

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

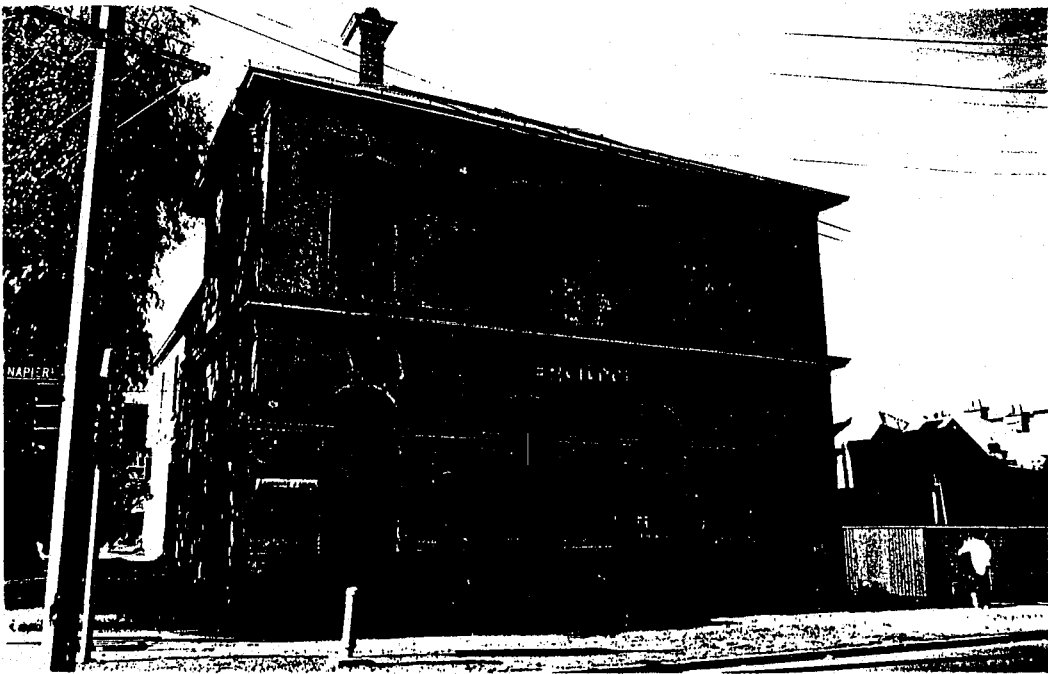
A new rear addition has used similar materials and relates in part to the original structure also some loss of detail in the forecourt (lamps).

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.



4-82 66 Napier Street

**National Bank of Australasia, former
66 Napier Street**

History

Architects, Terry & Oakden, called tenders for a Footscray branch of the National Bank in 1875 and another for Yarraville, ten years later.¹ This firm designed all new Victorian National Bank branches in 1881, as well as those for the Oriental, London Chartered Bank of NSW and E.S. & A. at different periods in the 19th Century.² John Colhoun was an early and long-lived manager (c1880-90s), as was F.G. Armstrong (c1910), Edward Smith (c1915-20) and W.H. Stevenson (c1935-40).³ A Mr. Learmouth was the first manager to occupy the building, albeit soon to be replaced by Colhoun.⁴

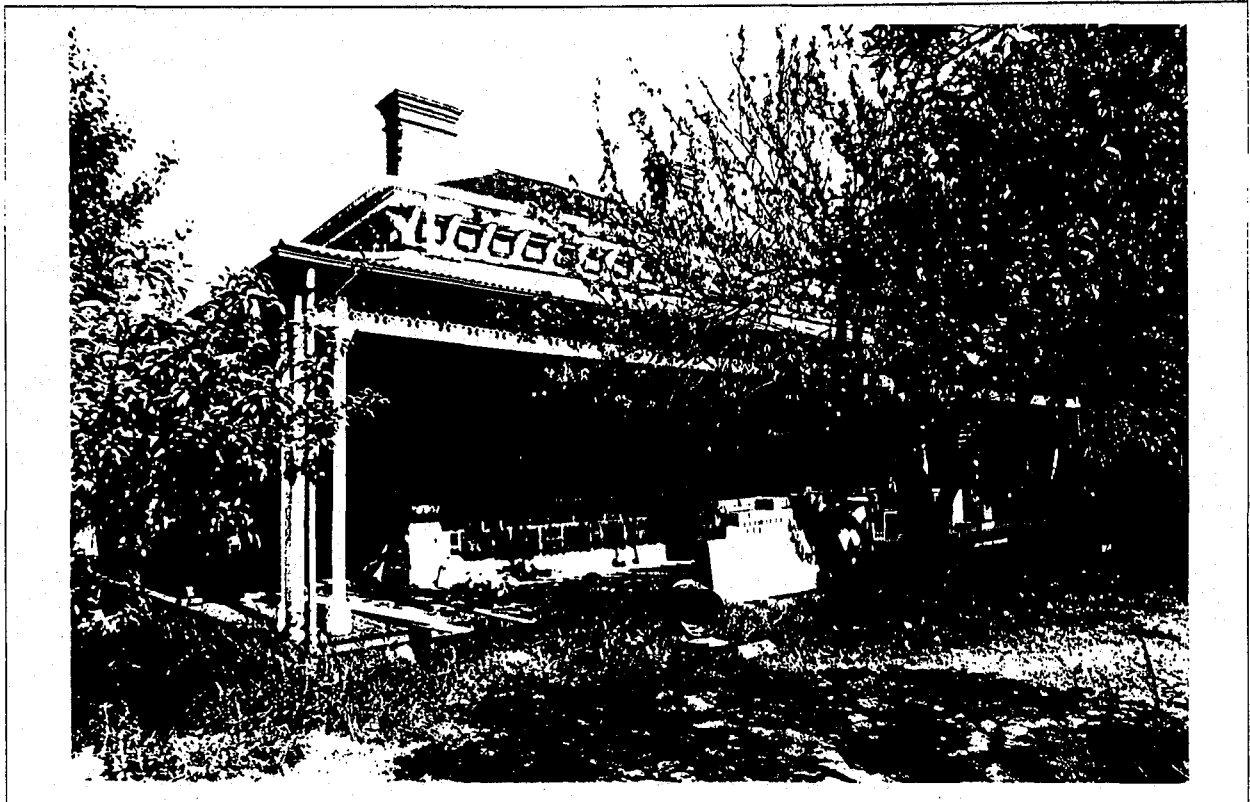
When Maie and Dermot Casey, Joan Lindsay, Allan Henderson and the Freeman Brothers published their influential *Early Melbourne Architecture* in 1953, this building was included among their carefully chosen examples for its '...well spaced openings in plain wall faces... crowned with a charming cornice.'⁵

Description

Positioned, as it was, in the old civic centre of Footscray, its contemporary competitor banks had a distinct advantage from their Nicholson and Barkly Streets locations. Not surprisingly then, the bank was gone by the 1940s, a Miss Phyllis Beers having taken residence.⁶ The Footscray Historical Society is now the owner and part occupier of the former bank.

Description

Following Terry's established Italian Renaissance Palazzo revival manner, the bank presents a conserva-



4-83 15 Newell Street

- 1 MUA
- 2 Trethowan, Banks of Victoria, 1976
- 3 D1880-1939; FFFY p110
- 4 FFFY p110
- 5 Casey, et al *Early Melbourne Architecture*, (Melbourne, reprint 1963) p98
- 6 D1945

tive juxta-positioning of openings set within blandly treated walls, all subtly enhanced with revivalist details in the manner so dear to the Caseys. Its fading wall colours and old signs (since removed) present a convincing testimony to its age although recent repainting has also recalled this period. Inside most of the fittings associated with banking remain as a further expression of the past. A photograph of c1909 shows the bank and its staff aligned on the kerb, the only differences to today being the absent capped corrugated iron fence and gas street lamp, to the west of the building.¹

External Integrity

Generally original except for removal of the fence.

Streetscape

On a traditional corner site and hence relates to other similar Napier Street structures such as the Exchange Hotel (q.v.) which today mark the old civic/commercial centre of the city.

Significance

Architecturally, an elegant and well-preserved (if typical) essay in the Italian Palazzo manner by its master practitioners. Historically, for a long period one of the city's foremost public buildings and may be viewed today as a precedent to the Nicholson Barkly Streets commercial precinct.

House, 15 Newell Street

History

Granted as a 42 acre Crown portion to William Donald, in 1849, this land and an adjoining portion to the south were subdivided by the 1870s, yielding main streets such as Newell, Donald, Moore, Ryan and Bowen.²

When David Newell was mayor, in 1877, the Borough and its buildings were surveyed by Gustav Tulk. Newell Street is shown dotted, east of Cowper Street and, north of Donald Street, only two structures are shown in the area of this house. Of these, one approximates 15 Newell Street's general position but is shown on the Donald Street alignment. The other approximates the site of 1 Newell Street.³ A further plan showing the original 1874 subdivision for William Donald Esquire (CA 8/15) has Newell Street as Frances Street and this house's site as a vacant lot⁴. A view of this subdivision is portrayed in a handbill of 1885 which shows this house, complete with striped verandah, on the edge of what was termed 'Newell's Paddock'⁵. A map of 1895 shows only 15 Newell Street in the Newell, Donald, Railway Place block with timber stabling on the Donald Street alignment. The house itself faced north, was verandahed on three sides and possessed the typical rear courtyard plan, linking with the stable yard to the south.⁶

Ratebooks of 1876 describe a stone house owned by Newell (contractor) in Cowper Street, valued at £54 (annual nett). Two years later a similar description appears but with stables and an annual value of £63.⁷ The address changes to Donald Street (north side, as in 1877 plan) in 1882-3 and the value £100, but the description lapses in 1883-4 and the value falls to 70 pounds; Newell's name is crossed out and his wife's name (Margaret) substituted.⁸ The *Melbourne Directory* of 1880-1881 lists Newell in Donald Street but at the Nicholson Street end. By 1882 he is east of Cowper Street on the north side while, in the same year, Newell Street listings are west of Cowper Street.⁹

A 59% valuation rise occurred in 1882 but for an address in Donald Street (Newell Street east of Cowper being unmade?). The first listing of the property as in Newell Street, was in 1883 and at a 30% lesser value. The Angus Maclean column patent of 1873 sets a lower limit to date speculation but it appears likely that either 1875-6 or 1882-3 was the construction date.

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- 1 FFFY
 - 2 Dunstan & Austin. Newell Street Urban Conservation Area, NTA (1984),p.4
 - 3 M1877
 - 4 RGO plan in draw for GS 6936
 - 5 FHS
 - 6 MMBW RPA,1895
 - 7 RB1876-7,1279; RB1879-80,734 from Kellaway, 15 Newell Street research notes, (NTA,1984)
 - 8 RB1882-3,1139; RB1883-4,967
 - 9 D1880-2