

Footscray Railway Station McNab Avenue

History (See also Yarraville Railway Station)

Originally two stations, one (Middle Footscray) on the first major government-built railway (Bendigo 1859) in the colony and the other on the first rural line built (Geelong 1857, Williamstown by 1859), this became one extensive brick complex straddling the branching of these two lines during 1899-1908 (up-side 1900, down 1908), some distance to the east of the original Napier Street site. R. Vickers and local Frank Shillabeer were the two contractors¹

In place of the old Napier Street station site was the two-acre Railway Reserve ornamental gardens and

rotunda, developed in the same period but in existence as a fenced reserve since the railway's construction². James Cuming's statue (since removed) was placed in these gardens which were then leased by Council from the Railways Department.³ Further developments occurred this century with the cutting and tunnel which linked the Bendigo line (and some large strategic government complexes) with the Melbourne docks.

Railways historian, Andrew Ward, in his *Victoria's Railway Stations*, has noted Footscray as the precursor of a style also used at Jolimont and West Richmond (1901) and Williamstown Beach (1899-1900), all on a much smaller scale. Hence the station is allotted the highest importance in a three-tier scale.⁴ Ward describes it as '...an architectural "tour-de-force" quite rare in stations of this size'⁵.



4-74 Footscray Railway Station, McNab Avenue

- 1 Ward, *Victoria's Railway Stations, An Architectural Survey*, V2 p.11f
- 2 Ward :M1877; M1921; FFOY pp.14,20,27,35,42,60,74
- 3 FFC p.16
- 4 Ward, loc.cit., Vol.1, n.p.1981
- 5 Ward, loc.cit., V2 p.11

Description

Set at the V-junction of two major lines, the station complex is understandably extensive and, given its construction was generally within the one period, the visual effect is impressive. With Macnab Avenue directing the visual focus to the apex of the 'V,' the main station building styling responds with an arcaded porch-entry and pedimented parapet bays facing each main line, in the Edwardian Baroque manner. Similar, if more restrained, styling and red brick and cement dressings, are carried through into the two adjacent station buildings, each appointed with a cantilevered canopy with a scalloped-edge ripple-iron valence.

Following the V-plan, the main building directs its pedestrian traffic towards either of the lines via a shallow V-shaped transverse passage, naturally lit via a small roof lantern. This in turn links with the small booking hall. Its various compartments appear original in form and finish (generally vertical boarded dados) despite the abolition of the decorative treatment by an all-green colour scheme.

The complex and its associated cuttings may be viewed from an aerial pedestrian bridge and its approach is bordered with neglected but representative Edwardian landscaping.

A later part of the complex is the hipped roof signal tower on the north, which is constructed in similar materials.

External Integrity

Generally original except for removal of iron roof cresting, balls from pediments at the entrance, replacement of slate with corrugated iron roofing and sheeting over windows with asbestos sheet.

Streetscape

The focus of an impressive Edwardian man-made landscape consisting of the cutting and the reserve (refer Railway Reserve precinct).

Significance

Architecturally, a design made more impressive by its unusual configuration. Although possessing similar multi-platform elements to contemporary stations such as Heidelberg and Box Hill, its V-plan is both distinc-

tive and visually exciting when seen in the context of the impressive contemporary landscape and civil engineering works. Historically, it has served as a major Footscray public building for near 90 years.

Henderson's Bacon Curing Factory 45 Moreland Street

History

A farmer and punt proprietor, Michael Lynch purchased most of the Bunbury-Moreland Street's corner in 1850. The township plan (dated 1857) shows two of the three allotments eventually taken up by the complex and all but the Ship Inn site on Lynch's land as vacant¹. The Melbourne Harbour Trust 'Central Plan' of 1878 shows a complex arranged around a courtyard, much as it was shown in 1895 on the MMBW 'Record Plan.' The 1877 Borough plan also shows this complex but the 'house' part of the complex appears to be missing.

S.T. Gill's undated view shows the house, factory and stables, is as in the MMBW plan but does not show the Catholic Church (1873-) in the background, perhaps with artistic licence. This view shows the detached operations of both the complex and the house flower garden, which is shown descending the steep grade to the Maribyrnong in an elegant geometric layout. Lombardy poplars (?) line both sides of the block, concurring with other documented early uses of the tree elsewhere in the colony. The first owner and creator of this house, stable and factory complex was bacon curer, Samuel Henderson in 1872-3.²

The Illustrated Australian News of mid 1873 shows a similar view to Gill's and gives a lengthy description of the four acre site and contents. Entering from Moreland Street, on the west there was the large paved courtyard and on the left of that the slaughterhouse, a structure with bluestone outer walls (particularly those facing north to exclude heat) and internal timber frame measuring 90x45 feet. Here pigs were killed and dressed for curing. In the north-west corner of the site was the boiler house which supplied hot water for washing and curing vats in the complex but the most substantial structure was the two-storey stone curing shed built on the eastern side of the courtyard.³

1 FFOY p.15
2 RB1872-3,p.19
3 *The Illustrated Australian News* 15.7.73