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

In its display of symmetry and simplified classicism, *Park Avenue Building* is a fine example of the Inter-War Georgian Revival style of the 1920s and 1930s. (Criterion 1.1)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Park Avenue Building has historic value as the first permanent building erected for the University of Western Australia on the Crawley site and, as such, has considerable significance in the educational history of Western Australia. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

---

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Park Avenue Building is held in high regard by members of the University for its historical associations with the establishment of the University, and for its refined aesthetic qualities.[1] (Criterion 4.1)

[1] Letter held by HCWA from University of Western Australia. HCWA file 3545 folios 9,10.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Park Avenue Building is of a building style uncommon in Western Australia as an institutional building. While Georgian revivalism enjoyed a period of popularity in the 1920s and 1930s in the domestic market, institutional examples are rare. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Park Avenue Building represents the principal characteristics of Georgian Revivalism in the inter-war years. (Criteria 6.1, 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Park Avenue Building is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Until mid 1993, *Park Avenue Building* provided facilities for the teaching of science. Although additions have been made to the place, the original layout and interior fittings and fixtures of the building are evident. *Park Avenue Building* retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

While some alterations have occurred to *Park Avenue Building*, the original fabric is intact. *Park Avenue Building* retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Park Avenue Building (1923-24) (former Biology and Geology building, later Zoology Building) is a two-storey building, connected to a lecture theatre, built to provide science facilities for the University of Western Australia. It was the first purpose built university building at the Crawley site.

The University of Western Australia, which commenced teaching in 1913, was established by an act of State Parliament in 1911. In the war years of 1914 to 1918, during a period of limited academic growth, steps were taken which would lead to the successful development of the Crawley campus. In 1914, a competition was held for a plan of the Crawley site for University purposes.[2] Entries were received from around the world and, in June 1915, first prize was awarded to H. Desbrowe-Annear, a Melbourne architect. The winning plan was criticised and redesigned in later years, but some elements of the plan were retained.

In 1922, the Senate, in considering recommendations for science departments to be moved from the University's temporary accommodation in Irwin Street to the Crawley site, appointed a committee to report on the buildings required and their proposed location on the campus.[3] The recommendations made by the heads of department included amending the provision for professors' houses and constructing accommodation for science departments in their place, commencing with a building for Biology and Geology. The Heads of Departments' Report was accepted by Senate at a meeting on 21 August 1922, and the Government was requested to provide a building for Biology and Geology on the north-east corner of the campus.[4]

Early in 1923, the Government provided funds for the construction of the building which was designed by the Public Works Department, under the supervision of William Hardwick who was Government Architect at the time. The foundation stone was laid by Premier, Sir James Mitchell at a ceremony on 1 September 1923. The event was reported by *The West Australian*:

> Saturday was a day of rejoicing for those who have at heart the welfare of the University of Western Australia. On a beautiful site, on the hillside at Crawley, with a wide, inspiring outlook over the Swan, the foundation stone of the first section of the permanent home of the University was laid. ... The style of the architecture was Georgian, with a Flemish feeling. The building was being erected by the Department of Public Works under the able supervision of Mr. Hardwick, with Mr. Arnott as the capable contractor. In view of the necessarily limited amount of money, the Government in these straitened times had placed at the disposal of the University, he thought that when the building was completed the public would agree that a structure

---

2 Ferguson, R. J., Crawley Campus: The Planning and Architecture of the University of Western Australia (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1993), p. 8.

3 ibid.

4 ibid.

had been erected which was specially adapted to the uses for which it was intended, and possessed too, the characteristics of simplicity and dignity.[5]

The Georgian Revival style in Australia is believed to have been influenced by the teachings of English academics to graduate architects in the decades prior to WWII.[6] The style is seen to be '...synonymous with upper-middle-class concepts of good taste.'[7] The style demonstrates a gentle adaptation of the discipline of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Georgian buildings in Britain. The style was popular in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s for residential, institutional and commercial buildings of modest size.

Details of the layout and construction of the building were provided in the Annual Report of the Public Works Department:

> W. A. University - Biology and Geology Buildings at Crawley. - Tenders were accepted for the above building, being the first portion of the W. A. University to be erected on the site at Crawley. The contract amount is £16,500. The building is two storeys in height, with a frontage facing south. The accommodation provided is as follows:-
>
> Ground floor
>
> General Geology and teaching collection 74 ft. by 31 ft. Senior Geology 54 ft. by 12 ft., with rock sectioning and Goniometer rooms, store and workshop. Senior Zoology 66 ft. by 12 ft., Research 24 ft. by 11 ft., and a separate building behind 6 ft. by 56 ft. in which are houses two Lecture Theatres, Vivarium, Lecture Rooms, etc.
>
> First Floor
>
> On the first floor accommodation is provided for Junior Biology and teaching collection 74 ft. by 31 ft. Professors' private and Research rooms, Optical room and Dark room, Senior Botany 54 ft. by 12 ft., and rooms for Diagrams and Mechanic.
>
> The building is being erected in pressed brickwork with stone dressings and tiled roofs.[8]

Construction of *Park Avenue Building* was completed in time for commencement of the 1925 academic year.

In 1945, a single-part two-storey extension to the building was completed by the Public Works Department. At a meeting on 20 October 1947, the Senate decided that the Chair of Biology should thereafter be known as Zoology (thus the building was referred to as the Zoology Building).

Geology remained in the building until 1962, when the department moved to the northern end of the 1935 Physics and Chemistry Building.

The Department of Zoology occupied *Park Avenue Building* until the end of 1993 when it vacated the premises. In 1995, a few offices within the building are occupied by other University staff although other areas are used for storage.

---

5 *West Australian* 3 September 1923, p. 8.

6 Apperly, R., Irving, R,. & Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture.* (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989)., p. 150.

7 ibid.

8 Votes and Proceedings 1923 Vol. 2, 'Annual Report of the Department of Public Works and Trading Concerns for the Financial Year 1922-23', p. 25.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Park Avenue Building is a two-storey building constructed on an elevated site north of Mounts Bay Road, set back from the street alignment of the corner of Park Avenue and Crawley Avenue.

The building is free standing, with a lawned setting to the north and south elevation and with bituminised car parks to the west and east. The brick building was constructed to accommodate lecture theatres, classrooms and teaching laboratories, and is in the Inter-War Georgian Revival style.[9]

The building is 'U'-shaped in plan with a long, rectangular section (64 metres) orientated east-west with the main entrance facing south. Two small wings at the east and west ends of the main arm of the building project north and form a partially enclosed courtyard at the rear. A verandah and balcony (later enclosed) wrap the rear elevations.

A covered way (1945) connects the long arm of the building to a separate structure north of the court that was designed to accommodate a lecture theatre and service rooms.

Park Avenue Building is constructed of load bearing walls in red face brickwork, timber floors and timber framed hipped roofs covered with terra-cotta tiles. The roof features a stone cupola with a domed roof; in the centre of the main arm of the building. The cupola is supported on four pillars that sit in the interior of the building in the middle of the central laboratory. Four decorative lanterns with finials at their apex, metal exhaust ventilators, and prominent boxed eaves are features of the roof.

The main feature of the building is the patterned brickwork that projects forward of the building face, within the spandrels and surrounding the windows. Other features include the formal entrances on the south, east and west elevations, which are formed by simply-detailed porticoes. A stone plinth extends across the projecting facade bay on the south elevation, adding grandeur to the symmetrical facade. The porticoes comprise Donnybrook stone and Roman orders that support an entablature and form balconies on the upper level which feature cast iron balustrading, and are approached by concrete steps.

The exterior of the building also features Donnybrook quoin-stones and, stone sills, lintels and reveals. The recessed fenestration is regularly spaced, repetitive and vertical in accent. The windows comprise predominantly double-hung sashes with large single panes, and bottom-hung fanlights.

The interior is utilitarian in design, lacking any decorative treatment, and has timber floors throughout, although some areas now covered with linoleum. Soffits are lined with timber boarding. With the exception of new interior brick walls to the laboratories on the upper level, and the interior walls in the laboratories and research room on the lower level, the internal layout of the original building is largely intact.

---

9 Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture, Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, (Angus & Robertson Publishers, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 150-153.

In 1945, a second storey was added to the lecture theatre building to accommodate further teaching rooms. At the same time, a two-storey covered way was built to connect the lecture theatre building to the main structure. These structures are considered to be of low significance.

The verandahs and balconies of the original building have been enclosed with weatherboards and fibro-cement linings, to accommodate further work stations and a library. The lower levels have louvred windows and large fixed panes with textured glass. The upper levels have long, narrow pivot sashes to the east and west wing enclosures.

Over the years, sun protective metal screens of varying types have been installed to windows. Exposed pipes and air conditioning ducts are evident on the external walls. Lattice has been installed to screen the entrance to the men's toilets (west wing) and, to protect the external stair. A breezeway now connects the west wing with the lecture theatre building.

Additional buildings (teaching rooms and service facilities) were added to the site to cater for increased student numbers. These additions were built to match the original building with the exception of two, timber framed structures, at the northern end of the site, and a single-storey addition to the north-west corner of the site that is covered with a gabled roof, clad in corrugated galvanised iron. Additional structures (some temporary) and animal pens were built in the foreground of the original building (south elevation), many of which are no longer extant.[10] The additional buildings are considered to have little significance at this time and do not form part of this assessment.

13. 3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition, May 1994.

[10] See Heritage Council of Western Australia file No. 3545 for site plans.