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# MCCRACKEN'S SALTING ESTABLISHMENT COMPLEX

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## Location

1-7 GIPPS STREET PORT FAIRY, MOYNE SHIRE

## Municipality

MOYNE SHIRE

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7321-0071

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

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### Interpretation of Site

Those residences fronting Gipps Street were built sometime between the 1960s and the 1980s and appear to have shallow foundations. Some of these properties have open grassed backyards. The vacant lot fronting the River does not appear to have been greatly modified in recent years. The foundations and building platforms of earlier structures are visible.

The archaeological significance of the remains of the salting establishment would lie in what could be learnt about the process of salting meat at a time and place that was effectively a remote frontier post. From the refuse pits, the ages and types of animals slaughtered could be ascertained as well as what portions of the animal were not utilised. Cess pits and general rubbish pits could provide information on the health, diet and standard of living of those workers at the establishment.

Archaeological  
Significance

It can be expected that the footings of the buildings associated with the salting establishment would be present, most likely better preserved and more extensive in the spaces between the existing residences. Post holes associated with fences and lesser structures as well as surface drains and refuse/disposal/cess pits can be expected to be present. The timber remains of the wharfage and cultural deposits associated with their use could also be expected to be either in the river bed or even under the river's edge where some reclamation has most likely taken place in the past.

Historical  
Significance

McCracken's salting establishment was one of the earliest industries at Port Fairy. Prior to refrigeration, salted meat was one of the essential food staples for sea travel. The establishment not only added value to the pastoral economy that first developed in the hinterland but also made Port Fairy an attractive port of call for ships, which required victuals thereby further stimulating trade.

Hermes  
Number

149916

Property  
Number

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## History

Throughout the early-mid 19th century, in the absence of refrigeration, the process of salting and thus preserving meat was a common and important practice.

In early 1848, Mr Hugh McCracken obtained a lease of 33 acres at the southern extent of Port Fairy. By mid 1848, McCracken had established a slaughter yard and extensive "salting establishment" and was open for business, preparing and shipping salted beef products to local regions, as well as Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart.

Very little is known of the actual structures and facilities McCracken constructed upon his leased lands as part of the salting establishment. A surveyor's plan of 1850 shows the lease, but no structures. A second plan from the same year indicates one structure on the west side of Gipps Street (Martin's Point). This structure is situated close to the bank of the Moyne River, and it would seem McCracken obtained use of additional lands outside his 33 acre lease to establish a processing and packing facility that would enable the easiest transfer of his produce to shipping.

By the early 1850s it appears that McCracken extended the salt work facilities as an 1854 plan depicts two structures at Martin's Point. This plan marks these buildings as the "old sailing(sic) establishment". Evidence suggests that McCracken had ceased to operate by the mid 1850s as there is no mention of his establishment on Road Board Lists for this period, and in 1855, it appears that the buildings were used as temporary premises for immigrants.

The structures remained until the early to mid 1870s, possibly being used for a variety of different purposes. When demolished, the bluestone from the "old salting-down establishment" was used to construct John Lee's Albion Hotel on the corner of Bank and James Streets in 1874.

*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/>*