

development in Ballarat Street and linked with the renowned J.C. Schild and tenuously to the lesser known John Copplestone.

### State Savings Bank of Victoria 13 Ballarat Street, Yarraville

#### History

Commissioners of the State Savings Bank of Victoria engaged architects Sydney Smith & Ogg to design this branch bank in 1909. The contract price was 1966 pounds. Smith & Ogg designed other S.S.B. banks at Moonee Ponds (1905), Elsternwick (1907), Camberwell (c1907) and Numurkah (1913): all in a period when they employed the 'architectural expert', author and academic, Robert Haddon, as a contract designer. Haddon's *Australian Architecture* illustrates similar structures, as bank or office designs.<sup>1</sup>

#### Description

Parapeted face-red brickwork, foliated pressed cement detail and fanciful wrought iron were typical ingredients of the Edwardian Freestyle which used British and Italian Medieval sources for its inspiration.

More regular in composition on its main facade than on the asymmetrically treated north elevation, the walls are divided by piers and considerably enlivened by a variety of openings set between them. Round, bayed and segment-arched windows of different sizes are used on the Ballarat Street front, while a combination of freely arranged arched and rectangular ones are used to the north. Moulded terra-cotta tiles separate an intricate leadlight from the residential entrance and moulded terra-cotta outlines the prominent voussoirs to the arches. Queen Anne scrolls mark the change in width of the chimney shaft in its path down the north wall. The corrugated iron fence to Ballarat Street is original.

Massive elements and diverse openings, provide a free and highly successful design.

#### External Integrity

New bank entrance, window glazing and interior; basalt painted.

#### Streetscape

Contributes to 19th and early 20th century streetscape on this side of Ballarat Street.

#### Significance

Architecturally, a highly successful bank design in the Edwardian Freestyle manner which exhibits skill in both massing and application of detail also part of a late 19th early 20th century streetscape. Historically, among the surge of Savings Bank construction during the Edwardian period and still functioning as one of Yarraville's major public buildings.

### Sun Theatre, 6-12 Ballarat Road

#### History

Purpose-built cinemas were scarce in the West, the suburbs of Footscray, Williamstown and Newport containing only six built between 1911 and 1922. In Yarraville there were only the McFarlane family's early St. Georges cinema (1913)<sup>2</sup> which survives in Birmingham Street and the converted Yarraville Hall (Lyric) in Stephen Street, prior to the arrival of the Sun<sup>3</sup>. Competition from the Sun meant the closing of the Lyric in the 1940s and the cessation of remodeling plans for St. Georges: it was always the first choice of cinema-goers in their rounds of Saturday night's entertainment and hence is the venue most remembered by today's Yarraville community<sup>4</sup>.

Opened in April 1938 with the Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy film *Maytime*, the Sun replaced a Commercial Bank, a fishmonger's shop and was sited on land formerly owned by the Mount Lyall company<sup>5</sup>. It was the owner, Ernest Charles Yeomans, fourth cinema (see also Footscray Grand) and was managed by his son, W.J. Yeomans, remaining among the small number of privately owned cinemas of the post-war period. What impressed local patrons most was that the

1 Trethowan  
2 *Yarraville News* 14.6.13  
3 Hanson, 'The Sun Yarraville' in *Kino* 10.8.2, p.7f, cites *Film Weekly* 2.6.38  
4 verbal  
5 R Cocks

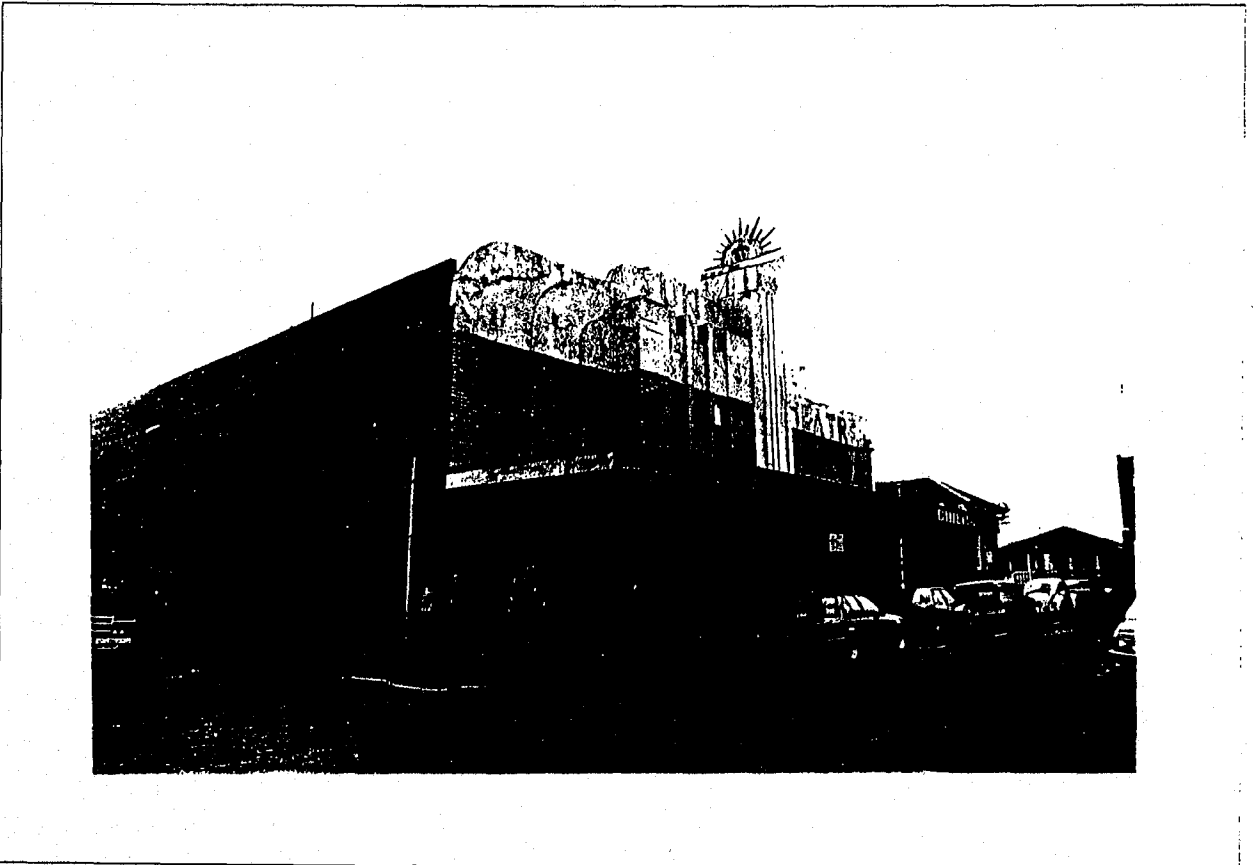
two Yoemans chose to live in the area and were deeply involved in local sporting activities.

The prolific cinema designers, Cowper Murphy and Appleford were the architects for 'a brick picture theatre, seating 912..' and Hansen & Yuncken the contractors.<sup>1</sup> In Yarraville only the contemporary Railway Hotel offered similar Moderne lines while in Footscray only a Nicholson Street jeweller's shop and, in Williamstown, a block of flats, were able to compete. The Sun remains among the few Moderne styled commercial or civic buildings (notably, excluding factory complexes) in the western suburbs.

Apart from the Moderne styling of the exterior, the Sun claimed an influential first in the introduction of a parabolic-section floor which dispensed with the traditional stalls and circle division. It became popular as

the 'Continental' form of seating where the construction cost per seat was lower, there was a better view of the screen, no distortion because of increased vertical projection displacement from the screen centre-line, ease of heating and ventilation (less volume) and usher supervision could take place from one vantage point. All of today's new cinemas use this principle.<sup>2</sup>

More typical but nevertheless stylish aspects were the indirect lighting of the auditorium which highlighted and diffused its warm pastel shades of pink, the cast plaster 'cubist' centre-piece to the ceiling with associated moulded streamlines flowing around the side-walls, and the specially imported crushed velour proscenium curtain, with the multi-coloured footlights which made it glow and shimmer.<sup>3</sup> Loose furnishings were supplied by French & McNeil, useful rooms such as the pram and bicycle stores, were created by the ar-



4-10 6-12 Ballarat Street

- 1 *ibid.*; Kivimets, *The Sun Theatre Yarraville*, history workshop research essay, 1985
- 2 *ibid.*, the cinema under the Century Building, Swanston Street used the same principal but a few years later
- 3 *ibid.*

chitects and a smart team of ushers, booking clerks, programme boys and commissionaires were made available by the management<sup>1</sup>. Two shops were part of the complex, one for confectionery and the other for millinery<sup>2</sup>.

Most spectacular of all was the sun itself, perched on the roofline and the giant letters spelling out the cinema's name, flashing at night in red and gold neon (Claude Neon Lights Ltd.) while the facade itself was illuminated with amber sodium lighting<sup>3</sup>.

A bicycle room was provided for patrons, the railway station was nearby and those few who needed to drive to the cinema could park in the deserted commercial streets nearby.<sup>4</sup> The cinema worked in tandem with the two other older Yarraville cinemas, patrons who could not get into the Sun would try St. Georges and, if unsuccessful, proceed to the Yarraville Hall.<sup>5</sup>

#### Description

Comprising a two-level cream brick and cement facade onto Ballarat Street, propped against a more austere auditorium carcass, the cinema as is most contemporaries purely a facade with (former) interior delights. The canopy is plain, with a geometric patterned metal soffit and below it is austere manganese brickwork, separating the 12 glazed entry doors and two glazed shopfronts. Above the canopy is the building's character. A 'vertical feature' (with ribs) balances a strong horizontal thrust carried out in cement render. Interspersed are lesser fins, punctuated with small rectangular windows and counterpoised with a large round one. The words 'Sun Theatre' and 'Sun' are in bas-relief, and the sun itself is fabricated from metal with neon tubes following its rays inside.

#### Significance Comparison

Notable Streamlined Moderne cinemas in Victoria included the following:

- Circle, Preston, 1939
- Padua, Brunswick, 1938
- Time, Balwyn, 1941
- Park, Albert Park, 1938
- Broadway, Camberwell, 1941
- Regal, Hartwell, 1937

These have all been demolished. The Rivoli Camberwell, 1940 survives but the once impressive auditorium has been divided. The once internally spectacular Hoyts Windsor, has been stripped and used for storage and its exterior remains an austere example of the style. The St. Kilda Astor Theatre, like Her Majesty's interior, is fundamentally jazz or geometric Moderne with some streamlined forms included, although still most impressive for its colour scheme and original fittings and furnishings.

Another claim made for the Sun Theatre is as the first use in Melbourne of an auditorium floor which is parabolic in section, allowing the traditional upper circle deck to be discarded. Comparison with the fully streamlined Moderne Wests Olympia (1939), Adelaide shows use of two upper circles and the traditional ramped stalls level. So also did the impressive Regal Theatre, Hartwell (1937), the Mildura Ozone (1939) and the Park, Albert Park (1938).

#### External Integrity

The cinema is, and has been, sadly neglected with little attention to basic maintenance. Worse the interior has been left unsecured and has been burnt out at least twice; the roof has been left open. Despite all of this the internal moulded plaster walls survive as does the parabolic floor, albeit in a poor state. Externally the paintwork canopy and glazing need repair.

#### Streetscape

Relates to the adjacent buildings on the south in siting and use of cement and face-brick but is more importantly one of the major elements in the notable Ballarat Street civic-commercial precinct.

#### Significance

By elimination, the Sun Theatre remains (albeit on a small scale and partly destroyed) as the most successful fully articulated (internally and externally) privately owned Victorian example of the streamlined Modern style. This style (known also as 'Art Deco') is closely associated with the public's concept of cinema architecture. By comparison, the free-standing United Kingdom Hotel, Clifton Hill, is a superior example of the style but in a use which does not encourage full expression of the fluid curves, inside and out. The Sun

1 Kivimets, loc.cit.  
 2 ibid.  
 3 Kivimets, loc.cit.  
 4 ibid.  
 5 oral sources, two first nighters

also forms part of a valuable civic- commercial precinct, distinguished by its layout and individually notable buildings. Historically, among the few cinema buildings of the West, this is perhaps the most remembered and is identified with a socially active local family (Yeomans).

**Yarraville Hotel  
58 Ballarat Street**

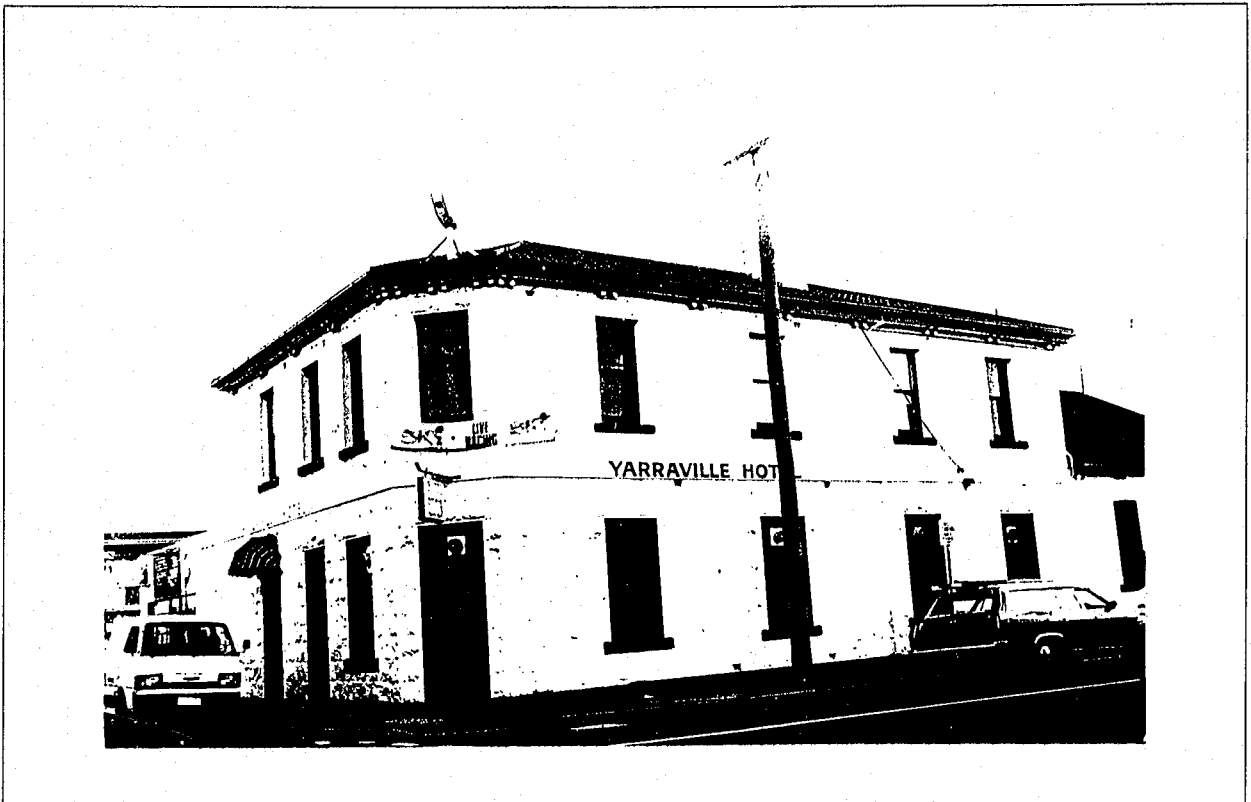
**History**

Former quarryman, Robert Otter, owned and operated his Yarraville Hotel (also known as the Bluestone Hotel) from its construction in 1873-4 until a long occupation by Arthur Blackson during the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Margaret J. Berlowitz (later McManus) then commenced near 20 years behind the bar, into the

1920s.<sup>2</sup> James Newbold, M.D. Whitty and Tom Clark were later licensees.<sup>3</sup>

Previously Otter had been listed care of the Greenhythe quarry and, similarly, William Otter (quarryman) was at the Stony Creek, Footscray. Presumably the Otters were among the early ballast quarrymen associated with the then booming Williamstown port.

The Otter family (Ada) appeared to also share a connection with the extensive quarries at the south end of Nicholson Street, occupying the large house Roxburgh (q.v.) there in the 1930s. Robert died at his home at 123 Gamon Street, Yarraville, in 1905, leaving a widow, Augusta, and family Thomas, Henry, Joseph, Alfred, George, Charles, James and two girls, Mrs. Thomas Truman (husband a quarryman and contractor) and Mrs. A.S. Poole.<sup>4</sup>



4-11 58 Ballarat Street

- 1 RB1874,-; RB1875,-; D1875
- 2 D1900-30
- 3 D1935-55
- 4 Lack, FCR