



1. **Data Base No.** 2480
2. **Name.** Guildford Post Office (1897)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** The Guildford Post Office and the land on which it stands, being Guildford Location 194 on OP Guildford 17/7, comprised in Certificate of Title Vol 1223 Fol. 110.
4. **Local Government Area.** Shire of Swan
5. **Location.** 24 Stirling Street, Guildford
6. **Owner.** Jones, V.E.
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

## DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The *Guildford Post Office* was built in 1897 to provide a permanent location for the postal and telegraph services in the town. Although postal services had been in operation since 1834, the *Guildford Post Office* was the first purpose-built post office in the town.<sup>1</sup>

Guildford was established as a port at the upper navigable limit of the Swan River, at its juncture with the Helena River, soon after the establishment of the colony of Western Australia in 1829. Situated about 25 miles upstream from the port of Fremantle and 12 miles above Perth, the capital, Guildford was centrally located to the best available farmlands, which made it the colony's most important early district market centre and the outlet for produce from the Upper and Middle Swan districts. Many of the colonial officers had secured property in the area.

With the development of farming in the Avon Valley, and the establishment of York in 1834, Guildford became the customary starting point for overland travel to the hinterland. After the introduction of convicts to the colony in 1850, Guildford became the centre for labour and administration within the Swan Valley.

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<sup>1</sup> National Trust Assessment Exposition. July 1993.

Early buildings were established within a town plan that sought, to reproduce a contemporary English "country town" with its large central square (Stirling Square) within which is located the principal church (St. Matthews).<sup>2</sup>

The first Post Office in Guildford opened in 1835; it was the fourth post office in the colony. This service and subsequent postal services operated from various premises in the town, including the school and the gaol. In 1871, a Post and Telegraph Office was established in the Government Buildings.

The Eastern Railway reached Guildford in 1881 and, as the line was extended further eastward into the hinterland, Guildford continued to grow. Development included Guildford Grammar School (a private school started by Charles Harper on his Woodbridge Estate) in 1896 and the Peerless Roller Flour Mill in 1898.<sup>3</sup> In 1897, a site on the north east corner of Meadow and Stirling Streets, opposite Stirling Square and central to the commercial activity of Guildford, was set aside for a new Post Office to meet the needs of the rapidly growing town. The site had been previously the location of the old Convict Depot hospital.<sup>4</sup>

The design of the *Guildford Post Office* was executed under the direction of J.H. Grainger, who had taken up the post of Chief Government Architect that year. Tenders were called in May 1897, and closed on 29 June, 1897.<sup>5</sup> In July 1897, a contract for the sum of £3,211 was let to Mr J. Wilson. During construction it was mooted in the local press that "When completed it will be an ornament to the town, and should prove of great convenience to the public."<sup>6</sup> The building, of red brick with stucco mouldings, was completed in May, 1898.

In 1900, it was proposed to increase the height of the tower to accommodate a clock, presented to the town by the Post and Telegraph Department. A bell was also to be added.<sup>7</sup> The extension of the clock tower was also designed by Grainger.<sup>8</sup> The successful tender, a sum of £284 1s from Mr W.C. Rose, was accepted on 3 December 1900.<sup>9</sup>

Construction on the extension to the tower began in early 1901 and was completed later that year. The extended clock tower dramatically changed the character of the building; providing a civic dignity that was previously lacking. (Although there is no documentary evidence, it is possible that the extension to the tower and the gift of the clock were in celebration of Federation, as much public building stock was being built or upgraded at this time. Alternatively, Grainger may have sought the opportunity to improve on the awkward proportions of the original design. Fourteen years earlier, Grainger had heightened the clock tower of Fremantle Town Hall to similarly improve upon its stature in the townscape.)

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<sup>2</sup> National Trust of Australia (WA) Historic Town Assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Guildford Conservation Policy (adopted by the Shire of Swan, 1992) p.5.

<sup>4</sup> National Trust Assessment Exposition. July 1993.

<sup>5</sup> *Government Gazette*

<sup>6</sup> *Helena Vale and Guildford Advertiser*, 11 December, 1897.

<sup>7</sup> Cogan, M. *Bassendean and Guildford Sketchbook* (Rigby Ltd., Adelaide, 1976) p.30.

<sup>8</sup> Pitt-Morison, M. *Migrant Architects* (unpublished); Grainger had previously made a similar alteration to the Fremantle Town Hall Clock Tower in 1887, prior to taking up the position of Government Architect see Considine and Griffiths, *Architects: Fremantle Town Hall. Conservation Analysis and Plan.* (Cottesloe, April 1985) A2.5

<sup>9</sup> *Government Gazette* 7 December, 1900 p. 4622.

The construction of the post office in Guildford coincided with the town reaching its peak of development, following the discovery of the eastern goldfields in the 1890s. The location of the southern terminus of the Midland Railway in Midland Junction in 1895 and the relocation of the Government railway workshops from Fremantle to Midland in 1905 assured the growth of Midland Junction as a commercial centre, and the general decline of Guildford.

The *Guildford Post Office* has continued in use as an official Post Office since 1898. In 1993, Australia Post sold the building by public tender, with the proviso that the purchaser maintain and operate a postal agency in its existing location. Postal facilities continue to be run from the building on an agency basis. The new owner has sought advice from the Heritage Council of Western Australia regarding alterations and improvements.<sup>10</sup>

The *Guildford Post Office* was assessed/entered into the Register of the National Estate by the Australian Heritage Commission on the 21 October, 1980. The property is individually classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA). The Town of Guildford was classified as an Historic Town by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in December 1983. The *Guildford Post Office* is listed as significant in Swan Shire's Guildford Conservation Policy (1992).<sup>11</sup>

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The *Guildford Post Office* is a two-storeyed brick and stucco building constructed in 1898, with the clock tower extended in 1901, to accommodate postal services for the Town of Guildford. It was designed under the direction of the Chief Government Architect, J.H.Grainger.

The *Guildford Post Office* is sited on the corner of Meadow and Stirling Streets, Guildford, opposite the Church of England, and in a block comprising the convict built Police Station, Courthouse, Commissariat Store and Mechanics Institute.<sup>12</sup>

The block is relatively level, rectangular in shape, with a 23.8 metre frontage to Meadow Street and a 44.3 metre frontage to Stirling Street, and comprises some 1060 square metres. It is located in a prominent position at the main railway crossing, a position which, in the heyday of Guildford, defined the central focus of civic activity. The Post Office is still the most prominent land marks in Guildford, rivalled only by Guildford Grammar Chapel and the Guildford Hotel.

The *Guildford Post Office* is a late example of the Victorian Italianate style.<sup>13</sup> Built of red brick, with tuck pointing to the street facades, the building features arched stucco window heads, string courses, arched porticos, sash cord box-frame windows, roof-line parapet and an elaborately moulded clock tower.

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<sup>10</sup> Heritage Council of WA correspondence 12 October, 1993

<sup>11</sup> *Guildford Conservation Policy* (Swan Shire, 1992) , plan 11.

<sup>12</sup> Guildford O/P 17/7. Also, documentation by the National Trust for Guildford's Historic Town status, 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Apperley, 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.70-73.

The load bearing brick building has two main working floors, the floors are in timber and the roof is tiled.

In common with the Italianate style the walls of the ground floor are deeply incised. In this case the effect was achieved in brickwork by setting several course of brick forward then one back to simulate a joint. The upper floor modelling retains the same depth and interval of the joint in the tower and the base course.

The clock tower has rounded corners, and originally had a round louvred opening on each face and a tiled steeple roof. When the clock tower was heightened and the clock added in 1901, the masonry tower was rendered. It is probable that part of the lower storey above the dado was also rendered at this time.

The original pattern of brick and render gave the building a strong horizontal emphasis, largely unaffected by the squat tower. However, the 1901 rendering, and the later painting of the whole building, has increased the vertical massing of the building, thus emphasising its Italianate design.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of sale in the 1993, the 492 square metre post office, included customer and mail services area, manager's office, mail room, mail receiving area, kitchen amenities areas and toilets on the ground floor, with residential accommodation on the first floor, and part of the ground floor.<sup>15</sup>

The postal hall on the ground floor is entered through a large entry portico. The residential accommodation is accessed from the postal hall via the manager's office, or privately from a porch on the northern side of the building. The northern entrance opens into a large entry hall, spacious dining room, kitchen and toilet facilities.

A timber staircase leads from the entrance hall to a first floor landing and passage, in turn leading to the living room, three bedrooms and a bathroom. On the southern side of the building is a flatette, comprising a large bed-sitting room, adjoining kitchen and toilet facility. Next to this area is an alcove from which ladder access is provided to the elevated clock tower which has one room on each of two levels. The *Guildford Post Office* has had little alteration or intervention since the time it was built, the room layout remains the same, and it is possible that the flatette is part of the original layout. (This issue requires further close inspection of the building fabric for evidence.) The interior retains many original details, including turned stair balusters, moulded timber skirtings and tessellated floor tiles in the lobby.

## **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.

### **1. AESTHETIC VALUE**

The Guildford Post Office is a fine example of late Victorian Italianate design, a style similar to Grainger's design of the Fremantle Town Hall.

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<sup>14</sup> information from the National Trust Assessment Exposition. July 1993

<sup>15</sup> "Historical Guildford Post Office will be privatised" *Midland/Kalamunda Echo* 16 May, 1993 p.3.

The building is widely viewed by the community to be aesthetically pleasing.

The extension of the clock tower (1901) provided the impressive post office with a civic stature that was previously lacking. The building is a local landmark for both people in the town and those travelling through, by rail or road.

The building defines the southern boundary of the turn-of-the-century civic precinct of Guildford, and the clock tower is a significant landmark addressing the south-west corner of the block.

The building plays a major role in the historic precinct in which it sits, being a key element in the transfer of scale from one section to the other.

## **2. HISTORIC VALUE**

The impressive character of the Post Office demonstrates the importance of Guildford as a regional centre at the turn of the century, prior to the development of Midland Junction.

The building has significance as one of the earliest designs of J.H. Grainger in his capacity as Chief Government Architect (P.W.D.).

The building demonstrates the provision of government services to an important regional community, the result of the expansion of the colony eastward, and is associated with the wealth of Western Australia generated by the gold boom in the late 1890s.

## **3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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## **4. SOCIAL VALUE**

The Guildford Post Office contributes to the general community's sense of place through its status as a local landmark and the continuous provision of postal services associated with the place;

The building is an important reminder of the former prosperity and stature of Guildford as a colonial (19th C) regional centre.

## **5. RARITY**

The Guildford Post Office is a fine demonstration of the Victorian Italianate style, of which there are relatively few examples in Western Australia.

## **6. REPRESENTATIVENESS**

The building is an impressive example of post office design. The civic stature of the building, relative to post offices built in other towns, demonstrates the importance of Guildford as a regional centre in the late 1890s.

## CONDITION

The fabric of the building is generally in sound condition. There are a number of cracks in the structure, however none of these are considered to be serious, according to an recent assessment undertaken by the National Trust in July 1993.<sup>16</sup> The roof tiles also require some maintenance.

## INTEGRITY

Following Grainger's alterations in 1901, the Post Office has remained intact, other than minor external works to the outbuildings and rear toilets. The most significant alteration to the building has been the painting of the brickwork, which has markedly altered the aesthetic character of the building. Internally, the building retains its original room layout, although some minor modifications to the counter areas have been made. The *Guildford Post Office* continues to be used for purposes similar to that for which it was built, and therefore retains a high degree of integrity.

## AUTHENTICITY

The *Guildford Post Office* is a highly authentic building, being virtually the same as when completed, following the 1900 alteration.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The *Guildford Post Office* has cultural significance for the following:

the building strongly contributes to the sense of identity of Guildford. The impressive design of the building is an important reminder of the former prosperity and stature of Guildford as a colonial (19thC) regional centre;

the building defines the southern boundary of the Guildford's turn of the century civic precinct, and is valued by the community as a local landmark;

the building is a fine example of the Victorian Italianate style, of which there are relatively few examples in Western Australia; and,

the building has significance as an early example of the architectural design of J.H. Grainger in his capacity as the Chief Government Architect (1897-1905).

## 8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim Entry	08/01/1993
Permanent Entry	31/12/1993

## 9. Conservation Order

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<sup>16</sup> National Trust Assessment Exposition. July 1993.

**10. Heritage Agreement**

**11. References**

National Trust Assessment Exposition, July 1993.