

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** STORE AND RESIDENCE (FORMER)

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** 107 Whyte Street COLERAINE

**STUDY NUMBER:** 027

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE:** MCLEAN'S TIMBER YARD, COLERAINE

**PRECINCT:** Coleraine

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** 4      **SECTION:** 34

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 430J, located at the western end of Whyte Street, the main street of Coleraine, on the south side near Bryan's Creek.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Rubinstein Residence and Store (former), Whyte Street, Coleraine. Looking south from Whyte Street

**Image Date:** 09/09/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the buildings and all the land, including the interior of the shop.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The building comprises a large single storey shop on the west side and a later single storey dwelling on east side. The shop is said to be brick (of which there is much evidence at the rear) and the dwelling is weatherboard. The two gable roofs, one over each section, are clad with corrugated iron. The shop gable includes a plaque with the date 1866. The original shop windows have been replaced but probably reflect the original plan. The shop entrance is on the east side of the eastern window. The original door and double hung sash window of the dwelling survive. A modern [?] timber verandah with a shingle roof crosses the footpath in front of both sections of the building. It is covered with timber shingles. The interior of the shop is relatively intact with typical fittings for an early twentieth century department store. The interior of the dwelling is also relatively intact. In plan it also typical with a series of rooms accessed from a passage on the west side.

## HISTORY:

The land on which the former Store and Residence was constructed was first purchased from the Crown by Robert Gage on March 10, 1865 (Department of Lands & Survey, 1955). This was only one of many blocks of land which Robert Gage purchased in the Coleraine Township in the 1850s and 1860s (*ibid.*). A Robert Gage married Jane McKebery in one of Portland's Presbyterian Churches in 1846 (VPI, Reg. No.3954). It is likely that this is the same Robert Gage who owned the land, as both Gage and McKebery are important early local families, and a union between the two would have been favoured. Both families have also had major streets in the town named after them. It is unlikely that Gage or his family lived or operated a business from this site.

In 1866, the ratebooks note that Neil McLean constructed a brick shop and a storage shed for the sale of timber and Building supplies from the allotment (SofG Ratebook, entry 268). The shop and storage shed appear in a photograph titled 'The West End of Coleraine 1866' (Troeth, 21). Neil McLean married Annie Gowie in 1861 (VPI, Reg No. 3127), they had two children, Donald James, born in 1862 (*ibid.* 10430) and James Gowdie, born the following year (*ibid.* 16610). It is presumed that they arrived in Coleraine shortly before the construction of the shop and residence. Although Neil McLean's headstone is not recorded in the Coleraine Cemetery nor is his death registered in Victoria, it is presumed that he died in 1873, as his widow Annie placed an advertisement in the local paper that she "... beg[s] to intimate that it is her intention to carry on the business under the management of Mr. Thurman, and to meet the increasing requirements of the town and district will again introduce the Grocery branch ..." (CA 05/12/73, in Troeth, 49). It appears that she continued to expand business with her young sons and Mr. Thurman as manager until October 1884, when the property was purchased by general merchants, Louis and Bernard Silberfeld (Buck, 2001). The Silberfelds who already owned a store in Tahara, transferred their business to the new premises on October 17, 1884 (*ibid.*).

The Silberfelds added the residence to the store in 1891 (Shire of Glenelg Ratebook, entry 504). This was the same year in which their niece, Helena Rubenstein emigrated to Coleraine from Poland (Buck, 2001). Helena Rubenstein was only in the town for a short time, but remains the most internationally renowned resident of Coleraine. 'The Jews in Victoria' (Rubinstein, 104) state that Helena Rubenstein was 'perhaps the most remarkable Jewish woman in Victoria ...'.

Helena Rubenstein was born on December 25, 1879 at Kracow in Poland, the eldest of eight daughters of Augusta Silberfeld and Horace Rubinstein, a wealthy merchant. It appears that Rubinstein has been somewhat 'flexible' with the truth when recalling her early life both in Poland and in Coleraine, so there are many contrasting stories.

For example, different accounts exist regarding her emigration to Australia. One states that she emigrated to escape a proposed marriage to a wealthy widower (ADB, Vol. 11, 475). Whereas Rubinstein (104) states that she emigrated to "see her cousin again, a girl of ... her own age, and because she wanted a change, and because her uncle had written to her that 'life is very different here and the climate is hot' ". It is clear is that she came to Victoria with a different expectation from what she met. Her suprise and dismay at country life are documented

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clearly in many different sources. Her main memories of Coleraine noted as "only hundreds and hundreds of bleating sheep and bony cattle ... where the never ending sweep of pasture, broken here and there by a ... gum tree, presented a very different picture from the one I had imagined" (Rubinstein, 104).

It also seems clear that Rubinstein endured many things in Coleraine which she did not wish to publicly relate in later life, including learning English through attending classes at the local private primary school, and being judged 'haughty and difficult' for her insistence on wearing the most stylish modern dress and manners (ADB, Vol 11, 495). Rubinstein often recalled feeling 'hungry, lonely and poor in that awful place' (ibid.).

She is said to have established a cosmetics manufactory in the store using cold cream and additives sent from Europe, after her '... new friends could not get over the texture and milkiness of my skin ... to the ladies of Victoria, with their sunscorched, wind-burned cheeks, its city bred alabaster quality seemed remarkable. The twelve pots of face cream with which my mother had sent me off ... were now to be the cornerstone of my life. When women in Coleraine heard about this cream, they all wanted to try it, and soon nearly all the cream in the twelve jars I had brought with me had been given to friends, with their friends clamouring for more. I wrote to Mama asking for an additional supply. She began to send replacements every month, and as soon as the cream arrived I would store it in the cellar of my uncle's house to keep it at the right temperature. Even so, the demand was exceeding the supply ...' (Rubinstein, 104).

Shortly after, Rubinstein argued with her uncles (some say over her selling her face creams from the store, others suggest that one of her uncles developed an unhealthy interest in the young Rubinstein). She moved to Melbourne to further her career and thence became internationally successful. Her first beauty salon was the Maison de Beaute Valaze in Collins Street, Melbourne. In 1909, when interviewed by a journalist in Melbourne, Rubinstein claimed that she had chosen Australia because she "wanted to put the marvellous properties of my specialities to the most difficult test imaginable -- a tropical climate" (Rubinstein, 106). It is believed that after she departed, she never returned to Coleraine.

The Silberfelds continued to occupy the premises until 1911, when a Mrs. Glossop purchased the store, residence and business, renaming it 'The Renown Store' (Buck, 2). The Store and Residence was later acquired by George Johnstone in 1920, from which he operated a grocery business. (Buck, 2, The Sun [18/08/81], 39). By 1939, the store was known as Johnstone, Semple and Ward, advertising as Cash Grocers 'For Fresh stock and Keen Prices Cleanliness and Service' (Centenary Celebrations Committee, 8). It is not known when the store closed, but for some years during the 1980s it was vacant, until purchased as a private residence. It is now something of a museum to the memory of Helena Rubenstein.

## **THEMATIC CONTEXT:**

Theme 2: Peopling Australia

2.4.2 Migrating to seek opportunity

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.13 Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity

3.16 Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure

3.19 Marketing and retailing

Theme 8: Developing Australia's cultural life

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## **CONDITION:**

The buildings are in good condition.

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## INTEGRITY:

The whole of the exterior is relatively intact. The interior of the shop is intact but the interior of the residence has been compromised.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The former store and store at 107 Whyte Street, Coleraine was the early home of a woman who became one of the world's leading cosmetic manufacturers. She had migrated from Poland in 1894 to live with her uncle, Louis. Having established a limited trade in cosmetics at the store based on imported face cream, she fell out with her uncle and moved on to Melbourne. The development of her business follows two versions, one well documented and the other according to Rubinstein's recollections. Nonetheless, she went on to make a fortune not just in the metropolis but internationally using family and friends as important contacts and assistants. The Coleraine store continued as an emporium, similar to the several others in Whyte Street.

How is it significant?

The former store and residence are of historical and architectural significance to the Shire of Southern Grampians.

Why is it Significant?

The former store and residence at 107 Whyte Street are of historical significance for their associations with Helena Rubinstein, a woman who became one of the world's leading cosmetics manufacturers and for demonstrating her humble beginnings in a conventional merchant's store and dwelling. They are of architectural significance as one of several typical such later nineteenth century stores and dwellings in the main street of Coleraine.

## COMPARISON:

070 Store and Residence, 95 Whyte Street, Coleraine

078 Store and Residence, 100a Whyte Street, Coleraine.

**ASSESSED BY:** tfh

**ASSESSMENT DATE:**

28-Aug-01

## EXISTING LISTINGS:

## HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR  Include in RNE  Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

## REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Malcom Troeth	The Cultural Landscape of Coleraine	1988	49-50
Centenary Celebrations Committee	Coleraine Centenary Celebrations: October 7 to 14, 1939	1939	8
Charlotte Gere	Great Women Collectors	1999	Ch. X
Department of Justice	Pioneer Index Victoria 1836 - 1888 (reg. No. 1505)	1998	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Coleraine (Parishes of Coleraine and Konong Wootong County of Dundas)	1873	
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Coleraine (Parishes of Coleraine and Konong Wootong County of Dundas)	1955	
Hilary L. Rubinstein	The Jews in Victoria, 1835-1985	1986	104-6
J. R. Poynter, in Serle, Geoffrey, gen. ed.	'Rubenstein, Helena', in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 11, 1891-1939	1988	475-7

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Kevin Buck	Research Notes 'History of Residence and Store 107 Whyte Street Coleraine'	n.d
Lindy Woodhead	"The Rubinstein Myth" The Good Weekend 05/07/2003	2003 44-9
Stefano Papi and Alexandra Rhodes	Famous Jewellery Collectors	1999 Ch. 3