

The Villas of Potts Point

1827-1830

EXCERPTED FROM AN EXHIBITION HELD AT THE SLNSW, 2002





Artist unknown, [Rockwall, with Grantham & other Potts Point villas in distance], 1844.
Part of Adelaide Cottage can be glimpsed between Rockwall (foreground villa) and the pine tree at centre.

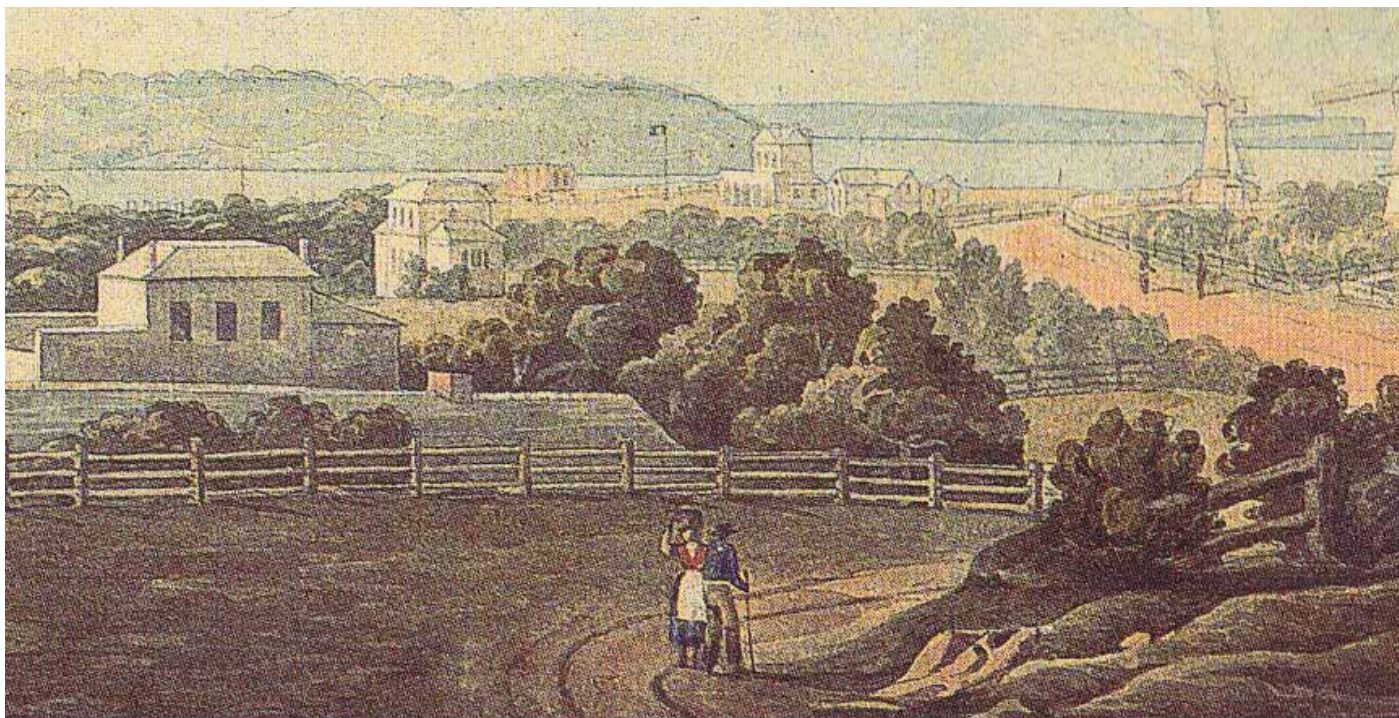
ADELAIDE COTTAGE

Henry Grattan Douglass (1790-1865) arrived in Sydney in 1821, following a distinguished medical career in England and Ireland. He was placed in charge of the colony's General Hospital and also became superintendent of the Female Factory at Parramatta.

Douglass employed architect/engineer Edward Hallen to design his villa, Adelaide Cottage, for his 1828 grant of over eight acres. Despite Douglass's subsequent fall from official favour and departure from the colony the same year, the Governor approved the villa design in 1830. Douglass appears to have continued with the building to facilitate eventual sale of his land.

Douglass sold part of the grant, including the house, to Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Shadforth. The land where the villa's bathing house stood was later reclaimed, and the base of McElhone Steps now marks its site.

By 1858, Adelaide Cottage was owned by merchant John Henry Challis, who bequeathed the greater part of his estate to the University of Sydney. Adelaide Cottage was demolished in 1899 - blocks of four storey flats now cover the site. One of ten terraces built in the late 1890s on the property's Macleay Street frontage was notorious in the 1960s as the artistic enclave, the 'Yellow House'.



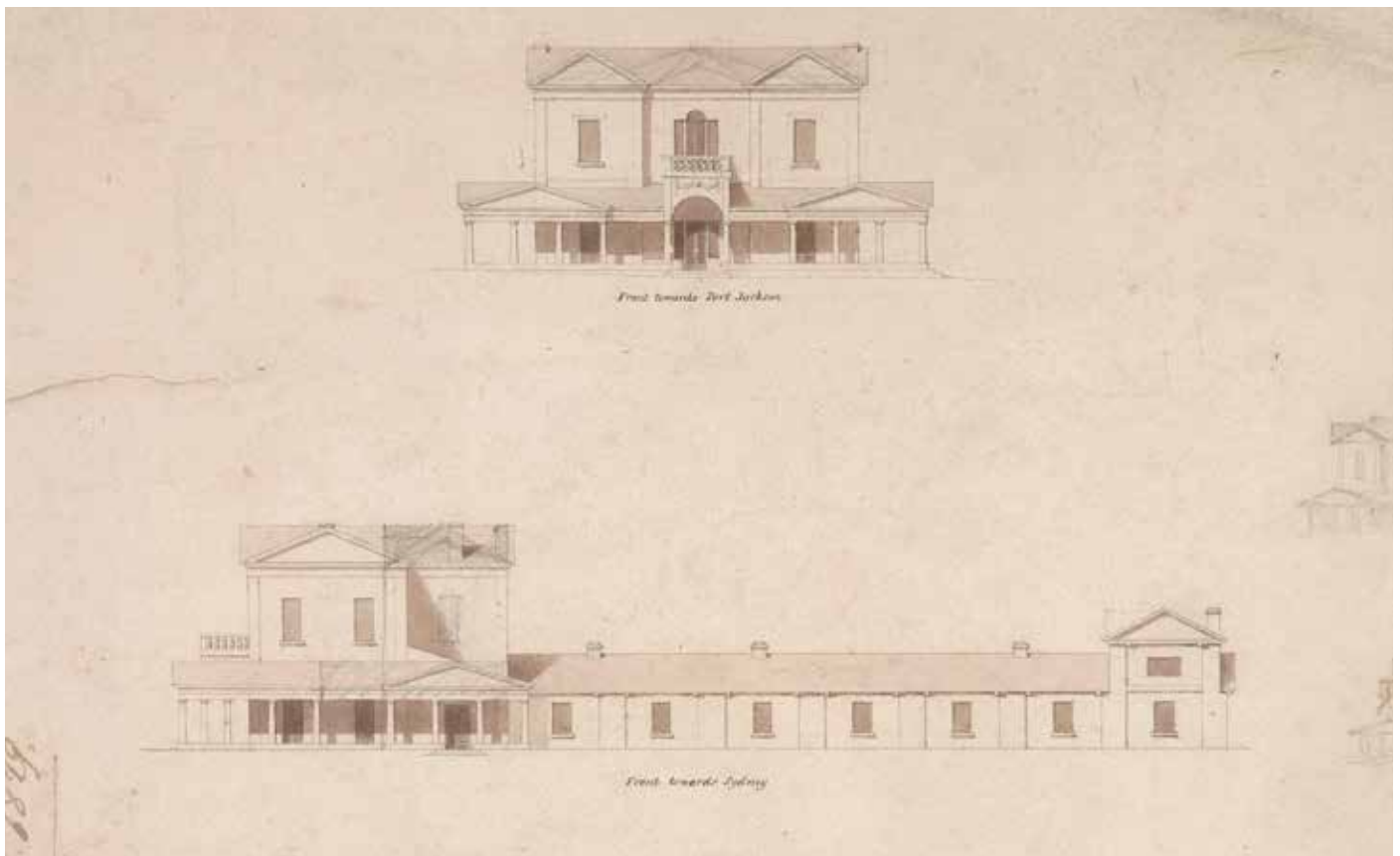
Frederick Garling, *Darlinghurst Road*, c. 1835 (detail) Brougham Lodge is the villa at far left.

BROUGHAM LODGE

In 1828, James Dowling (1787-1844) arrived in the colony with his wife and six children. Dowling took up the position of Puisne Judge (Deputy to the Chief Justice) from 1828 to 1835 and later became the second Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.

Dowling built Brougham Lodge on his 1831 grant of over eight acres. He named his villa after his London patron, Lord Brougham, through whose influence Dowling obtained his appointment. The Governor approved plans for the residence (by an unknown designer) in 1829, before the grant was authorised. In September 1830 Dowling sought to alter the design, as the original designer had left the colony before building commenced. A new architect, possibly John Verge, made improvements to the original plans.

Dowling was in residence at Brougham Lodge from late February 1831 until his death in 1844. The villa then saw a succession of tenants, including use as a boys' school. In 1882 Brougham Lodge was sold to developers for £7000 and demolished soon after for large terrace houses. The Holiday Inn Potts Point now stands on the site of the original villa.



Artist unknown, *Elevation and plan of a house proposed to be built on Craigend, 1829, No. 12 of the Wolloomooloo [sic] allotments.* [detail]

CRAIGEND

Thomas Livingston Mitchell (1792-1855) was born in Craigend, Scotland. He was appointed the colony's Assistant Surveyor-General and arrived in 1827. The following year he was appointed Surveyor General of New South Wales. After actively petitioning the Colonial Secretary for land on Woolloomooloo Hill, Mitchell was authorised to select an allotment. He chose a grant of just over nine acres in 1831.

Mitchell designed his villa, Craigend, the first to be built at the southern and highest end of the ridge. The portico - a pastiche of the Parthenon - and the elevated position of the house meant that Craigend was described as 'the Acropolis of Sydney' in the *Sydney Herald* in 1837. However, financial difficulties, caused in part by his expenditure on Craigend, led Mitchell to subdivide and sell the Craigend estate in 1837.

Following a succession of later owners, Craigend was converted into a hospital, then a boarding house in the early 1900s. The house was demolished in 1922, to make way for a block of flats in Royston Street.



Conrad Martens, *Elizabeth Bay*, 1838 [detail].

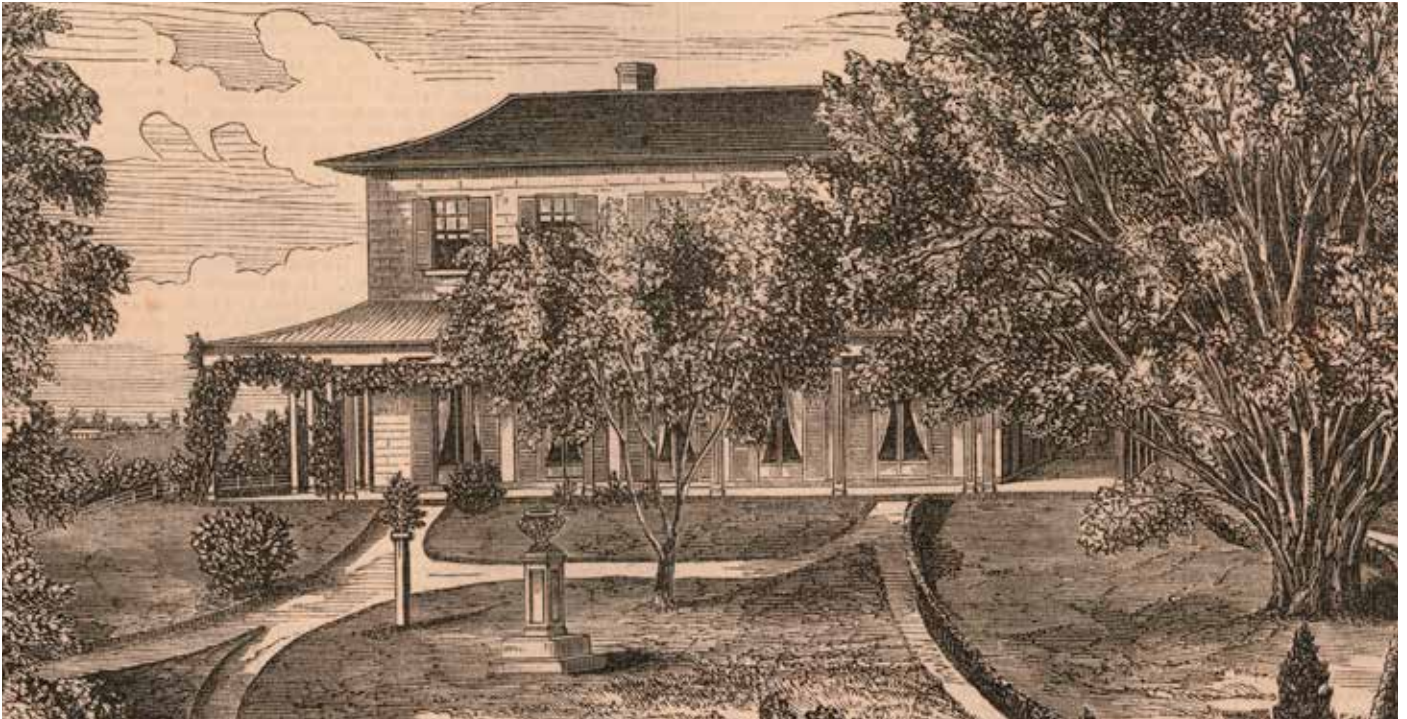
ELIZABETH BAY HOUSE

Alexander Macleay (1767-1848) arrived in Sydney in 1826 with his wife and six daughters (of a total of 17 children), to take up the post of Colonial Secretary.

Macleay was promised a grant of 54 acres at Elizabeth Bay. He immediately began establishing a botanic garden of plants imported from around the world, amid the native vegetation. In 1832 he employed John Verge to design a house for the site. The villa was one of the most extravagant constructions of the day, with costs totalling around £10,000.

Macleay's eldest son, William, arrived in the colony in 1839 and moved into Elizabeth Bay House. He oversaw the subdivision and sale of most of the Elizabeth Bay property in order to help save his father from bankruptcy and lived alone in the house until his death in 1865. Members of the Macleay family occupied Elizabeth Bay House until 1903.

In 1942 the house was internally converted into 16 flats. In 1974 South Sydney Council took over the run-down property and contracted architects Fisher Lucas to supervise the restoration of the residence. In 1980 the property came under the auspices of the New South Wales State Government and, along with Vaucluse House, became the first of the properties administered by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales.



Artist unknown, *Goodrich [sic] the residence of Captain Smith*, 1875 [detail].

GODERICH LODGE

After being appointed High Sheriff of New South Wales, Thomas Macquoid arrived in the colony in 1829. He was granted over four acres in 1831, and he also received another grant of over four acres in 1839.

Governor Darling approved a plan by John Verge for the house on Macquoid's original grant in January 1831. By 1832 Macquoid was living in his house, Goderich Lodge, named after Lord Goderich, Secretary of State for the Colonies at the time. Macquoid was also a wealthy merchant until he was badly affected by the 1840s Depression.

He committed suicide at Goderich Lodge in October 1841. Following his death, the villa was sold by auction in December 1841, leading to a succession of tenants and owners. The first Bishop of Australia (consecrated in 1836), Dr William Grant Broughton, was a tenant at Goderich from 1848 until 1852. Broughton's wife died at Goderich in 1849. Frederick Tooth, of Tooth's brewery, bought Goderich in the 1850s.

Goderich Lodge remained a well-known Sydney residence until its demolition in 1915. The Hampton Court Hotel was constructed on its site.



Photographer unknown, [Grantham], c.1880.

GRANTHAM

Caleb Wilson (d. 1838) came to the colony around 1806 and was an early Hawkesbury settler. By 1836, he was a wealthy merchant and ironmonger and bought the remaining five acres of Judge Wylde's grant on Potts Point. In September 1836 he called for tenders to build his residence, Caleb Castle (later known as 'Grantham'), there.

Grantham was not subject to Darling's 'villa conditions', as the Governor had left the colony by this time and Wilson had purchased, rather than been granted, the undeveloped land. Wilson must have decided to make an individual statement with his villa, in order to stand out from the crowd of refined villas up the hill.

Grantham was designed (by an unknown architect) in the same Gothic Revival style as the new Government House (1837-1845) across the bay. Grantham was considered a rather pretentious building and became known locally as 'The Pepper Pot' on account of its turrets, or 'Frying Pan Castle' (referring to Wilson's occupation).

In the early 1840s Frederick Parbury, a wealthy merchant, owned the house, which he renamed 'Granthamville'. The house was later bought in 1853 by Henry Dangar, and it eventually became known as 'Dangar's Castle'.

Grantham was sold for demolition in 1937, and two blocks of three-storey flats in St Neot Avenue stand over the site of Grantham today.



Photographer unknown, Kellett House, Sydney, c. 1876 [detail].

KELLETT HOUSE

Soldier and surveyor Captain Samuel Augustus Perry (1792-1854) was appointed Deputy Surveyor-General (under T. L. Mitchell) and arrived in the colony with his wife and six children in 1829. Perry submitted his design for his villa to the Governor in 1831. After some negotiation the design was approved, and Bona Vista (later known as 'Kellett House') was built on his grant of a little over three acres.

The villa and grounds were sold at public auction in 1834. Merchant, banker, shipowner and Member of Parliament Richard 'China' Jones was the purchaser, and renamed the villa 'Darlinghurst House', in honour of Mrs Jones's friend, Lady Darling. The next owner, Stuart A. Donaldson, was the first Premier of New South Wales. He renamed the villa 'Kellett House' (sometimes also referred to as 'Kellett Lodge').

Subdivision of the Kellett estate took place from 1864. The villa was demolished in 1877 by W. F. Buchanan, a wealthy squatter. Part of the land went to form Kellett Street and the Hotel Mansions on the corner of Bayswater Road and Kellett Street.



Samuel Thomas Gill, *Orwell House near Sydney, NSW, NE angle*, c. 1856.

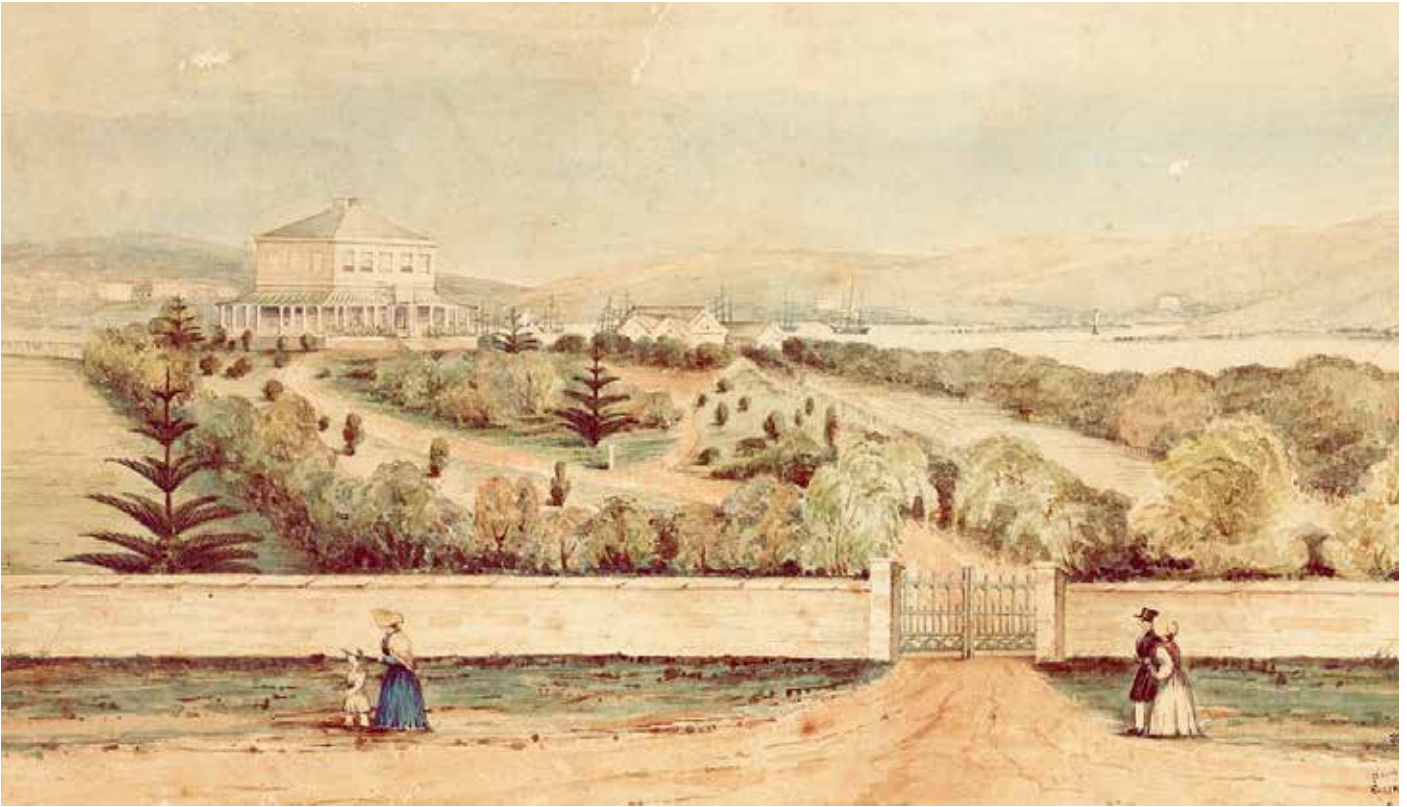
ORWELL HOUSE

Attorney and barrister John Stephen (1771-1833) was Commissioner of the Courts of Requests and the first Solicitor-General of New South Wales; he then became the first Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1825.

Stephen received one of the original Darlinghurst grants of over 11 acres. His house, Orwell, was one of the first on the hill, being under construction in 1829.

After Stephen's death, the house had a succession of eminent legal residents, including W. W. Burton (Puisne Judge succeeding Stephen) who lived at Orwell House in 1833 and 1834, when it was still the property of Stephen's family. Other occupants included the merchant Frederick Parbury in 1847, after he sold Grantham. In the early 1870s Orwell was purchased by Mr and Mrs Phillips, whose son was born there and was named after the house.

Orwell was demolished in 1937 and the Minerva Theatre, now known as the Metro, was built on its site. The Metro is one of the few remaining examples of an Art Deco style theatre in Sydney.



Artist unknown, *Sempill House* [Rockwall], Sydney, NSW, c. 1840 [detail].

ROCKWALL

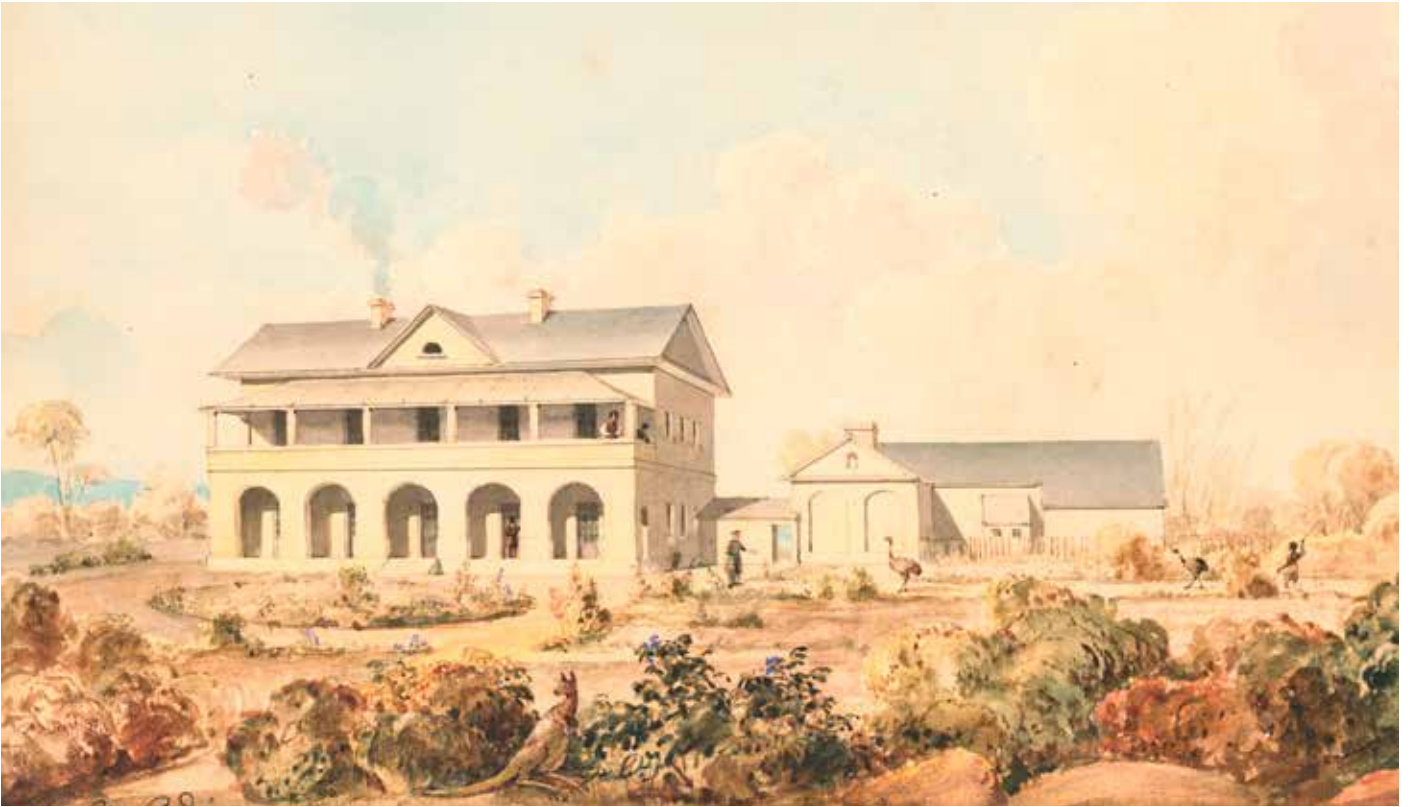
John Busby (1765-1857) was a mineral surveyor and civil engineer. In 1823, he was appointed to manage the colony's coal mines and to find a new supply of fresh water, as the Tank Stream had become too polluted.

Busby received a grant of over eight acres in 1828. John Verge started plans for Busby's house, Rockwall, and a cottage in 1830. Verge's plans for the house were approved by the Governor the same year.

However, in the early 1830s Busby found himself in financial difficulties and was forced to sell his grant. From 1835, Verge altered the existing plans for the new owner of Rockwall, Hamilton Collins Sempill, a grazier and merchant. Verge supervised the works for Sempill through to completion in 1837.

In the 1880s the residence was used as a girls' school, Ailanthus College, and was then acquired by the Nurses' Club. It later became part of the Chevron Hotel, then the Landmark Hotel, in Rockwall Crescent, Potts Point.

Rockwall and a portion of surrounding land were restored in 1995 by Howard Tanner & Associates for the Mirvac Group as part of the development of The Landmark Parkroyal hotel in Macleay Street, and today Rockwall is privately owned.



Charles Rodius, *Wolomoloo* [sic] [Springfield House], 1832 [detail].

SPRINGFIELD

Alexander Macduff Baxter (1798-c.1836) was nominated for the post of (the second) Attorney-General of New South Wales in 1826. Baxter arrived in the colony in 1827 with his Spanish heiress wife, and was soon being referred to by Governor Darling as 'Dandy' Baxter for his social excesses.

Baxter was granted just over nine acres in 1828 and submitted plans for his house to the Governor in October that year. The original plans were possibly by Francis Greenway; Edward Hallen was in charge by the time building began in 1830.

Baxter's professional deficiencies and personal extravagances soon caught up with him. He departed for London in 1832, where he was imprisoned for debt.

It is unlikely that Springfield was completed before Baxter's bankruptcy, but it must have been soon after, because in 1832 Charles Rodius painted a watercolour of the house and the newly planted garden.

Springfield was demolished in 1934. 'The New Village Centre' in Springfield Avenue now marks the site of the former villa.



George Edwards Peacock, *Tarmons*, 1845

TARMONS

In 1839 Hamilton Collins Sempill of Rockwall sold five acres of the original Busby grant to the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Maurice O'Connell.

A cottage designed by John Verge in 1830 as part of the Rockwall estate, which did not fulfil the villa conditions, had been erected on the allotment by 1833. Verge designed and supervised alterations to the cottage in 1836-1837, creating a two-storied, verandahed residence.

Verge retired to his estate on the Williams River in 1838, so it is possible that the addition to the cottage that was to become Tarmons was designed by John Bibb, Verge's assistant, who continued Verge's architectural practice.

After the death of Sir Maurice in 1848, it was sold to Doctor (Sir) Charles Nicholson, medical practitioner, founder of Sydney University and antiquities collector. When Sir Charles sold the estate in 1853, the house and land were acquired by the Irish Sisters of Charity for a convent, school and hospital: St Vincent's. The villa became the Mother House.

Although the hospital extended onto another site in Darlinghurst donated by the Hughes family, St Vincent's College and Convent remain on the old Tarmons land. Tarmons itself was demolished in 1966.



Photographer unknown, *Tusculum*, Macleay St., taken between 1860-70.

TUSCULUM

Alexander Brodie Spark (1792-1856) arrived as a free settler in Sydney in 1823. His success in shipping and commerce meant that he was quickly accepted as an influential member of colonial society.

Spark had received a literary education, which may account for the name of his villa — Tusculum was the name of Cicero's villa near Rome. Spark's 1828 grant of over nine acres was one of the few original grants made to a private citizen. John Verge's plan for Tusculum was approved by Governor Darling in 1830.

Spark probably built Tusculum as an investment property, as he only lived there for a brief period.

The villa was under construction from 1831 to 1835. Alterations were made in 1836 to suit its first tenant, Bishop Broughton. The Broughtons made Tusculum a centre of hospitality and, after Government House, it was the most important domestic building in the colony.

In 1983, Tusculum was saved from demolition when it was acquired by the New South Wales State Government. Architect Clive Lucas supervised the restoration of the residence, and it is now the headquarters of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (New South Wales Chapter).