

The 'Paris' end of Collins St was photographed frequently by both amateur and professional photographers. My first question was who was Pierre Robin? After much searching, he remains a mystery. The only possible result being a French wool buyer from Hawthorn.

This shot is one of many that were popular in the 1950's. During the first decades of the 20th century, the 'Paris end' of Collins Street was home to the artistic community of Melbourne with many artists, musicians, writers and theatre performers living and working in the area. Some of Melbourne's leading photographers including Athol Shmith, Jack Cato, Julian Smith, May and Mina Moore, Ruth Hollick and Wolfgang Sievers established studios in this thriving arts precinct. As well as the Oriental Hotel, the 'Paris End' of Collins Street included establishments such as La Pastorale, Boulevard Café, Grosvenor Chambers and Le Louvre.

The photograph reflects a change in Melbourne at that time – outdoor cafes. Melbourne City Council initially refused the Oriental's first application for the outdoor café in 1933 as too disruptive to pedestrian traffic. A permit was eventually granted in the 1950's and the Parisian custom was established.

Australia, and in this instance, Melbourne was evolving its identity from following British customs and traditions to enjoying the new habits of immigrants from Europe. The development of Melbourne's cosmopolitan café society has been attributed to the influx of European migrants, particularly Italians, after World War Two.

These families populated the inner city suburbs of Melbourne - Carlton, Brunswick, Collingwood, Richmond, Fitzroy and North Melbourne. This is where the European based café culture in Melbourne began and slowly spread into the CBD with cafes such as Pellegrini's in the city, Mario's in Brunswick, the Sidewalk Café, along with Mirka's Café and The Galleon in St Kilda.

During the 1950s older style tea rooms and tea houses were replaced and converted into coffee lounges and the love of espresso coffee spread throughout the city. It is now hard to imagine Melbourne without sidewalks cafes.

<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/the-paris-end/>

<https://www.domain.com.au/news/why-the-top-end-of-spring-street-still-deserves-to-be-called-the-paris-end-845713/>

<http://citycollection.melbourne.vic.gov.au/oriental-hotel-collins-street/>

<https://www.artstthread.com/news/til-you-drop-shopping-a-melbourne-history/>

<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2933>

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