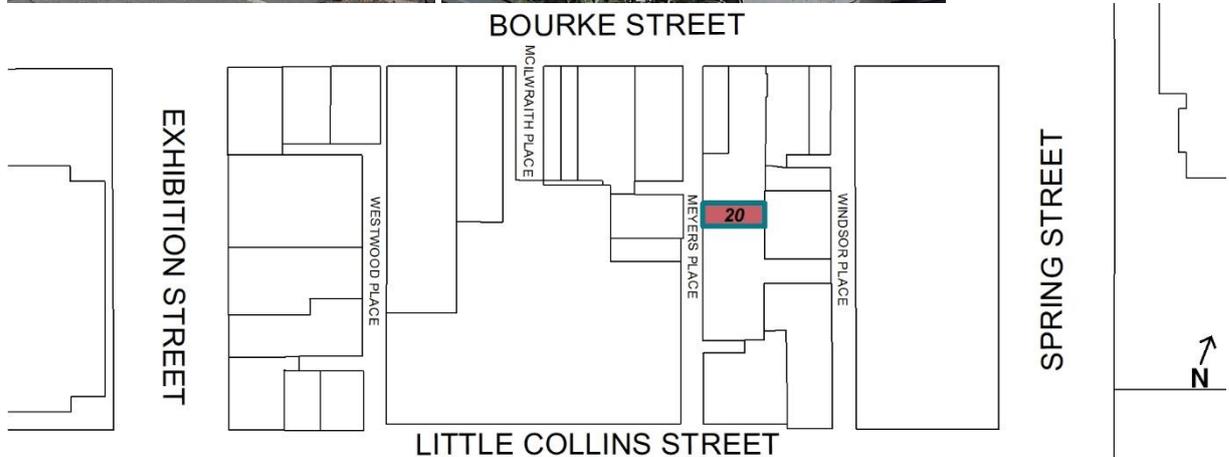


| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| SITE NAME | The Waiters Restaurant |
| STREET ADDRESS | 20 Meyers Place Melbourne |
| PROPERTY ID | 106559 |



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| HERITAGE INVENTORY | H7822-1683 | EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY | HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct |
| PLACE TYPE | Individual Heritage Place | PROPOSED CATEGORY | Significant |
| DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: | Not known | FORMER GRADE | E, contributory |
| | | BUILDER: | Not known |
| DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: | Victorian Period (1851-1901) | DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: | c1886-1887 |

THEMES

| ABORIGINAL THEMES | SUB-THEMES |
|---|---|
| Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations. | Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here |
| HISTORIC THEMES | DOMINANT SUB-THEMES |
| 5 Building a Commercial City | 5.5 Building a manufacturing capacity |
| 10 Enjoying the City | 10.3 Eating and drinking |

LAND USE

| HISTORIC LAND USE | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Archaeological block no: 40 | Inventory no: 683 |
| Character of Occupation: Commercial, residential | |
| Offered at fifth land sale 1839, Allotment 12. | |
| 1839 Williamson | |
| 1840 Hoddle | |
| 1866 Cox | Building on site |
| 1880 Panorama | |
| 1888 Mahlsted | Two-storey building, Jones Bootmaker |
| 1905/6 Mahlsted | Two-storey building |
| THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE | |
| 1890s | Warehouses |
| 1920s | Factories and Workshops |
| 1960s | Restaurant |

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

20 Meyers Place is a two storey Victorian warehouse built in c1886-87 in association with Melbourne's manufacturing industry. It was later used as a factory until the 1940s. The Italian Waiters Club opened on the first floor in 1947. It was established as a place for waiters, mainly of Italian, Spanish and Greek backgrounds, to come together and eat, drink and play cards after finishing work at their respective restaurants. Today the building houses the Waiters Restaurant and a bar on the ground floor.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Building a commercial city

Building a manufacturing capacity

From the 1850s, the Yarra River and the docks west of Swanston Street were in essence the 'lifeline' of the city. Port facilities and large warehouses were built in this area to serve shipping interests (Context 2012:39-40).

By the 1880s, the areas of Flinders Street, King Street, Little Bourke Street and Spencer Street comprised multiple mercantile offices, produce stores and large-scale bonded stores, including Zander's Bonded Stores and Coles Bonded Stores. As Melbourne developed through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, so did her manufacturing industry, much of which was established in close proximity to existing warehouses and stores.

Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by 1921, 38 per cent of Melbourne's workers were employed in industry with almost all new factory jobs in Australia between 1921 and 1947 created in Sydney and Melbourne. The growth of manufacturing, assisted by a new federal tariff in 1921, stimulated urban growth and by the end of the 1920s, Melbourne's population had reached one million people. The expansion of new sectors in the manufacturing industry was maintained by buoyant levels of domestic demand (Marsden 2000:29; Dingle 2008).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the demand for residential development declined in central Melbourne as many residents moved out of the city to the suburbs, and the booming retail and manufacturing sectors rapidly took up available city properties (Marsden 2000:29-30). Multi-storey factory, workshop and warehouse buildings, some designed by architects, increasingly took over the city.

Development in the city slowed with the Great Depression that commenced in October 1929 and continued through the early 1930s. Because of a lack of finance over this period, instead of new construction, some city buildings were substantially re-modelled to create new office, commercial and industrial spaces, and also for use by government.

From the 1930s, like the rest of Australia, an increasing proportion of the city's workforce took up jobs in manufacturing, an industry that led Australia's recovery from the economic depression and a time when, the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* notes, a

steep rise in tariffs, devaluation of the Australian pound, falling wages and electricity costs all made local producers far more competitive internationally. Textiles benefited first, then the metals industries and engineering took over as pacemakers (Dingle 2008).

After being the centre of manufacturing in Australia in the 1920s, Melbourne's importance in this regard began to decline. During the 1940s some city factories and warehouses were left empty or converted for other uses (Context 2012:35).

From the end of the World War Two to the beginning of the 1970s, Melbourne underwent the most sustained growth in its history, mostly based on the manufacturing industry.

Enjoying the city

Eating and drinking

Fine dining had been the preserve of the wealthy in nineteenth century Melbourne. Restaurants were few and gentlemen enjoyed good meals at their clubs. Others generally made do with the 'plain fare' served up at the city hotels. The mix of different cultural traditions in Melbourne contributed to varied culinary offerings from around the middle of the nineteenth century. One observer described Bourke Street as 'packed with foreign cafes'. Gunster's Vienna Café on 'the Block', for example, was popular in the 1870s. Vincent Fasoli opened Fasoli's restaurant at 108 Lonsdale Street c1897, the popularity of his establishment amongst Melbourne's bohemians and intelligentsia set a precedent for the flourishing café society developed by Italian communities in subsequent decades (Context 2012:98; Swinbank 1994:5).

In the 1950s-1960s an influx of Italian World War Two migrants disseminated Italian culture in Melbourne as restaurants and pizza cafes sprung up across the inner-city area, including Pellegrini's in the city and Toto's in Carlton. The significant influence of Italian culture upon Australian culinary traditions had its roots in the nineteenth century and continues to have enduring presence and value in Melbourne today.

In the 1980s, the Cain government reviewed Victoria's licensing laws, which were consequently turned from the most restrictive in the country to the most liberal. The Kennett government revisited the liquor laws in 1994, mostly because the newly built Crown Casino wanted to operate bars in the complex without the obligation to serve food. The General Licence Class B was created to give Crown what it wanted, but it also opened the door for the Melbourne small bar boom. In 1994, there were eight small bar applications (including the casino's). By 1997, there were 152. After a ban on smoking in bars was implemented in 2007, city bars proliferated (Harden 2012).

In more recent years the number of restaurants and cafes has grown enormously, aided by the development of Southbank and Docklands. Melbourne's laneways and rooftops have been turned over to small bars and cafes, rejuvenating the city centre and forging a new era in eating and drinking in Melbourne (Context 2011:76).

SITE HISTORY

The subject site is part of Crown Allotment 12, Block 9, offered for sale in 1839. By 1866, a building existed on the site (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 683).

In September 1886 the National Boot Company, boot importers, operated from the subject site, then addressed as 4 Nicholas Lane (*Advocate* 25 September 1886:22). A newspaper article reporting on a fire in May 1887 noted that the two-storey brick building at 4 Nicholas Lane had been newly erected for the proprietor of the company, John Jones (*Age* 31 May 1887:6). In the same year, Jones advertised his boot warehouse at 4 Nicholas Lane (*Age* 19 November 1887:5). By 1888, a two-storey building was present, and was occupied by boot importer John Jones (Figure 1). A two-storey building was still present on site in 1906 (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 683).

John Jones was a bootmaker and importer, and the owner of the National Boot Company. A report from 1889 stated that Jones had conducted his business in Melbourne for 'almost 30 years', at varying addresses around the city (*Age* 31 May 1887:6, *Narracoorte Herald* 28 November 1889:3). Jones' occupancy of the subject building ended in 1889 with the sale of his property due to insolvency and his exit to Adelaide to escape his creditors (*Argus* 12 December 1889:5).

Following Jones' departure, through to 1903 the building was used for manufacturing purposes, including multiple cabinet makers (S&M 1895, 1898, 1903). From 1905 until 1910, the building was occupied by the Magnet Motor & Cycle Company (S&M 1905, 1910).

By 1911, Boehme & Owen occupied the building. The firm, by 1915 known as Justice Manufacturing, was successful in winning several Commonwealth government contracts for the supply of bridle rings, likely for horses used by Australian troops overseas, from 1913 to 1915, as well as other government tenders for items such as coin boxes and galvanised iron, from 1917 to 1923 (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* 2 August 1913:1815; 8 February 1917:228; 5 July 1923:997).

The subject site was advertised for sale as a two-storey brick factory in December 1917 (*Herald* 6 December 1917:14). The property was again offered for sale in 1929, as part of a sale of S Meyer's land in the street. S Meyers owned other sites in the street, and he is presumably the person the street is named for (Figure 2) (*Argus* 2 February 1929:3).

Between 1920 and 1924 the building was used by Edgar Owen, an engineer and merchant (S&Mc 1920, 1924). By 1926, Samuel Meyers, an ice-cream manufacturer, who is listed as occupying multiple buildings in Myers Place at the time, occupied the building (S&Mc 1926). By 1935, the ground floor of the building was occupied by J M Cook, a printer, who remained there until at least 1942. By 1945, the building was occupied by W R Crichton, a caterer, who remained there until at least 1955 (S&Mc 1945, 1955). The building was sold to Wallace (Wally) Crichton in 1952, who continued to own the property until 1959 (CT:V7749 F104).

From 1947, the first floor of the building was occupied by the Italian Waiters Club, which continues to operate from the building today as the Waiters Restaurant (Cody 2018). The Italian Waiters Club was established at a time when Wallace (Wally) Crichton's catering business occupied the building (c1945 to c1955). It is not known who established the Italian Waiters Club, although one source suggests that Filippo Lentini owned the restaurant for many years. Lentini also operated Filippo's Restaurant in Exhibition Street in the 1980s, and in c1983 opened Lentini's restaurant in Lygon Street, Carlton (*Age* 1 May 1984:28; 30 March 1985:194). Carlo and Fernanda Sabbadini purchased the Italian Waiters Club in the late 1970s.

The ground floor of the building was briefly used as a sandwich bar, before being occupied by two different confectioners from the 1960s until 1970 (S&Mc 1960, 1965, 1970). By 1974, the ground floor had been converted into an office for Apeco Office Systems (S&Mc 1974).

The property was sold in 1959, 1961, 1964, 1985 and 1989, before Denis and Sergio Sabbadini, the sons of Carlo and Fernanda Sabbadini, became the owners in 1993 (CT:V9632 F464).

The 20 Meyers Place Bar opened on the ground floor of 20 Meyers Place in 1994.

The subject building today houses the Waiters Restaurant (first floor) and Bar Carlo (ground floor) (CoMMaps).

The subject building was recorded in 1888, 1910 and 1948 as a two-storey building (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 9A, 1888; Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 2, 1910; 1948). This building is evidently the building still extant on the subject site, which maintains the same original form except for the staircase inserted into the narrow strip of land on the southern perimeter of the site (see Figure 1; Figure 2; Figure 3).

The facade at 20 Meyers Place does not appear to be original and is representative of a later architectural style. Changes to the facade may have been undertaken in January 1934, when

'alterations' were made to the building (MBAI 14919). Other minor work has been carried out to the building in the following decades (MBAI). A new shop front was added in 1985, and this is presumably when the large roller-door was installed on the facade of the building at ground floor (MBAI 59679). The large sunblinds on the facade of the building were also added in 1985 (MBAI V2649).

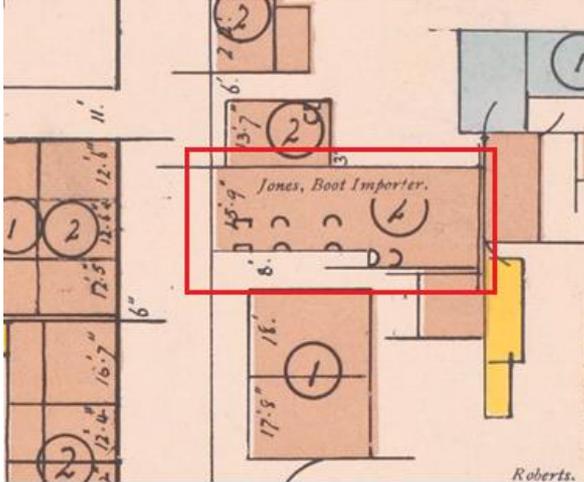


Figure 1. The subject site in 1888, showing a two-storey building with the label 'Jones, Boot Importer'. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 9, 1888)

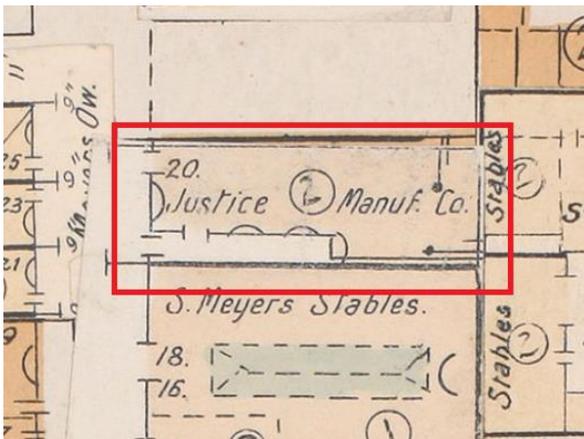


Figure 2. The subject site in 1910, which maintained the same form as the 1888 plan. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 2, 1910)

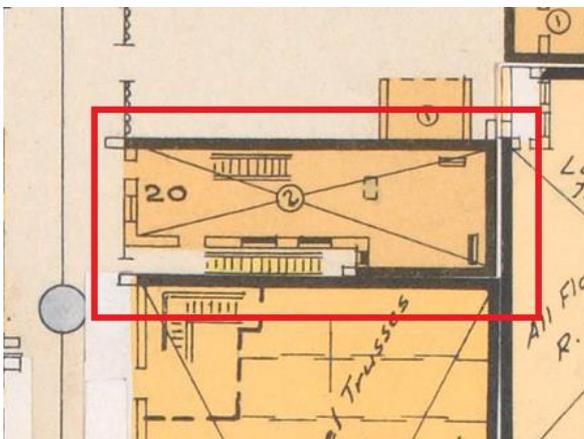


Figure 3. Showing the subject site in 1948, which maintained the same form as the 1888 plan. The building differs only by the insertion of a staircase in the narrow strip of land on the south perimeter of the site. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 2, 1948)

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Italian Waiters Club (Waiters Restaurant), occupier 1947-present; and bar, occupier 1994-present

The Italian Waiters Club, opened in 1947, was established as a place for waiters, mainly of Italian, Spanish and Greek backgrounds, to come together and eat, drink and play cards after finishing work at their respective restaurants. It was an after-work club, and according to current (and second-generation) owner Denis Sabbadini, the waiters were able to tap into 'a winery source', then adding a single stove. Alcohol was sold clandestinely at a time when selling alcohol after 6.00pm was illegal in Melbourne (the club remained unlicensed up until 1992). Fitted out with a kitchen in the 1950s, the restaurant became infamous for its clientele, which included politicians, police, journalists and gangsters, due to its isolated location and discreet nature (Cody 2018).

The Italian Waiters Club (now the Waiters Restaurant) is a popular and well-known Melbourne late-night eatery, despite or perhaps because of its apparent anonymity and lack of external signage. Said to require a password to gain entry, its attraction was as a place where 'a decent feed and a passable claret' were available after legal closing times (Dennis 2018).

Italians have been highly influential in the development of Melbourne's restaurant scene from the late nineteenth century through to today; the scene was dominated by Italians in the 1920s-30s. After the Second World War, which was a difficult period for Italians living in Australia, Italian cafes such as the Italian Waiters Club, Pelligrini's (1954) and several others in Lygon Street (Carlton) were established, each serving a particular clientele and with their own style. Research has not revealed when the secret of the Italian Waiters Club slipped out – perhaps around 1962 – creating a clientele that has expanded significantly in the seventy plus years since the late 1940s (Erlich 2008; Age 15 November 1995:7).

The Italian Waiters Club continues to reflect a *casalinga* style of cuisine – in essence home-cooking – and this is a recognised part of its attraction. The Sabbadini family, owners since the 1970s, have continued this tradition across three generations, serving dishes from the northern Italian Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region. The Italian Waiters Club remains a Melbourne legend: knowing how to find it, recalling the wine served in cups or 'vegemite' jars and 'legendary brusque waiter Paolo', are part of being a Melburnian.

The ground floor of the subject building is notable for its contribution to 'bar culture' in Melbourne (Six Degrees 2019). Opened in 1994, the 20 Meyers Place Bar was one of the first to open in a laneway setting, which helped to 'revolutionise' Melbourne's laneways (Six Degrees 2019). The site was designed by the Six Degrees architecture firm and won architectural awards for its design in 1995 and 1997 (Six Degrees 2019). The bar is now known as Bar Carlo.

W R (Wally) Crichton, owner 1952-1959, occupier 1945-c1955

Wallace (Wally) Roy Crichton, a well-known Melbourne caterer, owned the building from 1952 to 1959, and operated his catering business from the premises from 1945 to c1955. Crichton owned a number of pastry shops in the suburbs in the 1930s and 1940s, and provided services as a caterer and hirer in the 1930s (*Argus* 24 July 1945:4; *Herald* 2 December 1933:38; *Herald* 28 May 1935:18).

During the economic depression of the 1930s, Crichton, then president of the Flemington and Kensington branch of the All-For-Australian League, organised a soup kitchen from the Kensington Town Hall that provided about 100 meals a day, mostly to school children (*Herald* 6 August 1931:12).

Crichton was a Melbourne City councillor for the Hopetoun Ward (1945-54) and was elected general president of the Victorian Chamber of Catering Industries in 1948 (*Advocate* 19 November 1945:2; *Argus* 27 August 1954:1; *Argus* 6 December 1948:3).

An avid supporter of the Essendon Football Club, Crichton served the club continuously, sometimes in multiple roles, for an unbroken period of 34 years, including as long-serving club administrator. He was appointed Essendon president 1941 and held the position until his death in 1959. As a mark of the esteem with which Wally Crichton is held, the Essendon Football Club's best and fairest award was renamed the Crichton Medal in his honour (Essendon 2019).

Sabbadini family, owner 1993-present, occupier 1970s-present

Carlo and Fernanda Sabbadini purchased the Italian Waiters Club, located at 20 Meyers Place, in the late 1970s after they migrated to Australia in 1949 from the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region in Italy's north. Settling in Fitzroy in 1950 Carlo started working in Melbourne's hospitality scene. The restaurant came into the spotlight in 1978 with Victoria's newly formed anti-terrorist squad being utilised for the first time when a gunman held 29 patrons in the restaurant under siege (*Age* 1 April 1978:5). The building was purchased by the Sabbadini family in the 1990s. The Waiters Restaurant continues to operate today under the management of Denis Sabbadini, the son of Carlo and Fernanda Sabbadini (*CBD News* 30 August 2016, Cody 2018).

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located on the eastern side of Meyers Place between Bourke Street and Little Collins Street, 20 Meyers Place is a small two-storey warehouse/factory built in c1886-87. The northern side wall of the building is visible above the adjoining allotment. On the southern side, the building is set back to accommodate an external stair to the upper floor level.

The principal façade to Meyers Place is of loadbearing brickwork, finished in painted render. It is symmetrical at the first-floor level, with a pilaster at each end supporting a moulded cornice below a simple triangulated pediment. The space between the pilasters is dominated by a large window with an arched head and a moulded balustrade sill, below which is a recessed spandrel with three square pyramidal panels. The windows are aluminium framed whereas the original windows would probably have been timber framed. Given the original construction date of c1886, it is likely that the large central window, balustrade and possibly the triangulated pediment were later revisions, perhaps added when the building was altered in 1934. The window was fitted with a large canvas awning in 1985.

The pilasters continue through to the ground level. The ground floor level consists of a large single opening set between the pilasters. The opening is fitted with a single roller shutter door allowing for the whole shop front to be opened to the street. A walkway along the western boundary can be closed to the street by a single door and is fitted with a timber stair protected by a transparent corrugated roof. This provides sheltered access to the restaurant above.

The northern side wall is also rendered and painted for approximately a quarter of the depth of the building and then continues as painted brickwork laid in English bond. At the upper level, the side wall has an early graphic featuring a black and white checkerboard band and the text '*Waiters Restaurant, 20 Meyers Place Upstairs*' and includes an early telephone number.

INTEGRITY

20 Meyers Place is generally intact to its 1934 configuration, with changes visible to early elements of the building. It retains its original fenestration (pilasters and cornice) but demonstrates later stylistic influences associated with the 1934 alterations with the first-floor window configuration dating from this period. The original timber frame windows have been replaced with aluminium frame windows, and it is possible that in the interim the first-floor window opening may have been a recessed balcony. The building retains evidence of its long occupation by the Waiters Restaurant, in the form of the painted graphics on the northern side wall and the narrow entry and stair along the southern boundary that has provided direct access to the Waiters Restaurant since at least 1948 (see Figure 3).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Low scale unadorned brick warehouses and industrial buildings provide tangible evidence of the important phase of development of central Melbourne during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Utilitarian two-storey warehouses similar to 20 Meyers Place are a common building typology in the Hoddle Grid, especially in laneways and the 'Little' streets. These buildings are typically built of loadbearing brick, with a minimum of detail that generally references the Victorian period. Many of these buildings are no longer operating in their original industrial or manufacturing role, often adapted to house businesses or offices with retail at ground level, resulting in substantial changes to shopfronts.

The following examples are comparable with 20 Meyers Place, in terms of the long-term association with the Italian culinary culture. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Grossi Florentino, 78-84 Bourke Street, 1860 & 1922 (VHR H0493; H0537, Significant in H0500 Bourke Hill Precinct)

A two-storey brick building incorporating two former shops. 78-80 Bourke was built in 1860 and 82-84 Bourke was built in 1922 to a design by Frank Stapley. The buildings were incorporated in 1944. Of note is the interior which was designed by John W Wright in 1928 with further alterations designed by Robin Boyd in 1958. It contains a selection of murals designed by Napier Waller.

Grossi Florentino is Melbourne's quintessential Italian restaurant, established in 1928 by Rinaldo Massoni, at the current site at 78 Bourke Street which formerly housed Café Denat, Melbourne's first wine saloon (established 1900) (Grossi and McGuinness 2003:6-7).

The Cafe Florentino buildings are socially significant for reflecting the evolution of a culinary institution to become Melbourne's most famous European wine cafe. It remains the meeting place of intellectuals and politicians in Melbourne's theatre district. The buildings have been continuously used as a wine bar, cafe or restaurant since 1900. They illustrate early twentieth century wine selling and restaurant decor and character, including the Cafe Denat. Today the Cafe Florentino is one of

Melbourne's leading Italian restaurants (VHR record for Café Florentino, 78-84 Bourke Street, Melbourne).



Figure 4. Grossi Florentino, 78-84 Bourke Street, built in 1860 & 1922.

Pellegrini's Espresso Bar, 1860 (refurbished 1955) (HO534 66-70 Bourke Street, Significant in HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)

One of a row of three, two storey brick shops, built in 1860. Of note is the intact 1955 refurbishment into a purpose-built restaurant. Pellegrini's is a Melbourne institution, unchanged in decades. The Bourke Hill Precinct is historically and socially significant as an entertainment and leisure precinct, containing well known cultural places such as Pellegrini's and Florentino's cafés. Pellegrini's was nevertheless established in an area already famous for its Italian cafes and restaurants (Florentino, Society, Molina's, Latin). It is among the first of Melbourne's cafes to feature an espresso coffee machine and continues to serve authentic Italian food and coffee.



Figure 5. Pellegrini's Espresso Bar built in 1860 (refurbished as restaurant in 1955).

53-57 Lonsdale Street, c1880-81 (Interim HO1253 – Recommended as significant in Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

Originally built as a row of three double storey shops with residences above, the building is closely associated with Italian wine bars/café/restaurants, with similar business operating from the premises continually from 1901 to 2001. John Rinaldi opened a wine shop at 55 Lonsdale Street in 1901. Most recently it was the site of Marchetti's Latin restaurant.



Figure 6. 53-57 Lonsdale Street, built c1880-81.

Café Society, 23-29 Bourke Street, 1901 (HO526, Significant in HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)

Three-storey brick restaurant designed by William Salway in the Neo-Romanesque style and built by H Hemmingsen in 1901. The Italian-themed Society restaurant was first opened by immigrant Giuseppe Codognotto in 1924, and continued for over 90 years until it closed in 2016. One of the earliest of Melbourne's restaurants with a cosmopolitan flavour, in this case essentially Italian, the Society remains well established in Melbourne's social scene.



Figure 7. 23-29 Bourke Street, built in 1901.

The building compares well with other examples of places in the HO with long-term associations with Italian culinary culture, as wine bars, cafes and restaurants. It has long been used as the Waiters Restaurant, since c1947, which was informally established as a meeting place for waiters after their night shift. It has since become an institution within Melbourne's café culture. It compares well with above examples in the City of Melbourne's Heritage Overlay such as Grossi Fiorentino (HO537, HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct, VHR H0493) and Pellegrini's Espresso Bar (HO534 66-70 Bourke Street, HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct), both of which were noted for social significance in Bourke Hill Precinct. These examples and the subject building all share an iconic status and long-standing operation as restaurants. They hold continuing association with Melbourne's café and restaurant scene, and

demonstrate the post-World War Two influence of the Italian community on Melbourne’s restaurant and café culture.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓

CRITERION A

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B

Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

CRITERION D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E

Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

✓

CRITERION G

Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

| | |
|---|----|
| EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS | No |
| INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS | No |
| TREE CONTROLS | No |
| OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3) | No |
| TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER | No |
| PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED | No |
| ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE | No |

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985**

E

**Central City Heritage
Study 1993**

Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002**

Ungraded

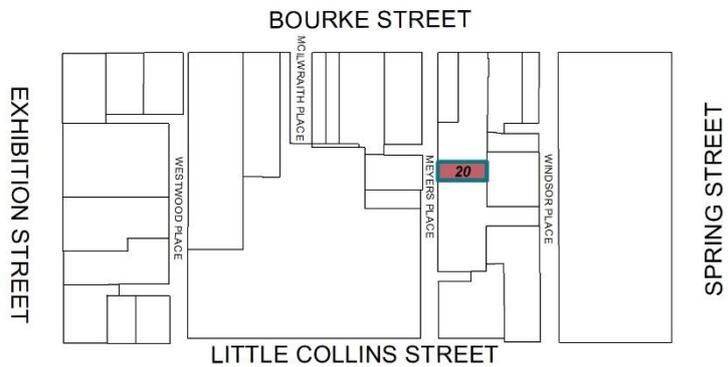
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011**

Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: The Waiters Restaurant

PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

20 Meyers Place, Melbourne, a two-storey warehouse built in c1886-87.

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

- The original building form and scale;
- The pre-1995 Waiters Restaurant painted sign on the northern side wall; its continuing presentation as a casual style Italian restaurant, with a continuity of Sabbadini ownership over three generations; and
- Its continuing presentation as a casual style Italian restaurant, with a continuity of Sabbadini ownership over three generations; and
- The traditions and stories associated with the restaurant which are 'legendary' within Melbourne.

More recent alterations made to the street level façade are not significant.

How it is significant?

20 Meyers Place, Melbourne, is of local historic and social significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

20 Meyers Place is historically significant for its long-standing and direct connection with Melbourne's café and restaurant industry from the early post-World War Two period to the present, demonstrating the influence of the Italian community on Melbourne's restaurant and café culture. It is associated with the Italian Waiters Club established in the building in c1947, a business that continues today as the Waiters Restaurant. Italians have been highly influential in the development of Melbourne's restaurant scene

from the late nineteenth century through to today; the scene was dominated by Italians in the 1920s-30s. After the Second World War, which was a difficult period for Italians living in Australia, Italian cafes such as the Italian Waiters Club, Pelligrini's (1954) and several others in Lygon Street (Carlton) were established, each serving a particular clientele and with their own style. The Italian Waiters Club specialises in a casalinga style of cuisine – in essence home-cooking – and this is a recognised part of its attraction. The Sabbadini family, owners since the 1970s, have continued this tradition across three generations, serving dishes from the northern Italian Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region. (Criterion A)

The Italian Waiters Club is of social significance for its strong and enduring associations as a Melbourne eating institution, made famous by its 'secret' location, unlicensed drinking, the casalinga style of cooking and as a place to see many renowned Melburnians – politicians, journalists and sometimes underworld figures. It is an important place of informal social congregation for Melburnians, initially created as an informal club by waiters seeking a place to socialise after work, but soon becoming a highly desirable place to those 'in the know', with its anonymity forming part of the attraction. Its social significance is evidenced by its regular, long-term and continuous use as a casalinga style restaurant and informal meeting place for around 55-60 years, and longer if the early club period is included. (Criterion G)

The Italian Waiters Club has become a Melbourne institution over the course of its 72-year operation and colourful history. For its iconic status and long-standing operation as a restaurant, it is comparable with the nearby Florentino's and Pellegrini's, both located on Bourke Street. While established later than both these examples, it is distinguished by its different role in Melbourne's café and dining culture because it was established as a place for waiters, mainly of Italian, Spanish and Greek backgrounds, to come together and eat, drink and play cards after finishing work at their respective restaurants, at a time when selling alcohol after 6.00pm was illegal in Melbourne. The Italian Waiters Club remains a Melbourne legend: knowing how to find it, recalling the wine served in cups or 'vegemite' jars and 'legendary brusque waiter Paolo', are part of being a Melburnian. Its early painted sign on the northern side wall is tangible evidence of its long-term use as and occupation by the Waiters Restaurant, an institution within Melbourne's café culture. (Criterion G)

Primary source

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

