

CAIRE & GRANCINI WAREHOUSE
1314 WHARF STREET SOS
Revised March 2012

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Caire & Grancini Warehouse is a mid-nineteenth-century vernacular brick and stone commercial warehouse located within Victoria's Inner Harbour Precinct. It sits on a sloping bank between Wharf Street and the Inner Harbour waterway. Due to the slope, there is a one-storey frontage facing Wharf Street, and two exposed storeys facing the harbour.

HERITAGE VALUE

Built in 1860, the Caire & Grancini Warehouse is among the oldest commercial warehouses on the Inner Harbour and is linked with the Colonial-era development of Commercial Row, the original locus for commercial and retail ventures in Victoria. The development of Commercial Row was spurred by the advent of Victoria's resource-based economy and the Fraser River gold rush, during which time Victoria became the primary supply town for miners. This warehouse, which predates the incorporation of the City, forms an integral component of the early harbour streetscape. It is situated on a sloping bank between Wharf Street and the Inner Harbour waterway, and represents the commercial activity that fuelled the initial growth and development of the city. Caire & Grancini had originally set up a hardware business in San Francisco during the California gold rush. Capitalizing on the Fraser gold rush and Victoria's rapidly growing economy, Caire & Grancini opened a branch of their firm in this purpose-built structure in 1860, specializing in the sales of iron, hardware, imported glassware and crockery.

This warehouse is also valued as one of the earliest known commercial projects and a rare surviving example of the work of architect John Wright (1830-1915). Wright was born on May 15, 1830 at Killearn, Scotland, and arrived in Victoria in 1858. In 1860, he partnered with George H. Sanders (1838-1920) to form the architectural firm of Wright & Sanders (1860-1895), which was responsible for the major governmental, institutional, commercial and domestic commissions in Victoria prior to their relocation to San Francisco in 1866.

The heritage value of the Caire & Grancini Warehouse also lies in its vernacular construction and building materials, its waterfront situation, and in particular its waterfront facade, which contributes to the diversity of the city's historic shoreline as viewed from the Inner Harbour. The functional design takes advantage of the sloping site, with a utilitarian lower floor used for warehousing and accessed from the water side, and an upper floor with a commercial storefront facing Wharf Street. The Caire & Grancini Warehouse has been subject to additions and alterations, reflecting the changing needs of its occupants and its adaptation to different uses over time.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character-defining elements of the Caire & Grancini Warehouse include its:

- waterfront location within Victoria's Inner Harbour Precinct, unobstructed views between the building and the water and views of the rear façade from the harbour
- continuing commercial use
- commercial form, scale and massing including its two storey configuration, with lower level access at the water side and upper level access at the Wharf Street side, and generally symmetrical configuration of the front and rear facades
- industrial vernacular character and detailing, as seen in robust construction materials such as the brick upper walls, projecting cornices, brick chimneys, rubblestone foundations, stone lintels and interior timber structure
- historic fenestration pattern on the waterfront façade, and other random window openings that indicate alterations over time
- contiguous relationship between this building and the adjacent Fraser Warehouse, 1316-18 Wharf Street.