

# CAPTAIN JOHN MILLS HOUSE



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1 captain john mills house  
gipps street port fairy front  
view

## Location

40 GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

## Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0253

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO24

## VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 3, 1999

What is significant?

Captain John Mills' House is located on a slight rise in what is now Gipps Street, Port Fairy, the street in the town grid aligned with the River Moyne. The earliest, middle section of the dwelling, probably built in late 1843, faces the west bank of the river which was then developing as a port. The second, rear section was built before 1848. The third, front section, built in 1853, clearly addresses the formal street pattern, which was imposed in the mid 1840s. The stages of construction reflect the building techniques possible at that time and all the opportunities provided by a port. They range from the simplest timber framing with split boards, shingles and casement windows, through the relatively more sophisticated use of double hung sash windows, to the imported prefabricated structure of the front building with its sheet iron roof, cast iron columns from Sydney and verandah flag stones, possibly from Scotland. Significant early joinery and decoration, such as rare wallpapers also survive. Stables were built on the northern boundary in 1859. Other minor structures and works also existed on the site. The house remains significantly intact to its late 1850s extent, is in good condition externally but only fair condition internally.

John Brabyn Mills (1809-1877) and his brother Charles Frederick (1812-1855) were, at first, sealers and whalers, but became increasingly settled at Port Fairy as a maritime trader and as a farmer. Charles was the first occupant of the house until he moved to his farm, Woodbine, in the mid-1850s. Captain John Mills was appointed the Harbour Master at Port Fairy in 1853, retiring from that position in 1871. He also held other positions of importance in the community. He occupied the house from the mid-1850s until 1871.

The Mills family sold the property in 1909 to their neighbour, James Bragg, a carrier. It remained in private ownership until 1984 when it was presented as a house museum. It was then purchased by the State because of its significance.

How is it significant?

Captain John Mill's House is of scientific, aesthetic, architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria and to the nation of Australia.

Why is it significant?

Captain John Mill's House is important as, in its earliest part, one of the oldest surviving timber structures in Victoria, for its sequence of development and for demonstrating a range of early building techniques and materials. These are important for reflecting the special nature of Port Fairy, also known as Belfast, as one of the busiest ports in colonial Victoria. It is also important for its representation of the pioneering mariners, John and Charles Mills and their families, especially John Mills in his authoritative role as Harbour Master.

[Online Data Upgrade Project 2001]

### Permit Exemptions

#### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General

exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific Exemptions:**

**General Conditions:** 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. **General Conditions:** 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. **Note:** All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. **General Conditions:** 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. **Note:** A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. **General Conditions:** 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. **General Conditions:** 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. **Minor Works :** **Note:** Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates        1845,

Heritage Act Categories    Registered place,

Other Names                MILLS' COTTAGE,   MILLS COTTAGE,

Hermes Number            2678

Property Number

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## History

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REGISTER OF THE NATIONAL ESTATE - CITATION JOHN MILL'S COTTAGE AT 40 GIPPS STREET, PORT FAIRY WAS ERECTED IN THREE STAGES, ON LAND ORIGINALLY HELD BY JAMES ATKINSON AND LATER BY BROTHERS JOHN AND CHARLES MILLS. THE CENTRE WEATHERBOARD SECTION WAS ERECTED PRIOR TO 1845 WITH THE REAR SECTION WITH LOFT AFTER THAT DATE. THE FRONT SECTION, POSSIBLY OF PREFABRICATED CONSTRUCTION WITH PATENT ROOF TILES, VERTICAL BOARD WALLS AND OPENWORK REGENCY IRON PILASTERS TO THE VERANDAH, WAS ERECTED C. 1853. JOHN MILL'S COTTAGE AT PORT FAIRY IS ONE OF THE OLDEST EXTANT BUILDINGS IN VICTORIA AND OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO THE HERITAGE OF THE STATE. THE TIMBER BUILDING COMPLEX DATES FROM THE FIRST PERIOD OF SETTLEMENT AND SURVIVES VIRTUALLY INTACT TO DEMONSTRATE EARLY BUILDING TECHNIQUES IN AUSTRALIA. JOHN AND CHARLES MILLS, AS WHALERS, SEALERS AND COASTAL TRADERS, WERE AMONGST THE EARLIEST SETTLERS IN WESTERN VICTORIA. JOHN MILLS APPEARS TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE COTTAGE SINCE EARLIEST CONSTRUCTION UNTIL 1871. JOHN MILL'S COTTAGE SURVIVES VIRTUALLY IN ORIGINAL CONDITION ALTHOUGH EXTREMELY DEPRESSED AND DILAPIDATED. THE STRUCTURE IS CURRENTLY BEING USED AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION WITHOUT ANY ENHANCEMENT OR REHABILITATION OF THE FABRIC. OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE.

## Extent of Registration

*Borough of Port Fairy. No. 253. Captain John Mills House, 40 Gipps Street, Port Fairy.*  
[Victoria Government Gazette No 100 Wednesday, October 9 1974 p.3649]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*