



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)

- 3.18 Marketing and retailing

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 308 Commercial and service industries

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

McKenzie's Buildings is a fine example of a functional commercial building in the Federation Free style, and includes the innovative construction of a water tank on the tower corner of the building. (Criterion 1.2)

McKenzie's Buildings, with its substantial presence on the street corner, is an integral element of the prominent intersection of Hannan and Maritana Streets in Kalgoorlie. Collectively the buildings on the corners of the Hannan and Maritana Street intersection, including the *McKenzie's Buildings*, form a significant cultural environment in the town of Kalgoorlie. (Criteria 1.3 & 1.4)

McKenzie's Buildings forms part of the Hannan Street streetscape which, spanning four blocks, is the most extensive, intact and significant commercial street representing the 1880s and 1890s goldrushes in Western Australia. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

McKenzie's Buildings is representative of the successful exploitation of the Eastern Goldfields and the continuing development of Kalgoorlie as the major administrative and commercial centre of the goldfields in the early 1900s. (Criterion 2.1)

McKenzie's Buildings is representative of the third phase of construction on Hannan Street between 1898 and 1908, when the timber and iron buildings were replaced with brick structures. (Criterion 2.2)

McKenzie's Buildings is closely associated with Robert D. McKenzie, who constructed the building to house his growing merchandising business, The

* 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.

McKenzie family were associated with the site from 1895 to 1979. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

McKenzie's Buildings forms part of the Hannan Street streetscape which is the most extensive, intact and significant commercial street in the Eastern Goldfields representing the 1880s and 1890s goldrushes in Western Australia and as such is significant to the Western Australian community. Spanning four blocks, the Hannan Street precinct has been identified by the National Trust, and listed on the Register of the National Estate, as a significant turn of the century goldfields' town streetscape which extends over three street blocks and comprises one and two storey buildings of various styles of the period. (Criterion 4.1)

McKenzie's Buildings, with its substantial presence on the street corner, is an integral element of the prominent intersection of Hannan and Maritana Streets which form a significant cultural environment in the townscape of Kalgoorlie. This prominent intersection contributes to the local and wider community's sense of place as a reminder of the 1880s and 1890s Western Australian goldrushes and, as such, has become an easily identifiable icon of this period. (Criteria 4.1 & 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

McKenzie's Buildings is an uncommon commercial corner premise in the Kalgoorlie town centre, where most corners are occupied by hotels constructed in the Federation style. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

McKenzie's Buildings, is a fine representative example of the Federation Free style of architecture. (Criterion 6.1)

McKenzie's Buildings is important in representing a way of life associated with commercial and retail businesses, and the changes which have taken place to continue those functions. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The fabric of the original and more recent fitouts of the public spaces of the tenancies is in good condition. The non public spaces, in the basement and at the rear of the ground floor are in poor condition with no apparent maintenance having taken place for some time. The street front exteriors are in a fair to good condition with the original timber work evidencing minimal maintenance, the roof rusting in places, and the boxed canopies in varying conditions. Overall the place is in fair to good condition.)

12.4 INTEGRITY

The configuration of the tenancies at all levels have changed over time, although the spaces and fabric continue to function as originally intended. The place evidences a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The external fabric above street level is mostly intact as is the basement area. The ground floor has retained the structural elements and fabric throughout, and ceiling fabric in two tenancies. Wall and ceiling fabric has been retained throughout the upper floor. The retention of the external fabric which comprises the identity of the building, the roof monitors and original staircases, contributes to the moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Irene Sauman, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Laura Gray, Heritage Consultant.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

McKenzie's Buildings is a two-storey plus basement, brick and iron commercial premise constructed in 1904. The place was designed by architects Hawkins and Sprigg in the Federation Free style, and was constructed by W. & J. Park. *McKenzie's Buildings* was built for R. D. McKenzie & Co to replace their existing timber and iron premises (1894).¹ *McKenzie's Buildings* was refurbished c. 1979 and has continuously functioned as commercial premises since its construction.

In June 1893, Paddy Hannan and his partners discovered alluvial gold thirty miles (48 kms) north-east of Coolgardie. A camp, known as Hannan's Find, quickly developed at the site, with bough huts and hessian and canvas structures erected along the edge of the track from Coolgardie. Many of these structures housed businesses to serve the prospectors who flocked to the area. Later that year, George Brookman and Sid Pearce located gold reefs three miles south of Hannan's Find, at what was to become Boulder. On 4 September 1894, Hannan's Find was declared the townsite of Kalgoorlie. The track from Coolgardie became the main street and was named Hannan Street.²

With the establishment of the townsite, the second phase of building along Hannan Street began. This was facilitated by the arrival of the Eastern Goldfields railway line in September 1896, which made the transport of more substantial building materials much easier. The original structures were replaced with timber-framed buildings clad in galvanised iron, and usually lined internally with hessian or canvas. The early buildings presented a very real fire hazard, and there were a number of fires in Hannan Street over the

¹ Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1989, pp. 136-139.

² Webb, M. & A. *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of WA*, (2 vols), Hocking & Co and St George Books, Perth, 1995, p. 91; King, Norma, *The Voice of the Goldfields: 100 years of the 'Kalgoorlie Miner'*, p. 15; Kalgoorlie-Boulder Tourist Centre, *Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie 'Our Golden Heritage': a heritage walk along Hannan Street*, June 1995, pp. 2-4.

ensuing years. Between 1898 and 1908, substantial brick buildings replaced the timber and iron and hessian structures in the town centre, although many timber and iron residences remained in the town.³

Lot 59, on the corner of Hannan and Maritana streets, was first offered for sale by auction in December 1894.⁴ It was purchased by John Maxwell Ferguson.⁵ At the time of his purchase there was a small iron building on the site from which Courthorpe & Sullivan were operating as ironmongers, clothiers and general storekeepers.⁶ In January 1896, title was transferred to Robert Donald McKenzie and Frederick William Strother.⁷ They traded under the name of McKenzie, Strother & Co. The business grew quickly, in keeping with general developments on the Kalgoorlie goldfields, and the building was enlarged. General merchandise was soon abandoned in favour of hardware, timber and furniture.⁸ Later in 1896, William Strother retired. McKenzie bought out his share of the business and traded as McKenzie & Co. In 1897, the company was incorporated.⁹

The building continued to be enlarged until it covered the entire lot and a bulk store was built on McDonald Street. When bricks and mortar replaced timber and iron as the major building material in Kalgoorlie, McKenzie & Co gave up the timber trade and concentrated on the hardware and furnishing business. In 1901, the company had:

a London office... and also a branch at Fremantle... McKenzie & Co carry an immense stock of hardware and furniture of all kinds at their establishment, also mining material of every description, the value of the stock on hand being upward of £20,000... The extent of the business necessitates the employment of a staff of twenty permanent hands.¹⁰

Kalgoorlie-Boulder had a combined population at this time of approximately 30,000, with an extensive electric tramline system providing public transportation around the two towns. The Hannan-Maritana street corner was a major intersection, with tramlines running along both streets.¹¹

In 1904, Robert McKenzie engaged architects Hawkins and Sprigg to design a new building for the McKenzie & Co corner site. McKenzie & Co held a 're-building' sale over December 1903 and January 1904, 'to make room for the builders'.¹² The contractors, W. & J. Park, were supposed to be taking possession of the site at the end of January.¹³ A drawing of *McKenzie's Buildings* was published in the *Western Argus* Christmas issue of 29 November 1904, with the statement that the place was almost completed.

3 Webb, M. & A. op cit, pp. 430-432, 540.

4 *West Australian Government Gazette*, 23 November 1894, p. 1165.

5 Certificate of Title Vol. 68 Fol. 144, 19 June 1895.

6 Thiel, P. W. H. *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, 1901, p. 642; Advertisement, *Western Argus*, 22 December 1894, p. 4.

7 Certificate of Title Vol. 68 Fol. 144, 9 January 1896.

8 Thiel, P. W. H. op cit, p. 642.

9 ibid; Certificate of Title Vol. 68 Fol. 144, 29 August 1896.

10 Thiel, P. W. H. op cit, p. 642-3 & photographs of old Hannan Street premises and bulk store. See supporting material.

11 Webb, M. & A. op cit, p. 553 & photograph c. 1940s, p. 771.

12 *Kalgoorlie Miner*, Saturday's issues, December 1903, p. 2.

13 *Kalgoorlie Miner*, January 9, 1904, p. 2; King, Norma *When Hannan Street was Young*, 6 page booklet, 1976, p. 5.

The drawing showed the Maritana Street frontage, which extended the length of the lot.¹⁴

McKenzie's Buildings was completed the following month, in time for Christmas trading. The place was advertised as 'The Big Store' and signage to that effect was painted on the corner frontage of the building.¹⁵ Information received at the time of the physical inspection of the place indicates that a water tank was fitted on top of the corner tower.¹⁶ No documentary evidence has been located to confirm this however. Early photographs of *McKenzie's Buildings* show that the section above the tower was covered in large neon signs which may or may not have been attached over a water tank.¹⁷ Hawkins & Sprigg had included water storage 'features' in the Semaphore Chambers which they had previously constructed on Hannan Street in 1899, but no details of these features was given.¹⁸

Robert Donald McKenzie was born at Maldon, Victoria in 1865. His father was a merchant and mining investor. After being educated at St Paul's Grammar School, Melbourne, he was apprenticed to Briscoe & Co, hardware merchants, and later managed a firm in the Goulburn Valley. In 1892, he moved to Western Australia, first working for Symon, Hubble & Co and then for J. M. Ferguson. McKenzie is claimed to be the first commercial traveller to visit Hannan's Find.¹⁹ It may have been on his suggestion that J. M. Ferguson purchased Courthorpe & Sullivan's store, or perhaps Ferguson financed McKenzie's entry into his own business.

Robert McKenzie was elected to the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council in the first election in 1895, topping the poll, and was elected Mayor in 1897. He served on two Royal Commissions relating to the mining industry and, in 1898, was elected the first president of the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Commerce, a position he held for many years. In 1904 he was elected to the Legislative Council for the North-East province. He was Chairman of Directors of the Kalgoorlie Brewing and Ice Company, and had pastoral interests on the Blackwood River.²⁰

Title to *McKenzie's Buildings* was transferred to McKenzie & Co Ltd in 1923.²¹ Robert McKenzie died on 14 May 1928, but McKenzie & Co continued to trade until about 1940. In July that year, title passed to Robert's widow, Emma Mary McKenzie.²² In 1941, the ground floor corner shop space in *McKenzie's Buildings* was occupied by J. Bailey's grocers. Other tenants who occupied the building at this time, included a fruiterer and confectioner, dentist, music teacher, solicitor, furniture dealer, Musgroves music

14 *Western Argus*, Christmas Issue, 29 November 1904, [p. 55]. See supporting material.

15 *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 23 December 1904, p. 9.

16 Information provided to Laura Gray by Bill Robinson, who occupies the Goldfields Business Enterprise Centre in McKenzie Buildings.

17 Photographs, c. 1940s, Webb, M. & A. op cit, p. 771; undated, Battye 5168B/71; 1910, *Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie 'Our Golden Heritage'*, p. 39. See supporting material.

18 *Western Argus*, 28 September 1899, p. 12.

19 Battye, J. S. (ed) *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, 1915, p. 330.

20 *ibid*; *Western Argus*, 4 May 1895, p. 2.

21 Certificate of Title Vol. 827 Fol. 171, 5 April 1923.

22 Certificate of Title Vol. 827 Fol. 171, 31 July 1940; *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1920-1941.

wholesalers, and Nestle's Ltd.²³ Since at least 1970, the street corner shop space has been occupied as a chemist shop.²⁴

Following Emma McKenzie's death in 1955, title passed to her children and, later, to some of her grandchildren among others. By 1970, title to *McKenzie's Buildings* had been divided into fourteen shares.²⁵ McKenzie family interests in the place ended in 1979, when Graeme John Crisp, pharmacist, Kenneth Joseph Hall, electrician, and Trevor Dudley Kent, builder, purchased *McKenzie's Buildings*.²⁶ Graeme Crisp, Chemist occupied the shop space on the street corner of the building at this time.²⁷ *McKenzie's Buildings* was extensively refurbished by the new owners. The refurbishment included the addition of partitions on the upper floor. In March 1994, *McKenzie's Buildings* changed hands for a reputed one million dollars and is currently owned by a group of investors in East Perth.²⁸ Net rental for the building at time of sale was put at \$159,399.²⁹

One change to the facade of *McKenzie's Buildings* concerns access to the upper floor balcony, above the ground floor verandah. The balcony on the upper level was accessed by a doorway in the Maritana Street corner frontage, but this doorway has since been converted to a window with an arched top to match the rest of the windows.³⁰ This appears to have been done prior to the c. 1979 refurbishment. In September 1994, approval was granted by Kalgoorlie Town Council for the truncation of the ground floor corner elevation and the addition of a new doorway at the truncation, affecting entry into the chemist shop.³¹

In 1999, *McKenzie's Buildings* continues to function as retail and office premises. Tenancies on the ground floor include: Bunco photography, AMP agency, Café Ferrari, Bobbitts hairdresser, a beautician, Greg Crawford pharmacy, and Games R Us; in the basement: Goldfields Christian Family Church and Goldfields Grooming and Department; and on the first floor: Strudwick Human Resources, and Goldfields Business Enterprise Centre.³²

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

McKenzie's Buildings is located on the north west corner of Hannan and Maritana Streets, the most significant intersection in Kalgoorlie. The building occupies the entire site and comprises three levels. There are a series of shops at street level, office tenancies in the McKenzie Chambers at the first floor level, and several tenancies in the basement, including retail, storage, studios and offices.

²³ *Wise's Post Office Directories, 1941-1949.*

²⁴ *West Australian Telephone Directories, 1970-1998; photograph, 1970, Battye 4429B/28.* See supporting material.

²⁵ Certificates of Title Vol. 827 Fol. 171,15 September 1955, 22 September 1958, 24 October 1962, 16 October 1964; Vol. 320 Fol. 5A, 23 January 1970; Vol. 475 Fol. 5A, 19 February 1971.

²⁶ Certificate of Title, Vol. 1537 Fol. 595, 27 July 1979.

²⁷ *West Australian Telephone Directories, 1980-1994.*

²⁸ Certificate of Title, Vol. 1537 Fol. 595, 2 March 1994.

²⁹ Health Department File, 56 Piccadilly Street, 05-03-41, 1994.

³⁰ Photographs, undated, Battye 5168B/71; 1910, *Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie 'Our Golden Heritage'*, p. 39c. 1940s, Webb, M. & A. op cit, p.771; 1970, Battye 4429B/28. See supporting material.

³¹ Minutes of Kalgoorlie Town Council, 12 September 1994, p. 1290, HCWA File 1295. See supporting material.

³² Information provided by physical inspection.

McKenzie's Buildings delineates the corner in a distinctive manner as do the Palace Hotel, Exchange Hotel and Australia Building on the other three corners. The building is central within the commercial heart of Kalgoorlie which is essentially two storey buildings, and is integral within the streetscape of Hannan Street.

McKenzie's Buildings displays some characteristics of the Federation Free style.³³ The street frontages evidence an eclectic combination of details. The red face brick facade above street level remains intact with the rendered and stucco details contrasting in cream. The flat arched rendered window heads and pediment elements are asymmetrically balanced on each street frontage. A decorative stucco detail runs across the gable tops of the pediments and along the cornice of the parapets. The central arched recessed rendered feature is flanked each side by tourelles, and the arched detail has a stepped rendered border. The infill detail of the Hannan Street pediment has the words 'McKenzie's Buildings' in relief. A similar pediment off centre on the Maritana Street frontage states 'McKenzie and Co. Limited', and the pediment at the end of the Maritana Street frontage is detailed in a similar manner but with no signage. The fanlights above the windows on the Hannan Street facade show the word 'Dentist' painted onto the glass.

The corner tower, which no longer has the water tank in place, anchors the corner and emphasises the verticality with tourelle details and vertical windows. The ground floor verandahs along the street frontages show decorative timber balustrading. There is no evidence of there having been a first floor verandah, suggesting a balcony at the upper level instead. Steel posts and token bracket detailing form a verandah colonnade at ground floor level, with boxed canopies along the perimeter.

The northwest and southwest face brick walls form the property boundary along both side boundaries. The roof of the place is complex and has four monitor roofs along the building, and one above the chambers entry.

Without exception, tenancies on the ground floor have retained the original structural walls, but show no evidence of any original shop fronts, with each tenancy displaying a different style. The corner chemist shop tenancy demonstrates considerable change with a truncated corner and ramped ceramic tile entries into the shop, as well as tiled panels across the top of the shop front glazing.

The McKenzie Chambers entrance on Hannan Street evidences a recent refurbishment with pilasters each side of the timber lined pillars. The three steps and entry have been laid with quarry tiles which continue through the double timber framed glazed doorway, with sidelights and fanlights above, to the original staircase.

The interiors of the shop tenancies are for the most part modern fitouts, except for the northern most shop on Maritana Street which has retained evidence of all original doors and windows, ceilings and floors. The tenancy central along the Maritana Street facade has retained the pressed metal ceiling which has a central recessed panel.

All the tenancies have basements, although only the north tenancy and the chemist shop directly access or use their basement tenancy. The front perimeter of the Maritana Street shops still have the glass block prism pavement tiles in place, providing light to the basement.

³³ Apperly, R., op cit, pp. 136-139.

The basement on the corner frontage is accessed from the McKenzie Chambers entry in Hannan Street. Some of the basement spaces along the Maritana Street frontage are connected to the chamber's entry. There is another staircase central along the south west wall of the building. It opens onto a covered corridor along that wall which accesses the right of way at the north end.

The basement walls are lime washed face brick showing considerable evidence of moisture ingress. Brick piers approximately one metre square provide a structural grid support within the basement spaces. The floors are concrete except for the lobby of the central staircase where there is evidence of clay bricks laid in a circular pattern at the foot of the stairs. The return staircase is timber with vertical timber balustrading.

Immediately inside the entry doors of McKenzie Chambers, on the right, is the main staircase to the first floor tenancies, and the basement staircase is on the left. The original turned timber newel post and balusters of the double flight staircase, which leads directly up to the first floor are still in place. The double flight stairwell has a monitor window above. Halfway up the staircase is a small stairway leading to a tenancy on the left.

The top of the stairs opens into a large foyer which is part of a wider corridor along the length of the building, accessing all the first floor tenancies.

The most striking feature of the upper level is the decorative pressed metal ceilings which are in place throughout with decorative cornices and a series of four monitor windows similarly lined with pressed metal. The monitor windows and extent of the ceilings can only be viewed from within the tenancies.

Tenancy fitouts for the entire first floor are quality jarrah doors and window panels, with glazed partitioning above the solid partitioning to door height. The position of the wall partitioning does not correspond to the ceiling patterns which indicate the original room configurations. There are two other sets of stairs between the ground floor and first floor besides the main public entry staircase. Both return staircases are timber detailed with simple vertical balusters.

The row of four tenancies on the right each have a large monitor window lined with decorative pressed metal. The tenancy on the immediate right at the top of the main staircase shows evidence of the original plaster moulded circular air vents on the external walls, and the steel support structure for the original water tower which was above the east corner of the building. There is no evidence of stair access to the former tower.

Further on the right are two office tenancies with partitioning into smaller office spaces within the tenancies. On the left is a staircase and toilet facilities before two small interconnected offices. A safe is still in place in one of the offices. Further on the left are two more toilets and a small kitchen.

An arch across the foyer corridor is one of a series in the wall through to the Maritana Street frontage. The arches have been infilled but defined by a small recess. The next tenancy on the right has a mezzanine floor.

On the left, in the west corner of the building, a residential unit has been established with a kitchen and bathroom fitout and a mezzanine bedroom accessed by a simple timber staircase.

At the end of the corridor, on the right is the second internal staircase, detailed the same as the other staircase.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

As a commercial building, *McKenzie's Buildings* is unusual in the town centre of Kalgoorlie for its corner site. Most corner sites, including two of the other three corners at the Hannan-Maritana Street intersection, are occupied by hotels. *McKenzie's Buildings* could be compared with the commercial and residential buildings at 151-165 Beaufort Street, Northbridge which were built in the same period (1903), or with the Beaucott Building (two-storey 1937 art deco refurbishment of a 1905 single storey building) and the Alexander Building (1939 refurbishment of a two-storey c.1918 building), which are situated on opposite corners of the Beaufort-Walcott Street intersection in Mt Lawley. All these buildings still function in their original capacity as shop premises, but the Perth buildings also had a residential component which is not found in *McKenzie's Buildings*.

13.4 REFERENCES

No key references.

13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH
