

ELDER HOUSE

27-39 Currie Street

Historically this building is significant as it was until recently the head office of the national firm of Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort. Elder Smith has been a major financier of pastoral enterprise in Australia. The firm was developed by Thomas Elder and Robert Barr Smith who also made vital contributions to South Australian cultural and philanthropic institutions.

The origins of Elder, Smith & Co. Ltd. were in 1839 when Alexander Lang Elder, a merchant of Kirkcaldy, Scotland, arrived at Port Adelaide in his father's schooner and commenced business in Adelaide as a general and commissioner's agent.

In 1840 William Elder joined the Adelaide business, followed by his father, George Elder, shortly afterwards. It was during A.L. Elder's period as a metal broker that copper was discovered at Kapunda and he did much to establish the company's financial base. With financial security accrued from this venture, the company became involved in a variety of interests, including a project for establishing gasworks in Adelaide, exploiting guano deposits in Spencer Gulf, attempting to erect an iron-smelting furnace, acting as agent for shipping agents Lloyds of London, tendering for contracts to deport convicts to Van Diemen's Land, acting on behalf of landed proprietors, and most important of all, being involved in pastoral pursuits.

In the 1850s Robert Barr Smith joined the company. (He had married Joanna, daughter of George Elder). Edward Stirling and John Taylor also joined the business and the company in 1855 became known as Elder, Stirling & Company. John Taylor and Edward Stirling had both left the company by 1863, the company then being reconstituted as Elder, Smith & Co.

Elder's were involved in the development of the Wallaroo and Moonta copper mines. Success enabled the company to extend its interests into the outback regions of South Australia and beyond. The 1860-80 period was one of great expansion. The company took up huge tracts of land in Queensland, Western Australia and the far north of South Australia. Its financial strength buffered the company from the effects of the droughts of the mid-1860s and mid-1880s and drastic market fluctuations. Although these pastoral properties were said to have been as large as a 'European Kingdom' the company could afford to introduce fencing. This was practically unknown on pastoral properties before 1865, yet became universal by the 1870s.

In 1888 Elder Smith and Co. and Elders Wool and Produce merged. Subsidiary companies, such as Elders Wool and Produce Co., Elder Trustees, Executor Co. Ltd., Elder Metal and Mercantile Proprietary, were subsequently absorbed into the massive Elders organisation, and by 1914 Elders had operations in all states.

In 1963 Elder Smith & Co. merged with Goldsbrough and Mort. From the 1970s a further series of company mergers and acquisitions took place together with further expansion of the

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group's established interests in finance, metals, real estate, insurance, travel, shipping and overseas trading. This culminated in the 1980s with mergers with Henry Jones (IXL) Ltd. and the Wood Hall Trust Pty. Ltd. The Currie Street building is now the head office for Elders Pastoral, a division of Elders IXL Ltd.

As its activities expanded Elders' occupied several office buildings in Adelaide in succession. Construction of Elder House, Elders' last Adelaide headquarters, was started in 1937 and cost £119 207. A leading South Australian architect, Walter Hervey Bagot, was engaged and the builders were J. Grove and Son.

Architecturally the Elders' building is of note as it was designed by Bagot and demonstrates the importance he placed on stylistic derivation.

The facade of the building is reminiscent of a Renaissance palazzo, while the proportioning system appears to have Georgian precedents. The detailing of the building is of a high order.

Advertiser, 3 September 1936; *Elders Pastoral brochure*, c. 1985; Elder Smith & Co. Ltd., *The first hundred years 1839-1939*, 1940; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 139); Woods Bagot, *Ledger of commissions*, p. 38.

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	ELDER HOUSE	Building No 6/0402
Address	27-39 Currie Street	CTs 1686/78 * 4282/583

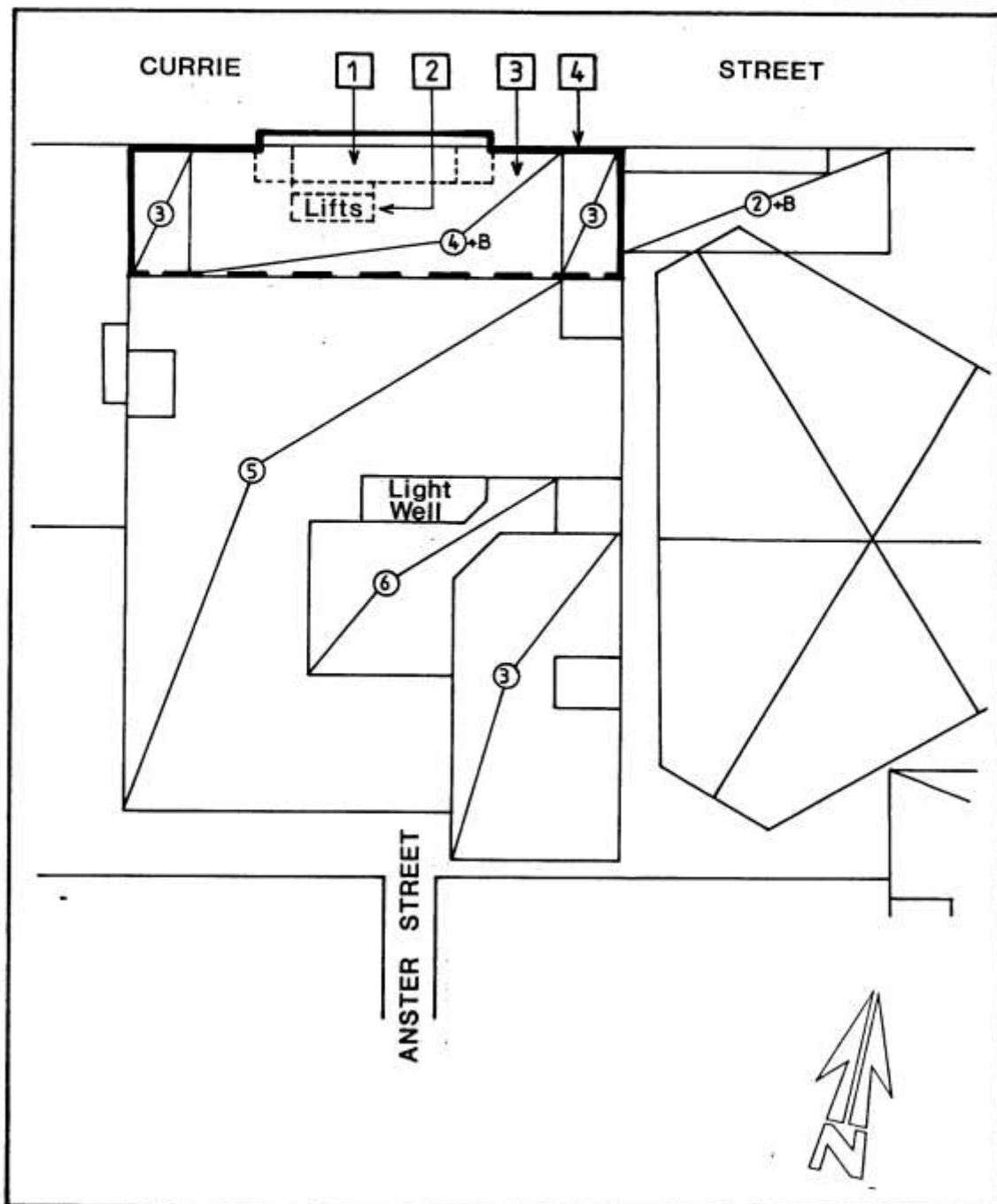


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NOTES:

1. Entrance halls.
2. Plaque.
3. Tiled roof.
4. Ashlar sandstone with rusticated polished granite at ground floor level.

* (Conservation site comprises that part of the above CT to a depth of half Town Acre 139 from the Currie Street alignment.)