



HERITAGE
COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES Assessment Documentation

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history;

Marginata Flats, Perth helps to illustrate the diverse nature of flat development in Perth during the 1930s and early 1940s, which ranged from domestic scaled blocks in suburban garden settings to high-rise apartments in the city centre.

11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage;

The place is significant as the most recognised work by architect Margaret Pitt Morison, the first female architect to register and practice in Western Australia.

11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;

Marginata Flats, Perth is typical of modern purpose-built flats that became popular as an alternative form housing during the inter-war years in Perth.

The place helps to illustrate the diverse nature of flat development in Perth during the 1930s and early 1940s, which ranged from domestic scaled blocks in suburban garden settings to high-rise apartments in the city centre. As a simple rectangular block, with a series of clearly expressed balconies, *Marginata Flats, Perth* is unambiguous in its function, an idiom that became increasingly common in the post-World War Two period.

11(f) Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;

Marginata Flats, Perth helps to illustrate the emergence of a simple, functional, and cost-effective architectural style that was promoted by architects such as Harold Krantz, Margaret Pitt Morison, and Heimann (Heinz) Jacobson in the decade following the Great Depression. This utilised traditional, readily available materials in a very simple, clean style with minimal decoration. *Marginata Flats, Perth* epitomises the characteristics of this emerging functionalist approach to architecture in Perth.

11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;

Andreas Daniel Helms, a renowned government forester in Australia, who together with his wife Margrethe Ingeborg Helms, was the owner of the site on which the flats were built. It is believed the name *Marginata* was chosen for its association with Andreas Helms, who worked in WA from 1924 to 1940. The Helms Forest Reserve and Arboretum, north of Esperance is named for him.

Margaret Pitt Morison, the first female architect in Western Australia and Heimann Jacobsohn, architect, who had practiced in Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s before fleeing from Nazi Germany. They maintained an architectural partnership in ca.1939-42 and were commissioned to build several houses and flats, the best known and most intact being *Marginata Flats, Perth*.

Marginata Flats, Perth is associated with the expansion of the Royal Perth Hospital and its use for accommodation purposes for the Hospital forming part of its Wellington Street Campus.

11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;

The place demonstrates the characteristics of an emerging functionalist approach which originated in modern European architecture. The style looked to the future of post-war International Functionalism in building.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 CONDITION

Marginata Flats, Perth appears to be well maintained and is generally in good condition. However, there are several areas where the external mortar joints have fretted and there are some locations where fretting is severe, and bricks have partly dislodged. Localised areas of mortar repairs suggest that this has been an ongoing issue. There are also some areas of flaking paint to the external joinery.

The interiors are generally in good condition, with wear and tear commensurate with the age of the place.

12.2 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

Marginata Flats, Perth has a moderate to high degree of integrity, both internally and externally. It has retained the majority of its original materials and there is considerable surviving evidence of the original detailing and finishes, which enables a good understanding of the original design. The major alterations have related to the introduction of security screens, replacement of external doors, refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms, painting of some of the original varnished internal joinery, and the apparent removal of two balconettes from the east elevation.

12.3 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

Marginata Flats, Perth has a high degree of authenticity. It was designed as a block of 13 flats, serviced by 6 garages, and this continues to be clearly evident. The flats are individually used for short-term accommodation, which is reasonably consistent with the original intent.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Historian Dr Robyn Taylor and Annette Green, Greenward Consulting, in June 2022, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Marginata Flats, Perth is a large three storey block of 13 brick and tile flats with garages, designed by Margaret Pitt Morrison and Heimann Jacobsohn, constructed in 1941 for Hans Herring Tvermoes, a Danish émigré, on land belonging to Andreas Daniel Helms and his wife Margrethe Ingebord Helms. The flats occupy the north-west corner of Hill and Goderich Streets in East Perth.

Chronology of place

1900 The future building site for *Marginata Flats, Perth* remains vacant until 1940.

1940 Transfer of land title, NW corner Hill and Goderich Streets to Andreas Daniel Helms and Margrethe Ingeborg (*sic* Ingeborg) Helms.

The Helms leave Western Australia for the Australian Capital Territory.

Heimann Jacobsohn and Margaret Pitt Morison, architects, commissioned to design flats to be named *Marginata*. The client is Hans Henning, a Danish émigré.

November. Builder E. Allwood's tender accepted for the erection of 3-storey flats.

1941 Completion of *Marginata Flats, Perth*.

1942 Architectural practice of Jacobsohn and Pitt Morison closes.

1966 *Marginata Flats, Perth* Lot transferred to the State Government to be used for accommodation purposes for Royal Perth Hospital

2022 *Marginata Flats, Perth*, continues to be used for accommodation purposes for Royal Perth Hospital and forms part of its Wellington Street Campus.

Brief history of the development of the area

During the 19th and early 20th centuries the intersection of Hill and Goderich Streets was notable for the diversity of its buildings that encompassed religion, education, health, industry and housing. The Roman Catholic Precinct, centred around Victoria Square containing the Sisters of Mercy Convent/Mercedes College Group (P4327) and St Mary's Cathedral (P2124). On the north western side of Victoria Square is the Royal Perth Hospital Heritage Precinct (P4289) established in 1855, that grew in response to the population explosion following the 1890s gold rush, returning casualties from WWI, and the outbreak of the Spanish Flu pandemic that followed.

A major industrial development in the area was The Perth Mint (1899) backing onto the south-east corner of Hill and Goderich Streets (P2166). A mix of domestic houses, lodging premises, small businesses and flats gradually filled remaining vacant lots along Goderich and Hill Streets. On the south-west corner of Goderich and Hill, the imposing two-storey Art Deco styled Rostrevor Flats was built in 1938-

9, now forms part of Mercedes College (P3454)¹ These were up-market serviced apartments designed by the firm Cavanagh & Cavanagh. On the opposite corner, the site remained undeveloped until the erection of *Marginata Flats, Perth* in 1941.² From the mid-late 1930s increasing numbers of flats were erected in the Central Business District and adjoining suburbs in response to the demand for affordable housing close to work and the city. In East Perth this was evident along Adelaide Terrace, Terrace Road and Burt Way with the majority designed by Harold Krantz, later to become Krantz & Sheldon. In 1939 the construction of the first part of “A” block, a new multi-storey hospital, named the Royal Perth Hospital, was commenced but due to the war was not completed until 1942.

Construction of Marginata Flats

On 14 August 1896, Perth Town Lots 1 to 4 of Lot 01 were registered in the name of Ernest William Hocking.³ Lot 1 was situated on the corner of Goderich and Hill Streets facing Goderich. Lots 2 and 3 faced Goderich Street, while lot 4, which the other lots backed onto, faced Hill Street.⁴ Subsequent transfers of the land were made in 1896 to Andrew Harriot of Coolgardie, then in 1923 by endorsement to Barnot Rogalasky, Gentleman, of Hill Street, Perth.⁵

On 30 January 1940, an auction for an ‘ideal site for flats’ on the corner of Hill and Goderich was advertised.⁶ The land, Lot 13 on Diagram 11524 had a right of way on the western boundary to Goderich Street. It was well located with ‘high position, with easy walking distance of city. Close to Hay-St. and St Mary’s Cathedral. One of the few allotments available near city centre for erection of flats.’⁷

On 8 March 1940, Andreas Daniel Helms, a renowned Research Officer at the Forests Department, and his wife Margrethe Ingeborg Helms acquired the land.⁸ The Helms were living in Nedlands at the time. The flats that were built soon after on the site were named ‘Marginata’, possibly inspired by Helms’ occupation as a forester and his research into hardwoods including jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*).

Andreas Daniel Helms (1891-1968)

Andreas Helms was born in Sydney in 1891 to Danish parents Rudolph & Sabine. In 1924, Helms was appointed a divisional forester for Western Australia. His work and legacy in the Esperance and south-west region of the state was and continues

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- 1 *West Australian*, 25 July 1936, p.9; *Daily News* 24 July 1939, p.9. The building, containing 18 flats, was built for Churchlands Estates. A grocery store was part of the development and located on the ground floor.
 - 2 Post Office directories. A panorama view of Perth taken in c.1900 from the steeple of St Mary’s Cathedral shows the location of *Marginata Flats* was a vacant site, *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, Perth WA, PWH Theil & Co., 1901. Facsimile reproduction, Hesperian Press, 2000. The photograph is folded between pages 380-381.
 - 3 Certificate of Title Vol.LXXXVII, Folio 190, dated 14 August 1896.
 - 4 Map reproduced in C.T. Stannage, *People of Perth*, City of Perth Council, Perth, WA, 1979, p.254.
 - 5 Certificate of Title Vol LXXXVII, Folio 190. Mr Rogalasky’s name could not be found listed in the PO Directories for Hill Street, Perth.
 - 6 *West Australian*, 30 January 1940, p.14.
 - 7 *West Australian*, 30 January 1940, p.14.
 - 8 Certificate of Title Vol.1069, Folio 86, Dated 8 March 1940.

to be highly regarded. The Helms Forest Reserve and Arboretum were named for him.⁹

In 1937, Helms he was appointed to the Forestry Department as a research officer where he undertook the 'Hardwood Forest Assessment in Western Australia'.¹⁰

In 1940, before the building of *Marginata Flats, Perth* commenced, the Helms moved to the ACT where he joined the Forestry and Timber Bureau and lectured in silviculture and forest management at the Australian Forestry School in Canberra.

Marginata Flats, Perth

In November 1940, an advertisement in the *West Australian* announced the successful tender by Mr E Allwood to erect a three-storey brick and tile-roofed block of flats on the corner of Goderich and Hill Streets in East Perth. Allwood was also the builder of Rostrevor Flats. There were to be 13 flats, all sound-proofed. Allwood's tender price was £7,360 with the flats planned for completion in six months.

There will be three flats with four rooms, seven with three and three with two rooms. Each flat will also have a breakfast nook, a bathroom, and a balcony. Four garages will form portion of the ground floor on the Goderich-street frontage and two others will be at the rear. The plans were prepared by Mr. H. Jacobson, who will supervise the construction of the building.¹¹

Margaret Pitt Morison and Heimann (Heinz) Jacobsohn were the architects commissioned to undertake the building of the flats. Their client was a Danish emigré Hans Hemming (Hans Hemming Tvermoes) who they met through their association with Professor Paul Hermann Fraenkel at the University of Western Australia.¹² Fraenkel was Danish and served as Consul for Denmark from 1917. He knew Henning and as Consul would certainly have known the Helms. What the connection was between the Helms, the land owners, and Henning has yet to be established.¹³

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- ⁹ The Helms Forestry Reserve and Arboretum. The first plantings were made in 1928. <http://www.wanowandthen.com/Helms-Reserve.html> In 2016 the Esperance Historical Society created a major exhibition titled 'The New Era in Agriculture' funded with a grant and \$US1,000 donation by Professor Emeritus John Helms to showcase his father's contribution to the development of the sand plain country. <https://www.esperancehistory.com.au/blog/new-era-in-agriculture-exhibition/>
- ¹⁰ *Goldfields Observer*, January 1937. Co-authored reports with T N Stoaite for the Forests Department of WA including *Stocktaking in the jarrah bush 1934–38*, published in 1938.
- ¹¹ *The West Australian*, 23 November 1940, p.8. The spelling of Jacobsohn's surname differs in various articles, with Jacobsohn being the most consistent.
- ¹² Matthews, Leonie, 'Tracing Connections, The architecture & furniture design projects of Margaret Pitt Morison and Heimann Jacobsohn in Western Australia, c.1940.' Published in, Andrew Leach and Gill Matthewson (eds) (2005). *Celebration: Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, Napier, New Zealand, 24-27 September 2005*, [pp.243-247], p.246.
- ¹³ Rate books (Ancestry) for 1943 for flats at No. 83 Hill Street indicate the Helms as the owners. It is possible the former farmer in Carnamah district named Hans Henning Tvermoes (1899-1965), who was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and known as Hans Henning, may be the Danish émigré referred to. After farming he worked in the goldfields where he held tailing licenses, obtaining 2.6 and 5.67 kilograms of gold at Davyhurst, north-west of Kalgoorlie in 1938. He eventually lived in Dalkeith where he died in 1965. <https://www.carnamah.com.au/bio/hans-henning-tvermoes>

On 3 May 1941, an advertisement indicated the well-appointed flats were nearing completion and listed those that were still available for rent. These included one of the three furnished bachelor flats at 30/- per week.¹⁴ Bachelor, or Minimum flats were ideal for a single person who worked in the city. Pitt Morison and professional photographer Susan Hughes (nee Watkins) both lived in the bachelor flats 'Chelsea' that had been an early 1930s conversion of the former Foy & Gibson warehouse in St George's Terrace. The conversion was planned by builder-entrepreneur Joe Skinner with Harold Krantz as architect.¹⁵

The first listing for *Marginata Flats, Perth* at 85 Hill Street appears in the 1941-42 Post Office directories though no residents are listed until 1946 when there are six including Mrs Johna Neufeld. Advertisements in the press indicate there were in fact residents in *Marginata Flats, Perth* before 1946. In 1943, Albert Neufeld an Austrian born in Vienna, indicated he had been a resident in Australia for five years and intended to apply for Naturalisation under the Nationality Act 1920-1938.¹⁶

J Neufeld, presumably Johna, placed an advertisement in the *Westralian Judean*, 'Sewing Work Required, at Flat 3c Marginata Flats. Expert in – repairs, making and alterations of Ladies' and Gents' underwear and bedclothes -Work only at my Flat'.¹⁷ The years of arrival in Australia of Albert Neufeld in c.1938 and architect Heimann Jacobsohn in 1937, amongst many others including the Viennese born and educated Jew Robert Schläfrig who joined Harold Krantz's architectural firm in 1939, and many of Krantz's clients point to the emigration of Europeans fleeing war and persecution in Europe.¹⁸

Architect Heimann (Heinz) Jacobsohn

A Jewish refugee who had fled Nazi Germany, Jacobsohn was born in 1899 in Fordon, Germany. He had studied architecture at Stuttgart Technical High School then practiced as an architect in Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s. He arrived in Perth in 1937 and joined the architectural office of Harold Krantz on the understanding that eventually he would become a partner.

Margaret Pitt Morison was with Krantz at the time, and in 1938 she and Jacobsohn worked on a block of 12 flats on the corner of Thomas Street and Barker Road in Subiaco.¹⁹ A press article describes the flats as,

... a new departure in architecture in Western Australia, although it is greatly favoured by European architects. A single-storey building in Thomas-street will have an additional storey added to it, and the existing building, together with the additional storey, will form a block of four flats. On a large area of vacant land adjoining will be erected two other separate two-storey buildings each

¹⁴ *West Australian*, 3 May 1941, p.18.

¹⁵ Taylor, Robyn D., 'An investigation into the nature of modernism and modernity during the 1930s in Perth, Western Australia, through the study of specific buildings and related art and design forms.' Doctoral thesis, Department of Fine Arts, University of Western Australia, 1993, Vol.1, p.365.

¹⁶ Naturalisation Notices, *Daily News*, 30 November 1943, p.8.

¹⁷ *The Westralian Judean*, 1 April 1944, p.12.

¹⁸ Taylor, John, 'Abraham Harold Krantz', December 2014. Robert Schläfrig changed his name to Sheldon. In 1946 the firm's name changed to Krantz & Sheldon. Post war, the firm became a major employer of architects many having emigrated from Europe.

¹⁹ Matthews, L., 'Tracing Connections', p.244-245. Pitt Morison's name appears on the perspective drawing for this, now known as Barker Mews, and other flats undertaken by Krantz's firm.

containing a block of four flats. The three separate buildings will be grouped around a central courtyard. This method of grouping for flats has found favour with European architects insomuch as it gives the maximum of light and ventilation to every flat consistent with the land space available. Each of the flats will have separate front and back entrances and will be furnished mainly with built-in furniture.²⁰

Regarding her association with Jacobsohn, Pitt Morison recalled 'we agreed in a great many things with regard to technical design, architectural history... and so we decided [as] ... there were a good deal that went on in the office that we didn't like very much, that we would get out and carry on our own practice'.²¹ Their practice 'produced a number of "modern designs", with simple forms and materials, for furniture, speculative homes and private residences in the Nedlands area, and 'Marginata' flats in Perth.'²² They were also commissioned to design a number of flats, the best known being Marginata.²³ In an interview Krantz 'described the design of these flats as "standing the test of time" because of their "simplicity", with no "adornment" and of "good proportion".²⁴

Two speculative homes were financed by Pitt Morison and Jacobsohn. The one at 18 Hynes Road was 'a very simple, two-bedroom cavity brick house with a hipped roof.'²⁵ The other larger house at 71 Hobbs Avenue in Dalkeith (designed 1941), became the family home for Pitt Morison and her father George Pitt Morison. While the house is a surviving example of their practice, there have been alterations over the years.²⁶

Margaret Lillian Pitt Morison (1900-1985)

Although credited with being the first professionally trained female architect in Western Australia,²⁷ architecture was not her first choice for a career which was medicine. Not only was this regarded as 'unfeminine', but her parents could not afford the cost involved and at the time, there was no medical school in Perth. Acquiring secretarial skills led to work at the University of Western Australia where Reginald Summerhayes the son of architect Edwin Summerhayes suggested architecture to her. While she began with Edwin Summerhayes, she completed her training with Eales and Cohen. She was registered as an architect in October 1924 (no.102), then left for the Eastern States the following year with her parents, 'intending to enlarge her architectural experience'.²⁸ This, she acquired by working for a number of architectural firms and study at the University of Melbourne's Architectural Atelier. In 1926, she joined the prominent firm A & K Henderson. For

²⁰ *West Australian*, 19 February 1938, p.8. The flats are still extant (June 2022).

²¹ Matthews, Leonie, *An Exploratory Study of Women in Western Australian Architecture 1920-1960*. Architectural Dissertation 599, December 1991, Vol 1, p.113.

²² Matthews, L, 'My Brilliant Career', in *The Architect*, Women in Architecture issue, March 2009, p.16.

²³ Matthews, L, 'Tracing Connections', p.246.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.246.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.245.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.245.

²⁷ Julia Willis and Bronwyn Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia 1900-1950*, First Australian edition 2001, RAlA, Red Hill, ACT, p.26. 'Our First Lady Architect', *Sunday Times*, 26 October 1924, p.8.

²⁸ Taylor, John, 'Margaret Pitt Morison (1900-1985)', June 2013. Western Australian Architect Biographies, <https://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html>, accessed 27 May 2022. Taylor's biography draws together a number of sources including the seminal work of Leonie Matthews for her dissertation.

family reasons, she returned home in 1929 with the intention of returning to Melbourne which she had found stimulating. She resigned from the Architects Board in 1926 and re-registered in August 1929 (no.129). On her return from Melbourne, she was interviewed by the press recounting the improvements for women seeking a career in architecture. 'She has not so many things to work against, and the old prejudices are gradually disappearing. In Melbourne, at least, it is being recognised that there is a place for a woman in a drawing office, and that she can do a man's work.'²⁹

In 1929, Melbourne architect F.G.B. Hawkins moved to Perth. Pitt Morison was given a letter of introduction to Hawkins by Leighton Irwin, Director of the Melbourne Atelier. For two years she worked for Hawkins, including documenting the design of the Atlas Building (1930) on the corner of Sherwood Court and the Esplanade in central Perth. However, the onset of the Depression led to her being retrenched. She joined Poster Studios, a creative commercial art initiative set up by Harold Krantz and other out-of-work architects. Krantz's experience with Poster Studios taught him valuable lessons about economies of scale that he later successfully applied to the building of homes and flats. During 1931 and 1933, Pitt Morison won prizes in the 'Ideal Homes' competition that had been organised by the Royal Institute of Architects of WA.

Around the mid-1930s Pitt Morison worked with the established firm Oldham, Boas and Ednie-Brown that involved her in major commissions such as the Adelphi Hotel, the Karrakatta Club, a prestigious club for women where her mother was a member, and the Emu Brewery on Mounts Bay Road. From the mid-late 1930s, she and John Oldham worked with Krantz designing small blocks of flats and flat conversions before she left the practice to work in partnership with Heinz Jacobsohn.

Soon after *Marginata Flats, Perth* was completed, Pitt Morison and Jacobsohn closed their practice. 'The... [cessation] of building activities after the Japs came into the war [1941] ... killed that practice, but we did a lot of work and we were extremely busy....I think the last thing that we were engaged on was that block of flats ...[on the] corner of [Goderich] Street and Hill Street...'³⁰

On 17 April 1942, Pitt Morison was appointed as a Camouflage Officer with the Department of Home Security working for the Western Region under Physics Professor Alexander Ross at the University of Western Australia. She was the only woman in Australia in the camouflage section of the Department of Home Security who had duties in field and operational camouflage.³¹ One major project was the camouflage of the wheat bins in Geraldton where she could combine her knowledge of architecture with her artistic eye for colour. She found the paint colours supplied from the eastern states were not suitable for the Western Australian landscape and set about organising more appropriate colour schemes.³²

29 Taylor, John, 'Margaret Pitt Morison (1900-1985)', June 2013. Western Australian Architect Biographies, <https://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html>, accessed 27 May 2022.

30 Matthews, L., Dissertation, Vol 1, p.74.

31 Elias, Ann, *Camouflage Australia. Art, Nature, Science and War*, Sydney University Press 2011, p.107. The inference here appears to be Pitt Morison could dress in uniform, something denied to others, male and female, that prevented them from working in the field.

32 Matthews, L., Dissertation, Vol 1, pp.75-76.

In 1945, Pitt Morison became Clerk of Works for Melbourne architect H. Vivian Taylor who was commissioned to undertake the new headquarters for the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Perth. The project was abandoned, for the time being, due to pressure on the Curtin government. She then returned to Melbourne to work for Taylor. Following her father's death in 1946 and dissatisfaction with her work in Taylor's office, she returned to Perth in 1948 where she was appointed as a lecturer in the new architecture course at Perth Technical College (PTC). 'By 1949, Morison was first year studio master, lecturer in history, civic design and fine arts.'³³ She remained there until 1962.

After a short stint in politics as a Labor candidate for Nedlands, her next career move was assistant research officer in the Perth City Council's planning department from 1967 to 1971. Work during the early 1970s with the School of Architecture at the University of WA led to her becoming a research officer on the history of the state's architecture. *Western Towns & Buildings* co-edited with John White, was published in 1979 as one of a number of substantial histories about the state produced for its 150th anniversary. In that celebratory year Margaret Pitt Morison was made a Life Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. For over 65 years her career encompassed being a practitioner, educator and historian. To honour her memory and contribution to the discipline of architecture, annual awards have been established: University of Western Australia's Margaret Pitt Morison Memorial Prize to outstanding environmental design students; and the Western Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects' Margaret Pitt Morison Award for Heritage.³⁴

Despite all of the above in relation to Pitt Morison's long years of training and practice, there appears to have been little documented recognition of her role within the firms she worked for, including *Marginata Flats, Perth*. She wasn't alone in this.

Female architects in Western Australia

Other female architects who joined the profession during the early 1930s in Western Australia were Nancy Allen, Dorothea Hancock and Zoie Bennett, amongst others. The women formed a close collegial bond, a supportive network in what was to remain a male dominated profession for much of the 20th century. In later years Noel Stewart, who had worked as a reporter for the *West Australian* for much of the inter-war period, interviewed Pitt Morison who recalled how she had met Nancy Allen and Zoe Bennett and that 'a bone of contention with the three of them at the time was sex-discrimination as the women were being paid at a lower rate than male architects for similar work.'³⁵

The recognition of these women architects is due in large part to scholarship into Australia's architectural history in order to retrieve the careers of women who have been largely overlooked or overshadowed by their male counterparts.³⁶ With the

33 Taylor, J. op.cit.

34 Margaret Pitt Morison: Architect, Museum of Perth website accessed 22 March 2022.

35 Stewart, Noel, *As I Remember Them*, 'Miss Margaret Pitt Morison (1904-), Pioneer Woman Architect', Artlook Books, Perth, 1987, p.179.

36 The first book on the subject, authored by Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia 1900-1950* was published in 2001. The authors acknowledged the research of others including Matthews' undergraduate thesis 'Women in Western Australian Architecture 1920-1960' completed in 1991. This was the first major study of WA women architects and became the source document for subsequent articles and biographies by Matthews and others.

absence of signed plan drawings, and one advertisement about the successful tender for the building of *Marginata Flats, Perth* where Jacobsohn's name is given as the architect, no historical documented reference could be found of Pitt Morison's involvement in its design and construction. Her role may well have been known within the architectural and building fraternity of the time, but only revealed in recent decades through archival and oral history research.³⁷

Few people would know Pitt Morison was the architect in charge of the 'Atlas Building' or that she was involved in detailing the frieze of the Emu Brewery. Fewer still, of the contribution Nancy Allen made in the prolific practice of W G Bennett, and that she administered the office and was responsible for many of the residential projects.³⁸

Marginata Flats Post-WWII

During the post-WWII years, the State government began expanding its landholdings for the ongoing development of Royal Perth Hospital. This included residential lots along the north side of Goderich to Hill Street, and in 1966 the transfer of title for *Marginata Flats, Perth*.³⁹

In 2009, a report undertaken for the Ministry of Health on the potential options for the redevelopment of Royal Perth Hospital notes,

The Goderich block houses the recently refurbished outpatient area, Jewell House, Marginata flats and the WASON education centre. These are still useable into the foreseeable future. Redevelopment of Jewell House and Marginata may allow a Medihotel to be constructed.⁴⁰

In 2022, *Marginata Flats, Perth* remains in use for accommodation purposes for Royal Perth Hospital and forms part of its Wellington Street Campus.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Marginata Flats, Perth comprises a three storey 1940/41 brick and tile block of flats with a detached brick and tile double garage. The building, which is located on the north-western corner of Hill and Goderich Streets,⁴¹ is of utilitarian design with minimal decorative detailing. The design does not reflect the key characteristics defined for the Inter-War Functionalist style.⁴² It does, however, clearly represent a parallel functionalist style, which was prompted by the office of Harold Krantz, architect, from the early 1930s, and adopted by some of those who worked with

³⁷ Matthews refers to the 'Margaret Pitt Morison interview', by Stuart Coll, 1981, held in the Battye Library of Western Australian History.

³⁸ Matthews, L., Dissertation. Vol.1, p.96.

³⁹ Transfer registered 18 May 1966.

⁴⁰ Estimates and Financial Operations Committee Supplementary Information Ministry of Health, 26 October 2009. Available at: [https://parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament%5Ccommit.nsf/\(Evidence+Lookup+by+Com+ID\)/48BA45ABE13A739A48257831003C11BD/\\$file/ef.aar08.aqton.Health.pdf](https://parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament%5Ccommit.nsf/(Evidence+Lookup+by+Com+ID)/48BA45ABE13A739A48257831003C11BD/$file/ef.aar08.aqton.Health.pdf) – Draft, Options for the New Royal Perth Hospital, pp.102-103.

⁴¹ Note: The main spine of *Marginata Flats* is aligned on an ESE-WNW axis (approximately 20° off east-west). For ease of reference east-south-east has been referred to as east, etc.

⁴² Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, pp 184-187.

him, including Margaret Pitt Morison and Heimann Jacobsohn.⁴³ This aimed at developing simple, cost-effective, functional designs without compromising on architectural quality.⁴⁴

Setting

The streetscape setting is mixed with a large block of 1960s high-rise residential flats on the north-eastern corner of Hill and Goderich Streets, the rear of the Perth Mint complex on the south-eastern corner, and the 1936/1937 Rostrevor Flats (a two-storey, Art Deco style, former apartment building, now part of Mercedes College) on the south-western corner. The land wrapping around the northern and western sides of the *Marginata Flats, Perth* site was originally occupied by 1-2 storey housing, but this area was redeveloped as a carpark from the 1970s. Operated by the Royal Perth Hospital, this now provides approximately 50 parking bays in an open setting with scattered mixed shade trees.

Grounds

The grounds of *Marginata Flats, Perth* are open along the small street setbacks, except for the eastern half of the Goderich Street frontage which is defined as a garden area. This space, which currently lacks any landscaping elements, measures approximately 15m x 2.8m and is bounded by brick edging and low brick posts.

On the northern part of the site there is an open drying court, which extends between the detached garage (at the north-west corner) and a projecting wing of the main building (at the north-east corner). This area, which has been enclosed by a high, spear topped metal boundary fence, includes a concrete path adjacent to the flats, a brick paved area with two rotary clothes lines, and some informal shrubs along the fence line (primarily small hibiscus).

On the western side the adjacent carpark abuts the building.

Exterior

Marginata Flats, Perth is constructed of autumn-toned red brick in a stretcher bond. The minimal decorative detailing includes contrasting rendered capping to the brick balustrades (formed by planter boxes to each of the private porches/balconies and by plain capping to other areas); a rendered horizontal strip at the top of the entry porch and to each of the private porches/balconies; a rendered surround to the two circular openings on the southern side of the stair well; rendered 'doric' columns to the balconies above the entry porch; and rendered detailing to the balustrades of the access balconies, creating a pattern of square panels of brickwork. The name 'Marginata' is mounted in cursive metal lettering mid-way between the two circular openings noted above.

⁴³ The direct relationship between Marginata Flats and the modern functionalist style developed by Harold Krantz is discussed in a paper by Leonie Matthews, titled 'Tracing Connections. The architecture & furniture design projects of Margaret Pitt Morison and Heimann Jacobsohn in Western Australia, c.1940', published in. Andrew Leach and Gill Mathewson ed. (2005). *Celebration: Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand. 22nd annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Napier, New Zealand, 24-27 September 2005*. New Zealand: Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand, pp 243-247.

⁴⁴ Taylor, Dr John J., 'Abraham Harold Krantz (1906-1999)', Western Australian Architect Biographies, <https://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html>, accessed 27 May 2022.

The hipped roof is clad with autumn-toned tiles and extends out from the face of the building with wide, battened eaves. Windows are variously paired or triple casements with timber frames, two panes to each opening, and plain, slim line rendered sills. The majority have been fitted with modern diamond pattern security screens but are otherwise generally as designed. However, two of the openings to the east elevation have been modified and the physical evidence suggests that the first and second floor flats at the south-eastern corner each had a balconette that has been removed, with the doors being adapted as windows.

The main entry, which is located at the centre of the eastern (Hill Street) elevation, is formed by a utilitarian porch which features plain brick columns, a plain concrete floor, a timber entry door to the stairwell, and what appears to have been a space for private mailboxes (now covered over).

The southern (Goderich Street) elevation features two private porches towards the eastern end of the ground floor and four garages with modern roller doors along the western half. At the first and second floors there are four private balconies to each level. Triple casement windows identify the 7 one-bedroom flats, while pairs of double casement windows identify the 3 two-bedroom flats at the south-eastern corner.

The western elevation features a single window to the laundry at the ground floor and paired casement windows to the kitchens of the first and second floor flats. Other than this it is a plain face-brick wall.

Along the northern elevation access balconies link the internal stairs (eastern end) and external stairs (western end). The walls are punctuated by the individual recessed entries to the one and two-bedroom flats; kitchen and bathroom windows; doors to the service ducts (located between back-to-back bathrooms); small original features such as delivery hatches and the central rubbish chute; and various wall mounted service pipes, water heating units etc. At the western end of the ground floor two recessed entries provide access to the garages, storerooms, and laundry.

The surviving physical evidence suggests that the original entrance doors to the flats were flush panel with a high-level rectangular pane of textured glass, but the majority have been replaced with solid timber doors with moulded detailing to the external face. Original timber, board and brace doors remain to the storerooms, garages, and laundry.

The detached double garage at the north-western corner of the site is a small square building constructed of matching brickwork. This has a parapet wall along the northern side, hipped roof clad with grey tiles (no eaves overhangs), and modern roller doors opening onto the Perth Royal Hospital carpark (originally opening onto an access lane).

At ground and first floor levels, access to the site has been restricted by the installation of high, spear topped metal fencing (matching the northern boundary fence). This runs along the gutter line of the detached garage, the balustrade of the external stair and across the face of each of the ground and first floor porches/balconies along the southern elevation.

Interior

Marginata Flats, Perth includes 3 bed-sits in the projecting wing on the northern side of the main entry (now designated as 1A, 2A and 3A); 3 two-bedroom flats at the south-eastern corner (1B, 2B and 3C); and 7 one-bedroom flats across the remainder of the building (1C, 2C, 2D, 2E, 3C, 3D and 3E).⁴⁵

Each of the bed-sits has a small entry hall accessed from the enclosed stairwell, a bed-sitting room, a kitchen, and bathroom. Unit 1A (on the ground floor) is the only flat in the complex which was designed without a private porch/balcony. In addition to their bedrooms, the other flats have an entry hall, separate living room, kitchen, bathroom, and private porch/balcony.

Surviving examples of original details which remain throughout much of the place include polished stretcher-bond pattern parquet floors; varnished skirtings with a flush face, curved upper edge, and convex edging strip at the base; simple varnished architraves; varnished internal doors with a recessed central panel and round door handles; timber framed doors to the balconies, each with three large panes of textured glass; built-in cupboards in the access hall to the bathrooms (1 to each of the bed-sits and 2 to each of the other flats); timber picture rails to the living and bedrooms; textured plaster to picture rail height, with flush plaster above; and flush plaster ceilings with no cornices.

Key variations to the original detailing of the flats included a projecting brick panel with a terrazzo mantle to the western side of the living rooms to 2E and 2D only (possibly originally accommodating a heating unit); evidence of a former balconette on the eastern side of the living rooms to 2B and 3B only; partly raked ceilings accommodating the slope of the hipped roof to the second floor flats; and built-in, table height, varnished timber wall units along the eastern side of the bed-sitting rooms.

The garages, storerooms and laundry are very utilitarian, with concrete floors, painted brick walls and painted, off-form concrete ceilings. Wall mounted metal tracks along the front and part of the side of the garages indicates that the current roller doors replaced sideways sliding doors.

The stairwell off the main entry has face-brick walls, concrete steps, and a zig-zag pattern wrought iron balustrade. The small circular openings over the mid-level landings are open with a cross pattern of wrought iron bars. The external stair has steep, narrow concrete steps, with a brick balustrade.

Key modifications over time include the replacement of the majority of the main entry doors; replacement of the garage doors; painting of some of the varnished timber joinery; replacement of some of the door and window hardware; installation of security screens to doors, windows, and porches/balconies; upgrading of electrical services; and the complete refurbishment of the bathrooms and kitchens.

⁴⁵ Examples of each of the different layouts for the flats were inspected, sufficient to describe the evidence of original finishes/details and the nature of typical modifications.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Principal Australian Historic Theme(s)

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 107 Settlements
- 241 Migrating to save or preserve a way of life
- 3.22 Lodging people
- 3.14.2 Using Australian materials for construction
- 4.1 Planning urban settlements
- 4.1.5 Developing city centres
- 8.13 Living in cities and suburbs

Heritage Council of Western Australia Theme(s)

- 101 Immigration, emigration, and refugees
- 303 Intellectual activities, arts, and crafts
- 501 World wars and other wars
- 502 Refugees
- 504 Depression and boom
- 604 Innovators
- 605 Famous people
- 701 Women's rights

Comparative Analysis

Marginata Flats, Perth was designed by architects Margaret Pitt Morison and Heimann Jacobsohn in 1940 in the Inter-war Functionalist style, resulting from a demand for affordable housing. The flats are located within proximity to the Central Business District and within walking distance to the city for work.

Interwar Flats

Relatively few interwar flats constructed within the Perth CBD remain today. A survey of flats in the 1949 Post Office directory indicates at least 37 listings. Of those, only about seven remain including Lawson Flats and Rostrevor, now Mercedes College.⁴⁶ However, numerous examples do remain in the inner suburbs where there was a focus on providing a high-quality, low-maintenance alternative to the traditional large house. The following three examples, two of which have been entered in the State Register and the third included in the Heritage Council's Assessment Program, indicate the diversity of styles popular for flats and housing during the inter-war years in Perth:

- P2092 *Lawson Flats*, Perth (1937) [RHP] – cnr Sherwood Court and The Esplanade, Perth. A grand ten-storey, 32-apartment block of flats with ground level commercial space designed by Hennessy & Hennessy of Melbourne in association with Perth architect Reginald Summerhayes. Lawson Flats is designed in the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style and catered to the high-end of apartment living in Perth. In common with

⁴⁶ Research undertaken by Annette Green for this assessment.

Marginata Flats, Perth, and commercial city buildings, *Lawson Flats* is directly accessed from the street.

- P3227 *The Maisonettes* (1934) [RHP] - 67 Stirling Highway, Nedlands (1934). Block of four brick and tile flats designed and constructed by builder Horace Costello. The building reveals elements of the Old English Revival style popular at the time for Perth's suburban homes.
- P3454 Rostrevor Flats (1937) [HCWA Assessment Program] - (part of P4327 Mercedes College Group, Perth), cnr Hill and Goderich Streets, East Perth. A two-storey block of former flats designed by architectural firm Cavanagh & Cavanagh in the Inter-War Art Deco style. The building is notable for its decorative panels of geometric patterns.⁴⁷ In common with *Marginata Flats, Perth*, and commercial city buildings, *Rostrevor Flats* is directly accessed from the street.

Marginata Flats, Perth was designed in the simple, functional, and cost-effective architectural style favoured by architects such as Margaret Pitt Morison, Harold Krantz, and Heinz Jacobsohn. Traditional, readily available materials were utilised in a very simple, clean style, and eschewed the more decorative architectural detailing used for places such as *The Maisonettes* and Rostrevor Flats. However, unlike many of the other functionalist flats of the era, which were designed in a manner that interpreted a more domestic form and setting, *Marginata Flats, Perth* was unambiguous in their function. This place was presented as a simple rectangular block, with a series of clearly expressed balconies, and a direct street frontage, which was a design idiom that became increasingly common for flats in the post-WWII period.

Other work by Margaret Pitt Morison

As noted in the documentary evidence, other architectural works in which Margaret Pitt Morison was involved have not always been attributed to her so have not been entered in the inHerit database as her work. The following is an example which has been entered in the State Register:

- P1975 *Atlas Building* (1930) [RHP] – four storey commercial building, constructed in the Inter-War Free Classical style. With a façade including Palladian motifs suggesting a traditional construction, the use of Wunderlich architectural terracotta cladding conceals the use of steel and concrete. The place is a rare demonstration of this technology.

Conclusion

Marginata Flats, Perth is one of a relatively small number of inter-war flats which remain extant in the Perth CBD. It is the best-known example of a block of flats undertaken by the short-lived practice of Heimann Jacobsohn and Margaret Pitt Morison, and the most recognised work by Pitt Morison as part of her own practice as an architect.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

⁴⁷ The sculptor of the panels was Edward Kohler who worked with Ajax Plaster Company and undertook a number of commissions for buildings in Perth during the 1930s. See R. Taylor, doctoral thesis, op.cit, chapter 5.