

## 19.1 NOTICE OF MOTION - 9 CENTENNIAL AVENUE, CHATSWOOD

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:** DEBRA JUST – GENERAL MANAGER

**AUTHOR:** DEBRA JUST – GENERAL MANAGER

**CITY STRATEGY LINK:** 3.1.3 LOCAL CHARACTER

**MEETING DATE:** 27 FEBRUARY 2017

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### **Purpose of Report**

Councillor Saville has indicated her intention to move the following Notice of Motion:

### **Motion**

**That, as a priority, Willoughby City Council will expedite the processes to:**

- a) **Commit to list the property located at 9 Centennial Ave, as a Local Heritage Item in the LEP;**
- b) **That funds are allocated in the present budget to enable this process to occur:  
and**
- c) **In the meantime, that if/when considering re-zoning proposals and new DAs in the vicinity, that the property is regarded as a future heritage item.**

**(Refer to Willoughby District Historical Society nomination of this property as a local heritage item)**

### **Background**

The property at 9 Centennial Ave is located in a landmark position. Proposed re-zonings and changes to increase housing density near transport hubs will impact heritage values in this area.

Its first occupants/owners of 9 Centennial Ave 1896-1914 was W. R. J. Jenkins. The Jenkins family were one of the first families to settle in Chatswood. Later it was owned by the Jones family, then later by A. J. Benjamin, who ran the A. J. Benjamin's store in Victoria Ave., Chatswood. Benjamin's store at that time, and for many years, was the largest retail store in Chatswood & probably the north shore.

The house is substantial, of distinctive design. Castleden is thought to have designed this house. Many Castleden designed houses have been demolished, which makes those remaining even more precious for present and future appreciation of all concerned.

Chatswood West is one of the earliest areas of European settlement in Willoughby, the earliest land grants occurred in 1795, some of the earliest recorded in Sydney. However, this area is under-represented in conservation precincts, with few heritage items listed, and consequently much has already been lost or is under threat of demolition. This area has a variety of architecture with a few dairies, farmhouses, Victorian cottages, distinctive Castleden houses federation houses remaining.

Heritage buildings and places symbolise the shared values of the community, what we have achieved as a community. Communities are united by shared memory and shared values.

**Social Significance of the Jenkins family to early development of Chatswood, including farming, agriculture & wholesale fruit & vegetables.**

The alluvial soils along the eastern banks of the Lane Cove River between Blue Gum Creek & Swaines Creek were developed as orchards by the Jenkins & Fullers families, descendants of William Henry in the mid nineteenth century Fullers Road developed from the track linking William Henry's Millwood Farm on the Lane Cove River to his other farm on the ridge.

Thomas Jenkins (1829-1890) was born in the Lane Cove district. In 1847 he opened a fruit business in the York Street markets, & the fruit business remained in the family until 1963. He married Maria Maher, a granddaughter of William Henry in 1849. Between 1851 & 1872 he brought 272 acres at approximately two pounds per acre.

Fruit & timber were sent down the Lane Cove River to market from his Millwood estate near Fullers Bridge, from Jenkins Wharf (Willoughby Heritage Study 1986,p.5, & The West Ward, 1988 p.26).

Mrs. Jenkins was born in 1830 in the Hunters Hill portion of the then district, & came with her husband to reside in their cottage, in about 1860, in the Lane Cove River locality now West Ward. Most of the family of 12 were born in the cottage the cottage roof tiles were made from clay from the adjacent ground. At that time most people were living in huts, engaged in timber cutting. (Willoughby's Fifty Years 1865-1915, Leplastrier,p.23).

As most of Mrs Jenkins family of 12 were born in the cottage - W. R. J. Jenkins was one of these. W. R. J. Jenkins owned the property at 9 Centennial Ave from 1896, & thereafter it was in the estate of W. R. J. Jenkins from 1911-1914.

**Social significance of A. J. BENJAMIN to the social & economic development of Chatswood, including retail.**

Mr. A. J. Benjamin owned the residence 'Toonburra', 9 Centennial Ave., Chatswood, from 1932-35 during the time of his significant contribution to the retail development of Chatswood. The grand house reflected his important position.

Mr. A. J. Benjamin was born in London. By 1906 he had gained 30 years local experience including accountancy. Mr. Benjamin became managing partner in the firm founded 20 years previously by Messrs Hill Bros. Known as; 'Universal Providers' since 1895. It then became known as A. J. Benjamin's shop or 'Benjamin's' in Victoria Ave., Chatswood. Mr. A. J. Benjamin managed Benjamin's for 10 years, during which time the business 'flourished' & contributed to the economic development of the area. The growth of the building material branch of the business was enormous, indicating the general progress of the district. The output of 3 tons of lime per week in 1906 increased ten times that amount during WW1

In 1913 additional storage was added, windows were replaced. Stables were updated to accommodate 14 horses to deliver goods, & the company secured adjoining premises to double their size. The shop carried varied stock including an ironmongery section, for building purposes, a large drapery section, a grocery department, & the store held wine & spirit & tobacco licences.

Benjamin's remained Chatswood's own emporium until 1965 when it became Woolworths store. Its decline reflected the shift of commercial interest to the eastern side of the railway after WW11. The business had been described as 'flourishing' & was for many years the largest retail store certainly in Chatswood & probably on the lower north shore, until the arrival of Grace Bros. (Willoughby's Fifty Years 1865-1915, Leplastrier, p.88-89).

**Property Name & Address:** 9 Centennial Avenue, Chatswood

The property has previously been named 'Eloura' (1896-1918), 9 'Toonburra' (1920-1935) 9 'Corella' (1938-1960) and it has been known as 'Jenkins House' locally.

**Real Property Description:** Lot Cr pt 63 D . Part of the Fullers Estate

**Building Type:** Residence

**Building Style/Date:** Federation. 1896

**Developer/Architect/Builder:**

Oral history, local knowledge and available documentation all indicate that Frederick George Castleden was the architect for 9 Centennial Ave.. Based on these aspects, researcher Kathie Rieth, who has been locating and documenting the projects of Frederick George Castleden, Castleden & Lake and Waterhouse & Lake 1888 to 1924 is confident No. 9 is the work of Frederick George Castleden. Castleden lived in Whitton Road/Centennial Ave where he designed a number of houses.

**Description:**

No. 9 Centennial Avenue, Chatswood, is a substantial two storey face brick house of Federation style, set in a wide tree lined street of mostly single dwellings, with 2 schools & more recent medium density housing on the opposite side of the road. . It appears to be in very good condition, with sound foundations and tiled roof. Intact original features include shingled gables, chimneys, ornate timber bargeboards, timber framed windows and curved lintels, and a covered verandah with timber supports.

**Historical Context:**

No. 9 is to all accounts one of the first houses built in the street, and its style completely identifiable with the era in which it was built, and with the importance of the original owners. It therefore is an essential ingredient of this streetscape because it marks a particular stage in the development of the area. The position, style & scale of the house reflects the important position in the community held by its owners.

No. 9 Centennial is situated in a prominent landmark position & has sweeping views of the district & to the west of Sydney. It is most probably one of the oldest buildings still standing in Centennial Ave.

Its early owners and occupants not only made significant contributions to the development of Chatswood, but also to the early development of the city of Sydney and to the region.

Its first occupants/owners 1896-1914 were W. R. J. Jenkins & the Jenkins family, descendants from one of the first families to settle in Chatswood. Then, 9 Centennial was owned by the Jones family, & later by A. J. Benjamin, who ran the A. J. Benjamin's store in Victoria Ave., Chatswood, which at that time, & for many years, was the largest retail store in Chatswood & probably the north shore . (refer to appendix).

FG Castleden, the architect believed to have designed No.9 Centennial Ave, not only worked for the Government Architect during a time of intense building activity throughout the state, but having re-entered private practice, later became a very significant architect and town planner in Newcastle. In 1919 he took his son Archer into the practice; one of their most revered projects is the completion of Christ Church Cathedral.

Castleden has significant local associations. He lived in Chatswood from 1891 to 1898 and c.1903-1908, and designed a number of residences for high profile clients in the Chatswood area, in Centennial Avenue, Mowbray Road, Pacific Highway and in Beaconsfield Road. Of these only No.9 Centennial Avenue and Nos. 2a, 6-10, 14 and 28 Beaconsfield Road remain. Castleden's home in Centennial Avenue has been demolished; his timber home in Beaconsfield Road (No.40) was moved to the Hunter Valley in the 1990s. It's possible that Castleden designed 'Chislehurst' in Centennial Avenue, owned from 1906 by the Hordern family and later demolished to build Chatswood High School.

## Statement of Significance

### Pioneer Historic land use, social & economic development of Chatswood & the region. Important architect, Castleden & prominence of landowners.

- **Historical** - No. 9 is believed to be one of the first substantial residences built in Centennial Ave., (1896) and the last remaining house from a group of houses of that period designed by the architect Castleden before he moved to Beaconsfield Road.
- **Centennial Ave 1888**: Named in celebration of the Centenary of NSW. (Formerly it was named Fathers Rd, after Fathers, an early settler & orchardist).
- Centennial Avenue is one of the most significant streets in Chatswood as its name suggests. It also houses one of the earliest schools built on the north shore, the largest area of open space close to the CBD, Chatswood High School.
- Centennial Avenue has been home to a number of Australia's most eminent politicians, including former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (who attended 'Astraea' College in Centennial Ave.); former Willoughby Mayor & councillor Greg Bartels; & former leader of the NSW Liberal party, Kerrie Chikarovsky.
- **Jenkins St., 1898**: Named after the family of Thomas Jenkins, an early settler, orchardist & landowner who resided at the property 'Millwood' on the Lane Cove River from the 1850's. Thomas Jenkins & wife raised their family at Millwood. Jenkins St was also named after W. R. J. Jenkins, the first owner of 9 Centennial Ave. In recognition of their early settlement & the significant contributions made by the Jenkins family, the site of original farmhouse, the remaining kitchen building & building relics in Lane Cove National Park have been identified as heritage items.
- **Aesthetic** – No. 9 is one of a unique group of houses believed to have been designed by the same architect and built within a short period of time. Only 4 remain. The houses were built while Castleden lived in the vicinity of Whitton Road & Centennial Avenue. It is presumed that he designed 'Chislehurst', 24 Centennial Ave., the house on the corner of Whitton & Centennial, now demolished and 9 Centennial Ave. The houses are unique because they represent different styles popular in the one decade, 1895-1905, and accordingly an expression of the architect's diversity of Queen Anne Federation & Federation Arts & Crafts.
- **Technical / research** – The good condition is due to their sound construction, good and innovative design, and the use of excellent materials. It is probable that the bricks were locally fired, and at least some of the timber locally milled.
- **Social** - Both architect and residents played significant roles not only in the immediate area but also statewide. The high quality of No.9 Centennial Ave reflects the social and economic standing of its first & subsequent owners.
- W. R. J. Jenkins, was the first owner of 9 Centennial Ave. in 1896. The Jenkins family was one of the most significant families in the district, & its members played a significant role in the social & commercial development of the area. The Jenkins family developed one of the first orchards along the eastern shores of the Lane Cove River. They were descendants of William Henry in the mid nineteenth century Fullers Road developed from the track linking William Henry's Millwood Farm on the Lane Cove River to his other farm on the ridge. Thomas Jenkins had a stall at the wholesale fruit market in Sydney from 1847, fruit & timber were sent down the Lane Cove River to market from his Millwood estate near Fullers Bridge, & the fruit business remained in the family until 1963. (Willoughby Heritage Study 1986,p.5).

- Mr. A. J. Benjamin, owned the residence 'Toonburra' 9 Centennial Ave., Chatswood, from 1932-35 during the time of his most significant contribution to the retail development of Chatswood. He managed 'Benjamin's' store, & the business was described as 'flourishing' & was for many years the largest retail store certainly in Chatswood & probably on the lower north shore, until the arrival of Grace Bros. The grand house at 9 Centennial reflected his important position & contribution to Chatswood.

**This nomination is being submitted because of the new evidence available to support the nomination.**

#### **Research sources:**

- Oral & written testimony of past and present residents, and descendants of FG Castleden
- Rate books of Willoughby Council
- Land Title records
- Electoral rolls and Sands directories
- The West Ward, by Nancy Booker & Ida Bennett (1988)
- Willoughby's Fifty Years 1865-1915, A Retrospect by Claude Leplastrier
- Willoughby Heritage Study Thematic History 1986
- Willoughby Heritage Study (Falk & Jensen, Willoughby Municipal Council, 1989)
- "A pictorial guide to identifying Australian architecture ... " by Richard Apperly, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds
- "Newcastle Morning Herald & Miners' Advocate" passim
- "The work of FG Castleden 1907-1919: an architectural thesis" MS by JA Sara, 1964.
- "FG Castleden " MS by Les Reedman.
- (For further information refer to WDHS Heritage nomination for 9 Centennial Ave, and for Centennial Ave Conservation Zone 2005.: RAI A Biographical information about Architect Castleden which lists some of his significant architectural achievements after living in Chatswood.
- Refer to Kathy Reith report.

#### **General Manager's Comments**

Heritage Listing of 9 Centennial Ave, Chatswood has been considered by Council on a number of previous occasions as detailed below:

##### 1996 - Review of Proposed Heritage listings in the City of Willoughby (prepared by Robert A Moore Pty Ltd)

- This review recommended that the property be included within the Schedule of Local Heritage Items.
- It was subsequently included as a Local Heritage Item in Draft WLEP 1995 (Amendment 9) for exhibition.
- Council resolved not to proceed with amendment of the WLEP for the inclusion of 9 Centennial Ave as a Heritage Item.

##### 2005 - Nomination of Inclusion as Local Heritage Item by Willoughby District Historical Society

- A request to include 9 Centennial Avenue as a Local Heritage Item was received by Willoughby District Historical Society on 24 May 2005.
- This was incorporated into a Heritage Review undertaken by Graham Brooks and Associates which subsequently recommended the property be considered for individual listing as an item of heritage significance.

- Council resolved to inspect the property and to seek to determine the willingness of the owners to such inspection.
- No response was received from the owners. As such the property was not inspected and Council took no further action.

#### 2009 - Notice of Motion by Councillor Saville

- A Notice of Motion by Councillor Saville to expedite the process to commit to list 9 Centennial Avenue as a Local Heritage Item was considered by Council at its meeting of 23 March 2009.
- Council resolved to defer the matter to enable the owner to be advised of the proposed listing.
- An objection to the listing was subsequently received from the Solicitor on behalf of the owners outlining the following concerns:
  - o Inconsistencies in the history and the architect of 9 Centennial Avenue, Chatswood;
  - o Council had twice previously considered the heritage listing of the property;
  - o The property owner's age and financial situation.
- Council, at its meeting of 25 May 2009 resolved to expedite the process to commit to list the property as a Local Heritage Item.

#### 2010 - Exhibition of Draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2009 (later to become Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012)

- In response to the Council resolution of 25 May 2009, 9 Centennial Avenue was incorporated as a Local Heritage Item into Draft Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2009 for exhibition which occurred between 25 March, 2010 and 20 May, 2010.
- Two submissions from family members of the owner of 9 Centennial Avenue were received during the exhibition which maintained objection to the listing.
- A report to the Council meeting of 3 November, 2010 recommended that inclusion of 9 Centennial Avenue as a Heritage Item should proceed.
- Council subsequently resolved to:
  - o Amend Draft WLEP 2009 by removing 9 Centennial Avenue, Chatswood from Schedule 5 and the Heritage Map; and
  - o That a full Council inspection be held at 9 Centennial Avenue, Chatswood.
- The owner of the property was contacted. The Solicitor acting for the owner advised that the owner is not prepared to allow Councillors to inspect her property.
- On 22 November, 2010 a petition from residents in West Ward was submitted to Council requesting that Council investigate the possibility of 9 Centennial Avenue being listed as a Local Heritage Item.
- Council, at its meeting of 28 February 2011, resolved to take no further action to visit the property at 9 Centennial Avenue, Chatswood, at this stage.

### **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council consider the Notice of Motion from Councillor Saville.**

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