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Mossmont House and Garden Heritage Citation

Date: 3 November 2022

Place: Mossmont house and garden

Address: 1207 Winter Street, Buninyong

Build date: c1860s & c1922

Architect/builder: unknown

Recommendation: Included in the Heritage Overlay to the cadastral boundaries.



History

Contextual history

Buninyong

Buninyong is located on Wadawurrung country.

The Buninyong settlement was established in 1841 after the arrival of squatters in the district in 1837-38. The first pastoral run in the area (1838) was named Boninyong. It was occupied by the Learmonth

brothers, the first of several families of Scottish descent who settled in the district (Victorian Places 2015).

Buninyong was located near the junction of the roads from Geelong and Melbourne to the Ballarat district. A store was erected near the junction in 1841, and a post office opened in 1845. A Presbyterian church was opened in 1847, and its minister opened a school in the following year. In June 1850, the Buninyong township was surveyed and land sales occurred in May 1851 (Victorian Places 2015).

In August 1851, gold was discovered at Buninyong. A rush took place and, although the Buninyong find was patchy, the miners discovered the rich Ballarat field at Golden Point within a short time (Victorian Places 2015).

Extensive gold mining occurred from 1857 when the Buninyong Gold Mining Company began operations on 57 hectares of the Learmonth's Boninyong [sic] run (Victorian Places 2015).

Large-scale mining activity brought formal government to the area in the form of an early police court, warden's office and police station and good agricultural land formed a basis for long-term settlement (Buninyong Community Website; Victorian Places 2015).

Catholic and Methodist churches were opened in 1853 and 1856. An Anglican school was opened in 1857 and enlarged Catholic and Presbyterian churches were opened in 1858 and 1859. On 15 July 1859, the town was made a municipal borough, a year after the Buninyong Road District was proclaimed. The District was the forerunner of Buninyong Shire (1864), which absorbed the borough in 1915 (Victorian Places 2015).

By the mid-1860s, when Buninyong's population was about 1500, the township had a main street lined with fine shops and stores, a brewery, a tannery, a flour mill, a mechanics' institute (1861), six hotels and a petty sessions court. In 1889 a branch railway line was opened from Ballarat to Buninyong. The church schools were replaced by a government school in 1873, with accommodation for 500 pupils (Victorian Places 2015).

Mining declined from the 1890s, and by the 1930s the population had fallen to approximately 800 people. The passenger service on the railway line ended in 1931 and the goods service in 1947 (Victorian Places 2015).

Buninyong's population has increased since the 1970s (Victorian Places 2015).

Place history

The subject residence is located on Crown Allotment 109, Parish of Buninyong, purchased by M Cavanagh in 1852 (see Figure 1) (*Buninyong Parish Plan*, 1958). The subject property was known variously as Mossmont, 'Mossmount', and 'Mosmont', with Mossmont the most common appellation. The subject house was built for Francis Moss and his family.

Francis Moss came to Buninyong by 1853, when he began to develop the grounds at what would become Mossmont (*The Gardener*, 12 July 1873). In 1856, Moss married Sarah Kingsford (see Figure 4) and the couple had seven children, with son, William, helping Francis Moss with the nursery business in later years. In 1858 he was described as a gardener in a local newspaper report and served on the Buninyong Road District Board in the same year (*Ballarat Star* 11 August 1858:3 and 18 October 1858:2). In 1864, Moss was one of the directors of the Buninyong New Mining Company (*Ballarat Star* 30 September 1864:2).

In 1862 Moss' site was described as 'several acres of ground laid out as an orchard, the trees in which seem perfectly healthy, although not long planted' (*Ballarat Star* 21 February 1862:2). It is likely that this orchard was the first stage of the gardens planted by Moss on the subject site, which was, at the time, located near the mine workings of the Buninyong New Gold Mine company. This is supported by a c1861 map (see Figure 2) and a 2019 article about the property that states 'the Mossmont nursery was established by Francis Moss adjacent to the Buninyong New Gold Mine in Webbs Hill Road'

(*Buninyong and District Community News* 2019:3). Figure 2 shows the subject site in relation to the gold mine.

In 1864 a newspaper report noted that the Buninyong Paddock Company had ‘commenced operations for boring near Mr Moss’s garden for the purpose of finding the Union Jack gutter’, which was predicted to ‘considerably enhance the value of shares in the Buninyong New Company, as they intend to sink a shaft in the garden’ (*Ballarat Star* 30 September 1864:2). Further evidence that the subject site was co-occupied by the Buninyong New Gold Mining Company is found in an 1869 advertisement placed by the Sherriff’s Office for the auction of the land, mining equipment and plant of the company located on Crown Allotments 23, 24, 109 (the subject site) and 110 (*Ballarat Star* 20 October 1869:3). It appears, then that Moss established his gardens in 1853 on the subject site, prior to taking formal ownership of the land. An 1854 Buninyong Township Plan shows an M Cavanagh as the owner of Crown Allotment 109.



Figure 1. Showing the subject site, Crown Allotment 109 (outlined in black), in 1854, and then owned by M Cavanagh. (Source: *Buninyong Township Plan 1854*, *Visualising Ballarat*)

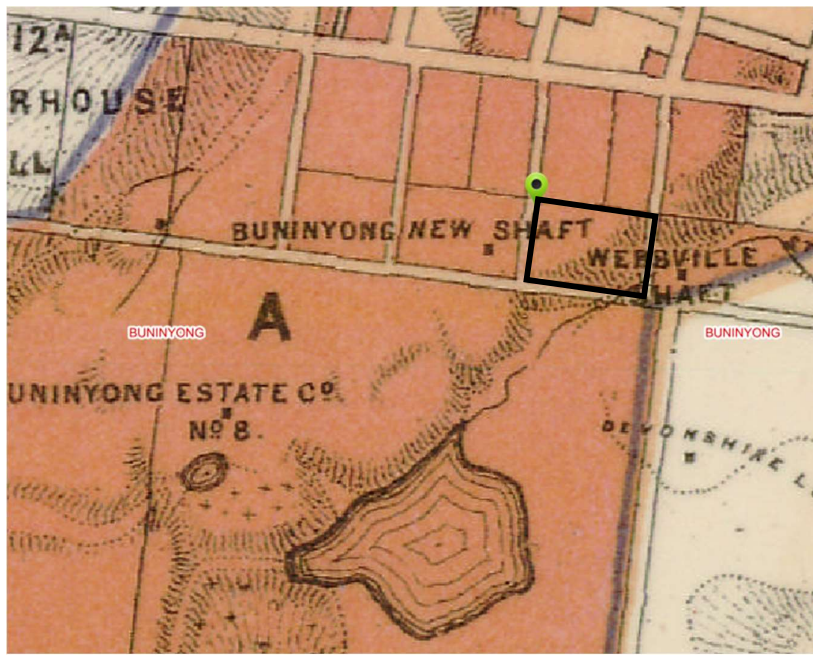


Figure 2. Showing the goldmining landscape of the area around the subject site (outlined in black with green dot) c1861, with the Buninyong New Gold Company's shaft located to the west of the subject site (RHS). The southeast half of the site slopes down to a creek. (Source: Ballarat, Sebastopol & Buninyong part 1 1861?, Visualising Ballarat)

By the 1860s, the nursery and gardens, described in Figure 3, were attracting visitors from afar. It is likely that Francis Moss purchased Crown Allotments 23, 24, 109 (the subject site) and 110 when the property became available for purchase in 1869, although, as evidenced by a death notice for Francis Kingsford Moss, the son of Francis and Sarah who died aged 10 years at Mossmont, the Moss family were residing at Mossmont by 1867 (*Herald* 3 June 1867:2). The earliest part of the existing residence would have been built prior to this time, though the precise date of the first part of the house is unknown, due to the loss of Buninyong Borough rate books from the nineteenth century.

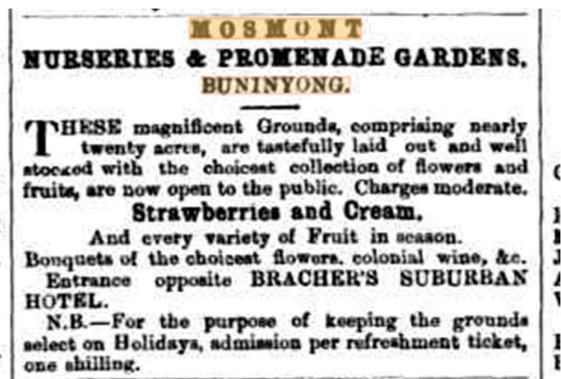


Figure 3. An advertisement for Mossmont Nurseries and Pleasure Gardens in 1865. (Source: *Ballarat Star* 6 January 1865:1)



Figure 4. Francis and Sarah Moss, undated. (Source: Carter collection)



Figure 5. A photograph of Mossmont showing its original shingle roof cladding and lack of bargeboards, circa early 1870s. The verandah cast iron ornament included the intertwined letters of F [&] S M (Francis and Sarah Moss). The three women are pictured on a gravel drive that arrives at the northeast house corner of the house. (Source: Carter collection)

A newspaper article described Mossmont in 1873:

The extent of ground developed to Horticulture by Mr. Francis Moss is seventeen acres, through the centre of which winds a well made gravel drive, and on each side, from end to end, are splendid specimen trees and shrubs. ...

It is now twenty years since Mr. Moss commenced to form these grounds, and during the earlier years chiefly vegetables were cultivated. Mr. Moss eventually improving and finally year by year beautifying the spot, so that of late the grounds have become during the summer months quite a popular place of resort for the good people of Ballarat.

*Nearly all kinds of coniferæ, hardy trees, and shrubs succeed grandly here; while fruits of all kinds with the exception of peaches, almonds and apricots, thrive excellently, and attain great perfection. No less than ten acres of grounds are devoted to fruits, and the remaining seven acres to floral and arboricultural beauty ('Mossmont Gardens, Buninyong', *The Gardener*, 12 July 1873, cited by Jones and Fifth Creek Studio 2004:11).*

Another newspaper article in 1877 provided further detail, including the first known description of the subject residence:

*Mr. Moss settled at Buninyong with the intention of growing produce for market, and ever since he has been actively engaged in gardening. The oldest established portion of the ground, upon which the proprietor resides, known as Mossmont, is beautifully situated in Warrenheip-Street, a little more than half a mile from the town of Buninyong. It contains 14 acres, the greater portion being devoted to orchard purposes, but a considerable extent has been laid out as a pleasure garden and planted with a great variety of ornamental trees, shrubs, and flowering plants... The residence, a neat and commodious building, stands on an elevated portion of the ground, some distance back from the road, and is approached by a fine drive 200 yards long, with borders on either side. From the house charming views are obtained of Mount Buninyong, with the valley running along its base, towards the east, while on the south lies a magnificent sheet of water, formed by a dam constructed, many years ago, for the Messrs. Learmonth, by Colonel Cotton. Conifers have been planted extensively in the borders flanking the drive and along the front boundary of the ground...[and] many noble specimens are to be met with (*Australasian* 27 January 1877:25).*

An advertisement for Francis Moss's nursery in 1880 can be seen in Figure 6.

F R U I T T R E E S,
 To Orchardists, Planters, and the Trade Generally.

FRANCIS MOSS,
 BUNINYONG, near Ballarat. Established 1853,
 Begs to offer a choice and varied assortment of
 healthy, well-grown TREES, Gooseberry and Currant
 Bushes, etc., etc., true to name.

50,000 APPLE TREES,
 All worked on blight-proof stocks, including all the
 leading European and American varieties in the
 colony.

A large lot of NORTHERN SPY and WINTER
 MAGETIN STOCKS for grafting.

An allowance made for carriage to distances where
 more than one rate is charged.

A Cash Remittance or Reference required from un-
 known correspondents.

Figure 6. An advertisement for Francis Moss's nursery in 1880. (Source: *Weekly Times* 7 August 1880:14)

After Sarah Moss died in 1879, Francis Moss married Augusta Munroe in 1881. The couple had two daughters. A certificate of title from September 1885 shows that Francis Moss was the owner of the subject site, Crown Allotment 109, as well as Crown Allotments 23 and 24, a total of approximately 17 acres bounded by Warrenheip Street, Webbs Hill Road, Winter Street and Somerville Street (see Figure 7). In October of the same year, part of Crown Allotment 24 was transferred into the ownership of Samuel Coxall (CT:V1734 F663).

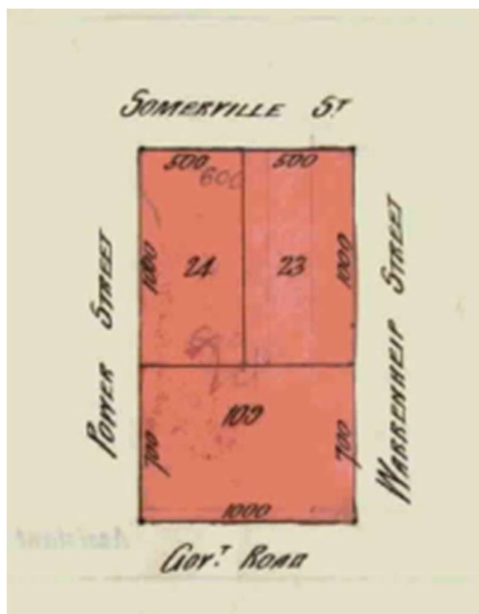


Figure 7. Showing Francis Moss's property in September 1885. (Source: CT:V1734 F663)

In 1888, because of Moss's planned retirement, an advertisement published in the *Argus* announced the sale of the 'well-known property of F Moss Esq', Mossmont Nursery and Orchard. Situated at

Buninyong, ‘the Most Attractive and Popular Fruit-Growing District in the Colony’, the property comprised, in all, about 40 acres of land on which a nursery and orchard had been established. The advertisement noted that ‘fruit from Mossmont always commands the highest price in the Melbourne and Sydney markets’ (*Argus* 21 April 1888:9).

The property was put up for sale in three lots: the nursery, consisting of about eight acres, ‘entirely filled with young healthy stock ready for sale’; the orchard containing about 17 acres, ‘planted with the choicest sorts of apples most suitable to the district’; and the subject property:

That portion on which the dwelling house is situated contains about 15 acres, chiefly planted with gooseberries, currants, and cherries and all in good bearing... There is a handsome commodious dwelling-house lately built, with every convenience, together with the necessary outhouses, stabling, sheds &c (*Argus* 21 April 1888:9).

This suggests that additions had been made to the residence by the 1880s.

It appears, however, that the subject property was not sold at this time as it continued to be owned by Francis Moss until his death in 1916.

Augusta and Francis Moss moved to Gippsland in 1888 to open an extensive nursery, Mossvale Park, near Leongatha, with their son, William Moss, continuing the Buninyong nursery business. The couple continued to move between Gippsland and Buninyong. In a post office directory of 1915, for instance, Francis Moss is listed as a nurseryman in Buninyong (S&Mc 1915; *Buninyong and District Community News* 2019:3).

After Francis Moss died in 1916, his probate documents described his assets as including Allotments 23 and 109, and part of Allotment 24, Parish of Buninyong, comprising 14 acres on which stood a weatherboard residence, known as Mossmont, and outbuildings, with a total value of £750. Part of the property was used as nursery. Moss also owned a number of other allotments in the township of Buninyong: allotments 2-7 and 9-14, Section 25; and allotments 1, 2, 17, 18, 19, and 20, Section A (PROV 1917).

The deceased estate of Francis Moss was advertised for auction on 22 June 1917. Lot 1 comprised the subject property, Mossmont, 14 acres facing Ballarat Road, including a ‘splendid villa residence’ and outbuildings. Lot 2 comprised the main nursery, 10 acres on Caffrey Street; Lot 3 comprised a triangular block of one acre with frontage to Caffrey Street; and Lot 4, known as Topp’s Block, contained approximately one acre with frontages to Herriott, Simpson and Inglis streets (*Ballarat Star* 12 June 1917:5).

Gardener Charles Calf purchased Mossmont for £820; the main nursery of 10 acres and Topp’s block were sold to D Kerr for £275 and £77 respectively; and the smallest block was sold to R J Bergin for £40 (*Evening Echo* 23 June 1917:2). A certificate of title shows that ownership of the subject property, as well as Crown Allotments 23 and 24, passed to Charles Ernest Calf in 1922, although Mr and Mrs C Calf were already living at Mossmont in 1920 (CT:V4603 F520; *Ballarat Star* 26 October 1920:6).

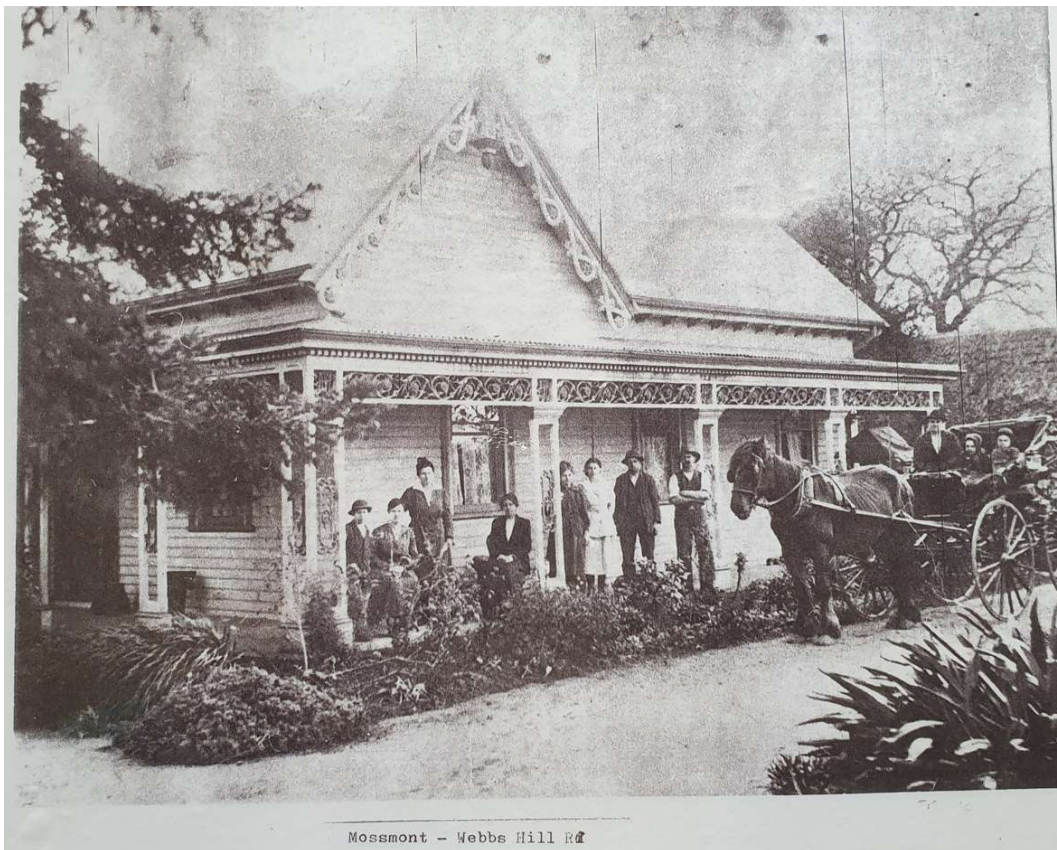


Figure 8. An image of the subject residence, with the Calf family standing on the verandah. The women's clothes suggest this was taken in the late 1910s, when they resided in but did not yet own Mossmont. Note the addition of bargeboards and covering of roof shingles with corrugated iron. (Source: Carter collection)

From the evidence provided by photographs (see Figures 8 and 9) and the pressed metal lining to its internal walls, it is likely that the living room on the north elevation of the residence was built by the Calf family shortly after they became owners in 1922.



Figure 9. Mossmont after 1922, showing the addition of the gabled living room at what was then the west end of the north elevation (LHS). The last bay of the verandah posts and iron was reconfigured to accommodate the change. (Source: Carter collection)

After Charles Calf died in 1931, Florence Mary Coxall became the owner of the property in 1935, although it seems that Calf's wife, Jessie Clara, continued to live in the subject residence, called 'Rockleigh' by the Calf family, until her death in 1939 (*Argus* 7 December 1939:14; *Age* 13 November 1939:1). After Florence Coxall died in 1949, her husband, gardener Norman Clive Coxall, became the owner. In 1960, the property was subdivided, with parts of Crown Allotments 23 and 24 sold; the subject site was retained by Norman Coxall until 1964 (CT:V4603 F520).



Figure 10. Aerial photograph of Mossmont showing the original extent of the grounds, extending northward to Somerville Street, 1961. Those is located amongst trees at bottom centre, while the dam is visible at centre right. (Source: Commonwealth Aerial Photography, Ballarat SJ5408, 23 Dec. 1961)

In 1964, farmer Francis Sewell, and his wife Gwenyth Sewell, became owners of the subject property. Later owners included Alan and Joy Caldwell in 1973, Hartley and Hazel Clementson in 1976, and John and Moira McMahon in 1986. The remaining portions of Crown Allotments 23 and 24 were subdivided and sold in 1987, leaving Crown Allotment 109, on which the subject residence was located, in the ownership of the McMahons until 1993 (CT:V8497 F985).

In 1987, the McMahons commissioned plans for a small extension to the west end of the house, adding two small rooms and extending the verandah in a replica form (Shire of Buninyong, Building Approval No. 4977, 22 Sept. 1992).

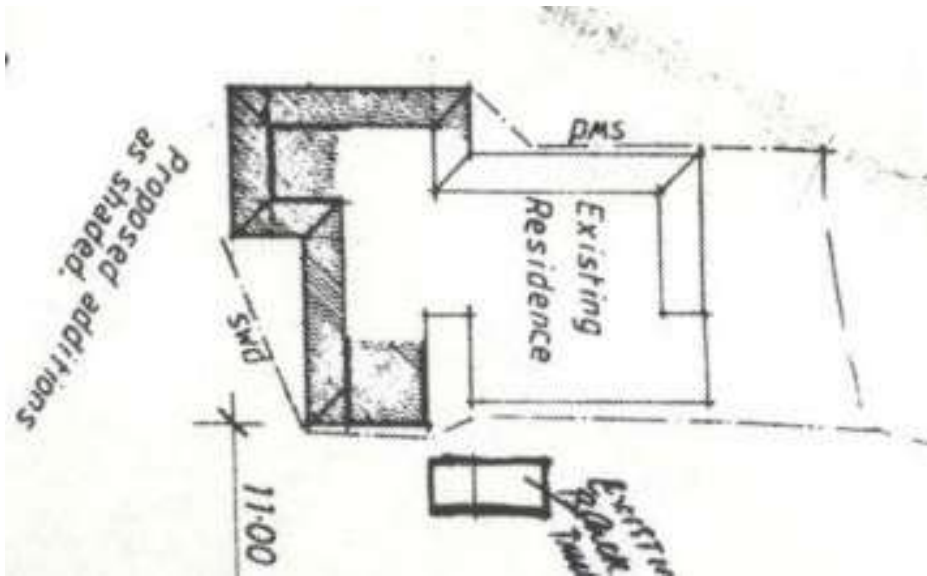


Figure 11. Proposed additions to Mossmont, prepared in 1987. Includes addition of two rooms and extension of the verandah. (Shire of Buninyong, Building Approval No. 4977)

It is not clear if the modest extension shown above was carried out, as the same building approval includes plans for a similar enlargement of the house which extended further to the west and south.

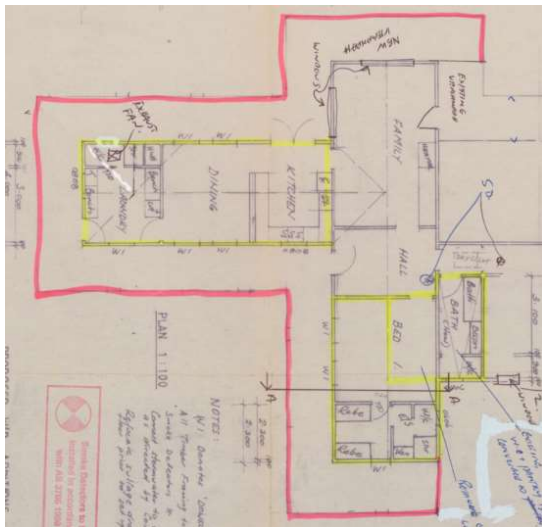


Figure 12. Extension as carried out, with new walls highlighted yellow and new parts of the verandah in red. (Shire of Buninyong, Building Approval No. 4977)



Figure 13. North elevation of Mossmont, with the western extension highlighted in yellow and the new parts of the verandah in red. Reproduction bargeboards were installed on the two western (right-hand) gables. (Shire of Buninyong, Building Approval No. 4977)

When Veronica and Stephen Carter purchased the subject property in 1993 the gardens and residence were in a neglected state. While building approval for the extension had been granted to the previous owners, the McMahons, it was the Carters who carried out this work, with reproduction of the nineteenth-century forms and details to the extension. This included reproduction of the timber bargeboards in cast aluminium, which were installed on the c1922 and 1993 north gables (Pers. comm. V Carter, 2022). To assist in the re-creation of the gardens, they engaged well-known horticulturalist Kevin Walsh. Trees were sourced from a nursery in Macedon and planted in positions similar to the original grand garden design (*Buninyong and District Community News* 2019:3).

Associations

Francis Moss (c.1834-1916), occupier c1860-1916; owner c1867-1916

Mossmont is closely associated with gardener and nurseryman, Francis Moss, nursery proprietor and pomologist who occupied the property from the c1860s to 1916, as owner from c1867 to 1916.

Moss arrived in Australia from England in c1852, establishing his business at Buninyong in 1853 providing fruit and ornamental trees in the rapidly developing town gardens of Ballarat and surrounding farmlands. By the 1870s the Mossmount Nursery was not on a successful nursery, it was also a popular place of resort in the summer months (Aitken 2002: 418).

An obituary for Francis Moss, who died in 1916 aged 84 years, described him as a ‘plucky and fortunate’ mining investor, but that his ‘chief business was the establishment of the Mossmount Nursery’, which he carried on successfully with his son William Moss. It was noted that Moss’s ‘trees and plants of various kinds were sent to all parts of the Commonwealth, and even beyond Australia’ (*Ballarat Courier* 21 October 1916:11). Along with Ferdinand von Mueller of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, Daniel Bunce of the Geelong Botanic Gardens, and George Longley of the Ballarat Botanic Gardens, Moss supplied plants to the Buninyong Botanic Gardens, established on a ten-acre site in 1861 and permanently reserved in 1889 (Jones and Fifth Creek Studio 2004:10). Moss also provided trees for the Buninyong Cemetery in 1873-74 (Jones and Fifth Creek Studio 2004:11). From 1888 Francis Moss developed another large nursery, Mossvale Park, today managed by the Shire of South Gippsland, on 1,000 acres near Leongatha in Gippsland. The Mossmont Nurseries in Griffith, New South Wales, is owned and operated by a fifth-generation member of the Moss family.

The Buninyong and District Historical Society provides this summary of Francis Moss’s life:

Francis Moss was born in 1834, County Durham, England, [as an] Episcopalian. His father was Abendnigo [Abednego], [his] mother Jane Hobson. His father was a

gardener and Francis trained as a gardener. He came to Port Phillip, and established the Mossmont nursery at Buninyong in about 1853.

Francis was a nurseryman, and grew and sold red, white and yellow gooseberries, strawberries, red and black currants, plums, cherries and rhubarb. He grew many vegetables too, and learned some Cantonese so that he could converse with the Chinese he employed to work in his gardens. He imported seed from England, France and Italy, and supplied many of the Chinese market gardeners in Ballarat. He imported thousands of daffodil bulbs, and birds like thrushes and goldfinches. He advised on plantings for the Buninyong Cemetery and the Botanic Gardens.

By 1860 [sic], he was able to build his handsome residence Mossmont on the edge of Buninyong, on the Durham Lead road. He developed a great talent for budding and grafting fruit trees, after all imported stock suffered blight. He experimented with apple stocks, and with the help of Thomas Lang of Ballarat, developed a blight-free stock. Hence the Stewart's Seedling, or Ballarat Seedling, named by Francis Moss in the 1870s. A Mrs Stewart of Golden Point, Ballarat, sowed the apple from a seedling, and Francis distributed it. It was a snow white apple, very acidic, and there is an example planted in the Old Library garden at Buninyong by the Historical Society in July 1991. Henry Bull, who was a gardener in Buninyong in the 1860s and 1870s, and who lived in Somerville St., very close to Moss's nursery, probably worked for Moss, and according to descendants was responsible for the introduction of the Ballarat apple into New Zealand, when he moved there later in the 1870s...

After a series of tragic family deaths, in 1881 Francis married...Augusta Munroe, former teacher at the Buninyong school, and they had two daughters. Francis left his son William Esmond to run the Buninyong business, and in 1887 purchased 1000 acres of virgin bushland on the Tarwin River halfway between Mirboo North (the terminus of the railway from Melbourne) and Leongatha, starting the new Mossmont. He appointed a Mr William Gould of Warrenheip as the manager of his nursery in South Gippsland. Gould had been trained at Brunnings Nursery in the 1860s, and supervised for Moss until 1917, with his son George assisting him from 1910 to 1917. Francis would frequently visit to superintend the development of seeds and cuttings. Later he opened another nursery in Leongatha.

Francis collapsed in 1912, and died in 1916, aged 82. In 1917 the Buninyong nursery was sold. His son William Moss owned two and a half acres at 511 Learmonth St., which was planted with 16 apple trees. There was a Five Crown, a Snow, a Russian apple, one like a Golden Delicious. The orchard was also planted with oaks, elms, wisteria and laburnum. A 1906 Directory lists William Moss, gardener, of Learmonth St. This land was sold to the Odgers family in 1917, and the apples were still cared for and in production, in the 1990s.

William married Charlotta Pask, the daughter of Buninyong gardener Lambert Pask, in 1890, and continued the Gippsland business with his son William Edward. In 1946 the family sold out at Leongatha, and established a new Mossmont at Monbulk. In 1990 the 5th generation of the family established a new branch of the business at Griffith in NSW, which allows improved plant hygiene, and the development of stone fruits (Buninyong and District Historical Society Newsletter 2013:np).

Francis Moss is buried in Buninyong Cemetery.

Description

Setting

The property at 1207 Winter Street occupies a large block of land, bounded by Winter Street to the west, Warrenheip Street to the east, Webbs Hill Road to the south, and the boundaries of adjoining properties at 1203 and 1205 Winter Street (north). Topographically the site is characterised by a broad ridge of higher ground from the northeast to the southwest corners, which slopes gently down at the northwest corner (the current entry off Winter Street) and more steeply down at the southeast corner (intersection of Warrenheip Street and Webbs Hill Road). Part of a former entry drive follows the contour towards the top of the southeast side of the slope, which extends from the north boundary (near the northeast corner of the property) towards the house. There is a dam in the northeast corner of the site, close to Warrenheip Street. An old windmill to the northeast of the house was purchased by the current owners and is said to replace an earlier windmill formerly at that location.

The house stands on high ground close to the Webbs Hill Road (south) boundary. Because of the elevated situation and orientation of the house there are views from the original front verandah northeast to Mount Buninyong.

The site is composed of large open grassed areas, with tree plantings in groves, groups, rows and specimens, most of which have been planted by the current owners. On either side of the existing entry drive off Winter Street are large Hazelnut groves, also planted by the current owners. The Winter and Warrenheip street boundaries are defined by mixed mature tree plantings, while the Webbs Hill Road boundary is defined by mature trees at the east and west ends and a tall *Viburnum* hedge.

The extant driveway, gates, most of the outbuildings and other ancillary structures date from after 1991. There is an early brick outbuilding, possibly a detached kitchen or cool store, which stands just south of the house. Most of the trees and shrubs at the site were planted after 1991.

The former Mossmont Nursery originally occupied a much larger site. Although subdivision has removed the northern half of the original site, the remaining generous landscape setting contributes to an ability to appreciate the place's history as a nursery and pleasure garden at which the proprietor and his family resided. While much of the early planting, layout and infrastructure from the site's use as a nursery and pleasure garden have been lost, some early evidence remains including a mature elm (*Ulmus* sp) close to the house (northwest), a mature Holly in the turning circle garden bed, remnants of an early drive from the northeast corner of the property to the house, and early plantings along its length including six Cherry Plum trees (purple and green foliated varieties), a *Liriodendron*, and three Hawthorns. The dam beside the eastern boundary may also be an early or longstanding feature.

House

Mossmont House was constructed in four stages, from the 1850s or '60s to the 1990s. It is a timber house with a corrugated-steel roof with a complex gabled and hipped form.

The original part of the house was L-shaped and its front façade faces east, to Mt Bunninyong. The front (east) façade and north side elevations each have a gable-fronted bay. It extended several rooms back on the south side, beneath a hipped roof, with a cellar beneath the rear room. Walls are clad with timber weatherboards, with a decorative moulded edge. Foundations are of rubble volcanic stone, beneath ruled render, with red bricks at corners. The chimney, to the south side rooms, is of handmade brick with a simple corbelled top.

This original front façade is asymmetrical, with the steep gable to the south side, and a recessed transverse gable beside it. There is a double-hung windows with red and blue margin glazing in the front gable, which sits below a hood with rolled-metal roofing and a fretwork fringe. The front door and a simple double-hung window set to the side of the gable. The front door has the classic two-over-two panels with bolection mouldings, typical of the mid-to-late Victorian period. It sits within a surround with red and blue flashed glass.



Figure 14. Original front (east) façade of Mossmont. (Landmark Heritage, 2022)

There is a vertical weatherboard stop between the north-east corner room and those to its rear (west), indicating that the house was extended in this location, adding two small rooms which face north. This early addition has the same decorative weatherboard profile, and a similar chimney of handmade bricks with a simple corbelled top.



Figure 15. Early (east) end of the north elevation. The division between the first and second stages of the house is just left of the gable. (Landmark Heritage, 2022)

These first two sections of the house were wrapped in a continuous return verandah. Its original extent is shown in the earliest known historic photo (see Figure 5). At that time, in the late 1860s or early 1870s judging from the clothing, the house was quite plain in detail compared to today, with the front window hood and return verandah the only ornament. As Francis Moss and his family apparently resided here prior to purchasing the freehold in 1869, it is likely that the first stage of the house was modest, and only after 1869 was it extended and the verandah added or embellished with new posts and cast iron enrichments. Embellishments such as the coloured margin glazing to the front window,

and the front door and surround may also date to this period, as they are far more elaborate than was typical in the 1850s or early 1860s. Even the clear window glazing to other windows in this section, with large single panes in each sash, is unlikely to date from earlier than the 1870s. Conversely, the metal hood over the front window, with its concave profile and rolled seams, is more typical of 1850s verandahs and entry porch roofs, so it may be one of the earliest decorative features of the house. Compare, for example, to similar rooflets over bay windows at the Pilots' Cottages, Queenscliff, of 1854 (VHR H1618).

The verandah has a concave roof. The posts are open frames with built-up capitals, emulating Regency-era cast-iron columns. At the centre of each post is an oval element, similar to those seen in balustrades. Above it is a cast-iron rinceaux frieze, set in a timber frame as was popular in the 1870s. Above each capital is cast filigree monograph of 'F S M', believed to stand for Francis and Sarah Moss. It appears to come from a different source than the other, heavier cast-iron enrichments. The verandah beam to the front (east) façade retains a dentilated moulding, though it has been lost on the north side. The early part of the verandah floor, to the eastern half of the house, has been replaced with concrete and a tile edging.

This photo also indicates that further ornament was added after this time, including the distinctive openwork timber bargeboards and finials, which give the house its current Gothic Revival appearance, and the complex curved timber eaves brackets. These were installed during the Moss family's ownership (as indicated by Figure 8), likely in the 1870s or '80s. At some point, prior to 1920, the shingle roof was covered with corrugated iron cladding, and round metal vents were installed along the ridgeline.

The second family to own Mossmont, the Calfs, made a small addition early in their ownership (c. 1920s). This is the living room, which occupies a gabled bay on the north side of the house. In conservative fashion, the elements of the westernmost bay of the verandah were reused to return against this projecting room. The nineteenth-century details were not copied, so this bay has no eaves brackets, and windows to the gable end are a bank of three narrow double-hung windows with different proportions to earlier windows.

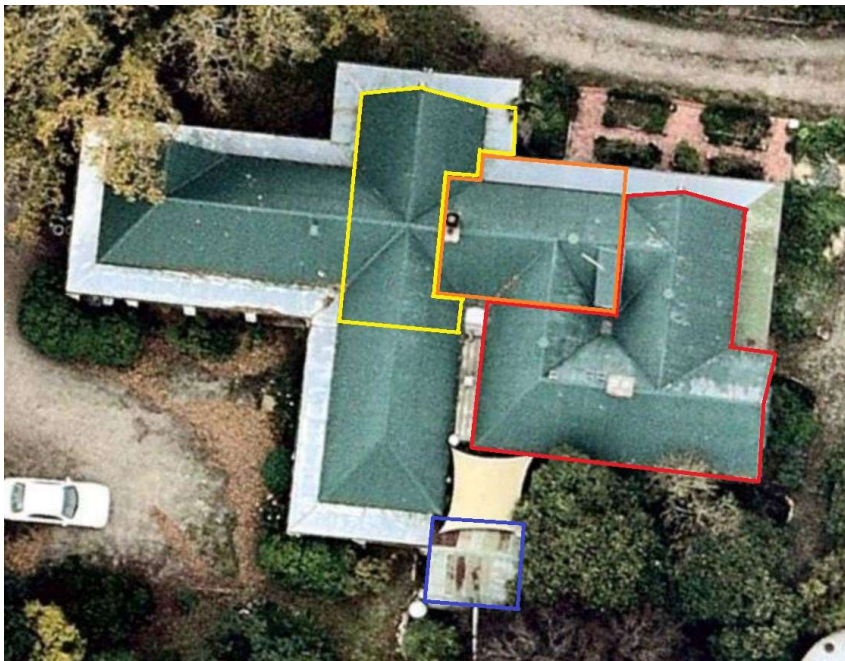


Figure 16. Roof plan with indication of the first three stages of construction: Red – the first stage of the house of c1850s-60s (possibly including a return verandah); Orange – second stage of two rooms, c1969-70s; Yellow – c1922 living room with the reconfiguration of the west end of the verandah; Blue – early 20th-century outbuilding. The rest of the house dates to 1993. (Adapted from Nearmap, 2020)

The most recent section of the house is an extension, added in the early 1990s. It has two parts: a western wing housing a new kitchen, family room and laundry, and a master bedroom wing to the south. Both

extend off the c1920s living room. The 1990s addition copies the materiality and details of the nineteenth-century part of the house. This includes the extension of the verandah, so that it now wraps around the entire 1920s addition and the 1990s addition.

The southern wing of the 1990s extension nearly touches an early outbuilding. This small building has (overpainted) brick walls, and a weatherboard clad gable end. It is not clear when it was built, but the bricks seem relatively well-fired, suggesting an early twentieth-century date. It is in a fair to poor condition, particularly the timbe-framed roof and gable cladding, and it has lost all windows. The north side of the building has been covered by fake stone.

Comparative analysis

Setting

Mossmont Nursery was among one of a small number of early nurseries in the Ballarat region responsible for supplying plants to meet the demand of the growing townships and farms in the years following the local gold rushes

Other prominent early nursery proprietors in Ballarat, in addition to Moss, were nursery proprietor and seed merchant Thomas Lang (1815-1896) and horticulturist, nursery proprietor and editor William Elliott (1813-1897). Lang arrived in Ballarat in 1855. Initially trading in general stores from premises in Bridge Street, in 1857 he established a small nursery by the Yarrowee Creek in Bridge Street. By 1860 he had a nursery of about 20 acres at Warrenheip, which by 1872 had doubled in size, making it one of the largest nursery enterprises. The nursery sold both large quantities of fruit trees as well as vegetable seeds, ornamental trees. By 1868, Land had established a Melbourne outlet. (Aitken 2002: 359-360) Elliott migrated to Victoria from England in 1853. In 1860 he joined Lang as partner in his Ballarat nursery. Both Lang and Elliott were prominent members of the Ballarat Horticultural Society (estab. 1859). Both Lang and Elliott are known to have supplied plants for public gardens and street tree planting in Ballarat, including the Ballarat East Town Hall Gardens in the 1860s. (Aitken 2002: 199-200)

Established in 1853, Mossmont was one of the earliest nurseries supplying fruit and ornamental trees in Ballarat, with Thomas Lang's nursery established slightly later in 1857, and by 1860 becoming a nursery of a similar size to Mossmont (20 acres). The site of Thomas' Lang's first nursery at Bridge Road has long been built over, along with the Yarrowee Creek itself. It is not known if evidence survives of his nursery in Warrenheip (in Moorabool Shire), but no reference can be found to in the Victorian Heritage Database, nor is its precise location known.

Mossmont is also among the earliest nurseries established in Victoria. Victoria Nursery in Richmond, established by one of Victoria's pioneer nursery proprietors James Rule, was one of the earliest nurseries, established in 1850 or so it was claimed in his 1857 catalogue (Aitken 2002: 526). Smith's Nursery at Riddells Creek (VHR H2060) in Macedon Ranges Shire was established in 1863 at Riddells Creek. Smith's Nursery is acknowledged as one of the earliest nurseries established in Victoria outside of metropolitan Melbourne. Like Mossmont and Thomas Lang's nursery, Smith's Nursery also supplied fruit and ornamental trees. Although established later than Mossmont, Smith's Nursery is distinguished for its retention of early evidence of its original display garden including sizable tree and bulb collections. Both nurseries were in operation for a similar time span of around 60 years; Mossmont from 1853 to 1916; Smith's nursery closed in the 1920s.

House

The two most striking features of Mossmont are its elaborately carved and pierced bargeboards and the verandah detail with openwork posts and monograms in the frieze above. As discussed in the history and description, we know that the bargeboards were an early addition to the house and the verandah iron probably was as well. They represent two different architectural styles, with the openwork posts characteristic of the Victorian Regency style, while bargeboards are a common attribute of the Gothic Revival style. The massing of the house, with its steep gables, is also in keeping with the Gothic Revival.

The earliest architectural styles to be introduced to Australia were the Georgian and Regency, which were interlinked classically derived styles imported from Britain. The more restrained Regency style can be considered the final expression of Georgian architecture. While the reign of King George III ended in 1811, and the Regency period ended in 1820, these styles continued to be used in the colonies for both simple and grand houses into the 1850s and even the 1860s (Apperley et al. 1989:28).

Like Georgian, Regency buildings were characterised by symmetry and pleasingly harmonious proportions based on classical antecedents. Frequently the low-hipped roof was partly concealed behind a simple parapet, with simple projecting mouldings. Many houses had a concave or ogee-profile verandah roof, though grander houses might have a portico and frontispiece (Apperley et al. 1989:46).

Verandahs were supported on classical columns, chamfered posts, or flat openwork columns (or more accurately, pilasters). The first two were most common in Victoria, while areas settled earlier, such as Tasmania and New South Wales, featured many 1850s and '60s houses with openwork columns as seen at Mossmont. The earliest examples of such verandahs had hand-carved timber openwork columns, and this transitioned to cast-iron versions starting in the 1830s. Early examples in Victoria, with unembellished timber openwork columns, are seen at Maretimo of c1854, Portland North (VHR H242), and Glenara of c1857, Bulla (VHR H625). Maretimo has an austere parapeted form, while Glenara has a roof form typical of the Italianate style.



Figure 17. Maretimo, Portland North, built c1854. (Heritage Victoria, 2008)



Figure 18. Glenara, Bulla, built c1857. (Heritage Victoria, 1983)

The earliest cast-iron verandah ornaments were light and sinuous, derived from British wrought and cast-iron decoration of the Regency period. Both custom designed and standard forms were imported from Great Britain in the 1830s for houses in New South Wales and Tasmania. An early example of the openwork verandah posts in Victoria is seen on the c1853 section of Mill's Cottage, Port Fairy. They were manufactured in Sydney. It was not until about 1860 that there was cast-iron production in Victoria (Lewis 2014). The form of the base and capital of Mossmont's posts are very similar to Mill's Cottage, though made of timber.



Figure 19. Cast-iron openwork verandah posts at Mills Cottage, manufactured by R Dawson, Sydney. (Landmark Heritage, 2021)

The original verandah details of Royal Terrace, 39-49 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, designed by architect Charles Laing and built 1856-58, were similar to those at Mossmont. They had openwork posts with a decorative motif at the centre, and a frieze set within a timber frame. Considering the simplicity of the ornament – solely circles and crosses – it appears that all verandah elements were of timber, though the

first-floor window balustrades are probably cast iron and the palisade fence certainly was of iron. These details were replaced in 1892 when the terrace was remodelled.



Figure 20. Detail of a verandah in Royal Terrace, Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, of 1856-58, in 1866. (Davies & Co., State Library of Victoria)

The oval cast-iron enrichment, inserted in the centre of Mossmont's posts, bears a strong resemblance to a cast-iron openwork pilaster seen both in Tasmania and New South Wales, produced in Sydney by PN Russell (Robertson, 1994 Pl. 458).



Figure 21. Terrace house in Darlinghurst, Sydney, with cast-iron pilasters produced by PN Russell. (Landmark Heritage, 2022)

Perhaps the finest example of openwork verandah posts – though of timber and not cast iron – is seen in Buninyong, at Ballantrae, 7208 Midland Highway (VHR H551). It was built in 1857 and has carved timber bargeboards and finials based on a patternbook by English architect Augustus Pugin. The openwork timber verandah columns are unusual for their Gothic style. This combination of Regency openwork columns with an overall Gothic form and detail may have provided inspiration for the nearby Mossmont.



Figure 22. Ballantrae, Bunninyong. Note the elaborate Gothic bargeboards and openwork verandah posts. (National Trust, n.d.)

As Lewis (2014) notes, Ballarat and Bendigo had a distinctive use of cast-iron openwork verandah columns, in contrast to other regional towns and Melbourne. The two most frequently seen cast-iron patterns in Ballarat are a strawberry pattern and an ornate openwork pilaster produced at Bendigo's Phoenix Foundry. Examples in Bendigo include Nyora, 59 Victoria Street, Eaglehawk, built in 1884.



Figure 23. Nyora, 59 Victoria Street, Eaglehawk (Bendigo). (Google Streetview,

Houses in the City of Ballarat also continued to be built with these details in the 1870s and '80s. For example, a c1870s timber house at 450 Wendouree Parade, Lake Wendouree, with openwork verandah columns was depicted in EG Robertson's book *Ornamental Cast Iron in Melbourne* (1967). This house was demolished in 1976, though some elements were salvaged and used for the replacement house.

The very same combination of cast-iron detail seen at Nyora in Eaglemont was used for a number of houses in Ballarat. A fine example from the late 1870s or 1880s is 24 Windermere Street, Ballarat Central (in HO168). It has all-iron posts with a rinceaux (running vine) pattern going up them, paired with combined cast-iron frieze and brackets. This contrasts with Mossmont's posts, which are timber with an inset cast-iron enrichment. And Mossmont's rinceaux frieze is of an earlier type, framed in timber with no brackets. While the house at 24 Windermere Street has a similar asymmetrical façade, with a projecting gable to one side, its hipped roof and front gable pitches are more in keeping with the mid-to-late Victorian Italianate style, and the gable bargeboard is more simply embellished with applied detail.



Figure 24. 24 Windermere Street, Ballarat Central. (Landmark Heritage, 2022)

There is another house, at 41 Grant Street, Ballarat Central, that has identical cast-iron openwork columns, frieze and brackets to 24 Windermere Street. It has a pierced gable bargeboard, though much simpler than Mossmont's. The façade of this house has been altered by the introduction of a full-width bay window. It is not in the Heritage Overlay.



Figure 25. 41 Grant Street, Ballarat Central. (RealEstate.com.au)

The same posts, frieze and brackets were used at Kenfig, 112 Olliers Road, Mount Rowan, a fine brick homestead with crenelated "tower" feature (not in the HO, but appears intact).



Figure 26. *Kenfig, 112 Olliers Road, Mount Rowan. (M Lewis, n.d.)*

As noted, the only true Regency attribute of Mossmont is its verandah, while its steep gables and carved bargeboards added c1870 are Gothic Revival attributes. While not quite as intricate as the nearby Ballantrae example, the bargeboards are relatively unusual in design and level of carved detail.

The most common high-end Gothic Revival bargeboards take a cusped form, directly from Gothic church details. This type of bargeboard is seen, for example, at Invergowrie of 1846-50s, Hawthorn (VHR H195); Residence at 26 Finch Street of 1861, Beechworth (VHR H352); Longerenong Homestead of 1862, Longerenong (VHR H290); and Elcho Homestead of c1867, Lovely Banks (VHR H283).



Figure 27. *Elcho Homestead, Lovely Banks. Note the cusped gable bargeboard.*

Instead of the more academically correct cusped bargeboard form, Mossmont's bargeboards fall into a freer, picturesque category. This is seen on Gothic Revival houses and mansions such as The Hawthorns of 1845, Hawthorn (VHR H457); Coriyule of 1849, Curlewis (VHR H272); Barwon Grange of pre-1856, Newtown (VHR H1102); Glenfern of 1857, St Kilda (VHR H136); Residence at 39 Finch Street of c1862, Beechworth (VHR H353); and Residences at 39 & 41 Nicholson Street of c1858-69, Abbotsford (VHR H142). The most similar of these examples to Mossmont's bargeboards, in its exuberance and

freedom, are those of the Abbotsford houses, which were similarly thought to have been designed by a builder and not an architect.



Figure 28. Bargeboard of 39 Nicholson Street, Abbotsford. (Heritage Victoria, 2008)

Even compared to these other ‘free’ examples, Mossmont’s bargeboards veer even farther from academic Gothic. In fact, they are most closely related to the classical rinceaux pattern of the cast-iron frieze of the verandah. Their Gothic nature is almost solely attributable to their pierced form.

Mossmont’s heavy gable finials, with a pineapple motif to the pendant part, on the other hand, is more in keeping with more formal examples of the Gothic Revival such as Barwon Grange or even Ballantrae.

In conclusion, Mossmont illustrates a relatively early use of flat openwork verandah columns, a feature that came to exemplify the architectural independence of regional cities Ballarat and Bendigo when columns of this type were massed produced of cast iron in the 1870s and ‘80s. The sparing use of cast-iron enrichments for the columns and frieze illustrate a period when cast iron was not as widely available. These elements themselves are rare examples of early cast iron, which was lighter and more delicate than the kind that became widely available later in the century. The carved timber bargeboard is a very unusual and creative adaptation of a decorative detail generally associated with the Gothic Revival style, but here it has been adapted to blend seamlessly with the classical rinceaux frieze of the verandah. The enlargement of the house in several stages, and the concurrent addition of embellishments, such as the later bargeboards, illustrate the expansion of Francis Moss’s business and wealth.

Assessment of significance

The following statement of significance has been expressed in regard to the ‘Model’ or HERCON heritage criteria.

What is significant?

Mossmont’ 1207 Winter Street, Buninyong, is significant including the following elements:

- The early extent of the house, constructed c1850s to c1922
- The landscape setting
- Remnants of the early drive from the northeast corner of the property to the house

- Early plantings: mature elms (*Ulmus sp*) close to the house (northwest), mature Holly in the turning circle garden bed, early plantings along the length of the former drive including six Cherry Plum trees (purple and green foliated varieties), a Liriodendron, and three Hawthorns.

The brick outbuilding on the south side of the house is a contributory element of the site.

The 1990s extension to the house, as well as the extension to the verandah and bargeboard to the central gable on the north elevation, are not significant.

How is it significant?

Mossmont house and garden are of historical (including associational) and aesthetic significance to the City of Ballarat.

Why is it significant?

Mossmont house is aesthetically significant due to its verandah enrichments and bargeboards. The verandah has a relatively early use of flat openwork columns, a feature that came to exemplify the architectural independence of regional cities Ballarat and Bendigo when columns of this type were massed produced of cast iron in the 1870s and '80s, in contrast to the rest of Victoria. The sparing use of cast-iron enrichments for the columns and frieze illustrate a period when cast iron was not as widely available. These elements themselves are rare examples of early cast iron, which was lighter and more delicate than the kind that became widely available later in the century. The carved timber bargeboard is a very unusual and creative adaptation of a decorative detail generally associated with the Gothic Revival style, but here it has been adapted to blend seamlessly with the classical rinceaux frieze of the verandah. (Criterion E)

The place as a whole is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the earliest known nursery established in the Ballarat area, which was responsible for the supply of ornamental and fruit trees for the rapidly developing town and farms and, after they permanently reserved the land as Public Gardens in 1889, to the Buninyong Botanic Gardens. The enlargement of the house in several stages, and the addition of embellishments, such as the later bargeboards, illustrate the growing prosperity of Francis Moss's business. (Criterion A)

The place is significant for its historic association with Francis Moss, a notable figure in the early development of horticulture in Buninyong and the wider Ballarat area. (Criterion H)

Statutory recommendations

In recognition of the local heritage significance of Mossmont house and garden at 1207 Winter Street, Buninyong, it should be protected in the Ballarat Heritage Overlay.

Extent of overlay: an appropriate curtilage would be to the property boundaries, three of which (east, south, west) are consistent with the original site boundary. Although reduced from its original extent, this would enable appreciation of the dwelling set in a landscaped setting as it would have been during the operation of Mossmont as a nursery from the 1850s and nursery with pleasure garden by the 1870s.

Tree controls: Yes – mature elm near the house, the Liriodendron, mature Flowering Plum trees and Hawthorns along the driveway.

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