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| Name | <i>Norrac</i> | Reference No | |
| Address | 23 View Street, Hawthorn | Survey Date | 28 April 2006 |
| Building Type | Residence | Grading | C* |
| Date | 1881-82 | Previous Grading | C*3 |



Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

Intactness Good Fair Poor

Heritage Status HV AHC NT Rec. BPS Heritage Overlay

History

Norrac, a brick house of twelve rooms, was constructed on a large allotment in 1881-82 for timber merchant James Wright, owner of the well-known Carron timber yard in Flinders Lane (the house name is that of the timber yard reversed). The house was sited facing south, taking advantage of views down the Auburn Road hill. The house was described as consisting of twelve rooms (occupied by 10 persons) and was rated with a net annual value (nav) of £125 in the Borough of Hawthorn rate books in 1882.¹ Other members of the Wright family owned houses nearby - in Elphin Grove, Lyndhurst Crescent and later at no 20 Rae Street. Graeme Butler has recorded that James Wright was a provisional director of the Hawthorn Building Society, with speculator and politician Frank Stuart in April 1888.² The Wright family remained resident at the property for many years, apparently extending the house to accommodate the needs of the family. By the 1901-02 rate cycle, the house was described as consisting of 14 rooms, with a household of seven and a nav of £180. Note that the address at this time was 10 Auburn Road, to which the property originally had an extensive frontage. James Wright was still listed as the occupier in c. 1910, succeeded by Miss Jane Wright who was listed as the occupant of *Norrac*, now re-numbered as 36 Auburn Road. By 1922-23, another timber merchant, Frederick Wright, was listed as the occupant of the house, with the owner of the property identified as the estate of James Wright. The net annual value of the property had increased to £275.³

Subdivision of the property occurred in 1923 as the *Auburn Heights* estate development. The house was retained as lot 17, but the original frontage to Auburn Road was subdivided and sold. Two new streets, View Street and Wright Street, were formed to service the new subdivision. The retention of the subject property on its allotment is the reason for the 'dogleg' in View Street.⁴ With a frontage now to View Street, the subject house was subsequently owned by Anne Taft and tenanted by Mr and Mrs Watts for many years, before being converted to apartments, a function it served from the mid 1950s until at least 1974.⁵

(G Butler & Associates, *Hawthorn Keynote Places (draft)*, 2000; additional research by Lovell Chen, 2006)

Description & Integrity

Norrac, at 23 View Street, Hawthorn, is sited on a rise at the edge of the Auburn Road Hill, and is a single-storey, stuccoed masonry, Italianate villa of the early 1880s, with a projecting bay on the east side of the south façade. The roof is hipped and clad with plain slate tile cladding, iron ridge capping, and finial bases at the major hips. The chimneys have stucco-clad shafts with lightly sculpted cornices and string courses round their necks. The eaves are boxed with brackets in intermittent pairs, and a thin course line completes the composition of a bracket frieze. The west elevation, and west bay of the south elevation, have a thicker squared course line which appears to be a mounting point for a return verandah, now removed (the verandah is also evident in plan in the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works plan #55, undated but late nineteenth century). There is also a verandah floor in place, now a front patio. The entry porch is composed as a miniature stucco-clad (portico) tower; this is also not believed to be original as it does not appear on the aforementioned plan, but may nevertheless be a relatively early alteration. The portico tower has a balustraded parapet (of interlinked concrete circles) and four piers topped with small brick 'ziggurats'. The portico has a tall arch facing south and a shorter entrance arch to the west. A cornice line is located below the main south arch; the arch is topped with an incised keystone, and two incised spandrel panels are located to either side of the arch. The west side of the entry tower is unusually plain, which is consistent with being bisected by a verandah roof. The front door frame is set in a third interior arch, with a wheel-spoke fanlight, sidelights and windowed front door, all of which may be original. A quartet of blind arches with plain reveals and moulded surrounds, line the upper internal walls of the portico; the ceiling is flat. Generally, the windows are timber-framed, double-hung sashes, flat headed with crisply moulded borders, with the west and south-west windows set in shallow breakfronts which is consistent with their originally being located under a return verandah. The larger south window is flanked by two narrow sidelights. Three windows are located in the canted projecting bay of the south façade. There is no front fence, with an embankment separating the central garden and house from View Street; the drive curves round to the west side with the present entry footpath to the east. This is consistent with the house having been divided into flats. The property has a thickly grown garden with agapanthus and other long-standing growth.

Historical Context

Norrac, which dates from the early 1880s, was constructed on a large allotment in the Auburn Road/Barkers Road area of Hawthorn. At the time of its construction there were a number of other large estates in the area.⁶ The subdivision of *Norrac* in the 1920s, and the layout of the *Auburn Heights* estate, is also consistent with the gradual breakup of these larger nineteenth landholdings in the early twentieth century, and the sometimes awkward road alignments which resulted when the original dwellings were retained.

Comparative Analysis

Norrac, at 23 View Street, Hawthorn, can be compared to several marginally larger single-storey, canted-bay Italianate houses, such as 16 Yarra Street, Hawthorn, in the St James Park heritage precinct, or the much larger *Wimba* at 235 Cotham Road, Kew (1862-70, graded A). It is also similar in resolution to *Hermon* at 2 John Street, Kew, which was finished much later, in 1898. These comparisons also acknowledge that *Norrac* formerly had a return verandah, presumably cast iron. The large front door frame, with wheel-spoke fanlight and slightly over scale, compares closely with 33 Alma Road, Camberwell (1888, graded B), as does the modulation of frontal scale and the individual enrichments around the windows, arches and aedicules, including the chamfering at the edge of each window. In terms of the portico tower, which is believed to be a comparatively early addition to the subject house (and may have reflected the desire of the owner, as was often the case, to emulate an architectural feature admired elsewhere), this can be compared to a number of single-storey, brick Italianate houses in this area, notably the group on the north side of Rathmines Road, Hawthorn (on the west side of Rathmines Grove). The use of the miniature tower form, dominating the entry area, as if from a scaled-down mansion, would also have reflected the fact that *Norrac* was historically in a prominent and quite exposed position, prior to the 1920s subdivision. In Boroondara, some of these tower forms also recur in the Wattle Valley Road area of Canterbury. The mode was also popular, at a smaller scale, in Sydney's inner western suburbs, especially the Strathfield-Croydon area.

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.*

Noorac, 23 View Street, Hawthorn, was quite a prominent house in the Auburn Road/Barkers Road area of Hawthorn, in the period before the landholding was subdivided as the *Auburn Heights* estate in the 1920s. The single-storey, canted-bay Italianate house was a popular option for affluent residents of the area in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The addition of the tower portico (believed to be a comparatively early addition) also demonstrates aspects of its elevated and exposed position, in both adding protection to the entrance area, as well as a more highly visible architectural element.

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.*

Noorac, 23 View Street, Hawthorn, demonstrates several key elements which are typical of the 1880s Italianate mode in Boroondara, including the canted bay form and the approach to detail and composition. The return verandah was also consistent with this approach, and although removed, the house is nevertheless a good example of this type. The comparatively early addition of the portico tower is also consistent with late nineteenth and early twentieth century developments in desirable areas of Boroondara, where a miniature tower was used to draw attention to the entry. The addition may also have anticipated, or derived from, the eventual subdivision and creation of the new address to View Street.

Statement of Significance

Noorac, 23 View Street, Hawthorn, is of architectural and historical significance at a local level. Prior to the break-up and subdivision of its landholding in the 1920s, the house was prominently located in the Auburn Road/Barkers Road area of Hawthorn, where there were a number of large nineteenth century residential estates. The single-storey, canted-bay Italianate form was a popular option for affluent residents of the area in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Although altered, through the loss of the return verandah and the comparatively early addition of the tower portico, the house is nevertheless significant as an example of a 'layered' Victorian dwelling, which retains several key elements typical of the 1880s Italianate mode in Boroondara. The addition of the mini tower also demonstrates aspects of its elevated and exposed position, and the desire of the owners to draw attention to the entry.

Grading Review

Unchanged.

Recommendations

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

Identified By

Meredith Gould Conservation Architects, *Hawthorn Heritage Study*, 1992.

References

General: (G Butler & Associates, *Hawthorn Keynote Places (draft)*, 2000; Meredith Gould Conservation Architects, *Hawthorn Heritage Study*, 1992.)

Specific:

¹ Draft citation, G Butler & Associates, *Hawthorn Keynote places (draft)*, 2000.

² *Boroondara Standard*, 13 April 1888, cited in G Butler & Associates, *Hawthorn Keynote places (draft)*, 2000.

³ City of Hawthorn Rate Books, 1922-23, #6218, cited in G Butler & Associates, *Hawthorn Keynote places (draft)*, 2000.

⁴ *Auburn Heights* estate plan, [1923], Batten & Percy Collection, State Library of Victoria.

⁵ Pattern of occupation derived from listings in the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, various years between 1940 and 1974.

⁶ G Butler & Associates, *Hawthorn Keynote places (draft)*, 2000. See also Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works plan #55, undated but late nineteenth century.