
Geelong Picture Theatre



194-204 Ryrie Street,
Geelong

Location

194-204 Ryrie Street, GEELONG VIC 3220 - Property No 302858

Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO1637

HO1128

Heritage Listing

Greater Geelong City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

C Listing - Local Significance

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Geelong Picture Theatre building, 198-204 Ryrie Street, Geelong, has significance as a reasonably externally intact example of the Federation Free style and arcuated picture palace composition popular in the U.S.A. and Australia in the first decades of the 20th century.

An unusual style for a building in Geelong although not unique, the Geelong Theatre was completed in 1913 to a design by the Geelong architects, Tombs and Durran, in association with the Melbourne architect, Frank. G. Richardson. Although there have been changes to the original facade, the general form, composition and detailing is extant and in good condition.

The Geelong Picture Theatre building, 198-204 Ryrie Street, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level. Although altered, it demonstrates original design qualities of a Federation Free style. These qualities include the symmetrical composition of three bays, emphasised by the large, central blind arch and flanking pavilions. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the gabled parapet with incised rectangular panels, moulded, dentillated and corbelled cornice, arcuated title panel that reads "Geelong Theatre", rendered piers and cast iron balustrading to the central blind arch, roundel motifs flanking the arch, rendered voussoirs, smoothly rusticated pilasters of the flanking pavilions, moulded cornice below the parapet corbels, decorative rectangular panels adorned with cartouches and festoons, smaller festoons above the first floor windows, simple window pilasters and drip moulds, 8 paned steel framed casement windows and projecting stylised segmentally arched frames, projecting moulded cornices between a plain wide band delineating the ground and first floors, highlight windows above the verandah, ground floor composition but not finish or detailing, and the exposed red brick walls at the sides.

The Theatre is representative of a number of similarly designed and composed moving picture palaces constructed in Australia in the early 20th century. The neighbouring building to the west also contributes to the architectural significance of the place. It demonstrates original design qualities of an interwar modern Renaissance style. These qualities include the three-bayed composition, accentuated by a central steel framed window and balconette. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the two pavilions with stylised Doric pilasters flanking narrow steel framed windows, panelled entablature below a bracketed projecting cornice, and the shallowed gabled parapet with incised rectangular panels.

The Geelong Picture Theatre building, 198-204 Ryrie Street, is historically significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with the development of moving pictures in Geelong from 1913, with the establishment of the Geelong Theatre Company Pty Ltd, who had commissioned the construction of the building in 1911. The Theatre has further associations with the Geelong architects, Tombs and Durran, and Melbourne based architect, Frank G. Richardson.

The Geelong Picture Theatre building, 198-204 Ryrie Street, is socially significant at a LOCAL level. It is recognised and valued by the Geelong community has an important place for recreation and entertainment.

Overall, the Geelong Picture Theatre building, 198-204 Ryrie Street, is of LOCAL significance.

References

F. Bambino, Geelong Theatre Conservation Analysis Report, School of Architecture and Building, Deakin University, 1989. F, Bambino cited the following Geelong Advertiser, 9 August 1911, 3 May 1913, and 27 May 1913. News of the Week, May 1913, 5 June 1913 and 4 December 1913. Oral evidence of Ron Monsborough.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Greater Geelong - Geelong City Urban Conservation Study, Volumes 2-5, Graeme Butler, 1991; Greater Geelong - Geelong City Urban Conservation Study Volume 1, Graeme Butler, 1993; Greater Geelong - Geelong City 'C' Citations Study, Dr David Rowe, 2002;
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	16168

Physical Description 1

The site at 198-204 Ryrie Street, Geelong, is dominated by the two storey Geelong Picture Theatre building, which forms a landmark in the commercial streetscape.

The two storey, rendered brick with later over-painting, Federation Free styled Geelong Picture Theatre building is characterised by a symmetrical composition of three bays, emphasised by the large, altered central blind arch and flanking pavilions. The building has a gabled parapet with incised rectangular panels below which is a moulded, dentillated and corbelled cornice that follows the composition of the three bays below. The parapets of the pavilions also have smooth finished and rudimentary pilaster piers. The central bay has a large early, arcuated title panel that reads "Geelong Theatre". The blind arch has been altered, although the rendered piers and iron balustrading is original, as are the roundel motifs flanking the arch.

The original rendered voussoirs that define the arch have been further decorated with stylised patera motifs, while the appearance of window panes and the central projecting box have been introduced. The end pavilions have a vertical emphasis created by the smoothly rusticated pilasters that rise to the underside of the moulded cornice below the parapet corbels. Between the corbels are decorative rectangular panels adorned with cartouches and festoons. Smaller festoons are located above the windows on the first floor in panels under simple window pilasters and drip moulds. These blind altered windows have recessed 8 paned steel framed casements and projecting stylised segmentally arched frames. Projecting moulded cornices between a plain wide band delineate the ground and first floors. Apart from the blind highlights above the introduced cantilevered verandah, the ground floor has been greatly altered, although the three bayed composition with a central recessed porch and flanking shopfronts is partially extant. The over-painting and colours of the front facade have also been introduced, although the exposed red brick walls at the sides are original. To the west of the main Picture Theatre is a semidetached two storey modern Renaissance styled building that forms part of the theatre complex. It also has a three-bayed composition, accentuated by a central steel framed window and balconette having a steel balustrade on the first floor. Flanking the central bay are two pavilions with stylised Doric pilasters flanking narrow steel framed windows. Above the first floor is a panelled entablature below a bracketed projecting cornice. The parapet is rudimentary, having a shallowed gabled central bay and incised rectangular panels. This building is linked to the main Picture Theatre by a single bayed addition having a blocked up timber framed double hung window.

The ground floor of the building has been altered and forms part of the overall composition of tiled piers and aluminium framed windows of the picture theatre complex. Comparative By 1908, moving picture theatres were popular throughout the U.S.A., and soon after in Australia. Initially, they accommodated 100 people or less, but by 1908 some theatres were able to seat 400-800 persons. The design of the facades became more decorative in an attempt to entice visitors within. Decorative plastering was widely used and these buildings became known as "palaces". Lubin Palace, U.S.A., built in 1908, is possibly one of the earliest examples of a palatial picture theatre. Swanson's Moving Picture Theatre built in Chicago in 1909 was a less elaborate example, but the form of this building was distinctive, with its dominant central arch, flanking pavilions and decoration.

Other local picture palace examples of similar composition followed in Australia. The Melba Theatre 1911, Britannia Theatre 1912 and the Majestic Chelsea Theatre 1912, all situated in Melbourne, were slight variations on the arcuated picture palace theme.

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/>