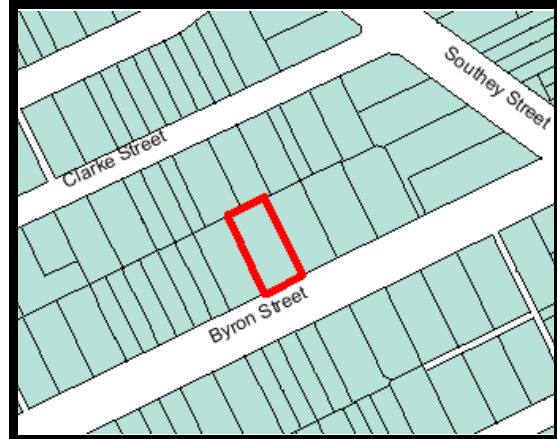


**Identifier** "Ravensmead"  
**Formerly** unknown



Not within a HO area

**Address** 38 Byron Street  
ELWOOD

**Category** Residential: detached

**Constructed** 1885

**Designer** Unknown

## Significance

### *What is Significant?*

The house at 38 Byron Street, Elwood, is a single-storeyed double-fronted Victorian block-fronted hip-roofed block-fronted timber villa, erected in 1885 by F J Douglas, a Caulfield builder, as part of a speculative housing estate bounded by John, Mitford, Clarke and Tennyson Streets. The house is set well back on a slightly elevated site, enhanced by a landscaped setting with palm tree and Italian cypresses.

### *How is it Significant?*

The house is of historical, architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### *Why is it Significant?*

Historically, the house at 38 Byron Street provides rare evidence of the dense but somewhat limited phase of residential development that occurred in Elwood during the prosperous Boom period of the 1880s, concentrated in the relatively small area bounded by Mitford Street, Clarke Street/Mason Avenue, Brighton Road and Scott Street. Erected in 1885, this house is notably early in this context, predating, by several years, subsequent Boom-period development in nearby John Street, Moore Street, Rainsford Street and elsewhere.

Architecturally, the house is significant as a representative and notably intact example of a double-fronted asymmetrical timber villa, which is a relatively rare type amongst the surviving late nineteenth-century building stock in this part of Elwood. Aesthetically, the house is significant for its fine and intact decorative detailing, its landscaped context with palm tree and conifers, and its prominent location on an elevated site, all of which contribute to its fine streetscape presence.

## Description

The house at 38 Byron Street is a single-storeyed double-fronted Victorian timber villa on a slightly elevated site. It has a hipped roof, clad in slate, with eaves brackets and a pair of painted rendered chimneys with moulded caps. The asymmetrical street frontage is block-fronted (atypically without expression of vertical joints) with conventional weatherboarding to the sides. The elevated front verandah, reached by a short flight of timber steps, has a hipped corrugated galvanised steel roof, supported on stop-chamfered timber posts with moulded capitals and a cast iron lace frieze with matching balustrade. Windows have timber-framed double-hung sashes and moulded architraves; the window to the projecting bay on the right side has a pressed metal awning with fringed valance. The setting of the house is enhanced by a large palm tree and a pair of Italian cypress trees flanking the central pathway. The timber picket fence is sympathetic but not original.

## History

This site formed part of an unnamed 63-lot subdivision bounded by Mitford, Southey, John and Clarke streets, gazetted in June 1885. The new estate was bisected by that part of Byron Street between Mitford and Southey streets, which first appeared in the 1886 rate book (dated 25 January 1886), listing 10 five-roomed houses owned by F J Douglas, a Caulfield builder. His clearly speculative project comprised five timber houses on the south side of Byron Streets (Lots 32 to 36) and, on the north side, three timber houses (Lots 23 to 25), one brick house (Lot 26) and a brick and timber house (Lot 27), the last listed in the rate book as 'unfinished'. Only six of these villas were tenanted at that time; the house at No 38 (then Lot 24) was one of them, occupied by Mrs Agnes Boake, domestic duties. She was still there at the end of 1887, by which time most of Douglas' houses in Byron Street had been acquired by the AD&M Bank.

Subsequent rate books reveal a succession of short-term tenants, including Walter McNicholl, secretary (1888-89), Norman Prentice, surveyor (1891), Richard Hore (1893-94) and George Mollison (1895). By that time, the property was designated as 32 Byron Street. Longer-term occupants followed in the early twentieth century, including Miss Violet Hancock, music teacher (c.1905-10) and then Frederick Oulton, who lived there from 1911 until his death in 1954 at the age of 95 years. During this time, the address was renumbered to 38. The house was then occupied by Miss Mary Oulton, schoolteacher, until her own death in 1990.

## Comparative Analysis

Of the ten houses built in this part of Byron Street in the 1880s, the five timber villas on the south side have all been demolished, along with one brick villa (No 32) and one timber villa (No 36) on the north side. Of the three villas now remaining, two have been substantially altered: No 34 was remodelled in the inter-war period with new multi-paned windows and shutters, a reclad roof, and a new flat-roofed verandah with roughcast rendered piers, while No 40 was altered in the post-war period, with metal-deck roof, steel-framed windows, slate cladding and new verandah.

More broadly, the house can be considered as a relatively rare example in the area of a Victorian double-fronted timber villa with an asymmetrical façade. Most comparable double-fronted villas in Elwood were of masonry, and the lesser number of timber villas more commonly had symmetrical frontages (eg 24-30 John Street, 1 and 17 Clarke Street, and 12 Hotham Grove). In this regard, the house at 38 Byron Street can only be compared with the row of four asymmetrical block-fronted villas at 20-28 Moore Street, Elwood, which are smaller, generally less intact and certainly later in date. Another pair also survives at 7-9 Hotham Grove, Ripponlea, as the only remnant of half a dozen such villas built on that side of the street.

## Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

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

## References

Lodged Plan No 788, dated 12 June 1885.

*Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory*

*City of St Kilda Rate Book*. South Ward.