

2.6 East St Kilda: Mooltan Avenue Precinct

Existing Designations:

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

History: Mooltan Avenue is named after the large Victorian mansion which formerly stood on the site now occupied by the Sol Sapir-designed block of flats at No 8. The vast *Mooltan* estate, which originally extended from Hotham Street back to Alexandra Street, was partly subdivided in 1922 when Mooltan Avenue was created as a short cul-de-sac flanked by ten new residential allotments - five fronting Hotham Street, and five to Mooltan Avenue - with the mansion itself retained on the eleventh and larger lot. Mooltan Avenue first appears in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* in 1925 - albeit listing "no houses". The following year, the directory lists two occupied houses on the south side (now Nos 3 and 7), and a third "house being built" (No 5). The directory for 1927 identifies 'flats being built' and a 'house being built' on the north side of the street, plus the three existing houses and 'public tennis courts' on the south side.

These tennis courts were evidently subdivided in 1928, when Mooltan Avenue was extended further east to create another eight new residential allotments. These were developed even more rapidly than those released in 1922. The directory for 1928 includes 'three houses being built' on the north side (evidently Nos 10, 12 and 14) and a 'house being built' on the south. The following year identified the new residents as N J Fairless (No 10), Frank Ayre (No 12) and Edward Brougham (No 14), plus two new 'vacant' houses at Nos 13 and 16, and two new occupied houses at Nos 9 and 11, occupied by Mrs A Drummond and W H Taylor. The last house, located at the extreme eastern end of the *cul-de-sac*, appeared in 1930.

The new housing in Mooltan Avenue was clearly geared towards the comfortable middle-class professional gent, and electoral rolls reveal that the original residents were defiantly white collar, and included Herbert Larkin, company director, at No 16; William Taylor, manufacturer, at No 11; Norman Fairless, superintendent, at No 10; and Frank Ayre, manufacturer, at No 12.

Description: Mooltan Street is a short dead-end street; the western end, subdivided in 1928, contains a remarkably cohesive collection of houses which, with the exception of a single post-War house at No 12, are all in a loosely Spanish Mission style. These houses are single-storey detached dwellings of brick construction with a rendered finish (variously rough and smooth) and hipped tiled rooves (in terracotta or cement). All somewhat asymmetrical in composition, those houses on the steeper north side of the street are distinguished by being raised up from the street, some with garages below. The houses are embellished with various details typical of the Spanish Mission style, including arcaded porches (Nos 13, 14 and 15), shaped parapets (No 11, 13 and 16) penetrated by faux beams (No 14) or terracotta pies (No 11), windows with blind fanlights (Nos 11 and 14), wrought iron balustrades and spandrels (Nos 9 and 14), geometric window grilles (No 9) and gabled chimney caps (No 10).

The post-war house at No 12 is the only non-contributory building in the precinct; although markedly different to its neighbours in its use of orange bricks, cement roof tiles and terrazzo porch with cement balustrade, the house is otherwise sympathetic in its scale, form and composition.

All of the Spanish Mission houses in the street have the same type of front fence: a low rendered dwarf wall with squat piers and chunky capping. There are also some original lampposts with polygonal concrete shafts and tapered luminaires. Mature street planting includes some birches (*Betula pendulata*) and *Alnus jorullensis*. There is a Bhutan cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*) at No 16, which is probably contemporaneous with the house, and a much older and larger cypress tree (*Cupressus sempervirens*) at No 15, which seems to date from the 19th century and is probably a remnant of the original *Mooltan* grounds.

References:

Lodged Plans No 8866, declared 16 June 1922; No 12721, declared 17 October 1928.
MMBW Plan No 46 (c.1903)
Sands and McDougall Directory (various).

Thematic Context: Building settlements, towns and cities:

- ? Planning urban settlement
- ? Making suburbs

Comparative Analysis: The *Port Phillip Heritage Review* has not specifically identified any comparable precincts of Spanish Mission houses, although several examples of multiple dwellings have been individually recorded. The most prominent of these is the attached row of eight Spanish Mission houses at 239-253 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, described by Ward as 'one of the largest and most complete essays of the Spanish Mission style in Melbourne'. These houses, however, are actually a Victorian terrace of 1885 that was remodelled in c.1920 and, as such, is not truly comparable to the detached housing in Mooltan Avenue.

Other Spanish Mission multiple dwellings identified in the municipality are even less comparable; they include several blocks of flats (located almost exclusively in central St Kilda and Elwood) such as *Winnipeg* at 51 Blessington Street (1920), *Aston Court* at 43 Acland Street (1926), *Glenronald* at 75 Dickens Street (late 1920s), and *Baymor* at 6 Victoria Street (1929-32). There are also a number of semi-detached dwellings in the Spanish Mission style (located throughout the municipality), including 235-237 Bank Street, South Melbourne, 156-158 Brighton Road, Elsternwick and 11-11A Hammerdale Avenue, St Kilda East.

But while all of these examples are comparable to the Mooltan Avenue houses in their dates and in their individual finishes and detailing, they are otherwise considerably different in form and setting. In Mooltan Avenue, the cluster of seven fully detached Spanish Mission houses forms a distinct enclave that has few parallels elsewhere in the municipality. Some broad comparisons can be drawn with the east side of Morres Street in Ripponlea, and a portion of nearby Maryville Street, where there are short expanses of similar rendered houses in the Spanish Mission and related Mediterranean styles dating from the late 1920s; these, however, lack the specific enclave quality of the Mooltan Avenue *cul-de-sac*, which is further enhanced by its common front fences, street planting and original 1920s lampposts.

Statement of Significance:*What is Significant*

The Mooltan Avenue Precinct comprises the eastern portion of Mooltan Avenue, St Kilda East, including seven Spanish Mission houses on 3 sides of a *cul-de-sac* (Nos 9-15 and 10-16), plus mature trees and original concrete lampposts.

How is it Significant?

The Mooltan Avenue Precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip

Why is it Significant?

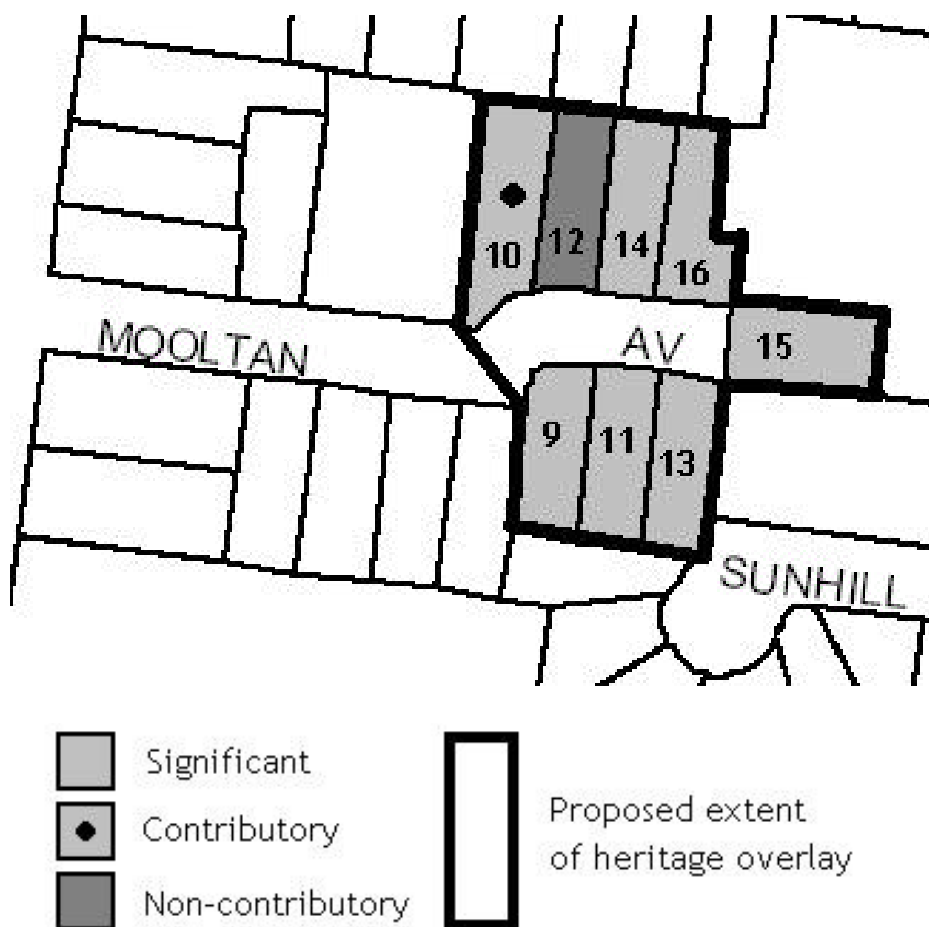
Historically, the housing in Mooltan Avenue is representative of a typical pattern of subdivision in East St Kilda during the inter-war period, where large mansion estates were gradually carved up into new residential subdivisions. It retains associations with the long-demolished mansion Mooltan, through its nomenclature, its dogleg street alignment, and the huge remnant cypress tree at No 15.

Aesthetically, the eastern portion of Mooltan Avenue represents a fine and intact streetscape of Spanish Mission housing, characterised by rendered walls, tiled roofs,

arcaded porches and curved parapets. Although differing somewhat in their individual decorative detailing, the houses display notable cohesion through their common style, scale, composition and materials, and, particularly, the use of identical front fences to all properties. The setting is enhanced by contemporaneous plantings (including a Bhutan cypress at No 16 and some birches along the nature strip) and the somewhat unusual survival of the original concrete post street lamps.

Recommendations: Buildings, street trees, cypresses (at Nos 15 and 16) and concrete lampposts recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

Assessment: Simon Reeves, Heritage Alliance. June 2004.



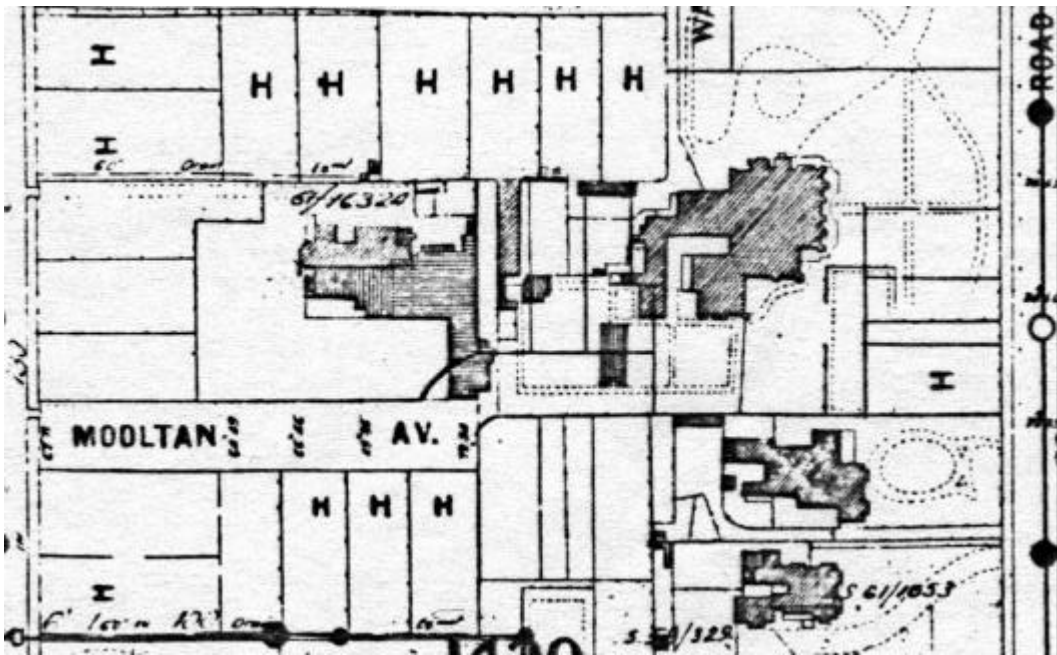


Figure 1 MMBW Map (c.1903) showing Victorian estates from which Mooltan Ave was formed



Figure 2 South side of Mooltan Avenue



Figure 3 House at 14 Mooltan Ave (c.1928)



Figure 4 House at 9 Mooltan Ave (1928)



Figure 5 Detail of 1920s concrete lamp