

guide notes- 1920s homes

To inform homeowners about characteristic features of the interior and exterior detail of original homes in Colonel Light Gardens.

As Colonel Light Gardens is a State Heritage Area, property owners require development approval before undertaking work which would change the exterior appearance of their home. Please contact Mitcham Council for advice.

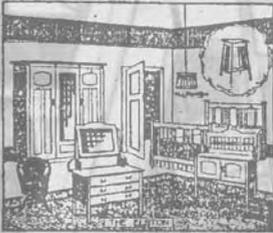
Apart from this requirement, there is no obligation to follow the advice provided in this guide note.

COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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ON VIEW IN OUR HINDLEY STREET SHOWROOMS

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This Modern Oak Bedroom can be had in Furgate or Dark Grey Oak, includes massive wardrobe, 2 ft. 6 in. wide, with beveling mirror, 2 oak painted doors, with hat shelf fitted with hat and coat hooks. Dressing table, 2 ft. 6 in. wide, with beveling swing mirror and three full width drawers. Washstand, 2 ft. 6 in. wide, full size oak bedstead. Wire mattress, bed, tentor, and 2 pillows, and strong mattress mat.

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Including oak table and 4 ft. wide, with 2 drawers and 2 cupboards with steel inside. Full size oak dining table in modern oak, 4 chairs and seat, 2 chairs, 2 chairs and a mirror and a table. A modern oak wardrobe is extra, from £10-0-0.



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Includes a useful heavy dresser with shelves, glass doors with drawers and 2 cupboards, with steel table, heavy kitchen sink and large strong iron chair.

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THIS GUIDE NOTE...

This Guide Note provides advice on exterior and interior features of Colonel Light Gardens houses, as well as sources of further information. It is hoped that these notes will assist homeowners with sympathetic house renovations.

CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY

When restoring a house it is wise to consider the desired result. The following advice is useful to consider before approaching renovations.

“An unfortunate aspect of the interest in old houses is the practice of ‘tarting up’ old buildings in a pseudo-period way, often in an attempt to capitalise on their considerable appeal. A great deal of work which purports to be restoration is really the application of period ‘features’ without any consideration of their relevance to the age or style of particular buildings. The workmanship may be quite satisfactory but the character of the houses is often destroyed in the process.

Original qualities which are not considered smart enough are destroyed or disregarded while features which are thought to add ‘olde world’ charm are planted, seemingly at random, on houses for resale. In planning work on any old house, always take care not to destroy the qualities that attracted you to the building. Atmosphere and character are frail attributes which are all too easily damaged or destroyed.”

Getting The Details Right: Restoring Australian Houses of 1890s-1920s - Ian Evans

HOUSES IN COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS

In order to undertake sympathetic renovation and conservation works, it is important to understand the design features of the architectural period to which the building belongs.

Colonel Light Gardens’ houses were largely built between 1921 and 1927. During the 1920s the bungalow was the popular style; although it predominates in Colonel Light Gardens, the Tudor became fashionable towards the end of the decade and so it is also represented.

This Guide Note will assist homeowners to identify and readily distinguish between original bungalow features and unsympathetic alterations.

BUNGALOW EXTERIORS-GENERAL COMMENTS

Original exterior features of Colonel Light Gardens houses included:-

- Red brick walls, some with bands of stucco finish. Sandstone was often used for the front wall of privately built houses.
- Low-pitch roofs (predominantly gabled) with wide overhanging eaves.
- Front verandah gables finished with roughcast pressed metal sheets, cement stucco or shingle style weatherboard.
- Roofs generally corrugated galvanised iron. A very small number of homes used terracotta roof tiles.
- Verandah roofs supported on substantial stone or brick pillars topped with square finished coping, often with timber supports.
- Painted timber joinery.
- Double hung sash or casement style windows.
- Solid timber front door with part glazing to upper section.

Over the course of time, some homeowners have altered original features in an unsympathetic manner.

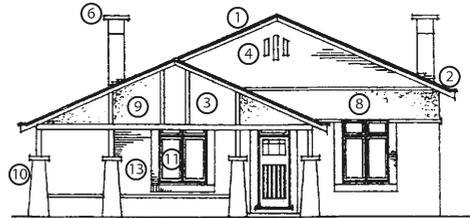
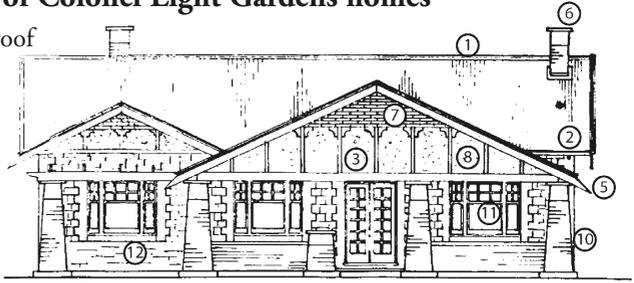
Unsympathetic materials and details include:

- metal tiles or shingles.
- aluminium or colonial windows.
- painting or rendering exterior walls.
- tubular steel or full length precast column verandah posts.
- metal security doors, grilles, window screens and roller security shutters.
- lace trim or fretwork to the verandah.
- finials to roof gables.
- part rendering of brickwork, particularly around windows, doors and quoins.
- painting of false “quoins” around doors and windows.

Property owners require development approval before undertaking work which would change the exterior appearance of their home. Please contact Mitcham Council for advice.

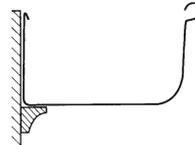
Characteristic features of Colonel Light Gardens homes

- 1 low pitch corrugated iron roof
- 2 wide eaves overhang
- 3 street facing gable
- 4 gable vent
- 5 taper cut bargeboard
- 6 flat top chimney
- 7 shingle cut weatherboard
- 8 roughcast cement stucco
- 9 “roughcast” metal panel
- 10 substantial verandah pillar
- 11 timber windows
- 12 unpainted sandstone facade
- 13 unpainted red brick facade



ROOFS AND GUTTERING

All of the Thousand Homes, and most of the privately built homes had corrugated galvanised iron roofs with “D” profile guttering (right).



WALLS

RENDER

Render applied to the original red brick can be removed, but not easily. You are encouraged to discuss any plans with the City of Mitcham Heritage Adviser.

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PAINT REMOVAL

Care should be exercised when removing paint from brick or stone. Sand blasting is very destructive and will damage the surface of the wall. High-pressure water may also damage the surface of the brick or stone as well as the mortar joints. A methyl chloride based chemical product in conjunction with a low pressure water spray is preferable, with very good results being achieved. This process, when professionally undertaken, minimises damage to stone, brick and mortar joints.



Before and After.
All the brickwork painted white (above). After a careful chemical paint strip, and good use of paint colour on the trim, the house now is very well presented (left).

STONE AND BRICK REPAIR

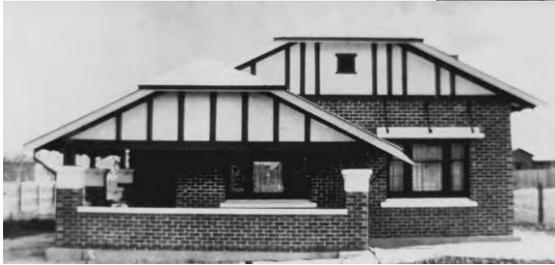
Where the damp course fails, it often leads to damage to the mortar joints and the bricks or stone. This damage can be successfully repaired. For advice contact the City of Mitcham Heritage Adviser. The mortar mix used should be weaker than the brick or stone. Take care to match the colour of replacement mortar to the original. Grey cement was not generally used.

PAINTING

Masonry surfaces were generally unpainted, timber and stucco were painted. Prepared paints were available but the choice of colour was influenced by factors unrelated to fashion: paint was considerably more expensive than it is today; the technology used to produce the dark chemically pigmented paints was not advanced and they tended not to last long in the Australian climate. Dark brown and stone colours tended to last longer, and were often used. Deep reds and mid-greens were also popular.

As a general rule, light stone colours in a matt finish were applied to sections with large surface areas (roughcast stucco). Contrasting strong dark gloss paint was used on the timber. The effect was simple when compared with earlier architectural periods. Exterior woodwork was not clear finished.

Examples of paint colour schemes can be found in books by Peter Cuffley and Ian Evans (see Further Reading).



Discount on paints are available from Solver Paints. Contact the City of Mitcham Heritage Adviser to be issued with a discount card.

WINDOWS

Timber windows were either double hung sash or casement style. In privately built houses, the top sash of the double hung window was generally divided into six or more panes by timber glazing bars or lead comes.

Where the original timber window has been removed and replaced by an aluminium window it is possible to restore the original appearance by reinstating the window in the original style.

DECORATIVE GLASS

Privately built homes often had textured glass to the upper sash with either timber or lead glazing bars (see photos right). Thousand Homes houses had textured glass to the sidelight next to the front door, and to the window/vent above the front door. Avoid installing leaded windows where there is no evidence of them as an original feature.



DOORS

The front door was generally solid to three-quarter height, with a number of small glass panes divided by glazing bars in the upper section.

A small number of the privately built houses had glass with glazing bars for the full length of the door, often set as a pair of doors. Thousand Homes houses had textured glass or a dimpled glass panel in the upper section of the front door.



SCREEN DOORS

The early timber screen doors were simple in design, complementing the design of the front door.

SECURITY DOORS

Where a security door is required, a satisfactory result may be achieved with a custom-built product designed to complement the front door. The screen door should be powder-coated to match the colour of the front door. Stainless steel mesh is now available, minimising the need for closed or aluminium grilles.

SUN PROTECTION

There were a number of techniques to protect the house from the summer sun.

Verandahs featured in the design. Some of the privately built homes were built with a pillar and small pergola on which wisteria was grown to shade the front room and allow winter sun and light. Close fitting roller metal security shutters should be avoided.

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OUTDOOR BLINDS

Holland blinds were used on the verandah to shade the walls from the morning or afternoon sun. Plain and traditional striped canvas blinds were used; colours complemented exterior paint colours.



SUN HOODS

Sun hoods were used to shade the front and side windows not protected by the verandah. They were simple in design, without any decorative fretwork.



VERANDAH

Front verandahs were an important element of the house design. They were supported by solid brick, sometimes stone or stucco faced pillars or timber posts and featured gables with timber battens and roughcast cement stucco or pressed metal infill. The pressed metal panels are still produced for use in repairs or extensions. Avoid using “stucco” fibre sheet with the characteristic swirl finish.

VERANDAH FLOORS

The verandah floor was generally smooth-finished coloured cement topping. Topping colours included red, grey and green. The topping was polished with the appropriately coloured cement polish which is still widely available.

Avoid painting the cement as the paint often fails to achieve a good bond and will peel.

FRONT VERANDAH LIGHTS

Either wall mounted or ceiling mounted if the verandah had a ceiling. Where sensor lights are required, a separate sensor should be installed in an unobtrusive location.



DETAILING

HOUSE NAME PLATES

Many houses had name plates attached to the front gable or mounted near the front door. Names were often created from the original owners' names and/or family birthplaces. Some of the original house names are still to be seen.



FINIALS AND IRON LACE WORK

Finials and iron lace work were not associated with the bungalow style of architecture.

SERVICES

The inconspicuous siting of new services such as TV antennae, satellite dishes, air conditioners etc is important to preserve the period appearance to the street. Depending on the proposed location, the installation of such services may require development approval. Contact Mitcham Council for advice.



BUNGALOW INTERIORS-GENERAL COMMENTS

Colonel Light Gardens' houses were either constructed privately or under the Labor Government's Thousand Homes Scheme (1924). In either case, they were compact in plan and usually comprised at least two bedrooms and a living/dining room. All of the utility rooms (kitchen, bathroom, w.c., laundry) were under the main roof. The houses were provided with a full range of services:- water and flush toilet, electricity, gas, telephone. There were fireplaces in the living/dining rooms. The interiors of Colonel Light Gardens' houses were simply furnished and finished; exposed dark-stained timber was the main decorative feature.

Original interior features of Colonel Light Gardens houses included:-

- plastered walls with light paint colours.
- dark-stained timberwork.
- exposed dark-stained floorboards, with carpet squares and runners.
- plaster ceilings.

Thousand Home rooms.

Note the original dark-stained timberwork, and the timber batten covers.



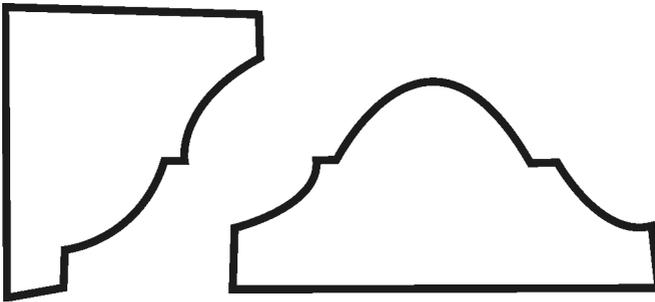
WALLS AND CEILINGS

FEATURES

- Walls were painted in white or pastel colours, with ceilings a lighter shade than the walls. The effect was to highlight the dark stained timberwork.
- Plaster sheets were used for the ceilings with (1) simple plaster cover battens, cornices and bosses or (2) dark stained timber cover battens and cornices.
- Battens covered the plaster sheet joints. Bosses were used to finish the end of the plaster cover batten or where the batten covers met.
- Ornate plaster ceiling panels were infrequently installed in privately built homes in the north of Colonel Light Gardens. They were not used at all in the Thousand Homes.

AVOID

- Using dark paint colours.
- Using wallpaper and paper friezes deeper than 12 cm.
- Installing decorative plasterwork such as ceiling roses, deep cornices and fancy batten covers where they were not originally featured.



For private-built homes left, plaster cornice and plaster cover batten (right)

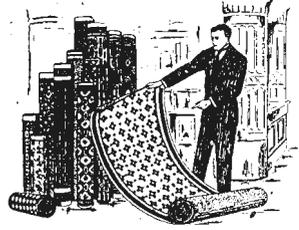
A full range of plaster cornices and batten covers can still be obtained from Adelaide plaster manufacturers.

Dark-stained timber battern covers and cornices were used for the Thousand Homes houses (see photo on page 10)

JOINERY AND FLOORS

FEATURES

- Red Pine timber, finished with a dark stain and shellac.
- Simple splays to the door and window architraves.
- Skirting boards of simple design.
- Picture rails in living and dining rooms.
- Polished wood floors, with carpet rugs and runners.
- Originally the area between the edge of the carpet and the skirting board was finished with a dark or black stain shellac finish.
- Lino in kitchens and often in bedrooms.



Most painted timber can be stripped successfully and returned to a sympathetic finish or the original finish replicated.

AVOID

- Painting stained woodwork.
- Installing wood panelling.
- Using gloss finishes on stained timber.
- Using high gloss finish to polished floors.

Use of timber joinery in the “Thousand Homes” showing timber picture rails, skirting boards, architraves and batten covers.



FURNITURE AND FITTINGS

FEATURES

- Mission or Craftsman inspired furniture, constructed using Tasmanian oak with a shellac finish, again in keeping with the simple and earthy approach to the home.
- Suspended lights, with fittings using 1, 3 or 5 globes in the living and dining rooms, a bowl suspended on chains, or a single globe counterbalanced light fitting.
- Plain or flower patterned curtains, with or without pelmets in main living rooms, on rods in other rooms.

AVOID

- Using highly ornate fittings and chandeliers, particularly in the Thousand Homes.
- Installing ceiling roses. Roses were used to ventilate fumes from gas lights. Gas lighting was not used in Colonel Light Gardens.

Each month the *Australian Home Beautiful* magazine presented readers with a woodwork project for the “small house carpenter” with fully dimensioned plans. These articles are particularly useful for ideas for 1920s furniture styles.



Interior of a privately built Colonel Light Gardens' home featured in the *Australian Homes and Gardens*, July 1929.

BATHROOMS

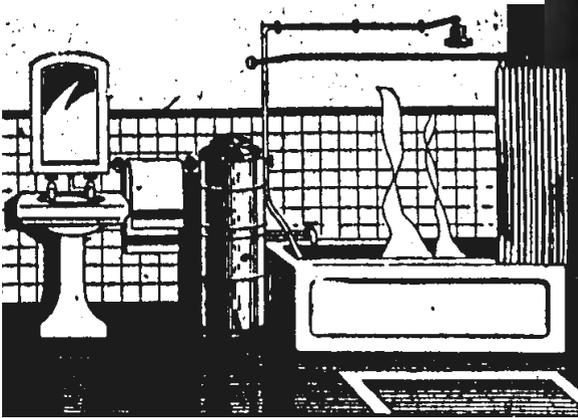
FEATURES

- Generally tiled to 1.8m with hard plastered walls.
- Small dado.
- Coloured concrete floor.
- Free-standing pedestal handbasin.
- Small mirrored shaving cabinet.
- Gloss painted woodwork to protect against moisture damage.

An attractive modern sympathetic bathroom may include wall and floor tiles, stained timber woodwork, pedestal handbasins etc.

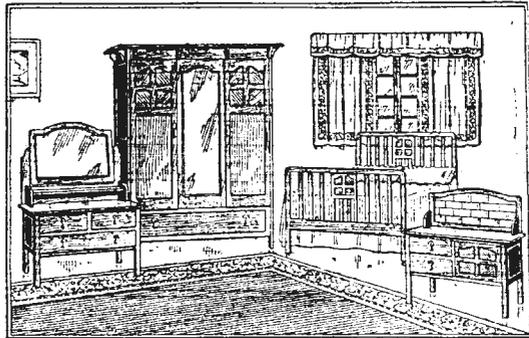


Thousand Home bathroom



Bathroom advertisement
Australian Home Beautiful, 1926.

Main bedroom suite advertisement
The Advertiser, 1926

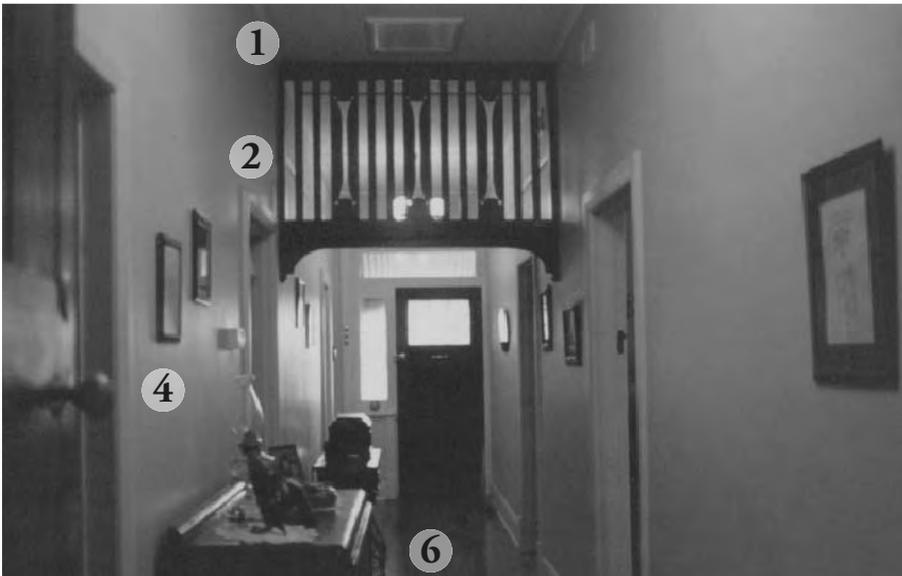




SYMPATHETICALLY RENOVATED INTERIORS

1 plaster batten covers and simple cornices,
2 featured dark stained timber work,
3 multi-lamp light fitting,
4 lighter paint colours to emphasise dark
stained timber,

5 simple pelmets and curtains,
6 clear satin finish to floors with traditional
carpet squares or runner.



16 guide notes-1920s homes

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Advertisement from *The Advertiser*, 1924

FURTHER READING

Australian Home Beautiful 1924-1929

available from the State Library of SA.

Christine Garnaut, Colonel Light Gardens: Model

Garden Suburb. Crossing Press, Sydney, 1999.*

City of Mitcham Development Directions 22,

Colonel Light Gardens State Heritage Area,
available from the City of Mitcham.

**Graeme Butler, The Californian Bungalow in
Australia,** Lothian Books 1992*

**Peter Cuffley, Australian Houses of the 20s and
30s.,** Five Mile Press. 1989*

Ian Evans, Caring For Old Houses, The Flannel
Flower Press, Mullumbimby, 1998.*

**Ian Evans, The Complete Australian Old
House Catalogue,** The Flannel Flower Press,
Mullumbimby, 2000.*

Ian Evans Web page <http://www.oldhouses.com.au/>

Ian Stapleton, How to Restore the Old Aussie House, The Flannel Flower Press, Yeronga, 1993.*

* available for borrowing from the Mitcham Library.

Further information is also available from the
Colonel Light Gardens Historical Society Inc. ph 8277 2595

Photographs of Colonel Light Gardens are held in the City of Mitcham Heritage Research
Centre, Room 5, 242 Belair Rd, Lower Mitcham.

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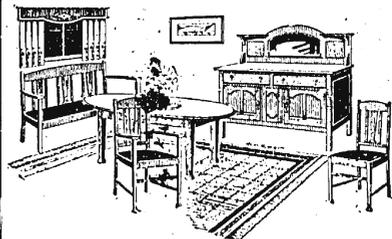


A HANDSOME BEDROOM
Useful design, built in seasoned Oak, comprising massive Wardrobe 5 feet wide with bevelled centre mirror, deep drawer at base. Dressing Chest 3 ft. 6 ins. wide. Wash-stand 3 ft. 6 ins. wide with marble top and tile back. Full-size Bedstead with our famous 4 ply Mattress Bed and 2 Pillows.



MODEL KITCHEN
Containing 3 ft. 6 in. Sliding Glass Door Dresser, fitted with wire gauze ends. Strong White Pine Table 4 ft. 6 ins. by 2 ft. 6 ins., and two sturdy Chairs to match.

-AND A FINE DINING ROOM



The Dining Room includes handsome Sideboard 5 feet wide with shaped bevelled mirror, drawers, &c. Oval Table. Springs-seated Settee. 5 Dining Chairs and 1 Carver Chair, all built to match. - The Three Complete Rooms, as shown above, for the low price of £49/10/-

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