

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Trefusis
Other names: House

Citation No:
323



Address: 6 Dickens Street, St Kilda

Heritage Precinct: St Kilda
Botanical Gardens & Environs

Category: Residential: House

Heritage Overlay: **HO7**

Style: Victorian: Italianate

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1891

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Ernest M. Crouch

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Significance

What is significant?

Trefusis, the Italianate villa built in 1891 for Margaret McCutcheon at 6 Dickens Street, St Kilda is significant.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

Trefusis at 6 Dickens Street, St Kilda is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Trefusis is of aesthetic significance as an Italianate villa with fine and unusual detailing. Of note are the arched windows to the projecting bay, which have impost moulds and barley-twist Corinthian colonettes, the cast iron verandah frieze and brackets in an unusual pattern using leaf motifs alternating with timber spindels, and the carved timber board to the side of the verandah roof, the unusual, cranked profile of the steeply pitched roof above the projecting bay, which is surmounted by iron cresting, the gable above the verandah, which is decorated with carved timber panels with sunray patterns surrounding a louvred vent with a label mould, and the chimneys, which have bracketed cornices and half circle cresting. (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 (5.3.1 Mansions and grand villas)

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).

Mansion estates – large, detached homes on generous allotments – defined early, permanent housing in Elwood and St Kilda, in the mid-nineteenth century. Although the oldest surviving houses in Elwood – such as Vautier House, built in the mid-1850s – are terrace houses, it was mansions on large allotments that came to characterise the neighbourhood in its early years. Apart from the mansion estates, most of the development in Port Phillip prior to 1880 was confined to the early township reserves. However, the boom era of the 1880s saw intense land speculation across Melbourne, with large estates and the original crown allotments carved up into much smaller allotments for residential development that filled in the gaps shown on that plan. During the peak of Melbourne's building boom in the 1880s, almost all the remaining land in Port Phillip (except for the Elwood Swamp and the Fishermans Bend area) was subdivided and offered for sale (TEH).

House, 6 Dickens Street

The development of the St Kilda Botanical Gardens from c.1860 onwards encouraged the development of the surrounding area into a desirable residential neighbourhood. By the end of the nineteenth century Blessington, Tennyson, Dickens, and Herbert streets and the east side of Brighton Road were lined with substantial villas and mansions set in large grounds.

This house was built in 1891 for Margaret McCutcheon on land that had once formed part of the property owned by prominent early Melbourne architect, T.J. (Thomas) Crouch who had died in December 1889 (RB). His house was immediately to the west. McCutcheon is reputed to have been related to Crouch's widow, Mary Emma Bloor Crouch and in January 1892 the land was reconveyed back to Mrs. Crouch and then back to Mrs. McCutcheon, at the same time on the same day, with slightly amended boundaries (LV). It has been suggested that the architect Ernest William Marston Crouch designed the house (Bick). Ernest was the eldest son of T.J. Crouch and was admitted as a partner to his firm shortly before his death (*The Colonist*, 7 December 1889, p.25).

George Frederick Lynch acquired the property in 1895 and in 1903 architect Sydney Wigham Smith (Jnr.) purchased the property and owned it until 1919 (LV). By 1920 it was known as 'Trefusis' (*Malvern Standard*, 28 February 1920, p.3).

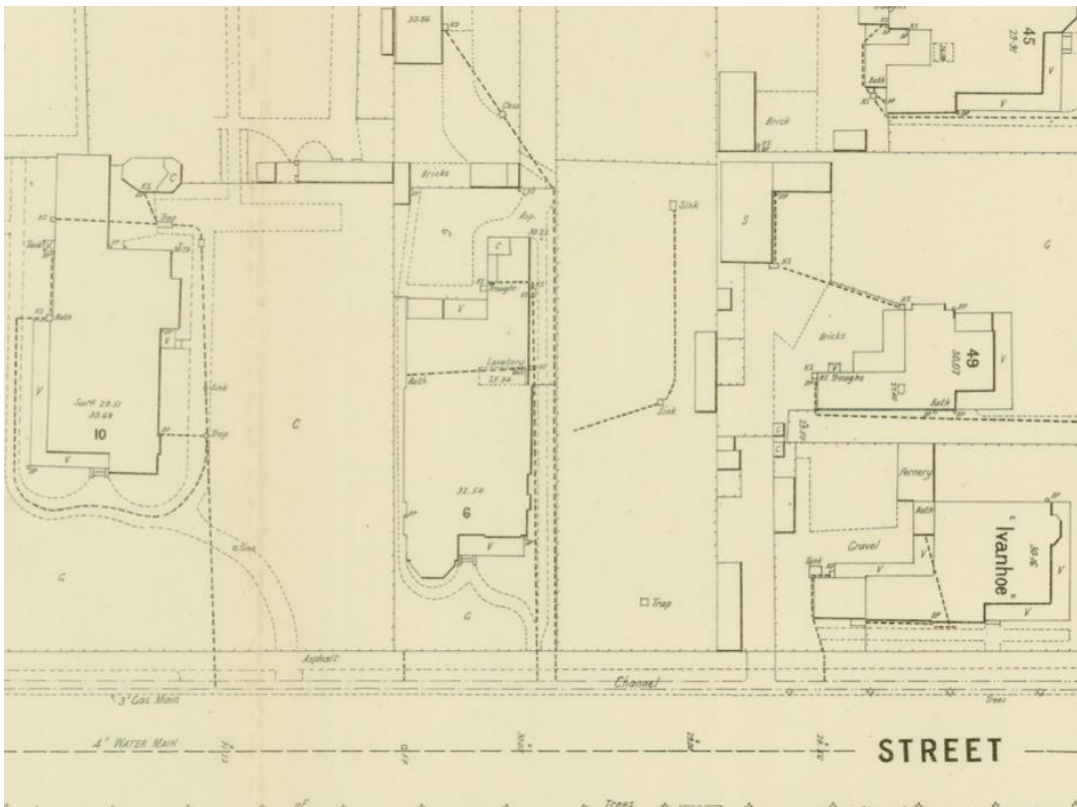


Figure 1: MMBW Detail Plan No. 1382 (detail) showing the house in 1897. The house of Thomas and Emma Crouch is to the left (no. 10)

References

Bick, David, *St Kilda Conservation Study. Area 2*, 1985

Land Victoria (LV): Vol. 2314, Fol. 648 (1890); Vol. 2408, Fol. 474 (1892); Vol. 2408, Fol. 478 (1892); Vol. 2592, Fol. 300 (1895)

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan No. 1382, dated 1897

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

St Kilda Rate Books (RB): 1890/91 no. 1952, 50 ft. land; 1891/92 8 rooms brick, N.A.V. 120 pounds

Sands & McDougall Directory (SM) 1895, 1900, 1905

Description

The house at 6 Dickens Street is an Italianate villa with rendered and brick walls and a slate roof. Characteristic of the style, the house is asymmetrical in plan with a projecting three-sided bay to one side of a separate verandah with turned timber posts and a cast iron frieze, and stucco ornamentation to the eaves, walls, and chimneys. Notable details include:

- The arched windows to the projecting bay, which have impost moulds and barley-twist Corinthian colonettes.
- The cast iron verandah frieze and brackets in an unusual pattern using leaf motifs alternating with timber spindels, and the carved timber board to the side of the verandah roof.
- The unusual, cranked profile of the steeply pitched roof above the projecting bay, which is surmounted by iron cresting.
- The gable above the verandah, which is decorated with carved timber panels with sunray patterns surrounding a louvred vent with a label mould.

- The chimneys, which have bracketed cornices and half circle cresting.

Internally, a hall in three sections bisects the house and the first section, the length of the front rooms, is narrower than the main hall with its coved ceiling. Original or early embossed wallpaper lines the hall, now painted. The elaborate plasterwork to the ceilings is a feature of the interior and the ceiling rose in the front bay windowed room is unusual. The doors to the front two rooms have acid-etched glass toplights.

The house is in good condition and has good external integrity. Timber blind frames described in the 1985 heritage study and visible in 1998 heritage citation image in the bay windows have been removed.

Comparative analysis

No information.

Assessment

This place has been assessed using with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013 applying the Hercon criteria in accordance with PPN1: *Applying the heritage overlay*.

Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with external paint controls.

Primary source

David Helms, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations (Part 2)*, 2022

Other studies

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

Other images

