



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 3235
2. **Name.** *Hills' Residence (Fmr)* (1895)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** Hills' Residence, and the land on which it stands being portion of Perth Lot 950 on D 88605, in C/T 1810/174 (as defined in Heritage Council drawing number A927).
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Perth
5. **Location.** 292 Hay Street, East Perth
6. **Owner.** Western Australian Mint
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The former *Hills' Residence* is a two-storey, brick residence, constructed in 1895 as the family residence for Mr. J.C.Hills, a mining agent. It is situated in East Perth, on the northern side of Hay Street (previously Howick Street), east of the Perth Mint.

In the early 1890s, as a result of the discovery of the eastern goldfields, the population of Western Australia increased dramatically. Capital investment came from Britain and a migrant population came from the economically depressed eastern states, and overseas. The city of Perth rapidly expanded to meet the demand for housing. The emerging group of wealthy entrepreneurs, professionals and their architects introduced a new style of domestic architecture to Western Australia: complex and varied individual houses, that befitted their owners middle-class status.¹

The opening of the Fremantle-Perth-Guildford railway in the 1880s provided opportunities for the development of suburban housing, with the favoured residential areas having the attraction of elevated sites and access to ocean or river beaches.² However, in the 1890s many wealthy families still chose to live in the central city. Numerous large houses were still to be found on St George's Terrace and Adelaide Terrace; Alexander Forrest, for example (Mayor of Perth, 1893-95,

¹ Pitt Morison, M. & White, J. (eds) *Western Towns & Buildings* (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979) p. 176.

² *ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

1898-1900, mining agent and property developer) bought G.W. Leake's house on St George's Terrace in 1895. Other examples include, *Great Boulder*, the Adelaide Terrace home of W.G. Brookman, mining entrepreneur and property developer; *Collieville*, a mansion built for the timber magnate James Cornish Port; Septimus Burt, Forrest's Attorney-General owned a large house along Adelaide Terrace; Alfred Morgan owned *Gracemere*, a large two-storey house opposite Government House; Daniel Kenny, a wealthy medical practitioner and real estate speculator lived nearby, and Stephen H. Parker (Chief Justice, 1906-13) owned a house on the corner of Irwin Street and St George's Terrace.³

J.C. Hills, for whom the *Hills' Residence* was built, was born in 1861 in England and arrived in Perth in 1886. Starting work as a Perth draper's assistant (1887-89) he later joined H.J. Saunders & Co., a sharebroking and mining business. With Hills as secretary, the firm promoted some of the first gold mining companies at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.⁴

The *Hills' Residence*, which included house, stables and outbuildings, was designed by architect J.J. Talbot Hobbs in 1895, on land previously owned by George Shenton. Hobbs received £132. 7s. 3. for his commission. The construction contract was awarded to J. Hurst and Son, in September, 1895, and the buildings were completed by April 1896, at a cost of £2,368.⁵

Hobbs gained his architectural training in England, and arrived in Western Australia in 1887.⁶ He soon established a reputation as one of the better architects in Perth. His early commissions included *Christ Church* Claremont (1892), the *Malthouse* Perth (1896), the *Swan Brewery* Perth (1897) and the *Windsor Hotel*, South Perth (1898). He designed many large residences for wealthy colonists who prospered during the gold rush including *Haddon Hall*, South Perth (1897); his own residence the *Bungalow*, (1899); and Walter James' *Minnawarra* (1899) in Peppermint Grove; and other large suburban residences in the wealthy suburbs of Perth and Fremantle. The *Hills' Residence* was typical of the substantial Queen Anne Revival residences that had evolved in the 1880s and 1890s.⁷

In 1904, Hobbs formed the architectural partnership of Hobbs, Smith & Forbes and the firm designed many prominent buildings in Perth and Fremantle including *St George's House* at Guildford Grammar School, *St George's College* at University of WA, the *Weld Club*, *Freemasons' Hall*, and *W.A. Trustee Building*.⁸

The Hills family were to live in the house for only a short period, and from 1900 until about 1920, the house was owned by F.D. Good.⁹ Good lived in the house during this period, but for some years it was occupied by Alfred Freedman and his family.¹⁰

³ Seddon, G. & Ravine, D. *A City & Its Setting* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Western Australia, 1986) p. 155.

⁴ Erickson, R (ed), *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australias*, Vol,1 (UWA Press Nedlands, 1987) p. 1494.

⁵ Ledgers, 2780A, *The works of John Talbot Hobbs* (State Archives of WA)

⁶ Erickson, R, p. 1494.

⁷ Pitt Morison, M. & White, J. (eds)

⁸ Hunt, L. (ed) *Western Portraits* (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979) p. 153.

⁹ Perth City Council rate books, 1899 & 1900, east ward (Battye Library, micro fiche).

¹⁰ Perth City Council rate books, east ward (Battye Library, micro fiche).

Ms. Freedman (daughter of Alfred Freedman), who lived in the house around 1910, interviewed in 1993, provided details about the layout of the house, the functions of the various rooms, and in some instances information about the furnishings.¹¹ Ms Freedman was able to recall that the family employed a houseboy, a young English immigrant who lived with the family and whose job it was to maintain the gardens and do odd jobs around the house. There was also a part Aboriginal lady who cooked, and lived in a room at the rear of the house, now demolished, and a young live-in maid.

The ground floor included a Drawing Room, Dining Room, Billiard Room, Conservatory, Kitchen and Laundry. On the upper floor were four Bedrooms a Bathroom and back verandah, with a well remembered Toilet located half way up the stairs. With regards to furnishings, Mrs Freedman remembers a parquet floor in the Entry Hall, which is now the reception area, and papered walls. Mrs Freedman also remembered outbuildings that are no longer in existence, including Quarters for servants, Stables and a Windmill. (The location of these outbuildings is shown on an old Water Board map.)

In later years, this fashionable Perth residential district declined as the central city changed its function and visual character. Residential buildings made way for commercial and retail buildings, especially in St George's Terrace. Early morning trams running up Hay Street from the Causeway depot intruded into the peace of the wealthy residents living in East Perth. The central city became a less desirable residential area and affluent city dwellers moved to more salubrious areas such as Crawley Bay, Mount Lawley and West Perth.¹² Their large houses were initially altered into boarding houses and later converted into commercial offices. In the 1960s many were demolished to make way for multi-storey office buildings.

The *Hills' Residence* continued to be used as a family residence up until about 1946, when it too was converted for other uses. In 1992 the building was adapted to accommodate the offices of the Heritage Council of Western Australia.

The place was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1991. The place is entered into the Perth Town Planning Scheme, 5th Schedule and is afforded protection under clause 46(1) of the scheme.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The former *Hills' Residence*, at 292 Hay Street, is a two-storey, load bearing brick building with timber floors and a terra-cotta tiled roof. It was constructed in 1895 as a large private city residence.

The building exhibits the major characteristics of the Queen Anne Revival style, and the particular architectural detailing of J.J.Hobbs. The dominant roof, originally of corrugated iron, has been replaced with terra-cotta tiles. The Hay Street elevation features a half timbered roughcast stucco gable, finished at the base by a dentil pattern and supported on timber brackets. The main roof extends in a broken back fashion over the two storey front verandah, where it is supported by an ornamental timber beam on decorative turned timber posts. The flying gable, over the entrance on the west elevation, is supported at each end by turned timber struts seated on projecting cement stools.

¹¹ Interview between Ms Freedman and Julia Ball on 26 August 1993, at the Heritage Council office.

¹² Seddon & Ravine, p. 155.

The upper verandah and a separate balcony, which extends over the bay, feature vertical timber balusters and a moulded handrail which curves at its attachments. The beam supporting the upper verandah is highlighted by a lead light frieze.

One of the prominent features of the building is the window set into the bay at the ground floor level. The deep window is constructed of moulded concrete mullions and transom, surrounded by a rendered quoin. Sills are similar in their treatment, heavy and dominant. Decorative lead lights are set above the timber casement windows.

The red brickwork on the south (front) and entry (west) facades is tuck pointed. The east (unseen side) and north (rear) section of the building are more austere in their detailing. The upper floor level is distinguished by an moulded stucco band running around the building. Tall brick chimneys with decorative strap work are another of the building's features.

The Billiards Room and Maid's Room, if they can be remembered being in existence by Ms Freedman, would have been added between 1895 and 1910.

The Entrance features a Tudor style quoining, with chequered patterned tiling on the floor. The Entry door is a three light panelled door, with leadlight fanlight and side-lights. The central glass panel to the Entry door has been replaced with timber. The Entrance is emphasised by the oriel window of the bathroom, which has a decorative metal lining to its lower section.

The double volume Entrance Hall features a grand staircase with finely detailed timber balustrade of Tudor design. The two large reception rooms, facing Hay Street on the ground floor, contain original heavily moulded cornices, large elaborate plaster ceiling roses, moulded timber skirtings, carved timber mantles to fireplaces and lead light windows. Other rooms display original decorative arches, plaster mouldings, anaglypta dados and pressed metal ceilings.

The Stables, Windmill, other outbuildings and chicken run at the rear of the residence have long been demolished and the land bituminised for car parking. However, the front garden still maintains the residential image of the place.

The conversion from residence to office has been achieved with minimal changes to the building's fabric or internal spaces. In 1991/1992 new electrical, air conditioning and security services were installed, and moveable partitions erected in some rooms. Repair work also included new door, side-light and fanlight at the rear entry; replacement of missing windows; upgrading of the lower level Toilet; a new doorway to the rear Storeroom; the Cellar was fitted with a new door, and its walls and ceilings repaired and painted.

In 1992, refurbishment continued with the laying of new floor coverings and installation of skirtings over the existing. Improvements were made to the upper level Bathroom, and to the building's insulation. A roof vent, computer wiring and telephone system were installed.

In 1993 work included erection of a partition wall in the upper front room and repair work to ceiling boards, verandah floorboards, leadlight panes, balustrade and verandah ceilings and repainting of all joinery.

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.

1. AESTHETIC VALUE

The *Hills' Residence* is a fine example of a Queen Anne Revival two-storey city residence of the gold boom era of Perth. (Criterion 1.1)

The *Hills' Residence* is important for the range of examples and quality of its architectural detailing and craftsmanship. (Criterion 1.2)

2. HISTORIC VALUE

The *Hills' Residence* is a fine example of the many large townhouses built in this section of the city for the more affluent of Perth's citizens in the 1890s and early 1900s. It is a reminder of a period when the eastern end of the central city, in particular Howick (Hay) Street and Adelaide Terrace, was a desirable residential address. (Criterion 2.2)

Hills' Residence is fine example of the urban residential architecture of J.J.Talbot Hobbs, one of Perth's prominent architects in the 1890s. (Criterion 2.3)

3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

4. SOCIAL VALUE

5. RARITY

Hills' Residence is one of the few intact examples of two-storey domestic architecture residential buildings of the 1890s in East Perth. (Criterion 5.1)

Although it no longer serves its original function, the *Hills' Residence* is a rare reminder of the fashionable residential history of Howick (Hay) Street and East Perth. (Criterion 5.2)

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

Hills' Residence is a fine representative example of the large, townhouses built during the gold boom period for the more affluent citizens of Perth. (Criterion 6.2)

CONDITION

Except for the brick chimneys, which need attention, the building has been well maintained and is in sound condition.

INTEGRITY

Alterations to the internal spaces and details of the place are minimal, and although the building no longer serves its original function, it retains a high degree of integrity.

AUTHENTICITY

There have been minimal alterations to the fabric of the building and it retains has a high proportion of original external and internal detailing. The *Hills' Residence* has a high degree of authenticity.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former *Hills' Residence* has cultural heritage significance for the following:

it is a fine example of a two-storey Queen Anne Revival city residence of the gold boom period of Perth;

it demonstrates a high quality of architectural detailing and craftsmanship:

it is a fine example of the urban residential architecture of J.J.Talbot Hobbs, one of Perth's prominent architects of the 1890s; and

the building is a rare and representative reminder of the scale and style of the many expensive city residences constructed in the East Perth area during the gold boom period.

8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim Entry	07/04/1992
Permanent Entry	01/07/1994

9. Conservation Order

10. Heritage Agreement

11. References

National Trust Assessment Exposition