

## Identification and location

**Name of Place:** **McCall's Tannery**

**Other Name** McCall, Deardon & Bennett, McCall & Bennett, McCall & Sons, E. Turner & Co. K & A Laird

**Address** 125 Francis Street  
Yarraville

**Place Identifier** 8768

**Heritage Significance** city

**Creation date(s):** 1921 c. **Map (Melway)** 41 K10

**Boundary description** The extent of the current allotment

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Private

## Description

**Site Type:** manufacture

### Physical Description

The site comprises a timber-framed, galvanised-iron clad, two storey building with timber framed six pane windows. Gable ended roof is also corrugated iron clad. The walls are clad in timber weather boarding. The unlined main building retains some internal fittings from the tannery use including notched bearers in the walls for taking skin drying racks. The site, which is now used as a steel yard, backs on to Stony Creek which probably originally provided wattle bark and fresh water for the tanning process, It is surrounded by a reserve and the West Gate Golf Course. A rectangular depressions on the south-west side of the buildings may indicate buried tanpits.

### Condition

In poor condition externally but apparently structurally sound.

### Integrity

Generally intact although surrounding evidence suggests other buildings were once on the site.

### Context

Adjacent to park land and Stony Creek, the creek possibly once providing wattle bark and water for the tanning works.

### Threats

Potential for removal due to incompatibility with surrounding residential zoning.

## History

Tanning was one of the first industries in the Port Phillip District and tanned hides comprised the major export from the colony prior to the Gold Rushes. Sites were chosen for tanneries because of a ready supply of fresh water, and originally wattlebark. Footscray was one of several centres of tanning (others being on the Yarra at Richmond, Flemington Bank and following the completion of the Yan Yean water supply in Preston).

Footscray's longest lived and most famous tannery was that of Michaelis Hallenstein on Hopkins Street. This was one of the largest in Victoria, but was completely demolished in the 1980s.

The first listing of a tannery in Francis Street next to the railway line was in 1921, when Sands & McDougall listed McCall, Deardon & Bennett as the proprietors. From 1923 to '37 the firm was listed as McCall & Bennett. In 1938 it became J. McCall & Sons. In 1928 the land west of the railway on the south side of Francis Street was occupied by David W. Piggott and the tannery of McCall and Bennett. The tannery was very probably located in this building which is of considerable vintage and may have been later modified from the skin drying shed. From 1946 to 1960 the tannery was run by E. Turner & Co (Sands & McDougall Directory).

The site was taken over by K & A Laird, steel merchants, in 1961, and this firm is still in occupation at 125 Francis Street (Sands & McDougall Directory).

### Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:  Local Theme

### Cultural Significance

McCall's tannery is historically significant to the city as the last surviving structure related to an industry which was synonymous with Footscray from the 1850s to the 1970s, as exemplified by the vast Michaelis Hallenstein tannery. (Criterion A3) McCall's Tannery, while converted to other uses, displays the characteristic form and materials of an early tannery in the timber framed and clad building which would once have housed drawing, trimming and drying functions, while the tan pits would have been located in the common fashion beside the creek. (Criterion B2) The site is also one of the few traditional bark tannery sites to have escaped total destruction either for new chrome tanning processes, or for reclamation of what was seen as an undesirable industry from the middle of the nineteenth century. (Criterion A4)

### Comparative Examples

The only known early bark tanning premises known in Melbourne, although remnants of such sites are known from archaeological sites, eg. River St. Richmond, Debney's Flemington, Zwarr's Beechworth. Other surviving tannery buildings generally relate to the very different chrome tanning processes introduced in the inter war period.

## Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Register of the National Estate	<input type="text" value="No"/>
National Trust Register	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
Other Heritage Listings	<input type="text" value="WRIHS"/>
Planning Scheme Protection	<input type="text" value="Recommended"/>
External Paint Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="Yes - fittings and timberwork"/>
Tree Controls Apply?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?	<input type="text" value="Yes"/>

## Recommendations

The following objectives relate to the Statement of Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.

- To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.
- To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.
- To conserve and enhance the visual relationships between the contributory elements.
- To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements.
- To prepare a conservation management plan which embodies the above objectives. This should also address the potential for internal fittings of significance, and archaeological remains.

## Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

*A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.*

A rare and unusual building form representing the diversity of industrial use in the early 20th century.

*A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.*

Tanneries were among the first and most significant industries to the Colony of Victoria and helped establish the industrial character of Footscray and the Maribyrnong River

*B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practised, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.*

As the only known building related to bark tanning in Melbourne and possibly Victoria, the site demonstrates a process, function, landuse and design which has become extinct.

## Documentation

### References

Sands & McDougall Directory

## Data recording

Assessed By   
Assessed Date: