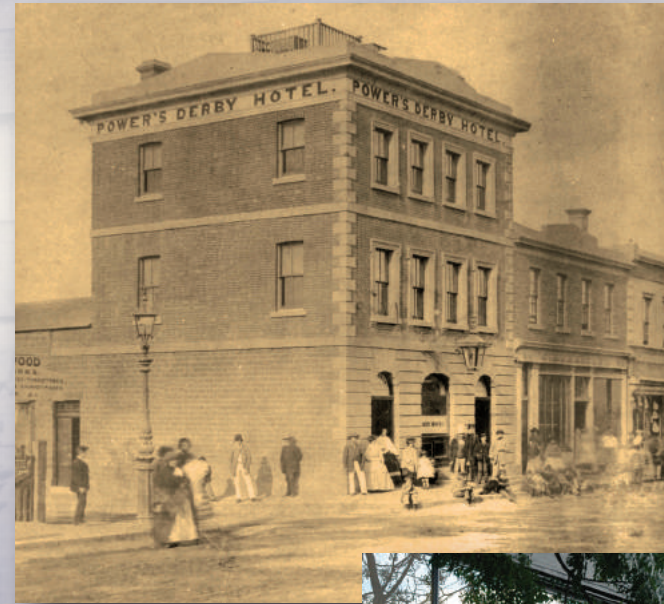


# Gertrude Street Fitzroy



Fitzroy History Society

# **Gertrude Street Fitzroy**

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## Acknowledgements

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# Welcome to Gertrude Street, Fitzroy

Gertrude Street has a full and fascinating history. Indeed, its story reflects that of Fitzroy itself. It began in optimism in the 1850s and developed into a respected residential and commercial precinct, fell on bad times in the 1890s depression and became synonymous with crime, poverty, gangs, prostitutes and seediness in the years following the First World War. Post-World War II migration enlivened the area. In the 1960s a huge chunk of Gertrude Street frontages was lost to a public housing development. The street has always been an important meeting place and hub for Aborigines, and we acknowledge the Wurundjiri people as the traditional owners of this land.

In the early years of the 21st century the street is undergoing another transformation as cafes, fashion stores and galleries arrive. Luckily, enough of Gertrude Street's built heritage remains to evoke the feeling that here is a street that has seen it all. If you look upwards, averting your eyes from the redeveloped shopfronts at street level, you will see an amazing collection of well-preserved architecture including simple Georgian-style facades, stately Victorian terraces with their decorative cast iron, imposing Queen Anne gables, stained glass windows, Art Nouveau swirls and Edwardian restraint.

So come and explore. Step back in time. Immerse yourself in the present. And imagine the future. Gertrude Street is an impressive survivor.



# Documenting the history of Gertrude Street

This is the first time an attempt has been made to document the history of Gertrude Street. It is not meant to be the definitive history. There are still many stories to tell, buildings to date, people to research and facts to validate. More family photographs are yet to be uncovered.

If you have any stories, photographs, building plans or any information about any of the sites, buildings or residents of Gertrude Street, or have identified any errors, please contact the Fitzroy History Society Inc. at PO Box 180, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065.

**A note about street numbers:** All street numbers referred to are those currently in use.

In the early days, there were no street numbers. When a builder needed to identify the house he was building, he simply described it as 'three buildings up from Drewery's hotel', 'east of Virtue's shop' or 'opposite Elm Cottage'. Street numbers were assigned from the 1860s but were changed as development progressed.

To add to the historian's confusion, the original No.1 Gertrude Street was at the corner of the eastern end of Smith Street on the southern side. When the numbers changed in the 1860s, so too did the entire system. No.1 Gertrude Street was placed at the corner of the western end of Nicholson Street on the northern side.

So, when reading a building's number, it is wise to consider the date; No 1 Gertrude Street in 1870 is No. 244 today.

Jill Robertson  
Fitzroy History Society

# 1 Before there was a street: 40,000 years of Aboriginal culture

The land that Gertrude Street now runs through was once part of the territory of the Wurundjeri-Willum people – a distinct language group of the Woiwurrung tribe who occupied the area drained by the Yarra River.

The Wurundjeri-Willum consisted of three main groups: one of these groups, headed by Billibellary, occupied the north bank of the Yarra, the area that is now the suburbs of Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond.

They speared fish, eels and waterbirds in the river, creeks and swamps, hunted for possums, kangaroos and emus amongst the tall eucalypts, and dug for yams. They used the bark of the gum trees for their canoes. While territorial, they also liked to join other Aboriginal groups for corroborees and meetings around what is now the Melbourne area.

This life was monumentally disrupted following the British Government's establishment of a settlement in the Port Phillip region. Not only did the Aboriginal population lose the use of their traditional land, the massacres and the illnesses caused by introduced diseases that followed resulted in a rapid decline of the population. In 1846 the Wurundjeri people lost their leader Billibellary when he succumbed to a chest infection, furthering the dislocation of their lives.

As a consequence, the traditional owners of the land were forced to live on reserves and missions or became fringe dwellers, living on the edge of towns. The *Aborigines Protection Act 1886*, while purporting to 'protect' them, further destroyed their family life and contributed to the decline of the Aboriginal population.

Over the years, Aborigines – many of them descendants of the Woiwurrung – have returned to settle in Fitzroy. From the late 1920s onwards, there has been a lively Aboriginal presence here, especially around Gertrude, Gore, George and Young streets. Even today, Gertrude Street remains an important meeting place and hub for Aborigines, and is renowned Australia-wide as a place to gather, be put in touch with others and find support.

The Aboriginal community has worked hard to establish a number of services to better the conditions and quality of life for their people. These services include the Aboriginal Church of Christ, the Fitzroy Gym, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Koori Club and the Aboriginal Cooperative. Many of these were located in Gertrude Street and some continue to operate today. For more detailed information of the Aborigines in Gertrude Street, see Chapter 8.

## Further reading

Bunji consultants for City of Yarra and the Aboriginal Cultural Signage Reference Group, 2002, *Snapshots of Aboriginal Fitzroy*, City of Yarra.

Ellender I & Christiansen P, 2001, *People of the Merri Merri*, Merri Creek Management Committee, Melbourne.

Presland G, 1994, *Aboriginal Melbourne: The lost land of the Kulin people*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne Press, Melbourne.

Foley G & Harding J, 2006, *The Dirty Mile*, Melbourne.

## 2 European settlement: the creation of Gertrude Street

Following the signing of the Batman Treaty in 1835, in which local Aboriginal tribes allegedly signed over the 'title deeds' of their land to John Batman, the area destined to become present-day Melbourne was divided up and allocated for public buildings, houses and gardens.

In 1837 Robert Hoddle, the colony's Surveyor General, divided undeveloped paddocks north of the boundary of the Melbourne area into square mile allotments. Land to the north-east was also divided into large strip allotments running down to the Yarra River. The area was known as Newtown. This land now forms the suburbs of Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood.

The government reserved some of the land for the main boundary streets. These streets would become:

- Nicholson Street (originally West Government Road, then Evelyn Street)
- Victoria Parade (originally Simpson's Road then Catherine Street)
- Alexandra Parade (originally North Government Road, then Darebin Road, then Reilly Street)
- Smith Street (originally Eastern Road).

Land for another east-west street was also set aside at this time and eventually became Johnston Street.

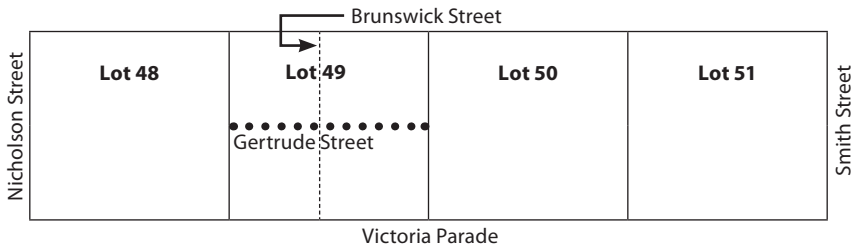
Even before the land was sold, however, the demand for it was so high that further subdivisions were made to reduce the allotments in size to between five and 25 acres (approximately 2 to 12 hectares) each.

The first land sale took place in Sydney on 13 February 1839. The prime allotment was Lot 48 on the corner of Nicholson Street and Victoria Parade, as it was the closest to Melbourne and on a pleasant wooded hill. This land was bought by a firm of Sydney merchants.

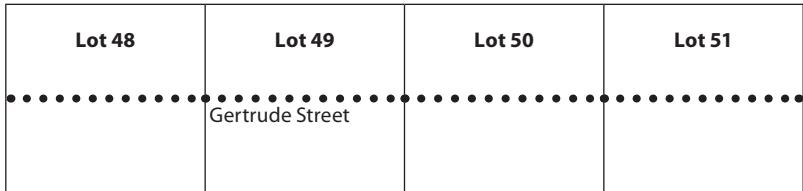
The next best site was Lot 49, bought by another Sydney merchant Thomas Walker who sold it five months later to Captain Benjamin Baxter and his partner Captain Brunswick Smythe. The other lots fronting Victoria Parade were sold to a Captain Flint and Thomas Gore.

Lot 49 is of particular interest because there is where Gertrude Street began. Until the 1850s there were no restrictions on the sale of land or sizes of subdivisions or streets; each land owner did so at their own discretion, and most began subdividing as soon as they had purchased. Baxter was no exception, and soon he had quartered his land and began disposing of new frontages. In doing so, he created two privately owned, non-government streets which were to become Brunswick Street and Gertrude Street.

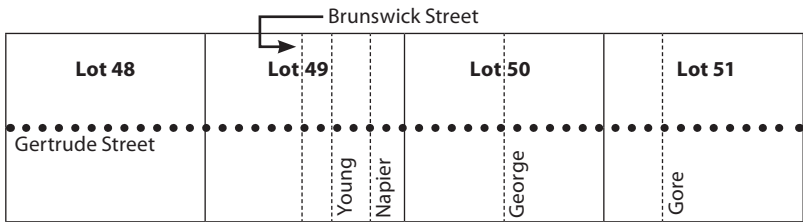
Gertrude Street is believed to have been named after Captain Brunswick Smythe's daughter.



These fledgling streets were to become two of the most important streets in Fitzroy because neighbouring landowners, unlike landowners elsewhere, decided to continue Baxter's streets to provide new frontages for their own allotments, with the result that, by 1851, Gertrude Street extended all the way from Nicholson Street to Smith Street through the original Lots 48, 49, 50 and 51.



Other streets were then developed off Gertrude Street: Young, Napier, George and Gore.



The city's wealthy built large villas on the highest point from the Yarra River along Simpson's Road (Victoria Parade), but beyond and down on the river flats were the tents, shanties and cottages of the working class. Development here was nothing if not haphazard. While there was no control over owners subdividing their land and reselling, there was also no control over materials and standards of buildings. Garryowen, renowned chronicler of life in early Melbourne, wrote vividly about the manner in which land was sliced up into small subdivisions. He described how residences of sod, brick, wood and canvas or any other sort of material available were built willy-nilly.

It was against this background that Gertrude Street was to emerge as one of Fitzroy's most important thoroughfares.

### 3 The early years: 1850s and 1860s

In 1850 the new ward of FitzRoy (its original spelling) was proclaimed as a separate entity to Newtown and named after Governor FitzRoy of New South Wales.

It was also in 1850 that the first recorded houses appeared in Gertrude Street, four on the north side and two on the south side. Only two new buildings were officially recorded the following year. However, from 1852 to 1854 there was an unprecedented building boom in the wake of the gold discoveries in regional Victoria, with at least 60 new buildings recorded in Gertrude Street, signalling the beginning of its importance as a trading street and main thoroughfare. Builders used a range of building materials including timber (the most common), bluestone, iron and brick.

Jane Cannan's 1853 sketch of Gertrude Street near Little Napier Street shows a settled, bustling area with the Swan Hotel, the neighbouring Waterloo House, a series of stone stores and opposite, James Hickey's public stables. However, contemporary reports mention the poor state of the street. Local resident Dr Embling describes going to a *soirée* through 'mud, bog and quagmire'. He continues: 'In Gertrude Street, within 400 yards of my house, the day before yesterday, a horse and dray got stuck, and the horse all but suffocated; it required great effort to save the wretched animal. Yet Gertrude Street is a noble street in which C H Ebdon Esq., the late Auditor-General, and other colonial aristocrats reside. So much for a roadway in this great city.'<sup>1</sup>

Following the gold boom Fitzroy became the fastest-growing ward in Melbourne. Its independent status was recognised in 1858 when it broke away from the City of Melbourne to become the Municipality of Fitzroy.

In these years, Gertrude Street firmly established itself as a busy retail centre, one of the first commercial streets to be developed outside Melbourne's central city area.

#### A snapshot of Gertrude Street businesses in 1860

By the 1860s Gertrude Street had a range of shops and businesses catering for the needs of Fitzroy residents. These included a number of bakers, butchers, bootmakers, drapers, tailors, grocers and wine merchants. There were also a few printers, undertakers, corn merchants and saddlers.

There were a number of stores known as 'fancy repositories' that catered to the lady of the house, selling things such as embroidery wools, wax flowers, work boxes, dressing cases and toys. There were also hay stores, public stables, a slaughter house, a number of hotels and a church, the United Presbyterian Church. Most of the buildings were single storeyed although there were a number of two-storey shops made up of a ground floor store and an upstairs dwelling.

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<sup>1</sup> From Howitt, William, Facsimile Edition 1972, *Land, Labour And Gold or Two Years in Victoria with Visits to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land*, Volume II, Sydney University Press, page 303. (The original first published 1855, Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, London.)



In these early years, many people speculated and developed the land but did not occupy their holdings. Records show that only 50 per cent of the owners were also the occupants. Those who were owner/occupiers were often immigrant tradesmen who bought a piece of land and built a small shop and home for their family, hoping to be successful in their new country. Very few of these gold rush-era houses and shops survive intact in Melbourne as they have either been altered or demolished. An example survives at No. 181-183 Gertrude Street.

A significant proportion of buildings built in Gertrude Street during the 1850s and 1860s were hotels. These buildings served a multiple of purposes. They were used for socialising, drinking and eating. Many offered boarding rooms. Some had an area where you could play a game of skittles or billiards. Stables were usually attached. Before the days of town halls and civic centres they were also regarded as general meeting places just as much as they were places for drinking. In fact, the first meeting of the newly formed Fitzroy Council was held in the rooms of the Royal Exchange Hotel on the north-east corner of George and Gertrude streets on 30 September 1858. The building is still there, though no longer serving as a hotel.

Gertrude Street at this time was also the playground of a future prime minister of Australia. Alfred Deakin was born in nearby George Street in 1856 then lived for several years in Gore Street before moving to South Yarra in 1863. Deakin's father was a partner in a coaching business on the corner of Gertrude and Gore streets and an early Deakin biographer, La Nauze, describes Deakin playing with a group of friends on the wagons and buggies at his father's business. When interviewed about his early life, Deakin is said to have remembered 'the toyshop round the corner', which was possibly George Harrison's fancy repository shop.<sup>2</sup>

## **Significant buildings and traders in the 1850s and 1860s**

### **Shops at No. 181-183 Gertrude Street – building exists**

The building at 181-183 Gertrude Street, on the north-west corner of Gertrude and George streets, is historically and architecturally significant as a typical but now rare example of modest gold rush-era shop design. The building was developed in a number of stages beginning in 1852, though the earliest existing structure is from 1853. The two-storey shops were owned and built by Joseph Trevena, a stonemason who had migrated from Cornwall. The building was divided into two shops and residences in 1864; since then other internal alterations have been made. Part of the large yard originally at the rear of the building now has a brick addition which is linked to the original building on the George Street frontage.

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<sup>2</sup> La Nauze, JA, 1965, *Alfred Deakin: a biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.



*No. 181-183 Gertrude Street, 2007*

### **Glass Terrace at No. 64-78 Gertrude Street – building exists**

The existing row of eight terrace houses at No. 64-78 Gertrude Street is an important part not only of Gertrude Street but Fitzroy itself, as it is generally thought to be the oldest surviving terrace building in Melbourne.

In 1853 when he was 38 years old, Irish-born pastoralist Hugh Glass purchased the land for £7,430. At this time Glass was one of Victoria's wealthiest and most influential men. His wealth came from his activities as speculator, squatter and merchant. In 1853 two houses were designed by J E Moore and in 1856 architect David Ross designed six more houses on the Gertrude Street site. Glass's business empire collapsed spectacularly in the late 1860s and he died aged 55 in 1871 bedevilled by shonky dealings, loss of influence, and the loss of Glass Terrace.

At first the terrace was occupied by gentlemen and professionals. The houses' stature declined later to become boarding rooms as Fitzroy fortunes changed in the 1890s depression. The terrace was almost demolished in the 1960s when it had become extremely run down. Today Glass Terrace forms one of the oldest and most intact elements of Gertrude Street.



*A derelict Glass Terrace*



*Glass Terrace, 2007*

## **Granite Terrace at No. 1-9 Gertrude Street – demolished**

Built in 1853, Granite Terrace was an impressive three-storey building that consisted of five houses. It was designed by architects Robertson and Hale for Henry ‘Money’ Miller to show off the granite from Miller’s Mill Park quarries. The terrace was one of the first to be designed with a loggia, an arcade that provided shade and an elegant space between the footpath and the front door. The architects made good use of the granite in the arches of the loggia. Despite changing ownership over the years the houses were always occupied by gentlemen or genteel widows and ladies of independent means. In 1965 the building was abandoned and subsequently thoroughly vandalised. The Fitzroy Council estimated it would cost £30,000 to buy the terrace and £20,000 for renovations. No-one came forward to rescue this landmark building. It was demolished, despite the National Trust’s claim that the building was highly significant and should be preserved as one of the few buildings remaining in Melbourne with a colonnade on the ground floor. It was replaced in 1974 by a bland brown brick office block. Fitzroy is definitely the poorer.



*Granite Terrace 1965 –  
the exterior was in good repair  
but the interior was uninhabitable.*



*The site in 2007*

## **Tailor’s shop, Westmoreland House, No. 161 Gertrude Street - building exists**

In May 1857, Isaac Relph Fawcett established a tailor’s shop at No. 161 Gertrude Street (No. 46 in the 1860s and No. 149 in the 1870s). He named it Westmoreland House after his birthplace. Isaac was 34 years old. The Fawcett tailoring business was to stay in the family for 70 years until a combination of competition (especially from Coles in Smith Street), poor management and a depressed market in the late 1920s forced them to sell. However, in the beginning, the store answered a pressing need in the colony.

A family photograph survives to show the single-storeyed Westmoreland House in 1861, with large signs painted on the window announcing, ‘I Fawcett Habit Maker’, ‘Tailors’, ‘Trimming’s’ and ‘Importer of woollen drapery’. A well-stocked window display shows bolts of material, patterns and a photograph of men in various suit styles.

An 1875 advertisement shows the range of goods on sale.

### IR FAWCETT

BEST WEST OF ENGLAND CLOTHES AND DOESKINS, GERMAN,  
COLONIAL AND OTHER COATINGS AND TWEEDS ALWAYS IN STOCK.

ALL SILK AND WALSH & MARGETSON'S SHIRTINGS

SILK COATS TO ORDER AND IN STOCK. PRICES STRICTLY MODERATE

WAREHOUSE GERTRUDE STREET

Source: *The Mercury and Weekly Courier Collingwood and Fitzroy*, 2 January 1875

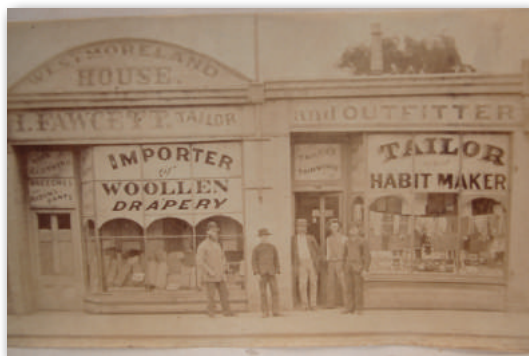
Records show that by 1880 the shop was owned by an Esther Solomon; Herbert and Henry Solomon owned the furniture shop next door and Fawcett's daughter Annie had married a Solomon so it is likely the Solomon family bought into the business and built the set of three two-storey buildings that still stands today, with the Fawcetts occupying No. 161.

By the 1890s Isaac's son Charles James had taken over, although when Charles decided that selling boiled sweets to the miners on the Western Australian goldfields was more lucrative than being a tailor, his 67-year-old father managed the store for him. Back in Fitzroy in 1905, Charles was advertising a 'well assorted stock' with 'mourning orders at short notice'. An article in a local directory praised the business:

For an up-to-date tailoring establishment and for well-stocked mercery and gentlemen's requisites generally, Mr CJ Fawcett of Gertrude Street has one of the best establishments in either Collingwood or Fitzroy.

Source: *Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook*, 1905

However, the times were not favourable and eventually the business suffered. One of Charles' sons Fitzroy (known as Roy) was the only son interested in haberdashery but he left the Gertrude Street shop to work at the Henderson Emporium in Sydney until he retired. The other sons Charles and Ralph had different careers in mind and did not wish to continue. It was the end of an era.



*Isaac Fawcett's tailor shop*

### **Wine and spirit merchants and grocery shop, No. 184 Gertrude Street – demolished**

This site at No. 184 Gertrude Street was well established as a wine merchants and grocers shop by the 1860s. It was successfully run by Scott and Wilson (later Scott and Kennedy) from 1858 to 1863. In 1864 William Ross and John Smith moved here from their premises at No. 150 Gertrude Street (No. 120 in the 1850s) to continue their business at No.184 (No. 144 in the 1860s). The building was demolished and by 1880 there was an enormous four-storey furniture warehouse on the site.

### **Grocery store, 150 Gertrude Street – building exists**

Built in 1853 for Benjamin Drewery who had just built his hotel across the street. In 1860 it was Ross and Smith's grocery shop and remained a grocery store under different proprietors for 20 years. In the 1880s it housed George Rushall's auctioneering business. From the 1890s until the mid-20th century it was Beckett Bros furniture store. It continued as an auction mart until it became a restaurant and wine bar in the 1990s.



### **England, Scotland and Australian Chartered Bank, No. 138 Gertrude Street – building exists**

The first Fitzroy branch of the England, Scotland and Australian Bank was opened at No. 43 George Street in 1854. Around 1865 a new bank was built by local builders Leech and Bricknall at the corner of Little Napier and Gertrude streets. In 1879 the bank was demolished and new premises were erected on the same site – the building we see today. Historians believe it was designed by well-known architect Leonard Terry (who designed the Palmer Street Convent of Mercy School buildings). This building is a typical example of a bank in the conservative classical style. It became the Aboriginal Health Service in 1973. In 2008 it remains vacant with plans to turn it into a training centre for Aborigines.



*138 Gertrude Street, 2007*

## Bakery, No. 62 Gertrude Street - building exists

There was a bakery on this site for 135 years from 1854 until 1989 when the business closed. In 1854, a survey described the bakery as a 'brick house, shop, bakery, yard' owned by Francis Clark. In 1857 it was run by William Shurey a baker who arrived in Melbourne from Surrey around 1855. In 1858 Shurey was one of 200 Gertrude Street residents who signed a petition to separate the affairs of Fitzroy from Melbourne.

Shurey died in 1868 aged 45 and the bakery was left in his wife Mary's hands. She continued the business until there were too many problems, the main one being that the bakers were spending more time at the nearby Gertrude Hotel than baking. By 1880 Francis Gearon was in charge and it stayed in the Gearon family until the late 1930s. In 1940 it was owned by Capitol Bakeries Pty Ltd. In the 1960s it was the Mooncrust Wholemeal Bakery. In the 1980s it was known as Potts Bakery, famous for being Melbourne's largest commercial bakery using wood-fired ovens. These ovens were the original ones made by a Port Melbourne foundry for Clark back in the 1850s.



*Bakery in 2008*



**Mooncrust Wholemeal Bakery**

**Organic Wholemeal Bread**  
**1½ LB NET 680g**

Our Breads are very moist, and are baked so that they keep. Should they be too moist for your taste, allow them to sit for a day or two. They are often better to eat after having stood for sometime.

Mooncrust Wholemeal Bakery  
62 Gertrude Street,  
Fitzroy, Melb. Vic Ph. 41 3301

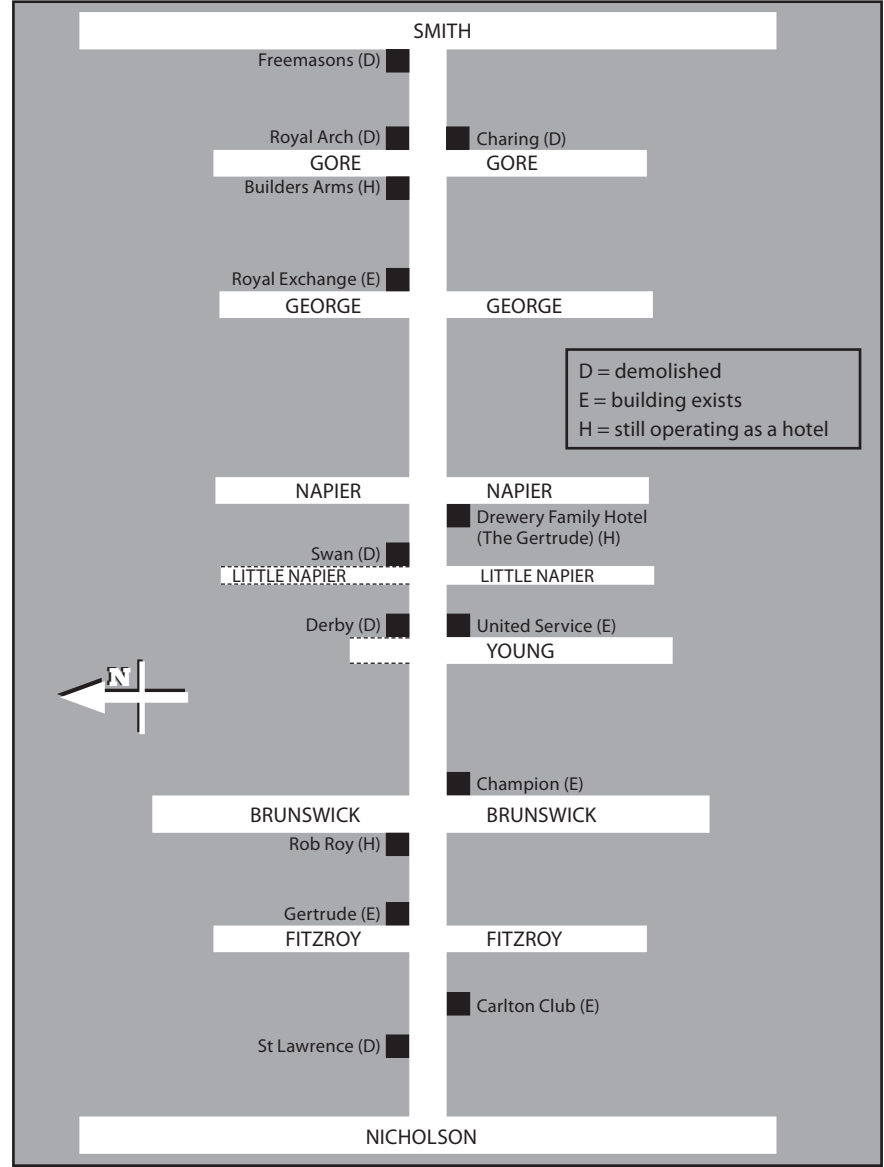
*Bakery advertisement 1960s*

## Hotels in Gertrude Street in the 1850s and 1860s

Of the 14 hotels that have been recorded in Gertrude Street, 13 were built in the 1850s and 1860s (one was built in 1873). In the early years of the 21st century only three survive as hotels: The Builders Arms, the Rob Roy and Drewery's Family Hotel (known for many years as the Renown, and currently the Gertrude Hotel). Six of the other hotel buildings are still there but no longer operating as hotels and five hotels have been demolished.



Hotels were located on both sides and along both lengths of the street. For more detailed information of the hotels that once flourished here, see Chapter 9 Hotels in Gertrude Street.



**Further reading**

McLean R, 1980 *Aspects of Fitzroy Pubs 1870-1920*, University of Melbourne History Department, Melbourne.



## 4 Mid- to late-Victoria era: 1870s to 1900

By the 1870s, there was little vacant land left in Gertrude Street. Because many of the early timber houses and structures were flimsy and did not meet the strict fire regulations, they were demolished and rebuilt. Owners who had become prosperous replaced their buildings with larger, more substantial structures and new buildings were established on the remaining available land. Most of the existing buildings in Gertrude Street are therefore from the 1870s and 1880s, although most now have modernised shopfronts and altered facades.

Numbers changed dramatically to account for the additional buildings. As before, half the businesses in the street were owner/occupied while the rest of the owners lived elsewhere and rented their premises. Large landholders included Rucker & MacKenzie (No. 19-43), the Victorian Insurance Company (No. 51-61) and the Castlemaine Brewery (No. 75-89).

Probably due to its proximity to Nicholson Street, the western end of Gertrude Street developed as a residential area, dominated by two-storey brick terrace houses. By the 1870s, the rest of the street consisted of (mostly) two-storey brick or stone buildings of which the ground floor was devoted to a commercial enterprise with the upper storey being the shop keeper's residence or let as rooms.

There were no large factories in Gertrude Street. Traders were well established by now, selling all the essentials that a community needed. Bootmakers, dressmakers, drapers, tailors, milliners, jewellers and watchmakers, furniture shops, grocers, butchers and bakers dominated. There were also pastrycooks, hairdressers, tobacconists, opticians, dentist and laundries run by Chinese owners. In the section of stores known as Rob Roy Terrace was one Ebenezer Lush and his knickerbocker enterprise. At the eastern end of the street was a farrier, two coachbuilders, a saddler and a corn dealer. Other businesses included a photographer, two chemists, a toy shop, two pawnbrokers and the delightfully described occupation of 'oyster dealer and muffinmaker'. When bicycles were introduced to Victoria in the late 1890s, a number of bicycle dealers were established in Gertrude Street.

Many of these businesses became very successful. A feature of the history of Gertrude Street is the number of businesses that were established at this time and remained in operation, often within the same family, for 20 or 30 years, even weathering the 1890s depression. Some continued to operate well into the twentieth century. For example, No.13 was an optician's until the 1970s, No. 53 was a wine shop for 90 years, No. 118 was a hairdressers for 100 years and No. 245 was a hairdresser/tobacconist until the 1960s. This stability reflected on Fitzroy's development as an important inner-city precinct. Significant changes only became apparent after the 1930s depression when many businesses were forced to close.

## A snapshot of Gertrude Street businesses in 1870

Here is a list of businesses that flourished in Gertrude Street in 1870.

15 fruiterers and grocers

13 bootmakers

10 milliners/dressmakers

5 drapers/tailors

6 fancy goods

6 confectioners

4 butchers

4 jewellers/watchmakers

3 cabinet and furniture makers

2 each of coachbuilders, farriers, saddlers, corn merchants, chemists, newsagents, pawnbrokers, wine saloons, dentists, furniture carriers and land agents

1 gasfitter and plumber, printer, tinsmith, photographer, pianoforte maker and hairdresser/tobacconist.

### 'The rowdy inhabitants'

Gertrude Street had developed into a crowded, commercial precinct, with 14 hotels operating along its length. As such it began to attract layabouts, prostitutes and criminals. It was a well-known fact that the police turned a blind eye to the brothels that had sprung up in nearby Young Street. The hotels, however, were the focus of many complaints. For example, in 1873 shopkeepers in Gertrude Street protested about the rowdy inhabitants and prostitutes who moved between the Swan and Derby Hotels, 'rendering it dangerous for respectable persons to pass by combined with obscene remarks and conversation'.<sup>3</sup> A poll taken in 1879 which proposed an increase of public houses in Fitzroy was not surprisingly defeated with 194 for and 1022 against.

About this time we see the rise of the 'larrikin', a term used in a derogatory sense for the groups of boisterous youths who hung about street corners causing trouble. A Fitzroy resident Mr Healy complained about the boys who gathered near the Carlton Club Hotel 'smoking, swearing, stone throwing, firing catapults, climbing the lampposts, fighting amongst themselves'.<sup>4</sup> This unruly element was to remain a feature of Gertrude Street and its surrounding streets for many decades.

In contrast, Fitzroy itself continued to prosper and expand and, on 1 February 1878, was granted city status.

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<sup>3</sup> Fitzroy Police Records 299/937, in *Fitzroy, Melbourne's First Suburb*, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> Fitzroy Police Records Series 937 documents, 3 June 1873, in *Fitzroy, Melbourne's First Suburb*, p. 186.

The 1880s were boom years for Fitzroy (and Melbourne). Land prices rose and people had to look further afield for cheaper land. One businessman, discussing his plans for expansion, was quoted as saying, 'As the price of suitable building allotments in Fitzroy is very high, a site in Collingwood has been selected.'<sup>5</sup>

In 1886 the cable car route was expanded to Nicholson and Gertrude streets. Alexander Davison, the architect for Melbourne's Omnibus and Cable Car Company, designed the impressive cable tram engine house and signal box which still remains on the corner of Gertrude and Nicholson streets. The tram service had an enormous effect on Fitzroy, as people now ventured here from other suburbs to stroll, sightsee and shop. Development flourished and cemented Gertrude Street as a prime commercial thoroughfare.

## **A snapshot of Gertrude Street businesses in 1880**

Advertisements were a powerful way of connecting with potential clients and many businesses advertised in the local newspaper, the Fitzroy City Press. There were advertisements for hatters, jewellers, grocers, dyers, manchester, furniture, a tobacconist, plumber, butcher, baker and real estate agents. By far the most numerous were tailors and bootmakers.

Without fail they offered 'a large and varied stock' of 'goods of the best quality'. Orders were 'punctually attended to' and prices were 'strictly moderate'.

Two firms, G C Clausen's Furniture Warehouse and R Thompson's Fitzroy City Furnishing Warehouse, offered customers a 'new time payment system'.

Sewing machines were a must-have item and there were a number of shops selling different brands, all advertising in the Fitzroy City Press. James Terry was a sub-agent for Raymonts handlock stitch machine ('They sew from the finest muslin to the heaviest material and will not get out of order'). Grieves Show Rooms naturally sold Grieves Sewing Machines: ('Work that cannot be done on other machines unless by special adjustments and great skill on the part of the operator. Prices £2.10s to £8.10s Cash or terms.'). G C Clausen offered 'Sewing Machines By all Known Makers'.

George Clausen's newly built furniture warehouse occupied a prime site at the north-east corner of Gertrude and Brunswick streets and was a typical example of a huge enterprise offering a wide range of goods under the one roof. Shoppers could avail themselves of furniture, carpets, floor cloths and 'every requisite for furnishing', such as ironmongery, silver and electroplated ware, pianos, cabinet organs, harmoniums, sewing machines and household ornamental furnishings.

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<sup>5</sup> *Fitzroy City Press* 30 July 1888.

## Advertisements from the Fitzroy City Press in the 1880s

**G. DICKENS,**  
PLUMBER,  
GASFITTER, GLAZIER,  
AND  
BELLMANAGER.

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PAPERHANGINGS,  
OILS,  
COLORS AND VARNISHES  
OF EVERY VARIETY.

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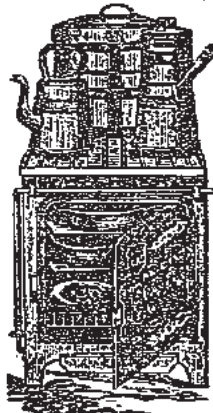
**LIVERPOOL HOUSE,**  
CORNER OF  
GERTRUDE & GEORGE STS.  
FITZROY.

A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q. R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z.

**WHO'S YOUR HATTEY?**  
WHY  
**CHARLES CLARKE**  
OF  
100, GERTRUDE STREET  
THE ONLY  
**PRACTICAL**  
**HATTEY**  
IN  
FITZROY.

"THE Best and Cheapest Method of  
Cooking is by means of a Gas  
Stove."—EVERYBODY.

**J. D. FRASER,**



**PLUMBER, GASFITTER, ETC.**  
Store Fittings, Portable Boilers, Ovens,  
Tanks, Baths, Lamps, &c.  
All Repairs neatly and promptly executed.  
Charges Strictly Moderate.  
The Trade Supplied.  
200 GERTRUDE STREET, FITZROY.  
Near Smith Street.

## The 1890s depression and aftermath

The prosperous 1880s came to an end when Melbourne's widespread land and property speculation was followed by high interest rates, panic, the closure of several financial institutions, more panic and finally a huge financial collapse. This in turn fed an economic depression that enveloped Victoria, and especially Melbourne, for the rest of the decade.

The depression of the 1890s saw many families and businesses suffer. Records for this period in Gertrude Street show that many premises were vacant. Businesses changed ownership or were occupied by others when rents became difficult to pay or it was impossible to meet mortgage repayments. Property values plummeted. Places that had been valued at £85 were now listed at £45. Values were slow to return to their pre-depression level and did not rise again until the 1920s.

Fitzroy became more and more a suburb for the working class, the unemployed seeking work and shelter, and a breeding ground for criminals, gamblers, drunks and prostitutes. With its many hotels, the once grand terraces now converted to boarding houses, larrikins, trouble-makers and nearby brothels, Gertrude Street became synonymous with trouble. Brunswick Street now eclipsed its neighbour as the principle commercial street.

However, the tiny suburb also retained its spirit. In 1891 a number of women living in Gertrude Street signed their name to the 1891 Women's Suffrage Petition. Among these were Mrs Tunnecliffe whose family had been in Gertrude Street since the 1850s, Nellie Batchelor, wife of Ninian Batchelor the newsagent at No. 116, Mrs Rogers whose husband had a boot warehouse at No. 109, Maria, wife of William Toy at No. 145 and Mrs Coupland from No. 67.

## **Significant buildings and traders in the 1870s to 1900**

### **Cable Tram Engine House, corner Gertrude and Nicholson streets – building exists**

With the approaching 1888 Centenary Exhibition to be held in Carlton Gardens, a second cable tram route was established in Melbourne. The route from the city split at Gertrude Street; one route continued along Nicholson Street, the other turned into Gertrude and then Smith streets. This gave considerable impetus to the commercial development of Gertrude Street. The Cable Tram Engine House is an outstanding example of this building type and is intact apart from some minor façade alteration. Look at the parapet urns, the cord pattern inscribed on the façade (evidently a whimsical architectural feature designed to represent the cables) and the corner tower.



*The Cable Tram Engine House, 2008*

### **Cuthbert Blackett, chemist shop, No. 158-164 Gertrude Street – building exists**

This building was constructed in 1887-1888 for Cuthbert R Blackett, a chemist, to the design of architects Tappin, Gilbert and Denney. Blackett had been elected to represent Fitzroy in the Legislative Assembly in 1879.

The building replaced an earlier one built by Brennan and Brooks for Blackett in 1864. The building provides an excellent example of an English Queen Anne Revival commercial building. A dominant feature is the four arches of the first floor loggia. The building is intact apart from the ground floor shop fronts which have all been altered. The upper floors have always been residential.



*No. 158-164 Gertrude Street, 2007*

### **Edward Bottomley, draper, No. 210 Gertrude Street – building exists**

Edward Bottomley had a drapery store here for 30 years from 1880 until 1910. In 1910 he also purchased No. 129-135 Gertrude Street which remained in the Bottomley family until the 1940s. These were later demolished in the slum clearance program of the 1960s.

Bottomley was a respected businessman who set great store in customer service, making sure his sales assistants were courteous and that they attended to customers promptly. Here is an advertisement from 1881.

E BOTTOMLEY  
IMPORTER AND DRAPER  
FASHIONABLE AND SEASONAL GOODS  
AT  
REASONABLE PRICES  
TO BOOTMAKERS – SUPER WHITE SILK  
1 OZ, 2S,  
YELLOW 1S 9D, LESS BY THE QUARTER LB  
CORNER GORE AND GERTRUDE STREETS.

*Source: Fitzroy City Press, 16 July 1881*

In 1905 an article stated that he ‘... stocked his premises so successfully that customers go to him with confidence that they will find the best of goods at the most moderate prices.’

BOTTOMLEY'S DRAPERY ESTABLISHMENT IS THE POPULAR DEPOT  
FOR THE NEATEST AND MOST CHARMING GOODS AT THE LOWEST CASH  
FIGURES. OUR PATRONS ARE NUMEROUS AND EVER-INCREASING, AND  
INTELLIGENT BUYING AND CHEAP SELLING PLEASURES ALL WHO BUY.  
  
STYLISH MILLINERY. NEWEST AND DAINTIEST LACES  
  
COME INSPECT ADMIRE PURCHASE THE LATEST 'LOVELIEST AND BEST'  
COURTESY AND ATTENTION AWAIT YOU.  
  
CORNER GERTRUDE AND GORE STREETS.

Source: *Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook, 1905*

The building is now a gallery.



210 Gertrude Street c 1880



210 Gertrude Street 2007

### **Wilhelm Mienhardt, music warehouse, No. 229 Gertrude Street - building exists**

Meinhardt was a successful importer and seller of musical instruments and sheet music. He established a music store at No. 229 Gertrude Street from the 1880s. By the 1890s he had expanded into the shop next door at No. 231. By 1910 he had purchased (and leased) the building next door at No. 233-235. He also had a store in Bourke Street, Melbourne. In the publication *Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook, 1905* an advertisement for Meinhardt's reads: 'Sole agent for Heinel's high-class brass instruments; a large and well-selected stock of violins, accordions, concertinas, zithers, strings and popular classical music.'





*Meinhardt's music emporium c 1905*



*2007*

### **Gordon, quilt and costume manufacturer, No. 220 Gertrude Street – building exists**

This site has had a varied number of occupants, beginning in 1864 as a corner shop. During the 1870s it was a wine and spirit shop, and a grocery shop from the 1870s to 1891. In 1894 it was home to Mrs Gordon, a quilt and costume manufacturer, selling blouses, bonnets, trousers, eiderdowns, curtains, bed linen, quilts for baby prams and church cushions. The fact that the business was advertised in the other Australian colonies shows it was a substantial enterprise. Indeed, an advertisement's byline announced it was 'the most complete and perfect plant in use in Australia.' The business was perhaps a victim of Victoria's economic depression of the 1890s because it was no longer there in 1896, a mere two years after it had been established. It is entirely appropriate that the building is now home to Rose Chong, costume maker.



*No. 220 in 2007*



*One-stop shopping: advertisement, c1894*

### **Joseph Edward Burke's Dancing Academy, corner Little George and Gertrude Street - existing**

While not a significant enterprise, Joseph Burke's dancing academy is included as an example of the variety of businesses conducted in Gertrude Street at this time. Burke advertised himself as a professor of dancing, while also working as a clothing manufacturer. His annual balls at the Fitzroy Town Hall were fixtures on the Fitzroy social calendar. When in 1887 his home in George Street became too small for his dancing classes, Burke built a two-storey house named *Waverly* on the north-east corner of Gertrude and Little George streets, though it took the Little George Street numbers of 37 and 39 as it faced this street. The house contained a 'commodious and lofty ballroom, luxuriously furnished and lit by pretty gasoliers'. There were refreshment rooms, cloak rooms and a large smoking room. It was here, in 1887, that Burke held two magnificent balls instead of at the Town Hall where he usually held them. Newspaper reports indicated that the hall was the finest in the city. By the turn of the century, Burke was in ill health and moved from Fitzroy.

## 5 The first half of the 20th century

Business slowly gained momentum after the decade-long depression and by the turn of the century optimism had returned. Although overshadowed somewhat by both Brunswick and Smith streets, Gertrude Street was still a vibrant commercial precinct catering for visitors and residents alike.

### 1900 – 1910

From 1900 to 1910 most businesses prospered. It became increasingly common now for the majority of owners of Gertrude Street properties to live outside the suburb as the suburb itself was firmly established as working class and, for some people, not wholly desirable. A feature of the street that began now and continued well into the 1920s and 1930s was the proliferation of furniture stores. These businesses occupied large premises and sold a range of household goods such as furnishings, cabinets, crockery and iron goods, including pianos, as well as offering upholstery and furniture manufacturing services. Charles Johnston & Co. was the largest. Their building dominated the corner of Gertrude and George streets. In the 1920s and the depression years of the 1930s, secondhand furniture stores proliferated.



Source: Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook, 1905

## North side

On the north side, in buildings that are still there, was an optician at No.13 and a bootlace maker at No.15. Next door, a terrace row (demolished in the 1970s) housed a bootmaker, bookseller, grocer, fruit seller and a mirror manufacturer. The buildings at No. 37 to No. 73 all remain today. In these were a mantel maker, pastrycook, wine merchant, furniture shop, hosiery, butchers, bootmaker, draper and jeweller.

Brunswick Street to Napier Street was another busy commercial section. The shops included Evan Rees' grocery store, a hairdresser, fish shop, dressmaker, jeweller, draper, bookshop, pawnbroker, greengrocer and tobacconist. The Commotion Hotel (its name had just changed from the Derby) and the Swan Hotel continued.

From Napier to Gore streets all the buildings remain. In 1900, there was a grocer, costumiere, hairdressing salon, tailor, furniture store. Further along the street was a pastrycook, newsagent, plumber, ironmonger, bootmaker and butchers. The Royal Hotel remained at the corner of George Street as did the Builders Arms and the Civil Service Club. Toward Smith Street, George and Henry Lancaster had a brick forge and farrier business. No. 243 was a wine shop run by Bridget Watson and owned by McCracken's Brewery. Next door was a dentist.

## South side

The south side saw a similar eclectic array of businesses including a grocer, a curio dealer, a tobacconist, a chiropodist and a dentist at the Nicholson Street end. The remaining buildings to Fitzroy Street, since demolished, housed a dressmaker, wood merchant and bootmaker.

Gertrude Street was beginning to be known for its furniture shops and George Clausen, Melbourne businessman (later to become Mayor of Fitzroy) had a warehouse at No. 108–110, William Beckett had a furniture shop at No.150 and John Renfrew sold furniture at No. 166–174. In 1909 Charles Johnson advertised in the Sands and McDougall Directory:

Warehouseman, cabinet makers, upholsterers and furniture manufacturers to the Victorian Government. 166-188 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy. Factories Napier and Little Napier streets.

Further along was the United Services Club Hotel, the Leviathan and the English Scottish and Australian Bank. The eastern end of Gertrude Street had Edward Bottomley's drapery business, a grocer, a photographer, a furrier and a dressmaker.

## The war years 1914 -1918

As in other cities, suburbs and towns across Australia, Fitzroy offered its young men to fight for King and country. Records show that 51 men from Gertrude Street enlisted and fought overseas. Some of these men may not necessarily have lived in Gertrude Street but registered here and gave their family's Gertrude Street address.

Among them were Walter Harvey (No. 40), Claude Laing (No. 46), Alexander Renfrew (No.133), George Copeland (No. 193), Charles Fawcett [Jnr](No. 161), Isaac Lazarus (No. 202), Eric Cousins (No. 220), Edmund Bottomley [Jnr](No. 214).

Sadly, six men paid the ultimate sacrifice: Lazarus was killed in action at Gallipoli on 22 May 1915, James Shields was killed in action in 1916, as was John Moffat in 1917 (No. 117) and Alfred Johnson (No. 70). James Inkson (No. 9) died of wounds in March 1917.

Many more were wounded, physically and mentally, and some of this was reflected in the increased homelessness, drug addiction and crime that swept 1920s Fitzroy.

Chemist Oscar Lawson had been shot through the knee at Gallipoli. He was one of the lucky ones in that his wounds hindered but did not really affect his work. By 1935, however, he only worked two days a week.

## **The 1920s**

The 1920s saw huge upheavals in Gertrude Street (as in the rest of Melbourne) in the aftermath of the First World War and the beginnings of a world-wide depression. The 1920s began with optimism but most of Fitzroy, and Gertrude Street, were never a part of it.

There was a sharp increase in the demand for housing, partly fuelled by returned servicemen (some with money to buy homes), by the increased number of migrants and Aborigines returning to the area. There was also an influx of people moving into the city from the country to take advantage of the increased number of jobs that were available. Because of this, existing housing was stretched to the limits with many families occupying a single residence and people sub-letting to others.

Those who had money moved further north to build larger houses in a more salubrious environment. Most of the working class, however, had no such opportunity and they remained where they could afford the rent and walk to work. As a result, the suburb became poorer and, because of its proximity to Melbourne, continued to attract more unemployed and homeless. The many boarding rooms sheltered lost souls from the Great War. The criminals, prostitutes and gangs of Fitzroy's underworld ruled over a suburb now rife with brothels, sly grog shops, cocaine trafficking, organised crime and random violence. Melbourne criminal Squizzy Taylor is often mentioned as favouring the Renown Hotel with his presence. Hygiene was poor as there was no sewerage system. By the end of the 1920s Fitzroy was regarded as one of Melbourne's worst slums, saddled with a very high level of unemployment and Victoria's highest infant mortality rate.

In Gertrude Street Francis Gearon's properties had been condemned and were vacant, though his bakery at No. 62 continued to operate. The government reduced the number of hotels allowed to operate. By the end of the decade there were only seven hotels remaining from Gertrude Street's original 14.



Furniture shops, however, continued to flourish. A big change occurred at No. 174–176 and No. 186 –196 where George Johnston expanded his furniture warehouse with John Chilners, making this section of Gertrude Street a one-stop furniture precinct.



*Fruit shop, 95 Gertrude Street*

## **Depression and war: 1930 to 1950**

The years from 1930 until the end of the Second World War were a mixed bag for Gertrude Street. While there was incredible poverty, Gertrude Street remained a busy commercial area. Some people such as the Johnstons were fortunate to be able to survive, expand and prosper, while others were reduced to selling, starting over or succumbing to unemployment and the generosity of family and friends. Crime, prostitution, alcoholism and gambling continued to flourish. Values plummeted and many business changed hands, though remained operating with new owners. Wages were low, but you counted yourself lucky if you had a job.

Against this backdrop of despair and misery developed the fabric of camaraderie, trust and support that characterised Fitzroy in those years. For example, every week the butchers at Swanell's would package up meat and donate it to 'Brother Bill' from St Marks Church to give to the needy. Oscar Lawson's pharmacy at No. 102 Gertrude Street became a centre of compassion and support where the poor flocked for advice, comfort and care. It was 10/6 (\$1.50) to see a doctor but only threepence or sixpence (5 cents) to see a pharmacist. They came in their droves, the poor, the alcoholic, the mentally unstable, all to receive kindness and consideration from the staff. Duncan Reilly, who began as an apprentice at Oscar's pharmacy, described Fitzroy in the 1930s: 'Though poor and depressed there was still a richness of life in Fitzroy'. It was this richness and heart that permeated down Gertrude Street.

Frank Brain grew up in Gertrude Street at this time and recalls having a good life as a kid even though times were hard.

'I sold papers with a friend before and after school and we'd get a tip if we were lucky. We played cricket and football in the street but the police would come along and tell us to stop. A lot of the boys used to chase the cable car and jump on the back until the conductors spotted us and shooed us off. We made our own fun. I remember that on Saturday nights there were always brawls outside the Champion and Rob Roy hotels – you didn't have to go to the Stadium to see a fight! [The Stadium in Brunswick Street was an entertainment venue.] We were very poor and there were lots of homeless people, because they couldn't pay the rent.'

Businesses remained varied. Chinese laundries continued to operate at No. 32, 67 and 140. On the south side, the condemned houses at No. 56–60 were demolished and replaced with a brick factory valued at £200 for Joseph Cranwell (motor trimmer) and Reginald Smith (panel beater) – the first business to cater for the motor car. Heading east from Brunswick Street, the south side consisted of dressmakers, dry cleaners, a plumber, chemist, hardware shop, newsagent, bootmakers, a milliner, furrier, jeweller, photographer and fruiterer. The new and second-hand furniture shops in the furniture precinct between Napier and Gore continued to prosper as locals and people from other suburbs came to find bargains in wardrobes, kitchen dressers, lounge suites and beds. At No. 218, Gabrielle Falucci began his 40-year reign as a hairdresser. On the north side, Sarah Harhood owned a major block of property from No. 19 to No. 43, which was occupied by a costumiere, a tailor, fish shop, draper and fruiterer. F. Watkins butchers shop continued on the corner of Fitzroy Street.

The Second World War had a profound effect on Fitzroy as everywhere else, with overcrowding, poverty, rationing, and fears for those serving overseas. Gertrude Street terraces became home to American servicemen. Many Aborigines moved from rural areas to work in defence industries and returned to their friends and families around Gertrude Street.

A social survey of Melbourne households was carried out by the University of Melbourne in the summer of 1941/42, known as the Prest Wartime Social Survey. Here are four entries for Gertrude Street.

#### **No. 70 Gertrude Street**

Fruiterer, 61 and daughter 26. Italian.

Interviewees were very suspicious and afraid.

#### **No. 130 Gertrude Street**

Head of household male 47 years; café proprietor earning £4 to £5 per week

Boarder, male 24 years, AIF now called up

Both keep wife, children and/or parents in Greece; hope to bring them out after the war

#### **No. 203 Gertrude Street**

Radio and electrical shop

Husband 53, second-hand dealer at site, £8 nett per week

Wife 59

Son 16, daughter 18, daughter 25, working in carton manufacturing



Information on shared housing in the survey showed how people were living. Here is one example.

No. 135 Gertrude Street

2 storeys, building age 70 years

Weekly rent 37/6, unfurnished

7 people including woman from Darwin with 2 babies, 6 years resident

6 separate bedrooms, 1 bath with chip heater

External WC shared by 7

Wash house with copper and troughs

1 shared kitchen, sink and taps, 2 gas stoves

Front bottom rooms are a second hand clothes shop

Tenants let rest of the rooms to boarders

Building about 15 ft x 80 ft. Needs renovating.

No info re rents.; should range 10/- single, 17/6 double

Gertrude Street was struggling. It was rescued, in a fashion, by the wave of post-war immigration and businesses coming for the cheap rents. The first wave of migrants, mostly from the Mediterranean countries, began to arrive and set up groceries, cafes, and fish and chip shops.

## **Significant buildings and traders from 1900 to 1949**

### **Albert Bennett, dentist**

#### **No. 14-16 Gertrude Street – building exists**

In 1891, Albert Bennett established himself as a dentist at No. 78 Gertrude Street, after moving from his North Fitzroy practice. He also retained a practice in Prahran. Bennett remained at No.78 until 1904 when he moved to newer state-of-the-art premises at No. 40 Gertrude Street. While the surgery was being built, there was a gas explosion. Bennett hastily informed people through an article in the newspaper that the explosion had been caused by the council laying gas mains in the street and had nothing to do with the standard of his surgical instruments. To further calm people's apprehension, he added that the new dental equipment was powered by electricity, not gas.

An advertisement announcing Bennett's dental rooms appeared in the publication *Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook, 1905*.

'New premises especially designed and built to suit requirements of an up-to-date dental surgery. The old premises were obsolete and unsuitable. These are lit with electricity. Established in Fitzroy over 20 years. By close personal attention and skilful work, Mr Bennett has succeeded in building up an extensive practice in Fitzroy with a reputation as a conscientious and skilful dentist.'

In 1914 Bennett moved from No. 40, but remained in Gertrude Street. He built an imposing structure at No. 14-16 which incorporated elegant living quarters for his family and an impressive dental surgery. The building is still there. No. 14, Albert's surgery, had eight rooms. Its rated value of £100 gives some idea of its opulence. A stained glass name panel with 'A Bennett Dentist' is still intact in the porch. No.16 had six rooms and was Amy and Albert's private residence. A stained oak stairway (with intact banisters with tulip cutouts and incised newel posts) led to the upper floor of both buildings.



*No. 14-16 Gertrude Street*



*The stained glass window*

### **William Beckett , furniture dealer**

#### **No. 150–156 Gertrude Street – building remains**

William Beckett established a successful furniture business in Gertrude Street that continued for 40 years. In 1890 he set up Beckett Brothers furniture brokers in partnership with his brother Henry at No.150-156 Gertrude Street. In 1894 he expanded into the shop next door. The Beckett brothers advertised themselves as 'buyers and sellers of billiard tables, pianos, organs and all description of good household furniture purchased for prompt cash, from 1 shilling to £1,000.'

With business booming, Beckett moved his family to Fitzroy (from Footscray), settling at No.160. He moved again in 1930 to nearby Napier Street, and finally settled in St Kilda where he died in 1965.

Beckett also became an owner and breeder of quality racehorses. In the early 1900s he had a livery stable not far from his furniture business.

In 1914 Beckett won a seat on the Fitzroy Council and was the city's Mayor in 1921 and 1925. He also moved into state politics, entering the Legislative Council as a Member for Melbourne North Province.

Although he retired from the business around 1930 it continued to operate as Beckett Bros until 1955. In 1972 the building operated as the Fitzroy Auction Rooms. It is now a restaurant and bar.

## **Johnston's furniture empire**

### **No. 184 - 196 – buildings remain**

A photo in the *Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook*, 1905. shows an impressive four-storeyed brick building on the corner of Gertrude and George streets and a single-storey strip of buildings stretching along the south-side of Gertrude Street. This was the Johnston's furniture empire, an extremely profitable business that had begun around 1880 and continued until well into the 1950s.

The business was founded by Irish-born Charles Johnston. His son George joined the firm after he left school and established himself as an active member of the Fitzroy business world. In 1896 when he was 28 he became a member of the Fitzroy City Council. George's involvement in the family business was an 'on-again off-again' affair as he divided his time between the army and Fitzroy. He saw active service in the Boer War then returned to Fitzroy and the business. As a lieutenant-colonel, George was part of the ANZAC forces at Gallipoli, then fought in the worst of the battles in France before returning to Fitzroy. In 1918 he was appointed military administrator of New Guinea where he stayed for two years. On returning to Melbourne he resumed his position as governing director of Johnston's Pty Ltd.

The business was experiencing its best years as people needed furniture and house furnishings in the years following the war. George, who lived in Brighton, was now in partnership with John Chilners. They took over the row of shops on the western side of their main building, but shed the series of shops on the eastern side of George Street.

The business still operated as Johnston's (although George died in 1949) but by the 1960s there were a number of tenants including an art supplier and several clothing manufacturers. On 22 June 1963 the grand old building caught fire and the top two floors were destroyed. Today a rusting sign hanging high above the building still proclaims 'Johnston's'.



*1963, courtesy of the  
Herald and Weekly Times Ltd*



1905



2007

TELEPHONE NO. 872.  
CORNER OF  
GERTRUDE AND GEORGE STREETS.

*Trissey, July 15 1902*

*My dear Sir,*

*By kind permission of*

**TO CHARLES JOHNSTON & CO.,**  
MANUFACTURERS & IMPORTERS.

HOUSE DECORATORS  
English, American, Continental and Colonial Furniture.

1902	8	1 Walnut Room order as per agreement	250.00
1902	10	By kind permission of date 25.00	25.00
1902		attestance	25.00
			275.00

*By Cash with hands  
Chas Johnston & Co.*

Receipt, 1902

## **Lewin's tobacconist and hairdresser**

### **No.159 Gertrude Street – building exists**

This building housed a hairdresser for over 100 years; from 1880 when Victor Groves moved in, until the 1980s when the Lewin family left. George Lewin, later his son Ernest, ran the small tobacconist and hairdressing business from the two-storey building. The layout was typical of a small business in those days; the tobacconist section was at the front of the shop followed by the hairdressing basins and seat, and at the back was the family kitchen. The upper storey housed three bedrooms and a store room. A laundry and small vegetable garden were in the small backyard.

## **Duncan Reilly, chemist,**

### **No. 102 Gertrude Street – building exists**

Duncan Reilly began at Oscar Lawson's chemist in 1935 and spent the rest of his working life there. He bought the business from Oscar's son in 1960. His unfailing friendship, encouragement, assistance and care to all who entered his shop was renowned throughout Fitzroy. A compassionate man, Reilly never turned anyone away. Prostitutes, gamblers, drunks, the unemployed and gangsters all found their way to No. 102. Reminiscing in 2002, Reilly said:

‘They all responded to love, to care, to sympathy. Often they were appreciative of the simplest things. The whole spectrum of life was there. We never counted one person as lost or hopeless. There was virtue in every person. That made my 63 years in the Fitzroy community so unforgettable.’<sup>6</sup>

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6 Parker, Cynthia, *Duncan Reilly, Pharmacist in Fitzroy: His Story*, 2002.

## 6 The second half of the 20th century

The post-war era was not kind to Gertrude Street. While it is true that the street had gradually been losing its air of prosperity and bustling commerce ever since the 1890s depression (apart from a period of optimism in the early 20th century), it now truly began to fall on hard times. Because there was no money to repair buildings or erect new ones, many began to fall into disrepair. An increasing number of properties were listed in the annual Rate Books as ‘condemned’. Traffic became busier. Advertising signs mushroomed, destroying the once-gracious buildings with their gaudy, raucous messages. Electric wires haphazardly criss-crossed the street overhead. All of this contributed to what one person described as ‘an ugly, tired landscape’.

Gertrude Street also retained its undercurrent of tension and drama. It was still a haven to the poor, and a hotbed for criminals, drunks, SP bookmakers, sly grog merchants, prostitutes, gangs and two-up gamblers. Residents from the 1950s can still remember people running down the street brandishing weapons, crawling under cars to avoid being beaten up by the police or other criminals, lying in the gutters, drunks, police cars, endless commotion .... Homelessness was rife, with people sleeping in doorways covered by the thinnest of blankets, or at worst, newspapers. People starved and begged. If you had money you could take advantage of the numerous ‘Rooms to Let’ signs, a result of people taking tenants into their already crowded households to augment their own revenue.

In her article in *Fitzroy: Melbourne’s First Suburb*, Eleanor Harding described Peter’s Café in Gertrude Street in the 1960s:

‘.. steak and eggs, three shillings for breakfast, two shillings and sixpence for bacon and eggs...Always nice and clean... It opened 5.30 in the morning. Lovely cheap meal there and plenty of it’. <sup>7</sup>

As with Duncan Reilly, Greek-born Peter would never turn anyone away – as long as they told him if they had no money – ‘I don’t wanna see anyone hungry’, Eleanor recalls him saying.

Diana Georgeff describes Gertrude Street in a similar fashion in her biography of Melbourne poet Shelton Lea, who opened a bookshop at No. 122A Gertrude Street in the early 1970s. In the chapter aptly titled *Prostitutes and Pimps*, she says:

‘The Gertrude Street shop was a disorganised place and attracted the usual Fitzroy caravan of anarchists, Aborigines, poets, prostitutes, social workers and students.’ Georgeff recalls how Albert Rostein, a young doctor who became a regular visitor to the shop, professed that ‘up until that time, he had never known how wild Gertrude Street could be’ with old drunks, prostitutes and police raids being a regular feature.’ <sup>88</sup>

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7 From ‘Aboriginal Fitzroy’ in *Fitzroy: Melbourne’s First Suburb*, p. 295.

8 Diana Georgeff, D, 2007, *Delinquent Angel*, Random House Australia, Sydney, 2007 p. 235.

## **A change of business**

The businesses that remained in Gertrude Street now catered solely for the local community and their daily needs. Tram and cars took people into the city for bigger purchases. No-one wanted to linger any longer than they had to in the street. There were grocer shops, two chemists, a number of fish and chip shops, butchers, newsagents and used-furniture shops as well as a sprinkling of tailors and dressmakers, hairdressers, and a dentist. Many family-owned businesses were taken over by larger concerns. This is reflected in the corporatisation of the names. Gearon's bakery became Capitol Bakeries Pty Ltd, Cranwell's garage became Courtney and Patterson Motors Pty Ltd, then Exhibition Body Works. There was also Victoria Waste Products Pty Ltd at No. 132, Woolcott Weaving Mills Pty Ltd at No.160 and Lady Gay Footwear at No. 220. The butchers shop on the corner of George Street that had been operating since the 1880s, most recently as Swanell's, was now the Rural Meat Supply Pty Ltd.

Change continued. Many shops were converted into cafes and restaurants. For example, Watkins butchers shop at No. 61 reopened as the Espresso Bar and Club run by Grezla Djukic. Falucci's hairdressing shop at No. 220 became the White Swan restaurant. Other shops with upstairs residences were demolished in favour of office space – the Exhibition Body Works at No. 56-60 was demolished in 1974 and made way for a row of offices for St Vincent's Hospital. The Caltex Service Station at No.19-35 was demolished and replaced by an office block. The owners of St Vincent's Hospital began to buy up properties surrounding their existing holdings to satisfy their need to expand.

By the 1950s six hotels remained: the Carlton Club, Rob Roy on the corner of Brunswick Street, the Exhibition on the corner of Young Street, the Royal on the corner of George Street, the Renown and the Builders Arms. The Exhibition and the Royal went in the next decade, leaving only the Rob Roy, Builders Arms and Renown – all three still there in the early years of the 21st century.

## **A snapshot of Gertrude Street businesses in 1972**

Here is a list of businesses that flourished in Gertrude Street in 1972.

- 14 cafes, milk bars, coffee lounges and restaurants
- 12 clubs – five Greek Clubs, Alexander Social Club, Makedonia United Club, Turkish Club, Macedonian Social Club, Albanian Social Club, Yugoslaver Club, Vardar Club
- 10 manufacturing agents and importers
- 3 service stations
- 3 shoe wholesalers
- 2 herbalists, secondhand dealers, lighting companies, beauty shop/hairdressers, paint shops, grocers, chemists, shop fitters and market research companies
- 1 bakery, fishmonger, pet supplies
- 1 optician, dentist, tailor, draper, dry cleaner, music store, newsagent, shoe repairer
- 1 solicitor, tax consultant, travel agent, estate agent, photographer
- 1 billiard table maker, wrought iron works, printer



## Support organisations

A feature of Gertrude Street in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was the number of services set up by the Aboriginal people to support their community. Many organisations had offices in the street. These included the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service at No. 231, the Aboriginal Legal Service at No. 72, the Aboriginal Housing Board at No. 79, and the Koori Information Centre. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 *Aborigines and Gertrude Street*.

## Migration

In the aftermath of the Second World War migrants came to Fitzroy and Gertrude Street and brought life and community back into the area with their fruit shops, tailor shops, green groceries, fish and chip shops, cafes and clubs – and community spirit. Most came from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, Macedonia and Malta. Names such as Vasilios Deliopolous, Rocco Piscitelli, Bruno Ciano, Adele Di Paulo, Filippo Baban and Branko Nikodijevic appeared in the rate books.

A noticeable change in the street was the increasing number of restaurants and coffee lounges as migrant owners brought their foods and European way of life with them. In the 1970s, Gertrude Street became the main dining area in Fitzroy. In 1974 the list of cafes and restaurants included the Blue Danube, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Balkan and Gorgia, leaving the patron in no doubt about the type of food on offer. A common feature of migrant communities is their sense of family, friends and belonging so it was not surprising that social clubs proliferated. In the 1960s and 1970s there were five Greek clubs, the Yugoslavia Club, Tzavaras Coffee Lounge, Citadella Coffee Lounge, Harry's Café, Bosna Espresso Bar and the Bosnakis Coffee Lounge. No. 220 housed the Albanian Social Club upstairs and the Macedonian Social Club downstairs.

Melbourne poet  $\pi$ O brought visions of Gertrude Street to life at this time with his quirky, heartwarming poems. He vividly described the people, the sights and sounds in his combination of Greek/English. Two particularly evocative ones are '116 Gertrude Street' and 'Scenes from a door'. His poetry volumes are available at the Fitzroy Library.

In the 1980s and continuing today, migrants from Vietnam, Cambodia and other parts of Asia have settled in Fitzroy but not to the same degree in Gertrude Street as the Eastern Europeans did. The high rise apartments in Atherton Gardens are home to many people from diverse backgrounds, recent arrivals coming from the Horn of Africa.

## Demolition

In the 1960s and 1970s there was a widespread movement in Australia to rid areas of homes and buildings that had become derelict following the war years and replace them with modern ones. There was a strong sense of renewal and 'starting over' for the country. In Fitzroy, authorities saw it as an opportune time to rid the suburb

of its slums. In this earnest yet sometimes misguided period many buildings that were stable and had no need to be demolished were also destroyed – along with their heritage value and aesthetic appeal. More often than not they were replaced with functional but bland brick constructions. Perhaps many of these buildings could have been renovated and restored instead.

Gertrude Street lost a gracious and elegant building when Granite Terrace was demolished in 1965. Sadly, the building had been allowed to disintegrate until it was deemed unliveable. The replacement office showroom, factory and carport proved a visually unsatisfactory substitute.

Office blocks appeared in the area between Nicholson and Brunswick streets. The entire strip from No. 67–77 all fell into disrepair after the 1950s and was substantially refurbished. Many owners modernised their 1880s building with aluminium window frames and large sheets of glass or mock colonial facades. They did this, however, after being issued with warnings following the Council's annual property inspections. Records are littered with descriptions such as 'vacant', 'disused', 'old and in poor condition', 'in disrepair', 'old and dark', 'condemned', 'poor residence', and 'compliance order issued'.

But the biggest change came in the wake of the so-called slum clearance, a large-scale program aimed at wiping out Fitzroy's overcrowded, sub-standard housing. The Housing Commission began to resume land for clearance as early as 1959 and by 1966 had completed their mission – the entire block fronting Gertrude Street, from Brunswick Street to Napier Street, was demolished. In all, over 60 shops were demolished along with 120 houses. Four giant high rise apartment blocks of 200 units each arose on the site; the area was named Atherton Gardens after Atherton Street, one of the streets that disappeared. The demolition displaced many people, among them a significant number of Aboriginal families, most of whom did not gain a place in the new units.

It is amazing that in this atmosphere Glass Terrace, owned in 1968 by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, was not demolished despite being in very poor condition. The Fitzroy Residents Association, formed in 1969, played a large part in saving this building from demolition and, with the Fitzroy City Council, successfully lobbied the Cain Government to have the terrace saved, restored and used for low-cost accommodation.



*Atherton Gardens, 2007*

By the early 1980s, local residents' groups, the Council and the Ministry of Housing and Construction were in agreement about preserving Fitzroy's buildings and combined to prevent St Vincent's Hospital from demolishing the row of terrace houses near Nicholson Street.

## **Significant buildings and traders in the second half of the twentieth century**

**Rose Chong, costume maker**

**No. 220 Gertrude Street**

Rose Chong arrived in Gertrude Street in 1980, making her one of today's 'old timers'.

She recalls that there was no real retail presence then.

'A lot of buildings were boarded up. There were not a lot of shop fronts. Many of the places were social clubs that catered only for their particular clientele. I remember lots of curtains across shop windows. Because of the migrants, there were strange signs saying things like 'Fresh burek'. Now what on earth was that? There was not a lot for us to buy here.

When I set up my costume shop, friends asked me how I could have such a classy business in such a scary place. And it *was* scary. The whole atmosphere in Gertrude Street in the 1980s was fairly seedy with gambling and drugs being the main vices. From my upper corner window I'd always see trouble at the Builders Arms. After a while we got used to it. Once the police used my upper-storey rooms as a stake-out.

Among the older people, Gertrude Street was synonymous with VD because of the VD clinic that used to operate here. If you said you were going to Gertrude Street, it meant only one thing: You were going to the clinic. There was always a snigger when Gertrude Street was mentioned.

I was part of the first Gertrude Street Traders Association in 1980. There was Duncan Reilly, Herb Berger and Hans. We arranged a street festival and the council organised for replica lamp posts to be installed in the street. I can't remember much else being accomplished.

The early 1990s were not much better, but towards the end of the decade things started to change. The Builders Arms changed ownership and attracted a calmer and more cosmopolitan crowd. Herb's furniture shop became Dantes Restaurant and Wine Bar. Gradually other businesses arrived. It's now an exciting and dynamic place to be with a diversity of people and businesses. All our businesses are individual. There are no chain stores here. We're all unique. The current Traders Association is going strong.

## **Vincent Leung, dentist, No. 247 Gertrude Street**

Vincent Leung came to Gertrude Street in June 1976. He is carrying on a long tradition as a dentist at this site. Francis Belcher set up his surgery here in 1890 and remained until the 1940s, followed by William Freeman and his son who were here until the early 1970s. The business is one of the longest, continuously operating businesses in Gertrude Street.

Hong Kong-born Leung came to Australia to complete his high school and university education then immediately left for England. In 1975 he returned to Melbourne and started looking around for a place to establish his own business. He didn't have much money so the surgery in Gertrude Street was ideal. As he says:

'The area was pretty run-down and depressed. Everything was a bit rough. I remember there was a florist next door, then a continental butcher and a shoe repairer. There was a wine shop on the other side up the street a little and a second-hand goods store opposite. Some of my patients were very poor and mostly older people who had always come here; they were very loyal. After a couple of years I realised I had to start a practice somewhere else as there wasn't enough work around here, so I bought another practice in Springvale. I still have these two practices and divide my time between them.

Gertrude Street has been changing gradually since about the mid-1980s and I have seen huge changes in the last few years. My clientele is now made up of all ages, with a high proportion of professional people. New businesses such as fashion shops and galleries have come into the street. I enjoy it here. I'm looking to stay a few more years – though after 32 years I still haven't got a permanent parking spot!

## **Harry Evans & Sons, billiards table maker, No. 206 Gertrude Street**

Four generations of Evans have provided billiards tables from the premises at No. 206. Harry Evans Snr started his business in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne in 1895 after running a successful enterprise in the gold-boom town of Coolgardie, Western Australia. Harry was the undefeated Australian and world billiards champion from 1882 to 1892. When the family bought the Gertrude Street property during the 1950s, it was two separate shops occupied by squatters. There was no running water and no electricity. With unbounded enthusiasm they set to and removed the wall between the shops to make one large space and added a period verandah. 'The iron lace came from a building in NSW', explained Gordon Evans. 'While the verandah looks good, it also shields the French-polished tables from the northerly sun'. The family affair continues in the 21st century with Gordon in charge of the French polishing, Gordon's son David managing the business and David's wife Chris as the office manager.

Today's business comes from the customised manufacturing of billiards tables for private and commercial commissions, restoration and repairs.

The family has seen many changes and colourful characters in Gertrude Street over the years. 'We love it here. The street's got a great atmosphere and it's really buzzing again. We feel we're very much part of the infrastructure,' says Chris.

## 7 The 21st century: the first few years

Gertrude Street is transforming again.

The social clubs have gone. The last Eastern European restaurant Vardars closed in 2006. Some buildings such as the old English, Scottish and Australia Bank/Aboriginal Health Centre have been abandoned and are empty; plans are underway to convert this to a training centre for Aborigines. Three hotels remain.

The street is slowly becoming gentrified in a way that would surprise residents of the 1860s and 1920s and certainly those of the gold rush era. It is becoming a fashion, food and gallery destination. But as with all places in Fitzroy, it has its edges. It will no doubt resist bland and boring. As one recent reviewer said, 'Gertrude Street is way cooler than wherever you live.'

There remains a kaleidoscope of businesses. The southern side from Nicholson Street to Brunswick Street is now mostly owned and operated by St Vincent's Hospital. The northern side in this area consists of office blocks and small businesses.

The rest of the street is made up of:

- Food and wine bars (cafes, restaurants, a bakery, bars)
- Services (a dentist, a local branch of the Post Office, a newsagent, hairdressers, chemists, an accountant, a paint and hardware store)
- Clothing stores (new and vintage)
- Furniture (an antiques store, a retro furniture store, a store selling second-hand industrial goods, a billiard table maker)
- Galleries

Other businesses include a tattoo parlour, giftwares, a second-hand music store, a florist, a yoga studio and a wrought-iron manufacturer.

As in the early days, many of the premises are owned by the people who run their business.





## **Maria Frendo**

### **Dantes Wine Bar and Restaurant , No. 184 Gertrude Street**

Maria came to Fitzroy in 1996.

‘Even in the 1990s it was still a fairly unsettled place, especially around the corner of Napier Street’, she says. ‘There were prostitutes who would preen themselves by looking in the mirrors on the dressing tables in the furniture shops. We knew the corner was a drug pick-up point. The Aborigines would have regular bonfires in the grounds of the housing estate.

Gradually over the years things have started to improve. Shops are occupied by more permanent owners and different types of stores such as high-class clothing and galleries have appeared. That has made people lift their game. And of course property rates have gone up. It has all had an impact on the area.’

## **The Gertrude Association**

The Gertrude Association, a group of Gertrude Street traders, began about mid-2007, resurrecting a similar initiative in the 1980s. The not-for-profit organisation was revived by local traders Kym Oretenburg and Monique McNamara. They have developed a regular newsletter and implemented a number of initiatives to provide a focus for the street. Their aims are to promote a neighbourly cohesive community by blending and balancing the old with the new and devise projects that raise awareness of issues and people’s creative talents. They’ve already had a T-shirt design competition and a Gertrude Street Digital Media Festival in which artists projected their work onto the walls of buildings and the footpath.

This new phase of Gertrude Street merely demonstrates that change will always be a feature of this vibrant, diverse and history-filled precinct.



## 8 Aborigines and Gertrude Street

The Aborigines have always been an important presence in Gertrude Street. Theirs is a story of survival, resilience and hope, bound together by strong family bonds and a desire to improve their community.

Aborigines began to find their way back to Fitzroy after the First World War, for a number of reasons. The Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve near Healesville was disbanded to make way for a soldier resettlement scheme. The government subdivided the mission at Lake Condah near Portland and sold the land to returned white soldiers – but not to Aboriginal returned servicemen. Aborigines were not permitted to live at Lake Tyers, the Aboriginal mission in Gippsland if they were deemed to be not ‘dark’ enough. Many of those from the Cummeragunja Mission on the border of NSW and Victoria near Barmah simply walked away because there were no jobs for them. Among these were Thomas James, Grace Brux, Marge Tucker and Willian Cooper who all made significant contributions in Gertrude Street.

Many of the Aborigines who returned to Fitzroy from these environments came with a simmering resentment – they had been good enough to fight for their country in the war but not good enough to be treated as an equal in a white world. Many settled around Gertrude, Gore, George and Young streets. Living conditions were poor. In the aftermath of the First World War and in the shadow of the looming depression, Fitzroy’s fortunes had faded. Once-grand homes became boarding houses. Pockets of workers’ cottages became slums. Prostitutes, drug dealers and crime were rife. Many families lived together in small cottages with inadequate toilets and poor hygiene. The homeless huddled anywhere they could. Conditions were starting to improve when the Second World War began in 1939.

Against this backdrop a number of Aborigines were striving for better conditions for their people. The first organisation established was the Australian Aborigines League which began in 1932. Meetings were held on the banks of the Yarra River to fight for Aboriginal citizenship rights, representation in Parliament and support for Aboriginal communities. Another inspirational and important institution was the Aboriginal Church of Christ, established by Pastor Doug Nicholls in 1943, in the church at No. 258 Gore Street. Before that, church activities were held at the home of Alice and Jack Connolly at No. 234 Gertrude Street. The church held a special place for these Aboriginal people – they worshipped, sang and socialised joyously within their close-knit community. By the 1950s there were more than 300 Aboriginal people living in Fitzroy (and as many living in surrounding suburbs). Fitzroy, and Gertrude Street in particular, was the social hub of Aboriginal Melbourne.

A number of essential services established to assist and sustain the Aboriginal community had their premises in Gertrude Street. These services – some still operating though no longer in Gertrude Street – are a reminder of the important contribution made by the Aborigines.



## **Victorian Aboriginal Health Service**

The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service was established in 1973, with volunteer doctors and Aborigines working out of a shopfront at No. 231 Gertrude Street. It grew from the policy that advocated Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs, and a philosophy of holistic health care. The service not only provided medical services but gave Aborigines the opportunity to meet in a comforting and supportive location with other Aborigines. In 1983 it moved to the building that had more recently been the STD clinic and before that the English, Scottish and Australian Bank on the corner of Little Napier and Gertrude streets. The service was extremely successful under the leadership of Bruce McGuiness, Alma Thorpe and Aunty Edna Brown and spawned a range of other programs. The service moved to its present location at No. 186 Nicholson Street in 1993. It remains the most important Aboriginal community organisation to have emerged in Fitzroy.

## **Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service**

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service was established in 1972 at No. 72-73 Gertrude Street to provide legal services for Aborigines.

## **Aboriginal Housing Board**

The Aboriginal Housing Board was established in 1981 and later moved from its Smith Street location to No. 79 Gertrude Street. It is now in Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy.

## **Koori Club**

The Koori Club was established by Lin Onus at No. 41 Gertrude Street in 1969 as a social and political meeting place for young Aborigines. The club had an 'Aborigines only' policy that reflected the climate of the times when young people around the world – especially black activists – challenged the authority of earlier generations and sought to reclaim their cultural identity. Activist Bruce McGuiness spread their word through the club's newspaper the *Koorier*. The club was a good idea, but it was ultimately unsuccessful; Aborigines didn't like to travel at night on their own, there was little support from the local council and people were reluctant to attend.

## **Koori Information Centre**

The Koori Information Centre was established in 1982 at No. 120 Gertrude Street. The impetus was the Brisbane Commonwealth Games at which the protests of indigenous activists were brought to the public's attention. The centre was set up as an educational resource to help people find out more about indigenous issues. Robbie Thorpe ran a 'Pay the Rent' campaign from the premises.

## **Aboriginal Cooperative**

The first state conference for the Australian Aboriginal Elders Council was held in 1957 at No. 165 Gertrude Street.

## **Fitzroy Stars Aboriginal Gym**

The Fitzroy Stars Aboriginal Community Youth Club Gymnasium was formed by the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in 1977 under the leadership of Jock Austin and Bruce McGuiness. Jock, in particular, had long had a dream of an Aboriginal gymnasium. He believed with Bruce that staying fit kept you healthy. The gym played a major part in the success of the Fitzroy Stars Football Club and the Aboriginal community's netball and basketball teams. In the beginning the gym operated out of the health service at No. 138 Gertrude Street. In 1982 the gym leased the building at No. 184 Gertrude Street, and later moved to George Street where it continues to thrive under the name of the Fitzroy Stars Koori Gym. A famous visitor in the 1970s was boxer Muhammed Ali.

## **The Builders Arms**

The Builders Arms Hotel became a social gathering and meeting place for Aboriginal people from the 1940s until the 1980s. The hotel was a place of support for all Aborigines, even being known nationally as the Black Pub of Melbourne. Here Aborigines mixed with Fitzroy's poor whites and post-war immigrants. Everyone knew they would meet friends from the country. Messages were passed on about family members. People greeted those newly arrived from a mission and helped them settle into Fitzroy. If someone was looking for a relative or friend, they'd go to the Builders Arms and know that someone there would be able to help. In the 1960s and 1970s the hotel was a base for Australia's black power movement of which Bruce McGuiness was the undisputed leader and hero.

## **Aboriginal Cultural Heritage plaques**

In 2008 the City of Yarra's Aboriginal Heritage project aims to celebrate the important contribution that indigenous Australians have made to their community. Plaques are to be placed at significant sites, such as the Koori Club, Builders Arms, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, to commemorate Aboriginal achievements and remind people of the past and ongoing presence of Aborigines in Gertrude Street.

## **The Dirty Mile**

In 2006 the Ilbigerri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Theatre produced a street theatre presentation depicting the story of Aborigines in Fitzroy, and in particular Gertrude Street. Written by playwright John Harding and activist and researcher Gary Foley, this highly engaging and evocative event that encourages audiences to walk in Aboriginal shoes is destined to be a regular on the Yarra Council's event program.

## 9 Hotels in Gertrude Street

Over the years no less than 14 hotels have quenched thirsts and dispensed hospitality in Gertrude Street. Of these, three remain today to carry on this fine tradition: the Builders Arms, the Gertrude (formerly the Renown) and Rob Roy.

Nine of the hotels were built between 1853 and 1857, four were built in the 1860s and the last one was built in 1874.

Originally built to provide refreshment to locals and travellers alike, early public houses offered accommodation and were also meeting places, centres for socialising, and places where you could play a game of skittles or billiards and stable your horse.

The favoured location was a corner site which meant that the hotel was easily visible; cellars opening off the side street allowed barrels to be moved from wagon to cellar with the minimum of exertion. 'A pub on every corner' was a familiar statement that was not far from the truth.

Records show that licensees typically stayed for a period of from one to three years then moved on, with a significant number of women enjoying the position of 'licensed victualler'.

In the early 20th century hotels had proliferated to such an extent in Fitzroy (and elsewhere) that a special body was set up to control the number that could be allowed to operate based on a population count. The Licensing Reduction Board did its job well and in Fitzroy alone many hotels that had been operating successfully for a number of years were closed down. Some were converted to new businesses, while others were demolished. In Gertrude Street, four hotels –the Royal Arch, the Freemasons, the Gertrude, and the United Service – were closed by the Board.

Another piece of legislation had an impact on the architecture of hotels. In 1916 the Victorian Parliament passed legislation that restricted drinking hours to between 9.00 am and 6.00 pm. This resulted in what was referred to as the 'six o'clock swill' when hotel bars became crowded as workers on their way home stopped in to top up before the hotel closed. To cope with the increased number of after-work drinkers, many hotels knocked out walls, extended the bar areas, added bottle departments and modernised the external features. The Rob Roy and Builders Arms, both very early hotels, are examples where their redevelopment makes them look as if they were built in a much later period.

The hotels here are listed in the order in which they operated.

## **The Swan, 1851**

### **No. 137 Gertrude Street Demolished**

The earliest record of a public house in Gertrude Street is that of the Swan in 1851. It was located on the north-east corner of Little Napier and Gertrude streets. In 1856 it is described in the Fitzroy Rate Book as a brick hotel of 16 rooms with a cellar and stone stables for 16 horses. It was owned by John and James Woods. In later years it is described as a 13-room hotel with a bar with a rating value of £160 (which leapt to £240 in the 1880 boom years, returning to £110 thereafter).

The hotel fell victim to the Licensing Reduction Board, a body set up to control the number of hotels which could be allowed to operate based on a population count. It was purchased by Jean Borelli and divided into two six-room shops. The building was demolished in the 1960s. The site is now part of the Atherton Gardens Estate.

## **The Builders Arms, 1853**

### **No. 211 Gertrude Street Still operating as a hotel**

Not only is this hotel still operating, it is one of the oldest in the area. Built in 1853 on the north-west corner of Gore and Gertrude streets, it was first owned by Thomas McSelland. It was described in 1856 as a 'stone hotel of 19 rooms and a cellar'. By the 1870s and thereafter it is listed in the Fitzroy Rate Books as 'a brick hotel of 12 rooms with a bar' indicating that it may have been rebuilt. Its rating value in 1880 was £180.

The hotel was auctioned in 1869. For the next two years it was known as the Derryberg Hotel. The hotel was remodeled around 1915 in response to the new drinking laws and it is this hotel that we see today. The hotel became a social meeting place for Aborigines; people still remember the sing songs and dancing around the piano in the back room.

## **The Carlton Club, 1853**

### **No. 22 Gertrude Street Building exists**

The Carlton Club began operating in 1853 on the south side of Gertrude Street close to Nicholson Street. Its description in 1856 is of a hodgepodge of buildings: 'an iron house with 14 rooms, a brick bar, a wooden house at the rear with 12 rooms, stables and a yard'. Owned by a Mrs Cruse, it was leased to James Baynton Cox for 21 years. By the 1860s it had been named the Carlton Club. By the 1880s onwards it is described as a 'brick hotel of 20 rooms' with an annual rating value of around £200. As with many hotels it was extensively remodeled in the late 1910s. In 1993 it was known as the Nightowls Club Hotel.

The building is still there but is now owned by St Vincent's Hospital and serves as part of the hospital's dialysis unit.

## **The Royal Arch, 1854**

**(Coach & Horses, Sir George Bowen, Royal Duke, Civil Service Club)**

### **No. 219 Gertrude Street**

#### **Building demolished**

Surely the most named of all Fitzroy's hotels! It began as the Royal Arch in 1854 on the north-east corner of Gore and Gertrude streets – the opposite north-west corner being occupied by the Builders Arms, as a small stone and brick hotel of five rooms.

From 1862–1872 it was known as the Coach & Horses. In 1873, it was not licensed and became the Tusmith Factory. From 1874–1882 it was known as the Sir George Bowen. For 1882 and 1883 it was known as the Royal Duke. In 1884 it was bought by McCrackens Brewery which purchased the hotel and the adjoining land and renamed the hotel the Civil Service Club. It is described in the 1880 Rates Book as 'a brick hotel of 12 rooms'. The hotel fell victim to the Licensing Reduction Board and was closed in 1910, with £1,021 being paid as compensation to the owner and £125 paid to the licensee.

The site is currently occupied by a soft furnishings store.

## **Drewery's Family Hotel 1854**

**(The Leviathan, Squizzy Taylors, The Renown, Gertrude)**

### **No. 148 Gertrude Street**

#### **Still operating as a hotel**

Drewery's Family Hotel was opened in 1854 on the south-west corner of Gertrude and Napier streets. There had been opposition to the proposed hotel from the neighbouring United Presbyterian Church. Consequently, approval was given on the condition that there would be no bar!

By 1858 it had become the Leviathan and remained as part of the Drewery family estate for the next 70 years. Presumably it now had a bar. It was a fairly small hotel having only nine rooms. In 1900 its rated value was £120. It was renamed the Renown. By the 1920s the hotel was a gathering place for Fitzroy's underworld, with the likes of 'Squizzy' Taylor as regulars. Cashing in on this relationship, the hotel was briefly named Squizzy Taylors. The hotel is still operating and is a handsome survivor; it has recently had a name change to the Gertrude.

## **Royal Exchange, 1855**

**(Lindon House, The Royal)**

**No. 187 Gertrude Street**

**Building exists**

The Royal Exchange began operating in 1855 with Jeremiah Crawley at the helm. Located on the north-east corner of George and Gertrude streets it was a two-storey stone building with a slate roof, 12 rooms and a bar. It served as the venue for the first meeting of the Fitzroy Council on 9 September 1858 in the absence of more suitable premises.

In 1867 the licensee Saqui Auston was fined 10 shillings for allowing a person to sell liquor on a Sunday. Although it has been remodeled over the years, the building retains its solid corner site importance. Currently home to a real estate company.

## **Freemasons Hotel, 1855**

**Corner of Gertrude and Smith streets**

**Demolished**

The Freemasons Hotel was on the corner of Gertrude and Smith streets. Although its address was always referred to as Smith Street, it was a prominent establishment occupying a substantial part of Gertrude Street.

The original hotel was built in 1855 and had 14 rooms and adjoining stables. It was owned and run by Daniel Roberts. Bought by the McCracken Brewery, the Freemasons was rebuilt as a two-storey brick hotel in the 1870s.

The hotel was closed in 1925 by the Licensing Reduction Board and subsequently demolished.

## **St Lawrence, 1856**

**North-west Gertrude Street, near Nicholson Street**

**Demolished**

Little is known about this hotel. It appears in the 1856 rating book as a 'wooden house (St Lawrence Hotel), 18 rooms, large yard and two brick conveniences.' Its owner is listed as Dr Tweedale, a surgeon who had retired from the Royal Navy. The occupier is listed as Thomas Popenheart Bernard. Two years later, neither Tweedale nor Bernard is listed in the rate books and the St Lawrence Hotel is never heard of again.

## **Rob Roy, 1857**

### **Corner Gertrude and Brunswick streets**

#### **Still operating as a hotel**

The Rob Roy is another corner-sited hotel that occupies a part of Gertrude Street but is not referred to as a Gertrude Street property in the rate books. Built on the corner of Gertrude and Brunswick streets, the Rob Roy began operating in 1857 with 11 rooms and a bar. It is another handsome survivor, although the hotel we see today is the result of extensive remodeling in the 1920s.

## **The Champion Hotel 1861, 1911**

### **Corner Brunswick Street**

#### **Building exists**

A prominent corner site on a busy intersection was the ideal location for a hotel and this is the third hotel that occupies part of Gertrude Street (although its address has always been Brunswick Street). The Champion was first built in 1861 but the present building (occupied by apartments and a carpet shop) dates from 1911. The first publican was Jeremiah Boland an Irishman who arrived in Victoria in 1857. A long-serving publican (1861-1895) he was also involved in the Licensed Victuallers Association of Victoria.

By the 1920s this part of Fitzroy was frequented by vagrants, small-time crooks, prostitutes, drug dealers and the like. In fact, a local newspaper referred to the area outside the Champion Hotel as 'that tainted corner', referring to the constant drunkenness and lawlessness.

## **Derby, 1861**

### **(Commotion, Exhibition)**

### **North-east corner of Gertrude and Young streets**

#### **Demolished**

Located on the north-east corner of Gertrude and Young streets, the Derby had eight rooms. In 1886 it changed its name to the Commotion Hotel and added more rooms. In 1928 the name was changed to the Exhibition Hotel. It was demolished in 1967 by the Housing Commission and its site now forms part of the Atherton Gardens housing estate.



## **Charing Cross, 1862**

**South side of Gertrude and Gore streets**

**Demolished**

This hotel was the shortest-lived of all the hotels. It operated for two years, 1862 and 1863, was not granted a license in 1864, and closed the following year.

## **Gertrude, 1869**

**North-east corner of Gertrude and Fitzroy streets**

**Building exists**

Built on the north-east corner of Gertrude and Fitzroy streets, the Gertrude was unusual in that it was designed as a hotel with a row of four shops attached. It was closed in 1916 by the Licensing Reduction Board which offered compensation to the licensee of £875.

## **United Services Club Hotel, 1874**

**South-east corner of Gertrude and Young streets**

**Building exists**

This hotel was the last hotel to be built in Gertrude Street. The 13-room hotel was built in 1874 on the corner of Gertrude and Young streets. It was closed in 1910 by the Licensing Reduction Board as part of its hotel reduction program.

## 10 Records

There are a number of documents and publications that record the early building activity and residents in Fitzroy.

### Burchett Index

Records kept by the Melbourne City Council of 'Notices of Intention to Build' from 1850 to 1916 are held in the Victorian Public Record Office. The records were catalogued sometime in the 1980s by Winston Burchett and sorted into suburbs. They became known as the Burchett Index. For Fitzroy, the records terminate in 1870.

Burchett's card index records the builder, owner, type of building and location. In this way you can quickly find out who the building was built by, who it was built for, a description of the building and where it was. Street numbers did not exist in this very early period so entries rely on existing landmarks or other buildings, such as 'three doors below the Royal Arch Hotel', 'near the Colonial Bank', 'corner of George' and 'nearly opposite the Builders Arms'.

A typical entry reads:

Date	Reg. no.	Reg. fee	No. description	Street	Builder	Architect	Owner	Description of building or work
20 June 53	996	2	East of Virtue's shop	Gertrude	Francis Emery		Peter Virtue	Stone house

### Rate books

In 1854, a detailed record of improved and unimproved properties in the Fitzroy Ward was made by the Melbourne City Council. Copies of the document are in the Fitzroy Library History Room. The handwritten entries describe who owed the building, who occupied it, its use, how many rooms there were and the building material. Street numbers were still not assigned at this stage. The number in the rate book refers to the order in which they were built along the street. Cross streets are listed making it relatively easy to pinpoint the location of the building.

Three entries for 1854 read:

Number	Occupier	Owner	Description
14	Archibald P Allen	Thomas William Stewart	Brick house; 2 rooms, and small kitchen; yard and brick convenience
25	James Jacobs	Captain Mair	Two stone houses jointly 5 rooms, zinc and wood stabling yard and brick convenience
34	George Dodson	Timothy Hickley	Brick house, 2 rooms, hay store, one room, stabling for 30 horses, yard and stone convenience, zinc shed on coach yard adjoining

By the 1880s people's occupations were listed as well as a rated value. Three entries for 1891 read:

No	Name	Occupation	Owner	Description	Value
204	Barnett Marks	Tailor	Barnett Marks	Brick shop, 9 rooms	£95
202	James Beringer	Watchmaker	Barnett Marks	Brick shop, 9 rooms	£95
200	Joseph McGinty	Auctioneer	James Dickson	Brick shop, 5 rooms	£65

Rate books for Fitzroy up to the 1960s are available from the Public Record Office and the Fitzroy Library. The library also has some rate cards to the mid-1970s.

## Melbourne Directory 1850s

By 1858 property entries are listed in the Melbourne Directory. The printed entries are in alphabetical order and list only the occupant and their trade. An entry does not indicate whether the person is an owner/occupier. No cross streets are included, making it difficult to locate buildings.

Numbers do not transpose to today's numbering. In 1858 the even numbers began on the north-eastern side of Gertrude Street from the Smith Street end. By the 1860s the numbers were reallocated in exactly the opposite order – even numbers began on the south-western side of Gertrude Street from the Nicholson Street end.

An example from the 1858 Melbourne Directory reads:

64 Adamson, William, painter and glazier

46 Alexander, Godfrey, draper and mercer

48 Arnold, William, bootmaker

10 Barber, M, milliner and dressmaker

## Sands and McDougall Directory 1860s

By 1860 the firm of Sands & McDougall was responsible for printing the directory. The firm continued to publish the books with increasing detail and entries until 1972 when telephone books had largely supplanted the information.

By 1860, entries included side streets. For example:

Number	Occupier
66	Lister & Hopkins, wine and spirit merchants

*Young Street*

Number	Occupier
68	Candy, William marble and stone masons

There was a large section at the back of the directory devoted to Trade entries. This is a valuable record of advertisements detailing the type of merchandise on offer and the names of business owners. Occasionally prices are included.

## Newspapers

Early newspapers such as the Melbourne Herald, Argus and Fitzroy City Press are good sources for snapshots of life in early Melbourne. All or some of these are available on microfilm at the State Library, the University of Melbourne's Baillieu Library, the Fitzroy Library and on line at websites such as [www.paperofrecord.com/Default.asp](http://www.paperofrecord.com/Default.asp)

## Fitzroy Urban Conservation Study Review 1992

In 1992 the City of Fitzroy prepared a comprehensive study of South Fitzroy of which Gertrude Street forms part. Known as the Fitzroy Urban Conservation Study Review, it was prepared by Allom Lovell & Associates. Its value lies in its descriptions of early Fitzroy buildings. The study is available from the Fitzroy Library.

## Heritage Victoria

Heritage Victoria lists a number of buildings in early Fitzroy. A listing includes a summary of the building followed by a statement about its significance. An example of a summary for Glass Terrace follows. This can be accessed from Heritage Victoria's online site at [www.heritage.vic.gov.au](http://www.heritage.vic.gov.au)

<b>VHR Number</b>	H0446
<b>File Number</b>	601938
<b>Year Construction Started</b>	1854
<b>Year Construction Completed</b>	1856
<b>Municipality</b>	Yarra City
<b>Extent of Registration</b>	To the extent of the buildings including fencing and walling; and land as defined by the Heritage Council.
<b>Other Listings 1</b>	Yarra City Planning Scheme
<b>Architect/Designer</b>	Ross, David
<b>Architectural Style</b>	Victorian Period (1851-1901) Regency
<b>General References</b>	Glass Terrace: A Report on its Architectural Significance and Historic Merit, Historic Buildings Council, 1977
<b>Heritage Act Categories</b>	Heritage place

## Picture Victoria

A valuable addition to the collection of photographs of Victoria's early days, Picture Victoria is an online database of several hundred photos, listed by suburb. There are many photos of Gertrude Street.

Visit [www.picturevictoria.vic.gov.au/site/yarra\\_melbourne/Fitzroy](http://www.picturevictoria.vic.gov.au/site/yarra_melbourne/Fitzroy)

## Public Record Office

The Victorian Public Record Office holds a vast array of documents about Fitzroy, some of the most important to researchers being the rate books from 1856 to 1965, building plans from the 1920s to the 1950s, and the Burchett Index.

## State Library of Victoria

The State Library of Victoria has a collection of annotated maps of areas of inner Melbourne suburbs that accompanies a photographic streetscape survey of the 1970s by the Committee for Urban Action. There is also a collection of photos of Melbourne from the air 1927-1928 known as the Airspy photos. There is also material about individual businesses, for example James and John Coles Gertrude Street painting and decorating business.

## Fitzroy Library History Room

The History Room contains an extensive photographic collection, books, journals and newspapers related to the history of Fitzroy. Of particular interest is the publication *Collingwood and Fitzroy Illustrated Directory and Handbook, 1905*. Other publications include:

Allom Lovell & Associates, 1992, *Fitzroy Urban Conservation Study Review*, prepared by the City of Fitzroy.

Cutten History Committee, 1989, *Fitzroy: Melbourne's first suburb*, Hyland House, Melbourne.

McLean, R 1980, *Aspects of Fitzroy Pubs 1870-1920*, University of Melbourne History Department.

Spiller L 1983, *South Fitzroy Historic Walk*, Urban Planning Office, Fitzroy City Council, Fitzroy.

# 11 Our national heritage: a stroll down Gertrude Street

Here is a snapshot of the buildings and businesses that have occupied Gertrude Street from the 1850s. Information is taken from the Burchett Index, council rate records and the Sands & McDougall Directories. Street numbers have changed over the years and this has made it difficult to identify some businesses accurately. Please contact the Fitzroy History Society if you have any further information. Current occupations are from early 2008, but may have changed since publication. Photographs are from 2007 and 2008.

## South Side

### Nicholson Street

#### Corners of Gertrude and Nicholson Street



The Cable Tram Engine House was built in 1886 for Melbourne's second tram route. It was designed by Alexander Davison, Scots-born architect to the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company who contributed a whimsical cord pattern inscribed on the facade. The building is an excellent example of its type and is intact apart from some minor façade alteration.

#### No. 6 - 8 Gertrude Street



In the 1850s No. 6 was originally part of the garden of John Riddell's property facing Nicholson Street. The site of No. 8 was occupied by a 5-room wooden house with a garden and stables. The present conjoined terrace was described in 1880 as two brick houses of six rooms each and was rated at £38. It has always been residential. In 1890 No. 8 was occupied by Dr William Crooke whose medical practice was on the corner of Gertrude and Brunswick streets. The buildings are now part of St Vincent's Hospital.

#### **No. 10 - 12 Gertrude Street**



In the 1850s this site was occupied by a brick house with three rooms and a shop. The present two-storey terrace was described in the 1880s as two brick houses of six rooms, each being rated at £40. It has always been residential. It is now owned by St Vincent's Hospital.

#### **No. 14 - 16 Gertrude Street**



In the 1850s and 60s there was a small shop here adjacent to a large block of land. In 1914 Albert Bennett, a dentist who had lived further down Gertrude Street (at No. 40) in the 1880s, subdivided this land to build a new practice. Albert obviously wanted to make a statement with the style of his new home and business and it is certainly one of the more impressive buildings in the street. However, the solid and very high bluestone foundation and narrow entrance porches gives it a rather forbidding appearance. In 1955 it was owned by the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation. It is now part of St Vincent's Hospital.

#### **No. 18 - 22 Gertrude Street**



This site was occupied by an iron building of 14 rooms with a brick bar plus, at the rear, a wooden house with 12 rooms and stables, built in 1853. James Cox held a 21-year lease. However, by 1860 it was known as the Carlton Club Hotel, had 20 rooms and was owned by William Watkins. It was remodelled in 1910. In 1976 it was listed for 'proposed public purposes'. It is now a dialysis centre for St Vincent's Hospital.



#### No. 26 - 28 Gertrude Street



In 1854 No. 26 was an iron house occupied by John Cantry who had a hay store. Next door was a house owned by Frederick Whitmore, a saddler. By the 1880s, two conjoined brick shops of six rooms were built. **No. 26** was a grocer for over 70 years; in 1976 it was a milk bar. **No. 28** has housed a draper, cabinet maker, ham and beef shop, grocer, bootmaker, and dressmaker. It is now part of St Vincent's Hospital.

#### No. 30 - 32 Gertrude Street



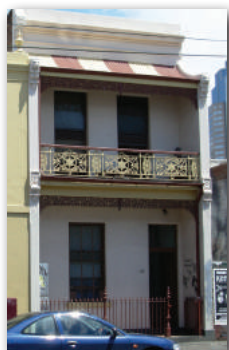
Originally two shops with upstairs residences. It was owned by the Hart family from the 1880s to the 1920s. Currently a bar and club called Gertrudes.

#### No. 34 - 36 Gertrude Street



In the 1850s two wooden houses occupied this site. By the 1870s there were two brick houses with shops at street level. **No. 34** was a laundry from 1910 to the 1930s. **No. 36** was a confectionery shop for many years. The buildings were demolished and the site is currently vacant.

#### **No. 38 Gertrude Street**



This terrace has always been a residence. Built in the 1870s, it remained in the Bricknall family until the 1920s. In 1966 the building was renovated after falling into disrepair. It is now part of St Vincent's Hospital.

#### **No. 40 - 42 Gertrude Street**



No. 40 was Albert Bennett's state-of-the-art dental surgery, complete with entrance portico, which he moved into in 1903. It is now operated by Yarra Housing. The terrace next door with the elegantly curved verandah is listed in the rate book as having 15 rooms. In the 1920s it was even referred to as a 'hotel' but would more likely have been a boarding house.

#### **No. 44 - 46 Gertrude Street**



In 1854 the site was occupied by a brick house with 11 rooms. It was demolished and in 1880 the site was listed as vacant land owned by dentist Albert Bennett. The present terrace was built around 1905. It is now part of St Vincent's Hospital.

#### No. 48 - 50 Gertrude Street



Originally residences, they are listed from 1910 as 'shop and house'. **No. 48** was a confectionery shop for many years and **No. 50** was an upholsterers and later a grocers. In the 1960s it was the Pork Café. It is now part of St Vincent's Hospital.

#### No. 52 - 60 Gertrude Street



Five brick houses stood on this site until they were condemned and demolished in the 1970s. From the 1930s, No. 56-60 was a garage. The current buildings are part of St Vincents Hospital.

#### No. 62 Gertrude Street



This site was a bakery from 1854 until 1989 when the business closed. In 1854 the site is described as 'brick house, shop, bakery, yard' owned by Francis Clark. It was run by William Shurey until 1868; his wife then took over. By 1880 Francis Gearon was in charge and it stayed in the Gearon family until the late 1930s. In 1940 it was owned by Capitol Bakeries Pty Ltd. In the 1960s it was the Mooncrust Wholemeal Bakery. In the 1970s it was Potts Bakery.

## Fitzroy Street

### No. 64 - 78 Gertrude Street



The eight terrace houses that make up Glass Terrace were built between 1853 and 1856 by wealthy Melbourne businessman Hugh Glass. In 1853 two houses were designed by J E Moore and in 1856 architect David Ross designed six more. They are generally thought to be the oldest surviving terrace building in Melbourne. They were nearly demolished in the 1960s when they fell into serious disrepair.

### Corner of Gertrude and Brunswick streets



The corner site fronting Brunswick Street is part of the original Royal Terrace built 1856-58. The building facing Gertrude Street has been a doctor's surgery, dentist, and barber. In 1905 R Barnes had his waiting room and surgery here. Still visible on the walls are signs saying, 'Vaccination', 'Teeth extracted and stopped' and 'Prescriptions carefully prepared'.

## Brunswick Street

### Corner of Gertrude and Brunswick streets



The Champion Hotel was first built in 1861 but the present building (no longer a hotel) dates from 1911. The rug shop that currently occupies the lower floor wraps around into Gertrude Street. In the 1870s there were livery stables attached to the hotel on this site.

### No. 92 -100 Gertrude Street



Prior to 1911, there were two brick shops on this site. From the 1920s **No. 92** was a hairdresser. By the 1970s it was a 'disused shop'. It is a hairdressers again. **No. 94** was a dressmakers for many years. In the 1960s it was owned by the Commonwealth Bank. Currently a Vietnamese café. **No. 96** has been a tailors, a milliners, a dry cleaners and a fish and chip shop. In a 1974 auction it sold for \$26,500. **No. 98** was a confectionery shop in the 1930s and a newsagent in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Currently an accountant's offices. **No. 100** was the site of a plumber from the 1890s until the 1960s. In the 1970s the Citadella restaurant was upstairs. Currently a tattoo parlour.



#### **No. 102-106 Gertrude Street**



The current building was built in 1920. Chemist Oscar Lawson moved his business here from No. 120 Gertrude Street. Later, chemist Duncan Reilly took over. In the 1930s and 40s the shop was a magnet for Fitzroy's poor who received kindness and support from Reilly. It has more recently housed a vintage clothing shop and florist.

#### **No. 108-110 Gertrude Street**



In the 1880s Henry Butler and Alfred Sargood had an importing business here. In the 1890s this was the site of George Clausen's furniture warehouses. Businesses here have included shirt manufacturers, a shoe factory and a dry cleaners. In the 1950s it housed the United Linen Co. In the 1960s there was an 'exotic aquarium supplier' and used furniture.

#### **No. 112-114 Gertrude Street**



This building was in the Cole family from around 1880. James and John Cole were importers of oils, colours, paperhangers, painters and decorators. It was still in the Cole family and operating as a painting business until well into the 1960s. Currently a gallery.

### No. 116 -120 Gertrude Street



In 1854 this was the site of a slaughterhouse. **No. 116** was a newsagency from 1880 until the 1930s. It has since been a confectionery shop and milk bar, and second hand shop. Currently an Aboriginal art gallery. **No. 118** was a hairdressers from the 1880s until the 1970s. Currently a clothing store. **No. 120** was a chemists from 1873. Oscar Lawson was the chemist from 1880 until 1920 when it became a restaurant. Currently a clothing and giftwares store.

## Young Street

### No. 122 -126 Gertrude Street



The United Services Club Hotel was built on this site in 1874. It closed in 1910. **No. 122** is now a gallery and a jewellery shop. **No. 124** was a boot makers from the 1880s to 1920s. In the 1950s and 60s it was a tailors. Currently a clothing shop called Moustache. **No. 126** was a tailors shop in the 1890s and then a laundry, watchmaker, jeweller, bootmaker and grocer.

### No. 128 -130 Gertrude Street



**No. 128** was Albert Sykes' bicycle shop from the 1880s. In the 1960s it was still in the Sykes family. Currently an antique furniture shop. **No. 130** was Henry Whitmore's saddlery from 1880 until 1920 when it became a hairdressers. By 1930 it was a bakery and café until the 1960s. Currently a fish and chips shop.



### No. 132 -134 Gertrude Street



No. 132 and No. 134 was the business of John Whitelaw, corn dealer from the 1870s. The family continued as produce merchants until the 1950s. The building then became Cotton Waste Pty Ltd. **No. 132** is currently a newsagent and **No. 134** is the Fitzroy South Post Office.

### Little Napier Street

#### No. 138 Gertrude Street



The England, Scotland and Australian Chartered Bank was built on this site in 1865. It was known as the Collingwood Branch and was the only bank in Fitzroy at this time. It became the Aboriginal Health Service in 1973. The building is currently unoccupied.

#### No. 140 - 144 Gertrude Street



Now numbered as 142, there were originally three buildings here. In 1854 there was a house and hay store with stabling for 30 horses. By the 1880s and for the next 50 years there was a laundry here. Next door, in 1854, Joseph Horsfall had a wooden house and shop. In 1890 the site was owned by George Clausen and housed a fish shop. It has been a bootmakers, estate agents and a cabinet maker. Next door, in 1854, was a billiard room leased by Drewery's Hotel. From the 1870s until around 1910 it was the shop of John Giles, an oilskin maker. By the 1960s the shops were derelict and demolished. Currently a suite of offices.















### No. 246 Gertrude Street



This corner site was unenclosed waste land for many years. In 1880 the rates book lists an 'iron shed and house' with Frank Howard, caterer. In 1910 Frank is listed as a 'coffee stall keeper'. From 1920 the site was owned by the Australian Advertising Company. Today it is still leased to advertisers.

## North Side

### Smith Street

#### No. 1-9 Gertrude Street



In 1858 Henry Miller built Granite Terrace on this site. It was three storeys high and had a gracious arcaded verandah at street level. Each of the five homes had 11 rooms. It was demolished in 1965 and in 1974 an office block was built on the site. It now houses a business called Hairdressing & Beauty Supplies.

### No. 11 Gertrude Street



In 1854, the wooden 18-roomed St Lawrence Hotel stood briefly on this site. By the 1870s a bluestone house (that is still here) occupied the site. From the 1930s to the 1950s it housed a herbalist.

### No. 13 – 15 Gertrude Street



The present buildings were built in the 1870s. **No. 13** was an opticians run by the McFarlane family for 100 years, one of the longest running single occupant sites in Gertrude Street. Currently Skite, a fashion and jewellery store. **No. 15** was a dressmaker in 1880, a bootmaker in 1890, a dressmaker again from 1910 to 1940, a furrier, a drycleaner. In 1968 the façade was modernised. In 1970 it was a hairdressers.

#### No. 19-35 Gertrude Street



By 1880 until 1930 Rucker & McKenzie owned the entire block almost to Fitzroy Street. The whole section became the Caltex Service Station in the 1960s and 1970s and is now an office block housing various small businesses (taxation services, architect, prepress). **No. 19** was a bootmaker from the 1860s until the 1920s. **No. 21** was a booksellers for many years then a tailors. **No. 23** was a laundry, dentist and café. **No. 25** was a dressmaker, fish seller and hairdresser. **No. 27** housed a mirror manufacturer for 40 years, then Apps the undertaker in 1930. **No. 29** Selina Smith was listed as a 'dealer' from 1880 to 1920. **No. 31** was a grocer, music shop, picture dealer and café. **No. 33** was a bicycle builder, furrier, tea rooms and confectionery goods. **No. 35** housed a grocer, tailor, fruiterer and dealership.

#### No. 37 – 43 Gertrude Street



By 1858 there were shops and houses here, since demolished. The corner site was a timber yard with a stone and wood house, a hay loft and stables for five horses. **No. 37** had mantle makers in the 1890s, a bootmaker in 1900, the Melbourne District Cleaning Co. in 1910, and a ladies' draper in 1920. It was a café and restaurant in the 1950s to 1970s. **No. 39** has housed a music shop, fancy goods; for 30 years from 1930 the Brandon family were listed as 'dealers'. **No. 41** has been a dressmakers, herbalists, butchers and restaurant. No. 37, 39 and 41 are currently part of Artemis Antiques. **No. 43** has been a bakers, fruiterer and electrical workshop and is now a café called Caffettino.

## Laneway

### No. 51 – 61 Gertrude Street



In 1852 Joshua Higgs built a wooden house and store on this site and next door, in 1854, a hay and corn store with stables. By 1880 the property to Fitzroy Street was owned by the Victorian Insurance Co. **No. 51** has been a ham and beef shop, dairy products store and a grocers. **No. 53** has had a long history as a wine merchants, beginning in 1880. Wine sellers Antonio and Velia Virgona were here from the 1920s until 1965. **No. 55-57** has been a dressmakers, furniture shop, hosiery manufacturer. By 1940 the shop was listed as Herbert Healy's shopfittings factory. **No. 59** has had a hosiery manufacturer, picture framer, fruiterer, bootmaker and tailor. **No. 61** was a butchers since at least 1880 until 1965. It was known as F. Watkins Pty Ltd from the 1920s. In 1965 it was the Espresso Bar and Club run by Grezla Djukic and is currently a café called Hudson's Famous Foodstore and Catering.

## Fitzroy Street

### No. 65 – 73 Gertrude Street



The Gertrude Hotel was built in 1869 on this corner site with street-level shops attached. It closed in 1910. In 1965 a 'billiard room' was still listed upstairs. The façade was renovated in 1976. **No. 65** is a design studio. **No. 67** was a Chinese-owned laundry from 1880 until the 1960s. It was a restaurant in 1974 and an office showroom in 1976 and is now a fashion store. **No. 69** was a bootmakers shop from the 1880s until 1950. It was a tailors for 20 years, an osteopath in 1968, fell into disrepair and was sold. Currently a communication and design business called Up & Up. **No. 71** was a fruit shop for 30 years from the 1880s, then a clothier for 30 years which included No. 73, then a fruit shop again. It fell into disuse in the 1960s. Currently a design and gift store. **No. 73** was a dealership run by the Jenkinson family from the 1930s. By the 1960s the building was in poor condition. It is currently a children's clothes, toys and books store.

### No. 75 – 79 Gertrude Street



The properties to Brunswick Street (No. 75 – 89) were owned by the Castlemaine Brewery until the 1920s. **No. 75** has been a jewelers and a confectionery store. In the 1970s it was Harry's Café and is now a skin day spa retreat. **No. 77** was a draper and dressmaker from the 1880s until 1930. It was part of Harry's Café in the 1970s and is now a business that specialises in architectural pieces. **No. 79** has been a stationery shop, newsagents and, from the 1940s a fish shop. In the 1970s the building was listed as 'old and poor'; the shop closed in 1977. It is currently a restaurant.

### No. 81 – 89 Gertrude Street



No 81 and 83 are now 'Rooms to let'. The remainder of the site is the Rob Roy Hotel which was built in 1859 and fronted onto Brunswick Street. From the 1870s there were five shops fronting Gertrude Street, listed as Rob Roy Terrace. These included a hairdresser, butcher, dressmaker, shoemaker and a tailor.

## Brunswick Street

### No. 91 – 117 Gertrude Street



The section of Gertrude Street to Napier Street was fully settled by 1858 with grocers, general produce stores, an undertaker and a marble and stone mason. From the 1880s there was a mix of businesses including grocer shops, clothiers, a watchmaker, dressmaker, bootmaker, draper, butcher, fruiterer and furniture stores. Evan Rees grocery shop was near the corner from the 1880s. Aaron's pawnbroker operated at No. 109 from 1910 until 1930. The large, gracious building on the corner (Clausen's furniture warehouse) had a Brunswick Street address. This strip of businesses was demolished between 1959 and 1966 by the Housing Commission as part of its slum clearance program.



## Young Street (now demolished)

### No. 123 - 135 Gertrude Street



The Derby Hotel was built on this corner site in 1861. It became the Commotion from the 1890s then the Exhibition in 1930. It was demolished in 1967. Businesses in this strip have included a piano repairer, draper, tobacconist, an upholsterer and shoemaker. No. 127 was always a butchers shop. No. 129 was Brochie's grocery for 60 years. This section was demolished between 1959 and 1966 by the Housing Commission as part of its slum clearance program.

## Little Napier Street (now demolished)

### No. 137 - 151 Gertrude Street



This section was well established by 1854 with a wine and spirit merchant and five stores. The Swan Hotel graced this corner site in 1851 until 1920 when it became a dressmakers. The building was demolished, along with the remaining five businesses in this section, in the 1960s. Businesses over the years included furniture dealers, bootmakers, jewellers, a newsagent and grocers.

## Napier Street

### No. 153 Gertrude Street



In 1852 the United Presbyterian Church stood on the corner; it was demolished in 1871. It was Edward Purvis' grocery from 1880 to at least 1910. It has been a wine and spirit store and a florist. Currently a restaurant called Claypots.

### No. 155 – 159 Gertrude Street



**No. 155** had a long history as a grocers from 1880 to the 1940s. Currently a gallery called Seventh. On the site that is now No. 157 and No. 159 was a house and stables for six horses in 1854. From the 1870s, **No. 157** has been a grocers, hatters, costumiers, small goods and furniture store. Currently a video copying company called Beograd Online.

**No. 159** was a hairdressers for 30 years then, from 1912, Lewin's hairdresser and tobacconist's store. Currently Artisan Books.

### No. 161 – 167 Gertrude Street



In 1857 Isaac Fawcett built a tailor shop at **No. 161**; this remained as a family business until the 1920s. Currently a fashion store called Left. In the 1880s No.163 to No. 167 was a furniture dealers, first operated by Henry and Herbert Solomon then Julius Copeland. In the 1940s the shops reverted to individual businesses. In 2007 **No. 163** is currently a fashion store called Vixen, **No. 165** is a fashion store called The Bureau and **No. 167** is Porters Paints.

## Little George Street

### No. 169 – 171 Gertrude Street



From the 1880s until the 1970s **No. 169** was a bakers and pastrycooks. **No. 171** has a similar long life; it was a newsagency from the 1880s until the 1950s. From then until the 1950s it was a watchmakers. Currently a small supermarket.



#### No. 173 -175 Gertrude Street



Before these shops were built the site was occupied by Richard Bishop's coal yard. By the 1910s the building was a furniture store and in the 1930s, it became part of Johnstons Pty Ltd, the furniture company that occupied a large portion of the buildings on the southern side of Gertrude Street. Currently a shop fittings business called Display Design.

#### No. 177 -179 Gertrude Street



These shops have had a variety of businesses. Sometimes they have operated separately and at other times they have been occupied by the one business. **No. 177** has been a plumbers, fruiterer, ironmonger, furniture store, dressmaker, and tobacconist. **No. 179** has been a plumbers, bootmaker, fruiterer, ironmonger and dairy shop. Currently both shops are part of Display Design which also occupies the shops next door at No. 173-175.

#### No. 181 – 183 Gertrude Street



This building was built in 1853 as a shop by stonemason Joseph Trevena. The building was divided into two shops and residences in 1864. No. 181 was a bootmaker from at least 1880 and No. 183 was a butchers from the 1880s. Currently a music store.

## George Street

### No. 187 Gertrude Street



In 1853, Jeremiah Crowley owned the land between George and Gore streets. The Royal Exchange Hotel was built in 1853 by stonemason Joseph Trevena who built the building on the north-west corner of George Street. It had 12 rooms, a bar and a cellar. It served as the venue for the first meeting of the Fitzroy Council in 1858. From the 1880s it was known as the Royal. Currently a real estate agency.

### No. 189 – 193 Gertrude Street



These may be the shops attributed to Heiling and Trevana and built in 1857. The set of six shops (No. 189–199) has housed a variety of businesses. **No. 189** was Charles Moore's grocery store from the 1880s until the end of the 1920s and continued as Francis Bate's grocery for at least another 40 years. Currently a café called Little Rebel. **No. 191** has been a draper, bookbinder and confectionery store. It is now a hairdresser. **No. 193** has been a furniture shop, grocery and café. Currently a restaurant called Arcadia.

### No. 195 -199 Gertrude Street



Part of the original strip of shops that started at No.189. **No. 195** has been a grocery, dairy products shop and a ham and beef shop. Currently Melissa Jackson's millinery store called Millinery in the Making. **No. 197** has been home to a baker, pork dealer, printer and laundry. It is now a Japanese restaurant called Yuzu. **No. 199** has been a fish shop, pastrycooks, and furniture dealers; it was a dressmaker in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Now an Indian restaurant called the Tandoori Times.

### No. 201 Gertrude Street



A brick shop has been here since at least the 1870s and operated as a newsagency. Currently a giftware store known as Bistrini's emporium.

### No. 203 – 205 Gertrude Street



The facades of these shops have been substantially altered. **No. 203** has mostly been a new or used furniture store. From the 1920s until the 1970s it was in the Beckett family. **No. 205** was a grocers from the 1870s until the 1920s, when it became a small engineering works. Currently both these shops are occupied by a high fashion store called Nom\*d Inc.

### No. 207 -209 Gertrude Street



Originally the site of the stables for the Builders Arms Hotel. **No.207** has been a confectionery shop for most of its life. **No. 209** has been a Chinese laundry, a bicycle shop, a bootmaker and, since the 1940s, was home to Felix Mobilia, fruiterer. Currently both shops are occupied by a hairdressing salon named Barbarellas.

### No. 211 Gertrude Street



The Builders Arms was built in 1853. In the 1870s it was described as 'a brick hotel of 12 rooms with a bar'. In 1870 and 1871 it was known as the Derryberg Hotel. The hotel was remodeled around 1915 in response to the new drinking laws and it is this hotel that we see today.

## Gore Street

### No. 219 - 227 Gertrude Street



In 1856 the Royal Arch was on this corner site. From 1862–1872 it was known as the Coach & Horses. From 1874–1882 it was known as the Sir George Bowen. For 1882 and 1883 it was known as the Royal Duke. In 1884 it was renamed the Civil Service Club. The hotel was closed in 1910. It was then used by a second-hand furniture dealer, a dressmaker and hairdresser. The building has been gutted and rebuilt. Currently the site is occupied by a soft furnishings store, and an Asian giftware store called Shop Sui.

### No. 229 -231 Gertrude Street



In 1880 these two shops were Wilhelm Mienhardt's music warehouse. By 1910 he leased the shop on the western side to a milliner. By 1920 Meinhardt had gone and the shop has since been home to a furrier, bootmaker, second-hand furniture and fishmonger. Currently **No. 229** is Enotica, a wine bar and **No. 231** is vacant after being a book store for many years.

### No. 233 – 235 Gertrude Street



Until 1940 this building operated as two separate shops. **No. 233** was a bootmakers in the 1870s. From the 1880s it has housed a greengrocer, furniture dealer, dining rooms, bootmaker and confectionery shop. **No. 235** was a grocers in the 1870s, a confectionery store in 1880, a pastry cooks for 10 years, Bertha Schreck's patent medicine store in 1910, and as confectionery store again from 1920 until 1950. In 1910 Wilhelm Mienhardt (who owned the two shops next door) bought the building, perhaps thinking to expand. Currently both shops are operated as 'Books for Cooks'.

### Little Smith Street

#### No. 237 -239 Gertrude Street



This site was a farriers from the 1870s. It was operated by the Lambles until 1873, then the Lancasters in the 1870s until the 1920s. It then became a printers. In 1972 it was home to Perfection Press.

#### No. 243 – 247 Gertrude Street



This set of three shops cascading down to Smith Street were built in the 1880s on what had been the site of the Freemason Hotel's stables. From 1880, and for over 100 years, **No. 243** was a wineshop; from 1910 it was in the Watson family. **No. 245** was a tobacconist / hairdresser from the 1880s until well into the 1980s. Currently No. 243 and 245 are combined as a restaurant. **No. 247** was a tobacconist until 1890. Since then it has been a dental surgery.



### Corner of Gertrude Street and Smith Street



The Freemasons Hotel was built in 1853. Although it occupied a substantial part of Gertrude Street and had a corner entrance, it had a Smith Street address. In the 1870s it was rebuilt as a two-storey brick building. The hotel was closed in 1925 and subsequently demolished.