

Oxonia, 3 Forster Avenue

Architects: presumed Crouch and Wilson

1889: Land only in Jessie St (Forster Ave). John Gourley owner of Glen Iris Park Estate (Mavern Rate Books)

1892: Crouch & Wilson, 114 Elizabeth St. Letting of tenders - erection of villa residence, Glen Iris Park, East Malvern (*Australian Builders and Contractors News* 9.7.1892 - Architects Index)

1892: No. 3. Rose, Frederick. o/o Bk. hse. 8 rms. Oxonia 66'x176' (Malvern Rate Books)

1894-1922: Rose, Frederick, J

1925-35: Sanders, John

1940-60: Knaggs

(Sands & McDougall Directories)

Oxonia was built c1892 for a Mr Frederick J Rose, who made a notable contribution to Melbourne by founding the Victorian School for Deaf Children in St Kilda Road. Frederick Rose came to Australia from Oxford, England, hence the nameplate Oxonia (Latin for Oxford). The nameplate is still the original one. He trained as a cabinet maker in England and after a successful attempt at prospecting he established a building business at Emerald Hill. He established a school for Deaf Children in Peel Street, Prahran before he constructed the present Deaf Institute St Kilda Road in 1866. This was designed by Wilson & Son who it is presumed designed Rose's own house at Forster Avenue. Coincidentally, Wilson's son (Sydney H Wilson), who conducted a separate practice, built 15 Forster Avenue for himself in 1890, and the *Australian Builders and Contractors News* reference coincides with the known construction date and the description of the area. (1)

An attic style late Victorian/early Edwardian residence, this building embodies a number of stylistic characteristics from both eras. The polychrome brick work using Hawthorn bricks with red and cream brick trimmings, the mouldings at impost level running around the front facade of the building (and linking the architraves of the windows and the console brackets at the entry recess) and the double hung windows have a Victorian character to them. However, the steeply pitched complex hip roof with its slating and terracotta ridging and projecting gables and porches and the attic forms create a strong Edwardian character. It is possible that the attic roof was added at a later date, it bearing some resemblance to the work of Ussher and Kemp of the mid 1900s. The chimneys in coloured brick work with terracotta chimney pots also have an Edwardian character by their



irregular placement and differing heights. The verandah has turned timber columns and expressed rafters above the verandah beam, which create further Edwardian features. The house is relatively intact although the verandah decoration is partly missing. The front fence, however, a high face brick structure of a modern character and the wrought iron gates, do not relate to the character of the house itself.

Oxonia is of regional significance as an unusual house of the Victorian and Edwardian transitional style, in which a number of diverse elements are placed together in a relatively ad hoc manner. The unusual front gable attic and adjacent gabled open portico are interesting eclectic elements. It bears some relationship with the equally unusual building at 17 Dundonald Avenue.

1 Research by Malvern Historical Society Inc.

