



HERITAGE
COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 2024
2. **Name.** *Commercial Building* (1905)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** Commercial building and the land on which it stands, being part of Lot 104 on Diagram 75154 comprised in C/T Vol. 1941 Fol. 631, and marked in red in the sketch annexed to the relevant memorial.
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Perth
5. **Location.** 21 Howard Street, Perth
6. **Owner.** Farrix Pty. Ltd.
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

21 Howard Street Perth, is a two storey commercial building, with basement, built in 1905, as a legal chambers.¹ The architect of the project is unknown, at this stage. At the turn of the century, the prosperity associated with the Goldrushes led to a significant expansion of the commercial centre of Perth, and Howard Street, with its close proximity to the Supreme Court, the Government Offices, the Weld Club and Government House, soon became the heart of the financial and legal district of Perth.

Shortly after completion 21 Howard Street, was occupied by Parker and Parker, Solicitors, who relocated their chambers from the William Street chambers they had constructed in 1884. It is not known from documentary sources whether Parker and Parker specifically commissioned the building, but it is probable, given their long tenancy of the place.² Parker and Parker remained in the premises until 1964 when expansion of the firm led them to relocate to "Henry Parker House" and then again, in 1976, to 140 St. George's Terrace, at which site they are presently located.³

Since 1964, 21 Howard Street has continued to be used as a legal chambers and offices. The building has had little alteration to the external or internal fabric over the years.

¹ Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown: *21 Howard Street: Application for entry of 21 Howard Street, Perth into the Register of Heritage Places* (October 1992) p.9.

² *loc.cit.*

³ *ibid.* p.11.

Howard Street, as a precinct, has remained relatively undeveloped. St. George's Terrace has attracted most of the commercial interest from developers and tenants, whereas Howard Street has had little attention, resulting in a largely untouched gold boom streetscape which is unusual in the C.B.D. of Perth.

The place was entered into the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission in March, 1986. The place is classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) as part of the Howard Street group of buildings. 21 Howard Street was awarded the 1993 Heritage Conservation and Property Value Award of Western Australia.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

21 Howard Street is a two storey brick, stone and stucco commercial building, in the Federation Anglo-Dutch style.⁴

It is sited on the western side of Howard Street, approximately one third of the way down the street from St George's Terrace. It is a short distance from the Supreme Court and this relationship to the pre-eminent court in Western Australia and the nearby Weld Club, a prestigious private gentlemen's club, did much to establish Howard Street as an important legal address in Perth.⁵

21 Howard Street exhibits a strongly modelled red brick facade, with a number of decorative elements. It has a rusticated limestone base, well detailed brickwork and stucco facade, and stepped parapet detailing. This detailing continues around the corner entry porch and along the northern facade, facing the R.O.W. Although the building is modest in scale, the handling of the modelling and decoration of the facade is deft, resulting in an impressive and imposing building. It has created a strong visual statement in the streetscape, far in excess of the building's actual size.

The interior of the building comprises a basement with office, cellar and garage (the latter a 1950s addition); ground floor with office and front entrance; and first floor office. According to Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown the original floor plans are not available and so the original functions of the rooms is not clear.⁶ However, as the building was originally designed as a legal chambers and its current use is similar, it is unlikely that the functions of the rooms would differ significantly.⁷ From a study of the floor plans it is evident that some rooms have been subdivided, while others have been combined into a single volume.⁸

Intervention in the building in the 1950s consisted of an addition at the back of the building. This addition, having a reinforced concrete frame and load bearing brick

⁴ Apperley, 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.112-115.

⁵ Parker and Parker eventually also occupied the building next door (No.17), while another famous Perth legal firm, Hayes, Robinson and Cox, occupied chambers in No.20 Howard Street.

⁶ Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown: *op.cit.* p.9.

⁷ *loc.cit.*

⁸ Heritage Council of Western Australia: *21 Howard Street: Schedule of Conditions for the continued conservation and preservation of Cultural Heritage significance.* 17 February, 1993

with a rendered string course, attempted to match the adjacent side elevation.⁹ In later years, air conditioners had been unsympathetically added to the front windows, projecting in an unpleasant way and interrupting the rhythm of the facade, however this intrusion was rectified in the restoration undertaken by Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown in 1988.¹⁰

For a more detailed description of the physical elements of the building refer to Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown: *21 Howard Street: Application for entry of 21 Howard Street, Perth into the Register or Heritage Places* (October 1992).

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

21 Howard Street is a fine example of Federation Anglo-Dutch style. It demonstrates a sound handling of materials, scale, detailing and decoration.

The building contributes an important element to the streetscape of Howard Street. With the other buildings of Howard Street, it demonstrates the urban character which the financial precinct of the city took on during its transformation in the gold boom.¹¹

2. HISTORIC VALUE

21 Howard Street has a close association with one of Perth's oldest and most accomplished legal practices, Parker and Parker, which had chambers in the building from 1905 to 1964.

The building demonstrates the expansion of central Perth, in particular the legal district, during the gold boom.

3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

4. SOCIAL VALUE

21 Howard Street is highly valued by the legal profession for its association with Parker and Parker, both for the people who worked for the firm and their clients, and also in contributing to the general community's sense of place through legal activities associated with the firm.

The exuberant styling of the building facades in Howard Street demonstrated the community confidence associated with the wealth generated by the Goldrushes.¹²

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ photograph by F.A. Sharr held in Heritage Council files

¹¹ Molyneux, I. *Looking Around Perth* (Wescolour Press, East Fremantle, 1981), p.42

¹² *loc.cit.*

5. RARITY

21 Howard Street is an important component of a rare turn of the century streetscape in central Perth, which exhibits a now defunct approach to streetscape design, and a rapidly diminishing form of urban fabric.

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

The building is representative of the ebullient architecture constructed in Perth, during the gold boom. It demonstrates the increasing prosperity and sophistication of Perth, and Western Australia, at the turn of the century.

CONDITION

During 1988, the building was restored and renovated by Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown Architects. The restoration stayed within the stylistic confines established by the existing original detailing while making allowance for the requirements of the contemporary workplace.

INTEGRITY

21 Howard Street has been used for the same function since it was constructed in 1905. Although some internal walls have been removed and others installed this work is reversible. The building remains generally as it was and has a reasonable degree of integrity.

AUTHENTICITY

Despite the renovations the building remains largely intact, and has a reasonable degree of authenticity.

For further details regarding alterations and restoration refer to Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown: *21 Howard Street: Application for entry of 21 Howard Street, Perth into the Register of Heritage Places* (October 1992).

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Commercial Building at 21 Howard Street has cultural significance for the following:

it is a fine example of Federation Anglo-Dutch style, demonstrating a sound handling of materials, scale, detailing and decoration;

the building demonstrates the commercial expansion of central Perth, in particular the legal district, during the gold boom;

the building, together with the other buildings of Howard Street, strongly contributes to maintaining an increasingly rare example of turn of the century urban character of central Perth. Each of these buildings contribute a streetscape element, the loss of which would be detrimental to the scale and ambience of Howard Street; and,

the building has a long and close association with Parker and Parker, an important and prestigious legal firm in Perth, which is of both historic and social significance.

8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim entry 08/01/1993
Permanent entry 31/12/1993

9. Conservation Order

10. Heritage Agreement

11. References

Oldham, Boas, Ednie-Brown: *21 Howard Street: Application for entry of 21 Howard Street, Perth into the Register of Heritage Places* (October 1992) p.9.

Apperley, 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.112-115.

Heritage Council of Western Australia: *21 Howard Street: Schedule of Conditions for the continued conservation and preservation of Cultural Heritage significance.* 17 February, 1993

Photograph by F.A. Sharr held in Heritage Council files

Molyneux, I. *Looking Around Perth* (Wescolour Press, East Fremantle, 1981), p.42

National Trust Assessment Exposition