

Howlands, 37 Docker St, Richmond, VIC, Australia**Photographs:** None**List:** Register of the National Estate**Class:** Historic**Legal Status:** [Registered](#) (26/10/1999)**Place ID:** 15448**Place File No:** 2/11/044/0023**Statement of Significance:**

Howlands, designed by architect J A B Koch in 1889, is architecturally significant as a finely detailed and intact late Victorian residence in a Classical Revival style. The style is seen in the array of decorative elements on the two street facades (Criterion D.2). Readily identifiable for its period, and located on a corner site, the building forms an important streetscape element in this part of inner Melbourne (Criterion E.1). (Historic Themes: 8.12 Living in and around Australian homes)

Official Values: Not Available**Description:**

This is an imposing two storey rendered brick townhouse on a prominent corner site, and an extremely rare type in Melbourne. The articulation of the facades is particularly notable, with a rusticated bluestone plinth (painted), and an unusual composition of rendered walls, bays, attached pilasters, string courses, cornices, arch headed windows, Palladian style windows upstairs, pedimented doorway, balustraded pediment and urns. Such stylistic inventiveness in an eclectic Victorian Classical Revival style is a typical feature of the work of J A B Koch. Howlands is a good example of the peak of 1880s boom style architecture.

History:

An earlier house, built in 1867 and occupied by Ahab Kellet, existed on this site, which had been created by the 1853 subdivision of Joseph Docker's Crown Allotments. Docker was a successful squatter from Wangaratta, and this was one of the earliest intensive subdivisions in Richmond.

Howlands was built in 1889 for George Alexander, tailor and businessman, to designs by architect J A B Koch, an architect who resided in nearby Church Street from 1885 to 1896, and designed many buildings in the area. His best known work are the additions to Labassa, Caulfield.

George Alexander was born in London in 1829, and migrated to Australia in 1852. He set up as an auctioneer, and sold crown lands for the government. He was a notable member of the Melbourne Jewish community, a Freemason, and an active political organizer for the Free Trade Party. He became a Justice of the Peace in 1888 and attended the first Federal Convention in 1891. He lived at Howlands for only three years, dying in 1892 at the age of sixty three.

After his death, his widow, Sophia, continued to live in the house until her death in 1899. After this a series of tenants are listed as ratepayers, alternating with John Alexander, who managed his father's estate. He and his brother, Moses, are listed in 1905 as sole proprietors, and in 1905-06 a new owner, W H Searle, is listed.

It was George's second son, Moses, together with his son, also named George, who co-founded Coppel and Alexander (the former being the brother-in-law of Moses), later Alexander's Menswear Stores.

Howlands was later used as a boarding or rooming house and is currently a private residence once again.

Condition and Integrity:

The condition and integrity of the house, at least externally, appears good. (1986)

The condition and integrity of the house is very high. The building appears substantially original except for the painting of the exterior, the verandah at the rear, kitchen

alterations, missing overmantels and altered fireplaces, alterations to fences, landscaping, and the upstairs bathroom, and changes to the internal decorative schemes. (1986)

The condition and integrity of the building is very high and it retains its external form and ornamentation and bluestone base. All external rendered surfaces have been recently painted. Discreet contemporary additions have been made to the rear of the building. (1996)

Location:

37 Docker Street, corner Gipps Street, Richmond.

Bibliography:

Apperly, Richard, et al, 1989, A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Sydney.

O'Connor, J. and T., Coleman, R., Wright, H., 1985, Richmond Conservation Study. National Trust of Australia (Victoria) FN 4005.