

NAME: Fitzroy Cable Tram
Engine House

ADDRESS: Nicholson Street,
Cnr. Gertrude Street

CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1886

ALTERATIONS./ADDITIONS: Corner signal box not
part of first design,
new entrance door on
north elevation, urns
removed from top.

ARCHITECT: Twentyman & Askew?

BUILDER: Martin and Peacock

FIRST OWNER: Melbourne Tramway and
Omnibus Company

FIRST OCC./USE: Ditto/Engine House

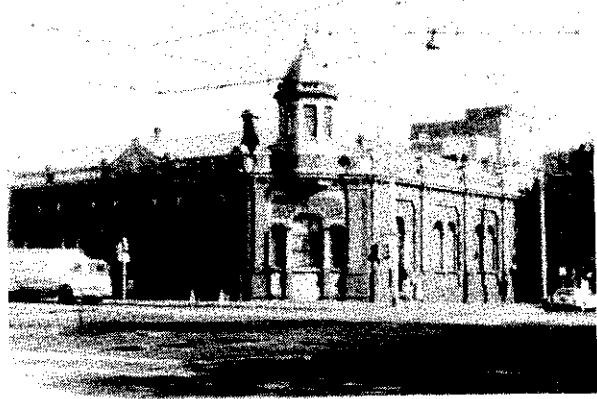
PRESENT OWNER: Melbourne and Metropolitan
Tramways Board

PRESENT OCC./USE: Ditto/Offices

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: Brick, cement dressings, bluestone plinth, cast iron
internal columns.

INTACTNESS/
CONDITION: Intact/good condition

AREA STREETSCAPE: Part of recommended area A1



IMPORTANCE:

The Fitzroy Cable Tramway Engine House was the 3rd of eleven such Engine Houses constructed for the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company. It was erected in 1886-87, the contractor was Martin and Peacock and the architects were probably Twentyman and Askew. It provides the best example of this building type and is intact apart from the removal of urns to the parapet and minor facade alterations. The cement and bluestone dressings contrast against the two tone red brick work, and the eclectic use of architectural motifs with the dominating corner signal tower result in a building of state wide significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that this building be brought to the attention of the Historic Buildings Preservation Council and be referred to the Government Buildings Advisory Council. It is also recommended that it be added to the Register of the National Estate and be specified under the Town and Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE:

The Fitzroy Cable Tramway Engine House was the 3rd of eleven such Engine Houses constructed for the privately owned Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company.¹ It was erected in 1886-87² and opened 10.8.1887.³ It was probably designed by architects Twentyman and Askew,⁴ the contractor was Martin and Peacock and the construction cost was £17,833.11.9 (with machinery included was £64,979.16.5).⁵

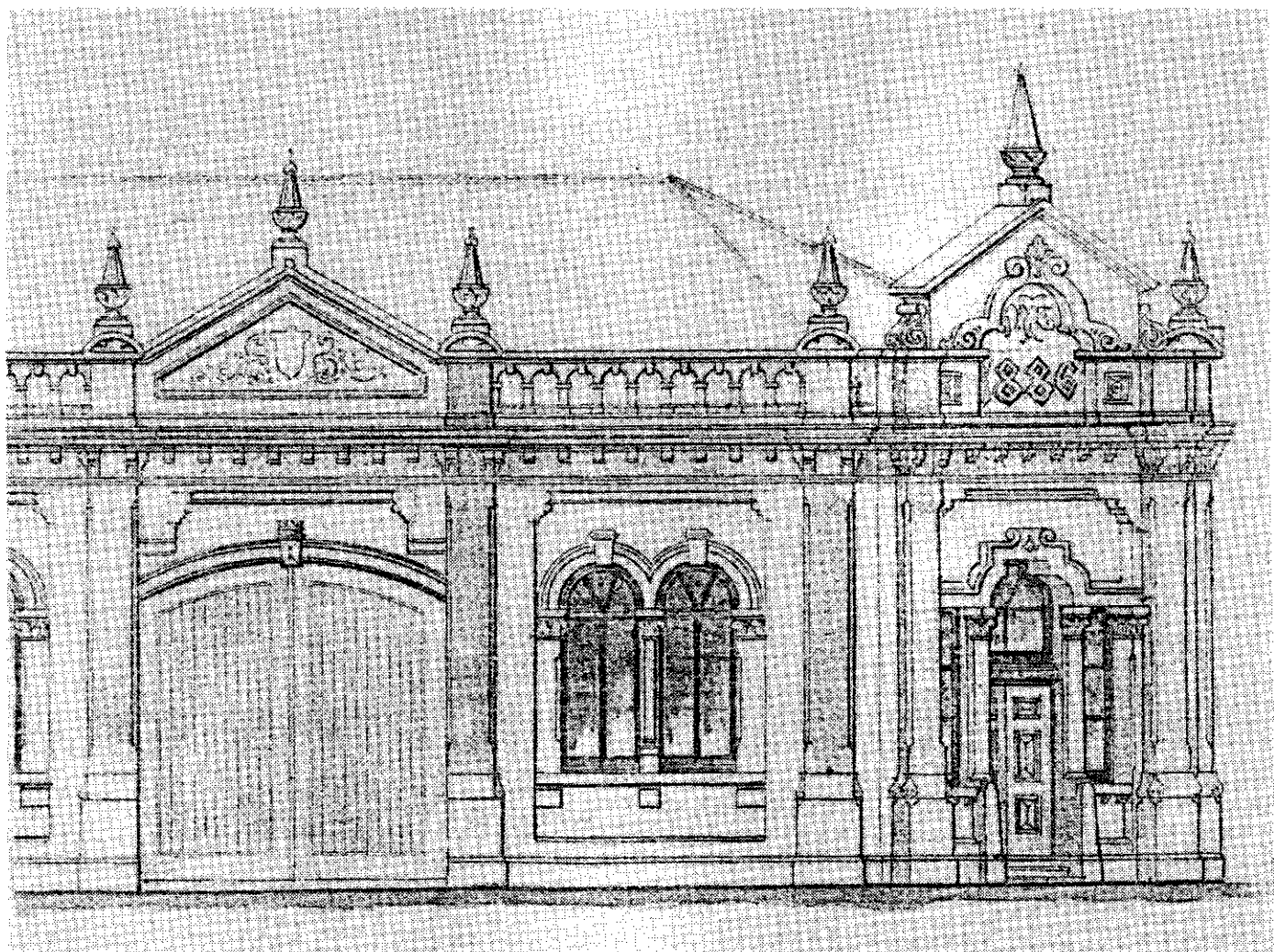
The original drawings survive and indicate that the building as it stands today is virtually intact. Only the urns have been removed, an entrance cut into one of the northern windows and the original corner entrance, infilled to sill height to form a window. Two contract drawings exist dated June 1886 without the corner signal box; a third undated drawing shows the scheme for the signal box,⁶ and it is probable that this was an amendment to the original design during the construction period.

The Nicholson Street Engine House was one of the biggest engine houses, driving three cables, the greatest cable length being 23,880 feet.⁵ Out of those surviving which are substantially intact,⁶ the Nicholson Street building provides the best, intact example of an engine house building. Compared to the simple design of the first engine house building at Richmond (1885), this building is more ornamental and compares with the North Melbourne building of 1890 (designed by Twentyman and Askew). The external cement and bluestone detailing is extremely fine; the window sills and supporting volutes are in bluestone, and the window dressings, representative cement cable and brackets are in pre-cast units. The facade is in two tone brickwork with the piers in brighter red; there is evidence of a former fixture to the facade, (possibly an awning or verandah) with timber plugs at regular intervals.

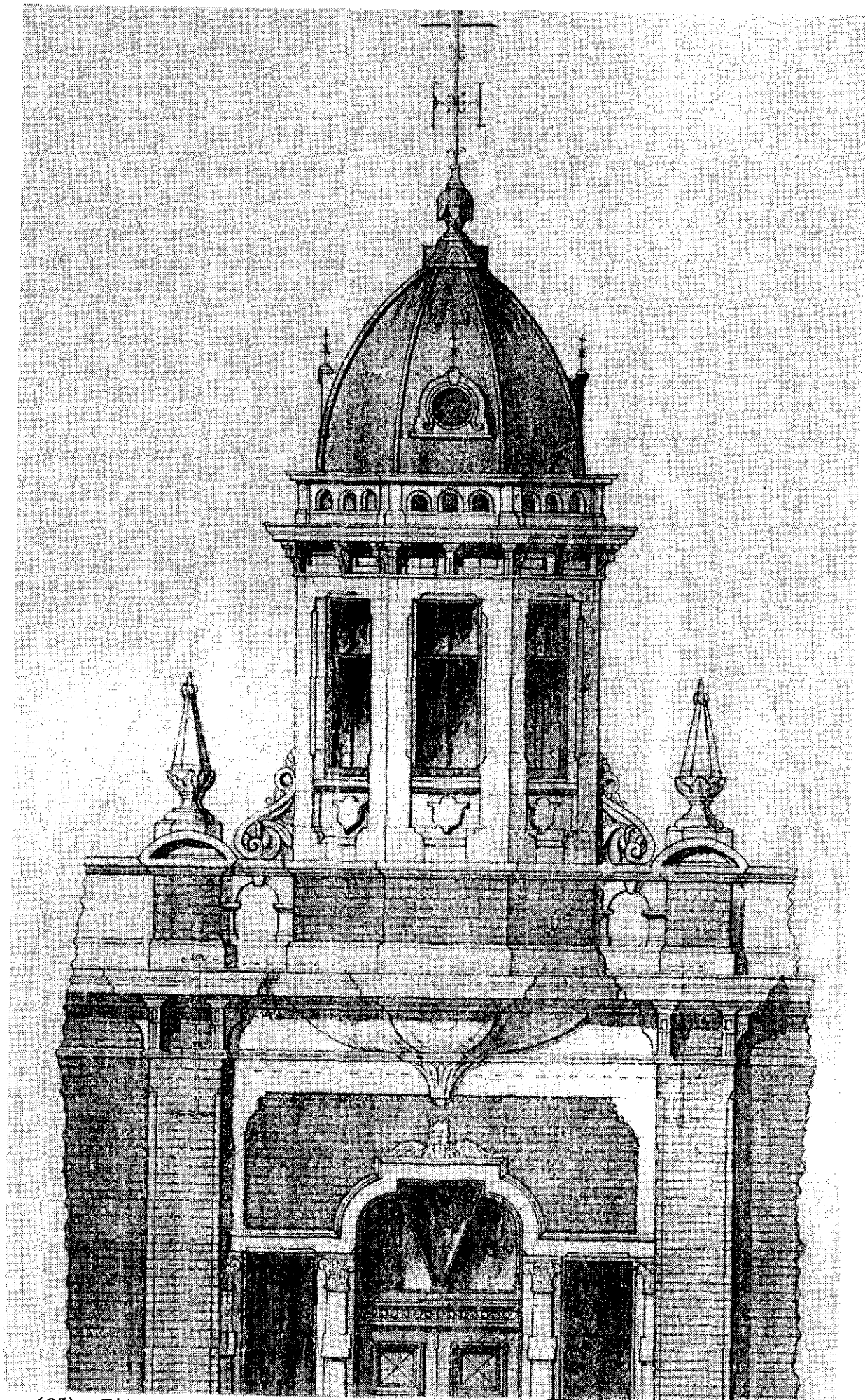
Internally there is little of note apart from a pair of large cast iron columns with foliated capitals. The stairs to the signal box have been removed (thus preventing any form of access) and the office interiors completely altered.

This building provides the best surviving example of an engine house in Melbourne. It was the most decorative and eclectic of the Tram Engine house designs of the 1880's and early 1890's and is considered superior to the North Melbourne Engine House of 1890.

-
1. L.J. Harding "Development of Tram Engine Houses" B. Arch University of Melbourne undated P.26-30
 2. Original drawings are held by the M.M.T.B. 3 sheets. Two contract drawings dated 22 June 1886, contractors Martin and Peacock. One sheet undated.
 3. Harding op. cit. p.28
 4. "Twentyman & Askew Day Book" LaTrobe Library Box 138/3 p.216 March 31 1887 contract price W.W. Saddington £2979.0.0 Final contract price £2981.3.0. New Car House at Nicholson Street N.F. This is the only entry for Nicholson Street, but this may refer to the Tram Depot, Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy. Twentyman & Askew designed most of the Engine Houses and also the head office for the Melbourne Tramways and Omnibus Company.
 5. J.D. Keating *Mind the Curve* M.U.P. Carlton Vic. 1970.
 6. Substantially intact Engine Houses: Richmond (opened 11.11.1885); Nicholson St. (10.8.1887); Brunswick (1.10.1887); Johnston St. (21.12.1887); North Carlton (21.12.1888); North Melbourne (3.3.1890); South Melbourne (17.6.1890).



(24) Original drawing held at M.M.T.B. 22.5.1886. Note: this drawing shows the original scheme for the corner entrance door without signal box.



(25) Fitzroy Cable Train Engine House undated drawing showing corner signal box.