

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name Commercial Hotel
Address 101 - 111 Watton Street (cnr Wedge St) Werribee **Significance Level** Local
Place Type Hotel
Citation Date 1997



Commercial Hotel

Recommended Heritage Protection VHR - HI - PS Yes

History and Historical Context

This hotel, located on the south-east corner of Watton and Bridge Streets, had a long association with the O'Connor family. Richard O'Connor, early district storekeeper and hotel keeper, reputedly built an earlier hotel on the site in 1869 called the Railway Hotel. In 1875, he gave up storekeeping but kept the hotel.[1] By the middle 1880s, the Railway Hotel (in Allotments 1 to 4 in Block 21 in the Werribee township) was owned and occupied by Richard O'Connor, hotel keeper.[2]

O'Connor changed the name of his hotel to the Anglers Hotel in the 1890s. Its valuation had increased to 108 pounds by this time.[3] It continued at that valuation until about 1904.[4]

According to a Werribee District Historical Society publication, at this time O'Connor announced his plans for rebuilding the Anglers Hotel.[5]. Shire rate records confirmed that there was a substantial increase in valuation between 1905 and 1906.[6] In September 1907 Richard O'Connor's death was reported in the district press. The article told how he was born in Ireland and first came to Victoria in 1861. He was employed on the Wattle Park estate but then went to the Otago (NZ) goldfields. On his return, O'Connor married and opened a store at Werribee. The article told of how he built the Anglers Hotel and was a promoter of the Werribee Mechanics Institute and was Treasurer of St. Andrew's RC Church for 40 years. He was buried in the Werribee Cemetery.[7]

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By 1910 there was another name change, to the Commercial Hotel, the present name. In that year the property was owned by O'Connor's Executors and occupied by Johanne Cooke, licensed victualler.[8]

A 1920 description of O'Connor's hotel survives in the sale notice for the O'Connor Estate following a subdivision in that year. It was announced that the hotel, shops and houses were for sale in " the main business street of the township and close to the Railway Station." The Commercial Hotel was described as " a Two-story Brick Building with Balcony, overlooking the Werribee River; it contains 22 Rooms. There is also good Stabling, Loose Boxes, Feed-house, Sheds, and all necessary hotel conveniences. Electric light and water are laid on, also very large underground tank. the whole of the Buildings, both inside and out, are in splendid condition.[9]

A sketch of the properties for sale on their allotments showed the outline of the large L-shaped hotel building on the Watton/Bridge Street corner with a rear L-shaped building on the corner of Bridge Street and the back right-of-way. The name "Cooke" and the sum of 6000 pounds was written across the property.

Shire rate books confirmed that by this date, 1920-21, the valuation of the hotel had increased to 250 pounds.[10] By the 1930s, the property valued at 336 pounds was owned by the Gargan family with Isobel Nervin as hotel keeper.[11] In the 1940s and early 1950s, the Gargan Estate owned the Commercial Hotel, which was run still by Isobel Nervin. Its valuation increased substantially to 475 pounds (1941), 500 pounds (1946-47) and to 914 pounds by the 1950s.[12]

REFERENCES

- [1] Early Hotels, in Werribee History Kit, p.4 of 5.
- [2] Shire of Werribee RB 1887-8 East Riding No.897 NAV 79 pounds.
- [3] Shire of Werribee RB 1899-1900 East Riding No.3124.
- [4] Shire of Werribee RB 1904-5 East Riding No.3159.
- [5] Early Hotels, p.4 of 5
- [6] Shire of Werribee RB 1905-6 No.3206 NAV 150 pounds.
- [7] Wyndhamshire Banner, 12 Sept. 1907.
- [8] Shire of Werribee RB 1910-11 Central Riding No.3747 NAV 195 pounds.
- [9] Curators Sale Brochure, 3 Nov. 1920.
- [10] Shire of Werribee RB 1920-21 No.6031.
- [11] Shire of Werribee Valuers Cards 1936-40 No.914.
- [12] Shire of Werribee Valuers Cards 1941-56 No.917.

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

9.5 Local shops and services

Description

Physical Description

The two storey Commercial Hotel is located on a prominent corner site in Werribee's main shopping street. The hotel has been a landmark for many year. As with many hotels, the use has continued but the building has undergone various stages of development and change.

The present building appears to date from the early years of the twentieth century. It is set facing the corner, with the traditional entry to the main bar now off-set to the Watton Street facade (further research is needed to confirm the original position of the entry). The upper floor is the least altered, retaining a series of arch-head windows, moulded string-course and parapet detailing. The tiles on the exposed roof section have been replaced with a darker glazed tile, and most of the

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window frames have also been altered.

Recommended Management

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Occupancy

Private

Site Context

Main facade.

Statement of Significance

The Commercial Hotel has local significance as an important c1905 commercial building in the main business street of the Werribee township, close to the Railway Station. It has been a popular community meeting-place from the turn of the century, and has significance for its long association with the O'Connor family of early settlers, storekeepers and publicans. Its site has significance as the location of O'Connor's earlier Railway Hotel, which dated from the late 1860s and was there until about 1904.

Recommendations 1997

External Paint Controls

-

Internal Alteration Controls

-

Tree Controls

-

Fences & Outbuildings

-

Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

-

Incorporated Plan

-

Aboriginal Heritage Place

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Other Recommendations

Wyndham Heritage List Planning Scheme

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.