



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* exhibiting a grand and intricately detailed façade is a significant example of Federation Free Classical style architecture. (Criterion 1.1)

The façade of the building, constructed in two stages, exhibits one of the most intricately detailed façades of the Federation Free Classical style in Perth's central business district. (Criterion 1.2)

Viewed with surrounding buildings it significantly contributes to the overall setting of the street and character of the urban space. (1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* was one of only two theatre/hotel complexes built in the central city area. The subsequent gradual transformation of the theatre into a cinema house reflects the introduction of cinema culture in Western Australia and its growth in popularity. (Criterion 2.1)

Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr), built in 1897 and 1894, respectively, reflects the development and growth of theatre and cinema culture in Western Australia during and after the Goldrush. (Criterion 2.2)

Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr) was developed by T. G. A. Molloy, who was a successful Perth business man and landowner, as well as being the Mayor of Perth in 1908/9 and 1911/12. Molloy made a great contribution to the civic, cultural and recreational development of the State from the 1880s to his death in the 1930s. The place is also associated with Alexander Forrest, who assisted Molloy financially in the building of the theatre and hotel. (Criterion 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Theatre Royal (fmr) was the first purpose-built theatre in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* is valued by the community for its aesthetic qualities. Along with surrounding buildings it contributes to the character of the urban space of the Hay Street Mall. (Criterion 4.1)

Its use as a theatre (and later cinema) from 1897 contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

The *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* is highly valued by the community for its aesthetic qualities. Along with surrounding buildings it contributes to the unique character of the urban space of the Hay Street Mall. (Criterion 4.1)

Its use as a theatre (and later cinema) from 1897 contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr) is representative of the cultural and recreational needs and activities of the people of Perth and reflects in its size and scale the significance of theatre during the 1890s. Conversion of the theatre to a cinema, first as a whole and then just the upper level reflects the enduring popularity of this form of entertainment from the 1920s through to the present day. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr) is generally in a very poor condition where original or early fabric is evident. Those areas that have been substantially altered for continuing use are in an excellent condition. Areas used for storage are in a poor condition. Past works including the removal of the balustrade to the staircase, dividing walls between bedrooms and dormer windows in the former *Hotel Metropole*; the installation of the cinema in the dress circle of the former *Theatre Royal*; and the removal of the ground floor façade to provide open retail spaces have detracted from the place. No maintenance of the upper floors has been carried out to retard deterioration. Installation of air-conditioning ductwork in the upper floor of the former *Theatre Royal* has detracted from the already compromised condition of this space.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The original intention of the design of the interior of the former *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* is not evident due to substantial modification to interior spaces. Although use of the former *Theatre Royal* dress circle for a cinema is a compatible use, the fact that the cinema is not entered from the building and that users would be completely unaware of the location of the space, detracts from its significance. The position of the new cinema has also compromised the possible useability of adjacent upper level spaces. The ground floor retail spaces in the former *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* are not compatible with the original design intent however they are representative of the building's location within the central shopping precinct of Perth.

Interior spaces of the theatre could not conceivably be reconstructed however some of the hotel spaces and ancillary rooms of the theatre could be restored. Significant investment would be required for any restoration works and access to these upper levels would need to be re-instated.

The primary façade of the building, being substantially intact, is the principle element representing the values ascribed to this building. Restoration of the façade (above ground level) would be a relatively simply process.

Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr) have a low to moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The primary façade of the building, with the exception of the ground floor, is substantially in its original state. Most other areas of the building have been substantially altered or are in such a poor condition that original fabric has been lost due to decay. The *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* has a low level of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Helen Burgess, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alice Steedman, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The former *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)*, also known as Sussan House, is located at 637-645 Hay Street, Perth. The three-storey building is constructed in rendered brick in the Federation Free Classical style and contains an attic and basement area. The *Theatre Royal* was built on the site of a former shooting gallery in 1897 adjacent to, and incorporating the already existing *Hotel Metropole* (1894). A photograph shows the hotel as three column-bays wide and three-storeys high with a mansard roof containing arched dormer windows. Verandahs are visible along the first and second floor on the western wall.¹ A photograph of the completed building shows the theatre continued in the same style as the original hotel. The division between hotel and theatre is visible only at ground level, by a laneway, and by a solid section in the parapet balustrade. A dentist is located in the western side of the ground floor of the hotel and it also appears as though two small shop fronts are located in the ground floor of the theatre.²

A number of sources have attributed the building to the design of William Wolfe although it appears the theatre, at least, was designed by the architect J. S. Jackson, and the contractor was D. Gray.³ The theatre and hotel complex was developed by businessman, Thomas George Anstruther Molloy.

The Molloy family arrived in Western Australia in 1862 and the young Thomas Molloy, upon finishing his schooling, became the manager of Cooperative Stores in Perth. In 1875, Molloy became a successful baker, not only owning the land for his shop in Goderich Street but also 10 two-roomed cottages for his workers. Molloy became one of the largest landowners of the 1890s due to his shrewd investments in real estate, predominantly in the West Perth area, in addition to buying into various hotel ventures in the city. Molloy's business acumen was complimented

¹ *Hotel Metropole* prior to the construction of the *Theatre Royal* c.1894, Performing Arts Museum Photo 4841.

² Old Theatre Royal, Hay Street, Perth, c.1897. Batty Library Pictorial Collection 53965P.

³ Some documentary evidence (secondary sources) points to William Wolfe as the architect for the Theatre Royal, who was the architect for Molloy's other theatre, His Majesty's. However, no primary source evidence has been located to confirm this. Little is known about Jackson and what other buildings he designed, although it could be assumed that he was also the architect for the Hotel Metropole, which is mentioned in Margaret Pitt Morison's 'Immigrant Architects' but in no other sources accessed for this assessment. Further confusion regarding architects for this building is added in an article in *The West Australian* (5 May 1953, p.7) based on an interview with Molloy's grandson Reg Cooper. The article suggests that Jackson experienced difficulties in completing the building and in the end it was left to G.W.G. Liebe, also the builder of His Majesty's. Stannage (1979, p.235) records the builder of His Majesty's as Frederick Liebe.

by the onset of the Goldrush years in Western Australia, which brought great wealth to the State and a boom in population.⁴

In 1884, Molloy entered the Perth City Council. He was the Member for Perth in the Legislative Council in the early 1890s, and in 1908-09 and again in 1911-12 he was the Mayor of Perth.⁵

The *Hotel Metropole* was constructed with the financial assistance of the then Mayor of Perth, Alexander Forrest. Molloy purchased Perth Lot F3 on 20 September 1893 and was issued with a Publican's General License on 27 September.⁶ The *Hotel Metropole* is listed in the Post Office Directory for the first time in 1895 indicating that the building was constructed in 1894.⁷ The manager of the hotel from 1895-1896 was James Pearce and from 1897 was Harry Blake. A description of the Hotel as it was in 1897 is as follows:

The Hotel Metropole (adjoining Theatre Royal) has over 100 Largest. Coolest and Best Furnished Bedrooms in Perth. Exactly in the centre of Perth. Drawing, Smoking, Reading, Commercial Rooms, also Ladies boudoir, will be found Luxuriantly Furnished, and combining all the Comforts of a Modern Hotel. ROOMS WITH OR WITHOUT BOARD. Two spacious Billiard Rooms. Six Saloon Bars. (Civility and attention the success of this Hotel.)⁸

Molloy again pursued Forrest's support with the construction of the theatre. In February 1895, a notice appeared in the *Inquirer and Commercial News* announcing that Mr T. G. Molloy was having plans prepared for a 1,000 seat theatre, to be built on the land adjoining his *Hotel Metropole*.⁹

Although the Town Hall (1870), St George's Hall (1879) and, in some cases, the Swan River Mechanics' Institute (1852) were used for the staging of live theatre, the need for a purpose-built theatre in Perth had been long felt in the community. The inadequacies of these other venues were often expressed in newspaper articles such as the following article from 1891:

The Muses who preside over the drama have been too long insufficiently housed in Perth. The only place in which with the semblance of propriety such performances may take place is St George's Hall, where there is much that is unsuitable and hardly anything which is suitable for the purposes for which, in default of another building, it has to be used. Everything is really wanting there, and when the day comes when something more appropriate is provided - a day we may hope which is now not far distant, the old home of the drama in this city we may be assured will

⁴ Stannage, C. T., *The People of Perth: a social history of Western Australia's capital city*, Perth, 1979, p. 224

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ CT Vol. LIV, Fol. 57; *Police Gazette*, 27 September 1893, No. 3a, p.157 [360POL].

⁷ In Seddon and Ravine's *A City in its Setting: Images of Perth, Western Australia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1986, p. 150, there is a map of Gold Boom Buildings of Perth showing the *Hotel Metropole* constructed in 1895. However, in February 1895 it was stated that Molloy was going to build a theatre in land adjacent to the hotel so appears as though the Hotel must have been constructed in 1894, although it may not have opened until 1895. No references to the architect or the construction of the hotel were able to be located for this assessment.

⁸ This description was on the *Hotel Metropole* letterhead, in Public Records Office File No. AN17, Cons. 3294, Perth Local courts, Liquor Licenses, Item 24, 1897.

⁹ *Inquirer and Commercial News* 22 February 1895, p. 9.

be pointed out with wonder and amusement as the most significant proof of the old time backwardness and poverty of Western Australia.¹⁰

The news that Molloy was planning to build Perth's first theatre was therefore received with much enthusiasm. In response to Molloy's announcement, an article appeared in the *Inquirer and Commercial News* to reinforce the long overdue need for a theatre building and to commend Molloy's project:

So much has been said within recent times in favour of the idea of providing Perth with a theatre, that very little remains to say at this stage of affairs...Even those who are conscientiously opposed to the stage and all connected with it cannot but feel that although it is contrary to their own sense of what is right and proper, nevertheless they are antagonistic to the bulk of public opinion on the matter, which recognises theatrical performances as a rational and right means of recreation, and who hold the view that the absence of a theatre in Perth is to bar its progress...We repeat that the need for a theatre is so great that a good scheme for its provision should be espoused and supported as a public enterprise of high importance to the community.¹¹

On 8 May 1895, the foundation stone for the theatre was laid by the Mayoress, Mrs Alexander Forrest, and a bottle containing an inscription to the effect that the theatre was the first to be erected in Perth was placed under the stone by the contractor Mr D. Gray.¹² The formal ceremony was followed by drinks in the *Hotel Metropole*. In his speech, the Premier Sir John Forrest expressed his view that the building of this theatre was a sign of the growing popularity of Western Australia and the prosperity being experienced.

The *Theatre Royal* was ready to open on 19 April 1897, which was Easter Monday night. It was to have opened two days earlier (on the Saturday night) but was postponed 'owing to the late arrival of *S. S. Rockton* with the actors and scenery on board'.¹³ The opening, arranged by the lessees of the theatre Messrs Jones and Lawrence, was marked by a performance of the 'Silver King' by the Stanford & Barnes Company.¹⁴

The *Theatre Royal* was originally built for live theatre, this being the traditional theatre of the day which was Three Act Drama. This type of entertainment, combined with the opulent setting, attracted more the middle to upper-class population. Vauderville Theatre which was held in smaller venues, such as the Cremorne Theatre (c1895) and the Luxor Theatre (1900) which were patronised by more the working class and was accordingly more affordable.¹⁵

Architecturally, the *Theatre Royal* featured a sliding roof in the auditorium dome and Tobin air shafts, both of these systems providing ventilation 'without draughts' which was seen as a high priority in the hot

¹⁰ *The West Australian* 27 August 1891, p. 4.

¹¹ *Inquirer and Commercial News* 1 March 1895, p. 10.

¹² *Inquirer and Commercial News* 10 May 1895, p. 12.

¹³ *The West Australian* 17 April 1897.

¹⁴ Original opening night program (held at Performing Arts Museum, His Majesty's Theatre).

¹⁵ Information provided by Ivan King curator, Performing Arts Museum, His Majesty's Theatre, Perth.

climate of Perth.¹⁶ The proscenium was 21'6" wide and 22'6" high, framing a 40ft stage. The theatre also featured stalls, dress circle, gallery and an orchestra pit. The stanchions used to support the dress circle and gallery were imported from England. The theatre was compared to the best theatres in Melbourne of the time, such as the Bijou Theatre and the Princess Theatre. Together with the *Hotel Metropole*, the *Theatre Royal* was the largest commercial building in Perth at the time of its construction.¹⁷

In keeping with the style of the new theatre building next door, a 1901 description of the *Hotel Metropole*, Mr Karl Fink, the proprietor, promoted the hotel in the following terms:

Comfortable lounges are in use on the spacious balconies, and a fine view of the Swan River is obtainable from the verandahs at the rear of the building. The bedrooms, numbering fifty, are all spacious, lofty, and well fitted, while cosy drawing and reading rooms, together with a fine billiard saloon, add to the comfort of patrons. A large dining room is on the first floor, and each floor is provided with bathrooms, in which both hot and cold water are laid on.¹⁸

The success of the *Theatre Royal* is difficult to measure, particularly in its early years. Although it was popular and attracted big productions by professional theatre companies, and it was viewed as a much needed facility at the time, boom-time Perth could not support long seasons and the first lessees, Jones and Lawrence, filed for bankruptcy only a year after the theatre opened. Other problems associated with the *Theatre Royal* in its early years were also raised by the Health Department - in relation to poor sanitation, insufficient emergency exits, steep stairs and the absence of a fire curtain - and also by the Church, which objected to the Sunday theatre performances.¹⁹

Thorne suggests that the first alterations to the building occurred in 1907/8 and included enlargement of the auditorium and resolution of the problems of emergency egress as noted by the Health Department in 1899. Thorne's drawings also show hotel bedrooms extending into the third floor of the theatre side of the building and the construction of ablutions to the rear of the hotel.²⁰

A verandah to the front of the building also appears to have been added at this time. An undated photograph shows a verandah at street level with iron posts and lace work. The first floor porch above has a cement-rendered balustrade similar to that of the building's parapet.²¹

Despite the tenuous success of the *Theatre Royal*, Molloy was not discouraged, and in 1902 applied for a licence to build a second theatre and

¹⁶ *Inquirer and Commercial News* 10 May 1895, p. 12. This provided the model for His Majesty's Theatre.

¹⁷ *The West Australian* 5 May 1953, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia* (PWH Thiel, & Co., Perth, 1901) pp. 425-426.

¹⁹ Walker, Sonia, 'The History of the Theatre Royal: 1897-1979, unpublished manuscript, 1979 (held at the Performing Arts Museum, His Majesty's Theatre). Although there was no official response to the Church, Sunday performances did eventually cease. In the case of the asbestos safety fire curtain, one was not installed in the theatre until 1936.

²⁰ Thorne, R. *Theatre Buildings of Australia to 1905* Vol.2 p.214.

²¹ Battye Library Pictorial Collection 11819P.

hotel, a combination that proved very popular.²² This new theatre, His Majesty's Theatre and Hotel, was completed in 1904, and was not only larger and more opulent than the *Theatre Royal*, but also boasted to be the first building of concrete construction and possessing the largest stage in Australia.²³ Molloy went on to build other hotels, including the Australia Hotel in Perth (converted to a Bookstore), the North Beach Hotel (since rebuilt), the Brighton Hotel in Scarborough (demolished) and the Oceanic Hotel (later the Mosman Park Hotel).²⁴

From its establishment until just before the First World War, the *Theatre Royal* experienced many changes in management as well as styles of entertainment provided. Rather than being disruptive, these changes probably enabled the theatre to survive and continue to operate for as long as it did; however, these changes impacted on the condition of the building as several ad-hoc modifications were carried out under each new management.

After Jones and Lawrence pulled out, the theatre was managed by the Williamson and Musgrove Comic Opera Company, which retained the mix of drama and musicals presented by Jones and Lawrence, and also brought to Perth the first production of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. In 1902, management changed again, this time to Harry Rickards, a famous Vaudeville star who came from the Eastern States and introduced more vaudeville and variety acts. Because of this style of entertainment, the theatre was no longer a venue just for the middle to upper class community, and so Rickards introduced a tiered system of ticket prices (according to seating) so that shows were affordable for everyone.²⁵

In 1907, William Anderson became the manager, and although he retained the vaudeville and variety acts introduced by Rickards, he also reintroduced more traditional plays.

From 1916, films at the *Theatre Royal* were presented by well-known showman C. C. Spencer, who also screened films at the more modest Esplanade Gardens, leasing both premises for this purpose.²⁶ The *Theatre Royal*, in conjunction with other Perth venues including the Cremorne Gardens in Murray Street and Queen's Hall in William Street, became one of the main venues for the screening of film shows.²⁷ In 1921, Fullers Theatre Ltd took over management. Even after the introduction of film, the Theatre continued to present live shows and sometimes sessions were

²² Stannage, C.T. *The People of Perth: a social history of Western Australia's capital city*. Perth, 1979, p. 224.

²³ Honniball, J. H. M., 'The Golden Age of Cinema in Perth', *Early Days*, Journal of the Royal WA Historical Society, Vol. 8, Part 6, 1982, p. 39.

²⁴ *The West Australian* 19 October 1977, p. 64.

²⁵ Walker, Sonia, 'The History of the Theatre Royal: 1897-1979, unpublished manuscript, 1979 (held at the Performing Arts Museum, His Majesty's Theatre).

²⁶ C. C. Spencer was based in the eastern states. Other well-known film agents of this time also included J. C. Williamson, J. & N. Tait and T. J. West. Spencer and West eventually merged in 1912 and later became absorbed by Union Theatres.

²⁷ Two other important film venues at this time were the Palladium (1916) and the Pavilion (1914). Both were demolished in the 1970s.

referred to as the 50/50 sessions, as they contained a film show as well as live shows.²⁸

During the Depression and the Second World War, newsreel theatrettes, which screened newsreels, animated cartoons and other short films, began appearing in most capital cities around Australia. However, in Perth this trend did not really take off, although in 1933 a newsreel theatrette, the 'Times Theatrette', operated in the basement of the *Theatre Royal*. The Times, which was the only such theatrette in Perth, was short-lived, operating for only a few weeks.²⁹

In the early 1930s, a new company had formed, the Grand Theatre Company, under the leadership of successful real estate agent, James Stiles.³⁰ The Grand Theatre Company had already purchased the Grand Theatre in 1932, but due to securing contracts with the major film suppliers Paramount and Universal, as well as MGM, the company required a second city picture house. In 1934, the company took lease of Molloy's 'white elephant' *Theatre Royal*.³¹ From this time on the theatre became exclusively a cinema house and no live performances were ever staged again at the theatre.

The *Theatre Royal* was very run down and not really designed to cope with the demands of new celluloid technology and audience requirements. In 1936, Stiles extended the auditorium into the stage, however, this was only a temporary solution and further works still needed to be carried out. As a result, Stiles and his company set about conducting extensive refurbishment and modernisation of the theatre in 1939. This modernisation was not something unique to the *Theatre Royal*, but a trend common to all theatre and cinema complexes (and indeed other commercial and public buildings in the city) at the time:

The recent campaign of theatre modernising and rebuilding in Perth left the *Theatre Royal* far behind as an entertainment house and it was found necessary to make sweeping and drastic change in order to bring it up to, if not beyond, the standard of leading city theatres.³²

Plans for the modernisation of the *Theatre Royal* were prepared by Messrs Baxter Cox & Leighton and the contractor was Harold Doust. The works cost approximately £7,800, which provided for the entire remodelling of the main entrance and the removal of one of the main foyer staircases, remodelling of the upper foyer and new ceilings. The walls were replastered, moulded and decorated in the 'modern' style. A new stalls foyer, which included lavatories was installed, and the proscenium was brought forward and right up to the main ceiling level, making it more suited to film. The original dress circle and its supporting columns was replaced with a new dress circle supported by single span steel girders

²⁸ Information provided by Ivan King, historian/curator Performing Arts Museum (His Majesty's Theatre).

²⁹ Despite the popularity of newsreel theatrettes in the eastern states, it was not until 1947 that Perth had its first dedicated theatrette, the Mayfair, which was a very popular venue in its day.

³⁰ The Stiles family had conducted the successful Gaiety Theatre in South Perth.

³¹ Honniball, J. H. M., 'The Golden Age of Cinema in Perth', *Early Days*, Journal of the Royal WA Historical Society, Vol. 8, Part 6, 1982, p. 46.

³² *WA Building and Construction Journal* 29 September 1939, p. 6.

allowing all patrons a clear view of the stage.³³ Approximately 400 seats were also removed from the theatre to provide more comfort for patrons.

The cost of the above-mentioned works did not include other refurbishment such as extensive neon lighting, new seats and carpets and a new stage curtain. Although the sliding roof was retained, mechanical ventilation in the form of high speed fans, was also added at this time, the contract going to Mr R. A. Berryman for £800.³⁴

The refurbished theatre, combined with the contracts the Grand Theatre Company had secured with major film suppliers, resulted in the *Theatre Royal* being the most popular picture theatre in Perth in the mid-1930s:

After renovations were complete, Stiles and company found they had a bonanza in the *Royal* in the mid-1930s, thanks to the succession of 'hits' which MGM rolled out, such as 'San Francisco', 'Mutiny on the Bounty', 'Boom Town' and 'Rose Marie'. With the nine week season achieved by 'Naughty Marietta' at Christmas 1935, they claimed not only a new Perth record, but also, for this particular film, a world record!³⁵

In 1938, the Grand Theatre Company lost the MGM contract for the *Theatre Royal*. However, in 1939, Stiles secured a contract with British Empire Films, which offered some consolation to the MGM loss. In 1954, the *Theatre Royal* was finally purchased by the Stiles' family company, now known as City Theatres and run by Arthur Stiles (nephew of James Stiles).

Hotel Metropole was not included in the sale of the *Theatre Royal* and remained the property of the Trustees of the Molloy estate. In 1962, the lingerie company, Sussan (WA) Pty Ltd, purchased the hotel from the Molloy family for £125,000, and in 1963 commenced extensive remodelling and renovations to the total of £40,000. The lounge, saloon and public bars on the ground floor were cleared of all fittings and four brick front piers were removed and replaced with plate-glass and marble to allow for unobstructed shop fronts and a central arcade. The marble base was ivory Sicilian marble with green Italian marble above. Jarrah boarding with fluorescent lighting troughs was installed on the ceiling of the ground floor arcade, and the shop ceiling was 'extruded aluminium channels supporting wood-weave matting. The three upper floors were supported on a steel framework and the hotel guest accommodation on these floors was converted into large open areas through the removal of walls. The manually operated lift was replaced with an automatic lift. The architects for this work were Krantz and Sheldon.³⁶

In 1965, the *Theatre Royal* underwent further extensive refurbishment and modernisation. The works, which cost approximately £50,000, included the removal of a 58 foot steel beam, which stretched across the width of the theatre and supported the old gallery, which was also removed at that time.³⁷ A new, wider 40 foot curved screen and

³³ WA *Building and Construction Journal*, 7 July 1939, p. 5. An extensive list of all contractors and suppliers involved in these works, as well as details of materials and colour schemes are listed in this article.

³⁴ WA *Building and Construction Journal*, 7 July 1939, p. 5.

³⁵ Honniball, J. H. M. 'The Golden Age of Cinema in Perth' *Early Days*, Journal of the Royal WA Historical Society, Vol. 8, Part 6, 1982, p. 46.

³⁶ *The West Australian* 9 March 1963, p. 14.

³⁷ *The West Australian* 27 February 1965, p. 8.

stereophonic system were installed and seating reduced from 1,030 to 915, making it a more intimate cinema. A floating ceiling was installed, new ticket and bio-boxes were also installed. The completed works were officially opened by the then Lord Mayor Veryard, and marked by a screening, and subsequent season, of the very popular and successful film 'My Fair Lady'.³⁸

The 1960s and 1970s saw the age of large and glamorous cinemas diminish significantly, with either the demolition of many of the theatres or the conversion of theatres into retail space.³⁹ In 1977, the *Theatre Royal* closed and the Perth City Council approved plans for the redevelopment of the ground floor of the former theatre into shops. The canopy and facade of the theatre were retained.

In 1983, Hoyts Cinemas Ltd., which had a theatre complex located to the east of the former *Theatre Royal* in the St Martins Arcade, converted the former dress circle into a fourth cinema accessed directly from their building.

In 1987, the former *Hotel Metropole* was purchased by Bremhill Pty Ltd of Victoria and then in 1993, by Porsche Nominees of Perth.⁴⁰ The first floor is used for storage and office space by Sussans clothing store and the second floor and attic space are vacant. The former *Theatre Royal* has been strata-titled creating at least 3 units at ground level and the remainder of the building is occupied by Hoyts.⁴¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The former *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole* is a three-storey rendered brick Federation Free Classical⁴² style building located on the south side of the Hay Street Mall.

The building is one of a number of buildings in the Hay Street Mall constructed in the period 1890 – 1915 among which include the McNess Royal Arcade (c.1896) and The Savoy Hotel (1914). Buildings within the mall are generally two or three storeys in height with taller buildings punctuating this pattern. Surrounding development represents each main period of development since the gold rush. Many facades are of architectural distinction and exhibit a variety of detail on a generally consistent scale which creates a sense of continuity and enclosure.

The ground floor of the former *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole* contains six retail tenancies in a variety of recent finishes. The building has a symmetrical facade divided into seven bays by fluted Corinthian

³⁸ *The Film Weekly* 29 April 1965, Vol. 105, p. 1.

³⁹ Theatres demolished included the Capitol (1967), the Ambassadors (1972), the Metro (1973), and the Grand was converted into a pizza parlour (1980). Queen's Hall and the Cremorne Gardens (and Theatre) had also been demolished as well as the Pavilion and Palladium.

⁴⁰ Certificate of Title Vol. 1756, Fol. 701.

⁴¹ City of Perth information refers to strata plan 10606, old lot 21 Diagram 63088.

⁴² Apperly, Richard, Irving, Robert, Reynolds, Peter A *Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 104-07. The building exhibits one of the most intricately detailed facades of the style in Perth's central business district, tending perhaps to represent the Victorian Free Classical style prevalent in the eastern states until

columns, behind which arcades run at the first and second floors. The second and sixth bays are distinguished by pediments above the entablature and by bays of 4 windows which punctuate the balustrade above. A cantilevered verandah with wrought iron balustrade runs the entire length of the façade at first floor level.

Whilst not discernible from the street, the building is divided into two by a parapet wall which is located at the end of the third bay from the west. The western side of the building (former *Hotel Metropole*) has a tall mansard corrugated iron roof with original dormer windows to the attic space at the front of the building. Three rendered brick chimneys and a face brick lift motor room punctuate the roof.

The roof to the eastern side (former *Theatre Royal*) has been substantially altered. The mansard roof has been reduced in height and the attic space does not extend to the windows on the northern parapet balustrade. At the front of the building, the mansard is clad in asbestos cement sheet and steel roof decking. Immediately behind this is a gabled roof with ventilators located on the ridge and behind this again is a lower section containing a curved roof. Beyond that, the former fly-tower, all clad in corrugated iron.

The upper floors of the eastern side of the building are accessed via Hoyts Cinema complex in the adjacent building. A small area at the front of the first floor contains a number of offices formerly used by Hoyts. This area has flush plasterboard ceilings and hard plastered walls. The office space extends from the former dress circle foyer into the former arcade at the front of the building and new multi-paned timber framed windows have been installed in the arched openings.

A makeshift timber stair located behind a wall at the western end of the former arcade leads to the second floor. This area appears only one room deep behind the arcade, although access within the area was very difficult as air conditioning ducts run across and through the floor. Three smaller rooms are located at the western end, and a larger room with small anteroom is located at the east. The eastern rooms exhibit earlier finishes in the Art-deco style. Openings from the rooms to the arcade have original two-panel French doors with arched fanlights over. The openings to the arcade have been boarded over. The lath and plaster ceiling and jarrah boarded floor has been damaged during the introduction of services. Falling damp is evident in the arcade and decorative feature including drip-moulds and ceiling roses have been removed. The entire area is in an extremely poor condition.

The remainder of the upper floor on the eastern side contains a modern cinema and bio-box. This area was not available for inspection.

The upper floors on the western side of the building are accessed via a reinforced concrete stair at the rear of Sussans clothing store. The rear of the first floor has a concrete floor and contains a small office area and ablutions. A staff room is located a further half flight up on the south-eastern corner. To the north of this area, a passage with a vaulted corrugated iron ceiling runs along the parapet wall to a stair lobby mid-way along the building from north to south. Adjacent to the passage is a large room (former dining room) used for storage. It has a suspended ceiling,

wallpapered walls and large decorative skirtings and architraves. Windows on the west wall are timber-framed double-hung sashes.

A stud-framed wall divides a small room at the north end of the passage from the stair lobby. Installation of this wall has damaged a decorative plaster cornice and frieze.

A grand half-turn jarrah staircase is framed behind a large archway. The two flights to the ground floor and balustrades on all flights have been removed. Decorative carving is visible in the jarrah stringer at the turn of each flight and the one remaining newel post exhibits a plain square shaft and chamfered top. The underside of the stair is plastered and the landings bisect double-hung sash windows on the west wall of the building.

A small arched opening from the stair lobby leads into a wide passage that continues northwards to the front of the building. The passage is in a poor condition. Both the ceiling and walls have a number of large cracks and previously modified openings in the brick walls have been built-in with stud framing. An arched opening at the end of the passage accesses the arcaded verandah.

The openings in the arcade have been in-filled with steel framed awning windows and the balustrade beneath covered with fibre cement sheet. The timber floor is covered with vinyl. The ceiling is lath and plaster and is damaged in some locations. It has quite simple ceiling roses, a deep coved plaster cornice and plaster picture rail. Reeded hood-moulds and floral drip-moulds decorate the inside of the arcade.

Arched openings lead from the arcade to two rooms (presumably former drawing and reading rooms) on either side of the passage. French doors have been removed but obscured glass curved fanlights are extant. The floors of the passage and the western room have been covered in parquet. Both rooms have decorative plaster cornices and ceiling roses. A number of large openings have been made in walls on the western side and subsequently built-in with stud framing. A light well is located at the rear of the eastern room although it appears to have been covered over at roof level.

The second floor also has a large arched opening at the top of the stairs. A passage with decorative plaster cornice runs from the landing to the front of the building and also a short distance to the rear accessing a lift, which has been decommissioned. A large turned timber column supports a beam to create a large landing area adjacent to the stair.⁴³ A number of bedrooms are located on either side of the passage to the north. A small bathroom is located immediately adjacent to the landing. Most original doors have been removed but fanlights remain extant. The inner faces of the door jambs are panelled and decorative skirtings and architraves are mostly evident. Some walls on the eastern side of the passage have been removed, as have the French doors leading to the verandah. The openings to the arcade have been boarded over

To the south of the stair, the walls are lath and plaster. Large openings have been cut in most walls to create a number of semi-open spaces. A

⁴³ This area is not shown in Thorne's plans of the theatre and hotel but was presumably related to the modified egress routes from the Theatre.

paneled door at the end of a narrow passage leads to a large space with a concrete floor. Toilets and ablutions are located to the south of this space and a reinforced concrete stair is located to the east. This entire area is in a poor condition.

The attic space is also in a very poor condition. Most doors and architraves have been removed and dormer windows on the western side of the building have been removed and simply sheeted over externally. There is some evidence of termite damage to the small windows on the northern elevation. To the south of the stair lobby, spaces are divided with timber and glass panelled partitioning. An opening on the east wall leads to a fire escape stair adjacent to the parapet. A concrete floored space is located to the south of the rooms, with ablutions to the rear as for other floors.

The basement of the western portion of the building is accessed via a room at the rear of the right-of-way behind Sussans. A ladder is propped against a wall giving access to the area. The walls are generally rough rendered and painted and there is evidence of water laying a few inches deep in this area in recent times. The area to the north of the basement has concrete pillars supporting a recent concrete slab floor whilst the area to the rear has a central corridor with small storeroom to either side. Former delivery hatches to this area are evident from the right-of-way.

The basement below the eastern side could not be inspected.

13.3 REFERENCES

No key references.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

Architect J. S. Jackson.