

AMBASSADORS HOTEL

107-109 King William Street

When the Ambassadors Hotel was constructed in 1881 as the Service Club it was one of the largest, most up-to-date and valuable buildings in King William Street. The hotel was built in a boom period during which King William Street in particular was transformed by the rebuilding of banks and other financial institutions.

As one of the few three storey hotels in the city (the Botanic Hotel and the Newmarket were also built around this time) the Service Club had one of the highest assessed rateable values in King William Street. Among its up-to-date facilities was a hydraulic lift. It was at this time that the use of the new hydraulic lift technology was enabling the construction of 'lofty buildings' in city centres elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

The site of the new hotel was first occupied by an inn, opened in 1840, known as the Red Lion. It then became the City Arms Hotel in 1847 until 1867, and then for a period the licence was transferred elsewhere. Thomas Graves bought the property in 1869 and in 1880 had plans drawn up for a new hotel by the architect J.H. Grainger. The plans had to be approved by the Licensing Board - a requirement which had a considerable effect on the appearance and facilities of the many new or rebuilt hotels of the period. Building work commenced in September 1880.

The *South Australian Register* of 22 May 1880 commented that the plans disclosed a lofty building with a handsome facade, the style of architecture being modern, with traits of several of the earlier styles gracefully introduced'. Small wings projected from the north and south ends of the facade to add '... greater scope for artistic adornment than could be hoped to be obtained with a plain unbroken frontage'. The front was constructed of stone with cement dressings, and the height was increased by two mansard roofs with ornamental ironwork. The builder was Charles Farr.

The construction of this 'first class family hotel' in Adelaide's 'principal thoroughfare' was the act of an astute local merchant whose business interests were highly diversified. Thomas Graves started in business in 1848 as a retail and wholesale grocer. He was one of those who prospered during the Victorian gold-rushes, not by toiling for gold, but through trade with the diggings.

In 1869 he visited England to extend his business connections and to establish the South Australian Land, Mortgage and Agency Company.

He was also first chairman of the National Bank of Australasia, a director of the Burra Burra Mine and of other city boards, and, with Alexander Hay and Simpson Newland, owned some large pastoral properties. Graves died in 1900.

The hotel was called the Service Club until 1886, then the United Service Club until 1931, and finally the Hotel Ambassadors. In 1987 the 1930 cantilevered canopy was removed and a balcony conforming in shape though not in detail with the original balcony was erected over

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King William Street. The subsequent enclosure of the balcony with a glass structure diminishes its impact on the streetscape. In addition the hotel is physically dominated by twentieth century versions of 'lofty buildings', but the hotel's distinctive design still makes a positive contribution to the streetscape.

ACA, Assessments 1852, 1857, 1866, 1881; *Advertiser*, 9 September 1880; Cannon, M., *The land boomers*, 1976, p. 15; Hoad, J.L., *Hotels and publicans in South Australia*, 1986, Part 3, p. 11; Jackman Gooden Architects, Historical architectural plans; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 171); *Observer*, 18 August 1900; *South Australian Register*, 22 May 1880.

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The property described in this Information Sheet is a place of Local Heritage (City Significance). A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.

Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item AMBASSADORS HOTEL
Address 107-109 King William Street

Building No
6/0409
CT 1983/40

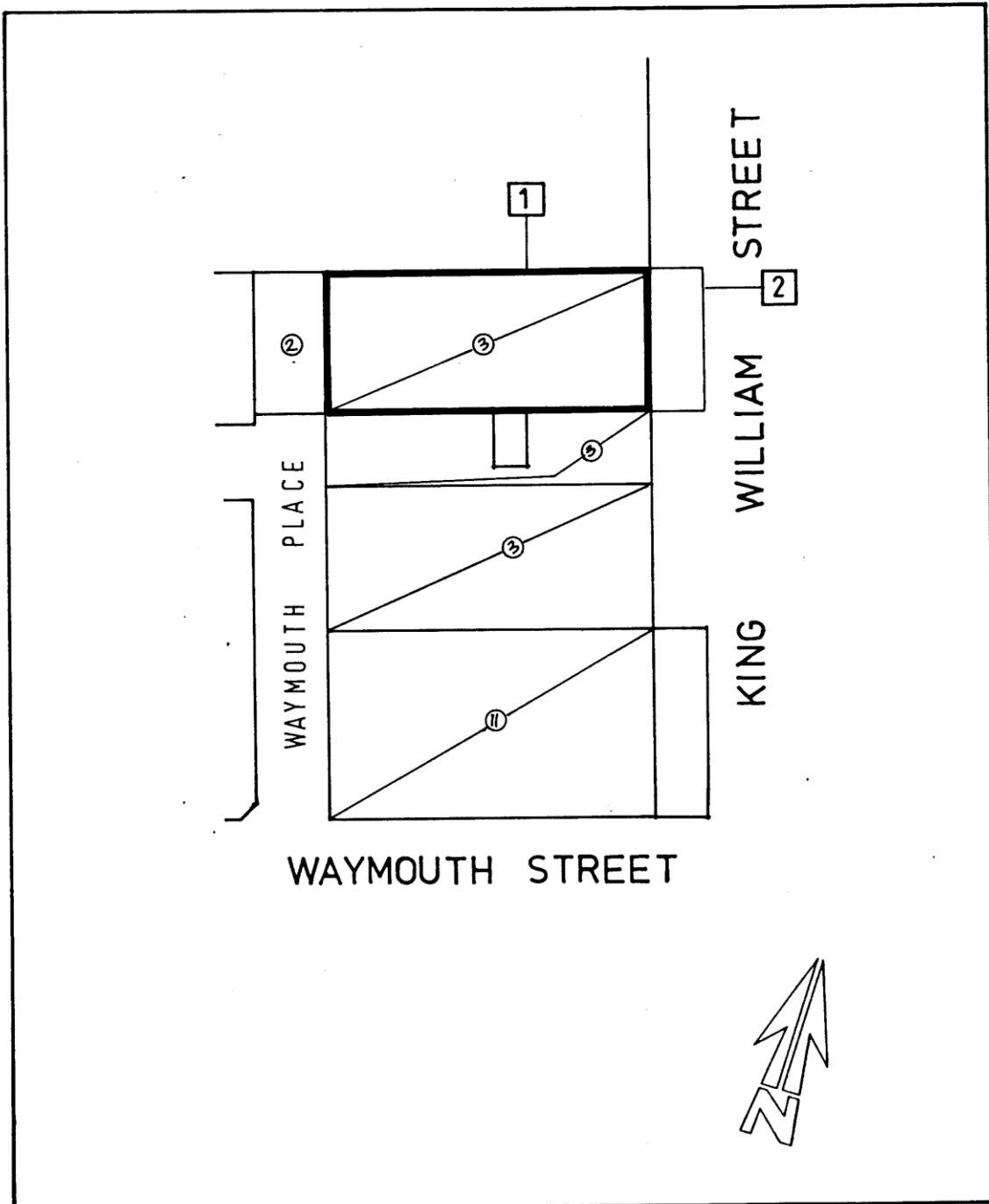


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NOTES:

1. Main body of building.
2. Cantilevered awning of 1930's date.