



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 0915
2. **Name.** Union Stores Building (1895)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.** The Union Stores Building and the land on which it stands, being Lot 700 on Diag. 74064, in C/T 1808/974
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Fremantle
5. **Location.** 41-47 High Street, Fremantle.
6. **Owner.** City of Fremantle
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Union Stores was built as four new shops in the High Street in 1895 for John Wesley Bateman, a prominent Fremantle merchant. The Bateman family was a well established third-generation merchant family having considerable commercial influence in Fremantle. Shipping and trade activities were the basis of the family business, and the firm of J & W Bateman exported Western Australian products through its overseas trade networks. Bateman inherited from his father a business which included the monopolistic control of the coastal trade to the North-west and the Kimberley, prior to the arrival of steamships. In addition to supplying local goods, Bateman continued the association with the north-west. He was instrumental in establishing the W.A. Shipping Association, and construction of the Geraldton to Roebourne telegraph line in 1885.¹ At the time of construction of the High Street building in 1895, Bateman was President of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce, a position he held until 1900.

Built for retail purposes, the four shops in the two storey building were leased in 1897 to the Union Stores Ltd. and other smaller tenants, including the Bank of Australasia and a barber. Later, in 1899, the Union Stores Ltd. bought the building from Bateman. In 1906 the rear of the lot was developed with the construction of three offices and a residence.

The Union Stores was built during the State's gold boom. Wealth from the goldfields flowed into Fremantle and Perth, and merchants made healthy profits selling to miners and explorers. Union Stores supplied goods to the metropolitan area, as well as the north, south and central regions of the state.

¹ Erikson, R. *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914. Volume Three. Free 1850-1868* (UWAP, Perth 1979) pp33-4

Although they had no branch store, travelling salesmen and their illustrated catalogues provided details of the stock the Union Store carried. Goods were manufactured in Fremantle and Perth, or imported direct from London, New York and Hamburg.² Records from 1899 show that the stock items included "tinned butter, magic soap, paisley fours, Derby Tobacco, glycerine soap, draught vinegar, Dutch cheese, and goose starch and soda biscuits."³ In this respect the Union Stores continued the tradition of trade and retail commercial activities that the Bateman family established. The Union Stores was managed by Mr F. Hollis, a previous employee of the Bateman family.⁴

In 1901 the Union Stores was described as being "divided into three shops, which are subdivided into no less than ten departments, namely:- 1. Groceries and provisions; 2. Wines, beers and spirits; 3. Crockery, earthenware and glass; 4. Tools for all trades; 5. Builders hardware; 6. Mantelpieces and stoves; 7. Furniture; 8. Cutlery and electro-plate; 9. Furnishing hardware; 10. Bicycles and sporting goods."⁵

In 1910 the Union Stores advertised itself as having "Bedsteads, bedding, blankets, brushware, crockery ware, carpets chest drawers, linoleums, meat safes, sideboards, wardrobes, suites for dining and drawing rooms, flags, funnels, tools, stoves, grates and cutlery...."⁶ In 1914 the Union Stores was described as being "Ironmongers, Grocers, House Furnishers" with "Tools for all Trades our Special Line". The firm, at this time, was "contractors to the Education Department for tools used in technical schools" and "experts in furnishing houses with economy and taste".⁷

The Union Stores, which was known as the Union Stores (WA) Ltd after 1932, occupied the premises until 1972, when ownership transferred to the Metropolitan Regional Planning Authority. The building continued to be used as shops, including a pet care centre and second hand furniture store, while two of the upper floor tenancies were let to community groups.⁸ In 1981 the City of Fremantle purchased the building. Conservation of the place commenced in 1985, with funds made available by the Commonwealth Government for America's Cup projects. Following its restoration, the building has been used as a tourist information centre and retail shops.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The Union Stores is a two storey brick and stone building located on the south east corner of Henry and High Streets, Fremantle. The building was built in the Federation Free Classical style; a style well suited to express the confidence that accompanied the dynamic growth of settlements in Western Australia following

² Thiel, P.W.H., *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia* (Perth, 1901) p510

³ Stock book from February 13th, 1899 cited in "An Old Style Grocery List" in *The West Australian* Thursday May 15, 1986 and also in "Floor boards reveal their aged secrets" in *Fremantle Focus*, June 1986.

⁴ *loc.cit.*

⁵ Thiel, P.W.H., *Top.cit.* p509

⁶ Beaconsfield Parish News - June 1910 cited in Rahim, N.T. *The union Stores Building. 41-47 High Street, Fremantle* (Architecture and Culture student study, Curtin University 1988) appendix.

⁷ Advertisement in the *Fremantle Boys; School Magazine* Vol 1. No. 3 (February 1914)

⁸ Photographs taken in 1979, 1980, 1981

the discover of gold at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.⁹ The decorative detailing on the tuck pointed brick facade are indicative of the original four shops. Stucco Corinthian pilasters, alternating segmental arched and triangular pediments, decorative urns, and an ornate shell pediment at the corner articulate the facade, and alternating wide arched windows, decorative stucco architraves and distinctively patterned fenestration, with stained glass windows provides the unique stylistic character of the Union Stores building. The front of the building has tiled dado of rectangular green and brown glazed tiles.

Four years after being built it is described as being "among the most commodious of the emporiums in the town. The extensive frontages of 122 feet in High Street and 160 feet in Henry Street will serve to convey some slight ideas of the vast area occupied by the premises..." with "fine and spacious windows.." ¹⁰

In 1902 the original single storey verandah erected over the pavement was replaced with an ornate double-storey lace verandah, comprising posts and brackets of cast-iron. It had a fluted shaft with cylindrical base and "mid-level astragal" division and non-classical octagonal capital. On the first floor, the posts had similar fluting but a non-classical capital. The balustrade, valance frieze and brackets were made of cast iron. On the ground floor the framed valance panels of the earlier single storey verandah were not altered but were surmounted by sheet-metal clad frieze over which were placed signage. The frieze sat over an architrave of timber boards and moulding and was surmounted by a cornice made of the verandah floor, gutter and a string of dentils, thus completing a Corinthian entablature.¹¹ Signage was originally attached to the building above the line of the verandah. Later with the extensions to the verandah, a sheet-metal clad frieze surmounted the original structure and signage was attached to this.

The increased decoration of the building was both a reflection of the increasing taste for ornamentation in buildings¹² and an advertisement for the ironmongery and other cast-iron ware that the Union Stores supplied. It made an impressive visual statement to the facade of the building. There is only evidence of one window opening having been extended to the floor to act as a doorway and this appears to have been infilled when the whole verandah was removed.¹³

In the original design access to the upper floor was by stairs within each shop, there being no individual entrances and exits. In later renovations these internal stairs were removed, and access is now via a timber staircase with an extended landing at the rear of the building. The interiors are spacious with the top floor ceiling lined with pine boarding above exposed timber trusses. Arched openings in the party walls of the upper storey indicate the upper tenancies may have been

⁹ 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) p104

¹⁰ Thiel, P.W.H., *op.cit.* p509

¹¹ Rahim, N.T. *The Union Stores Building. 41-47 High Street, Fremantle* (Architecture and Culture student study, Curtin University 1988) pp6,7

¹² The Moores building had been consolidated behind an ornamental facade in 1899.

¹³ Molyneux *op.cit.* p6

used as a single open space by one tenant, probably when the Union Stores occupied the building.¹⁴

The Union Stores building was in poor condition in 1981/82 at the time the Fremantle City Council purchased the site from the Metropolitan Regional Planning Authority.¹⁵ In 1985 Duncan Stephens and Mercer commenced the restoration of the building in accordance with a conservation plan.¹⁶ Adaptation of the building altered the internal layout to allow for four retail tenancies on the ground floors and four offices on the upper floor. A separate access by means of a two level rear verandah along the south wall was required to comply with fire regulations. A single verandah, in keeping with the original design, was reinstated. For safety purposes the new verandah is cantilevered from the building, but it retains the same design elements as the 1895 verandah.

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 Union Stores building has aesthetic value due to its eclectic use of diverse decorative classical elements, resulting in a rich visual and textural quality.

The building demonstrates an interesting use of decorative elements to specifically delineate the separate shops within the totality of the design.

The distinctive design of the Union Stores building defines the south east corner of Henry and High Streets, and strongly contributes to the "gold boom" character of Fremantle's West End.

2. HISTORIC VALUE

The Union Stores building demonstrates the ebullient decorative form and style favoured by successful merchants within the central business district of Fremantle during the gold rush period. The building is identified as part of the architecture produced in Western Australia by the wealth of the goldrush.

The building was built by J.W. Bateman, and so has a strong association with this prominent Fremantle mercantile family.

3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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4. SOCIAL VALUE

¹⁴ Molyneux, I. *History of Development and Uses*" File Report p4

¹⁵ Fremantle City Council Data Sheet 1981/82

¹⁶ Bodycoat, R. *A Conservation Plan for the Union Stores Ltd. Building.* (Fremantle City Council, 1985)

The Union Stores is indicative of the unbroken history of retailing in High Street in Fremantle. It contributes to the sense of place and identity of Fremantle's West End as the mercantile centre of the port city.

5. RARITY

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

The building is representative of ebullient architecture that was common in Fremantle, during the gold boom. As such it demonstrates the increasing prosperity and sophistication of Fremantle, and Western Australia, at the turn of the century.

The site is representative of retailing at the turn of the century and is significant for its form, continuity of use and development of the commercial area of Fremantle.

CONDITION

The Union Stores building was restored in 1985-87, in the lead up to the staging of the America's Cup. The building is in sound condition.

INTEGRITY

Although some internal modifications were made to the building during the restoration, the building continues to be used for purposes similar to that for which it was built, and therefore it retains a high degree of integrity.

AUTHENTICITY

There have been some additions, alterations and even reconstruction to the Union Stores, however the external fabric of the building is intact and it retains a high degree of authenticity.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Union Stores building has cultural significance for the following reasons:

The building is a fine example of Free Classical architecture and, occupying a strategic position at the corner of High and Henry Streets, makes a major contribution to the streetscape of the West End.

The building is part of a suite of buildings that demonstrate the gold boom architecture for which Fremantle is renowned. Each of these buildings contribute a streetscape element, the loss of which would be detrimental to the scale and character of High Street and the West End.

The building is closely associated with the Bateman family, an important mercantile family in Fremantle.

8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim Entry 20/11/1992

Permanent Entry 09/11/1993

9. Conservation Order

10. Heritage Agreement

11. References

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet (1976)

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Bodycoat, R. *A Conservation Plan for the Union Stores Building*. (Fremantle City Council, 1985)