

Heritage Overlay No.: 122

Citation No.: 462

Place: House, 2341-2421 Western Highway

Other Names of Place:	N/A
Location:	2341-2421 Western Highway
Critical Dates:	Built 1898
Existing Heritage Listings:	None
Recommended Level of Significance:	LOCAL



Statement of Significance:

The house at 2341-2421 Western Highway, Rockbank, is significant as a moderately intact example of an unassuming Late Victorian style.

The house at 2341-2421 Western Highway, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D.2). Although altered, the house demonstrates some original design qualities of an unassuming Late Victorian style. These qualities include the hipped roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel, together with the face brick chimney and narrow eaves. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical composition, single storey height,

horizontal timber weatherboard wall cladding, front verandah supported by turned timber posts, central timber framed doorway and the timber framed double hung windows.

The house at 2341-2421 Western Highway, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2) as one of few early houses remaining in Rockbank, and is prominently situated on the Western Highway. It is also one of relatively few allotments in the Shire released under the Selection Acts. It also has significance for its association with the Pitson family, an early family in the district.

Overall, the house at 2341-2421 Western Highway is of LOCAL significance.

Description:

The house at 2341-2421 Western Highway, Rockbank, has a large front setback comprising an open grassed area with perimeter plantings and some exotic trees. There are also wide side setbacks.

The symmetrical, single storey, horizontal weatherboard, unassuming Late Victorian styled house is characterised by a hipped roof form, together with a skillion verandah that projects at the front. These roof forms are clad in lapped galvanised corrugated steel. An early face brick chimney with a corbelled top adorns the roofline. Narrow overhangs are features of the eaves.

A feature of the design is the front verandah. It appears to have replaced an earlier verandah in this location. It is supported by introduced turned timber posts and there is a recent timber verandah floor.

The symmetry of the design is accentuated by the early central timber framed doorway that is flanked by early timber framed double hung windows.

The additions are largely to the rear of the building and include a 1940-50s skillion kitchen/dining room and the opening out of two rooms to make a larger lounge room. The interior alterations include the lowering of the ceiling of the loungeroom, and significant alterations to the fireplace surrounds. The front 3 rooms retain early features and arrangement.

History:

The house is situated on Crown Allotment 4, Section 3, Parish of Kororoit, on the south side of the Western Highway Rockbank. The Rockbank State School is also situated on this allotment. This allotment was alienated under a Selection Act to an R. Smith, who obtained title to its c.103 acres in February 1874.

The land had previously been near the centre of the Rockbank 'farmers common',¹ the neighbouring farmers being 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.'² It was opened for selection c.1867.

¹ Bob Macdonald, 'History of Melton', typescript, October 1969, p.6

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

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’.³ Smith was fortunate enough to obtain a selection in the Lands Board’s ballot, when it met in Bacchus Marsh to allocate the sites.

Mr Smith donated a one acre site for the new Rockbank school (New Cambridge, No.919).⁴ Mary Missen recounted that it was built of bluestone carted by the local people.⁵ The Selection had brought large new families to the area, and the school was well attended.

One of these belonged to George Missen, who acquired the property to the east and south of Smith’s property (some 152 acres), and another 224 acres in the same Section.⁶ He later opened the Rose & Crown hotel at Rockbank.

Smith may have had to live on the site as part of the Selection conditions, but it is not known whether any evidence of such a house remains on the site. By the 1880s good prices were being offered for Rockbank land, and Melbourne speculators, fired by the land boom, looked to buy land near new railway lines such as that which reached Rockbank in the early 1880s. In 1891 Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks show that Robert Missen was in leasing the c.99 acres that was the balance of Crown Portion 4, Section 3, Parish Kororoit. Robert Missen lived on the north side of Beatty’s Road near the Rockbank Inn and farmed an additional 294 acres in Rockbank at the time. The owner of CP 4 Section 3, which was valued at £35, was John Turner, and there was no house on the site. The adjacent property was owned by Joseph Missen and farmed by Walter Missen.⁷ Thomas Missen (senior) owned most of the balance of this Section. A 1892 confirms that ‘J Turner’ owned the site.⁸

By 1894 Edward Pitson, ‘farmer’ of ‘Mt Cottrell’, was the owner of the site of c.99 acres.⁹ There was no house recorded on the site until, in 1897-98, a ‘hut’ is recorded on the site, and Pitson had moved to ‘Rockbank’. The following year - 1898-99 - records a ‘house’ on the site for the first time.¹⁰ The 1900-01 Braybrook Ratebook records the house and 99 acres being occupied by Edward Hall Pitson, and valued £25.

In 1916 EH Pitson ‘farmer’ was still living in the house and 99 acres, whose value had risen to £40. The property was valued at £64 in 1925 and had declined by 1930 to £56.¹¹ By 1934 EH Pitson was still living on the property, which had decreased slightly in area (perhaps as the school increased in size).

A ‘J Pitson’ - a young man - appears in a photograph of a Rockbank picnic in Starr’s history of the Shire.¹² Ratebooks show that a William Pitson, and Mary Pitson (whose occupation was

³ *loc cit*

⁴ Macdonald, *loc cit*.

⁵ Starr, J, *Melton: Plains of Promise* (Melton Shire Council, nd), p.117.

⁶ Parish Plan, Parish of Kororoit. (It is possible that some of this land was selected by a son George).

⁷ Shire of Braybrook Ratebook, 1890-91

⁸ SLV Shire Map Series, 821A (1892)

⁹ Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1892-93, 1894-95

¹⁰ Shire of Braybrook Ratebooks, 1896-1900.

¹¹ Shire of Braybrook and Melton Ratebooks, 1915-1934.

¹² Starr, *op cit*, p.120

‘home duties, and was probably his wife), had acquired blocks on the Exford Estate in the early twentieth century.¹³

Thematic Context / Comparative Analysis:

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: ‘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 McGuinness Cottage, Blackhill Rd (c.1860s)
Place No.460	No.1957-1963 Western Highway (c.1895).
Place No.462	2341-2421 Western Highway (1898).
Place No.009	152-176 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)

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 is a typical example of a Late Victorian style, the design quality of the dwelling is unassuming. This appears to represent a common design quality throughout the Shire. Other comparable dwellings include:

- House, Leakes Road, Rockbank (Place No.403). Although altered with an introduced verandah and a carport at the side, this house shares a similar hipped roof form, scale and construction.
- Hickey, 30 Hickey Road, Melton (Place No 288). A predominantly intact example, this house features a hipped roof form and a projecting front verandah with early timber fretwork valance (some components of the valance are missing however) and early timber posts.

¹³ Shire of Melton Ratebook, 1933-34

- House, 1180 Exford Road, Exford (Place No 274). Another timber example of the type with a hipped bullnosed front verandah that has been altered. Only one of the early turned timber posts survive.
- House, 161 Bulmans Road, Melton South (Place No 174). A similarly constructed and designed dwelling, the front verandah has also been altered, with introduced timber posts and aluminium valances and brackets.
- House, 1374 Gisborne-Melton Road (Place No 030). A similarly unassuming Late Victorian example, the verandah has also been altered.
- House, 911 Melton Highway, Sydenham (Place No 127). A more intact example of the Late Victorian type, although of unassuming design quality.
- House, 32 O’Neills Road, Melton (Place No 230). A less intact example of the Late Victorian type, the building features a similar hipped roof form, although the front verandah is bullnosed. The front windows have been altered.

Condition:

Good

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>