

# Inter-war Californian Bungalows (1920s-1945)



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: ■ Late Colonial Georgian Dwellings ■ Weatherboard Dwellings ■ Federation Bungalows ■ Post-war Bungalows

## Background

Early 20th century bungalows are found in a number of different exterior guises: Californian, Hollywood Spanish, Georgian Revival and Old English. The Californian Bungalow was amongst the earliest and most popular of these styles.

The California Bungalows were based on the American bungalow design and were particularly popular in Australia from approximately 1913 to the 1940s. This style marks the beginning of American influences in housing as Australians experienced greater exposure to American popular culture. The Californian prototypes were based on 'craftsman' principles and were constructed of natural-looking materials.

Whilst the Californian style offered a range of variations, its distinctive forms are readily identifiable within Vincent today.



TOV Local History Collection PH00923 courtesy H Peake

## Key characteristics of California Bungalows include:

### Outside

- Freestanding single-storey houses with informal lawns and gardens.
- Homely, earthy character often embracing natural materials and finishes.
- Low-pitched roofs emphasising horizontal lines covered with terracotta tiles.
- Exposed rafters and purlins projected from the roof.
- Brown brick, roughcast or pebble dash render or weatherboard walls.
- Rendered walls painted in off-white, beige or cream.
- Verandah roofs contained within walls and the overhanging roof.
- Heavily built verandah posts.
- Verandah posts often pylon-shaped and tapered upwards from a wide base.

- Windows either double-hung or casement, with panes in small rectangles or diamonds or featuring Art Nouveau or Arts and Crafts patterned stained glass.

### Inside

- Divided by a hallway with the best rooms located at the front, kitchen and laundry at the rear.
- Craftsman principles in decoration dispensed with frills, drapery and timber prevailed.
- Timber panelled walls in dark timber to lower half of wall.
- High waisted timber doors, skirting boards and architraves given a dark oiled finish in all rooms but the parlour, where cream prevailed.
- Brown, olive, grey and cream in wallpaper and Kalsomine paint.
- Peacock blue and deep pink in upholstery, furnishings and carpets.

### Garden

- Spiky buffalo grass kept closely clipped, edged by gravel or stone flagged paths.
- Garages at side of the dwelling, making driveways an integral part of the front garden.
- Garden beds bordering the house and along boundary fences.
- Low brick or 'pillow-faced' limestone block fences. Cyclone wire and timber post fencing also common.

## 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.

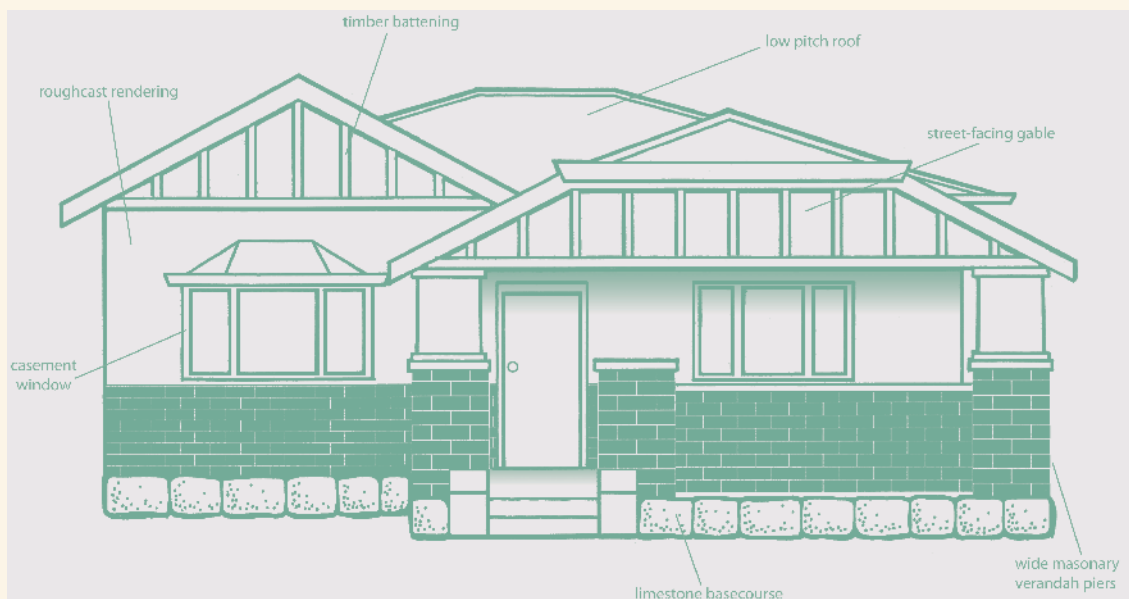
- Concrete cancer is the corrosion of steel reinforcement in concrete structures, which causes it to expand. The expansion of the steel causes the surrounding concrete to crack, and therefore undermine the strength of the building. Concrete cancer is often identified by flaking concrete or rust stains. In order to make effective repairs, the degraded concrete must be removed and any exposed steel must either be replaced or cleaned and treated. If you think your dwelling may have concrete cancer it is important for the problem be correctly diagnosed by a professional.
- Generally painting of masonry is not recommended. However, should you wish to paint a masonry building proceed with caution as some paints can create problems by trapping moisture and salts behind an impermeable membrane.

## 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

- Apperly, R; Irving, R; Reynolds, P (1989) *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, Angus and Robertson  
Kelly, I (1992) *Development of Housing in Perth 1895-1915*, The University of Western Australia  
Stapleton, I and M (1997) *Australian House Styles*, The Flannel Flower Press  
Viska, J (2007) *A Guide to Conserving and Interpreting Gardens in Western Australia*, West Australian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society