Heritage Overlay No.:	117
Citation No.:	438
Place:	'Bonnie Doone', 339-365 Tarletons Road

Other Names of Place: Location: Critical Dates: Existing Heritage Listings: Recommended Level of Significance:

'Bonnie Doon' 339-365 Tarletons Road, Plumpton Construction: 1906 None LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

Bonnie Doone at 339-365 Tarletons, Road, Rockbank, is significant as a predominantly intact example of a Federation style. Built in 1906 for Mr Irwin Gillespie, the house is in good condition. The galvanised corrugated steel stable, other outbuildings, underground tank and dry stone walls also contribute to the significance of the place. It is also significant as a representative example of the farms created as a result of the break up of the Clarke pastoral estate, a watershed in the history of the Shire of Melton.

Bonnie Doone at 339-365 Tarletons Road is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). It demonstrates original design qualities of a Federation style. These qualities include

Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006) Sera Jane Peters (2007)

the steeply pitched hipped roof forms, together with the broken back return verandah. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the single storey height, asymmetrical composition, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, two red brick chimneys with rendered and projecting tops and terra cotta pots, modest eaves with exposed timber rafters, turned timber verandah posts with decorative brackets and timber fretwork valance, timber verandah floor, and the timber framed doorway with timber door, sidelight and highlight. The galvanised corrugated steel outbuilding and underground tank also contribute to the significance of the place.

Bonnie Doone at 339-365 Tarletons Road is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4). It is one of the larger of the surviving rural weatherboard houses built in the first few decades of the twentieth century which express the increasing rural prosperity and historic changes of the era, and in particular the break-up of the large pastoral estates throughout Australia. The break-up of Sir RHT Clarke's massive Rockbank estate represented a major turning point in the history of the Shire. The property is also significant for its association with the locally prominent Gillespie and Tarleton families.

Overall, Bonnie Doone at 339-365 Tarletons Road is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

Bonnie Doone, 339-365 Tarletons Road, Rockbank, has a rural setting and consists of a timber house, galvanised steel outbuilding, dry stone walls and underground tank.

The asymmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, Federation styled house is characterised by steeply pitched hipped roof forms, together with a broken back return verandah. These roof forms are clad in galvanised corrugated steel. Two early red brick chimneys with rendered and projecting tops and terra cotta pots adorn the roofline. Modest overhangs and exposed timber rafters are features of the eaves.

An early feature of the design is the return verandah, which has recently been extended to the north side of the house. It is supported by turned timber posts with decorative brackets and timber fretwork valance, and has a timber floor. Other early features of the design of the house is the timber framed doorway with timber door, sidelight and highlight, and the fact that the house is orientated to face the original track which ran along the south-west side of the house.

The stable which is located to the north-east of the house was converted from a dairy. It has galvanised corrugated iron wall cladding over much earlier, unclad external wooden framing and internal horizontal weatherboard cladding. The floor is cobbled with house bricks on the northern side with more recently poured concrete on the south side. The round yard at the end has a remnant box thorn hedge which adjoins the north-south running dry stone wall. There are numerous fruit trees planted along this wall and around the house.

Other features include the dry stone walls around the house and site (up to five courses), the ford site (poor condition), and underground tank which still holds water on the north side of the stable, the above-ground steel pipe with which is the remnant of Gillespies market garden irrigation system, and the Sunshine gate, which is in poor condition.

History:

Contextual History

The land upon which *Bonnie Doone* is situated was originally almost at the centre of WC Yuille's Rockbank pastoral station, about 20 square miles of leased land incorporating an area of approximately 3.5 miles east of a line between Mount Kororoit and Mount Cottrell.¹ The headstation of the run was situated at the Rockbank Inn on Beatty's Road.

The nine square mile sections of the Parish of Kororoit stretching from approximately Mt Kororoit in the north-west to Beatty's Bridge in the south-east (Crown Allotments 19 - 27) were surveyed by Assistant Surveyor Gibbons in April 1854 and sold in Melbourne a month later, on 9th June. Because of the high quality of much of this land near Kororoit Creek, much of it was sold in 150-200 acre allotments. Farmers purchased most of these, but pastoral giant WJT ('Big') Clarke purchased all but one of the square mile (640 acre) sections that were sold.²

However Section 18, upon which *Bonnie Doone* is situated, originally designated as the 'Village Reserve' for the parish of Kororoit, was reserved from the 1854 sale. Immediately south of *Bonnie Doone*, on the opposite side of Kororoit Creek, was a 'Limestone Reserve.'³ In 1868, when the village reserve was being sold as small allotments under the provisions of the Selection Acts, a part of this Limestone Reserve was gazetted as a Water Reserve, to facilitate the farming era.⁴ It remains a water reserve today.

An 1862 map shows a track passing approximately north-south straight through what would become the *Bonnie Doone* house.⁵ This property, Allotment 3, Section 18, Parish of Kororoit, of 26 acres 2 roods and 12 perches, was then sold as part of the 1860s Selection Acts, I Gidney obtaining freehold on 4th April 1873.⁶ The current owners say that the alignment of the this track can still be made out.

Isaac Gidney purchased nearly a thousand acres of land in the Rockbank area from the Crown alone, all under the provisions of the Selection Acts, despite the fact that he lived in North Melbourne. In additon to grazing stock he bred horses for the India market.⁷

By 1892 Gidney had consolidated his Rockbank land holdings, selling the small 26 acre allotment and aquiring other land contiguous to his major holdings south of Beattys Road. Allotment 3 was now owned by Sir WJ Clarke.⁸

History of the Place

¹ Lands Victoria, Historic Plan: 'Run Plan 1114'.

² Put Away Plan K74 (2): 'Plan of the the Parish of Kororoit, 1852-559'; also Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit.

³ Gealogical Survey of Victoria, Map 8NE (1861)

⁴ Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit (Gaz. 1868:2519)

⁵ Lands Victoria, Put Away Plan: K74 B 'Special Lands, Section 18, Parish of Kororoit, County of Bourke' (1862)

⁶ Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit. (Selection Act File 14151/31.)

⁷ Genealogy notes, J. Bilszta files

⁸ Shire Map Series (1892): Parish of Kororoit.

Clarke's son, Sir RTH Clarke, disposed of this part of the vast Rockbank estate c.1905, when Irwin Stewart Gillespie (1868-1946) purchased Allotments 1-6 of Section 18. Family history has Gillespie arriving at Rockbank c.1906-7.

Braybrook Shire ratebooks record that the farm was fenced and buildings erected by 1907.⁹ Gillespie family records show the family had occupied *Bonnie Doone* in 1908. Gillespie brought with him a family retainer, Stewart, who resided on the property and provided year round labour.¹⁰ Stewart was with the Gillespie family for forty years. Seasonal workers were engaged as required. Gillespie is reported as being a hard task master.

The weatherboard house faced the east, rather than Tarleton's Road to the north, apparently in the mistaken belief that a new road would be constructed on that side.¹¹ The house incorporates a kitchen and wash house under the corrugated iron-clad roofline. The interior was of lath and plaster (lining board in washhouse and the large pantry). External ornamental timber and iron window shades were fitted to the windows.

The extended Gillespie family had been bakers operating from Oakleigh to Cheltenham, and market gardeners at Bentleigh.¹² According to family history, Irwin Gillespie was a baker in the Mentone area, who married Matilda Jackson of Croydon. The births of their eight sons between 1897 and 1912 were all registered in southern suburbs of Melbourne. Matilda died in Mordialloc in 1918, aged 43. Gillespie had a second marriage to Gertrude Lee, who died of peritonitis months after the ceremony in 1921. He married again in 1923 to Elsie Watson; a son Kenneth, was born. Most of the nine Gillespie boys worked and made their mark in the Melton district, mostly as farmers, but amongst their ranks were a contractor, and a musician for local dances.¹³

Gillespie had a bore put down to supply additional water. Domestic water was supplied by rainwater tanks supplemented by the borewater. Following the construction of the bore and tank, Irwin Gillespie established a poultry farm and vegetable garden on the land. As an egg setter, he erected numerous sheds for fowl and an in-ground incubator for the hatching of chickens. This latter building was constructed about five feet below ground level with double walls on a concrete floor. A lined iron roof completed its construction. A door controlled external draught and pipes let in fresh air. A rack held boxes of eggs with a lined tray underneath to catch the hatched chickens. It is thought that a carbide lighting and heating arrangement was provided to the hatchery but it is not known how the humidity level was maintained.

Gillespie sent boxes of fresh eggs to Melbourne by horse and cart on a weekly basis. Later vegetables grown by his bore irrigation system from the well were included in the weekly loading.

⁹ Shire of Braybrook, *Ratebook*, 1907

¹⁰ Obituary collection – J Bilszta files

¹¹ Leo Tarleton, personal conversation with J Bilszta.

¹² Victorian Register, Births, Death, Marriages; Vertical file, RHSV Collection; Carol Clayton,

personal conversation, 24/1/2002

¹³ Genealogy notes, J Bilszta files

An old railway carriage/s used for storehouse and men's quarters, a stable for the horses, chaff and grain sheds, a small dairy and other sheds completed the major outbuildings.¹⁴ Ratebooks show that by 1930 Gillespie owned and farmed some 396 acres in Rockbank, including allotments 1-6 of Section 18, which included 'buildings'.¹⁵

Gillespie died at Rockbank in 1946 at the age of 78 years, and is buried in Cheltenham cemetery.¹⁶ By this time his original family had moved away from the old home which was left to the widow and youngest son. They sold the property in April 1952 to George Tarleton, farmer, from Toolern Vale, and his wife Elizabeth.¹⁷ George's mother Mary (daughter of Melton midwife Hanna 'Grannie' Watts) had purchased the property opposite (on the north side of Tarleton's Road) under the 1905 Closer Settlement Act, from Taylor's Overnewton Estate. Several photographs of George's late father Digby Tarleton feature in Starr's history of Melton Shire and he is also described in Harry Peck's noted memoirs as a regular supplier to the Newmarket sale yards in the nineteenth century.'¹⁸ The former Overnewton property (a weatherboard house now in very poor condition) was left to George by his mother.

The Tarletons ran the property as a hay and grain producing farm, running sheep and fat lambs on pasture land. In the early years son Leo Tarleton milked cows selling cream to McMahon's at Sunbury. Their children, the late Leo Tarleton and Mary Tolhurst, farmed the Toolern Vale and Rockbank areas until recently. The Tarleton family sold out in the early 1990's, moving their farming activities to Boort. Subdivision activities in the area and the proposed green wedge for the Sydenham-Rockbank area made long term farming a non-viable proposition.¹⁹

The house has been altered in recent years.

History of Underground Tanks

Underground tanks were a typical component of nineteenth century rural properties in Victoria, and illustrate a form of water collection and infrastructure no longer practised.

Provision of a domestic water supply was critical to the establishment of any rural property that was not beside a permanent supply of water. 'The first essential was to secure a reliable water supply. Unless the farm bordered a permanent creek ... the selector had to dig a dam for his animals and a well [sic] for the household supply.'²⁰ Especially in low-rainfall Melton, domestic water storage was critical, and relics of these systems is a key part of the heritage of the Shire. Many underground domestic 'wells' (as they are usually called) around Melton are in fact 'tanks' which, rather than tapping groundwater, were sealed cisterns for the storage of water from the roofs of buildings.

¹⁴ All information notes from conversations with Leo Tarleton, Mary Tolhurst, Lorraine Gillespie, various dates, 2005

¹⁵ Shire of Melton, *Ratebooks*, 1929-30

¹⁶ Victorian Register of Births, Deaths, Marriages.

¹⁷ Melton *Express* 26/4/1952

¹⁸ Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Shire of Melton, nd, c.1985), pp.100-109; also Peck, Harry H, *Memoirs of a Stockman* (Stock and Land Co, Melbourne, 1972), p.123

¹⁹ Mary Tolhurst, personal conversation, August 2005

²⁰ Cannon, Michael, *Life in the Country: Australia in the Victorian Age: 2* (Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978), p.149

Underground tanks became only generally necessary in Australia from the 1850s, when increased population and Crown land sales ensured that many dwellings were unable to locate beside a stream. At the same time, as a result of the goldrushes, the mass introduction into Australia of the new product 'corrugated iron' made it feasible for ordinary people to be able to channel water into the underground tanks from roofs and guttering.²¹ Underground tanks on small properties generally seem to have been located at the rear of the house; this might have enabled the roof runoff from dairy and other nearby farm outbuildings to also feed the tank.

The construction of wells goes back thousands of years, and designs for underground wells and tanks, such as contained in JC Loudon's Encyclopaedia of Agriculture, had been available to English farmers since at least the early nineteenth century.²² These generally advocated cigar shaped cross-sections, with the domed top being mostly underground. This shape was also used in Australia, but on Melton rural properties they do not appear to have been used on early farms. Instead, the early tanks had vertical walls, and no domed covers. Most appear to have been constructed of local stone rather than brick, and without a low wall (as in romantic images of European wells) to ensure safety. Isolation and cost probably meant that they may have been sunk by the property-owners, at least in the case of early small farms. Examples of such tanks on small farms are the former Scarborough and Moloney properties on Mount Cottrell Road (Place Nos.293 and 292) which were constructed of bluestone in the 1850s and 1871, and for which no evidence of a cover remains. In terms of larger early (1850s) properties, Glen Elgin (Place No.39) has a low timber-framed gabled roof, clad in corrugated iron; and the tanks of Tibbermore (Place No.392), Mount Ida (Place No.002) and the Diggers Rest Hotel (Place No.067) both have flat corrugated iron covers on raised stone sides. (These covers, and sides, might have been added later, as gradual modernisation of the tanks was common.)

While domes were advocated in early British architectural literature, they appears to have only begun to be built in Australia in the 1860s. At that time there was a growing realisation of the dangers of uncovered wells and tanks in terms of sanitation, as well as safety. Unclean water could wash into uncovered tanks from dairies, and sometimes from cesspits, and vermin also obtained easy access:

'The typical countrywoman of the early days hardly moved a step from her threshold "to cast away indescribable filth". The contents of chamber pots, vegetable peelings, grease-laden water – all festered around the hut and blended with the nearby latrine to create a "peculiarly offensive" odour which attracted swarms of flies. Sometimes the fluids soaked through the soil into the well [sic], so that the family suffered from an intermittent "low typhoid" fever whose cause they did not suspect.'²³

In 1885 *Martins Home and Farm* described uncovered underground tanks and wells as 'the family rat-trap'.²⁴ 'Common infections of the nineteenth century, such as typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria (which was known to have proved tragically fatal in the case of Melton's Kerr, Moloney and Wood families), tuberculosis and gastro-enteritis, spread rapidly in many country

²¹ Hughes, Trueman, Ludlow, 'Wells and Underground Tanks', prepared for the Heritage Council of NSW (nd), *passim;* Cannon, *op cit*, p.150

²² J.C. Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Agriculture*, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, London, 1826.

²³ Cannon, *op cit*, p.151

²⁴ Cited in Hughes *et al*, *op cit*, p.19.

towns Efficient disposal of human excreta was a major problem.²⁵ The connection between water pollution and public health, in particular diseases like dysentery, typhoid and even cholera were beginning to be appreciated.²⁶

At the same time, technology was contributing to better health. As long as a bucket was necessary to draw water, it was not possible to cover the tops of tanks, or at best only to provide a rudimentary cover. Once a small and reasonably priced pump became available there was no further need for an open tank. The availability of domestic hand-pumps grew in the 1850s, and by 1860 NSW public buildings (schools and railway stations) specified domes as the standard form of construction for tanks.²⁷ It is also highly likely that the increasing access to good quality bricks, professional bricklaying skills, and cement, over the course of the late nineteenth century contributed to the proliferation of covered tanks in places like Melton.

The new tanks were still circular in plan, but constructed of brick, with approximately 9 inches of clay puddle behind the brick wall to keep the tank water-tight. The hemispherical dome, or segment of a dome, was also constructed with bricks. Both the interior of the tank, and the exterior of the dome, were cement rendered according to recommended practice.²⁸ Without internal inspection it is not known whether the cross-section of the tanks typically remained vertical, or cigar-shaped, which were both described in textbooks. Numerous domes in Melton appear to be segmental spheres, rather than hemispheres, and may have spread underneath the surface to a wider diameter tank cylinder, as per the textbooks. The domes were provided with a manhole on top (covered with a concrete cover), of minimum width 16 inches, to provide access for cleaning. Mr Jeff Robinson of Melton West recalls entering the tank on the family farm to repair internal render.²⁹ The opening also enabled the cool water to be used for refrigeration: perishables and jellies (for setting) were lowered into the water in a bucket.³⁰

The only known Australian heritage study of underground tanks (conducted in NSW), claims that they were only superseded by the familiar corrugated iron tanks (on tankstands to provide water pressure) in the 1890s, when 'the galvanised above-ground tank was in widespread use.'³¹ In Victoria however Miles Lewis claims that '*the corrugated iron rainwater tank was manufactured in Melbourne by the later 1850s, and spread very rapidly despite claims that the zinc coating would poison the water.*'³² Anders Hjorth's recollections of Melton in the 1860s state that: '*The water supply was very deficient; a few had iron tanks, and some under-ground ones.*'³³ He may however have been referring to the square plate-metal 'ships tanks' (shipping containers, usually for foodstuffs, that were designed in Britain for recycling in this manner) that are most usually found these days on larger properties, rather than the larger corrugated steel version that became more common. A survey of remaining underground tanks on nineteenth century Melton properties might reveal the extent to which galvanised iron (or steel)

Consultants: David Moloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie (2006) Sera Jane Peters (2007)

²⁵ Cannon, *op cit*, pp.255-6

²⁶ Hughes et al, op cit, pp.19-24

²⁷ *ibid*, pp.32-33

²⁸ Eg, Albrecht, CE, *Measurements and Dimensions of Tanks and Dams* (Melbourne, Arnell and Jackson [1885?]), pp.30-33

 ²⁹ Mr Jeff Robinson, personal conversation, 14/2/2006. This contradicts the Hughes *et al* survey of tanks in NSW, which found that internal render was rare in domestic tanks (pp.55-56).
³⁰ Hughes et al, op cit, pp.32-80.

³¹ Hughes *et al*, *op cit*. (Austral Archaeology also conducted a study of early Chinese wells on the Koorong, South Australia.)

³² Lewis, Miles, *Physical Investigation of a Building: National Trust Technical Bulletin 9.1* (National Trust of Australia, Victoria, 1989).

³³ Hjorth, Anders, 'Recollections of Melton 1861-67', in M&DHS Newsletter, February 2001.

header tanks were used as an alternative. We know that underground tanks continued to be built in the early twentieth century, and that today there are many properties that have both underground tanks (most not in use) and corrugated steel header tanks. As access to hand, petroleum or electric pumps permitted, they may have been used in conjunction.

While domes probably became widespread from the 1860s for domestic use, it cannot be categorically inferred that the absence of a dome means that the tank was built before that time. On the other hand, the presence of a dome does not necessarily mean that the tank was built after this time, as apparently the building of a dome over a tank often took place many years after the original construction.³⁴ The best assumption that can be made in terms of dating tanks is that, water being essential to habitation, they were built at or very soon after the construction of the original dwelling on a site. So in the case of this property, it is most likely that the tank was built c.1906.

Tankbuilders known to have operated in Melton in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include WA Cecil, Tom Collins (c.1890-1913), and Augustus Schebler ('known for his workmanship' according to Collins).³⁵

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Melton Historical Themes: 'Farming'

Known Comparable Examples:

Historical comparison:

The sale of the vast Clarke pastoral estate as small farms in the early twentieth century was a turning point in the history of Melton Shire. Only 24 houses and substantial sites associated with this event now remain. Of these places, heritage citations have been prepared for 11 places, including *Bonnie Doone*. These places are:

Places for which heritage controls are proposed:

Place No.438	House, Bonnie Doon, Rockbank (1906)
Place No.120	House, Gollers Court, Melton Highway Sydenham (1906- 11)
Place No.372	House, 63 Greigs Rd, Rockbank (c.1910)
Place No.360	House, Mount Cottrell Homestead, Rockbank (c.1910)
Place No.407	House, 1/6 Judd Court, Rockbank (c.1910): one of six houses on Clarke Estate reputedly by the same builder (c.1910)

³⁴ Hughes *et al, op cit*, p.3

³⁵ Robinson, *op cit*; also Tom Collins memoirs, part of which were reproduced in the M&DSH Newsletter of December 2000.

Place No.237	House, 2120 Ryans Road, Melton: one of six houses on Clarke Estate reputedly by the same builder; with scarce hand-pump still attached to underground tank (c.1914)
Place No.457	House (former Casey), Water Reserve Road, Rockbank
Place No.102	House, Arrunga (early 20C)
Place No.075	House, 2-180 Davis Road, Diggers Rest (c.1914).
Place No.152	House, Plumpton Park, Diggers Rest (c.1922)
Place No.103	House (Tyquins), 932 Holden Road, Diggers Rest (1931)

Places for which heritage controls are not proposed:

Place No.084	House, 219 Diggers Rest – Coimadai Road, Diggers Rest
Place No.470	House, Beattys Road, Rockbank, much altered
Place No.401	House, Fairview Park, 686 Leakes Road, Rockbank (1905-08)
Place No.315	House, Beatty's Road, Rockbank (early 20C)
Place No.456	House, Water Reserve Road, Rockbank (c.1900-10, 1960s)
Place No.299	House, Penlee Farm, Mount Cottrell Road, Mount Cotterell
Place No.348	House, Kintbury, 318-386 Faulkners Road, Mount Cotterell
Place No.452	House, Stoneleigh, Troups Road, Tarneit
Place No.453	House, Camelot Lodge, 230 Troups Road, Rockbank
Place No.371	House, 405 Greigs Road, Rockbank
Place No.107	Trees, Holden Road, Diggers Rest: large avenue of cypress trees, remains of <i>Lyndhurst Lodge</i> .
Place No.095	Outbuilding, bluestone blacksmith, Finches Road, Melton; date 1913 inscribed.
Place No.344	Ruinous house near Kororoit Creek, ruinous, concrete.

Most surviving Clarke estate places are located in the centre and north of the Shire, in the Parishes of Kororoit and Holden. In the southern parishes of Derrimut and Pywheitjorrk, which were vast Clarke landholdings, only eight places survive, two of which are recommended for heritage controls.

Architectural comparison:

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Bonnie Doone at 339-365 Tarletons Road, Rockbank may be compared with other similar timber Federation styled houses in the Melton Shire including:

- *Stoneleigh*, 196 Sinclairs Road (Place No.435). An altered example of this Federation stylistic type, *Stoneleigh* is asymmetrically composed and features hipped and gable roof forms, and a return bullnosed verandah. The roof forms are clad in deep red painted galvanised corrugated steel. Early face brick chimneys with corbelled tops adorn the roofline and there are modest eaves. A flat roofed verandah porch and door opening, and some corner windows have been introduced.
- Main house at *Cornwell Park Stud*, Diggers Rest –Coimadai Road, Toolern Vale (Place No.018). This house has also been altered and extended, and features a prominent elongated gable roof form that traverses the site, with a substantial gable that projects towards the rear and a minor verandah gable that projects towards the front and continues along the side and towards the rear. Most of the roof forms are clad in deep red corrugated Colorbond, although the gabled verandah that extends along the side and to the rear is clad in early slate tiles. Two prominent, face brick, strapped and corbelled chimneys adorn the roofline and there are modest eaves. The dwelling features early timber verandah posts with projecting capitals and decorative solid timber curved valances and there is also a rectangular bay window.

Bonnie Doone is therefore a representative example of this Federation style type in the Melton Shire. Compared with the examples above, the main house at *Cornwell Park Stud* may be more substantial, but *Bonnie Doone* is more intact.

Condition:

Good

Integrity:

Substantially intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	No
Internal Alteration Controls:	No
Tree Controls:	No
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	Yes – stable/dairy; underground tank, dry stone walls,
	to the south and east of the house.