



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11 ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Midland Courthouse is a fine example of the Federation Academic Classical style used for a modestly sized civic building, and exhibits a dynamic exterior created by its central portico and classical mouldings. (Criterion 1.1)

Midland Courthouse has landmark value in the Helena Street. Its prominent site, and architectural style contribute to this quality. (Criterion 1.3)

Midland Courthouse is an integral component of the historical heart of Midland, comprising *Midland Town Hall* (1906-1907, 1923-1924), *Midland Courthouse* (1907), *Mechanics Institute* (1907) and *Midland Post Office* (1913). Collectively they contribute to the streetscape and townscape of Midland, forming a precinct of early twentieth century administration buildings of similar style and coloration. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Midland Courthouse is a reminder of the development that took place in Midland Junction, in the early twentieth century, as a result of the establishment of the railway service and manufacturing centre. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Midland Courthouse, as a component of the historical civic precinct which forms the centre of Midland, contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Midland Courthouse exhibits the features of the Federation Academic Classical style of architecture. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

With the exception of limestone erosion to some areas, and the roof requiring maintenance, the general condition of *Midland Courthouse* is good.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Midland Courthouse is no longer used as a court room and office; however, the occupation of the place by the Uniting Church does not greatly diminish the integrity of the place. *Midland Courthouse* retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The occupation of the building by a community group and now by the Uniting Church has resulted in minor alteration to the building fabric. The exterior and interior spaces remain largely intact. With the exception of four windows that have been bricked-up, the original exterior fabric and detailing remains. *Midland Courthouse* retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Julia Ball, Historian.

The physical evidence has been compiled by Kelly Aris, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Midland Courthouse is a single-storey brick building constructed, in 1907, by the Public Works Department in Midland.

The decision by the government, in 1895, to relocate its railway workshops from Fremantle to Midland Junction was instrumental in the development and progress of the Midland area. At the same time, the Municipality of Helena Vale was established. However, in the years following this, the population of Midland Junction began to decline as the Government had yet to fulfil its promise to relocate the workshops. Following deputations from the local ratepayers, clearing of the site began in 1901, and by 1904 the complex had been completed.¹

The announcement, in 1900, that the construction of the new workshops, the most advanced and complete in Australia, was to commence, caused a sudden increase of commercial activity in Midland Junction. Following the new industrial expansion, building of commercial premises increased substantially. The expected increase in population also made necessary the provision of public amenities. These included a recreation ground (1901), electric lighting (1902), Council Chambers and Town Hall (1906,1923). The construction of *Midland Courthouse* was part of this increase in the provision of public amenities.

The building was designed by the Public Works Department, under Chief Architect, Hilson Beasley.² The contract for construction of the *Midland Courthouse*, and the Water Supply Office at the rear, was let to Mr Alfred Eade on 27 February 1907, for the amount of £1,9328/8/8.³

Midland Courthouse was officially opened on 5 November 1907, with press coverage in both the *West Australian* and *Swan Express*.

The courthouse is situated on the triangular block in the centre of the town, facing Helena-street, on which block are also situated the new Town Hall and municipal offices, post-office and telephone exchange, goldfields water supply office and old public hall. The building is of pleasing design, well built in brick, with front and facings of dressed Donnybrook freestone. Ample accommodation is afforded for all work in connection with police and local court work, treasury business, and the district registrar's office. The court proper is a fine lofty room, with furnishings of jarrah and ample ventilation. The offices are also well furnished, and the whole building is a credit to the department and contractors, as well as an ornament to the town.⁴

Midland Junction Court House assumed the local court function for the Swan District that had, until then, been held at Guildford. As the *Swan Express* reported:

¹ Bourke, M., *On the Swan: A History of Swan District Western Australia*, (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987), pp. 259-269.

² PWD 13268 (1907)

³ *Government Gazette* 1 March 1907, p. 812.

⁴ *West Australian* 6 November 1907, p. 6.

The Local Court would not be held in future at Guildford. Perhaps it was that the people at Guildford were so law-abiding that they could not find the R.M. [Resident Magistrate] sufficient to do, and so the authorities had sent him Midland to see if the people of Midland could find him more work to do.⁵

By 1913, the central triangle of land, which was almost completely filled with public buildings, formed a cohesive centre to the townsite of Midland Junction.

Extensions were carried out to *Midland Courthouse*, possibly in the 1970s, though the Building Management Authority does not hold plans that show this. The building continued to function as a court house until 1987, when the new Midland Court House was opened in Spring Park Road. It was then vested with the Uniting Church. For a period of time, it was used as offices for the Marriage Guidance Council of Western Australia. Further alterations were carried out in 1988. In October 1995, the building is used for religious and administrative purposes.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Midland Courthouse is sited within a triangular piece of land bounded at the north-west by Great Northern Highway (formerly Newcastle Road), to the south by Great Eastern Highway (formerly York Road), and to the east by *Midland Post Office* (1913). The location is significant in the townscape of Midland as the junction between the main highways leading north and east from Perth.

The close proximity of *Midland Town Hall* (1906-1907, 1923-24), sited on the corner at the junction of the two highways, and *Midland Post Office* (1913), places *Midland Courthouse* in an historic precinct which once formed the civic heart of the town.

Midland Courthouse is adjacent to *Midland Town Hall* and addresses Helena Street. The former *Mechanics Institute* (1907), (also known as the Water Supply Office) a simple single-storey office building, is at the rear of the Courthouse.

Midland Courthouse is a simple, single-storey, rectangular-shaped building built in the Federation Academic Classical style⁶ which is symmetrical about a well proportioned portico. The central portico dominates the front elevation in size and detail and contains an elevated, recessed porch and has a large, wide semi-circular archway, flanked by two smaller archways that are supported on rectangular columns. The columns and outer corners of the porch are faced with Donnybrook stone. Above the arches, the walls are carried up in brickwork and are capped with a stone entablature and triangular pediment featuring classical mouldings. The pediment contains a painted cement Royal coat-of-arms and triangular-shaped decoration on each side. The coat-of-arms is set against a stone background that projects slightly forward of the pediment wall.

⁵ *Swan Express* 9 November 1907, p. 4.

⁶ 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. 100-103.

The height of the walls of the building is visually broken by string courses and two continuous, horizontal bands of stone. Window openings are arched with moulded stone. The interior of the porch is in matching brickwork with rendered bands that mimic the exterior walls, and painted stucco.

The building has gabled and hipped roofs clad in corrugated iron with timber battened eaves.

The interior of the building comprises a central court room with a Magistrate's bench at the far end. The clerk of court's office is on the southern side of the court room and has a public entrance off the porch. A passage separates the clerk's office from the magistrate's room that is located behind. Another passage separates the witness room - on the northern side of the court room which is also accessed from the porch - from the holding cell at the rear of the building that has direct access into the court room.⁷

The interior of the building retains some original doors with original hardware, moulded skirting boards and architraves and decorative plaster ceiling roses and vents which are currently covered by a suspended ceiling in the court room and clerk of court's office. The Magistrate's room has been extended to the west, with a lean-to roof, to accommodate a change room and toilet.⁸ There are timber floorboards throughout, now covered with carpet and linoleum in the wet areas.

At some time, a timber partition was installed in the courtroom to provide an entry and to reduce the affects of street noise.

In 1987, *Midland Courthouse* was vested with the Uniting Church and was used as offices for the Marriage Guidance Council of Western Australia Inc. It is now used as a church. The railing in the court room that once divided the public gallery from the court proceedings, and the magistrate's bench have been removed, although the podium that once accommodated the magistrate's bench remains. The church furniture that sits on the podium was salvaged from the Presbyterian Church in Spring Park Road, Midland. The church pews came from the Midland Methodist Church. The witness room is now used as an office and, the clerk of courts room is now used as a hall which is offered to the public for hire. Interior walls that were constructed in the clerks of courts room have been demolished. Although not original, the location of the walls can be interpreted from markings in the floor.

A small toilet block has been built to the rear of the site.⁹

In 1988, the building was altered under the direction of Ken Adam, Architect. Works included the conversion of the original witness room into two counselling offices by the installation of an internal wall and two doorways. The original holding cell was converted to an office and waiting area and the passage was converted to an entry. The passage

⁷ PWDWA 13268 for plans and elevations.

⁸ Date of the addition is unknown. The addition was constructed prior to the Uniting Church taking occupation.

⁹ Date of construction is unknown.

window was converted into a doorway allowing access from a new rear courtyard. A doorway that provided access to the witness room was sealed and a partition was built behind the door converting the space into a storage cupboard. A new brick screen wall and timber gate was built on the northern boundary. All cornices, skirtings and architraves installed in the converted areas match original detailing.

Prior to the Uniting Church taking office in *Midland Courthouse*, the Building Management Authority carried out maintenance to the building, including the repainting of the roof cladding and roof plumbing.¹⁰ Since taking occupation of the building, the Uniting Church installed partitions at the rear of the clerk of court's office to create a staff amenities area and, existing plumbing was upgraded to accommodate a kitchen. New floodlights were installed in the courtyard, and brick screens were built to the two entries of the toilet block that is at the rear of the site.

Three original window openings at the rear of the court room were bricked-up. This alteration to the openings was probably undertaken when the court room was converted for use as a church; however, this has not been substantiated. The exterior door to the passage on the north elevation has also been brick-up for reasons of security. The work was possible undertaken prior to 1987, as the doorway does not appear on drawings dated 1987.¹¹

The building is in sound condition; however, erosion in the limestone plinth is evident on the street elevation, and the roof cladding requires maintenance.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

¹⁰ Interview with Mr Ron Watson, Property Manager, Midland Courthouse (fmr) for the Uniting Church, with Heritage Council of Western Australia, 19 October, 1995.

¹¹ See Floor and Electrical Plan for Old Midland Courthouse by Ken Adam, dated 1987.