

Tasmanian Heritage Register Datasheet



134 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 618)
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 850 332 (local call cost)
Email: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
Web: www.heritage.tas.gov.au

Name: Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building
Status: Provisionally Registered
Tier: State

THR ID Number: 12038
Municipality: Hobart City Council
Boundary: CPR11253

Location Addresses

50 MACQUARIE ST, HOBART 7000 TAS
MACQUARIE ST, HOBART 7000 TAS

Title References

142916/1

Property Id

2567107



Hobart Town Hall & TPL c.1920s
Tasmanian Archives: NS892/1/64



Entry foyer and staircase
J Wadsley 2021



Staircase and landing
J Wadsley 2021



From Mawson Place
Heritage Tasmania 2021



Ground floor gallery, fmr Reading Room
Heritage Tasmania 2021



Ground floor gallery, fmr hall
Heritage Tasmania 2021



Entrance, Argyle Street
Heritage Tasmania 2021



Argyle Street boundary
Heritage Tasmania 2021



Ghost signage and former windows, wstn elev
Heritage Tasmania 2021



Reading Room c.1907.
Tasmanian Archives: SLT23/1/180



Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie c1907.
Tasmanian Archives PH30/1/494



Reference Room c.1907.
Tasmanian Archives: SLT23/1/179

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

Statement of Significance:

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building represents the emergence and development of free public information resources in Tasmania, serving as the State headquarters for the Library service throughout Tasmania from 1907 until 1962. The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building demonstrates an important phase of library development in the early twentieth century, in a purpose-built facility that set a precedent for free library services in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is the only public library building in Tasmania funded by industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. The Carnegie Building in Hobart is the grandest and most expensive of the Australian Carnegie libraries, and demonstrates the characteristics of an early twentieth century civic building. The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is a well-known and utilised public facility within Hobart, most notably as a free public library, public galleries run by Hobart City Council, and most recently as the Maritime Museum of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building has a strong association with Tasmanian architectural firm, Walker & Salier, and also the establishment and administration of the State Library of Tasmania, and the Maritime Museum of Tasmania. Subsurface archaeological features and deposits associated with early use of the site have the potential to yield evidence of the pattern of reclamation of the waterfront from c1830, development and use of the site relating to Old Government House and Hobart Town Hall.

Why is it significant?:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building represents the emergence and development of free public information resources in Tasmania, serving as the State headquarters for the Library service throughout Tasmania from 1907 until 1962. For over fifty years the Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building provided community services for a growing population, as a place of education, learning and social interaction. The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building demonstrates an important phase of library development in the early twentieth century, in a purpose-built facility that set a precedent for free library services in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building has a connection to the wider global movement and provision of free public libraries by industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who funded the establishment of approximately 2530 public libraries around the world.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is the only public library building in Tasmania funded by industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. The Carnegie Building in Hobart is the grandest and most expensive of the Australian Carnegie libraries.

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is of historical cultural heritage significance as it has the potential to yield important information that may contribute to a greater understanding of Tasmania's history. Subsurface archaeological features and deposits associated with early use of the site have the potential to yield evidence of the pattern of reclamation of the waterfront from c1830, development and use of the site relating to Old Government House and Hobart Town Hall.

d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building demonstrates the characteristics of an early twentieth century civic building, established as a free public library. It is an important example of grand Federation-era architecture in a prominent location in Hobart.

e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.

No Data Recorded

f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is a well-known and utilised public facility within Hobart. Since opening in 1907 it has served as a public facility for varied uses and organisations, most notably as a free public library, public galleries run by Hobart City Council, and most recently as the Maritime Museum of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is a prominent landmark within Sullivan's Cove, and forms part of a precinct of civic buildings and places, that includes the adjacent Town Hall (THR#12039), the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Complex (THR#6648) and Franklin Square (THR#2333).

g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building has a strong association with Tasmanian architectural firm, Walker & Salier, recognised as leading architects during the early twentieth century. The building is also associated with the establishment and administration of the State Library of Tasmania, and the Maritime Museum of Tasmania.

h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

No Data Recorded

Heritage approval is required for work that will result in changes to the nature or appearance of the fabric of a Heritage place, both internal and external.

Please refer to the Heritage Council's Works Guidelines (www.heritage.tas.gov.au) for information about the level of approval required and appropriate outcomes.

Heritage Advisors are also available to answer questions and provide guidance on enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au or Tel 1300850332

This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

Setting:

Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is located on a prominent corner site in Sullivans Cove, Hobart. The building occupies part of a city block bounded by Macquarie, Argyle, Davey and Elizabeth Streets, main thoroughfares through the city – Hobart Town Hall occupies the remainder of the city block. The building overlooks Victoria and Constitution Docks and the River Derwent, and is surrounded by other prominent civic and commercial buildings and public spaces.

Description:

The Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building is a two-storey red brick building with sandstone foundations; it is a Classical style building with bold Edwardian Baroque detail. It is a rectangular shaped building with hipped roof forms clad in corrugated iron. The northern, eastern and southern elevations feature banding, detailed window surrounds, and evenly spaced dentils to the cornices. Openings on the lower and upper levels are evenly spaced, with timber-framed casement windows and fanlights. The western elevation has simpler detailing; the upper section is constructed from solid red brick with engaged piers, and features painted signage contemporary to the buildings' use as a library.

The principal symmetrical façade addresses Argyle Street, the boundary is marked by a low stepped sandstone wall with cast iron railing atop. The entrance is at the northern end, marked by a set of four stone steps and an arched sandstone portico. An access ramp and automatic door were added to the northern elevation of the ground floor in 2000. The southern elevation fronts onto the Davey Street footpath, a low doorway, recessed under the central

window, accesses the 'back' staircase to the basement area, offices and the former caretaker's residence on the upper level; the three casement windows with roundels above mark the caretaker's residence.

Internally the building is highly intact. The main double doors open into a small vestibule and an additional set of half-glazed timber double doors and side panels. The main foyer accesses a wide blackwood staircase with generous landings and full height ceiling. The lower foyer ceiling and the underside of the staircase have pressed tin, and the space is lit by simple hanging opaque glass pendants –that also hang in the upstairs gallery. Original Tasmanian hardwood joinery, including architraves, balustrades, handrails, floors and doors is extant throughout the building, however, a number of doors have been removed (storage location is not known). The ground floor has two main rooms, now used as galleries and storage areas. A lift was installed between the main gallery and the 'Carnegie' gallery upstairs in 2016. Offices and amenities for staff are in the north western corner of the building, sections of the ground floor have lower false ceilings installed c1980s. There are two main rooms upstairs. The room that overlooks Argyle Street is divided by partitions into smaller offices and storage space, converted c1980s. The 'Carnegie' gallery is a grand space with long clerestory lantern light.

The back staircase on the south west corner is narrow and accesses the basement area, where the original boiler is located. An original cast iron radiator, disconnected from the system, sits beside the boiler; the radiator is highly decorative. A dumb waiter, for the purposes of moving books, sits adjacent to the staircase – while it is not operational, all the fittings and mechanisms are in situ. The caretaker's residence for the Tasmanian Public Library is located on the split upper level, two small rooms, hallway and a storage room, and below a kitchen, bathroom and storage space.

Caretaker's Cottage (1924)

Adjacent is a two-storey red brick Town Hall Caretaker's Cottage, with the same exterior detailing as the Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building. A laneway along the northern elevation of the Carnegie Building is accessed through a brick archway with false façade above. The Caretaker's Cottage has a hipped roof clad with corrugated iron, and tall brick corbelled chimneys. Internally the building has a domestic character and is highly intact. The interior retains original features and joinery, including fireplaces and mantelpieces, staircase with bannister, doors, architraves and cornices.

Although the building is stylistically and physically linked to the Carnegie Building, it was constructed as a Caretaker's Cottage for the Town Hall. An elevated walkway connects the Caretaker's Cottage to the Town Hall Davey Street wing/Annexe.

HEC Substation (c1940)

Adjacent to the main entrance, in front of the Caretaker's Cottage, is a single-storey red brick sub-station that fronts directly onto the Argyle Street boundary.

The detailing on the sub-station mimics the Classical decoration on the Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building, including sandstone base and plinth, banding and cornice. It has a concrete and bitumen roof with a brick parapet wall around.

Collections

The Maritime Museum has a substantial collection that is of significance in its own right. However, it is noted that it is a private collection not regulated or managed in accordance with any provisions of the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995*.

Old Government House (1804-1858)

Potential subsurface archaeological features and deposits relating to British settlement in Van Diemen's Land, including the Old Government House and gardens, are located beneath the land bounded by Macquarie, Argyle, Davey and Elizabeth streets on which the Hobart Town Hall (THR#12039) and the Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building are located, as well as the surrounding footpaths.

History:

Hobart is located within the country of the Mouheneenner people.

Early Hobart

Hobart Town was established by British settlers in February 1804. The small settlement centred around Sullivan's Cove, developing as the capital and the administrative centre of Van Diemen's Land during the early nineteenth century (Alexander & Petrow 2005, p9.176-7).

Government House

Within weeks of landing a Government House, a two or three roomed house of rough timber and wattle and daub, was constructed for Lieutenant-Governor David Collins on the escarpment facing the Cove – partially on the site where Hobart Town Hall and the Tasmanian Public Library/Carnegie Building are now located. The house was gradually added to over the years, until 1858 when a new Government House was constructed adjacent to the Colonial Gardens (Botanical Gardens THR#11999) on the Queens Domain. In 1859 most of the old Government House and gardens were demolished, only the ballroom was left standing, a space that the Hobart Town Municipal Council used as a meeting place and a town hall. This was later demolished, and a new grand town hall designed by Henry Hunter opened on the site in late 1866 (Freeman 2016, p.2-25).

Libraries in VDL/Tasmania

The 'Tasmanian Public Library' opened in 1849 in a house on the corner of Barrack and Davey Streets, open only to subscription members, and funded by a Government grant for books as well as the yearly subscription fees. The library was legally established by an Act of Parliament in 1850. This library became publicly accessible in 1860, closing in 1867 heavily in debt. In 1870 a newly constituted free public reference library and reading room opened in the recently constructed Hobart Town Hall, located in the Elizabeth Street wing (Marshall 2005, p.345). The library was managed and financed from 1881 under a joint arrangement between the Council and the Tasmanian Government (Wadsley 2016, p.13). By 1890s the library was so popular, it had outgrown the space, and demand was increasing.

In August 1890 Hobart City Council was asked for assistance towards building a new library in the city; 'The present building was inadequate, and it had been thought to remove the Library to the other wing of the Town Hall, but it was thought on consideration that it would be better to erect a new library, for which purpose the Corporation was willing to give a piece of land behind the Town Hall.' (*Mercury* 8 August 1890 p2). However, the Government was reluctant to fund the project, including ongoing costs and the purchase of books (Wadsley 2016, p.13).

A Carnegie Library

In 1902 funding for the construction of public libraries was advertised by the Carnegie Trust across the British Commonwealth. The Chairman of the Tasmanian Library Trustees, Mr CM Tennison, wrote to the Trust in August 1902. A reply was received in November offering 7500 pounds, on the condition that the library was free, built on a site that was largely rent free in perpetuity, and a guarantee that ongoing expenses would be paid (Wadsley 2016, p.13). Under the *Tasmanian Public Libraries Act 1902*, and following negotiations with the Council, the site for the new Library was provided rent free. The funding from Carnegie was signed off in mid-1903, and a competition to design the new library was launched (Wadsley 2016, p.13).

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919)

Andrew Carnegie was a self-made steel industrialist, and one of the wealthiest businessmen of the nineteenth century, who dedicated his later life to philanthropic endeavours. Up until his death in 1919, he gave away almost 90 percent of his wealth to charities, public institutions and universities. One of his key philanthropic interests was the support of public libraries (Wadsley 2016, p.13).

Competition

By December 1903, several design entries were received for the new library. On 13 June 1904 it was announced that the design marked 'Bookworm' won the competition - a Classical style design constructed from sandstone, by Hobart architects Douglas Salier and Alan Cameron Walker. The design was later amended to have brick and stone walls, a substantial cost saving. Mr William Cooper was awarded the tender at a cost of 6841 pounds (Dooley 2014, pp.45-6).

Walker & Salier, architects

Between 1900 and 1906 Alan Cameron Walker (1864-1931) and Douglas George Salier (1868-1923) were in partnership, notable commissions include Werndee in Mount Stuart (1903), the National Mutual Life Association building, Hobart (1906, THR#95) and the Carnegie Building. Alan Cameron Walker was articled to Henry Hunter, between 1882 and 1885, who designed the adjacent Town Hall and Royal Society Building; Walker eventually took over Hunter's practice. Alan Cameron Walker is recognised in his own right as an influential architect, particularly for Arts and Crafts style buildings and objects (Neale 2012, pp.742-3).

Construction and opening

The foundation stone was laid on 22 February 1904 by the Governor Sir Arthur Havelock, organised to coincide with the Centenary of white settlement in Tasmania. The first stone was laid by Mr Alfred Taylor on 21 January 1905, in celebration of his thirtieth year as public librarian (Dooley 2014, p.46).

The Tasmanian Public Library opened on 22 February 1907 by the new Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland. The new building was described as 'an imposing structure, opposite the Tasmanian Museum and adjoining the Town Hall. On the ground is a spacious newspaper room and a large hall for lectures and concerts. A broad handsome staircase leads to two upper rooms, one for the circulating library and the other for reference books and magazines. The Reference Library is very spacious, lofty well-ventilated, well lit and warmed by hot water pipes in the winter.' (*Mercury* 25 February 1907). The lending library was opened in July 1907 (Dooley 2014, p.65), however, many of the books came from public donations. Over the following years the lack of support from the Trustees in providing funds for new books became an ongoing issue. Concern was raised in 1934 when Ralph Munn, a director of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, visited Australia to conduct a survey of Carnegie libraries. His report noted, 'It is impossible to exaggerate our disappointment in your Public Library. It has been starved almost to death and is the poorest library in a city of this size in Australia and New Zealand.' And that it was 'rather like a cemetery of books'. Following the critical report, the Government and Council allocated more money to the library, however, it continued to struggle primarily because of the joint control between Council and Government (Wadsley 2016, p.14).

Free Library Movement

In 1938 the Free Library Movement was established in Tasmania, championing the provision of free public libraries throughout the State (*Mercury* 14 June 1938 p6). At the time, the Carnegie library in Hobart was the only free public library in Tasmania, although there were several public subscription libraries and Mechanics' Institutes (ABS).

As early as 1939 there was a 'proposal to erect a new building for the Tasmanian Public Library, instead of incurring further expenditure in extending the present building'. At the time the Lord Mayor suggested the old Central Street State School as a site for the new building (*Mercury* 15 August 1939 p2), located on the corner of Murray and Bathurst Streets (see AOT PWD266/1/1989-1995). Construction of a new library was put on hold during World War Two, however, a library annexe was constructed at the rear of the Town Hall. (RAIA).

State Library of Tasmania

The *Libraries Act* of 1943 established the State Library of Tasmania, administered by the Tasmanian Library Board (*Mercury* 7 January 1944 p4). A schedule attached to the Act stated that the Government would undertake 'to cause a new State Library building to be erected as an urgent post-war measure'. The Carnegie Library had been built to service a Hobart population of approximately 25 000 (RAIA).

Demand and expansion of Library services

In 1946 the Annual Report of the Tasmanian Library Board noted that the number of books issued from the State Library in 1945-1946 numbered 177 075, library services to municipalities had doubled. The report observed that there had been a steady enrolment of borrowers at the Hobart Lending library, with a total of 5,738 or 10% of the population (*Mercury* 2 May 1946 p10). By 1946 rapid expansion of services and activities offered by the State Library during World War Two and the immediate post-war period, including showing documentary films, recitals of recorded music, displays of books and public lectures, exacerbated the acute shortage of space within the Carnegie Building (*Mercury* 29 November 1944 p14, 28 August 1946 p11). By 1947 the number of enrolled borrowers had increased by 10 000 in one year (*Mercury* 23 August 1947 p2).

A new building

As early as 1949 preliminary plans for the new library building were forwarded to the Tasmanian Library Board and submitted to the Parliamentary Public Works Committee (*Mercury* 2 September 1950 p12). By 1959 the site on the corner of Bathurst and Murray Streets had been secured and approval for additional loan funds obtained from Parliament. One of the most important parts of the planning was combining children and adult's services into one building.

The new State Library opened to the public on 14 September 1962 (see THR#7485 State Library of Tasmania for further information on Library services post-1962).

Ongoing use

Following the relocation of the Tasmania Public Library, the Carnegie building was taken over by Hobart City Council. Ongoing issues with accommodation, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, led the Council to propose the demolition of the Carnegie building to construct new office accommodation. The proposal was met with public opposition, subsequent inclusion by the National Trust on its Heritage Register, and a recommendation to list the building on the Register of the National Estate (Freeman 2016, p.203); listing on the Register of the National Estate provided restoration grants for the Carnegie building and the adjacent Town Hall. A section of the upper floor was converted to offices, and areas were set up as gallery and exhibition spaces (Freeman 2016, pp.206-7).

The Maritime Museum relocated from Secheron House (THR#1969) in Battery Point, Hobart to the Carnegie building in 1999. The Maritime Museum was formed in 1974, and during the 1980s the majority of the Shiplovers' Society of Tasmania's collection (est 1931) came to the Maritime Museum. The Maritime Museum is dedicated to Tasmania's history of ship-building, trade, sailing, whaling and other maritime activities (Wadsley 2021, p.18-19; Wadsley pers.comm Nov 2021).

Comparative Analysis

The Public Library/ Carnegie Building is the only example of a public library building in Tasmania funded by Scottish-American Andrew Carnegie, an industrialist and philanthropist. Carnegie funded the establishment of approximately 2530 public libraries, mostly in the United States (1681), but also in Britain (660), Canada (125), Ireland (18), New Zealand (17), South Africa (12), the Caribbean (6), and individual libraries in France, Belgium, Serbia, Mauritius, Seychelles and Fiji. Australia has four Carnegie libraries, Hobart (1907), Mildura, Victoria (1906), Northcote, Victoria (1909) and Midland Junction, Western Australia (1909). The size and cost of the libraries varied enormously; the Carnegie building in Hobart is the grandest and most expensive of the Australian buildings (Wadsley 2016, p.13).

Library buildings across Tasmania are common in each town and city. From the early days of white settlement many groups or organisations established a library for their education and improvement. Early community-based libraries included subscription libraries, literary societies, mechanics' institutes and book clubs, established for intellectual and practical enquiry, recreation and community building (Adkins 2005, p.215).

Due to the ongoing development of the Free Libraries Movement and the establishment of the State Library of Tasmania, each library building varies in size, form and style – many regional libraries are linked to civic and community buildings. There are several Libraries on the Tasmanian Heritage Register that illustrate the variation, including the State Library of Tasmania, Hobart (1962, 1972, THR#7485), Penguin Memorial Library (1966, 1973, THR#10933), Literary Society Library, Bothwell (1834, THR#10), Post office, Museum & Library, Latrobe (THR#3647) and the Former Library and Institute Building, Bellerive (1867, THR#989).

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