

PLACE NAME "Yemoneit" **LEVEL:** B
ADDRESS 51 Virginia Street
AREA 2 **DATE/PERSON** 23.4/RP **NEG:** 1.25 (unprinted)
 1.26 & 1.27



DATES **Construction:** 1918-19
USE **Present Use:** Residential
Original Use: House
Alterations?: Nil

FORM		STYLE
I Detached		Californian Bungalow
I Single storey		
I Four bays		

DESCRIPTION (I = Intact A = Altered * = significant)
ROOF I Slate
WALLS I Brick
 I Sandstone
ROOF FORM
 * Chimneys
 * Gable decoration

VERANDAH	FENESTRATION	FINISHES
* Form	* Doors	* Paint colours
* Decoration	* Windows	

INTERIOR	GARDEN & SETTING	OTHER COMMENTS
	* Fences & gates	
	* Plants: Elm tree (?)	

CONDITION & INTEGRITY	THREATS
Condition: Excellent	
Integrity: Intact	

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DESCRIPTION

A complex Californian Bungalow, with Colonial influences. It has a major gable across the site, with a symmetrical three-gable front. Side-bays have minor gables facing, but the centre has a curious barrel-vaulted attic, from whose sides minor gables also project. Upper gables are decorated with shingles on timbered render, which jetty forward on joists, with a round-headed vent. The bargeboards are decorative fretwork (in revival of the Colonial Picturesque Gothic style). The house is tuck pointed brick with a slate roof. Paint colours are appropriate. There is a shallow curved porch with (local?) sandstone Ionic columns with exaggerated entasis, on a sandstone balustrade. The porch has a Terrazzo floor.

Windows are tripartite, with shallow-curved transoms, sandstone sills and geometric decoration.

Gates have sandstone piers on bluestone bases perhaps re-used from an earlier house on the site. There is one timber geometrical pedestrian gate, with a curved top remaining, contemporary with the house. There is a large mature elm (?) in the front garden.

HISTORY

Lewis Hirst, engineer, the son of Godfrey Hirst, woollen manufacturer, was the first owner in 1918-19 of "Yemoneit". A house on Hirst's land is indicated for the first time in the Newtown rate book of that year, but it had obviously just commenced as the rating was very low, NAV 18 pounds⁴⁹². By 1920 a building on land 60 x 203 feet, NAV 130 pounds, was recorded owned and occupied by Hirst⁴⁹³. By 1925 a dwelling and garage was reported on the site, NAV 230 pounds⁴⁹⁴. This property was typical of the large brick residences built on elevated sites in Newtown for affluent local businessmen. From 1930 until the 1940s Catherine Hirst was listed as owner and Lewis Hirst as occupier for the dwelling at 51 Virginia Street⁴⁹⁵. This was a common economic strategy for families during the depression years.

Lewis Hirst was one of the three sons, Lewis, Willie and Harold, of Godfrey Hirst, reputedly "the man who made the city of Geelong the Bradford of Australia"⁴⁹⁶. Born in 1857, the son of a Yorkshire spinner, Godfrey married Sarah Carter in the 1870s. In Meltham, the village where he was born, they bought up their three sons. In 1885 the family arrived in Melbourne and later, Godfrey applied for a job in Geelong as a weaver at the Victorian Woollen Mills. In early 1889 Hirst and Charles Shannon, a local merchant and financier, formed a partnership and bought the Barwon Mill. They changed its name to the Excelsior Mill and early in 1891 manufactured the first tweeds, called at first "Hirst's Tweeds" and later "Harris Tweeds". This product became famous both in Australia and overseas. In November 1909 Hirst and Shannon bought the Victorian Mill which they reopened as Excelsior No 2. A change to electricity in both mills resulted in the horrific fire at the Barwon Mill in 1912. In 1913 Godfrey became ill and left his son Willie in charge. All his sons, Lewis, Willie and Harold worked in the Hirst mills. In February 1917 Godfrey Hirst died at his

492. Newtown rate book, North Ward, 1918-19 No 105.

493. Ibid 1920 No 107.

494. Ibid 1925 No 114.

495. Ibid 1930 No 116; 1945 No 124.

496. Melissa Harlison, Local History option, 29 July, 1985.

residence "Royd Grange" in Belmont designed by Laird and Frederick in 1897⁴⁹⁷.

Lewis Hirst's "Yemoneit" is described in a splendid auction sale notice held by the Geelong Historical Records Centre⁴⁹⁸. The "magnificent solid brick residence", the home of the late Lewis Hirst, was described in the rather florid style favoured by auctioneers of the day:

The house which is built of solid, tuck-pointed brick, with slate roof, contains, on the ground floor, an elegant Entrance Patio, also a Piazza with side entrance to the Lounge; both with ornamental, hand-moulded columns and balustrades, and Italian processed and laid Terrazzo floors.

There was an Entrance Hall with "panelled walls of imported Japanese oak", a Dining Room with "built-in Oak Buffet", a "Sun Room facing Front Garden" and a "Master Bedroom and connecting Dressing Room with built-in furniture in Louis XV period style". There was also a "well-equipped kitchen with stainless steel sink etc.", a large tiled "Early Roman" period Terrazzo and a Bathroom "with semi-sunken porcelain enamelled Bath". Special features were the electric hot water service, ornate grained oak staircase, numerous built-in presses, Venetian blinds, and plateglass and leadlight windows throughout. The sale notice also referred to the "spacious Double Garage with workshop", two "netted aviaries, a tennis court and Fernery". The garden was "tastefully laid out in lawns, with ornamental shrubs, Shelter Trees, Fountain and Pergola" and there were "impressive specially constructed, double Entrance Gates, and a wide gravelled driveway". The Lewis residence was "truly 'The Home Beautiful' in the Best Residential Locality in Newtown".

SIGNIFICANCE

This substantial residence described by contemporaries as "truly The Home Beautiful in the Best Residential Locality in Newtown", has regional historical significance for its associations with Lewis Hirst, engineer, first owner in 1918-19, and the son of Godfrey Hirst, woollen manufacturer and reputedly "the man who made the city of Geelong the Bradford of Australia". Lewis and his brothers worked in the Hirst woollen mills which included the Excelsior Mill and produced the "Harris Tweeds", which became famous both in Australia and overseas. It also has regional architectural significance as a fine complex Californian Bungalow with Colonial and eclectic influences. Colonial influenced elements of interest include the decorative fretwork bargeboards and the Ionic porch columns. Eclectic elements include the barrel-vaulted attic and round headed vent. Contextural elements such as the stone fence and gate and the garden contribute to its significance. The paint colours are sympathetic. Also of interest is the wide use of local (?) sandstone.

497. Ibid, pp.10-42.

498. Auction sale notice, Newtown, Geelong. "Yemoneit", 51 Virginia Street, Subdivisional Plan Folio 8/194. Geelong Historical Records Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Existing Listings NONE
Recommend'ns RNE LPS
Area 2
Place

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