

FRASER WAREHOUSE
1316-18 WHARF STREET SOS
Revised March 2012

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Fraser Warehouse is a mid-nineteenth-century vernacular stone commercial warehouse located within Victoria's Inner Harbour Precinct. It sits on a sloping bank between Wharf Street and the Inner Harbour waterway. The front and rear facades are symmetrical, and represent two stores separated by an interior wall. Due to the slope, there is a one-storey frontage facing Wharf Street, and two exposed storeys facing the harbour.

HERITAGE VALUE

Built in 1864, the Fraser 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 stone warehouse 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. This warehouse was built for the Honorable Donald Fraser (1810-1897). Born in Scotland, Fraser came to Victoria in 1858 and shortly after his arrival became the unofficial advisor to Sir James Douglas (1803-1877), governor of the Colony of Vancouver Island. Fraser was a member of the Vancouver Island Legislative Council between 1864 and 1866. Fraser was also a wealthy speculative land developer, and owned numerous lots in the downtown core.

This warehouse is also valued as one of the earliest known commercial projects and a rare surviving example of the work of prominent local architect and contractor Thomas Trounce (1813-1900). Trounce arrived in Victoria at the time of the 1858 gold rush; the majority of Trounce's buildings were of masonry construction, an influence from his Cornish background.

The heritage value of the Fraser 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 Fraser 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 Fraser 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, symmetrical configuration of the front and rear facades, double-gabled roof structure and division into two halves with a central wall
- industrial vernacular character and detailing, as seen in robust construction materials such as the rubblestone foundations and walls, dressed quoins, granite lintels, shaped raised front and rear parapets, sandstone façade pilasters 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 Caire & Grancini Warehouse, 1314 Wharf Street.