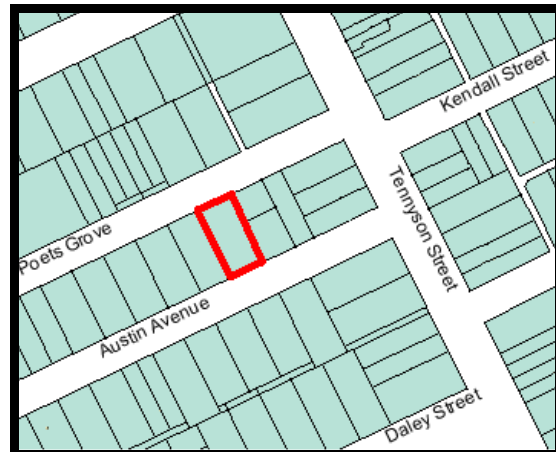


Identifier House
Formerly unknown



Not within a HO area

Address 6 Austin Avenue
ELWOOD

Category Residential: detached

Constructed 1914

Designer Unknown

Significance

What is Significant?

The house at 6 Austin Avenue is a single-storey late Edwardian weatherboard villa with a terracotta tiled roof and double-fronted asymmetrical façade with return verandah. It was erected in late 1914 for accountant James Bruce Lake, whose family remained living there until 1980.

How is it Significant?

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

Why is it Significant?

Historically, the house is significant for its association with the intense residential boom in this part of Elwood during the 1910s. Erected in late 1914, the house was not only the first dwelling to be built in Austin Avenue (which was laid out only a few months earlier) but now, following the post-war redevelopment of much of the streetscape, remains as the most intact and most prominently sited of the few surviving original houses in the street.

Architecturally, the house is significant as one of a relatively small number of late Edwardian houses in this part of Elwood that are both detached and of weatherboard construction, as opposed to the more ubiquitous red brick villas and (more commonly) semi-detached duplexes that otherwise proliferated in the area at that time.

Aesthetically, the house is significant as a prominent element in a streetscape otherwise overwhelmed by post-war flats and red brick duplexes. It is distinguished by its high level of external integrity and its interesting detailing including circular window, bracketed eaves, return verandah with corner window, and notched weatherboards in imitation of shingles.

Description

The house at 6 Austin Avenue is a single-storeyed late Edwardian weatherboard villa with a steel gambrel roof clad in terracotta tiles, and penetrated by two red brick chimneys. The weatherboards to sill height, and those in the gambrel apex, have been notched to create the effect of shingles. The street frontage is double-fronted and asymmetrical, with a projecting bay to the left side and a return verandah alongside that extends around to another projecting bay on the east (side) elevation. The front bay has a half-timbered and roughcast-rendered gable end, bracketed eaves and a tripartite bay of timber-framed casement windows sheltered by a metal sheet skillion awning, also on timber brackets. The return verandah has plain timber posts, a curved timber skirt and a corner window with leaded casement sashes. The main entrance, which opens onto the side verandah, has a circular window alongside.

History

Austin Avenue forms part of a 38-lot subdivision that was gazetted in August 1914, extending between Tennyson and Mitford streets. The house at No 6 was the first house to be built in the new street, recorded in the 1914-15 rate book (dated 21 November 1914) as a wooden house 'being erected', valued at £20 and owned/occupied by James Bruce Lake, an accountant. In 1915, when Austin Avenue appeared for the first time in the *Sands & McDougall Directory*, there were still only two listings, for 'two houses being built' – one obviously that of James Lake. A minor residential boom followed; the 1916 directory suddenly listing five occupied houses on the north side (with James Lake's house now designated as No 6), a vacant house at No 10, and four other houses 'being built'. By 1917, there were eleven completed houses on the north side and five on the south, four more houses 'being built', and a new Methodist church and Sunday school on the Mitford Street corner.

James Lake, the earliest resident of Austin Avenue, also became its most enduring one. He lived at No 6 until his death in 1966 at the age of 88 years, while his widow, Hilda, remained there until her own death fourteen years later – thereby ending a remarkable 65-year tenancy by the house's original occupants.

Comparative Analysis

While substantial portions of Elwood underwent intensive residential development in the 1910s, the bulk of the housing erected during that time were of brick construction. A number of timber houses were indeed erected, most notably in the streets west of Barkly Street (such as Lawson, Meredith and Thackeray streets) but virtually all of these, however, were designed in the Victorian Survival mode, evoking the block-fronted villas of the previous generation, rather than the Queen Anne Revival or Arts & Crafts idioms that were fashionable in the 1910s. Examples include those timber villas at 2 Lawson Street, 29 and 37 Meredith Street and, further east, at Nos 6, 8, 19 and 29 Ruskin Street.

Recommendations

recommended inclusions:

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

References

Lodged Plan No 6447, dated 21 August 1914.

City of St Kilda Rate Book, 1914-15

Sands & McDougall Directory, various