HOUSE (DEVON), 38 JOHN STREET, BRUNSWICK EAST

Prepared by: Context Pty Ltd

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HERMES number: 56451</th>
<th>Survey Date: March 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: Devon</td>
<td>Designer: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Type: Residential House</td>
<td>Builder: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading: Significant</td>
<td>Construction Date: 1893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries

Architectural Style: Victorian Period (1851-1901), Italianate

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History

Thematic context
This place is associated with the following themes in the City of Moreland Thematic History (2010):

Theme 6: Building Moreland’s Houses; 6.3 Building during the Boom
**Locality history**

The suburb of Brunswick is part of the traditional land of the Wurundjeri who occupied this area, which they named *Iramoo*, for many thousands of years. The area achieved local governance as the newly formed Borough of Brunswick in 1857; the municipality was elevated to the Town of Brunswick in 1888 and to the City of Brunswick in 1908.

Brunswick, located a few miles north of central Melbourne, was first surveyed in 1839 to provide 16 farming allotments ranging in size from 100 to 300 acres. The early allotments each had a frontage to either the Moonee Ponds or Merri Creeks and to a rough north–south track that soon became known as the Sydney Road. The allotments were quickly sold over three auctions, mostly to private speculators, and re-subdivision began almost immediately. On the west side of Sydney Road James Simpson subdivided his allotment, creating Albert (then Carmarthen) and Victoria (then Llandillo) streets. When Thomas Wilkinson purchased the allotment on the opposite side of Sydney Road he extended Victoria and Albert streets. This pattern was repeated many times, and each time the land was divided into smaller and smaller allotments (Context 1990:10).

The Colony of Victoria expanded rapidly during the 1850s with the gold rushes and in the twenty years between 1846 and 1865 Brunswick's population grew from 146 to 3000, creating a strong demand for housing. People were drawn by the considerable local industry, including stone quarries, brick-works and potteries, and steel works. The sequence of subdivision generally followed transport and access routes. The opening of the railway to Coburg in 1884 and the cable tram along Sydney Road in 1887, providing direct access to the centre of the city of Melbourne, encouraged the subdivision and development of land along these routes. Sydney Road became a busy hub of commercial development.

Brunswick developed as a self-contained and close-knit community that was home to rich and poor. Whilst the vast bulk of its housing was built for the working and artisan classes, there was also a sprinkling of more salubrious residences including grand two-storey terrace houses and freestanding villas occupied by the middle-class factory owners, merchants and professionals, notably in Blyth Street, Park Street and Brunswick Road. Mansions were rare, with Michael Dawson’s ‘Dawsonhurst’ built in the 1850s on his Phoenix Park estate (demolished 1880s) being a notable exception.

The process of subdivision of the larger estates for house blocks accelerated rapidly during the economic boom of the 1880s and was accompanied by an escalation in land prices; in the twenty years from 1865 to the 1880s the population of Brunswick more than tripled to 14,000. Many of the houses built during the boom were small cottages, particularly in the form of terrace housing, which were built to accommodate the growing number of workers employed in the expanding local industries. A large proportion of workers’ housing was erected as rental accommodation. Typically, it was the members of the local middle class and the aspiring working class, who were engaged in speculative housing development, became the landlords for many local workers’ rental accommodation.

Following the bank crash of 1891 and the extended depression of the 1890s, development ground to a halt. Many newly built houses in Brunswick were left vacant and many of the
new estates offered for sale toward the end of the boom remained undeveloped until the early twentieth century (Historica 2010:59-62). Renewed local prosperity in the early 1900s was fuelled by a boom in industrial development in Brunswick, which benefited from the introduction of import duties after Federation.

In 1905 the population had reached 24,000 and by 1928 it had more than doubled to 55,799 (Barnes 1987:64). The rapid growth of Brunswick during the early twentieth century was once again driven by the expansion of employment opportunities and improvements to public transport and by 1930 there were 300 factories in Brunswick, employing over 6000 workers (Historica 2010:32). These were predominantly in the clothing, textiles and footwear industries, which employed a significant number of women workers. During this time, many of the nineteenth-century subdivisions were re-offered for sale whilst the remaining areas of farming land and large estates in the east and west of Brunswick were carved up to meet the unprecedented demand for housing. By the end of the 1930s the suburban development of Brunswick was almost complete (Context 1990:12).

Following the pattern of development in Brunswick proper, there was extensive subdivision of land in Brunswick East for residential development in the 1880s, however; most of these subdivisions were only partially developed before the economic depression of the 1890s brought a halt to development. Development recommenced slowly in the early twentieth century but gathered pace by the 1910s with the opening of the electric tramway along Lygon Street in 1916, which encouraged the establishment of new textile factories in the area such as Prestige Hosiery, established in 1922. The new industries created a demand for housing and this led to the subdivision of the last remaining nineteenth century estates such as the Sumner property, ‘Stony Park’ (built c.1860s) on the west bank of the Merri Creek, which was subdivided in 1924 and was developed as an extensive interwar housing estate (Sumner Estate, HO238). A large number of war service homes were also built in several streets off Stewart Street, Brunswick East, in the early 1920s (Historica 2010).

**Place history**

The house at 38 John Street, East Brunswick, was built for John McGregor Dawson in 1893 (RB 1893). The block was originally known as Allotment 38, and prior to 1893 a timber house had stood here for several years (RB 1885–1892). Dawson had owned and occupied the timber house on Allotment 38 before rebuilding it as the present 10-roomed brick villa (RB 1893).

John Dawson McGregor (1851–1928) was a steel expert and a founder and major shareholder of Dawson & Sons Steel Foundry in Brunswick. He was the son of Scottish-born John Dawson, iron moulder, who immigrated to Victoria with his wife and family in 1852. John McGregor Dawson became a prominent local figure and stood as a candidate in the council elections. On his death in 1928, he left a substantial estate worth over £25,000 (Age, 21 August 1928: 8). John and his wife Emma (née Stephenson) had a large family, with their ninth child born in 1892.

The larger new residence was a modest villa built in the Victorian style, with a front bay window and the decorative use of polychromatic brickwork. The MMBW detail plan of 1905
shows an asphalt path along its south perimeter, and the garden had the fashionable addition of a fernery along the back fence (MMBW 1905).

Extract from the MMBW Detail Plan No. 1878, dated 1905 (source: SLV)

From the early 1890s until his death in 1928, Dawson also owned two neighbouring houses on the east side of John Street – 40 and 42 (RB 1892-1925; Age 30 March 1928:1). In 1897, 38 John Street was reduced to nine rooms, although the property’s net annual value increased from £24 to £30 (RB 1896, 1897). For a brief period between 1914 and 1921, the rate books referred to 38 John Street as ‘Devon’, however this name was not repeated in later books (RB 1914, 1921).

References
Ancestry.com
Barnes, Les 1987, Street Names of Brunswick, Brunswick Public Library, Brunswick.
City of Brunswick. Municipal Rate Books (RB), 1885, 1890, 1892, 1893, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1900, 1905, 1910, 1915, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1925
Historica 2010. ‘Moreland Thematic History’, prepared for the City of Moreland.
Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works. Detail Plans, Town of Brunswick, 1890s-1900s (State Library of Victoria)
Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW). Detail Plan No. 1874, dated 1905, State Library of Victoria
Sands & McDougall, Melbourne and Suburban Directories (SM)

Description
This fine and well-detailed Victorian Italianate brick villa is set back behind a small front garden and an original iron palisade fence with bluestone plinth and bi-chrome brick piers with rendered caps.

The house is asymmetrical in plan with a canted wing projecting to one side. The M-profile hipped roof has bracketed eaves and is clad in what appears to be the original slate with a band of contrasting coloured slate in a fish scale pattern across the front face. Polychromatic (three colours) brick is used across the façade, with detailing in cream and red brick
contrasting with the face brown brick. This includes brick courses across the façade, over the arched window openings and under the eave line. The original cast iron verandah has paired barley-twist posts with classical capitals and scalloped verandah frieze, and tessellated tiling appears to be intact on the verandah floor. Rounded arched windows with leadlight to the highlights are located around the projecting bay. Two identical squared windows open onto the verandah. The entry door has a single side light and highlight windows.

The tall dark brick chimneys have cornices and a stringcourse in contrasting red brick and terracotta chimney pots.

**Intactness and integrity**
The house and front fence are very intact, as viewed from the street, with no alterations evident.

**Comparative analysis**
In Brunswick East, Victorian era houses are typically terraces or detached cottages, designed to accommodate the growing number of workers employed in Brunswick’s expanding industries during the ‘Boom’ years of the 1880s. Most are built of timber with some masonry examples evident.

Of the houses in Brunswick East included in the Heritage Overlay (HO) as individually significant places, most are cottages or terraces with one timber villa included. Typically, they are set within a garden with a low front fence at the street frontage. Detailing is not elaborate but includes typical features from the era including cast-iron verandah friezes and posts and timber block work to the front face. The level of intactness is high.

The house at 38 John Street, Brunswick East stands out as an intact and well-detailed example of a Victorian Italianate brick villa of characteristic asymmetrical form with a wide canted bay, a bracketed M-hip roof (clad in the original two-tone slate with fish scale detailing) and separate convex profile verandah. It is representative of the superior quality villas built for the wealthier residents of Brunswick in the late nineteenth century. Of note is the fine quality of the polychromatic brickwork, the arched windows with leadlight highlights, the elegantly detailed cast iron verandah, which features paired twisted columns with classical capitals, and the slender bi-chrome brick chimneys and the cast iron palisade fence with brick piers with rendered caps.

It compares with 76 Victoria Street, Brunswick East (HO306). Built c.1892, this is a double-storey bi-chrome brick terrace house. While there are many differences in the form and style of the two properties, they are comparable as a more substantial dwelling for the suburb, with a high level of intactness. Both have intact iron palisade fences.

Other comparable examples throughout Moreland include 44 Acacia Street, Glenroy (HO201), 41 Cassels Road, Brunswick (HO286), 11 Davies Street, Brunswick (HO58), 28 Pleasant Street, Pascoe Vale (HO420) and 120 Stewart Street, Brunswick (HO147). 38 John Street is of equivalent or higher intactness than all of these places and is one of only three to retain an original front fence.
Statement of significance

What is significant?
The house at 38 John Street, Brunswick East, built in 1893 for John Dawson McGregor, is significant. The iron palisade front fence with brick and rendered piers is also significant.

Non-original alterations and additions to the house are not significant.

How is it significant?
The house at 38 John Street, Brunswick East is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Moreland.

Why is it significant?
It is of historical significance for its association with local industrialist and steel founder John Dawson McGregor who had this house built and lived here with his family until his death in 1928. (Criterion A)

It is significant as an intact and well-detailed example of a Victorian Italianate brick villa of characteristic asymmetrical form with a wide canted bay, a bracketed M-hip roof (clad in the original two-tone slate with fish scale detailing) and separate convex profile verandah. It is representative of the superior quality villas built for the wealthier residents of Brunswick in the late nineteenth century. Of note is the fine quality of the polychromatic brickwork, the arched windows with leadlight highlights, the elegantly detailed cast iron verandah, which features paired twisted columns with classical capitals, and the slender bi-chrome brick chimneys and the cast iron palisade fence with brick piers with rendered caps. (Criteria D & E)

Recommendations

Moreland Planning Scheme
Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay of the Moreland Planning Scheme as an individual place.

Recommendations for the HO Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Paint Colours</th>
<th>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Alteration Controls</td>
<td>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Controls</td>
<td>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Heritage Register</td>
<td>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporated Plan</td>
<td>Does an Incorporated Plan apply to the site?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outbuildings and fences exemptions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prohibited uses may be permitted?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Aboriginal Heritage Place</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there outbuildings and fences, which are not exempt from notice and review?</td>
<td>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use, which would otherwise be prohibited?</td>
<td>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place, which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes – front fence</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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**Other recommendations**
None specified