

Research into Northbrook House, 1257 High Street, Malvern

F.N. 4989

Note for File:

Architect

A search of Miles Lewis' Architects Index failed to discover the name of the architect who designed this building.

Owners and Occupiers, 1889 - 1900's

Donald Munro

The first owner, Donald Munro, auctioneer, didn't ever live in his High Street building, which was occupied 1889-1890 by Robert Sellar, merchant. ⁽¹⁾

Donald was the son of James Munro (1832-1908), businessman, temperance leader and politician, who in the 1880's established the twin institutions of the Federal Bank and the Federal Building Society. ⁽²⁾ In 1886 the Windsor Hotel, (known then as the Grand) was purchased for a temperance hotel by a company in which James Munro was prominent. ⁽³⁾ Munro became Premier and Treasurer of Victoria in 1890. His business concerns were seriously affected by the economic disasters of 1893/94. ⁽⁴⁾

His son Donald, became prominent in the Victorian land boom as a partner of W. L. Baillieu in an auctioneering business. Victoria and its Metropolis in 1888 described the firm as, "one of the largest of its kind in the colony, and being a comparatively young institution, is remarkable for the manner in which it has come to the front.....The character of the business is the entire management and control of auction sales, real estate, brokerage and finance, the extent of which can only be arrived at by reference to their total transactions, which for the year ending 1887 amounted to over three millions.

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- (1) See Rate Book evidence
(2) A.D.B. vol. 5, pp 312-313
(3) See F.N. 423. Could the architect Charles Webb, assoc. with this building, have been involved in the designs of Northbrook House ?
(4) A.D.B. p. 314

In addition to the Collins Street business the firm have branches in all the leading suburbs, also four auctioneers besides Messrs. Munro and Baillieu, who all wield the hammer as occasion requires.⁽⁵⁾

Donald, like his father, was affected by the failure of the land boom. Both Munro and Baillieu made secret compositions in 1892, and soon after their partnership ended. According to Cannon, "Donald Munro retired to the comparative peace of the suburbs with his shattered father, whom he helped to build up a small competency in Armadale - Donald Munro became a local councillor, and in time a member of the Board of Works."⁽⁶⁾

The Melbourne Directories show Donald Munro at Waverley Road, Glen Iris, in the early 1890's and later at Sorrett Avenue, Malvern. His auction room in 1899 was in High Street, Armadale. He was a Malvern Shire Councillor 1890-1893 and 1895-1902 and Shire President 1895-1896.

Robert Sellar, the first occupier, was a merchant, member of the firm McCulloch, Sellars and Co. wool and commission merchants, agents for Lancashire Fire Insurance Co. and Merchants' Marine Insurance Co. with offices in the St. James Buildings.

The Directories show Sellar in High Street, Malvern in 1890. Following the transfer of the ownership of the house to the Federal Bank of Australia in 1893,⁽⁷⁾ Sellar is listed in Alma Road, Caulfield.

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- (5) Victoria and its Metropolis, vol. 2, p. 571
(6) Cannon, p. 256
(7) See Rate Book evidence
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LIST OF SOURCES

A.D.B. Vol. 5
Cannon M, Land Boom and Bust (1972)
Melbourne/Victorian Directories
Miles Lewis Architects Index (Melb. Uni., 1977)
