HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: POST OFFICE (FORMER)

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Brown Street BRANXHOLME

STUDY NUMBER: 198   **HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

OTHER NAME/S   OLD POST OFFICE
OF PLACE:

PRECINCT: Branxholme

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 8, 9, 10   **SECTION:** 41   **PARISH:**   PARISH OF BRANXHOLME

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 473J1; VicRoads 233 R3; located on the north-east corner of Brown Street, and Railway Parade.

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: Local

Post Office (former), Brown Street, Branxholme. Verandah and window detail

Image Date: 26/03/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: all the building excluding the interiors of the residence and all of the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Single storey timber shop and dwelling. The house is symmetrical about the front door. The walls are weatherboard, the hipped roof is corrugated iron. A gable projects over the 'shop' located on the west side of the building. A verandah, partly enclosed, is in front of the shop which was the purpose built post office. The post boxes have been relocated to the nearby Junction Hotel.

HISTORY:

The official post office in Branxholme has shifted many times and there has been a long succession of postmasters and postmistresses, who also fulfilled other official duties. Rainfall records, for example, were first kept in January 1917. Jabez Best, the first storekeeper, was also the first postmaster. He was appointed on 1st June 1858, and he was paid an allowance based on the amount of postal business transacted. This amounted to 20 pounds for the first year's salary. But this post office was not official and it moved to the Travellers' Rest hotel.

Jabez Best had married Nanny Penrose in 1856 (VPI, Reg. No. 240). In 1863, he was appointed agent for the London and Lancashire Fire and Life Insurance Companies. In 1864, he was electoral registrar and registrar of births and deaths, holding the positions for many years, to be followed by his daughter, Sarah Louisa, until her death aged 52 in 1924. On 11th July 1862, Thomas Matthew Penrose, a relative of Jabez Best, became postmaster. His salary was forty pounds per annum. He was appointed electoral registrar in July 1863.

John J. Smith was postmaster briefly when the post office was again at the general store in Cox Street. In 1871, Thomas Kemp was postmaster. Thomas Kemp married Elizabeth Potter and they had three daughters, Ann Millicent (1859), Mary Elizabeth (1860) and Selina Martha (1866) (VPI, Reg. Nos. 14467; 22783; 13263). The first two were born at Linlithgow and the third was born at Branxholme. The Kemp family lived in Creek Street, just south of the Branxholme Hotel. According to the Spectator Almanac, about this time the number of inhabitants in Branxholme was 120, there was a daily mail service, and a post office savings bank was opened at the office in 1873. In 1875, the post office also became a telegraph office, and Mr. Kemp's daughter was the telegraph operator. Elizabeth Kemp became postmaster in 1875, followed by Millicent A. Kemp in 1876 and Maria E. Kemp in 1879 until 1884.

A public telegraph office had been opened at the railway station in December 1882, and this finally closed on 1st January 1917. The post office was transferred to the station in 1884. Postal authorities say that there was a postmistress at the Railway Station office during 1884, and a postmaster in 1885, but their names are not known. In March 1888, the post office moved from the station to a new building in Brown Street, built by Mr. M. M. Silberberg next to his new store. Miss Stubbly, of the relieving staff, opened this office, followed by Miss Susan Thomson, and later Miss Coverdale. Ellis Foster was her assistant and later Frank Lott assisted.

From 1893 to 1899, the Post Office was again located at the station. Then Frank Lott became postmaster, in the building on the corner of Cox and Best Streets, opposite the State School. For the next five years, 1901 to 1906, Miss Claire Allen was postmistress. The post office was in this building, built by William Wilson, for about thirty years. It has since been demolished.

Miss Violet Gough was the assistant to Miss Allen when the telephone was connected to Branxholme in 1905, and she became postmistress in 1906 hold the position until 1917. Miss M. Gough succeeded her until Mr. Andrew Bell was appointed in 1918. A new post office and residence were built near the station in Brown Street, in 1930. The builder was Alex. Black, of Macarthur. Mr. Bell continued there as postmaster until 1939. Stephen Charles Murtagh became Postmaster in February 1940. He was postmaster from nearly 10 years, Mr. R. R. Crellin becoming postmaster in December 1949. William Leslie Hogan became postmaster in November 1952. He was followed in June, 1967 by Patrick Nash.

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The manual telephone exchange was changed to automatic in February 1971. In 1973, the post office is still in the building in Brown Street and P. Nash was the Postmaster. The post office was closed and the service is now provided from the junction hotel from about 2000.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 3: Developing local, regional and national economies
3.7 Establishing communications
3.7.1 Establishing postal services
3.7.2 Developing electrical means of communication

CONDITION:

The building is in fair condition

INTEGRITY:

low degree of integrity

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?
The surviving former post office and its attached residence in Brown Street, Branxholme is only one of the many places in the township that have served this function. A conventional single-storey weatherboard structure, it was built by Alex Black of Macarthur in 1930. The post boxes were located under the small verandah. The first postmaster was Jabez Best. Other members of his family followed him and this became a pattern with the post office throughout its history. The Kemp and Gough families were typical. Other important postmasters and postmistresses were: Claire Allen, Frank Lott, Andrew Bell, Stephen Murtagh, William Hogan, and Patrick Nash. The post office also provided a savings bank opened in 1873, a telegraph service, initiated when it was located at the railway station in early 1880s, and from 1904 a telephone exchange. The manual exchange located in the 1930s post office was not automated until 1971. The post office was closed recently and the service is now provided from the nearby Junction hotel. The buildings remain in good condition but their integrity has been compromised by the relocation of the post boxes.

How is it significant?
The former Branxholme post office is of historical significance to the township of Branxholme and to the southern Grampians Shire.

Why is it significant?
The former Branxholme post office is of historical significance as the best surviving reminder of the critically important communications service provided by the post office and its many staff to the community for nearly 150 years.

COMPARISON:

393 Boonar, Hamilton Highway, Tarrington
212 Junction Hotel, Cnr. Brown & McNicoll Street, Branxholme
024 Coleraine Post Office, 80 Whyte Street, Coleraine
414 Dunkeld Post Office, Willls Street, Dunkeld
361 Glenthompson Post Office and Residence, Memorial Drive, Glenthompson
245 Penshurst Post Office & Residence, 31 Martin Street, Penshurst

ASSESSED BY: tfh & aen   **ASSESSMENT DATE:**   11-Dec-03

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS: