

GRASMERE

Prepared by: Context Pty Ltd

Address: 9 Auburn Grove, Hawthorn East

Name: Grasmere	Survey Date: 20 May 2016
Place Type: Residential (house)	Architect: attributed to James Wood
Grading: Significant	Builder:
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Date: 1882



Historical Context

Considerable residential subdivision occurred in this area of Hawthorn East during the 1880s, such as at Hepburn Hill to the west of Auburn Road, as well as Grove Estate, comprising the south side of Auburn Grove down to what is now known as Roseberry Street (Hepburn Hill Estate Plan 1885; Grove Estate Plan 1885).

History

The Italianate villa at 9 Auburn Grove is located on the northeast corner of Fletcher Street and Auburn Grove, Hawthorn East, on part of what was Crown portion 96 in the Parish of Boroondara. The property was purchased by William Thomas McFee in April of 1881, at which time he was listed in the City of Hawthorn rate books as the owner of land in Auburn Grove with a net annual value of £6 (LV: 1249/173; RB784). In 1883 William,



described as an ironmonger by trade, was listed at the same location as the owner and occupant of a house valued at £90 (RB1499). In the 1891 rate book, the house is described as comprising 10 rooms, and by that time had a net annual value of £110 (RB4702).

Newspaper advertisements indicate that architect James Wood invited tenders for the construction of a two-storey brick villa at Auburn Grove, Hawthorn, in December 1882, March 1883 and again in January 1884 (*The Argus* 4 December 1882:14; 22 March 1883:3; & 3 Jan 1884:2). Given the length of time between each advertisement, it is likely that James Wood was the architect of at least this and another two-storey villa in Auburn Grove in the early 1880s. Wood has not currently been attributed as the architect of any other residences in Auburn Grove dating to this period, and so it is possible that the December 1882 tender notice was for the construction of William Thomas McFee's house. This time frame would fit with McFee's home having been rated (meaning that construction was complete) for the first time in November 1883 (RB1499).

The following is a profile of the training and work of architect James Wood from a recent conservation management plan for the Former Yorkshire Brewery in Collingwood which notes his large body of work in the suburb of Hawthorn (Lovell Chen 2011:28-29):

James Wood (1854-1897) was born in Melbourne around the same time that his father established the Yorkshire Hotel in Wellington Street. The younger Wood trained as an architect under George Wharton (1822-1891), a prolific architect and land surveyor who had practiced in Melbourne since his arrival in the early 1840s. Wharton's extensive body of works included numerous banks and churches, such as the Wesleyan Church in Kew, designed in a florid polychromatic style in 1882. Coincidentally, Wharton was also responsible for additions in 1879 to the brew tower at the Victoria Brewery, which included refacing the building with polychromatic brickwork.

James Wood completed his articles with George Wharton in 1875 and established his own private practice the following year, setting up his office in Swanston Street. According to Victoria and Its Metropolis, the new buildings at the Yorkshire Brewery were among the young architect's first works. He went on to design a number of other industrial buildings in the Collingwood area, including the Batt & Emery boot factory (1876) and the Yarra Grange Dry Plate factory (1886), further details of which are unknown. James Wood also designed the Sandridge Hotel in Port Melbourne (1876), the Junction Hotel in St Kilda Road (1889), and the Glenferrie Hotel in Hawthorn (1888), and undertook additions and alterations to other hotel premises.

As a resident of Hawthorn, Wood designed numerous buildings in that area, including the Augustine Congregational Church in Burwood Road (1880) and private houses at 62 Power Street, 58-60 Power Street, 79 and 19 Canterbury Road, Camberwell. This last was originally known as 'Linda' and constructed for department store magnate William J Craig, of Craig, Williamson (1887). The property is today known as the Baptcare Hedley Sutton Community. James Wood's other residential work in the Hawthorn and Camberwell area included unidentified houses in Wattle Road (1879), Lisson Grove (1880), Glenferrie Road (1881), Auburn Grove (1881-82), Riversdale Road (1882), Burke Road (1882-83) and Harcourt Street (1883).

The architectural style of James Wood was mostly in the prevailing Italianate mode common in Victoria in the 1870s and 80s. Wood's design for the Augustine Congregational church was, not surprisingly, in the Gothic style, but making extensive use of polychromatic brickwork.

Owner of 9 Auburn Grove William McFee was a general wholesale and retail hardware merchant with premises at 89 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, which he opened in 1885 and

by the end of 1887 had 16 staff members in his employ (*Victoria and Its Metropolis* 1888:509). Despite his apparent success, title records indicate that in 1893, McFee's house at 9 Auburn Grove was in possession of the Commercial Bank of Australia in liquidation, presumably due to financial difficulty during the 1890s' economic depression (LV: 1249/173). McFee is listed as a resident at Auburn Grove in street directories between 1884 and 1896, sometimes under 'McPhee'; an alternate spelling of his surname (S&McD).

William Thomas McFee shares a similar heritage to most Australians of the nineteenth century, having emigrated in 1848 from England with his mother Sarah and his father, also named William Thomas (SLV records, as cited in VHR nomination [29 April 2016]). William senior established a business as a stationer, bookseller and binder in Collins Street, Melbourne, where he lived with his wife and children in a small combined shop and dwelling (S&McD). The family relocated to Dunedin, New Zealand in 1865, and it was not until the late-1870s that the family returned to Victoria, where William Thomas McFee junior took up residence in Auburn Grove, Hawthorn in the early 1880s (SLV records, as cited in VHR nomination [29 April 2016]).

The Australian economy was built on the back of hard working, enterprising migrants, and so the McFees are not unique in their contribution to Melbourne's business development. However, it is noteworthy that William Thomas McFee served as a Councillor for the Hawthorn Borough Council between 1887 and 1890, indicating that he was an individual of some standing in the community (as cited in VHR nomination [29 April 2016]). McFee continued his contribution to local government after relocating to Phillip Island in the late 1890s (*Frankston and Somerville Standard* 17 August 1928:8).

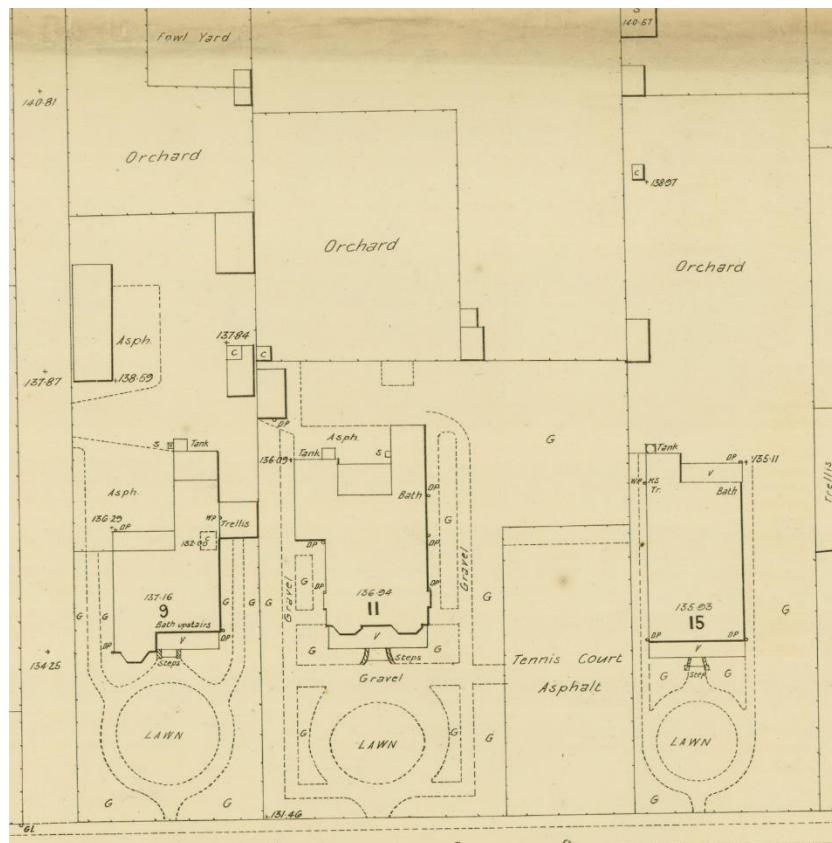


Figure 1: 1903 MMBW Detail Plan 1544 showing residence at 9 Auburn Grove (Source: SLV)

The house at 9 Auburn Grove was named 'Grassmere' under the ownership of Mrs Emily Francis Hall, who purchased the property in May 1900 (LV: 1249/173). The funeral notice



of Emily Hall's husband Mr George Hall, published in newspapers in February 1901, notes his residence at 'Grasmere' Auburn Grove (*The Argus* 8 February 1901:1).

The MMBW Detail Plan for the property, created in 1903, shows the residence at number 9 Auburn Grove as a similar size and composition as other properties in the street, consisting of a large residence, landscaped front garden with circular paths and lawn, and an orchard and outbuildings at the rear (see Figure 1). Property certificates indicate that the orchard portion of the allotment – located to the north – was sold off to Robert Henry Gregory in August 1927 and now comprises 1, 1A, 3 and 3A Fletcher Street (LV: 1249/173).

Description & Integrity

Grasmere, at 9 Auburn Grove, Hawthorn East, is a masonry Italianate villa of 1882 which stands on a corner site, on the east side of Fletcher Street. It sits behind a very deep front garden filled with mature trees. Of particular note is a mature Deodar Cedar on the west side of the garden. It is paired with fairly poor specimen of a grafted *Gleditsia tricantha*. There is a more recent row of cypresses along the boundary. The rendered masonry fence around the front garden is not original.

The house has rendered masonry walls above rock-faced bluestone foundations, a slate-covered M-profile hip roof and a double-storey verandah beside a two-storey canted bay with a hexagonal hip roof, creating a classic Italianate asymmetrical composition. The large chimneys are also classic examples of the Italianate, with ruled render shafts, stop-chamfered arises, and a substantial run cornice at the top (along with terracotta chimney pots).

The render is ruled to resemble stone ashlar, and the windows are finished with complex stop-chamfers with staff rod to the sides and top. There is a run cornices above the ground floor of the canted bay, while the first floor terminates in a narrow moulding and paired cast-cement corbel brackets.

Windows to the façade are all one-over-one double hung sashes with rectangular heads. The front door has four panels with bolection mouldings and fielded panels. Around it are panelled sidelights and highlights with painted stained glass.

The verandah retains paired cast-iron Corinthian columns, and cast-iron friezes and a balustrade to the first floor.

The plan of the house is the same as shown in the 1903 MMBW plan, with a long rear wing to the east side. This wing also appears to be intact, retaining a corniced chimney, ruled render, sash windows without the chamfer detail, and a round-arched stained glass window to the interior stairs. A reproduction bullnose verandah has been added around this rear wing at the ground floor level, however, this small addition is not visible from the public domain and could be reversed.

There is a 20th-century garage at the rear of the property that is sympathetic in its form and materials.

Comparative Analysis

Grasmere, at 9 Auburn Grove, is a classic example of the larger Italianate houses that were so popular during the 1880s in Melbourne's suburbs. There are many examples in the western part of Boroondara, which was settled first, and a smaller number in suburbs such as Hawthorn East.

In Hawthorn itself, there are many larger examples of this type, often with a return verandah. Examples include 6 Hepburn Street and 12 Goodall Street (both Significant in HO164), and 149 Victoria Road (HO428).

Grasmere is more closely comparable to Individually Significant examples of this type of villa in Hawthorn East. These include:

- Essington House, 67 Mayston Street (HO465) - an 1870s Italianate two-storey house whose single-fronted façade is dominated by a canted bay. The rendered walls have quoins and run mouldings, and the verandah is to the ground floor only.
- Norwood, 14 Auburn Grove (HO432) - built in 1882, it is described as a 'substantial Italianate villa of stuccoed brick with a canted west bay and a verandah with a non-original (but sympathetic) lace balustrade and iron posts.' The statement of significance comments on its 'front garden setback of generous proportions' and the 'façade is also distinguished by the relatively unusual use of square-headed windows' (Lovell Chen, 2006)

Grasmere and Norwood, which stand on opposite sides of the same street, are nearly identical in their setting, form and details. The blocks of land are the same size, though Grasmere has a slightly deeper garden setback and is enhanced by mature trees. Both have a two-storey asymmetrical form with a canted bay and front verandah. They both have ruled render and almost identical run mouldings and eaves brackets. Both have the reportedly unusual square-headed windows, but Grasmere's windows have more complex chamfering detail (and to three sides, while only to the sides of Norwood's). The front door and surrounds of Grasmere's is wider and more ornate than Norwood's, and the verandah detail of Grasmere appears to be intact (unlike Norwood's).

In summary, Grasmere is the equal of Individually Significant Norwood in its size and setting, but somewhat superior in its decorative detail and intactness.



Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Planning and Community Development, September 2012, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: *Importance to the course, or pattern, of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

NA

CRITERION B: *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).*

NA

CRITERION C: *Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).*

NA

CRITERION D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

Grasmere is a fine and substantial representative example of an 1880s Italianate villa. It has an asymmetrical façade, created by a two-storey canted bay with a hexagonal roof, with a front verandah beside it. Other typical details include the cast-iron details to the two-storey verandah, with paired Corinthian columns, frieze with brackets, and a balustrade to the first floor, as well as the slate-clad M-profile hip roof with large cornices and chimneys.

CRITERION E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).*

Grasmere is aesthetically distinguished for its deep front garden setting with mature Deodar Cedar, and for the fine detailing seen in its render - particularly the chamfering to windows and chimneys - and to its substantial front door and surround.

CRITERION F: *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).*

NA

CRITERION G: *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 their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).*

NA

CRITERION H: *Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).*



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The two-storey rendered brick Italianate villa, called Grasmere, at 9 Auburn Grove, Hawthorn East, is significant to the extent of its 1880s fabric.

The mature Deodar Cedar in the front garden is a contributory element.

How is it significant?

Grasmere is of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

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Grasmere is aesthetically distinguished for its deep front garden setting with a mature Deodar Cedar, and for the fine detailing seen in its render - particularly the chamfering to windows and chimneys - and to its substantial front door and surround. (Criterion E)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External Paint Colours <i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	No
Internal Alteration Controls <i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree Controls <i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	Yes – Deodar Cedar
Victorian Heritage Register <i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Incorporated Plan <i>Does an Incorporated Plan apply to the site?</i>	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions <i>Are there outbuildings and fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted <i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place <i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No



Identified By

M Gould, Hawthorn Heritage Study, 1993.

References

- City of Hawthorn (former) municipal rate books.
- 'Deaths', Argus 8 February 1901:1.
- Grove Estate, Hawthorn Estate Plan 1885, Walker, May & Co Printers, Melbourne.
- Hepburn Hill, Auburn Estate Plan 1885, J Batten lithographers, Melbourne.
- Lovell Chen 2011, Former Yorkshire Brewery 1-21 Robert Street Collingwood Conservation Management Plan, prepared for SMA Projects.
- LV: Land Victoria Certificates of Title, as cited.
- Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Detail Plan no. 1544, 1903.
- Sands & McDougall Directories (S&McD).
- 'Tenders', Argus 4 December 1882:14.
- 'Tenders', Argus 22 March 1883:3.
- 'Tenders', Argus 3 Jan 1884:2.
- Victoria & Its Metropolis: Past and Present 1888, McCarron, Bird & Co. Publishers, Melbourne.
- 'Phillip Island', Frankston and Somerville Standard, 17 August 1928:8.