

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: House
Other names: -

Citation No:
936



Address: 58 Tennyson Street, Elwood

Category: Residential: House

Style: Federation villa

Constructed: 1912

Designer: Unknown (A.J. Griffiths, 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 built by A.J. Griffiths in 1912, at 58 Tennyson Street, Elwood is significant. It is a well-detailed, asymmetrically composed, Federation brick villa with a steep hip and gable roof clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. The brick and render front fence (excluding the non-original metal balustrade and gate) contributes to the significance of the place.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

The house at 58 Tennyson Street, Elwood 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 Federation brick villa. The façade is rich in embellishment, which is well-executed and makes for both an interesting and unusual example of the Federation-style villa typology. The house is asymmetrically composed, and has a steep hip and gable roof clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. The first floor of the house is expressed as an attic level with a pronounced half-timbered street-facing gable above a canted-bay window. Flanking each side of the roof are chimneys with corbelling and terracotta pots. It is, however, the lower portion of the front elevation that demonstrates a level of detailing that is superior to that commonly found on a villa of this period, with the verandah expressed with bold circular motifs in timber, creating a screened effect. This detailing is

augmented by an oval-shaped leadlight panel on the front door that complements the curved timber forms of the verandah. Other detailing, characteristic of housing of this period, includes red face brick walls with string courses at head and sill heights, half-timbering at gable ends, and timber casement windows with leadlight in the upper sashes. (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.

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.

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.

House, 58 Tennyson Street

The development of the St Kilda Botanic 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 were lined with substantial villas, and mansions set in large grounds. In Tennyson Street the mansion estates extended almost as far south as Byron Street. One of these was Hartpurty, which was established c.1864 for Captain Howard S. Smith at the southeast corner of Milton Street.

In 1911, the Hartpury Estate was subdivided creating Hartpury Avenue and new building lots facing Milton and Tennyson Streets (AAI). This property was one of three in the Hartpury subdivision facing Tennyson Street, and was purchased in May 1913 by Alfred J. Griffith, a builder of Page Street, Middle Park (LV). By that time Griffith had already obtained a building permit from St Kilda Council for this house, which he constructed in late 1912. Original plans show the house when constructed contained three bedrooms on one side of a central hallway, with the drawing room, dining room and kitchen on the other, and a maid's room at the rear of the house (BP).

It appears the house remained vacant until 1916, when it was sold to Barbara F. Handley who was by then living at the property. She was to remain the owner until 1959 (LV).

References

Australian Architectural Index (AAI) Record No.899 for Hartpury:

<https://aai.app.unimelb.edu.au/apex/f?p=198:11:::> (viewed 23 March 2021)

Land Victoria (LV) Certificates of title Vol. 3701 Fol. 147, Vol. 3977 Fol 325

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan nos. 1384, dated 1898, 1385 (1905), 1396 (1905) and 1397 (1905).

'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 permit (BP) no. 1712, 27 August 1912

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM), 1920, 1930

Description

This early twentieth century villa forms the bookend of a fine collection of Federation housing that extends south along Tennyson Street to the corner of Hartpury Avenue. Enhancing the early Garden Suburb character of this portion of Tennyson Street are the mature plane trees that create a canopy of vegetation over the street, and a lush landscape setting for this and the other houses in this group.

This well-detailed, asymmetrically composed, Federation brick villa, has a steep hip and gable roof that is clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. Its first floor is expressed as an attic, with a pronounced, half-timbered, gable facing the street. Recessed below this attic gable is a canted bay window. Red brick chimneys are at each side of the roof, and these have corbelling and terracotta pots at their tops.

The façade is rich in embellishment and well-executed. This makes for both an interesting and unusual example of the Federation-style villa typology. A gabled bay, half-timbered, projects at left that is supported by timber brackets. A smaller bay of casement windows, with leadlight in the upper panels, is below the projecting gable bay.

A verandah, with a small gable facing Tennyson Street, extends to the side of the projecting gable bay. A stone stair leads to the verandah, and this has red brick piers with rendered caps. The piers are sited at a diagonal to the stair. The verandah has fine and unusual timberwork, expressed with bold circular and curved motifs, which create a screen effect. The timber front door has an oval shaped panel with leadlight glass, that complements the curved forms of the verandah detailing. To the side of the front door are casement windows in a tripartite arrangement. A string course at window head and cill height extends across both sections of the façade.

Different types of mortar are used on parts of the fence, which suggests that it has been rebuilt in places. Additions have been made to the roof of the house towards the rear, and these are obscured from view from Tennyson Street.

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 (c.1901 to c.1919) onward.

This house is an interesting and unusual example of the Federation-style villa. The façade is rich in embellishment, which is well-executed and makes for both an interesting and unusual example of the Federation-style villa typology. The house is asymmetrically composed and has a steep hip and gable roof clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. The first floor of the house is expressed as an attic level with a pronounced half-timbered street-facing gable above a canted-bay window. Flanking each side of the roof are chimneys with corbelling and terracotta pots. It is, however, the lower portion of the front elevation that demonstrates a level of detailing that is superior to that commonly found on a villa of this period, with the verandah expressed with bold circular motifs in timber, creating a screened effect. This detailing is augmented by an oval-shaped leadlight panel on the front door that complements the curved timber forms of the verandah. Other detailing, characteristic of housing of this period, includes red face brick walls with string courses at head and cill heights, half-timbering at gable ends, and timber casement windows with leadlight in the upper sashes.

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.

Consider replacing the steel inserts between the brick piers of the front fence and the steel gate with timber equivalents, which would respond to the timber detailing on the verandah of the house.

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 20th century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

Other images

