Victorian Heritage Database Report

Horatio Jones House







Location:
16 Blackwood Street Tecoma, YARRA RANGES SHIRE

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number:

Listing Authority: HI

Heritage Overlay Number: HO6

Statement of Significance:
Horatio Jones House, its interior furnishings and garden setting are significant as evidence of the impact of World War One on one family and their efforts to recreate their former lifestyle in a secluded bush sanctuary away from the city, after the loss of human life and family finances. The surviving furniture and other effects are in striking contrast to the rustic nature of the building and illustrate the genteel and idiosyncratic lifestyle maintained by Jones and his sisters (Criterion B.2).

Horatio Jones House is significant as an example of an alternative lifestyle in bushland on the outskirts of Melbourne during the 1920s. It is evidence of post World War One life in the Dandenong Hills. The House's association with prominent literary and artistic figures who were entertained within the house and bush setting is significant also (Criteria D.2 and H.1). (RNE, 005692)

Horatio Jones House is a surviving example of a building constructed of recycled kerosene tins, a building material which was used for shanties in the Depression. It is notable for its grand, skilful and innovative use of this material. It reflects the resourcefulness and inventiveness of its builder (Criterion F.1). The House's garden is notable for its delicate and lush bush setting and as a remnant of the fern tree and creek gullies of Tecoma which have been largely subdivided for suburban housing (Criteria E.1 and A.3). The tale of Horatio Jones, the Gallipoli veteran who made a house of four gallon kerosene tins in the Dandenong Hills is metaphorically the tale of the resourceful Aussie battler of national mythology. The community interest in the preservation of Horatio Jones House as a place that illustrates contemporary folklore is significant as evidence of community values (Criterion G 1). (RNE, 005692)

Description

Established in the 1880s. Horatio Jones House was constructed by Horatio Jones in the 1920s of stone, bush timber, fencing wire and sheet metal. It is a large shanty with its exterior walls clad in flattened four gallon kerosene tins, some still bearing their original advertising brands. The dwelling comprises two floors, each measuring approximately 7.5m by 6.5m with no dividing walls, with exposed timber beams on the perimeter internal walls and ceilings. Framing for the building is constructed from sapling poles and logs from native trees while the floor framing of the upper storey is constructed from rough sawn timber and logs. (RNE, 005692)

The roof is low pitched and gabled and its framing is a composite structure of timber pole framing and fencing wire criss-crossing for bracing. The upper floor features window openings with awning hatches clad in recycled kerosene tins. This level was the quarters for Horatio's two half sisters. The lower floor, which was Horatio's abode, has a cement floor and has an open fire place made of stone. Some internal walls are finished with salvaged timber panelling of the type common in the early 1920s. A bath tub is located adjacent to the fire place and is screened from the main living area on that level by an oriental screen. (RNE, 005692)

Outbuildings:
There is a pole structure near the house which Jones called his study. This has been restored. A small companionable two seater dunny is located within a separate structure which has been restored also. A plaque with the word Bliss is above the dunny. This is believed to have been placed there by C J Dennis. A third structure has been reported on the other side of Little Ferny Creek. This is C J Dennis' hut. This hut has been restored also.

Interior fittings and furniture:
The interior and furniture reflects its genteel South Yarra origins which were transposed from the Jones residence there to Horatio Jones House in Tecoma. The furniture includes a piano, a port table, dining setting, brass beds and a large bed with blackwood posts. An oil painting is hung near the bath's screen and is

believed to be a portrait of Horatio's fiancee, Caroline Hearst. An American flag is draped above the bed in canopy style (an accompanying Union Jack was stolen in recent years) and other wartime memorabilia is on display. The house is softened with Persian rugs, Venetian glass, crystal, fine crockery, jewellery, pictures, Italian brocade furnishing fabric and an oriental patterned screen. It is understood that tools for cutting the kerosene tins and Horatio Jones' invention, the patent rabbit exterminator, are in situ. Source: Photos in National Trust magazine and the Age descriptions 1990.

Gardens:
Horatio Jones House is sited at the bottom of a suburban garden alongside the rear fence. It is surrounded by remnants of the fern gully and shielded by eucalypts and populated with native birds including magpies and red breasted parrots. This setting is a remnant of the Dandenongs landscape at Tecoma which has been otherwise subdivided for housing. Wild flowers along the creek's side, including native orchids, add to the natural delicate atmosphere. Rhododendrons are planted down the property's driveway. The older ones were planted by Horatio. The house is situated on the banks of Little Ferny Creek and is approached by a simple wooden footbridge.

The house is intact but its condition is deteriorating. The structure is suppported by bush timber posts which are rotting at ground level, the tin is in need of conservation treatment, the staircase giving access to the upper floor is unsafe and gum trees growing close to the house are continually dropping limbs, threatening the structure. (1996) (RNE, 005692)

Heritage Study / Consultant	Yarra Ranges - Shire of Yarra Ranges Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2000
Construction Date Range	1925 - 1935
Architect / Designer	
Municipality	YARRA RANGES SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	115398
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online