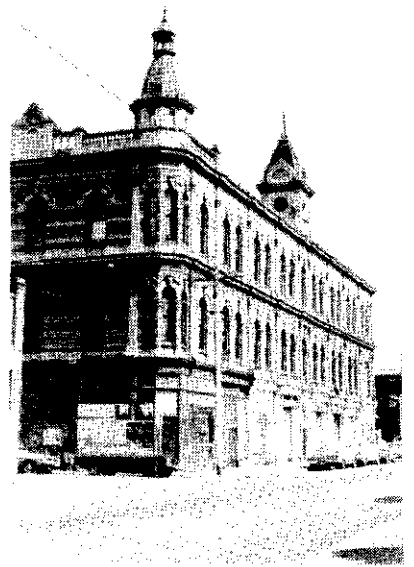


NAME: -
ADDRESS: 236-252 Brunswick St.
CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1888
ALTERATNS/ADDITNS: Verandah removed,
parapet incomplete,
some shop fronts
altered.
ARCHITECT: John Beswicke
BUILDER: Ralph Besant
FIRST OWNER: Australian Property
& Investors Co. Ltd.
FIRST OCC./USE: Various shops &
manufacturers shops
PRESENT OWNER: Various
PRESENT OCC./USE: Various/shops, manufacturers, etc.



CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: Red brick, cement render trim
INTACTNESS/CONDITION: Substantially intact/good condition
AREA/STREETSCAPE: Part of recommended area A7.

IMPORTANCE:

This building was constructed in 1888 for the Australian Proprietors Investors Company Ltd. The architect was John Beswicke and the contractor Ralph Besant.

The building is substantially intact apart from the removal of the verandah and part of the parapet, and alterations to some shop fronts. The polychrome brick facade is highlighted by unpainted cement render trims, and utilizes some unusual architectural motifs: stilted arches to the second floor, scalloped pedimental motifs to the balustrade (two since removed), an unusual central tower with lunettes and a corner turret topped by a lantern.

This building provides an excellent example of a polychrome brick commercial premises constructed at the height of the boom. It survives substantially intact with an unpainted facade and five original shop fronts. It is in an excellent state of preservation, and is one of the best surviving examples of a row of once verandahed three storey polychrome brick shops in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this building be added to the Historic Buildings Register. Replacement of the verandah and reinstatement of the original parapet is strongly recommended. It is also recommended for addition to the Register of the National Estate and be specified under Clause 8 of the Town & Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE:

This row of eight three storey shops was constructed in 1888 for the Australian Proprietors & Investors Company Ltd.¹, to the design of architect John Beswicke and built by Ralph Besant, builder².

Beswick was an architect of some merit designing numerous Town Halls (Brighton, Malvern, Hawthorn & Essendon), various churches, large commercial premises (including the Australia Building cnr. Flinders Lane and Elizabeth Street in conjunction with Oakden, Addison & Kemp) and substantial residences³. Besant was also a notable contractor who "...erected a number of shops in Collingwood and Fitzroy, eleven large shops in Burwood Road, Hawthorn, and villas and residences in almost every part of the city and suburbs..."⁴.

An early photo survives of the building⁵, showing the original verandah (now removed) and continuous balustraded parapet with intercepting pedimental motifs. Apart from these changes, and replacement of shop fronts to numbers 236, 248 and 252 the building is intact and provides an excellent and unique example of a flamboyant polychrome brick commercial development. The building has an unusual assymetrical composition, with an unusual central tower and corner turret, topped with a lantern. The fine polychrome brick facade is highlighted by unpainted cement render detailing; arches, impost string courses, pilasters, and bracketed cornice. The pedimental motif originally repeated twice on the west elevation, is unusual with a scalloped motif in the tympanum. The facade does not receive monotonous treatment - the upper floor utilizes the stilted arches above the windows, seen elsewhere in Fitzroy on the Sisters of Charity Building, 116-118 Nicholson Street and in 5-7 Collins Street.

The central entrance topped by an elegant fanlight on the west elevation, leads through an unimposing passage to the rear of the building. Access to the upper floors was not possible; there appeared to be little of note internally to the ground floor shops.

This building is of considerable significance locally, and on a statewide basis. It provides an excellent example of a boom polychrome brick commercial premises that is substantially intact and is a good example of a prominent Melbourne architect's work. It is an extremely important streetcape element to the Brunswick Street commercial precinct and can be seen as a landmark from the surrounding areas.

Viewed from Carlton, down Faraday Street, it provides an important and contributory element to the skyline. It is strongly recommended that the verandah be restored and the parapet reinstated. This would result in an intact building of considerable merit.

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1. Fitzroy Ratebooks 1st entry 1888, 236-252 Brunswick Street. Australian Proprietors & Investors Co. Ltd., Brick shop 11 rooms £200. 7 x Brick shops 9 rooms £130.
 2. *Australasian Builder and Contractors News* 18.2.1888. Acceptance of tenders - erection of 8 three storey shops, cnr. Brunswick & Greeves Street. R. Besant, Hawthorn.
 3. See A. Sutherland (ed) *Victoria and its Metropolis* 1888 Vol. 2 p. 512. Article on John Beswicke.
 4. Op cit Vol. 2 p.630. Article on Ralph Besant.
 5. LaTrobe Collection, State Library of Victoria: Meade Album. Vol. 10 p.3, Bay 2, Sh. 24.

236-252 Brunswick Street (Cont.)



(17) Brunswick Street, c1900