

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Site Name: Former Bell's Buildings

Project File No: 1127

Address: 188-192 Ryrie Street Geelong 3220

Approx. Date: 1914

Integrity: Moderate-High

Significance Level: C (Local)

Photograph No: 04.07

Survey Date: March 2002



History

This site at 188-192 Ryrie Street, Geelong, is located on Crown Allotment 5, Section 25, of the Geelong Town Plan of 1881. The original owner was Robert Bell, who was granted the land in 1847 for the payment of 150 pounds.

Robert Bell, then of Chilwell, died on 26 September 1913. His Will named John Bell, Charles Bell and Elizabeth Bews (nee Bell) as Executors, being the children of Robert and Mary Bell. Possibly drawing on the Estate of Robert, the executors engaged the Geelong architects Laird and Buchan to design a new building to replace the existing 2 storey stone premises, which the Barwon Ward Rate Book for 1914 described as "very old". Bell's Buildings were constructed for Mary Jane Bell and Elizabeth Bews (who were sisters, aged in their sixties). The building was designed as two shops, each with an upper floor accessed from a central staircase. By 1925, the upper floor had become a separate leasehold to the 2 shops on the ground floor, with a grocer and warehouseman renting downstairs (in nos. 188 and 192) and Percival Shand's Billiard Saloon situated upstairs at no. 190 Ryrie Street. When Mary Jane died on 10 February 1930, ownership of the property remained with Elizabeth Bews. She was succeeded by Oswyn Raymond Bews. The building was in the hands of the Bews family until the late 1950s, when it was purchased by Lionel Elias Michael, pawnbroker, who occupied the shop at no. 188.

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Notable lessees up to 1960 included a Mr Costa, fruiterer, various caterers and the Golden Vine Chinese Restaurant, occupying the upstairs area in the early 1950s. Among the tenants of Bell's Buildings since 1960 have been:

Denways Interiors

Ian Hawthorne, photographer

Arthur Murray School of Dancing

Weaver to Wearer clothiers

Hairdressers

Jewellers

Samuel Michael pawnbrokers (owner and occupier of no. 188 in the early 70s)

Brystan (in the mid 70s)

and Steve Bennett Hi Fi, who have occupied the entire building since the late 1970s.

There have been a number of alterations to the internal structure and exterior of the Building over the years. A suspended, steel-framed awning has been added to the exterior, projecting over the footpath. The shopfront of the building has been made flush with the footpath, except for a recessed store entrance. Ceramic tiles have been applied to the sills and piers around the shopfronts. The rears of both shops have been extended. The stairway has been enclosed at first floor level. Glass panes have been replaced, and the first floor has been partitioned at various times. The most conspicuous alteration has been the creation of an opening in the original wall separating the two ground level shops to make a single retail area downstairs. The first floor is now used to store stock.

Description

The former Bell's Buildings, 188-192 Ryrie Street, Geelong, contributes to the predominantly one and two storey commercial streetscape along this section of Ryrie Street.

The symmetrical, two storey, unpainted red brick, Federation styled building is characterised by a three bayed first floor composition flanked by wide unpainted red brick piers (with long incised rectangular panels) that project beyond the simple capped solid brick parapet. The central bay is an early feature of the design, with its flanking pilasters that rise beyond the parapet line and terminate in a curved cement rendered capping. Below the curved capping is a cement rendered title panel with incised blind arch and the sign that reads "Bells' Buildings 1914". Below the sign is some vertical motifs that have an affinity to Art Nouveau decoration. The central bay also has two early and narrow timber framed windows with awning sash highlights, and a projecting hood above. The windows also have an early continuous cement sill and band.

The flanking first floor bays are identical and have early banks of four timber framed casement windows with awning sash highlights. These windows also have early cement sills and bands. Above the windows are introduced canvas awnings, and each bay is adorned with dentillated cement cornices.

Below the first floor windows is a wide rendered band and introduced cantilevering verandah. The ground floor shopfronts have been greatly altered, with more recent shopfronts introduced.

Statement of Cultural Significance

The former Bell's buildings, 188-192 Ryrie Street, Geelong, have significance as a moderately intact commercial example of a Federation style. Built in 1914 for the Bell family to a design by the Geelong architects Laird and Buchan, the building is a surviving legacy of the commercial developments in Geelong during the Federation period.

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

The former Bell's buildings at 188-192 Ryrie Street is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level. It demonstrates original design qualities of a Federation style. These qualities include the three bayed first floor composition flanked by wide unpainted red brick piers (with long incised rectangular panels) that project beyond the simple capped solid brick parapet. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the first floor central bay with its flanking pilasters that rise beyond the parapet line and terminate in a curved cement rendered capping, cement rendered title panel with incised blind arch and the sign that reads "Bells' Buildings 1914", vertical motifs that have an affinity to Art Nouveau decoration, two narrow timber framed windows with awning sash highlights and the projecting window hood, continuous cement sills and bands, flanking bays with banks of four timber framed casement windows with awning sash highlights, cement sills and bands, and the dentillated cement cornices. The ground floor shopfronts have been greatly altered.

The former Bell's buildings at 188-192 Ryrie Street is historically significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with commercial developments in Geelong during the Federation period (c.1895-1915). In particular, this building has associations with the Bell family and (particularly the Estate of Robert Bell and his children, John, Charles and Elizabeth), original owners from 1914. It was at that time when the Geelong architects Laird and Buchan were commissioned to design the building that replaced a two storey stone premises on the site.

Overall, the former Bell's buildings at 188-192 Ryrie Street is of LOCAL significance.

References

- Reports and Drainage Plans, Barwon Water profits system, 1993.
- Sands & McDougall's Directory of Geelong, 1972, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Sands & McDougall's "Invicta" Geelong Directory, 1968, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Geelong City Council Rate Books (Barwon Ward), 1914-1960, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Town Plan of Geelong 1881, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Thomas, A.P., Bell's Buildings, Geelong - Conservation Analysis Report, 1989, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Aitken, R., Edwardian Geelong - an Architectural Introduction, 1979, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Photographic Collection, Geelong Historical records Centre.
- Land Title Search APP41354, Land Titles Office, Marland House, Bourke Street, Melbourne.
- Ryrie Street streetscape map, from L. Huddle collection of notes.