

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Site Name: Residence

Project File No: 0921

Address: 28 Fenwick Street Geelong 3220

Approx. Date: 1854c, 1856, 1868, 1917, 1925c

Integrity: Moderate

Significance Level: C (Local)

Photograph No: 07.28 & 08.01

Survey Date: March 2002



History

This site at 28 Fenwick Street (south-west corner of Fenwick Street and Wesley Place), is located on parts of Allotments 5 and 6, Section 46, of the Geelong Town Plan of 1858. These allotments were originally the property of Thomas Towle and John Maurice Turpin.

As evidenced on an 1854 map of Geelong, Thomas Towle built a 2 room brick house on his land, complete with stable, coach house and loft, before selling it in 1855 to his younger brother, Dr. Frederick William Towle, for one thousand pounds. The Towle brothers were born in Derbyshire and came to Australia on the ship "Thomas Fielding", Frederick being a surgeon. He practised medicine in Market Square, Geelong, until September 1856, when he moved into the Fenwick Street residence and immediately enlarged it to a two storey, 10-roomed building. In March 1861, when Frederick and his family returned to England for a visit, the house was put up for auction, but evidently was not sold, as a conveyance was signed by vendor Frederick William Towle and purchaser George Cunningham on 15 April, 1868. In the interim, the house, and presumably the medical practice, was occupied by Dr. James Carstairs, who had 2 sons born there.

On 21 October, 1868, W. Grundy, architect, announced tenders for additions to the residence of George Cunningham, MLA. Cunningham extended the house by a further 2

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rooms. The Geelong Rate Book (Kardinia Ward) for 1868-69 described the residence as "brick, balcony, 2 storey, 12 room with coach house, stable and land", and valued it at 90 pounds per year.

George Cunningham had arrived in Victoria with his wife, Margaret, in 1852-53, and quickly gained employment as the Manager of McEwen's hardware merchants (Geelong store) in 1853, a business he later acquired. Cunningham entered politics, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly on a number of occasions between 1864 and 1886, representing Geelong and District. He also became a Justice of the Peace for the Geelong District in January 1869. After Cunningham's death, his daughter lived at Fenwick Street for a couple of years from c.1893, before his Estate passed the property in trust to Henry Barkley Hodges, a brewer (proprietary rights were still retained by Cunningham's Estate at this time). Hodges owned the house outright in 1925. During Hodges's custodianship, the house was again enlarged in 1917, this time from 12 to 14 rooms.

The next owner was Frederick Charles Purnell, architect, of Hermitage Road, Newtown, who purchased the building between 1925 and 1930. He leased it out to a number of tenants for the next 20 or 30 years until his death in c.1960. Frederick evidently made some structural changes to the place, reducing the number of rooms from 14 to 12 between 1920 and 1930. In the 1960s and early 1970s the building was converted into flats, known as Cunningham Flats.

Description

The building at 28 Fenwick Street, Geelong, is set on a contextually large allotment for the local area. It is located on the front and one side boundary, with an open grassed yard at the other (south) side. At the rear is a detached brick stables outbuilding with a gabled galvanised corrugated steel roof.

The two storey, rendered brick, largely altered Victorian styled building is characterised by a dominant rendered brick parapet having a projecting stringcourse supported by ornamental brackets with decorative motifs between. Below the parapet is an altered balcony that was possibly introduced in the early 20th century as it is suggestive of Edwardian and interwar Bungalow design. It has timber columns and decorative, stylised geometric fretwork valances, with a curved solid and capped balustrade simulating shingling. This balustrade is supported by large, curved brackets. The first floor is comprised of four bays of early timber framed and glazed French doors with leadlight highlights.

The ground floor has also been greatly altered from the original mid 19th century design. The original bays of arched openings are discerned above the introduced aluminium framed shopfronts. Other original features of the ground floor include the incised panelling forming pilasters with moulded Tuscan capitals.

To the rear of the parapetted main facade is a projecting hipped roof wing clad in galvanised corrugated steel. It has an early arched window with early stained glass and a balconette balustrade on the first floor, and an early doorway with a mid Victorian Tuscan door surround (although the door has been introduced). There is a projecting timber framed double hung bay window on the south side, with an early timber framed double hung window on the first floor.

Beyond the rear two storey wing is an introduced extension in the south-west corner.

At the rear of the original building is the early brick service wing with pitched roof forms clad in galvanised corrugated iron.

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Other early features of the design include the rendered brick chimneys with multi-corbelled tops and terra cotta pots and narrow eaves.

Statement of Cultural Significance

The building at 28 Fenwick Street has significance as one of Geelong's early substantial urban residential buildings. Although altered, the Victorian stylistic qualities, forms, construction and details are still evident, as are the early brick service wing at the rear and the detached brick stables building. Originally built in c.1854 and altered and extended at various times in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the building has associations with some of Geelong's early identities including the Towle brothers (Dr Frederick Towle was a local surgeon) and George Cunningham, MLA. The building appears to be in fair condition when viewed from the street.

The building at 28 Fenwick Street is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level. Although altered, it still demonstrates original design qualities of a Victorian style. These qualities include the dominant rendered brick parapet having a projecting stringcourse supported by ornamental brackets with decorative motifs between, timber framed and glazed first floor French doors with leadlight highlights, evidence of the original arched ground floor openings, incised panelled ground floor pilasters with moulded Tuscan capitals, and the pitched roof forms. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the rendered brick wall construction, two storey height, rendered brick chimneys with multi-corbelled tops and terra cotta pots, narrow eaves, projecting rear wing with an stained glass arched window and balconette balustrade on the first floor, doorway with a mid Victorian Tuscan door surround, projecting timber framed double hung bay window on the side facade, and the timber framed double hung window on the first floor. The rear brick service wing with pitched galvanised corrugated iron roof forms, rear detached brick stables outbuilding with a gabled galvanised corrugated steel roof and the side cast iron palisade fence at the front also contribute to the significance of the place.

The building at 28 Fenwick Street is historically significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with substantial urban residential developments in Geelong in the mid 19th century. In particular, this building has associations with Thomas Towle, original owner prior to 1854, and also with Dr Frederick Towle, surgeon and George Cunningham, MLA, both later prominent owners in the 19th century.

Overall, the building at 28 Fenwick Street is of LOCAL significance.

References

- Drainage Plans and Reports, Barwon Water profits system, 1917.
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