

MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter 3 July 2012

Photograph: Rose Stereograph Co. State Library of Victoria

MIDDLE PARK HOUSE STYLES

By Alison St John and Max Nankervis

In comparison with other inner Melbourne suburban areas, Middle Park was a “late developer” in that the area was not surveyed until the 1870s and so most housing appeared after that decade. However, Middle Park does boast a variety of housing styles, from late Victorian to some post WW2 housing stock, but the majority of houses are late Victorian (1875-1900) or Federation (1890-1915) and Edwardian (1901-World War 1). It is our plan to examine the varieties of housing types over the next few editions of this newsletter, commencing in this edition with late Victorian, the area having been developed following the earlier Victorian housing period.

The Late Victorian Period 1875 to 1900

The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 led initially to the Gold Rush, and eventually to the great Land Boom of the 1880s. This was a time of prosperity and growth and in this Land Boom period houses began to appear in the Middle Park area. Even though late Victorian architecture represents a time of economic buoyancy, houses of the period in this area ranged from simpler styles to the more decorated “Boom” style, including some in the Italianate style, with its characteristic loggia verandahs amongst other features. There are few Middle Park houses exhibiting full-blown “Boom” characteristics and those that do are generally less heavily decorated, missing out on the “conspicuous display of wealth” seen in Boom houses in other areas of Melbourne.

House styles do not fit neatly into an exact time frame and, while particular houses may be classified in a certain style, the style is often merely an indicator of the time it may have been built. Some people build with (perhaps nostalgic) hints of a past age or style. We can see this today when people build reproduction Federation (or

even Victorian) style houses. Anachronistic houses are to be seen in Middle Park showing a combination of style features, and some in styles that continued long after they were high fashion. (Cont p2)



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When looking at late Victorian period houses, it is important to consider terrace houses, though many are actually free standing (ie not physically connected). In Middle Park they range from single-fronted single-storey cottages to the grander terraces on Canterbury Road and Beaconsfield Parade, generally built of brick which was often covered with stucco. There are almost no grand mansions, like those to be found in St Kilda or Caulfield for example. The former Buxton home (perhaps best known as the Danish Club) is one exception.

The general style of Victorian housing became more elaborate between 1860 and 1890 . However, the depression of 1893, combined with the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, tended to introduce a fashion of less elaborate ornamentation. Nevertheless, many houses built after this date (and this includes most houses in Middle Park) still retained the elements of “high Victorian” architecture. These included:

- The polychrome brickwork of earlier Victorian houses. This polychrome styling appeared in the architecture of Melbourne in the 1860s and 70s, apparently through the influence of the writings of John Ruskin and the work of George Edmund Street, an English Gothic Revivalist architect.
- The exposed brick-work, at least on the facade, was tuck-pointed (ie highlighted by white plaster lines) There was less use of stucco (cement rendered bricks)
- Less use of a front decorated parapet.
- The sidelights which appeared either side of the front door in early Victorian homes, which were more often “stained” or painted, and coloured lead-light glass.
- Timber on front of houses representing stone-work
- The bay windows began to be more square shaped rather than poly/tri-sided, and less use of the large “bay” or tri-sided wall on the projecting room.
- A more subdued use of ornamentation including iron lace, patterned tiled verandahs and

front paths of houses, stuccoed exteriors embellished with moulded ornamental swags, shields, flowers, human heads, vermiculation where the stucco was made to look like as if it had been eaten by worms, and Italianate elements which has been such a feature of High Victorian style.

- *"A decorative parapet was used to hide the roof, often combined with balusters above an eave cornice and a frieze either plain or decorated with a row of brackets. A central classical styled pediment was balanced by a pair of finials or urns on either side (often later removed). Party walls were usually decorated with corbels which sometimes depicted heads.*

Melbourne (and therefore Middle Park) terraces featured cast iron balconies and today Melbourne has more decorative cast iron than any other city in the world.” (Wikipedia)



In general, late Victorian times saw an explosion of experimentation informed by the legacy of classical architecture but late Victorian houses (after 1890) tended to have less use of those elements of “High” Victorian Italianate style. As most houses in Middle Park post-date 1890, they tend to fit into this category.

Photos by Alison St John

ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY of VICTORIA ANNUAL BOOK SALE

Please donate your unwanted books to the annual book sale at Royal Historical Society before the 9th September, at 239 A'Beckett Street. 10 minutes free parking is available outside . Alternatively, deliver to Diana Phoenix, 9696-1878.

Book sale is on Sunday 9th September

Know your street names - MILLS STREET

Robert S Mills, Hotel keeper, estate agent; Councillor; Mayor.

Robert John Mills was born in 1826 in Longford, County Longford, Ireland. His early education was at Edgworthtown, where his friend and companion was GV Brooke. He arrived in Melbourne with his father and siblings, and briefly went to the diggings. Mills settled in Emerald Hill,

and entered into business as a boniface ('jovial innkeeper'), but later became an auctioneer and estate agent in conjunction with his son.

Mills was the publican of the Emerald Hotel (76 Clarendon Street) for about 12 years. With Patrick Ward, he built the first two storied brick houses in South Melbourne, shops in Clarendon Street, next to the hotel. Later, he was actively involved with the Licensed Victuallers Association, and managed its Collingwood brewery during his mayoral year.



Mills was a Councillor, (1874-1894 and 1896-99) and Mayor, 1877-78. He was also a Commissioner for the Melbourne Harbour Trust, a director of the South Melbourne Gas Company (from 1872), and involved in so many committees, that he was known as 'the old war horse'.

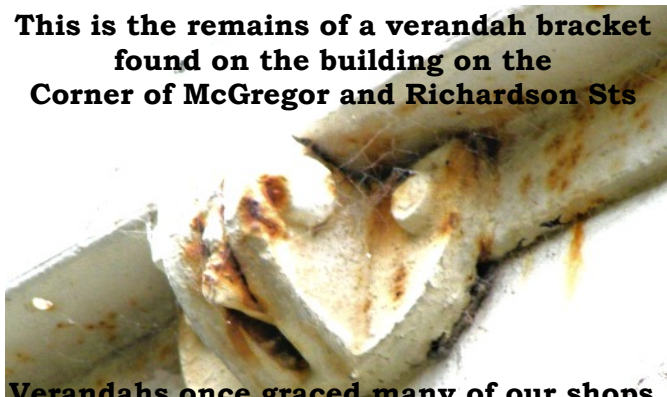
Mills and his wife, who died in 1879, had three daughters and two sons. One of his daughters, Phoebe, married Edward Heather in 1885, and one of his sisters may have married Councillor James Page. Other members of his family were also actively involved in the area.

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.

LAST EDITION MYSTERY-HERITAGE OBJECT

This is the remains of a verandah bracket found on the building on the Corner of McGregor and Richardson Sts



Verandahs once graced many of our shops throughout our suburb. Other bracket remains are evident on Middle Park shops. Would you like to see verandahs restored?

MYSTERY HERITAGE OBJECT

What is it and where is it?

Send responses to:

The Secretary, PO Box 5276,
Middle Park 3206, or email
middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com





MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Middle Park History Group will celebrate it's first year of operation on Monday September 3rd at 4.30 pm, at the Mary Kehoe Centre, 224 Dank St, Albert Park.

At this meeting there will be the election of office bearers and the presentation of the annual and financial reports.

Geoff Cayzer, director of Cayzer Real Estate will be our guest speaker. With over 25 years experience with Cayzer Real Estate, Geoff will highlight the changes that have taken place in real estate and how they have impacted on the heritage throughout our municipality.



AUGUST MEETING SPEAKER

Meyer Eidelson, MPHG Vice President, will be the guest speaker at our August general meeting.

Meyer is a respected historian with many books to his credit. He will speak about his professional role as a historian and his current involvement in the celebrations 'Just For Fun. A Century of Luna Park'

HAVE YOU BOUGHT OUR FIRST BOOK?

Our very popular book can still be purchased for \$15 from these outlets:

Armstrong Street

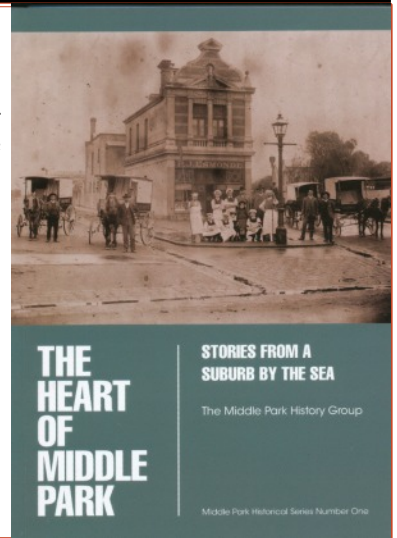
- Hot Honey

Albert Park:

- Avenue Bookshop

Or by contacting us at:

middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com



It happened in...

1850's

Account of Aborigines strolling along Clarendon St to Albert Park

1886

Middle Park Primary School opened

1926

Tram route 12 (now 112) opened through Middle Park to St Kilda

Source: 'The Heart Of Middle Park' Chronology

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



Board Members:

President: **John Stirling**

Vice President: **Meyer Eidelson**

Secretary: **Alison St John**

Treasurer: **Sonya Cameron**

Public Officer: **Diana Phoenix**

Rosemary Goad

MEETINGS

Every first Monday of the month except January

Forthcoming meetings: **6th August** , **3rd September (AGM)** , **2nd October**

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

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