

RESIDENCE
3 Portland Street

History and Description

Built prior to 1855, this house was occupied by the architect, surveyor and artist Robert Russell. It is unknown whether it was built for Russell.

Russell was appointed surveyor to the Port Phillip settlement in 1836, his first surveys being in the Geelong and Werribee areas. He produced a topographical feature survey of the Melbourne site on which Robert Hoddle drew his grid plan, after he superseded Russell as surveyor-in-charge in 1837. Russell went to Sydney, then returned to Melbourne in 1838 as clerk of works with architectural responsibilities until he was dismissed in 1839. He then went into private practice as an architect and surveyor.

His only known surviving work is the St. James Old Cathedral (1839-42, consecrated in 1853) now located in King Street.

The famous first views of the Melbourne settlement from 1837 onwards were lithographed by Russell and he produced painted replicas of them until the last decade of his life. He achieved some local fame as a connoisseur of old-master paintings and as a print collector.

Russell moved around frequently having also lived in Fitzroy and East Melbourne. His last home was a cottage (demolished) at 283 Burnley Street where he died in 1900.

The form and detail of no. 3 Portland Street is Early Victorian. It's cramped siting was caused by Portland Street being created in the 1880's.

The roof form of two parallel hipped roofs joined by a smaller hipped roof is most unusual. It is also unusual for a pre 1855 cottage to be built in stuccoed brick with a slate roof.

Statement of Significance

A pre 1855 stuccoed brick cottage of unusual form, at one time the residence of the surveyor/architect Robert Russell.

References

Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1850, pp. 409-11.
 Magee, John Steel. Municipal Map of Richmond, 1855.
 National Trust of Australia (Vic.) F.N. 4936.