



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

Victoria Park Post Office makes an important contribution to the streetscape of Duncan Street and Albany Highway as it occupies a prominent corner position in a commercial area comprising the ribbon development of Albany Highway. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Victoria Park Post Office is of historic importance for its association with postal services on Albany Highway, the initial transport and communications link in the Colony. (Criterion 2.1)

Victoria Park Post Office is of historic value for providing postal services to the community for over eighty years. (Criterion 2.1)

Victoria Park Post Office is important as evidence of a way of life. The importance is enhanced by the size and proportion of the building assigned to postal use and the services provided from within it to the people and business community of Victoria Park. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

Victoria Park Post Office is significant through its association with the community as a meeting place, particularly in the early days of the community's development, prior to the widespread introduction of telephones and home mail delivery. The post office played an important community role in the disbursement of social assistance, and collection of war bonds. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Victoria Park Post Office is a representative example of the Federation Free Style civic architecture of Hillson Beasley. (Criterion 6.1)

Its generous provision for postal activity expresses *Victoria Park Post Office* perceived importance as a local facility. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Much of the external internal fabric has been replaced or repaired with materials of low maintenance; however, *Victoria Park Post Office* has been well maintained and is considered to be in good condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The building has lost its residential function and, due to the re-assigning of floor space, some of its interior walls and kitchen fixtures have been removed. The removal of the gabled roof, gargoyles and lantern, the enclosing of the verandahs and the repainting of the facades at the time of the extension has diminished the building's integrity. Whilst alterations and additions have been made, *Victoria Park Post Office* retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Victoria Park Post Office retains a moderate amount of its original fabric. The original exterior walls, many openings, the exterior arches, and a portion of the roof profile, comprise the authentic fabric. However much of the original detailing has been removed. Some interior fabric remains. While the additions, c. 1950s, are in sympathy with the existing building, they are not considered authentic and therefore, the *Victoria Park Post Office* overall retains a moderate to low degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The following information is based on the assessment report on the Victoria Park Post Office by David Kelsall, 1994.

Victoria Park Post Office at the corner of Albany Highway and Duncan Streets is a single storey building constructed in 1913.

In 1834, the first regular mail service between settlements in the colony was established, and included a weekly service to Canning and Pinjarra. Until the turn-of-the-century all incoming mail to the Colony was delivered to Albany. The mail was then transferred to Perth by road, which took two horses six and a half days.

The first subdivision of residential lots in Victoria Park began in 1887. The opening of a railway station in 1893, encouraged settlement and Victoria Park underwent a development boom. The gazettal of the municipality of Victoria Park, in 1897, brought with it various amenities previously unavailable, including, the delivery of mail.¹

Victoria Park evolved as ribbon development flanking a main road to the town of Albany since the inception of the Colony. The establishment of the tram route reinforced residential and commercial development to its terminus at the southern end of the suburb. The demise of trams did not diminish the commercial importance of the centre or Albany Highway.

In 1898, a post office established in Victoria Park as a post and telegraph office. Post and telegraph business in Victoria Park was conducted at least in 1902, by a Postmistress from a six roomed 'wood and iron house' leased by the Deputy Postmaster General from the owner, Mr G Fairbrother.²

In 1904, it was designated an allowance office, which became semi-official in 1907. In 1911, it was again designated an allowance office, and an official post office in 1912.³

The Commonwealth acquired Lot 114 from the holding in July, 1913.⁴ A new title was registered and reissued in metric dimensions on 15 August, 1983.⁵ The street to the north west is now shown as Duncan Street, Albany Road as Albany Highway, and the owner as Australian Postal Commission.

A building contract for the tender sum of £1711/14, was let to W. N. Roberts on 9 January 1913.⁶ The drawing, No. 16003, is signed by Hillson Beasley, Chief Architect for the Western Australian Public Works Department (PWD).⁷ The plan on the drawing is noted as having been amended in January prior to

¹ Council Agenda, City of Perth Department of Planning, 11 May, 1994, Item 6, p. 47.

² Australian Archives, File 2434/02.

³ Pope, B., Broomfield and Kelsall, 'Historical and Architectural Assessments of Post Offices in Western Australia owned by Australian Post', 1993.

⁴ Application 1526/1913 Lands Acquisition Act No. 13 of 1906.

⁵ Certificate of Title, Vol 558, Folio 49; Certificate of Title, Vol 1649, Folio 487, Diagram 3616.

⁶ PWD Contract Book, Volume 1.

⁷ Australia Post Files, Drawing No. 16003.

the letting of the contract. A further note near the title of the drawing is marked 'corrected 24-2-20'.

Victoria Park Post Office was built with an attached residence at the rear which provided three bedrooms. The residence was considered at the time to be modest in comparison with accommodation provided in some earlier post offices, for example, *Brisbane Street Post Office*.⁸ In 1923, the residential function of the post office ceased and the spaces re-assigned to an additional mail room and offices. Alterations, to the sum of £76/05, were made to the interior, including the removal of an externally accessed telephone cabinet.⁹ The building had previously allowed generous provision for postal activity, suggesting it was to be a busy office from its conception.

In the 1940s, the building underwent minor alterations. The addition is believed to have been built in the mid 1950s.¹⁰ An Australia Post drawing dated 1979, depicts the present layout of the post office with its addition to the south east corner of the building of public and office space, postmaster's office and entrance porch.

The commercial nature of Albany Highway has endured, and *Victoria Park Post Office* continues to be used as a Post Office.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Victoria Park Post Office is of Federation Free Style, originally built of red fair-faced brickwork.¹¹

The original roof was constructed as a gambrel, tiled with terracotta gargoyles and a roof lantern. The roof structure was framed of 'queen-posts' with ventilated gables. Behind the street frontage, the roof reverted to a standard hip construction with lean-to roofs over the verandahs.

The original entrance porch is located on its south west corner with rendered decorations surrounding its arched openings and piers. The main facade to Albany Highway comprised of four bays. The addition in the 1950s extended the facade in a south easterly direction, to form two further bays, including one fenestration and an easternmost porch, built in matching style. The roof was re-configured, the gambrel, gargoyles and lantern were removed. The masonry junction of the addition was concealed by painting the brickwork. The fascia and associated timberwork bear evidence through shrinkage at the mitred union of the original building and its addition.

The render patterning continues around the arch openings, the chimneys, and the recesses of the windows with elongated, simulated keystones. The rendered section of the facades feature a recessed joint pattern characteristic of Beasley's work. The wall infill is now of painted render.

The windows are broken into three vertical sections. They contain an unusual pattern with their central transom curved to match the arched opening. This

⁸ *ibid.*, Council Agenda.

⁹ *ibid.*, PWD Contract Book.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Apperly, 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. 136-139.

central transom is made of a heavier frame section visually strengthening the arched form.

The verandah identifying the entrance to the residence was enclosed in 1923, and the roof extended to accommodate post boxes. (Private postal boxes are now also accommodated in the enclosed rear verandah.)

The original drawings indicate timber floors, fireplaces without mantles, dado lining, 4m high ceilings, and otherwise traditional construction and finishes. The public area had a desk along the street wall.

In 1923, the residence was reduced to a single bedroom with an adjoining bathroom. The front two bedrooms were converted to the postmaster's office and telegraph office. The kitchen was converted to a welfare room containing a stove, sink, bench and separate pantry. The mail room now occupies the living room.

In the 1940s, further modifications were carried out including, an extension to the counter, removal of the wall dividing the hall and the mail room, and changes to doors and windows.¹² Fence and gate details and the location of an incinerator are detailed on a plan prepared at this time.¹³ Although, a garage, fences and other outbuildings are shown to the south east of the main building, no alteration to the Albany Road elevation is indicated at this stage.

By the mid 1950s, the interior was divided into the public area with the mail room behind, allowing direct access to the service rooms and private post boxes at the rear. The building extension created a new office for the postmaster located behind the new entrance porch, and extended the general office and public space. The welfare room was converted to staff toilets, and a new doorway created to directly link the mail hall, and the remaining bedroom converted to a lunch room.

The public space is generally intact with the exception of the installation of a sub-ceiling, modern lighting and air handling facilities. The original fireplace has been removed, but a portion is visible at the cornice.

The walls to the original hall of the residence, have been removed, but their location is evident by beams below the ceiling. The fireplaces remain, a small safe has been installed into one of them, and the others have had their openings sealed. The ceilings, walls, joinery, floors (linoleum covered), and verandah linings are otherwise intact. Some evidence of termite infestation, from 1994, is present near the mail room fireplace.

The two arch windows on the Duncan Street facade have been replaced with a curved profile in clear anodised aluminium sections which mimics the original. All other windows are, or match those depicted in the original documents.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition, July 1993.

¹² Australian Archives, Drawing c. 1940s.

¹³ *ibid.*