

# Weatherboard Dwellings



This brochure is one of a series of Housing Style Information Brochures based on the common housing styles in the Town of Vincent. The brochure provides details on the origins and distinct features of the housing types within Vincent. Other brochures in this series include: ■ Late Colonial Georgian Dwellings ■ Federation Bungalows ■ Inter-war Californian Bungalows ■ Post-War Bungalows

## Background

In the 19th and early 20th centuries weatherboard houses were a common housing choice, with a significant number of timber houses constructed in the Mount Hawthorn, North Perth and Leederville areas. However, today due to age, weathering and redevelopment weatherboard buildings are amongst the oldest and rarest buildings in Vincent.

Whilst many considered timber housing to be inferior to brick, a fire hazard and the precursor of slums, timber housing offered employment to the timber industry and enabled workers to afford and build their own home. In the early 1900s weatherboard homes could be built for approximately £95, whereas brick would cost around £200 to construct. Leederville and other areas, which were considered as artisan in social composition, tended to have a high proportion of weatherboard dwellings, with 75% of dwellings being constructed from timber in Leederville in the early 1900s. The debate of brick over timber led some local councils and Roads Boards to declare 'brick areas' where timber homes were not allowed.



## Key characteristics of Weatherboard Dwellings include:

### Outside

- Modest structures of simple design with no ornamentation.
- One or two rooms across the front, with one room often projecting forward.
- Hipped roofs of corrugated iron.
- Full width verandah or no verandah.
- Timber sash windows placed in the middle of each room often flanking a central doorway.
- There are a number of different profiles and sizes of weatherboards, which help create the distinct styles of weatherboard houses. Some profiles include:

1. Simple Feather Edged was the least expensive of all profiles and

was extensively used to clad the side and rear of timber houses.

2. Shiplap was sparingly used and was often restricted to the front wall with simple feather edge applied to the remainder.

3. Fake Ashlar simulated blocks or bricks were used sparingly.

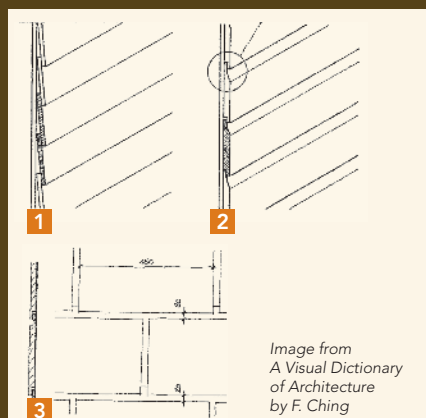


Image from  
A Visual Dictionary  
of Architecture  
by F. Ching

### Inside

- Moulded skirtings and architraves.
- Ceilings often unadorned, with cornices, if any, fairly small and limited to front rooms.
- Walls clad with timber lining boards and/or plaster.

### Garden

- Generally small gardens with many having little setback from the front property boundary.
- Divided into a front garden, which had a neat public appearance, and a back productive area.
- Simple paling fencing or timber post and rail fences with 'cyclone' mesh.
- Paths made from local materials, such as crushed limestone or clay, over sand.

## Maintenance Advice

Here are some general principles to keep in mind:

- Renew exterior paintwork regularly to preserve weatherboards and other timberwork.
- Have a yearly pest inspection. Treat termite activity immediately and ensure the nest is destroyed.
- Maintain or replace gutters and downpipes to keep stormwater away from building foundations.
- Be mindful that tree roots, self-sown woody weeds and rampant climbing plants can cause damage to timber buildings, possibly displacing fabric and even rendering structures unsound.
- Remove water catchment and dampness. Vegetation too close to buildings can also create a moist microclimate that may encourage fungal decay or termite infestation. Constantly damp conditions can encourage rotting of timber and increase the risk of termite attack.



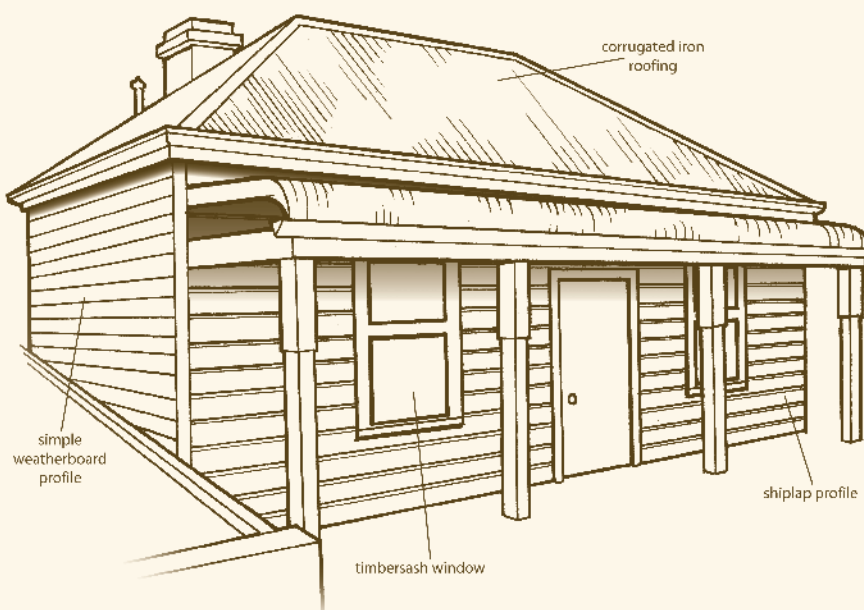
TOV Local History Collection PH01412 courtesy Marj Cook

## Renovation Advice

- Do as little as possible but as much as necessary.
- Additions should be carefully inspected to locate original parts before demolition occurs. It is not unusual to find original features stored in sheds or adapted for new uses.
- Before starting any physical works, research old records, photographs and plans/elevations to assist in an authentic restoration.

## Health and Safety

- Asbestos was a widely used building material until the early 1980s. Prior to commencing any works on your home it is important you establish if there is any asbestos present in the existing building.
- Lead paints were also commonly used until the 1980s and can be toxic. Consult your local hardware supplier about the safest method of removal.



## References

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Stapleton, I and M (1997) *Australian House Styles*, The Flannel Flower Press  
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