

PAOLO DATTARI, ARCHITECT — A BUILDING

by Ruth Dwyer

In East Melbourne in the 1880s, at the present 33 Grey Street, on the south-west corner of Simpson Street, stood a small building overlooking the Collingwood Drill Ground, now known as Darling Square. An extension to this building was to be erected to the design of the Italian born architect, Paolo Dattari¹. Dattari, born c1850 in

alterations to the property, Louis Jean Suhard, was at this time a confectioner. He had previously been a licensed victualler in Melbourne, but became insolvent in 1862.

Louis Suhard passed away in 1891 aged 58. He was not the owner of the dwelling². His widow,



No. 33 Grey Street, East Melbourne, showing the six-roomed two-storey extension designed by Paolo Dattari.

Leghorn near Florence, the son of Luigi Dattari, gentleman, and Enrichetta, formerly Maneschit, was one of a number of Italians drawn to the colony of Victoria in the late 1870s. At this time, 1884, Dattari was employed as a draftsman in the engineering section of the Victorian Railways.

The application to build, dated December 2 1884³ and naming Paolo Daturri (sic) as the architect, was for a two-storey extension to the dwelling at 33 Grey Street. This involved the demolition of the wooden section of the existing building. Christopher Fry of Coppin Street, Richmond, was named as the builder. The applicant for

Georgiana, died in the August of 1892, leaving her affairs in the hands of her administrator. Her elder son, Louis Henri Lambert Suhard, jeweller of Adelaide, assented to matters being handled by a daughter, Emilie Georgiana Cox. It was revealed that the dwelling with the two-storey extension, completed, was in the ownership of the deceased, Georgiana Suhard. Her husband, Louis Suhard, had taken advantage of the Married Women's Property Act as did many men of business in the late nineteenth century. The probate papers of September 1892 gave the valuation for the eight-roomed brick property, of which six were to Dattari's design, as one thousand, three

hundred pounds⁴. The property had a frontage of thirty-two feet to Grey Street, and, bordering Simpson Street, was seventy-two feet deep. The dwelling still stands today. It shows Dattari's influence in the external Italianate appearance.

Meredith Gould, in the assessment of buildings within the City of Melbourne for the Conservation Study of 1983 gives a citation as follows: *...The two-storey section is classical in style with restrained cornice string courses and segmental pedimented window surrounds...*

The property was listed for auction on 7 November 1998 — *Rarely offered for sale... gracious light filled rooms of warmth and character...a cedar staircase...*⁵. The exterior is of rendered brick, with double-hung sash windows, at present with shutters to those on the ground floor, and decorative ironwork to the upper. Internally the two-storey section contains little of the original. Walls have been replastered, the decorative cornices, ceiling roses and light fittings are no longer there. Nor are there Victorian fireplaces and mantelpieces, architraves or the high skirting boards. The polished cedar staircase, rather narrow, is all that remains.

This is the only building designed by Paolo Dattari located in Melbourne records up to the present time.

Author's acknowledgements

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NOTES

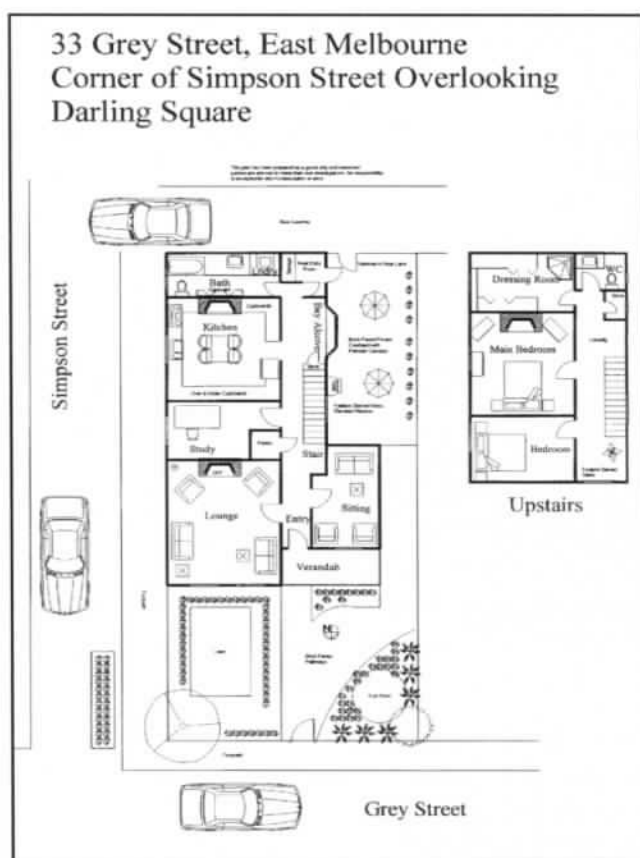
¹ For Dattari see Ruth Dwyer, *To Honour a Noted Botanist*, Italian Historical Society Journal, July - December 1996, Volume 4, No.2., reprinted from *The Victorian Naturalist*, Volume 113(4) August 1996. See also Ruth Dwyer, *Paolo Dattari, Jewellery and the Italian Court at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-1881*, Italian Historical Society Journal, July - December 1997, Volume 5, No.2.

² PROV VPRS 9462/P3 Unit 4 Reg. No.1226, Melbourne City Council, Index of Architects named in Notices of Intention to Build.

³ PROV VPRS 28/P2 Unit 319 46/636 Louis Jean Suhard.

⁴ PROV VPRS 28/P2 Unit 346 50/21 Georgiana Suhard.

⁵ *The Age* 31 October 1998 p.G17.



Floor Plan showing the two storey extension of No. 33 Grey Street, East Melbourne, 1998.

Paolo Dattari was a talented gentleman of many parts. He was born in Leghorn, near Florence, c1850 and was the son of Luigi and Enrichetta Dattari. He emigrated from London to Australia in 1877 as an unassisted passenger aboard the Somersetshire. In 1881 he married in Melbourne Margaret Victoria Yeomans, born in London. In June 1880 Dattari was elected to The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and 1881 he designed a handsome and costly gold and silver presentation casket for Captain Standish, Chief Commissioner of Police in Victoria. The Italian Consul and Commissioner General for Italy, C.A. de Goyzueta, appointed Dattari as one of the Italian jurors at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-1881, together with Carlo Catani, Ettore Checchi and Pietro Baracchi.