

Heritage Citation



Commonwealth Bank of Australia (former)

Key details

Addresses	At 87 Grey Street, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101
Type of place	Bank
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	Georgian Revival
Lot plan	L1_RP44996; L2_RP44996
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2002 Date of Citation — June 2011

Construction	Roof: Terracotta tile; Walls: Masonry
People/associations	Frank Lee (Builder)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

This building is representative of the late 1920s building boom in this part of the South Brisbane region. It is also indicative of the general business confidence that this locale was regarded with in the years immediately preceding the depression. It is a good example of the type of buildings that were constructed by banking institutions in the interwar period and is a physical remnant of a former corner shopping centre, one of three main centres that developed in South Brisbane in the early twentieth century. The building remained in the ownership of the Commonwealth Bank until the early 1990s.

History

The South Brisbane Branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia at 87 Grey Street, was constructed by Frank Lee in 1929. It was open for business by 1930. Prior to this, the bank had occupied temporary premises in and around Melbourne Street since 3 January 1921. Plans for this purpose-built bank designed by the architects in the Commonwealth Department of Works are dated 9 December 1927.

The site on which the bank is located was one of thirty allotments sold in the Brisbane land sales of 1854. It was acquired by Deed of Grant on 11 May 1854 by William John London. Situated within the Brisbane town limits drawn up in 1846, this allotment was affected by each of the major urban developments on the South Brisbane peninsula; the development of the public transport systems, the declaration of first-class urban areas, and the widening of the major arterial roads [Melbourne & Stanley Streets]. Subdivision of the original blocks was under way by 1870 and allotment 1 section 15, of which this site is a part, was acquired by Patrick Maunsell on 3 March 1871. Once it was sold by Maunsell's widow in 1897, it passed through various hands until the site was acquired by Janet Mearns Pike and Richard Pike in 1912.

The more diversified nature of commerce in the area from that time is reflected in the tenancy of the Pikes Building which was erected on the site by 1917. The State Department of Works leased the site in 1917 and various State offices including the Chief Protector of Aborigines and the Department of Water Supply were situated there. In 1925, the whole of the site was resumed by the South Brisbane City Council. It passed to the Brisbane Municipal Council in 1927 when part of the land was dedicated for road purposes. Re-subdivision of the land followed and subs. 1 & 2 of allot 1 of section 15 were sold to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia by the Brisbane City Council in September 1927. The property was taken over by the Commonwealth Trading Bank of Australia in September 1956.

Centrally situated in one of the three distinct shopping centres which developed in South Brisbane in the early twentieth century, that at Bayard's Corner Melbourne Street, the Commonwealth Bank was ideally placed to take advantage of the industrial and commercial development which was the predominant feature of the early 1920s.

Custom would have been further enhanced when the in-bound lane of the tramway in Stanley Street was relocated in Grey Street in 1918. From that time, all in-bound trams from West End, Dutton Park, Ipswich Road, Coorparoo, Greenslopes and Balmoral stopped at Bayard's corner.

When the Melbourne Street Railway Station became the terminus for both the interstate line through Kyogle as well as the southside commuter services the business potential was further enhanced. By this time, the bank was both a trading and savings bank and it also had the custom of the Queensland Government. The South Brisbane Branch was one of a number of suburban branches established in the 1920s. Its move into the area reflects the bank's optimism and confidence in the potential of the locale and its desire to capture a share of the area's financial market; a confidence and a desire which it apparently shared with its counterpart and rival, the Queensland National Bank which adjoined. The building, in its aspect and architecture, reflects both the optimism for the future and the challenge which was being posed by the bank, casually dismissed at its inception in 1911 as "a new bank controlled by political amateur financiers."

The property remained in the ownership of the Commonwealth Bank until the early 1990s. It has been subsequently been used as office space.

Description

This symmetrical building on Grey Street is designed like its neighbour on the corner to reflect the solidity and stature of a banking institution. To this end, it uses austere classical detailing, has no awning, and a flat parapet line. The entire facade was clad in terra-cotta facing, one of the earliest applications of this material in Brisbane, but it has since been painted. The major feature of the building is a recessed porch supported on four fluted columns with plain capitals.

Tiled steps lead up between the columns from street level. The main entry doorway is situated centrally in the porch and has a high level window above it. The bays to either side have double hung windows. At the line of the footpath to either side of the porch are windows of the same size located centrally. The walls surrounding these at the lower level are coursed to imitate stone work. Keystones appear above all the window openings in the front facade. A cornice runs above the rows of columns as a string course. The windows on the upper level are in line with those below and are of the same size. Above these runs another cornice line below the plain parapet. The front facade has slightly recessed portions at each edge indicating a respect for the adjoining facade. At the sides of the building the parapet follows the gable form of the terracotta tile roof. Rainwater heads are exposed to each side of the visible right hand elevation. The building and its neighbours give some indication of the importance of the Grey and Melbourne Street intersection as a commercial centre during the inter-war period.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as this former bank demonstrates the economic evolution of the local area and was part of the late 1920s building boom.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as one of two surviving elements of the former Bayard's Corner shopping centre.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a good example of an interwar masonry bank building, executed in the Georgian revival style, and purpose designed to connote values of solidity and security.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its intactness, attractive form, interesting detailing, contribution to the streetscape of Grey Street.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a building owned for more than 60 years by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, a major Commonwealth government inspired banking institution.

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



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