
R. C. Church Seminary & Offices 21 Elgin Avenue, Armada



History and Description

This large two-storeyed house with its attractive cast iron verandah trim, now owned by the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation, was built in 1899-1900 by the Victorian Permanent Building Society for Mary Windsor. The residence was let to Thomas Wallace, draper.⁶⁸ This building society, which was associated with the construction of a large number of properties throughout Melbourne's suburbs, was founded in 1865 by James Munro, MLA for North Melbourne and Carlton, and Premier of Victoria.⁶⁹

The house appears to be largely intact and demonstrates grand Italianate architectural detail. The broad facade addressing Elgin Street has a pair of ornate bay windows on each storey, each containing narrow, arched double hung windows. The balcony returns on both sides and is infilled on the southern side. Elegant cast iron columns are paired and bracketed with fine lacework with a few segments missing. The roof is hidden behind a continuous parapet wall, complete with balustrade and frieze. The grand residence is situated on raised foundations with most of the area lawned with occasional established plantings. Later buildings are located to the south-east of the house.

A 1902 MMBW drainage plan shows the Elgin Avenue residence at that time, on the east side of Wynnstey Avenue (the street's earlier name). The property has a long

68. Prahran Rate Book 1899-1900 Windsor Ward No. 8136. Listed as 'New House'.

69. M. Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, p. 242.

drive from stables at the rear and an entrance in Wynnstay Avenue.⁷⁰ Later, during the 1940s, the property became known as Elgin Hall Guest House. From 1958, when it was purchased by the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation, it has had other uses. At first, it was a Hungarian Youth Club Hostel and later an R. C. Church Seminary and Offices.⁷¹

Significance

This intact example of a grand Victorian mansion still located on a large allotment, has state significance for design reasons. It demonstrates the building styles popular among the wealthy in the Prahran district, and is important architecturally for its elaborate decorative treatment and external intactness. The site has local aesthetic significance for its large open space although the early garden features have been removed.

Sources

Cannon, M., *The Land Boomers*, 1986 edn.

City of Prahran Rate Books, Windsor Ward.

City of Prahran Valuers records, Windsor Ward.

MMBW Detail Plan No. 996.

National Trust File No. 4194.

Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that this property be retained at A1 level.

70. MMBW Detail Plan No. 996.

71. City of Prahran Valuers records, Windsor Ward Book 5W.