
Location

78-84 BOURKE STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0493

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO537

VHR Registration

April 24, 1981

Amendment to Registration

January 24, 1990

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 24, 2000

What is significant?

Nos.78-80 Bourke Street was built as part of a terrace of shops erected in 1860 for Moses Benjamin. Benjamin was a member of a family prominent in Melbourne's early commercial development. The buildings' association with Melbourne's wine merchant and restaurateur families date from the establishment of a wine cafe in 1900, and ownership from 1918 by Samuel Wynn, co-founder of Australian Wines.

From 1918 the Wynn family ran Nos.78-80 as the 'Colonial Wine Shop' and after some years of living upstairs they converted the first floor to the Cafe Denat. Wynn re-established the popular French Cafe Denat from Exhibition Street to Bourke Street to be closer to Parliament House, the principal source of his trade. The Massoni family owned the cafe from 1928 and in 1944 they incorporated No.82 Bourke Street into the existing building. From 1928 the Florentino Cafe developed as one of Melbourne's leading Italian restaurants and was patronised by leading political, social and artistic figures such as Sir John Monash, Lord and Lady Casey and Australian art patrons John and Sunday Reed. There have been significant periods of alterations, including changes to No.82 in the 1920s by Frank Stapley, renovations in 1928 by John W Wright, and alterations in 1958 by Robin Boyd. The buildings' interior spaces still exhibit the fashionable and celebrated decor created since the 1920s, including the sixteen intact dining room murals depicting Renaissance Italy executed under the direction

of artist Napier Waller, the renowned designer of murals and stained glass.

How is it significant?

The Cafe Florentino buildings are of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The buildings known as Cafe Florentino are historically significant for their links since 1860 with prominent Melbourne political and social figures beginning with first owner Moses Benjamin. Historical links with other prominent Melbourne citizens include the Wynn and Massoni families. Historically the buildings have associations with notable architects and artists who have supervised alterations, including Frank Stapley, John W Wright and Robin Boyd and Napier Waller.

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 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.

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Construction dates	1853,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	702
Property Number	

History

Source: Melbourne Backlog Study. Prepared For The Australian Heritage Commission. January 1997.

The Florentino dining room embodies a culinary institution which, as the Cafe Denat, commenced as Melbourne's most famous European character dining room and wine cafe. It continued in a similar vein, but with more renown, as the Cafe Florentino and as a meeting place for intellectuals, bohemians and politicians during the inter-war years. (criterion a.4) the dining room has important historical associations with Melbourne's prominent wine merchant and restaurateur families, dating from the establishment of a wine cafe in 1900 and ownership from 1918 by Samuel Wynn, co-founder of Australian wines limited and the Wynn family winemaking empire.

The significance was particularly important from 1928 with the development of the Florentino cafe as one of Melbourne's leading Italian restaurants managed by Rinaldo Massoni. (criterion h.1)

Set in the theatre district of Bourke Street east, it is the last intact example of the once numerous wine cafes and bohemian haunts which dotted this end of the city, particularly from early this century.(criterion b.2)

As a period cafe interior, it retains a high integrity and is distinguished by the Napier Waller-inspired murals depicting Renaissance Italy and expressive of the cafe's Italian associations. (criterion f.1)

Associated People: Frank Stapley, John W Wright, Robin Boyd, Napier Waller

Extent of Registration

Historic Building No. 493 Cafe Florentino, 78-84 Bourke Street, Melbourne. (All of the buildings known as the Cafe Florentino located at 78-84 Bourke Street, Melbourne and all the land on which they are sited [Volume 8054 Folio 414, Volume 8054 Folio 415, Volume 6869 Folio 723] excluding kitchen equipment, bar refrigerators, servery equipment and stainless steel fittings whether such items are fixed to the building or otherwise). [Victoria Government Gazette No.G4 24 January 1990 p.220]

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/>