



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

The *Peninsula Hotel* is a fine example of the elaborate design of Perth suburban hotels, at the tail end of the gold boom. (Criterion 1.1)

The building demonstrates a consistently high quality of design, particularly in the decorative details. (Criterion 1.2)

The bold manner in which the hotel design addresses the site corner has established the building's value as a local landmark. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The *Peninsula Hotel* forms part of Maylands town centre. The building demonstrates the early expansion of Maylands as a residential suburb, which followed the establishment of the Ferguson factory and the railway station. (Criterion 2.1)

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

The *Peninsula Hotel* has continuously played a prominent role as a centre of social life for the Maylands community. The building's high degree of social value was clearly demonstrated in the community effort to prevent its demolition in the 1970s, and its subsequent restoration for use as a community centre. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1. RARITY

The *Peninsula Hotel* is a rare example of a richly detailed Edwardian hotel, still largely in its original form, in metropolitan Perth. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

12.3 CONDITION

Some problems requiring attention include: water drainage from the building; the timber fence on the north-east boundary; and, the garden and landscaping.

Generally, the building is sound and externally the overall condition is fair to good. This has been ensured by the maintenance and restoration programs carried out over the last twenty years.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Although some of the internal building finishes were partly removed in 1974, many have since been reinstated and the integrity of the interior is high with the exception of the integrity of the bar areas due to the removal of the bars and fittings.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The building has a high proportion of original detail. However, the removal of bar fixtures and fittings has deprived the building of some of its interpretation as a suburban hotel. The degree of authenticity is somewhat reduced by the loss of the hotel functions.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The *Western Australian Year Book 1898-1899* makes note of the construction of a new railway station building in the area around Bayswater.¹ Previously there was no station between East Perth and Bayswater. A siding, near the site of the present Caledonian Avenue crossing, was constructed for the benefit of Mr Mephan Ferguson, who had been awarded a contract to manufacture and supply seamless pipes for use in the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme.² Ferguson bought land alongside the railway line and named the area Falkirk, in honour of his birthplace in Scotland. Tenders for the Falkirk Railway Station were invited in August 1899 and a notice in the *Railway Weekly* in September 1899, stated that the station to be erected at Falkirk would be named 'Maylands'.³

The establishment of Ferguson's factory and construction of the railway station encouraged people to settle in Maylands, and the suburb rapidly expanded. The *Peninsula Hotel*, constructed in 1906, was designed to cater for this growing population. The site was chosen to take full advantage of the benefits of being located directly opposite the railway station.

The hotel was constructed and owned by Wilhelm Friederich Gustave Liebe, a well known Perth building contractor. A graduate of the Vienna Technical School of Building, Liebe and his partner Joseph Klein migrated to Adelaide in 1885, where their work attracted the attention of Melbourne architects.⁴ Liebe subsequently moved to Carlton, where his building contracts included the Newmarket Markets and many Carlton houses. In 1891, Liebe and the Kleins moved to western Australia at which time the partnership was dissolved due to Klein's ill-health.

In Perth, Liebe worked with leading architects on a number of large and grandiose projects, including *Queen's Hall* (1899), *His Majesty's Theatre* (1904), the *Public Art Gallery* (1908), several banks, and a number of stations for the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia.⁵

Liebe specialised in hotel construction, with the *Peninsula Hotel*, which he owned, being of particular note. In April 1906, construction was well enough advanced for the following comments to be made about its design in the *West Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*:

At Maylands the erection of the hotel at the railway station is well towards completion. The building, which is of brick, has a tower with a mansard roof, roomy balconies, and the general design reflects credit on the architect. It occupies a fine site,

¹ Easton, L.A. *Stirling City*, (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1971), pp. 41-42.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Nairn, B & Serle, G. (eds) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10, 1891-1939, pp. 98-99.

⁵ *ibid.*

and should, with the growth of this suburb of the city, prove a good investment for the owner.⁶

Although there was much talk of the Hotel being used meetings of the German Club, no evidence has been found to support this. Liebe himself had been granted citizenship in 1901.⁷ The declaration of war on Germany in August 1914 saw the hotel doors closed.⁸ Much of the property owned by Germans in Australia at that time was confiscated and quickly sold off, but Liebe somehow managed to avoid this action. According to title details, he continued to own the *Peninsula Hotel* until his death in March 1950, when probate of his will was granted to Albert Klein. In April 1952 the property was transferred to the Swan Brewery Company Ltd.

Liebe denied he suffered from expressions of anti-German sentiment during the war years. He later claimed he had relinquished his Perth contracting business to concentrate on wheat production on a property at Wubin, purchased in 1908, because of the decline in building work in Perth following the outbreak of war.⁹

After WWI the hotel continued as a centre of social activity. During the 1920s and the early 1930s the hotel was the start and finish 'line' for the Beverley to Perth Cycle Race, inaugurated by Mr Percy Armstrong.¹⁰ However by the 1970s, demand for suburban hotel accommodation had declined, Australian drinking habit were changing and the *Peninsula Hotel* was in need of repairs and 'updating'. In 1973, the Swan Brewery decided to build a tavern on an adjacent site and proposed demolishing the *Peninsula Hotel* to provide a car park.

What followed was a long and protracted battle to save the hotel. The National Trust of Australia (WA) approached the Brewery in mid-1973 and through a series of discussions endeavoured to secure the conservation of the hotel building. At that stage the Trust had not considered the hotel for classification, due to a large backlog. Unfortunately, the Trust was unable to convince the Swan Brewery of the merits of conserving the hotel building and the matter lapsed, until the formation of the Peninsula Association.

The Peninsula Association was formed independently by people interested in conserving the old hotel building. After a well attended public meeting in July 1974 the Brewery agreed to "a stay of execution" and, influenced by this change in attitude, the National Trust classified the building. Public opinion of the time is reflected in a comment made by Professor Gordon Stephenson; "The *Peninsula Hotel* should be saved and restored because of its historical significance..."¹¹ The Swan Brewery agreed to postpone

⁶ *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 14 April 1906, p. 20. At present the name of the architect who designed the hotel is unknown.

⁷ *The Star*, June 1982, p. 6; Gervas, S., "*Five Graves in Dalwallinu*": A Life of Wilhelm Friederich Gustave Liebe, (Executive Press, limited edition, 1991), p. 33.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Nairn & Serle. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, p. 98.; Gervas, S., p. 47

¹⁰ *The Star*, June 1982, p. 6.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 7.

demolition of the hotel in order to give the Peninsula Association a chance to establish a viable proposal for its conservation and future use. By this time some demolition of the interior had occurred, including the removal of the hand-carved balustrades of the stair-case. Fortunately, these pieces were saved and later re-instated.

It was the intention of the Peninsula Association to restore the building to a condition in which community groups would be able to use the hotel as a focus for social activities and community development. This has been achieved, with the building currently being used by a variety of community groups as a base for their organisations.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The *Peninsula Hotel* is located on Railway Parade opposite the Maylands Railway Station. The area is predominantly residential, with a scattering of 'corner' shops. There is a shopping precinct on Eighth Avenue, on the opposite side of the railway line, leading from Maylands Railway Station to Guildford Road.

The hotel possesses a number of significant architectural elements and is considered to be a particularly fine example of an Edwardian hotel building in the Perth metropolitan area. These elements include: elaborately carved timber pediments above the wide internal doors; the grand central staircase with its carved jarrah balustrades; the decorative repetition of the stylised tulip motif in wood, glass, plaster, pressed metal and cast iron throughout the building; the decorative pressed metal ceilings; the cast iron lace-work on the verandah; the prominent chimneys and square dome, a local landmark.

13.3 REFERENCES

Pidgeon, J., 'Peninsula Hotel, Maylands, WA: Study of the Building and Environs for the City of Stirling', (August 1975).

Considine and Griffiths Architects, 'Peninsula Community Centre (formerly the Peninsula Hotel): Conservation Plan for the Peninsula Association' (September 1994).

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.