

OLD ORCHARD

Place No. 362

ADDRESS 194 Church Road
Doncaster

Last Update 2/09/2005

DESCRIPTION 'Old Orchard', 194 Church Road, Doncaster, is a five bay, symmetrical single storied house with a glazed terra-cotta hipped roof, extending over a verandah on all three sides supported on fine Tuscan column pairs. The roof is bell cast, providing an Asian accent to the building. The central bay forms a high hip with a decorative gablet. This is clad in unusual scalloped and toothed weatherboards, with an unusual concave hexagonal louvred vent (in a holly-leaf shape). Windows are 16-paned double hung. The entry door has three panels with upper glazed sidelights. The chimney at right front is paired, with high terra-cotta pots (one damaged) and decorated with a blind Romanesque arch.

The 1929 house is substantially intact and has undergone very few alterations or additions over the years. These have included:

- The extension of the original dining room, on the right side of the house, in 1938-39 by Mr Grayden, a local builder, guided by the original house plans (full-length windows have since been added to the façade).
- The freestanding laundry and garage building behind the house, of the same date as the main house, have been linked to the main house by a weatherboard extension (probably after the Thieles had left). The north side of the main house has modern sliding-glass doors leading to a rudimentary timber balcony. An in-ground swimming pool, of a curved outline, surrounded by stone pavers, was installed after the Thieles sold the house, in the early 1970s.

Other buildings include the tiny fibro outbuilding with a corrugated galvanised metal roof that was built as a sleepout for Bill and Benita's four sons just after World War II and the billiard room (Note: the latter building has not been inspected).

The house is set back from the street, behind a row of mature trees along the property line. It is reached by the c.1940 semi-circular drive, with the main entrance at the right flanked by random rubble local mudstone pillars with dwarf approach walls. It is not evident how much of the garden originally designed by Bill Thiele still remains, however, it contains a number of mature trees, plants and shrubs, which would appear to date from the Thiele ownership, including:

- A Scarlet Oak, along the north side of the entry driveway.
- A Deodar Cedar, along the south side of the entry driveway.
- A Pin Oak, at the rear of the house.
- Prunus species.
- Many species of roses, as well as perennial plants in beds throughout the gardens.

The original sprinkler system, mentioned in Nichterlein's 1928 specifications for the house, survives mostly intact as does the sundial in the front garden reputedly installed by Bill Thiele.

Condition	Good	Integrity	Intact
Threats	Redevelopment	Key elements	Building Garden Tree(s)

Designer

HISTORY

1 Summary

This single-storied house known as 'Old Orchard', in a garden setting near the Doncaster Municipal Gardens, was constructed in the late 1920s for the prominent Doncaster district orchardist and horticulturist William Alfred (Bill) Thiele (1899-1979).(1) The 1920s was a peak period in the development of Doncaster as a major fruit-growing district.(2) The Thieles, pioneer German Lutheran settlers from Silesia (now part of Poland), played a major role in the important district orchard industry.(3)

Bill's house in Church Road was known as 'Old Orchard' because its site was originally part of the extensive orchard associated with his grandfather's, Gottlieb Thiele, historic 'Friedensruh' property.(4) The Thiele family will be discussed in more detail later in this Report. The 'Old Orchard' house, unlike most of the early orchardists' homes in Doncaster, was architect designed.

The chosen architect was a family member, Bill's cousin, G.E. Nichterlein, who carried out some remarkable work during the 1920s.(5) Nichterlein's architectural career will be discussed later.

The Church Road house is remarkably intact as are early elements in the surrounding garden, which was planted by the first owner, who became a prominent district horticulturist. Like the historic Thiele family homestead complex 'Friedensruh' in nearby Waldau Court,(6) 'Old Orchard' house in Church Road has considerable heritage significance as a reminder of the time when the Doncaster district was covered by orchards. Many of those orchards were owned by pioneer German Lutheran families from Silesia.(7) Bill, his wife Benita, and their family lived at 'Old Orchard' until 1971, when they moved to Croydon.(8) This was the end of Thiele family ownership of the property.

2 German Lutheran migration

2.1 German migration to Australia

The history of German migration to Australia began in 1838 when 200 Lutherans from Prussia arrived in South Australia. Later, during the 1850s, some German families moved eastward to Victoria, to the eastern Riverina, near Albury in New South Wales, and to Gippsland in eastern Victoria. The gold discoveries in New South Wales and Victoria brought many more German migrants to the goldfields. By 1870, there was a shift in migration patterns and German migrants began to move to Queensland, becoming the chief source of European migrants there.

During the 19th century, the largest group of non-English-speaking settlers in Australia were German and by 1894 there were more than 40,000 Germans in Australia.(9) Many of those German settlers were from Silesia, and 'came from one of the richest pastoral areas of Europe. They continued to be farmers, particularly contributing to the development of fruit growing.'(10)

2.2 German migration to Doncaster

An early settlement of German Lutheran farmers was established along Ruffey's Creek in Doncaster. The Thiele family from Silesia has considerable historical significance for its early associations with this settlement. The earliest Lutheran German migrant to come to the Doncaster area was Gottlieb Thiele, Bill Thiele's grandfather. Gottlieb arrived on the ship 'Wappaus' in 1849 and moved to Doncaster in 1853, purchasing land along Ruffey's Creek. This creek runs today through the Doncaster Municipal Park, which was once part of the Thiele family's historic 'Friedensruh' orchard property. (11)

According to one account, other pioneer German families came to the Doncaster district and 'found that the river flats and rolling hills were suited for orchards and dairy farms. A number of German families were among the early farmers who formed a small community called Waldau, and in 1858 built the first church in the district, where a school was also conducted. The land filled and orcharding became the main occupation of the people.'(12)

Early maps show the Waldau settlement along Ruffey's Creek. (13) The settlement stretched between Church Road and Blackburn Road and extended down to the present George Street. Now part of the City of Manningham, the site of the old settlement is remembered in the naming of Waldau Court, where the historic homestead complex 'Friedensruh' is located. The name 'Waldau' can be translated to mean 'a clearing in the forest.' This is thought to allude to the clearing of native forest timber to plant gardens and orchards.(14)

3 Development history of 'Old Orchard'

The site of 'Old Orchard' at 194 Church Road, Doncaster, was a 12-acre allotment on the east side of Church Road on the corner of George Street. This block had been subdivided from a larger 24-acre allotment owned by Bill's father, Alfred Edwin Thiele.(15) It was an early portion of the family orchard property, where vineyards had thrived in earlier days. This made the choice of the name 'Old Orchard' for the new house a most appropriate one. (16)

The construction of the new house began around the time Bill's marriage on 10 October 1928 to Benita Cartwright at St. Thomas Church of England, Moonee Ponds.(17) The completion of the house was recorded in the 1929-30 Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe Rate Book. The property was described as a house on 12 acres in Church Road owned and occupied by William Thiele, Doncaster orchardist, and was valued at £108.(18) This was a considerable valuation, which recognised the substantial nature of the architect-designed residence. The fact that this was a period when the orchard industry in the Doncaster district was at its peak may explain Bill's decision to build such a substantial residence. Petty, another prominent district orchardist, is said to have decided to also build himself a new, more substantial residence (now demolished) at this time.(19)

The architect who designed 'Old Orchard' was, as discussed earlier, Bill's cousin, G.E. Nichterlein. Blueprints of Nichterlein's original design for the house, specifications and some early photographs are held by Bill's son, Michael Thiele.(20) Nichterlein's other 1920s work, which included the design of a grand Toorak residence for the wealthy merchant, T.J. Noske, will be discussed later in this report.

The 1929 house underwent very few alterations or additions over the years. The original dining room was extended in about 1938/9, just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. This work was carried out by a local builder, Mr. Grayden, guided by the blueprints of Nichterlein's original plans for the house.(21) A fibro outbuilding (which remains) was constructed at the rear of the house just after the Second World War as a sleepout for Bill's four sons. A second outbuilding, which also remains, was built beside the garage as a billiard room. This was constructed by the Thieles themselves with the help of a carpenter who was working on the family orchard. A billiard table was purchased at an auction of furniture from the Dame Nellie Melba Estate but was found to be too large for the room at 'Old Orchard.' The Melba table had to be sold and another three-quarter billiard table obtained.(22)

The garden surrounding 'Old Orchard' was designed by Bill Thiele, who was a keen gardener and a member of the Box Hill Horticultural Society and won many prizes for his exhibitions of fruit and flowers.(23) Nichterlein's specifications for the house include provision of 'Garden stand pipes to be 21" high', which are visible in family photos dated c 1931-32 and have survived to the present day.(24) The house was originally approached by a narrow, serpentine path edged in mudstone, which survives in some places. Around 1940 the layout was redesigned and a wide, circular drive was installed that abuts the front of the house.(25) Collyer's history of the Thiele family at Doncaster contains a photograph of Bill and Benita in their garden at 'Old Orchard' in the 1950s.(26)

The present in-ground swimming pool on the property was built by more recent owners of 'Old Orchard,' some years after the departure of the Thieles in the early 1970s.(27)

4 William (Bill) Alfred Thiele (1899-1979)

Bill was the eldest of the eleven children of Alfred and Minna (nee Nichterlein) Thiele. He was born at 'Friedensruh', Doncaster, on 21 March 1899. Bill was baptised by Lutheran Pastor C. Schotnecht and confirmed at St. John's Lutheran Church in Melbourne. He 'spoke German before he could speak English so that he could converse with his grandmother, 'Mutter', who lived with the family at 'Friedensruh'.' He learned to speak English when he first went to school at the East Doncaster State School. He later attended Trinity Grammar School.

After leaving school, Bill came home to help his father in the family orchard. At 18 he enlisted in the Light Horse Brigade but was waiting to embark for overseas when peace was declared on 11 March 1918.(28) Bill returned to orchard work, later taking over management of the family property. In 1926, Bill purchased his first car, a single-seater Peugeot. As we have seen, on 10 October 1928 he married Benita Cartwright, a friend of his sister Betty. The young couple moved into their new home 'Old Orchard' in 1929. They had four sons, Peter, Michael, Philip and Lawrence, and a daughter, Elizabeth, who all grew up at 'Old Orchard.' 'These sons all followed in the family tradition and worked on the orchard at Doncaster and in later years at Main Ridge on the Mornington Peninsula.'(29)

Bill played a prominent role in the development of the district fruit-growing industry and helped draft regulations for the Australian fruit export trade. At this time he formed a partnership with his father and other family members, which traded under the name of 'Thieles Fireside Fruit.' A fruitcase label for 'fancy precooled pears' advertised the fruit as 'Orchard to Home - Doncaster Grown' and showed two large pears and an orchard scene. A smaller scene on the label was of a family group sitting cosily beside the fire with a small girl offering a box of pears to her father with the words 'They are quality Dad.'(30)

Bill had a continuing involvement with the Lutheran Church and became Vice-President of the Australian Lutheran League when it was formed in 1926 and was later Treasurer of the Lutheran Church Home Committee, which helped children.(31)

During the 1950s and 1960s Doncaster changed from an orchard district to a new suburb with the subdivision of the old orchard areas. From 1960 to 1970, Doncaster's orchards were reduced to only 2,000 acres. Cool stores closed down. According to one account, 'Orchardists sold their land to sub-division and others retired from fruit-growing or retired to districts further out, in the

Mornington Peninsula, the closer areas of Gippsland, or the Goulburn Valley... Bulldozers pushed over trees, sheds were pulled down and dams filled in.'(32)

Following the death of Alfred Thiele in July 1960, most of the orchard land at 'Friedensruh' was sold in 1966 to the City of Doncaster and Templestowe. The orchard was demolished and most of the area was developed as municipal gardens. In 1970, the old homestead and its surrounding garden was purchased by the Council from Miss Elsa Thiele. Later, in 1981, the historic old house and garden was sold to Paul and Edna Collyer, the great-grandson of Gottlieb Thiele, its first owner, and his wife. They live there still with Paul's brother, Eric.(33)

After the sale of 'Friedensruh' and its orchard, Bill and Benita continued to live at 'Old Orchard' until 1971, when they purchased a smaller home in Croydon. Bill died on 22 February 1979 and Benita on 24 December 1986. They are both buried in Box Hill Cemetery.(34)

5 G.E. Nichterlein, the designing architect

The designing architect for his cousin, Bill Thiele's 'Old Orchard' residence, G.E. Nichterlein, received his architectural degree at the University of Melbourne and then did post-graduate studies in America.(35) According to the Australian Architectural Index, Nichterlein completed a number of other important works during the 1920s. These included a grand Toorak residence called 'Chiverton' (39 Irving Road) for the merchant T.J. Noske in 1929, the same year Nichterlein designed 'Old Orchard.' This house has a similar steep hipped roof to 'Old Orchard' and interestingly modelled chimneys. It is a much grander residence of two storeys and gave Nichterlein free rein to create unique decorative window openings and parapets. Noske, like the Thieles, was a Lutheran and had family connections with the Thieles through the marriage in 1930 of James Barnabas Thiele to Eunice Noske.(36)

Church (demolished (37)) in City Road, South Melbourne. This was a gable-fronted building with Romanesque details and a dramatically steep roof, giving it a Medieval Germanic feel. The architrave over a side door is similar to the fanciful work at Noske's mansion. Nichterlein's architectural career was a successful but brief one. It was reported in September 1935 that he had 'removed to Mernda Road, Olinda.'(38) Nichterlein gave up his architectural work to become an artist, opening a studio at Olinda.(39)

Sources:

- (1) Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe Rate Book 1929-30, Doncaster Division, No. 669; Eric Collyer, 'Doncaster. A Short History', 1994, pp. 39-40.
- (2) Irvine Green, 'The Orchards of Doncaster Templestowe', 1985, p. 55.
- (3) Ibid, pp. 6-9.
- (4) Information supplied by Eric Collyer, a Thiele descendant.
- (5) Information supplied by E Collyer and by Michael Thiele, William's second son.
- (6) Friedensruh and a number of its trees are included on the Heritage Overlay as HO175-178.
- (7) 'Ringwood', Army Ordnance Map, 1935.
- (8) Eric Collyer, 'The Thiele family of Doncaster', 1989, p. 238.
- (9) Eric Uebergang, 'Carl Samuel Aumamn. The Family History. 1853-1993', pp. 6, 12.
- (10) Ibid, p. 9.
- (11) Ibid, p. 19; Eric Collyer, 'The Thiele Family at Doncaster', p. 45.
- (12) Uebergang, op cit, p. 27.
- (13) Map of Parish of Bulleen, 1868, Lands Victoria.
- (14) Collyer, 'The Thiele family at Doncaste'r, p. 27.
- (15) Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1929-30, Doncaster Division, No. 635 (this recorded the 24 acres before the transfer).
- (16) Collyer, op cit, p. 235.
- (17) Ibid.; Nichterlein's specifications are dated April 1928.
- (18) Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1929-30, Doncaster Division, No. 669.
- (19) Michael Thiele, pers. comm.
- (20) The blueprints have been temporarily mislaid, but Michael has provided copies of the construction specifications and early photos of the front garden to the consultants.
- (21) Eric Collyer, pers. comm.
- (22) Michael Thiele, pers. comm.
- (23) Michael Thiele, pers. comm.; Collyer, op cit, p. 238.
- (24) 'Specifications for the erection and completion of Residence at Doncaster for W. Thiele Esqr.', G.E. Nichterlein, April 1928; family photos of front garden, c 1931-32, both provided by Michael Thiele.
- (25) Photos dated c 1931-32 and 1940 of the front garden, provided by Michael Thiele.
- (26) Ibid.

- (27) Ibid.
 (28) Collyer, op cit, pp. 236-237.
 (29) Ibid, p. 238.
 (30) Ibid, pp. 238, 44.
 (31) Ibid.
 (32) Irvine Green, 'The Orchards of Doncaster and Templestowe', pp. 63, 64.
 (33) Collyer, op cit, p. 60.
 (34) Ibid, p. 239.
 (35) Eric Collyer, pers. comm.
 (36) Collyer, op cit, p. 247.
 (37) Australian Architectural Index.
 (38) Royal Victorian Institute of Architects Journal (RVIAJ), Sept., 1935.
 (39) Collyer, pers. comm.

Creation Date c 1927-28

Change Dates

Associations

Local Themes

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The house known as 'Old Orchard' at 194 Church Road, Doncaster was constructed 1928-29 for William (Bill) Thiele and his new wife Benita (nee Cartwright) by Bill's cousin, architect G.E. Nichterlein, and valued at £108 (a substantial sum in those days). Nichterlein was also the architect of a mansion in Toorak for wealthy merchant T.J. Noske and a Lutheran Church in City Road, South Melbourne (demolished). The Thiele family originated from Silesia and were the pioneer fruit growers in Doncaster, which was known for its orchards for more than a century. The house was named 'Old Orchard' because it was a part of the extensive orchards founded by Bill Thiele's grandfather, Gottfried Thiele. The Thieles retained the house until 1971.

'Old Orchard', 194 Church Road, Doncaster, is a five bay, symmetrical single storied house with a glazed terra-cotta hipped roof, extending over a verandah on all three sides supported on fine Tuscan column pairs. The roof is bell cast, providing an Asian accent to the building. The central bay forms a high hip with a decorative gable. This is clad in unusual scalloped and toothed weatherboards, with an unusual concave hexagonal louvred vent (in a holly-leaf shape). Windows are 16-paned double hung. The entry door has three panels with upper glazed sidelights. The chimney at right front is paired, with high terra-cotta pots (one damaged) and decorated with a blind Romanesque arch.

The 1929 house is substantially intact and has undergone very few alterations or additions over the years. These have included:

- The extension of the original dining room, on the right side of the house, in 1938-39 by Mr Grayden, a local builder, guided by the original house plans (full-length windows have since been added to the façade).

- The freestanding laundry and garage building behind the house, of the same date as the main house, have been linked to the main house by a weatherboard extension (probably after the Thieles had left). The north side of the main house has modern sliding-glass doors leading to a rudimentary timber balcony. An in-ground swimming pool, of a curved outline, surrounded by stone pavers, was installed after the Thieles sold the house, in the early 1970s.

Other buildings include the tiny fibro outbuilding with a corrugated galvanised metal roof that was built as a sleepout for Bill and Benita's four sons just after World War II and the billiard room.

The house is set back from the street, behind a row of mature trees along the property line. It is reached by a circular drive, with the main entrance at the right flanked by random rubble local mudstone dwarf approach walls. This drive was installed c 1940 and replaced the original narrow, serpentine path leading to the house shown in early photos. The garden was designed by Bill Thiele, who was a keen horticulturist and won prizes in flowers shows. The original sprinkler system, mentioned in Nichterlein's 1928 specifications for the house, survives intact, as does the base of a sundial installed by Bill Thiele in the front garden and many mature trees, shrubs and plants including a number of roses.

How is it significant?

'Old Orchard', comprising the house, outbuildings, and surrounding gardens at 194 Church Road, Doncaster is of local historical and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

'Old Orchard' is of local historical significance for its strong associations with German Lutheran migration to the Doncaster district. It is located on a site which was once part of the early Waldau German Lutheran settlement and was the home from 1929 to 1971 of William (Bill) Thiele (1899-1979), prominent Doncaster district orchardist and horticulturist, and his family. It is connected to the historic 'Friedensruh', which was also owned by the Thiele family. Bill Thiele was born at 'Friedensruh', worked there and was finally its manager. 'Old Orchard' is also significant for its strong associations with the Doncaster district fruit-growing industry during its peak years in the 1920s, the decade in which the house and gardens were established, and is a now rare reminder of the time when Doncaster and Templestowe were major orchard areas. The orchards are now gone but this house and nearby 'Friedensruh' homestead and outbuildings associated with the important Thiele orchard at Doncaster remain as evidence of the prosperity of this industry and the families associated with it. 'Old Orchard' is also historically significant as an example of the work of the architect G.E. Nichterlein, a cousin of Bill Thiele, who was associated with a number of other important works at the time. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2 and H.1)

'Old Orchard' is of local aesthetic significance as an excellent example of a large, architect-designed house, which is substantially intact, constructed for an orcharding family during the 1920s, peak years in the development of the Doncaster district fruit-growing industry. Earlier district orchard houses, including the historic 'Friedensruh', were rarely architect-designed and the design of this house and its gardens speaks of the prosperity of the orcharding industry during the 1920s. The design of the house is unusual and includes many features that are rare or unique within the municipality including the roof form and details to the entry gablet. The house is complemented by a mature garden, designed by Bill Thiele, which is also significant as a representative example of Inter-War garden styles and provides an appropriate setting for the house. The mature trees contribute to the broader cultural landscape of this area, which includes the windrow extending to the north along Church Road. (RNE criteria B.2, E.1 and F.1)

LEVEL Local significance

RECOMMENDATIONS

Heritage Register Listings

Register	Reference	Zoning	Status
Manningham Planning Scheme	HO		Recommended

Extent The whole site as defined by the title boundaries.

Heritage Schedule

External Paint Controls:	Yes	On VHR:	No	VHR Ref No:
Internal Alteration Controls:	No	Prohibited Uses:	No	
Tree Controls:	Yes	Aboriginal Heritage Place:	No	
Outbuildings or Fences:	Yes	Incorporated Plan:	No	Incorporated Plan Details
Description:				

Conservation Management

BUILDINGS

In order to conserve the heritage significance of this place, it is recommended that the following conservation objectives, as appropriate, be given priority in the future maintenance, development or management of the place:

1. Conserve the fabric of the building/s or other built elements, which is identified as contributing to the significance of the place. This includes the original fabric as well as fabric that may demonstrate important successive stages in the historic development of the place and/or provide evidence of changing architectural styles or techniques.
2. Discourage the demolition of significant or contributory buildings unless the demolition is only of part of the building and it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the responsible authority that, as appropriate:

- The fabric to be removed is not significant, or
- The fabric to be removed is not of primary significance and its removal will not adversely affect the significance of the place, or
- It will assist in the long term conservation of the place, or
- It will facilitate the historic use of the place and will not result in the loss of fabric considered to be primary significance.

Note: The poor condition or low integrity of a heritage place should not be used as justification for its demolition, particularly if it appears the condition of the heritage place has deliberately been allowed to deteriorate.

3. Where there is a complex of buildings and other elements the aim should be to conserve or reveal the historic visual relationship between the buildings and other elements in order to demonstrate the historical use and/or layout of the place.
4. Conserve significant plantings on the property, and maintain a visual relationship between the plantings and the significant buildings on the property.
5. Encourage the removal of non-significant or intrusive elements, particularly where this would assist in understanding or interpreting the significance of the place.
6. Ensure that the siting and design of new development does not overwhelm the historic setting of the building and the site as a whole by becoming a dominant element or by interfering with key views to and from the site.
7. Encourage any new development on the property to relate and be complementary in form, scale and materials to the significant buildings and other elements, but be clearly contemporary in design.
8. Retain views of significant building(s) and plantings from the street.
9. In the case of subdivision of the property, encourage the retention of the significant buildings, trees and related elements on one lot.

TREES

In order to conserve the heritage significance of this place, it is recommended that the following objectives be given priority in the future maintenance or development of the place:

1. Ensure that the tree/s survive in good condition according to their normally expected lifespan. Regular maintenance should include monitoring condition, pruning, and pest and disease management.
2. Develop a strategy for replacement when the tree/s becomes senescent or dangerous. Document the replacement process (photographs and written record before, during & after) for future record.
3. Replace 'like with like' species to maintain the significance and integrity of the vegetation fabric, unless an alternative planting scheme has been devised in accordance with an approved management plan.
4. Manage surrounding vegetation to maintain the integrity and condition of the tree/s. Remove weed vegetation species.
5. Ensure that any future development, or changes in immediate environmental conditions, adjacent to the tree/s does not have a detrimental impact upon the integrity and condition of the of the tree/s. Investigate ways in which adjacent development could include or coordinate with recovery and improvement of the tree/s integrity and condition.

NOTE:

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this citation is accurate, it is possible that more detailed investigation may reveal further information about the significance of the place. For example, in most cases an internal inspection was not made of buildings at the time of initial assessment. In the time since the place was first assessed it is also possible that the condition of buildings or trees may have changed.

The information contained in this citation should therefore be reviewed at the time that it is proposed to make changes to the property. This would likely require a more detailed assessment of any

significant or contributory element that is affected by any proposed buildings or works. Once this more detailed assessment has been made, a review of the significance of the place should be carried out by Council's Heritage Adviser or an appropriately qualified professional.

Extra Research

BIBLIOGRAPHY Context Pty Ltd, (2005), *Manningham Heritage Study Review*, Manningham City Council, Doncaster