

BENDIGO TOWN HALL



2023. Bendigo Town Hall viewed from Hargreaves Street.



BENDIGO TOWN HALL SOHE 2008



2023. Western facade, near Lyttleton Terrace



1 bendigo town hall front view



2023. Entry portico, western facade near Hargreaves Street.



2023. Lightwell, introduced in 1867



2023. Large hall space or former corn exchange.



2023. Detail of Otto Waschatz wall painting



2023. Council Chamber (former) with furniture and wall paintings.



2023. Former corn exchange/main hall space.



2023. Details of plaster modelling to main hall, undertaken by Otto Waschatz.



2023. inventory item no. 1, councillor's chairs (10)



2023. inventory item no. 2, councillor's desks (8)



2023. inventory item no. 3, upholstered bench.



2023. inventory item no. 7, flat writing desk.



2023. inventory item no. 4, chairman's desk.



2023. inventory item no. 5, low backed upholstered chair.



2023. inventory item no. 6, long desk.

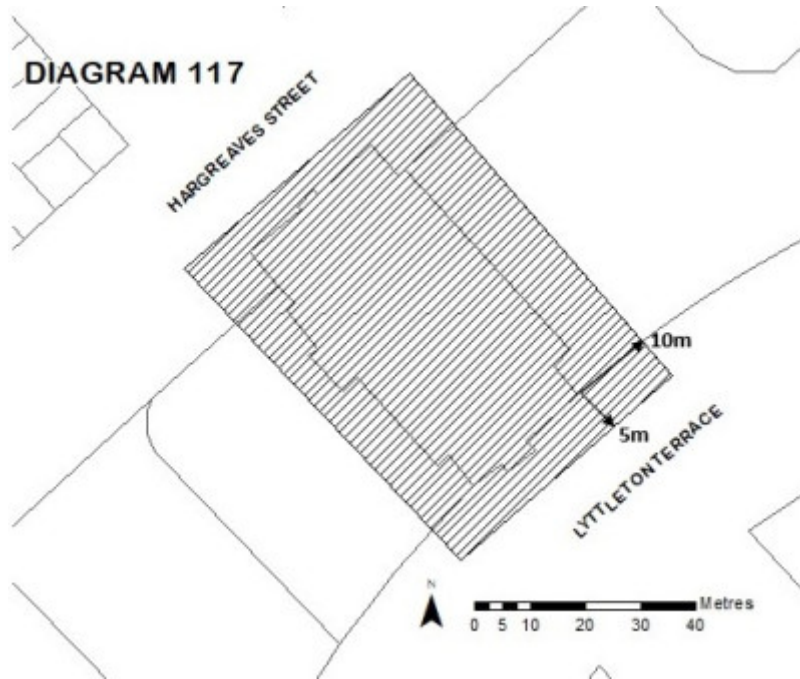


Diagram 117 with measurements

Location

189-193 HARGREAVES STREET BENDIGO, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0117

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO147

VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

Amendment to Registration

August 22, 2024

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 21, 2024

What is significant?

Bendigo Town Hall, built in 1859 and extended over three phases resulting in the present mannerist building of stone construction. The original 1859 design by George Avery Fletcher was a simple two storey building in the Italianate style, which served as the foundation for future remodelling and extensions by Bendigo architect William C. Vahland in 1866. The town hall also contains fine decorative interiors, as displayed in the main hall and council chamber, along with objects integral, being the original council chamber furniture.

How is it significant?

The Bendigo Town Hall is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

Why is it significant?

The Bendigo Town Hall is historically significant due to its association with the development of Bendigo, a major Victorian centre for gold mining in the nineteenth century. The elaborately decorated building demonstrates the prosperity of Bendigo as a provincial city, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s, and it is illustrative of the civic growth that occurred as a result of the mining industry.
(Criterion A)

The Bendigo Town Hall is architecturally significant as a particularly notable example of mannerist architecture which evokes the pretensions of Bendigo in its boom period. The facades of this freestanding building are asymmetrical and deeply modelled, incorporating rustication, deep broken pediments, alternating triangular and segmental pediments, layers of varying orders with the Corinthian predominant, paired pilasters and columns, and skyline interest in the form of three towers, mansard roofs and balustrading. It is also of architectural significance as an important work of the prominent 19th century Bendigo Architect, William C. Vahland and his skilful adaptation of an existing building.
(Criterion D)

The Bendigo Town Hall contains particularly fine and impressive nineteenth-century decorative interiors as displayed in the main hall and council chamber. The interior decoration of these rooms with their elaborate plasterwork and hand painted wall panels is the work of important artist and modeller, Otto Waschatz, who was also responsible for the interior decoration of the library at the Bendigo School of Mines and the Melbourne Town Hall. The interiors of the Town Hall, along with the early council chamber furnishings, make Bendigo Town Hall one of the finest municipal buildings in Victoria.
(Criterion D)

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

Internal

1. Removal and/or like for like replacement of the carpet tiles in the main hall, provided that works do not harm the original floors underneath the existing carpet including any cumulative harm incurred by the exposure of the original floor surface.

Objects integral

2. Temporary relocation or movement of the moveable Registered Objects Integral to the Registered Place within the town hall building.
3. Repair and conservation of Registered Objects Integral to the Registered Place, including like for like reupholstering of the councillors chairs, provided works are carried out by a suitably qualified conservator.

Theme

4. Transforming and managing the land 6. Building towns cities and the garden state 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates 1866, 1871, 1878,

Architect/Designer Fletcher, George A, Vahland, William Charles,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,

Hermes Number 125

Property Number

History

In 1855, four years after the discovery of gold, Bendigo was first established as a municipality and provisions were made for a local government to be formed. A site in View Point, purchased in 1856 after the first council elections, was the location of the first town hall and a two-room timber building was constructed. Despite the population growth of the gold rush, many people were impoverished and there was a reluctance amongst ratepayers to see their money squandered. The iterations of the later town hall, which saw the building extended several times but never demolished is reflective of this.

First phase

The Bendigo Town Hall was built on its present site in Hargreaves Street in 1859. Town clerk and surveyor George Avery Fletcher was responsible for the original design, a two storey Italianate structure comprised of brick with sandstone dressings. The primary elevation to the north opened on to a large market square in Hargreaves Street with projecting bays on either side enclosing the ground floor arcade with a balcony above. This original design would form the basis of future designs for the building.

Between 1866 and 1867, Fletcher designed an extension enclosing the central recess with a lightwell, and containing a council chamber on the upper floor, two rooms on the lower and a colonnade and balcony to the east, north and west elevations. In 1871, a further extension introduced a corn exchange in the form of a large hall with basement below. Fletcher's extensions generally retained the same facade treatment of the original design. Fletcher passed away in 1876.

William Vahland

William Charles Vahland was a German-born and trained architect who emigrated to Victoria in 1854 in pursuit of gold. After an unsuccessful period as a miner, in 1857 Vahland opened an architectural practice with fellow German architect, Robert Getzschmann. The firm was responsible for several early public buildings in Bendigo, including Bendigo Hospital, Bendigo Benevolent Asylum, the School of Mines, Mechanic's Institute and the Masonic Hall.

Vahland led a prominent public life in Bendigo, including acting as the representative of the Barkly Ward in the Bendigo City Council, a position he resigned from in 1872. In 1878, Vahland drew up plans for the restyling of the town hall, continuing a tradition of adding to the hall instead of rebuilding, which allows the stages of growth to be identified in the building fabric.

Second phase

Vahland undertook the task of renovating the existing town hall, producing a facade divided into three vertical elements and creating a varied skyline with the introduction of three corner towers. A new mansard roof was constructed with timber spanning the width of the building, overcoming the need for columns throughout the large main hall.

In 1885 the exterior of the building was rendered, and plastering of the interiors was begun by Otto Waschatz. Waschatz was a German plasterer and artist, working as a lecturer at the Bendigo School of Mines whose credentials included the ornamentation for the Royal Palace in Copenhagen. Waschatz was also responsible for the plasterwork at the library at the Bendigo School of Mines. The painting of the main hall was completed in 1902, and with it Vahland's master plan was realised.

Later works

The final phase of remodelling began in 1913 and was undertaken by architects J. Beebe, J.G. Austen and E.J. Keogh. It entailed work mainly to the interior of the south end of the building, including a staircase in the enclosed lightwell. A stage was erected across the Hargreaves Street entrance, and the elaborately painted walls and ceilings were painted over amongst other minor alterations through the 1970s.

In the 2000s, the Bendigo Town Hall underwent extensive conservation works. This included the reinstatement of the Hargreaves Street entrance, foyer and balcony, demolition of the 1926 balcony and the reinstatement of original decorative schemes and conservation of the extensive wall paintings.

Selected bibliography

Bendigo Advertiser. "The New Council Chamber." June 27, 1860. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87944687>.
Westmore, Trevor and Butcher, Mike. *Bendigo Town Hall Conservation Plan*. Prepared for City of Bendigo, 1993.

Assessment Against Criteria

The intactness of the place and objects integral is excellent.

There are carpet floor tiles to the main hall/former corn exchange space that protects the original floors underneath and accommodates the use of the hall as an event space.

(December 2023)

Extent of Registration

Heritage Act 2017

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H0117

Category: Registered Place, Registered Objects

Integral to a Registered Place

Place: Bendigo Town Hall

Location: 189–193 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo

Municipality: Greater Bendigo City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 117 encompassing all of Crown Allotment 4B, Section 10C Parish of Sandhurst and parts of Allotments 4E and 4F Section 10C Parish of Sandhurst and parts of the road reserves of Hargreaves Street and Lyttleton Terrace (to the measurements of 5 metres to the front and back and 10 metres to the side measured

from the four corners of the building) and objects integral listed in Inventory H117.

Dated 22 August 2024

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>