

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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RESIDENCE AND AIR RAID SHELTER



1 sicree family air raid shelter mitford street st kilda elevated view of shelter jan1995



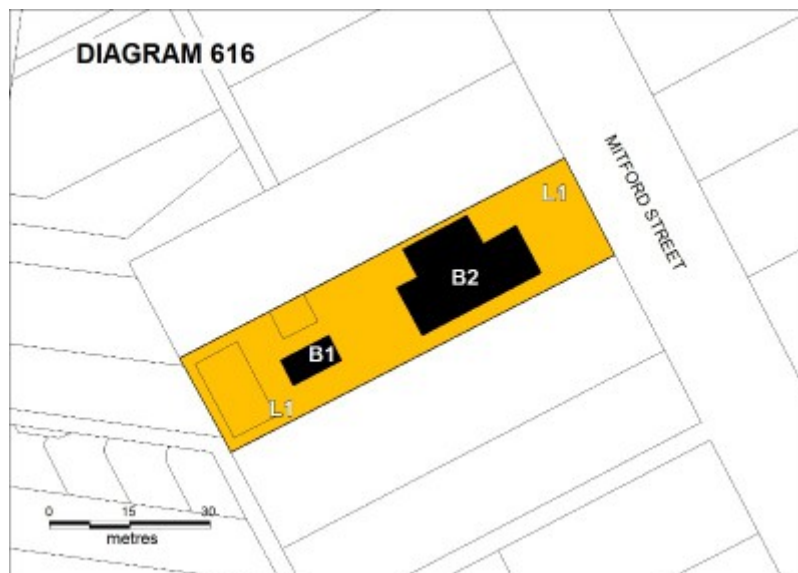
SICREE FAMILY AIR RAID SHELTER SOHE 2008



23 Mitford St - front view



23 Mitford St - entrance porch



sicree plan revised.jpg

Location

23 MITFORD STREET ST KILDA, PORT PHILLIP CITY

Municipality

PORT PHILLIP CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0616

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO368

VHR Registration

February 19, 1986

Amendment to Registration

March 11, 2010

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 24, 1999

The Californian bungalow residence at 23 Mitford Street was constructed in 1921 by the original owner, Benjamin Davis, and designed by architects Edwin and C.L. Ruck. The concrete air raid shelter, located in the large back garden of the Sicree family home, was constructed in early 1941.

Henrietta and Harry Sicree and their family took up residency at the substantial 1921 Californian Bungalow in St Kilda in 1927. The family had a long connection with the house, with brothers Abraham and Lazarus continuing to reside there following their father's death in 1944. In 1946, businessman Abraham Sicree established the Lazarus and Abraham Sicree Chair of Semitic Studies at the University of Melbourne, and was prominent member of the local Jewish community. Lazarus Sicree and his wife constructed the concrete air raid shelter in 1941. The shelter took the place of the Sicree's tennis court in their extensive backyard, as concerns about potential air raids heightened over the course of the war.

The single storey brick dwelling is of Californian Bungalow design. The most prominent feature are the arched front porch and the large arched entrance with impressive stained glass, which leads to a wide, wood panelled entrance hallway. Two hallways lead to bedrooms, a bathroom and the kitchen, which retains early tiling and openings. The dining room and lounge room feature original ceiling decoration and tiled fireplaces.

The shelter was designed by David V Isaacs, a consulting engineer, in December 1940. Isaacs was a member of

a sub-committee formed by the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects and the Institution of Engineers, Australia, Melbourne division. The two bodies had been asked to prepare a series of reports to the State Emergency Council for Civil Defence early in 1940. The Pollard Brothers began building the shelter in February 1941. Its date is comparatively early, as shelters were more commonly constructed by citizens in the back yards after 1941. Though the public was made aware of the danger of air attacks following outbreak of war in 1939, it was not until late in 1941 that the threat of the Japanese in the Pacific prompted 'brownout' simulations and the allocation of federal funding increased the construction of shelters.

In an era when many private shelters were shallow trenches covered in corrugated iron, the Sicree family concrete bunker is an unusually substantial structure. It also provided a relatively high level of comfort with bunks, toilet compartment with escape hatch, hand basin and benches provided for its few occupants. The reinforced concrete walls, floor and barrel vaulted roof were 12 inches thick and unusually, the concrete roof remained exposed. The sophisticated design suggests a British influence. It was later shown, however, that the extra effort and cost of elaborate subterranean concrete shelters was not justified by an improvement in protection.

Both the Sicree residence and the concrete air raid shelter have remained intact since their construction.

How is it significant?

The Residence and Air Raid Shelter at 23 Mitford Street is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Residence and Air Raid Shelter is historically significant as an unusual example in Victoria of a private dwelling with its own air raid shelter built for the residents during the early years of the war. The residence and shelter together demonstrate the safety concerns of Melbourne's population during World War Two. The threat of attacks from the air prompted many residents to build shelters in the rear garden behind their houses. The shelter is rare for its early construction date, as backyard shelters were more commonly constructed after 1941.

The substantial Sicree family house gives a context to the residential air raid shelter. It provides greater understanding of the wealth of the owners of this property in a comfortable middle class suburb, and their concerns for the safety of their family at a time of great uncertainty in the war in the Pacific during World War Two.

The residence is of architectural importance as a fine and intact example of a 1920s Californian Bungalow, the most popular domestic style of the interwar period in Victoria.

The underground air raid shelter is of architectural significance for its sophisticated design when most private shelters constructed were of more makeshift materials and construction. Its association with engineer David V. Isaacs is important, due to his contribution to early official concerns about home defences.

Permit Exemptions

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be

exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Interior:

Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.

Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art or religious works or icons.

Construction dates	1941, 1921,
Architect/Designer	Isaacs, David V, Ruck, Edwin J,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	AIR RAID SHELTER,
Hermes Number	1116
Property Number	

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 0616 in the category described as Heritage Place.

Residence and Air Raid Shelter
23 Mitford Street
St Kilda
Port Phillip City

EXTENT

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram H0616 described in Certificate of Title Vol. 2059 Folio 679.
2. All the buildings marked B1 and B2 on Diagram H0616 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Air Raid Shelter
B2 Residence

Dated 11 March 2010

Jim Gardner
Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 10 11 March 2010 445]

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 data owner.

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