

Unicorn Hotel (Former)



Former unicorn hotel - - Film 7 / Frame 34 - Ballarat Conservation Study, 1978



Former unicorn hotel - 1978 The Corner, Sturt Street, Ballarat, c.1866. The Unicorn Hotel can be seen to the centre left of the photograph, behind the brace of stockbrokers and their clients. The front brick facade can be seen clearly, before the erection



Former unicorn hotel - This view by Nettleton, taken in the 1870's shows the Hotel in its full elegance, complete with its crowning unicorn. (photograph: Nettleton's victorian Views Album, La Trobe Library) - Ballarat Conservation Study, 1978

Location

127 STURT STREET, BALLARAT CENTRAL - PROPERTY NUMBER 2030745, BALLARAT CITY

Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1911

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO115

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 1, 2024

What is significant?

How is it significant?

Why is it significant?

Part of Recommended Area A1.1 No SoS provided in this citation. Please refer to descriptions, history, construction, local government, listings and images sections in this place record for further information.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Ballarat - Ballarat Conservation Study, Jacobs Lewis Vines Architects, 1978;
Construction dates	1866,
Architect/Designer	Caselli & Figgis,
Hermes Number	123569
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The present building facade dates from 1866 and the rest of the building was built some time later behind this facade, replacing the original prefabricated wooden building. The building has French doors opening to an upper storey balcony with a most elegant two storied verandah. Originally the verandah had a balustraded parapet with a centrally mounted unicorn. This distinctive treatment is now unfortunately not extant. The building and its verandah are of great importance in a statewide context. This would appear to be the only extant building with a two storied verandah of this early form. The building is also important, historically, being situated at "the Corner", where frenzied stockbroking activity once took place at a time when Ballarat was a city of world importance.

Intactness

INTACTNESS: Shopfronts altered, parapet altered

Physical Description 2

The earliest reference to the Unicorn Hotel would appear to be in The Miner of 22 August 1856 when Thomas Vaughan was the public. The hotel was the third to be erected in West Ballarat after Baths now Craigs Royal Hotel) and the George, and became the centre of the exciting incidents connected with the "Corner" and the Mining Exchange next speculation door. 1

This early hotel would appear to be that seen in the photograph of 1863-64. This building is wooden and appears to be prefabricated. A later photograph (c.1866) 3 shows the same wooden section; however a substantial brick facade has now been added. existing, albeit with slight modifications. This facade is still The owner of the hotel during this period was William Stevenson, and between 1865 and 1866 the building description changed from wood to brick, thereby enabling the photo to be dated. Later in 1866 Stevenson erected the existing brick building 4 behind the already completed facade.

In 1885-1886 in an advertisement for the firm of Caselli and Figgis Popjoy's Unicorn Hotel is listed as one of their designs. Popjoy owned the hotel from about 1870 until the 1890's. In 1938 the bluestone footings were chopped back to take tiles. 5 -The Unicorn operated as a hotel until 1957 when it was closed by the owner 6 J.Beecham.

The hotel facade is composed on the upper floor of French doors surmounted by austere detailed Renaissance heads on consoles, and on the centre door a pediment. The building has a particularly elegant and early verandah and balcony, which tend to over-shadow the facade. It is a two storey version of the early single storey flat roofed and balustraded post and beam verandahs. The original elements are (from ground up): the slender cast iron columns with Corinthian capitals; ground floor brackets, swag bellied balcony panels; the double timber bressumer with frieze iron inserts; cornice and brackets. There are four missing ground floor brackets, and those at first floor, perhaps covered by the existing flat fascia, and the now flat surfaced parapet originally was an elaborate set of balusters with a unicorn statue mounted centrally. Early photographs and etchings⁷ show the hotel as an opulent structure which was originally luxuriant with potted palms on the first floor level.

This building, and especially its verandah, is of great interest in a state wide context. This is the only remaining two storied verandah of this form. Unfortunately various alterations to the balcony have resulted in the stripping of all the distinctive treatment of the parapet in which the balustrading parapet extended out over the balcony with a central block carrying the unicorn. Even so, this building is of the utmost importance to Sturt Street and to Ballarat, where it forms an important part of the environmental area.

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/>