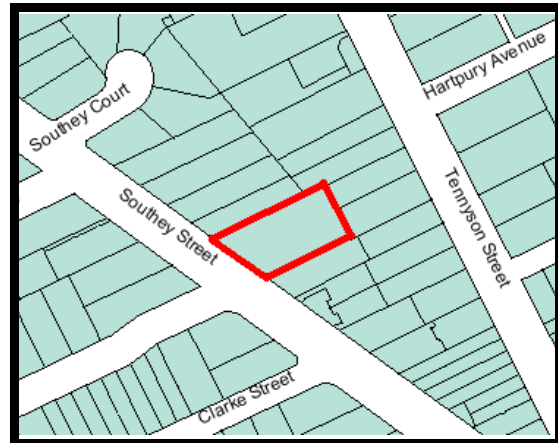


Identifier House
Formerly "Corra-Lynn"



Not within a HO area

Address 54 Southey Street
ELWOOD

Category Residential: detached

Constructed 1872

Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

The house at 54 Southey Street, Elwood, is a large single-storey double-fronted Victorian bichromatic brick villa with an unusually elongated street frontage. Occupying a large allotment (now with a modern block of flats built at the rear), the house was erected in 1872 for Alexander Watt, and subsequently occupied for many years by William Thistlethwaite and, during the twentieth century, by the Durham Family, who apparently remodelled it in the late 1920s.

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 is significant as one of a relatively small number of large residences that were erected in Elwood during the 1870s, a period of development lull that fell between the initial mansion boon of the 1850s and '60s and the Land Boom period of the 1880s.

Architecturally, the house is significant for its unusual plan form, with an elongated double-fronted frontage to Southey Street, and its interesting and eclectic range of detailing including bracketed eaves, arcaded loggia, roughcast render, curved bay window, balustraded parapet and unusually tall chimneys. It is also of significance as notably early use of bichromatic brickwork, which was popularised in Melbourne from the late 1860s by architect Joseph Reed. Aesthetically, the house remains as a distinctive element in the streetscape, enhanced by its siting on a large landscaped allotment with prominent inter-war brick front fence.

Description

The house at 54 Southey Street is a large single-storey double-fronted Victorian bichromatic brick villa on a large allotment. Its unusually elongated street frontage comprises a projecting gabled bay at the left side, and a long recessed wing with verandah that returns to a second gabled bay on the south side. The hipped roof, reclad in metal sheeting, has bracketed eaves, four tall bichromatic brick chimneys with moulded caps, and a section of balustraded parapet above the side bay. Both bays, to front and side, have half-timbered roughcast gable ends with bracketed eaves, and curved bay windows with rendered sills and lintels, timber-framed double-hung sashes, and leadlight highlights. Below the verandah, the street façade has a pair of canted bay windows. The verandah itself comprises a bullnosed corrugated galvanised steel roof, supported on a rendered segmental-arched loggia with capped brick dwarf walling between the piers. The property has a substantial red brick fence along the street boundary, with capped piers and bullnosed coping and wrought iron gates opening onto a bluestone-pitched driveway. At the rear is a double-storeyed skillion-roofed cream brick building containing six flats.

History

The City of St Kilda rate book for 1872 (dated 4 January 1872) records that Thomas Eddington owned unspecified vacant land (valued at £10) on the east side of Southey Street, between two large timber houses owned by the Baldwin and Clark families. By November, when the 1873 rate book was compiled, a six-roomed brick house (valued at £60) had been built there, owned and occupied by Alexander Watt, a clerk. Watt (later listed as a warehouseman) resided there until 1879, when he let it to estate agent William Thistlethwaite. The latter acquired the house by 1881, renaming it *Cora-Lynn* and building brick stables, first mentioned in that year's rate book. Thistlethwaite lived there until his death in 1891, and his widow, Mrs Jessie C Thistlethwaite, remained until 1901. By that time, the address had become 76 Southey Street. The MMBW map, dated around that time, shows the house on its large lot with a small rectilinear masonry outbuilding (presumably the brick stables) at the rear, along the block's north boundary.

Occupants in the early 1900s included Samuel Allen (1901-08) and J M McFarlane (1909-11). In 1912, it was acquired by George Durham, who remained there until his death in 1936. It was during his long tenure that the street address was twice altered: firstly to No 62 (c.1914) and then to No 54 (c.1928). The house was also remodelled during this time; the altered verandah bears the digits 54 on a rendered panel, indicating that renovation occurred after 1928. After Durham died, the house was occupied by his widow, Mrs Lillian Durham, until her own death in 1946, and thence by Gordon Durham (probably their son) until 1950. During the 1950s, the house was occupied by Otto Wachtel, who erected a freestanding block of flats at the rear in c.1958.

Comparative Analysis

The 1870s represent something of a lull in the history of Elwood's residential settlement, when the initial period of mansion construction during the 1850s and 60s had abated, but the Boom period of the 1880s had yet to prompt a resurgence. Consequently, few grand houses were built in Elwood during the 1870s. Examples included *Ravelston* in Tennyson Street (1870), *Whinbank* in Mitford Street (1875; demolished) and *Arranmure*, on the south corner of Brighton Road and Burns Street (1876; demolished). *Corra Lynn* at 54 Southey Street contrasts from the other survivor, *Ravelston* (now 17a Tennyson Street), as it is a sprawling single-storey house on a large allotment, rather than a compact double-storey mansion on a reduced block.

Cora-Lynn also represents a notably early use of bichromatic brickwork, which was popularised in Melbourne by architect Joseph Reed from the late 1860s. Within the City of Port Phillip, it is comparable to a double-storey house at 10-12 Anderson Street, South Melbourne (1871), which displays similar brickwork but is otherwise entirely different of similar in form and detailing.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

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

References

City of St Kilda Rate Book. South Ward.

Sands & McDougall Directory

