

# BALLAARAT MECHANICS INSTITUTE



MECHANICS INSTITUTE  
SOHE 2008



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1 mechanics institute ballarat  
front street view aug1985



h00987 mechanics institute  
sturt st ballarat facade she  
project 2003



h00987 mechanics institute  
sturt st ballarat figures above  
vaulted entrance she project  
2003



h00987 mechanics institute  
sturt st ballarat front view she  
project 2003



h00987 mechanics institute  
sturt st ballarat statue of  
minevra she project 2003



h00987 mechanics institute  
sturt st ballarat top floor  
balcony area she project  
2003



After Photographs -  
Reference F3924 2016



After Photographs -  
Reference F3924 2016



Before Photograph -  
Reference F3924 2014



During Photographs -  
Reference F3924 2015

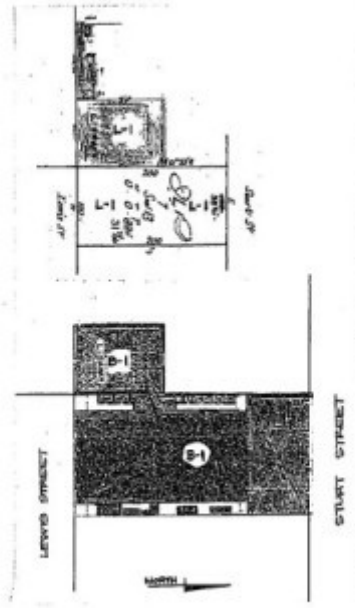


During Photographs -  
Reference F3924 2015



During Photographs -  
Reference F3924 2015

REPORT TO MINISTER PLAN 600220(A)



*Perceps to Walter  
7 September 1995*

H0987 plan

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## Location

113-121 STURT STREET BALLARAT CENTRAL, BALLARAT CITY

## Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0987

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO114

## VHR Registration

October 19, 1993

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 30, 2010

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute in Ballarat was built in two main stages, in 1860-61 and in 1869-70. The Institute had first met unofficially in 1854, with space provided for the first reading room in the Ballarat Fire Brigade building, but a site for a new Institute building was granted in Sturt Street in 1856. The institute was inaugurated by a public meeting in 1859, with the first president being JB Humffray (1824-1891), the Secretary of the Ballarat Reform League, which had been founded by the diggers in 1854 and instigated the Eureka uprising. In 1860 a design competition was held for the first stage, the southern part of the present building. It was won by the Melbourne architect Charles Boykett, and a tender was accepted from the builders Francis and Watson. The cost was £3400 for the construction and the purchase of furniture. By 1860 the Institute had three hundred members, whose subscriptions, as well as profits from various fundraising events and state and local Government grants, were used to fund the building. The Reading Room opened on 19 December 1860 and the remaining spaces, except the hall, were completed before the end of the year. The lower storey of the two-storey brick building had a library, a reading room, three classrooms, and the upper storey was occupied by the lecture hall. In 1862 the prominent Melbourne architect Leonard Terry was engaged to provide recommendations on the design of an elaborate coved ceiling and other details in the hall. In 1868 another competition was announced, for designs for extensions at the front of the building, which was won by the architect John Holmes Jones, then based in Ballarat. The new five-level building with a grand classical facade was separated from the 1860 building by a new stair hall, and had a basement with a restaurant, kitchen, scullery smoking room and store rooms; a ground floor with offices and shops; a mezzanine with the hall foyer, offices and living quarters for the secretary; above this was a new library; and at the top a museum (which was the billiard room from 1879 to 1938). A gallery was also added in the hall and concave verandahs were added to the front on each side of the entrance. A number of changes have been made to the interiors and exteriors since then, including the addition of Wunderlich pressed steel ceilings in the Reading Room in 1909 and the addition of a verandah with a central barrel vault in 1914. In 1935 the Institute acquired the adjacent Old Mining Exchange Hall, and the library and reading room moved there the following year. Ballarat played a crucial role in the development of the stock exchange in Victoria, with share-broking, mainly in mining shares, beginning in Ballarat in 1857, the same year as the unofficial Melbourne Stock Exchange. The Exchange Hall was completed in 1865 and was the hub of Ballarat's share trading for the next fifteen years. From 1908 the Institute hall was used as a picture theatre. The building continues to function as a Mechanics Institute. The library collection (H2096) is one of the most important in Victoria, and remains in use today.

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute is a brick building with an impressive four level symmetrical rendered Victorian Free Classical style facade with a verandah with a central barrel vault. The facade has a recessed central section flanked by two three storey bays with Greek and Roman classical motifs. The coved arch above the entrance is bordered by sculptural relief panels with two reclining figures, and to either side are shopfronts. The library floor has a central arched and fanned alcove with a slightly projecting balustraded balcony. The central bay of the top floor is also recessed with a small balcony and above the parapet is a sculpture of Minerva, the Roman goddess

associated with wisdom, symbolising the Institute's desire for knowledge. The building is substantially intact internally. The library houses a vast collection of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century books, newspapers, journals, and Institute records dating from c. 1857. It includes early Ballarat and Australian colonial publications, and collections of notable individuals such as John Fawkner and JB Humffray.

Why is it significant?

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

How is it significant?

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute is historically significant as an outstanding example of a grand nineteenth century mechanics institute, which demonstrates the important role played by these Institutes in the nineteenth century. It has a strong association with the Mechanics Institute movement and the important role it played in the intellectual, cultural and social development of Victorians throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. It differs in size from most other Mechanics Institutes, which usually only included a public hall and library, demonstrating not only the prosperity of Ballarat but also the cultural and educational aspirations of its citizens during the gold era.

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute is historically significant for its associations with a number of people of importance in the history of Victoria, including Peter Lalor and John Humffray (both linked to the Eureka Stockade), JP Fawkner (one of the founders of Victoria), WB Withers (the eminent Ballarat historian), and Henry Sutton (the acclaimed scientist and inventor).

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute Library, once the trading hall of the Old Mining Exchange, is historically significant for its importance in the history of stockbroking in Victoria, and for its association with gold mining and mining speculation in Ballarat, one of Victoria's greatest gold mining centres in the nineteenth century.

The Ballaarat Mechanics Institute is architecturally significant as an outstanding and substantially intact example of a large nineteenth century Mechanics Institute building. Its fine rendered Victorian Free Classical style facade is a distinctive and notable example of craftsmanship in construction and decoration. The building is significant for its substantially intact interiors, which demonstrate the design and the various functions of such Institutes. The building is significant for its association with the architects Charles Boykett, Leonard Terry and John Holmes Jones.

[This statement was produced as part of an Online Data Upgrade Project 2010.]

## 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 exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates	1860,
Architect/Designer	Boykett, Charles Bolten,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	BALLARAT MECHANICS INSTITUTE,
Hermes Number	1393
Property Number	

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## **History**

Associated People: J H Jones

## **Extent of Registration**

AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS  
Historic Building No. 987.  
Mechanics Institute  
113-121 Sturt Street, Ballarat  
(To the extent of:

1. All of the building known as the Ballarat Mechanics Institute marked B1 in Plan 600220(A) endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.
2. All of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 2284 Folio 729 and all of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 8411 Folio 598 marked L1 on Plan 600220(A) endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.)  
[Victoria Government Gazette No. G41 21 October 1993 p.2869]

*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/>*