

Heritage Citation



Tram Postal Bags' Hitching Post

Key details

Addresses	Outside 261 Queen Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Hitching post
Period	Federation 1890-1914
Geolocation	-27.467711 153.027924
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2009 Date of Citation — June 2006
Construction	Structure: Cast iron

This cast iron Tram Postal Bags' Hitching Post is a remnant of Brisbane's system of mail delivery by electric tram that operated from 1894 to 1929. Under this system, tram passengers would deposit their mail in canvas bags that hung on the front of the tram, which were unhooked and attached to this hitching post upon arrival at the General Post Office. In the 1920s, this system was gradually phased out and motor vehicles were introduced as the new method of mail delivery. The last tram delivery service occurred on December 16 1929.

History

In 1882, the Tramways Act established the Metropolitan Tramway and Investment Company to introduce horse-drawn trams to Brisbane's streets. Thereafter a tram network spread throughout the suburbs north and south of the Brisbane River and electric trams were introduced after 1890.

The frequency of the trams travelling throughout these suburbs made the tram network a more attractive option for the mail delivery than the existing single horse-drawn wagons or carts. As a result, on 1 June 1894, Queensland became the first Australian colony to introduce a tram mail delivery system, which was commenced in Brisbane. The Tram Postal Bags' Hitching Post currently located outside the General Post Office (GPO) was built at this time as part of the new mail delivery system.

The purpose of the hitching posts was to act as the collection points for the canvas mail (posting) bags that the tram drivers dropped off when they stopped outside the GPO. It was a simple system:

Letter receivers or posting bags were hung on the left hand front of the tram near the motorman. Passengers could conveniently deposit their letters as they embarked or disembarked from the trams. The boxes were made of a galvanised plate at the top, painted red, with good quality stiff canvas underneath to hold the letters. The bag was unhooked when the tram stopped in front of the GPO and a new bag attached.

As well as handling the mail deposited by the travelling public, the trams also carried full mailbags for delivery to suburban post offices at places such as Red Hill, Paddington, Fortitude Valley and the Brisbane Markets in George Street. The tram mail delivery system that utilised the hitching post was formalised in 1899 when the Brisbane Tramways Company won a tender from the Post and Telegraph Department to carry mail. By the 1920s, the Post Master General Department had acquired a fleet of motor vehicles to deliver the mail and the tram mail delivery service was phased out. The last tram mail delivery occurred on 16 December 1929.

This hitching post was set back from the kerb, to its present location, in 1971 as part of a beautification program for the forecourt of the GPO. In 1990, the Tram Postal Bags' Hitching Post was identified, by a member of the Brisbane public, as a heritage item during the Heritage Photographic Competition that was organised by the Brisbane City Council. In 1992, it was identified as a significant item of Central Business District street furniture in a project conducted by the Queensland University of Technology.

Description

This Telegram Bag Hitching Post is a decorated, one-metre high, cast iron post set into the footpath outside the Brisbane GPO. It was cast as a small Greek fluted column with a taper from the base to the top. The base of the hitching post resembles two torus mouldings sitting on top of one another. The fluted column rises to a second torus moulding where it is then replaced by a smooth finish to a height of nearly 10 centimetres. Protruding from the column are two matching iron hooks from which hang two metal rings. The top of the column comprises a pointed dome that overhangs the circumference of the column. The dome is decorated with troughs, which meet in the centre at the top to form a point.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a remnant of the system of mail delivery by tram that operated from 1894 to 1929, before being replaced by motor vehicles.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places as a Tram Postal Bags' Hitching Post located near its original position in front of the Brisbane GPO.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance as a unique piece of CBD street furniture.

References

1. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.
2. Brisbane City Council, Heritage Photographic Competition, 1990
3. Brisbane City Council, Sewerage Map, 1913
4. Brisbane City Council's Central Library, local history sheets.
5. Cole, John R. *Shaping a City: Greater Brisbane 1925-1985*. Brisbane: William Brooks Queensland. 1984
6. John Oxley Library, Brisbane Suburbs – Estate Maps
7. Rea, Malcolm M., *Brisbane General Post Office pamphlet*, Brisbane, Australia Post, 199?

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

Citation prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2020)



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