

HISTORICAL RESEARCH: KARRATA HOUSE, ROBE

Karratta House was built in the mid-1850's (possibly in 1857, the land was purchased in September, 1855) as a summer house for the family of the well-known squatter, Henry Canton Jones of Binnum Binnum Station, situated 90 miles from Robe. The two-storeyed mansion was designed by Messrs. G. and E. Hamilton of Adelaide and built overlooking the shores of Guichen Bay. Edward Hamilton had been made Assistant Colonial Architect in 1854 and then Colonial Architect and Supervisor of Works from 1856 to 1860, when he resigned to join his brother in private practice. Karratta House was used by the Jones family perhaps until the late 1860's when it was put on the market and bought as the summer residence for the eighth Governor of South Australia, Sir James Fergusson, during his term of office, 1869-1873. The Fergusson family travelled to Robe by sea from Port Adelaide to spend several summer seasons at the South-Eastern Port, adding greatly to the level and tone of social activity in the town. After the end of Governor Fergusson's term of office, Karratta House continued its role as a provincial summer house under the leases of H.H. Dutton and George Riddock, both pastoralists of some distinction. However, after the conclusion of these leases Karratta House remained unoccupied for some time.

Historically, Karratta House is significant because of its first owner, Henry Jones, who along with his brother, Derwas, were "two splendid pioneer squatters, among the best the South-East of this State ever had". They arrived in the Binnum area around 1844 and, "it is understood that they were the first white men in that part of South Australia". In 1866, Henry's property covered 30 square miles and he was considered to be "the swell squatter of the district". The period during which Governor Fergusson used Karratta House as his summer residence coincided with the last phase of Robe "boom period" in the nineteenth century which lasted until the early 1870's. Undoubtedly in these years, Karratta House would have been the social centre of the town during "the season". The house itself is representative of the rapid growth experienced by Robe and district during the 1850's and 1860's as a result of the development of the wool trade in the South-East. It was during these two decades that a considerable amount of building was undertaken in and about Robe, illustrating the social and cultural, as well as the economic, development of the town. The building of Karratta House was therefore a sign of the social development that Robe was undergoing during this period, and the importance that the 'pastoral aristocracy' held in this region.

Sources

Robe Conservation Study, Part I (1979)

Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia, Vol. II (1927)

The Second Eleven Tales of Robe, Kathleen Bermingham (1971)

South-East Sketchbook, Max Lamshed (1970)

Early Adelaide Architecture, 1836 to 1886, E.J.R. Morgan and S.H. Gilbert

| Criterion | Comment | Grading | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | E | VG | A/G | F/P | N/A |
| <u>Environment</u> | | | | | | |
| 11. Continuity | Located close to Lake and to recently developed beach houses. | | | * | | |
| 12. Local Character | Of importance in establishing and maintaining the old character of Robe. | | * | | | |
| 13. Landmark | A conspicuous and familiar building in Robe. | | * | | | |
| <u>Integrity</u> | | | | | | |
| 14. Alterations | Considerably altered. Verandahs built in; original coach house, gates and stone walls around house renewed. | | | | | * |
| 15. Condition | Unknown. Appears sound. | | | * | | |
| <u>Capability for Reuse</u> | | | | | | |
| 16. Compatibility | Present residential use compatible with area zoning. | * | | | | |
| 17. Adaptability | High potential for reuse. | | * | | | |
| 18. Interpretation | Has potential for interpretation | | | * | | |
| 19. Services | Unknown | | | | | * |
| 20. Cost | Unknown | | | | | * |

Mark A Butcher

Mark A. Butcher
Development Architect

Anneli Auwickens
Anneli Auwickens
Register Historian

16/7/81

EVALUATION ANALYSIS: KARATTA HOUSE, ROBE

| Criterion | Comment | Grading | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | E | VG | A/G | F/P | N/A |
| <u>History</u> | | | | | | |
| 1. Context | Associated with "boom period" of Robe. Representative of the economic and social growth of Robe during the 1850's and 1860's. | | * | | | |
| 2. Person/Group | Associated with the first pioneers in this area, the Jones family of Binnum Binnum Station. Also associated with Governor Fergusson who used the house as a summer residence. | | * | | | |
| 3. Event | | | | | | * |
| <u>Architecture</u> | | | | | | |
| 4. Age | Erected about 1867 | | | * | | |
| 5. Style | Early Victorian | | | * | | |
| 6. Architect | G. and E. Hamilton, Adelaide. E. Hamilton was Assistant Colonial Architect 1854-1858 and Colonial Architect 1856-1860. | | * | | | |
| 7. Design | Simple yet stron design | | | * | | |
| 8. Construction | Traditional method. Rendered masonry walls' galvanised iron roof. | | | | * | |
| 9. Interior | Unknown. | | | | | * |
| 10. Representation | Representative of very early large country houses. | | | * | | |

To: The Register Sub-Committee, South Australian Heritage Committee
RE: REGISTER NOMINATION:
KARATTA HOUSE, ROBE

SUMMARY

The District Council of Robe has requested the Heritage Conservation Branch to advise them on the possible heritage significance of Karatta House, Robe. The building is due to be auctioned in August and is therefore under possible threat. This item is therefore put to the Register Sub-Committee for consideration as a possible State Heritage Item.

Historically, Karatta House is significant for its association with the first settlers in the area and with the "boom period" of the 1850's and 1860's. It was also the summer residence of Governor Fergusson during the 1869 -73 period.

Architecturally, the building is significant for being designed by E. Hamilton, the then Assistant Colonial Architect and later Colonial Architect.

Environmentally, the building is of major significance as a key landmark in Robe. It is also significant for contributing to the general character of old Robe.

The Integrity of the building is fair, for while superficial alterations such as building in the verandahs has taken place, the overall structure appears to be in reasonable condition for its age.

Karatta House is not listed on the Register of the National Estate, although it is included on the Recorded List of the National Trust of South Australia. It has been identified by the Heritage Conservation Branch as being one of about twenty buildings in Robe of possible heritage significance.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Karatta House be included on the Register of State Heritage Items, and that it be categorized as A2, A3, H3, and 3.2.



Barry G. Rowney
SENIOR HISTORIC ARCHITECT

MAB:JD
29/6/81

