

48 Grange Road, Toorak Heritage Citation Report



Figure 1 48 Grange Road, Toorak.

History and Historical Context

Thematic Context

The following is drawn from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006).

Creating Australia's most designed suburb

Toorak is notable for the strong culture of patronage between architects and their wealthy clients, which existed from the earliest times of settlement. This has resulted in a much higher than average ratio of architect designed houses. In Albany Road alone, 47 of the 61 houses built since 1872 have been attributed to architects. The consequence of this is one of the strongest concentrations of high quality residential architecture in Australia, which provides an important record of all major architectural styles and movements since the earliest days of settlement.

Architects were particularly busy in Toorak in the boom years of the 1880s when newly prosperous merchants, businessmen and land speculators built mansions and grand villas that would stand as testament to their wealth, status and fashionable taste. A great many examples of nineteenth century domestic architecture in the Municipality were lost through demolition, however many of these demolitions created opportunities for twentieth century architects.

After the turn of the century, architects continued to have a major influence on the wealthy suburbs within present day Stonnington. Walter Butler, Robert Hamilton, Marcus Martin and Rodney Alsop were among the notable architects whose work is well represented in Toorak.

These architects built predominately in the fashionable architecture styles of the 1920s and 1930s, notably the Georgian revival, Mediterranean and Old English modes.

Place History

The area bounded by Toorak Road, Grange Road, Orrong Road and the Yarra River sold as Lot 15 at the first Crown land sales on 10 June 1840. Lot 15 was purchased by Charles Norris and subdivided into large lots, although Kearney's map indicates no development occurred in this area prior to 1855.¹ However, after this time the land was taken up by wealthy squatters and successful merchants with estates that straddled Orrong and Grange Roads.² Land on the east side of Grange Road had been taken up by the Ogilvy family and by 1861 the rate book records vacant allotments along Grange Road in the hands of the Ogilvy Trustees. Walker Street (now Struan Street) was created from a subdivision of Ogilvy land in 1865. It appears allotments had been advertised for sale at various times during the early 1860s.³ Lots 39 and 39a (on the north side of Walker Street) had been purchased by architect Arthur Ebdon Johnson by 1866. Johnson built a seven room brick house named Struan on one of his allotments close to Orrong Road. By 1876 Walker Street had been renamed Struan Street after Johnson's house.⁴

On 17 November 1877, a subdivision and auction of land bounded by Grange Road, Struan Street and Hill Street, released 10 allotments for sale as villa allotments.⁵ The sale, by Alfred Bliss for the owner Charles Washington Umphelby, appears to have been unsuccessful, as the 1905 MMBW plan shows only one of the allotments with a house facing Orrong Road at the end of a long driveway.⁶ The land at the corner of Grange Road remained undeveloped.

It was not until the 1920s that building commenced on this corner when 48 Grange Road was erected for G Sayer in 1928.⁷ The cover page to the MMBW property service plans records the architectural firm of A & K Henderson as the 'agent' (the agent often being the house's architect).⁸ K F Elliot is named as the agent on the earliest MMBW property service plan.⁹ Kenyon Elliot was a senior architect at A & K Henderson.¹⁰

The 1929 Sands and McDougall directory records a 'house being built' on this site. The house is first record in the 1929-1930 City of Prahran rate books as a fourteen room brick building owned and occupied by George Sayer, investor.¹¹ Sayer named his house 'Neangar'.¹²

A & K Henderson

The architectural firm A & K Henderson was established in 1906 when Anketell Mathew Henderson (1853-1922) went into partnership with his son Kingsley Anketell Henderson (1883-1942). Anketell Henderson began his architectural career articulated to prominent firm Reed & Barnes. In 1883, Henderson went into partnership with Joseph Reed and Francis Smart to form Reed, Henderson and Smart (later to become Bates, Smart & McCutcheon). Henderson set up his own practice in 1890 and was president of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in 1897, 1910 and 1913. Kingsley Henderson had been articulated to his father

¹ Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Reg. No. PH9399.

² Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Reg. No. PH61419.

³ Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Reg. No. PH61419.

⁴ Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Reg. No. PH61419.

⁵ Stonnington Local History Catalogue. Reg. No. PH11079.

⁶ MMBW Detail Plan No. 936. State Library of Victoria.

⁷ MMBW Drainage Plan. No. 170398.

⁸ MMBW House Connections. Application No. 170398.

⁹ MMBW Drainage Plan. No. 170398.

¹⁰ Helena Morris, *Kingsley Henderson: Architect of Civic Virtue in Interwar Melbourne*, Master of Arts Thesis, Deakin University, p.108.

¹¹ City of Prahran Rate Book 1929-1930, No. 1372, p. 69.

¹² *Table Talk*, 7 July, 1938, p.35.

from 1901 whilst studying at the University of Melbourne and the Working Men's College (later RMIT). Rodney Alsop and Marcus Martin became partners in 1920. Henderson senior died in 1922, after which time Kingsley Henderson can be credited for the practice's success in attracting commissions for major office buildings in Melbourne and interstate. The firm won several competitions during the 1920s and in 1931 was awarded the RVIA Victorian Street Architecture medal for Lyric House, Collins Street, and in 1935 for Shell Corner, William Street. Kingsley Henderson was particularly adept at the functional requirements of office building planning while other members of the firm seemed to have played a key role in façade designs.

Henderson was elected president of the RVIA in 1921-24 and served as vice-president in 1934-35. He was president of the federal council of the institute in 1924-25 and in 1937 of the Architects' Registration Board. Henderson was also a director of a number of companies, including the Argus and the Australasian Ltd. He died suddenly in April 1942 at his Portsea home where he was seeking to recover from the effects of illness and strenuous work.¹³

Description

The house at 48 Grange Road is a substantial double-storey interwar Mediterranean style building sited on the corner of Struan Street. It has smooth rendered walls and a hipped roof with terracotta Cordova tiles. Cordova tiles are also used for the chimney capping. The focal point of the design is a grandly proportioned arcaded semi-circular entry porch. The porch links the main double storey wing with a single storey front wing originally containing the servants' accommodation. A single 'barley sugar' column can be found between the round arched windows above the entry porch. The house otherwise takes a restrained approach to ornament and in this respect is characteristic of the Mediterranean idiom.

The house appears to remain substantially intact externally with little change to the building footprint from that shown on the first MMBW plan of 1928. Building permits were issued for external decking on the west side of the house in 2009 and a lift at the rear, sited between the main double storey house and the attached single-storey garage.¹⁴ Council records also include 1972 working drawings showing various internal works and comparatively minor works to the east (side) elevation.¹⁵ Most of the window and door openings on the west elevation have modern retractable awnings or roller shutters. Window and door frames on the first floor of the west elevation also appear to have been replaced, albeit with frames adopting a sympathetic multi-pane format.

Comparative Analysis

Interwar Mediterranean and Spanish Mission

Alongside the revivalist neo-Georgian and Colonial idioms there developed a strong Mediterranean movement that was to have a significant impact on not only the architecture of the 1920s but also the development of modernism in Melbourne in the 1930s. The Mediterranean and Spanish Mission idioms are closely related, although the former is often perceived to be a more sophisticated 'up market' version of the later.

The Mediterranean style typically avoids the more blatantly Iberian features of the Spanish mission in favour of a subtle blend of Georgian and Mediterranean elements. The style is characterised by lightly bagged or smooth rendered walls, limewashed in muted tones, and multi-pane sash windows with louvred shutters. Round arches are often used for openings or loggias. The idiom also made use of simplified versions of classical motifs.

¹³Argus, 7 April, 1942, p.2

¹⁴Stonnington Building File BS1421/2010/0066/0

¹⁵Stonnington Building File BS1421/2010/0066/0

The rise of the Mediterranean idiom gained its impetus from two major sources - the influence of American publications advertising their interest in the Mediterranean and the Californian Spanish Colonial Revival, and the example set by those Melbourne architects and educators who, either through academic publications on the vernacular idioms of the different Mediterranean regions or through travel itself, realised the suitability of such idioms for coping with the light and climates of the major Australian suburban centres. The underlying theme of all contemporary writings on the style is its potential as the basis for the creation of a national style, climatically congenial and appropriately modern.

In 1920 architects Leighton Irwin and Roy Stevenson returned from Europe, where they had become interested in the simply planned houses of Italy, Spain and southern France. In a published 1922 design they combined plain stuccoed walls, a hipped roof with generous eaves, French windows with Georgian fanlights and a columned loggia surmounted by a balcony. At the same time architect W A M Blackett was also urging architects to look toward the Mediterranean and experiment with combinations of the locally approved Georgian with elements taken from southern Europe.

By the mid-1920s the various Mediterranean/Spanish idioms had taken a vigorous hold on the domestic work of many of the more prominent architects in Melbourne. Beside the houses of Irwin & Stevenson, Gawler & Drummond and Rodney Alsop one finds examples by Marcus Martin, Arthur Plaisted, Barlow & Hawkins and F L & R Klingender.

It is apparent from contemporary advertisements of speculative building companies that the mode had spread to domestic projects in which architects were to have little or no direct involvement. Such examples saw Spanish detailing including parged stucco and arched porches merged with what was basically Californian bungalow form. Other examples took a more thorough approach to the style, with multi-angular Cordova tiled hipped roofs, above a Spanish porch with baroque parapet and twisted columns. The walls of such buildings commonly had roughcast or rough trowelled render to provide a pattern or texture. Baroque parapets, twisted columns of precast concrete, cartouches, medallions and coats of arms were also common on the facade.

Spanish styles were in full stride by the end of the 1920s, but began to lose favour with architects in the early '30s. The idiom continued to be used, but most examples were the work of builders. A continuing tradition of design in hybrid Mediterranean/Georgian modes, was, however, to become a hallmark of domestic architecture in Melbourne's elite suburbs in the 1930s.

In the context of the City of Stonnington, Mediterranean style houses within individual heritage overlays include Marcus Martin's own residence of 1926 at 6 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak (HO264). 48 Grange Road is larger and more grandiose design. It is most directly comparable with the Irwin and Stevenson designed house at 762 Orrong Road (HO90) as a large and sophisticated evocation of a Mediterranean villa. Another large scale Mediterranean/Spanish style house exists at 719 Toorak Road, Toorak (HO344). This example is has an electric character and is not as well resolved as 48 Grange Road.

Thematic Context

The house at 48 Grange Road, Toorak illustrates the following theme, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006):

TEH 8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Assessment Against Criteria

Assessment of the place was undertaken in accordance with the HERCON criteria and the processes outlined in the Australian ICOMOS (Burra) Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance.

Statement of Significance

Note that the relevant HERCON criteria and themes from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (TEH) are shown in brackets.

What is Significant?

The double-storey interwar Mediterranean style house at 48 Grange Road, Toorak was erected in 1928 to designs by the prominent architectural firm of A & K Henderson.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing of the building.
- The generally high level of external intactness.
- The domestic garden setting (but not the fabric of the garden)

Modern elements do not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

The house at 48 Grange Road, Toorak of local architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally significant as an impressive and substantially intact interwar Mediterranean style house (Criterion D). It illustrates the role of houses generally, and large architect designed Mediterranean inspired houses in particular, as symbols of wealth, status and taste for Melbourne's upper classes of the interwar period (TEH 8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion).

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme to the extent of the whole property as defined by the title boundaries as shown in figure 2 below. External paint controls, internal alteration controls and tree controls are not recommended. The place should retain its current A2 grading.

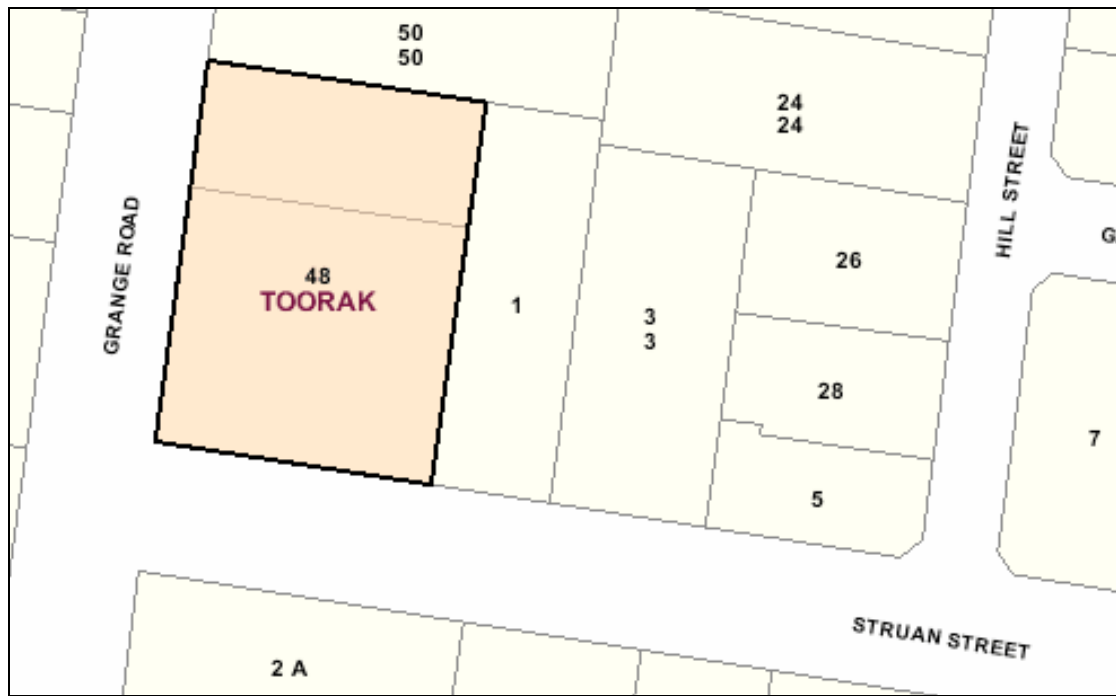


Figure 2 Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 48 Grange Road, Toorak.