South Australian HERITAGE COUNCIL

BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the South Australian Heritage Act 1978 or the Heritage Places Act 1993.

The information contained in this document is provided in accordance with s14(6) and s21 of the Heritage Places Act 1993.

REGISTERED Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

NAME:

KNOWN AS: Warehouse (former grain store)

ADDRESS: Ngarrindjeri Country & Peramangk Country

25 Commercial Road

Strathalbyn SA 5255

Hundred of Strathalbyn

CT 5231/258 F126924 A2

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

05 April 1984

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1864, Colman's Store demonstrates the agricultural and economic development of the colony in the second half of the nineteenth century. Built as a warehouse to store grain and flour it was also used as an exhibition building between 1883-1910 for the Strathalbyn Agricultural Show. Colman's Store also demonstrates the social and cultural development of Strathalbyn acting as a venue for community meetings, worship and theatrical events for over fifty years.

RELEVANT/INDICATIVE CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

(a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history

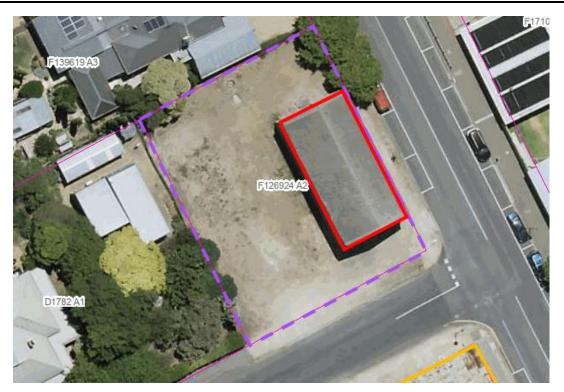
Colman's Store is associated with the early agricultural and economic development of South Australia and the establishment of social and cultural life in regional centres across the colony in the second half of the nineteenth century. Following the survey of the Strathalbyn area in 1839, agriculture developed rapidly, with settlers establishing farms across the valley during the early 1840s. Wheat growing assisted the new colony in becoming self-reliant in the provision of flour and established a valuable export commodity that assisted in building the fledgling colony's economy. Built in 1864 by William Colman, a miller and the owner of the Angas Mill, the Store was used to stock grain and flour produced by the Mill. Between 1883 and 1910 the Store was also the venue for the Strathalbyn Agricultural Show. Colman's Store therefore demonstrates the development of South Australia's economy through primary production.

In addition to its primary purpose as an agricultural building, Colman's Store was also Strathalbyn's 'makeshift' community hall, playing host to a variety of live performances, balls, fundraisers, lectures, meetings, sermons, and festivals prior to the establishment of purpose-built venues. As the centre of Strathalbyn's social life for almost fifty years, the Store demonstrates the establishment of social and cultural life in South Australia's regional centres in the nineteenth century and the multi-purpose nature of such buildings.

SITE PLAN

Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



Colman's Store, 25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255 (CT 5231/258 F126924 A2, Hundred of Strathalbyn)

N↑

LEGEND

Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)

Existing State Heritage Place(s)

Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

Physical Description

Colman's Store is a rectangular, single-roomed stone building with a cement-tiled gable roof. The walls are pointed, coursed rubble with brick quoins surrounding the windows and doors. Both gable facades are symmetrical, with an arched central door opening and a half-round louvre vent above. The Mill Street façade additionally has two segmented windows on either side of the central door opening. The doors at both ends are solid timber with fanlights above. A projected plinth with stairs on either end lead to the entry door. The long elevations of the building are windowless, with remnants of white paint on some surfaces. The interior has plastered walls, timber flooring, exposed timber roof trusses, and timber partition walls.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Rectangular stone building with gable roof,
- Original fittings and fixtures to the interior and exterior.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

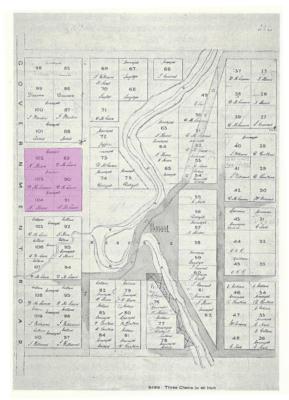
• Metal railing along entry stairs on Mill Street.

HISTORY OF THE PLACE

Strathalbyn and Early Agricultural Expansion

Located on the transition between the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Murray plains, the town of Strathalbyn resides in an open valley on the border between Ngarrindjeri Country to the south and Peramangk Country to the north. At the time of settlement in 1839, First Nations people had three camping places in the area, one on the peninsula, another on the site of the old pioneer cemetery along Colman Terrace, and a third in front of where the present Victoria Hotel stands. The area was rich in grazing and agricultural land, owing to the good supply of water from the Angas and Bremer rivers. Page 1841.

Flour was a vital commodity for South Australian colonists, with 10,000 acres of wheat under cultivation by 1841.³ Prior to 1840, grain produced in South Australia had to be exported for milling into flour and attracted heavy duties. John Ridley built the first flour mill in South Australia at Hindmarsh in 1840 with other mills commencing operation soon after at Kent Town, Thebarton and Hackney.⁴ By the mid-1840s, the construction of mills had spread to country areas, following agricultural expansion, including at Echunga, Mount Barker, Gawler, and Angaston. By 1850, 27 mills were operating in the colony.⁵



Early land division of Section 2600, Hundred of Strathalbyn. The allotments purchased by William Colman in 1864 are coloured purple. The Angas Mill is located on allotment 92.

The Angas Mill

Following the Angas Special Survey in May 1839, the Strathalbyn township developed steadily alongside crops of wheat and maize as well as dairy cattle and sheep grazing. Donald Gollan, one of the colony's early pioneers and owner of Strathalbyn's Terminus Hotel (SHP 11652), recognised the need for a local mill, and set about establishing a flour mill on allotment 92 around 1847. Known as the Angas Mill, it was sold to miller William Colman c.1851.

Colman's Grain Store

Between 1850 and 1859 the number of acres of land under cultivation in South Australia rose from 64,949 to 361,884. At this time the prosperity of the colony was due to copper, wool and wheat exports to Britain and the other Australian colonies. By 1856, 60 mills were operating in South Australia, and flour production was exceeding local demand.

In July 1864, after running the Angas Mill for over ten years, Colman purchased allotments 89, 90, 91, 102, 103 and 104 of Section 2600, Hundred of Strathalbyn. It is unknown precisely when the mill store was constructed on allotment 91, but a 'large and fashionable' ball was held at the premises on 4 January 1865, suggesting that the store had been built sometime between July and December 1864. According to the South Australian Register, 100 ladies and gentlemen were present at the event, 10 which provides an indication of the size and capacity of the building.

While primarily intended to store grain products and flour produced by the Mill, due to its size and layout the building was quickly embraced by the residents of Strathalbyn as a community and concert hall. Colman's Store welcomed entertainers from all around the country, including the 'Australian Prima Donna' Madame Carandini in 1865, the Amateur Christy Minstrels in 1868,¹¹ Tom Thumb's troupe of 'perfect ladies and gentlemen in miniature' and the Amateur Ethiopian Serenaders in 1870.¹³

In his column in the Southern Argus, Joseph W. Elliott recalls the early recreational life of the town, writing, 'Strathalbyn, quite early in its history ... developed some good histrionic talent, and under difficulties scarcely believable to-day, several very creditable little productions were "staged" under the crudest of theatrical conditions,' describing Colman's big store 'as a wonderfully fine place in its time, few country towns boasting so large a room.' 14

Colman also lent the Store to numerous Christian causes. The Store hosted a tea meeting prior to the opening of the extensions of the Presbyterian Church in 1866, ¹⁵ a fundraiser for the erection of an Episcopalian Church in 1869, ¹⁶ and a series of lectures

by Rev J. Thornton and Rev William Taylor.¹⁷ The Store was also the main venue for the Wesleyan Methodist Circuit festival in the early 1870s. ¹⁸

In March 1865, Colman installed the first tramway in the township, connecting the Angas Mill with the wheat store across the street. A Strathalbyn correspondent for the Advertiser reported, 'we can now boast of having a tramway, and, although not quite extending to [the] nearest port town, reflects credit on the enterprising owner.' 19

Colman began charging other farmers of Strathalbyn and surrounding districts to store wheat at his store in 1867. A charge of three farthings per bushel were to be made on the first of every month for all wheat in the store. Bags were provided, but all parties who retained bags longer than six months were charged threepence for each bag, at six weekly intervals.²⁰

The following year, on 16 April 1868, the first sheet of the Southern Argus newspaper was printed at the store. The newspaper reported:

After Mr. Colman had successfully managed to pull the first copy, many others of those present tried their hands at the bar, but none even of the younger men proved so adroit as the stalwart miller.²¹

The Southern Argus was established two years prior by politician and journalist Ebenezer Ward in Freeling Street, Port Elliot.²² The Store was a temporary location whilst Colman funded the construction of Argus House (SHP 10627) on allotment 93 behind the Angas Mill.²³

The late 1860s and early 1870s marked a downturn for the colony's agricultural industry with the total acreage under wheat declining from 550,456 acres in 1867 to 533,035 acres in 1868.²⁴ While there were many reasons for the decline, the drought in 1865-1866 and the prevalence of wheat disease, including rust in 1867-1868 are notable.²⁵ In an era before fertilisers were in common use, the depletion of soil nutrients resulting from decades of heavy cropping also drastically reduced the region's productivity.

Poor yields locally coincided with the opening up of new agricultural lands for settlement to the north, prompting an exodus of farmers seeking new opportunities elsewhere in the colony. With reduced local demand, mills throughout the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu districts began to shut down. ²⁶ Colman's Angas Mill was no exception, the failed crops in the district forcing closures of the mill for substantial periods of time. Unfortunately for Colman the downturn coincided with his investment in new building works and improvements to the mill, and these works in combination with the downturn resulted in Colman declaring insolvency in December 1870. ²⁷

From 1867 to 1871, Colman's business ventures made a net loss of close to £3,000, increasing his total debt to about £19,000. As a result, Colman was awarded a second-class certificate of insolvency on 28 February 1871.²⁸ The certificate discharged him

'from all debts appearing on his schedule as due by him when he became insolvent, and from all claims and demands made provable under the insolvency.' As a further condition of the Act, the Insolvency Court also suspended the operation of the certificate, 'so far as regards to the future estate and effects [emphasis added] of such insolvent, for a period not exceeding three years.'²⁹

His entire estate was put up for auction on 9 March by order of the Mortgagee, including the Angas Mill, the Railway Store on allotment 33, Argus House on allotment 93, and allotment 91 'on which is erected a large and substantial Store, capable of containing 25,000 bushels of wheat.'30 The Angas Mill and the Store failed to sell, and remained with the Mortgagee until the three-year period elapsed in 1874. In the meantime, Colman was allowed to continue running the Angas Mill, the Southern Argus announcing its reopening in December 1871.31

During this time, Colman's Store continued to be used by the community as an entertainment venue, 'The Bell Ringers' performing on 15 March 1871 and the Simonsen's English Opera Company on 21 and 22 of June.³² After the show, the Adelaide Observer reported on the low attendance for the opera caused by the agricultural downturn: 'doubtless the bad times had the effect of keeping many away, or a company having such a high reputation would have drawn a much larger assembly.'33

On 4 February 1874, Colman repurchased the Angas Mill, which presumably included the Store across the street.³⁴ According to newspaper advertisements, during the early 1870s, the Store on Commercial Road ceased its primary operations, with Colman shifting storage of wheat flour to his tramway store. Colman's Store became primarily a community venue referred to as either Colman's Old Store or the Assembly Room,³⁵ hosting acts such as magician Professor Louis Haselmeyer,³⁶ and meetings of the Rifle Association Committee.³⁷

The Strathalbyn Agricultural Show

In 1883, the Strathalbyn Agricultural Show Society (Strathalbyn Agricultural and Horticultural Society) purchased Colman's Store and its adjacent lots, amounting to six acres of land, for £600. The Society was founded in 1855, and prior to Colman's Store and paddock, the shows were held at various local hotel yards. By the early 1880s this arrangement had become a 'great inconvenience,' with outdoor exhibits being shown at one side of the town, and the indoor exhibits at another.³⁸ Colman's store and paddock was seen by the Society as the perfect site for future shows, 'it being a sufficiently large square block with roads on all sides, and situate[d] in a most convenient part of the town.'³⁹

The first show was held on the site on 7 September 1883,⁴⁰ with between '2,000 and 3,000' spectators present. An article in the *South Australian Advertiser* reported on the

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repurposing of Colman's Store as a show hall: 'on the ground there is a building which once served the purpose of a wheat store, and which the committee have turned into a commodious hall to hold the perishable exhibits.'41

The Store was used by the Society as a show hall until 1909, by which time the Society and Show had outgrown the grounds. The Society purchased 12 acres of land between Ashbourne Road and Coronation Road and held the first show on the site on 21 October 1910.

Henry Hubert Butler and the Adams Family

In April 1910, allotment 91 was transferred to Henry Hubert Butler, Clerk of the Strathalbyn Corporation and District Council from 1902 and 1914. Butler was an agent for several companies such as Dalgety & Co.'s produce and merchandise, Clutterbuck Bros machinery and engines, and Bagshaw & Sons. He also sold agricultural related products such a superphosphates and stock insurance.⁴² He ran his business out of Colman's Store until his retirement in 1914, leaving the property to his business partner William Frank Adams.

Born in Strathalbyn in 1874, Adams worked for E.J. Tucker's legal firm before joining Butler in agency work selling houses, machinery, and insurance.⁴³ In December 1914 he was appointed Town Clerk on Butler's retirement.⁴⁴ Following Adams' death in 1954, the property was transferred to his wife Katherine and son Stuart, a grazier. Colman's Store remains under the ownership of the Adams family.

Chronology

Year	Event
1839	Angus Special Survey is purchased by Captain George Hall and William Mein conducted in May.
1840	Township of Strathalbyn is surveyed on Section 2600 by E.W. Cross.
1840	The colony has 10,000 acres under wheat production.
1849	William Colman (1812-1882) arrives in South Australia aboard the <i>Posthumous</i> with his wife Phillipa and begins running the mill at Balhannah.
1856	On 5 March the first Strathalbyn Show is held adjacent to the Robin Hood Hotel.
1864	Colman purchases allotments 89, 90, 91, 102, 103 and 104 of Section 2600, Hundred of Strathalbyn.
1864	Colman builds a store across the road from the Angas Mill (SHP 11596).
1865	Colman installs a tramway connecting the Angas Mill and the Store.
1865	Colman purchases allotment 93 directly south of the Angas Mill.

1866	The Presbyterian Church opens in Strathalbyn.
1866	In March, the first copy of the Southern Argus weekly newspaper is printed in Port Elliot.
1868	Strathalbyn separates from the District Council to become a municipality.
1868	In April, the first sheet of the Southern Argus weekly newspaper is printed at Colman's store in Strathalbyn.
1868	Colman constructs a two-storey building next to the Telegraph Station for the proprietors of the <i>Southern Argus</i> .
1869	Tramway opens connecting Strathalbyn with Goolwa.
1869	Colman builds a second grain store adjacent to the tramway.
1870	Colman declares insolvency in December.
1872 –	Colman serves as Mayor of Strathalbyn.
1874	
1883	The Strathalbyn Show Society purchases a 6 acre block of land for £600 including Colman's Store.
1902 - 1914	Henry Hubert Butler (1863-1914) serves as the Town Clerk of Strathalbyn.
1909 - present	The Strathalbyn Show Society moves the showground to a 12 acreallotment between Ashbourne Road and Coronation Road.
1910	Allotment 93 is purchased by Butler (CT 831/72).
1914	Colman's Store is Transferred to Adams in November.
1914 – 1939	William Frank Adams (1874-1954) serves as the Town Clerk of Strathalbyn.
2023	Colman's Store remains in the Adams family (CT 5231/258)

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SITE DETAILS

Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE: Rectangular, single-roomed stone building.

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1864

REGISTER STATUS: Nomination: 7 June 1982

Provisional Entry: 6 Oct 1983

Confirmation: 5 April 1984

CURRENT USE: Private use

1950s - present

PREVIOUS USE(S): Wheat store

1864 - 1883

Recreational hall and meeting place

1864 - 1883

Show hall

1883 - 1909

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

AREA:

Alexandrina

LOCATION: Street No.: 25

Street Name: Commercial Road

Town/Suburb: Strathalbyn

Post Code: 5255

LAND DESCRIPTION: Title Reference: CT 5231/258 F126924 A2

Hundred: Strathalbyn

PHOTOS

Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



Colman's Store in April 2023.

Source: Google Maps, April 2023



The west and north elevation of Colman's Store. The Angas Mill can be seen behind.

Source: Google Maps, April 2023



Strathalbyn looking north-west over an Aboriginal encampment c. 1865. Colman's Store is circled in red.

Source: SLSA B 63453

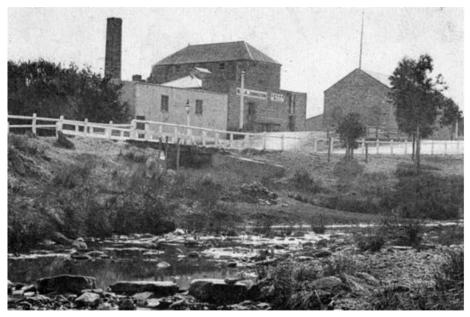


The Strathalbyn Football Club standing behind Colman's Store in 1884.

Source: SLSA B 46338

Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



View of the Angas Mill and Colman's Store from the Angas River c. 1900.

Source: SLSA B 46837



The Strathalbyn Agricultural Show c. 1900. Colman's Store can be seen in the background behind the white tents.

Source: SLSA PRG 280-1-13-284

Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



Laucke Milling Company with William F. Adams' Store in the background during the 1940s.

Source: Strathalbyn National Trust Museum



Photograph from a similar perspective, taken in 1981.

Source: DEW Files, Dec 1981

Colman's Store PLACE NO.: 11596

25 Commercial Road, Strathalbyn SA 5255



Colman's Store taken from the corner of Commercial Road and Mill Street in 1981. Note the painted quoins around the windows and doors, and the missing balustrade on the entry stairs.

Source: DEW Files, Dec 1981





Interior of Colman's Store. Note the plastered walls, exposed timber roof trusses and partition walls.

Source: DEW Files, Dec 1981

¹ Down by the Riverside. Strathalbyn Theatrical-Historical Tour, a South Australian History Festival Event, May 2017.

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- ²⁵ Williams, The Making of the South Australian Landscape, p.36.
- ²⁶ Morgan, Angas Mill, p.17.
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- ²⁹ The Insolvency Act 1860, South Australia, p.155.
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- ³⁴ South Australian Register, 'Auction Sale,' 5 February 1874, p.4.
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- ³⁹ Southern Argus, 'The Strathalbyn Agricultural Society.'
- ⁴⁰ South Australian Register, 'Advertising,' 18 July 1883, p.2.
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- ⁴² Southern Argus, 'Advertisements,' 7 September 1911, p.1.
- ⁴³ Southern Argus, 'Advertising,' 1 January 1914, p.2.
- ⁴⁴ Nancy Gemmell, *Old Strathalbyn and its People 1839-1939* (Adelaide: National Trust of South Australia, 1985), p.193.

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