HARRIS RESIDENCE (former)

ADDRESS: 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive, Wodonga

STUDY NUMBER: 2C HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

DATE: circa 1936

CONDITION: Good

INTEGRITY: Good



(Wodonga City Council, November 2024)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The *Harris Residence (former)* at 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive, Wodonga built circa 1936 is significant. The significant elements are the form; gable roof clad in terracotta tiles, timber-lined soffits, red brick walls with rendered plinth and lintel/band, chimney, areas of rubble/stone-like render finish (chimney shaft, side gable end), front gable end with half-timbering, double hung timber sashes with six pane upper sashes, porch with masonry piers (rendered shaft with soldier coursing), and glazed front door with multi-paned side lights.

The non-significant elements are the front and side fence, garage, and west addition with a hipped roof clad in corrugated sheet metal.

How is it significant?

The *Harris Residence (former)* at 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive, Wodonga is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Wodonga.

Why is it significant?

The Harris Residence (former) at 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive is of historical significance of the form of suburban residential development that occurred on the outskirts of the original Wodonga township in the early to mid-twentieth century. As such it represents a period of prosperity and expansion in Wodonga following the Great Depression and prior to World War Two. It is also significant for its association with long-time residents/owners and prominent Wodonga citizens James and Glenda May Harris, who made a substantial contribution to the social and business life of Wodonga from the 1930s to 1950s and later through work on numerous recreations, social, and community organisation and professional bodies. (Criterion A)

The Harris Residence (former) is of aesthetic significance as a good and intact example of the later bungalow type. It is differentiated by many houses of the period by the use of the gable roof form rather than the then predominant hip form, harking back to the typical format of the 1920s however its more restrained detailing, pronounced horizontal emphasis, and incorporation of a small front porch under the sweep of the main roof attests to a 1930s date. It is distinguished by the robust piers to the front porch, extensively glazed entry, and areas of unusual rubble/stone-like render finish t to the chimney shaft and side gable end. (Criterion E)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The house is located on an irregular allotment at the corner of Tower Street. The house is widely visible behind a contemporary steel palisade fence (replacing timber and wire mesh) with low perimeter planting and a red brick pedestrian path.

The red brick bungalow (in stretcher bond) has a rendered plinth with a band of terracotta vents within and above. The gable roof is clad in terracotta tiles, wide timber-lined soffits, and is punctuated by a brick chimney with soldier coursing to the cap and rubble/stone-like finish to the render. The same render finish has been applied to the side gable end (Tower Street) which has a vent defined with umber bricks. The front gable however has half timbering (or battened sheeting).

At the level of the window lintels is a continuous rendered/concrete band. The windows are double hung timber sashes with six panes upper sashes. Brick piers, mainly rendered with soldier coursing to the base and ‘capital’, support the front porch. The entry has a concrete deck and wide door and side lights, both with horizontal glazing bars and textured/translucent glass.

The western addition/section has a hip roof clad in corrugated sheet metal with a soffit lined in battened sheeting with a wide aluminium-framed window to the front.



There is a salmon/red brick garage, which likely dates to the 1950s, located in the south-west corner. It has a skillion roof and a band of battened sheeting above a modern roller door.



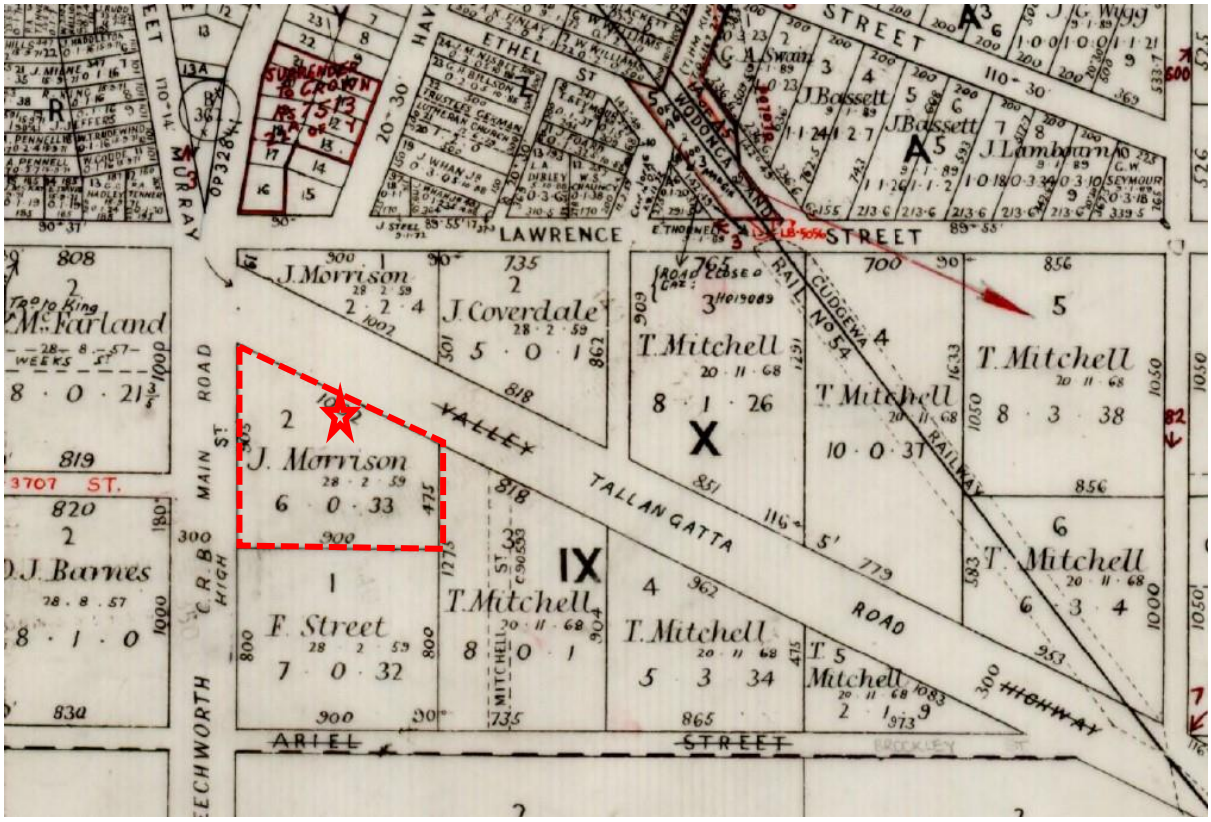
HISTORIC THEMES

6.5 Living in country towns

6.7 Making homes for Victorians

HISTORY

The subject site forms part of the original 6-acre Crown Allotment 2, Section 9, which was originally owned by John Morrison who lived on the property with his wife Susan. The couple built a home nearby which fronted Beechworth Road and resided there into the 1910s ('Death', 1912). Morrison was a grazier and as one of the earliest Wodonga-born settlers (born in 1851) who resided in the town until his death in 1912 ('Obituary: Mr Morrison', 1912).



Wodonga Township Plan with CA2 dashed, and approximate location of subject site starred (W308-Sheet 4)

Crown Allotment 2 was subdivided sometime during the decades that followed Morrison's death and by 1933 there was some development along northern boundary of the Crown Allotment – however it did not include the subject site. Electoral Roll records show the Harris family resided at 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive from as early as 1936 — shortly after the aforementioned map was recorded (Results for James S. N Harris in Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980; Wodonga, Indi, Victoria. 1936). Owing to the dwelling's absence from the 1933 maps and its bungalow style it was likely constructed not long after 1933, probably mid-1930s.



Location of 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive shown in yellow with no dwelling, 1933. The red circle may be the site of John Morrison's former home. (Great Britain. War Office. General Staff. Australian Section 1933).



9 Thomas Mitchell Drive shown in yellow, 1951 (Albury, New South Wales and Victoria / produced by Royal Australian Survey Corps)

James and Glenda Harris with their three children occupied the home from 1936 – 2000 (Randell & Pennay 2004, *Public family tree of Sandra Wilcox*, 2022). As we shall see, throughout their lives as locals both James and Glenda Harris became widely known and highly respected in the Wodonga community.

James Stewart Noel Harris (1905-1978) was a prominent barrister and solicitor and occupied the home with his wife Glenda May (nee Hartsman) (1936-2000) from approximately 1936. At this time the property was formerly listed at '9 Tallangatta Road' however, when the road was renamed 'Thomas Mitchell Drive' in 1978 it became 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive (Certificate of Title Volume 2662 Folio 395 1897). In line with the electoral roll, it is reasonable to suggest construction of the dwelling was commissioned by the Harris's for their growing family, however, the builder/designer remain unknown.

James Stewart Noel Harris (also known as 'Stewart Harris' also spelled 'Stuart') was the third son of the Honourable Sir John Harris (after whom "Harris" house at Wodonga High School is named) and Lady Jessie Lily Prentice. Glenda May Hartsman was born in Brighton Beach. Her sister was married to the eldest child of John and Jessie Lily, John Harris ('Family Notices', 1932, pp. 1). Thelma and John Harris resided in Rutherglen.

James Harris attended Trinity College and Melbourne University from 1925 to 1929 (*251538 Wing Commander James Stewart Noel Harris, Chief Instructor of the RAAF*, 1945) during which time he worked in administration within the RAAF ('Royal Australian Air Force', 1926, pp. 1021). Shortly after his graduation from Trinity, Harris became engaged to Glenda and the together the pair moved to Wodonga. Here, in 1930, James Harris joined the law firm of Francis William Edmondson on High Street, and the couple commenced their life in Wodonga.

During the Second World War, James Harris was prominent in the RAAF holding the rank of Wing Commander and later Chief Instructor of the RAAF School of Administration. His service was recognised when in 1945 he received the RAAF Long Service Commendation at No. 1 Engineering School, RAAF (*251538 Wing Commander James Stewart Noel Harris, Chief Instructor of the RAAF*, 1945). Following the Second World War he became president of the Fleur de Lys society, the Trinity College alumni society. In his legal practice he often represented local community interests, assisting with applications to develop the dance hall on Ebden Reserve, Wodonga Athletics Club. Both Mr and Mrs Harris were prominent in local affairs, being one or the other, members of the Wodonga Chamber of Commerce, Masonic society, Hospital Board, board member and President of the Wodonga Golf Club, Wodonga Tennis Club, Wodonga Show Society, Secretary of the Wodonga Racecourse, Secretary of the Wodonga and District Patriotic Fund Committee, group secretary of the Wodonga CWA, the Wodonga Library Board, St Luke's Parish assistant secretary, and many other community organisations. In addition to acting as Hon. Secretary in several the above-mentioned societies, such as the Patriotic Fund, Mrs Harris also provided her home (9 Thomas Mitchell Drive) for garden parties and various functions which included raising funds for these local causes. Such events regularly appear as notable social events in the local newspaper and established for the family an important place in Wodonga's social and civic spaces (Sources from Border Morning Mail & Wodonga and Towong Sentinel via Trove for example see ('What People Are Doing', 1944).

In 1966 Lou Lieberman joined James Harris's firm on High St creating Harris and Leiberman & Co.. Today, Harris and Leiberman &Co. is one of the region's largest law firms (*About Us*, 2022). Glenda May Harris remained at the home until her death in 2000.

The 1963 aerial following reveals that the western section and garage had been constructed and that the land at that time included what is now 9A Thomas Mitchell Drive.



9 Thomas Mitchell Drive highlighted, 1963 *(*CAD8, Run 2, Frame 269, Geoscience Australia).

Until recently (circa 2020), the front fence had been timber-framed with woven wire.



2004 image showing established garden (Randell & Pennay 2004).

COMPARISON

The house at 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive is a mid-1930s bungalow. Several interwar period bungalows have been included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay reflecting that this was a major growth phase in Wodonga and municipality generally, associated with the construction of the Hume Weir, which commenced in 1919. The bungalow mode predominated during the 1920s and remained prevalent throughout the 1930s in the municipality.

The subject house is characteristic of a typical Californian bungalow type with its fully gabled roof form and elongated façade with a peripheral gable end, however more indicative of a late interwar period example by its relatively restrained detailing and small entry porch with robust piers rather than an long porch extending across the recessed part of the façade as was typical during the 1920s. The upper sashes have been defined by timber glazing bars (multi-panes) rather than leadlight and stained glass.

Among the existing heritage overlays, there are few clear comparators, although there are several bungalows within the Lawrence Street Precinct (HO48). Most of the houses in this precinct however are timber with a longer porch and many have a main gambrel/ hipped roof - e.g., 134, 146, 147, 148, 163,165 Lawrence Street.

Regarding the interwar period houses along the Beechworth Road, there is also no clear comparison because although they date to the 1930s, they generally have hipped roofs - e.g., no. 185 (HO18), no. 204 (HO20), though it has a small central gabled porch, no. 206 (HO21), no. 208 (HO22) and no. 209 (HO23) – or are indicative other contemporary styles such as the Tudor Revival at no. 322 (HO29) or Moderne at no. 324 (HO30).

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that the *Harris Residence (former)* at 9 Thomas Mitchell Drive, Wodonga, is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the parcel of land (2\PS610447) on which the house is located as outlined below.



(Nearmap, 22 June 2024)

PLANNING SCHEME CONTROLS

Planning Controls	Y/N
External Paint Controls Apply?	N
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	N
Tree Controls Apply?	N
Solar Energy System Controls?	Y
Outbuildings or Fences Not Exempt Under Clause 43.01-4?	N
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register Under the Heritage Act 2017?	N
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	Y
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	N

REFERENCES

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'Royal Australian Air Force', 1926., *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette (National : 1901 - 1973)*, 54, accessed 7 June 2022, http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article232534926.

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ADDITIONAL IMAGES





Front porch and door (Biosis 2020)