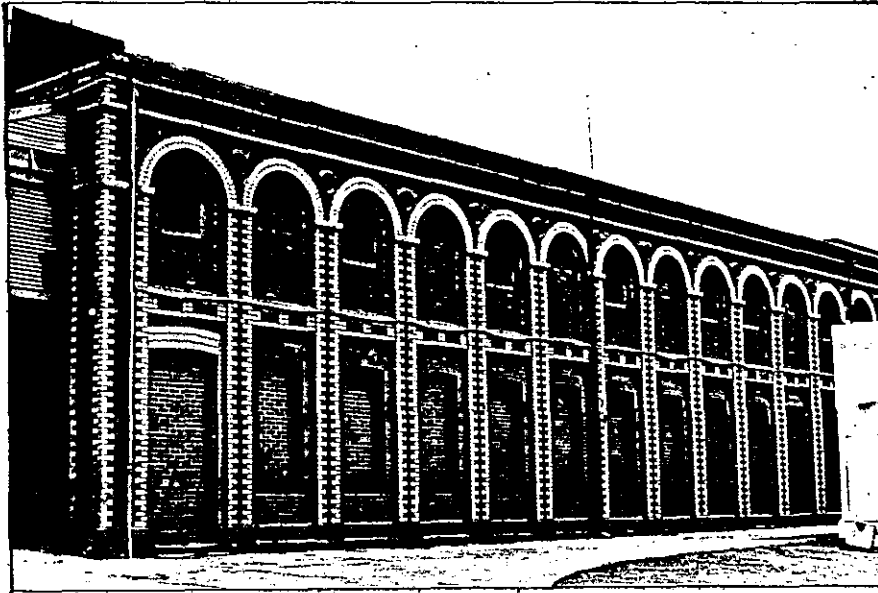


BALLARAT WOOLLEN AND WORSTED CO. LTD.

Cnr. Hill and Humffray Streets

H.R. Caselli (Architect)



RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that this complex of buildings be added to the Register of the National Estate and be specified under the provisions of Clause 8 of the *Town and Country Planning Act* (Third Schedule). Further comparative research is required to establish its importance on a state wide basis.

BUILDING HISTORY AND ANALYSIS

The reduced outputs from Ballarat mines from the 1870's onwards would have been a crisis for the City of Ballaarat's economy but the railway expansion and the factory growth during the 70's and 80's brought significant industrial advancement. The Ballarat Woollen Company at Sunny Corner incorporated in October 1871, was one of these important industrial advancements. Weston Bate writes of its development.¹

By a stroke of luck, a woollen mill, begun in 1872 as a means of keeping population in the city, was rewarded with extensive new markets a few years later. James Main and Andrew Anderson, its keenest sponsors, were not looking for large profits when they launched the idea in 1871. Shareholders were canvassed mainly in terms of preserving their existing investments at Ballarat, with the result that their occupations were not only as varied as in mining companies but also included a veritable Ballarat "Who's Who". In January 1872, after a careful look at the market and at their two Geelong competitors, the directors decided to proceed, and the foundation-stone of a handsome factory designed by H.R. Caselli was laid at Sunny Corner six months later. Production began in June 1873, but the firm was plagued for a time by mismanagement, by a lack of skilled labour, and by doubts about the best type of fabric to manufacture. There was little hope of competing with English worsteds, and little sense in adding to the Geelong output of tweeds, so flannels, shirtings and blankets were made.

After four years the Courier was not optimistic. Then a new manager from England began a long period of prosperity. In 1880 the mill employed 105 people and sold cloth in Melbourne and Sydney as well as in the district. Economies were achieved by using local wool, and the firm was confident enough to undertake its own fellmongering and to put out a higher grade of cloth. The market was obviously satisfactory.

The Ballarat Council was obviously in favour of the development and there were several entries in the Mayors reports.² The first entry dated 19 November 1872 stated

"Woollen Factory - The foundation stone of the first woollen factory in our district was laid on the 29th July last. I hope it may prove a source of profit to the shareholders and thus be the means of favourably introducing a new industry here. The originators and promoters of the store deserve the thanks of every member of the community for their foresight and energy."

It was followed by another report of 18 November 1873.

"The woollen factory, started under so many difficulties, is now manufacturing flannel and may be looked upon as a great success. Machinery has been sent for to England, which when erected, will enable the company to manufacture tweeds etc.

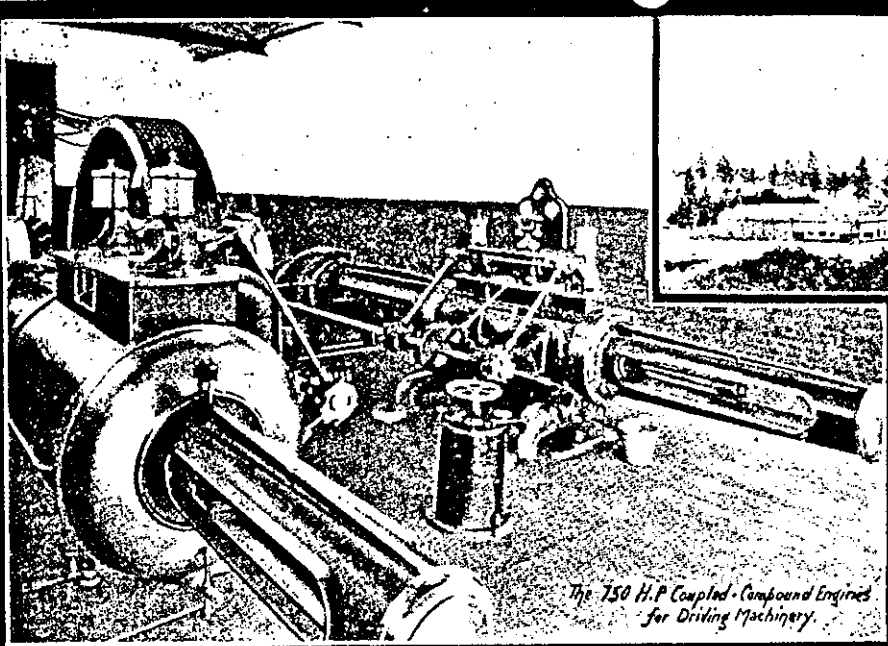
A third entry of 14 November 1874 stated :

"The Ballaarat Woollen Company have made extensive additions to their factory during the past year, and are now effecting still further improvements. Additional machinery has been procured and erected, by which their manufacturing power is more than quadrupled ... when the improvements now in hand are completed the manufacturing will represent a capital invested of £25,000. The arrangements made at the mill for ventilation and the comfort of the work people are excellent. The worker of hands which will in a short time find employment in the factory will be about 200, of which the greater proportion will be women and boys... Great inconvenience is experienced through the non-erection of the Hill Street Bridge, this proposed work having been a great inducement to the Company in selecting their present site."

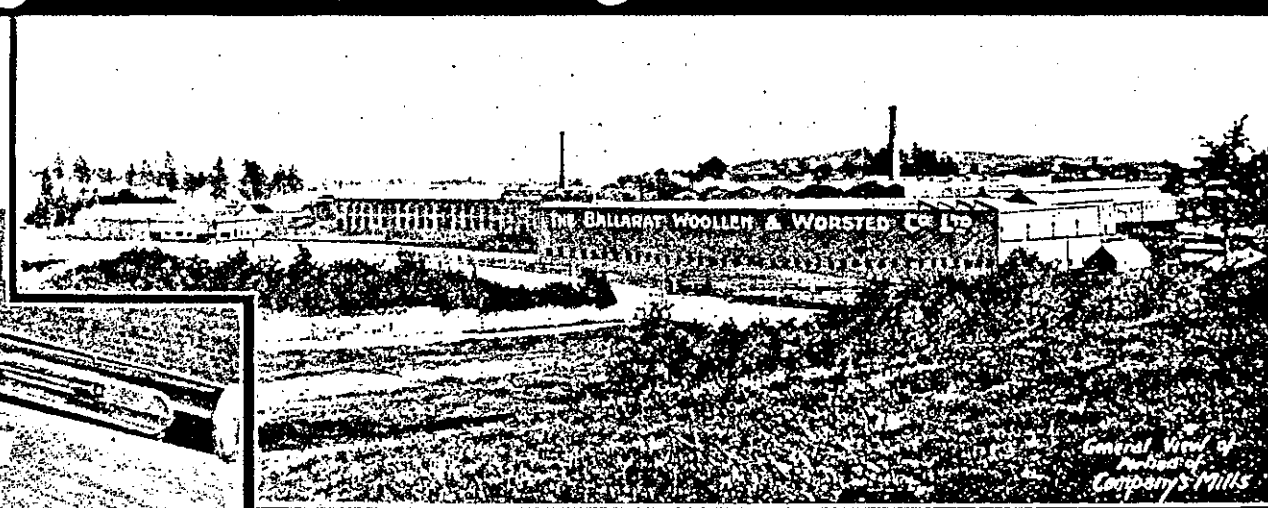
The buildings today survive in remarkably intact and original condition. Comparison with an early photograph dated 1905³ shows the site without the present c 1920's entrance office building. Later photos (c1920) show the corner building as it is today.⁴

A comparison can be made between these woollen mills and the mills on the bank of the Barwon River in Geelong. The polychrome brick central building at Geelong was erected by the Barwon Woollen Mills Company in 1873 to the design of architects Davidson and Henderson. The siting on the Barwon can be compared with the setting on Hill Street adjacent to the Yarrowee Creek.

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1. Bate, W *Lucky City* M.U.P. 1978. P 210, 211.
 2. Mayors Reports held by the City of Ballaarat.
 3. As reproduced in Bate op cit p 211. Photo from glass slide in the Ballarat Municipal Library.
 4. *Ballarat Illustrated* c 1920, facsimile copy republished 1972.
 5. See also Withers W.B. *History of Ballarat* 1887 p. 294.

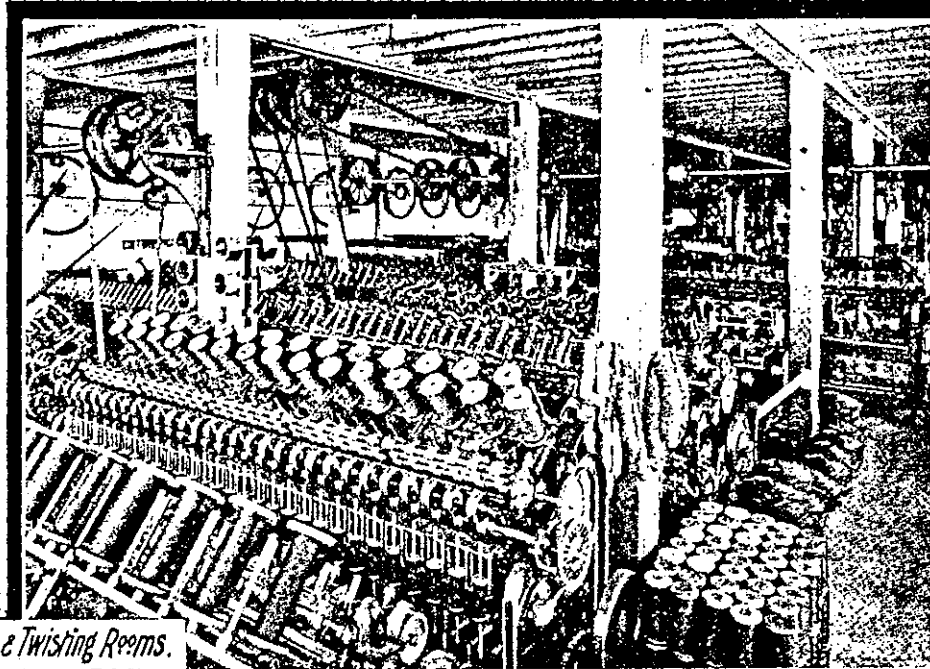
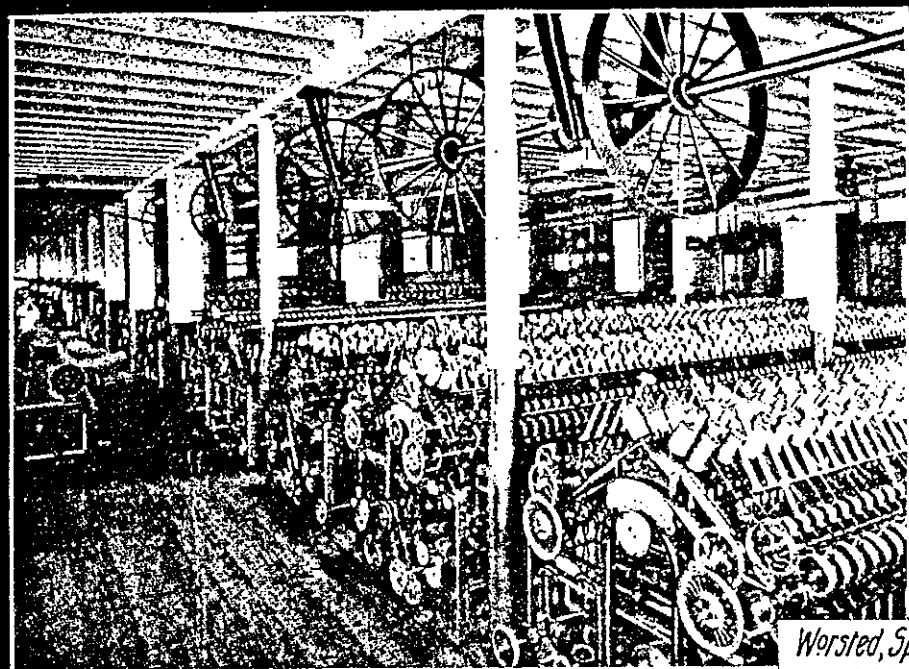


The 750 H.P. Coupled-Compound Engines for Driving Machinery.



General View of
Ballarat
Company's Mills

THE BALLARAT WOOLLEN & WORSTED CO. LTD.
SUNNYSIDE MILLS.



Worsted, Spinning & Twisting Rooms.