

Area: Geraldton	Place Number: 305	Category: 1
Assessment Date: 30/10/1996	Last Revision Date: 15/02/2010	
HCWA Number: 1068	Asset ID: MCH127049	

PLACE DETAILS

Name:	Geraldton Railway Station Fmr
Other Names:	Mechanics Institute, Geraldton Region Museum
Type of Place:	Railway Station
Address:	246 Marine Terrace
Suburb:	Geraldton

LOCATION

Map Reference: 14.15	GPS Northing: 6814517.00	GPS Easting: 266241.000
		000



Photo Description:

13/04/2008

Tanya Henkel

Openings boarded up while building is vacant.

SITE DETAILS

Lot No.:	Lot 2842	Assess No.:	18043
Reserv No.:	38455	Vol/Fol:	3039/312
Dia/Plan:			

USE OF PLACE

Original Use:	Railway Station		
Current Use:	Vacant		
Ownership:	Western Australian Government		
Public Access:	Yes	Occupied:	Not Occupied

DESCRIPTION

Walls:	Stone/Brick	Roof:	Corrugated Iron
Condition:	Fair	Integrity:	
Original fabric:			
Modifications:	Brick upper floor a later addition (c1909)		

The Former Geraldton Railway Station is a two storey, rendered limestone (ground floor) and brick (first floor) building of combined Victorian Regency and Federation Free Style character. This may be due to influences from both its original single storey 1878 railway station design and its later, c1909, two storey addition when it became the Mechanics Institute. The building sits at the edge of the main road without any reference to its former role and where bitumen now replaces the tracks where the trains of the first government railway in the State (Geraldton to Northampton) would once have pulled up to its verandah platform. A 'new' station replaced this building to the north of the town. The Mechanics Institute then operated from the building for a greater period than which it operated as a railway station. This also made a significant contribution to the social life of the town and should not be diminished.

The ground floor of the former railway building has rendered, stone walls set back on a verandah podium with remnants of a balustrade between turned timber posts, with curved brackets, supporting the first floor verandah. Currently boarded up while the building is vacant, the narrow, double hung, timber window frame openings have flat heads whilst the entry door has a shallow arch.

The brick, first floor addition changed the character and nature of the building. The brick walls feature a rendered band at approximately door head height. The vertical balustrading and curved verandah beams

wrapping around the top floor give more the impression of a hotel from the turn of the century than that of a former railway station. The verandah is attached to the walls below the eaves of the main roof which is hipped, red painted corrugated iron with small gambrel ends.

Internally the rooms have been modified over time to suit the different uses of the buildings, including as a museum. Refer to State Register documentation and conservation plan for further information.

HISTORY

Construction Date: 1878 **Source:** "Government Gazette"
Architect: PWD
Builder: Heal & Cornish

Following much petitioning to the Government it was decided to construct a railway between Geraldton and the town of Northampton, where considerable mining activity necessitated improved transportation of ore to the port. Work on the line commenced in 1874, when Governor Weld turned the first sod of what was the first government railway in the state (22 October, 1874). The first 18 miles of the railway were opened in 1877. The Northampton-Geraldton railway was completed and officially opened by Governor Ord in 1879.

The tender of Messrs Heal and Cornish to erect a railway station at Geraldton for £1,278.7.8 and execute any extra masonry required at 8/6d per superficial foot was accepted on 22 May, 1878. ("Government Gazette", 1878, p132) The railway station was originally a single storey stone building with a shingle roof. The stone for the building was taken from the Nolba Quarry in Chapman Valley. (Sims, S., "The History of the Upper Chapman District 1839-1911", unpublished Thesis, nd) The architect of the station was possibly Clayton Mason, the Resident Engineer on the Geraldton-Northampton Line, 1877-79 or R.R. Jewell. (National Trust Classification Record)

The foundation stone of the first railway station in Western Australia was laid by Mrs Maitland Brown, wife of the member for Geraldton, on 21 August, 1878. ("Geraldton Express", 11/8/1915)

The building operated as a railway station until 1894 when the railway track was removed from the centre of Marine Terrace and a second timber station was built on a new site in the vicinity of Garden Road (now Forrest Street). (Marchant James, R., "From Cork to Capricorn", Congregation of Presentation Sisters, 1996, p107-8) Originally a single storey stone building, it was vested in the Geraldton Council in 1909 and converted for use by the Geraldton Mechanics Institute in 1911. (P. Uhe, "Survey of Railway Heritage in WA", National Trust of WA, 1994) The Geraldton Mechanics Institute, originally known as the Geraldton Working

Men's Society, was formed in 1868. From 1871 to 1909 the Institute was based in a building on the corner of Marine Terrace and Durlacher Street. In c1909 the former railway station acquired its second storey. Indeed it is thought that the addition of the second storey was a condition of the lease. The building housed a library reading room and office facilities. The Geraldton Mechanic's Institute changed its name to the Geraldton Cultural Trust in 1960. (Ibid., & Newman, J., "The Geraldton Cultural Trust", Geraldton Historical Society Quarterly Review, May 1980)

The Trust terminated its lease of the building in October, 1975. In 1979, during the building's centenary year, it was renovated by the Public Works Department to become part of the WA Museum (Geraldton Branch). The Old Railway Building reopened in December, 1985 as the Geraldton Region Museum until it moved to its purpose built building in the Marina in c2005.

Refer to State Register documentation and conservation plan for further information.

HISTORIC THEMES

HCWA:	202 Rail and light rail transport 404 Community services and utilities
AHC:	3.8.6 Building and maintaining railways education 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Geraldton Railway Station has historic and social significance for the State as the station for the first government railway (1878-93), for its role as the Mechanics Institute for some fifty years or more and for its more recent use as a regional museum. The building has aesthetic significance for the town for its prominent two-storey form, landmark quality and its contribution to the town scape. The place is highly valued by the local community and contributes to Geraldton's sense of place.

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY

Management Category:	1
Level of Significance:	EXCEPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE: Essential to the heritage of the locality.
Management Recommendation:	Conservation of the place is considered essential. Any proposed change should not

unduly impact on the significance of the place and be in accordance with either a Conservation Plan or Heritage Impact Statement.

OTHER LISTINGS

Heritage Council of WA - Register, 09/01/1998
National Trust of WA - Classified, 08/06/1998

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Considine & Griffiths Architects, "Geraldton Foreshore Conservation Plan", 2002 - Building 78.
"Government Gazette".
"Geraldton Express".
GLLSPC - Buildings (Miscellaneous) & Marine Terrace.
GHSPC.
Feilman & Associates, "Survey of Places of Historic and Landscape Significance in Geraldton", 1977.
Newman, J., "The Geraldton Cultural Trust", Geraldton Historical Society Quarterly Review, May 1980.
Sherwood, B., "Conservation Plan for the Fmr Railway Station, Marine Terrace, Geraldton."
Sims, S., "The History of the Upper Chapman District, 1839-1911", unpublished thesis, nd.
Uhe, P., "Survey of Railway Heritage in WA", National Trust of WA, 1994.

OTHER PHOTOS



Photo Description:

30/10/1996

Suba, Callow & Grundy

Photo taken when in use as a Museum.