
'Diamond House' & adjacent house, 24 Seaby Street, STAWELL



SL 307 - 'Diamond House'
and adjacent house

Location

24 Seaby Street STAWELL, NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Municipality

NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

Level of significance

Recommended for VHR

Heritage Listing

Northern Grampians Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 27, 2004

The Diamond House at 24 Seaby Street, Stawell, has significance as a unique example of 19th century domestic architecture in Victoria. Constructed of rectangular, parapeted wall planes, the building features highly unusual and intact brown and quartz stone facades shaped in diamond patterns and bordered by timber slats. The idea and construction was conceived by the original owner, John Hearne, miner and wine merchant, with the work being carried out between c.1866 and 1868. The house appears to be in good condition when viewed from the street and makes a significant contribution to the predominantly single storey Victorian styled streetscape.

The Diamond House at 24 Seaby Street is **architecturally** and **scientifically** significant at a **STATE** level. It demonstrates unique design and construction qualities for a 19th century residential building in Victoria. These

qualities include the parapeted rectangular wall planes constructed of brown stones and white quartz in the shape of diamonds that are bordered by wooden slats. Other intact qualities include the uniform appearance of the carefully cut and fitted stones, decorative brick and stone parapet band, screw fixings, flat roof behind the parapet, unpainted and multi-corbelled chimney, and the paired elongated timber framed casement windows with herringbone pattern glazing that continues the diamond theme. There are few if any known comparisons with the Diamond House in Australia, with the most comparable building being Jules Saulner's chocolate factory at Noisiel on the Marne in France. This design was published in E.E. Viollet-le-Duc's *Entretiens sur l'Architecture*, second volume, published in French in 1872 and in English in 1881.

The Diamond House at 24 Seaby Street is **historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level. It is associated with residential developments in Stawell in the 19th century. In particular, this house has associations with John Hearne, miner, wine merchant and original owner, who conceived the rare design and construction of the house had built it between c.1866 and 1868.

The Diamond House at 24 Seaby Street is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level. It is recognised and valued by the Stawell community for its highly unusual architectural qualities.

Overall, the Diamond House is of **STATE** significance.

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| Heritage Study/Consultant | Northern Grampians - Shire of Northern Grampians - Stage 2 Heritage Study, Wendy Jacobs, Vicki Johnson, David Rowe, Phil Taylor, 2004; |
| Hermes Number | 112722 |
| Property Number | |

Physical Description 1

The house known as the Diamond House at 24 Seaby Street, Stawell, is set on an average-sized allotment for the area and has visual connections with other significant single storey houses. The front has a garden of exotic trees and shrubs and the is bound by an introduced flat timber picket fence that is approximately 1 m high.

The unique, Victorian single storey Diamond House building is especially characterised by its highly unusual parapeted wall planes constructed of brown stones and white quartz in the shape of diamonds that are bordered by wooden slats. The carefully cut and fitted stones have a uniform appearance throughout the rectangular wall planes which are capped by a decorative brick band. Screws instead of nails appear to have been used. Behind the parapet may be a flat roof. An early unpainted and multi-corbelled chimney adorns the roofline.

Another early and unusual feature of the design are the paired, elongated timber framed casement windows with herringbone patterned glazing continuing the diamond theme. Collectively these architectural features make the Diamond House a unique type of 19th century domestic architecture in Victoria.

At the rear of the house is a horizontal timber weatherboard addition with a gabled galvanised corrugated iron roof. Abutting the Diamond house at the side is an introduced brick addition.

Some unsympathetic signs project from the roof top and side wall of the house.

Comparative Analysis

(partly taken from National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Classification Report for the Diamond House, file no. 45)

The diamond treatment of the Diamond House has some strong similarities with Jules Saulner's chocolate factory at Noisiel on the Marne in France. The design was published in E.E. Viollet-le-Duc's *Entretiens sur l'Architecture*, second volume, published in French in 1872 and in English in 1881. Any links with Viollet-le-Duc's publication are uncertain, given that it was published several years after the construction of the Diamond House. However, the

original owner's nephew, George Inskip (who arrived in Victoria in 1870), was an architect who had completed his studies in Germany. Both during and after his studies prior to emigrating to Australia Inskip visited the principal cities of Europe. It may well have been from one of these visits that inspiration for the Diamond House was passed onto John Hearne through correspondence. While this scenario cannot be substantiated it is valid, given that the eminent architectural firm of Davidson and Henderson reinterpreted the French Romanesque designs published in Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire Raisonné de L'Architecture Française Du XI^e Au XV^e Siècle* [1866] in their work throughout Victoria in the 1870s and 1880s.

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/>