
Name	House	Reference No	
Address	33 Alma Road, Camberwell	Survey Date	September 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B
Date	1888	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Heritage Status ☐ HV ☐ AHC ☐ NT ☐ Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

The original owner and date of construction of this house are unclear.¹ To date, no architect has been associated with its design.

A Mrs Byrne of Hawthorn owned the house in the 1920s and a Mrs M. Lawlor was an occupier during the 1930s².

Unspecified additions were made to the house in c. 1929; these are assumed to have been at the rear of the site. Subsequent changes have been relatively minor (swimming pool, 1978, rear family room, 1979, carport and garage), fence.³

(G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005)

Description & Integrity

33 Alma Road is a generally intact house in stuccoed Italianate style, double-fronted with a canted bay, attached iron verandah and two-storey tower. The large barrel-vaulted porch is unusually scaled relative to the house and rare in Melbourne as a porch type. It runs through to an imposing wheel-fanlight over the front door and sidelights, which look original and well-kept. An acanthus leafed frieze links the external composition.

Several of the major trees look original and the garden, though largely changed in its smaller plants, is well shaded and deep. The rear garage shown on site plans now resembles a summer-house of sorts from the street, surrounding the pool of 1978, and a more recent timber frame structure, this time in the open frame and lattice summer-house theme, acts as a garage, just inside the front gate. The largest additions have been a small (2 metre) extension to the family room, facing south and not visible from the street, and accompanied by some internal wall rearrangement at the rear of the

house. The entrance steps are original, if weathered; the paint and wall maintenance is good. Roof is original slate on the front sections at least. The fence and gates date from 1992, the fence is in close grained corrugated steel and draws on fence treatments common in the 1880s and early twentieth century.

Historical Context

Located relatively close to the railway station at Camberwell, Alma Road, had undergone some development by the late 1880s, with a number of these villas surviving today. The *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory* for 1901 lists more than a dozen houses in the street at this date.⁴

Comparative Analysis

33 Alma Road is interesting primarily for its insistent largeness in scale: its window arches, brackets, and entrance arch are all consistently overscaled, though quietly, and the swags at the tower base and acanthus frieze acts as a fairly subtle restraint. This scaling contrasts with the actual size, which is medium-average for 1880s houses in Hawthorn or Kew. *Alma* has an imposing bearing that belies its size. This presence comes arguably through the richness and large scales of its detailed treatment- as in the arched bay window mouldings, the acanthus- leafed frieze and the deep and quite graceful eave brackets. The large barrel-vaulted porch is unusually scaled relative to the house and unusual in Melbourne as a porch type.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

CRITERION D: The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as a part of a class or type of places or objects.

Alma, including its tower, is generally typical of asymmetrical stuccoed Italianate villas in the Hawthorn, Kew, and Canterbury districts of Boroondara. It is more intact than most, without conspicuous extensions or artificial reshaping.⁵

CRITERION E: The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Alma's design strength is in its quiet but consistent re-scaling of otherwise conventional Italianate elements, and the capacity of this overscaling to convincingly enlarge the presence of a house with otherwise ordinary dimensions.

Statement of Significance

33 Alma Road, Camberwell is of historical and architectural significance as a fine and externally relatively intact example of an asymmetrical stuccoed Victorian Italianate villa with tower. It is distinguished architecturally from other examples by its quiet but consistent re-scaling of otherwise conventional Italianate elements, effectively enlarging the presence of the house.

Grading Review

Unchanged.

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

Identified By

G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991.

References

General: G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study, 1991.

Specific:

¹ There is conflicting information in the 1991 citation for this property. According to Graeme Butler, F.S. Prior, a Toorak dairy proprietor¹, was the first owner of the house in 1888¹, leasing it to Robert T. Clayton¹, however the ratebook for 1888-9 lists FS Prior as owner of a timber house, leased to Clayton (Shire of Camberwell Rate Book, 1889-90, no. 73), see Camberwell Conservation Study, v. 4, p. 12.

Elizabeth Burroughs, listed by Butler as an occupant of Prior's house in the 1890s, owned a brick house in the street in 1889-90 (Shire of Camberwell Rate Book, 1889-90, no. 74).

² Details sourced from City of Camberwell Building Index #1041, 1929; *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1935

³ Details sourced from the City of Camberwell Building Index: swimming pool, # 64046, dated November 1978; family room and other extensions, # 64865, 20 April 1979; carport, # 84740 and 84926 (the latter a contract variation), dated 17 February and 9 March 1988, # 94676, dated 3 April 1992.

⁴ *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1901.

⁵ For example, in the Shakespeare and Isabella Grove district of Hawthorn.