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## The Pottery (formerly Hybla)



18 Wallace Ave, Toorak



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### Location

18 Wallace Avenue TOORAK, STONNINGTON CITY

### Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO575

### Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 18, 2016

#### What is significant?

'The Pottery' (formerly 'Hybla'), at 18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak, built in 1889, and comprising a large single-storey residence with various gabled projecting bays and a large central tower is significant. It was built for the Scottish Mary Hastie, a recipient of the Hastie Bequest, from her brother, John Hastie of 'Leslie Manor', Camperdown, an unmarried grazier who had died in 1866, leaving a large fortune to his next of kin, to various Protestant churches, and sections of the University. It was later occupied by Mary Hastie's niece and her daughter Mary Pott. Mary Pott played a significant role in the YWCA, serving as national president of the World Fellowship Committee.

When the residence was taken over by the Geelong Grammar School in 1947, the school nicknamed the building "The Pottery" after her.

It is significant to the extent of its nineteenth century external form and fabric. The modern alterations and additions are not significant.

#### **How is it significant?**

'The Pottery' (formerly 'Hybla'), at 18 Wallace Avenue, Toorak is of local architectural and aesthetic significance and rarity value to the City of Stonnington.

#### **Why is it significant?**

Architecturally, 'Hybla' is the only known Neo Greek (or Greek Revival) dwelling in the City of Stonnington (and possibly in the State of Victoria). It was closely modelled on architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson's 'Holmwood House' of 1857-58 in Glasgow, as published in Blackie & Son's *Villa and Cottage Architecture* of 1868. This exemplar provided the unusual low-pitched gables with wide eaves and bargeboards with scrolled ends and metal bosses along their length, as well as much of the external ornament executed in cement render. The house illustrates the importance of British architectural pattern books in introducing new and exotic styles to Australia during the nineteenth century. (Criteria B & D)

Aesthetically, it is distinguished by its wealth of high-quality Greek and Egyptian-derived ornament, most of which was adapted from the interior details of 'Holmwood House'. Details of note in the tympanum of the front gable, all executed in cement render, is high reliefs of anthemias (palmettes), arabesques, an Aeolic capital (two large volutes with a palmette between), and a star or sunburst within a notched circle, with a band of incised tridents and anthemias below. The capitals have a dog-tooth moulding to the abacus (top block) and palmettes in high relief below. The square tower with a corbel table may have been based on Thomson's 'Craig Ailey Villa'. The design was adapted to the Australian climate by the addition of a return verandah, which features more unusual decorative detail whose origins are unknown. This includes the double toothed fringe on the verandah beam and the battered piers supporting the verandah posts, as well as the muscular name pediment above the verandah, based on abstracted Greek pediment and cenotaph forms. The painted and stained glass to window highlights and around the front door is also significant. (Criterion E)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington Victorian Houses Study, City of Stonnington, 2016;
Hermes Number	200126
Property Number	

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## **Physical Description 1**

### Physical description

'Hybla' is a large single-storey residence, occupying a wide allotment on the north-east corner of Wallace Avenue and Jackson Street in Toorak. It is set back from both street frontages behind a modern fence which conceals most of the building from Jackson Street. The former garden has been lost to various school-yard requirements.

Constructed in 1889, the building is distinctive for its bold use of traditional and abstracted Greek decorative elements, primarily drawn from 'Holmwood House' in Glasgow Scotland. That building was designed by leading Greek Revival architect Alexander 'Greek' Thomson and built in 1857-58. 'Holmwood House' was described as a 'picturesquely treated . adaptation of the Greek', and the same can be said for 'Hybla', which combines an Italianate massing and square tower with extensive Grecian and a bit of Egyptian ornament.

It has complex massing with variously scaled projecting gabled bays and a large central tower over the centre of the building. The wide eaves have a widely spaced pierced scallop detail along their bottom edge. The rectangular projecting bay fronting Wallace Avenue is highly ornamented with a relatively shallow-pitched gable roof, unusual double bargeboard with wide eaves, and a high relief rendered tympanum that utilises a range of Greek ornamental motifs executed both in high relief and as an incised band at the base. This includes anthemion (palmettes), arabesques, tridents, a star or sunburst within a notched circle, and a bas-relief Aeolic capital (Figure 6). An Aeolic capital is the predecessor of the Ionic capital; it has two large volutes (spiral scrolls) with a palmette (a leaf ornament resembling a fan) in between them.

The south side gable has a splayed form, and somewhat simpler detail. An incised Greek Key frieze runs above the verandah roof. Above it are pairs of simple dwarf pilasters below a large incised design on an anthemion. To the west of this gable is the only (visible) chimney, which is unusually small and features incise patterns on the shaft and a terracotta chimney pot at the top.

A shallow-pitched skillion corrugated iron verandah wraps around the front facade and returns to encircle the canted bay to the south. It retains slim cast-iron columns resting on battered masonry plinths, and has a verandah beam covered in two layers of pointed scallops. The floor retains its bluestone nosing and what may be original red and cream biscuit tiles.

The roof is a complex grouping of low-pitched gables, apart from the central tower with a nearly pyramidal roof, all clad in new slates and with very wide eaves. Bargeboards have scrolled ends and regular raised bosses along their length.

The windows are full-length, probably casements, with large, rich painted and stained glass highlights. The architraves are battered, in the Egyptian style. Beside them, on the facade are large incised floral designs. The front door is recessed and there are very large panels of incised anthemion designs beside it. The door was not visible, but retains leadlight sidelights and highlights. The entrance is reached via a small flight of steps with a cast-iron balustrade between battered and fluted piers (similar to those of the verandah).

The building is dominated by the landmark tower which has deep overhanging eaves with a timber fascia of a pointed scallop fringe motif that matches the verandah below. The eaves are supported on enlarged paired Italianate eaves brackets which in turn rest on pilasters. The capitals are an unusual combination of a dog-tooth moulding to the abacus (top block) and palmettes in high relief below. The shafts of the pilasters are panelled with an incised scrolling floral design along their length. Contributing to the tower's distinctive appearance is Italianate corbelling above windows with shouldered hood moulds and consoles beneath the window sills.

Below the tower, the building name 'HYBLA' is fashioned on an unusual pediment which projects through the eaves. It is boldly modelled with abstracted Greek pediment and cenotaph forms. Along the base is a row of incised designs suggesting a triangular pediment.

On the ridge of the roof, on the north side, is a very unusual chimney. It has a stepped rectangular base, but the shaft is round and narrow with a fluted top.

There have been numerous additions to the rear of the former residence which were likely undertaken as part of the conversion to school use. Much of the property is concealed from the public realm by high fences and a gabled weatherboard shed in the front garden, but the house as viewed and appreciated from Wallace Avenue appears largely intact. The Jackson Street facade is also intact, but is hidden by a high paling fence.

## **Local Historical Themes**

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

8.4.2 Functional, eccentric & theatrical - experimentation & innovation in architecture

9.3 Developing the private school system

### 10.3 Helping other people

It is of historical interest for its association with Mary Hastie and for the association with Mary Cameron Pott, a significant figure in the YWCA and other services in the 1920s-1960s.

*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/>*