



# REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

## 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

*Harper's Buildings* is significant for its aesthetic characteristics as an excellent example of purpose built buildings comprising retail stores, offices and warehouse, in the Inter-War Functionalist style, with a consistent level of detailing of the style throughout the premises. The place stands in contrast with its near neighbours in terms of its styling; however, it integrates with them as it is similar in scale, fitting comfortably in its context. (Criterion 1.1)

The place exhibits design excellence and innovation in the Inter-War Functionalist style design of Edwin Summerhayes. (Criterion 1.2)

The place contributes significantly in its scale and design to the streetscape of the Hay/King Streets precinct, an area of acknowledged cultural heritage significance. It is part of a development continuum, which while reflecting its own time, was designed to fit comfortably within its context. (Criterion 1.4)

### 11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

*Harper's Buildings* is significant as a part of the evolution of the Hay/King Street precinct and its continued development as a retail and warehousing area following the opening of the Fremantle-Guildford Railway in 1881, through the Gold Boom and into the twentieth century, and the re-development of the area in the 1930s and 1990s. (Criterion 2.1)

The place was constructed at a period of recovery and optimism in Western Australia following the Great Depression, and was concurrent with the construction of a number of notable buildings in Perth, including, the Old English style *London Court*, the Inter-War Functionalist style *Gledden Buildings*, and Plaza Arcade and Cinema. (Criterion 2.2)

The place is closely associated with Nathaniel Harper, mining entrepreneur and investor, for whom it was built and named; and with architects, Edwin Summerhayes, who designed the place, and his son, Reginald, who was responsible for the alterations in 1948. (Criterion 2.3)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

The place is significant for the design excellence and innovation of the Inter-War Functionalist style design by Edwin Summerhayes, and in particular the purpose built wine tasting room designed for Yalumba Wines. (Criterion 2.4)

### **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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### **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*Harper's Buildings* style contributes to the community's sense of place through its distinctive facade within the Hay/King Street precinct. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*Harper's Buildings* is one of a comparatively small group of buildings in the Inter-War Functionalist style remaining in the City of Perth. (Criterion 5.1)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Harper's Buildings* is a fine representative and relatively intact example of Inter-War Functionalist style applied to a commercial premises. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

*Harper's Buildings* appear to be in a good state of repair. Maintenance appears to have been effective and most elements appear sound. There are some cracks appearing in the brickwork to the Hay Street facade in the area of the parapet above the first floor windows, the cause of which is not clear. There is cracking alongside the central bay and minor cracks in the spandrel wall. The render to the rear has been painted to improve the appearance of the renders, and this maintenance work has altered the appearance of these buildings. The place appears to be in good condition.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

*Harper's Buildings* remains in use for the same kinds of uses that it was intended to accommodate. Changes have been made to accommodate various tenants through time. The shops continue to be used for retail purposes and the first floor is used for offices and warehousing, which was its intended purpose. The basement is currently vacant. The place appears capable of sustaining its values and to be assured of ongoing use. The place therefore retains a high degree of integrity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

*Harper's Buildings* retains much of its street frontage details above canopy level. The front entry and first floor would seem to have retained their detail also. The spatial qualities of the remainder of the building remain intact. The building overall retains a high degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Robin Chinnery, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*Harper's Buildings* comprises stores (1937), offices (1937), and a warehouse (1937), with alterations (1948), in the Inter-War Functionalist style.<sup>1</sup> The stores and warehouse are two-storey buildings, with offices above the stores. Constructed of brick, concrete, and iron, the buildings were designed by Edwin Summerhayes, and built by L. J. Rounsevell for Nathaniel Harper in 1937, with minor alterations designed by Reginald Summerhayes in 1948.<sup>2</sup>

The townsite of Perth was declared on 12 August 1829.<sup>3</sup> The first plan of the townsite surveyed and laid out by Surveyor General Roe in 1829, shows the basic grid plan of the central city, including the future Hay Street.<sup>4</sup> In early 1830, the Surveyor's memorandum records the marking out of 'a second-rate street behind St. George's Terrace', i.e. Hay Street, including Perth Town Lots G and L, of which a portion was the future site of *Harper's Buildings*.<sup>5</sup> For most of the nineteenth century, until after the opening of the Fremantle - Guildford Railway in 1881, the focus of Perth was on the waterfront port area at the Swan River, the centre of trading activities, and the streets to the north were developed as housing areas. A photograph of 1886 shows the early development of the area of Hay Street west of the Perth Town Hall, including the future site of *Harper's Buildings* on part of Perth Town Lots G14 and G15.<sup>6</sup>

During the Gold Boom of the 1890s, and into the first decade of the twentieth century, there was considerable development and re-development in the areas to the south of the railway, in particular the construction of warehousing and other commercial buildings, as the focus of the city shifted away from the Swan River port to the vicinity of the railway facilities.

Building activity in Perth slowed during World War One, accelerating in the 1920s to reach its peak in 1929, immediately before the Great Depression.<sup>7</sup> Following the Great Depression of 1929, recovery in the mid 1930s, including renewed activity on the Goldfields, led to a spate of new buildings in the City of Perth in the latter half of the decade.

Through the early 1930s, portion of Perth Town Lots G14 and G15, 810-820 Hay Street, had continued as the site of some of the small businesses which characterised the area of Hay Street between William Street and King Street in the early twentieth century. In 1936, at 810-812 Hay Street, was the furniture warehouse of T. J. F. Stevenson; at 814, the business of Arthur

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<sup>1</sup> Pitt Morrison, Margaret, and White, John (Eds.) *Western Towns and Buildings* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979) p. 4.

Seddon, George, and Ravine, David A *City and Its Setting: Images of Perth, Western Australia* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1986) p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p. 87; and Pitt Morrison, Margaret, and White, John (eds.) *Western Towns and Buildings...*, p. 14i

<sup>3</sup> Pitt Morrison and White (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Seddon, and Ravine, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p. 87; and Pitt Morrison and White (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>7</sup> White, John 'Building in Western Australia' in Pitt Morrison, and White (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 124-126.

Pidgeon, Wireless Engineer; at 816, G. Phillips, hairdresser; at 818, Kailis Dining Rooms; and at 820, Louise Florist and the Armstrong Health Centre.<sup>8</sup>

On 15 April 1937, Nathaniel Harper and his wife, Olive Estelle Harper, as joint tenants purchased a portion of Perth Town Lot G14 with an area of 19 perches, together with a right of carriageway.<sup>9</sup> With their adjoining land at portion of Perth Town Lot G15, they proposed re-development of the sites for shops, warehouse and offices.

Nathaniel Harper commissioned his old friend, Edwin Summerhayes, to design a complex of stores at 810-820 Hay Street, with offices above, and warehouse at the rear.<sup>10</sup> Although retired from the practice with his son Reginald, Edwin designed the building for his friend; however, Reginald's name appears on the Council approval of the plans for the place.<sup>11</sup>

Nathaniel Harper (b. 1865, d. 1954), mine manager and investor, came to Western Australia in 1892 during the Gold Boom, following experience in the mining industry in New Zealand and Tasmania.<sup>12</sup> By 1895, he was manager of the White Feather Main Reef at Kanowna.<sup>13</sup> On the visit of the Premier, John Forrest (later Sir John) on 24 November 1895, Harper suggested that a dam in the Avon Valley with a pipeline to the Goldfields might provide the solution to the chronic problem of water supply to the Goldfields.<sup>14</sup> Harper was a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Beverley from 1910.<sup>15</sup> His entrepreneurial activities included investments in the City of Perth, including The Esplanade Hotel (1898), and several motor firms, most notably Winterbottoms, and Harper Motors.<sup>16</sup> In 1947, with the State Government, he founded the Nathaniel Harper Homes for mentally retarded children at Guildford and Bassendean.<sup>17</sup>

*Harper's Buildings* was built by L. J. Rounsevell in 1936-1937. Constructed of brick, concrete, and iron, the place was completed in 1937. It comprised a two-storey building, with four retail stores at the ground floor, with office suites above, with a purpose built wine tasting room in the basement for Yalumba Wines, and a two-storey warehouse at the rear, for the same tenant. On completion of *Harper's Buildings*, Yalumba relocated their Fremantle based operations to Perth. It was the company's first branch in the city, and the tasting room was an innovation for Western Australia. The rustic detailing of its decor shows evidence of the influences of the concurrent construction of London Court, and Tudor influences. The business of Smith & Son Ltd., wine merchants, at *Harper's Buildings* was simply named 'Yalumba Wine Cellars'.<sup>18</sup>

At the ground floor level, the tenants in the new buildings were Maples, House Furnishers, with the name of the business in black terrazzo at the entrance to the store at 810-814 Hay Street, and Arthur Pidgeon, Wireless

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8 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1936-1937, p. 40.

9 Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot G14, Vol. 1053 Fol. 612. 15 April 1937.

10 National Trust of Australia (W. A.) Assessment of Harper's Building, 1 June 1995.

11 *ibid.*

12 Nairn, Bede and Searle, Geoffrey (Eds.) *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 9. 1891-1939 Melbourne University Press, 1983) p. 205.

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

16 *ibid.*

17 *ibid.*

18 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1937-38, p. 30.

Engineer, whose business had been located at 814 Hay Street prior to the re-development for *Harper's Buildings*.<sup>19</sup>

Other notable buildings constructed in Perth in 1936-38, are *London Court*, *Gladden Buildings* and *Arcade*, *Plaza Arcade* and *Cinema*.

The Metropolitan Sewerage Plan for the City of Perth, drawn in February 1942, shows *Harper's Buildings* with the building at 810-812, including the basement extending from Hay Street almost to the rear of the lot, with steps at the rear, and a light well on the western side of the basement.<sup>20</sup> The building at 814-820 Hay Street is a two-storey building, with a basement; a passage is located on the west of 814; and there is a light area at the rear, steps from the building to the granolithic area at the rear, with a small brick addition and a brick lavatory to the east and west of the steps respectively, and a timber addition and steps to the west of the brick lavatory.<sup>21</sup> A granolithic area at the rear connects to a laneway from King Street to provide access for deliveries to the rear of the buildings.<sup>22</sup>

In May 1946, Reginald Summerhayes, Architect, drew plans for proposed alterations to the shop at 820 Hay Street, for a kitchen and facilities at the 'Break O'Day Cafe'.<sup>23</sup> As cement for the concrete kitchen floor required by the City of Perth health regulations was still unavailable following World War Two, the work was not fully implemented.<sup>24</sup> In March 1948, when materials were available and the wartime regulations had been eased, Summerhayes submitted an Amended Drawing for 'Proposed Alteration' to the cafe.<sup>25</sup> It was approved on 16 April 1948, and the work to provide change rooms, a store, and kitchen facilities for the cafe was implemented.<sup>26</sup> 820 Hay Street is no longer a cafe, and there is no visible evidence of these alterations.

Yalumba remained a tenant at *Harper's Buildings* for some years, into the 1950s and 1960s, with the tenancy recorded in the name of Smith & Son (W. A. Pty. Ltd.), as the annual value of the basement declined from £304 to £280 between 1950 and 1955, before increasing sharply to £500 in 1956.<sup>27</sup> In the period 1950 to 1956, the shops at *Harper's Buildings* at nos. 810-814 Hay Street were occupied by Henry C. Clarke, the offices on the first floor, no. 816, were occupied by Westralian Farmers' Co-op Ltd., later Co-operative Wholesale Services Ltd., Arthur Pidgeon continued as a tenant at the shop at no. 818, and Pellegrini & Co. (WA) Pty. Ltd. occupied the shop at 820.<sup>28</sup>

Following the death of Nathaniel Harper on 3 January 1954, the place was transferred to Colin Frederick Paterson, Olive Estelle Harper, and Alan Eric Blanckensee as joint tenants, administering the Harper's Building Trust.<sup>29</sup> On 14 April 1967, the properties were transferred to the administration of The

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19 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1936-37, p. 40; 1937-38, p.30; and site visit by Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, 17 November 1998.

20 Metropolitan Sewerage City of Perth, PRO Cons. 4156 Item 18, 27 February 1942.

21 *ibid.*

22 *ibid.*

23 R. Summerhayes, Plan of Harper's Building May 1946. Approvals, City of Perth, 376/48.

24 *ibid.*

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.*

27 Rates for 810-820 Hay Street, City of Perth Rate Books 1950 to 1956.

28 *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*, 1954-1956; and Certificate of Title portion of Perth Town Lot G14, 11. Vol. 1053 Fol. 612. March 1955.

West Australian Trustee Executor and Agency Company Limited, as proprietor in fee simple.<sup>30</sup>

Following a fire at the place, Moyle Barrett & Associates, Architects, drew plans in February 1977, for repairs to the damaged warehouse area.<sup>31</sup> The work required the demolition and reconstruction of sections of the floor, roof structure, and ceilings, and some replacement of plumbing and electrical wiring in the warehouse areas at ground floor and first floor levels.<sup>32</sup> The work was implemented in 1977.

In 1981, the National Trust of Australia (W. A.) included *Harper's Buildings* in its assessment and classification of the King Street Precinct; however, only the facade of the *Harper's Buildings* was deemed significant.<sup>33</sup>

Hobbs, Winning and Leighton, Architects, drew plans for the upgrading of *Harper's Buildings* in June 1987.<sup>34</sup> Following approval by the City of Perth on 30 October 1987, the work to remove the existing shopfronts, to realign the shopfronts, and fit new ones was carried out.<sup>35</sup>

In early June 1995, the National Trust of Australia (W. A.) assessed the place, and it was classified on 7 August 1995.<sup>36</sup>

In October 1995, BGA Interiors submitted plans to carry out internal alterations to the place, involving changes to the interior decor of the buildings, and minor changes which included the restoration of glass panes in the doors to the offices at the first floor, 816 Hay Street, which were approved and duly implemented.<sup>37</sup>

In May 1996, a new shop front at a cost of \$8,000 for 820 Hay Street, for 'Elizabeth's Secondhand Bookshop', was approved by the Perth City Council, to a design by Design Practitioners.<sup>38</sup>

In February 1998, application was made for alterations at 814 Hay Street, for a complete shop fit out and part new shop front on behalf of the Brody Family Trust, for their business, 'Java Juice', with plans designed by Philip McAllister, Architect.<sup>39</sup> The work is in progress in late 1998, at an estimated cost of \$100,000.<sup>40</sup>

Currently the basement is vacant. The retail stores continue to be leased, with the current tenancies of Retravisation at nos. 810-812 Hay Street (originally Maples), Java Juice opening soon at no. 814, Rainbow Bazaar at no. 818, and Elizabeth's Secondhand Bookshop at no. 820.<sup>41</sup> Some of the seven office

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30 Certificates of Title Portions of Lots G14 and G15, Vol. 22 Fol. 372A, and Vol. 22 Fol. 373A respectively, 14 April 1967.

31 Moyle Barrett & Associates Harper Building - Repairs to Fire Damage, February 1977. Approvals, City of Perth, 561/77.

32 *ibid.*

33 National Trust of Australia (W. A.) File.

34 *ibid.*

35 Approvals, City of Perth, 613/89.

36 Assessment by Laura Gray. National Trust of Australia (W. A.) File.

37 C. Higham, Manager, City of Perth Approvals Services, to Barrie Glossop. City of Perth File P 100 3501, 5 October 1995; and Barrie Glossop, BGA Interiors, telephone conversation with Robin Chinnery, November 1998.

38 Approvals, City of Perth, 0195/96.

39 Approvals, City of Perth, 0389/98.

40 *ibid.*; and site visit by Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, 17 November 1998.

41 Site visit by Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, 17 November 1998

suites are occupied, whilst others are vacant and available for lease. The place is included in the Draft Municipal Inventory for the City of Perth.

In May 1999, the place is currently owned by The West Australian Trustee Executor and Agency Company Limited (Perpetual Trustees).<sup>42</sup>

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*Harper's Buildings* is a two-storey commercial premises with a full basement in the Inter-War Functionalist style<sup>43</sup>.

*Harper's Buildings* is located between William and King Streets on the north side of Hay Street. Hay Street is a one way road with the traffic running from east to west and kerbside parking in the area of *Harper's Buildings*. The pavements are made of Urbanstone unit pavers. This section of Hay Street is made up of predominantly two- and three-storey buildings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Harper's Buildings* is a long horizontally proportioned building and stands in contrast with its context of buildings which are characterised by classically derived vertical proportions. The scale of the buildings is similar to that of its neighbours and *Harper's Buildings* sits comfortably in its urban context. It appears very much as part of a development, which is set in a general continuum of two-storey office, retail and warehouse buildings which are the prevalent form of development in the immediate area.

The building comprises a full basement under the main building, four retail tenancies, together with an office entrance lobby at the ground floor, a number of warehouse spaces to the rear, and a first floor level made up of a number of office tenancies of different sizes.

The front or south elevation of *Harper's Buildings* is treated with polychromatic tapestry textured face brickwork, steel windows and a metal framed awning, together with a number of replacement shopfronts.

The basement was not available for inspection.

The ground floor office has a central entry hall located below the flat pedimented entry, which is a characteristic Inter-War Functionalist decorative motif used to emphasise entries. The entrance is flanked by two minor and two major retail tenancies with 1980s -1990s shopfronts. There is a cantilevered awning with a plain fascia, which is signwritten for each of the tenancies. The first floor elevation above the awning is *Harper's Buildings* distinguishing external feature. It is characterised by long horizontal lines and proportions, with a contrasting central flat pedimented element over the entry. The central element is made of polychromatic brickwork, with a pink brick band at its base, a brown brick sill and architrave and a cantilevered awning over the window, which runs up into a fluted concrete decorative panel over the hood. The central panel rises above the parapet of the remainder of the building. The bays to either side of the centre panel employ similar motifs to the central panel, but have no sunhoods over the windows. The base band of brickwork is laid in pink brickwork, the string course and architraves are in brown brick and the panels between the windows are laid in yellow bricks, then the pink bricks resume above the window heads, as far as a rendered band just below the brick parapet. The rendered panel is

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<sup>42</sup> Certificate of Title, Vol. 22, Fol. 373A.

<sup>43</sup> Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, pp. 184-187.

finished with a chevron pattern and the words 'Harper's Buildings' appear in raised metal letters on the rendered band. All windows are made of steel and have long horizontal proportions with a fixed central section and side hung casement windows at each side of the fixed panel.

Each of the shops has been refitted to a greater or lesser extent. All shopfronts are replacements. Elizabeth's Bookshop, at the western end of the building has a replacement shopfront, but apart from the bookshelves, the space retains its original qualities with plasterboard and batten ceilings, plastered concrete beams, and plastered walls. The small shops to either side of the office entry have new shopfronts and interior fit-outs which obscure the original fabric. The shop immediately to the east of the office entry was being re-fitted at the time of this assessment. The space to the eastern end of the building is occupied by an electrical goods store which is by far the largest space in the building. The polychromatic terrazzo threshold placed by Maples furniture store is still intact. A dropped ceiling has been introduced in the front of the shop, but otherwise the fit-out has not affected the fabric of the shop, apart from the introduction of air-conditioning. It has tall ceilings, finished with plasterboard and cover battens, plastered columns and walls. There is evidence of original openings in the western wall which have subsequently been closed in and one opening has a glass block wall set in it.

The entrance to the office is modestly sized and has a terrazzo floor, panelled entry doors with glazed lobby doors. The terrazzo stairs lead to the basement, the former Yalumba wine tasting cellars, and the first floor level office accommodation and warehousing. The stairs have a terrazzo skirting, horizontally proportioned balustrades with steel uprights, flat steel intermediate rails, and a wreathed timber handrail.

The first floor has a suspended timber floor with plastered walls and plasterboard ceilings with covered battens. The corridors appear to be in the original format with tenancies arranged around the central corridor. The offices are quite stark, but receive bright natural light from their wide steel frame windows. The corridor receives borrowed light through steel opening lights, though some of these have been painted over.

The basement has access from two points at the rear of the premises. It is a full basement and has a hoist service from the basement area, which delivers to a loading dock above ground floor level at a height to suit loading vehicles. The basement extends under the pavement to form light areas which are covered with 'Plummer and Co.' pavement lights. The buildings are arranged in a 'U' shape around an access area at the rear, which is connected to a right of way to the north. The treatments on the front elevation extend to the rear elevation and show a complete consistency. The escape stairs and all balustrades are made of steel. The windows are made of steel frames, except for those to the toilet areas which are timber framed windows.

The building shows few signs of deterioration, and most of the fabric would appear to be authentic. There is cracking on elements of the Hay Street elevation. The cracks occur above the first floor level windows and run vertically from the corners of the window and alongside the centre panel over the entry. The awning appears to be original fabric.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

National Trust Assessment by Laura Gray, 1 June 1995.



## **13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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