

CITY OF SOUTH PERTH LOCAL HERITAGE INVENTORY

Management
Category

B

PLACE RECORD FORM

Prepared by *Heritage Today*, November 2000
Most recent update by City of South Perth, November 2015

Place No: SPS 6 South Perth Post Office



(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, December 2014)

LOCATION

Name of Place	<i>South Perth Post Office</i>
Other / former names	Mends Street Post Office
Address	103 Mends Street, cnr Mill Point Road
Suburb	South Perth
Local Government Authority	City of South Perth
Scope of listing	This heritage listing only applies to the South Perth Post Office building.

LAND DESCRIPTION

Reserve No.	Lot No.	Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio
-	P432	P432	S633	V 600 F 189A

LISTINGS BY OTHER BODIES

Name of Body	Reference No.	Grade of Listing	Date
Heritage Council of Western Australia	2391	Assessed below threshold – not listed	-
Commonwealth Heritage List	105370	Listed place	8 Nov 2011
State-wide Post Office Survey	-	Completed	1 March 1992
<i>Register of the National Estate</i>	<i>This register ceased to have statutory significance 19.2.2012</i>		

PERIOD	Federation (c1890-c1915)
Design Style	Simple Federation Bungalow
Construction Date	1900
Source / Details	Extract from <i>Assessment of Post Offices in Western Australia</i> , David Kelsall

USE(S) OF PLACE

Original	Post Office
Present	Post Office
Other / Former	

HISTORICAL NOTES

Much of this information is extracted from an assessment prepared by David Kelsall, Heritage Consultant 1999.

By the late 1890s, settlement in South Perth was largely recreationally based around the Zoo and Turkish baths, tram and ferry routes, Windsor Hotel and affluence created by the gold boom. The establishment of the Zoological Gardens and the Mineral Baths in South Perth in 1898 led to the development of Mends Street as an important business centre. The Zoological Gardens proved extremely popular, and it is recorded that 176,800 people had visited the zoo within three years of its opening. At that time, South Perth was relatively inaccessible by horse and cart and part of the attraction of a trip to the zoo was the ferry ride from Perth to the Mends Street Jetty. From the jetty many people then chose to walk the short distance along Mends Street to the zoo. Businesses grew up along Mends Street, among them the *South Perth Post Office*.

The first Post and Telegraph Office in South Perth started in 1898 from a room located at the foot of the stairs in the Windsor Hotel, which was then operated by the Strickland family. The first postmistress was Theresa O’Dea. At that time about fifty letters a day were delivered and three letter boxes had to be cleared. By 1898 the status of Post and Telegraph Office was conferred on the district, and in 1900 a site for a Post Office was set aside on the south-western corner of Mends Street and Mill Point Road, the latter then known as Suburban Road. Funding was allocated for a Post Office and Quarters for the post mistress, by then Miss J Benson. The contract was awarded to F S Warner for £939, and the brick and iron building was constructed in 1900.

The *South Perth Post Office* was important not only as a Post Office, but as a meeting place, a place for dissemination of news and gossip, and for the disbursement of social assistance, collection of war bonds etc. However, as its role changed, its social significance diminished. Over the years, the name and status of the Post Office have changed, and in 1982 the name was changed from ‘Mends Street Post Office’ to ‘South Perth Post Office’.

HISTORICAL NOTES (cont'd)

In 2014, the building was still strategically placed to serve the needs of a thriving and growing commercial centre. The *South Perth Post Office* building was restored in 1995-96 to its original design.

Purchase of the South Perth Police Station site by the Council in 2004 meant that it owned all of the land bounded by Mends Street, Labouchere Road and Mill Point Road, other than the South Perth Post Office site. All of this land was known as the 'Civic Triangle'. For some years, the Council had been intending to sell the Civic Triangle to help fund other major works within the City, such as a new Manning Community Centre. The Civic Triangle was eventually sold to Finbar Group Ltd, Real Estate Developers, for \$27,310,000 plus GST, as a landmark development site through an Expression of Interest process which was finalised in September 2014 following the required statutory advertising period. Finbar then negotiated directly with Australia Post for the purchase of the *South Perth Post Office* site.

In January 2015, Finbar lodged an application for a mixed-use building comprising 294 dwellings and 10,500 sq. metres of commercial floor space, in a building of 38 storeys (120 metres) with an additional five car parking basement levels. At the time, the development was estimated to cost \$165 million. The design team consisted of TPG Town Planning, Urban Design and Heritage; overall designer, S S Chang, Architects; specialist retail consultant, Hames Sharley, Architects; retail leasing agency, Colliers International; and the interdisciplinary consulting firm, Urbis, who prepared a Retail Potential Assessment Report. TPG Town Planning also provided heritage advice. The two heritage-listed buildings, *South Perth Police Station and Quarters (Former)* and *South Perth Post Office*, remain as protected heritage buildings on the larger development site.

DESCRIPTION

The *South Perth Post Office* is located on what is now a major intersection, at the corner of Mill Point Road and Mends Street. The *South Perth Post Office* is one of a group of heritage buildings in the vicinity, including the Mechanics' Institute Hall (Former) (c1890), Windsor Hotel (1898), South Perth Road Board Office (Former) (1904), and South Perth Police Station and Quarters (Former) (1908).

This is a simple building executed in domestic scale, with residential quarters originally attached. Construction is of red brick and the building originally had a galvanised corrugated iron roof and timber joinery. A number of fireplaces internally were served by brick chimneys with sand finish rendered detail. The masonry generally is face brick with render extending several courses down as a frieze. The head of the former opening on the south-eastern (Mends Street) elevation is a round arch formed with red brick voussiors.

Comparison of the original site plan with the fabric extant in 1993 indicates the loss of outbuildings and street fence, the enclosure of the north-western verandah, brick additions on the south-western corner and the loss of the telephone cabinet under the verandah. Large mail boxes between the Post Office and Mends Street to some extent conceal the original verandah with its bracketed posts at its most important visual point, the street corner.

A number of alterations had been made to the building up until 1981, generally reflecting the changes in the post and telegraph service. The demise of the telegram service meant that there was no need for residential quarters, and the vacated space was taken up by other postal services. As a result of further alterations in 1995, the chimneys and verandah timbers (with bracketed posts) are virtually the only remnant original features of the place. A number of internal changes have resulted in the loss of fabric and architectural details, such as cornices and joinery.

ASSOCIATIONS**ASSOCIATION TYPE**

John Harry Grainger	Engineer and Chief Architect in the Western Australian Public Works Department ¹ (father of world famous composer, Percy Grainger)
F S Warner	Builder
Public Works Department	Architect
Hillson Beasley	Chief Draughtsman

HISTORIC THEME / Sub-theme**CATEGORIES OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Transport and Communication/ <i>Mail Services</i>	Aesthetic
	Historic
	Social
	Representative

RATING AND ASSESSMENT**High****Low**

Aesthetic value (streetscape, setting)	1	2 ✓	3	4	5
Architectural merit (design features)	1	2	3 ✓	4	5
Rarity value	1	2	3	4 ✓	5
Value as part of a group/precinct	1 ✓	2	3	4	5
Condition	1	2 ✓	3	4	5
Integrity	1	2	3	4 ✓	5

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The *South Perth Post Office* has aesthetic, historic, social and representative cultural heritage significance. The prominent corner location and the close proximity of the building to a group of other significant heritage buildings, including the Mechanics' Institute Hall (Former) (c1890), Windsor Hotel (1898), South Perth Road Board Office (Former) (1904) and the Police Station and Quarters (Former) (1908), add to the aesthetic significance. The building has historic significance, relating as it does to the development of South Perth at the beginning of the twentieth century in the post gold boom era. The *South Perth Post Office* was an important meeting place for the community, and therefore has social significance. The building is representative of an architectural style and period characterised by the work of Hillson Beasley, who designed a number of other public buildings in Perth (eg the Victoria Park Post Office).

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**Management Category B : Considerable significance**

Conservation essential. Reflects the highest level of local cultural heritage significance. Very important to the heritage of the locality. High degree of integrity and authenticity. Demolition or significant alteration to a place in Management Category B of the Heritage List is not permitted. Any alterations or additions are to be guided by a Conservation Plan, if any, and reinforce the heritage values of the place.

¹ Among other government works, in 1897 J H Grainger was responsible for designing extensions to Western Australia's Government House, which included the design of a new ballroom featuring rolling Romanesque arches. (*University of Melbourne Collections, Issue 1, November 2007 web site: <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/research/collections1/allison.pdf>*)

SUPPORTING INFORMATION / BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Assessment by David Kelsall, Heritage Architect, 1999.
- City of South Perth Municipal Heritage Inventory (No. 1) 1994.
- Reviews of Municipal Heritage Inventory by *Heritage Today* in 2000 and 2006.
- National Trust Assessment, July 1994.
- Florey, Cecil C. *Peninsular City: A Social History of the City of South Perth*, City of South Perth, WA, 1995.

HISTORY OF HERITAGE LISTING BY CITY OF SOUTH PERTH

	Date Adopted by Council
Town Planning Scheme No. 5 – Schedule G	Gazetted 25 September 1986
Initial listing in MHI	December 1994
Update of MHI	February 1996
Update of MHI	December 1996
Update of MHI	December 1997
Review of MHI by <i>Heritage Today</i>	June 2000
Update of MHI	June 2002
Update of MHI	March 2003
Review of MHI by <i>Heritage Today</i>	February 2006
Interim Heritage List – Policy P313 ‘Local Heritage Listing’	April 2013
Updated in renamed LHI	November 2015



The former living quarters with north- and west-facing verandahs, seen from Mill Point Road.
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, May 2015)



Verandah containing the former doorway opening on the Mends Street elevation.
The location of the opening is identified by a round arch formed with red brick voussoirs.
(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, 2015)



Perspective of the ‘Civic Heart’ 2015 development proposal viewed from Mends Street, showing the *South Perth Post Office* (far right), in context with the proposed development. (City records)



View of the ‘Civic Triangle’, cleared in preparation for the proposed ‘Civic Heart’ development. Post Office far left. (Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, May 2015)



South Perth Post Office in its historic context at the intersection of Mends Street and Mill Point Road.

(Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, December 2014)

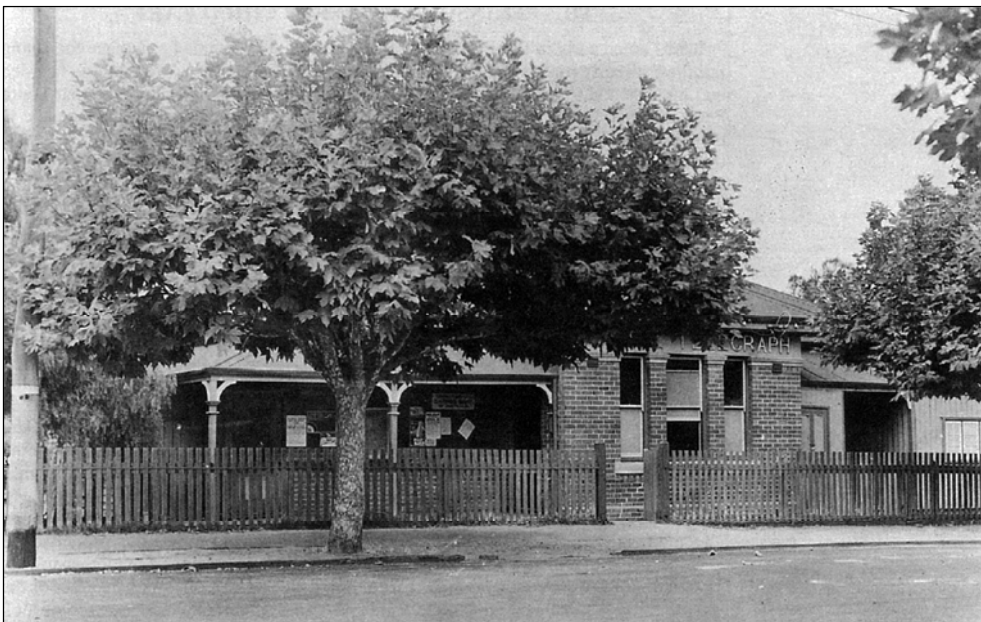
ABOVE: Viewed in relation to the Windsor Hotel (north-eastern corner of the intersection).

BELOW: Viewed in relation to the South Perth Road Board Office (Former) and Mechanics' Institute Hall (Former) (south-eastern corner of the intersection).





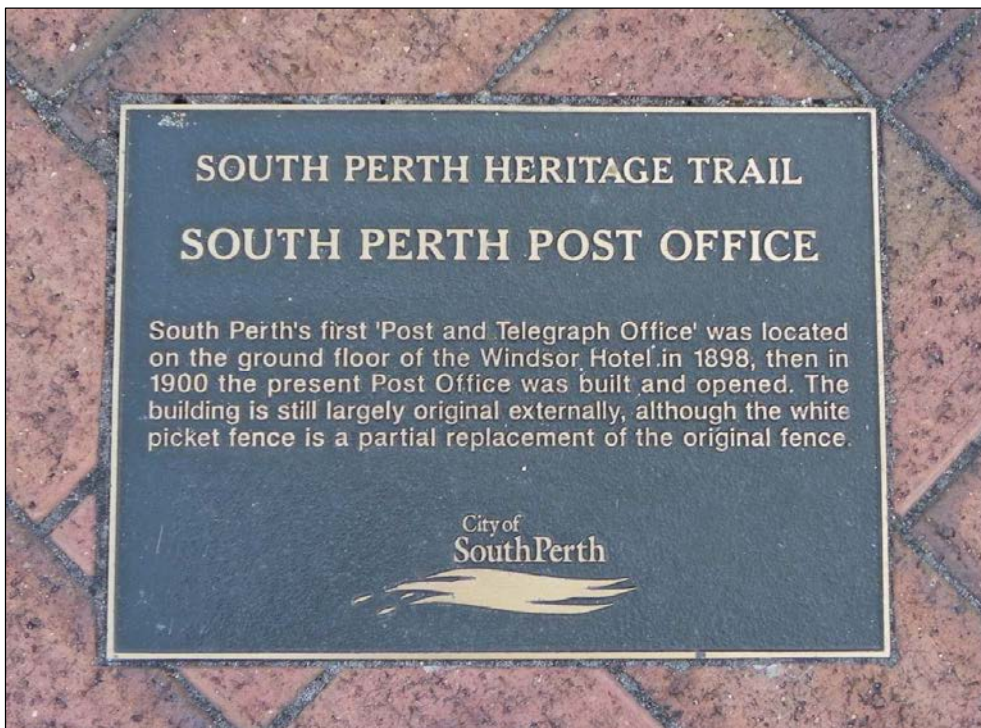
*South Perth Post Office, 1994.
(Jenny Dans, City of South Perth, December 1994)*



The Mill Point Road frontage of the South Perth Post and Telegraph Office, as it was in 1939.
(Florey, page 213)



South Perth Post Office living quarters, 1937.
(*South Perth Post Office Heritage Management Plan Lovell Chen, 2015.*
Photograph reproduced with kind permission of Finbar Group Limited).)

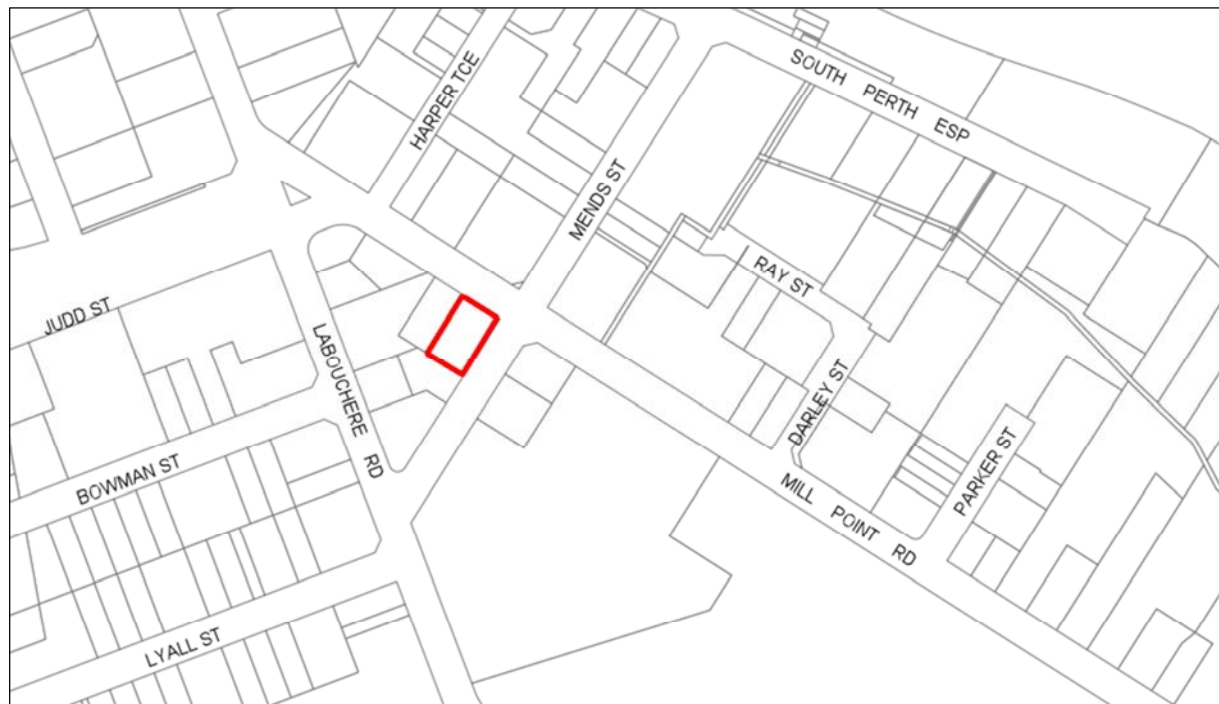


Plaque set into the Mill Point Road footpath outside the South Perth Post Office.
(*Gina Fraser, City of South Perth, December 2014*)



*South Perth Post Office shown on a 1930 aerial photograph in its historical setting.
(City Records)*

LOCATION MAP



(Digital Cadastral Data supplied by Landgate, WA. P295)