

To: The South Australian Heritage Committee

From: Senior Historical Architect

Subject: REGISTER NOMINATION REPORT
Department of Community Welfare Building (former Barrier Chambers)
1 Alexander Street, Port Pirie

Date: 2 June, 1982

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared as a result of the Port Pirie National Trust expressing concern over the future of a number of buildings of heritage significance in Port Pirie. The building has been nominated by a Victorian visitor who considers that the building should be preserved.

Historically, the building is significant because it was associated with shipping activity in the wharf area and was built by the Barrier Wharf Company. A reflection of the importance of products from Broken Hill to the township.

Architecturally, the D.C.W. building is significant as the only remaining example of an early commercial waterfront building in Port Pirie and for the fine proportions and restrained decoration of its facade.

Environmentally, the D.C.W. building is important, because of its physical isolation, which makes it a strong visual element. The building in turn supports the historic character of adjacent Ellen St.

The Integrity of the building is high, despite superficial deterioration of the base of walls and balcony.

The building is not listed on any conservation Register, but it has been identified in the Port Pirie Conservation Study.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Department of Community Welfare Building, Alexander St., Port Pirie be placed on the Register of State Heritage Items and that it be categorised A2, A3, H2, H3.



(Barry G. Rowney)

SENIOR HISTORICAL ARCHITECT

CAW:SK

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures					
	Item DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY WELFARE BUILDING, 1 Alexander St., Port Pirie (formerly Barrier Chambers)					
Age 1906	Theme	Office 6531-10978				
Period 1883-1914	Subject TRADE AND COMMERCE - Retail	Region Upper North				
Building Type Office	Style Victorian	Status -				
<u>Qualitative Data</u>		<u>Grading</u>				
Component	Comment	E	VG	AG	FP	NA
<u>HISTORY</u>						
1. <u>Context:</u>	Located in the important wharf area of Port Pirie. The building represents patterns of shipping and economic activity related to Pt. Pirie during the turn of the century. Its presence helps to maintain continuity with the past appearance of the wharf area.	*				
2. <u>Person/Group:</u>	Built by the Barrier Wharf Company, whose Registered Office was in Melbourne in 1906.	*				
3. <u>Event:</u>	1/4/22 Marine & Harbours Board acquired the property.				*	
<u>ARCHITECTURE</u>						
4. <u>Architect:</u>	Possibly J. Firmin Jenkins after 1898 (unconfirmed)					*
<u>Engineer:</u>	Not yet known.					*
<u>Builder:</u>	Not yet known.					*
5. <u>Design:</u>	Symmetrical two storey building with covered balcony and verandah at front, single storey gabled building at rear, simple with restrained but tasteful decoration.		*			
6. <u>Construction:</u>	Coursed sandstone-dressed stone on facade, brick quoins and surrounds to segmental arched windows and doors. Hipped corrugated iron roof.		*			
7. <u>Interior:</u>	Decorative pressed metal ceilings and cornices. Arches in hall.		*			
8. <u>Representation:</u>	Only remaining example of early commercial waterfront building in Port Pirie.	*				
<u>ENVIRONMENT</u>						
9. <u>Continuity:</u>	Strong visual element because of isolation and visibility on all four sides, landscaped area by Council Chambers in Ellen Street. Previous permanent view through to the building.		*			

I.E.S./D3/211081

South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80	Register of State Heritage Items ITEM EVALUATION SHEET Buildings and Structures Item DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY WELFARE BUILDING, 1 Alexander St., Port Pirie (formerly Barrier Chambers)						
Component	Comment		Grading E VG AG FP NA				
10. <u>Local Character:</u>	With demolition of Ozone Theatre and Barrier Hotel, and projected demolition of Town Hall the building has increased importance in reinforcing the historical character of the area and maintaining a visual link between other buildings on the east side of Ellen St.		*				
11. <u>Landmark:</u>	Important local landmark by virtue of its isolation.		*				
<u>INTEGRITY</u>							
12. <u>Alterations:</u>	Basically intact both externally and internally, verandah posts are not original.		*				
13. <u>Condition:</u>	Basically sound, signs of cracking internally, some fretting in base of walls, timber balcony in poor condition.			*			
14. <u>Compatability:</u>	Built as an office building and still serving that function.		*				
<u>Supplementary Information</u>							
<u>Adaptation:</u>	The building has a high potential, because of prime location, for continued commercial use. The building should be restored to its original external appearance and retention of notable features internally is encouraged.						
<u>Interpretation:</u>	The building has a passive interpretation role in representing early wharf front development. There is potential of active interpretation capability but this depends on its future use.						
<u>Current Situation:</u>	The building is owned by the Marine Harbours Board and leased to the D.C.W. who are apparently building new offices on the corner of Alexander and Gertrude Sts. The demolition of this building has been discussed but no decisions made.						
Evaluated By	Carolyn Wigg Reg. Architect	Iris Iwanicki Reg. Historian	Date				
Reviewed By	Ivar Nelsen		Date				
South Australian Heritage Committee Categorization			Date				

11001/21/03/05/01

HISTORICAL RESEARCH REPORT: D.C.W. BUILDING,
1 ALEXANDER STREET, PORT PIRIE

The building is situated at the rear of what was originally Lot 20, facing Ellen Street, the main street of Port Pirie and adjacent to Tugboat Wharf. In 1873 building activity in the vicinity was described as follows:

"The main street is about 3/4 of a mile long and runs in a crescent fashion, the greater part of it being called Ellen Street. At present there is only one side of it or, in fact, only part of a side. The opposite fronting is to be occupied by wharf stores leading to the landing jetties. The only one of these in use is Horner's, formerly Bowman's Station Jetty. There are others in the process of erection for Messrs. Horner, Reeves, Denman, Galloway and Co. In fact it seems as if everybody is going to have a jetty. The first stores to be looked at are Bowman's and Hughes, both of which are wharfage stores. Then comes Galloway and Denman's. Opposite to Galloway's is a public house".¹

At this time, the land belonged to John Brodie Spence, the Manager of the E. S & A.², Chartered Bank, and there is no evidence to hand that the present building was erected between that date and 1906. During the period, the land belonged to various owners, including David Murray, a merchant of Port Adelaide. In 1878, J. Cowan, a miller of Two Wells, owned the land briefly before it was transferred to the Adelaide Milling and Mercantile Company Limited and Robert MacGeorge Turner of Melbourne successively. Probably its use was connected with storage and shipping, although photographs of the wharf area do not reveal a great deal about the location.

In 1888, 10 years after his initial brief ownership, Lot 20 once again came into the possession of James Cowan now described as a merchant of Adelaide. He died in 1890, leaving his widow Sarah Ann administratrix of his estate. Then in 1906, the land was transferred to the Barrier Wharf Limited for a consideration of £100/9/8.

As a condition of sale the Company undertook to erect within the space of 6 months buildings for offices and stores "so constructed that a pay window shall be placed on the western side of the said building".³

John Christisen, a brewer of Clare, was given a right of way along the eastern side of the present building, presumably erected by the Barrier Wharf Company within the specified time.

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1. Supp. to S.A. Register, Nov. 6, 1873, p.12.
 2. Certificate of Title, Register Book Vol. 177 Folio 160 L.T.O.
 3. Transfer No. 443531, L.T.O.

The building and land was acquired by the Commonwealth of Australia under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act, 1906, in 1919 and became the property of the Harbours Board in 1922. It is currently leased by the Marine & Harbors Board of the Department of Community Welfare.

Built in 1906, the building is significant locally as a rare survivor of the wharf side landscape between 1885 and 1910. Its solid construction and style reflects the prosperity and success of the port as an outlet for mining products from the Barrier Ranges around Broken Hill. On a State level, the building must be seen in the context of Port Pirie's major shipping role in the economic fortunes of South Australia between 1885-1914.

Sources:

L.T.O. CT.177/160, 205/17, 546/7, 169/105, Transfer 443531 and Agreement 443530.

Interview Paul Bond, Marine and Harbors, Pt. Adelaide, 25/5/82
Donley,

Nancy Robinson, The Reluctant Harbour, Nadjuri, 1968.

D.U.R.A., Lester Firth & Murton Pty. Ltd., Port Pirie Conservation Study, 1980.

Williams, Ald. J.L.: The Port Pirie Story - From Settlement to City.

S.A.A. Newspaper Reading Room: S.A. Register, Nov. 3, 1873.

Supp. to S.A. Register, Nov. 6, 1873.

Advertiser, Nov. 6, 1873.

S.A.A. - Photographs of Early Pt. Pirie.

I. Iwanicki
Register Historian

II:JD

CHRONOLOGY

August

- 1872 Land grant to Charles Barney Young of Adelaide, gentleman, of a parcel of land including Lots 17, 18, 19, 20
- 1873 John Brodie Spence, Manager of E.S. & A. Chartered Bank, owned a number of allotments on CT.177/160 including Lots 17, 18, 19 & 20 of the wharf frontage along Ellen Street.
- 1875 Transferred to George Rawden Selth, New C/T issued, then transferred in the same year to David Murray, merchant.
- 1876 Leased by Murray to J.M. Sinclair, T. Sinclair & G.W. Smith.
- 1878 Transferred to J. Cowan of Two Wells, miller.
- 1883 Transferred to Adelaide Milling & Mercantile Company Limited. CT. Cov/117. Then to Robert MacGeorge Turner of Melbourne, Victoria, gentleman.
- 1888 Transfer to James Cowan of Adelaide, merchant - died 21/7/1890
- 9/3/01 Transferred to Sarah Anne Cowan as Administratrix.
- 1905 Transferred (No. 431349) from Sarah Ann Cowan to Barrier Wharf Limited of Pt. Section 19 and 20.
- 26/11/1906 Transfer No. 443531 from Sarah Ann Cowan of Burnside, widow, to Barrier Wharf Limited for a consideration of 100/9/8 "and in further consideration by the said Company and John Christison - agreeing inter alia to build upon the land hereinafter firstly described Do Hereby transfer to the said Barrier Wharf Limited all my estate and interest in that piece of land above described and coloured green. (Instrument lodged by Moulden & Sons). Witnessed by H.S. Cowan.
- 20/8/1913 Horace Stanthorpe Cowan, formerly of Burnside in the State of South Australia, Accountant, but now of parts beyond the sea transferred a section to the Clare Co-operative Brewing Company Limited for £6/13/4, as far as related size is concerned, the sale made in 1900 would be for land and some form of improvement. (TR. No. 595846)
- 17/7/1919 Mem. of Acquisition 722201 now vested in the Cwth of Australia pursuant to the Lands Acquisition Act, 1906. New CT. issued 1136/62.
- 24/7/1923

PORT PIRIE CONSERVATION STUDY

lester firth & murton pty ltd

architects urban planners and environmental consultants

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data sheet

no. 1

Name : DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY WELFARE BUILDING
Type : Building

Location : Alexander Street - wharf side
Legal and Physical

Owner :
Address :

Physical description :

Date built

Designer and Builder

Owners and Uses

Materials

Details

Style and Features

Alterations and Additions

Plan and Form

Condition

Illustrations

A two-storey sandstone building, dating from the 1880's, with a single storey extension at the rear and covered balcony and verandah at the front. The building probably had a harbour-related use originally, but is now used by the Department of Community Welfare.

The symmetrical facade has central doors at both levels, with windows at either side. All openings have segmental arches, with hood moulds at the lower level, and brick quoins. The building has a corrugated-iron hipped roof over the two-storey section, while the single-story section is gabled (featuring a brickwork chimney). The three-bay verandah and balcony has been damaged somewhat - the posts having been replaced in part.



PORT PIRIE CONSERVATION STUDY

lester firth & murton Pty Ltd

architects urban planners and environmental consultants

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data sheet

no. 2

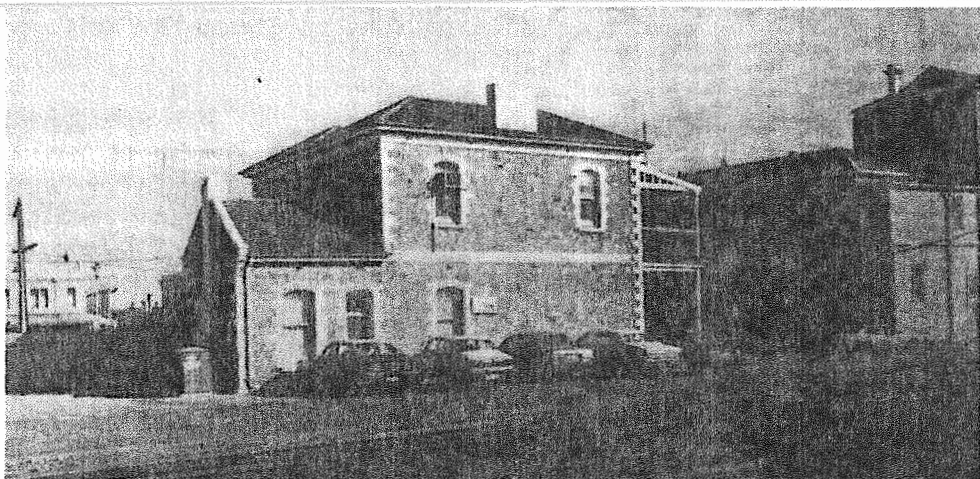
Endorsements :

None

Heritage Value :

Historical
Social and Cultural
Creative and Technical
Aesthetic
Site integrity
Natural
Aboriginal

This handsome building is not unique in Port Pirie - there are other two-storey edifices like it elsewhere (eg the Mid North Domiciliary Care Service building in Gertrude Street) - but it is virtually the only building left standing in this historical wharf side zone. The Barrier Hotel and Ozone Theatre have been demolished, and the Town Hall is due for demolition, so it is important that this building be retained as a reminder.



Comments :

Retain

Current situation
Under threat

Recommendations :

Information Sources :

Compiler and date :

PORT PIRIE - A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE

The history of Port Pirie spans a time from 1840 to the present, and represents the growth of an industrial city from inauspicious beginnings to prominence as a leading Australian port. Discovered almost coincidentally by one of the Germein Brothers in 1840,¹ Port Pirie was first used as a port in 1845. The schooner "John Pirie" collected a cargo from the Crystal Brook sheep run, an event which prompted Governor Robe to rename Samuel's Creek, as it was then known, to Port Pirie, after the ship and its namesake, Sir John Pirie, who was one of the South Australian Company's original directors.

Up until 1875, Port Pirie was used predominantly for shipping wool from the surrounding sheep runs. In 1870, the Strangways Act opened up the selection of northern lands for wheat growing. A decade later, Port Pirie had developed into a regional centre for shipping grain, despite opposition from other ports, notably Wallaroo, Mt. Ferguson, Port Augusta and Port Wakefield. Robinson (1976) and Donley (1975) describe fully how this was achieved. Some indication of the importance of the 1870's to Port Pirie's development can be seen in the events which occurred during the period:-

- 1872 Government survey of Port Pirie; with main streets laid out following the curve of the Pirie River and named after members of the family of Mr. G.W. Goyder, the Surveyor-General.
- 1873 Land sold for speculative purposes by two Adelaide businessmen, Matthew Smith and Emmanuel Solomon; after purchase in 1848 and private survey, was re-surveyed and renamed "Solomontown" to avoid confusion with the Government township. South east of the main business section of Port Pirie, Solomontown has many distinctive small galvanised iron and timber dwellings erected by workers for their families. Church Circle, at the centre of Solomontown was originally intended by Emmanuel Solomon to be the site of a synagogue. This however never eventuated. A new Methodist Church was built there in 1902, which still stands today.
- 1874 Henry Warren opened a flour mill. Time of profit for land speculators. Port Pirie West land, bought for two pounds per acre was resold for as much per foot. Direct trade with London established.
- 1876 Town incorporated with a population of 947 inhabitants. Gladstone railway line completed. Dredging and deepening of harbour proceeding.
- 1878 Port Pirie-Gladstone railway extended to Jamestown.
- 1879
- 1880 The export of grain from the port exceeded that of Port Adelaide.² Nelshaby Reservoir completed.

After the emergence of Port Pirie as an established township during the 1870's, events during the 1880's and 1890's heralded the development of the processing industry for ores extracted from the Barrier Ranges, 250 miles away. In 1885, the first load of silver ore, comprising 165 bags arrived by wagon load from the Barrier Ranges. By 1889, the town was linked to Broken Hill by rail and BHP had set up a refinery works in the town, gazetted the same year as a manufacturing area. As a result of the influx of workers, an acute housing shortage occurred, remedied by the temporary expedient of a "Canvas Town" in the town's parklands. Despite the shortage of accommodation, very little rental housing occurred, with most workers eventually building small homes of tin or timber for their families. It was also a period during which an organised labour movement fully emerged.

1. Believed to be Samuel Germein, although there is some uncertainty.
(See Robinson, 1976; 22 and 23).

2. Gazette, 21st June, 1878.

In 1896, Mr. Alf Roberts ousted Mr. John Howe, a local farmer who had represented the district since 1881, in State Parliament. This event reflected the future strong Labour sympathy within the town. During 1896 and 1897, BHP closed down its inland smelters and relocated at Port Pirie, erecting the additional chimney that became known as the big stack. This was to dominate the township's landscape as the industry has since dominated the fortunes of the residents.* By 1889, the lead smelters were described as "the best equipped in the world for the treating of silver lead ores". By 1900, there were nine times more mineral products than grain handled at the Port. This situation, however, changed dramatically when the Works closed down for four months in 1909 following a reduction in wages after world prices for lead, zinc and silver dropped. With the advent of World War I, Port Pirie's European shipping was severely disrupted. However, there were also benefits brought to the township as a result of the Great War. Unable to ship concentrates to Germany for processing, Australian industrialists formed a co-operative company to take control³ of the Pirie smelters, improving the efficiency and output as a result. Since then, the fluctuations of the town's fortunes have been a reflection of the mineral industry's development, or lack of it. In 1953, Port Pirie was proclaimed a city, the first provincial city in South Australia. Today, the city has a declining population, although it still exports a significant quantity of grain and minerals.

None of Port Pirie's achievements have been won easily, least of all its past pre-eminence as a major Australian port. Details of its struggle for survival as a suitable outlet for grain and mineral products reveal the determination and grit of its citizens since 1845. Its significance in the history of the State is outstanding because of its development to a major Australian port, and its role in providing a base for further mineral development and settlement on the other side of Spencer Gulf.

I. Iwanicki
Register Historian

II:BAH
24.5.82

Sources:

- Blainey, G. The Rise of Broken Hill London, 1968.
- Burgess, H.T. The Cyclopaedia of South Australia Adelaide, 1907.
- Donley, R.J.R. The Rise of Port Pirie Automatic Printing Co. P/L., 1975.
- Gibbs, R.M. A History of South Australia Adelaide, 1969.
- Robinson, N. Reluctant Harbour - The Romance of Pirie Nadjuri, Australia, 1976.
- Pt. Pirie Gazette and Area News - February, 1876 - December, 1884.
- Pt. Pirie Recorder - July, 1898.
- Williams, J.L. The Port Pirie Story - From Settlement to City
Port Pirie National Trust, 1976.

3. See G. Blainey. The Rise of Broken Hill London, 1968, for an account of mining in the Barrier Ranges.

* The construction of the wheat silos adjacent to the wharves south east of the town centre during the 1850's also signified the continuing



10978 D.C.W. Building, 1 Alexander St., Port Pirie.