

WIGGS' BUILDING

63-69 Grenfell Street

This building was first acquired and used by the stationery company of E.S. Wigg & Son Limited in 1920. Prior to moving to these larger premises, the Company had been located at number 4 Rundle Street and on this site, the Company began business in 1849.

E.S. Wigg & Son Limited was established by Edgar Smith Wigg in 1849, shortly after his arrival in the colony. He established the business in Rundle Street with some experience of the book-selling trade in England. Wigg saw the opportunity to establish a stationery business soon after the Municipal Corporation Bill was passed in 1849. This bill “required many records to be kept, including those of council accounts, religious congregations, licences issued and taxation”.

In the 1870s the Company quickly expanded as it became involved in supplying matter for educational needs and Sunday schools. Because Wigg saw the ‘necessity for establishing public picture galleries and schools of art’, they also promoted amateur art exhibitions and a series of organ recitals which were very successful in this period.

In the 1870s, Wigg’s son, Edward had married Janet Davidson in England. In 1873, Janet’s brother William, came to South Australia and joined the business. When E.S. Wigg eventually retired, the Company was jointly managed by Edward Wigg and his brother-in-law, William. The Davidson’s are the present owners of the Company.

By the 1880s the Company had commissioned the construction of a new building on the Rundle Street site. (The building has been recently demolished as part of the Myer redevelopment.) The business conducted by Wigg’s at that stage was wide ranging and included colour printing of books, book binding and manufacturing, picture framing and gilding, a fine art gallery, stationery and a newsagent as well as book selling. The firm made account books, had a country school department, were die sinkers and embossers and imported games. This was all conducted from the Rundle Street building.

Wigg’s, like many Adelaide based companies, expanded into Western Australia in the early 1890s, as a result of the discovery of gold. The Company became a limited Company in 1910. Edward Wigg had withdrawn from active participation and William Davidson became both Chairman and Managing Director. This change in management eventually saw more of an emphasis on stationery manufacturing and the decision to abandon general book selling to concentrate on children’s and educational work. E.S. Wigg and Company remains in operation as a manufacturing stationer.

In the 1920s the Company decided to purchase a block of buildings in Grenfell Street in order to meet the demands for extra space. A history produced by the Company states that the central building was demolished and rebuilt as the main warehouse. Doorways were created to connect the adjoining portions of the buildings. The Company moved to the building in December 1921.

The Wigg's building in Grenfell Street is significant in its association with the Company and that it is a reminder of the earlier nature of Grenfell Street, that of wholesaling and warehousing serving the retail heart of the City, much evidence of which has disappeared with the recent re-development.

The building on this site is four storeys in height with a basement. It has a wide cantilevered verandah, a projecting cornice and a parapet. The building appears to be a symmetrical freestyle Classical building, the present appearance of which dates from the 1920s. The building is an original design and rather eclectic.

The facade is divided into three bays. The eastern and western bays have rock-faced stone quoins to the outer and inner ends of the bay. The eastern bay has three sash windows which have rendered surrounds to each floor. The western bay of the building retains its decoration, the other bays have been simplified. The western bay has only two sash windows per floor and attendant columns on either side of the window, others simply with keystones.

The central bay is highly decorated and the masonry construction of the building is rendered. No stonework is visible. The central bay has two windows per floor with Classically derived but simplified decoration.

The side walls of the building at the basement are constructed of bluestone with painted brick walling above. The ground floor of the building has evidently been greatly altered as trading practices and business operations have required.

The history of the building is complex. The three bays of the present building reflect its constructional history. Archival photographs reveal that it was originally built in different stages as three distinct and quite separate buildings, although the eastern and western bays are similar in design and construction. The central bay was the last to be built to its present four storeys. It is unlikely that any of the original 1850s building remains on the site.

In 1854 part of the site was occupied by a warehouse. G.A. and H. Bartless bought the site in January 1877 and by 1879 appear to have made substantial improvements to or completely rebuilt the building on the site. The Rate Assessment Books record the estimated value of the building in 1879 was £200, forty pounds more than the previous year. It is believed that the 1879 change in the estimated value of the building relates to the eastern bay of the building. It is known that substantial changes were made to the eastern bay during the ownership of the prosperous merchant, Thomas Graves who bought the property in 1881.

It appears that in 1882, further alterations were carried out to the eastern bay of the building. Possibly the alterations included the construction of two extra floors, making a total of four. In 1882, the central portion of the building is recorded as having a building erected on it to the value of £300. This building was demolished to make way for the construction of the Wigg's building in the 1920s. In 1882, the western section of the land parcel was recorded as vacant but was apparently built on soon after, in C 1883 and rated at £200. In 1894, it appears from the Rate Assessment records, that alterations occurred to the western section, as the rateable value rose from £200 to £300. Probably, at this time the third and fourth storey were added to the western bay.

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The central bay of four storeys, was built in the early 1920s, soon after the Wigg Company acquired the site. At a later time the building's facade was stripped of most of its decoration and unified.

Clearly many changes have been made to the exterior, Grenfell Street elevation of the building, but the cumulative result of all these changes presents Grenfell Street with a remarkably unified building of three bays.

The building is a notable contributor to the character of Grenfell Street and as such constitutes a notable physical environment. It is a reminder of the activities and appearance of buildings once found in Grenfell Street and enhances such buildings as Bertram House.

Land Title Office, Certificate of Title 206/67, 525/133, 1131/80, 1669/195, 4176/851, 4257/465; Rate Assessment Books for the period 1853 to 1900; *The Advertiser*, 21 March 1979, p 25; *Observer*, obituary for E.S. Wigg, 21 October 1899, p 46; Franklin, H. Mortimer, *A Glance at Australia in 1880*, entry for E.S. Wigg and Son, pp. 405-8; Wigg, E.S. *The First Hundred Years*, 1949; Diary of E.S. Wigg, (in private collection); Church, S.G, *History of Wigg's*, 1949 (unpublished); Interview with A. Davidson, April 1990; *AO Chambers' (Common Sense) Information for the People*, 1885, available at the Mortlock Library of South Australia

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **City of Adelaide Heritage Study**, October 1990, Volume One, part of a review of the City of Adelaide Plan 1986-1991. 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 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

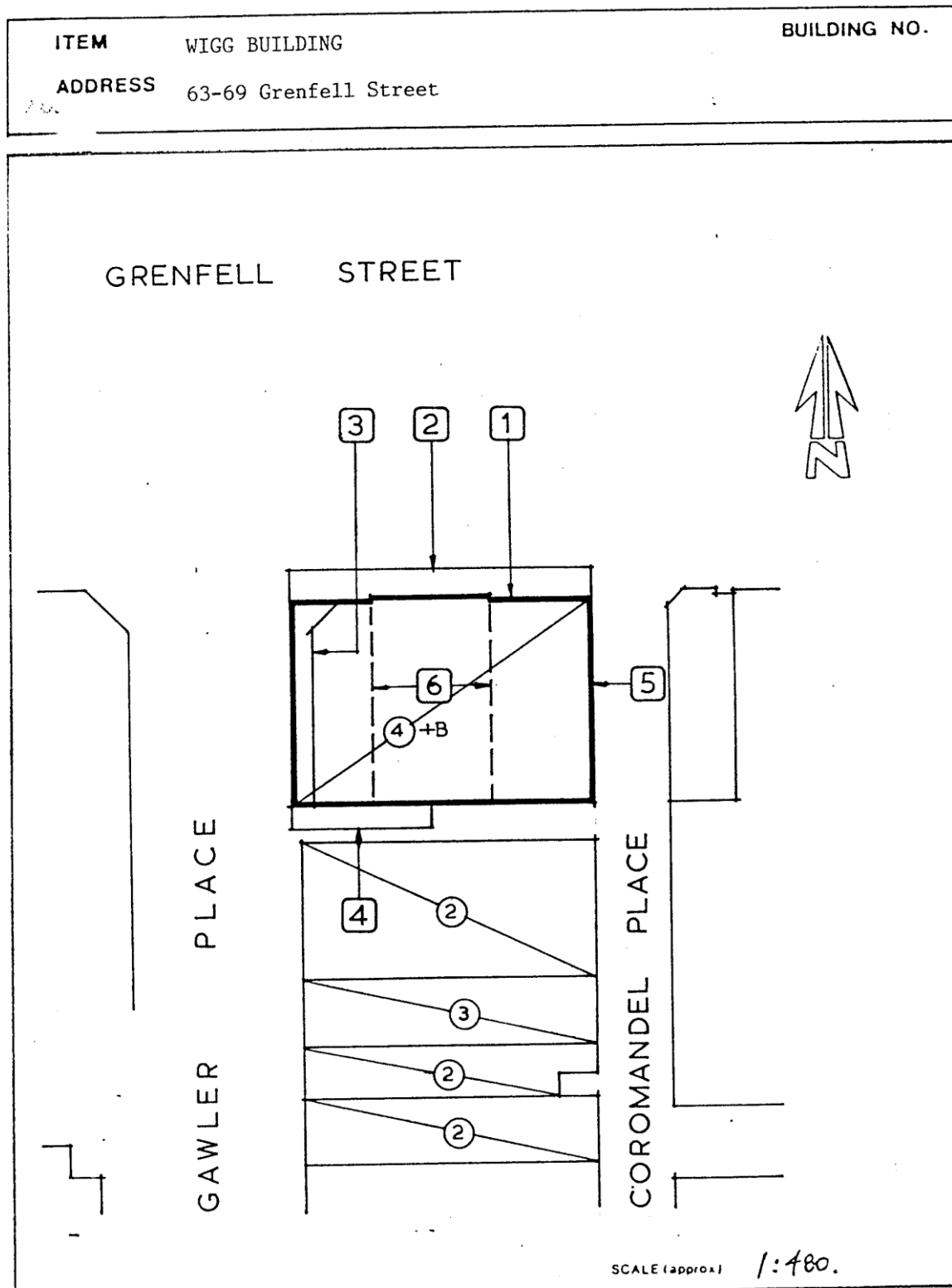


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CITY of ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY
THE CITY HERITAGE REGISTER — DEFINITION OF ITEMS

ITEM	WIGG BUILDING	BUILDING NO.
ADDRESS	63-69 Grenfell Street	

1. Main body of building.
2. Canopy.
3. Pedestrian access provided within western building of relatively recent date.
4. Verandah to lift foyer recessing upper floors.
5. Bluestone brick and rock faced quoins to east wall.
6. Extent of rebuilt 1920s section erected by Wiggs.

1.480