



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.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.18 Marketing and retailing

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 308 Commercial and service industries

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Semaphore Chambers is one of the finest examples of the Federation Anglo Dutch style in Western Australia, with its elaborate upper gable and exuberant parapet line. (Criterion 1.1)

Semaphore Chambers is a distinctive building in the streetscape and contributes to the identity of Hannan Street. (Criterion 1.3)

Semaphore Chambers is a distinctive element of the Hannan Street streetscape which, spanning four blocks, is the most extensive, intact and significant commercial street representing the 1880s and 1890s goldrushes in Western Australia. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The construction of *Semaphore Chambers* was a result of the successful exploitation of the Coolgardie Goldfields and the continuing development of Kalgoorlie as the major administrative and commercial centre of the goldfields. (Criterion 2.1)

Semaphore Chambers is representative of the third phase of construction on Hannan Street between about 1898 and 1908, when the timber and iron buildings were replaced with brick structures. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC 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.

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Semaphore Chambers is valued by the Western Australian community as a distinctive element of the Hannan Street streetscape which is the most extensive, intact and significant commercial street representing the 1880s and 1890s goldrushes in Western Australia. Spanning four blocks, the Hannan Street precinct has been identified by the National Trust, and listed on the Register of the National Estate, as a significant turn of the century goldfields' town streetscape which extends over three street blocks and comprises one and two storey buildings of various styles of the period. (Criterion 4.1)

Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie, including *Semaphore Chambers*, contributes to the local and wider community's sense of place as a substantial reminder of the 1880s and 1890s goldrushes in Western Australia.. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Semaphore Chambers is an excellent example of the Federation Anglo Dutch style, of which there are few examples in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Semaphore Chambers is representative of the commercial buildings of Kalgoorlie, dating from the late 1890s, particularly along Hannan Street. The shopfront at *Semaphore Chambers* is typical of those located at Hannan and Burt Streets, with display windows, recessed entrance, and features such as timber and glass panel doors and rendered dado masonry (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Semaphore Chambers has recently been refurbished and is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Semaphore Chambers was constructed as a commercial building but the recent renovations have provided a residential and commercial fitout. Documentary evidence suggests that the place may have been occupied as a boarding house as well as shops and offices in earlier years, in which case the current residential use is not out of character, and *Semaphore Chambers* could be said to have a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Minimal original fabric remains intact except for the four brick exterior walls of the building, including the front façade and shopfront. Original outbuildings and semi detached buildings at the rear of the existing original building have been demolished and rebuilt. The interior of the place has a low degree of authenticity. The exterior of *Semaphore Chambers* has a moderate to high degree of authenticity, and overall the place has a low to moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Heritage Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Semaphore Chambers is a two-storey brick and iron commercial building, with a single storey back section, constructed in 1899. The place is designed in the Federation Anglo Dutch style.¹ *Semaphore Chambers* replaced an earlier timber and iron building (c. 1895) also known as Semaphore Chambers, which was burnt down early in 1899. In the 1990s, *Semaphore Chambers* has been extensively refurbished and enlarged to serve both a residential and commercial function.

In June 1893, Paddy Hannan and his partners discovered alluvial gold thirty miles (48 kms) north-east of Coolgardie. A camp, known as Hannan's Find, quickly developed at the site, with bough huts and hessian and canvas structures erected along the edge of the track from Coolgardie. Many of these structures housed businesses to serve the prospectors who flocked to the area. Later that year, George Brookman and Sid Pearce located gold reefs three miles south of Hannan's Find, at what was to become Boulder. On 4 September 1894, Hannan's Find was declared the townsite of Kalgoorlie. The track from Coolgardie became the main street and was named Hannan Street.²

With the establishment of the townsite, the second phase of building along Hannan Street began. This was facilitated by the arrival of the Eastern Goldfields railway line in September 1896, which made the transport of more substantial building materials much easier. The original structures were replaced with timber-framed buildings clad in galvanised iron, and usually lined internally with hessian or canvas. The early buildings presented a very real fire hazard, and there were a number of fires in Hannan Street over the ensuing years. Between 1898 and 1908, substantial brick buildings replaced the timber and iron and hessian structures in the town centre, although many timber and iron residences remained in the town.³

Lot 16 was sold at the second auction of Kalgoorlie town lots, on 25 October 1894. It was purchased by Walsh & Son for £154. It had £95 worth of improvements on it at the time of purchase.⁴ What these improvements comprised is not certain, but they may have been made up of more than one building. In 1896, William Lovely, Thomas Brimage and Henry Taylor, obtained title to the section of Lot 16, comprising about one third of the lot, on which was situated the original Semaphore Chambers.⁵

When built the old Semaphore Chambers was considered to be one of the most advanced set of offices in the place... This original building had a frontage of 25ft, and was simply divided down the centre, with a narrow passage, from which five small offices opened on each side. Messrs T. F. Brimage & Co then occupied two of these apartments, and the others were tenanted by various well-known goldfield's

¹ 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, pp. 112-115.

² Webb, M. & A. *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of WA*, (2 vols), Hocking & Co and St George Books, Perth, 1995, p. 91; King, Norma, *The Voice of the Goldfields: 100 years of the 'Kalgoorlie Miner'*, p. 15; Kalgoorlie-Boulder Tourist Centre, *Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie 'Our Golden Heritage': a heritage walk along Hannan Street*, June 1995, pp. 2-4.

³ Webb, M. & A. *op cit*, pp. 430-432, 540.

⁴ *ibid*, pp. 419-421.

⁵ Certificate of Title, Vol. 101 Fol. 122, 15 December 1896.

professional firms, the most prominent of which was the firm of Pilkington and Hall, solicitors.⁶

Semaphore Chambers was named after William Lovely's home suburb in Adelaide.⁷ In 1899, fire destroyed the building. Henry Taylor withdrew from the partnership, and Thomas Brimage and William Lovely had *Semaphore Chambers* rebuilt, adding a little more land to the site in the process.⁸ Some of the extra land came from Lot 17, which was owned by Isidor Cohn.⁹

Amongst the many new additions recently erected in Kalgoorlie is the handsome new Semaphore Chambers which have just been completed. This structure has been erected by Messrs Brimage and Lovely on their property in Hannan-street to replace the old corrugated iron building which was demolished by fire some months ago... In looking at the building which has risen Phoenix-like out of the ashes of the past, one cannot help contrasting it with the old; nor can one help contrasting the then state of the town with the present position of rapid advancement and solidity which is so apparent almost everywhere and exemplified in a marked degree by the new and up-to-date Semaphore Chambers.

Before rebuilding Messrs Brimage and Lovely were successful in obtaining an additional three foot frontage on one side and one foot on the other side of their old site, thereby increasing the frontage to 29 ft. On this frontage and back for a depth of 70ft the new building has been erected. With granite for the base, machine-pressed bricks of dark brown color for the general face work, red bricks for the piers, black bricks in the spandrils of the window heads, white stone for the quoins, arches, and mullions of the window openings, white stone corbelling for the gable, and cement stucco for the moulds, scrolls, foliage and other enrichments of the finishing details, the architects have been successful in obtaining a most pleasing scheme of contrast even without taking into account the form of the design, which has been treated in the Gothic style. Rising above the verandah, which shades the ground floor front, this building presents perhaps one of the most pleasing fronts in Hannan-street...

From the main entrance a passage 4ft 6in wide continues through the whole depth of the building. On either side of the entrance are plate glass windows, with cathedral glass lights over, and with fanlight doors opening from the street. One of these windows, that on the left, is the front of a well-finished shop, and the other on the right is the front of Messrs T. F. Brimage and Co's business office. Immediately behind, and opening from this front office, is Mr T. F. Brimage's private office, which has a strong room attached. At the rear of the front shop before mentioned is the stairway which leads to the upper storey. At the rear of the two-storey portion is an open light court, and then comes the single portion of the building, which comprises four comfortable offices, access to which is obtained from the passage before mentioned.

The first floor contains five very neat and comfortable offices, three of which are occupied by Messrs T. F. Brimage and Co, whose rapidly increasing business has necessitated increased accommodation. This floor also contains a lavatory. The whole of the apartments throughout the building have well-finished plastered walls, and are floored with well-seasoned jarrah, which has a capital surface. The ceilings have fluted iron covering, neatly panelled out with molds.

The architects... hav[e] provided a fireplace in each office, and splendid ventilation throughout... The ceiling and joinery work in the various apartments is tastefully painted. Electric lights have been installed throughout the building... [and p]rovision has been made for conserving rain water from the roof, and this has been placed at the disposal of the tenants. Messrs Hawkins and Sprigg were the

⁶ *Western Argus*, 28 September 1899, p. 12.

⁷ Blainey, G. *The Golden Mile*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p. 24.

⁸ Certificate of Title, Vol. 148 Fol. 33, 5 April 1899.

⁹ Certificates of Title, Vol. 247 Fol. 192 & Vol. 247 Fol. 194, 28 June 1902.

architects for this work, and it has been carried out and completed under their supervision by Mr. A. H. Galpin...¹⁰

Thomas Brimage and William Lovely traded as T. F. Brimage & Co, 'mining engineers, accountants, legal managers, mining and land agents'.¹¹ When *Semaphore Chambers* was constructed, Hannan Street was already paved, with electric street lighting and street trees. By 1904, electric trams ran along Hannan Street and on to Boulder, and the street had developed into the major commercial and shopping precinct in the eastern goldfields.¹² In that year, *Semaphore Chambers* was tenanted by Citizen Life Insurance and the Commercial Union Insurance Co, while the rest of the building was still occupied by T. F. Brimage & Co.

By 1910, Brimage & Co were operating largely as sharebrokers, and *Semaphore Chambers* was home to music teacher Professor G. Marshall, tailor Henry Cope, T & G Mutual Life, and Mrs Cohen's registry office.¹³ Thomas Brimage died on 25 May 1915, and title passed to his wife Marie Louise, who had moved to Narrogin. Thomas Brimage had raised a mortgage on the building with the Western Australian Bank in October 1912 and, in 1922, title to *Semaphore Chambers* passed to the Bank suggesting that the mortgage conditions may not have been met.¹⁴

Much of *Semaphore Chambers* was empty in 1920, perhaps due to the uncertainty of ownership. One tenant was a Mrs McEvoy. It is not certain in what capacity she occupied the building, but she was a tenant for over twenty years. It is possible she ran a boarding house in the building, behind or above the shop spaces and offices.¹⁵ Thomas John Martin, an investor who purchased *Semaphore Chambers* in 1942, is listed as running a 'lodging house' in the place in the late 1940s.¹⁶ Other tenants of the place over the years included Norwood Bros stationery and library, and Roycroft Library & Bookshop. A beauty salon and later a pastry cook occupied part of the ground floor in the 1940s.¹⁷ *Semaphore Chambers* changed hands a number of times following Thomas Martin's death in 1963.¹⁸

Photographs of *Semaphore Chambers* in the 1980s, show that at that time the facade had been painted to reflect almost a 'negative' of the original finish, with dark brown and red brickwork painted white and white stone quoining painted black.¹⁹ The colour scheme highlighted the Gothic influences in the style of the windows.

In 1981, *Semaphore Chambers* was purchased by Arrowville Pty Ltd, engineering and mining services, who appear to have occupied the entire building for about five years.²⁰ The place changed hands a few more times

10 *Western Argus*, 28 September 1899, p. 12, & photograph, p. 13.

11 *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1904.

12 King, Norma, *When Hannan Street was Young*, 6 page booklet, p. 1.

13 *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1910.

14 Certificate of Title Vol. 247 Fol. 194, 2 October 1912, 25 May 1915, 9 July 1915 & 5 August 1922.

15 *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1920-1942.

16 Certificate of Title Vol. 810 Fol. 143, 2 December 1942; *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1942-1949.

17 *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1920-1949.

18 Certificate of Title Vol. 810 Fol. 143, 20 November 1969, 8 October 1970, 14 July 1981.

19 Photograph, 1982, HCWA File 1303.

20 Certificate of Title Vol. 424 Fol. 154A, 14 July 1981.

until purchased in 1994 by current owners David and Wanda Johns.²¹ During their ownership, *Semaphore Chambers* has been extensively renovated and enlarged for both residential and commercial use, which may more closely reflect the actual usage of the place in the past. The facade has also been given a new colour scheme.

In 1999, two commercial tenants of *Semaphore Chambers* are FAI Insurance, and Master Builders Association of WA.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Semaphore Chambers is situated on the south side of Hannan Street, amongst other commercial premises of similar size and proportion. Its distinctive facade gives it a landmark quality in the streetscape.

Semaphore Chambers displays characteristics of Federation Anglo Dutch style of architecture.²² The symmetrical street facade is double height with a decorative gable embellished in stucco with quoining and banding, in a contrasting colour, originally a striking contrast against the dark brown face bricks. The gable has curvilinear elements and has a pediment crowning gable. The detailing on the facade also shows Gothic influences in the windows and window bays.

A single-storey steel framed verandah has been constructed recently. This extends the width of the building and the full width of the footpath. The upper level of the verandah forms a first floor balcony.

At ground floor level the recessed doorway is central within the symmetrical facade, flanked by the original shop fronts with transoms above, angled towards the doorway. The doorway is a stepped arch with decorative capital banding on the piers each side. The original arched fanlight is above the door. The original corner copper mullions are still in place on each front window. The piers on each external side of the building and each side of the central doorway, have a painted granite base. The external piers have a recessed and moulded vertical detail in the painted face brick.

The ground floor interior is entirely a recent fitout. It has concrete floors throughout with quarry tiles in the hallway. The ceilings are gyprock and ceiling roses have been installed. Some original brick and plaster walls have been retained, although they are indistinguishable in appearance from the gyprock stud walls. New MDF skirtings, architraves and other detailing have been installed.

The central hallway has office tenancies on each side. The left hand side wall is original brick, but much of the right wall is recent stud work with gyprock linings. The office fitouts feature new timber framed doors and associated windows along the hallway walls. Behind the office on the right is the original staircase. The lower half of the staircase has been moved from its original position which was about two metres closer to the front on the same side, to facilitate a larger front office space. The lower section of the staircase is now situated beyond the original exterior back wall of the building.

The hallway continues into the new extensions with toilet facilities on the left behind the stairs, a full glazed wall at the end of the hallway, and a double entry into the rear space on the right hand side. The rear space is open plan and was established as a residential apartment with a kitchen fitout and

²¹ Certificate of Title Vol. 1735 Fol. 045, 21 July 1986, 19 May 1989, 19 January 1994.

²² Apperly, R., op cit, pp. 112-115.

bathroom facilities. It has a series of three monitor skylight roofs along the centre of the roof. Double doors give access to the rear of the property.

The stairway accesses a mezzanine area at mid level. The original upper section of the stairs remains in its original location, with a window on the original rear wall, and an internal window with etched glass pattern on the interior wall of the stairwell.

The stairs open onto a reception area ahead, and the front of the building on the right hand side down a short corridor with an office each side. In the reception area, a wall has been removed and a flat arch constructed over the reception counter. There is evidence of a fireplace which has been boarded over, and a recessed arched opening which has been bricked in. The arched opening possibly gave access through to the adjoining building. The office on the left has a large recessed flat arched former opening which has been bricked up.

The short corridor opens into a large room which previously comprised two rooms and a central corridor. The removal of the walls has created one large space across the front of the building. The corner fireplaces remain, with reconstructed mantelpieces, in the two outside corners of the space. Central within the room on the front facade is a door which has replaced the original window, to give access onto the front balcony. The balcony is a recent construction. It is steel framed with ply board floors overlaid with indoor outdoor carpet. The balustrading comprises pressed aluminium panels in a replica cast iron lace design.

The upper floor is almost a complete refurbishment with pine floors, gyprock ceilings, new ceiling roses, decorative cornices, and flat moulded arches to match an original arch. There are no new stud walls in the original section upstairs, but several walls have been removed.

On the left at the top of the staircase is a step up which signals the rear of the original building and the beginning of the rear extension. On the right hand side are amenities, and a door opens onto a small verandah on the left hand side. The face brickwork of the original rear wall remains.

From the small rear verandah looking to the rear of the property, the roof of the ground floor extension dominates the site. The zincalume gable roof spans the entire property. Three monitor windows are in place along the ridge of the roof, and along the north side boundary (the left side looking to the rear of the property), a timber deck walkway runs the length of the roof providing rear access from the upper level.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Although built for a commercial function, *Semaphore Chambers* was also used as a boarding house, a combination of residential and commercial usage which was a common feature of the period. The recent refurbishment of *Semaphore Chambers* has emphasised the residential aspect of the place.

Park Buildings (1904) in Hannan Street Kalgoorlie also has a continuing residential function with a separate boarding house building currently utilised as a backpackers' hostel, with more recent renovations adapting the upper floor of the commercial section of the place for family residential use. Park Buildings is in fair to good condition. The commercial and residential premises at 151-165 Beaufort Street, Northbridge is still partly occupied as residential, although the building is in only fair condition. Other commercial premises which originally had a residential function, such as the Beaucott

Building and the Alexander Building in Mt Lawley, are of a much larger scale and no longer have a residential use.

There is only one other example of Anglo Dutch style architecture on the HCWA database, and that is Butterick's Building, Wagin (1906). It is on the Municipal Inventory for the district and has been recommended for inclusion on the State Register of Heritage Places.

13.4 REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
