

Shop & Residence - 11 Mercer Street, Geelong

Address	11 Mercer Street, Geelong
Significance	Local
Construction Dates	Circa late 1850s
Period & Building Type	Victorian, mixed commercial and residential
Designer	Unknown
Previous Grading	'Not Significant' Attributed a 'C' grading in the <i>Geelong City Urban Conservation Study</i> (G Butler, 1991)



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The two storey Victorian period building located at the front part of 11 Mercer Street, Geelong.

How is it Significant?

The building at 11 Mercer Street, Geelong is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Greater Geelong.

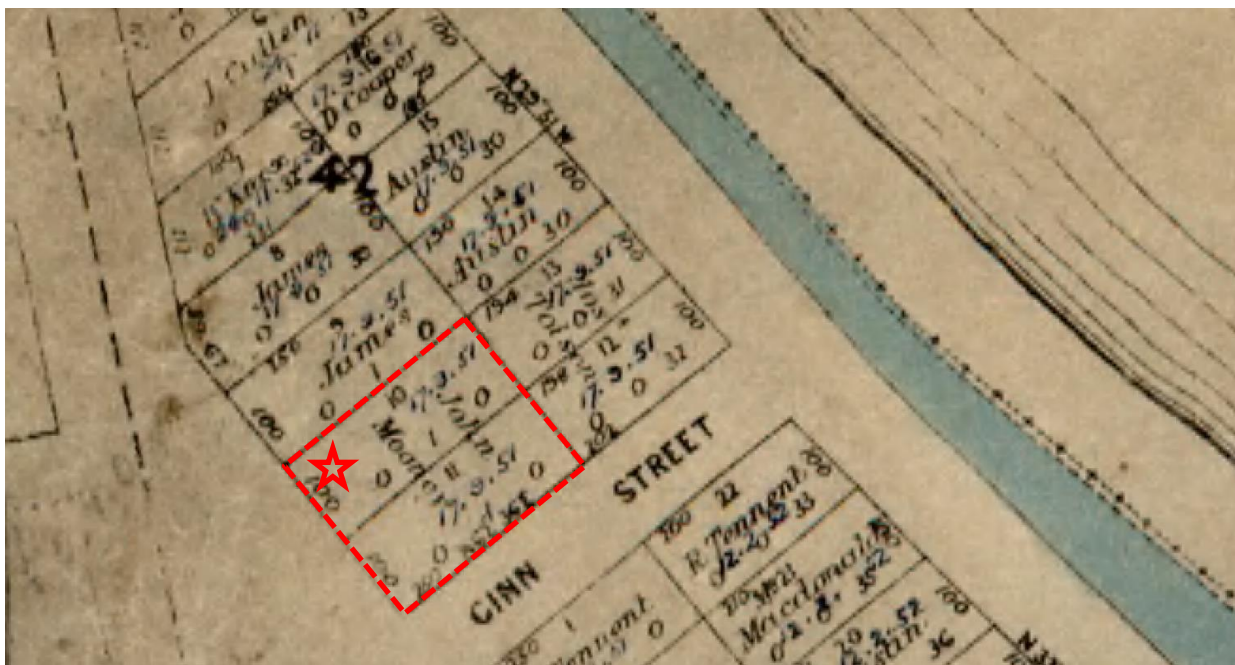
Why is it Significant?

Historically the building at 11 Mercer Street is one of five early Victorian buildings which remain to this part of Mercer Street. It is representative of a key early development phase which occurred in this area on one of the main roads to the town of Geelong. Many substantial commercial premises were erected on both Mercer Street and Latrobe Terrace from the early 1850s as the population of Geelong was rapidly increasing. (Criterion A)

The two storey building at 11 Mercer Street is of aesthetic significance for being a largely intact (above the awning) early Victorian building consisting of commercial premises to the lower level and a residence above. The restrained classical design of the building, incorporating quoining, a simple cornice and plain parapet, as well as the rendered architraves and keystones to the openings, are all indicative of an early Victorian building. Other early detailing which remains includes the hipped slate roof, face brick chimneys with pots, and windows to the rear. (Criterion E)

History

11 Mercer Street was part of allotment 10 of Section 42, Parish of Corio which was first purchased, along with the adjoining allotment to the south (no. 11), by J Mooney on 15 May 1852.¹ The following year, Mooney sold his land to Martin Treacey for £7,500 who subsequently sold allotment 10 to William Weire for £2,700.²



Parish Plan, G29 (10). Allotments 10 and 11 are indicated (red line) as is the location of the subject building (red star)
(Source: Landata webpage)

During the mid-1850s, the adjacent parts of Mercer Street began to develop as a commercial area as Geelong's population was rapidly increasing due to the discovery of gold in the goldfields to the north around Ballarat.³ At this time, Mercer Street was a main thoroughfare between the port town, the main road to Melbourne and other suburbs to the north and west.⁴ By 1854, two buildings had been erected on allotments 10 and 11: Brown Brothers British and Foreign Warehouse on the corner of Ginn Street and a building at 15 Mercer Street. Three hotels had also been erected nearby including one on the north-west corner of Latrobe Terrace and Mercer Street and another opposite the end of Ginn Street. The subject site remained vacant at this time.⁵

In August 1854, the north-west portion of allotment 10, having a frontage of 25 feet (7.6 metres) and extending to a lane at the rear, was purchased by James McEwan and John Houston,⁶ who used the site as an iron yard.⁷ The following year, in April 1855, McEwan bought Houston's share in the land and several months later disposed of his iron merchant business in Geelong to Mr George Cunningham.⁸

On 18 September 1857, the site was registered to James Spark M.D. and the following year, Spark acquired the adjoining allotment to the rear (including the current workshop site).⁹ Spark appears to have practiced from Mercer Street as early as 1855, when he is listed as the public vaccinator for the districts of 'Ashby, Kildare, & c'.¹⁰ It is likely that the subject building was erected not long after Spark acquired the site. Following Sparks death in 1883, a description of the property was included in his probate.

¹ Parish Plan, G29 (10), Parish Plan Schedule 5311-3.

² Application File 077973X, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, General Law Library

³ Norman Houghton, *Geelong: A Short History*, Geelong 2003 [2005], p8

⁴ *Ballarat Star*, 8 June 1916, p4. *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 27 June 1853, p2. *Argus*, 15 February 1855, p5.

⁵ Geelong, County of Grant, J H Taylor, Surveyor Generals Office, 1853-54, State Library of Victoria

⁶ Parish Plan, G29(10) and Schedule 5311-3

⁷ *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 22 May 1854, p8

⁸ *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 19 December 1855, p3

⁹ Application File 077973X, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, General Law Library

¹⁰ *Argus*, 14 July 1855, p.5

Two storey brick built dwelling house [...] containing 7 rooms (with slate roof) with wooden kitchen and a scullery at the rear (with metal roof) now let at £42 a year and rated in the Town rates at £40 per annum. Valued at £510.¹¹

By the early 1880s there were several large commercial premises close to the intersection of Latrobe Terrace and Mercer Street, including in the current location of the road over rail overpass.¹²



'View of Corio Bay, from St. Paul's Tower, Geelong' (Fred Kruger, circa 1882)

Looking north along Latrobe Terrace. The subject site is obscured (its approximate location is indicated). (Source: State Library of Victoria, H39614/18)

In July 1888 the building was acquired by William McRowe. Ownership of the site changed another three times over the next 9 years.¹³ By 1890, the site was known as 'Osmond House' and vacancies for two or three gentleman boarders were being advertised.¹⁴ The following year, in 1891, the house, was advertised for sale and was described as:

Very substantial brick and stone residence of two stories, known as Osmond House, Mercer-street, consisting of 7 rooms, kitchen, servants room, bathroom, wash house (including copper, etc.) large fruit garden, and right of way at rear, water and gas laid on.¹⁵

By 1909, the house was occupied by Michael Gissane,¹⁶ Mrs Mary Gissane occupied the residence for the next 20 years until her death in November 1928.¹⁷ In 1912, whilst Mrs Gissane lived there, the site was purchased by Laura Jones of Ginn Street for 300 pounds. Jones owned the site for the next 25 years until her death in 1947.¹⁸ During the early to mid-1940's Mrs Lilly A Birkett occupied the property.¹⁹ It appears that boarders were taken on with two long term tenants, Sydney Kidman and Ormond Campigli, living at the site from the early 1940s to mid-1950s.²⁰

¹¹ Probate file James Spark, Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 28, P0002, unit 155, item 26/623

¹² Photograph 'View of Corio Bay, from St. Paul's Tower, Geelong, Fred Kruger, circa 1882, State Library of Victoria, H39614/18

¹³ Application File 077973X, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, General Law Library. In 1890, the site was purchased by Francis and Catherine McGill and the following year by John Daniel. In 1907, it was acquired by John Longville Price, John Patrick McCrae Doyle and Davin Fyfe.

¹⁴ *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 February 1890, p3

¹⁵ *Geelong Advertiser*, 23 May 1891, p3

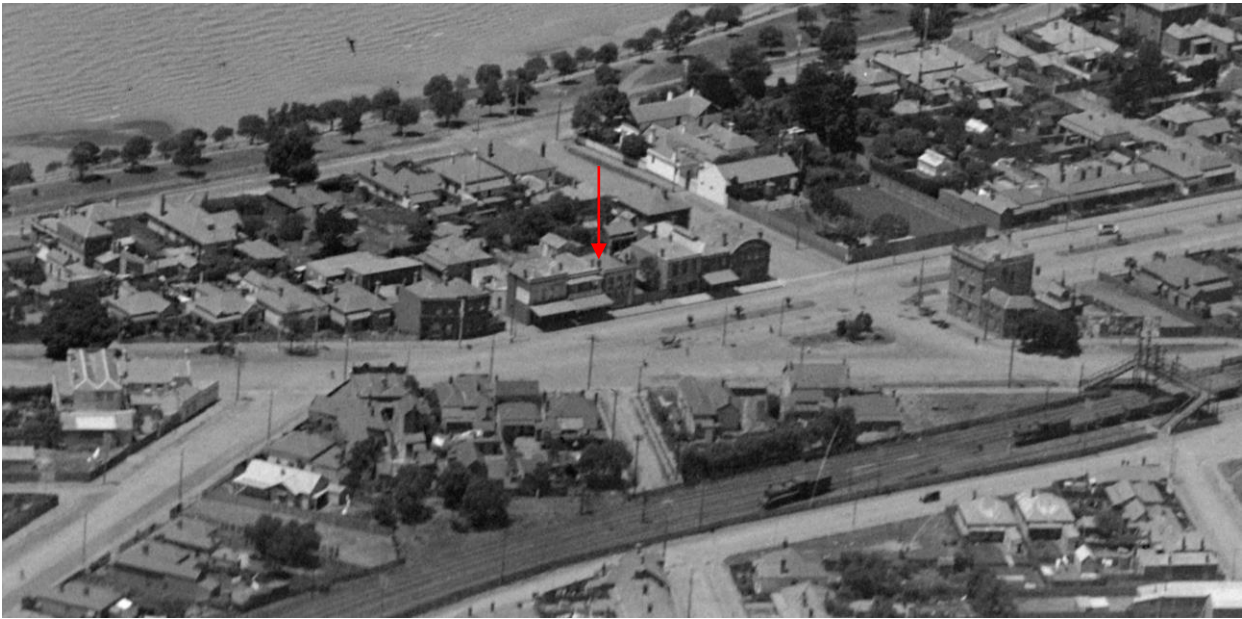
¹⁶ *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 July 1909, p1. The house is noted as 'Ormond House', Mercer Street.

¹⁷ *Geelong Advertiser*, 27 November 1928, p2. It appears that boarders were taken on at the residence other reported as living at no. 11 during this period. e.g. Albert Renwood & J Amderson: *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 February 1927, p9 & 14 June 1920, p3

¹⁸ Application File 077973X, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, General Law Library

¹⁹ Sands and McDougall's Directory of Victoria, 1942 and 1946

²⁰ Victorian Government Gazette, Various editions, 1941-1955.



'Geelong and harbour area' (C D Pratt, circa 1926)
The subject building is indicated.
(Source: State Library of Victoria, H91.160/693)

During the 1920s-30s, the east side of Mercer Street between Latrobe Terrace and Ginn Street was still predominantly lined with two storey commercial premises dating from the Victorian period and built to the street boundary. At this time, the subject building had no verandah and there was a large yard to the rear of the site, with an established garden and smaller outbuildings.²¹



'Mercer Street, Geelong, Vic, row of stores including C Phillips (Hairdresser), Geo. Elias (Draper) and Miss J E Nash (Cash Grocer)' (C Fox, 13 February 1937). 11 Mercer Street is indicated.
(Source: State Library of Victoria, H19371)

Following the death of Laura Jones, the lot, along with some additional land to the rear was purchase by Leopold George Hauser and Lucy Marion Hauser. The following year, in 1959, the site was purchased by Stanley Abe Freeman and Mary Lillian

²¹ Aerial photograph 'Geelong and harbour area', C D Pratt, circa 1926, State Library of Victoria, H91.160/693

Freeman, and Muffler and Tube Bending Service (the extant business) began operating from the site.²² The first part of the single storey workshop located to the rear of the original building was likely erected at this time.

Seven years later, in 1966, the Freemans acquired the adjoining allotment at the rear of the site (now with vehicle inspection pits).²³ The workshop at the rear was enlarged during the mid to late 20th century. The adaptation of the subject building for an automotive business reflects a change in the commercial activities undertaken in the area during the mid-20th century, with several other car related enterprises established in the vicinity during this time.

Description

The two storey rendered Victorian building at 11 Mercer Street was designed in a restrained classical manner, and has a similar format to an early Victorian shop with residence above.

The original building is built to the front and side boundaries. It has a hipped roof clad in slate and retains two face brick chimneys with metal pots. The symmetrical, rendered façade (now painted) is intact to the upper level and has a plain flat parapet separated from a plain frieze by a simple cornice. There is quoining to the façade and three rectangular sash windows which feature rendered architraves, keystones and sills. A small cornice separates the upper and lower levels. Both cornices and the quoining return to the north and south sides.

To Mercer Street is a mid-20th century cantilevered awning and tiled shopfront. Remnants of a plinth (now tiled over) remain at the north and south ends. The shopfront includes a large metal framed window (copper alloy), paired timber framed glazed doors with a letter slot. To the north is a flush timber door with early basalt threshold indicating it is an original openings (that possibly provided access to the upper level).

The north party wall is rendered whilst the walls to the south and rear (east) are brick (now painted). Cracking is evident to the north wall and metal bracing has been installed to the lower part of the south wall. There are three early opening to the rear at first floor level: two multi-paned timber sash windows and another with margin panes.

To the rear, adjoining the Victorian building, is a mid-20th century brick workshop that appears to have been constructed in two stages and extends to the east boundary. This single storey, cream brick building has a flat roof concealed behind a plain flat parapet. A metal roller door provides vehicle access from the rear lane whilst a large timber framed window including double doors provides access to the adjacent yard (to the south). This yard includes two vehicle inspection pits.

Both the Victorian building and the mid-20th century workshops have large signs associated with the extant business painted on the walls. Additional signage includes a substantial rectangular sign with fluorescent lighting mounted above the northern wall of the workshop.

Comparative Analysis

The Victorian building at 11 Mercer Street is one of five early Victorian buildings which remain in this part of Mercer Street and is similar to the nearby commercial building at 15 Mercer Street. The buildings are representative of the mid-19th century commercial development that once lined this part of Mercer Street (between Latrobe Terrace and Ginn Street). Another small group of Victorian commercial building is located further south and includes the early 1850s Steam Coach Hotel at 49 Mercer Street and the Victorian shops with residences above at nos. 26 and 28 (circa 1874 and circa 1890).²⁴

Both 11 and 15 Mercer Street consist of a shop at ground level with residence above and have relatively plain symmetrical rendered facades with flat parapets and simple cornices which are indicative of the early Victorian period. Other buildings of this type remain in the town centre, including the circa 1870 shop and residence at 156 Myers Street. Like many Victorian shops with a residence above, that at no. 156 has separate doors for the commercial premises and the residence (as was likely the case at 11 Mercer Street).²⁵

²² Muffler and Tube Bending Service website. http://www.geelongmufflers.com.au/?page_id=36, accessed 13 April 2017.

²³ Application File 077973X, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, General Law Library

²⁴ *City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study*, Graeme Butler & Associates, Volume 5

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The combination of a plain parapet with simple projecting cornice, plain frieze and quoining that is used at 11 Mercer Street has also been employed in buildings in the town centre, including at 189 & 205-207 Moorabool Street. The building at no. 205-207 however, incorporates additional decorative details including a curved nameplate to the parapet which is flanked by scrolls. During the latter part of the Victorian period, buildings of this format typically had more richly decorated façades (e.g. circa 1880 building at 179-181 Ryrie Street) and often incorporated elements such as balustraded parapets, more elaborate cornices and a decorative frieze.

Thematic Context

Victorian Historical Themes

Theme 6.4 Making Regional Centres

Recommendations

It is recommended that 11 Mercer Street (the land and building) be removed from the City Fringe Heritage Area (HO1639) and be included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay on an individual basis.

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and/or Fences	No