

GEELONG CITY 'C' CITATIONS

Site Name: Geelong & District Peace Memorial

Project File No: 1621

Address: 24 Gheringhap Street Geelong 3220

Approx. Date: 1919-1926

Integrity: High

Significance Level: C(Local)

Photograph No: 08.07 & 08.08

Survey Date: March 2002



History

This memorial building in Johnstone Park, Geelong, is located in an area initially reserved as public space in the 1858 Geelong Town plan.

In July 1919, the Geelong Town Council decided to build a Peace Memorial Foyer to commemorate the fallen of World War I. A Crown grant of land (at the focal point of the Geelong Civic Centre in Johnstone Park) was obtained at that time and an architectural competition held with the design by the Geelong architectural firm Buchan, Laird and Buchan, in conjunction with Percy E. Everett, awarded the project. The tender of 12,000 pounds by W. J. Kelly Ltd. was accepted for the work. The Mayor of Geelong, Howard Hitchcock, laid the foundation stone on 30 December 1922, with building works not completed until 1926. W.J. Kelly Ltd was assisted by other Geelong firms, Willcox Bros., J. Smith, and C. Nash and Sons. Two flights of smooth-cut bluestone stairs were built that led to the upper landing of the portico with a grand foyer beyond that was to lead to a large community hall at a later date (but never eventuated). Granite slabs in front of the Memorial record the First World War campaigns in which Australians fought and the names of the 3,500 who enlisted from the district are inscribed in panels on the walls.

Internal plastering and external rendering was executed by G. Palmer. Plumbing work

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was carried out by William de Freeman, and painting was done by William Thoms. Lighting effects were installed by the Melbourne Electric Supply Company, supervised by T. Brown.

The total cost at completion was between 13,000 pounds and 15,000 pounds, the money raised from local contributions.

An article by Percy Everett in 1922 provided an explanation of the overall design intentions for Johnstone Park and the reason for the location of the Memorial foyer. Everett states: "A feature of the adopted scheme was the provision for an avenue dividing the reserve into two distinct sections. One to the North to be retained as gardens, and the Southern portion reserved for future buildings, "The Prince's Boulevard", now completed [forming an east-west axis], forms a thoroughfare by which access is obtained to the present Art Gallery, a future Community Hall and Library.

The design provided for a more symmetrical alignment of the old reserve. The fences were replaced by wide, neatly kerbed boundary plots, fringing the lawns which slope toward a central insular Band Pavilion. Radial paths link the various Park entrances."

The foyer was officially opened on 31 October 1926, by the Governor of Victoria, Lord Somers, and it has been maintained in good condition until the present day.

Description

The Geelong and District Peace Memorial building at 24 Gheringhap Street, Geelong, is set in Johnstone Park along Prince's Boulevard that forms the east-west axis to the park. The memorial foyer has visual connections with the Hitchcock Memorial Bandstand to the north and the flanking parkland. Behind the Memorial to the south and south-east are the Geelong Town Hall, Art Gallery and Regional Library buildings.

The symmetrical, imposing two storey, stuccoed brick, late Edwardian Baroque styled Peace Memorial building is characterised by a giant portico supported by paired, blocked Ionic columns on massive granite tablets and smooth-surfaced bluestone pedestals. The portico is crowned by a broken entablature and dentillated cornice having a decorative rectilinear and broken parapet above. Flanking the portico on the east and west sides are two vertically-proportioned pavilions at the front that form apsidal alcoves within. The pavilions have semicircular porticos supported by Ionic columns (on smooth-finished base walls) and crowning curved and moulded parapets. The pavilions also have lofty parapets with rusticated arches and building corners, and widely projecting cornices. There are more rudimentary parapetted wall planes on the side elevations.

Two flights of smoothly finished bluestone steps lead to the upper land of the central portico which has a terrazzo floor. The large timber and glazed screen doors and highlights of the central foyer beyond are constructed of polished maple and have concentric diamond-shaped windows.

Internally, the central foyer is planned over a square area with a terrazzo floor and large arched openings at the east and west ends to the alcoves. These alcoves have elaborate coffered semi-domes with radial ribs that converge towards the central Australian Crest, over each each tablet to the fallen. The southern screen walls in the alcoves have staircases beyond, while the northern screens are punctuated by niches.

Other comparative Edwardian Baroque buildings:

- * Commonwealth Offices building, Melbourne, 1910-11;
- * Victoria Memorial Hall, Singapore, 1901-06;
- * Durban City Hall, South Africa, 1903-10;

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- * Government Offices, London, 1898-1912;
- * Lands and Survey Building, Brisbane, 1899-1905.

Statement of Cultural Significance

The Geelong and District Peace Memorial building in Johnstone Park, 24 Gheringhap Street, Geelong, has significance as an important memorial to commemorate the fallen of World War One, and as an intact example of the Late Edwardian Baroque style. Designed in 1919 and built between 1922 and 1926, the Memorial structure appears to be in good condition.

The Geelong and District Peace Memorial is architecturally significant at a LOCAL level. It demonstrates original design qualities of an intact Late Edwardian Baroque style. These qualities include the giant portico supported by paired, blocked Ionic columns on massive granite tablets and smooth-surfaced bluestone pedestals and the flanking portico pavilions with apsidal alcoves within. Other intact or appropriate qualities include the broken portico entablature and dentillated cornice (with the decorative rectilinear and broken parapet above), symmetrical composition, two storey height, stuccoed brick wall construction, semicircular pavilion porticos supported by Ionic columns (on smooth-finished base walls) and crowning curved and moulded parapets, lofty pavilion parapets with rusticated arches and building corners and widely projecting cornices, two flights of smoothly finished bluestone portico steps, terrazzo portico floor, large timber (polish maple) and glazed screen doors and highlights of the central foyer, concentric diamond-shaped windows, central square internal foyer with a terrazzo floor and large arched openings at the east and west ends to the alcoves, elaborate coffered semi-domed alcove ceilings with radial ribs that converge towards the central Australian Crest over each each tablet to the fallen, southern alcove screen walls with staircases beyond, and the northern screens punctuated by niches.

The Geelong and District Peace Memorial is historically and socially significant at a LOCAL level. It is associated with and commemorates local Geelong soldiers who fought and died in the First World War. The Geelong Town Council decided on the construction of the Peace Memorial in 1919, with the design being carried out by Buchan Laird and Buchan in conjunction with Percy E. Everett. The Memorial also has associations with the builders, W.J. Kelly Ltd., together with Willcox Bros., J. Smith, and C. Nash and Sons. The Memorial is highly valued and recognised by the Geelong and district community for commemorative and cultural reasons.

Overall, the Geelong and District Memorial is of LOCAL significance.

References

- Mary, Ng., "Geelong & District Peace Memorial, Deakin University: School of Architecture and Building, 1991, Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- Mills, Peter, Giesbers, Robert and Sharp, Bruce, "A History of Johnstone Park and its buildings" Geelong Historical Records Centre.
- D. Rowe, 'Building a National Image: The Architecture of John Smith Murdoch, Australia's First Commonwealth Government Architect', PhD (Architecture) Thesis, Deakin University, 1997.

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