

Heritage Citation – Precinct

Heritage Place: Gordon Street Precinct

Address: 2-28 Gordon Street, Toorak

HO Reference: HO750

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 28 March 2022

Designer: N/A

Year of Construction: 1902-1915

Builder: N/A



Photograph of 16 Gordon Street (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of Gordon Street Precinct.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings

Heritage Type: Residential precinct

Key Theme: Building suburbs

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

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Recommended for the Heritage Overlay as a new precinct.

| | | | |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| 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 Gordon Street Precinct, comprising a group of Edwardian and Federation style dwellings on Gordon Street, Toorak, is locally significant.

The precinct is characterised contributory graded buildings and one non-contributory graded building.

Character elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The distinctive pattern of the 1902 subdivision and subsequent development created by the group of Edwardian and Federation era buildings;
- A high degree of intactness arising from the similar construction period and absence of modern infill within the curtilage;
- The regularity and harmony of the single-storey Edwardian and Federation era houses primarily characterised by single or double fronted façades with half-timbered open gable projections, hipped and gabled roofs with some retaining their original terracotta Marseilles tiles with crested terracotta ridge capping and finials, timber bargeboards, fascia, shaped timber stays, exposed rafters, brick chimneys, terracotta chimney pots, front verandahs with terracotta awnings and timber posts with fretted timber brackets and valance, and timber framed sash or casement windows;
- The uniformity of allotments, siting and building heights across the precinct;
- Predominance of traditional timber picket fences, particularly along the eastern end of Gordon Street; and
- The unique bend in the road created by the 1902 subdivision.

Later alterations and additions to the properties are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Gordon Street Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Gordon Street Precinct is historically significant as a collection of Edwardian and Federation era houses that were developed following the 1902 subdivision of the Woodside Estate, which resumed the initial 1880s land boom urban character changes that precipitated the area's shift from sparsely developed paddocks and mansion estates to a suburban upper-middle class enclave. This group of dwellings were developed during an important phase, being the economic recovery in the early twentieth century after the 1890s recession. The residential area forms a tangible link to this period of development. (Criterion A)

The Gordon Street Precinct is aesthetically significant as an intact and visually cohesive heritage area characterised by single-storey Edwardian and Federation era dwellings. The buildings retain a high degree of integrity as a group and demonstrate stylistic cohesion through consistency in built form, materials, fenestration, detailing, heights, allotment sizes and setbacks. Its unified character is further enhanced by the predominance of traditional picket fences, particularly along the eastern half of Gordon Street, as well as the unique bend in the road created by the 1902 subdivision. Combined, these

elements create a harmonious and attractive collection of buildings that are free from modern development within the curtilage. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| A | <i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i> | The Gordon Street Precinct is historically significant as a collection of Edwardian and Federation era houses that were developed following the 1902 subdivision of the Woodside Estate, which resumed the initial 1880s land boom urban character changes that precipitated the area's shift from sparsely developed paddocks and mansion estates to a suburban upper-middle class enclave. This group of dwellings were developed during an important phase, being the economic recovery in the early twentieth century after the 1890s recession. The residential area forms a tangible link to this period of development. |
| 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> | The Gordon Street Precinct is aesthetically significant as an intact and visually cohesive heritage area characterised by single-storey Edwardian and Federation era dwellings. The buildings retain a high degree of integrity as a group and demonstrate stylistic cohesion through consistency in built form, materials, fenestration, detailing, heights, allotment sizes and setbacks. Its unified character is further enhanced by the predominance of traditional picket fences, particularly along the eastern half of Gordon Street, as well as the unique bend in the road created by the 1902 subdivision. Combined, these elements create a harmonious and attractive collection |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | of buildings that are free from modern development within the curtilage. |
| 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

The Gordon Street Precinct consists of fourteen single-storey residences built in Edwardian and Federation styles. The residences generally present with a single or double fronted façade and half-timbered open gable projections. They have a varied overall layout, as reflected in the varied hipped and gable roof forms seen throughout the precinct. The roofs are generally clad with terracotta Marseilles tiles with crested terracotta ridge capping and finials. The residences typically have two period appropriate chimneys extending from the main roof. In addition to the half-timber gables, timber bargeboards, fascia, shaped timber stays, and exposed rafters are characteristic roof elements within the group.

All of the residences except 16 Gordon Street have been finished with bagged bricks or a smooth render with roughcast render on the top of the gables and walls. Most residences have a front verandah with a terracotta awning where the main entrance is located. The front verandahs consist of turned timber posts with fretted timber brackets and valance. The facade fenestration typically consists of banks of timber framed casement or sash windows with fanlights. Some residences have retained the detailed leadlight stained-glass windows including those at 8 and 18 Gordon Street. Moulded string courses express the fenestration form and demarcate the transition between brick and half-timbered surfaces.

The facades of the group addresses Gordon Street, which doglegs between Williams Road and Mathoura Road. The compact property lots appear relatively consistent in size between the west and east side of the precinct. The residences have a short setback from the street allowing for a small front yard and slightly larger rear yard space. However, there is no regularity between the front yard landscaping, driveway layout and front fences. 2-10 Gordon Street generally consists of low rendered fences and capped posts with iron palisade fencing. 12-28 Gordon Street generally consists of timber post and picket fencing.

Due to the relatively compact lot sizes, most of the residences have retained their original built form. The residences on the west side of the precinct generally have minor rear extensions. However, because the lots are longer between 18-28 Gordon Street, these residences have larger rear extensions. The rear extensions are not visible from the street front.

The Gordon Road Precinct is considered to be in good condition overall. The residences appear to be largely intact to their original built form and detailing, as viewed from the street. The front landscaping and front fences have been mostly altered throughout the precinct. However, consistency in the setback, massing, fenestration and facade elements creates a cohesive streetscape. The Gordon Road Precinct has high integrity overall.

- **Alterations and Additions**

- Rendering to some residences.
- Carports added to 4 and 22 Gordon Street.
- Minor rear extensions at 2-16 Gordon Street.
- Larger rear extensions at 20-28 Gordon Street.
- Rear yards relandscaped.
- Swimming pool added at 14 Gordon Street.
- Front yards relandscaped.
- Front fences altered.

History

- **Historical Context**

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung 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 land and surrounds of the Gordon Street Precinct formerly comprised Crown Portion 31 and 32 (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). Purchased by Thomas Coclough in the June 1849 land sales, the area encompassed thirty-two acres extending from Mathoura Road to Williams Road. Colclough immediately subdivided this substantial area of land into large estates, while retaining about ten acres at the northern end (Foster 1996). He subsequently erected a mansion for himself known as Tintern (1849) on retained property at the corner of Toorak Road (then known as Gardiners Creek Road) and Williams Road (Sharpe 2014). To the south of Tintern was William Bowen's newly erected mansion estate Woodside, and to the south of Woodside Estate at present day Tashinny Road was Charles Forrests' Ellerslie Estate. All three properties are depicted on James Kearney's map of 1855, which shows present day Gordon Street, undeveloped at the time, along the boundary of the former Woodside Estate and Ellerslie Estate (Kearney 1855).

The western portion of the Gordon Street roadway was established as an entrance way to Ellerslie Estate by 1898, and was likely named after George Gordon, who lived at Ellerslie with his wife Violet Elizabeth Gordon (née Eddington) from 1872 until his death in 1907 (MMBW 1898). While the Woodside Estate was initially subdivided in 1886, paving way for the development of residences along Woodside Crescent, the dwellings along Gordon Street were not developed until the second subdivision of Woodside in 1902 (The Age 1886, 2). Indeed, although the gold rush era and subsequent 1880s land boom saw a period of subdivision and rapid expansion on former grand estates in what was then the City of Prahan, the subsequent financial collapse that resulted in the 1890s depression halted further development for many years (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 37). It was not until economic recovery in the early twentieth century did land sales, subdivision and development resume, albeit in a less rapid and frenetic manner (Context Pty Ltd, 37).

Within this context, lots along Gordon Street were offered for auction in March 1902, with advertising material for the auction stating (Williams & Co. 1902):

Those in want of building allotments should not miss this opportunity. The situation cannot be excelled, being surrounded by superior residences, and within a few minutes from tram and train (The Argus 1902, 3).

Lots 3 and 4 of this subdivision, comprising present day 20 and 22 Gordon Street, were purchased by architect Francis R. Barlow by 1906/1907, who subsequently constructed a seven roomed brick house at 20 Gordon Street (1907) and a seven roomed brick house at 22 Gordon Street (1908) (Prahan Rate Books 1907-8). Further allotments were sold in 1909, and by 1915, it appears that all the lots in the subject area were developed and occupied (Sands & McDougall 1915; Sharpe 2014).

The driveway to Ellerslie House continued to run through 12 Gordon Street. It is therefore unsurprising that Violet Elizabeth Gordon (née Eddington), who was still residing on Ellerslie Estate at the time, is also listed at the dwelling established on 12 Gordon Street until her death in 1932 (Argus 1934, 15). Following Gordon's death, Ellerslie Estate was put to auction in 1933 (The Age 1933, 10). Ownership was subsequently taken up by Annie Gordon, who retained the northern portion of the Estate along with the Ellerslie house, while subdividing the southern portion. The house and remaining grounds remained intact until the 1960s, with the remainder of estate subdivided as an extension of Tashinny Road by 1970 (Sands & McDougall 1970).

It is not known when the present property at 12 Gordon Street was constructed, although it is clear that it replaced the initial lodge building that was part of the Ellerslie Estate. Newspaper articles reference the Greenwood family as resident in the 1920s, and the Jones family as resident in the 1940s, though this is not reflected in historical directories (The Prahran Telegraph 1923, 6; The Argus 1946, 2).

Comparative Analysis

The Gordon Street Precinct comprises an intact collection of Edwardian and Federation style dwellings that were developed during the early 20th century economic recovery of the 1890s financial collapse, which precipitated a revival of the land sales and subdivision that had taken off during the 1880s land boom. All constructed following the 1902 subdivision of Woodside Estate, the Gordon Street Precinct is noted for its visual cohesiveness stemming from consistencies in siting, scale, materiality and architectural styles. As there are no Edwardian/Federation style precincts within Toorak currently protected on the municipal Heritage Overlay, the following comparative analysis draws from examples in the neighbouring suburbs of Armadale, Prahan and Malvern.

Key comparative examples include:

- **Inverness Avenue Precinct, Armadale (HO179).** Built between 1901 and 1903, the Inverness Avenue Precinct consists of a collection of single-storey, intact and visually cohesive late Victorian style dwellings, with some Federation elements and details. The precinct is similar to Gordon Street Precinct in terms of its stylistic cohesion, streetscape rhythm and the general intactness of individual buildings to their original states with some minor alterations. However, given the slight differences in style, the buildings within this precinct are evidently more modest than the residences within the Gordon Street Precinct.
- **Banole Estate Precinct, Prahan (HO385).** The Banole Estate Precinct is directly comparable to Gordon Street Precinct as an early 20th century precinct made up of residential building stock constructed in the 1910s and 1920s. While it includes a much larger number of buildings than the Gordon Street Precinct, it nevertheless draws comparisons through its clear early 20th century character, streetscape rhythm of building style, and the intactness of individual buildings to their original states with some minor alterations. However, the buildings within the Banole Estate Precinct are more modest in form, and primarily consists of semi-detached cottages in matching symmetrical pairs as opposed to the combination of freestanding dwellings with double fronted asymmetrical and symmetrical façades across the Gordon Street Precinct.
- **Edsall Street Precinct, Malvern (HO374).** The Edsall Street Precinct is a residential area developed during the late 19th (northern side of the street) and early 20th (southern side of the street) centuries. While the Edwardian/Federation era dwellings compare well to the Gordon Street Precinct in terms of intactness, the landscaping and front fences at Edsall Estate Precinct are noticeably more consistent and sympathetic. As with the Inverness Avenue and Banole Estate Precincts, the Edwardian and Federation building stock within Edsall Estate Precinct are more modest than the elaborate asymmetrical forms, fenestration and detailing demonstrated in the Gordon Street Precinct.

Although the group of dwellings within the Gordon Street are not without minor alterations, they overall form a cohesive group of Edwardian/Federation era dwellings that were developed as part of the 1902 Woodside Estate subdivision. There are only a small number of modified dwellings, and although some

have lost their original front fences and landscaping, the group as a whole is of high integrity and is readily likened to several other precincts within the municipality in terms of quality and intactness. As the above comparative analysis has also shown, the Gordon Street Precinct is not only noteworthy as the only identified Edwardian/Federation era precinct within Toorak, but also as a cohesive group that are grander and more elaborate than comparable precincts.

Precinct Map



Grading Plan

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria’s Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

Note: the Style/era column follows architectural style categories set out in Heritage Victoria’s HERMES Orion database and does not necessarily reflect the date of construction. For details on construction era(s) where available, refer to the Place History section.

| Street address | Place type | Style/era | Grading |
|-----------------|------------|---|---------|
| 2 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 4 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |

| <i>Street address</i> | <i>Place type</i> | <i>Style/era</i> | <i>Grading</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| 6 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 8 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 10 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 12 Gordon Street | House | Interwar Period (c.1919-c.1940) or Postwar Period (1945-1965) | NC |
| 14 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 16 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 18 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 20 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 22 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 24 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 26 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |
| 28 Gordon Street | House | Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918) | C |

References

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Toorak Property Realises £11,030. (1933, October 5). *The Age*, 10.

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



2 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



4 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



6 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



8 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



10 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



12 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



14 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



16 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



18 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



20 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



22 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



24 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



26 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



28 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing street view of 14-16 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing street view of 16 Gordon Street, Toorak, and bend in the road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



South-west facing street view of 18-22 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



South-west facing street view of 26 Gordon Street, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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