

NAME: "Mononia"
ADDRESS: 21 Brunswick Street
CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1851
ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Remodelling of facade,
 slate roof replaced
 by galvanised iron
ARCHITECT: Charles Laing
BUILDER: Brown & Ramsden
FIRST OWNER: John Mickle
FIRST OCC./USE: Ditto/residence
PRESENT OWNER: Trustees of the Sisters
 of Charity, 59/61 Victoria
 Parade
PRESENT OCC./USE: Ditto/offices
CONSTRUCTION
MATERIALS: Rendered masonry, bluestone plinth, metal deck roof
INTACTNESS/
CONDITION: Original form intact, facade detailing altered
AREA/STREETScape: Part of recommended area A1.



IMPORTANCE:

This house constructed in 1851 for John Mickle, an early squatter was designed by architect, Charles Laing, and constructed by Brown and Ramsden, well known and important builders of the 1850's.

It is one of the earliest known surviving examples of a pre gold rush mansion in Fitzroy. The facade of the building has been altered, but the fenestration and form of the building remain intact. A modest facade restoration programme would return this building to its original condition.

This building provides the only known example of a Charles Laing house in Melbourne. The double polygonal bay arrangement is somewhat unusual and the austere classicising treatment of the original detailing (window hoods, door surrounds, cornice treatment) combine to produce a residential building of state wide significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this building be added to the Historic Buildings Register. Very little work is required to restore the exterior of this house to its original state, and it is the consultants recommendations that such a restoration programme be undertaken. This building is also recommended for addition to the Register of the National Estate and for Specification under Clause 8 of the Town & Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE:

This single storey house was built for John Mickle¹ in 1851 to the design of architect Charles Laing² and constructed by Brown and Ramsden³.

An early photo survives of the building⁴ and upon comparison, the existing building is substantially intact apart from some surface remodelling. The windows have been defaced by coarse ancones below the hoods and dentillation has been added to the hoods and cornice. The entrance porch has been altered, with a name panel created by lowering the entrance lintel. The engaged columns still survive with the original capital moulding visible in the porch interior. The fenestration is original, with evidence of the early glazing bars since removed on the front windows. The entrance lights have been reglazed.

Internally, there is little of note, apart from a marble fireplace to the front north room. The shutters to the front window have been removed. The original picket fence has subsequently been replaced by an impressive cast iron fence on a bluestone plinth. The gateposts are labelled "J. Laughton & Co., Hotham Foundry, 73 & 75 Elizabeth Street North Melbourne".

This house is of considerable architectural and historical importance. John Mickle was an early squatting gentleman who owned considerable property in the Westernport district⁵. This house was the most prominent in Brunswick Street throughout the 1850's and 1860's⁶ and is an important surviving example of an early pre-gold rush mansion built for a wealthy resident of Fitzroy (then known as Collingwood). John Mickle did not occupy the property after 1858, but owned it until 1865, and it was occupied until 1900 by well-to-do professional men; a merchant, MLA, solicitor and a doctor⁷.

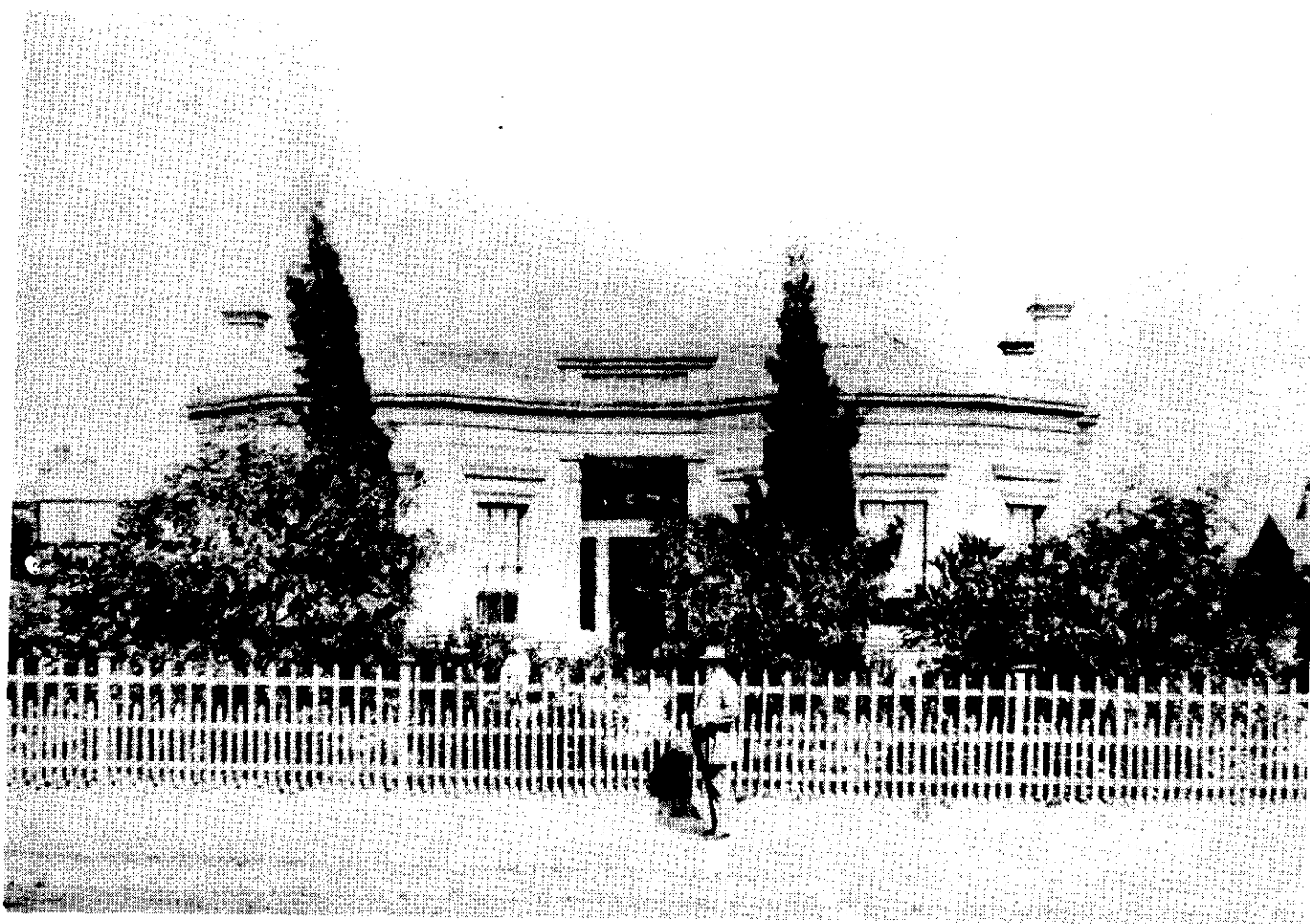
The builders of this house, Brown and Ramsden, were early contractors of some importance. Samuel Ramsden operated quarries in Clifton Hill and Ramsden Street, Clifton Hill was named after him.

Restored to its original condition, this building would provide a unique example of a Melbourne residence designed by the prominent early Melbourne architect, Charles Laing. The austere classical treatment with simple renaissance hooded windows, and debased pediment resembles Laing's treatment of Lunan House, Geelong, built in 1849-51 for J.F. Strachan. There are very few surviving houses by Charles Laing, and this house provides an extremely important example.

The building and original fence are extremely important streetscape elements to this unique and significant early precinct.

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1. Ratebook entries. Earliest entry in Melbourne Ratebook, Fitzroy ward 1851. No. 812 John Mickle, Brunswick Street, House, brick, 3 rooms, 2 pantries, kitchen, room off cellar unfinished, garden, woolshed £90.
 2. Argus 15.4.1851 Charles Laing calls tenders for cottage for John Mickle.
 3. Melbourne City Council Building Register Book. Entry. May 16, 1851. No. 319 Brown & Ramsden (builder), John Mickle (owner) Charles Laing (architect), house, Brunswick Street, Collingwood £1.1.- (fee)
 4. LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria H688 Bay 5 Sh 17, Box 5, Env 4.
 5. For a discussion of John Mickle, refer: "Extracts collected from the diaries of William Lyall, Esq. of Harewood, Westernport, Victoria, and members of his family by his grand daughter Bertha Irene Ricardo ". Manuscript per Miles B. Lewis.
 6. The Assessed Annual Values for the property exceeds all others in Brunswick Street (refer Ratebook entries) during the 1850's and 1860's.
 7. Refer Ratebook entries.

"Mononia", 21 Brunswick Street (Cont.)



(15) 21 Brunswick Street, c1860