



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.

1. AESTHETIC VALUE

The Boulder Town Hall possesses a considerable degree of aesthetic value, being a notable example of the Gold Boom Free Classicist style in Western Australia.

The imposing form of the Town Hall, complete with tall clock tower prominently located at the intersection of Burt and Brookman Streets, has some significance as the focal point of Boulder township since 1908.

The quality of the interior details, particularly the pressed metal proscenium arch and ceiling of the hall, is of some significance.

The drop-curtain, painted by Phil W. Goatcher, is a rare surviving example of his artwork in Western Australia, adding to the aesthetic value of the hall interior.

2. HISTORIC VALUE

As an imposing and substantial public building, the Boulder Town Hall has historic value as evidence of the prosperity experienced in the Eastern Goldfields at the turn of the century. The scale and stature of the building reflects the confidence of Boulder's civic leaders in the continued prosperity and growth of their town.

3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

4. SOCIAL VALUE

Boulder Town Hall has considerable social value as the administrative, civic and social centre of Boulder for over eighty years. Despite the town's administrative amalgamation with Kalgoorlie, the Town Hall's social role, and value, continues.

5. RARITY

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

Boulder Town Hall is representative of administrative and civic buildings constructed in West Australian towns due to the economic stimulus provided by the 1890s gold boom.

CONDITION

Although some restoration work was carried out on the town hall walls in 1988, there is evidence of renewed movement in the stonework in a number of places.¹ (This may be attributed to the daily blasting at the nearby open pit.) There is also evidence of rising damp, which requires attention. However, overall the building is in reasonable condition

INTEGRITY

Although the administrative function has been located elsewhere the social function of the building is maintained. The building has a high degree of integrity.

AUTHENTICITY

Although some of the paint finishes may not be original, the fabric of the building and the internal details have a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The following is an extract from the brochure prepared for the opening of the Hall on 23 June, 1908:

"Boulder Town Hall Buildings have been constructed for the Boulder Municipal Council at a cost of £11,200 by Mr. Octavius Stubbs, of Perth, to the plans and specifications of Mr. A. Oswald Wilson, of Boulder. The block of Buildings comprises Municipal Offices and Council Chambers, a Library (both public and subscription) and a Theatre, with an up-to-date modern stage.

The Town Hall is 70ft long by 55ft wide, by 32ft clear height from floor to ceiling. A large gallery runs right round the Hall, which is lofty and well ventilated, with numerous exits and escape doors. A mechanical sliding roof has been constructed, and this can be opened or closed as desired.

The stage has been constructed with a view to the accommodation of the most modern scenery, the stage mechanism having been specially designed by Mr. Black, the Chief Mechanist at His Majesty's Theatre, Perth. The dimensions of the stage are 42ft by 34ft deep behind the proscenium walls, and 39ft deep to the footlights. The stage has a clear height of 45ft to the gridiron, and has the usual fly galleries on three sides, scene dock, stage loft, etc. The Drop Curtain, which is a scene of "The Bay of Naples," and an exterior set scene, are by the well known scenic artists, Phil W. Goatcher & Son, of Perth.

The whole of the electric lighting of the buildings has been designed and carried out by Mr. H.G. Alder, Manager of the Boulder Municipal Electric Light Station. A special feature has been made of the Hall lighting, the stage being illuminated with 275 lights of 16 c.p. each.

¹ Details of restoration work, including photographs, are held on file.
Register of Heritage Places-Permanent Entry Boulder Town Hall 2

The foundation stone of the Town Hall Buildings was laid by Phillip Collier, Esq., M.L.A., on 13th November, 1907."²

Despite the glowing description, at the time of the tender there was some local resistance to the construction of the building. "Even though the tender has been accepted certain of the ratepayers think that an injunction could be obtained to stop the new building from being proceeded with."³

However, by the time of completion, the opening of the Town Hall and Council Chambers was a cause for celebration in Boulder. "Flags were flying from the principal business places, and lines of bunting were stretched across Burt-street from in front of the Race Club offices and from the Court Hotel and the Mechanics' Institute."⁴ A great number of ordinary citizens turned out to be involved in the opening of the hall. It had been noted with appreciation by the mayor that such interest had been shown. However, there was insufficient room inside the hall for all the people present to be included in the actual ceremony. The Governor was presented with a souvenir gold key, manufactured by Messrs. Mazzuchelli & Downes, bearing an inscription that recorded the details of the event. The presence of the Governor at the opening ceremony indicates the significance of the occasion and the importance of the building in the towns development.

Once inside the building, "the stage was decorated with pot plants, and looked very attractive", the mayor stepped forward to address the gathering. In his speech he outlined the background events that led to the eventual construction of the Town Hall. "He was very pleased to be able to say that the successful competitor was their local architect, Mr. A.O. Wilson, which proved that not only did Boulder turn out good gold but good architects also."⁵

The workmanship of the contractor is reflected in a comment in the Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal in September 1908, "The erection of the Boulder Town Hall was carried out so well by the contractor, Mr. O. Stubbs, that during the three months' period of maintenance practically nothing had to be done to the building."⁶

Once the Town Hall had been officially declared open, the musical section of the function commenced. The festivities surrounding the opening of the Hall continued for a number of days with further musical performances being held at the Hall.

Following the amalgamation of the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Town Councils in 1989, there was a rationalisation of Council activities and subsequently the functions of the Boulder Town Hall changed. The hall continues to be the focus of social and cultural activity within the community, however the former council offices are now used as an art gallery and exhibition space.

A major feature of the building is the drop curtain, "The Bay of Naples", painted by Phil W. Goatcher (1851 - c.1931), a scene painter of world renown. Goatcher arrived in Melbourne in 1867 aboard the *Dover Castle*, having apprenticed himself to a Liverpool shipping company. However, he took leave and walked to the Ballarat goldfields to join relatives. Finding little success he left Australia

² Information held on file.

³ Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal, (WAMBEJ) 31 August, 1907, p.20

⁴ Kalgoorlie Miner, 24 June 1908, p.2

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ WAMBEJ, 28 September 1908, p.20

seeking employment in America and Britain. During the 1870s and 1880s he acquired a considerable reputation in the USA as a scenic artist, his speciality being drop-curtains (painted canvas cloths lowered during a performance to mask scene changes) and drop scenes (painted cloths in lieu of flats). Goatcher returned to Australia in 1890, painting scenery for J.C. Williamson's theatrical productions in Melbourne, before moving to Western Australia in 1906 in search of a drier climate. Goatcher, with his son James, established a successful painting and decorating business in West Perth. The original subject of the Boulder curtain was the Rock of Gibraltar, however Goatcher subsequently altered it to the Bay of Naples to please the Italian goldfields community.⁷ The scenic curtain, an integral part of the internal decoration of the Boulder Town Hall, is the only known example of Goatcher's scenic painting in Western Australia. Other examples of Goatcher's art are to be found in the chapel of St Gertrude's School, New Norcia, All Saints' Church, Collie and St John's Church, Fremantle.⁸

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The Boulder Town Hall is an imposing brick and stone building with clock tower at street corner, comprising municipal offices and council chambers, library, town hall, and 8 dressing rooms. The hall stage measures 42' x 32' (13m x 9.8m). The lofty hall is 70' long, 55' wide and 32' high (21.5m x 17m x 9.8m). A gallery runs around the sides of the hall, which also has a mechanical sliding roof.

The exuberant interior detailing of the building reflects the pride, confidence and new wealth of the goldfield community, as well as contemporary aesthetic values. The proscenium arch and the elaborately patterned ceiling, both fashioned in pressed metal, are impressive examples of the range of building materials available in Western Australia, as a result of the goldrush.

Apperly (et al), in A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, describes the Boulder Town Hall as an exemplar of the Federation Free Classical style of architecture. "Free classical was a style well suited to express the confidence that accompanied the dynamic growth of settlements in Western Australia following the discovery of gold at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. Buildings in this idiom erected in the 1890s and early 1900s in Perth, Fremantle and the goldfield towns convey the ebullient confidence of these boom years at a time when the eastern states were suffering from depression, drought and industrial unrest. Many architects from the eastern states moved to Western Australia at this time and played an important role in the establishment and development of its towns, cities and suburbs."⁹

In 1988 the Boulder Shire Council received \$7,500 towards the restoration of the Town Hall. This work, carried out by Consulting Engineers G.J. Looten, included: steel strapping to the two most easterly walls; removal of tie bars from the southern section of a wall in the ladies toilet, which had been installed some years earlier in an unsuccessful attempt to stabilise this section of the building; and, rendering and repainting of the affected walls.

⁷ Ivan King, HMT archivist, has a photograph of the original Gibraltar scenic curtain.

⁸ Hough, D. "Remembrance of scenes past", in The Bulletin, 15 October, 1991, pp.98-99.

⁹ Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P., A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989, pp.104-107

13.3 References

Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal,
(WAMBEJ) 31 August, 1907, p.20

Kalgoorlie Miner, 24 June 1908, p.2

WAMBEJ, 28 September 1908, p.20

Ivan King, HMT archivist, has a photograph of the original Gibraltar scenic curtain.

Hough, D. "Remembrance of scenes past", in The Bulletin, 15 October, 1991, pp.98-99.

Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P., A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989, pp.104-107