

## PERCY STREET COMMERCIAL PRECINCT – HO268

### Introduction

This Heritage Citation for the Percy Street Commercial Precinct documents the historical background of the Precinct and presents an assessment of heritage significance.

This Citation identifies properties based on their contribution to the heritage values of the Precinct:

- ‘Significant’ heritage places are individually important places of State or local heritage significance. They are listed individually in the Glenelg Shire Planning Scheme Schedule to the Heritage Overlay. They can also be places that, when combined within a precinct, form an important part of the heritage significance of the precinct.
- ‘Contributory’ heritage places are places that contribute to the heritage significance of a precinct. They are not considered to be individually important places of heritage significance, however when combined with other ‘significant’ and/or ‘contributory’ heritage places, they play an integral role in demonstrating the heritage significance of a precinct.
- ‘Non-contributory’ places are places within a heritage precinct that have no identifiable heritage significance. They are included within a Heritage Overlay because any development of the place may impact on the heritage significance of the precinct or adjacent ‘significant’ or ‘contributory’ heritage places.

### Historical background

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct extends from Julia Street north to Henty Street on both sides of Percy Street.

The first official government visit to Portland was from Foster Fyans, the first police magistrate at Geelong, who travelled overland from Geelong to Portland in June 1839. Fyans reported to the Governor, Sir George Gipps, on the promising land at Portland and the extent of the Hentys’ landholdings (Learmonth 1960). This visit was followed shortly after by the first official survey between December 1839 and February 1840 by Charles J Tyers. Tyers reported a town population of 203 at that time. The first land sales for Portland occurred in Melbourne in

October 1840 (Learmonth 1960). Prices were high for properties at that time and for a time Portland vied with Melbourne for the status of major settlement of the southern region. A building boom followed the land sales, and from 1840-42 four hotels and four churches were established followed by the first banks in 1846 and 1847 (Tout-Smith 2003).

Percy Street developed from the mid-1850s as a commercial, predominantly retail, centre with early development including banks, draperies, merchants and hotel.

### Physical description

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct contains a range of commercial architecture from different periods in Portland’s history, from the early Georgian and Victorian periods (1850s-1870s) to Art Deco styles.

Prominent early buildings in the Precinct include the former Union Bank at 44 Percy Street (1855-56), (designed by local architect John Barrow). The double-storey bluestone building is simply composed and includes a central entrance on Percy Street enclosed by a Doric porch with Venetian windows on either side. The building has rough (quarry-faced) stone walls at ground level and smooth-faced stone walls on the second floor. The bluestone double-storey stables at the rear are also an important feature.

The former Campbell’s Drapery and outbuildings (including sheds, stables, a well and pump) at 57 Percy Street was reportedly built in 1868 for Joseph Marriott, however Birmingham’s plan of 1853 indicates a collection of buildings on the site at the time and the narrow bay on the southern side may date from this era. The building has a distinctive bluestone façade and low-pitched wide gable front with interesting windows and verandah and is an important element in Percy Street.

Birmingham’s plan of 1853 also indicates a concentration of early building development in the vicinity of the intersection of Percy and Julia streets, including premises at 43, 45-51, 53, 55 and 57 Percy Street. By the 1920s, the full extent of these allotments had been developed and much of the nineteenth century fabric remains extant today, concealed by later cladding and shopfronts.

The north western corner of Percy and Julia Streets was the location of several wells during Portland’s early development, prior to the introduction of reticulated water supply in the 1930s. There are four (known) wells remaining within this area including one at 53 Percy

Street (visible from inside a shop), one at 55 Percy Street, and one each at the rear of 57 Percy and 66 Julia Street. Importantly the examples at 66 Julia Street and 53 Percy Street demonstrate how a well can be successfully incorporated into the design of a new building or renovation and provide an interpretation of the past.

Other important infrastructure from the early settlement of Portland can be seen in the remnants of a macadamised cart track behind 55 Percy Street. Macadam road surfaces were invented in the 1820s and consisted of small shaped rock fragments compressed into a road surface and the spaces between filled with dust or mud. Remnants of these surfaces are rare in Victoria. These are considered archaeological sites.

The centre of the Percy Street Commercial Precinct is dominated by a non-commercial structure – the former Wesleyan Church (now Uniting Church). The construction of this church (the third Wesleyan Church in Portland) began in 1865. The building was designed by local architect Daniel Nicholson with a sophisticated classical temple street elevation in a style derived from English Renaissance architecture (VHD 1999). The fine craftsmanship of the bluestone exterior is the work of stonemasons, C Webber & Sons. The Church was extended with a bluestone Sunday school room at the rear in 1868, a bluestone extension of three classrooms in 1883, and a timber room on the south side of the Sunday school (unknown date). The adjacent bluestone Manse was constructed in 1868 and the rear alterations to the Manse and most likely the verandah were added in around 1899 (VHD 1999). The Church and Manse are greatly enhanced by the landscaped forecourt fronting onto Percy Street and the established large Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*) in the garden. The northern edge of the landscaped forecourt is nicely enclosed by the attractive Dutch-style gable of 63 Percy Street.

Important early commercial buildings on the east side of Percy Street include the double-storey bluestone building at 58-60 Percy Street with a fine dressed stone façade built in 1860 for S Jarrett (Bennett 1993), the bluestone shop at 54 Percy Street, and the modest bluestone shop at 48 Percy Street, built in 1872.

On a grander scale the bluestone and brick complex of shops on the south eastern corner of Percy and Henty Streets (78-82 Percy Street) is a fine example of the layers of building adaptation over time in Portland. The original building on this property was constructed for merchants Trangmar and Crouch in 1858; evidence of this is shown by the large bluestone wall on Henty Street. The building was rendered and re-faced in the post-war period in Art Deco style with thin brown bricks used to

define features and motifs. A tower and flagpole were also constructed at this time on the corner of Henty and Percy Streets.

The adjacent 'Audley Building' at 70-76 Percy Street also demonstrates the use of Art Deco elements in the Percy Street streetscape, using the colour contrast between thin dark brown bricks on a cream brick building as the main decorative element.

Of a smaller scale is the narrow single-fronted shopfront with Art Deco-styled brick parapet which was constructed in front of the original building at 51 Percy Street.

The buildings in the Precinct have no setbacks, with the exception of the Wesleyan Church and Manse, and shopfronts generally present a Victorian style and form with cantilevered verandahs. Most of the parapets in the precinct are modern and not contributory.

### Comparative analysis

The Percy Street Commercial Sub Precinct has similar characteristics and significance to the Port Fairy Commercial Precinct (Moyne Shire HO14). Both Precincts include verandahs, no building setbacks, a mix of single and double storey buildings. Both Precincts contain a representative selection of building styles over different periods integral to the history of each town. Finally, both Precincts are relatively intact (with a few potential infill areas). The Port Fairy Commercial Precinct is historically, architecturally and socially significant to the Moyne Shire.

### What is significant?

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct from Julia Street north to Henty Street, along both sides of Percy Street is of heritage significance to the Glenelg Shire.

Contributory elements include:

- Early commercial buildings in bluestone and masonry including 44, 48, 54, 45-51, 53, 57, 60 and 81 Percy Street and 19 Henty Street.
- The former Wesleyan Church and Manse and the 'garden square' represented by the landscaped forecourt. This area is enhanced by the mature *Quercus suber* and the Dutch gable-style facade of the building at 67 Percy Street.
- Ongoing and continued use as a commercial (retail and industrial) area since European settlement of Portland.
- Early wells including those at 53, 55 and 57 Percy Street and 66 Julia Street.

- Remnants of macadamised cart track at 55 Percy Street.
- The majority of buildings in the Precinct have little to no setbacks, presenting a common appearance to the buildings and the streetscape overall.
- Outbuildings including those at 44, 46, 54 and 57 Percy Street.
- Associations with prominent settlers, businessmen and builders/architects and stonemasons including John Barrow (designed former Union Bank at 44 Percy Street), and Daniel Nicholson (designed the former Wesleyan Church).
- Art Deco architecture or re-purposing of existing architecture represented by 78-82 Percy Street, 70-76 Percy Street and the façade of the small newsagent at 51 Percy Street.

#### **How is it significant?**

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct is of historical significance (HERCON Criterion A), research significance (HERCON Criterion C), can demonstrate principal characteristics of styles (HERCON Criterion D) and associative significance (HERCON Criterion H) to the Glenelg Shire.

#### **Why is it significant?**

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct is historically significant to the Glenelg Shire as it demonstrates the evolution of an early commercial area in Portland.

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct has research significance for the Glenelg Shire, as it has the potential to yield information about previous occupation of the area. This specifically applies to archaeological potential particularly at sites where there are documented archaeological sites.

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct demonstrates principal characteristics of several different styles of commercial architecture particular to different phases of Portland's development. The Precinct contains examples of Victorian and Art Deco architecture. The consistent proximity to the street of the single and double-storey buildings in the Precinct creates an intact and uniform streetscape, which is unusual given the variety of styles present.

The Percy Street Commercial Precinct is of associative significance to the Glenelg Shire for its association with key prominent architects, stonemasons and social, political and business community leaders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Photographs**



Former Campbells Drapery, 57 Percy Street, built 1868 (significant)



Bluestone outbuilding at 57 Percy Street (significant)



Bluestone outbuilding at 57 Percy Street (significant)



Remnants of macadmised cart track at 55 Percy Street (contributory)



Former Wesleyan Church, 61 Percy Street (significant) (Source:VHD)



Mature *Quercus suber* (Cork Oak) in garden of Wesleyan Church and Manse, 61 Percy Street (significant)



Dutch-style gabled façade at 63 Percy Street (contributory)



Former Union Bank, 44 Percy Street (significant)



Former Wesleyan Manse, 61B Percy Street (significant)



58-60 Percy Street, 1940s (Source: State Library of Victoria)



58-60 Percy Street, 2013 (significant)

Percy Street Commercial Precinct Map



Contributory Places

- 44B Percy Street
- 44D Percy Street
- 45 Percy Street
- 46A Percy Street
- 47-49 Percy Street
- 48 Percy Street
- 50 Percy Street
- 51 Percy Street
- 52 Percy Street
- 53 Percy Street
- 54 Percy Street
- 55 Percy Street
- 56 Percy Street
- 63 Percy Street
- 64 - 64B Percy Street
- 66 Percy Street
- 68A Percy Street
- 70-76 Percy Street
- 44A Julia Street

Significant Places

- 19 Henty Street (internal bluestone wall)
- 44 Percy Street (former Union Bank)
- 57 Percy Street
- 60 Percy Street
- 59-61, 61A and 61 B Percy Street – former Wesleyan Church (now Uniting Church), Manse and *Quercus suber* (Cork oak)
- 81 Percy Street
- 78-82 Percy Street

### Recommended Controls (2016)

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| External Paint Controls          | Yes |
| Internal Alteration Controls     | No  |
| Tree Controls                    | Yes |
| Fences & Outbuildings            | No  |
| Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted | No  |
| Incorporated Plan                | No  |
| Aboriginal Heritage Place        | No  |

### References

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Birmingham, FW. 1853 *Map of the town of Portland in the Colony of Victoria*. Surveyed and etched on stone and published by Frederick William Birmingham.

Learmonth, N. 1960. *The Story of a Port, Portland Victoria*. Portland Harbour Trust: Portland Victoria.

Tout-Smith, D. 2003. Municipality of Portland, Victoria, in Museum Victoria Collections. Retrieved 7 June 2016 from <http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2311>,

Victorian Heritage Database (VHD) 1999. Former Wesleyan Church ,59-61A Percy Street, Portland. Retrieved 13 June 2016 from <http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/952>

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This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.