



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*

St Joseph's Convent is a fine example of Federation Gothic architecture. Its aesthetic value is enhanced by its decorative brickwork, fenestration and roof detailing. The addition of a metal fence along the front boundary restricts the visibility of the facade diminishing its streetscape value. (Criterion 1.1)

St Joseph's Convent is a landmark in Moran Street as a most imposing and decorative structure which contributes strongly to the visual character of the streetscape. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

St Joseph's Convent is a feature of the development of the Catholic school system in Western Australia and in the Goldfields in particular. Its establishment reflected the needs of an increasing Catholic population in the Goldfields during the 1890s and 1900s. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

St Joseph's Convent was established by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, founded by Mary McKillop. The place is closely associated with the teaching work and life of the Western Australian Order, known as the Black Josephites, who broke from the Mother body of the Order in Sydney. (Criterion 2.3)

The place is closely associated with those pupils and teachers who attended the school during its ninety-two year history, including personages such as concert pianist Eileen Joyce. (Criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

* 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.

St Joseph's Convent is highly valued by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart for being a place for their teaching activities in the Boulder area and as a centre for the Order, their life and spirituality. (Criterion 4.1)

St Joseph's Convent is highly valued by the number of students and teachers who attended during the ninety-two years it functioned as a school. (Criterion 4.1)

The place is significant for its aesthetic, religious, educational and social associations to the Catholic community and to the wider Kalgoorlie-Boulder community and, as a result, contributes to these communities' sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

St Joseph's Convent is representative of Federation Gothic architecture commonly adopted for ecclesiastic purposes. (Criterion 6.1)

St Joseph's Convent is representative of a building built in the early twentieth century to serve religious and educational purposes. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

With the exception of dampness and some wall cracking *St Joseph's Convent* appears to be in sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Until 1996, *St Joseph's Convent* was continually used as a convent, a function for which it was originally designed. In 1998, the place is being converted to a bed and breakfast facility. *St Joseph's Convent* retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Recent alterations and rear additions are reversible and do not diminish the original fabric of the place. *St Joseph's Convent* has a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by HCWA staff. The physical evidence has been compiled by Kelly Aris, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Catholic Archdiocese of Perth was established in 1846, with Dr John Brady, formerly of NSW, as Bishop.¹ In the same year, the Sisters of Mercy came to Perth and established the first Catholic primary school in Western Australia. This was soon followed by a secondary school for girls.² Other Catholic primary schools were opened and run by lay teachers. Public funds were provided for both Catholic and government primary schools and only secondary schools charged school fees.³

In 1856, Governor Kennedy, a Protestant Irishman, put in place an education system whereby the government would only provide funds for its own primary schools. It could be suggested that this was a deliberate attempt to try and diminish the influence of the Catholic school system, however, tuition fees were still paid and support was given to fund-raising activities, especially for building projects.

In 1871, Governor Weld introduced the Elementary Education Act which made school attendance compulsory and also gave denominational schools public funding, 50% of the funds which were available to public schools. These funds ceased with the introduction of the Assisted Schools Abolition Act 1895. However, during the intervening years, religious groups, such as the Catholic Church, had the financial security to be able to expand their school systems.⁴ Other factors which contributed to this expansion of the independent school system were the general growth of the population and wealth caused by the State's gold rush, widespread community recognition of the quality of these schools, and the arrival of a number of different religious orders who also took on teaching work.⁵

The Sisters of the St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, founded by Mary McKillop and Father Julian Woods in South Australia in 1866, arrived in Perth in October 1887. The Sisters who came to Perth, Ursula Tynan, Mechtilde McNamara, Irene Ryan and Camilla Ryan, were experienced teachers and had come at the invitation of Bishop Matthew Gibney to set up a school in the mining district of Northampton.⁶ In August 1888, there were 87 children on the school role (including Protestants), while at the local Government school only 33 were enrolled.⁷

¹ *Centenary of the Catholic Church in Western Australia, 1846-1946*, a celebratory history prepared by the Church, p. 22.

² Neal, W.D.(ed), *Education in Western Australia*, UWA Press, 1979, p. 126.

³ The students in these Catholic schools came from various denominations, and included Protestant children.

⁴ Neal, W.D., *op. cit.*, pp. 132-147.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Marie Therese Foale RSJ, *The Josephites Go West: The Sisters of St Joseph in Western Australia 1887-1920*, University of Notre dame Press, Fremantle, 1995, p. 21.

⁷ *ibid.* pp. 29. At the same time, the Josephites also took over the running of the Sisters of Mercy school and convent in Geraldton, two more Sisters journeyed from Adelaide to join those in Geraldton.

Led by Sister Ursula, the Western Australian Josephites, split from the mother body in Sydney. Although they continued to be called the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, they adopted black habits instead of the brown usually worn. This led to the Sisters becoming known as the Black Josephites.⁸

In April 1896, Mother Ursula's only two postulants, Martha Postans and Magdalen Tuohy, took their perpetual vows. However, by this time, the lead mining in Northampton was in decline and, as a result, many families were leaving the area, taking with them their school age children.

Elsewhere, the numbers of Catholic children were increasing rapidly in areas which had, as yet, no school. In late 1896, Bishop Gibney asked the Sisters to make the Eastern Goldfields their new sphere of influence. The three Sisters left Northampton in January 1897 and arrived in Boulder in 1897.⁹

In 1896, the twin settlements of Kalgoorlie-Boulder had a population of approximately 20,000, with men outnumbering women two to one. While Kalgoorlie had begun to establish a range of services including hotels, breweries and newspapers, there were only a few permanent buildings in Boulder, South Boulder and Kamballie. Most people still lived in hessian tents or rough wood and iron humpies.¹⁰ Many of the prospectors and miners were Catholics and by 1901, approximately one third of all Catholics in Western Australia (about 40,000 in total) were living in the Eastern Goldfields.¹¹

Bishop Gibney appointed Father James Duff to Coolgardie in 1894 and the first recorded Mass was held in a hessian tent in April of that year. Gibney also sent Sisters from the St John of God Order to the Goldfields to care for the sick and dying. They arrived before the Josephites in March 1896. The Sisters established hospitals at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie and opened the first Catholic school in Kalgoorlie in February 1897, and a second in South Kalgoorlie in October 1897.¹²

In September 1896, a community meeting was held to discuss the provision of a school for the 45 children in the Great Boulder area. In October, the community decided to establish a convent school in the area. St Joseph's school, Kamballie was built near the Great Boulder mine. The arrival of the three Josephites from Northampton coincided with the opening of the building on 7 February 1897.¹³

The Sisters quickly made it known that they would teach all branches of education, including music, and would accept children from all denominations.¹⁴ When the numbers of children became too large for these three Sisters to manage, they employed lay teachers to assist them. In 1898 and 1899, the Josephites in Boulder were joined by one English and thirteen

⁸ *ibid*, p. 39.

⁹ *ibid*, pp. 34 & 42. In 1898, the Irish Presentation Sisters went out from Geraldton to take over the running of the Northampton Catholic school.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 35.

¹¹ *ibid*.

¹² *ibid*, p. 46

¹³ *ibid*, p. 46 & 47

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 47

Irish postulants.¹⁵ By this time, they had a second school at All Hallows in Boulder City. However, the arrival of the new Sisters stretched the resources of the Order and Sisters were forced to beg for money and goods.¹⁶

By 1905, the Josephites had five schools in the Goldfields. These were St Joseph's, Kamballie (moved to South Boulder 1908); All Hallows, Boulder City (destroyed by cyclone 1903); St Brigid's, Brown Hill (1899); St Joseph's, Kanowna (1905, which became the Order's first branch convent); and St Ursula's, Trafalgar (1905).¹⁷

The Josephites had initially been accommodated in hessian tents until a wood and iron convent was built for them in Wittenoom Street, Boulder. Although this building was severely damaged by the cyclone in December 1903, it became a temporary school for the children as All Hallows had been completely destroyed by the cyclone.¹⁸ Money which the Sisters had collected for the construction of a new convent was instead used to fund the erection of a new church-school. This new school, renamed All Hallows, was finished in March 1904.¹⁹

Tenders for the building of the convent were initially given at a cost of £4,200 and higher. The committee of Catholic Church parishioners who were supervising the building's construction chose not to accept any of these tenders. Instead, they appointed the Catholic Church's Clerk of Works, M Carey, to carry out the work. Carey had built St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Kalgoorlie in 1902.²⁰ T H Cunningham was the architect of the building and Carey also supervised local tradesmen such as painter Mr Harvey and plasterer J Williams.²¹

On 20 January 1905, Bishop Gibney laid the foundation stone for the long awaited new convent. Over 5,000 people were present at the ceremony and the collection for the new building amounted to £550, which was quite remarkable considering that twelve months earlier a collection had taken place for a new school. *St Joseph's Convent* was completed in September 1905. On 24 September 1905, the Convent was officially opened and blessed by Father Keogh.

A number of alterations and changes to the design of the building were made, ballooning out the cost of the convent's construction. In the end, the convent cost £4,000, £200 less the lowest tender which was originally received. After its completion, about half the money spent was still owed by the Catholic Church.²²

The new convent building was a far cry from the hessian tents which the Sister's lived in when they arrived in Kamballie. The Kalgoorlie Miner

¹⁵ ibid, p. 49. Between 1898 and 1911, 25 of those who had joined the Order took their vows, 17 of these were from Ireland, one from England and the remainder were Australian.

¹⁶ ibid, p. 50.

¹⁷ ibid, p. 53.

¹⁸ ibid, p. 47&54.

¹⁹ ibid, p. 54.

²⁰ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 20 September 1905.

²¹ ibid.

²² Marie Therese Foale RSJ, *op. cit.*, pp. 54&55.

announced that the building marked 'a very distinct advance in the architecture of Boulder City'.²³ It went on to state

The new convent is designed to meet all the developments that the most sanguine Boulderite could reasonably hope for, and judging by appearances it has been built to last as long as Boulder will last.²⁴

Besides the living and work rooms which accommodated the Sisters, the design of *St Joseph's Convent* also included a large pupil's dormitory, bathroom and living areas in the upper storey.

Although the convent was not officially opened until the 24 September, an opening celebration took place on the 20 September 1905. The celebrations included a torchlight procession by children who attended the Sisters of St Joseph schools at All Hallow's, Kamballie, Trafalgar and Brown Hill Schools, and a school children's bazaar and fancy fair. Other entertainments featured the sports and pastimes, songs and dances from Ireland. This included 'a real Irish Turf fire', Irish moss and heather, Irish flanks and yanks of yarn, lace, Irish paintings of Irish scenery and growing shamrocks.²⁵

St Joseph's Convent, Boulder was classified by the National Trust on 6 June 1978 and on 21 October 1980, was also included on the Register of the National Estate. On 18 September 1992, *St Joseph's Convent*, Crown Reserve 3900, was interim listed on the Western Australia's Register of Heritage Places. In 1994, a memorial was lodged by the Heritage Council of Western Australia on the Crown Land Reserve relating to *St Joseph's Convent*, Boulder.

St Joseph's Convent functioned as a school-convent from 1905 to 1996, at which time the convent was closed after the last Josephite had left. Although the Sisters of St Joseph are still located in Boulder, at 43 Moran Street. Other Catholic communities include the Sisters of Mercy, the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Christian Brothers.

In 1997, parish priest Father Steve Durkin reported that the convent building would be sold after the church had failed to find a practical use for the building.²⁶ The auction was held on 17 September 1997 and the convent was sold for \$320,000 to Boulder locals Michael and Judith McKay.²⁷

In the process of readying the land for auction, the Crown Reserve land was cancelled and a Crown Grant was granted on 9 July 1997 to the Roman Catholic Archbishop. On 20 October 1997, the land was transferred to new owners Michael Wayne and Judith Ann McKay. However, the memorial to the land was not noted and the Heritage Council is currently in the process of rectifying the anomaly, by lodging a new memorial.²⁸

In 1997/1998, *St Joseph's Convent* is currently being renovated by Michael and Judith McKay. A new swimming pool has been installed in the rear grounds of the site and general landscaping has taken place. The metal fence on the front boundary of the building was replaced with a fence of brick pillars and iron infill. The building is in the process of being painted and cracks in the

²³ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 20 September 1905.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 15 August 1997, p. 3.

²⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 18 September 1997, p. 3.

²⁸ HCWA Files, St Joseph's Convent, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, File No.: P0190.

plaster walls are being patched. The owners are also replacing the drainage on the site, fixing the downpipes and gutters.

The new owners' long term plans for the site are to establish a bed and breakfast. *St Joseph's Convent* has been renamed 'Rosewood House' by the McKays.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

St Joseph's Convent is a two-storey red brick structure on the north side of Moran Street built in the Federation Gothic style.²⁹ The building was built to accommodate the Sisters of St Josephs of the Sacred Heart. Adjacent is *All Hallows Church* (c.1900), smaller in size and in similar style and materials to the convent. The convent was likely to have been built at the same time as the church as the ornamentation on the church is the same as that on the convent. Federation Gothic style is typical of ecclesiastic buildings of this period, examples include *St John of God Hospital Convent* (1905), Kalgoorlie, *St Mary's Roman Catholic Church* (1902) Kalgoorlie, *St Andrew's Church* (1905) Perth, *St Patrick's Basilica and St Patrick's Presbytery* (1900, 1916) Fremantle, and *St Brigid's Convent (Fmr)* (c.1881), Northbridge.

Moran Street, Boulder contains *St Matthew's Anglican Church*³⁰ and *St George's Church* (c.1890) but are in different styles to *St Joseph's Convent* and its adjacent church.³¹ *St Joseph's Convent* is most imposing and decorative structure of the ecclesiastic buildings in Moran Street.

The building is set back from the street alignment with a lawned forecourt. Remnant garden is on the east side of the building, while the rear and west sides are un-landscaped except for some shrubbery in close proximity to the building. The entrance is approached along a narrow path of concrete paving slabs which broadens at the entrance. Concrete paths wrap the periphery of the building. The addition of a metal fence along the front boundary restricts the visibility of the facade diminishing its streetscape value.

The building is 'L' - shaped in plan, approximately 27.5 metres long, and approximately 11 metres wide extending to approximately 14.6 metres wide at the north-west corner. The building is orientated east-west with the main entrance facing Moran Street to the south. The facade is symmetrical about a central entrance bay with a small single-storey vestry projecting from the east side.

The pitched roof has pronounced brick gables and Dutch gables. The roof is now covered with red painted corrugated iron but it is believed to have originally been covered with slate. Remnants of the slate covering can be seen on the vestry. The roof lacks ornamentation other than tall heavily corbelled rendered brick chimneys, decorative timber bargeboards and louvred vents to the gables which are visible from the north. The underside of the roof projection is supported on corbelled brick dentils.

²⁹ Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1994) pp. 120 - 123.

³⁰ Date the church was built is unknown.

³¹ Hocking Planning and Architecture Pty Ltd, 'Municipal Inventory Draft' (prepared for City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 1995).

The exterior walls are faced-brick in English bond. The main feature of the exterior of the building is three projecting bays to the facade. The external corners of these bays and the corners of the building are strengthened by corbelled buttresses. The buttresses are accentuated by rendered copings, now painted. The three bays extend beyond the height of the exterior walls to form stepped gables which are decorated with rendered copings.

The eastern bay has a single-storey projection to contain the altar of an oratory. The exterior walls of the projection feature a heavily moulded and rendered battlemented parapet to conceal the roof behind. The vestry on the east side is in matching style to the main building with a gable end and buttressed corners.

The main entrance to the building is set in the centre of the central bay flanked by the buttresses and is crowned by a steep gable which is slightly proud of the face of the exterior wall. This gable is finished with a moulded rendered coping and finial at the apex. The doorway is within a brick lancet archway recessed to feature a brick intrados highlighted with tuck-pointing. The arch also features a small voussoirs of a single round brick arch. The fanlight contains timber tracery. The fanlight is believed to have contained leaded and stained glass. A rendered shield is above the fanlight.

The fenestration is paired recessed lancet windows between each bay at the ground and first floor level. The lancets contain two light casements and lancet fanlights. The panes are decorated with leaded and stained glass, with the exception of the upper-storey casements which have been replaced with plain glass.³² All the windows have painted rendered sills, and are crowned with decorative hood mouldings. The voussoirs of the doorways on the north wall (rear) are tuck-pointed, some are now fully or partly rendered. The reveals of the windows are moulded to match the entrance. The oratory window consists of three conjoined narrow lancet windows supported on fine rendered columns with capitals. The windows are covered with louvres.

A wide verandah and timber balcony extend across the rear of the building roofed with a lean-to covered in corrugated iron, and supported on timber posts. A simple timber frieze decorates the underside of the balcony roof. Fibro-cement sheets now provide balustrade infill panels and a skirt below the balcony floor. Evidence remains of the location of the original handrail on the balcony roof posts.

The interior comprises a large kitchen and refectory, a laundry, two sitting rooms, a vestry and oratory on the ground floor level, and several bedrooms, two bathrooms and living areas on the upper level.

The building interior is impressive in its expansive space, due to its high ceilings, and intricate detailing. Decorative plaster and timber mouldings, and pressed metal ceilings are features, in particular, the intricately painted embossed metal ceiling, cornice and frieze to the entrance hallway and oratory.

A hallway forms the entrance to the convent which connects to a wide passage that runs the length of the building at the rear. This passage is approached from the entrance hallway under a corbelled lancet archway

³² Other glazing has been replaced with obscure glass.

decorated with a plaster hood mould and leaded and a stained glass fanlight. At the end of the hall is a carved jarrah staircase which leads to the upper floor bedrooms. A very small office is under the stair landing.

On both sides of the entrance hallway is a sitting room featuring fireplaces with timber and marble chimneypieces and iron grates. At the western end of the passage is the refectory and access to the kitchen and to the verandah. The laundry at the north-east corner is an addition and is accessed from the verandah. At the eastern end of the passage is the oratory which gives access to the vestry on the east side.³³ A raised altar, framed by a wide arch, is housed within the bay of the oratory. The altar is framed by two niches.

On the upper level is a central passage that extends the length of the building. The sisters' bedrooms (11 in total) are small sized and are mainly on the south side of the passage. Bathrooms, living areas and a few bedrooms are on the north side. The passage has three lancet arches each decorated with plaster hood moulds.

A laundry has been added behind the sitting room on the north-east corner of the building. The laundry is timber framed externally clad with fibro-cement lining.³⁴

At the west side of the site is a metal clad shed, recently erected.

Over the years, sun protective hoods have been fitted above the windows, the bathrooms have been modernised, and an external stair has been added to provide egress from the upper level. Exposed pipes and air-conditioning units are evident on the external walls and lattice screens have been installed to the verandah. Light weight partitions and cupboards have been added to the living areas. Suspended fluorescent lights have been installed throughout and timber floorboards have been covered in carpet.

Evidence on the northern exterior wall of the kitchen, including old plumbing fixtures and pipes, suggests that a room, perhaps a laundry, was once attached to the rear of the kitchen.

There is evidence of dampness which may be due to ineffective stormwater disposal, and some cracking to walls which may also be due to the above. The roof covering may require attention in parts but as a whole the building appears in a sound condition.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition, n.d.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet, 26 February, 1980.

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

³³ Access to the vestry was restricted but is believed to have a jarrah panelled ceiling.

³⁴ Date the laundry was built is unknown.