

Significance

Architecturally, atypical wall materials for this city and provision of a look-out makes this house locally distinctive as well as achieving streetscape reinforcement from its neighbour. Historically, of interest as one of a group of comfortable residences which were constructed on the slight rise facing the river and near the established residence formerly owned by James MacMeikan (31 Somerville Road).

**Airlie House, later The Elms,
31 Somerville Road**

History

Industrialist James MacMeikan acquired this site in later 1872 after a series of dealings arising from Andrew Rodgers' three acre grant purchased in 1856 for £20¹. No evidence exists of Rodger's occupation of the site or Rodgers himself: one A. Rodgers (or Rogers) being an engine fitter at Sandridge during the period².

Rodgers sold his land, in 1859, to Footscray councillor, factory-owner and solicitor, Stephen Stephens, who immediately mortgaged it for the purchase price of £400³. His business address was in Queen Street and his residence at Footscray⁴. After a number of similar deals, his mortgage was transferred to J.S Ogilvy, in 1868, until finally his equity in 'premises' plus £5 was



4-102 31 Somerville Road

- 1 RGO SN7646
- 2 BD. 1868:D1857-70
- 3 *ibid.*: D1863-8
- 4 D1866

transferred to Catherine (John's wife?) Ogilvy in 1872¹. It is likely that Stephens had the house built in 1859, given the series of mortgages which occurred in that year.

Ogilvy was an accountant in Queen Street, Melbourne (sharing offices with Stephen Stephens) and resided in South Yarra. His firm became A. J. Ogilvy & Co. by the early 1870s, J. S. Ogilvy possibly having died in the interim. The firm was now accountants and estate agents and H. Ballantyne was a partner; A.J. Ogilvy resided in Footscray². During the Ogilvy tenure, the property was rated (Nov. 1871) as a stone and wood house with land in Somerville Road, NAV 85 pounds³

Meanwhile MacMeikan had purchased the 3 acre lot for £1400 (previous mortgage in 1865 had been for £900), immediately mortgaging it to H.R.W. Walker and J. Espie as two transactions prior to having the General Law title changed to Torrens in 1875⁴. During MacMeikan's involvement with the property came the relocation to Yarraville, from Flemington, of his Animal Guano and Converting Works with partner James Reid.⁵ MacMeikan commissioned architect, James Donaldson to design a 'large basalt factory' in 1870 followed by Reid commissioning Crouch & Wilson to design his own 'cottage and outbuildings' in 1871 (Whitehall Street)⁶.

By the late 1870s, trustees controlled MacMeikan's estate and leased Airlie to its long-term occupant, the customs officer, Horace Walpole. Around the same time, part of the guano works was sold to the adjoining Cuming Smith & Co. for use in conjunction with their fertilizer works⁷. By 1881 Walpole owned what was described as a 'stone house and land' on the south side of Somerville Road while Ida owned land on the north side and Emma leased fenced land from one Hamilton in Whitehall Street⁸. The Chinese gardener Ah Hoy leased Airlie's northern grounds in 1882-3 while Wal-

pole was appealing against a valuation increase, suggesting improvements were made this year possibly with the income from the market garden rent⁹. Walpole's next property investment was in 1888-9 when a note was entered in the rate book '£250 house' and the valuation rose considerably to £400¹⁰. This may have been a speculative house built on the property, but in Castlemaine Street, which was later leased to Margaret Swallowell.¹¹

Local knowledge has it that Walpole was related to the celebrated 'Gothic' novelist, Horace Walpole (1717-97) who also served as a customs officer of sorts during 1737-8¹². Walpole's son (?) is said to have become a 'film-star', seen in features at the St. George's Theatre c1910-11¹³. Other reports are that the stone walls are some three feet thick¹⁴. More recent occupants have included Frederick Parsons, dating from the 1940-50s¹⁵.

Description

(obscured-inspection required)

Apparently of some age (old chimneys) and once fronting Stephen Street (for good reason given its first owner), this hipped roof stone house is comprised of house and a once detached kitchen (?). The latter still possesses exposed stonework, but the former has been stuccoed over. Both are set well back from Somerville Road with the frontage aptly demarcated by a row of mature (severely pruned) elms.

Streetscape

Unrelated to the streetscape proper but probably the precedent for the later well-to-do households which were established here during the late 19th. and early 20th centuries.

- 1 ibid.
- 2 D1870-2
- 3 RB1871,885
- 4 RGO loc.cit.
- 5 Cuming, *James Cuming an Autobiography*, p14; RB1871, 832
- 6 MUAI
- 7 FFFY p.48
- 8 RB1881. 2463-4
- 9 RB 1883,3200,2510
- 10 RB1889,5050
- 11 RB1900,6192
- 12 Hammerton, *Harmsworth's Universal Encyclopedia* p.7870
- 13 Verbal. FHS
- 14 FHS, Notes on Historical Buildings..., (1969)
- 15 D1945-55



4-103 34 Somerville Road

Significance

Architecturally, expressive of both an early construction date and the basalt construction which distinguishes Footscray from other suburbs. Historically, linked with some of the city's earliest river-front industrialists and the maritime activities (via Walpole) which made Victoria's busiest 19th century port, Williamstown, and its industrial partner, Footscray, a prominent duo in the metropolitan area. Also a possible link exists with the romantic novelist Walpole and a later entertainment form (the cinema) via the Footscray Walpole's progeny.

Tolquhoun House 34 Somerville Road

History

(Refer Colonial Sugar Refinery Co., Whitehall Street).

The Colonial Sugar Refinery Company Ltd. commissioned prominent Melbourne architects, Hyndman & Bates to design this house for their manager, George A. Turner, in 1901¹. This was part of a general housing programme devised for their workforce which eventually replaced the six houses and manager's villa built at the works in 1873-5. Key personnel were needed close to the refinery at all times, eventuating in the construction of this house and many others in the locality². An early photograph (c1909) shows the building much as it is now, with its loggia ground level and flared corner pier.³

Later occupiers were Ashley Cambell, Thomas Steele and Alfred Bloomfield.⁴

1 MUA; RB1900-1,p.136; RB1901-2,p.136

2 see CA 1N,10/8 Cut Paw Paw subdivided in c1917 by CSR as LP 6185, corner Hyde, Somerville and Stephen Streets

3 FFFY

4 D1900-55