

Customs House, Port Adelaide, South Australia

Customs house buildings at Port Adelaide

The first of at least four Customs Houses built at Port Adelaide, South Australia, was a small weatherboard structure on wooden blocks in use by 1838.

The second, built on the government reserve at New Port, was of simple stone design, square and double-storeyed, and was completed in 1840. This building also contained the Harbour Master's residence, which was used to accommodate the Telegraph Station from 1856 until its demolition in the 1860s.

An Italian-style combined Police Station, Customs House and Court House, was completed on the corner of St Vincent Street and Commercial Road in 1861. The Port Adelaide Institute used part of this building pending completion of its own Italian-style premises on the corner of Commercial Road and Nile Street in 1876. Plans for a new office block to complement the design of the Institute building and accommodate the Marine Department, Surveyors and Harbour Master on the New Port site were drawn up. This building was built on the site of the second Customs House. The Customs Department occupied the ground floor in 1880 and the building was known as Customs House.

Customs House, Port Adelaide, was passed to the Commonwealth on Federation in 1901 by which time Customs occupied the whole building. The Customs Service occupied the Commercial Road frontage between North Parade and Nile Street from 1958 following the purchase of the Institute building. Several other State buildings including the Waterworks building and Marine centre at the rear of Customs House were also occupied by Customs. The area was vacated by the Australian Customs Service in 1987 when it moved to a new building at 220 Commercial Road.

Record holdings relating to Customs House, Port Adelaide

The fourth Customs House (1879–1987) is documented in records of the Australian Customs Service and Australian Construction Service held by the National Archives Adelaide Office. Examples of these records are listed overleaf.

Use [RecordSearch](#), to identify additional records relating to Customs House, Port Adelaide.

Architectural drawings

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Original drawings, plans and prints of National Estate properties</u>	1847–1980	D1051
<u>Port Adelaide Customs House</u>	1877–1952	D1051, FOLDER 120
<u>Port Adelaide Institute building</u>	1873–98	D1051, FOLDER 121
<u>Port Adelaide Marine Board and Harbour Master's residence</u>	1877–1932	D1051, NN

Correspondence files

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Customs correspondence files – Port Adelaide</u>	1871–1962	D596
<u>Legal definition in new Customs houses</u>	1901	D596, 1901/1319
<u>Customs House sale – conditions of</u>	1901	D596, 1901/1941
<u>Reconstruction of Customs House</u>	1927–29	D596, 1927/2478
<u>Customs House Port Adelaide – alterations to accommodation</u>	1935–38	D596, 1937/700
<u>Accommodation – Customs House – purchase of Institute building</u>	1953–58	D596, 1958/1767
<u>Customs correspondence files – 'S' series</u>	1962–	D737
<u>Flooding of cellar in Customs House</u>	1956–60	D737, S1965/2609
<u>Commonwealth Lands correspondence files</u>	1932–49	A877
<u>Port Adelaide Customs House</u>	1946–47	A877, CL25036
<u>Office copies of specifications for works, repairs, and maintenance</u>	1941–62	AP567/1
<u>Information folders relating to National Estate buildings</u>	1976–91	D5159

Records held by other institutions

State Records of South Australia holds many nineteenth century records relating to Customs Houses, including those buildings that ceased to perform a Customs function before Federation. These include correspondence records of the Colonial Secretary's Department and drawings of the Colonial Architect.

The South Australiana photographic collection, within the State Library of South Australia, is also a valuable source.

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Further information about the National Archives' holdings relating to Australian customs houses is available in the following fact sheets:

- *Fact Sheet 23 - Customs House, Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 92 - Customs houses in South Australia*
- *Fact sheet 226 - Customs House, Brisbane*

The first paragraph of this fact sheet includes information from Venning, George, 'History of Customs Houses at Port Adelaide', *Custom's Agents Institute Journal*, November 1970, pp. 12–13.