



## 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

*Leederville Post Office* is a fine example of a suburban, civic building in Federation Arts and Crafts Style built in a domestic scale that achieves an unassuming character. (Criterion 1.1)

*Leederville Post Office* is situated on a prominent corner site marking the end of the transition to the shopping precinct which is contiguous in scale and character with this building. (Criterion 1.3)

#### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Leederville Post Office* demonstrates the provision of government services to an expanding suburban community, which was the result of the gold boom experienced in Western Australian in the late 1890s. (Criterion 2.2)

#### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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#### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Leederville Post Office* contributes to the Leederville community's sense of history and place, as one of its earliest public buildings which has been used for its original purpose since 1897. (Criterion 4.2)

### 12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### 12.1. RARITY

Of the four inner suburban post offices built north of the railway line in 1896-1897 only the *Leederville Post Office* continues to provide postal services. One (Newcastle Street) has been demolished and the other two (Aberdeen Street and Brisbane Street) have been adapted for other purposes.

#### 12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*Leederville Post Office* is representative of the unpretentious, domestic style of public architecture in suburban centres. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

The building is structurally sound particularly its two street facades. *Leederville Post Office* is in good condition.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

Although the post office no longer serves the residential function and alterations and additions to the place have been made, physical evidence of the original layout remains. The building continues to be used as a post office. *Leederville Post Office* retains a moderate degree of integrity.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

Additions and alterations to the interior, including the removal of chimneys and internal walls, have been made. Material was recycled on site to brick-up the doorway and window in the residence, and the hole in the wall left by the relocation of public letterboxes. Additions to the building's exterior have also been made. The original building is largely intact and the verandahs and internal walls could easily be reinstated. *Leederville Post Office* retains a moderate degree of authenticity.

## 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Leederville Post Office* is a single-storey brick building with a terracotta tiled roof constructed, built in 1897 to provide postal facilities for the new suburb of Leederville.

In the 1890s and 1900s the enormous increase in population in Western Australia, associated with the discovery of gold first in the Kimberley and then around Kalgoorlie, led to the suburbanisation of Perth and the construction of thousands of residential dwellings. *Leederville Post Office* was one of four post offices built in the late 1890s to service Perth's rapidly expanding residential areas north of the railway line. These included the former *Brisbane Street Post Office* (1896) and the *Aberdeen Street Post Office* (1897) and a post office in Newcastle Street (now demolished), all designed by the Government Architect George Temple Poole.

The gazettal of Leederville, in 1896, was one of the early suburbs created to cope with this expansion. The fifteen years after 1895 in which the suburbanisation occurred is reflected in the growth in Leederville. The population rose from 2,555 in 1901, to 5,457 in 1911 and the number of houses rose from 664 in 1901, to 1,246 in 1911.<sup>1</sup>

Although built under the direction of Chief Architect, J. H. Grainger, the design of *Leederville Post Office* continued the pattern Temple Poole had established; all three remaining post offices being similar in design, style and materials, but with variations in detail.

In February 1897, a contract for the sum of £1,168 was let to Mr A. Davenport, for the construction of the *Leederville Post Office*.<sup>2</sup> The foundation stone was made from Meckering granite and was laid on 3 May 1897, by E. H. Wittenoom, MLC, Minister for Posts and Telegraphs.<sup>3</sup> The following records were placed in a leaden box, which was sealed and deposited in a cavity of the stone: plans of the City of Perth and Municipalities of Fremantle and Leederville; a list of the names of the Mayor and Councillors of Leederville and the officers of the Municipality; a set of current postage stamps and post cards, working drawings of the building; the *Blue Book* for 1895; *Government Gazette* of 30th April 1897; copies of the leading city and provincial journals of the colony; and, a copy of the *Western Australian Year Book* with a list of the members of both Houses of Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

At the ceremony, Wittenoom congratulated the district on the acquisition of the post office and commented on the development of the area:

... Things were not now as they used to be. It was very pleasing to know that so close to Perth there was so much land available for cutting up for small allotments, where people could live more comfortably than in the more crowded city. If there was one thing they

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<sup>1</sup> Stannage, C. T., *The People of Perth. A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City*, (Perth City Council, Perth, 1979) p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> Votes and Proceedings, 'Annual Report of the Public Works Department, 1897-98'.

<sup>3</sup> *West Australian* 4 May 1897, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

desired more than another it was that people should acquire land and settle down and erect homes for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

*Leederville Post Office* was completed in September 1897.

There have been later additions and external alterations, with some former windows replaced by private letter boxes. Over the years there have been major changes to the interior, including the adaptation of the residential accommodation, to suit changing postal requirements.

*Leederville Post Office* continues to provide postal services for the Leederville area.

### 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Leederville Post Office* is an unpretentious, single-storey building in the Federation Arts and Crafts Style.<sup>6</sup> The style was common for post office buildings throughout Western Australia built prior to the turn-of-the-century, particularly those designed by Grainger's predecessor George Temple Poole, Government Architect 1885-1896.

The building is located on the north eastern corner of Oxford and Vincent Streets with the main public entry off Oxford Street. The building shares the intersection with the historic Oxford Cinema. This prominent corner marks the end of the shopping precinct on Oxford Street which is contiguous in scale and character with *Leederville Post Office*.

*Leederville Post Office* is simple in design and domestic in scale. The building is of traditional masonry and timber construction. The terracotta tiled roof forms a dominant element, medium to steep in pitch with prominent eaves and exposed rafters.

The main entry to the postal hall is via an arched and colonnaded porch. The brickwork is fair faced with the exception of the square central columns either side of the entry which are stuccoed and decoratively finished with ionic capitals. The Oxford Street facade has english bond brickwork to the facing walls and features cement vents. Brick voussoirs are highlighted with tuck-pointing.

Stop chamfered timber posts and curved fascia boards once adorned the Vincent Street verandah. The verandah is now supported by visually intrusive metal columns. The verandah retains a match board soffit that is repeated under the colonnaded porch.

The fenestration features original double hung sash windows with multi-paned upper sashes and two paned lower sashes.

*Leederville Post Office* was built to accommodate a public office, instrument, mail and battery rooms with an attached residence comprising four rooms, kitchen, bathroom, store and verandah to the southern (Vincent Street) and

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 140-143.

northern facade.<sup>7</sup> The Vincent Street verandah was designed as the entry into the residential section of the post office.

In 1959, restoration works were carried out on the building, including, the renewal or roofing tiles, guttering and associated items.<sup>8</sup>

Extensive interior alterations were carried out in the mid to late 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Many of the interior walls in the residence and the three chimneys have been removed. While structural alterations to the interior have been made, the ceilings appear to be the only surviving fabric in the interior. The bricks were salvaged and used to brick-up the entrance to the residence on the Vincent Street verandah and the door to the office on the southern facade. At the same time, private mail boxes on the southern facade were removed and the wall bricked up. The mail boxes were relocated to the Vincent Street verandah. Remnants of the entrance and window west of the door are clearly evident in the brickwork and could be easily reinstated. The window to the east of the door is intact but the lower pane has been boarded-up.

The verandah on the northern elevation was enclosed with brickwork and a doorway created. The area was extended eastwards to accommodate toilets and a store. The date of the alterations is unknown but the additions appear on plan drawn in 1971.<sup>10</sup> The verandah enclosure appear on a metric redraw of the plan dated 1981.<sup>11</sup> Differences in the laying pattern of the brickwork suggest the addition was further extended westward at a later date to accommodate a strong room, and female toilets. Other alterations include tiling the floor of the colonnaded porch; modernising the service counter and extending, to the ceiling, the existing partitions that separate the public spaces from the office.

External to the building is a modern post box building to the east; four modern telephone boxes to the west and a fibro shed in the middle of the site. They are considered of low significance; however, demolition or substantial alteration to the fibro shed should not be done without further research being undertaken.

The building, including the residential area, is now used exclusively for postal services.

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, Pope, B., Bush, F., Broomfield, W., and Kelsall, D.

<sup>8</sup> The work was carried out by F. C. Nash see *Daily News Northern Supplement*, 4 March 1959, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Date of interior alterations are unknown but a drawing of the floor plan dated 1972 shows the interior intact and a floor plan dated 1981 show the altered interior. See Heritage Council file, P2203, for copy of plans.

<sup>10</sup> GPO Building File.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

Pope, B., Bush, F., Broomfield, W., and Kelsall, D. 'Historical and Architectural Assessment of Post Offices in Western Australia owned by Australia Post as at 21 July 1991', (for the National Trust (WA), November 1993).

National Trust Assessment Exposition, July 1993.