Town Hall

DESCRIPTION

A two storey building with double hung sash windows. The windows at ground floor level are arched. The walls to the upper floor are pecked ashlar sandstone while those at ground level are of pecked and margined and bevelled sandstone. There are rendered quoins and dressings and a plinth. The roof is of corrugated galvanized iron.

There is a large central tower which is very ornate and of a Victorian Classical style. The tower has a French Renaissance roof. There are pediments to all upper windows at the front elevation and Ionic columns to the upper floor and on the tower. A large pediment is at each end.

A marble foundation stone reads:

1886 – 1946
to Commemorate the Remodelling, this tablet was unveiled
by His Worship the Mayor, L.G. Richey, Esq, M.P. on the 30th August 1946
Russel & Yelland — L.W. Abernathy
Architects — Town Clerk

HISTORY

The original Town Hall was completed in 1887 and was seen as a symbol of progress as it was the largest building in the town at that time and described in the press as being 'the finest building outside the metropolis'. Designed by Black & Hughes of Adelaide and built by Sara & Co of Port Augusta, the Town Hall took 11 months to build with stone carted from quarries near Quorn. The contract was let on 15 April 1886 for approximately £5,000. Building commenced on 3 May 1886 and the foundation stone was laid on 8 June 1886. As the *Register* noted:

> The mayor addressed the people, and the town clerk read a copy of the statistical document, to be enclosed, as was customary, with the newspapers of the day and current coins of the realm in a sealed bottle to be placed under the foundation stone. When the mayoress came forward to officially lay the stone in place she was presented with a silver trowel and a beautifully polished myall gavel to assist her in her task. . . . At this time, little more than ten years after the incorporation of the town, Port Augusta boasted seven miles of streets and sixteen miles of footpaths. The population then totalled over 2,400.

Because the electric lighting equipment had not arrived from England, it was decided that there should be a daylight opening ceremony with a further ceremony later on once the equipment had arrived. The first opening ceremony took place on 12 May 1887.

On 8 November 1887 the gallery was refloored in the terraces. Originally the area had been designed with sloping floors but it was soon noted that this made it virtually impossible for the use of audiences. Just a few days later, on 21 November, the second opening ceremony of the Town Hall took place this time under electric light.

Town Hall

On 17th May 1944, fire destroyed the greater part of the Town Hall. Only the Corinthian frontage and the dome escaped destruction. The Town Hall was rebuilt and
re-opened on 30th August 1946 by the Governor, Sir Willoughby Norrie. Architects were Russell & Yelland of Unley, S.A., while F. Fricker of Fricker Ltd was the master builder. The cost of reconstruction was £30,000. As the *Transcontinental* noted:

> It [the re-opening] was a momentous day in the history of the town, the schoolchildren were on their holidays, the business houses closed so that their employees could be at the ceremony, and included in the large assemblage were many former residents who had journeyed from various parts of the State to be present.

A high tea and concert were held in conjunction with the re-opening of the hall.

The building continues to play an important part in the life of the Port Augusta community.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

The Town Hall building is of major heritage significance in the city because of its close identity with the development of local government in the community. The building also fulfilled an important function in the town as the main venue for important assemblies and in this capacity was associated with many of the important historical developments in the town. The significance of the building to the community is reflected in the design and construction of the building, and the attention given to its reconstruction after its near destruction.

The Town Hall was entered in the State Heritage Register on 26 November 1981.

RELEVANT CRITERIA

(a) the building demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history, particularly that of local government;
(d) the building is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance, being a town hall, the only one in the city;
(e) the building demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment in its construction techniques or design characteristics;
(f) the building has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community where many important assemblies have been held which have been associated with historical developments in the town.

Town Hall

REFERENCES

Branson, V.M. and Millsteed, R., *Port Augusta Sketchbook*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1977, p. 10.
Department of Environment and Natural Resources, State Heritage Branch — 10199.
Mortlock Library photographic collection, B.8089; B.15734; B.21955; B.24588; B.39373; B.45556; B.45557; B.48404.
Register, 17 April 1886.
The Port Augusta Town Hall, official opening pamphlet, Friday 30 August 1946.
Transcontinental, 6 September 1946.

Site Surveyor B.G. Rowney **Date(s) of Survey** 11.2.1994

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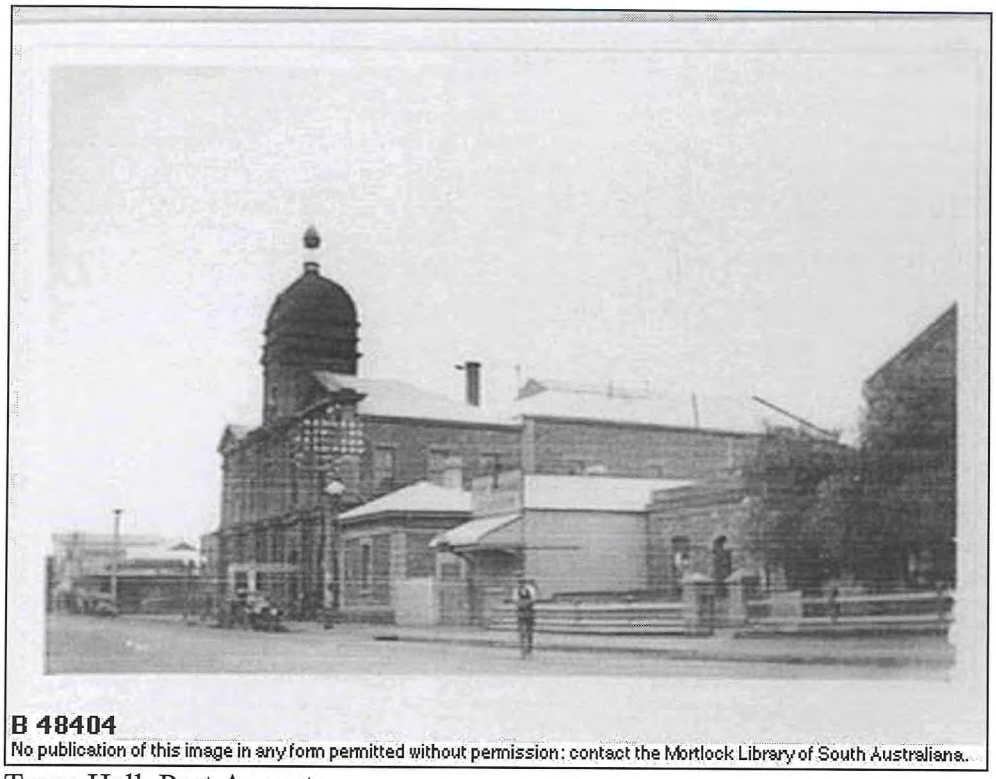


TITLE Town Hall, Port Augusta

DATE 1929

TOWN HALL

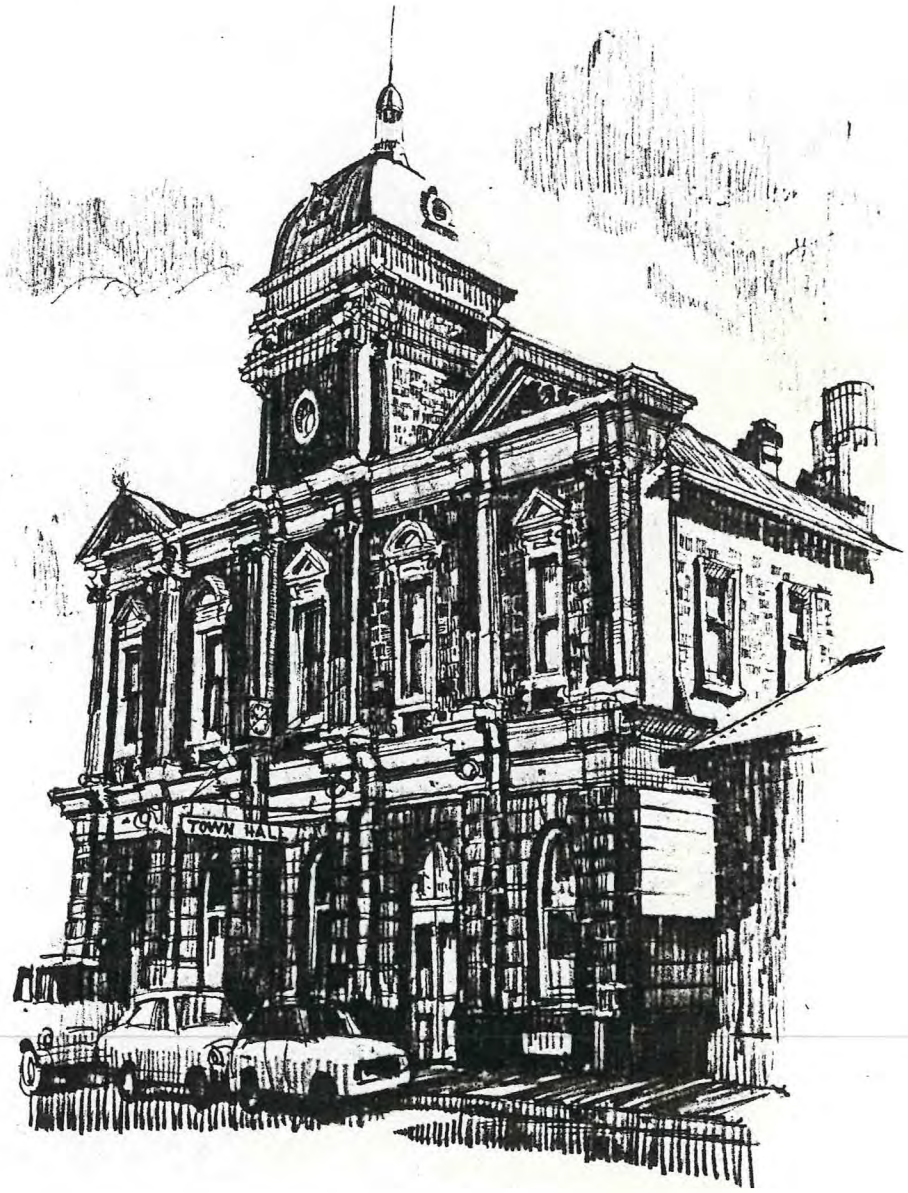
J.W. Martin, a jeweller of Rundle Street, Adelaide, presented a town clock to the citizens of Port Augusta in 1881, six years before the Town Hall was built. When the building was erected, the citizens were immensely proud of the edifice and the local paper published a somewhat extravagant eulogy.

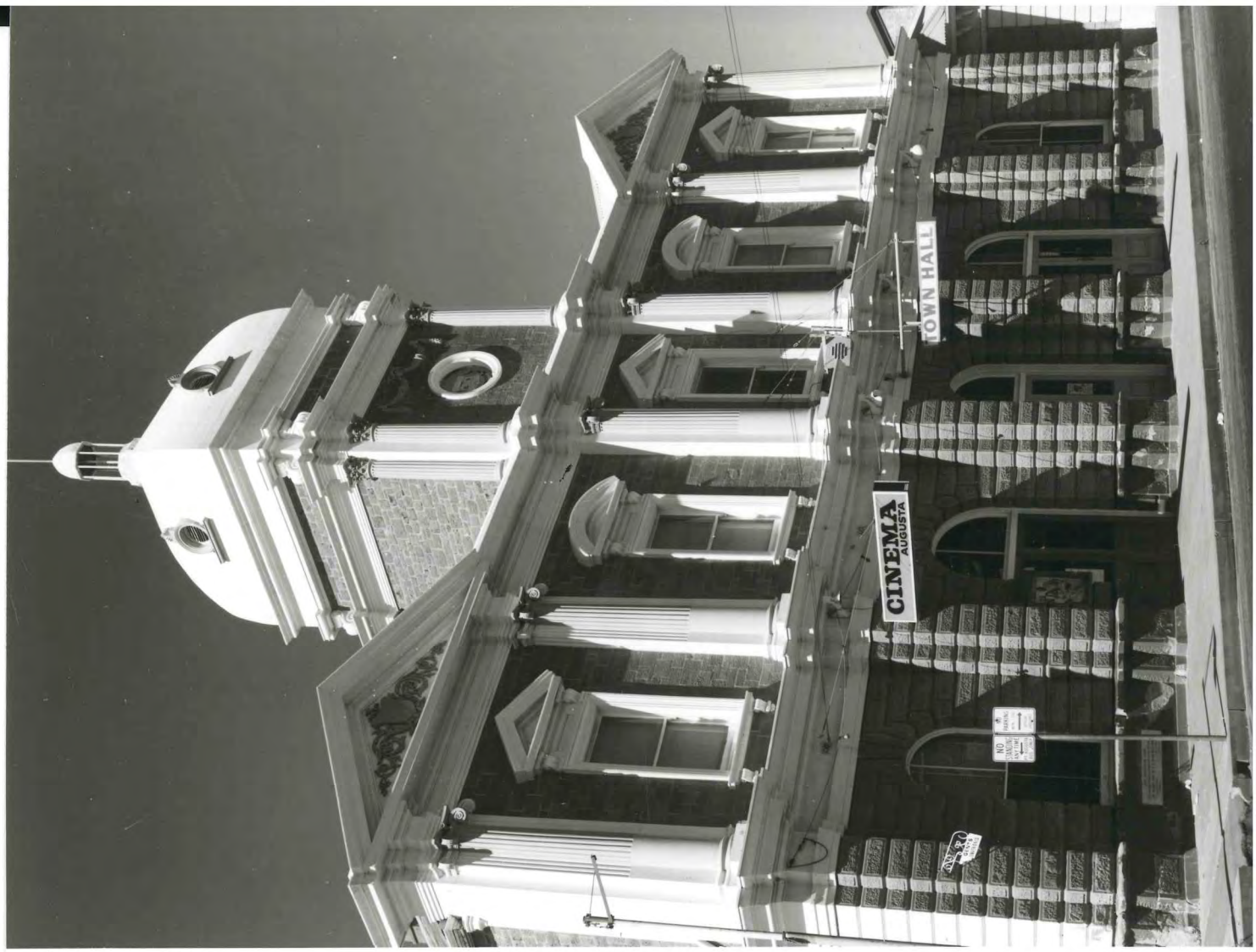
'The Town Hall occupies almost the whole of the Corporation block in Commercial Road extending from the footpath quite back to the Waterworks yard to a depth of 113 feet 6 inches with a 78 feet frontage. The building material is brownstone from the Quorn quarries and is neatly dressed and presents a very handsome appearance. The front is ornamented with Ionic columns, with elaborate and beautiful capitals, surmounted by pediment gables on either side of the square tower, terminating in a rounded pyramidal dome and is capped by an elongated metallic cupola, the summit of which is 72 feet above the footpath.

'. . . it challenges comparison with any out of the metropolis, while as regards the public hall, with the exception of the Theatre Royal in Adelaide there is not a place of public entertainment in the colony of South Australia which can equal its comfort, elegance and completeness of stage equipment and scenery, and when the electric light illuminates the hall, it will in one respect be superior to the metropolitan theatre.'

In fact two immense arc lamps and 100 small pear-shaped incandescent lamps were installed in 1887—before electricity illuminated the Theatre Royal. The Town Hall was built in eleven months and was declared open on 12 May 1887.

On 17 May 1944 fire destroyed a large part of the Town Hall but, although smoke blackened, the facade survived the blaze and the original character of the building was retained when it was re-built and re-opened in 1946.



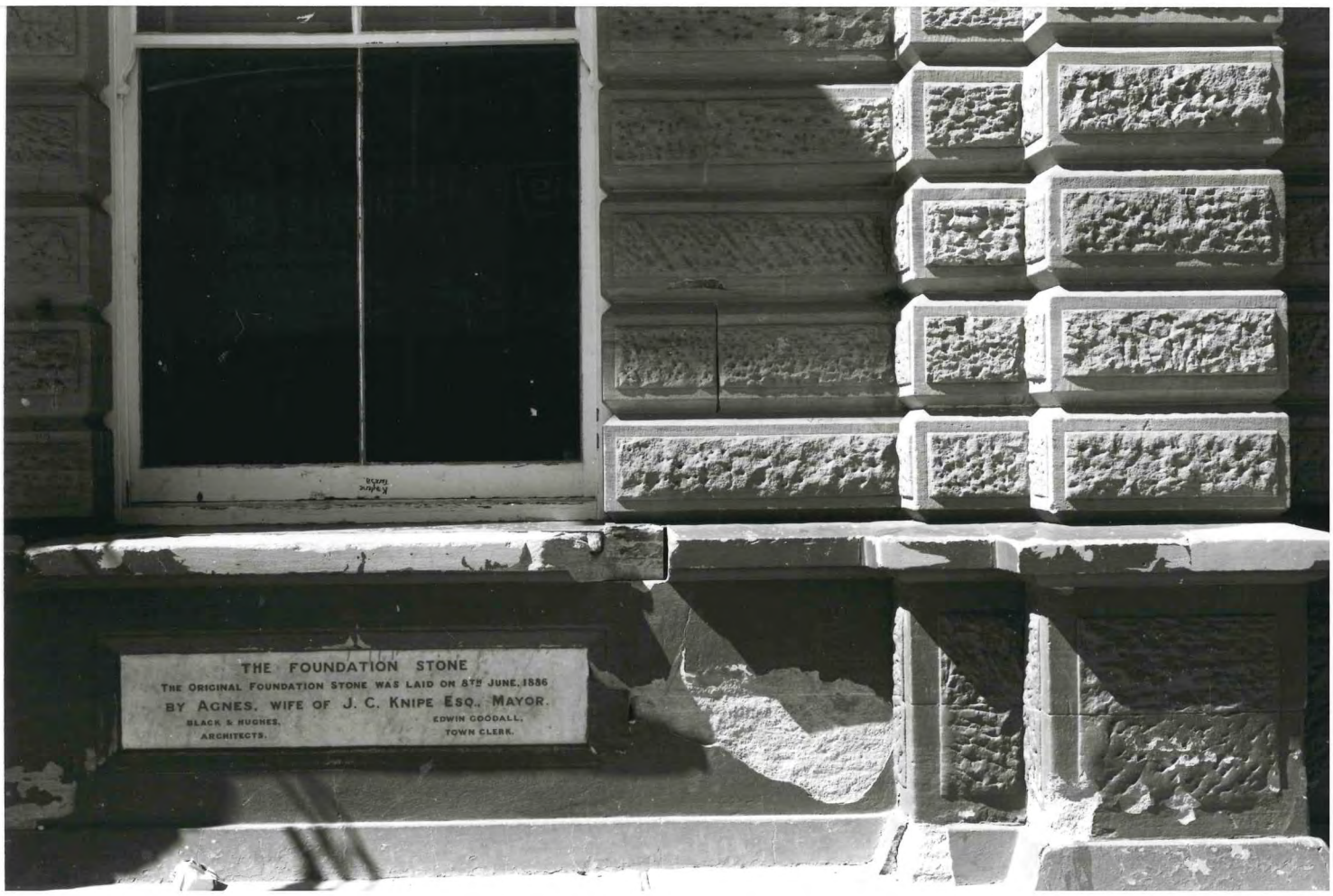


FILM 86
No 3

WEST FACADE TOWN HALL
COMMERCIAL ROAD

PORT AUGUSTA
11-3-79

FILM 86
NO 4

FRONT ENTRANCE TOWN HALL

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