

# FORMER NORTH PARK



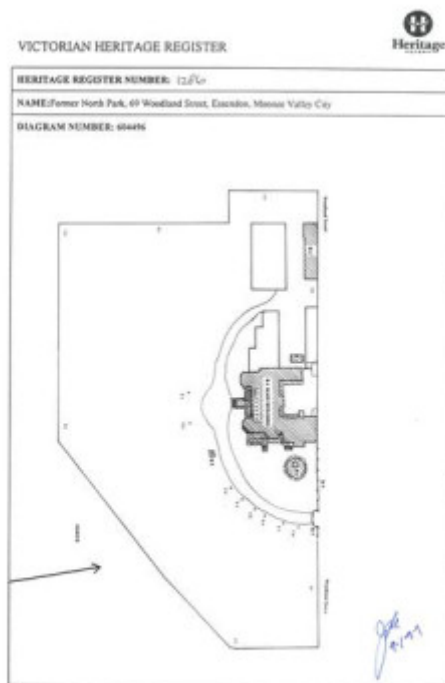
FORMER NORTH PARK  
SOHE 2008



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1 north park woodland street  
essendon front view sep1996



fnp extent diagram.jpg

## Location

69 WOODLAND STREET ESSENDON, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

## Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1286

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO128

## VHR Registration

January 9, 1997

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 20, 1999

North Park, now known as the Australian Headquarters of the St Columban Mission, was the home of Alexander McCracken, renowned brewer and sportsman. The 42 roomed mansion was built in 1888 by builder D. Sinclair for the cost of £10,750 to the design of Henry Kemp of the prominent Victorian architectural firm of Oakden, Addison & Kemp. In the tradition of the baronial mansions of wealthy British industrialists, the residence was built to symbolise its owner's prosperity and achievements. The large, two storey, picturesque residence is set on the highest point of Essendon and anticipates the popular Queen Anne Revival style in its use of red brick for walls, half-timbering with roughcast in the gables, orange terracotta tiles, ornamental bargeboards, decorative finials and chimneys, and ornate glazing. Three ornately carved chairs survive from the furniture which was designed to complement the elaborate interior. A spacious ballroom was added to the ground floor in the early years of this century which now serves as a chapel. A new wing was added to the house in 1966, and a new office building replaced the original stables in 1968. The coach house was retained except for a small section on the south side. Alexander McCracken died in 1915 and in 1923 North Park became the Australian headquarters of the St Columban Mission.

The former North Park is of architectural, historic, and aesthetic importance to the state of Victoria.

The former North Park is architecturally important in demonstrating a high degree of creative achievement, being a pioneering example of the Queen Anne Revival domestic architecture in Australia. This style became the dominant expression in Australian domestic architecture in the decades immediately before and after 1900. The house is architecturally important for its use of imported Marseilles terracotta roof tiles in possibly their first application in Australia. Made by the French company, Guichard Carvin de Cie, St Andr, these unique tiles feature the firm's signature bee imprint. The interior is architecturally important for its rich decoration including multi-coloured pressed metal ceilings, plaster friezes, timber panelling, encaustic tiling and elaborate stained and coloured glass. Other important extant detail includes ornate door knobs and push plates, and gas light hardware. Three ornately carved chairs in the entrance hall dating from the McCracken ownership are important for their continued association with the house.

The former North Park is historically important for its association with renowned brewer and sportsman, Alexander McCracken (1856-1915) and its imposing massing and design reflect his position and achievement in Melbourne's industry and his standing in local society. Alexander McCracken is an important historic figure in the brewing industry but was also a founder, secretary and then president of the Essendon Football Club. He was also the first President of the Victorian Football League, and Chairman of the Royal Agricultural Society. North

Park is of historical interest as the Australian Headquarters of Saint Columban's Mission since 1923.

The grounds of North Park are of aesthetic importance as an outstanding example of the gardenesque style and for the unusual three curved terraces, wide drive, garden path remains, and the evergreen trees and large conifers which contribute to the picturesque profile of the overall composition. The circular fish pond (disused) with its central figurine fountain and random rubble base is of unusual design and an important garden element now uncommon in Victoria. The location of this structure opposite the ballroom bay window is an important design feature. The cast iron gates, fence and hand gate supported by dressed bluestone are of an outstanding design, with particularly large spears and large scale iron members. The coach house and gardener's shed are important contributions to the interpretation of a late nineteenth century large house and garden.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

#### EXEMPTIONS FROM PERMITS:

For the main building B-1, the following exemptions apply to the upper floor bedrooms and bathrooms :

Interior painting / wall papering to walls and ceilings, provided the preparation work for painting / papering does not remove evidence of the building's original paint or other decorative scheme.

Removal of existing carpets / flexible floor coverings eg. vinyl.

Installation of carpets and flexible floor coverings.

Installation of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.

For the garden, the following exemptions apply :

Repairs and maintenance to hard landscape elements, buildings and structures, drainage and irrigation system

The process of gardening and maintenance to care for the planting themes  
Emergency and safety works  
Management of plants in accordance with Australian Standard, Pruning of amenity trees AS 4373

Construction dates 1888,  
Architect/Designer Kemp, Henry H,  
Heritage Act Categories Registered place,  
Other Names ST COLUMBAN CATHOLIC MISSION, NORTH PARK,  
Hermes Number 3447  
Property Number

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## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY: HISTORY OF PLACE:

The boom years witnessed the construction of several elaborate mansion houses in Melbourne's middle ring suburbs. Many, notably Raheen, Labassa, Rippon Lea, Villa Alba, and Parlington were built in the southern and eastern parts of the metropolis. Few graced the suburban landscape north of the Yarra. Perhaps two of the largest and most imposing of these mansions were Earlesbrae, and North Park, both built in Essendon by members of the same successful brewing family, the McCrackens. In England many successful and highly prosperous nineteenth century industrialists built grand baronial style residences to symbolise their achievements. North Park, built on Alexander McCracken's home turf of Essendon, maintains this tradition.

**Style in Context: The Queen Anne Style** In the last decade of the nineteenth century architecture began to articulate a new stylistic approach which challenged the predominance of the eclectic Classical idiom typified by much of Victoria's boom-time building. The red brick styles introduced in the 1880s were the harbingers of this change, but the watershed is more generally marked by the economic depression of the early 1890s. Red brick held sway through the early years of this century up to World War One, and despite the 'powerful impression made by red brick Romanesque, with its use of Australian fauna and flora and its suggestiveness as a new Antipodean branch struck from the main trunk of historic European architecture', it was the half-timbered English Domestic or Vernacular Revival pioneered by English architects Richard Norman Shaw and William Eden Nesfield that was to gain favour in Victoria. It became the prevailing expression in house design by the early years of this century, and by 1915 it was popular with builders of modest suburban villas. Coming from England as well as from the east coast of America, this picturesque expression has been traditionally described as the Queen Anne style. Characterised by decorative detail, colour and picturesque outline, the style was expressed by red brick for walls, turned timber for verandah and porch supports, half-timbering with roughcast in the gables, orange terracotta tiles, decorative finials and chimneys, stained or coloured glass, and ridgeline cresting.

From World War One the use of the term 'Queen Anne' became almost exclusively associated with the designs of the architects Ussher and Kemp. Henry Kemp's name is more usually associated with the use of gables as the dominant stylistic feature. An early example was the house he designed in 1887 in the 'old English style' on the East St Kilda Estate between the railway and Hotham Street. The following year (working with the firm Oakden Addison & Kemp) he applied this 'Old English' formula to Alexander McCracken's North Park, in Essendon, which anticipates the Queen Anne romantic massing and picturesque roofscapes of his later compositions. In 1906 (with the firm Ussher & Kemp) Kemp designed Dalswraith, now Champion College, at 99 Studley Park Road, Kew. Kemp prepared and signed the drawings for each of these buildings, and it is therefore presumed that he was responsible for their design.

Henry Hardie Kemp

Henry Kemp was born at Bowden, south of Manchester on 10 March 1859. His parents were originally from Scotland. His father was a merchant businessman. From an early age the young Kemp aimed at becoming an artist. He studied at Victoria University, Manchester, and afterwards in London at the Royal Academy. Some of his student drawings survive to indicate his early interest in the half-timbered vernacular of Cheshire and Manchester, Gothic style, and a developing interest in the contemporary work of English architects Nesfield and Shaw. No doubt he was well aware of Cragside, the imposing country mansion Shaw designed at Rothbury, near Newcastle, for industrialist Lord Armstrong (1810-1900), as it bears striking similarity to Kemp's North Park. He began his career at the age of sixteen as an articled pupil in the office of Corsen and Aitken of Manchester. In 1880 he was working in the office of R. W. Edis, an associate of William Burges, in London. During these years Kemp also went on a number of sketching tours of France, some being published by the Architectural Association. All of these early career experiences were seminal in the development of the style Kemp was to practise after his arrival in Melbourne in 1886. His first job was that of chief assistant with Terry & Oakden. A year later he became a partner in the restyled firm, Oakden, Addison & Kemp. Addison was stationed in their Brisbane office. Sometime after 1892 the firm was renamed Oakden & Kemp. This arrangement lasted until 1897. In 1899 he went into partnership with architect, Beverley Ussher (b. Melbourne 1868), a proponent of the Queen Anne style who had worked previously with Walter R. Butler (1864-1949). The partnership lasted until 1908, when it was terminated by Ussher's early death at the age of forty. The partnership of Inskip & Kemp was then consequently formed.

Extant buildings designed by Oakden Addison & Kemp include:

Queen's College, University of Melbourne (1899)

Workingman's College at RMIT, (1888)

Woodlands, Essendon (1888)

The last two buildings have been ascribed to Kemp.

Extant Ussher & Kemp, and Inskip and Kemp buildings include:

98 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn (1899)

104 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn (1899)

2 Studley Avenue, Kew (1899)

Cnr Molesworth & Barry Street, Kew (1900)

Halsey house, Broadway, Kew (1902)

Walsh house, Fellows Street, Kew (1902)

Collis house, Stawell Street, Kew (1902)

5 Willsmere Road, Kew (1903)

59 Park Street, Essendon (1903)

169 Armstrong Street, Canterbury (1903)

178 Barkers Road, Hawthorn (1907)

7 Adeney Avenue, Kew (1908)

Dalswraith, 99 Studley Park Road, Kew (1906) (Kemp)

51 Walpole Street, Kew (1905)

31 Canterbury Road, Camberwell (1909)

Heald Lawn (Kemp's own house), 5 Adeney Avenue, Kew (1912) (Inskip and Kemp)

19 Moorehouse Street, Malvern (1921) (Kemp)

The Syme residence, Mont Albert Road, Canterbury (1922) (Kemp)

## HISTORY OF PLACE:

### North Park

In 1888, Alexander McCracken commissioned architects Oakden Addison & Kemp of William Street, Melbourne to design a large, fashionable house on what was the most elevated estate in the Borough of Essendon. The land on the 'wooded road' later known as Woodlands Street, was formerly owned by Dougal McPhail. At six miles north west of the heart of Melbourne, the house was to stand in parkland that was still predominantly rural. The contract was let to builder, D. Sinclair for the cost of £10,750. Sinclair's background is unknown, however it is known that he was an unsuccessful tenderer for Earlsbrae, built by his cousin. As construction neared completion, a description and drawing of the house were published in *The Australasian and Builder Contractors' News*, under the announcement of a new 'English style' residence for Mr McCracken Esq. With its French-inspired turret, roof promenade, balconies and terraces the house afforded 'splendid views of the country in all directions'. Built on bluestone foundations, the building's walls were of 'picked red Northcote bricks, relieved by Waurin Ponds dressings and bands'. Other structural features included gables made of plaster and timber, ornamental bargeboards, and a high roof 'covered with Marseilles patent roofing tiles, lately introduced into this colony, and here used largely for the first time'. The tiles were imported from the firm of Guichard Carvin Cie, St Andre, Marseilles, and have a bee stamped on their nose and back. After studying Kemp's perspective of the house, George Tibbits believes that slate roofing tiles may have been originally intended for the design. The central, arched entrance was reached by a flight of Malmsbury steps. Inside the house there was a spacious entrance hall and a corridor that ran the whole length of the building on two floors. The ground floor corridor opened to a spacious dining room connected by a folding door to a breakfast room, and there was also a library, drawing room, sitting room, and bedroom. The kitchen and other service rooms were contained in a wing to one end of the house, giving ready access to the dining room via a serving-room. Under the dining room there was a billiard room (with a lavatory 17 x 9 feet), and under the servants' wing were cellars 'for larder and dairy purposes'. On the first floor there were six bedrooms, bath and dressing rooms, and day and night nurseries.

Early this century a ballroom was added, reputedly for the debutante celebrations of a McCracken daughter. Other alterations and extensions were undertaken in 1906 which included the complete redecoration of the interior to the design of Billing, Son & Peck. As Tibbits observes, the house has not been the subject of any detailed study, 'so the redecoration schemes which seem to have taken place within it, and the additions, such as the ballroom, may only be guessed'.

**The McCracken Family.** North Park was built for Alexander McCracken in 1888, at the height of Melbourne's boom period. Alex was the son and co-successor of the renowned brewer, Robert McCracken, who had founded the family firm in 1851, along with his brother Peter and brother-in-law James Robertson. First established in Little Collins Street, the brewery expanded over four acres to eventually face Collins Street, opposite the Olderfleet Buildings.

The brothers had arrived in Melbourne from Scotland in January 1841 and initially maintained a mere subsistence. In 1846 Peter leased and later was able to purchase a property at Moonee Ponds, which he named Stewarton. By 1851, there were seven fledgling breweries competing for custom over the much preferred imported brews. Five years later there were 136 inns and taverns in the town, with McCracken and Robertson supplying the majority. Their scientific methods of brewing as well as their canny marketing strategies resulted in the manufacture of a popular, uniquely Australian, light and bright coloured beer. James Robertson retired a wealthy man by 1861, and the brewery traded henceforth as R. McCracken and Co. The firm was overtaken by Carlton and United in 1907.

As their brewing business expanded Robert and Peter invested heavily in land and property. In 1855 they jointly purchased land in the Parish of Lawriston, and a further acreage was bought in the Parish of Doutta Galla which stretched from Mount Alexander Road to Waverley Street, between Derby and Park Streets, over Essendon and Moonee Ponds. Peter built Ardmillan House (still standing and used as a reception house) on a section of this land in February 1857, which he named after the property where the brothers had spent their boyhood. Robert purchased Ailsa (today Catholic University, Mercy Campus) from a Captain Buckley in 1864 and resided there until his death in 1885. Both brothers were active in community affairs, being Justices of the Peace and members

of local council. Peter was elected to the first council of the Borough of Essendon and Flemington in 1862, and Robert was appointed Assessor and Auditor the following year. Robert may have served as Mayor of Essendon from 1879-1881. After Robert's death the business passed to Peter and their respective sons, Alex and Coiler.

#### Alexander McCracken

Coiler was running the brewery by mid-1871. He devoted his leisure time to sport, becoming Captain of the newly formed Essendon Football Club in 1873. The following year he married Margaret Robertson, daughter of James Robertson the former pastoralist of East Keilor, then resident of Aberfeldie, Essendon. Coiler and his cousin, Alex became the perfect partners in their inherited brewery business. While Coiler had the capacity for hard work, shunning the public face of the company, Alex became the business spokesperson 'epitomising the camaraderie with which the public had come to associate the family's products'. Born in 1856, the Scotch College-educated Alexander initially set his sight on becoming a horse trainer, but this errant idea was eclipsed with threats of disinheritance by his father. Alex's sporting instincts were henceforth relegated to his leisure hours, yet his passion was no less diminished; his interests

eventually expanded to embrace enough organisations to meet the needs of a half-dozen fanatical virile men. Not only did he become the motivating force behind each and every group in Essendon which could boast some form of combative purpose, but also of half those beyond it. And when the supply was exhausted, he founded others. To list the presidencies, vice-presidencies, secretaryships, and patronages held concurrently by Alex in the course of his legendary career, is to chronicle what no other man has ever achieved before or since. The list is not so much a spectacular inventory of hobbies and amusements as the delineation of a veritable passion:

Founder, Secretary and later President, Essendon Football Club; Founder and President, Essendon Rowing Club; Founder, Essendon Cricket Club and Essendon Tennis Club; President, Essendon Poultry, Dog, Pidgeon and Canary Society; President, Essendon Literary and Debating Society. Vice-President, North Suburban Cycling Club and Essendon Golf Club; Patron, Essendon Bowling Club, North Park Cricket Club and North Park Football Club. First President, Victorian Football League; Chairman, Royal Agricultural Society; Vice-President, Victoria Racing Club; Patron, Harriers Club; Founder, Oaklands Hunt Club.

The McCracken brothers were the motivating force behind the formation of the Essendon Football Club in 1873. Following a meeting at Ailsa, the team's first matches were played on the adjoining 'McCracken's Paddock', and the familiar red and black colours adopted at the brothers' instigation. Robert was elected President, Coiler appointed Captain, and Alex was declared Secretary, a position he held until elected President in 1886. Alex's popular leadership qualities led to his standing against Alfred Deakin in the 1894 state election, but he was easily defeated.

In 1884 Alex McCracken married Mary Peck, daughter of John Murray Peck, the co-founder of Cobb and Co. Coaches. Five years later they built their 42 room mansion, North Park on the highest land in Essendon. His cousin Coiler, built the classically-designed Earlsbrae, also in Essendon, near Ardmillan House. The 1890s stock crash (and the results of an imprudent investment with the notorious financial entrepreneur, Benjamin Fink) ultimately forced Coiler to sell Earlsbrae, but Alex remained at his beloved North Park until his death in 1915 at the age of 59 years. A staunch Presbyterian and committed anti-Catholic, Alex provided a codicil in his will to prevent his property falling into Catholic hands. Some years after his death North Park was sold to Harvey Patterson, an executive of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company.

#### The Society for Saint Columban

In December 1923 North Park together with about three acres of land was sold to the Society for Saint Columban for £14,000 by estate agents, Tadgell Brothers. This society of secular priests dedicated to foreign missionary work was established in 1918, when Father Edward J. Garvin returned from China. They adopted the 6th century Irish missionary, Saint Columban, as their patron, and renamed the property Bobbio in his honour. The trustees planned to use the premises as a training college for missionaries who would work in China, Japan, Korea, Burma, the Philippines, Fiji, Chile and Peru. Under the Columbans the coach-house and stables were turned into offices for the mission's magazine, The Far East, and the ballroom was converted to a chapel, with the first public mass celebrated there on Sunday, July 10, 1927 by twelve people. This work may have been undertaken by architects Eggleston and Oakley, who designed extensions to the buildings in the 1920s. During the Directorship of Fr. Frank Hunter, a new wing was added to the house in 1966, as well as a new office building in 1968 which replaced the original stables. The coach house was retained, except for a small section on the south side.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under Section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1286 in the category described as a Heritage Place:

Former North Park, 69 Woodland Street, Essendon, Moonee Valley City Council.

#### EXTENT:

1. All of the specified buildings forming part of the property formerly known as North Park and marked as follows on Diagram 604496 held by the Executive Director of the Heritage Council:

B-1 Main Building (former North Park residence), including steps at front and side.

B-2 Former Coach House.

B-3 Garden Shed.

B-4 Brick and Iron Fence and Gates.

B-5 Steps.

B-6 Fish Pond.

2. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 604496 held by the Executive Director, Heritage Council, being all of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 6113 Folio 415.

3. All the *Cedrus deodara* (Himalayan Cedar) trees marked T-1 to T-8 on Diagram 604496 held by the Executive Director of the Heritage Council.

4. Three carved McCracken chairs marked located in the entrance hall of Main Building B-1.

Dated 19 December 1996

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* No. G1 9 January 1997 p.49]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*