Melbourne ~ a trading city

It was in a 'village' built on entrepreneurship and speculation that warehouses like 573 Lonsdale St flourished. From the 1850s, merchants and their warehouses were the crucibles of trade and all manner of goods passed through their doors. Wine, spirits, sugar, wool, tea, coffee, rice and textiles were stored before heading to local and global destinations. Precious imported items were also housed safely.

In 1855 ships moored along the Yarra, in fast growing Melbourne, were trading around the globe. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Originally 573 was numbered as 114-116 Lonsdale St. In 1890 Melbourne streets were renumbered and it became 573-577. We have called it ~573~

European Settlement

In 1835 this Melbourne 'village' was settled by Europeans in a commercial arrangement with investors from Tasmania, on the lands of the Kulin Nation with their Wurundjeri, Bunurong and Wathaurong Tribes. This arrangement was enabled by means of a 'treaty' between the new Settlers and Kulin Elders. Much has been left unanswered about the nature and content of this 'treaty'. At the time that John Batman and William Faulkner organised investors from Tasmania, ('The Port Philip Association') to establish a settlement on Port Philip Bay, both the settlement and the 'treaty' were outside the boundaries of British law. They were deemed illegal, but the settlement went ahead and British Law was changed to accommodate it. It was significant for European occupation of the whole Australian continent.


Signing of the 'treaty' between John Batman and Kulin Elders for European Settlement on Port Phillip. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

John Batman's Farm (1830s) on Batman's Hill was along what is now Spencer St. The Hill has since been demolished. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Hoddle Grid

On 4 March 1837, Robert Hoddle, the senior surveyor from Sydney, and NSW Governor Bourke traced the general outline of the township on horseback as there had been little progress with the initial land survey. Bourke directed that the town be laid out, and a few days later the Governor named the settlement Melbourne after the British Prime Minister of the day. Hoddle's plan of Melbourne was lodged at the government survey office in Sydney. Not all have agreed that the plan of Melbourne is actually the work of Robert Hoddle. Governor Bourke (who added its much loved laneways) and William Lonsdale, Melbourne's first police magistrate, have also been credited with Melbourne's grid design. Whatever the verdict, the 1837 grid of wide and narrow streets and lanes remains Melbourne's dominating historic memento of European settlement
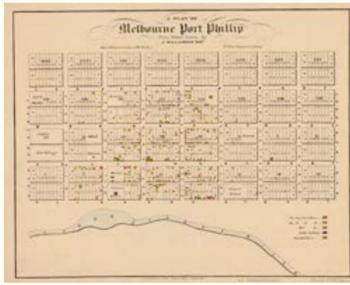
The 1837 Hoddle Grid set out the streets of early Melbourne. 573 was built near the NW corner. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Robert Hoddle STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Captain William Lonsdale STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Governor Richard Bourke STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

John Batman STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Gold Fever

Gold fever was running high after the first discoveries in 1851. 'One day a child named Williams picked up a small piece of gold specimen in Lonsdale St opposite the Wesley Church. There was a rush to the 'Lonsdale Diggings'..... It didn't last long. Alas there were no more finds there.' THE CHRONICLES OF EARLY MELBOURNE, GARRYOWEN.

The lure of the goldfields drew people from around the world to what had been a quiet British colony in the Antipodes. It changed Victoria forever. The Eureka Stockade uprising in December 1854 signified early protests against colonial authorities over what were seen as unfair laws, charges and the policing of Ballarat miners. The influx of newcomers was overwhelming. The streets of Melbourne became rough places. The men wandering them were often armed. Accommodation was hard to find. At the same time the British feared attacks from the Russians, the French and the Germans so armed volunteer soldiers were also roaming the streets, mingling with the unsuccessful, ragged miners straggling back into town.

The 1854 uprising of miners at the Eureka Stockade was a protest against Colonial authorities about unfair conditions and charges. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Marvellous Melbourne

By the 1890s Melbourne had transformed from a small illegal settlement, to a frontier gold town, and then to an internationally recognised metropolis. It had held several exhibitions and Victorian wine was receiving much acclaim. Its early prosperity from settlement, trade and gold was replaced by massive land and share speculation, wool and agriculture exports. The population soared from 20,500 in 1850 to 494,000 in 1900. Lonsdale St changed too. By the turn of the century it was becoming respectable - more or less!

The 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition highlighted the City's status as a prosperous and progressive international metropolis. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

LONSDALE ~ THE STREET WITH EVERYTHING

LONSDALE ST MATURED WITH THE CITY; FROM TRADE TO GOLD, INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, AND NOW PART OF THE LEGAL WORLD. THE PRECINCT HAS BEEN HOST TO ALMOST EVERYTHING: WAREHOUSES, HOUSES OF WORSHIP, BOARDING HOUSES, COURT HOUSES, WHOREHOUSES ALONG WITH RESIDENCES AND SHOPS. AND SOME GEMS SUCH AS ST FRANCIS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH 1856, CITY ELECTRIFICATION WORKS 1893, THE QUEEN'S ARCADE 1853, AND THE FIRST TURKISH BATHS IN 1861.

Telegraph Office & Time Ball — William Street — Site of Supreme Court — Lord Clyde Hotel — Spencer Street Railway Yards — Gas Works — Hobson's Bay Tar Company — Spencer Street Railway Yards — Lonsdale Street — Presbyterian Church — Congregational Church
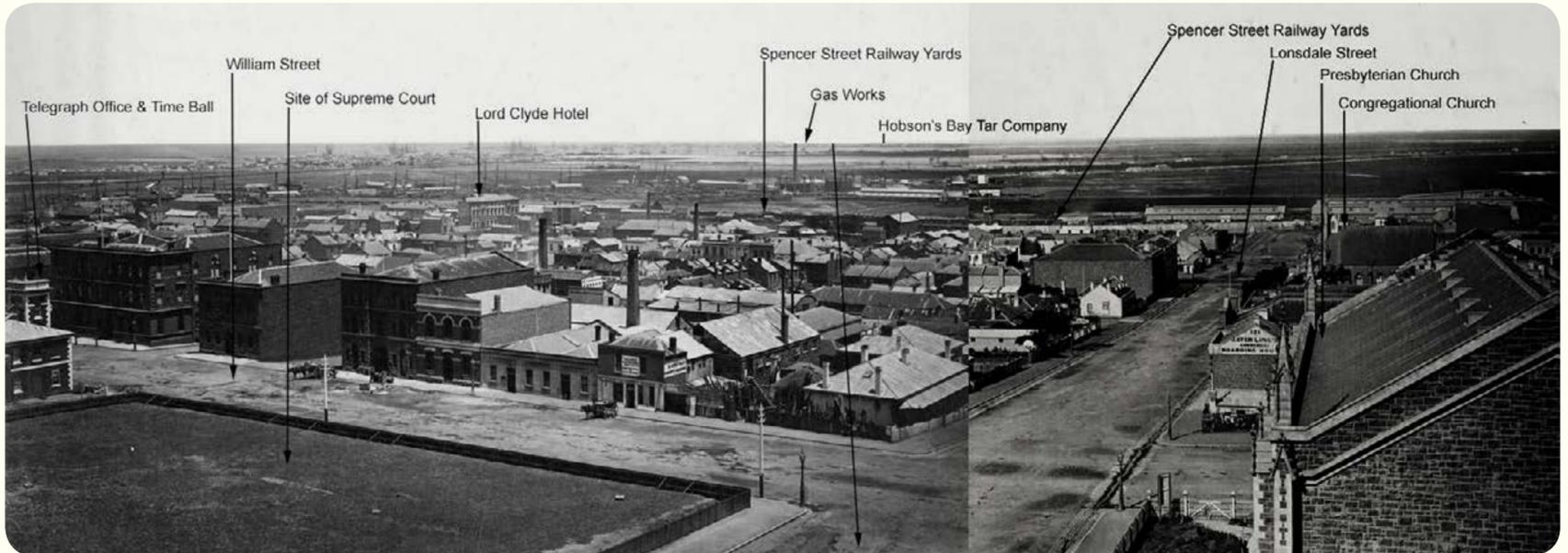
In 1869, 573 was a warehouse in an industrial Melbourne. Beyond Lonsdale St to the west the ships line up along the Yarra.
ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

Street Life

For decades Lonsdale St was considered a poor cousin of Collins and Bourke Streets. Tents, makeshift dwellings, boarding houses, and 'red light' premises co-existed with warehouses, factories, stores, hotels, churches, smelting works and timberyards. There were tales of mobs of boys playing football, complaints of foul smells from the Hughes and Harvey zinc works.

'Locals complained 'meandering gutters' were open sewers, and poor lighting meant it was 'hard to feel the way to Lonsdale St.'
MELBOURNE STREET LIFE. ANDREW BROWN-MAY

As late as the 1880s, the streets were still without proper gutters and all kinds of folk and their activities were about.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Celebrities on Lonsdale

Lonsdale Street hosted some of Melbourne's leading institutions and their makers. Not far from 573, north on Lonsdale were the Cobb and Co stables. 'Rostella', the private hospital of eminent surgeon Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, was built across the road. The Supreme Court and then the Melbourne Hospital, (Queen Victoria) were further to the east. The mighty Myer Emporium came to Lonsdale in 1924. Famous artists, writers and radicals like Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan hung out in Melbourne's own Bohemia around Fasoli's Cafe near Exhibition St in the 1930s and 1940s. Much earlier in 1855, the same corner housed a pre-fabricated iron structure, Coppin's 'Olympic Theatre'.

Coppin's 1855 Olympic Theatre, was Melbourne's first theatre. Earlier Rowe's Circus (later Melbourne's first Turkish baths) and now the Comedy Theatre occupied the site.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Houses Of Worship

From early European settlement, Lonsdale St contributed to religious worship in historic churches. St Francis, the first Roman Catholic Church in Melbourne, was consecrated in 1841. It still stands on the corner of Elizabeth St. Near Russell St is the Wesleyan Church Complex of 1857, now part of Melbourne's Uniting Church with English and Chinese congregations. Architect Joseph Reed's ornate design was controversial at the time. The Princess Mary Club, part of the complex, was built in 1926 as a home for girls.

Looking east from Elizabeth Street along Lonsdale Street is St. Francis Church, the first Catholic Church in Melbourne. It is still standing.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Madame Brussels

'Great' Lonsdale St was the name given to Lonsdale St East – the posh end of town near Parliament and fashionable East Melbourne. At 2 and 4 Lonsdale were the elite bordellos of Madame Brussels with lesser brothels close by. Rumour has it that the Parliamentary Mace disappeared into one of these and Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria's son, is reputed to have been a visitor! Nearby, along busy, noisy streets and lanes, were gambling houses, opium dens, pubs with gangs and thugs all interspersed with the crowded houses and shanties of the poor.


There were all kinds of houses of ill repute at the posh end of Lonsdale St. The Queen of Harlotry, Madame Brussels, kept elite brothels there.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Criminals, Drunks and Crazies

In 19th century Melbourne, drunks and doubtful characters wandered the streets. Lonsdale St had its fair share making the news. The Temperance Movement tried restricting alcohol availability when Coffee Palaces, Temperance Hotels, 'pubs with no beer' were built. John Tankard operated his alcohol-free Family Hotel in Lonsdale St West, the first in Melbourne.

In August 1882, The Argus reported, 'An extensive robbery of ironmongery, kegs of white lead, and nails' from Mr Duckett's import business in Lonsdale St. Detective Ward was on the case. It turned out to be an inside job! In 1866 The Argus reported on an Inquiry at the Melbourne Hospital into a murder-suicide in Lonsdale St West. In 1880, Ned Kelly was tried in Lonsdale St in the Supreme Court.
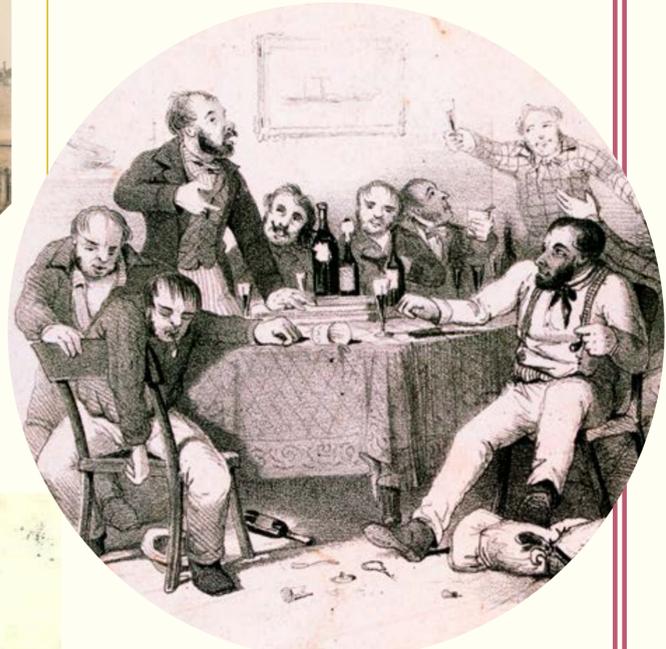
Alcohol was a problem in early Melbourne. Drunks were everywhere at venues of all sorts, the pubs, clubs and in the streets.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Industrious Lonsdale

-573- was commissioned when Melbourne was fast developing around the area and the Museum, Library, and the University were built. The population explosion required new dwellings and services. Infrastructure and technology were advancing with the port, steam, rail, gas, water utilities, and the telegraph all established. Manufacturing led the economy into the 1860s, with jobs galore and Melbourne as the hub.
-573- and Lonsdale St played their part. For decades and into the 20th century the street housed engineering works, iron foundries and textile factories. Later electrical and communication companies, radio distributors, the ABC Studios and film makers made it to Lonsdale St. It is now very much a mix of Melbourne's legal world, government offices, modern retail, and the large Greek community. There are very few reminders of early Melbourne.


From the 1860s, -573- became part of industrial Lonsdale. Textile factories, iron mongers, electric lighting generators along the street, and the port and rail heads close by.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

-573-LONSDALE ST STANDING THE TEST OF TIME

-573- HAS BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF MELBOURNE HISTORY. IT STANDS MUCH AS IT ALWAYS HAS, BUT ITS TIME AS A WAREHOUSE CAME TO AN END WHEN IT BECAME A PLACE OF WINE AS SEABROOK HOUSE. THEN FOLLOWED SEABROOK CHAMBERS, A PLACE OF BARRISTERS, AND TODAY A 21ST CENTURY CORPORATE HOME FOR ARNOLD THOMAS & BECKER LAWYERS.
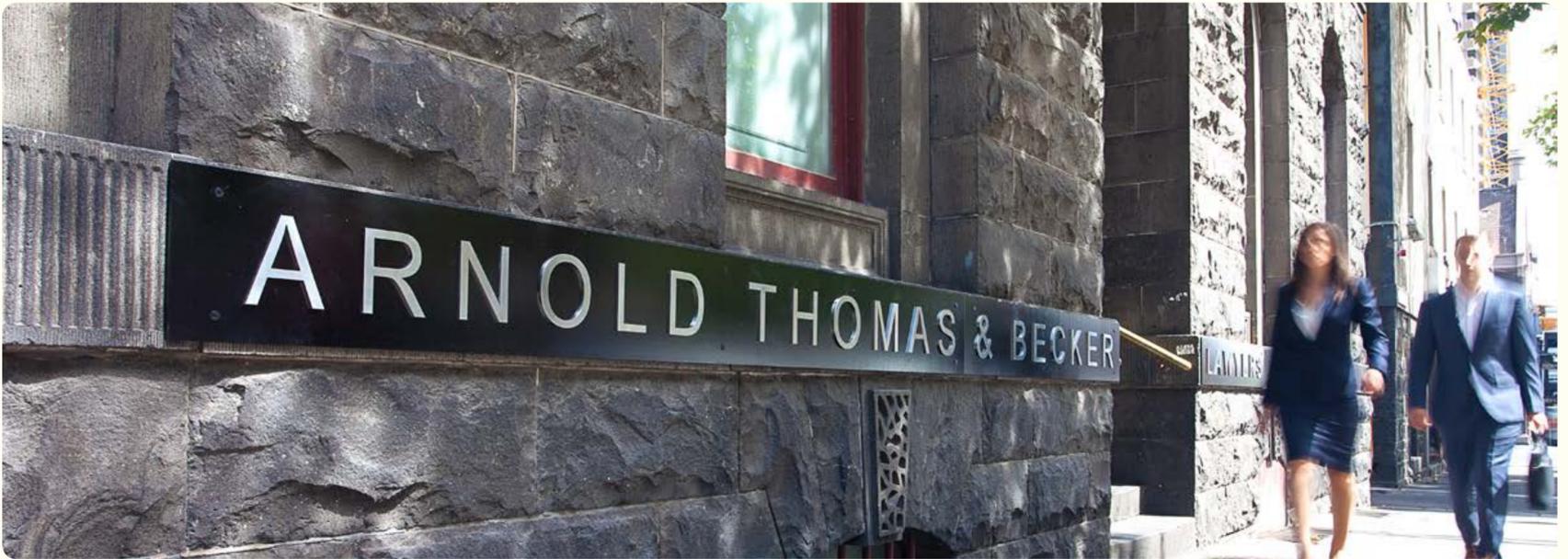
The sweep of the bluestone facade of -573- marks it as a 21st century place for Arnold Thomas & Becker Lawyers. EAMON GALLAGHER

-573- Becomes Seabrook House in the 1970s

1969 brought wine merchants, W.J. Seabrook & Son, to 573. "Seabrook House was ideal for wine storage with its solid bluestone walls providing even, low temperatures. The air of age and restfulness was enhanced by the rows of ageing barrels and dusty bottles," explains Iain Seabrook. Julie Hoey of the Seabrook Family, describes the arrangements, "The whole building was dedicated to the production and sale of wine: local, speciality Seabrook's brands, and European. Tankers came into Browns Lane and pumped the wine into barrels in the basement. The ground floor had reception, offices, tasting and show rooms with a bottling plant, packaging area and distribution outlets at the rear. Upstairs a strong room, offices, laboratory and storage made it complete."

The glory grapevine we planted in the basement grew out through the grill at the front of Seabrook House. It thrived for years.' Iain Seabrook, Seabrook Wines.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Mr Douglas Seabrook tasting wine at Seabrook House in 1970.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

-573- Seabrook Chambers in the 1980s

In 1984 a privately owned Trust of Barristers converted -573- to Seabrook Chambers and stayed for 28 years. Kevin Greenhatch, the architect who had been responsible for the then major refurbishment of the Melbourne City Baths, designed the transformation. Gerald Lewis, QC, describes life there. 'We had a reception area with rooms let to individual barristers for their chambers. The basement became a conference venue with a bar and wine cellar. All sorts of events took place; legal meetings, mediations, social events including an annual Grand Final luncheon. A sauna and spa were available for those who made their daily exercise a run to Melbourne University and back. It was a very intense, active place, very much of the 1980s'.

A private Trust of Barristers bought and renovated -573- in 1984. The ground floor had a reception area and individual legal chambers. Frank Knight
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

In Seabrook Chambers the basement was converted to a venue for legal meetings, conferences and social events with a bar and a sauna for exercise addicts.
JOHN HORTON

21ST Century revival: Arnold Thomas & Becker

In 2013 Lee Flanagan, Principal of Arnold Thomas & Becker, commissioned Melbourne architectural firm John Wardle Architects (JWA) to shine a light on the architectural and cultural heritage of -573- as it was refigured for modern legal offices. Mr Flanagan explains how this was achieved. "Two great architects were involved in this project; Leonard Terry for his original commission, design and construction of our building in 1858, and JWA who restored it to its former glory 156 years later while creating contemporary and functional space for our legal practice. As the shape and fittings of its life as Barristers' Chambers were peeled away you can see and feel history. The elegance and strength of the original architecture are obvious against the original bluestone envelope".

Lee Flanagan says, "It is a privilege to work in this amazing building, to be part of Melbourne's history and to be so close to all of Melbourne's Courts, Tribunals and Barrister's Chambers."

The original open internal structure of -573- is revealed when John Wardle Architects were contracted to revive its heritage for Arnold Thomas & Becker Lawyers.
JOHN HORTON & JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS

-573- Heritage Revealed

JWA consulted with the Heritage Council of Victoria to ensure that the building's architectural and cultural significance was taken into account in the refurbishment. This meant differentiating the new with the existing heritage fabric, keeping faith with the building's origins. Externally there was no change. The bluestone walls all remain. Internally, JWA recognised and highlighted the heritage values. The building's openness and lightness were enhanced. The structure and building techniques were exposed, featured along with the elegance of the new offices. You can see and touch the original bones of the building. On the ground floor the cast iron columns supporting the Oregon beams. In the basement, the timber posts sitting on giant basalt footings. On the first floor you can admire an open space with exposed roof trusses. The inclusion of glazing in the refurbishment allows for visual connectivity through the workspaces and emphasises their place within the historic and cultural significance of the building.
JWA BRIEF AND HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA.

From a pioneer trading house of a burgeoning early Melbourne, -573- has been transported into a globalised 21st Century taking its revived heritage into 'Melbourne's legal end of town'.

The industrial sized cast iron shoes encase the beams and pillars of refurbishment for Arnold Thomas & Becker Lawyers.
JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS

Meeting of old and new. The elegant open timbered modern internal structure is set against the strength and age of the original bluestone wall.
JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS

-573- is on the Victorian Heritage Register, on the Register of the National Trust in Victoria and the Register of the National Estate. Wardle's refurbishment received a Commendation for Heritage Architecture - 2015 Australian Institute of Architects Victoria Awards.

-573- LONSDALE ST A WORKING PLACE COMES TO LIFE

THROUGH BOOM AND BUST **-573-** HAS BEEN PRODUCTIVE AND VERSATILE. FROM ITS EARLY DAYS AS A BONDED WAREHOUSE AND LATER AS A PLACE WHERE ENGINEERED, ELECTRICAL AND AGRICULTURAL GOODS, CHEMICALS AND TEXTILES WERE STORED AND SOLD. BY THE 1970S IT WAS HOME TO WINE MERCHANTS THEN THE LEGAL FRATERNITY.

-573- would have depended on many auctions with various goods for sale and trade over much of its life. STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Architecture of its time

-573- was designed and built in 1858 by renowned architect Leonard Terry on commission from wealthy merchants, the Cleve Brothers. 'It is one of the oldest and finest bluestone warehouses in the city and forms part of a streetscape of warehouses. An intact example of the palazzo style of the 1840s warehouses of Manchester, inspired by the 14th and 15th century warehouses of Florence, Genoa, Venice, renaissance revival style. It has two storeys, a basement, a hipped roof of corrugated, galvanised iron, two symmetrical chimneys. It is freestanding, rectangular with one chamfered corner. Originally the interior was open with no structural walls'.
HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA.

The technology used to support the interior may be a very early version of its kind used in buildings, originally derived from methods used in the construction of sailing ships.
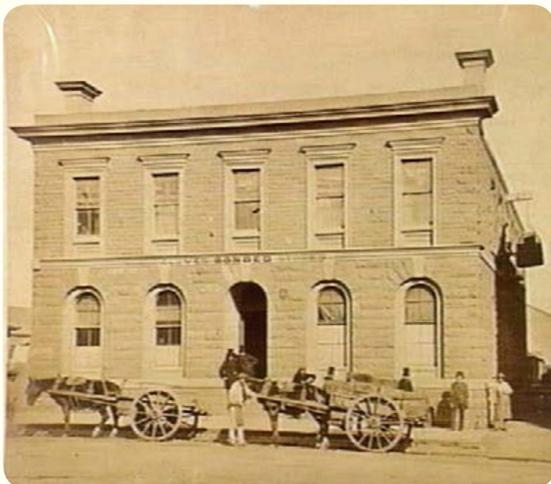
In 1861, -573- had carts out front loading goods being lowered on the windlass on Browns Lane destined for local or overseas markets.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Cleve Brothers

The land of -573- (then 114-116 Lonsdale St) was bought by DH Cleve in April 1855 from John McKenzie for 1000 pounds. Initially it was a bonded warehouse of the Cleve Brothers, secure and housing dutiable goods stored without charge until the goods were required and duties were paid. By 1860, two more bluestone warehouses were built for the Cleve's next door, later sold to the Blight Brothers. Arrangements varied over the years with the stores a mixture of bonded and free, involving a vast range of goods. All this on a strip of boarding houses, small stores, factories, hotels, churches and much more. Early on Airey's Furniture Showrooms were a few doors along, and next to them (at the then 106 Lonsdale) a local 'Madam', Mrs Delaney. Across the street was a carriage works. After 60 years the Cleve Brothers moved out.

By 1861 the Cleve Bros had built warehouses next to -573- on the corner of King St. For decades they were managed together, bonded and free.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Leonard Terry, an inspirational legacy

Leonard Terry was born in Scarborough Yorkshire in 1825 and died in Collingwood in 1874. He married twice, was father to nine children. Terry arrived in Melbourne in 1853 first working for a Mr Laing, then becoming a sole practitioner until he went into partnership with Percy Oakden. He left a legacy of buildings all around Melbourne, in numerous Victorian towns, Tasmania, Western Australia and New Zealand. His portfolio and styles were diverse. He designed countless warehouses, banks, churches, the Victoria Sugar Co, the Melbourne Club, residences in the eastern suburbs and the famous Norwood in regional Victoria. He has had a significant and long lasting impact on architecture in Victoria. Apart from numerous tender documents little was published about Terry in the newspapers or in the historical records. It seems he was an unassuming, retiring man. Not one photograph could be found!
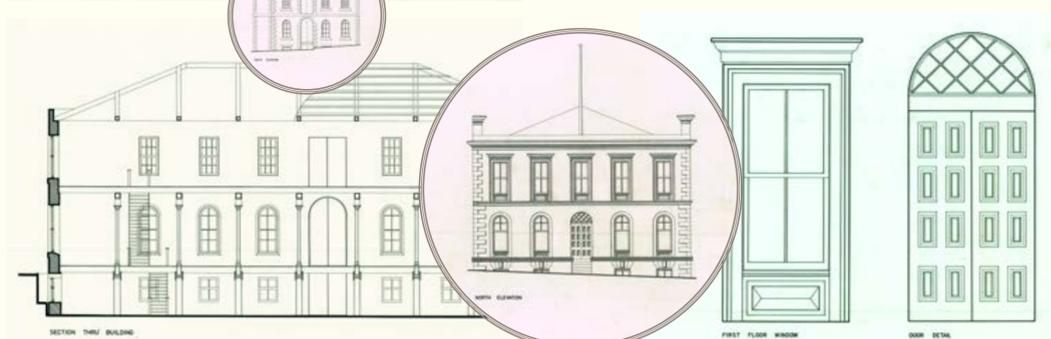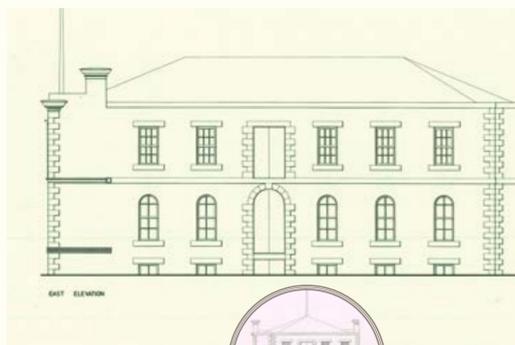
Original architectural drawings of plans of 573, north, south and east elevations. Details of front door, ground and first floor windows. D. Bozzonello, M. Englisch, B. Faulkner, Leonard Terry.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

A thoroughly bluestone building

Bluestone was a signature building material of early Melbourne. It is basalt from the vast volcanic plain that runs across the north west of Melbourne. It is a difficult material to use; hard to extract, hard to shape, heavy and expensive to transport, but grand, strong and durable. The bluestone of -573- could have come from many sites, perhaps the quarries of the time at Malmsbury, Lethbridge or Footscray. The ground floor walls are thick, coursed quarry-faced bluestone blocks set in lime mortar. The first floor bluestone blocks are smaller, dressed with rusticated quoins (cornerstones). The 15 metre bluestone façade is richly detailed.

Bluestone for warehouses like -573- was won by hard work from the basalt quarries on the volcanic plains across the north of Melbourne.
STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Manufacturers and their agents

Exporters Corbett, Derham Co Pty Ltd worked at -573- alongside organisations with broadcasting licenses, until 1928 when York and Co took over. York and Co were manufacturers and agents of chemicals and dyes, with a variety of partners and tenants. In 1930, British Engineering appeared as a tenant, and in newspapers of the times, textiles, fertiliser products, and a wool processing service were all advertised. Lots of transactions took place, and business thrived through the 1940s and 1950s. The 1960s heralded change. Sun Electrical Pty Ltd took charge with wholesale and household goods stored and sold for a decade. Wine merchants, the Seabrook Family, then came to -573- in 1969.

-573- housed many mixed businesses in the 1920s and 1930s. They advertised in newspapers across Victoria and Tasmania, especially their agricultural and chemical products.
TROVE