



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES- ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Strelitz Buildings is of a more eclectic and unusual design than most other commercial buildings in Fremantle's West End. The building's individual aesthetic character contributes strongly to the collective identity (townscape) of the West End. (Criteria 1.1, 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Like a number of other Fremantle trading families, the Strelitz Brothers company was closely identified with the commercial expansion of Perth and Fremantle, during Western Australia's gold boom of the 1890s. (Criterion 2.2)

Strelitz Buildings in Mouat Street has a close association with the brothers Paul and Richard Strelitz who established their trading company and were also influential in trade and politics in Perth and Fremantle. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Strelitz Buildings contributes to the West End's sense of place by contributing to the built environment of commercial buildings, which collectively reflect the rapid growth and importance of Fremantle in the gold boom of the 1890s. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Strelitz Buildings is representative of the exuberant style of commercial building constructed at the turn of the century in Fremantle, and closely associated with the commercial development of the West End of Fremantle during the gold boom in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The condition of the building is generally sound. It appears to be well maintained by the current owner. The cause of a lean in the paired parapet is undetermined, it may be of deliberate design, or it may be a structural fault.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Although *Strelitz Buildings* is currently used for residential rather than commercial purposes the building retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Despite some alterations over nearly one hundred years of use and the replacement of some parts of the fabric, *Strelitz Buildings* retains its original spatial configuration and has had minimal alterations to the external fabric of the building. The place has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Soon after their arrival in Western Australia both Paul and Richard Strelitz established themselves in Fremantle. Paul Strelitz had originally landed in Melbourne in 1886 and after various jobs moved to Western Australia in 1894, attracted by the glowing reports of gold discoveries. He was an inaugural East Fremantle Councillor, serving for a year, on the first Council after the area was declared a municipality on 2 April 1897.¹ On 23 August 1904, he was selected for the consulship of Western Australia by the Netherlands Government.²

Richard Strelitz settled in Victoria in 1892, following a post in a shipping office in Germany. Through his association with a wholesale merchants agency he was transferred to Western Australia six months after his arrival. In 1894, he severed his connection with that firm and commenced in business with his brother in Fremantle. Richard Strelitz was appointed consul for Denmark in 1897, and six years later became Acting-Consul for Sweden.³

The two brothers established themselves as the firm 'Strelitz Brothers: Merchants and Shipping Agents' of Fremantle and Kalgoorlie.⁴ Among

¹ Lee, J. *This is East Fremantle: The story of a town and its people*, (Town of East Fremantle, 1979), pp. 4, 213.

² Battye, J. S. (ed) *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*. Vol I, 1912. pp. 595-596.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, (P.W.H. Thiel & Co., 1901), pp. 507-508.

the agencies possessed by the firm, one of the most important was the German-Australian Steamship Company, owners of the 'direct' line of continental sailers who were the pioneers of 'direct' trade between Europe and Western Australia. Strelitz Bros. also held the agency for Alfred Nobel's Hamburg Explosive Company, Ltd and through this had agencies for magazines in the goldfields. They also imported railway material and mining machinery.⁵

Ratebooks indicate that Drummond & Strelitz bought vacant Lot 49, 30 Mouat Street in 1896.⁶ By 1897, the owners were listed as Strelitz Bros., whose occupation was noted as merchant, and the description of the property indicated that a warehouse had been built. This is verified by an entry in the Fremantle Minute Books that states that on 5 January 1897, plans were passed for the Strelitz warehouses and offices in Mouat Street, on the proposition of Cr. Forsyth and seconded by Cr. Instone.⁷

It is thought that *Strelitz Buildings* was designed by J. F. Allen, as it is similar in style to a number of his other designs.⁸ Allen later designed commercial buildings for the expanding Strelitz business in Hay, Murray and William Streets, Perth.⁹

The description of the property read, 'office, warehouse at back, office in front and office upstairs'.¹⁰ By 1898, in addition to occupancy by the firm, offices in the building had been leased to a number of other companies, including: A.U.S.N. Coy, Steamship Agents; Cavanagh and Keogh, Architects; Frank Viles, Commission Agent and W. M. Lovegrove, Solicitors.

Between 1904-06, American mining engineer, Herbert Hoover, later to become President of the United States of America, rented an office and workshop in the building.¹¹

Strelitz Bros. continued to expand its business, taking advantage of the development of Fremantle as the major trading port for Western Australia's gold boom. Despite their internment as aliens during the 1914-1918 war Paul and Richard Strelitz remained the owner-occupants of the building until 1920, when the building was sold to George Evans.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Fremantle ratebook entry, 1896. (Provided by City of Fremantle Local History Collection).

⁷ Fremantle Council Minutes, 5 January 1897. (Provided by City of Fremantle Local History Collection).

⁸ The National Trust assessment states that Joseph Francis Allen was the architect, but a recent university study by Victoria Cole, looking at the work of Allen, found no specific reference to Allen being the architect for the 'Strelitz Buildings' in Mouat Street.

⁹ *West Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 25 November 1911, p. 19.

West Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal, 9 November 1907, p. 19.

¹⁰ Fremantle ratebook search and Fremantle Council Minutes, 5 January 1897. (Provided by City of Fremantle Local History Collection).

¹¹ *Fremantle Gazette*, 17 February 1978, p. 1.

Evans later established the first paint manufacturing business in Western Australia.¹²

The building is currently privately owned and used as a private residence.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The building is most notable for the Free Classical details of the facade and the heavy modelling of stucco decoration. The use of rusticated pilasters, on lower and upper levels is unusual, as is the arched area over the upper windows and the decorative elements, including the lyre. It is possible that the incorporation of the lyre emblem, symbol of Apollo, god of the fine arts, in the pediment was used to represent the Strelitzs' connection with the fine arts. Both brothers were involved in patronage of the fine arts, Richard facilitating the purchase of St Petersburg China from Russia for the Art Gallery of Western Australia, in 1902.¹³

The building has been modified, but this has had limited impact on the original fabric. Externally, apart from the painting of the walls, alterations appear to have been limited to changes in the glazing, with one door removed. On the ground floor, two large open areas, currently used as a residence, are sub-divided with partitions. Walls and ceiling were painted previously, when the space was used as a restaurant, but otherwise appear unaltered. The upper floor was converted for single residential use several years ago. Some walls have been modified, floor boards replaced and new plaster details added, however the original configuration of rooms remains intact.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

¹² *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1920, p. 91, 1921; *Fremantle Gazette*, 17 February 1978, p. 1.

¹³ Erickson, Dorothy, 'History of the metal collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia and a catalogue of objects', (Masters Preliminary, UWA, 1985).