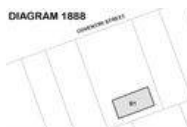


Victorian Heritage Database Report  
**BELLHOUSE IRON HOUSE**

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**Location:**

399 COVENTRY STREET SOUTH MELBOURNE, PORT PHILLIP CITY

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H1888**

**Listing Authority: VHR**

**Heritage Overlay Number: HO97**

**Statement of Significance:**

What is significant?

The Bellhouse iron house was erected in c1853 at 40 Moor Street, Fitzroy for Samuel Boswell. It was constructed according to the British patented system of iron founder Edward Taylor Bellhouse of Manchester. The only other surviving building on this system, or by this manufacturer, is the former ballroom at Balmoral Castle, Scotland, originally ordered from Bellhouse by Prince Albert.

The patent Bellhouse system was based on a number of cast iron structural and roof plumbing elements specifically sculpted to mate with the roof and wall cladding of 5 inch (130mm) pitch corrugated iron. The horizontal wall cladding ran into channels in the cast iron stanchions. Plates for fastening the top and bottom of the stanchions to the top and bottom plates.

The back top edges of the cast iron roof gutters are shaped to fit the corrugations of the roofing iron, and in a complete building, other cast iron members such as the ridge capping would have been similarly treated. The two windows are missing, but photographs of them survive. Internally the house was lined with lath and plaster, but was designed to have a horizontal board lining fixed to vertical timber pieces set into the hollow backs of the stanchions. The culturally significant fabric includes the whole of the building, though the cladding iron has largely been replaced and the structure now stands on timber baulks and a concrete slab.

The Bellhouse iron house was moved to its South Melbourne site in 1971 by the National Trust so as to save it from complete demolition, and has preserved the exterior shell and some elements to illustrate the interior as at Fitzroy, while also displaying schematically the sort of construction designed by the manufacturer,

How is it significant?

The Bellhouse iron house is of technical, architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Bellhouse iron house is of technical and architectural significance as an extremely rare and relatively intact example of the innovative portable iron structures constructed according to the British patented system of Edward Taylor Bellhouse of Manchester. It is the only surviving building by ET Bellhouse in Victoria and Australia and is thought to be one of only two buildings constructed on the Bellhouse system surviving in the world. The other example is the former ballroom at Balmoral Castle, Scotland, originally ordered from Bellhouse by Prince Albert.

The Bellhouse iron house is of significance for its potential to be used to illustrate and educate on the technology of portable iron houses imported during the gold rushes, which are an important and increasingly rare aspect of Victoria's heritage.

The Bellhouse iron house is of historical significance as one of the few surviving examples in Victoria of imported prefabricated iron houses of the 1850s. The use of imported prefabricated iron houses such as this in Victoria in the early 1850s reflected the rapid increase in population, scarcity of building materials, and high labour costs, all which were related to the rush for gold. Though not on its original site, the Bellhouse iron house provides an insight into one aspect of the migrant experience in the 1850s in Victoria.

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	PORT PHILLIP CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	6061
Property number	

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*