

# National Bank, former 53 Malop Street, 184-190 Moorabool Street History

This three-storey bank and offices replaced smaller banking chambers and two shops (49-53) after its completion in 1928<sup>1</sup> to the design of H W & F B Tompkins, Melbourne architects. The Mayor (Alderman T. Walls) opened the building in January, 1928.<sup>2</sup>

The Tompkins brothers had called tenders in 1926 for the bank and in 1931 for connected flats. Until this project, Gibbs Finlay & Moresby had served as the bank's architects in the design of regional offices such as Camperdown, Terang and Sale, throughout the 20th century, while Leonard

Terry had designed the first major Geelong branch in 1861.<sup>4</sup>

The adjoining National Bank Chambers (west of the new bank) contained among others, H C Giles, dentist, a long-term tenant, as was a solicitor, M Kelly, from the 1940s. Laurens P/L, debt collectors, and F G Gargan, a solicitor, were among the other mainly professional occupants in the upper levels.<sup>5</sup>

## **Description**

Greek Revival in detail, the bold rounded-corner form is also typical of many 19th century Renaissance revival examples. This bank differs in the simplification or reinterpretation of period detailing and fenestration, as demanded by greater daylight penetration. Upper windows are vertical slots, with paneled spandrels; lower-level windows fill the Ionic pilastrade with multi-pane metal-framed glazing. The main chamber is typically near double-height, to achieve the monumentality inherent in the style. Stone and cement-render are blended skillfully to achieve a convincing classical character and the saltire-cross, used in balustrading and window mullions, hint at the Green sources.

## **External Integrity**

Generally original, added signs.

#### Streetscape

Opposite National Mutual Life (c1924), the altered former Solomon's Department Store (1914), Colonial Mutual Chambers (1927) and formerly across from the old Commonwealth Bank and Victoria Hotel (both

<sup>1</sup> CTHE open 27.1.28; RB 1927, 373f; RB1928, 378f

<sup>2</sup> GA. 28.1.28

<sup>3</sup> MUAI

Trethowan 'Banks of Victoria'

<sup>5</sup> D1930-61

## City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study Significant Sites

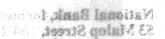
demolished), this bank was once part of a visually cohesive group of some of the town's most prestigious commercial buildings. Today it relates closely to the CML & NML Buildings and other landmark corner sites such as the T & G Building (1932) and Bank of New South Wales (1938).

## Significance

Historically, a major public building over a 60 year period and an indication of the growth and consolidation of banking companies after World War One and, particularly, the Great Depression.

Architecturally, one of a rare breed in Geelong of the large early 20th century commercial buildings, also seen in Melbourne in greater numbers and larger scale. With its relatively larger scale, goes the amplification of the prevailing, Greek Revival Style into Geelong's best (and only example at this scale).

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