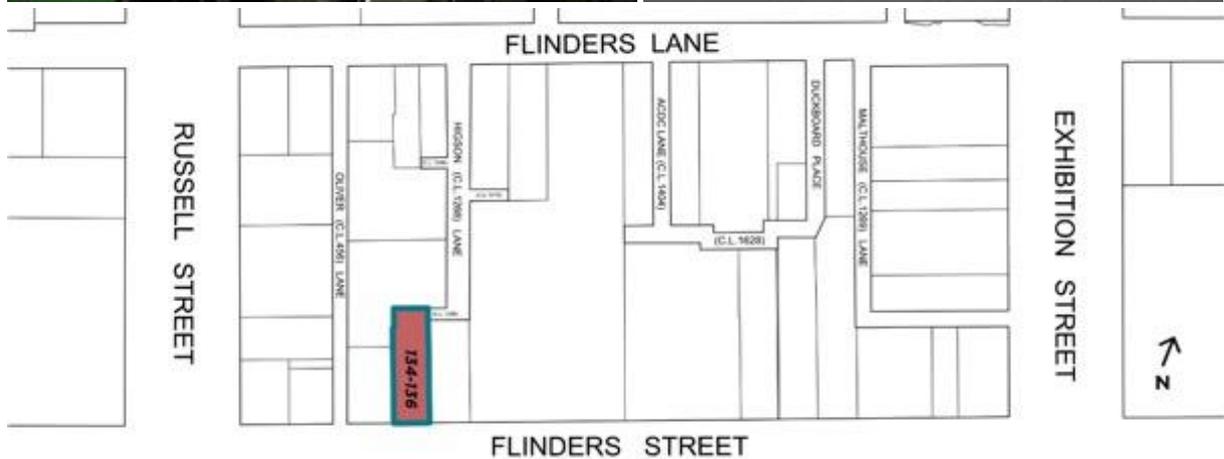


SITE NAME	Epstein House
STREET ADDRESS	134-136 Flinders Street Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	104023



SURVEY DATE: May 2017		SURVEY BY: Context Pty Ltd	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	H7822-1944	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	James A Wood	FORMER GRADE	C
		BUILDER:	Not known
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Interwar Period (c1919- c1940)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1926

THEMES

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, Stage 2 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 industry
	OTHER SUB-THEMES
9 Working in the city	9.2 Women's work
3 Shaping the urban environment	3.2 Expressing an architectural style

LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
Archaeological block no: 63	Inventory no: 944
Character of Occupation: Governmental, Commercial, Residential	
Fourth land sale. Block 7 Allotment 2, Thomas Gore.	
1866 Cox	Building on site.
1877 Dove	Three-storey building; Bramwell & Grant, boot manufacturer.
1880 Panorama	
1888 Mahlstedt	Two-storey building.
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Civil Service Store.
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Manufacturing
1920s	Manufacturing, Commercial
1960s	Retail

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

Epstein House was built in 1926 for the Epstein family. It is associated with Louis Epstein who established himself as a tailor and went on to develop a successful clothing manufacturing business. The six-storey building has a distinctive glazed bay to its upper façade and two shopfronts at street level.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Building a commercial city

Building a manufacturing capacity

As Melbourne developed through the nineteenth century, so did its manufacturing industry. Flinders Lane became an important area for clothing manufacturers, while Chinese cabinet makers were concentrated at the east end of town. Food-processing plants were established in north and west Melbourne. Factories tended to be small and specialised. Large factories, built in the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century tended to be built outside the City of Melbourne, where land was more easily obtainable (Context 2012:44).

The textile industry formed an important sector of Melbourne central's economy. In Flinders Lane, from Spring to Queen streets, 'clothing warehouses, manufacturers, mill suppliers, button-and belt-makers, and clothes designers made the lane the centre of fashion, an industry pioneered by Jewish immigrant families such as Slutzkin, Blashki, Merkel, Haskin, Mollard and Trevaskis.' Crowding and a lack of parking forced the rag trade into decline from the 1960s (May 2008).

Working in the city

Women's work

Women were restricted in terms of the paid work that was available to them. Single women found employment as domestic servants and nursemaids in private homes, although these positions had a high turnover — this situation was disparaged by employers as 'the servant problem'. Women also worked as schoolteachers and nurses, and as 'shop girls', waitresses and publicans. Large numbers of women found employment as machinists in the clothing and footwear factories that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Context 2012:72).

Shaping the urban landscape

Expressing an architectural style

Commercial buildings in Melbourne's central city in the 1920s were mainly of the commercial palazzo style, as exemplified by Harry Norris's Nicholas Building in Swanston Street (1925). The style was an early attempt at creating a style suitable for the tall building. It was divided into a base, shaft and cornice, much like a Renaissance palazzo. The scale, however, was greatly enlarged, with the shaft stretching up to 10 storeys. By the 1930s, the soaring height of the new office towers was embraced and the vertical thrust emphasised in the Commercial Gothic style and the jazz moderne. Landmark examples include, respectively, Marcus Barlow's Manchester Unity Building (1929-32) and the Tompkins Bros' Myer Emporium in Bourke Street (1933) (Context 2012:19).

SITE HISTORY

134-136 Flinders Street has been occupied by a number of businesses over the years. A building was on site in 1866, and in 1877, boot manufacturer Bramwell and Grant operated from a three-storey building. In 1888, a two-storey building stood on the land, and by 1905, the Civil Service Store was operating from the site (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993).

Butler House, which housed J H Butler and Co and Leroy and Co, both undergarment and blouse makers, preceded the subject building (Butler 1984).

In 1926, architect James A Wood of Temple Court, Melbourne, submitted plans to build a reinforced concrete building at 134-136 Flinders Street for tailor Louis Epstein, who had established a tailoring business in Melbourne in 1905. In the first plans, a three-storey elevation was proposed, with only stair access between floors, toilets on the roof slab and two roof lanterns to light, presumably, a work area below (Butler 1984).

A second set of plans added a lift (front and back) and three floor levels to the previous design, with an allocation of two water closets per floor, and a large 'Women's Lavatory' on the roof. One of the roof lanterns was eliminated in this plan. At ground level, two shops with a common recessed entry, plus an entry to the upper levels, were provided. Each of these upper floors possessed a four-light bay overhanging Flinders Street and over the rear yard, a regulation successive setback to provide light angles (Butler 1984).

The six-storey style reinforced concrete Epstein House opened in 1926. Architect James A Wood called for contractors to advertise on the walls and roof of the building in September of that year (*Age* 23 September 1926:1). M Glynn, also housed in Epstein House, advertised for machinists for the making of ladies' robes and coats in November 1926 (*Age* 9 November 1926:15). It is highly likely that these positions were filled by women.

In 1930, Epstein House housed, on the ground floor, Louis Epstein and Co, tailors; Mrs E M Alyn, mantle maker; and V Laby, who managed a newsagency and billiard saloon. Businesses on the upper floors comprised a motor tyre dealer, Leo Figg; and machinery agents, W C Sackson and Co (Butler 1984).

Similar tenants were in residence in 1940: Perfit and the Costume Co made mantles; Lady Mackay ran a florist shop; and the Young Australia League rented space (Butler 1984). Epstein House is shown in 1972 (Figure 1).

Louis Epstein died in 1954, leaving behind his wife and ten children. An obituary in the *Age* noted that Epstein had been a prominent tailor in Flinders Street for 30 years and had made most of the uniforms for the Victorian Police Force. His sons, Keith, Phillip and Garth, joined the tailoring business, Louis Epstein and Co, which continued to operate from Epstein House until 1994. The Epsteins gained a reputation as bespoke tailors and uniform and equestrian clothing manufacturers and were the first importers and retailers of Levi Strauss jeans in Australia. After their retirement, various elements of the business were sold to others, including the equestrian wear. The Louis Epstein chain of fashion stores was established in the 1990s. (*Age* 29 June 1954:15; Epstein 2017).

After the closure of Louis Epstein and Co at 134-136 Flinders Street in 1994, Epstein House was refurbished in 1995 and subdivided into strata offices with retail established on the ground level. Today the property comprises residential and business use.



Figure 1. The east elevation of 134-146 Flinders Street shown in a section of Flinders Street north between Hosier Lane and Russell Street, Melbourne, Vic, c.1972, by K J Halla. (Source: SLV)

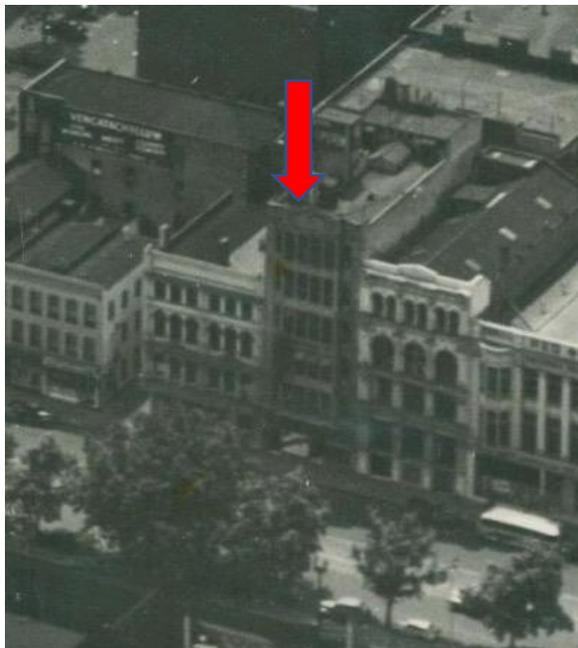


Figure 2. 134-136 Flinders Street with its original parapet shown in a section of Aerial view of the central business district of Melbourne from Flinders Street railyards looking north-west, c.1950-c.1960, by C D Pratt. (Source: SLV)

SITE DESCRIPTION

This six-storey building is located between Exhibition Street and Russell Street, on the southern edge of the city grid. Built of reinforced concrete with a rendered finish, the building was designed to have two shop fronts at ground level and a distinctive façade to the upper five floors.

Designed in the classical revival style, engaged pilasters run up the outer edges of the building and combine with a simple parapet to form a rectangular façade with a strong vertical emphasis. A glazed bay runs the full height of the upper façade, projecting out over the street level. Each floor has a band of four windows at the edge of the bay. Timber glazing bars are arranged in vertical and diamond patterning to give a distinctive character to the façade. Central hopper windows are integrated to the arrangement on the fourth level. The glazing pattern has been altered at the top level, with the typical

arrangement replaced by plate glass panels. A concrete spandrel runs below each set of windows. The words 'Epstein' and 'House' are inscribed on the spandrels at the fourth and fifth levels.

At the top of the building, stylised rendered decoration is notable to the parapet. A narrow band runs down each side of the building. The patterning and dimension of windows in this band is consistent with windows in the central projecting section.

INTEGRITY

The building is reasonably intact with the parapet detailing, the engaged pilasters, projecting bay and much of the window glazing patterning remaining. Alterations include plain glass to the upper floor windows and extensive alterations to the shopfront. Epstein House was refurbished and subdivided into strata offices with ground level retail in 1995. At street level, shop fronts have been altered and part of the parapet removed.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Structural steel and reinforced concrete framing became popular building materials in interwar Melbourne. Many 1920s examples adopted architecture styles with strengthened vertical lines to emphasise the tall height of buildings.

The subject building compares well with the following examples, drawn chiefly from the Central City Heritage Review 2011 and Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017, being of a similar use, scale, location and creation date. The below images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise.

Selected examples of interwar city buildings include:

Capitol Arcade, 115 Swanston Street (VHR H0471; H0747, Significant in H0502 The Block Precinct)

An 11-storey concrete building with a ground floor arcade and a basement. Designed by Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony in association with Peck & Kempter in the Chicago-esque style. Built by John Monash's Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Company in 1924. Of special note is the auditorium/theatre with its Art Deco lighting and decor. Subdivided in stages from 1999 and concluding with the residential units in 2003.



Figure 3. Capitol Arcade, 115 Swanston Street constructed 1924.

Francis House, 107 Collins Street (HO573, Significant in HO504 Collins East Precinct)

Francis House is a six-storey reinforced concrete office building with a basement. Designed by William Arthur Mordey Blackett and William Blackett Forster in the Neo Renaissance style. Built by Scott & Sorrell and completed in 1927. Noted for being the inaugural winner of the RVIA award for street architecture in 1929.



Figure 4. Francis House, 107 Collins Street constructed 1927.

Evans House, 415 Bourke Street (HO1004)

Originally known as Evans House. A six-storey concrete office building with a ground floor shop and a basement. An early example of the Moderne style in Melbourne it is finished with sandstone and cement stucco and features terracotta ornamentation. Designed by Hare Alder Peck & Lacey and built by George Prentice Pty Ltd for Thomas Evans Pty Ltd in 1930. Thomas Evans was a manufacturer and retailer of canvas goods. Fully refurbished in the mid-1990s, subdivided in 1999 and further in 2002.



Figure 5. Evans House, 415 Bourke Street constructed 1930.

Druids House, 407-409 Swanston Street (HO1083)

A seven-storey reinforced concrete office building with a basement and ground level retail. Designed by Gibbs, Finlay, Morsby & Coates in the Greek Revival style and built by EA Watts for The Druids Friendly Society in 1927. It was opened by the Lord Mayor, SJ Morell, on 4th April 1927. Refurbished and subdivided into two retail and six office units in 1989.



Figure 6. Druids House, 407-409 Swanston Street constructed 1927.

Pellegrini & Co (former), 388 Bourke Street (HO1206)

A nine-storey brick office building with ground level retail. Designed by AA Fritsch in the classical revival style and built in 1930.



Figure 7. 388 Bourke Street constructed 1930.

Epstein House is a notable example a commercial mid-rise building from the 1920s and is unusual for its generously glazed façade. It is comparable with 388 Bourke Street (recommended for inclusion in HO) and Druid House at 407-9 Swanston Street (HO1083) in terms of its scale and stylistic expressions. Epstein House is an example of a group of taller commercial building that were constructed on small sites in the 1920s.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION A
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p> |
| | <p>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).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p> |
-

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

REFERENCES

Age, as cited.

Butler, Graeme 1984, 'Central Activities District Conservation Plan', prepared for Melbourne City Council.

Context Pty Ltd 2012, *Thematic History: A History of the City of Melbourne's Urban Environment*, prepared for the City of Melbourne.

Dingle, Tony 2008, 'Manufacturing' in *eMelbourne*, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00896b.htm>, accessed 13 June 2017.

Epstein, David 2017, 'Epstein Family Australia', <http://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/epstein/27/>, accessed 5 June 2017.

Halla K J c.1972, 'Flinders Street north between Hosier Lane and Russell Street, Melbourne, Vic.', State Library of Victoria (SLV) Halla collection of negatives. Views of East Melbourne, Fitzroy, Melbourne & North Melbourne, accessed 22 June 2017.

Lovell Chen 2017, 'Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendments C271 and C301 – Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage', prepared for the City of Melbourne.

May, Andrew (2008), 'Flinders Lane' in *eMelbourne*, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00586b.htm>, accessed 13 June 2017.

Pratt, C D c.1950-c.1960, 'Aerial view of the central business district of Melbourne from Flinders Street railyards looking north-west', State Library of Victoria (SLV) Airspy collection: photographs, accessed online 23 June 2017.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** C

**Central City Heritage
Study 1993** C

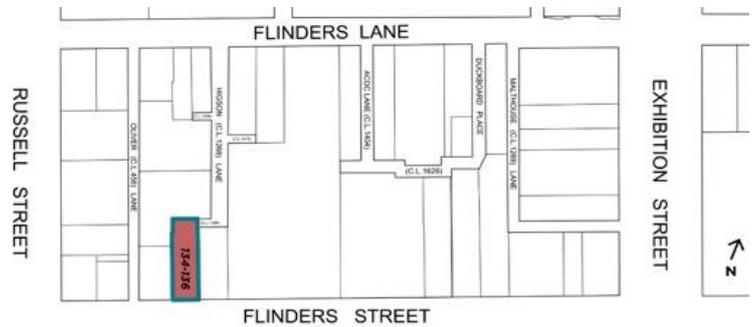
**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Epstein House

PS ref no: Interim HO1274



What is significant?

Epstein House at 134-136 Flinders Street built for clothing manufacturers the Epstein family in 1926, and designed by architect James A Wood.

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

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing;
- The buildings relatively high level of integrity to its original design;
- The original proportions and patterns of fenestration;
- The engaged pilasters, parapet, rendered ornament, spandrels; and
- Decoratively arranged timber mullions and raised lettering 'Epstein House'.

Later alterations at ground level and glazed panels at upper level are not significant.

How it is significant?

Epstein House at 134-136 Flinders Street is of local historic, representative, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Epstein House at 134-136 Flinders Street is historically significant for its association with the textile industry in the City of Melbourne that was strongly represented in the Flinders Lane area. Epstein House is also significant for its association with the Epstein family of tailors. (Criterion A)

Epstein House at 134-136 Flinders Street is a fine example of mid-rise commercial building designed in the interwar classical revival style. (Criterion D)

Epstein House at 134-136 Flinders Street is aesthetically significant for its elaborate façade design including decorative rendered piers and a central projecting glazed bay running the full height of the upper façade. This is complemented by generous glazing comprising a band of four windows across the projecting bay at each level, with glazing bars arranged in vertical and diamond patterning.

It is also aesthetically significant as one of several Flinders Street buildings of the same era and scale including 100-102 Flinders Street and 96-98 Flinders Street, that form an impressive edge to the city. (Criterion E)

Epstein House at 134-136 Flinders Street is significant for its association with the Epstein family. Louis Epstein established himself as a tailor in Melbourne in 1905 and opened Epstein House in 1926 to house his growing clothing manufacturing business, Louis Epstein and Co., which his sons, Keith, Phillip and Garth, also joined. The business gained a reputation as bespoke tailors and uniform and equestrian clothing manufacturers, making most of the uniforms for the Victorian Police Force. (Criterion H)

Primary source

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