
Former Georges Store



B3899 Fmr Georges Store

Location

162-168 Collins Street,, MELBOURNE VIC 3000 - Property No B3899

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

State

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 31, 2008

The building known as Georges at 162-168 Collins Street, Melbourne, designed by Grainger & D'Ebro and completed in 1884, was extended to Little Collins Street to a design by Charles D'Ebro in 1891. It is of State importance as the only 19th century department store remaining substantially intact in Victoria and as the site of what became Melbourne's most exclusive department store.

The Italianate Collins Street facade is notable for incorporating neo-classical features such as arcading and corinthian columns at first floor level and a pediment surmounting the central bay, which provide a certain grandeur. Built originally for the Equitable Cooperative Society, it was occupied by the Collins Street drapers, George & George, in 1889, who were one of the premier 'Universal Providers' in Melbourne by 1900.

The only evidence of other 19th century department stores to survive is the arcade of the Mutual Store in Flinders Street, built in 1891. Many other department stores remain, but they are all early 20th century; for instance the facade of Ball & Welch, Flinders Street, 1899, the Big Store, Chapel Street, 1902, or Buckley's (now David Jones), Bourke Street, 1910-12.

Having gone bankrupt in 1907, the store reopened in 1908 as Georges, concentrating exclusively on women's wear and from the 1930s gradually became more and more exclusive, catering to the cream of Melbourne society. By the late 1950s, Georges had become the most exclusive shop in Melbourne, and was one of the institutions that was strongly associated with the wealthy, largely Anglophile and conservative elite and was therefore seen as a place that characterised Melbourne itself.

The store was purchased by the Sydney based retailer David Jones in 1981, and was closed in 1995.

The Collins Street display windows, designed by Charles D'Ebro, and built in 1908, are of special significance as possibly the first built and certainly one of the earliest and most extensive remaining examples of 'arcade' style display windows in Victoria, their early character is disguised by the 1956 panelling over the upper leadlighting and the pink marble floor installed in 1982.

"Arcaded" windows, where extensive amounts of display space is provided by creating glass fronted passageways within the building, first developed in about 1905 and standard in the interwar years, were partly prompted by restriction of shopping hours and increased leisure time, resulting in window-shopping as a popular past-time. With the gradual expansion of shopping hours and the decline of window display generally, such windows are now extremely rare. The Georges windows have therefore become strongly associated with the exclusive and traditional character of the store.

The arched brick dividing walls and the Corinthian cast-iron columns dating from 1884 are notable features of the interior, as is the moderne style curving main stair, installed in 1939 and designed by David Eggleston.

Classified: 22/07/1976

File Note: The classification extends rearwards sufficiently to support the facade and its relation to the neighbouring buildings; the shop front, much altered to first floor level, is excluded.

Hermes Number 64625

Property Number

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/>