

City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Duplex
Other names: Attached houses

Citation No:
192



Address: 245 & 245A Barkly Street, St Kilda

Heritage Precinct: St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs

Category: Residential: Duplex

Heritage Overlay: **HO7**

Style: Federation/Edwardian:
Arts & Crafts

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1914

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Richardson & Wood

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Significance

What is significant?

The Arts & Crafts style duplex at 245 & 245A Barkly Street, St Kilda designed by Richardson & Wood and built by H. Bellion in 1914 for Mrs Amies is significant.

The front fence is sympathetic, but not original.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

The duplex at 245 & 245A Barkly Street, St Kilda is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The duplex is significant as a representative example of a two-storey semi-detached duplex that sits at the cusp of the transition toward duplex flats and demonstrates the contribution of Richardson & Wood to the development of multi-dwelling building types in the early twentieth century. Internally, the efficient layout neatly resolves many of the problems inherent in an essentially 19th century narrow allotment size and building form and is one of several buildings by the architects that demonstrate their exploration of different approaches to multi-dwelling developments including the 'bungalow court' flats at 96 Grey Street of 1920, and the more conventional Belmont flats (1923). (Criterion D)

The duplex is a fine and exemplary example of the Arts and Crafts style with characteristic natural materials that have been used with striking simplicity and boldness, to produce one of St Kilda's most distinctive pieces of architecture. Of especial note is the façade, which has a prominent gable-front roof dominated by a central, massive, plain red brick chimney. The significance of the building today is enhanced by its high degree of integrity, including the original unpainted render and other original materials (face red brick, weatherboards and terracotta roof tile) and details including the verandah, windows and bracketed hoods, arched porches and entry doors. The colour scheme is sympathetic and the front fence, while not original, in its materiality and detail complements the setting of the houses. (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 during the Federation/Edwardian period was 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.

Duplex, 245 & 245A Barkly Street

The west side of Barkly Street immediately to the south of Blessington Street remained vacant until the early twentieth century (MMBW). In late 1900 the land was subdivided into 64 building allotments and offered for sale as the Baker Estate. It was promoted as being within '4 minutes walk of the St Kilda Trams' (SLV) and soon would have access to the tramway from St Kilda Station to Brighton Beach, which opened in 1905 and ran along Barkly and Mitford streets. The area was swiftly developed and almost no vacant lots remained by 1915 (SM).

Lot 6 in the Baker Estate was sold to a Mrs. Cora Amies and in 1914 she engaged Richardson & Wood, architects to design a pair of attached houses, which were constructed by H. Bellion. Mrs. Amies lived in the adjoining house to the south at no.247 (BP, SM).

Original building plans show that each dwelling consisted of three main rooms on the ground floor: the sitting room, dining room and kitchen; and two bedrooms on the first floor. Between the sitting and dining rooms, leading off from the skewed side entry porch, is a small entry hall with an open well staircase. Upstairs the landing opens onto the bedrooms on either side and a small bathroom neatly perched above the porch, with its skewed window visible from the street. At the front a ground floor verandah was accessed through the sitting room's bay window. At the rear a woodshed, W.C. and laundry block attached to the back of the kitchen (BP).

Richardson & Wood, architects

The partnership of Richardson & Wood was formed in 1912. Frank G. Richardson had been in practice since 1894 and in 1911 he was involved with several large projects with the larger firm of Twentyman & Askew, which included shops and a picture theatre in High Street, Northcote. Herbert Wood, who was born and raised in London, arrived in Melbourne in 1887 and entered into practice with George McMullen. He later became manager of the architectural department of Roche and Company, but when this firm was absorbed into the Wunderlich Group he left to commence practice with Richardson. Richardson and Wood appear to have had a practice of a general rather than specialised nature, although they were involved in the design of about twenty picture theatres and three town halls. They also undertook many residential commissions. The partnership ended in 1929 with Wood's death. Richardson continued in practice alone, but little is known of his work in the following years. One of his last known commissions was in 1937 for a funeral parlour in St Kilda Road, South Melbourne (Lewis & Aitken 1992: 78-9).

In Port Phillip, Richardson & Wood designed several houses and flats in St Kilda and Elwood in the 1910s and 1920s, as well as the Parish Hall for Christ Church in Acland Street, St Kilda. One of their first known commissions was this pair of houses at 245 & 245A Barkly Street, St Kilda built in 1914. In 1919 a permit was issued for three brick shops in Barkly Street, but this does not appear to have been built. Next was a 'bungalow court' development of four flats at 96 Grey Street built in 1920, which was followed in 1923 by the Belmont flats at 86 Alma Road, and finally in 1927 by a mixed-use development comprising two shops and residences with two flats above at 93 & 95 Chapel Street.

References

Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving & Peter Reynolds, *A pictorial guide to identifying Australian architecture. Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, 1989

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no. 1380, dated 1897

Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken P/L, *City of Malvern Heritage Study Appendix 1: Architects of Malvern*, June 1992



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

St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 2235, 28 March 1914

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM), 1915, 1920

State Library of Victoria (SLV), 'The Baker Estate (Blessington, Barkly, Dickens and Baker Streets), 1900'

Description

This is a gable-fronted two storey duplex pair in the Arts & Crafts style, which is symmetrical in plan. Typical of the style, the façade is dominated by a central, massive, plain red brick chimney, which has terracotta pots, while the ground floor is entirely of face red brick, the first floor is unpainted roughcast, and the gable is weatherboard above the eaves line. Entry is at the side via a porch with an arched opening set into the angled side wall. The timber front door has a multi-pane window, and the first-floor windows are paired multi-pane casements with bracketed hoods to those in the front elevation. At the front ground floor there is a three-sided bay window with multi-pane casements and a door, which provides access to the front verandah, which has simple timber posts and brackets and cream and red tiles in a diamond pattern. The main and verandah roofs are tiled in terra cotta. The colour scheme is sympathetic.

The building is in good condition and has a very high degree of external integrity.

In 1992 the front fence and gates were described as 'may also be original'. These have been replaced by present fence and gates in a closely matching style. It is a simple closed top timber picket fence with simple ladder frame. The simple main posts have pyramidal tops.

Comparative analysis

Arts & Crafts style

The Federation Arts & Crafts style in Australia drew on precedents established by nineteenth century Arts & Crafts movement in England (and in the United States) as demonstrated through the work of important architects such as C.F.A. Voysey. Buildings make free use of traditional (usually English) vernacular motifs to achieve an 'unassuming, homely, well-established character' (Apperly et al, 1989:140). The style is characterized by 'earthy' natural colours, textures and materials such as face brick, roughcast render, timber shingles and stonework. The roof is a dominant element, usually steeply pitched with prominent and often bracketed eaves. Tall tapering chimneys battered wall buttresses and bay windows are also characteristic elements of the style.

There are many examples of Arts & Crafts style flats in St Kilda, several of which were designed by the prominent designer/builder Howard R. Lawson such as Wimmera (1917) and Clairvaux (1917). Biltmore (1922-23), which is included on the Victorian Heritage Register, is another fine Arts & Crafts design with Oriental influences.

The buildings in Port Phillip by Richardson & Wood are all in the Arts & Crafts style. Belmont demonstrates Richardson & Wood's skill with the style: included on the Victorian Heritage Register, the citation describes the flats as 'an extraordinary and essentially intact interpretation of the English Arts and Crafts tradition' that are 'contemporary with the American exploration of this tradition and shows the influence of the developing California Bungalow style'. The Christ Church Parish Hall is also a fine and intact Arts & Crafts style hall.

This duplex is another example of the skill of Richardson & Wood in the use of the Arts & Crafts style where characteristic Arts & Crafts elements have been used with striking simplicity and boldness, to produce one of St Kilda's most distinctive pieces of architecture. The significance of the building today is enhanced by its high degree of integrity, including the original unpainted render.

Duplex houses and flats

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, and detached bungalows became the most common form of housing from the Federation/Edwardian period onward. Until the emergence of flats semi-detached dwellings or 'duplexes' emerged as a popular option to maximise the development potential of land. Most examples were single storey with the houses side by side, but the type gradually evolved to two storey examples, eventually to one dwelling above the other, which were among the earliest purpose-built flat types. The earliest known example of this type is at 20 Gurner Street, St Kilda, designed in 1913 by J.J. Meagher. Other early examples include Clairvaux at 44 Blessington Street, St Kilda by Howard Lawson (1917) and 13 Southey Street, Elwood (1917) also designed by Meagher.

This duplex is significant as representative example of a two-storey semi-detached duplex that sits at the cusp of the transition toward duplex flats and demonstrates the contribution of Richardson & Wood to the development of multi-dwelling building types in the early twentieth century. Internally, the efficient layout neatly resolves many of the problems inherent in an essentially 19th century narrow allotment size and building form and is one of several buildings by the architects that demonstrate their exploration of different approaches to multi-dwelling developments including the 'bungalow court' flats at 96 Grey Street of 1920, and the more conventional Belmont flats (1923).

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 external paint controls.

Primary source

City of Port Phillip, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2022

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

