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# Batavia



Undated photograph of Batavia at 20 Darling Street, South Yarra



20 Darling Street, South Yarra

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## Location

20 Darling Street, SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141 - Property No 24406

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO459

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### *What is Significant?*

The building at 20 Darling Street, South Yarra is a large, double-storey rendered masonry villa in the Victorian Italianate style. Constructed c1882-1883, and later known as *Batavia*, the villa remains substantially intact externally to its nineteenth century state.

### *How is it Significant?*

*Batavia* at 20 Darling Street, South Yarra is of local architectural and historical significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it Significant?*

*Batavia* is of architectural significance as a fine and substantially intact late-Victorian Italianate villa. Locally, the Italianate mode of architectural expression pervaded all strata of residential design and had, by the late 1880s, come to define the architectural character of Melbourne's inner ring of suburbs. The house's rendered entry porch is an unusual element which distinguishes the building from other, more typical, houses in this mode. *Batavia* also shows a degree of composure and restraint in its application of Classical ornament that sets it apart from the flamboyant Boom-era houses of the late 1880s, which generally relied more heavily on cast-iron lacework for decorative effect.

*Batavia* is historically significant as surviving evidence of the affluent character of the South Yarra hillside in the nineteenth century. Melbourne's prosperity through the latter half of the nineteenth century coupled with the growth of its public transport system, allowed many Victorians to opt for a home in the fresh air and tranquillity of the suburbs away from the noise and dirt of the city. Beginning as early as the 1850s, the subdivision of large land holdings in South Yarra, and other parts of Stonnington, created new middle class enclaves, populated by businessmen and their families pursuing the suburban ideal of a *rus en urbe* ('country in the city'). These developments became common in the higher parts of the former City of Prahran, away from the low lying swamp land.

*Batavia* also forms part of a relatively small extant group of substantial double-storey Italianate villas within the Municipality which illustrate the role of houses generally, and classically-inspired houses in particular, as symbols of wealth, status and taste for Melbourne's middle and upper classes.

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|---------------------------|---|
| Heritage Study/Consultant | Stonnington - 20 Darling Street, South Yarra - Citation, Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 2014; |
| Hermes Number             | 196587  |
| Property Number           |   |

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## **Physical Description 1**

The site at 20 Darling Street, South Yarra is located on the eastern side of the street, midway between Toorak Road and Domain Road. It is occupied by a large, double-storey Victorian Italianate villa, formerly named *Batavia*. The villa has a hipped slate roof and an asymmetrical rendered brick facade with a projecting double-height bay to one side of an arched single-storey entry porch (also of rendered masonry construction). The porch supports a first floor balcony and cast-iron balustrade with a rendered pier, topped by an urn finial.

The facade is further embellished with late-nineteenth century Classical ornament, including vermiculated spandrel panels, archivolt and string course mouldings and bracketed eaves. The ground floor facade windows have segmental arches whereas first floor windows are square headed. The entry retains an original or early panelled timber door, surmounted by an elegant arched fanlight and flanked by 'barley sugar' columns and sidelights.

The rendered wall finish and ornate bracketed eaves treatment return along the side elevations for a short distance only. Beyond this point, the side elevations are plainly detailed with face brick walls punctuated by timber-framed double-hung sash windows.

Research undertaken to date has not uncovered the name of the house's designer, although the scale and quality of the building suggests the involvement of a competent architect or builder-designer.

The villa remains substantially intact in terms of its presentation to the street apart from the loss of the timber picket front fence and a single-storey front verandah that can be seen in an early undated photograph of *Batavia*. It is not known when the front verandah was removed although its footprint appears on MMBW drainage plans as late as 1958.[10] The verandah seems to have been a fairly typical 1880s design with a cast iron post and frieze supporting a corrugated iron roof. It also appears from the evidence of the early photograph that the verandah abutted the side of the entry porch somewhat awkwardly, leaving the top part of the entry porch arch exposed. This may be the result of the verandah being an early addition.

The exterior presently has a uniform white paint finish. The early black and white photograph of *Batavia* shows decorative mouldings painted a darker colour than the main body of the wall with stop-chamfered corners picked out in a much lighter tone.

Other changes to the property include the addition of a small, low-set garage on the south side of the house. The metal palisade front fence with rendered piers is also modern, but is nonetheless broadly sympathetic to the Victorian character of the house.

[10] MMBW Plan of Drainage No.11620. South East Water.

## **Local Historical Themes**

The building at 20 Darling Street, South Yarra can be shown to illustrate the following themes as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*:

8.2.1 - Mansion estates and the high ground - Middle class estates in Prahran

8.4.1 - Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

*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/>*