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Architects Creating a Landscape

Ray Tonkin

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This article is derived from a research project designed to establish a better understanding of the nature of professional architectural activity in the State of Victoria, Australia, in the second half of the 19th century. It posed the following question: why is the activity in rural areas not acknowledged by the traditional approaches to studying architectural history? Part of the conclusion is that our understanding of urban cultural landscapes/townscapes will be improved if we look beyond the limitations of separate disciplines such as architectural and social history or historical geography. The landscape is built from many layers and they all need to be acknowledged if we are to understand what we find important about it. The reasons for seeking the conservation of our urban environment cannot be related solely to the peculiar interests of one discipline alone. Over the past 30 years the Australian community has developed a substantial interest and appetite for heritage conservation and along with that has grown a broadening interest in how the importance of the urban environment is defined.

Keywords: Built Environment; Urban Heritage; Architectural History; Australia

The Australian colony of Victoria was first permanently settled by Europeans in 1834 when the Henty brothers arrived at Portland in the far west of the colony. The initial white settlement of the hinterland was for agricultural purposes with a few service towns appearing throughout the colony. Prior to this there had been both seasonal and long-term occupation by sealers and whalers along the coast from bases established to serve their activities. Prior to that, the land had been occupied for thousands of years by Aboriginal people.

With the announcement of the discovery of gold in 1851 there was a massive influx of population from across the world. Places like Ballarat, Bendigo, Mt Alexander (Castlemaine) and Clunes became household names across the globe as thousands of people set off in search of fortune. Whilst these gold rushes had a limited life, the

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Figure 1 *The Corner and Mechanics' Institute, Ballarat*, ca 1882. Photograph: albumen silver; 13.4 × 20.3 cm. Reproduction rights owned by the State Library of Victoria.

settlements that they created did not and it was the industry that grew up in the towns and cities to support mining that established the colony (after 1901 a state of Australia) as the manufacturing and industrial centre of the country.

This development was not simply happenstance. There was a significant role for professional architects and engineers in the development of towns and cities, a role that is often overlooked. It is the purpose of this article to discuss that role. Not only did large centres such as Ballarat, Castlemaine, Maryborough and Bendigo develop around lucrative gold fields but a myriad of smaller settlements was established. This was the result of the discovery of gold nearby, or as support towns for surrounding agricultural pursuits, or in the case of Geelong and towns like Warrnambool and Portland as ports and service centres for the industrial (gold) and agricultural activities of the hinterland.

What is the Picture of Architectural Activity in Victoria in the Late 19th Century?

The most dramatic evidence of man's activities on this earth lies in our urban and industrial landscapes. As a result, the architecture and buildings of our urban environments are a palpable part of our cultural landscape. The growth of architectural practice across Victoria in the first half of the 19th century demonstrated the level of building activity in the colony at that time. Research into the practices of architects in Victoria has revealed a large number of practices spread throughout the colony during the last half of the 19th century.

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Table 1

Date	Source	No. of firms	Notes
1857	Huxtable's Ballarat Commercial Directory	10 entries	
1859	Bendigo District General Directory	2 entries	
1861	Geelong and Western District General Directory	3 entries	
1867	Port Phillip Directories—Sandhurst (Stevens and Bartholomew)	4 entries	The listing is for architects, civil engineers, etc. It is known that two of them were practising as architects but the other two may have practised as engineers
1865/1866	Port Phillip Directories—Ballarat and District	15 entries	The listing is for architects and surveyors
1875	Bailliere's Victorian Directory	33 entries	This is the most comprehensive list found in the directories and lists firms with addresses in places as diverse as: Beechworth, Wahgunya, Coleraine, Alexandra, Sandhurst (Bendigo), Ballarat, Geelong, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, Castlemaine, Maryborough, Nagambie, Daylesford, Lake Town, Portland, Kyneton, Port Albert, Ararat
1880/1881	Bailliere's Victorian Directory	20 entries	This list covers the whole colony. The difference between the 1875 directory and this is substantial. Not only are there fewer entries but many of the 1875 entries have disappeared altogether. It must be assumed that payment had to be made for an entry in the directory and business decisions were made as to the value of these entries. In this directory the following places are listed as the addresses of architects: Ballarat, Geelong, Sale, Colac, Donald, Stawell, Warrnambool, Castlemaine, Hamilton, Echuca, Wychitella, Belfast (Port Fairy), Portland, Horsham, Wangaratta, Benalla

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Table 1 provides some insight into the number of practices working throughout the state during this period.

So between 1875 and 1880 we can identify architectural practices in no fewer than 28 Victorian towns.

A number of other studies have attempted to identify the extent of architectural activity in various centres, and Table 2 provides some insight into these findings.

Lawler's essay on the firm Vahland and Getzschmann (in its various manifestations) clarifies that it dominated architectural work in Bendigo and district and all the way north to the Murray River for over 40 years from the late 1850s until around 1900. Lawler explains that the Germanic background and training of many of these people

Table 2

Source	Locality	Period covered	No. of practices	Comments
Lawler[a]	Bendigo	1850–1910	25	
Rowe[b]	Geelong	1860–1900	19	
Jacobs et al.[c]	Ballarat	1860–1910	21	This is taken from the places written up in this publication
Tonkin	Warrnambool	1850–1900	15	This is a count taken from recorded newspaper articles and tender notices from this period

Notes:

[a]Lawler, *The Vahland School*, 3.

[b]Rowe, 'Architecture of Geelong, 1860–1900'.

[c]Jacobs et al., *Ballarat: A Guide to Buildings and Areas, 1851–1940*.

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provided the possibility that they established a strongly German school of design, and flavour, in Bendigo.[1]

Such regional practitioners were extremely active, many of them with very busy practices and obviously relying on offices to produce all of the work. In several instances they held down other official posts. Andrew Kerr from Warrnambool was also Town Surveyor and Shire Engineer for Mortlake. Frank Hammond from Hamilton was Town Engineer and Town Clerk. Their offices also provided the profession with an ongoing source of practitioners

Very little has been done to catalogue their works and contribution, although plenty of data are available through the documentation of the association of individual architects with individual buildings in local heritage studies. However, this work rarely discusses their role in influencing the form of these towns and cities, whether they imposed an architectural style or form on the place or what relationship they held with other members of the community and what role they played in addressing the development ambitions of these communities. This is an important part of the social history and historical geography of these places. These architects were not just practitioners of their trade. They very often played a prominent role in community life and it was undoubtedly of importance to be seen out and about with those who commissioned work.

This importance is reinforced by Lawler.[2] W. C. Vahland was a member of many organisations and for a time was a councillor for the City of Bendigo. As has been discussed by Paul Fox[3] and others, being active in community affairs was a particularly important qualification for a successful practice in a growing industrial environment like Ballarat or Bendigo.

So we are able to detect a very active architectural scene across Victoria during the last half of the 19th century. The work of these local architects was supplemented by commissions given to larger and more prominent Melbourne-based firms whose work

Figure 2 *Looking Down Centre of Sturt Street, Ballarat*, n.d. Miniature postcard: gelatin silver; 6.7 × 8.4 cm. Reproduction rights owned by the State Library of Victoria.

appears all over the colony—firms such as Reed and Barnes, Terry and Oakden, Smith and Johnstone, etc. In some cases this was as a result of a corporate client such as bank or insurance company using the same architect wherever they erected a building, or a church where the diocesan architect was used. The interaction of these practitioners with the social, environmental and geographic pressures may be little more difficult to ascertain. The role of the Public Works Department throughout the colony also cannot be overlooked. Its architects were responsible for a vast array of structures, many of which to this day provide prominent centrepieces to the towns and cities.

Can Architecture and Buildings Be Part of Our Cultural Landscapes?

The US National Park Service has always been a leader in the identification of cultural landscapes and has been one of its significant and major activities. A summary of the Service's five types of cultural landscapes is:

(1) Historic scene: a micro-environment where a significant historic event occurred, frequently with associated structures or tangible remains that promote understanding and interpreting of events, ideas or people.
(2) Historic site.

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(3) Historic designed landscape: e.g. historic gardens and parks where the form, layout and/or designer are significant; attention to detail is important in this category.
(4) Historic vernacular landscape.
(5) Ethnographic landscape.[4]

Types 1 and 3 are pertinent for the sorts of places discussed in this article. International interest in the notion of cultural landscapes had been established for many years and was finally acknowledged by the World Heritage Committee in 1992 when it adopted a classification framework for cultural landscapes. This framework provides limited room for urban environments and recognises three categories of landscape:

(1) A clearly defined landscape is one designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes characteristically constructed for aesthetic, social and recreational reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles.
(2) An organically evolved landscape:
   - a relict (or fossil) landscape;
   - a continuing landscape.
(3) An associative cultural landscape.[5]

The first of these provides an opening for urban environments. However, it is clear that this is not precisely what some of the drafters had in mind. The focus is clearly on gardens and parklands. There is also some commonality between the two sets of definitions, but inevitably they are not the same. What is important is that the concept of an urban landscape/townscape has not been totally disregarded. The place of the urban landscape has been acknowledged by geographers for a long time and the theory underpinning the study of cultural landscapes has come largely from historical geography.

Among the early writings, Ellen Churchill Semple provides us with a view of this concept when she says: 'Geographic conditions influence the economic and social development of a people by the abundance, paucity, or general character of the natural resources, by the local ease or difficulty of securing the necessaries of life, and by the possibility of industry and commerce afforded by the environment.'[6]

She went on to identify four different classes of geographic influences:

(1) Direct physical effects of environment.
(2) Psychical effects of geographic environment.
(3) Geographic conditions influencing the economic and social development of a people by the abundance, paucity, or general character of the natural resources.
(4) Geographic features which effect the movement and settlement of people.

In summarising this analysis she discusses how 'many of the characteristics acquired in the old home still live on. Or at best yield slowly to the new environment', but that the new environment and economic conditions will inevitably prompt change and a different outcome.[7] It is worth noting that Semple's interpretation of the German

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Figure 3 Panorama of Ballarat taken from the Town Hall tower. Available on Open Access shelves in Mitchell Library Original Materials Reading Room.

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geographer Ratzel continues to be the subject of debate; however, this is not the subject of this article. Her views strike a chord for these investigations which deal with the new 19th-century settlements in regional Victoria and their growth over a short period—in particular the reliance on models from the Old World and the gradual and growing influence of local geographic factors.

There is a general acceptance by historians and commentators that new settlers attempt to recreate physical replicas of the 'old country'. Semple supports this but says that whilst this may be the first objective, the geographic impacts and local environment of places like Ballarat, Bendigo or Warrnambool will create a somewhat different place from that which it initially set out to emulate. So the environment is more than a passive agent. The surveyors, architects, engineers, designers and builders of these places were going to be influenced by more than the pattern books and journals that they brought with them or came through the mail. Their engagement with the environment, their clients and the ambitions of the community led to something different and a different interpretation of design and style from what may have been applied in the 'old country'. This does not make these places any less important, but it does mean that

they have to be studied from a different perspective from that applied through the traditional approach of architectural historians concerned with architectural design and style.

In discussing symbolic landscapes, D. W. Meinig further reinforces this when he suggests: 'It is clear that symbolic landscapes … arise out of deep cultural processes as a society adapts to new environments, technologies and opportunities'.[8] In discussing the American landscape, Pierce Lewis suggests that 'it is proper and important to think of cultural landscape as nearly everything that we can see when we go outdoors'.[9] He goes on to suggest that 'Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form.'[10]

In Australia, historical geographers have largely avoided applying their theory and form of analysis to the urban environment. As a result the field has been dominated by social and architectural historians and urban planners. As Ken Taylor has explained so eruditely, our rural landscapes can be fine examples of cultural landscapes as defined by the geographers, but rarely are the urban spaces defined in the same way.

Dolores Hayden dealt with the same issue and quoted J. B. Jackson, who saw cultural geography (as he called it), architecture and social history intersecting to provide the history of the cultural landscape.[11] Hayden recounts the debate that took place between the eminent urban sociologist Herbert Gans and Ada Huxtable, architectural critic for the *New York Times* over the listing activities of the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission. Gans was critical that this body failed to acknowledge anything but grand architectural monuments. Huxtable defended the position on the basis that to stigmatise monuments because they were the product of the rich was perverse.[12] The reality is that there is room for both.

So the study of our urban environment and the creation of the physical form of our towns and cities is not the exclusive preserve of one or other of the disciplines, be they social history, architectural history, urban planning, economic history or historical geography. It should be a joint exercise, and our understanding of these places and their significance and importance will be improved as a consequence of discussion amongst all the relevant disciplines.

How Do We Study and Analyse Our Built Environment and Urban Landscapes?

The study of the built environment in Australia has been largely left to architectural and social historians and, to a lesser extent, urban planners. The great tradition of architectural historians in Australia is to celebrate the grand, just like the New York Landmarks Commission. This approach derives from a great European tradition. Pierce Lewis, in contrast, in setting out his axioms for reading the American landscape, is concerned that one cannot make much sense of cultural landscapes if one studies elements of those landscapes outside their contexts. He talks of architectural historians publishing books of handsome photos, removed from their context, 'as if on an architect's easel in a windowless studio somewhere'.[13]

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Figure 4 *Pall Mall, Bendigo*, ca 1907. Postcard: printed, colour; approx. 8.8 × 13.8 cm. Reproduction rights owned by the State Library of Victoria.

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The photograph itself is hardly the issue, but rather the practice of isolating 'important things' or monuments. This is one reason why the day-to-day architecture and buildings of our rural and regional towns are often overlooked. They may be insufficiently grand when compared to equivalent examples in our big cities and elsewhere in the world.

Canberra, the capital of Australia, is a small city which seriously celebrates the architectural monument despite the fact that its enduring character is that of a designed landscape and its associated plantings which in turn articulates the city form. The most prolific architecture in Canberra is that of the domestic dwelling. Canberra is the epitome of the suburban city and perhaps the best architectural decisions have been made in relation to the design of those houses, particularly the houses of early Canberra.[14] It is, however, far more difficult to gain broad acknowledgement of the importance of the designed landscape or the domestic architectural scene than to celebrate the monuments of Canberra such as the Parliament Houses or the national cultural institutions.

The Australian government has recently introduced a new heritage listing process to identify places of significance to the nation as a whole. The first round of nominations by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects for this list was a series of 20th-century monuments from around Australia. Amongst them there were no nominations for houses despite the importance of the house in the establishment of Australia's larger

cities and the domination of the domestic residence as an architectural form throughout the country.

At a different level, the World Heritage Committee also suffers from this monument syndrome. For this reason the Royal Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne had a difficult passage onto the world list. It was constantly seen as a fine big 19th-century building in the southern hemisphere. The nomination, however, was not about its monumentality but rather about its role and rarity as a survivor of the great exhibition movement of the 19th century. However, Australian bureaucrats, international reviewers and certain members of the World Heritage Committee struggled to break away from a view of it in terms of its architecture and monumentality.

This is not surprising. The Committee draws on a long and established view of architecture as being an aesthetic pursuit rather than a social or engineering activity. It places the other players in the creation of buildings and architecture in the background and promotes the view that clients simply provide the money and builders simply do as they are told. Wayne Andrews aptly summarises this when he proposes that 'I happen to believe that architectural history is only half told when the neatest analysis is made of the designs under consideration. I think that both client and architect are likely to be interesting individuals and that how the client was persuaded is a story worth hearing.'[15] He goes on to place businessmen and economic forces in the creation of buildings as important factors in the creation of the urban environment. This does not deny the importance of architectural design and style. It simply calls for a broader recognition of who found 'new ways to impress their neighbours with their importance'.[16]

The American architectural historian James Marston Fitch was a little more direct when he criticised the great English architectural historian Bannister Fletcher. In particular he found his Eurocentric approach to architectural history quite inadequate and that Bannister Fletcher was not only obsolete but harmful. As he put it, it is not a world history but an architectural analysis of the western world alone. It is parochial and fails to deal with 'other fields'.[17]

He further comments on the architectural history profession, seeking for it to become 'esthetically mature' and claims that 'there is no room for personal aesthetic likes and dislikes to be promoted over the facts'. 'The ability to make such objective analyses, to break down into their component parts the periods of history, to understand the complex of technical, esthetic and cultural forces which acted upon them and gave their art its characteristic form—this ability is relatively new and marks an absolute gain in the science of history itself.'[18]

Fitch wrote over 40 years ago. Since that time Australian architectural historians and heritage professionals have advanced their approach and it would have to be acknowledged that there is a far greater level of aesthetic maturity in the writing of architectural history than there was then. The antiquarian who would like to advance one stylistic aspect over another still appears from time to time and there is probably a greater tendency amongst the general public to promote a limited view of popular and preferred historical styles—hence the mock Georgian and Edwardian styles that are to be found in new suburbs in Australian cities. But is this itself not an expression of everyday cultural values?

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A further tradition among architectural historians is to undertake biographical studies, thereby celebrating the work of an individual and isolating that work as a personal aesthetic exercise. Melbourne architectural historian Julie Willis has seriously questioned the manner in which modern architectural historians in Australia have applied their craft, commenting that through the 20th century this idiom has played an increasingly important role.[19] She correctly asserts that this leads to the elevation of individual architects to iconic status at the expense of their partners and associates. She reinforces the view that by focusing on the 'big boys' who worked or work in the major cities there has been a failure to understand not only the value of the work of the more modest practitioners but also the role they played in a broader social movement of the creation of towns and cities. She goes on to explain this approach as allowing architects to see themselves as part of an elite tradition, removed from the trade basis of construction and appealing to egos.

This observation reinforces the view that the architects of rural and regional Victoria are not treated seriously because they do not support the egos of those who aim to associate with the grand. During the 19th century they were very often associated with the everyday experience of creating towns and settlements and not necessarily seen to be on the high artistic plane of other architects. They were also, very often, surveyors and engineers as well, and brought a practical approach to their craft.

Willis's summary of the limitations of the architectural biography as it is pursued in Australia supports the view that the urban environment as part of our cultural landscape cannot be analysed in a one-dimensional way. Her argument underpins the

Figure 5 *Pall Mall From Bridge St, Bendigo*, ca 1906. Postcard: collotype, colour; 8.8 × 13.8 cm. Reproduction rights owned by the State Library of Victoria.

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view that a proper understanding of the built environment requires the input of other disciplines let alone a broader form of architectural analysis—that is an analysis beyond the aesthetic approach of an individual.[20]

What Were the Influences on these Designers of Our New Towns and Cities or What Were the Geographic and Social Forces that Were at Play?

There tends to be an assumption that architects working in regional areas, like their counterparts elsewhere, were the captives of architectural style and their success should only be measured in terms of their translation of accepted style into real buildings. The reality is that there were other forces at play. If we accept Semple's four classes of geographic influences which would influence the development of cultural landscapes we can understand that there was more to the architectural outcome in these regional towns and cities than aesthetic influences and an understanding of architectural style.

In his discussion on the creation and marketing of symbolic landscapes, Meinig describes the typical American Main Street and adjoining residential and other precincts.[21] On the face of it this could be any Australian town and one could assume that the origins of these symbols come from the Old World in both the American and Australian cases.

Paul Fox describes the social and geographic influences that provide a unique outcome in Ballarat and in particular notes the influence of science and the wonders of the industrial revolution.[22] He recognises that 'Importantly, the architects who built Ballarat not only designed the buildings but were aware of the values that formed them … and the town council was in the early 1860s to be a powerhouse of ideas which generated a townscape where the buildings reflected the understanding that knowledge was a power shaping society.'[23]

A useful way of testing this view is to look at the reporting in local newspapers of the day and by external commentators. Towns of any size usually had two competing newspapers during the boom of the 1880s, and these were often of a remarkably high quality, due partly at least to the work of educated men left stranded by the ending of the gold boom.[24] It is from sources such as these that we get comments likening these new towns to the Old World. For example:

> The statuary in the Botanical Gardens, as that in Sturt Street shown in this work, is of a character which many wealthy cities of the Old World cannot boast, and is such as no other city in Australia has aspired to.[25]

This obsession with achieving comparison with the Old World is constant and in line with the theories expounded by Semple and others. Most of these towns had arisen from humble beginnings in a very short time and there was a constant desire to promote the advances in development in the towns over those short periods. The *Ballarat Star* promoted this for Ballarat, the *Warrnambool Examiner* for Warrnambool and the *Bendigo Advertiser* for that town. They make extensive use of the term 'handsome' to describe new structures and the general sense is that any new development was good and there was an expectation that such developments would establish a greater air

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Figure 6 *The 'Ozone,' Warrnambool (Mrs. L. E. Thom, Proprietress)*, ca 1909. Postcard: printed, colour; approx. 8.8 × 13.8 cm. Reproduction rights owned by the State Library of Victoria.

of permanence for the town that they were part of. There was little time for buildings that seemed to be temporary or insubstantial. The message is that 'progress' is good and 'progress' means development. Well into the second half of the 20th century many towns throughout Australia supported very active and influential progress associations. They were probably direct descendants of this 19th-century attitude and approach.

It was usual for the local newspaper to run regular columns reporting on town improvements. The *Warrnambool Examiner* did this regularly under the heading 'Town Improvements', where any new structure proposed or completed would be described. The *Bendigo Advertiser* ran lengthy articles describing the advances in the town, with particular reference to Pall Mall, its grand boulevard. And whilst these articles did occasionally mention the architect, with passing reference to architectural style, there was little interest in this and far more interest in the dimensions, substance and solid materials of the new structures. By 1859 the description of Pall Mall is all about the size, substance and quality of goods able to be traded along this boulevard. The extensive description advances further than Pall Mall to describe buildings in View Street. At this point, we detect the preoccupation with making the town more permanent by replacing timber buildings with stone and brick. Once again the concern is with substance over style.[26] It seems that this may have a great deal to do with the economic geography of the place or its social standing in an international or colonial context.

There is also evidence of a strong parochialism from the local press (or at least in Warrnambool) over the need to support local contractors. That paper was very critical

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of a government decision to use a Melbourne contractor to construct the new Custom's House.[27] This was matched by a general dissatisfaction in all three places at the failure by the government to provide sufficiently substantial buildings to reflect the importance of the new town. In hindsight this is a surprising claim because the Victorian Public Works Department gave the state some of its architecturally most innovative and substantial buildings. Any number of towns rely to this day on the substantial investment in 19th-century public buildings to provide them with much of their prominent physical character.

These interpretations of the townscapes are repeated in the commentary by outsiders. The Vagabond (John Stanley James or 'Julian Thomas') toured Victoria in the late 19th century and published his columns in the *Argus* and the *Leader*. He wrote of the substantial appearance of Warrnambool[28] and in Ballarat he hailed Sturt Street as 'the broadest street in Australia … Taking Sturt-street alone, Ballarat may claim to be beautiful. But it possesses an added attraction, the culmination of the picturesque, in its Botanical Gardens and lake, the pride and glory of its citizens.'[29]

The English writer Anthony Trollope travelled through Australia and New Zealand in the early 1870s and he described Ballarat as

> a most remarkable town. It struck me with more surprise than any other city in Australia … a town so well built, so well ordered, endowed with present advantages so great in the way of schools, hospitals, libraries, hotels, public gardens, and the like, should have sprung up so quickly with no internal advantages of its own other than that of gold.[30]

Aside from the concern with images of economic prosperity and social standing there were accepted architectural rules which influenced the architects and builders of these towns. These rules derived from classical or mediaeval models. However, the application of these rules was surprisingly liberal to the point that perhaps the only consistent rule applied was that building designs had to draw on architectural elements from the past. The constant desire by 20th-century architectural historians to classify and categorise, therefore, becomes a difficult exercise. In order to accommodate this problem, taxonomies with a myriad of styles have been established.

Lawler, in his study of Vahland and Getzschmann, set out to establish that there was something specifically German about the work that they did in Bendigo. He comes to the conclusion that whilst their early work may have drawn more heavily on their German training, this was soon overtaken and 'Out of the stylistic turmoil that was German architecture they were able to fall back on a vast range of devices to make up their rag bag of eclecticism.'[31] So whilst there were some rules emanating from their training it would appear that there was no strict desire to follow them and an eclectic approach developed. This would appear to be the case across the colony and in a sense may have established the groundwork for the later concern about a distinctive Australian architectural style.

A similar view could be taken of the work of the Geelong-based firm of Davidson and Henderson. Willingham's study of this firm places great store on the influence of pattern books and journals such as the British journal *The Builder*. Considerable emphasis is also placed on this firm's reliance on the work of Viollet-le-Duc, on the

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basis that Henderson arrived in Australia with a copy of the first eight volumes of *Dictionairre*. There is little doubt that this was an influence, but it did not automatically make Davidson and Henderson antipodean disciples of Viollet, nor the buildings that they designed French gothic revival masterpieces.

Much of Willingham's work relies on letters sent by Henderson to his mother in Edinburgh and one particular extract from one of those letters gives us a very useful insight into what was going on in Victoria in this period. Writing seeking a copy of a particular book he says: 'it and the Dictionnaire are works which only seem to be in the possession of the Cracks out here, and are of course necessary for us that we may compete with them. The Renaissance, & that French Gothic seem very much in vogue now, and bring new to most "Committees" in the case of a competition is the most likely style' (George Henderson writing to his mother, 24 April 1869).[32] This seems to confirm that patterns and ideas from elsewhere are critical and that the 'Cracks' (presumably the significant Melbourne practices from that time) are operating in much the same way. It also suggests that the game of getting commissions and creating townscapes is a very competitive one.

Paul Fox confirms the important role of local newspapers in influencing the design outcomes in these places when he refers to the writings of the *Ballarat Star* and its concern with civic improvement. He indicates that whilst the British *Builder*'s columns on civic architecture were important in providing a civic vision for the cities of Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds the *Ballarat Times* and *Star* played the same role for Ballarat.[33] It is clear that the *Ballarat Star* was more than a commentator. It set out directly to influence the manner in which buildings should be designed. The case that Fox particularly refers to is where it calls on the council to employ a competent architect to vet every verandah design before it is erected.[34]

George Mackay, in *The Annals of Bendigo*, draws from the columns of the *Bendigo Advertiser*. Describing the architecture of Pall Mall in 1857, he praises the design work of an early architect in that town, Mr Hartley. He had designed three buildings in close proximity to one another, the Hall of Commerce, described as modern Italian style; the Colonial Bank in an Italian style and the Bank of Australasia as Free Italian.[35] This is a liberal interpretation of architectural style and further evidence of the stylistic eclecticism that was applied and happily accepted.

So where does all of this leave us? When Paul Fox is again instructive writing about the construction of shops in Ballarat he reinforces 'the power of the shopkeeping and mercantile classes to make a cityscape that reflected their values rather than a municipality ordering the wilderness through the virtues of the Roman *civitas*'.[36]

If we are to understand the fabric of our towns and cities, let alone the value of the architecture or the role of the architects, we need to view these places in more than a one-dimensional way, be that related to social or architectural history or historical geography. The research that led to this article commenced in just that way. However, it quickly became apparent that any effort to acknowledge the contributions of these many architects would not succeed by analysing their work in the traditional manner of architectural historians (through stylistic analysis or biography). It is clear that this acknowledgement will be achieved if their work is

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Figure 7 *Liebig St. N; Warrnambool*, ca 1909. Postcard: printed, colour; approx. 8.8 × 13.8 cm. Reproduction rights owned by the State Library of Victoria.

understood in the context of the physical and social circumstances that existed in the local environment at the time.

For example, why are Ballarat, Bendigo and Warrnambool so different? It is not because Frederick Casselli, W. C. Vahland or Andrew Kerr, dominant architects in those places, had certain stylistic preferences. The different nature of the mining industry in central Ballarat compared with that of central Bendigo was a major factor, as was the social background of key figures in those communities. It is also no coincidence that the physical geography of Ballarat lent itself to a layout which provided for the formation of the grand Sturt Street boulevard and the commercial avenue of Lydiard Street, whereas Bendigo contended with a creek running through its centre. Warrnambool, on the other hand, was a port town servicing an agricultural hinterland and the goldfield much further to the north. This meant that a different sort of entrepreneur took up the challenge of developing that place and the demands for physical infrastructure were different, even if the concern for substance and progress was common. It also has a different physical geography and is subject to weather conditions not found in the other two places.

The analysis of the interaction of these factors becomes even more important when studying the physical environment of smaller settlements where there was little in the way of large or significant buildings. Such places are no less important and in many cases in Victoria have been acknowledged as highly significant 'heritage places'. However, that significance cannot be described in a one-dimensional way, be it through architectural style, the ethnic, religious or social background of the population or the physical or economic geography of the place.

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So whilst an effort should be made better to understand who the architects of our regional centres were and what they did, their importance to the development of those places cannot be seen in isolation and the quality of their professional output should not be measured by the academic accuracy of their designs.

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Notes

[1] Lawler, *The Vahland School*, 3.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Fox, 'A Colonial City of Ideas', 18.
[4] Taylor, 'Rural Cultural Landscapes', 28.
[5] UNESCO, http://whc.unesco.org
[6] Semple, *Influences of Geographic Environment on the Basis of Ratzel's System of Anthropo-geography*, 43.
[7] Ibid., 46.
[8] Meinig, 'Symbolic Landscapes', 184.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 15.
[12] Ibid., 3.
[13] Lewis, 'Axioms for Reading the Landscape'.
[14] Canberra was designed and constructed after 1913 and the Australian government moved the Parliament and much of its administration to Canberra in 1927.
[15] Andrews, *Architecture, Ambition and Americans*, xvi (foreword).
[16] Ibid.
[17] Fitch, *Architecture and the Esthetics of Plenty*.
[18] Ibid., 251.
[19] Willis, *The Architect and his Right Hand*, 265.
[20] Ibid., 267.
[21] Meinig, 'Symbolic Landscapes', 167.
[22] Fox, 'A Colonial City of Ideas', 18.
[23] Ibid.
[24] The Vagabond.
[25] *Ballarat and District in 1901*, 3.
[26] Mackay, *Annals of Bendigo, 1851 to 1867*, 57.
[27] *Warrnambool Examiner*, Friday 26 October 1860.
[28] The Vagabond, 65.
[29] Ibid., 191.
[30] Trollope, *Victoria and Tasmania*, 46.
[31] Lawler, *The Vahland School*, 30.
[32] Willingham, 'Two Scots in Victoria', 299.
[33] Fox, 'A Colonial City of Ideas', 24.
[34] *Ballarat Star*, 29 August 1861.

[35] Ibid.
[36] Fox, 'A Colonial City of Ideas', 30.

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