

Victorian Heritage Database Report  
**Stawell Court House, 11 Patrick Street, STAWELL**

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**Location:**

11 Patrick Street STAWELL, NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H1997**

**Listing Authority: VHR**

**Statement of Significance:**

(Taken from recently-prepared Victorian Heritage Register Citation.)

What is significant?

The town of Stawell grew out of two mining settlements established in the 1850s. Gold was discovered at Pleasant Creek (later Stawell West) in 1853 and at Quartz Reefs (later known as Stawell East) from 1854. A police camp was set up at Pleasant Creek and in 1858 it was named after Sir William Stawell, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria. However the settlement did not develop as the Government had expected. Instead, Quartz Reefs (Stawell East) flourished and was re-named Stawell in 1870. By 1868 the population at Quartz Reefs was approximately 6500 compared to about 200 people at Pleasant Creek. Finally in the late 1870s the Government acknowledged that the growing settlement required a more official presence. The Patrick Street court house was built in 1878-79 and police quarters and lock-up in 1881. The police quarters and lock-up were demolished to make way for a Percy Everett designed police station of 1949. A new police

complex was built in the early 1990s. The Patrick Street court house was built in 1878-79 by contractor J Summerland to the design of George W. Watson, who became the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department from 1910 until his death in 1915.

How is it significant?

Stawell Court House is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Stawell Court House is of architectural significance as a fine and highly intact example of the larger courts in the Victorian Free Classical style with recessed entry, arcade, gallery and hipped roof. The building is significant in its use of the local Stawell sandstone from the nearby Heatherlie quarry; stone from this quarry was also used in some Melbourne buildings including Parliament House. The court house is also notable for the high integrity of its interior fittings and furniture. Stawell Court House is of historical significance for its associations with the transformation that had taken place by the 1860s and 1870s of a number of makeshift gold settlements into established towns with more permanent and architecturally sophisticated structures. The court house also has associations with the history of law and order in Victoria and the complex history of government administration reacting to the demands of the shifting goldfields population. Stawell Court House is of historical and architectural significance for its associations with George Watson, a prolific Public Works Department architect. The Stawell Court House is an important example of Watson's work as it represents a transition from the simple designs evident in some of his works such as the Mansfield Court House to the confident, exuberant designs he executed for Bendigo Post Office and Law Courts.

Overall, Stawell Court House, Patrick Street, Stawell is of STATE significance.

## **Description**

The Stawell Court House, Patrick Street, Stawell, takes up a substantial proportion of its site. At the front are early rendered masonry gate piers with cast iron gates and flanking cast iron palisade fencing having Grampians stone plinths.

The symmetrical, dressed Grampians stone, Victorian Free Classical styled Court House is characterised by a central two storey court house having a hipped roof form, and flanking single storey wings crowned with balustraded parapets and parapet piers adorned with urns. The elaborate nature of the design is identified in the modelling of the exterior stone work: in the smoothly rusticated piers at the building corners, stringcoursing, and architraves.

The central section of the building features an early arcade on the ground floor that is reflected above in the three bays of round-arched timber framed double hung windows. The arcade and arched windows are accentuated by the early projecting Grampians stone keystones that punctuate the arches. Similar arched window openings are an early feature of the flanking single storey windows, which have early timber framed tripartite windows and fanlights above.

The hipped roof form of the central court room is clad in early slate. Symmetrically located and elaborate chimneys adorn the roofline. Broad overhangs with early decorative brackets are features of the eaves. Crowning the building are highly elaborate cast iron finials and ridge decoration. An early small round-arched gablet adorned with a cast iron finial is also centrally located on the front face of the roof.

Another early feature of the design is the main entrance double door opening. It has early six panelled timber doors. The entrance arcade is met by a series of early Malmsbury bluestone steps. The original cast iron gates that once adorned the arched openings have been removed.

Internally, the spatial layout, fittings and furniture appear to be the original design fittings and furniture.

The Stawell Court House is a substantially intact example of the work of the Public Works Department architect, George W. Watson. It is also a transitional example between his more modest works including the Mansfield Court House, and his more opulent designs such as the Bendigo Post Office and Law Courts.

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| Heritage Study / Consultant | Northern Grampians - Shire of Northern Grampians - Stage 2 Heritage Study, Wendy Jacobs, Vicki Johnson, David Rowe, Phil Taylor, 2004 |
| Construction Date Range     |   |
| Architect / Designer        |   |
| Municipality                | NORTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE  |
| Other names                 |   |
| Hermes number               | 112549  |
| Property number             |   |

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*