#### **History and Records of the Source Sheet No. 51**

**Building Surveying Branch**

Although a separate Building Surveyor’s Department was not established until 1971, the regulation of building activity within the City extends back to the beginnings of the Council.

**Administrative History**

Before 1882 the inspection of all new buildings was performed by the City Surveyor under By Law No. 26 of 1863 (relating to the construction of party walls, etc). Following the passage of the Building Act 1881, a Building Surveyor was appointed to oversee the regulation of building works.

From 1881 to 1923 Council was required to approve plans of building work in the City but did not have to keep a copy of them. After 1924 it had to approve and retain copies.

In 1947 a separate Building Surveying Branch was created within the City Engineer and Surveyor’s Department.

In 1971 Council resolved that in view of the increasing volume of building work, a new Building Surveying Branch be separated from the City Engineer’s Department and a new Building Surveyor's Department. This was subsequently (1982) renamed the Department of Building Surveying which lasted until 1992 when its functions were absorbed into a new Department of Planning and Development.

**Function and Records**

The function of the Building Surveying Branch was to ensure that all proposed new buildings, as well as additions and alterations to existing buildings within the City, complied with the provisions of the Building Act.

Records include the Building Surveyor’s Dockets from 1925 (S18) containing correspondence relating chiefly to property matters, Building Surveyor’s Files (S13) which were raised to include documents relating to major building works from about the early 1930s, Building Plans, including specifications (S17) which, from 1924, formed part of the Building Applications submitted to Council for approval, and Building Plans and Drawings of the Town Hall and other Council properties from about 1881.

Details of Building Application Plans are to be found in Accession 1170 which consists of four volumes of Plan Registers, 1924 - 1981. These were Registers of Plans Submitted to the Building Surveyor under Section 8 of the Building Act, 1923 for the consideration of the Council. They show the Number of the Application / Date received / Building owner / Description of work / Locality / Street Name and Number / Town Acre / Contract Price / Builder / Date approved / Building fees / Computation fees / Date fees paid / Date completed / Remarks.

Although plans of non-Council building work are not generally held prior to 1924, details of earlier works approved by the Council are contained in such records as the Returns of Notices Received under the Building Act 1881, by the Building Surveyor and Local Board of Health.

Other key series of records include:

Return of Surveyor of Notices Received for Building Work under Section 51 of the Building Act,

1881

* 1882 - 1895 Accession 4920
* 1895 - 1910 Accession 2167
* 1910 - 1925 Accession 1173

Provides details of Plan Number. / Date / Applicant (either owner, architect or builder) / Locality (street)

/ Owner / Town Acre / Description of Work / Cost / Date of Council approval.

Return of Plans submitted to Council and Local Board of Health under Sections 27, 28 and 53 of the Building Act, 1881

* 1882 - 1896 Accession 4919
* 1896 - 1903 Accession 2168
* 1903 - 1925 Accession 1169

Provides details of Plan Number / Owner / Description of Work / Town Acre / Street Address / Applicant / Date approved / Fees payable / Date of receipt of Building Notice / Date of settlement.

In addition to these records, there is an Index to Pre-1923 Building Act Buildings, Accession 2581. This is a list of plans held of 50 major City buildings erected prior to 1924. The list has been annotated to show street addresses, and some subsequent plan numbers relating to the same building. The plans themselves have been incorporated in the Building Application Plan series (S17).

**Further sources**

Mayor’s Reports and Annual Reports, and the annual Council Digests of Proceedings

Robert Thornton, ‘The Registration of Building Activities within the City of Adelaide: An Administrative

History’, BIAS Magazine, Sept 1994, pp. 12-16.

City Archives Source Sheet No. 22 *Building Plans.*

City Archives Source Sheet No. 49 *Access to Building Plans*.

**Further Information**

**City Archives:** Topham Mall, off Currie and Waymouth Streets, Adelaide 5000

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