



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)

- 3.19 Marketing and retailing
- 4.2.5 Developing city centres

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 308 Commercial & service industries
- 504 Depression & boom

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Mitchell's Buildings is significant as a fine example of a well designed and competently built commercial building in the Federation Free Classical Style, based on the ionic order. It is distinguished by an inventively composed front façade modulated by strongly moulded classical elements, some with mannerist characteristics that give it considerable depth and visual strength. (Criterion 1.1)

Mitchell's Buildings is an integral component of a largely intact precinct of buildings from the Federation and Interwar periods, strongly contributing to the historic streetscape that remains on both sides of Wellington Street, and together with other nearby streetscapes from that period collectively forms a significant townscape. (Criteria 1.3 & 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Mitchell's Buildings was constructed in 1912-13 during the expansion and the intensive building program in the Perth central business district that occurred during the gold rush period, which dates from the discovery of gold in Western Australia in the 1880s and 1890s up to World War One. (Criterion 2.2)

* 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.

From its construction in 1912-1913 up to the present day (in 2003), *Mitchell's Buildings* has continued to serve its original purpose as a retail and commercial premises. (Criterion 2.2)

Mitchell's Buildings was constructed at a time when businessmen and land owners were investing in and constructing retail and commercial premises in the central Perth area, influenced by the proximity of the railway, to take advantage of the gold boom atmosphere of vitality. (Criterion 2.2)

Mitchell's Buildings has a long association with the Mitchell family, after whom it takes its name. The land was originally granted to John Mitchell, a Private in the 63rd Regiment, in 1837. His daughter-in-law Harriet Mitchell commissioned the construction of *Mitchell's Buildings* in 1912-13, and members of the Mitchell family continued to own the property up to 1949. (Criterion 2.3)

Mitchell's Buildings was designed by architect Louis Bowser Cumpston in 1912. Cumpston operated an office in the newly constructed building from 1913 to c. 1917. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

With shop units at ground floor level and small office tenancies on the upper floor, *Mitchell's Buildings* is typical of commercial structures in Western Australia dating from the Federation period through to the immediate Post-War One period. (Criterion 5.1)

Mitchell's Buildings combines with other buildings of this type in the vicinity to form a distinctive streetscape characteristic of business districts developed in the 1890s and early 1900s in the Perth metropolitan area and larger rural centres. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Mitchell's Buildings is mostly in good condition although some of the upper floor tenancies were unoccupied and open at the time of inspection. A rectangular opening has been cut through a dividing wall between two of the rear offices and the surrounding fabric left damaged.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Mitchell's Buildings is of high integrity.

The building continues to serve its original intended purpose with shops at ground floor level and small tenancies on the upper level.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The level of authenticity of *Mitchell's Buildings* varies throughout the building.

The upper floor of the building, designed in the ionic order, is of high authenticity with the fabric of both the interior and exterior of the building remaining largely in its original state.

The authenticity of the ground floor is generally low. The ground floor level has been extensively altered. The shopfronts may have been altered a number of times in the life of the building. In some cases the interiors of the shop units have been completely stripped out and replaced. Whereas in some units original elements such as pressed metal ceilings remain. Again in other cases original elements may be concealed under recent fit outs.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Kristy Bizzaca, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects and Katrina Chisholm Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Mitchell's Buildings, a two storey brick and stucco building, was constructed in 1912-1913 for owner Harriet Mitchell. The building originally comprised four retail premises at ground floor level and offices at first floor level. *Mitchell's Buildings and Commercial Building, 132 – 134 William Street* are both located on Lots 3 and 7 of Perth Location V20.

Not long after the foundation of the Swan River Colony, Lieutenant Governor Captain James Stirling posted a government notice on 27 July 1829 that proclaimed 'the new stone will be laid of a New Town, to be called Perth, near to the entrance of the Estuary of the Swan River'.¹ The survey of the new town site began the day after its foundation ceremony on 12 August 1829.² It was laid out in a traditional grid pattern with streets surveyed parallel and at right angles to the main street named St. Georges Terrace, thereby forming large blocks which were surveyed into smaller allotments.³

Perth was constituted a city in 1856, but its village landscape appearance⁴ remained relatively unchanged right up to the 1880s and 1890s. This was despite the erection of a number of landmark public buildings such as the Town Hall (1868-1870) during the convict establishment period of the late 1850s to 1870s⁵, and the clearing and construction of Perth roads by convict labour from the 1860s up to 1875.⁶

The development of Perth was hugely impacted by the discovery of gold in the Kimberley, Murchison and Kalgoorlie regions in the 1880s and 1890s, and the concurrent granting of Responsible Government to Western

¹ Stannage, C. T., *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City, City of Perth*, Perth, p. 30. The name Perth was chosen in honour of the birthplace of then Secretary of State of the Colonies Sir George Murray. (Markey, D. C., 'Pioneer Perth', in Gentili, J., (ed), *Western Landscapes*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 346.)

² Ibid, pp. 351 – 352.

³ Markey, op. cit., pp. 351 - 352.

⁴ Building regulations drawn up in the 1830s together with the slow progress of the colony resulted in a village landscape of scattered single and two storey brick or stone residences surrounded by gardens mainly to the east of the government domain along Adelaide Terrace, and a slowly developing business area in the vicinity of the government domain to the west of Barrack Street. (Markey, op. cit., pp. 356 – 357; Stannage, op. cit., pp. 193 – 194; Campbell, R., 'Building in Western Australia 1851 – 1880', in Pitt Morison, M. & White, J. (eds.), *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 90.)

⁵ Campbell, op. cit., pp. 94 – 104; Battye, J. S. (ed), *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, Vol. 1, 1912, Facsimile Edition, Hesperian Press, 1985, p. 356. Perth was initially administered by a Town Trust after it became a city in 1856. The Town Trust was later replaced by a city council in 1871, subsequent to the proclamation of the Municipal Institutions Act of that year. (Battye, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 536; Georgiou, J., 'The Metropolitan Region', in Pitt Morison & White, op. cit., p. 247; Stannage, op. cit., p. 193.)

⁶ Stannage, op. cit., pp. 157, 164, 170.

Australia in 1890.⁷ The physical nature of the city changed dramatically with economic prosperity and the increase of population as a result of gold rush immigration. By the turn of the twentieth century, Perth was totally transformed. Its streets became lined with elaborately styled multi-storey buildings, many of which were the design of a now large architectural profession, and developing suburbs surrounded the city.⁸

With the central railway station to the north of the town site, which was completed in 1881, and the government domain to the south, the area bounded by William and Barracks Streets was consolidated as the commercial and retail centre of the Perth region.⁹ Banks, insurance buildings and professional and commercial offices were constructed along St. Georges Terrace, and businesses, shops and warehouses were established in Murray, Hay and Wellington Streets.¹⁰ A number of hotels and theatres were built in this central area and large emporiums such as Foy and Gibson's and Sandover's emerged along the tram route and the shopping strip of Hay Street. Shopping arcades and passage ways were also developed in this period, allowing people to move with ease through the now busy Perth streets and providing spaces for further business outlets within the form of the narrow blocks.¹¹

A number of Perth's prominent businessmen and investors took advantage of the increased prosperity and building boom in the central area of Hay, Murray and Wellington Streets by purchasing property and erecting mixed retail and commercial premises. This investment of central Perth is reflected in the histories of various sites within the area between William and Barrack Streets and St, George's Terrace and Wellington Streets including Sir Charles McNess' *McNess Royal Arcade* (c. 1896), Thomas Molloy's *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* (1894; 1897) and *His Majesty's Hotel* (1904), the Congregational Church's *Trinity Buildings* (c. 1906; 1927), and mining magnate Claude De Bernales' *Picadilly Theatre and Arcade* (1938).¹² Probably one of the largest and most significant property investors at the turn of the twentieth century were partners Timothy Quinlan and Daniel Connor who were responsible for the construction of the *Connor Quinlan Building* on the corner of Hay and Barrack Streets in c. 1900 as well as the adjacent *Moana Café and Chambers* (c. 1909) and *Savoy Hotel* (1914).¹³ This type of development took place throughout the central district including properties located in close proximity to entry points into the

⁷ Stannage, op. cit., pp. 193; Seddon, G. & Ravine, D., *A City and its Setting*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1986, pp. 146 – 147.

⁸ Stannage, op. cit., pp. 193-4; Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 147. Seddon and Ravine state that: 'In 1904, 10 per cent of central Perth was still vacant land, but by 1911, there was no vacant land left.' (Stannage, op. cit., p. 243, cited in Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 152.)

⁹ Hocking, I., 'Growth and Change in Central Perth', in Pitt Morison & White, op. cit. pp. 266 – 267.

¹⁰ Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 156.

¹¹ Hocking, op. cit., pp. 266 – 268.

¹² All information from Kelsall Binet Architects & Bizzaca, K. in association with Sherriff, J., 'City of Perth Central Precinct', draft heritage assessment prepared for HCWA, June 2002.

¹³ Ibid; Stannage, op. Cit., p. 226.

area such as those along Barrack and William Streets, and across from the railway station in Wellington Street.

Perth Town Lot V20, on which *Mitchell's Buildings* is located, was originally granted to John Mitchell, a Private in the 63rd Infantry Regiment on 19 May 1837.¹⁴ Mitchell arrived with his Regiment at the Swan River Colony in June 1829 and left in March 1831. In 1853, Mitchell returned to the Colony as an enrolled pensioner guard.¹⁵ John Mitchell died on 29 October 1868 and his estate was granted to his widow Jane, whose brother John Stanton had been granted the adjoining Lot V19. Their eldest son Joseph inherited Lot V20 after Jane's death in 1878.¹⁶

In March 1880, Joseph Mitchell entered into a mortgage with the Perth Benefit Building Investment & Loan Society Permanent to secure a sum of £150, possibly for the construction of a building on Lot V20.¹⁷ The Rate Book for the year 1884 shows that by this time there were six cottages, two cottages with adjoining shops, and a residence and grounds occupied by Joseph Mitchell on Lot V20.¹⁸

Portion of Lot V20 at the corner of William and Wellington Streets was sold to Wesley Maley on 28 April 1886.¹⁹ That same year, in June, Joseph Mitchell died²⁰ and a new Certificate of Title was issued for the property on 18 October 1886.²¹ Although this Title lists Joseph Harris, Canning farmer, and Carlton Richard Pether, Government Clerk, as the proprietor of the remaining southern half of Lot V20, Rate Books record Joseph's widow, Harriet Mitchell, also as the owner.²² As stated in the history of William-Wellington Streets East Precinct, this would suggest that the three shared

¹⁴ Western Australian Biographical Index, Battye Library; Crown Grant, 79.

¹⁵ Western Australian Biographical Index, Battye Library. It is interesting to note that Mitchell appointed an agent, John Cole, to look after his estate in Western Australia. Cole, without Mitchell's knowledge, sold Perth Town Lot V20 to Thomas Mason. The matter was not settled until 1863 some time after Mitchell's return, with Mitchell making a payment of £2 to Mason. (Deed of Memorial Book 1, No. 311, 7/1/1836 & Deed of Memorial Book 6, No. 1541, 13/11/1863 cited in Sauman, I., 'Documentary Evidence of William-Wellington Streets East Precinct', in Hocking Planning and architecture, 'Perth urban Rail Development: Proposed Perth Railway Station platforms 10 7 11 CRAC, Alternative ID – Compilation of Heritage Advice February – June 2002', Vol. 1, prepared for Jones Coutler Young, September 2002, pp. 21 – 22.)

¹⁶ Western Australian Biographical Index, Battye Library; Town Grant, 392 & Deed of Memorial Book 6, No. 2819, 9/1/1861, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁷ Deed of Memorial Book 8, No. 627, 5/3/1880, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁸ City of Perth Rate Book, Central Ward, 1884, SRO. The 1884 Rate Book appears to be the first rate Book for the Perth Central Ward.

¹⁹ Deed of Memorial Book 9, No. 1228, 28/4/1886, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 22. The first Certificate of Title for Lot V20 records that the transfer of this property at the corner of William and Wellington Streets to Wesley Maley occurred on 22 March 1888. The property was registered a second time after it was split into two sections, each with a separate title. (Certificate of Title, Vol. 21, Fol. 61.)

²⁰ Sauman, op. cit., p. 22.

²¹ Certificate of Title, Vol. 20, Fol. 169.

²² Ibid; City of Perth Rate Books, Central Ward, 1886, 1887 & 1888.

trusteeship of Joseph Mitchell's estate.²³ From 1887, Mrs. Mitchell was listed as an occupant of the house and grounds on William Street.²⁴

After the death of Carlton Pether on 24 December 1901, Joseph Harris was registered as the sole proprietor on the Certificate of Title and Harriet Mitchell the owner in the Rate Book.²⁵

By the early 1900s, various shop buildings had been constructed along the William Street frontage of Lot V20, including four premises on the site of the later *Mitchell's Buildings*.²⁶ By 1910, businesses on the site were Breckler Brothers boot manufacturers, B. Roffman & Co. picture frame manufacturers, hairdresser Joseph Lacerda and fruiterer Nathan Mazo.²⁷

The City of Perth Building Licenses record that a license was issued for the construction of a two storey building for Harriet Mitchell in August 1912.²⁸ The plans of the proposed *Mitchell's Buildings* show an elaborate two storey façade with stucco detailing and a parapet. It comprised four shops with yards and a main entrance lobby at ground floor level, and four offices on each side of a central corridor at first floor level.²⁹ The architect responsible for *Mitchell's Buildings* was L. Bowser Cumpston and the builders were Todd Brothers.³⁰

A listing in the 1913 Rate Book describes 'new buildings' between 132 and 144 William Street. The capital value for the new premises was £15,200, compared to adjoining property values of £6,000 and £3,750.³¹

A list of early tenants of *Mitchell's Buildings* in 1914 is as follows: A. Krakour, wine saloon; B. Roffman & Co., picture framers; Breckler Shoe Stores; and, Joseph Lacerda, tobacconist and fishing tackle in the ground floor retail premises. At first floor level were the offices of: W. D. Campbell, quality surveyor; an employment office; L. Bowser Cumpston, the architect of the building; J. A. Halls, music teacher; Brown, Clinch & Co. auctioneers and agents; agents Cleland & Co.; and estate agent Alfred N. Geeve.³² By 1915, the main entrance to the upper storey was listed at 142 William Street, and costumiers the Misses Webster now occupied the eighth office tenancy.³³

From 1 July 1915, sisters Jane Burstem Mitchell and Minnie Harriett Hartle were registered as the new trustees of the will and estate of their father

23 Sauman, op. cit., p. 22.

24 City of Perth Rate Books, Central Ward, 1887 & 1888.

25 Certificate of title, Vol. 21, Fol. 61; City of Perth Rate Books, Central Ward, 1901 & 1902.

26 City of Perth & Suburbs, PWD 5647, Sheet No. 8, 1897 [revised c. 1904], SRO; see also Metropolitan Sewerage, Perth District, 1906, PWD 12794, Sheet No. 19, Acc. 1647, SRO.

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

28 City of Perth, Record of building licenses, No. 193, 22/8/1912, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 26.

29 L. Bowser Cumpston, Plan of Shops and Offices, William Street Perth, for Mrs. H. Mitchell, 8/7/1912, City of Perth Planning File 993/12, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 26.

30 City of Perth, Record of building licenses, No. 193, 22/8/1912, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 26.

31 City of Perth Rate Book, Central Ward, 1913.

32 *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1914. Architect L. Bowser Cumpston had offices in Mitchell's Building up to c. 1917. (*Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1917.)

33 *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1915.

Joseph Mitchell, which included Perth Town Lot V20.³⁴ In January 1916, this Perth property was divided equally between Jane Mitchell, Minnie Hartle and Amy Maclaren (Minnie Hartle's niece).³⁵ Harriet May Edgar, another niece to Minnie Hartle, also became a joint owner of Perth Town Lot V20 in 1917.³⁶

The southern portion of Perth Town Lot V20 was subdivided into smaller lots in February 1922.³⁷ On 28 February 1922, Minnie Hartle became the proprietor of Lots 3 and 7 of the subdivision; Lot 3 being the location of *Mitchell's Buildings*.³⁸

A Fire and Accident Underwriters Association of W. A. plan of *Mitchell's Buildings* dating from 1925 to 1935 shows the staircase leading to the first floor at the address of 142 William Street. To the rear of the property, to the west of a right-of-way lane that ran along the back of the William Street properties from *Wellington Buildings* to Murray Street, were several yards with single storey structures including an addition adjoining what would have been the shop at 136 William Street.³⁹

At the beginning of this period, in 1925, tenants were: B. Ferstat, wine saloon; fruiterer and confectioner P. Angelos; and, the businesses of B. Roffman and J. Lacerda continued to operate from the premises. On the first floor, were still the Misses Webster and various occupants such as a number of tailors (for example U. G. Kemp), an estate agent, the Co-operative Film Exchange Company and the offices for the Master Butchers Association.⁴⁰ By 1935, there were several new tenants with only Ferstat, Lacerda, Kemp and now only Miss Webster remaining.⁴¹ New businesses included an optician, a land agent and two indent agents.⁴²

A 1943 Sewerage Plan shows *Mitchell's Buildings* with the two southern most ground floor shops as one address (number 136 William Street).⁴³ This corresponds with *Wise's Post Office Directories* of the time which list only three tenants at ground floor level.⁴⁴ By 1943, two weatherboard structures are recorded at the rear of number 136, and a brick addition and

³⁴ Certificate of Title, Vol. 21, Fol. 61; see also Sauman, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁵ Certificate of Title, Vol. 21, Fol. 61; see also Sauman, op. cit., p. 27. It should be noted that separate Titles were issued to each of the proprietors to indicate the shared ownership of portion of Perth Town Lot V20. (See Certificate of Title, Vol. 637, Fol. 186; Certificate of Title, Vol. 637, Fol. 187; Certificate of Title, Vol. 665, Fol. 85.)

³⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol. 665, Fol. 86; see also Sauman, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁷ Certificate of Title, Vol. 665, Fol. 86.

³⁸ Certificate of Title, Vol. 798, Fol. 182.

³⁹ Fire & Accident Underwriters Association of Western Australia, Fire Detail Surveys of Perth and Fremantle, July 1924 to 1935, Perth Block B, BL 36/6/1-33.

⁴⁰ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1925.

⁴¹ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1935.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Metropolitan Sewerage, City of Perth, MWSS&DD 1522, Sheet No. 19, January 1943, Cons. 4156, SRO.

⁴⁴ *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1940, 1945 & 1949.

a weatherboard addition adjoining number 138 and number 140 respectively.⁴⁵

Minnie Hartle was the owner of place up to 28 June 1949 at which time the property was transferred into the ownership of her nieces Harriett May Bond Barker (nee Edgar) and Amy Seabrook (formerly Amy Maclaren).⁴⁶ Later that same day the Perpetual Executors Trustees and Agency Company were registered as the new proprietor.⁴⁷ The Certificate of Title also records that the Company paid an annuity of £1,000 to Minnie Hartle for the property up to the time of her death on 13 June 1958.⁴⁸

In 1949, shop tenants were W. J. Lucas bicycle and radio dealers, J. McCree's wine saloon and C. Horner & Co. sporting goods. Miss Webster, tailor A. Gollinger, Westral Cash Order Company, paper merchant C. M. Hird, the Reliable Employment Agency, woollen merchant A. D. Turnbull, the Suburban Theatres Advertising Office, and advertising agent C. H. Brand Smith occupied the eight offices in the first floor.⁴⁹

It is interesting to note that *Wise's Post Office Directories* indicate Miss Webster was the longest serving tenant at *Mitchell's Buildings*, having occupied one of the first floor tenancies from c. 1915 up to at least 1949.⁵⁰ It is not yet known when Miss Webster vacated the premises.⁵¹

The City of Perth Building Application Files record that in 1950 new fire escape stairs were designed by E. LeB. Henderson and Thompson Architects for *Mitchell's Buildings*.⁵² In 1969, approval was granted for renovations and alterations to the place undertaken by building contractors Heath & Mackay to the design of architectural firm Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown. This work comprised the installation of new toilets and the removal of the decorative cornice on the façade, which was located above the shops at ground floor level.⁵³

A fire plan survey of the site amended in the early 1970s shows *Mitchell's Buildings* as again incorporating four shop tenancies at ground floor level, the main entrance, and a one storey addition to the rear of the main entrance section of building. The roofing material of the place is described

45 Metropolitan Sewerage, City of Perth, MWSS&DD 1522, Sheet No. 19, January 1943, Cons. 4156, SRO.

46 Certificate of Title, Vol. 798, Fol. 182.

47 Ibid.

48 Certificate of Title, Vol. 798, Fol. 182.

49 *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1949.

50 *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1915 & 1949.

51 A survey of the telephone directories in the early 1950s found no listing for a Miss Webster in William Street; however, this could in fact mean the business did not have a telephone at this time. (*Western Australia Telephone Directories*, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951 & 1953.)

52 City of Perth Planning File 600/50, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 27.

53 City of Perth Planning File 154/1969, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 27.

as galvanised iron. It is interesting to note that the extensions recorded on the 1943 Sewerage Plan appear to have been removed by this time.⁵⁴

In 1973, the City of Perth granted a building license for alterations in the form of new ground floor shop fronts to *Mitchell's Buildings*.⁵⁵

On 18 May 1987, company Albern Pty Ltd became the proprietors of Lots 3 and 7 (the Study Area) of Perth Town Lot V20. Maurice Alter of Toorak, Victoria and Peter D. Grant of Essendon North, Victoria are the owners of this company.⁵⁶ On this same day, Albern Pty Ltd was also registered as the owner of *Maclaren's Chambers*⁵⁷; the company became the registered owner of *Wellington Buildings* (150-162 Williams Street) on 29 May 1989.⁵⁸ Albern remain the owner of *Mitchell's Buildings* in January 2003.⁵⁹

In the next year, in 1988, a new shopfront was added to the façade of the tenancy at number 140.⁶⁰

In the Post World War Two period, retail and commercial tenancies in areas such as William and Wellington Streets went into a decline. This was primarily the result of the decentralisation of Perth, which saw the relocation of industries such as retail and wholesale to new suburban areas, the pedestrianisation of Murray and Hay Streets and Forrest Chase to draw consumers into this tighter retail centre, and the redevelopment of the cityscape to form large office blocks thus encouraging use of larger, modern spaces.⁶¹ The development of Forrest Place; closed to vehicular traffic in 1978/1979 and transformed into a mall in the mid 1980s⁶², and Raine Square by the University of Western Australia in 1984-1986⁶³ also impacted on tenancies in streets such as William and Barrack Streets by acting as a focal point for pedestrian access/flow to the central malls. In her history of the William-Wellington Streets East Precinct, Sauman argues that it was not until 1995 with the opening of the *Globe Hotel* as backpacker accommodation that allowed retail premises in its vicinity to develop linked

54 'City of Perth Detail Fire Survey', compiled by Mahlstedt's, 1942 (last revised c. 1972), Sheet Perth 2B; see also Metropolitan Sewerage, City of Perth, MWSS&DD 1522, Sheet No. 19, January 1943, Cons. 4156, SRO.

55 City of Perth Planning File 371/73, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 27. In her history, Sauman states that there was no mention to which shop fronts the alterations were proposed.

56 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1294, Fol. 192.

57 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1768, Fol. 330.

58 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1250, Fol. 567.

59 Certificate of Title, Vol. 1294, Fol. 192.

60 City of Perth Planning File 1234/88, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 27.

61 Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., pp. 180 – 190; Hocking, op. cit., pp. 280 – 286; Alexander, I., 'The Central Area', in Gentilli, op. cit., pp. 410 – 420.

62 Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 189; Hocking, op. cit., p. 284. Forrest Place was created as a street in 1924. ('Commonwealth Bank, Perth', heritage assessment prepared for HCWA, 1994, p. 4.)

63 Palassis Architects, 'William, Murray, Queen and Wellington Streets Streetblock (including Raine Square) Heritage Assessment', prepared for Spowers Architects on behalf of City and Suburban Group Pty Ltd, March 2001, pp. 18 – 19.

commercial activities such as internet lounges, souvenir shops, a laundromat and camera shop.⁶⁴

A proposal for the conversion of the first floor of *Mitchell's Buildings* into a boarding house was made to the City of Perth in 1996; however, the plans did not eventuate because of the problem of disabled access to the upper level.⁶⁵

Since the construction of the Narrows Bridge in 1959 that led to the opening of stages of the Kwinana and Mitchell Freeways and the completion of the Narrows Interchange in 1973, Perth's public transport system has been extended along the route following in the path of the growth of the freeways and the development of suburbs.⁶⁶ In June 2002, long held plans for a Mandurah railway link were finalised. With regard to the city section of the route, the State Government decided on an option that proposes the building of a railway tunnel underneath William Street linking to an underground station at the Esplanade and continuing along the Kwinana Freeway. Two options for the construction of the tunnel are proposed. The first would mean as little as possible above ground disturbance and, the second proposes a cut and cover method of tunnelling. The second option would cause the demolition of the buildings in the area to allow excavation of the tunnel; in this case the resumed land will eventually be subject to commercial redevelopment.⁶⁷ *Mitchell's Buildings* would be affected by either proposal.

As part of the planning processes for this railway development, heritage assessments of the buildings located on the western portion of the block bounded by Wellington and Murray Streets and William Street have been commissioned.

In 2003, *Mitchell's Buildings* continues to be used for retail and commercial uses; the purpose for which it was originally constructed in 1912-1913. Current tenants include Sparkles jewellers, the Outback Travel Shop (taking up two of the original shop tenancies), and Vogue Souvenir Shop on the ground floor; and, Complex Records and Peter Kershaw specialist services on the first floor.⁶⁸

Recent works to the place in the 1990s have mainly been in the form of facilitating these various retail and commercial uses. For example: the conversion of two ground floor spaces for the Outback Travel Shop; and, the installation of a sound and recording studio and a photographic studio at first floor level. Access has also been provided at first floor level through the party wall to *Maclaren's Chambers* and *Commercial Building, 132 – 134 William Street* as a result of the loss of internal staircases in both these buildings.

⁶⁴ Sauman, op. cit., p. 12.

⁶⁵ City of Perth Planning File: 378/98, cited in Sauman, op. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁶ Edmonds, L., *The Vital Link: A History of Main Roads Western Australia 1926 – 1996*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1997, pp. 136 – 143, 213 – 219.

⁶⁷ *The Community Guardian Express*, 2-8/4/2002; *The Community Guardian Express*, 9-15/4/2002; *The Community Guardian Express*, 30/4-6/5/2002; *Voice News*, 15-22/6/2002.

⁶⁸ Information from Perth Cityscope 2002 Database, Map 8, Property 3.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Mitchell's Buildings is a two-storey masonry and stucco building in William Street within the City of Perth. The place is located on the east side of the street approximately mid-way between Wellington and Murray Streets. Neighbouring buildings to the north include *MacLaren's Chambers* and *Wellington Buildings* which are of a similar scale but feature a range of detailing, broadly classical in style. Together with *Royal Hotel* at the south-west corner of Wellington and William streets, these buildings form a streetscape of strong visual interest at one of the gateways to the city centre.

Constructed in 1912 in the Federation Free Classical Style⁶⁹, the form of the building with shop units at ground floor level and small office tenancies on the upper floor is typical of commercial structures in Western Australia around the turn of the twentieth century. The building is distinguished by an inventively composed front façade modulated by strongly moulded elements that give it considerable depth. The first floor is a token reading of the ionic order. Three shop tenancies are accommodated in the four shop units at street level with masonry partitioned office spaces in the floor above. The building has a rectangular form extending across the full width of the street boundary and abutting the two-storey buildings to the north and south.

Mitchell's Buildings was constructed using traditional building materials and techniques. The masonry wall of the upper level of the principal façade is most likely supported by rolled steel joists that span the party walls to provide, at ground floor level, the large single opening containing the shopfront. The walls of the front facade are finished with a grey coloured render. The roof is concealed by the parapet.

A suspended canopy runs continuously across the upper level of the ground floor façade. The canopy is segmentally curved in section allowing light to reach the band of high level windows running above the shopfront. The flat metal fascia is covered with signwritten advertising for the retail tenancies. Beneath the canopy much of the expression and fabric of the original facade has been altered and now consists of shopfronts stylistically characteristic of retail fit-outs of the last decades of the twentieth century, featuring large expanses of aluminium framed glazing.

Above the canopy the façade of the building appears to be completely intact. The dominant element of the William Street facade is the pedimented bay at the northern end of the building. This projects slightly forward of the longer portion of the building extending to the south, which is divided into equal bays by engaged columns with Ionic capitals supporting an entablature. Each bay contains an architraved window opening within which is a timber framed double-hung sash window. The pairing of ionic engaged columns around the central bays creates an interesting rhythm.

The composition of the façade suggests that the proposed development may originally have been intended to be larger than what was eventually

⁶⁹ 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, pp.104-107.

built. The southern portion of the facade matches the length of the two-storey *MacLaren's Vuilding* which abuts the north side of *Mitchell's Buildings*. What is now the pedimented bay of the façade ought to be the central element within a longer building.

The north bay is monumentally composed and achieves a degree of massiveness by use of layered rusticated pilasters and parapet walling. At first floor the main element is composed as an ensemble of ionic order containing a window within a recess formed with columns distyle in antis supporting the continuous entablature on which sits, at parapet level, a semi-circular pediment that is enriched by a dentil course. This main element is flanked at first floor level by two short lengths of rusticated walling, each of which contains a narrow window. These windows are about half the width of windows elsewhere on the facade.

The massing of the stepped pediment forms a prominent skyline feature incorporating a stepped arrangement of block-like pieces which includes at its top a square block on which is '1912' formed in bas relief numerals. Other bas relief lettering on the façade includes '.Mitchell's.' in the frieze of the entablature directly below the pediment, while '.Buildings.' is located in the frieze further south.

The rear of the building fronts a service yard which is accessed by a right-of-way located further north along William Street. Constructed in red brick which has been left unfinished, there is evidence of different eras of construction in the quality of the fabric used, although the masonry has been laid consistently in Stretcher bond. A single-storey sanitary block extends to the rear of the place along the junction with *MacLaren's Chambers* corresponding with the 1969-1970 building work mentioned in documentary evidence. The first floor level features soldier course lintels above the window openings while at the ground floor a steel beam is continuous across brick piers dividing the separate office units with panels of brickwork and glazing between. Mechanical ductwork and air conditioning units are supported on the external wall.

The street level entrance to the upper floor is located at the northern end of the building. Double timber panelled doors lead to a small entrance lobby with a tiled floor and a second set of double doors beyond. Behind this is a narrow, straight flight of stairs occupying the full width of the hall. The timber stairs have a stained finish and a ceramic tiled dado to each side of the wall. A round timber handrail is bracketed from the southern wall. At the top of the flight, a door at the intermediate landing opens onto escape stairs to ground level at the rear of the building. Further risers from this quarter turn landing lead to the central corridor running through the length of the building at first floor level with four office units located to each side. A storeroom has been incorporated at the southern end of the corridor and evidence of a former sanitary facility is apparent between offices in the north-east corner.

Much of the interior surface finishes and detailing is consistent with the original period of construction. The length of the corridor is divided by semi-circular archways and features an ornately decorated pressed metal ceiling. Some variations in the designs of the pressed metal ceilings are evident in

the individual rooms of the upper floor and at least one tenancy features an ornately moulded plasterwork ceiling. This same tenancy, in the south-west corner, retains a timber fireplace surround although the opening has been boarded over. Oregon timber flooring has been left exposed in the public space of the upper floor, but carpeted within the offices, and the same ceramic tile dado apparent in the stairwell has been utilised in the central corridor. Timber panelled doors with glazed fanlights have moulded timber architraves and some of the door hardware, such as the applied room numbers and metal framed postal openings, are still extant. The glazing of the timber framed sash windows facing William Street have been divided into small panes while the rear rooms feature larger paned glazing.

With the exception of the fit-out of the ground floor tenancies there is little evidence to suggest there has been significant change to the form or fabric of the place. The building is mostly in good condition although some of the upper floor tenancies were unoccupied and open at the time of inspection. A rectangular opening has been cut through a dividing wall between two of the rear offices and the surrounding fabric left damaged.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Louis Bowser Cumpston was born in Liverpool, England on 27 November 1865. After completing his education, he immigrated with his parents to Victoria where he was articled to architect John Robertson of Queen Street, Melbourne. He arrived in Western Australia in 1891 and by 1893 had set up an architectural practice in Perth.⁷⁰

Buildings attributed to this architect include: St. Columba's Church, Peppermint Grove (1909); the Ocean Beach Hotel (1911); Collie Municipal Offices (1907); Pinjarrah Roads Board Offices (1909); hotels in Gosnells (1908), Boyup Brook (1910) and Cunderdin (1910); and various residences and shops in various places in the metropolitan area such as Perth and North Perth.⁷¹

Similar precincts of commercial buildings remain along William Street in Northbridge, between Newcastle Street and Row Street, and in Fremantle at the west end of High Street and along Market. Street.

Much of the development in Hay and Murray streets west of William Street, as far as Milligan Street has a similar scale to *Mitchell Buildings*, with premises developed for wholesale and retail purposes, and upper floors designed as an extension of the functions of the ground floor, or as suites of offices.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

⁷⁰ Kelly, I., 'The Development of Housing in Perth (1890 – 1915) - Architectural Biography (1890 – 1915)', Master of Architecture Thesis, UWA, 1991, n.p.; Pitt Morison, M., 'Immigrant Architects in Western Australia', UWA Faculty of Architecture, Typescript (Battye Library PR 3589), p. 4.

⁷¹ Ibid (both).

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
