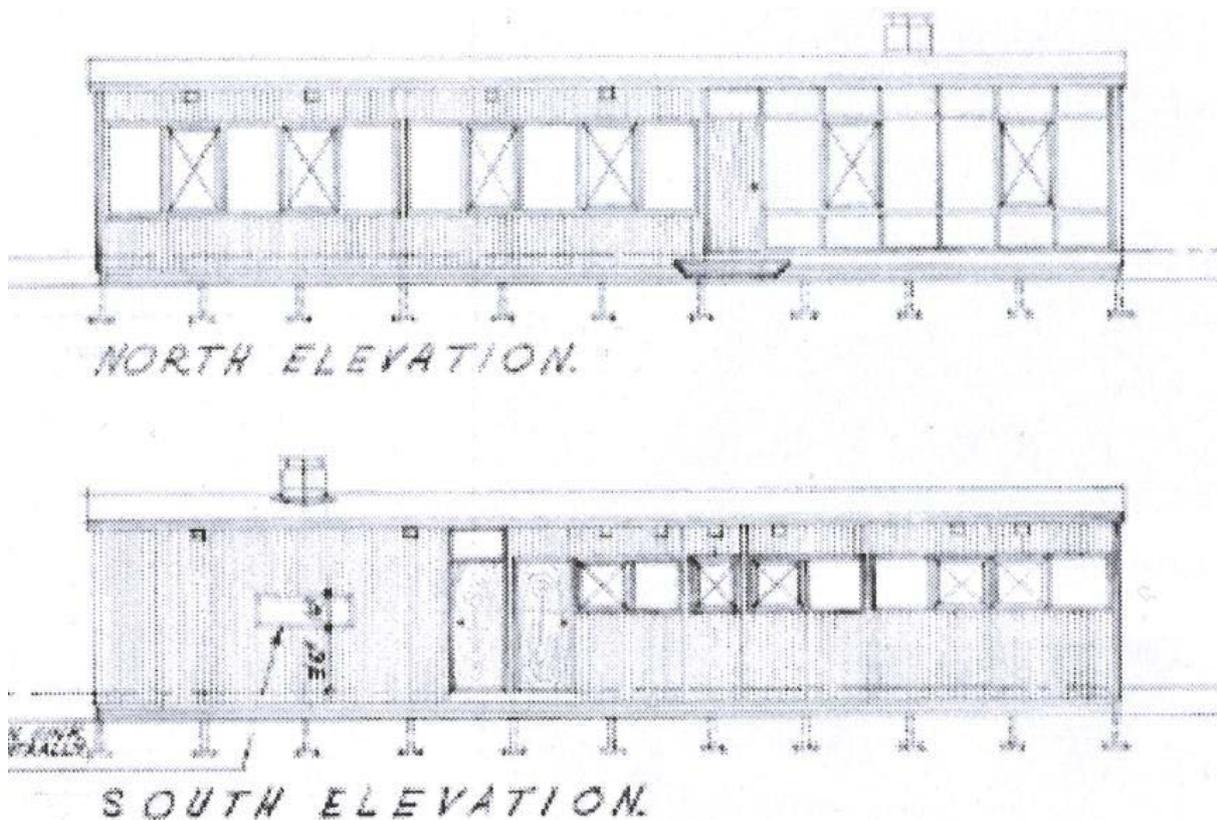


History and Description

The subject residence, built in 1956, is an example of a 'Peninsula House', a project house designed by Robin Boyd of Grounds Romberg & Boyd in 1955 for Contemporary Homes Pty Ltd.¹ It was built for Keith and Ailsa Tandy on land that was part of a recently-formed 84-lot subdivision. The Tandy's lived in the house until 1966, and thereafter the house changed ownership several times.²

The subject house generally follows the design illustrated in the standard working drawings for a Peninsula House (illustrated below), except that it has been mirror reversed. The standard Peninsula design was rectangular in plan with a low-pitched gable roof in ribbed aluminium and walls of vertical timber cladding. The two end elevations were blank, while the front and rear elevations featured banks of windows and a Stegbar Windowall.³



Detail from the standard working drawings

(Source: Robin Boyd Foundation, 'Boyd at the Edges' Open Day 6 December 2015 [catalogue])

¹ The working drawings for the subject house were dated 2 August 1955 (with two amendments dated later that month and early the following one). The building permit was issued on 22 June 1956.

² Citation for 4 Ian Grove, Burwood, in the *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, pp127-128

³ Judith O'Callaghan & Charles Pickett, *Designer Suburbs: Architects and Affordable Homes in Australia*, p74

The house is single storey, rectangular in plan, and has a low pitched gable roof. It is clad with vertical timber boards which are painted green. The void created under the house at the front due to the slope of the site is screened with horizontal timber planks. There is a timber framed porch at the entrance, which although not part of the standard design may have been an early addition. The asymmetrical façade has banks of timber framed windows either side of the front entrance.

The windowless east elevation is intact. At the west end the house has been extended, with the addition similarly clad in vertical timber boards, although the boards are more closely spaced than the original part of the house. Unlike the original presentation of the east elevation however, there are two windows in the west/end elevation, the eaves extend past the end of the house, there are projecting rafter ends, and the timber boards reach the top of the wall (as opposed to the expression of the gable end on the east side with a plain timber fascia).



To the rear, the house follows the standard Peninsula House design, apart from an additional window at the east. There is a simple flat/skillion roofed carport on the eastern part of the site.



The Peninsula House Type

The Peninsula House was developed as Australia's first successful architect-designed project house. In 1955, Contemporary Homes Pty Ltd engaged architect Robin Boyd (of the practice Grounds Romberg & Boyd, and widely considered to be the most well-known architect practicing in Melbourne during the post-war period) to develop a standard 3 bedroom dwelling known as the Peninsula House. With its compact modular plan and prefabricated components, the Peninsula could be erected quickly (within six weeks) and cheaply (£3,140). The promotional brochure stated that 'Every House is architect designed and supervised with unexcelled quality of workmanship and materials'. It was intended that it would bring 'the comfort and delight of modern living within the reach of everyone'.⁴ Boyd followed up his original Peninsula design with several variations referred to as the Peninsula II, Peninsula III and Peninsula IV, and an entirely new design for a similar but larger four bedroom dwelling known as the Sou' Easter (1956). Boyd severed his connection with Contemporary Homes in 1957 after the designs were adapted without his approval. However Contemporary Homes continued to market the Peninsula, along with several derivatives, well into the 1960s.⁵



Peninsula House, Haldane Street Beaumaris (Peter Wille, c.1956)
(Source: State Library of Victoria, H91.244/679)

⁴ Judith O'Callaghan & Charles Pickett, *Designer Suburbs: Architects and Affordable Homes in Australia*, pp72-74
⁵ City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study, p55

Comparative

It is not known how many Peninsula Houses were built, or how many still survive. One source claims that the Peninsula House is thought to have been built by up to 200 different clients. The Peninsula Houses were concentrated mostly in two general areas of outer Melbourne where much growth was occurring in the post-war period: in the southern suburbs of Beaumaris (where the company's first six prototypes were built), Highett, Moorabbin, Cheltenham, Mentone, Mordialloc and Seaford, and in the eastern suburbs of Blackburn, Burwood, Forest Hill, Mitcham, Nunawading, Syndal, Glen Waverley, Mount Waverley, Templestowe, Ringwood, Park Orchards, Mooroolbark and Croydon.⁶

According to the *Post-1945 Heritage Study* at least twelve Peninsula Houses are known to have been built (or proposed) in suburbs within the City of Whitehorse. Several remain, albeit in various states of alteration. Included amongst these are two in Burwood (the subject site + 74 Burwood Highway), two in Blackburn (3 Ottawa Avenue + 226 Canterbury Road) and one each in Mitcham (32 Cresswell Crescent), Forest Hill (24 Jackson Street). It is understood that another example at 22 Salisbury Avenue, Blackburn, was demolished in recent years.⁷

Being of a modest size, Peninsula Houses were typically enlarged and altered in later years, and it is rare to find examples with little or no external changes.

⁶ Citation for 4 Ian Grove, Burwood, in the *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, pp129-130

⁷ Citation for 4 Ian Grove, Burwood, in the *City of Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study*, pp129-130

The table below provides details of the known surviving Peninsula Houses within the city.

32 Creswell Crescent, Mitcham. (Source: RBA)

Re-clad with horizontal weatherboards. Windows introduced to end wall.



3 Ottawa Street, Blackburn Showing original section (Source: RBA)

Substantial alterations and additions undertaken in the early 1970s, including a two storey component.

The house cannot be seen from the street.

Also being recommended for heritage protection as part of Amendment C172.



Showing later two storey additions (Source: RBA)



226 Canterbury Road, Blackburn (Source: Google Street View)

Enlarged with a two storey addition at one end and a low addition at the other. The original single storey section can still be readily appreciated however and appears otherwise intact.



74 Burwood Highway, Burwood (Source: Google Street View)

Re-clad with horizontal weatherboards. Windows introduced to end wall.



24 Jackson Street, Forest Hill (Source: Google Maps)

Little of the house can be seen from the street due to dense planting in the front garden. An aerial view suggests that additions may not have been made, although there is possibly some structure (e.g. pergola) attached to the street facing end. Intactness of elevations unknown.



Statement of Significance

Our reasons against the application of a heritage overlay for the subject site.

Reference is made to the statement of significance for the subject house from the City of *Whitehorse Post-1945 Heritage Study* (Built Heritage, 2015).

We find the statement of significance to be inaccurate/inadequate for the following reasons:

- The statement claims that the house is significant as 'an example of the Peninsula House, which was Australia's first project house'. However it is known that project houses existed during the 1940s.⁸ Also, in 1954 Robin Boyd had been commissioned to design a project home for Stegbar (incorporating the Windowall that Boyd had designed for the company the previous year), although it seems that it did not progress to the market place past construction of the prototype.⁹ It would therefore be more correct to say that the Peninsula House was Australia's first successful architect-designed project house.

The 'Why is it Significant?' part of the statement explains why Peninsula Houses as a type are significant but does not offer any specific comments about why the subject house, as opposed to other examples in the City, is worthy of heritage protection.

We observe that the Peninsula House at 226 Canterbury Road, Blackburn, appears to be in a comparable state of intactness as the subject house, however it has not been recommended for heritage protection as part of Amendment C172. Similarly it is speculated that 24 Jackson Street, Forest Hill, may also be in a reasonably intact state, however due to dense vegetation this cannot be confirmed from the street.

Some alterations and additions have been made:

- The house has been extended at the west end. Although the addition cannot be said to be unsympathetic, it has altered the original expression of both the western elevation and the front of the house. Unlike the original section, the fenestration is comprised of isolated windows and there are windows to the west/end elevation, the vertical timber boards are more closely spaced than the original part of the house, the eaves project past the end of the house, there are projecting rafter ends (a feature not seen elsewhere on the building), and the timber boards extend to the top of the wall rather than allowing for a contrasting treatment of the gable end.

The following may be variations on the original design, rather than later alterations:

- The porch was not a feature of the standard Peninsula House design, it may have been a later addition.
- The eastern-most window to the rear elevation is not part of the standard design and may be a later introduction.
- The timber boards may have originally had a clear finish.
- The standard design featured a full Stegbar Windowall (patented by Robin Boyd) to the front elevation. However on the subject house, the highlight windows are missing and as such it is not a full height Windowall.

⁸ Philip Goad & Julie Willis, *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, p566

⁹ Judith O'Callaghan & Charles Pickett, *Designer Suburbs: Architects and Affordable Homes in Australia*, p72



The section of the front façade missing the highlight windows (location outlined in red dash)

Conclusion

In spite of the inaccuracies however, we concur that the Peninsula House type in general is of historical significance, and as such there may be a good case for some good surviving examples of the type to be retained, it is not however necessary to protect every surviving Peninsula House. Given that the City's suburbs formed part of the eastern suburbs area in which many of the Peninsula Houses were erected during 1955/56, we consider that it is appropriate that one example within the municipality be preserved. There are two other surviving houses in the municipality (226 Canterbury Road, Blackburn & 24 Jackson Street, Forest Hill) that may also have the potential to demonstrate the qualities of a Peninsula House to a comparable level as the subject site, if not better.