

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** SHIRE SECRETARY'S RESIDENCE (FORMER)

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** 24 Martin Street PENSHURST

**STUDY NUMBER:** 263

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** Penshurst

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** part of **SECTION:** 14 **PARISH:** PARISH OF YALIMBA  
10

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 475J C11; VicRoads 233 O11; located at 24 Martin Street between Watton and Bell Streets in the centre of the township.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local

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Bisquolm, Former Shire Secretary's Residence, Martin Street, Penshurst.

**Image Date:**

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the building but excluding the interiors.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The house, Bisquolm is a single storey bluestone building with a broad, low pitched roof continuous over the verandah on four sides. The walls and fenestration of the house suggest a post-1860s and pre-1900s date of construction. The roof appears to have been added as a major alteration during the Interwar period. The house is symmetrical about the front door which faces north onto the side garden. There are double hung sash windows on either side of the door. There are three double hung sash windows on the west or Martin Street elevation. Chimneys rise from the walls opposite the front windows. [The interiors have not been inspected.]

## HISTORY:

The land on which the house stands was purchased from the Crown by T. E. Bostock, on the 8th September 1852 (Department of Lands and Survey, 1957). Little is known as yet of this T. E. Bostock but, according to the 1864 Shire of Mount Rouse Rate Book, Thomas E. Bostock occupied 1,862 acres owned by Peter Manifold at Caramut and Nareeb Nareeb. A George Bostock, who held the Eumeralla west run, married one of the daughters of John Cox, the squatter who held the Mount Rouse run before the establishment of the Mount Rouse Aboriginal Protectorate. A G. Bostock bought other town allotments in the west of Penshurst in 1853. Edward Bostock was an Overstraiter who had an interest in Jellalabad run, one of the first to be issued a licence in the Portland bay district. According to Gibbney and Smith (71), a Thomas Edward Bostock, woolbroker and three times mayor of Geelong, whose father was Thomas B. Bostock, was born in 1862.

It is believed that the house dates from the 1860s, when it may have been constructed in conjunction with the Shire Council Chambers, directly opposite. The role of Shire Secretary was very important, with a great deal of responsibility. The first Mount Rouse Shire Secretary was Patrick Duncan Baxter, listed in the Shire of Mount Rouse Centenary as serving from 1960-1863.

Patrick Duncan Baxter was born March 3rd, 1827, at Aberdeen, Scotland the eldest son of Andrew Baxter, master mariner and Elizabeth Leys. Patrick arrived in Australia on November 18th, 1853, as a crew member of the "Ann Dashwood". Although he is listed as the 'Ships Surgeon', he may not have been medically trained. It is not known when he arrived in Penshurst, but he was the first Head Teacher of the National School from December 1858, as well as undertaking the role. His role as Post Master continued until at least the end of 1864. At the same time, he was the Secretary to the Shire of Mount Rouse, and also Deputy Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages in the Mount Rouse area.

Patrick Duncan Baxter married Jane Barnes, daughter of Edward Barnes and Mary Brooker, at the Presbyterian Church, Hamilton on February 14th, 1861. His bride, Jane was only 17 years old, and required written consent from her mother, for them to marry. Patrick and Jane had ten children. It is unlikely that Baxter had the house built, as by 1870, he is listed in the rate books as an accountant, renting a house in Penshurst owned by Matthew Gibb (SMRB 1870 #20).

The next Shire Secretary was James Mylne Knight (a combined Secretary-Engineer), from 1863-1870. James Mylne Knight was from Edinburgh, Scotland and arrived in Victoria in the early 1850s. It is thought that he met and married his wife, Matilda Bennett after arriving in Victoria. It is possible that he was active in the district as early as 1852, when he became a member of the first Road Board in the Colony of Victoria (Powling, 125). His first two children, James Halley (born in 1856) and Matilda Ann (1857), were registered as born in Belfast (VPI, Reg. No. 9281 & 15774). Knight was an influential member of the district, he owned the Boodcara run, which he sold to James Ritchie in 1859 (Powling, 37), and later held interests in the Alison and Knight Flour Mill at Rosebrook, where his next child, Annie Beatrice (1859) was born (VPI, Reg. No. 3288).

He was a member of the Belfast Roads Board prior to it becoming the Borough of Port Fairy, and was at various times the Municipal Shire Chairman, the Town Clerk, Surveyor, Valuator and Compiler of rate and assessment until his resignation in December 1863, when he resigned to become the Mount Rouse Shire

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Secretary. Two more of his children were born in Belfast in the is period, Florence Isabella, born 1861 (ibid., 3271), and Sydney Walter the following year (ibid., 12810). It is possible that the house was built for Knight, as he held the position for a seven year period 1863-70, from the first days of the Shire's official start. It may have been constructed at about the same time as the Municipal offices opposite. Evidence against this is apparent from early rate books which indicate that in 1863, Knight was renting a "stone shop, part of Gahn's buildings, Penshurst" (SMRRB 1863). from Carl Gahn, suggesting temporary accommodation. While residing in Penshurst, Knight had another three children, Arthur Edward in 1865 (ibid., 10720), Kenneth Bruce in 1868 (ibid., 18552) and Rupert Kirk in 1869 (ibid., 10704). Although active in his role while Shire Secretary, he retained strong ties with Port Fairy, returning to an active public life in the township in 1870, and having three more children, Mary Norton in 1871 (ibid., 854), Mabel Emily in 1873 (ibid., 14586) and Percy George in 1874 (ibid., 13982). Knight remained in Port Fairy until his death in 1876, aged 50 (Powling, 265).

It is more likely that the house was designed by John S. Jenkins (c1835-1913), architect and engineer, who served as the Mount Rouse Shire secretary and engineer from 1870-1876 (HHC, research notes). Jenkins, who described himself as a civil engineer as much as an architect, was born in Elgin, Scotland in 1834. "He served his apprenticeship with Messrs. McKenzie and Matthews, of Aberdeen and Elgin, architects, and arrived in Melbourne in 1854" (Sutherland, Vol. 2, 521). He soon went to Warrnambool where he traded as a timber merchant, building contractor and machine maker. "In 1858 he became town surveyor of Port Fairy, went to Hamilton in a similar capacity in 1860, to Mount Rouse as shire engineer in 1870, and to Richmond as town surveyor in 1876" where he was also a councillor for five years (Sutherland, Vol. 2, 521). In 1861, John Shanks Jenkins married Emma Wright in Victoria (PIV, Reg. No. 3595). At first they lived at Hamilton but moved to Penshurst, where Jenkins was appointed engineer of the Mount Rouse Roads Board in December 1860, and served in that capacity until 1863, when the transition was made to the Shire of Mount Rouse. He designed the Mount Rouse Council Chambers in 1864. The couple had seven children. Jenkins died in Richmond in 1913, aged 78 (EIV, Reg. No. 3413). As well as winning first prize with Charles D'Ebro and John Grainger (father of Percy Grainger) for the present Princes Bridge, Melbourne, Jenkins was proud to be one of the pioneers of the eight hours' movement in 1856.

He also designed Warrayure Homestead and extensions to Skene Homestead, if not the original homestead, and many other buildings in the Southern Grampians Shire. It is highly likely that the house was designed by Jenkins, and lived in by him between 1870-1876.

Other Shire Secretaries were James Campbell, who served as combined secretary and engineer between 1877-1880, Clarence Dufton, who swerved between 1880-1901, Duncan Walls 1901-1920 and the longest serving Shire Secretary was Herbert Samuel Mason, from 1920-1959 (Shire of Mount Rouse).

In more recent years, the property has been owned by artist, Victor Bisquolm, who operated it at Bisquolm Gallery. The house is now used as a private residence.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life  
8.12 Living in and around Australian homes  
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## **CONDITION:**

The building is in good condition.

## **INTEGRITY:**

Good degree of integrity

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

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## What is Significant?

The former Shire Secretary's Residence, is located on the north east corner of Watton and Martin Streets in the centre of the township, opposite the Mount Rouse Shire Council Chambers. The house takes the form of a single storey bluestone building with a broad, low pitched roof continuous over the verandah on four sides. The walls and fenestration of the house suggest a post-1860s and pre1900s date of construction, with the roof added as a major alteration during the Interwar period. The roof has been deliberately added to give the older house a more modern bungalow form. It is believed that house was built in the 1860s or 1870s, designed perhaps by John S. Jenkins, one of the most talented and prominent architects operating in the area in the nineteenth century. The property served as the residence for the Shire Secretary for some period, but has been in private ownership for many years. It has also been used as an art gallery, known as Bisquolm Gallery. The house is in good condition, but its integrity has been severely compromised by the replacement roof.

## How is it significant?

The house is of historical and architectural significance to the township of Peshurst and the Southern Grampians Shire.

## Why is it Significant?

The house is of historical significance for its close proximity and association to the Mount Rouse Shire Council Chambers, located directly opposite, which reinforces the building's role as a Shire Secretary's Residence over a period of time. It is of further historical significance as the possible home of many of the Shire's Secretaries, including Baxter, Knight, Jenkins, Campbell, Dufton, Walls and Mason. The building is of architectural significance for its possible connections with notable architect John. S. Jenkins, who may have designed the house in the 1860s or 1870s.

## COMPARISON:

263 Catholic Convent (former), 73 Watton Street, Peshurst

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

23-May-02

## EXISTING LISTINGS:

## HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Include in VHR**  **Include in RNE**  **Include in Local Planning Scheme**

**No Recommendations for Inclusions**

## REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Billis and Kenyon	Pastoral Pioneers of the Port Phillip District	1974	30
Department of Justice	Pioneer Index Victoria 1836 - 1888 (reg. No. 1505)	1998	various entries
Department of Lands and Survey Gibbney	Township of Peshurst, County of Villiers	1957	
Gordon Forth, ed	A biographical register and annotated bibliography of Anglo-Irish colonists in Australia	1992	75
H J Gibbney and Ann G Smith	A Biographical Register 1788-1939, Vol. 2	1987	71
J W Powling	Port Fairy, the First Fifty Years	1980	var.
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse Rate Books 187	1872	
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse Rate Books 1871	1871	
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse Rate Books 1870	1870	#20

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Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse, In the Centre of the Fertile Western District of Victoria: Centenary Celebrated	1966
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse, In the Centre of the Fertile Western District of Victoria: Centenary Celebrated	1966