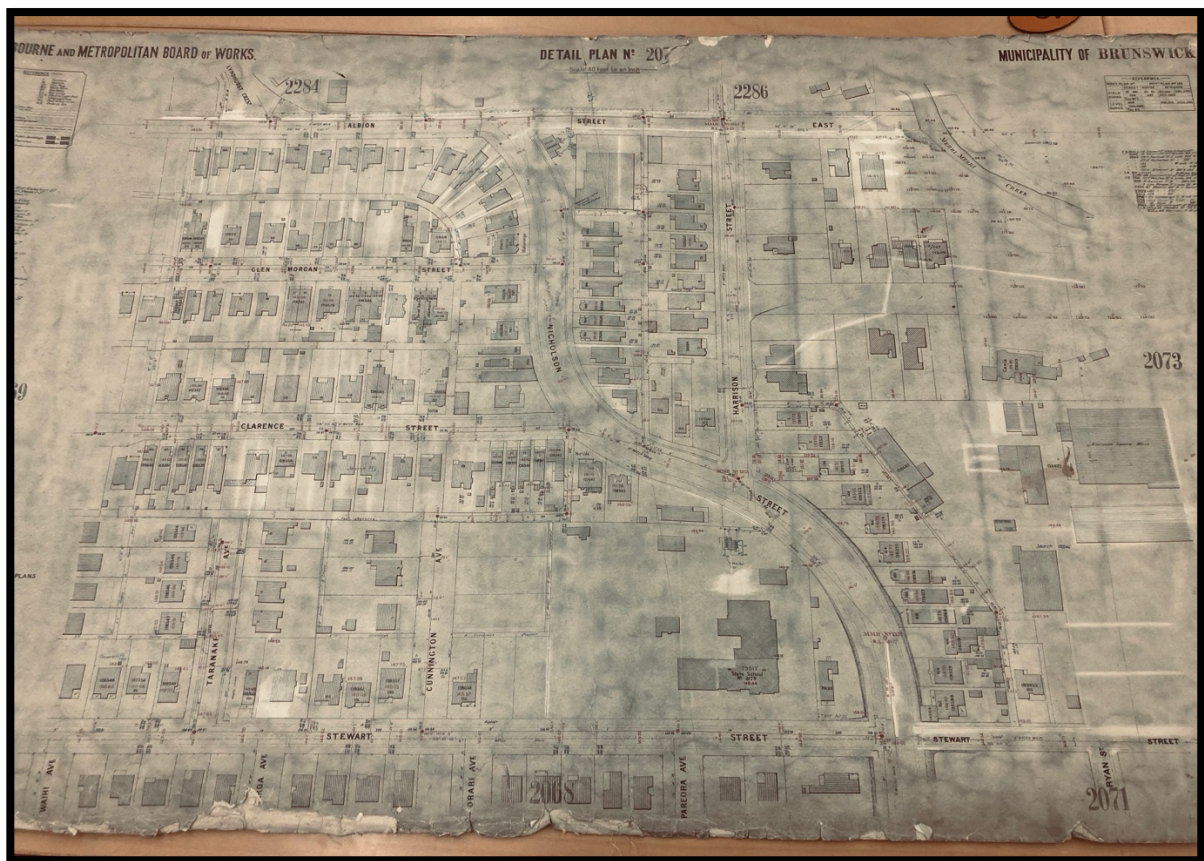


4 Taranaki Avenue, Brunswick East

A history



By Dr Jeska Rees, kitchen table historians, December 2023.

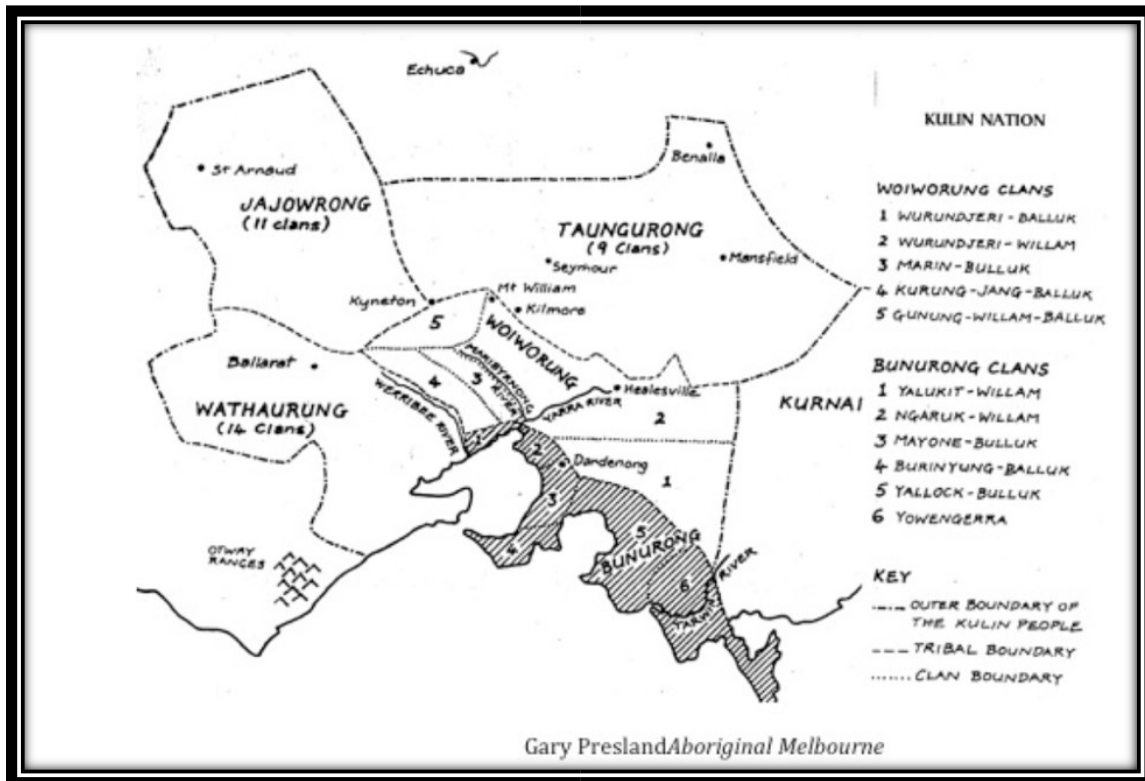
Contents

1. Indigenous custodianship of Brunswick East	2
2. European history of Brunswick East.....	4
3. Taranaki Avenue	6
4. Returned Servicemen Housing.....	8
5. The house at No. 4 Taranaki Avenue	10

1. Indigenous custodianship of Brunswick East

Prior to British invasion the land around Brunswick East was cared for by the

Wurundjeri-willam people. Wurrundjeri-willam means place (willam) of the grubs (jeri) of the White Gum Tree (wurrun). The Wurundjeri-willam people were one of five groups who shared language similarities and kin, collectively known as the Kulin nation.



Traditional life for the Wurundjeri-willam was that of hunter-foragers, centred around the creeks and rivers, and moving according to season. The Merri Creek (merri meaning 'rocky') and the Darebin Creek provided fresh water, fish and birdlife while the surrounding sandy grasslands were home to possums, emu and kangaroo for hunting.

Hand-made goods included woven baskets, stone tools made from local quarries such as that now known as Mount Cooper, and wooden containers. Cultural systems of kinship governed marriage and family; laws were understood and enforced through traditional knowledge based on the land, sometimes known as the Dreaming.



When John Batman arrived from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1835 to try to secure a sale of Aboriginal land, he negotiated with eight ngurungaeta (elders) including Billibellary, representing the Wurundjeri. Although this attempt to negotiate treaty was declared void by the British government – and most likely not fully comprehended by the ngurungaeta, given their lack of formal land ownership system – it remains the only recognition of Aboriginal 1920. Source: State Library of sovereignty by the European invaders.

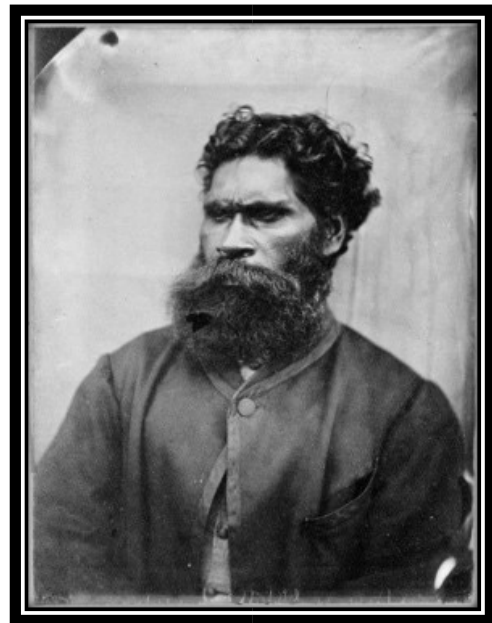
Merri Creek, by Carl Reinhold.

The imposition of British colonial rule in Melbourne resulted in the widespread destruction of Aboriginal customs and way of life, as the land was seized for grazing, diseases were introduced and British violence saw the retreat of the Wurundjeri-willam from their traditional lands.

Billibellary's descendants continued to be recognized as Wurundjeri leaders until the start of the twentieth century. Today the recognized traditional custodians are the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Corporation, who provide education on and management of their cultural heritage.

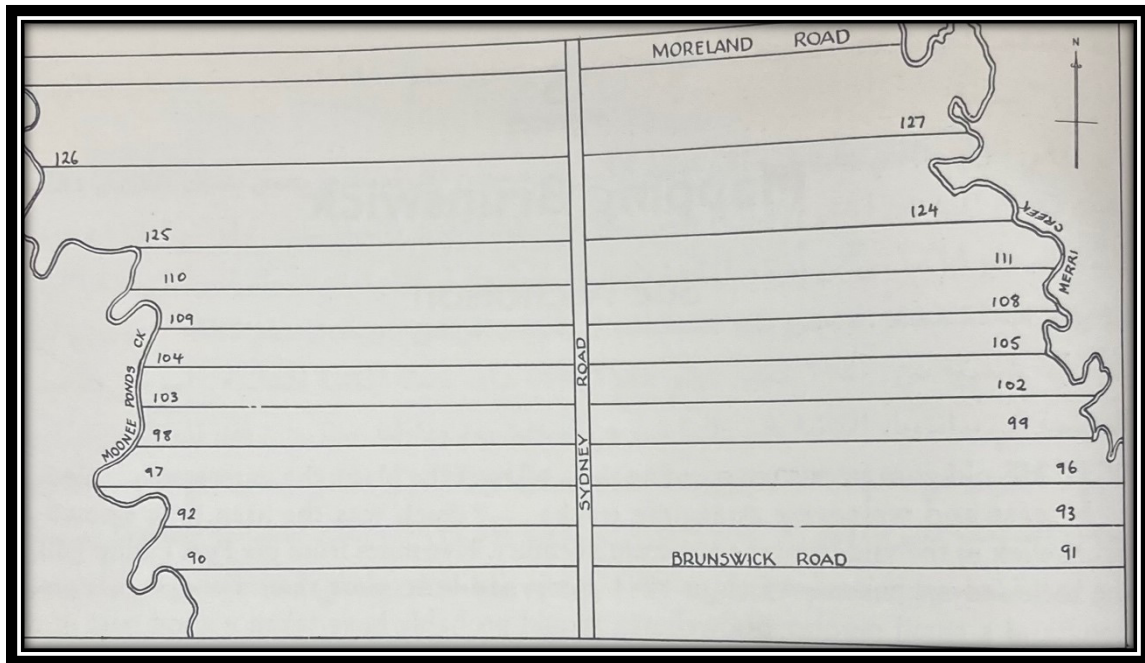
William Barak, last recognized leader of the

Wurundjeri-willam, 1866. Source: Wurundjeri-Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Management Corporation.



2. European history of Brunswick East

The whole area now known as Brunswick was 'sold' by the British government at land sales in 1839 and 1840. A.D. Volon purchased lot 108 in the Parish of Jika Jika, where Taranaki Avenue is now located. Unusually, Volon did not quickly re-sell his allotment for profit



First British land subdivision in Brunswick, 1839. Source: Penrose, Brunswick: one history, many voices, p. 48.

Brunswick was named by early settler Thomas Wilkinson, whose 'Brunswick Estate' was bordered to the east by the Merri Creek, to the west by the narrow strip of land running north-south set aside for a thoroughfare (now Sydney Road), and to the north and south by thoroughfares that he named Victoria Street and Albert Street.

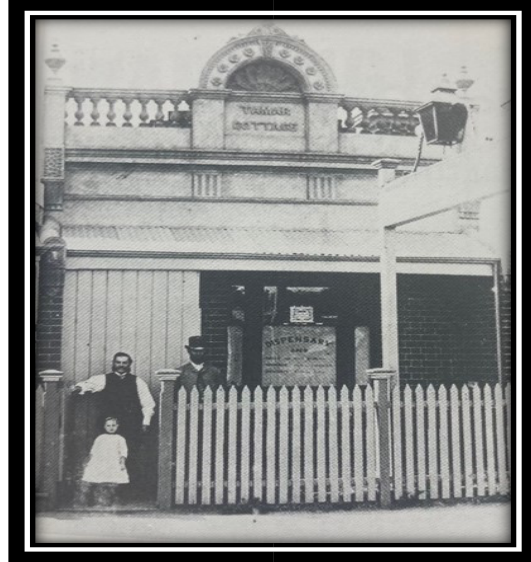
In 1851 the gold rush began and Brunswick became a stopping point on the road north. The huge injection of wealth from the Goldfields fuelled Melbourne's rapid expansion in the 1860s and Brunswick was no exception, with land continuing to change hands – Volon finally sold his original allotment 108 at this time, at great profit – and buildings crowding along Sydney Road. Early industries included bluestone quarrying and brick-making, drawing on the natural clay on which Brunswick was situated.

The introduction of trains in 1884 and trams in 1887 connected Brunswick to Melbourne faster and market gardens were established to provide fresh food to Melbourne until the 1920s.

The suburb steadily built its civic and community structures, including Council buildings, free library, Mechanics' Institute, public baths and medical services. By 1900 Brunswick was home to 24 000 people.



Above: Glew brickworks clay pit, Hodgson Street, unknown date. Source: Penrose, Brunswick: one history, many voices, p. 107. Above right: Brunswick's first pharmacy, unknown date. Source: Brunswick Library. Below right: Brunswick Baths advertisement, 1950. Source: Penrose, Brunswick: one history, many voices, p. 98.



Infrastructure often came later: there was no sewerage system until 1910, and electricity supply commenced four years after that.

Further subdivision of land during the 1920s provided more housing and it was at this time that Taranaki Road was created. Brunswick was now home to significant communities of Italians, Greeks, Lebanese, Turkish and Irish families, making for a city that centred around food, family and – in the words of one local historian – Sydney Road, 'the road of excess'.

Manufacturing declined as the key sector in Brunswick after 1945. Pollution controls, automation, and an influx of white-collar workers taking advantage of the area's centrality meant that the brickworks and textiles industries had disappeared by 1960. Property prices increased and household size decreased, leading to a stabilisation of population to around 55 000 people.

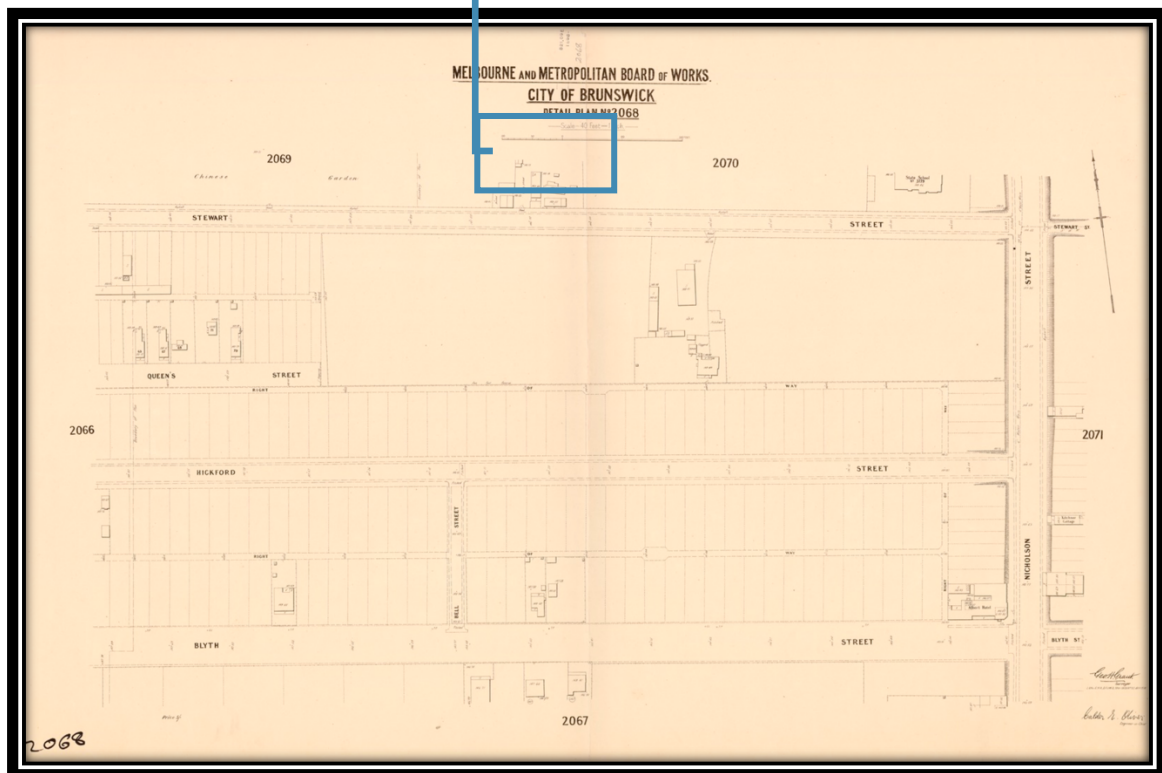
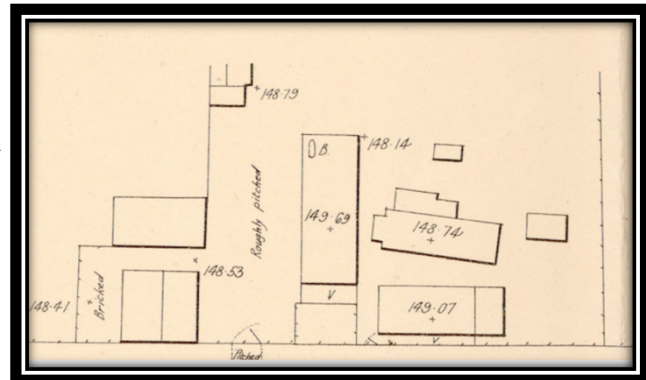
Brunswick was a key centre of counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s, and the establishment of CERES on council land in 1982 has meant that there has consistently been a focus on sustainability, community and open space.



3. Taranaki Avenue

Brunswick was surveyed in 1909 by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works. The map shows that the house on the corner of Stewart Street and the future Taranaki Avenue, now no. 185 Stewart Street, had been built along with multiple other small structures. It is shown with the numbers 149.69 in the picture on the right.

A dirt track labelled 'roughly pitched' can be seen where Taranaki Avenue is now located.



Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan 2068, 1909. Source: State Library of Victoria.

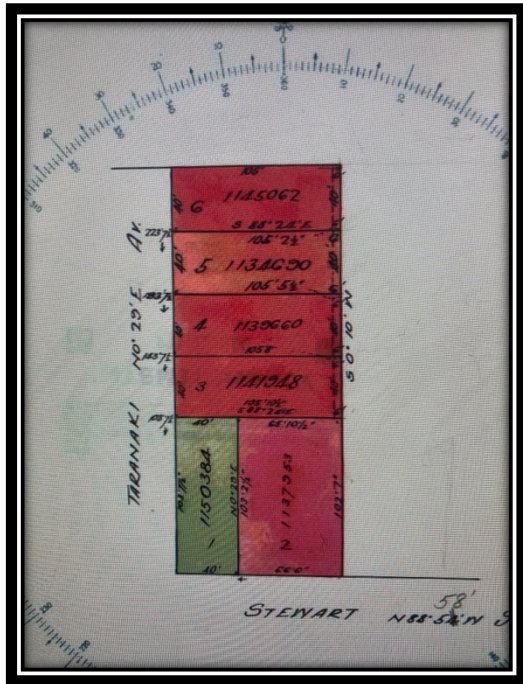
Taranaki Avenue itself was created in 1921. The Goldsworthy Brothers won a tender from the Brunswick Council for completing Taranaki, Temuka and Timaru Avenues for 998 pounds, seven shillings and a penny. All three streets used Maori names, after regions in New Zealand and reflecting the ANZAC spirit of World War One.

The first purchasers of land on the east side of Taranaki Avenue were James and Mary Harris, who lived at 185 Stewart Street (then numbered 369). James, a boot repairer, and Mary, a 'married woman', purchased the large tract of undeveloped land behind their house on 21st January 1921. The land included all of what is now 185, 187A and 187B Stewart Street as well as nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8 Taranaki Avenue.



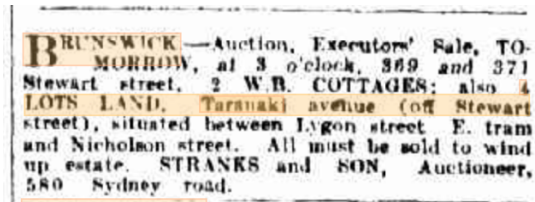
Certificate of title showing the land purchased by James and Mary Harris. Source: Public Record Office of Victoria.

The Harrises held the land for nearly two years, during which time the property was planned for sub-division into the property boundaries existing today.



Left: the planned subdivision. Lot 4 is now no. 4 and the instrument of subdivision is 1139660. Source: Public Record Office of Victoria.

Following Mary's death in 1922 the title was transferred into James' name alone. James appears to have attempted to auction the property in April 1923, shown in an advert placed in The Herald, below.



The auction was either cancelled or unsuccessful and the lots were sold separately in late 1923 and early 1924. The Harris family retained the Stewart Street properties: Lot 1 was retained by James Harris himself while lot 2 was transferred to Mary Russell and William Harris, possibly James' and Mary's children. Lots 5 and 6 were sold to private citizens.

4. Returned Servicemen Housing

At around this time a concerted effort was being made to build homes for soldiers returning from the First World War. A lack of skilled labour during the War combined with the return of thousands of young men had left Australia with a national housing shortage. A program of housing for returned servicemen commenced in 1919, first administered by the Commonwealth and then run by state governments from 1921. The Commonwealth provided funds for state banks to purchase land and pay local builders for the rapid construction of simple housing of brick or timber.

It appears that properties were purchased under the scheme in Temuka, Timaru and Taranaki Avenues. Lots 3 and 4 Taranaki Avenue – now no. 2 and no. 4. – were acquired by the State Savings Bank of Victoria in November 1923 under the Housing and Reclamation Act 1920 and the War Services Homes Act 1918-20, meaning that the land was earmarked for returning soldiers and their families.

Entered in the Register Book

Vol. 4809 Fol. 961603


VICTORIA.

Certificate of Title,
UNDER THE "TRANSFER OF LAND ACT 1915."

Given

The Commissioners of the State Savings Bank of Victoria of Elizabeth Street - -
Melbourne is - - - - -
now the proprietors of an Estate in Fee-simple, subject to the Encumbrances
notified hereunder in All that piece of Land, delineated and coloured
red and blue on the map in the margin being Lot 4 on Plan of Subdivision No. 9594 - -
lodged in the Office of Titles and being part of Crown Portion One hundred and - -
eleven at Brunswick Parish of Jika Jika County of Bourke Together with a right-
of carriage way over the roads colored brown on Plan of Subdivision No. 8112 lodged-
as aforesaid - - - - -

Dated the Twenty-seventh day of November One
thousand nine hundred and twenty-three.

W. H. Anderson
Assistant Registrar of Titles.
ENCUMBRANCES REFERRED TO.

As to the land colored blue - - -
ANY EASEMENTS implied under Act No. 3168 -



ORIGINAL CERTIFICATE.
Not to be dealt with outside the Titles Office.

The

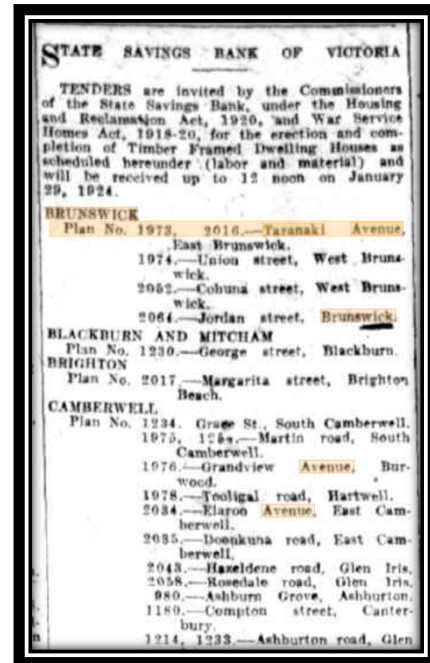
current title, showing purchase by the State Savings Bank of Victoria in 1923. Source: Landata.

In January 1924, the State Savings Bank called for tenders for the building of timber-framed dwelling houses in Taranaki Avenue. Northern Timber Mills were awarded the tender.

5. The house at No. 4 Taranaki Avenue

The first record of a house at no. 4 in the East Brunswick rate book is a pencilled correction to a 'land only' entry in the 1924 book, dated March 4th, suggesting that the house had been rapidly built in less than two months. In 1925 it is recorded as having four rooms and being made of wood.

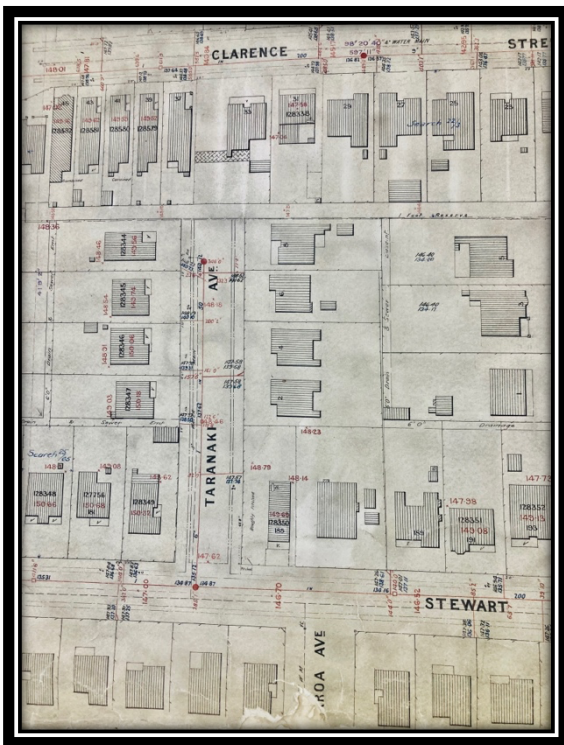
Elsewhere in Taranaki Avenue, similar houses were being constructed. On the west side wooden houses were built at least as early as 1923 but were slightly larger, having five rooms.



The rate-payers of Taranaki Avenue were working people with professions such as clerk, labourer, shunter, railway employee, brass-finisher, blacksmith and potter. Some of these may have been landlords; either way, it can be assumed that the new development was an affordable way to own a home or residential property.

On the left is an updated survey of Taranaki Avenue by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works. Nos. 2 and 4 Taranaki Avenue are identical, both built by the Savings Bank of Victoria. Although the survey map is undated, it can be assumed that this was completed not long after the houses were built, as the houses on the east side of the street have not had drain pipe codes (in red) recorded, nor is there a fence-line between nos. 2 and 4.

Above: Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan 2070, undated. Source: Public Records Office of Victoria.



-----Remaining report redacted for privacy reasons-----