



### Geelong Gas Company Building, 161-163 Ryrie Street

#### History

A new building for an old company, these brick offices materialized in 1920 to the design of Geelong architects, Laird & Buchan.<sup>1</sup> The building was pictured in the background of a returned servicemen's march in 1922, equipped with an unusual, post-supported verandah with a stepped fascia. The fascia stepping matched that of the parapet.

A bid to start a Geelong gas company failed in 1854 but, enabled by new legislation, a meeting urged its formation to light the town's streets three years later. Given the electric telegraph and the railway were now connected to Geelong, gas street lighting was the only modern convenience missing. To remedy this, the first gas was produced in May 1860 and, in October 1862, the streets were lit.<sup>2</sup> At one stage, coal for the gas plant came via Hutton's jetty (now gone) in Geelong North.

Later parts of the building's history lay with the company being absorbed by the Gas & Fuel Corporation (1900- ) and natural gas replacing manufactured gas in 1971. Other gas works in Victoria included West Melbourne (1856), Bendigo (1860) and Castlemaine (1859).<sup>3</sup>

#### Description

Two storeys, with ornate cement mouldings, the Geelong Gas Co. building is elevated in three parts. The two end bays have intricate prismatic forms at the parapet, composed above a crucifix-like element, and the wide centre bay holds four window openings below the company's name.

The original street verandah was similarly composed, with stepped profiles to the fascia end-bays and a simple fascia between. All of the fascia surfaces were ribbed or paneled, giving the verandah a distinctive appearance above the gutter line. Below, simple iron (?) posts were still used for support, providing a marked contrast to the modernistic upper levels.

#### External Integrity

Generally original above the canopy but the canopy has been greatly altered if not replaced and the shopfronts are new.

#### Streetscape

Adjacent to and supportive of the important T&G Building and related to the parapet detailing of 155 Ryrie Street but otherwise at the eastern end of the commercial precinct 5.3.

1 GW & ST, DRP1482; RB1920, 283 land only; RB1930, 295-6  
2 INV, Vol.5, p.220  
3 VYB1973, p.224f

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study  
Significant Sites

**Significance**

Historically, the last remnant of a once important and long-lived Geelong institution and one of the many important Geelong buildings designed by Laird & Buchan. Architecturally a distinctive upper level albeit much altered at the canopy and below.