BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The information contained in this document is provided in accordance with s14 and s21 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

NAME:	Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade)	**PLACE NO.:** 11579
KNOWN AS:	Façade of Malcolm Reid's Emporium	
ADDRESS:	Kaurna Country	
	187-195 Rundle Street	
	Adelaide SA 5000	
	Hundred of Adelaide	
	CT 6167/606 D37943 A53, CT 6167/607 D37943 A54	

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

5 June 1986

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Built between 1882 and 1883 for the South Australian Company during the economic boom that occurred from mid-1870s to mid-1880s, Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade) demonstrates the success of South Australia's economy in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is one of a suite of buildings that changed the physical character of Adelaide by replacing early structures with mid-Victorian, multi-storey buildings. Designed in the Victorian Free Classical style by Grainger, Naish and Worsley to an earlier plan by William McMinn, the building is typical of boom era architecture.

The building was the main store for Malcolm Reid & Company's Furniture Emporium for most of the twentieth century and several upgrades were made to its interior and exterior to keep pace with modern retail trends. Furniture manufacturers and department stores like Malcolm Reid's Emporium were an important part of the shopping experience for South Australians before being challenged by the rise of

suburban shopping centres from the 1960s. As such the façade represents the growth of the Rundle Street shopping precinct and the importance of retail trade to the state's economy.

Originally a row of shops and attached dwellings constructed for the South Australian Company, the building was one of many commercial properties established in Adelaide during the economic boom that occurred between the mid-1870s and mid-1880s. The boom changed the physical character of the city and many of its original buildings were replaced with mid-Victorian, multi-storey structures distinguished by bluestone walls and stucco detailing. Built along one of Adelaide's premier shopping streets, the façade of Malcolm Reid's Emporium illustrates the impact of the colony's economic prosperity on Adelaide's commercial development during this period.
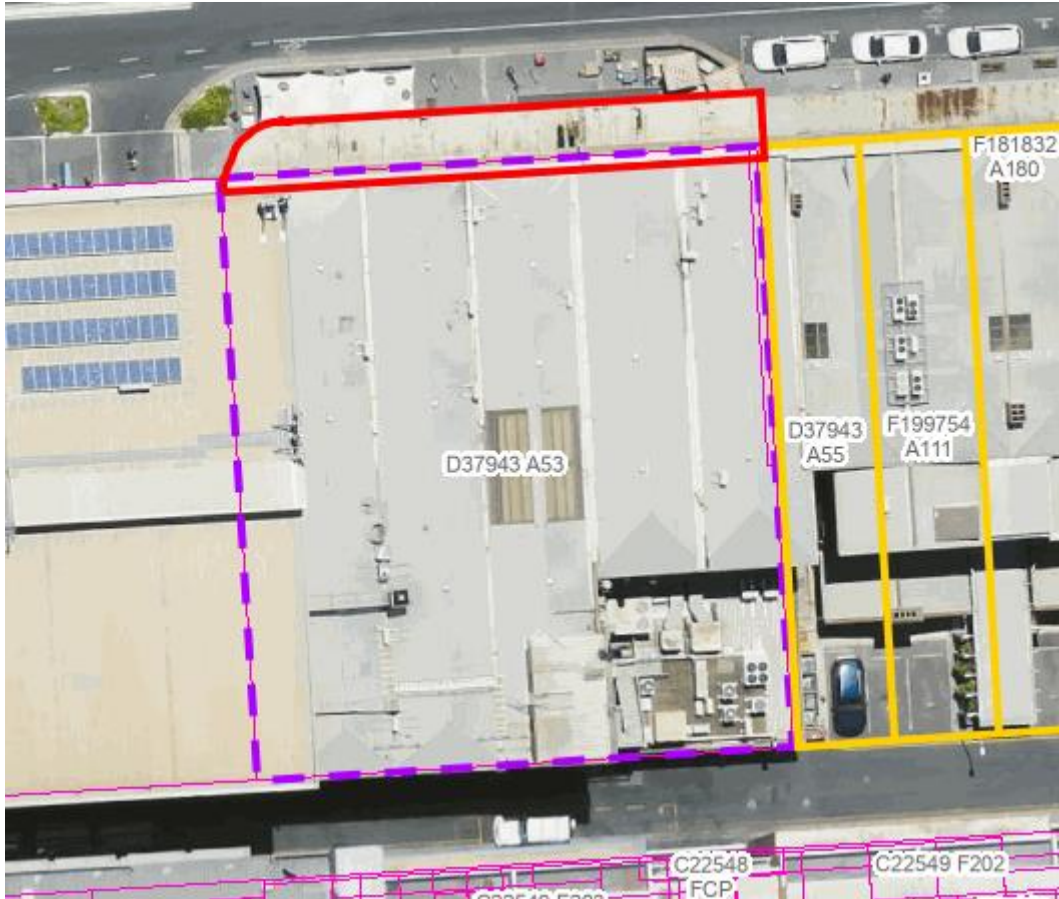
During the twentieth century, Rundle Street was home to most of the city's department stores. One of these was Malcolm Reid's Furniture Emporium, which occupied the building from approximately 1909 to 1991. The Emporium was established for the sale of furniture and household goods, and included departments such as drapery, ironmongery, plated wares and saddlery. The building underwent major alterations in 1909 and the early 1930s to keep up with the latest department store trends, incorporating elements such as display showrooms, arcade-style display windows, live music performances, and neon signage for night advertising. During that time the company established a reputation for providing affordable and high-quality locally made and imported furniture and household goods to city and country residents. Malcolm Reid's Emporium represents the growth of South Australia's mercantile industry and the golden era of department stores during the twentieth century.

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SITE PLAN

Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade)   **PLACE NO.: 11579**

187-195 Rundle Street, Adelaide SA 5000

LEGEND

Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)

Existing State Heritage Place(s)

Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

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Physical Description

Three-storey Victorian Free Classical-style façade constructed of squared sandstone with stucco strings and surrounds to openings. The façade features:

- asymmetrical composition with shallow frontispiece to the east,
- decorated corbels at eaves with block modillions,
- stuccoed floral motifs to window pilasters and friezes and vents,
- double hung sash windows with recessed louvred timber shutters,
- string course separating the first and second levels,
- rectangular windows to the first floor, with flat aedicules,
- arched windows to the second floor, with label moulds above, bordered by Corinthian columns contrasting with rectangular windows to the first floor,
- six-pointed star vents beneath windows in lower entablature flanked by decorative consoles on either side,
- cantilevered awning over ground floor,
- modern glass shopfronts to the ground floor.

The frontispiece additionally features:

- vermiculated stucco quoins at sides and centre,
- Palladian motif windows to the first floor with segmented pedimented aedicule surround,
- painted, galvanised steel upright neon sign braced to façade by iron brackets,
- metal trough letters.

History of the Place

The South Australian Company

The establishment of a British province in South Australia was conditional upon the sale of £35,000 of preliminary land orders and the provision of an emergency fund of £20,000.[1] With insufficient capital from individual subscribers, the future of the colony looked uncertain until merchant and philanthropist George Fife Angas formed a joint stock company in October 1835. Named the South Australian Company, (the Company) its purpose was to encourage the preliminary purchase of land in the South Australian colony.[2]

With the sanction of the British parliament, the company purchased the remaining unsold land at twelve shillings an acre. Angas personally purchased and transferred to the company 102 lots of land including prime town and country sections, of 13,770 acres in total, with the right to rent a further 220,160 acres of pasturage. Over the next decade, the Company secured tens of thousands of acres of land, including around

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Adelaide and Port Adelaide, as well as 20,000 sheep and 1,160 cattle. This made the Company the largest owner of lands and herds in the colony.[3]

The Company did much to advance the interests of the settlement, becoming the 'economic backbone of the province.'[4] It provided infrastructure in the form of roads, bridges, ports, warehouses, and mills. The Company also engaged in a flourishing livestock industry, formed the South Australian Banking Company (later, the Bank of South Australia), undertook shipbuilding at the 'New Port', now Port Adelaide, and had a strong presence in mining, particularly at Burra.

In the early 1900s, the Company decided to wind up its commercial operations in the state. This took many years to accomplish, and it was not until 1949 that all remaining assets were transferred to the Elder's Trustee Company.[5]

Adelaide and the 1876-1886 Building Boom

The Adelaide Plains within which the city and parklands are situated are the traditional lands of the Kaurna People. Prior to settlement, the area was an open grassy plain with patches of trees and shrubs, the result of skilful land management conducted over hundreds of generations.[6] Around 300 Kaurna People resided in the area, living close to the Karrawirra Parri / River Torrens, an important resource area and camping place, providing water, fish and other foods.[7]

During the 1870s, the colony's economy grew at a faster rate than the rest of Australia due to the profitability of the rural sector, which in turn created a demand for goods and services supplied mostly from Adelaide.[8] Together with an increase in population from 23,229 in 1866 to 38,479 in 1881, the economic prosperity of the colony resulted in a building boom between the mid-1870s and 1882.[9] The physical character of Adelaide changed during the boom with many of the original buildings replaced with mid-Victorian structures characterised by bluestone rubble with stuccoed enrichments. Growth in land value also led to a rise in building heights with many structures achieving over three storeys.[10]

Public establishments such as Parliament House (1874) and the first university buildings (1881-1882) were constructed along North Terrace. King William Street and Tarntanyangga / Victoria Square became the business and administrative district, with the Bank of South Australia (1879), General Post Office (1867), Town Hall (1866) and the Magistrates and Supreme Courts (1869) all erected there.[11] In 1878, the first tramways were established, running to North Adelaide and east to Norwood, boosting development in those areas.[12] Additionally, a deep drainage system connected to all properties was constructed alleviating some of the health problems associated with overcrowding.[13] Retail precincts were established within the city and North Adelaide, specifically along Hindley, Hutt, Gouger and O'Connell Streets and Rundle Street in

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the city's East End. Many of the shops located in Rundle Mall and Rundle Street date from this period.[14]

187-195 Rundle Street, Adelaide

The South Australian Company commissioned architect William McMinn to design the row of fourteen shops and dwellings and hotel on Rundle Street, halfway between Pulteney Street and Frome Road.[15] The building was constructed in stages. The first section, comprising the present Austral Hotel and row of shops were built between 1879 and 1880 (197-207 Rundle Street, SHP 12685, SHP 11581).[16] The second, consisting of seven shops and dwelling houses, were drawn to the same design by firm Grainger, Naish and Worsley and completed in early 1883 (SHP 11579).[17] Contractor J. Jude oversaw the construction of both stages.

According to newspapers, each shop had a cellar of 60 x 19 feet; a ground floor comprised of a shop 46 x 15 feet, a dining room and office, a sitting room and three large bedrooms; a closet and bath on the first floor; and an open 'long room' on the second floor which could be subdivided into smaller compartments if required. Two warehouses forming the centre of the whole block also had their own cellars, 79 x 20 feet in size, with the first and second floors measuring 80 x 20 feet.[18] The completed suite of buildings, including the Austral Hotel and adjoining shops, occupied almost two town acres.

Malcolm Reid and Company

General furnisher, ironmonger, and timber merchant Malcolm Reid & Company was founded by Port Adelaide-born Malcolm Donald Reid. After graduating from Port Adelaide Grammar School, Reid's first job was as a clerk with wholesale grocery company D. & J. Fowler Ltd before obtaining a position with a local builder where he learnt about the timber business.[19]

Reid's business began as a timber yard in St. Vincent Street, Port Adelaide, under the name Messrs. Malcolm Reid & Co.[20] Stock included cedar, flooring, ironmongery, cement, shelving, doors and guttering.[21] In 1884, Reid entered into a partnership with James T. Russell and W.L. Dickson who owned a steam sawmill located on Leadenhall Street.[22] Upon Russell and Dickson's retirement in 1887, Henry Emes became a partner, the company name changing to Messrs. Reid & Emes.[23]

Following the discovery of silver at Broken Hill in the early 1880s, Reid left Emes in charge of the Port Adelaide business to establish a branch of the firm in Broken Hill, adding building, contracting, and general furnishing to the enterprise.[24] The branch was a great success, with Reid securing some of the most important Government contracts, constructing public buildings such as schools, banks and hotels in the township.[25] Emes retired in 1890 leaving Reid to carry on the business alone.[26]

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Upon his return to Adelaide, Reid opened a furniture manufacturing warehouse in Franklin Street.[27] By the mid-1890s, the company had several locations, including in Port Adelaide, Franklin, and Rundle Streets in Adelaide, and in Broken Hill in New South Wales, together employing over 100 workmen.[28] Reid opened another furniture warehouse on 55 Rundle Street, Adelaide, in 1892. In addition to selling timber mantels, dining tables, and chests, the warehouse also stocked perambulators, mattresses and cooking stoves.[29] Within a year, the business had outgrown the premises, moving to number 148 Rundle Street. It was at this location that Reid began selling imported furniture from England.[30] In 1902, he moved to Johannesburg, South Africa, where he opened a timber business under the name of Malcolm Reid and Son before travelling to London where he established another branch of the firm.[31]

Malcolm Reid Furniture Emporium

When Reid returned from overseas, he moved his furniture emporium from 148 Rundle Street to new premises next to Messrs. Foy and Gibson in Rundle Street in 1909. Inspired by furniture company Messrs. Waring & Gillow's new Oxford Street showrooms in London, Reid made major alterations to the early 1880s building in preparation for his furniture business.[32] The four flats and basement were converted into showrooms and electric lifts were installed. The floors were divided into a 'novel system' of 21 completely furnished exhibiting suites ranging in value from £12 to £300.[33] Each compartment was lined with tinted walls and stamped steel, a register grate and mantle, electricity, as well as appropriate carpeting, pictures, and ornaments. The frontage to Rundle Street was comprised of 'deep and commodious' windows allowing a large amount of stock to be advertised to passers-by.[34]

The furnished showrooms were designed to allow customers to either purchase an entire furnished room or single articles. According to the *Register,* 'patrons [had] found great advantage in this method of display, inasmuch as when everything [could] be seen in position, that harmonious combination essential to the tasteful home [could] the more readily be secured.'[35] In addition to furniture, the store featured other departments such as drapery, plated wares, ironmongery, musical instruments and saddlery.

With much of the Rundle Street property occupied with showrooms, reserve stock was housed in a bulk store warehouse on the south-western corner of York and Bent Streets, just behind the Austral Hotel.[36] At this time, Reid shared the building with leather and grindery merchants F. Weller & Son and importers W. Storrie & Co.[37] In 1912, the window displays were 'practically doubled' through the installation of a central island window fitted with marble flooring and columns.[38]

By the 1920s, Rundle Street had established itself as the city's retail centre led by landmark stores Cravens and Fitch's and Foy & Gibson's, each on opposite corners of

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Rundle and Pulteney Streets.[39] Entertainment and leisure had become a part of the shopping experience and department stores offered services such as beauty salons, restaurants, pharmacies, and musicians.[40] Malcolm Reid's Emporium was no exception, opening a music room which hosted a programme of performances each Friday night, including their own orchestra. Concerts were broadcast from radio station 5CL.[41]

Malcolm Reid & Company purchased the property from the South Australian Company in 1927.[42] This included the premises occupied by Weller and Storrie, into which the furniture business soon after expanded. In the early 1930s, the walls in between the ground floors of the two buildings were demolished increasing the floor space to 44,000 square feet and the number of show rooms to 30.[43] The shopfront windows were also remodelled and converted into arcade windows, also known as the 'island type'.[44] This style of window allowed shoppers to circumnavigate the islands and inspect goods contained within.[45]

In March 1934, a neon sign was installed onto the building's façade.[46] The sign towered 50 feet above Rundle Street and weighed more than 1.5 tons.[47] Although the manufacturer is unknown, the sign was designed in the upright style and was attached to the outside of the building's top storey by angle-iron bracing to prevent swinging.[48] It featured channel lettering and the colour scheme was red, blue, green, ruby and white, and featured intermittent directional arrows. According to one newspaper, the building was the first to introduce this form of night-advertising to the main shopping centre of Adelaide.[49]

The invention of neon lighting by French engineer Georges Claude in 1910 dramatically altered the uses of electric lighting and greatly increased its efficiency.[50] Neon light was produced when an electric current was passed through neon, a chemically inert gas, producing a bright red glow with an output of up to 635 millimicrons, the same wavelength at which maximum light transmission occurs in rainy weather. Neon lights had no need for a filament and as a result could be produced in any shape. Coloured lights were produced by other gases. Mercury vapour, for example, produced a blue glow and low-pressure sodium vapour produced yellow.[51]

Neon signage for advertising became popular in Adelaide from the 1930s onwards, becoming a night-time feature along the city's retail and entertainment streets. Just like the tall buildings to which they were attached, neon signage became a symbol of the modern city.[52] Upright neon signs were used on multi-storey buildings, their large letters visible at a distance. The transformers were usually mounted inside of a tall metal box built from galvanised sheet iron. As the sheet metal was not rigid enough to prevent bending or twisting, angle or channel iron braces were constructed inside the box for stability.[53] The box was often painted to emphasise the neon tubing so that the message of the sign was visible when the tube is not lighted. For channel style

lettering, the neon tubes were fitted inside the channel, which acted as a reflector whilst preventing the light from adjacent letters from running together and blurring.[54]

Big retail stores, or department stores, in Adelaide were unable to compete with the development of shopping centres in the suburbs and their decline can be seen from the early 1960s.[55] Malcolm Reid's Emporium continued to operate until around 1991.[56] The façade of the building has been altered since, including the island window display boxes which were removed in parts over time.[57]

Chronology

Year	Event
1834	The South Australian Colonization Commission is established.
1835	9 October: the South Australian Company is formed by George Fife Angas.
1857	Malcolm Donald Reid (b.1857-d.1933) is born in Port Adelaide.
1878	Architect and engineer John Grainger (b.1854-d.1917) resigns from his appointment as Railway Draftsman for the Public Works Department to start his own firm with partner, licensed surveyor Henry Edward Worsley (b.1852-d.1943).
1879 - 1880	Four shops and a hotel are constructed for the South Australian Company. The architect is William McMinn.
1880	Reid marries Elizabeth Eleanor Purches.
	Cohen's Family Hotel opens on the corner of Rundle Street and Bent Street.
1882	Reid establishes a timber yard in St. Vincent Street, Port Adelaide, operating under the business name Malcolm Reid & Co.[58]
	Grainger and Worsley form a partnership with architect John Naish (b.1844-d.1904).
	February: Grainger, Naish & Worsley invite tenders for the construction of seven shops and dwelling-houses in Rundle Street for the South Australian Company.
1883	**January: Construction of seven shops on Rundle Street by the South Australian Company is in progress.**
	March: Firm Grainer, Naish & Worsley is dissolved by mutual consent. The business of civil engineers and architects is carried on by John Harry Grainger and Frank John Naish under the name Grainger & Naish.[59]
	Charles Rasp discovers rocks rich in oxidised silver and lead minerals at Broken Hill.
	Malcolm Reid & Co.'s operations in Port Adelaide expand to Nile Street.[60]

1884	Reid goes into partnership with Messrs. James T. Russell and W.L. Dickson. Malcolm Reid & Co. becomes Russell, Reid & Dickson and incorporates the steam sawmills located at Leadenhall Street, Port Adelaide.[61]
1887	21 March: Russell and Dickson retire from business. The company Russell, Reid & Dickson is dissolved.[62]
	May: Reid takes on Henry Emes as partner operating under the name Reid & Emes.
	Messrs. Reid & Emes establish a branch at Broken Hill.
1890	Emes retires from the business.
c.1891	Reid opens a timber business in Franklin Street, Adelaide, for the sale of articles and manufactures under his own supervision.
1892	Reid opens a furniture warehouse at 55 Rundle Street, Adelaide.
	August: having outgrown the premises at 55 Rundle Street, Reid moves his furniture warehouse to 148 Rundle Street, Adelaide.
	Reid serves as a Justice of the Peace.[63]
1898	Cohen's Family Hotel becomes the Austral Hotel.
1902	The timber branch of the business is acquired by the Lion Timber Mills Company. The furnishing and galvanised-iron business is retained.
	Reid and his son, Malcolm Reid Jnr., travel to South Africa and establish a successful timber and iron business in Johannesburg. His brother John Harper remains in Adelaide to manage the business.
1905	John Harper becomes partner of the firm, the business name becoming Malcolm Reid & Co.
1906	Reid leaves South Africa for London to establish another branch of the firm.
1909	Malcolm Reid returns to Adelaide from London.
	Malcolm Reid's Furniture Emporium opens on Rundle Street.
1910	Neon lighting is unveiled by French engineer Georges Claude at the Paris Motor Show.
1911	Malcolm Reid & Co. Ltd is made a limited company, with directors Reid, Sydney Reid and Thomas Crase as directors.[64]
1912	Neon is used for the first time for signage on the Boulevard Montmartre, Paris, advertising a barber's shop, Le Palace Coiffure.
1914	Malcolm Reid is bestowed a Freeman of the City of London exempting him from tolls at markets and fairs.[65]

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Claude establishes a signage factory operating under the names Claude Neon and Air Liquide.

1919   Malcolm Reid travels to South Africa and sells his timber business.

1923   Malcolm Reid returns to South Australia.

1924   Claude's patent for neon illumination and advertising tubes arrives in Australia.

1925   Claude's patent is granted.

1927   **Malcom Reid & Co. Ltd purchases the building from the South Australian Company in April.**

1928   The Australian and New Zealand patent rights for the Claude inventions were vested in Claude Neon Lights of Australasia.

1929   The Neon Light (South Australia) Limited is established and a plant for manufacturing neon opens in Port Road, Hindmarsh.[66]

Charles Moore and Co. unveil a neon sky sign on their building in Victoria Square.

1931   The Neon Light (South Australia) Limited company changes their name to Claude Neon Lights (S.A.) Limited.[67]

1933   Malcolm Reid passes away leaving his son Arnold Reid to direct the furniture business.[68]

1934   **March: A neon sign is installed on the Malcolm Reid building.**

1936   Malcolm Reid & Co. Ltd. opens a store in Bourke Street, Melbourne.

        A suspension verandah is installed on the building.

1947   The Malcolm Reid & Co. Ltd store in King William Street is taken over by Reid's Ltd.

1949   17 March: All remaining business relating directly to the South Australian Company is transferred to Elder's Trustee Company.

1951   A new company, Malcom Reid and Co. (Vic.) Pty. Ltd., is floated, purchasing the Victorian assets from Malcolm Reid & Co. Ltd.

1953   **Alterations are made to the island display windows. Design by Woods, Bagot, Laybourne-Smith and Irwin, contractors McEntee & Williams.[69]**

1991   The Malcolm Reid Emporium on Rundle Street closes.

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SITE DETAILS

Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade)   **PLACE NO.: 11579**

187-195 Rundle Street, Adelaide SA 5000

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Three-storey, Victorian Free Classical-style façade constructed of squared sandstone with stucco strings and surrounds to openings. Frontispiece features an upright neon sign and cantilevered verandah.
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1882-1883 (with later alterations)
REGISTER STATUS:	Nomination: 21 May 1982
	Provisional Entry: 6 June 1985
	Confirmation: 5 June 1986
CURRENT USE:	Mixed commercial
	1991 - present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Malcolm Reid & Co.
	1909 - 1991
ARCHITECT:	Grainger, Naish and Worsley (from McMinn)
	1882-1883
BUILDER:	J. Jude
	1882-1883
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	City of Adelaide

LOCATION:	**Street No.:**	187-195
	Street Name:	Rundle Street
	Town/Suburb:	Adelaide
	Post Code:	5000
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title Reference:**	CT 6167/606 D37943 A53, CT 6167/607 D37943 A54
	Hundred:	Adelaide

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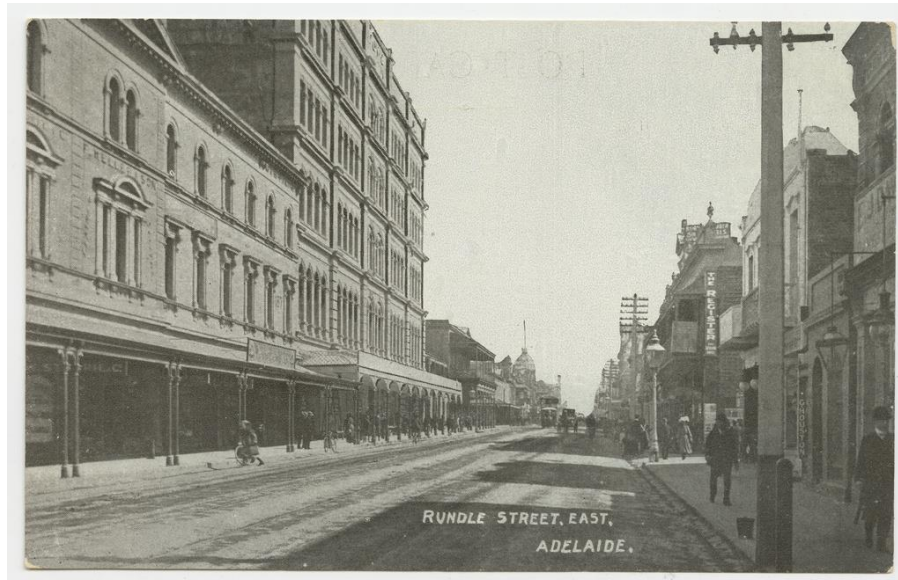
PHOTOS

Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade)   **PLACE NO.: 11579**

187-195 Rundle Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Rundle Street looking west c.1900. 187-195 Rundle Street is the three-storey building on the left. Photographed by H.R. James.

Source: SLSA B 73141

Rundle Street c.1909. Malcom Reid's Emporium is situated in the centre between F.Weller & Son and Foy and Gibson. Photographed by Ernest Gall.

Source: SLSA PRG 631-2-448

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Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade)   **PLACE NO.: 11579**

187-195 Rundle Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Photograph along Bent Street taken 18 March 1929 with Malcolm Reid & Co.'s furnishing warehouse circled in red. This warehouse was at the rear of the Emporium on Rundle Street. Photographed by Gordon Walker.

Source: SLSA B 5536

Malcolm Reid & Co.'s warehouse on the corner of Bent Street and York Lane on 13 May 1925.

Source: SLSA B 2693

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The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 5 September 2024

Malcolm Reid's Emporium (Façade)   PLACE NO.: 11579

187-195 Rundle Street, Adelaide SA 5000

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Rundle Street facing east, 18 February 1929. The eastern portion of Malcom Reid's Emporium can be seen on the right. Photographed by Gordon Walker.

Source: SLSA B 5819

Malcolm Reid & Co., Rundle Street, 14 January 1936.

Source: SLSA B 6801

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Rundle Street facing east c.1937.

Source: SLSA B 23778

Detail showing the Malcolm Reid neon sky sign.

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Neon lights along Rundle Street c.1948. Photographed by Keith P. Phillips.

Source: SLSA PRG-1712-1-49

Malcolm Reid Furniture c.1979, note the cantilevered awning.

Source: DEW Files

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187-195 Rundle Street, August 2023.

Source: Google Maps

187-195 Rundle Street, August 2023.

Source: Google Maps

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