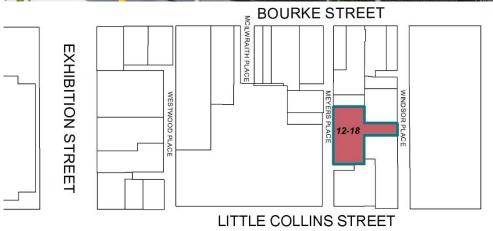
SPRING STREET

7 N

SITE NAME	Former Kantay House
STREET ADDRESS	12-18 Meyers Place Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	106560





SURVEY DATE: October 2018 SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY	H7822-1682	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Harry A Norris	BUILDER:	George Prentice
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Interwar Period (c1919- c1940)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1940

THEMES
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ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here.
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
5 Building a Commercial City	5.5 Building a manufacturing capacity

### LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE		
Archaeological block no: 40	Inventory no: 682	
Character of Occupation: Commercial, residential		
Offered at fifth land sale 1839, Allotment 12, Block 9.		
1839 Williamson		
1840 Hoddle		
1866 Cox	Building on site	
1880 Panorama		
1888 Mahlsted	Four single-storey buildings; houses and yards.	
1905/6 Mahlsted	Two single-storey buildings; one house and workshop, Ah Pay, Cabinetmaker.	
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND U	SE	
1890s	Residential, yards, workshop	
1920s	Factories, stables	
1960s	Warehouse	

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

# **SUMMARY**

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne is a two-storey brick warehouse/factory building, built in 1940 in the interwar Functionalist style to a design by noted architect Harry A Norris. The building had a long association with the manufacturing industry in Melbourne from 1940 to 1987.



### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### **Building a Commercial City**

Building a manufacturing capacity

From the 1850s, the Yarra River and the docks west of Swanston Street were in essence the 'lifeline' of the city. Port facilities and large warehouses were built in this area to serve shipping interests (Context 2012:39-40).

By the 1880s, the areas of Flinders Street, King Street, Little Bourke Street and Spencer Street comprised multiple mercantile offices, produce stores and large-scale bonded stores, including Zander's Bonded Stores and Coles Bonded Stores. As Melbourne developed through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, so did her manufacturing industry, much of which was established in close proximity to existing warehouses and stores.

Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by 1921, 38 per cent of Melbourne's workers were employed in industry with almost all new factory jobs in Australia between 1921 and 1947 created in Sydney and Melbourne. The growth of manufacturing, assisted by a new federal tariff in 1921, stimulated urban growth and by the end of the 1920s, Melbourne's population had reached one million people. The expansion of new sectors in the manufacturing industry was maintained by buoyant levels of domestic demand (Marsden 2000:29; Dingle 2008).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the demand for residential development declined in central Melbourne as many residents moved out of the city to the suburbs, and the booming retail and manufacturing sectors rapidly took up available city properties (Marsden 2000:29-30). Multi-storey factory, workshop and warehouse buildings, some designed by architects, increasingly took over the city.

Development in the city slowed with the Great Depression that commenced in October 1929 and continued through the early 1930s. Because of a lack of finance over this period, instead of new construction, some city buildings were substantially re-modelled to create new office, commercial and industrial spaces, and also for use by government.

From the 1930s, like the rest of Australia, an increasing proportion of the city's workforce took up jobs in manufacturing, an industry that led Australia's recovery from the economic depression and a time when, the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* notes, a

steep rise in tariffs, devaluation of the Australian pound, falling wages and electricity costs all made local producers far more competitive internationally. Textiles benefited first, then the metals industries and engineering took over as pacemakers (Dingle 2008).

After being the centre of manufacturing in Australia in the 1920s, Melbourne's importance in this regard began to decline. During the 1940s some city factories and warehouses were left empty or converted for other uses (Context 2012:35).

From the end of World War Two to the beginning of the 1970s, Melbourne underwent the most sustained growth in its history, mostly based on the manufacturing industry. At the peak of industrialisation in 1966, 37 per cent of total employment in Melbourne was dedicated to manufacturing, compared to the national average of 27 per cent (Maher cited in Tsutsumi and O'Connor 2006:8.3). Australia's manufacturing output increased 6 per cent per year between 1949



and 1967, and between 1947 and 1966, 155,221 new manufacturing jobs were created in Melbourne alone, roughly one-third of which went to women (Dingle 2008).

However, by the mid-1960s,

[the] postwar expansion of manufacturing could no longer be contained within the old ring of inner industrial suburbs. They had become crowded and congested. New methods of production required more space and single-storey buildings to accommodate assembly-line techniques. The fork-lift truck led to new kinds of factory buildings. An increasing use of electricity for power and road transport rather than rail to move goods, opened up new locational possibilities...During the 1960s manufacturing expanded most rapidly in Moorabbin and the Oakleigh-Clayton area. When the available sites were taken up the area of fastest growth then transferred to Broadmeadows and Waverley (Dingle 2008).

City centres retained some manufacturing until the late 1970s, mostly in the areas of clothing, printing and food processing, sectors that increasingly employed women workers. By the 1990s manufacturing had declined to 16 per cent of total employment in Melbourne, and 77 per cent of the workforce were working in the tertiary sector (Marsden 2000:99-100).

### SITE HISTORY

The subject building at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne is constructed on Allotment 12, Block 9, City of Melbourne, which was offered for sale in the fifth land sale of 1839. By 1866, a building had been constructed on site, and by 1888 four one-storey buildings comprising houses and yards were in existence on the site. By 1905-06, Ah Pay, cabinetmaker, occupied a single-storey house and workshop on the site (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 682).

Mahlstedt plans from 1910 indicate that the site was occupied by a factory and stables for S Meyer's Ice Cream Works prior to the construction of the existing building (see Figure 1). At this time, the site did not include the small strip of land that runs through to Windsor Lane (Mahlsted Map Section 1, no 2, 1910). Meyers Place, formerly known as Nicholas Lane, was likely named after S Meyer's Ice Cream Works.

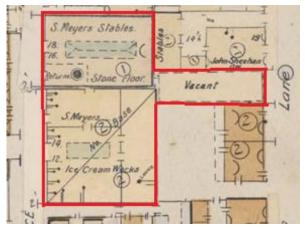


Figure 1. The subject site in 1910, outlined in red, prior to the erection of the subject building. (Source: Mahlsted Map Section 1, no 2, 1910).



F W Kain was listed as the owner of the subject site in 1940. That year, he commissioned the two-storey reinforced concrete factory building to the design of architect Harry A Norris and constructed by builder George Prentice (see Figure 2) (PROV VPRS 11201/1, unit 255; MBAI 21104). For 47 years, the two-storey building at 12-18 Meyers Place was associated with clothing and goods manufacturers and importers. F W Kain & Co, millinery manufacturers, was listed as the first occupant of one of the factories in Kantay House, as the building was named (*Herald* 16 July 1940:12). By 1947, F W Kain was trading under the name of Crossleigh Hats, and had left the premises by 1960 (S&Mc 1960; *Argus* 8 January 1947:22).

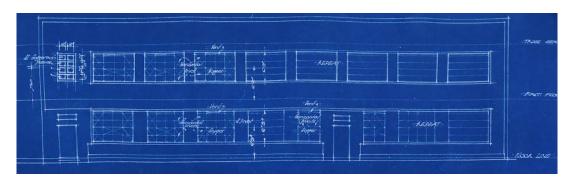


Figure 2. The front facade of 12-18 Meyers Place, designed by architect Harry Norris and constructed in 1940. (Source: PROV VPRS 11200/4, unit 510).

The factory was designed as two premises, both with entrances to Meyers Place (see Figure 3). In June 1940, an advertisement was published announcing the availability to let the ground floor of the new building in Meyers Place, described as suitable for showrooms, factory or warehouse (*Argus* 29 June 1940:1).

By 1942, the building was named Kantay House (S&Mc 1942). Mahlsted maps produced after the construction of the current building show it incorporated the strip of land that runs through to Windsor Lane (see Figure 3).

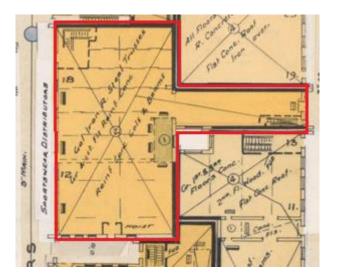


Figure 3. The subject site in 1948, showing the subject building outlined in red. (Source: Mahlsted Map Section 1, no 2, 1948).

The first occupant of the other factory in Kantay House was Michaelis, Hallenstein & Co, who used part of the site as one of their workrooms until c1960. Michaelis, Hallenstein & Co, a large firm of tanners, curriers and leather goods dealers with foundations back to the 1860s. Established by two German Jewish migrants, who were uncle and nephew, the firm developed from a tannery in Footscray to a widespread organisation that saw offices set up in London at its peak (Associated Leathers Ltd 1965:12). The company owned a number of premises around the city, including a shop front on Lonsdale Street (Associated Leathers Ltd 1965:13). Their business expanded beyond leather-based products, with canvas goods making up a large portion of their sales by the 1960s (Associated Leathers Ltd 1965:17). Directories indicate that Michaelis, Hallenstein & Co remained in the Meyers Place building until sometime after 1955, but like F W Kain & Co, had left by 1960 (S&Mc 1955, 1960).

The premises were continually occupied by clothing manufacturers and importers through to the 1980s. In 1965, the building was renamed as Sandoz House after Sandoz Australia Pty Ltd, importers, who left the factory by 1970, when Sportswear Distributers Pty Ltd, manufacturing agents, was recorded as the main tenant. Other short-term tenants involved the importers Incorporated Agencies Pty Ltd and Drezz Pty Ltd (reported liquidation in 1981) (S&Mc 1965, 1970 & 1974; *Age* 8 July 1981:27). Clothing company Witchery Pty Ltd had its buying office at 12-18 Meyers Place from around 1975 until c1986 (*Age* 25 January 1975:59; 14 June 1896:179)

Coinciding with the alterations in 1987, by 1988, the building was used as the headquarters of Melbourne City Libraries ('Dynix Launch' 1988, MLS). The building was rented by the Melbourne City Council with a 10-year lease and one five-year renewal option (*Age* 14 August 1993:75).

The ground floor was refurbished in 2006 and converted to four shops (CoMMaps). The façade of the building has changed very little from the original plans, except for the installation of an intrusive exhaust pipe (PROV VPRS 11200/4, unit 510). The ground floor of the building is currently used as a restaurant and a bar; the building also houses a Japanese-style bathhouse.

### Harry A Norris, architect

Harry Albert Norris (1888-1967) was born in Hawthorn, son of a bootmaker. He was articled to architects Ward & Carleton between 1906 and 1911, a Melbourne firm that undertook modest domestic, commercial and industrial commissions. In 1910, he won second prize in the Royal Victorian Institute of Architecture student competition (Gurr and Willis 2012:502-3).

Norris commenced his sole practice from c1915, and by 1920 he was established in an office in Collins Street. His early works included domestic and commercial projects, with a significant number of motor garages, factories and bakeries (Gurr and Willis 2012:502-3).

Harry Norris also participated in a number of business ventures with Alfred M Nicholas, director of the highly successful Nicholas Pty Ltd. The close relationship between Norris and Nicholas resulted in a number of substantial architectural commissions, including the Nicholas Building, Swanston Street (1925-26), and two Nicholas residences: 'Carn Brea', Hawthorn (rebuilt in 1928) and 'Burnham Beeches', Sherbrooke (1930-33).

Norris also had a long relationship with G J Coles, who sent him to the United States in 1929 to investigate chain store architecture. Norris was responsible for designing and altering many Coles



stores across Victoria from c1927, and in Sydney from c1938 (Gurr and Willis 2012:502-3). Norris retired at aged 75, dying six months later.

### George Prentice, builder

George Prentice was a Scottish immigrant who arrived in Melbourne c1919 (*Argus* 11 August 1949:11). Prentice Builders Pty Ltd, with George and his son Robert as directors, was incorporated in 1940, and had offices at 200 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn (*Argus* 5 December 1940:14). By 1948 George Prentice was the president of the Master Builders' Association (*Age* 9 September 1948:5).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne, constructed in 1940, is a two-storey industrial warehouse building in the interwar Functionalist style. The building has a strong horizontal emphasis. It is located between Bourke Street to the north, Little Collins Street to the south, and abuts Windsor Place to the rear.

The building structure is of reinforced concrete post and slab construction, although the masonry façade walls are likely to be loadbearing. The principal façade is constructed of cream face brick laid in stretcher bond with the side walls (the northern and southern elevations) constructed of common red bricks. The side walls themselves are industrial in character, typical of earlier inner-city factory buildings with simple concrete lintels over the steel frame windows. The transition between the Meyers Place façade and side walls is treated with a corner treatment of thin dark 'Roman' bricks which are slightly recessed. A simple parapet, capped with the same Roman bricks laid on edge, conceals the roof.

The first floor is intact with eight bays of original steel framed windows comprising sixteen rectangular panes, four horizontally by four vertically. Each set of windows is separated by a slightly recessed vertical panel of 'Roman' bricks matching the parapet capping and corner treatment. Projecting painted concrete frames, typical of the style, surround the row of windows, providing a strong horizontal emphasis.

Consistent with other twentieth-century industrial buildings in Melbourne city, the windows feature a ventilation system where one row of sashes is angled back and the gap above covered in mesh to provide a measure of permanent ventilation. At the northern end of the first floor is a modular concrete grill projecting slightly from the plane of the wall which is subdivided into 8 panels, 2 across 4 vertically.

The ground floor façade to Meyers Place has been substantially altered with modifications to some of the window and door openings and new surface material of small dark coloured ceramic tiles, and later window frames.

### **INTEGRITY**

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne retains its original scale and form, and substantial evidence of original interwar Functionalist style fenestration and wall surface material at the upper floor levels. Alterations have been made to the ground level façade, including the replacement of original windows and doors, replacement of wall surface material with new cladding and the addition of a cantilevered box awning. The steel ventilation shaft affixed to the face of the



building, in between two bays of windows is intrusive but is removable. Overall, the building is of moderate to high integrity.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

From the 1930s, like the rest of Australia, an increasing proportion of Melbourne's workforce took up jobs in manufacturing, an industry that led Australia's recovery from the economic depression of the late 1920s-early 1930s. After the end of World War Two, building activity in the central city slowly revived after a period of stagnation caused by building restrictions and materials shortages during wartime.

Elements of the interwar Functionalist style first emerged in Australian architecture c1915 and continued to be applied after 1945, usually for low rise industrial buildings, schools, other modern service facilities such as car showrooms and institutional buildings. The style was used to emphasise a modern aesthetic using 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels and extensive horizontal bands of glazing. From c1940, the postwar International style became more widespread and elements of this style were increasingly incorporated into designs for commercial buildings being constructed in central Melbourne from the 1960s.

The following examples are comparable with 12-18 Meyers Place, being of a similar style and use, although their construction date and scale varies. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

Russell's Building, 361-363 Little Bourke Street, 1939 (HO1050)

A three-storey brick building. Built in 1939 it was designed by Arthur and Hugh Peck in an early modernist style for Robert Geoffrey Russell.



Figure 4. 361-363 Little Bourke Street, built in 1939.

Grange Lynne Pty Ltd, 185-187 A'Beckett Street, 1937 (Interim HO995 – Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

A three-storey factory and office designed for Grange Lynne Pty Ltd by architect Edward Billson in 1937. It is part of a group of printing and linotype companies which was located around the northwestern edge of the city in the interwar period.





Figure 5. 185-187 A'Beckett Street, built in 1937.

McPherson's Building, 546-566 Collins Street, 1935 (VHR H0942; HO614)

A five-storey reinforced concrete office building with basement parking and ground level retail.

Designed by Stewart Calder in association with Reid & Pearson in the International style and built as offices and showrooms for McPherson's Proprietary Limited in 1935.



Figure 6. 546-566 Collins Street, built in 1935. (Source: iHeritage)

# 17-23 Wills Street, 1930s (HO850)

Two storey brick and concrete warehouse/factory. Designed in the Moderne style and built in the mid 1930's.



Figure 7. 17-23 Wills Street, built c1930s.



Former Patron's Brake Replacement Factory, 198-202 Queensberry Street, Carlton, 1943 (HO1134)

Three-storey building built in 1943 in the Functionalist style with a restrained, efficient expression consisting of a prismatic volume with bands of windows. The façade is finished with brown clinker bricks, with red ricks to the side and rear elevations (RBA 2013:D39).



Figure 8. 198-202 Queensberry Street, Carlton, built in 1943.

# 111-125 A'Beckett Street, 1936 (HO994)

A two-storey brick and concrete building. Designed by Lionel Sam Miguel in the Moderne style as a purpose-built motor showroom. It was built by Rispin Brothers in 1936 for a cost of £20,000. Built for Commonwealth Motors which reconditioned motor trucks and was the agent for Vauxhall and Bedford commercial vehicles. It is still used by the motor trade.



Figure 9. 111-125 A'Beckett Street, built in 1936.

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne, constructed in 1940 is a good representative example of a low scale industrial building in the interwar Functionalist style. It is comparable with a number of other HO listed examples of the style constructed prior to and post-World War Two, including the 1939 Russell's Building at 361-363 Little Bourke Street (HO1050) and the 1953 building at 198-202 Queensberry Street, Carlton (HO1134). All of these buildings demonstrate key aspects of the style, including 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels and extensive bands of glazing with expressed frames, despite their varying uses and construction dates.



# **ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

	CRITERION A
✓	Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history
	(historical significance).
	CRITERION B
	Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	CRITERION C
	Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of
	our cultural or natural history (research potential).
	CRITERION D
✓	Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of
	cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	CRITERION E
	Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic
	significance).
	CRITERION F
	Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical
	achievement at a particular period (technical significance)
	CRITERION G
	Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural
	group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the
	significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their
	continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).
	CRITERION H
	Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of
	persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).
	persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).



# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

# **MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

# **OTHER**

N/A



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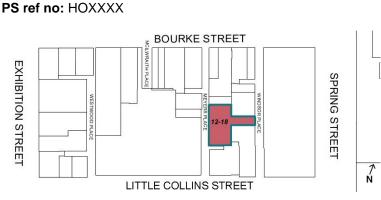


# Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985 Central City Heritage Study 1993 Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002 Central City Heritage Review 2011 Ungraded Ungraded Ungraded



### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE





# What is significant?

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne, a two-storey interwar Functionalist style warehouse built in 1940 to a design by architect Harry A Norris is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original scale and form and scale;
- The original face brick walls original pattern of fenestration, including corner treatment of thin dark 'Roman' bricks, parapet capped with Roman bricks laid on edge, modular concrete ventilation grill; and
- The recessed vertical panels of 'Roman' bricks separating panels of original steel windows.

Later alterations made to the street level façade, and the affixed ventilation shaft, are not significant.

# How it is significant?

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place, Melbourne, is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

# Why it is significant?

The former factory building at 12-18 Meyers Place, named Kantay House and constructed in 1940 for F W Kain, is historially significant for the evidence it provides of the rise of industry in the city from the 1940s. From the 1940s to the 1970s, Melbourne underwent the most sustained growth in its history, mostly based on the manufacturing industry. Built as two factory spaces under the one roof, the first occupiers of the factory in 1940 were F W Kain & Co, millinery manufacturers, and Michaelis, Hallenstein & Co, tanners, curriers and leather goods dealers. Both firms occupied the building until c1960, demonstrating Melbourne's sustained growth from the end of World War Two to the beginning of the 1970s, mostly based on its manufacturing industry. (Criterion A)

The former Kantay House at 12-18 Meyers Place is significant as a substantially intact, modest example of industrial development in central Melbourne as the city recovered from the Great Depression and responded to the industrial demands of World War Two. It was built in the interwar Functionalist style to a design by architect Harry A Norris, one of Victoria's most prolific commercial architects in the 1920s



and 1930s. The interwar Functionalist style was popular during the interwar and early postwar periods, usually for low rise industrial buildings, schools and institutional buildings. These new 'modern' industrial buildings were often located in minor streets and laneways with rear lane access to facilitate the movement of material in and out of the building. 12-18 Meyers Place exhibits key characteristics of the style, which emphasised a modern or progressive aesthetic and was characterised by its progressive image, using 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels and extensive horizontal bands of glazing. The building has a moderate to high degree of integrity, retaining defining elements of its style, including the blond face brick façade, recessed vertical panels of 'Roman' bricks separating panels of original steel windows and modular concrete ventilation grill. (Criterion D)

# **Primary source**

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)

