgers, account books and company records relating to the operation of a brickworks during our period are those of the Hoffman and Company brickworks at Brunswick. They used a special Hoffman kiln for burning. The Cash Account book 16 May 1887 – 14th Jan. 1889 shows carriage by horses and drays averaging out at about 3/4 the amount of that of the working expenses for any monthly period in 1887. For example, 24 June 1887, working expenses £1578, carriage £211, though in 1888 carriage rates rose to about 1/3, which may mean more expensive carriage over longer distances with the spurt in outer suburban building activity or else a relative decrease in working expenses, as in May 1888, work on a new Hoffman Kiln and in June 1888, on a railway extension are listed and continued through until August, and November 1888 saw a new winding machine and machine house extension, all of which add up to an overall picture of company expansion in 1888.

Subscribed capital was £137,500 in 27,500 shares of £5 each, and banking was transacted with the City of Melbourne Bank. On 7th November, 1887, the dividend account shows 50 shareholders, most of whom averaged dividends of from £7.15.0 to £78. There were 6 large shareholders who received amounts of £472 (x2), £1082, £1604, £1880 and £1860. The dividends paid in Nov. 1888, showed a slight decrease on these amounts overall, e.g. the 2 latter largest shareholders were reduced to £1846 and £1852 and 1889 showed a significant drop e.g. each to £1479. This could have been perhaps the beginning of the downturn in building being reflected in decreased output.

In discussing the quality and properties of colonial building materials, the building journals were attempting to promote their use. In the early 1860's most hardwood framework of weatherboard dwellings

9. Lodged in Melbourne University Archives.
10. Journal, 1 August 1884
was locally produced whereas most was imported from England and Scotland. Baltic pine from Riga and Moscow was sawn in Scotland and exported to Australia from there.12.

Bluestone was handsome and durable but required a great deal of labour to obtain and work it, so that its use was limited. Illustration No. 71 shows the durable quality of bluestone in an unusual pair of two-storey houses, 13 & 15 James St., Richmond. One of the earliest known surviving dwellings in Richmond, built in bluestone in 1859, is situated at 17 Brighton St. (See Illustration No. 20). Worked colonial bluestone was 12 times as expensive as English freestone and Mayes thought that construction of railway viaducts and bridges in bluestone was an extravagance. Being a relatively intractable material, bluestone also tended to dictate the style of any building it was used in.

Sandstone or freestone, such as that obtained from Bournda or Toorak was subject to weathering because of the amount of iron obtained in it but there were alternative sources of supply. Limestone was also considered a good building material.

The mixing of mortars and plasters was much discussed throughout the period. An inferior product often resulted from ignorance, carelessness or economising in ingredients by bricklayers or plasterers. Even by 1888,13 the question of good mortar still arose, and Victorian mortar was compared unfavourably with durable mortars existing in ancient buildings in England, such as Corfe Castle in Dorset.14. With rudimentary scientific knowledge and careful supervision of the mixing, there was no reason why mortars should not last, but "the rule of thumb still prevails in building practice" and a shoddy job often ensued. Recognizing the importance of obtaining good lime, the Victorian Contractors' and Builders' Association formed a company for the manufacture of lime in 1856. There were 47 limekilns in 1858 of which 28 were in the County of Mornington.15. The lime

12. Mr. Miles Lewis, M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, pending on "Early Colonial Building Materials"
14. Ibid. 29 September 1888, pp.279-280
was brought to Melbourne from the Mornington Peninsula in small boats. It was relatively cheap, 1/6 per bushell in Melbourne compared with 7/- in England. Meyen stressed that hydraulic lime containing 10% clay or alumina must be used where the mortar or plaster was exposed externally to rain or to water in drains and the like.\textsuperscript{16} Cement (Portland or Roman) needed a strong hydraulic lime containing 30% alumina, on which amount depended the setting time. He thought the manufacture of artificial cement, a mixture of 6 parts limestone to 1-2 clay ground in a puddle, then burnt in a kiln, to be of more immediate importance to the colony than the supply of Limestone. 1890 saw the opening of David Mitchell's Portland cement factory at Richmond.

In the mixing of plaster, it was emphasized that loam should not be used as a substitute for lime and sharp sand; care should be taken in its application as sawn lathes often swelled and twisted and cornices were liable to crack. Stucco also needed care in mixing and applying which the Australian Builder thought it seldom received.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.} p.290
CHAPTER 11

DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

By 1860–61, the need to replace existing structures with better-designed, more permanent buildings had become obvious.¹ An almost immediate result of the early gold discoveries a decade previously had been that "money was so plentiful and accommodation so urgent, that building became a natural mania: almost anything constituted a 'house', and in those days, canvas and paper wrought miracles."²

Many existing dwellings were unsuitable or uneconomic as housing, particularly with rental properties requiring expensive maintenance. The cheaper weatherboard or canvas-walled dwellings gave but scant protection from the extremes of Melbourne's climate. They were hot and dusty in summer, and did not insulate from the winter cold; they provided virtually no soundproofing or privacy. As dwellings they provided a degree of shelter but little more.

"There is a great lack of really comfortable dwelling houses both in Melbourne and its suburbs: there are plenty of unoccupied "places" to be found everywhere; but why are they tenantless? Are they not either in low miserable flats, or in unapproachable and mud-encircled municipalities; are they not chiefly weatherboarded cribs, perched upon logs, their external walls of threepenny calico surrounded with gaudily coloured paper – perhaps a flimsy bird-cage looking verandah may be stuck on . . . but the required appliances for a decent habitation are not to be found... these emanations of the cheap (?) (sic) house property mania now stand deserted."³

Many of these earlier buildings were now showing their deficiencies of construction and the undue ravages of normal wear-and-tear and dilapidation a decade or so after their erection.

"It is very certain that in the majority of cases property built in the dearest times was executed in the commonest manner, and with the commonest materials... Mortar, the vital principle of sound building, was usually a simple mixture of mud and water; the bricks tell their own tale... in a few years hundreds of brick houses will have quietly melted away."⁴

1. 'Earl's Circular and Rural Economist' 2 April 1859
2. The Australian Builder and Land Advertiser 7 August 1856 p.182
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. 7 Aug. 1856 p.182
These early examples of "jerry" building and "scampering" bred a concern for improved quality and permanency of construction in the columns of the *Australian Builder*. Persons thinking of building permanent private residences were advised to choose high land and to aim for a substantially-built structure, even to the extent of settling for a smaller well-built house, with proposed later additions rather than putting up a comparatively valueless "cheap toy."5

The incidence of these hastily-built, now unsatisfactory dwellings, a heritage of the gold era was probably highest among working-class dwellings, and an opportunity was seen here for much-needed re-building. But with all property values depressed from 1859 onwards, and particularly in 1860-61, this was hardly feasible as an attractive economic proposition at that time.

"Little has been done hitherto in Melbourne towards improving the dwellings and cottages of its labouring population. Herded together at present in wooden shanties or miserable brick houses in "rights-of-ways" or situated on surrounding low and swampy flats...they vegetate in the midst of plenty, in filth and wretchedness."6. Melbourne was thus seen reduced to the level of other old-world cities with its crowded lodging houses, dirty dwellings and narrow streets devoid of water, fresh air and sewerage.

The *Australian Builder* urged the owners of wooden shanties and iron houses near Melbourne which had probably 'realised well as investments, to demolish them and replace them with brick or stone structures embodying modern conveniences, "such houses in fact as people now expect and must have."7. It is interesting to note this upgrading of the public's wants and tastes in domestic building. In this regard, "hundreds of houses both in the city and country constructed of wood or iron, with canvas or paper ceilings and internal walls have...become so unsightly and uncomfortable as to make a change imperative".8

5. ibid.
6. ibid. 24 July 1856. See also, Victorian 26 July 1862
7. *Australian Builder*, 2 August 1855
8. ibid, 29 January 1859
The need for replacement of existing unsatisfactory structures, then, was evident by the later 1850's, certainly by the early 1860's. A crucial question is whether in fact such houses were, by and large, demolished or whether they were patched up, renovated, added on to or incorporated into newer structures in the decades that followed. Evidence on this point is unfortunately, inconclusive. Statistics of dwellings and rooms by 1891 do not reveal the extent of additions to existing structures. Nor are any figures available on rebuilding, so no trend can be established. Only scattered references can be obtained. Lytton St., Carlton in 1967 offered evidence of the continued existence of original early structures with later additions together with newer buildings, the result of demolition of older dwellings. (Illus. Nos. 7 & 8). Moor St., Fitzroy, today has a rare example of an early iron house, still standing beside a single front brick terrace and nearby is a very old double fronted vertical weatherboard with an unusual roof of flat sheets of iron joined with French seams. This house stands on a generous-sized block with a wide frontage and has what was once an elaborate garden. (Illustrations Nos. 14 & 15)²⁹.

Charles Mayes in the Introduction to his 1859 edition of the Victorian Contractors' and Builders' Price Book had noted a great change in the architectural features of the colony. "The comparative scarcity of good buildings and the universal prevalence of low, wooden, one-story (sic) houses in Melbourne and Geelong, with slab or bark huts in the isolated townships and stations of the bush have, since 1851, been gradually giving place to well-built, lofty brick and stone houses, many of which are equal to the best buildings of the provincial towns of Great Britain".¹⁰. The comparison with Britain has been noted above and frequently arose in discussions concerning an Australian style of architecture compared with "Anglo-mania" in Victorian domestic architecture.

9. See Illustrations Nos. 7, 8, 14, 15 & Plan overleaf.
10. C. Mayes, Victorian Contractors & Builders Price Book 1859
No. 15 LYTTON ST.
GROUND FLOOR
CONSTRUCTIONAL DATE & 1870

Photo No 7

1900

1890

1890

1871
It is also possible that the older structures alluded to in the above passage were not demolished but continued to be occupied by lower-wage earning groups. In 1890 structures from the very earliest days still occupied Melbourne frontages, especially in the lanes of the city, which were by then thought in need of widening. In so doing, hundreds of "jerry-built" shanties still standing would have also been pulled down. In the same year, 1890, Bannow counted 97 ramshackle wooden structures in the area of the city proper bounded by Spencer, La trobe, Spring, and Flinders Streets. This was in spite of the continuous pulling down of old buildings. Many of the old buildings Bannow thought were on long leases or their owners were biding their time to scoop the unearned increment by selling during the next land site boom.

In 1892 the charge was made that "anyone who...explores...the smaller streets in some of our suburbs, or the by-lanes almost in the centre of the city itself will be amazed to find the number of old, dilapidated and dirty houses occupied by numbers of people who, apparently, cannot afford better ones." The presence of unsightly and dangerously dilapidated buildings in the streets of the city had also been commented on.

The following example shows the difficulty in assessing the type of change which had taken place in one locality over the thirty years. The proposed drainage of Richmond Flat was under discussion in 1856. The scheme put forward was feasible but costly. Clarke's Survey Map of 1855 shows 2 large clustered settlements east of Government Road, later Burnley St. The Flat had been originally built on because "persons with small means were tempted during the very dear times to invest in such property" i.e. to escape high land prices elsewhere in

11. Builders and Contractors News, 16 August 1890
See also ibid. 22 February 1890
Ibid. 11 July 1891
13. Victorian Review, 1 April 1882 p.651
15. Map in Lands Department Office, Treasury Place, Melbourne
the higher parts of Richmond, and probably they had little choice in committing the "sad mistake" of settling on land thought really only suitable for brickfields and pasturage. 16.

An interesting insight is gained into the same locality thirty years later in an account of RichmondFlat, by then suburban development on the Allen and Tuxen Map of 1888. 17 The writer thought it "not a poetical neighbourhood. The streets are garbage covered, the footpaths are unswept, the houses - for the most part - are commonplace or dilapidated... On all sides, the eye is met with the frowzy, the unlovely, the disorderly, the untidy." 18

If extensive rebuilding had taken place in the interim period this would hardly have been the case; but it was described as a working class locality so we can safely assume either that a fair proportion of the dwellings found there in the 1880's had been in existence for some considerable time, or else were cheaply-built structures which had deteriorated rapidly. Thus, in the absence of definitive evidence, no finality is possible on the question of replacement versus additions to existing dwellings.

Even in 1967, the continued existence in the streets of Collingwood, Carlton, Fitzroy and Richmond of considerable numbers of century-old houses, shops, business premises and hotels 19 points to the fact that demolition, although much discussed, was not as commonly practised as contemporary writing would lead one to believe.

One result of Melbourne's swift growth was a patchiness of appearance which struck contemporary observers. 20 There was a lack of homogeneity to the development of even small areas, with older and smaller buildings side by side with newer and larger structures, thus giving a disparity to the total effect. The main streets of the city,

16. Australian Builder 10 July 1856
17. Map in Lands Department, Melbourne
18. Table Talk, 13 September 1889 p.6
19. Illustrations No. 4, Orwell Cottage, Lennox St. Richmond built 1848; No. 7 Lytton St. Carlton c1860; No. 10 the original head-station building of the Richmond run built in the late 1830's, now standing at corner of Church and Princes St., Abbotsford; No. 17, an old shop at 42 Hoddle St., Abbotsford; No. 22 2-storey weatherboard house of 15 rooms built c.1876-9; See also Nos. 3, 14, 15
20. Bamford, op. cit. p.10
Freeman, op. cit. p.3
especially Elizabeth, Bourke and Collins Sts. offered great scope for rebuilding and improvement, with their small wooden structures jostling substantial brick and stone warehouses, dwellings, stores and shops. The city presented a disordered appearance which many visitors and new arrivals found disturbing. Despite its many fine and large buildings and the generously wide streets and footpaths, Twopeny in 1883 discerned a "higgledy-piggledy look about the town... There are no building laws, and every man has built as seemed best in his own eyes." 21. He saw the city as constantly outgrowing its buildings, and piecemeal development resulting in many gaps in the streets on the outskirts of the city. A decade earlier, Trollope 22 had found the city magnificent — yet no street in it was finished or uniformly imposing and he had remarked on the outstanding variations between the buildings; although there were grand banks, churches and public buildings, they were interspersed with a few high-quality private homes and many "mean little houses". He saw the suburbs of Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond as, in effect, separate towns. Froude commented in 1886 23 that "the city has grown hastily, and carries the signs of it on the surface." Side by side splendid public buildings and fine shops he, too, saw houses little better than sheds. The reason behind this state of affairs was that "People have built as they could...and they have been too busy to study appearances." 24.

Very early this disarray and disparity had been identified as resulting from a clash between elegance of form and appearance and economy-type building. The main question thus raised, that of the total appearance of the streets and of whole areas of the city and suburbs was to assume increasing importance as the three decades passed, by which time the operation of virtually unrestricted building practices and their subsequent effects had become obvious to all.

21. R. E. N. Twopeny — Town Life in Australia (London 1883) p. 4
22. A. Trollope, Australia and New Zealand (Melbourne 1873) p. 252
23. J. A. Froude, Oceana (London 1886) p. 95
24. Ibid.
CHAPTER 12

AN AUSTRALIAN STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE

The whole question of what constituted an appropriate
Australian style of architecture was to come in for intense discussion in
the 1880's, largely precipitated by the rash of suburban building which
was filling up whole streets at a time in places such as Brighton, Brunsw-
wick, Caulfield, Toorak, Hawthorn and Kew.1 In fact, there was to be
a growing body of more advanced architectural opinion which set itself
against the grafting on of older acquired notions of architectural design.
These progressive architectural thinkers aimed for an Indigenous Aus-
tralian style in suburban domestic building and met the challenge with
what were, by nineteenth century standards of design, radical innovations
and advanced planning principles based on concepts of spatial arrangement
little thought of in Australia before that time.

The charge of ugliness had been made against the city of
Melbourne in 1856. There was a "want of picturesqueness in design and
treatment of colonial architecture."2 With their eyes adjusted to the
architectural styles of England and Europe in public buildings and better-
type private housing, some newcomers reacted strongly to the obvious
differences in colonial architecture, although many visitors commented
favourably on Melbourne's public buildings.

On the other hand, defenders of Melbourne's architectural
appearance thought it must be judged by colonial standards, not trans-
planted ones derived from the well-worn slowly evolving architectural
features which characterised older-established countries. To those
critics who thought Melbourne an unattractive or ugly city and blamed
colonial architects, the President of the V.I.A. made the rejoinder that
there were other parties beside the architect who were accountable for
this.3 Although enlightened opinion regarded the choice of site with
concern for aspect, outlook and size in relation to the proposed building
as most important, in actual fact the architect was rarely consulted on
the matter of a suitable site. The architect also had no control over
such matters as the mode of road building, by which differences in levels

1. See Table III for 2% increase in total number of dwellings.
2. The Australian Builder & Land Advertiser, 16 October 1856 p.273
3. ibid. p.275
frequently occurred. Thus "The land owner or speculator seeks
the architect not for advice but for plans, merely to mature detail
from an outline put into his hands."4. Thirty years later the same
complaint, in substance, was still being voiced against "that most
hopeless product of fin-de-siecle civilisation - the Australian build-
ing owners."5. "Enlightened design adapted to the Australian climate
such as the incorporation of elegant piazzas and colonnades on street
frontages was also rendered impossible by the restrictive nature of the
Building regulations.

Such treatments would have greatly improved the appearance of
the city, giving both much-needed shade from the heat and protection
from rain and in addition an aesthetic advantage.6. J. C. Knight was
concerned over the absence of any overall design treatment in street
frontages and conceded the ugliness of this deficiency. He suggested
the operation of co-operative building schemes to achieve this. An
Englishman, he probably had the overall unity of English town squares
and terraces in mind. He thought that as a step in this direction,
future land should be sold on condition that a unity and harmony in the
style of elevation chosen should be preserved. For land already
alienated, he suggested the repurchase and rebuilding of frontages,
especially the dilapidated structures in the main streets of the city.
He justified the cost involved by the resulting increase in the value
of the property. With almost unbridled speculation and development of
urban land a significant aspect of Melbourne's development throughout
the nineteenth century, he could not have fully realised the imprac-
ticability of his proposal at the time. The main significance of his
suggestion lies in the depth of concern shown over the "free development"
trend in Melbourne's urban ecology.

As a logical extension of this concern for the future mode of
development of Melbourne, Knight7. stressed the need for a co-ordinated
overall plan for Melbourne's growth based on a comprehensive survey of

4. Ibid.
5. Builder & Contractor's News 5 March 1892 p.180
6. Age, 6 January 1860.
7. Australian Builder, 16 October 1856
the city and its suburbs to be carried out by experts. Thirty-five years later this was to be carried out by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. Knight also advocated that a body of general regulations be laid down, to cover sanitary as well as architectural matters, and a type which could be adapted to suit particular circumstances. To carry out this two-fold task of drawing up a master plan and formulating an all-embracing building code, he suggested the formation of a Board or Commission of Public Improvements. His plea was to go unheeded.

By 1861, a certain "Anglo-mania" or emulation of English architectural models was evident in domestic architectural design in Melbourne, but the writer noticed a trend away from this already taking place in the style of better-class houses in Melbourne and suburbs.

These builders took comfort and climate into account and showed " Taste and liberality." The next step was seen for architects to discard British models altogether in the elements of house design and "to go boldly to the South of Europe, to the North of Africa and to 'sue for types", countries, in short, where heat and vivid light conditioned the approach to dwelling houses. It is obvious that the immigrants of the 1880's found the intense summer heat wearisome whereas the rigours of a Melbourne winter were acceptable to those with British backgrounds. The heat could be lessened with paved central courts, planted with young orange trees, oleanders, camellias and with fountains, as in the Moorish architecture of Granada or Damascus, with spacious rooms and subdued interior light. When the inevitable question of cost was raised, it was admitted that such features would entail additional expense but those with money to spend on good horses, choice wines, high-class furniture and libraries should not cavil at the cost of an elegant house. Too frequently, however, even in the higher-priced type of dwelling, an architect was more often than not expected to watch costs closely lest he become known as "that bête-noir...an expensive architect."

8. Builder and Contractors' News 1 April 1892 p.149
9. Victorian Review 1 February 1861
Three decades later, another architect, Mr. Jonsland, remarked on the poverty of conception in the average colonial residence and asked, "What should guide us in the development of an Australian type?" Viewing climate as the primary consideration, he considered the verandah and balcony as a sine qua non. Another writer also included a cellar as an essential feature. Social conditions and living habits frequently led Australians out of doors. The need of ample ventilation would be taken care of by lofty ceilings and he also considered the need to minimize housework because of the lack of servants and reliable help.

A similar viewpoint stressed suitability of design. Any Australian architectural style should be subjected to a critical analysis of special Australian needs and assessed accordingly. Thus, the chaste Ionic villa might be delightful in its original Aegean setting but not be "the most suitable residence for Mr. Robinson Jones, who arrives home by the electric tramcar for the habitual tea-washed supper-dinner." It was also thought that the English and Scottish architectural tradition involving crowded masses of bricks and mortar did not apply in Victoria, whereas exterior colonnades and internal courtyards were eminently suitable and desirable. Another informed commentator, Mr. Sisley, thought that "Architecture is, like Art, born of its age and environment", so any new Australian style would be found by the frankest possible acceptance of every requirement of modern life. He saw the need for a mode of building peculiar to Australian conditions both in climate and the conditions of Australian daily life.

In the search for an Australian style, a further question arose as to whether to adopt an existing style and adapt it through modification or whether to work on the development of a new style which would require the adherence of a body of architects to some definite lines or principles of design.

11. Ibid. 28 February 1891
12. Ibid. 18 October 1890 p.282
13. Ibid. 15 November 1890
How far did these rational and advanced architectural notions penetrate the field of nineteenth century house design, in so far as the general public and the ordinary home owner was concerned? By and large, the architects were disappointed in their ideals, which were neither widely accepted nor substantially implemented because public taste prevailed. Only a very small proportion of suburban houses built in Melbourne were architect designed. The vast bulk were erected by builders and contractors who also "designed" them. Examples of these from an 1883 Building Society Pamphlet are found overleaf.

Builders averred that they gave the public what the public wanted; the vast bulk of building construction was a business undertaking and an economic proposition having only a veneer of aesthetics and with design largely subordinated to economy. Thus advanced architectural ideas were to make small impact overall on the style and mode of suburban architecture in Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Discussion and criticism which centred around the public taste (or rather, lack of it) and the need to consider appearance and the overall effect of the streets was to continue unabated into the early 1890's. By then, the inherent defects of speculative domestic building with design subordinated to cost were so evident that they had provoked a spate of comment from architectural quarters. To identify the problems was one thing. Attaining a measure of agreement on design principles and formulating broadly acceptable guidelines in an Australian style of architecture was to prove much more difficult.

In a paper read to the Architectural and Engineering Association in February 1891, Mr. Wilson Dobbs remarked on Victorians' inheritance of many styles and their ability to mix them indiscriminately. The result was, of course, that "bizarre effect" or visual chaos of the city streets so frequently remarked on by overseas visitors to Melbourne. "We inherit all styles, choose first one and then the other, mix them and confuse their elements."

13. Ibid. 6 June 1891
See also Ibid. 5 January 1890
Wilson Dobbs saw Melbournians as essentially conservative and non-imaginative in their approach to building problems and techniques. The architect attempting to incorporate new ideas in a design invariably ran up against this innate conservatism on the part of his client. Hence he saw the late nineteenth century social condition of Victorians as "a crude hodgepodge of obsolete traditions and of novel sciences which are manifestly at issue with those traditions."

A client's demands often aimed only to emulate or copy a neighbour's or friend's residence thought to be attractive. This lack of discrimination resulted in an uncritical acceptance of ugly brick and stucco buildings being regarded as "an ornament to the neighbourhood"; showy and ostentatious residences were equated in the public mind with the more thoughtful designs of skilled architects. Nevertheless the blame did not lie entirely with the client. Some architects were too much influenced by their client's whims and taste and subordinated their own individuality and education to their client's demands.

Uninformed public taste did not entirely rule the day. Some were agreeably impressed by the newly-erected suburban residences in the wealthier areas and thought them well-designed along the lines of individuality and appearance as well as of comfort. However, a satirical article saw villas as a showy outlet for individual whims and fancies and the much-vaunted freedom of expression. "We are forced to conform in so many ways but we can, thanks to the villas, if we can only afford it, live in a house like no-one else's... the inside, like meat in a penny pie, is generally an afterthought."

Complimentary remarks were made in some quarters concerning Melbourne's building achievements. Sir George Vernon's address to the R.V.I.A. as retiring President mentioned the ingenuity and great freedom of design in the elevations of buildings in the principal streets of the city, and in the wide variety of building materials employed, such as stone, brick, terracotta and tiles. That "nearly every style of architecture is represented" he saw as commendable. Similarly, by 1891 Mr. Blesset surveyed the steady progress in suburban building in the past three years.

15. *Table Talk* 20 August 1886
and thought most of Melbourne architects had progressed beyond "the stock pattern of gingerbread lollypops style which has existed for so long." He noted an improvement in the plans and internal layout of the later villas, and summed up thus:

"There are houses now dotted over the suburbs of which we may well feel proud... [but] the vulgar over-ornamented luncrack cemented or tuck-pointed villas with cast ornamental iron work are unfortunately still being built... [to satisfy] the utter want of taste... of clients." 18.

Yet another writer saw an innate elegance in the middle range of domestic architecture. 19. These were the permanent residences of people of moderate means; their preference for comfort and convenience rather than showiness meant that these buildings exhibited an honesty of design and a functionalism usually lacking in more expensive structures. Dwellings of this type were often suited to the climate, well-situated and built of proper materials.

The critics saw the slow maturing of "the infantile public taste of Australia" still lagging behind that of Europe and the U.S.A. in aesthetic standards. 20. Exception was taken particularly to pointless or pretentious ornament, false gables, unartistically broken skylines and elevations and false fronts on buildings, which were likened to a dickey or false linen front worn over a flannel shirt. In a lecture on public taste and its improvement, it was stated that the average Australian homeowner preferred the commonplace and meretricious to the sterling and refined and exhibited a fondness for bright colour. Another writer thought "the fact remains that the average Australasian house such as the great majority of the public have to live in is a "monument of hideousness and discomfort and a disgrace to the civilisation of the age... Must the general public continue to reside in dwellings built by the jerry architect and jerry builder or "run up" by that arch fiend, the Australasian speculative landlord?" 21. And there was the rub.

18. Ibid. 7 February 1891
19. Ibid. 25 April 1891
20. Ibid. 7 February 1891
21. Ibid. 20 August 1892
Whether buying or renting a house it was impossible for most people to avoid inheriting some of the consequences of "jerrying".

Architectural embellishment was however acknowledged to be a matter of taste and opinion with no definite laws operating. This statement perhaps brings us close to the crux of the problem — to express one's taste involves a freedom of choice. What one person sees as attractive, his neighbour may not. Thus the dilemma unfolds as to whether unrestricted design enhances street frontages, which are ultimately public property in the visual sense. Could one stand idly by when its misuse became apparent? The reformers and town planners thought not, but the nature of the controls to be imposed on the urban environment raised wider and more fundamental issues than that of aesthetics alone.

22. Ibid. 26 March 1892
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