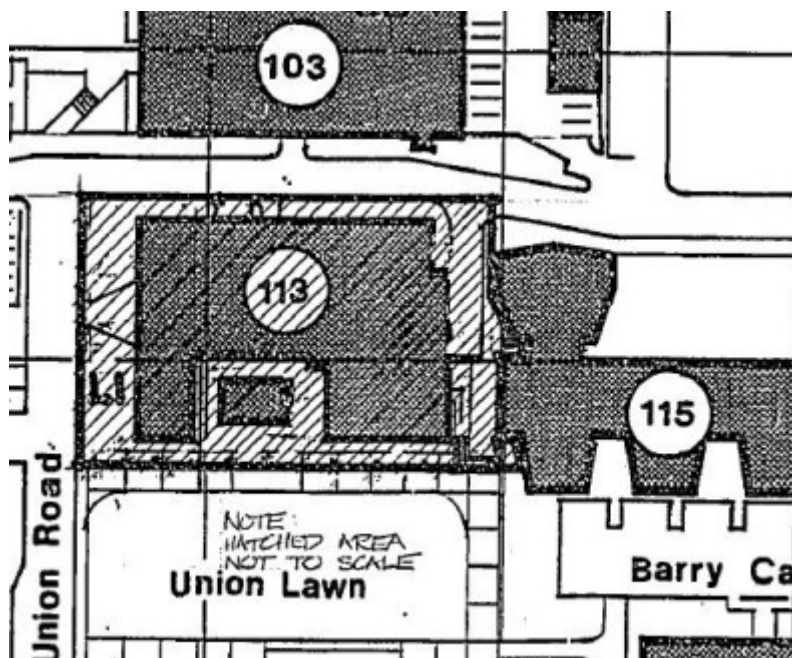


## BALDWIN SPENCER BUILDING (OLD ZOOLOGY)



BALDWIN SPENCER  
BUILDING (OLD ZOOLOGY)  
SOHE 2008

1 baldwin spencer building  
university of melbourne  
parkville front view



h00921 plan h0921

### Location

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, 156 - 292 GRATTAN STREET PARKVILLE, MELBOURNE CITY

### Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0921

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO350

## VHR Registration

June 24, 1992

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 23, 2000

### What is significant?

The Baldwin Spencer Building was opened in 1888 as the Biology Building. The final plans of architects Reed Henderson & Smart faithfully followed designs submitted by the first Professor of Biology Walter Baldwin Spencer. The new building contained a lecture theatre to seat two hundred students, well-lit laboratories, a museum for teaching purposes and store rooms. At the rear Spencer also established a greenhouse, maceration room, pond, and animal compounds. The laboratories were adapted from a design at Owens College laboratories in England and provided for two feet of window space for every five feet of bench space. The lecture theatre had a large skylight roof and efficient acoustic and ventilation systems. Additional rooms, including lecture spaces, were added in 1889. Two workshops were added in 1905. All additions were also designed by architects Reed Henderson and Smart, or by Smart, Tappin and Peebles as they became by 1906. Baldwin Spencer contributed greatly to Aboriginal research and the Darwinian debate in Australia during his tenure at the Biology department and was instrumental in the establishment of Wilson's Promontory National Park in 1898. The School of Biology was renamed Zoology in 1920 when W E Agar succeeded Baldwin Spencer.

The Baldwin Spencer Building is styled in a version of the Early English Gothic, constructed in stone and brick. The main elements are the heavily rusticated freestone walls, buttresses, a conical roofed round turret with spiral stair, dressed stone arched window heads, drip moulds and a parapet decorated with trefoils. Internally the original theatre, laboratory and staircases survive. One laboratory retains the original slate benches. The ceiling of the library is of panelled timber with chamfered beams and decorated circular cast iron vents.

### How is it significant?

The Baldwin Spencer Building is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

The Baldwin Spencer Building is historically significant for demonstrating the new era of science teaching and original research that revolutionised educational policy in Victoria during the late nineteenth century. The building demonstrates the pressure on the University to create new science degree courses in the period following the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of the Species*. The building is closely associated with the work of Professor Walter Baldwin Spencer, whose expeditions into central and northern Australia and writings on the Australian Aborigine gained world renown.

The Baldwin Spencer Building is architecturally significant as a masterful exposition in the Gothic style by Reed Henderson and Smart, and compares with the old Pathology building designed by them two years earlier. The Gothic styling is evidence of the university's nineteenth century preference for a consistent collegiate Gothic

styling to all its buildings. The design reflects the requirements identified by Walter Baldwin Spencer for natural light and ventilation in a biology research department involved in microscopic and dissecting work. The architectural importance of the building is enhanced by the high level of integrity of the interior spaces, particularly the laboratories, staircases and lecture room.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Construction dates	1887,
Architect/Designer	Reed Henderson & Smart,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	913
Property Number	

---

## History

Contextual History: (from Joy McCann, The University of Melbourne Historical Assessment of Buildings, 1992)  
The Baldwin Spencer Building at the University of Melbourne was built to house the Biology Department in 1887-88. Approval for conferring a three year science degree was given in 1883. A review of the Medical School curriculum concluded that an expanded component of natural philosophy and elementary biology was needed to replace comparative anatomy and botany. By 1886, a time of great debate about the Darwinian theories, the need for a Professor of Biology was recognised. A grant of 46,800 pounds was voted for the introduction of scientific apparatus and for salaries of demonstrators in biology and physics. Walter Baldwin Spencer was the first Professor of Biology. With David Orme Masson, Spencer helped transform the university's standards of science teaching by introducing teaching and research methods observed in Europe. Spencer's department was the first to appoint female lecturers and associate professors. By 1900 the school had developed into a major

centre of Australian biota research. In 1899 Spencer was appointed honorary director of the National Museum of Victoria. Spencer's most significant contribution to Australian science was his anthropological work in central and northern Australia following his involvement in the Horn scientific expedition in 1894. His research amongst aborigines influenced contemporary theories on evolution in the early 20th century. Spencer was also instrumental in the establishment of Wilson's Promontory National Park in 1898, one of Victoria's earliest conservation reserves.

Associated People: Walter Baldwin Spencer

## Extent of Registration

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 921.

BALDWIN SPENCER BUILDING (OLD ZOOLOGY), THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

(To the extent of:

1. the whole of the building known as the Baldwin Spencer Building (Old Zoology) but excluding the 1963 west wing, University of Melbourne, Parkville shown marked B-1 on Plan 6032820(A), endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.

2. the land extending

**north** - to the south kerb of Tin Alley

**east** - to the Redmond Barry Building

**west** - to the east kerb of Union Road

**south** - from the line 10 metres south of the east wing to Union Road

this being part of the land described in Certificate of Title Vol. 8876 Folio 379 and marked L-1 on Plan 6032820(B), endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.)

[Victoria Government Gazette No. G24 24 June 1992 p.1580]

*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/>*