

# STAMFORD PARK

**Location:** Stud Road, 300 m north of Lakeview Avenue, Rowville

The site presently abuts Stud Road

**Date of Construction :** 1882

**Listing status:** Recorded by the National Trust (Vic.)

On the Register of the National Estate (See Commonwealth Gazette November 1991)



## Statement of Significance:

Stamford Park dates from an early period in the district history and has an association with late 19th century and early 20th century Melbourne horse breeding and racing circles and other social elite. (Criterion A.4. Register of the National Estate). The homestead was built for the Row family who played a notable role in the history of the area, an area which has subsequently been named after the family. (Criterion H.1.). The building is one of the last remaining substantial 19th century homes in the local region (Criterion B.2.).

## Description

The house, built in 1882, is a magnificent example of 19th century architecture featuring Gothic gables, fretted barge boards, intricate wrought iron and five metre high ceilings. It is typical of the era with a long tradition in the district. Frederick Row names the house Stamford from his English connections. The name Rowville was adopted in 1908 as a compliment to the family because the property was focal to the district. The building is one of the last remaining substantial 19th century houses in the region.

## History

(Acknowledgement to reminiscences of Mrs B Foster, great-granddaughter of Edward Row, 1981).

The land on which Stamford Park was built was originally bought by James Quirk in 1856. It afterwards became the country residence of Frederick Row, a partner and co-founder of the firm Goldsborough, Row and Company, Melbourne Wool Brokers. Frederick Row bought the property of 440 acres in 1858 and this was increased to 1,100 acres. Edward, one of the sons, created an English estate by planting English trees and shrubs. The property became a successful horse stud and centre for social occasions. In 1858, 424 acres of land on the north-western corner of Stud Road and Wellington Roads, were sold to a Frederick Row for one pound ten shillings an acre. Later 6,000 acres surrounding the property took on the name Rowville. This was suggested by the local blacksmith, Nicholas T Bergin, in 1903 as appropriate to the impact on the area of Frederick and his descendants.

Frederick Row was born in Bourne, Lincolnshire, England in 1825 and came to Australia in 1846. Both he and his cousin, Richard Goldsborough, had arrived in a Melbourne that was to boom with the wealth of the Victorian Goldfields. Goldsborough had landed in Melbourne on the 29th of November, 1847.

Frederick Row joined his cousin in the wool and hide business, Goldsborough having been fairly experienced as the owner of a small wool stapling business in England. The first entry of this is in the Melbourne Direct 1861 - F Row and Co Wool and Hide Fallow Dealers.

Three sons were born to the Rows, Frederick, Edward and Richard. The property was used mainly as a holiday retreat as the family lived at Thompson Street, Collingwood from at least 1863, a few minutes walk from "The Rest", a mansion owned by Richard Goldsborough. Edward and Richard were given the property by their father in their early twenties, and Edward built the house in 1882. There is evidence that another house existing on the site (later the library area), probably used by the family as a holiday cottage.

Edward, the most creative and inventive of the sons, had already landscaped the grounds to create an English country garden. Richard lived on the estate but had little to do with the farm. Frederick joined his father in the wool business.

Stamford Park was turned into a highly successful horse stud and racing horses from Edward's stables performed well all over the country. Horses were also raised for export, many of them being shipped to India for use as remounts for the Indian Army.

## The House

Described as a “commodious gentleman’s residence of the times”, the house was built as a single storey dwelling. Constructed of bricks, the house has two bay windows dominating the western facade with fretting and ornate cast iron decoration, featuring on the verandah. There are several outbuildings with Gothic style windows.

The house is built in a hollow and not readily seen from Stud Road. Facing west across Corhanwarrabul Creek it appears that flood waters may have contributed to damp rising in the house which had poor sub floor ventilation.

The main house comprises seven large rooms, a toilet room and an external kitchen, while the servants’ quarters located to the east, comprised a total of at least five rooms each in two separate buildings one of which has been demolished. Internally the walls are double brick with plaster linings, and the floors are of New Zealand Kauri. The fireplaces of slate were rendered with marble. The ceilings of lath and plaster are highlighted with ceiling roses.

The south-east room with a lower ceiling is thought to be the original cottage on the site built in 1864 over the cellar. The guest rooms have cavity walls dating from the late 19th or early 20th century. The external walls are rendered with cement. The grounds contained a substantial number of European and English trees and a herb garden behind the kitchen reflecting the period.

The Row family sold the property in 1910 to the Murrays who used it as a summer residence and dairy farm. It was renamed “David”. In 1936 it was subdivided by the Drummond family who added two rooms for sharefarmer use and reverted to the name Stamford. In 1950 further subdivision occurred and it was sold in 1954 to a retired gentleman Mr Alfred Stevens who although actively interested in horse racing did not use it for that purpose. Knox Council bought the property in 1988 and embarked on a major capital works program of restoration.

Stamford House has been the focus of a long history of early settlement in the Rowville area. Built in 1882, the house remains largely as it did at the turn of the century.

It was in an advanced state of disrepair when it was acquired by Knox Council in 1988. Little in the way of renovations and maintenance had been carried out since the previous owner had vacated the property.

Several rooms have been completely restored to give visitors an appreciation of the homestead as it was in its heyday.