



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

The *Archbishop's Palace* is a competent remodelling of the 1855 Palace to create a good example of Federation Academic Classical style of architecture. (Criterion 1.2)

The *Archbishop's Palace* is distinctive in its siting in Victoria Square and addresses both Victoria Square, Victoria Avenue and Hay Street. Set within large grounds it has a landmark quality in the streetscape. (Criterion 1.3)

The *Archbishop's Palace* forms part of a precinct of nineteenth century ecclesiastical buildings belonging to the Roman Catholic Church which include *St. John's Pro-Cathedral* (1846+), *St. Mary's Cathedral* (1865+), the *Convent of Mercy* (1844+) and *Mercedes College*. (Criterion 1.3)

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Archbishop's Palace demonstrates the role played by Roman Catholicism in the early years of Western Australia, and also of the importance of religion in the general community. (Criterion 2.1)

The construction of the *Archbishop's Palace* demonstrates the growing wealth of the Roman Catholic community in Western Australia from 1855 onwards. (Criterion 2.2)

The later remodelling of the building is representative of the changing styles of architecture thought appropriate for official ecclesiastical buildings. (Criterion 2.2)

The *Archbishop's Palace* is closely associated with Bishop Serra and Archbishops Clune and Prendiville. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

The *Archbishop's Palace* is held in high regard by members of the Roman Catholic community in Perth as the seat of power for the Archbishop of Perth

and for the Diocese of Perth. The place retains this importance even though the Archbishop now resides elsewhere. (Criterion 4.1)

The *Archbishop's Palace* contributes to the sense of place of the community as a place of religious administration and as a reminder of the development of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Australia in the last one hundred and forty years. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The *Archbishop's Palace* is representative of the Federation Academic Classical style of architecture, embodying all the main elements of that style. (Criterion 6.1)

The size and grandeur of *Archbishop's Palace* is representative of the authority and power of the Archbishop within the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. (Criterion 6.2)

The *Archbishop's Palace* is representative of a period when holders of high Church office were housed in specially built Palaces that combined public and residential functions, rather than in domestic residences. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

The *Archbishop's Palace* is in good condition. The building has a regular program of maintenance. Repainting and cleaning of the building was undertaken prior to the Papal visit of 1986. According to an inspection by Fiona Bush of the public rooms in 1994, the condition was good; although, the condition of the interior of the upper floors in the 1855/1911 sections is not known.¹

12.4 INTEGRITY

The *Archbishop's Palace* has a high degree of integrity. Although the Archbishop no longer resides in the *Palace*, the building is still used for administrative and residential purposes. The ground floor area is used as clerical offices, the dining room continues to be used as such and the upper rooms are used for residential purposes by the clergy.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Although the building was extensively remodelled in 1911, large portions of the original 1855 building have remained intact. The exterior section has retained original door and window openings and in certain areas original windows and balcony railings. It is not known if the upper floors of this section are still intact.

The remodelling, undertaken in 1911, is insitu with only minor modifications in some areas, for example the mezzanine on the southern side of the former chapter hall.

¹ Bush, F. 'Assessment of Significance' (for HCWA 1994).
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13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The *Archbishop's Palace* is a three storey building constructed, in 1855, for the use of the Bishop of Perth and other priests.

In 1850, Bishop Joseph Serra became Bishop of Perth. In the same year, he established a community of thirty lay brothers on land purchased by the previous Bishop, Brady. Serra called the new establishment Subiaco. In 1853, he left Perth for Rome, leaving Bishop Salvado in charge. Serra returned, in 1855, with further helpers amongst whom were several brothers who were capable builders and masons. In the same year, he decided to build an Episcopal Palace and began to take measurements for the building on 11 September 1855.² The fact that he could even entertain the idea of building such a Palace shows the high regard in which the Bishop was held in the community and indicates the increasing wealth of the small Catholic community in Western Australia. Labour was provided by the brothers from Subiaco and, later, from New Norcia and, at one stage, there were thirty-three brothers working on the building - a substantial input of labour.

The finished building was impressive and sat in stark contrast to the humble worker's cottages surrounding it.³ A photograph (circa 1860) shows a Georgian style building of two and a half storeys, with a long east-west axis and a gable roof covered with shingles. The building may have been rendered as there is decorative modelling around the doors, windows and a distinct stringline above the first floor windows. At the western end, a wing projects on both the north and south sides of the building. The roof in this section was hipped. The ground floor had tall, eight-paned casement windows, and round headed entrance doors at each end. The first floor had french windows with decorative ironwork placed across the windows, flush with the wall, from the sill to about waist height. On the wing to the west, the first floor doors had a projecting balcony with a decorative iron balustrade. The second floor was a half storey in height with squat six-paned windows. Both the north and south facades are similar with the exception that on the south facade at the eastern end is a doric porch surmounted by a decorative iron balustrade which forms a balcony for the first floor in this section.⁴

A photograph dated 1894 shows a two storey verandah with engaged columns on the lower floor and columns to the upper floor. The verandah roof is also shingled. The southern facade appears unchanged.⁵

In 1910, the current Bishop, Gibney, was forced to resign from the Diocese, as a result of financial mismanagement. He was replaced by Bishop Patrick Clune (later Archbishop). Clune immediately set about reducing the large debt which he had inherited from Gibney and building programs were apparently reduced to a minimum. However, a year later, in 1911, a tender

² Bourke, D. F. *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia*, (Archdiocese of Perth, 1979) p. 59.

³ Photographs from the Battye Library. No 26405P.

⁴ Photographs from the Battye Library. Nos. 67624P, 26497P and 26405P.

⁵ Photographs from the Battye Library. Nos. 20636P, 67661P and 20392P.

was called for improvements to the Palace, under the direction of prominent ecclesiastical architect Michael Cavanagh.⁶

Michael Cavanagh was a prominent Adelaide architect who, attracted by the gold boom prosperity in Western Australia, established a practice in Perth in 1895. He was responsible for many of the Catholic Church's ecclesiastical buildings in Western Australia, as well as numerous other commercial, civic and residential buildings. By the time he redesigned the *Archbishop's Palace*, Cavanagh's commissions for the Roman Catholic Church included the *Christian Brothers' College, Perth*; *Mercedes College, Perth*; *St Brigid's Convent, Northbridge*; the *Convent of Mercy, Bunbury*; a home for the aged for the Little Sisters of the Poor, Glendalough; a Boy's Industrial School, Glendalough, *St. John's Convent and Chapel, Subiaco*, a small convent in Guildford and the *Roman Catholic Church* in Northam. Later commissions in Perth were to include alterations to *St. Mary's Cathedral*, and the *Redemptorist Monastery* in North Perth.

Cavanagh's improvements to the *Archbishop's Palace* extended and refurbished the original 1855 building while leaving the original building substantially intact behind remodelling.

In the mid-1930s, during Archbishop Prendiville's term, a substantial amount of building took place for the Roman Catholic Church in Western Australia, (in thirty three years a record 140 new churches and schools were built), to accommodate the increased numbers of religious congregations the Archbishop introduced to Western Australia.⁷ The administrative functions of the Archbishop's office expanded and, in 1936, a new section was added to the eastern side of the Palace, which substantially increased the size of the building. The addition was in the same style as that used by Cavanagh in 1911.⁸

The building has continued in use as the Archbishop's offices and as a short-term residential accommodation for Church purposes on the upper floors, although the Archbishop no longer resides in the building. In 1986, His Holiness, the Pope was accommodated in the *Archbishop's Palace* during his visit to Perth.

In 1994, the building functions as the Catholic Offices on the ground floor with residential rooms above.

⁶ *Western Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*. (1911) quoted in McKenzie, J. 'Michael Cavanagh 1860 - 1941. His Life, His Philosophies (sic) and His Architecture', (unpublished thesis, 1992) p. 59.

⁷ Bourke, p. 261, 267.

⁸ Conversation with Father MacDonald, Dean of Perth, May 1994.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The *Archbishop's Palace* is sited on a block facing Victoria Square which slopes downward, through a garden, to Hay Street in the south. The building effectively addresses three streets: Victoria Avenue, Victoria Square and Hay Street and forms a key element in a precinct of nineteenth century buildings constructed by the Roman Catholic Church. To the north is *St. Mary's Cathedral* while to the east is the *Convent of Mercy* and *Mercedes College*, and the earlier *Pro-Cathedral*.

The *Archbishop's Palace* is a three storey, cement rendered structure with a basement, remodelled in the Federation Academic Classical style.⁹ The roof is covered with corrugated asbestos sheets. On the north and south facades the double storey verandahs are supported by double storey ionic columns. The corners are deeply quoined and there is high relief quoining to the second floor windows. Other features include scroll brackets to many windows, projecting string-lines and stained glass windows.

The original 1855 portion of the building has been retained largely intact, although hidden behind the extensive remodelling done by Cavanagh in 1911. The windows, doors and some of the small balcony balustrades are still insitu; however, the upper section which was previously only a half storey in height has been remodelled to accommodate a full storey.

Cavanagh added a new section to the eastern side of the building while the north and south facades were modified with a two storey verandah supported by double height ionic columns. Decorative scrolls were added to many of the windows and the whole building was rendered to resemble ashlar masonry with highly modelled quoining at the corners of the building.

Internally, original 1855 features are the entry doors, the windows in the dining room and the internal shutters are still insitu in this room. The entry hall has the original staircase on the eastern side which features a wrought iron balustrade which is thought to be original.¹⁰ Remodelled features (1911) include timber joinery to doors and windows with rondels in the corners of the door and window architraves, deep skirting boards and decorative cornices. The cornices exhibit Art Nouveau floral motifs. The Dean's study has panelling to the walls and the parlour has an intricately plastered ceiling and an impressive timber mantle piece. The doors along the hallway have leaded glass fanlights.

In 1936, further additions were made to the eastern part of the building, following the style of the 1911 additions. The present day archive room is located on the first floor of the eastern (1936) section. This room originally served as the chapter hall for the priests residing in the Palace. Access was through a door in the western wall or via stairs from the ground floor. The room has a parquet floor with the chi-ro motif centrally located, an exposed beam ceiling and a dais on the northern side. The cornices in this room exhibit Art Deco influences. A mezzanine located on the southern side of this

⁹ Apperly, 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. 100-103.

¹⁰ Inspection by Fiona Bush. Bush, F. 'Assessment of Significance' (for HCWA 1994).

room, which is currently used for storage, appears to have been altered at some time in the 1960s.

It is not known if remodelling of the private rooms in the upper storey took place in 1936 or whether these are left in their original state, access was denied to the upper areas of the building.¹¹

The building was cleaned and repainted in 1986 in preparation for the visit of the Pope to Perth.

13. 3 REFERENCES

Bush, F., 'Assessment of Significance' (for HCWA, 1994).

Bourke, D.F., *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia* (Archdiocese of Perth, 1979).

McKenzie, J., 'Michael Cavanagh (1860 - 1941); His Life, His Philosophies (sic) and His Architecture', (Curtin University, unpublished study, 1992).

National Trust Assessment Exposition.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

¹¹ Inspection by Fiona Bush. Bush, F. 'Assessment of Significance' (for HCWA 1994); The areas accessible were the public areas of the Palace: the foyer, office areas, original entry foyer and dining room only.