Location:
546-566 COLLINS STREET and 27 FRANCIS STREET MELBOURNE, Melbourne City

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H0942
Listing Authority: VHR
Extent of Registration:
AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS
Historic Building No. 967.
The former McPherson's Building 546-566 Collins Street, Melbourne.
(To the extent of:
1. The whole of the building known as the former McPherson's Building; and
2. All of the land marked L-1 on Plan 6033630A endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and
held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.)
[Victoria Government Gazette No. G18 13 May 1993 p.1086]

Statement of Significance:

The Former McPherson's Building was designed by Stuart P. Calder, and Reid and Pearson (architects in
conjunction), and built in 1935-6, as a warehouse, office and showroom for the hardware empire headed by Sir
William McPherson. It is a four storey (plus basement) reinforced concrete structure with a column-free facade
featuring alternating broad horizontal bands of glazing (originally Vitrolite) and light brown faience along the full
160 feet of its length. The horizontal emphasis is punctuated by a stair tower at the western end, which projects
above the roof line to give access to the flat roof which originally had a tennis court.

The Former McPherson's Building is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

The Former McPherson's Building is of architectural significance as an extraordinary example of the
streamlined moderne style in Melbourne, helping to introduce a whole new style of architectural expression in
this city. This style was derived from European architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly the Bauhaus
School, and emphasised clean lines, functionalism and a detachment from previous styles. These
characteristics are easily recognised in the streamlined horizontal banding, large glassed areas of the facade,
and choice of building materials of the Former McPherson's Building, which has been likened to Erich
Mendelsohn's Schocken Department Store of 1927 in Stuttgart. These materials: glass, stainless steel, faience
and concrete, reflected an interest in more dynamic materials and a move away from traditional, stultifying
wood and plaster and brick and render construction techniques, and constitute a major and innovative use of
such materials in Melbourne. Of particular note was the employment of reinforced concrete to achieve an
uncluttered, column-free facade. The emphasis on functionalism was translated into the idea of architectural
design as integral to merchandising. The striking facade, with its highly visible display areas, reflected the need
to catch the eye of passing motorists, as well as pedestrians. The early years of the automobile age were also
manifested in the large expanses of glass, which drew on car showroom architecture and were a substantial
improvement for retailers on the classical designs that were still popular for inner city buildings into the 1930s.

The Former McPherson's Building is of historical significance because it reflects the growth and diversification
of secondary industry in Victoria under the stimulus of population growth, growing credit sources and tariff
protection after WW1. The McPherson company was a direct beneficiary of tariff protection, which enabled it to
produce manufactured goods without crushing competition from more established industrial nations. The
modern, radical style of its new building reflected its dynamic prospects, being erected at perhaps the peak of
the company's expansion, not long after the opening of its Perth branch in 1930 gave it a presence in four
Australian capital cities.

The Former McPherson's Building is of historical significance for its associations with the company that built it.
McPherson's was a prominent manufacturer of hardware in Victoria, and its governing director, William
McPherson, was an important figure in political and economic affairs, being premier and treasurer of the State
in 1928-9. The Emily McPherson College is another substantial Melbourne building bearing the McPherson
name.

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<td>Architect / Designer</td>
<td>Reid &amp; Pearson</td>
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