

44 WALMER STREET, 'VILLA ALBA'

Original Use: Residence
Date of Construction: 1863¹
Architect: Unknown

DESIGNATION A
CITATION NO.10



Hall Ceiling Detail (Kew Historical Society)

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

Documentary evidence from Kew Rate Books records that 'Studley Villa' (now known as 'Villa Alba') was built for William Greenlaw, banker and speculator². The initial N.A.V. for the property was £100³ while in February 1884 an increase in the N.A.V. to £300⁴ indicated that the 1882-83 alterations and additions to the southern part of the house⁵ were completed. The decorative scheme for the interior was carried out by Patterson Brothers of Melbourne in 188⁶.

Greenlaw owned and occupied the house until his death in 189⁷ and in 1949 the building was purchased by the Royal Women's Hospital who converted it into a nurses home⁸. The description given by the Australian Heritage Commission citation is repeated here in part: '...Exterior is quite plain and little altered. Main feature of the house is lavish interior decoration completed 1883/84 by Paterson Bros. (leading Melbourne decorator). A house containing one of the most complete and elegant decorative schemes of the 1880s.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Heritage Commission Statement of Significance is: ' Unusual building architecture for period (1882/1883) - almost Norman in style. A main feature however is the remarkable extent of original stencilled interior decoration of 1883/84 including ceilings of exquisite artistry; gilded and stencilled skirtings, doors, window frames; beautiful tiled and decorated fire places and mantles; freizes etc. There is no house in Australia with comparable extent and variety of lavish interior decoration of such freshness and excellent condition.'

HERITAGE LISTINGS

HBR: Reistered No.605.

GBR: Registered

RNE: Nominated

National Trust: Classified No.1385.

¹ Bennett, K., 'The Villa Alba', January 1987

² National Trust of Aust.(Vic), 'Borough of Kew Rate Records...', held in File No.1385

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ National Estate, 'Listing for Kew City - Villa Alba', as at 23 January 1987

⁶ National Trust of Aust.(Vic), 'Building Citation', 7 February 1985

⁷ Rogers, D., *A History of Kew*, p.101

⁸ *ibid.*, p.102

Clearly of state significance in terms of its decorative scheme alone, it is already registered as an historic building.