

**Exchange Hotel  
28 Napier Street**

**History**

William Highett, a merchant and pastoralist, purchased this Crown allotment in 1851. However, the site remained vacant until 1876 when the present hotel was opened under licensee Jonas Brown; the baker, David Mitchell, apparently being the owner since the 1850s.<sup>1</sup>

Mitchell remained so through the 1880s along with a succession of hoteliers which included Charles Clack, Sophia and Michael Gleeson.<sup>2</sup> Others were M.A. Kent (c1890), O. Leehane (c1895), Mrs. Annie Conway

(c1940), W.H. Booker, Mrs. Charlotte Greenwood (1920s) and Mrs. M. Griggs (1940-50s).<sup>3</sup>

William and David Mitchell opened their nearby Moreland Street bakery (see 98-100 Moreland Street) in 1854, thriving for many years to come, on what was said to be a 'secret recipe for bread-making.' David was early in introducing the eight-hour day (claimed as the first) in his bakery and paid good wages for 'the most competent tradesmen.'<sup>4</sup> Around 1914 Mitchell sold out to a Mr. Stein.<sup>5</sup> Mitchell was mayor 1873-9, 1882-4, and a councillor 1877-1893.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Kelly, the architect responsible for the Footscray Town Hall (first) and Catholic Church, called tenders for an hotel early in 1876. This may be the one.<sup>7</sup>



**4-81** 61 Napier Street

- 1 RB1876- 7-
- 2 RB1883,1454; RB1886,1712
- 3 d1885-1955
- 4 FFOY p.119
- 5 ibid.
- 6 Lack
- 7 The Argus 25-3-76/3

### Description

Set out in the traditional manner, the hotel has long frontages to two streets, a slated and hipped roof and the archetypal splayed corner entrance. It is two-storey and, atop the basalt base course, has cemented walls, sparsely adorned with the then fashionable Italian Renaissance revival detail. Adjoining on the north is an Edwardian parapeted and gabled face-brick former factory (?), now serving as an extension to the hotel.

### External Integrity

One upper level, and ground level openings and detailing, have been altered, also diverse plumbing and signs have been added. The stone plinth has been painted but the cemented facade is a sympathetic colour for the period. The brick structure adjoining has also been painted. An unsympathetic addition has been made to the east (bottle shop and lounge).

### Streetscape

A traditional corner building and the start of a period streetscape going north along Whitehall Street.

### Significance

Architecturally, a typical conservative Italian Renaissance revival hotel design which possesses fair integrity and a key corner site. Historically, a meeting place since the beginnings of urbanization in Footscray.

### Footscray Civic Offices and Council Chambers 61 Napier Street

### History

The Governor, Lord Huntingfield, opened, this complex in November 1936 with the Mayor and Mayoress, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hanmer, in attendance, the Mayor being adorned with his new mayoral chain.

Rather than acquire a new site, Council had decided that the new building should replace, in brick, the stone solidity of Thomas Kelly's impressive 1875 town hall

design, but not without some controversy. This was in 1933. Sixty years after the commencement of the old town hall (post office and courthouse), the new building's design was approved and its creator, Joseph Plottel, commissioned. Plottel had a long association with the West (Barnet Glass Co. complex) and had previously designed Williamstown's municipal buildings.<sup>1</sup> The opening souvenir spoke the following words, evidently with an American accent:

*'Bold in proportions, the exterior of Footscray's new civic edifice has been treated after the Romanesque manner, the walls being built of specially selected bricks of variegated color (sic), the colors (sic) ranging from browns to red, and buff architectural terra-cotta has been used to the main portio (sic), columns, balconies, arches and elsewhere where accents or color (sic) contrasts were necessary.'*

Footscray's Norman Griffin (q.v.) had provided the mayoral chain, the Australian Natives Association the two forecourt lamp standards, George Gordon & Son the hardware equipment, the Colonial Gas Association Ltd. all of the kitchen and committee room urns and Bunting & Tickell built the new office furniture as well as renovating the old.<sup>3</sup> Outside suppliers included the Australian Tessellated Tile Company Pty. Ltd., who made the mosaic Footscray Coat of Arms and Wunderlich Ltd. provided the architectural terra-cotta applied to the walls.

Plottel's two-level plan had offices (town clerk, auditor, health inspector, rates, electricity supply and electrical engineer) at ground level and the generously sized engineer's offices at the upper. The rest of this level was taken up with the councillors' chamber and rooms and a large supper room with adjoining reception hall. Queensland Maple, a popular timber veneer for most 1930s interiors, was used extensively here, no more so than in the council chamber, with its high dado paneling and mayoral throne. Another internal focal point was the relocated Roll of Honour, which had been constructed in the old town hall to commemorate the fallen in the First World War.<sup>4</sup>

*'... This imposing edifice rises, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the fine old building ... Modern in every detail, it represents a new eager age - just as its bluestone predecessor was symbolic in its day of one of the district's basic industries.'*<sup>5</sup>

- 1 SCO p.4
- 2 ibid.
- 3 ibid.
- 4 SCO p.3
- 5 ibid.

### Description

The new building possessed a passing resemblance to the old (probably by intention given the controversy over its loss) with its bayed plan, shingled mansard roof line and arcaded central entrance porch. Even the Modern Romanesque style chosen was conservative in a time when the European and American Modernists were demanding the abolition of all revival styles in their preference for function. As with banks and other traditionally conservative institutions, the precedent was there for conservative architecture but this design can be compared with the contemporary Modernist Heidelberg Town Hall which showed no such influence and won an award for its nerve.

Inside however, the period's mainstream styling took over with streamlined Moderne treatments such as the impressive main stair case and curved stair hall. Maple veneer is in evidence in most main rooms and recent renovations have in part reintroduced the pastel autumn tonings used in the period for the fibrous plaster ceilings and walls. Much of the original exterior and interior have been retained and are in excellent condition.

### External Integrity

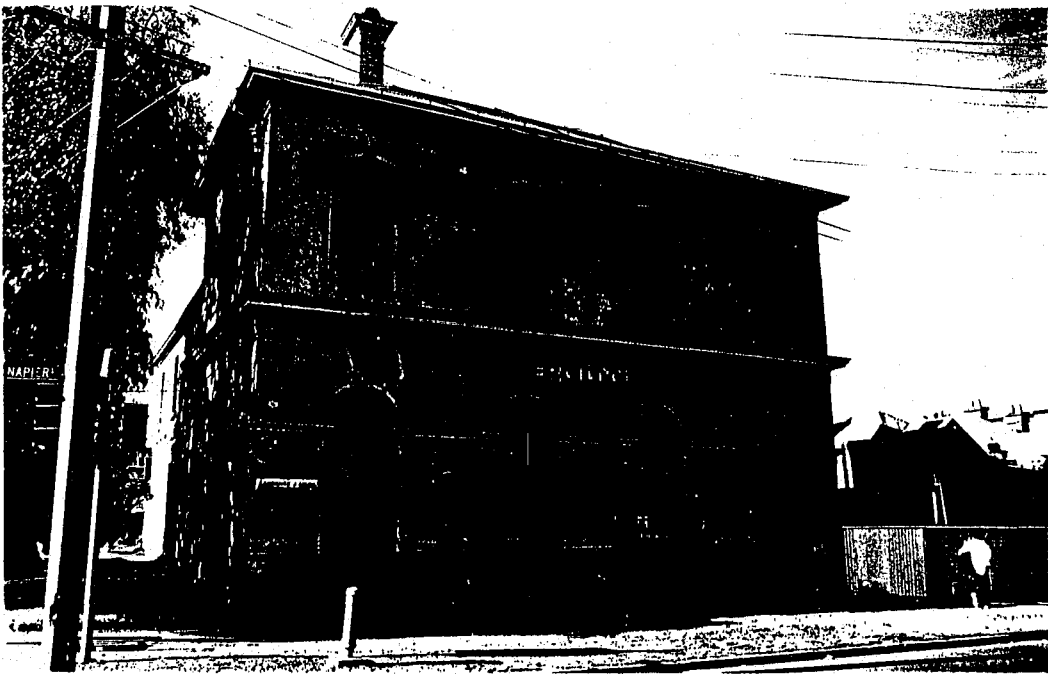
A new rear addition has used similar materials and relates in part to the original structure also some loss of detail in the forecourt (lamps).

### Streetscape

A more symbolic than physical contributor to what had been a civic precinct since the 1870s. However it is sufficiently large and set within sufficient grounds to provide its own independent architectural presence.

### Significance

Architecturally, although a dedicatedly conservative design (see Oakley & Parkes' earlier Romanesque revival Equity Chambers) it is highly successful and relatively well preserved, both inside and out, particularly the more contemporary Moderne styled interiors.



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