Building:	Former Fire Station	**Significance:**	B
Address:	131 Lord Street, Richmond	**Melway Map Ref:**	2H C9
Building Type:	Fire Station	**Construction Date:**	1893
Architect:	J A B Koch	**Builder:**	Cr Gahan



Intactness:	**Condition:**
G[x] F[ ] P[ ]	G[ ] F[x] 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 Fire Brigade Station on the corner of Lord and Newry Streets, Richmond, was built in 1893. It was designed by J A B Koch of Church Street, Richmond. The cost of the land and building was approximately £1,100, exclusive of fittings and furniture which were to be 'on a very elaborate scale'.[1] The building was officially opened by the mayor on 6 May 1893. When it was opened it was reported that:

> The building has a very imposing appearance, and is replete with the latest fire-fighting appliances. Electricity plays a leading part in the new service. By simply connecting the current by the merest pressure of a button, or pulling a cord, open fly the main doors, the hor[s]e rushes out of the stable, and backing itself into the horse-cart, is harnessed ad in full going order within 20 seconds ... With such a marvellously perfect system, ought we not to henceforth feel secure against the devastating elements of fire ...[2]

The building was considered important at the time because it incorporated a fire services system similar to those which were used in America.[3]

John Augustus Bernard Koch emigrated to Australia in 1855, and had established an architectural practice in Richmond by 1870. He designed over sixty buildings, the majority in Richmond and neighbouring Hawthorn. After fifteen years as architect for the City of Melbourne, Koch was appointed city architect by the City of Richmond in 1887. He was a Justice of the Peace from 1866, a Richmond councillor from 1877 to 1885, and mayor in 1883. In 1903-04 he was president of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. Koch's buildings range across a number of architectural styles, including Italianate and Gothic Revival. The former Fire Station contrasts with one of his most ornate buildings, Ontario (now Labassa), in Caulfield.[4]

Description

The former Fire Station at 131 Lord Street, Richmond, is a two-storey late Victorian red brick domestic-scaled building. A shallow projecting bay to the south of the west elevation has a large arched vehicle opening with panelled timber doors. The main facade of the building has no front door; the ground floor has two shallow-arched window openings, the first floor has four semi-circular arched windows. There are brick string courses at ground floor sill level and first floor impost level, whilst the first floor windows have protruding keystones. The windows are timber-framed double-hung sashes with single vertical glazing bars. Sills are bluestone. There is also a moulded rendered frieze across the west and south elevation at first floor level, and rendered mouldings to the gable-end of the bay. The roof is hipped and gabled, and clad in (non-original) tiles. The red brick chimney has a rendered moulded cap. The south wall, to Newry Street, is blank save for a single arched first floor window. The ground floor on the south elevation extends beyond the rear of the main building and terminates at what appear to be a gable-roofed outbuilding. To the north-east corner there is a skillion-roofed single storey addition.

Significance

The former Fire Station at 131 Lord Street, Richmond, is of local historical and architectural significance. The building was technically advanced for its time incorporating the latest American fire service system. Architecturally, the building is a particularly simple and bold late Victorian composition. The building is an unusual and prominent heritage element on a corner in an otherwise predominantly residential area. The building was designed by prominent Melbourne architect and former Richmond councillor and mayor, J A B Koch.

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1 J U White, 'Richmond Fire Brigades-from 1855'. Richmond Filing Cabinet (2) 249, held at the Richmond Library.

2 J U White, 'Richmond Fire Brigades-from 1855'. Richmond Filing Cabinet (2) 249, held at the Richmond Library.

3 J U White, 'Richmond Fire Brigades-from 1855'. Richmond Filing Cabinet (2) 249, held at the Richmond Library.

4 B Nairn & G Serle (eds.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, 1983, pp 632-633.