
Foster Building



B4979 Shops

Location

67 - 71 Johnson Street,, MAFFRA VIC 3860 - Property No B4979

Municipality

WELLINGTON SHIRE

Level of significance

State

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2308

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

This two-storey commercial building, originally incorporating shops, offices and residences, was constructed using precast concrete blocks in 1908 for notable local businessman, Askin Morrison Foster of Fosters Brothers and designed by Maffra architect, Stephen Ashton. The blocks were probably made with a Midget Giant Block Making Machine imported from the U.S. The blocks were laid as a cavity wall construction, not unique at this time in Victoria, but unusual enough to be especially noted in the local newspaper. Variations to the standard block

form articulate the impressive front facade. These include quoining around the front facade window openings and three courses moulded to look like timber shingles running below the first floor windows. A timber framed verandah with decorative fretwork shades the footpath in front and joins the building above a long transom window. The original building was a U shaped structure, with shops with residences above at each end, while the central shop was built as a two-room office suite, with a matching suite built above, the latter occupied by the Foster Brothers themselves. The courtyard formed by the U was later roofed over and two shopfronts altered or replaced in the interwar period, while the third is more modern, but the building is otherwise remarkably externally intact.

How is it significant? The Shops are significant for technical reasons at a State level, historic and architectural reasons at a local level.

Why is it significant?

The shops are technically significant as the earliest known commercial buildings in Victoria constructed entirely of precast hollow concrete block. They are one of the earliest precast concrete block structures of any kind in Victoria. They are a relatively early example of masonry ventilated cavity wall construction.

The Shops are historically significant for associations with A.M. Foster of Foster Brothers of Boisdale, prominent and wealthy citizens in the Gippsland district. They occupied one of the offices in the building once it was completed. The Foster Brothers were local innovators in the use of concrete blocks, and had at least two houses constructed using the same technology at Boisdale village.

The Shops are architecturally significant as an impressive early 20th-century commercial building, using the variety available in the appearance of the blocks to articulate the facade, which is a prominent landmark in the Maffra streetscape.

Classified: 22/02/2010

Other Names Shops,

Hermes Number 69991

Property Number

Extent of Registration

The Whole Building.

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/>