





Detail of Adamson's 'Melbourne from the south side of the Yarra Yarra 1839', showing Eastern Hill.

The enlargement of Eastern Hill shows the outlines of the lots along Collins and Bourke Streets towards Spring Street, and further to the north is the stockade which soon became the original Melbourne Gaol. The trees along the hilltop indicate that it was then relatively unsettled beyond the town limits. At 45 metres above sea level, the summit of Eastern Hill was much higher than nearby Batman's Hill (18m), Flagstaff Hill (35m), Hotham Hill (33m) and Emerald Hill (15m). The only higher ground was more distant at Parkville (48m), Northcote (64m) and Kew (55m).



Contour map from <http://services.land.vic.gov.au/maps/interactive.jsp>

As shown on the contour map, the summit of Eastern Hill is a relatively flat area, about a hundred metres in diameter, centred on the western corner of Victoria Parade and Brunswick

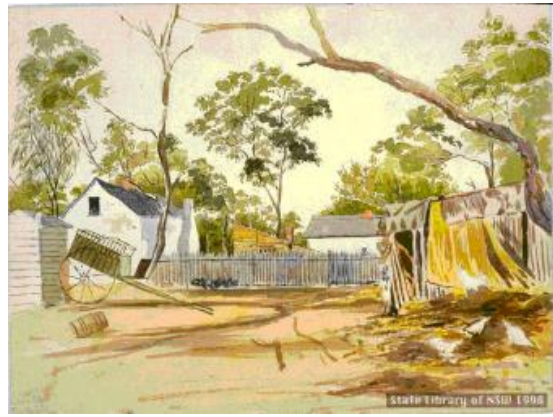
Street. That original corner site was owned by Captain Minton from June 1840 to June 1841, and in October 1840 he advertised two cottages there as being located at 'Forest Hill'. The Belvidere Hotel was built on the corner site in 1854. On the opposite eastern side of Brunswick Street, the corner site, measuring 115 ft by 164 ft, was owned by the surveyor William Wedge Darke from August 1840. Darke had reached Melbourne in 1836 with the surveyor Robert Russell, to whom he was assistant. His corner property was one of five facing south to the government road and reserve. His sketch is probably looking to the north-east, and shows an adjacent cottage with sunlight on the west wall and chimney.



'Sketch from Mr Darke's cottage, Brunswick Street, looking north about 1839', by Robert Russell. State Library of Victoria H9301

I now go forward to March to August 1841 when Sarah and Richard Bunbury lived in Brunswick Street, before moving to their eighty hectare farm 'Stanney' on the Darebin Creek, at what is now Preston. Sarah did watercolour paintings around their cottage and sent them to her relatives in Europe to give them some idea of the scenery in their new neighbourhood. Two of these paintings are now held at the State Library of New South Wales, and a third is at the State Library of Victoria. These three images show that Brunswick Street was well defined by 1841, and almost cleared of forest trees by then. Trees remained on the nearby surrounding land.





'New Town, from our house, April 1841, towards Melbourne' and 'Yard at the back of our house at New Town - Port Phillip. April 1841', both by Sarah Bunbury: State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW), Image SSV2A / Coll W/2 and W/3.



'Brunswick Street - Newtown from the front of our house June 1841', by Sarah Bunbury: State Library of Victoria H6162.

The challenge is to determine the location and direction of these three images. To do this, we need to refer to the records of early land sales in the area, and to the Bunbury letters held by the State Library of Victoria. This collection of the letters of Sarah and Richard Bunbury, to and from her father in Malta and his parents in England, gives many details on Brunswick Street in mid 1841. Records of early land sales, from 1839 onwards, provide information on the subdivision of the area and the creation of the early streets. This southern part of Fitzroy was sold by the Crown in lots of twenty-five acres [ten hectares] each. Facing the government road which is now called Victoria Parade, there were four lots, numbered 48, 49, 50 and 51, between Nicholson Street and Smith Street. On Brunswick Street lot 49 measured 10 chains (200 m) from west (Fitzroy Street) to east (Young Street), and 25 chains (500 m) from Victoria Parade northwards to the line of what is now Webb and Little Hanover Streets.

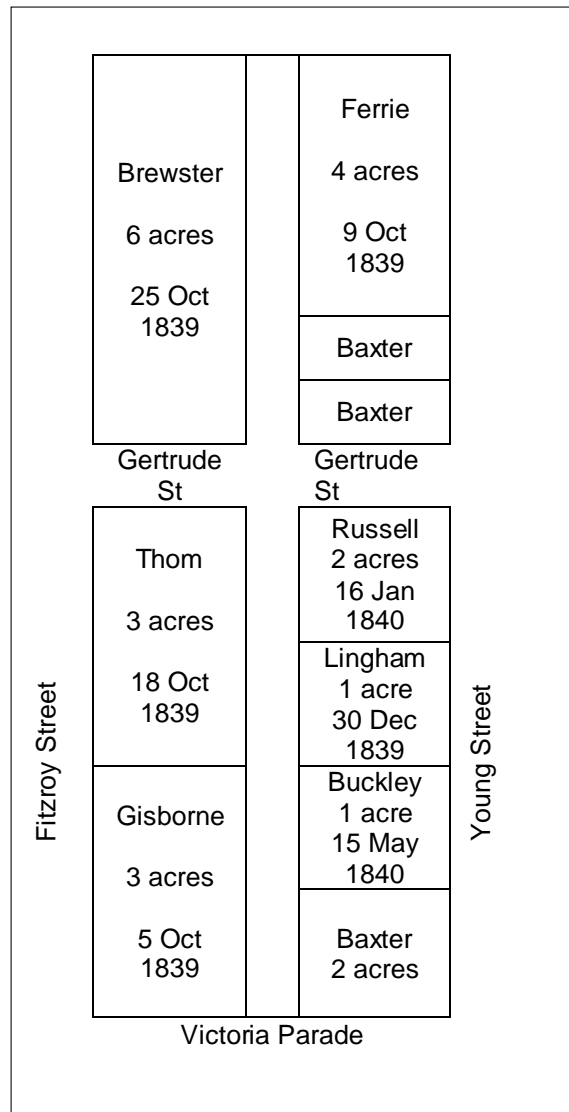
Lot 49 was purchased by Thomas Walker on 13 Feb 1839, and re-sold on 17 May 1839 to Benjamin Baxter for £500.<sup>1</sup> Baxter then subdivided the twenty-five acres with bisecting roads, each one chain [20 m] wide, and now called Brunswick and Gertrude Streets. The four large blocks of land created by these streets were each nominally six acres (2.4 ha). Baxter sold the western half of lot 49 to George Brunswick Smyth on 9 October 1839 for £250 (ie \$20 per acre).<sup>2</sup>

Before the end of October 1839, Smyth subdivided and on-sold.

- 3 acres to Henry Fysche [otherwise Fyshe] Gisborne, on 5 October for £550<sup>3</sup> (£180/acre);
- 3 acres to Archibald Thom on 18 October for £300<sup>4</sup> (£100/acre);
- 6 acres to Edward Jonas Brewster on 25 October for £750<sup>5</sup> (£125/acre).

On the eastern half of Lot 49, Baxter had sold eight acres (3.2 ha) by mid 1840:

- 4 acres to Peter Ferrie on 9 October 1839 for £250;<sup>6</sup>
- 1 acre to Alfred Lingham on 30 December 1839 for £60;<sup>7</sup>
- 2 acres to Robert Russell on 16 January 1840 for £120;<sup>8</sup>
- 1 acre to John Mark Buckley on 15 May 1840 or £60.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Registrar-General's Office (RGO), memorial no Sydney 130, 5 July 1839.

<sup>2</sup> RGO, Sydney 257, 5 October 1839.

<sup>3</sup> RGO, Sydney 222, 5 October 1839.

<sup>4</sup> RGO, Sydney 259, 18 October 1839.

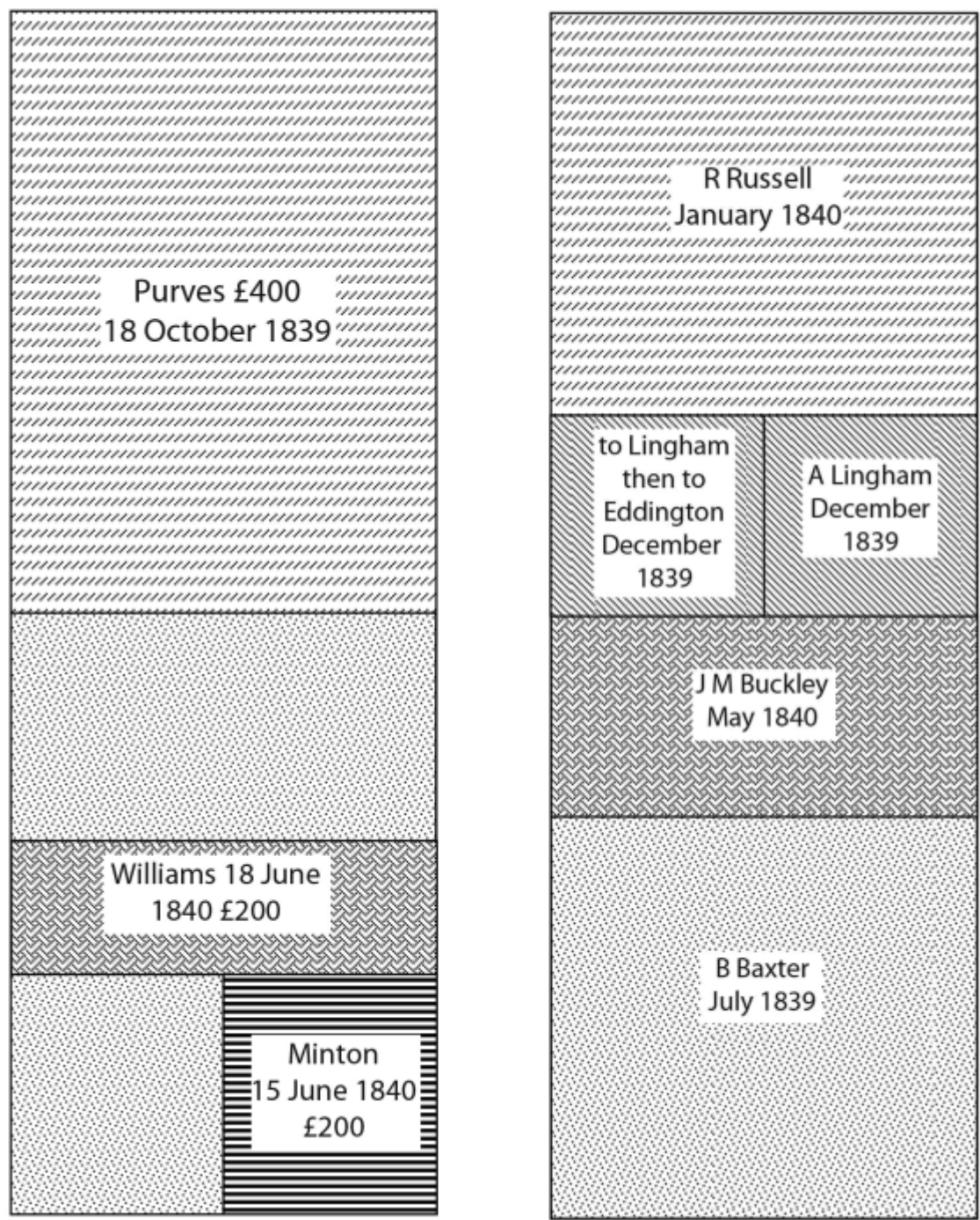
<sup>5</sup> RGO, Sydney 321, 25 October 1839.

<sup>6</sup> RGO, Sydney 258, 9 October 1839.

<sup>7</sup> RGO, Sydney 392, 30 December 1839.

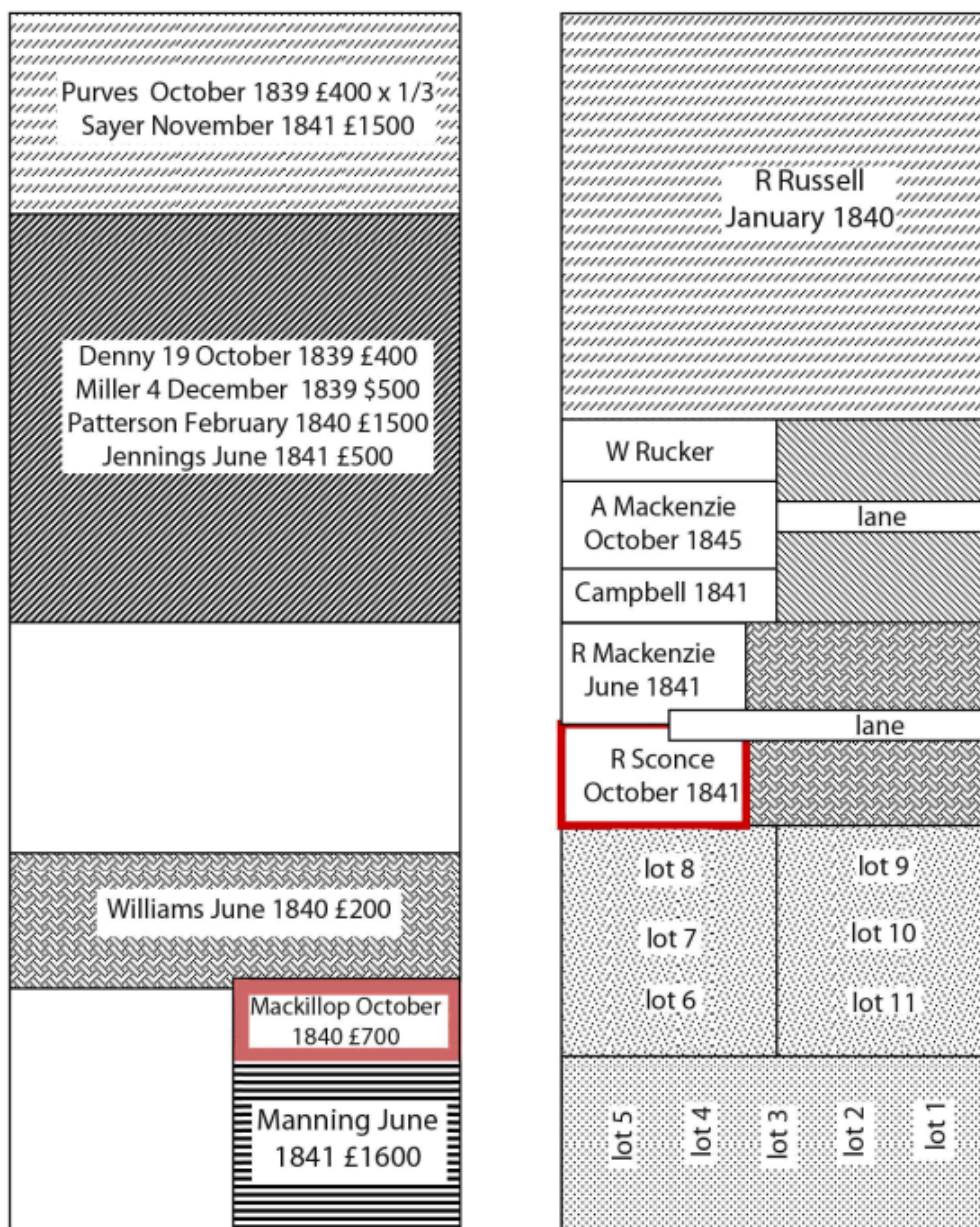
<sup>8</sup> RGO, Sydney 399, 16 January 1840.

<sup>9</sup> RGO, Sydney 702, 15 May 1840.



South Brunswick Street in 1840





South Brunswick Street in 1841

Along the west side of Brunswick Street, the northern three acres (1.2 ha) were sold by Thom to James Purves on 18 October 1839 for £400.<sup>10</sup> Purves sold the acre facing Gertrude Street to Edwin Sayers in November 1841 for £1500,<sup>11</sup> and this area is now occupied by Glass Terrace, 64 to 78 Gertrude Street, and Royal Terrace, 39 to 49 Brunswick Street. South along Brunswick Street, the two acres now occupied by Barcelona Terrace and Mononia, were sold by Purves to James Oliphant Denny on 19 October 1839 for £400,<sup>12</sup> and there were later transactions on this land involving Henry Miller on 4 December 1839,<sup>13</sup> John Hunter Patterson on 6 February 1840,<sup>14</sup> and David Jennings on 23 June 1841.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> RGO, Sydney 262, 18 October 1839.

<sup>11</sup> RGO, A 120, 16 November 1841.

<sup>12</sup> RGO, Sydney 263, 19 October 1839.

<sup>13</sup> RGO, Sydney 314, 4 December 1839.

<sup>14</sup> RGO, Sydney 431, 6 February 1840.

<sup>15</sup> RGO, Sydney 1855, 23 June 1841.

Further south, Gisborne had sold a nominal half acre (0.2 ha), 24.75 m wide by 79.2 m deep, to Charles Williams on 18 June 1840 for £200.<sup>16</sup> One week later, on 26 June, Williams auctioned 'these valuable cattle drafting yards erected between Brunswick and Gertrude Streets at enormous expense by Mr Williams. This very valuable property deserves the particular attention of those parties who keep Town Herds.'<sup>17</sup> At the western corner of Brunswick Street and the Government Road, now Victoria Parade, Gisborne sold the half acre block to Jane Minton for £200 on 15 June 1840.<sup>18</sup> This site was two chains wide along the Government Road, and 2.5 chains deep along Brunswick Street. Soon after in early October, Captain Minton advertised:

To Be Let, Two neatly finished Cottages, comprising Four Rooms and Kitchen, together with Yard, &c.; they are delightfully situated at Grenville Place, Forest Hill, about five minutes walk from town, and fit for the immediate occupation of respectable families. For further particulars apply to Captain Minton.<sup>19</sup>

In June 1841 Minton sold the corner site, measuring 40 metres wide by 32 metres deep along Brunswick Street, to William Montague Manning for £1600.<sup>20</sup> The Belvidere Hotel was to be built on it for Thomas McClelland in 1854. In the meantime, on 1 October 1840, Minton sold the rear Brunswick Street frontage, fifteen metres wide, to Alexander MacKillop for £700.<sup>21</sup>

Along the east side of Brunswick Street, Robert Russell had bought the 0.8 hectares facing Gertrude Street for £120 on 16 January 1840.<sup>22</sup> Four days later he sold the land to Purves for £240.<sup>23</sup> The 0.8 hectares facing the government road, now Victoria Parade, were part of the 25 acres [10 ha] which had been bought by Baxter from Walker in May 1839 for £500. This area was divided into eleven lots, five facing the Government Road, three facing Young Street and three facing Brunswick Street. Baxter sold lots 1, 2, 3, 11 to James Rattenbury in July 1840,<sup>24</sup> lots 9 and 10 to Leadbeater in July<sup>25</sup> and August<sup>26</sup> 1840, and lot 8 to Cooper and Kerr in July 1840.<sup>27</sup> Lots 4, 5, 6 at the Brunswick Street corner were sold for £350 to W F A Rucker<sup>28</sup> who then immediately onsold to Darke for £1060.<sup>29</sup> This property owned by Darke is probably the location of Robert Russell's 'Sketch from Mr Darke's cottage Brunswick St. looking north about 1839.'

Two intervening one acre (0.4 ha) lots were sold by Baxter, the northern acre was sold to Alfred Lingham on 30 December 1839 for £60,<sup>30</sup> and the southern to John Mark Buckley on 15 May 1840 for £60.<sup>31</sup> Lingham, on the day of his purchase from Baxter, sold the half acre facing Brunswick Street to Eddington for £130.<sup>32</sup> Eddington retained the central eighteen metres of the frontage until he sold it to Alistair Mackenzie for £120 in 1845.<sup>33</sup> Already on 6 July 1841, Eddington had sold a 10.5 metre frontage on the south side to Campbell for £600.<sup>34</sup> The site of Eddington's half acre is now occupied by 24, 26, 28 and 32 Brunswick Street.

<sup>16</sup> RGO, Sydney 894, 18 June 1840.

<sup>17</sup> *Port Phillip Herald*, 19 June 1840, p 3.

<sup>18</sup> RGO, Sydney 801, 15 June 1840.

<sup>19</sup> *Port Phillip Herald*, 2 October 1840, page 4.

<sup>20</sup> RGO, Sydney 1510, 4 June 1841.

<sup>21</sup> RGO, Sydney 1429, 1 October 1840.

<sup>22</sup> RGO, Sydney 399, 16 January 1840.

<sup>23</sup> RGO, Sydney 626, 20 January 1840.

<sup>24</sup> RGO, Sydney 844 and C 759, both dated 24 July 1840.

<sup>25</sup> RGO, Sydney 973, 31 July 1840.

<sup>26</sup> RGO, Sydney 1021, 13 August 1840.

<sup>27</sup> RGO, Sydney 2100, 17 July 1840.

<sup>28</sup> RGO, Sydney 1125, 21 September 1840.

<sup>29</sup> RGO, Sydney 1318, 4 Aug 1840.

<sup>30</sup> RGO, Sydney 392, 30 December 1839.

<sup>31</sup> RGO, Sydney 702, 15 May 1840.

<sup>32</sup> RGO, Sydney 391, 30 December 1839.

<sup>33</sup> RGO, C 858, 6 October 1845.

<sup>34</sup> RGO, B 56, 6 July 1841.



The next acre to the south was owned by John Mark Buckley. He reserved a lane, now known as Duke Street, for rear access from what is now Young Street. Later, in 1842, he sold off several smaller sites along that rear lane.<sup>35</sup> The Brunswick Street frontage of forty metres was split into two, into what are now the sites of Central Hall and the property to the south. The northern property was sold to Roderick Mackenzie for £115 in June 1841.<sup>36</sup> The southern property was sold to Robert Sconce for £89 in October 1841.<sup>37</sup> In the meantime, on Wednesday, 4 March 1841, the following advertisement appeared in the *Port Phillip Gazette*:

To Let or Sell, FOREST HILL COTTAGE, New Town, near Mr. Kemmis' mansion, containing five good Rooms, Store, Closet, Kitchen, &c. &c.  
Apply to Mr Eddington at the cottage, or Mr. Bland at Montgomery & M<sup>c</sup>Crae's<sup>38</sup>

On that day Richard Bunbury and his brother-in-law Robert Sconce had come ashore after their four month voyage from England. The Bunbury letters record that they secured a cottage for their families that day on a six month lease, and that their home was named 'Forest Hill cottage'.<sup>39</sup> The letters also record that 'he (Sconce) bought a little cottage in New Town where we lived when we first came out.'<sup>40</sup>

Using the above records of land subdivision, and the details in the Bunbury letters, it is possible to determine the location of, and details shown in the paintings by Sarah Bunbury. The painting 'New Town from our house, towards Melbourne' shows the Brunswick Street roadway in the foreground, with no apparent tracks worn by vehicles or horses, and with a single large tree remaining in the centre of the road. Towards the left are the two white cottages facing the Government reserve which is now Victoria Parade and East Melbourne. These two cottages were advertised to let by Minton in October 1840. At the right centre, the cottage with the green front verandah was then owned by Alexander MacKillop, and Mary MacKillop would have been born there early in the following year. To the right of the MacKillop cottage is the half acre cattle yard of Charles Williams, with ten or more panels of substantial fencing.

The painting of Brunswick Street 'from the front of our house' shows the front fences and gardens of Bunbury's cottage and its immediate northern neighbour. These two cottages were owned by John Mark Buckley, and were soon sold to Roderick Mackenzie (June 1841) and to Robert Sconce (October 1841). The infant in the foreground would be Sarah's son, Henry Robert Bunbury, who was twenty months old. Brunswick Street slopes downwards to the north and the Gertrude Street intersection. The two large red houses opposite would be on the 0.8 hectare lot variously owned by, or mortgaged to, James Purves, James Oliphant Denny, Henry Miller, John Hunter Patterson and David Jennings. The two acre lot is now occupied by Mononia and Barcelona Terrace. The more distant white house is on the 0.8 hectare acre site on the south side of Gertrude Street where Hugh Glass was later to build Royal Terrace. That one acre property was then owned by James Purves, and soon after he sold it to Edwin Sayers for £1500 'together with the messuage or tenement, outhouses & other buildings erected and built and now standing.'<sup>41</sup>

The image of the 'yard at the back of our house' shows the yard with:

- a 'closet' at the left, near to the access from the rear lane<sup>42</sup>
- a cart (incompletely painted by her brother Robert Sconce)
- a water barrel, probably the one that 'fell off the water cart upon poor Mrs Leishman and broke her arm'<sup>43</sup>
- a tent at the rear right of the yard, for the storage of their 'things'.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>35</sup> RGO, A 579 and A 581 and A 615 and A 696.

<sup>36</sup> RGO, Sydney 1513, 14 June 1841.

<sup>37</sup> RGO, A 385, 5 October 1841.

<sup>38</sup> *Port Phillip Gazette*, 4 March 1841, p 2.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Bunbury to R C Sconce, 5 March 1841, State Library of Victoria, Bunbury letters, series 6.

<sup>40</sup> Sarah Bunbury to R C Sconce, 13 October 1841.

<sup>41</sup> RGO, A 120, 16 November 1841.

<sup>42</sup> Sarah Bunbury to R C Sconce, 5 March 1841.

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Bunbury to R C Sconce, 9 March 1841.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Bunbury to R C Sconce, 9 March 1841.

The buildings beyond the rear fence would be on the smaller allotments that were subdivided along the rear lane.



Melbourne from Collingwood, 30 December 1843, by Henry Godfrey. State Library of Victoria, no. H90.53/1/90-91

The change to the neighbourhood in the years following can be seen in two images of 'Melbourne from Collingwood' - a drawing by Henry Godfrey dated 30 December 1843, and a lithograph of John Skinner Prout's drawing from when he was in Melbourne for two months from December 1846. Although dated three years apart, and by different artists, these two pictures with the same title have very similar content, with the bay and the town in the distance, a large flat foreground with a gully at the right edge, and an almost identical group of aborigines around a small fire. The artists' viewing point appears to be about a metre higher than the standing figure in the foreground, and is most likely from the hilltop at the south end of Brunswick Street. The forest has almost gone, except for a few trees at the edge of the hill and a few tree stumps apparent in the foreground.



'Melbourne from Collingwood, 1847' by J S Prout: National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an6940156.

**Mike Moore is a retired engineer and has been a member of the Fitzroy History Society for two decades. He enjoys researching the rich history of Fitzroy and its early settlement, buildings and people.**