

Melbourne Survey Maps and Plans

Maps Collection

Acquired 2015

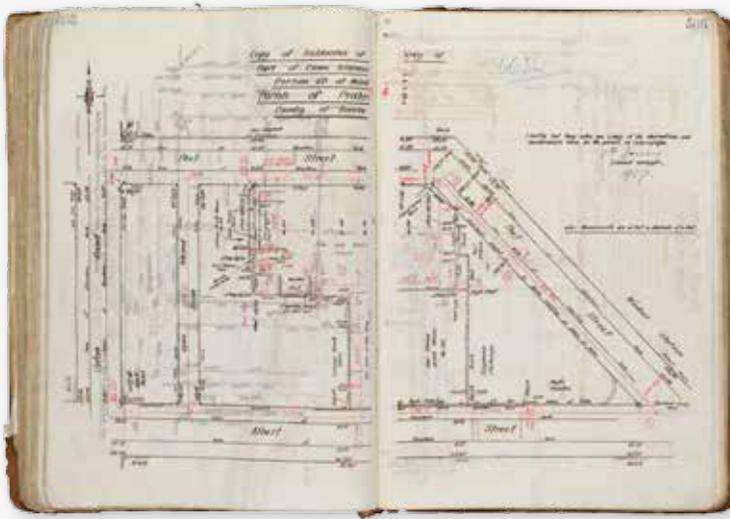
This unique collection, acquired with support from the State Library Victoria Foundation, comprises 37 volumes containing approximately 27,000 original field notes and plans from the late 1800s to 1950. The corporate stamps on the material indicate that it was produced by the prominent Melbourne survey companies Johnstone & Tait and Meudell Gillespie.

The plans relate to properties in the Melbourne central business district and suburbs, with some coverage of rural areas. Each bound volume has an index at the front, with the names of the surveyor's clients, the parish and suburb in which the surveyed property was located and a page reference. The maps contain valuable information such as land measurements, building materials and names of owners or occupiers. Each plan features a small area in much detail, generally spanning part of a Crown allotment.

The maps and plans build upon and complement similar, much-used collections in the Library, the major one being the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works drainage plans. These were created when the sewerage system was implemented in the city and inner and near-inner suburbs in the 1890s. The Library also holds extensive county, parish and township plans that originated after the first Melbourne sales of Crown land in 1837, and auction plans produced by real-estate companies to promote the sale of land during the land boom from the 1880s onwards.

The collection requires substantial conservation treatment, so we must weigh up the value of the content with the investment required to make it accessible. The bindings of the volumes are in an advanced stage of disintegration and, while much of the content is clean and preserved, there are many instances in which the ink on the plans is so degraded that the content is illegible. The tracing paper that forms the material for much of the collection is also extremely fragile and difficult to handle.

The process of conservation, preservation, storage, cataloguing and digitisation will be a huge undertaking, but the Library believes that the investment is warranted. A collection spanning more than 50 years of commercial surveying in Melbourne appears on the market once in a lifetime and is the bread and butter of a cultural repository like State Library Victoria. Local, family and urban historians will lap it up.



Top: Field notes 1930–41, Copy of field notes for part of Crown allotment portion 60 at Windsor, parish of Prahran, County of Bourke, 1937, pp. 505–6

Above left: Surveys 1918–20, Part of Crown allotment 7 section 9, City of Melbourne, 1920, p. 218

Above right: Surveys 1918–20, Part of Crown portion 8 at Richmond, parish of Jika Jika, 1919, p. 98

From 'Melbourne Survey Maps and Plans', produced by Johnstone & Tait and Meudell Gillespie. Maps Collection