



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Midland Town Hall is significant in exhibiting aesthetic characteristics that are valued by the community, its general form, colonnaded entrance, dome and unusual clock tower are easily recognisable. (Criterion 1.1)

Midland Town Hall was the result of an architectural competition, the entrants of which included prominent Western Australian architects of the era. The building possesses importance for its design excellence. (Criterion 1.2)

Midland Town Hall is a landmark in the Midland townscape; its prominent site, unusual form and height contribute to this quality. *Midland Town Hall* contributes to the aesthetic qualities of the townscape. These qualities have not been diminished by minimal alterations to the building or changes to the townscape of Midland. (Criterion 1.3)

Midland Town Hall is an integral component of the former civic heart of Midland, comprising *Midland Town Hall*, (1906-1907, 1923-1924), *Midland Post Office* (1913), and *Midland Courthouse* (1907) which collectively contribute to the streetscape, townscape and cultural environment of Midland, forming a precinct of early twentieth century administrative buildings. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Midland Town Hall is significant for its association with the local government and social occasions which contributed to the development of Midland. (Criterion 2.2)

Midland Town Hall has a close association with the Midland Junction Council and the architects R. M. Hamilton and F. W. Upton. (Criterion 2.3)

Midland Town Hall was the result of a keenly contested architectural competition. Entrants included prominent Western Australian architects of the era. As the winning design, *Midland Town Hall* is significant in the history of Western Australia for its design excellence and achievement. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Midland Town Hall has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the cultural history of Western Australia as a type locality and benchmark site by which other buildings can be evaluated. (Criterion 3.1)

Midland Town Hall was important as a focus of community events and is essential to the understanding of the human occupation of the town centre of Midland. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Midland Town Hall is highly valued by the community for social, cultural and aesthetic associations as the centre of local government and the venue of many recreational gatherings. *Midland Town Hall* also has educational, religious and spiritual associations as the venue for war memorial services and public announcements in the past. (Criterion 4.1)

In 1995, the Shire is in the process of relocating its civic functions back to the Town Hall (Criterion 4.1)

The prominent location, unusual form and scale of *Midland Town Hall* is significant for contributing to the community's sense of place as it is easily recognisable and visible from various locations in Midland. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The construction of the square clock tower above the dome is thought to be unique in Western Australia. The form of *Midland Town Hall*, addressing the junction of two highways, is uncommon. Throughout Australia intact examples of town halls of similar age are becoming rare because of demolition and alterations. (Criterion 5.1)

Midland Town Hall is of a design particular to civic buildings of the early twentieth century; one that is no longer constructed in Western Australia. It demonstrates a distinctive way of life and custom associated with public entertainment prevalent before the introduction of film, television and video. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Midland Town Hall is significant in demonstrating the stylistic qualities and design characteristics of local government buildings constructed in Western Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century. (Criterion 6.1)

Midland Town Hall demonstrates the human activities of local government, social intercourse and entertainment in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Midland Town Hall is generally in sound condition; however, some work is required to adequately conserve and maintain the building to

current conservation standards, and a detailed works program has been established for this purpose. Refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects' detailed drawings 94142 A2.0 - A17.0 (for the Shire of Swan October 1995), for more information.

The roof is in sound condition, although a multitude of small valleys and hidden gutters that are easily blocked renders the roof defective in heavy rain, and has been the major cause of damage to plasterwork inside the building.

The external solid brick walls are in sound condition, exhibiting fretting in some locations.

Rising damp has been a problem in the main hall, however the wall surface has been treated with a damp inhibitor and a high dado rail has been installed with panelling below.

Midland Town Hall is currently cared for by the Shire of Swan. No regular maintenance program is in operation; however, attention is paid to defects as they arise. Various repairs, alterations and additions have been undertaken by current and past managements. Intrusive additions and defects are currently reversible.

Refer to Palassis Architects' "Midland Town Hall Conservation Plan", (for the Shire of Swan, May 1993), for more information.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Local government use of *Midland Town Hall* ceased, in 1970, with the formation of the new Shire of Swan and the relocation of the offices to other premises. However, the majority of associated elements, including furniture in the council chamber, remain insitu.

The 1923/24 addition to the building, which was intended to complete the original design, is not identical to the 1905 design; however, it has a high degree of integrity because it was designed by the same architect with similar form and massing.

Later additions, including the toilet block, a fire escape and the replacement of gardens alongside Great Eastern Highway by parking space, possess low integrity.

There is sufficient evidence available for the accurate conservation, including the removal of intrusive elements and the reconstruction of missing or altered elements, of *Midland Town Hall* to sustain its general integrity.

Midland Town Hall has a moderate level of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Some decorative details of the dome have been removed, and several doors and glazing have been replaced in a design dissimilar to that of the original.

Original stained glass windows and interior fittings include cast iron gallery chairs, staircase joinery and a horseshoe table in the Council Chambers remain insitu.

Additions to the structure are minimal, and in combination with the minor changes to the building fabric, *Midland Town Hall* retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Midland is located 18 kilometres north east of Perth by road.

The Midland Railway Company commenced construction work in 1886 and a tent village developed in the current location of the town of Midland.¹ The new town, at the junction of the 'iron roads', was proclaimed and named 'Helena Vale' in December 1895.²

In March 1899, Reserve No. 5178 (Town Hall Site) was set apart for municipal purposes.³

In November 1900, ratepayers voted to change the name of the municipality from 'Helena Vale' to 'Midland Junction'.⁴ In July 1901, Swan Location 1740 was granted to the Mayor and Councillors of the Municipality of Midland Junction for use as a Town Hall site, under the Land Act of 1898.⁵ From 1902, the area was used for public gatherings, despite the absence of a building.⁶

In December 1903, the Midland Junction Municipal Council moved to form a sub-committee to consider the erection of a Town Hall. In April 1904, a special meeting of the Midland Junction Council was held. It was decided that the cost of the Town Hall should not exceed £6000, that the Government was to be approached for subsidies and the prospect of holding a design competition was discussed.⁷

In January 1905, designs were invited for *Midland Junction Town Hall* (now known as Midland Town Hall) in the *Western Australian Mining Building and Engineering Journal*. Nine designs were received and R. M. Hamilton and F. W. Upton were announced as the winners of the competition in April 1905. George Temple Poole, former Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, was placed second.⁸ Tenders were called for the building in February 1906.⁹ Messrs. Kerr and Pitt were appointed as contractors.¹⁰

The foundation stone was laid on 24 April 1906 by the Premier, Mr Rason, and seconded by Mayor W. R. Crosbie.¹¹ The Grand Opening Ceremony was held on 23 January 1907 and officially opened by the Premier, Mr Moore.¹²

¹ *The Countryman*, 22 April 1976.

² Council Yearbook.

³ *WA Government Gazette*, 4 March 1898.

⁴ Council Yearbook.

⁵ Land Grant 1901, Department of Land Administration Offices.

⁶ Harison, B. G. *Centenary of Midland 1886-1896* (Swan Press), p71.

⁷ Midland Junction Council Minutes, 17 December 1903 and 7 April 1904.

⁸ *Western Australian Mining Building and Engineering Journal*, 29 April 1905.

⁹ Midland Junction Council Minutes, 19 February 1906.

¹⁰ *West Australian*, 23 January 1907.

¹¹ *West Australian*, 25 April 1906.

¹² *Swan Gazette*, 23 January 1907.

Events and activities associated with local government, community meetings, social gatherings and entertainment were held at *Midland Junction Town Hall*. During the First World War, the balcony of the Mayor's Parlour was used to read out news of the War's progress to people gathered below. Memorial services for both World Wars were held at *Midland Junction Town Hall*.¹³

In November 1923, the clock turret on top of the dome of *Midland Junction Town Hall* was unveiled as a Soldiers War Memorial by Governor Newdegate to commemorate soldiers in World War One.¹⁴ It is believed that the clock was intended for the *Midland Post Office*, however when it was decided by the Head post office that only Main post offices were to be fitted with clocks, it was decided to install the clock in *Midland Junction Town Hall* as a war memorial.¹⁵

The addition to the *Midland Junction Town Hall*, designed by the architect Fred W. Upton, commenced in 1923. The addition included a new entrance lobby to the main hall, a lesser hall built on the first floor, a shop and other small rooms including a lighting room for the stage.¹⁶ A completion plaque on building states that the addition was completed in 1923, however Council minutes record that building was not completed until January 1924.¹⁷

In 1954, toilets and an escape stair were added to the building.¹⁸

In 1961, the 'Midland Junction Municipal Council' was renamed 'Midland Town Council'. From this time onwards, *Midland Junction Town Hall* was known as *Midland Town Hall*.¹⁹

In 1968, the Meckering earthquake caused damage to *Midland Town Hall*. The building was in a dilapidated state and came under threat of demolition. The adjacent *Carnegie Library* (1912) was demolished as a result of earthquake damage.²⁰

In 1970, the Midland Town Council merged with the Swan-Guildford Shire Council and the town hall functions were transferred to the Shire of Swan's Administration Centre in Middle Swan.²¹

In October 1973, *Midland Town Hall* was re-opened for community use after restoration was undertaken with a \$35,000 interest free loan granted by the Premier, Mr Tonkin. The restoration was prompted by public pressure.²²

Midland Town Hall was painted in 1984.²³

¹³ Harison, p71.

¹⁴ Weigand, L. 'The Construction of the Midland Town Hall', 1989.

¹⁵ College, N. 'Midland Junction 1887-1937', June 1983.

¹⁶ Weigand.

¹⁷ Midland Junction Council Minutes, January 1924.

¹⁸ Architectural drawing, August 1954, held at the Midland Library.

¹⁹ Weigand.

²⁰ *The Countryman*, 22 April 1976.

²¹ Weigand, L 'The Construction of the Midland Town Hall', 1989.

²² *The Countryman*, 22 April 1976.

²³ *The Countryman*, 22 April 1976

In October 1995, the Development Committee of the Heritage Council accepted a development proposal illustrating a program of conservation works and minor alterations to the *Midland Town Hall*. Refer to Considine and Griffiths Architects' detailed drawings 94142 A2.0 - A17.0. (for the Shire of Swan October 1995), for more information.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Midland Town Hall is within the civic precinct bounded to the north west by Great Northern Highway (formerly Newcastle Road), to the south by Great Eastern Highway (formerly York Road) and to the east by Helena Street.

The precinct includes *Midland Post Office*, (1913), *Midland Courthouse* (1907) and formerly the *Carnegie Library* (1912), places *Midland Town Hall* in an historic precinct which once formed the civic heart of the town. This siting is significant in the townscape of Midland as it is the junction between the main highways heading north and east from Perth.

The triangular site of *Midland Town Hall* is integral to the design of the building. *Midland Town Hall* addresses the corner of Great Eastern Highway and Great Northern Highway, unlike most buildings which front one street. However, it is not unique as a 'corner' town hall, *Fremantle Town Hall* (1885) and *York Town Hall* (1911) also addresses the junction of two streets.

The building comprises two storeys, with an extra room on the second floor below the central dome. The corner element, which is crucial to the design and aesthetic value of the building, consists of a colonnaded circular entrance lobby on the ground floor and the Mayor's parlour directly above it on the first floor. The room above the Mayor's parlour now contains the supporting structure for the clock which was added in 1923.

A circular entrance lobby on the ground floor leads to various offices. The main hall is located at the back of the building and includes the stage and gallery. The council chamber and other offices are located on the first floor.

The building is constructed of solid brick walls, the public facades are tuck pointed. Early photographs clearly illustrate the masonry as exposed; however the majority of the brickwork is now painted a terracotta colour and stone detailing has been painted cream. A small amount of exposed brickwork remains on the eastern facade. A smooth cement render has been applied to sections of the external walls.

Small valleys and hidden gutters that are easily blocked cause the roof to leak in heavy rain and has caused damage to internal plasterwork. This has not been caused by changes of roofing materials, but is a result of the complex design.

The 1923-1924 addition to the east of the building comprise of the entrance lobby to the main hall, the lesser hall on the first floor, the shop facing Great Eastern Highway and various other small rooms. The clock above the dome was not part of the original design, but was added fifteen years later.

Refer to Palassis Architects' "Midland Town Hall Conservation Plan", (for the Shire of Swan, May 1993), for a detailed analysis of the place and the fabric.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition. 1987.

Palassis Architects, "Midland Town Hall Conservation Plan", (for the Shire of Swan, May 1993)