

Attachment C

Historical Justification

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Crane Place

It is proposed the historic name of Crane Place be re-instated on its east-west alignment from Pitt Street. The original name evolved from the showroom and works of GE Crane and Sons Ltd located in Pitt Street. The long-standing firm was established by George Ekins Crane in 1867 and became one of the leading companies importing and manufacturing building materials, hardware, marble, slate and lead. George Crane demonstrated civic as well as business leadership. He was one of the early councillors on Redfern Municipal Council serving 1862-1864 and was later involved with Ashfield Municipal Council, being elected as an inaugural councillor in 1872.

The firm GE Crane and Sons was renowned for its use of Australian marbles and was credited with popularising local marbles for building and architectural decoration. The firm also manufactured decorative metal ceilings, centre flowers, ceiling panels and friezes; used widely in Federation and Inter-war houses and retail premises. Their work can be seen in significant public buildings around Sydney. They produced marble flooring for St Mary's Cathedral and a pressed metal ceiling for Pitt Street Congregational Church; both buildings are listed on the State Heritage Register. GE Crane & Sons also collaborated with the NSW Government Railways to design and manufacture the large indicator board which was used on the main concourse of Sydney Central Station 1906-1982, which is now held in the Powerhouse Museum collection.

Maps, plans and archival documents show how the private lane evolved beside their showroom on Pitt Street from a right of way access to their open yard and sheds. The original premises in 1867 for GE Crane was a brick and stone store and yard at 23-25 Pitt Street. By 1880 the business was rapidly expanding, with their stores extending from 21-31 Pitt Street and incorporating a large yard space with passageway access. By 1906 their headquarters and showroom were in a warehouse at 33-35 Pitt Street, with their stores off Pitt Street accessed via the lane. Documents indicate that gates limited access to the private lane in 1924. The lane could also be accessed from George Street via Auto Lane, later known as Blue Anchor Lane. GE Crane & Sons showroom remained on Pitt Street throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th century, until at least 1948.

The name Crane Place was in use for at least 40 years and most likely for around 60 years or more. The name was first recorded in the official City Assessment Books from 1921, although the existence of the laneway was evident from the assessments since 1896. The name was probably used informally, such as Crane's yard or Crane's lane, by locals from the late 19th century. The name of the private lane, Crane Place, was superseded by Rugby Place in the 1960s when Rugby Union NSW established their club in Bacon's Building, which fronted the lane. The Rugby Union Club is no longer on site.

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<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article229650554>

George Ekins Crane, biography, Sydney's Aldermen website
<https://www.sydneyaldermen.com.au/alderman/george-ekins-crane/>

Destination board, Central Station, wood / glass / metal, designed and made by New South Wales Government Railways and G E Crane and Sons, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 1906 <https://ma.as/212227>

Maps

City of Sydney – City Building Surveyor's Department, *City of Sydney - Building Surveyor's Detail Sheets*, 1949-1972, Sheet 2 – Sydney Cove (City of Sydney Archives, <A-00880195>)

City of Sydney - City Engineer's Department, Town Planning Branch, *City of Sydney - Civic Survey*, 1938-1950: Map 6 - Circular Quay, Dawes Point, 1948 (City of Sydney Archives, <A-00880366>)

H Percy Dove, *Plans of Sydney*, 1880, Block 45 (City of Sydney Archives, <A-00880118>)

Fire Underwriters Association of NSW, *Plans of Sydney*, Block 125, 1917-1939 (City of Sydney Archives, <A-00880214>)

F. Oliver Jones, Civil Engineer & Surveyor, *Structural plans of the City of Sydney : Ignis et Aqua series*, vol.1, Plan 35 (State Library of NSW, <Z/MAXX 811.17/1892/1>)

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G E Crane & Sons illustrations

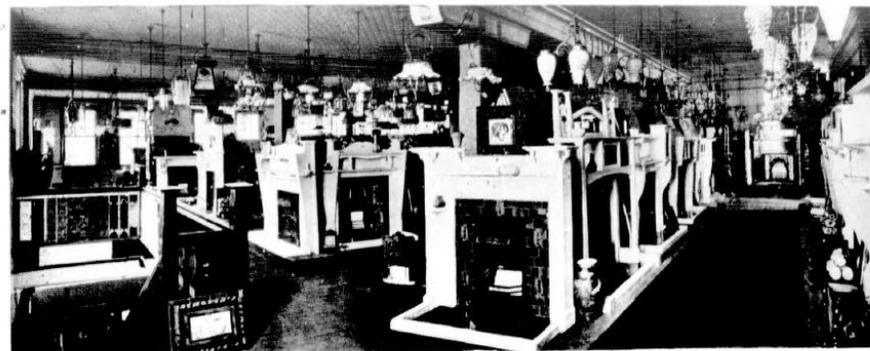


Head Office and Showrooms, 53 and 35 Pitt and Underwood streets, Sydney.

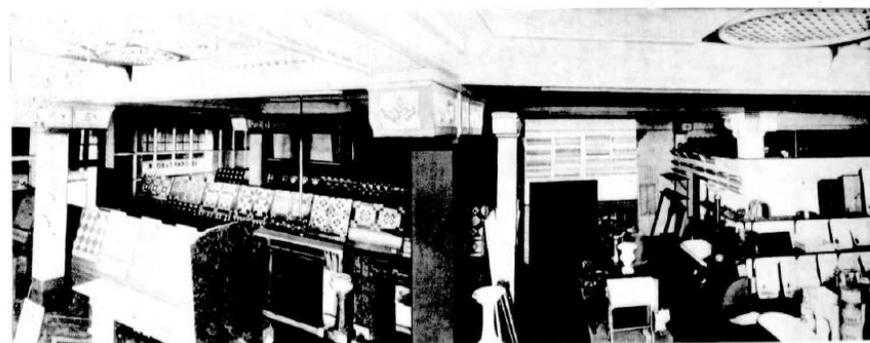
Exterior view of the Pitt Street showroom, 1906, with Crane Lane to the right.

(*Town & Country Journal*, 7 November 1906, p.35

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71542494>)



View in Pitt-street Showrooms, showing Art Wood and Marble Mantelpieces, Grates, Tiles, Gas Fittings, etc.



View in Pitt-street Showrooms, showing Marble Work, Encaustic Floor Tiles, Metal Ceiling Work, and Sundries.

Interior Views of the Pitt-street Showroom, 1906.

(*Town & Country Journal*, 7 November 1906, p.35

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/71542494>)

1894



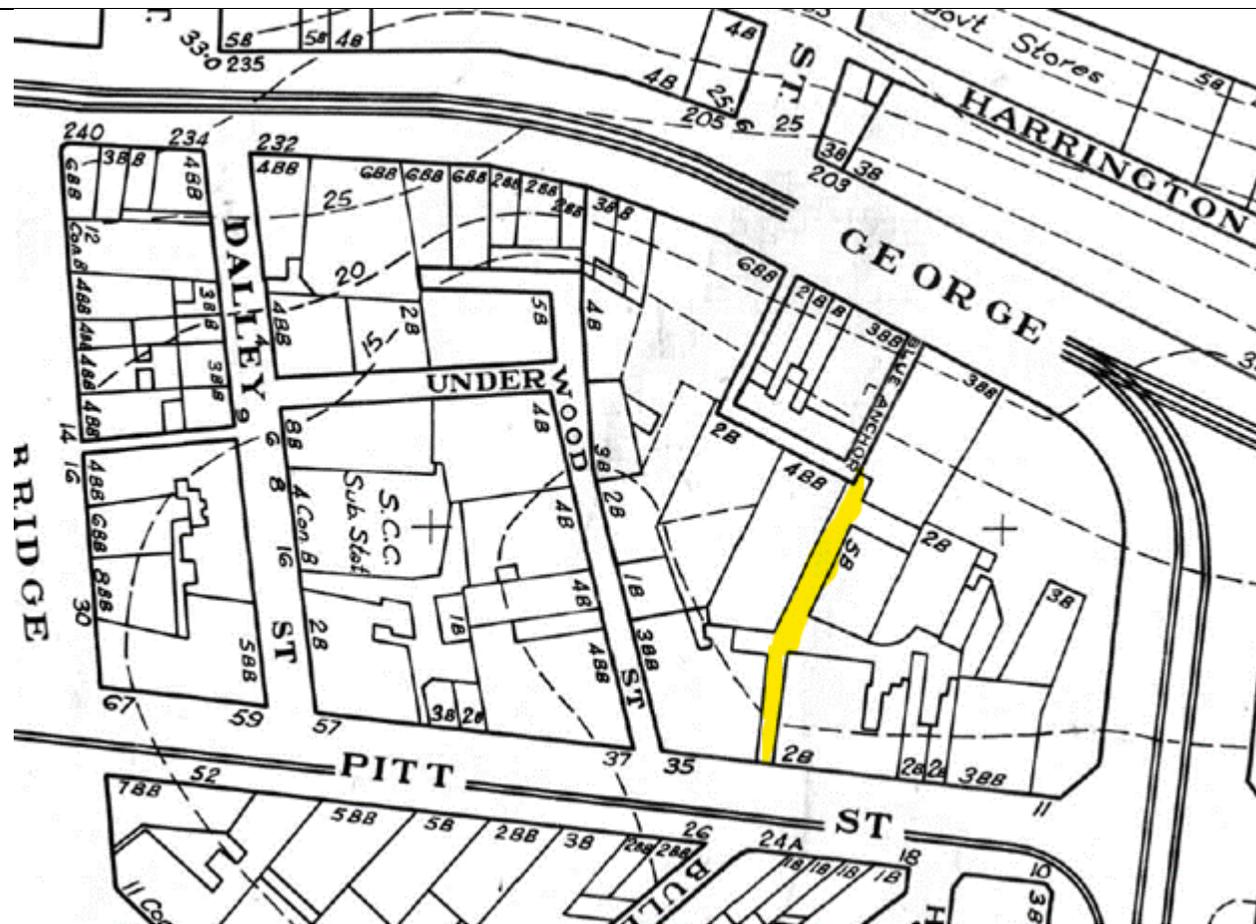
Source: Surveyor-General's Office, Metropolitan Detail Series, City of Sydney, 2nd edition, 1893-1894m Part of Section No. 47 [detail] (State Library of NSW, MAXX 811.17/1887/1 <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKqv5pXe4b/2wX8kAKPw7ZVP>.)

1892-1937



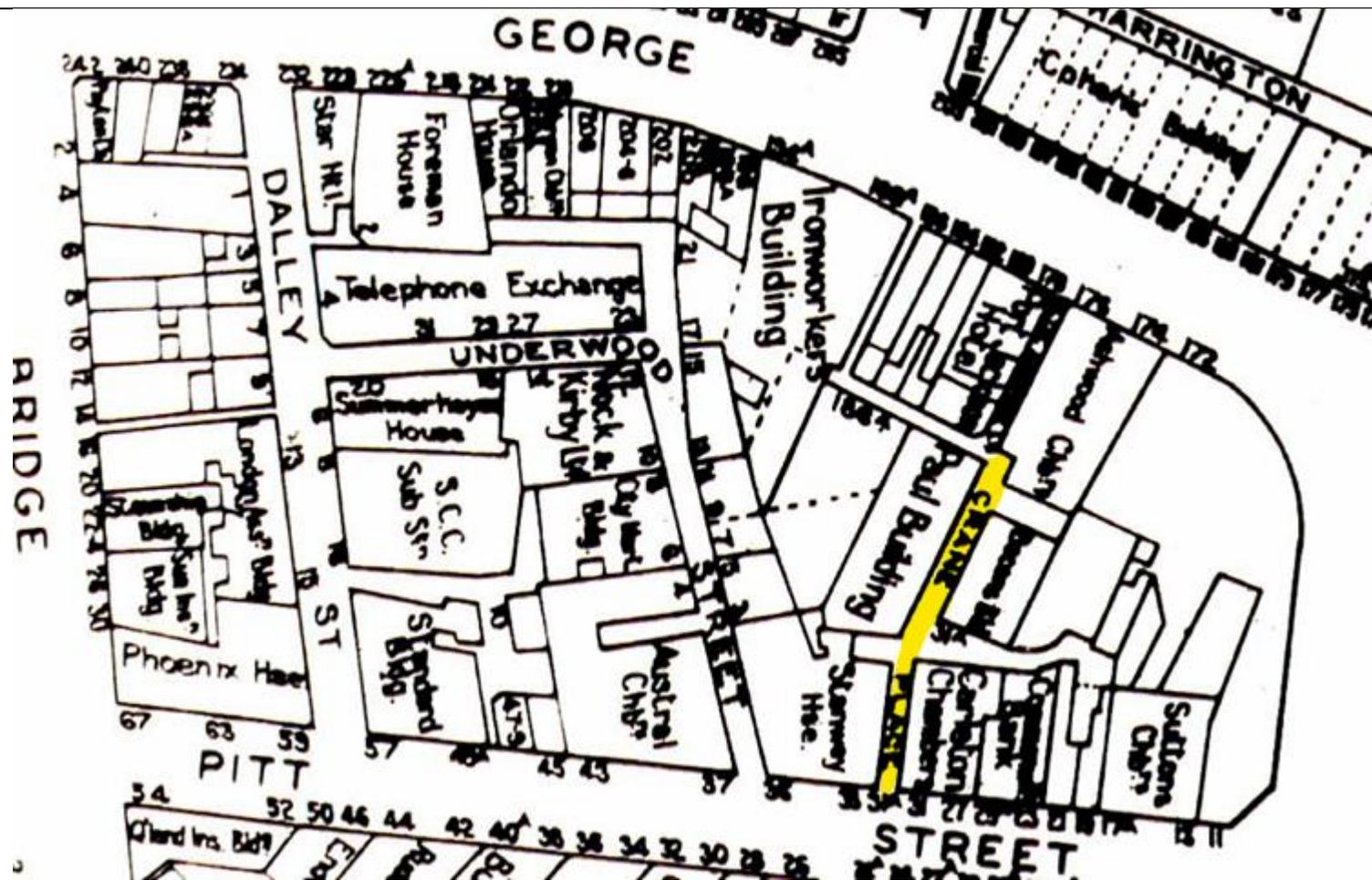
Source: F. Oliver Jones, Civil Engineer & Surveyor, *Structural plans of the City of Sydney : Ignis et Aqua series*, vol.1, Plan 35, [detail] (State Library of NSW, Z/MAXX 811.17/1892/1, <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/74VKD3RpaRZM/X7EQMZRbVbOpQ>)

1917-1939



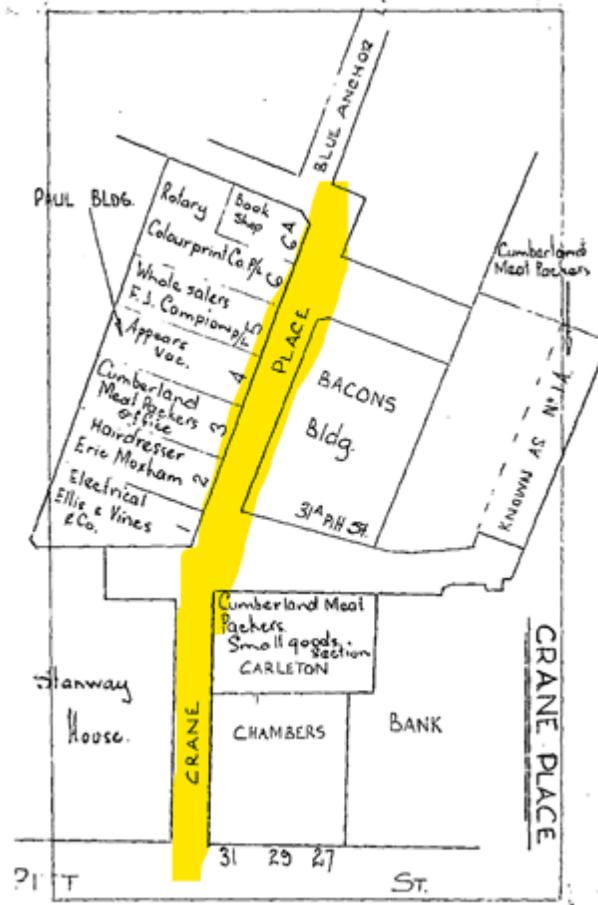
Source: City of Sydney - City Engineer's Department, Town Planning Branch, *City of Sydney - Civic Survey, 1938-1950: Map 6 - Circular Quay, Dawes Point, 1948* [detail]
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1949-1972



Source: City of Sydney – City Building Surveyor’s Department, *City of Sydney - Building Surveyor’s Detail Sheets, 1949-1972, Sheet 2 – Sydney Cove [detail]*
(City of Sydney Archives, A-00880195 <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1709122>)

c.1950s



Source: Planning Street Cards – Crane Place, Sydney, c.1950s

(City of Sydney Archives, A-00002074 <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/609379>)

Cabinetmaker Place

It is proposed that the lane with a northeast-southwest alignment be named Cabinetmaker Place. This name recognises the evolution of Sydney's original Chinatown around Lower George Street and The Rocks from 1850s – 1880s. Here you could find Chinese cook shops, grocers, general stores, chemists dispensing Chinese medicine, furniture workshops and lodging houses, alongside tobacconists and gambling houses. The wharves and maritime workers brought trade, world ties and opportunity to this bustling area of town. The multicultural nature of the area was also reflected in other business names such as the “All Nations Restaurant” and the “Oriental Hotel”.

The proposed name specifically recognises the contribution of Chinese cabinetmakers manufacturing furniture in Sydney and celebrates the multicultural history of Sydney. According to Peter Gibson (2018), aside from market gardening, furniture manufacture was the largest post-gold rush Chinese economic activity in Australia. It was the only manufacturing activity that involved a substantial number of Chinese people, and a significant proportion of those people were based in Sydney city.

At least two Chinese cabinetmakers were operating on the site in the 1880s: Loon Cheong & Co and Way Hap & Co. Way Hap & Co was located at 164 George Street in 1880. Loon Cheong & Co was a furniture manufacturer based at 168-170 George Street in the 1870-80s. Loon Cheong & Co's furniture was represented in the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879, held in the Garden Palace; the only Chinese cabinetmaker to be represented.

Nearby was Ah Toy, who had an extensive furniture factory on Lower George Street just south of the site, with a showroom at 192 George Street and his timber yard and factory at 202-208 George Street. He came to Sydney in the 1850s and was in business for over 36 years. Ah Toy's factory produced up-market furniture for David Jones as well as cheaper lines. A successful businessman, Ah Toy's store bore the brunt of anti-Chinese violence in 1878, when 2000 protesters separated from a larger rally at Hyde Park and descended on the premises, pelting it with stones. Fortunately, an attempt to torch the building was unsuccessful, and police along with some outraged citizens dispersed the crowd. But this nasty incident is a reminder of the discrimination and violent racism many Chinese families and workers encountered in Sydney.

Chinese furniture makers in Sydney produced products that were competitively priced and popular. Their products retailed in department stores such as David Jones and Marcus Clark. Many Sydney households were furnished with local Chinese-manufactured hall stands, wash stands, book cases and tables. Competition and exclusion from the mainstream union movement led Chinese furniture workers to form their own union in 1890. Their contribution to furniture manufacture and the decoration of domestic households is largely forgotten.

References

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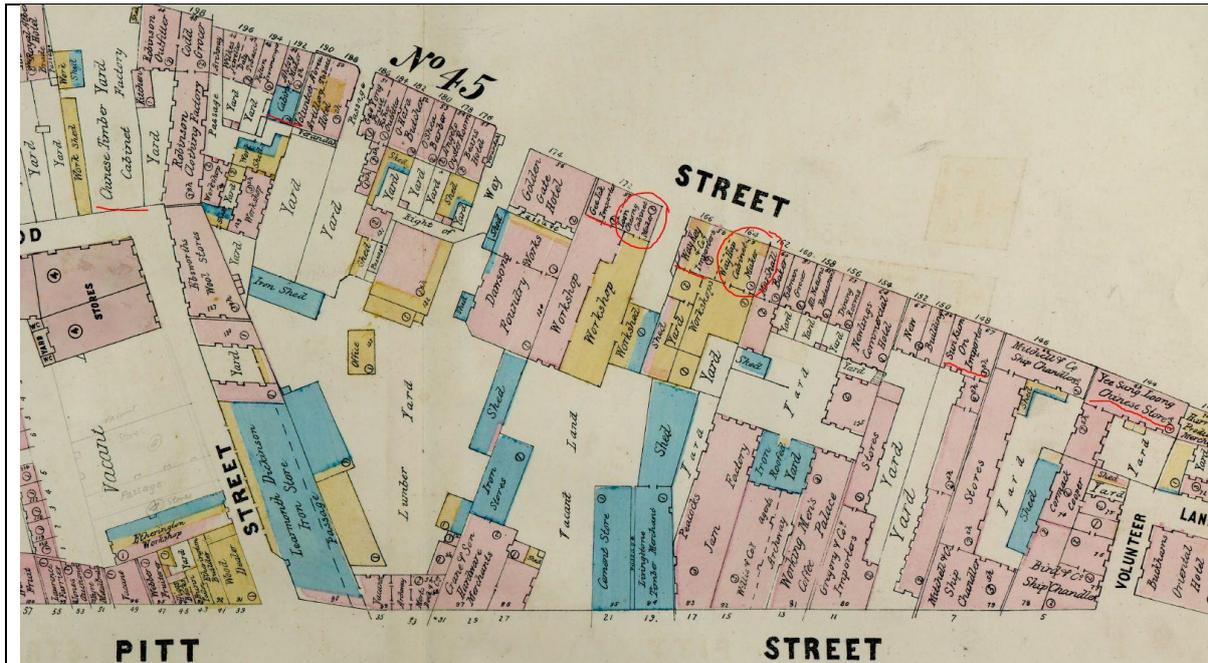
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Australian Economic History Review, Vol. 58, No.1, March 2018, pp.87-107 doi:
10.1111/aeht.12131



Cabinetmakers Way Hap and Loon Cheong on Lower George Street are circled. The large timber yard and workshop of Ah Toy can be seen to the left. Other stores and merchant businesses are also highlighted in red.

Source: H Percy Dove, *Plans of Sydney*, 1880 Block 45 (Map 19) [detail]

City Archives, A-00880118, <https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1709045>



Ah Toy's Cabinet Factory, 192 Lower George Street.

Date: c.1885 Source: State Library of NSW,

<https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/1JkmAW5Y/8re5BkaGP2ALz>



Merchants Yee Sang Loong & Co, a branch of the Hong Kong firm, sold wholesale and retail goods in their shop in Lower George Street and attracted both a Chinese and English clientele.

Date: c.1885 Source: State Library of NSW,
<https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/9AL4PZ4Y/VDwoeMKEyv7VJ>

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