



**NATIONAL TRUST**

*Every moment an amazing story*

**Victorian Heritage Database place details - 16/1/2021**  
**Former General Post Office**

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**Location:**

338-352 Bourke Street and 188-218 Elizabeth Street and 327-337 Little Bourke Street,, MELBOURNE VIC 3000 - Property No B0445

**Heritage Inventory (HI) Number:**

**Listing Authority:** HI  
**Extent of Registration:**

**Statement of Significance:**

The Melbourne General Post Office is of great social and historical significance for its association with the development of Melbourne into a major city and as the focal point for social and cultural events as varied as New Year's Eve revelries and Armistice Day celebrations. It is only the second post office building to occupy the site since 1841 when the land was set aside as a post office reserve.

The postal services for Victoria for more than a century. Identified as the centre of Melbourne, the clock tower and approach stairs have long been considered a landmark and have provided a focal point for public meetings for many years; the building is the point from which distances from Melbourne to other Victorian centres are measured.

Designed in 1859 as a grand and monumental two storey building to occupy the whole of the Bourke and Elizabeth Street site frontages, the initial 1859-67 building phase reflected the optimism of gold rush Victoria. The 1887-90 additions of a third storey and an extended clock tower were undertaken in a period of rapid economic development in Victoria. Further additions to the Elizabeth Street elevation in 1906-7 have continued the process towards the completion of the 1887 design.

Although unfinished, the Melbourne General Post Office is of national architectural significance as a major work in an academic Classical style with French Second Empire influences designed by the important Public Works Department architects Arthur Ebdon Johnson and Peter Kerr under the leadership of its most distinguished head William Wardell. The design is notable for its arcaded ground floor structure, the expression of the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders to the principal facades, the clock tower, the bold terminating pavilions with mansard roofs reflecting the influences of the French Second Empire style, and the internal grandeur of the postal hall.

The postal hall and the arcade to the street perimeters of the post office are important reminders of the functional character of nineteenth century post offices where the hall acted as a mail sorting room and public business was conducted through the openings to the arcade. The public postal hall was created in 1919 to the drawings of the famous American architect Walter Burley Griffin but amended by the Commonwealth Department of Works architect John Smith Murdoch.

Additions and alterations made to the building after 1919 are excluded. The interior of the building was destroyed by fire in 2001 and has been redeveloped into a retail complex.

Classified: 18/11/1992

**Description**

Heritage Study	
Year Construction Started	
Architect / Designer	
Architectural Style	
Heritage Act Categories	
Municipality	["MELBOURNE CITY"]
Other names	
History	