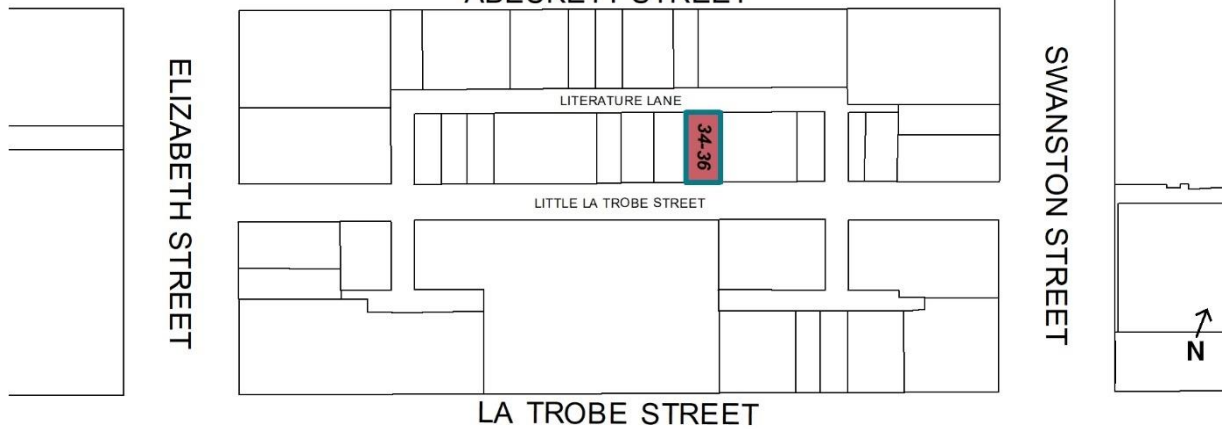


SITE NAME	Warehouse
STREET ADDRESS	34-36 Little La Trobe Street Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105988



ABECKETT STREET



SURVEY DATE: March 2019		SURVEY BY: Context	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	H7822-2141	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	C
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Robert Bell Hamilton	BUILDER:	A T Orme
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Interwar Period (c1919-c1940)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1928-29

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, 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

LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
Archaeological block no: 80	Inventory no: 2141
Character of Occupation: Commercial	
Land sale details not provided	
1866 Cox	
1888 Birds Eye View	
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Two single-storey buildings
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Residential
1920s	Residential, Manufacturing
1960s	Manufacturing

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

The two-storey interwar brick warehouse at 34-36 Little La Trobe Street was built in 1928-29 to a design by architect Robert Bell Hamilton (1892-1948). The building was occupied by Nason & Pollard, engineers (later Central Motor Engineers), from 1930-65. The use of the building as a motor engineering workshop from 1930 to 1965 reflected the nature of businesses related to the motorcar that characterised the Little La Trobe Street area at the time. The building was then occupied by a hat manufacturer into the mid-1970s and then used as a café. Since c2000, it has housed Melbourne Artists' Supplies.

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

SITE HISTORY

The subject site forms part of Crown Allotment 17, Block 37, which was sold to Ozanne and Payne in 1837 (CoMMaps). The subject site first appears in plans from 1866, and again in 1888. By 1906, the site was occupied by two-single storey buildings (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 2141). The buildings at 34 and 36 Little La Trobe Street were advertised for sale in 1925 as two cottages, on a site, which was described as 'highly suited for the erection of a factory, store or workshop' (*Herald* 7 October 1925: 13).

Tenders were invited by architect Robert Bell Hamilton in November of 1928 for the erection of a two-storey brick factory on the subject site (*Argus* 10 November 1928:24). Construction started that year, with an estimated cost of £1638 (MBAI 11101).

Records indicate that the site was constructed for a P J Kent (PROV VPRS 11201/P1 unit 137), though he does not appear to have occupied the building at any time. The builder was A T Orme (PROV VPRS 11201/P1 unit 137).

The site housed multiple tenants, many of which were associated with motor vehicle businesses, which were concentrated in Little La Trobe Street at the time, the first such business appearing in 1905. In 1930, one floor of the building was occupied by Nason & Pollard, engineers (S&Mc 1930).

Nason & Pollard (later operating as Polson Motor Parts Co Ltd and Central Motor Engineers) occupied the subject property for 35 years from 1930 to 1965.

Edward Roy Nason, an accountant, founded his motorcycle parts manufacturing business with Herbert Pollard in 1927 (AAAA 2016:70). This is reflected in the name of the company when it first occupied the building at 34-36 Little La Trobe Street in 1930: Nason & Pollard. The pair purchased a small engine reconditioning business, and set about manufacturing parts for motorcycles that were difficult to find (AAAA 2016:70). Herbert Pollard died in 1936, at which point Pollard's widow, as executor, dissolved the partnership, leaving the company solely to Nason (*Age* 28 September 1936). The wives of Nason and Pollard were both listed as partners in Polson Motor Parts Co Ltd in 1936 (Polson is presumably a combination of the two surnames) (*Age* 28 September 1936). During World War Two, the company used their new Maidstone factory to produce pistons (AAAA 2016:70).

The company soon after became known as Central Motor Engineers. By 1947, Nason's business pursuits had grown to directing three motor engineering companies: E R Nason & Co Ltd., Central Motor Engineers, and Polson Motor Parts Co Ltd (*Age* 10 April 1947).

The company E R Nason & Co Ltd was founded in 1947 as a machine shop concentrating on the wholesale supply of parts and reconditioned engines (presumably playing a specific role in the broader network of Nason's companies), and it is this company that continues to operate as Nason Engine Parts today (AAAA 2016:70).

C H Simpson & Co, manufacturers' agents, occupied the site by 1935 and remained until 1965 after which the building was used as a store and a hat factory named Material Hats Pty Ltd until at least 1974 (S&Mc 1935, 1960, 1965, 1974). The site operated briefly as a jazz café called The Metropolitan in the late 1990s before it was auctioned in 1998 (see Figure 1) (*Age* 26 June 1996:22, 24 March 2000: 68).

The subject building was converted into a retail space and has been occupied by Melbourne Artists' Supplies, run by the Gardner family, since c2000 (CoMMaps). The first Melbourne Artists' Supplies

store was opened in Hampton East, Melbourne, in 1975, with the second store opened at 34-36 Little La Trobe Street in c2000. Today, its central city position makes it popular with art, design and architecture students. Melbourne Artists' Supplies continues to be run by the Gardner family, who have recently opened another store at Brunswick, making a total of three stores (Elder 2016).

No notable alterations have been made to the building, and the façade closely resembles the original architect's drawings, though it has since been painted (see Figure 2) (MBAI).



Figure 1. Showing the subject building in a sale advertisement in 1998. (Source: Age 4 March 1998:20)



Figure 2. The original façade drawings by RB Hamilton. (Source: PROV VPRS 11200/P1 unit 1368)

Robert Bell Hamilton, architect

Robert Bell Hamilton (1892-1948) was educated at Scotch College, before being articled by R B Whitaker for four years. Hamilton then moved to the practice of Klingender & Alsop as their chief draftsman, before seeing service in the AIF (Raworth 2012:313). Hamilton later studied at the Architectural Association in London, before being qualified as an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects and joining the Bombay Government (India) as an assistant architect (Raworth 2012:314). Hamilton returned to Melbourne in 1921, and re-joined F L Klingender, whom he had worked under at Klingender & Alsop, as a partner. This partnership lasted until 1925, during which time Hamilton's reputation as a domestic architect was established (Raworth 2012:314). By the late 1920s, Hamilton was one of the most prolific architects of the Tudor Revival style in Melbourne, with a strong emphasis on Arts & Crafts details. Many of his works, including flats, houses and shops, are still extant in areas such as South Yarra, Malvern and Toorak. Also, a figure in the public life of Victoria, Hamilton was elected as the MLA for Toorak in 1945, and served variously as a councillor for Prahran and Mornington Shire (Raworth 2012:314).

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located on the northern side of Little La Trobe Street between Elizabeth Street and Swanston Street, 34-36 Little La Trobe Street, Melbourne is a two-storey factory building constructed in 1928-29 and designed by architect Robert Bell Hamilton. The building also has a rear frontage to Literature Lane.

The principal façade to Little La Trobe Street is symmetrical and constructed in loadbearing painted face brickwork laid in stretcher bond, suggesting that it is an early example of cavity wall construction. At the first-floor level, the façade features a wide horizontally proportioned and centrally located multi-pane window, flanked by narrower vertically proportioned windows, and separated by brick mullions. The building terminates in a painted render pyramidal parapet with a simple raised horizontal pediment. The parapet and pediment are finished with a subtle projecting cornice. A centrally placed round arched roof ventilator is the only decorative element. Vertical and projecting signs are fixed to the façade towards the western end. A pair of rainwater heads and downpipes are placed at the edges of the building and introduce a vertical element to the otherwise horizontal emphasis of the façade. Four small painted terracotta air vents are extant.

The windows at the first-floor level appear to be the original multi-pane steel framed windows. Consistent with other early twentieth-century industrial buildings in inner city Melbourne, some of the windows feature a ventilation system where one row of sashes is angled back and the gap above covered in mesh to provide a measure of permanent ventilation.

At the street level, the original openings appear to be extant, including the wide central opening that was likely to have been designed to accommodate access by motor vehicles, reflecting the early use of the building and others within Little La Trobe Street. The vehicle crossover is still in place. A contemporary aluminium framed door and window assembly has been fitted to the original opening, however the original timber bi-fold garage doors remain extant behind the later shopfront. At the western end of the building a single door with toplight gives access to the floor level above, and at the eastern end there is a single pane aluminium framed window. A continuous painted render lintel extends across the elevation above the street level openings.

The rear façade to Literature Lane is similar to the principal façade, constructed in loadbearing unpainted painted face brickwork laid in stretcher bond. The first-floor level features a wide horizontally proportioned multi-pane window. The other window openings are not consistent in terms of size and arrangement, although they appear to all retain their original steel frame windows. Continuous painted render lintels extend across the elevation above the street level and first floor level openings.

INTEGRITY

34-36 Little La Trobe Street, Melbourne is highly intact with very few changes visible to the original or early fabric of the building. The building retains its original scale, walls and parapets of loadbearing face brick, continuous painted render lintels and parapet detailing. It retains its original pattern of openings and steel frame windows, original entry door with toplight, timber bifold garage doors and parapet ventilation openings. Alterations include the fitting of a contemporary aluminium shopfront into the large street level opening. This opening and the timber bifold doors are evidence of the building's use in association with the motor industry which dominated Little La Trobe Street in the 1930s. Overall, the building is of high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The construction of warehouses and industrial buildings was an important phase of development in central Melbourne, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The buildings were usually low scale and located in minor streets and laneways with rear lane access to facilitate the movement of material in and out of the building. Today most of these early factory or warehouse buildings are no longer operating as such, and have often been adapted to house professional offices or other commercial functions.

The brick warehouses constructed around the early twentieth century and early inter-war period are generally of a simple utilitarian character, utilising loadbearing face brick external walls with either a steel post and beam or reinforced concrete internal structure. Windows were generally large to maximise access to natural light at a time when artificial lighting was not adequate for the manufacturing process.

The following examples are comparable with 34-36 Little La Trobe Street, being of a similar style, scale, construction date and use. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

Former Factory, 225-227 Queensberry Street, Carlton, 1923 (HO1136)

A two-storey former factory building built in 1923 is an intact example of a factory building from the interwar period with triangular parapet and original steel framed windows.



Figure 3. 225-227 Queensbury Street, Carlton, built in 1923.

Former Wenley Motor Garage, 39-41 Little Collins Street, 1919 (Interim HO1277 – Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

This three-storey face brick building (overpainted), built in 1919, is simple in form and in detailing, reflecting its origins as a warehouse building with garage on the ground floor.



Figure 4. 39-41 Little Collins Street built in 1919.

27-29 Little Lonsdale Street, 1924 (Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

27-29 Little Lonsdale Street is significant as a highly intact example of an early interwar warehouse/factory building constructed in 1924 as a component of the industrial expansion in central Melbourne during this period.



Figure 5. 27-29 Little Lonsdale Street, built in 1924.

34-36 Little La Trobe Street is a low scale and exemplary example of an intact interwar factory warehouse building, utilitarian and functional yet refined in its design, of which there are several surviving examples within central Melbourne (albeit often adapted to house new uses such as professional offices). The building is located within a context that retains a number of other low scale factory warehouse buildings, and which, in the early twentieth century, comprised a conglomeration of businesses providing services to the fledgling motor car industry.

34-36 Little La Trobe Street is comparable with a number of other HO listed examples of the type, including 225-227 Queensbury Street, being of a similar character, scale and degree of intactness and 27-29 Little Lonsdale Street (recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

Of particular note is the original fenestration pattern including a large central opening for motor vehicle access. It is further distinguished by its retention of the original timber bifold garage doors. The retention of the driveway crossover is also important.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>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).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

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

REFERENCES

Age, as cited.

Argus, as cited.

Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) 2016, 'Nason, An Automotive Name Steeped in History, Looks to the Future', *Australian Automotive Aftermarket Magazine*, November 2016, pp 70-71.

City of Melbourne Interactive Maps (CoMMaps) 2019, <http://maps.melbourne.vic.gov.au/>, accessed 8 April 2019.

Elder, John 2016, 'Drawn and quartered – a little art shop, and old Melbourne, makes its last stand', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au>, accessed 17 April 2019.

Fels, M, Lavelle, S and Mider, D 1993, 'Archaeological Management Plan', prepared for the City of Melbourne.

Herald, as cited.

Melbourne Building Application Index (MBAI), retrieved from Ancestry.com 2015, Victoria, Australia, Selected Trial Brief and Correspondence Registers and Other Images, 1837-1993 [database on-line], <http://ancestry.com.au>, accessed online February 2019/

Poulton, Fiona 2018, 'Little La Trobe Street and the Historical Significance of Melbourne's Laneways', Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), <https://prov.vic.gov.au>, accessed 8 April 2019.

Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), City of Melbourne building plans and permits, VPRS 11200/P1 unit 1368.

Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), City of Melbourne building plans and permits, VPRS 11201/P1 unit 137.

Sands & McDougall, *Melbourne and Suburban Directories* (S&Mc), as cited.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985**

D

**Central City Heritage
Study 1993**

C

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

Ungraded

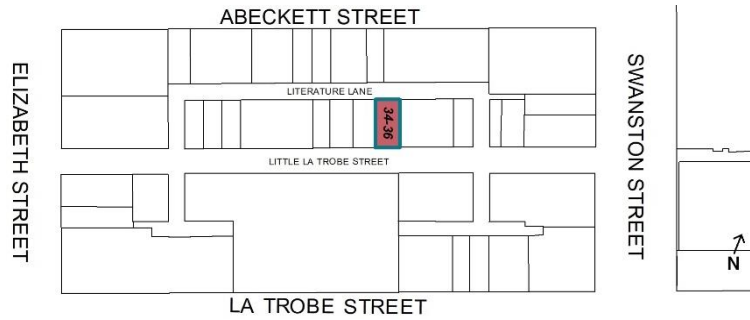
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011**

Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Warehouse

PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

34-36 Little Latrobe Street, Melbourne, a two-storey former factory and warehouse built in 1928-29.

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

- The original building form and scale;
- The original face brick walls and original fabric including parapets, continuous painted render lintels, pattern of window openings and central doorway;
- The original steel frame windows; and
- original details including the original timber bifold garage doors.

Later alterations including the insertion of an aluminium framed shopfront to the street level façade are not significant.

How it is significant?

34-36 Little La Trobe Street, Melbourne is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

34-36 Little La Trobe Street, Melbourne, a brick factory and warehouse built in 1928-29, is historically significant for its association with the industrial expansion in central Melbourne during the interwar period, and for the evidence it provides of the former conglomeration of businesses providing services to the fledgling motor vehicle industry. These businesses characterised and came to dominate Little La Trobe Street in the 1920s and 1930s, with the first such business established in Little La Trobe Street in 1905. The site was associated with the motor vehicle industry until 1965. Among its tenants were long-

standing occupants Nason & Pollard, engineers (later Central Motor Engineers) who ran their small engine reconditioning business from 34-36 Little La Trobe Street from 1930-65, initially manufacturing difficult to find parts for motorcycles. (Criterion A)

34-36 Little La Trobe Street is significant as a highly intact example of an early interwar warehouse/factory building, constructed in 1928-29 to a design by architect Robert Bell Hamilton (1892-1948). It is representative of the many low scale warehouse/factory buildings in central Melbourne of a simple utilitarian character, utilising loadbearing face brick external walls with either a steel post and beam or reinforced concrete internal structure. These buildings are frequently located in minor streets and laneways with rear lane access to facilitate the movement of goods and materials in and out of them. It is located within a context that retains a number of low scale factory warehouse buildings, and which, in the early twentieth century, comprised a conglomeration of businesses providing services to the fledgling motor car industry. It is distinguished by its retention of the original fenestration pattern, upper floor steel framed windows, large central opening for motor vehicle access, and the original timber bifold garage doors. (Criterion D)

Primary source

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

