



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 6.2 Establishing schools

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education & science

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Elements of *Geraldton Primary School*, particularly the well proportioned Victorian Georgian stone structures with gabled roof forms and simply detailed masonry; and the Fitzgerald Street brick structures with prominent pavilion and roof lantern displaying characteristics of the Federation Free-Style, are valued by the Geraldton community. (Criterion 1.1)

The place possess landmark qualities through the accumulation of built forms over a large site in a predominantly residential area and particularly through the interest in the design of the double height forms along Fitzgerald Street. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The construction of 1878 classroom of *Geraldton Primary School* represents the growth and importance of Geraldton at that time, as a port town serving the large mining and pastoral district of the Mid West, while subsequent alterations and additions reflect the continued development of the town. (Criterion 2.2)

The 1878 portion of *Geraldton Primary School* was designed by colonial architect and Public Works superintendent Richard Roach Jewell. (Criterion 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Later prominent additions in 1911 and 1914 fronting Fitzgerald Street, were designed by Public Works Department Chief Architect Hillson Beasley and constructed by local Geraldton firm Jenner & Haffner. (Criterion 2.3)

Alfred Carson, appointed headmaster of Geraldton Boys' School in 1878 at the age of nineteen, is credited with being the youngest headmaster appointed to an Australian school. (Criterion 2.3)

Geraldton Primary School is significant in representing a continuum of the standard of school facilities provided by the State Government through different periods of Western Australia's history. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

As the oldest continually operating school in Geraldton, *Geraldton Primary School* has had educational and social associations for the local community from 1878 to 2003. (Criterion 4.1)

Situated in the centre of the Geraldton town since 1878, *Geraldton Primary School* contributes significantly to the streetscape and provides a strong sense of place for the Geraldton community. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Geraldton Primary School is a rare example of a school built in the 1870s which has operated continuously from 1878 to 2003. It is the oldest continually operating school in Geraldton, and one of the oldest in Western Australia. (Criteria 5.1)

The 1878 classroom is a rare example of an early educational building in Western Australia and retains its original late colonial structure in an identifiable form. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Geraldton Primary School is representative of the design of State government schools by the Public Works Department from 1. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Geraldton Primary School is in good condition and has been well maintained through continual use of the place.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Geraldton Primary School has high integrity retaining an educational function since first constructed in 1878 which is likely to be sustainable.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Geraldton Primary School has moderate authenticity. The place has responded to the growth of Geraldton and changing educational practices through continual additions and alterations. Internal finishes and fittings are generally consistent throughout the buildings reflecting current requirements and thereby disguising the evolution of the fabric. Some of these adaptations are superficial and may be reversible.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Taylor Architect and Katrina Chisholm, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Geraldton Primary School is a cluster of masonry and tiled buildings arranged around an uncovered quadrangle, and comprises early stone structures constructed as classrooms in 1878, and added to in 1895, 1900 and 1904, all of which are representative of the Victorian Georgian style, and have been extended to include brick buildings of the Federation Free style (1911, 1914, 1918), Inter-War (1935), and Late Twentieth-Century periods (1978), together with free-standing brick Classrooms (1978), Dental Therapy Centre, Library, and Covered Assembly Area (1995-1996) which are each representative of the Late Twentieth-Century period.

Geraldton Primary School was constructed as a four-room school in 1878 as Geraldton Boys' and Geraldton Girls' schools. The place was constructed of stone with a shingle roof by R. Creswick to a design by colonial architect Richard Roach Jewell. The place underwent several name changes: to Geraldton Public School (1895), Geraldton District High School (1918) and Geraldton Primary School (1939). Since 1895, *Geraldton Primary School* has undergone considerable renovation and additions.

A settlement was authorised on Champion Bay in what is now known as Geraldton following the opening of the Geraldine lead mine at Northampton in 1849. According to the Municipality of Geraldton's 1950 centenary publication, the township of Geraldton took its name from the mine. Geraldton developed as a port for the Murchison mineral fields to the north and a centre for the rich pastoral and agricultural lands in the Victoria district. The first Geraldton town lots were offered for sale in June 1851, but only one was purchased. In 1852, a port was established at Port Gregory, about 50 miles (80kms) north of Geraldton, with the help of convict labour, and a ticket of leave hiring depot set up at nearby Lynton provided labour for the mines, and for the pastoralists who were moving into the region. In 1857, the depot closed and the pensioner guards were moved to Geraldton. The town began to develop from this time, hastened by the closure of Port Gregory in 1861, after proving unsafe for shipping.¹

By 1860, the population of Geraldton had increased to the point where residents required facilities such as a school. A number of Geraldton residents petitioned for a building to be erected for use as a school and Sunday school. It was also proposed that church services be held in the building when a minister of any denomination was available. As there was no building in the settlement that could be hired for the purpose, the

¹ Bain, Mary Albertus, *A Life of Its Own: A social and economic history of the City of Geraldton and the Shire of Greenough 1846-1988*, City of Geraldton, 1996, pp. 1-10; *The First Hundred Years: Geraldton Centenary 1850-1950*, Municipality of Geraldton, [1950], pp. 5-7.

Government agreed to provide one.² An advertisement calling for tenders for 'a building to be used as both church and school' was published in the West Australian Government Gazette on 2 August 1864. The tender of builder William Trigg, with a price of £225, was accepted.³ The one-room School and Church building was constructed on Marine Terrace, beside the site designated as a public landing place, where the town's first jetty had been established.⁴

The Geraldton School held its first classes in 1863, in rented premises costing six pounds, although what premises these were is not known. Initial enrolment was 15 boys and 10 girls. The school is recorded as moving into 'permanent quarters', the new School and Church building, in September 1864.⁵ In 1868, when the attendance at the Geraldton School had increased to 57 students, the school was separated into Geraldton Boys' school and Geraldton Girls' school. Both groups continued to occupy the School and Church Building, but there was now a calico partition separating the two schools.⁶ Each school had its own teacher. In 1868, there were 33 girls, under headmistress Theresa Strappini, and 24 boys under headmaster R. C. Howe.⁷

By 1874, school attendance had reached 105 for the two schools. In 1876, the examination results for the Boys' school were such that the school inspector noted that 'in such a confined space the most skilful teacher must to a certain extent fail'. This comment brought immediate action for the construction of a new school building. Compulsory attendance at school had been established under the *Elementary Education Act, 1871*, so it was beholden on the Government to provide suitable buildings and facilities where large numbers of children were involved.⁸ In the meantime, the classes were moved to larger temporary quarters in one of the church buildings.⁹

Plans for 'Geraldton School' were drawn up by Richard Roach Jewell.¹⁰ Jewell was first employed in the Royal Engineers section of the Convict

2 Bain, Mary Albertus, op cit, p. 64.

3 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 2 August 1864, p. 124 & 13 September 1864, p. 174.

4 Bain, Mary Albertus, op cit, p. 64; PWD Plan 847, undated; DOLA, Reserves Index Enquiry, Reserve 5525 comprising Geraldton Town Lots 75-78; Geraldton townsite map, 1901. The 1864 building is currently the Geraldton Mission to Seamen.

5 Ridders, John, *Western Australian Schools 1830-1980. Part One: Schools and teachers 1830-1871*, Perth, Education Dept. of WA, 1984, p. 40.

6 *Geraldton Guardian*, 10 February 1941, quoting Mayor R. Carson, who had been a pupil at the school.

7 Ridders, John, *Part One: Schools and teachers 1830-1871*, op cit, p. 40.

8 Gregory, Jenny & Smith, Lisa, *Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia*, Centre for Western Australian History, 1995, pp. 7-8.

9 Central Board of Education, *Annual Report, 1876*, p. 7; Ridders, John, *Western Australian Schools 1830-1980. Part Two: Schools and teachers 1872-1895*, Perth, Education Dept. of WA, 1986, alphabetical entries.

10 Geraldton School plans, undated, except for date 4 October 1878 when signed by contractor. Drawing 4, Detail of windows, clearly shows Jewell's signature, SROWA, PWD Plan 722, microfiche.

Establishment at Fremantle, but in January 1853, was appointed foreman of the Department of Public Works and then superintendent. Jewell was Acting Director of Public Works in 1879 and 1882-3, Commissioner for Railways 1887, a member of Perth City Council in 1870, and a JP. He retired in 1884. For most of his thirty-two years in office he was the only qualified architect in the colony.¹¹

Tenders for 'Geraldton School' were called on 13 August 1878, a criterion for the awarding of a contract being speed of construction. A contract was awarded to R. Creswick, who tendered a price of £1,859-14-0.¹² The stonemason was A. Stewart.¹³ The site chosen was a 3.67 acre (1.48ha) piece of land on the corner of Fitzgerald and Sandford streets, gazetted as Reserve 165A.¹⁴ The foundation stone was laid by Lady Julia Ord, wife of the Governor, on 4 October 1878.¹⁵

The only school building that has been erected this year is one at Geraldton, which has been completed and duly occupied. This is one of the largest school buildings in the Colony, and contains one large and one small room for boys at the one end of sufficient dimensions to hold 125 scholars, and at the other end are two similar rooms for the girls.¹⁶

Geraldton Boys' and Girls' School was built of stone with a shingle roof. Back-to-back fireplaces were situated in the central wall that separated the boys' and girls' classrooms. A divided woodshed with earth closets at each end and a divided shelter shed completed the establishment.¹⁷

The Government School was where it is now in Fitzgerald Street and consisted of four rooms, two for girls and two for boys. The rooms were separated by archways, and a wooden partition between the front verandah, and a paling fence that separated the yards. Dull government brown paint, and glass through which we could not see, made them dull drab places.¹⁸

Geraldton Boys' and Girls' schools opened in 1879, with 59 boys and 54 girls. The two schools were considered separate entities, although they occupied a shared building. Theresa Strappini continued as headmistress of the Girls' School, which included the Infant's classes, and nineteen-year-old Alfred Carson was headmaster of the Boys' School, having been appointed in 1878.¹⁹ Carson was educated at Guildford Grammar School and trained as a pupil teacher at Perth Boys' School. His first appointment was to Geraldton and he is credited with being the youngest headmaster

11 *Australian Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 4, MUP, 1982, pp. 481-482.

12 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 13 August 1878, p. 184 & 10 September 1878, p. 295.

13 Burns, A. C., *Geraldton Primary School, 1878-1978: Centenary Souvenir*, Geraldton Primary School, 1978, p 2.

14 Site plan, 1878, PWD 3633.

15 Burns, A. C., op cit, p. 2.

16 Central Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1879, p. 4.

17 Burns, A. C., op cit, p. 2; PWD plan 3633, 3 June 1895.

18 Norris, Constance, *Memories of Champion Bay or Old Geraldton*, Soroptomists International of Geraldton, 1989, p. 9.

19 Ridders, John, *Part Two: Schools and teachers 1872-1895*, op cit; Central Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1879, p. 6.

appointed to an Australian school. In 1886 he resigned to take up the editorship of the *Victorian Express* newspaper, published in Geraldton, and later worked on the *West Australian* and *Western Mail*.²⁰

By 1884, enrolments had increased to 75 boys and 80 girls. About 30% of the pupils were infants and the remainder were spread over 6 grades in each school.²¹ In 1892, Theresa Strappini retired, having been headmistress of Geraldton girls' (and Infants) school since 1868.²²

In 1895, Geraldton Boys' and Girls' schools were amalgamated to form Geraldton Public School.²³ That year, the two central classrooms were enlarged by moving the east wall out to the edge of the verandah.²⁴ In 1898, tenders were advertised for additions to accommodate 150 pupils but the extent of the remodelling, completed in 1898-99 is unclear.²⁵

In 1897, the school site was enlarged with the addition of almost 2 acres of land on the Augustus Street (south) frontage. The area was then 5.6 acres (2.27ha) and the site was re-gazetted as Reserve 4111.²⁶ The 1890s and early 1900s were a period of threefold increase in the number of schools in the State, and the expansion of those already operating. Geraldton Public School was an example of the latter.²⁷

Drifting sand was a problem in Geraldton, and efforts were made to grass Geraldton Public School grounds. In 1899, a party of prisoners from the Geraldton gaol were employed to level a section of the grounds and plant couch grass. In 1900, the grassing was reported to be going well. That year, two rooms, each to accommodate 50 pupils, were added at the southern end of the 1878 building. The southernmost room, originally part of the girls' school and in use as an infant's room since 1895, was to be used as a hallway to access the two new rooms. A teacher's room and toilet were added on the east side of the former infant's room and the east and west windows of the infant's room were enlarged, the east windows being placed higher, apparently to be above the roofline of the teacher's room addition. A contract for the work was let to W. C. Rose on 17 January 1901, at a price of £1,248-6-4.²⁸

There were no school quarters provided at Geraldton and head teacher W. O. Shelton was paying £30 a year in rent in 1901. A contract for construction

²⁰ Geraldton Regional Library, Local Studies Department, *Geraldton: 150 years, 150 Lives*, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 33.

²¹ Central Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1884, p. 6.

²² Ridders, John, *Part One: Schools and teachers 1830-1871 & Part Two: Schools and teachers 1872-1895*, op cit.

²³ Ridders, John, *Part Two: Schools and teachers 1872-1895*, op cit.

²⁴ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1895, pp. 771, 807 & 834; Floor plan showing alterations to 1910, Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 494/1907.

²⁵ Contract and Management Services (CAMS) Heritage database, Geraldton Primary School.

²⁶ DOLA, Reserves Index Enquiry, Reserve 4111, 18 June 1897.

²⁷ Gregory, Jenny & Smith, Lisa, op cit, p. 18.

²⁸ Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 1939/1900; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1901, p. 218.

of quarters on the site was awarded to W. Sharp on 19 August 1901, at a cost of £695-3-2.²⁹ The quarters were completed on 12 December. In April 1902, prisoners were again employed levelling the grounds and planting grass. This work was eventually completed on 23 October 1902.³⁰

Enrolments at Geraldton Public School in November 1902 were 370, with attendances averaging 340, a figure well above accommodation levels. In 1904, another two classrooms were added at the northern end of the 1878 building, matching the two rooms that had been added at the southern end in 1901.³¹ In July 1905, a contract was let for construction of a 50-foot long (15.25m) detached, weatherboard Manual Training Room. Classes in manual training began on 20 October 1905 with 36 boys attending.³²

On 18 March 1908, when the shingle roof on the 1878 section of Geraldton Public School was in need of repair, it was suggested that an iron roof should be put on the building over the existing shingles. Retaining the shingles was claimed to keep the rooms cooler, but money was not available for a new roof at the time and repairs were made to the existing roof instead. The shingle roof was eventually covered with iron, but it is not known when this was done. Ventilation was improved by upgrading the room vents with 'bellmouth and upcast' vents. In 1910, the detached Household Management Centre was constructed by Jenner and Haffner for £721-19-7.³³ They also undertook another small contract for £39-17-0, earlier in the year, but it is not clear what was done at this time.³⁴

On 3 March 1911, a contract was let to Jenner and Haffner for £2,676-16-3.³⁵ The work, completed on 16 October 1911, involved the construction of a two-storey red brick addition designed by Public Works Department Chief Architect, Hillson Beasley.³⁶ The plans for this work show a 'new' science room, classroom and a double height central hall adjoining the earlier structures and fronting Fitzgerald Street to the west.³⁷ It was described years later by author Randolph Stow:

The school was old, with new bits added. The hall was funny, one side of it was the outside wall of the old stone schoolhouse, and the classroom doors opened on to the hall like doors opening into the street. The

²⁹ Education Department file, 1939/1900, op cit; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1901, p. 3386.

³⁰ Education Department file, 1939/1900, op cit.

³¹ Education Department file, 1939/1900; op cit; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1904, p. 35.

³² Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 318/1905; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1905, p. 1990.

³³ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1910, p. 2215.

³⁴ Education Department file, 494/1907, op cit; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1910, p. 85.

³⁵ Education Department file, 494/1907, op cit.

³⁶ These plans are on display in Geraldton Primary School administration office.

³⁷ CAMS Heritage database, Geraldton Primary School, p. 2; information from site inspection; Floor plan showing alterations to 1910, Education Department file, 494/1907, op cit.

classroom doors had fanlights above them, like the front doors of old houses.³⁸

James John Jenner, of Jenner and Haffner, was a plasterer, builder and contractor in Geraldton in the 1890s. He went into partnership with architect L. Haffner and in 1902 they purchased Hubert's Brickworks. Jenner and Haffner built the Greenough Road Board Office (1906), Northampton's Holy Trinity Church (1908) and St George's Building, Marine Terrace (c.1910). James Jenner was a Geraldton Councillor (1918-1924) and a member of the Masonic Lodge.³⁹

With the impending opening of the University of Western Australia in 1911, the State government was forced to address the issue of providing secondary education within the State School system. The provision of secondary education had been left to the private schools. The first Government high school, Perth Modern School, was established in 1911, but it was initially a fee-paying high school.⁴⁰ Students in country towns, who wanted to continue their education, were encouraged to apply for government scholarships to assist with accommodation and fees. For the majority who didn't go on to a secondary school, continuation classes were begun at Geraldton Public School in 1912, providing a 'link between primary and technical education for boys and girls and providing domestic training for girls'.⁴¹

Enrolment numbers at Geraldton Public School continued to grow. In November 1912 there were 521 students in the school, which was equipped to accommodate 486. In January 1914, an elevation drawing signed by Hillson Beasley shows new additions planned for the Fitzgerald Street frontage, including another classroom and an entry porch.⁴² This work was undertaken by Jenner and Haffner, at a cost of £559-5-6.⁴³

A separate infants school was established at the eastern end of the site around this time. In 1915, two pavilion classrooms were added to Geraldton Public School by J. Aitken, for £417-4-0.⁴⁴ Enrolments for the school numbered 600 in 1916, and three additional pavilion classrooms, two of them for the infant's school, were added in 1917 and 1918, by which time enrolments had increased by another 50 students.⁴⁵

38 Stow, Randolph, *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, Penguin Books Ltd, Ringwood, 1968, p. 78.

39 Geraldton Regional Library, *Geraldton: 150 years, 150 Lives*, op cit, p. 93.

40 Education Department Circular, November 1910, p. 123, referenced in Gable, Walter, *The Foundation Stages of the Geraldton High School, 1863-1939: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the High School, 1939 to 1989*, typescript, 1989, p. 5; Gregory, Jenny & Smith, Lisa, op cit, pp. 19-33.

41 CAMS Heritage database, Geraldton Primary School.

42 PWD elevation drawing, unnumbered, Education Department file, 494/1907, op cit.

43 Education Department file, 494/1907, op cit.

44 Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 3308/1914; *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1915, p. 89.

45 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1917, pp. 588, 2045 & 1918, p. 1691; Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 873/1916.

The continuing development of secondary education saw the first rural District High School established in the 1910s. Eastern Goldfields District High School was established in 1914 with Northam, Geraldton, Albany and Bunbury following. In the beginning, the High School was housed in the existing Primary School in each centre until student numbers warranted a separate building.⁴⁶ Geraldton Public School became Geraldton District High School and there were 100 students enrolled in the High School classes in 1918.⁴⁷

In June 1920, there were 342 boys and 294 girls at Geraldton District High School. Of these, 196 or 30%, were in the infants' classes.⁴⁸ The continual building work that had taken place at Geraldton District High School during the previous twenty-five years did not continue into the 1920s and 1930s. As the population of Geraldton grew, other primary schools were opened. The Bluff Point Primary School, in east Geraldton, was opened in 1916, and a convent school opened at Bluff Point at the beginning of 1921. In order to ensure that Geraldton District High School did not need new classrooms, the headmaster was instructed not to enrol children 'who lived on eastern side of the flour mill'.⁴⁹

In 1925, the original foundation stone, inscribed 'Laid by Lady Ord Oct. 1878' was found in rubble in the school grounds and 'installed in the construction then underway', but where this work was being carried out is not known.⁵⁰ A contract was let for 'renovations' to Geraldton District High School in 1922, and contracts for 'repairs' were let in 1926 and 1927, but no details of the work undertaken at that time has been found.⁵¹

A Parents' and Citizens' Association (P & C) was formed in 1929. Its main activity for many years was fundraising for equipment and facilities.⁵² In 1932, the P & C had an ornamental brick fence erected to replace the old picket fence that had fallen down in a storm. The following year, they had the partitioning removed from the lesser hall at the northern end (the end room of the 1878 building that had been used as corridor and hat room), installed glass-door library cupboards, and made the area available for use as a reading area, or for dramatics or similar activities. In 1935, a new brick classroom was added to Geraldton District High School.⁵³

⁴⁶ Gable, Walter, op cit, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 1725/1918.

⁴⁸ Education Department file, 1725/1918, op cit.

⁴⁹ Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 1523/1921.

⁵⁰ Gable, Walter, op cit, p. 3.

⁵¹ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1922, p. 1181; 1926, p.115; 1927, p. 1704.. The Education Dept. files on Geraldton School located at SROWA did not cover the years 1925-1932.

⁵² Burns, A. C., op cit, p. 9.

⁵³ Education Department file, Geraldton Primary School, buildings & works, SROWA, ACC 1629, 437/1938.

New High Schools were constructed at Northam (1921), Bunbury (1923) and Albany (1925), but at Geraldton, the retention rate for students beyond the 9th Standard, or 3rd Year, was considered too low for a dedicated high school building. Many Geraldton students continued their education at Perth schools, a number accepting scholarships to Perth Modern School. By the time student numbers had increased sufficiently for a separate high school building at Geraldton, the Depression had restricted the Government's ability to construct it. It was July 1939 before Geraldton High School opened on a separate site.⁵⁴

With the removal of the High School classes, the place was reclassified as Geraldton Primary School. A school crest was introduced in 1944, featuring buds of Geraldton Wax and the motto 'Generosity, Perseverance, Service'. New shelter sheds were provided in 1951 and further additions were added in the 1960s, including a canteen in 1969.

In 1978, new classrooms enclosing the east side of the quadrangle were opened by the Minister for Education, P. V. Jones as part of *Geraldton Primary School* Centenary Celebrations. During these celebrations, D. C. B. Ord, grandson of Lady Julia Ord, who laid the original foundation stone in 1878, unveiled a Centenary plaque.⁵⁵ More recent additions have been a dental therapy centre, and a new library and covered assembly area built in 1995-1996.

In 1998, *Geraldton Primary School* was entered on the City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory with a management category 1 listing.⁵⁶

In 2003, *Geraldton Primary School* continues to provide primary education for Geraldton children within its intake boundaries.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Geraldton Primary School is a cluster of masonry and tiled buildings arranged around an uncovered quadrangle, and comprises early stone structures constructed as classrooms in 1878, and added to in 1895, 1900 and 1904, all of which are representative of the Victorian Georgian style, and have been extended to include brick buildings of the Federation Free style (1911, 1914, 1918), Inter-War (1935), and Late Twentieth-Century periods (1978), together with free-standing brick Classrooms (1978), Dental Therapy Centre, Library, and Covered Assembly Area (1995-1996) which are each representative of the Late Twentieth-Century period.

The principal structure at the place combines multiple adjoining elements featuring variations in construction fabric and style but there are also free-standing structures arranged in close proximity to this main building, connected by pathways and covered links. Fenced play areas, sporting and storage facilities are also located on the site with the majority of the

⁵⁴ Gable, Walter, op cit.

⁵⁵ Burns, A. C., op cit, p. 10; CAMS Heritage database, Geraldton Primary School.

⁵⁶ Suba, T., Callow, B. & Grundy, G., *City of Geraldton Municipal Heritage Inventory*, 1996-97, Place no. 140.

structures concentrated in the south-west corner, configured to partially enclose the uncovered quadrangle.

The place is located at the intersection of Fitzgerald and Augustus streets within an area of early settlement in the Geraldton city centre which is now predominantly residential.

1878, 1895 Classrooms

The earliest portion of construction is a single-storey stone structure with a gabled tiled roof which displays characteristics of the Victorian Georgian style.⁵⁷ The structure has been extended and enveloped by brick additions which obscure the original spreading verandah form and some of the symmetry of the early composition. Comprising two large, high ceiling rooms at each end with two smaller classrooms between, the structure is orientated along a north-south axis. The central classrooms were extended in 1895 when the east wall was relocated to the verandah edge. This wall is now visible from the quadrangle although it is unclear if any of the original fabric was used in the current location. The coursed rubble stonework appears to match the masonry in the east facing gable ends and has a rendered plinth below window level, with rendering in the bands across the window heads and projecting sills. The timber framed, two-pane sliding sash windows have obscured glazing in the fanlights and are arranged in groups of three, whereas the 1895 drawing shows only one central window opening to each classroom. The gable ends have a moderately steep pitch with a simple timber fascia and tiled roofs.

The increased width of the central classrooms is evident in the internal proportions of the classrooms. Back-to-back fireplaces are now located off-centre and the spacing of the faceted masonry piers in the end walls is no longer symmetrical. A partition wall divides these hexagonal piers which are not full height and terminate in a peaked form approximately half way up the wall. They have a bulky presence in the classrooms and are obstructive to the current fittings and furniture layout. The purpose of these elements which appear both structurally and aesthetically contrived is unclear. Early drawings indicate double doors between the central piers were the only means of access into the rooms from the larger classrooms at each end as only window openings are shown in the east and west walls. The central classrooms are now entered from the large enclosed space of the Hall to the west.

The larger, former classrooms at the north and south ends of the 1878 structure have been divided and adapted for various uses since first constructed but are now used for wet area activities and circulation space. The timber framed scissor trusses supporting the high, steeply pitched roof are exposed and feature a rounded moulding in the pendant of the central vertical member. Detail drawings of the trusses signed by the contractor, Creswick and others, on 4 October 1878, form part of the archival set held at

⁵⁷ Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, pp. 42-45.

the school and indicate that the trusses are original fabric. A central, triangular portion of the roof has a timber boarded lining beneath the tiles, to enclose the roof space created by the intersecting, perpendicular roof form.

1900 and 1904 Classrooms

The two single-storey classrooms added at the southern end of the 1878 building in 1900 are constructed with stone walls and have tiled roofs with square brick chimneys rising above the gabled roof forms, close to the projecting eaves. They match the Victorian Georgian style of the earlier classrooms. The chimneys are partially rendered with face brick corbelling around the top edge. The top portion of the west gable has a fibre-cement lining punctuated with rectangular vents. The masonry and fenestration match the earlier Quadrangle east elevation with coursed rubble and timber framed sash windows with fanlights arranged in groups of three. The matching window detailing may provide evidence of when the glazing in the east wall of the 1895 extension was modified. Quoins have been incorporated into the masonry at the corners and sides of the window openings and the base of the wall has a narrow rendered plinth.

These classrooms are entered from the circulation space created in the southern classroom of the 1878 structure. The rooms have high ceilings and a rendered brick fireplace with a rounded arch opening across the south-west corner.

Two matching stone classrooms were added to the northern end of the 1878 structure in 1904 with some minor modifications to the earlier 1900 classrooms. The reason for different sill levels for the two sets of windows in the north elevation is unclear. Similarly, the stonework in the west gable end shows a conspicuous differentiation in the colour of the mortar pointing up the height of the wall which may be evidence of repair work. Some of the modifications relate to orientation. The tiled roof has been extended over a verandah along the north face of the structure providing some shade and shelter and it might be assumed that the lack of fireplaces in the classrooms indicates that they were not considered necessary on the warmer, north side of the building.⁵⁸

The Hall 1911, 1914

The Hall has a two-storey face red brick external wall forming the west elevation fronting Fitzgerald Street. The tiled roof with gable ends to the north and south is the highest form within the group of structures at *Geraldton Primary School*. The single-storey porch added to west elevation in 1914 with its rounded arch opening, half timbered gable and moulded finial adds style characteristics of the Federation Free Style period to the

⁵⁸ A later drawing prepared in 1935 which shows a brick classroom extension to eastern end of the north elevation, indicates a fireplace was added to the 1904 northern classroom at that time.

place.⁵⁹ The drawings for this portion of work are signed by Hillson Beasley, a key practitioner of this style.

A mezzanine level has been created within the double height space of the Hall, over the eastern half of the room, abutting the 1878 structure. Square timber posts through the centre of the Hall support the upper level which is accessed by open riser staircases at each end. It is not clear from documentary evidence when the mezzanine level was incorporated but the fabric and detailing is characteristic of 1970s construction technology. The timber Queen Post trusses supporting the roof structure are partially exposed with only the top triangular portion of the roof space concealed by a ceiling lining. The trusses are shown on the 1911 construction drawings and are assumed to be authentic fabric.

1911, 1914-15, 1917-18 Brick Classrooms

The addition of two brick classrooms is shown on the same 1911 drawing as the Hall extension. A square pavilion classroom, ('new' science room), was constructed at the south-west corner of the Hall and a smaller room, also square was added to the north elevation, both matching the Federation Free Style characteristics of the Hall. The larger space has a pyramid shaped roof form with a prominent square lantern at the apex. Constructed in stretcher bond face brickwork the walls have a narrow rendered plinth at the base and rendered projecting sills beneath the window openings. The timber framed sash windows are of similar proportions and detailing to the windows in the stone structures, but are singular not grouped elements. The roof extends down over a brick form at the south-east corner of the pavilion which abuts the west gable end of the 1900 stone classroom. A porch roof and concrete ramp with circular metal balustrade have been constructed outside an external entry into the pavilion in the south elevation.

The high ceiling of the pavilion classroom follows the pyramid roof profile and allows plentiful light to infiltrate the classroom interior through the glazed vertical faces of the lantern. The timber framed roof structure is exposed but appears to have been supplemented by steel beams. These may have been required due to the added load imposed by the suspension of mechanical climate control and electrical fittings from the roof structure. A fireplace with rounded arch opening and brick hearth is evident across the north-east corner of the room.

The northern classroom features similar wall detailing to the southern pavilion but has a hipped roof at the eastern end. The former west gable end has been obscured by the addition of a further brick classroom in 1914 at the north-west corner of the Hall. Minor differences are discernible in the fabric and detailing of the construction periods. Bands of render are continuous across the wall of the later section but only present in the projecting window sills of the 1911 classroom. Brick chimneys are

⁵⁹ Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, pp. 136-139.

apparent above the roof line, despite their omission from earlier north facing classrooms.

Documentary evidence suggests further classrooms were added in 1917-18, predominantly for the infants school. A brick classroom with a rendered dado and timber framed windows with six panes in each sash, abuts the eastern end of the 1900 stone classrooms but it appears as an existing structure on the drawing prepared for school additions in 1914. These discrepancies may be clarified with further investigation. It is also not clear at what stage the corrugated iron sheet roofing was replaced with tiles.

1935 Brick Classroom

A brick classroom was added to the eastern end of the 1904 stone structures at the north-east corner of the building in 1935. It appears that modifications were also made to the window and door openings, and a fireplace may have been included in the north-east corner of the eastern stone classroom at this time. The brick addition has external access from the verandah along the north side of the Quadrangle and features some modified detailing to earlier brick classrooms particularly along the Quadrangle elevation where the walls have a rendered dado and the sash windows have been divided into smaller panes. The tiled roof of the earlier structures is continuous across the 1935 portion terminating in a gable end to the east and sheltering verandahs along the north and south elevations. Although constructed in the Inter-War period this structure adopts some similar detailing to the earlier brick classrooms but does not display any other particular style characteristics or features.

1978 Brick Offices and Classrooms

A two-storey brick addition extends to the east along the southern side of the Quadrangle. The fabric and detailing is clearly distinguishable from earlier structures and representative of late twentieth century construction but lacks indicators of any particular style. The tiled roof extends over this portion of the building at the same height as the adjoining structures with the lower floor-to-ceiling heights permitting an upper floor to be incorporated, but requiring the ground floor windows to be lowered. This contrasts with the rest of the building where the window sill level is relatively consistent. A portion of the southern wall comprising the upper floor windows projects through the roof plane breaking the line of the eaves. Other differences include the omission of any rendering and window openings with single pane sashes and brick on edge sills. The structure houses the entrance to the school administration with a plaque by the front door in the south elevation recording that the building was opened on 4th October 1978 by 'The Hon. P.V. Jones M.L.A.'

On the same day, a centenary plaque was laid in the west wall of the 1878 stone classroom now facing the interior of the Hall. This plaque is directly above the original Foundation Stone laid on 4th October 1878 although it is not known whether the latter is in its original location.

A detached wing of single-storey brick classrooms was also constructed in 1978 partially enclosing the east side of the Quadrangle. The rectangular

form has a north-south orientation with gabled, tiled roof and is linked to the southern structure by a covered verandah.

1995-1996 Additions

A Dental Therapy Centre, Library, and Covered Assembly Area were constructed in 1995-1996 detached from the main building. The single-storey Dental Therapy Centre stands immediately to the east and with a narrow separation from the 1935 brick classroom. The ridge of the tiled roof has a perpendicular orientation to the northern wing of classrooms, with its gable ends facing north and south. The single-storey Library with hipped tiled roof, is located to the north-east of the buildings around the Quadrangle, projecting into the grassed playing fields. A plaque records that the building was officially opened on 15 May 1997 by the Minister for Education, Colin Barnett.

The Covered Assembly area is a partially enclosed structure with two rooms at the western end and is located east of the bitumen carpark accessed from Augustus Street.

Each of these structures is representative of late twentieth century construction but lacks indicators of any particular style.

Geraldton Primary School is in good condition and has been well maintained through continual use of the place. Internal finishes and fittings are generally consistent throughout the buildings reflecting current requirements and thereby disguising the evolution of the fabric.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The 1878 building within *Geraldton Primary School* complex is understood to be one of only two school buildings from the 1870s still operating as a school, the other being the 1870 building within the Guildford Primary School complex, also designed by Richard Roach Jewell. The *Geraldton Primary School* 1878 building is complete, although with some alterations and additions, while only remnants of the 1870 structure remain at Guildford Primary School.⁶⁰ Guildford Primary School is on the State Register.⁶¹

Other remaining school buildings of the colonial period include several one-room schools, specifically: Yardarino School (ruins) (1878); Central Greenough School (1865), restored by the National Trust; Freshwater Bay school (1861-62), now Claremont Museum; and Old Perth Boys' School (1853). These buildings are all entered on the State Register, but none are still in use as schools.⁶²

The 1895-1914 additions to *Geraldton Primary School* are typical of school development during this period of rapid growth in the State. Other examples of school buildings of this period include: *Boulder Primary School* (1898-99), is in fair condition and part of an operating school; *Kalgoorlie Primary*

⁶⁰ HCWA assessment documentation, *Guildford Primary School*, Place 4088

⁶¹ HCWA assessment documentation, *Guildford Primary School*, Place 4088

⁶² HCWA assessment documentation for the various places.

School, (1897-1912, comprising two stone buildings is in fair condition and continues to operate as a school; *Applecross Primary School (original buildings)* (1913-1918), comprising two timber-framed classrooms and a shelter shed, was restored in 1982 as an example of a one-teacher school; *East Perth Primary School*, (1895-1914), occupied by the Children's Court c.1975 and has had the exterior restored by East Perth Redevelopment Authority in 1993-94; *East Fremantle Primary School* (1898-1901), a limestone masonry structure, is in good condition and part of an operating school; and *Subiaco Primary School* (1897-1914), in good condition and still operational.⁶³ All these schools are entered on the State Register.

Richard Roach Jewell was involved in the designing of a considerable number of the colonial public buildings in Western Australia, including: Pensioner Barracks, Perth, of which only the Arch remains (in good condition); Bill Sewell Community Recreation Complex, Geraldton, formerly a group of public buildings and in good condition; Central Government Offices, Perth, in fair to good condition but vacant since 1996; Guildford Court House and Gaol (fmr), in good condition and occupied as a museum; Northampton Police Station, Quarters and Court House (fmr), in good condition; Old Toodyay Gaol and Police Station Complex, a tourist attraction since 1962 and extensively restored; The Cloisters, Perth, in good condition and largely intact externally; The Deanery, Perth, restored in the 1970s and in good condition; Trinity Uniting Church Group, well maintained; Wesley Church, well maintained. All these places are on the State Register.

Geraldton Primary School is the oldest continually operating school in Geraldton, and one of the oldest in Western Australia.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

The construction history of the place is complex and some discrepancies have been uncovered between the documentary evidence, (tender documents and available drawings) with the remaining physical fabric. These may be clarified through a more detailed study of the place. It is also not clear at what stage the corrugated iron roof was replaced with tiles.

⁶³ Heritage Council database.