NORTH GEELONG PRIMARY SCHOOL No. 1889 Bay St., North Geelong

ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

RESEARCH AND REPORT BY

Lorraine Huddle

Heritage and Design Advisor

City of Greater Geelong

MAY 1997

	1	Historical Context
		1.1 North Geelong -
		1.2 North Geelong Primary School
	2	Location, Physical Description, and
		Architect
		2.1 Location
		2.2 Buildings
		2.3 The Government Architect
1:	3	Comparative Analysis
		3.1 School Design in Victoria
		3.2 Schools in Geelong
		3.2 Industry, immigrants and education
	4	Heritage Status
	5	Statement of Cultural Significance
	_	D
	6	Recommendation
	7	Bibliography

Lind version Krastins Kevin Krastins

1 **Historical Context**

1.1 North Geelong

North Geelong, now part of the City of Greater Geelong, was within the former Shire of Corio until the recent amalgamation of Local Councils. However, the nearest urban development was in Geelong West. Thus it was on the west side of the Geelong/Melbourne Road that saw the earliest nucleus of a village. It commenced in 1854 with the Nugget Hotel (later known as the Orient Hotel) at the corner of the Geelong/Melbourne Road and Victoria St. 1 By 1860. a Gas works was built on the west side of the Geelong/Melbourne road, near the brick works and the North Geelong railway station. Houses were built in Victoria Street and the construction of a primary school was commenced in Separation Street in 1876 and opened in 1877.²

St Helen's Estate was located on the east side as were several other prestigious homes on very large allotments, built above the cliffs overlooking Corio Bay in the mid to late nineteenth century.³

It began to develop as a suburban residential area, separate from the town of Geelong in 1888 when a syndicate bought St Helen's homestead, together with thirty acres of land for £3,750. They sold the house with a few acres and subdivided the rest. The advertising prior to the sale attempted to appeal to all.

St Helen's Estate ... stands unrivalled as the spot for princely mansions, villa residences, or the less pretentious cottages of our thriving artisans.⁴ It appears that the 'thriving artisans' were the main buyers or at least the houses built were for their habitation as they are predominantly modest cottages. The Geelong North Primary School was built at the western boundary of this subdivision over twenty years later.

Industrial development commenced on the east side of the Geelong/Melbourne Road in 1898 when Freezing Works were built near the shore of the harbour nearby. About ten years later the Oriental Timber Co. was established in this area, 5 further development occurred at the freezing works, and the Commonwealth Woollen Mills (later known as the Federal Woollen Mills) was established to make cloth for uniforms for the military forces, 6 although it did not commence operation until 1913.7 In 1910 it appears that these developments prompted the first listing of North Geelong in the Municipal Directory. Furthermore, the Drumcondra Estate, south of 'Lunan' was sold into urban allotments and new villas had already been built when, in 1911 the grounds of Strachan's mansion, 'Lunan', were subdivided into 71 residential lots. ⁸ By 1912 a Progress Association had been formed. In 1916 North Geelong wa listed as having a State School, three hotels, freezing works and the Commonwealth Woollen Mills.9

6

Shire of Corio, a Brief History, nd., pamphlet. p 8

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 182.

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 189

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 184

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 99

Shire of Corio, a Brief History, nd., pamphlet. p 7

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 99

⁸ Marc Askew, in Aitken, Honman and Huddle, City of Geelong West Urban Conservation Study, City of Geelong West and Geelong Regional Commission, 1986, Vol 1, p31

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 189

3

1.2 North Geelong Primary School

The first school in the area was opened in an old building on 1st July 1861 at the instigation of Rev William Higgins of the Independent Church, which was located on the east side of the Geelong/Melbourne road opposite the West Geelong Railway Station (later renamed North Geelong). The Board of Education leased the building from Higgins, from 1870, and the school became known as Common School No. 683 West Geelong. Further changes were made to the administration of the school when the Victorian Education act established free, secular and compulsory education in 1872.

However, conditions became so bad that in August 1875 Charles Vigar, a shopkeeper whose store was near the Nugget Hotel, wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction that school classes were being held in:

...one of the oldest weatherboard structures in the neighbourhood ... more than twelve months ago it was condemned by the Inspector of Schools and the Local Board of Health as utterly unsuitable. ... The condition of the existing building is such as to render it useless to the majority of families ... I would humbly suggest that a new commodious schoolhouse... be erected without delay inasmuch as parents are at present compelled to send their children at a sacrifice of convenience and money to private establishment in town. If a good school were erected, instead of an average of 60 or 70 there would be an attendance of 100 to 150 children. 11

Over a year later the condition the building was of still of concern and the head teacher, Mr William Smith, noted

... to state that the building is very unsafe ... Yesterday the walls, owing to the foundations being decayed, swayed backwards and forwards, and caused the teachers and scholars to be alarmed for their safety. The lessons were very much impeded, on account of the clouds of dust entering through the chinks in the walls and roof and covering the desks and seats in such a manner that writing was obliged to be dispensed with. The heat of the rooms was almost unbearable causing most of the children to feel faint. 12

The appalling situation was rectified on May 1st 1877, when Common School No, 683 was replaced by State School No. 1889 Geelong West. The school, which was 36' x 20', had an enrolment of 116 and was located in Separation Street. 13

The name of the school was changed in the 1890s to reflect its location in North Geelong and the economic depression contributed to the drop in enrolments down to 40. However, enrolments grew to 145 in 1912, prompting the lease of the larger North Geelong Congregational Church Hall and the purchase of the present site on the corner of the Geelong/Melbourne Road and Bay Street. 14 At this time there were:

...houses and shops right along the railway line (Melbourne Rd) to the (Separation St.) bridge then. A lot of people lived over the railway line too. They worked for the Oriental Timber Mill at the log ponds (now Corio

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p1

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 2

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981, p 182
 Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990, p 2

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. pl

Quay), the Harbour Trust, Railways, Meat works, then the Woollen Mills employed a lot when they started. Being close to this employment was the primary reason for living in the area.

A red brick two storey building to house 300 students was constructed and the classes commenced on March 1st 1915, Michael Clancy being the Head Teacher.. This was the day after the Minister for Public Instruction opened the school. Work cost £4,52.5.1 and was carried out by Geelong building firm, Dew Brothers. Additional land was purchased in 1913, 1915, 1923, 1962 and 1970 to enlarge the school grounds. In 1926 when there were 324 pupils, the Geelong/Melbourne Rd was widened and over thirty feet of school land was removed for that purpose.

A student in the 1920s recalled

'the population of the area were mainly working class labourers, tradesmen and shopkeepers. They were mainly Australians, not even many pommies then'... They were shifting in form the Mallee and a lot of people came here from Ballarat.' Later, Elva Rigby remembered that 'in the 1950s the European migrants began arriving in increasing numbers. The school serviced Drumcondra, North Geelong, Bell Post Hill, Bell Park and Norlane when Norlane was built.' Apart from the small Corio Primary School, much further away, it was the only government school north of Geelong West and Geelong.

In 1933, overcrowding was such that one class was held in the corridor. The School Committee re-erected a weatherboard kindergarten hall measuring 35'x 25', which it purchased from the Geelong Harbour Trust Commissioners for use as a classroom. This building was still in use in 1989. 18

During World War Two, the school was an Air Raid Precaution Centre and 'the 'phone in the principal's office was manned day and night. To be on duty you had to pass the Red Cross exam.'19

The Ford Motor Company opened in 1925 and in the 1950s expanded its facilities. According to a former teacher at North Geelong,

in the 1950s large numbers of Dutch families came into the area to build Shell and large scale Baltic migration had commenced. Heavy industry sponsored them here to fill vacancies and they had to stay in the job they were given for a specified length of time. There were also many ex-servicemen coming into the district. All these people were quite materialistic in outlook. The Dutch families and the people from Drumcondra and near the beach were either professional or skilled workers but the new settlers on the western side of the railway line and to the north of the older established area were lover working class labourers. The Dutch had an excellent attitude towards education, the North Geelong people had limited education and gave limited support to the school.²⁰

The huge influx of immigrants created an enrolment explosion so

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 5

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 7

Recollections of Mavis Hocking in Barron, Robert, A Study of a School:

The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North
Primary School, 1990. p 5

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 9

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 9

John Matthews in Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 10

that by 1951 there were 393 children on the roll. They were coming in every day and many did not speak any English at all. 'Some of the migrants were living in huts at the Geelong West Football ground. "The walls were packing cases and the roof was canvas with a centre pole. They had to use the football ground showers and toilets. The children all walked to school from there." The majority were from the Norlane Hostel and Norlane while it was being built'22 The Church of England hall was hired to cope with the overcrowding. Some teaching was done at the Geelong Teachers' College which was located in the 1847 sandstone home 'Lunan' in Drumcondra.²³

In 1956 there were 500 children on the roll at North Geelong. It was also the first time there was a public hall in the area. A former billiard saloon was converted to a hall by the Shire. Other events at this time included the erection of portable classrooms in 1957.²⁴

The 1980s saw great changes in responsibility for the running of the school and content of the curricula shifting from the Education Department to the School council. In 1989 the enrolment was 140 pupils.²⁵

'Since 1957, the external appearance of the school buildings has basically remained the same, but changes have been made to the internal structure of the main building. In 1978, two classrooms on the first floor were opened up to form one classroom which until 1988 was used as the library. One of the results of the 1989 upgrade was the transfer of the library to a double classroom in the L T C building. The classroom closest to the main entrance was converted to an administration and principal's office. The existing office was enlarged to provide a new staffroom. The area comprising the old staffroom was remodelled to provide a sick bay, teacher's work room and indoor toilets. The former Harbour Trust building was used as a canteen.

The school was closed by the State Government in 1996 and it is to be offered for sale by tender in May 1997, along with about forty other former State Government schools in Victoria.

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 10

Miss Stanley, in Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p,12

Gary Todd in Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 13

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 13

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 14

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 14



2 Location, Physical Description and Architect

2.1 Location

The former Geelong North Primary School is bounded by Bay Street, Melbourne Road and Vautier (formerly Shannon) Street. On the east boundary, privately owned houses remain on the subdivision of the 1888 St Helen's Estate. The site plan (nd) indicates the boundaries described above and illustrates the way in which the school site was expanded around private residences. The front of the school buildings are directed to Bay Street.

2.2 Buildings

There are two existing buildings being assessed in this report. They are the two storey red brick building and the timber single storey building to the east of the red brick one.

The main school building dates from 1914-15 and is the first school building on this site. It is has two storey walls of red face brick with contrasting bands of cream and roofed with Marseilles tiles. It has multi-paned large square headed timber framed windows. The intended future extension shown on the original plans is also evident where the brickwork has remained unfinished, exposing the keying for the future structural connection.

The second building is the single storey gabled timber structure. The wall cladding is weatherboard and it has a corrugated iron roof. The School committee purchased this building from the Geelong Harbour Trust Commissioners in 1933 and re-erected it on this site. The age and designer of this building is not known but it appears to date from the nineteenth century. It was first used as an extra classroom. The 1957 plans show that it was referred to as a hall with an annexe constructed to the north end. In 1989 the annexe was used as a kitchen to service the main part of the building, which appears to have been used for a canteen. 27

2.3 The Government Architect

The architect for the existing Geelong North Primary School buildings was H J Kerr who signed the drawings for the main building on 27 January 1914. Kerr was the son of Peter Kerr, architect of Parliament House, Melbourne. He joined hi father in the Victorian Public Works Department in 1878 and worked on a number of major buildings including the detailed drawings for Parliament house and the General Post Office. In 1914, Kerr's position in the Department was District Architect in charge of architectural work of the Western District, including Geelong. He remained with the Department until his retirement in 1923, rising to become Senior District Architect in charge of the metropolitan area. This position was second in seniority to the Chief Architect, E E Smith. ²⁸

3 Comparative Analysis

28

3.1 School Design in Victoria

The Director of Education, Frank Tate took an active interest in school planning in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1905, he and Public Works Department architects drew up guidelines relating to lighting, orientation, ventilation, accommodation, floor area and playing area for new schools. The Public Works Department in 1909 was the subject of an enquiry in

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990. p 14

Frances O'Neil, Memorandum, Heritage Assets, Building Services Agency, Geelong North Primary School, 17 April 1997, p3.

1909 by John H Grainger. Grainger's report recommended standardisation of plans, specifications and details for buildings of similar types.²⁹ Building designs did not include any applied decoration, beyond a name plaque. New building regulations for schools were drawn up in 1911.'³⁰ The account of the condition of the previous accommodations for students in this area may have supported the need for guidelines in these matters.

The increase in the regulation of design of schools in the early twentieth century can be seen in the design for Geelong North, which resembles a number of other schools of the same period in a number of respects.'

The Historic Government Schools Study identifies a group of schools as 7.4 Edwardian Parapet Entrance built between 1904 and 1927. Although Geelong North does not have a parapet entrance, it does have almost all the other characteristics of that group outlined in the study. It is of red brick with a terra cotta Marseilles tile hipped roof. The chimneys have broad roughcast bands and mouldings. It has up-draft shaft ventilators and large windows in pairs or quadruples. It carries a name plate. It has standard size classrooms off spine corridors. There is no external expression on the front elevation of the entrance, which is in Bay Street. Manifold Heights Primary School was also constructed to this design and is a good example of a single storey version of this style at the end of its period of use, 1926. 31

A contemporary school in the City of Greater Geelong is the Geelong Grammar School at Corio. The first large development in Corio was the building of this school in 1913-14,³² just before the construction of North Geelong Primary. The layout of the school, the result of a competition, had been carefully considered and Melbourne architects Wight and Hudson, grouped the buildings with skill drawing heavily on English traditions. The main building, commenced in 1912-13 was built around a cloistered quadrangle, and, facing the main oval was the front wing which had an elegant clock tower. Nearby, Cuthbertson House also commenced in 1913 was similar in design to the main building. The architects used steeply pitched slate roofs, red bricks and symmetrical forms to give the building its English character.³³

A major similarity is seen in the use of two storey red brick cuboid structures, large panels of square headed windows and a minimum of decoration. Both designs draw on the Arts and Crafts and Edwardian styles popular at the time. Both schools were designed by Melbourne architects, the Grammar design being the result of a competition. However, it is interesting to note that Geelong Architects Laird and Buchan were the supervising architects for the first stage and the School Architects until John Angus Laird died in 1936.³⁴

Important differences include the use of slate roofing, gable-ends and some modestly pointed windows. The number of buildings and the design of their layout, particularly around a courtyard, is a significant feature at Geelong Grammar which is not comparable with North Geelong.

Another contemporary school in the region is St Patrick's School

Shire of Corio, a Brief History, nd., pamphlet. p 8

Kilby, Jennette, 'Public Buildings in Victoria 1901-1932.' Research Report, University of Melbourne, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, 1987, pp17-19.

Frances O'Neil, Memorandum, Heritage Assets, Building Services Agency, Geelong North Primary School, 17 April 1997. p3

See the illustration from Marc Askew, in Aitken, Honman and Huddle, City of Geelong West Urban Conservation Study, City of Geelong West and Geelong Regional Commission, 1986, Vol 1, p42

Richard Aitken, 'Edwardian Geelong', School of Architecture, Deakin University, 1979, p53, 54

Interview with Ewen Laird, son of John Angus Laird. 1990.

built in 1912 to replace the 1857 building. It appears to follow the general style of Geelong North although it is not two storey nor a government school.

3.2 Architecture of Schools in Geelong

There are a number of extant two storey brick nineteenth century Primary Schools in Geelong. These include the picturesque forms and massing and polychrome brickwork designed by architect, H R Bastow, for Newtown Primary School (date 1877) in Aberdeen Street and Chilwell Primary School in Pakington Street, Newtown. Swanston Street Primary School is of stuccoed brick construction. The last one is now longer operating as a school. The Geelong High School is also a stuccoed two storey building circa 1950s.

Single storey brick primary schools were built in Geelong in both the nineteenth century and twentieth century. Some, such as the Belmont Primary School illustrate some building design of this period, particularly the brick section. Highton Primary School also had a small addition to their timber school about this time. Over ten year later, Manifold Heights Primary School was built in 1926. The design is very close in style to that identified as '7.4 Edwardian Parapet Entrance' built between 1904 and 1927. It has a parapet entrance, is of red brick with a terra cotta Marseilles tile hipped roof. The large windows are in pairs or quadruples. It carries a name plate. It has standard size classrooms off spine corridors.

A considerable number of single storey primary schools were built in stone in the nineteenth century. Fyansford Primary School is an example of this. Corio Primary School is another example. Timber construction was often used in both centuries however, early nineteenth century schools (prior to the introduction of the Education Act in 1972) were usually designed by local architects.

3.3 Geelong industry, immigrants and education

Most of the residents who sent their children to this school were from working class and/or immigrant backgrounds. More affluent people from Drumcondra also sent their children there.

Many children walked large distances to the school, from the immigrant camps or hostels in Geelong West and Norlane. There were also many children whose parents worked in the local freezing works, gas works, woollen mills, timber mills and other minor industries and lived in the nearby subdivisions.

It was the only large government school north of Geelong West until the late 1950s when Norlane was built. The small Corio Primary School was evidently inappropriate as perhaps it was too far distant even from Norlane residences. North Geelong was, therefore, the main secular and educational meeting place for the new immigrants and people working in the new industries north of Geelong West. St Patrick's Primary School was established in 1857 in Britannia Street and a new building constructed there c1912. The children of the Catholic faith most likely attended St Patrick's if it was within walking distance of their home.

4 Heritage Status

North Geelong Primary School is not included in Heritage Victoria's Heritage Register. It is has not been classified by the National Trust. It has not been included in the Register of the National Estate. It has not so far been included in the City of Greater Geelong Local Planning Scheme.³⁵

Frances O'Neil, Memorandum, Heritage Assets, Building Services Agency, Geelong North Primary School, 17 April 1997

5 Statement of Cultural Significance

There are two buildings of significance on this site. They are the 1915 red brick, two storey classroom block and the single storey timber structure apparently dating from the nineteenth century.

Together these buildings are socially and historically significant for their strong association with the educational and social development of the North Geelong community which commenced in 1861. These links, with the children of Geelong's wave of twentieth century immigrants and the children of the twentieth century industrial development to the north of Geelong West, are particularly important aspects of the historical development of the Geelong region. The school was the only secular, educational meeting place north of Geelong West, until one reached the small Corio Primary School, up until about the 1950s. It was the only substantial public building north of Geelong West until after the 1950s. It was the place where most of the non-English speaking children of the twentieth century immigrants to Geelong, learnt to speak English, and to meet other children from immigrant and Australian backgrounds.

The red brick structure is the first known Government school, in the City of Greater Geelong, designed, using standardised designs, with emphasis on addressing aspects such as lighting, orientation, ventilation, accommodation, floor area and playing area while decoration was kept to a minimum. North Geelong is recognised as a "7.4 Edwardian Parapet Entrance" type built between 1904 and 1927. The Director of Education, Frank Tate was instrumental in developing this concept into guidelines. The plans are signed by the notable Public Works Department District architect H J Kerr in 1914.

The timber structure was purchased in 1933, by the School Committee, from the Geelong Harbour Trust Commissioners to relieve overcrowding in the main building. It continued in use until the school was closed in 1996.

The two above mentioned buildings on the former North Geelong Primary School site are of Regional Significance.

6 Recommendation

That the former North Geelong Primary School site, including the two buildings discussed in this report, be included in the City of Greater Geelong Local Planning Scheme at Cultural Significance Level B.

7 Bibliography

Barron, Robert, A Study of a School: The History of North Geelong Primary School No. 1889, North Geelong Primary School, 1990.

Burchell, Lawrence, Victorian Schools, A Study in Colonial Government Architecture 1837-1900, MUP, 1980.

Contract No. 358 for 1913-14

Kilby, Jennette, 'Public Buildings in Victoria 1901-1932.' Research Report, University of Melbourne, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, 1987, pp17-19.

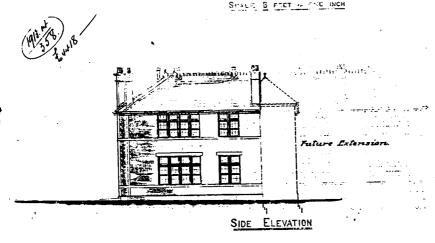
O'Neil, Frances , Memorandum, Heritage Assets, Building Services Agency, Geelong North Primary School, 17 April 1997

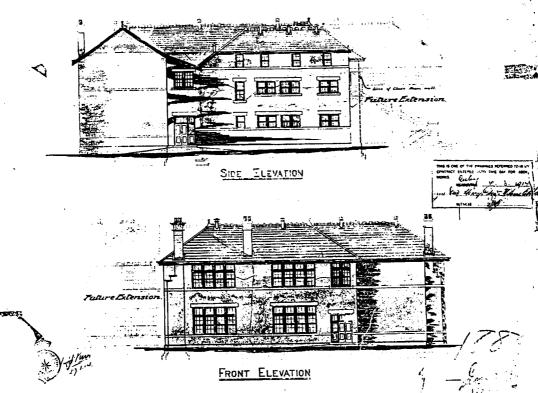
Shire of Corio, a Brief History, nd., pamphlet.

Wynd, Ian, So Fine a Country, Shire of Corio, 1981

Nº 3

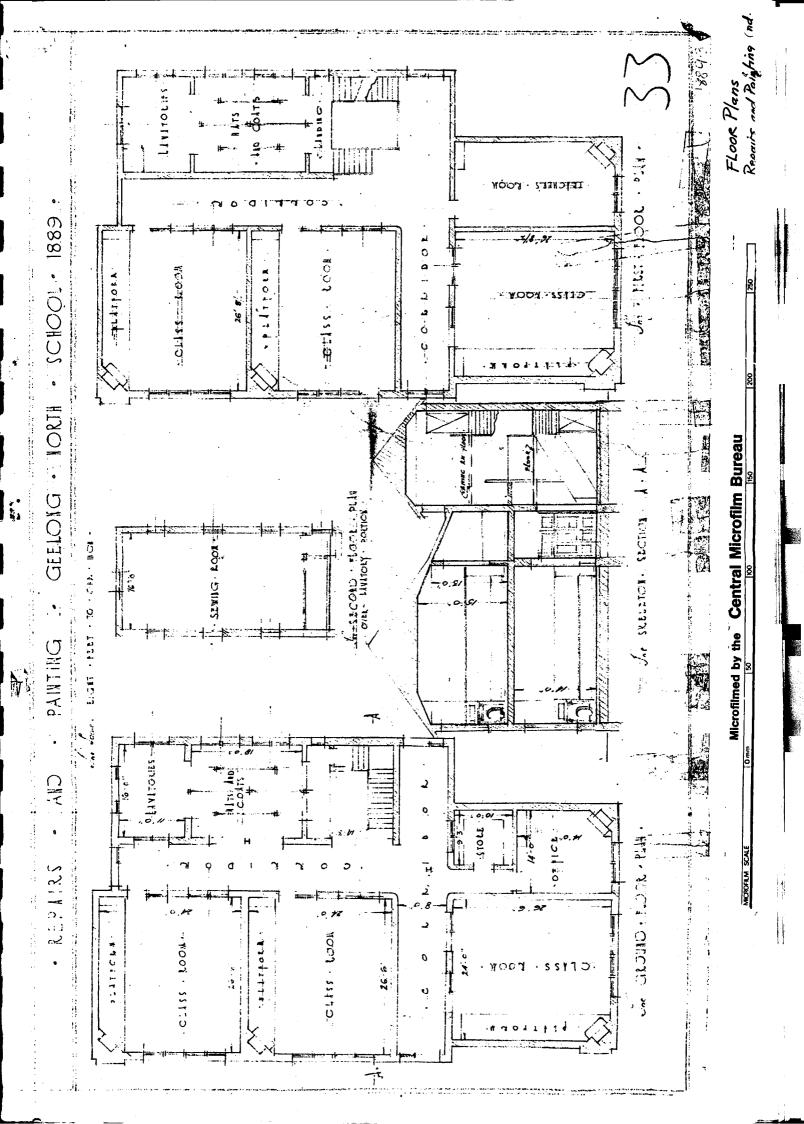
STATE SCHOOL Nº 1889 GEELONG NORTH



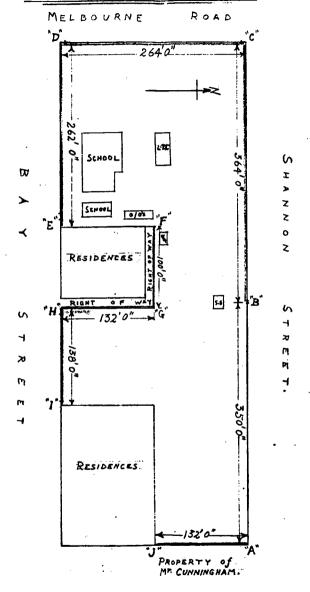


Microfilmed by the Central Microfilm Bureau

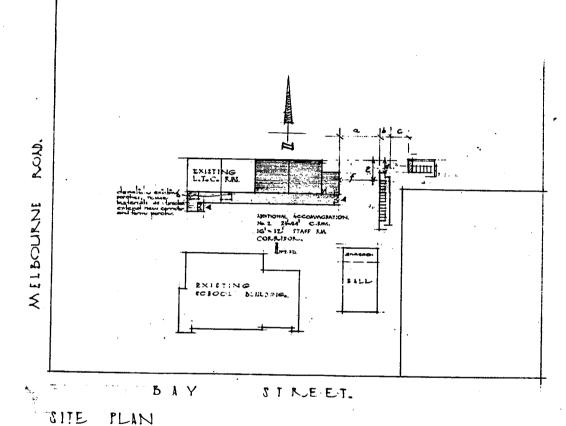
1913-14



GEELONG NORTH 1889:50 FENCING.



SITE Plan C 1740



ABITIONAL L.T. C. CLASSROOMS & CORRIDOR

GEELONG NORTH SCHOOL Nº 1889.

1889

= CHIE! AN CHITICT.

33

drown by je. 14h mor. 15.

1991 SITE PLAN

1957