

FORMER FOURTH VICTORIA BUILDING



FORMER FOURTH
VICTORIA BUILDING SOHE
2008



h01542 1 fourth victoria
building



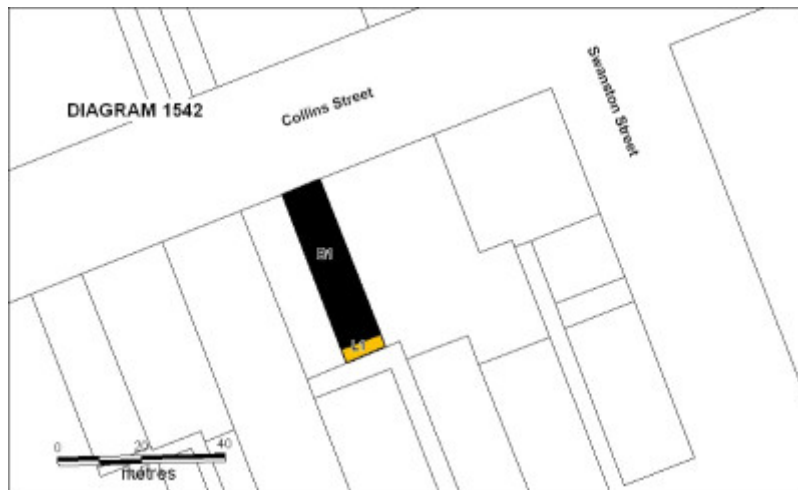
h01542 fourth victoria
building rear



h01542 fourth victoria
building side



h01542 fourth victoria
building wunderlich ceiling



h01542 fourth victoria building plan

Location

241-245 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1542

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO591

VHR Registration

July 8, 2004

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 11, 2004

What is significant?

The Fourth Victoria Building was originally a four storey brick warehouse and office building, built in 1884 and remodelled in 1912 by architect Robert Haddon for the Fourth Victoria Permanent Property Building and Investment Society who owned the building from 1886 to 1971. Two more storeys were added to the building and the Collins Street facade was rendered with white cement and a series of whimsical decorative elements added. Haddon's treatment of this facade reflected his interest in the Arts and Crafts and movement, in nature, and in the latest architectural movements in Europe, and it is an early landmark of the modern movement in Victoria.

The six storey facade of the Fourth Victoria Building differed significantly from other contemporary commercial facades in its austerity and originality. Above the ground floor shop front and awning the first floor facade is covered with a panel of green glazed tiles, originally with the name of the building in large letters above arched windows, surmounted by a stylised wrought iron balcony. The facade above this was of plain white render pierced by windows without architraves. Haddon considered that developing uniquely Australian forms and motifs was important, but in the design of this facade he used decorative elements such as the lion motif and Art Nouveau curvilinear forms. Above the fifth level were two large majolica medallions, originally containing green lions' heads, with trunk-like majolica stems running down the facade. Beneath a simple parapet a row of cement projections casts an indented shadow along the plain wall face, an effect Haddon described as aesthetically necessary to the form of the building.

The interior was also remodelled in 1912, and the lift cage from this period still exists. The remodelling at this time in the stairwell, lift core and the installation of the large windows brought light and space into the centre of the building. All these internal changes were part of the building's modernisation. The firm of Wunderlich Ltd, Victoria's major supplier of architectural terracotta and pressed metal architectural features, particularly ceilings, which were so characteristic of the Edwardian period, was a supplier to the construction, and the first major tenant. Interior features from this period survive, including the architect's green and white colour scheme, the white marble treads on the stairs, extensive use of green glazed tiles, pressed metal ceilings and the Wunderlich showroom with samples of Wunderlich pressed metal designs.

Tenants in the building before and after the 1912 remodelling included the Melbourne Bicycle Club, architects G.

W. Vanheems and Isidor Beaver, Wunderlich Pty Ltd (on the third floor), and architect Leslie M Perrott in the 1920s.

The facade has been painted pink and the lions' heads, which gave meaning to the form of the decoration and also proclaimed the purpose of the building, have been removed as has the wrought iron balcony.

How is it significant?

The former Fourth Victoria Building is of aesthetic, architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Fourth Victoria Building has architectural significance as a stylistically unique commercial facade, characteristic of its renowned architect and his idiosyncratic design technique, and his influence in turn from British Free Style architecture and the Viennese Secession. In the opinion of Robin Boyd, the building is a landmark of the modern movement in architecture in Victoria. It was a very early, perhaps the only, commercial facade in Victoria to incorporate the simple white surface which was important in early twentieth century European modernism. Although the facade now lacks the two famous lions' heads of green glazed terracotta, its Art Nouveau elements, plain parapet and lushly tiled first floor level is remarkable for its contrast with contemporary commercial facades. The dripping majolica stems, stylised wrought iron balustrading and projections at the cornice line provide a Secessionist character to the building.

The building has aesthetic significance for its interior features which includes extensive use of green glazed tiles and pressed metal ceilings. The former Wunderlich showroom features a unique showcase of Wunderlich pressed metal ceilings in Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles ranging from simple to opulent designs. The original tiled signs on the landing are also noteworthy.

The former Fourth Victoria Building is of historical significance for its associations with the architect Robert Haddon. Robert Haddon was a highly influential architect, teacher and writer. He was a consulting architect from his office known as the Central Drawing Office and was associated with the work of a number of architects and firms such as G B Leith and Sydney Smith and Ogg of Melbourne and Laird and Barlow of Geelong, and Michael McCabe of Camperdown. He was head of the department of architecture at the Working Men's College (now RMIT) from 1902 and a founding Vice President of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria.

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Exterior

- Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, flues, wiring, antennae, aerials, and making good.

Interior

- Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.
- Installation, removal or replacement of curtain tracks, rods and blinds.
- Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art or religious works or icons.
- Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions, computer and office fitout and the like.
- Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.
- Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.
- Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.
- Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring.
- Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.
- Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.
- Installation of plant within the roof space.
- Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Construction dates | 1884, |
| Architect/Designer | Haddon, Robert Joseph, |
| Heritage Act Categories | Registered place, |
| Other Names | HOUSE OF MERIVALE, GEMTEC, |
| Hermes Number | 13030 |
| Property Number | |

History

The following history is from the National Trust nomination, unless otherwise noted:

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Collins Street in Melbourne has always been a prestigious location for Victoria's largest financial institutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it includes many of Melbourne's best buildings, designed by Melbourne's best architects. This part of Collins Street contains a mixture of retail and commercial buildings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and has a particularly fine collection of buildings from the early twentieth century.

HISTORY OF PLACE

This site and that adjoining to the west were two brick warehouses from 1884, owned over a long period by the furniture company W H Rocke & Co; one was occupied by Rocke & Co and one by Brinsmead & Co. It was Rocke who imported the new Marseille pattern roofing tiles, later taken up by Wunderlich Ltd, who were to be tenants in the new building. The Brinsmead Building was bought by the Fourth Victoria Building Society and in 1911 they commissioned the eminent architect Robert Haddon to re-design the building.

Robert Haddon was born in England in 1866, and received his architectural training there. He migrated to Australia in 1889, and practised in Hobart, Adelaide and Perth before setting up his own practice in Melbourne in 1901 (Roslyn Hunter, 'Robert Joseph Haddon Architect 1866-1929', B Arch, University of Melbourne, 1981). Before 1910 there are few buildings which have his name attached to them, as much of his work involved producing designs for other architects. From 1902 he began a twenty four year teaching career, as Head of the Department of Architecture at the Working Men's College, Melbourne (now RMIT University). He was a vocal and dominant figure within his profession, and a founding Vice-President of the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria. He was active in the RVIA, speaking and publishing articles in the RVIA Journal. He was the only Australian contributor to G A T Middleton's *Modern Buildings; their Planning, Construction and Equipment*, published in London 1905-6, and wrote *Australian Architecture*, published in 1908, which became the definitive text on the subject. Haddon is regarded as one of the most important of the architects practising in Victoria in the early twentieth century.

Haddon's architectural principles were closely allied with those of the British Art and Crafts architects of the 1890s, and with those of the Viennese Secession and *Art Nouveau*. However he also had a keen interest in developing a distinct Australian national style. Simplicity, structural honesty and originality were more important to him than historical precedent, though in his designs he adapted suitable elements and forms from various sources. He advocated the simplicity of plain surfaces, with ornamentation which was restrained and used particularly to establish the character of the particular building, such as his use of boat prows to adorn the parapet of the Wharf Labourer's Building, 480 Flinders Street (1916, now demolished).

Haddon at the Fourth Victoria Building was adapting an existing building and so was able to concentrate on the facade design, which is the most notable aspect of the building. His interest in greater simplicity of form is reflected in the austere treatment of the upper facade, especially in the absence of architraves around the windows and the extremely simple parapet. The white rendered surface resembles closely the surface treatments being used by C F A Voysey and Charles Mackintosh in Britain, and also by the architects of the Viennese Secession (Adolf Loos, Josef Hoffman and Josef Olbrich) in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth

century. The protruding beam ends below the parapet, which cast interesting shadows on the surface, have been related to the Spanish Mission Style, but also resemble in appearance the small square openings in this position on Loos's Steiner House, Vienna (1910).

Haddon's interest in nature is reflected in the use of his favourite green colour for the decorative elements on the otherwise white facade, and in their curved forms. The forms of the medallions, the bases of the vertical majolica 'trunks', and the wrought iron of the balustrade are related to the curvilinear forms of Art Nouveau. Haddon often used permanent 'signs', both written and figurative, on his buildings: here the name of the building was in large letters across the top of the first floor level, and the lions' heads were an appropriate symbol for the financial institution housed there.

Skylines were also important in his work: he believed that the clarity of Australian skies draws men's gazes upwards, and he preferred plain horizontal parapets to emphasise the line between the building and the sky.

The simplicity of the design received some hostile criticism from the architectural press ('A Somewhat Original Design', *Building*, 12 October 1912, p 123). Haddon had illustrated a similar facade in his design for 'City Business Premises' in his book *Australian Architecture* (p 103), but although the simple white rendered facade had appeared around the turn of the century in Britain and the Continent, it had not so far been seen in Victoria.

Robin Boyd considered that Haddon's influence on architecture in Victoria was inestimable (*Victorian Modern*, Melbourne 1947, p 15). Boyd considered that the characteristics of Haddon's style were flat planes on elevations, simple window openings without architraves, and though there was an absence of extraneous ornament Haddon might instead use what Boyd called 'explosion[s] of fancy'. Boyd illustrated the Fourth Victoria Building in *Victorian Modern* (p 24), and wrote of it:

a little composition of simplicity and congealed ornament that brought a rather wheezy first breath of functionalism to Melbourne. Robert Haddon ... scraped off everything on the old [face] rendered over flush in white cement and then carefully placed some rather whimsical terracotta on the surface. It was in the direct line of development of his previous designs. For some years his work had been growing simpler in idea and more fanciful in detail. But here the influence of the European movement was sudden and unmistakable.

The building is now predominantly empty and is poorly maintained.

REFERENCES:

Robin Boyd, *Victorian Modern*, Melbourne 1947.

Philip Goad, *Melbourne Architecture*, Sydney 1999.

Robert J Haddon, *Australian Architecture. A Technical Manual for all those engaged in Architectural and Building Work*, Melbourne 1908.

Roslyn Hunter, 'Robert Joseph Haddon Architect 1866-1929', B Arch, University of Melbourne, 1981.

Miles Lewis, 'An Architectural perspective', *Trust News*, February 1993, pp 14-17.

Rohan Storey, 'Landmarks in the City', *Trust News*, February 1993, pp 18-19.

Ernest Wunderlich [ed], *Forty Years of Wunderlich Industry 1887-1927*, Sydney 1928.

The idea of a showroom was an innovative approach to marketing. The company also set one up in their Redfern offices in NSW with other states following:

"Recent social developments have considerably altered the relations between buyers and producers. Formerly a buyer might have been satisfied to make his purchases from catalogues or from small samples; but now that modern facilities of transport have eliminated time and distance, he can always make an actual inspection of the article he has in mind to purchase. This gives him a much wider range to select from and he avoids the pitfall of finding that he might have done better had his choice been less limited.

The Wunderlich Showroom was inaugurated in order to conform to these new conditions. It takes at most seven minutes by car from the GPO to the Showroom where intending purchasers will be able to inspect a full range of the products of Wunderlich industry." (Susan Bures, *The House of Wunderlich*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, NSW,

1987)

Extent of Registration

1. All the building known as the former Fourth Victoria Building marked B1 on Diagram 1542 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the land described in Certificates of Title Volume 10500 Folio 641, 642, and 643 marked L1 on Diagram 1542 held by the Executive Director.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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