## Terminus Hotel
96  98 Mercer Street

### History

Thomas Austin owned this land along with four other Crown Allotments adjoining to the north in the 1850s. Directly to the west was St. Paul's Anglican Church school and parsonage reserves so that the arrival of the Geelong & Melbourne Railway Company line, which separated the Terminus
Hotel from its ecclesiastical counterpart, was perhaps fortuitous. [1]

The Terminus was built on land arising from Austin's subdivision of his grant in the boom era of 1853-6.[2] Austin sold lots 1, 2 & 26 to Alfred Napoleon Gilbert, also paying one Walter Hobson £230 out of the £500 received.[3] Geelong architects, Snell & Kawerau, called tenders for the hotel's construction in 1853 [4], the building being

described as a brick two-storey hotel of 31 rooms, storeroom, wine cellar, laundry and a five-stall stable soon after completion. The rated occupier was one Charles Fassert and the hotel's name, the Terminus, as cited in rate books of 1854-5.[5]

Fassert, the first licensee, advertised that he had previously spent some 15 years managing large hotels in Europe, Britain and America.[6] F T Honey (member of the Geelong Architectural Association) publicized his internal decoration of the hotel in the Builder of 1855, obviously with some pride.[7] The Terminus and other Geelong hotels built during the gold era were all substantial buildings, even by Melbourne standards.

Despite its name, the hotel could not boast a location at the railway end until 1857 but in the interim was still on the main coach route. The Western and Terminus Hotels were both booking offices for Cobb & Company's

1    line completed in 1857, land acquisition in 1854
2    RGO 33297
3    RGO 21298
4    Seaton, The Ashby Story p.53 September 1853 tenders called for stone and brickwork for hotel at Golden Point
5    RB1854-5, 381- annotated Terminus Hotel; MUAL NTA file
6    Seaton, p53 Fassert advertises his background in August 1854
7    MUAL Builder V 13, N 632, 17.3.55 p.126

Telegraph Line of coaches in 1858.[1] An early illustration of the hotel (then Bedford's and Hooper's Terminus Hotel) shows little has changed with the exception of stuccoing of the brickwork, removal of part of the central parapet wall and the multi-pane glazing also the accretion of signs and canopies.[2]

James Bedford presided over the bar briefly before his death, his widow Mary being there for the longest period in the 19th. century.[3] Mrs. Bolger and Mrs. E McIntosh maintained the female emphasis in the hotel this century but the hotel remained the property of the Bedford Estate.[4]

Appropriately, the architects, Snell & Kawerau, also designed the first Geelong railway station and quarters in 1853. They won second prize in the St. Mary's Catholic Church competition (1854) as well as calling tenders for several other gold-era Geelong projects.[5] The future Mayor of Liverpool, Sir William B. Forwood, stayed at the Terminus in the year the railway opened (1857):

> We found our hotel at the extreme end of the town, a large brick building, and were shown our bedroom sans mosquitoe curtains but as the chamber maid insisted, that there were no mosquitoes in the house we pacified ourselves...[6]

Forwood and companion ended up wrapped in their sheets from head to toe, to avoid the troublesome insects.

### Description

Thought by Lorraine Huddle (in Architects in Geelong in the 1840s and 1850s[7]) to be the first of Geelong's distinctive rounded-corner hotels, this three-storey, formerly face-brick building shares its designers with the actual terminus (Geelong Railway Station) nearby. Sited on a triangular plan, the building takes on an unusual wedge shape. Relief from the otherwise severe geometry is achieved with a decorative brick parapet wall and heavy bracketed cornice. Projecting bays in each street elevation are relatively sophisticated, compared to the simple early hotel buildings elsewhere in Geelong, (ie., the former Union Club, now demolished). A stone base and radiating stone steps lead up to an entrance bay, with a dentillated cornice moulding, which has been built-up on the lower facade.

Otherwise the ground level has a string sill and impost mouldings. One elegant iron balconette railing survives on the corner, second-storey window. The curved outer door pair also survives. Altered outbuildings, some of rubble basalt, are visible to the west.

Other surviving Geelong gold era hotels include the former Somerset Hotel (c1854), Balmoral Hotel (1854), Fyansford Hotel (1854), Golden Age (1854) which still possesses its decorative brickwork, Bayview Hotel (1854), Star Hotel (1855), Argyle Hotel (1855), and the stone George & Dragon Hotel (1855)[8].

### External Integrity

An etching used to advertise the hotel shows the parapet wall as continuous, with the proprietor's name attached; the cornice was simpler, also multi-pane glazing was used throughout (six-pane sashes typical). The traditional light, with the hotel's name, hung on an extended bracket over the doorway.[9] The hotel was stuccoed, probably late last century (see Golden Age Hotel). Leadlight windows have replaced the originals in the 1920s, also the lobby doors date from this era.

### Streetscape

On a traditional corner site and on the old Melbourne coach road, the hotel is also close to its namesake (the railway station), and the early St. Paul's complex: all focused as an early community centre, adjacent to two forms of transport.

### Significance

Historically, among one of the few near intact gold-era Geelong hotels, which is further enhanced by its physical proximity and design-link to the former Geelong Railway Station complex. Given its near 140 years of operation, it has performed a long quasi-public building role in the Geelong community.

Architecturally, of an unusually sophisticated design for its age, illustrating the distinctive Geelong rounded-corner hotel form and the early use of bas-relief decorative face-brickwork in a colony where brickmaking was still unreliable.

1       ibid.
2       INV. 9.81 p.94
3       D1861-90; GHRC note on 2.90 draft GCUCS
4       D1910-61
5       MUAI
6       INV. 9.1981, p.93
7       Vol. I, p.56 (MU Humanities Research Report, 1979)
8       see GRC register
9       INV. 9.81, p.94