

PLACE IDENTIFICATION FORM

ADDRESS

9 Hilda Crescent

TITLE

"Constantia"

TYPE

- ☒ Single Residence ☐ Multiple Unit Res.
☐ Shop ☐ Outbuildings
☐ Office ☐ Industrial Building
☐ Landscape feature ☐ Public building
☐ View ☐ Other

EXISTING DESIGNATION

HBR ☐ GBR ☐ AHC ☐ NT ☐ VAS ☐

STREETSCAPE LEVEL

1 ☒ 2 ☐ 3 ☐
 SIGNIFICANT ☒ SIGNIFICANT ☒
 STREET TREES KERB & GUTTERS

GRADING

A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐
 KEYNOTE BUILDING ☐

RECOMMENDED FOR

HBR/GBR ☐ AHC ☒ URBAN CONSERVATION AREA ☒
 VAS ☐ PLANNING SCHEME PROTECTION ☒
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ☐ OTHER ☐

SURVEY DATE Oct. 91

NEG FILE 24.29

Title
Vol.
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THEME

- ☐ Early Settlement
☐ Mansions
☐ Victorian Garden Suburb
☐ Municipal dev.
☐ 1870s growth
☒ Garden villas
☐ Working enclaves
☐ Commercial Centres
☒ Edwardian Prosperity
☐ Interwar Housing
☐ Flats and Offices

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Date 1907

Architect Christopher Lowper.

Builder

Elements



- ☐ Contributing garden ☐ Original or early hard landscape layout
☐ Landmark tree ☐ Original or early fence

NOTABLE FEATURES/SIGNIFICANCE

See attached

INTEGRITY Good ☒
 Fair ☐
 Poor ☐

CONDITION Good ☒
 Fair ☐
 Poor ☐

CROSS REFERENCED INFORMATION

Associated significant garden ☐

9 HILDA CRESCENT

"CONSTANTIA"

History

"Constantia" at 9 Hilda Crescent constructed in 1907 was the home of the architect, Christopher Cowper, and one of a number of Edwardian houses in Hilda Crescent and Moore Street designed by Cowper. "Constantia" was described in the 1908 rate book as a brick house of eight rooms. Cowper designed 1 Hilda Crescent (1909) and 15 Hilda Crescent (c1910) and lived in No. 9 and probably No. 21 circa 1908. Cowper also, reputedly, designed 11 Chrystobel Street and 13 Linda Crescent. Irene Lewis lived in No. 9 from the 1930s to the 1960s, the building being converted into flats in the 1950s.⁴

Description

A single storey Queen Anne house, part of a group in Hilda Crescent designed by Christopher Cowper, all different but complementary in their siting, materials and design details. This building adopts Cowper's favoured corner turret form but varies from the standard corner plan by the absence of a corner return verandah, and the incorporation instead of a recessed small porch, centrally placed in the design. The building includes the common Queen Anne characteristics of; red bricks; half timbered gables; casement windows; timber verandah decoration; and a prominent terracotta tiled roof.

Assessment

Ussher and Kemp were at the forefront of the development of the domestic Queen Anne in Melbourne and Australia. Early buildings such as Campion College (former Dalwraith) of 1906, (Studley Park Road, Kew) and Woodlands of 1888 (Woodlands Street, Essendon) were instrumental in the development of the style to suit the typical suburban form which reached its peak in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Ussher's work falls into two categories, the gabled design - usually a two storey form and the hipped design where gables on two co-ordinate points project from an overall hip - usually a single storey form. In general, Ussher's largest houses e.g. Dalwraith in Kew of 1906, adopt the gabled designs. These houses fall into the mansion category. It is the single storey designs, which usually apply to large houses rather than mansions, which have developed into the distinctive Australian style, Queen Anne domestic and which were the most popular in the first decade of the twentieth century e.g. Hedges Residence, 1897 in Canterbury and Clarke's Residence in Toorak of 1897. Ussher joined with Kemp and developed the style with the characteristic features of tiled hipped roofs, timber verandah decorations, and a strongly three dimensional form with a corner emphasis.

Several key practitioners worked within the style. Ussher and Kemp, Walter Butler, Christopher Cowper amongst others. The early development occurs in the last decade of the nineteenth century culminating in the first decade of

⁴. Information supplied by Gwen McWilliam. (Recommended that entry no. should be searched to confirm original owner); Gwen McWilliam, Grace Park, Hawthorn, Area Walk IV, Hawthorn Historical Society, 1987-88.

9 Hilda Crescent continued

the twentieth century. The key practitioners were widely copied by builders up to the first world war.

The Queen Anne style, combined with some of the principals of Australian homestead planning and design, around the turn of the century, to produce a new suburban style continuing to the end of W.W.1. Sometimes loosely referred to as "Edwardian" or "Federation" it is more appropriately referred to as "Garden Bungalow", because it does not relate just to the period around Federation at 1901, and because it is intimately related to the garden suburb concept. What sets the "garden bungalow" and "Queen Anne domestic" apart from the other red brick styles of the period, is a purposeful and close relationship with the garden as the dominant feature. A variety of decorative forms are used within this framework. The "garden Bungalow" eventually developed into the ubiquitous Californian Bungalow of the 1920s and 1930s.

The "domestic Queen Anne" had an ongoing influence on vernacular designs which can be seen up to the 1960s. The domestic Queen Anne buildings which survive from the turn of the century had a vital role in the development of the urban form of metropolis.

"Art-architecture in the Melbourne Queen Anne manner was aimed at the wealthier but for the less wealthy, more restricted, less picturesque and utilitarian designs were created. An architect (developer) with just such a diverse practice was Christopher A. Cowper (1868-1954). He was born in Cape Town, South Africa, and arrived in Melbourne in 1883 at the age of 15. He was articled to Evander McIvor whose practice is chiefly remembered today for its fine gothic revival churches in brick with stone dressed lancet and geometric windows. (In 1888 Henry Kemp was married in McIvor's Presbyterian Church at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Highbury Grove, Kew). Cowper was in architectural practice until 1895 at which time he retired to the land and farming. He then worked with the Equitable Life Assurance Company. From this varied background he went on a world tour in 1906 perhaps as an architectural refresher, for after that tour he returned to architecture. The years after his return to architecture were to be occupied with the development of Grace Park Estate in Hawthorn. Architecturally, this area of Hawthorn is of special interest as a sanctuary of houses in the Melbourne Queen Anne manner. It offers a cross-section of the variety and scale of designs from Cowper's office".⁵

This is Cowper's own home. Architecturally it is not more significant than his other works nearby. However it illustrates the elements which Cowper found most attractive, in particular the corner turret, used on many of his designs, and the vertical valence decoration terminating at an arch form. In this case the verandah arch is supported on stumpy columns not noted on his other designs. The building is also interesting for the absence of Cowper's much used Tuscan columns which are a strong characteristic of the urban form of Grace Park.

⁵. George Tibbetts, "The So Called Domestic Queen Anne", *Historic Environment*, Vol. 2., No. 2., 1982, p.36.

9 Hilda Crescent continued

Significance

Metropolitan

1. Architecturally significant as one of a group of Cowper's designs in Hilda Crescent and Grace Park.
2. Historically significant as Cowper's own home.
3. Architecturally significant for its contribution to the outstanding Queen Anne precinct of Grace Park, which is of State significance.