

Area: Geraldton	Place Number: 407	Category: 2
Assessment Date: 09/09/2010	Last Revision Date: 01/01/1970	
HCWA Number:	Asset ID:	MCH127142

PLACE DETAILS

Name:	King's Picture Theatre
Other Names:	Soldiers' Picture Theatre, Radio Picture Theatre
Type of Place:	Hall
Address:	Fitzgerald Street
Suburb:	Geraldton

LOCATION

Map Reference:	GPS Northing: 6814506.00	GPS Easting: 266396.000
	0000	000



Photo Description:

22/05/2010

Tanya Henkel

View of Hall from Fitzgerald Street.

SITE DETAILS

Lot No.:	Lot 21	Assess No.:	11591
Reserv No.:		Vol/Fol:	
Dia/Plan:			

USE OF PLACE

Original Use:	Theatre		
Current Use:	Not in use		
Ownership:			
Public Access:	No	Occupied:	

DESCRIPTION

Walls:	Brick and CGI	Roof:	Corrugated Iron
Condition:	Good	Integrity:	
Original fabric:	CGI wall cladding		
Modifications:	Brick shopfront addition		

Located to the rear of the Radio Theatre Fmr, this large building is of two storey proportion with a later single storey addition addressing Fitzgerald Street. The original historic hall has walls of horizontally placed corrugated iron cladding, while the gable roof features four roof vents and two raised roof sections along the central ridge. The western end of the hall, which would have comprised the original building frontage, is of brick construction, including the gable end, with rendered parapet detailing. The brickwork extends approximately 5 metres along both side walls. To the rear of the building there is a single and double storey lean to of timber frame and corrugated iron construction. Several high set windows to the side walls are boarded up with sheets of corrugated iron. To the front of the original hall addressing Fitzgerald Street there is a c1960s single storey brick addition which fronts directly onto the footpath. This addition features large expanses of shop windows and a curved cantilevered awning which wraps around the corner of the building. An internal inspection was not made as part of this assessment however it is understood that the interior is painted black and that while the stage structure has been altered from its original form, the original proscenium arch remains intact with decorative pressed metal around the stage space featuring an art deco style olive laurel. Further the interior features "very fine steel roof trusses" which are identified in the "CBD West End Project Precinct Plan, Design Guidelines and Local Planning Policy" as warranting retention and reuse in the case of demolition. (p.17 & P. Griffiths Heritage Report.) A brick toilet block has also been built inside the hall.

HISTORY

Construction Date: 1911 **Source:** Geraldton Guardian,
1/12/1999

Architect:
Builder: Dick Cardilini

In 1911, the King's Picture Theatre was built by Dick Cardilini to the rear of Geraldton Town Lot 1 fronting Fitzgerald Street. The first film is believed to have been screened in 1913 by Daniel Marsh who apparently operated the first electricity plant in Geraldton as well as a second picture theatre called Queen's Pictures. Following the First World War the King's Picture Theatre enterprise was run by a syndicate of Geraldton businessmen and renamed the Soldiers' Picture Theatre because the profits were used to assist in the rehabilitation of returned First World War servicemen. By August 1920, profits from the picture shows also contributed towards the purchase of premises named "The Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Institute". Alfred G. Wheat, a returned soldier himself, arrived in Geraldton in 1921 to manage the Soldiers' Picture Theatre. In 1927, Wheat acquired the lease to Soldiers' Picture Theatre and reverted back to the name King's Pictures. He also purchased Queen's Pictures from the Marsh family, which was located on the corner of Cathedral Avenue and Foreshore Drive, in order to acquire the rights to Fox and Paramount films, and both cinemas continued to operate for a time until Queen's Pictures was eventually closed with the advent of 'talkies'. In 1930, Wheat renamed King's Pictures, 'Radio Pictures' or 'Radio Theatre' - the new name coming from Wheat's belief that some time in the future radio would be used in the sound system of film. In that same year and following the installation of the latest Raycophone sound gear the first talking picture, "Tanned Legs", was shown at the cinema which now had additional seating and suspended flowing curtains. The old Radio Theatre presented both movie shows and vaudeville acts, while dancing lessons were also conducted there. Wheat's operation of the old Radio Theatre was carried out in conjunction with a garage business, known initially as the Radio Service Station and later as Radio Motors, which also operated on Lot 1 from the late 1920s. In the mid 1930s plans to redevelop the site were commenced resulting in the construction of the new Radio Theatre building which opened on 9 April 1937, an Art Deco style building addressing the corner of Marine Terrace and Fitzgerald Street. Prior to this the final screening at the old Radio Theatre on Fitzgerald Street was a special four-hour entertainment, after which the projection equipment was moved to the new building. The old Radio Theatre building was stripped internally and used as a motor vehicle workshop for Radio Motors, which operated the new service station and motor vehicle showroom on the ground floor of the new Radio Theatre building. In 1951, Geraldton Town Lot 1 was subdivided, creating Lot 19 (later Lot 21), the site of the Radio Motors workshop formerly the old Radio Theatre, and Lot 20 being the site of the new Radio Theatre

building. While the new Lot 20 was purchased by Goldfields Pictures, the Wheat family retained Radio Motors, which they continued to operate on Lot 19 and on rented portions of Lot 20 (the service station and showroom on the ground floor of the new Radio Theatre). Following the death of Alfred Wheat in 1956, his son Alwyn continued to run Radio Motors. The Wheat family's association with the site ended in 1976, when Alwyn Wheat moved his business operations to another venue in Geraldton. Since that time the old Radio Theatre building, with its new addition to the street frontage, has been used as a food hall (the first in Geraldton), a camping and sports business, for ladies' darts and as an archery centre.

HISTORIC THEMES

HCWA:	405 Sport, recreation and entertainment 605 Famous and infamous people
AHC:	8 Developing Australia's cultural life 3.5 Developing primary production

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The King's Picture Theatre Fmr has considerable historic significance as the oldest remaining cinema building in Geraldton. The place has further significance for its role in assisting with the rehabilitation of returned First World War servicemen and for its long association with well known local business identity, Alfred Wheat from 1921 to 1976. The building is a rare example of a large structure of corrugated iron construction and although altered internally and externally, still retains some of its original features and detailing. Further the place forms part of a "Cinema Precinct", inclusive of the adjacent 1930s Radio Theatre Building and the modern Cinemas Complex opposite, which is evidence of the social value of cinema in the local community as well as the development of the technology over time.

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY

Management Category:	2
Level of Significance:	CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE: Very important to the heritage of the locality.
Management Recommendation:	Conservation of the place is highly recommended. Any proposed change should not unduly impact on the heritage values of the place and should retain significant fabric

wherever feasible.

OTHER LISTINGS

No other listings

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Radio Theatre Building Fmr State Register documentation.

"Geraldton Guardian", 1/12/1999, p.28.

"Geraldton Guardian" - "Last screening for Geraldton Radio Theatre?", 28/10/1971.

"Geraldton Guardian" - "That radio corner era has come to an end", 26/8/1976.

"Geraldton Guardian and Express" - "Radio Pictures inauguration at King's Theatre", 7/6/1927,

"Geraldton Guardian and Express" - "Radio Theatre, the closing night", 1/4/1937.

Geraldton Regional Library, Local Studies Department.

"Geraldton: 150 years, 150 Lives", Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p.178.

Wheat. Alwyn, G., (son of Alfred Wheat), article on history of theatres and cinemas in Geraldton, "Geraldton Historical Society Quarterly Review", No. 70, 1987, pp.8-10.

"Geraldton Historical Society Review", No. 71, 1988.

DOLA Survey Diagram 16094, approved by Town Planning Board on 13/2/1951.

Bertelson, Ron, "Brief History of Central Geraldton in 1925", unpublished, Geraldton Library.

OTHER PHOTOS



Photo Description:

22/05/2010

Tanya Henkel

Southern elevation of the old picture theatre building.