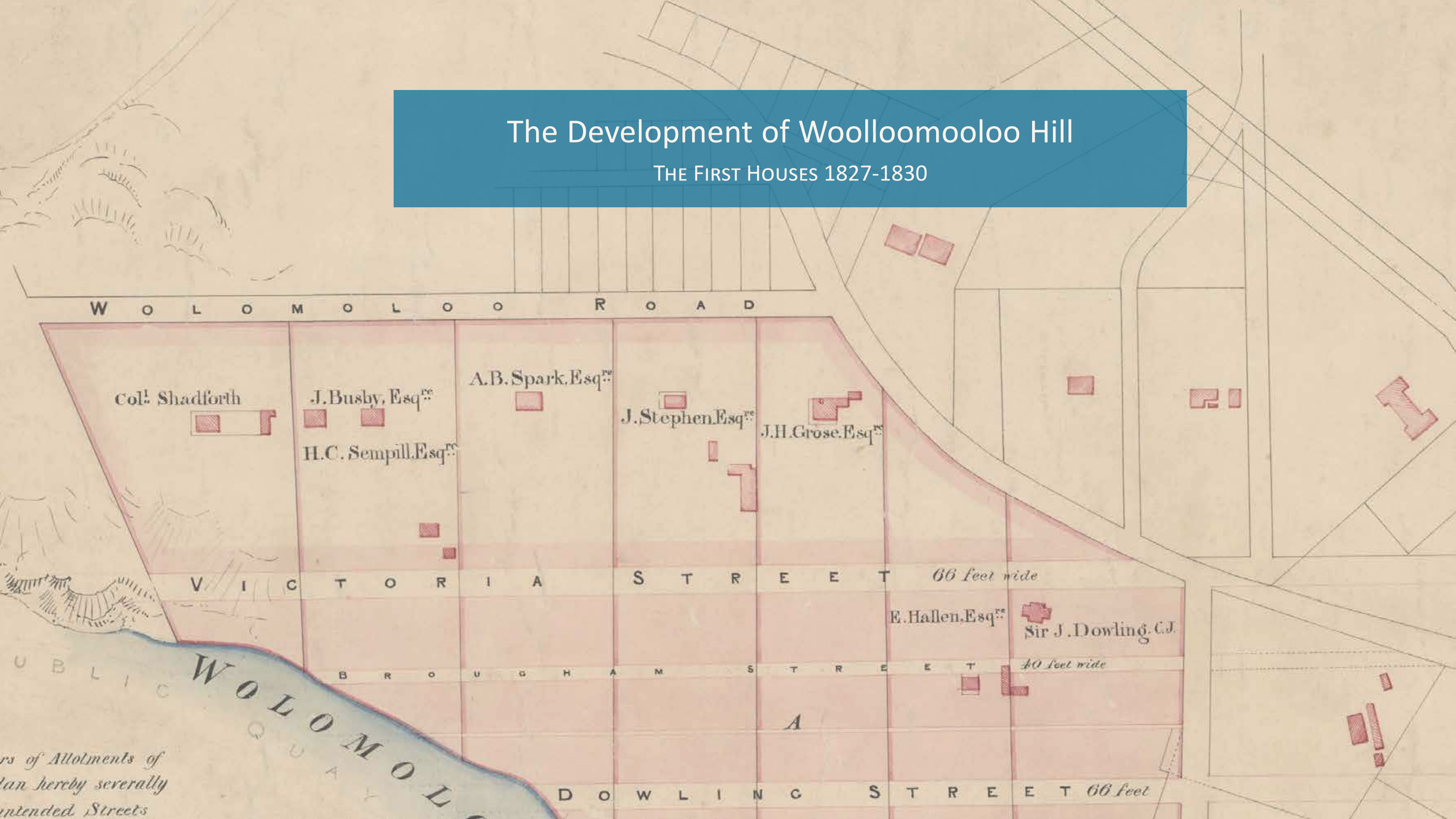


The Development of Woolloomooloo Hill

THE FIRST HOUSES 1827-1830



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THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO HILL: THE FIRST HOUSES 1827-1830

[EXCERPTED FROM *THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIAL HOUSE*, BY COURTESY THE AUTHOR DR JAMES BORADBENT OAM]

Look round to your left - What mansions are those
That crown yonder cliffs so romantic?
Woollomooloo'- Official Town'- once ere the names:
But 'Darlinghurst' now - less pedantic.

These elegant villas have lately been built,
By Judges and other Officials,
Whose names I would gladly record in my verse
Could I rhyme with so many initials.'

Thirteen nominees for grants were selected in 1828 for the fifteen allotments, ranging in size from 8 to 10 acres (3.2 to 4 hectares), on Woolloomooloo Hill.² They were the heads of various departments of the civil service, such as Sir James Dowling and John Stephen, Judges of the Supreme Court, Thomas Livingston Mitchell, the Surveyor- General; Thomas Macquoid, the High Sheriff: and Ambrose Hallen, the Colonial Architect. There were also lesser official such as John Busby, surveyor and civil engineer. One 'respectable merchant'. A. B. Spark, was admitted to this exclusive enclave. Spark may not have let this distinction go unremarked. His house, Tusculum, may have been named, with wry irony, not only for Pliny's fabled villa, but also for the villa of the nouveau-riche grocer's wife Anastasia Rafferty, in Maria Edgeworth's popular novel, *The Absentee*. Spark was well read and, like Mrs Rafferty, sought to distinguish his villa by its embellishments.

The peninsula of Woolloomooloo Hill, terminating the eastern view from the elevated parts of the town of Sydney, particularly from the Government Domain, was 'a piece of barren, rocky and desert [sic] land'³ suitable only for windmills. Being unsuitable for agriculture it had not been taken up in the earliest years of the colony as was the low land at the head of the intervening bays between it and the town: Alexander Riley's Woolloomooloo and the government garden, later to become the Botanic Gardens. Its ridge offered pleasing views westward to the town which, however ill-planned and ill-kept it may have been in parts, from a distance was a picturesquely sited, small, bustling seaport. Eastward were views to the harbour entrance, over bays and headlands and islands, thickly wooded, the sombre vegetation reaching to the water's edge with fantastically weather-sculpted rocks overhung occasionally by darker, glossy-leaved native figs. Only the sunlight on the water, the

slow progress of arriving and departing ships with their pilot vessels, and the elegant, classical shaft of Macquarie's lighthouse and the semaphore on South Head gave movement to the scene when the first grants were promised in September 1828. No longer did Captain Piper's barge carry guests to and from Henrietta Villa, which was out of sight beyond the rounded headland of Mrs Darling's Point.⁴ Vaucluse, the only other house of note yet built between the town and South Head, had not yet gained under its new proprietor, William Charles Wentworth, its Romantic Gothic appearance or its reputation as a scene of carousing and political intrigue.

The said "desart, and then worthless tract of land', the picturesque ridge of Woolloomooloo Hill, was an ideal site for the erection of suburban villa for those numerous government officials whose positions made their residence near the town essential. but who did not require attached commercial premises (and probably wished to dissociate themselves from such enterprises) and had no need for fertile ground other than for the establishment of a house garden. Here the leading officials of the colony could build their houses 'to the ornament and improvement of the suburbs of Sydney'⁵

The landscape was not to all tastes. and even when the headlands were 'crested with handsome villas'. there was still 'to the stranger's eye something singularly repulsive in the leaden tint of the gum-tree foliage, and in the dry and sterile sandstone from which it springs'⁶, but, within the environs of the town, Woolloomooloo Hill became the most desirable locality in which to live.

If any event heralded the coming of age of colonial domestic architecture, it was possibly the establishment in 1827 of the 'villa conditions' to which the grants of land on Woolloomooloo Hill were to be subject. For the first time in the colony a set of conditions was established to restrict the type of development, to determine the type and status of the houses to be built and to govern their appearance. These conditions were established by January 1827 when the colonial secretary informed A. B. Spark that he would be considered eligible for a grant subject to such conditions⁷, although it was not until September 1828 that the promises of grants were confirmed⁸. It was intended to ratify these grants only when the conditions had been complied with.

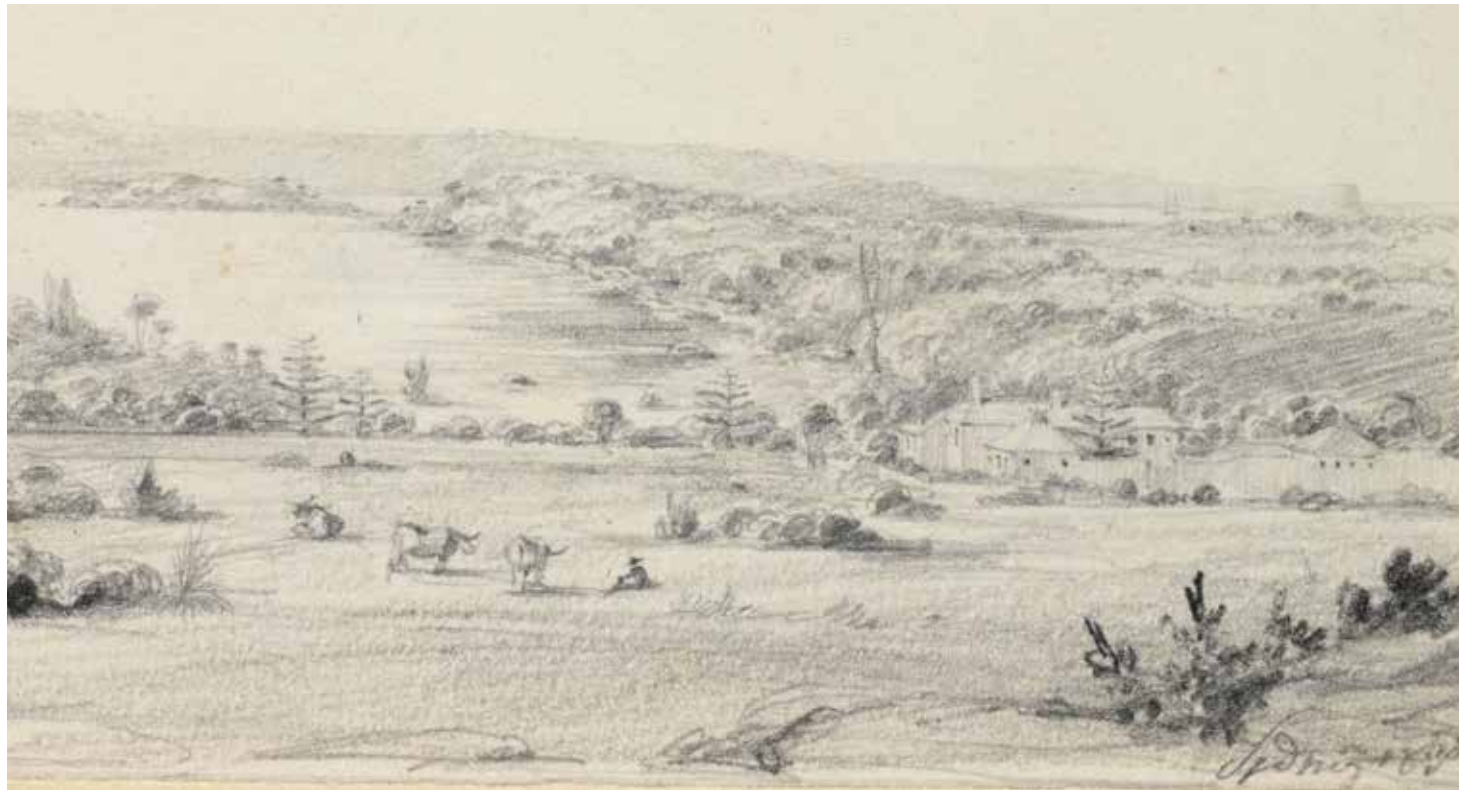


His Honor Mr Justice Dowling, afterwards Sir James Dowling, C.J., 1834 / [probably by T.B. East]
SLNSW

Though the grantees were not required to enter into any covenant or bond respecting their allotments, they did not obtain possession of their land until they had agreed, in writing, to the conditions described to them by the colonial secretary.⁹ The grantees were to affirm that:

Within three Years from the date of the order for the land, the Buildings, which may be approved by the Governor as undermentioned, are to be erected thereon, such Buildings being of not less value and cost than One thousand pounds — No Buildings but such as shall be so approved are to be at any time erected on the Said Land which is expressly given for one Villa or residence only — A plan and Elevation of the Building proposed to be erected on the Allotment is to be submitted to the Governor and after receiving His Excellency's approval, the respective parties must apprise the Director of Public Works with their intention to commence Building, in order that the Town Surveyor may be sent to examine the Spot selected for the Site of the Dwelling, which is in no case to be nearer to the Road than Sixty Yards, and to take care that the front of the Building face towards Sydney — If the situation proposed should appear to be objectionable, a report of the circumstances which render it so will be made, and the matter referred to the Government...¹⁰

The conditions ensured that each house would be isolated in its grounds to preserve its privacy and that each would be built to a minimum standard based on cost. As the annual incomes of most of the grantees exceeded £1,000 (A. M. Baxter, for example, receiving £1,400 per annum in 1828, and 1830 Major Mitchell £1,000 and James Dowling £1,500)¹¹ and as the cost of building in the colony had always been high, the figure appears to have been chosen cautiously. But who initiated the establishment of such conditions, and who drew them up? No mention of the conditions appears in the *Governor's Memoranda*, nor in the published *Proclamations, Acts in Council, Government Orders, and Notices* for the years 1826 to 1827. The future Surveyor-General, Major Mitchell, one of the original grantees, the first to build on the peninsula land one of the upholders of the 'villa ideal' in Sydney, had not yet arrived in the colony. It is possible that Mitchell's predecessor, John Oxley, who in 1825 and 1826 had drawn up regulations on land grants in accordance with the orders of the Colonial Office,¹² may have been responsible, but these conditions were not of the kind to interest the office of the Home Secretary. The Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay, is another candidate, informed on matters of landscape and horticulture, but the most likely initiators of the conditions were Governor Darling, his wife, or his brothers-in-law, William and Henry Dumaresq. The villa conditions were exactly contemporary with the announcement of a competition for the design of a



Sydney 1830 [view of Woolloomooloo Bay and Garden Island--detail] / C. Rodius del. SLNSW

new Government House¹³ and may have been a direct result of that project.

In December 1825 the *Sydney Gazette* had printed a report on the siting of a proposed new vice-regal residence:

We have authority to state that the erection of a new Government-house is contemplated. The site upon which it was intended to have been built, we understand, was Elizabeth Town, which is the next bay to Woolloomooloo, and is certainly a most picturesque and delightful situation: ... the spot fixed on, is rather above, and in line with the celebrated Government stables ... It will be at least two years before this contemplated structure will be commenced ...

It appears, therefore, that the new house was to be sited high on Woolloomooloo Hill and from this decision may have developed the ideas of establishing a hierarchy of residences of the 'Civil Officers of the Colony' by granting the surrounding allotments to the heads of various government departments and of formulating regulations to control the siting of the houses and to set building standards. The choice of Woolloomooloo Hill for the site of the new Government House had possibly been abandoned, however, by January 1827 when the competition for its design was announced, for in October 1826, 54 acres (21.9 hectares) of land at Elizabeth Bay, presumably part of the area considered as the site for the new house, were promised to Macleay.¹⁴ Nevertheless the villa conditions were still relevant if the Government House was to be built in the Domain, for its views, as well as the views from other parts of the town, could be controlled.¹⁵

The designs of the houses were to be approved not by the surveyor-general, the director of public works or the colonial secretary, but by the governor himself, suggesting that the conditions may have originated at Government House, may not have been true government regulations and may therefore not have required the grantees to enter into covenant but merely to affirm their intentions in writing.

Considering that Mrs Darling prided herself on her architectural accomplishments¹⁶ — and won the competition for the design of Government House¹⁷ — it is possible that it was she, rather than the coolly efficient administrator, her husband, who was ultimately responsible for directing the appearance of the Woolloomooloo villas, although she may have been aided or advised by her brothers, the Dumaresqs. Henry Dumaresq, whom Darling had appointed clerk to the Executive Council, appears to have dabbled in architectural design and to have planned the alterations to



GOVERNOR'S BATHING HOUSE, Gov^t Domain.

Printed, Published and Sold by J.G. Austin, 13 Hunter St

J.G. Austin, *Governor's Bathing House, Government Domain* 1836, SLNSW

Government House undertaken in 1825. William was appointed Civil Engineer and Inspector of Roads and Bridges and was officially responsible for later alterations to the house.¹⁸ If Mrs Darling was responsible for initiating the conditions or approving the designs she would only have been carrying on the role of the governor's wife, established by Elizabeth Macquarie, of influencing the architectural development of the colony. Eliza Darling did continue Mrs Macquarie's vision of a harbour embellished with Picturesque Gothic buildings by erecting the castellated bathing house at the Government Domain in 1826.¹⁹

Darling decided that Woolloomooloo Hill should be set aside for the leading respectable citizens of Sydney and, of those, principally senior civil servants. There were no wealthy emancipists on Woolloomooloo Hill and there was no question about the type of house that should be erected: the suburban villa was the ideal residence for officials and professionals in receipt of regular government salaries. Although nearly all of them acquired, by grant or purchase, rural holdings and speculated in land, their primary source of income was not the land: they did not need country estates but saw the advantages of living out of town. The suburban villa also suited the prosperous or retired man of business who could afford to dissociate himself from the source of his wealth and enjoy its rewards in a spacious environment of peaceful domesticity.²⁰

During the second decade of the nineteenth century, in England and in the colony, the villa became the 'universal pattern' for domestic architecture 'in which simple elegance and usefulness [were] intended to be combined'. 'Simple elegance' increasingly gave way to competitive, pretentious elaboration as the century wore on and the number of salaried middle-class aspirants to a suburban, or semi-rural, life increased, but the 'general features and principles' that Papworth expounded his 'Remarks on English Villas' in Britton and Pugin's *Illustrations of the Public Buildings of London*,²¹ published contemporaneously with the formulation of the villa conditions of Woolloomooloo Hill, remained consistent: 'its insulated form, its garden-like domain, and external offices for stables and domestic economy'. At the same time James Elmes, in his *Metropolitan Improvements of London*, in *the Nineteenth Century*²² concluded that 'the term [villa] is never more properly applied than when given to such suburban structures as those which are rising around us, serving as they may well do from "situation" as to the town and from "position" as to rural beauty'.

At the height of the suburban villa's popularity in the late 1830s John Claudius Loudon in *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*²³ set forth the benefits of the suburban villa in more detail:

The enjoyments to be derived from a suburban villa depend principally on a knowledge of the resources which a garden, however small, is capable of affording. The benefits experienced by breathing air unconfined by those streets of houses, and uncontaminated by the smoke of chimneys, the cheerful aspect of vegetation, the singing of birds in their season; and the enlivening effect of finding ourselves unpent-up by buildings, and in comparatively unlimited space; are felt by most people.²⁴

and elsewhere:

The Object which a person has in view in desiring a country residence [that is, a house out of the town] will necessarily influence his choice. Health and recreation are the most universal objects, but joined to these, or independent of them, is the love of distinction; of retirement; of seclusion; of horses and dogs, which a country residence affords an excuse for maintaining: of astronomy, botany, gardening and entomology; or of some other study which can be better carried on in the country, or in the suburbs of a town, than in the town itself.²⁵

These were objects of consideration in the colony as well as in England. The surveyor John Thompson informed Loudon in 1833:

Sydney is, I am afraid, becoming very unwholesome. the houses being too much crowded, and proper arrangements for drainage, &c, not having been made when the town was originally laid out. I have found my own health, and that of my children, sensibly improved by merely moving to a residence within reach of the sea breeze.²⁶

In a climate as mild as Sydney's, despite its summer humidity, the opportunities for enjoying the outdoor activities that Loudon enumerated were far greater than in England. Even before building his ambitious house, Alexander Macleay would drive from Macquarie Place in the early morning and in the evening to enjoy, plan and supervise the construction and planting of his private botanical garden at Elizabeth Bay.²⁷

The environs of Sydney offered innumerable picturesque sites for villas. The nurseryman and landscape gardener, Thomas Shepherd, writing in 1835 on the planning of the gardens of the 'marine villas' of Port Jackson, looked forward to a time

when all the land on each side of this splendid river, together with its branches and bays, will ... be ornamented with beautiful marine villas and cottages at

short distances from each other, forming most pleasing parts of the landscape ... residences placed upon the middle elevation, the richly picturesque and wooded hills forming a back ground, each with a carriage and garden front, with lawns, walks, and shrubberies.²⁸

Unfortunately, it was usually beyond the awareness and the capabilities of the builders of these villas to preserve this picturesqueness while developing their properties. On Woolloomooloo Hill little advantage was taken by the landholders of its picturesque character, and Shepherd duly admonished them:

When you ... first got your estates, your ground was well furnished with beautiful shrubs. You ignorantly set the murderous hoe and grubbing axe to work to destroy them, and the ground that had been full of luxuriant verdure, was laid bare and desolate, and the prospect ruined.²⁹

The 'desart' of Woolloomooloo Hill was largely one of the proprietors' own making, and the pleasures of the natural landscape were mostly destroyed before they set about importing soil to form 'gardenesque' displays of more colourful exotics.³⁰

Only Macleay attempted to reconcile modern English garden design with the native landscape; the houses on the western side of the peninsula stood proudly bare in their formalized newly planted villa gardens for all the town to admire. In this way the denizens of Woolloomooloo Hill interpreted Loudon's 'love of distinction' and ranked it higher, it seems, than retirement or seclusion or picturesque landscape.

The grandees of Woolloomooloo Hill valued the exclusiveness of their grants, but within five years of their receiving title to the land they began to apply for its subdivision and, unanimously, they asked for the repeal of the villa conditions that bound them.³¹

On the receipt of the plans for the villas and their approval by the governor, the director of public works had copies of the plans made, registered them and returned the original plans to their owners.³² Unfortunately, although much of the correspondence concerning the grants has been preserved, all the registered plans appear to have been destroyed and only one original plan, that of Major Mitchell's Craigend (see opposite), signed with Governor Darling's approval on April 1829, survives.³³

Mitchell's plan was not the first to be approved. On 1 December 1828 Darling had approved the



S T. Gill, *Orwell House near Sydney NS.W. N.E. Angle*, n.d. Mitchell Library, Sate Library of NSW.

plans submitted by the Attorney-General, Alexander Macduff Baxter, for the house to be built on his promised grant of over 9 acres (3.6 hectares), Number 6 of the Woolloomooloo allotments.³⁴

Mitchell's Craigend, Baxter's Springfield and Judge Stephen's Orwell were the earliest houses to be built on the peninsula. Of the three, Orwell, apparently building in 1829,³⁵ was the simplest and the least interesting.

Stephen, first puisne judge of the Supreme Court, was promised Number 5 of the allotments. Orwell was plain, wide-eaved, two-storeyed rectangular house raised on semi-basement containing the domestic offices and therefore, unencumbered by out-buildings.³⁶ It had identical elevations to the town and to the east, of three bays with simplified Venetian windows on each floor. The northern and southern elevations had plain rectangular windows, blind on the upper storey. A canopy-roofed verandah supported on ornamental wooden trellised posts, and with an ornamental valance and balustrade, surrounded the house on three sides, but this work was possibly later, for the arched and cusped design of the valance was similar to that on the upper verandah of Hannibal Macarthur's Vineyard which was built by the builder-architect James Houison. As Houison was employed by Stephen late in 1832 and early in 1833³⁷ it is possible that he added, or remodelled, the verandah at Orwell.

The tripartite windows with heavy stone, or possibly wooden, mullions gave the house some architectural interest, and the verandah lent some grace to the awkwardly proportioned elevations but, like so many houses of the 1820s, Orwell had a plain and uninspired design. It was overshadowed, architecturally by the striking form of its neighbour, Springfield.

A.M. Baxter, scarcely thirty years old and married to a Spanish heiress, was totally inexperienced as a lawyer, incompetent to hold the position of attorney-general which his father, through the influence of Sir George Murray, had procured for him, and was irresponsibly extravagant and a drunkard.³⁸ But as one of the elite of civil officers in Sydney he received his land on Woolloomooloo Hill. Despite his deplorable performance in office, he was nominated in April 1830 for the post of second judge in Van Diemen's Land. Baxter recorded his resignation as attorney-general and eight days later, in January 1831, took refuge under the Insolvency Act before proceeding to Van Diemen's Land. 'Dandy' Baxter returned to England in 1832 and was imprisoned for debt. He died in obscurity some time before 1836.



Charles Rodius, *Wolamoloo* [sic] 1832. Dixon Library, State Library of NSW.

Baxter submitted the plans for the house that he proposed building on his allotment at 'Ollamaloo' in October 1828.³⁹ and it is unlikely that Springfield was finished before his bankruptcy in 1831. It was still building in December 1830 when the Office of Public Works reported to the colonial secretary that it was in conformity with the conditions,⁴⁰ but it had been completed by 1832 when Charles Rodius made a watercolour drawing of the house and its raw, newly planted garden.⁴¹

Rodius's delightful drawing (opposite) is the most detailed and reliable evidence of the appearance of the house, for although some photographs survive these were taken after the house was extensively remodelled in the late-nineteenth century.⁴²

The most striking feature of the design is the five-bayed, ground-floor arcade with a covered balcony above, the solid balustrade of which is formed by the upper part of the arcade. This has an undefined 'colonial', or possibly Mediterranean, character about it, in that it appears to be a direct and sensible response to a warm climate, but it is not typical of the detailing of early colonial houses in New South Wales where columned verandahs and trelliswork screens were generally used rather than masonry arcades, and two-storeyed verandahs were uncommon.

It appears from Baxter's letter accompanying the submission of his plan of the house for approval that the arcade was an afterthought:

... with regard to the enclosed plan now submitted, I may mention, that the first story [sic] will be raised one foot higher than the present elevation, and that the second story will be lowered two feet from the present plan. The upper windows will be cut down to a balcony (not shown in the plan) which will run along the front of the House facing Sydney.⁴³

Baxter was required by the colonial secretary to submit another plan showing these alterations, but whether this second, more sophisticated and original design was by the same architect as that first submitted, or whether Baxter had changed to a more innovative designer, remains unknown.

Other unusual features of the design are the use and detailing of the roof pediments. Instead of the ubiquitous hipped roof there are gables to either end of the house as well as a central pediment on the main front. These, and also the arcade, are echoed in the design of the offices. Again, this arrangement is not typical of early colonial houses but it is remarkably similar in general arrangement, as well as in detailing, to Francis Greenway's design for the rectory of St John's, Parramatta.

In particular, the fronts of the out-buildings of each house — single-storeyed with two blind arches beneath gable-pediments — are almost identical, as is the relationship of each to the main block of the house. At Springfield there was no balancing out-building on the northern side of the house and, as at St John's Rectory, the pavilion form of the Springfield out-building does not appear to have been intended as part of a triadic Palladian composition. In this it also relates closely to the detached offices at Glenlee, Menangle, which are similarly positioned and have a corresponding gable.

Owing to these similarities (and also to his use of an arcade at Liverpool Hospital) Springfield could, tentatively, be ascribed to Francis Greenway but, in fact, the architect of the house is recorded by Ambrose Hallen in 1830⁴⁴ as being his brother, Edward. Edward Hallen could not have been responsible for either the first set of submitted plans, or the amendments, for they were prepared in 1828, the year before he arrived in the colony. Any later contributions Hallen made to the design cannot be identified and the authorship of the distinctive house remains unknown. Could it have been Greenway, after all, replaced by Hallen by the beginning of 1830 when building appears to have begun?

At St John's Rectory the main block of the house seems to have been intended to be seen 'in the round', as a villa. This, however, is less pronounced at Springfield than at the rectory where the three pediments are of equal size and have almost equal prominence. At Springfield more emphasis is given to the length and appearance of the western front, the front facing the town; the house is more obviously designed with a principal elevation, for even the arcade does not return with arches at each end.

At Parramatta the main front is divided by the breakfront, and the central pediment covers the three bays of the blind arcade; attention is focused on the centre of the composition. But at Woolloomooloo the pediment covers only one bay and the bold arcade across the front gives the whole facade equal strength.

Springfield has few vestiges of the Palladian composition of St John's Rectory, but neither was it Picturesque nor Romantic as might have been expected at this date, as was neighbouring and contemporary Craigend, the surveyor-general's house. Springfield was an original design: simple but not without architectural sophistication, Classical but not overly revivalist. It was well calculated to take advantage of the westward views, to be functional for the climate and also to receive the

governor's approbation. It is unfortunate that neither the identity of Springfield's designer, nor the sources of its design, can be established. Despite its modern features, such as the French doors opening into the arcade and onto the balcony above, the house appears to have been designed in a manner established by Greenway in the mid-years of the second decade of the century and which, by the 1830s, was largely discredited by architecturally ambitious builders and architects and those who considered themselves informed on such matters.⁴⁵ Taste was changing towards more Picturesque, Romantic, antiquarian and sentimental attitudes, and the leader of these colonial taste-makers was the new surveyor-general of New South Wales.

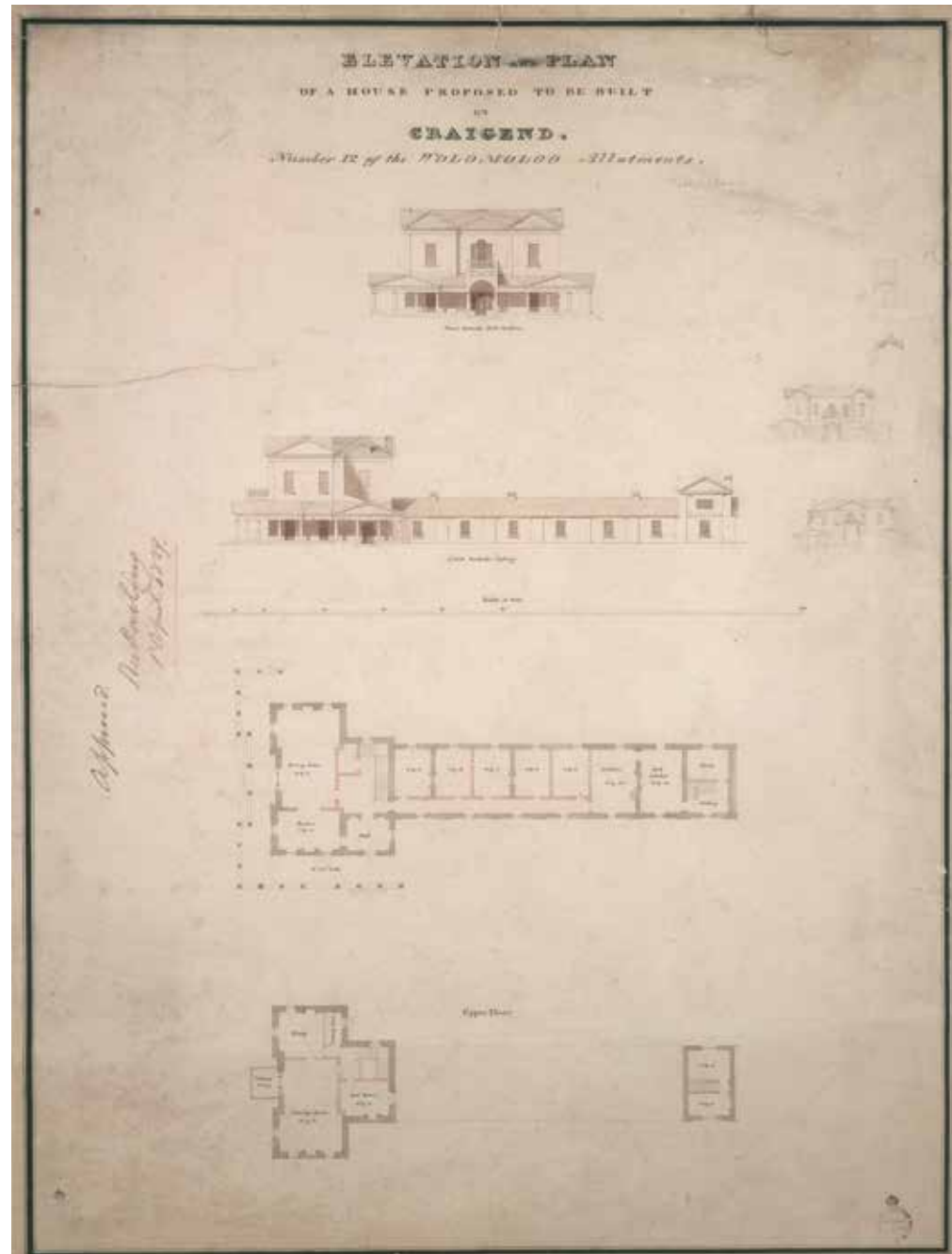
Major Thomas Livingston Mitchell arrived in the colony with his family in 1827 to take up the position of assistant surveyor-general, with the right to succeed the current surveyor-general, John Oxley.⁴⁶ On Oxley's death in May 1828, Mitchell became surveyor-general. He had applied for a grant of land on Woolloomooloo Hill and in September 1828 he was promised Number 12 of the allotments.⁴⁷ A few days later he wrote to his brother:

I have got the most picturesque hill about Sydney, with ten acres of ground round it — for the purpose of building mansion — which as it will stand on a rock, I am thinking of calling Craigend.⁴⁸

In the following June he wrote to his mother:

I am now building a house which is very expensive in this part of the world ... I have got a beautiful spot containing about ten acres commanding a beautiful view — just at Sydney it is the Calton Hill of Sydney ...⁴⁹

Mitchell's design was for a far more architecturally elaborate house than Springfield: it was designed to look more extensive than it really was, to show its designer's taste by its Picturesque character and his erudition by the archaeological correctness of its detailing. Altogether it was intended to be the superior house of a superior colonist of superior taste, as the substantial advertisement for its sale and the subdivision of its grounds, less than a decade after its foundation stone was laid indicates. Under instructions from Mitchell in November 1836, James & Co advertised for sale by auction on 22 January 1837:



'Elevation and plan of a house proposed to be built on Craigend', 1829, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

all that splendid ROMAN VILLA, and spacious Pleasure Grounds on Woolloomoolloo Hill called CRAIGEND built entirely under the superintendence and for the last ten years the residence of Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, Esquire, Surveyor General of New South Wales, whose well known taste in Architecture and Landscape Gardening is only inferior to those rarer and higher qualifications which have already immortalised his name as one of the most intrepid and successful Discoverers of the present age ...

At the government minimum price of £1,000 per acre its land was estimated to be worth £10,000

but, as a Mansion has been raised upon it, fit for the residence of the highest functionary, ornamental [sic] and protected by NOBLE COLONNADES

The property can hardly be estimated at less than £15,000 or £16,000, especially as Shrubberies, Vineyard and Gardens have been laid out with a view to the permanent residence of the present distinguished Owner and his Family, but it has been ordered otherwise — and all the labour and expense exhausted on this

PRINCELY PALACE

Has been laid out for the enjoyment of others ...

Woolloomoolloo was the spot which His Excellency General Sir Ralph Darling, when Governor of this Colony, originally pointed out as the most eligible spot for the New Government House, and this very eminence, now for sale ... was pronounced as the fittest situation for it, as it overlooks the whole Town, and since the Traveller Proprietor has introduced an exact copy of the

PARTHENON

For the portico of Craigend it may almost be considered the

ACROPOLIS OF SYDNEY

... however intense the sun, there is always a refreshing breeze and shady wall on the long and classical colonnades and

TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS

of Craigend.

The scenery and views from Major Mitchell's grounds, as every one knows are grand beyond description, resembling another Naples. They have furnished some of the finest subjects of Mr Martin's [sic] pencil, many of which, taken from the north and west points of the house, are now decorating the first-



Charles Bayliss Craighend, Darlinghurst. Undated photograph. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

rate print shops in London.

Craighend is remarkable as being perhaps the only Villa, among the rich specimens of architecture near Sydney, that may be said to be decidedly adapted to the country and climate of New South Wales. Protected the two principal facades by a spacious colonnade in the chastest Doric architecture, and an exquisite tessellated pavement, copied from the

RUINS OF HERCULANEUM

unrivalled in this Colony.

The interior consists of thirteen apartments, the dining room and drawing room being thirty feet by twenty feet, and the best bedroom twenty feet by sixteen feet, whilst the others are all of the usual convenient size, and most judiciously arranged with a view to comfort and good taste. The detached offices are numerous and well disposed; kitchen, wash-house, bakery, fowl-yard. coach-house, and stabling for four horses, harness room, hay and corn loft etc. etc. etc. with a noble approach and drive from the main road of Woolloomoolloo.⁵⁰

Considering this extravagant description, and the surviving plans, drawings and photographs, what sort of house was Craighend? Briefly, it appears to have been a pastiche concocted by an amateur, for it is almost certain that it was designed by Mitchell himself. It is as interesting and important a house in the history of early colonial architecture in New South Wales as its advertisement suggests, if not as architecturally excellent.

Although the architect Daniel Dering Mathew had produced a mongrel design for a courthouse for Governor Macquarie in 1814 with 'a Grecian Doric Portico at the main entrance copied from the Temple of Theseus at Athens...'⁵¹ Henry Kitchen's doctrinaire design for John Macarthur of c 1821 was probably the first wholehearted manifestation of the Greek Revival in domestic architecture in the colony. Francis Greenway seems to have remained, if anything, a Chambersist, sticking to his preferred Roman Doric order. Major Mitchell's design for Craighend, however, was the first design built in the colony that was, or attempted to be, thoroughly Greek in its detailing.

The development of a taste for the Grecian style, even in the provincial environment of Sydney in the 1820s where it was limited to a few of the colony's self-proclaimed cultural elite, shows the appeal that the Greek Revival held during the third decade of the century, not only in Britain but throughout the western world. This has been explained concisely by J. Mordaunt Crook:



Craigend, Darlinghurst. Undated photograph. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW

These were the years of the Greek War of Independence (1821-33), the poetry of Byron, Keats, Shelley and Landor, the sculpture of Flaxman, Thorwaldsen, Westmacott and Chantrey and the architecture of Schinkel in Germany, of William Strickland in the United States, of Robert Smirke and William Wilkins in England and of Thomas Hamilton and W. H. Playfair in Scotland. Thereafter there was a swift decline in England, but not in Scotland.⁵²

Thomas Mitchell and later his protégé Mortimer Lewis were, in New South Wales minor products of similar influences, and it is probably significant, considering Lewis's work in the next decade and the continued popularity of the style, that Mitchell was a Scot and that Scottish influence, and Mitchell's influence in particular, gained strength during the 1830s in Sydney.

Mitchell proudly described the site of his house as 'the Calton Hill of Sydney' and, although the comparison between a hill intended for the erection of suburban villas and one displaying the pride of Scotland's modern architectural monuments — *à la Grecque* — is exaggerated, it is nevertheless telling. It was ever Mitchell's mission to introduce into the remote, benighted land, the 'vile woods'⁵³ in which he was compelled by economic necessity to live,⁵⁴ 'all the arts of civilization [of] the illustrious regions of his native country'.⁵⁵ Architecturally, these arts were manifest in the buildings on the 'Caledonian Acropolis', Edinburgh's Calton Hill. Beginning with his own house on his own hill, he sought to emulate them.

Crowning Calton Hill was the National Monument designed by C. R. Cockerell and W. H. Playfair as a copy of the Parthenon. It was begun in the year Mitchell sailed for the colony and was still building (although soon to stop and to remain unfinished) when he received his grant on Woolloomooloo Hill. Not unexpectedly, Mitchell chose the Grecian Doric order of the Parthenon for Craigend.

He was not as ambitious or extreme in his Neoclassicism as to cast his whole house in temple form, as William Wilkins had done spectacularly in the prostyle of Grange Park in Hampshire in 1809, or as was to be done with both prostyle and peristyle arrangements in early Republican houses in the United States of America. Instead, Mitchell chose to combine antiquarian correctness in detailing with Picturesque irregularity of composition. Unfortunately, his architectural skills do not appear to have been equal to his aspirations.

Craigend was apparently still unfinished in April 1833 when Mrs Felton Mathew described it as 'by far the most distinguished for architectural design' of the houses then built on the ridge 'and will

when completed, present a splendid specimen of the Doric order',⁵⁷ although she thought its siting was not as fine as several of the other villas. Lady Franklin, visiting Sydney in 1839, was probably referring to Mitchell's house when she noted 'on l[eft] windmill & Italn. Looking building on projection above water'.⁵⁸ The auction advertisement refers to the house being both a 'Roman villa' and the 'Acropolis of Sydney'. It was, in fact, a hybrid affair.

As designed, the house combined four Grecian Doric porticos with seven anonymously Classical pedimented gables, an arched Renaissance porch with swags decorating its spandrels and a balcony above with vase-shaped balusters, a Venetian window and deep, bracketed, Italianate eaves, all grafted onto a modern Picturesque villa.

The porticos (see opposite) appear reasonably well constructed although they were far from being copies of the Parthenon: the columns sat unhappily on a raised stone plinth and, where their purported model had eight columns, the porticos at Craighend boasted only four widely spaced shafts. It is likely that the tessellated pavements copied from the 'Ruins of Herculaneum' were later embellishments. They may have been similar to the tiled floors still extant, but of uncertain date at Vacluse House.⁵⁹ Unfortunately no other reference to the pavements has been found.

As built,⁶⁰ the form of the main block was simplified, its pilaster strips and gable pediments eliminated, the Grecian porticos reduced to three, the Venetian window dispensed with and the porch was turned Greck to match the porticos, although the disparate balustered balcony above it was retained. Awkwardly. And with the same stylistic incompatibility, the columned porticos were connected to the body of the house by arches. But the 'Princely Palace' was more than a discordant medley of architectural clichés.

Although the garden front, the 'Front towards Port Jackson' on the plan was symmetrical, the entrance front, the 'Front towards Sydney', the principal front which required the governor's approval, was asymmetrical: the entrance portico and main, two-storeyed block were balanced by a long, low, single-storeyed spine, or rather tail, of bedrooms terminating in the taller block of detached offices at the end. As originally planned, the entrance portico was itself asymmetrically placed to one side of the main house and the terminating block at the other end of the elevation housed the dairy, scullery and two bedrooms above. The walls of each block were relieved with corner pilaster trips and the 'tail' was subdivided by a regular rhythm of windows alternating with broad piers. This irregular, Italianate facade was planned to extend approximately 168 feet (51.2 metres) along the

ridgeline of Woolloomooloo Hill.

In the built, amended design the portico was aligned with the main block and the length of the whole shortened to approximately 135 feet (411 metres). The kitchen offices were enlarged, or possibly rotated 90 degrees, to make a more effective termination to the 'tail'. Even With these reductions and alterations — and despite its muddled detailing — Craighend must have made an impressive piece of Picturesque landscape design.

The functional planning of the house was largely subservient to its Picturesque external appearance. The secondary bedrooms were arranged in a line along the 'tai', rather than being grouped, in order to create the illusion of a larger house, and the long corridor resulting had also to serve as the passageway to the kitchen. As a result, the kitchen was approximately 80 feet (24.4 metres) from the dining room. It had the disadvantages, but none of the advantages of a detached kitchen in this colony of flies, heat and convict servants. Mitchell made little attempt to organize and articulate the various areas of his house in the functional way contemporary houses in Scotland and England were beginning to be organized by such architects as Edward Blore (whom Mitchell was later to approach to prepare designs for Government House, Sydney) and, in particular, the Scottish architect William Burn. Craighend is remarkably similar in general plan to Burn's Elizabethan, and only slightly larger, Snaigow, Perthshire of 1824-1827⁶¹ but, in place of Craighend's corridor of bedrooms leading to the kitchen offices, Snaigow's corridor is occupied by the housekeeper's rooms, with bedrooms above.

It was approximately to this very workable arrangement that Craighend was changed by about 1860,⁶² a second storey being added to the bedroom wing and the terminating kitchen block. As a result of these modifications, the house must have become more convenient to live in although much of the impact of its original Picturesque variety and the contrast of forms for which the surveyor strove was destroyed.

Mitchell was a fine draughtsman with an eye for that 'system of visual values fusing architecture with nature in a series of scenic entities', the Picturesque.⁶³ He was not a competent architectural designer, but he made a brave and, to the history of architecture in the colony, important attempt at synthesizing archaeological detail and Picturesque composition, taking it far beyond Mrs Macquarie's and Greenway's 'fugacious toys' and Colonel Campbells *cottage omné*, Bungarribee.

FOOTNOTES: THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO HILL

1. The New South Wales Magazine, December 1833. pp 294 ff. 'Entering Port Jackson, from the Scrapbook of John Newcombe, Esq.'
2. List of Allotments selected on Woolloomooloo Hill 29 September 1828. Colonial Secretary: Allotments and Construction of houses and wharves etc. at Darlinghurst and Woolloomooloo, 1827-46, AONSW 2/1751.
3. Memorial, n.d. [1832]; Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONS W, ibid.
4. Darling Point was not divided into villa allotments until 1833. See NSW *Government Gazette*, 1833. No. 69, p. 239.
5. Memorial, n.d. [1832], Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
6. Godfrey Mundy, *Our Antipodes; or, Residence and Rambles in The Australasian Colonies, with a glimpse of the gold fields*, London, 1852. Mundy was writing of Sydney in 1846.
7. G. Abbott and G. Little (eds), *The Respectable Merchant of Sydney: A. B. Sparke of Tempe*, Sydney, 1976, p. 38.
8. List of Allotments, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
9. Memorandum, unsigned, undated. Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, ibid.
10. Col. Sec. to James Dowling, 18 September 1830. Similar letters were sent to all the other grantees. Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, ibid.
11. R. Darling, Despatches, 1828, ML A1202, p. 439, NSW Returns of the Colony, 1830, Mitchell, p. 78: Dowling. p. 104. In 1830 Edward Dess Thomson's salary was £600 (p.74), Alexander Macleay's £2000 (p.76) and John Stephen's £1,500 (p. 104).
12. See *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2, Melbourne, 1967, p. 307.
13. *Sydney Gazette*, 19 January 1827.
14. Darling to Huskisson, 26 March 1828, Desp No. 46, *HRA*, 1, 14, p. 41.
15. As only the elevations facing the town were required to be approved it appears that the scheme for building Government House on Woolloomooloo Hill had been abandoned.
16. Archives Office of Tasmania, Dumaresq Papers, Letters of Eliza Darling, 17 January, 1826.
17. Mrs Darling won the first prize, not the third prize as is usually stated, see *Australian*, 24 March 1827. Regrettably. the style of the winning design was not recorded. On Mr Darling's architectural interests and abilities see also her letter to Edward Dumaresq, 26 June 1826 (Archives Office of Tasmania, Dumaresq Papers, Letters of Eliza Darling). Information from Joan Kerr.
18. See Rollo F P. Gillespie, *Viceregal Quarters: an account of the various residences of the Governor of New South Wales from 1788 to the present day*, London, 1975.
19. See J. Broadbent, *The Australian Colonial House*, chapter 7.
20. For example, Robert Campbell of the Wharf later retired to Springfield on Woolloomooloo Hill See Freda Macdonnell, *Before Kings Cross*, Melbourne, 1967, p. 71.
21. J. Britton and A. Pugin, *Illustrations of the Public Buildings of London*, vol. 1, London, 1825. pp. 83-8
22. James Elmes and Thomas Shepherd, *Metropolitan Improvements or London, in the Nineteenth Century*, facs. ed, NY, 1968, p. 26. 1st pub. 1829.
23. John Claudius Loudon, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, London, 1838. Unlike his earlier publications, *The Suburban Gardener* deals only with the architecture, furnishing and gardens of suburban villas, from the smallest ('Fourth-rate') to the grandest ("First-rate").
24. *ibid.*, p. 1, Introduction.
25. *ibid.*, p. 33.
26. John Claudius Loudon (ed), *The Architectural Magazine*, vol. 1, 1834, Foreign Notices: Australia, pp.375-7. letter from John Thompson, August 1833.
27. J.J. Fletcher, *The Society's Heritage from the Macleays*, Procs. Linnean Society of NSW, 1920, p.584, quoting an undated letter from Mrs Eliza Macleay to her son, W. S. Macleay.
28. Thomas Shepherd, 'On Planning the Gardens of the Marine Villas of Port Jackson', in *Lectures on Landscape Gardening in Australia*, Sydney, 1836, p. 87. Shepherd died before he could deliver the lectures and they were published posthumously.
29. *ibid.*, p. 90.
30. Memorial, n.d. [1832], Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit. Also contemporary illustrations and garden plans.
31. Memorial, 28 October 1835, Col. Sec. Woolloomooloo, AONSW, ibid.
32. For example, see Col. Sec.: Copies of Letters sent to Engineering and Public Works Offices, AONSW 4/3880, vol. 3, for typical letters re registration of plans.
33. In the Mitchell Library, Sydney, VIA/DARH/4.
34. No.30/398, Office of Public Works to Col. Sec., 3 December 1830, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo. AONSW, op.cit.
35. See Map P. L. Beml, Woolloomooloo: Points Point, original lots 1829, ML M2 811.1811/1829/1.
36. See S.T. Gill. Orwell House, Near Sydney NSW, nd., ML PXD109.
37. James Houison, Day Book, 1832-1833. ML MSS 2524.
38. See Australian Dictionary of Biography vol. 1, 1966, pp. 74-5.
39. A. M. Baxter to Col. Sec, 13 October 1828, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
40. Office of Public Works to Col Sec., December 1830, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, ibid. In the 1920s during alterations to the house a hearthstone was removed, on the back of which was inscribed: This hearth stone was laid by F Overton. 15-9-1820. (see J. A. Dowling, 'Potts' Point, Darling Point and Neighbourhood: supplementary note', *IRAHS*. vol. 13, 1927, p. 87).
41. Charles Rodius. Wolomoloo. 1832, Dixson Library, Pd 258.
42. The house was demolished some time after 1930.
43. Baxter to Col. Sec. 13 October 1828, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
44. As town surveyor, Ambrose Hallen inspected the proposed site of the house with Baxter's architect 'Mr. E. Hallen' in February 1830. A. Hallen to A. M. Baxter, 4 February 1830, Surveyor General, Buildings on Town Allotments, AONSW 9/2700.
45. For example sec Lady Franklin's condemnation in 1839 of St Mathew's Rectory, Windsor and other Greenway buildings, in her 'Journal of a journey from Port Phillip to Sydney, 1839', NLA MS1 14,
46. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.2, op cit. p.238-42.
47. List of Allotments, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
48. Mitchell to his brother 3 October 1828, Mitchell Letters, ML A291, p. 342
49. Thomas Livingston Mitchell to his mother, 4 June 1829, Mitchell Letters, ML A295/2, pp. 19-21.
50. *Australian*, 29 November 1836. The house block failed to sell and according to the newspaper account was 'purchased in' by Mitchell at £4,000.
51. Morton Herman, *The Early Australian Architects and their Work*, 2nd ed., Sydney, 1970, p. 40.
52. J. M. Crook, *The Greek Revival*, London, 1968. p.13.
53. T.L. Mitchell, Memoranda Book, 1828-30, ML C42. From an undated poem composed by Mitchell.
54. Thomas Mitchell to his mother, 3 October 1828, ML A291, p. 343.
55. From the inscription on the foundation stone of his later country house, Parkhall.
56. A.J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh 1750-1840*, Edinburgh, 1967, pp 158 ff
57. O. Havard, 'Mrs Felton Mathew's Journal', *JRAHS*, vol. 29, pt 2, 1943, p. 104. Entry for 22 April 1833.
58. Jane Franklin, 'Journal of a journey from Port Phillip to Sydney, 1839', NLA MS114, entry for 20 May 1839.
59. Traditionally these floors are said to be laid in ancient Pompeian tiles. The tiles are, in fact, stamped 'Fabrico di Strino Ferdinando' and are of nineteenth-century manufacture.
60. See Photographs of Craigend, c. 1865, ML Small Pictures File, Sydney-Residences-Craigend.
61. David Walker, Willam Burn, the country house in transition', ch. 1, in Jane Fawcett (ed.), *Seven Victorian Architects*, London, 1976, p. 11 (fig. 4); p. 20 (fig. 13).
62. See note 60.
63. Crook, op. cit., p. 7.

A watercolor illustration of a large, two-story villa with a veranda and arched windows, set in a garden with a kangaroo and an ostrich. The villa has a grey roof with two chimneys and a balcony on the upper floor. The ground floor features a series of arches. In the foreground, there is a garden with various plants, including a kangaroo and an ostrich. A person is visible near the villa, and another person is on the balcony. The scene is set in a rural, hilly area.

The Villas of Woolloomooloo Hill

THE VILLAS OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO HILL: 'WOULLOUMOUULLOU AVEC SES MAISONS VARIES'

The rapid development of the allotments on Woolloomooloo Hill in the early 1830s, following a slow start in the closing years of the previous decade, was perhaps not so much the result of the rapid recovery from depression after 1830 as the expiry of the specified period of three years in which those gentlemen promised grants in September 1828 were required to develop their land. If a grantee had not already built a villa on his land by September 1831, or could not demonstrate that he was committed to doing so, he was liable to lose his right of occupancy of that land and the promise of his grant would be invalidated.

Except for the prosperous merchant Alexander Brodie Spark, all the promised grantees were in receipt of governmental salaries and should have been in a financial position to develop their land despite the largely rural economic depression of 1827-1829. However, for all their haste in 1828 to acquire these prized allotments for their residences in order, so they argued, to relieve themselves of the high rents of unsuitable houses,² it required the threat of losing their rights to the land after 1831 to spur them into building. Without an approved villa on the site they could not legally sell, or even mortgage, the land.

In May 1831 the editor of the *Sydney Gazette* praised the efforts of Alexander Macleay in forming a garden at Elizabeth Bay and the developments lately transforming Woolloomooloo Hill:

...it is now transversed by an elegant carriage road and picturesque walks, decked with respectable mansions, clothed with gardens, and bidding fair to become the Richmond or the Kensington of the Australian metropolis. That these rapid improvements were originated by the proprietor of Elizabeth Bay, cannot be doubted. He was the first to show how those hillocks of rock and sand might be rendered tributary to the taste and advantage of civilized man; and when their capabilities once became fairly developed, a spirit of emulation was awakened.

The desire of erecting villas on spots till then despised, took strong hold on the gentry: Woolloomooloo hill was portioned in lots, and located on suitable conditions, and it now presents the germ of a 'rus in urbe'.³

A year later, in the same newspaper, John Verge was praised as 'an architect who has done much for the embellishment of Sydney and its environs ... To his judicious taste we are indebted for the elegance of most of the villas on Woolloomooloo Hill, some of which are worthy of the suburbs

of London'.⁴ This assertion was not simply self-flattery, for the best of these houses were not provincial: before emigrating, John Verge (1782-1861) had lived and worked as a builder-architect for twenty years in the London districts of Holborn, Bloomsbury and Clerkenwell.⁵

Born in Christchurch, Hampshire, into a family of local bricklayers and stonemasons, Verge entered the family trade but, by 1808, had moved to London, living in Holborn. How he acquired the expertise to design the most accomplished houses built in the colony in the 1830s is unknown. By the time of his sudden decision to emigrate to New South Wales, he had acquired several properties in Holborn, but the identities of his associates, and what he built, remain mysteries.

In external form his villas and terraces in Sydney are hardly distinguishable from thousands of Regency and late-Georgian stuccoed villas and or in the rapidly increasing suburbs of London. It is the detailing of Verge's house terraces throughout England, in industrially expanding Leeds, in rural Cheltenham that raises them above the level of simple competency — but the inspirational source of this detailing remains elusive.

Verge emigrated to become a settler, not to continue as a builder or an architect. Accompanied by his seventeen-year-old son, Philip George, he arrived in Sydney in December 1828 on the *Clarkstone*, bringing with him merino sheep, agricultural implements and 60 tons (61.2 tonnes) of salt (which he planned to resell). His capital amounted to £2,738 and in consideration of this he received a grant of 2,560 acres (1,036 hectares) of land in northern New South Wales, on the banks of the Williams River near the present town of Dungog. He named his estate Sydenham Grove but later changed its name to Lyndhurst Vale. Within a year Verge realized that his capital was insufficient to develop the estate and support it until it became self-sufficient. He returned to Sydney, leaving his son in charge of the property, to set up again as a builder and architect.

Verge's timing in establishing business in Sydney was perfect. Having recovered from the depression the colony was beginning a period of extraordinary economic growth which immigration and capital imports from Britain made possible.⁶ With the vast pastoral expansion came a boom in building, in towns and in the country, and with this the demand for the services of experienced and skilled builders and architects to produce houses sufficiently ornamented to satisfy their clients' aspirations and to display their new-found style and taste, but plain and practical enough to suit their conservatism. Verge appears to have been the ideal architect for these less-than-ideal clients: his work says more of his innate talent than of the discrimination of most of his employers. He quickly



[Rockwall, with Grantham and other Potts Point villas in the distance] circa 1840s SLNSW

established a reputation in the colony but, despite the *Sydney Gazette's* editorial in 1832 in praise of the design of his houses on Woolloomooloo Hill, his rapid success seems to have resulted more from his reliability in business than from any discrimination or committed artistic patronage by the nabobs of Woolloomooloo. Like Governor Darling in 1831, they merely 'sent for a Builder of the name of Verge, who ... was doing business on rather an extensive scale and had given much satisfaction'.⁷

By May 1832 nine villas had been built or were building on Woolloomooloo Hill. In addition to Craigend, Orwell and Springfield were Judge Dowling's Brougham Place, Edward Hallen's Telford Lodge, Dr Douglas's Adelaide Cottage and James Laidley's Rose Bank,⁸ the plans of which were all approved by the governor in 1830,⁹ and Thomas Macquoid's Goderich Lodge and Samuel Perry's Bona Vista, approved in 1831.¹⁰ Although it is implied in the *Sydney Gazette* that most of these houses were to Verge's designs, only Goderich Lodge can, with certainty, be ascribed to Verge.¹¹ Adelaide Cottage was designed by Edward Hallen, who also presumably designed his own house, and it is unlikely, from the surviving documentation and from Perry's position in the surveyor-general's office, that Bona Vista would have been Verge's work, but both Brougham Place and Rose Bank may possibly have been. Verge had also prepared plans for John Busby's Rockwall¹² and Spark's Tusculum, both approved in 1830,¹³ but construction of these did not begin until years later.

Although the building conditions applicable to the grants were established in order to ornament the town with a suburb of well-designed villas, their fulfilment in the first years of the 1830s presented difficulties: to the government, in persuading reluctant grantees to fulfil the conditions to which they had agreed;¹⁵ and to the compliant grantees themselves because of the very limited choice of architects available and their varying competency. It is not surprising that Verge's work was distinguished from that of his contemporaries and that he was credited with giving the peninsula its architectural pre-eminence in Sydney in the 1830s.

Even for the elite of Woolloomooloo Hill building to a specified standard, the choice of an architect during the first years of the decade continued to be as chancy and surprisingly casual an affair as it had been in the previous two decades, and the distinction between builder and architect remained unclear. Verge appears to have established himself in Sydney as a builder before assuming the role of architect; James Houison, like James Smith earlier, was formerly a builder who strayed into architectural design;¹⁶ the brothers Ambrose and Edward Hallen turned to architecture from surveying



The residence of D.C.G. Laidley - Woolloomooloo [sic], 1831-1836 by unknown artist, SLNSW
 A view of the eastern face of Rosebank as seen from Woolloomooloo (or Darlinghurst) Road, house of Deputy Commissary-General, James Laidley, was built in 1831, to designs by John Verge.

but appear to have been ill-versed in building construction,¹⁷ James Hume designed buildings and acted as clerk of works for other architects and building contractors.

Judge Dowling submitted a plan for his house on 7 October 1829 and it was approved by the governor a week later. However, in September 1830 he again wrote to the Colonial Secretary, seeking to alter the design:

I now beg leave to inform you that the architect who drew the said plan, having soon after left the Colony, before I commenced building. I was constrained to employ another individual to erect my house. This person having suggested improvements in the plan alluded to, which whilst they lessened the expense of the building, would not diminish the suitable appearance of the house proposed to be erected, I was induced to accede to his suggestions, and having drawn for me the enclosed plan, I have the honour of transmitting the same...¹⁸

Although the plans may have borne the names of the architects,¹⁹ Dowling did not consider it relevant to mention the name of his original architect or his replacement by 'another individual' in either submission, and made no distinction between 'this person's' role as architect or as builder.

Dowling's Brougham Lodge or Brougham Place²⁰ was a two-storeyed, three-bayed house with deep eaves and flanking single-storeyed wings. A watercolour panorama of Darlinghurst painted in about 1836²¹ shows a colonnade along the front facing the town, while a crude pencil drawing²² of the house shows a columned porch which was presumably on the opposite entrance front. The arrangement of a two-storeyed central block with attached single-storeyed wings of pavilions was to be employed by Verge, notably at Camden Park and Denham Court, as was the arrangement of entrance porch and colonnade on opposite fronts, again at Camden Park and at Wivenhoe, and it is possible that Verge, the builder who was giving much satisfaction, designed, or rather redesigned and rationalized, the house for Dowling in September 1830. It is also possible, however, that the original source for the design was a plan for a three-bayed house with flanking wings and entrance porch given in plate 7 in Peter Nicholson's *The New Practical Builder and Workmen's Companion*, used widely during the second quarter of the century and used by Verge when designing Vineyard for Hannibal Macarthur.²³

It is even more likely that, at the beginning of the year, Verge had designed adjacent Rose Bank for James Laidley. Like Brougham Place it had a three-bayed, two-storeyed central block with attached



Rosebank, Woolloomooloo, the residence of James Laidley, 1840 by Conrad Martens, SLNSW

pavilions and a colonnade on the garden front, but its architectural ornamentation was more elaborate, the Greek Revival detailing of the pavilion pediments closely resembling that at Camden Park.

Also, as in Verge's unexecuted designs for Engehurst at Paddington, which he was later to prepare for F. A. Hely, the entrance front of Rose Bank and the detached offices of the house faced each other across a gravelled court²⁴ — a very unusual arrangement.

Judge Dowling was not the only grantee to encounter problems in finding a suitable architect prior to Verge's setting up in Sydney. On 3 January 1830 William Carter, the Master of the Supreme Court, who had been promised allotment Number 11, wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

The Surveyor General was kind enough to promise to supply me with a Plan and elevation — I waited for some months, but not receiving any Plan from him, owing I presume to his very numerous important engagements, I applied to Mr Allen [sic], the brother of the Town Surveyor — I took him to the spot and having shown him the ground, I supplied him with a ground Plan — After waiting some months, I was told by him not very long ago that he was so engaged, he could not undertake it.

I will endeavour to find out some other person capable of drawing out an Elevation, and transmit it for His Excellency's approval.²⁵

Carter did not proceed with a plan but, contrary to the conditions governing the grants, attempted to sell his undeveloped allotment. It was resumed by the government in September 1830 and re-granted to John Edye Manning for whom, a year later, Verge prepared a house design.²⁶ This design, however, was never built.

Manning was one of only three landholders on Woolloomooloo Hill to name the architect of plans submitted for the governor's approval. Verge was also named by A.B. Spark for his design of Tusculum.²⁷ The only other architect so named was Edward Hallen, for his design of Adelaide Cottage in 1830 for its absentee owner Dr Henry Douglass.²⁸ Both Edward and Ambrose Hallen lived on Woolloomooloo Hill, but whereas it can be presumed that Edward designed his own house, Telford Lodge, on the allotment formerly granted to William Balcombe, who died before building on his grant, Ambrose purchased his house, Rose Hall from William Cordeaux in 1836. It had been designed by an unidentified architect in 1831.²⁹

It appears that the only plan that was rejected (apart from Edward Hallen's plan for his own house, which was returned for a scale to be added) was the design that Deputy Surveyor-General Samuel Perry submitted in May 1831.³⁰ The reason for the rejection is not recorded but Perry resubmitted the plans a few days later, accompanied by a long letter containing 'extracts from some of the most celebrated artists' in order to explain 'the principles by which [the plan] is governed'.³¹ On its second submission the plan was approved, but unfortunately Perry does not name the 'celebrated artists', either colonial or English, whom he quotes for his largely irrelevant architectural maxims, nor does he name the designer of the house. Given his profession it is likely that Perry himself designed the house, which he named Bona Vista.³² It was an odd house, with a balconied verandah or colonnade set between two narrow projecting bays with blind windows below and French windows and doors with iron balconies above.³³ Renamed Darlington House after being purchased by Richard Jones in 1836,³⁴ it was made odder still by the removal of the verandah and the infilling of the area between the projecting bays with an ugly, bald, gabled addition.³⁵

If Governor Darling, in incorporating in the villa conditions of Woolloomooloo Hill the requirement to build within three years, had expected to see a developed suburb of ornamental villas gracing the eastern prospect from the town by the end of his six-year term of office in 1831, he was to be disappointed. Although most of the plans had been prepared and approved by the time of his departure in October 1831, less than half of the allotments had been built on. By 1835, however, most of the villas had been built, or were building, more or less fulfilling the other conditions imposed on them in 1828.

Although it cannot be substantiated that Verge had designed most of the villas built on Woolloomooloo Hill by 1832, he does appear to have designed more than any other architect. He set the mode of their design and in the following years designed several more houses on the Peninsula. Tusculum was begun to his design in 1832³⁶ and Edward Deas Thomson's Barham in 1833.³⁷ Rockwall was begun in 1835³⁸ for the new owner of the allotment, Hamilton Collins Sempill, but not completed until 1837³⁹ by which time the property had been purchased Thomas Urmson Ryder. A cottage that Verge had designed in 1830, but which did not fulfil the villa conditions,⁴⁰ had been erected on this allotment by 1833. A substantial two-storeyed block was added to the cottage, probably in 1839, by Sir Maurice O'Connell, who named the house Tarmons.⁴¹ Verge retired to his estate on the Williams River in 1838, and it is possible that Tarmons was designed by John Bibb,

Verge's assistant, who continued Verge's practice.⁴²

The culmination of Verge's work on Woolloomooloo Hill was Elizabeth Bay House, designed for Colonial Secretary Alexander Macleay in 1832 but not commenced until 1835.⁴³ Here again, as with Macarthur's country house, Camden Park, it is unclear to what extent Verge was the executor or amanuensis and to what extent he was the creative artist. Nevertheless, Verge's stuccoed villas, with their particularly elegantly designed and beautifully executed detailing, set the standard and fashion for the suburb during the first half of the 1830s — and, indeed, for the whole colony for the rest of the decade.

Of the villas on the peninsula designed by either Edward or Ambrose Hallen, the appearances of Springfield and Roslyn Hall, designed by Ambrose for the wealthy miller, Thomas Barker, are known, but I have not been able to find any clear illustrations of either Telford Lodge or Adelaide Cottage in order to compare them with the type of late Georgian villa exemplified by Verge's work.

Only one house built on Woolloomooloo Hill in the 1830s, Grantham begun in 1836,⁴⁴ diverged from this style. Like Maior Mitchell's Craighend of nearly a decade before, it attempted a more Picturesque appearance. However, unlike Craighend, Grantham, situated at the end of the peninsula, assumed a Gothick garb, aping and anticipating the erection of the new Government House on neighbouring Bennelong Point. It was not until the depression of the 1840s and, in 1841, the first subdivision of the Macleay estate, that another such house was built on the peninsula: Campbell Riddell's multi-gabled, pattern-book Gothick Larbert Lodge.⁴⁵

The building of Grantham introduced not only a change in the architectural style of the peninsula, but also a change in the social structure of the suburb. Although contiguous to the villas of the official establishment, Grantham was built on part of Judge Wylde's grant of 1822, by a *nouveau riche* ironmonger, and it was not subject to the villa conditions — the governmental conditions or the unwritten social conditions. Although Mrs Meredith could still describe Woolloomooloo in 1839 as 'being to [Sydney] ... what the Regent's Park is to London',⁴⁶ and it continued to be a fashionable suburb throughout the nineteenth century, its exclusiveness was at an end. The grantees themselves, greedily wanting to capitalize on their properties, or forced by their financial imprudence to do so, pressed for the repeal of the villa conditions and the freedom to subdivide their land. The conditions were not formally rescinded until 1847⁴⁷ but by that time most of the grants had been subdivided.



Elizabeth Bay, 1838 (detail) by Conrad Martens, SLNSW
Elizabeth Bay House prominently in the foreground

In the advertisement for the sale of the subdivisions of the Craighend estate in September 1841, the 'merchant or tradesman' was induced to 'here erect his dwelling, and enjoy, in the town, all the advantages of a country residence' and 'Building Speculations' were encouraged.⁴⁸ With profits from land sales at stake, the nabobs of Woolloomooloo Hill forsook the niceties of social distinctions as readily as they destroyed their lately planted gardens with new streets and small allotments.

FOOTNOTES: THE VILLAS OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO HILL

1. Eugene Delessert, *Souvenirs d'un Voyage à Sydney*, Paris, 1847, p. 19
2. Applications for grants on Woolloomooloo Hill, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW 2/1751.
3. *Sydney Gazette*, 28 May 1831
4. *ibid.*, 22 May 1832.
5. For this and the following biographical details I am indebted to Verge's descendant, Ian Evans; see also J. Broadbent, I. Evans and C. Lucas, *The Golden Decade of Australian Architecture: The Work of John Verge*, Sydney, 1978.
6. S.J. Butlin, *Foundations of the Australian Monetary System 1788-1851*, Sydney, 1968, pp. 225 ff.
7. Darling to Howick, 24 July 1831, NSW Governor's Despatches, ML A1209, p. 506.
8. Also known as Rosebank.
9. Col. Sec: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op.cit
10. Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid.*
11. John Verge, Ledger, 1830-38, ML A3045, p. 77. Entry for Thomas Macquoid, December 1830.
12. *ibid.*, p7.
13. Verge's ledger, P. 48, dates the plan to April 1831, therefore a previous plan must have been prepared. It is possible that this was not prepared by Verge. Spark's reference to Verge is in a letter dated 1 June 1831 in Col Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
14. Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid.*
15. Letters to grantees, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid*
16. Houison worked in London, and first worked in Sydney as a carpenter. See Robert Summerville, James Houison, B.Arch dissertation, University of New South Wales, 1973
17. See Morton Herman, *The Early Australian Architects and their Work*, 2nd ed., Sydney, 1970, ch. 10.
18. Dowling to Col.Sec., 7 September 1830, Col. Sec. Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
19. All the copies of the plans made by the Director of Public Works appear to have been destroyed
20. Dowling's house is generally referred to as Brougham Lodge, but he also called it Brougham Place. See petition re subdivision, Col. Sec: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
21. Panorama of Darlinghurst, unsigned, undated, ML XVIA/DARH/1-2.
22. Photograph of drawing, ML Small Pictures File, Sydney - Residences - Brougham Lodge. The whereabouts and provenance of the original are unknown.
23. See chapter 10 of *The Australian Colonial House*, James Broadbent, Sydney, 1997.
24. Uncatalogued watercolour of Rose Bank, c. 1835. ML Pic Acc 5677.
25. William Carter to Col. Sec., 3 January 1830, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
26. J. E. Manning to Col. Sec., 13 September 1831, Col. Se.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid.*,
27. See note 13.
28. Douglass was represented by his agent John Stephen. John Stephen to Col. Sec., 5 May 1830, Col. Sec: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
29. William Cordeaux to Col. Sec, 7 December 1831, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid.*,
30. *ibid.*
31. Samuel Perry to Col. Sec., 18 May 1831, Col. Sec: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid.*
32. The maxims may possibly relate to the unidentified 'Archt' Dictionary which Major Mitchell appears to have borrowed from, or lent to, Perry in 1829. T. L. Mitchell, Memoranda 1827-1829, ML C38, undated entry.
33. See Panorama of Darlinghurst, undated, ML XVIA/DARH/1-2
34. Freda Macdonnell, *Before Kings Cross*, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 21-2. It was later renamed Kellett House.
35. Watercolour, unsigned and undated, private collection. Later still, an encircling, single-storeyed verandah was added.
36. Spark to Col. Sec, 26 May 1832, Col. Sec: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op.cit.
37. E. D. Thomson to Col. Sec, 2 February 1833, Col, Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, *ibid.*
38. Verge's ledger, op. cit., P. 49.
39. *ibid.*
40. Memorandum re cottage of J. Busby, 1833 (33/831), Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
41. See Plan of an Estate at Woolloomooloo... the property of His Excellency Major General Sir Maurice O'Connel [sic], 1839, ML M4 811.18112/1839/1. This plan shows the recent additions to Ryder's 15-6. See also W.G. Verge, *John Verge, Early Australian Architect: his ledger and his clients*, Sydney, 1962, pp. 15-6.
42. P. Cox & C. Lucas, *Australian Colonial Architecture*, East Melbourne, 1978, p. 160.
43. Verge's ledger, op. cit., P. 39. Macleay's grant was not subject to the villa conditions.
44. See *Australian*, 16 September 1836. Tender advertisement.
45. See chapter 14. of *The Australian Colonial House*, James Broadbent, Sydney, 1997
46. Mrs Charles Meredith Notes and Sketches of New South Wales, 1839 to 1844, facs. ed., Sydney, 1973, pp. 40-1. 1st pub. 1844. Also inscribed on her pencil drawing of Sydney Harbour, dated 1840, Hordern House, Sydney.
47. See draft legislation for the rescinding of the conditions, April 1847, Col. Sec.: Woolloomooloo, AONSW, op. cit.
48. *Sydney Herald*, 22 September 1841.