

BACO FOOD PRODUCTS FACTORY (HO328)

Address	121-129 Craig Street, Spotswood
Significance	Local
Construction Date	1948
Period	Post-WWII
Date Inspected	2021



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The former *Baco Food Products* building at 121-129 Craig Street, Spotswood, constructed in 1948 for Baco Food Products, and later the site where Spring Valley Juices were first produced, is locally significant.

Significant elements include the following original or early elements:

- Hipped roof form,
- Rendered and concrete block elevations,
- Ribbed panels to Craig Street façade,
- Original openings with metal-framed windows with textured safety glass,
- Recessed entry with metal security gates and granolithic tiled flooring,
- Vehicle entrances to McNeillage and Ramsay street elevations with metal roller door.

Elements that do not contribute to the significance of the place include the following non-original elements:

- Recent upper-level addition,
- Two awnings to west end of Craig Street façade,
- Infilled door to east end of Craig Street elevation.

How is it Significant?

The former *Baco Food Products* is historically and aesthetically significant to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?

The former *Baco Food Products* is historically significant as it illustrates the desirability of the Spotswood area for various types of industry in the post-WWII period.

Spotswood was established as a major centre for industry during the late 19th century, with new operations and existing concerns relocating from other parts of the city seeking vacant sites with water access and proximity to central Melbourne. Through the Interwar period, the enlargement of the Victorian Railway's facilities in the area and industrial sites like the immense Australian Consolidated Industries complex on Booker Street, further solidified this circumstance.

The Post-WWII period saw Spotswood become entrenched as key centre of industry and manufacturing in Melbourne, anchored by the established concerns including the Australian Glass Manufacturing site and buoyed by the large-scale development of petrochemical and refinery operations oil industry which developed south of Craig Street during the late interwar and post-WWII periods. The construction of the *Baco Food Products* building, a relatively small-scale manufacturing site for baking confectionary which later pivoted to bottling fruit juice, demonstrates this growth into a diverse industry nexus by this period. (Criterion A)

The former *Baco Food Products* is aesthetically significant as a well-resolved and largely intact example of an industrial building designed in the Functionalist style during the early post-WWII period. Typical of that style, the building has a largely unadorned expression to the exterior which reflects the internal function of the manufacturing programme.

The restrained expression of the Craig Street façade is typical of the Functional style with a pronounced horizontal emphasis provided by an extensive use of metal-framed windows in a distinct band and which is enhanced by the distinctive ribbed panels of the main rendered administrative section. The latter section is also distinguished the contrasting verticality of the off-centre entry bay that extends above the main level of the parapet and features a recessed entrance with a metal security gate and granolithic tiled entrance. (Criterion E)

Description

The former Baco Food Products building is located on the south side of Craig Street, between Mcneilage and Ramsay streets within the mixed residential/industrial landscape of southern Spotswood, between the Williamstown Railway Line and the Birrarung/Yarra River. It occupies the northern end of the parcel of land and due to the corner location, is widely visible from the public realm, that is from the north, east and west.

The building was developed in two phases: a 1948 office and bottling plant designed in the Functionalist style to the corner (grey) and late 20th century addition to rear (yellow).



Aerial photograph showing stages of development – original (grey) and additions (yellow)
(Source: Nearmap, 17 September 2019)

Original Building

The single storey Functionalist style administration and factory building is located to the north part of the site. The roof is concealed behind masonry façades and consists of two hipped roof sections, both clad in corrugated sheet metal with ridge ventilators.

The building is constructed of concrete block with the prominent administrative section at the west end of the north/Craig Street elevation being rendered. The windows are generally steel-framed and multi-paned of varying size with translucent glass (typically reinforced with wire mesh) and the larger windows including hoppers. The downpipes with rain heads from the boxed gutters are located at regular intervals on each elevation.

The prominence of the administrative section is further emphasised from the rest of the building by it projecting slightly forward of the plane of the other sections of wall and by having a taller parapet with a stepped coping. This section's asymmetric configuration pivots about the taller main entry bay, which also projects further forward. The recessed entrance features a metal security gate with geometric detailing and a granolithic tiled floor.

The verticality of the entry bay is juxtaposed with the general horizontal emphasis established by the band of windows, which is further enhanced by the ribbed panels between the regular fenestration pattern of the administrative section. Though the windows to the factory part at the east end of the façade are larger, the clear horizontal emphasis is maintained. There is also a non-original timber door to the factory section, which has been introduced within a formerly larger window near the junction with the administrative section.



Craig Street façade – west end

The subtle shifts in plane, contrasting horizontal and vertical emphasis, and a restrained material palette with minimal ornamentation are characteristic of the Functionalist style. This style reflected a continuity with the Interwar period Moderne style in the immediate post-WWII era however is a more restrained iteration of the earlier style and more decidedly rectilinear (that is without curved corners which are typical of the Moderne style). The Functionalist style was often employed on industrial buildings and blocks of flats at this time.



Craig Street elevation - east end

The Mcneilage Street elevation has an asymmetrical configuration of openings. At the north end is a band of smaller window openings – an alternating pattern of two narrow louvred and a square multi-paned window. At the south end is a vehicular entrance, with metal door inset with an inset pedestrian entrance, and a single large multi-paned window.



Mcneilage Street elevation (west)

The Ramsay Street elevation is symmetrical with a central vehicular entrance, which has a metal roller door and inset pedestrian entrance, flanked by two large multi-paned windows.

train station.⁴ It wasn't until the colony wide land boom of the 1880s did substantive development in the area begin in earnest, when the Spotswood Estate Company was formed for the purposes of purchasing land at Spotswood.⁵

Concurrent with interest in the area for residential development, by the 1870s and 1880s, spurred by the lasting effects of the mining activities Victoria's economy was boomed and the large tracts of undeveloped land and river and rail access in the Spotswood, Newport and Williamstown areas began to attract industry and manufacturing. Major operations that were established during this time included the Alfred Woollen Mill (1878) and Lennon's Agricultural Implements Works (established in Newport in 1887).⁶

Some of these new concerns were established companies seeking larger or better situated sites. This included T Robinson and Co. (which commenced operations in West Melbourne in the 1850s before moving to Spotswood in 1891) and the Melbourne Glass Bottle Works, which has had begun operations in South Melbourne in 1874 before moving to Booker Street in 1890.⁷

The advantages of the area for industry were further enhanced with the construction of the extant Sewerage Pumping Station on Douglas Parade, which was completed in 1897 forming the centrepiece of Melbourne's modern sewerage system – a massive undertaking of interconnected public works that transformed the city's ability to handle sewerage.⁸

Industrial development in the Victorian period was concentrated in a wide arc defined by the Railway Station to the west, Stony Creek to the north and the Yarra River to the east, as shown on the below c1899 map.



The Spotswood area in 1899 with the approximate location of the subject place indicated
(Source: MMBW plan no. 19, SLV)

Place History

⁴ 'The Modern Edom', Argus, 23 March 1878, p9; Vicsig, *Spotswood*, <https://vicsig.net/infrastructure/location/Spotswood>

⁵ HO30 Spotswood Estate Heritage Precinct Citation, p4

⁶ *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study, Vol1b: Thematic History*, 2003, pp22-23

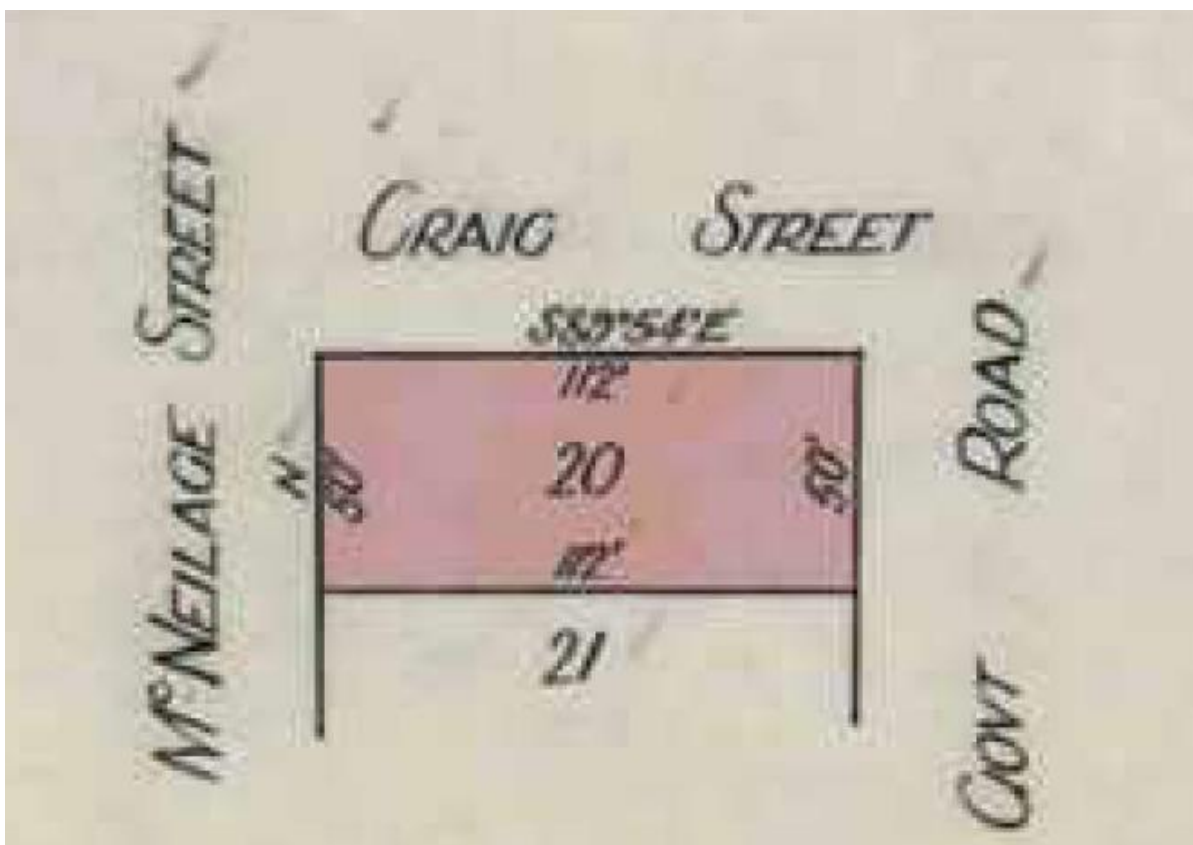
⁷ *Thematic History*, p23

⁸ Victorian Heritage Database Citation, *Sewerage Pumping Station*,

Baco Food Products site originally formed part of Crown Allotment 55 of the Parish of Cut Paw Paw, which were first acquired by J Downie. Allotment 55 was located south of Craig Street, and remained largely undeveloped during the Victorian period, with Craig Street demarcating the southern extent of residential development during this time.

In 1906, Allotment 55 was acquired by William McNeillage and two years later 1908 he had the extant red brick bungalow *Alloa* constructed just south of the corner of Hall and Craig streets.⁹ McNeillage, a Scotsman, likely named the building after Alloa, a town in his home Country. A prominent local citizen, he was the manager of the nearby Melbourne Glass Bottle Works, a substantial operation, and later a Williamstown City Councillor and RSL branch president.¹⁰

The subject site related to lot 20 of the 1926 subdivision of the holdings of the nearby mansion *Alloa*.¹¹ Advertised as the *Aloa Park Estate*, the subdivision largely became a residential area with the prime lots to Hall Street developed first. Lot 20 was first acquired by Auctioneer Henry Wheatly in August 1930 and changed ownership a few times unimproved during the 1930s, before being acquired by Ernest Frederick Epstein in May 1947.¹²



Original lot acquired by Ernest Epstein in 1947
(Source: Certificate of Title, Vol 5687 Fol 309)

Ernest 'Fred' Epstein was born in Freiberg, Germany to Frieda Weil and Leopold Epstein in an ethnic Jewish family.¹³ Escaping the attempted genocide of ethnic Jews by the Fascist Nazi regime, the Epstein family arrived in Melbourne in 1939. Shortly after arriving in Melbourne, he established a food production company with his father Leopold, which was initially known as Baco Manufacturing Company. The company was founded out of an office in the basement of the Rialto Building at 497 Collins Street, Melbourne.¹⁴

⁹ LP 11441; Certificate of Title, Vol 1284 Fol 776; *Alloa citation, Hobsons Bay Heritage Study Volume 3 – Heritage Precincts and Place Citations: Part 2 Heritage Places*, p435

¹⁰ *Alloa citation, Hobsons Bay Heritage Study Volume 3 – Heritage Precincts and Place Citations: Part 2 Heritage Places*, p435; 'Obituary', *Age*, 29 November 1950, p2

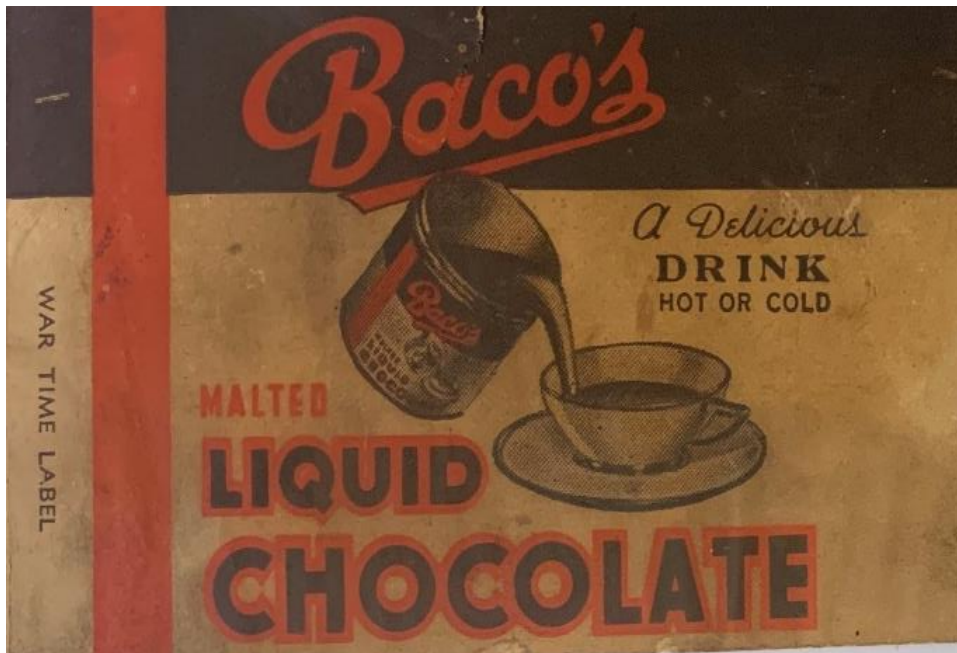
¹¹ Plan of Subdivision, LP11441

¹² Certificate of Title, Vol 5687 Fol 309

¹³ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 31 August 2021

¹⁴ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 31 August 2021; *Argus*, 10 August 1948, p11

A contraction of Bakers and Confectioners, the company was initially established as Baco Manufacturing Company and focussed on baking products.¹⁵ During wartime, they were known for their 'liquid chocolate' product, a powdered chocolate milk that could be used as a flavoured drink or in baking and cooking (see advertising below).



War time label of Baco 'liquid chocolate' drink
(Source: provided by Robert Epstein)

Reflecting the growing needs of the business and the desire to bring manufacturing into their scope, Fred sought a mortgage to in March 1947 and in May of that year acquired the factory site on corner Craig and McNeillage streets in Spotswood.¹⁶ The extant factory was constructed during the following year, 1948.¹⁷

¹⁵ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 31 August 2021

¹⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol 5687 Fol 309; contract of sale dated March 1947, provided by Robert Epstein

¹⁷ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 31 August 2021; The factory was also listed in Sands and Macdougall's Directory by 1950.

No original drawings survive in the building file for the factory to provide any indication who was responsible for the design. Communications from Fred Epstein's son Robert, suggest no architect was involved and the building was designed potentially in house at Baco. As told by Robert, the driving influence of the design of the factory was the internal function which it was purpose built for. This included the need for good drainage as production machinery had to be cleaned at the end of the day.¹⁸



c1950 undated early photograph of the factory shortly after completion
(Source: provided by Robert Epstein)

Although the Epstein family were based in the inner-south-eastern suburb of Windsor, they chose Spotswood as the site for their factory because it was the only industrial site the family could afford with a sewerage connection.¹⁹ The acquisition of land and the construction of a fine modern factory in an established industrial area was of great pride for the family, who had migrated to this country less than a decade prior.²⁰ The pride the family felt for the building is evidenced in contemporary staged photographs, with the family car in frame.



Circa 1950, undated early photograph of the factory
(Source: noahsjuce.com.au)

¹⁸ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 12 November 2021

¹⁹ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 31 August 2021

²⁰ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 31 August 2021

By 1951, Baco held an office at the Rialto Building and the factory on Craig Street. The factory was initially used to manufacture the company's line of condensed milk products, with milk brought in from the dairy centre of Korumburra in Gippsland.²¹ Baco had initially applied to the Department of Agriculture for a licence to manufacture condensed milk at the Craig Street factory, but the application was refused as Baco did not collect milk directly from the farmers. A separate store licence had to be sought from the Department instead.²²

Although the factory was in close proximity to the nearby Australian Glass Manufacturers site, milk bottles were not used in the production of their milk products, instead they were mostly canned.



Undated c1960s Spring Valley juice label
(Source: noahsjuce.com.au)

The passage of the 1958, *Milk Pasteurisation Act* introduced increased regulations around milk products.²³ Perhaps sensing the increased cost of the additional regulations involved with milk production, Baco Foods Pty Ltd in 1956/57 Baco adapted to manufacturing fruit juice at the site on Craig Street, creating the Spring Valley brand.²⁴

Spring Valley was a major success for Baco Foods and soon became the principal concern of the business. The distinctive glass bottle associated with the Spring Valley juices was produced at the nearby Australian Glass Manufacturers on Booker Street.²⁵

Likely due to the success of the Spring Valley brand, the company soon outgrew the factory on Craig Street, which they had vacated by 1970 moving to a premises on Cromwell Street, Caulfield to concentrate their fruit juice manufacturing in the south-east near where the family was based.²⁶

Consequently, the corner lot was acquired by Darrell and Heather Carr in July 1974.²⁷ In 1975, it was consolidated with a larger parcel to the south which had been acquired by the Carrs in 1973, to create the current holdings.²⁸

²¹ Letter, 'Minister of Agriculture to Baco Food Manufacturing Company', 15 February 1951

²² Letter, 'Minister of Agriculture to Baco Food Manufacturing Company', 15 February 1951

²³ *Milk Pasteurisation Act* 1958

²⁴ 'Close to the Tree', *Australian Financial Review*, August 9 2007, accessed online, <https://www.afr.com/companies/close-to-the-tree-20070809-kafcd>, accessed 12 August 2021

²⁵ As per comms, Robert Epstein, 12 November 2021

²⁶ *Age*, 5 November 1970, p31

²⁷ Certificate of Title, Vol 9050 Fol 491

²⁸ Certificates of Title, Vol 8448 Fol 835, Vol 9078 Fol 494

The large, double-height addition to the south of the original factory and administration building was constructed after the two sites were consolidated in 1975. The two hipped roof sections of the original extent of the Baco building can be seen in the 1970 aerial photograph below.



Subject place 1970. The Functionalist factory is outlined and vacant lot to the south which would shortly be consolidated with the north lot be is evident

(Source: Landata, Melbourne 1970 project, Run 39, Frame 174)

After Baco vacated the site, it was occupied by Eagle General Engineers.²⁹ Baco continued operation although fifty percent of Baco Foods Pty Ltd was acquired by Campbell Soups (Australia) in 1985.³⁰

More recently, a permit was granted for the construction of a two-storey addition to the factory and construction of the works are underway. The works are proposed to include the removal of part of the hipped roofs although the form of the building would be retained such that the three-dimensional form of the building would remain legible.

²⁹ Sands and MacDougall's Directory, 1970

³⁰ 'Campbell gets Juice Interest', *Age*, 4 December 1985, p32

Thematic Context

David Helms, *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study Volume 1: Environmental History*, 2003:

- Theme 3: Developing Local, Regional and National Economies – Developing Industry (3.4)

Comparative Analysis

The *Baco Food Products* is an uncommon example in the City of Hobsons Bay as a highly intact Post-WWII industrial building designed in the Functionalist style.

The subject place compares to the former Red Robin Hosiery factory (former) at 119 Pier Street, Altona (HO256) designed in the Moderne style at a similar time during the early Post-WWII period, circa 1949. It also has a rendered façade with long, narrower band of windows but features a concrete hood above the entrance. The façade of the Red Robin Hosiery factory however is more ornate than the subject factory on Craig Street. The off-centre, entrance bay is similarly emphasised as a vertically orientated unit - in this case by its fenestration pattern and stepped parapet featuring tripartite geometric mouldings with fin-like projections that extend above the parapet. Overall, the factory on Craig Street is less adorned, which illustrates the subtle differences between the two styles.

The only other place the subject site is readily comparable to is the former W Goetz & Sons Ltd Complex, which is located nearby at 136 Hall Street, Spotswood (HO139). This is a large factory complex with brick administration building designed in the Moderne style during the late Interwar period, circa 1939. The lower part/dado of the walls is manganese brick while the upper part is in a contrasting cream brick with dog toothed corbels to the parapet. The central band of metal-framed windows have a concrete lintel which contributes to the overall horizontal emphases of the design. The entry bay is centrally located and features fins, quoining and a frieze. Overall, it is more decorative than the factory to Craig Street and the elevations are face brick rather than render and concrete block.

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and/or fences	No
Prohibited Use	No
Aboriginal Place	No

Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed boundary of the heritage overlay is outlined approximately below, the northern building on CP103701 (about 18m x 34m).



Recommended boundary extent of heritage overlay.
(Source: Nearmap, 1 September 2021)