

VERCO BUILDING

178-179 North Terrace

This building is one of the earliest and most complete of Adelaide's reinforced concrete buildings to have survived. It was built as Adelaide's tallest building and the first high-rise block on North Terrace, hastening its change from residential to commercial use.



(CD Ref 3982/12)

Vercos Building and the former Kither's Building, now known as Opalfield House, King William Street, contribute to an understanding of the development of reinforced concrete construction in Adelaide. While they were architecturally clumsy in comparison with later efforts, the Vercos Building successfully reinterpreted traditional styles in the rusticated 'wings' of the North Terrace facade, visually binding together a series of bay windows. The handling of the rustication, and the use of oversized keystones to link with cornices and to support bay windows, is of particular interest. The facade to Stephens Place is less successful.

Dr William Alfred Vercos was a nephew of Sir James Vercos, an eminent Adelaide doctor who became leader of the medical profession in 1887 when he was elected president of the First Intercolonial Medical Congress of Australia held in Adelaide.

W.A. Vercos was equally brilliant. At Medical School W.A. Vercos topped his year for five years, won Professor Rennie's prize for chemistry and Sir Thomas Elder's much-coveted prize for physiology. He was also the first Everard Scholar and was made Honorary Prosecutor of Anatomy in 1888. He became house physician and obstetric assistant at the Adelaide Hospital before moving into private practice. In 1890 the *Pictorial Australian* suggested 'that the young doctor might become a brilliant ornament on the roll of South Australian physicians and continue to grace the noble profession which he has adopted'. He then took over his uncle's private practice and residence in Molesworth Street, North Adelaide.

At the height of his success Dr Vercos went into real estate, buying the former residence of Dr Allan Campbell and demolishing it to have Adelaide's tallest building constructed on the site in 1912. Although skyscrapers had been built since the mid-1880s in Chicago, it was 1911 before an Adelaide newspaper announced the news of a 'skyscraper for Adelaide', which would ' . . . add materially to the appearance of a handsome thoroughfare, and will be an addition to the architectural modernity of the Queen City'.

This was Eric H. McMichael's first architectural commission of note and made possible by his marriage to Constance Vercos. This commission, according to Michael Page, ' . . . launched him on to what was to become one of Adelaide's most successful practices between the wars'.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

The trend of doctors taking professional rooms in North Terrace began around 1880. By 1914 there were approximately forty-four doctors, surgeons and physicians, including a Chinese specialist known as Lum Yow. The trend continued. By the 1960s there were over 160 doctors in rooms on North Terrace. This does not include dentists, opticians, chiropractors, psychologists and other health professionals. North Terrace was firmly established as the 'Harley Street' of Adelaide, with the Verco Building encouraging this trend.

The building was extensively refurbished internally in 1980-81. At this time original windows were also replaced, every cornice removed and a new top floor in a mansard roof was added.

The Verco Building is also important to the environment of North Terrace as one of several buildings which create a significant streetscape. This impact will be retained with the incorporation of the North Terrace and Stephens Place facades into the projected Myer redevelopment.



(CD Ref 3982/11)

ACA, *Annual report 1911*, p. 79, BSO, index; *Digest of Proceedings*, 25 September 1911; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 18), Lendon, A.A., *The Medical School of Adelaide 1885-1935*; Old Parliament House Library, Lands Department photographs; Page, M., *Sculptors in space*, 1986, p. 149; *Pictorial Australian*, December 1890; South Australian Directories, 1880-1935; *South Australian Register*, 1 September 1896.

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **Heritage of the City of Adelaide: An Illustrated Guide**, (1996). The photographs contained in this Information Sheet are a selection of those held by Heritage Services, in digital format.

The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. 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	VERCO BUILDING	Building No	3/0106
Address	178-179 North Terrace; 1-9 Stephens Place	CT	4169/558

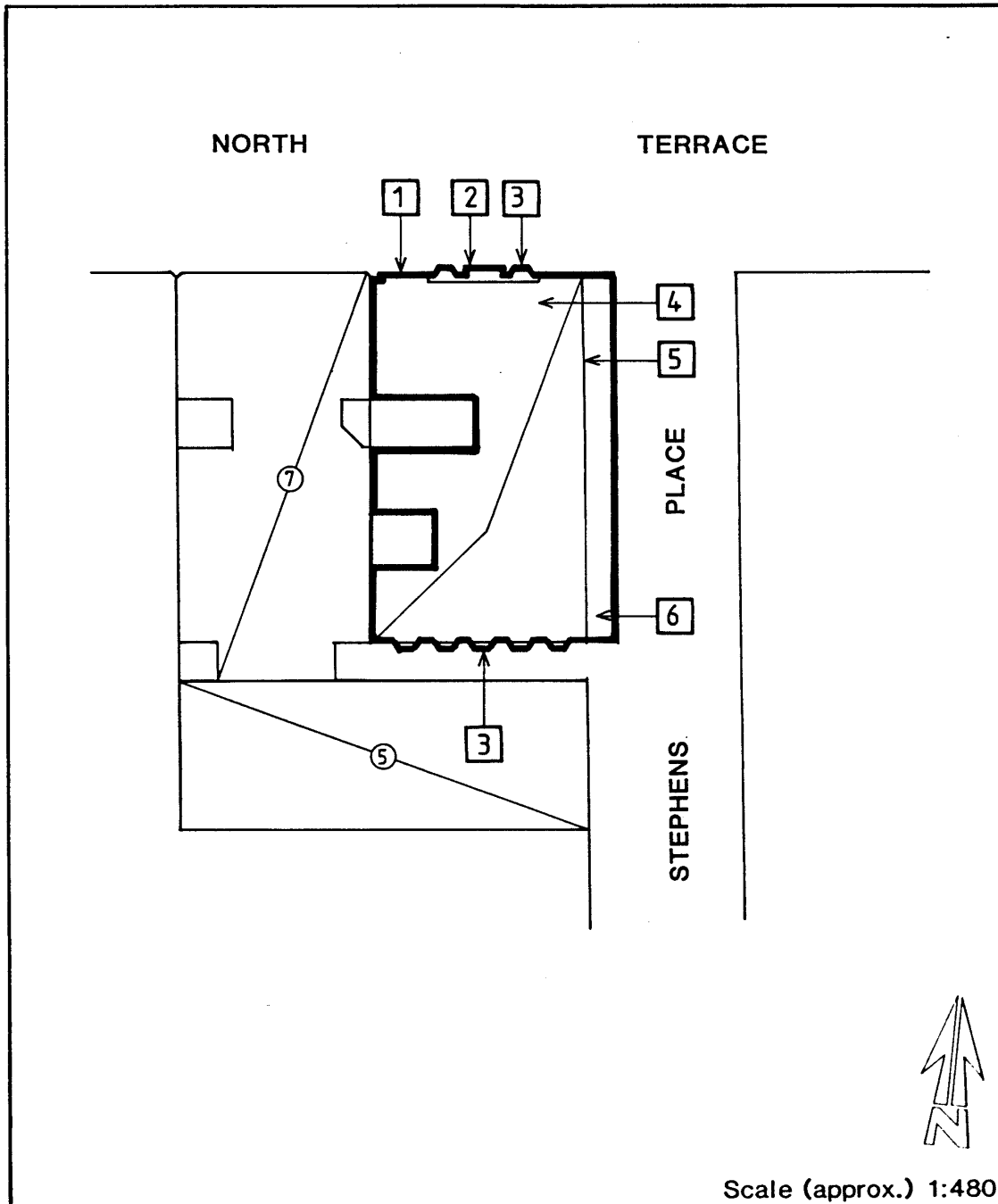


Image scanned - not to stated scale.

This Curtilage Map has been prepared as a guide only and no warranty or assurance is given about the accuracy of the content as it may contain obsolete information. The Corporation excludes all liability [including for negligence] in relation to your use of these documents.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	VERCO BUILDING	Building No
Address	178-179 North Terrace; 1-9 Stephens Place	3/0106
		CT 4169/558

NOTES:

1. Rendered facade with rustication.
2. Balcony.
3. Bay window.
4. Tiled mansard roof with dormer windows (recent addition).
5. Ground and basement levels refurbished:- Gawler Place shop fronts out of character.
6. Tiled gabled verandah.