State Heritage Areas of South Australia

former Moonta Railway Station

Kadina Road, Moonta Mines

SAHR 10187 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 12 January 1984

The first railway to Moonta was a horse-operated tramway for the transportation of copper ore. It was opened by the Wallaroo and Kadina Railway and Pier Company on 11 July 1866.

During these early years of mining at Moonta, communication with the outside world was mostly by ship, from Wallaroo or Moonta Bay. To reach Adelaide required a sea journey around Yorke Peninsula from Spencer Gulf to Gulf St Vincent.

In May 1876 the State Government negotiated the purchase of the tramway between the mines and the smelter, and by early 1878 had completed the deal.

Moonta Railway Station, 2005

The line was upgraded for steam locomotives, and linked to the Colony's rail system, via an extension of the already established Adelaide-Burra line. This branch was extended west from Bowman's, through Port Wakefield, skirting south of the Hummock's Range to Moonta. The line opened on 1 March 1878. The goods shed currently on site dates from this period, but the original 1878 wooden station building has been demolished.

Arched windows, 2005

The present passenger station was built in 1908, during an upgrading of rail facilities. At that time the price of copper was booming, and Moonta was a prosperous rural centre with a large mining population.

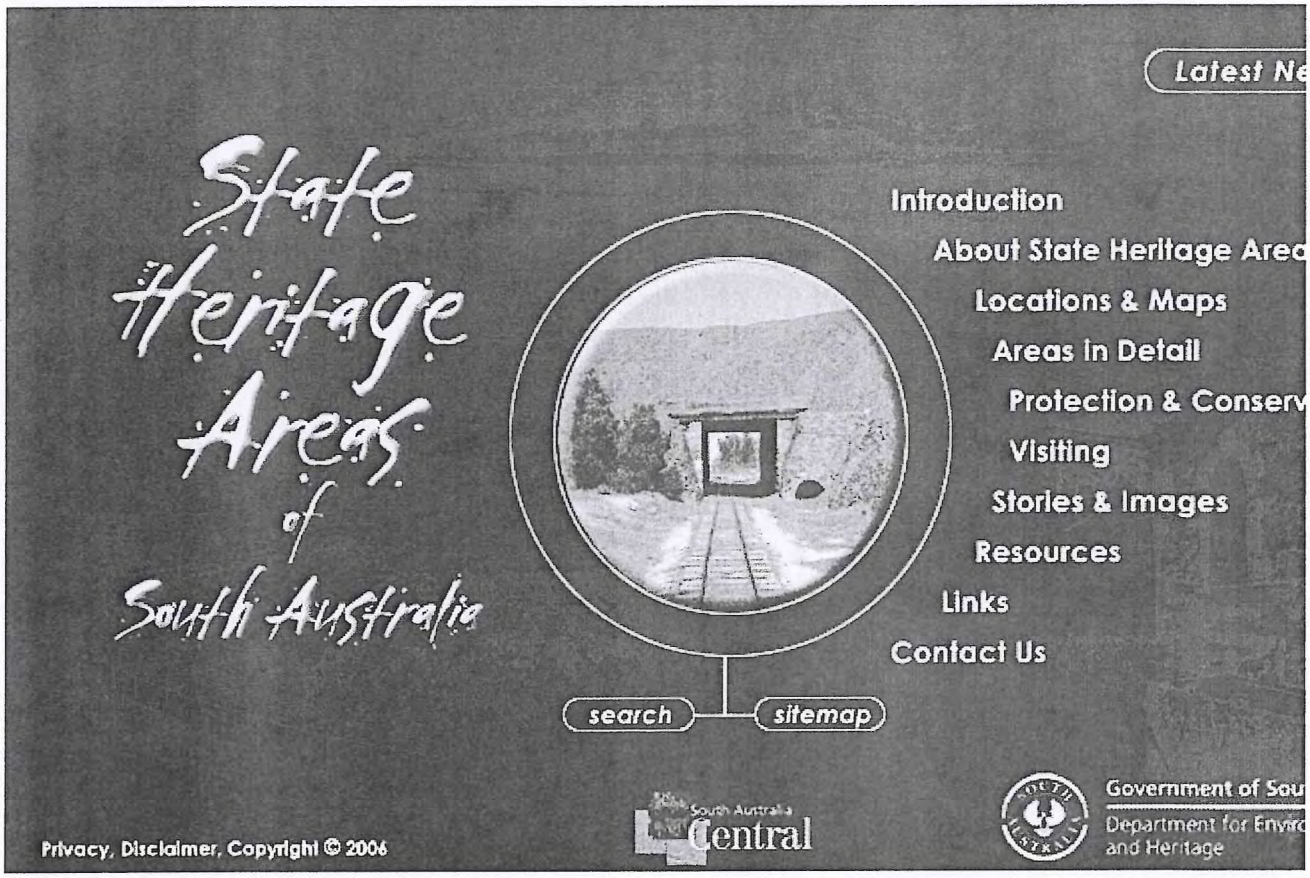
The station is in Federation style and is the same design allocated to only two other large South Australian country centres (Wallaroo and Penola). It was designed by Engineer in Chief, Alex Moncrieff, and built by contractor J.A. Gambling, using local stone and red brick.

Notable architectural features are the large arched windows, facing both the platform and the roadway, and the ornate chimneys. The interior has timber and slate floors, plastered walls and an ornate timber staircase.

National Trust Information centre, 2005
(Note Goods Shed in background)

After the Moonta Mine closed in 1923 traffic on the railway declined, but it was 1972 before the Moonta line closed. The railway station is now a tourist information shop for the Moonta Branch of the National Trust and is an important landmark at the entrance to the Moonta Mines State Heritage Area.

Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Heritage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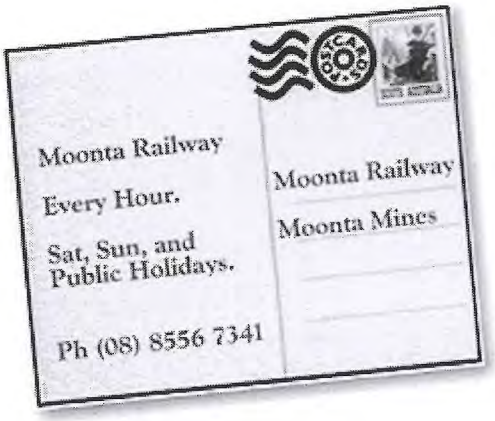
Yorke Peninsula

Moonta Railway

"I'd like to welcome you aboard Moonta Railways for a tour of the Moonta Mines ... Copper has been mined here from 1861 until 1923 ... it was discovered by a bloke called Paddy Ryan a shephered, so lots of things around here are named after him for example Ryans Shaft ... that sort of thing." The copper history of Moonta is in the safe hands of Don Underlin and Mick Harby, two of eleven volunteers who run the National Trust's steam railway. The journey begins in the historic precinct of Moonta which, along with Kadina and Wallaroo, each make up a corner of the copper triangle at the top of the Yorke Peninsula. After Ryan's discovery things gathered pace in Moonta ... within four years there were 12 hundred men and boys working the mines - supporting a town of more than 5000.

Ten years later - this is 1876 remember - the mine returned over a million pounds in shareholder dividends. The train tour through the skeleton of this mining beast, reveals the remains of tanks used to sort the ore. Saltwater was pumped from the Gulf and into it was dropped copper ore and iron - when the water was drained the copper stuck to the iron and was scraped off and sent to market via Wallaroo. The flushing of used salt water is thought to be responsible for much of the degraded bush around the mine sites - a stark contrast to it's original state. "Moonta got it's name from an Aboriginal word meaning impenitrable scrub." The boom died when the mine closed in 1923 and with it went much of the population. But Moonta has survived as an agricultural and service centre and through its pride in heritage.

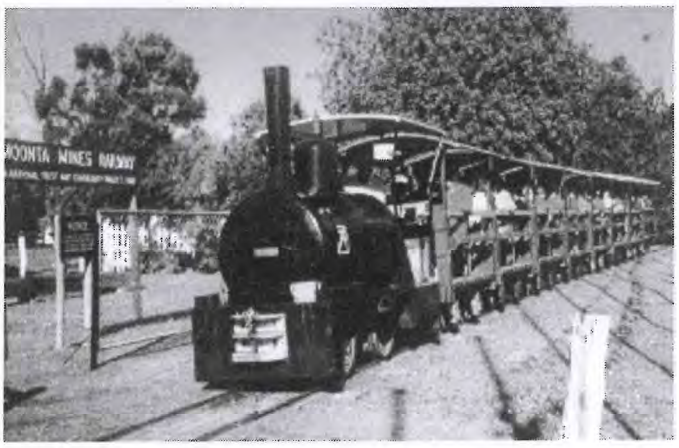
That's illustrated by a stop at the railway station which has been restored by fourteen young people on a TAFE accredited training scheme. The train begins and ends outside the Trust's Museum built in the Old Moonta Mines School. The 50 minute narrow guage railway journey departs hourly on weekend afternoons and during public and school holidays. It's $2.50 for adults and $1 for children. For more information email: info@postcards.sa.com.au



BACK TO POSTCARDS

Moonta Mines Railway Museum

The National Trust has established a Museum and history resource centre located in the former Moonta Mines Model School. Erected in 1878



The museum features displays of the district's mining history and Cornish heritage. As part of the adjacent, Wheat Munta Mining Display, a 2km tourist railway provides tours through the State Heritage area. Moonta Railway Station has been restored and provides a photographic display of past railway and mining activities.

Take a 50 minute round trip by narrow guage rail, which passes the reservior and ore sorting floors then through a tunnel in Ryan's Tailings Heap

It stops at the former Precipitation Works for an inspection of the story of Copper recovery and then onto the Moonta Railway Station to begin the return Journey.

OPERATING TIMES:

1pm to 4pm Saturday and Sunday.

Public and school holidays 11am to 4pm.

Last trip leaves at 3pm during Autumn and winter months.

LOCATION:

1.5 km from Moonta on Verran Terrace. Moonta is 17km from Kadina.

CONTACT:

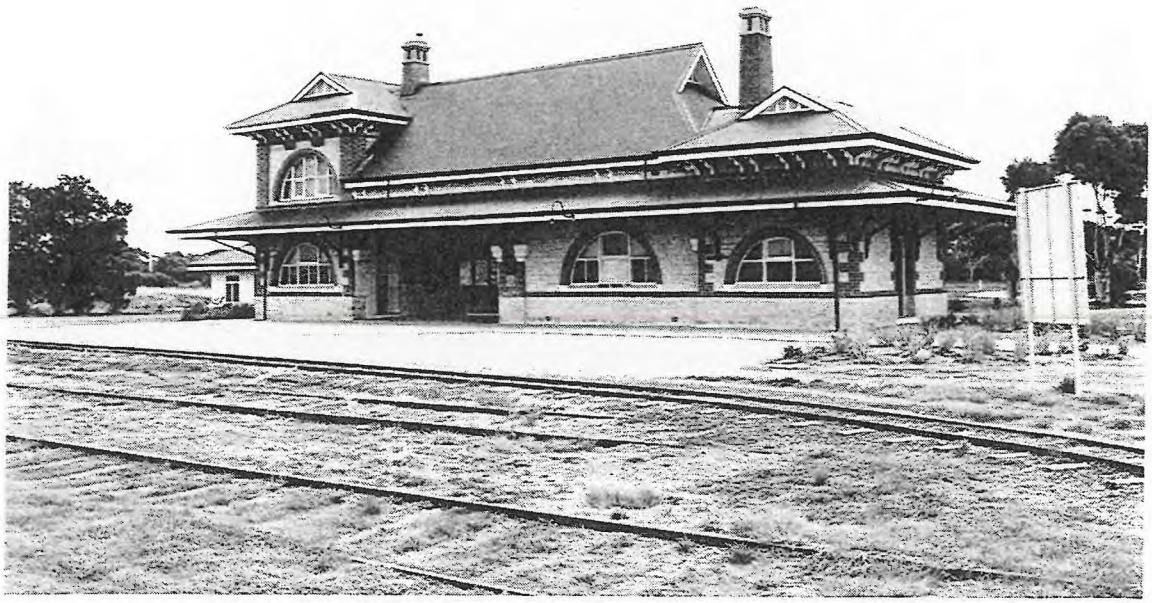
Secretary, PO Box 23, Moonta SA 5558

PHONE / FAX: (08) 8825 1994

former Moonta Railway Station, Goods Shed and Crane CC:167

LOCATION

Address	Moonta-Kadina Road, Moonta Mines SA 5558
Land Description	Lot 2, Section 1701, Hundred of Wallaroo
Certificate of Title	5388/822
Owners	Department for Environment, Heritage and Aboriginal Affairs, GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001 District Council of the Copper Coast, PO Box 6, Kadina SA 5554
State Heritage Status	Registered, 12 January 1984 — **SHR File No** 10187
Other Assessments	National Trust of SA, Recorded (File No. 375)
Photograph No	09/03, 04



Moonta railway station

former Moonta Railway Station, Goods Shed and Crane CC:167

DESCRIPTION

Designed in the Federation Arts and Craft style, this building is notable for the large arched head windows which are repeated to both the platform and road frontages. Walls are constructed of limestone with red brick quoins and detailing. The corrugated iron clad roof incorporates louvred dutch gables with eaves supported on paired brackets. The surrounding verandah is supported on flying brackets. Chimneys are ornately detailed and constructed of red brick.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

The Moonta Railway Station is significant because it expresses the importance of railway transportation to a large mechanised mining operation, it is a good example of Federation architectural styling applied to a utilitarian structure, and is an important landmark at the entrance to the town and the mines. The Station is within the Moonta Mines State Heritage Area.

HISTORY

In the early years of mining at Moonta, communication with the outside world was by ship from Wallaroo or Moonta Bay. However, to reach Adelaide required an inconveniently long sea journey right around Yorke Peninsula by way of Spencer and St Vincent Gulfs.

A railway had been extended north of Adelaide as far as Burra by 1869, and in 1878 a branch line was extended west from Bowmans, through Port Wakefield, skirting south of the Hummocks Range to Moonta. Simultaneously the Government took over the operation of the horse tramway network between mines and smelter already established by the two mining companies, upgraded it for steam locomotive traffic, and linked it with the State system. The line opened on 1 March 1878. The goods shed dates from the construction of the line.

The present railway station was built during an upgrading of rail facilities in the early 20th century. The price of copper was booming and the combined mines workforce was over 3,000 in 1907. The State built a new station, designed by Engineer in Chief Alex Moncrieff in Federation style using local stone, and built by contractor J A Gambling. The same design was used for only two other contemporary stations in South Australia, at Wallaroo and Penola.

After the mines closed in 1923, traffic on the Moonta branch railway declined to serving agricultural industry in the northern Yorke Peninsula. The line closed in 1968.

References

State Heritage Branch Files, File No. 10187

Drew, G. J. (ed.) 1991, *Discovering Historic Moonta, South Australia*, Department of Mines and Energy, DC of Northern Yorke Peninsula, p. 18

Hand, M. J. 1973, *Moonta's Monuments*, National Trust of South Australia, Moonta

Register Research Programme 1982/83 Item Ref: 6429-10187

To: The South Australian Heritage Committee

From: Manager, Heritage Conservation Branch

Subject: REGISTER NOMINATION:
RAILWAY STATION - FORMER
OFF BLANCHE TERRACE, MOONTA

Date: 24 February 1983

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared as a by-product of a nomination for the Penola Railway Station. Three stations are known to have been built to the same design (Penola, Moonta and Wallaroo) and the Branch feels all three are worthy of registration. To save time, the assessments were done together. The Moonta Station is under no known threat.

Historically, the Railway Station at Moonta is significant because it reflects the continuing importance of the Railway to a mining community at a time when production began to wane. Moonta was a leading mining town in the State during the latter half of the 19th Century, typified by its predominantly Cornish population after copper was discovered in 1859 and 1861. The Railway,opened in 1878, was an important transportation link.

Architecturally, the Railway Station is an important example of the station design allocated to the large country centres of the State and is a delightful application of the Queen Anne style to a 'Utilitarian' structure.

Environmentally, the Railway Station is an important visual feature on the main approach into Moonta.

The Integrity of the Railway Station is very high as a result of its continued use.

The building is listed on the National Trust Register as a Recorded Item and is identified as a major landmark in the 1979 Moonta Conservation Study.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Railway Station and associated Amenities Block off Blanche Terrace, Moonta, be placed on the Register of State Heritage Items, and that it be categorized H3, A1, A2, A3.

J.C. Womersley

HISTORICAL RESEARCH REPORT: MOONTA RAILWAY STATION

On March 1st, 1878, the railway line to Moonta opened. Moonta at the time was a busy mining town where copper ore was concentrated and railed to the Wallaroo smelters. Following the discovery of copper ore in December, 1859, and May, 1861, within a radius of 12 miles of the head of Wallaroo Bay, three main settlements grew rapidly in what was to become a world renowned copper field. Of the three main settlements of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta, the last assumed "a commanding position in the triumvirate as befitted the home of the richest lode."[1] Moonta was proclaimed a town in 1872. The mines there employed a maximum of 1,170 men during 1859 and, averaging 22% profit, returned a total of £800,000 of dividends on a total capital of £12,320.

In 1889 the two main mining companies operating in the area amalgamated, achieving a maximum employment of 3,107 in 1907. After 1889 the grade of ore decreased as the mines went deeper and deeper into the earth. From an average yield of 15.5% of copper per ton in 1889, the yield dropped down to 3% per ton in 1920. When the mines finally closed in 1923, Moonta declined more than its sister towns. Part of the reason for this lay in the lack of diversity of the town's economic base. Despite the falling fortunes of the town, the resident population proved highly resistant to migration. Many people remained, surviving on casual employment until able to qualify for a pension. This was possible because of the high degree of home ownership amongst the former miners.

In the above context, the present railway station was built by J.A. Gambling in 1908. It continued to serve the town as an important passenger/goods link between Wallaroo and Adelaide, and reflected the town's pre-eminence at the time.

At a local and state level, the railway station at Moonta reflects the pattern of transportation in the State, when railways played a major role in facilitating the development and expansion of industry. It also contributes to an appreciation of the development of Moonta, the main mining town in the Wallaroo copper belt which in its heyday was the most important area outside metropolitan Adelaide.

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1. Thomson, R.G.S.S.A. Procs., Vol. 56, p.56.

Sources:

P. Donovan: Railways in S.A., Research Paper, D.E.P. 1982
O. Pryor: Australia's Little Cornwall, Adel., 1962
K.W. Thomson: "The changes in function in former mining settlements in the Wallaroo Copper Belt"., R.G.S.S.A. Proceedings, Vol. 56.
M. Williams: The making of the South Australian Landscape, Acad. Pr., Lond., 1974.
S.A.A. RN.197; 447; 469; 1324/115.
L.T.O. Searches.

Iris Iwanicki
Register Historian

II:JD
27/1/83

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures Item RAILWAY STATION - FORMER MOONTA	

Component	Comment	Grading E	VG	AG	FP	NA
8. Representation:	One of 3 known to exist in the State, the other two are at Penola and Wallaroo. All are located at important terminals of the railway.		*			
Environment						
9. Continuity:	Set on its own with other major structures nearby.			*		
10. Local Character:	A feature on the main approach to Moonta, within the Moonta Mines Heritage Area.		*			
11. Landmark:	Familiar local landmark, unusual design in a relatively isolated position creates an important visual focal point.		*			
Integrity						
12. Alterations:	None	*				
13. Condition:	No obvious defects.		*			
14. Compatibility:	Used as a Crafts Centre.			*		

Note: This nomination assessment includes the small stone and stucco Amenities Block adjacent to the Station. This building shares most of the positive attributes of the Station itself but has not been separately assessed. Refer to the photos.

Supplementary Information

Adaptation: The external form and appearance of the building should be maintained as well as its relatively isolated position. Additional structures required should be separated from this one. Infill of the Waiting Room arch should be avoided but if required it should be done so as to retain the rhythm of the facade and disrupt the design as little as possible. Restrictions on the interior should be minimal.

Interpretation: As a semi-public building located in an open space, the Railway Station has a high interpretive potential. This need not be an active interpretive role but it could apply to themes of a general nature for the Town or region. The large spaces are ideal for displays.

Current Owner: The Station is owned by the State Transport Authority and is leased to the D.C. of Moonta.

Evaluated By Iris Iwanicki, Register Historian
Ivar Nelsen, Register Architect

Reviewed By Mark A. Butcher
Register Supervisor

I.E.S./D5/301182

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures Item RAILWAY STATION - FORMER MOONTA	
Age 1908	Theme	Office 6429-10187
Period 1884-1913	Subject TRANSPORTATION - Land	Region Yorke Peninsula
Building Type Railway	Style LATE VICTORIAN - 'QUEEN ANNE'	Status N.Tr. (RL)

Qualitative Data Component	Comment	Grading E	VG	AG	FP	NA
History						
1. Context:	The Railway Station at Moonta is associated with the development of Moonta as the State's major producer of copper ore following its discovery in 1859 and 1861. As one of three main towns in the Wallaroo Copper Belt, Moonta was the hardest hit economically when the Copper Mines closed in 1923 because of its lack of industrial and productive diversity. The Station reflects a typical pattern of transportation to country areas in South Australia.		*			
2. Person/Group:	Associated with the South Australian Railways and growth and expansion thereof.		*			
3. Event:	Mar. 1, 1878 Railway Line at Moonta opened.		*			
Architecture						
4. Architect: Engineer Builder	Not readily available. Alex. Moncrieff, Engineer-in-Chief J.A. Gambling					*
5. Design:	Simple plan, single storey basically, stone walls with repeating brick arches on all elevations, wide overhanging roofs supported by heavy timber brackets, wide cantilevered awning around ground floor, quoins and bands accent dark stonework, asymmetrical, quite grand for a country station.		*			
6. Construction:	Rough finished dressed stone walls laid in ashlar coursing, brick quoins at corners and openings, corrugated iron hip and gable roofs, timber detailing, iron brackets for cantilevered awning.			*		
7. Interior:	Timber and slate floors, plastered walls, some fittings still remaining, ornate timber staircase.			*		

I.E.S./D5/301182

CONTRACT No 66/08

Sheet No

Total No of Sheets

CLASSIFIED BY
NATIONAL TRUST OF S.A.
CR 1269/79

S A R

NEW PASSENGER STATION

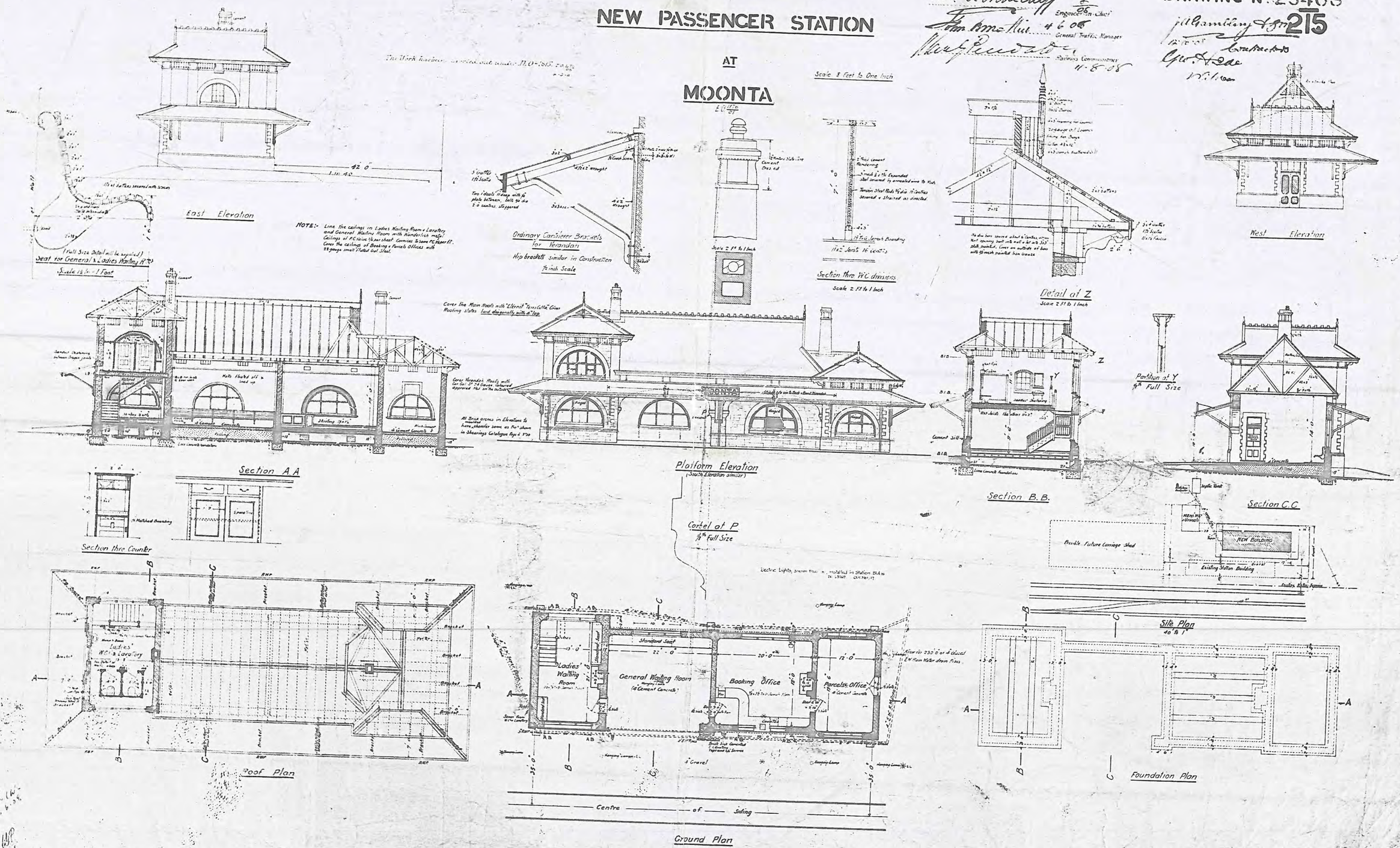
AT

MOONTA

DRAWING No 23468

215

Scale 8 Feet to One Inch



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RAILWAY STATION
MOONTA

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