

BUILDING TITLE ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY MEMORIAL THEATRE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA CITY OF BALLAARAT

NATIONAL ESTATE PROJECT No.
DOCUMENTATION OF LISTED HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN VICTORIA

DESIGNATION H.B.P.C. REGISTER No. NATIONAL TRUST (X) (X) FILE No.

BUILDING TYPE THEATRE
BUILDING NAME ROYAL SOUTH ST. SOCIETY
STATE VICTORIA
LOCAL GOVT AREA CITY OF BALLAARAT
STREET LYDIARD STH. No. 17
SUBURB/TOWN BALLARAT C.B.D.
CITY BALLAARAT POSTCODE 3350
RURAL
NEAREST CENTRE Km.



TITLE REFERENCE Vol Fol
DIRECTORY
NEGATIVE FILE FILM 1 / FRAME 35

PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION
DATE OF SURVEY/INSPECTION JULY 1978

OWNERSHIP ORIGINAL SIR W.J. CLARKE BART. / ACADEMY OF MUSIC
PRESENT ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY
ADDRESS

ARCHITECT/PRACTICE GEORGE BROWNE (1874)
BUILDER JAMES SUMNER & CO.
ARTISANS/TRADES STAGE FITTINGS, DROP SCENE J. LITTLE & SON

TENDERS REFERENCE
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1874
ESTIMATE/CONTRACT VALUE £12,000
ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS 1898 - William Pitt; 1906 Brick additions Clegg & Miller;
1912 - Portico Clegg & Miller; 1927 - Cedric Ballantyne & Arthur Russell;
1943 - Cowper, Murphy & Appleford. Foyers extensively altered/date unknown.

BUILDING CITATION
This theatre building, constructed in 1874 to the design of Architect George Browne, is of major interest for the unusual interior. Alterations were undertaken in 1898 by Architect William Pitt and a double balcony was inserted. The existing interior is somewhat ornate with decorative motifs surviving from 1890 and subsequent alterations undertaken in 1927 and 1943. The lounge and circle levels are in a horseshoe shape carried on cast iron columns with swag bellied balustrades. The ornate wall pilasters, the panelled ceiling and the classical proscenium are also of interest. The landing to the lounge is of great interest with Art Nouveau decorative motifs and would be greatly enhanced and quite unique if restored to original colours.

This building is of principal importance for the interior. There is possibly no other theatre in Victoria with an original, semi-intact double balcony. The external elevation is of some interest with the facade above ground level substantially intact. The building provides a contributory element to the Lydiard Street precinct and is in good condition. The rear is of great interest as it emphasises the rocky escarpment of West Ballarat, closes the vista along Lewis Street, and provides an important landmark.

RECOMMENDATIONS
It is recommended that this building be added to the Historic Buildings Register, the Register of the National Estate, and be specified under Clause 8 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Third Schedule).

DOCUMENTATION SOURCES

- 01 GOVERNMENT RECORDS
- 02 LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS
- 03 ARCHIVES/CATALOGUES
- 04 ARCHITECTS INDEX
- 05 ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS/ILLUSTRATIONS
- 06 PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS
- 07 NATIONAL TRUST FILE/ HISTORIC BUILDINGS PRESERVATION COUNCIL FILE
- 08 PRIVATE RECORDS
- 02 B.C.C. Building Permits Book
1906 - Brick additions by Architects Clegg & Miller
1912 - Portico, Clegg & Miller
- 05 Drawings held at La Trobe Library (WD THE 1) : 8 drawings of
the Academy of Music, George Browne Architect, dated July 1874,
February 1875, April 1875 : 5 drawings of alterations and
additions to the Academy of Music, William Pitt FRIVA 4 May 1898,
August 1898.
- 06 Album of newspaper clippings (Ballarat Regional Library 919.453 BAL)
photo of interior of Her Majesty's Theatre.
See References 1 and 3 below

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *Annals of the Ballarat Historical Society* Vol.2, p.204 (early photo).
2. *Courier* 25.9.1874.
3. *Leader* 12.8.1899 Supp. p.3. (three pictures of the interior and article).
4. M.B.Lewis "Study of Lydiard Street Area, Ballarat" 1976.
5. Withers W.B. *The History of Ballarat* Ballarat 1887 (2nd Ed.) p.288.

ASSESSMENT OF LISTING

CONDITION/INTEGRITY OF BUILDING INTERIOR OF IMPORTANCE

SIGNIFICANCE OF BUILDING

LANDSCAPE/STREETScape/ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE PART OF RECOMMENDED
AREA A1.1.

DOCUMENTATION JACOBS LEWIS VINES DATE SEPTEMBER 1978.

ARCHITECTS 212

ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY MEMORIAL THEATRE - 17 LYDIARD STREET SOUTH
BUILDING ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

This building was constructed in 1874 to the design of Architect George Browne¹ for the Royal Academy of Music. It is a building difficult to analyse due to the number of modifications which have destroyed most of the ground floor and stripped the parapet but left an interesting upper floor. The main features of the external elevation are the three triple arcade bays with less than semicircular arches with archivolts meeting on a crocket beneath which is a plain impost block resting on a capital of a slender shaft. The remaining details, although eclectic and mannered, are more conventional including flat pilaster faces with incised decoration, balconettes projecting on double brackets, and inverted scrolls rising from the first floor string course.

Internally the theatre is of greatest interest. In 1898 internal alterations were undertaken by Architect William Pitt FRIVA,^{2,3} and a double balcony was inserted. The *Leader* of 12 August 1899 described the alterations as follows:

"Her Majesty's theatre, which has evolved out of the Old Academy of Music in Lydiard Street, is a handsome structure both externally and internally. Blue is the prevailing tone of the decorations; the curtain, upholstery and panels of the balustrade of the circles being in that colour. This is relieved by gold and amber. The house is divided into two parts - parquette (or orchestra stalls), stalls and pit on the ground floor, and above that dress and family circles. The theatre will seat 1600 people quite easily and 2000 may be put in without undue packing as at the back of each circle are broad promenades running the whole width of the theatre. Messrs. J. Cogland, H. Davies and J. Heinz have spent £12,000 in transforming a barn into a theatre. Mr. William Pitt was the Architect and the stage fittings and drop scene were supplied by J. Little & Son."

The present interior is somewhat ornate with decorative motifs surviving from 1898 and subsequent alterations. In 1927 renovations by Cedric Ballantyne and Arthur Russell were undertaken, and after a fire in 1943

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1. 8 Drawings held at La Trobe Library SLV signed G. Browne Architect dated 1874, 1875 (WD THE 1).
 2. op. cit. 5 Drawings held signed William Pitt FRIVA dated August 1898.
 3. *Leader* 12.8.1899. Supp. p.3. Three illustrations of the interior.

BUILDING ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION (contd.)

further work was undertaken by Cowper Murphy & Appleford⁴. In summary the essential importance of the interior of the theatre is the lounge and circle levels in a horseshoe shape, carried on cast iron columns with swag bellied balustrades. The pilasters to the walls are ornate and possibly original, and the panelled ceiling with a central octagon (possibly a former ventilation opening) similar to the Princess Theatre in Melbourne. The classical proscenium, perhaps later than original is of some merit and character. The landing outside the lounge is of great interest with Art Nouveau influence : debarred columns with relief foliage (now painted) of lily leaves, a lintel with an Art Nouveau version of a classical cornice and pediment, and other lush detailing. The whole effect of the lounge would be greatly enhanced if restored to original colours, if they could be ascertained.

This building is of principal importance for the interior of the theatre. There is possibly no other theatre in Victoria with an original, semi-intact double balcony surviving. The external facade is of some interest with the facade above ground floor level substantially intact - the theatre entrance has been completely altered with remnants only of pilasters and pedestals. The building forms a contributory element in the Lydiard Street area, but the effect is somewhat reduced by the modern inappropriate buildings flanking it on either side. The rear of the theatre is of great interest as it emphasises the rocky escarpment and closes the vista along Lewis Street. It provides an important landmark.

4. M.B.Lewis 'Lydiard Street Area' 1976.