



Shop and Residence 55a Gheringhap Street

History

(see also W. Leggo store, 88 Ryrie Street)

This prime Crown Allotment was granted to Charles Shane of Hobart in 1848 for £158 and was to become the site of this building, among other commercial structures extending east along Ryrie Street and south along Gheringhap. McShane sold to Thomas Austin in the following year, more than doubling his money.¹

Austin commenced to subdivide the lot in 1850; just prior to announcement of the gold finds and hence they sold for modest prices. This site went to Thomas Towie and John M. Turpin, just after the first gold find rewards were granted,² for an atypically high £420, indicating it was already improved or gold had inflated the price.³

However, the next sale in 1853 confirmed improvements by description and the price paid. A 132 foot frontage to Ryrie and 90 feet to Gheringhap cost Michael O'Farrell, Snr. & Jnr., £3720. They subdivided to create this site (21 feet by 90 feet) in 1855, selling it to Thomas B. Hunt for £2310.⁴ This year also marked the first rate description of this building.

After this exchange, only mortgages in 1856 (£500), 1901 (£550) and 1903-4 (just prior to Hunt's death) preceded its acquisition by William Leggo in 1911 for £1550.⁵ Four years later Leggo sold an 11 feet wide frontage to Gheringhap Street to Frederick Harvey, presumably to give him access from a R.O.W. to the street.

Leggo died in 1931,⁶ preceding a series of mortgages by his wife, Susan, in 1932-3 and 1942.

1 RGO SN12143
2 see Flett
3 *ibid.*
4 *ibid.*
5 *ibid.*
6 RGO SN51696, p.8

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study
Significant Sites

Adopting a traditional courthouse profile, based around the existing building, it possessed a raised two-storey height courtroom, a lower-level colonnaded porch and two flanking pavilions, the Gheringhap Street elevation achieving its contemporary character by simplicity of detail and the all-pervading Cordova-tiled hip-roof form. In Little Malop Street, a similar tripartite composition also mixed tradition with Modernism but with emphasis on the latter, with its vertical window strips echoing similar devices used on Everett's Wool and Textile School design at the Gordon Institute of the same era. Decorative metal work (grilles) underscores the architectural inspiration (Italian provincial) and provides a vehicle for distinctive detailing.

Inside, the contemporary Moderne theme is more evident, with plaster friezes, metal work and the era's typical Queensland timber veneers to doors and panels. Some early colours are evident in what is a generally original interior.

External Integrity

Generally original.

Streetscape

Today it complements both the town hall portico and the adjoining contemporary telephone exchange.

Significance

Historically, given its near original condition, it represents its construction period faithfully and hence its long-term public building role.

Architecturally, one of Everett's larger Courthouse designs and among his most successful, given its corner site and streetscape contribution. It possesses distinctive finishes and details for a public building (tiles, metal work) and contributes to a valuable public building precinct.