

Land, Places and Local History – Property Research at PROV

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) holds a rich and diverse range of records for researching places and properties including houses, schools, churches, hotels, factories and businesses.

Locating a Property

Parish and Township Plans

Created by the Victorian Lands Department, these maps and plans show Crown reserves, cemeteries, school sites, church and police reserves as well as the names of the original purchasers of land from the Crown. Arranged in alphabetical order by the name of the parish or township, they are available on microfiche in the Victorian Archives Centre (VAC) and Ballarat Archives Centre (BAC) Reading Rooms.

Postal Directories

A selection is available on microfiche in PROV Reading Rooms. They contain listings of businesses and occupations and alphabetical listings of people across the state of Victoria, sometimes divided by streets or areas but varying in format and content. Directories are also available in many local libraries and genealogical centres and an extensive collection can be found at the [State Library of Victoria](#).

Electoral and Voters Rolls

Electoral and voters rolls provide alphabetical listings of people and their residential address. PROV holds rolls for some municipalities. Researchers are advised to contact the [State Library of Victoria](#) which holds the state's most comprehensive collection.

[VPRS 4029 Citizens Lists and/or Citizens Rolls MCC \(1843-1994\)](#)

These list citizens eligible to vote in the Melbourne City Council (MCC) elections, (originally rate paying males over 21 years of age occupying a property valued at £25 or more). Women began to appear on lists at the end of the nineteenth century. Voters are listed in alphabetical order within each electoral ward. Information varied over the years but after 1863 included the voter's name, residential address and occupation, the type of property and its location.

Wills and Probate

[VPRS 7591 Wills \(1853-1992\)](#) and [VPRS 28 Probate and Administration Files \(1841-1998\)](#)

Wills and Probate records often contain information about property owned by a deceased person and their beneficiaries. Probate files include an inventory of the deceased's estate. Details may include parish, section and allotment number, folio number, value of property and improvements made, for example, buildings, crops and quality of the land. Please note wills form part of the probate series after 1992. For additional information please see [PROVguide 68 Ordering Wills and Probate Records](#).

Local Government

Rate Books and Valuation Records

PROV holds a wide selection of rate records for Victorian municipalities. Rate and valuation records typically list the address, the name of the owner, a brief description of the dwelling, the rates paid and sometimes the occupant's name and the name of the house. These records were created annually and are often arranged by streets within council wards and ridings. Rate records can be ordered via PROV's online catalogue for viewing in the relevant Reading Room. Some rate records are available on microfilm and microfiche in PROV Reading Rooms.

To search for rate records, first identify the relevant council or councils that created them. A listing of councils for which PROV holds records can be found in [VRG 12 Municipalities](#) on PROV's online catalogue at www.access.prov.vic.gov.au. When you have located the page in the catalogue for the council you are seeking, click on the Related Series tab for a list of Series held at PROV created by that council.

Building Permits

Applications for building permits provide valuable information including architectural plans of the building, additions, renovations and correspondence between council and the owner or occupier. Building applications cover private residences, factories, public buildings, offices and shops.

PROV holds extensive building permit records for [VA 511 City of Melbourne](#). Please note that the boundaries of the municipality of Melbourne changed over the years and at times included the suburbs of Hotham/North Melbourne, Flemington and Kensington.

[VPRS 11202 Building Application Plan Index \(1916-1993\)](#) is available on microfiche in the VAC Reading Room and provides access to the following Series:

[VPRS 11200 Building Application Plans \(1916-1958\)](#)

[VPRS 11201 Building Application Files \(1916-1960\)](#)

To order plans and files for viewing in the VAC Reading Room firstly locate the property address on the index (VPRS 11202) and note down the application numbers. Then use a [Search within a Series](#) on PROV's online catalogue by entering the application number obtained from the index and the VPRS number.

[VPRS 9288 Notices of Intention to Build \(1850-1916\)](#)

Prior to 1916 owners of property within the Melbourne City Council were not required to submit a building plan or application but simply a notice of an intention to build. The contents of these records include the address or location of the building, nature of the works, anticipated building commencement date, and the name of the owner, builder and architect. This series is accessed through [VPRS 9289 Building Notices Register and Index \(1850-1916\)](#).

Much of the information in the notices is available on microfiche at PROV's Reading Rooms in [VPRS 9463 Burchett Index: Notices of Intention to Build \(1850-1916\)](#) and [VPRS 9462 Index to Architects Named in Notices of Intention to Build \(1850-1916\)](#).

[VPRS 9282 Property Sales Register \(1937-1972\)](#)

These registers records property sales in the City of Melbourne and are arranged by street name. Details include; date of sale, ward number, vendor, purchaser, description of property, measurements, sale price and price per foot/metre.

Other councils for which PROV holds Building Application Permits are:

[VA 702 Nunawading II \(City 1945-1994\)](#) (part of City of Whitehorse)

[VA 2533 Werribee\(1919-1994\) Wyndham \(1862-1909\)](#) (Includes Altona plans prior to 1957) (part of City of Hobson's Bay)

[VA 888 Altona \(1957-1994\)](#) (part of City of Hobson's Bay)

[VA 573 Brighton \(1859-1994\)](#) (part of City of Bayside)

[VA 871 Oakleigh II \(1891-1994\)](#) (part of City of Monash)

To access the building permit records for these councils, obtain the permit number from the relevant council. Building application permits can then be ordered through PROV's online catalogue. Please note not all building permits have been retained. For building permits for local government areas not listed in this guide, contact the relevant local council.

For more information about local government see [VRG 12 Municipalities](#) on PROV's online catalogue.

VA 1007 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW)

Established in 1891, the main function of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) was the construction and management of sewerage and water infrastructure in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

In 1892 the MMBW commenced a survey of the Melbourne metropolitan area as the first step in the task of establishing the city's sewerage system. As a result of the survey a number of different records were created which documented sewerage and drainage infrastructure and connections to individual properties. These include [VPRS 8601 Detailed Base Plans](#) and [VPRS 8600 Survey Field Books](#) which were created to plot water, sewerage and drainage plans. They show streets, building and property boundaries. The following is a step-by-step guide to accessing these records.

Step 1: [VPRS 12758 Index Map Book](#) facilitates access to the record plans by providing the negative numbers required for ordering the plans. The index book is available from the issues desk in the VAC Reading Room and does not need to be ordered. The State Library of Victoria also has a digitised copy of the index book available for viewing online at www.slv.vic.gov.au/mmbw.

Step 1: Once you have obtained the number from the index book you can order the negatives [VPRS 8601 Detailed Base Plans \(1891-c.1950\)](#) by filling in an order form at the VAC Reading Room. These records cannot be ordered online. Please note MMBW negatives are stored in cold storage for their long-term preservation and are delivered to the VAC Reading Room 24 hours from the time the order is lodged.

Step 2: Some digitised MMBW detailed base plans covering central Melbourne can be accessed through the State Library of Victoria's online catalogue available at www.slv.vic.gov.au/mmbw. These maps sometimes vary from those held by PROV.

Step 3: Some detailed base plans contain references to the field books ([VPRS 8600 Survey Field Books 1891-1970](#)) used in the survey of properties depicted in that plan. Field books contain detailed sketches of individual properties. Note down the field book numbers that appear on the detailed base plan and place an order via PROV's online catalogue using **Search within a Series**. Enter the series number in the VPRS field and the field book number in the other text field.

[VPRS 11570 Plans of Drainage \(House Connections\) \(1902-1975\)](#) provides detailed information about property boundaries and changes to buildings on sites over many years. The series includes properties currently within the jurisdiction of Yarra Valley Water. Files are located by their property service number which can be obtained from Yarra Valley Water, and on some detailed base plans (VPRS 8601). Once you have the property service number you can order the record through PROV's online catalogue.

VA 669 Public Works Department / Building Services Agency

Plans of government buildings designed or maintained by the Public Works Department and subsequently the Building Services Agency, are a rich source for researching properties. Plans are available on aperture cards, in the Reading Room at the Victorian Archives Centre. A [database index](#) to the plans is available on PROV's online catalogue.

Please note, researchers wishing to access plans of court houses, police stations or prisons must first provide written authority from the relevant government department. Please refer to [PROV guide 28 Public Works Department – Building Services Agency Plans](#) for information about ordering BSA plans and accessing restricted plans.

Researchers can also refer to the inventory of records held by [VA 669 Public Works Department](#) for other series that relate to the construction and maintenance of government buildings, such as [VPRS 10516 Photographs and Negatives of Government Buildings \(1926-1965\)](#).

Public Building Files

Buildings that were used for recreation, entertainment and education purposes (excluding state primary and secondary schools) were inspected by the Health Department who referred to them as public buildings. These include community halls, churches, theatres, sporting facilities, mechanics institutes and non government schools. For records relating to government primary schools see [VPRS 795 Building Files: Primary schools](#).

[VPRS 7882 Public Building Files \(1874 - 1988\)](#) can include sketch plans of the building, inspection reports, certificates of occupancy, correspondence to and from the health department and applications for registration. A [database index](#) to these records is available from [PROVguide 23 PROV's Digitised Records and Online Indexes](#). Once you have obtained the unit details from the index, an order can be placed through PROV's online catalogue. See [PROVguide 21 Ordering Records](#) for instructions.

Other Sources for Property Research

Land Records

In addition to parish and township maps and historic maps and plans, PROV holds an extensive range of land records including pastoral run and selection files, correspondence files and land sales registers. See [PROVguide 55 Land Records](#) for information about PROV holdings.

Title Records

Certificates of title can be obtained through Land Victoria: www.land.vic.gov.au. PROV holds some title records: [VPRS 460 Applications for Certificates of Title 1862 – 1969](#) which relates to the conversion of general law titles to Torrens titles from 1864. The records are accessed by application number available from the [Land Victoria Information Centre](#).

Government Gazettes

Available on computers in the PROV's Reading Rooms, the gazettes list land sales, auctions, tenders and contracts for government buildings and the gazetting of crown land and reserves.

State Library Victoria

State Library Victoria has architecture publications and surveys, maps, an online photographic collection and MMBW plans in its collection: www.slv.vic.gov.au

Infralib-Department of Infrastructure Library

Infralib holds copies of conservation and heritage studies and plans, publications relating to Australian architecture, and conservation guidelines and recommendations www.doi.vic.gov.au (go to Publications, then click on the link to the library). Infralib is open to the general public as a reference resource.

University of Melbourne Archives and Faculty of Architecture

Holds records relating to architecture, architects, business and private organisations, maps and photographs www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/archives/.

PictureAustralia

Search and view images online from the collections of Australian libraries, museums, archives, galleries and universities including PROV www.pictureaustralia.org.

Local Historical Societies and Local Libraries

Local historical societies hold records relating to their local area, as well as community histories written by local historians. See the website of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for a list of affiliated societies www.historyvictoria.org.au.

Publications

[Private Lives, Public Records: Family history resources at Public Record Office Victoria](#), 2004 (2nd ed) published by Public Record Office Victoria.

The National Trust Research Manual: trace the history of your house and other places, 2004 ed. Celestina Sagazio, Halstead Press, NSW.