Addresses:	635–639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds.
Place Typology:	Retail
Construction date range:	Circa 1886-90
Architectural style:	Late Victorian Italianate
Assessment:	heritage ALLIANCE, May 2021
Recommendation:	That the place be included in the Heritage Overlay Schedule

Photo of places:



635-639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds. Photographs, Google streetview, Dec 2021

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

635-639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds, built circa 1886-1890, is significant as a two storey, Late Victorian Italianate commercial building. The lower level is divided into three shopfronts, the upper level is offices/residences with a separate doorway located at number 639A. Significant features of the place includes:

At number 635-637:

- The two storey balustraded parapet form with ornate Late Victorian Italianate styling and raised pediment with nameplate with acroteria, scrolls and urns/balls.
- The stucco mouldings including a prominent cornice with dentils and expressed composite classical pilasters to each side and between the windows, which break the frontage into separate bays.
- The moulded aedicules around each large sash window, including the curved hood moulds with acroteria and with pilasters either side of the window opening and moulded rinceaux frieze below the sill.

At number 639-639A:

- The two storey parapet form with Late Victorian Italianate styling and raised curved pediment with nameplate with acroteria, scrolls and urns/balls.
- The stucco mouldings including a prominent cornice with pairs of brackets and raised lozenge mouldings between. A lower cornice with dentils has moulded panels below it.
- The arched timber double hung sashes occur in two pairs with classically moulded architraves, pilasters and key stone on a moulded sill.
- The separate entry door to the first floor located at number 639A.

The altered shopfronts and corrugated iron post verandah are not significant (the cast iron verandah frieze has City of Melbourne crests).

How is it significant?

635-639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds is of local historic and architectural significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

Why is it significant?

635-639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds illustrates the boom in commercial development along Mt Alexander Road and Puckle Street in the Late Victorian period as the development of the railways and transport routes at this very important civic and commercial intersection developed. (Criterion A)

The buildings are architecturally significant for the Late Victorian Italianate designs and ornate classical expression in the above the verandah façade. They are significant surviving examples of Late Victorian Italianate design in a much altered streetscape at an important commercial and civic hub for the surrounding suburbs. (Criterion E)

Description:

Two buildings, 635- 637 and 639- 639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds with a single post-verandah over both frontages. The buildings face the Moonee Ponds junction and one of the busiest intersections in the municipality.

635-637 Mt Alexander Road is a two storey Late Victorian Italianate masonry building with stucco to the façade above the verandah. The symmetrical attached terrace form has a very ornamental first floor level with pediment, parapet, cornice, aedicules and pilasters. The parapet has balusters to either side of a central pediment with name plate, urns and an acroterion. Above the balusters is two balls and a prominent cornice with dentils and three raised pilasters that break the façade into halves. Each half has an aedicule arrangement around the windows with a raised arch as window hood and two pilasters either side of the double hung sash windows. Below is a rinceaux frieze above a string course. The decorative scheme is very intact.

The post verandah and cast-iron frieze is a replacement constructed in ca. 1977. It appears to have been salvaged from another building as it has City of Melbourne crests in the brackets. The original verandah scheme can only be gleaned from historic photos which indicate that each building had its own post verandah as a 1907 postcard shows two different heights for the verandahs.

The two shopfronts below the verandah are complete replacements and no sign of the original arrangement of doorways, windows and stall riser remains.

639-639A Mt Alexander Road is a two storey late Victorian Italianate masonry building with stucco to the façade above the verandah. The symmetrical attached terrace form has an ornamental first floor level with pediment, parapet, cornice and pilasters. The parapet has a classical arrangement with a central arched pediment with name plate, urns and scrolling above

a very prominent cornice. The cornice has double brackets and moulded lozenges between them. The façade has raised pilasters at either side of the façade. Two pairs of arched double hung sash windows have moulded architraves and engaged pilasters, a keystone in the arch and brackets below the moulded sills. A string course with dentils and moulded decoration are above the verandah. The decorative scheme is very intact.

The post verandah and cast-iron frieze is a replacement constructed in 1977. It appears to have been salvaged from another building as it has City of Melbourne crests in the brackets. The original verandah scheme can only be gleaned from historic photos which indicate that each building had its own post verandah as a 1907 postcard shows two different heights for the verandahs.

The shopfront below the verandah is a complete replacement and no sign of the original arrangement of doorways, windows and stall riser now remains. To the right is a doorway to number 639A which is an upstairs business. Presumably this access to upstairs always existed.

A photo obtained from the National Archive Australia shows a cantilever verandah over 639-639A in 1977 and no verandah over 635-637 in 1977. Photo of the junction in 1900 shows a post verandah on 635.

635-637 has two hipped corrugated iron roofs one with rendered chimney, and right of way (ROW) at the rear. 639-639A is a single hipped corrugated iron roof with skillion extensions to a ROW at the rear.

History:

Contextual history from Context Thematic Places Heritage Study, 2012-14 and 2016 Heritage Study

The first retail area in Moonee Valley was Mt Alexander Road, which in 1851 became the main route to the Victorian goldfields. Businesses which were set up to service travelers included blacksmiths, saddlers, boot-makers, wheelwrights, stock feed and dry goods suppliers. Clusters of shops and businesses developed along the length of Mt Alexander Road, beginning near Flemington Bridge in the south.[1] A plan of building allotments prepared by surveyor H.D.G.Russell in 1853 shows the group of buildings on the north side of Main's Bridge in the area then known as Flemington-bank.[2]

For quite some time, any further movement up the hill was prevented by the large areas of land occupied by the Glass and McCracken estates, which bordered both sides of Mt Alexander Road, with Ailsa extending up to Kent Street, and Flemington House as far as today's Baroda Street. After that, land on the east side was still only sporadically available for development due to a number of smaller residential estates, such as J.T. Smith's Ascot House, which were built on this side of the road to enjoy views over the Moonee Ponds Creek valley.

One notable early commercial establishment built on the east side of the road was the Prince of Wales Hotel, which was trading by 1854. A commercial and community hub began to form around it, and before long there was a water tank on the other side of the road, and William Eastwood, who lived in South Street, had set up a hay and corn business on the north corner of Bank Street. Local residents clearly identified it as a centre for community activities, and in 1862 after the formation of the Borough of Essendon and Flemington, the majority of local ratepayers and newly elected C ouncillors opted to build their new municipal offices, hall and courthouse next to the Prince of Wales Hotel. William Eastwood became a long-serving Councillor, along with Mt Alexander Road blacksmith and wheelwright, George W. Parsons.

Other early traders on Flemington hill included hay and corn merchant, Samuel George, who set up his business opposite the council chambers on the north corner of Moonee Street, and John Twinem, who opened a grocery store on the south corner of Moonee Street in the 1860s. A bakery operated by the Leane family stood just north of Sydney Street from the early 1880s.[3] When a branch of the ES&A Bank opened on Mt Alexander Road directly opposite the borough offices in 1875, the council transferred its account there.[4] Local business must have been good because in 1884 the bank opened an elegant new two-story Gothic building on the site, which remains there today but has ceased to operate as a bank.

Racecourse Road in Flemington also developed commercially from an early date, being the main thoroughfare to the Newmarket saleyards and Flemington Racecourse. While its main development took place at the height of the land boom from 1885 to 1895, there were already 11 businesses there in 1885.[5] Union Road in Ascot Vale began to develop as a commercial precinct between 1885 and the early 1890s with the opening of many small businesses serving local needs. Up until 1888 there were only six businesses established in Puckle Street. Other shops were progressively opened in the 1890s, as well as three bank branches.[6]

References:
[1] Living Histories, Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History, 2012, p 94.
[2] H.D.G. Russell, 'Plan of building allotments at Flemington', 1853 [State Library of Victoria].
[3] F. Price, 'Flemington', 1881 [map of allotments to be auction by C.J. and T. Ham on Saturday 3 December 1881, held by State Library of Victoria].
[4] James McJunkin, 'History of Essendon', c.1948, p16. [copy held by Moonee Valley Library].
[5] Precinct citation for HO24 Racecourse Road Precinct, accessed 2013.
[6] Living Histories, Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History, 2012, pp. 94-96.

(From contextual history of serial listing of Early Ascot Vale Shops in *Thematic Places Heritage Study, 2012-2014:* p.40-41)

Contextual History

City of Moonee Valley occupies part of the Traditional lands of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woi-wurrung people. Many sites in the area now known as City of Moonee Valley show evidence of Woi-wurrung activities and spiritual connections. Fish were trapped in the rivers and creeks, stone was quarried from the river edges, murnong daisy was collected and kangaroos hunted across grassland areas, and bark was harvested from trees in the river valleys. This relationship between the Woi-wurrung and the land, water, animals and plants, continues to this day (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.29).

The first Europeans to explore the area known as Moonee Valley was a surveyor, Charles Grimes in 1803. In 1836, settlers moving from Van Diemen's Land crossed the area in the hope of finding empty, cheap and plentiful land for sheep. By 1842, surveyors had created the first map of the Parish of Doutta Galla and then Woi-wurrung lands were offered for sale by the British Crown to Europeans (noting that the land was never ceded). The Wurundjeri were moved off their land which had a profound impact on their culture, health and language. By 1860, the entire parish was sold (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.32-33).

Early development of the area began with the goldrush period of the 1850s which saw Mt Alexander Road used as a thoroughfare to the diggings with over 30,000 people estimated as moving along the dirt road each week. Businesses and shops sprang up providing sustenance, transport and accommodation to service the passing gold rush trade. Some very early wayside hotels and shops still survive from this period (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012 p.51-54).

After the heady days of the goldrush, the 1860s saw Essendon, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Flemington develop into permanent townships. The development of railways by private companies gave huge impetus to suburban development of the area with the opening of the Essendon railway in 1860. The government purchased the line in 1868. Suburban trains terminated at Essendon and it wasn't until 1889 that Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Newmarket stations were completed. By 1893 stations opened at Strathmore and Pascoe Vale and in 1922 Glenbervie Station opened. The railways provided an enormous boost to residential development along the line and those who had previously moved to areas without trains, now clamoured for them (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012 p.59).

By the 1880s Essendon had become a Borough and by 1891 had a population of 14,411. Many subdivisions occurred during the land boom of the 1880s and many failed to eventuate due to the depression of the 1890s. In the interwar period a boom in subdivision and residential infill occurred in Travancore, Essendon, Ascot Vale, Strathmore and Moonee Ponds, which was focused on new transport routes along the tram lines, first established to Essendon in 1905. In 1919 the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board was formed and lines were extended and improved. The tram lines saw development occur either side of Maribyrnong Road, further along Mt Alexander Road, Buckley Street and Keilor Road (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012 p.65-68, p.115).

In the three decades after the Second World War, Melbourne's suburbs ballooned outward to cater for post-war migration, the baby boom, an increasing need for new housing, and a more car-centred economy. Areas to the north of Essendon had been open paddocks in 1945, but by 1950 the Shire of Keilor found themselves with a developing suburb with no name. It was later called Niddrie. Similarly, Airport West was developing quickly with houses being built before the roads. By 1964 it was claimed that Airport West had the cheapest cream brick veneers in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012 p.120-121).

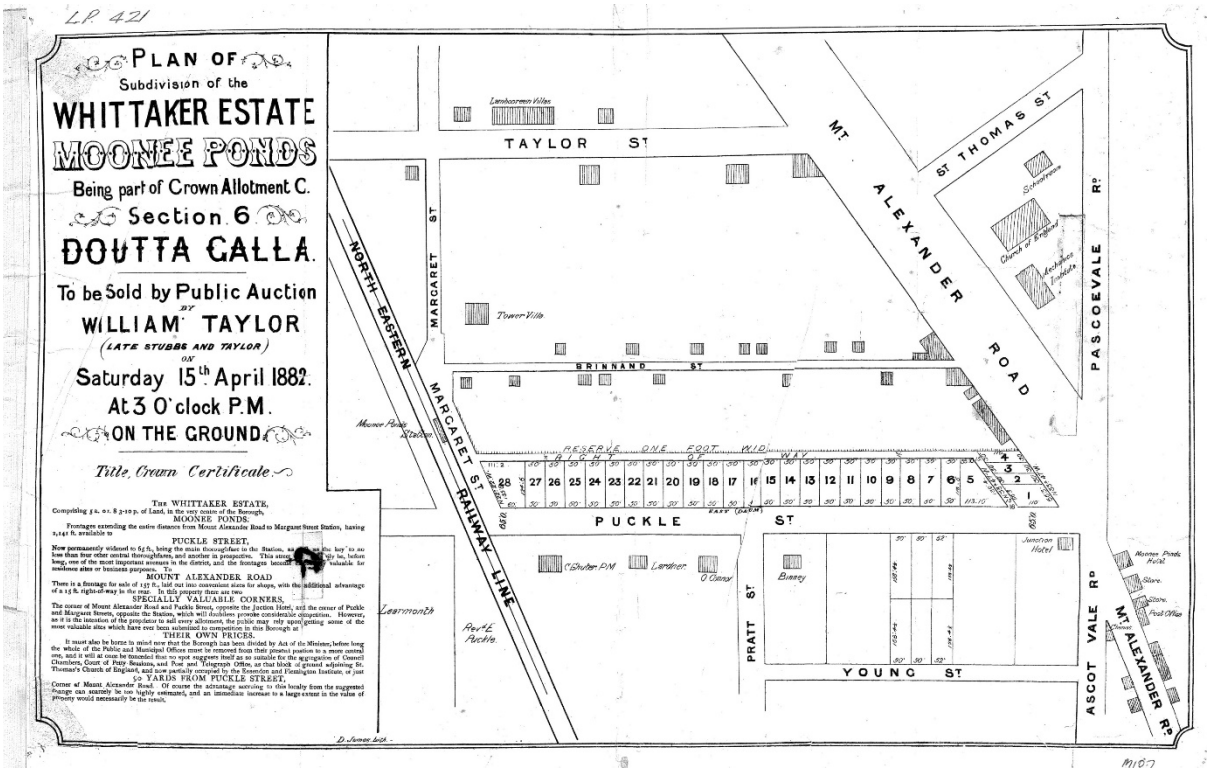
Many houses in these post-war areas were austere weatherboard or brick veneer bungalows, with a few scattered architect designed or project homes on new blocks, particularly along the Boulevard in Aberfeldie. These post-war housing areas were car-centred communities located close to industry along Keilor Road, Matthews Avenue around Essendon Airport and East Keilor. By 1960 Airport West had its first hotel, the famous Skyways Hotel and then in the 1970s the first shopping centre, owned by Westfield was begun (heritage ALLIANCE, *Gap Heritage Study*, 2005, p.28-30).

Post-war housing pressure also saw a huge investment by the Housing Commission of Victoria who developed 150 bungalows in concrete, weatherboard and brick in Aberfeldie. They then began an ambitious estate of houses and flats on a 77 acre site at Ascot Vale in 1949. These low-rise walk-up flats eventually gave rise to the high-rise flats of Flemington which opened in June 1965 (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012 p.123).

Many post-war migrants bought or built houses in the outer areas of the municipality, close to employment and industry where new, cheaper housing was readily available. These developments and public housing in Aberfeldie, Ascot Vale and Flemington have had a long-lasting effect on the nature of the Moonee Valley community which today is one of the most diverse and vibrant in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012 p.124).

Place History

The building at 635-637 Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds (Formerly numbered 529-531) was first constructed on this site in ca.1883 following the subdivision of the Whittaker Estate in 1882 (Sands & McDougall, 1893; Essendon Historical Society Notes; Grant Aldous, *The Stopover That Stayed*, 1979: p.69; *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 17 March 1882, p.2). The building is located at the intersection of Mt Alexander, Ascot Vale, and Pascoe Vale Roads and is often referred to as the junction.



"Plan of Whittaker Estate," 1882, Essendon Historical Society Plan collection.

Identified as Lot 3 of the Whittaker Estate, number 635 was first purchased by Robert Denovan who constructed a tin smith's shop on the site (Essendon Historical Society Notes). The shop, which operated from 1883-1888, was then sold (Essendon Historical Society Notes). In 1889, the shop was listed as vacant, possibly indicating the redevelopment of the site though this has not been confirmed (Essendon Historical Society Notes).

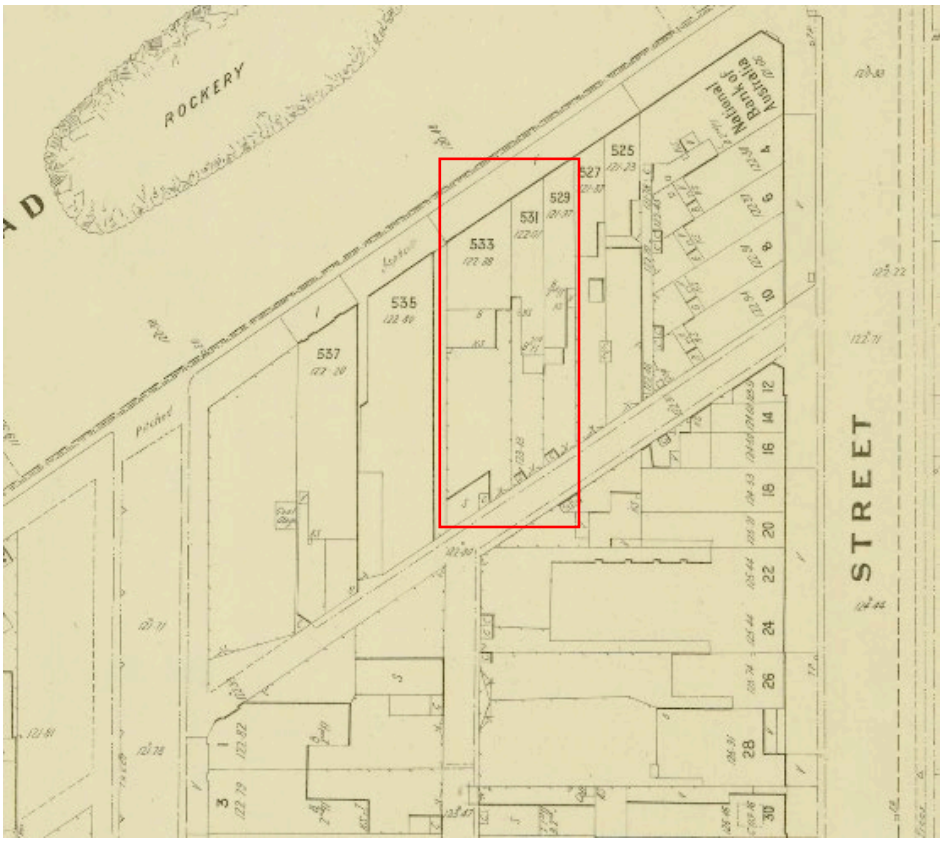
The earliest proprietor noted in Sands & McDougall at no. 635, was grocer Annie Trewen in 1890, followed by Henry Whatley in 1895 (*Sands & McDougall*, 1895; Essendon Historical Society Notes). The shop continually changed hands over the years, operating as a picture frame makers, news agency, and from 1915 to 1950, a confectionary (*Sands & McDougall*, 1895-1950).

At number 637 in 1895 was Bejamin Fell's furniture dealership (Sands & McDougall, 1895). This is the first occupant of the shop listed in the Sands & McDougall directory. Like no. 635, the shop was continually changing hands. By 1896, it was operated as a boot shop by Adolph Reincke and in 1898, as a tinsmiths by Samuel Hutson (*Sands & McDougall*, 1896; 1898). Prior to the published date of the postcard, in 1905, the shop was run by dressmaker Mrs. Charlotte White (*Sands & McDougall*, 1905).

Two shops were identified on the site in 1889, owned by The Standard Mutual Building Society until 1907 when they were sold separately (Essendon Historical So Notes). 635 Mt Alexander Road was sold to James Holberg, while 637 Mt Alexander Road was sold to Elizabeth Boyd (Essendon Historical Society Notes).

A later photo of the Moonee Ponds junction held by the National Archives of Australia, taken in 1975, shows a large Ansett sign at the intersection. The buildings at 635-639 shows that parapet detail and ornamentation remains, however, the building was repainted grey and white ("Traffic Signs, Moonee Ponds Junction," National Archives Australia, ca.1975).

In 1907, a postcard of Mt Alexander Road looking south shows the shops with their detailed ornamentation next to the National Bank of Australia and with signage for the Saturday Argus ("Main Road, Moonee Ponds," State Library Victoria, 1907) and a post verandah across both frontages. At this time, the shop at 635 Mt Alexander Road would have been run by John R. Summerland, a news agent (Sands & McDougall, 1905).



Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan no. 1647, 1905. Note that the buildings were numbered 529, 531 and 533. Source, State Library of Victoria

The shops at 639 and 639A Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds were constructed c.1886 following the subdivision of the Whittaker Estate in 1882 (Essendon Historical Society Notes; Sands & McDougall, 1893; Grant Aldous, *The Stopover That Stayed*, 1979: p.69; *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 17 March 1882, p.2; *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 20 April 1889, p.2). The building is located at the intersection of Mt Alexander, Ascot Vale, and Pascoe Vale Roads and is often referred to as the junction.

Formerly identified as no. 533, the building's first owners and proprietors were Sara Louis Arvier and her brother Charles August Arvier who operated a news and real estate agency (Sands & McDougall, 1890). Charles moved to Moonee Ponds following the dissolution of his partnership in the well-known real estate firm, Arvier and Gibson (*North Melbourne Advertiser*, 3 December 1886, p.2). He purchased Lot 4 of the Whittaker estate upon which he constructed the shop at 639

Mt Alexander Road (Essendon Historical Society Notes). Designed by architect Joseph Charles Martin Cowan and built by H. Grimkau, the shop and residence was described in 1886 as follows:

> *"On the ground floor is a large shop, one side of which is [sic] uses as a fancy goods repository, and the other as a newspaper and advertising agency depot, while the top story is occupied by Mr. Arvier's private office and three rooms, two of which are occupied by the Misses Wells, dressmakers, and one of which is vacant. […] the building presents a striking appearance, and is quite a feature of Moonee Ponds (North Melbourne Advertiser, 3 December 1886, p.2)."*

Notable features of the shop at this time included plate glass windows with iron shutters, Minton tiles at the main shop door, and the solid cedar counter from the old English and Scottish Bank in Moonee Ponds (*North Melbourne Advertiser*, 3 December 1886, p.2).

Sara, in 1891, married Herald journalist Harry C Rhys-Jones, the publisher of the first Edition of the Essendon Gazette (R.W. Chalmers, *The Annals of Essendon,* 1998: p.30; *Table Talk*, 2 Jan 1891, p.9). Known as the Moonee Ponds News Agency, it was the only authorized seller of The Herald in Moonee Ponds and was also a circulating library offering residents access to "All the latest books, journals, &c. (*The Herald*, 2 May 1892, p.4; *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 20 April 1889, p.2)"

In 1893, Sara and her family moved to Queensland and the shop continued to operate as a news agency under S.H. Jones (Lenore Frost, "Libraries, Moonee Ponds," ed. 2019, accessed 2021). Sands & McDougall directories show that the shop continued to change hands, becoming a fruitiers, a cabinet makers, a hairdressers, etc (Sands & McDougall, 1890-1945).

A postcard from 1907 shows the building on the right-hand side, with partially visible signage likely reading "News Agency ("Main Road, Moonee Ponds," State Library of Victoria, 1907) and a post verandah over both shopfronts. A later image held by the National Archives of Australia, shows the shop in 1975 ("Traffic Signs, Moonee Ponds Junction," National Archives of Australia, 1975). Here, the building has been repainted black with a cantilever verandah.



"Main road, Moonee Ponds," State Library of Victoria postcard 1907. Note the two buildings in the centre right with signage saying Saturday Argus.



"Traffic signs Moonee Ponds Junction," ca.1975, National Archive Australia.

Sources:

Primary Sources

The Herald
"Main Road, Moonee Ponds," 1907, State Library of Victoria
North Melbourne Advertiser
"Plan of Whittaker Estate," 1882, Essendon Historical Society Plan collection
Sands & McDougall
"Traffic signs Moonee Ponds Junction," ca. 1975, National Archives Australia

Secondary Sources

Essendon Historical Society Notes
Grant Aldous, *The Stopover that Stayed*, 1979
Lenore Frost, "Libraries, Moonee Ponds," ed. 2019, accessed 2021:
http://timetravellers.pbworks.com/w/page/98541941/Libraries%2C%20Moonee%20Ponds
R.W. Chalmers, *The Annals of Essendon,* 1998
State Library of Victoria

Thematic Context:

City of Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History, 2012

5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce

5.3 Marketing and retailing

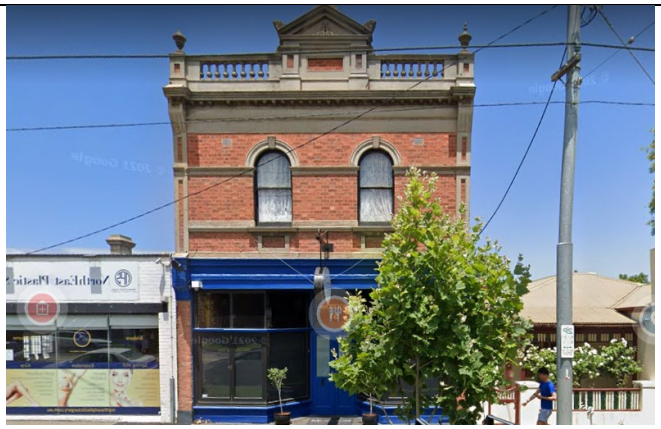
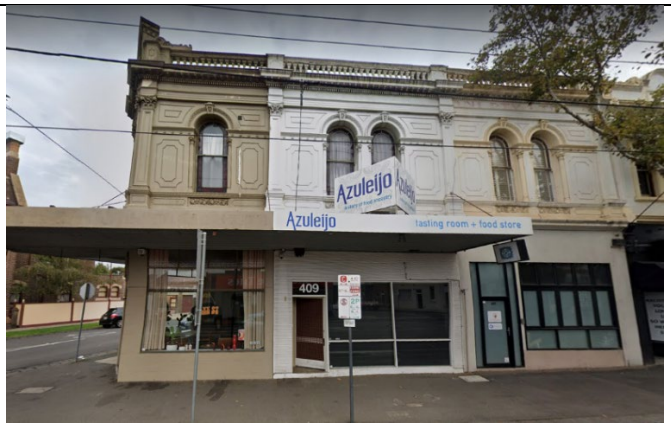
Comparative Analysis:

Most of the suburbs of the City of Moonee Valley, particularly Flemington, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds, and Essendon, underwent a large amount of speculative development during the land boom of the late 1880s and early 1890s. This period saw the major development of the municipality's major shopping strips on Racecourse Road, Flemington (HO25), Union Road, Ascot Vale (HO26), and Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds (HO14). Thanks to these three large commercial precincts, as well as a number of individually listed commercial buildings on Mt Alexander Road, Victorian shops (and hotels) in commercial areas are well represented in the three southern suburbs.

The Victorian shops that are of Individual Significance in the Moonee Valley Heritage Overlay (whether or not in a precinct) are mostly recognised for architecturally distinguished treatment of their first-floor elevation and parapet, as almost all have lost their original posted verandah and shopfront. Examples include the Ascot Vale Hall, 140-144 Union Road, Ascot Vale

(HO287), Shop and residence, 189 Union Road, Ascot Vale (HO288); Shops, 407-411 Mt Alexander Road, Ascot Vale (HO261); and 361, 363-379 & 548 Mt Alexander Road, Ascot Vale (all HO363).

Exceptions that retain an original shopfront are at 97-99 Mt Alexander Road, Flemington (HO196), Venetian Gothic shop-residences that retain one timber shopfront; the Victoria Buildings, 433-437 Mt Alexander Road, Ascot Vale (HO365) one of which retains its timber shopfront; 599-603 Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds (HO359), one of which retains a partial timber shopfront; and the Grandview Store, 79 Holmes Road, Moonee Ponds (HO191), a corner store with arched panels to its shopfront. There are also a few examples of Victorian shops with original timber shopfronts that are Contributory to a precinct, including 304 Racecourse Road, Flemington (HO25), and 15 Norwood Street, Flemington (HO24).

	Photos from Google Streetview
The shop-residence at 51 Fletcher Street, Essendon, (HO409) is significant. It was built c1887-89 when owned by Essendon "pioneer" Robert G Cook. The shop-residence is a two-storey building, constructed in a terrace form The first-floor facade is constructed of Flemish bond brick walls with unpainted cement-render dressings and two round-arched windows. The building retains an original timber shopfront with deep splayed entrance and extensive glazing below highlight windows. It is very intact.	
The 'Pioneer Store' at 187 Buckley Street, Essendon, (HO412) is a rather grand example of a 'corner store' as it was built in 1890-91. Its architectural expression, however, is comparable to some of the more elaborate shops in the main commercial areas of Moonee Valley, such as 635-639 Mt Alexander Road though the use of classical ornament is more naïve. The ornament and design of the shops on Mt Alexander Road is far more successful and well conceived.	
407-411 Mt Alexander Road, Ascot Vale (HO261). The Victoria building consists of a splayed corner shopfront and two more shopfronts down Mt Alexander Road, within a single Italianate commercial building with first floor residences. Number 407 is rare for its intact corner shopfront and intact corner parapet and pediment. It compares well to 635-639 as a partially intact commercial building which has an introduced cantilevered verandah and two altered shopfronts with slightly lesser ornamentation.	

57 Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds, (HO273) is a shop with upper level residence built in 1899 for Richard Philpot. It is historically significant as a representative example of a shop and residence of its period. This was an early inclusion in the heritage overlay and now would probably not meet the threshold for individual listing. It has a very restrained design, almost no ornamentation and has been greatly altered.	
189 Union Road, Ascot Vale, (HO288) is a shop and residence understood to have been built in 1880 and was occupied in that year by Misses Carr and Starr as a drapery. It is aesthetically important. With little original fabric remaining below the later cantilever verandah, the level of intactness is comparative whilst the level of ornamentation and execution is much higher than 635-639 Mt Alexander Road.	

Recommendation:

To be added to the Heritage Overlay Schedule as an individual heritage overlay.

Schedule:

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Solar Energy Controls	Yes
Fences and Outbuildings	No
Prohibited Uses	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No