

# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** House and Canary Island Palms  
**Other names:** -

**Citation No:**  
**428**



**Address:** 57 Blessington Street, St Kilda

**Category:** Residential: House, Garden

**Style:** Federation/Edwardian:  
Queen Anne

**Constructed:** 1910, 1919

**Designer:** Unknown (A. Kenley, builder)

**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, constructed by A. Kenley in 1910 with additions in 1919 for Otto Trichel, at 57 Blessington Street, St Kilda is significant. It is a Federation Queen Anne villa, situated on a prominent site at the east corner of Blessington and Tennyson streets, opposite the St Kilda Botanical Gardens. The mature garden setting, which includes two Canary Island palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) and a privet hedge behind a sympathetic (but not original) timber picket fence also contributes to the significance of the place.

Alterations and additions including the garage 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?

This house is of aesthetic significance as a fine example of a Queen Anne-style brick villa. Well-detailed, the house has elements demonstrative of the style, including an asymmetrical composition, layered with Queen Anne-style elements of complex hip and gable roof forms clad in unglazed terracotta tiles complemented with terracotta embellishment including ornate finials, ridge cappings, and chimney pots; and a curved bay topped with a candlesnuffer roof. The prominent corner bay positioned at the corner of Blessington and Tennyson streets gives the house a landmark quality. Other elements, associated with the Queen Anne-style are pressed red brick walls and chimneys relieved in roughcast render, exposed timber eaves

brackets, groups of timber casement windows, some sashes with Art Nouveau-style leadlighting, and timber fretwork on porches. Contributing to the aesthetic value of the house is its garden setting, making a visual reference to the Botanical Gardens opposite. (Criterion E)

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## 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)

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## 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, 57 Blessington Street

The development of the St Kilda Botanical Gardens from c.1860 led to the surrounding area becoming a desirable residential neighbourhood. By the end of the nineteenth century Blessington, Tennyson, Dickens and Herbert streets contained substantial villas, and mansions set within large grounds. Blessington Street was almost fully developed by 1895, and in the early twentieth century new building lots were created by the subdivision of some of the original mansion estates.

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This property, at the east corner of Blessington and Tennyson streets once formed part of the grounds of a house known as Woodlands that was erected prior to 1873 and occupied a large allotment with deep setbacks to both streets (Vardy Plan, MMBW). In the early twentieth century the Woodlands estate was subdivided creating building allotments along Blessington Street. Otto Triechel purchased this allotment and in 1910 had this house erected as his own residence. A. Kenley, who was the builder, also carried out 'brick additions' to the house in 1919 (BP).

In c.2003 a double garage was constructed at the rear of the house facing Tennyson Street (PP).

## References

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

'Plan of the Borough of St Kilda Surveyed and Compiled under the direction of the Borough Council by J.E.S. Vardy', 1873 (Vardy Plan)

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

St Kilda Council building permits (BP) no. 962, 6 January 1910; 3796, 21 January 1919

St Kilda Council planning permit (PP) 838/2003, 24 November 2003

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1915, 1920, 1930

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## Description

A two-storey, brick, Queen Anne-style villa, situated on a prominent site at the southeast corner of Blessington and Tennyson Streets, opposite the St Kilda Botanical Gardens and is set back from both boundaries behind a mature garden. Two mature Canary Island Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) are notable plantings in each setback. A timber picket fence extends along the street boundaries, and behind this is a privet hedge.

The house has complex roof forms clad in Marseille terracotta tiles with terracotta ridge capping and ball and rams head finials, and the chimneys are face red brick with roughcast render at the tops and terracotta pots. The first floor of the house is expressed as an attic level within the roof form, apart from a section with sheer two-storey walls towards the rear. The corner candlesnuffer roof (crowned with a metal weathervane) with its curved bay is adjacent to the corner of Blessington and Tennyson Streets, making this a distinct element on both the house and its context. A canted bay, slightly larger in scale and with a lower hip roof form, complements the candlesnuffer roof at the opposite end of the Blessington Street elevation and there is a further semi-circular bay to the Tennyson Street elevation. Porches facing Blessington Street and Tennyson Street are detailed with arched timber, infilled with timber fretwork. The windows are timber frame casements with many upper sashes retaining Art Nouveau style leadlight glass.

The house is in excellent condition and has a high degree of integrity. A small, glazed, skillion addition, has been added to the Tennyson Street elevation to the side of the projecting bay, partially obscured from view by a high fence. Further along Tennyson Street is the red brick, double garage, with an upper level expressed as a lantern-element. Constructed in 2003, this garage references the house in terms of its materials and detailing.

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## 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.

Queen Anne was a popular style during the Federation/Edwardian period (c.1901 to c.1919). The term Queen Anne came to mean, in the Australian context, an eclectic style applied exclusively to domestic architecture. This infused American influences from the exuberant and highly picturesque Stick and Shingle

styles (planning, complex roof forms, elaborate timber detailing) and materials usage derived from English Queen Anne Revival and Old English practice (red brick, render and stone dressings, roughcast, timber strapwork). The dominant and complex roof clad in Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles and elaborate ridge cresting and finials with multiple hips and gables, conical towers, dormer windows and tall chimneys is a distinguishing characteristic. The result was a uniquely Australian style, and this was to extent deliberate: the development of the style paralleled an emergent nationalism which was, at times, expressed in the decorative motifs of the houses (Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, Volume 1, 1992:51)

The earliest Queen Anne-style house in Port Phillip is Redholme, 572 St Kilda Road, Melbourne (Citation 1019), which was designed by the prominent architect John Beswicke and built in 1896. Beswicke also designed 313 Park Street, South Melbourne built in 1900 for Frank Fay (Citation 1018). Both houses are fine examples of the style and demonstrate Beswicke's skill as an architect. Another early example is Pine Nook at 22 Shirley Grove, St Kilda East (Citation 2308), built in 1902, but it has been altered and extended.

This is a fine example of a Queen Anne-style villa, with characteristic complex massing of face red brick relieved in render, with equally complex roof forms clad in terracotta tiles and detailing synonymous with this style. A notable feature is the candlesnuffer roof above a curved bay window that emphasises the corner location and is complemented by projecting bays on either side. The setting of the house is complemented by two mature Canary Island palms, which are a typical Edwardian planting, and an early privet hedge along both boundaries. These provide a verdant and related setting for the house, and a visual relationship to the Botanical Gardens opposite.

Other Queen Anne-style villas in the HO include:

- 20 Canterbury Road, Albert Park (c.1910) (Citation 1014). Prominent candlesnuffer roof.
- 118 Canterbury Road, Middle Park (c.1905). Very complex roof and unusual projecting corner porch. Complemented by original front fence
- 37 Southey Street, Elwood (1916) W.H. Smith, architect (Citation 922). Candlesnuffer roof.
- 29 Tennyson Street, Elwood (c.1910).
- Elenara and Thalassa, 2-6 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda (c.1910) (Citation 92). Two storey houses.
- 3 Deakin Street, St Kilda West (c.1910) (Citation 91). Distinctive roof top tower.

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## 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.

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## Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with paint controls. Apply tree controls to the two Canary Island Palms only.

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## Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 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 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992



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## Other images

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