

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Residence
Address: 762 Orrong Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO90
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 24 October 2023
Year of Construction: 1924

Designer: Irwin and Stephenson
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of 762 Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO90.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: House

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO; tree controls are recommended in relation to the mature English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) on the western boundary.

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Heritage Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited uses may be permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 762 Orrong Road, Toorak is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of the Interwar Spanish Mission house is of local significance, along with the original garage and mature English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) on the western boundary. The front boundary wall and later alterations and addition are not significant.

How is it significant?

762 Orrong Road, Toorak is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

762 Orrong Road is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of early 20th century mansions and houses within Toorak. The original garage is historically important as demonstrating early 20th century parking facilities, during a time when the motor car was gaining popularity amongst the wealthy. The mature English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) on the western boundary is historically significant as a remnant planting of the now demolished 19th century residence Villa Vera. (Criterion A)

762 Orrong Road is important in demonstrating the principle characteristics of an Interwar Spanish Mission domestic design. These features include the use of roughcast render, a hipped roof form clad with Spanish cordova tiles, deep eaves, shutters and an entrance treatment with decorative render or arcaded loggia. (Criterion D)

762 Orrong Road has aesthetic significance as an intact and high quality Interwar Spanish Mission style house designed by the architectural firm Irwin and Stevenson. Key features contributing towards this aesthetic value is the rectilinear form, coupled with a shallow-pitched gabled roof clad in Spanish cordova tiles. In addition, the presence of the mature English oak (*Quercus robur*) on the western boundary of the site contributes to the setting of the place. (Criterion E)

762 Orrong Road has associative significance as a house and garage designed by the reputed Melbourne firm Irwin and Stevenson. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	762 Orrong Road is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of early 20th century mansions and houses within Toorak. The original garage is historically important as demonstrating early 20th century parking facilities, during a time when the motor car was gaining popularity amongst the wealthy. The mature English oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) on the western boundary is historically significant as a remnant planting of the now demolished 19th century residence Villa Vera. residence
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B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	762 Orrong Road is important in demonstrating the principle characteristics of an Interwar Spanish Mission domestic design. These features include the use of roughcast render, a hipped roof form clad with Spanish cordova tiles, deep eaves, shutters and an entrance treatment with decorative render or arcaded loggia.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	762 Orrong Road has aesthetic significance as an intact and high quality Interwar Spanish Mission style house designed by the architectural firm Irwin and Stevenson. Key features contributing towards this aesthetic value is the rectilinear form, coupled with a shallow-pitched gabled roof clad in Spanish cordova tiles. In addition, the presence of the mature English oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) on the western boundary of the site contributes to the setting of the place.
F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	<i>Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

• Physical Analysis

762 Orrong Road is a two-storey stucco rendered brick structure reflecting the Spanish Mission style. The structure has terracotta Cordova roof tiles with timber eaves and a red lintel. The stucco is a cream colour. The structure has three distinct wings, a main centre wing and two smaller projecting wings located asymmetrically on plan off the north and south façade. The entire structure is raised behind several short terraces with stone lined or cement retaining walls. The main entrance to the structure is located between the main and south façade wing. It is demarcated by a projecting porch with an accessible verandah on the upper level. The front door sits within a recessed arch, capped with honeycomb tracery, and framed by a barley twist moulding. The front door is accessible via brick laid steps.

The windows on the ground level are red timber eight pane casement windows. There are similar windows on the upper level as well as double hung sash windows. The windows have external timber shutters with an arrowhead motif. Some windows have external aluminum security shutters. The east façade closest to Orrong Road has a small balcony with red metal balustrade, red timber French doors and shutters. The north façade has three projections from the main structure. Two pitched roof extensions with a covered awning between the projections. The third projection is a covered porch and verandah. There are two roughcast chimneys with a terracotta cowl projecting from the main roof.

There is a free standing garage located in southwestern corner of the property. It has a sympathetic roof form and cladding in relation to the house, and is very likely an original structure.

The grounds of 762 Orrong Road are highly landscape with the terraced garden beds planted with shrubs and small trees. There is a pebble screed driveway lined with bricks along the border. There is a significant mature English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) located behind the boundary wall of the property which is reported to be older than the structure. The eastern portion of the property is paved with well-defined raised garden beds and a centrally located water fountain. There is a pool located off the north façade of the building. The street boundary is demarcated by a tall, rendered brick wall which does not appear to be original. The wall is capped with a shaped curved form following the rising gradient of the street. The entrances are characterised by a recessed wall with a shorter projecting garden bed within the wall structure. There is an additional timber lattice wall affixed behind a portion of the main wall.

762 Orrong Road remains in use as a residential property. The original detailing of the dwelling and garage appears intact, albeit in poor condition in some areas. The render finish on the main structure and front wall are heavily stained and cracked in portions. The timber shutters are in poor condition and some are broken. As such, the property is considered to be in fair condition overall. The landscape of the property is quite modified and the property would be considered to be of moderate integrity overall.

• Alterations and Additions

- Rain scupper and new downpipes.
- Aluminum security window shutters.
- Timber lattice wall.
- Swimming pool.
- Likely altered landscape with raised garden beds.

- Pebble screed driveway.
- External lights added to eaves.
- Addition of rendered boundary wall at the front of the site.

History

• Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

Following the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, squatter John Gardiner and many others like him sought out land in what would become present day Toorak and surrounds on account of its densely timbered landscape, undulating terrain and proximity to water. By 1840, crown land sales marked the area's transition to pastoral settlement, and later in 1851, with the purchase of land in Hawthorn by Thomas Herbert Power, the surrounding environments gradually became a place where the early merchant and squatter elite of Melbourne built their homesteads. In Toorak, this is best represented by the purchase of lot 26 by James Jackson, associate in Jackson, Rae & Co. soap and candle merchants. Jackson was described by politician William Westgarth as 'Melbourne's greatest merchant of this early time' (Forster 1999, 10). It is only fitting that his house, called Toorak House, would be the namesake of what would become arguably the most affluent suburb in Melbourne. Following the discovery of gold in the 1850s and the wealth this produced for ancillary trades, the Toorak area drew in Melbourne's newly wealthy. Today, over a century later, Toorak still has connotations of wealth and prestige as best represented in its history and built environment (Forster 1999, 5–26).

• Place History

762 Orrong Road, previously listed as 234 Orrong Road, was designed in 1924 by architects Irwin and Stevenson. Well-known during the interwar period for their design of hospitals and other public buildings across Melbourne, notable designs by Irwin and Stevenson include the Moderne Mildura Base Hospital (1931-4) and the modernist Prince Henry Hospital in Melbourne (1936-41). While a description of the house in an article published by *The Age* in 1992 claims that the house initially belonged to a judge whose daughter married prominent Australian artist Russell Drysdale, there is no evidence that verifies this (Context 1993, 108). A search through rate books and historical records instead reveals that the house was built for one Ethel Maude Larking (née Peterson).

Given its remarkable size, the mature English oak (*Quercus robur*) tree situated in the front garden of the house is believed to be from an earlier 19th century garden of Villa Vera, a residence that predated the construction of 762 Orrong Road. Widely cultivated in the region from the mid 19th century, existing research suggests that this tree once comprised a carefully landscaped geometric garden (Hubbard 1992). Both the latter 1924 house elevation and front garden were thus likely designed with the tree in mind.

Previous research indicates that the original house featured ten rooms over two storeys (Context 1993, 107). A common space for social gatherings in the local area, the original house design comprised a large reception and ballroom that facilitated the entertainment of guests during its initial years (The Australasian 1926, 54). Throughout the 1930s, occupancy of 764 Orrong Road was shared with Ethel Larking's sister C. H. Newbold. Several newspaper articles make note of the various parties and dances held by Newbold during this period (The Argus 1934, 17; The Herald 1935, 13).

Upon Ethel Larking's passing in December 1952, the property was transferred onto Shirley Isabel Blackwell, who also owned a fourteen roomed brick house at Orrong Road (Context 1993, 107). While the exact duration of Blackwell's ownership is unknown, the property's sale history indicates that 762 Orrong Road was sold in 1983 and again in 1992.

Comparative Analysis

The style Irwin and Stevenson adopted for residence at 762 Orrong Road, being Spanish Mission, was derived from the American south-west coast and, to a lesser extent, from Spain and the Mediterranean. However, most suburban examples were less grand than this house and were often no more than a standard double fronted bungalow with a rendered surface and an arched loggia instead of a verandah or porch (Raworth, 1991, 16-17). Comparable protected examples of Irwin and Stevenson's domestic work is difficult to identify within the City of Stonnington, as well as across the rest of Victoria. As a result, the comparative analysis will address Spanish Mission houses designed outside of partnership of Irwin and Stevenson, as well an example from the firm's body of work.

Comparable examples include:

- **Residence (28 Albany Road, Toorak) (HO486).** Constructed in 1934 to designs by Irwin and Stevenson, the residence at 28 Albany Road, Toorak, is comparable to the house at 762 Orrong Road as another example of the work of Irwin and Stevenson. Though domestic in purpose, Irwin and Stevenson have implemented an Old English Revival design at 28 Albany Road, contrasting with the Spanish Mission styling of 762 Orrong Road. This contrast however works to illustrate the significance of the house at Orrong Road as an unusual example of Irwin and Stevenson's Spanish Mission domestic architecture.
- **House (2A Lascelles Avenue, Toorak) (HO71).** The house at 2A Lascelles Avenue, Toorak, was designed by reputed architect Marcus Martin. Constructed in 1934 in the Interwar Spanish Mission style, the house on Lascelles Avenue is directly comparable to the property at 762 Orrong Road, as both sites are highly intact examples of this form of domestic architecture. Both properties utilise rectilinear forms with asymmetrical proportions, deep projecting eaves designed to the windows from the sun, shuttered sash windows, roughcast render, and unadorned rendered chimneys. Key differences are the roofing materials, with Lascelles Avenue fitted with slate and 762 Orrong Road fitted with Spanish Cordova tiles.
- **House (Broome) (6 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak) (HO264).** Broome was also designed by Marcus Martin and constructed in 1926, two years after the construction of the house at 762 Orrong Road, Toorak. The similarities reflected above between the house at Lascelles Avenue and 762 Orrong Road are shared with Broome. These include shuttered sash windows, roughcast render, deep eaves and rendered chimneys. Broome, similar to 762 Orrong Road, has Spanish Cordova roofing tiles and enclosed entrance treatments. 762 Orrong Road has an

enclosed, gated and vestibule while Broome has an arcaded loggia. A key difference between both sites are the respective roof forms. Broome utilises a gabled roof form with louvered vents on each gable end while 762 Orrong Road is fitted with a shallow-pitched gabled roof.

This comparative analysis addresses two key findings: the first being, there are very limited examples of Irwin and Stevenson's domestic Spanish Mission designs, which works to highlight the significance of the house at 762 Orrong Road, and; the house at 762 Orrong Road is directly comparable to other high integrity examples of domestic Spanish Mission designs within the City of Stonnington.

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



View of front façade, looking east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of entrance treatment, looking east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View down driveway, looking east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Western boundary fence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of English oak (*Quercus robur*), looking north east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of English oak (*Quercus robur*), looking south east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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