HO79 - Former Mechanics Institute



Mechanics' Institute



Mechanics Institute

Location

222-238 High Street MELTON, MELTON SHIRE

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO79

Heritage Listing

Melton City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The former Mechanics' Institute building, at 222-230 High Street, Melton, built 1910, has significance as a predominantly intact example of an elegant Late Victorian style and for its associations with the development of the local Mechanics' Institute, an organization that was first established in Melton in 1868. The building was at the core of the social life of Melton, particularly during the early twentieth century, and to a lesser extent until the site was transferred to the Shire in 1982. It remains as a landmark of the Melton townscape.

The former Mechanics' Institute building, at 222-230 High Street, is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level (AHC D2, E1). It demonstrates original design qualities of a rudimentary Late Victorian style. These qualities include the rendered parapet with the projecting cornice and flanking parapet piers, central decorative brick parapet and timber flagpole above the main entrance, panelled timber double entrance doors and fanlight accentuated by the rendered drip mould, and the two bays of round arched timber framed double hung windows featuring drip moulds and stringcoursing. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the symmetrical composition, single storey height, face brick wall construction, stringcourse forming the horizontal band at window sill height on the front facade, hipped roof form clad in galvanised corrugated steel and the face brick chimney with the projecting, rendered and corbelled top.

Although the original hall at the rear was demolished, and a new Community Hall was added adjacent to it in 1983, the three dimensional form and design of the Institute building is intact.

The former Melton Mechanics' Institute building, at 222-230 High Street, is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2). It expresses the movement for education and self improvement and an informed participatory democracy which swept across Victoria in the latter nineteenth century, as well as a need for facilities for entertainment and community life in rural towns from the 1890s. It also represents community life in an era before electronic communication and the motor car became widespread, and when municipalities responsibilities were limited to provision of physical infrastructure services.

The Mechanics' Institute hall (demolished) and the library played a central role in the story of Melton social life, and in the development of its learning, culture, entertainment, celebration, commemoration and many community groups. The building on the site today - with the Court House the only remaining early community or public building remaining in High Street - is a tribute to the energy and talents of the very small Melton community over many years. Its substantial size, brick materials, and the evident use of an architect in its design, sets it apart from most other simple weatherboard Mechanics' Institutes that were built in smaller country towns in Victoria. The financing and upkeep of this building, which was community-owned until 1982, and built on land purchased by the community rather than granted by Government, itself contributed to the coming together of the Melton community in decision making and fundraising. Although the original hall is demolished, the 1983 Melton Community Hall adjacent is partly its successor, demolition of the Institute hall having been predicated on its construction.

The surviving brick front portion of the Institute was opened by the Hon. J Murray, Premier of Victoria in 1910.

The former Mechanics' Institute building, at 222-230 High Street, is socially significant at a LOCAL level (AHC G1). It is recognised and valued by the Melton community as having been an important meeting place for cultural and recreational activities, and continues to make a significant contribution to the sense of place in Melton.

Overall, the former Mechanics Institute building, at 222-230 High Street, is of LOCAL significance.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Melton - Shire of Melton Heritage Study phase 2, David Maloney, David Rowe, Pamela Jellie, Sera Jane Peters, 2007;
Construction dates	1890, 1983, 1910, 1925,
Other Names	222-230 High Street, Melton,
Hermes Number	30114
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Physical Description -

The former Mechanics Institute building, at 222-230 High Street, Melton, is set within an open grassed reserve with brick pedestrian paving and perimeter plantings. The building has a small front setback comprising two garden beds flanking a central brick path with recent shrubs and poplars.

The symmetrical, single storey, face brick, elegant Late Victorian styled Mechanics Institute building is characterised by a rendered parapet with a projecting cornice and flanking parapet piers. The parapet is punctuated by a central decorative brick parapet and timber flagpole above the main entrance. The entrance has early panelled timber double doors with a fanlight above that is accentuated by a rendered drip mould. Flanking the entrance are two bays of round arched timber framed double hung windows featuring drip moulds and stringcoursing. Another stringcourse forms a horizontal band at window sill height.

Other early features of the design include the hipped roof behind parapet (which is clad in galvanised corrugated steel) and the early face brick chimney with a projecting, rendered and corbelled top.

The whole parapet was orginally surmounted by a repeating pattern of urn or bulb shaped decorations. This was removed at an unknown date for safety reasons. Otherwise the facade is substantially intact.

To the east and rear of the former Institute building is the more recent Shire of Melton Community Hall. Although historically directly linked to the original hall, which it replaced, and with links also to the Satellite City phase of Melton's development, this building is not proposed for inclusion as a part of the site. It may be worthy of consideration in a future heritage study.

Historical Australian Themes

Shire of Melton Historical Themes: 'Community'

Integrity

Integrity - The 1910 building is substantially intact, with only the pediment removed

Physical Conditions

Physical Condition - The building appears to be in good condition.

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/