



Alex Miller Memorial Homes 324-332 Ryrie Street

History

The Alexander Miller Memorial Homes are represented throughout Victoria but commenced in Geelong around 1909. For this complex, architects, Laird & Buchan received successful tenders from Tingate Brothers to build 'cottage houses' for £1230; the contract was signed in November 1914. In July 1915 the 'board of control' of the Miller Trust called for applications for the new houses in Ryrie Street, achieving results one month later.¹

Miller (1842-1914) was born in Scotland, the son of a farmer. In 1928 memories of Miller were recited in the local press:

In the seventies in a drapers shop in Moorabool street, Geelong, a young man was making an indelible mark on the minds and memories of all classes of people...in his master's shop. Elderly women speak today of the kindly attention and obliging service of young Alex Miller. Quick at his work, keenly observant of human nature, and rapidly increasing his knowledge of his trade, he was always thoughtful of his customers requirements...Gradually Miller extended his business into the country centres and his name became a household word for fair and honourable trading throughout the north-east of Victoria and its Goulburn valley.²

Miller's homes were intended for the elderly who had no other means of support. His projects (1909-) began

before his death and his aims were inspired by the dearth of any old age pension until c1900.³

Description

Differing from the Bungalow style and pavilion form of the later complexes, this red brick and stucco building occupies a prominent triangular corner site. Underscoring this fact, the Edwardian Freestyle design features a slender tower after the precedent of other benevolent complexes such as the Haimes Memorial Homes in McKillop Street. The free treatment and ornament have led some to believe that this was another Robert Haddon design consultancy to Laird & Buchan.

External Integrity

Generally original.

Streetscape

A major corner element in an Edwardian and late Victorian era residential streetscape.

Significance

Architecturally distinctive among both the Miller Homes examples and other forms of Edwardian multi-unit housing in the State. As a building form it is rare and, with the

1 NOW 22.7.15, 26.8.15; GHRC Buchan Laird & Buchan contract book 12.13

2 W R Lang, Alexander Miller- the man, *Investigator* 9.86 p.95f

3 *ibid.*

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study
Significant Sites

other benevolent homes in Geelong provides an unusual architectural theme for the city.

Historically, another example of privately funded benevolent housing arising from and expressive of the government policies of the period towards old-age care.