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Name: Thomas' Drapery Store
Status: Permanently Registered
Tier: State
State
State

THR ID Number: 10824
Municipality: Central Coast Council
Date Listed: 01/05/2006

Location Addresses

95 MAIN RD, PENGUIN 7316 TAS

Title References

162566/1

Property Id

6759915



Untitled

No copyright on file

Setting: Thomas' Drapery at 95 Main Road, Penguin, a seaside town on Tasmania's north-west coast, is an integral architectural element in the Penguin commercial centre and streetscape. The land is on a rise at the eastern end of the main beach. The Drapery faces south into the main shopping area. Along the eastern boundary there is a driveway leading to a grassed backyard. The rear of the building overlooks the National Railway line built in 1901 and an access road to the Memorial Park and the Surf Club Point, with panoramic views of Bass Strait to the north. The west side of the block abuts the historic Browns Bakery. On the eastern side of the block are the low-rise Penguin Holiday Units. On the opposite side of the Main Road is a two-storey Late Victorian Hotel.

Description: The upper facade of shop is intricately modelled and features a parapet with a picturesque silhouette with a pediment crowning the arched gable. Decorative detail includes various stylised scrolls and moulded domes. The words 'ESTD H.E THOMAS 1909' are emblazoned in a render moulding across the parapet. This building is an Inter-War style with Federation influences on the parapet. The front faade comprises the original three-shop frontage, approximately 19 metres wide with matching doors, windows, tiles and leadlight and a continuous cantilevered verandah held by steel suspension rods. The entrance to the store features the name 'H E Thomas' in the recessed entry floor and also in green leadlight above the main entrance double-timber doors. The brass-framed shop windows are original with lead lighting detailing on windows above the main display windows, and blue and black ceramic glazed tiles featured below and surrounding the display windows. These large panoramic windows are representative of many shops built in the Inter-War style of the 1920s and 1930s. Large display windows recessed or angled lead the customer into the store past the extensive window dressing. Also a feature of this Inter-War style was the shop signage displayed internally and externally on the parapet and in this case on the edge of the verandah roof. The ceiling of the Thomas Drapery store is vaulted, spanning across the main shop ceiling and the two smaller shops to either side wings. The ceiling is an intact example of a Wunderlich pressed-metal ceiling. The only evident damage is the two holes on either side of the ceiling where the flying fox, which once delivered money from the main counters across the ceiling to the accountant's office, had been removed in c.1958 (PC Val Thomas, June 2006). Interior fixtures included features from the Thomas family occupation that included fiddle-back Tasmanian Oak counters, chairs, shelving and cupboards reputed to have been made by Pipers furniture makers (an Ulverstone firm). The rear high windows include a large half-circle window facing north to Bass Strait maximising wall space and increasing light. Small side windows are also located high up the walls. Some original advertising props were still evident around the shop until September 2006. The sole chimney in the building has been dismantled and only the base section remains on the eastern boundary. The interior fireplace has been boarded up and there is no longer a fire surround or mantelpiece.

History:

A drapery business was established on the site of 95 Main Rd, Penguin, in 1902 by Mr Henry Herbert Burbury (Penguin Historical Group). Mr Henry Edgar Thomas took over the business from his employer in 1909. The original building was burnt to the ground on Boxing Day in 1925 by three arsonists. A new Drapery store was built in 1926 on the same site by George Paton, son of George Paton senior (former Mayor of Launceston in 1912), a Launceston plasterer and builder. G Paton (junior) was the brother of Clara Evelyn, Mrs H E Thomas. The Paton family were known for their decorative cement rendering of buildings. The foundations of the building are reputed to have been designed to hold a second storey which was to cater for additional extensions reflecting a thriving business and Thomas' faith in the industrial growth of the north-west coast (Advocate, 1989). Gwen Jones nee Thomas (97-yrs-old and living in Penguin, 2006) recalled that when the building was being constructed the Paton family in Launceston and the Thomas family in Penguin swapped houses (PC June 2006). Originally there was an accounting office in the centre of the shop with glass windows and a space to allow money to be passed through. This room was removed by the subsequent owners who also sold many of the original chattels including some shop counters. Later an office was cornered off in the rear eastern corner of the building where the fireplace is located. This room was used for book-work. Later cash registers were introduced onto the counters. Originally the building was internally divided into tenancies by walls separating the shop wings, but these were eventually demolished to make one large shop. The original building design had taken this possibility into account and the demolition of the walls was accomplished leaving the ceiling intact. This Inter-war style was also characterised by fashionable displays including the use of mannequins and free standing frames, shelving and designated storage areas. The shop encouraged self-service by spreading the goods in the large open space and at the same time kept personalised assistance on hand. This was reflected also by the provision of seating at the counter for customers as they selected or waited for orders to be filled. Upon Henry Thomas' death, (aged 49) in 1932, his wife Clara and daughter Gwen, aged 21 years, despite a lack of experience, took over the management of the business. Clara Thomas died in 1957 and was remembered by all those she assisted through the Depression when credit was given out generously. Siblings Henry, George, Gwen, Enid (known as Jean) and Meg all worked for the family business at various times once they reached 21 years of age. The family business became a company in 1964 styled HE Thomas Penguin Pty Ltd. Family members continued to work in the shop until 1990, the business was sold to the Bailey's. At this time there was a huge closing down sale of old stock. J. Webster purchased the business and building in 1993. The building was sold in 1996 and again in 2001. The Drapery business was kept in the Thomas family for eighty years until 1989 and although in new ownership the use continued until September 2006, thus, there had now been a drapery business on this site for over a century. Family members still hold scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, exercise books documenting merchant accounts, stock lists, sundry payments, original accounts rendered, etc that not only provide much social history detail of the shop but also of a Tasmanian town. A more detailed history of this place is included at Attachment A. Community attachment to 95 Main Road, Penguin, is high (Advocate 3/6/06)

Statement of Significance:
(non-statutory summary)

No Statement is provided for places listed prior to 2007

Significance:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.

Thomas' Drapery Store is of historic cultural heritage significance as a fine example of a large regional shop dating from the early C20th. The second drapery to exist on this site, the 1926 Drapery store possesses considerable size and streetscape presence for the drapery of a small regional township, reflecting the relative importance of drapery and haberdashery products relative to other commercial activity and services of the day.

The facade demonstrates common commercial practises of the period in having the original shop-owner's family name formally intergrated within the design of the parapet and within leadlighting over the main entry door, along with the rare use of the owner's name within the paving at the entry door.

The Thomas family, whose name adorns the building and from which period of occupation the building remains largely intact, operated a drapery business out of this site for 80 years, a notable and increasingly rare example of a business being passed on through several generations of the one family.

b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.

No Data Recorded

- d) **The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.**

The facade of Thomas' Drapery Store is of historic cultural heritage significance as an exceptionally intact example of an interwar period shopfront. Generally of a Federation Free Style character, the Drapery demonstrates a range of interesting features and details including the layout of the building, the spatial quality of the main room inclusive of its vaulted metal-tiled ceiling, the large shopfront windows with decorative leadlighting and tiled surrounds, and the inclusion of the owner's name in the parapet moulding, window leadlighting and paving.

- e) **The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.**

- f) **The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**

No Data Recorded

- g) **The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

- h) **The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

PLEASE NOTE This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.