

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Wentworth
Address: 294 Williams Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO769
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 23 October 2023
Year of Construction: 1886

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of Wentworth (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of 294 Williams Road, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: House

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Remove from the curtilage of HO155 Williams Road Precinct and include on the HO as an individually significant place in its own right.

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input 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 294 Williams Road, Toorak (otherwise known as Wentworth) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale, detailing and setback of the Victorian Italianate villa is of local significance. The landscaping, front boundary fence and later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

Wentworth is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Wentworth is historically significant in demonstrating the development of Late Victorian villas within Toorak during the late 19th century, following the wider subdivision of the Victorian era estates. The house is also of historical significance in demonstrating the residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthy upper-middle class citizens during the 1880s land boom period. (Criterion A)

Wentworth is aesthetically significant as a well-articulated and intact example of a late Victorian Italianate villa. Key characteristics contributing towards this aesthetic value include its symmetry, double fronted façade, dichrome brick, hipped roof with polygonal bay window projections, triangular verandah pediment, chimneys with cornice mouldings and paired precast cowls, and decorative cast iron lacework. The aesthetic value of the place is also enhanced by its raised sitting on a short embankment, which contributes to the formal setting of the site. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Wentworth is historically significant in demonstrating the development of Late Victorian villas within Toorak during the late 19th century, following the wider subdivision of the Victorian era estates. The house is also of historical significance in demonstrating the residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthy upper-middle citizens during the 1880s land boom period.
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>	This place does not meet this criterion.

E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Wentworth is aesthetically significant as a well-articulated and intact example of a late Victorian Italianate villa. Key characteristics contributing towards this aesthetic value include its symmetry, double fronted façade, dichrome brick, hipped roof with polygonal bay window projections, triangular verandah pediment, chimneys with cornice mouldings and paired precast cowl, and decorative cast iron lacework. The aesthetic value of the place is also enhanced by its raised sitting on a short embankment, which contributes to the formal setting of the site.
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

Wentworth is a single storey villa built in a Victorian Italianate style. The dichrome brick structure is laid in brown Hawthorn brick with an English cross bond and yellow brick detailing. The hipped roof is clad with slate tiles and metal ridge flashing, and projects out towards the front with polygonal bay windows. Five chimneys with cornice mouldings and paired precast cowl extend from the roof. The face brick chimneys feature decorative patterning using the brown and yellow brickwork. The main roof form is finished with a timber soffit supported with corner brackets. The bracketed cornice of the main structure features brickwork patterning in a cross form.

The double fronted façade projects a strong symmetrical form. The house is raised up a short embankment and the covered front timber patio is accessible via a centred set of concrete steps. The base of the house is emphasised with a bluestone course. The main entrance consists of a six-panel timber door with a timber frame with sidelights and fanlights. The entrance framed by the yellow brick flat gauged arch and quoining. A house name plaque is located to the right of the front door.

The main entrance is flanked by polygonal bay window projections, characteristic of the Italianate form. The bays include tall arched black timber sash windows on each side. The base of the bay windows is finished in a smooth stucco painted black. The bay windows include rendered precast mouldings imitating the base and capital of a column. The ends of the front façade include brick quoining with a brick string course extending over the face of the façade.

The front verandah awning is supported by four pairs of cast iron posts with an ornate valance and frieze. The awning consists of a bullnosed and gable roof with grey corrugated steel cladding. The front profile of the awning is characterised by a gableton in the centre, featuring cast iron lacework. The awning and roof have a Quad gutter.

The other elevations of the house lack the ornate detailing of the front façade. The fenestration includes single sash windows. The east (rear) elevation of the house opens to a paved area and a carport. The paved area leads to the backyard space which includes a vegetable garden and two sheds at the east boundary. The residence is raised and set back from the street. The street front boundary is demarcated by a black picket fence and posts. The main entrance gate is centrally located on the fence leading to the two sets of steps and a pathway laid with English tiles. The remainder of the front yard consists of lawn with garden beds running along the perimeter.

Wentworth is located close to the junctions with Lechlade Avenue and Rathmines Street. The property is located on a deep-set block that extends east, providing car access to the backyard from Rathmines Street. The site is currently used as a residential property. It is considered to be in good condition. There has been major relandscaping, re-roofing of the awnings with corrugated steel and repainting of building elements since 2019. The main structure appears to be highly intact from the street front and the contemporary black trim colour scheme is reversible. Wentworth has high integrity overall.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

- Red and yellow painted galvanised iron bullnosed awning, and rear awning, removed and replaced with grey corrugated steel (2019).
- Backyard relandscaped and two mature trees on the south boundary removed (2019).
- Carport added.
- Street front boundary fence painted black (2019).
- Façade bay window stucco painted black (2019).
- Fenestration, front door, roof trim and gutters, and cast-iron elements painted black (2019).

[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**

The villa at 294 Williams Road was erected in 1886 for Walter Rankin Lemon, who subsequently named the property after his former residence in Albert Park. Constructed during Melbourne's 1880s land boom period, its erection took place in the years following the 1881 subdivision of land between Bruce Street and the 1869 Greenmount mansion situated on the corner of Williams Road and Toorak Road, which created thirty-eight building allotments fronting Rathmines Street and Williams Road (Foster n.d.). Its construction was a direct outcome of rapid population growth, boom prosperity and development that saw a rising demand for housing in Toorak. A MMBW map from 1898 reveals a double fronted villa with polygonal bay windows bordered by a group of four two-storey Victorian terraces to the south, and another villa named Waratah to the north (MMBW 1898).

Lemon occupied the residence for a brief period of time before renting it out. Known tenants during this early period include solicitor Ernest Keep, who occupied the house between 1892 and 1899 (Sands & McDougall 1890-1900). It appears that Lemon moved back into the residence with his wife Florence Alice Lemon following this period, and he is listed as the official owner and occupier again by 1905 (Sands & McDougall 1905; The Age 1912, 14). He occupied Wentworth until at least 1910, and by 1915, Clyde B Norton and his wife are revealed to be the official residents (Sands & McDougall, 1915; Punch 1917, 29). Given the couple's short stay at the property, it is likely that they were also tenants as opposed to owners.

A transfer of ownership took place in 1920, whereby Reverend Arthur Pelham Chase, along with his wife Marian Eliza, are listed as the official occupiers and owners of Wentworth (Sands & McDougall 1920). Arthur Pelham Chase lived at the residence until his death in 1947. The residence was subsequently passed onto his daughter Jessie Louise Thorogood (née Chase) and her husband Herbert Spencer Thorogood (Sands & McDougall 1950; Upper Beaconsfield History 2017). They stayed at the house until at least 1974, marking a decades long residency within the family that has undeniably contributed to the dwelling's high level of integrity. It was last sold in 2019, resulting in several alterations and additions. It continues to remain in use as a private residence.

Comparative Analysis

Designed in a late Victorian Italianate style for civil servant Walter Rankin Lemon in 1886, Wentworth is directly comparable to several single storey late Victorian era villas that were also constructed for the wealthy and influential in Toorak and Armadale during the late 19th century boom era. Popularised following the development of Toorak House in 1850 and its subsequent use as the Governor's residence in 1854, the use of Italianate derived elements in domestic architecture was particularly prevalent in the Victorian colony. Its connotations with the social and political elite was integral to its success, and the style is readily observable in residences across Melbourne's wealthy inner eastern suburbs.

Comparable examples include:

- **Wynduk House (1310 High Street, Malvern) (HO545).** Constructed in 1891, Wyndruk is directly comparable to Wentworth as a substantial, single storey double fronted Italianate villa designed in the late Victorian boom style. Although it is composed of rendered brick walls that differs from the distinct dichrome brickwork at Wentworth, it is analogous in terms of its symmetrical massing, with two canted bays to the front, hipped roof form, elaborate cast iron lacework on the verandah and decorative use of brackets. While it is defined by visually striking eaves set between garlands, it is still considered to be less elaborate in comparison Wentworth by virtue of its plain rendered walls and absence of a central gableton pediment.
- **41 Dixon Street, Malvern (HO590).** Erected in 1894 by builder, brickmaker and contractor Charles Butler, 41 Dixon Street compares to Wentworth as a single-storey, symmetrical double fronted late Victorian Italianate villa. Although it lacks the defining polygonal projecting at Wentworth, it maintains several analogous features such as the gableton verandah pediment marking the central entrance, use of brown Hawthorn bricks, prominent bracketed eaves, and an embellished front verandah featuring elaborate cast iron lacework and Corinthian verandah posts. It is more modest in comparison to Wentworth form by virtue of its sitting, brickwork and simpler massing.
- **6 Horsburgh Grove, Armadale (HO315).** This 1887 residence is directly comparable to Wentworth as a single-storey Italianate villa designed in the late Victorian boom style. Analogous features include its symmetry, double fronted projecting canted bays, hipped room form clad with slate and decorative frieze. It is distinguished from Wentworth by its distinctive and dominant roof lantern, and also lacks the triangular verandah gableton pediment that defines the façade at Wentworth.

Overall, Wentworth is a fine and highly intact example of a single-storey Italianate villa built during the late Victorian boom era. It is distinguished from other examples through its combination of dichrome brickwork, verandah pediment, polygonal projecting bays and high quality cast-iron work. It is a strong example of the municipality's wider collection of substantial single-storey Italianate villas.

References

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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 the residence from Williams Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of the façade from front gate (source: www.domain.com.au, 2021).



View of façade from south-western end of property prior to repainting (source: www.domain.com.au, 2019).



Detail of the chimney and double fronted hipped roof form (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



Detail of triangular verandah pediment (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 1998. *Note: the building was included in precinct citation for HO155.*

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022 (Vivian Lu and Reuel Balmadres).

Quality assurance review conducted by: Corinne Softley.