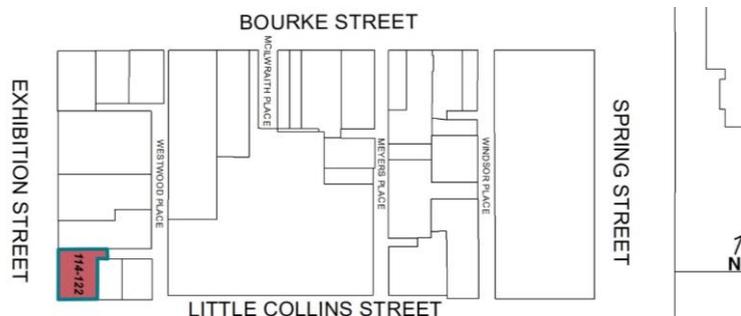


STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Morris House



PS ref no: HO1330



What is significant?

Former Morris House at 114-122 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, built in 1924 for the the Charity Organisation Society (Victoria), is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- the building's original external form, materials and detailing;
- the building's high level of integrity to its original design;
- pattern and size of original fenestration;
- tall narrow steel framed windows with mullions and transoms; and
- decorative elements including the pilasters, moulded and recessed panels between pilasters, parapet with moulded string course and entrance porch.

More recent alterations and addition, including those undertaken at ground level, first-floor balcony and a roof deck with glazed balustrade, are not significant.

How it is significant?

Former Morris House at 114-122 Exhibition Street, Melbourne is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Morris House at 114-122 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, built in 1924, is historically significant for its association with the Charity Organisation Society (Victoria), an influential organisation established in Melbourne in 1887 as an offshoot of its British antecedent. The organisation was enduring, later becoming the Citizens Welfare Society. The Charity Organisation Society pioneered the co-ordination of charitable, religious and educational institutions and private benefactors who made significant contributions to social welfare. Its importance was in helping to pioneer 'case-work' and lay the

foundations for the profession of social work and play a leading role in the distribution of unemployment relief in the 1930s. 114-122 Exhibition Street is significant as the offices of the Charity Organisation Society from 1924 to the early 1950s. During this time it also attracted other like organisations to occupy tenancies within the building. The Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (VSPCC) was one of the long-term tenants in Morris House, moving into the building in 1924. As a local branch of an international non-denominational organisation, VSPCC was established in 1894 to investigate and report child abuse and neglect in Victoria. VSPCC operated from the building into the mid-1950s, employing paid officers to perform its investigatory and prosecution work.

The building, from its foundation in 1924 as the office of the Charity Organisation Society and the Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, has historical significance on account of its long association with child welfare and the 'child rescue' movement from the mid-1920s, which would have almost certainly included the welfare of Aboriginal children. One of the founding members of the COS was Ann Fraser Bon, who was a leading advocate of Aboriginal welfare in Victoria. (Criterion A)

114-122 Exhibition Street is historically significant for its ownership and use by the Australian-American Association from 1957 to 1973, specifically as clubrooms for female members. The Association was founded by Sir Keith Murdoch in 1941 in order to strengthen cultural ties between Australia and America. It served as one of a few private clubs for women in the central city. (Criterion A)

114-122 Exhibition Street is significant as an example of the interwar classical revival style that was popular for government buildings, banks and other commercial premises built during the decades after World War One. The style is notable for its conservative and restrained design that reinterpreted nineteenth century classicism at the same time that it incorporated new construction technology. In 114-122 Exhibition Street this is evident in the scale and form, rhythm of the street façades with steel-framed decorative windows, stucco pilasters that extend over the two storeys with moulded, recessed panels, window spandrels and a moulded string course beneath the parapet. (Criterion D)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)