

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: LESSER'S STORES (FORMER)

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: 88a Whyte Street COLERAINE

STUDY NUMBER: 231

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE: COLERAINE IGA SUPERMARKET

PRECINCT: Coleraine

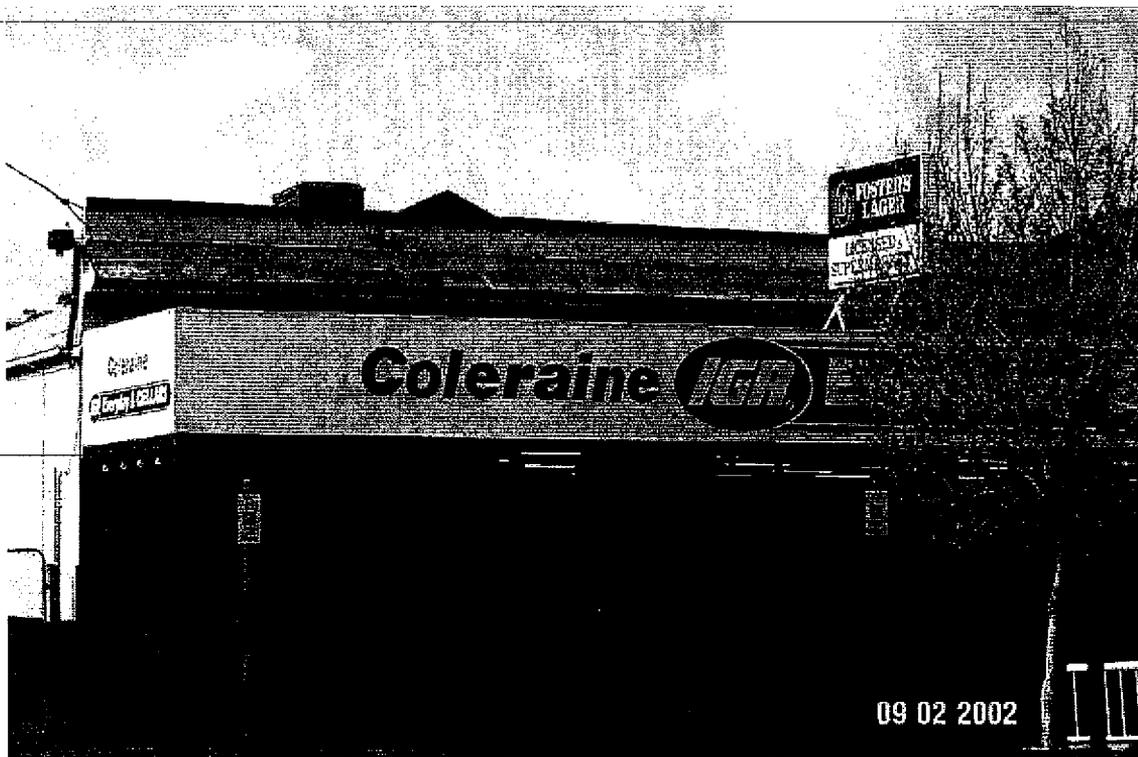
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 3 **SECTION:** 1 **PARISH:** PARISH OF COLERAINE

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 430J H4 Located on the south side of Whyte Street, between Gage and Winter Streets, in the centre of Coleraine.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local



Lesser's Stores (former), Whyte Street, Coleraine.

Image Date: 09/02/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All of the buildings (including both original stores and the brick storehouse at the rear) and all of the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The former Lesser's Stores are located on the south side of Whyte Street, between Gage and Winter Streets, in the centre of Coleraine. The building, which is now used as a supermarket, comprises two brick stores with corrugated iron gabled roofs and a larger brick storehouse with corrugated iron gabled roofs attached to the rear of the building. The shopfront, verandah and parapet have been much altered. The timber parapet still retains some of its decorative timberwork, but the facade of the building has been modernised, with large plate glass windows and an electric sliding door. The original verandah has been replaced by a modern pavement verandah.

HISTORY:

The land on which the former Lesser's Store stands was first purchased from the Crown by William Smith on 8th September, 1852 (Department of Lands and Survey, 1955). Very little is known about the first owner, but a William Smith died at Coleraine, aged 54 in 1888 (VPI, Reg. No. 5250). It cannot be proven that this is the same William Smith, and that a(nother possibly) William Smith was the holder of the Pre-emptive right at Lake Condah nearby between 1849 to July 1850 (B & K, 141).

In 1859, Abraham Lesser, a newly arrived merchant had two stores constructed (on Allotment 3 of Section 1) facing Whyte Street (CA, 02/09/1892). Abraham Lesser (1825-1886) was the son of Ephraim Lesser and Hinde Pincus (VPI, Reg. No. 12259). It is not known when or from where Abraham Lesser emigrated, but he arrived in Coleraine in 1859 (a Louis Lesser {1832-1921} is buried in the Jewish section of the Coleraine Cemetery, it is likely that Louis and Abraham were closely related, and may have arrived in Coleraine together). Two years after his arrival in Coleraine, Abraham Lesser married Elizabeth (Bessie) May (1835 - 1916). Between 1862 and 1875 they had eleven children, of which only three (Isedor Charles (1875), Pauline (1874) and Leon (1862)) survived to adulthood (VPI, various).

The first ratebook entry for the stores is in 1872, listing Abraham Lesser, a storekeeper as the occupant and owner of a general store, dwelling and backstore (Shire of Wannon 1872-73, entry 94). The Lesser family residence was built alongside the stores in Whyte Street (Stubbings in Forth (ed.), 84). The business flourished, and Abraham became a prominent and well respected member of the Coleraine community. The Lesser family were considered to be relatively wealthy, with the sons attending Scotch College in Melbourne (ibid., 84) and Mrs. Lesser being remembered as she "owned the first piano in Coleraine" (Centenary Celebrations Committee, 7). Abraham Lesser's headstone notes that he was a Justice of the Peace, and the Wannon Shire Centenary booklet lists him as a Wannon Shire Councillor from 1877 until his sudden death at age 61 in 1886 (McGaffin, 15).

After his father's death, Leon May Lesser (the eldest surviving son of Abraham and Bessie) continued to run and improve the family business, now known as Lesser's Stores. Leon Lesser married Cyril Jean Rosenbloom of Heywood in November 1887 (VPI, Reg. No. 7631), and they had eight children, of which seven survived. Shortly after his marriage, Leon Lesser completed his new home 'Fairview' located on the corner of Gage and Church Streets in Coleraine. This fine home is credited as being the first architect designed timber home in Coleraine (Stubbings in Forth (ed.), 84).

Leon Lesser followed in his father's footsteps, being elected a Justice of the Peace in 1922. He was also keenly involved in a variety of local clubs and committees: the Coleraine Race Club Committee, the Freemasons Society, and a was elected a standing member of the committee of management for the Coleraine Mechanics Institute for 20 years (1908-1928) (ibid.).

From about 1900, the Lesser family relocated for several months each year to Melbourne, where they had a

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town house in South Yarra. It appears that the Lesser family moved to Melbourne permanently in about 1919, with a house being purchased in St. Kilda Road (ibid.). However, Leon Lesser continued to travel between his business in Coleraine and family in Melbourne until the business was sold to C. Tippett and Sons in 1932 (ibid.). Tippett and Sons were general hardware providers in 1939 (Centenary Celebrations Committee, 5). At the time the Wannon Shire Centenary was produced (1972) the buildings were still occupied by Tippett and Sons (McGaffin, 48). Many alterations have been made to the two stores. By 1988, the building was being used as a Supermarket and Hardware store. A photograph taken at this time shows that the decorative timberwork and sloping corrugated iron verandah of the original building had been replaced, although the original timber parapet was largely intact (Troeth, 41 & 60). The shopfront of both stores had also been significantly altered (ibid.). The building is now used as a Supermarket.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies

3.12 Feeding people

3.12.5 retailing foods and beverages

3.19 Marketing and retailing

CONDITION:

much altered.

INTEGRITY:

The interior of the building has been altered substantially, as has the shopfront, façade, verandah and pediment.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The two brick stores known as Lesser's Stores which are located on the south side of Whyte Street, between Gage and Winter Streets in the Central Business District of Coleraine. These stores have been much altered, and converted into a Supermarket. The stores have corrugated iron gabled roofs and a large brick storehouse attached to the rear. The shopfront and verandah are much altered, as is the timber parapet. These stores were built in 1859 by Abraham Lesser, an important local businessman. The Lesser family continued to operate their business from these stores for nearly 80 years. The buildings are the earliest remaining stores in Coleraine, providing a focal points of the town since their establishment in 1859.

How is it significant?

The former Lesser's Stores are of historical significance to the township of Coleraine and Southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?

The former Lesser's Stores are of historical significance to the township of Coleraine and the surrounding district as the earliest surviving stores in Coleraine. They have continuously provided a commercial focal point for the town for nearly 150 years. The stores are of further historical significance for their association with the Lesser family, who were an important and influential family within Coleraine upto the 1930s.

COMPARISON:

085 Trangmar's Store and Residence, 73 Whyte Street, Coleraine

040 Hairdresser's Salon, 72B Whyte Street, Coleraine

ASSESSED BY: TFH

ASSESSMENT DATE:

8/06/2001

EXISTING LISTINGS:

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HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR **Include in RNE** **Include in Local Planning Scheme**

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
	Coleraine Albion 02/09/1892	1892	
Centenary Celebrations Committee	Coleraine Centenary Celebrations, October 7 to 14 1939	1939	7
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	
G. McGaffin	The Wannon Shire Centenary 1872-1972: A brief History of the Shire of Wannon	1972	48
Leon Goerge Stubbings, in Gordon Forth ed.	Biographical Dictionary of the Western District of Victoria	1998	84
Macbeth Genealogical Services	Pioneer Index Victoria 1836 - 1888	1998	
Shire of Wannon	Shire of Wannon Ratebooks 1872-1873	1872	
Troeth, Malcolm	The Cultural Landscape of Coleraine	1988	
