

Simpsons Terrace, 500-506 Nicholson Street. (Contd.)

BUILDING CITATION:

This row of four terraces is simple in conception. The palisade iron fences are intact and are divided by projecting wing walls decorated by heads. The upper facade is modest with hoods supported on consoles. The window architraves are simply modelled. The upper cornice is broken by projecting heads supported on consoles which reflect the dividing line of the parapet wall behind. The whole effect is simple but well balanced and understated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that this building be specified under Clause 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

NAME: State Savings Bank

ADDRESS: 720 Nicholson Street

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1890

ADDITIONS: 1922 - extension to east

ARCHITECT: Wight and Lucas

BUILDER: unknown

FIRST OWNER: Melbourne Savings Bank

PRESENT OWNER: State Savings Bank

CONSTRUCTION

MATERIALS: rendered brickwork

CONSERVATION AREA: -



BUILDING CITATION:

This building, constructed in 1890 to the design of architects Wight and Lucas, embodies the diverse elements of boom classical architecture. While most of the architectural elements can be found in the classical repertoire, they have been assembled here in a rather capricious fashion. In 1922 the bank underwent extensive alterations and a new banking chamber was added at the east. An early photograph shows the bank after these alterations with the corner entrance filled in, the original balustraded parapet and window guards (spikes). These have subsequently been removed and a corner entrance reinstated. A new western window has been inserted.

This building in a corner location is an important streetscape element. However the alterations to the facade detract from the integrity of the building.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this bank be added to the Register of the National Estate and specified under Clause 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

BUILDING ANALYSIS:

This building, constructed in 1890, was designed by the architects Wight and Lucas at a cost of £2,737.¹ There is evidence that Wight was interested in producing a new or specifically Australian style and this may account for the advanced character of this building which resembles the later eclectic State Savings Bank building. While most of the motifs can be found in the classical repertoire, they are put together in a very heavy and rather capricious fashion. The building is two storey with a curved corner entrance. The clumsy corner panel above the entrance represents a section of a classical cornice with a pair of triglyphs at either end surmounting a circular motif containing the bank shield. In the recessed panels at the side and at the corner, there are elaborate window motifs. On the upper floor arch headed windows with segmental pediments (with the bottom chords missing) are supported in a mannerist fashion on top of scrolls which rise in turn from a small section of entablature resting on a pair of pilasters.

The rusticated piers dividing the windows (the corner piers of the pavilion) have rusticated ionic capitals with garlands. The base of these piers is composed of projecting cables running vertically.

The entablature line on the bottom storey consists of a dentillated cornice surmounting a fiece which is in parts plain and in parts (in the pavilion sections) decorated by roundels or patterae between compressed triglyph motifs. Guttae protrude below the lower moulding.

On the ground floor there are masonry blocks represented by recessed panels with a roll moulding, arranged in a coarse manner. There are bands of bosses running across the pilasters and crude corbels with quadrant bases which support the main blocks forming the sides of the pavilion section.

In 1922 the bank underwent extensive alterations and additions at a cost of £3,367.² The eastern wing was added as the new banking chamber, and the front section of the bank converted into the Manager's residence. A photograph, taken shortly after that date (c.1924), indicates that the corner entrance was infilled as part of this scheme. This photograph shows the original windows on the western facade which have been replaced by a large window, original cast iron window guards (spikes), and the balustraded parapet which has been subsequently removed. The corner transom light has subsequently been infilled to take the State Savings Bank shield.

This bank embodies the principles of boom classicism: distortion and elaboration of rules, concentration of ornament around the windows and doors, and an elaborate composition.

The upper floor windows have small metal balconettes (carried out on consoles of reduced quasi-ionic form) and continuous architraves around the arched window heads, broken only by a keystone at the centre. These keystones are of a floral motif, while the ones on the ground floor are decorated by a stork with grasses and plants on either side.

The loggia consists of a series of arches between unusual columns with Egyptianizing round acanthus leaf capitals. These columns are doubled at either end of the loggia and tripled at the splayed corners.

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1. B. Trethowan "A Study of banks in Victoria 1851-1939" for the Historic Buildings Preservation Council. December 1976.
 2. Plan held at State Savings Bank premises department. Architects Sydney Smith Ogg and Serpell, Contractor A. Pithard.
 3. Photograph held by State Savings Bank Archivist.