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Norman Hitchcock
(courtesy x)

Norman Hitchcock (1837-1918) was born in Wiltshire, England to parents Robert and Sarah (nee Choules) Hitchcock. Norman had siblings Dorcas (c.1835-1909), Victoria (1838-1912), and Oliver (1847-1906). The family arrived in Australia during November 1854 at Portland, in the west of Victoria, and Norman served articles with G.M. Mathieson of that town. Norman moved to Melbourne and was involved with a building company before commencing his own business in 1859. Norman Hitchcock and Ellen Selina Coles were married in November 1872 at the Wesley Church in Melbourne. The couple had children Ellen Theresa Victoria b.1874, Aneta Beatrice Dorcas b.1875, Norman Roseburgh Cli b.1877, Oliver Rufus b.1879, Alfred Archibold William b.1880, and Eugene Leopold Beaumont b.1882.

Hitchcock appears to have initially styled himself as a builder-carpenter, and by 1875 was in Collingwood. Based at Nicholson Street, Carlton he was declared insolvent in July 1880, but advertised himself as an architect at 4 Bedford Terrace in Drummond Street, Carlton when calling tenders for two villas at Windsor in September 1880. The location and clients for many of his earlier designs are recorded in *Victoria & Its Metropolis, Past and Present* published at Melbourne in 1888, when his office was still located in Drummond Street. He was listed during 1889-1894 at 258 Drummond Street.

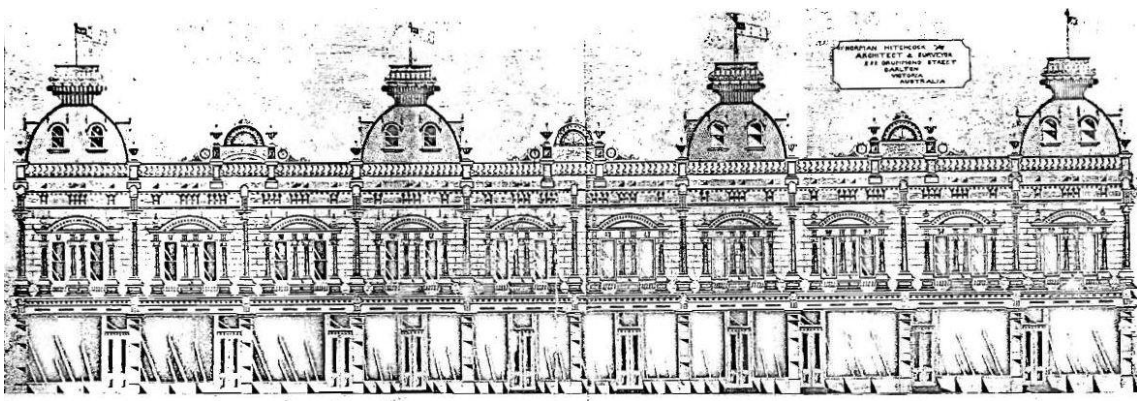


Melbournia Terrace 1-13 Drummond Street, Carlton of 1877 (blogspot.com.au)



Shops and residences at 198-204 Faraday Street, Carlton of 1886
 (<http://www.commercialrealestate.com.au/property/7754871/for-lease/vic/carlton/retail>)

Hitchcock established a reputation in Melbourne with his distinctively naive use of decorative details for speculative terrace housing in the suburbs of Fitzroy, Carlton and Parkville. Caught up in the collapse of the Melbourne housing market and financial ‘crash’, Hitchcock was declared insolvent in May 1891. He designed a chemist shop that was built in 1892 at Yea, 98 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. During 1893 he was advertising in the *Yea Chronicle* that he had a Melbourne office, but visited Yea once a week and would ‘draw plans and supervise all kinds of work in any part of the country at reasonable charges’.



Shops and Dwelling Houses, Smith Street, Fitzroy
 Melbourne, for J. Woods, Esq.
 NORMAN HITCHCOCK, Architect.

Smith Street Fitzroy 1888 (*Australasian Builder and Contractors' News*, 22 September 1888)

Hitchcock was briefly listed in partnership with Olaff Nichol Nicholson (1842-1912) at Melbourne. Nicholson fled the economic depression in Victoria for gold-boom Western Australia by 1895, and Hitchcock followed soon after. From his home office at Hubble Street, Plympton (East Fremantle), in April 1897 Hitchcock called tenders for a terrace of four two-storey houses at 88 Wittenoom Street in Perth. Already in his sixties at the end of the nineteenth century, Hitchcock continued his practice at Fremantle using many details developed with previous works in Victoria.

In WA Hitchcock again specialised in the design of housing, particularly in Fremantle and surrounding areas. Heritage Council of Western Australia (HCWA) documentation records that his work is notable for his repeated use of distinctive design and decorative details that assist to identify his architecture. These include pressed cement female faces to terminate corbelled party walls, cement putti set in a gable niche, scalloped barge boards with 'tear drop' turned timber knobs, roman chariot wheels used as pediment brackets, semi-circular pressed cement chimney baffles, stucco swags and rusticated panels. Hitchcock's combinations of these decorative elements provide a theatrical effect to what are otherwise relatively modest buildings.



Glanville's Buildings on Canning Highway, East Fremantle of 1902 (flickr.com, Diana House)

Perhaps the finest example of Hitchcock's design work in WA, *Glanville's Buildings* is a two storey terrace of 1902 on Canning Highway, East Fremantle and is the largest of his known buildings in the western State. *Glanville's Buildings* exhibits many of Hitchcock's 'signature' details. Spread over a two-storey facade, the contrast of stucco decoration against tuck pointed brickwork

is distinctive. The HCWA record for the place notes that other Hitchcock-designed buildings in the East Fremantle area include: the 'George Street Mews', 107-121 George Street; terrace houses at 46-52 King Street; two semi-detached houses at 25-27 Sewell Street and a gable fronted detached house in Hubble Street. Many other buildings in the Fremantle area (but also in Subiaco and Nedlands) have been identified as likely Hitchcock buildings due to their distinctive decorative treatments, but these attributions have yet to be verified.



Attached housing at 46-52 King Street, East Fremantle of 1910 (Google 2014)

During 1904-1905 Hitchcock is listed within *Wises Directory* in practice at High Street, Fremantle; and in 1906 as Hitchcock & Son – again at High Street. By late 1906 he may have been preparing to leave WA, as he advertised the rental of a cottage in Hubble Street, and is not listed from in WA from 1907-1914. Newspaper notices in Australia do not appear to record any activity of Norman in this time, and in the absence of clarifying family testimony or shipping records, we can speculate that he returned to the UK during this period. Norman Hitchcock and Son called tenders for a villa at Hawthorn from a Collins Street, Melbourne office in February of 1914, but soon recommenced business in WA. From a Barrack Street, Perth office in April 1914 they called tenders for a brick bakery on Broadway at Nedlands.

Hitchcock was listed in practice at 115 Barrack Street Perth for 1915, as Hitchcock & Son at 146 Murray Street Perth for 1916, and newspaper advertisements of 1917 record Hitchcock & Son (established 20 years) at Lombard Chambers in St George's Terrace Perth. Found by his son Alfred, by then a draftsman at the well-known retailers Boans Ltd, Norman Hitchcock died in his bed 30 August 1918 at 142 Lake Street in Perth. He was 81 years old, and was buried in the Anglican section of Karrakatta Cemetery.

References:

- 'Tenders', *Argus*, 8 May 1875, p.3 (tenders for floor laying, NH at 224 Smith St Collingwood).
- 'Transfer of Land', *Argus*, 31 July 1878, p.8 (George & Webb St Fitzroy land, NH carpenter).
- 'Land for Sale', *Argus*, 29 July 1879, p.1 (George & Webb St Fitzroy land for sale).
- 'New Insolvents', *Argus*, 20 July 1880, p.5 (notes causes of insolvency).
- 'Tenders', *Argus*, 3 September 1880, p.2 (two villas Windsor).
- Victoria & Its Metropolis, Past and Present*, Melbourne, McCarron Bird, 1888, vol.2, pp.520-21.
- 'New Insolvents', *Argus*, 29 April 1891, p.5 (notes causes of insolvency).
- 'Mr J.R. Mummery', *Yea Chronicle*, 17 November 1892, p.2 (chemist shop, High Street Yea).
- 'Business Notices', *Yea Chronicle*, 21 September 1893, p.1 (visits Yea once a week).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 7 April 1897, p.6 (2-storey terrace houses Wittenoom St Perth).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 27 January 1900, p.1 (stone cottage East Fremantle).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 12 November 1900, p.2 (2 storey brick & stone resid Nth Frem).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 10 April 1902, p.1 (2 houses Cottesloe, villa Hubble St E Frem).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 28 May 1903, p.2 (brick and stone villa South Fremantle).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 11 June 1904, p.2 (brick and stone villa East Fremantle).
- 'To Rent', *The West Australian*, 20 June 1906, p.10 (cottage to rent Hubble Street).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 26 September 1906, p.1 (large bungalow John St Nth Frem).
- 'Tenders', *Argus*, 28 February 1914, p.5 (villa at Hawthorn).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 15 April 1914, p.3 (brick bakery Broadway Nedlands).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 21 September 1914, p.2 (brick villa Cottesloe).
- 'Professions, Trades etc', *The West Australian*, 26 September 1914, p.10 (plans & specs prepared for £1 1s, at 115 Barrack St, 50 years experience).
- 'Professions, Trades etc', *The West Australian*, 24 March 1915, p.10 (plans prepared for 10s 6d, at Murray Street corner Barrack Street, 50 years experience).
- 'Professions, Trades etc', *The West Australian*, 10 November 1917, p.4 (Lombard Chambers).
- 'Died in Bed', *Daily News*, 31 August 1918, p.9 (son Alfred found Norman, post-mortem reqd).
- 'Hitchcock', *The West Australian*, 2 September 1918, p.1 (death notice).
- HCWA Register of Heritage Places-Assessment Doc'n, Glanville's Buildings, East Fremantle.
- Geoffrey Falk, *Development of the architectural practice of Norman Hitchcock*, unpublished investigation programme held at Melbourne University 1972.
- Lewis, Miles, 'Terrace Housing', in *Fitzroy – Melbourne's First Suburb*, Cutten History Committee of the Fitzroy History Society. Melbourne University Press, 1991, pp.107-108, 112.
- Willis, Julie, 'Hitchcock, Norman', *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, CUP 2012, pp.333-4.
- 'Norman Hitchcock', <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Hitchcock-4509> accessed 1 March 2026.

Contributing author: John Taylor

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