

Victorian Heritage Database Report
CORIO VILLA



Location:

56-58 EASTERN BEACH ROAD GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H0193

Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO8

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

Prefabricated in 1855 and constructed in 1856, Corio Villa is the first prefabricated cast iron house in Australia. The property is situated on the corner of Eastern Beach Road and Fitzroy Street overlooking Corio Bay at Eastern Beach, Geelong.

Corio Villa was commissioned by Scottish iron founders Charles D. Young & Co to the design of Bell & Miller. The house was originally purchased by William Narin Gray, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Portland Bay district between 1851 and 1854, and subsequently bought by Alfred Douglas after the pieces remained unclaimed at Cunningham Pier due to Gray's death. The form of the main house is not identical to the original prototype. It is possible that Corio Villa was erected entirely without plans. The foundry burnt down shortly after the manufacture of Corio Villa destroying the moulds.

The original cast iron house is constructed of 12mm thick cast iron plates 450mm x 300mm bolted together to form flat wall sections. Ornately decorated filigree guilloche, bevelled edged columns are patterned with unidentified foliage and roses in the shape of Scottish bluebells. Other features include fretwork bargeboards, bowed triple-arched bays and a flat-arched porch with arches displaying a lions head as a keystone.

Four cast iron decorative urns remain as part of the original 1856 fabric. A later weatherboard building was added to the eastern exterior of the existing house c.1890. Original plantings include an English Oak, Norfolk Pine and Elm and were reputedly planted at the birth of Alfred Douglas' children c.1860.

Prefabricated domestic and commercial buildings were frequently imported from Britain in the 1850s to satisfy demand for housing resulting from the gold rush boom. From the 1850s iron was used for decorative and ornamental as well as industrial purposes.

How is it Significant?

Corio Villa is of historical, architectural and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it Significant?

Corio Villa is of historical and architectural significance as the oldest and only known surviving prefabricated cast iron house in Victoria and Australia.

Corio Villa is historically important for its association with the gold rush period in Victoria's history.

Corio Villa is of aesthetic significance for its richly decorated and elaborate cast iron features.

(Online Data Upgrade Project 2007)

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1856 -
Architect / Designer	Bell & Miller
Municipality	GREATER GEELONG CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	523
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