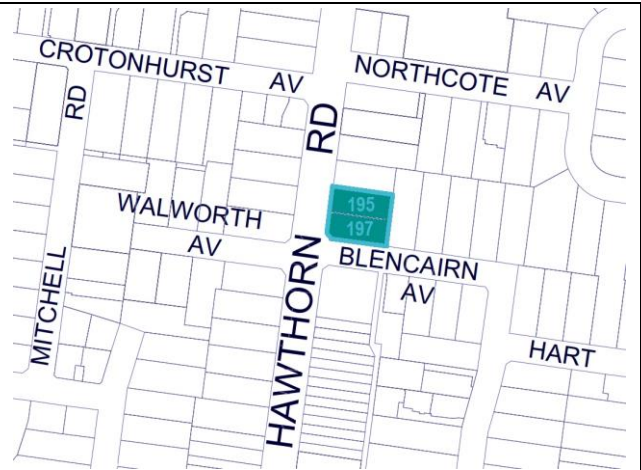


IDENTIFIER	HOUSES (PAIR)	Citation No	HG05
Other name/s		Melway ref	68 A1
Address	195-197 Hawthorn Road CAULFIELD NORTH	Date/s	1939
Designer/s	J W Fairbanks & Son	Builder/s	J W Fairbanks & Son



Photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019



Location map and extent of HO

Heritage Group	Residential building (private)	Condition	Excellent
Heritage Category	House(s)	Intactness	Excellent
Thematic context	6.7 Making homes for Victorians		
Recommendation	Include on heritage overlay schedule as an individual heritage place		
Controls	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The two houses at 195-197 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield North, comprised a detached pair of single-storey hip-roofed rendered brick dwellings in a hybrid style combining the horizontal emphasis, round corners and curved windows of the Streamlined Moderne with the fluted columns and applied ornament of the classical tradition. Similar without being identical, the two houses were erected in 1939 by local designer/builder J W Fairbanks & Son, as separate but attached residences for two sisters.

The significant fabric is defined as the exterior of both houses, the detached garage to No 195 (but excluding its front wall, which is a later infill), and the matching dwarf walls (and any original metal gates) along both street boundaries. The non-original garage at the rear of No 197, facing Blencairn Avenue, is not considered significant.

How is it significant?

The pair of houses at 195-197 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield North, satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Why is it significant?

The two houses are aesthetically significant as a distinctive example of domestic architecture from the late 1930s, deftly combining key characteristics of the prevailing Streamlined Moderne style (eg rounded corners and unusually extensive use of curved glazing) with classical touches (ie fluted porch columns) and an uncommon degree of applied ornament (included brick stringcourses and moulded elements). The exuberance and unselfconsciousness of this hybrid design is testament to the fact that it was the work of a talented and enthusiastic designer/builder rather than a qualified architect, reflecting the more populist approach to residential architecture at the time. Designed to be similar without being identical, the two houses form a unique pair and an eye-catching element in the streetscape, enhanced by retention of their original front fences. (*Criterion E*)

History

Note: Identifying details of property owners and their families have been deleted as per Council direction

Erected in 1939 for two members of the same family, the detached pair of houses at 195-197 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield North, was the work of local designer/builder J W Fairbanks & Son. The sites formed part of a subdivision created fifteen years early from *Blencairn*, a venerable mansion estate dating back to the 1880s. Gazetted in 1924, the subdivision created a new street, Blencairn Avenue, with five residential blocks along the north side and the original mansion initially retained on a larger block on the south side (but later demolished for further subdivision). The Hawthorn Road frontage was carved into sixteen elongated allotments that, with widths from 18 to 22 feet (5.5 to 6.7 metres), were clearly intended to attract retail development. This, however, met with mixed success: the blocks along Hawthorn Road would not be developed until the later 1930s, with those to the south of Blencairn Avenue attracting limited commercial development while those to the north were consolidated and acquired for residential use.

In July 1939, a site at the north corner of Hawthorn Road and Blencairn Avenue (comprising Lots 9, 10 and half of 11) was acquired by an unmarried woman, and the adjacent site (Lots 12, 13 and halves of 11 and 14) by her married sister. Title records indicate that both women were then residing at the same address in Elsternwick. Born in the late 1890s, the sisters were both milliners by profession. It has not been confirmed what prompted the sisters to relocate to Caulfield North and build adjacent houses on Hawthorn Road. On 26 May 1939, the City of Caulfield issued separate building permits: one for "brick villa, Hawthorn Road" for the married sister, and the other for "brick villa and garage" for the unmarried one. The builder for both dwellings was identified as J W Fairbanks & Son of 123 Orrong Crescent.

Joseph William Fairbanks (1871-1942) evidently hailed from Western Australia, as electoral rolls record him as a carpenter in Subiaco in the early 1900s. By the end of the decade, he and his wife Agnes had relocated to Victoria and settled in the Bendigo area, where he worked as a builder. In 1918, the family (by then including their young son Harold) moved to Melbourne and took up residence in the St Kilda/Balaclava area. The fact that Fairbanks changed address frequently over the next few years, relocating from Bowen Street to Hawsleigh Street to Westbury Street, suggests that he was building houses on a speculative basis, briefly occupying them himself, then selling them and moving on. This pattern evidently continued in the 1930s, when the family relocated to Caulfield and resided in Inkerman Road and later Orrong Crescent. Little is known of Fairbanks' professional activities, although he appears to have styled himself as a designer/builder. The name J W Fairbanks & Son is first recorded in the late 1930s, indicating that son Harold Walter Fairbanks (1915-1962), identified in electoral rolls as a carpenter, had joined the family business by that time. It is unclear if he carried on the firm after his father's death in 1942.

The two houses that J W Fairbanks & Sons erected on Hawthorn Road were completed by the end of 1939, when they were subject to a feature article in the Sydney-based trade journal, *Decoration & Glass*. Drawing attention to the fact that they represented the work of a designer/builder, without an architect's input, the article conceded that "while architect designed homes are intended to suit in every detail the requirements of one particular client, the builder-designer caters for a wider field". The quirky hybrid design, combining both traditional and progressive elements, was also acknowledged: "while it is difficult to reconcile classic columns with bent glass windows, they are well worthy of study as authentic examples of the current public demand. They afford, also, an interesting comparison with the builder-design homes of a few years ago". Befitting the journal's remit, the article otherwise focused on the construction materials and finishes, with emphasis on the extensive use of curved glazing. This was supplied by the Australian Window Glass Pty Ltd, which ran its own advertisement in the same issue, featuring an illustration of the house at No 195.

On completion of the two houses, the unmarried sister and her widowed mother took up residence at No 195, while the married sister and her husband lived at No 197. The two branches of the family would remain neighbours for a relatively brief period. The unmarried sister wed in the mid-1940s and moved elsewhere, while her sister and brother-in-law remained at No 195 until the late 1950s. Both houses have had a succession of subsequent owners.

Description

The houses at 195-197 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield, are a detached pair of single-storey hip-roofed rendered brick dwellings in a Streamlined Moderne style. The work of the same designer/builder, the dwellings are very similar in expression, finishes and detailing, but not exactly identical. Street frontages are asymmetrical and double-fronted, with the dominant expression of overlapping curves sometimes referred to as the 'Waterfall' style. The convex curves of the walls and parapets are echoed in the curved glass of the windows and curved porches with matching curved flights of steps. The stark rendered walls are relieved by clinker brick plinths that incorporate soldier courses; the house at No 197 has matching clinker brick to the window lintels and a stepped motif above the entry porch. The horizontality of each of the two street facades is variously emphasised by incised stringcourses (No 197), fluted banding (No 195), a projecting porch canopy (No 197) and a recessing parapet (No 197). Both houses are further enlivened by panels of cabled fluting, placed either vertically (No 195) or horizontally (No 197). Both also have fluted columns to their front porches: No 195 has paired columns with Corinthian capitals, while No 197 has single columns with Ionic capitals. The front entrances have pairs of glazed doors with flanking sidelights, all with curvilinear leadlighting. The corner house, at No 197 has a porthole window to the side (Blencairn Avenue) elevation and a rendered dwarf wall along both frontages, with matching clinker brick plinth and capping and a corner gateway with stepped gateposts and mild steel gate.

Comparisons

While Joseph Fairbanks lived and worked in St Kilda, Balaclava and Caulfield for two decades, little seems to be recorded of his professional activities in the study area. Research to date has identified only two other houses that can be conclusively attributed to J W Fairbanks. The earlier of these is a two-storey brick dwelling at 38 Fitzgibbon Crescent, Caulfield North (1934), in a Tudor Revival mode with hipped tile-clad roof and rendered walls with tapestry brick lintels and quoining (*Argus* 07/09/1934:2). Somewhat later, and more comparable to the subject buildings, is a two-storey rendered brick house at 14 Findon Avenue, Caulfield North (c1941), this time in a stark functionalist mode with curved corner (incorporating curved glass window) and projecting balcony above a classically-inspired entry porch. While it is likely that Fairbanks designed and built the houses that his own family occupied, none of these remains extant in what is now the City of Glen Eira: his first Caulfield house, at 521 Inkerman Road (c1932) has been demolished, as has the premises that he later occupied at 87-89 (formerly 123-123a) Orrong Crescent.

Several houses have been identified in the study area that, while not confirmed as the work of J W Fairbanks, are notably similar in their hybrid design approach. Of these, the most pertinent comparator is a single-storey rendered brick house at 2 Pullman Court, St Kilda East (c1938) that, with its curved corners, shaped parapets and curved entry porch with fluted columns, displays a confident amalgam of progressive and traditional styles that is eerily reminiscent of Fairbanks' two houses on Hawthorn Road. A similar approach is also evident in a nearby single-storey house at 166 Orrong Road, St Kilda East (c1939), which also combines Moderne curves with classical columns, albeit in a simpler fashion. Otherwise, the Hawthorn Road houses are more broadly comparable to manifestations of the Streamlined Moderne style that are more ornamented than most, such as the late example at 705 North Road, Carnegie (1943) [HO41], with a similar stepped and curving façade at the lower level, and 442 Dandenong Road, Caulfield North (1947), with curving rendered walls punctuated by garland-like parapet frieze and row of plain circular panels.

References

Lodged plan No 10,125, dated 2 July 1924.

Certificates of Title, Volume 6332, Folios 234 and 235, dated 19 July 1939.

"Twin homes: Spectacular design features bent glass", *Decoration & Glass*, Dec 1939, pp 3, 20-22.

Identified by

City of Glen Eira



*Two contemporary photographs: a general view of both houses (left) and detail of No 195 (right)
(source: Decoration & Glass, December 1939)*