



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

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) is a fine example of the Federation Free Classical style of architecture as applied to hotel construction. The place has an eclectic use of decorative classical elements. The order and control of architectural detailing in the stucco-finished facades, and the cantilevered balcony at first floor level, produce an accomplished and confident expression of late nineteenth century building form. (Criteria 1.1, 1.2)

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) defines the corner of Milligan and Hay Streets and is a Perth landmark. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) demonstrates the substantial growth that occurred in Perth during the gold rush period. (Criterion 2.1)

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) has a close association with John de Baun, the first proprietor and an influential entrepreneur in the 1890s, who developed a portfolio of hotels during the gold boom to provide service and accommodation for the rapidly expanding Western Australian population. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

As the western-most hotel in the Central Business District, *Melbourne Hotel (fmr)* was, until recently, a popular recreational venue and contributed to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) is an example of a gold rush hotel built in the city in the late 1890s. Its almost unchanged external appearance is uncommon. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) is representative of the ebullient gold rush architecture of favoured by developers in Perth and other town at the turn-of-the-century. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

The interior of the building is currently undergoing change for adaptation as a Club. This work is being supervised by Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown, Architects in liaison with Conservation Architect Ron Bodycoat. Deterioration, defects and inappropriate change are being addressed to return the integrity of these elements and to present them in an authentic and relevant manner. Generally, *Melbourne Hotel (fmr)*, is in sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Although the place has been used for a number of purposes over the years, *Melbourne Hotel (fmr)* is currently being converted into use as a private club. This use is compatible with the original use of the place as an hotel. *Melbourne Hotel (fmr)* has a moderately high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

In the current conversion of the place to a Club, the external facades and internal and original elements have been retained, including: the main staircase; the leaded glass to the ground floor Hay Street window; the internal leaded glass fanlights; the lift car and leadlight doors; the basement barrel lifting machinery; the surviving original cast iron panels to the cantilevered first floor verandah; the original cellar; and, the internal decorative work.

Melbourne Hotel (fmr) has a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The supporting evidence has been compiled by HCWA based on an information supplied by Ron Bodycoat of Duncan Stephen and Mercer, Architects: 'Old Melbourne Club. Heritage Assessment' (November 1994)

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Documentary evidence relating to the establishment, construction and use of *Melbourne Hotel (fmr)*, is sparse. Sufficient evidence does exist in photographs at the Batty Library and in the possession of the present owners, to demonstrate the form and character of the building and that the chief elements of the building, the external facades, have undergone very little change since 1896 and remain today in a form close to the original. Restoration work currently in hand will reinstate faithfully architectural details which have deteriorated, been altered or removed from the building during its life - with the exception of the large pediment to the parapet of the Milligan Street facade, taken down sometime ago and not to be reconstructed in the current adaptation programme.

Newspaper accounts from around the turn of the century, Post Office Directories, Perth City Council Rate Books and the WA Dictionary of Biography establish the opening of *Melbourne Hotel* in 1897 on that site and provide some evidence about the people associated with its beginnings, John De Baun, McMannaway and John Davies.

Milligan Street in the early 1890s as the Rate Books record, was largely a residential street of mixed social strata - some few large houses on the edge of an expanding town but predominantly a mixture of cottages and vacant land.

Owners of the land and the house that preceded the hotel on that land in the 1880s and 1890s, were brewers and then a brewing Company. The decision to build a hotel on the site is not surprising but a wise choice and suitable for a hotel due to its proximity to the Town, the nearby railway and the tramcar service which passed the door along Hay Street, leading up the Hill to the more socially elite residential areas in Mount Street, Malcolm Street and West Perth generally. Positioned on a prominent corner site in an easily accessible location, the hotel would attract local patrons and visitors from further afield.

Its large bulk and socially acceptable architectural style would impress then as it does again today, nearly 100 years later, when Victorian buildings have been re-discovered and are valued for their presence as a legitimate element in the environment of the town, their usefulness and their cultural heritage significance.

Little evidence has been discovered, however, to account for the life, ownership or use of the building as a hotel, then as a night club, prior to its recent closure for adaptation to a new use as a Club.

Perth City Council Rate Books record that in the 1880s the site was owned by William Molloy, brewer, and included a "house and grounds". Other parts of Lot H48 were either vacant ground or included houses occupied by a succession of owners, recorded as plasterer, engineer, tailor and so-on. In 1888 the Rate Books amend the owner's name to Meloy until 1890 when Mrs Meloy, widow, is recorded as owner. In 1892 the entries record W Nicholls,

brewer, as the rated person and the Swan Brewing Company as the owner. In 1894 Mrs Nicholls is noted as the rated person and in 1895 the entry shows "widow". Ownership by the Swan Brewing Company continues, with "house and grounds", until 1897 when the Rate Book entry records J de Baun as owner of the property and the property description as "Hotel". A second entry in 1897 records Mrs Grace Lannon (handwriting difficult to decipher) as the Publican and ratepayer for "new building Melbourne Hotel", owner J De Baun.

Certainly around the time of construction of the Hotel, entries in the Milligan Street area expand, indicating further land subdivision and an increase in the number of property owners with less vacant ground as the town expanded westwards.

Melbourne Hotel was constructed amidst a hive of building activity. The discovery of gold in the Western Australia led to gold rushes in the 1890s which quadrupled the colony's population. The increased population and prosperity created a buoyant economy. Hotels and accommodation facilities proliferated throughout Perth to provide for the surging population. From 1890, Western Australia was a self governing colony and Perth developed rapidly after construction of the railway and Perth Central Railway Station in 1894.

At the time of construction, Western Australia was experiencing the wealth, prosperity and security of a long running gold boom. Opulence, optimism, and confidence in the future of the State and the reign of a new King, Edward VII, heralded a baroque quality associated in architecture.¹ Freeland says:

In 1892, Perth had been a primitive frontier town with all the rawness and lack of style of a pioneer settlement. By 1900, it had been dipped boldly into a bucket of pure Victoriana and taken out, dripping plaster and spiked with towers and cupolas in a bewildering variety of shapes, to dry.²

The building demonstrates the confidence and opulence of hotels of the period, located prominently on a corner site at the western end of the Town. The elegant if somewhat incongruous first floor balcony, cantilevered out over the pavement to both streets, the high ceilings and the grand manner of the facades complete with the treatment of the principal rooms, speak eloquently of the social significance of late nineteenth century hotels which offered accommodation and service to a rapidly expanding Town population and a burgeoning trade in country visitors.

Melbourne Hotel (fmr), was one of a number of hotels constructed along the length of Hay Street. Further east was the *Metropole Hotel* and *His Majesty's*, to the west were hotels in West Perth and Subiaco. *Melbourne Hotel* was the western most city hotel and was a popular drinking spot. It continued in use as an hotel, and then as a nightclub, with associated entertainment, until the 1980s. In 1995, *Melbourne Hotel (fmr)*, is being renovated for use as a private club.

¹ Beasley, M. U. 'Architectural Styles and their Sources in Western Australia since 1831' in Pitt-Morison, M. and White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979) p. 211.

² Freeland, J. M. *Architecture in Australia: A History* (F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968) p. 198.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Melbourne Hotel (fmr), is a representative example of the opulence, the confidence and the extravagance of hotel service in the 1890s. It represents significantly the Federation Free Classical architectural treatment for commercial buildings in an urban context at the end of the Victorian era.³

The construction is representative of load-bearing, masonry construction for residential buildings in the 1890s and derives from a well-established English tradition of building techniques and decorative skills.

Examination of the surviving fabric of the building, currently undergoing adaptation to restore significant architectural elements of the external envelope and to some interior spaces and conversion for a new use as a club, reveals the surviving character of the original building - a three storeyed brick building of load-bearing construction, pitched corrugated iron roof concealed behind an elaborate parapet to the street facades which comprise painted stucco finish, round-headed timber windows and door openings arched with false stonework, attached columns, pilasters, triangular pediments and projecting mouldings, all in Federation Free Classical style.⁴ French doors open onto a cantilevered balcony at first floor level, supported on cast iron decorative brackets, cast iron columns and lacework and a bullnosed corrugated iron roof. High ceiling heights to each of the three floors, produce a high-volumed building capped with a parapet adorned with pediments, decorated stucco work, projecting corbelled mouldings and balustrading.

A major original element, a large pediment located on top of the parapet to Milligan Street, no longer survives. The Murray Street facade has been replicated and extended to double the length of the facade.

Internally, the building comprises timber floor and roof construction, plastered wall finishes, timber joinery and mouldings, and decorative plaster ceilings originally to the principal ground floor rooms.

A cellar survives under part of the ground floor, with original access for kegs and bar supplies in the street pavement.

Decorative elements which survive from the original construction are to be recycled or restored in the current adaptation:

- . a decorative timber main staircase
- . some leaded glass in fanlights to windows in the Hay Street facade and internally over principal doors
- . copying for reuse some of original moulded plaster ceilings
- . the metal lift car and leadlight doors⁵

³ The consultant attributed the style Victorian Classical Revival to the place. HCWA has revised this assessment of style and attributed 'Federation Free Classical' in accordance with Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present.* (Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 100-103.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ There is some uncertainty as to whether the car was part of the original construction or a later addition, as electricity was introduced to Perth in the 1892 Electricity Act and electric

- . pavement lights
- . barrel lifting machinery in the cellar.

The elements are significant; retention is important to assist interpretation of the original highly decorative character of the interiors and the function of the building as a hotel.

13.3 REFERENCES

Ron Bodycoat of Duncan Stephen and Mercer, Architects: 'Old Melbourne Club. Heritage Assessment' (November 1994)

Photographs 12/69 in the Batty Library Pictorial Records Collection:

Photos numbered: 4326B/1/18

4326B/1/19

4326B/1/21

Photographs on Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown files of the building prior to the commencement of adaptation in 1992.

Photographs in the possession of the owners including an early promotional brochure which incorporates a photograph of the exterior; assumed to be taken early in the twentieth century.

Perth City Council Rate Books on microfilm at the Batty Library

Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown 'The Old Melbourne Hotel Club' (October 1992)

Lise Summers - Archivist 'The Melbourne Hotel, Milligan Street, Perth' (undated research paper).

tramcars were not in operation until 1899. Further research is needed but the issue is not likely to affect the cultural heritage significance of the place.