



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Clifton Residence, Rathmines is significant in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the community:

The place is attractive because of the silvered weathered timber and iron materials and well-proportioned welcoming form of the cottage, and because of the sense of shelter engendered by the enclosing trees and garden. (Criterion 1.1)

The place has interiors of unpainted and polished hardwood, maintained in simple condition that is harmonious with the exteriors. (Criterion 1.1)

The place contributes to an understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic modes and themes of the development of Australian domestic architecture. (Criterion 1.2)

The place is a component of a remarkable and diverse collection of timber structures in the City of Bunbury's region (ranging from improvised forms of construction in housing, to bridges and jetties, etc) that are of substantial aesthetic interest in terms of the particular aesthetic qualities of the South-West hardwoods and as characteristic elements of the landscape. (Criterion 1.2)

The place is a component of the local picturesque townscape bounding and including *St. Patrick's Anglican Church* (c. 1910) and churchyard. (Criterion 1.3)

The place is a component of the Stirling Street - Austral Parade precinct. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Clifton Residence, Rathmines is significant in the evolution and pattern of the history of Western Australia in illustrating the following themes.

The development of the morphology of the Australian house. (Criterion 2.1)

The development of the locality of Rathmines. (Criterion 2.2)

The land ownership and subdivision patterns in the Bunbury region. (Criterion 2.2)

The association with Reverend Joseph Withers (arrived Bunbury circa 1864), inter alia, developer of Rathmines. (Criterion 2.2)

The technical achievement of durable, balloon-framed construction in untreated local hardwood. (Criterion 2.4).

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Clifton Residence, Rathmines has demonstrable potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the cultural history of Western Australia with respect to the development of the Australian house and to the human occupation of the locality and region. (Criteria 3.1, 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Clifton Residence, Rathmines is significant through having long continuity of association with the local community, and therefore has the propensity to contribute to the community's sense of place and through that sense, to its own cohesiveness. (Criterion 4.2).

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Clifton Residence, Rathmines is rare as its materials are relatively unchanged since construction, are unprotected by surface coatings, and the original form of the place and its garden are intact. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Clifton Residence, Rathmines is an unusually well preserved example of a pattern of Western Australian housing between the World Wars, following naturally from the introduced, pattern-book, timber "*Settlers Cottages*" of the turn-of-century Western Australian gold boom. (Criteria 6.1, 6.2)

The place, from its garden to its interiors, illustrates a way of life of a previous era, that has endured here for decades without the constant re fashioning common to many other places.

12. 3 CONDITION

The cumulative effects of management and environmental effects is the patina of age that is an inherent part of the cottage's aesthetic, historic, scientific and social values.

Past management has evidently been a matter of minimal change and non interference in accord with the adage "if it's not broken don't fix it".

In common with most private residences, there is no specific formal programme of management.

Clifton Residence, Rathmines is in very good condition for its age and class of structure, calling for minor periodic carpentry maintenance to maintain fixing and support of materials and components.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The compatibility of the current use could not be enhanced, being its original and only use.

The likely long term viability and sustainability of the values identified is high since they reside in the basic simple, highly-viable fabric of cottage and garden.

The cottage's materials and construction technique are inherently readily maintainable, indefinitely, in the present condition and detailing. The garden can be readily maintained by a programme of minimal, normal horticultural care, with provision for replacement growth as and when required.

Clifton Residence, Rathmines has a high degree of integrity in terms of lack of significant change since construction.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Most of the fabric of *Clifton Residence, Rathmines* is in its original state and exhibits a high, degree of authenticity, by virtue of most of it being undisturbed. Where maintenance has taken place it has been with equivalent material and detail which is in keeping with the original.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Clifton Residence, Rathmines was built in 1924 and is one of the earlier buildings developed as a consequence of the formation of the locality of Rathmines.¹

Rathmines is a locality of the City of Bunbury, on the historic Stirling Street-Austral Parade route from Bunbury to Australind, this route being well established at the outskirts of the then town, circa 1896, appearing at that time on Bunbury harbour charts. (Fig iii)

The Reverend Joseph Withers arrived at Bunbury in 1864, where he purchased *Rathmines Farm*, of 40 acres; a part of Governor Stirling's Location 26.² Withers subdivided the farm into Town Lots which have since been subdivided into house lots and rear lanes.

St Patrick's Church, which is near *Clifton Residence, Rathmines*, was established by Withers, with the present timber framed church building dating from circa 1910.³

Clifton Residence was built in 1924. Miss Ethel Clifton, the current owner and occupant, remembers her mother and family arriving by wagon to occupy the cottage built for them, on 8 October 1924. The family's bedding had been soaked by rain and so they stayed the first night at the residence next door in Shenton Street.

Miss Clifton's father died of an heart attack and he had not left any estate to his widow. A family relative assisted the widowed Mrs Clifton to acquire the Rathmines lot which is now No. 9 Shenton Street.

Miss Clifton has resided at 9 Shenton Street ever since.

A cottage of similar significance to this place, belonging to Withers' descendants, survives at *12 Preston Street*, nearby. (Photographs page 1)

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

According to an assessment by Ian Molyneux, the place is a component of a remarkable and diverse collection of timber structures in the City of Bunbury's region (ranging from improvised forms of construction in housing, to bridges and jetties, etc) that are of interest in terms of the particular aesthetic qualities of the South-West hardwoods and as characteristic elements of the landscape.⁴

The place is a component of the Stirling Street - Austral Parade precinct, which is notable for the aesthetic qualities engendered by its wide range of turn-of-century and early twentieth century dwellings in association with the

¹ Information from the report comes from Molyneux, Ian, (1995) Heritage Assessment, *Clifton Residence, Rathmines*.

² Discussions by Ian Molyneux in 1995 with the owner, Miss Ethel Clifton, and Mr Charles Staples (South Perth), historian and childhood resident of the locality.

³ Charles Staples' was christened there in 1910,. His christening was one of the first in the church.

⁴ Molyneux, Ian, (1995) Heritage Assessment, *Clifton Residence, Rathmines*.
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Leschenault Estuary landscapes. Together with *12 Preston Street, St Patricks Church* and the adjacent brick house, there are sufficient buildings to be have the quality of a sub-precinct within the larger Stirling Street-Austral Parade precinct. (Fig iv, Photographs page 1)

Precinctual relationships and qualities of places are identified in the City of Bunbury Town Planning Scheme No. 6 (gazetted 6th April 1984).⁵

The room layout of the cottage is that of one of the typical, timber-framed patterns found throughout the south-west, probably originating with the standard "Settlers Cottages" sold by the Subiaco timber merchant, Whittaker Bros., at the turn-of-century (fig ii), and subsequently appearing in the Group Settlers cottage pattern of the between Wars period of the 1920s. (Fig i)

Four main rooms form a rectangular plan; being entered via the front verandah and living room from which doors lead to front bedroom and rear kitchen. (Fig i)

A second bedroom is entered from the kitchen. A rear skillion of common form is supplemented by a side verandah, partially enclosed at the front, south-west corner.

The front rooms are lined with clear-finished dressed hardwood boards and the living room has a polished hardwood mantle piece to its plastered masonry fire place.

Figure i illustrates the uses commonly allocated to the multi-purpose rooms of the "Settlers Cottage" catalogue compiled from examples related by owner-occupants' but is representative of a shared (folk) idea of 'the house' that once prevailed in Australia.⁶

The main roof over the four principal rooms is single-pitched with side gables, and the skillion and verandah roofs extend around 3 sides; all roofs being clad with corrugated iron. The move from roofs pitched room by room to roofs pitched across the whole main floor is a hallmark technical "accomplishment" of the period.

The place is constructed of untreated local hardwood. The construction technique is that commonly known internationally as "balloon -framing" or "j.w.b" locally (jarrah-framed weatherboard-clad), generally held to have gained sway with the advent of machine made nails.

The exterior and interior construction details are self-evident and are substantially as originally built.

The condition of the cottage is substantially such as to reveal this original construction, extended by enclosure of the south-west corner verandahs and minor subsequent alterations to the extent and materials of enclosure of the rear skillion.

According to Ian Molyneux, the form of the house and the origins and development of the style are not well studied and, therefore, *Clifton Residence*,

⁵ Report of that inventory and a selection of viable places so identified were incorporated in Schedule 2. ("Buildings, Objects and Places - The Preservation of Which Should be Encouraged")

⁶ Ian Molyneux.

Rathmines has the potential, because of its high degree of authenticity and integrity to be a valuable research resource for the study of the development of this style of housing. This is increased by the original style of the garden which has simple bush plantings and by the interior of the place which has furnishing contemporaneous with the construction of the house.⁷

13.3 REFERENCES

Molyneux, Ian. (1978) Fremantle. *Bunbury National Estate Survey 1978* (unpublished report)

Molyneux, Ian. (1985) Fremantle. *Survey of the National Estate in Subiaco* (unpublished report)

Molyneux, Ian, (1995) Heritage Assessment, Clifton Residence, Rathmines.

⁷ Ian Molyneux, Architect, is the author of the report.