Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated 24/03/17

HERITAGE COUNCIL VICTORIA

GORDON HOUSE

GORDON HOUSE SOHE 2008

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h00443 gordon house

h00443 gordon house

h00443 gordon house

h00443 gordon house side view

Location

24-38 LITTLE BOURKE STREET MELBOURNE, Melbourne City

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0443

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO685

VHR Registration

January 17, 1979

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 18, 2000

What is it significant?
Gordon House was built in 1883 for George Coppin, theatrical entrepreneur, politician and philanthropist George Selth Coppin. Coppin was one of the fathers of Australian theatre. The building was conceived as subsidised accommodation for actors and was modelled on the Chelsea Model Lodging House in London. The courtyards were supposed to allow for maximisation of natural light and air. Renowned Melbourne architect William Pitt designed Gordon House as a three storey brick building with basement and internal courtyards. The symmetrical facade is eclectically derived from Gothic, Romanesque and Renaissance sources. Gordon House remained a lodging house until 1976.

How is it significant?
Gordon House is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?
Gordon House is architecturally significant as Victoria's only nineteenth century philanthropic model lodging house complex. It is one of the more austere and unusual works of the architect William Pitt, designed using an eclectic mixture of Gothic, Romanesque and Renaissance styles.

Gordon House is historically significant for its association with the philanthropy of the leading actor and theatrical entrepreneur, George Selth Coppin. Coppin was one of the leading entrepreneurs of Australian theatre before the arrival of JC Williamson.

Construction dates	1884,
Architect/Designer	Pitt, William,
Heritage Act Categories	Heritage place,
Hermes Number	778
Property Number	

History

History of Place:
George Coppin arrived in Australia from England in 1842. He was involved in all manner of ventures, making and losing several fortunes. The idea of Gordon House was to provide apartments with plenty of light and air overlooking a central courtyard. His architect William Pitt had other business associations with Coppin, and Gordon House marks an unusual example of his ouevre. All lodgers shared a huge underground kitchen and a reading room. The lodging rooms were soon taken over by single men as families moved out. The building remained a hostel until 1976 when it was converted to a restaurant and shopping complex, then to apartments and then to an hotel.
(from Age article, no date, possibly 1983)

Houses for Families in Bloomsbury. The architect Henry Roberts produced an influential design four storeys high with minimal classical decoratin to the exterior. The dwellings were self-contained flats arranged around three sides of a courtyard, allowing air and light into the rear of the building. Access was via open galleries with iron balconies.
In 1862 George Peabody set up a trust to ameliorate working class living conditions. By the 1870s the trust's architect Darbishare had evolved a standard design of five storey blocks with minimum decorative treatment.
(R Dixon and S Muthesius, Victorian Architecture, pp.72-73)
Associated People: George Selth Coppin

Extent of Registration

Historic Building No.443. Gordon House, 24-38 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, (to the extent of the courtyard building fronting Little Bourke Street).
[*Victoria Government Gazette* No.717 January 1979 p.164]

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 1995. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online*http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/