

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Site Name: Residence

Project File No: 0851

Address: 36 Alexandra Avenue Geelong 3220

Approx. Date: 1886

Integrity: Moderate-High

Significance Level: C (Local)

Photograph No: 06.15

Survey Date: March 2002



History

This site at 36 Alexandra Avenue, Geelong, is located on Lot 1 of plan TP16941, which is part of Crown Allotments 2 and 3, Section 59, of the Geelong Town Plan of 1881. John Guthrie and Collins were the original owners of these allotments.

Another early owner of the land was George Cakebread. In 1852, he purchased the lime kilns at Limeburners Point and was prominent among the limeburners. Cakebread was also a mason and bricklayer but developed an interest in building supplies.

It was on 4 June 1886 tenders when were accepted by William Bell & Sons for the erection of two semi-detached weatherboard houses at total cost of 946 pounds. They had been designed by the Geelong architect Joseph Watts and J.C. Taylor was the main contractor. The site, on the corner of Alexandra Avenue (then known as Corio Street East and Corio Place), was described in the tender notice as being "near the Botanical Gardens". The semi-detached houses each consisted of 7 rooms, with a verandah. By 1887, one house was occupied by James Bell, possibly a son of William Bell. In 1889, the houses, then described in the Bellerine Ward Rate Books as consisting of 6 rooms with kitchen, bathroom, pantry and a verandah (and numbered 224 and 226 Corio Street), were purchased by Mary Gilchrist for 1500 pounds. She who leased no. 224 (now 36) to John

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Acton, a bank clerk. Following Gilchrist's death before 1905, Annie Laidlaw, a householder of Branhholme, and Francis William Stewart, executors of Gilchrist's estate, acquired the properties. Ownership officially rested with Annie Laidlaw from 1906 to 1913, when she sold the properties to Robert William Charles, who in turn sold them to Arthur Hamblin the following year in 1914. Hamblin had the original verandah removed in 1915.

Thomas Charles Woods of Geelong West procured the houses in 1918, continuing the established practice by this time of letting the houses to a succession of tenants. The properties were bought and sold a number of times in the next few years. William Matthew and Fiona Usher were the owners when sewerage was connected in 1921 with Mary Ann Kerr the purchaser in 1925 of this house at 36 Alexandra Avenue, and Alice May James the buyer of no. 38. Kerr appears to have added a room to her house, and she sold the property in 1931 to David Laidlaw. William Hubert Pride, ironmonger, of The Avenue, owned the house briefly in 1939, before it was again sold to William Stott, jeweller, in July 1940. Stott seems to have made internal structural alterations to the house, whereby the number of rooms was reduced to six in the early 1940s. Stott died in October 1945, probate being granted to Albert Vernan Aubrey Stott in 1949, but on his death in October 1950 the property passed to Lillian Ada Elizabeth Stott. She lived there until her death on 31 December, 1979. More recent owners have been Frank Theo Mary and Elberthe Elizabeth Kuylaars (1980-1983), Mark Saville and Pamela Jean Oddie (1983-1988), Michael Geoffrey Homewood and Kathryn Julie Turner (1988-1994) and current owners, Gerard Paul Mullally and Helena Buxton.

Joseph Watts was born in 1816 at Peterborough, Northampton, England. His father is said to also have been an architect. Watts arrived in Victoria on the Duke of Richmond in 1853, classing himself as a bricklayer. He is first mentioned as an architect in 1865 and with the partnership of Watts and Jackson between 1881 and 1883, he was a most successful architect in Geelong throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

Description

The semi-detached house at 36 Alexandra Avenue, Geelong, forms part of an unusual residential duplex on an irregularly-sized allotment. Both houses have a modest front setback characterised by paved areas and garden beds. The front is bound by an early cast iron palisade fence with a smooth-finished bluestone plinth, the whole being approximately 1300 mm high.

The single storey, asymmetrical (or symmetrical as a duplex), horizontal weatherboard, Victorian Italianate styled semi-detached house is characterised by a hipped roof form that traverses the site, together with a projecting bay window at the front with a conical roof, a front skillion verandah and a rear introduced hipped roof form that projects at the side. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Two early rendered brick chimneys with projecting cornices adorn the roofline, which is also punctuated by the early rendered party wall that rises above the main roof. Narrow overhangs with worked timber brackets are features of the eaves.

An early feature of the design is the projecting bay. It has early arched timber framed double hung windows with early decoratively moulded architraves with moulded capitals at the springing of the arches, and punctuating keystones in the arched heads. The other timber framed double hung window under the front verandah also appears to be early, as is the timber framed doorway with a four panelled timber door and sidelights and highlights.

The front skillion verandah has been altered, and is now comprised of recent exposed timber rafters and a simple solid timber brackets.

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Statement of Cultural Significance

The semi-detached house at 36 Alexandra Avenue, Geelong, has significance as a reasonably intact and unusual example of the Victorian Italianate style. Built in 1886 for William Bell and Sons to a design by the Geelong architect Joseph Watts (as part of a duplex of semi-detached houses), the building appears to be in good condition when viewed from the street.

The semi-detached house at 36 Alexandra Avenue is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level. It demonstrates original design qualities of the Victorian Italianate style. These qualities include the hipped roof form that traverses the site, together with the projecting bay window at the front with a conical roof, and the front verandah form. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, asymmetrical composition (or symmetrical composition as part of the duplex), horizontal weatherboard wall cladding, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, two rendered brick chimneys with projecting cornices, rendered party wall that rises above the main roof, narrow eaves with worked timber brackets, arched timber framed double hung windows with decoratively moulded architraves having moulded capitals at the springing of the arches, punctuating keystones in the arched window heads, timber framed double hung window under the front verandah, and the timber framed doorway with a four panelled timber door and sidelights and highlights. The front cast iron palisade fence with a bluestone plinth also contributes to the significance of the place. The architectural significance of the semi-detached house at 36 Alexandra Avenue also relies on the retention of the neighbouring house at 38 Alexandra Avenue.

The semi-detached house at 36 Alexandra Avenue is historically significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with residential developments in Geelong in the second half of the 19th century. In particular, this house has associations with William Bell and Sons who instigated construction in 1886. This house and the neighbouring semi-detached house were designed by the Geelong architect Joseph Watts.

Overall, the semi-detached house at 36 Alexandra Avenue is of LOCAL significance.

References

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