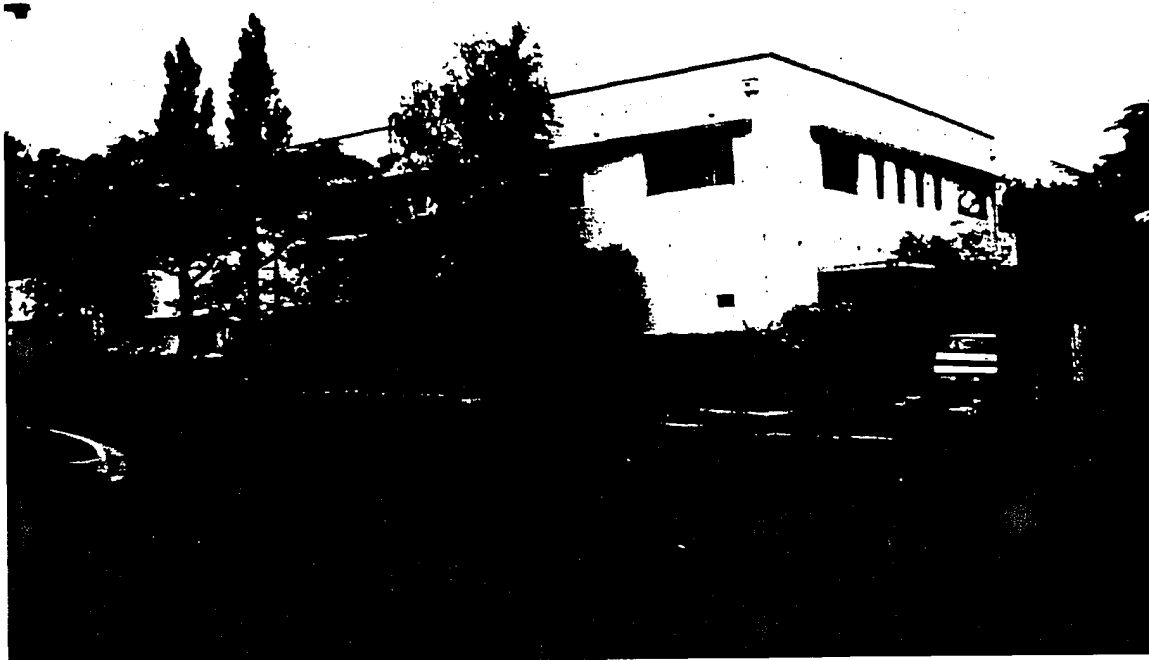


## 55 Lansell Road, Toorak



### History and Description

This two-storey residence, thought to have been designed by Harry Norris<sup>206</sup> was constructed in 1940-41 for Hugh Wallace Smith, sharebroker. It was described in that year as a 16-roomed brick house at 31 Lansell Road, the earlier numbering.<sup>207</sup>

A 1940-41 MMBW drainage plan shows the property on its corner site with a large terrace on the Towers Street side. A garage is incorporated into the east side of the building next to a laundry area. A. Oliver of 383 Wattletree Road, East Malvern, named as agent on this plan was a local builder.<sup>208</sup>

The residence became the home of G. J. Coles, well-known Victorian businessman, from c1946 until his death.<sup>209</sup>

The building's design is geometric in form. Smooth rendered brick walls rise to form a plain parapet, which conceals the flat roof of the basically rectangular structure. The windows, which puncture the walls, are uniform depth but vary in width and placement. A constant sill height and a continuous projecting horizontal hood link the fenestration and provide an appearance of uniformity to the facade. Strips of glass bricks, a popular design feature at this time, are employed and also form a bay to the north of the building. At ground floor level the northern facade curves away to the west creating a roof garden. The 'ocean liner' image is evoked in this form and is reminiscent of the luxurious Burnham Beeches residence in Sassafra, designed by

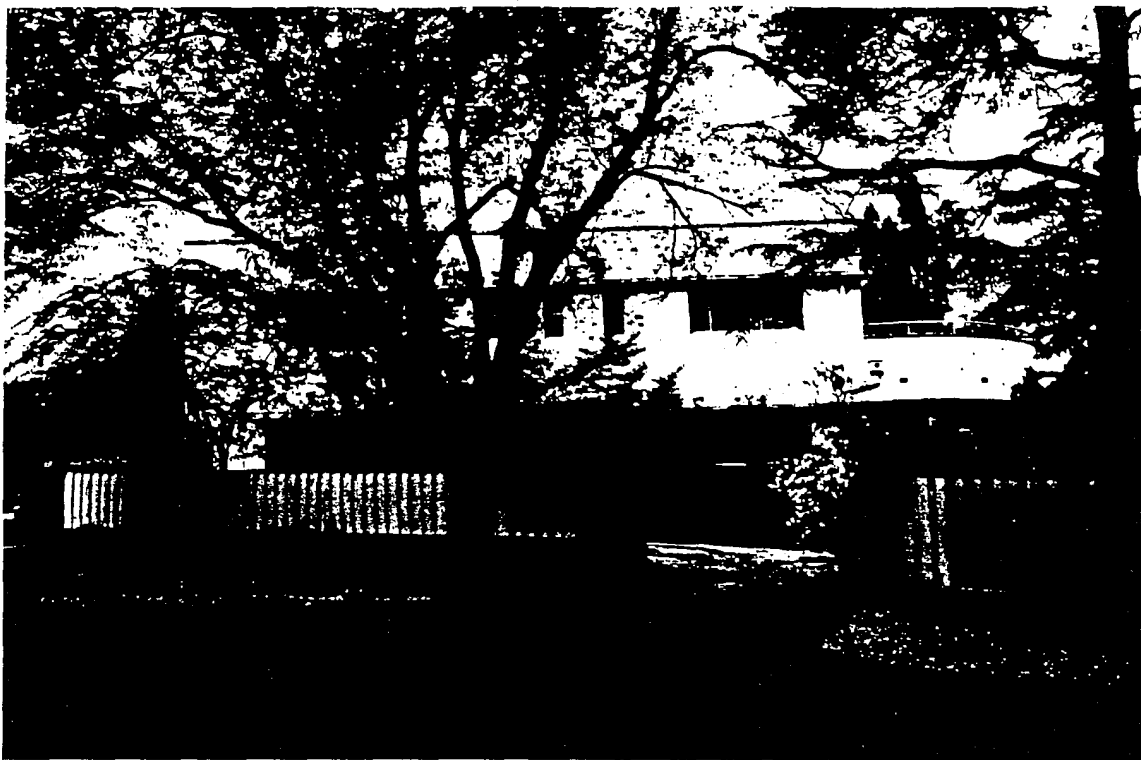
206. John Curtis Pty. Ltd., *Toorak Residential Character Study*

207. Prahran Rate Book 1940-41 Toorak Ward No. 3023.

208. MMBW House Cover No. 194985.

209. Sands & McDougall Directories.

Norris in 1930.<sup>210</sup> The building occupies an irregularly shaped corner block partly bordered by a granite fence, matching the pilasters in the side entrance.



## Significance

This 1940s Toorak residence has state architectural significance as a fine example of the experimentation in geometric forms carried out in Melbourne at this time as a result of the influence of the International style precedent in Europe. The irregularly shaped corner block is partly bordered by a granite fence that matches the pilasters in the side entrance and contributes to the design significance of the site. The house has research value related to its possible association with the architect Harry Norris, one of the major Melbourne practitioners of this style. The residence has state historical importance as the home of the Victorian businessman, G. J. Coles, over a long time.

## Sources

Apperly, R., R. Irving and P. Reynolds *Identifying Australian Architecture*, p. 184.

City of Prahran Rate Books. Toorak Ward.

Curtis, John Pty. Ltd., *Toorak Residential Character Study*, 1992.

Hamann, Conrad, 'Grounds, Romberg and Boyd' in H. Tanner (ed), *Architecture of Australia*, 1981. (Discussion of geometric style).

MMBW House Cover No. 194985.

Sands and McDougall's Directories.

---

<sup>210</sup>. Apperly et al, p.184.

## **Analysis & Recommendations**

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