

# MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP

**Newsletter 5 January 2013**

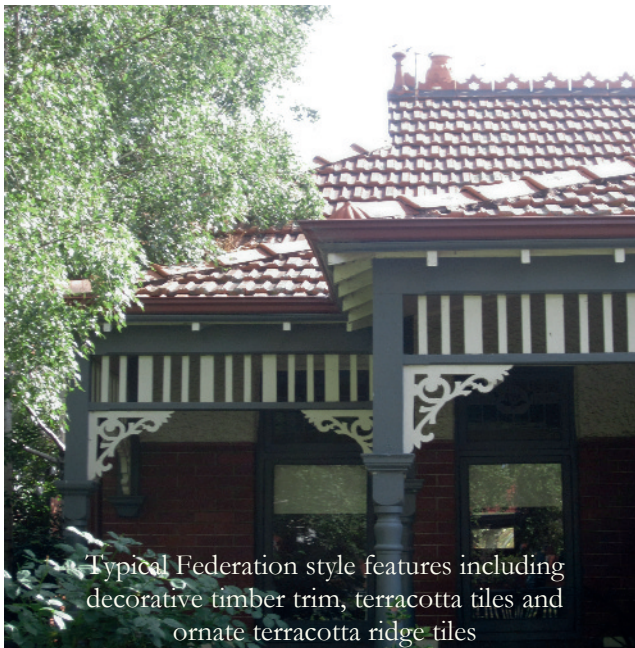
Photograph: Rose Stereograph Co. State Library of Victoria

## *MIDDLE PARK HOUSE STYLES*

*By Alison St John and Max Nankervis*

### FEDERATION STYLE

By 1881 three quarters of Australians had been born here. After a hundred years of colonial rule, with a national pride growing, the collection of colonies was finally united under a federal government on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1901. The strong ties between Australia and England continued, but under a national government, Australia started to stand on her own feet. A rich nationalistic flavour was apparent in literature, painting and the applied arts, and to a lesser extent, in architecture. As well as absorbing influences from England, Australian architecture was at times, exhibiting a distinct Australian flavour. Images of Australian flora and fauna were popular and the style known as Federation developed.



Typical Federation style features including decorative timber trim, terracotta tiles and ornate terracotta ridge tiles



Distinctive Australian kangaroo motif, decorative ridges and hexagonal slate roof pattern

The period 1890-1914 is referred to as Edwardian, Edward VII having been on the throne for part of this time. The term Edwardian was generally in use until about thirty years ago but now tends to have more of an "English" connotation, and in recent years, the term Federation, which is really the Australian version of Edwardian, has been more widely used, but they are interchangeable.



Another example of typical Federation style decorative features

The boom of the eighties had been followed by the crash of the nineties, and these economic phenomena were reflected in the architecture. Things gradually improved as the decade progressed and then a wave of prosperity launched the new century. (Cont. next page)

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Thanks to Richard Barber for assisting with editing this newsletter



Housing types were changing. In the early nineteen hundreds new suburbs started to appear to cater for the demands of a growing population due not only to immigration from overseas but also to the population drift to the cities. With new transport technologies, the extension of public and private transport enabled people to move away from the dense belt of nineteenth century housing out to new suburbs (as well as to older areas like Middle Park and Elwood where former swamp land was reclaimed for development). Terrace houses were being phased out in favour of bungalows and semi-detached houses became very popular, being a combination of terrace and bungalow.



A fine Federation style house

We can see in Federation architecture, as well as the effect of the economic downturn of the 1890s, the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement and the Art Nouveau style, both of which were flourishing in Europe at the time. The effect of these influences is apparent as we walk round Middle Park. While Federation houses are handsomely decorated, the depression of the 1890s meant that the exaggerated decoration of the “Boom” style of architecture was less affordable and there was a move to a relaxed, more romantic style.

The proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement in England believed that craftsmanship had been destroyed by the Industrial Revolution and wished to reform design and restore the creativity to the work process itself. Arts and Crafts architects favoured homely materials, simplicity and honest craftsmanship and the squared wooden detailing on the verandahs of some Middle Park houses shows the Arts and Crafts influence. We can also see the influence of the Art Nouveau style in Middle Park on houses with, for example, ‘vivacious Art Nouveau timber curves’ as Stapleton and Stapleton describe them in ‘Australian House Styles’!<sup>1</sup> The flow-on effect of Art Nouveau is also evident in Middle Park in many lovely stained glass windows



Characteristic Arts and Crafts style house plaque

As mentioned in our previous article, there are houses in this area which are not strictly Federation or Victorian but a mixture of both, as people sometimes favoured older styles and built in a “nostalgic” manner, harking back to other years.

## WHAT IS FEDERATION ARCHITECTURE?

There was in Federation architecture a reaction to the formality and the heavy ornamentation of the Victorian age. Decoration was less formal and less complex and often based on wood rather than cast iron or plaster moulding. Colour was more subdued..



Wooden fretwork patterned verandah

### Characteristics of Federation Houses

**The roofs**, tiled in red toned tiles (often imported from France and thus called Marseilles tiles.). In ‘The Federation House; Australia's Own Style’<sup>2</sup>, Fraser and Joyce claim that by 1914 tiles for 40,000 homes had been imported before Wunderlich set up factories and started producing local ones. Roofs were a most distinctive feature, often broken by a false gable, turrets, decorative motifs terracotta trimmed ridges. They were high pitched and bulky, balanced by tall vertical chimney lines. While slates were also still used, the red Marseilles tiles became more predominant. The roof was dominant and closer to the viewer's eye level so its style and embellishments were easily visible. In contrast to the simpler line of the Victorian roof which was often hidden behind a parapet, the Federation roof was fascinatingly ‘busy’.



Federation tiling patterns were usually less ornate than the Victorian period

**A variety of materials** were used – shingles (on gables), rough cast, timber slats and fretwork timber.

**Asymmetry**, variety and irregularity were favoured

**Joinery demonstrating the skills of the wood turner and carpenter** a feature of the Arts and Crafts philosophy. Timber detailing on verandahs often replaced cast iron. More often, rather than cast iron verandah ones, posts of turned timber were linked by wooden fretwork rather than by the earlier cast iron panels, or vertical slats in different shapes and patterns. The Federation verandah was a reaction to what was considered to be the tacked on appearance of the Victorian one and architects attempted to integrate the verandah and porch with the roof line. (Cont. next page)



**Walls of red and brown brick** or sometimes a combination rather than the polychrome of Victorian houses. Sometimes a band of contrasting brick was featured in the brickwork as is visible in the photos.

**Fences** of timber pickets or low brick topped with chain ropes.

**Leadlight and stained glass** replaced the etched glass of Victorian houses. A small set of coloured glass windows above the main windows was common. Another frequently seen feature was the circular window.

**Verandah floors and pathways** of tiling which was of a simpler design to its Victorian predecessor.

**The sunrise motif** on the front gable which, according to the authority on Federation architecture, Ian Evans<sup>3</sup>, represented the dawning of a new age.



Federation style tower



### THE NEXT PHASE

The Federation style of housing continued until World War 1 and was followed by the Californian Bungalow which was multiplied across the country from south to north and east to west.

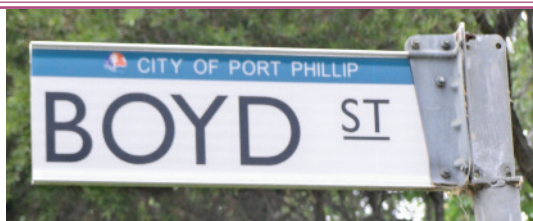
1. *Australian Housing Styles*, by Maisy and Ian Stapleton, Flannel Flower Press. 1997

2. *The Federation House*, by Hugh Fraser and Ray Joyce, New Holland Publishers 2002

3. *Federation House ~ A Restoration Guide*, by Ian Evans, Flannel Flower Press 2004



## Know your Street Names



**John Boyd** Butcher, Estate agent, Councillor, Mayor. Councillor 1875-79; 1890-93; Mayor 1878-9.

John Boyd (-1913) was a Councillor for six years between 1877 and 1883. During that time he had butcher shops in Coventry, Bank and Montague Streets. He later relinquished butchering, and became a house, land and insurance agent in Albert Park from 1885. Boyd was Mayor in 1878-9, and during that time laid the commemorative stone for the new town hall. In 1897 on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee there were no public celebrations but the distribution of food to the needy. Boyd's butchering skills were used on that occasion.

In February 1869 Boyd became the first president of the Emerald Hill United Friendly Societies Dispensary. This dispensary, at 44 East York Street next to the Hit or Miss Hotel, was the first of its kind in Australia, and endeavoured to provide medicines for all of its members. Boyd was also a member of the first committee of the South Melbourne Permanent Building Society in June, 1875. Its aim was to provide facilities for the building, purchase and improvement of freehold property, and for the safe and profitable investment of money. Shares were 25 pounds, compared to one hundred pounds that other societies had previously offered.

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

## Mystery Heritage Object

Hundreds of these disks can be seen throughout Middle Park. What are the numbers and letters telling us?





**Diana Phoenix and Rosemary Goad  
organizing the History Week exhibition**

**History Week 21-27 October 2012**

Following a suggestion by Kay Rowan, City of Port Phillip Local History Librarian, we decided to create a presence in the Middle Park Library during that week. With the help of Katherine Foster, Librarian Team Leader, two members were able to sit in the Library for an hour or two each day to speak to people, primarily about the corner shops which were so vital but which have now disappeared. As a result we made contact with several residents who have provided us with valuable information, and one of these will take part in a comprehensive interview as part of our Oral History Project.

**It Happened in...**

**1862** The Acclimatization Society asked the Council 'to endeavour to protect at Albert Park all native birds except hawks'.

**1911** Middle Park School 2815 had an enrolment of 1100.

**2012** The residents of Middle Park in Melbourne and Lakes Entrance in Gippsland are the most generous in the nation. ('The Age' October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

Source: 'The Heart Of Middle Park' Chronology

**HAVE YOU BOUGHT  
OUR FIRST BOOK?**

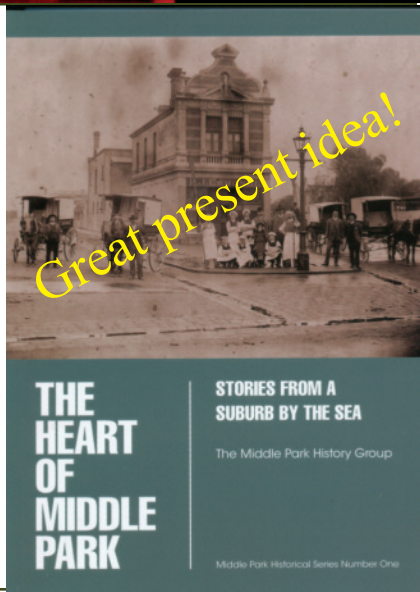
Our very popular book 'The Heart of Middle Park' can still be purchased for \$15 from these outlets:

**Armstrong Street:**  
Victor's Dry Cleaners  
Sweat

**Richardson Street:**  
Peter Simmons  
Real Estate

**Albert Park:**  
Avenue Bookshop  
**Or by contacting us  
at:**

[middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com](mailto:middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com)



**LAST EDITION  
MYSTERY  
HERITAGE  
OBJECT**

Regularly seen in lanes throughout Middle Park. What has caused this deep ridge?



These deep ridges are noticeable throughout most lanes in Middle Park and inner Melbourne. They are caused by the constant movement of iron-rimmed cart wheels over the basalt (bluestone) pavers.

Lane ways were constantly used by horse and cart transport particularly by the 'night man' before sewerage was connected in the latter part of the 1890's. Once a rut began to form, cart wheels would slip into the ridge, causing a 'rail line' effect. This is very noticeable when carts turned out from a lane.

Excellent examples of deep ruts can be seen throughout lanes in the Emerald Hill district of South Melbourne

**Board Members:**

President: **John Stirling**  
Vice President: **Meyer Eidelson**  
Secretary: **Alison St John**  
Treasurer: **Sonya Cameron**  
Public Officer: **Diana Phoenix**  
**Rosemary Goad**



The Middle Park History Group is supported by The City of Port Phillip

Forthcoming general meetings: **4th February 2013, 1st April 2013**

Committee meetings: **4th March 2013, 6th May 2013**

**Meetings are held in the Mary Kehoe Centre, 224 Danks St, Albert Park at 4.30 pm.**

(Notification will be sent to you prior to the meeting listing agenda items)