

NAME: -  
ADDRESS: 14, 16 Gertrude St.  
CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1912  
ALTERATNS./ADDTNS: Internal alterations  
 and arrangements.  
ARCHITECT: Unknown  
BUILDER: L. Hansen  
FIRST OWNER: Albert E.G. Bennett/  
 Dentist  
FIRST OCCUPIER/USE: Ditto/Residence/  
 Surgery  
PRESENT OWNER: State Government  
PRESENT OCC./USE: Childrens Welfare  
 Agency/ Offices  
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: Brick, bluestone  
 plinth, cement  
 detailing  
INTACTNESS/CONDITION: Externally intact, some interior features of  
 interest  
AREA/STREETSCAPE: Part of recommended area B1.



IMPORTANCE:

This building was constructed in 1912 for Albert E. Bennett, a dentist, for combined use as a surgery and residence. It was built by contractor, L. Hansen.

The building is modelled on the Italian palazzo composition, but the heavy bluestone plinth and infilled ground floor loggia produce a somewhat debased elevation. The art nouveau cement detailing is of considerable interest with luxuriant vegetation in raised relief work. Intact leadlighting survives to the porch lunette to number 14 (the original surgery) and to both entrance side lights and transom lights.

Internally there are surviving art nouveau ceiling decorations, floor tiling and joinery work.

The juxtaposition of a classical model (palazzo form pilasters and columns) with luxuriant Art Deco detailing produces an interesting eclectic facade to this building. Whilst not purestylistically, this composition, detailing and internal features are unique and of considerable importance on a state wide basis. The building provides an important streetscape component to this historic precinct.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this building be added to the Register of the National Estate and be specified under Clause 8 of the Town & Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE:

This building was constructed in 1912 for Albert E. Bennett, a dentist for combined use as a surgery and residence<sup>1</sup>. It was built by contractor, L. Hansen<sup>2</sup>.

Bennett had already constructed two villas in Gertrude Street in 1906,<sup>3</sup> possibly his earlier practice, for he was a dentist in Fitzroy from at least 1903.<sup>4</sup>

The architect of this building is unknown but the relief cement foliage detailing and the internal ceiling treatment is similar to Walter Butler's house "Grong Grong", Toorak of 1907 and the Conservatorium, of 1912, University of Melbourne, by Peebles, of Bates, Peebles & Smart, architects.

The building appears to be modelled on an Italian Palazzo composition, but the enlarged bluestone plinth and unfilled ground floor loggia, provide a variation and debasement of the theme. However the Art Nouveau cement detailing is very fine, and the projecting balconettes over the side entrance have the luxuriant detailing of Gaudi's buildings. The elongated keystone motif with incised ruling at first floor level and the large corbel supporting the balconettes are in marked contrast to the more correct Italian Renaissance detailing of the arcaded loggia and ground floor pilaster.

Number 14 was originally the surgery and has a stained glass name panel with "Bennetts Dentist" in the porch. Internally, the encaustic tiles to the floor remain intact, and the art nouveau ceiling treatment (cornice and panels with foliage and grape decorations) is of some interest.

Number 16 was the private residence and it is larger than 14 and somewhat more opulent. A stained oak stairway (with intact bannisters with tulip cut outs and incised newell posts) leads to the upper floor of both buildings which was originally all used as the residence. Petitions have now been inserted, drastically altering the building. Two roundels of stained glass with delicate plaster surrounds survive in the upstairs and downstairs wall and intact lead lighting survives to side lights and transom lights of both entrances.

This building provides an important example of an Art Nouveau residence/combined commercial building. It is superior to "Brooklyn", 50 George Street, which was refaced at a similar period but is more crude in detailing and execution. Whilst 43 Alfred Crescent, North Fitzroy, provides a more consistent example of an intact art nouveau residence, both internally and externally, the detailing, composition and execution of the building differ markedly from this building. The combination of bluestone, face brickwork and delicate cement detailing produce a building of considerable interest and importance.

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1. Fitzroy Ratebooks First entry 1913. No. 16: Albert Bennett, Dentist own./occ. Brick House 8 rooms £100;  
No. 14 - Ditto. Brick House 6 room £75.0.0.
  2. Fitzroy Council Building Permit Book. 4.12.1912. Gertrude Street  
2 villas for A.E. Bennett, L. Hansen Builder.
  3. Fitzroy Council Building Permit Book 20.10.1908. Gertrude Street,  
2 villas for A.E. Bennett, N. Smith, builder.
  4. J. Smith (ed) *Cyclopedia of Victoria* Vol. 1 1903 p.470-471.  
for a discussion on Albert E. Bennett.