City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name:	**House**	
Other names:	**Attic bungalow**	

Address:	**48 Blessington Street, St Kilda**
Category:	**Residential: House**
Style:	**Federation/Edwardian: Arts & Crafts**
Constructed:	**1918**
Designer:	**Gawler & Drummond**
Amendment:	**TBA**
Comment:	**Revised citation**

Heritage Precinct: **St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs**

Heritage Overlay: HO7

Graded as: **Significant**

Victorian Heritage Register: **No**

Significance

What is significant?

The house, designed by architect Gawler & Drummond in 1918 for Isaac Corkill, at 48 Blessington Street, St Kilda is significant. It is a two-storey, brick, attic-style villa, with a steep gable roof clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. The ground floor street-facing elevation has clinker brick towards its base, and red pressed brick above. A curved bay, its hood supported by two chains attached to the adjacent wall, is at one side. The timber casement windows of its canted bay window have small diamond-shaped glazed panes. At right, on the ground floor, is a small gable that projects forward. Below this is a small, canted bay window with small diamond-shaped glazed panes, and the entrance porch to the house that is supported by diagonal timber brackets. Timber shingles clad the gable end. On the upper portion of the street-facing elevation, the gable end is half-timbered with vertical battens and has a recessed balcony set within a rectangular wall opening. Above this, the gable end is clad in shingles with a timber vent at the apex. Two relatively plain, tall, brick chimneys are on the east side of the roof. Both chimneys are capped and have terracotta pots.

Non-original alterations and additions including the front fence are not significant.

How is it significant?

The house at 48 Blessington Street, St Kilda is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The house is of aesthetic significance as an intact and well-detailed example of an attic-style bungalow, which is massed with a steep and dominant gable roof, clad in unglazed terracotta tiles, where the first floor of the house is expressed as an attic. The street-facing elevation is notable for its ornate detailing; much of this derived from English Vernacular and Arts & Crafts influences. This detailing includes half-timbering and shingles cladding the gable end, and which surround the recessed balcony of the attic-level. The lower walls are faced in red pressed brick, above a clinker brick base. It is on the lower level of the façade where the detailing is most exquisite, and this includes a hood supported by chains fixed to the wall of the house above a curved bay window; and a small projecting gable at right that forms the entrance porch to the house, and is above a small canted bay window. The windows on both bays have diamond-shaped window panes. On the porch, the smaller gable is supported by a series of diagonal timber brackets fixed to brick piers. (Criterion E)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.3 Suburban bungalows)

History

Contextual history

Private development in the City of Port Phillip began from the time of the first sales of Crown land in the 1840s and 1850s. The gradual development of infrastructure, including roads, public transport networks and utilities, paved the way for increasing development of private land. Private subdivision within the broad framework set out by Hoddle's survey saw neighbourhoods in the City of Port Phillip grow into populated, thriving communities (TEH).

During the peak of Melbourne's building boom in the 1880s, almost all the remaining land in Port Phillip (with the exception of the Elwood Swamp and the Fishermans Bend area) was subdivided and offered for sale. Prosperity saw land speculation intensify across the suburbs during that period in areas such as Elwood, Balaclava, Ripponlea, St Kilda East that were remote from transport and services. When one of Elwood's oldest estates, Chiverton, was subdivided in 1885, it created 85 allotments. Despite the eager subdivision of land and colourful advertising, however, the actual building of homes in these remote subdivisions was slow. With the onset of the 1890s economic depression, many estates failed and remained undeveloped for a decade or more. Maps of Elwood in the late 1890s, for example, show that residential development was still sparse and the beachside estates had failed spectacularly, with only a few houses on the Elwood Esplanade and Elwood Hill estates. Hood Street and Bluff Avenue remained entirely undeveloped at the turn of the century (TEH).

There was almost no increase in St Kilda's population in the decade from 1891 to 1901. However, as development recovered in the early twentieth century the number of residents in St Kilda almost doubled between 1901 and 1921 rising from 20,500 to 38,500 as land was highly sought-after by a new generation of homebuilders seeking smaller detached dwellings, duplexes or flats.

Most of the development that occurred during the Federation/Edwardian period occurred on subdivisions laid out during the 1880s boom period, as well as in the continuing subdivision of mansion estates in St Kilda, Elwood, Balaclava and Ripponlea. The exception is the low-lying parts of Elwood, which were

subdivided and development following completion of the Elwood Swamp reclamation project in 1910 (TEH).

House, 48 Blessington Street

The development of the St Kilda Botanical Gardens from c.1860 led to the surrounding streets becoming a desirable residential area. By the end of the nineteenth century Blessington, Tennyson, Dickens and Herbert streets were lined with substantial villas, and mansions set in large grounds.

The north side of Blessington Street was almost fully developed in 1895. The exception was vacant land between nos. 38 and 46 (MMBW). In 1916 this was subdivided into three lots and this property was purchased by Isaac Corkill, a civil servant then living in Moonee Ponds (LV). This house was built in 1918 for Mr. Corkill as his own residence. Gawler & Drummond was the architect and H.H. Eilenberg was the builder (AAI, BP). Mr. Corkill continued living here until his death in 1932 (LV, SM).

When first assessed in 1992 by the *St Kilda 20th century architectural study* the porch and balcony had been enclosed. These openings have since been reinstated. The front fence was constructed in 2013 and replaced a low brick fence, which appeared to date from the postwar period (PP).

References

Australian Architectural Index (AAI), record no. 31124

Land Victoria (LV), Certificate of title 3988 Folio 459

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no. 1374, dated 1895

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) Version 1, July 2020

St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 3697, 31 August 1918

St Kilda Council planning permit (PP) 536/2013, 19 July 2013

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM), 1920, 1930

Description

A two-storey, brick, attic-style villa, with a steep gable roof clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. The ground floor street-facing elevation has clinker brick towards its base, and red pressed brick above. A curved bay, its hood supported by two chains attached to the adjacent wall, is at one side. The timber casement windows of its canted bay window have small diamond-shaped glazed panes. At right, on the ground floor, is a small gable that projects forward. Below this is a small, canted bay window with small diamond-shaped glazed panes, and the entrance porch to the house that is supported by diagonal timber brackets fixed to brick piers. Timber shingles clad the gable end. On the upper portion of the street-facing elevation, the gable end is half-timbered with vertical battens and has a recessed balcony set within a rectangular wall opening. Above this, the gable end is clad in shingles with a timber vent at the apex.

Two relatively plain, tall, brick chimneys are on the east side of the roof. Both chimneys are capped and have terracotta pots. An addition with a skillion roof has been built to the west side of the roof, set back from the façade. It is recessive, obscured from the street by the adjacent flats and landscaping.

The house is in good condition and has a relatively high degree of external intactness. It is set back from the street behind a mature garden, and a tapestry clinker brick fence (not original), with a recessed entrance without a gate, extends along the street boundary. The fence has been designed to reference some of the face brickwork of the façade.

Comparative analysis

Following the economic depression of the 1890s, there was concern that inner Melbourne was becoming overcrowded. Terrace houses fell out of favour, as they were perceived as being cold and dark with limited

garden space. Instead, detached bungalows became the most popular form of housing from the Federation/Edwardian period onward, influenced by the Garden Suburb movements from overseas, a concept of one family, one, house, one garden. Improved transport links to the city from the early twentieth century, also stimulated development.

This is a fine example of an architect-designed Arts & Crafts attic-style bungalow. It is notable for the ornate level of detailing; much of this derived from English Vernacular and Arts & Crafts influences. This detailing includes half-timbering and shingles cladding the gable end, and which surround the recessed balcony of the attic-level. However, it is on the lower level of the façade where the detailing is most exquisite, and this includes a hood supported by chains fixed to the wall of the house above a curved bay window; and a small projecting gable at right that forms the entrance porch to the house, and is above a small canted bay window.

It compares favourably with other individually significant Federation/Edwardian attic bungalows in St Kilda or Elwood:

- 29 Westbury Street, St Kilda East (1913) Leonard J. Flannagan, architect (Citation 956)
- Dartington, 14 Selwyn Avenue, Elwood (1914) W.G. Pollard, builder/designer (Citation 802)
- Eumana, 76 Blessington Street, St Kilda (1914) D. McKecknie, builder/designer (Citation 297)
- 31 Redan Street, St Kilda (1914-15) Edwin J. Ruck, architect (Citation 787)
- 329 Barkly Street, Elwood (1916) W. Pike, builder/designer (Citation 194)
- 11 Hennessy Avenue, Elwood (1919) Carleton & Carleton, architects (Citation 2014)
- 18 Normandy Road, Elwood (1919) Matthew Sherlock, builder/designer (Citation 747)
- 69A Alma Road, St Kilda (1920) Sydney Smith & Ogg, architect (Citation 144)
- Sur La Mer, 382 Barkly Street, Elwood (1921) (Citation 2182)

Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with paint controls

Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *HO7 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20th century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

Other images