

2.1 East St Kilda: Chusan Street Precinct

Existing Designations:

Heritage Council Register:	nil
National Estate Register:	nil
National Trust Register:	nil

History: Chusan Street first appears in the St Kilda rate book for 1885-86 (dated 25 January 1886), comprising six three-roomed houses and one four-roomed house, all of timber construction. Four of these houses were owner-occupied: George Cooper, gardener, at No 1; James Beach, labourer (exact address unclear), Thomas Hutchinson, gentleman, at No 27 and Alfred McGuire, painter, at No 29. One house was owned by Mr Williams and occupied by a tenant, Christina Gallagher, and another two were vacant (actually designated as 'unfinished'), owned by M J Mulvany.

The ensuing eighteen months evidently saw much building activity in Chusan Street, with the rate book for 1887-88 (dated December 1887) listing twelve new houses, which effectively filled out the entire street from Nos 1 to 37. The new occupants included William Connell, painter, at No 13; Arthur Feiman, carter, at No 17, Joseph Fairey, bricklayer, at No 21; John Lezona, carpenter, at No 33, and Thomas Stephenson, painter, at No 37. Most of the residents were tenants, with only about one third being owner-occupants. At this time, all properties were rated as three-roomed timber houses, all with a net annual value of £22 except for Nos 21 and 25 (NAV £24).

The only significant change before the turn of the century was the demolition of the house at No 5, which disappeared from the rate books in the 1890s and was rated as vacant land by 1900. The rate book for 1900 also indicates a trend reversal since the 1880s, in that most residents were now owner-occupants, with only one-third being tenants. At that time, the occupants included a bootmaker, a police constable, two tram employees, a jockey, a groom and a horse dealer. The only original resident still living in Chusan Street at that time was Joseph Fairey at No 21.

Relatively few changes were made to the Chusan Street streetscape during the twentieth century. A new house was built on the site of No 5 in c.1909 - it first appears as a 'vacant' house in the 1910 directory, and subsequently occupied by one Frederick Mackie. The large house at No 21, home of Joseph Fairey for many years, was finally demolished for a new double-storey block of flats which appears in the directory for 1964. The last new house was a clinker-brick villa at No 37, erected in the 1970s.

Description: The Chusan Street streetscape consists almost entirely of modest single-fronted weatherboard cottages which were erected between 1885 and 1888. The exceptions amongst the significant buildings include two double-fronted Victorian villas: one, at No 9, having an asymmetrical frontage, and the other, at No 25, with a symmetrical frontage. The Edwardian house at No 5 is a single-fronted brick cottage with a rendered finish and rough-cast gable end. All significant houses have simple roof forms, clad in corrugated galvanized steel; about half have hipped roofs (No 1, 3, 7, 9, 15, 27) while others have pitched roofs, with gable ends to the street (Nos 13, 17, 29, 31, 33, 35). Several houses still retain original rendered brick chimneys with moulded caps.

Most of these cottages retain verandahs: variously with bullnosed (No 25), concave (Nos 31, 33, 35) or conventional skillion roofs (Nos 13, 15, 17) supported on plain (No 15), stop-chamfered (No 27, 29) or turned (No 13, 17) timber posts, with friezes of cast iron lacework (Nos 1, 3, 15, 29, etc) or timber palings (No 13). Some verandahs (eg No 5, 25) have been entirely rebuilt in the mid-twentieth century with metal pipes or mild steel trellises. Most of the Victorian houses retain original timber-framed double-hung sash windows, with moulded external architraves, and have four-panel timber doors, some with sidelights (eg Nos 7, 13, 17) or highlights. Some houses, such as No 25, have new windows. Several houses are embellished with scrolled eaves brackets (Nos 7, 15, 27) or a dentillated frieze

(No 7), while the three houses at the southern end (Nos 31, 33, and 35) retain distinctive loopy timber bargeboards.

There are two entirely non-contributory buildings. One, at No 21, is a double-storey block of eleven flats, of cream brick construction with a hipped roof of terracotta tiles. The other, at No 37, is a single-storey clinker-brick townhouse with a steep tray-deck skillion roof.

Chusan Street itself retains its bluestone gutters and has a narrow asphalt footpath without a nature strip. The houses display a variety of front fences, none of which appear to be original. Many have low timber picket fences (No 5, 9, 15, 25, 27, 31-35) which are sympathetic in style, but there are also more intrusive taller fences in brick (No 3, 13), timber palings (No 17), timber trellis (No 29) or ripple iron (No 1)

References:

MMBW Plan No 45 (c.1903)

St Kilda Rate Books, 1884 to 1900. PROV.

Sands and McDougall Directory, 1885 onwards.

Thematic Context: **Building settlements, towns and cities:**

? Planning urban settlement

? Making suburbs

Comparative Analysis: Modest workers' housing of this type proliferated in Melbourne's inner suburbs in the late nineteenth century, most notably in such areas as Richmond, Collingwood and Brunswick. It was also widespread in Port Melbourne, where it was subject to close scrutiny by the slum abolition movement of the 1930s. In the heritage precincts documented in the *Port Phillip Heritage Review*, Andrew Ward has identified numerous areas of comparable timber workers' cottages in St Kilda, including unspecified side streets off Charnwood Road (down the hill from Wellington Street), and the area on the east side of Brighton Road (to the north and east of the public buildings and railway). The latter evidently includes Camden Street (east side only), Lynnot Street, Duke Street, Nightingale Street, Gibbs Street, Rosamund Street, Marlborough Street and parts of Pakington Street, where rows of single-fronted timber worker's cottages remain, mostly still in a relatively intact condition.

This housing typology, however, became much less common east of the railway line. Inspection of MMBW plans No 45 and 47 shows that, at the turn of the century, there were comparable rows of single-fronted timber workers' cottages in Young Street, Jervois Street, King Street and Leslie Street, as well as Chusan Street. These streetscapes survive today in various states of intactness. Many of the cottages in Jervois Street and Young Street, for example, have been demolished for inter-war and post-war developments, and those few which remain have, for the most part, been unsympathetically altered. The seven cottages at the northern end of King Street still remain as a cohesive row, but are still far less intact than their counterparts in Chusan Street. In Leslie Street, there has also been considerable post-war redevelopment, although a row of relatively intact six single-fronted timber cottages survives at Nos 13 to 23. This streetscape, however, is less cohesive than Chusan Street, where only two of the seventeen properties in the street are non-contributory.

Not only is Chusan Street the most cohesive amongst the remaining rows of modest nineteenth worker's housing in East St Kilda, but it is also the most easterly example of this typology in the entire municipality. The MMBW maps, prepared around the turn of the century, indicate that nineteenth century residential settlement, in general, was much sparser to the east of Hotham Street, and was limited to large mansions estates and some small pockets of detached Boom-period villas in brick and timber.

Statement of Significance:*What is significant?*

The Chusan Street precinct comprises all those properties along the western side of Chusan Street, East St Kilda, numbered 1 to 37 and consisting overwhelmingly of intact single-fronted Victorian timber cottages.

How is it significant?

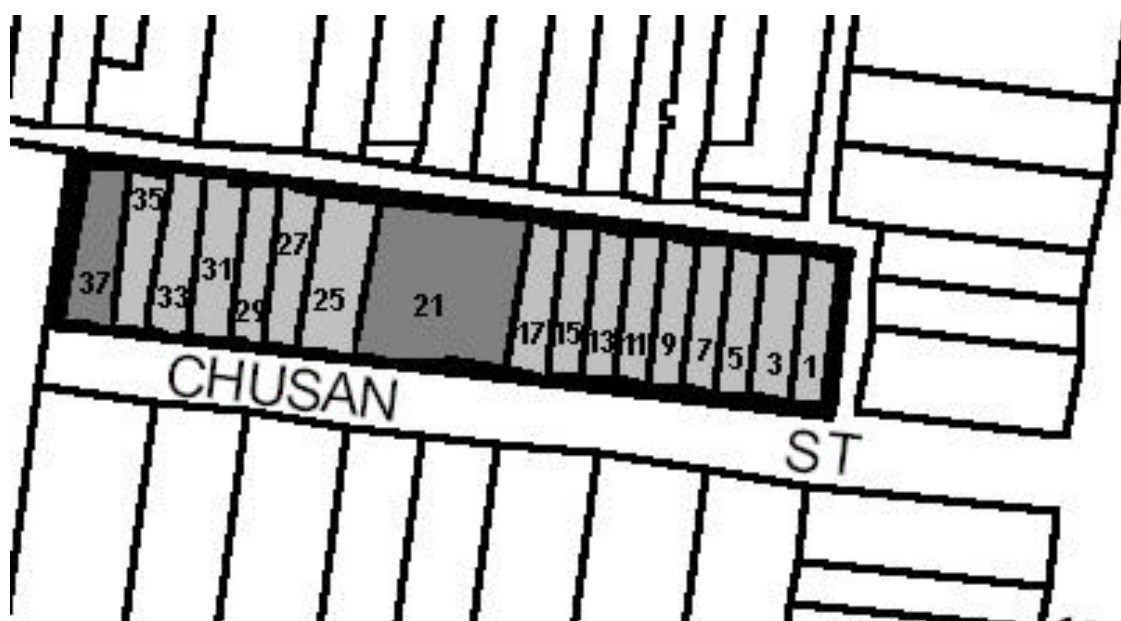
The Chusan Street Precinct is of historical significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Consisting almost entirely of single-fronted timber cottages erected in 1886-88, and initially occupied mostly by tradesmen, the Chusan Street Precinct is a representative and largely intact example of the type of modest working-class housing which proliferated in the inner suburbs in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Within the City of Port Phillip, this typology was and is widespread in areas such as Port Melbourne and South Melbourne, but is less common in St Kilda, and becomes increasingly rarer as one moves further east. The Chusan Street Precinct is the most intact and extensive collection of such housing in East St Kilda, and the most easterly example in the entire municipality.

Recommendations: Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

Assessment: Simon Reeves, Heritage Alliance. June 2004.



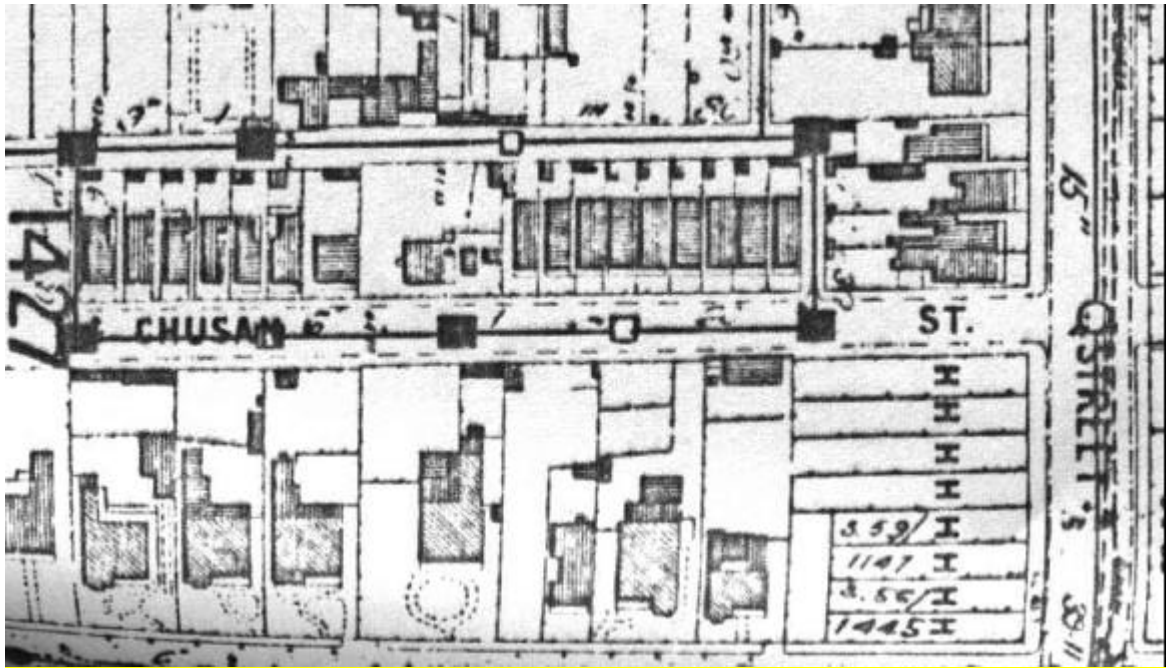


Figure 1 MMBW Plan No 46 (c.1903) showing fully-developed Chusan Street



Figure 2 Chusan Street, looking north



Figure 3 Chusan Street, looking south



Figure 4 Edwardian house at No 5 (1905)



Figure 5 Double-fronted house at No 25