FORMER HOLDENSON & NEILSON CHEESE FACTORY

ADDRESS: 5, 5A, 6/48-54 Lincoln Causeway, Wodonga

STUDY No.: 2B HO No.: ..... HERMES No.: 206344

DATE: 1942

CONDITION: Good

INTEGRITY: Good



(RBA, June 2024)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The former Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory at 5, 5A, 6/48-54 Lincoln Causeway Wodonga, constructed in 1942, is significant.

The significant elements are the form with broad gable roof surmounted by a clerestory and attached skillion concealed by a parapet, corrugated metal roof cladding, soffits lined with sheeting, face brick walls, concrete canopy, and original windows (including those with horizontal glazing bars to the clerestory).

The non-significant elements are the solar cells, single fixed panes to the west elevation of the clerestory, the larger openings and ramp to the north elevation, and two doors to the west elevation.

How is it significant?

The former Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory at 5, 5A, 6/48-54 Lincoln Causeway Wodonga is of historical, representative and associative significance to the City of Wodonga.

Why is it significant?

The former Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory has historical significance with the dairy industry in Wodonga and wider Victoria. Built in 1942 with federal government support, the factory was part of a complex along with the adjacent butter factory built in 1927 when Holdenson & Neilson transferred their facilities from Albury to Wodonga. The building represents the expansion of the facilities during WWII due to increased demands for cheese (rather than butter) from the British government, previously a restricted market. The post war expansion of the factory operations is also reflective of Holdenson & Neilson's ongoing contribution to the growth of dairy farms within the region. (Criterion A)

The former Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory has representative significance as a largely intact industrial building, a typology that has not survived well in the municipality, and one readily identifiable as relating to the dairy industry by way of its long clerestory. Its detailing of stretcher bond walls with soldier coursing to the lintels, concrete canopy , and horizontal glazing bars to the clerestory windows establish it as a circa 1940s construction. (Criterion D)

The former Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory is significant for its associations with the Holdenson & Neilson company which was one of the early successful dairy manufacturing operations in Melbourne and across Victoria. Holdenson & Nielson was a prominent local identity within the municipality as well as wider links due to its historical takeover of regional dairies. Danish emigrant Poul Jorgenson Holdenson was a prominent figure in both the dairying circles during the early 20th century in Victoria and a well-known member of the Danish-Australian community and served as the Danish Consul General in Victoria. (Criterion H)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The former Holdenson & Neilson cheese factory forms part of the Gateway Village cultural arts hub at the north end of the Lincoln Causeway, near the Murray River. To the west and south there are asphalted roadways and carparking areas and to the north and east and red brick paths and landscaped areas, planting and lawn.

The building has a broadly square footprint and the roof is clad in galvanised corrugated metal sheeting. There are solar cell panels to the north-west section, some of which are visible. The building has a main broad gable roof with a skillion roofed bay along the west side, whose roof is concealed by a parapet. The soffits are lined with battened sheeting.

A clerestory, a typical feature of butter/cheese factories at the time, extends along most of length of the roof ridge, which is surmounted by four non-original rotary ventilators. The end walls are clad in battened sheeting and the detailing to the long elevations varies – to the east, which is original, there are alternating windows (singles to the end and pairs elsewhere) and timber louvres. The windows are divided into three panes by two horizontal glazing bars. To the west side, the sections with timber louvres have been replaced with a single fixed pane window.

The walls are variegated red brick in stretcher bond, divided into bays by brick piers/buttresses. The parapet to the west side is largely rendered (where there had been signage for the company)

with a stepped corner accent at the north end. Various recent signage and art works have been applied/fixed to the west elevation.

A canopy supported by five timber stays extends along the length of the north/front elevation, below which is the main entrance (converted from an original loading bay) and includes modern, large glass aluminium-framed windows and doors accessed by a concrete ramp with steel railing. The openings are wider than the original.



North/entry elevation

An narrow concrete canopy with brick brackets extends along the middle section of the west elevation above four openings - two doorways with non-original, panelled timber doors (one with upper glazed panes) and two windows with blinds. The lintels to these openings have soldier coursed bricks.



North-east corner

HISTORIC THEMES

5.1 Processing raw materials

HISTORY

The extant building was constructed in 1942 as part of a national program to increase production of cheese for the British war effort. Access to the British butter market was restricted during World War II and in 1941-1942 the British government requested supplies of cheese rather than butter and the building of the Wodonga Cheese Factory helped meet this demand. In May 1942, it was reported that construction was underway as follows (however no tender notice has come to light to determine the designer):

> Owing to the British Government's desire to purchase large quantities of cheese rather than butter, butter factories throughout the Commonwealth are being encouraged to manufacture cheese. To assist with the project the Commonwealth Government is making money available on easy terms for the erection of the necessary buildings and purchase machinery. The Wodonga Butter Factory (Holdenson and Neilson) has already made a commencement with a commodious building which is designed to handle 8,000 gals. of milk daily (1942, Wodonga and Towong Sentinel).

Holdenson & Neilson Fresh Foods Pty Ltd was founded by Danish emigrant Poul Jorgenson Holdenson and Andrew Neilson. Holdenson was born in 1863 in the village of Sejstrup on the west coast of Jutland, Denmark. Hoping to earn his money on the Victorian goldfields with the aim of buying his own farm in Denmark, Holdenson arrived in Victoria in 1879. He soon abandoned the gruelling goldfields and become a farm hand before purchasing a rundown

restaurant in Melbourne and turning it into a thriving business to be later sold at a profit. The money was used in part to buy a stall selling wholesale produce at Melbourne's Eastern market. The turning point in Holdenson's career came he partnered with old friend Andreas Nielson focusing on dairy goods. In 1886 the pair started one of the first ever butter factories trading under the name of Holdenson & Nielson, collecting cream from the milk skimming stations set up in various country locations. The company relocated to Flinders Lane in 1889 followed by Flinders Street, while at the same time buying up several small in inefficient country butter factories in Victoria. Nielson returned to Europe in 1902 due to illness and died in 1903 leaving Holdenson, who had been appointed Consul General for Denmark in Victoria in 1901, sole ownership of the company.

In 1908 the business merged with Fresh Food Pty Ltd to become Holdenson & Neilson Fresh Food Pty Ltd. By this time Holdenson had the company headquarters in Melbourne and owned twelve branch factories throughout Victoria when it bought the old butter factory in Stanley Street, Albury in 1921. According to The Land (February 1927) operations were moved to the Victorian side of the Murray River due to the disparity between the factory laws in New South Wales and Victoria (The Land 1927). Holdenson & Neilson built a concrete butter factory on Gateway Island in 1927, which is the present day Hot House Theatre (Argus 1927) or HO2. Cream was collected by company from all areas of North East Victoria and the Riverina, with contractors carting to railway stations and consigning to Wodonga. This method of collection continued until well after World War II, a legacy which encouraged an increase in dairying in the region. Holdenson passed away in 1948 at the age of 85.



Undated, showing an earlier section/addition at the south-west corner. (Wodonga Historical Society)



Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory, 1951. (Wodonga Historical Society)

Immediately after the war, dairy production continued to increase locally and nationally. More farmers took to dairying, particularly after electricity was extended into Baranduda and the Kiewa and Leneva Valleys. During the 1950s Holdenson & Nielson produced each week 4000 gallons of pasteurised whole milk, 45 tonnes of butter, 20 tonnes of cheese, copious quantities of ice and what was now known as 'Iceberg' ice cream. It employed 75 people. Two photographs (above) from this time show the signage and a section/addition at the south-west corner, which has since been removed.

The company was bought out by the North Eastern Dairy Co-operative (NEDCO) in 1962 and the premises became a retail milk depot, with cold storage, ice making and general storage. NEDCO were taken over by Murray Goulburn in 1985 and the buildings were sold to the Wodonga Council in 1986 (Randell and Pennay, 2004).



Late 20th century, showing the original size of the openings on the northern elevation. (Wodonga Historical Society webpage)

Subsequently, the building was leased to single operators during the late 20th/early 21st century, initially Skills Galore indoor market, Murray Valley Pottery leased it from 1989, and Airlie Pottery

from 1995 to 2004. The cheese factory is currently divided into three premises and is occupied by a gallery, theatre and music venue.

COMPARISON

Only a few places from the postwar period have been included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay and only a few industrial/commercial places from any period.

In terms of industrial buildings, the main comparator is the adjacent building to the north - Butter Factory, 44-46 Lincoln Causeway, Wodonga (HO2). The front concrete section dates to 1927 however the façade/west elevation has been considerably altered such that its original design has been compromised.

In terms of postwar buildings, they generally date to the 1950s, rather than the earlier, WWII phase of the period and are of varying typologies such that there is no ready comparison. Examples of this group include the:

- Leneva Hall, Beechworth-Leneva Road, Leneva (HO13). A small 1950s timber-framed building with a gable roof.
- Brick Residence at 336 Beechworth Road, Wodonga (HO31). Circa 1950, cream brick with brown brick trim and matching fence. It has a long hip roof and a curved bay at the north end.
- Council offices, 198A High Street, Wodonga (part of HO47). A two storey brick building in a Moderne style mode of 1957.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that former Holdenson & Neilson Cheese Factory at 5, 5A, 6/48-54 Lincoln Causeway, Wodonga is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the part of the parcel of land on which the building is located (Lot 2, PS710743) with a nominal five metre curtilage about it as practical.



(Nearmap, 8 January 2025)

PLANNING SCHEME CONTROLS

Planning Controls	Y/N
External Paint Controls Apply?	N
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	N
Tree Controls Apply?	N
Solar Energy System Controls?	Y
Outbuildings or Fences Not Exempt Under Clause 43.01-4?	N
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register Under the Heritage Act 2017?	N
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	Y
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	N

REFERENCES

1927 'Albury Factory for Wodonga.', *The Land* (Sydney), 4 February, p17. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article102976869

1927 'Tender', *Argus*, 17 February 1927, p2

1942 'A progressive move', *Wodonga and Towong Sentinel*, 29 May 1942, p2

Coulthard, Ross (1993): *A Spirit of Cooperation: A Century of Cooperative Dairy Factories in Victoria's North East*, pp26-27

Danes in Australia: http://www.danesinaustralia.com/poul-john-pj-holdenson.html

F Randell & B Pennay (2004) 'Wodonga City Council Victoria Heritage Study Volume 1: Thematic Environmental History'

Wodonga Historical Society Archives