



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

1. **Data Base No.** 0875
2. **Name.** Museum and Arts Centre, Fremantle (1861 onwards)
3. **Description of elements included in this entry.**
The Museum and Arts Centre Buildings and the land on which it stands, being Reserve 31435.
4. **Local Government Area.** City of Fremantle
5. **Location.** 1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle
6. **Owner.** Vested in the City of Fremantle
7. **Statement of Significance of Place (Assessment in Detail)**

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Construction of the Asylum for the Criminally Insane (now known as the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre) commenced in 1861, when the combined population of Perth and Fremantle was still less than 8,000.¹ Built by convict labour, the asylum represented a major commitment of capital and labour resources. It was the largest public building constructed by the convicts in the Colony before they built the Fremantle Prison.

The building of an asylum had been mooted as early as 1855 by Thomas Gray, Superintendent of the Convict Establishment. "I was induced to call the attention of the Medical Officer to the question of accommodation of the said (6) lunatic prisoners by the fact of them appearing to grow worse and also by the fact of attacks having been made upon the Warders in charge of them...I would earnestly press the desirableness of some other Asylum or place of security being establish at an early period."² A temporary Asylum was established on the corner of Croke and Cliff Streets but Surgeon Superintendent Attfield complained that "...the temporary Asylum has a low damp site, ill-ventilated and over crowded wards, and the frequent presence of an overpowering stench from the beach immediately contiguous, consequent upon putrescent jelly fish, seaweed, and other decay..."³

¹ Campbell, R. K. "Building in Western Australia 1851-1880" in Pitt Morison, M. and White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWAP, 1979) p104

² Report from Thomas Gray, Superintendent of the Convict Establishment to Acting Controller General, Captain Wray, (1855)

³ Quoted in Campbell, R. Memo to the Town Clerk (Fremantle) on the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre date 30 Jan 1968

The first design for the new asylum was produced by Captain Wray in 1857, in his capacity as acting Comptroller General during the absence overseas of Lt. Colonel E.Y.W. Henderson, Comptroller-General of Convicts. Wray's design was rejected by the Colonial Office on advice from its Prison experts.⁴ Henderson was asked to research current thinking on the design of mental institutions⁵ and immediately upon his return a site was selected and plans decided upon.⁶ The building was designed to accommodate "16 Imperial Lunatics (Convicts); 6 Colonial Lunatics; 1 Colonial Lunatic Prisoner; 9 Colonial Female Lunatics".⁷

Construction began in 1861, under the supervision of James Manning - Clerk of Works to the Convict Establishment and the Twentieth Company of Engineers, who provided instruction and technical expertise to the convict labourers. Construction took four years. On completion the building was described as "...very substantial and stands by itself on an elevated site and on sandy soil; the wards are spacious and lofty, well lighted and ventilated and affording from the windows a good view of the sea...".⁸ At the time of opening the Asylum inmates numbered 28 males and 17 females,⁹ and increase of 13 lunatics, 8 of whom were female.

Considering the small proportion of females to male in the Colony the proportion of female inmates is very high. This is because the prevailing patterns of incarceration of women were more closely linked with the nineteenth century ideology of women and morality than with criminal insanity.¹⁰ Colonial women, notwithstanding their isolation from England, were expected to live up to the idealised role of woman and motherhood¹¹, and it was considered that women who failed to live up to this ideal threatened society.¹² The Asylum served society by taking "fallen Angels" out of circulation and thus preventing their "corrupting" influence extending further and tainting society.¹³

⁴ Campbell, R. Memo to the Town Clerk (Fremantle) on the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre date 30 Jan 1968

⁵ Campbell, R. K. "Building in Western Australia 1851-1880" in Pitt Morison, M. and White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWAP, 1979) p101

⁶ Kelleher, P. *A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre* (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987) p8

⁷ Henderson: Report in 1858 quoted in Kelleher, P. *A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre* (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987) p8

⁸ Report of Surgeon Superintendent Attfield (1865) quoted in Kelleher, P. *A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre* (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987) p10

⁹ Kelleher, P. *A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre* (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987) p10

¹⁰ Foucault, M. *Madness and Civilisation. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Paris,, 1961, Trans. London, 1967) p 258-9

¹¹ Stannage, C.T. *The People of Perth. A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (Perth, 1979) pp101ff

¹² Grellier, M; "The Family: some aspects of its demography and ideology in mid-nineteenth century Western Australia" in Stannage, C.T. (ed) *A New History of Western Australia* (Perth, 1981) pp480-500

¹³ Foucault, M. *Madness and Civilisation. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Paris,, 1961, Trans. London, 1967) p259

The physical features of the Asylum were "Both Male and Female lunatics have large dining rooms, separate from the sleeping apartments, these latter wards are also spacious and lofty and well ventilated. There is a large exercise yard at the back of the building, with a covered shed to protect it from the sun. In this yard also there is a large wash house in which the female lunatics do a great deal of the prison washing (500 pieces per week average); and also an arranged kitchen in which the whole cooking for the Asylum is done. In front there are two very spacious enclosures for exercise and amusement, the one of about an acre and a half, the other of about three acres and a half."¹⁴The Asylum continued to be used for both convict and free, male and female inmates.

In 1886, the Imperial Government shifted responsibility for public buildings to the Colonial Government and the newly created Public Works Department under the Superintendent of Public Works: George Temple Poole. Temple Poole was responsible for the design of the north east wing, facing Finnerty Street (1886) and the southern wings (1890 and 1894).¹⁵

In 1900, two deaths in questionable circumstances provoked strong editorial comment from the local press. The Government set up a select committee to investigate and the finding included the recommendation that the building "...be demolished as unfit for purpose for which it is now used."¹⁶ Movement of patients to alternative locations in the Metropolitan area began in 1901 and was complete in 1905.

Despite a lack of funding for ongoing maintenance, the place was used as a home for Old Women until 1942 when the buildings were converted to serve as the wartime headquarters of the American forces stationed in Fremantle. After the war a few of the buildings in the southern section were used as an annexe of Fremantle Technical College, but most of the building was untenanted and left in disrepair.¹⁷

In 1957, the Education Department proposed razing the site to provide playing fields for the adjacent John Curtin High School. This proposal prompted a long and vociferous public outcry and community appeal to save the site. The Mayor of Fremantle, Sir Frederick Samson, called a meeting of interested citizens in 1958. At the meeting it was resolved that the State Government and the City of Fremantle should be asked to collaborate in re-instating the building for use as a History Museum and Arts Centre. The Western Australian Museum supported the proposal. The Royal Western Australian Historical Society and the National Trust, who agreed that the buildings could be restored and were worth preserving, supported the idea. Initially the Government offered to hand over

¹⁴ Report of Surgeon Superintendent Attfield (1866) quoted in Kelleher, P. A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle *Museum and Art Centre* (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987) p11

¹⁵ Oldham, R. and J. *Western Heritage Part 2: George Temple Poole : Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* (UWAP, 1980) p78-79

¹⁶ cited in Kelleher, P. A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987)

¹⁷ Hutchinson, D. *The Making of the Fremantle Museum*. (Western Australian Museum Information Series Number 2. Perth) p12

the buildings and a limited area of land, however it was not prepared to support the project financially so negotiations reached an impasse.¹⁸

In 1963, the Earl of Euston, then Chairman of the National Trust of Great Britain, inspected the building, and later said to Sir Frederick Samson, "Don't let them demolish this buildings...it is the best example of Colonial Gothic in Australia today."¹⁹

A fresh approach to the Government in 1964 suggested that part of the building should be made available to the State for the purpose of establishing a branch of the Western Australian Museum with emphasis on the display of historical items. The Government agreed to this and committed financial support in June 1965,²⁰ permitting conversion of the earlier Henderson-designed wing for re-use as an extension of the West Australian Museum. The work was completed in 1966 and restoration work on the northern wing began late 1968.

In October 1970, with the conversion complete, the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Paul Hasluck, officially opened the Maritime Museum. At the time a plaque was put in place at the Museum entrance commemorating the past history of the place and the restoration "...was achieved through the co-operation of the City of Fremantle and the Government of the State of Western Australia." Citations are "Mayor of Fremantle, Sir Frederick Samson. W.A. Museum: Chairman, Sir Thos. Meagher, K.St.J., Director, W.D.L. Ride. Architects: 1861 E.Y.W. Henderson, 1970 R.McK. Campbell."²¹ George Temple Poole, the architect responsible for designing the northern wing in which part of the Museum is housed, is not cited.

The Western Australian Museum and the maritime archaeology team, moved into the premises, occupying an area of 28,000 sq.ft. or about 40% of the building.²² The Maritime Museum, which is recognised throughout the world as being a leader in its field, houses, among other things, cannon and relics of the *Batavia*, wrecked off the coast of Western Australia in 1629, and also relics of the *Gilt Dragon*.

In 1978 the southern wings were conserved and converted for use by the Fremantle Arts Centre. Since 1979, the Centre has been used as a venue for the exhibition of Western Australian Arts and Crafts, teaching art, artists studios, and an information resource centre.

The Fremantle Arts Centre Press, also located within the southern wing, is unique in Australia and provides substantial cultural input into the Western

¹⁸ Hutchinson, D. *The Making of the Fremantle Museum*. (Western Australian Museum Information Series Number 2. Perth) p12

¹⁹ Quoted in Hutchinson, D. *The Making of the Fremantle Museum*. (Western Australian Museum Information Series Number 2. Perth) p12

²⁰ Hutchinson, D. *The Making of the Fremantle Museum*. (Western Australian Museum Information Series Number 2. Perth) p12

²¹ The Museum opening on the 17th of October, 1970. Oldham, R. and J. *Western Heritage Part 2: George Temple Poole : Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* (UWAP, 1980) pp78-86

²² Hutchinson, D. *The Making of the Fremantle Museum*. (Western Australian Museum Information Series Number 2. Perth) p12

Australian and the Australian and international arena through its support of Western Australian authors.

The restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre was the first major restoration work undertaken in Western Australia and work on the project necessitated reviving old trades as well as combining new ones.²³ As a result the restoration received an R.A.I.A. Bronze Medal Citation in 1972 for the architect, and subsequently a R.A.I.A. Bronze Medal in 1977, the restoration project being described as an outstanding achievement.²⁴

In 1978 the building's south elevation was used on a poster for World Environment Day which was distributed to schools throughout Western Australia.²⁵ Since 1991 the site has also housed the Kathleen O'Connor Gallery, representing works of one of Western Australia's finest early women artists.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Sited on the rise of a hill, a short distance from the centre of town, the first building for the Asylum for the Criminally Insane was constructed in 1861, and added to in successive stages in 1886, 1890 and 1894. The first building was built by convict labour, the later ones by contractors to the Public Works Department. The complex comprises two wings constructed of limestone quarried from the local Fremantle Prison site, with sheoak shingles over a high pitched jarrah roof structure. Internally, local jarrah was used for flooring, and imported oregon, redwood and cedar timbers for joinery mouldings. Iron mongery, hardware and nails were made locally, in the prison workshop.²⁶

While incorporating a variety of stylistic influences the overall design of the asylum is not derived from any of the standard pattern books of the time.²⁷ The design incorporates elements of the Colonial Gothick Picturesque style, similar to "Carthona" in Darling Point, NSW, and late Georgian simplicity²⁸ The inclusion of the gothic cloisters was both practical in the hot climate and added an interesting design element. The regularity of the windows marries well with the cloisters to give a pleasant patterned effect. The windows are recessed into the deep walls, but contribute to the strong rhythmic design of the facade. The strong vertical lines of the windows continue unrestrained to end in curved Dutch gables, the only restriction on upward movement being a small battlement frieze around the chimney. The gables were topped by pediments, which have since

²³ *The Architect* W.A. (R.A.I.A.(W.A.), Perth) 82/3 Volume 22 No. 3. p22

²⁴ Cownie, S. & M. Fremantle and Rottneest. Buildings classified and recorded by the National Trust. (Perth 1978)pp12-13

²⁵ Oldham, R. and J. *Western Heritage Part 2: George Temple Poole : Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* (UWAP, 1980) p82

²⁶ Oldham, R. and J. *Western Heritage Part 2: George Temple Poole : Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* (UWAP, 1980) p78

²⁷ Campbell, R. K. "Building in Western Australia 1851-1880" in Pitt Morison, M. and White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWAP, 1979) p101

²⁸ 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) p 36-39

been demolished, thus increasing the verticality of the building.²⁹ One architectural historian has written that the design "wavers between an early form of Gothic Revival, seen in its lean arcades and buttresses, and Victorianised Georgian, seen in its window forms and proportions, and most of its mouldings."³⁰

Accommodation comprised male and female sleeping wards, separate dining rooms, cells, a padded cell, a large exercise yard at the back of the building, with a covered shed to protect it from the sun, a large wash house and an arranged kitchen.

On the eastern side of the courtyard is a single-storey bloc, which comprised wardens quarters, constructed sometime prior to 1887. In this area were also a wash house, a pump yard, wood store and a small porch at the entrance to the Matrons quarters.³¹

In 1886, a northern extension to the original building was constructed under the direction of Temple Poole to house male patients, with an entrance to Finnerty Street.³² The contracts for this were signed on 15th November 1886³³ and it was constructed by Bunning Brothers for a cost of £555.³⁴ The wing comprises cells and wards for the patients. The new wing echoed the design of the previous structures, with a steep roof, pitched at the same angle and covered with the same hand split shingles. The proportions of the windows, the glazing of small diamond panes and the walls of limestone blocks blended with the original.

In 1890, a southern extension, comprising of offices and quarters for the Matron and Assistant Matron on the Ground floor and on the upper storey additional ward to accommodate further female patients, was designed by Poole. Bunning Brothers and O.P. Staples obtained the contract with a tender of £949 on 20th June, 1890.³⁵ Additional extensions to the east were completed in the same year to provide a female dining room and extra female wards. The extension has three wide bay-windows on the ground floor of a two storey building. Although the design is more domestic in style, the wing harmonises with the other earlier building abutting it through the use of similar materials and scale.

In 1894, further extensions were made to provide additional ground floor accommodation in the form of doctor's and nurses quarters and, on the first floor, were four-bed wards for private patients.³⁶ The builder was John Milne

²⁹ An 1898 photograph reproduced in Hutchinson, D. *The Making of the Fremantle Museum*. (Western Australian Museum Information Series Number 2. Perth) p12

³⁰ Beasley, M.U. "Architectural Styles and their Sources in Western Australia since 1831" in Pitt Morison, M. and White, J. (eds) *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWAP, 1979) p194

³¹ Kelleher, P. *A Report on the Restoration of the Fremantle Museum and Art Centre* (Architecture and Culture Student work, Curtin University, 1987) p18

³² PWD plan no 37. Date 5th April 1887 but signed by Thos. B Barratt, Resident Engineer, a position he ceased to occupy in November 1886. Also PWD 662

³³ PWD 663

³⁴ *Government Gazette* 1886 p 728

³⁵ *Government Gazette* 1890 p464

³⁶ PWD 2793 drawing no 2, elevation and plan, 1894, drawing no 5. drawn by Ernest Hack, signed George T. Poole. Also PWD 2793 drawing no 5. 8th March, 1894.

who charged £3,997/10/2.³⁷ This addition featured timber verandahs extending across two storeys of the east front, dormer windows in the roof and the roof terminates above the entrance.³⁸ Facing east, the new wing connected the other wings, and since conversion to a Museum and Arts Centre is the main entrance to the Fremantle Arts Centre.

From 1905 to 1942, when the last inmates of the Asylum were transferred out of the building, there was little ongoing maintenance. Although the site was then used as an Old Women's Home little modification to the fabric occurred as there were little funds available. At some point, possibly about 1912, new windows were put into the buildings which bound the court on the north and south sides.³⁹

A restoration survey was undertaken in 1964-65 by architect Raymond Jones, with the intention to restore the "Old Women's Home", Finnerty Street and to advise on its subsequent conversion into a Maritime Museum and Art Gallery.⁴⁰ On 2nd October, 1967, architect Robin McK. Campbell was appointed to undertake the restoration and conversion of the place.⁴¹ Conservation and adaptation of the 1861 and 1886 wings was undertaken during 1968 and 1969 in association with the Fremantle Town Council. Work included the removal of rubbish and unwanted external structures which had accumulated over the years. The strength and stability of structural elements was checked physically, and theoretically, where possible and was found to be basically sound; although there were weaknesses in some areas which had been crudely altered. Vandalism and neglect had also left its mark. Sub-contractors carried out the work over a three year period. Much of the work involved making good wall and floor surfaces, refurbishing doors and windows and replacing the services. The building re-opened in October 1970.

In 1978, additional conservation work was undertaken in the 1890 and 1894 additions to provide administrative accommodation for the Fremantle Arts Centre and the Fremantle Arts Centre Press. However, the rooms were not structurally altered.

Further details of the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre buildings can be found in Ingrid van Bremen's thesis on Temple Poole, *George Temple Poole, New Architecture of the Goldboom in WA*. (UWA, Department of Architecture Thesis)

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

³⁷ Government Gazette July 1894 p 759

³⁸ Oldham, R. and J. *Western Heritage Part 2: George Temple Poole : Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* (UWAP, 1980) p83

³⁹ Oldham, R. and J. *Western Heritage Part 2: George Temple Poole : Architect of the Golden Years 1885-1897* (UWAP, 1980) p86

⁴⁰ Jones, R. *Fremantle Maritime Museum and Art Gallery* (Fremantle City Council) May 1964.

⁴¹ Letter of acceptance of offer, R. McK. Campbell, 2nd October, 1967

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 Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre has aesthetic value for its design accomplishment. The building displays an eclectic mixture of styles in a new and original manner, and demonstrates strong and confident handling of form, space and structure.

The result is an exceptionally interesting building, enlivened by a variety of external and internal spaces, by asymmetrically picturesque composition, and by a variety of stylistic influences including Gothic-Revival, Jacobean cum Dutch, and Georgian sources.⁴²

2. HISTORIC VALUE

The Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre complex has historic value for its association with the convict establishment and the development of a public works program during the convict period.

The place has a close association with the treatment of insanity and the treatment of women in Western Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The building has a strong association with important figures in the development of the State including Captain E.Y.W. Henderson, Controller of Convicts; George Temple Poole, Government Architect, who was responsible for the design of many public buildings; and the Bunning brothers, who were to found a leading Western Australian construction firm.

The first major restoration project in Western Australia, the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre has historic significance for its association with the political development of community lobby groups to conserve buildings and the development of conservation practice in the State.

3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre has significance for its demonstration of technical skill in the use of local building materials.

The place yields information about convict architecture in Western Australia, attitudes and treatment of mental illness in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the development of maritime archaeology and museum display in Western Australia.

4. SOCIAL VALUE

⁴² Molyneux, I. *Looking Around Perth* (Wescolour Press, East Fremantle, 1981) p9

The Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre has played a significant role in the historic, social and cultural activities of Fremantle in respect of the convict settlement, mental health and, more recently, the arts and publishing. The place is held in high regard by the broader, Western Australian, community.

5. RARITY

The buildings in the complex comprise the only purpose-built nineteenth century lunatic asylum in Western Australia.

The buildings are rare in both architectural form and in employing convict labour.

6. REPRESENTATIVENESS

The building is representative of the increasing sophistication of building Western Australia during the convict period, and of attitudes and practices concerning insanity and incarceration in colonial society.

CONDITION

The conservation of the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre complex commenced in 1978 in celebration of Western Australia's sesqui-centenary. The buildings have been maintained and are in sound condition. Conservation work on upgrading the grounds and landscaping is in progress.

INTEGRITY

The buildings are no longer used for their original purpose, however the current uses sit comfortably within the spaces and do not detract from the significance of the place.

AUTHENTICITY

The fabric of the buildings were little altered during the conservation work the place has a high degree of authenticity.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre complex has cultural significance for the following reasons:

it has historic significance as a major demonstration of the building program undertaken in the colony during the convict era,

it has strong associations with the treatment of mental health and women in 19th century colonial society,

it is an outstanding local example of colonial gothic architecture, demonstrating the design capabilities of E.Y.W. Henderson and George Temple Poole,

it has social significance as the first major restoration project in Western Australia, and

the place is held in high regard for its colonial architecture and its more recent use as a focal point for cultural activities in Fremantle.

8. Register of Heritage Places

Interim entry 20/11/1992

Permanent Entry 16/11/1993

9. Conservation Order

10. Heritage Agreement

11. References

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Oldham, R., *George Temple-Poole, Architect of the Golden Years (1885-1897)*, (Nedlands: UWA Press, 1980).

WA Museum, "The Making of Fremantle Museum", *WA Museum*

Van Bremen, I., *George Temple Poole, New Architecture of the Goldboom in WA*. (unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Architecture, UWA.)