
MELBOURNE OMNIBUS COMPANY AND IRON FOUNDRY ARCHAEOLOGY SITE

Location

36-58 MACAULAY ROAD NORTH MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7822-2427

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 4, 2023

What is significant?

The surviving built component of the Melbourne Omnibus Company premises have been assessed as being of state significance and are accordingly listed on the VHR as H1810. This significance is based on both the historical association with the Melbourne Omnibus Company and that the building is the earliest and only known surviving structure associated with the Melbourne Omnibus Company.

It should be expected that if archaeological remains associated with the Omnibus phase remain, they would also be considered to hold some significance based on their historical associations, but the degree to which they survive is unknown.

The site then had a later phase of use associated with operating as an iron foundry and manufacturing premises. Again, the degree to which archaeological traces of this survive is unknown.

How is it significant?

The built heritage aspects of the Melbourne Omnibus Company premises have already been assessed as being of state significance. The archaeological components of this are tentatively assessed as being of local to state significance and this will, to a degree be determined by the condition of the archaeology.

Any archaeology associated with the iron foundry phase of the site is considered to be of local significance.

Why is it significant?

The archaeology of the Melbourne Omnibus Company is considered to hold some significance for its connection to early public transport and communication in Victoria (Theme 3 in Victoria's framework of historical themes). The archaeology of the foundry site is considered to hold some significance as a location that employed a significant number of local people producing a variety of metal furnishings for hospitals and houses (Theme 5.2 'developing a manufacturing capacity' in Victoria's framework of historical themes).

Interpretation of Site The proposed VHI listing area is currently built over by part of the Melbourne Omnibus Stables (at the southern end of the property and registered as VHR H1810) and to the north of this is part of the warehouses and workshops constructed in the early 1890s for the Law and McWalter iron foundry. The site has been modified since the nineteenth century and there are currently slab floors/paved surfaces over the whole of the area. It is unclear to what extent nineteenth century archaeological remains survive under floor levels.

Hermes Number 209769

Property Number

History

There are two main historical occupation phases - the Melbourne Omnibus Company and a later nineteenth century iron foundry. Melbourne Omnibus Company Premises In September 1873 lot 10 of section 92, consisting of 3 roods and 36 perches was put up for sale and was purchased by the Melbourne Omnibus Company (Lovell Chen 2016: 9). The company had been formed just a few years earlier in 1869 by Francis Boardman Clapp, William McCulloch and Henry Hoyt and by 1873 already had stables in Fitzroy (at the corner of Brunswick and Johnson Streets) and was rapidly expanding its services through the inner city with more stabling at Richmond, Clifton Hill, North Fitzroy, South Melbourne, Moonee Ponds, Prahran and Sandridge. The original omnibus service offered by the company had followed a route from Spencer Street to Collingwood. By the early 1880s there were an additional 14 routes available for passengers (Lovell Chen 2016: 6). By 1877 the company's service was described as playing an 'important...part in the daily life of our city and suburban populations'. Perhaps an indication of its value to the population of Melbourne is the rise in the value of houses and property located 'on and near the omnibus routes...since the company commenced operations' (The Argus 7/4/1877: 5). In the late 1870s the Melbourne Omnibus Company commenced a shift towards cable tramways pivoting away from horse-drawn carriages. After a period of petitioning and consultation with the Victorian Government, the company, now the Melbourne Tramways and Omnibus Company, gained permission in 1883 'to introduce tramways, many of which were established on the original omnibus routes' (Lovell Chen 2016: 7). The need for stables accordingly diminished and in 1888, the Macaulay Road property was advertised for sale. It was described in sale advertising as follows: ...having the magnificent front of 150 links to Macaulay road, by the splendid depth of 498 links, upon which is erected large stabling...This site is without equal for a timber yard or manufactory (Australasian 1888 quoted in Lovell Chen 2016: 9). Nineteenth Century Iron Foundry c1889 - 1930s The 1889/90 rate book entry for the property describes it as an iron foundry – a 'bus stables' description has been crossed out by hand – and the owners listed as Law and McWalter. The entry for the following year describes Law and McWalter as 'bedstead manufacturers' and describes the structures present on the property as 'brick and iron foundry'. Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plans from the mid 1890s provide an indication of the make up of structures then present on the property. Visible in the northwestern corner of the property on the 1895 plan (with diagonal hatching) is the brick building associated with the omnibus stables marked on the plan labelled on the 1897 plan as an 'office'. To the rear of this building and indicated by horizontal hatching is a large timber/weatherboard structure marked as 'iron foundry' on the 1897 plan. This building extends to the northeast beyond the boundary of the heritage registered site – it should be noted that the MMBW field survey plan (dated 1894) cited in the Lovell Chen report indicates that this building was a galvanised iron shed (Lovell Chen 2016: Figure 10). Between these two buildings is shown a small rectangular brick or stone building which is labelled as 'furnace' on the 1897 plan. In the late 1890s the foundry premises were taken over by Austral Manufacturing which continued to use the premises to manufacture bedsteads. Lovell Chen notes the business was established by Robert Gibson who became prominent in manufacturing and other business boards in the early decades of the

twentieth century (Lovell Chen 2016: 11). Austral 'undertook works to the site between 1896 and 1898' (Lovell Chen 2016: 13). This included the addition of a large brick or stone building located largely to the southeast of the current study area in a portion of vacant land that had been part of the adjacent lot 11. In the twentieth century the property operated as the Stokoe Motors premises and then more recently as a taxi company headquarters. The northern portion of the original omnibus and foundry premises have been demolished to make way for a multistorey apartment development.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>