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## Former Fourth Victoria Building



B6382 Former Fourth Victoria Building



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### Location

241 - 245 Collins Street,, MELBOURNE VIC 3000 - Property No B6382

### Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

### Level of significance

State

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1542

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO591

HO502

### Heritage Listing

National Trust

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 8, 2004

What is significant? The Fourth Victoria Building was originally a brick warehouse, built in 1884 and remodelled in 1912 by architect Robert Haddon for its new owner, the Fourth Victoria Building Society. The eastern facade of the 1880s brick building was preserved along Manchester Lane, but Haddon stripped the Collins Street facade, rendered it with white cement, and added a series of whimsical decorative elements. Haddon's treatment of this facade reflected his interest in the Arts and Crafts movement, in nature, and in the latest architectural movements in Europe, and it is an early landmark of the modern movement in Victoria. The Fourth Victoria Building is also one of a particularly fine group of early twentieth century buildings in this part of Collins Street.

The six storey facade 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 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. Above the fifth level were two large majolica medallions, originally containing green lions' heads, and trunk-like majolica elements dribbled from these down the facade. At the top was a simple parapet with a row of protruding beam ends below.

The interior was also remodelled in 1912, and the lift cage from this period is believed to still exist. The firm of Wunderlich Ltd, Victoria's major supplier of Edwardian 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. As the building has been unoccupied for many years, it is likely that some at least of the original interiors, with their Wunderlich ceilings, survive.

The facade has since been altered only slightly: it 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.

How is it significant? The former Fourth Victoria Building is significant for architectural and historic reasons at a State level.

Why is it significant? Architecturally the former Fourth Victoria Building is significant 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. 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. The architect Robert Haddon considered that developing uniquely Australian forms and motifs was important, but in the design of this facade, rather than using Australian native motifs, he used overseas-inspired decorative elements, such as the Art Nouveau-inspired curvilinear forms, the lion motif, the white stucco wall and the protruding beam ends (deriving perhaps from the American Spanish Mission style) to create a striking and aesthetically satisfying composition.

Although the facade now lacks the two famous lions' heads of green glazed terracotta, its white surface, 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 protruding beam ends at the cornice line provide a Secessionist character to the building, which housed tenants such as the Melbourne Bicycle Club, architects Vanheems and Isidore Beaver, and Leslie M Perrott in the 1920s, and appropriately a major tenant such as Wunderlich Pty Ltd, suppliers of architectural terracotta and pressed metal ceilings. Historically it has significance for its associations with the architect Robert Haddon, and, in the opinion of Robin Boyd, is a landmark of the modern movement in architecture in Victoria.

Classified: 23/09/1992

Revised: 17/05/2004

File note 24/01/2013: Building renovated in 2008 as apartments, retaining original lift and re-instating lions' heads and original colour to the facade.

Hermes Number 64713

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

The 1888 brick facade along Manchester lane still survives, and is in marked contrast to the remodelled Collins Street facade. The Collins street facade is rendered; it was originally white but is now painted pink. The tiles on the first floor level are green glazed terracotta, as are the vertical elements above this, the medallions higher on the facade, and the original lions' heads, which are now missing.

## **Intactness**

The facade is substantially intact, although it has been painted pink and the majolica lions' heads have been removed. The ground floor facade has been altered for shop fronts. The condition and intactness of the interior is unknown, but are believed to have been largely abandoned for many years.

*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/>*