WRIGHT HOUSE (FORMER)

ADDRESS: 169 Beechworth Road, Wodonga

STUDY NUMBER: 2B HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

DATE: 1908-15

CONDITION: Good

INTEGRITY: Good



(RBA, June 2024)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The *Wright House (former)* at 169 Beechworth Road, Wodonga, was constructed between 1908 and 1915 for local councillor and businessman Abraham Lincoln Wright, is significant, including the mature Queen palm tree (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*). The dwelling is currently used as an office.

The significant elements of the house are its original built form and fabric, including complex gabled roof clad in corrugated sheet metal, red brick chimneys with caps, gable ends with pebble dash finish and rising sun motif, bullnose corner verandah with cast iron columns, brackets and frieze, face brick walls, front door with leadlight panel, sidelights and toplight, and casement windows with keystones to the lintels and Queen Anne sills.

The front ramp and rear lean-to addition are not significant.

How is it significant?

The *Wright House (former)* at 169 Beechworth Road, Wodonga, is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Wodonga.

Why is it significant?

The *Wright House (former)* is of historical significance as a substantial and prestigious late Federation period residence, befitting its original owner, the prominent local councillor and businessman Abraham L Wright. (Criterion A)

The *Wright House (former)* is amongst the most architecturally distinctive examples of the Queen Anne style in the municipality. It is largely intact and distinguished by its picturesque roofscape and fine array of elements, including the use of a pebbledash finish, rising sun motifs, cast iron detailing, keystones, Queen Anne sills, casement windows and leadlight. The mature Queen palm in the front garden provides a tangible link to the original garden. (Criterion E)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The subject place comprises a substantial, Queen Anne-style residence with an asymmetrical form. It is currently employed for offices.

The building has a complex hipped and gabled roof with a louvred gablet, clad in red painted corrugated sheet meal. Gable ends are ornamented with a pebbledash finish in plain (corner) or rising sun motif to the timber battening. There are two tall unpainted red brick chimneys, whose caps are also pebbledash finished.

The walls are red brick laid in garden wall bond (five rows of stretchers to a row of headers). A bullnose verandah wraps around the northeast corner of the building, which is supported by cast iron columns with fluted shafts and features cast iron frieze and brackets in a format typical of the early 20th century. The verandah desk was said to have previously been finished with tessellated tiles but is currently painted concrete. A disabled access ramp has been added to the side of the verandah.

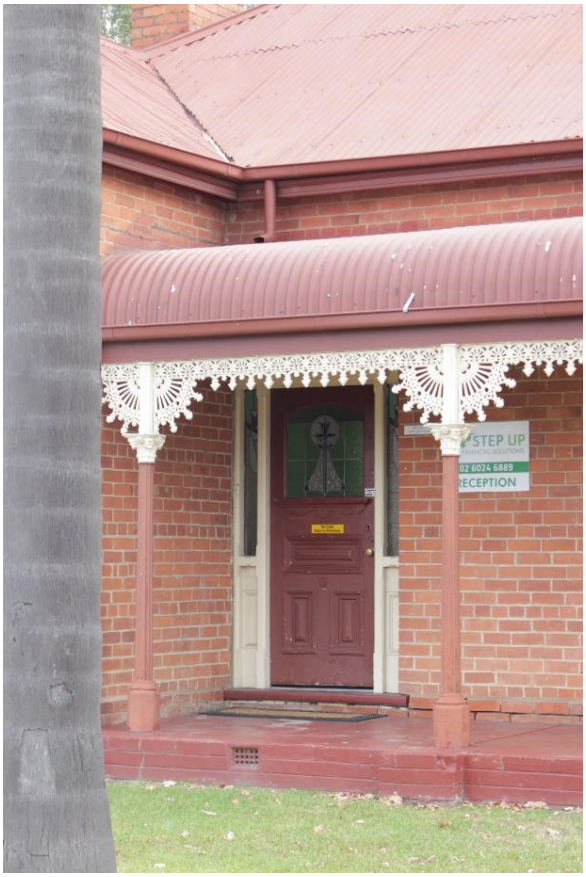
The front entrance includes a panelled door and decorative glass (leadlight and stained glass) to the upper pane of the door, sidelights and a toplight. The original casement windows are paired or in groups of three to the projecting gable-roofed bays, all with toplights and decorative glass. The windows are detailed with rendered lintels featuring a prominent keystone and a curvilinear rendered band below the sill (known as a Queen Anne sill).

A skillion-roofed brick addition, rendered and painted, has been constructed to the rear with aluminium windows. The sides and rear parts of the place are extensively hard-paved for car parking.

The front garden features a mature Queen Palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana),* which is typical of Federation era gardens*.* There is no boundary fence between the building and the former Gundowring House to the east.



Queen palm and gable end (RBA, June 2024)



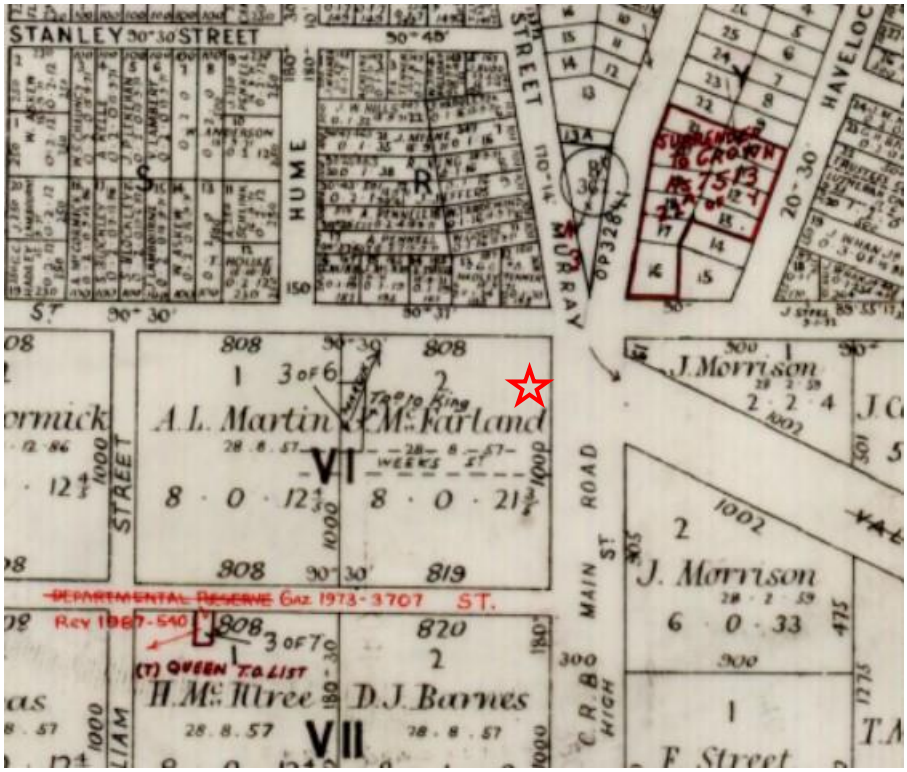
Front entry and verandah detail (RBA, June 2024)

HISTORIC THEMES

6.5 Living in country towns

HISTORY

The subject land formed part of Crown Allotment 2, Section 6, Wodonga Township, which was acquired by J McFarland in August 1857. This holding was one of the larger parcels (more than 8 acres) on the edge of the original central township area.



Wodonga Township Plan, showing approximate location of the subject site (W308, sheet 4)

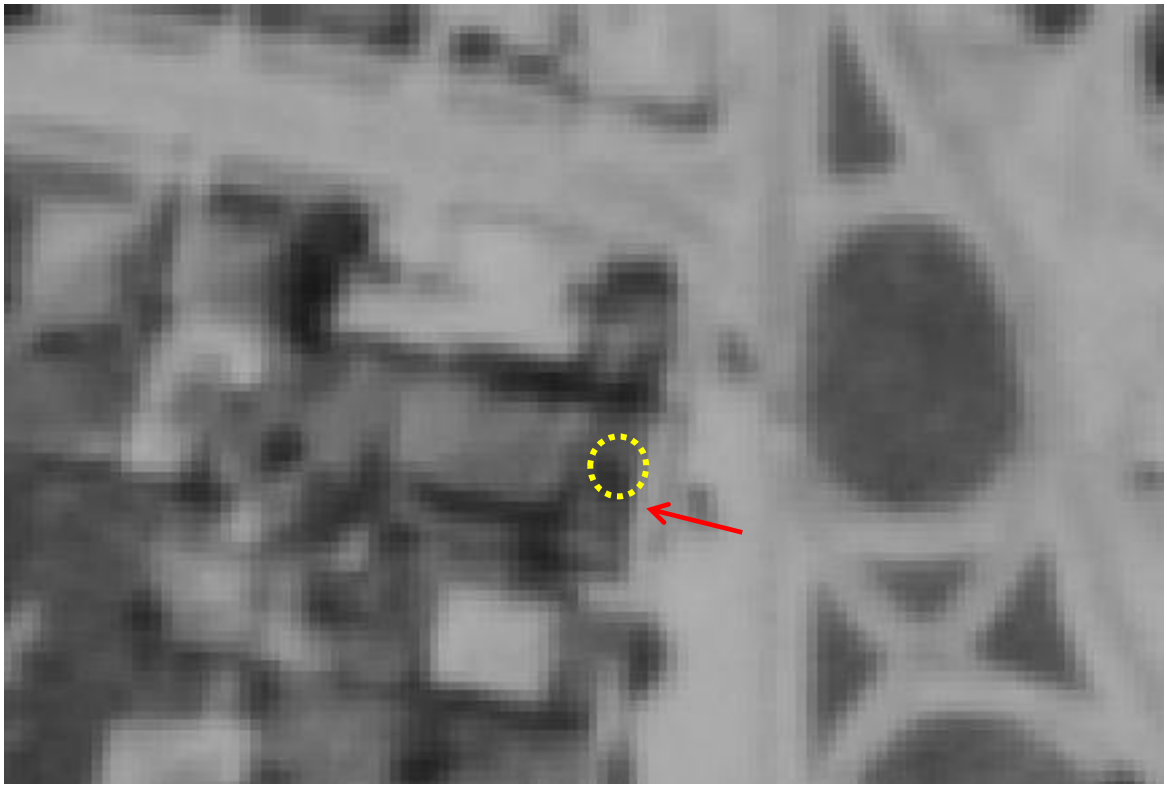
Rates records indicate that a number of dwellings were located within this allotment. Abraham Lincoln Wright acquired the land during 1908-09 and the subject house had been constructed by 1915.

Wright was described as a 'prominent citizen of Wodonga' in his obituary, playing 'an important part in the commercial and civic life of this community, during which time he occupied almost every post of any consequence, not the least of which was the president's chair on several occasions. He was a councillor for many years and carried out the duties worthily' (*Wodonga and Towong Sentinel*, 19 July 1935, p2).

Subsequent owners were Ellen Blight, who sold to John Francis, and Beatrice Turner, who occupied the house in 1921/1922 when John was transferred from Albury as the manager of Dalgety. The Turners named the house *Locherbie* after the village in Scotland from which John originated. Both John and Francis remained in the house until they passed away in 1952 (Wodonga & District Historical Society Archives).

In circa 1950, a local GP, Dr Taverney, used the two front rooms of the Turner's house as consulting rooms. He later built the two-storey *Gundowring House* on the corner of Beechworth Road and Lawrence Street next door. The building has been adapted for use as commercial office space.

The Queen Palm tree to the front of the house is evident on the following (low resolution) aerial.



1963 aerial photograph with the *Wright House (Former*) highlight and circle indicating location of tree. (CAD 8, Run 2, Frame 269, Geoscience Australia)

COMPARISON

To date, no substantial and/or brick examples of the Queen Anne style, which is characteristic of the Federation period, have been included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay. As such, there is no direct comparator to the *Wright House (Former)* and it is among the most architecturally refined examples of domestic design in the municipality from the Federation period.

The grandest house of the period – *Cambourne* at 2 High Street, Wodonga (HO1/VHR - H233), constructed circa 1903 – is a large masonry building, red brick with rendered sections, with a symmetrical façade featuring paired cast iron columns in a transitional mode (between typical Victorian and Federation period detailing).

There is a group of three adjacent timber houses from the Federation period at 241, 243, 245 Beechworth Road (HO26, 27, 28) which have prominent gambrel roofs and exposed rafter ends typical of the period however have symmetrical facades rather than asymmetrical massing with an off-centre gable end which is intrinsic to the Queen Anne style.

Within the Lawrence Street Precinct (HO48), the house at 151 Lawrence Street is broadly indicative of the Queen Anne style but a less distinctive/relatively modest example. A few houses in the precinct date to the Federation period however are indicative of the Victorian Survival style, that is, generally appear as being from the 19th century but date to the early 20th century.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that *Wright House (former)* at 169 Beechworth Road, Wodonga, is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme with tree controls.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the parcel of land (Lot 1/TP578096) on which the house and Queen Palm tree (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) are 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?	Y - Queen palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*)
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

Aerial photograph, CAD 8, Run 2, Frame 269, 1963, Geoscience Australia

Electoral Roll, Division of Indi, District of Benambra, Subdivision of Wodonga

Wodonga & District Historical Society Archives

Wodonga and Towong Sentinel, 19 July 1935, p2