HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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

Mechanics' Institute (fmr) with its Federation Filigree style, in common with the two-storeyed hotels that line Hannan Street, together with the verandah and balcony over the pavement, continues the visual character of Hannan Street. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Mechanics' Institute (fmr), is a representative example of the purpose built buildings erected by progressive social organisations, that played an important role in the early education and cultural development of communities in newly settled centres. (Criterion 2.1)

The construction of *Mechanics' Institute (fmr)* is closely associated with the rapid population growth in the eastern goldfields at the turn-of-the-century. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

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12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

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12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Mechanics' Institute (fmr) is a representative example of the Federation Filigree style popular in Kalgoorlie at the turn of the century. The style of the building is evidence of the wealth, civic pride and communal confidence generated by the goldfields community at the turn of the century. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Mechanics' Institute (fmr), subject to alterations, additions and renovation in 1902, 1976 and 1994, has been well maintained. The place is in sound condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The building has undergone extensive internal and external alterations and additions. The original spatial layout is not clearly evident, and the building is used currently for commercial purposes. *Mechanics' Institute (fmr)* retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Although additions have been made to the building, much of the interior fabric is intact. The external fabric has been extensively altered, the installation of the shopfronts diminishing the authenticity of the facade. Overall, *Mechanics' Institute (fmr)* retains a low to moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Julia Ball, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Kelly Aris, Conservation Architect.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Mechanics' Institute (fmr), originally the Kalgoorlie Miners' Institute, is a two-storey brick and iron building constructed in 1902 to provide additional facilities for the members of the Kalgoorlie Miners' Institute.

In most parts of Australia, early library services were provided by churches and Sunday schools, and through organisations variously referred to as mechanics' institutes, literary institutes etc. The emergence of mechanics' institutes in Western Australia grew in a sporadic way, following the pattern of settlement and growth, which itself was influenced by the unique circumstances of the colony's establishment.[1]

The Kalgoorlie Miners' Institute was established in 1895. The objects of the Institute were, "the cultivation of Literature, Science and Art, the intellectual improvement, and the recreation of its members."[2]

In April 1896, a new building was being erected in readiness for the opening of the railway line when a banquet was to be held in the hall portion. The banquet was held on 8 September 1896, many prominent politician and government officials being present. The formal opening took place on 23 December.[3]

Decisions concerning the erection of new premises were made at the Annual General Meeting in 1901, as follows:

> That a permanent design be prepared as soon as possible for a proper Institute building ...That in carrying out such new building the first consideration be given to the front, both as necessary in view of the rapidly increasing number of members, and as likely to produce a larger and more reliable venue than the hall.[4]

In 1902, plans were drawn up by architect Harvey G. Draper for a larger building. The foundation stone was laid on 7 May 1902, by R.D. Thompson, President of the Miners' Institute. Contractors for the job were Messrs. Ellis, Pitman and Totterdell and Mr R. Pilgrim acted as clerk of works.[5]

An article in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* in October 1902, provided an extensive description of the progress of the building:

> ... Briefly described, the building is a two-storey one, the walls being of brick, and the whole covered by a Mansard roof, surrounded by [sic] ornamental cement cornice. On the ground floor, immediately opening on to the pavement are three shops; with handsome plate glass fronts and faced with handsome granite piers. Over the footway is the verandah, which is supported by artistic iron columns with pedestals, the

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1 Rose, P., Birman, W. & White, M., "Respectable' and 'useful': The institute movement in Western Australia' in Candy, P. & Laurent, J. (eds), *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*, (Auslib Press, Adelaide, 1994), pp. 126-27.

2 *Regulations of the Kalgoorlie Mechanics' Institute, 1905*. Even though the name had changed, the objectives did not.

3 National Trust of Australia (WA) assessment.

4 *Kalgoorlie Miners' Institute Annual Report* for the year ending 30 June 1901. n.p.

5 *Kalgoorlie Miner* 21 October 1902, p. 20.

> appearance of which is substantial as well as pleasing to the eye. What is ultimately intended to be the main corridor is temporarily to be utilised as a shop or office. ...
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> The greater part of the first floor is occupied by the main room ... which will serve the purpose of the subscribers' library. Adjoining it are three smaller rooms, intended respectively to be a ladies' room, magazine room and members' room. ... A staircase descending from the street will give access to the basement, which, as is now generally known, will be fitted up as a restaurant or dining room, although originally part of it had been intended for a billiard saloon. ...
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> As already stated, the idea is to make additions to the building in order to fully complete the design. Provision has been made for extensions in the rear, and the walls have been built strong enough to carry a third storey, when that is considered desirable or requisite. Should this be carried into effect it is intended to surmount the building by a fine dome roof, which will furnish the finishing touch to a design of which Kalgoorlie will have cause to be proud.[6]

The cost of the building in 1902, amounted to £6,000.[7] The success of the new building is outlined in the 1903 Annual Report:

> During the past year the new premises have been occupied, and the Institute has been newly furnished throughout. A large Reading Room is now available, with excellent card and games, magazine and ladies' rooms and a balcony 48 feet x 15 feet - which later proved exceedingly popular during the hot summer months. The Institute can now fairly claim to be one of the best institutes of its kind in West Australia.[8]

The land on which the building was erected was granted by the Government, and vested in five trustees, viz.: Messrs R.D. Tompson, T.F.Brimage, W.M. Oats and H.W. Taylor and Senator S. Smith. The Government also gave two special monetary grants of £500, and the Institute received annual grants varying from £25 to £100.[9]

In 1904, the Committee decided to give up using the original 1896 hall for public entertainment and converted it to a first class billiard room. It continued to be used as a billiard room until March 1957 when it became a furniture supplier's storeroom.

In 1904, the Kalgoorlie Miners' Institute became an incorporated body and changed its name to the Kalgoorlie Mechanics' Institute. The objectives of the Institute remained the same, though the Constitution, Regulations and By-Laws were revised.[10]

The Mechanics' Institute maintained a healthy membership over the years, providing a free reading room to the public and a programme of educational lectures. In Kalgoorlie, it is noted that there were clear links between the mechanics' institute movement, the need for trained men in the gold-mining industry, and agitation for the establishment of schools of mines in Western Australia.[11]

In August 1973, the Home Building Society leased a shop in the building and opened a branch there two months later. In December 1975, Home Building

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6 ibid.

7 ibid.

8 *Kalgoorlie Miners' Institute Annual Report* for the year ending 30 June 1903. n.p.

9 Thiel, P.W.H., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, (1901), pp. 633-34.

10 *Kalgoorlie Mechanics' Institute Annual Report* for the year ending 30 June 1904. n.p.

11 Rose, P., Birman, W. & White, M., "Respectable' and 'useful': The institute movement in Western Australia' in Candy, P. & Laurent, J. (eds), *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*, (Auslib Press, Adelaide, 1994), p. 146.

Society acquired the building as an additional asset.[12] At this time it was decided to modernise the interior to suit the requirements of contemporary office accommodation and renovate the exterior, endeavouring to retain as much as possible of the original design and appearance.

The architectural firm of Oldham, Boas Ednie-Brown was commissioned to organise the programme which was carried out by contractors H. R. Cody Pty. Ltd. The work commenced in May 1976, at an estimated cost of $155,000.[13]

In 1996, the building continues to be used for office and commercial accommodation.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Mechanics' Institute (fmr) is a two-storey commercial building built to the street alignment of Hannan Street in the Federation Filigree style.[14]

The building was originally constructed as single-storey, a basement and a second floor was added in 1902.[15] The style of the building is evidence of the wealth, civic pride and communal confidence generated by the goldfields community at the turn of the century. The style is common in Kalgoorlie, in particular with the two-storeyed hotels that line Hannan Street.

The walls of the building are in red brickwork laid in English bond and the building has a steeply-pitched hipped roof covered with corrugated iron. An iron palisade decorates the roof summit. An Italianate balustraded parapet surrounds the roof, partially concealing it.

A verandah and balcony extend across the facade over the pavement. The balcony is supported on tall, slender Tuscan columns on rendered pedestals. The corner supports are arranged in a group of three, and the two centre supports are paired. The balcony floor framing is concealed behind a fascia with decorative timber brackets that appear as if they support the rendered pedestals on the balcony above. The balcony is covered with a lean-to roof clad in corrugated iron supported by short Corinthian columns surmounted by turned posts. The posts are decorated by an elliptical arched frieze. The bracketed fascia is repeated below the balcony roof line. The balcony columns follow the arrangement of the columns below. The balcony is protected by an Italianate balustrade similar to the parapet detailing but in a smaller profile.

Windows are flat arched, double-hung sashes. The ground floor facade was remodelled in 1976, when the building underwent renovation works. The facade has glazed shopfronts in aluminium frames either side of a semi-circular arched raised entrance. The bricks walls of the ground floor have been faced in stone.

The interior comprises a wide entrance passage which extends to a hall approached under a corbelled archway. The hall spanned the width of the

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12 C / T 1171 / 871.

13 National Trust files.

14 Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1994) pp. 108-111.

15 The National Trust of Australia (WA) files.

building with a smaller archway on the rear wall for egress. The character of the hall has been changed through the additions and alterations of 1902, which partially enclose the space. A carved timber staircase is on the west side which leads to the upper floor offices, and a timber stair on the east side leads to a basement. The basement stair partially conceals a doorway on what was originally the rear wall of the building. Shops were created along the west wall of the former hall with timber panelling enclosures, and a ticket office with double-hung sash windows, was created on the rear elevation opposite the passage.

The walls of the passage are strengthened with regularly spaced engaged piers and the ceiling is lined with ripple-iron. While the hall was being used as a billiards room, the ceiling was lined with timber boards, the dado was lined with vertical timber boards with horizontal boards above. The billiard tables sat on tiled sections on the floor. At some stage, the ceiling was covered with embossed metal ceiling linings; much of it remains, and the timber floorboards are now covered with carpet. The shops created at the rear retain etched pane, one pane has been replaced with textured and thickened glass. The stair has ripple-iron and pressed metal soffit. Most of the original cornices are now covered by the staircase to the upper level. The first floor has pressed metal ceilings and carpet covered floorboards.

Double timber panelled doors were added behind the original entrance door creating a vestibule.[16] The doors have brass plates and glazed panels etched with "Mechanics Institute". The ceiling of the vestibule is lined with timber boards.

Semi-circular arched windows have been added to the east elevation in the former hall. The small archway in the former hall has been enclosed with double-doors.

Renovation works were carried out in 1976, under the direction of architects, Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown. The shopfronts were remodelled, the shop on the west side of the passage was converted for use by the Home Building Society. The work included the creation of a second entrance off Hannan Street, the glazing of the west wall of the passage, an additional internal doorway from the bank to the rear of the building, installation of suspended ceilings and new lighting, the division of the upper level offices into smaller offices including a tea room with timber and glass partitions, the installation of new suspended ceilings and light fittings upstairs, and the addition of kitchen and toilets to the north-west corner extending the rear of the building. The additions are in brickwork with a concrete floor. A lean-to roof was added across the rear of the building that abuts the adjoining building on the east side.

A landing bay on the rear wall on the upper level has been bricked-up. A narrow laneway extending the length of the east elevation from Hannan Street to the carpark behind, has been brick paved. The laneway is covered and the ceiling is lined with pressed metal. Openings on the shop walls facing the laneway have been boarded over with corrugated iron.[17]

In 1994, general repairs to the building were carried out.

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16 The doors were probably installed when the Mechanics' Institute occupied the building.

17 Date of these alterations is unknown.

13. 3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition, February 1976.