

The Homestead, Georges Hall

Exterior

The building is a well-proportioned symmetrical rectangular mass modulated by timber columns and a regularly spaced window pattern. The principal chimneys reinforced the symmetry of the building, which was centred on a circular carriage drive. The front entry is orientated 20 degrees west of north, and originally had extensive views down to the Georges River and beyond. Additions and extensions have altered the rear of the house.

Foundations

The house is built on a raised plinth over a partly excavated cellar. While most of the cellar is built in brick, the main walls at the front and rear of the house are sandstone.

The building is founded on a clay or shale base, and the cellar is subject to a rising water table.

Walls

Wall construction was of the finest quality sandstock bricks of a red and blue mottle (possibly made in Liverpool), and laid in lime mortar. The exterior walls were stuccoed and lined to imitate masonry in the Regency manner. The walls were lime washed in a yellow ochre colour with lines marked in gray.

Roof

The roof was framed in pit sawn hardwood framing with purlins and struts onto internal walls and chimneys. Originally shingled with hard split she oak shingles, the roof was subsequently covered in corrugated iron, and then later terra cotta tiles.

The unusual half second storey breaks the roof structure into two along the centre of the house providing support at the ridge between the two principal chimneys.

The verandah is roofed separately at a lower pitch.

The earliest photographic records of the house date from circa 1860. Unfortunately, no photos of the extensive out buildings exist, and sadly none of these buildings have survived. Further photos from the 1890's show the front of the house, and the ring or central garden area surrounded by a carriage drive.

These photos were used to recreate the original verandah, details that were demolished during extensive alternations to the house made by Henry Crossing, a grazier who bought the house and 100 acres of land in 1917.

The Crossings, and later the Beans, tried to update the house by reproofing with terra cotta tiles, and replacing the verandah details with art nouveau columns and brackets.

The stone verandah and steps were covered with red ferrite cement, and a fern house was built.

The timber columns and verandah rails are replacements.

Wall Finish

Internally, the original plaster walls were plastered and electricity was put on by Mr. Bean, an electrical engineer, when he owned the property.

Joinery

Fortunately, the magnificent cedar panelling inside is intact (the cedar is believed to have come from Johnston holdings on the south coast at Albion Park). It has mellowed with the years, as have the architraves and door trims.

The joinery is of a very high quality cedar with 6 panelled doors and 12 panel windows. The French doors to the principal rooms have margined glazing and fixed highlights. The semi circular fan light at the rear door, and the unusual “gothic” sashes of the attic windows are fine examples of this influence on Regency design.

The steep and narrow staircase leading to the attic bedrooms is typical of colonial timber stairs built in this. The large double door sets opening off the entry hall were seen in a number of houses of the period.

All the openings are shuttered externally and have splayed cedar linings internally. The three fitted cupboards in the storeroom are unusual and intact.

The principal rooms contain fine stone chimney pieces, while the south-west rooms have Edwardian fireplace surrounds. All of the fireplaces had been fully tiled ca 1911. Some of these fireplaces are currently undergoing restoration work.

Floor Construction

The central floor of the cellar is of stone flagging, while the side rooms were rammed earth construction.

The timber flooring in the original sections of the house is original and has been sanded, oiled and restored to what would have been in the house when it was first built.

Cellar and Outer Buildings

Under the house is a large cellar with brick arches and barred windows. The huge windows that support the building show the marks of the adze and the square, and handmade nails can be seen.

At the rear of the building, large slabs are all that remain of the demolished outbuildings. The coach house and stables, also demolished, were still standing in 1923, for a curve in Beale Street shows how the street was aligned to avoid them when part of the estate was subdivided as the Deepwater Estate.

While many alternations have taken place, fortunately for us they have not obscured the line of the original building.

The restoration program undertaken by the Church of the Foursquare Gospel, with the assistance of the Bankstown City Council Heritage Committee, is preserving a part of our local heritage.