

Victorian Heritage Database Report
FORMER RECORDS OFFICE



Location:
287-297 QUEEN STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Heritage Status / Level of Significance:
Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H1528
Listing Authority: VHR

Heritage Overlay Number: HO733

Statement of Significance:
What is significant?

The former Records Office was built in 1900-1904 to the design of SE Bindley, District Architect of the Public Works Department. The contractor was Bartley Dinsmore. It was originally built to house official records

including records of births, deaths and marriages, as well as legal records and wills. The building is in the Victorian Second Empire style, a style considered appropriate for a city striving for Parisian grandeur. The main building has a rusticated basement and first floor, a piano nobile with Corinthian columns and pilasters, and an attic storey hidden behind the balustraded parapet. The distinctive Mansard roof is capped with cast iron finials and elaborate zinc griffins. Typical of the style, the main facade has projecting centre and end bays. Internally the main staircase at the Queen Street entrance rises on granite columns through three floors and has marble balustrades to the first floor and cast iron balustrades to the piano nobile. The former Records Office is constructed of stuccoed brick and is joined to a single-storey strong room building at the rear by a courtyard. A caretaker's flat was built over the strong room building in 1938. Fireproof floor construction is used throughout the building, and iron roller shutters on the ground floor and in the strong room.

How is it significant?

The former Records Office is of architectural, historical and scientific (technical) significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Records Office is architecturally significant as the last grand statement in the Victorian Second Empire style of a city aspiring to the grandeur of European cities. The Records Office marks the end of the imposing classical style for public buildings in Melbourne and reflects an important development in the design philosophy of Public Works Department architects.

The former Records Office is historically significant for demonstrating the importance of record-keeping in carrying out the functions of Government. Its location near the Titles Office and the law courts illustrates the early relationship between all these arms of Government. The responsibilities of the first Registrar-General of the Colony of Victoria included registering land grants and collecting statistics of births, deaths and marriages. From 1858 the position also became the Registrar of the Supreme Court responsible for the safekeeping of legal documents relating to land transactions and court records. The Records Office originally housed records relating to all these functions of Government.

The former Records Office is scientifically (technically) significant for its use of fire precaution methods. The Traegerwellblech system of fireproof floor construction used throughout the building represents an advance in fireproof flooring techniques first tested in Melbourne in 1881. The system used deep corrugated iron designed to carry substantial loading and was curved into flat arches spanning between girders.

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1900 - 1902
Architect / Designer	Bindley, Samuel Ebden
Municipality	MELBOURNE CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	792
Property number	

This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online