

FORMER INSTITUTE BUILDING

Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue

North Terrace is renowned as the home of several of the state's main cultural institutions, which stand cheek-by-jowl amidst native landscaping. Perhaps the least known is the building which once accommodated several of these institutions before more substantial headquarters were constructed. This building, at the corner of Kintore Avenue and North Terrace, was also South Australia's first Institute. Indeed, the South Australian Institute grew out of the South Australian Library and Scientific Association which was established in London soon after the British government passed the act of 1834 for establishing the Province of South Australia.

The association's task was '... the cultivation and diffusion of useful knowledge throughout the Colony'. It chose 117 volumes and then had them shipped out to Adelaide. The Mechanics Institute was formed when its tiny library arrived in Adelaide on the *Tam O'Shanter* in 1836. It held its meetings in a small wooden building on the Park Lands near the present railway station.

In 1844 The South Australian Subscription Library was formed, and in 1848 the two societies combined to become known as The South Australian Subscription Library, and Mechanics Institute. Amalgamation was necessary as the two societies were struggling with their restrictive rules, regulations and lack of books.

The combined societies met in Peacock's Buildings, then Exchange Chamber, in King William Street, but wallowed in confusion and muddle until a bill was passed for establishing the South Australian Institute. With government intervention and control, the Institute's development forged ahead with increased subscribers, improved conditions and, in 1859, partnership with the Philosophical Society and the Society of Arts. Act 16 of 1855-56 stated that the South Australian Institute was established under the control of a board of governors. It was to include a public library and museum, and to conduct lectures on a variety of subjects, and to include, by affiliation, a union of all the colony's cultural societies. The existing book collection became the nucleus of the circulating library.

The expanding Institute needed suitable premises. Edward Angus Hamilton the colonial architect was instructed to prepare a suitable design, for a site close to the railway station. In parliament in 1859 Mr Milne protested at the proclaimed site being in a hollow where the traffic was great, and proposed instead the site east of the Government Domain and fronting North Terrace, although it might encroach upon the citizens' promenade. The motion was accepted and the contractor William Lines who already had the tender to put in foundations was asked to proceed at once. English & Brown built the superstructure of the building for £4839 during 1859.

The official opening by Sir Charles Cooper, took place on 29 January 1861, although the building was already in use by the governors from as early as August 1860.

The new building was only the first stage: a north wall was left unplastered, but the second stage was not built (on the north) until 1906.

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The design was described in the *Observer*, 28 July 1860 as a combination of the Venetian and Grecian orders of architecture, with a portico supported by Doric columns, arches over the lower windows supported by Doric, and those over the upper windows by Ionic fluted pilasters:

Its cornice is rich, handsome and bold without being heavy. Indeed, the building in this respect is decidedly in advance of any other building, public or private, in the colony. There is harmony of proportion and a classical stamp about the whole structure which entitles it to be regarded as an architectural gem.

There was a 70 foot long room on the first floor, with special skylights of benefit to a museum or a gallery. Over the skylight were fitted blinds which could be moved by means of pulleys.



(CD Ref 2835/95)

This building became the focal point of the cultural life of Adelaide as it housed the art gallery, public library, museum and School of Art and Design. It was the only institution in Adelaide which could offer anything that could be considered of technical or of further education level beyond primary level, for apart from the private colleges offering secondary education, the

colony's education system began and ended with primary school.

In 1874 a commission was set up to enquire into the Institute and Museum and concluded that it had outgrown the accommodation. Further, the library was inadequate as there was a deficiency in modern scientific works: the Institute had not done as much as might have been expected from one supported by the government.

Consequently the library was divided from the museum and appropriate new buildings were constructed: the Jervois Wing (now the Mortlock Library of South Australian), North Wing and East Wing alongside the South Australian Institute. In 1884 the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery came into existence in place of the South Australian Institute. This group of adjoining buildings dramatically illustrate the development of South Australian culture and the physical expansion along North Terrace. The School of Design was still conducted by the Institute until 1909 when its administration passed to the Education Department.

Plans went ahead in 1906 for extensive additions and modifications to the existing South Australian Institute building for the different societies using the premises. C.E. Owen Smyth the superintendent of Public Works drew up plans for the additions in the style of E.A. Hamilton's south section.

The staircase from the original main entrance was dismantled and a new one was built into the new north section, transferring the main entrance to the new section in Kintore Avenue. Extra

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accommodation provided space for the Royal Society, Royal Geographical Society and the South Australian Society of Arts. The Royal Geographical Society needed extra space because of its acquisition in 1905 of the York Gate Library from England.

In designing the ceilings for the first floor of this new section, Owen Smyth made provision for natural light to pass through these ceilings as Hamilton had done in the original part.

Some modernisation has taken place internally, the most noticeable being the 1965 remodelling of the Royal Geographical Society rooms into a lecture theatre. Otherwise, the building retains an evocative nineteenth century atmosphere, complete with wall-to-ceiling shelves of books belonging to the old Adelaide Circulating Library which closed in 1975. The building is still controlled by the State Library but its main tenants are the History Trust of South Australia, the Royal South Australian Society of Arts, the Community Information Support Service of South Australia, and the Women's Information Switchboard.

Bridge, C. 'South Australia's early public libraries, 1834-56' in *South Australiana*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 1982, p. 80; Burgess, H.T., *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, 1909, Vol. 1. pp. 408-9, 411; DHC, Plan Room, HD 312-32; *Historical Society of South Australia Newsletter*, No. 51, November 1983, p. 20; MLSA, Historical photographs; *Observer*, 28 July 1860; PRO, GRG 19 (Historical note), GRG 38/7/294/29.9.1858, 38/7/469/5.5.1859, 38/9/1; *Public Buildings Department, SA Museum redevelopment heritage study*, 1980, pp. 35, 36; SAPD, 16 September 1858, col. 145, 21 September 1858, col. 178, 31 August 1861, col. 736; SAPP, No. 23, 1874.

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **Heritage of the City of Adelaide: An Illustrated Guide**, (1996). The photographs contained in this Information Sheet are a selection of those held by Heritage Services, in digital format.

The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.

Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	STATE LIBRARY (part of) former INSTITUTE)	Building No 126501
Address	North East corner of North Terrace and Kintore Avenue	

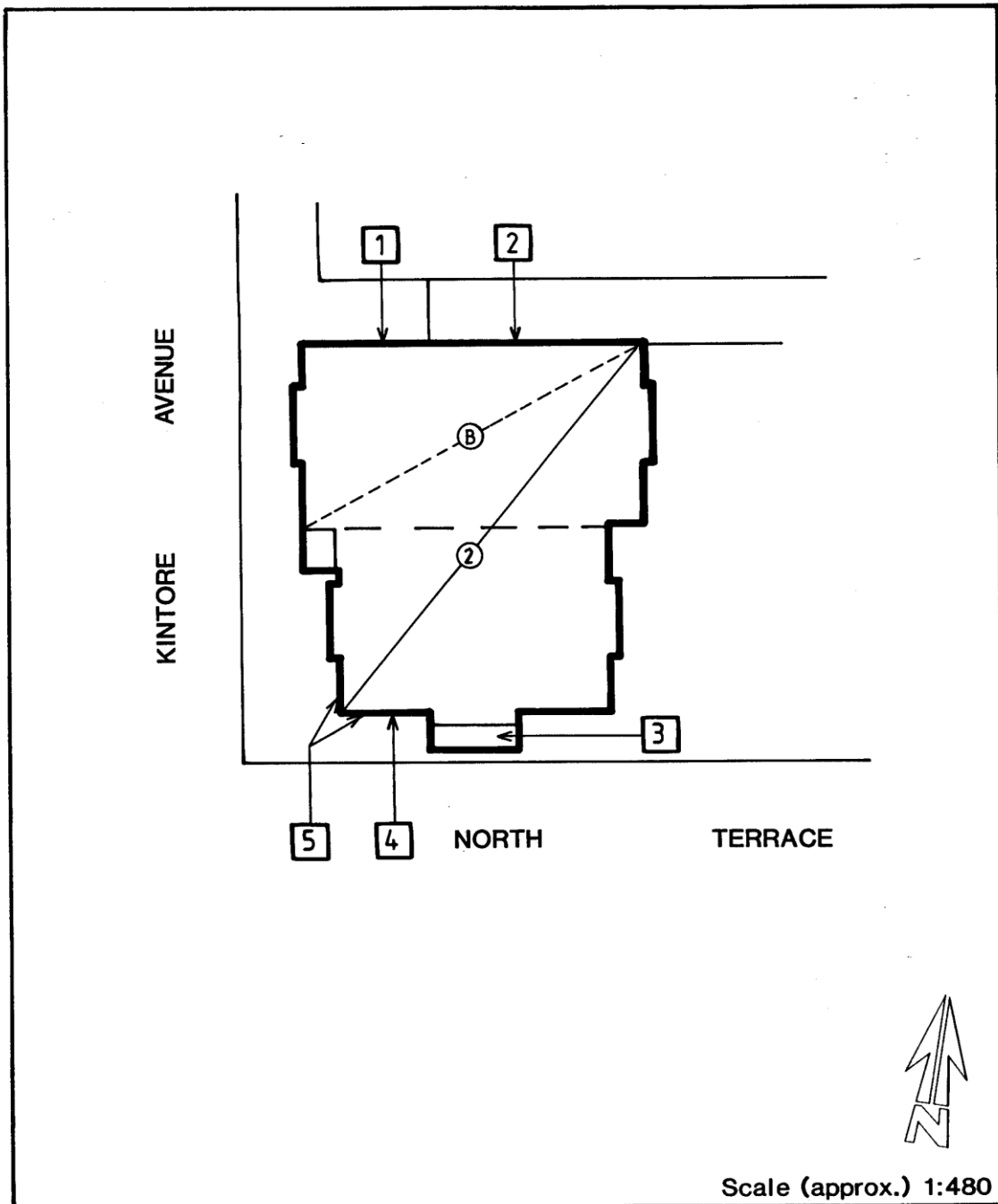


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Item STATE LIBRARY (part of) former INSTITUTE)

Building No

Address North East corner of North Terrace and Kintore Avenue

126501

NOTES:

1. Red brick (English Bond).
2. Marble clad (addition contemporary with erection of State Library).
3. Portico with Doric columns and balustraded balcony.
4. Rendered facade with raised quoins, pilaster/pediment enrichment, rendered plinth and rusticated quoins.
5. Arched windows.