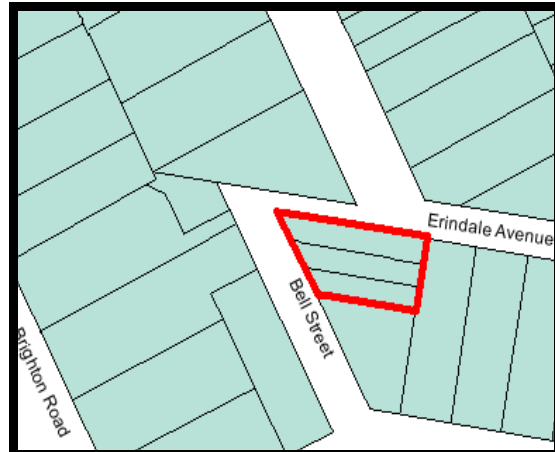


Identifier Houses
Formerly “Melton”, “Bay View” and “Orsett”



Not within a HO area

Address 1-5 Bell Street
RIPPONLEA
Category Residential: row

Constructed 1888
Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

The houses at 1-5 Bell Street, Ripponlea, comprise a row of three detached late Victorian single-fronted gable-roofed weatherboard workmen’s cottages, which were erected during 1888 by (or for) John Reynolds.

How is it Significant?

The houses are of historical and architectural significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

Historically, the houses at 1-5 Bell Street provide evidence of the dense but somewhat limited phase of residential development that occurred in Ripponlea during the prosperous Boom period of the 1880s, concentrated in the relatively small area bounded by Brighton Road, Hotham Street and Hotham Grove.

Architecturally, the houses are significant as a representative and relatively intact example of the single-fronted workmen’s cottage typology. While very common in Melbourne’s inner suburbs in the late nineteenth century (including other parts of the City of Port Phillip such as Port Melbourne and St Kilda), this typology was considerably rarer in Elwood, with only a few comparable clusters known to survive.

Aesthetically, the houses are significant as distinctive elements in this somewhat hidden laneway-like streetscape. Their stepped setbacks, compensating for the angled site boundary to Bell Street, creates a visual effect that sets them apart from the other rows of single-fronted cottages in the area, where the rows of individual facades tend to be in alignment.

Description

The houses at 1-5 Bell Street, Ripponlea, comprise a row of three detached late Victorian single-fronted weatherboard cottages. Occupying narrow sites with a non-perpendicular street boundary, the cottages are set back with their street façades not aligned. Once virtually identical, they have been variously altered. All have pitched roofs, clad in corrugated galvanised steel, with gable ends to the street. Nos 1 and 3 retain plain timber bargeboards with turned finials, and red brick front chimneys with dogtooth capping. These two houses retain verandahs with hipped bullnosed roofs supported on stop-chamfered (No 1) or plain (No 3) timber posts with cast iron lace friezes; the verandah at No 5 has been entirely rebuilt with a flat roof and new posts. Windows have also been altered; only No 3 retains its original timber-framed double-hung sash window with moulded architraves, while No 1 has a pair of inter-war timber-framed windows, and No 5 has a modern full-height window with fixed and awning sashes. All three houses retain front doorways with moulded architraves and fanlights above, and picket fences.

History

Bell Street was part of a modest residential subdivision, gazetted in August 1887, that connected Brighton Road and Hotham Street by newly-formed Hotham Grove (originally Susan Street). The City of St Kilda rate book for 1888 (dated 12 December 1887) records that John Reynolds owned vacant land with a frontage of 64 feet (19.5 metres) to Bell Street, located between smaller allotments on Hotham Grove and Brighton Road, owned by J S Murphy and the eponymous Mrs Bell. Within a year, three houses had been built there, first described in the 1889 rate book (dated 26 November 1888) as three-roomed wood houses, valued at £15. At that time, all three were owned by a Mr Martin, and occupied by Messrs Rose, Dennis and Gordon. For most of the 1890s, James Wallace resided at No 1; with the other two occupied by a succession of short-term tenants, or often listed in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* as 'vacant'. In 1901, when the three houses were occupied by Edwin Scarlett, Mrs Jane Meehan and Charles Hampson, house names began to appear in the directory for the first time. By 1903, the three cottages were conclusively identified as *Melton* (No1), *Bay View* (No 3) and *Orsett* (No 5).

Comparative Analysis

Modest single-fronted worker's cottages of this type were (and generally still are) very common in Melbourne's working-class inner suburbs such as Richmond, Brunswick and Collingwood. Within the City of Port Phillip, rows of such housing still remain in parts of Port Melbourne and St Kilda. In the heritage precincts documented in the *Port Phillip Heritage Review*, Andrew Ward identified numerous areas of comparable timber workers' cottages in St Kilda, including unspecified side streets off Charnwood Road (down the hill from Wellington Street), and the area on the east side of Brighton Road (to the north and east of the public buildings and railway). The latter evidently includes Camden Street (east side only), Lynnot Street, Duke Street, Nightingale Street, Gibbs Street, Rosamund Street, Marlborough Street and parts of Pakington Street, where rows of single-fronted timber worker's cottages remain, mostly still in a relatively intact condition.

This housing typology, however, is less common in the eastern and southern extremities of the municipality, where residential development was less intense during the Boom period of the 1880s. In East St Kilda, for example, a rare intact example survives in Chusan Street (recently documented as a heritage precinct), while several others known to have existed (eg Young Street, Jervois Street, King Street and Leslie Street) have largely disappeared. In Elwood, this sort of housing is even rarer; the MMBW map (c.1897) shows only a few isolated pockets in Bell Street, Moy Street (now Mason Avenue) and Moore Street. All of these, however, still remain.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme

References

Lodged Plan No 1622, dated 31 August 1887.

City of St Kilda Rate Book. South Ward.

Sands & McDougall Directory.

