

PARKVILLE POST OFFICE A BRIEF HISTORY

Establishment of Parkville

The first sub-division which began the establishment of south Parkville occurred in 1872. This subdivision created the east-west streets of Morrah, Bayles and Degrares, and the north-south streets of Fitzgibbons and Wimble. In 1879, further subdivision and sale of land occurred in the suburb between Morrah Street, the newly named Story Street and along Park Street. Gatehouse Street was also formed by 1879, with a wide median between it and Park Street, known as levers Reserve, now Redpath Rise, allowing for the channelling of the creek bed that ran parallel to the two streets. The majority of dwellings in Parkville were erected between the early 1870s and early 1890s.

The First Post Office

By the early 1880s, however, it was clear that the suburb was developing. In 1883 the government sought to establish a Post and Telegraph Office in Parkville. An advert in *The Argus* 15 September 1883 read:

Tenders are hereby invited and will be received at this office until 12 o'clock on Tuesday the 25th of September, from persons disposed to let for a term of three year or sell premises suitable for a Post and Telegraph Office at Parkville.

Evidence suggests that a Post Office had been established by July 1884. On 25 July 1884 *The Argus* carried an advert for a servant at a property in York-Place, 'opposite the Post Office.'

On 28 November 1885 *The Record*, carried an advertisement for the sale of the "Parkville Post Office and two Brick Dwellings adjacent". The Post Office contains the office, lavatory and five dwelling rooms and each of the dwellings contain six rooms and a bath. The land is irregularly shaped, but it is situated in the very heart of this rapidly improving neighbourhood". The asking price was £3,800. From the July 1884 and November 1885 advertisements, it is clear that the building was located on the corner of Park Street and Wimble Street.



The first Post Office with the two houses adjoining facing onto Park Drive, formerly Park Street. The end house in 'York Place' with cast-iron verandah just visible beyond. (2026)

On 20 November 1886 *The Argus* reports that:

Negotiations are being conducted by the Postal Department with the University Council to secure an extended lease of a portion of the north-western part of the University reserve for postal purposes. Action has been taken in this direction on account of the insufficient accommodation provided at the Parkville post-office. The building which is used as the post-office is a private property, and the department, therefore, has to pay a considerable annual rent. It is thought that should the University authorities consent to the application the new post-office can be placed in such a situation as to be convenient not only to the residents of Parkville, but also to the professors and students at the University.

On 12 March 1887, *The Argus* reported that the University had agreed to leasing a site to the Postal Department at a peppercorn rent. The following week, *The Argus* (18 March 1887 page 6) reported that the Parkville residents were objecting to the proposal.

A meeting of the Parkville residents was held on the evening of 16 March 1887, with one of the objects being:

To offer strong opposition to an acceptance by the Government of a site for a new post office in the University reserve grounds which has been offered by the University Council. The present edifice used for postal business is in a very unsatisfactory state and the conditions of its outhouses is such as to jeopardise the health of the resident officials, but several good sites have been offered for a new post office, and it was the opinion of the meeting that it would be unjustifiable for the department to ignore their advantages and erect a post office in the University Reserve were it would be away for the residents of Parkville, and convenient only to University authorities, besides involving the crossing of the road on the part of school children, which when the trams are constructed, will be accompanied by dangers

As a result of the meeting a deputation met with Mr Derham, the Post-Master General. (*The Age*, 25 March 1887, page 7). In response to the resident's objections Mr Derham explained that:

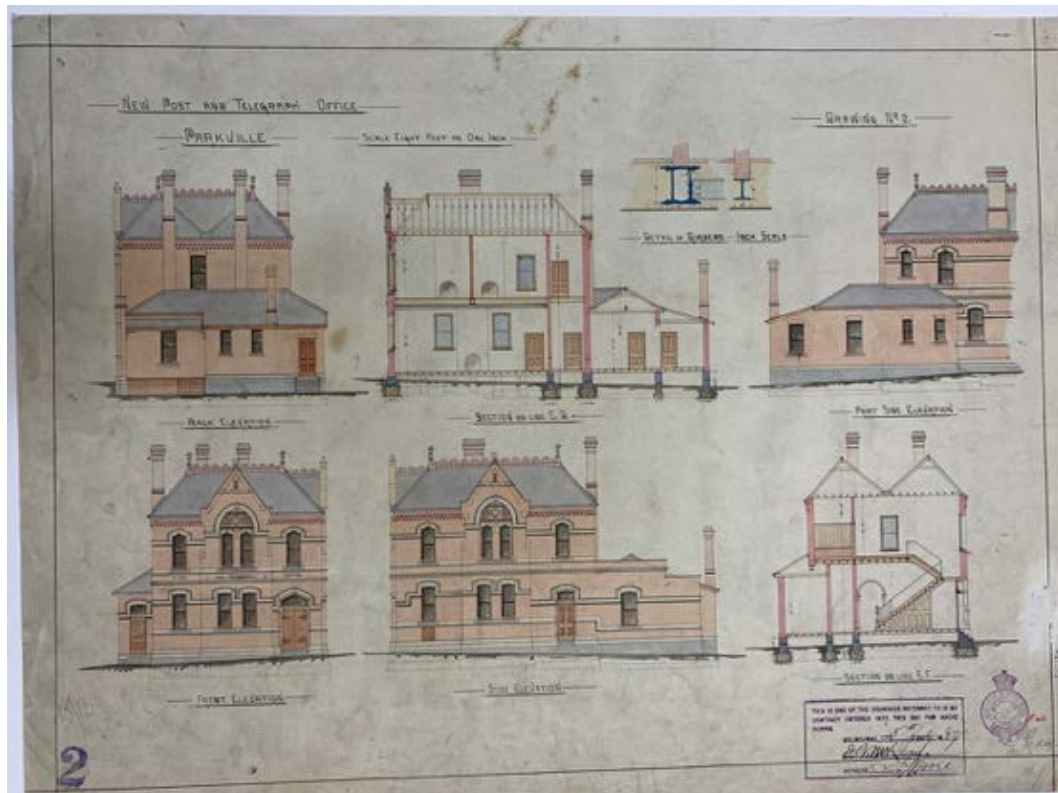
The difficulty was that the residents of Parkville demanded an excessive price for the land on which to erect a post office. As the lease of the present one would shortly expire, the department was forced to look for another site, and in the absence of a suitable and cheap one in Parkville, the department had been forced to consider the desirability of accepting one in the University reserve.

He agreed to have a report prepared before making a decision on the matter. Despite the lease expiring the post office appears to have continued trading from its existing site. On 28 November 1888 *The Age*, carried an advertisement for "accommodation, two or three gentlemen [...] Parkville Post Office".

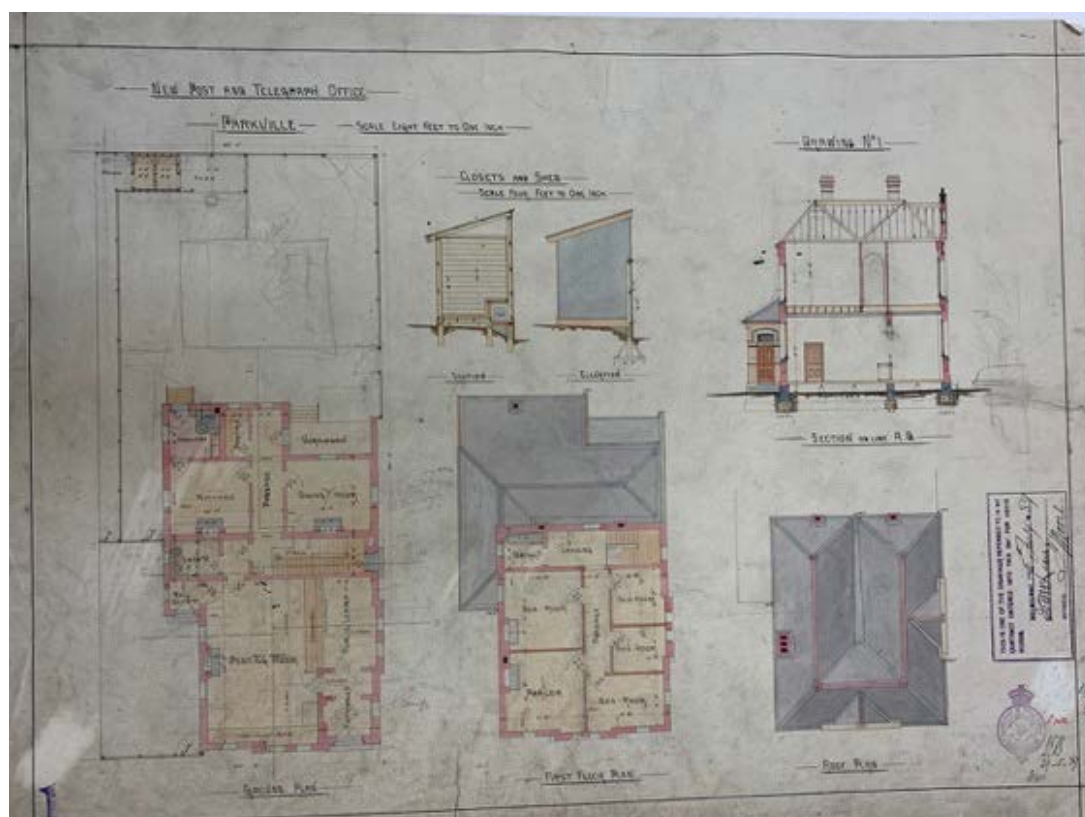
The Second Post Office

On 29 June 1889, *The Argus* carried a notice of "Government Tenders" which listed the provisional acceptance of tenders for various works. It noted the "Commissioner of Public Works had accepted a tender from J. G. McLean for a new post office, Parkville, at a cost of £1,869 7s 9d."

The Commonwealth National Archives file on the Parkville Post and Telegraph Office shows that the current site was purchased on 7 July 1887, with the valuation of the site being £820, with the final price for the construction being £1981 8s 2d. (VPRS 242/P0000/845 – Crown Reserve Correspondence C87623 Parkville Post Office)

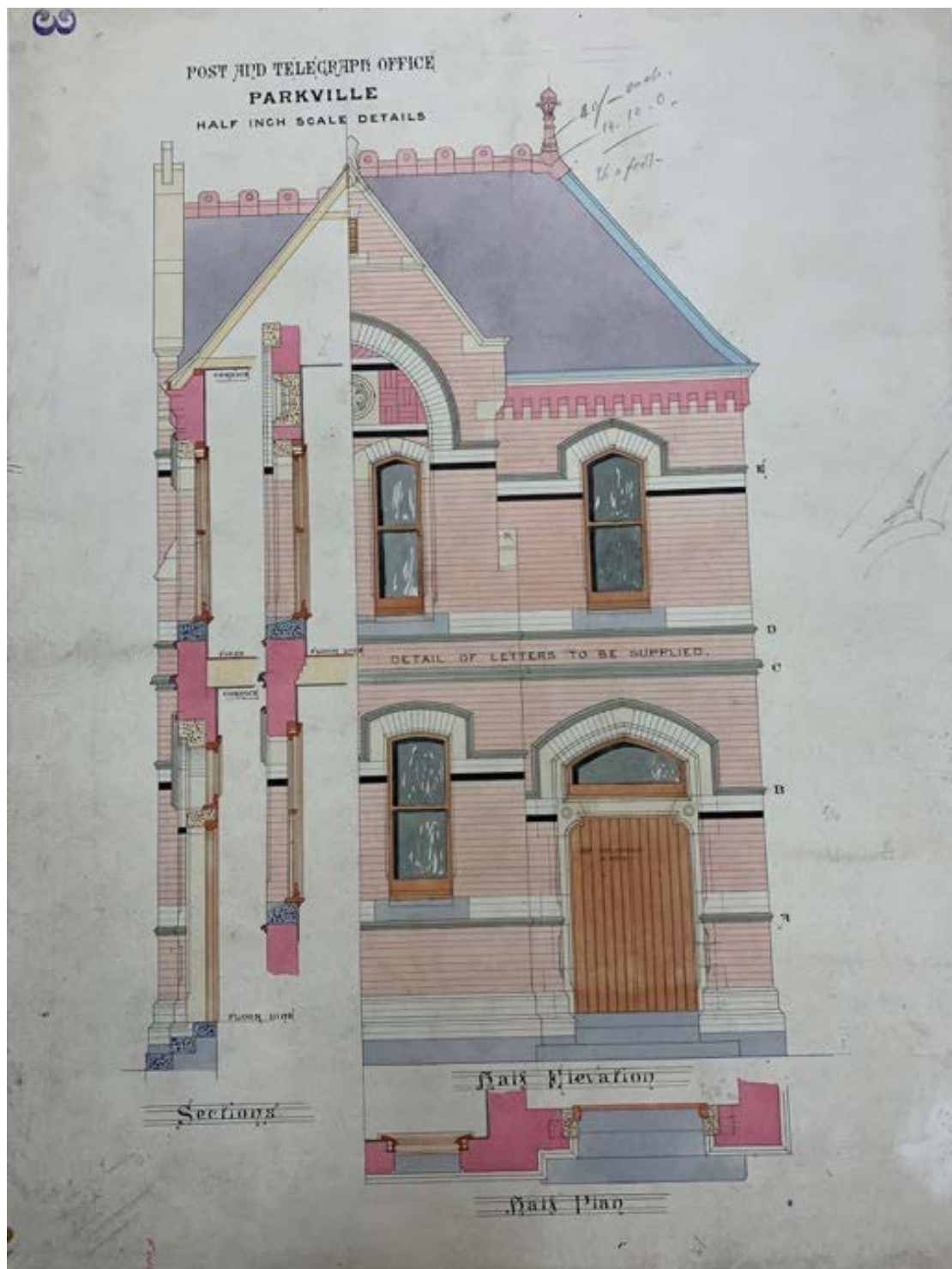


1889 plans for the Parkville Post and Telegraph Office – elevations and sections. (Reference: B3712/0/Drawing No. 40/Folder 9)



1889 plans for the Parkville Post and Telegraph Office – plans and sections (Reference: B3712/0/Drawing No. 40/Folder 9)

The post office was designed by Public Works Department architects S.E. Brindley and S.C. Brittingham. The Commonwealth Archives retains a set of the drawings for the building, together with drawings of subsequent alterations. The plans show that the contract for the building was signed on 5 July 1889. (Reference: B3712/0/Drawing No. 40/Folder 9)



1889 plans for Parkville Post and Telegraph Office – detailed elevation and cross-section showing types of bricks to be used. (Reference: B3712/0/Drawing No. 40/Folder 9)



Extract from 1896 Plan showing the location of the old Post Office leased from 1883 and two dwellings marked in red on the corner of Park Street and Wimble Street, and the new Post Office corner of Bayles and Fitzgibbon Street marked in yellow.

Interestingly, to date no newspaper report has been found of the opening of the Post Office, which is a bit surprising considering the local interest by the Parkville residents.

The archive file contains a range of useful information on the operation of the Post and Telegraph Office including who operated it and how much they were paid for the period 1884-1900. The first post mistress was a Mary Kentish, first appointed in February 1884 on an annual salary of £120. In 1885 her salary dropped to £108, while in 1894, it dropped again to £90, a 25% drop in salary from the 1884 level. In December 1895 an Alice Blanche Fyans takes over the job, on the same salary level. She is noted as the post mistress in 1900.

The Post Office and Telegraph Office collected a whole range of information on the operation of the Parkville office. This included salaries for the period 1906-1910, for the post mistress, senior assistant, messenger, and letter carriers.

Year	Post mistress	Rent deducted	Senior assistant	Letter carriers	Messenger	Miscellaneous	Total	Population served
1906	120	12	110		26	3	247	1860
1907	120	12	110		32	3	265	1860
1908	140	14	110		32	12	281	2084
1909	160	16	110	220	39	14	543	2084
1910	170	17	114	220	39	16	542	2084

Details of business operations expenditure population 1906-10

There is also information on revenue generated for the same period

Year	Postal	Telegraph	Telephone	Money order commission	Postal note poundage	Miscellaneous	Total
1906	591	103	-	19	-	-	713
1907	602	79	22	10	12	12	738
1908	616	91	33	8	12	12	772
1909	539	83	34	10	12	20	698
1910	600	89	17	12	14	17	749

Details of business operations revenue 1906-10

Year	Letters	Newspapers	Packets	Parcels	Total
1906	37904	3296	2969	407	44576
1907	33321	2740	4190	464	40715
1908	31601	2869	1504	443	36417
1909	26778	1926	1221	428	30353
1910	33196	2619	2789	451	39055

Details of business operations items posted 1906-10

The post office also operated as a savings bank

Year	Number of accounts	Deposits	Withdrawals
1906	714	2957	131
1907	700	2794	121
1908	710	4186	362
1909	715	4464	427
1910	714	4112	412

Details of business operations – Savings Bank 1906-10

In 1918 minor works appear to have been undertaken to the post office, with additional cupboards to the kitchen, redecoration etc.

Life appears to have been pretty quiet at the Post and Telegraph Office until the first couple of months of 1917. In January 1917, however, the wife of a soldier on active service, who in December 1916 had abandoned her child in Bendigo, was arrested at the Post Office as she was collecting her allotment money. (*The Age*, 12 January 1917 page 6)

On 23 February a horse attached to a mail van outside the Parkville Post Office, became frightened and bolted and careered madly along Elizabeth Street, losing the van in collision with a stationary car, and then ran into a crowd of people. (*The Argus*, 24 February 1917, page 17)

In September 1921, there was a second incident with a horse and van from the Parkville Post Office while on its rounds. A car grazed the wheels of the van in College Crescent, and when the postman got down to examine the damage the horse bolted, with the swaying van hitting a tree and overturned. The free horse bolted towards the city and returned to the Postal stables in Sturt Street. (*The Argus*, 26 September 1921)



Parkville Post Office – undated image c1917-30

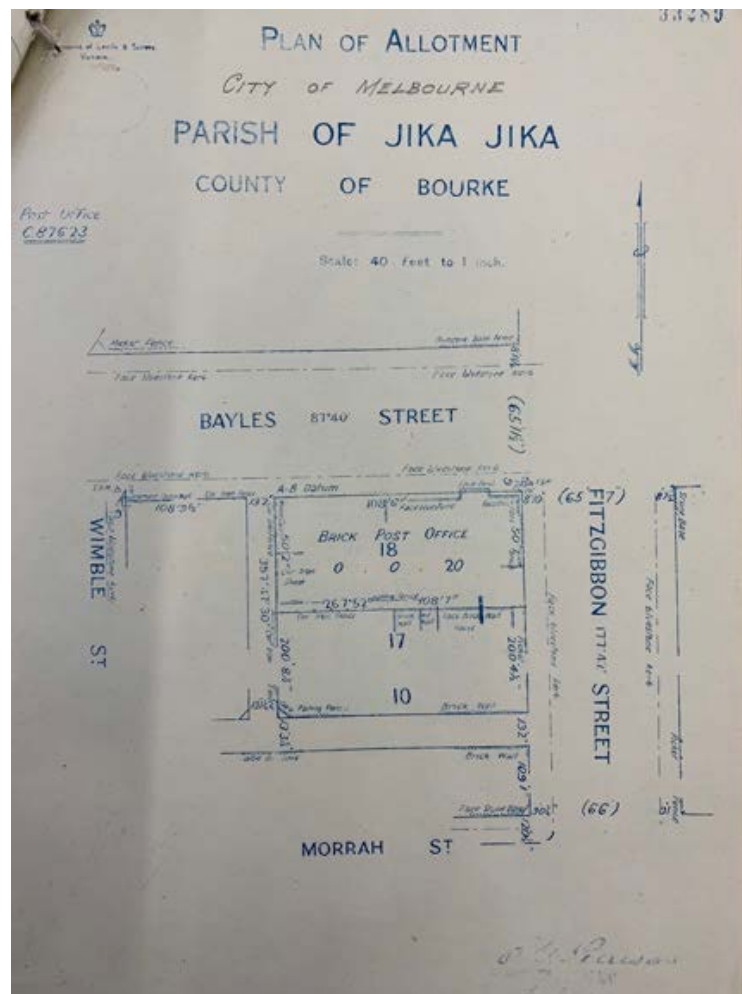


Parkville Post Office following conversion to a single dwelling. (2026)

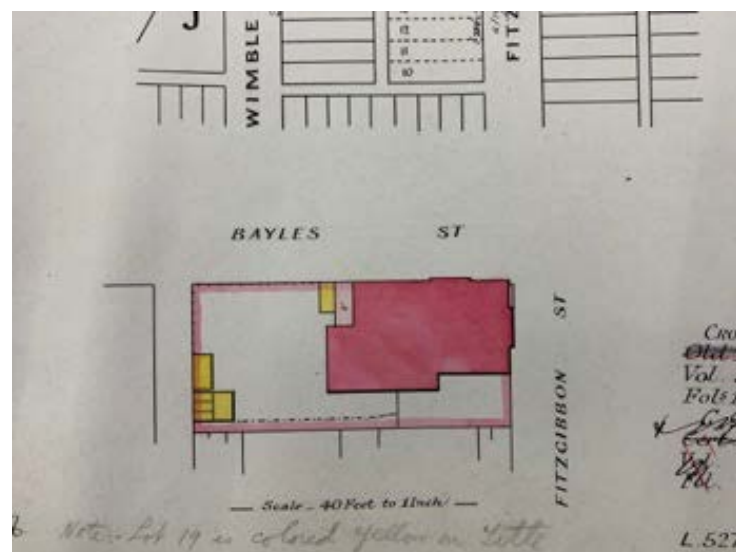
Apart from the change to the entrance arrangement onto Bayles Street, the building closely resembles the 1889 drawings and the above photograph.

In 1931 the Federal Government allocated £63,500 for Unemployment Relief Works. As part of these works' repairs and painting were undertaken to all Post Offices across Victoria, with £50 allocated to Parkville. (*The Age*, 6 November 1931 page 9)

In 1942 the site was surveyed as part of a proposed transfer of the property.



1942 survey plan of the Parkville Post Office (PROV VPRS 242/P0000/845)



1942 plan of the Parkville Post Office showing the principal building and timber outbuildings. (PROV VPRS 242/P0000/845)

The Parkville Post Office is entered in the Victorian Heritage Register. The entry in the register dated May 1999 reads as follows:

What is significant?

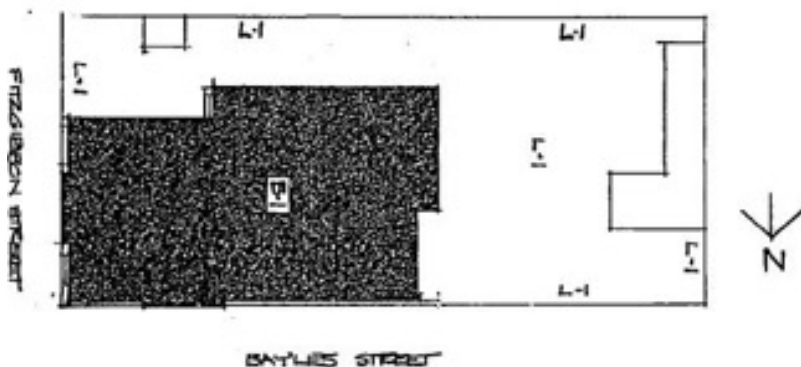
The Parkville Post Office and Quarters was designed in the neo-Gothic style by Public Works Department architects SE Brindley and SC Brittingham. The builder was JG McLean and the building was completed in 1889. The Parkville Post Office and Quarters is a two-storey polychrome brick building on a bluestone plinth. It is sited on a corner location with facades to Fitzgibbon Street and Bayles Street. Each of the street facades is composed of three bays, with the centre bay projecting slightly forward and topped by a parapeted gable projecting through the eaves line. All openings have stilted segmental arches or single point segmental arches. String courses, imposts, drip moulds and quatrefoil motifs are in freestone. The eaves are augmented with brick machicolations and the hipped roofs are covered with slate. Stained glass windows have been introduced from the demolished Preston Post office. The interior layout is largely intact although the counter and instrument table have been replaced.

How is it significant?

The Parkville Post Office and Quarters is of architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Parkville Post Office and Quarters is architecturally significant as an early example of the adoption by the Public Works Department of the Gothic polychrome style for post offices. It also demonstrates the gradual adoption during the late 1880s of Gothic styling for public buildings other than schools. The choice of the Gothic style at the Parkville Post Office and Quarters contrasts to other post offices built in the same year. Flemington was in a Moorish style, Geelong was Italianate, Mildura was Queen Anne and Warracknabeal was in an English domestic style. The Parkville Post Office and Quarters is also of significance as a design response to the suburban setting, offering a truly residential, domestic character in keeping with the character of suburban Parkville



Map accompanying the entry

The Post Office operated on this site continuously since late 1889, some 130 years.

The Third Post Office

The 1889 Post Office was sold and has been renovated and extended to form a single dwelling. The Post Office relocated to a premises at 55 Royal Parade in the small parade of shops adjoining Naughtons Public House making it the third Post Office in Parkville.



Post Office at 55 Royal Parade, Parkville (2026)

Sources:

- South Parkville, Hilary Lewis, 2nd edition 1996
- Commonwealth Archive B3712/0/Drawing No. 40/Folder 9
- PROV VPRS 242/P0000/845 – Crown Reserve Correspondence C87623 Parkville Post Office
- Newspaper articles from TROVE

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