



## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

### Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 0871
2. **Name.** Port Flour Mill (c.1862)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** The Port Flour Mill and the land on which it stands, being Lot 4 on Diagram 11709, comprised in Certificate of Title Vol 1454 Folio 704.
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Fremantle
5. **Location.** 15 Essex Street, Fremantle
6. **Owner.** Maryhill Pty. Ltd., Trustee for Essex Street Village Trust
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

#### DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Port Flour Mill is a two storey limestone building built circa 1862 to mill flour for the district of Fremantle, and for export.

There is some dispute as to the date of construction of the Mill. On the one hand, it is claimed the mill was built in 1848 by Nicholas Paterson and William Cornish.<sup>1</sup> Cornish and Paterson then dissolved their partnership in 1849, with Cornish recorded as receiving the Port Mill.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, in 1862, the *Inquirer*<sup>3</sup> reports that Cornish and Paterson had purchased a store owned by Yelverton and Co. (location not given) with the intention of erecting a mill, and for it to be operating the following year. The rate books for the year show Yelverton as the owner of the site in Essex Street<sup>4</sup> and it seems more likely that the "Port Mill" referred to in earlier sources was located elsewhere and that the *Inquirer* was referring to Cornish's activities alone and it was Cornish, not Cornish and Paterson, who built the Port Flour Mill in Essex Street in 1862.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from, Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>2</sup> Erikson, R. *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914. Volume 3; Free 1850-1868* (UWAP, Nedlands, 1979) and also Statham, P., *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914. Volume 1: early Settlers 1829-1850* (UWAP, 1979)

<sup>3</sup> *Inquirer* 1/10/1862

<sup>4</sup> Fremantle Rate books owning lot 180 and the lot at the rear (lot 187) which faces onto Norfolk Street from 1855-1859

By 1865-6, the Essex Street mill was leased to T. & H. Carter & Co. of Fremantle,<sup>5</sup> who, in June 1866, entered a bag of their flour in the Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne.<sup>6</sup>

In January 1868, Cornish's son-in-law Thomas Oakley leased the mill<sup>7</sup> and apparently upgraded it in 1871.<sup>8</sup> Cornish died in August 1871.<sup>9</sup> In 1880, the rate returns start to show a more complete record of the site and describe the lot as being occupied by a house and mill.<sup>10</sup> The mill was run by Oakley until his death in 1883 and, following the death of his wife, Rebecca (nee Cornish) in the same year, the mill was offered for sale along with the rest of the Cornish family estate.<sup>11</sup>

In June 1884, the mill was advertised for sale equipped with "a fixed 10-1/8 h.p. engine (Young and Company) ; 8 Cornish boilers each equal to power required; elevator for grain and meal, 8 pairs of 8ft French butt stonce with grover in can, staff and c. for mill stones; silk dresser with elevator; ofal separator; smutter; shaker; salter's steam gauge; donkey pump, force pump and every appliance for working a mill except the main belt".<sup>12</sup> The Port Mill was purchased the following month for £2050 by E.H. Higham, a prominent Fremantle businessman whose family continued to own it until 1893.<sup>13</sup>

In a typical flour mill, the wheat, delivered to the mill in sacks, was transferred to a hopper located at an upper level. From there it was fed into a series of wheat cleaning devices such as separators, smutters, scourers and brushes. Each step of this process was aimed at removing dirt and associated material before grinding. In some mills (possibly the Port Mill at some stage) wheat heaters were installed for processing the grain prior to grinding. Grinding then took place and after grinding the output was dressed on a series of machines consisting of varying grades of silk sieves. The flour and bran were screened to obtain various grades of each. The resultant products were bagged and stored.

The whole process, while slow and inefficient compared to the roller mills, was nevertheless, capable of producing approximately 300lb of fine meal per hour from a single pair of stones. After dressing 60-65% of flour would have been extracted. This would mean that the Port Mill, if following the above processes and using all three pairs of stones could conceivably have produced 400-600lbs of flour and 200-400lbs of offal per hour depending on which milling process was in use.

In 1885, advertisements were placed offering to purchase bones delivered to the mill and, in May, an offer to lease as a Flour and Bone Mill with immediate possession,

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<sup>5</sup> *Inquirer* 11 January 1865

<sup>6</sup> *Inquirer* 13 June 1866

<sup>7</sup> *Inquirer* 11 December 1867 cited in an extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>8</sup> *Inquirer* 3/5/1871

<sup>9</sup> Erikson, R. *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914. Volume 3; Free 1850-1868* (UWAP, Nedlands, 1979)

<sup>10</sup> Fremantle Rate Books

<sup>11</sup> Richards, R. *The Murray District of Western Australia*, (Shire of Murray, Harvey, WA 1978)

<sup>12</sup> *The West Australian* 8th July, 1884 cited in Fremantle Town Council Civic Administration Centre file: Memo dated 24th July, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> *Inquirer* 23 July 1884 quoted in extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills) The Higham family would continue its association with the mill until 1950, with unbroken ownership between 1924 and 1950.

was made.<sup>14</sup> The *Inquirer* reported that the Port Mill had been leased by a South Australian Company and a Mr Atkins was to be appointed manager.<sup>15</sup>

In 1893, the property was sold to Mrs William S. Pearse and George Yorke Hubble. The property continued to be owned by the Pearse family but, in 1897, was subdivided into a dwelling, two warehouses, mill premises and stables. The warehouse and mill premises were held in partnership with Charles E. Slee and W.A. Milling Company respectively. The mill was managed by a Mr A.C. Thompson. In June 1899, Slee sold his share of the Mill to the Port Roller Flour Milling Co. Ltd. for £1400. It is not known whether Slee had upgraded the mill to a roller mill, or whether it was the intention of the new owners to do so. The Roller Flour Milling Company was a company incorporated in May 1899 with a capital of £10,000 in £10 shares, 360 of which were taken up, with the major share holder the Fremantle merchants H.W. Rischbieth (100 shares) and F.K. Terry (80 shares). The remaining shares were divided amongst N.L. Moss, H. King, T.B. Gray, J.P. Learmonth, F.W. Matthews and W.H. Evans with the latter subsequently appointed as managing director.<sup>16</sup>

Despite assets of almost £5,000 and a turnover of £18,289, the company was wound up early in 1903. In February 1903, the Inspectors Branch of the Mines Department condemned the boilers at the mill.<sup>17</sup> On 23 May 1903, the Port Roller Flour Milling Co. Ltd. ceased business and by October was struck off the Companies Register.<sup>18</sup>

Ratebooks show James Gillespie Ltd (miller) owning, with Alice Pearse, the warehouses, stables mill and office with an address of 19 Essex Street, in 1905/06 until 1907 when James Gillespie sold to Westralian Union Flour Milling Co. Ltd. under the control of Thomas Ockerby, a local corn merchant.<sup>19</sup> Ockerby was to begin a long and controversial career in the milling industry with this move. In 1909, he went into partnership with William Lehman and, after 1909, they are cited as Ockerby Lehman and Co. Ltd. Together they expanded their interests, purchasing the Eureka Mill in Nairn Street, Fremantle and later transferring their interests to Cottesloe. In 1910, they built a new mill at Kellerberrin to which the machinery from the Port Flour Mill was removed and the mill closed.<sup>20</sup>

In 1920, the property is described 'a foundry' which description continued until 1925 when the description became 'workshops'. After 1927, the description "old mill" is included. In 1939, engineering workshops were established as the Port Foundry and Engineering Co. Ltd., which was sold to Mr Percy Smith, engineer, in 1939/40. The

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<sup>14</sup> *Herald* April-May 1885 quoted in an extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>15</sup> *Inquirer* 13 May 1885

<sup>16</sup> 1370/52 quoted in and extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>17</sup> 1347/1 467- Battye Library quoted in an extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>18</sup> From an extract of Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>19</sup> City of Fremantle Ratebooks; Official records of W. Thomas and Co. Also minute books of Mill-owner's Association cited in an extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

<sup>20</sup> Official records of W. Thomas and Co. Also minute books of Mill-owner's Association cited in and extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

workshop made tank wheels and parts for the Army during and after the Second World War, and continued to operate under Smith family ownership until sold to Clarence Minicullo who used the site as a panel beater's workshop.<sup>21</sup>

In May 1993, planning approval for the restoration and conversion of the old Flour Mill to seven residential units was given. The development entailed the retention and restoration of all surviving elements of the old mill including external details. Alterations to the existing fabric consisted of converting five of the existing windows into doors and the installation of seven new dormer windows in the existing roof. The additional construction of six new residential units and one commercial tenancy in a new building was granted subject to full documentation of the physical, documentary and other evidence of the existing fabric being made.<sup>22</sup>

The property was classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1974. The property was assessed and entered into the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission.

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The Port Flour Mill is a purpose-built two storey limestone flour mill believed to have been constructed in 1862.. It provided milling facilities for the Town of Fremantle and grain transported to Fremantle by rail. It is sited in Essex Street and was located "only a short distance from the jetties and railway station...well situated for receiving grain from the Eastern districts, Dongara or Champion Bay."<sup>23</sup>

The site has an old cottage at the rear of the mill. Together the cottage and the mill enclose an internal courtyard.<sup>24</sup>

The Port Flour Mill building is a symmetrical two storey rectangular building, built of random limestone, with a rendered and painted street facade. A separate rendered dado begins near the bottom of the front two windows on the lower storey and extends across the front of the building and northern facade. The front facade features a double-doored loading entrance with two small windows flanking either side. On the first storey there is a loading door at floor level and two windows on either side. The windows are double hung sash windows.

The building is built of local limestone quarried from Arthur Head. The structure has a corrugated iron hipped roof which extends slightly over the walls to form an eave. It is probable that the original roof was made of timber shingles, however the shingles have been replaced by corrugated iron at a later date.

On the northern facade, the wall halfway along the property is set back by about one and half metres and once again has loading bays top and bottom flanked by two

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<sup>21</sup> City of Fremantle Ratebooks, 1920-1940

<sup>22</sup> City of Fremantle Minutes: Planning and Development Committee. Adopted by Council 24th May 1993

<sup>23</sup> *The West Australian* 8th July, 1884 cited in Fremantle Town Council Civic Administration Centre file: Memo dated 24th July, 1985.

<sup>24</sup> Fremantle Council Minutes: Planning and Development Committee accepted by Council 19 April 1993

windows on either side. The side walls are predominantly of unrendered random limestone with brick arches over the wall and door openings, except for a rendered dado which extends halfway up the window height of the northern facade. This dado matches height with the one on the front facade. The windows are double hung sash windows.

The interior has Baltic pine floors to the ground floor level, with timber roof trusses and floor joists. There is a hoist beam and decorative brick air vents on the north-west elevation.<sup>25</sup> An early limestone and brick oven and chimney is situated towards the rear of the complex.

Very little of the interior fabric remains in the building, as most of the internal fixtures and fittings were removed in 1910.<sup>26</sup> Subsequent usage of the building has not resulted in it being re-fitted out to any substantial degree. In 1990, the building was described as having been gutted, with parts of the roof missing and in need of internal bracing.<sup>27</sup>

It was recommended by HCWA, in November, 1993, that an archaeologist undertake a preliminary site survey, prior to development of the site.

## **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 Port Flour Mill has aesthetic significance for the strong contribution it makes to the Essex Street streetscape with its pleasing proportions and a strong, bold facade.

The mill has a landmark quality in Essex Street and the interesting internal courtyard space makes a strong contribution to the historic streetscapes of Fremantle.

The Port Flour Mill building is an example of utilitarian industrial structures, technically interesting and competent, typical of the construction of mills and associated storage sheds for the time of construction.

### **2. HISTORIC VALUE**

The Port Flour Mill has historic significance for its role in the development of mills in Fremantle and as the last surviving mill in Fremantle. It is an important historical memorial to all those people associated with milling in Fremantle and for its close association with the Cornish, Oakely, Higham,

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<sup>25</sup> Fremantle Council Minutes: Planning and Development Committee accepted by Council 24 May 1993

<sup>26</sup> Fremantle Council Minutes: Planning and Development Committee accepted by Council 19 April 1993

<sup>27</sup> *Fremantle Gazette* 20 February, 1990, p.1.

Pearse, Smith, and Minicullo families. It also has a close association with Thomas Ockerby who was later to develop and build other mills in the State.

Although much of the evidence of milling technology has been lost through the removal of the plant and machinery, the buildings show the form of a typical mill of the mid-nineteenth century.

The Port Flour Mill is interesting in its dual use for grain and offal milling and for the representation of the diversity of commercial enterprise of Fremantle through its change in use and ownership.

The buildings illustrate the character of the earlier, colonial, townscape - the bulk of which has been lost due to the rapidly changing and significant period of growth from 1869 to 1900.

### **3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

The building demonstrates vernacular construction used in the middle part of the nineteenth century, but no longer employed.

### **4. SOCIAL VALUE**

The Port Flour Mill has social significance as a place that contributed to the well-being of the local community by providing locally ground flour for making bread and other foodstuffs. As such, it was an essential and important staple industry.

### **5. RARITY**

In 1862, the Port Flour Mill was constructed to the design of flour mills of that time. Other mills were constructed before and after the Port Mill. Whereas it is a typical mid-nineteenth century flour mill, today it has become an example of an endangered expression of milling as the result of the transformation or loss of other historic mills of its kind.

The mill is representative of the shift of milling facilities to ports and away from the growing districts that was made possible by the railway and shipping infrastructure developed in the State.

### **6. REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The Port Mill is important in demonstrating the form, location and siting, in proximity to the railway and shipping, of urban flour milling in the mid-nineteenth century. The Mill is characteristic of its class and a representative example (devoid of plant and machinery) of flour milling in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Port Flour Mill is representative of light industrial development that was established in Fremantle in the nineteenth century prior to the gold boom and expanded in the gold boom period.

The Port Flour Mill is also representative of Fremantle's role in the processing of primary produce in the state, both for local consumption and prior to export.

## **CONDITION**

In 1990, the building was described as having been gutted, parts of the roof missing and in need of internal bracing.<sup>28</sup> The walls suffered from rising damp, buckled and cracked.<sup>29</sup> As at April 1993, the building was cited as being in a poor state of repair.<sup>30</sup>

## **INTEGRITY**

With the industrial equipment removed from the building there is little specific evidence of the previous uses of the building. The integrity of the place as a mill has been compromised, however it still has degree of integrity as evidence of 19thC milling in Fremantle.

## **AUTHENTICITY**

The building fabric remains largely intact and the place retains a reasonable degree of authenticity.

## **7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Port Flour Mill has cultural heritage significance for the following:

a rare example of mid-nineteenth century light industrial development, and representative of pre-goldrush development in Fremantle - the bulk of which was lost due to the rapid and significant changes of the gold boom period (1890 to 1910); and

the strong contribution it makes to the streetscape of Essex Street, an important component in the southern edge of Fremantle's historic West End precinct.

## **8. Register of Heritage Places**

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

## **9. Conservation Order**

## **10. Heritage Agreement**

## **11. References**

Extract from, Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill* (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills)

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<sup>28</sup> *Fremantle Gazette* 20 February, 1990, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> "Movement at old Mill" *Fremantle Gazette* 26.6.1993

<sup>30</sup> Fremantle Council Minutes: Planning and Development Committee accepted by Council 19 April 1993

Erikson, R. *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914. Volume 3; Free 1850-1868*  
 (UWAP, Nedlands, 1979) and also Statham, P., *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-*  
 National Trust Assessment Exposition  
*1914. Volume 1: early Settlers 1829-1850* (UWAP, 1979) Australian Heritage  
 Commission Data Sheet  
*Inquirer* 1/10/1862  
 Fremantle Rate books owning lot 180 and the lot at the rear (lot 187) which  
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*Inquirer* 11 January 1865  
*Inquirer* 13 June 1866  
*Inquirer* 11 December 1867 cited in an extract from Lang, E. *Grist to the Mill*  
 (Goodman Fielder Flour Mills) *Inquirer* 3/5/1871  
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