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“The Queen’s Theatre, Adelaide”, portion of an Address by Mr G L Fischer, to the Pioneers’ Association of South Australia

27 September 1989. Track A. 60 mins.

Mr G L Fischer – Gentlemen, can you all hear me if I speak in about this position. If not, please signify. [Laughter] In keeping with the subject of the talk, I see it is a thing in three Acts with one Intermission. I don’t want you to go outside though, it’s not an Intermission of that sort but the first Act would deal with the Queen’s Theatre from 1841 to 1842 and then there’s this one Intermission which deals with the time that the Courts were there in this building, from 1843 to 1850, and then comes another Act, Act 2 of the new Queen’s Theatre which existed from 1846 to 1850 in a separate building adjoining the Queen’s Theatre and then there’s the metamorphosed Queen’s Theatre into the Royal Victoria Theatre from 1950, 1850 I beg your pardon, to 1868. Before I get on with that though, I would like to thank the Pioneers’ Association for inviting me to speak to them, Mr Borrow will not mind if I say it was not I who addressed your Association in 1957. In those days I think the Association held afternoon meetings and for that reason I couldn’t go, I was working in the Archives Department and Mr Geoffrey Clarke who was the Secretary of the Association read the Paper, and among the people in the audience on that occasion I know were Mr Borrow’s father, Mr Travers Borrow, who was Vice-President of this Association and Mr LJ Ewens who was a member of the Association and well known to us at the Archives Department because he did a lot of work on many subjects. After the meeting was over, Mr Ewens wrote me a letter. He must have gone home from the

meeting and sat down and wrote a letter to tell me exactly what had taken place, who had proposed a vote of thanks and who had seconded it and the fact that Mr Geoffrey Clarke apparently had called Mr Lazarr, Mr Laser, something like that, the motor car of today, at least that's what I think because in the letter which I kept from Mr Ewens, he spelt Lazar **Lazarr** and he's underlined **rr** three times so I think he was just having his occasion to point out an error because he was very good at that sort of thing. Mr Ewens was a very careful researcher and if he gave us any information which he often did in those days, we could rely upon it. (32)

Now, I want to have a bit of a prologue to these three Acts. In the days of these theatres that I talk about, most performances, at least when a building was opened or a scene was opened began with a prologue. It was usually verse but I haven't written anything in verse. But as a bit of a prologue, because I feel I have to explain myself and my interest in this subject matter, the fact that I did offer a Paper in 1957 and in fact had done something earlier than that, and that's over 31 years ago, it made me think that I'm a bit like some of these university lecturers who go on giving the same paper for 30 years and you get a second generation of students coming along at last who haven't heard the first one, the one you gave 30 years ago and it's all well again, and perhaps there is a completely different audience here tonight, ah I expect there would be some here who may have heard it and may have read that Paper, but in extenuation I might say that I'm going further tonight but in no more time, I hope than I, than that Paper did in 1957 and furthermore there's more material to draw from these days especially the material that's gone into the Australian Dictionary of Biography where various people that I mention have been accorded entries and some of these entries throw up new information, some we didn't even guess about back in 1957. There's also been some general interest continuing here particularly since it's

been announced that the site of the Queen's Theatre which is at the southern end of Gilles Arcade off the south side of Currie Street is to be developed or would be developed, I'm not quite sure of course one can't guess what might happen now but I understood that there was going to be some large building there and that in the process of removing existing buildings the remains of the old Queen's Theatre were found and a lot of attention has been paid to them, the Government made a grant, LJ Hooker made a grant to a Consulting Archaeologist, Mr Justin McCarthy of Melbourne I think he is, or at least he is in Melbourne at the moment, and he and his team have done a lot of work there and I will have some photographs which Mr Borrow took to show you of the work or at least of the site. I don't intend to enlarge on that because Mr McCarthy and his people are experts on what they found and what it means, I've looked at it with him and explained, but I really don't understand enough about what this archaeological evidence means. (64)

Also I don't want to give the impression that I'm the only one who's ever been interested in this Queen's Theatre, I think people have been interested in it for a long time. Articles were published before I even joined the Archives Department and I saw reference to one by Mr Esmond George, written in the 1930's. It's a site that sort of conjures up a bit of interest, I think, because of its early association with South Australia and in 1948 Paul McGuire published a book the 'Australian Theatre' and that put the Queen's Theatre and some of the South Australian theatrical history in an Australian context and perhaps that too was responsible for drawing my attention to it at the time. But my own interest I suppose would be to look at a bit more closely and in a bit more detail than some of the other writers have. I don't have any theatrical knowledge, that is inside, I'm not an actor, though I have written a couple of reviews for University Reviews and once for the Festival Review, they weren't that

memorable that people put them in anthologies, but it did happen mainly my credentials are that of a spectator. (79)

I was particularly interested in what was going on in the professional theatre in Adelaide in the period from about 1947 to 1960 and some of you will well remember that period, it was a rather rich one, packed with a visit of Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh in the Old Vic Company. I don't know whether anyone would have rather stayed home tonight to watch this version that the ABC is presenting of the Oliviers in Australia rather than hear something about something a century earlier, I don't know. But it is interesting that they are doing it. There was a book published in Australia about that tour soon after it took place and in the last few years a man in England called O'Connor undertook to write another book about the tour. It must have had considerable interest far beyond South Australia and it certainly had a lot of interest here. I think people saw that we were getting, not exactly for the first time, but we were getting people who were at the top of their profession. This is a bit of an aside, although that's in the theatrical tradition too in as much as I'm not dealing with that period, it helps to explain a bit why I got interested in this subject.

I had another qualification, the fact that I worked in the Archives Department. There was a wide range of material that I had easy access to and I got to know various people at that time who came there to work and like Mr Ewens who often gave me bits of information that he'd found, there were other people. Two people in particular, Mr John McEwen from Melbourne, who was interested in the Melbourne theatrical scene, he used to come over occasionally, well once a year quite often, and Mr Alec Bagot who lived in Sydney and he took up a huge interest in a man that'll figure in this talk, Mr George Selth Coppin, a most important figure in Australian

Theatrical history. I had correspondence with these people and we all tended to help each other. (105)

These still are not the great credentials but they're about the best I've got except in a humorous way like that girl who danced with the boy who danced with the girl who danced with the Prince of Wales. Just a few years ago in Sydney I was kissed by a woman who was kissed by Anna Pavlova and (*laughter*) I, I thought that this is not bad going because the Sydney side of things has quite an important influence here and Anna Pavlova did come to South Australia too in 1928 I think. However, I must stop getting aside or I'll be right out there and you won't hear me.

Still a little bit in this Prologue. I think we should consider how theatre might have come to South Australia. If you can consider a very wild sort of hypothesis, suppose we were to form a new colony today or a new town is more I suppose to the point. But suppose it were a new colony, we probably would appoint the officials as were done in 1836 to come to South Australia. We wouldn't appoint a Colonial Chaplain these days, I don't suppose, but we might appoint a Director of Theatrical Entertainment [laughs] because this is the kind of bureaucratic thing that is done and not only would we have a Director and we would have an Assistant Director, several others, perhaps a Company of Players and even I suppose a Playwright in Residence, that seems to be a thing that goes with all that kind of bureaucracy.

But in 1936 [sic] they ordered things rather differently. Systematic colonisation would have implied that all the British traditions would be transplanted here in due course and you can find in Wakefield's Letter simply that he refers to the kind of people that he expected to come in due course once settlement gets going and he says that the, there will be emigrants of the type, actors, singers, music and dancing masters and he adds, "Most of these would call themselves ladies and gentlemen".

(laughter) That was one of the things I think that a lot of Southern Australian early colonists would not have called the acting profession 'ladies and gentlemen' and unfortunately the theatres that I'm dealing with did have quite a reputation to live down because their members were not regarded as 'ladies and gentlemen'. (136)

But in many ways, as you know, South Australia didn't follow the Wakefield System, it went its own way and we beat EG Wakefield a bit because we got the theatrical entertainment before perhaps we asked for it. As early as 1838 there were a couple of theatres here, there was the Theatre Royal in Franklin Street and there was a Royal Victoria Theatre so called on North Terrace down near the corner of Morphett Street and North Terrace. They weren't very well built at all and they were pretty ordinary and James Hawker said in his reminiscences that if it were a wet night the rain would come in and if there was a night that the chaps were down from the hills that there might be a fight and seats would break and the scenery would run and they weren't too good at all, but they did try.

It was a rather sickly plant that first one in these two or three places so that the theatre that comes and is a subject of this talk, the Queen's Theatre, is quite important, and the man who was responsible for it was Emanuel Solomon and in dealing with each of these theatres now I will deal a bit with the people, a bit with the buildings and a bit with the plays in each one. I didn't know very much about Emanuel Solomon back in 1957. I know more now and I see he's a much more interesting man and we have much more to thank him for than I realised. I think you would call him a developer today, he developed that site down there before Hookers thought of developing it. According to the ADB he was born in London in 1800 and he was a pencilmaker by profession and both he and his brother Vaiben were transported to Sydney in 1818 for housebreaking the ADB says. They were emancipated after seven years, or at least

their sentence was for seven years, but they may have been released before that, and according to an article recently in the mail by Dr [Lipman] some of the treatment metered out to Emanuel Solomon in Tasmania was pretty dreadful indeed. (165)

But the two brothers, once they were emancipated established business in Sydney and in Bathurst, auctioneers, merchants and they became quite successful and then in 1838 or 9, Emanuel represent, decided to come to Adelaide to represent the firm here. The ADB article says that he bought a share in a land grant in South Australia in 1835 but I don't quite understand that what that means because the acre at least in relation to this Theatre, because the acre on which the Queen's Theatre stands, stood at 176, it fronts onto Waymouth Street, that was bought at auction by Osmond Gilles for seven guineas in March 1837 or whether the Solomons had interest in other land and only acquired a lease or to purchase of that acre later on, I don't know. But he established the Adelaide side of the business and they had a ship the *Dorset* which plied between Sydney and Adelaide and they dealt in all sorts of things. They must have dealt in flour because one of the things that he did according to his letter-book was that he traded flour for bricks that were used to build that Theatre and you will see in one or two of the slides the brick walls of the Theatre and they were bricks made here. Mr, Dr (Lipman?) in his article said that Emanuel Solomon was interested in the theatre, liked the theatre and that was why he was interested to build it and I could understand that too. (188)

He had many other interests, Emanuel Solomon, he became a Member of the Legislative Assembly and a Member of the Legislative Council here. In 1871 he even paid for a banquet for old colonists, there were 520 of them, so it must have been quite a spread. For those of you who are interested, his letter-book should be in the Mortlock Library still. It's got a lot of detail about the trading arrangements. It was

he who in some way financed the building of this Theatre. I wish I knew whether they had an architect to design it, I haven't found that they did, but they may have, it's a sizable or was a sizable construction. One would think they would need expert advice, there would be questions of the traditions of the day, what kind of seating arrangements you have, stresses of the building, wouldn't want the gallery collapsing with the first wild night of an over enthusiastic audience.

It was thought in its beginning to cost 3000 pounds but apparently it cost a lot more. When it at one stage later on was offered for sale he said it cost 13,000 pounds to build. Well if you were to translate that to today's terms it would be a good deal, millions and millions of dollars I should think given that 1840 is the date of construction. It must have been in appearance red-brick fronted and it looked to me rather like Georgian sorts of houses look in photographs to me. The windows on either side of the façade were sashed ones with white paint. The Theatre was behind that and if you know that site in Gilles Arcade present today, there is a façade which has been built some years after the original and the Theatre was behind that stretching back perhaps almost to Waymouth Street. (217)

Hawker called it rather perhaps in a modest way I suppose, a comfortable little Theatre but of course they were inclined to, the owners were inclined to see it as a, the best thing South Australia had ever had. It must have been too and it was a large theatre with a gallery, a pit and a dress circle.

Solomon had to do more than just get the Theatre built, he had to get some players. There were one or two in Adelaide but he wasn't very happy with them. There were Mr and Mrs Arabin and Mr Sampson Cameron, they'd appeared in those other two theatres I mentioned.

But he wrote to his brother and asked whether some actors could be got from Sydney and that transpired that there was a John Lazar there who'd migrated to Sydney from England not so many years before, he said he'd played in English theatres, he was managing the Theatre Royal in Sydney or he had managed it and they were able to engage him to come and he came with his wife and his daughter, Rachel, and younger sons whom I'm not sure whether they were both born then, there was Samuel and Abraham. Lazar um later on after he had finished with his theatrical career in Adelaide, became Mayor of Adelaide. He also had a silversmithing jewellery business in Hindley Street and finally he went to New Zealand. He was born in 1801 and he died in 1879. He and his family were the mainstay of the Theatre, they may sometimes have engaged a few local people; they did engage those others that were not thought highly of, that is the Arabians and Cameron, from time to time as well.

(242)

The Theatre opened up on Monday, 11th January 1841, with a version of Othello, a dance by Rachel Lazar and then a farce, it all ended at (1.00pm?) which is pretty late really. They said afterwards that it did, had been delayed changing the scenery but I think they were used to long large evenings of entertainment in those days. A Shakespearian play if it was presented fully as they would have done it then would always, in the minor theatre, would always have had some music and songs sliced in between. But there was a reason for this, not just to keep the audiences happily amused in case they got rather tired of the Bard but the minor theatres in England up to about this time were not permitted to produce a certain plays. There were only two or three licensed theatres, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, I think were two of them, so that the other theatres had to find some way round this embargo and they did this by importing into the act, into the play, music and song and in the State Library I think

you could still see a whole series of volumes called the National Acting Drama. I had a look at these years ago, they have the texts of lots of the plays that were presented at the Queen's Theatre it, it's not a set, I'm not suggesting a set that was got out for that Theatre, it just happens to be there but they also have Shakespearian texts in these plays as well, in these books as well. They don't bear the best resemblance, I suppose, to the first quarto or the first folio Shakespeare that you could hope for um but they must have been what was acceptable at the time. (270)

The theatres, the Queen's Theatre, also tried a bit of opera as far as I can see. The Barber of Seville, it looks as though, I can't tell and from what is written about it, but it is difficult to say how far this bore any resemblance to an opera by Rossini. Ah, and also another one by Weber, Die Freischutz, that too was offered with music but they only had about six people in the orchestra they probably presented a dance or two on the same night, I'm not too sure that these operas could have been any closer to the real thing than their Shakespeare was.

They also had a great number of small plays, farces. These are, the word means a play desired primarily to raise a laugh, just some humorous thing often based on the notion of mistaken identity, either a boy's a girl or girl's a boy or somebody thinks somebody else is married and somebody else doesn't think so. Shakespeare wasn't above using that sort of prop so we can't be too critical there but they had a lot of those, one they did on the opening night 'Our Mary Anne' was something in that nature.

There were burlettas, **burletta**. They were farces with music whereas 'Our Mary Anne' would just have been a straight little humorous play and melodramas were dramatic presentations with music. They had a bit to run through what with dancing

and then now and again somebody would sing. It's no wonder the entertainments went on quite late at night.

The first one, the first opening night was well attended, Mrs Thomas, Mary Thomas, kept a diary of those days and she wrote in it that they omitted to get some tickets before hand and then they were forced to sit in rather unfortunate seats. I think her brother, William, probably had to sit in the pit or somewhere like that. At another performance later on in the brief life of this Theatre she draws attention to an aspect of those theatrical days, 'Benefit Nights'. If they didn't do too well financially out of their house takings every now and again a 'Benefit Night' would be held for Mr Lazar or for Rachel or for the Arabins or for other players. (305)

One night a 'Benefit' was held for Mr Connolly and he was the Thomas's Press Man and Miss Thomas has mentioned in her diary, "As it was our Press Man's Benefit Night, mama could not do less than buy two tickets". She obviously wasn't all that keen on going, I think. But still she was a good theatre goer and she would go, she said, even when the mud was ankle deep in the streets as it probably usually was in the winter time then.

The Theatre was open about three nights a week and the prices were in those day's terms, six shillings for the dress circle, five shillings for the upper circle, gallery I would take that to be, and three shillings for the pit. That seems to me to be fairly expensive for those days and over the years that I am talking about even right up to '68 they don't seem to change very much. I can't work out how this would relate to the Consumer Price Index, what six shillings would represent today, it's probably what you could buy for six shillings in those days, a bag of flour or several pounds of butter perhaps. The Theatre was open on three nights a week so they wouldn't have done all that well and they had other things against them as well. As you know,

suddenly in 1841 the whole economic climate of South Australia changed.

Everybody thought we were on a good thing we had something like a national debt of 15 (billion?) dollars and it turned out poor Governor Gawler had to cope with it all but in the kind of lack of confidence that followed and the arrival of Governor Grey, the Theatre suffered along with everything else and attendances fell away in 1841/42.

Mr Lazar opened the Figaro Chop and Coffee House somewhere in the same area. He also had in the same area the Shakespeare Tavern. Theatres and hotels were well associated at all times in England than they were here in those early years and if you read the advertisements in today's papers you will see that we've come back to that again. Plenty of hotels today have theatrical entertainment often, particularly in the weekend and presumably any one of these, if it were a great success, could something blossom into a real theatre, it might be that they build on. It's just an interesting historical development to me that we've sort of come back to that in part now. But Lazar didn't do too well at all and apart from the financial distress and the lack of interest there was a certain puritanical attitude in Adelaide. He'd been warned about this in the first place, and perhaps people didn't respond to the theatre as much as they could have, given the population of the time. (346)

A man called Henry Hussey who wrote the book when he was an old man 'Colonial Life Christian Experience', he wasn't against the theatres as a young man, he even visited it but later on he changed his views completely and when he wrote about the theatre in his old age I think he expressed the view, which must have been held by a number of people at the time, that he said that when one saw the notices in the theatre to the pit they were singularly prophetic.

Now, that's a brief survey of the Queen's Theatre, the first attempt there. When it ceased Lazar went back to Sydney and Emanuel Solomon had to consider his

position. It was fortunate that the Government could come in, could step in there. They didn't have a Court House and this building offered possibilities. Such judicial proceedings must have been held in the judge's personal house up to this time but in 1843, Solomon was prepared to offer the building to the Government and they were prepared to accept it for use as a Supreme Court and a Magistrate's Court. This is where some, a little bit more new information has come about. Alex Castles and Mr Michael Harris in their history, 'Lawmakers and Wayward Whigs', I think it's called, touch on this and they give us the interesting fact that in the negotiations to turn the theatre into a Court House, Solomon thought that that he would like to have an exclusive right to sell liquor in the area which wouldn't be a bad idea, all things considered, but the Government would not agree to that. Nevertheless they did agree to hire the premises for a Court, but Judge Cooper, he wasn't very happy about the general area, the atmosphere of the Court. He thought that this reputation of theatres and taverns and disreputable people wouldn't be the best for a Court House. Nevertheless he had to accept what the Government's decision was and the building was adapted for the purpose. (382)

Castles and Harris and also some of the findings of this archaeological survey indicate, and also another source, a man writing about it, that a wall was run up in the Theatre to divide one part, the southern part, for a Supreme Court and the northern part for a Magistrate's Court. There were certain inbuilt advantages, it seems that the Supreme Court being at the southern end with the stage, they could use the traps in the stage floor as that place where felons and convicted people were kept and then brought up into the dock from there and again according to Castles and Harris, Cooper dispensed his justice from a crimson canopy chair which had an extra advantage that when the rain got into that place he didn't get wet, well perhaps the

jurors and the accused did. The other half which was more the audience half presumably, was the Magistrate's Court and in the cutting which Mr Borrow drew to my attention by reminiscences of JB Phipson, who was the Clerk to the Court, he says that this had certain disadvantages, that if he went away over the weekend, he'd come back to his office on Monday morning and find that revellers from the Shakespeare or as it was later called the Temple Tavern had come in and eaten their lobster and their sandwiches and left them on his desk there, it made quite a mess. (407)

But they used some of the boxes which were of the dress circle I suppose for the audiences to watch the Court proceedings. It was a useful arrangement and lasted for some years. How did, I thought that Castles and Harris had put it in some way about a more interesting procession of dramatic people passing before the Courts than had passed in the Theatre that was there before them, which is quite likely.

In 1850, the Government provided a new Court House and it's the one for which the façade still stands, you know, on Angas Street and Victoria Square. There's the rear portion behind it is all comparatively modern, I should think, but that front classical portico is from 1850 and when the Courts moved there, it freed the old Queen's Theatre for other purposes but before that happened, while the Court was still occupying the Queen's Theatre, we have this new development with the new Queen's Theatre. South Australia had gone out of its economic despond and somebody decided to come here who was of great significance and this was George Selth Coppin. Coppin was an Englishman, born in 1819, his parents were strolling players and he got onto the stage pretty early and he played in Ireland and there he met a lady, Maria Watkins Burroughs. She was an actress and according to what I read of her, a quite a bit older than Coppin and they lived together and came out to Australia

together. She was always apparently known as Mrs Coppin in Australia and she is in fact buried in the West Terrace Cemetery. She died here in Adelaide. (442)

Coppin went first to Sydney and then to Tasmania and then to Melbourne and he was a man full of ideas all the time, not only theatrical ideas but he always seemed to have big ideas about entrepreneurial activity. I know more about these in Adelaide than here, so I'm wondering whether he, his decision to come to Adelaide might be related to perhaps things not going quite so well somewhere else. Theatrical people after all are, particularly that time, well on the move and life has to be lived where it can be best lived. He may have come here perhaps because things were looking up, the discovery of copper, both at Kapunda and at the Burra suddenly made South Australia a much more interesting proposition than it had been before, it was financial again, and perhaps you could expect that a theatre would begin to do well. But whatever the reasons George Selth Coppin came here in 1846, he didn't have a theatre to go to.

There was one established by a man called (Dearing?), the Royal Adelaide Theatre in Franklin Street also down toward Light Square but Coppin was not dismayed by any opposition and in fact subsequently he managed to win that opposition over.

He must have approached Solomon about what could be done and the Court couldn't be shifted so what was agreed to be done was a large room adjoining the Queen's Theatre, which had been referred to as the billiard room, was turned into a theatre.

Now we do know of somebody, as an architect involved with this, a Thomas Price, but other than his name and some well, I think thoughts by Mr Alec Bagot in his life of Coppin, discussion between Coppin and Price give an idea I suppose of the sort of things they would have discussed, how it could be turned into a theatre. I think this is a bit of author's license in the book, I doubt whether any conversation of that kind could have been recorded. (479)

Anyway the theatre, the billiard room was converted and that theatre was able to open on a date here that I have, in 1846, but I'm blown if I can find it just because I want to, I shall no doubt find it in a moment. The same sort of programmes took place in the new Queen's Theatre, as in the Queen's Theatre but Coppin was a fairly strong theatrical personality and he added a certain difference. He, entrepreneurially speaking, he started bringing people to Adelaide, encouraging them to come, bringing in people like Morton King from Victoria and later on bigger names which we'll deal with in the Royal Victoria Theatre and he also developed a comic character called Billy Barlow, it was a kind of a comment on all sorts of political, topical events. He seemed, I suppose, and set to rhyme a whole lot of topical things. I can't remember when local, when representative government first came to be in 1850, I can remember two lines that I saw somewhere that Billy Barlow would not be content to sit and nod for Smiley and Co, or something like that. These kinds of things must have pleased local people who wanted to see criticism of their government or criticism of politicians in particular. (508)

The theatre itself was rather small and recently Mr Borrow has drawn my attention to a drawing by a man called Snell whose diary it appears in. This Snell had a, was a Victorian I think, and his diary deals with much more than South Australia but he came here and made this tiny sketch, we've got a picture of it to show you later on at the end of the text which will show you the sort of thing. which makes me think one has never seen a picture of the inside of the Queen's Theatre nor of the Royal Victoria but who knows what will turn up. I never expected one would turn up of the new Queen's Theatre but suddenly this diary is published and there it is. It's very difficult to be certain in history, that is, what may turn up to correct one's impressions on earlier times.

Coppin moved into other things as well as the theatre, he took over the Auction Mart Tavern in Hindley Street. Some of you will remember it as the Royal Exchange Hotel, it is just, it's on the north side of Hindley Street just down from King William Street. I couldn't say exactly what, it's a new building taking up the site now and even in, just before it was demolished, I think that was in the 60's, it had a very interesting look belonging to that period, the Dickens Period. It had a balcony and it had wooden columns and I paid it a visit or two not only in the bar but I looked over it before it was demolished. I was allowed to go in there I even hoped that I might find some relics there that might have survived but that was mere optimism, but an interesting building inside and Coppin had added the front to it that we were still seeing in the 1860's and perhaps the rooms inside still reflected some of the arrangement that he did to them. It was an interesting place with a large dining room but was very, I understood, very popular with dining clubs in Adelaide until the '60s. (547)

He also opened a theatre in Port Adelaide, he had a hotel there, the White Horse, and he added a theatre to that, but he too like Lazar came up against certain criticism and he got criticism particularly from William Giles the Manager of the South Australian Company and Giles is apparently on record as saying that if Coppin's White Horse cellar caught on fire he would not allow the South Australian Company's fire engine to be used and that any member of the SA Company who attended to put the fire out would be sacked. So his views on the Theatre and Coppin's conduct there were at variance with a good deal of the public, I think, because he was pretty popular there all the time and in Adelaide. (560)

Lazar was encouraged to come back to Adelaide by Coppin. He came back about 1848 with his daughter, his daughter by this time married to Mr Andrew Moore, a

violinist, and they as I say continued the ordinary sort of programme with some Shakespeare, lots of farces, sometimes an attempt at an opera, sometimes letting the Theatre for dinners, sometimes for balls and anything at all to make the thing go and be successful. It still opened mostly three nights a week. There could be problems, I have a note here that on one night there was a play 'Timour the Tartar' an adventure story taking place and one of the actors, Mr Thompson, is said to have forgotten his lines, forgotten almost a whole scene and when he took up the play and said to his other fellow actors, "Why, what's the agitation?". Mrs Coppin said to him that, "You cut out a whole line, a whole scene Mr Thompson", and Mr Thompson simply ignored this, he went on with what line he thought was appropriate and Mrs Coppin asked him rather sharply, he said something about the guards being present and she said, "There are no guards here, Mr Thompson", and then an uproar occurred on the stage and all the players withdrew. I think Mr Thompson got the sack and that made them employ Mr Dearing from a rival theatre to come back into the Company. I see Mr Coppin would accept an apology from Mr Thompson so perhaps there was a happier ending to that. (593)

Morton King played some Shakespearian roles there. He was called the 'Charles Kean' of the Colony. Charles Kean was the son of the great Edmund Kean, an English actor. Charles Keen never came to Adelaide, in fact Coppin advised him in '86 it wasn't worthwhile coming to Adelaide, they wouldn't appreciate him here, but in these earlier years, the '40s, Morton King who did come, could be called a 'Charles Kean' and I suppose helped to bring in a few more people. He played 'Richard the Third', he played 'Hamlet' and the 'Merchant of Venice' but I think all of them must have been played in the shortened version and not all that well either because the South Australian newspaper with a report of his 'Hamlet', said he played, he played

'Hamlet' as "a professor of divinity or logic run mad". The newspaper columnists and critics in those days could get away with a lot more than they can these days, they didn't have so many libel laws to worry about.

Also he engaged another man from Sydney, Francis Nesbitt, to come here and play. He also played in Shakespeare and if I can believe what I read he was being paid 100 pounds a week just to, or 100 pounds rather for a six night season, as well as that he could have a benefit night.

In some ways Coppin didn't do too badly, I suppose. He also presented in this little Theatre a play that we all, I'm not sure whether the Oliviers did, 'She Stoops to Conquer', that's Goldsmith, he did that. 'She Stoops to Conquer' which the South Australian this time thought the best piece of acting we've seen on the Adelaide stage. I thought there was one other occasion when they presented an opera but I think that must be in a later stage. (633)

The orchestra was no better in this new little Theatre, though we know a little bit more about it. In 1848, when Lazaar became the Manager there, the orchestra consisted of Mr Lee, who was the leader on violin. There was a second violin, a violoncello, there was a cornet, a trombone, a flute and one other instrument which is simply described as a tenor. I don't think there was a saxophone, but the playing still wasn't all that good. Sometimes they used the band for dances as well and once there, they had a team of Ethiopian Serenaders. Now these may have been white men with black faces or they may have been visiting black singers, I don't know, it's not easy to tell, but it's an early form of a kind of entertainment that became popular in the 19th Century, the Christy Minstrel Show. Some musical evenings were presented at the Theatre too, which could be let out to various purposes just as the Queen's was.

This Theatre lasted as I say until the Court vacated and the old Queens Theatre was up for use again, and the decision there must have been based on the fact that they had been reasonably successful in the new Queens Theatre and Solomon, again comes into the picture, ready to remodel that Queens Theatre and alter its internal arrangements so that a new chapter, Act 3 can take place there. What he did particularly was to add a new front on the building and it is still to be seen if you go down there, it's in pretty bad state now but it's still there. It was a small classical front and we have a description of that here in this small publication Mr Borrow mentioned. Again he and Mr Marquis drew my attention to this article in the Adelaide Times, I think it was, of the Royal Victoria Theatre as it was remodelled. I'll read you a bit of it because it gives a good idea of the interior.

Lazaar and Coppin engaged from him at 500 pounds per year for three years, that's a rather optimistic venture as you will see. The front of the building is adorned with ionic pillars, well they're not, they're only in relief these pillars if you go down there, they're part pillars but they can still be seen. I wouldn't, I expect they are ionic pillars but I'm not too sure about the tops of them. The whole surmounted with the Royal Coat of Arms, that is not to be seen and I sometimes wonder where it is because it was a very handsome one judging from photographs and but the space that it occupied is clear then and that is, it's a pity that that's gone. It was a beautiful specimen of English manufacture, the Coat of Arms, seven feet by five feet. The entrance to the Dress Circle is like that of the Princess Theatre, London, papered all round. (706)

Now some of the things that Mr McCarthy and his diggers found there were bits of wallpaper, whether any of this paper I don't know, I speculate it just might be.

Because quite a few pieces of this material that he found do have a somewhat special sort of wallpaper on them.

There were two flights of stairs that lead to a lobby, 36 feet by 16 feet, intended expressly for ladies of the withdrawing and promenading hall. The interior of the Theatre surpassed anything of the kind in Australia, in the Australian colonies both in design and execution and the several departments of gigantic dimensions. The whole is 140 feet, breadth, 140 feet with a breadth of 34 feet and a height of 50 feet, that's the interior.

The boxes formed tiers including six private boxes with private entrances. The pit is a vast expanse with close seats capable of accommodating an immense concourse of people. Now the pit would only have been benches I think judging from the small illustrations of the 'new' Queens, you can see them there and the 'old' Queens Theatre sometimes said that they covered the seats expressly for certain occasions, so on most occasions it was just a hard wooden bench. (732)

Besides those compartments there are the following rooms: gentleman's saloon 36 by 16 feet; two rooms for ladies to retire 18 feet by 16 feet; the Green Room, that's a room for actresses and actors when they're not on the stage I understand, 35 by 21; a storeroom, a female's dressing room, men's dressing room, property room and wardrobe room. That, it sounds all fairly comfortable but I wonder if it was.

Before the Theatre Royal was demolished a year or two ago, I was able to go over it quite thoroughly and this was the Theatre in which the Oliviers appeared in 1948 and I was astonished at the dressing rooms which had probably hadn't been altered perhaps since 1878 but possibly 1914, that theatre had been remodelled several times, the last in 1914. But the dressing rooms I could imagine people throwing up their hands in horror and walking out. They were primitive and that was in 1948, what this means in 1850 is a good question in my mind.

The stage of the of the Royal Victoria measured 74 feet by 34 feet six, it is well supplied with drop scenes and other necessary paraphernalia. One man who painted scenery for all these three theatres was EA Opie. He painted lots of early of South Australia, is well known, some of his pictures were used, I think, as publicity purposes. The backdrop that he did for this Theatre caused one of the newspapers rather concern because they couldn't make out whether it was an Australian scene or overseas scene, of what he was attempting to depict is not described here unfortunately. (773)

The proscenium is both expansive and magnificently ornamented with a variety of allegorical devices surrounding a cupid in the centre holding a mirror up to nature and surmounted with motto, "The Imitation of Life, the Mirror of Manners, the Representation of Truth", which was apparently all in Latin and possibly in English as well. Some of you may remember above the Theatre Royal there used to be, above the stage in the centre, there used to be some sort of similar thing. I can't remember now whether it showed two cupids with trumpets or something like that, I think. I don't recall any motto there.

The front of the tiers of boxes similarly adorned with appropriate allegorical and mythological designs, bordered with beautifully with mouldings of gilded paper mache, whilst the supporting pillars are all veneered and beautifully French polished. This vast expanse of brilliantly lighted up with five magnificent chandeliers holding 108 waxed candles, there again a bit of a problem, 108 won't divide very nicely by five, err to give you an even number but if there were 108 in each five chandeliers it would be pretty hot I think. Um, perhaps that was only used on occasions.

The lighting on the stage was probably by lamps though by 1863 in this theatre they were trying gas. Ah it wasn't very successful all because whenever the weather was boisterous outside it somehow interfered with the plant and the lights went out.

All the painting was done by the talented artist, Mr Opie, so he didn't only do backdrops he did a bit of interior decoration as well it seems. (812)

Mr Solomon was, in short, determined to spare no outlay or pains in forming a theatre worthy of the Colony and even the foregoing cursory descriptions shows how well he succeeded. The Managers, that is Coppin and Lazaar, are equally resolved to render the performances as efficient and entertaining as possible by introducing the best available talents from the neighbouring colonies. Now, that's very interesting because by that time the steamships were more regular in their services between the East and here and instead of having a few actors who were actually living here, people start more regularly to come here just for a short time and in fact it has occurred to me looking at this Royal Victoria Theatre that it was part of a bigger movement in a way, in the world of the gold movements to California and to Victoria. I think that a lot of theatrical people got on the move and they would go perhaps to California, then to Australia and possible some of them come onto to Adelaide if they were not dissuaded as Coppin had dissuaded Charles Kean. This coming in of the theatre has been a thing that we had to live with almost ever since. We don't have much in the way of a continual theatre here even now. I see I have omitted to mention the fact that at one stage when the success of the Queens Theatre, the new Queens Theatre, was at its height, Coppin thought of getting rid of the Queens Theatre, offering it off in a raffle in a special sort of way but apparently he didn't get enough takers for that and it was still in his hands and was there to be remodelled when the time came. (853)

Things again followed much the same pattern except that one or two perhaps more important people came to Adelaide through this matter of importing people from the east and also visiting companies perhaps even from America.

Gustavus Vaughan Brooke, the Shakespearean actor, not of the level of Charles Kean, certainly not of the level of Edmund Kean, he came and played for Coppin here. He used to manage theatres for Coppin too, but unfortunately he was a bit fond of the bottle and sometimes couldn't appear. But the opening night of this revived Royal Victorian Theatre was 23 December 1850. It was well attended and I have a, on a few slides it will show an advertisement chain of what was being offered there on that night. It may not be possible to read it but it makes it clear that police will be in attendance so that there will be no disturbances in the pit. Apparently the audience hadn't improved much since the days of 1838.

I had a look through papers to see what sort of things they were doing and at what period because there had been suggestions that the Theatre didn't do very well during the gold rush period and I think, I suppose there was a good exodus of money and people in South Australia in 1852. 1851, the first year, it did fairly well, 1852 I can only find one appearance there of Coppin himself, but I'm not certain that this is the end of the story. Some others may not have been mentioned during the year. I find it hard to believe that nothing went on there but Coppin gave one short appearance there when he came back. He himself went off to the gold fields and some of his business ventures must have gone wrong again and his creditors here including Samuel Tomkinson, who was the Manager of the Bank of Australasia I think, they must have agreed that he could go off for a while and see if he could better his financial position at the gold fields but he got sore feet and blistered hands and he didn't last more than two days over there and he came back here fairly quickly and he didn't make any

money either. He had to think again about how to revive his fortunes here which was apparently the story in a way of his life. He gave one performance in 1852 when he described his experiences on the gold fields but that's the only one I could find.

But in the later years um there seems to be something happening there most years. In 1853 the Theatre was open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. In August of '53 there was a Grand Select Ball held there and there was another in, a performance in August of 1853 of a play called the 'Battle of Austerlitz'. How they managed to do that on the stage I'm not too sure but they apparently could perform wonders in this small place. (937)

The Theatre was still attracting, was attracting good attendances I read in the 1853 period. (End of tape)