Photograph: Rose Stereograph Co. State Library of Victoria

ARCHITECTURAL ODDITIES IN MIDDLE PARK ~ PART 6
By Max Nankervis

In his 6th and final essay on architectural oddities, Max takes on law and order, subdivision oddities and extensions.

LAW AND ORDER

The last few years have seen a rationalisation of police stations across the state. But at one stage, and for many years there appears to have been a police station, or what might have been a sort of sub-station, in Middle Park. Strangely the address of the police station appears to shift over the years, which suggests it was always a small office, and perhaps a rented facility. Several sites are noted in *Sands & McDougall* as being, for a time, a police station (with the name of the officer-in-charge noted), suggesting that he (it was always he) lived on the premises. No 259 Richardson St is one such site though, given that it has unusual architectural qualities, and two front entrances, it suggests it was either purpose built or converted for use to enable the front rooms to be used as the police office.

141 Ashworth St

Former police station at 259 Richardson St

LONELY LITTLE PETUNIAS IN THE ONION PATCH

While most houses front wide streets, and some sections of the lanes are generally developed as streets, there are a couple of isolated developments which stand alone. Perhaps the most notable is the pair of small houses in Neville St between Langridge and Fraser streets. This pair, now converted to one house, are situated in a section of Neville St with narrow footpaths (as other sections have) but remains a cobblestone lane. Another lone house can be found at 141 Ashworth St. Other subdivision oddities can be found, for example, at the site (N 31 Langridge) which is a small isolated site accessed only by either of two lanes, one off Langridge, and one off Patterson St and was probably used at one time as an industrial or storage site. Just how and why this isolated site was created remain a mystery. It is presently undeveloped except for a shed.

EXTENSIONS

In general, the half-life of a private house is about 50 years, at which stage major works are often necessary both to conserve the fabric, but also "catch-up" with new technology. Thus post WW2 many houses in Middle Park were given a face-lift and, in many cases a rebuilding of the service rooms at the rear. In most cases these works were, in architectural terms, pedestrian and utilitarian. But by the late 20th century, especially accelerated by the shifting demographic from "old salts" to "baby boomers" and "Gen X", the renovation process has moved into overdrive. By the early 21st century probably a majority of houses in Middle Park have had significant alterations, generally of a more architectural style. While debate (and outcome) over the last 2-3 decades has often focussed on the appropriate architectural style, there has been a shift from a form of "reproduction" architecture (attempting to make new extensions look old), towards a clear architectural statement of modern, and more lately, postmodern architecture.
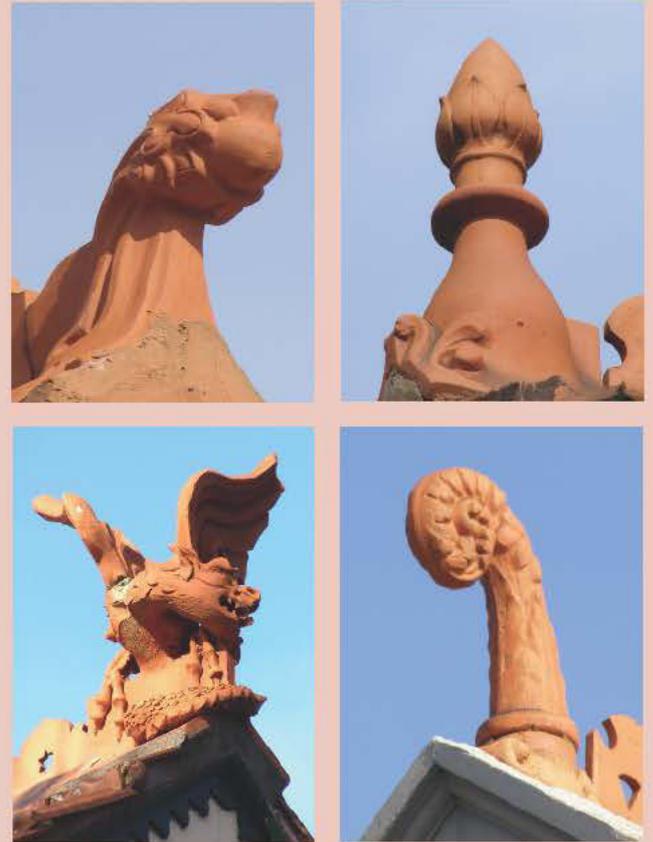

Modern extension at 16 Nimmo St

While most of these extensions are not generally visible to passers-by (a point of emphasis in planning permits), there are several on corner sites which make bold statements. Some of the more bold, postmodern statements can, for example, be seen in the recent extensions to the former 1920s shop-house on the corner of Park Rd and Fraser St where the extensions is designed to be almost a form of urban sculpture, making no pretence of being old and original. The extension of the corner NW of Page and Armstrong St is similarly bold, as is that at 16 Nimmo St and. A common theme in these extensions appears to be the use of metal as a facing, a distinct shift from the traditional materials of brick or wood.

Extension at corner Page and Armstrong Sts

Terracotta finials around Middle Park

Here are a few of the many and varied finials found on houses throughout Middle Park. They were a particularly popular decorative element added mainly to Federation Style buildings. (see Newsletter 5 'Federation Style')

THE CHURCHES OF MIDDLE PARK
A series by Diana Phoenix

Middle Park is the home to at least seven church buildings of which only two, the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Baptist Church still operate. In this series Diana tells us about the places of worship in Middle Park, both present and past

The Church of Christ

In 1904 a break-away group of 30 Church of Christ members left South Melbourne and met in Honeybone's Hall in Neville Street, intending to work towards the establishment of their own place of worship in Middle Park. The planned church, on the corner of Richardson and Mills Streets, was designed to have brick walls, a tiled roof and seating for 150 people. Permission was granted by the Health Department and the opening took place on 24 November 1909.

This is not a large building, measuring 30 X 13 metres, containing five bays, with the entrance on Richardson Street, opposite the Middle Park Primary School. The style of architecture is simpler than that of the Presbyterian (now demolished) and Methodist churches further east along Richardson Street. Built of red brick, these bays each contain a gothic style window.

In May 1915 an application for additions to the Church was submitted to the Health Department, and these were opened in October of that year. The architect was W. Meekison who was also the first pastor, while the builder was Mr. W. Timmins. A manse was not acquired. Meekison's name was inscribed on a 1915 foundation stone, the location of which is now unknown. In 1910-1911 he was living at 21 Wright Street, but by 1915 he was at 36 Mary Street, St Kilda. The first preacher was H. G. Hayward, registered in March 1910.

The original building contained only 3 bays, each approximately 3 metres wide, with those added closer to 4 metres wide. The walls are punctuated by projecting 'buttresses' an additional brick deep every 3-4 metres. The windows are 'Gothic' style, with one window per bay. They are' banded' with two cement bands, one running at sill height, and one towards the top of each window, but which partly forms the lintel. The roof is made of red or 'Marseilles' style tiles which give a black and red effect.

Sunday School operated from the start, also a choir and then a Dorcas Society. A Soldiers Comfort Club existed later, obviously after the outbreak of war. Annual picnics were held, with the children transported in horse-driven vans as far away as Doncastor or Murrumbeena.

The strength of the organisation came from the youth and young adult clubs. There were football and cricket teams, plus tennis and athletics clubs. These were to provide recreation for young people, children and adults away from worldly recreation facilities that might lure them away from the Church and its services. Membership was based on church attendance which was required at least once a month. Everybody joined in the fund raising and building maintenance. The rules were very strict: discussions would take place about these, and whether certain music was appropriate. Marriage of divorcees was not allowed. Dancing was forbidden because it had not been mentioned in the Bible.

The Depression made a difference to the Church community. The salary of the minister was reduced, while the church was unable to buy songbooks. It could be that this socio-economic crisis was something from which this particular Church did not recover.

By 1948 the ministers officiating were still undergoing training, thus were of student status. However, the Sunday School and various clubs were still active. A breakthrough came in 1955 when women were elected to the Board. Max Nankervis reported that Russell Hiscock and Elva Longstaff, both local residents, stated that the Church was not strongly attended and the community was small. Lack of adequate housing caused many church members to leave the district. According to Church of Christ records membership numbers were roughly 135 in 1962 and as low as 25 when it closed.

Great changes were taking place in society following the end of WW2 and the Church of Christ could have been affected more than others because of its strict rules. Many schools and clubs were insisting on attendance at Saturday sporting events, often where better facilities were available. More families spent week-ends away at beach or country properties, thanks to the growing car ownership. In addition television was inducing people to stay at home rather than spend evenings at church meetings or services.

In 1976 a Greek School was set up in the building, run by the Church and Mr Peter Gouzos, a member of the Greek community. Finally, in July, 1977 the Church was closed. The Church Property Corporation decided to put the building up for sale. Mr. Peter Gough, a photographer, bought it and used it for a studio for some years.

During the 1990s the Church was converted into three apartments. This project was carried out in accordance with the regulations enforced by a Heritage Overlay on the building.

Carol Lee, compiler. Yesterday, today and forever: the history of South Melbourne/Middle Park Church of Christ (unpublished). Public Record Office. 5755 7882 PI 722. PRO.
Sands & McDougall Directory. 1910, 1916.
Max Nankervis. Report on former Church of Christ, 2001.
Protestant Churches in South Melbourne. File held in the City of Port Phillip Heritage Centre.

Of the many churches found throughout Middle Park, which church bears this cross?

MYSTERY OBJECT

Last edition mystery object

THE AGE painted advertising sign is located at 111a Wright St. This was Tom Corrigan's mixed business shop. Deliveries were done by bicycle. There are still a few other painted signs remaining on Middle Park commercial buildings. Sadly, most have almost faded away.

KNOW YOUR STREET NAMES

Mc GREGOR ST

Robert McGregor, MLA for Emerald Hill, 1880-83
Robert MacGregor (1825 -1883) was born in Banffshire, Scotland. He was educated in Edinburgh, and arrived in Melbourne about 1852. McGregor settled in Emerald Hill and was soon after appointed headmaster of the South Melbourne Wesleyan Day School, and in 1863 founded the South Melbourne Grammar School in Albert Road. This was the first secondary school in South Melbourne. From about 1867 he supplemented his income by becoming an estate agent. By 1873 evening classes were offered to prepare for matriculation entry to the civil service, and commercial examinations were also being offered. McGregor entered politics in the 'Liberal cause', first as MLA for Fitzroy '1877-1879', and then Emerald Hill (1880 –1883). He died of heart disease. He married Sarah Brown in 1858, producing five sons and six daughters, not all of whom survived him.

Extract with thanks to Dr Rob Grogan, from his book: *Colonels, Colonials and Councillors: The Origin of Street Names of South Melbourne*, Cygnet Books, 2007.

It happened in:

Source:
The Heart of Middle Park
Chronology

1861   A 77 acre military reserve gazetted around Danks and Mills St
1897   Tea-tree planting along Beaconsfield Pde
1927   Wright St Bathing Club started

Canterbury Rd mid 1970s. Photo: John Stirling

THE HEART OF MIDDLE PARK
STORIES FROM A SUBURB BY THE SEA

MIDDLE PARK
FROM SWAMP TO SUBURB

OUTLETS WHERE OUR PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE
Armstrong St Village: Hot Honey, Armstrong St Deli, Victor's Dry Cleaners, Sweat, Middle Park Bowling Club
Albert Park: Avenue Bookstore

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CITY OF PORT PHILLIP

MEETING SCHEDULE: **Committee meetings:** 3 November 2014 **General Meeting:** 1 December 2014
Notification will be sent to you prior to the meeting listing agenda items and supporting documents

MPHG COMMITTEE: **President** *John Stirling* **Vice President** *Meyer Eidleson* **Secretary** *David South* **Treasurer** *Sonya Cameron* **Public Officer** *Diana Phoenix* & *Rosemary Goad*