

# Late Colonial Georgian Dwellings

(pre-1890)



This brochure is one of a series of Housing Style Information Brochures based on the common housing styles in the Town of Vincent. The brochure provides details on the origins and distinct features of the housing types within Vincent. Other brochures in this series include: ■ Weatherboard Dwellings ■ Federation Bungalows ■ Inter-war Californian Bungalows ■ Post-war Bungalows

## Background

Prior to the Gold Rush of the 1890s domestic architecture in Perth was quite basic. A shortage of population, capital and labour inhibited the development of an organised building industry and influenced the quality of design; it was a period marked by the necessity of 'making do'. The majority of early residences were simple two-room or four-room buildings constructed in mud brick with a thatch roof and calico for windows. Few of these early residences have survived.

Beyond the mud brick variety, the symmetrical Georgian rectangular house, with which most of the older British settlers were familiar, was regarded as being adequate for local needs at the time. Managing to build one's own house was still a higher priority than any concern of being stylistically correct. This slow development and low quality of housing was a marked contrast to the situation in Sydney and Melbourne, where the gold discoveries of the 1850s had begun an era of economic growth culminating in the building boom of the 1880s.



## Key characteristics of Georgian dwellings include:

### Outside

- Square, symmetrical with plain solid brick walls.
- Central front door with windows placed symmetrically either side.
- In rare two-storey dwellings, second storey openings align with ground floor openings to reinforce the symmetry.
- Verandah erected around the dwelling, often to the rear skillion, to protect the principal rooms from the penetrating sun.
- Verandah usually a lower-pitched extension of the main roof.
- Use of simple double-hung sash windows.
- Minimal roof overhang.

- Painted white or yellow.

### Inside

- Interiors restrained with simple detailing.
- Layout comprising a rectangular block bisected by a passage of 1-2.5 metres in depth, with the drawing and dining rooms in the front, bedrooms behind and the kitchen and scullery in a lean-to section across the back.
- Fireplaces placed in the side walls or back-to-back in the central dividing walls.
- Hall commonly divided by a decorative arch or sometimes a timber screen.

- Flooring generally wide, pit sawn boards with tongue and groove edges.

- Lath and plaster walls.

- Plaster cornices and ceiling roses.

### Garden

- The productive garden a main element.
- Fences of simple paling construction in small holdings, more substantial in larger residences.
- A limited range of ornamental plants.
- Paths made from local materials such as crushed limestone or clay over sand.

### Maintenance Advice

- Rising damp is a common cause of deterioration in stone and brick buildings and is recognised by fretting masonry, mould, peeling paint, a musty smell and a horizontal tide mark on internal walls.

To prevent rising damp remove areas for water catchment and dampness. Remove mounds of soil and debris adjacent to walls and maintain or replace gutters and downpipes to keep stormwater away from building foundations. It is important to consult an experienced professional on appropriate remedial works, such as the replacement of the damp-proof course, to prevent further deterioration.

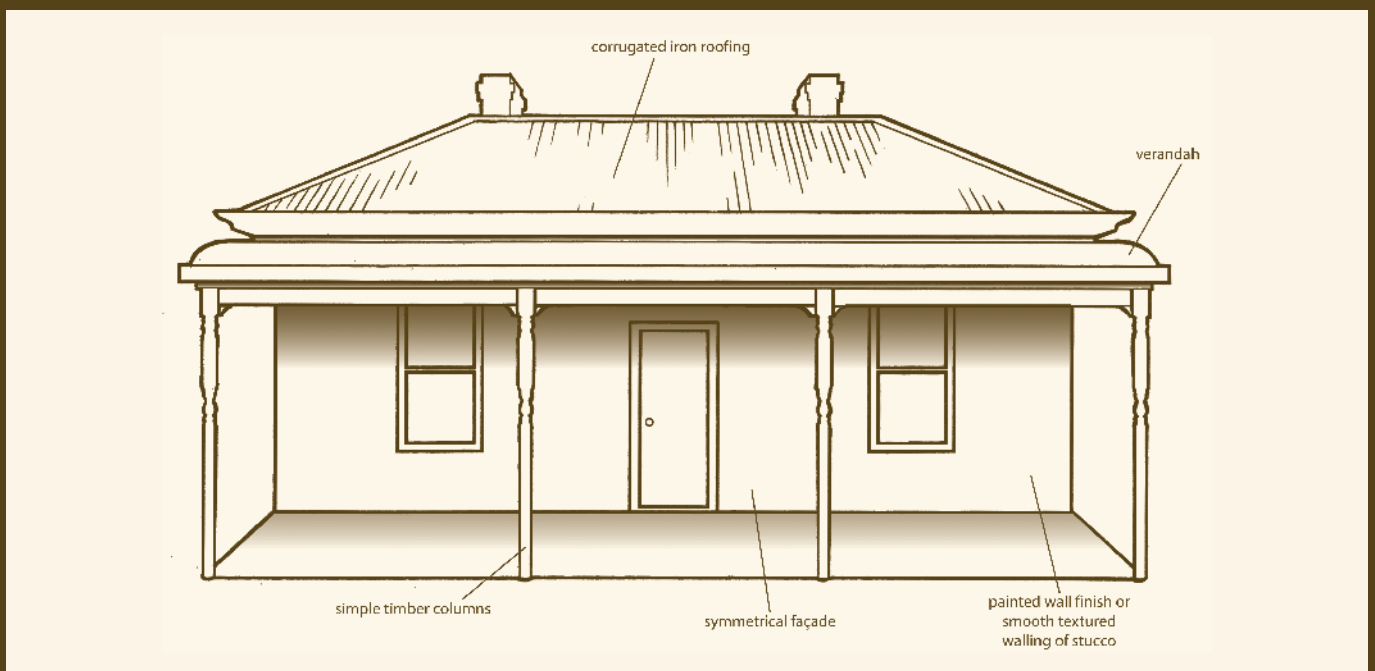


### Renovation Advice

- Do as little as possible but as much as necessary.
- Additions should be carefully inspected to locate original parts before demolition occurs. It is not unusual to find original features stored in sheds or adapted for new uses.
- Before starting any physical works, research old records, photographs and plans/elevations to assist in an authentic restoration.

### Health and Safety

- Asbestos was a widely used building material until the early 1980s. Prior to commencing any works on your home it is important you establish if there is any asbestos present in the existing building.
- Lead paints were also commonly used until the 1980s and can be toxic. Consult your local hardware supplier about the safest method of removal.



### References

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Stapleton, I and M (1997) *Australian House Styles*, The Flannel Flower Press  
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