

Building:	Former Wertheim Piano Factory (GTV 9 Studios)	Significance:	B
Address:	Bendigo Street, Richmond	Melway Map Ref:	2H G9
Building Type:	Television Studios	Construction Date:	1909
Architect:	Nahum Barnet	Builder:	R McDonald



Intactness:		Condition:	
G[x] F[] P[]		G[x] F[] P[]	
Existing Heritage Listings:		Recommended Heritage Listings:	
Victorian Heritage Register	[]	Victorian Heritage Register	[]
Register of the National Estate	[]	Register of the National Estate	[x]
National Trust	[]	Heritage Overlay Controls	[x]

History

The former Wertheim Piano Factory was constructed in 1909 to the design of architect Nahum Barnet. The builder was R McDonald. The owner was Hugo Wertheim who, after a study of European and American factories, decided to have the factory area on one ground floor with offices on the first floor, a somewhat new concept for large factories in Australia. The site covered four acres and a tramway system was laid through the building and to the timber stores at the rear. The floor area was 50,000 square feet and the factory was capable of producing 2,000 pianos a year.

Almost all parts of a piano were made in the factory, and for this purpose iron and brass foundries, timber seasoning racks, wood working equipment, cabinet-making, French polishing and sounding board facilities were provided. The factory generated its own power and it was heated by hot air pipes. Lavatories, luncheon rooms and smokers' pavilions were built for employees. Fire proof divisions and steel doors were provided for fire isolation and a new type of damp course was laid in the walls.

Some of the staff had been trained in the leading European piano factories, and the pianos were claimed to compare favourably with any in the world.

The factory is presently used as the GTV 9 studios.

John & Thurley O'Connor, Ros Coleman & Heather Wright. *Richmond Conservation Study*. 1985.

Description

The former Werthiem Piano Factory comprises two identical double-storey red brick pavilions, each approximately square in plan, connected by a single-storey central section. The building is designed in a free Arts and Crafts style. Facades are divided into three bays, separated by red brick piers which rise through the parapets, which are finished with moulded rendered cappings. The multi-paned steel-framed windows are not original; those on the first floor have segmented arched heads with moulded brick voussoirs. Second floor windows have moulded rendered lintels and sills. Moulded rendered string courses run across the elevations between the brick piers, and the brick spandrel panels above the windows are decorated with black brick diamond patterns. The hipped roofs are clad in Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles, surmounted at the apices by terracotta finials.

Another, much larger, three-storey red brick building exists to the west, which appears to have been constructed c.1930s.

Significance

The former Wertheim Piano Factory in Bendigo Street, Richmond, is of local historical and architectural significance. The factory is a good example of the free Arts and Crafts style applied to an industrial building, designed by prominent Melbourne architect Nahum Barnet. The buildings are important heritage elements in the streetscape.

The factory was once the largest piano factory in Australia, occupying a four acre site, complete with its own power generator and tramline.

Original Source

John & Thurley O'Connor, Ros Coleman & Heather Wright. *Richmond Conservation Study*. 1985.