

185 HIGH STREET, NATIONAL BANK

Original Use: Bank
Date of Construction: 1891¹
Architect: Inskip and Robertson²

DESIGNATION A
CITATION NO. 69



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

The National Bank of Australasia was established in 1859³ and a branch at High Street Kew, was operating by 1892⁴. Inskip and Robertson designed a number of banking chambers in Melbourne and elsewhere in Victoria⁵ including this building. In February 1889 the *Australian Builder and Contractor's News* recorded that a building on the corner of Walpole and Bulleen (now High) Streets was to be demolished to make way for the erection of the National Bank⁶. The two-storey building accommodated a banking chamber as well as three shops onto High Street (now demolished), one of which was later occupied by the *Mercury* newspaper⁷. In 1918 the Colonial Bank amalgamated with the National Bank of Australasia⁸, now called the National Australia Bank.

The design of the bank takes full advantage of its corner position, with both of the street facades embellished with render mouldings. In a manner typical at the end of the economic boom, the bank is ornately decorated. There is a trabeated system represented across it with half-fluted pilasters, that rise to a projecting pediment to the corner entrance door. In the manner of a basement, the ground floor has rusticated walls and round headed windows in the spandrels of which are heavily foliated render mouldings, while the floor above has been presented as the piano nobile, with large rectangular windows filling the wall plane and surrounded by render architraves. The whole is surmounted by an Italianate parapet.

Apart from the demolition of the High Street shops, the building remains in a substantially intact condition, however the front doors have been replaced and the railings to the front door added.

SIGNIFICANCE

The National Bank is of significance as a substantially intact bank of the early 1890s, the exterior of which is a fine example of the degree of decoration typical of that date. It is a rare survivor of a nineteenth century example of this building type in Kew and is one of few intact nineteenth century commercial premises in the High Street area.

HERITAGE LISTINGS

HBR: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

GBR: N/A

RNE: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

National Trust: Not currently listed.

¹ Architects' Index, University of Melbourne

² *ibid.*

³ *Victoria and its Metropolis*, Vol IIB, p.547

⁴ Architects' Index

⁵ Trethowan, B., 'Banks in Victoria-1851 to 1939', prepared for the HBC, 1975, p.46

⁶ Architects' Index

⁷ Rogers, D., *A History of Kew*, p.175

⁸ Trethowan, *op.cit.*, p.139