



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

Albany Town Hall has aesthetic value in the fact that it is a good example of a Victorian Free Classical building. (Criterion 1.1)

It is very much a landmark building with the clocktower being highly visible from along most of the length of York Street. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Albany's Albany Town Hall reflects a period of growth and development in the town's history. (Criterion 2.1)

Albany Town Hall has historic value as the first major building project to be undertaken by the Albany Municipal Council. (Criterion 2.2)

Albany Town Hall has been closely associated with key figures involved in municipal activities in the town. (criterion 2.3)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Albany Town Hall is highly valued by the local community for its long role as the principal public building associated with cultural and administrative activities in the town. (Criterion 4.1)

As a distinctive public building, *Albany Town Hall*, has landmark qualities that contribute towards the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Albany Town Hall is of a type of building that was common in major towns of Western Australia. Relatively few of these buildings are still existing. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Albany Town Hall characterises the civic pride and confidence of the community at the time of its construction. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Albany Town Hall is in good condition although the stucco is showing signs of deterioration and the iron ventilation grilles are rusting.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The integrity of *Albany Town Hall* has suffered with its conversion into an art gallery and theatre. However, it is still a public building valued and used by the people of Albany, and therefore has moderate integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Albany Town Hall has moderate authenticity. The corrugated asbestos of the main roof is not original and the exterior has been extensively re-pointed. The interior has been substantially altered in the theatre conversion.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Sarah Stephenson BA. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Albany Albany Town Hall is a two storey stone building with clock tower, designed in the Victorian Free Classical Revival Style architecture.¹ It was built in 1888.²

In 1827, Albany was established as a New South Wales military settlement, under the control of Edmund Lockyer.³ On 7 March 1831, Albany was transferred to the administration of Governor Stirling by proclamation.⁴ After the surveying of the townsite by J S Roe, a Government Resident, Dr Alexander Collie RN, was appointed to administer local affairs.⁵

In 1843, a committee was established to advise the Government Resident, allowing the people to have their say in government affairs.⁶ A town trust was created in 1848, which dealt with the day to day issues of government.⁷ The Municipality of Albany came into being in 1871.⁸

The decision to build a *Albany Town Hall* was made in the early 1880s. This was met with controversy due to the lack of an appropriate building site and poor finances.⁹

Although the railway had brought new prosperity to the district, early attempts to raise finance failed. Even the purchase of the land sparked lively debate with ratepayers claiming the transaction was made without their approval. The hall was to be built on government land promised by the Governor, but when none proved suitable, the council bought the site for £650 with the Governor kicking in £500.¹⁰

The site mentioned was Lot 217 on York Street.

On 9 December 1886, the *Albany Town Hall's* foundation stone was laid by the Mayoress of Albany, Mrs W.G. Knight.¹¹ Architects connected with its design were Henderson, Marriot and Co, Adelaide, the Clerk of Works was R G Foreman, and the contractors were Messrs Harrison and Hamilton.¹²

Albany Town Hall was opened by His Worship Mayor William Grills Knight Esq JP on 1 June 1888.¹³ However, the town hall clock was not started until 15 April 1891, at 3 pm.¹⁴

¹ *Destinations*, (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec. 1988). p 8.

² Garden D, *Albany, A Panorama of the Sound*, (Thomas Nelson Ltd, Melbourne, 1977) p.216, 217.

³ Letter to Albany Town Clerk from Robert Stephens regarding the naming of Albany, 4 July 1960.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Wilson H, *Albany Sketchbook*, (Rigby, Adelaide, 1975) p.50.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Garden D, p. 130

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *Destinations* (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec, 1988), p. 8

¹⁰ *Destinations* (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec, 1988), p. 8

¹¹ Stephens R, *Albany's History in Stones*.

¹² *Destinations* (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec, 1988), p. 8

¹³ Garden D, p. 219

¹⁴ *Destinations* (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec, 1988), p. 8

Since its construction, *Albany Town Hall* has been a venue for entertainment, public meetings, and indoor sporting activities. The first floor was used for entertainment, whilst the gas, electricity and water board was located on the ground floor.¹⁵ In 1911, *Albany Town Hall* was first used as a picture theatre.¹⁶ In 1913, an upper gallery was added to increase seating.¹⁷ On 2 June 1953, *Albany Town Hall* housed Coronation Celebrations, with an afternoon of song and a Box Supper Dance.¹⁸

In 1981, the Council commenced a \$1 million project to convert *Albany Town Hall* into a theatre, which opened in 1986.¹⁹ Since this time *Albany Town Hall* has become the focal point for Albany's performing arts groups. In 1988, *Albany Town Hall* celebrated its centenary.²⁰ *Albany Town Hall* continues to be a popular venue. In 1994, over one hundred performances were staged in *Albany Town Hall*, including concerts, plays, seminars, trade shows and movies. It also functions as a meeting place for town social groups.²¹

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Albany Town Hall is a granite and stucco two storied public building surmounted by a clocktower. It is located at the north-west corner of the intersection of York and Grey Street West. To the north are the Council Offices and Library and to the west is the Albany Dental Clinic and the Senior Citizen's Centre. To the south, opposite Grey Street West, is the Commonwealth Bank. Diagonally opposite is the Premier Hotel and to the east opposite York Street is the ABC and Post Office. *Albany Town Hall* is aligned on an east-west axis and is set back about eight metres from York Street and about six metres from Grey Street West.

Albany Town Hall is designed in a Victorian Free Classical style, constructed of granite masonry with stucco ornamentation externally and plastered brickwork internally. It comprises a ground floor, first floor and gallery level, with further levels inside the clocktower. The clocktower is centrally located on the front facade and is a very prominent feature of the streetscape. Stucco ornamentation over and around the main entrance leads the eye directly up the centre of the front facade to the clocktower, copper roof and surmounting flagpole.

The north and south elevations are similar to one another, except that the north elevation has a timber fire escape. While less elaborate than the front facade, the stucco ornamentation to the side elevations includes plinths, quoins, pilasters, swags, voussoirs and string courses.

The rear or west elevation is dominated by a modern two storey concrete block extension. While the colour of the concrete blocks are not dissimilar to that of the stucco, the openings and corbels are treated in an awkward manner.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Alluring Albany*, (W F Forester & Co, Proprietors of the *Albany Advertiser*, October 1911).

17 *Destinations* (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec, 1988), p. 8

18 Souvenir Programme, Coronation Celebrations, June 1953.

19 *ArtsWest*, (Troubadour Productions, March-April Vol 5, No. 2, 1995) p.18.

20 *Destinations* (Skywest Productions, Nov-Dec, 1988), p. 8

21 *ArtsWest*, p.18.

The original layout of *Albany Town Hall* was as follows. Upon proceeding through the central entrance foyer, flanked by two offices, the visitor was presented with the option of either moving straight ahead to either the Council or Mayoral Chambers, or walking up one of two symmetrical staircases with jarrah and wrought iron balustrades, leading up to the first floor foyer. From the first floor foyer, access was gained to the Main Hall, which would have been a handsome double volumed hall, well lit by large north and south facing windows. According to the documentary evidence, an upstairs gallery was added in 1913. Access to this gallery was obtained by proceeding up one of two matching staircases, of a less elaborate design than the main entrance stairs, the balustrades being of jarrah only. At the western end of the Main Hall was a stage. Dressing room facilities were provided on the ground floor below, which also had a Lesser Hall located between the dressing rooms and the front chambers. Access to the Lesser Hall was obtained from the north, underneath the timber fire escape, which provided egress from the Main Hall in the event of emergency.

In the early 1980s, *Albany Town Hall* was converted to a theatre, under the architectural direction of Pat Pinder and Associates. On the ground floor, the Mayoral Chambers were reduced in size in order to accommodate a lift, toilets and a perimeter corridor, which was established to provide access from the main entrance foyer to the Lesser Hall. The Lesser Hall has kept its basic dimensions while being converted to an art gallery. The Council Chamber was converted to an art gallery also, with an acoustic tile ceiling, carpets and semi-permanent screens over the original window openings. The original dressing rooms to the western end of Albany Town Hall became used for kitchen and storage facilities. At this time, the western concrete block extensions were added. On the ground floor, these consisted of external access public toilets. The front two offices, and staircases were left largely untouched. On the first floor, the Main Hall has been converted to a modern small theatre. Permanent tiered seating, extending from the first floor to the 1913 gallery level, was installed, necessitating the blanking off of the original windows. A bio-box has been added at the eastern end of the Main Hall, adjacent to and below the clocktower bells, which appear to be original. A backstage, dressing room and toilet area was added to the rear of the stage, over the public toilets on the ground floor below. The stage area has been upgraded with modern production facilities.

Although attempts have been made to preserve the quality of the original building, the radical nature of the change of use and the demands of modern theatre design have resulted in a significantly different interior quality. In order to accommodate air conditioning, the slightly vaulted original ceiling has been replaced by a flat ceiling. While the original cornice height has been preserved, the reduction in volume is significant. An access catwalk for the adjustment of stage lighting has been inserted across the auditorium, in a north-south direction. While every attempt has been made to give this catwalk the appearance of a ceiling beam by matching the original cornice detailing, again the reduction in volume is not in keeping with the lofty nature of the original space.

13.3 REFERENCES