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## Duplex Houses



29-31 Phoenix Street, South Yarra



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### Location

29-31 Phoenix Street SOUTH YARRA, STONNINGTON CITY

### Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO530

### Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 16, 2016

### What is significant?

The semi-detached pair of houses at 29-31 Phoenix Street, South Yarra, is significant. The houses were built for owner John H Sallows in 1890 as rental properties. Sallows was an engineer, and the likely designer of their naïve though creative and lively architectural expression.

The front walls are of pressed red brick with cream brick dressings, both tuckpointed in Flemish bond. The facades have a regular pattern of round-headed arched openings, three to each dwelling; the central openings to recessed entrance porches. Abstracted classical forms, including keystones, engaged pilasters and raking pediments are created mainly with cream bricks, many of them with moulded profiles.

The two dwellings are highly intact, retaining all elements and details of the facades and entrance porches. The only external alteration noted is the shortening of the four front chimneys.

The dwellings are significant to the extent of their 1890 fabric. While the 1890 timber lean-tos at the rear are secondary, utilitarian spaces, the intact corbelled chimney shared by the two kitchens is particularly significant as the only surviving intact chimney.

### How is it significant?

The semi-detached pair of houses at 29-31 Phoenix Street is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

### Why is it significant?

Aesthetically, the semi-detached terrace pair is significant for its abstracted classical forms, in a naïve version of the Free Classical style, in a palette of materials typical of the Federation period (particularly the pressed red brick). They are highly unusual among dwellings in the City of Stonnington both for their inner-urban form, built to the front boundary, and even more so for the abstracted pedimented parapet and high level of detail created with cream bricks. The use of the two colours of bricks is lively and inventive, particularly the use of moulded cream bricks to create classical capitals and cornices, combined with a more medieval use of decorative diaper patterns. The retention of fine-grained detail, such as the timber entrance gates and diamond-patterned timber porch ceilings, is also unusual. (Criteria B & E)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington Victorian Houses Study, City of Stonnington, 2016;
Hermes Number	200120
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

The semi-detached pair of bichrome brick dwellings at 29-31 Phoenix Street is an unusual and intact example of a late Victorian dwelling, with a transition to the materials popular in the Federation period. While small in size, the pair is distinguished by the abstracted pediment form of front parapets, which can be considered a version of the Federation Free Classical style.

The pair is built to the front property boundary, giving it a very inner urban form, in contrast to most of the other houses in Phoenix Street which are set back behind a modest garden, though all have minimal side setbacks reflecting the small blocks of this subdivision.

The front walls are of pressed red brick with cream brick dressings, both tuckpointed in Flemish bond. The raddling on the red bricks of the parapet has run down over time, tinting some of the cream bricks. The side walls are of lighter red bricks, jointed in a Colonial bond. Each dwelling has a main gable-fronted roof, clad in corrugated metal, over the primary building volume which is built of brick. Each has two red-brick chimneys to the primary volume, all four of which have lost their corbelled tops.

At the rear, each dwelling has an L-shaped timber lean-to containing the kitchen and bathroom. Judging from the 1895 MMBW plan (Detail Plan No. 954), this lean-to section is original, though the bathrooms have been extended westward to incorporate indoor toilets. The kitchen lean-tos share a tall chimney with a red-brick shaft and a bichrome corbelled top with a dog-tooth detail.

The front elevations of the two dwellings are mirror images, with the two recessed entrances at the centre of the composition and identical pediments. The facades have a regular pattern of round-headed arched openings, three to each dwelling. The outer two openings are arched windows with one-over-one double-hung sash windows with bluestone sills (overpainted). Abutting each other at the centre of the composition are the entrance arches which open onto small recessed porches.

The use of the two brick colours is lively and inventive. While red bricks are used for the majority of the wall face, cream bricks are employed to create detail. They are used as the upper part of the building plinth, as voussoirs and keystones to the arched openings, in diamond-shaped diaper patterns inside the porches, in a small diaper pattern below a stringcourse, as a cornice dividing the facade from the parapets, as short piers framing the parapets, and for the tympani of the raking pediments. Special moulded cream bricks are used to create more sophisticated architectural details such as the stringcourse, capitals of engaged pilasters, and as a cornice to the raking pediments. In keeping with the Victorian enthusiasm for ornament, several cast-cement elements have been added to the parapet, including scrolled corbels and chunky acroteria (or a shell design) to the outer edges of the parapet. Unlike the other detailing to the house, these are the sort of elements typically seen on the parapets of Boom-style terrace houses.

Apart from the bichrome brickwork and unusual pedimented parapet form, the third focus of unusual detail is the two entrance porches. Both retain rare timber gates with a curved top rail and infilled with slender timber dowels of two lengths with turned finials. It is similar in its form and detail to timber gates advertised by James Moore & Sons, Timber Merchants of South Melbourne, during the 1890s (National Trust Technical Bulletin: Fences & Gates, 1988:40).

As noted above, there is a large diamond-shaped diaper pattern in cream bricks with the blind arches on the walls inside the porches, and both have a timber beaded lining board ceiling laid in contrasting diamond-shaped patterns.

Steps up to each entrance porch and to the front door within are of bluestone. Both retain an original four-panel door with fielded panels and bolection mouldings, typical of the late nineteenth century, and above it is a simple rectangular highlight window.

## Local Historical Themes

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

8.4.2 Functional, eccentric & theatrical - experimentation & innovation in architecture

8.5.1 'Struggletown' - working-class housing in the nineteenth & early twentieth century

*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/>