



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

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence exhibits aesthetic characteristics unusual in contemporary Western Australian post offices, and reflects the Government's anticipation for the continued growth of Kellerberrin. (Criterion 1.1)

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is the most visually imposing building in the town and makes an important contribution to the townscape of Kellerberrin. (Criterion 1.3)

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence forms part of a visually unified group of buildings, an important element of which adjoins immediately to the east. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is important for its association with the evolution and development of postal and telegraphic services. (Criterion 2.1)

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is important as evidence of a way of life in which the postmaster and family were accommodated within the complex of the post office. (Criterion 2.1)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is valued by the community as the location for postal and other communication services. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

The impressive scale and detailing of the *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence* is rare for a post office outside the major regional towns and cities of Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is rare for its relative intactness of interior fittings of the postal hall and demonstrates the functions of early postal services. (Criterion 5.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence, in its imposing scale and form, is evidence of an expectation of the growth in the town which did not eventuate. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The program of maintenance adopted by the proprietors of the *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence* has retained the building in good condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Considering the change in the nature of the postal service since this structure was built, and the minor alterations to the building fabric with the insertion of modern conveniences to the residence, and interior shop fit-out and addition to the public space of the postal office, *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence* retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Some alteration and modernisation to the building fabric has occurred over the years; however, the building is substantially intact and it would be possible to reinstate those items to the postal hall which were removed during adaptation, to the exterior of the rear of the building which underwent alteration and the modernisation of the public space of the post office. The building therefore retains a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The following is based on the Heritage Assessment for the *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence* compiled by David Kelsall, 1994.

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is a two-storey brick building designed, in 1912, by the Public Works Department in Western Australia under the supervision of Hillson Beasley.

In 1861, the first Europeans arrived in the area of present day Kellerberrin. Over the next three years, numerous expeditions seeking gold bearing formations further east, were mounted. The first settlements in the locality

were outstations. The district grew slowly until gold was discovered in the Yilgarn. In 1877, the district contained four farms, all of which ran sheep.

In 1892, the area was surveyed for a railway route to the goldfields.

Surveyor Tibbets was appointed to survey the shortest distance for the railway from Northam to Southern Cross. A plan was set out placing the railway line 11 miles north of its present position in the Kellerberrin District. Settlers were not happy with the situation as the railway was not half way between settlements...the line was resurveyed.³²

A small township established by 1893, at nearby Doodlakine Well. The area became the terminus for gangs building the new railway.³³ There had been a post office at Doodlakine since the completion of the Telegraph Line. In 1897, a post office was built at Kellerberrin north of the railway line; the postal officers were transferred from the old Doodlakine site.³⁴

It was not until the Goldfields Water Scheme passed through Kellerberrin in 1901, that the first sale of town lots began.³⁵

By 1902, Kellerberrin comprised of a Railway Station, Station Master's House, two cottages, four houses, a small Methodist Manse, post office and the Agricultural Hall.³⁶

The town's growth was rapid, and a Road's Board (1908) and a bank (1910) were established. By 1911, Kellerberrin's population had grown to 903, with a further 2,500 in the surrounding district (a larger municipality than it is at present).³⁷ A petition for a telephone exchange at Kellerberrin was presented to the Postmaster General's Department.³⁸

In 1912, *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence*, two further banks and a flour mill were built in the town. The new post office was constructed on the south side of the town. The first post office, located on the north side of the road was demolished several years later.

On 4 July 1911, Michael McCabe, a farmer from Kellerberrin, purchased adjoining land (Lot 8) to the south, fronting Sewell Street, and various rights of way were established. Further, more recent subdivision into Lots 42 and 43 of the holding, formerly Lot 41, have taken place, resulting in the land on which the present post office stands being a fraction of the earlier holding.

The post office at Kellerberrin is testimony to the importance of the town in this region during this period, and the State Government's anticipation of the town's continued growth.

During the period of 1910-12, many post offices were built, but few were built on the grand scale found at Kellerberrin. Many post offices built during this period shared a common design. Compared with other post offices designed by Beasley in this period, *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence* is strikingly different. The floor area is large, and it is two-storeyed having four generous

³² Leake, B. W., *Reminiscences 1860 C1910.*, 1961.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Massingham, C. W., *Early Days of Kellerberrin C1870-1906*, Notes, Batty Library, PR811.

³⁵ Morison, J., *Kellerberrin History*, Thesis, 1959.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Year Book, 1913-1914, p. 198.

³⁸ Morison.

rooms on the upper floor, a voluminous hallway, two balconies, and a lounge, kitchen and pantry on the ground floor level. A further toilet, broom closet and laundry (with copper) are at the rear, accessible externally.

Hillson Beasley supervised the design and alterations of many post office buildings within the State, contemporaneously with *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence*. The post offices at Dowerin, Katanning, Meckering, Merredin, Sandstone and Wickopin were also built in 1912, by the Public Works Department (PWD). Beasley's other post offices from this period are smaller, single storeyed, and share similar design elements including, round arch headed windows, a timber pediment motif in the central window panel and arched entry points. (Katanning, Moora, Narrogin and Wagin).

Whilst the design bears no resemblance in size to the buildings of similar sized towns, *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence* is similar in size and scale to a number of post offices constructed in the Sydney Metropolitan area some ten years previously, and reflects similar design details. *Summer Hill Post Office* has 'a two storey hipped roof hexagonal entry porch addressing the corner, with a balcony above supported by five sandstone Tuscan columns'.³⁹ *Annandale Post Office* (1895) and *Arncliffe Post Office* (1898) exhibit similar scale characteristics to *Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence*.⁴⁰

By 1914, the town could boast four churches. The pre-war years had seen growth that was brought to a rapid end due to a drought in 1914, from which the town did not recover.

After World War Two, the population in the district declined.⁴¹ Kellerberrin is no longer the important centre of agricultural activity that once supplied the goldfields with many of its needs.

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is still used as a Post Office for Kellerberrin.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Kellerberrin Post Office and Residence is an imposing two-storey, red brick building designed in the Federation Free Style.⁴²

The building features an elaborate ventilation system with internal ducting detailed from each room. Duct registers are still evident in the ceiling as timber trimmed square recesses with vents above to the roof space on the upper floor, and through the ceiling and external wall into the roof void in the case of the ground floor lounge-dining. Vents in the ceiling of the postal hall are provided, but the system for their exhaust is not clear without invasive investigation, although a brick duct is shown on the plans between two of the upper floor rooms. Extensive venting of the upper floor vestibule is also provided. The use of internal air ducts for climate control was incorporated in a number of other buildings constructed in Western Australian areas with hot, dry climates in this period.

³⁹ Heritage Survey of Sydney Region Post Offices (for the National Trust of Australia, Nsw Project 50, 1987-1988.)

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Morison.

⁴² Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 136-139.

The design incorporates an elegantly proportioned two-storey portico in a classical style. The portico forms the central part of the facade. Its pentagonal roof is supported by concrete columns capped with tuscan capitals, an unusual feature for Western Australian buildings. A pediment crowns a central rendered band. The front facade also features a balcony which extends the length of the building with a timber balustrade infill.

The front facade is embellished with rendered quoins, window heads and sills, and deeply moulded string courses. The roof is covered in terracotta tiles set on decorative brackets on a rendered frieze. A vented roof monitor and decorative terracotta ridge elements located at the rear, no longer exist.

The ground floor is largely occupied by the postal hall, with the postmaster's living quarters at the rear, including a dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom and a store. Private access to the quarters was via an entrance passage on the west elevation. The sleeping area, including three bedrooms, a bathroom and a sitting room were located on the upper level.⁴³

In 1954, new toilets and laundry were added to the south-east corner of the building, the existing store was converted into mens' toilets, and the existing bathroom converted to two womens' toilets.

The timber stair to the upper level is well detailed and the stair-well features a raked timber boarded ceiling.

The postal hall is a large space with painted timber boarded and beamed ceilings, with a modest fireplace and an existing counter, a strong room and partitioning to the exchange. The partitioning is in the form of painted timber frames divided into four vertical bays with some glazed panels and painted boarded dado. In 1973, some partitions were sheeted and the counter top and nosing resurfaced with plastic laminate. The counter retains its decorative elements; however, its curved ends have been replaced with jarrah panelled partitions in order to separate the postal hall from the public area.

In 1971, the balcony was enclosed and its picket fence removed. Other alterations to the building fabric include: in 1980, a steel framed pergola covered with sheet metal to the entrance porch of the residence was installed; and ventilator and fireplaces were enclosed. Other alterations to the interior include: the installation of air conditioning; the upgrading of door furniture; and the painting of fireplace mantles and other joinery.

To the rear of the premises is a brick garage with a standard profile corrugated asbestos cement roof. The land on which the garage and other outbuildings of recent construction are sited has been excised from the original holding.

⁴³ PWD No. 16103, for ground floor plans, 1912.

In 1994/95, the public space of the post office was extended and the interior modified to accommodate a retail shop. The modifications included: removal of the original counter (stored at Shire Office) and replacement with a modern version; installation of Australia Post standard slat walling to two existing jarrah panelled partitions and additional partitions; installation of wall carpets; and general modernisation of interior fixtures.⁴⁴

13.3 REFERENCES

Pope, B., Bush, F., Broomfield, W., and Kelsall, D., *Historical and Architectural Assessments of Post Offices in Western Australia owned by Australia Post*, 1993.

NEGP 1987-1988, The National Trust of Australia (NSW) Project 50, 'Heritage Survey of Sydney Region Post Offices'.

⁴⁴ See Heritage Council of Western Australia File No. 1372 for ground floor plan showing modifications to the interior.