

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: West Devonport Infant School
Status: Provisionally Registered
Tier: State

THR ID Number: 12043
Municipality: Devonport City Council
Boundary: CPR11257

Location Addresses

52 STEELE ST, DEVONPORT 7310 TAS

Title References

142649/1

Property Id

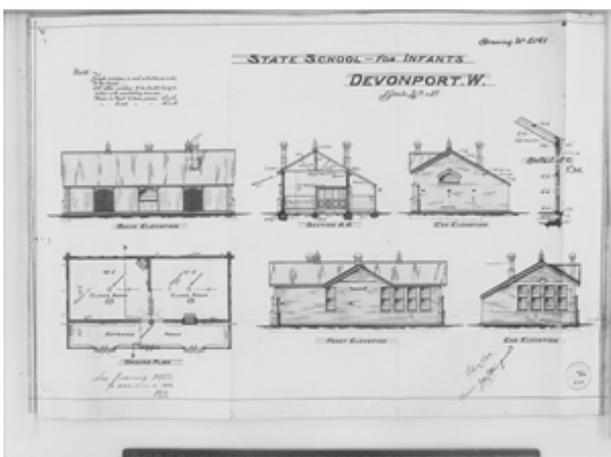
2577380



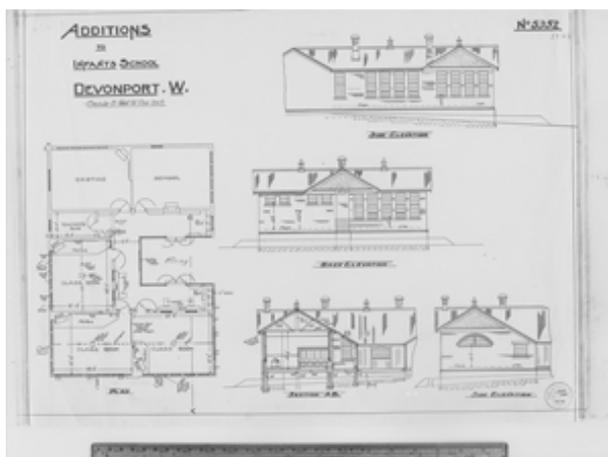
West Devonport Infant School, southern elevation
 NRE 2006



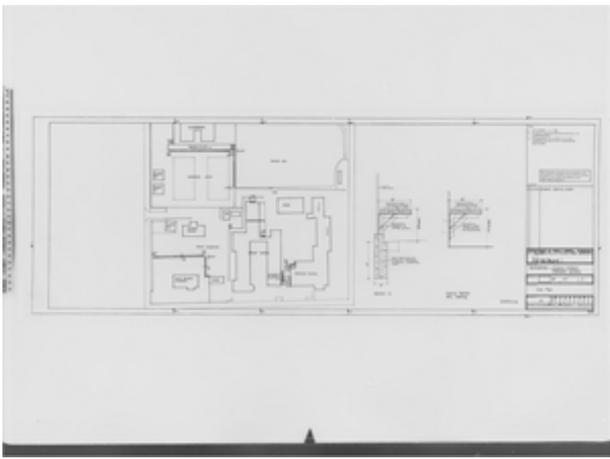
West Devonport Infant School, eastern elevation
 NRE 2006



Infant School, 1911
 Tasmanian Archives PWD266/4/235



Infant School additions, 1916
 Tasmanian Archives PWD266/4/229



Site plan 1973

Tasmanian Archives PWD266/5/52794 Card 102811

Statement of Significance: (non-statutory summary)

West Devonport Infant School has historical and social associations with the development and provision of State education infrastructure within Tasmanian communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries . The Infant School is the earliest surviving structure associated with West Devonport State School , following demolition of the 1886 building in the 1970s. West Devonport Infant School demonstrates the principal characteristics of an early twentieth century educational building built in the Federation era.

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.

West Devonport Infant School has historical and social associations with the development and provision of State education infrastructure within Tasmanian communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries . The Infant School demonstrates the principal features of the public-school facilities built and expanded throughout Australia in response to the increasing population and consequent school enrolments during the early twentieth century. The Infant School is the earliest surviving structure associated with West Devonport State School , following demolition of the 1886 building in the 1970s.

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

No Data Recorded

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

No Data Recorded

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

West Devonport Infant School demonstrates the principal characteristics of an early twentieth century educational building built in the Federation era. Tasmania was nationally recognised as an educational innovator during the early twentieth century.

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.

No Data Recorded

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.

No Data Recorded

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:

Located in a largely suburban area of west Devonport, the Infant School sits on the hillside above the central business district of Devonport. West Devonport Infant School occupies a small parcel surrounded by two schools, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School sits adjacent on the western boundary and Devonport Primary School to the north and east. Access to the Infant School is from Steele Street.

Description:

Set back from Steele Street, West Devonport Infant School is a single storey red brick building constructed in the Federation period with Queen Anne style elements. A single-storey and rectangular timber building with gabled roof sits behind the brick building.

The brick building features complex roof forms with gable ends and tall brick chimneys with pots, varied window size and arrangement - both large multi-paned windows and small rectangular and semi-circular multi-paned windows. Variation in brick tone shows the different phases of development of the building. The two classrooms, small office and enclosed porch were the first phase of construction in 1912, the three classrooms, enclosed verandah (1916) and courtyard infill were added later. The 1912 section has stepped buttresses at the corners. Internally the building retains several original features, including pressed metal ceiling lining, room layout and joinery.

History:

Devonport is located within the country of the Pirinilaplu people.

Devonport – Torquay and Formby

Before its establishment as a town in 1890, Devonport consisted of two settlements on either side of the Mersey River: Torquay on the east and Formby on the west (Gardham 2005, p.105-6). In May 1856, upward of fifty children of school age lived in and around the more populous Torquay but neither day school nor Sunday school existed. By June 1857, when the population of Torquay was estimated at 200, a Board of Education school was established and conducted by Mr John Thompson and Miss Thompson. It had an early enrolment of 15 and by October 1859, the number had increased to 31. It was not until 1859 that a government school on the western side of the river was provided (Jones 2021).

Formby Public School

In August 1859, the Formby Public School operated on a half-time basis in tandem with that at Torquay. It was located on the Wenvoe Estate on the Esplanade (now Formby Road) and bounded by Wenvoe Street. Two cottages, built by Mr Charles Thomas, were rented by the Board of Education, one for a teacher's residence and the other for a schoolroom (*Advocate* 27 August 1932). At the end of 1861, the school at Formby was transferred to Torquay (*Launceston Examiner* 2 January 1862 p5), however, the Formby school was resumed on a half-time basis from 1864 to 1866. No Government school existed on the west side of the river from 1867 to 1885, but the public school was still in operation at the more populous Torquay during that period.

In Tasmania attendance at school for children between the ages seven and 12 was made compulsory in 1868 and a new Education Act established the Department of Education in 1885. However further significant reform did not occur until the twentieth century. During the early twentieth century a series of Directors of Education (WL Neale, WT McCoy and GV Brooks) initiated an ongoing revitalisation of public education in Tasmania following the principles of the 'New Education' movement – modernising the primary curriculum, improved recruitment and training of teachers

and upgrading school facilities. Tasmania was nationally recognised as an educational innovator during the early twentieth century (Sprod 2005, pp.113-115).

A New School

The Board of Education noted in June 1881 that a five-acre block bounded by Steele, Fenton and Stewart Streets had been secured for the establishment of a school. In 1883, a letter to the *Examiner* from a Formby resident expressed disappointment at the Board's inaction on the delivery of a school. The resident emphasised how scattered the population of Formby was and the hardship experienced by some pupils to attend the school at Torquay. Such children had to walk from West and North Formby to the ferry and then half a mile to the school at Torquay (*Launceston Examiner* 8 August 1883). A building did not eventuate until 1886, following acceptance of the tender by Mr Wood in December the previous year at a cost of £775.10s for the school and £356.10s for the teacher's residence (*Daily Telegraph* 15 December 1885).

The school was opened on 2 August 1886 with an enrolment of 23; there were several private schools with competing interests operating in the town. By August 1887 enrolments had grown to 50 (*The North-West Post* 25 September 1887). The school changed its name to West Devonport State School in 1890 (Jones 2021).

West Devonport State School

In 1891 there were 85 pupils on the rolls. Several major additions were made to the school complex during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, to accommodate increasing enrolments. A new room was added to the 1886 building in 1893. A large new classroom was opened in September 1901, on the western side of the old building (PWD Card 220; *North West Post* 1 October 1901). By April 1904, there were over 250 pupils on the rolls, six assistants and headmaster (*Advocate* 30 April 1904).

Infant School (1912), Additions and Improvements

Severe overcrowding in the infant classrooms by August 1911 led to the construction of a new brick building to accommodate 120 infant age children, leaving space for future expansion (*Daily Post* 12 Oct 1911 p4). In 1912 enrolments at the school increased by 220, with attendance 'assuming large proportions' (*North West Post* 19 Oct 1912 p6). There were two spacious rooms in the Infant School building measuring 28 feet by 22 feet each and connected with patent sliding doors. The entrance to the building was on the south side, where a porch, 9 feet wide, ran the full length of the building and large windows on the northern and eastern sides, gave plenty of sunlight throughout the whole day.

In 1915 the main school building was renovated - six rooms were formed out of the four previous ones (*North Western Advocate and Emu Bay Times* 4 February 1915), and an extension was added to the main façade of the school building (PWD Card 234). A new four-roomed building attached to the Infant School was ready for occupation in January 1917 and was used to temporarily accommodate pupils enrolled at Devonport Intermediate High School, pending the construction of a purpose-built facility (*North Western Advocate and Emu Bay Times* 28 January 1916; TAHO: ED9/695/1911). In 1922, West Devonport School had an enrolment of 620 pupils, making it one of the largest in the State. At the beginning of the same year the four rooms previously used by the High School were freed up, making accommodation facilities more comfortable.

A new Infant School (1942)

By April 1939, there was an enrolment of 670, with some of the children being housed in make-shift accommodation including corridor partitions and even the children's shelter shed (*The Advocate* 3 April 1939). In December 1942 a new Infant School was designed by architect SWT Blythe. Following the construction of the new infant school close to Fenton Street, the former infant school was utilised as classrooms for the primary school and a Library was placed in the central room (PWD Card 240).

Improvements and additions were made across the School site during the twentieth century, including the creation of a Model School (1924), additions to the main school (1925), new Headmaster's residence (c1938), Home Arts and Crafts building (c1950s), and a Pre-School built at 51 Steele Street. More classrooms were added to the 1942 Infant School in 1950 and in the 1960s (PWD Card 242, Card 102807). Several Mussett Huts were placed on site c1950s (PWD Card 102804) and remained on site into the 1970s (PWD Card 102818). In 1963 substantial additions, including classrooms and administration space, was added to an existing building on the Stewart Street boundary (PWD Card 102800). During the 1940s and 1950s it was referred to as West Devonport Practising School, where teachers were provided an opportunity to practically train in their profession.

By 1963 the site was referred to as Devonport Primary School, and by the 1970s it was known as Steele Street Primary School (PWD Card 102800), to distinguish the school from other State primary schools in West Devonport, such as Nixon Street Primary School. The 1886 school building (with additions and alterations) was demolished in 1970 and playing courts were created on the site (PWD Card 102809).

The Infant School (1912) was subdivided and sold into private ownership in 2005. It is used as a childcare and early learning centre (LTO CT142649/1). The wider site continues to function as Devonport Primary School.

Comparative Analysis

Infant Schools

Mention of infant schools in Tasmania goes back to 1826 when a report by Archdeacon Scott recommended that infant schools should be built, more primary schools opened, and an orphan school be built as a matter of the most pressing necessity. Scott's motivation for this came from a need to provide moral guidance and Christian values to young children before they became corrupted (Phillips 1985, p. 11). Infant Schools and Primary schools were established throughout the Colony of New South Wales in 1827, however Phillips notes that Infant Schools were not established in Tasmania until the 1850s (Phillips 1985, p.26).

Attendance at school in Tasmania for children between the ages seven and 12 was made compulsory in 1868, a new Education Act established the Department of Education in 1885, however further significant reform did not occur until the twentieth century. By 1916 the Report of the Director of Education outlined progression of public education in Tasmania, starting with Kindergarten and Infant School for two years (Phillips 1985, p.141).

Infant Schools were built across Tasmania from 1850s onwards as standalone structures and within established public schools. It is likely that there are numerous examples of purpose-built infant schools that sit within wider school complexes, that have been altered and repurposed. Known examples of Infant Schools include the Infant School (adjacent to the SWT Blythe building) at Goulburn Street School, Hobart (THR#3264), built in 1927 and stylistically very similar to the West Devonport Infant School, most likely built to a standard PWD design. Swanston Street Free Kindergarten in New Town (THR#10878) was opened in 1929. It was not part of the public education system, however it is also stylistically very similar to West Devonport Infant School. Frederick Street Infant School in Launceston (THR#4239) was built in 1836; it is a simple Georgian era building with Classical detailing and a much earlier example of this type of building.

REFERENCES

Gardham, F. 'Devonport' in A Alexander (ed) (2005) *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, University of Tasmania, Hobart .pp105-6.

Jones, B. 'Devonport Primary School: it's beginnings 1859-1940s', unpublished notes, September 2021.

Phillips, D (1985) *Making More Adequate Provision*. Education Department of Tasmania, Tasmania.

Sprod, M. (2005) 'Education' *Companion to Tasmanian History*. University of Tasmania, Hobart pp113-115.

Note

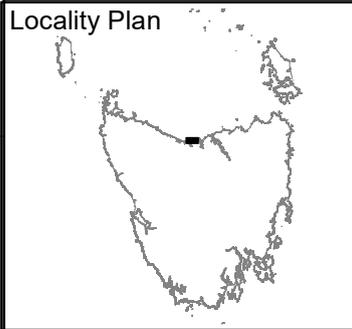
1. Lot 1 represents the registered boundary for 'West Devonport Infant School', #12043 on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.
2. Lot 1 is the whole of FR 142649/1, the boundary of which is marked by a heavy black line.
3. All boundaries are parcel boundaries, details of individual land parcel boundaries may be accessed through the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST).

FR 176685/1

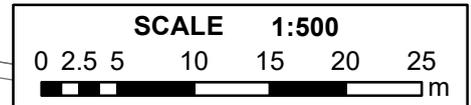
FR 142649/1

Lot 1
1850 m²

LPI JRG00



Steele Street



TASMAP: DEVONPORT - 4444 **GRID:** MGA94 / ZONE 55 **DATUM:** AHD **CONTOUR INTERVAL:** N/A

No.	PRODUCTION / AMENDMENT	AUTHORITY	REFERENCE	DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE
1	Production	THC	12043	JS	A. ROBERTS	30JUN22



West Devonport Infant School
52 Steele Street, Devonport

PREPARED BY
HERITAGE TASMANIA



CENTRAL PLAN REGISTER

p.p. Surveyor General: _____

Date Registered: 1-JULY-22

CPR
11257