

## Identification and location

**Name of Place:** **Mowling's Soap & Candle**

**Other Name** former Cheetham Salt, Safcol

**Address** 107 Whitehall Street

Footscray

**Place Identifier** 20232

**Heritage Significance** regional

**Creation date(s):** 1895 c.

**Map (Melway)** 42 D7

**Boundary description** bounded by Whitehall, Lyons and Maribyrnong Streets.

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Private

## Description

**Site Type:** factory

### Physical Description

Complex of red brick buildings constructed in rows parallel to Napier St. All buildings marked on 1895 MMBW Sewerage Plan survive with the addition of the two story structure on the west (probably by Cheetham Salt) and the modern space-age style building in the south east was built in 1987 by Safcol. The buildings feature red brick with regular pilasters and corbel-table forming recessed bays in which the nine pane timber framed windows were set. Many openings have been bricked up, sometimes behind the surviving window.

Remnants of the firm's lettering survive on the parapet, now trimmed to the roof line and through which an arched entrance leads to a lane between buildings. The works incorporates the remnants of the gunpowder magazine in the north east corner (0075)

### Condition

In fair condition although damage to the buildings by forklift impact and salting (from the former Cheetham period) is causing some problems.

### Integrity

Most of the buildings noted from the early MMBW plans can still be discerned in some form. The parapet wall to the front has recently been partly demolished.

### Context

In a developed industrial area close to the Maribyrnong River.

### Threats

Redevelopment, probably for another industrial use is likely as the building stock deteriorates.

## History

The Melbourne Stearine & Soft Soap Works was located on the Yarra Bank, Melbourne in 1875, G. Mowling was proprietor having founded the company in 1870, and was succeeded by his son around 1908. Many companies took advantage of the production of refined tallow and other meat by-products by numerous boiling down works in Melbourne that commenced in the 1840s, in order to produce soap and candles and a wide range of other industrial and domestic products, generally as import replacements.

Mowling relocated the works to the Footscray site in about 1895 when noxious trades were being discouraged from Melbourne and particularly from the Yarra River upstream of the docks, while Footscray was actively encouraging noxious trades. Mowling manufactured Gondolier brand candles and Empire soap as well as refining oil for oleo-margarine and glycerine distillation. The site was later used by Cheetham Salt for storage and processing and is currently owned by Safcol. Mowling & Sons is still in business as a bait supplier elsewhere.

### Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

## Cultural Significance

G. Mowling & Sons is of regional historical and architectural significance as one of the very early manufacturers of soap and candles in Victoria and once one of the most up to date in Australia in the 1900s. (Criterion A4) The works was extensive and integrated producing a variety of by-products from the basic animal tallow. The layout and design of the buildings provides the best available physical key to the original form and function of soap and candle works at the turn of the century. This is the last relatively intact site where this process can be examined. (Criterion B2) The company's production was part of a chain of manufacture in the region beginning with the abattoirs and ending with consumer products. Tallow for soap and candles; glycerine for soap; explosive and chemical manufacture; oil for margarine and other foods; waxes and polishes all depended on the reprocessing provided by works such as this. All of the 1895 buildings survive although somewhat modified and the site is a particularly extensive and intact example of a turn of the century by-products works. It also incorporates the remnants of the 1850s Footscray gunpowder magazine. (qv)

### Comparative Examples

Few comparable complexes of the turn of the century are known, although remnants of the Apollo Candle Works can still be seen on the opposite side of the river at Kensington.

## Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate

National Trust Register

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?

## Maribyrnong Heritage Review - Industrial Places

Tree Controls Apply?

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?

### 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.  
To encourage continuation of the original use of the place.

### Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

*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.*

The development of local domestic and industrial products from meat by-products was an important phase in the industrialisation of Melbourne and Australia. Mowling, with the Apollo and Kitchen Brother works, was one of the main suppliers.

*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.*

The layout and design of the buildings provides the best available physical key to the original form and function of soap and candle works at the turn of the century. This is the last relatively intact site where this process can be examined.

### Documentation

#### References

Sands & McDougall Melb. Directory 1875,  
Footscray's First Fifty Years  
Paynting and Grant Footscray Illustrated :396

### Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: