

NAME: Terrace
ADDRESS: 36-50 Gore Street
CONSTRUCTION DATE: pre 1858
ARCHITECT: Charles Webb?
BUILDER: Unknown
FIRST OWNER: 1859 - William Virgol
FIRST OCC./USE: Various/ rented out as residences.
PRESENT OWNER: Various
PRESENT OCC./USE: Various: mostly owner/ occupiers as residences
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: Rendered masonry galvanised iron roofing
INTACTNESS/CONDITION: Facades substantially intact
AREA/STREETSCAPE: Part of recommended area A5



IMPORTANCE:

This terrace sequence of 8 houses was constructed prior to 1859 probably for William Virgol. It provides an excellent example of an early Regency terrace development which responded to the requirements of the 1849 Melbourne Building Act: the continuing facade parapet and the party wall projecting through the roof. It is possible that five of these terraces were designed by Charles Webb in 1858, but this has not been verified.

This terrace is in remarkably intact and good condition. Of particular interest is the panelled pilaster to the upper floor with unusual paired consoles at the capitals. A continuous cast iron fence, set on a bluestone plinth unifies the terraces at street level, and intact timber blind hoods can be seen on numbers 44-50.

The terrace is more sophisticated in detailing than some earlier terraces in Fitzroy, but provides a significant example of a transitional terrace formula which eventually resulted in the numerous ornate terraces of the 1880's boom.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this terrace sequence be added to the Historic Buildings Register, the Register of the National Estate and be specified under Clause 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act (3rd Schedule). Further research is recommended to establish an exact date of construction and to verify or negate Webb's association with this terrace sequence.

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE:

These houses were constructed prior to 1859 probably for William Virgol who rented the properties out.¹ An attempt was made to trace the properties in the Melbourne City Council Records, but without success.² It is possible that five of these terraces were those designed by Charles Webb in 1858³ but this has not been verified.

This terrace sequence of 8 houses is remarkably intact and simple in conception. It is one of the longest double storey terrace sequences in Fitzroy and the repetition of architectural motifs produces a harmonious facade. Of particular note is the panelled pilaster to the upper floor with an unusual console detail at the capital: paired consoles project outwards and sideways supporting the cornice.

This detailing is seen on the less intact houses 274-276 Gore Street, and it is possible that these are also to the design of Webb.⁴

It would appear that a date of c1858 terrace would be appropriate for this terrace. The window surrounds, pilaster and cornice treatment shows a greater degree of sophistication than displayed on earlier Fitzroy terraces (compare Glass Terrace, 64-78 Gertrude Street of 1853-54, and Royal Terrace of 1854-55, 1856-57). The simple regency pilaster treatment and moulded window surrounds produce an elegant facade treatment. The continuous parapet was a feature of early Fitzroy terraces, and was in response to the anti-fire measures of the 1849 Melbourne Building Act.⁵ This Act only applied to certain sections of Melbourne, and it was not until the 1860's that fashion persuaded the parapet to be introduced in areas outside the Building Act's control (for example in North Melbourne, South Melbourne, Carlton etc.)

These houses provide an excellent example of a well preserved and intact late 1850's regency terrace sequence. There is a continuous intact cast iron fence set on a bluestone plinth unifying all the houses at street level. Intact original blind hoods can be seen on numbers 44-50. The delicate console treatment at the cornice line pilasters, window surrounds and cornice provides some surface modelling to an otherwise austere facade. This terrace provides a significant example in the development of terrace housing in Melbourne, and provides an important streetscape element to this extremely important precinct.

1. Fitzroy Ratebooks 1859 William Virgol owner, no entry for occupier or description, 36 and 38: £50.0.0; £40-50: £100.0.0.
2. An attempt was also made using the directories, but occupiers are listed in alphabetical order not street sequence, therefore making the tracing of a terrace sequence almost impossible. The Melbourne City Council Records also list occupiers not owners, which also made identification of this terrace not possible. Reference to the Melbourne City Council Building Register Book is recommended, but this was not undertaken due to the extensive searching time involved in such a task.
3. *Argus* Charles Webb calls tenders for 5 two storey brick houses, Gore Street.
4. *Argus* 8.4.1859 Charles Webb calls tenders for two 2 storey dwellings in Gore Street. Again the connection has not been verified.
5. For discussion of this Act refer M.B. Lewis "64-78 Gertrude Street Fitzroy", paper prepared November 1978. p.4