

NAME: Champion Hotel
ADDRESS: 50 Brunswick Street
(cnr. Gertrude)
CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1911
ALTERATNS/ADDITNS: 1924, 1959, 1962, 1977
(replacement of
balustrading to first
floor with glazing).
ARCHITECT: Unknown
BUILDER: Unknown
FIRST OWNER: Victorian Insurance
Company
FIRST OCC./USE: Unknown/Hotel
PRESENT OWNER: N.M. Kearney,
2 Victoria Street,
Richmond.
PRESENT OCC./USE: T.W. Gilbert/Hotelier
CONSTRUCTION
MATERIALS: Brick, cement trim.
INTACTNESS/
CONDITION: Partially intact.
AREA/STREETSCAPE: Part of recommended Area A1.



IMPORTANCE:

This building was constructed in 1911 for the Victorian Insurance Company. The architect is not known. The building is a delightful flamboyant composition of red brick and cement render, with a dominating and unusual open-work corner tower. Unfortunately, the facade has been substantially altered, and on a state wide basis, the Provincial Hotel, Ballarat of 1909 is considered a better example of Edwardian flamboyance on a large scale. However, its scale, design and corner location make it a very important corner streetscape element of great significance locally and in a Melbourne Metropolitan context.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

BUILDING ANALYSIS & EVIDENCE:

This building was constructed in 1911 for the Victorian Insurance Company.¹ It replaced an earlier hotel constructed in 1873 which probably did not conform to the strict standards of the Licensing Reduction Board.² This Board was established in May, 1907, with the task of closing hotels which did not conform to the standards required by the Licensing Act of 1906-07. Many hotels were demolished and re-built at this time.³

1. Daws K. and McAllester "Hotels with corner towers in Fitzroy"
B.Arch. University of Melbourne p.13.
2. op cit p.13.
3. op cit p.1.

Champion Hotel, 50 Brunswick Street (Cont.)

The building is of a delightful flamboyant composition, employing red brick and cement render to achieve a decorative yet quite clumsy design of many mixed elements. At the corner is a dominating open-work pavillion tower which is quite an unusual and rare building element. A similar but more clumsy example is seen on Michaels Furniture Disposal Store, corner Geelong Road and Barkly Street, Footscray.

The use of the three centred arch is characteristic of the period, and there are many other Queen Anne motifs: art nouveau/arabic foliated capitals, elevated pediment with lush plasterwork, and intact lead lighting in the corner tower window.

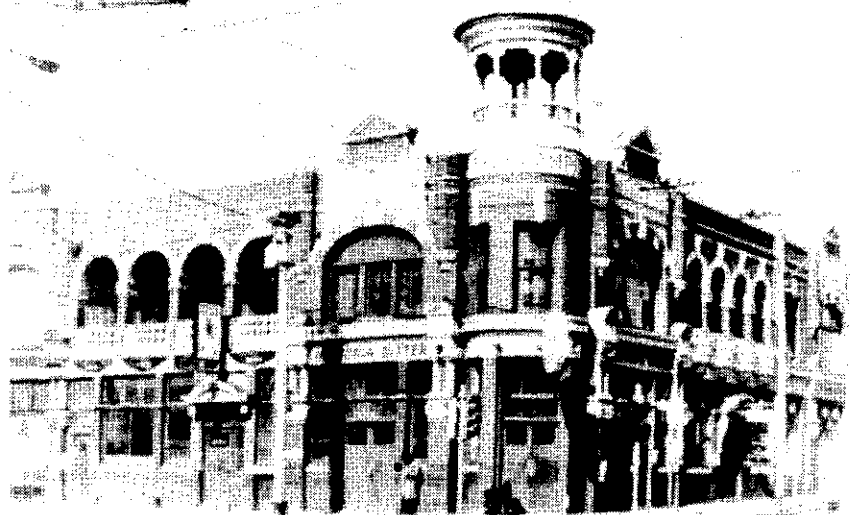
Unfortunately the facade has been substantially modified.⁴ Only recently the cement waffle balustrading was replaced by inappropriate glazing, infilling the original loggia at first floor level. The wider arches were infilled at an earlier date. The ground floor has been drastically altered with entrances and windows bricked in. An elaborate pedimented entrance survives on the west facade. Punctuating both elevations are unusual paired stilted engaged columns supported on capitals. Internally there is little of note.

This building provides an important example of a grand and flamboyant Edwardian building. The adjoining shops (nos. 94-100 Gertrude Street) read as part of the overall composition but were probably constructed at a different date.⁵ The shopfronts have been altered and verandahs removed.

The period of construction and to a limited extent the style of the building can be compared with the Provincial Hotel, 123 Lydiard Street, North Ballarat. This was constructed in 1909 to the design of a local architect P.S. Richards. This building is substantially intact and employs similar detailing: the waffle balustrading and contrasting use of red brick and cement dressings.

The massing of the building and the positioning and detailing of the towers is however quite different. The Provincial Hotel provides a more intact example of a flamboyant Edwardian/Art Nouveau hotel building.

The Champion Hotel has been so drastically and insensitively defaced, that it cannot be considered for addition to the Historic Buildings Register. It is of great significance as a large scale and ornate Edwardian building. Its scale, design (incorporating adjoining shops) and corner location make at an extremely important streetscape element. Restored to its original condition this would be an outstanding example of an Edwardian hotel building.



(16)
Champion Hotel, before
arcades infilled and
ground floors altered c.1976-77

4. Visible in photo of the Champion hotel in Piccolo N. "Hotels in Fitzroy up to 1906" Research Essay. B. Arch 1971 Vol. 2
5. Their date of construction is unknown. They are possibly those in the Fitzroy Permit Book 15.12.1903 3 shops and street license for Victoria Insurance Coy. Builder J.L. Wright Gertrude Street near Brunswick Street.