

2.6. VIEWS TO AND FROM THE SITE

The Capitol Theatre is located in the middle of the block bound by Campbell, Pitt, Hay and George Streets. As the building is directly bordered by Capitol Square and the Palace Hotel to the west, and the Manning Building to the east, views to and from the site are primarily limited to Hay and Campbell Streets.

2.6.1. Views to the site

The fly tower in the south portion of the Capitol Theatre is a prominent structure within Hay Street, due to its six storey height and small setback. Views from the west of the site to the west elevation of the fly tower span as far as Paddy's Market (Views 1, 2 and 3). Views from the east of the site to the east elevation of the fly tower are visible from the corner of Hay and Pitts Streets, where the east elevation is prominent in the Hay Street streetscape (View 4).

The south elevation of the fly tower is visible from Parker Street and aligns with the centre of the pediment on this elevation. Views looking north from Parker Street to the west elevation of the Capitol Theatre were once prominent. Following the development of Capitol Square on this former portion of the road, between the Capitol Theatre and the Palace Hotel, these views are now limited. Views of the east elevation, above ground level, are visible from within Capitol Square (View 6).

Views of the Campbell Street elevation of the Capitol Theatre exist between the intersection with Pitt Street to the east (View 7) and George Street (View 8) to the west. From both vantage points oblique views of the Campbell Street elevation can be appreciated. These views provide the best vantage point for understanding the physical and visual connection between the Manning Building and the Capitol Theatre.

The Capitol Theatre contributes to the streetscapes of Hay and Campbell Streets which comprise of two and three storey Victorian and Federation period buildings including the Corporation Building, Palace Hotel Complex, the Haymarket Library, the Manning Building and the Victorian terraces (northern side of Campbell Street).



Figure 144 – Views to the Capitol Theatre map

Source: SIX Maps, 2019 with Urbis overlay



Figure 145 – View 1 – View east from Capitol Square forecourt



Figure 146 – View 2 – View south-east along Hay Street from intersection with George Street.

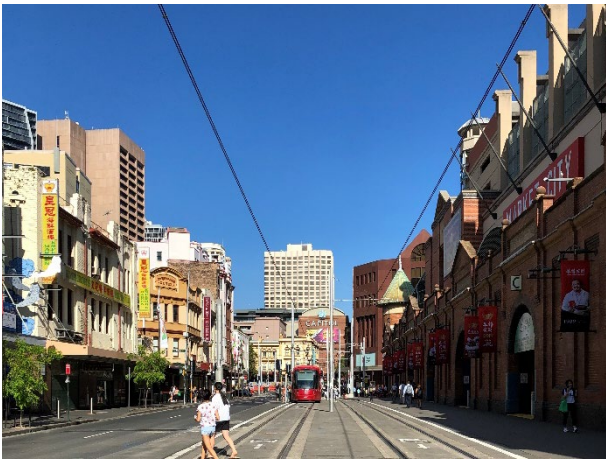


Figure 147 – View 3 – View south-east along Hay Street from Paddy's Market



Figure 148 – View 4 – View north-west from intersection of Hay and Pitt Streets.



Figure 149 – View 5 – View north from Parker Street



Figure 150 – View 6 – View from within Capitol Square of the west elevation of the Capitol Theatre



Figure 151 – View 7 – View north-west from intersection of Campbell and Pitt Streets.



Figure 152 – View 8 – View south-east from intersection of Pitt and Campbell streets

2.6.2. Views from the site

The Capitol Theatre has few windows. Views from the building are limited and available primarily from the original foyer at ground floor (View 1) and new foyer at ground and first floor (View 2) along Campbell Street and the south-east corner of the building in the Rehearsal Room and Green Room, with views along Hay Street toward Belmore Park (View 3).



Figure 153 – Views from the Capitol Theatre map

Source: SIX Maps, 2019 with Urbis overlay



Figure 154 – View 1 – Views from original foyer out to Campbell Street



Figure 155 – View 2 – View from the new foyer/box office



Figure 156 – View 3 – View to the south-east along Hay Street from the Green Room



Figure 157 – View 3 – View to the south-east to Belmore Park from the Green Room.

2.7. CONDITION ASSESSMENT

A separate document *Capitol Theatre Condition Assessment* (11 March 2019) by Mott Macdonald provides an analysis of the existing condition of the Capitol Theatre. This section provides a summary of the condition of the building as assessed in this report. Generally, the building was overall in a very good to good condition at the time of inspection and it is noted that refurbishment works were undertaken between 1993 and 1995.

The following points summarise the existing condition of the Capitol Theatre:

- Roof structures (original atmospheric roof and new 1990s roof) appeared to be in good condition at the time of the inspection, without any evidence of major defects.
- Minor defects throughout the roof structure include:
 - Timber purlin damage. These defects are low risk as the timber roofing is only supporting the weight of the corrugated sheeting and services above;
 - Buckled flat truss chord members (Figure 158). It is uncertain when this failure occurred and could be caused by the cutting and rewelding of the truss members.
- No major defects were identified in the concrete tank at the sub-stage level.
- The original perimeter walls (New Belmore Markets and Hippodrome) appeared in good condition.
- The trusses, joists and ceiling of the dress circle appears to be in a good condition.
- Evidence of minor cracking was observed throughout the building's masonry walls, concrete floors, and pre-cast panels. The causes of the identified cracking include:
 - Cracking due to embedded steel sections in the ground floor slab below the stage (Figure 159);
 - Minor crushing of concrete pre-cast panel due to a steel member above; and
 - Cracking most likely due to minor building movement.
- No defects were noted in the exterior perimeter awnings.
- The facades of the building were in a very good condition at the time of inspection, with no major cracking, weathering or spalling visible.

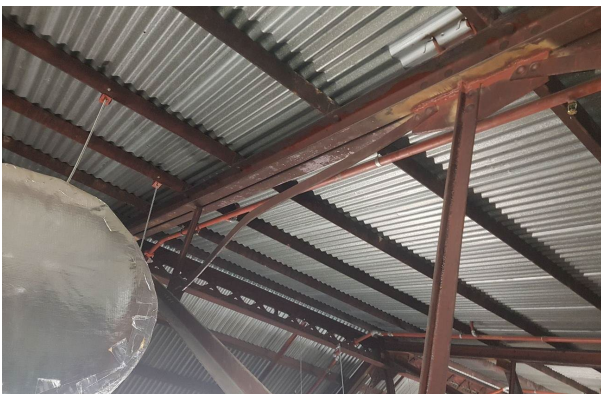


Figure 158 – Buckled truss chord in original theatre roof
Source: Mott MacDonald

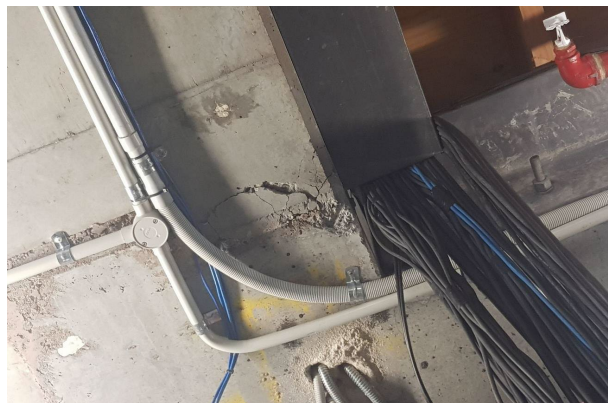


Figure 159 – Minor cracking on underside of new concrete slab
Source: Mott MacDonald

3. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

3.1. HISTORICAL SOURCES

This section of the report is based upon the thematic and chronological format devised by James Semple Kerr in *The Haymarket and the Capitol: a conservation plan for the area bounded by George, Campbell, Pitt and Hay Streets, Sydney* (1990). This report also draws heavily upon Lisa Murray's *The Capitol Theatre Restoration* (2003) and a 1998 thesis by Lynne Dent *The Capitol: its producer, director, auteurs and given circumstances: an epic of a "lucky" theatre*.

All three named reports utilise published material supplied by Ross Thorne and theatre historical societies, also primary source material held in the City of Sydney Archives, State Library and other documentary repositories. This material is identified in the bibliography at Section 10.

Copies of all plans used were made available by both Ross Thorne and Peddle Thorp and Walker from material held by the Sydney City Council. The Council also supplied photographs.

3.2. HISTORY OF THE PLACE

3.2.1. Indigenous History

There has been no research on the Aboriginal use of the vicinity. One of the few explicit historic references is provided by David Collins. In November 1796, he noted that "Bennillong" had complained to the Governor that the Aboriginals were assembling "in a considerable body near the Brickfields to lie in wait for him [Bennillong] and where, if possible, they intended to kill him".² According to Collins, this eventuality was averted by the governor's provision of an armed escort for "Bennillong" while he warned those assembled that they would be driven from the area if his life was taken.

Those assembled would have been the Guringai people who no doubt used the creek area for subsistence. However, because of its swampy character, it is unlikely that they camped there. Andrew Wilson suggests that, judging by the results of other archaeological excavations in Sydney, occupational remains are unlikely on the site.³

3.2.2. Brickfield Hill and The Haymarket, 1788-1888

The Haymarket site occupied the low swampy land at the southern foot of Brickfield Hill about a mile south of Sydney Cove. It was drained, somewhat inadequately, by a creek which rose in the Surry Hills to the south-east and crossed what is now Belmore Park to the alignment of Hay Street near the Capitol Theatre.

According to Assistant Surveyor Meehan's map of 1807, the creek passed under a small bridge on the track which connected the Sydney High (George) Street to Parramatta (Figure 160). This bridge was approximately on the present intersection of George and Hay Streets and, at the time, the sand and mud flats of Cockle Bay (Darling Harbour) extended right up to its west side. If this seems hard to credit, it must be remembered that the vicinity of the creek has been extensively filled and levelled.

² Collins, *Historical Records of Australia Series II*, p5

³ Blackmore and Wilson, *What is an Atmospheric Theatre? Capitol Historical Report*, Appendix 3

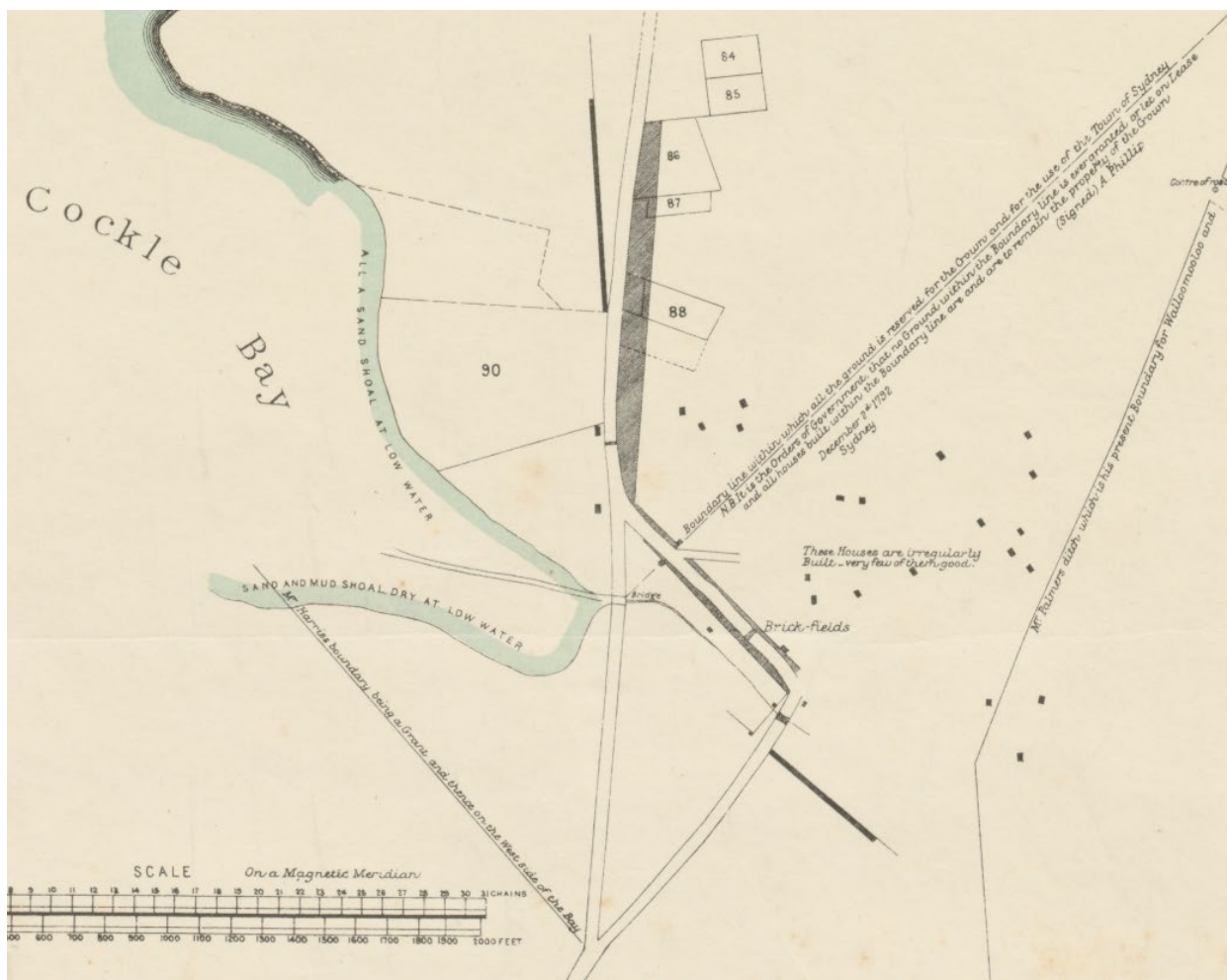


Figure 160 – Plan of the Town of Sydney in New South Wales by James Meehan Assistant Surveyor of Lands by Order of His Excellency Governor Bligh 31st October 1807. Photolithographed at the Government Printing Office Sydney, New South Wales. [1850-1899?]

Source: NLA, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229911438>

Meehan's map suggests that, before the bridge was built, the track turned south-east and followed the bank of the creek until a convenient crossing place was reached. The present frontage of buildings at corner of George and Campbell Streets, derives its splayed alignment from the 45 degree turn of the original track.

Europeans used the north bank of the creek right from the beginnings of settlement. In March 1788, Collins reported that "a gang of convicts was employed ... making bricks at a spot about a mile from the settlement, at the head of Long Cove" (Cockle Bay, later Darling Harbour). In addition, two acres of ground were marked off for "such officers as were willing to cultivate them". The agricultural result, if any, is unknown, but the industrial activity came to identify the place.⁴

The clay pits, kilns and convict huts were scattered over the area immediately north-east of the creek and on the lower slopes of what became known as Brickfield Hill. In July 1790, the unskilled convicts were employed in "forming a road from the town to the brick-kilns, for the greater ease and expedition in bringing bricks to the different buildings".⁵ By 1793, the bricks were conveyed by three brick carts, each drawn by twelve men under the direction of an overseer.⁶

In 1811, following the arrival of that orderly and entrepreneurial Scot, His Excellency Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Sydney was divided into five districts each with a watch-house and police-force:

⁴ Collins, *Historical Records of New South Wales (HRNSW)*, Series I, p17

⁵ *loc. cit.*, p103

⁶ *loc. cit.*, pp 277-8

for the protection of the inhabitants from night robberies, and for the more effectually securing the peace and tranquillity of the town, and apprehending all disorderly and ill-disposed persons committing nightly depredations ...

As a necessary preparatory step to the proposed arrangements, His Excellency deems it expedient to give regular and permanent names to all the streets and ways ...

The principal street in the town, and leading through the middle of it from Dawes' Point to the place near the Brickfields, where it is intended to erect the first toll bar, being upwards of a mile in length, and hitherto known alternately by the names of High-street, Spring-row and Serjeant-Major's-row, is now named "George-street", in honour of our revered and gracious Sovereign.⁷

The boundaries of the 5th District, served by George Street, extended:

from Park-street and the burying-ground on the north to the southern extremity of the Brickfields on the south, and extending from Hyde Park and Surry Hills Farm on the east to Cockle Bay on the west.⁸

Thus, the future site of the Haymarket became the southernmost part of the 5th District.

His Excellency was not one to miss the opportunity of raising funds for "the ornament and regularity" of the town of Sydney and lost no time in commanding and directing:

that all bricks, pottery and other articles of whatever nature which may be sent from the Brickfields to Sydney, or from Sydney to the Brickfields, shall be passed through the turn-pike-gate, and pay the same toll as if going to or coming from Parramatta, and any article which may be sent to or from the Brickfields by any circuitous or different road from the public turnpike is to be seized, the cattle drawing or carrying them impounded for trespass, and the person so endeavouring to evade the regular toll to be severely fined and punished.⁹

The turnpike gate can be seen across George Street as a later addition to Meehan's 1807 map. It was not a popular measure and probably resulted in a variety of evasions including the transacting of business outside the town whenever possible. Such activities may have contributed in some measure to Macquarie's ultimate removal of the gate to its 1820 location further south to what is now Railway Square. In any case, with the establishment of large barracks for convict carters with their bullocks, horses and carts where Eddy Avenue now joins Pitt Street, much of the traffic up Brickfield Hill involved government public works.

By June 1829, the area at the foot of Brickfield Hill was officially operating as a "New Cattle Market."¹⁰ Such use was probably little more than the legitimisation of a de facto situation. The terrain was swampy and unsuitable for other development and, as Michael Christie points out, it was the usual halting place before the steep ascent into the town. Moreover, on the northern side of the George Street Bridge lay the Peacock Inn, a watering hole for wagoners, while close by lay semi-permanent fresh water for stock. Cattle landed at the Market Wharf in Cockle Bay, formerly destined for the town market, were now driven down the alignment of Sussex Street round Brickfield Hill to "the flat area south of Campbell St".¹¹

According to James Macleahose, the ascent of Brickfield Hill in 1837 was still steep, difficult and even dangerous. The following year, in a major undertaking, over a million cubic feet of material, much of it rock, was cut by convict labour from the upper parts of the hill and removed to the lower to create a gradually inclined plane, thus making it safe "for all kinds of drays, waggons and carriages".¹²

When Samuel Mossman and Thomas Banister climbed Brickfield Hill in 1852, they described it as "a wide and airy street with rows of two and three storeyed houses".¹³ Earlier, as they approached Sydney Town along the Parramatta Road, Mossman and Banister noted:

⁷ Collins, *HRNSW, Volume VII*, pp427-8

⁸ *ibid.*, p479

⁹ Collins, *HRNSW, Volume VII*, p594

¹⁰ *Sydney Gazette*, 16 June 1829

¹¹ Michael Christie, *The Sydney Markets 1788-1988*, p51

¹² James Macleahose, *Picture of Sydney and strangers' guide in NSW for 1839*, p69

¹³ Mossman and Bannister, *Australia visited and revisited: a narrative of recent travels and old experiences in Victoria and New South Wales*, p205

Proceeding onward in this direction for about half a mile, you come to the Hay-market, passing on your way Christ Church and the Benevolent Asylum. All along the road through this suburb looks like the approach to an English market-town: the small green-grocers, with bundles of hay and straw at their doors; the dealers in odds and ends for country customers; the blacksmith's forge, with the horses waiting to be shod; and the snug roadside inns, where carriers and small settlers with dairy and farm produce put up, whom you may see sitting on side benches outside the doors, smoking their pipes and quaffing their tankards of ale; while the more noisy customers may be heard dancing inside to the sound of a fiddler. The most uproarious and extravagant frequenters of these tap-rooms, it will be readily supposed, are now the successful returned gold diggers ...

The Hay-market [itself] is a large open space at the foot of Brickfield Hill, with a substantial market-house in the middle of it, surmounted by a turret-clock.¹⁴

Woolcott & Clarke's 1854 map of the City of Sydney shows the general layout of the area (Figure 161). The "substantial market-house" mentioned by Mossman and Banister was situated on the George Street frontage of the Haymarket and the cattle market was confined to the block bounded by Campbell, Castlereagh, Hay and Pitt Streets. The "market-house" with its shingle roof was demolished by William Watkins early in 1876 to make way for a new commercial terrace on George Street.



Figure 161 – Woolcott & Clarke's Map of the City of Sydney with the environs of Balmain and Glebe, Chippendale, Redfern, Paddington etc., 1854. The location of the subject site is shown outlined in red.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, http://cdn.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/maps/1174/1174_001.pdf

The Handbook to the City of Sydney, published in 1879, furnished the following description of the locality of the eastern frontage of George Street, Haymarket:

Crossing Liverpool and Goulburn Streets we arrive at the HAYMARKET SQUARE the property of the Corporation of Sydney. The hideous structure which formerly occupied this valuable frontage has been superseded by an elegant block of buildings, on a plot of land leased from the Council by the later Mr Watkins, for a term of twenty years, at a gross rental of £30,000. At the corner of Campbell Street is a branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank, adjoining which is a branch Post, Telegraph and Money Order Office, and the corresponding corner of Hay-street, the 'Palace' Hotel, which several commodious business places intervening. At the next corner of the southern branch of the Commercial Bank, also built on leased Corporation ground. From thence to Christ Church are a

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p204-5

*number of elegant shops, including the premises of Hordern and Sons, with their palace show rooms, and the branch Savings' Bank, and the ever memorable Christ Church which has long held the name of the aristocratic Anglican place of worship, and is amongst the oldest display of architecture we have...*¹⁵

Three years later, *Gibbs Shallard & Co* noted that "Campbell and Hay Streets bound the Haymarket block [of George Street] north and south. The former is a short public way, presenting few architectural beauties, and is peopled principally by produce merchants, general dealers, and publicans, who depend greatly upon the market trade. Hay Street extends to Pyrmont, over a region reclaimed at great expense from the waters of Darling Harbour."¹⁶

3.2.3. The Hay-Market

On 8 June 1829, Governor Darling set aside a new market site at the bottom of Brickfield Hill to be used for the trading of livestock. The "Cattle Market" is shown on the undated Parish of St Lawrence map

Five years later, Governor Bourke established Sydney's second market, a hay and corn market, on a site bounded by George, Hay, Castlereagh and Campbell Streets. Soon after, a small red brick building for the storage of hay and for market offices, surmounted by a turret clock, was built on the George Street frontage of the site as shown on the maps drawn in 1836, c.1840s and 1851 (Figure 163 to Figure 165).

The Market Commission Act was passed in 1839, giving responsibility of Sydney's markets to the Market Commissioners. They in turn conveyed control of the markets in 1842 to the newly formed City of Sydney Corporation. Four years later, the Crown formally granted the land bounded by George, Hay, Castlereagh and Campbell Streets as a hay and corn market to "promote the public convenience of Our Loyal Subjects the Inhabitants of the City of Sydney in Our Colony of New South Wales". Under Council control Haymarket House underwent alterations and additions in the 1850s to expand facilities for fruit and vegetable sales. Part of the building was later conveyed to a theatre before it became a general store run by W Terry. Haymarket House (otherwise called Market House) is depicted in G Verdan's 1858 painting of the Haymarket, reproduced in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January 1929 (Figure 162).



Figure 162 - Historic painting of the Haymarket in 1858 by G Verdan. The Peacock Inn is at far left at the intersection of George and Campbell Streets. The Hay and Corn Market building is shown at centre right.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 January 1929, p20

¹⁵ *Handbook to the City of Sydney*, 1879, p9

¹⁶ *Gibbs, Shallard & Co.'s illustrated guide to Sydney and its suburbs, and to favourite places of resort*, p33

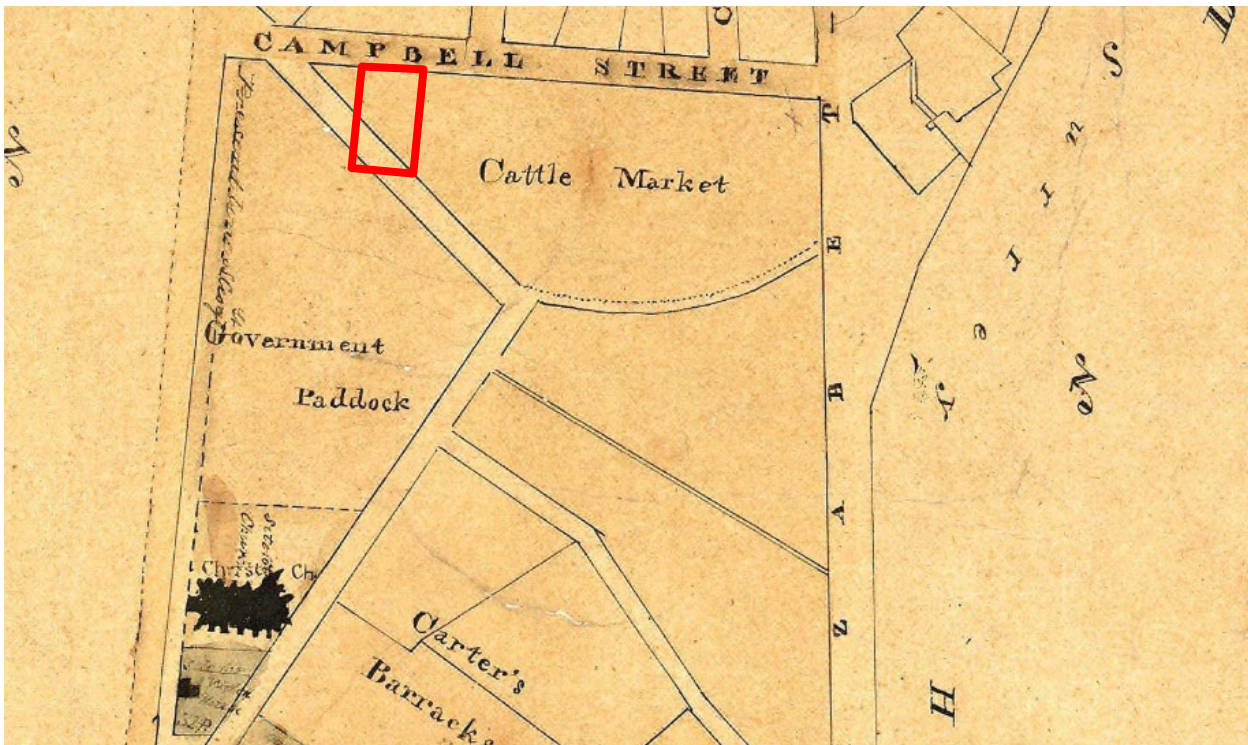


Figure 163 – Detail from Parish of Saint Lawrence County of Cumberland, undated but pre-1834 with annotations to c.1840 showing Christ's Church south of Government Paddock.

Source: NSW LRS, PMapMN05, 14074001.jp2

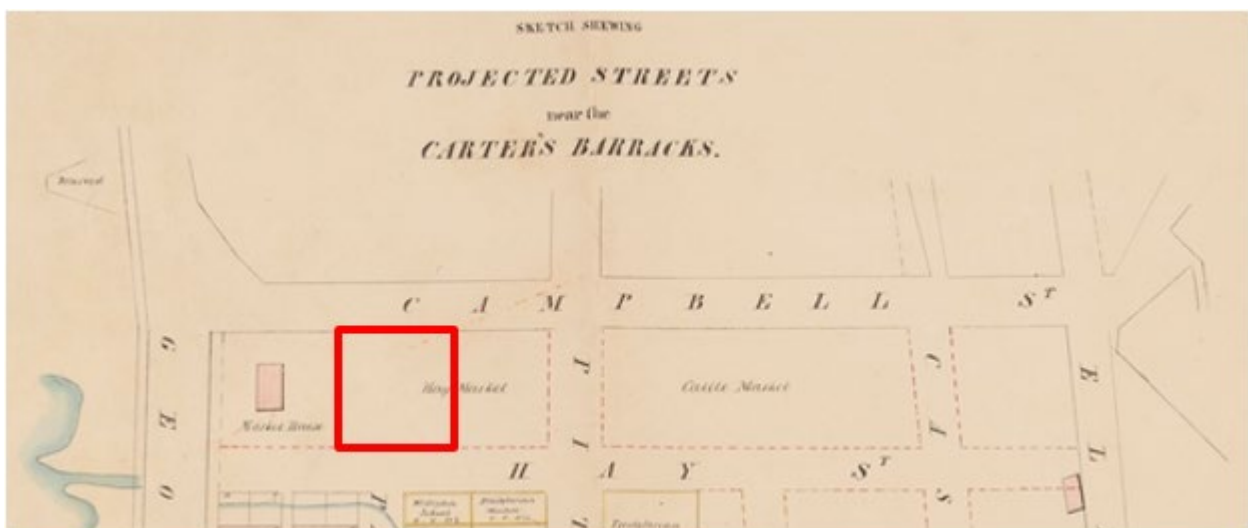


Figure 164 - Detail from "Sketch shewing projected streets near the Carter's Barracks", 1846 showing respective sites of Market House, Hay Market and Cattle Market.

Source: SLNSW, Digital order number a8293001.

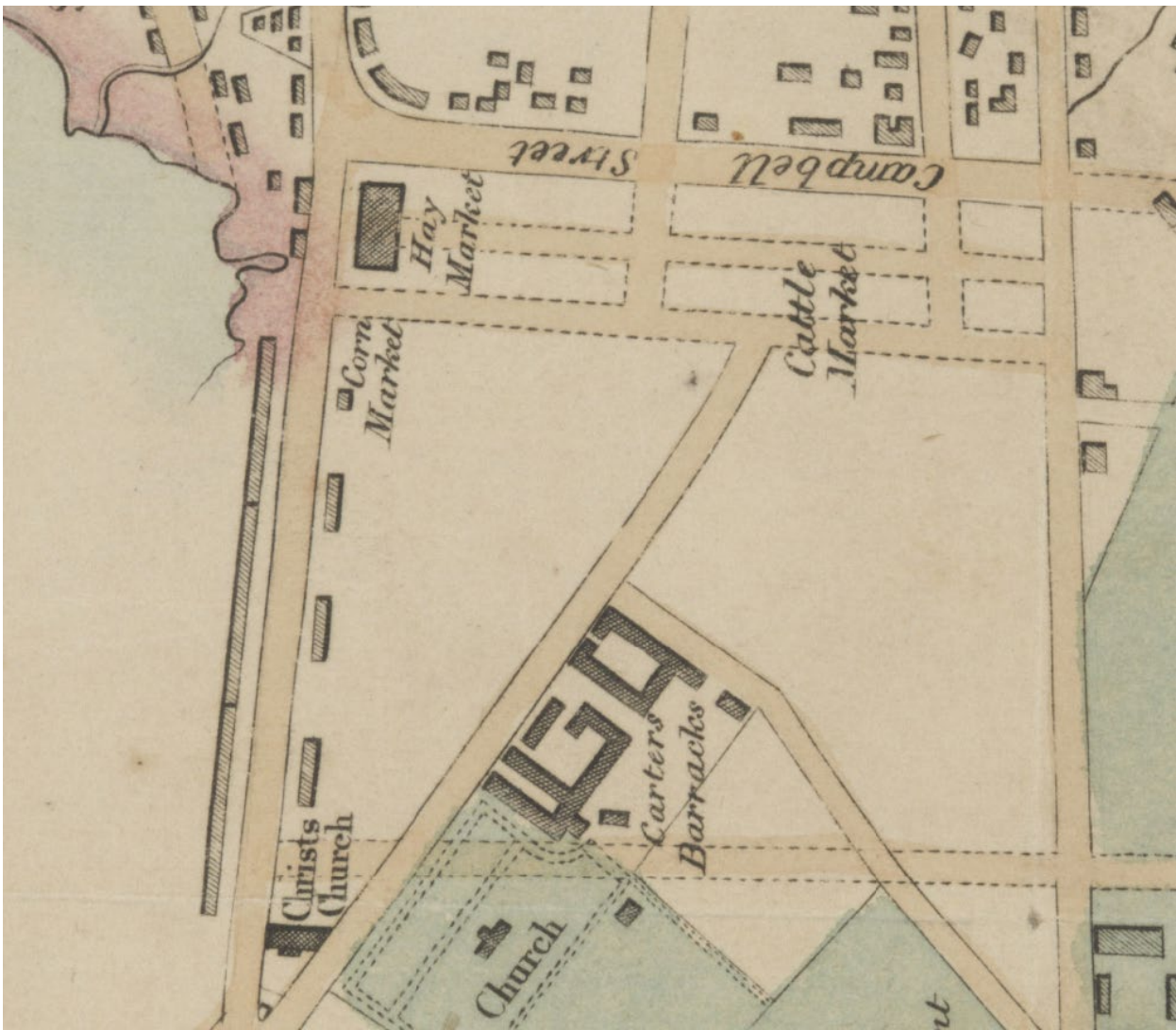


Figure 165 - Detail from "New Plan of the town of Sydney", 1851. Shows location of Hay and Cattle Markets.

Source: SLNSW, Digital Order number c01383

3.2.4. Belmore Markets

In June 1829, Governor Darling proclaimed part of the area at the foot of Brickfield Hill as a "New Cattle Market"¹⁷ and moved the livestock markets to a flat area at the end of Brickfield Hill south of Campbell Street.¹⁸ This was a response to the overcrowding of the market square site and also as stock were often driven along the Parramatta Road, a livestock market in the Haymarket area was a logical place to site it. The Sydney City Corporation assumed control of the cattle market in 1845 by deed of grant.¹⁹ By this date, the cattle market had both outgrown its site and been hemmed in by urban development. In the 1860s, the cattle market was relocated south to the Redfern Railway terminus.

In 1868, the Council commenced construction of a general wholesale market on the site of the former cattle yard. The three long sheds of the new market were officially opened on 14 May 1869 by the Mayor, Alderman Walter Renny and named "Belmore Market" after the Governor of NSW, Sir Somerset Richard Lowry-Corry, the Earl of Belmore.²⁰ The following description of the Belmore Market was furnished in the *Sydney Mail*:

*the Belmore market has a western frontage of 175 feet to Pitt Street south; - another of 390 feet to Hay street; another of 117 feet to Castlereagh street; and a fourth (of 373 feet) to Campbell street. It consists of three separate rows of lofty sheds, running east and west, for the whole of their several lengths...the three long roofs are of corrugated iron, of a high pitch, and running the entire length of the building. The materials used are of the best quality, and the erection generally such as will long be a just source of satisfaction to the citizens, and of pride to the numerous friends of Mr Bell, the City Engineer.*²¹

Coinciding with the opening of the Belmore Market, the Council approved new Corporation By-laws for the regulation of the Sydney markets. The three markets at the Haymarket were given the following designations:

- the market sheds and vacant spaces situated between Campbell, Hay, Pitt and Castlereagh streets is to be called the Belmore Market;
- the market shed between Campbell and Hay streets is to be called the Campbell Street Market; and
- the vacant space of ground between George Street, Campbell street, Pitt street and Hay Street is to be called the Hay, Corn and Cattle Market "[which is] to be reserved as a wholesale stock and produced market but no vegetables or fruit shall be sold therein."²²

By 1872, the Belmore Markets had become the main Sydney outlet for fruit and vegetables.²³

¹⁷ *Sydney Gazette*, 16 June 1829

¹⁸ *ibid*, p49

¹⁹ Christie, *Sydney Markets*, p70-1

²⁰ *Tod & Cork, Dream Palaces*, I, p1

²¹ "The Belmore Market", *Sydney Mail*, 6 February 1869, p6

²² "Sydney Markets", *Empire*, 12 June 1969, p2

²³ Christie, *Sydney Markets*, p71

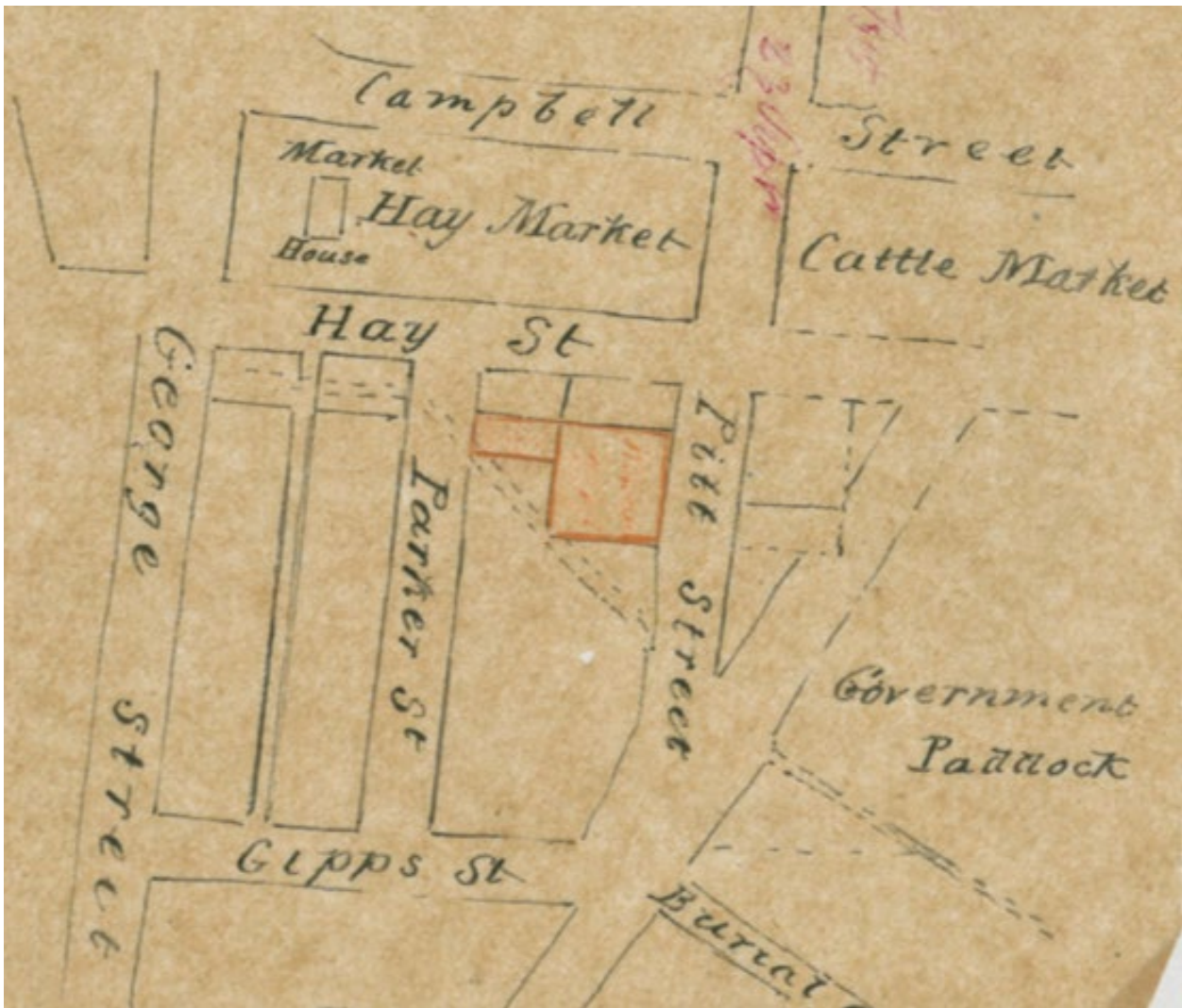


Figure 166 - Detail from Sketch Shewing proposed sites of Wesleyan Chapel & dwelling, 23 September 1845. Note location of Market House, Hay Market and Cattle Market.

Source: State Archives & Records, Sketch book 4 folio 202

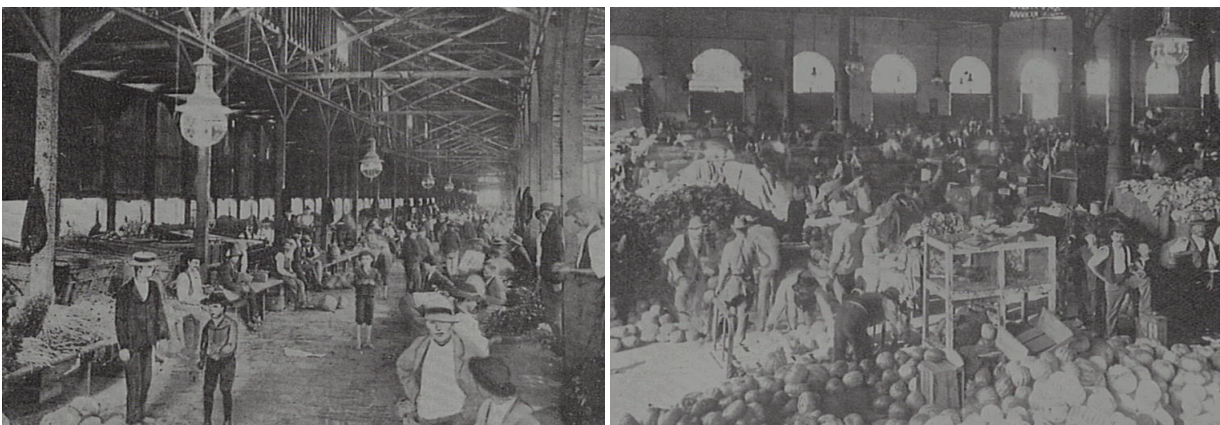


Figure 167 – Two views inside Old Belmore Market, 1904.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 274/9 (left) and NSCA CRS 274/10 (right)



Figure 168 – Old Belmore Markets, 1904.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 43 Vade Mecum 1903 p107



Figure 169 – Old Belmore Market, c.1909.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 51/2511

3.2.5. New Belmore Market

Between the 1860s and 1880s, the flat ground opposite the old Hay, Corn and Cattle Markets (later New Belmore Market) was the site of open-air markets or 'poor man's fair' - Paddy's Market - which operated from temporary stalls, tents and soapboxes every Saturday night.

The colourful Paddy's Market featured theatre, circus and sideshow entertainment, and patrons could buy hot food and all manner of market goods. The market scene on a Saturday night inspired numerous literary depictions.

Commentator John Laing noted that

*on the open and extensive space of ground that intervenes between the market [old Belmore Market] and George Street, are a number of shows and stalls of different kinds, each with its attendant-lights and crowd of patronizers [sic], whose shadowy forms moving hither and thither add greatly to the picturesqueness of the scene. Animation, bustle, and noise are in combination everywhere. In one direction lies the market, flaming with light and distinct with life and activity, like an immense hive - full of busy inmates; in another George Street opens widely to the view, teeming with thousands of people, and with its brilliantly-lighted shops blazing forth all their innumerable and varied attractions.*²⁴

Yet, like so many other moralistic Victorian observers of working class life, Laing found the market at best "an extensive field for the observation of the lower forms of our city life" and at worst a place which attracted "a promiscuous assemblage of hard-working men with their families, servant girls let loose till ten o'clock, factory girls freed from their week's labor [sic], slatterns from the lanes and alleys, and, above all, a large admixture of the larrikin tribe."²⁵

In 1875, the Council awarded the tender for the purchase and removal of the old Hay, Corn and Cattle Market building in George Street to William Watkins for the sum of £150.²⁶ They simultaneously accepted his tender to lease the George Street frontage of the Haymarket and construct a terrace building of three storeys and basement (Watkins Terrace).

The residue of the market site, between Pitt and Parker Streets lay vacant and was known as Haymarket Reserve or Haymarket Square. This ground was leased to a succession of international and Australian circuses including Chiarine's Royal Italian Circus (1873), Wilson's San Francisco Palace Circus (1876) and Cooper, Bailey and Company's International Circus Allied Shows (1877). Figure 170 comprises a bird's eye view of Sydney with a circus tent visible on Haymarket Reserve.

Wirths family circus was one of the Australian companies that performed on the reserve. In 1882, the four Wirth brothers opened a sideshow on the reserve where they gave seven or eight performances each Saturday for six months, from 1 pm until 11 pm, in a small tent about 12 metres in diameter. The brothers performed every act in the "Wirths All Star Varieties" including playing in the band. Philip Wirth recalls that:

*After our season in Bourke, we turned our cavalcade towards Sydney, and after playing all the towns on the way, opened in paddy's markets. The late Mr George Hudson, senior, had our pitch railed for us and we played there for eight weeks. As soon as it became known that Wirth's show was having a splendid season at the market, the place was invaded by side shows of every description, and later by other circus companies so that rivalry then began in earnest.*²⁷

His brother, George, had a similar recollection:

*Others, however, came on the scene and soon Paddy's market on a Saturday looked like a regular fair, with merry-go-rounds, swingboats, shooting galleries, pea and pie stalls, and all kinds of side-shows from the snake charmer to the armless women, black art, and sword swallowing shows, and eventually even full circuses made their appearance.*²⁸

²⁴ Laing, *op cit*.

²⁵ *ibid*.

²⁶ "Sydney Municipal Council", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 December 1875, p7

²⁷ Philip Wirth, *Life of Philip Wirth: a lifetime with an Australian circus*, 1937, p30

²⁸ George Wirth, *Round the world with a circus: memories of trials, triumphs and tribulations*, 1925, p25

With the decision to build a new Belmore Market, some of the activities of the Paddys Market moved indoors to the old Belmore Market. As late as June 1888, Wirth Family Circus were still utilising ground at Haymarket Square. However, other circus troupes were setting up in Belmore Park or on the city's outskirts.

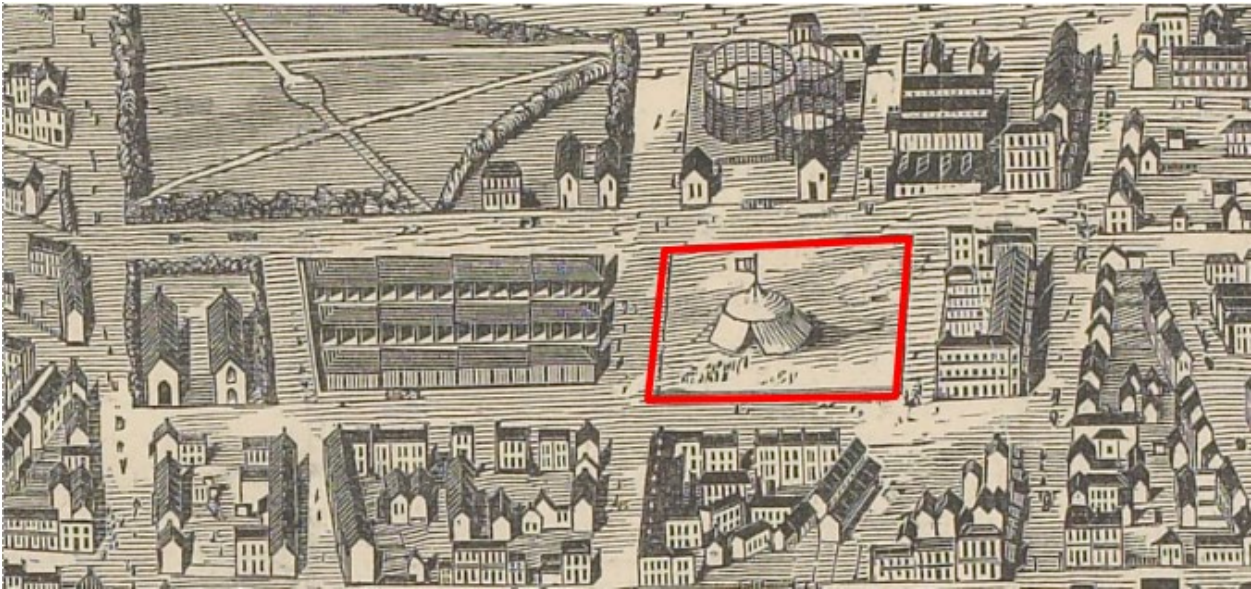


Figure 170 – Detail from “Bird’s Eye View of Sydney”. Market reserve occupied by a circus tent (circled red). South to top of page.

Source: *Illustrated Sydney News*, 2 October 1879 held in SLVIC

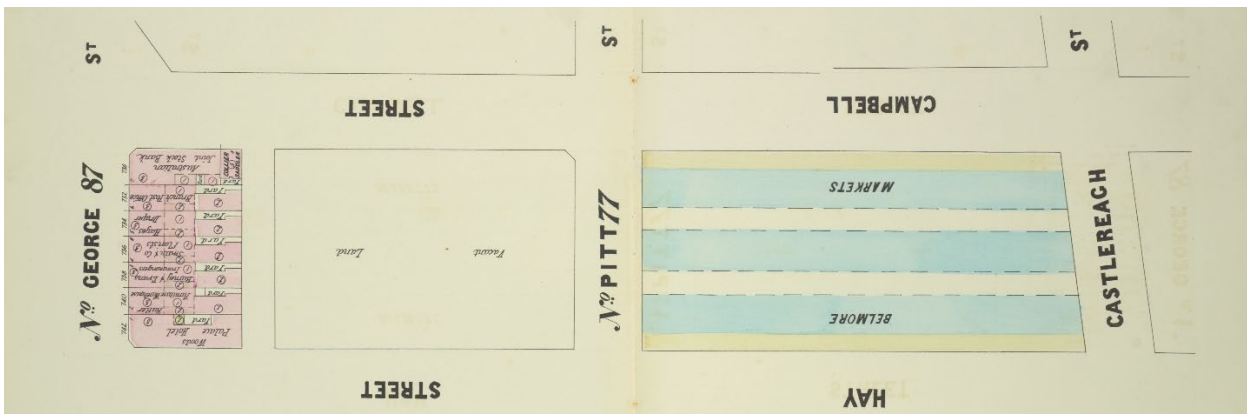


Figure 171 - H Percy Dove's Plans of Sydney Plates 77 & 87, c.1879 showing “vacant land” sandwiched between Belmore Markets (Pitt Street) and Watkins Terrace. North to top of page.

Source: NLA, [nla.obj-231030527](https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231030527)

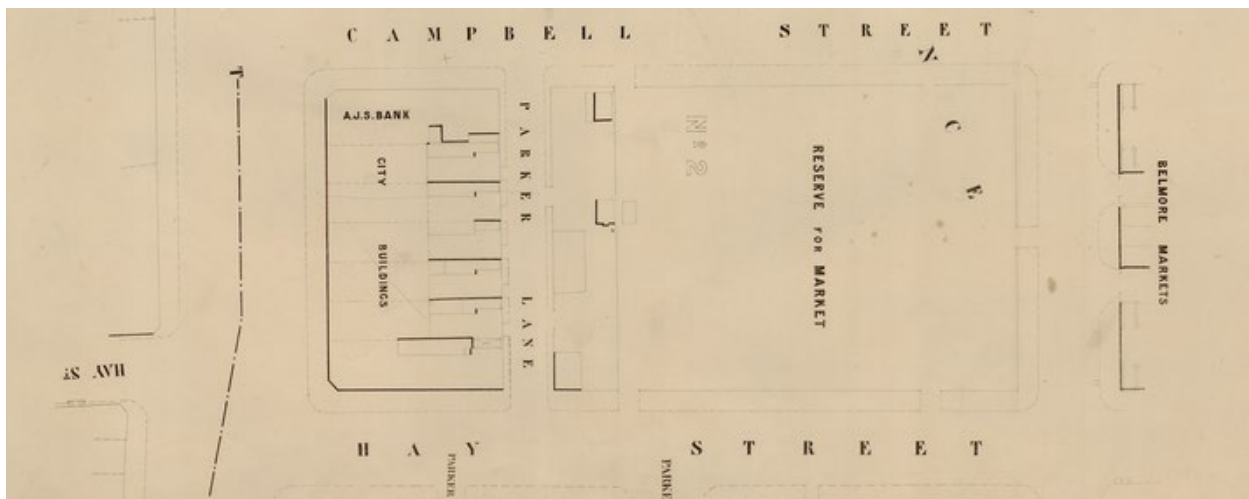


Figure 172 - Extract from Detail Survey City of Sydney Sections Nos 2 and 8, 1887 showing “reserve for market” between Parker Lane and Belmore Markets to east. North to top of page.

Source: SLNSW, a1367410h (1).jpg

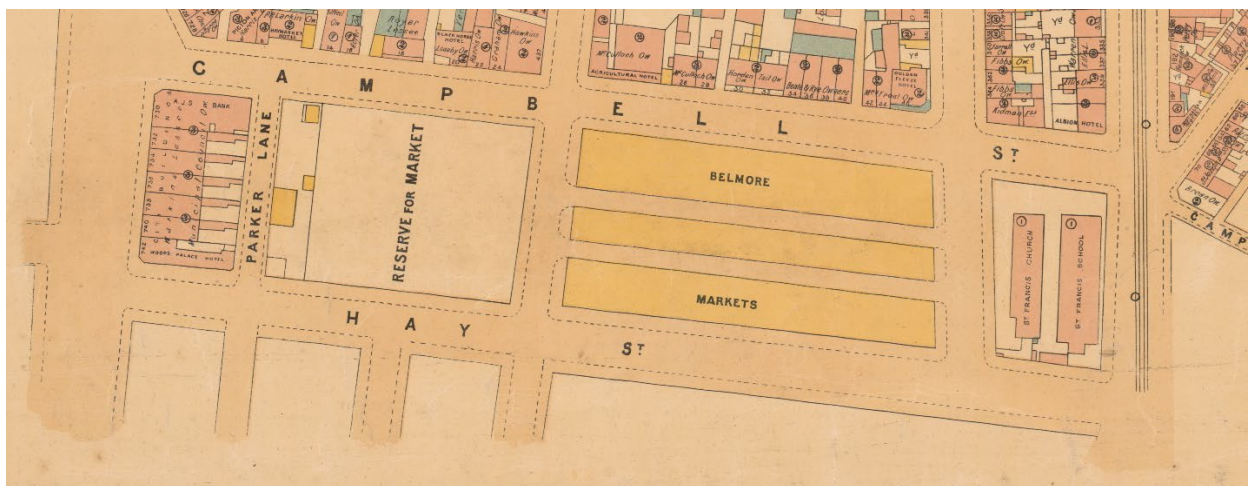


Figure 173 - Detail from Sydney and Suburban Plan Publishing Co., City of Sydney 1888 showing “reserve for market” sandwiched between Belmore Markets and Watkins Terrace. North to top of page.

Source: NLA, nla.obj-231303413.tif

By the mid-1880s, the old Belmore Markets was congested and wholesale traders were expressing dissatisfaction with the prevailing conditions. Consequently, Council gave instructions to the City Architect, Thomas Sapsford, to prepare plans for a fruit market building to be erected on the Haymarket Reserve which he submitted in January 1885.²⁹ He designed an impressive three-storey building for this site, however this plan was never realised as the following year, the Council instead decided to build a market in Sussex Street. Only one year later, the Council reprised plans to build a new market following calls from representatives of the fruit trade urging Council to provide new and enlarged markets at Haymarket. However, with the advent of the 1890s Depression, the Council abandoned Sapsford’s market plans. In 1891, the Council instructed Sapsford’s successor, George McRae to prepare “sketch plans of proposed building to cover in vacant space at Haymarket Square”.

This building would be constructed with brick walls 26 feet high with arched gateways and piers, the gateways to be fitted with iron grills made to slide up with balance weights, so that they would not be in the way of vehicles.

The roof I propose to construct in as light as manner as possible with iron principals and purlins, and louvre ventilators in ridges and to be carried on cast iron columns. The columns will be placed as far

²⁹ CRS 16/51: Royal Commissions: Fruit Industry New South Wales. Evidence Roy Hendy, Town Clerk of City of Sydney, Sydney, 12 Oct. 1938 p. 1.

apart as possible consistent with property construction, so that full advantage can be taken of the floor space.

*The dome shown in the centre would present a very handsome appearance, and materially assist in lighting and ventilating the building.*³⁰

McRae's design comprised a less elaborate, single storey building. His assistant and draughtsman, RH Brodrick, prepared extensive drawings and tracings for the New Belmore Market and his work earned McRae's praise. The Council approved the plans and specifications on 28 July 1891, and four months later accepted the tender of A M Allan to erect the building for the sum of £24,902.

Before work could commence on the new Belmore Market, the builder was required to fill and level the site and build a culvert in Hay Street. Extensive footings were sunk to a depth of twenty-five feet (7.6 metres). The foundations were laid on 22 September, and the superstructure was commenced on 21 December the same year.

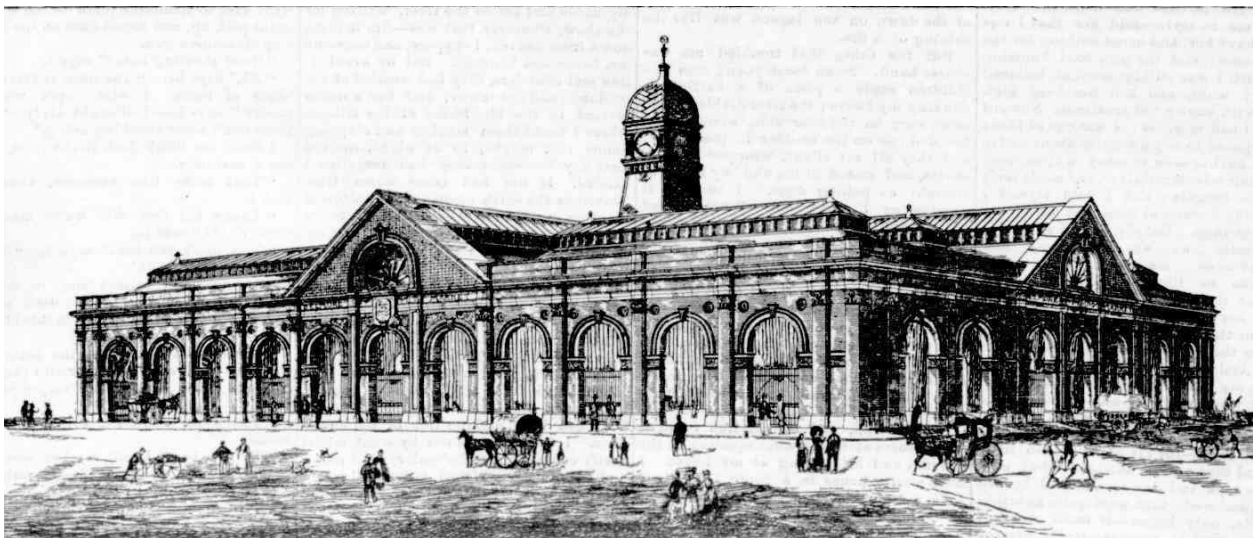


Figure 174 - "The Belmore Market, Sydney, now in course of erection – as the building will appear when completed".

Source: *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 24 December 1892, p31

Tensions soon developed between the contractor and City Architect, resulting in numerous delays and a protracted building process extending well beyond the expiry date of the contract. Consequently, the opening date was pushed back to February 1893. Meanwhile further delays by Allan resulted in the building cost rising to £30,079, with the budget shortfall part funded by a special loan. The building was eventually completed and opened on 14 July 1893 as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*:

*Naturally, the old market still retains its hold upon the public, but when the new one is in full swing it is bound to take the foremost position. That the desire of the City Council to keep pace with the times met with general approval was evident from the number of complimentary references to the new building made.*³¹

The New Belmore Market comprised a brick and terracotta version of an Italian Renaissance elevation facing the street and an economical iron and steel structure covering the entire market. The facade presented thirty-six arched bays to the streets: eleven to Campbell and Hay and seven to Parker and Pitt Streets. The central three bays of each elevation were embellished with fruit in foliage; carried out in terracotta in the spandrels of the arches and stained glass in the semi-circular windows of the pediments.

The walls were constructed of red double-pressed face bricks - those in the arches having complex ornamental mouldings. All the capitals, keystones, diaper work, swags in the frieze, and roundels or foliage in the spandrels were executed in red terracotta, a material in fashion at the time. The terracotta ornament

³⁰ CRS 19 March 1891, City Architects Office, 26_248_508.pdf

³¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 17 July 1893, p4

was designed in McRae's office but produced under a separate contract by James Campbell and Sons of Brisbane. String courses, cornices and coping to parapets and pediments were carried out in Pymont freestone.³² It was, and (where undamaged and unpainted) still is, a most effective assemblage. According to Tod and Cork, the massive Bowral trachyte base courses rested on exceptionally deep footings on account of proximity to the old creek.³³

Before completion, the entire area was paved by Flowers and Lane with a thick, ten-inch (25 cm) concrete foundation covered with asphalt. In addition, gas lamps were erected at the following locations:

- Hay and George, south-eastern corner Hay and Pitt, north-western corner
- Campbell and George, south-eastern corner Campbell and Pitt, south-western corner³⁴

During the work of building the New Belmore Market, Parker Lane, which had been extended to service the rear of Watkins' Terrace in the 1870s, was widened from 30 feet to the standard 66 feet.³⁵

The new building provided the largest unbroken space in Australia at 237 feet (72.32 metres) by 176 feet (53.64 metres). It featured set areas marked out on the paving for the stall holders. Natural light came from the partially glazed lantern ranges and the thirty-six large arches. The *Building and Engineering Journal Illustrated* described the roof structure as follows:

*the roofs are of iron and consist of two main spans of 60 foot running at right angles to each other and meeting in the centre of the Markets. The smaller side spans are 28 feet. The large diagonal rafters at the intersection of the main span are about 85 feet span and are constructed in the form of an elliptical bow made of mild steel on the lattice principle. On these diagonals is carried the centre tower...The girders which carry the various roofs are lattice in form, and are supported by 16 heavy cast iron columns 22 inches in diameter, with ornamental foliated caps, and richly moulded vases. The columns average 30 feet in length and are being cast in one length by the Mort's Dock and Engineering Company. The roof lanterns are all constructed of iron with galvanized iron louvres and glazed with Bush 's Patent glazing.*³⁶

Following the opening of the New Belmore Market, the paddys market continued to operate on Saturdays in the new building. Shooting galleries, second hand dealers, food vendors, confectionary and soft drink sellers, plied their trade alongside music and theatrical performances, side shows, early film exhibitions, circuses and novelty acts.

³² *Building and Engineering Journal*, 21 May 1892, p85 and 28 August 1892, p208

³³ Tod & Cork, *Dream Palace*, p1

³⁴ Sydney Council Minutes 1892, p67

³⁵ *Building and Engineering Journal*, 27 August 1892, p85

³⁶ *ibid.*



Figure 175 - New Belmore Markets, 1904.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 43 1904 p106



Figure 176 – New Belmore Market entrance, 1904.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 43 p104



Figure 177 – Inside New Belmore Market, 1904.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 43 1904 p107



Figure 178 – New Belmore Market, 25 June 1913.

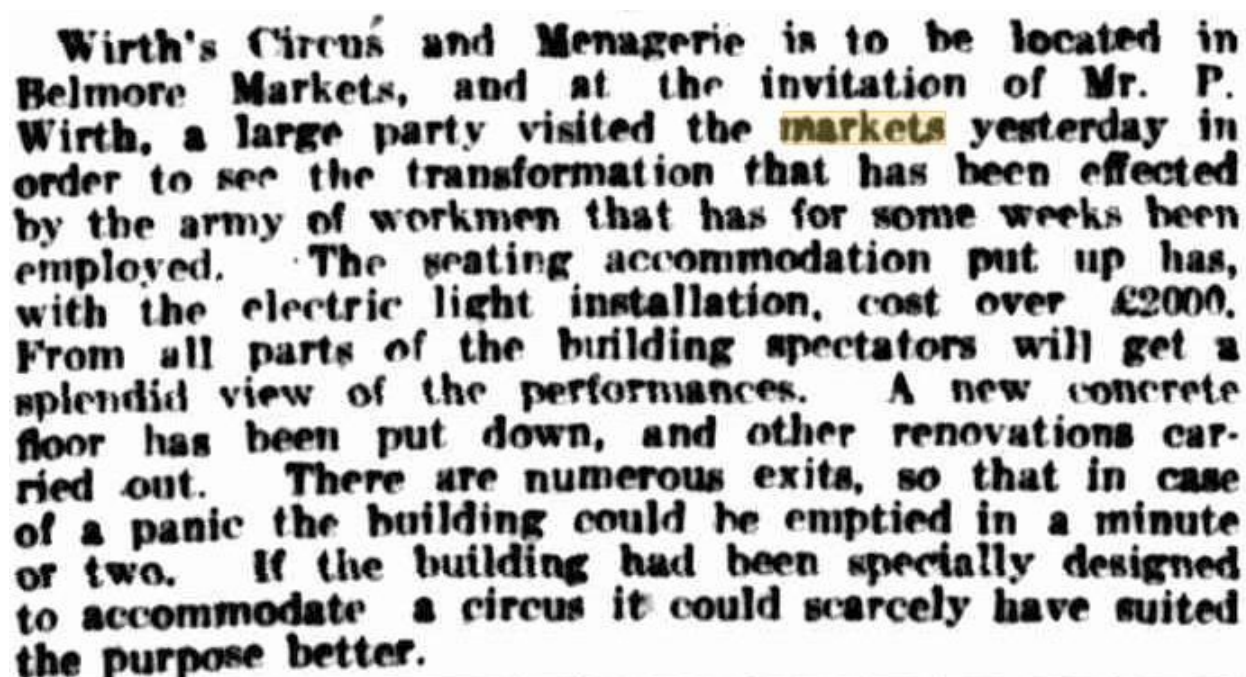
Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 51/3421

3.2.6. Redevelopment of the New Belmore Markets, 1913-1916

The emphasis of the Council on the erection of architecturally satisfying edifices was not matched by practical economic sense and neither the New Belmore Market nor the Queen Victoria Market building near the Town Hall (built 1893-98) proved to be a success. By the following decade the Council were seeking a new site, with rail and water access, on the reclaimed land west of George Street. The first of three stages of the new municipal market with frontages to Hay, Thomas and Quay Streets was opened in 1909 and completed in November 1911.

The opening of the first stage of the new market made the Old and New Belmore Markets redundant. In June 1910, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Council had decided that two theatres would be erected on this site. The Old Belmore Market was demolished and replaced on the Castlereagh Street front by the Adelphi Theatre and on Pitt Street by the Hotel Sydney. The Adelphi was later converted to an opera house and subsequently to the Tivoli Theatre before both it and the Hotel Sydney were demolished, to be replaced in turn by an office block and an unimproved car park.

In October 1911, the Council invited tenders for the lease of the New Belmore Market buildings for a period of 50 years.³⁷ The following January, the Council's finance committee accepted a tender from Wirth Bros for a six week season of their circus and hippodrome "at the Sir William Manning Markets" for £50 per week.³⁸ The impending visit of the circus company and the adaptation of the New Belmore Markets for this purpose was widely covered in the local press including the *Sydney Morning Herald* who were especially impressed by the transformation of the building comprising seating accommodation, electric light installation and new concrete flooring (Figure 179). "Wirth's Circus and Menagerie" opened on 16 March and was pronounced a spectacular success. Less than two months later, the Council extended Wirth Bros lease to ten weeks for a sum of £400.



Wirth's Circus and Menagerie is to be located in Belmore Markets, and at the invitation of Mr. P. Wirth, a large party visited the markets yesterday in order to see the transformation that has been effected by the army of workmen that has for some weeks been employed. The seating accommodation put up has, with the electric light installation, cost over £2000. From all parts of the building spectators will get a splendid view of the performances. A new concrete floor has been put down, and other renovations carried out. There are numerous exits, so that in case of a panic the building could be emptied in a minute or two. If the building had been specially designed to accommodate a circus it could scarcely have suited the purpose better.

Figure 179 – "A Change at Belmore Markets".

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 March 1912, p6

In the meantime, in April 1912, the Council invited tenders for the "lease of Belmore Markets, Pitt, Hay and Campbell Streets [for] shops, factories, etc" indicating Council's preference for a remodelling scheme for the entire building, including the addition of two floors and construction of shops fronting Pitt Street. Yet within two months, Alderman A Kelly introduced a counter motion requesting the finance committee investigate the advisability of converting the market building into a municipal theatre. Consequently, the Council deferred

³⁷ "General notes", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1911, p5

³⁸ "Circus at Haymarket", *Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 1912, p11. Sir William Manning Markets is an alternative name for Belmore Markets

final consideration of the leasing tenders while the finance committee considered Kelly's motion. Following deliberations, the finance committee recommended that the Belmore Markets be remodelled to make them revenue producing. The Committee accepted the tender of Wirth Bros for "rear portion of building" for the sum of £2,000 per annum and 5 per cent on any additional expenditure incurred in fitting to their requirements.³⁹ This decision was set aside until September when the Council formally accepted the tender of Wirth Bros for a lease of the western half of the building for circus purposes for a term of 21 years, amounting to £2,050 and an additional 6 percent for remodelling of the building, amounting to approximately £9,000.

Simultaneously, the Council elected to redevelop the eastern half of the building as a coffee palace (later offices) and 18 shops fronting Pitt Street (present Manning Building).

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF SYDNEY.

LEASE OF BELMORE MARKETS, PITT, HAY, AND CAMPBELL STREETS. SHOPS, FACTORIES, ETC.

The Municipal Council of Sydney proposes to remodel this building by the addition of two stories to the present structure, and the construction of commodious shops fronting Pitt-street.

Plans of proposed remodelling may be seen at the Office of the Comptroller of Assets, Town Hall, Sydney.

Tenders are now invited for the **lease** for a period of 10 or 12 years of the separate premises, and the Council are prepared to consider the requirements of intending Lessees in the remodelling scheme.

Tenderers are required to deposit with the City Treasurer the sum of Twenty Pounds (£20), and to lodge their **tenders** with the undersigned on or before **THURSDAY, the 18th APRIL, at 3 o'clock p.m.**

Dated this 2nd day of April, 1912.

W. G. LAYTON,
Acting Town Clerk.

Town Hall, Sydney.

Figure 180 – Lease tender notice.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 April 1912, p26

The final two performances of Wirth Bros Circus were held at the Belmore Markets on 8 June.⁴⁰ The Company returned to Sydney the following March, opening their 1913 season at the "old Belmore Market Building" with an entirely new show. In the intervening period, the Wirths formed its family business into a registered company and applied to the Council to register the theatre lease in the new company name.⁴¹ In March 1913, Wirths engaged Ernest Lindsay Thompson, architect to prepare preliminary plans for the

³⁹ "Belmore Markets", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 June 1912, p4

⁴⁰ "Wirth's Circus", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 June 1912, p20

⁴¹ Lynne Dent, *The Capitol: its producer, director, auteurs and given circumstances: an epic of a "lucky" theatre*, 1998, p57

Hippodrome. Council's Architect prepared architectural plans based upon the original submission and forwarded these to the Chief Secretary's office for approval in accordance with the *Theatre and Public Halls Act of 1908*.⁴² These were approved subject to certain conditions.

In March 1913, Wirth Bros announced the early termination of the Wirths circus season "as the Belmore Markets must soon go into the builders' hands to be converted into an up-to-date Hippodrome for Wirth Bros."⁴³ Likewise, the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried the following special notice (Figure 181).

As the building operation which will result in the conversion of the **Belmore Markets** into **WIRTH'S HIPPODROME**, a most modern structure, specially designed to fitly house **THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH**, will shortly be commenced, the current season must necessarily terminate at an early date.

Figure 181 – Special notice.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1913, p2

The *Daily Telegraph* described in detail the City Architect's designs for the complete remodelling of the Belmore Market building which comprised one section, 175ft x 106ft, to be converted into a hippodrome for Wirth Bros; the remainder, measuring 175ft x 130ft, to be turned into shops and factory rooms at an estimated cost of £25,000 (Manning Building).

*The plans for the hippodrome are not yet complete, but tenders are already being invited for the other work. The whole roof is to be raised, and the building carried up another two stories. The present roof will be utilised as far as possible; also, the stone dressings and terracotta ornaments which run entirely round the building. There will be eight shops on the ground floor, with cart-entrances providing access from Pitt, Campbell, and Hay streets. The first and second floors will consist mainly of factory rooms. The whole of the shops will have highly-ornamental fronts, and will be floored with concrete. The upper floors will be of timber. Staircases and two goods lifts are to be installed. The main transverse steel roof and existing hip principles and cast-iron columns supporting the roof will be removed, and the whole of the walls with the exception of the stone and terracotta ornaments will be of brick and cement. Every effort has been made to keep the character of the additions in harmony with the existing elevation.*⁴⁴

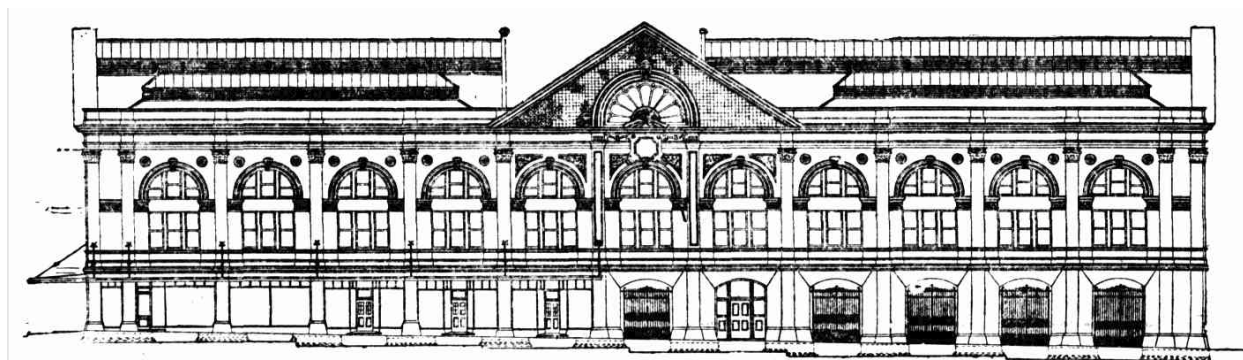


Figure 182 – "Belmore Market remodelled – shops, factories and hippodrome".

Source: *The Sun*, 9 June 1913, p5

RH Brodrick, City Architect. prepared plans and specifications for the proposed new Hippodrome "in accordance with the sketch plans prepared by the Lessees". These were duly approved by Council in September and two months later, Council invited tenders for "ALTERATIONS TO SIR WILLIAM MANNING

⁴² *ibid*.

⁴³ "Stage song and show", *The Sun*, 31 March 1913, p10

⁴⁴ "Building & Construction: Transforming the Belmore Markets", *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 1913, p9

MARKETS, at HAYMARKET, in order to convert it into a HIPPODROME".⁴⁵ In mid-December 1913, Council accepted the tender of William Maston and Thomas Yates for the sum of £32,500.⁴⁶ Earlier in the year, JM and A Pringle tendered successfully for the redevelopment of the eastern half, now known as the Manning Building, for the sum of £30,368.

It is unclear when work commenced on the conversion of Belmore Markets into a Hippodrome, but by August 1914, progress was so advanced that more than one newspaper reported completion and occupation of the building was expected by the end of the year.⁴⁷ This timing was, as it turned out, incredibly optimistic, as Wirths did not open and occupy the Hippodrome until April 1916. However, the building cost had risen to £51,800, of which £4,000 resulted from alterations and amendments required by the Government Architect and Chief Secretary in order to comply with regulations set forth in the Theatres Act. The largest single extra (£6,065) was for a "Hydraulic Ring Pit (tank)"; the water tank was originally costed at £1,700.⁴⁸

The Council's intention was to make the building commercially viable. Hence the extra height which allowed the inclusion of three lettable storeys to the east and the bulk of the Hippodrome to the west. This arrangement resulted in other alterations to the facade: the Campbell and Hay Street pediments were repositioned above the foyer and stage entries of the Hippodrome; the Parker Street pediment was omitted; and the newly-elevated arcading of the Manning Building was infilled with windows to serve the two floors of office space. The arcade of the Hippodrome was blocked or adapted to meet the requirements of its auditorium and stage. Despite this, the new cornice line remained unbroken right round the building and approximated to the alignment of Watkins' Terrace. Overall, the redesigned building exhibited that attention to well-mannered and urbane design which city architects then believed to be important.

3.2.7. Manning Building, 1913-1916 and 1916-1927

Unlike the Hippodrome with its new roof structure, the Manning Building to the east simply had the relevant parts of the Market roof and structure re-erected at the required height. A pair of the original lantern structures remain intact at the north-eastern corner of the building. They consist of steel trusses mounted on lattice girders supported by posts. The posts are probably Mort's original decorative iron members but, as they are now encased to improve fire rating, this has not been checked.⁴⁹

In 1924, plans signed by Brodrick and Merriman were prepared for three additional floors and the removal of the Pitt Street pediment. Finally, only the southern part of the building was added to and the pediment removed. Since the 1920s, the building has remained substantially unchanged. The interiors reflect the Council's initial demand for economy and subsequent low maintenance requirements. Only the space under the trusses to the north-east has some potential for re-creation as a space of unusual quality.

3.3. WIRTHS HIPPODROME

The Hippodrome project was under the control of Robert Hargreave Brodrick, who had been appointed Architect and City Building Surveyor in 1897 when McRae left to become the Principal Assistant Architect for the Public Works Department and, later, Government Architect. Some of the plans for the new work carry James Merriman's signature. Both Brodrick and Merriman were long-serving and experienced officers explicitly acknowledged by McRae for their work on the market buildings in 1891- 92. Jim Kerr suggests that the decision to dismantle the facade and re-erect it above a new ground floor, which was in turn mounted on the old footings, was undoubtedly influenced by Brodrick and Merriman's involvement in the design of the original market building.

A series of RH Brodrick's design for the Hippodrome in 1913 are shown below at Figure 183, Figure 184, Figure 185, Figure 186, Figure 187, Figure 188 and Figure 189 (respectively numbered plans 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 of the original set).

⁴⁵ "Municipal Council of Sydney", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 November 1913, p4

⁴⁶ "Hippodrome at Manning Square", *The Sun*, 14 December 1913, p8

⁴⁷ "Wirths Hippodrome", *Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 1914, p3

⁴⁸ *Construction and Local Government Journal*, 18 January 1915, p10 and "Wirth's Hippodrome", *Daily Telegraph*, 7 January 1915, p7

⁴⁹ Kerr, *op. cit.*, p16

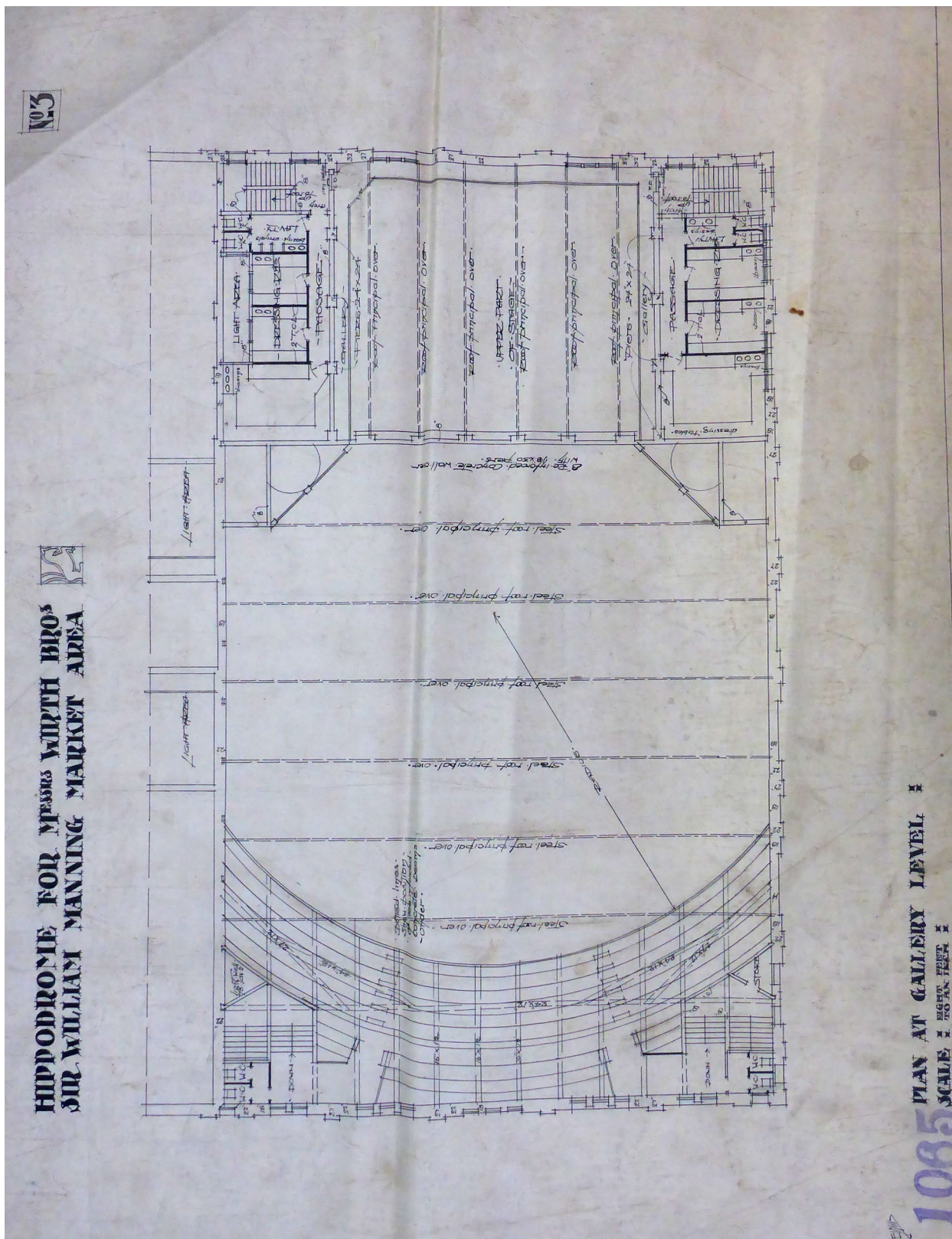


Figure 184 – “Hippodrome for Messrs Wirth Bros Sir William Manning Market Area – No 3, Plan at Gallery Level”, September 1913. Drawn by RH Brodrick.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, 1065

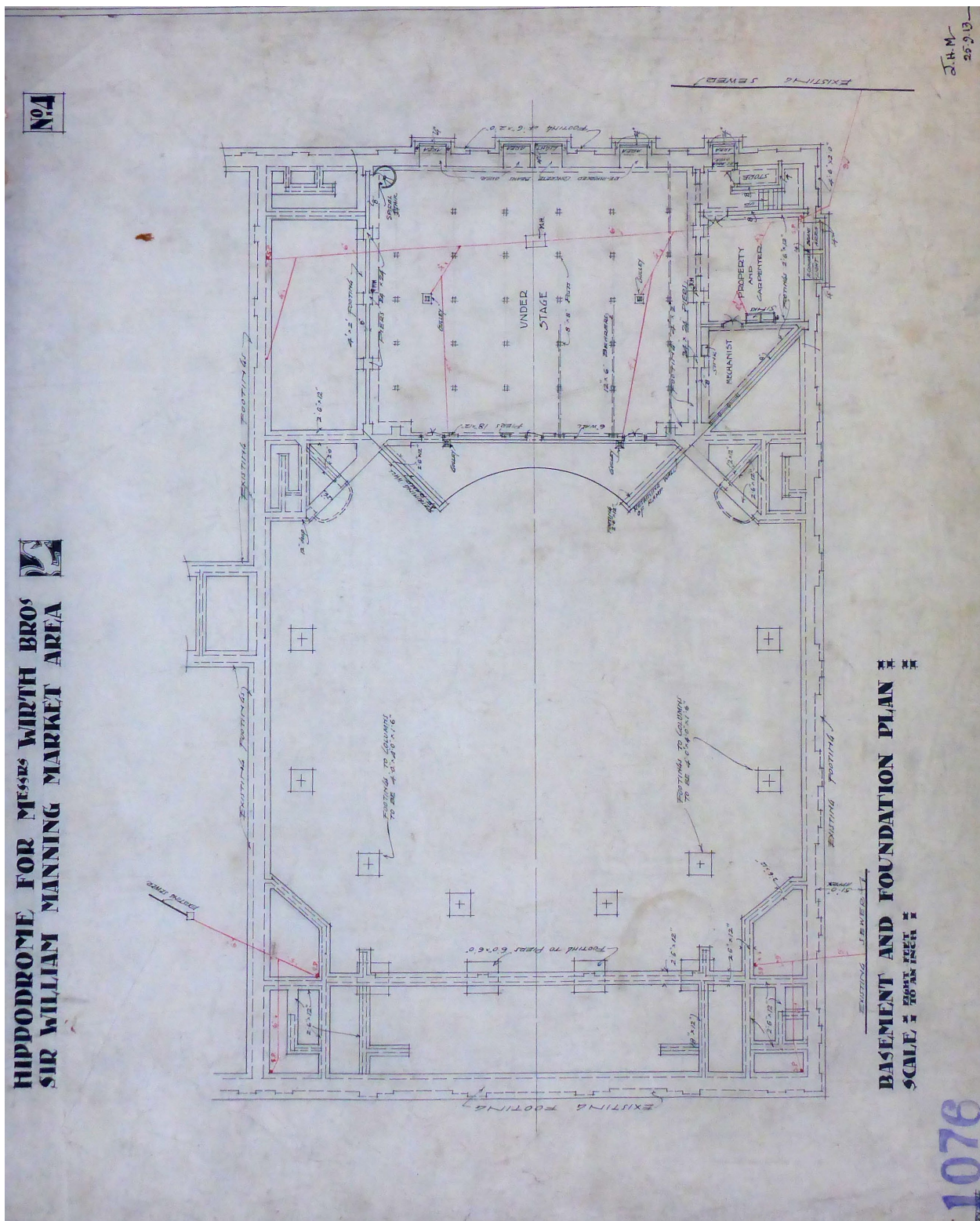


Figure 185 – “Hippodrome for Messrs Wirth Bros Sir William Manning Market Area – No 4, Basement and Foundation Plan”, September 1913. Drawn by RH Brodrick.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, 1076

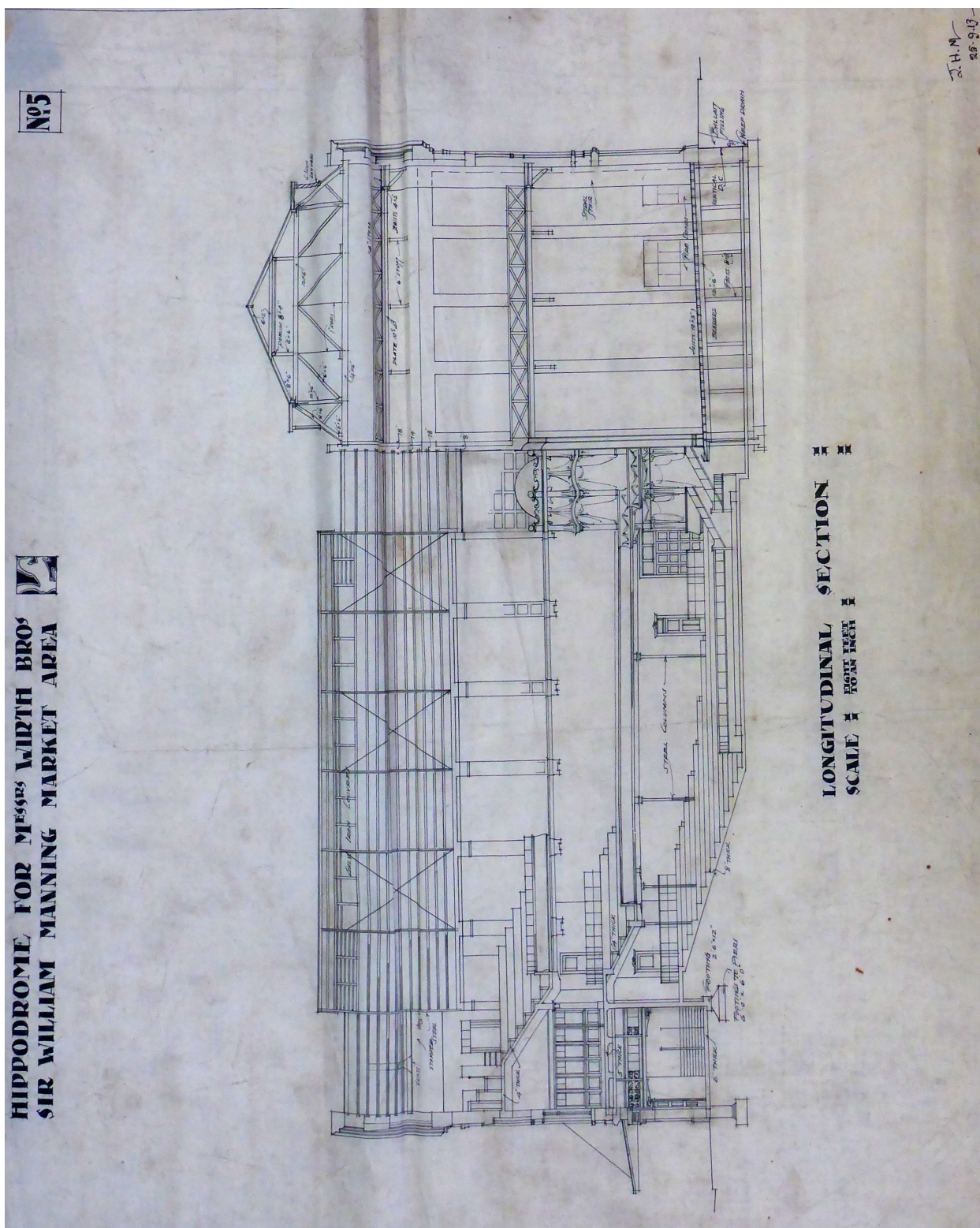


Figure 186 – “Hippodrome for Messrs Wirth Bros Sir William Manning Market Area – No 5, Longitudinal Section”, September 1913. Drawn by RH Brodrick.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, 1069

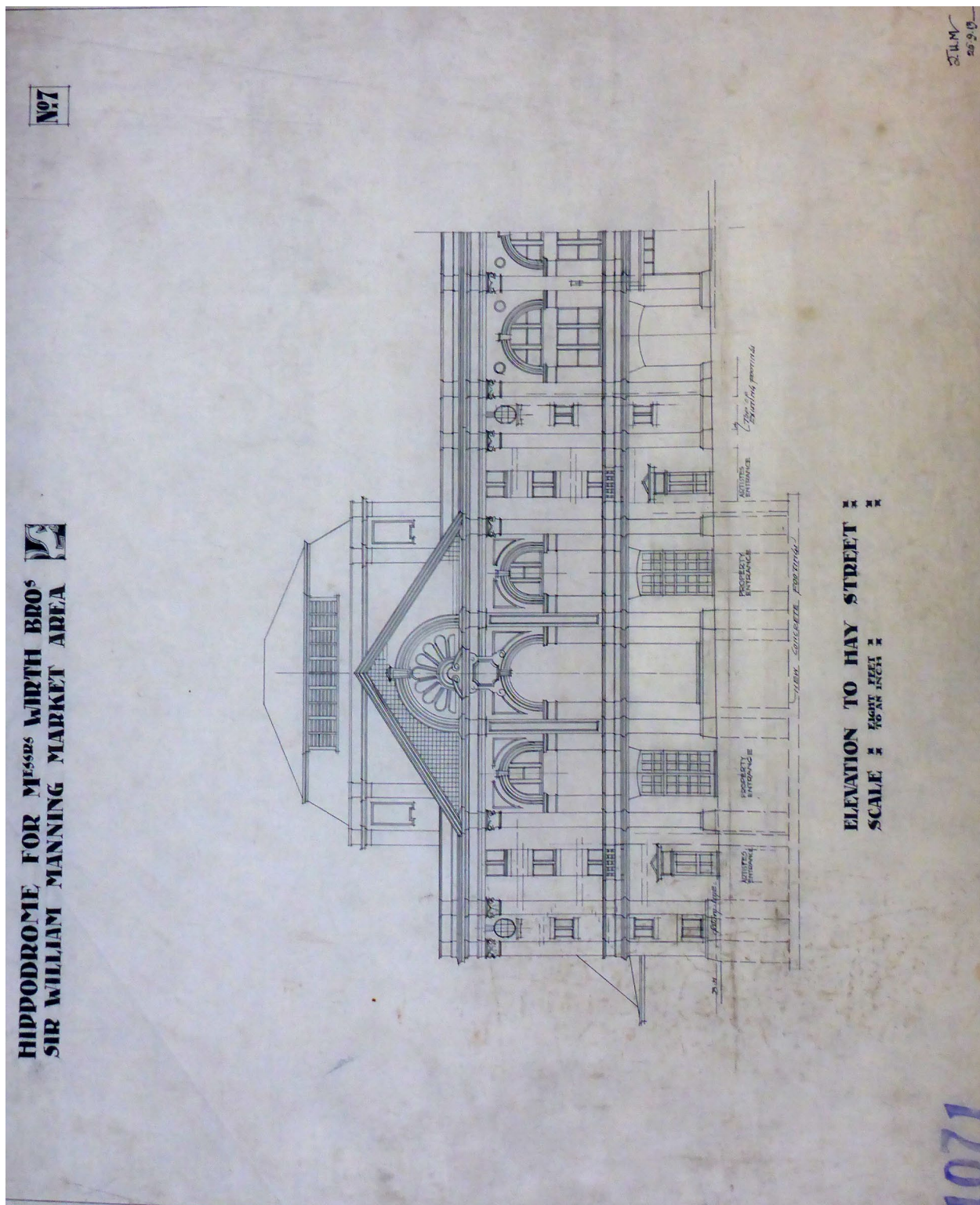
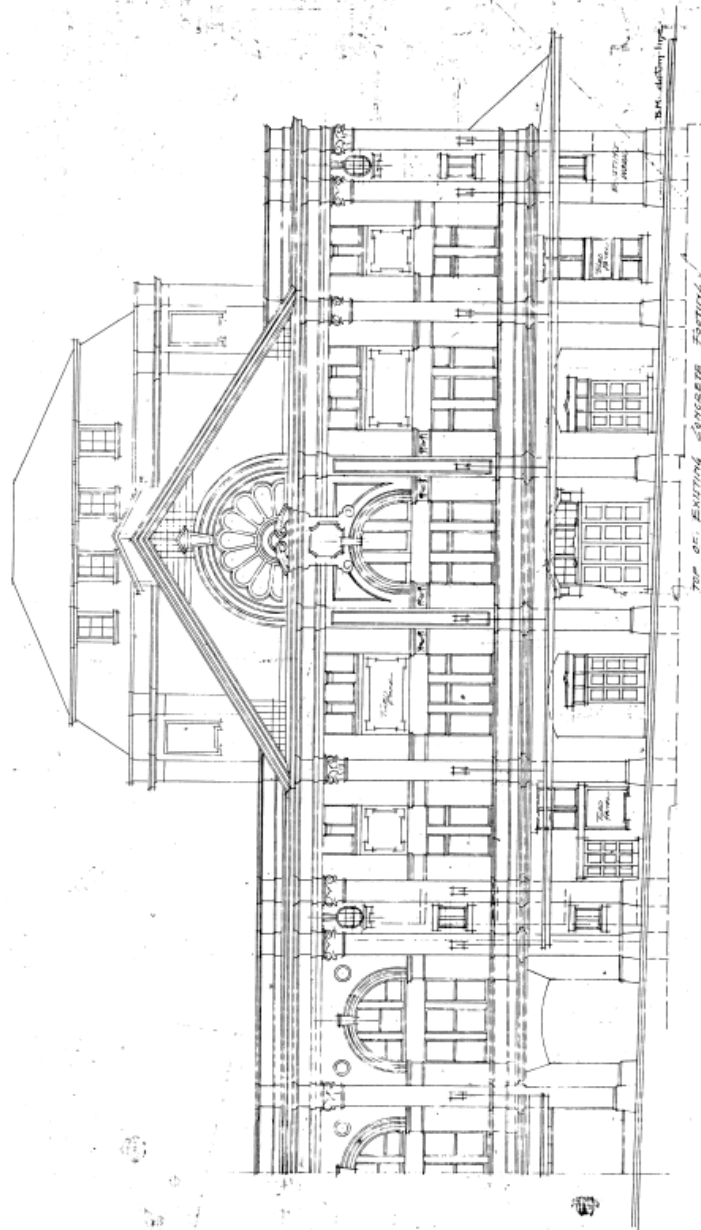


Figure 187 – “Hippodrome for Messrs Wirth Bros Sir William Manning Market Area – No 7, Elevation to Hay Street”, September 1913. Drawn by RH Brodrick.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, 1071

**HIPPODROME FOR MESSRS WIRTH BROS
SIR WILLIAM MANNING MARKET AREA**

No 9



ELEVATION TO CAMPBELL STREET
SCALE 1/4" = 1' 0"

Figure 189 – "Hippodrome for Messrs Wirth Bros Sir William Manning Market Area – No 9, Elevation to Campbell Street".

Source: City of Sydney Archives, 208-01.pdf

The specifications required the contractors to exercise the greatest care in removing brick, terracotta and stone work preparatory to cleaning and re-use. Specifically mentioned were:

- frieze to new parapet [actually coping]. cornice, frieze, pediment tablets, corbels, etc.
- terracotta capitals, keystones, frieze [with swags], foliated and roundel ornaments in spandrels, and diaper tiles in the pediments
- moulded bricks in arches.⁵⁰

Additionally, the ordinary brickwork was also to be taken down, cleaned and, subject to the approval of the architect, reused. It was a labour-intensive exercise – part preservation, part reconstruction, part adaptation and part new construction. The Council thoroughly documented the alterations and additions to the Manning Markets Building and dismantling of the New Belmore Market for conversion into the Wirth Bros Hippodrome. A selection of photographs are reproduced at Figure 190, Figure 191, Figure 192, Figure 193, Figure 194, Figure 195, Figure 196, Figure 197, Figure 198 and Figure 199.

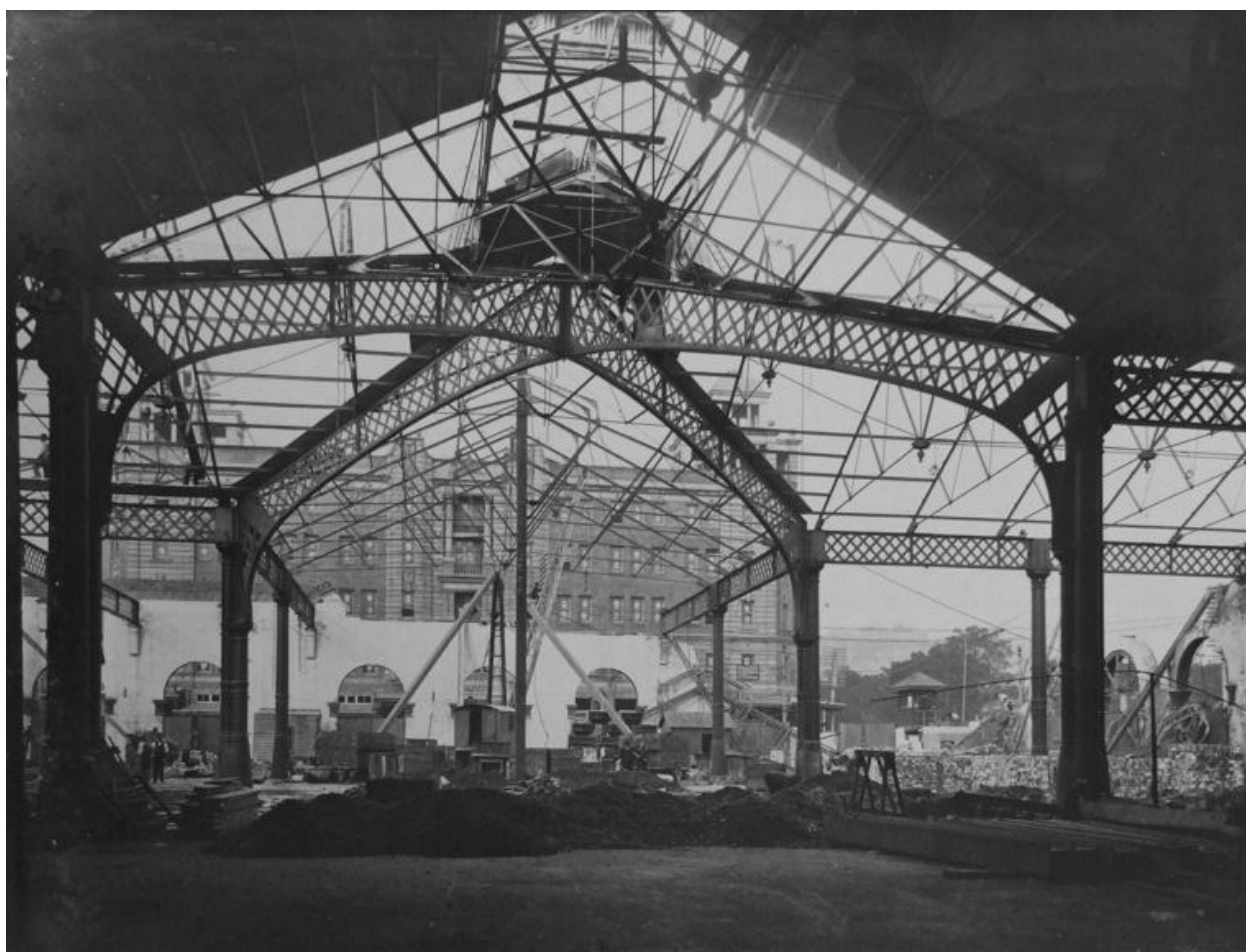


Figure 190 – Internal view looking towards Campbell Street showing demolition of market building in progress, 2 July 1913.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3423

⁵⁰ Specifications quoted in Thorne, *Capitol*, p6

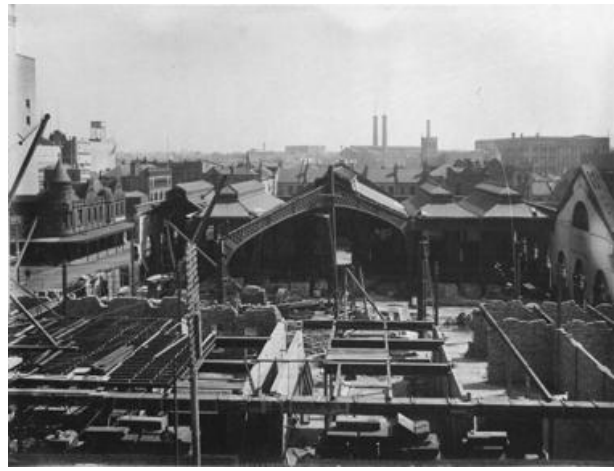
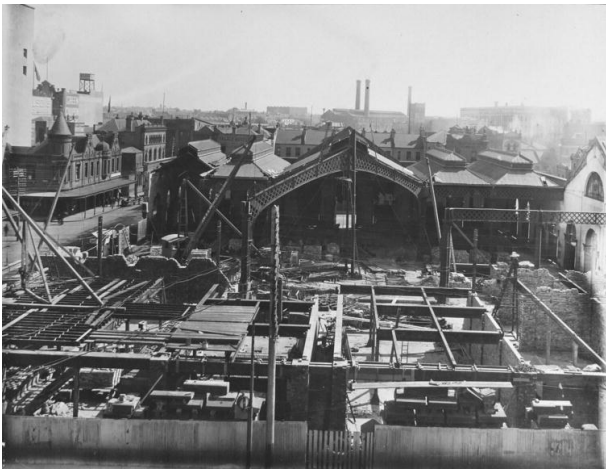


Figure 191 – Demolition of old and new Belmore Markets and construction of Manning building (foreground), 27 August 1913 (left) and 3 September 1913 (right). Site of Hippodrome in background.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3430

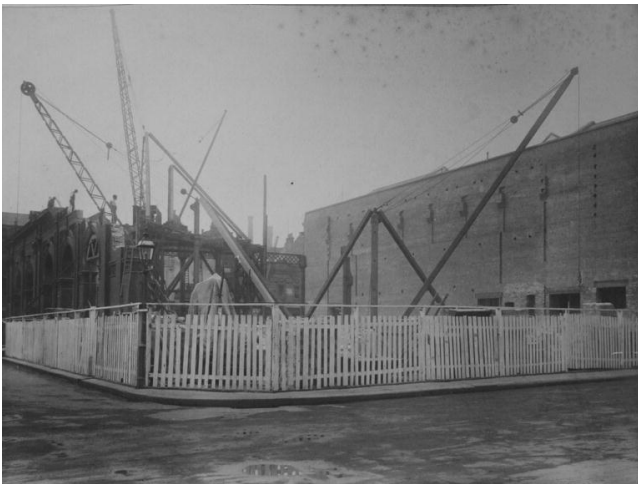


Figure 192 - Conversion of New Belmore Market to Hippodrome for Wirth Bros, 18 August 1914.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3270 (left) and NSCA CRS 51/3271 (right)



Figure 193 - Conversion of New Belmore Market to Hippodrome for Wirth Bros, 18 August 1914.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3273 (left) and NSCA CRS 51/3274 (right)

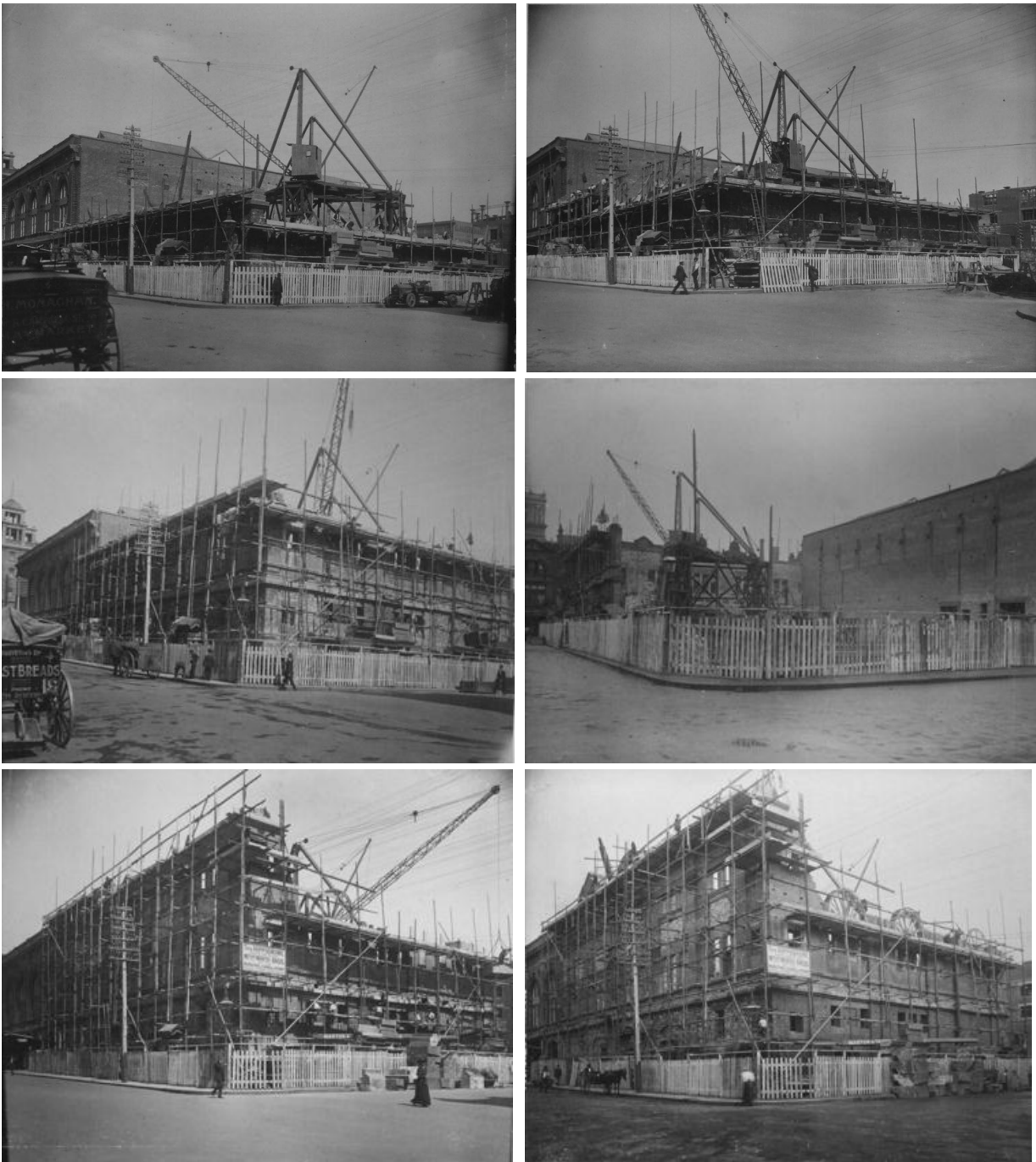


Figure 194 – Selection of photographs documenting building works to convert New Belmore Market to Hippodrome for Wirth Bros, 28 September - 23 November 1914.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3283 (top left), NSCA CRS 51/3284 (top right), NSCA CRS 51/3290 (middle left), NSCA CRS 51/3292 (middle right) NSCA CRS 51/3297 (bottom left), NSCA CRS 51/3299 (bottom right)

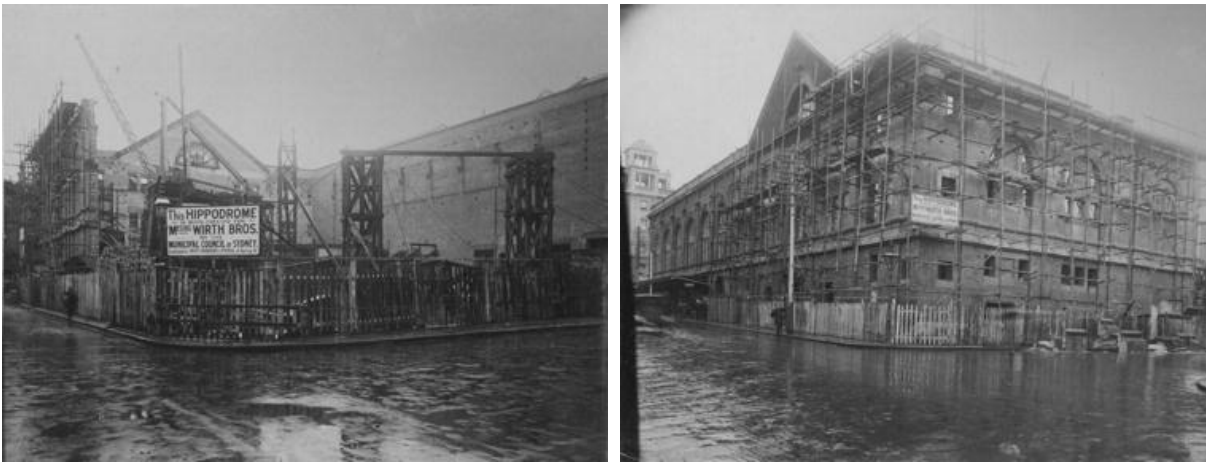


Figure 195 - Progress of construction of Wirth Hippodrome, 21 December 1914.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3306 (left) and NSCA CRS 51/3307 (right)



Figure 196 - Facade of Wirth Hippodrome, 11 January 1915.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3313

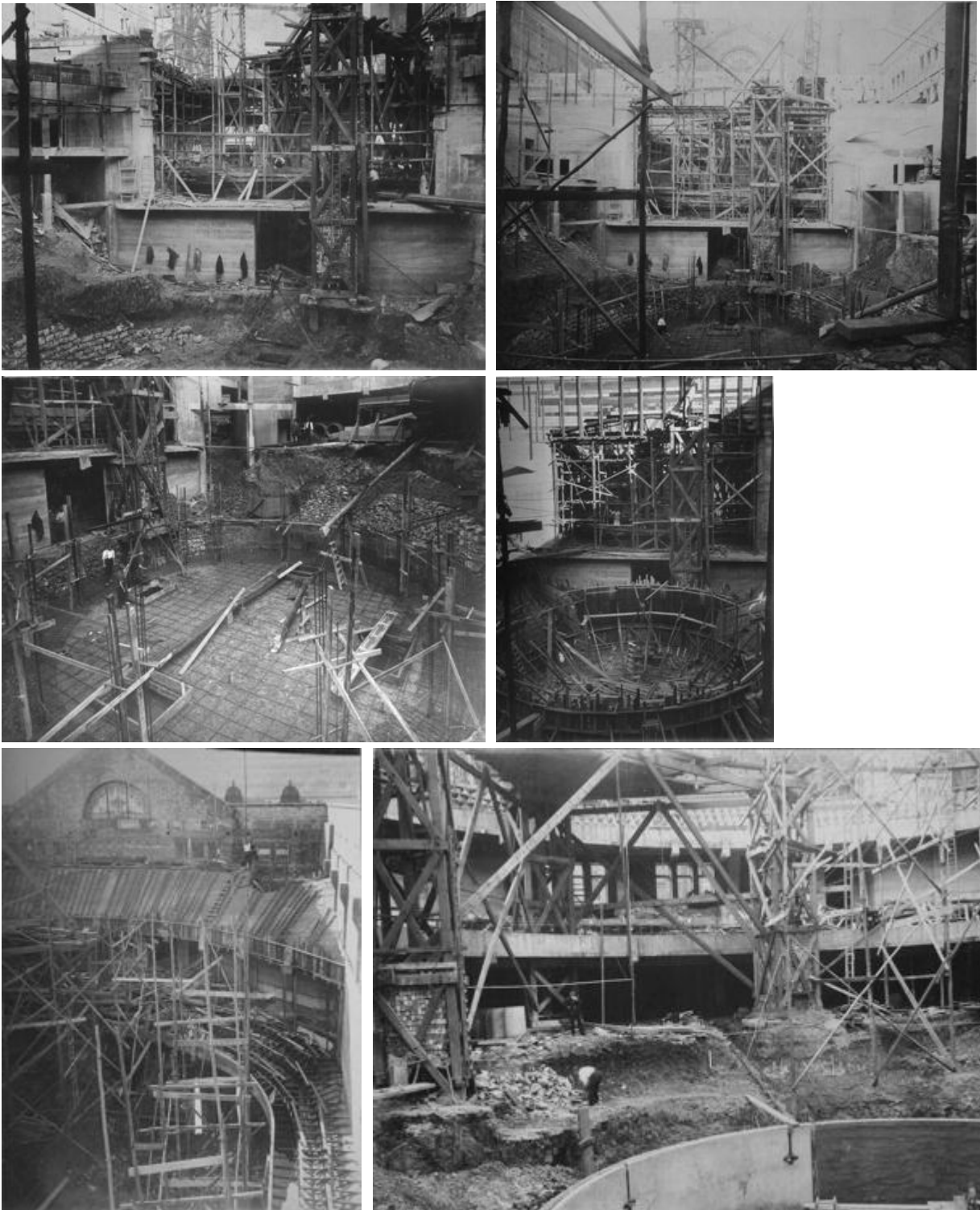


Figure 197 – Progress of construction inside Hippodrome, 1 June - 9 August 1915.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3354 (top left), NSCA CRS 51/3355 (top right), NSCA CRS 51/3356 (middle left), NSCA CRS 51/3363 (middle right), NSCA CRS 51/3370 (bottom left), NSCA CRS 51/3375 (bottom right)

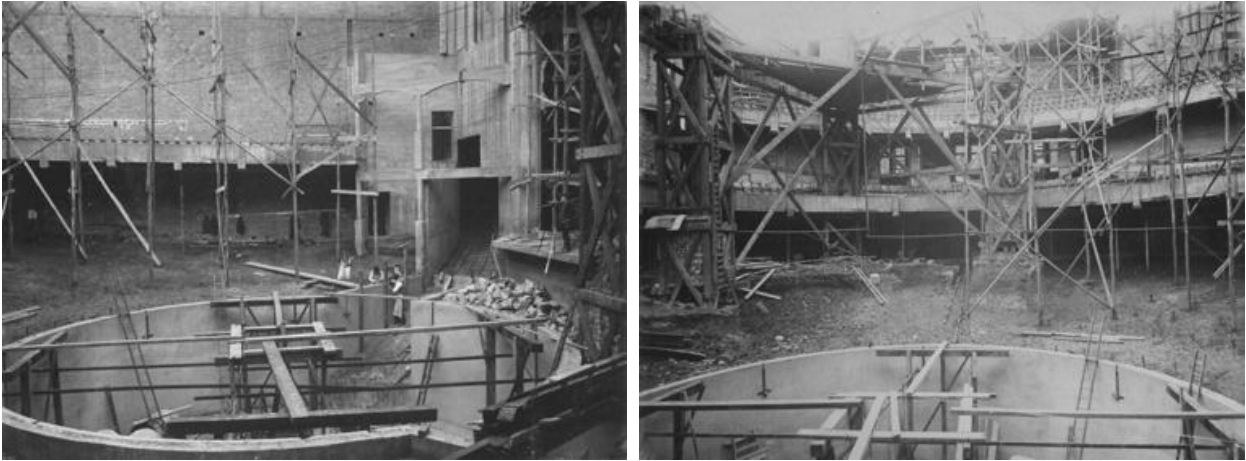


Figure 198 – Progress of construction inside Hippodrome, 23 August 1915.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3379 (left) and NSCA CRS 51/3380 (right)

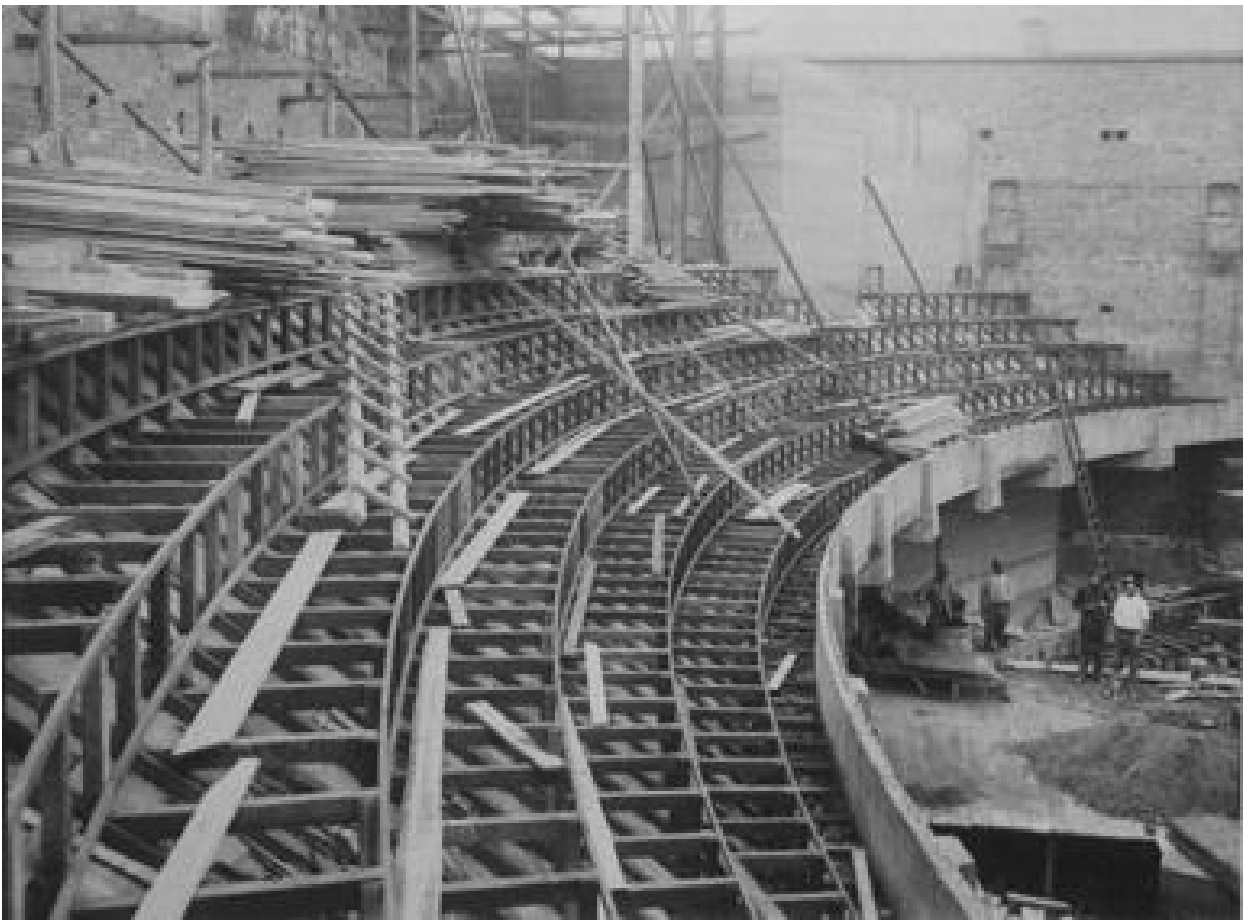


Figure 199 – Construction of seating within Hippodrome, 13 September 1915.

Source: NSCA CRS 51/3385

3.3.1. Hippodrome Design

Wirth Bros Circus, like its Australian rivals, kept in touch with performers and developments in the United States. One of the latter was the New York Hippodrome, designed by J.H. Morgan and erected in 1904.⁵¹ It was claimed at the time to be the largest building in the world, but the feature which caught the attention of Wirth Bros was the water tank for aquatic spectacles. This they decided to introduce into their comparatively diminutive antipodean Hippodrome.

The Sydney tank, constructed of reinforced concrete, was forty feet in diameter and twelve feet in depth. Large box section slides entered it from the wings to facilitate the entry of seals and polar bears. When not in use the pool was covered by a strong steel-framed platform which, when locked into place, converted the area to a circus ring with a low perimeter parapet. The platform was raised hydraulically from the base of the pool.⁵² Although no plans survive of the actual tank, it is clear from Merriman's basement plan of September 1913, that the pool was intended early on, although it was not included in the original tender. The tank was photographed under construction in August 1915 (Figure 200). Although an opening has been cut in the stage end and the parapets have been removed, the concrete fabric of the tank remains in place.

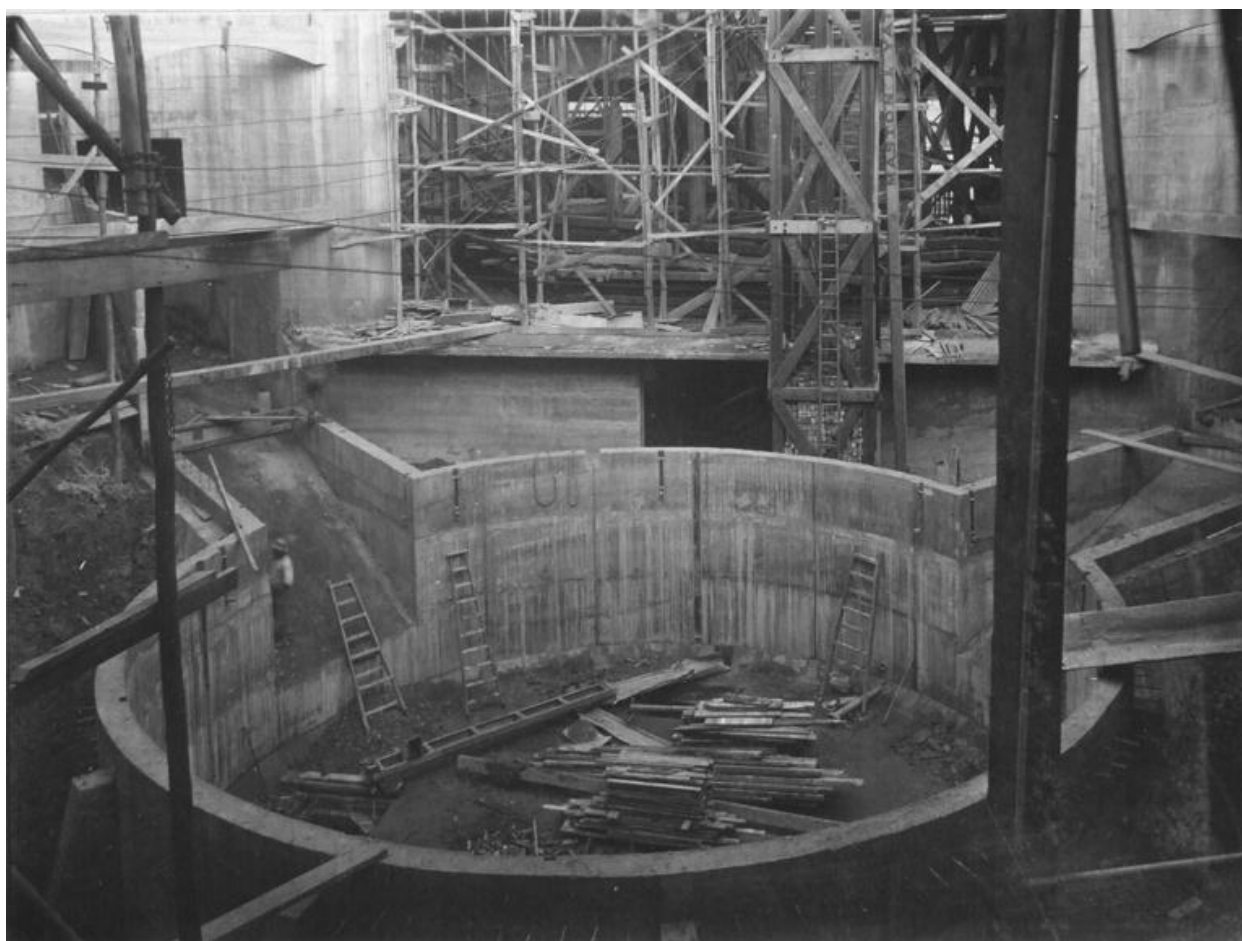


Figure 200 – Aquatic tank nearing completing within the Hippodrome, 9 August 1915.

Source: *City of Sydney Archives, NSCSA CRS 51/3374*

A commodious stage, 72 feet wide (60'6" clear) and 54 feet deep⁵³, was separated from the pool by a concave orchestra pit. On the remaining three sides, amphitheatric stalls seating was arranged. Two narrow galleries were superimposed at the rear of the auditorium. The stalls patrons gained access from the centre of the Campbell Street vestibule and large exits were provided for them in the centre of the Parker Street facade and the eastern wall. The lower of the two galleries (dress circle) was gained via the marble stairs

⁵¹ Hanson, *op. cit.*, pp11,18

⁵² *Vade Mecum*, quoted in Thorne, *Theatre Buildings*, p11, 9

⁵³ 72 feet equals 21.0 metres. 60 feet 6 inches equals 18.56 metres. 54 feet equals 16.45 metres.

flanking the vestibule, and additional exits were provided behind the boxes near the proscenium arch. Patrons of the upper or "peanut" gallery used separate entrances and enclosed "fire resisting" stairs at the north-eastern and north-western corners of the building and could only escape by the same route. The Council listed seating as: gallery, 460; dress circle, 410; stalls, 1,000; and an extra 357 if the circus ring was not needed for a performance.⁵⁴ There were a few additional seats in the pairs of boxes on either side of the proscenium arch.

Because the dress circle and upper gallery were so narrow, sight lines for stage, ring and even aerial acts were unimpeded from almost any part of the auditorium. Supporting gallery posts presented the only problem. The Council claimed the auditorium could be used as a hippodrome, circus, theatre, opera house, concert hall, vaudeville entertainment hall or for "photo plays" (early silent motion pictures).

A steel truss roof covered the Hippodrome. Six of the original seven trusses were raised some 12 feet (3.65 metres) in 1927-28 to accommodate the atmospheric ceiling of the Capitol Theatre. As the trusses were not taken down but raised simultaneously by screw jacks, the original timber framing which held the stamped metal coffers or domes remains between the Hippodrome trusses. The frames would also have carried ventilating apparatus and lighting equipment.⁵⁵

On completion in 1916, the auditorium was decorated with a surprisingly old-fashioned and conservative Late Victorian colour scheme of dark brown dado, deep chocolate dado line and cream above. This scheme was visible in 1990 on an exposed western wall of the auditorium.



Figure 201 – Wirths Hippodrome, 1916.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 43/1916 p177

⁵⁴ NSCA/1 plan collection, City of Sydney Archives

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p9 and *Building*, 12 February 1929, p61 and inspection of fabric, 1990

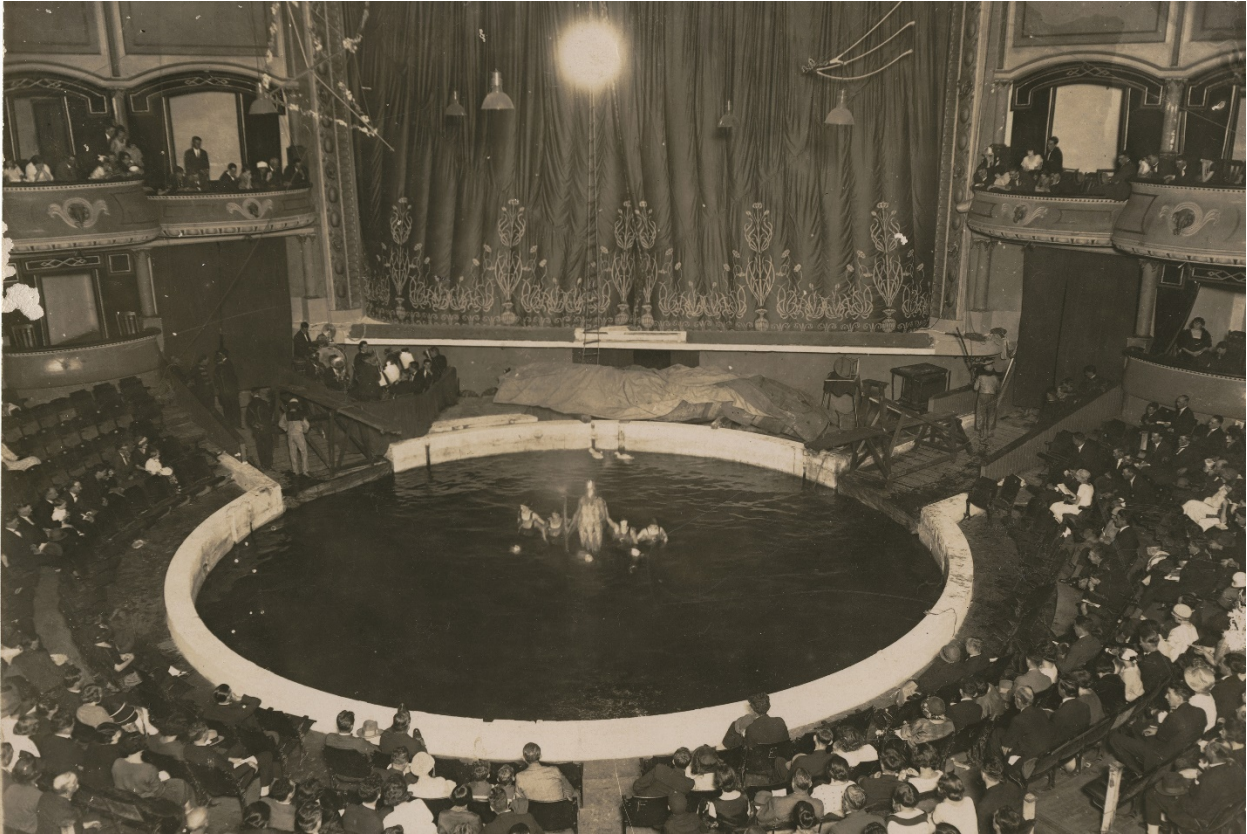


Figure 202 – Hippodrome aquatic tank, c.1916.

Source: MAAS Collection, 2012/104/1-3/61

Wirths Hippodrome was officially opened on 29 March 1916. The opening night program having been delayed to the following Monday on account of the late arrival of English, Japanese and other artists travelling from Europe aboard the RMS Mooltan. The opening show opened to widespread acclaim, with the newspapers congratulating the Council and Wirth Brothers on their enterprise. *The Sun* hailed the opening show a great success. Several acts merited special mention, including the Riogoku Family (Japanese acrobats), Captain Hulling's performing seals, Miss May Martin Wirth (equestrienne), Cossack cavalry exhibition by M Mussie Mamive, Losetta Twins (trapeze work) and Lovani's high wire act.⁵⁶ *The Referee* pronounced Wirth Brothers new venture a "brilliant opening success"⁵⁷ while the *Freeman's Journal* praised Wirth Bros. "clever and dashing entertainment in which quite a constellation of brilliant stars took part".⁵⁸ The show played to packed houses throughout April and May. Leonard Durrell's military "aqua-drama" *Kultur* premiered in the Hippodrome on 1 June.

⁵⁶ "Wirth's New Hippodrome", *The Sun*, 4 April 1916, p8

⁵⁷ "Wirth Brothers' Hippodrome", *Referee*, 5 April 1916, p15

⁵⁸ "Wirth Bros' Hippodrome", *Freemans Journal*, 6 April 1916, p29



Figure 203 - Official opening of Wirths Hippodrome Sydney, 3 April 1916. Photograph by JD Cleary.

Source: MAAS Collection, 2012/104/1-2/9

The opening season was a financial success, unlike the programs which followed in 1916 and 1917 which included two seasons of films presented by Wirths Hippodrome Pictures, Kemp's Buck Jumping Show and the circus's Eastern Season featuring King Neptune and the "lovely diving mermaids". However, Wirth Brothers could not recapture the highs of 1916. Despite the Wirth family's best efforts to make the theatre financially viable as a circus, the Hippodrome lay idle for almost half of its first fifteen months of operation and this situation did not improve with time. Nevertheless, in eighteen months, Council raised the rent three times.

Endeavouring to reverse the theatre's fortunes, Wirths reached agreement with other enterprises for the use of the Hippodrome, including William Anderson, the melodrama specialist. Wirths and Anderson jointly produced several dramatic entertainments. Weekly plays included "Robbery Under Arms", "When London Sleeps". The Hippodrome also hosted several popular vaudeville and pantomime programs. Another innovation was the screening of films, which had commenced soon after opening in 1916.

One of the great success stories in this period was the popularity of boxing programs run by Wirth Brothers in conjunction with Harry Keesing, and subsequently Stadiums Ltd. The first boxing event took place in May 1918 and included a programme of vaudeville events.⁵⁹

Despite the success of a range of popular entertainment programs at the Hippodrome, Wirths reportedly applied unsuccessfully to Council to end their lease in 1919. Locked into a twenty-one-year lease and with mounting costs, in 1927, Wirths applied to the Council to convert the building into a picture theatre, and simultaneously engaged Henry E White to act for them. In May the same year, William Kenworthy, architect, submitted White's plans for the remodelling of the Hippodrome to the Chief Secretary's Department. The drawings were approved subject to fourteen requirements. The plans show a traditional "hard top" cinema.

⁵⁹ "Boxing at the Hippodrome", *Sunday Times*, 12 May 1918, p4

White submitted revised drawings for Union Theatres for an “atmospheric” theatre along the lines of those designed by American architect, John Eberson.

Soon after, an agreement was signed by Wirths, the Council and Capitol Theatre (Sydney), a division of Union Theatres, whereupon the residue of the lease was conveyed to the film exhibitor, and the lease reassigned to Wirths as mortgagee. Simultaneously, Wirth Bros vacated the premises.

Wirths “long and costly association with the Hippodrome property” came to an end in 1927, “driven out by escalating costs, expensive improvements to safety and ventilation, and changing audience expectations”.⁶⁰



Figure 204 – Wirths Hippodrome, 19 August 1919.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 51/4709

⁶⁰ Dent, *op. cit.*, p89



Figure 205 – Wirths Hippodrome, 1920-1928. Manning Building at far-right fronting Campbell Street.

Source: SLNSW, hall_34998h.jpg



Figure 206 – Traffic in Hay Street, 5.30 pm, October 1923 showing Wirths Hippodrome in centre looking east from George Street.

Source: SLNSW, d1_17776h.jpg

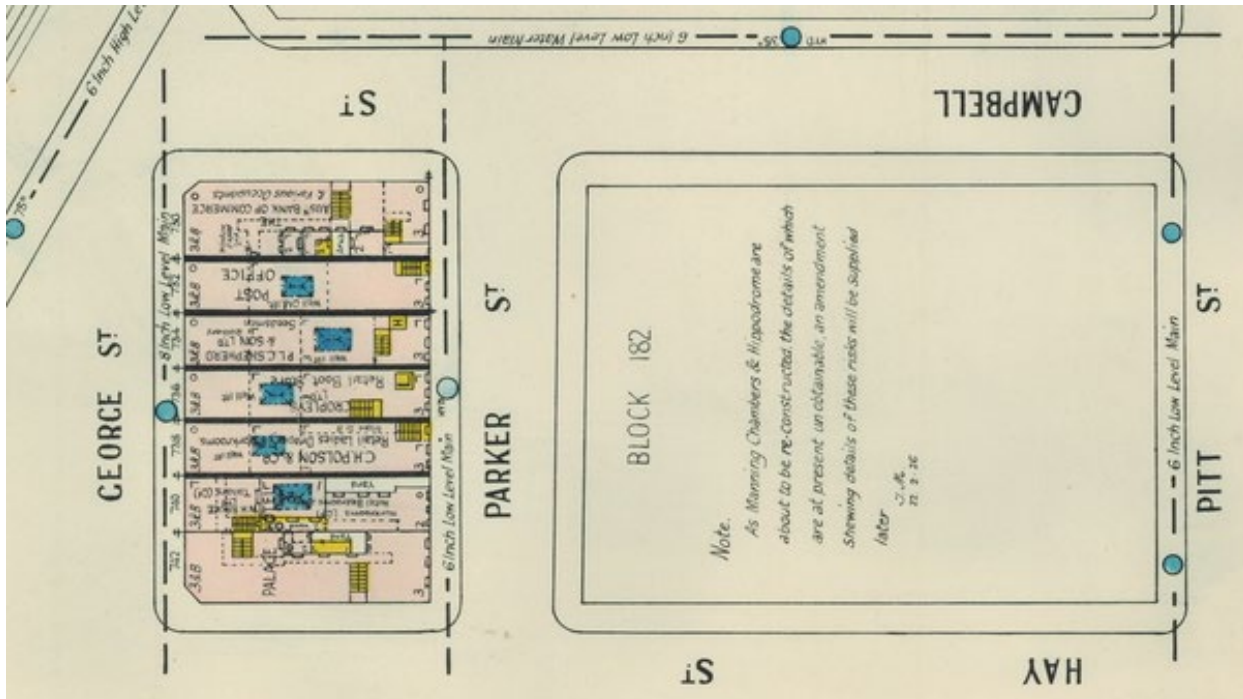


Figure 207 – Fire Underwriters Association of N.S. Wales Detail Survey Maps, Hippodrome Block No. 182, 22 February 1926. North to top of page.

Source: SLNSW, Digital order no. a1358104h.jpg

3.3.2. The Atmospheric Theatre

The period 1924-32, was the grand era of the atmospheric theatre. During this brief period, over 100 atmospheric theatres were built in the United States. Their progress was only halted by the depression. Then, when construction resumed, "Moderne" cinemas had become the predominant mode. From 1927, five atmospheric theatres were built in Australia: The Capitol, Sydney, 1927-28; The State, Melbourne, 1928-29; the Ambassadors, Perth, 1928; the Empire, Goulburn, 1929-30; and the Plaza, Paddington, Queensland, 1930.

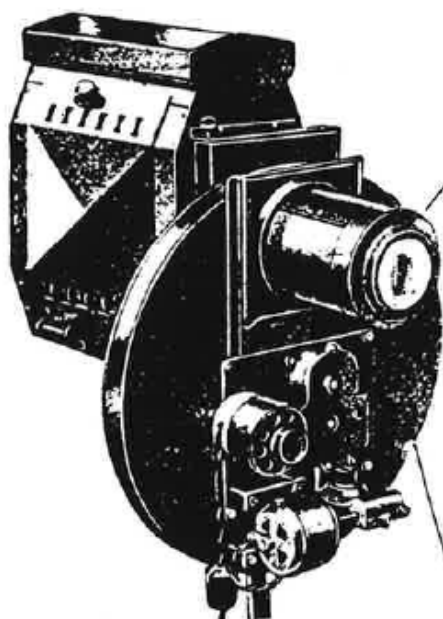
Most picture palace buffs agree that the "atmospheric" theatre arrived almost full blown with John Eberson's 1923 design of Hoblitzelle's "Majestic" in Houston, Texas. It was a distinct departure from the mainstream picture palace design which had developed progressively during the first quarter of the twentieth century from the conventions of the opera house. Such orthodox theatres had increasingly luxurious decoration and were intended to provide a palatial architectural setting for their patrons. In the trade, they were known as "hard tops" and the State Theatre, Sydney, is a fine example.

Atmospheric theatres, on the other hand, sought to create the illusion that the patron was sitting in an exotic and romantic courtyard or amphitheatre under a brilliant night sky. It was a sky that could be transformed by dramatic lighting effects projected from a highly developed version of the magic lantern (Figure 208). The Brenkert Company's 1928 catalogue lists some of the effects:

Aurora Borealis, Babbling Brook, Blizzard, Descending Clouds (for imaginary ascension trip), Flying Angels, Flying Birds, Flying Butterflies, Fire and Smoke, Flames, Lightning, Fast Moving Dark Storm Clouds, Moving River, Ocean Waves, Rain, Sand Storm, Snow, Volcano in Eruption (with flowing lava and rain of fire and ashes), Waterfall, Waving American Flag, Flying Fairies, Flying Aeroplanes, Falling Roses, Twinkling Stars, Rainbow and Rising Bubbles.

To provide an appropriate ground for these atmospheric performances a ceiling of smooth plaster, painted electric (nearly blue bag) blue, curved from behind the side walls without interruption or blemish. For those who haven't experienced an atmospheric theatre - Will Longstaff's "Menin Gate at Midnight" in its specially lit room at the Canberra War Memorial Museum approximates the effects. It is perhaps not coincidental that Longstaff painted this, his most atmospheric of pictures, in 1927 at the height of the craze for atmospheric

theatres. A wide span garden pergola, or its equivalent, was the only distraction permitted in this smooth facsimile of the sky, but as it was located at the rear of the auditorium behind the backs of the patrons at a place when the seating was closest to the sky, it had a certain logic. The pergola's practical advantage was that it provided a cover for ventilation grills.



BRENOGRAPH *Junior*

**Reliable
and built to remain so**

Like every unit in the complete line of Brenkert projectors and lighting devices, Brenograph Junior was designed to produce certain results, effectively and well. It is absolutely reliable.

It may be operated over a wide range of speeds and is automatic and reliable over the entire speed range. Brenograph Junior is especially well adapted to short range work for covering large areas, and its automatic operation and compactness make it ideal for remote control, with the origin of the effects hidden from the patrons of the theatre. It is decidedly to your advantage to write for full details.



For concealed work, Brenograph Junior with its motor driven effect and automatic operation requires a space but 14" wide 10" high and 30" deep. No matter where located it may easily be controlled from the main switchboard.

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The Appeal of Light in Motion

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Brenograph Junior creates this—and more. Animated scenic effects, projected back stage from the wings, from overhead or, in small theatres from the projection room, are now available, at a minimum cost—through Brenograph Junior.

Its interchangeable discs, projected at any desired speed, give you, easily and realistically, moving clouds, flying birds and swiftly passing country panoramas. Or, at a moment's notice, you may have a driving rain, falling flowers or ocean waves.

Let us send you an illustrated folder describing Brenograph Junior in full and listing moving scenic and color effects now available. Free on request.

**BRENKERT LIGHT PROJECTION CO.
DETROIT**

Brenkert

PROJECTORS—EFFECTIVE LIGHTING DEVICES

Figure 208 – Advertisement for Brenograph Junior, projector of illusionary effects for atmospheric theatres.

Source: Motion Picture News, 20 December 1927, p14 as reproduced in Kerr, op.cit., p18

All standing elements under this sky were treated as if they were external architectural features: the projection box and the proscenium arch were capped by roofing elements; and the side walls were penetrated by gates, arches and niches and supported temples, balconies, and gables depending on the character chosen. Eberson tried to avoid repeating his auditorium interiors - a difficult feat considering his prodigious output. To reduce the problem, he researched a wide variety of exotic styles and situations. For example, illustrations in a 1927 edition of the *Motion Picture News* show his use of the following themes:

Baroque Deluxe
Classic
Castillian Castle
French Fantasy
Greek
Italian Renaissance
Italian Colonnade
Italian Garden Court
Moorish
Oriental
Persian Shrine
Courtyard
Roman Temple
Rustic Spanish
Spanish Churrigueresque
Spanish Mission.⁶¹

Nor did Eberson mind mixing his themes where the result might help provide a novel and spectacular ambience for the patrons. Such vulgar eclecticism might have displeased art and architectural critics, but it helped pack people into the theatres.

Eberson's invention of the atmospheric clearly owed much to his familiarity with the highly decorated Baroque and Rococo elevations and coved tromp l'oeil ceilings of Dresden and Vienna where he had received his education. After settling in St Louis, Missouri, in 1901, the young Eberson would have had these impressions reinforced by the designs for the great expositions then fashionable in the United States. Jane Preddy describes them as "theatrical, impermanent, eclectic and escapist" and notes the abundance of "statuary, gazebos, trellises, columns, cherubim and urns". Typical of this oeuvre was the 1904 St Louis World Fair to which Eberson was doubtless exposed.⁶²

Apart from his creative and organisational skills, Eberson was a super salesman. Moreover, his product was as alluring to theatre management as it was to the patrons: the lightly constructed plain ceilings and interchangeable plaster decoration made his auditoria much cheaper than the grand hardtops of the 1920s. In addition, Eberson backed up his design and supervision by organising a workshop ("Michelangelo Studios") to supply plaster ornamental and sculptural features to his clients.⁶³

The atmospheric theatre was intended for silent movies and the live performance of sound. Its acoustic characteristics, whether sophisticated or not, were designed with this in mind. Recorded sound did not become effective until the late 1920s and was introduced to most of the theatres as an afterthought. The fact that Eberson and his contemporaries called their creations "theatres" emphasised the live dramatic components.

⁶¹ *Motion Picture News*, Part II, 20 December 1927

⁶² Preddy, *Palaces of Dreams*, 1989

⁶³ Naylor, Theatres, in James Semple Kerr, *The Haymarket and the Capitol: A conservation plan for the area bounded by George, Campbell, Pitt and Hay Streets, Sydney* (May 1990) p. 19

The feature movie was accompanied by an orchestra, the size of which depended on the importance of the theatre. Performances were given on Robert Hope-Jones' extraordinary invention the "unit orchestra" - the most famous manufacturer of which was Rudolf Wurlitzer. Apart for its capacity to imitate all the instruments of the orchestra, it could, as Ben Hall said:

*conjure up nightingales, canaries, galloping horses, steamboat and train whistles, auto horns...fire engine sirens, air planes, hurricanes, swishing surf, rain on the roof, telephone bells, door bells, trolley bells and the sound of smashing crockery - all with hair-raising verisimilitude.*⁶⁴

It was capable of producing honest music of compelling emotional force when properly played. Without it the movie palace would have been as soulless as an armory.⁶⁵

Ross Thorne's quote from "Roxy" Rothafel puts the presentation of programs during the 1920s into perspective:

*Of course the picture is important, and we could not do without it, but what we have tried to do is build around it an atmospheric program that is colorful, entertaining and interesting. This type of program, with its ballets, musical presentations, stage settings, and lighting effects ... was originated by ourselves (i.e. the creative management of the individual theatre).*⁶⁶

3.3.3. Capitol Theatre Conversion, 1927-1928

Despite the Hippodrome's versatility, it was not a commercial success and, by 1926, Wirths had decided to remodel the building as a picture palace. In February 1927, Henry White prepared plans for the theatre conversion of the Hippodrome for "Capitol Theatre Sydney Limited". Simultaneously, Wirths wrote to the Sydney City Council requesting a "remodelling" of the building for its proposed new function. It is unclear whether Wirths were acting on their own behalf or whether they had already come to an informal arrangement with Stuart Doyle, the managing director of Union Theatres Ltd.

White's design comprised the conversion of the Hippodrome to a conventional "hard top" with a capacity of 2,999 seats (Figure 209). His plans were drawn up by WBG (?) and EWM, the latter initials being EW McGowan, who about that time was in the "Architectural Department" of Union Theatres.⁶⁷ The plans were "approved" by GN Kenworthy (who later designed the Cremorne Orpheum), probably because White had already departed for the United States with Stuart Doyle to review the latest developments in theatre design. It had been Doyle's stated intention "to build a chain of picture palaces to be known as the Million Dollar Theatres in capital cities"⁶⁸ and this was probably given an added impetus by Paramount threatening to build their own chain of theatres in Australia if Union did not "raise theatres good enough for Paramount's supposedly spectacular product".⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Hall, *Seats*, pp182-2

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p179

⁶⁶ Thorne, *Psychology*, p178

⁶⁷ Taken from stalls plan 3A for Capitol Theatre (provided by PTW) quoted in Kerr, *op. cit.*, p20

⁶⁸ O'Brien, *The Greater Union Story*, p32

⁶⁹ Blackmore, *op. cit.*, p10 quoting Tulloch

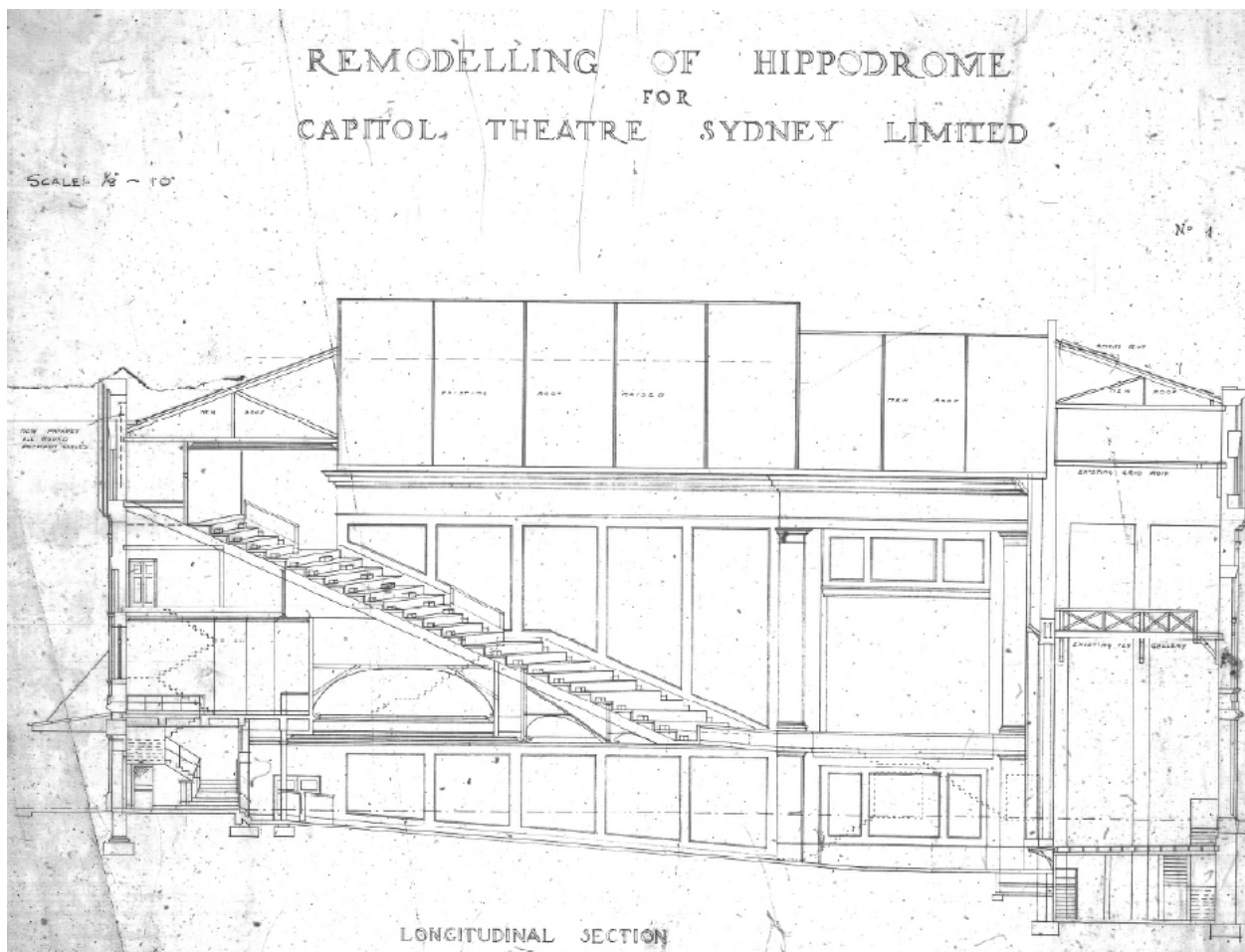


Figure 209 – John Eberson and Henry White sketches of the redesign of the Hippodrome.

Source: City of Sydney Archives

By 1927, Henry Eli White, originally from New Zealand, was a very experienced theatre designer based in Sydney. Before he closed his office in the 1930s depression, he had designed over 120 theatres for stage and cinema as well as the Bunnerong Power House.⁷⁰ Doyle, on the other hand, started his show business career as a "conjurer, ventriloquist and all round social entertainer".⁷¹ No doubt his interest in illusion was one of the reasons he was so impressed by the new atmospheric theatres in the United States and engaged Eberson to provide White with designs for the conversion of the Hippodrome - designs which Doyle was to draw on again for atmospheric theatres in Perth and Melbourne.

The earliest surviving evidence of the Eberson White association is a series of plans dated 31 March 1927 and inscribed

H.E. White – Sydney

John Eberson – Chicago

Associated Architects

These, and all subsequent joint plans, were for an atmospheric auditorium very like Eberson's Riviera at Omaha, Nebraska, to which Doyle and White had taken a fancy.⁷² Eberson was presumably less worried about duplication when the location was on the other side of the Pacific.

⁷⁰ Thorne, typescript biography of White, quoted in Kerr, *op.cit.*, p21

⁷¹ O'Brien, *loc.cit.*, p32

⁷² *Argus*, 6 January 1927, quoted by Thorne, *op. cit.*, p8

In May 1927, the Sydney City Council approved Wirths proposed alterations as shown in White's original February plans for the Hippodrome conversion, provided that the seal tank could be fully reinstated if required at the expiry of the lease and in the meantime would be made rat proof.⁷³ Sydney administrators still had a vivid memory of the disastrous bubonic plague carried by the rats of the city in 1900. Seven weeks later the lease was formally transferred to Union Theatres.

Construction work commenced on site on 12 August with a dedication ceremony. Well-known film actress, Edith Roberts, dedicated the Capitol, to "the art of the motion picture" and broke a bottle of champagne on the foundation stone.⁷⁴ The event was reported widely in the local press including in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which offered the following detailed description of the design of the new Capitol Theatre:

A new era of motion picture theatre construction in Australia was ushered in yesterday by the dedication and christening of the Capitol Theatre, which is being erected in the Haymarket for Union Theatres Ltd., at a cost of £120,000. With a seating capacity of 3,200, it will not only be the largest theatre in the Commonwealth but also will embody a design entirely new to Australia. It will be what is known in London and American cities as an "atmospheric" theatre-a building in which a certain locality or period will be ex-pressed by art and decoration. It is dedicated to the "Art of the Silver Screen."

A patron when he enters the auditorium, surrounded by tapestries, statuary, and paintings, will look up, not to an orthodox roof, but to a seemingly illimitable space. He will be led to imagine that he is sitting beneath the open sky, for stars will twinkle in all naturalness, and clouds will pass across his field of vision. Rainbows he will see, as well as strikingly beautiful sunlight effects. This will be brought about by the special "star" and "cloud-making" machinery. In the purchase of which hundreds of pounds have been spent. Ingeniously designed spotlights will give rise to scenes of sunrise and sunset.

Both inside and out the Capitol will be designed in Venetian style. An elaborate piazza and garden will be reproduced, Venetian pictures will grace the walls, and the general effect will represent a public square in the old Italian town. Examples of marble statuary and art treasures will decorate the amphitheatre and loggia, such as wrought-iron gates, carved chairs, authentic copies of the grotesques on the Palace of Montepulciano, massive vases and jardinières and paintings.

The ground space of the Capitol will be 170ft by 102ft, and the auditorium will be 140ft x 102ft. As in most modern theatres, a gallery is being dispensed with, the plans providing for a dress circle and stalls only. The stage and orchestra stalls will be in the form of terraces. There will be one terrace for the string instruments of the orchestra, another for the wind instruments; the stage itself will represent another, and the screen on which the pictures are projected will constitute the fourth. A distinctive type of motion pictures and presentation, which will have many of the features of a stage revue and symphony concert, will be another innovation, providing for the engagement of perhaps 40 artists and performers each week. In this respect the tendency in the United States of filling almost half the programme with a musical presentation and the other half with a film will be followed.

*Mr. AK Emmelheinz, who arrived in Sydney a few days ago to superintend the arrangement of the lighting effects, brought with him four cloud-making machines, 500 star-twinkling machines, and 120 spotlights, including a powerful naval searchlight. A number of important pieces of statuary are due to arrive shortly by the Aorangi, including such figures as the Venus de Medici, busts of Ajax, Venus Melos, Diana, The Wolf of the Capitol, Romulus and Remus, Minerva, Apollo, Venus of Capua, Julius Caesar, Amazonian Venus, and others. It is expected that the theatre will be opened in February of next year.*⁷⁵

The Capitol duplicated Capitol Theatre, Chicago (Figure 210) and the Riviera Theatre, Omaha (Figure 211).

⁷³ SCC Minutes, 31 May 1927 (343), CRS 1105/27, City of Sydney Archives, in Kerr, *loc. cit.*, p21

⁷⁴ "Unique christening", *Daily Telegraph*, 13 August 1927, p2; "Unique ceremony", *The Sun*, 12 August 1927, p9; "The Capitol", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1927, p16

⁷⁵ "The Capitol: Dedication of the Theatre, Art of the Screen", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1927, p16



Figure 210 – Capitol Theatre, Chicago, after 1925. – Designed by famed theatre architect John Eberson. Closed in 1974 and demolished in 1985.

Source: Cinema Treasures website, Capitol Theatre <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/987>, accessed 19 February 2019

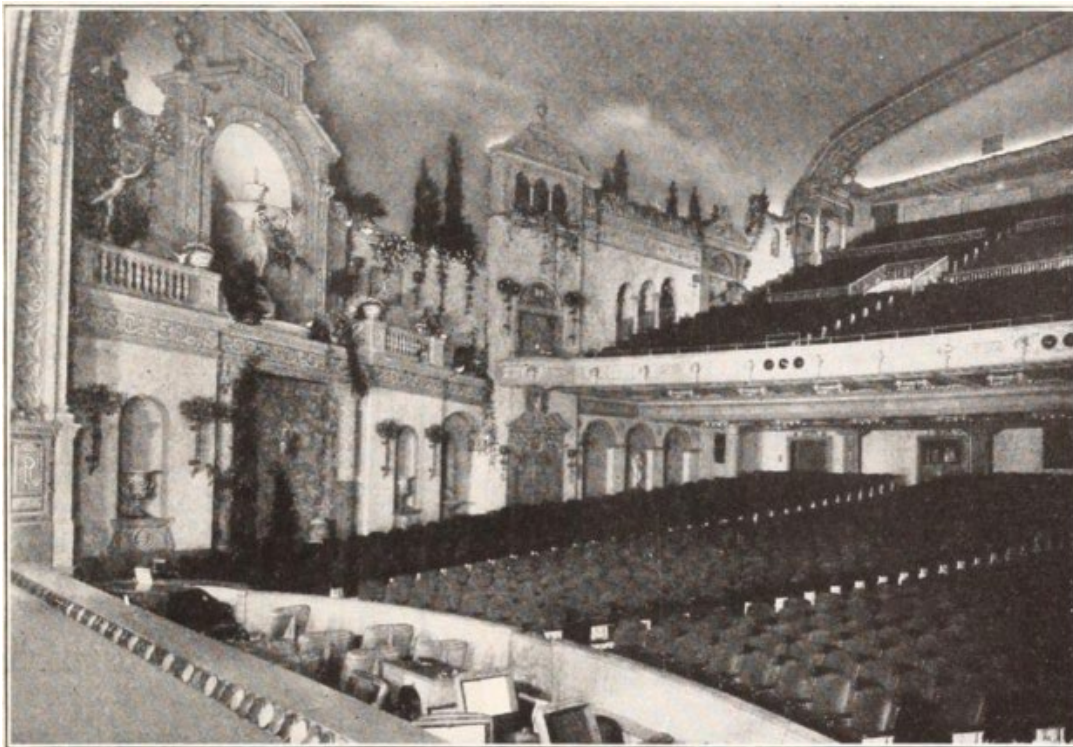


Figure 211 – Riviera Theatre, Omaha, after 1926. Name change to the Astro in 1960. Closed in the early 1980s but saved from demolition by Mrs Rose Blumkin. Theatre restored and reopened at Rose Blumkin Performing Arts Centre.

Source: Cinema Treasures website, <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/906>, accessed 19 February 2019



Figure 212 - The New Capitol Theatre, to cost £120,000.

Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1927, p18

During succeeding months, Sydneysiders were kept informed on progress of the remodelling of the Hippodrome for the Capitol Theatre. *The Truth* reported in January 1928 that "Sydney's new Capitol, now being erected in the Haymarket, is running up figures that read like telephone numbers, or motor licence plates. Art treasures, £50,000; organ, £21,000; stage drapings, £3,000; electric signs, £5,000 – are a few items apart altogether from the constructional costs which alone exceed £145,000."⁷⁶

The Hippodrome conversion followed closely the sketch plans prepared by Eberson under the architects' joint names, redrawn in more finished form by White's Sydney office. Similarly, the detailed American drawings of the ornamental side walls and proscenium arch specifically prepared for the Capitol were re-copied in Sydney. Both the American and Australian versions of the proscenium arch have survived, and it is possible to confirm that the latter was a precise copy of the former. Hence, it was deliberately misleading to omit Eberson's name from the Sydney version even if it was in the cause of chauvinistic propaganda for Union Theatres.

Although the design of the Capitol as an atmospheric theatre should certainly be attributed to Eberson, White's role as supervising architect, with all the organisational, structural and mechanical problems of conversion, was considerable. It was, moreover, an area in which he was particularly experienced and competent.

The conversion involved lifting the six northernmost roof trusses twelve feet to make room for the extended slope of the new gallery and the atmospheric ceiling. White dealt with the external consequences of this in a summary and rather unsatisfactory way, probably as a result of client pressure for rapid completion but perhaps also because the perceived value of the precinct as townscape was being devalued by changing fashion. He simply extended the parapet to the required height, rendering it a disproportionate, overbearing and poorly detailed feature. In addition, he plastered the bays of the Campbell Street facade with an

⁷⁶ "Capitol-£350,000", *Truth*, 22 January 1928, p22

inappropriate, grossly textured, rough cast and had little regard for the quality of the facade when making some of the window insertions. Finally, the theatre was painted white, thus losing the relationship of brick, terracotta and Pyrmont stone, although this was probably required by Union Theatres to increase night visibility.⁷⁷

It seems that the treatment of the heightened facade was either referred to Eberson or tackled on his own initiative. In December 1927, he prepared a more grammatical remodelling of the Campbell Street fabric to cope with the problem. He removed the pediment (and thus its awkward relationship with the parapet), improved the parapet detailing (including large ventilator cartouches) and gave the former arcade bays a more sympathetic treatment. The effect was typical of the Neo Georgian revival of the 1920s. Francis Greenway, Hardy Wilson and Morton Herman would surely have considered it a great improvement on what was actually constructed.⁷⁸

As lighting was to be a major feature, Union Theatres' technical manager, AE Emmelhainz, was dispatched to the United States to study atmospheric techniques, returning in August 1927. The bulk of the plans on which the interior conversion was based were prepared the same month and continuously revised over the next few weeks in what must have been a very intensive exercise. Plans for decorative detailing and fittings followed in December and January.

Building claimed that refinements in the ventilation system perfected by Emmelhainz were subsequently adopted by Eberson in the United States⁷⁹ and that the installation in the Sydney Capitol was one of the most effective and, at £10,000, the most expensive in Australia.⁸⁰

The opening of the Capitol in April 1928 was a grand affair. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the first nighters:

...passed into an enchanted region where the depth of the blue heavens had something magical about it, and something heavily exotic. Clouds passed light over; then stars began to twinkle. Then again all was blue and clear.

This "atmospheric" effect had been carried out, not only in the auditorium itself, but also in the entrance lounge, so that it leapt upon the visitors the instant they left the street. The construction and decorations were all in the Venetian style. Facing the entrance above the doors which led to the stalls ran a slender balustrade, with tapestries hanging over it and lying against the pinkish-brown, variegated stucco of the walls. At either end stairways in two flights ran up to the balcony. Everywhere one looked there was bas-reliefs set into the wall, tapestries hanging, twisted pillars of red and gold.

In the auditorium itself there was a much greater profusion of sculpture and architectural detail and objects of art; but the great size of the place enabled all this to be set forth with no suspicion of cramping. Indeed the designers have achieved a remarkable feeling of depth and vastness. The two sides of the theatre are quite dissimilar in treatment. On the left, as one faced the screen the irregular facade terminated in a delightful garden, with a round tower in the midst supported by red and white Florentine pillars, with flowering vines drooping down towards the orchestra. with flocks of snowy doves. On the right a series of huge pedestals and niches, bearing reproductions of the Hermes of Praxiteles, the Capitoline Wolf and other famous statues, and thrown into relief by the decorative cypress trees behind, led down to a large palace-front with a balcony. As for the proscenium itself, that was roofed in red tiles, to heighten the feeling of out-of-doors, surmounted by groups of beautiful glowing lamps, and very richly ornamented. A particularly attractive feature being a row of peacocks with electric lights behind them.

The lighting in fact played a great part in the theatre's success. In general it was diffused and gained a pleasantly restful quality from the blue that floated in the roof: but at the same time bulbs had been concealed here and there, so as to bring out the features of the decoration and give the surroundings vivacity. Sometimes, when all the main lights had been extinguished, there remained a charming half-glow on the proscenium with the lamps a glow of scarlet in the niches behind the statues and a yellow glare behind some trellising at the sides as the dominant notes.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Kerr, *op. cit.*, p22

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Building*, 12 February 1928, p87

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ "The Capitol, richly ornamented theatre, opening ceremony", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1928, p4

The *Herald* went on to comment on the orchestra and the Wurlitzer rising into the auditorium on their platform lifts, the jazz band performing on the stage, and the shorts and feature films. Not mentioned, but part of the early programs, was a twenty-member Capitol Ballet. The following year (1929) the theatre was fitted to screen “talkies”. It was a spectacular but brief flowering as by 1931-32 Greater Union was in financial difficulties with the depression. In November 1932, the Capitol closed its doors for renovations and alterations, and in the words of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, bring it “into line with the most modern theatres on the Continent and in America”.⁸²



Figure 213 – Foyer decorated with fresh flowers for Opening Night, 1928

Source: <https://www.capitoltheatre.com.au/about/history.aspx>, viewed 3 December 2018

⁸² “The Capitol”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 November 1932, p10



Figure 214 – Capitol Theatre in 1928, viewed from the corner of Campbell Street and Parker Lane.

Source: <https://www.capitoltheatre.com.au/about/history.aspx>, viewed 3 December 2018

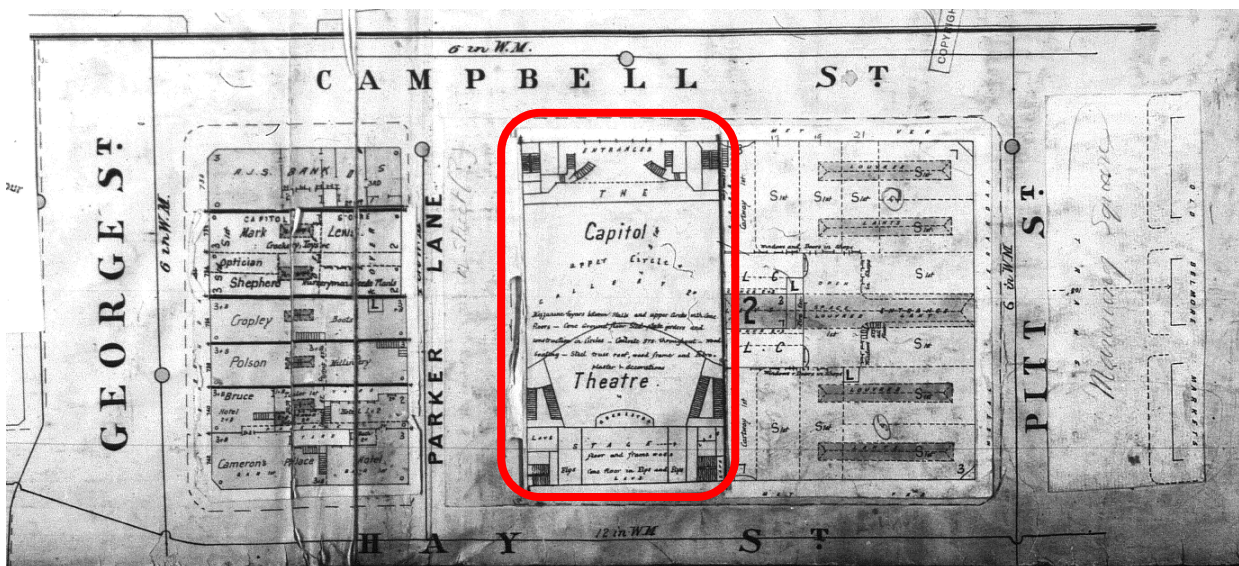


Figure 215 – Detail from Structural Plans of the City of Sydney “Ignis et Aqua” Series Sheet 3 Vol 1, 1907 with later annotations to c.1928. Capitol Theatre outlined in red.

Source: SLNSW, Z/MAXX 811.17/1892/1 FM4/10537

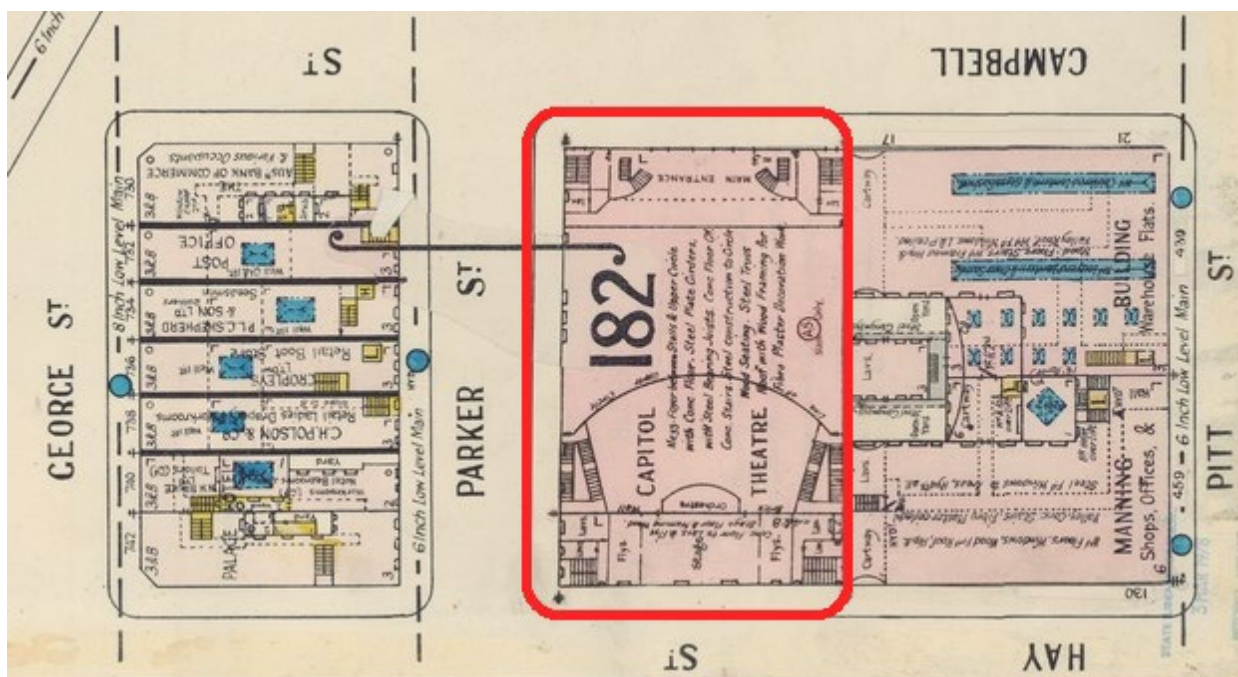


Figure 216 - Fire Underwriters Association of N.S. Wales Detail Survey Maps, Hippodrome Block No. 182, c.1928.

Source: SLNSW, a1358104h

Shorn of its live acts (excepting the Wurlitzer) and screening second-rate movies, the theatre re-opened in an economy mode in April 1933 with an all Australian programme. However, the Capitol never recovered its former glory. Over the next fifty years its erratic downhill progress makes depressing reading.⁸³ Maintenance economising gradually put machinery and lighting out of action and in 1945 all "unwanted" decoration (including banners, tapestries and artificial foliage) was stripped from the interiors.

⁸³ Blackmore, *op. cit.*, pp23-30 and Hanson, parts V and VI



Figure 217 – Detail from Milton Kent aerial view of Haymarket, c.1940-February 1957. Capitol building in bottom right corner.

Source: SLNSW, c079000010

In her thesis, Lynne Dent discusses Sydney City Council and Greater Union's "equivocal" relationship. She questions the Council's apparent lack of concern and/or awareness over the deteriorating condition of the building, and why did the Council overlook Greater Union Theatres' neglect and disinterest in the Council's property? Dent did not uncover any evidence in Council files, nor Chief Secretary's files, that the company made any attempt to maintain the building according to conditions in both lease and licence.⁸⁴

Kate Blackmore also discusses at length the decline of the theatre from the 1930s to 1970s.

From the onset of the Depression through to 1971, the theatre was held by Greater Union (in its many corporate forms) on six-month, one year or occasionally two year leases from Council, and from 1961 to 1972 on a weekly tenancy. Initially showing 'B' grade westerns through the 'thirties, it then became one of the few cinemas in Sydney to have a weekly changeover of prestigious re-runs during the 1940s and 1950s. In the late 1950s, it is alleged it was the only theatre in Sydney showing Australian films.⁸⁵

Periodically throughout these years, Council Sub-Committees looked at alternative options for the theatre but all were without concrete result. For example, in 1959, Council decided to put the lease out to tender in an attempt to extract a minimum three-year lease and to encourage capital expenditure on the building. At this date, Greater Union would only accept a two-year lease and their rental was 'pegged' by the Fair Rents Board at a sum still slightly higher than that proposed by the only other tenderer (Hoyts).⁸⁶ One decade later, however, and in the midst of Australia's second long boom, Council policy and Greater Union's attitude seem to have been reversed.

⁸⁴ Dent, *op.cit.*, p177

⁸⁵ Conversation with Bruce Pattison, 3 August 1989 in Blackmore, *op.cit.* p26

⁸⁶ Minute Paper, Properties Department, 29 January 1959, CRS 34/5425/58, City of Sydney Archives

Early in 1970, after the closing of the Tivoli, the Stadium and the Palace Theatre and only a few months before the destruction by fire of Her Majesty's Theatre, Greater Union wrote to Council with "various proposals to either buy or lease the property to enable us, in conjunction with associates, to renovate the theatre so that it could be used for the dual purpose of live entertainment and/or as a cinema". No action resulted. Then, in August, after the destruction of Her Majesty's, Greater Union wrote again, this time offering to expend in excess of \$100,000 "to replace the roof and ceiling and to modernise the front of house and auditorium and dressing rooms". Their condition, however, was a minimum three-year lease.

The matter was referred to Council's Finance Committee and consideration briefly deferred. In the interim, JC Williamson Ltd made a tentative approach to Council as to the possibility of using the Capitol as a temporary replacement for Her Majesty's...

In December 1971...the Lord Mayor received an approach from Harry M Miller of Harry M Miller Attractions offering to lease the building from Council for a rental of \$2,000 per week for a minimum period acceptable to the Council and with guaranteed expenditure of \$100,000 on facilities.⁸⁷

Council officer, Ron Dunphry photographed the interior of the Capitol Theatre after the building was vacated by Greater Union and before it was leased to Harry M Miller. The series of photographs, a selection being reproduced at Figure 218, Figure 219 and Figure 220, show the years of neglect including water stains, holes in the roof and ceilings, and peeling painted surfaces. The atmospheric and ornamental fabric of the interior suffered further indignity in 1972 when the theatre lease was removed from Greater Union Theatres and awarded to Harry M. Miller for the very successful production of *Jesus Christ, Superstar* (Figure 221). Preparations involved the replacement of the atmospheric plaster ceiling, the addition of various facilities of substandard design and carpentry, and coating much of the original polychrome decor with ochre paint. The Theatre Organ Society purchased the Wurlitzer and finally found a home for it in the Orion Theatre, Campsie.

Jesus Christ Superstar premiered at the Capitol Theatre on 4 May 1972 and ran until 1973 (Figure 221). Thereafter, the Capitol had an intermittent list of tenancies, including ballets and dance company productions sponsored by Edgley and Dawe, a shortened season of Chinese documentary films, and a return season of *Jesus Christ Superstar* (June- October 1976). Harry M Miller Attractions' lease expired in October 1976, leaving the Capitol vacant for almost two years. During this period the Council attempted unsuccessfully to attract tenders for the lease for five or ten years. The fabric of the building continued to deteriorate to a dangerous state, and any prospective lessees expected Council to pay all costs for repairs and alterations in return for reducible rentals set at, or below, the rental paid in 1972.

In the 1970s, various organisations and individuals sought to preserve the Capitol. The first such move was in 1976, when the National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) classified the theatre building. Two years later, the Australian Heritage Commission listed the Capitol on the Register of the National Estate. Later the same year, the NSW Heritage Council recommended to the Minister for Planning that he place a Conservation Order on the Capitol, which was duly approved on 22 January 1979. However, the Interim Conservation Order (ICO) lapsed in March 1981, leaving the building unprotected from development pressures.

At the same time, "the theatre's deteriorating condition and inadequacies – such as its small stage and sight lines limited by the proscenium – made lease negotiation protracted and difficult".⁸⁸ Consequently, between 1979 and 1983 when the Capitol finally closed, the theatre was used primarily as a concert venue.

⁸⁷ At that date, Greater Union were paying a rental of \$260 per week. Minute of the Town Clerk, 8 December 1971, CRS 34/397/61, City of Sydney Archives

⁸⁸ Murray op.cit., p11



Figure 218 – Series of interior shots taken to record the contents and condition of the theatre in connection with the lease of the Capitol Theatre to Harry M Miller in 1972. Photographs by Ron Dunphy.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 356

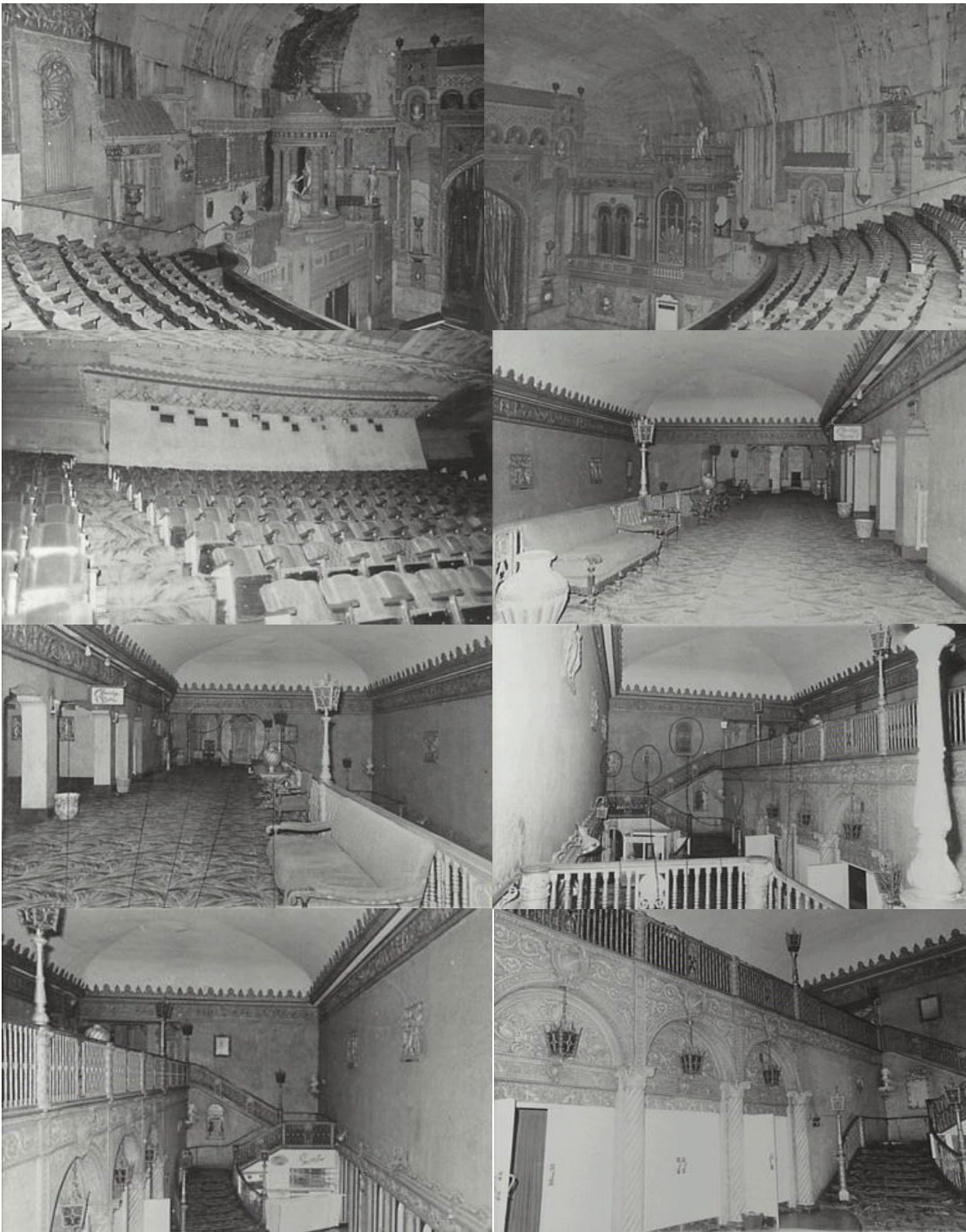


Figure 219 - Series of interior shots taken to record the contents and condition of the theatre in connection with the lease of the Capitol Theatre to Harry M Miller in 1972. Photographs by Ron Dunphy.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 356

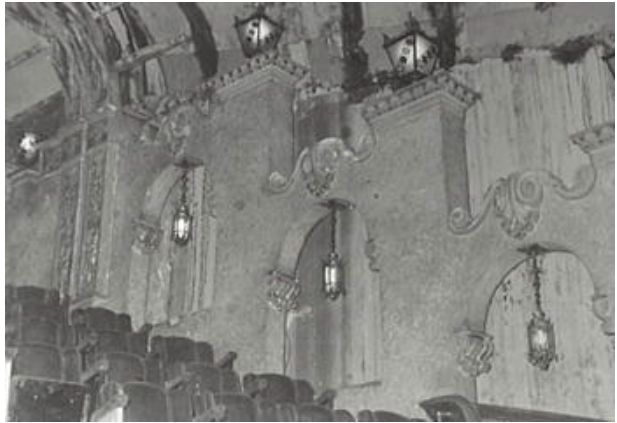
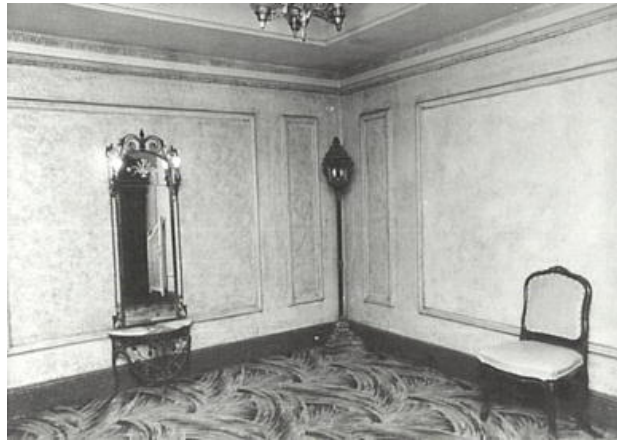


Figure 220 - Series of interior shots taken to record the contents and condition of the theatre in connection with the lease of the Capitol Theatre to Harry M Miller in 1972. Photographs by Ron Dunphy.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 356



Figure 221 – Several views of production of Jesus Christ Superstar, Capitol Theatre, 1972.

Source: Milesago: Australasian Music & Popular Culture 1964-1975, <http://www.milesago.com/stage/superstar.htm>

3.3.4. Restoration of the Capitol Theatre

Following its closure in 1983, the theatre remained boarded up and gradually deteriorated as Sydney City Council debated its fate, pitting it against the Regent Theatre, facing a similar predicament. The Interim Heritage Order (IHO) on the Capitol expired in March 1981. However, the Minister granted a new IHO on the building in 1985, followed in 1987 with a Permanent Conservation Order (PCO). Despite heritage protection, the Capitol's future was still in doubt, as there were competing factions in the City Council for and against the retention of the Capitol, and the feasibility of restoring the building as a lyric theatre.

Eventually, in March 1989, the Council called for Expressions of Interest for the conservation of the Capitol Theatre. Developers were asked to conserve the atmospheric auditorium and also update the Capitol into a first class lyric theatre. In return, Council was offering a 99-year lease on the development site bounded by George, Haymarket, Pitt and Campbell Streets.

Four final development proposals were selected, namely: Bond Properties; Essington Developments; Capital Land Corporation; and Ipoh Garden Developments (Aust.). Bond Properties and Essington Developments both incorporated very high towers on the western boundaries. Capital Land Corporation and Ipoh Garden Developments maintained a height that was more compatible with the buildings in the immediate area.

In September 1989, the Council accepted the tender of Ipoh Gardens (Aust) Ltd. Following protracted and difficult negotiations, the developer signed a contract with the City of Sydney in March 1992 to redevelop the site. Soon after, the development application (DA) was lodged with both the Heritage Council and Sydney City Council. The DA was awarded conditional approval in May that year, however, a series of design amendments were made to the plans throughout the rest of the year. Tenders for construction were called in October 1992. Ipoh appointed Fletchers (Aust) Ltd as the preferred tender. Council assented to the building contract in June 1993.



Figure 222 – Capitol Theatre before restoration, c.March/April 1992.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 908/1258)



Figure 223 – Facade of Capitol Theatre before restoration, c.March 1992.

Source: *City of Sydney Archives, STC 18251, 18252 & 18253*

The upgrade of the theatre was a major job requiring architectural and engineering ingenuity. Ipoh's Project manager, Tim Tait, had gathered a range of professionals to work on the project. Andrew Andersons, Robert

Eadie and Trevor Waters from Peddle Thorp and Walker Architects had been involved in the project since Ipoh's first tender in 1989. An initial partnering program was held to bring all the team together along with key stakeholder groups. Architects, builders, plasterers, engineers, Heritage Council representatives and council staff attended workshops on site in the Manning Building to discuss the vision of the project. The process was particularly successful in focusing the project team on the job ahead and ensured a collective understanding of the project's philosophy and goals as well as different stakeholders' expectations.⁸⁹

The project team was lucky to have access to all the original plans for both the Hippodrome and the Capitol Theatre. Council had kept all these, as owner of the building, and they have important clues for construction, design and restoration. The project team was also guided by the Conservation Plan prepared by James Kerr. This identified all the significant heritage elements of the theatre. Kerr established the point at which compromise would "adversely affect the quality of the atmospheric experience" and suggested alternative approaches for solving the particular problem.⁹⁰

Trevor Waters was the conservation architect on the job, responsible for recreating White's Florentine open-air garden. The second half of 1993 was spent documenting all the significant fabric using photographs and measured drawings. As demolition progressed, Waters devised a methodology for the removal of the exterior stone and terracotta work, which were reused in the construction, he also reviewed cleaning methods for the stained glass, tested paint colours, and sourced appropriate light fittings.⁹¹ Many of the original statues had disappeared, so Waters had to identify appropriate statues in other theatres and collections and recast them. His quest for appropriate carpet is indicative of his dedication. He had found on site examples of a standard Greater Union carpet dating from about 1934, and another carpet that had appropriate colours but photographs proved was not the original carpet. Dissatisfied with having to reproduce the Greater Union carpets, Waters scoured the theatre for a second time:

I came back to look again and sat down on this really brown, muddy carpet which had plasterer's dirt walked into it. Some worker had ripped up the edges of it, looking for the old carpet and I looked down and realised I was actually sitting on a piece of the original stuff.⁹²

Waters washed and unpicked the carpet to determine its original design pattern and colours. The carpet print mimicked old stone flagging, with small flowers and weeds creeping through the cracks. This was the carpet design that was finally reproduced and used in the restoration.

The Capitol Theatre redevelopment was an exercise in pragmatic restoration. Both the timetable and the budget were tight. This had advantages and disadvantages. Tait, Waters and Barry Osmotherly, the project manager from Fletcher Construction, worked hard to minimise costs. Fletchers tried to demolish as little as possible and to reuse materials, which meant that there was less intervention into the fabric. Waters commended Fletchers and their subcontractors for their efforts to protect and preserve the heritage fabric of the theatre.⁹³ Despite his earnest efforts to monitor works, Waters recorded several examples of significant interior fabric being altered, demolished or damaged before he could inspect it. This included the original ceiling adjacent to the bio box, exit doors c.1928 to Campbell, Parker and Hay Streets. Screen ornaments, handrails, light fittings and lamps.

A number of significant changes were made to make the theatre functional for the twenty-first century. The floor was raked to improve sight lines. Modern lighting and equipment were introduced. The stage was extended, and the fly tower rebuilt. The construction of the fly tower was made all the more difficult in engineering terms because after Fletchers had finished excavating for the fly tower, it didn't stop raining for three months. Fletchers' approach to the fly tower's materials reflects their pragmatic approach to the restoration.

One negative impact of this approach was the tendency to take shortcuts in melding the new with the old, such as the installation of technical equipment. This concerned the Heritage Council, which had a watching brief over the construction. Overall, however, it was satisfied with the Capitol's restoration.⁹⁴ The restoration was faithful to the intent of the original design. The theatre was an atmospheric theatre, designed to create a mood. It used motifs and architectural details, not accurately, but to suggest a certain place, a certain time.

⁸⁹ Mary Knaggs, personal communication, 10 July 2002; Trevor Waters' Project Diary, 20 July 1993, p17, CRS 84/15.

⁹⁰ Kerr, *The Haymarket and the Capitol*, p.iv; Kerr, *The Capitol Theatre: Supplementary policy and guide*.

⁹¹ Trevor Waters' Project Diary, CRS 84/15.

⁹² Trevor Waters quoted by Tim Elliott, "Sleuthing guides Capitol renaissance", *SMH*, 16 July 1994, Spectrum, p12A.

⁹³ Trevor Waters' Project Diary, p33. CRS 84/15.

⁹⁴ Elliot, *SMH*, 16 July 1994; Memo – Mary Knaggs to Sue Holliday 26 February 1992, HC 32157 Capitol Theatre File vol 4; National Trust Board Meeting no. 34, Minutes, 8a) Addendum – Capitol Theatre Update, NT Capitol Theatre File.

Peddle Thorp and Walker, and Trevor Waters in particular, carefully recreated the idea of a Florentine garden, an Italian place of dreams. Jim Barrett believes that Ipoh's track record with the QVB helped in the whole design and construction process. "We came with a reputation where I was, Ipoh was trusted [by the NSW Heritage Council]. And even Frank trusted me, to a point," laughs Barrett."⁹⁵

Frank Sartor judged the new foyer as the least successful design element of the refurbishment. It was incorporated into the side of the Manning Building to provide more foyer space and better patron circulation. Originally Andrew Andersons, architect with Peddle Thorp Walker, planned to just use the original foyer spaces; the rationale being it was equivalent to the foyer seat ratio of the Theatre Royal. However, Council's architect, Lawrence Nield, believed this was insufficient. Barrett backed the Council's request for more foyer space. After discussions with Sartor, Andersons returned to the drawing board. Functionally, the foyer works, but the design compromises the restoration heights reached in the theatre.

Frank Sartor was instrumental in negotiating the completion of the theatre to Council's satisfaction and on time. Indeed, Fletcher Construction finished the Capitol on time for the opening of the theatre on 24 January 1995, five months ahead of schedule. Likewise, Ipoh managed the project tightly.



Figure 224 – Internal view of auditorium during restoration work, c.1993-94

Source: SRC18247

⁹⁵ Jim Barrett, interview with author [Lisa Murray, City Historian], 20 November 2001, NSCA.



Figure 225 – Restoration work in progress at Capitol Theatre. One left: statues were repaired and recast based on replicas from other theatres (1994). On right: an artist at work during restoration (1994).

Source: www.capitoltheatre.com.au/about/history.aspx, viewed 3 December 2018



Figure 226 – Restoration underway in foyer, 1994.

Source: www.capitoltheatre.com.au/about/history.aspx, viewed 3 December 2018



Figure 227 – Seal pit rediscovered during restoration, 1994.

Source: www.capitoltheatre.com.au/about/history.aspx, viewed 3 December 2018



Figure 228 – Old stage and mechanics were replaced with modern theatre facilities during restoration, 1994.

Source: www.capitoltheatre.com.au/about/history.aspx, viewed 3 December 2018

Opening night of the restored Capitol Theatre was a glamorous affair. Few patrons were aware of the list of outstanding works and defects still waiting to be finished. These included provision of lounge chairs to the new foyers, auditorium acoustic doors, theatre services, the cloud projectors for atmospheric lighting, and paving and footpath works.⁹⁶ But there were, in the scheme of things, minor glitches.

Even the theatre industry, despite “some bitching” that an Australian production didn’t get the coveted long run spot after opening, was pleased (and no doubt relieved) that the Capitol Theatre had finally been saved and updated to modern theatre standards.⁹⁷

The design of the auditorium was soon to change. Cameron Mackintosh wanted to introduce balcony boxes along the side of the auditorium for his production of *Miss Saigon* in July 1995. Consultations by Andrew Andersons with the theatre industry during the design and construction phases had indicated that these would be welcome additions to the auditorium, as they would help integrate the gallery and the stage. But they had not been built, apparently due to time constraints. Lawrence Nield, consultant architect to Council, insisted that the construction of the balcony boxes be reversible as a matter of heritage principle. Another change requested by Mackintosh for the staging of *Miss Saigon* was the squaring roof of the proscenium. Mackintosh paid an \$80,000 security deposit that the changes to the auditorium would be reversed. The balcony boxes are still there.⁹⁸

The final completion of the Capitol Theatre restoration was signed off on 18 January 1996, nearly twelve months after the theatre re-opened.⁹⁹ It was the end of extremely long, fraught and at times acrimonious battles within the Council to restore the Capitol and provide Sydney with a modern lyric theatre. Since then, the Capitol has played host to a series of productions including *West Side Story*, *Chicago*, *Porgy and Bess*, *My fair lady*, *Hair*, *The Lion King*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Billy Elliot*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Wicked*, *The Boy from Oz*, *Mary Poppins*, *Les Miserables*, *Cats*, *The Sound of Music*, *Kinky Boots*, *Aladdin*, *Fame*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Jersey Boys* and *Mamma Mia*.

3.3.5. George McRae, City Architect

George McRae was born in Edinburgh in 1858, where, after completing his schooling, he was apprenticed to Messrs. George Beattie and Sons, architects. After several years in private practice, he decided to emigrate to Australia. McRae arrived in Sydney in 1884, as a young architect. Soon after arrival, he was appointed as principal assistant to the City Architect, TH Sapsford. McRae was soon appointed as City Architect and City Building Surveyor in 1889, a position he held until 1897.

One of Sapsford’s major projects at the time was the second stage of the Sydney Town Hall, which was completed in 1888. McRae spent much time with Sapsford on this project and saw it through to completion. McRae was directly responsible for the design and erection of the Eastern Fish Market in Woolloomooloo, the Queen Victoria Building and the Fruit and Vegetable Market Building in Belmore Street.

In 1897, McRae was appointed principal assistant architect in the Public Works Department of New South Wales. In 1912, he succeeded WL Vernon as Government Architect, a position he held until his death in 1923. In this position, he participated in the design and construction of many prominent public buildings, including the old Fisher Library building, the southern cloister of the Quadrangle, the Anderson Stuart Medical School at the University of Sydney (c.1907 and c.1910), the Parcels Post Office at Railway Square (1912-13), the Department of Education Building (1912-14), Manly and South Steyne Surf Pavilions, part of the Jenolan Caves House (1914), Taronga Park Zoo (1915), Central Railway Station and the old Treasury Building in Bridge Street (1916-19).¹⁰⁰ Some of these building are shown at Figure 230, Figure 231 and Figure 232.

⁹⁶ Facsimile, Tim Tait to Carleen Devine, 16 January 1995, P05-00340/22; P05-00340/26; Capitol Theatre Fourth Deed of Variation to Agreement to Lease, 6 April 1995, P05-00340/27.

⁹⁷ Ava Hubble, “A new age of comfort for theatre-goers” in *SMH*, 17 January 1995, p30.

⁹⁸ Peter Cochrane, “Capitol cause for concern”, *SMH*, 29 July 1993, p21; Carleen Devine, Special projects Officer, Report – Capitol Theatre Project – Variations to mandatory Work 26 October 1994, P05-00340/22; Ava Hubble, “Capitol enhances intimacy”, *SMH*, 8 May 1994, p17; Lawrence Nield to General Manager, 28 February 1995, P05-00340/26.

⁹⁹ P05-00340/27.

¹⁰⁰ Stenning, Nicholas & Eve 1977, “George McRae”, Undergraduate Thesis, Sydney University.



Figure 229 – Portrait of George McRae, c.1890.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, SRC 15120 (originally CRS80/7)



Figure 230 – Eastern Fish Market, Woolloomooloo, c.1870

Source: SLNSW, in John Shaw 1987, *The Queen Victoria Building 1898-1986*



Figure 231 – Parcels Post Office at Railway Square (now converted to a hotel), 1967

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 48/6206



Figure 232 – Department of Education Building, Sydney, 1915

Source: State Library of NSW, Government Printing Office 1 - 18335

3.3.6. Robert Hargreave Brodrick (City Architect and City Building Surveyor)

Robert Hargreave Brodrick was born in Cheshire, England. He came to Australia in 1882, having previously served his indenture in Manchester. In March 1883, he commenced employment with City of Sydney Council

and served in various capacities before being appointed to take charge of the City Architect's department in 1898. He was promoted in June 1919 to City Architect and City Building Surveyor.

He was responsible for the erection of nearly all of the city's buildings for the 30 years from the time of his appointment to his retirement, and including all buildings for the electric light department, numbering about 300. He also supervised the construction of the Domain Baths and the municipal markets.

Brodrick passed away in September 1934, having retired from the Council in 1928. His death was marked by an illustrated obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 25 September 1934.



Figure 233 – Portrait of RH Brodrick.

Source: City of Sydney Archives, NSCA CRS 54/336

3.3.7. Henry Eli White (Theatre architect)

The following biography is reproduced from Julian Thomas, 'White, Henry Eli (1876–1952)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-henry-eli-9074/text15995>, published first in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 20 February 2019.

Henry Eli White (1876–1952), theatre architect, was born on 21 August 1876 at Dunedin, New Zealand, son of English parents Joseph Eli White, bricklayer, and his wife Susanna, née Scholfield. On leaving school, Henry joined Joseph's contracting business and learned bricklaying, painting, plumbing and carpentry while studying engineering and architecture. Finding it difficult to work with his father, he established his own business as a builder in 1896. 'Big Henry' was over six feet (183 cm) tall and weighed more than 16 stone (102 kg). He married Margaret Hallinan at Dunedin on 24 December 1900; they were to have four children.

Although his first major project was a tunnel on the Waipori River hydro-electric scheme, White gravitated towards theatre design: he was interested in using steel frames and reinforced concrete, and in the problems of ventilation, acoustics and visibility posed by auditorium design. By 1905 he had established himself at Christchurch. With the contract to build His Majesty's Theatre, Wellington, for (Sir) Benjamin Fuller in 1912, White moved his thriving practice to that city where he also built the Midland Hotel.

By 1915 White was building theatres in Australia for Hugh McIntosh and was well placed to take advantage of the boom in theatre investment in the 1920s. He adapted from the American architect John Eberson the 'atmospheric' style, one which was supposed to evoke an exotic garden or courtyard and used Spanish, Moorish, Venetian and Indian motifs. White's theatres in Sydney (where he made his headquarters) included the Capitol, the St James (for the Fullers) and the Majestic (Elizabethan) at Newtown. His only significant industrial project in Sydney was the Bunnerong power station, begun in 1925. He designed over 130 theatres, among them the Tivoli, Brisbane, and the St James Theatre, Wellington, New Zealand.

Sydney's baroque State Theatre (opened in June 1929) is White's best-known work. The building, which includes shops and an office block in Market Street, cost Union Theatres Ltd £1 million in an attempt to entice middle-class film-goers. The auditorium was divided into three levels of comfort and expense. Much loved by audiences for its excessive Art Deco ornamentation, its interior made lavish use of marble, gold and ivory decoration, and featured paintings, sculpture and exotic objects (such as the 'Fujiyama cameo', removed during World War II). The cinema's lavatories were named the 'Empire Builder's', 'Pompadour', 'Futurist' and 'Pioneer' rooms.

The Depression marked the end of White's architectural career. He won a competition to design a college at Auckland, but plans were shelved; he closed his office and lost money through farming in New Zealand. By 1937 he was back in Sydney. His plans for a block of flats at Point Piper were disallowed by Woollahra Municipal Council. Although his cement manufacturing project near Bathurst fell through, dolomite was discovered on the site and during World War II his company supplied it for windows and light bulbs made in Australia. White spent much time sailing and big-game fishing.

Survived by his wife and two sons, he died on 3 March 1952 at Kings Cross, Sydney, and was cremated with Anglican rites. He had reputedly earned over £1 million in architectural fees, but was not an astute businessman; his estate was sworn for probate at £1147.



Figure 234 – Palais Theatre, St Kilda (top left); Civic Theatre, Newcastle (top right), State Theatre, Sydney building photographed by Arthur Ernest Foster (bottom), various dates.

Source: NAA, a1200, L43547 (top); University of Newcastle Library (centre); SLNSW, On 30/Box 69/ON30/Box 70 (bottom)