BALCONIES in

NORTH FITZROY

History IV Essay
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1968
STATEMENT of AIM

A visual inspection of Melbourne's inner suburbs shows nearly all two-storied houses to have balconies. That the once middle class suburb of North Fitzroy abounds in balconied houses interested this writer, even more so when a quick check of possible bibliographies revealed very little information about this suburb.

This essay attempts to examine North Fitzroy, by the use of selected examples, as an area containing common usage of the balcony. Most of the evidence was gained by observation of the buildings themselves, and to corroborate this a number of photographs have been included. The examples cited were selected to give a typical cross-section of type, construction and siting.
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INTRODUCTION
THE SUBURB

The suburb is that known as North Fitzroy, bounded by Queens Pde., the Railway and St. Georges Rd (see map)

Much of the area around the junction of the Railway and St. George's Rd. is single storeyed development; eg. Eastman St. which has no two-storeyed dwellings, and Kneen St, which has only one. Further towards Queens Pde, two-storeyed houses begin to predominate. As will be seen from the map, most of the examples examined lie South of Falconer St. - this, it is felt, gives an accurate picture of the development of double-storeyed houses - there are some North of Falconer St., but they are numerically insignificant.

Because it was close to the city, the suburbs just North of Victoria St. became an area of merchants and professional men during the 40's and 50's. After the discovery of gold, what are now the Southern parts of Fitzroy and Carlton became highly fashionable quarters. It was not until the mid 70's, however, that North Fitzroy began to develop.*1 Development was slow at first, and although the streets were laid out in the 70's, not until 1888 were enough sections subdivided into lots, and enough lots taken up, for street numbers to be given. Most of the building took place 1887-1892. This was, of course, the time of the Land and Railways Boom - the line beyond Clifton Hill was put through in 1891; the cable tram to Clifton Hill and one to North Fitzroy (Brunswick St) had been laid in 1887.

*1 Fitzroy was declared a City in 1878.
THE INHABITANTS

The Directories of the time show a "middle-class" range of occupations living in the district- 1888,

21 Alfred Cres. Wm. Garritty, contractor.
68 Falconer St. Fred Bustard, grocer.
76 Falconer St. W.S.Fergie, solicitor.
230 McKean,St.Miss Westgarth's School for Young Ladies.
216 McKean St. John Salery, mason.
3 Rushall St. Henry Bennet, carpenter.

and so on.

The 1903 "Cyclopaedia of Victoria"* describes the area around Brunswick St. and Elizabeth Gardens as a "fashionable quarter"- indeed, Alfred Crescent, which overlooks Elizabeth Gardens, contains only five single storey houses, and many of the blocks are 200' deep. This area, and that around the Eastern end of McKean St, seem to have been rather more expensive than that stretching between.

This writer's research into the "class" of people living in the district has not been extensive, and this could well provide the basis for future research essays.

THE HOUSES

Among the two storeyed houses, only six do not have balconies. Two of these are Queen Anne style houses of comparatively recent date (the 1920's). A number of single storeyed houses have two

*1 "Cyclopaedia of Victoria" ed, James Smith. Melb. 1903. vols 1,2.
storeyed additions at the back, but none of these are always away from the street) have balconies.

The four houses which were contemporaries of those dwellings discussed later are-
115 Rowe St, built 1885, facing South. (see ILLUSTRATION 32.) With a small garden in front. A verandah at first floor level, but no balcony.
35 Rowe St, built 1882, facing South (see ILLUSTR. 33). A larger house which until recently had a verandah across the front, but not a balcony.
5 Falconer St, built 1887, facing South (see ILLUSTR.34). Built right on the street line.
126 Michael St, built 1887, facing West and North (situated on a corner). Built right on the street line, but with the lower storey recessed three feet. (see ILLUSTR. 28).

Since the dates of these buildings are not earlier than those of the balconied houses, there is no evidence presented for a case that the balcony developed from the plain facade—this may well have been the case but further research would be intailed. If this development did take place, it would be safe to say that by the 80's, the use of the balcony had grown to be practically universal.

THE BALCONIES

Three materials have been used—timber, (eg ILLUSTR. 26), cast iron (eg ILLUSTR 3), and rendered brick (eg ILLUSTR 35)—sometimes exclusively, sometimes in combination (eg ILLUSTR 15)
Detailed information about cast iron, its manufacture, and the registration of designs, is found in "Ornamental Cast Iron in Melbourne", "Sydney Lace" both by E. Graeme Robertson (both Georgian House, Melb. 1967 and 1962 respectively), and in the History IV essay of the same name by Arbi, O'Neill, Rochardi, Slynko, Wardle and Warnesuria.

Brick and Render is also discussed by Robertson, in "Ornamental Cast Iron etc", at some length. These materials have been sufficiently discussed; therefore, to give no more than passing comment to them. This essay is more concerned with the balcony as an integral element.

After an examination of individual cases, the form of the balcony will be discussed under the general title of "Function and Facade".

TYPES OF BALCONIES FOUND IN NORTH FITZROY.

Various methods of categorizing these balconies may be employed— their construction (timber, iron or brick), their date, their size, and so on. A more meaningful classification is one which takes account of both the type of house and the type of balcony. Accordingly, four distinct categories emerge—

- Terrace and pairs of houses.
- Single house with the balcony and verandah forming a facade.
- Single house with balcony forming one element in the overall design (generally larger houses).
- Single house with small or unusual balcony.

Within these categories occur various types of construction
materials, size, and differing dates.
THE EXAMPLES
 Terraria and Pairs of Houses

Despite the popular notion of the "terrace house", relatively few two-storied houses (in this suburb at least) actually form part of a terrace. For the purposes of this essay, the term "Terrace" shall be applied to a group of houses which consists of two or more distinct dwellings, sharing a party wall, which were built as one uniform design. A distinction is drawn between the Terrace and the "paired house", the latter being a separate, distinct building, having the general appearance of one house but being in fact two separate dwellings. Such a distinction arises solely for the purpose of discussing the balconies, not from any other architectural or historical criteria.*

In the area considered, there are 15 terraces and 3 paired houses. There are no terraces or paired houses without balconies.

The party walls of a terrace are carried forward to flank the balconies and verandahs of the individual houses. The balconies are thus "one-sided", looking out onto the street. Before discussing general characteristics, several examples, arranged in chronological order, shall be examined to see if any patterns or evolving themes occur.

1883...70-76 McKean St. Facing North, a terrace of four, each house being one room wide upstairs and one room plus a passage downstairs (the frontage is only 19'-0"). The balcony is 5'-0" wide, and is accessible from the front room via two full height windows. The party walls flanking the balconies are without "blind" windows or openings.

*1 Bylaws required the party walls of a terrace to project beyond the front of the house, forming what I have termed "flanking walls". Why the above-discriminated "Paired houses", while divided by a party wall inside, were allowed to avoid this regulation could not be explained by this writer's research.
of any kind. The cast iron balusters are of the design registered* as Victoria No. 89 on 7-5-73 by Richard Godfrey, and as NSW No. 92 on 16-6-81 by Fletcher Bennet and Frew. A visual inspection of Melbourne's inner suburbs show this design to be a very popular one. There is no cast iron frieze on the upper storey (only a fringe) and the upper corner brackets are smaller than those on the lower storey (SEE ILLUST. 1).

This particular end of McKean St., together with the lower ends of Rowe and Falconer Streets, developed earlier than the rest of Nth. Fitzroy, and the surrounding houses are mostly single storeyed, many of them in terraces.

886/7, 228-30 McKean St. Facing North, a terrace of two houses each of frontage 20'-0". The balcony is 5'-0" wide, and is again reached by two full height windows. The flanking walls have no "blind windows" or openings of any kind. The balusters, frieze, and brackets are of a fairly common design (several other examples being in North Fitzroy) although no record exists of their registration date. A central column helps support the balcony and its roof. Notice the lower frieze is upside down (or is the top one upside down?) (SEE ILLUST. 2).

887, 59-63 Delbridge St. Facing East, a terrace of three houses, the end one being on the corner of Delbridge and Rowe Sts. Again two full height windows open from the one front room onto the balconies. (Frontage 20'-0"). The flanking walls have "blind windows" except for the corner house, which takes advantage of its free wall by having an aperture (although the present residents have

boarded this up). The cast iron baluster is of the popular design Vic. No. 89 (see above, 70-76 McKean St.). A central cast iron column is used to help support the balcony and roof.

1887-8. 72-74 Falconer St. A two-house terrace facing North with a 19'-0" frontage, there is only one upstairs room, with two full height windows opening onto the balcony. The flanking walls have "blind windows". The cast iron balusters have the design registered as Vic. No. 266 on 28-7-80 by A. McLean, and as NSW No. 90 on 16-8-81 by Fletcher Bennet and Frew. Although the frontages of these houses are comparable to nos. 228-30 McKean and nos. 59-63 Delbridge Streets, no supporting columns are used.

1888...53-9 Alfred Cres., facing North-West, 18'-5" frontage. The upstairs room has the standard two full height windows opening onto the balcony. The flanking walls have "blind" windows. A central column is used. The design of the balusters is a fairly common one in Melbourne (SEE ILLUSTR. 3), although no record can be found of its registration number. It is the same as that on 21-7 Drummond St. Carlton dated 1868, so it could be an early design, although the earliest recorded registration is Vic. No. 4, 3-4-1870. Inspection indicates that this is a fairly sophisticated design, and in any case the cast iron at 21-7 Drummond St. may well have been added in 1897 *1. The pattern of the frieze is not nearly so sophisticated, although it is often paired with both this and similar baluster designs *2.

1889...45-7 Alfred Cres. Facing West, a terrace of two large houses (frontage 25'-0"). Three full height windows open

*2. eg at 21-7 Drummond, and the similar interlocking circles of 228-30 McKean St.
onto the balcony, which is 6'-0" wide. The party wall has blind windows, but the end walls have actual apertures (SEE ILLUSTR. 4). The cast iron balusters are registered as Vic. No. 180, on 4-8-77, by Angus McLean. A central column is used.

1890...218-220 McKean St. Two houses facing North. Due to the curving street, one is set back several feet from the other, giving an opportunity for an aperture in the flanking wall of number 218 (SEE ILLUSTR. 5). This is not taken advantage of, and all flanking walls have blind windows. The frontage of each is 17'-0". Both upstairs windows are full height. There is no central column.

1892...19-21 Rushall St. Two houses, facing East, each with a frontage of 18'-0". The flanking walls have blind windows. Two full height windows open onto the balcony. There is a column, not central but off-set to the frame the front door. The cast iron is generally more ornate and complicated than the other examples quoted.

Five of these eight houses are basically the same (regarding there balconies). Only the last three: vary - nos. 45-7 Alfred Cres., built before the adjoining houses, has apertures in the outside flanking walls, although they define the site boundaries. These houses are also wider (25'-0") than the common 17 to 19 ft. - nos 218-20 McKean

St. follows the curve of the street and has one house set back from the other.

- no. 21 Rushall

Cres. has its column off-centre to define the main entrance.

The use of such a column as a structural device is apparently not necessary, as three of the eight terraces manage to support their balconies without one. A column, of course, gives more decorative "style" to the facade, both by its own presence and by the attached brackets.
It is interesting that all the houses have blind windows or apertures except the earliest two, which have plain walls. The dates are too close, however, and the examples too few, to claim the evolution of the blind window as an element during this period.

PAIRED HOUSES

1880... 6-8 Delbridge St. Facing West; two dwellings in the one building. Since the building is "free", ie not built to the edge of its site, there are no flanking walls and the balcony is free at the ends (see ILLUSTR.6). The party wall (present inside the house) does not extend to divide the balcony in two. This is done by a timber partition. On each side of this partition are two windows - one full height, one with its cill about two feet above the balcony. The overall effect is light and delicate; due to the absence of protuding party and flanking walls, the light spills across the balcony from the sides.

1883... 2-4 Delbridge St. Basically similar to nos. 6-8. Of interest is the entrance to no.2 - not on the facade, but on the side wall, reached by the pathway along the edge of the site.

1886... 19-21 Alfred Cres. Facing West; a free standing building not reaching the edges of its site. Pathways are at each side, and these in fact lead to the front door of each dwelling. An extra column in the centre of each frontage, the symmetrical design of the chimneys, windows and bay windows gives a classical, balanced facade, made airy and light by the sunlight spilling across through the open sides of the balcony (SEE ILLUSTR. 7).

1893... 39-41 Rushall Cres. Two houses, facing East; a free standing building with pathways up each side of the site. One of the relatively few examples of a brick-and-render balcony, giving a heavier looking facade. (SEE ILLUSTR. 35).
The ends of the balcony were originally arched openings (to match the facade arches) although the North side has now been bricked up to form a blind window.

One obvious point about the balconies on both terraces at paired houses is that not one of the examples is reached by a door. This may be because in a terrace house, where the rooms can only gain light from the front and rear of the building, a window (especially full height) is more useful than a door. And in an age of applied ornament and symmetry, it would have seemed out of balance to have had one window and one door. This may be necessary on the ground floor, of course, except in the case of a paired house where the front doors may be on the side walls (eg 19-21 Alfred Cres. ILLUSTR.?). Another possibility is that access to the balconies was not important as they were there as applied facades, not as usable spaces. The fact that the upstairs room in a terrace house was usually a bedroom meant that the balcony was not a sort of "patio" or "deck" providing outdoor living space. But this question of the use of the balcony, with its implications of facade and function, will be discussed at a later stage.
SINGLE HOUSES WITH BALCONY FORMING FACADE

The term "Single House" defines a house built as one-of-a-kind, containing one dwelling, its width being either the whole site frontage or smaller; it may have one or both of its side walls abutting its neighbours. By "forming a facade" is meant the projection of the side walls to flank the balcony, which extends right across the front of the building. There is not one example in North Fitzroy of a balcony, extending across the whole front (and not returning down the sides) which is not flanked by the side walls.

There are many examples of this kind of house - nearly all the two storeyed houses in this area fit this category. The following are selected examples, arranged in chronological order.

1881...18 Falconer St. Facing North. Against its boundary on one side, a pathway up the other. Neither side wall abuts the neighbouring houses. One of the flanking walls has a blind window, the other (the one on the path side) having an aperture. Although the width of the house is only 18'-0", there is a central column. The two upstairs windows have sills two feet above the balcony. There are cast iron friezes, brackets, balusters and columns.

1883...61 Alfred Cres. Facing Nth-West and taking up the whole width of the site, (frontage 18'-0"). The flanking walls have blind windows. The two bedroom windows have cills one foot above the balcony. The central column plays no part in the structural system as it stops at the frieze and so cannot support the balcony. (SEE ILLUSTR.8). The design of the cast iron is almost "primitive" - the balusters are still single strips, not yet developed from single rails, and the brackets and frieze are of design Vic. No. 5 and 6 (res-

*1 see Arbi, O'Neill etc, ibid,
-pectively) applied for by Wm. Hutchison on 11-4-70.

1883...69 Alfred Cres. Facing Nth-West and taking up almost the whole site (one wall abuts its neighbour, the other is short of the site boundary by 18"). Of the same date as no. 61, this house is as ornate as the other is simple – two columns (giving the effect of three arches) and a flowery pattern of cast iron (SEE ILLUSTR.9). The downstairs verandah also has a balustrade. The upstairs windows have cills two feet above the balcony. The flanking walls have no apertures or blind windows. The balcony is unusually deep (eight feet) and the frontage is 17'-0".

1885...71 Alfred Cres. Facing Nth-West, one wall on the boundary, the other set in three feet to allow a pathway up the side. This also allows a window in the corresponding flanking wall – this window being set in a blind window (SS ILLUSTR 10). The other wall, abutting the house next door, has only a blind window. There is a central column, and the cast iron baluster is the ubiquitous Vic. No. 89:1. The roof to the balcony, the frieze and the brackets have been removed by the present residents.

1887...63 Rushall Cres. Facing East. Flush to the site boundary both sides. Flanking walls are plain, no openings or blind windows. Central column; two full height windows open onto balcony; frontage 19'-6". Cast iron baluster is of curved section. Top frieze and bracket (of considerable sophistication, SEE ILLUSTR 11) is NSW No. 207, 12-6-85, by Swinerton and Frew.

1887...65 Rushall Cres. Facing east and taking up the whole width of the site. Plain flanking walls. Despite frontage of 23'-0", there is a column only on the lower storey – and that is off-centre to frame the doorway (SEE ILLUSTR 12).

*1 As on 70-76 McKean St, 59-63 Delbridge St, see above.
Note that the lower frieze is of a different design to the upper one - this is a quite common occurrence.

1889... 22 Falconer St. Facing North with one wall on the boundary (abutting no. 20) and a pathway up the other side. The flanking walls have blind windows except for the upper free side, which has a small aperture with a pointed arch (SEE ILLUSTR 13). There are three upper storey windows, all full height. There is a central column. The baluster design is Vic. No. 385, 14-6-86, by Chochrane and Scott. The frieze and bracket design is registered as Vic. No. 406, 18-1-87 by Chochrane and Scott - the lower frieze consists of two strips, divided by a timber frame (SS ILLUSTR 14), while the upper frieze has only strip.

1889... 44 Delbridge St. Facing West, one of a series of houses which take up the frontage of their sites, ie abut wall to wall with each other, but were built independently of each other (SEE ILLUSTR 15). This house has balustrade and lower arcing of brick and render, but upper columns, brackets and frieze of cast iron. There are three full height windows opening onto the balcony, the centre one being of double width. The frontage is 22'-0".

1890... 224 McKean St. Facing North. Due to the curve in McKean St., this house is set back from the line of no. 220 (SEE ILLUSTR. 16). Occupying three lots (nos 222, 224, 226), the house has a frontage of 23'-0", giving a garden and secondary buildings to one side. This also allows a window in the free flanking wall. There is a central column to the facade.

1891... 41 Alfred Cres. Facing West. Occupying a double block, the house (frontage 22'-0") abuts no. 43 to one side and has a 22'-0" wide garden on the other. This allows the flanking wall to have large apertures (SEE ILLUSTR 17). The facade has a central column.
1892...105 Alfred Cres. Facing Nth-West, and wall to wall with a single storeyed house to one side, a pathway up the other. The flanking wall on the free (pathway) side has a small window. The other flanking wall has a blind window. Of ornate general appearance, the house has balusters of the same design as 69 Alfred Cres, 1883 (see illust. 9). Although the house width is only 19'-0", there are three full height windows, and a central column.

1902...25 Alfred Cres. Facing West. Again, one wall on the boundary, the other set in to allow a pathway up the site. In this case, not only the "free" flanking wall, but both of them have windows (SEE ILLUSTR 18) - the SDA church next door (no27) had already been built (1897), with its setback from the street. The balcony and columns are brick and render, although the corner brackets are cast iron - Vic. No. 5 by Wm. Hutchison, 11-4-70. There is a door opening onto the balcony!

1907...20 Falconer St. Facing North. Apart from its unusually late date, this house is of interest because of its very sophisticated corner brackets (SEE ILLUSTR 19). The flanking walls have blind windows even though one wall is freed by a pathway up the side of the site. Three full height windows open onto the balcony. There is a centre column. Most of the cast iron has now been replaced by wrought iron.

The predominant pattern found in these houses concerns the flanking wall. Of the 13 examples, 8 have either a pathway along one boundary of the site, or occupy a double block with a garden to one side. Yet not one house has dispensed with the flanking wall and opened up the balcony end. In fact, one (No. 20 Falconer) does not even have an aperture or window. And only one house (41 Alfred) has substantial openings. Two other themes corresponding to those which emerged from Terrace and Paired Houses should be mentioned - the innaccessibility of the balco-

*1 Compare illust17 (41 Alfred) with illust 13 (22 Falconer)
-onies, and the effect of the "Ornamental Facade".

Only one of these "single houses", no. 25 Alfred Cres., has a door opening onto the balcony. Every other house, with every terrace and paired house discussed above, has the main bedroom looking at the balcony thru two or three windows. As mentioned above (under "Terrace Houses"), this may well be due to the use of the balcony as an ornamental facade. This will be discussed further at a later stage in the essay.
SINGLE HOUSES WITH THE BALCONY FORMING ONE ELEMENT IN
OVERALL DESIGN
All such examples in North Fitzroy have been

1885...223 McKean St, facing South. A much larger
ILLUST 20) than those previously considered, with
balcony wrapping around two sides. Extensive gro
once included stables and outhouses. This house was on-
inally the home of Cr. Albert Lee Tucker, Mayor of Fitzroy
1879, and Member of the Legislative Assembly 1879–90.
Three bedrooms, each with a full height window, look onto
the balcony, and a door gives access from an inside lobby
near the head of the main staircase. The unusually wide
balcony (7'-0") was at least accessible, and was provided
with gas lamps (SEE ILLUST 21).

1890...125 Rowe St., facing South, and taking up the whole site.
The balcony actually wraps around two sides of the house,
with no.123 (single storeyed) built up alongside (SEE ILLUST
22). The interesting point is that no.123 was built first —
before 1886. The balcony has a door opening onto it.

1891...75 Alfred Cres, facing North-West. A large house, with
the balcony wrapping around three sides (SEE ILLUST 23).
A number of bedrooms have windows onto the balcony, and there
are two doors, each giving access from an inside passageway.
Originally the home of John McMahon, J.P.

1892...67 Alfred Cres, facing West. A fairly large house, on a
corner block, and originally the home of James Jamieson MA.
The balcony fills the L-shaped facade, and has one end open
(SEE ILLUST 24). Two windows look over the balcony, and a
door gives access to it from an inside lobby. A column
defines the main entrance.

1902...238 McKean St, facing North. On a double block, this
large house takes up most of the frontage, leaving a path
up one boundary. At the other boundary the house abuts its neighbour (see ILLUSTRATION 25). Of altogether more picturesque design, this house raises a "tower" which partially encloses the end of the balcony. The balcony itself—columns, beams, balustrading and frieze—is of timber (see ILLUSTR. 27). Two doors, each from a large bedroom, open onto a large balcony.
SINGLE HOUSES WITH SMALL OR UNUSUAL BALCONIES
Every such example has been included.

1885...124 Michael St, facing West. A narrow house (frontage 14'-0"") with a little balcony sitting on top of a bay window (SEE ILLUSTR 28). The baluster, of curved section, is Vic. No. 7, 11-4-70, by Wm. Hutchison. A door gives access from the bedroom. House abuts those to each side.

1892...43 Alfred Cres, facing West. An incredible, large, Art Nouveau house (SEE ILLUSTR 29). A balcony across most of the facade, with a small cantilevered portion (SEE ILLUSTR 30). Although most of the fretwork and joinery is in timber, the balcony has cast iron balusters. A door gives access from a lobby in the tower. While one wall of the house abuts no. 41 a pathway runs up the other boundary. This enables the flanking wall to the balcony to have a (glass) window, both upstairs and down.

1910...65 Alfred Cres, facing West. A fairly large Queen Anne style house with a strange, unroofed balcony outside an attic (SEE ILLUSTR 31).

The last two categories constitute the "individualist" balconies, and it is interesting to observe that all but one (124 Michael St.) are larger houses (larger, that is, than the surrounding dwellings) - 43 Alfred Cres., although of one room width, extends back for half of its 200 ft long site;

- and two (223 McKeen and 75 Alfred) could be termed mansions. Only one of these houses - 43 Alfred submits to the "flanking wall syndrome", and it has a large window in this wall.

Every one of these houses has a door giving access to the balcony.

The major questions arising from this examination concern the use of the balcony - was it actually a usable space, or was it more of an applied ornament?
SOME CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE SMALL HOUSE

The terrace and most of the single houses same as regards their balconies - houses with (generally 17 - 20 ft), one room wide at balco taking up all or most of their site. The side walt ght forward to flank and support the balcony, which st across the whole front. The balcony, whether cast iron or brick and cement render, takes on a decorative effect, often heightened by structurally unnecessary columns. There is little flexibility in the overall design or in the use of the flanking walls. And almost every balcony is inaccessable except by climbing thru the bedroom windows.

The only houses to dispense with the flanking walls (among these small frontaged dwellings) are the three examples*1 which have been termed "Paired Houses" (see illust. 6, 7).

The dominant pattern which emerges is one of similarity and inflexibility. There is no obvious evolution towards a more complicated design in either the baluster or in the whole balcony. It would be tempting to claim a movement from the simplicity of 61 Alfred Cres, 1883 (see illust 8) to the more vulgar complexity of 25 Alfred, 1902 (see illust 18), except for the contradicting evidence of a progression from the ornate 69 Alfred, 1883 (see illust 9) to the apparently simple and balanced 19-21 Alfred, 1886 (see illust 7).

Within the twenty-odd years considered there is a basic sameness about the houses with balconies, and what variation there is (apart from being generally unimaginative)*2 appears to be independent of any evolving style.

*1 2-4 Delbridge, 6-8 Delbridge, 19-21 Alfred.

*2 eg no213 McKeen, being set back, could dispense with its flanking wall, or at least have an aperture.
FUNCTION and FACADE
INFLUENCES AFFECTING THESE BALCONIES

Times change and so does the notion of architecture. The change in the role of architecture from an overall affecting of decoration and "style" to the planning and coordinating of many different aspects (function, structure, finance etc) has been well documented and discussed, and it would be naive to expect the balcony to be completely governed by such "modern" criteria as angle-of-sun, use-of-space, view, etc. Indeed, these considerations on their own present a confusing picture of the balcony —

ANGLE of SUN and WEATHER PROTECTION

Of the examples quoted, only two houses face South and so receive no sun on their balconies whatsoever (conversely, have no sun for their balconies and verandahs to keep off the building). Of the others, 16 face North or North-West (into the sun for a major part of the day) and 15 face East or West. It would thus seem reasonable to suggest that the balconies do act as some sort of sun or weather control. By "weather control" is meant the desire to keep the front door (and immediately in front of it) protected from the rain. Consider, in this context, number 115 Rowe St, a two storeyed house with a verandah but no balcony (SEE ILLUSTRATION 32).* Facing South, the verandah serves no sun-control purpose, but could be considered a rain-protector for the front door. A "two storeyed verandah", or balcony, would serve the same function as well as protecting the upstairs windows (SEE SKETCH BELOW). This same "double protection" is afforded in the case of the sun, while the extra space gained,


*2 As already stated, the examples were not chosen at random, but were selected to give a reasonably accurate sample of the differing types, construction and orientations found in the area.

*3 115 Rowe St, built 1885, facing South.
VERANDAH TO PROTECT ENTRANCE
BECOMES
BALCONY AND VERANDAH TO PROTECT WHOLE OF FRONT WALL
(ie th balcony itself) is open. The flanking walls, too, find a function in the protection of the front wall of the house against the sun and rain.

And a further point - the notion of light and sunshine filling the rooms does not seem to have been entertained until this century\(^1\), and the 19th century Australian, and European immigrant, was not the "sun-loving hedonist" of today. He would probably have preferred to keep the hot summer sun well away from his cool and dark\(^2\) Victorian house. This, however, is speculation not based on the presented evidence.\(^3\)

**THE UTILIZATION OF THE BALCONY**

The fact that the balcony (except in the larger houses) could only be reached thru the bedroom windows renders it almost useless as a living space. Today's residents of these houses seem to use their balconies infrequently, and then mainly for hanging out the washing. Some of these residents claim that they do in fact go out on their balconies on summer evenings, though all preferred to use the verandah than to climb up the stairs. As a "patio" the downstairs verandah is obviously preferable to the upstairs, thru-the-window balcony. Neither afford any privacy as they are within spitting distance of the street.

The view from these balconies is generally miserable: either the balcony across the street or a few blocks of one-storeyed villas and backyards. Only these houses on Alfred Crescent (looking into Edinburgh Gardens) and a few in Falconer Street (looking over a little treed square) view anything at all attractive.

\(^1\) Whether this was due to structural restraints or psycho-sociological inhibitions is outside the scope of this essay.

\(^2\) The association of cool with dark is mentioned in Gideon, and in Brown -"BAY WINDOWS IN NTH MELBOURNE" History 4 Essay, 1967.

\(^3\) Such a line of pursuit could well be followed in future History 4 essays.
As a storage space the balcony is open to sun, rain, and possibly theft, so it is useless except for the odd chest or unused chair.

Thus the utilization of the balcony as an extra space of the house would seem to be negligible.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE BALCONY ON OTHER GROUNDS

Almost every householder wants his "place to look nice" - and it all depends on whether you know what is nice or accept what the supposed experts tell you. The sameness of street after street of two-storeyed, cast iron balustraded, party walled North Fitzroy houses is paralleled today by Waverly's street after street of double-fronted, hipped-roofed, brick veneer villas. Then as now, the speculator takes the obvious "features" of the "modern style" and mass produces them in the cheapest, easiest way. Thus a bare brick facade (see illust 33) can be made to look "nice" by the addition of the balcony.

And this was the age of the ornament. Cast iron, cement render and coloured bricks provided everyman with a nice decorated facade. Viewed purely as decoration, the balcony can be expected to be no more functional than the parapets and pediments which often hide the roof (see illusts. 9, 16). The balcony is in fact a decorative facade (see illust. 18, no.25 Alfred Cres., where the cement render does not extend back along the side wall more than six inches). This is true of every example except three.* And the larger, more expensive houses such as 223 McKean St. (see illust. 20) and 73 Alfred (see illust 23) would look barren indeed if it were not for their "cake fringes." Even though these larger houses have doors opening onto their balconies, they are not really useful spaces except for sitting out on warm summer evenings. Certainly one cannot

*1 Today wrought iron, colortone bricks and stained timber joinery provide the same effect.
*2 Nos. 124 Michael, 43 Alfred, 65 Alfred.
imagine the Mayor of Fitzroy (Crs Lee Tucker, 223 McKeans St) hanging out his washing for inspection by all of McKeans St. And if it comes to that, it would seem unlikely that his daughters would want to cool themselves in full view of the clerks living across the street*

The fact that the richer people had balconies (no matter why THEY had them) would be another reason (in its own right) for the middle class houses to have them

STYLISTIC VARIATIONS

As already mentioned, variation, either over a period of time, or due to orientation or site, is negligible. The apertures in flanking walls have already been discussed. If the balcony was intended primarily as a facade and was not a usable space, it would perhaps be unreasonable to expect variations from what was accepted as "normal". The flanking walls do, in fact, support this "Facade Theory" - compare 6-8 Delbrigg (illust 6) with 69 Alfred (illust 9). In the first case the open ends give the balcony a 3-dimensional quality - it is something added to the front of the building. In the second case the front of the building or facade is the cast iron; it is a textured facade because of the pattern of light and shade, but it defines the front of the building, and the flanking walls define the sides.

This idea of the decorative facade also explains the use of the columns, which, as pointed out earlier, are not usually structurally essential. The column adds its own decorative value plus that of two corner brackets (see illust 19). The columns themselves are not highly ornamented, although invariably equipped with a Corinthian capital. By placing this column in the centre of the facade, a restful symmetry could be achieved (see illust 8, no. 61 Alfred). By placing it off-centre, the main entrance could be defined and emphasised (see illust 12, no. 65 Rushall), while achieving a more vigorous assymetry (see illus

*1 nos. 218-220 McKeans was a boarding house.
An even more elaborate and ornate facade was produced by using two columns in a narrow frontage (see illust 9, no. 69 Alfred).

The design of the cast iron, while generally outside the scope of this essay, is interesting. Despite the variation between simple designs (eg at 61 Alfred, built 1883, see illust 8), ornate designs (eg at 224 McKean, built 1890, see illust 16), and highly sophisticated ones (eg the brackets at 20 Falconer, built 1907, see illust 19) there is no evidence of stylistic development. Later designs were often more elaborate, but not necessarily more refined - a technological advance rather than a design evolution. This conclusion, reached by a visual examination of cast iron in the area, is reinforced by examination of the patented designs*1.

The lower storey was often detailed differently to the top-bigger brackets (see illust 23, no.75 Alfred), more elaborate frieze (see illust 6, no.6-8 Delbridge), different frieze and brackets (see illust 11, no.63 Rushall) and so on.

The differences in materials - cast iron, brick and render, timber - have already been mentioned.

*1 Reproduced in "Ornamental Cast Iron in Melbourne" ibid and "Sydney Lace" ibid.
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