REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

**HERITAGE
COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

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

Gingin Post Office is a simple domestic style building, suitable for a rural town. (Criterion 1.1)

Gingin Post Office is one of an important group which contribute to the historic fabric of the Gingin townscape. (Criterion 1.4)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Gingin Post Office is of historic importance for its association with community involvement to establish the linking of Gingin to the Perth to Geraldton telegraph system. (Criterion 2.2)

With its relatively intact public area and service areas, the building is of historic value as a fine demonstration of postal activity in a rural town of the late 1880s. (Criterion 2.2)

Gingin Post Office is important as a marker for postal and telegram transactions along the horseback routes of the district. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Gingin Post Office contributes to the community's sense of place as the location for communication services within and beyond the locality. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Gingin Post Office is the oldest extant purpose-built post office with attached residence in Western Australia. (Criterion 5.1)

Gingin Post Office   is one of the few buildings remaining from the commencement of the Colonial Government's post office building program. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Gingin Post Office is representative of early purpose built post offices to be built as a consequence of the government's policy to install post offices in every gazetted town in the State, and is characteristic of a group of buildings constructed from the basic plan. (Criterion 6.1)

Gingin Post Office   is representative of a way of life in which post and telegraph offices provided an attached residence. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Gingin Post Office is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

All original site elements no longer exist, and it is unlikely that the original structures will be reinstated. With the exception of the addition to the north west corner of the building, minor remodelling of the interior, and the enclosing of the verandahs, the building is relatively intact. The building therefore retains a moderate degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Gingin Post Office has been modernised and repaired; however, the alterations have not removed much of the original structure, rather, interior finishes and trimmings. The addition to the north west corner of the building could be removed and facilities reinstated to their original location. The building therefore retains a moderate degree of authenticity.

The original outbuildings, the memorial, fences, telephone boxes and most tanks on the site (as far as can be gauged by the 1941 and later drawings) are no longer extant. The present elements are therefore not authentic.

13.   SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The following information is based on the Assessment for the Gingin Post Office, compiled by David Kelsall, 1994.

The townsite of Gingin was proclaimed a municipality in February, 1893.[1]

The telegraph system of communication had arrived in the colony in 1871. By 1872, a line was built linking Perth and Guildford. The people of Gingin demanded that a link be built to Gingin. It was not until 1886, that tenders were let for a post and telegraphic office. The continued growth of the colony through the 1880s was reflected in Gingin.

The 1881 Census, lists the population as 51 males and 46 females (Australian or British born). In the 1880s, Gingin began to attract more commercial ventures as rumours spread of a railway passing through the town to either Victoria Plains or Champion Bay. It was not until 1886, that construction of a rail link between Midland and Walkaway began. Lack of finance stopped work until the Midland Railway Company took over the venture in 1890. The first stage between Midland and Gingin was completed in 1891.[2]

On 1 July, 1853, the inaugural Mail Service to Champion Bay passed through Gingin on a monthly basis carried by police.[3]

In 1853, W L Brockman was receiving the mailbags at his property. By 1855, the service had moved to Creaton, the property of John York. In the 1850s, John York built "Creaton" an early Gingin homestead, and set up an office within to become the first Postmaster and Registrar. The service was conducted on a voluntary basis from December 1854 until 1864.[4]

By 1860, the mail service took 10 days outwards, 11 days for the return collecting Victoria Plains mail on the return at Gingin. The Gingin Police were finding the service taxing on their time,[5]and settlers were finding it an inconvenience to journey the 7 km to "Creaton".[6]

In 1863, the responsibility for the post office transferred to Mrs Tyler, the Policeman's wife and schoolmistress who lived in the growing settlement near the Police Paddock. The service became centrally located in the growing township of Gingin. Mrs Tyler, was appointed Postmistress. In 1864, John Cockman was contracted to convey mail once a month.[7]

In January, 1867, the earlier agreed route was redirected to pass through New Norcia and Berkshire Valley. Several subsequent mail contracts were established.[8]

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[1]   Dickie, L., *Development of the Gingin Region.*
[2]   Udell, H., *Gingin 1830 to 1960*, Shire of Gingin, 1979.
[3]   Owen, *Post Office in Western Australia*, Battye Library.
[4]   Notes: Deward, K., E., and *ibid.*, Udell.
[5]   de Burgh, W .J., *Neeragabby: A History of the Moore River and Lower Gingin Brook, 1830-1960*,   Shire of Gingin, 1960, p. 47.
[6]   *ibid.*, Udell, p. 55.
[7]   *ibid.*, de Burgh.
[8]   *Government Gazette*, January 1867.

In 1871, George Washington Logue was registered as Postmaster at Gingin.[9] By July, 1881, Margaret Hackett was appointed postmistress at Gingin. Mail was still being collected and distributed from the police station.[10]

On 31 March, 1893, Hackett resigned from the Police Department, but the family remained living in the residence of the post office until 1914. Mrs Hackett earned a salary of £60 per annum and Hackett was listed as messenger at £25 per annum.[11]

The town's inhabitants petitioned for Gingin to be included on the telegraphic line to Geraldton which had originally been proposed to bypass. In November 1885, as a result of the efforts of the residents, tenders were called for the erection of a telegraph line from Guildford to Gingin, a distance of 41.5 miles (66.7 km), the government supplied the wire and the insulators.[12]

On 20 August, 1886, a tender was let to C H Smith for £684/10/- for construction of the new post office. The Building was opened on the 28 October, 1886.[13]

In October, 1886, the telegraph wires had reached Gingin allowing telegrams to be sent. By 1887, Gingin could boast a post office, two churches, three hotels, a lodge, book clubs, a school, a blacksmith, a shoer, a miller, a carpenter, and two general stores.

Rail connections brought changes to Gingin by 1894. The rural community was previously two days travel from Perth was now only two hours travel by train. However, mail contractors still conveyed mail by horseback from Gingin to the Moore River settlements until 1937.[14]

Prior to 1886, Western Australia had no purpose built post offices. All postal transactions were carried out in the home or office of the town's appointed or in some cases honorary postmaster or postmistress.

The arrival of George Temple-Poole in Perth, to take up his position as Superintendent of Works in 1886, coincided with the government's plan to provide gazetted towns with post office buildings. During 1886, Western Australia saw the design and construction of the first purpose built post office. Bridgetown and Gingin saw the earliest post offices constructed to this design. Gingin is the earliest purpose built post office to survive. Bridgetown's post office was demolished in 1911.

George Temple-Poole was appointed Superintendent of Works for the Public Works Department in June 1885, having arrived in Albany on 2 June 1885, on the *Indus.*[15]

Gingin Post Office was built on a Police Department Reserve adjoining the police station.[16] It is possible that *Gingin Post Office* is the earliest surviving post office design under Poole's supervision. Although tenders for

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[9]   *ibid.*, Udell.
[10]   *ibid.*
[11]   Blue Books, 1894.
[12]   *Government Gazette*, 23 November 1885.
[13]   *Government Gazette*, August 1886.
[14]   *ibid.*, de Burgh, p. 148.
[15]   Ship Arrivals, Battye Library.
[16]   *Government Gazette*, August, 1896.

construction of the post office were not called for several months after Poole took office, its design was probably produced under his direction. The similar, basic design was utilised over several years including, the post office for Pingelly (1892), Wagin and Katanning.[17]

A domestic building, its scale, detailing and style do not resemble any of the buildings known to have been designed by Poole, and it must be assumed that one of the architects in the Western Australian Public Works Department, Architecture Division was responsible for the design.[18]

Renovations to the building were carried out in 1904 by J. C. Hick for £49/4/-; alterations were carried out in 1905 by Ede & Deeble for £70/3/9; and in 1921, further repairs were carried out for £63/12/06.[19]

Further works were carried out to the building interior and exterior after 1950, including the relocation and addition of facilities in 1954.

13. 2   PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Gingin Post Office is a single storey building, built in 1886, in a domestic style.

Gingin Post Office is located adjacent to the police station on land which falls sharply from north to south, (rear to front) resulting in drainage problems. Elaborate interceptor drainage systems have been installed to collect surface run-off from the street as well as the adjoining properties.

Gingin Post Office features distinctive bay windows, polygonal in plan including, three light windows with casement sashes set in the gable at both sides of the central main entrance. The roof over is supported by turned timber struts. The verandah to the east relieves the symmetry of the masonry section of the main elevation.

The main roof is timber framed, originally covered by corrugated iron and replaced with terracotta tiles in 1955. The roof of the lean-to verandah is covered with corrugated iron. The masonry walls have been rendered and painted. The entry door is half glazed. All joinery is painted white.

The site features strapped picket fences and gates that are no longer extant, being replaced with fences of various materials, the most prominent of which is corrugated fibro (super six profile) on steel posts. Part of the fence to the police site adjoining to the east is masonry.

Outbuildings, including an earth closet, stables and laundry are no longer extant. A memorial plaque set on a plinth commemorating Jim Gordon VC, once stood in front of the building, and is shown on a 1950s drawings.[20] The tablet has been removed to another site. The forecourt is now bituminised and used for parking. Other outbuildings include, three water tanks, a windmill in a fenced enclosure, and a timber framed wash house (since replaced by other structures).

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[17]   *ibid*., Oldham.
[18]   Oldham, R., & J., *George Temple-Poole, Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897*, University of Western Australia Press, 1980, p. 182.
[19]   PWD Contract Book, Volume 1.
[20]   Postmaster's File for PMG Department Drawing No. BBW 195, sheet 2, for site plan showing   outbuildings and structures.

A barricade protects a leach drain in the north east corner from traffic damage. This drain is connected to a pumping system in the back yard of the post office.

The postal offices are housed behind the bay window, west of the entry. The remaining building accommodates the residence with the living area behind the bay window, east of the entry. A passage, with a bathroom at one end, separates the front spaces from two bedrooms and dining room behind. A verandah runs the length of the living space on the east side of the building, with a kitchen and store, the width of the verandah, located at the southern end. A verandah of the same width is located at the rear.

The interior walls are roughly plastered possibly attributable to poor or unskilled workmanship rather than effect. Wall ventilators present a mixture of plaster, metal and pressed metal. The major ventilator is distinctive with three quatrefoils in a horizontal pattern.

Ceilings are lathe and plaster with rectangular pattern shrinkage joints common to the technique. Other joinery includes timber skirtings with deep chamfers and architraves of a common run. The floors are timber throughout and are now covered.

Many alterations have been made to the building fabric since the 1940s including, the installation of a septic system in 1953, and the relocation of the bathroom and laundry in 1954. In 1960, fire extinguishers were installed; stainless steel sink and doorway were installed in 1965; stove and bathroom fixtures were installed in 1968; bathroom landing was created in 1969; and in 1974, alterations to some windows and doors were made and a toilet was added to the new bathroom. Other minor alterations have been made over the years and are included in the description below. A photograph taken in 1943, shows two telephone boxes arranged at the building entrance. They have since been removed and replaced with a single box to the south west corner of the building.[21]

Electrical fittings have been replaced in many cases although some brown bakelite fixtures with steel conduits remain.

Fireplaces are graceful in their design with chamfered plaster reveals to the recess, curved arch heads, simple timber moulding surrounds and timber mantles supported on two brackets.

The entrance hall is original, with painted timber joinery, fittings, fixtures, and a ledged and braced door to the passage with sliding hatch. Postal boxes have since been installed to the lower portion of the entry door sidelights, and air conditioning grilles, a laminated desk top and other minor alterations have been made to the space.

The mail room is virtually intact, with new cupboards inserted under the original tops. Other alterations include, air conditioning installation, and a new flush door to the passage.

In 1954, the bathroom was relocated to an addition to the north west corner of the building. The original bathroom has been converted to a store. The

[21]   Kelsall, D., 'Assessment Report on Gingin Post Office' (for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, 1994) for historic photographs.

window sill has been raised, evidenced by the mark on the external wall by a 10 mm recess in the surface of the render. The lean-to roof over the rear verandah, has been extended the width of the building, and is now enclosed, as is the verandah on the south east corner of the building.

A window hood with square battened trellis was installed to the bedroom furthest west. New ceiling and cornices have installed to the bedrooms.

The passage has a half glazed door with and arch headed frame at the eastern end to provide light from the side verandah now enclosed. A plastic faced concertina door has been installed to the dining room. The side verandah is now enclosed and accommodates a bedroom.

The building owners advised that the wood stove, that featured in the kitchen, was removed about 10 years ago, and its replacement could not be fitted into the recess, benches were fitted as a result. The north and west walls of the kitchen are brick, the remainder being timber framed. A visible remnant of the dado each side of the door remains on the south wall.

The rear verandah is now enclosed with aluminium framed windows, a toilet, and laundry troughs.

The walls to the new bathroom are of red brick rendered internally. The bathroom contains three toilets fitted out with cast iron porcelain enamel basins, china pans and timber flaps, the cisterns having been replaced with stainless steel.

13. 3   REFERENCES

de Burgh, W., J., *Neeragabby: History of the Moore River and Lower Gingin Brook, 1830-1960*, Shire of Gingin 1960.

Pope, B; Bush, F; Broomfield, W; and Kelsall, D. 'Historical and Architectural Assessment of Post Offices in Western Australia, owned by Australia Post' (for the National Trust of Australia, (WA) 1993)