

TOWN HALLMARKET STREET, BURRA

(Formerly the Burra Burra Mines and Mechanics Institute)

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Historically, the Town Hall is noteworthy in its representation of the growth of Burra's civic identity as it has provided a focus for the town's community functions, providing a venue for the local Lodges up until the early 19th century, the library, the Council meeting place, stage and picture theatre. From its beginning as a mining town under the domination of the South Australian Mining Association, Burra gained local government a few years before the mine closed in 1877.

Architecturally, the Town Hall is important as a large and impressive example of this building type. The size, decoration and monumental scale reflects Burra's position in the State.

Environmentally, the Town Hall is an important landmark on the main northern approach to Burra and a significant contributing element to a harmonious group of civic, commercial and religious buildings.

The Integrity of the Town Hall externally is very good with necessary additions over time being kept to the sides and done with sympathy to the original. Internally the integrity has been superficially marked but the essence still remains.

NOMINATION SOURCE/THREAT/OWNER

This report has been prepared as part of the programme to evaluate items nominated in Burra. This nomination was received from Mr. Ian Auhl and is a by-product of his Burra Heritage Survey. The building is under no known threat and is owned by the District Council of Burra.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION BRANCH RECOMMENDATION:

Barry C. Rowley
Manager

It is recommended that this item be included on the Register of State Heritage Items, and that it be categorized A2, A3, H3, H2.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

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Chairman

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-82	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures	Ref. No. 6630-10403
	Item TOWN HALL MARKET STREET, BURRA (Formerly the Burra Burra Mines and Mechanics Inst.)	Status N.Tr.(RL)
Age 1857 - Institute 1874 - Front Sect.	Subject PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - Administration EDUCATION & CULTURE - Arts, Recreation	Style Mid Victorian

History

Architecture

Environment

Integrity

		E	VG	AG	FP	NA
History	Context Associated with the provision of library services to Burra's population, and with the various lodges operating in Burra from 1845 onwards. Used as a Council meeting place, the former Institute became the Town Hall.		X			
	Person/Group Associated with the Burra Burra Miners & Mechanics Institute, the Burra Council and the numerous Burra Lodges.		X			
	Event 1945 Transferred to Council.		X			
	Architect/Builder Rowland Rees - Architect			X		
Architecture	Design A grand civic building with two projecting bays and decorative pilasters and cornices, contrasting colour scheme, monumental but not particularly refined.		X			
	Construction Coursed rubble stone walls, rendered decoration, corrugated iron hip and skillion roofs.			X		
	Interior Basically intact, fibro partitions dividing some rooms, superficial upgradings in the hall.			X		
	Representation Very large in scale and monumental in design for a country hall.		X			
Environment	Continuity Very similar in form and design to the adjacent Post Office and sympathetic to the residence and Bank further south.		X			
	Local Character A major element to creating a civic or community precinct along Market Street.		X			
	Landmark Scale design and position on main northern approach to Burra create a major focal point, Town Hall and adjacent Post Office are significant landmarks.	X				
	Alterations Several compatible additions to the rear, awning added over entry, superficial internal upgradings, basically but not perfectly intact.		X			
Integrity	Condition No obvious major defects, in need of some maintenance			X		
	Compatibility Still used as a Hall for public functions, offices are little used.		X			

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Supplementary Information

Adaptation: The external form and appearance of the building should be maintained. The reinstatement of the timber fence in front should be encouraged. Additions which may be required should be kept to the rear. Landscaping directly in front should be more sympathetic. The entry foyer and hall should be restored to near original. A sympathetic treatment of the other rooms is encouraged. External works should be in sympathy with the Post Office.

Interpretation: The building has a potential active interpretation function as a prominent public building still used by the citizens of Burra. There appears to be excess rooms serving no active function. Any interpretative exercises should be done with consideration to the town as a whole. The theme of civic facilities is not a dominant one.

History and Sources

The Town Hall was first built as a one roomed Institute in 1857 on allotment 83. Known officially as "Burra Burra Miners and Mechanics Institute", it stood on land belonging to the South Australian Mining Association. In 1874, a conveyance from the trustees of the Association, legally transferred the land to Alexander McCulloch, of Princess Royal, Gentleman; Isaac Killicoat of Abberton Park near Koorunga (Smelts Manager) a Gentleman; Thomas Bath, a storekeeper; Philip Lane, a saddler; August Bartholomaeus of Redruth, a storekeeper. (G.R.O. Mem. No. 77 Book 278). Shortly afterwards, a declaration of Trust dated the 4th January, 1875, claimed the objective of the Trust (and the Trustees) as "the promotion of useful knowledge and rational mental recreation amongst its members ...".

Colonial Institutes in South Australia had established themselves in country areas by the latter 1850's. They ideally sought to provide an opportunity for further education beyond the rudiments taught to a fortunate few workers. Despite a general observation that the leisured class were important in their operation, the Burra Institute appeared to be run by a fair cross representation of men of different occupations. Construction of Institute buildings were helped by the Government in the form of building grants and grants-in-aid, based upon membership. Like most Institutes in the State, the Burra Institute's main function was in its provision of library services. Mr. W.H. Birbeck was appointed as the first librarian in 1858. He was replaced by a Mr. Davey in 1881. Mr. Davey's son, A.A. Davey, succeeded his father as librarian in 1903 and was still in the position in 1951. At the time, the library boasted over 6,000 books and was considered to be one of the three best Institute libraries outside the Metropolitan area.

Also closely associated with the building were the various lodges in Burra. These included the Freemasons who established themselves shortly after the mines opened in 1845, the Oddfellows (established 1849), the Foresters (est. 1859) and Rechabites (est. 1865).. Until the former Koorunga Primitive Methodist Church was purchased early in the 1900's for a Lodge Hall, the Lodges used the Institute for regular meetings, and no doubt subscribed to the cost of the major front portion built in 1874, which was financed by public donations. A plaque, laid by the Koorunga Freemason, Alexander Stewart in 1874, appears on the north east corner.

In 1945 the Trusteeship was transferred to the Corporation of Burra, and the building provided a council meeting room for many years. The Town Hall, as it is now known, has also been used as a picture and stage theatre, apart from public

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History and Sources

meetings.

Few buildings in Burra demonstrate such involvement in a wide array of civic activities as does the Town Hall. Its form represents a steady expansion of facilities over the years and is a good example of how Burra developed from a mining settlement dominated by the South Australian Mining Association into an independent civic entity following the mine's decline and closure.

Sources:

L.T.O. & G.R.O. Searches

Official Burra "Jubilee Year" Souvenir, 1951

Ian Auhl & D. Perry: Burra Sketchbook, Rigby 1969

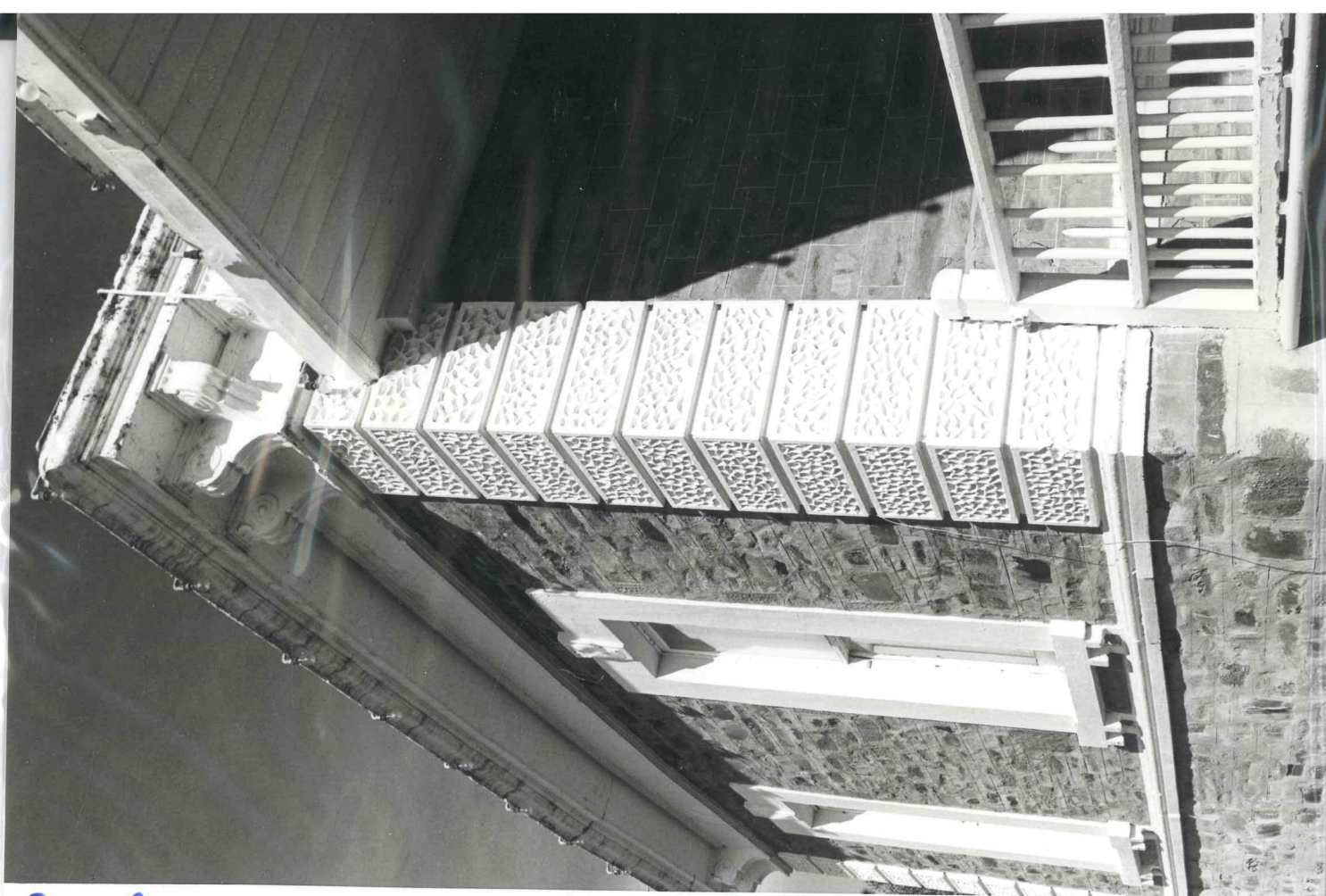




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