

HOSTEL - "TOWNSEND HOUSE"
KING GEORGE AVENUE
HOVE

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Historically, Townsend House is associated with the establishment of educational and residential accommodation and facilities for deaf and blind people and named after the founder of the institution, William Townsend.

Architecturally, the designer was Thomas English, a prolific early architect. Townsend House is a fine example of his work and a good example of Gothic architecture incorporated into the Victorian era.

Environmentally, the building is set behind an oval and encircled by large trees. While not visible from the street, the item contributes to local character and is important in the area.

The integrity of Townsend House is high. Externally the building is in near perfect condition.

NOMINATION SOURCE/THREAT/OWNER

This report has been prepared to reassess the heritage significance of Townsend House. The item was being considered for the Register in 1979 when two wings of the building were demolished. Action was suspended and the item has never been reassessed. Townsend House is owned by the Blind and Deaf Institute and is under no known threat.

STATE HERITAGE BRANCH RECOMMENDATION:

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for Manager

It is recommended that this item be included on the Register of State Heritage Items and that it be categorized A1, A3, H3.

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-82	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures	Ref. No. 6628-10546
	Item HOSTEL - "TOWNSEND HOUSE" KING GEORGE AVENUE HOVE	Status NT (Cl.) NE
Age 1878	Subject Original Use: 0302 Single Dwelling. Other Use: 0508 Special School Present Use: 0000 Disused	Style Victorian Gothic

X

History

Architecture

Environment

Integrity

<p>Context The item is associated with the Deaf and Blind Institution of South Australia and was constructed in 1878 as a residence and school. It is representative of the establishment of social institutions in South Australia.</p> <p>Person/Group Closely associated with William Townsend, prominent politician and the founder of the Deaf and Blind Institution.</p> <p>Event No specific event.</p> <p>Architect/Builder Thomas English (architect), 1878.</p> <p>Design Two storey building in Victorian Gothic design featuring stone walls, elaborate brick quoins, gable ended corrugated galvanised iron roof and verandah to three sides. Pointed arch windows with two-toned brick surrounds. Carved barge boards and finial to gable ends.</p> <p>Construction Standard construction but fine use of materials.</p> <p>Interior Unused and in poor condition. Features superb cedar turned staircase, balustrade and screen. Most fire places, ceiling roses removed.</p> <p>Representation The immediate area has a number of institutions present with buildings dating from this period. Although scarce, the Register is well represented with this type of educational and institutional facility dating from this period.</p> <p>Continuity Set behind an oval at a distance from the street surrounded by remnants of old buildings, playgrounds and new facilities.</p> <p>Local Character Contributes in establishing and maintaining the special character of the Hove area.</p> <p>Landmark No particular landmark qualities although a great deal of sympathy for building locally, eg. Save Townsend House Groups campaign.</p> <p>Alterations Removal of two wings associated to main building. Few alterations to main building.</p> <p>Condition Externally fully restored and in excellent condition. Internally, evidence of water damage to walls, ceilings and floors.</p> <p>Compatibility Unused since 1972.</p>	E	VG	AG	FP	NA
		X			
		X			
			X		
		X			
		X			
			X		
		X			
			X		
			X		

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Supplementary Information

Adaptation: There is an enormous amount of potential for this building to accommodate a variety of uses, either as offices, a residence or museum. Its constraint is its location as it is intimately connected with the Deaf and Blind Institute and any change in use would have to consider the special needs of the children.

Interpretation: Potential for passive interpretation.

History and Sources

The history of the education of the blind and deaf began in Adelaide in 1874 with the establishment of a school on the site now occupied by Townsend House. During the 19th century all of the Australian colonies had set up institutions catering for the educational needs of the blind and deaf. This was in response to a worldwide trend that began in Europe in the 18th century. By the 19th century the establishment of such institutions was relatively common and usually associated with a prominent humanitarian.

South Australia was no exception to this. To place in the perspective of time, Institutions for the blind were established in Victoria in 1866, New South Wales in 1869, Queensland in 1883 with a school completed in 1892, Western Australian in 1895 and Tasmania in 1901.

Schools for the deaf began in Victoria and New South Wales in 1860, Western Australia in 1896, Queensland in 1892 and Tasmania in 1904. South Australia therefore was amongst the earliest colonies to sense a need and respond to this.

The movement began in South Australia on the 26 June, 1872. William Townsend, a Member of Parliament in the House of Assembly, raised the issue of the need for an educational institution for the deaf, dumb and blind, and proposed that the Government should supplement any funds raised by a private individual. Townsend began canvassing and by 1876 had collected 3594.7s.11d pounds.

Townsend, a prominent colonist, had arrived in South Australia in August 1853. He began his Adelaide life as a shoe salesman before opening his own shop and eventually becoming an auctioneer. The business boomed and Townsend was able to set up on his own and merge with another company to become a leading firm.

He was active both in business and politics and four years after his arrival was representing the District of Onkaparinga in Parliament. During this period he assisted Robert R. Torrens with the founding and management of the Real Property Act. From 1871 until his death in 1882, Townsend represented the area of Sturt in Parliament. Although frequently chosen for administrative positions his record in these positions was extremely brief. In July of 1863 Townsend spent 11 days as the Commissioner of Public Works, less than one month as the Commissioner of Crown Lands in 1868, and the Administrator of the Lands Department for two months.

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Townsend was elected as the Mayor of Adelaide and Mayor of Unley during his career. This is a remarkable feat for an uneducated and working class man. He was, however, an extremely liberal man associated with the Chartists in London before his departure and a friend and supporter of Feargus O'Connor.

There is no doubt that the liberal and humanitarian views of Townsend prompted his concern for South Australia's deaf, dumb and blind and led to the establishment of Townsend House.

A committee was formed in 1872, comprised of some of Adelaide's most prominent colonists, and suggested to the Government that some land be allocated for an institution near the Parkside lunatic assylum. The Government refused. In 1874 a property known as "Grace Darling" in Brighton was proposed and accepted and an agreement was arranged for rental of the property for two years with the right of purchase.

This site was established as a hotel in 1849 and remained as such until 1866. It was apparently the staging post for travellers on route from Adelaide to Victor Harbour and on the darker side, was associated with smuggling. The hotel was the site for land sales in the area, banquets and council meetings.

From 1867 to 1869 the two storied building was used to house, in very poor conditions, Adelaide's destitute children. For the next five years it stood unused until the South Australian Institute for the Deaf and Blind took up residence of this building and the surrounding 24 acres and began a school for seven children opening in 1874. By 1875 the number had risen to twenty and a year later it was evident that a new building was required.

Thomas English, MLC, responsible for the design and/or construction of St. Judes, Brighton, and the preceeding Mayor of Adelaide to Townsend, was asked to prepare the plans. English was a prolific designer who arrived in Adelaide in 1850 and established a builders business with his brother-in-law, Henry Brown.

He was active in Parliament and local government and associated with other early Adelaide architects. The list of buildings attributed to him is considerable and extends to all types of buildings.

Townsend House was designed when English had established himself as an architect and towards the end of his life. It was described by the Press as a two storey stone and brick building "in a Tudor style of Gothic architecture." The design consisted of three wings, two of which (Anderson and Coulton) were completed later, although to the original design. The centre wing and the main building was completed in 1878 at the tendered cost of 4,289 pounds.

Until the 1970's Townsend House remained as an institution combining the functions of accommodation for staff and pupils, teaching, sports and recreation for the blind and deaf. Few alterations have occurred. However, in 1978 moves were made by the South Australian Institute for the Deaf and Blind to demolish the complex of three

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buildings to provide extra playground space. The newly formed South Australian Heritage Committee responded to the threat and widespread community agitation by recommending the complex (the main building, Anderson and Coulton Wings) on the Register in February of 1979. The building was rejected from the proposed Interim List by Cabinet and demolition of the two wings (Anderson and Coulton) began in October 1979, at the time of a change of Government. By the time a decision had been made by the new Liberal Government to place Townsend House on the Interim List, the administrative procedures enabling that to occur did not allow enough time to prevent demolition of the Coulton and Anderson wings.

Townsend House was recommended therefore by a previous South Australian Heritage Committee with the categories A2, A3 and H3 on the 21 February, 1979. It was recommended because of its significance as a building revealing the nature of institutional buildings of that period. It is significant as an example of the work of Thomas English and gains a special significance in being the first example of a conflict in decisions between the Government and South Australian Heritage Committee.

The difference between this recommendation and the previous decision is that the Committee is now asked to consider only Townsend House owing to the demolition of Anderson and Coulton wings. Townsend House remains a significant building illustrating the development and establishment of social institutions in South Australia and is a fine example of the work of Thomas English.

Sources

Barkham, Lawrence F., The Story of Townsend House, 1874 to 1974. The South Australian Institute for the Deaf and Blind Incorporated. Adelaide 1974.

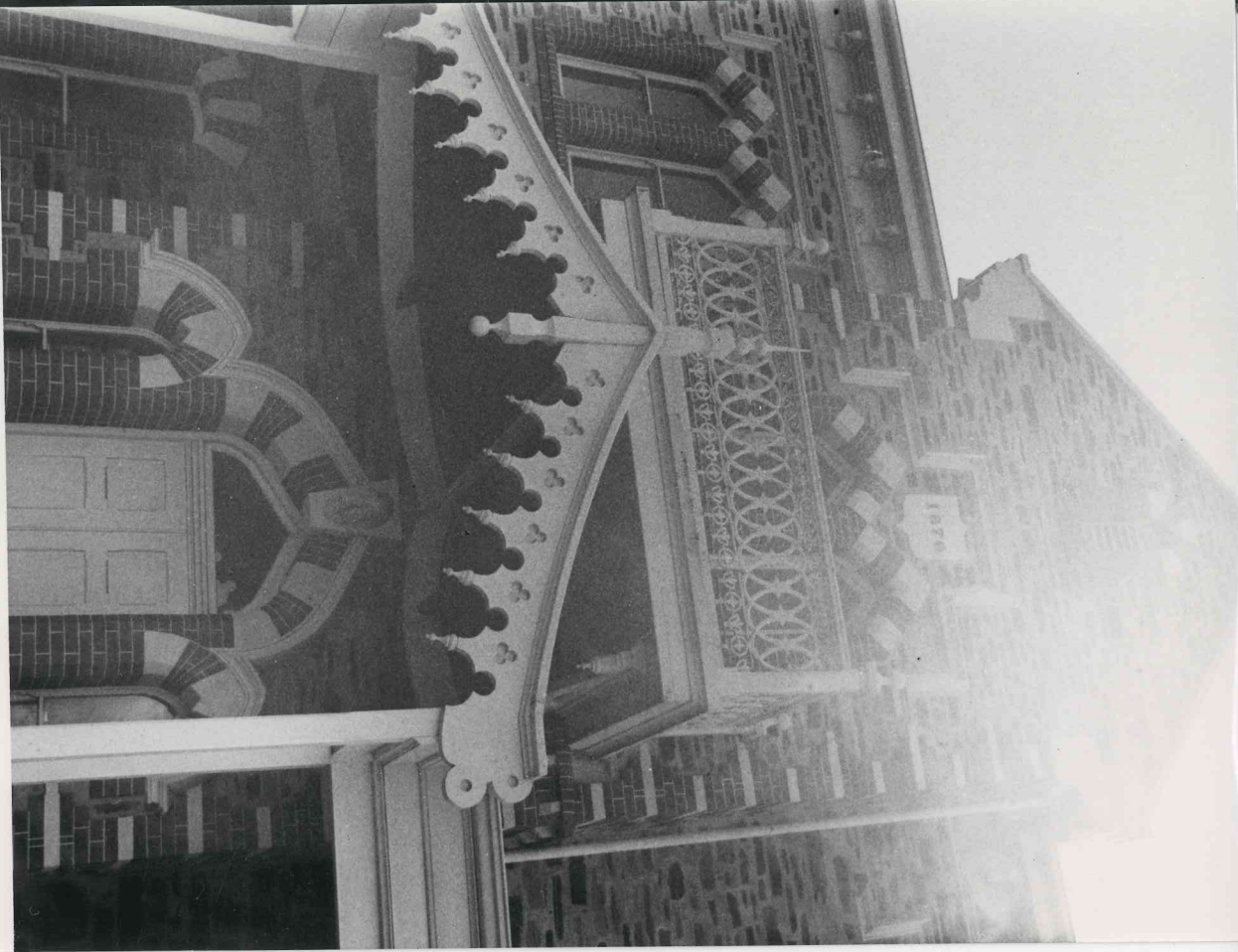
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E.J.R. Morgan and S.H. Gilbert, Early Adelaide Architects, 1836 to 1886. Oxford University Press. Melbourne 1969.

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