

# State Heritage Areas of South Australia



## Jens Hotel

40 Commercial Street East (corner Watson Terrace), Mt Gambier  
SHR 10237 – confirmed as a State Heritage Place 28 May 1981

Jens Hotel, originally named the Town Hall Hotel, was opened for business on 30 January 1884 with a band, gas lighting throughout and Chinese lanterns festooning the balcony. The building was designed by architect Thomas Hall, for German immigrant Johannes Matthies Jens, and was constructed on the site of Mount Gambier's first (1847) hotel.

Over the years a number of major alterations were made to the hotel, making it one of the leading country hotels in South Australia. Jens Hotel has hosted royalty, Supreme Court Judges and many distinguished visitors to the district.



Jens Hotel, April 2005

*"...the Town Hall Hotel ... is an elegantly designed two storey structure, of red dolomite with white limestone dressings. The lower floor is divided into three parts by a corridor ... leading from an ornamental door on the Watson Terrace front, and another running at right angles with it from an entrance in Commercial Street. The bar ... occupies the junction corner. It is well finished, and furnished with cedar fittings. The commercial room ... is furnished with several small marble tables on ornamental stands, the other furniture being of cedar. The dining room is on the right-hand side of the Watson Terrace corridor. ... it is fitted to accommodate about 50. The other rooms on this floor are the bar parlour, two private parlours, a travellers' room, a pantry and kitchen. ... The entrance to the upper floor is at the head of an elegant staircase rising from the end of the Watson Terrace corridor. In front of the staircase is a nicely moulded archway, which has a pleasing effect. The rooms on the upper floor are 12ft 6in high, and there are 19 of them. The principal one is the drawing room ... which occupies the corner, immediately above the bar. It is beautifully finished. The woodwork is painted maple and the mantle-piece is of white marble. A splendid walnut suite has been placed in it, ... There are 12 bedrooms on this floor, ... There are two bathrooms, ... as well as a linen room, a pantry, and a closet. It should be added that all the mantle-pieces in the hotel excepting that in the dining room are of marble – white or variegated. ... An ornamental covered balcony ten feet wide runs around the two fronts. It is supported on handsome cast-iron pillars, placed in couples, and its appearance is improved by an ornamental iron frieze-work. ... the cellar ... is divided into six compartments. One of these, ... has been well finished and fitted as a beer saloon, ... Water is laid on to both storeys and the cellar. The gas (for lighting) is made on the premises from gasoline, ..."*



Jens Hotel, Mount Gambier 1904  
Photo B 21811: State Library of SA

**Border Watch, 2 February 1884**

In 1904 the original building was enlarged, with the Commercial Street frontage gaining 45 feet. Two new offices were erected at street level, with nine bedrooms and lounges added upstairs.

#### "ADDITIONS TO TOWN HALL HOTEL

*Mr. J.M. Jens has resolved on an extensive addition to the Town Hall Hotel, and has accepted tenders for it. ... It will be two-storeyed, and the front will be similar in height and style to that of the present building. On the lower floor there will be three large rooms, ... one ... which will be let as offices. ... On the upper floor there will be a large parlour for boarders and gentlemen, ... "*

**Border Watch, 27 January 1904**

In 1927 old buildings in Watson Terrace were demolished and another two-storeyed edifice erected, consisting of a magnificent dining room, foyer and kitchen, and 22 bedrooms.

#### "TOWN HALL ADDITIONS – EXTENSIVE IMPROVEMENTS

*Among the building additions in progress in the town at present time are important and extensive additions to Jens' Town Hall Hotel. When completed they will be a very fine acquisition to the architectural beauty of Mount Gambier.*

*For 44 years the Town Hall Hotel has been in the hands of the Jens family, ... The house has the unique record of having had only one name over its door during the long period since 1883, and this probably constitutes a record for Australia.*

*On the site previously occupied by a wood and iron structure used as servants' quarters and sample rooms, a large two-storeyed building, designed by Melbourne architects, Messrs. Joy & McIntyre, is being erected ... On the lower floor there will be a lounge entrance, dining room to seat 120 persons, lounge and writing room. The top storey will consist of 22 additional bedrooms, including a suite of rooms and bathrooms fitted with showers and plunge baths, which will be supplied with hot and cold water, 11 bedrooms, as well as a lavatory and bathrooms. A corridor connecting with the present hotel will extend the whole length of the new building. Water and gas will be laid on, and hot and cold water will be available in the bathrooms."*



*Jens Hotel, Mount Gambier 1935  
Photo B 20147: State Library of SA*

**Border Watch, 21 June 1927**



*Jens Town Hall Hotel  
Mount Gambier 1924  
Photo B 43533: State Library of SA*



*Jens Town Hotel interior, 1981*



*Jens Hotel, 1981*



**Government of South Australia**  
Department for Environment  
and Heritage