

Name	Rathmore, Rokeby	Reference No	
Address	78 Athelstan Road, Camberwell	Survey Date	2 September 2005
Building Type	Residence	Grading	B (recommended by the Panel for Amendment C64)
Date	1891	Previous Grading	B



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness Good Fair Poor

Heritage Status HV AHC NT Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

Previously known as 76 Athelstan Road, the present-day 78 Athelstan Road was constructed in 1891¹ to plans prepared by architects Hyndman & Bates, for Arthur J Fuller, an accountant, previously of Harcourt Street, Hawthorn.² The original contract drawing for *Rokeby* is extant in the Bates Smart collection, now held in the University of Melbourne Archives.³ Of interest, the drawing was amended with the south and west dormers penciled in over the finished and coloured drawing.⁴

The 1892 edition of the *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory* listed the private residence of A J Fuller, at Athelstane Road, as it was then known⁵, in the alphabetical section, and from the date of the 1893 edition, provided a directory listing for Athelstane Road. For several years the only residence listed was the subject property. In May 1897 Arthur Fuller sold the property, which at that time had grounds of more than six acres, extending south to Toorak Road. The purchasers were Archibald and Martha Smart, previously of Wellington Street, Kew.⁶ Smart, Senior Landing Surveyor at the Customs House resided at the property until 1907.

The name *Rokeby*, given to the property by Smart, first appeared in the 1905 edition of the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*. In 1907 it was acquired by James Lang who retained the name *Rokeby* for the duration of his period of ownership.⁷ In February 1911, the property was acquired by John Payne, founder/owner of Payne's 'Bon Marche' drapery in Bourke Street.⁸ John Payne apparently renamed the property *Rathmore*.⁹

The address given for the property at this time appeared to vary – the house was listed under Athelstan Road in the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, while municipal rate records listed it at Bowen Street.¹⁰ The Payne family had a long association with the property with houses being constructed for other members of the Payne family in later years, with addresses in both Bowen Street and Athelstan Road.¹¹ Portions of the property's land holding were also gradually sold off with the

property's Toorak Road frontage – curiously never listed as the address – sold to Edward Prokter in 1925. A further portion of land had apparently previously been gifted to St. Mary's Church in 1917 with land also acquired by the City of Camberwell for the establishment of the Bowen Gardens in 1923.¹² After the death of John Payne in 1938, the remaining property, now approximately one acre, was acquired by Leslie Wedderburn Thompson in January 1939. The Certificate of Title indicated that the property included a small pathway to Bowen Street behind.¹³ The Thompson family retained the property until the 1990s, periodically subdividing further allotments from the property's land holding. Two lots to the south of the house were sold in 1958, with a further subdivision proposed and implemented by then owners Peter and Dianne Power in 1994.¹⁴

(G Butler, Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005, 2009)

Description & Integrity

Rokeby, the house at 78 Athelstan Road, is a red brick Federation house with a return verandah and angled corner bay, anchored compositionally by two brick wings to the east and south. The south-east corner bay is emphasized externally by an angled verandah gable. The front wing has a canted bay with a bracketed half-timbered awning-gable over it, framing four bay windows. The scalloped valence is understood to have been added.¹⁵ The south elevation, which has a greater setback, albeit now impacted upon by the property's history of subdivision, may have been designed to be the primary entrance as it has an elaborate entry with side lights with leadlight and stained glass.¹⁶

Part clad with Swiss pattern terracotta tiles, and Marseille pattern terracotta tiles to the rear section of the house, the roof is framed as a pyramid from which the angled bay and the two main wings project three gables at different heights. As common in Federation designs, the second storey is understated, being represented in two shingled dormers, the south being gabled with an integral shingled balcony, and the east being hipped. The east dormer, though now with different window framing and possibly a later scalloped shingle pattern, appears possibly to have been part of the original structure.¹⁷ Chimneys are corbelled in a manner that became characteristic in earlier Federation architecture, particularly in the 1890s.

Original windows are a mixture of double hung sashes on the east and south sides, and Norman Shaw-derived casements on the east bay. Timber brackets are seen to the sides of the projecting gables (with a coved frieze to the southern elevation); those to the front have a decorative cut-out.¹⁸ The verandah fascia is a simple, firmly shaped design linking thick timber columns on a series of brick plinths all of which are capped with molded cornices.

The garden has some trees of long standing, though much of the smaller growth is later. A recent picket fence and gate pergola has replaced an earlier wire fabric fence.¹⁹ A pittosporum hedge has been reduced in height to reveal the garden more.

The house is largely intact, especially to the front, as described by RBA Architects who undertook a detailed on-site external inspection of the building. RBA Architects identified a series of alterations, predominantly to the sides and rear of the house:

The house is largely intact, especially to the front. The minor alterations that have occurred include a change to an opening along the north elevation (not widely visible) and the addition of a scalloped fascia above the window at the northern end of the façade. There have also been some changes to the entrance at the southern side of the verandah – the brickwork has been painted white and there are large, modern panes of glass. Presumably there was originally a stair, possibly below the multi-pane window that might have been a transom. None of these changes [other than for the scalloped valence] are apparent from the street.

There has been more change to the rear mostly in the form of additions. A timber wing was added circa 1920s in a complementary manner. It has a hip clad in glazed tiles and box frame windows with double hung sash windows. The timber clad room, first floor room the rear of the original has similar detailing. There is a small circa mid-20th century addition along the north elevation with face red brick and metal framed windows. The rear verandah and adjacent wall has also been altered.²⁰

Historical Context

The subject property was the first house constructed in Athelstan Road, and the subdivision of its once extensive grounds over the past hundred years is of a pattern repeated throughout Boroondara. Athelstan Road is characterized by late-Federation and interwar houses on generous allotments, with the subject property still the pre-eminent house in the street.

Comparative Analysis

Rokeby, at 78 Althestan Road is an intact, inventive, vigorous composition by later Federation standards, and comes very early in the history of Federation architecture. It is one of the early clear announcements of the mature Federation house form.

Rokeby's double-hung sash windows and corbelled chimneys remained standard elements in Federation architecture all the way through to World War 1, though the double-hung sash was consistently challenged by hinged casements on the 'Norman Shaw' pattern, usually divided in a 1:2 ratio. *Rokeby's* proportions and scaling are well-adjusted to the compositional vigor of this house, though the linkage between the canted bay and verandah is awkward.

The plan around a central stair hall, the diagonal address of the large garden and the roof and wing composition, all produce a rounded example of Federation villa architecture, as do its external brackets, simple verandah and dormer treatment. In an Australian context, *Rokeby* is ahead of Howard Joseland's single-storey Federation bungalow of 1892, George Sydney Jones radial and wing-form Federation houses from 1893, and ahead of the dramatic houses by Talbot Hobbs at Peppermint Grove in Western Australia (1897 ff.). It has few close predecessors in Victoria: Alfred Dunn's double and single-storey bungalows in St Kilda and Hawthorn were precursors, narrowly. Melbourne's other signature houses of the early Federation mode, by Evander McIver at 15 Alma Road Camberwell (q.v., B-graded but recommended for an A in this review) and Arthur Fisher in St Kilda, AB Rieusset in Caulfield and Surrey Hills, Christopher Cowper at Kerang, and J Charlesworth at 620 Riversdale Road, Camberwell (q.v., B-graded) were all contemporary, being commenced or completed in 1891-2. The iconic Federation houses by Beverley Ussher and Henry Kemp did not appear until 1892-4.²¹ Then, significantly, several of those appeared in Boroondara.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

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.*

Rokeby is an early example of a mature Federation design and is one of a relatively small group of houses that announced Federation architecture's complete arrival in the domestic sphere. *Rokeby's* site placement, angled corner bay, and placement of a pyramidal roof form punctuated by projecting sitting room and dining room bays, is a clear and mature reflection of the external massing that would mark the Federation period. Its pinwheel placement of rooms around a central hall became thoroughly characteristic of internal planning in the Federation period. *Rokeby* is quite close to the seminal Federation plans by Alfred Dunn and Beverley Ussher of 1889-1892.

The house also has a directness that presages later moves around Australia toward simpler bungalow composition. The sitting room bay canopy is unusual in Victoria in its combination of scalloped window hood and brackets, and the roof bracket to the north east corner predates a later bungalow characteristic. In general, the design is rich in its combination of form and materials, yet plain and vigorously executed, externally.

Statement of Significance

Rokeby at 78 Althestan Road, Camberwell, is of municipal significance. *Rokeby* is an early and externally relatively intact example of a mature Federation design and is one of a relatively small group of houses that announced Federation architecture's complete arrival in the domestic sphere. *Rokeby's* site placement, angled corner bay, and placement of a pyramidal roof form punctuated by projecting sitting room and dining room bays, is a clear and mature reflection of the external massing that would mark the Federation period. Its pinwheel placement of rooms around a central hall became thoroughly characteristic of internal planning in the Federation period. *Rokeby* is quite close to the seminal Federation plans by Alfred Dunn and Beverley Ussher of 1889-1892.

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Grading Review

Unchanged (as recommended by the Panel for Amendment C64 to the Boroondara Planning Scheme).

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; Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988, G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded places study (draft), 2001.

Specific:

¹ A notice accepting tenders for the construction of a villa for A J Fuller Esq. by Hyndman & Bates was published in the *Building, Engineering and Mining Journal*, 17 January 1891, cited in Lewis, Miles. *Australian Architectural Index; Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory*, 1890 – 1892; A floor plan and the south elevation are held in the Bates Smart collection, in the University of Melbourne Archives – cited in the property's record in the *Melbourne Mansions* on-line database.

² During 1892 and 1893, Arthur Fuller would be embroiled in the spectacular collapse of the Mercantile Bank, under the directorship of Sir Matthew Davies, Fuller's brother-in-law, and to whom he served as Secretary. See Cannon, Michael. *Land Boom and Bust*, 1972, p. 333.

³ The present owner of the property located the drawing for Rokeby in the Bates Smart collection in the University of Melbourne Archives and a comparison with the image reproduced in Philip Goad (ed.), *Bates Smart*, Melbourne, 2004, p. 81 indicated the drawing was the same, and has mistakenly been captioned 'Lineda' in the text.

⁴ As noted by RBA Architects, there are a number of relatively minor changes between the drawing and the house as built, however given the historical context there seems no doubt the drawing is for the subject property. A recent published survey of the work of Bates Smart and its antecedents reproduced and mistakenly identified *Rokeby* as *Lineda*, another residence constructed by the architects for the same client in Stanley Grove, Canterbury. Miles Lewis, Part 2 in Philip Goad (ed., contrib.), *Bates Smart*, Thames and Hudson, Melbourne, 2004, p. 82.

⁵ The present day spelling of Athelstan Road was first listed in the 1909 edition of the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*.

⁶ The details of sale and extent of the land holding are outlined in research kindly lent by Peter Andrew Barrett, Architectural Historian, 2005; *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory*, 1893.

⁷ Town of Camberwell Rate Books, 1907, #227, brick house, nine rooms, addressed as Bowen Street, cited in research provided by P A Barrett noted the rate entry amended and Lang's name substituted for Smart's.

⁸ The details of sale and extent of the land are outlined in P A Barrett's research.

⁹ The property is not listed under this name in the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, but is discussed in detail in P A Barrett's research.

¹⁰ Town of Camberwell Rate Books, 1911, #100, Bowen St., John Payne, brick house, 9 rooms, area of land 6.1.26, 6 person dwelling, nav £112.; *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, 1912.

¹¹ The 1924 edition of the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, noted residences on either side of the subject house, occupied by William Payne and Miss Jean Payne respectively.

¹² An outline of the dispersal of the six acre estate is provided in research provided by P A Barrett.

¹³ Certificate of Title, Vol. 6368, Fol. 538, dated 13 January 1939.

¹⁴ Details sourced from the City of Boroondara Planning File no. 106447, and augmented by information provided by the present owner, May 2007.

¹⁵ Information provided by owners' architect, notes provided by Council, May 2007.

¹⁶ Additional detail from the RBA Architects peer review, October 2008.

¹⁷ Its small-paned windows and insistent shingled grid to either side recall designs in the *Craftsman* magazine and by William Ralph Emerson in the *Massachusetts Architectural Review*, *Architectural Record* and elsewhere in the later 1900s and teens. Locally, this pattern of external timber gridding had shown in Blakett and Forster's Stanley Hunter house at 34 Wolseley Grove, Brighton, of 1914: Bryce Raworth, 'A Question of style', M. Arch. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993, p. 33. The dormer's grain, and multi-paned windows, look distinct from the spare and conservative character of the other detailing.

¹⁸ Additional detail relating to the physical description of the property is drawn from the peer review by RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants, October 2008. These revisions have been made at the direction of the Panel for Amendment C64 Boroondara Planning Scheme, December 2008.

¹⁹ See Butler, pp. 14-15.

²⁰ RBA Architects, peer review, October 2008.

²¹ A series of these are illustrated by Conrad Hamann in 'Nationalism and Reform in Australian Architecture, 1880-1920', *Historical Studies*, 18, 72, April 1979, pp. 393-411.