

Area 18 Annandale Conservation Area

Landform

A wide ridge of land between Whites Creek and Johnstons Creek running due north to Rozelle Bay, with views from cross streets, and from the northern end of the suburb to the harbour, Anzac Bridge and the city, and west towards Leichhardt.



Figure 18.1 Annandale Conservation Area Map.

History

George Johnston, a marine officer of the First Fleet, received a grant of 290 acres on the northern side of Parramatta Road in 1799, an area now known as Annandale, named after Johnston's home town in Dumfriesshire, Scotland where he was born in 1764. Annandale House, designed in the Georgian style, was occupied by the Johnston family from 1800, and despite development closing in on all sides, their Annandale estate remained intact until 1876.

The first subdivision of 1876 reveals a grid of streets and allotments covering the land bounded by Parramatta Road, Johnstone, Collins and Nelson Streets. Robert Johnston transferred this portion to his son, George Horatio, in June 1876 who sold off 75 lots to John Young, who then purchased the remainder of the estate for 121,000 pounds in October 1877. Young then sold the land to the Sydney Freehold Land and Building Investment Co Ltd, which he formed in 1878 to subdivide and sell the 280 acre estate. Building contractor and entrepreneur John Young, the company's chairman for the rest of its life, and its second largest shareholder, left an indelible impression on Annandale's development. Other directors of the company were politicians Samuel Gray and Robert Wisdom, developers John North and AW Gillies, soap and candle manufacturer WA Hutchinson and Henry Hudson.

Architect and surveyor Ferdinand Reuss junior won a prize of 150 pounds offered by the company for the best design for the subdivisional layout for Annandale

and designed many of the houses. Reuss widened Johnston Street, a major design feature which followed the spine of the ridge from 66ft to 100ft and the topography of the estate encouraged the symmetrical street grid pattern.

Annandale Street, 80 feet wide, almost rivalled Johnston Street, but its opposite number, Trafalgar Street, retained the 66ft width determined by the 1876 plan. On the western side, Young Street matched the 66ft wide Nelson Street, which for topographical reasons terminated at Booth Street. The four cross-streets, Collins, Booth, Piper and Rose Streets were also 66ft wide. The centrepiece of the plan was an open space at the junction of Johnston and Piper Streets, which became Hinsby Reserve. The plan also featured two other large reserves and six smaller ones. The company's original policy of 'no back lanes' was an enlightened planning policy: access for night soil collection was to be by side passage from the front street. Terrace housing was therefore not part of their plans, indicating that they were aiming for a middle class market. Even the lesser streets were 50ft wide, still above the standard widths of other suburban streets.

The majority of the building lots were generous, directed again to a middle class market: 66ft frontages with depths of about 90ft, ideal for freestanding houses. Most of the allotments sold up to 1881 were in Johnston and Annandale Streets. Allotments on the slopes above the creeks were largely ignored. Though extension of the tram track along Parramatta Road reached the junction of Annandale's main artery in 1883, the track was not built along Johnston Street. Land sales were sluggish and in 1882 the company was forced to revise its original policy on lot sizes. Though Johnston and Annandale Streets remained typical of the kind of middle class suburb the company originally envisaged, elsewhere a proliferation of small lots were created by resubdivisions. The company began with land on the creek slopes near Parramatta Road, re-subdividing sections 26 and 30 (creating Mayes Street), 34 (Ferris Street) and 37 on the western side, and eastern sections 28 and 33. The smaller lots did attract working class buyers, largely missing before 1882.

Between 1884 and 1886 more sections were resubdivided, increasing the number of sales up to 1889. Section 25, creating Alfred Street, and 35 were resubdivided, and sections 9-11 and 16-19 were halved to create sections 50 and 56 (along the banks of Whites Creek). The company undertook further resubdivisions in 1887 and 1888 involving sections 13, 21, 22, 24, 29, 39 and 40. As land sales reached their peak Annandale ratepayers began petitioning to secede from Leichhardt Council and incorporate the new Borough of Annandale which occurred in 1894. Between 1894 and 1930 Annandale Council was filled with self-employed local businessmen - timber merchants, builders and contractors, printers, grocers, butchers and a long serving carrier. They provided social leadership in their community. Many of the builders of the suburb's physical fabric possessed local addresses. The number of Annandale's builders and contractors rose from one in 1884 to fourteen in 1886 to seventeen in 1889. Apart from John Young, a partnership comprising John Wise, Herbert Bartrop and John Rawson was especially active in 1881/2, making twenty-five separate purchases. Other prominent local builders of Annandale's houses were Robert Shannon, William Nicholls, William Baker, Albert Packer, Owen Ridge,

George McDonald, George Bates, Hans Christensen, Cornelius Gorton, William Wells and Phillip Newland.

The Sydney Freehold Land and Building Investment Co Ltd, after thirty-eight years of having a controlling interest in Annandale, went into liquidation in 1916. The remaining unsold lots which were, in the main, located at the suburb's northern end, were bought by the Intercolonial Investment Land and Building Co Ltd. Annandale's last major land sales began in 1909 when Young's Kentville Estate was subdivided into ninety allotments.

By 1893, of Annandale's 1,189 residences, 906 were constructed of brick and 250 of weatherboard. The whole process of building up the streets of Annandale stretched over a long time. At the 1901 census there were 1,729 houses increasing to 2,363 by 1911 and reaching 2,825 in 1921. Annandale had 3,265 residences at the 1947 census.

The bubonic plague first appeared in The Rocks in 1901, and led to quarantine areas in Glebe and other inner areas. It affected attitudes to inner city/suburban housing, so that by 1910 those who could afford to were moving out, particularly to the railway suburbs. Inner suburban areas such as Annandale began to be seen as slums. It was at this time, and particularly after World War I, that industry began to appear in peripheral areas, along Johnstons and Whites creeks and in the swampy head of Rozelle Bay (later to be reclaimed).

John Young, with architectural and engineering experience in England including as superintendent for Crystal Palace, purchased the North Annandale land, established the Sydney Freehold Land & Building Investment Co to lay out the subdivision and finance the residential building.

The subdivision in the 1870s was premature, forcing the company to re-subdivide many of the large 'villa' allotments along Annandale Street and Trafalgar Street for smaller scale housing attracting working class residents. Johnston Street for the most part still exhibits the single villa ideals envisaged by the company for the three main streets.

Sources

Information provided by Max Solling.

Significant Characteristics

- Close relationship between landform and layout of the suburb with widest street along ridge top.
- The highest land has the widest streets and the largest buildings with the deeper setbacks
- Streets, buildings and setbacks diminish in size towards creeks.
- Important civic, ecclesiastical and educational buildings sited on top of the ridge facing Johnston Street, giving spire of Hunter Bailey Church high visibility from wide arch of Sydney suburbs.

- A notable group of buildings, 'the witches hats' sited on northern edge of Johnston Street ridge as it falls towards Rozelle Bay.
- Tree-lined streets, particularly of brush box, planted within the carriageway.
- Industrial buildings occur randomly, but generally marginalised to creek edges, the northern end of Annandale and round Booth Street.
- Variety of domestic buildings 1880s-1930s including single and double-fronted freestanding, semidetached and terrace houses and pre-World War II flats from one to three storeys.
- Small collection of weatherboard dwellings.
- Victorian Italianate boom period villas generally along southern end of Johnston Street, nearer to Parramatta Road.
- Uninterrupted commercial buildings with attached dwelling along Parramatta Road, with parapets and balconies or suspended awnings and some original shop fronts.
- Group of shops, pub, post office, church at intersection of Booth Street.
- Occasional corner shops throughout suburb.
- Skyline of chimneys, decorative fire wall dividers on terraces, ridge capping and finials.
- Wealth of decorative elements – iron fences, coloured tiles in paths, steps and verandahs, plaster moulding finishes above door and window openings, coloured glass, chimneys, verandah awnings.
- Walls of rendered brick (1870s and 1880s), and dry pressed face brick (available from c1890s).
- Roof cladding of terracotta tiles, slate, and some iron, particularly on verandahs.
- Irregular occurrence of back lanes.
- Iron palisade fences on low sandstone plinth.
- Continuous kerbs and gutters – many of sandstone.
- Rock outcrops within footpath and road alignments.

Statement of Significance or Why the Area is Important

- One of a number of conservation areas that 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 important as a well planned nineteenth-century suburb, and for illustrating development particularly from 1880s-1890s, aimed initially at the middle class market. The surviving development from this period forms the major element of its identity along with an area of 1910s-1930s development at its northern end.

- Demonstrates the vision of John Young, architect, engineer and property entrepreneur.
- Demonstrates, arguably, the best and most extensive example of the planning and architectural skills of Ferdinand Reuss, a designer of a number of Sydney's Victorian suburbs, including South Leichhardt (the Excelsior Estate) and Birchgrove.
- Clearly illustrates all the layers of its suburban development from 1878, through the 1880s boom and resubdivision, the 1900 slump and the appearance of industry, and the last subdivision around Kentville/Pritchard Streets to the 1930s, with the early 1880s best illustrated along Johnston and Annandale Streets.
- Demonstrates a close relationship between landform and the physical and social fabric of the suburb.
- In its now rare weatherboard buildings it can continue to demonstrate the nature of that major construction material in the fabric of early Sydney suburbs, and the proximity of the timber yards around Rozelle Bay and their effect on the building of the suburbs of Leichhardt.
- Displays a fine collection of large detached Victorian Italianate boom-period villas with most decorative details still intact, set in gardens.
- Displays fine collection of densely developed Victorian commercial buildings.
- Through the absence/presence of back lanes, changes in the subdivision pattern, and the range of existing buildings it illustrates the evolution of the grand plan for Annandale, in response to the market, from a suburb of middle class villas to one of terraces and semis for tradesmen and workers.

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

- All pre-1939 buildings and structures because they are important to understanding the history of the growth of this suburb.
- All weatherboard buildings, their rarity adds to their significance.
- Green garden space to all residential buildings – an important part of the character of Annandale.
- Original plastered walls (generally belonging to pre-1890s buildings).
- Original dry pressed face brick walls (generally belonging to post-1890s buildings).

- All original architectural details.
- Original iron palisade fences.
- Back lanes in their early configuration.
- Brush box tree planting, replace where necessary in original position within the alignment of the carriageway.
- All sandstone kerbs and gutter uninterrupted by vehicular access.

Avoid

- Amalgamation to create any more wider allotments that would further disrupt the Victorian pattern of development.
- Demolition of any pre-1939 building unless it is so compromised that it can no longer contribute to an understanding of the history of the area.
- Plastering or painting of face brick walls.
- Removal of plaster from walls originally sealed with plaster.
- Removal of original architectural details.
- Changes to the form of the original house. Second or third storey additions.
- Posted verandahs over footpaths to commercial premises or former commercial premises where no evidence can be provided to support their reconstruction.
- Additional architectural detail for which there is no evidence.
- High masonry walls or new palisade fences on high brick bases.
- Alteration to back laneways.
- Road chicanes which cut diagonally across the line of the streets.

Further Work

Use Water Board Detailed Survey of 1890 to identify which buildings remain from that time.

Compile photographic record of the conservation area from photos available since the late nineteenth century to the present time, as a means of assisting in appropriate reconstruction/'restoration'.