MARYBOROUGH TOWN HALL

Town Hall_Maryborough_view from South_7 Nov 07_KJ

Town hall_Maryborough_front_Nov 07_Kj

Town Hall_maryborough_view from east_7 Nov 07_KJ

Town Hall_Maryborough_memorial fountain_7 Nov 07_KJ

Town Hall_maryborough_hall interior_7 Nov 07_KJ

Town Hall_Maryborough_painted ceiling in main hall_7 Nov 07-KJ

Town Hall_Maryborough_window detail_7 Nov 07_Kj

Maryborough Town Hall town hall_plan

Location

71 CLARENDON STREET MARYBOROUGH, CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

Municipality

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2152

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO174

VHR Registration

March 13, 2008

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The first Maryborough Town Hall, built in 1858, lacked a large hall suitable for public functions, and in 1887 the decision was made to build a new Town Hall on vacant land in the Civic Square near the Post Office. The architect was George Johnson, possibly the most prolific designer of municipal buildings in late nineteenth century Victoria and noted for his designs for town halls in Melbourne, particularly Collingwood, Northcote and North Melbourne Town Halls, as well as many theatres and opera houses in Melbourne and other Australian cities. Tenders were called in March 1887, the successful quote being for ?6454.5.0 by George Clayfield Senior. The foundation stone was laid in June 1887 and the new town hall opened with a grand ball in July 1888. In 1903 a memorial drinking fountain was erected in front of the building. Designed and made by George Daws, a Melbourne monumental mason, it commemorates Gerald Wilkinson, Maryborough's first war casualty, who was killed in action in 1901 during the Boer War. Films were screened at the Town Hall between 1908 and 1967. In 1939 a new entrance foyer for the hall and a Lower Town Hall were constructed, providing much needed public work during the depression. They were built by Steve Hunn for ?5000, to plans by the Melbourne architect Harry J Little. Funds were made available by the sale of the Borough electrical supply to the SEC. In 1971 the administrative offices at the front of the building were vacated when new administrative offices were built opposite. The old offices are now used for council and community purposes.

The Maryborough Town Hall is a symmetrical two-storey rendered Free Classical style building with a single storey Streamlined Moderne style addition. On the main administrative block on Clarendon Street there is a central projecting two-storey entrance portico, a balustraded parapet and balustraded balconettes outside the first floor windows. The windows are modified Serlian openings, with stilted segmental arches on the ground floor and semi-circular arches on the first floor. Much of the interior is intact and it retains some original furniture. At the rear is a large much more simply decorated wing containing the hall, which has a painted ceiling, a stage surrounded by a proscenium arch and a gallery which extends around three sides. The gallery has a cast iron balustrade and is supported on decorative brackets. The 1939 additions along Neill Street include a smaller hall beneath the north end of the main hall and a Streamlined Moderne style entrance foyer for the hall. This addition is of cream render with bands of brown clinker brick at the base and forming a continuous strip with the steel framed windows. Internally the foyer retains its original *Art Deco* features, including ticket offices, light fittings, staircases, doors and windows. The memorial drinking fountain on the footpath in front of the Town Hall is an elaborate structure on a stepped base of Malmsbury bluestone with the top section supported on four stone columns. There is a commemorative plaque on the front, the maker's name on the rear, water basins for dogs on two sides and it is surmounted by a cast iron lamp. The Town Hall is one of three landmark buildings around the civic square in the centre of Maryborough, the others being the Post Office (1878, VHR H1754) and the Court House (1891-2, VHR H1475).

How is it significant?

The Maryborough Town Hall is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Maryborough Town Hall has architectural significance as a notable and largely intact example of a late nineteenth century provincial town hall, and as a major public building designed by the prominent Melbourne architect George Johnson. It is notable for the fine interior of the hall, particularly the gallery and painted ceiling. The *Moderne* style additions are also significant for their intactness and for the *Art Deco* interiors. The significance of the Town Hall is enhanced by its location in the Maryborough Civic Square, adjoining the 1878 Post Office and the 1891-2 Court House. The group of three buildings is significant as an outstanding example of late nineteenth century civic design.

The Maryborough Town Hall has historical significance as a reflection of the wealth of gold mining towns such as Maryborough in the nineteenth century and of the civic growth that occurred in Victoria as a result of the mining industry. The 1903 memorial drinking fountain has historical significance as a demonstration of the importance attached by the community to the sacrifices made by local men in foreign wars in the early twentieth century.

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions here.

Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions:

1. All alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place.

2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that originally or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place are revealed which relate to the significance of the place, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.

3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works will be in accordance with it.

4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Exterior:

Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.

Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

Installation or removal of external fixtures and fittings such as, hot water services and taps.

Installation and repairing of damp proofing by either injection method or grouted pocket method.

Interior:

Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.

Removal of paint from originally unpainted or oiled joinery, doors, architraves, skirtings and decorative strapping.

Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted artworks.

Refurbishment of bathrooms and toilets including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

Removal of tiling or concrete slabs in wet areas provided there is no damage to or alteration of original structure or fabric.

Installation, removal or replacement of kitchen benches and fixtures, including sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers, etc, and associated plumbing and wiring.

Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and provided that the location of the heating unit is concealed from view.

Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed.

Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.

Installation of stud walls which are removable.

Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions, computer and office fitout and the like.

Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.

Installation of plant within the roof space.

Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

Construction dates	1887, 1939,
Architect/Designer	Johnson, George R,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	13472
Property Number	

History

Contextual history

Opulent Victorian-era town halls are the grandest and most substantial buildings in many cities and towns throughout Victoria. Many were built during the prosperous 1870s and 1880s, when flamboyance and opulence in architecture was the norm, until this was halted by the 1890s depression. There was a tendency for shires and municipalities to compete to produce ever-grander towns hall to symbolise the wealth and prosperity of their municipalities, and they were major investments for the municipalities at the time. Almost invariably they had striking exteriors in ornate classical styles with columns, pediments, porticos, balustrades and with multitudes of decorative features, and often also an imposing clock tower. They generally had a central auditorium on the ground floor with council chambers upstairs and municipal offices at the sides.

History of place

The site of the present Civic Precinct/Square was the designated Reserve for Public Purposes in the Second Camp Reserve of the old gold-mining settlement, which moved here in 1857 from the original 1854 Commissioner's Camp Reserve (City if Maryborough heritage Study, v2, p 223).

Maryborough was proclaimed a municipality in 1857, and the first Maryborough Town Hall, designed by R T Cooper, was built in 1858 opposite the present site on the corner of Clarendon and Neill Streets. When built it was considered quite handsome, being a brick building on bluestone foundations, nearly fifty feet long by twenty-eight feet wide, with a front elevation in the Tuscan Order, and containing a twenty-five feet square council chamber. There was also a committee room and Town Clerk's office. The Council was soon proposing a town hall with a large hall suitable for public functions, however an estimated cost of ?4000 put plans on hold. (Osborne & DuBourg, *Maryborough A Social History 1854-1904*, p 115.)

The poor state of Maryborough's public buildings was of concern in the 1870s, with the Court House, the post Office, Treasury and Police Buildings all in poor condition due to bad construction. As the old town hall was ill-suited for public use, meetings, concerts and plays were held in the Golden Age and Commercial Hotels. Early in 1873 there was an editorial on the need for a new town hall. The Advertiser condemned the town's public buildings as 'the meanest collection of dirty, rotten, tumble-down and patched-up affairs that any town in the colony is adorned with'. By November 1873 the idea of one central building in Clarendon Street facing Nolan Street had emerged which could house not only a town hall but various other offices as well. This building did not eventuate but the idea of a civic square did, and in 1877 tenders were let for a building in Clarendon Street to house a post office, court house and sub-treasury. (Osborn & DuBourg, pp 241-243) Maryborough was then a major centre of the colony's gold fields, and it was planned to be a substantial town.

Ratepayers were reluctant to borrow the substantial sum needed for a new town hall. A donation of ?3000 from the local Water Works Trust in 1883 gave the project a boost; in 1887 a proposal was adopted to float a loan funded by debentures, which produced a further ?7000. Three sites were proposed, but it was decided to make use of the vacant land in the Civic Square near the post office. Plans were prepared by the architect George Johnson, who also designed the North Melbourne Town Hall (1875-6), Collingwood Town Hall (begun 1885, VHR H140) and Northcote Town Hall (1888-9). Tenders were called in March 1887, the successful quote being for ?6454.5.0 by George Clayfield Senior, who had built the Daylesford Town Hall; the Clerk of Works was W Goodall. The foundation stone was laid on 22 June 1887 by the Mayor (Osborn & DuBourg, pp 288-90), and Johnson placed a sealed bottle containing copies of colonial dailies and local newspapers under the stone before it was lowered into place. The new Town Hall opened with a grand ball on July 24 1888. It was designed with a clock tower, but there was already one on the adjacent post office, and the tower was not built.

In 1903 a memorial drinking fountain was erected outside the Town Hall. Designed and manufactured by George Daws, a Melbourne monumental mason, and commemorates Gerald 'Jinx' Wilkinson, Maryborough's first war casualty, who was killed in action in South Africa in 1901 during the Boer War (Mark Fiddian, *Civic Palaces*, *A Tableau of Australian Town Halls*, 1986, p 37).

As well as its normal administrative functions, the Town Hall was used for concerts (Nellie Melba sang there at least once), for public meetings, receptions, lectures, balls (which were then more frequent than they are today), for war-time recruiting rallies, as well as for more unusual events: a skating rink was set up there in 1910 and a boxing exhibition held there in 1909. There was community singing there during the depression to raise money for the unemployed. (Osborn, *Against the Odds. Maryborough 1905-1961*). Films were shown there for about sixty years from 1908 until 1967

The Town Hall foyer and the Lower Town Hall, a large room used as a supper room or large meeting room, were constructed in 1939, providing much needed public work during the depression. The builder was Steve Hunn, to

plans by the Melbourne architect Harry J Little, the contract being worth ?5000. Funds were made available by the sale of the Borough electrical supply to the SEC. In 1971 the administrative offices at the front were vacates when new administrative offices were built opposite. The old offices are now used for council and community purposes (Fiddian p 37).

The architect (1840-1898)

[Largely taken from Bill Hannan, *Pride of Hotham. A tale of North Melbourne and a red-headed architect,* North Melbourne 2006, pp 177-193.]

George Raymond Johnson's fame rests largely on his public buildings, especially his town halls. In his own day however he was noted as a builder of theatres in almost every Australian colony, though his best-known Melbourne theatres - the Opera House and the Bijou - have not survived.

He was born in Southgate, Middlesex, in 1840, and was articled at 13 to the chief architect of the Midland Railway Company in Derby. In 1859 he moved to London where he practised for two years. He married in 1962 and shortly after migrated to the new colony of Queensland. He practised in Brisbane for two years, and built the Toowoomba Gaol, in early 1865 moved to Bowen in North Queensland, and a few months later to Townsville. Although his practice seemed to do well, Johnson was a spendthrift and appears not to have been a good financial manager, and in early 1867 he moved to Melbourne leaving unpaid debts.

Boom period Melbourne provided many opportunities for an architect. On reaching Melbourne he gained commissions to design houses for wealthy merchants and professional men, the Jewish almshouses in St Kilda Road, and houses for the Old Colonists project in North Fitzroy. He designed the Haymarket and Varieties Theatres, the Eastern Arcade, the Apollo Music Hall, the Prince of Wales Opera House, and the Metropolitan Meat Market in North Melbourne.

He was in a good position to take on the large civic projects that municipalities began to contemplate in the 1870s. In 1874 he won the competition for the Hotham (North Melbourne) Town Hall, and also designed the town halls at Daylesford (1882), Collingwood (1885), the second stage of Fitzroy Town Hall (1888), Maryborough (1887), Northcote and Kilmore (1893).

With declining work opportunities during the 1890s depression, in 1895 he moved to Perth, where he designed Theatre Royal in Hay Street. He boarded a ship to return to Melbourne in 1898, but died of blood poisoning during the voyage.

Assessment Against Criteria

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object

The Maryborough Town Hall, and the Civic Precinct of which it forms a major part, is a demonstration of the wealth of the gold mining towns of Victoria in the nineteenth century. The 1930s Moderne style addition with Art Deco interiors accommodating a cinema increases its significance. The 1903 Boer War memorial drinking fountain in front of the Town Hall reflects the importance attached by Victorian communities to the sacrifices made by local men in foreign wars.

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness

The Maryborough Civic Precinct is one of the most outstanding such nineteenth century precincts in Victoria.

c. The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage

d. The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects

The Maryborough Town Hall is a notable example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architect George Johnson, who designed a number of Victoria's most important late nineteenth century town halls.

e. The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features

The Maryborough Town Hall is a notable and largely intact example of a Boom period provincial town hall, and forms part of one of the most outstanding group of nineteenth century civic buildings in Victoria. It is important for the impressive classical exterior, for the Art Deco addition and for the fine and intact interiors.

f. The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements

g. The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural association

h. Any other matter which the Council deems relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

Plaque Citation

Designed by George Johnson and built in 1887-8, this Free Classical style Town Hall reflects the wealth of Victoria's gold mining towns. It forms part of one of the State's most outstanding civic precincts.

Extent of Registration

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram Number 2152 held by the Executive Director, being all of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 01952 Folio 248.

2. All of the buildings and structures marked B1 and B2 on Diagram Number 2152 held by the Executive Director.

B1 Town Hall

B2 Memorial drinking fountain

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/