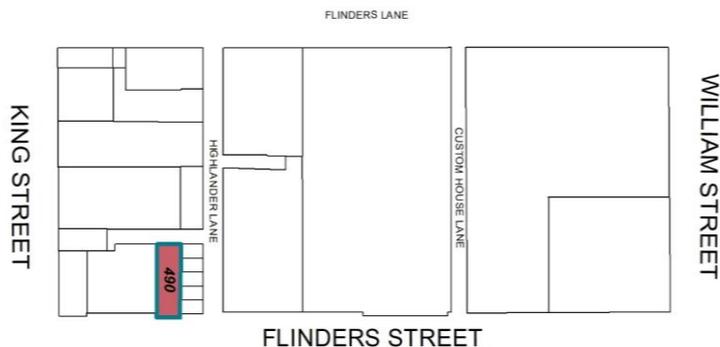


STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Willis' Buildings

PS ref no: HO1337



What is significant?

Willis' Buildings at 490 Flinders Street, Melbourne, a pair of two-storey shop and residence buildings, built in 1869-70.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original building form and scale;
- The original painted render and face brick walls and pattern of fenestration including rusticated pilasters, cornice, parapet and pediment with moulded lettering and window openings at the above ground levels with projecting moulded sills and architraves with a semicircular arch with a keystone;
- The cement rendered chimney and shopfront base masonry sections clad in green glazed tiles; and
- The original timber double hung windows.

The later alterations made to the street level facades, such as the awnings and plate glass shopfronts, are not significant.

How it is significant?

Willis' Buildings at 490 Flinders Street, Melbourne is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The pair of two-storey shop buildings at 490 Flinders Street, Melbourne, originally three two-storey shop residences, constructed in 1869-70 for and by builder George Willis, is historically significant for the evidence the building provides of the need for and provision of daily retail points with associated

residences in a part of the city that, during the mid-Victorian period, thrived with port-related activities. The buildings have been continuously occupied by a number of retail and service businesses through to the present day, including grocery, general store and tailoring businesses for the first 50 years after the building was completed, and used as combined shop residences until the c1920s . (Criterion A)

The former 'Willis' Buildings' at 490 Flinders Street is significant as largely intact two-storey shops and residences constructed in the pre-boom period in 1869-70 in the Victorian Italianate style. Increasingly rare in terms of their use and building typology in this part of the city, they are otherwise typical of retail buildings of the Victorian era where the ground floor operated as a shop and the shopkeeper and their family lived in the residence above. The building is also typical of the modestly scaled and fine-grained retail expansion in central Melbourne until development slowed during the economic depression of the 1890s. The building has the classical detailing often applied to small scale examples of this type in central Melbourne. Elements characteristic of the classical style include its rusticated pilasters, cornice, parapet and pediment with moulded lettering and projecting moulded sills and architraves with a semicircular arch with a keystone on the first level window openings. The building also retains components of its early twentieth century shopfront. (Criterion D)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)