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## **Royal College of Anaesthetists of Australia and New Zealand (formerly Ulimaroa) 630 St Kilda Road, Melbourne**

Ulimaroa is one of only five surviving nineteenth century St Kilda Road mansions in what was once a glorious avenue of mansions. All five were designed by important architects. The others comprise: Charlesfield (1889) by Charles Webb, at 478; Estella (now the Willows, 1890) by G.Woolf, at 462; Airlie (1891), by Anketell Henderson at 452 and Warwillah (Redholme) by John Beswicke at 572.

In 1875, the first residential allotments on the west side of St Kilda Road (then Melbourne Road) were offered for sale by the Colonial Government. The Fawkner Park frontages on the east side had been sold from 1859, in the face of vigorous protest from Council and the public. Prior to 1859, St Kilda Road passed entirely within parkland.

As early as 1855, there was a proposal to subdivide the southern part of the parkland that became Albert Park, which did not proceed (19). James Kearney's *Plan of Melbourne and Suburbs* shows an ambitious plan of streets radiating about the axis of the present Princes Street.

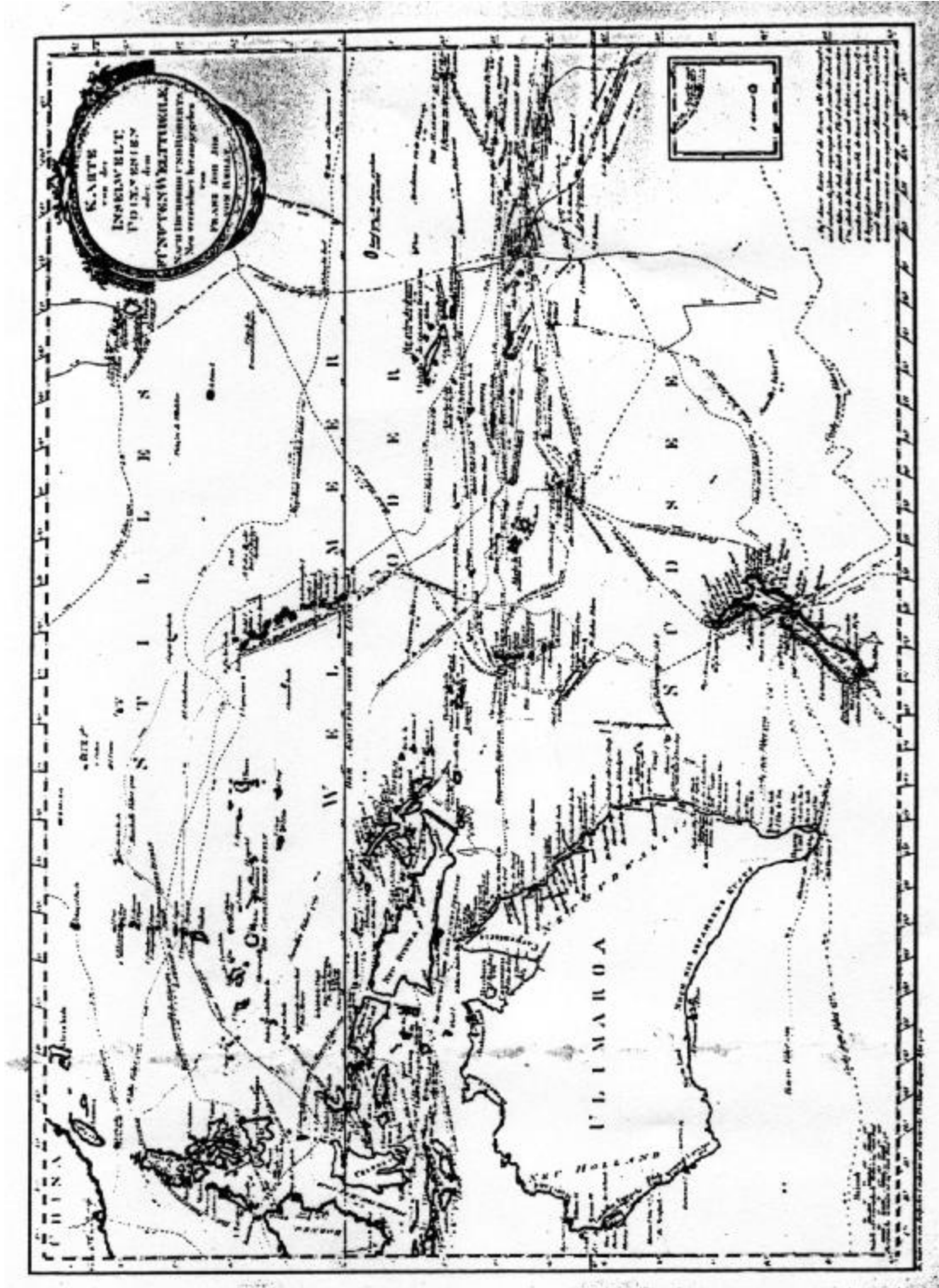
In 1864, the Colonial Government made the Melbourne City Corporation and the Board of Land and Works, joint trustees of the parklands, including the South, or Albert Park. But the dimensions of the park reservation remained uncertain.

Alienation of parklands began then, as an issue which continues with no less anguish today, 145 years later. So the March 1875 surprise government announcement in the *St Kilda Advertiser* was worded with the kind of astuteness recognisable in the twenty-first century:

It has been decided by the Government to permanently reserve the Albert Park Lagoon and the greater portion of the park, for recreative purposes. At present, there is nothing to prevent the whole area being cut up, and sold, in building allotments. A strip of the park, facing the St Kilda Road will not, however, be permanently reserved, but this means, it is anticipated that handsome residences will be erected there, as is the case on the opposite side of the road, and the approach from Melbourne, from the south will then be something worthy of a great city.

There were caveats on the Crown Grants restricting use to the construction of one masonry villa. Similar conditions applied to Royal Parade, Parkville. These caveats seem to have been since forgotten as office blocks replaced the houses from the 1970s. All grants were

snapped up in months. When tolls were abolished in 1877, and with the consequent lack of income for maintenance, the road fell into disrepair.



Early map showing the name Ulimaroa, c.1795

The land at 630 St Kilda Road was bought by T.M. McGrath and remained vacant for about ten years. By 1888 it had been bought by Dr I.E. Watkin, (1839-1916) an unusual Wesleyan minister, 'a particularly broad-minded man (with)...a catholicity of sentiment,' explained the *Argus*. He was born in Sydney, where his missionary father briefly was, en route from eight years in Tonga, to become the first missionary in the South Island of New Zealand to the Maori people.

Educated at Wesleyan College, Auckland, aged 20 Watkin junior also entered the ministry. His 'powerful and popular' preaching was heard around Victoria, including St Kilda. From 1859 he was minister of Wesley Church, Lonsdale Street, for two periods. He persistently advocated union of the seven disparate branches of the Wesleyan Methodists. His journalism included editorship of the Methodist *The Spectator* and frequent articles in the *Argus* on geographical and historical topics. He published *Australian Native Names and their Meanings* and was honorary secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, Victorian Branch. He was a particularly influential Australian Methodist, yet as the developer and owner of a substantial St Kilda Road mansion, he was also an astute investor. As was his son, Stanley Entwistle Watkin who became a stock and sharebroker.

Ulimaroa is an eighteenth century name for Australia. It is indicated on Reilly's map and Canzler's map offers it as an alternative name to New Holland. Both were published in 1795 in German. The name clearly derives from Watkin the geographer, educated in Auckland and reputed for his knowledge of early Australian and Polynesian history. It appears to be a Polynesian name, possibly Hawaiian origin, not Maori, as there is no L in the Maori language. Presumably it should therefore be pronounced: 'oo-li-ma-roar-a'.



Ulimarua, c.1980

The house appears to have been designed by John A.B. Koch (1845-1928) who called tenders for a two-storied house in St Kilda Road on 31 August 1889. Koch was born in Hamburg, migrating to Melbourne with his family at the age of ten. He served articles with F.M. White, architect of the Palais (3). Koch is known for over 78 buildings, often in Richmond, or Hawthorn where lived in Yarra Street, St James' Park from 1896. His tour-de-force is Labassa (1889-91), Caulfield. His houses and shops frequently include Hellenistic elements: key pattern (as at Ulimarua), masks, caryatids, acroteria and foliated scrolls and consoles.

Koch became a Richmond City Councillor (1877-85) and mayor (1883) and president of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (1903-04). He ceased to practice in 1913 and moved to Adelaide, although his family deny that this was due to the Great War and his German birth.

Ulimarua is a characteristic Melbourne Italianate tower house: asymmetrical, with canted windows, hipped roof, bracketed eaves, round-headed windows, tower in the angle and return verandah in cast-iron. It had 12 rooms. If the design is by Koch, it is unusually subdued.

The first, and famous tenant of Ulimaroa was John Traill (1826-1916), shipowner. He clearly approved of the name which he later gave to one of his Huddart Barker ships. There is a model of the ship at Malvern Grammar. Traill was also unusual, in that he lived quietly with his family, not involved with Melbourne's demanding social whirl. Born on the Scottish east coast, educated at Edinburgh, at 28 in 1854, he immigrated to Geelong, becoming manager of Smith Barker & Skinner who operated in the coastal shipping trade between Melbourne and Geelong. In 1860 he married, and had four children.

In 1867, Skinner died and by 1876, Parker, Webb & Traill joined with Huddart Parker & Co, coal importers from Newcastle, merchants. Huddart Parker expanded rapidly. By 1886 they had inaugurated the Melbourne-Adelaide shipping service and in 1882 entered the Sydney Melbourne trade. By 1890, Traill had moved from Geelong and offices on the wharves, to Collins Street and he had moved into Ulimaroa.

Huddart Parker were one of the seven major coastal shippers, when this was the principal means of interstate transport. Their steamers including the *Ulimaroa*, were household names. They also operated the famous and glamorous Port Philip steamers, including the *Ozone*, *Hygeia* and *Weerona*. Aboard these, bands played popular songs, couples danced, serenaded by an orchestra on moonlight cruises, for over a hundred years from 1842 until 1949, particularly from the 1880s to 1920s.

By 1895, Traill was the only surviving original director. He remained chairman until his death at 92. The Traills never owned a carriage, coach-house or stables and John walked each day to the office until he was 90.

It is said that in about 1899, Watkin was financially embarrassed by the financial crash and sold Ulimaroa to John Traill. The family of John Cuthbert Traill (son of John and also director) continued living at Ulimaroa until 1946 when it was sold within the family. Dr Harvey Barrett was the last Traill relative to live there (and use it as a surgery) until 1960. The Traills had lived at Ulimaroa for seventy years.



Ulimaroa, 2002

The family took great pride in the planning and evolution of their St Kilda Road garden as an integral part of their home. In 1891, Robert, son of John Cuthbert described in words and sketches how the garden was altered in the 1920s by John Cuthbert after his father's death. The Victorian garden had a symmetrical pair of palms behind a hedge and corrugated iron fence on St Kilda Road, with a central path from a splayed pedestrian gate. The house had perimeter paths and a shrubbery on the north boundary, through a lattice fence and gate to a large racetrack-shaped garden bed, like the Piazza Navona, in Rome with two small trees and a central fountain. On the south was a (clothes) drying green, vegetable garden, almond and peppercorn trees.

In the 1920s, at last a vehicle was acquired and a drive made on the north boundary, reducing the width of the shrubbery to a double(?) garage behind the house. The oval garden vanished and a lawn tennis court installed across the west (rear) boundary on Queens Lane.

From 1960, Ulimaroa was no longer a house. It was sold to Repco Limited as their international corporate headquarters. The rear wing, with a modern verandah, was extended by an unknown architect. A new bathroom, and kitchen were installed. The quality of the workmanship by Swanson Bros builders is particularly high, with very fine joinery in fiddleback blackwood. In 1985 Repco was acquired by Ariadne Limited and Ulimaroa was auctioned in April 1986. It was sold again at auction in March 1993, when it was purchased by the Royal College of Anaesthetists of Australia and New Zealand. The College engaged the distinguished architect Norman Day to design a major addition.

Day was educated at University of Melbourne, then worked for Robin Boyd (46) and Prof. Frederick Romberg. In 1971-72 he was a director of Romberg and Boyd. In 1972 he founded Norman Day & Associates. He has inherited some of Boyd's mantle as an architectural journalist. for *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ABC TV and various papers and books. He is adjunct professor at RMIT University. His works include: Mowbray College, Melton (1995-96), Patullo House, Richmond (1995), and Burford Pool House, Hawthorn (1987) and Elderly Persons' houses in Chelsea. Day went through a strong Post-modernist phase, towards his most expressive and complex forms, but this design and other recent work are more subtle and indeed beautiful.

The new wing sits over the site of the 1920s tennis court on Queens Lane: a seven storied building (over a three-level basement car park), surrounding a full-height atrium space. All is clad with a beautiful shimmering multi-coloured glass screen, when seen from the house. The National Trust had no objections to the addition. Though large, it was not felt to dominate and it uses the 1960s addition as a connecting link. It was built about 2001.

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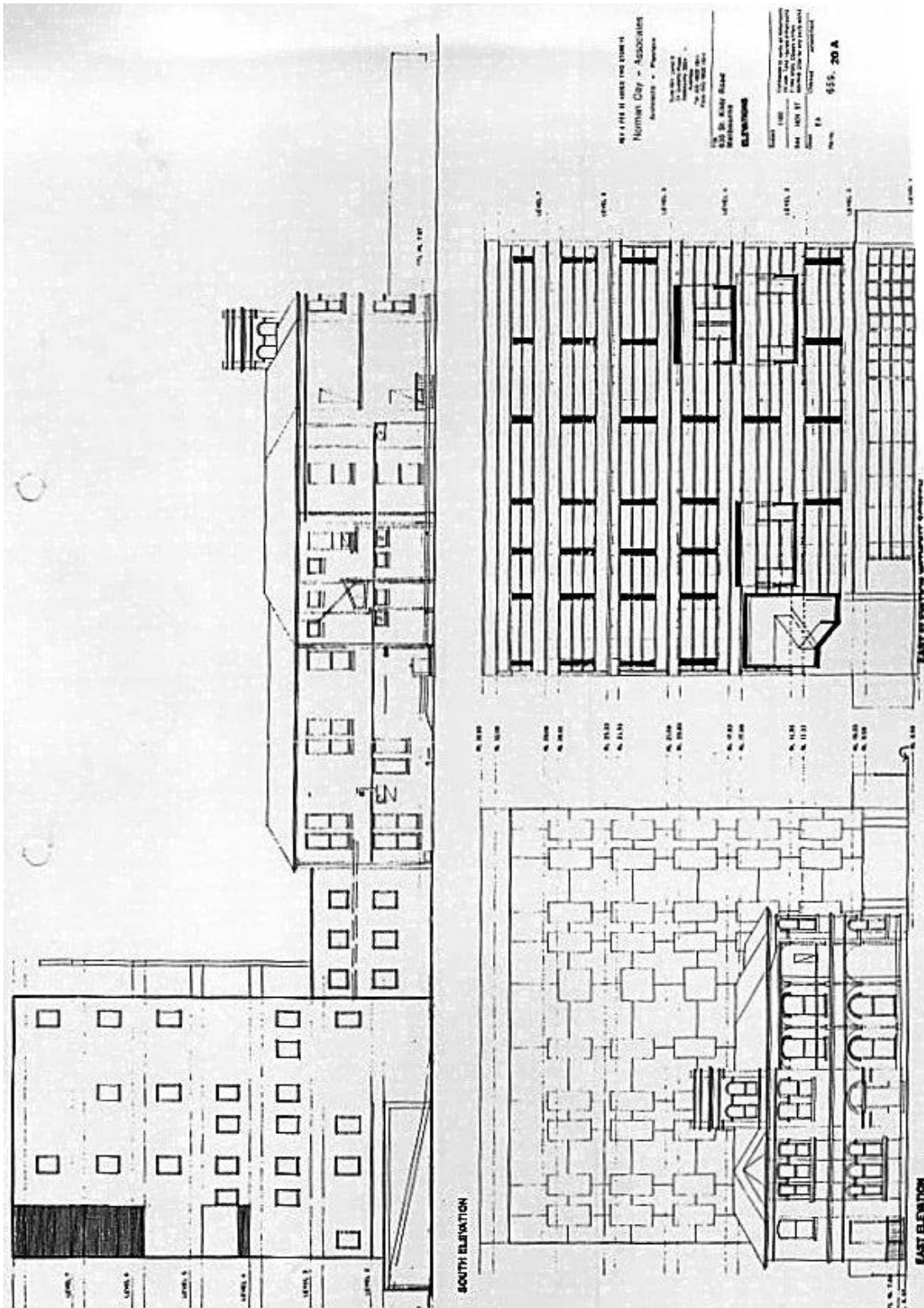
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Richard Peterson: A Place of Sensuous Resort: Buildings of St Kilda and Their People

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Plans and Elevations of major additions to Ulmaroa, 1993

Extracted from Richard Peterson: "A Place of Sensuous Resort: Buildings of St Kilda and Their People"  
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