

Building:	Former United Tannery and Boot Factory	Significance:	B
Address:	112 Rokeby Street, Collingwood	Melway Map Ref:	2C F11
Building Type:	Factory	Construction Date:	c.1876
Architect:	Unknown	Builder:	Unknown



Intactness:		Condition:	
G[] F[x] P[]		G[] F[x] P[]	
Existing Heritage Listings:		Recommended Heritage Listings:	
Victorian Heritage Register	[]	Victorian Heritage Register	[]
Register of the National Estate	[]	Register of the National Estate	[x]
National Trust	[]	Heritage Overlay Controls	[x]

History

In the early 1850s, William Overton established Victoria's first glassworks on Collingwood Flat in the vicinity of what is now Glasshouse Road. The glassworks was unsuccessful and by 1855 the building had been taken over by Rae Dickson & Co. for use as a stearine candle factory. By the late 1950s the candle works had also closed down.

After lying vacant for a number of years, the site was taken up by a prominent Melbourne leather merchant, Hugh Thompson in 1864, for use as a tannery and boot factory. Beginning with a staff of 20 the firm grew rapidly to over 200 employees by the late 1860s, after the introduction of protective import tariffs on boots and shoes. The works was one of Collingwood's first steam powered factories with a six horsepower diagonal steam engine driving a variety of machines including leather rolls, a pricking machine, eccentric sole-cutting press and a number of sewing machines. By 1868 the tannery section employed 20 staff with 36 tan pits and a large curing room. The firm had introduced new technology including machine rolls to flatten the sole leather (previously beaten out by hand) and a pricking machine to pre punch holes in the soles for sewing. In 1868, however, most of the bootmaking work was still done by hand with the factory floor having eight large work benches for 20 sewers each, two additional benches with lasts for the 36 hand riveters, and 12 finisher's stools. In 1930, the company was still in business, specialising in men's and women's welts and heavy machine sewn men's boots.

The business took the name of Hugh Thompson & Sons Victoria Tannery c.1890, and H Thompson & Son Pty Ltd by 1920. Initially, Thompson carried out the work of tanner, currier and bootmaker. His was the only establishment described in the directories and census returns as a boot factory in the 1870s. Thompson expanding to an additional tannery in Alexandra Parade, Clifton Hill, in the early twentieth century and appears to have restricted his business to tanning in these years, although the factory resumed boot manufacturing in the 1920s.

Gary Vines and Matthew Churchward. *Northern Suburbs Factory Study*. 1992.

Description

The former United Tannery and Boot Factory, 112 Rokeby Street, Collingwood, is a double-storey brick industrial building. Its walls are of red face brick, with evenly spaced single window openings at both levels. On the east elevation, the ground floor has a two-leaf timber door flanked by one window to the south and two to the north, whilst the first floor has four windows. Window openings have segmental brick arched lintels, whilst the door has a flat concrete lintel below a brick relieving arch. Windows are generally multi-paned timber-framed double-hung sashes. The longitudinal gabled roof is concealed behind an unadorned brick parapet.

Significance

The former United Tannery and Boot Factory, 112 Rokeby Street, Collingwood is of local historical and architectural significance. Historically, it was occupied by a prominent tannery and boot factory from the 1860s until the mid-20th century. Architecturally, it is a substantially intact example of a very austere mid-Victorian industrial building, and, as such, makes a contribution to the mixed industrial streetscape.

Original Source

Gary Vines and Matthew Churchward. *Northern Suburbs Factory Study*. 1992.