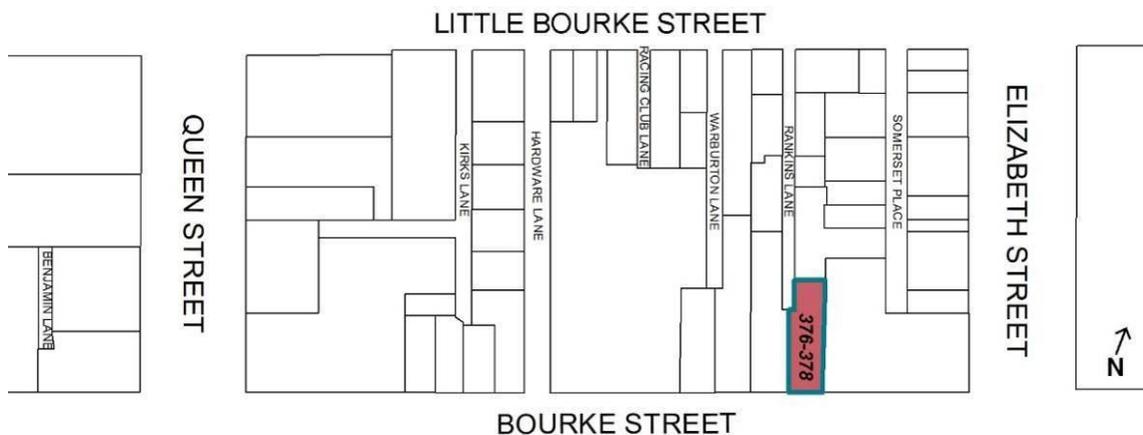


**SITE NAME** Former Coles and Garrard Building

**STREET ADDRESS** 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne

**PROPERTY ID** 101191



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2018

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** H7822-1435

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** C

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Meldrum & Noad

**BUILDER:** Thompson & Chalmers

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1957

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
4 Creating a functioning city	4.3 Providing health and welfare services

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and lodgings
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Coles & Garrard building at 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne, is a five-storey commercial curtain wall building built in the Post-War Modernist style. It was designed by architects Meldrum & Noad and opened in 1957. It was built for opticians Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd, Melbourne's largest optometry firm until it was sold to OPSM in 1988. Coles & Garrard had an association with the building from 1957 to c1986.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

### **Providing health and welfare services**

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne's city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.

The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

### **SITE HISTORY**

The land comprising the subject property at 376-378 Bourke Street was first purchased by Joseph Solomon in November 1837, as part of Allotment 7, Block 20, in the City of Melbourne (Badman & S&Mc 1892). This site was originally addressed as 17 Bourke Street (S&Mc1885). The earliest occupation of the land was c1839, with a building at neighbouring Crown Allotment 8, Block 20 extending into the site. By 1850, it is suggested that a hotel might have occupied the site, and by 1859, William Smith had opened the New York Dining Rooms on the site (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 435; *Argus* 16 December 1859:1). This establishment continued to trade on the site for almost a century, under the name of either the New York Dining Rooms, or the New York Hotel, until the present building was erected (S&Mc 1955).

In 1946, a fire broke out in the hotel building, starting in the bottom of the lift well and working its way up to the top of the building, causing widespread damage and collapsing the roof (*Advocate* 9 October 1946:5). In 1956, the de-licensed four-storey premises of the New York Hotel was put up for auction (*Argus* 30 May 1956:15).

In 1957, an article in building and architecture journal *Cross-Section* noted the planned construction of a steel-framed four-storey (with provision for seven storeys) office block designed by Melbourne architects, Meldrum & Noad, for opticians Coles & Garrard on a 32-foot frontage at 376 Bourke Street (*Cross-Section* 1 May 1957:3, as cited in AAI, record no 87921).

Founded by H E Coles, opticians Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd opened in Melbourne in March 1922. Proprietor Earle Coles was described as 'feisty and energetic', and built his business on advertising and commercial contracts with government agencies. Coles regarded the firm as a commercial entity, a view that ran contrary to other leaders of the profession at the time who practised with professional restraint rather than as makers and sellers of spectacles. The Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd premises were originally located at an adjoining building (known as Cromwell Building) at 370-374 Bourke Street, which has since been demolished.

The firm expanded during the postwar period, establishing a branch in Geelong in 1940. Coles retired in 1948, and sold the business to 18 members of staff. The firm continued to grow during the 1950s, opening a branch in Bendigo by 1955 and another branch in Chadstone shopping centre by 1958. Further development ensued, with many branches being established in shopping centres in the following years.

By May 1957, the New York Hotel had been demolished, and foundations for the present building laid, alongside underpinning of adjacent buildings (BP 31202). The rendered brick office building with a curtain wall of blue spandrel panels and opening window sections was built to five-storeys and completed by 1958 (see Figure 1) (National Trust 2014:32).

By the time of construction of the subject building at 376-378 Bourke Street in 1957, the firm employed 120 people (ACO 2017). Coles and Garrard Pty Ltd was the largest optometry firm in Melbourne until it was sold to OPSM in 1988 and ceased trading under its name a few years later (ACO 2017).

The 1986 building permit card for the site notes that the structure was still referred to as the 'Coles Garrard Building' in 1986, indicating that the firm was still operating from the premises in this year. The building permit card notes a substantial 'refurbishment' in September 1986 without further details, and that it had a change of use at this time (MBAI). It is likely that the ground level was converted to retail this time, as the subject building comprised office and retail premises in 1987 (Age 8 December 1987:42).

Currently, the building houses a pharmacy and two businesses (CoMMaps).



Figure 1. Showing the Coles and Garrard building (second from RHS) at 376-378 Bourke Street in 1959. (Source: Fowler 1939, SLV [copyright](#))



Figure 2. Showing the Coles and Garrard building (second from right-hand side) in the 1960s. (Source: Halla 1960-170, Picture Victoria [copyright](#))

#### *Meldrum & Noad, Architects*

The architectural practice Meldrum & Noad was formed in 1938 by Percy Hayman Meldrum (1887-1968) and Arthur Aldred Noad. Meldrum had formerly been in partnership with A G Stephenson, practicing as Stephenson & Meldrum from 1921 before departing the firm in late 1937 due to a disagreement over the firm's direction. Arthur Noad had been the manager of the Melbourne office of Stephenson & Meldrum (Willis 2012: 450)

Percy Hayman Meldrum studied at Ballarat College and was articled to AA Fritsch from 1907 to 1913. Moving to London in 1914, Meldrum practiced as an aircraft designer at the War Office and established an atelier in Wells Street, London, which became a gathering place for Australian architects engaged in war service. At the end of World War One Meldrum joined the staff of the Architectural Association, where he taught A G Stephenson and Donald Turner. In 1921, he returned to Australia to join A G Stephenson as Stephenson & Meldrum. Practising as principal designer of Stephenson & Meldrum, he strongly encouraged the inclusion of murals and sculpture in the firm's projects. His work during the practice as Stephenson & Meldrum included Newspaper House, Collins Street (1932) and Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historic Museum (1930).

Meldrum practiced as Meldrum & Noad between 1937 and the 1950s, during which time he won the 1942 RVIA Street Architecture Medal for the National Bank of Australasia building in Collins Street (1938) (Willis 2012: 450). Meldrum went on to form Meldrum & Partners in 1959 before retiring from practice in 1965.

Meldrum & Noad were responsible for the design of a number of buildings in the Melbourne CBD, including the National Bank of Australasia, opened in 1939 at the corner of Collins and Williams

streets. An article of the time announced that the bank building was the first in the area to be built to the full height allowed by the City building regulations and therefore would have 'a decided influence on the future development' of that part of the city (*Journal of the RVIA* 1939:218). Meldrum & Noad also designed the BHP head office in Bourke Street, opened in 1958.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

376-378 Bourke Street is located on the northern side of Bourke Street between Elizabeth and Queen streets. It is a five-storey commercial curtain wall building in the Post-War Modernist style. It exhibits key characteristics of the style, particularly in the lightweight fine-grained modularity of the curtain wall façade.

The façade to Bourke Street comprises an aluminium framed non-loadbearing curtain wall set within an outline frame that appears to be of off-form concrete that returns forming the side boundary wall to the east. The curtain wall comprises alternating vertically glazed and solid panels to provide a lightweight grid across the façade. The frame is natural aluminium finish and the solid panels appear to be of blue coloured glass, aligned at the level of the upper floors. At each of the upper levels there are three openable sashes as the building predates the use of air conditioning. The side wall to the eastern boundary is solid concrete.

The retail and entry shopfront to Bourke Street has been replaced over time, and there is a heavy suspended box awning over the ground floor entry lobby, which is not sympathetic to the delicate modularity of the façade above.

It is a modestly scaled example of its style and period.

## INTEGRITY

The building is highly intact with very few changes visible to original fabric. The original non-loadbearing aluminium curtain wall with its alternating vertically glazed and solid panels remains intact. At street level, shop fronts have been altered and a heavy suspended box awning added. The building also retains its original built form and scale, materials and stylistic details. Overall, the building is of high integrity.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former Coles and Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of multi-storey commercial buildings designed in the 1950s.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were designed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Coles and Garrard Building. These are detailed below.

### State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

**Locally-significant places**

*Precinct Heritage Overlay*

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those constructed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### *Other Examples*

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (Bernard Evans, 1960).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

## Analysis

The former Coles and Garrard Building is comparable to other central Melbourne buildings included on the HO, including Gilbert House at 100-104 Collins Street (significant in HO504), Coates House at 20 Collins Street (significant in HO504), Mering House at 276-278 Collins Street (significant in HO502) and the former Guardian Assurance Company building at 404-406 Collins Street. At five storeys, the former Coles & Gerard building at 376-378 Bourke Street is substantially lower-scaled than these examples. However, it is a highly intact, good representative example of early curtain-walled office building, clearly expressing the design aesthetic of the style based on repetitive horizontal and vertical modules rather than a vertical differentiation as utilised by the classically derived styles.

As a full-glazed curtain wall building, and for its scale, the degree of intactness is increasingly uncommon. Other early examples of this type, such as the six-storey former SDA House, 8-12 Market Street (assessed but not recommended in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) or the five-storey former National Insurance Company of New Zealand at 180 Queen (not recommended for assessment in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) have been substantially altered resulting in the loss of key design elements.

All of these examples and the subject building demonstrate the prominent Bauhaus grid aesthetic made possible by the use of a lightweight aluminium curtain wall system which maximises access to daylight. The vertical grid pattern is typical of the style with vertically alternating clear glass and opaque panels. The structure retains a high level of integrity above the ground floor, comparing favourably with other examples of the style identified above.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

	<p><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION G</b> Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

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*Argus*, as cited.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** C

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002** Ungraded

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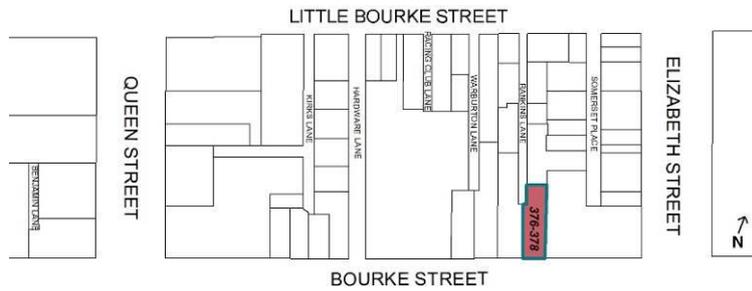
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Heritage Place:** Former Coles and Garrard Building

**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



**What is significant?**

The former Coles & Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne, a curtain-walled postwar commercial building built in 1957 to a design by Meldrum & Noad, is significant.

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

- Original building form and scale; and
- Original non-loadbearing curtain wall.
- Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

**How it is significant?**

The former Coles & Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is of local representative and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

The former Coles and Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is significant as a highly intact example of the Post-War Modernist style offices utilised for commercial development in central Melbourne during the late 1950s and early 1960s. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus inspired aesthetic incorporating features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The building, designed by architects Meldrum & Noad, reflects the growth and progress in 1950s and 1960s Melbourne of locally established companies, resulting in many architecturally designed buildings being erected in the city. (Criteria D)

The former Coles & Garrard Building is significant for its long-term association with Victorian optometrists and spectacle makers, Coles & Garrard. The building was constructed for Coles & Garrard and the firm occupied the building for some 28 years, from 1958 to c1986. Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd, a Victorian-based company established in Melbourne in 1922, grew to become Melbourne's largest optometry firm, until it was taken over by OPSM in 1988. (Criterion H)

**Primary source**

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

