

Area 16**Waterview Estate Conservation Area**

Comprises Parbury's 10-acre Waterview Estate and Cooper's 28-acre estate adjoining it to the northwest.

Landform

This Conservation Area comprises land on the southeast of Waterview Bay (now Morts Bay). It slopes quite steeply towards the bay from the Darling Street ridge.



Figure 16.1 Waterview Estate Conservation Area Map.

History

This area contains two large sections of land which were among the earliest to be carved out of Gilchrist's Balmain Estate. Dr William Balmain had given his grant of 550 acres to fellow surgeon and friend John Gilchrist in 1801. Gilchrist's agent, Sydney merchant Frank Parbury put a number of land parcels up for sale in 1836, all near the eastern end of the Balmain peninsula, with easy water access to Sydney Town.

Parbury himself leased/bought ten acres at the southeastern part of Waterview Bay, and built the first house on the Balmain grant, Waterview House, in 1835. It was a six-roomed single-storey house with stables, outbuildings and a fenced garden and stood near the corner of Colgate Avenue and Caroline Street. It was later purchased by George Cooper, Comptroller of Customs, who owned/leased 28 acres adjacent to the west. Like many people who overstretched themselves in the late 1830s, Cooper fell victim to the crash of the early 1840s and was declared bankrupt. The Waterview Estate was then divided into modest building allotments, with very narrow streets (leaving as much land as possible for development) leading down to the bay with its slipways/wharves.

With the expansion of industry out of Sydney Town in the 1880s, allotments close to the water were taken up for water dependent industrial uses, such as

the Balmain Ferry Co works. Some villas were built on the higher slopes of the land, while other allotments were resubdivided for closer development. The growth of the Morts Dock and Engineering Company provided an impetus for the construction of small terraces and cottages to house the growing maritime workforce. A number of these resubdivisions provided narrow back lanes.

Waterview House was demolished after 1905, probably in the 1920s. Colgate Palmolive established a factory on the water's edge in 1922. The conversion of this factory to apartments in the 1990s, and the remaining small maritime activities around the Balmain Ferry Co works at the end of Waterview Street illustrate the close and enduring relationship between housing and industry.

Sources

Solling, M and Reynolds, P 1997, 'Leichhardt: on the margins of the city', *Leichhardt Historical Journal*, Vol. 22, Allen and Unwin.

Reynolds, P 1985, 'The first 22 lots – an overview: Suburbanisation in Balmain', *Leichhardt Historical Journal*, Vol. 14.

Significant Characteristics

- Very narrow straight streets, most of which lead down to Morts Bay.
- Clusters of small maritime activities end the view down some streets.
- Buildings generally sited close to street, defining edge of narrow roads.
- Varied streetscape comprising dense post-1870s housing – two-storey terraces and single and double-fronted detached cottages; the occasional large early villa, industrial buildings, shops and commercial buildings.
- Variety of building materials and finishes: rendered brick, face brick, weatherboard, stone.
- Roofs mostly of iron or terracotta tiles.
- Sandstone kerbs and gutters mostly uninterrupted by driveway access.

Statement of Significance or Why This Area is Important

- One of a number of conservation areas which collectively illustrate the nature of Sydney's early suburbs and Leichhardt's suburban growth particularly between 1871 and 1891, with pockets of infill up to the end of the 1930s (ie prior to World War II). This area is significant for the layers of development from presuburban marine villas of the 1850/60s to small-scale workers' housing from the 1870s through to the late 1930s.
- Demonstrates the close physical relationship between industry and housing (both middle class and workers' housing) in nineteenth century cities.
- Demonstrates the nature of some private subdivisions before the introduction of the Width of Streets and Lanes Act of 1881 required roads to be at least one chain wide.

Management of Heritage Values

Generally

This is a conservation area. Little change can be expected other than modest additions and discrete alterations. Buildings which do not contribute to the heritage significance of the area may be replaced with sympathetically designed infill.

Retain

- Narrow streets.
- All pre-1939 buildings and structures, especially timber and stone buildings.
- Maritime and industrial buildings that have played a part in the history of this area.
- Original plaster finishes to external walls (as a rough rule of thumb this will mostly apply to pre-1890s buildings. Reconstruct the finish where necessary.
- Original unplastered face brick external walls.
- Original architectural details to building. Encourage replacement of lost elements, but only where evidence is available.
- Uninterrupted sandstone kerbs and gutters.

Avoid

- Alterations that change the shape of the building or original roof forms on the main part of the buildings.
- Second-storey additions to original single-storey houses, other than as separated pavilion forms.
- Removal of original detail. Encourage restoration from evidence.
- Removal of original plaster finishes to external walls.
- Plastering or painting of original face brick walls.
- Additions of details not part of the original fabric of the building.
- Inappropriate fences such as high brick fences/walls, new iron palisades on high brick bases.
- Interruption to almost continuous kerb and gutters.