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## 537 Church St



RICHMOND CHURCH  
STREET 537.jpg

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### Location

537 CHURCH STREET, RICHMOND VIC 3121 - Property No 161615

### Municipality

YARRA CITY

### Level of significance

Rec for HO area indiv sig

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

### Heritage Listing

Yarra City

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 1, 1900

#### What is significant?

Alexander Miller of 94 Moorabool street Geelong draper had owned the site of 533-537 Church St since November 1889. Miller is well known as a great benefactor, via his estate, for the establishment of early aged care homes in locations where his drapery stores had thrived.

The MMBW Detail Plan 914 of 1895 showed a corner shop at the Kingston St crossing with a large rear yard and stable (533), a deep set back for 535 and a front yard, and what appears to be a house at the Darlington St

corner (later Willis) also with a rear yard and stable as 539 (no 537): the 1904 listing for these buildings includes Fred Brown, baker, at 533; Robert Munro junior, saddler, at 535 and Fred Brown's timber residence at 537. By 1910, Sands & McDougall Melbourne directories listed the extra property in the block, marking the construction of this row of 3 shops: the entry 'three vacant houses' was made in 1910, indicating they were still in construction. By the time of the 1911-12 rate book, the shops were listed as occupied.

Alexander Miller died 27 April 1914, with probate granted in 1915 to The Trustees Executors and Agency Company limited of 412 Collins Street Melbourne, George Edward Wale of Euroa storekeeper, and Donald Hinton McKenzie of Benalla Storekeeper and William Henry Thomas of the cnr. Of Swanston and Little Collins street Melbourne, accountant. The trustees continued to own the buildings into the 20th century.

Occupiers of the shops included: T Perryman, engineer, Isabel Jagert, confectioner, at 533; Ernest McMillan, butcher, James Arnold, fishmonger, and later F Farrell, boot maker, at 535, and hairdresser Walter Moriarty, an engineer Charles Slez, and Ernest Hughes at 537; (Frederick Brown was still at the adjoining 539 into the 1920s). Reputedly a Post Office was formerly in no.533 as indicated by the faded parapet sign photographed in 1984. Recently Australia Post occupied 535.

The first Miller homes were built in Geelong in 1914, where Alexander Miller began his successful life as a draper. The gross value of his estate at his death in 1914 (he is buried at Western Cemetery) was £176,241, and 195 aged care homes had been built up to 1984. The endowment was given with the ability of the trustees to develop the trust and maintenance of the homes. They were built in towns such as Shepparton, Rushworth, Numurkah, Benalla, Maryborough, Castlemaine and Ballarat where Miller had conducted business. Leading Geelong architectural firm, Laird and Buchan designed many of these buildings and it is likely from the distinctive design of the Church St shops that they too were designed by this firm. The first Alexander Miller Memorial Homes were at 324-332 Ryrie Street, Geelong, designed by Laird and Buchan and constructed in 1913-14 by Tingate Bros. for a total cost of £1277. Others were at 73 Mckillop Street Geelong and 22 Park Street GEELONG (both on the Victorian Heritage Register).

These three single-storey red brick shops have very high parapets shaped in what has been described by Richard Peterson as 'a most exotic design'. The parapets terminate with rare Chinese (concave) pediments and flagpoles, supported on flat, fluted brackets, over an ogee parapet, plain with capping mould. Between, are parapet piers, surmounted by pineapples. Cornice and frieze-mould are set between plain, round corbels. The exposed north side wall of 533 Church Street is face red brick and the parapet wall stepped in profile.

Two shops have rare timber shop-fronts (535, 537) set on battered glazed green ceramic tiled plinths, with recessed and splayed doorways and encaustic geometric tile paving to the thresholds. Only the shop-fronts of 537 and 535 are near original (although 537 is reputedly a replica based on 535). Only 535 and 537 have encaustic threshold tiles. The top of one pineapple is missing (533/535). The canvas-canopy of 533 and the shop-front sign-writing of 537 are unrelated to the Edwardian-era as is the air-conditioners projecting from the doorway of 537. The sills of openings on the north of 533 have been altered.

#### **How is it significant?**

The Alexander Miller's shops & residences at 533-537 Church Street, Richmond are historically and aesthetically significant (National Estate Register Criteria A4, E1) to the locality of Richmond and the City of Yarra.

#### **Why is it significant?**

Alexander Miller's shops & residences 533-537 Church St, Richmond are significant historically and aesthetically to the Richmond locality and the City of Yarra:

- for their distinctive design, including the timber parapet form and detailing;
- for the relatively high integrity, with some original shopfronts; and
- for their association with the important benefactor, Alexander Miller.

Construction dates	1911,
Other Names	Alexander Miller's shops & residences (part),
Hermes Number	168661
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

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The commercial building at 539 (former bakery) is related to the Edwardian-era group.

## Integrity

Good

*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/>*