



REGISTER OF HERITAGE- 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

Adelaide Steamship House (fmr) is a fine example of the Federation Free Classical style. In general, the buildings reinforce the architectural character (townscape) of the West End precinct of Fremantle. In particular, their presence strongly contributes to the character and scale (streetscape) of Mouat Street. (Criteria 1.1, 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The buildings on site have historic significance as the offices of the Adelaide Steamship Company. This company contributed to the development of shipping to ports around Australia. During the gold-boom at the turn-of-the-century, the company played a significant role as one of the major national shipping companies in Western Australia, and Fremantle in particular. Adelaide Steamship conducted their West Australian shipping business out of these buildings for more than seventy years, until the buildings were sold in 1978. (Criteria 2.2, 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

These buildings and their continuity of use by the original occupants, located in the West End of Fremantle, reflect the significant role Fremantle played as the state's principal shipping port during Western Australia's gold boom of 1890-1910, and in subsequent years. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

12. 3 CONDITION

Following recent restoration work, the buildings are well maintained by the owner. They are in sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The buildings have been adapted to provide residential, as well as office and warehousing spaces by the current owner. This has resulted in some minor modification of the interior spaces, but the usage of the buildings is not dissimilar to that of their original purposes. The integrity of the buildings is high.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Despite minor changes in use and internal layout, the interior spaces of the place, particularly on the ground floor of the principal building, have been restored to recover early details. Recent alterations have been handled sympathetically, to minimise intrusions on original fabric. The place has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

With the lease on the company's rented offices at the corner of Cliff and Phillimore Streets about to expire, the Adelaide Steamship Company decided it was an opportune time to build their own office.¹ The company purchased lot 41 and a portion of lot 42 in Mouat St Fremantle in June 1900 to provide a permanent site for their growing business operations in Fremantle.²

Adelaide Steamship commenced their commercial operation in Fremantle in 1883, initially with an agent and then with its own staff.³ By 1900, there were two principal reasons for the company's rapid expansion of operations. Firstly, the company had recently secured the mail contract for the north west of WA, in addition to the Albany to Esperance mail contract, and secondly the Kalgoorlie goldfields were providing a boom in passenger transportation to Western Australia.⁴

With a secure future in Western Australian shipping, the Adelaide Steamship Company planned to build an office in Mouat Street, close to the Fremantle Wharf. The Fremantle based architectural firm of Oldham and Eales designed the building.⁵ In the latter half of 1900, the

¹ Parsons, R., *The Adelaide Line*, (Ronald Parsons, 1975), p. 91.

² Certificate of Title, DOLA, Vol. 193, Fol. 182.

³ Parsons, p. 91.

⁴ Page, M., *Fitted for the Voyage The Adelaide Steamship Co 1875-1975*, (Rigby, Adelaide, 1975), p. 148.

⁵ *West Australian*, 21 May 1900, p. 1.

construction was undertaken by Mr C. Coghill, a builder of North Fremantle.⁶ The building(s) were completed by the end of November 1900 and the manager of Adelaide Steamship, Mr C. W. Moxon, and his staff took possession of the building(s).⁷

There is some doubt as to whether both buildings fronting Mouat Street were built at the same time. Photographic evidence indicates that prior to 1900 a building stood on the present site of the smaller building.⁸ However, the building in the photograph has a central entrance, unlike the existing building. It is possible that a new facade was added to the existing small building in 1900, when the larger building was constructed. Alternatively, the original building may have been demolished and a new structure built in its place. The date of construction of the small office is thrown into further doubt by its absence on water authority drawings of 1916. Smaller stores at the back of the block may have also been built later than 1900. However, they are shown as existing on maps in 1914, when sewerage work was undertaken.⁹

As a result of fire damage, extensive work was undertaken by architect F. G. B. Hawkins in 1947-48, to restore the principal building to its earlier condition. Plans and documentation of this project indicate the principal building was without the partitioning and false ceilings evident when the current owner, John Dowson, bought the property in 1991.¹⁰

Since 1966, the buildings have been used for warehousing and offices. (This may indicate Adelaide Steamship had relocated their head offices from Mouat Street.) Adelaide Steamship Company sold the site in 1978, but the buildings continued in use for commercial purposes.

In 1991, John Dowson restored and adapted parts of the buildings for use as his own residence, an office, store and warehouse.

The restoration of the place was awarded a Commendation in the 1993 Heritage Conservation and Property Value Awards.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The place comprises two buildings fronting Mouat Street and outbuildings at the rear of the site. The main buildings, one of which is two storeyed and the other single storey, share uniform Italianate stucco details which unite their presence in the streetscape. On the ground floor these details include a granite plinth, rusticated wall, broad doric pilasters and large arched openings. The upper floor of the principal, two storeyed building continues this theme, being detailed in the tradition of the *piano nobile*, of a renaissance palazzo. This includes paired ionic pilasters, false balustrades under the heavily moulded aedicule windows, a heavily moulded cornice, balustraded parapet and decorative central pediment.

⁶ *The Umpire*, 30 June 1900.

⁷ *The Umpire*, 17 November 1900.

⁸ Battye Library of WA, photograph 5778B/3.

⁹ MWSS and DD Sewerage Plan 2898, Battye Library.

¹⁰ Boxed Plans, Fremantle City Library.

In general the original interior of the principal building has been restored, although some minor adaptation has been necessary on the ground floor to accommodate its residential function. Where possible existing finishes were left intact to indicate the previous spatial arrangement of the offices.

13.3 REFERENCES

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.