

Heritage Overlay No.: 120
Citation No.: 460
Place: House, 1957-1963 Western Highway

Other Names of Place: N/A
Location: 1957-1963 Western Highway, Rockbank.
Critical Dates: Construction: c.1895
Existing Heritage Listings: None
Recommended Level of Significance: Local



Statement of Significance:

The house at 1957-1963 Western Highway, Rockbank, is significant as a moderately intact example of an unassuming Edwardian style. Built c.1895 probably for George Missen, the house has experienced some alterations and additions, but the original design qualities are clearly discernible.

The house at 1957-1963 Western Highway, Rockbank, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). Although altered and extended, it still demonstrates original design qualities of an unassuming Edwardian style. These qualities include the shallow pitched hipped roof form, together with the minor gable and skillion verandah form that project towards the road. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the asymmetrical composition, single storey height, horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, lapped galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding, modest eaves, decorative gable infill (panelling and timber battening), timber framed

doorway with highlight, timber framed double hung window under the verandah, bank of three timber framed casement windows with highlights above, and the window hood supported by timber brackets.

The house at 1957-1963 Western Highway, Rockbank, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, H1). It is associated with the Missen family, prominent Rockbank early settlers, in particular George Missen, and his son Thomas George Missen. It is also one of relatively few allotments of land in the Shire released under the Selection Act, and one of few remaining early houses in Rockbank.

Overall, the house at 1957-1963 Western Highway, Rockbank is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The house at 1957-1963 Western Highway, Rockbank, is situated on a small domestic allotment and has a modest front setback. The front has a row of mature Cypresses that may have previously formed a hedge. The remainder of the front is rudimentary, with grassed areas, concrete pedestrian path and small perimeter plantings and trees. The front is bound by a timber picket fence, approximately 1300 mm high.

The asymmetrical, single storey, horizontal timber weatherboard, unassuming Edwardian styled house is characterised by a shallow pitched hipped roof form, together with a minor gable and skillion verandah that project towards the road. These roof forms are clad in lapped and green-painted galvanised corrugated steel. Modest overhangs are features of the eaves.

Early features of the design include the decorative gable infill (panelling and timber battening), timber framed doorway with highlight, timber framed double hung window under the verandah, bank of three timber framed casement windows with highlights above, and the window hood supported by timber brackets. The cladding of the hood is in poor condition.

The front verandah appears to have been altered and is supported by introduced timber posts with a green mesh screen at the front. The house also has been extended at the side, with the provision of a narrow gable.

History:

The house is situated on Crown Allotment 1, Section 5, Parish of Kororoit, on the east corner Troups Road North, Rockbank. The allotment was one of three alienated under a Selection Act to a W Pratt, who obtained title to it in 1874.

Ratebooks show that the site was owned by George Missen, son of the Rockbank pioneer George Missen, by the 1890s. George Missen senior, who had three sons and five daughters, had acquired land in the vicinity when the Rockbank Farmers Common had opened for selection c.1867. This land had previously been used as a common by neighbouring farmers, who were permitted to graze stock there in proportion to the number of acres they cultivated. Thus the appearance of the 'dread disease pleuro pneumonia on these Crown Lands there in 1864 had been a major cause of concern.

Early Melton settler Anders Hjorth recalled that a day or two before the Lands Board met to determine who would obtain the land, there was a great influx of would-be selectors from different parts of Victoria, and even South Australia. 'They came in all sorts of conveyances, a

good many in covered wagons'; the 'excitement was intense'.¹ George Missen was one of those South Australians fortunate enough to obtain a Rockbank selection in the Lands Board's ballot.

George had three sons and five daughters, and was on the committee of the New Cambridge (Rockbank) school which opened in October 1868, no doubt to cater for the selectors' children. He later obtained a publicans licence and built the Rose and Crown hotel (which remains as the Caravan Park office). Thereafter the name Missen was prominent amongst Rockbank landholders and farmers for generations. Daughters also married into other families, such as Radford, who were to become part of the farming history of the Shire.

George senior died in the Rose & Crown hotel in 1883, and George junior, then his son Willie continued to operate the establishment for a period afterwards.

Family memorialist Mary Missen records that George junior (her uncle) sold the 'paddock' in front of his brother Thomas' house in the 1880s land boom.² The opening of the Ballarat railway through Rockbank in the early 1880s coincided with the land boom, and good prices were being offered by Melbourne speculators. Of George senior's three sons, only Thomas didn't move to Melbourne after selling land at these prices. George junior 'did well' out of the boom, at one time keeping the Metropole Hotel in Bourke Street Melbourne.³

An 1892 map shows the owner of the allotment on which the house is built as 'G Missen'.⁴ Although G Missen does not appear in the Shire of Braybrook ratebooks for this district in 1891-93,⁵ by 1894 he is shown as the owner of 215 acres 2 roods and 18 perches which were Crown Portions 1-3 of Section 5, Parish of Kororoit, the same land that had been owned by Pratt in the 1870s (less the land since taken for the railway line). No house is recorded on the site. However, by the following year, 1895-96 and in all ratebooks thereafter, this property is listed as including a 'house'. In that year the property was leased out to Charles Gibney, of Rockbank, as part of several thousand acres of property he owned or leased in Rockbank at this time. Gibney continued leasing the property (it is doubtful that he lived in the house) until it was again in the possession of George Missen by 1899.⁶ In 1901 the property was valued at £107.⁷

By 1915-16 the property had been subdivided, and the western part described as 'House and 109 acres', was now owned by a Miss V Block, and valued at £50. The house was now occupied by 'Thomas George Missen'.⁸ By the 1920s, the (by now) Shire of Melton ratebooks indicate that 'Thomas George' Missen (to distinguish him from his uncle and cousin), 'farmer', occupied some 292 acres 'and buildings' which included allotments 1-3 in Section 5 (the original c.215 acres). It is not clear whether he owned this property. By 1929 the property appears to have been owned by a Mrs M Malteira (?), who may have been the original Miss Block. TG Missen was also in possession of an additional 360 acres of land nearby.⁹ By 1933

¹ Anders Hjorth, 'Recollections of Melton 1861-67', in Melton & District Historical Society Newsletter, April 2001, pp.2-3

² Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Melton Shire Council, nd), p.115.

³ Alex Cameron, 'Melton Memoirs' (Melton & District Historical Society), p.3

⁴ SLV Shire Map Series: 821A (1892)

⁵ Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1890-91.

⁶ Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1895 - 1901.

⁷ Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1900-1901.

⁸ Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1915-16

⁹ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1924-25, 1929-30

TG Missen is listed as the owner of the original allotments 1-3, Section 5, as well as the abutting allotment 1, Section 16, Parish of Pywheitjorrk, an area of c.283 acres.¹⁰

A local record of the district notes that the house was ‘where Frank and Reg Missen’s father lived; he farmed it and was a very keen race horse follower’.¹¹ This accords with the description of Thomas George Missen by Mary Missen in her family record. She describes him as having been a ‘keen sportsman and lifetime owner, trainer, and driver of trotting horses’. The ‘grand old man’ drove sulkies until in his late 70s, and continued his interest in the horses right up to his death in the Footscray Hospital. Starr’s history of Melton includes a large photographic portrait of him.¹²

The (imperfect) historical record then indicates that the house was built in 1895, although its architectural style definitely appears to be later than this. Other explanations include the possibility that the ‘house’ referred to in the ratebooks was another house somewhere else on Allotments 1-3, Section 5, or else that it is a replacement of an earlier house. However, the ratebooks don’t mention an house on the site earlier than 1895, so while this is not impossible (given the vagaries of the ratebooks), there does not appear to have been an earlier house. Regarding the possibility of another house elsewhere on the site, no other house appears on a 1916 map of the area.¹³ So it is possible (although unlikely) that the present house was built and an earlier one was removed between the years 1895 and 1916.

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘Pastoral’, ‘Farming’

Comparable Places in Shire of Melton:

Historically, the house is one of only nine known surviving places in the Shire associated with the Selection Acts. At least 113 Selection Act allotments were allocated in the Shire, in the Parishes of Kororoit (65) and Yangardook (48).

Selection Act places for which heritage overlay controls are proposed in this study:-

Place No.061	Former McGuiness Cottage, Blackhill Rd (c.1860s)
Place No.460	No.? Western Highway (c.1895).
Place No.462	2341 Western Highway (1898).
Place No.009	Chapmans Road, Paines (c.late 1860s-1892, c.1890?)
Place No.144	‘Mt Kororoit Farm’, stone cottage; important dry stone wall context (late 1860s)
Place No.457	Water Reserve Road, Rockbank (c.1900, c.1913)
Place No.041	Hjorth dam etc (no dwelling; see also dams)

¹⁰ Shire of Melton Ratebooks, 1924-25, 1933-34

¹¹ Albert Evans, ‘From the early settlers to the 1969 fires’ (manuscript) site 114

¹² Starr, J, *op cit*, p.118

¹³ Army Ordnance Map, Sunbury 1916.

Selection Act places for which heritage overlay controls are not proposed in this study:-

Place No.316 Fulham Park (much altered but locally prominent bluestone)

Place No.315 House, 1232 Beattys Road (much altered)

Architecturally, the house off the Western Highway, Rockbank, is a representative rudimentary example of an Edwardian style in the Melton Shire. Other examples include:

- Toolern Park homestead, 1658 Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road (Place No.020). Built in c.1911, this dwelling appears to be more intact than the house of the Western Highway. It features a similar hipped roof form with projecting gable at the front, but also a return verandah supported by timber posts. There are timber framed double hung tripartite windows. This dwelling is of a similar rudimentary character and appearance.
- House, 2-200 Porteous Road (Place No.064). This dwelling is more modest in scale, with a hipped roof form and a projecting minor gable and skillion verandah at the front. The dwelling may have been relocated to this site and overall, it shares a similar rudimentary character and appearance.
- House, 685 Bulmans Road (Place No.007). This Edwardian dwelling appears to largely intact although its overall roof composition is more similar to the dwelling at 786 Blackhill Road. It features a more steeply pitched hipped roof form, and projecting minor gable and verandah at the front clad in red painted galvanised corrugated steel. The verandah is supported by early timber posts and has an early timber verandah fretwork valance and brackets. Overall, the character and appearance is similarly rudimentary.
- House, 895 Exford Road (Place No.276). This house also appears to have been altered, including the front skillion verandah and the front windows. The composition of roof forms is similar to the house off the Western Highway, although the roof forms are more steeply pitched. The dwelling has a similar rudimentary Edwardian character and appearance.

Possibly the most intact example of an Edwardian or Federation style in the Melton Shire constructed in horizontal timber weatherboards is the house at 111 Davis Street (Place No.75). It has a central steeply pitched hipped roof form and projecting front and side gables linked by a return broken back verandah. The verandah valance, timber framed casement windows arranged in banks and at the corner under the verandah, face brick multi-corbelled chimneys, gable infill and galvanised corrugated steel roof cladding represent the intact fabric. The dwelling at 111 Davis Street is also of higher design quality.

Condition:

Fair

Integrity:

Moderately intact

Recommendations:

Recommended for inclusion in the Melton Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.
Recommended Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls:

External Paint Controls:	<i>No</i>
Internal Alteration Controls:	<i>No</i>
Tree Controls:	<i>No</i>
Outbuildings and/or Fences:	<i>No</i>