Which Fence For My House?

Civic Trust of Wagga Wagga Inc.
Wagga Wagga

New South Wales

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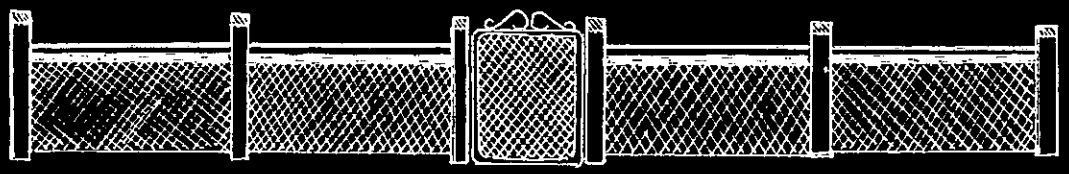
House and Fence Styles for Wagga Wagga 1860 - 1960



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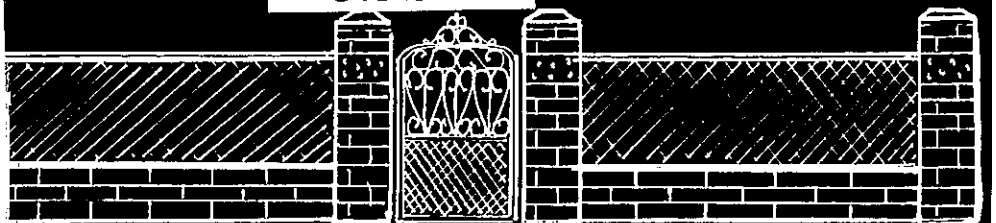

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House and Fence Styles for Wagga Wagga 1860 - 1960

Civic Trust

of Wagga Wagga

RIVERINA
REGIONAL
LIBRARY

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PREFACE

This booklet has been produced in response to the continuing interest in the conservation of period buildings in Wagga Wagga. It contains brief descriptions of the various domestic architectural styles found in the central area of this city and provides a basic understanding of why particular buildings look the way they do. Owners of older buildings in Wagga Wagga will be able to make informed decisions when planning alterations to their properties by using this publication and by consulting the Heritage Advisor, Council of the City of Wagga Wagga and the Riverina Branch of the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

Most publications with guidelines for the extension or alteration of period buildings refer to architectural styles and building scales typical of the metropolitan centres. Because of the tyranny of distance and rural conservatism it was often ten to fifteen years after a certain architectural style reached the peak of fashion in the cities, before it became popular in country areas. As a result, styles were modified and adapted to suit the local social and economic conditions.

The regional adaptations of each architectural style, and the fence styles of the corresponding period, are described briefly to provide an account of their evolution in Wagga Wagga.

Front fences play an important role in determining the character of the houses to which they belong and the streetscape of which they are a part. They announce the property to the world and it is here that the household makes its first impression. The form, scale and style of the front fence is usually determined by the style of the house and the building materials used. An enhanced visual link between the house and its fence is created when design elements from the house are incorporated into the fence.

BACKGROUND

In the **Colonial** period, while allowing views between the street, garden and house, fences primarily separated the domestic sphere from the disorder of the early urban development.

During the **Victorian** and **Federation** periods the colonial philosophy continued as fences became increasingly elaborate and larger in scale relative to the more pretentious and extensively decorated houses to which they belonged. Between 1920 and 1940 there was a proliferation of styles (for example, **Californian Bungalow** and **Spanish Mission**). Houses generally became smaller in scale, more functional and less decorative. The fences also were reduced in height and constructed in durable, less elaborate materials.

The provision of town water to most urban areas, together with changing social values and increased opportunities for home ownership, led to the development of interest in ornamental domestic gardens.

In the **Post War** period fences were rarely more than 0.5m high so that the house and its surrounding lawns and gardens could be effectively displayed and viewed from the street. The small scale decorative details of these fences frequently repeated those of the house, thus providing a visual link between them.

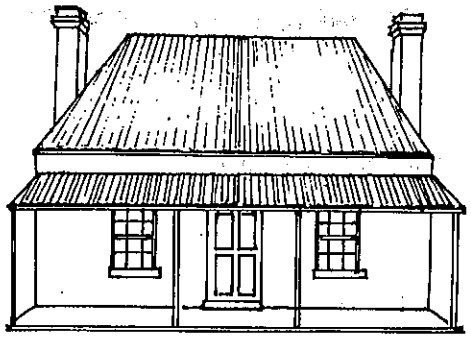
Since the late 1970s changing social values have prompted a perceived need for increased privacy and security. As a result many front fences of 1.8m or more separate houses and their occupants from the street and wider community. In older urban areas not only are these fences and walls unsympathetic to the architectural style of the houses, they also visually interrupt the streetscape, thus reducing the character and quality of that streetscape.

High masonry fences frequently interfere with air circulation and cast dense shadows. These changes may adversly affect the growth and health of garden plants. Noise may actually be increased and amplified if sound from the street is deflected onto hard surfaces, for example, masonry fences and house walls.

It has been noted that, while offering a degree of privacy and security, high front fences also shield the activities of intruders and may therefore contribute to instances of repeated robberies. Low to medium height screening fences provide the opportunity for informal interaction between the street and the property owners, facilitating the establishment of neighbourhood networks.

COLONIAL STYLE HOUSES

1860s - 1890s
Wagga Wagga

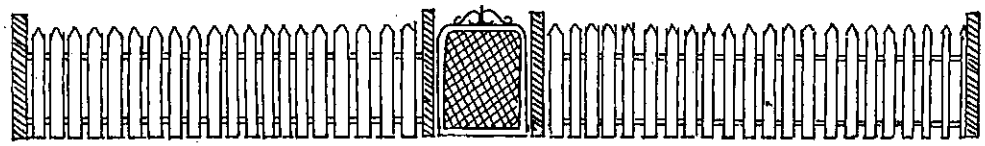


Specific Features

- Symmetrical form with centrally placed front door and matched windows either side;
- sash windows of twelve or more small panes; larger panes of glass not available in Wagga Wagga until after the late 1880s and then reserved for prestigious buildings;
- verandah across facade supported by timber posts;
- verandahs have simple timber decorative details; brackets and chamfered posts common;
- high, steeply pitched roofs of timber shingles, later covered by corrugated iron when available;
- walls of locally made bricks or locally milled timber;
- early bricks tended to be porous and external walls were frequently rendered and limewashed;
- usually built on large blocks of land which have been subsequently sub-divided.

Specific Influences

- Based on English Georgian architecture of an earlier period, with the adaptation from Colonial India of verandahs for weather protection;
- a separate kitchen building was linked to the house by a covered walkway;
- groups of small Colonial style four room cottages were built in central Wagga Wagga by speculative investor/builders to accommodate the increasing workforce;
- this basic symmetric form persisted in Wagga Wagga into the 20th Century when it was modified to incorporate the verandah and window details of the later Victorian and Federation architectural styles.

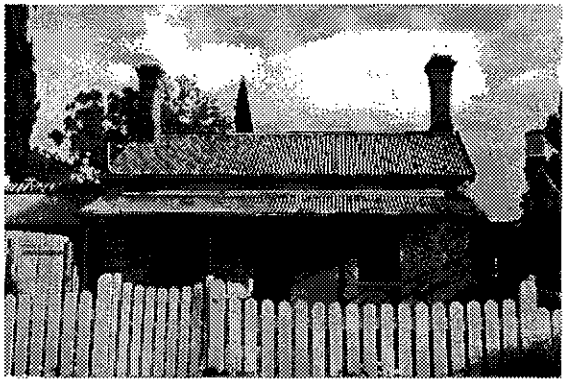


COLONIAL STYLE FENCES

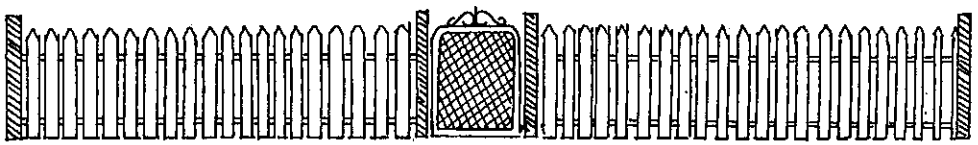
1860s - 1890s
Wagga Wagga

Specific Features

- Locally milled timber frame;
- simple timber pickets in panel sections between fence posts;
- straight top of fence;
- overall fence height no more than 1.0m for small cottages with small front gardens, 1.5m for larger houses set back from the street and with extensive gardens.

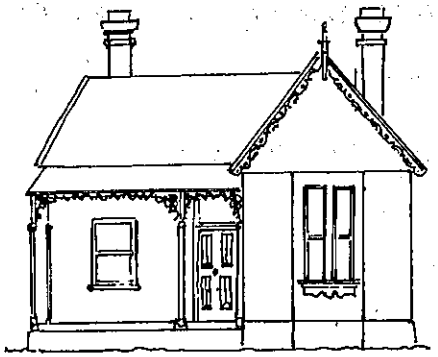


Colonial fences were primarily functional. They separate the household from the disorder of early rural urban activity which would have included straying animals, and runaway horses and buggies. Timber pickets were universal because other materials were unavailable or expensive to transport until the Great Southern Railway Line was extended to Wagga Wagga in 1879. Locally made bricks were in demand and reserved for building works of higher priority than fencing, while cast iron palisade fencing was expensive and used for only the most prestigious buildings (the railway station and bank buildings, for example).



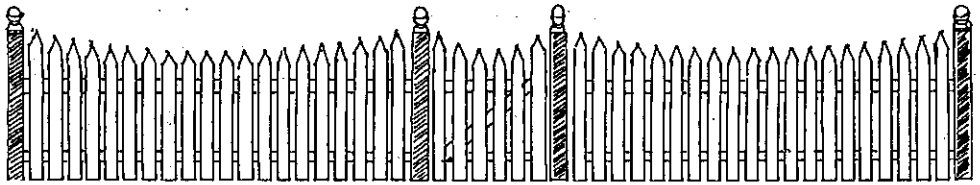
VICTORIAN STYLE HOUSES

1880s - 1910s
Wagga Wagga



Specific Features

- Asymmetrical buildings;
- steeply pitched roof gables;
- rooms projected at one end of the facade and often featured a bay window;
- elaborately worked timber bargeboards featuring fretwork and turned finials;
- more elaborate verandah decoration with cast iron brackets and friezes;
- tall chimneys with painted decorative mouldings;
- classical mouldings around doors and windows;
- classical brackets under eaves;
- larger windows, with larger glass panes;
- front entrances featured small, multi-coloured glass panes.

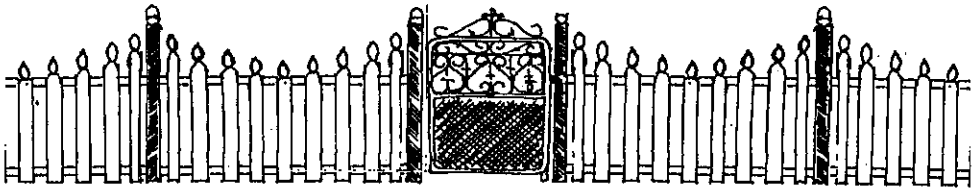


VICTORIAN STYLE HOUSES

1880s - 1910s
Wagga Wagga

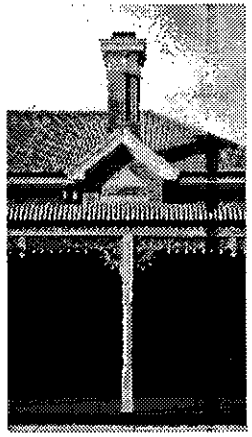
Specific Influences

- Increasing wealth generated by pastoral and agricultural consolidation;
- **Gothic** influences in this period reflected the nostalgia for England and a love of romantic and picturesque details. The steeply pitched roof gables with decorative barge boards as at 1 Trail Street and 46 Coleman Street;
- **Italianate** influences were based upon classic details borrowed in England from the Italian Renaissance period, and adapted in Australia to convey aspirations of grandeur. South Wagga Public School is an example;
- **Boom** style followed the period of rapid economic growth associated with the discovery of gold. Here mass production of materials made formerly hand crafted decorative items, (cast iron lace for example) available to all who could afford them. The developing rail system meant that these materials could be transported to country regions;
- All of the above influences were demonstrated and adapted in the domestic and public architecture of Wagga Wagga.



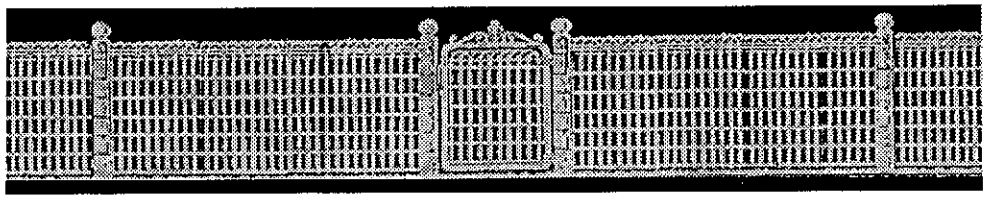
VICTORIAN STYLE HOUSES

1880s - 1910s
Wagga Wagga



Architectural details typical of Victorian style houses in Wagga Wagga showing;

- *cast iron verandah decoration;*
- *classic mouldings on the brickwork of chimneys;*
- *classic mouldings under the eaves.*



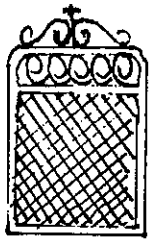
VICTORIAN STYLE FENCES

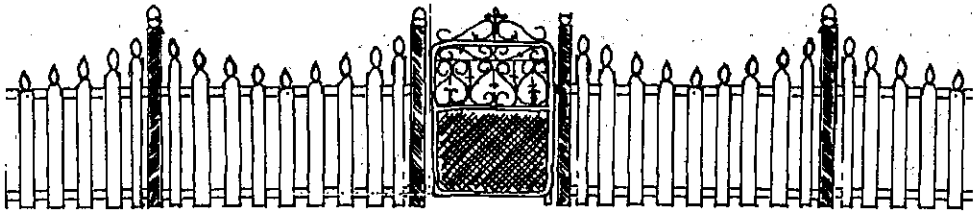
1880s - 1910
Wagga Wagga

Specific Features

- Locally milled timber frame with pickets in panel sections between posts;
- straight or scalloped top of fence;
- fancy pickets with Gothic or acorn shaped heads;
- fence posts capped with moulded or turned finials;
- matching timber picket gates;
- iron frame gates with curled wrought iron above a wire mesh lower section (after 1900);
- evergreen hedges were often planted behind picket fences;
- pickets and fence frame usually painted white or cream with a contasting colour for posts;
- twisted and crimped wire attached to fence frame.

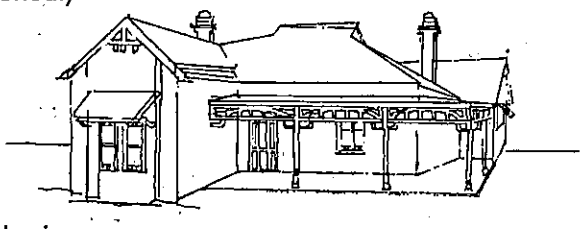
During this period timber picket fences remained popular in Wagga Wagga because of the availability of local timber, but fences became more elaborate in decorative detailing towards the turn of the century. A wider variety of materials manufactured in Sydney and Melbourne was becoming available due to improved rail transport. Number 77 Johnston Street is a good example of Victorian cast iron palisade fencing, but this style of fencing was not usual in Wagga Wagga, and generally not fashionable after 1914. Some iron fencing materials were now manufactured locally by blacksmiths and in local foundries.





FEDERATION STYLE HOUSES

(influenced by the Edwardian Period.)
1900s - 1920s
Wagga Wagga

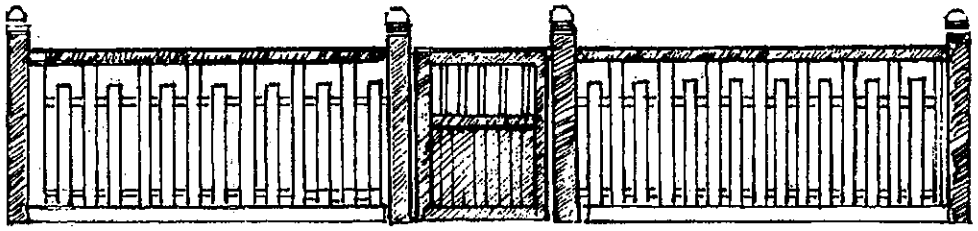


Specific Features

- Asymmetric in form;
- rooms projecting from main body of house;
- large roof masses, broken gables, and smaller false gables;
- tall chimneys with brick strap work and painted roughcast decoration;
- external walls red face brick - NOT painted;
- roughcast panels on chimneys, gables, under eaves and below windows painted white or cream;
- extensive use of verandahs extending across facade and around sides of house;
- turned timber verandah posts;
- elaborate timber verandah decoration, barge boards and gable infill;
- lead light or coloured glass windows;
- external woodwork painted white or cream.

Specific Influences

- National economic prosperity and confidence following Federation;
- curved forms and floral motifs in timber, plaster and leadlight were expressions of Art Nouveau which had its origins in the Arts and Craft Movement of the Northern Hemisphere;
- adaptation of these motifs throughout Australia incorporated native flora and fauna;
- stylised sunburst motifs in timber verandah brackets, and gable infill, were expressions of national identity;
- by late 1894 pressed metal for ceilings became available.

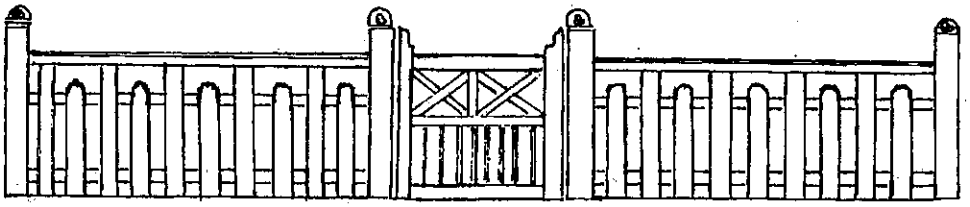


FEDERATION STYLE HOUSES

(influenced by the Edwardian Period.)
1900s - 1920s
Wagga Wagga

General overlapping of Victorian and the 'new' Federation decorative elements. For example, see the cast iron lace with turned timber verandah posts at 20 Simmons Street and 102 Peter Street and the chimneys with classic Victorian moulding above a Federation roofline and verandah at 77 Johnston Street.
Pressed metal was generally available in Wagga Wagga by the turn of the century as it was light weight and relatively inexpensive to transport by rail. It was frequently used for wall cladding as well as for ceilings.

Curvilinear Art Nouveau leadlight gave way to small textured coloured glass panes at the top and bottom of windows.
During the 1920's turned timber verandah posts and decorative forms were replaced by heavier squared off timbers on verandahs, eaves and gables.
Local economic consolidation in this period meant more people could afford the mass produced building materials. This led to an increased attention to the details of domestic architecture at all levels in Wagga Wagga.



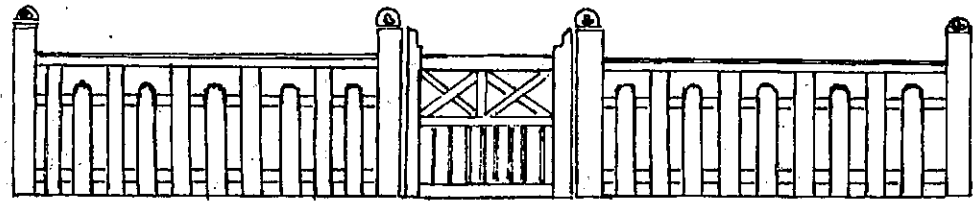
FEDERATION STYLE FENCES
1900s - 1920s
Wagga Wagga

Specific Features

- Timber picket fences became more visually 'solid';
- pickets arranged in a variety of combinations;
- fretwork patterns cut into the pickets;
- a straight capping or top rail frequently extended above the pickets and between the fence posts;
- timber gateposts were chamfered and had incised decoration;
- timber fences painted white or cream/buff combinations;
- increased use of rolled steel ribbon for fence panels and gates;
- twisted and crimped wire attached to timber fence frame.

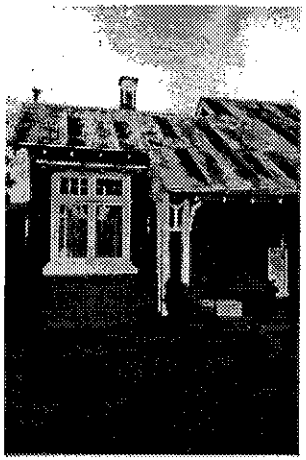
Specific Influences

- Fretwork patterns cut into pickets often repeated the Art Nouveau style motifs of the timber verandah decoration;
- increased availability of mass produced iron, steel and wire fencing materials.

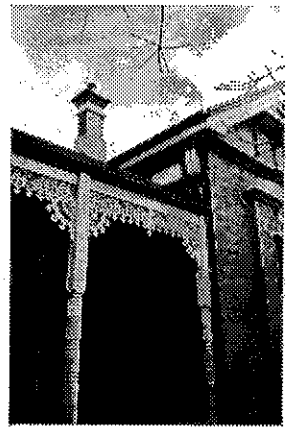


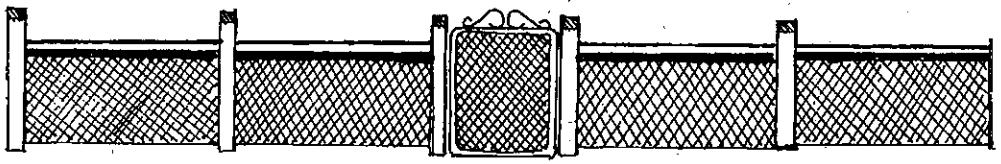
FEDERATION STYLE FENCES
1900s - 1920s
Wagga Wagga

Victorian style picket fences persisted well into the 20th Century, particularly with smaller Federation style cottages.
Owing to improved transport, and the establishment of manufacturing trades and services in Wagga Wagga, the availability and variety of affordable fencing materials increased.
Timber framed fences with chain wire attached to the flat edge of the arris rail were the choice of fence for modest Federation style houses (see 52 Simmons Street).



Overlapping Victorian and Federation stylistic details typical in Wagga Wagga





BETWEEN THE WARS
1918 - 1939
Wagga Wagga

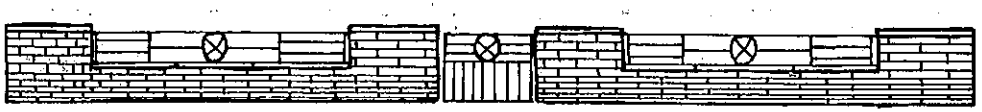
COLONIAL REVIVAL
CALIFORNIAN BUNGALOW
SPANISH MISSION
MODERNE OR OCEAN LINER STYLE

From the beginning of the 20th Century, with the gradual increase in suburban development and the opportunity for home ownership, there was also an increasing interest in the development of domestic architectural styles which were affordable and practical. Architects and builders looked to Europe, and particularly to West Coast America for inspiration.

Few of the many introduced architectural styles adopted in Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide became immediately popular in the distant Riverina. When the influences of these styles were seen it was usually in a modified form adapted to local climatic conditions, available building materials, and the socio-economic conditions of the time.

Because of the established pastoral and agricultural industries and broad economic base, the Wagga Wagga district did not historically suffer the severe economic extremes of 'boom and bust' cycles of other centres. This is reflected in the steady urban development of the city after the late 1880s, the gradual transition of architectural building styles and in the overlapping of these styles.

As the service infrastructure of the town developed and with changing land values during the early 20th Century, urban consolidation began in Wagga Wagga, particularly north of Wollundry Lagoon.



BETWEEN THE WARS
1918 - 1939
Wagga Wagga

No longer were large house blocks with stables, chicken runs, orchards and pit toilets necessary or viable. Many of these large blocks were subdivided. As a result, around Kincaid, Gurwood and Tarcutta Streets, original 19th Century **Colonial** style cottages are interspersed with later **Federation** or **Californian Bungalow** style houses. This mix of architectural styles provides a visual record of Wagga Wagga's development.

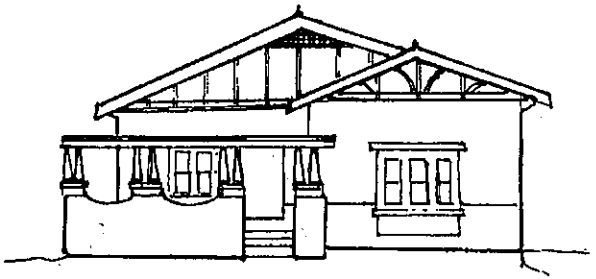
The Colonial Revival style represented a return to the symmetry and simplicity of the earlier Colonial style, and demonstrated a break with the more ornate traditions of the Victorian and Edwardian periods. This style was introduced to Australia about 1912 but did not become poplar in Wagga Wagga until the late 1920s. Variations of this style in both small and large houses are now represented in Wagga Wagga. The style has remained popular throughout this century with many modifications and adaptations of style which reflect the contemporary trends and building technologies.

There are only a few full expressions of the **Californian Bungalow** style in Wagga Wagga. Instead, local property developers adapted elements of this 'new' style to the familiar and accepted Victorian and Federation house plans. In this way a distinctive regional style was developed. The consistent 'overlapping' of these three styles determines the 'Edwardian Bungalow' character of much of central Wagga Wagga, for example Erin Street and the southern end of Peter Street.

The **Spanish Mission** and **Moderne** styles were each popular for relatively short periods in Wagga Wagga. A number of large houses in the Turvey Park area set these trends, followed by more modest expressions throughout the central area.

CALIFORNIAN BUNGALOW STYLE HOUSES

1920s - 1940s
Wagga Wagga

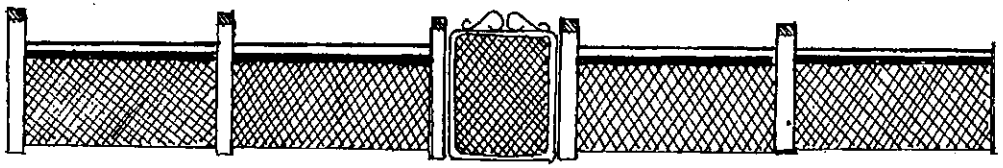


Specific Features

- Single storey;
- asymmetrical;
- large roof masses;
- terracotta roof tiles;
- low pitched, wide gables across facade;
- shingled, rough cast or timber battened gable ends;
- massive pillars support flat verandah roof or wide gabled porch;
- roughcast or red face brick exterior walls;
- low masonry verandah balustrade.

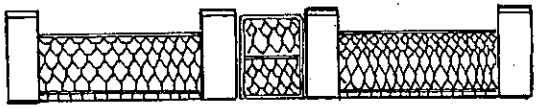
Specific Influences

- Derived from West Coast American architectural trends;
- linked to the philosophies of the British Arts and Crafts movement;
- reflected the interest in craftsmanship and simplicity;
- rising costs and scarce post-war building materials encouraged the acceptance of smaller scale suburban housing.



CALIFORNIAN BUNGALOW STYLE FENCES

1920s - 1940s
Wagga Wagga

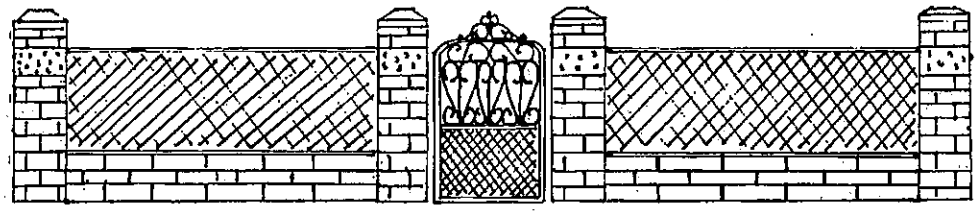


Specific Features

- Masonry plinth with piers from 0.5m to 1.0m high;
- masonry piers may have roughcast or rendered panels to provide a visual link between the house and fence;
- panels of chain wire between piers framed by rough galvanised pipe;
- roughcast fence panels painted cream or buff tones, otherwise fences un-painted.

Great variety of fences with round pipe rails, and chain wire panels between masonry plinth posts.
Evergreen hedges remained popular.
A popular alternative was a timber frame fence of no more than 1.0m high constructed with chain wire fixed to the arris rail across the top.
In Wagga Wagga the flat edge of the arris rail is usually facing away from the street.

By the 1920s to the 1940s many original timber picket fences were failing. The most expedient replacement in Wagga Wagga was the timber frame and chain wire fence described above.



COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE HOUSES

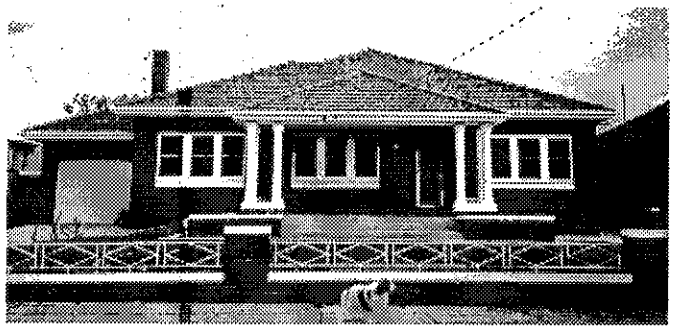
1930s - 1950s
Wagga Wagga

Specific Features

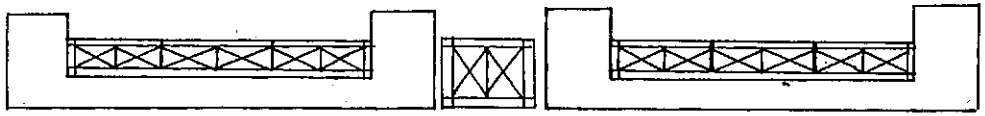
- Symmetric buildings;
- small pane windows with shutters;
- hipped roofs, usually tiled;
- verandahs with low balustrades of decorative iron or steel;
- strong horizontal lines;
- restrained decorative details.

Specific Influences

- Return to symmetry and simplicity;
- people were able to relate comfortably to the scale and proportions of these houses.



This style was introduced to the metropolitan regions after about 1912, but did not become popular in Wagga Wagga until after the 1930s. Individual colonial revival style houses continued to be built in Wagga Wagga throughout the 1960s and incorporated the new building techniques and materials of that time. Good examples of this style are to be seen at 7 Grandview Avenue and 58 Coleman Street.



COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE FENCES

1930s - 1950s
Wagga Wagga

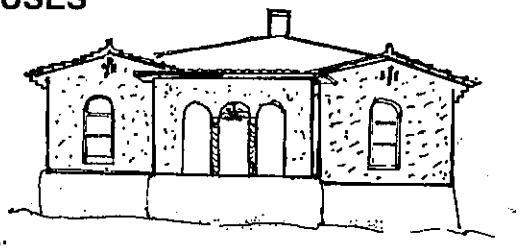
Special Features

- Masonry plinths and low piers;
- decorative iron or steel panels between piers repeating the formal design of the verandah balustrades;
- decorative panels painted to match house trims;
- brickwork painted ONLY if house brickwork is painted;
- overall height of fence generally less than 0.5m.

During this period fences throughout Wagga Wagga were generally less than 0.5 metres high to allow an un-interrupted view of the houses from the street.

SPANISH MISSION STYLE HOUSES

1940s - 1950s
Wagga Wagga



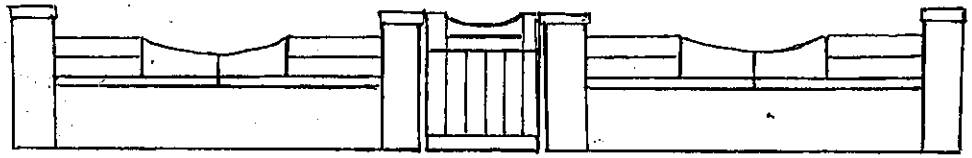
Specific Features

- Single or two storey;
- exterior walls rendered / stuccoed;
- small panels of coloured glazed tiles;
- rusticated brickwork under eaves or windows;
- round Cordovan or Marseillaise roof tiles;
- front windows grouped under moulded arches;
- barley twist columns define windows and entrances;
- wrought iron window grilles and verandah balustrades.

Specific Influences

- White - washed adobe buildings of California and Mexico built by Spanish missionaries and derived architecturally from the villas of Spain;
- adapted as an architectural style along the west coast of America;
- popularised by Hollywood movies of the time.

This style reached its most popular form in Australia in the 1920s and 30s but was not built in Wagga Wagga until the 1940s, and after the acceptance of the Californian Bungalow style.
The first Spanish Mission style houses were architect designed and built in Coleman Street.
Modifications and reduction of form to suit smaller scale Wagga Wagga houses.
Architectural details of Spanish Mission applied to Californian Bungalow style as an acknowledgment of latest trends and led to the overlapping of both styles (barley twist columns supporting a gabled porch or verandah, for instance).
Corrugated iron roofs were generally preferred in Wagga Wagga to the more expensive Cordovan or Marseillaise tiles which were restricted to coping of a parapet, porch or garden wall. (See Turvey Park area for latest trends).



SPANISH MISSION STYLE FENCES

1940s - 1950s
Wagga Wagga

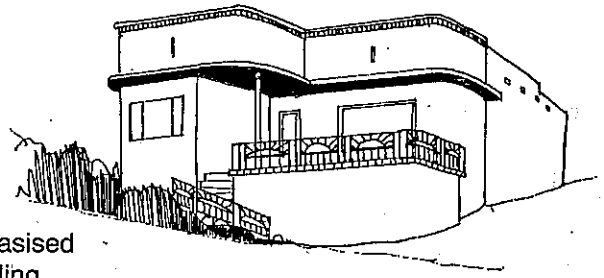
Specific Features

- Low masonry plinth with low piers;
- panels of wrought iron or welded steel between piers;
- wrought iron or welded steel panels to match window grilles, or balustrade pattern, of house piers.

Post war confidence and economic improvement prevailed in Wagga Wagga.
More leisure time available promoted a growing interest in ornamental domestic gardens.
Abundant water supplies for home gardens.
Low fences to display the home in its garden setting.

MODERNE or OCEAN LINER STYLE HOUSES

1940s - 1950s
Wagga Wagga



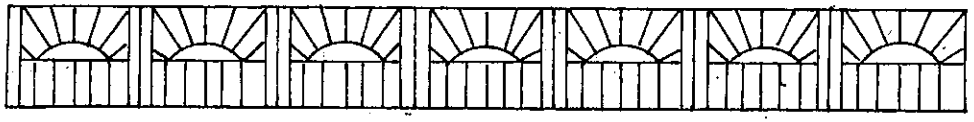
Specific Features

- Flat roof;
- single or two storey;
- clean horizontal lines emphasised by patios or terraces extending from building;
- external walls rendered and painted white;
- curved corners;
- curved steel framed windows wrapping around corners;
- round port hole feature windows;
- steel frame casement windows;
- glass brick wall panels.

Specific Influences

- Art Nouveau's organic curvilinear forms were replaced by the geometric lines of the Jazz / Art Deco styles of the 1930s;
- inspired by Hollywood and the post-depression glamour of ocean liner travel;
- first expressed in the new cinemas of the 1930s;
- further influenced by the international movement towards unadorned, functional architecture;
- elements were translated and adapted to domestic architecture.

1940s architect designed houses in Coleman Sreet influenced subsequent adaptation of this style to modest scale houses.
The former bungalow style was pared down and streamlined.
Local resistance to flat roofs resulted in raised parapets across facades to conceal low pitched roofs.
Stylised sunburst motif designs were used in tubular steel terrace balustrading and in some window glazing bars.
Exterior timber painted cream or white.
Exterior canvas awnings have in some instances been replaced by fixed metal awnings to provide sun protection.
These fixed awnings detract from the architectural integrity of the houses.

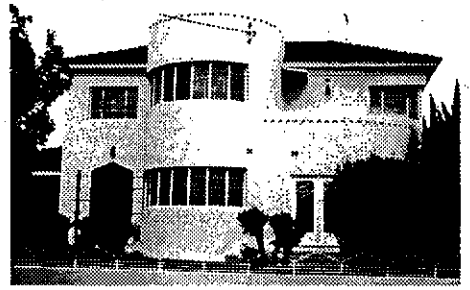


MODERNE or OCEAN LINER STYLE FENCES

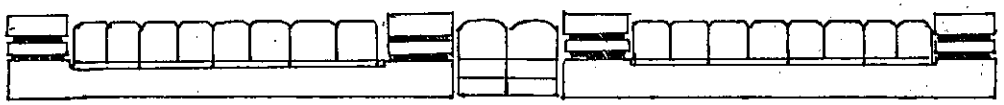
1940s - 1950s
Wagga Wagga

Specific Features

- Re-inforced concrete plinths with raised piers;
- panels between piers of square tubular steel in sunburst or geometric designs to visually link fence with house;
- overall height of fence 0.5m.

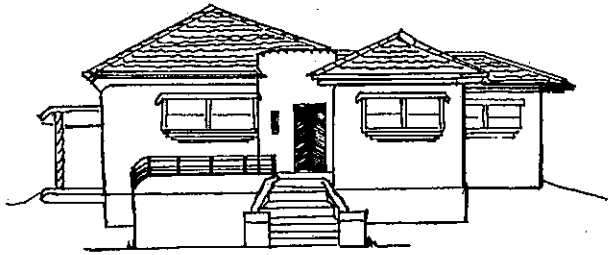


Post-war confidence and economic prosperity continued.
With increasing leisure time, interest in ornamental domestic gardens continued.
Low fences to display the house in its garden setting.
A great variety of metal fence panel design dates from this period in Wagga Wagga.



POST WAR STYLES HOUSES

1950s - 1960s
Wagga Wagga



Specific Features

- Rectangular or 'I'- shaped plan;
- timber frame brick veneer construction;
- external walls dark red / blue, then cream coloured bricks instead of the usual red brick;
- cement roof tiles;
- steel or timber frame windows (mass produced);
- curved, flat porch canopy;
- exterior decoration minimised.

Specific Influences

- Rising building costs;
- changing lifestyles;
- demand for smaller low maintenance housing;
- chimneys disappear - open wood burning fires replaced by gas, electric and then oil heating.

Corrugated iron, less expensive than tiles, was used extensively but not exclusively for roofing in Wagga Wagga.
Exterior walls used local red face brick, or local face brick in alternating horizontal courses in dark red / blue tones. See houses in Docker Street for good examples, or other decorative polychrome brick patterns for example, 20 Docker Street and 2 Murray Street.
Exterior timbers painted cream or white.
Extensive suburban development occurred in Wagga Wagga during this period. These styles led the way for the triple fronted brick veneer which was popularised during the 1960s to the 1970s in Wagga Wagga.

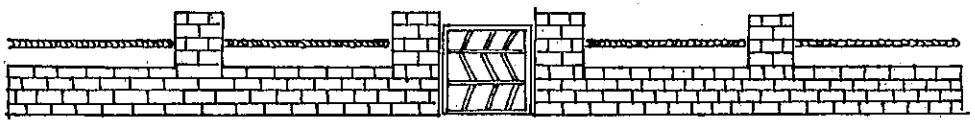
POST WAR STYLE FENCES

1950s - 1960s
Wagga Wagga

Specific Features

- Utilitarian;
- face brick to match exterior house walls, or rendered masonry with low piers;
- panels between piers welded tubular steel in geometric patterns.

It remained important that the house and its garden was viewed by passers-by so the fences remained low.
Many tubular steel panels were locally made by tradesmen or home D.I.Y. welders and this accounts for the great variety of metal fence designs in Wagga Wagga. Good examples can be seen in the Turvey Park area.



CONCLUSION

In each era a degree of personal and civic pride is evident when viewing a house and its surroundings.

During the mid 19th Century inadequate transport and communication facilities to emerging townships, such as Wagga Wagga, isolated these communities from the contemporary domestic architectural trends of the metropolitan centres. As a result a delay of up to ten to fifteen years often occurred before a particular architectural style was adopted in rural townships and some of these styles, such as the Colonial style, persisted in rural areas for up to thirty years after houses of this style ceased being built in the cities.

Transport of building materials, such as cast iron and slate, was not practical over long distances and so architectural styles and decorative details were adapted according to locally available materials and skills. Materials transported from Sydney or Melbourne were expensive and generally reserved for public buildings or for the facades or main portion of the houses.

Frequently local interpretation of styles resulted in the overlapping of architectural elements of more than one style. In this way distinctive regional styles developed which today contribute to our local cultural heritage and tell us much about the times in which the buildings were built. This mix of stylistic detailing was visually subtle and when repeated consistently produced homogeneous groups of buildings of considerable local significance.

Few domestic buildings in central Wagga Wagga are faithful expressions of a particular architectural style. Characteristics of more than one style are frequently displayed on the same building and this presents a challenge to owners wishing to refurbish.

When building alterations introduce a mix of architectural details from vastly different eras they create visual conflict, loss of architectural integrity and they interrupt the streetscapes.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adobe - walling of sun dried clay or mud brick.

Arris - the sharp edge or salient angle formed by the intersection of two planes.

Balustrade - a series of balusters or panels supporting a railing or coping.

Bracket - decorative pieces of timber or cast iron in the angle where beams meet the posts or walls of a verandah. Also, decorative masonry or plaster pieces which support eaves, sills or cornices.

Barge Board - a plain or decorative board at the end of a gable for the purpose of covering the ends of the roof timbers.

Cast Iron - iron which has been melted, poured into a mould, then cooled.

Chamfer - an angled surface made by cutting across the point at which two right angled surfaces (of a piece of timber or stone) meet.

Eaves - the projecting edges of a roof which overhang the walls.

Finial - a long, thin ornamental feature finishing off the apex of the roof, usually at the gabled ends.

Fretwork - decorative elements, usually of timber, from which portions are cut away to form a pattern.

Gable - the triangular portion of a wall at the end of a pitched roof.

Moulding - an ornamental contour given to an otherwise flat surface by means of careening, machining or the application of material such as plaster in relief.

Parapet - a low wall around a roof or platform.

Roughcast - an external rendering of rough material usually applied in two coats of lime mortar, the second of which contains gravel, crushed stone, ciders or pebbles and which is 'thrown' or 'dashed' onto the wall to give a rough surface.

Wrought Iron - iron which has been heated then worked into shape.

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In a well-maintained streetscape each house with its appropriate fence is an integral and essential component. To interrupt this continuity and character with fences unsympathetic in scale, form and style will ultimately detract from the quality of the streetscape.

Civic Trust

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