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THE EARLY YEARS OF THE PRESERVATION MOVEMENT  
IN NEW SOUTH WALES  
1900 TO 1939

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To Alexa and Anna

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### ABBREVIATIONS:

NSW	New South Wales
NRMA	National Roads and Motorist's Association
RAHS	Royal Australian Historical Society
RAIA	Royal Australian Institute of Architects

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## INTRODUCTION

In that historical account (of the emergence of preservation) the leading fact is the lateness of tolerance for, and the reluctance to admit the importance of, the past. (Saunders, 1972)

This study investigates the development of an interest in conservation of historic buildings and structures in New South Wales up to 1939. The work began as a history of conservation of the built environment for the Heritage Council of New South Wales and in the course of that study it became obvious that there was no available knowledge of the early history of the conservation movement and little understanding of the social, economic and cultural reasons for the development of an interest in historic structures in the twentieth century. In particular there appeared to be an assumption that sensitivity to the value of historic sites in New South Wales and movement to to preserve them followed the establishment of the National Trust in 1947 and that from the time of its inauguration the Trust created an awareness of historic buildings in what had been a wasteland of ignorance and indifference. This study reveals a history of emergent attitudes and campaigns to resist the destruction of significant buildings and the growth in the interwar period of a significant movement which was concerned with major issues.

The outbreak of World War II interrupted this movement as building activity and the consequent pressure for demolition declined. After the war a new era began for conservation with

the establishment of the National Trust in 1947 and the County of Cumberland Act, 1946, both of which acknowledged for the first time the impetus for preservation which had arisen in previous decades. A cut-off date of 1939 has been chosen for this analysis as it is concerned with the development of the push for preservation up to the point where it was interrupted by the War and transformed by radical changes in Australian society in the post-war era.

Early in the study it became apparent that an important association existed between the conservation movement and a gradual unfolding of an awareness of the past. Pressure arose for the preservation not only of buildings and structures but also of books, government records, photographs and relics. The move to 'save' historic buildings was but one aspect of a much wider movement for the establishment of an historical museum, and official archives, and libraries. Although this is a topic deserving of full investigation, it is outside the scope of this study. However, it is necessary to include a brief analysis of the rise of an interest in the past in order to place the conservation movement, as it applies to the built environment, in its proper context and to understand its preoccupations.

This thesis documents in a chronological fashion the development of an interest in the conservation of the built environment, discusses and analyses the issues which arose and identifies the various interests and individuals involved. Three groups of people are distinguished: historians, particularly



those associated with the Royal Australian Historical Society, artists and architects. Sometimes acting independently, sometimes in concert, they not only formed the nucleus of preservation campaigns before 1939, but led the move to found the National Trust in 1946-47. In general the historical interest was the first to emerge.

For this reason the thesis, after an introductory chapter on changing perceptions of the past, examines the growth of the historical interest and the early proposals and activities in the area of preservation in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 and 4 continue the narrative, dealing with the preservation movement in the interwar period when, particularly in the Sydney City area, major campaigns were waged against the State Government's proposals for urban improvement. Brief reference is made to the two groups, artists and architects in the narrative chapters. After 1920 these groups both encouraged a wider perception of the value of older structures and gave strength and direction to campaigns by their active participation. Their role is examined outside the narrative, so that the separateness of their contribution becomes identifiable. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the nature of their interest and identify the more important individuals involved. The concluding chapter reviews the state of preservation awareness in 1939 and the gains and losses of the preceding years.

Much information on the ideas and activities of individuals and groups involved in preservation was gathered from the

archives of the Royal Australian Historical Society. This source proved of immense value to the paper, providing otherwise unavailable documentation of much of the story of preservation before 1939. The manuscript collection of the Mitchell Library, particularly manuscripts concerning Lionel Lindsay, Sydney Ure Smith, David Scott Mitchell and others, and the files of the Department of Public Works in the New South Wales Archives Office provided additional documentary material. Printed sources such as the journals Architecture and Art in Australia, and the Sydney Morning Herald provided further sources of contemporary opinion.

There has been an evolution of the terms 'preservation' and 'conservation'; both have been used to the retention of an item of the past. 'Conservation' is the term in current use particularly among professionals in the field, and 'preservation' was the term used up until at least the late 1960's. As 'preservation' was used by all commentators quoted in this thesis, that usage is retained throughout.

## CHAPTER ONE

## THE HISTORICAL SENSE

Amos Rapaport has written that perception is "the principal mechanism linking people to their environment", and must precede any form of action. "One must know the environment before one can be aware of its problems and opportunities, and before one can act - or is impelled to act", he says, and people learn to know their environment first through their senses and then through information which is not experimental, such as that provided by media [1]. This learning process is affected by 'filters' in which "images, expectations, learning and cultural schemata all play a role" and influence evaluation of the environment. There are, Rapaport states, only "perceived qualities and environmental quality is perceived environmental quality". Awareness of the unique experiences of Australians and pride in past achievement were, indeed, necessary preludes to favourable perceptions of historic structures in the environment.

A recognition of the fact that Australia had a history distinct from that of the United Kingdom or the Empire developed slowly but by the late 1930's it was possible for a leader of the Sydney Morning Herald to insist that an 'historical sense' had emerged in N.S.W.

"...the interest that is now taken in our early days is keen and widespread. There is evidence of this on every hand. Centenaries are celebrated with all due pomp and circumstance. Historical societies promote pious pilgrimages to places with historical associations. Monuments are erected in honour of old-time worthies and their exploits. Exhibitions of an historical character are invariably well attended. Vexed questions, such as the site of the first Government House, or the number of taverns on the Bathurst Road when Plancus was Consul, are debated in the Press with as much fervour and earnestness as if the fate of nations depended on the correct answer." [2]

The phrase "historic" or "historical sense" recurs in discussions of the 20's and 30's in the press. It is important in relation to associated campaigns to preserve buildings and structures, to examine what the phrase signified. It had a wider meaning than serious academic historical writing, of which there was still very little; it signified a more general interest and the attitudes of a vocal minority in the community, striving to create an awareness of the past. This chapter explores the growth of this "historical sense" and its limitations up to 1939.

This sense of the past had grown slowly, long overshadowed by England and Europe with their lengthy and dramatic histories. As Flora Eldershaw, joint author with Marjorie Barnard of "A House Is Built", said in an address to the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1933,

"There have been no violent divisions in our history, no wars fought upon our soil, no invasions, no conquests. Important things have happened, but not sudden violent things... We have no bitter wrongs to keep our history alive in our memories, no lost provinces to brood upon, no hereditary enemy. As the years pass we let them go. National consciousness is focussed on the present. We have not yet reached our zenith; there is no reason why looking back should

give us more satisfaction than looking forward.. There are so few historic monuments, so few tangible traces of our history to remind us." [3]

Shame of convict origins, and the lack of both serious historical writing and a nucleus of historians dedicated to the study of Australian history in universities were further substantial obstacles. As late as 1924 the Sydney Morning Herald bemoaned the fragility of the historic sense,

"Young communities seldom have an historical sense. They possess no traditions or associations of their own. The past is too near at hand to have acquired any glamour. It was a period of hardship and drudgery, and time has not softened its crudities. A large proportion of the population has come from overseas, and feels itself an exile in a strange land. The old country, even to the native born, is still 'home' In Australia there was yet another reason why the historical sense was slow to develop. We were frankly ashamed of the origin of our settlement. It was a point upon which we were quite absurdly and illogically 'touchy'." [4]

"Before the twentieth century", J.M. Ward has written, "Australians lacked a firm conviction that the history of their own country was significant enough to justify sustained intellectual inquiry" [5]. Such history as was produced, he continued, tended to be dominated by overseas writers or by local writers eager to promote some political ambition or "influence British attitudes towards Australia". No historian, he claimed, seems to have been affected by the optimism of the eighties, although that decade might have been thought likely to stimulate belief in progress. The celebration of the first centenary of New South Wales did, however, stimulate sufficient interest in the events being celebrated to cause some to seek out and take steps to preserve historical records, and others to publish books of general interest on the Australian experience.

As the 1888 centenary of the founding of settlement in New South Wales approached, it was an appropriate time to reflect upon the achievements of the colony in its short one hundred year history and the period is remarkable for the number of historical references and biographical works published, two of the better known being the Aldine Centennial History of New South Wales, published in 1888 and the Picturesque Atlas of Australia, published in 1886-8 [6]. They contained historical accounts and catalogues of the achievements of the colony, as well as the usual descriptions of climate, topography, vegetation, towns, cities and rural and secondary industries. Emphasis was also placed on prospects for future development; if so much had been achieved in one hundred years, who could predict what the next century would accomplish? For the first time, some of Sydney's older buildings were marked out as interesting survivals of past experience. The Atlas for example included illustrations of the Rocks area of Sydney; it was a "quaint and old fashioned" area and "Those in search of primitive Sydney will find more of it here than anywhere else" [7]. By encouraging artists to illustrate the Rocks and other 'old' areas, the Atlas initiated some of the earliest reassessment of the visual quality of the old areas of Sydney.

From the 1880's onward, articles on aspects of colonial history began to appear in the Sydney press and magazines. Articles on "Old Sydney" were of particular interest and appeared as early as 1888 when a series of histories of Sydney suburbs was published in The Echo, then a Fairfax publication

[8]. The series continued through 1890 and 1891. In 1893 a series was published on Sydney's Old Sandhills Cemetery, Elizabeth and Devonshire Streets. At this time, J.M. Forde under the pseudonym "Old Chum" began his series of historical articles, mostly on old Sydney, for the Truth newspaper which it continued for over 35 years [9]. The articles covered a variety of subjects including biographical material, the development of small towns and regions, family histories and the growth of industries and were written mostly without thorough documentation, from memory, personal knowledge or a rough study of available records. By 1901 Dr Andrew Houson was able to state "In the newspapers of today allusions are constantly being made to Forgotten Sydney" [10].

At a more serious level, the lack of historical records, their inaccessible locations and lack of organisation were obstacles which had to be removed before a more sophisticated appreciation of the past could emerge. In two decades following the centenary, important steps were taken to remedy this situation. The initiative came from individuals who saw a problem and an opportunity, and who were already enamoured of the Australian past, so much so that they were prepared to take extraordinary steps to further its study. Among these James Bonwick and David Scott Mitchell were outstanding.

James Bonwick was a teacher, born in England in 1817 [11]. In 1841 he moved to Tasmania where he established his own boarding school, produced the first of many textbooks for

schools, and began to take an interest in local history. In two early textbooks, The Reader for Australian Youth and Geography for the Use of Australian Youth he included material on the history of Australian exploration and he later published Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip (1856), John Batman Founder of Victoria (1867) Curious Facts of Old Colonial Days (1870) and in 1870 The Last of the Tasmanians and Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians, both studies of the island's Aborigines. He left for England in 1869 and there he began to write about colonial life, involving some background research at the Public Records Office.

Of his own accord he began to transcribe the Public Record Office's documents relating to early Australia, particularly Queensland, and in 1883 was appointed official transcriber for the Queensland Government. He then approached other state governments and obtained similar commissions from South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. New South Wales, despite his repeated pleas, did not support him until April 1887. As Bonwick forwarded the New South Wales transcriptions in the ensuing years the government willingly renewed the contract with the result that Bonwick worked on the New South Wales documents until 1902 [12].

When Bonwick approached the New South Wales Government in 1887 it was at an opportune time, for the government was considering a proposal from Charles Potter, Government Printer, for the publication of a new edition of T. Richards' Official



History of New South Wales (1883, Sydney) to commemorate the State's centenary. With Bonwick's work in mind, it was decided to publish instead, a new work with documentary material provided by Bonwick's transcripts [13]. An "Historical Commission" was appointed to prepare the proposed history for publication. It was to be called the History of New South Wales from the Records [14]. The first volume appeared in 1889 edited by C.B. Barton, a member of the Commission and brother of the first Prime Minister of Australia, Sir Edmund Barton. The second appeared in 1894, edited by Bonwick's nephew-in-law, A. Britton, also a member of the Commission, the two volumes together covering the period 1783-1794 [15]. In 1891 a History Board was appointed and it recommended that the documents should be published separately from the History of New South Wales from the Records. Subsequently in 1894 the History was abandoned, "sacrificed to economic expediency" [16]. Seven volumes of the Historical Records of New South Wales were published from 1892 to 1901 under the editorship first of Britton and then of F.M. Bladen who replaced Britton on the Commission after the latter's death. These published document collections were landmarks at the time and indicative of the State and Federal Governments' commitment, albeit temporary, to funding and promotion of historical knowledge. Following Bonwick's retirement in 1902 and the New South Wales Government's decision not to continue funding the transcripts, the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility for the task and a new series, Historical Records of Australia, was launched (see below) [17]. The historian John Manning Ward has written

"Bonwick's transcripts were a major influence on Australian historical writing.....What he made available directed the attention of historians to the beginnings of Australian history and demonstrated the richness of the fields that awaited their reapers." [18]

While Bonwick had been primarily concerned with official documents and records, others had become collectors of private papers, books, manuscripts and paintings relating to Australia's early colonial days and through their work the New South Wales Government was encouraged to make another contribution to the development of Australian history: the establishment of a library for Australian studies. One collector in particular, David Scott Mitchell, was the catalyst for the library which was fittingly named in his honour.

Mitchell was born in 1836 in Sydney, and was a graduate of Sydney University, one of the first to receive a higher degree [19]. As early as the 1880's he began collecting all kinds of records concerning the history of Australia including books manuscripts, pictures, prints, maps and charts [20]. By 1898 he had amassed over 61,000 volumes and in that year he offered his collection to the New South Wales Government on condition that the latter provide an adequate building for a National Library in which the Mitchell Collection should be housed as an integral part but in a separate wing. A further condition was that the Library should be incorporated by Act of Parliament and the Mitchell Collection vested in the Trustees [21]. Mitchell also offered an endowment of 70,000 pounds, the income from which was

to be spent on additions to the collection [22]. The Government was anxious to accept and in 1899 the Library and Gallery Act was passed incorporating the Public Library of New South Wales as well as the Gallery. There followed years of indecision, delays and Government appointed Select Committees inquiring into the Library, Mitchell's offer and the building that was to house both [23]. Mitchell threatened to withdraw the bequest unless a building was ready within a year of his death [24]. Mitchell's colleagues urged the Government to act or else be forever responsible for the loss of a unique opportunity for the preservation of a storehouse of information on Australia's early history and their statements to the Select Committees suggest that the possible loss to the State of this collection had the effect of focussing attention on the importance of historical records and their preservation [25]. Eventually it was determined that a building would be constructed in Macquarie Street and temporary storage space provided in the meantime. In 1905 and 1906, largely as a result of Premier Carruthers' commitment to the bequest, the building was finally commenced and when Mitchell died in 1907 the books were transferred to the Public Library awaiting their final home [26].

The press, the Sydney Morning Herald in particular, had supported the idea of an Australian collection and like the collectors, urged the Government to take up the offer and to deal with the housing problem in a manner that recognized the importance of the collection. Letters to the press on the subject were numerous and it became a much discussed public

issue. When the building opened in 1910 it was heralded as a great achievement for New South Wales; "it is the grand repository for the history of Australia", Professor MacCallum said in his speech on the occasion and praised Mitchell not only for having gathered together the collection, but for his efforts to secure its preservation and lodgement under one roof [27].

Mitchell was only one, albeit the most successful, among a number of collectors of Australiana in the 1890's. Among the others were Alfred Lee, Dr. James Bennett and Tom Lennard and who together with Mitchell were assisted by the local booksellers, George Robertson and William Dymock and Robertson's assistant Fred Wymark. James Tyrrell, in his reminiscences, Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney (1952), hints at the competitiveness of the collectors, with Mitchell often having to outwit his colleagues [28]. He also recalls however, the fierce dedication of Mitchell, his total immersion in his self-appointed task, his home at No. 17 Darlinghurst Road choked with books and papers where he led a hermit-like existence, reading and studying the works he had amassed [29]. Tyrrell suggests that George Robertson had first steered the collectors towards "the then neglected field" of Australiana, and thereafter gathered in for them whatever they sought, internationally as well as locally [30]. Robertson was both bookseller and publisher and in his latter capacity notable for the publication of much early Australian work such as that of Steele Rudd, Henry Lawson and B.J. Patterson. The indebtedness of collectors to Robertson and Wymark was acknowledged by Sir William Dixon in his address at

the opening of the Dixon Gallery in 1929. Though unable through force of circumstances to make collections of their own, Dixon said, they had always taken a keen interest and pride in helping others obtain for Australia what would otherwise have been lost [31].

The collectors were friends as well as rivals and were no doubt in the habit of meeting to discuss their mutual interests, together and with others, who were not collectors, but whose interests were in Australia's past. From 1898 members of this group worked to establish an historical society and were founding members of the the Australian Historical Society, inaugurated in 1901 and which in 1918 became the Royal Australian Historical Society. This society was the focal point of historical interests for the next four decades at least.

On 23 November 1898 John Nobbs, MLA, gave notice of motion in the House to the effect that provision should be made in the proposed Mitchell Library building for the keeping of all important documents owned by the government and relating to the early history of the Australian colonies and other manuscripts. The motion did not proceed [32]. However on 30 November 1898 Nobbs, accompanied by Rev. W.H. Yarrington and the organiser of the meeting, Edward Dowling, approached Mitchell on the subject of the formation of an historical society or the establishment of some other means of preserving Australian records [33]. Rev. Yarrington (M.A, LL.B) was a well educated Church of England clergyman; Dowling was an accountant at the Government Printing

Office and Honorary Secretary of both the Australasian Federation League of New South Wales (Central League) and the Australian Natives' Association and a keen federalist [34]. The four agreed to found an historical society and to call a public meeting to that effect. Rev. Yarrington later recalled that the public meeting never took place. Four months later the three approached Mr & Mrs Alfred Lee to induce them to give their cooperation in establishing the Society [35].

Edward Stack, a Lands Department employee in charge of the Map and Plan Room, also discussed with Mitchell the founding of an historical society, this time to be called the "Old Sydney Society". J.M. Forde, author of the "Old Chum" articles was involved as was the well-known collector Dr Andrew Houison [36]. In 1900 Mitchell consented to become Patron of a Society based in Sydney, provided the title was altered to the Australian Historical Society [37]. There followed a series of meetings at the homes of Mitchell, Alfred Lee and Houison and months passed before a society was even provisionally formed. In the meantime strong support for their purpose was given by the Sydney Morning Herald. It was becoming progressively difficult to document the facts of the past, Dr Houison stated, and debates raged in the Herald over the 'facts' [38]. The Herald's leader of 20 April 1900 advised that there was a need to record by photographs and sketches parts of Sydney which were destined to disappear and a letter from Stack informed the paper that Dowling, Nobbs and the author had for some time past hoped to form an Australian Historical Society and invited anyone interested to a public

meeting for this purpose [39]. In October 1900 a discussion was conducted in the Herald as to the date of the laying of the foundation stone of St Phillip's Church, Sydney [40]. It led to renewed calls for an historical society. The Herald's leader of 22 October stated that

"The historical sense is strongly developed in Australia, though at first sight one might be inclined to doubt this. An historical society would have the effect of stimulating the habit of research....The history of New South Wales and its pioneers is a history worth studying, and such a society as is suggested would give valuable help in the collection and preservation of necessary materials." [41]

In late 1900 a provisional committee was formed, meetings took place and finally in March 1901 the Australian Historical Society was inaugurated at a public meeting. Houston was named President, Stack was Secretary and Mitchell Patron of the Society. Other founders included, E. Dowling, Rev. Yarrington, J. Nobbs, Alfred Lee, J.P. McGuanne, F.M. Bladen, Editor of Historical Records of New South Wales and Frank Walker [42]. According to Dowling the reason for the delay in founding the Society was that he was "overwhelmed with work at the time, being Hon. Secretary of the Australian Natives Association of New South Wales and also Hon. Secretary of the Central Education League". He could not manage the Secretaryship of another Society, but had induced Stack to do so [43].

John Percy McGuanne, a foundation member and author of articles on Old Sydney, set down his own version of the events in the Public Service Journal, 10 February 1908.

"Every man should have a hobby. Forty years ago I was a collector of Australian literature, and some twenty years later I began to read for a purpose, viz. to tell "The Story of Sydney".....

Those who are intimately interested in the pursuit naturally draw into sympathetic proximity, and having this absorbing interest in our infant Sydney, it followed that acquaintance with students of a like hobby was inevitable, with the result that the formation of an Australian Historical Society was mooted and taken up by the Sydney Morning Herald. Eventually it was determined by Mr. Edward Stack, an old Lands Officer, to convene a meeting for the purpose, and its advertisement was worded at my desk.

I had the honour of being one of the first vice-presidents."  
[44]

A leading article in the Herald dated 24 December 1901, commended the good work of the Society in its first year and suggested that the papers read should be published in a periodical journal [45]. In 1901 the Society had 19 members, in 1904 it had approximately 100 and by 1915 the membership had grown to between 150 and 160. In 1927 it reached 900. There was a decline in the depression years, but by 1938 the lost ground had been recovered and membership stood at 867 [46].

The Society sought to encourage the study of Australian history through its monthly meetings and excursions to places of historic interest and through its journal, first published in 1906. By 1939 26 volumes had appeared. Many of the articles originated as papers read to the Society. Well attended excursions, organised monthly between 1915 and 1939, familiarised members with sites and buildings of historic interest. The excursions were pronounced a success after the first year, having "done much to popularise our Society and



awaken general interest in the history of Sydney and surrounding districts" [47]. Years later Karl Cramp, who was the most active and influential of all members of the Society up to 1939, maintained that the regular publication of the Journal and the regular holding of excursions had done much, "not only to popularize the Society, but also to develop in the community generally an interest in Australian history" [48]. Only those, he said in 1941, who could recall the earlier days of the Society could adequately realize the development made in that direction.

On the advice of Charles Bertie, an early member and Sydney Municipal Librarian, and the initiative of Cramp, the Society undertook the erection of commemorative tablets in places of historic interest. Bertie had seen the London County Council's programme and suggested that the Australian Society follow its example, placing a succinct historical statement on such tablets [49]. The Society was given for the purpose, a small grant of 40 pounds initially, from the Chief Secretary's Department. The first tablet was erected in 1919 to mark the site of the first Government House in Sydney; the Society stated that it believed that this placing of tablets "will have a beneficial effect in creating an interest in, and a more certain knowledge of the past of our country, and in developing an Australian tradition and sentiment" [50]. Other tablets followed, often with the cooperation of public and business institutions and by 1927 17 had been erected [51]. Not all of these were in New South Wales; two tablets commemorating Cook's voyage along the coast

in 1770 were placed, one at Point Hicks, near Cape Howe, Victoria and the other at Possession Island, near Cape York, both funded by the Commonwealth Government, at the Society's request. It was also at the request of the Society that the Commonwealth Government erected a tablet marking the landing-place of Ross and Keith Smith at Darwin after their historic flight from England [52].

In the interwar years the Society extended its campaign to achieve a greater awareness of Australian history in the community at large. Schools received particular attention, with prizes awarded in essay competitions and for the most successful candidate in Australian history at the public examinations, and free copies of the journals were donated to the state's high schools [53]. The first prize, donated by Hon. J. Lane Mullins, was announced in 1917 [54], in 1918 two more were created [55], and by 1930 a total of eight prizes were available to school pupils for historical essays and passes in Australian history at the Leaving and Intermediate levels [56]. Much publicity was obtained from exhibitions of Australiana, held in 1920 and 1922 and on the occasion of the Sesquicentenary in 1938 [57]. Items from the Society's Museum and on loan from members and the public were clear evidence of the Society's drive to resist thoughtless destruction of surviving artefacts, costumes and other family treasures. An objective to which a few leading members gave particular attention was the need for an Historical Museum funded and maintained by the government. The Council approached the Premier with a proposal for a museum and in 1919

a bill constituting an Historical Museum Trust on which the Society was to be represented, was drafted. Notice was given in the Legislative Assembly of the introduction of the measure, but it was "crowded out" by other business and with a subsequent change of Government, allowed to lapse [58]. The Society's object in holding the 1920 exhibition had been "to draw public attention to the need for a permanent Historical Museum" and it thanked the Sydney Morning Herald for a leading article emphasising that need [59]. The matter was revived frequently in the next twenty years, especially after subsequent exhibitions had provided ample evidence of "the existence of a widespread public opinion in favour of Historical Museums" [60]. During the campaigns for the preservation of buildings such as Burdekin House and Hyde Park Barracks in the nineteen thirties and forties, it was often proposed that the buildings should become 'the much needed museum'.

Beginning in 1919, with the active support of Premier Holman, an attempt was made to record first-hand reminiscences from older settlers in outlying regions [61], but the results were considered inadequate, to be improved only through the formation of local historical societies better able to pursue this work. The Society thereafter encouraged this and supported those areas which expressed an interest in forming a local group; Grafton, Lismore and Newcastle were among the first to become affiliated with the Society in 1936 [62]. These and other local societies such as the Parramatta and District Historical Society, affiliated in 1937 [63], conducted their

own local research and had papers read at their regular meetings.

The Society received an annual subsidy from the Government and accommodation for its meeting and other activities was provided by the Education Department. The Society's relations with that Department were particularly cordial and many of its activities, such as the recording of pioneers' reminiscences and the encouragement of local history research in schools were done in conjunction with the Department [64]. Karl Cramp who had been Inspector of Schools for many years was certainly responsible for promoting this cooperation and he was assisted by the active interest of a number of senior department officers and Education Ministers. Outstanding in this regard was S.H. Smith, a member of the Society and President in 1919, and for many years, Director of Education. Smith was the author of several books on historical subjects and a frequent lecturer to the Society on the history of education in Australia [65]. On many occasions other senior officials in the Department addressed the Society as did various Ministers for Public Instruction/Education [66]. However the Society was rarely satisfied with the level of government assistance provided, particularly the subsidy, which it felt was never commensurate with the educational services it rendered.

The press gave much coverage to the Society's activities. Meetings were regularly and extensively reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, as were details of historical papers read, the

erection of tablets, excursions and other activities. The Society was very conscious of the value of this coverage and in its Annual Reports repeatedly thanked the daily press for its support. In several instances, such as the establishment of the Society in 1900, the proposal for a Historical Museum in 1919, and the recording of pioneers reminiscences in 1916, the issues became the topic of leading articles [67]. In its Annual Report of 1924. for example, the Society thanked the press, particularly the Sydney Morning Herald and the Daily Telegraph, "for consistent recognition and support of our efforts to awaken in the members of the community generally an interest in the past of our country's activities, a knowledge of which is so essential to her fullest development in the future" [68]. It was not only the press that was interested, radio stations also took notice of the Society's work. In 1925 Broadcasters (Sydney) Ltd inquired about the possibility of broadcasting the Society's monthly lectures [69], and from 1924 on several members delivered lectures for that station as well as for Farmers' Ltd [70]. In the 1930's the Australian Broadcasting Commission broadcast a series 'National Treasures' with the help of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

By 1939 the Royal Australian Historical Society had earned for itself a respected place in Sydney, its leadership at the public level acknowledged in the press and by academics. In 1934, for example, the Sydney Morning Herald published an article "The Historical Sense. Our Debt to the R.A.H.S." by an unknown contributor who signed himself 'W.F.W' [71]. There had

been a change in attitudes to the past, he wrote, for which much was owed to the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Pioneers Club, particularly to the older of these two institutions, the Royal Australian Historical Society, founded in 1901.

"That year saw the birth of the Commonwealth, and we may say also that it was the birth of the historical sense in our people. We suddenly discovered that we had historical things that were worth preserving, landmarks that we should cherish, progenitors who were worthy of lasting memorials."

To study Australian history, he concluded, is to find much cause for pride; indeed as Sir Edmund Barton, the first Prime Minister of the Commonwealth had said "research in our history and the wide publication of its results would be of far-reaching value to our political, social and economic life". The article listed the achievements of the Royal Australian Historical Society, making special reference to the contribution of Cramp, "the life and soul of the Society" who had been Honorary Secretary since 1915. The Society, it concluded, "is rendering great public service in developing a purified and enlightened patriotism, and an historic sense in our people". The Society was so impressed by the article that it reprinted it in its entirety in the Journal [72].

In February 1941, at the official opening of the Society's first permanent home, No. 8 Young Street, Professor Stephen Roberts spoke of his debt to the Society and of the debt of all present and future students of Australian history:

"I should like to pay tribute to the work of the Royal Australian Historical Society, first in a personal and then in an official capacity. It is just over twenty years that I have been drawing upon the accumulated labours of members of this Society. When I was writing "The History of Australian Land Settlement" and "The Squatting Age in Australia", the published papers of the Society was one of my prime sources, and as I publicly acknowledged at the time, no student of the early days of Australian development could cover his ground without working in detail on the heterogenous, but amazingly inclusive, series of papers in your Journal."

Referring to postgraduate research, he said

".... it is a prime job of every student to go through your files in order to find out what has been previously done and in order to cull those parts of earlier work which may suit his purpose. Few in Australian history, whether governmental or economic or social, are disappointed, because it is amazing how wide is the field which you have covered over the decades."

Professor Roberts then suggested that the Society widen its scope, particularly towards the inclusion of the period 1860 to Federation, which he said had been greatly neglected [73].

Meanwhile other developments were occurring, which, like the Society's initiatives, spread knowledge and appreciation of Australia's colonial past. Two which warrant particular attention were the publication of Historical Records of Australia by the Commonwealth and the beginnings of the academic study of history in the universities of Sydney and Melbourne.

The initiative for publication of the Historical Records of Australia began in 1911 when the Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament declared that to publish the documents transcribed for New South Wales was a duty the Federal

Government owed "to the nation they are building up, to posterity, and to civilization". In 1912 Dr. Frederick Watson was appointed editor [74]. The project was changed from "Historical Records of New South Wales" to "Historical Records of Australia" and the documents published already as part of the New South Wales series were republished as part of Historical Records of Australia. The strictly chronological presentation of the New South Wales volumes was abandoned and replaced by a series of seven separate chronological collections, classified according to document type, for example, legal papers, and Governor's Despatches [75].

Work on the publications proceeded slowly. Watson insisted on conducting a full survey of resources before proceeding with publication and found duplicates of much of Bonwick's material as well as hundreds of previously unknown documents [76]. Despite his difficulties with the survey and with his employers, thirty three volumes of the Records were produced between 1914 and 1925, evidently the result of "an extraordinary physical effort in the location, handling and collation of thousands of documents" [77]. His efforts did not win universal praise however and he received some severe criticism from Ernest Scott, Professor of History at Melbourne University for the selection, arrangement and editing of the documents. Nevertheless, these volumes of hitherto unavailable records were a significant addition to the literature of Australian history.



The academic study of Australian history developed slowly in the period before World War II. In Melbourne Professor Ernest Scott included Australian history in his courses offered to undergraduates and himself published quite extensively in the field [78]. Professor George C. Henderson, Professor of History at Adelaide University 1902 to 1923 was instrumental in establishing the South Australian Archives Department in 1919 [79]. Despite the availability of the transcripts and the rich collections of the Mitchell Library, formal teaching in Australian history was slower to appear in Sydney. The first Professor of History, George Arnold Wood, was appointed in 1891 [80]. A graduate of Oxford, his interests and teaching were chiefly in British history, in which his style of teaching and liberal philosophy profoundly influenced generations of students. Although he was anxious to introduce some teaching in Australian history and quite early encouraged research at the postgraduate level, for example Myra Willard who took her Master of Arts degree in 1921, he found facilities for serious work insufficient.

According to Wood's biography he had considered the possibility of introducing the subject to undergraduates as early as 1893, but found it lacking in sufficient literature [81]. When he pursued the subject further in 1914, there was the prospect of the publication of the Historical Records of Australia as well as the existing Historical Records of New South Wales which covered the period up to 1811. He wrote "I am very anxious to introduce the study of Australian history into

our university. But nothing can be done until we get our material into print" [82]. In 1917 he lectured to undergraduates on the discovery of Australia and in 1925 on the foundations of settlement in New South Wales [83]. In 1922 while endeavouring to introduce Australian history in the university, he agreed to its withdrawal from the list of subjects for the Leaving Certificate [84].

Wood's own research reinforced his views regarding the need for organisation and publication of the records. He joined the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1915, served as Vice President from 1916 to 1919 and read several papers resulting from his research. Conscious of the difficulties imposed by the lack of available records, he regarded Watson's work and the Historical Records of Australia as a vital task. In 1913 Wood had approached Watson regarding access to the records and received a very discouraging reply, but it was the start of a long association between the two men. Watson sympathised with Wood's plan to introduce Australian history at the undergraduate level and Wood respected Watson's work. Wood was appointed advisor to Watson in 1915 and during the editor's many difficulties with his critics and with the government, Wood defended his work [85]. In 1914 Wood wrote suggesting that he and Watson should work together, for "if we do so we may found a really good school for the study of Australian History" and in 1925 when Watson wrote to say that the last volume was complete Wood replied, "If this is the end, I must take the opportunity to congratulate you most heartily on your great achievement"

[86]. The publication of the records was essential for the realisation of undergraduate studies in Australian history.

Both Wood and Scott agreed not only on the need for publication of these records but also for their proper organization and the urgent need in this regard was for an archives repository in all States. In 1926 they jointly produced a report on Watson and the Historical Records of Australia, which recommended the appointment of an archivist to arrange for preservation of the records and to take over the editing of the Historical Records [87].

Although he came to Australian history relatively late in his career, Wood had made a major contribution to the development of a greater interest in colonial history. He had encouraged and supported Watson and the Historical Records of Australia, he had introduced Australian history to the undergraduate and postgraduate student, he had pursued his own research, published several books including The Discovery of Australia (1922), and he had promoted the need for proper protection and organisation of historical records. Wood's teaching also made an impact on students who did not pursue post-graduate work under his supervision but, eager historians, made their own distinctive contributions to public interest in the colonial past. Outstanding among them was Marjorie Barnard whose novel A House Is Built was written in collaboration with Flora Eldershaw. Set in Sydney in the period 1837-67 it was awarded the first place in the Sydney Bulletin 1000 Pound Prize

competition for the best novel by an Australian author and enjoyed great popularity, being reprinted eight times between 1929 and 1936 [88].

These many initiatives towards development of an appreciation of the past suggest, but do not confirm the existence of a similar appreciation within the broader community. In order to reveal wider community attitudes, I will explore other avenues, and one of the best of these and the most readily accessible is the press. One other avenue which should be considered is the celebration of municipal, town and other centenaries which, if successful, depend upon a reasonable level of public interest. The proliferation of these centenaries will be discussed briefly followed by a more detailed investigation of the role of the press.

Although centenaries were celebrated from 1888 on, it was only in the 1920's that they became numerous and popular. In 1920 the districts of Goulburn and Campbelltown held centenary celebrations [89] and in 1921 Mudgee, Wellington and Port Macquarie did likewise, while at Yass the centenary of the discovery of Yass Plains by Hamilton Hume was commemorated and two municipalities, Leichardt and Hamilton, celebrated the Jubilee of their incorporation [90]. Of the Wellington event it was said that the actual centenary of the district's discovery had passed, "but the interest awakened in the event was ample justification for the celebration" [91]. On many of these occasions memorials were erected to early explorers or pioneers.

The local press in each of the centenary centres "gave prominence to the history of the district, and a series of excellent articles was published" [92]. In 1922 the Royal Australian Historical Society proclaimed

"A hopeful sign of the increase in public interest in matters historical is the avidity with which country towns are seizing the occasion of the centenary of their districts to celebrate the discovery of the country or the foundation of their towns. The inevitable result of such celebrations is a diffusion of historical knowledge concerning the discoverers and the pioneers of the district." [93]

The Society was regularly involved in these commemorations and often invited to deliver an address. Occasionally it drew attention to a centenary such as Sturt's expeditions in 1830 on the occasion of which the Society issued a circular to towns in the Western Rivers area of New South Wales. In the 1930's the "Back to.....Week" became popular, an entire week devoted to commemorative celebrations and often including pageants, historical reenactments and publication of local histories. In 1931 Campbelltown staged a "Back To Campbelltown Week" for its Jubilee, and in 1933 Parramatta held a "Back To Parramatta Week" to celebrate the 145th anniversary of Governor Phillip's visit to the head of the Parramatta River in 1788 [94]. Such events must indicate a considerable community spirit in favour of the past.

As early as the 1890's there were articles and letters on colonial history published with some frequency in papers such as the Sydney Morning Herald, The Echo, The Bulletin, The Daily Telegraph and The Sun. In the library of the Royal Australian

Historical Society and in the Mitchell Library there are collections of newspaper cuttings of such articles, made by enthusiasts such as Frank Walker and Captain James Watson, both prominent in the Royal Australian Historical Society. Some newspapers ran series such as that by "Old Chum" (J.M. Forde) in the Truth and the "Peeps At The Past" series in The Sun around 1916.

The extent of these contributions can also be assessed by the listings under "Historical" in the published index of the Sydney Morning Herald and in the Herald's own library catalogue under various entries such as "Australian History" and "History". These listings indicate that up to 1939 there was steady growth in the number of such articles and letters, with a minor fluctuation around 1932-3 and a steeper decline after 1938, corresponding roughly with the growth and fluctuations in membership of the Royal Australian Historical Society. The listings are fullest for the years 1929 to 1935, with the exception of the slight dip around 1933, suggesting that this period, 1929-35, was one of heightened interest in historical matters. The year 1931 contained the most contributions, but this was partly due to the Sydney Morning Herald's centenary when the paper produced a a thirty-two page supplement to its centenary edition containing a profusion of historical notes such as "Burke and Wills", "Ryde's Early Days", "The Rocks, Old and Picturesque Area", "Newcastle, Early History", "Prominent Names in History" and others [95]. The Sydney Morning Herald's publication of historical material throughout this period was

both an agent in the growth of public interest in the past and a reflection of that same growth.

Nor was the Sydney Morning Herald's historical material confined to such articles. Leaders, too, from time to time, revealed the paper as an active participant. A succession of leaders appeared from 1924 to 1934 under the heading of "The Historical (or Historic) Sense" and others under phrases such as "Our Gracious Heritage", each proffering support for a particular historical event or issue, such as for establishment of museums to protect historic artefacts. Always the leaders endorsed the importance of awareness of the past for its own sake and for the good of the nation.

The leaders ardently supported the idea of preserving remnants of the past. Such museums as Ure Smith had suggested were an excellent idea, a leader stated in 1924, "the time was ripe for such initiatives, indifference to the past had been overcome and now it was essential that the historical record was preserved" [96]. However it was a pity this awakening had come so late, the leader stated, because continually the old was giving place to the new and much that "we would fain keep has gone beyond all recall". The museums, the leader insisted, "would foster the artistic and historic sense, by illuminating the past they would lend the present a new significance, and they would help to build up a continuous tradition which is the foundation of patriotism and the civic spirit".

Another leader of 1924, welcomed the publication of William Hardy Wilson's book Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania for it would "powerfully reinforce Ure Smith's plea for preservation of the monuments and relics of the early days" [97]. Wilson had deserved well of the community, he had produced "a most noble and sumptuous production, which breathes the spirit of the past in every line", for him, "an enthusiastic connoisseur of the period", the leader stated, "these old stones are alive and tell an eloquent tale. They are not simply picturesque and interesting survivors of an age that has gone". The community's indifference to these monuments and to their fate was extraordinary, the leader concluded. Again, when commenting on the threat to the historic Lennox Bridge in 1930, the Herald's leader advocated preservation [98]. Not many monuments of our early days remain, the leader said, and they should not be destroyed if it can possibly be avoided.

The advent of an "historical sense", however late and marginal, was unreservedly welcomed. William Hardy Wilson's book it was said, "should quicken our conscience" and help "dissipate the apathy" that was felt in a new land towards the things of the past. The leader of 1930 proclaimed that although "the ruthless hands of time and expansion" were everywhere destroying the monuments of the past, there had developed, perhaps by a sort of reaction, a "remarkable quickening of interest in the old days and all that pertained to them" [99]. Australians, it proudly announced, were developing a historical sense in which they were formerly deficient. Again in 1933, a



leader noted with pride that increasingly Australians were inclined to interest themselves in their beginnings, "an excellent habit, especially when we consider the legitimate pride with which later achievements can be regarded" [100]. Apathy, or indifference, was degrading, and denied the fullness of the Australian past. As the leader of November 29, 1924 had stated, this indifference should be, and was being, overcome; while an "historical sense" had been slow to develop in Australia, the people were now "outgrowing their former sensitiveness over convict origins" and their indifference, and everywhere there was growing evidence of enthusiasm for the past.

In March 1934 the Sydney Morning Herald offered another leader entitled "The Historical Sense" [101]. Again it spoke of the difficulty but necessity of forming a feeling for the past in a 'new' country such as Australia. "Nevertheless", it said, "it should be our aim to cultivate an 'historic sense' in our people". The Royal Australian Historical Society had done much towards this with its work for preservation of old landmarks, the setting up of monuments with appropriate inscriptions on historic spots, and the dissemination of knowledge through the papers read before the Society from time to time. Progress was slow but it was right that Australians should remember the pioneers and erect memorials to them. It was a great story, the leader stated, how great it was Australians would only realise more fully in the course of years. In a leader of 1920 entitled "History and the Community" which again chastised indifference

towards the past, it was suggested that by honouring the pioneers "we honour ourselves, and show ourselves worthy of our heritage" [102]. Ancestor worship, the leader went on, may be carried to extremes, "but where it breeds a spirit of emulation, and supplies an incentive to live up to the traditions our forbears have laid down, it is wholly good".

There is an ambivalence expressed in the sentiments of these leaders, a suggestion of the moral benefits of correct attitudes to the present as much as to the past. Veneration of the past, the leaders seemed to say, was to the benefit of the present. The building up of tradition was the foundation of patriotism and civic pride; when apathy, indifference and shame had been replaced by legitimate pride, a stronger and better nation would emerge. And such ideas were also expressed in other newspapers. In June 1935 the Sun newspaper published a leading article entitled "The Claim of Ancient Beauty" in which it supported the need for cultivating the 'historical sense' and for preserving Australia's historic buildings, with the words, "Not until a people acquires a sense of history does it acquire traditions and a true perspective of its own place, and not until these are established has a nation a soul" [103].

Further evidence of the active interest of the press, the Herald in particular, is provided by the extensive coverage given to the work of the Royal Australian Historical Society, as noted earlier. The Sydney Morning Herald was not only an important advocate of the formation of the Society in 1900, but

thereafter it supported most of the Society's initiatives such as the collection of pioneer reminiscences, the attempts to found a historical museum and regularly reported its monthly and annual meetings often including lengthy abstracts of addresses to the Society. In the years up to 1939 it was an excellent advocate of the Society.

Several members of the Fairfax family, proprietors of the Sydney Morning Herald and other newspapers, held a personal interest in Australian history, and at least one of the Herald's editors did likewise. Sir James R. Fairfax was a partner in the family business from 1856 until 1916 and a director from 1916 to until his death in 1919 [104]. He joined the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1906 and renewed his membership until his death [105]. In June 1918 he presented a paper on his recollections of old Sydney, which was read by Judge Backhouse as Sir James was ill at the time [106]. His son Geoffrey Evan joined the Society soon after its foundation but appears to have allowed his membership to lapse. Another son, James O. joined in 1924 and remained in the Society until his death in 1928 [107]. John Hubert Fairfax was director from 1931 to 1945 as was Warwick Oswald from 1927 to 1976; both were members of the Royal Australian Historical Society in the 1930s, from 1932 to 1950 and 1932 to 1951 respectively [108].

It is unlikely that their membership contributed directly to the favourable reporting on the Royal Australian Historical Society and the frequent appearance of articles of historical interest, for it was not the family's policy to impose their

views on editors. Gavin Souter in his study Company of Heralds quoted the editor Thomas Heney as saying "Few even of their own most trusted staff knew their real views upon such subjects as Australian federation, Australian military or naval defence, Pacific policy...and other matters" [109]. The Fairfax brothers, Souter writes, refrained from ever using the paper as a personal or family platform, but he continues, "as far as they had a definite clear-cut policy it was an Empire policy. They were Englishmen, they wished to see English ideals prevail". Nevertheless it is likely that the presence of men well disposed to study of the colonial past encouraged publication of sympathetic articles, letters and leaders. The Royal Australian Historical Society noted the deaths of first Sir James and later Geoffrey and James O. with regret. James O., it said, had for some years been an interested member of the Society [110], and Geoffrey was described as a "valuable friend to the Society" whose "readiness to promote its interests, through the columns of his paper, was a source of strength highly appreciated" by the Society [111].

Membership did not necessarily mean availability of newspaper columns to advance the interests of the Society, particularly as the Fairfax family kept their views to themselves. The editors were perhaps more important, particularly when they were directly involved with the Society as was Charles Brunston Fletcher, editor of the Sydney Morning Herald from 1918 to 1937, who was himself an historian [112]. As editor he was responsible for allocation of space and choice

of subject matter; his attitude to historical matters would have had substantial influence on the paper's policy. Fletcher was an Englishman, who arrived in Sydney in 1872, began as a reporter in Queensland in 1893 and became associate editor of the Sydney Morning Herald in 1903 [113]. He was closest to James O. Fairfax as editor as the latter had by 1918 taken over responsibility for seeing the editor. According to Fletcher's autobiography he and Sir James were "in constant touch" and "thrashed out doubtful questions of policy, or perhaps I had to justify some leading article or a presentation of fact in the news columns which might have been done differently. But there was no backseat driving; I was never expected to do or write what was against my convictions" [114]. Fletcher was a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and read several papers to the Society. He had an interest in the Pacific and in 1920 published The Problem of the Pacific and read a paper to the Society entitled "Dr. Brown and the Pacific" [115]. In 1931 he addressed the Society on the Sydney Morning Herald's Centenary, outlining the development of journalism and the press in Sydney in the early nineteenth century and the story of John Fairfax and the Sydney Morning Herald of the 1830's and 1840's [116]. He spoke of the growth of Sydney at that time and of the early battles for freedom of the press. His talk was not one of reminiscences, but historical in content and style, and showed a considerable knowledge of early colonial history. In 1925 the Society asked Fletcher to accept a position on one of its committees, but Fletcher declined as it seemed to him that he could help better by being quite detached. "By giving you every

publicity, and being free to commend the project without being personally interested" he suggested, "I would be a better asset both for the Historical Society and for the 'Herald'" [117].

The editor and his associate and leader writers were responsible for editorial policy, which as Fletcher described it, was a product of an editorial council or 'council of war'. Fletcher's principal leader writers were John McGregor, appointed associated editor in 1920, Mungo L. MacCallum, a leader writer from 1919 until his death in 1933, H.S. Nicholas, later to become Chief Judge in Equity and F.M. Cutlack, assistant war correspondent to C.E.W. Bean and author of Volume VIII of the official war history [118]. The 'council of war' assembled daily and included the editor, associate editor and leader writers. The day's news was debated and "then the editor decides" and "subjects are apportioned, and the leader writers are held responsible for their facts" [119]. Content then was the responsibility of the writers, while subject and most likely, tone, was the choice of the editor.

The influence of individuals such as Brunnsden Fletcher was undoubtedly a contributing factor in the paper's support of the 'historical sense', and so too perhaps was what Souter refers to as the "conservative nature" of the Sydney Morning Herald, and its loyalty to Empire. Such attitudes were perhaps conducive to an appreciation of the past and a desire to see traditions and history preserved. The Herald writers never felt a contradiction between the desire to see the Australian past

revered and the emotional pull of the 'homeland', Britain, whose age and history made Australia's past seem insignificant. As a leader of 1929 stated, the claims of the British past must not be denied while those of Australia were being recognised [120].

It is interesting to note that the editor of The Sun in in the 1930's, T. Dunbabin, lectured to the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1935 on a subject of his suggestion "Early Voyages to Terra Australis". In a letter anticipating this talk, he indicated that he proposed to include new material on French voyages before 1700 and some early English voyages. A letter from Cramp to Dunbabin of February 1935 thanked him for one of his leading articles [121]. It would appear that The Sun too had an editor sympathetic to historical interests.

By 1939 there was evidence of substantial interest in Australian history. The Royal Australian Historical Society had celebrated the sesquicentenary with an exhibition said to been attended by 60,000. Many districts throughout the State had celebrated their own centenaries and jubilees. Australian history was firmly established in the University of Sydney at the postgraduate level. The press indicated that there was sufficient interest in the past for articles, letters and leaders to be published quite often. But there was still a great deal of indifference. Obstacles to appreciation of the past still had to be overcome, especially the feeling that Australia did not merit the veneration with which the past of old countries of Europe was treated even in the Antipodes.

Some writers however stressed the importance of patriotism in arousing interest in the past. Charles Daley, for example, author of the paper "The Growth of a Historic Sense in Australia", read before the ANZAAS Congress in Canberra in 1939 [122], was very much of the view that the awakening of interest in Australian history owed much to the new 'nationalism' of the early twentieth century which he associated with events such as the Boer War, Federation and the Great War. Australia was a country devoid of the remains of ancient civilizations and links of historical continuity which might otherwise have encouraged an early interest in the new land and its past, he said [123]. The glimpse given in this chapter of the events and individuals active in developing that historic sense lends weight to Daley's point of view. Patriotism and veneration of the past did seem to develop hand in hand, particularly around the turn of the century and after the first world war.

It is evident that an historical awareness of significant extent had grown up in the period 1900 to 1939. Although limited by negative attitudes ranging from indifference to hostility, and by a lack of knowledge and of available records and a literature, the historical interest was supported by powerful groups such as the Sydney Morning Herald, The Royal Australian Historical Society, individuals in the universities and by a less powerful but very effective coterie of individual collectors, researchers and historical enthusiasts. The new awareness was intimately associated with the desire to have



preserved the physical remains of the past, the books, pictures, relics, buildings and monuments that remained; the loss or threatened loss of these remains had helped stimulate interest in a vanishing past, and vice versa. As the interest in the past developed so too did concern for preservation.

## NOTES : The Historical Sense

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- 10 Andrew Houison, "Introductory Address", Australian Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings, 1906, Vol.1, Part 2. p.13.
- 11 The most thorough treatments of Bonwick are to be found in Guy Featherstone, "James Bonwick" in Australian Dictionary of Biography, (Carlton, 1969), pp. 190-192; and Guy Featherstone, The Life and Times of James Bonwick, Part 1: Apostle of Moral Enlightenment, Part 2: A Bibliography of His Printed Works and the Bonwick Manuscripts, M.A. Thesis, Univ of Melb, 1968.
- 12 Guy Featherstone, The Life and Times of James Bonwick, Part 2, op.cit. pp.227-259; and Ann M. Mitchell, "Doctor Frederick Watson and Historical Records of Australia" in Historical Studies, Vol.21, No.79 October 1982, p.171.
- 13 Guy Featherstone, op.cit., p.258; and Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit. pp.171-172.
- 14 Guy Featherstone, op.cit., p.259.
- 15 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit. p. 172.
- 16 Guy Featherstone, op.cit., pp.258-259; and Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit. p.173.
- 17 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit. p.174.
- 18 John Manning Ward, op.cit., p.216.
- 19 There are two unpublished accounts of the establishment of the Mitchell Library, one by Ida Leeson, Mitchell Librarian 1932 to 1946 and the other by H.C.L. Anderson, Librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales, c. 1893 to 1904, who

was intimately involved in negotiating for acceptance of Mitchell's offer. Reference are as follows: Ida F. Leeson, "The History of The Mitchell Library", 1936, unpublished manuscript, Mss A 2882, Mitchell Library. H.G.L. Anderson, "David Scott Mitchell", paper delivered to the Royal Australian Historical Society on 26 June 1922, copy found in Royal Australian Historical Society Minute Book Oct.1920 to July 1931, RAHS. A short published account can be found in Keith Johnson, "Persistence Rewarded", Part 2, Newsletter of the Royal Australian Historical Society, April 1981, p.6. NOTE: These accounts do not cite sources, however the Mitchell Library maintains an archival collection which includes documents relating to the Library's foundation.

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- 21 Ibid. p.3; & H.G.L. Anderson, op.cit.
- 22 Ida F. Leeson, op.cit., p.3.
- 23 James R. Tyrrell, Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney (Sydney 1952) pp.141-149.
- 24 H.G.L. Anderson, op.cit.
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- 27 Ida F. Leeson, op.cit., pp. 3-7.
- 28 James R. Tyrrell, op.cit., pp.61-64.
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- 30 Ibid., p.61-62.
- 31 Ibid., p.99-100.
- 32 K.R. Cramp, "The Australian Historical Society - The Story of its Foundation", Australian Historical Society Journal & Proceedings, 1917, Vol IV Part I, pp.2-3.
- 33 Ibid.
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- 36 Keith Johnson, op.cit., Part I, p.2.
- 37 Ibid., p.10; Keith Johnson, op.cit. p. 2.
- 38 Andrew Houison, op.cit. pp. 13-14.
- 39 Sydney Morning Herald, 20 April 1900, in K.R. Cramp, op.cit., pp. 5-7.
- 40 K.R. Cramp, op.cit., pp.7-10.
- 41 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 October 1900.
- 42 K.R. Cramp, op.cit., pp.11-12; Andrew Houison, op.cit.
- 43 E. Dowling to Sec. Australian Historical Society, 8 April 1910. Papers relating to the foundation of the Australian Historical Society. RAHS Library.
- 44 Public Service Journal, 10 February 1908. Papers relating to the foundation of the Australian Historical Society. RAHS Library.
- 45 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 December 1901.
- 46 Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1916, p.13; K.R. Cramp, "Twenty Five Years of Progress 1915 - 1940" in Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings 1941, Vol. 27 Part II, p.167.
- 47 Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1916, p.4.
- 48 K.R. Cramp, "Twenty Five Years of Progress 1915 - 1940", op.cit., p.170.
- 49 Karl Cramp, ibid.; Sydney Mail, 5 November 1919.

- 50 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1919, p. 6.
- 51 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1927; this Report contains a list of the tablets erected to date .
- 52 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1927, *ibid.*
- 53 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1924, p.373.
- 54 Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1917, p.10.
- 55 Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1918, p.9.
- 56 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report, 1930, p. 480.
- 57 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1920; Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1922; Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1938; Refer also: Royal Australian Historical Society Catalogue of Exhibits, Loan Exhibition of Pictures and Objects of Historical Interest, Royal Australian Historical Society, October 25 - November 11 1922, Art Gallery, Education Department, Bridge Street, Sydney, 1922, Royal Australian Historical Society; Catalogue of the Australian Historical Exhibition, February 1-26, 1938, Royal Australian Historical Society.
- 58 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1920, p.7. Australian Historical Museum, A Bill, 1919, copy found in Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1919. RAHS Archives.
- 59 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1920, p.7.
- 60 A resolution of the ANZAAS Congress held in Canberra , 1939, urged the State Government to make adequate provision for the establishment of a historical museum. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, May 1938-June 1943, Meeting May 1939. RAHS Archives. Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1920, p.7.
- 61 Report of an Interview with the Premier, Hon. W.A. Holman, MLA, 6 May 1919. Royal Australian Historical Society, Council Minute Book, October 1916-October 1920, p.175. Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1919, pp.7-8. Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1920, pp.10-11.
- 62 Newcastle & Hunter District Historical Society, Richmond River Historical Society and Clarence River Historical Society. Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1936, pp.456-457.
- 63 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1937, p. 489.
- 64 Further information on the Society's Local History in Schools project is available in the Society's Minute Books and Correspondence Files for the 1920's.
- 65 The Sun, 2 March 1919.
- 66 For example, the Hon. J.A. Hogue, Minister for Public Education in 1920, was Councillor of the Royal Australian Historical Society and a Vice President. "As Minister for Public Instruction, he was instrumental in securing for the Society its annual subsidy of 50 pounds. He contributed a

- paper in 1910 on Governor Darling's administration, another in 1912 on "Reminiscences", and had a third paper in contemplation at the time of his decease. The removal of his influence is a distinct loss to the Society." (Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report, 1920, p.4).
- 67 Sydney Morning Herald, "Our Unwritten History", leader, 10 March 1923; "History and the Community", leader, 29 May 1920.
- 68 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1924, p.375.
- 69 K.R. Cramp to J.W. Prentice, Broadcasters (Sydney) Ltd., 2 October 1925. Royal Australian Historical Society, Correspondence File, 1925. RAHS Archives.
- 70 Ibid.; Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1924, p. 374; Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1925, p. 396; H.G. Horner, Manager NSW, Australian Broadcasting Commission to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 29 July 1937, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1937, Box 1. RAHS Archives.
- 71 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 December 1934.
- 72 Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings 1934, Vol 20, Part VII, pp.439-440.
- 73 The Editor, "History House Official Opening", Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings 1941, Vol XXVII, Part 1, pp.7-10.
- 74 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit., pp.178-179.
- 75 Ibid., pp.181-184.
- 76 Frederick Watson, "Old Documents, Romance of Discovery", Sydney Morning Herald, 13 August 1931.
- 77 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit., p.191.
- 78 Scott's publications include: Terre Napoleon: A History of French Explorations and Projects in Australia (London, 1910); The Life of Laperouse (Sydney, 1912); and The Life of Captain Matthew Flinders, R.N. (Sydney, 1914).
- 79 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit., p.194; R.M. Crawford, 'A Bit of a Rebel' The Life and Work of George Arnold Wood, (Sydney, 1975), p. 360.
- 80 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit.
- 81 R.M. Crawford, op.cit., pp.318-319.
- 82 Ibid., p.319.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1926, p.385.
- 85 Ann M. Mitchell, op.cit., pp.196-188.
- 86 Ibid., p.197.
- 87 Ibid., pp.195-196. Legislation for a Commonwealth Archives was drafted in 1927, but never passed and it was not until the 1940's that such an authority was established.
- 88 Marjorie Barnard & Flora Eldershaw, A House Is Built.
- 89 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1920, p.14.
- 90 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1921, pp.3-4.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Ibid.

- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 August 1933; 25 October 1933.
- 95 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 April 1931.
- 96 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 November 1924, "The Historical Sense", leader.
- 97 Sydney Morning Herald, 20 December 1924, "Our Gracious Heritage", leader.
- 98 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 June 1930, "The Historical Sense", leader.
- 99 Sydney Morning Herald. *ibid.*
- 100 Sydney Morning Herald, 28 October 1933, "Past and Future", leader.
- 101 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 March 1934, "The Historical Sense", leader.
- 102 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 May 1920, "History and the Community", leader.
- 103 The Sun, 24 June 1935.
- 104 Gavin Souter, A Company of Heralds. A Century and a half of Australian publishing by John Fairfax Limited and its predecessors 1831-1931, (Melb. 1981) p.606.
- 105 Lists of members in Royal Australian Historical Society Membership Files. RAHS Library.
- 106 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June 1918; Daily Telegraph, 26 June 1918.
- 107 Lists of members in Royal Australian Historical Society Membership Files. RAHS Library.
- 108 Gavin Souter, *op.cit.*, pp.606-607; Royal Australian Historical Society Membership Files.
- 109 *Ibid.*, p.606.
- 110 *Ibid.*, p.112.
- 111 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1928, p. 373.
- 112 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1930, p.470.
- 113 Gavin Souter, *op.cit.*, pp.161 & 607.
- 114 *Ibid.*, pp.126-128.
- 115 *Ibid.*
- 116 C.B. Fletcher, The Problem of the Pacific (1920); "Dr Brown and the Pacific", Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report, 1920.
- 117 Sydney Morning Herald, 31 March 1931; 1 April 1931.
- 118 C.B. Fletcher to K.R. Cramp, 8 April 1925, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1925. RAHS Archives.
- 119 Gavin Souter, *op.cit.*, p.128.
- 120 *Ibid.*, p.127.
- 121 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 May 1929. "Sentiment and Stonehenge", leader.
- 122 T. Dunbabin, Editor, The Sun, to Karl Cramp, 20 December 1935; K.R. Cramp to T. Dunbabin, 28 February 1935. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1935. RAHS Archives.
- 123 Charles Daley, "The Growth of an Historic Sense in Australia", Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings 1939, Vol. 25, Part III.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EARLY YEARS

From its first appearance around 1900 up to the late 1920s, interest in preservation was limited, the province of a few persistent enthusiasts, who were often members of the Royal Australian Historical Society. In these early years the two issues of preservation and history went hand in hand, for the drive to promote the 'historical sense' generally was a compelling force behind the desire to preserve for the future the evidence of a uniquely Australian past. It was not surprising therefore that historians took the initiative for preservation or that individuals, becoming aware of impending threats to older buildings, stressed their historical aspects in approaching either the Royal Australian Historical Society or the press. Their interest encompassed all types of remains of the past including documents, artefacts, books, photographs and paintings as well as historic buildings and structures. In fact the latter two tended to be minor concerns, far less accessible and certainly less collectable than the former. Nevertheless during the period there was a steady growth of interest in preservation of historic buildings and other parts of the historic environment and with that growth a gradual diversification evolved as the tight link between preservation and history gave way to broader associations and appreciation of the old buildings and structures.

Initially the limited concern for historic structures manifested itself simply as regret for their loss, whether that loss came about as a result of decay or deliberate demolition. With time, scope and attitude changed. The transformation took place in stages, from first tentative suggestions for preservation to firmer demands and finally to the emergence of a cohesive group willing to challenge government policy. By 1939 there is ample evidence of a rich diversity of interest developing as architects and artists began to be drawn into the issues, adding their own perceptions to the debates. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the growth of the movement to preserve historic buildings and other man-made elements of the historic environment, to examine the issues and the nature of response in chronological sequence, from the turn of the century to the 1920's, and in so doing to draw out from the story evidence of the increasing range of individuals and interests represented in moves to preserve the past. Examples of agitation over the threat or presumed threat of demolition have been selected to illustrate issues and tactics rather than the sequence of events or even the outcome in each case.

Despite the diversity of interests involved the Royal Australian Historical Society and its members were more prominent than any other group in the years covered by this chapter. At times it may appear as if the story of preservation is the story of the Royal Australian Historical Society. This was certainly not the case. On the other hand, at a time when arguments advanced in favour of preservation tended always to



stress historical associations rather than aesthetic quality, the Royal Australian Historical Society and its members were not only themselves very prominent in debate but were often approached for support by individuals who had issues of their own to bring forward.

Few voices were raised in protest against the demolition in the early 1900s of houses in the Rocks area of Sydney, although some of them were among the oldest in the State. The grounds for demolition were considered to be irrefutable. In 1896 Archdeacon F.B. Boyce complained that Sydney's 'slums' were equal to the worst in London and urged that residents should be removed to the outer suburbs and the buildings demolished [1]. He like many others thought that the cause of 'moral depravity' lay in the housing conditions, remove the inhabitants from these debilitating conditions and their morals and behaviour would improve. In 1900 and again in 1902 plague visited Sydney. It was a disease which most associated with filth and congestion in the poorest parts of the city. Where Boyce and city reformers had failed, the disease succeeded and in its wake many of the worst tenements were vacated and subsequently demolished, a Rocks Resumption Board was established to supervise reform of the area and the Royal Commission into the Improvement of Sydney and Suburbs was set up [2]. With a few exceptions those advocating city reform and urban improvement had no interest in promoting the Rocks area's historical qualities, or those of any part of the city, or in retention of any of its old buildings. Their attention focussed on the new suburbs and on the issues of

transport and health and they were in accord with all but a few of the city's inhabitants.

Nevertheless, there was some recognition that the demolitions entailed the loss of an aspect of Sydney that was at least worth recording. Around 1900 the Photographic Society of New South Wales and Sydney City Council adopted a policy of photographing all the buildings which the Council was about to have demolished [3]. In 1902 the State Government, possibly urged on by the artist Julian Ashton, arranged for a number of artists to illustrate the old areas of Sydney, mostly the Rocks [4]. The work which followed so interested some of those engaged that they continued to draw the area and its houses, streetlife, churches and warehouses, and to look with similar interest at other old areas of Sydney, and surrounding areas [5]. Ironically, identification of the Rocks as the worst of the city's slum areas, had helped focus attention on the area and its stock of historic buildings.

Around the time of Federation the interest in the early years of settlement and a feeling of pride in Australian accomplishment were leading some individuals to concern with early buildings. As far as can be ascertained the first examples of this concern occurred in the immediate post-Federation period and involved two of the oldest surviving structures in N.S.W.: Experiment Farm Cottage and Elizabeth Farm House.

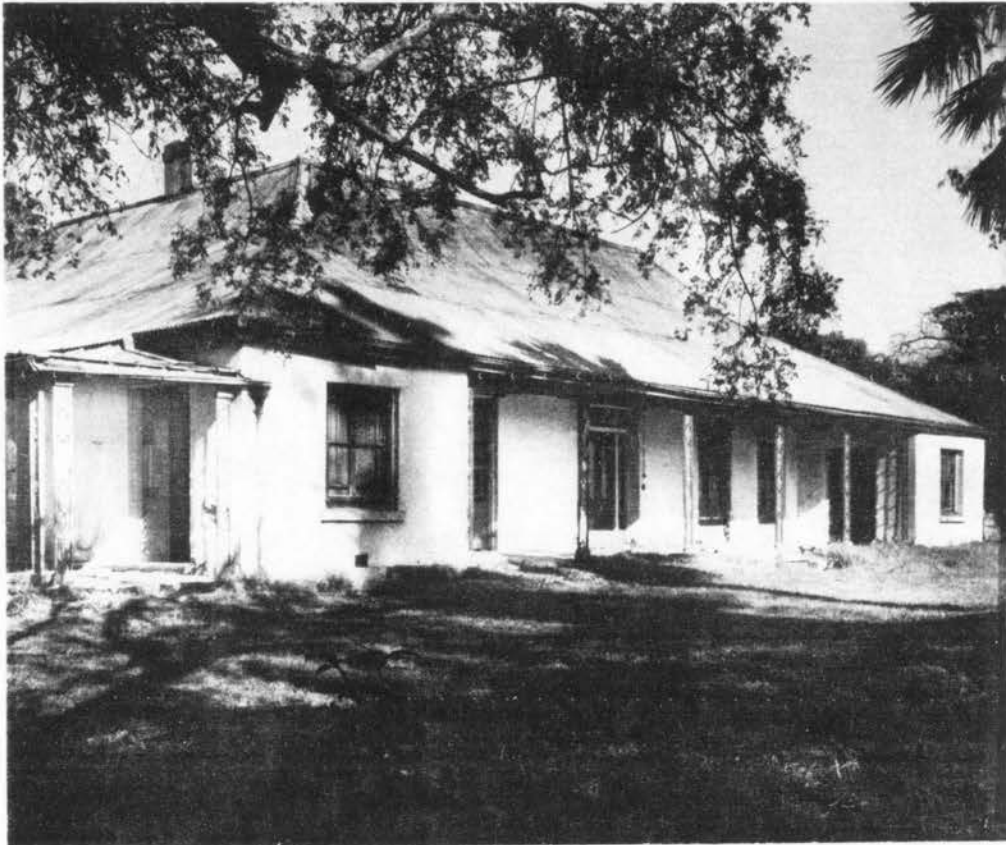
Sir Matthew Harris, a descendant of Surgeon John Harris who had purchased the Experiment Farm Cottage site in 1794, bought that cottage in 1903 and 'sold' it to his son for ten shillings in 1913 [6]. Sir Matthew did not choose to live at the site, but continued to let it as his cousins, the previous owners, had done. Sir Matthew was a collector of Australiana and his library amounted to over three thousand volumes [7]. He was also involved in the events of Federation in 1901 and it is possible that this may have fostered a desire to preserve the physical reminder of his own family's link with the earliest days of settlement. In May 1901, just prior to his first approach regarding purchase of the Cottage, Sir Matthew had been present at the opening of Federal Parliament, and for some time had been chairman of the Citizens Organising Committee [8]. Many years later when Experiment Farm Cottage belonged to his son, the family connection with the house was not maintained. The house was eventually sold and the surrounding land subdivided [9]. The formation of a Committee at the time of the sale, with the object of ensuring the preservation of the Cottage and with the support of the Royal Australian Historical Society, made it clear that a threat to Experiment Farm Cottage would thenceforth be a matter of public concern [10].

Elizabeth Farm House was derelict when it was purchased by William Swann in 1904; it was 'thrown in' with the purchase of the land as suitable only for demolition, but Swann, after months of repairs, made it his family's home [11]. Margaret, his eldest daughter, was in her thirties in 1904 and already a

teacher and historical enthusiast [12]. She took over responsibility for the family and their home following her father's death in 1909 and more than any other individual was responsible for the survival of the house. She was a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Parramatta and District Historical Society and author of several published papers in societies' journals, some of which described the story of Elizabeth Farm House and its original occupants, the Macarthurs. Margaret also conducted tours of the house, as well as tours of historic buildings in the Parramatta region. She was a recognized authority on the history of the region by the time of Parramatta's centenary celebrations in 1928 [13]. It has been suggested by present members of the Swann family that it was Margaret who persuaded her father to purchase the house in 1904 and, given her own age and that of her father, her historical interests and position in the family, this would seem entirely possible [14]. Margaret herself suggested that her father had been responsible for saving the house. When she wrote in 1920 that she was anxious to see the Elizabeth Farm House preserved in the future and sooner or later acquired by the proper authorities, she added:

"I have the added desire because it was my father who saved it from the .....Land Agents years ago and I feel it due to his memory to see this work in that direction completed." [15]

The Royal Australian Historical Society was also concerned about the future of the property and its buildings. In 1926 the Secretary, Karl Cramp, suggested to Margaret Swann that he commence some movement to induce either the State or Federal



*Elizabeth Farm House. (Top) Margaret Swann and friend at Elizabeth Farm House in 1939. Photograph, Swann Family Papers. (Bottom) As it was in the 1970's. From H. King, Elizabeth Macarthur and Her World (Sydney University Press, 1980).*

Governments to secure the property for the people so that it might be preserved for all time. He asked whether she and her sisters, joint owners of the Farm, were prepared to part with it and at what figure, assuring her that he did not wish to act except with her approval and collaboration [16]. Although they were not yet ready to part with the House, the sisters were prepared to sign a document to the effect that they would never sell other than to the Government, provided that the latter offered a reasonable price [17]. The matter lapsed at the time and was revived from time to time. For example, in 1935 the Historical Society wrote to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald referring to the house as being in an excellent state of preservation thanks to the Misses Swanns and their father before them. It had already been rescued from the demolishers' hands, the Society stated, and it was only to be hoped that the State Government would acquire it on terms satisfactory to the present owners [18].

The Swann family remained at Elizabeth Farm House until 1968 when the remaining sisters were forced to part with it for reasons of their health. A State Government-sponsored Trust was then established to manage and conserve the property, and subsequently it came under direct government control. In the sixty years they had occupied the House, the Swanns had done little to change its structure or detailing, thus 'preserving' it through those years.

From its inception in 1901 the Royal Australian Historical

Society took an interest in the buildings, sites and other physical elements of the past and their preservation. It came to be recognized as the vehicle for protest against the destruction of historic structures and its role as such was soon accepted by interested members of the public and by governments at the state and local levels. Other organisations also looked to the Society to take a lead in preservation, often requesting the Society's 'prestigious' support for regional issues. The Society became the voice of preservation for at least thirty years.

Very often discussion of issues in which the Society was asked to intervene was initiated by its own members or other individuals. In September 1910, for example, R.W. Jaynor sought action to preserve the old iron gates and piers formerly the entrance to Vaucluse House [19]. In 1911, at the time of the agitation over the proposed demolition of the Colonial Secretary's Office in Bridge Street, a member of the Society, M.J. O'Connor, suggested that it should form "a large influential deputation to wait on the Government and enter an emphatic protest against the destruction of two magnificent Moreton Bay Fig trees in Bridge Street, Sydney" [20]. Around 1912 Archdeacon Gunther, a founding member, drew attention to the work of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in England; its object, he said, was to preserve the ancient buildings, their original architecture, whether artistic, picturesque, historical, antique or substantial by repairs and to "stay the destroying hand of the restorer(?)" [21]. If there was not much scope for

the special work of such a society in Australia, he said, there were certain buildings that ought to have been preserved in the past and he hoped that the Society had "enough money or sentiment" to take action, as for example in respect of The Rangers at Neutral Bay. In January 1917 Mrs F. Ranken, a member of the Society, wrote to see if there was any possibility of the Society securing the portion of the Old Commissariat Stores with the convict's initials on it. "It would be most regrettable" she wrote "that it should go with the debris when the old building is razed to the ground" [22].

Frank Walker, a founding member who became one of the Society's most constant advocates of preservation, was hopeful in 1917 that some action could be taken to prevent the sale of the interior fittings of historic buildings, as had recently occurred in respect of William Cox's old residence at Clarendon. Whilst it was too late, he wrote, for a protest to be entered against this particular action,

"I am of the opinion that our Society should take some action to prevent a repetition of such a procedure in connection with any other of our historic buildings, if it would be at all likely to have effect. The possibility of such a thing occurring shows a lamentable lack of veneration in this State for the few historic monuments we possess.

I trust that whatever action is taken the matter will be made public through the columns of the press." [23]

Later that year Walker drew attention to an article accompanying some etchings by the artist Sydney Ure Smith in the November Triad, in which the author stated that there was no society whose special business it was to preserve the old landmarks;



Walker requested the Secretary to "set the author on the right path" [24]. His remarks suggest that by 1917 at least the Society had come to regard itself as the organisation whose 'special business' it was to seek the preservation of historic buildings and the like.

Prior to 1917 the Society had shown its concern for historic buildings in practical ways. On several occasions it responded to threats to important landmarks by requesting their retention. In the case of The Rangers of Neutral Bay, Sydney, it showed an early concern for the building but later an independent group formed to campaign for the building. As early as 1915 the Society endeavoured to involve the Sydney City Council in assisting preservation.

The Rangers was one of the earliest preservation issues and as far as can be ascertained the first example of the Royal Australian Historical Society's active involvement and of a group forming in New South Wales to oppose the demolition of an historic building. The estate surrounding the house had been subdivided in 1885, an event which even at that time had been viewed with regret, and in 1909 Frank Myers was commissioned by the Royal Australian Historical Society to "write up" the property as the prospect of the old home's demolition was thought to be imminent [25]. In 1912 however, when the owners confirmed their intentions to demolish, a group known as The Rangers Society was formed to seek the preservation of the building [26]. Its intention was to raise sufficient funds to secure the house for the use of the Northern Suburbs Institute, but it did not

succeed and the building's demolition and the dispersal of its valuable contents continued to distress preservation enthusiasts for many years [27]. There is no evidence that the Royal Australian Historical Society joined the Society. Among those thereafter seeking to halt the depletion of the the State's historic buildings, The Rangers was often cited as an example of a loss that should never have occurred.



*The Rangers. Photograph. Small Pictures File, Mitchell Library.*

Another example of early action by the Society involved a joint protest with citizens of Parramatta, the Parramatta Park Vigilance Committee and the Parramatta and District Historical Society in 1916, against the proposal to resume a portion of the historical Parramatta Park for the purpose of building railway sheds [28]. The Park, the Royal Australian Historical Society informed the State's Railway Commissioners, was of interest not only to the residents of Parramatta, but to the people of Australia because of its historical associations [29]. Resumption such as that contemplated "would retard the development of an Australian sentiment and tradition, as well as destroy an area of rather unique beauty".

Although early concerns were often of a seemingly minor nature, they were significant for the time, for they enabled the Historical Society to develop methods of applying pressure for preservation and illustrate a gradual flow from passive to active concern for physical remains of the past, from melancholic expressions of regret to first suggestions and then definite demands for preservation. They were especially significant when the Society succeeded in negotiating agreements with some degree of preservation included. Such achievements helped establish confidence.

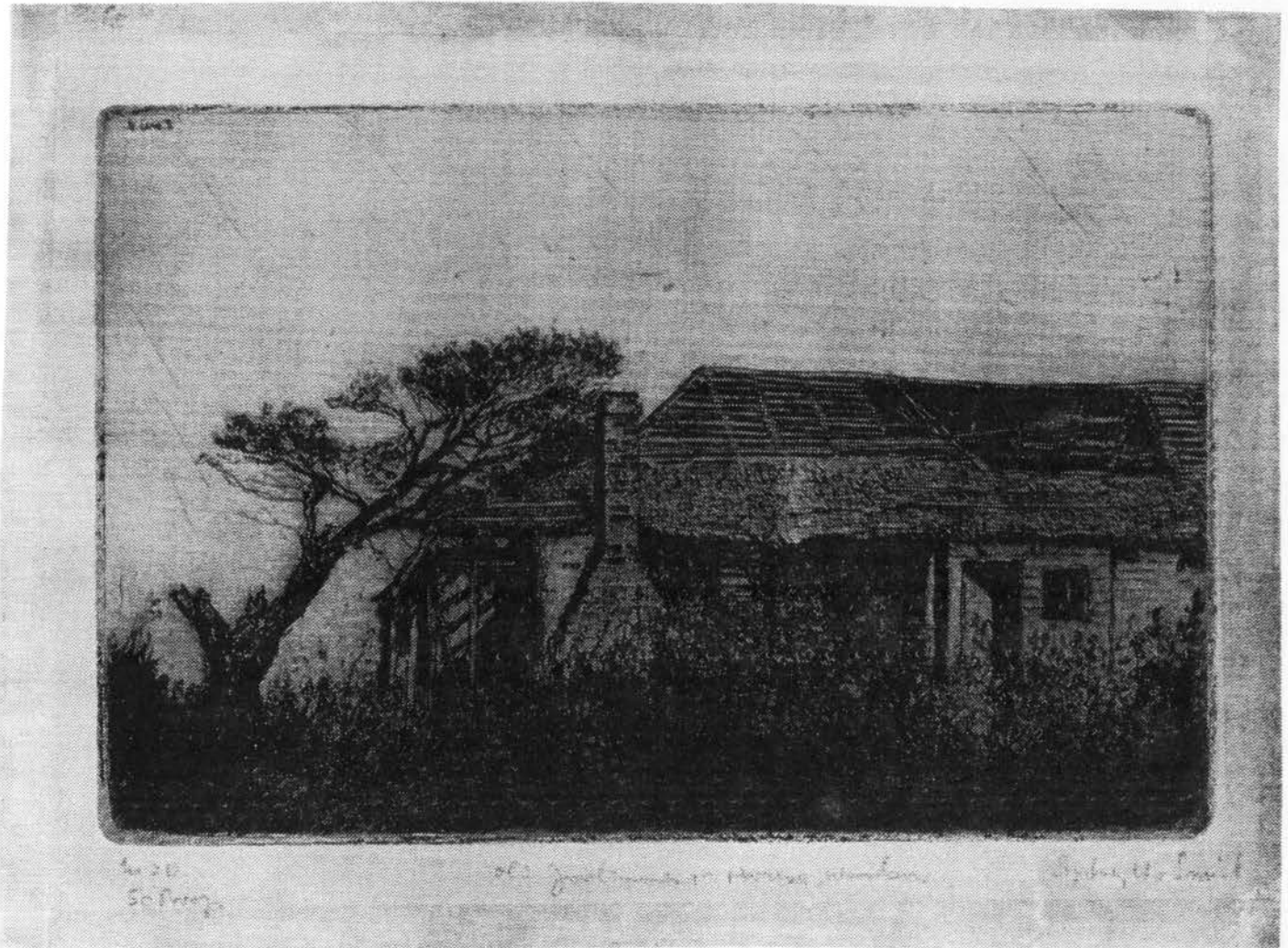
Members of the Royal Australian Historical Society worked hard to promote awareness of historic buildings and sites through lectures, newspaper contributions, articles and other written pieces, and through the Society's monthly excursions to

places of historic interest. It is difficult to estimate the effect of these efforts on the public, other than by pointing to constant reports of them in the daily and other press, but it is interesting to note that in the early years the Society's work was directly responsible for the involvement in preservation of two individuals, both seemingly not otherwise interested in the study of the past. These two were Leo Buring and Colonel Fiasci.

After reading a press report of the Society's excursion to the old Cox's Road between Emu Plains and Glenbrook at the base of the Blue Mountains in 1915, Leo Buring, owner of the property through which the road passed, offered to assist the Historical Society with the preservation of any of the landmarks in the area [30]. After conferences during March and April, 1916, Buring offered as a gift to the Shire, fifteen acres of his land embracing the sites of the old bridge and the former Edinglassie House, originally the country home of Sir Francis Forbes, first Chief Justice of New South Wales. The area of the park was later increased by purchase by the Shire of 68 acres, including land fronting the Nepean River and sections of the original road from the bridge to the mountains [31]. The Society considered it a source of great satisfaction that one of its excursions had led to "such a splendid development" [32]. Though the credit for the initiative lay with Leo Buring, the Society was justified in thinking that it had played a vital role in inspiring the gift and in securing the Shire Council's involvement.

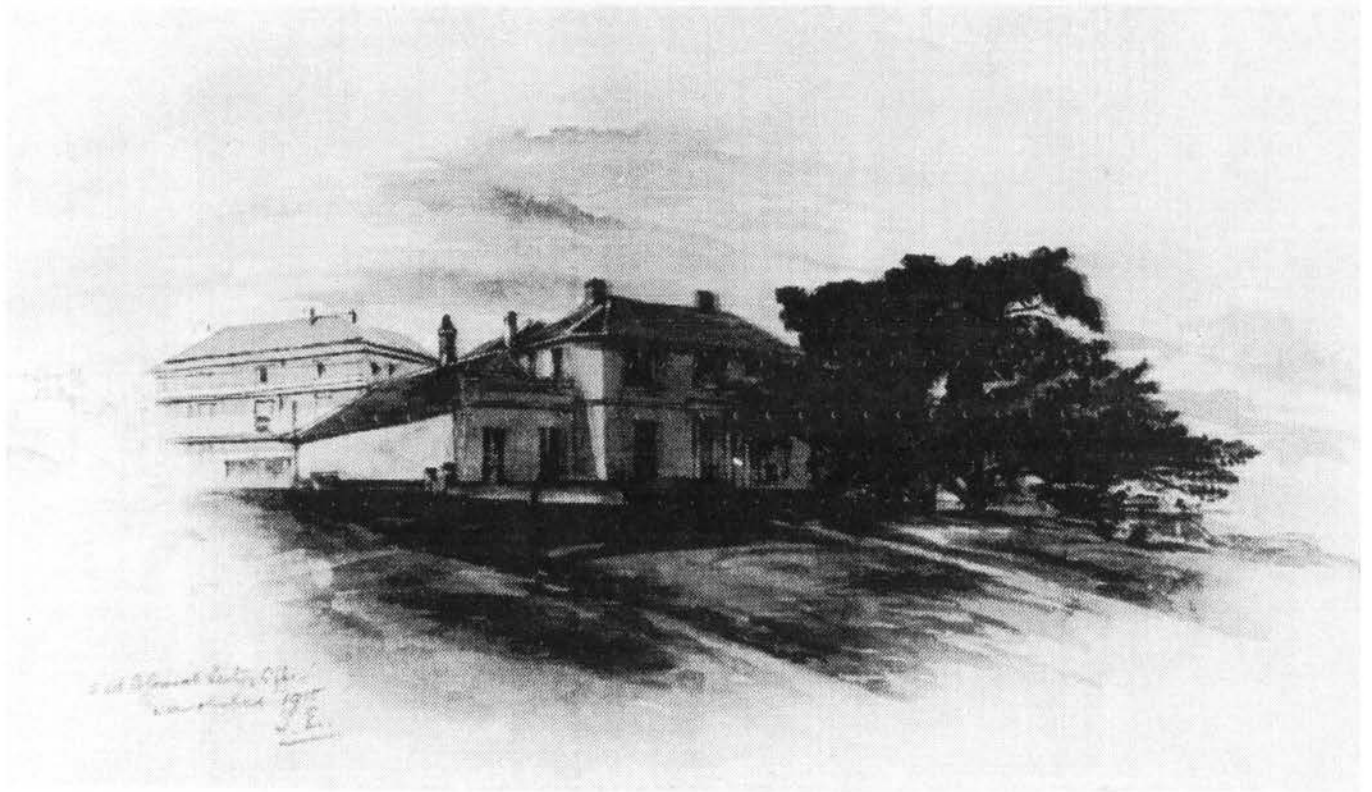
Colonel Fiasci's interest in preservation was aroused by the Historical Society's efforts to preserve the building known as Old Government House, Windsor. In 1916 Charles Bertie and Frank Walker, both ardent advocates of preservation, moved and seconded a motion in Council of the Royal Australian Historical Society suggesting that the Mayor of Windsor be approached to see if the property could be secured for the town of Windsor [33]. Windsor Council replied that they considered the building too dilapidated to preserve and would take no further action [34]. In 1919 the Society received a letter from Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Piero Fiasci, a native of Windsor, offering to purchase the property and present it to the Society [35]. Fiasci, according to James Tyrrell, was "one of the best known of the ...Anzac doctors", the son of Thomas Fiasci, "one of our early winegrowers, with a fine vineyard in the Hawkesbury district", called 'Tizzana' [36]. The offer was accepted, but the Society, worried by reports of the deteriorating state of the building, requested a report from the Government Architect which, when completed, stated that the old house was beyond repair [37]. The Society still went ahead with Fiasci's offer but stated that it was not in a position to repair the building [38]. Unfortunately for the Society, the owner of the old Government House, having been approached on Fiasci's behalf, promptly demolished the building. There was a lesson to be drawn from these events the Council of the Historical Society concluded:

"Australia now possesses but very few of the eighteenth century structures. We trust that the Government will never allow such properties as Elizabeth Farm House and Experiment Cottage, erected in 1793 and 1794 respectively, to suffer the fate of the Windsor property." [39]



*"Old Government House, Windsor". Etching by Sydney Ure Smith.  
Author's collection.*

Even before the postwar building boom and plans for rebuilding in the City in the 1920's had brought new threats to older City buildings, the Royal Australian Historical Society had been drawn into discussion with the City Council and the State Government. Its first approach to the City Council with an appeal for its intervention to preserve a City building occurred in 1911, when plans for the demolition of the Colonial Secretary's Office in Bridge Street were about to be implemented.



*"Old Colonial Secretary's Office". Watercolour(?) by Samuel Elyard. Dixson Library.*

It requested the Lord Mayor to receive a deputation whose object would be to

"..ascertain whether his Lordship would consent to call a meeting of the Citizens for the purpose of appointing a deputation to approach the Government with a view to asking it to reconsider the decision to obliterate one of the most historic spots in the Southern Hemisphere viz: the spot upon which now is the office of the early colonial secretaries, and the historic figtrees, which area of land my society holds should become an addition to the present ornamental reserves on either side." [40]

The reply of the City Council highlighted the classic dilemma of those responsible both for the maintenance of existing buildings and for provision for expansion.

"Whilst the Lord Mayor has every respect for the objects of your Society,..he cannot shut his eyes to the fact, that in the march of progress and City development, it very often happens that improvements of the character proposed in connection with the special matter referred to in your letter have to be carried out, and the removal of ancient landmarks cannot be obviated, and whilst he desires to support movements of the nature advocated by your Society, he regrets to state, that in this instance, he can see no alternative but to consent to the proposal mentioned." [41]

In this case the Council advised the Society to apply directly to the State Government.

A further approach to enlist the support of the City Council was reported in 1915 when the Society tried "to induce the Sydney City Council to assist in the work of saving many places of historic interest in the metropolis from being obscured under the mantle of modernity [42]." Several members accompanied by Alderman Griffen and others "who are interested in the matter", sought the Mayor's cooperation, explaining the historical value of some of the old city landmarks. The Lord Mayor promised to



see if there was not some means of carrying out their suggestions as he was in sympathy with the movement and proud of the history of New South Wales [43]. As far as can be ascertained, however, nothing eventuated.

By the time the Historical Society approached the State Government regarding the Colonial Secretary's Office building in 1916 it had lowered its sights somewhat; a request was made merely for the retention of the building's porch and staircase



*Lands Department (centre) and old Colonial Secretary's Office (left), Bridge Street. Photograph. Small Pictures File, Mitchell Library.*

for use in a future building [44]. The Government agreed, and informed the Society that the only parts of the entrance capable of being preserved were the stone columns; the pilasters, it said were of stucco and were destroyed when the building was taken down, the cornice over the columns was timber and in an state of advanced decay. It suggested that if the columns were built into the wall of the new Department of Agriculture as suggested by the Society, the effect would be "somewhat grotesque" [45]. The columns were carefully removed and put into storage, awaiting a suitable building. Pleased but cautious, the Society's outgoing Council of 1916 directed the incoming Council to ensure that the matter was not overlooked and that the site selected for relocation was in the vicinity of the old building [46].

By the 1920's the Royal Australian Historical Society and its members, who frequently acted independently in correspondence in the press, had assumed leadership in appeals for preservation. Although its record of success was not impressive, concerned members, individuals outside the Society and other organisations referred matters to it. The Society had several means at its disposal for promoting concern. One, as suggested by Frank Walker in 1917, was to use the press to publicise events as they occurred. Another was to make issues known through the Society's regular meetings, lectures and publications. Alternatively, the Society could make direct approaches to the relevant government departments. As an organisation with influential members and active in many ways in the promotion of the "historical sense", the Society was in a position to exert pressure on governments

and individuals responsible for historic structures. Its support of the cause gave preservation a degree of legitimacy which otherwise might not have been easily established.

The Society and its Councillors in particular had to decide whether to support an issue or not, whether the building was of sufficient historical importance to warrant preservation. There appears to be some ambiguity and inconsistency in the range of buildings for which the Society gave or refused support. In 1922, for example, the Society sought the retention of the Presbyterian Church at Parramatta by making approaches to the "proper authorities" [47] and protested against the neglected condition of the old St John's Cemetery, Parramatta [48]. In 1928 it protested against the proposed relocation of St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, "one of the few remaining specimens of an eminent architect's work of early days" which, it said, should remain in its present position for all time, not to be removed [49]. It did not, however, support suggestions made in 1920 for the retention of Henry Kendall's residence at Kendall on the north coast of New South Wales; the Society stated that although the object was "laudable", there were no funds and no means of carrying it out [50]. Again two years later when it was suggested that Henry Lawson's infancy home at Eurunderee, threatened with destruction, should be preserved, the Society resolved that the proposition was impractical and refused Eurunderee residents' request which was merely for assistance in urging the Government to purchase the home [51]. Neither of these proposals raised issues comparable with St Andrew's

Cathedral or the Parramatta churches, but there were other buildings of greater antiquity which it declined to support. It did not consider the old Berrima Gaol suitable for preservation in 1928 [52], and in the previous year had refused approaches made on behalf of Mamre, the home of Samuel Marsden; it was afraid that "any movement to secure the old building (Mamre) for the nation would not meet with any response as the historic gentleman did not himself make a residence of the home" [53]. It can only be assumed that at least some of these controversial decisions did not please all members or councillors of the Society, particularly those constant enthusiasts for preservation, Charles Bertie and Frank Walker.

The New South Wales Government began to acknowledge the Royal Australian Historical Society as an authority on historic buildings and called upon it to advise and arbitrate in preservation disputes. Relics removed from demolished buildings were offered to it, possibly as a substitute for the 'historical museum' that had never eventuated. It is possible that the Society's 'special' relationship with the Government, was responsible for some of the ambivalence in the Society's leadership. Too many or too large demands, the Society may have anticipated, would undermine that relationship. The examples of Calder House and Veteran Hall, are illustrative of the State Government's attitude towards the Historical Society in this period.

Calder House, situated in Wilson Street, Redfern, built by

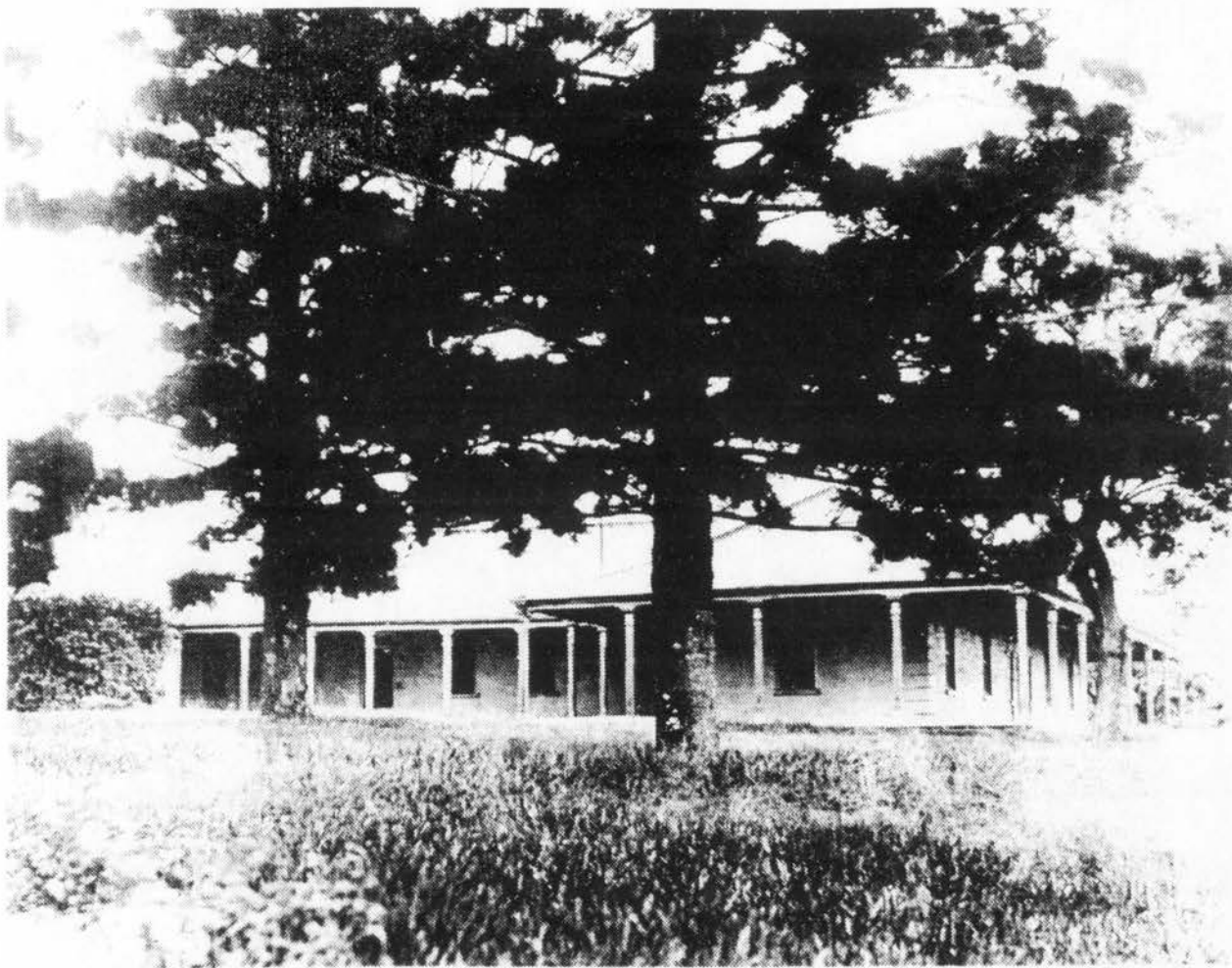
James Chisholm in the mid 1830's, had at one time served as a school under Dr Calder, and it has been said that many men prominent in the history of N.S.W. were educated there [54]. In 1924 the Estate Agent of the Railways Commission approached the Historical Society with an invitation to inspect Calder House, which was to be demolished owing to it's dilapidated state. He suggested that the House might contain items of historic interest [55]. On 24 April of that year, Captain Watson, having made the visit, reported to the Society's Council that items of interest were to be offered to the Society, some, namely three bells and a



*"Old Calder House". Oil painting. Royal Australian Historical Society's collection.*

large door key, without charge [56] and others specifically two glass bookcase doors requested by the Society, would have to be paid for [57]. The Society accepted the free gifts but had "no funds to purchase" the doors [58]. The brass knocker which the Society also wanted, was to be given to the Chief Mechanical Engineer [59]. It should be noted that the Society did not consider protesting against either the demolition of the House or the dispersal of the items Captain Watson had chosen.

The Government also approached the Historical Society regarding Veteran Hall, Emu Plains, the old home of William Lawson dating from 1812, but by 1926 owned by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board. Unoccupied for some years, it had fallen into a state of disrepair. In 1926 The Board explained that whilst it was not unmindful of the building's historic associations, it was not prepared to incur the expenditure necessary to renovate and keep the house in proper repair and consequently had decided to sell it for demolition and removal of the material from the site. Provided the Historical Society would provide a suitable tablet, the Board would erect a cairn to mark the site [60]. Both the Society and the Vaucluse Park Trust were invited to nominate members to visit the site in company with the Board's President. The visit was made and the Board's proposed course of action accepted, though the Society insisted the cairn should be made with material from the building itself [61]. The Royal Australian Historical Society had stated that the Board's decision to demolish was most regrettable [62], but later when faced with Parramatta and



*Veteran Hall. Photograph. Small Pictures File,  
Mitchell Library.*

District Historical Society's desire for stronger protests against demolition of Veteran Hall, the Royal Australian Historical Society suggested that "the building had no particular history beyond having been the residence of William Lawson in the late years of his life" and refused support [63].

Despite the predominance of the Royal Australian Historical Society and perhaps because of its ambivalent attitude in some instances, agitations were developed by other groups, although these groups continued to seek the Royal's support and guidance. Often these agitations arose in areas such as Parramatta, Berrima and Appin, where there were buildings dating from the first few years of settlement.

Several occasions on which the Parramatta and District Historical Society sought to enlist the support of the Society have been noted [64]. Another organisation which interested itself in preservation was the Australasian Society of Patriots. For reasons which are not clear, its Dalley Branch, based in Newcastle, was particularly interested in two sites in the Appin District: The Mt Gilead Mill and the land on which the house of the explorer Hamilton Hume had stood. The Branch wrote to both the Premier and the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1924, suggesting that the Mill should be preserved as an historic landmark and the Hume site should be resumed by the Government for permanent commemoration [65]. Responding to the Branch's proposal regarding the Mt Gilead Mill, the Premier sought advice from the Royal Australian Historical Society. Consistent with what appeared to be its belief that public money should not be spent on the restoration of buildings that were already dilapidated, the Society advised the Premier that the mill was "no longer recognisable as a mill, the walls only are left, and the machinery and arms have long since disappeared", and recommended that its condition did not warrant expenditure of



public moneys, although "we are in hearty accordance as a general principle with proposals to preserve historic landmarks" [66]. Shortly afterwards, the Society reconsidered its advice, having been informed by the Premier that the Dalley Branch was willing to meet the costs of restoration, and considered that resumption by the Government was now justified [67]. "We feel that it is a standing memorial of the earliest methods of corn grinding and useful as an object lesson, and of historic value."

Although the Dalley Branch had succeeded in reversing the opinion of the Royal Australian Historical Society, the campaign itself was of dubious value for the owner of the site, when informed of the proposed purchase, refused to consider parting with his property and stoutly denied any intention to demolish the Mill. He offered to guarantee to inform the Government if at any time in the future he decided to sell the property [68]. The Dalley Branch had greater success in respect of the Hume site and from the outset the Royal Australian Historical Society supported it and agreed to provide a tablet [69]. In 1924 the Premier announced that he would recommend resumption of the site [70].

The State Government had tried to be sympathetic to preservation and without ever actually retaining a building in response to a preservation campaign had tried in other ways to meet the claims of the past. As has been noted above, in the cases of Veteran Hall and Calder House two Government Departments had shown some empathy with the concerns of preservationists and had even taken initiatives in this regard. The role of the

Government in the Mt Gilead and Hume site agitations was similar, small demands could be met by small concessions and there would be a semblance of Government support for preservation.

When W.A. Holman was Premier of a National Government in 1919 the Government's support for preservation and other matters relating to recognition of the past seems to have been greater than at any other time up to 1939. In 1919 for example the Historical Museum Bill had been drawn up and Vauclose House had been resumed for the nation. In that same year the Local Government Act was passed, including a provision for the preservation of places of scientific and historical interest. The provision was never put into practice however in the period up to 1939. There were occasions on which a Minister expressed himself in sympathy with the past and its preservation, as did, for example, Mr Bruxner, Minister for Local Government in 1929, when he inaugurated the Bright Way in Windsor [71]. The town, he said, had several fine examples of colonial architecture of which the architect, Greenway, had been the designer, and these buildings were of value to the whole Commonwealth and "several of their finest traditions were centred in them". Certainly the Department of Main Roads made significant efforts to preserve the several Lennox Bridges and the Mt Victoria Toll House, in the early 1930s [72]. For the most part however State Government support was not conspicuous by either its absence or its presence.

An interesting example of State Government cooperation with

a local interest group, occurred in Berrima in 1924. For some years prior to 1924 the Committee of the Berrima School of Arts had endeavoured to secure for themselves the old Berrima Court House building, dating from 1834, in order to prevent its further decay and to render it suitable for housing their institution [73]. In that year the Government entered into an agreement whereby the School of Arts was given possession, at a nominal rental, and the Government was to do minor repair work and contribute some costs in return for use of one cell room [74]. Raising the funds and the repair work took several years and it was not until 1936 that the Committee's President could report that the work was near completion [75]. At the official opening Mr. Shand, MP, representing the State Government, stated that too often links with Australian history were allowed to fall into ruin and for that reason the residents of Berrima should receive every consideration and support [76].

By the late 1920's interest in historic buildings and sites had grown, moving beyond the confines of the Royal Australian Historical Society, although the latter continued to develop and maintain its leadership up until the outbreak of World War II. Particularly significant was the publicity given to all aspects of preservation and related issues in the press. Letters and articles concerning threats to historic buildings appeared frequently, and leaders in the Sydney Morning Herald, expressing concern about threatened destruction and sympathy with bids to restrain it, reflected both its own and its readers' interests.

Throughout the 1920's historical articles proliferated and letters from individuals concerned for the fate of buildings, began to appear more frequently. For example in 1928 a letter appeared noting the intended demolition of a building constructed by local residents for worship in 1853 at Baulkham Hills, which concluded rather optimistically, but unemphatically:

"Probably those interested in protecting our historic buildings will prevent yet another colonial monument being ruthlessly butchered on the altar of Mammon." [77]

Gwen Meredith also wrote to the Herald in the 20's on a matter of preservation, recounting memories of the life of an old Australian home at Katoomba, with which she had been familiar for many years and which was now derelict and beyond repair. She finished the letter despondently:

"Who cares? Only perhaps a few dreamers like myself who regret seeing old Australian homes rich in associations left to decay unnoticed." [78]

Such a melancholic attitude was still typical of many concerned with the fate of historic buildings.

Occasionally throughout the 1920's the leaders of the Sydney Morning Herald voiced concern for the loss of historic buildings. The leader of 29 November 1924, after suggesting that at last an historic sense had made its appearance in Australia, went on to relate this to concern for preservation of the 'relics' of the past, concluding that "We should retain as much that pertains to our past as we can" [79]. Another leader of December 1924, commenting on the publication of W. Hardy

Wilson's book Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania, declared that the book should:

"..quicken our conscience and help dispel the apathy felt in a new land towards a past which, though it is not far enough removed from the present to awaken veneration, or to stir the spirit of romance, has nevertheless bequeathed us precious possessions...Of a trust, we are blind to the beauty which surrounds us and which we should vigilantly cherish...our indifference to these monuments and to their fate is extraordinary." [80]

Later in May 1929 a leading article in the Sydney Morning Herald discussed an appeal for funds to preserve the English pre-historic site of Stonehenge [81]. Endorsing the validity of the site's claim on the financial resources of patriotic New South Welshmen, the writer suggested that there were buildings on the local scene which could benefit from similar generosity, although he disclaimed any desire to question the assumption that Australians should respond generously to the call for funds from England, "the call that thrills the motherblood within their veins". Despite such ambiguities the Sydney Morning Herald was a keen advocate of preservation in New South Wales.

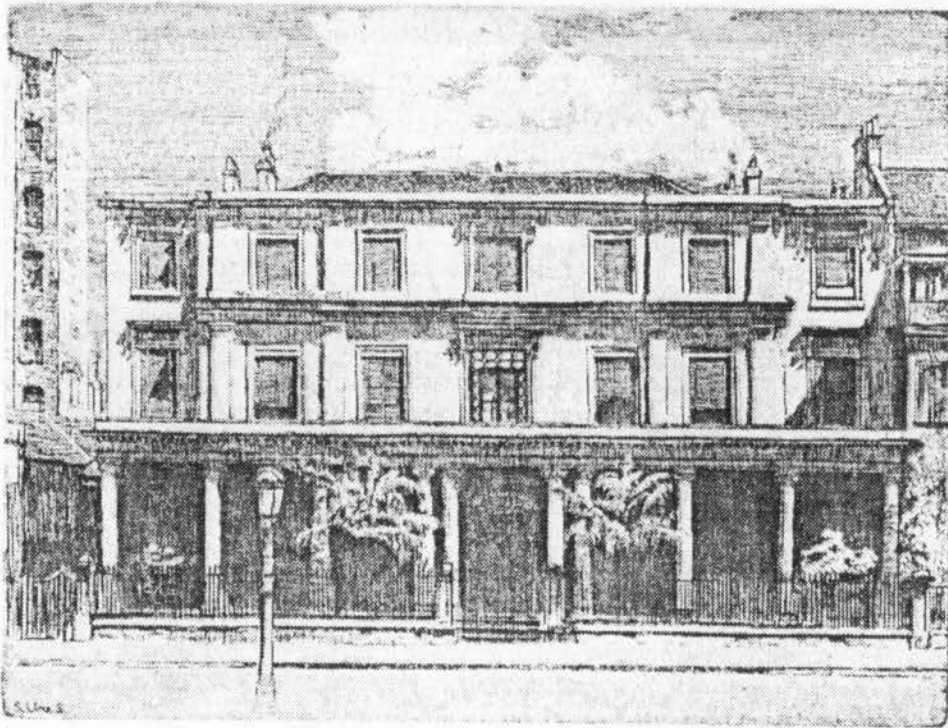
One particularly important event of the period, one which provoked great publicity and sympathetic interest, was the publication of the book Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania in 1924 [82]. Preceded by the exhibition of his drawings in Sydney in 1919, it was essentially a eulogy for the grand old buildings of the two States and included finely executed evocative drawings and a text which praised the style and quality of the buildings, and particularly those of Governor Macquarie's architect, Francis Greenway. The book was well

received and popular for many years, and became an important factor in creating sympathy for the cause of preservation. Hardy Wilson's work signals the beginning of architectural and artistic involvement in preservation and the introduction of new ideas in the debates. This change was realised first in the major preservation issue of the 1920's, Burdekin House. It was evidence that preservation was increasing in both diversity and strength.

The agitation over Burdekin House developed in the 1920's and for the first time a broad campaign was mounted demanding the retention of a building as a whole and raising the question of government responsibility where a building was in private ownership. Although the controversy reached its height in later years the campaign of the early 1920's provided an educational experience for those involved. It was a turning point in the development of preservation; thereafter there was greater vigor and determination in campaigns and a new alliance of interests, with artists, architects and historians, but mostly the latter two, combining their efforts for preservation with frequent support from leading articles in the Sydney Morning Herald. This alliance was the strength of the movement in the 1930s.

Burdekin House was a substantial and very fine early colonial residence located in Macquarie Street, Sydney, which many in the 1920s thought, erroneously, to have been designed by Francis Greenway. In 1922 it was known that the House was to be offered for sale. A news article in The Sun, of May 1922, quoting a member of the New South Wales Ministry, referred to the

prospect of demolition as a "calamity", instead, it said, the house should be considered as the venue for a "splendid historical museum" [83]. The same newspaper in its Sunday edition of 24 May 1922, carried a large photograph of the house captioned "Historic Mansion Which May Become A Museum" [84]. The Royal Australian Historical Society strongly supported the proposal.



*"Burdekin House, Macquarie St." Etching by Sydney Ure Smith.  
From S. Ure Smith & C. H. Bertie, Old Colonial By-Ways,  
(Art in Australia, 1928).*

Members of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Institute of Architects combined to form a deputation to the State Government to "ask for the securing of Burdekin House for an Historical Museum" [85]. Members of the deputation included Judge Backhouse, A. Halloran, H. Suttor and the Secretary, K. Cramp, representing the Royal Australian Historical Society, and Professor L. Wilkinson and Mr Waterhouse representing the Institute of Architects. It was received by Mr A Bruntnell, Minister for Education, who was sympathetic but unable to promise anything "in these lean times", it being, he said, impossible to justify the expenditure of a large sum of money on an object which, though worthy, would be distinctly in the nature of a luxury, particularly when the nation already possessed Vaucluse House as an historic monument [86]. The Historical Society also approached the Attorney General, who, it said, "evinced an interest in the matter" [87].

In a leading article, which the Society regarded as a "powerful leader", the Sydney Morning Herald supported the move and concluded that the whole episode was significant as illustrating the widespread interest that was being taken in things concerned with the past, whereas until very recently historic mansions and other features of old Sydney had disappeared unnoticed and unlamented [88]. The Royal Australian Historical Society too felt that something had been achieved; it seemed likely, it reported, that "as a result of the deputation the Government would interest itself in the question of an Historical Museum and proceed with the bill drafted by Mr James,



then Minister for Education, for the constitution of an Historical Museum Trust" [89]. For the Historical Society, it was an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone; no doubt too, preservationists thought it necessary to show that the building could be used for public purposes if it were preserved..

In June 1922 Burdekin House was finally put up for sale and its contents, which had "delighted the heart of the connoisseur and collector" were dispersed [90]. The Sydney Morning Herald leader of 1 July 1922, "Looking Backwards", commented at length on the event:

"There were many who were sorry that a different fate could not have overtaken a building of such architectural beauty and possessing such intimate associations with the Sydney of another age. Certain enthusiasts who thought that public life in New South Wales might with advantage be invested with greater dignity, suggested that it should be turned into the official residence on the analogy of Number 10, Downing Street. Here was a fine opportunity for a benevolent millionaire to acquire the property and present it to the nation, but it was perhaps too much to expect from private generosity." [91]

The house was sold for 55,000 pounds in 1923, and was to be replaced by a palatial Waldorf-Astoria Hotel [92]. The fate of the building seemed to be sealed and the Sydney Morning Herald published an article which, while extolling the magnificence of the House, read like an obituary, a melancholic recitation of a doomed life:

"The historic home, regarded as the handsomest house in Sydney in its day, has weathered more than 80 years. When it was completed people were invited to look at it, such was the grace and beauty of it. Even today passers by in Macquarie Street often stop to look at it with pride, not merely as one of the architectural glories of other days, but as a building that even now does not discredit the more ornate and aristocratic company which it keeps. Now, alas, its days are numbered." [93]

Yet the announcement of impending doom was premature, the hotel plan lapsed and the House survived for another ten years. In the interim preservation enthusiasts had the opportunity to absorb lessons learnt from the experiences of the 1920's. In the next decade pressure mounted for the retention of Burdekin House and for many other buildings throughout New South Wales.

From the time of Federation and especially throughout the 1920's there had been a slow but steady growth of interest in preservation. It was first evident among the historians, members of the Royal Australian Historical Society in particular, who had tried, and in many instances failed, to secure the preservation of buildings they considered historical and of sufficient importance to warrant preservation. Their efforts had brought the loss of historic buildings and structures and the need for preservation to public attention, and had received support from leading articles, especially those of the Sydney Morning Herald. In this way demolitions of historic buildings had become newsworthy items. Nevertheless preservation proponents remained few in number and as a group they were not large or strong enough to substantially affect Government policy, though they had managed to draw concessions which were considered acceptable at the time. More significant for the future was the fact that during the 1920s interest in preservation diversified, other groups began to take an interest and to assist the Royal Australian Historical Society develop preservation issues. In the next decade the alliance of historians, architects and artists was to become the focal point of preservation, the key to successful agitation.

## NOTES : The Early Years

- 1 John. M. Powell, Environmental Management in Australia 1788-1914. Guardians, Improvers and Profit. An Introductory Survey. (Melb. 1976) pp. 158-161.
- 2 Geoffrey Bolton, Spoils and Spoilers. Australians Make Their Environment 1788-1980. (Sydney 1981), pp. 122-124.
- 3 Editor, Australian Photographic Journal to Town Clerk, Sydney, 25 September 1900; and memo from S.B.B., Australian Photographic Journal, received by Sydney City Council, 26 September 1900. Town Clerk's Correspondence Folders 1900-1913, Item 3410. Council of the City of Sydney Archives, CRS 28.
- 4 Bernard Smith, "On Perceiving The Australian Suburb", George Seddon and Mari Davis, eds., Man and Landscape in Australia. Towards an Ecological Vision. (Canberra, 1976) p. 295. See also Chapter 5, pages.....
- 5 Refer Chapter 5, pages.....
- 6 Information on Sir Matthew Harris is from unpublished research papers of John Harris, solicitor, and Councillor, Royal Australian Historical society and a descendant of Sir Matthew. Mr Harris obtained details of the 1901-3 sale of Experiment Cottage from Primary Application No.12378, NSW Registrar General's Department.
- 7 John Harris, "Governor's Errors Silly, But Colossal", Canberra Historical Journal, New Series No.7, March 1981, p.2.
- 8 Personal communication from John Harris.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Experiment Farm Resumption Movement requested that Experiment Cottage be resumed by the Government. Mentioned in Royal Australian Historical Society Council Meetings of 16 July 1920 and 20 August 1920. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book October 1916-October 1920. RAHS Archives.
- 11 Margaret Swann, "Elizabeth Farm House 1793 to 1914", (Read by Miss Swann, 19 October 1914), Parramatta and District Historical Society Journal and Proceedings Vol.1, pp.28-29. The conveyance deeds are available in Document Box, Swann Family Papers. The Swann Family Papers are in the possession of Mrs Elizabeth Plimer, Lindfield, NSW. Mrs Plimer is a descendent of the Swann family.
- 12 Margaret Swann's paper "Elizabeth Farm House 1793-1914" was read to the Parramatta and District Historical Society in October 1914, five years after William Swann's death. An article in the Woman's World section of The Bulletin, 3 October 1928, describes Margaret's historical interests, beginning with Elizabeth Macarthur and later including other pioneering women of Australia. The Swann Family Papers contain copies of her numerous historical writings both published and unpublished. An article filed in Document Box, 1900-1909 of the Papers suggests that in this period Margaret was Vice President of the Henry Lawson Society and already interested in research on Australian 19th century poetesses.

- Information on her teaching career is available in "Miss Margaret Swann Retires" in Education, 16 March 1936, and further documents are available in Document Box, Swann Family Papers.
- 13 A letter from S. Davies, Parramatta Town Clerk and Hon. Sec., Parramatta's 150th Anniversary Committee, addressed "To Whom It May Concern", states that Miss Swann was authorised "to transact all business necessary in connection with the loan of pictures etc. to be displayed at the Historical Exhibition". S. Davies, 26 September 1938, Document Box, 1935-40, Swann Family Papers. The Souvenir Programme of the 150th Anniversary presentation of 'A Garden Party' names Margaret Swann and James Jervis as providers of "historical assistance". Souvenir Programme 'A Garden Party', Document Box, 1935-40, Swann Family Papers.
  - 14 Personal communication from Mrs Elizabeth Plimer, descendant of William Swann and family historian.
  - 15 Margaret Swann to K.R. Cramp, 29 April 1920, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Unidentified Bundle, c. 1915-1920.
  - 16 K.R. Cramp to Margaret Swann, 15 April 1926, 234/26, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1926, c. January-June. RAHS Archives.
  - 17 Margaret Swann to K.R. Cramp, 24 April 1926, 345/26, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1926, c. January-June. RAHS Archives.
  - 18 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 April 1935.
  - 19 R.W. Jaynor to Australian Historical Society, 18 September 1910, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, c. Dec 1902-Jan 1916. RAHS Archives.
  - 20 M.J. O'Connor to Australian Historical Society, 21 October 1911, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, c. Dec 1902-Jan 1916. RAHS Archives.
  - 21 Document in Archdeacon Gunther's handwriting inserted between pages 4 & 5, c.1912. Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, Nov. 1911-Sept 1916. RAHS Archives.
  - 22 F. Ranken to K.R. Cramp, 2 January 1917. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1916-1917. RAHS Archives.
  - 23 F. Walker to K.R. Cramp, 16 October 1917. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1917. RAHS Archives.
  - 24 F Walker to K.R. Cramp, 24 November 1917. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters Received 1917. RAHS Archives.
  - 25 Edward A. Archer, "Mosman's Bay The Romance of an Old Whaling Station" Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings, Vol 2 1909 Pt 10, pp.250-257. Read before the Society on 28 September 1909.
  - 26 Ibid., p.251.
  - 27 Ibid.
  - 28 Form letter from Parramatta Park Vigilance Committee to Mayor and Aldermen of various municipalities, September 1916. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, c. September 1916-January 1917, Letters Received. RAHS Archives.
  - 29 Australian Historical Society to Railway Commissioners,

- Sydney, 5 February, 1917. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1917, Letters Received c. January - March. RAHS Archives.
- 30 Report of Committee deputed by Council to confer with Leo Buring, January 1917. Leo Buring to secretary, Australian Historical Society, 28 June 1915. Royal Australian Historical Correspondence File, Unidentified bundle containing Report of the Committee to confer with Leo Buring and related correspondence, c. 1915-1917. RAHS Archives.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1916, pp.7-8.
- 33 Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. November 1911-September 1916, p.169. RAHS Archives.
- 34 Windsor Town Clerk to Australian Historical Society, 12 January 1917, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters Received 1917, January. RAHS Archives.
- 35 Minutes of a Special Meeting of Council, 5 December 1919. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, October 1916 - October 1920, p. 220. RAHS Archives.
- 36 James Tyrrell, op.cit.
- 37 Minutes of a Special Meeting of Council, 5 December 1919, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. 1917-1920, p. 220. RAHS Archives.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1919, p.12.
- 40 C.T. Burfitt to Town Clerk, Sydney, 21 October 1911, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters Received, c. 1905-1914. RAHS Archives.
- 41 Town Clerk, Sydney to C.T. Burfitt, 23 October 1911, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters Received c. 1905-1914. RAHS Archives.
- 42 The Sun, 15 September 1915; Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, C. Nov.1911-Sept 1916, p.125. RAHS Archives.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 C.H. Hay, Secretary, Premier's Office, to K.R. Cramp, 11 & 13 September 1916, Royal Australian Historical Correspondence File, 1916 "Special Files with more important letters". RAHS Archives.
- 45 Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office to Secretary, Australian Historical Society, 18 October 1916, Royal Australian Historical Correspondence File, 1916 "Special Files with more important letters". C.H. Hay, Sec. Premier's Department to K.R. Cramp, 5 February 1917, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File Letters Received 1917, c. January-March. RAHS Archives.
- 46 Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1916, p.7.
- 47 Meeting of Council, 29 September 1922, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, Oct. 1920-July 1931, p.102. RAHS Archives.
- 48 Meeting of Council, 21 October 1921, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, Oct. 1920-July 1931, p.57. RAHS Archives.
- 49 Copy of resolution of Council, n.d., 30/28, Royal Australian

- Historical Society Correspondence File, 1928, "Sorted To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 50 Meeting of Council, 18 June 1920. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, October 1916 - October 1920. RAHS Archives.
- 51 Meeting of Council, 29 September 1922. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, Oct. 1920-July 1931, p.102. RAHS Archives.
- 52 J.K.S. Houison to B. Gaudry, 23 November 1928, 613/28. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1928, "Sorted To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 53 Royal Australian Historical Society to Frances A. Wells, 28 July 1927, 505/27. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1927. RAHS Archives.
- 54 According to Old Chum (J.M. Forde) in Truth, November 16, 1919, Calder House was built by James Chisholm in the late 1830's. Chisholm had been a warrant officer in the N.S.W. Corps and had made money in rum trade. Mrs Chisholm was living in Calder House in 1844. In the 1850's it was used as a school, run for many years by James Frederick Castles. On reading the Old Chum article, C. Burfitt, prominent in the Royal Australian Historical Society, wrote and was quoted in Truth, 14 December 1919, that on relinquishing his business in Sydney, Chisholm retired to his residence Calder House in Newtown which he had built. He died there in 1837. Refer also: Percy Hunt, Estate Agent, NSW Government Railways to A. Halloran, 1 March 1924, 94/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin...". RAHS Archives.
- 55 Percy Hunt, Estate Agent, NSW Government Railways to A. Halloran, 1 March 1924, 94/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin...". RAHS Archives.
- 56 Percy Hunt to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1 April 1924, 145/24, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is. Appin...". RAHS Archives. Meeting of Council, 24 April 1924, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book Oct. 1920-July 1931. RAHS Archives.
- 57 K.R. Cramp to Percy Hunt, 14 March 1924, 104/24, and Percy Hunt to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 24 March 1924, 133/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin..." RAHS Archives.
- 58 K.R. Cramp to Percy Hunt, 7 April 1924, 163/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin...". RAHS Archives.
- 59 Percy Hunt to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 24 March 1924, 133/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin...". RAHS Archives.
- 60 Thomas Roseby, Secretary, Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and

- Drainage Board, to K.R. Cramp, 5 December 1925, 52/26. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1926, January. RAHS Archives.
- 61 Thomas Roseby to K.R. Cramp, 14 January 1926, 342/26. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1926, January. RAHS Archives.
- 62 Note on flyleaf, Thomas Roseby to K.R. Cramp, 5 December 1925, 52/26. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1926, January. RAHS Archives.
- 63 K.R. Cramp to J.K.S. Houison, 2 June 1926, 320/26. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1926, c.Jan-June. RAHS Archives.
- 64 Refer pages 61,72,73.
- 65 C.H. Hay, Secretary, Premier's Department, to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 19 December 1923, 23/667. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin...". RAHS Archives.
- 66 K.R. Cramp to C.H. Hay, 8 March 1924, 101A/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924 "To Be Kept", subtitle "Tablets, Possession Is., Appin...". RAHS Archives.
- 67 K.R. Cramp to Secretary, Premier's Department, 7 May 1925, 251/26. C.H. Hay to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 13 January 1925, 39/25. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1925. RAHS Archives.
- 68 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1925, p. 395.
- 69 Meeting of Council, 24 April 1924 & Meeting of Council, 23 May 1924. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, October 1920-July 1931. RAHS Archives.
- 70 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1924, pp. 363-364.
- 71 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 May 1936.
- 72 These matters will be discussed in Chapter 3.
- 73 R. White, President, School of Arts, Berrima, to President, Royal Australian Historical Society, 28 August 1924, 348/24. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1924, "To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 R.L. White, President, School of Arts, Berrima, to President, Royal Australian Historical Society, 11 March 1936. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1935-1939. RAHS Archives.
- 76 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 May 1936.
- 77 Sydney Morning Herald, 27 November 1928.
- 78 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 May 1929.
- 79 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 November 1924.
- 80 Sydney Morning Herald, 20 December 1924.
- 81 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 May 1929.
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- 86 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1922.
- 87 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1922,  
p.448.
- 88 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1922.
- 89 Meeting, 16 June 1922. Royal Australian Historical Society  
Council Minute Book, Oct. 1920-July 1931, p. 89. RAHS  
Archives.
- 90 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1922.
- 91 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1922.
- 92 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 April 1923.
- 93 Sydney Morning Herald, 13 April 1923.



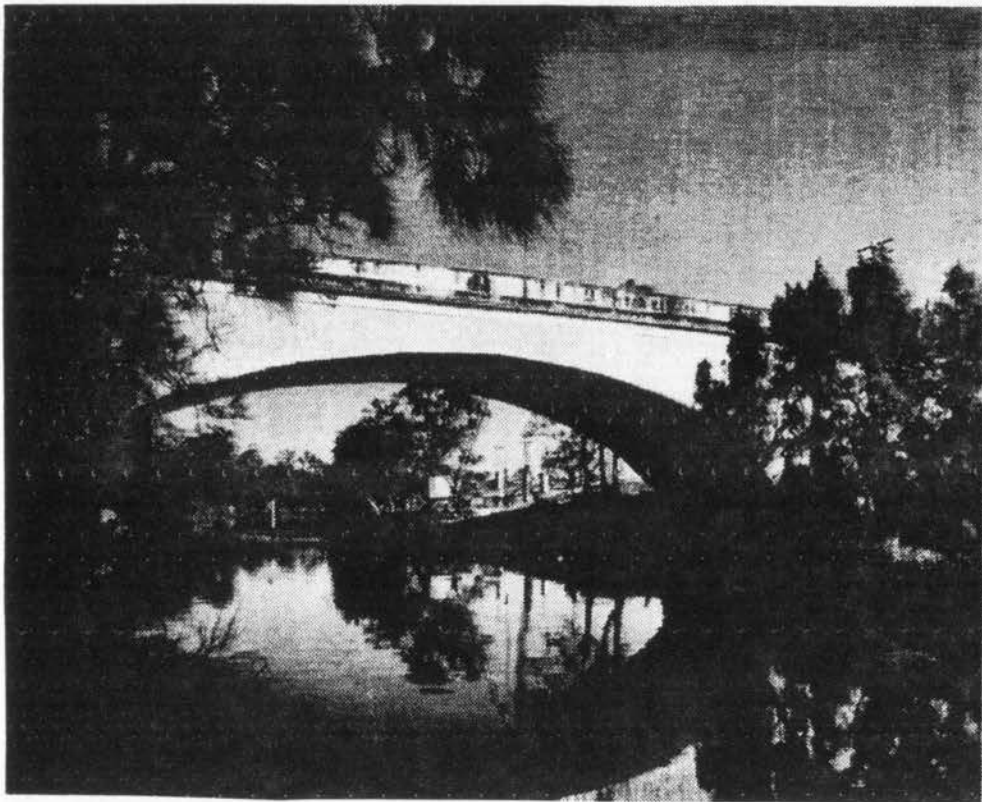
## CHAPTER THREE

## THE CENTURY DISEASE

In the decade or so before World War II debates over the fate of older structures in New South Wales became more intense, particularly in the years of accelerated building in Sydney which followed the Depression. Interest was shown by a broader range of interest groups, especially by architects and artists, who added their weight to the cause of preservation, often as individuals and sometimes through their associations. The press, through leaders and the publication of correspondence, continued to give publicity to the issues. New groups, such as the National Roads and Motorists' Association, were sympathetic, while the Royal Australian Historical Society continued to be the most active campaigner for preservation. The lead given by the Society or by its members acting as individuals was particularly valuable outside the City, where other interested bodies such as the architects tended to be less active.

The role of the Royal Australian Historical Society was important in saving from destruction some of the bridges built by David Lennox, the first Colonial Engineer. Throughout the twenties the number of motor vehicles on the roads increased dramatically. By 1923 "motor vehicles were more numerous than horsedrawn conveyances", and in the County of Cumberland the number of vehicles "had increased threefold between December 1919 and December 1929" [1] Pressure from the increasing number

of motor vehicles on the roads led to proposals for rebuilding or replacement of particular roads. The debates over the future of the bridge at Parramatta and the Lansdowne Bridge over Prospect Creek were among the first preservation issues to be perceived in terms of 'progress' versus preservation. When the Lansdowne Bridge was threatened in 1930, the Royal Australian Historical Society appealed to the Main Roads Board to revise its plans and



*"Lansdowne Bridge, near Liverpool". Photograph by Max Dupain . From Georgian Architecture in Australia (Sydney, Ure Smith, 1963).*

also, seeking wider support, approached the National Roads and Motorists' Association, urging that the bridge should be preserved as "the finest example of stone arch bridge(s?) in the southern hemisphere". The Society acknowledged that "progress must be made" and that "the safety of the whole road is sacrificed by a bottleneck anywhere", and sought suggestions from the NRMA that would "provide a wider thoroughfare and at the same time preserve the old bridge or part of it" [2]. Such attitudes became characteristic of the Society at this time.

On the general issue of preserving older structures of historical interest the response of the Council of the National Roads and Motorists' Association was enthusiastic. At its meeting in June 1930 the Council resolved that it would "cooperate to the fullest possible extent with the Council of the R.A.H.S. in any movement to preserve Historical Monuments and Structures" [3]. It undertook to publish in its journal The Open Road a series of articles on matters of historical interest in or near main roads. The first was on David Lennox, "making special reference" to the desirability both of preserving the Lennox bridges at Lansdowne and Parramatta and more broadly of fostering an 'historical sense' among members [4].

The issues were widely ventilated in the press. A leader in the Sydney Morning Herald on 25 June 1930 advocated the retention of the Lansdowne Bridge, this "Pontifex Maximus of the young colony" and suggested a second bridge alongside the existing one, leaving the latter for use at some future time by

horse-drawn vehicles. After all, it said, "not many monuments of our early days remain, and we should not destroy them if it can possibly be avoided". Progress demanded a price, the leader continued, but although there was a necessity for this to be so, as far as old structures were concerned, the price was high [5]. Letters appeared in the correspondence pages applauding the stand taken in the leader. "Ninety years with us is equal to five to seven centuries in Britain", argued one writer [6], while another urged that "progress" should not necessitate the loss of irreplaceable old structures [7]. William Freame, an active member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and a keen advocate of preservation, wrote that "we should cultivate the historical sense, and this can only be greatly assisted by the preservation - as far as is practicable - of our historic landmarks" [8]. A letter written by the President of the Royal Australian Historical Society was particularly interesting in its moderation and its stress on the need to recognise that 'progress' and the retention of 'historic structures' were not of necessity incompatible:

"My Society has always endeavoured to encourage any movement which makes for progress, and no one is more appreciative of the good work of the Main Roads Board than myself, at the same time we plead for the exhaustion of every avenue whereby an alternative to the destruction of such historic structures may be provided." [9]

The Main Roads Board was undoubtedly swayed by the extent of public feeling on the issue and, it would seem, postponed any action. In 1934 the centenary of the Lansdowne Bridge was celebrated with gusto. Four thousand people attended and a commemorative tablet was unveiled by the Deputy Premier Mr.

Bruxner, who spoke in praise of Lennox, his bridges and the early pioneers. K.R. Cramp also spoke on behalf of the Royal Australian Historical Society, "the watchdog of Landsowne Bridge", and received much applause for a suggestion that construction of a second bridge alongside, leaving the old one intact for use by one way traffic, would resolve the problem. The bridge remained thereafter [10].

The Lennox bridge at Parramatta was similarly threatened in the early 1930's [11], and in this case the matter was resolved quickly when in 1933 the Department of Main Roads (formerly the Main Roads Board) agreed to widen rather than replace the bridge and furthermore to do so in accordance with suggestions of the Royal Australian Historical Society [12]. The alterations were to be confined to the western side only, where the original parapet had been demolished years before, and the finished work was to resemble the bridge in its original condition [13]. The scheme was considered satisfactory by the Royal Australian Historical Society [14], but unfortunately, in September 1935 when the work was completed, the Society discovered that the it was not in accordance with the original design and the Council authorised J.K.S. Houison to protest against this matter with the Main Roads Board [15]. It was too late to save the bridge in a form close to its original design.

A similar compromise was worked out at Mt Victoria, where the Toll House "probably one of the last remaining links of a past system of paying for roads", was threatened by road-

widening proposals of the Department of Main Roads [16]. Again the Society had the support of the National Roads and Motorists' Association [17] and found the Department and the Blue Mountains Shire Council willing to compromise on the basis of a plan put forward by the Department for avoiding resumption and demolition, provided the Blue Mountains Shire Council consented to restrict the footpath in front of the house to a maximum width of six feet [18]. In 1939 the Department of Public Works and Local Government advanced Blue Mountaine Shire Council one hundred and twenty five pounds to help it renovate the Toll House [19].

In these examples preservation and development or 'progress' had been shown to be compatible, even if the solution achieved was not the most desirable or even implemented as planned. The tone of the Sydney Morning Herald leader of 25 June 1930 and associated letters was moderate, acknowledging always that the claims of 'progress' must be met. Direct confrontation of ideals and concepts had been avoided. That this was not always to be the outcome became clear when Sydney debated the future of some of its oldest and most symbolic structures in these years.

Debates over proposals and counter-proposals for the redesigning of some of Sydney's oldest areas took place in the 1930's against a background of wide general interest and a press that found the city's history 'newsworthy'. Newspapers published a mass of historical material, particularly of a type

best described as 'local history' [20]. Many of such articles described at length the history of a particular building, such as that published in 1931 detailing Glenmore House, built in 1825 for William Cox [21]. The 1932 Centenary Supplement of the Sydney Morning Herald was full of historical vignettes. All such articles, particularly when accompanied by illustrations in the form of reproductions of etchings or of photographs, enhanced awareness of the past and the need for preservation. A sympathetic press, long cultivated by the Royal Australian Historical Society, was essential to the creation of a community of interest in preservation.

Demolitions of historic buildings also were widely reported, and there were numerous articles and letters deploring the loss of buildings. Although most reflected the greater pressure for rebuilding in the Sydney area, the Sydney Morning Herald, for example, gave some prominence to losses in the country areas. One contributor in 1931 reported the demolition of an old weatherboard cottage in Goulburn, which had stood for over a hundred years, a Goulburn "landmark" [22]. In December 1933 Archer Russell wrote that Thomas 'Mort's old home on the Tuross River near Bodalla was falling to its ruin through neglect [23]. Other letters and articles dealt with buildings closer to Sydney; for example there was Osgathorpe at Ryde, "built over one hundred years ago" and belonging to the Le Gay Brereton family from the 1860's onwards, now purchased by the Department of Main Roads for road-widening purposes [24]. Few of these complaints in the press led to further agitation, but they heightened awareness

of the loss of historic buildings and helped create public support for preservation.

In the city the future of Burdekin House was in jeopardy for a second time in the early 1930s and although agitation to save the building was neither organised nor extensive, its actual demise produced a strong and lasting response. New voices were heard in support of preservation as artists and architects joined historians in their condemnation. Preservationists began to talk of a 'century disease', a phrase first popularised by Charles Bertie, City Librarian and Past President of the Royal Australian Historical Society, to describe what he saw as a pattern in the loss of historic buildings. As soon as a building reaches the century mark, he often said, it mysteriously becomes the subject of demolition proposals. When Burdekin House was sold for redevelopment in 1933 he warned members of the Royal Australian Historical Society in a speech reported in the Sydney Morning Herald:

"Burdekin House...is now suffering from century disease. As our buildings approach their centenary mark, almost inevitably circumstances arise which suggest their removal. As a consequence we have only about four buildings in Sydney actually more than a century old....Of these four buildings two have been threatened in recent years - the Old Mint building and the Law Courts (Hyde Park Barracks) at the top of King Street. Probably within a short time we shall only have two century-old buildings. Burdekin House is within eight years of its centenary and it is threatened. It seems a pity that we cannot preserve some of these old mansions." [25]

His diagnosis was taken up by others, Una V. Foster, for example, whose letter to the Sydney Morning Herald in February 1933 was an emotional appeal for preservation:



"We talk about our country having no legends, no historical castles, abbeys, churches, in fact buildings of any kind such as overseas countries have. How can we when as soon as we have some interesting historical building that reaches close within the century mark, and depicting to the full the architecture of our early days, man's destructive hand wants to level it to the ground....are we to have only modern things and buildings in Sydney? Can we not keep that which should be of value to the country and of interest to visitors from overseas?" [26]



*"Burdekin House, Sydney". Etching by Frederick C. Britton.  
Author's collection.*

Burdekin House was well known as a favourite subject of artists such as Hardy Wilson and Sydney Ure Smith. It was, in fact, the first of many issues in which Ure Smith was to be actively involved. In 1929 an exhibition of furniture, old and modern, was held there, organised by a committee chaired by Ure Smith and he was reported to have said at the exhibition's opening that he sincerely hoped a group of interested people would be found to consider acquiring the house for the State [27]. By 1933, however, when talk of the impending demolition of the House was revived, very little had been achieved. On 14 February 1933 the Sydney Morning Herald reported that negotiations were in progress for the sale of "the historic Burdekin House" and that a new St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church was to be built on the site. It was accompanied by a large photograph of the house showing the "beautiful Georgian facade" which had "inspired the artists Hardy Wilson and Ure Smith" [28]. The sale was concluded and notice to that effect given on 18 February 1933 [29]. It was August, however, before demolition began and in the meantime last minute efforts were made to save the house.

Meeting on 14 February 1933, the day on which the Herald first reported negotiations for the sale, the Council of the Royal Australian Historical Society reversed its earlier policy and decided not to protest against the sale, giving as the reason its view that the house was not of sufficient historical interest [30]. Perhaps the majority of council members were more

interested in the possibility of obtaining an historical museum than in a house built after the Macquarie period which by this time was the preeminent period of interest, perhaps they found themselves in a difficult position when opposed to the plans of an institution of the standing of the Presbyterian Church. Some, no doubt, recognised that without specific legislation to allow it to intervene to prevent the demolition of historic buildings, the government was unlikely, or unable, to act beyond exhorting the owners to retain the building, and this was unlikely to be effective in the present situation. What is clear is that without the commitment of the Council of the Royal Australian Historical Society any agitation was bound to be less effective.

Demolition work was to begin on 18 August 1933. On the previous day visitors flocked to the house for a final inspection. A report in the Sydney Morning Herald described the scene somewhat lyrically:

"Visitors thronged to Burdekin House yesterday for the last inspection. The work of demolition is to begin tomorrow.... ...in the courtyard at the rear the honey locust trees, also doomed to die, lifted their gaunt and leafless limbs to the towering building, symbolic of the progress which had decreed their end. Near the blackened trunks a Scottish piper strode, playing a lament." [31]

The caption on one of the final photographs of the house read "Demolishers At Work On Macquarie Landmark" [32]. Many mistakenly thought the building to have dated from the Macquarie period. It was to become evident that the loss of Burdekin House, often cited as an example of flagrant waste and disregard of the

past and historical sentiments, remained in the minds of preservation supporters for years.

A spate of demolitions in the city and inner suburbs followed the Burdekin House debacle as pressure for building sites grew with the easing of the Depression in 1934-35. "1935 was the best year for three years of Sydney's leading real estate companies since the boom of the twenties" [33]. In March and May respectively the Sydney Morning Herald reported the impending loss of Eynesbury, former home of Sir Albert Gould at Woolahra, and of Carlisle, one of the oldest homes in the Liverpool district, built by convicts in 1817 for the Reverend R. Cartwright [34]. Also in May there were reports of demolitions in progress in Macquarie Street [35] and in George Street, where the destruction of shops, thought to be the oldest in that street, was reported under the caption "Old Sydney Landmark Disappears" [36]. Of particular significance were reports in the middle of 1934 that the old Taxation Office Building at Circular Quay was to be demolished. This brought forth protests from members of the Town Planning Association; at its general meeting in July of that year Mr. Martin urged that the demolition be opposed, reminding members that "in every other part of the world there is a reverence for old landmarks" [37].

The involvement of the Town Planning Association in the protest in mid-1934 was indicative of the new interests and new organisations that were beginning to increase their awareness of the hazards to the older City landmarks and to consider their responsibilities to the community. Closely associated with the

Town Planning Association and with some overlap in membership, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, New South Wales Chapter was particularly aware of the government's intermittent planning for the remodelling of two of the oldest areas of the City, Macquarie Street and the Circular Quay area [38].

Confronted with the demolitions in the city, and rumours of plans for Macquarie Street and the Quay, the Council reported to members in June 1934 under the heading "Preservation of Monuments and Buildings of Historical Interest" that steps had been taken to obtain information about "Legislative Acts which have been introduced in Great Britain and other countries with a view to having some legislation brought into force in New South Wales along the same lines" [39]. This was the first formal recognition of the need for legislation to secure the permanent retention of historic structures in New South Wales. By the end of the year copies of the various Acts which operated in Great Britain for this purpose had been obtained from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Council had under consideration steps that should be taken to "obtain legislation of a similar nature in N.S.W." [40]

Equally significant was the decision of members of disparate groups of historians, artists, architects and others to act together in sending a deputation to the government to press for such legislation. In December 1934 this deputation waited upon the Assistant Minister Mr H.P. Fitzsimons, M.L.A., at Parliament House [41]. The New South Wales Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects was represented by Keith

Harris, who had probably been responsible for the joint approach of the Institute and the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1922 to protest about the demolition of Burdekin House, which then appeared to be imminent. Keith Harris introduced the deputation which included leading figures in a number of organisations: B.J. Waterhouse, President of the Board of Architects, Sydney Ure Smith, President of the Society of Artists, and Dr. G.A. Abott, President of the Royal Australian Historical Society. The Society was also represented by one of its councillors, W.C. Wentworth and a member J.K.S. Houison, who was active in both the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Parramatta and District Historical Society. Also represented were the Pioneers Club and the Town and Country Planning Institute [42]. It was the most representative body that had hitherto expressed common interests in the preservation of the historic buildings of the city.

The deputation pleaded for a better understanding of the value of historical monuments and relics "so many of which had been destroyed or ruined by neglect or reconstruction", and for the urgent need to preserve the most interesting specimens not only for the present but for future generations [43]. It was clear that the deputation's only concern was with 'colonial' architecture and that of the Macquarie period in particular. Although Burdekin House had had to be replaced, they said, there were still good specimens of early colonial architecture remaining. The early Governors, they stated, deserved to be remembered with something more than literature, especially

Macquarie who had given Sydney an architectural character, although that character was now almost lost. There were great engineering works of the early colonialists such as the first bridges and roads which should be preserved and there were still good specimens of early colonial architecture remaining in Jamieson Street, Sydney for example, in Miller's Point with its few old residences of dignity and character, in the Rocks area, with "its picturesque subject matter so loved by the artists" and in the interesting old colonial towns of Windsor and Campbelltown which each year suffered the loss of more colonial houses. Ure Smith pointed out that Queen's Square gave character to Sydney with St James' Church, the Hyde Park Barracks and the Mint Building situated there and suggested that the Government should preserve these buildings. Unfortunately, the deputation concluded, there were very few concerned about the value and the lessons of these reminders [44].

The deputation made two major proposals to the Minister: the first was that a committee of experts be formed which could advise the Government on the aesthetic or historical value of buildings worthy of preservation; and the second concerned the establishment of historical museums. These museums, they suggested, were needed throughout the State for housing historical documents, photographs and relics and would be useful in the teaching of local history. Sites were suggested for such museums in Sydney; these are discussed in the following chapter on the Macquarie Street buildings. The leader writer of the Sydney Morning Herald on 18 December 1934, applauded the

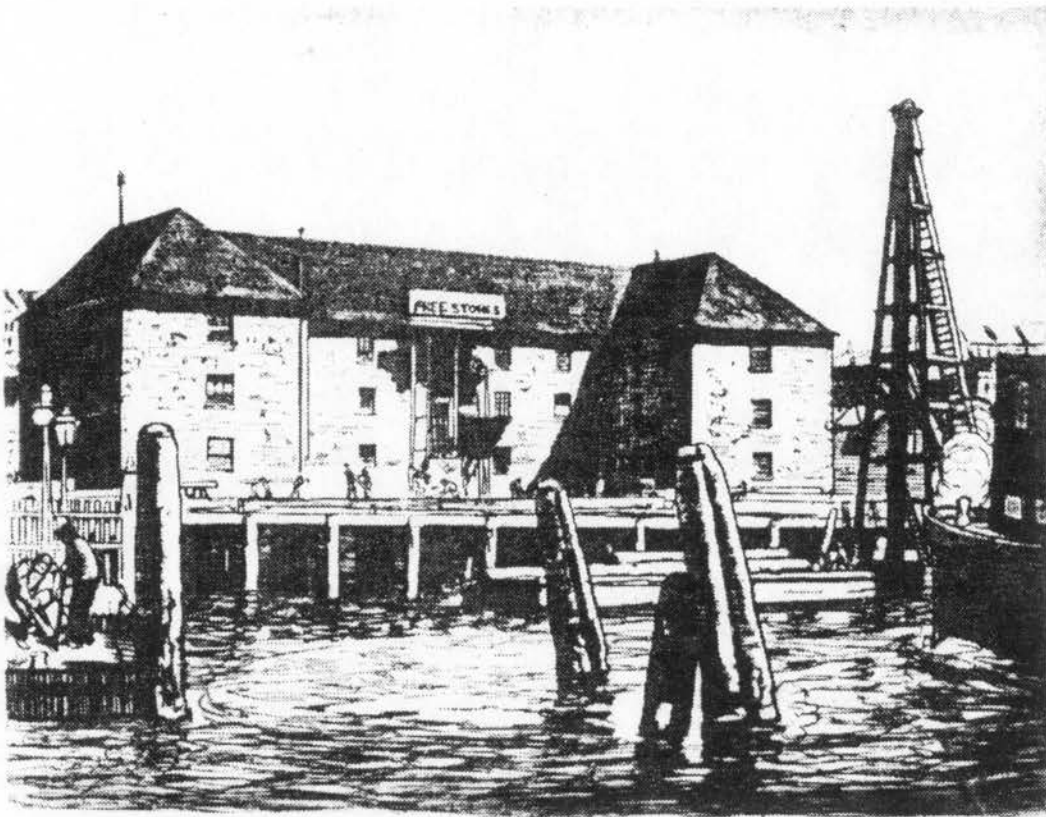
deputation and thought it worthy of the support of citizens. "We have been careless of historic buildings", he wrote, "many have been destroyed, while others have been reconstructed or ruined by neglect" [45]. Unfortunately no more is known of the suggested advisory committee, an interesting and innovative concept at the time. Most commentary concentrated on the museum issue and preservation in general, ignoring the novelty of the first proposal. It is possible that the proposal itself and the influential support behind it had some impact on the government, for in some of the important committees set up shortly afterwards to consider the future of the older and more historic areas of Sydney, private members were included, representing at least the architects.

Two areas dominated discussion and protest in the five years or so before the outbreak of World War II, both with links with the earliest years of settlement and both threatened by the government's plans for redevelopment: the Circular Quay area and Macquarie Street. Buildings such as the old Taxation Office and the Commissariat Stores at Circular Quay and Hyde Park Barracks and the Mint Building in Macquarie Street had been under threat by redevelopment proposals for decades but it was in the period 1935 to 1939 that these proposals were to be realised. No longer willing to settle for small concessions and faced with increasingly uncompromising attitudes, supporters of preservation confronted the State Government and others involved, placing the responsibility for preservation on the Government, especially when the buildings under threat were



Government property. In this and the succeeding chapter the events of these years will be analysed.

The old Taxation Office building, located in George Street North, was originally built as naval officers' living quarters [46]. It was flanked by a row of tall palm trees and over its main door was a large stone inscribed "Erected in the year 1812. L. Macquarie, Esq. Governor" [47]. Behind it with a frontage to Circular Quay was the former Commissariat Stores building, a four-storey structure, originating in the pre-Macquarie era and a prominent landmark in the early sketches of Sydney Cove when deep water extended to the Stores doors and goods were loaded directly from trading vessels. The Stores building, allegedly begun in 1809 and completed in 1813 during Macquarie's period in office, was regarded as the oldest Government building still extant in the 1930's, and hundreds of the sandstone blocks of its walls were said to have been engraved with the initials of the names of convicts [48]. Both were substantial and prominent buildings, dating from the earliest days of settlement, one had the emotive convict engravings and the other had the appeal of a Macquarie inscription. Whereas Burdekin House had been privately owned and it had been possible to contemplate no more than a request to the government to intervene in a private sale, in the case of the two Circular Quay buildings the Government could be held directly responsible, as both buildings were State owned. Together with the historical importance of the buildings, government ownership gave a new dimension to protest and created an opportunity for an especially vehement campaign to emerge.



*"Commissariat Stores". Etching by Lionel Lindsay. From L. Lindsay, Etchings of Old Sydney: No. I-V, 1925. National Library of Australia.*

As early as 1917 there were rumours that the Government intended to demolish the Stores building as part of the city railway loop construction programme [49]. At the time the Royal Australian Historical Society limited itself to suggestions for retention of the building's commemorative stone, and there the matter rested when the Society received an assurance that that demolition was not in immediate contemplation [50]. By the 1930's there were rumours of more definite plans for redevelopment and the removal of the buildings. In 1934 the Tree

Lovers' Civic League of Lane Cove took the initiative in writing to the Royal Australian Historical Society:

"These stores are of great historical interest, being the first definite allotment of land set aside in Australia for any specific purpose, and form a link with the past. Our League feels that this relic should be preserved, and therefore we request your co-operation and support in the matter." [51]

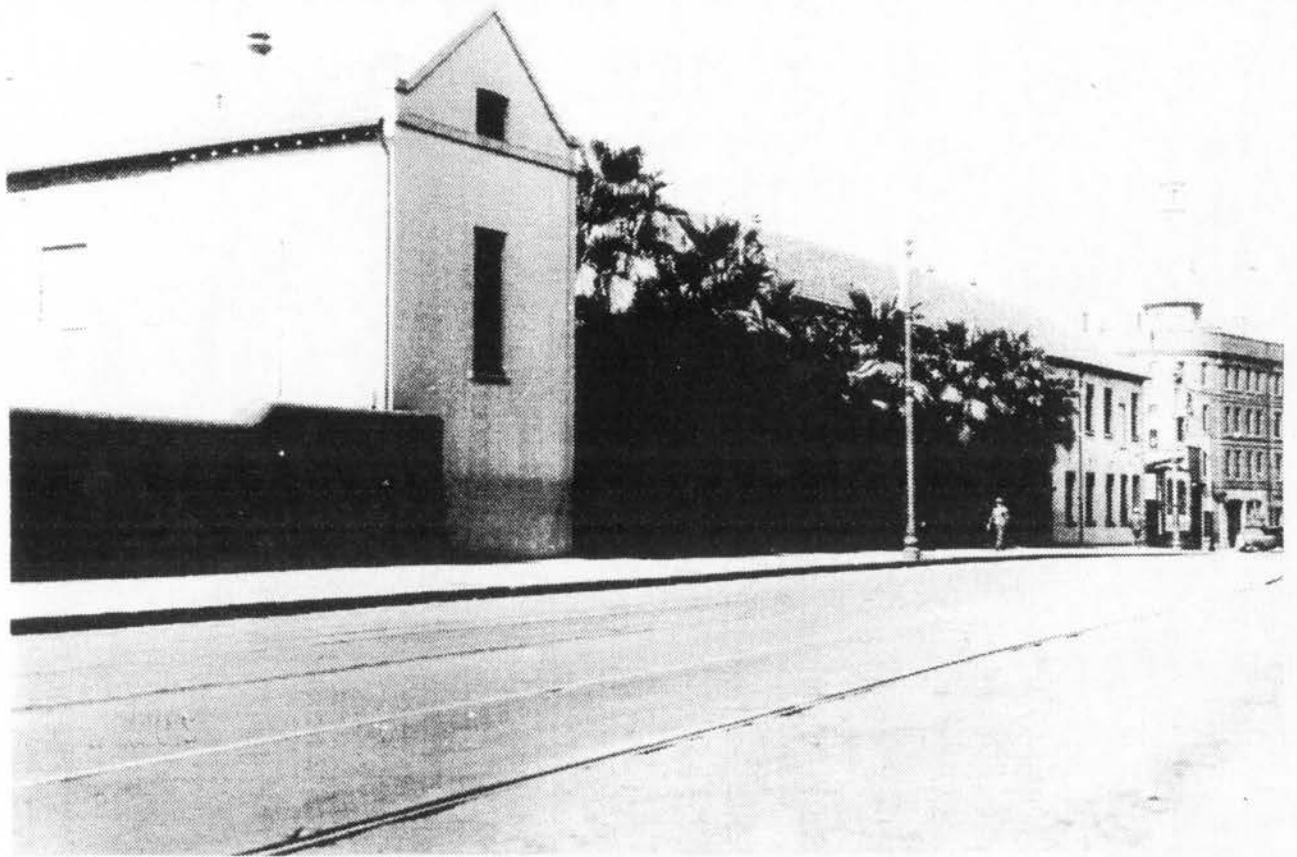
The Society had moved far from the acquiescence of 1917, when it proposed no more than the preservation of the building's commemorative stone, and offered to co-operate with the League and to do anything in its power to assist the movement [52].



*Commissariat Stores. Photograph. Small Pictures File, Mitchell Library.*

The Tree Lovers' Civic League was undoubtedly the initiator of the grouping of interests which in January 1935 formed the Commissariat Stores Preservation Committee [53]. It was the first time that such a wide range of interests collected together for the purposes of preservation. At its inaugural meeting the Committee decided to request that the Sydney Harbour Trust Commissioners transfer ownership of the Stores to a Trust of responsible citizens and they envisaged its future use as a home for an Australian Historical Museum as well as meeting rooms for the Royal Australian Historical Society, Town Planning Association, Tree and Civic Leagues, Australian Forest League, Parks and Playgrounds Movement, Rangers League, Wildlife Preservation Society and other public groups [54]. It is interesting to note the connection made between groups interested in the preservation of the natural environment and those with links with preservation of historic structures. The RAHS was frequently asked by individuals and societies to seek preservation of natural areas and Aboriginal sites, although for these interests there were other established avenues [55].

There were more powerful interests at stake when the Government finally made its decision. Located on the western side of Circular Quay the Commissariat Stores building and the adjacent Taxation Office building were in an area which had been resumed in 1900 at the time of the clearing up of the worst slum areas in the Rocks. Despite removal of the worst of the residential premises and some general improvements, development of the area had been slow, and the construction of the Sydney



*Old Taxation Office, looking towards George Street. Photograph. Small Pictures File, Mitchell Library.*

Harbour Bridge with its approaches had also had a disturbing and retarding effect on progress in the locality [56]. In 1936 the State Government set up a Committee, known as the Observatory Hill Resumed Area Development Committee, to prepare a scheme of development for the resumed area around Circular Quay, known as the Observatory Hill Resumed Area, including the sites of the Taxation Office and Commissariat Stores buildings. The chairman was Charles Henry Crammond and Alfred John Brown, architect and town planner was one of its four members. Other members were A.H. Garnsey, S.R. Giraud, F.C.I.U., and C.R. Chapman. They

were not state government employees, but were assisted by the staff of the Department of Works and Local Government. The Committee presented its report in December 1937, suggesting that the early rehabilitation of the area was now a matter of major and urgent importance [57].

In the meantime pressure on the area was mounting from another quarter. The State Government required new sites for several Government buildings, including new offices for the Maritime Services Board. The Board's existing building had to be demolished to make way for the Quay link of the overhead railway, part of the new City rail loop [58], which had been one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Improvement of Sydney and Suburbs of 1909 and had been long delayed in implementation. Several sites were discussed between 1936 and 1939, including the Goldsborough Mort warehouse on the eastern side of the Quay and the site containing both the Stores and Taxation buildings. In 1936 the Resumed Properties Department reported that the "old buildings" which cover the southern most moiety of the area now asked for by the Maritime Services Board were occupied almost solely by old records and that there would be no difficulty in disposing of the records and in making most of the area available [59]. A decision was not forthcoming however. In late 1936 the government appointed another committee, known as the Circular Quay Coordination (or Coordinating) Committee, also under the Chairmanship of Charles Crammond and later, it seems, Sir John Butters [60]. The Committee was to coordinate the activities and interests of the

various public authorities of the Circular Quay area and to oversee the development of the area [61]. It recommended in February 1937 a site for the Maritime Services Board building on the southern frontage of the proposed new street from Pitt to George Street. It also recommended eventual demolition of the Taxation Office and Commissariat Stores buildings [62]. In July 1938 the Maritime Services Board again raised the matter of new premises and stated that it preferred a site in the vicinity of the old Taxation offices in George Street in order that a more extensive view of the harbour could be obtained and was told by the Chairman of what was now called the Circular Quay Planning Committee, sir John Butters, that this could be done, although financial considerations might prevent it [63].

In August 1938 the report of the Observatory Hill Resumed Area Development Committee was considered by the Government [64]. The Committee had recommended, among many other things, that provision be made for three government buildings with parklike surroundings [65]. One of them a "well-designed building" to house the Maritime Services Board should be sited centrally in Section G of the Resumed Area, in which the two historic buildings were located. The latter would have to go. The Committee's report concluded:

"It is with some reluctance, and only after considerable thought, that the Committee recommends the removal of the old Taxation Building and the old Naval Store (Commissariat Stores). These buildings, while having no outstanding architectural merit, have an historical and sentimental value, being associated, as they were, with the early life of the Colony. However they stand in the way of a satisfactory rehabilitation of this portion of the Quay area and the replanning of the adjacent lands." [66]



*Aerial Photograph of Circular Quay area, showing Commissariat Stores and the Taxation Building (within box). Photograph from the 1930's. Small Pictures File, Mitchell Library.*



The Committee further recommended that work on the Resumed Area should be carried out in an order specified in the Report, the first in that order being the Clearing of Section G of buildings to facilitate the erection of the Maritime Services Building [67].

In the following months the Committee's recommendation was first rejected and then finally adopted by the Government in November 1938. The Premier had first decided to proceed with the Goldsborough Mort site until the Valuer General recommended against this step. It was noted that the western Circular Quay site already belonged to the Crown, would save 100,000 pounds and "would be a very important factor towards facilitating the rehabilitation of the Rocks area" as envisaged in the report of the Observatory Hill Committee [68]. The plan was approved by Cabinet and by the Sydney City Council in November 1938 [69] and the Lord Mayor, Sir Archibald Howie, MLC, was reported to have said:

"I would like to see these buildings pulled down and the sooner the better.. There is nothing artistic about them, and the fact that each stone used in their construction bears the initials of a convict is a very good reason why we should forget about them.... It will be impossible to obtain a beautification scheme for the Quay as long as those old buildings remain there. You might just as well try to preserve beauty in a quarry." [70]

No doubt there were many private individuals as well as public employees who sympathised with his remarks.

A major part of the campaign to save the buildings was conducted in the pages of the Sydney Morning Herald and here a new emphasis on aesthetic and town planning considerations was discernable. Charles Bertie, was reported by a 'special correspondent' in the Sydney Morning Herald to have said:

"There are so few buildings in Sydney associated with Macquarie's Day that it would be a great pity if those that remain are allowed to be demolished. Apart from their historic interest, these old buildings, if properly treated on town-planning lines by the removal of modern encumbrances, nearby, have an assured aesthetic appeal. Preserved in this way they would do something to counteract the harsh utilitarian appearance of the railway which is being built across the Quay." [71]

Frank Walker wrote saying that it seemed a pity that the building had to give way to modern progress, for very soon "one will look in vain for those historic links which bind our Sydney of today with days of long ago" [72]. The article by the 'special correspondent' in the Herald of 23 November 1938 stated that "the disappearance of these buildings, so intimately linked with the beginnings of New South Wales, can be regarded only as a national tragedy", suggesting that, as the Maritime Services Board's new building was to stand in an extensive park to be created by the demolition of many neighbouring buildings, the same building could be erected elsewhere in the same locality leaving the Commissariat Stores standing in the middle of a small park as a permanent monument to the men who founded the city. These buildings need not come down, the article stated "if the people insist vehemently enough that they are of value for their own sake" [73].

The campaign to save the Commissariat Stores and the old Taxation building attracted the attention of Sydney Long, a well respected Sydney artist [74]. It was, as far as can be ascertained, the only occasion on which he spoke publicly in support of preservation. A report in the Sydney Morning Herald of 4 February 1939 quotes Long as saying:

"Nothing should be left undone to preserve from destruction the buildings which make such a wonderful appeal to anyone possessing a feeling for the beauty of old things.... It would be a wicked shame if they are pulled down (he said). At present they make a wonderful appeal to anyone possessing a feeling for the beauty of old things." [75]

He added that the Butters Plan also involved the loss of the old cottage originally used to accommodate boatmen who ferried citizens across the harbour. Few people, he said, knew of its existence as it was hidden from view by the old Macquarie wall near the Taxation building, but he had come across it "about seven or eight years ago, when I was making an etching of the old buildings as they appeared from the waters of Sydney Cove". Fortunately, and perhaps as a consequence of the agitation over the larger two buildings, this tiny colonial cottage, later known as Cadman's Cottage after John Cadman Superintendent of the Governor's boats, was allowed to remain [76].

The campaign also caught the attention of W.H. Ifould, Principal Librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales. He too was a prominent and influential man and his support was a feather in the cap of preservation. In a letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald he wrote,

"I am not in a position to criticise the Butters Scheme in any way, but it breaks my heart to think that these early historic buildings should be demolished...I should like to put forward a strong plea for the preservation of these buildings if it is at all possible." [77]

As had been the pattern in the past, the Royal Australian Historical Society tried to exert influence through direct approaches to the Government while continuing to campaign in the press. Prominent members wrote privately to the press. On 4 February 1939, the Honorary Secretary, J.K.S. Houston, wrote to the Sydney Morning Herald on behalf of the Society claiming that the demolition of the buildings was not essential to the Circular Quay Plan as they were not in the way of the overhead road and railway, but were to be destroyed to make a spacious park for the new Maritime Services Board building [78]. These two ancient structures, he said, were now the best examples of "Macquarie buildings" still remaining, and his society had "strenuously protested" against the proposed demolitions, but had received from Premier B.S.B. Stevens, merely a reply stating that their representations would be carefully considered. The Government's approval of the Butters Plan, the Secretary concluded, meant that the Society's representations had been in vain. Again in February 1939 the Society requested the Government to take steps to preserve the Commissariat Stores building [79] and continued to voice its protest until demolition was a fait accompli. The association of the buildings with Governor Macquarie's period was an argument put forward to justify saving the buildings, frequently described as "among the few remaining relics of Governor Macquarie's regime that Sydney possesses" [80].

Although it did not produce the outcome preservation supporters desired, the campaign for the two Circular Quay buildings did significantly affect public and perhaps even government opinion. This was evident in the distribution of the 'historic' materials of the buildings. Demolition of the Commissariat Stores building was finally due to begin in July 1939. A clause was inserted in the demolition contract permitting the Maritime Services Board to claim any material possessing an historical value, and it was said that every effort was made to preserve stones and relics that might be of historic interest [81]. In fact some six thousand feet of sandstone blocks were sold to the parish council of St. Phillip's Church for use in construction of a new parish hall on Clarence Street [82]. It was reported that the Church had eagerly seized the opportunity to purchase the stone in recognition of the historical associations between the first St. Phillip's building and the Stores, both having been built about the same time and from stone hewn in the same quarries. It was an historic and sentimental association, the Assistant Minister at St. Phillip's said, that was felt to be well worth preserving [83].

The old Taxation Office building lingered on until November 1939. Its destruction created less controversy, as no doubt the battle was thought already lost and the outbreak of war had intervened. The Sydney Morning Herald report stated:

"Despite protests made by historians, artists, and many public spirited citizens for more than 25 years, the State Government has at last taken steps to demolish the old Taxation Building in George Street North....

The old Taxation Building which is now coming down was a handsomer building than the Commissariat Stores. It was flanked along the George Street elevation by a row of 11 giant Island palms which are to be transplanted elsewhere if possible..." [84]

The tablet and the keystone of the building were also to be preserved, to be incorporated in the new Maritime Services Board building [85].

The loss of these buildings prompted P.C. Mowle, a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society, to suggest the establishment of a society specifically for the promotion of preservation. It would seem that this was the first time that such a suggestion was made, at least in public. On 2 November 1939 Mowle wrote to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald:

"As individual protests against the demolition that is now taking place would be futile, it therefore seems that the time has arrived to form a society for the preservation of historic buildings, and thereby enable a collective opinion to be represented in the proper quarter upon this and other acts of vandalism that will assuredly occur." [86]

Mowle's suggestion for a society for the preservation of historic buildings was one of the first of many made by members of the Historical Society and a number of architects and others in the following years. It was the beginning of a major shift in the direction and leadership of preservation, and ultimately produced the organisation the National Trust of Australia, which as Mowle had envisaged was a society specifically set up for the furthering of preservation.

## NOTES : The Century Disease

- 1 Peter Spearritt, Sydney Since The Twenties, (Sydney 1978), pp. 159-162.
- 2 President, Royal Australian Historical Society to Secretary, National Roads & Motorists' Association, 23 May 1930, No. 203/30. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1930 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 3 Report to Council, Royal Australian Historical Society, from Harold Norrie, 14 July 1930, No. 317/30. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1930 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Sydney Morning Herald 25 June 1930.
- 6 Sydney Morning Herald, 28 June 1930. Letter from John A. Graham.
- 7 Sydney Morning Herald, 27 September 1930. Letter from C.O. Harrison.
- 8 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June 1930.
- 9 Harold Norrie to Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 25 June 1930, No. 299/30. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1930 "Selected To Be Kept" . RAHS Archives.
- 10 Newspaper article of unknown origin c. January 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-March 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 11 Sydney Morning Herald, 31 May 1930, 24 May 1933, 18 July 1933.
- 12 Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to Main Roads Board, 6 April 1933, & Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to Secretary, Department of Main Roads, 26 April 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1932-1933 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 13 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1933, p.397. S.R. Henderson, Secretary, Department of Main Roads to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 9 May 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1932-1933 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 14 Press releases, 9 & 12 June 1933; K.R. Cramp to Secretary, Department of Main Roads, 6 June 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1932-1933 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 15 Meeting of Council, 17 May 1935. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book c. July 1933-March 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 16 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 & 28 May 1930. A.S. Marsden, Blue Mountains Shire Clerk, to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 9 January 1936 & Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to Secretary, Main Roads Department, 24 January 1936. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters of Historical Interest, 1935-1939. RAHS Archives.
- 17 C.A. Gregory to H. Norrie, 26 May 1930, No. 212/30. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1930

- "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 18 Secretary, Department of Main Roads to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 7 February 1936, Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters of Historical Interest, 1935-1939. Meeting of Council, 17 May 1933, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-March 1938. RAHS Archives. Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report 1936, p.470.
  - 19 Sydney Morning Herald, 20 November 1939.
  - 20 Refer Chapter 1, pages....
  - 21 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 March 1931.
  - 22 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 February 1931.
  - 23 Sydney Morning Herald, 16 December 1933.
  - 24 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 May 1931.
  - 25 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 February 1933. Special Meeting of Members, 14 February 1933, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-March 1938. RAHS Archives.
  - 26 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 February 1933.
  - 27 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 October 1929.
  - 28 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 February 1933.
  - 29 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 February 1933.
  - 30 Meeting of Council, 14 February 1933, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-March 1938. RAHS Archives.
  - 31 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 August 1933.
  - 32 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 September 1933.
  - 33 Peter Spearritt, op.cit., p.66.
  - 34 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 March 1934, 2 May 1934.
  - 35 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 May 1934.
  - 36 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 May 1934.
  - 37 Sydney Morning Herald, 13 July 1934.
  - 38 Refer Chapter 6, (Architects).
  - 39 Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, New South Wales Chapter, 3 July 1934. Architecture, August 1934, p.171.
  - 40 Report of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, New South Wales Chapter, in Architecture, November 1934, p.229.
  - 41 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 December 1934, 18 December 1934.
  - 42 Ibid. The Town and Country Planning Institute held its inaugural meeting in September 1934 and Keith Harris was a member.
  - 43 Ibid.
  - 44 Ibid.
  - 45 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 December 1934.
  - 46 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 November 1939.
  - 47 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 November 1938.
  - 48 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1935, 23 November 1938.
  - 49 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January 1917.
  - 50 Secretary, Premier's Office to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 12 January 1917. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters Received 1917, January. Secretary, Premier's Office to Secretary Royal Australian Historical Society, 1 February 1917. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, Letters Received 1917, January- March 1917. RAHS Archives.



- 51 C. Wood, Secretary, Tree Lovers' Civic League to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 3 July 1934. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1934 (marked '1924'). RAHS Archives.
- 52 Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to Secretary, Tree Lovers' Civic League, 18 September 1934. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1934 (marked '1924'). RAHS Archives.
- 53 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1935.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Refer: Mulvaney J. "The Australian Aborigines 1609 - 1929: Opinion and Fieldwork", Historical Studies, 1968; The Preservation of Australia's Aboriginal Heritage. Report of National Seminar on Aboriginal Antiquities in Australia, May 1972, edited by Robert Edwards (Canberra 1975); and Australia's 100 Years of National Parks, (Sydney 1979).
- 56 Report of the Observatory Hill Resumed Area Development Committee and Correspondence 1937-1946. Department of Public Works. NSW State Archives GRR 7/5883. The report was signed by the Chairman on 21 December 1937 and printed in 1938.
- 57 Ibid., p.6. The Committee was set up on 31 July 1936 on the recommendation of the Minister for Public Works, refer Government Gazette No. 1222, 31 July 1936, p. 3263.
- 58 Minister, Public Works and Local Government to the Acting Premier, 6 July 1945. Department of Public Works File, Resumption of Land for Head Office of Maritime Services Board of NSW, Circular Quay 1936-48. NSW State Archives, 7/4134.
- 59 Acting Manager, Resumed Properties Department to Under-Secretary, Department of Works and Local Government, 19 August 1936. Department of Public Works File, Resumption of Land for Head Office of Maritime Services Board of NSW, Circular Quay 1936-48. NSW State Archives, 7/4134.
- 60 Refer Section on Butters in next chapter.
- 61 Report of Observatory Hill Resumed Area Development Committee, op.cit., p.16, Appendix No.2, Circular Coordinating Committee, Final Report, 29 January 1937. The Circular Quay Coordinating Committee was appointed following the Minister's approval of a recommendation by the Observatory Hill Resumed Area Development Committee "that by reason of the many changes contemplated in the Quay area, a conference of the interested Statutory Authorities and that Committee should be called with a view to the coordination of the various interests involved and the preparation of a comprehensive plan". The inaugural meeting of the Committee was held on 16 November 1936.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Report of Valuer General, 21 October 1938 and other correspondence, July-October 1938. Department of Public Works File, Resumption of Land for Head Office of Maritime Services Board of NSW, Circular Quay 1936-48. NSW State Archives, 7/4134.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Report of Observatory Hill Resumed Area Development Committee, op.cit., p.6.
- 66 Ibid., p.9.
- 67 Ibid., p.14.

- 68 A. Fewtrell to Chief Civil Engineer, 21 November 1938, 38/7301; Circular Quay Supervisory Committee to Mr. Spooner, Minister for Works and Local Government, 21 November 1938; & Report of Valuer General, 21 October 1938. Department of Public Works File, Resumption of Land for Head Office of Maritime Services Board of NSW, Circular Quay 1936-48. NSW State Archives, 7/4134.
- 69 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 November 1938. Correspondence regarding NSW Cabinet's decision, c. 1938, Department of Public Works File, Resumption of Land for Head Office of Maritime Services Board of NSW, Circular Quay 1936-48. NSW State Archives, 7/4134.
- 70 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1939.
- 71 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 November 1938.
- 72 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 December 1938.
- 73 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 November 1938.
- 74 Sydney Long's work will be discussed in Chapter 5 (Artists).
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 July 1938.
- 77 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1939.
- 78 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1939.
- 79 Memo from Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to Mr. Mason, Maritime Services Board, 22 February 1939. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1939, Box 1 beginning 1st January. RAHS Archives.
- 80 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1939.
- 81 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 July 1939.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 November 1939.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 November 1939.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## MACQUARIE STREET

'Civic improvement' and 'city beautification' were concepts which had been around since the nineteenth century in Australia as in Europe and America. The first was a more practical concept embracing improvements in housing, transport networks and services, while the second implied aesthetic rather than utilitarian developments. In Sydney the 1930's boom in building coincided with a period of renewed interest in improvement and beautification of the city and urban areas. The State Government's proposed remodelling of Martin Place and Macquarie Street brought forth plans for 'beautification' of the city, including grand thoroughfares and public squares, with suitably imposing buildings. Such plans invariably involved the demolition of existing structures, which in Macquarie Street included some of the oldest and finest from Governor Macquarie's time, and created conflict between preservation and Government policy on urban development. The situation brought about a vehement preservation campaign, particularly in respect of the Hyde Park Barracks. It also posed a dilemma for some individuals who had earlier expressed support for preservation and whose admiration for the old buildings was unquestionable. These individuals recognized the attraction and advantages of the new development and beautification schemes, as well as the value of retaining the old buildings, and many resolved that dilemma in favour of the new schemes. The conflict was not simply one of

'progress' as opposed to 'preservation', it was also a question of aesthetics. For those not sympathetic to the old buildings, the new schemes simply and clearly offered an opportunity to reach out to and express an exuberant belief in the future.

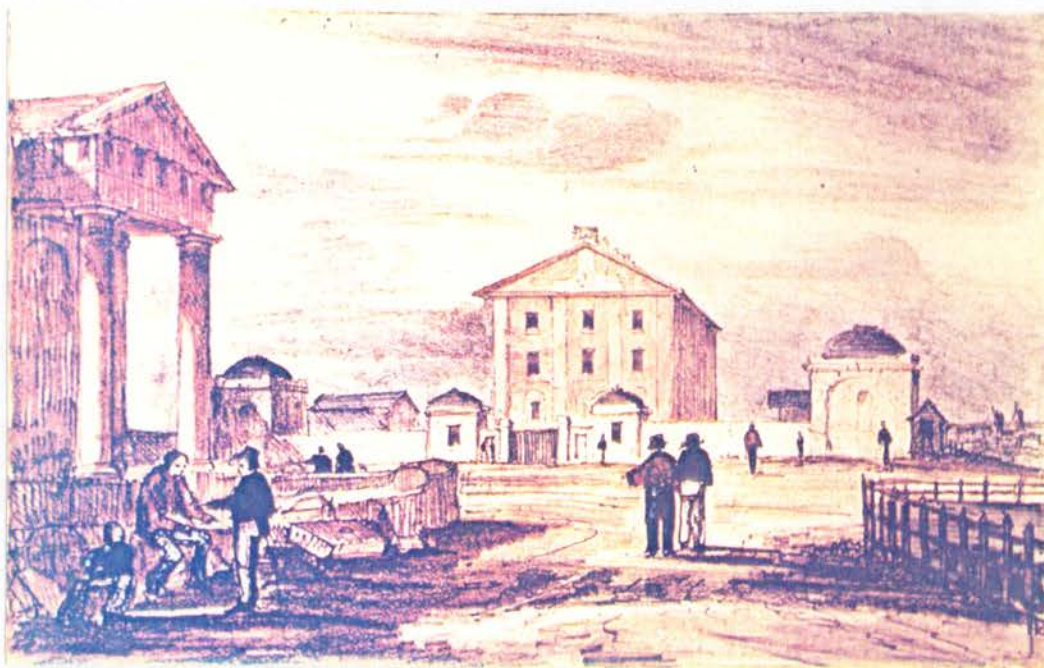
The first to speak of town planning and city reform was the English architect John Sulman who had emigrated to Sydney in 1885. His first such address, the "Laying Out of Towns", was given in Melbourne in 1890 to the Second Congress of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science [1]. Sulman covered problems such as traffic congestion and slum eradication, and he urged that "in the planning of new suburbs and towns there should be an end to the grid system which had dominated street layout monotonously since Governor Darling's time". Instead streets should curve in harmony with the contours of the land. His values were 'convenience, utility, and beauty', and he hoped they could be achieved by "thoughtful planning" instead of what he termed "the greedy improvisation of the past" [2]. As early as 1887 he requested the widening of Macquarie Street to make it a thoroughfare. Largely through Sulman's influence the concept of town planning was extended to include the improvement of existing towns, in order to beautify and also to eradicate problems such as traffic and poor housing conditions.

Proposals for the remodelling of Sydney around Martin Place and Macquarie Street dated from the nineteen twenties. In 1923 there were rumours that the State Government was considering

proposals for the extension of Martin Place to Macquarie Street, the erection of a new Supreme Court on the site of the Mint building which was to be removed, the demolition of the existing Supreme Court building, and creation of an "island" around St. James Church in Queen's Square, at the southern end of Macquarie Street [3]. In 1926 the architect B.J. Waterhouse issued a plea for the preservation of the Hyde Park Barracks, rumoured to be destined for demolition as part of the redevelopment plans [4], and in the same year the Mint site was suggested for a new St Andrew's Cathedral [5] and soon afterwards for new Law courts [6]. High costs and the Depression led to deferment but by 1933 discussion of impending redevelopment revived [7], including this time the extension of King Street through to the Domain [8]. In 1934 the Sydney City Council considered proposals for the extension of Martin Place to Macquarie Street, involving reconstruction of parts of that area. The State Government, which was required to approve any such plans before they could be implemented, considered itself of necessity a party to any redesigning proposals. The Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, stated in Parliament that his Government aimed "at taking full advantage of the opportunity that the putting through of this thoroughfare provides for reconstructing parts of the city within the immediate vicinity". When asked whether an advisory committee would be established he stated that "there are always many people who are prepared to give advice, but very few are prepared to pay". A Committee would not be necessary for "the various organisations that interest themselves in city beautification and replanning have put their proposals to the Government and they

will be considered and their importance recognised" [9]. When questioned again a week later regarding the need for "expert advice", he reiterated that there was already "no end of advice as to what ought to be done". The real question hanging over the plans was one of finance, but when that was resolved, he said, the whole scheme would open out pretty well [10]. There were other problems, too, which delayed completion of plans, such as the existence of Sydney Hospital and Parliament House in Macquarie Street.

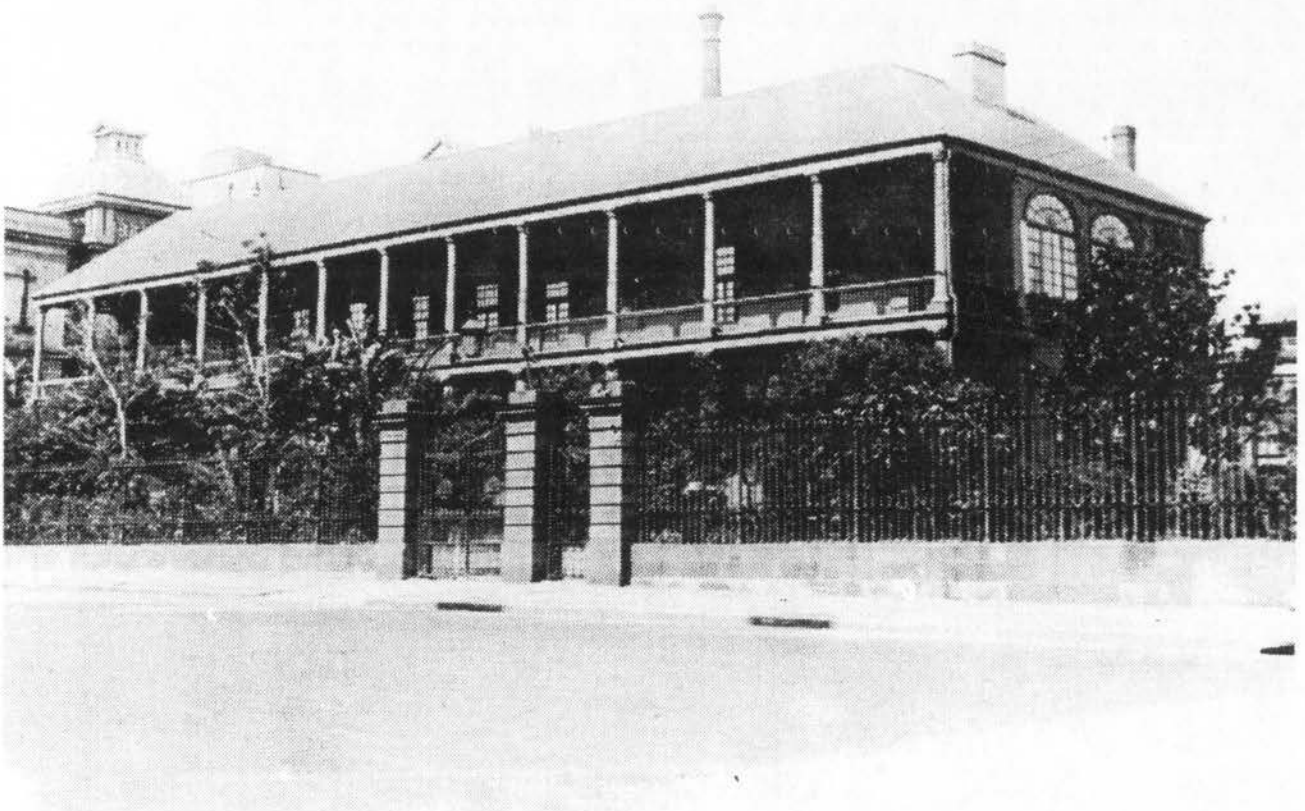
The future of the Barracks building was of great concern to the Royal Australian Historical Society and indeed the Society championed the cause of this building more than that of any other building up to 1939. Although the Hyde Park Barracks was "clear of the line" of the 1933-34 redevelopment proposals, it was still affected. In November 1933 the Secretary of the Historical Society wrote to the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald suggesting that when the Barracks was no longer serving as an Industrial Arbitration Court as a result of construction of the new Law Courts and was therefore vacant, "what better could be made of it than to convert (it)...into an Historical Museum." It was at least one of the few buildings that should not on any account be demolished. Discussion of the remodelling of Martin Place and Macquarie Street, the Secretary suggested, afforded a "favourable opportunity to revive the question of a National Historical Museum for Sydney." A copy of this letter was then sent to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens [11]. In the following weeks the Society's Council voted to support a movement to have the



*Hyde Park Barracks and Surrounds. From J. C. Austin and Co.,  
A Series of Lithographic Drawings of Sydney and its Environs  
 (Published at No. 12 Bridge Street, 1836).*

Barracks saved and to appoint a deputation to the Premier "to be supported by some influential members to be nominated by the President, to ask that a building be given us for a Historical Museum". The motion was seconded by Judge Backhouse and passed by Council [12]. The deputation, heard by the Assistant Minister for Local Government in March 1934, suggested use of the building then housing the Public Library for the museum. The Minister replied that the future of this building was "wrapped up" in the remodelling of Macquarie Street [13].

The future of the Mint and Barracks buildings was again raised with the Government by the deputation of December 1934 when it appealed for legislation to preserve historic monuments. Keith Harris urged that Queen's Square, including the Barracks, should be allowed to retain its character; he had, he said, expressed such an opinion publicly several years before. The deputation suggested the building could be converted to a soldiers' and sailors' memorial after all unsightly outhouses presently surrounding it had been removed and the building



*The Mint. Photograph. Small Pictures File,  
Mitchell Library.*

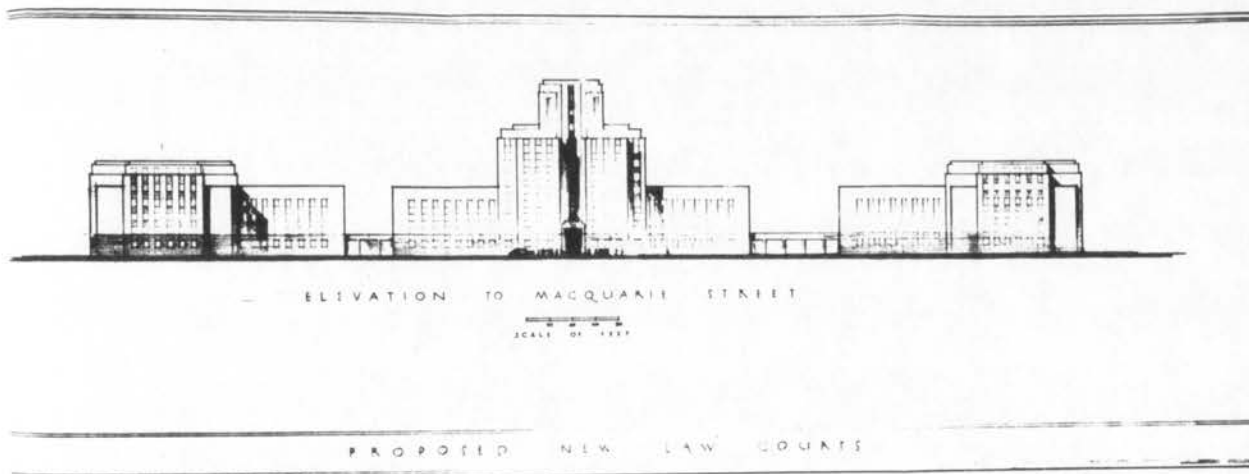
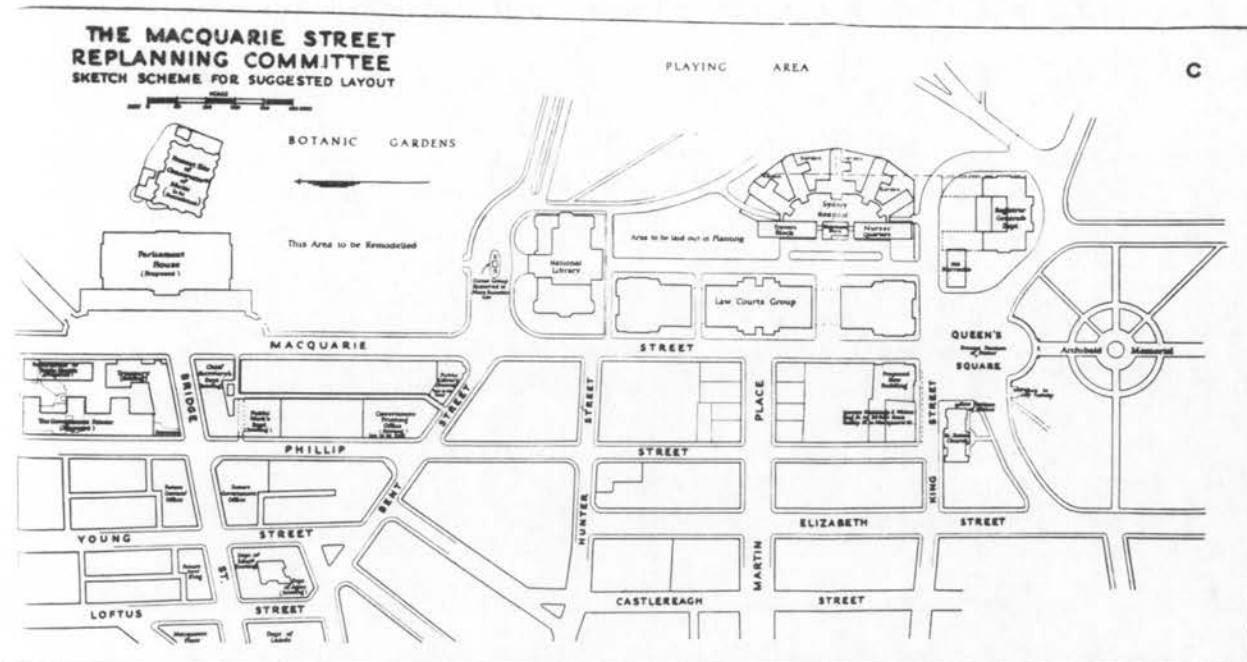


restored to its original state [14]. The Sydney Morning Herald's leader of December 18 1934 supported the deputation and preservation of the buildings and applauded Ure Smith's proposal for conversion of the Mint to a decorative arts and historical museum; it was time, it said, that Sydney had such a museum and if the Mint could be used for this purpose it would rapidly become one of Sydney's most popular museums and its position in Sydney's centre would ensure its usefulness. The Government, the leader concluded, could not give a more welcome gift to the public [15]. It is interesting to note that the deputation members had begun to look beyond the individual building and towards the concept of an historic street and townscape, thereby reflecting and modifying to their own specific interests, the contemporary enthusiasm for urban planning and civic aesthetics.

In 1935 the State Government appointed a Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, chaired by Sir John Butters [16]. Its task was to advise upon replanning of the portions of Macquarie Street and adjacent areas affected by recent changes in the City and to prepare a scheme for the Government in relation to such questions as the disposal of the Mint site, the best location of the proposed new Law Courts and other proposals before the Government. B.J. Waterhouse, then President of the Board of Architects, was appointed Vice Chairman. Other members included L.C. McCredie, A.H. Garnsey, A.J. Brown, C.B. Byrne, A.W. Anderson, C.R. Chapman and E.Evan Smith [17]. B.J. Waterhouse had previously supported retention of the Barracks. The Committee was anxious to achieve architectural and design unity and harmony for the area and considered various alternatives for

this. It considered sites for a major public square deciding upon Queen's Square rather than the Martin Place-Macquarie Street intersection and made recommendations for the location of new buildings of suitable grandeur in the vicinity of that Square [18]. The Committee was prepared to recommend a complete remodelling of Macquarie Street. It considered the removal of Sydney Hospital desirable as it precluded a satisfactory visual closure of Martin Place, and discussed possible new sites for Parliament House. Further consideration of the latter proposals ended with a decision by Cabinet that the buildings were to be retained. The policy of the Government was "to keep Parliament House and to effect such necessary improvements as would afford relief for some time to come. In view of its historical nature there was a large outside body definitely of the opinion that Parliament House should be retained in its present position." If the retention of the buildings (i.e. Parliament House and Sydney Hospital) created aesthetic problems, it was up to the Committee to find a reasonable solution [19]. The Committee thus faced significant limitations to achieving a unified, harmonious design of the type some members envisaged.

Early in its deliberations the Committee and its sub-considered the question of the Barracks. It was one of the few buildings whose future had not already been decided by the Government, which had, in addition to settling the fate of Parliament House and Sydney Hospital, indicated its desire to have new Law Courts on the site of the Mint building [20]. The Barracks was important for overall planning of the area,



*Plans showing proposed layout of buildings around Macquarie Street and Queen's Square, and elevation of proposed Law Courts. From the Macquarie Street Replanning Committee's Minutes and Final Report, 1935-1936. Archives Office of N.S.W., 5/7699.*

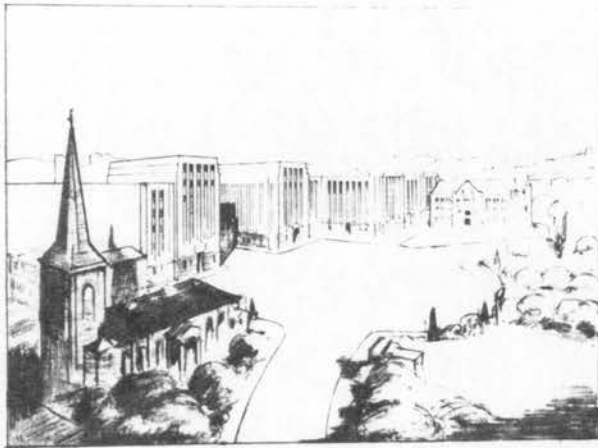
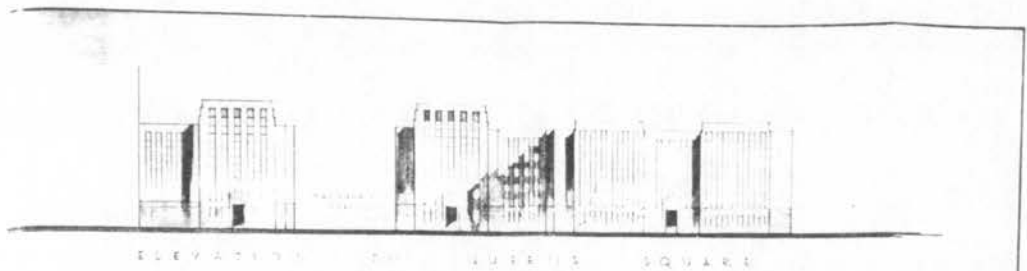
particularly in relation to Queen's Square, which the Committee had chosen as the new public square of the city centre. At one of its first meetings the Committee agreed that it "did not consider the retention of the Old Barracks essential, if in the interests of a comprehensive scheme, it was found necessary to recommend their removal [21]. The Committee revised its opinion several times, and throughout members were conscious of tension between the requirements of redevelopment and pressure for retention of the Barracks. On 8 August 1935 a joint meeting of the Civic Survey and Drafting Sub-Committees discussed the removal of the "Old Barracks" and were agreed upon removal, with one dissenting voice, that of A.J. Brown, architect and town planner who for many years was a 'towering figure' in the planning movement of Australia [22]. It is interesting to note also the comments of the architect B.J. Waterhouse who had earlier expressed an interest in the preservation of the Barracks. At an ordinary general meeting of the Institute of Architects of N.S.W. on 2 February 1926 he had said that he considered the Barracks building beautiful and worthy of retention [23]. In August 1935 however, his attitude was different. The minutes of the August 1935 joint meeting of the subcommittees record the discussion as follows:

"Mr. Waterhouse said that in many respects he felt the necessity for the preservation of old buildings, but in this instance he could not see any strong reasons, from an architectural point of view, why the Old Barracks should be retained. He pointed out that his Sub-Committee had agreed to their removal. Mr. Anderson said that at first he was very favourable to retaining this building, but he now realised difficulties in restoring it satisfactorily, and in all the circumstances he felt it should go. Mr. Garnsey stated that the preservation of the building became more a matter of

architectural planning than one for recognition of historical claims, and in all the circumstances he thought it unwise to favour its retention. Mr. McCredie said he agreed with Mr. Garnsey, and that he did not consider the old Barracks of sufficient merit to warrant retention. He considered it would be an architectural mistake to retain it.

Mr. Brown said that he had given this matter a great deal of consideration, but he was not yet converted to the necessity for removal. He said it may be possible to retain it, having regard to traffic requirements which might lead to the extension of King Street, and it may be possible to consider a satisfactory lay-out with the retention of the Old Barracks. The building is relatively small, but good buildings are good neighbours, and any new buildings could be designed in keeping with the Old Barracks if it was satisfactorily repaired. He stated that the satisfactory grouping of buildings was an important factor, and perhaps a scheme may be considered for the framing of a square in more detail, providing for the Old Barracks and St. James Church.....Further discussion followed, and the feeling generally was that the Members were now aware of all the main facts in relation to this particular building." [24]

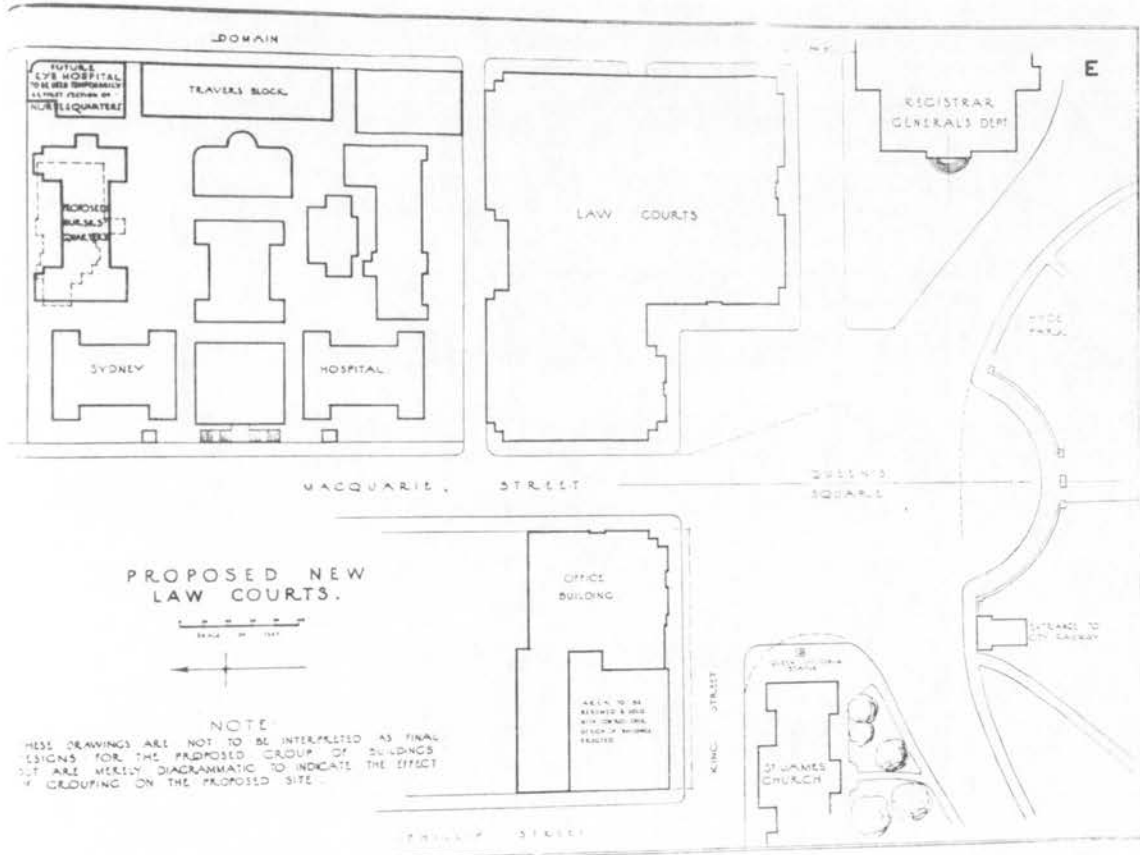
Some uneasiness must have remained, for after a second joint committee meeting of 15 August 1935, B.J. Waterhouse reported to the Committee that proposals for Queen's Square were being developed throwing new light upon the problem of the Old Barracks and "as the scheme developed it would later be seen whether it should be repaired and preserved, or whether another building should be erected in its place" [25]. In its interim report of September 1935 the Committee avoided the issue by suggesting that "a decision regarding the Hyde Park Barracks be deferred until the adjacent buildings are demolished, and the condition of the building becomes more clearly ascertainable" [26]. Among the other Macquarie buildings, the Mint was to be demolished. St James' Church was recommended for preservation in the interim report, as a feature of Queen's Square. The mid-nineteenth century Supreme Court, also in the Square, was to be demolished so that the area could be cleared for a public park [27].



PROPOSED NEW  
LAW COURTS

PLAN OF PAVING

NOTE  
THESE DRAWINGS ARE NOT TO BE  
INTERPRETED AS FINAL DESIGNS FOR  
THE PROPOSED GROUP OF BUILDINGS  
BUT ARE MERELY DIAGRAMMATIC TO  
INDICATE THE EFFECT OF GROUPING  
ON THE PROPOSED SITE.



Plans showing proposed layout of buildings around Queen's Square. The proposed Law Courts are on the site of Hyde Park Barracks. From the Macquarie Street Replanning Committee's Minutes and Final Report, 1935-1936. Archives Office of N.S.W., 5/7699.

After submitting the interim report the Committee began the process of review. At a joint meeting of the two sub-committees in January 1936 a submission from the Town Planning Association was considered, proposing removal and re-erection of a facade of the Barracks building as a means of preserving at least a part of the building. The joint meeting concluded that removal and re-erection was not a sound alternative for the Barracks building. Brown commented:

"...the building as a whole is an architectural entity. The western facade having no significance when removed from its context." [28]

By July 1936 when the final report was completed and presented to the Government all members had agreed to the demolition of the Barracks

"...as its condition is such that in the Committee's considered opinion, it cannot be preserved; this would permit of an extension of the Registrar General's Department Building and contribute to the formation of the 'Square'." [29]

As the Government had expressed dissatisfaction with the interim report and its lack of precise recommendations, particularly in regard to the Law Court group to be erected on the old Mint site, and had informed the Committee of Cabinet's decision regarding Sydney Hospital and Parliament House, the Committee may have felt frustrated by these constraints and saw no alternative but to recommend removal of the Barracks if any of its plans were to be realised.

This was not the end of the matter for the Committee

however. After submitting the final report it was forced to review the Barracks question several times and still by April 1937 no final decision had been reached. It became apparent in the Committee's later correspondence that they were more sympathetic to the Barracks than was indicated by the recommendation in the final report. In mid 1937 they wrote:

"Individually and collectively we give place to no one in regard to appreciation of the value of preserving historical buildings. This particular building has throughout all our deliberations been in the forefront of our minds...To indicate our interest we have several times reviewed the matter since the adoption of our main report with a view to ensuring that no action which would be irretrievable is taken before every possible angle of the problem has been looked into. No final decision in the matter has yet been reached." [30]

Long before the recommendations of the Committee were made public, rumours had circulated, and critics had been vocal, no doubt assuming that the Committee would recommend the removal of Hyde Park Barracks and other buildings. Numerous letters appeared in the press. Karl Cramp, who had been Secretary of the Royal Australian Historical Society for many years, was one who spoke frequently and freely in support of the Barracks and particularly its potential use as an historical museum. In June 1935 he wrote to the Editor of the Herald on behalf of the Historical Society, arguing the case for extraordinary treatment of the Barracks. At this stage he was under the misapprehension that St. James Church was also threatened. The letter is worth quoting in full as a summary of the stance of the Royal Australian Historical Society at the time:

"May I use your columns to state definitely the attitude of the council (of the R.A.H.S.) respecting the question of the preservation or demolition of historic buildings. The



council, despite its interest in the past, does not wish to figure in the public eye as an obstructionist influence in the matter of Sydney's progress. It is freely recognised that a building cannot always escape the hands of the demolisher because its erection dates back to the earliest times in the history of the colony. But, at the same time, certain buildings acquire in the course of the decades traditions that hallow them in the mind of the people.

While recognizing that probably some improvement and change is inevitable in Macquarie Street, the Society feels that the old Macquarie Building immediately to the south of the old Mint might well be saved from destruction. The late Sir John Sulman submitted a plan to show that improvements could be effected without the sacrifice of this time-honoured edifice. The artists of Sydney see beauty in it and the historian connects with it the earliest architecture of the colony. The later constructions surrounding it might be removed, but if the suggestion of your correspondent to the effect it could be converted into a historical museum were adopted, two birds would be killed with one stone. We would have the long desired museum, and we would have it in a building that itself is a valued historical relic....

We have also been asked to speak on the subject of the preservation of St. James Church...(those) suggesting the destruction of this, one of the finest relics of the past, would surely be guilty of sacrilegious intention.

Whatever buildings must succumb to.....Time in the name of progress, we think the Immigration Barracks, St. James Church and Elizabeth Farm House will be preserved." [31]

Frank Walker, another veteran Royal Australian Historical Society campaigner for historic buildings, informed the Sydney Morning Herald in a letter dated April 1935, that in England there was a society for the preservation of historic buildings, and the old buildings of Australia, although not ancient, were of equal interest and importance. He emphasised the need to "safeguard our heritage" and to preserve the 'Macquarie buildings' above all:

"The 'Macquarie era' particularly is represented by many existing buildings, which it would be a crime to remove, reminding us as they do of the early days of Sydney, and the work of that fine soldier and administrator, Governor

Macquarie, whom it would be no exaggeration to describe as one of the best Governors this State ever had. Our Society has the will, but unfortunately not the means to acquire any one of the buildings mentioned....but I can guarantee the interest in the question at issue of every member.

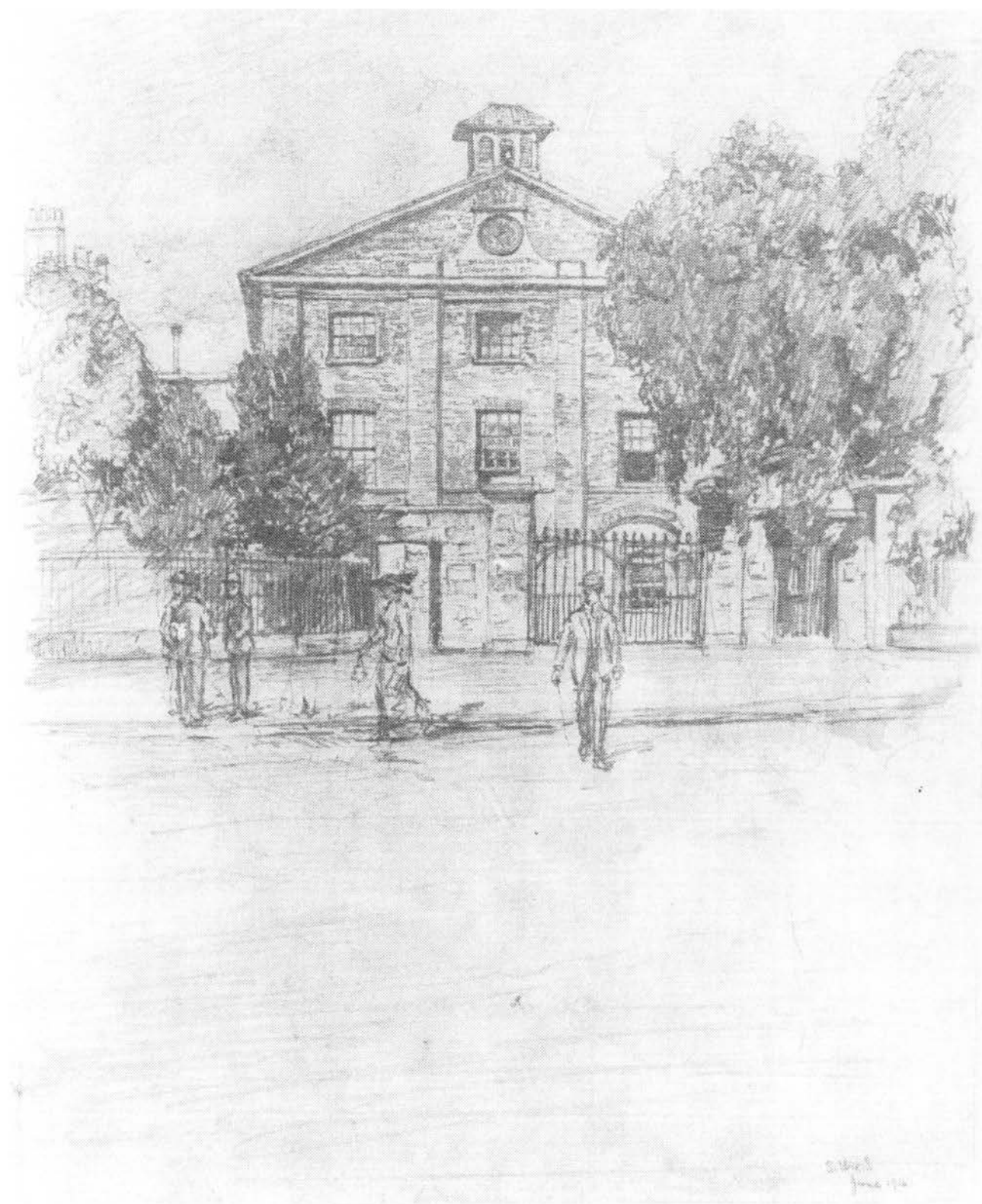
Until we try and cultivate here in Australia a virile historic sense, and a thought for the generations yet unborn, who will want to know why we have not safeguarded our heritage, the day will surely come when we shall look in vain for those picturesque links with the past, which at present delight the eyes of all those who have a true sense of appreciation for their worth, and what they stand for. [32]

Later in June 1935 the Herald reported Dr D.G. Abbott, then President of the Society, as saying that while the Society did not wish to impede progress, it considered that where possible historic landmarks should be preserved and endorsed the view that the Barracks should if possible be preserved as an historical museum. Patriotism, he is reported to have said, could be taught to a people by teaching its history [33].

In the campaign for the Macquarie Street buildings there was great emphasis on the architectural and visual qualities of the buildings, as well and perhaps even equal to, their historical significance. Sydney Ure Smith for example, when addressing the members of the Legacy Club in June 1935 spoke of the necessity of preserving the Mint and the Barracks and warned,

"If we allow Queen's Square to be tampered with, and altered by modern buildings taking the place of such fine examples of colonial architecture now there, we shall have much to answer for..."

If ever the date comes when an enlightened Government and the City Council appoint qualified individuals as a committee to advise with authority on aesthetic matters, we shall see a beautiful Sydney." [34]



*Hyde Park Barracks. Sketch by Sydney Ure Smith. From the Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, vol. 5. Mitchell Library, A3237.*

In a letter to the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald, dated 4 June 1935, he described the buildings as "such interesting and beautiful examples of our old colonial architecture" and felt "there must be something wanting in the citizens of Sydney to be apathetic about the suggested demolition" of these buildings [35]. He suggested the use of the Barracks as an historical museum and added "I should like to add the Mint to the list, but with all the demands to be made on Macquarie-Street, such as new law courts, an adequate Parliament House, the Sydney Hospital problem, to say nothing of the suggested continuation of Martin-Place through to the Domain, I realise as far as the Mint is concerned I am on the losing side." It appears that by this time he had decided to concentrate his energies on the Barracks, as the fate of the Mint building appeared to be sealed. That it did, in fact, survive was for reasons of delayed implementation of the Government's plans, not because the arguments of the supporters of preservation had prevailed.

A lengthy anonymous letter addressed to the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald in February 1935 stressed the architectural and visual features of the building, making particular reference to the work of Hardy Wilson and other artists and architects and to the impending Sesquicentenary Celebrations. One of Australia's most distinguished architects, Raymond McGrath, the correspondent wrote, had written of his love of Greenway's architecture, and the drawing in Hardy Wilson's book and the watercolour by John D. Moore in the Macquarie Book were a testimony to the beauty of the Barracks Building. "In three

years time" the writer concluded, "Sydney will be celebrating its hundred and fiftieth year, and we expect to attract visitors from abroad. Shall we be proud to tell them that we have destroyed almost everything that belonged to our first half century, and intend soon to destroy the rest?" [36].

Architects and artists were increasingly drawn into the campaign and architectural and aesthetic interest in historic buildings became increasingly important. An architectural and visual perspective was developing, and it was timely, for supporters of preservation were involved in a battle of ideas and ideals relating to the visual improvement of the city. Both sides of the debate spoke of urban aesthetics in the fashion of the time. Indicative of the interest of artists was the decision of the Council of the Associated Arts in June 1935 [37], acting at the request of Sydney Ure Smith, John D. Moore and others, to appoint three of its members to form the nucleus of a committee to work for the preservation of the Barracks; those chosen were J.W. Maund, R. Keith Harris and J.D. Moore [38]. Ure Smith was President and the Committee, known as the Save The Buildings Movement, held its first meeting in June 1935 "having for its object the preservation of the old Hyde Park Immigration Barracks" [39]. In 1936 the committee presented a petition to the Government urging the retention of the Barracks, signed by nearly eight thousand people representing many different sections of the community including artists, architects and "members of institutes and societies". It seems likely that the petition was the work of the Council of the Associated Arts Committee. The

Barracks and the St. James Church, the petition stated, could form the nucleus of a fine city square [40].

The new emphasis on the visual quality of the Macquarie Street buildings did not submerge the historical interest and historians and the Royal Australian Historical Society continued to lead agitations. Most probably in response to Ure Smith's committee, the Society called a members' meeting in June 1935 at which a unanimous vote was recorded in support of the desirability of saving both the St. James Church and the Barracks [41]. The Society was represented on the committee by its President Dr. G.H. Abbott as well as Charles Bertie, Karl Cramp and J.K.S. Houston. The Society acknowledged that it had not the money to acquire any one of the threatened buildings, but its interest in the matter was guaranteed [42]. The Society's members and other historians were without question the most prolific letter-writers to the Sydney Morning Herald on the subject. The debate over the Barracks was a catalyst for the involvement of a number of historians whose public support for the retention of the Barracks was the first indication of their interest in preservation.

In a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald which neatly collected together many of the threads in thought about preservation, Frederick Watson, Editor of Historical Records of Australia and member of the Royal Australian historical Society, stressed the association between patriotism, the past, preservation, diminishing resources and the overseas comparison.

"In Australia it is often said that there are no historical traditions nor romance. Tradition and romance undoubtedly create pride in one's country, but both are largely dependent on the visual memory. Hence most nations realise the necessity of maintaining historical monuments and buildings. In Sydney, the march of progress has already destroyed many historical and romantic sites...

In other countries historical buildings are restored to their original condition. Surely residents of Sydney will discountenance further historical vandalism, and will force the restoration and maintenance of the three buildings in Queen's Square, erected approximately 120 years ago, the last survivals of a bygone age." [43]

George Mackaness, historian, member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and author of several historical monographs, was prompted to speak for preservation for the first time by the threat to the Barracks. The approaching sesquicentenary, he wrote to the Sydney Morning Herald, presented an opportunity and indeed a need to concentrate on the State's past, particularly with regard to the exhibition of such relics and mementoes of the foundation and development of Australia as were still extant. The opportunity that now offered for securing the Barracks building for a permanent Australian Historical Museum must not be lost, he said. A collection could be displayed in the finest remaining Macquarie building that could be "a perpetual source of interest and instruction to posterity" [44].

Others had different ideas for the building's use. H.J. Rumsey of the Society of Australasian Genealogists saw an urgent need to have records returned from the United Kingdom and a public records office established in New South Wales - in the Barracks [45]. Dr. G.H. Abbott proposed that it should become the headquarters of the Royal Australian Historical Society and that its collections should be housed there [46]. Some

enthusiasts spoke of the importance of buildings like the Barracks for the cultivating of 'tradition', an 'historical sense' and the development of 'nationalism' in the community. The leader-writer of The Sun newspaper of 24 June 1935 voiced such concerns when he stated his reason for supporting the case for the Barracks:

"Not until a people acquires a sense of history does it acquire traditions and a true perspective of its own place and not until these are established has a nation a soul.

Australia's history is short...yet it is very full of interest, a story of a new people in a new continent, and already there is a feeling that we should do more to preserve its relics and records, than we have done in the past...

Sydney is the oldest of the Australian cities. In such structures of St. James' Church, and the old barracks, which now come into the area of reconstruction due to the opening up of Martin Place, we should see that for the sake of a doubtful utility we should not damage or destroy something which, once gone, can never be restored. In that work already two fine old buildings have been sacrificed, together with some which were old and not at all fine, and some which were neither. We should learn to distinguish." [47]

In January 1937 the Macquarie Street Replanning Committee's recommendations became public and supporters of preservation reacted strongly to its decision on the Barracks. Ure Smith announced that as a last effort to save the Barracks another appeal like the petition of 1936 would be launched and institutions and societies would be asked to co-operate again in a request to the Premier "to preserve this link with the early history of Australia".

"Each year we have seen examples of old colonial architecture demolished to make way for modern buildings...One realises that it is inevitable that the majority of these old relics must go, but it is a short-sighted policy to wipe out buildings which have an artistic, as well as a historical interest.... A city with a less commercial outlook than ours certainly would preserve these relics, and respect them." [48]



Ure Smith's remarks were endorsed by prominent members of the Royal Australian Historical Society and by architects. Charles Bertie argued that preservation of the Macquarie buildings would encourage tourism and give "definite character and marked appeal" to Queen's Square. Australia should follow the example of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings in England which "had done wonderful work in retaining buildings of importance for the benefit of British people and visitors to England" [49]. Dr. G.H. Abbott strongly condemned the Macquarie Street Replanning Committee's recommendations stating that the Royal Australian Historical Society needed a home for its valuable historical articles and that "if you teach people the history of the land you will make them patriotic" [50]. Keith Harris, now lecturer in Town Planning in the University of Sydney, stated that from the point of view of town planning the retention of the Barracks was as important as anything that had been suggested in Macquarie Street replanning and that nothing would be gained by its demolition [51]. John D. Moore considered that if the Hyde Park Barracks was submitted to a jury of half a dozen famous architects the verdict would be that the building, architecturally, was as good as, if not better than, any other building in Sydney [52]. Professor Leslie Wilkinson, Professor of Architecture in the University of Sydney, expressed the opinion that that it was ridiculous for the Replanning Committee to suggest that the building could not be restored. The Barracks, he said, was of more than local interest, it was an Australian historical monument and the Government should realise that they were trustees for the nation [53].

On 9 February 1937 at a meeting of the council of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Charles Bertie called attention to an article in the Sydney Morning Herald urging the preservation of the Barracks and its use as an historical museum and moved a motion, which was carried unanimously,

"That as the plan for the remodelling of Macquarie Street does not call for the demolition of the old Barracks at Queen's Square, and that, as it is very desirable that the few remaining links with the past in Sydney should be preserved, a deputation from this Society, together with representatives of other societies interested, be appointed to wait on the Honourable the Premier with a request that the building be converted into an Historical Museum and the headquarters of the Royal Australian Historical Society." [54]

A few days prior to the Historical Society's vote in favour of a deputation to the Premier, Ure Smith had announced that a deputation of representative citizens would appeal to the Premier and institutions and societies would be asked for support as they had been earlier when the petition was raised with eight thousand signatories. It fell, however, to the Royal Australian Historical Society to organise the deputation, which Ure Smith agreed to join [55]. It was received by the Hon. G.C. Gollan, M.L.A., Assistant Minister on behalf of the Premier, on 28 April 1937 [56]. The deputation comprised Sir Kelso King, representing the Australasian Pioneers' Club, W.R. Richardson, representing the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (N.S.W. Chapter) and representing the Historical Society, K.R. Cramp, President, J.K.S. Houison, Honorary Secretary and W.C. Wentworth and Dr. G.H. Abbott, Vice-Presidents. Sydney Ure Smith was to have represented the Society of Artists but was unable to attend at the last minute [57].

The deputation sought from the Government an assurance that in any scheme for the replanning of Macquarie Street the Barracks building would be preserved. The arguments advanced were an indication that the deputation and its members had reached a more sophisticated and comprehensive level of thought on the subject of preservation. Stress was placed on overseas experience and on the architectural and aesthetic qualities of the building as well as the historical. W.R. Richardson maintained that "the majority of architects are definitely in favour of its retention" and "that its retention would fit in quite well in any scheme for the replanning of Macquarie Street". In fact, he argued, it was appropriate to the concept of a public square at the junction of Macquarie and King Streets, and that

"if Greenway could be brought back to life, he would say that it was the intention to form a proper square at that point. The old Barracks and St. James' Church would form the nucleus of an attractive city square."

Particularly interesting in Richardson's submission was his reiteration of the need for legislation to protect historic buildings.

"...We want to look beyond the preservation of this one building, important as it is. We must do something to safeguard all similar buildings and monuments for all time, and do what has been done in other countries of the world, especially in England and France, and that is have an Act passed which will definitely prevent the demolition of old buildings and set out provisions for the preservation of those buildings and monuments of historical interest." [58]

Karl Cramp reiterated the view of the Royal Australian Historical Society that while as a society it did not wish to be "open to the charge of obstructing progress, there are just a few

buildings left that take us back to the old days and which are worth, for that reason, being preserved by the Government of this State" [59]. He proposed that the Barracks could be made over as a memorial to Governor Macquarie and a monument erected in front facing the Square and reiterated the proposal for use of the Barracks as an historical museum [60]. The Minister commended the deputation members for their civic pride and their interest in the Barracks, adding that sometimes "in the march of progress...it is essential that these things have to make way.." [61]. Forwarding the matter to the Premier, Gollan stated that, while in sympathy with the proposal, he was of the opinion that the matter could only be dealt with on the basis of the extent to which the proposal, if approved, would interfere with the general scheme for the replanning of Macquarie Street [62].

In May 1937 Justice Ferguson, member of the Royal Australian Historical Society, suggested to the Council that a small committee be appointed to formulate a definite scheme for the Barracks as an historical museum. The Council approved and the Committee was established "to bring influence to bear on the Government with this purpose in view" [63]. It devised a scheme which included a National Portrait Gallery as well as museum and accommodation space for the exclusive use of the Society and presented it to the Government in a letter of 24 May 1937. In support of its plan the Society cited examples of overseas governments' assistance to historical societies, particularly in the United States of America:

"We would point out that in other countries Government assistance is given generously to Historical Societies, and efforts are being made to reproduce the historical buildings which have been demolished. For instance, the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania is housed in a building which cost 100,000 dollars and was voted 40,000 dollars by the Government at the time of the Sesqui-Centenary Celebrations. ... Practically every State in the United States of America has a Historical Museum assisted by the State with grants varying from 2,000 dollars to 10,000 dollars annually." [64]

The Society also suggested that the surrounding structures presently obscuring the view of the Barracks could be demolished and the Barracks left in an island area with lawns and gardens around it. The building itself should be appropriated for use as an Historical Museum and handed over to the Society to manage [65]. The Premier's Department noted that it seemed as if the Society expected the Government "to bear the expenses involved in the creation and maintenance of an Historical Museum including the salaries of attendants, caretaker and cleaners" [66].

The Society's proposal was then considered by the Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, which advised the Government that it was anxious to avoid action which would be irretrievable "before every possible angle of the problem has been looked into," and that "no final decision in the matter has yet been reached" [67]. It suggested that the Government's decision to proceed with the southernmost wing of the Law Courts and its balancing building would provide an opportunity, on completion, for the removal of the present excrescences to the Barracks. Then it would be possible to examine the structure "from the point of view of preservation and practicability" and consider what effect its retention would have on Queen's Square. Furthermore, conditions

for a design competition for the Law Courts were being developed "on the presumption that the retention of Hyde Park Barracks may be found possible".

The Committee was obviously concerned about the scale of public protest and anxious to look at the matter from all angles, for Sir John Butters requested advice as to whether, if retained, the building would be used for Law Courts or an Historical Museum [68]. The views of the Ministers of Justice and Education were sought [69]. Mr. Martin, Minister for Justice, replied that the building would not be required for the purpose of Law Courts once the new law courts were constructed, but he thought the Barracks would be unsuitable and too costly to maintain as an Historical Museum, although he believed that Sydney should have such a Museum [70]. Mr. Drummond, Minister for Education, also considered the establishment of an Historical Museum desirable and thought that the Barracks could serve as its temporary home. He preferred, however, to offer the Barracks to the Royal Australian Historical Society, leaving that body to provide for the building from its own funds [71].

The matter was finally referred to the Premier by C.H. Hay, Under-Secretary of the Premier's Department on 29 September 1937, with the suggestion that a decision be deferred pending finalisation of designs for Queen's Square and the comment that if the retention of the Barracks was "ultimately found to be practicable then the suggestion of converting the building to an historical museum as a memorial to Governor Macquarie would

appear to be worthy of special consideration" [72]. It would appear, the Under-Secretary concluded, that the least expensive arrangement, so far as the Government was concerned, "would be to hand over the building to the Royal Australian Historical Society, leaving that body to provide from its own funds the necessary structural alterations, furnishings and upkeep" [73].

The Macquarie Street Replanning Committee's recommendations had included the holding of a competition for designing the new Law Courts, and in September 1937 when it was known that the Government was shortly to call for competitive designs, Ure Smith and others wrote to the press suggesting that the Government inform competitors that the Barracks were to be retained [74]. He also suggested ways of cleaning up the Barracks and the Mint building so that visitors to Sydney in 1938 would see that they were at least cared for. He again raised the desirability of saving the Mint as well, something which had been neglected in the battle for the Barracks:

"I suggest that we should show an intelligent interest in these two delightful old buildings so that visitors to Sydney next year will see that we think something of them, by at least cleaning the brickwork on the barracks, painting the woodwork, adding a new and suitable roof of shingle tiles, and painting the surrounding buildings....These buildings should be floodlit at night during the celebrations. Public interest will at least be concentrated on these buildings of which Sydney should be proud. It is only their shabbiness and general uncared for appearance which causes the public at present to show little appreciation of their quality." [75]

As the sesquicentenary celebrations drew closer, it became more difficult for the Government to ignore the demands for preservation and recognition of the claims of the past.

In October 1937 the Historical Society received a letter from the Premier informing it that the future of the Hyde Park Barracks had been reconsidered and that, "no final decision in regard to the demolition of the Barracks will be reached until the designs for the remodelling of Queen's Square have been completed" and that "consideration as to whether the Hyde Park Barracks should be utilised as an Historical Museum is therefore being deferred for the time being.." In the meantime

"...the Committee...is proceeding with the development of the competition conditions and specifications for the Law Courts on the presumption that the retention of the Hyde Park Barracks may be found possible." [76]

If retention of the Barracks was found to be practicable the Society was assured that the Government would give very careful consideration to the suggested historical museum. The Society was so pleased to receive this letter that it printed it in its entirety in the Society's Annual Report for 1937 [77].

During the sesqui-centenary celebrations of 1938 the Royal Australian Historical Society arranged a successful exhibition of its collection of artefacts which it hoped would augment its efforts for establishment of a museum in the Hyde Park Barracks. Despite limitations of space in the Society's small premises in the Education Department in Sydney, nearly sixty thousand people visited the exhibition, hundreds of whom, the Society reported, had recorded their support for making the collection and its display permanent [78]. At the 1938 Congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science held in Canberra, a resolution was passed which read



"In view of the ample evidence supplied in the attendance at the Historical Exhibition, Sydney, during the 150th Anniversary Celebrations, public opinion in favour of Historical Museums, the Council urges the State Government to make adequate provision for the establishment of a Historical Museum in this State." [79]

By June 1939 however the Government had still not reached a decision and with the outbreak of war the plans for Macquarie Street were set aside.

There were fewer protests on behalf of the Mint building and the Government was throughout adamant as to the necessity for its removal. Ure Smith was one of the few who continued to speak out on its behalf, initially as part of the 1934 deputation and on several occasions thereafter. The Royal Australian Historical Society did not actively campaign for retention of the Mint, although on one occasion when the President, Dr G.H. Abbott and the Minister for Justice, Mr Martin, were both addressing a gathering at Governor Phillip's Monument at Camp Cove, the subject of the Mint arose. Abbott spoke of the need for preservation of historical buildings and provision of a historical museum and the Minister understood the speech to imply the preservation of the Mint building and on the basis of this understanding replied that he was most anxious to see the Mint removed and replaced with adequate law courts,

"I have been told, however, that it ought to be left alone, and when I mentioned it to the architect, he replied 'If you leave it alone it will soon fall down'. (Laughter) While the Government is most anxious to preserve all those monuments that can be preserved reasonably, you must not blame us if we have to remove some of the old antiquated structures. They are blocking the way and we cannot allow them to stand in the way of the progress of the people. I hope, however, that this time next year we will have a museum and that Dr. Abbott will open it." [80]

The Society did not continue to push for the retention of the Mint and it is doubtful if even on that occasion Dr Abbott was actually referring to that particular building. All of the Society's energies were instead concentrated on seeking a future for the Hyde Park Barracks. The survival of the Mint owed more to the intervention of war and consequent delay in the Government's redevelopment proposals than to a preservation campaign.

In neither case had the campaigns been wholly successful in changing or moulding the attitudes of bureaucrats and politicians and convincing them of the need to conserve as much as possible of the surviving public buildings in Macquarie Street. They had however succeeded in stirring public opinion and laying a sound basis for success when the issues of preservation and improvement were again debated in the post-war years.

## NOTES : Macquarie Street

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- 2 Geoffrey Bolton, Spoils and Spoilers. Australians Make Their Environment 1788-1980, (Sydney 1981), pp.121-122.
- 3 New South Wales Parliament, Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly Printed Questions and Answers, 1 November 1923, p.2023.
- 4 Sydney Morning Herald, 3 February 1926.
- 5 Sydney Morning Herald, 12 & 13 May 1926.
- 6 K.R. Cramp, Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1932-33 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives. Sydney Morning Herald 15 March 1933, 27 October 1933, 24 November 1933.
- 7 Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, 22 November 1933, with enclosed copy of letter from K.R. Cramp to Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1932-33 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
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- 9 New South Wales Parliament, Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly Printed Questions and Answers, "Martin Place Extension", 26 September 1934. pp. 2789-2890.
- 10 New South Wales Parliament, Votes and Proceedings, Legislative Assembly Printed Questions and Answers, "Martin Place Extension", 3 October 1934, p. 2889.
- 11 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 November 1933. Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, 22 November 1933, with enclosed copy of letter from K.R. Cramp to Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November 1933. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1932-33 "Selected To Be Kept". RAHS Archives.
- 12 Meeting of Council, 1 December 1933, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-April 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 13 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 March 1934.
- 14 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 & 18 December 1934.
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- 16 Macquarie Street Replanning Committee Interim Report, 10 September 1935, p.1. Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, Minutes of Meetings 1935-36 with copies of Interim and Final Reports. Department of Public Works File, NSW Archives Office, 5/7699.
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- 20 Ibid.

- 21 Meeting of Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, 6 July 1935. Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, Minutes of Meetings 1935-36 with copies of Interim and Final Reports. Department of Public Works File, NSW Archives Office, 5/7699.
- 22 Peter Harrison, "Alfred John Brown, 1893-1976", Retrospect, Royal Australian Planning Institute Journal, Vol. 15, No.2, May 1977, pp.48-49. Brown was instrumental in founding the Town and Country Planning Institute in 1934 and President of its founding Council. Leonie Sandercock described him as "the first man in the twenty years since the arrival of Charles Reade to show a comprehensive understanding of the subject (of town planning).
- 23 Ordinary General Meeting of Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 2 February 1926, reported in Architecture, February 1926.
- 24 Joint Meeting of Civic Survey Sub-Committee and Drafting Sub-Committee, 8 August 1935. Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, Minutes of Meetings 1935-36 with copies of Interim and Final Reports. Department of Public Works File, NSW Archives Office, 5/7699.
- 25 Meeting of Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, 15 August 1935. Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, Minutes of Meetings 1935-36 with copies of Interim and Final Reports. Department of Public Works File, NSW Archives Office, 5/7699.
- 26 Macquarie Street Replanning Committee Interim Report, op.cit. p.4.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Joint Meeting of Civic Survey Sub-Committee and Drafting Sub-Committee, 23 January 1936. Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, Minutes of Meetings 1935-36 with copies of Interim and Final Reports. Department of Public Works File, NSW Archives Office, 5/7699.
- 29 Macquarie Street Replanning Committee Final Report, 7 July 1936, p.6. Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, Minutes of Meetings 1935-36 with copies of Interim and Final Reports. Department of Public Works File, NSW Archives Office, 5/7699.
- 30 Views of Macquarie Street Replanning Committee, 21 May 1937. Hyde Park Barracks - Preservation as an Historical Museum, 1937-47. Department of Public Works, Special Bundles 1846-1938, NSW Archives Office, 7/5884.
- 31 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 June 1935.
- 32 Sydney Morning Herald, 12 April 1935.
- 33 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 June 1935.
- 34 Sydney Morning Herald, c. March 1935. The letter appears in the Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book c. July 1933-April 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 35 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 June 1935.
- 36 Sydney Morning Herald, 5 February 1935.
- 37 The Council was composed of representatives from the Institute of Architects, the Society of Artists, the Royal Art Society of New South Wales, the Town Planning Association of New South Wales, the Institute of Journalists, the Musical Association of New South Wales, the Society of Women Writers and the Fellowship of Australian Writers.
- 38 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 June 1935.

- 39 Royal Australian Historical Society Annual Report, 1935, p.429. Sydney Morning Herald, c. July 1935; The letter appears in the Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book c. July 1933-April 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 40 Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January 1937 & 6 February 1937.
- 41 Sydney Morning Herald, 27 June 1935.
- 42 Sydney Morning Herald, 12 April 1935, letter from F. Walker.
- 43 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 June 1935.
- 44 Sydney Morning Herald, 8 February 1937.
- 45 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 May 1937.
- 46 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1937.
- 47 The Sun, 24 June 1935.
- 48 Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January 1937.
- 49 Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January 1937.
- 50 Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1937.
- 51 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 February 1937.
- 52 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 February 1937.
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- 54 Resolution of Council, 9 February 1937. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1937, Sub-File "Hyde Park Barracks". RAHS Archives. Meeting of Council, 9 February 1937, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-April 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 55 Annual meeting, 23 February 1937 and Meeting of Council, 26 February 1937. Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, C. July 1933-April 1938. RAHS Archives. Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, 19 February 1937; Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to Secretary, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, NSW Chapter, 17 February 1937; Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to President, Society of Artists, 17 February 1937; Secretary, Society of Artists, to Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, 24 February 1937; the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, to President, Royal Australian Historical Society, 19 April 1937; Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to G. Gollan, MLA, 23 April 1937; and Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to Sir Kelso King, 22 April 1937. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1937, Sub-File, "Hyde Park Barracks". RAHS Archives.
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- 58 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
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- 65 Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, 24 May 1937. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1937, Sub-File "Hyde Park Barracks". RAHS Archives.  
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- 66 Premiers Department Minute "Preservation of old Hyde Park Barracks for the Purpose of an Historical Museum", 29 September 1937. Department of Public Works, Special Bundles 1846-1963, Hyde Park Barracks - Preservation as an Historical Museum 1937-1947. NSW Archives Office, 7/5884.  
Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, 24 May 1937. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1937, Sub-File "Hyde Park Barracks". RAHS Archives.
- 67 Secretary, Royal Australian Historical Society, to the Premier, B.S.B. Stevens, 24 May 1937. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1937, Sub-File "Hyde Park Barracks". RAHS Archives.  
Premiers Department Minute "Preservation of old Hyde Park Barracks for the Purpose of an Historical Museum", 29 September 1937. Department of Public Works, Special Bundles 1846-1963, Hyde Park Barracks - Preservation as an Historical Museum 1937-1947. NSW Archives Office, 7/5884.
- 68 Premiers Department Minute "Preservation of old Hyde Park Barracks for the Purpose of an Historical Museum", 29 September 1937. Department of Public Works, Special Bundles 1846-1963, Hyde Park Barracks - Preservation as an Historical Museum 1937-1947. NSW Archives Office, 7/5884.
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- 78 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 June 1939. Letter from K.R. Cramp.
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## CHAPTER FIVE

## ARTISTS AS INTERPRETERS AND PRESERVERS OF THE PAST

Popular perceptions of the past and awareness of the fragility and value of the physical survivals from the past owed much to a coterie of artists who had specialised in the revival of printmaking and in black and white work. Only a few among them had a direct involvement in campaigns for preservation. Sydney Ure Smith was outstanding in this respect and probably his leadership of the Society of Artists in the '20's and '30's accounted for the Society's active participation in several of the more prominent preservation debates of the time. However other artists in this group had an indirect involvement as a result of their enthusiasm for historic buildings and sites as subject matter.

The more popular and 'available' an artwork is, the more likely it is to affect popular perceptions. Most of the artists to be considered here for their impact on preservation were etchers, whose work was designed to be produced in print series. All black and white techniques, however, well suited reproduction in newspapers, magazines and books. The work of these artists was therefore readily available to a wide section of the public. Although Professor Bernard Smith considers them 'minor' artists who did not have a great impact on the development of art in Australia [1], and their period of popularity was comparatively short, they had potential for wide dissemination in a short time. They may not have affected the development of art but their work



had an impact on community attitudes and perceptions, for popular lithographs familiarised the public with the appearance of, for example, a Greenway building and so contributed to awareness of the past.

The publication of the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, 1886 to 1889 was a landmark in this direction. It contained approximately 800 wood-engraved illustrations, cut under the supervision of an American, Horace Baker, which were among the finest engravings produced in Australia to that time [2]. They included sketches of old Sydney and other historic towns and areas, but unfortunately it is not known which artists were responsible for individual sketches. The engravers included George Arthur Collingridge, who had arrived in Sydney in the late 1870's having learnt engraving in Europe, A. Henry Fullwood, Julian Rossi Ashton and others. Joseph Lebovic, a specialist in old and rare Australian prints, has written that the production of the Atlas introduced a new vision and forced artists "to evaluate their total environment particularly the urban one, anew". These artists "sought out the 'old world picturesqueness to be found around Sydney's Woolloomooloo and The Rocks". This, he writes, was the beginning of "a new Australian pictorial tradition", not one taken up in 'high art forms' but one promoted by young artists of the time through print making [3]. Their work was picturesque and romantic, and much of it, particularly the etchings, contained historical subject matter. This created a genre which reached a peak of popularity in the early 1930's.

Julian Ashton, known today for his oil paintings and his Sydney School of Art, was one of the artists who, in the late 1880's, accepted an engagement from the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia Company to travel over Australia on their behalf preparing illustrations to be included in the Atlas publication. During this time, Ashton claimed, he developed such a love of New South Wales that he had never thereafter felt any desire to leave it [4]. By 1902 Ashton had not only developed a love of New South Wales generally, but also of old Sydney and its 'picturesqueness', so much so that he was instrumental in arranging with the Government for the commissioning of artists in that year to paint the buildings of the Rocks area of Sydney at the time of the resumption and cleanup following the outbreak of plague. In 1920 in the magazine Art in Australia Ashton described how this had occurred:

"From the earliest days of my life in Sydney I had been fascinated by the old streets of Sydney, the tortuous steps from one level to another, and the huddled picturesqueness of 'The Rocks', which might in truth be called the cradle of Australia, and in consequence of some conversations I had with the late Mr. E.W. O'Sullivan (then Minister for Works), a man of imagination and insight, the Government offered the sum of two hundred and fifty pounds to be spent in obtaining for the National Gallery some permanent and artistic record of this most interesting locality. This resulted in an exhibition of old Sydney drawings and paintings being held in the Society's rooms in March, 1902." [5]

During his life Ashton produced very few etchings, but among these was one entitled "The Girl At The Gate" c. 1895, which has been thought to be a scene around the Rocks area of Sydney. It was exhibited in the first exhibition of the Australian Painters-Etchers Society in 1921 [6]. Ashton further influenced developments through his art school where many young artists

including Sydney Ure Smith, enrolled for tuition.

The new tradition of printmaking in New South Wales really began with the revival of etching techniques, and in its early states was influenced by the example and teaching of Livingston Hopkins, who had taken up etching in America before he came to Sydney in 1883 as cartoonist for the Bulletin [7]. For some years in Sydney he practised etching as a hobby and included scenes of the older parts of Sydney among his subjects [8]. Although he was discouraged by a lack of popular interest in etching he handed on his skills to a number of friends before abandoning his hobby. Julian Ashton, B.E. Minns, A.H. Fullwood, Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts were among those who learnt from him and used his press to print their early plates [9]. Hopkins himself was very taken with the early architecture of Sydney and according to Bertram Stevens writing in 1921, he had been quick to recognize the picturesqueness of old Sydney [10].

Lionel and Norman Lindsay and Sydney Ure Smith were the most successful and popular in the printmaking arts. The Lindsay brothers experimented with woodcut techniques for a short time in the 1890's in Melbourne, worked a great deal in pen and ink and watercolour and later took up etching [11]. Ure Smith was contributing etchings to the exhibition of the Society of Artists by 1914 and shared with Lionel Lindsay an enthusiasm for etchings in the historical genre [12]. Lindsay himself proudly stated "...when I became associated with Sydney Ure Smith, the vogue for etchings began" [13].

Before looking more closely at the work of these leaders in the field, the range of interest will be suggested by a brief description of other artists who took an interest in historical subject matter, and of other relevant developments in the art world. A. Henry Fullwood, like Hopkins, was an early immigrant etcher of old Sydney. He arrived from England in 1881, took up etching under the influence of Hopkins and made many sketches for the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia. He left Australia shortly thereafter but returned again in 1920 for a few years. He made many illustrations of old Sydney and surrounds and one of his earliest subjects was the Black Horse Inn at Windsor in 1895 [14]. Alfred T. Clint was an Ashton pupil. Born in 1882 and an artist from the age of fourteen, he favoured pencil sketches and watercolours, but he also learnt etching from Livingston Hopkins. His favourite subject was the old town of Windsor where he lived for most of his life. A review of his work, published in Art in Australia in 1925, described it as having "captured the air of peaceful serenity which pervades the old Hawkesbury settlement". Three of Clint's sketches, published with the review, depicted the old buildings and landscapes of Windsor [15].

Sydney Long, a more accomplished artist, was, like Julian Ashton, a landscape painter in oil rather than etcher of buildings and urban scenes. Nevertheless throughout the '20's he exhibited examples of his etchings, many of which dated from his European travels prior to 1925. In 1927 he exhibited with the Australian Painters-Etchers Society and showed an illustration which has been reproduced frequently as one of the

best of his work in this medium; it was known as "The Blacksmith's Shop" and portrayed the old building in a nostalgic style akin to that of Lindsay [16]. Calder House and buildings in the Rocks area of Sydney were among his etchings. He took an interest in older buildings and while searching the Rocks area for picturesque scenes to illustrate, 'discovered' the building later known as Cadman's Cottage hidden in the grounds of the old Taxation building. Long spoke out in defence of the former Taxation and Commissariat Stores buildings in the late 1930's, and he and Sydney Ure Smith were two of the few artists to speak publicly in support of preservation [17].

George Collingridge, one of the Atlas artists, had spent his youth in Paris where he received instruction from the great artist Corot and arrived in Sydney for the International Exhibition of 1879. He was an author, geographer, linguist and historian as well as artist and according to a newspaper report of 1918 he had "devoted the whole of his life in this continent to the development of a taste amongst its citizens for a knowledge of their own land and its story, past and present" [18]. He had published The Discovery of Australia and as a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society for several years had "contributed largely to the knowledge of the history of the city and the State". Under the auspices of that Society an exhibition of his work was held in May 1918. The hundred odd paintings in the exhibition, it was said, derived "their chief value from the fact that in most instances they are records of topographical facts of historical significance" and it would have been difficult to select a picture that had no bearing on the past

history of the State or the metropolis. Among the works were "St. Thomas's Church, Mulgoa"; "The Post Office, Mulgoa"; "The Old Pier Hotel, Gosford"; "Old Courthouse, Gosford"; and "Old Settlement, Narrara" [19]. There were also several of Sydney scenery including "picturesque views of some of the city's oldest streets" and "admirable glimpses of old Sydney architecture". According to one report the oldest painting in the exhibition was of the early colonial church St. Anne's of Ryde and dated from 1880 the year after Collingridge had arrived in Sydney [20]. A Sydney Morning Herald report of the exhibition named "The Oldest House in Sydney" as one of the best paintings displayed; the house had stood at the end of the old cattle track, afterwards named Cumberland Road [21]. Collingridge's interest in the documentation of local history perhaps accounts for his topographical style.

Other artists brought a more strictly architectural interest to their work. Alfred Coffey, for example, made a name with his style of accurate presentation of architectural detail [22]. Several 'artists' were also practising architects. Raymond McGrath was one of these and examples of his historic genre sketches include "Argyle Cut, The Rocks", 1922; "Lennox Bridge", 1922; and "Lansdowne Bridge from the Garden of Eden", 1923 [23]. McGrath was born in Sydney and educated at Sydney University, where he enrolled in the Faculty of Arts before transferring to the School of Architecture when it opened in 1922 under Professor Wilkinson. He also studied painting at the Julian Ashton School. His etchings of Parramatta, where he spent his early life,

reflect the "tranquil life and colonial architecture" of the area [24]. He was also particularly fond of Greenway's buildings in Richmond and Windsor and praised them highly in his study of architecture published in 1933 [25]. After 1923 he moved to England where he continued printmaking and architectural work, both now in a 'modernist' style [26]. John D. Moore, assistant to Professor Wilkinson in the University of Sydney's Department of Architecture, also produced some picturesque views of Sydney and occasionally of its older areas. He became an active supporter of preservation [27].

Among the architects who also exhibited their prints, William Hardy Wilson was outstanding. By 1920 he had made a "long and faithful study of the best examples of early colonial buildings" in New South Wales and Tasmania, resulting in a series of drawings which he exhibited in 1923, after an earlier exhibition in 1919 at Anthony Hordern's Fine Art Gallery [28]. At the request of the British Department of Education in 1924 Wilson took his drawings to London where they were shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum, an event which created great interest in Australia. In that years also, a selection of the prints was published, with a text written by Wilson, in the book Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania. This book became very popular and had a great influence on growing awareness of the past and its surviving buildings. Wilson's work will be treated in detail in the next chapter.

The Society of Artists' annual exhibitions were popular

venues for the display of works of the etchers and the Society's support of the etchers and illustrators was a vital part of their growing popularity. The Society had been reformed in 1907 by Julian Ashton and Lionel Lindsay, among others, and Ashton was its president, followed in 1924 by Sydney Ure Smith [29]. In 1921 the Painters-Etchers Society held its first exhibition [30]. Gradually galleries became interested in exhibiting prints and black and white works, as for example the "Australian Etchings" exhibition held in 1927 by the Macquarie Gallery in Sydney. Works by Lionel Lindsay, Sydney Ure Smith, Fred C. Britton and others were shown at the exhibition. It was advertised with a reproduction of Britton's etching of the old Hyde Park Barracks [31].

Interest in the old buildings and urban forms was evident in art-house publications as well as in individual works of art. The most important of these was Art in Australia, a bi-monthly magazine, published by Angus & Robertson from 1916 to 1921 and then by Art in Australia Ltd. During these years it was controlled and edited by Sydney Ure Smith, with Bertram Stevens as co-editor [32]. The magazine attracted articles by and about Australian artists, discussed new developments in art and provided a great deal of information on the personalities of the period and their work. It gave considerable support and space to the etchers and artists of the black and white techniques and both Ure Smith and Lionel Lindsay were regular contributors.

In 1921, the centenary of Macquarie's administration of the

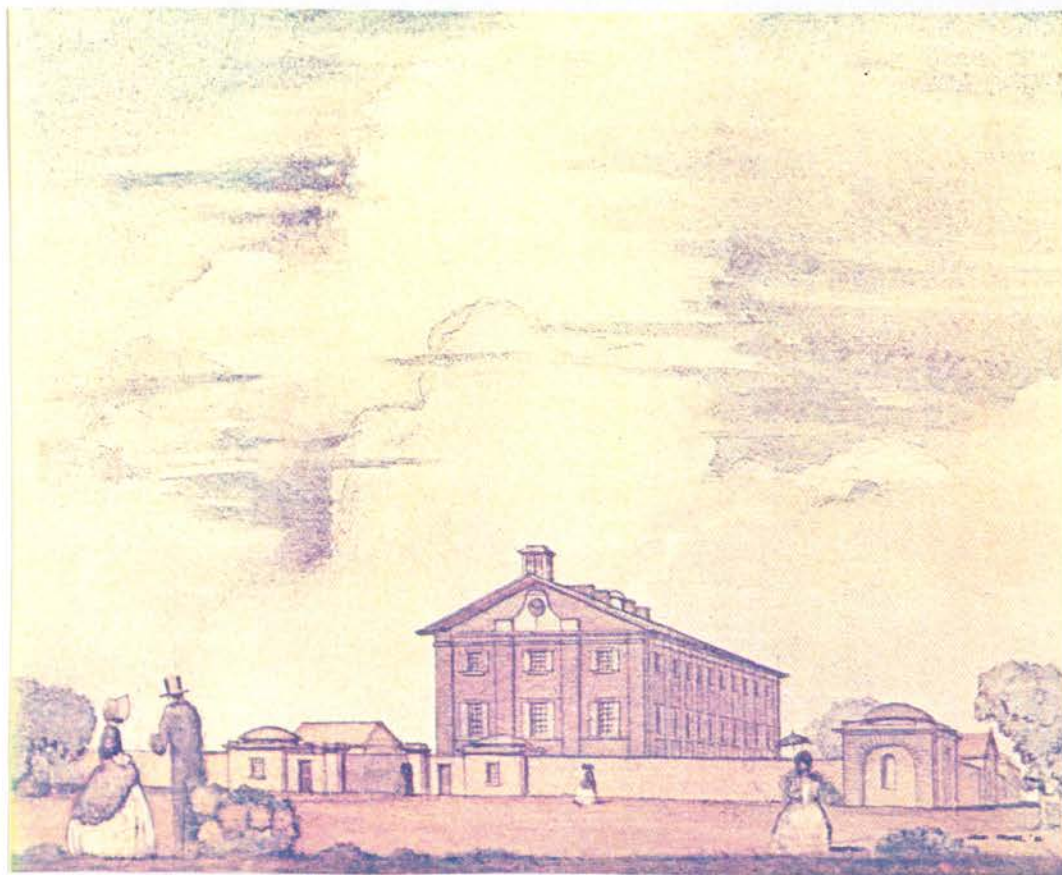


colony, Art in Australia Ltd produced a 'special number' volume entitled The Macquarie Book, which was devoted to Governor Macquarie and his times. The editors explained this event to readers:

"We have departed from the usual style of this magazine in publishing this additional memorial to the austere humanitarian and the practical statesman of a hundred years ago, because he was one who had vision and a sense of beauty and did material service for art in Australia." [33]

The volume contained articles by historians Charles Bertie and J.H.M. Abbott, "Sydney in Macquarie's Day" and "Macquarie the Man" respectively, and was illustrated with John D. Moore's water colours of several of Greenway's buildings and photographs by H. Cazneaux of other buildings of the Macquarie period. Hardy Wilson provided an article in which he described Greenway as the most accomplished architect who had ever dwelt in Australia, an artist in the art of architecture. In all the volume was a hefty statement of a serious interest in early colonial history and architecture on the part of the sole local art magazine of the period.

In 1921 Art in Australia published Windsor, New South Wales. A Book Containing Original Etchings of Windsor by Lionel Lindsay and Sydney Ure Smith. Including a Descriptive Essay Entitled 'The Green Hills' by J.H.M. Abbott [34]. This book combined the talents of historians and artists and paid homage to the past. Such combinations were concrete evidence of a mutuality of interest between historians, architects and artists interested in the past and its physical remains and suggested



*"The Convict Barracks" (later known as Hyde Park Barracks).  
Watercolour by John D. Moore. From The Macquarie Book, Art in  
Australia, No. 10, 1921.*

that these groups had developed similar emphases on the Macquarie period.

Much attention was given to 'good taste' in The Macquarie Book and R. Keith Harris' articles in Art in Australia in the early 1920's. As well as a fascination with the historical significance of the Macquarie period, there was an equally strong appreciation of the aesthetic of that period among artists and architects. Many shared Harris's views,

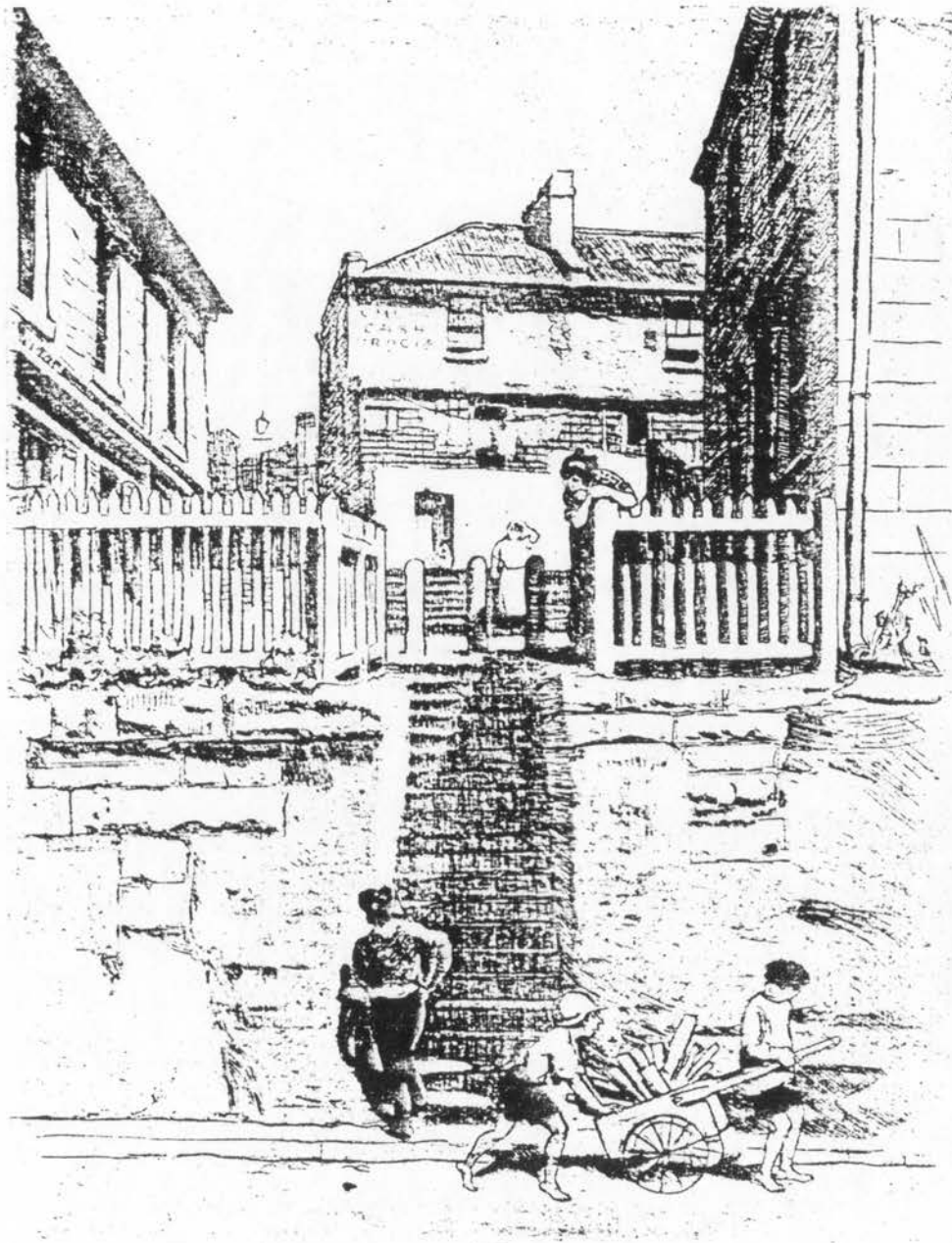
"We in Sydney turn with a sigh of relief to such works as the old Treasury in Lang Street, the old Bank of Australasia, and the old portion of the Commercial Bank in George Street; for their charm lies in simple form and fine proportions. They speak to us of a day when refinement was priced a little higher. They prove that a thing of beauty, irrespective of fashions or fancies, is not for its age alone, but for all time." [35]

During the '20's and '30's the Modernism movement influenced art and architecture and created considerable concern as well as enthusiasm. Some artists, including Lionel Lindsay, reacted violently against it, comparing it unfavourably with the aesthetics of the past. Many were now vitally concerned about aesthetics and questions of the definition of 'beauty' in all the visual arts, including architecture and interior design, where the effects of Modernism were so pronounced. During this period Art in Australia began to incorporate articles specifically on architectural matters and many of these discussed the issues raised by Modernism. Through an increasing emphasis on architecture those artists interested in the past gained a more technical appreciation of the old buildings, the style of which seemed admirable to them when compared to both Modernism and the

Victorian style. In developing this greater appreciation the architect/artists such as Hardy Wilson played an important role. The result was a less romantic and more realistic style in the work of the artists endeavouring to represent the past, which they now perceived to be not simply picturesque landscapes but complex architectural structures with style and formality.

Lionel Lindsay was the chief protagonist of the etching revival and the Australian black and white school; he was also a prolific writer and a key figure in the debate on art and Modernism in the early twentieth century in which he fiercely opposed developments leading to Modernism. He was both aesthete and reactionary, clinging to the values of the past and his own notion of Beauty. He wrote widely on his philosophy of art, and these writings not only provide ready access to his preoccupations of this artist but most probably speak for many of his fellow artists. However, his greatest value to the preservation movement lies in the nature of his art, his romantic love of Sydney, its architecture and the extant remains of the past. With Sydney Ure Smith, he was the most prolific and successful illustrator of the early buildings of New South Wales.

Born in 1874, Lionel Lindsay spent most of his life in Sydney with occasional sojourns in Europe [36]. He was first inspired to etch in the 1880's when he saw the Melbourne artist John Shirlow's etchings but did not follow it up until 1902 when he made two plates in London, one of Rudyard Kipling's house and the other of Henry James' house [37]. On his return to Australia that same year he settled in Sydney and earned a living writing,



*"The Rocks, Sydney". Etching by Lionel Lindsay. From L. Lindsay  
Etchings of Old Sydney, No. 1-5, 1925. National Library of  
Australia.*

drawing cartoons and illustrations for magazines such as the Bulletin. Like Julian Ashton, he became fascinated by the wealth of material in the old areas of Sydney, the Rocks especially, and in 1903 made numerous pencil sketches which he later etched [38]. Many years later he wrote "I was inspired by the Rocks area and the old regime architecture, then starting to be demolished, to spend my Sundays drawing" [39]. Possibly Lindsay was in some way associated with the Government commission for recording of the Rocks or at least came in contact with artists who were [40].

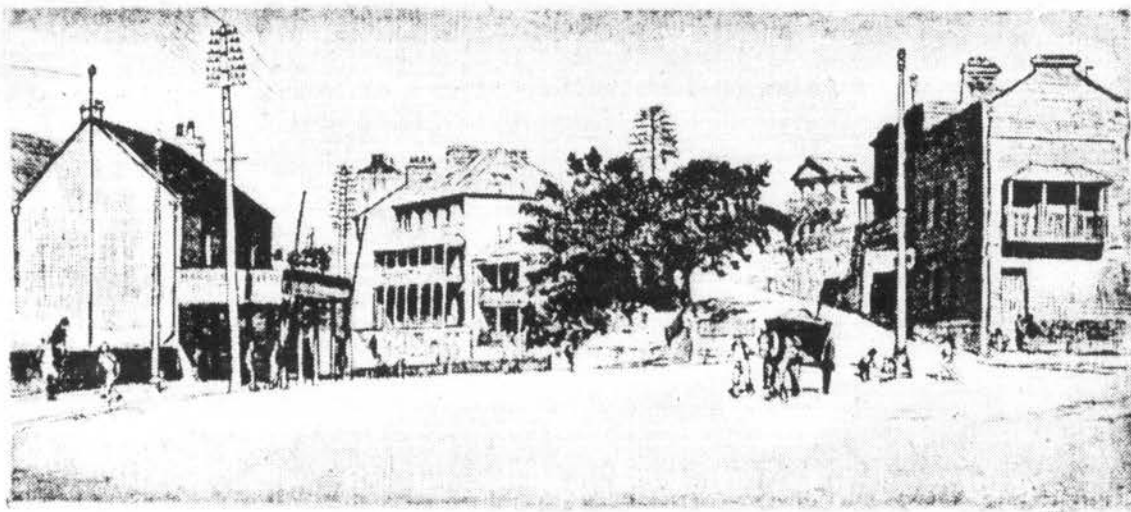
Lindsay first showed his etchings at the opening exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1907. To his surprise they were much admired and some purchased. At the Society's Melbourne exhibition in the same year he showed more prints and sold seventy-five of them [41]. Ure Smith considered that the art-appreciating public had taken little interest in etching prior to this time and that Lindsay had virtually 'created' a revival of the art [42]. Lindsay himself had this to say:

"My etchings of old Sydney revived the art of etching in the city. Livingstone Hopkins and Julian Ashton had some years before essayed it. Exhibiting regularly at the Society of Artists, I gradually found regular buyers, and I taught Norman and Syd Smith the elements of the art. Norman Lindsay despised etching under the delusion that only artists who couldn't draw practised it, until such time as I had made it popular with the public, when he began to etch, and reaped the harvest I had sown. Still I did very well once a few of us had established the Australian Painters-Etchers' Society of which I was president for three years." [43]

Lindsay continued to exhibit frequently and by 1926, having "done handsomely by my last shows", and with both woodcuts and etchings selling well in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, he

determined to go to Europe again and "quit journalistic drawing for ever" [44]. The following year he exhibited sixty-four prints in London at the Colnaghi Gallery; the prints comprised mostly Australian and Spanish material and the exhibition was such a success that when Lindsay returned to Australia later that year his reputation was greatly enhanced [45]. In Sydney he exhibited frequently at Macquarie Galleries twelve times between 1925 and 1947. He also exhibited with the Society of Artists,

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*Specimen Plate.*

*Miller's Point (now demolished.) Etching by Lionel Lindsay.*

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*Advertisement for 'Lionel Lindsay Number of Art in Australia'.  
From The Home, February 1, 1928.*

the Australian Painters-Etchers' Society and in 1936 held a joint exhibition with Sydney Ure Smith at Farmer's Blaxland Gallery [46]. He had become the doyen of the etchers. In 1936 he was appointed a Trustee of the National Art Gallery of New South Wales and was knighted for his services to art in 1941 [47].

Lindsay often elaborated on his ideas on art. His first book, published in 1920, was a study of the early colonial artist Conrad Martens, in which he admired both Martens' subject matter and technique:

"Georgian architecture, with adaptations fitting if for a warmer climate....has left this country the richer for a tradition of good taste." [48]

And Martens, he continued, was the one artist who had been capable of evoking the beauty of the colonial residence and its garden. Lindsay also recognized the historical value of Martens, work as documentation of the buildings of the period:

"..we have reason to be grateful (for this aspect of Martens work). His indefatigable pencil has left such a treasury of drawings that no history of our first century in New South Wales and Queensland would be complete without them. His sketch-book could never have been far from his hand, and the flying pencil that ministered to the calm eye left little to record once it had harvested its view." [49]

Not only had Martens left an invaluable historical record, but he had preserved the memory of a period which, for Lindsay, embodied 'good taste' in architecture and art.

Later books and articles developed these ideas further, especially his conviction that Beauty and Taste resided in the



past not the present. And, like his brother Norman, he became more convinced as Modernism began to dominate in the plastic arts. In 1942 he published a critique of modern art in a book entitled appropriately Addled Art [50], and similar attacks appeared in articles in Art in Australia and the regular press throughout the 30's and 40's. In his opinion both contemporary art and society had been muddled by modern trends; whereas the twentieth century was controlled by commercialism, the nineteenth century had been romantic in the best sense of the word, the producer of great sentimental ideals, which had "reached us in order to die". Old styles of art had been tossed aside for Modernism with its "everpresent cubic forms and geometric patterns, none of which could be found in nature". It seemed to Lindsay that "the driving power were hatred of the past, and that a desire to destroy all tradition and shape a new world at the dictates of the machine was in progress" [51]. The past offered contrast, sanctity and inspiration; his art was accordingly nostalgic and idyllic, or as Bernard Smith has suggested "antiquarian and somewhat sentimental" [52], as he tried to turn back the tide of history.

Sydney had captured Lindsay's imagination when he first arrived there in 1902 and it remained his home and an inspiration to his art throughout his life. Some of his remonstrances against the modern world and its aesthetic arose from a sense of the loss of character and beauty in the city's urban landscape. In 1902 Sydney had seemed to him:

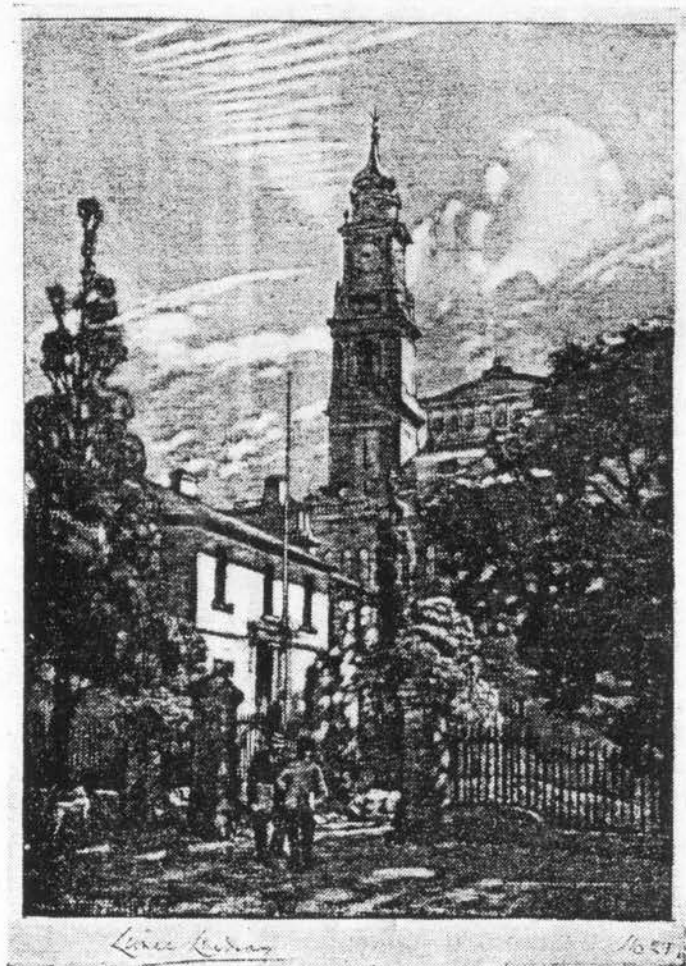
"...more carefree, less touched by the bank smash and the burst boom (than Melbourne) and wore the air of a long-settled community, to which the buildings of the old regime gave the right cachet...Sydney has a site unequalled and a harbour so beautiful that it has become a byword, yet everything possible has been done to eliminate natural beauty and to make the foreshores a close for the nouveau riche." [1931]

# ARCHITECTURE

AN AUSTRALIAN MONTHLY JOURNAL

Published by ART IN AUSTRALIA LTD., SYDNEY

PRICE ONE SHILLING



LANDS OFFICE TOWER AND OLD EDUCATION OFFICE  
Mezzotint by Lionel Lindsay.

ART AND THE STATE

Cover of *Architecture*, October, 1926, with mezzotint of Lands Office Tower and Old Education Office, by Lionel Lindsay.

He had no love for Victorian architecture and loathed the Sydney Town Hall in particular; when he spoke of the beauty of old Sydney he was referring to the early period when the Georgian style had prevailed. For Lindsay as for many of his like-minded fellow artists and architects the early nineteenth century had produced the best architecture, thereafter was only "vulgarization":

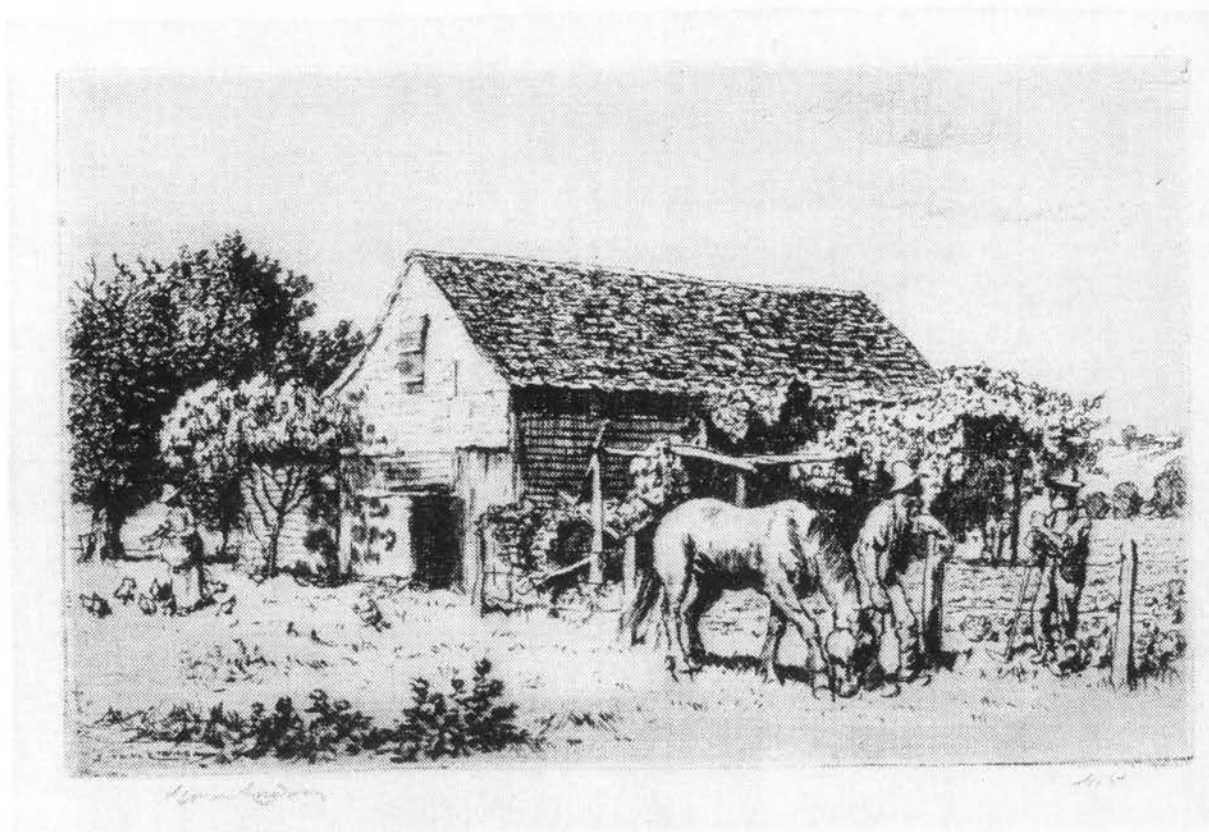
"Governor Macquarie and his architect Greenway gave the town buildings in fine taste, then came the rise of the Victorian-era shop-keeper, who copied his English prototype in everything and the vulgarization of the city was completed."  
[54]

Despite the ravages of Victorianism, the Sydney he knew in the early years of the twentieth century had had both grace and beauty; the towers of the Land Office and the Post Office had "graced" the skyline, "the foreshores were still innocent of massed red roofs", and "the beautiful Port Jackson fig and the banksia grew freely about the rocks, and seated in their shade (one) knew the peace and beauty of antiquity" [55].

Lindsay also illustrated a number of the new self-consciously 'Australian' books published in the early 20th century and there is an element of nationalism in his art and writings. He provided the drawings for example, for Steel Rudd's The Old Homestead (1918) and Sandy's Selection (1904); Henry Lawson's The Romance of the Sway; Amy Mack's Bushland Stories (1923); and for many issues of the Bulletin and Lone Hand magazines. In 1918 he provided Art in Australia with a review of the national Gallery's exhibition "Twenty-Five Years of

Australian Art" and wrote that in the last quarter century the note of nationality had at last been struck however lightly, and artists, with a virginal vision of their native land, had for the first time in its history, expressed something of its character and beauty. Illustrating the article were not 'bush' landscapes as might have been expected, but etchings of historic towns and areas, one of the Rocks by Lindsay himself and another of Windsor by Ure Smith [56]. When Lindsay spoke of a virginal national vision he intended it to include his much loved early colonial landscapes.

Surprisingly few of Lindsay's works show the architectural 'masterpieces' of the past, such as appear in the art of Hardy Wilson and in later years in the work of Sydney Ure Smith. The latter two tended more towards a descriptive or recording style, whereas Lindsay, an aesthete and a romantic, rejoiced more at the site of an old slab barn lying neglected in an anonymous landscape or of a picturesque old cottage in the Rocks. His early work from 1917 to 1919 concentrated on Sydney, reflecting the great love for the city that he had expressed in writing, but later he developed the more 'pastoral' style of the old slab barn and other 'rural' images. These may in fact have been sights well within the vicinity of Sydney and Parramatta, for the outer suburbs still had a distinctly rural character in the period. This style became Lindsay's own distinct exploration and interpretation of the nostalgic response to the past and its popularity suggests that it found a sympathetic audience; the



*"The Little Farm, Windsor". Etching by Lionel Lindsay, c. 1906.  
Author's collection.*

derelict barn has, in fact, remained a popular images in Australia to the present day. Lindsay's earlier work, with its emphasis on Sydney and selected colonial towns, more obviously corresponded to the developing urban character of preservation, and by creating a climate of opinion sympathetic to the buildings

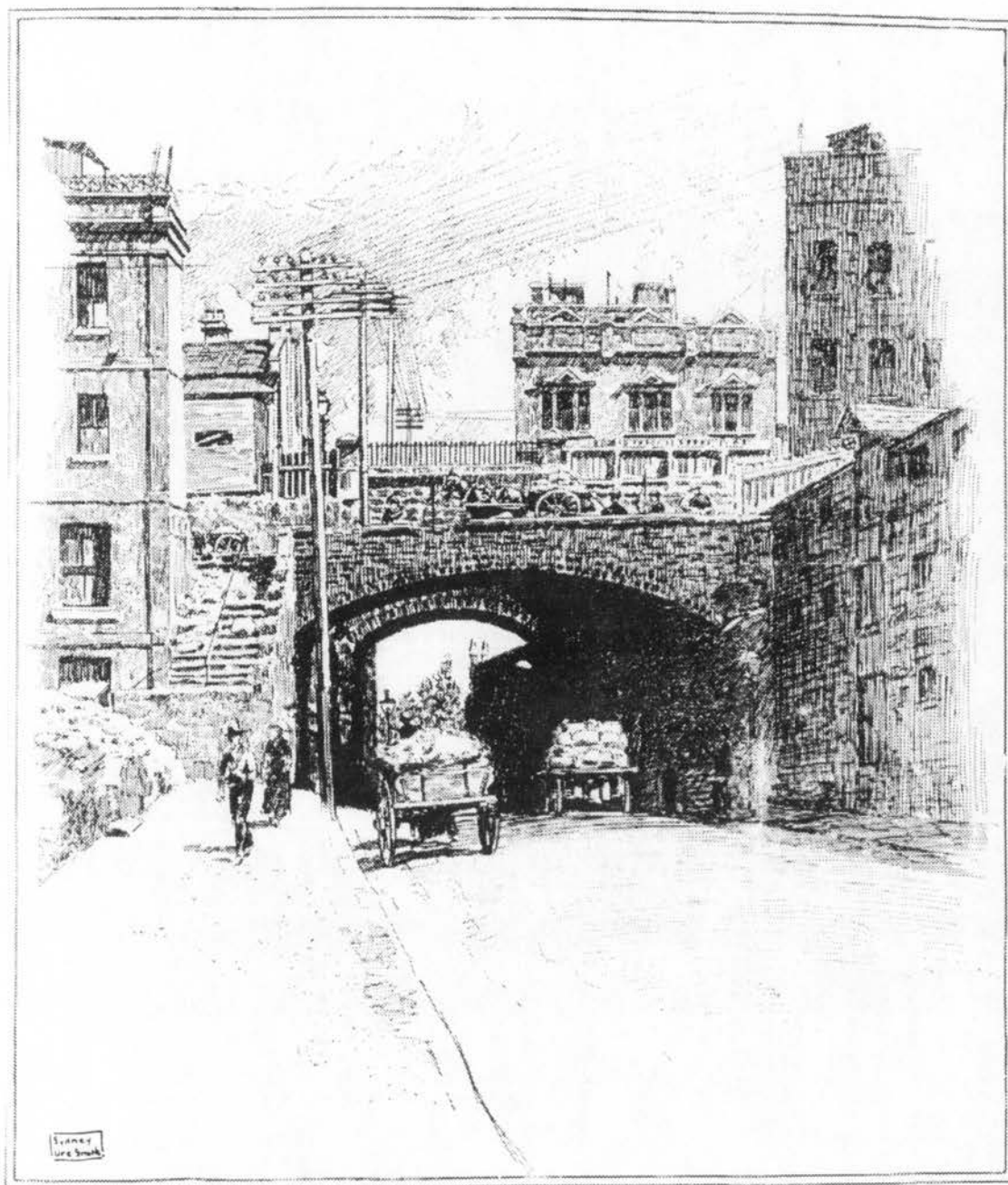
portrayed, it undoubtedly influenced and aided the development of attitudes to the past and preservation. The connection between his art and preservation is less clear in Lindsay's later work, but assuredly, with their own particular style of nostalgia, these 'pastoral' works enhanced appreciation of and interest in the past.



*Old Government House, Windsor. Etching by Lionel Lindsay, 1918.  
From Sir Lionel Lindsay Etchings and Drypoint, Ure Smith  
Miniature Series 2, Sydney, 1949.*

Sydney Ure Smith, born in London in 1887, moved with his family first to Melbourne in 1888 and then to Sydney, where in 1902 he attended Sydney Grammar School and from 1902 to 1907 studied at the Julian Ashton School of Art [57]. Here he met and developed lifelong friendships with other students and young artists, including the Lindsays, Harry Julius, Will Dyson and Charles Lloyd Jones. In 1907 he formed the commercial art studio of Smith and Julius, which soon became a leading establishment of its kind in Sydney. In that year he contributed to the opening exhibition of The Society of Artists and within the Society he met other young artists such as A.H. Fullwood, Adrian Feint and Sidney Long. Smith came to occupy positions of public importance in the art world; he became president of the Society of Artists in 1921 and remained in that position until 1947, he was a founding member of the Painters-Etchers Society and from 1927 to 1947 he was Trustee of the Art Gallery of N.S.W. [58]. He was publisher and editor of the most influential art house publication of the period, Art In Australia from 1916 until 1934 and 1938 respectively, and publisher of a vast number of other books and magazines covering art, architecture, interior design and other aspects of the visual arts, as well as several on old Sydney. He was without doubt one of the most influential figures in the arts in the period up to 1939.

Ure Smith always showed a deep appreciation of architecture, that of the early colonial period in particular. His drawings and etchings provided a sympathetic image, not only of the city and its historic fabric, but also of towns such as Windsor, and



**CITY IMPROVEMENT: THE HISTORIC ARGYLE CUT.**

This sketch represents one of the most interesting spots in Sydney—the Argyle Cut, which was begun by convict labour between 1830 and 1840, and subsequently completed by the City Council. It is a narrow roadway excavated out of the solid rock. The growing importance of Miller's Point as a shipping centre, however, has rendered necessary improved means of access, and the historic roadway is now being widened. The bridge in our drawing is to give way to a steel-concrete structure, which will form portion of the newly-aligned Cumberland-st. The new bridge will have a span of 60ft above the street below.

*The Argyle Cut. Etching by Sydney Ure Smith. Newspaper cutting from Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, vol. 8, Mitchell Library, A3240.*



Campbelltown. Up to 1914 his work had been mainly in pen and pencil, but he then began etching and exhibited alongside Lionel Lindsay and others with the Society of Artists [59].

In 1920 the Society of Artists held a one-man exhibition of Ure Smith's etchings and published a book of the same [60]. Most of the etchings shown were of "the survivals of Macquarie's building frenzy" or "perfect Georgian and early colonial architectural examples". Windsor, it was said, was his 'Mecca',

"Its different aspects he approaches full of feeling and reverence for its antiquity and romantic charm. It is at this place that his work shows his happiest mood, and by it one can gauge his intense appreciation for the beautiful." [61]

The popularity of his etchings was such that the catalogue for the exhibition was sold out on opening day and a reprint entitled The Etchings of Sydney Ure Smith was made soon thereafter [62]. One review of the catalogue said,

"Fragments of that delightful unregulated old Sydney that has almost stepped into the abyss of the past are here shown in a way to move the heartstrings. There are the old houses, the survival of which tells so much, portentous doorways reminiscent of the northern land from which Dr. Lang brought the design, the old shop at the corner of Hunter Street, a bit of "The Rocks", here and there a glimpse of the Harbour, and that place of ill-omen - the top of King Street. A few views of Parramatta, Windsor, and Mount Gilead complete a beautiful set." [63]

Another review of the exhibition singled out the print "The Argyle Cut" as being outstanding and also the view of the top of King Street with the old Hyde Park Barracks and St. James' Church in sight [64]. Julian Ashton wrote that Smith's etchings were not only interesting but full of historical value:

"...it is Smith's eye and his deft hand that have depicted for us the old houses and stairways which have made this Sydney of ours an object of love to the artistic temperament." [65]

And Hal Missingham wrote in 1950,

"Almost always his subjects were Sydney and its surroundings. ....in Ure Smith's etchings you can see how much in love he was with his chosen subjects, simple things mostly - a tree or two, a fence, a few barns, the grass growing, an old doorway or a Greenway building." [66]

Fellow artist Margaret Preston called his work 'descriptive', made with a truthful exactness of subject that gave them an historical value for the future:

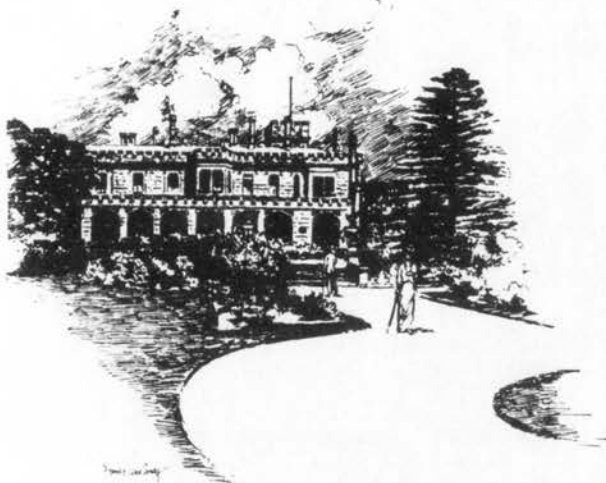
"They do not depend on any particular technique or mode but have taken the image of a city and its adjuncts as a right to its place in the art of this 20th century...He saw his material from a 'veracity' point of view, each subject was treated with the same minute care, only the difference in size catching the eye particularly." [67]

Ure Smith was an artist able to produce both a romantic and a more descriptive image of the buildings of early colonial times, and in his work it is possible to see the shift that occurred in the printmaking arts from a nostalgic towards a more realistic, descriptive mode, with emphasis on accurate representation of architectural detail.

In most of the present day literature credit is given to William Hardy Wilson for the idea of illustrating the old colonial buildings of New South Wales and Tasmania, but it is obvious from a study of the work of Ure Smith, Lindsay and others, that Wilson was not the first and certainly not the originator of the style or content, but one of a number of artists painting in this genre. Ure Smith's work was equally

May 1, 1914

THE LONE HAND  
SYDNEY VIEWS ————— By S. URE SMITH.



OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE



MITCHELL LIBRARY FROM BENT STREET



CASTLEREAGH STREET



ARISTOCRATIC MACQUARIE STREET



THE TOP OF KING STREET

*Sydney Views. Etchings by Sydney Ure Smith. Newspaper cutting from Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, vol. 8, Mitchell Library, A3240.*

important at the time and received much praise from his contemporaries, though it has since been somewhat neglected.

As a publisher, Ure Smith sought to satisfy a growing public demand for knowledge of old Sydney and to stimulate an imaginative vision of Sydney's past. He had the text of a number of illustrated books written by a leading figure in the Royal Australian Historical Society, Charles Bertie, and himself provided the illustrations, sometimes in collaboration with Lionel Lindsay. These books included: Old Sydney (1911), Relics of Old Colonial Days (1914), The Charm of Sydney (1918), Windsor (1921), Old Colonial By-Ways (1928), Sydney Streets and Stories of Old Sydney. These collaborations resulted in some very fine and innovative books whose publication the press reviews heralded as important contributions to the growth of an 'historic sense' in New South Wales.

The first in the series, Old Sydney, was lavishly praised in the press when it appeared in 1911. The book was described as "a pen-and pencil portrayal of the more remarkable of the landmarks of the oldest city in Australia", "the most tangible proof of our maturity which we have yet produced", "a record of ancient mansions, street scenes, and other features of a fast disappearing old Sydney...of the greatest historical value" [68]. One writer stated that not for over sixty years, in fact since the publication of Fowler's Sydney in 1848, had the appearance of any work of the kind commanded the interest that could be claimed for this new book [69].



*"The Rangers, Mosman". By Sydney G. Smith (a.k.a. Sydney Ure Smith).  
From C. H. Bertie, Old Sydney, illustrated by Sydney Ure Smith  
(Art in Australia, 1911).*

The reaction to the publication of Old Sydney provided evidence of some concern about demolition of early buildings and awareness of the ease with which they could disappear. Interest in early Sydney "does not decrease but grows with the years", an article in the Sydney Mail in 1911 stated, adding that the book

"...will not only satisfy lovers of old Sydney, but instruct and delight a much wider circle. An attentive perusal will add new and absorbing charm to a walk or drive through the city. Even narrow and rugged Jamison Street, with its ancient church at the head and its association as residences or offices with the names of so many distinguished men of the past, will take on a new face. Queen's Court, off Dalley Street...is recognizable for its quaintness, but under the information imparted becomes a spot of historic moment. Rightly enough Vaucluse House, the 'Rangers' at Mosman and 'Bronte House' are included in 'Old Sydney'." [70]

Several reviewers regretted the lack of a photographic record of the antiquity of the city. The Town and Country Journal suggested that, not only should a photographic record be made, but the buildings themselves should be preserved:

"When one sees and records the contents of this book, the more convinced does one become that it was a calamity that the Government of this State did not see the wisdom of preserving old Sydney buildings in photographic form. The late Mr. E.W. O'Sullivan saw the danger of losing the old landmarks on the 'Rocks' area, and he commissioned several painters to put them on canvas. But if any photographic collection of their antiquity exists, it must be in private hands. For many reasons, therefore, Messrs. Bertie and Smith are to be complimented on the enterprise that impelled them to issue this volume which must be a valuable accession to the literature of the State...A perusal of the book will only be further solid argument in favour of full consideration being given before such an old landmark, as the Public Instruction (old Education) Department, with its leafy foreground, is permitted to be demolished." [71]

The author of the Red Page of the Bulletin was astounded to see the similarity between the 'ancient' ruins of Europe and those of Australia and dismayed by the current "frenzy of municipal

'improvements' with their destructive encroachment on historic buildings of old Sydney" [72]. "Old Sydney is vanishing and the time will come when all that is left will be volumes of sketches and photographs", the Editor of the Daily Telegraph wrote [73], and the Sydney Morning Herald suggested that many of Sydney's beauties were disappearing before the march of progress as they were not such as to appeal to a city surveyor or sanitary expert [74]. All considered that Smith and Bertie had performed a service to the community in documenting the old aspects of the city.

Following the success of their first volume the collaborators repeated the formula in the following year with Stories of Old Sydney (1912), again published by Angus and Robertson for Art in Australia Ltd. Like the first it contained some 50 sketches by the artist and a text of stories from Sydney's past by Bertie, and again it was received with enthusiasm in the press. It was well that these two men had made a permanent record of Sydney's picturesque aspects before the opportunity was lost forever, an article in the Sydney Morning Herald suggested, for of late years so much of the old Sydney had disappeared and "every day the ruthless hand of progress sweeps more away" [75]. The 'Bookaneer' of the Lone Hand, a weekly magazine, wrote:

"The comparatively ancient structures which are to be found about Sydney are faithfully treated by the artist, who is obviously in love with them, and they appear so picturesque in his drawings that even the utilitarian reader will regret their departure." [76]

### Stories of Old Sydney.

The drawings by Sydney U. Smith for *Stories of Old Sydney* (Angus and Robertson, 2s. 6d.) have a mellow air about them which is appropriate to the subject. The comparatively ancient structures which are to be found about Sydney are faithfully treated by this artist, who is obviously in love with them, and they appear so picturesque in his drawings that even the utilitarian reader will regret their departure. Mr. Smith's work in pencil is very pleasing to the eye, though his human figures are less happy than his

buildings. It is a pity that Mr. Bertie's letterpress is not up to the standard of the illustrations. He is well acquainted with the literature relating to Sydney, and has quoted some stories which are worth re-telling—why not

have written the whole book with the scissors? At any rate, why did he bring the ghosts of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson all the way to Sydney in order to hear some trivial stuff about Hunter-street?



"OLD SYDNEY" SMITH, by Julius.

"The Bookman" The Law Hand January 1911

### "Stories of Old Sydney."

A YEAR ago Sydney Ure Smith and Charles H. Bertie collaborated on a book of pen-drawings and descriptive matter called "Old Sydney." This year they are responsible for "Stories of Old Sydney" published by Angus and Robertson. The new volume is smaller and lower-priced than the other, but has a similar attractiveness. For the present reviewer Mr. Smith's drawings have most to do with this, but there is a public for such records as Mr. Bertie provides in "The Windmills of Old Sydney," "A Ramble Round Old Sydney," "Fifty Years Ago," and "A Mysterious Affair." A fantasy called "The Ghosts of Hunter-street" imagines various old-world and other celebrities in Sydney.

The drawings of Sydney Ure Smith are well known to readers of the "Mail." Since his method has found imitators, it may be taken that he has "arrived"; but, far as he has gone, he is likely to go much farther. He has intellect and feeling, and uses both to good effect. Influenced in his earlier work by Howard Pyle and Norman Lindsay, he has since reached a style of his own, and one of a true poetic charm. He is indeed a poet of pen-drawing, with the Australian sunlight pervading his work. He deliberately avoids any attempt to give violent action, and his preference for repose has probably turned him towards the quieter times than ours, which he is fond of delineating. All times have had their perturbations, but it is allowed to the artist to make an ideal period of his own, and Sydney Ure Smith's is a period.

### OLD SYDNEY YARNS.

Just the thing for lovers of Sydney, the mother capital of Australia—whether they reside in that city or have their business in other parts of this vast continent—is Mr. Chas. H. Bertie's new book just published appropriately at this time of the year, entitled *Stories of Old Sydney*. So many are the admirers of that city, its quaint old-time buildings now rapidly disappearing under



A BIT OF OLD KENT STREET.  
(From "Stories of Old Sydney," by Charles H. Bertie.)

the ruthless hand of a progressive municipality, its picturesque surroundings, (that there will be a certain big demand for such a book, especially as it is in itself of much literary interest, artistic charm, and daintiness of appearance. The author, the artist (Mr. Ure Smith), and the publishers have done their respective work well, and the book is not only pleasing to look at, but extremely interesting to read. Perhaps the author will one day extend his subject and write a history of Sydney from its first day to the present time. If he does, may he have the same illustrator to embellish his pages.

Sydney Mail Dec. 25th 1910.

Newspaper reviews of *Stories of Old Sydney*, with cartoon of "Old Sydney" Smith. From Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, vol. 8, Mitchell Library, A3240.



Another writer claimed that the book was "just the thing for lovers of Sydney" and there were now so many admirers of the city's quaint old-time buildings which were now rapidly disappearing under the "ruthless hand of a progressive municipality", that there would be a big demand for the book [77]. The Sydney Mail, whose correspondent considered Ure Smith's drawings had most to do with the success of the book, was proud to announce that the artist was a regular contributor to the Mail:

"The drawings of Sydney Ure Smith are well known to readers of the 'Mail'. Since his method has found imitators, it may be taken that he has 'arrived'; but far as he has gone, he is likely to go much farther. He has intellect and feeling...and his preference for repose has probably turned him towards the quieter times than ours, which he is fond of delineating." [78]

In 1914, on his own, he brought out a book similar to the previous two, called Relics of Old Colonial Days (1914), published by James R. Tyrrell and entirely devoted to sketches of the old buildings and structures. In this book, the range was extended to include towns and subjects outside Sydney: the old village of Cobbity, the King's School at Parramatta, old Government House at Windsor and further afield, the towns of Hartley and Boydton [79].

Ure Smith was a man of many talents, an artist, businessman, publisher, and administrator, but his greatest contribution to the cultural life of Australia and perhaps to the preservation of old buildings also, was his work as an art publisher. In 1916 with Bertram Stevens he founded the publication Art in Australia, which until 1921 was published by Angus and Robertson Ltd. In

1921 he founded the publishing firm, Art in Australia Ltd. which was to become the most influential publisher in the art world for the next quarter of a century, producing not only the magazine Art in Australia but also many publications on art and architecture as well as several magazines such as The Home, "Australia's pioneer glossy magazine" of interior decoration, architecture, gardens, photography and social life [80]. Art in Australia was undoubtedly his most important publication. Norman Lindsay wrote later that Smith had conceived of the magazine, arranged its format, produced it and kept it in action with indefatigable energy for many years [81]. With his co-editors he was responsible for the content of the magazine and by extension for its historical interest, as for example in the production in 1921 of The Macquarie Book. His press, Art in Australia Ltd, was responsible for the publication of Windsor (1921), and many of the books produced jointly by Ure Smith and Bertie.

In 1934 Smith sold his interest in Art in Australia Ltd. to the Sydney Morning Herald, but remained it's editor until 1938. Ure Smith formed his own company, Ure Smith Pty Ltd in 1939 and continued to publish Australian art and architectural material [82].

Whereas other etchers and illustrators of the Australian past did not participate in agitation for preservation, Ure Smith became personally involved. As early as 1924 he appealed for the retention of historic relics in an address he delivered on "The Importance of Art in Australia" to the Royal Colonial Institute [83]. As a private individual and officially as President of the Society of Artists, he spoke out in support of

the preservation issues of the 1930's, the Circular Quay and Macquarie Street buildings. Like Lionel Lindsay he was critical of Sydney's "lack of taste" in civic aesthetics and the want of real civic pride and in 1938 he spoke at the Institute of Architects in Sydney on the subject of "Aesthetic Improvement in Sydney" [84]. It was undoubtedly his personal commitment that led the Society of Artists to associate itself with or initiate campaigns for preservation of City buildings. Certainly he was the only member to represent that Society in negotiations on related issues and the only member to write to the press indicating either personal or the Society's support of the issues. The following letter illustrates his views:

"Each year we have seen examples of old colonial architecture demolished to make way for modern buildings...One realises that it is inevitable that the majority of these old relics must go, but it is a short-sighted policy to wipe out buildings which have an artistic, as well as a historical interest.

It would be very regrettable if Sydney was left without a few notable examples of the Georgian architecture of the Macquarie period. Artists, architects, and writers have frequently pointed out the beauty of the old barracks.

A city with a less commercial outlook than ours certainly would preserve these relics, and respect them." [85]

Other artists had intermittent involvement in specific preservation issues, John D. Moore and Sydney Long, for example. Generally these were minor contributions in comparison with that of Ure Smith. He was the only one among those who were artists rather than architects to make a significant direct contribution to the cause of preservation in New South Wales in these years. Hardy Wilson was by profession and interest an architect first, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

The contribution of other etchers and illustrators to preservation was more indirect; through their unique medium they provided a sympathetic image of the old parts of the city and of the buildings and structures of the past. Many people thereafter, were able to look upon the same scene through different eyes, eyes given them by the artists. Perceptions changed as the artists and artist/architects encouraged people to see the old in a new light, to see architectural achievement where they had not previously, and to perceive beauty where before they had only seen defunct, derelict buildings. As early as 1922 a leader-writer of the Sydney Morning Herald credited artists and writers with having educated the public to appreciate the city and its environs and used the power of their art to the benefit of the old forgotten buildings of the city:

"They have taught us that our ancestors had a real sense of beauty and design and that the present generation might very profitably take a lesson from them. Their architecture especially had a strongly individual character and often possessed an appropriateness which our more sophisticated age has not been able to encompass. For instance, we no longer regard St. James' Church, the old Immigration Barracks, the Liverpool Church, and other monuments in and around Sydney as quaint but rather uncouth survival which could easily be spared. We realise that they have a grace and symmetry of their own, if now they are somewhat out of keeping with their surrounds, the fault is ours. Greenway, Macquarie's architect is now given his due after centuries of oblivion. Mr. S. Ure Smith, Mr. Julian Ashton, Mr. Hardy Wilson, and others have taught us to look at our city and its environs with a more appreciative eye, and by the exercise of their craft have rescued many a gem from forgotten obscurity." [86]

Such nostalgia as Lionel Lindsay and others conveyed could produce a sympathetic image of the past, but it could also obscure an honest appraisal of the subject, perpetuating a myth of an ideal past. It is also possible that they alienated as many people as they attracted to the idea of a romantic past;

the more removed from reality the image of the past appeared, the more it could be considered by some to be dismissable, romantic nonsense, as irrelevant as the artists themselves and their art. In this respect it was important that the artists developed a more descriptive style such as that of Ure Smith in his later works and of Hardy Wilson and other architect/artists. On the other hand the sentimental style could evoke an heroic image of the past, particularly captivating to those who felt that the past could inspire the present with new vigor and purpose. In this regard the association of the earlier art of the etchers with folk culture in literature and to some extent the self-conscious nationalism of the early 20th century was significant. The leader-writer of the Daily Telegraph for example, was reminded by the publication of Old Sydney in 1911, of

"....the pioneers who did so much to lay the foundation of the Commonwealth were a pretty sturdy lot, who took the ups and downs of life in a philosophical spirit, and who lived very comfortable lives, even though they had few of the conveniences and luxuries of modern civilization." [87]

It was an image of the past which had no basis in reality but was part of a developing 'historical sense' and national awareness.

Ure Smith, Lionel Lindsay and others were critical of their age and its efforts towards urban improvement and 'beautification'. They did not necessarily oppose change to the city's physical form; in fact they endorsed the idea of 'improvement', but they were concerned, they claimed, with 'Beauty' and wanted to see the old beauty preserved as well as the new imposed and the present improved. The idea that urban

improvement, with its emphasis on efficiency and modernity, grandeur and amenity, could encompass preservation of the old as well as new construction, was a new, difficult concept to grasp. For the artists who did envisage such a marriage it was simply a question of aesthetics; the beauty that was contained in the old buildings could but enhance the attractiveness of the city. Artists, therefore, contributed a new dimension to the ideology of preservation, a concern for and appreciation of the beauty of the old built forms, regardless of their 'historical' value.

Bernard Smith has written that it was not from the artists that a gentler view of the city came about, but from the architects and 'antiquaries'; he believes that the 'evil' image of the city which Social Realist artists provided in the period 1920 to 1940 was a more powerful one than the picturesque pieces of the etchers [88]. While the former style may indeed have been a more powerful artistic image, the etchers and their like were prolific, their art was popular for over thirty years and it was an accessible art both in terms of its medium and its subject matter. Therefore it cannot be denied that these artists did have a very substantial influence on popular perceptions of the city and of the buildings of the past.

In conclusion it is interesting to note the correlation between the buildings which became the subject of preservation campaigns and those illustrated by the artists. The artists shared with historians, architects and others a particular fascination with the buildings of the Macquarie era, and those of

Francis Greenway more so than of any other architect. In many cases their works predate the rise of preservation issues, and in others are contemporaneous. The proximity of their subjects to those valued by historians and admired by architects suggests that there was a consensus of opinion and a mutual source of inspiration in concepts of 'historic' in this period.

## NOTES : Artists as Interpreters and Preservers of the Past

- 1 Bernard Smith, Place Taste and Tradition. A Study of Australian Art Since 1788 (Melb. 1979). Smith does not discuss the work of Lionel Lindsay, Sydney Ure Smith or others of the 'black and white school', but he does look at Norman Lindsay's work in some detail in a chapter entitled "Aestheticism and Nationalism in Australian Art and Criticism". He describes the 'bohemian' life of the Lindsays around the turn of the century, which Lionel also describes in his autobiography, and refers to the "minor artists' who developed in the nineties and who adopted aestheticism as their "predominant philosophical approach" (p.160). The popularity of etching and the 'historical genre' is not mentioned.  
Bernard Smith, "On Perceiving The Australian Suburb", George Seddon and Mari Davis, eds., Man and Landscape in Australia. Towards an Ecological Vision, (Canberra 1976). In this article Smith makes more mention of the etchers, although still regarding them as minor artists. Refer p. 295 in particular.
2. Andrew Garran, The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, (Sydney, 1886-1889).
- 3 Historic Sydney, 1790-1940. Catalogue of the exhibition, Historic Sydney 1790-1940, held by Joseph Lebovic Gallery, Paddington, n.d., (Sydney, n.d.)
- 4 Manuscript written by Julian Ashton, n.d. Lindsay Family Papers Vol.12, p.101. Mitchell Library Manuscript, Mss. 1969/12.
5. Julian Ashton, "The Society of Artists", The Society of Artists Pictures. A Record of the Society of Artists' Exhibition held at the Education Department's Art Gallery, Sydney 1919. Art in Australia (Special Number. Sydney 1920).
- 6 Australian Print Makers 1840-1940. Catalogue of the exhibition Australian Print Makers 1840-1940, held by the Joseph Lebovic Gallery, Paddington, n.d., (Paddington, n.d.), Introduction, and p.1.
- 7 Sir Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life. An Autobiography, (Sydney 1967), pp.233-234. The Bulletin Artists. Catalogue of the exhibition The Bulletin Artists, held by the Joseph Lebovic Gallery, Paddington, n.d., (Paddington, n.d.).
- 8 Bertram Stevens, "Early Etchers in Australia", Art in Australia, Vol.2, 1917.
- 9 Australian Print Makers 1840-1940, op.cit., Introduction.
- 10 Bertram Stevens, "Etching in Australia", Art in Australia Vol.9, 1921.
- 11 John Hetherington, Norman Lindsay. The Embattled Olympian (Melbourne 1973), pp.126-130; Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life. An Autobiography, op.cit.; Lindsay Family, Catalogue of the Lindsay Family Exhibition, held by the Joseph Lebovic Gallery, Paddington, n.d. (Paddington, n.d.).
- 12 Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, Catalogue of an exhibition, "Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends", shown at Joseph Lebovic Galleries, (Paddington, n.d.), Introduction.
- 13 Ibid.



- 14 B. Stevens, "A. Henry Fullwood", Art in Australia, Vol.8, 1921.
- 15 "Alfred T. Clint", Art in Australia, Third Series, Vol.11, March, 1925.
- 16 Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, op.cit., No. 35 in the catalogue, Sydney Long, 1927/28 "Blacksmith Shop". Refer also Sydney Morning Herald, 31 May 1927.
- 17 See Chapter 3, pages 117-118.
- 18 Daily Telegraph, 1 May 1918. Article entitled "Old Sydney. Historical Society's Function".
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Evening News, 1 May 1918.
- 21 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 May 1918. "Historical Society's Exhibition".
- 22 Bertram Stevens, "Etching in Australia", op.cit.
- 23 Raymond McGrath Prints. Catalogue of an Exhibition of Prints and Watercolours by Raymond McGrath, shown at Deutscher Galleries, 22 April - 13 May 1979, compiled by Roger Butler, (Victoria, 1979). These sketches are included in the reproductions in this catalogue.
- 24 Raymond McGrath Prints, op.cit., "Biographical Notes".
- 25 See Chapter Six, page 230.
- 26 Lionel Lindsay, "Rembrandt v. Kalsomine", Art in Australia Third Series, No.63, May 1936, p.57.
- 27 See Chapter 4, page 144-145.
- 28 Julian Ashton, "The Society of Artists", op.cit.
- 29 Douglas Dundas, "Sydney Ure Smith and The Society of Artists", Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney 1950), pp.34-35.
- 30 Australian Print Makers 1840-1940, op.cit.
- 31 Art in Australia, Series 3, No.22, December 1927. Advertisement for Macquarie Galleries exhibition "Australian Etchings".
- 32 George Ferguson, "Sydney Ure Smith - Publisher", Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney 1950), pp.26-31. Bibliography, Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney 1950), pp. 40-45. On the death of Bertram Stevens, Leon Gellert became editor.
- 33 The Macquarie Book. The Life and Times of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Art in Australia, Vol.10, 1921.
- 34 Windsor, New South Wales. A Book Containing Original Etchings of Windsor by Lionel Lindsay and Sydney Ure Smith, Including a Descriptive Essay Entitled 'The Green Hills' by J.H.M. Abbott, (Sydney, 1921)
- 35 R. Keith Harris, "Character in Architecture. Individuality and Beauty", Art in Australia, New Series, Vol.1, Old Series Vol.12, 1922.
- 36 Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life. An Autobiography, (Sydney 1967). Many of the details of Lindsay's life have been obtained from this autobiography.
- 37 S.U.S. (Sydney Ure Smith), "Lionel Lindsay", Art in Australia, Vol.1, 1916.
- 38 Ibid. Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life, op.cit., p.250.
- 39 Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life, op.cit., p.250.
- 40 Letter from Julian Ashton to Lionel Lindsay, 8 June 1917, in which Ashton asks Lindsay to view his "old Sydney pictures"

- and make suggestions thereon. Lindsay Family Papers, Vol.2, 1902-1932, Correspondence, p. 53. Mitchell Library, MSS 1969.
- 41 S.U.S. (Sydney Ure Smith), "Lionel Lindsay", op.cit. Harold S.L. Wright, "Sir Lionel Lindsay", in Sir Lionel Lindsay. Etchings and Drypoints. Ure Smith Miniature Series no. 2, (Sydney, 1949) p.8.
  - 42 S.U.S. (Sydney Ure Smith), "Lionel Lindsay", op.cit.
  - 43 Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life, op.cit., p. 251.
  - 44 Ibid., p.252.
  - 45 Harold S.L. Wright, op.cit., p.2.
  - 46 Entries under 'Lionel Lindsay' and 'Sydney Ure Smith' in the Index to the Sydney Morning Herald, held and maintained by the Library of the Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney.
  - 47 Harold S.L. Wright, op.cit., p6.
  - 48 Lionel Lindsay, Conrad Martens. The Man and His Art. Revised Ed. Sydney 1968, (first published 1920), p. 9.
  - 49 Ibid., p.22.
  - 50 Lionel Lindsay, Addled Art, (1942, Sydney). Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life, op.cit., particularly pages 105-107.  
Lionel Lindsay, "Rembrandt v. Kalsomine", Art in Australia Third Series, No.63, May 1936, pages 55 - 58.
  - 51 Lionel Lindsay, "Rembrandt v. Kalsomine", op.cit., p.55.
  - 52 Bernard Smith, "On Perceiving The Australian Suburb", op.cit. p. 295.
  - 53 Lionel Lindsay, Comedy of Life, op.cit. pp. 92-93.
  - 54 Ibid., p.93.
  - 55 Ibid., p.94.
  - 56 Lionel Lindsay, "Twenty-Five Years of Australian Art", Art in Australia, Vol.4, Twenty Five Years of Australian Art, (1918).
  - 57 Gwen Morton-Spenser, "Sydney Ure Smith - Biography", Sydney Ure Smith. Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney 1950), pp. 7-9. Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, Catalogue of an exhibition, "Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, shown at Joseph Lebovic Galleries, (Paddington, n.d.), Introduction.
  - 58 Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, op.cit., Introduction.  
Douglas Dundas, "Sydney Ure Smith and The Society of Artists", Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney 1950), pp.34-35.
  - 59 Bertram Stevens, "Etching in Australia", op.cit.
  - 60 Sydney Ure Smith. The Etchings of Sydney Ure Smith, with Introduction by Bertram Stevens, and list of etchings. (1920)
  - 61 Melbourne Herald, 26 March 1924. Copies of this and other newspaper cuttings referring to the exhibition and book are available in a collection of newspaper cuttings made by Ure Smith and now held in the Mitchell Library, "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library, A 3240.
  - 62 Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, op.cit., Introduction.
  - 63 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 March 1921, "Sydney Ure Smith's Etchings".
  - 64 "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library, A 3240. Possibly this review was from the Sydney Morning Herald, 2 April, 1921.
  - 65 Julian Ashton, "The Society of Artists", op.cit., p. 11.
  - 66 Hal Missingham, "Sydney Ure Smith - Etcher", Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney, 1950), p.13.

- 67 Margaret Preston, "The WaterColour Work of Sydney Ure Smith", Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney, 1950), p. 19.
- 68 Sydney Mail, 13 December 1911, and other reviews found in "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 69 Newspaper review of unknown origin, found in "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 70 Sydney Mail, 13 December 1911. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 71 Town and Country Journal, 13 December 1911. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 72 Cutting from the 'Red Page' of the Bulletin, n.d. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 73 Daily Telegraph, 30 December 1911, Leader. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 74 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 December 1911. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 75 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 November 1912. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 76 Lone Hand, 12 January 1913. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240. Note that the date ascribed to this article in Ure Smith's newspaper cuttings is 12 January 1912.
- 77 Newspaper cutting of unknown origin. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 78 Sydney Mail, 25 December 1912. "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 79 "Relics of Old Colonial Days" in "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 80 Gwen Morton Spenser, op.cit., p.10. Sydney Ure Smith and His Friends, op.cit., Introduction. Bibliography, Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, op.cit., pp. 40-45. The Home was also taken over by the Sydney Morning Herald in 1934.
- 81 Norman Lindsay, "Art in Australia", Sydney Ure Smith Memorial Catalogue, (Sydney 1950), p.22.
- 82 Gwen Morton Spenser, op.cit., pp.9-10.
- 83 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 November 1924.
- 84 Sydney Ure Smith, "The Aesthetic Beauty of Sydney" an address delivered before the NSW Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 5 July 1938. Architecture, 1 August 1938, pp.181-183.
- 85 Sydney Morning Herald, 30 January 1937.
- 86 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1922. Leader, "Looking Backwards".
- 87 Daily Telegraph, 30 December 1911 in "Press Reviews, 1911-1921", Papers of Sydney Ure Smith, Vol.8. Mitchell Library A 3240.
- 88 Bernard Smith, "On Perceiving The Australian Suburb", op.cit., pp. 295-300.

## CHAPTER SIX

## ARCHITECTS: COLONIAL REVIVALISTS AND PRESERVATIONISTS

Although interest in the historical value of early buildings dominated debates about preservation for the first thirty years or so, a shift towards greater emphasis on their visual and architectural qualities became evident towards the end of the 1930's. This coincided with the emergence of the architects as active campaigners for preservation. Their contribution to the cause of preservation was two-pronged: on the one hand, they were direct and significant participants in contemporary issues and debates, and, on the other, they encouraged the concept of preservation and influenced its direction through the development of architectural thought, even when this had no direct connection with preservation issues of the moment.

To a considerable extent participation in the campaigns of the 1920's and 1930's was the result of the work of individual architects who were either directly involved themselves or managed to secure a measure of support from their professional association, the Institute of Architects of New South Wales (later Royal Australian Institute of Architects, New South Wales Chapter). These individuals included men who led or joined deputations to the Government, or who participated in committees and other groups seeking the retention of particular buildings and especially those involved in arguing for the future of the Macquarie Street buildings. Architects were among the first to

suggest the need for a systematic approach to preservation, specifically through legislation [1] and later through a separate organisation such as a National Trust. Although their numbers were small, the quality of their contribution was high and, by virtue of its professional nature, prestigious and respected.

Also contributing to a drift towards an architectural emphasis was the search for an 'Australian style' which had often been discussed in architectural literature from the late 19th century onwards. In the 1920's some, like W. Hardy Wilson, found an answer in the tradition of the early colonial period, 'a return to the work before 1840'. Their understanding of the old styles, often presented in an artistic as well as architectural form, had great appeal and was quickly assimilated by sympathetic artists and historical enthusiasts. This new appreciation of the style and sophistication of early colonial buildings combined with the more general desire to establish a local architectural tradition to highlight architectural aspects of the State's earliest buildings.

From the 1880's to well into the mid 20th Century the development of an Australian style of architecture was frequently discussed. 'National' style became a part of architectural thought in the period. As early as 1887, for example, the English-born architect John Sulman suggested that an Australian style was to be found "not in Gothic, a stone style, developed under the misty skies of Northern Europe", nor in Queen Anne, which was full of "quaint conceit and petty details", but rather

in "the broad simple treatment of the stucco covered buildings of Italy". He continued, stressing the importance of the 'Australian' style verandah,

"It (a national style) will have to be developed, however, with a difference. We are of English race, and love light and air; hence window spacing must be larger...The first step in advance must be the recognition of the verandah as a portion of the whole design, and indeed, when properly treated, as its leading feature in such a climate as we possess." [2]

In 1903 John Barlow wrote

"The necessity for verandahs and balconies in this semi-tropical climate of ours, and the fondness of the people for the cottage - or more properly speaking the bungalow - principle of planning, is slowly but surely evolving a house in this State which may be claimed to be almost distinctly Australian." [3]

First published in 1917 as the official journal of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and West Australia, Architecture stated its 'purpose' in these terms:

"It was founded to make the Architects of Australia an articulate force in the body national; to acquaint the members of each institute with what action the other Institutes are taking on all public and professional questions which have to do in any shape or form with the art and craft of Architecture; to foster the development of a distinctive Australian National style of Architecture; to encourage as far as possible the utilisation of Australian materials in building and thereby stimulate the development of our Continent; to obliterate slums and "jerry buildings" and improve the health of our people; and to interest Public and Governments in the Home Beautiful, the Civic Palace Splendid, and the City Magnificent." [4]

Professor Bernard Smith and other writers have pointed to an association between this search for a distinctly Australian style of architecture and the 'national aspirations' of the late nineteenth century. Smith, for example, has argued for the so-called Federation villa as a distinct Australian style, "For

it was born within the context of a discussion about the nature of an Australian style which parallels the political discussion that led to the foundation of the Commonwealth" [5]. Hugh Fraser in his recently completed study, "The Federation House", subtitled "Australia's Own Style", writes that "The nationalistic spirit of the 1888 Centennial celebrations gave impetus to the search for an Australian identity and its architectural expression" [6]. Conrad Hamann stresses nationalism "as a motive force in Australian architectural thought between 1880 and 1920" [7]. Many recent writers have pointed to the uniquely Australian features of Queen Anne architecture and other components of the Federation style [8].

While some architects continued to design Federation villas until at least World War I, others looked away from it, weary of the ornamentation and endless elaborations, and asked for a national style that highlighted climate, light, local materials and such overseas trends as the revival of interest in English Georgian architecture, and Mediterranean and Americal Colonial styles of domestic building. Rejection of the Federation Villa was expressed in an extreme form by the novelist Martin Boyd when he wrote, under the pseudonym Martin Mills,

"Worse...are the so called "Queen Anne" villas, which bear as much resemblance to the sober dignified houses of the early eighteenth century, as a modern chorus girl to a mid-Victorian duchess. These "Queen Anne" villas have turrets, leaded stained glass windows, bows, projections, gargoyles, and an excess of filligree wordwork. I ...hope (to hold) the two up to as much hatred, ridicule and contempt as is possible." [9]

In 1919 a special number of Art In Australia appeared on Domestic Architecture in Australia, and contributors included Sydney Ure Smith, Hardy Wilson and Harold Desbrowe-Annear, a 'modern' architect [10]. According to Johnson, it exposed "the discontent and frustration of the early twentieth-century architect" [11]. It also illustrated the desire for a new and Australian style of architecture.' For example, Professor Leslie Wilkinson, who had arrived in Sydney the year before to take up the first chair of architecture in Australia, expressed a preference for "a more formal manner based on Italian and 'Colonial' work", Hardy Wilson wished for "a delightful prospect to return to the work before 1840" and others thought the climate "points the way to the Mediterranean as our closest parallel". Annear himself considered that "other countries cannot help us" [12].

Many of the architects who rejected prevailing styles in favour of simplicity and clear outline, looked to tradition and "extracted from a lucky dip of styles of the past" [13]. They found their examples of architectural achievement in the English Georgian, the Mediterranean, and in Italy or Virginia and produced a variety of historically reflective designs. Unlike a few, of whom George Taylor was one, they were unacquainted with modernism in architecture, or if through travel or journals they were acquainted with European and American modernist architecture, they tended to reject it as unsuitable for Australia. From among these architects came some, like Leslie Wilkinson, who were influenced by overseas models. "Although his first love was Italian architecture, (Wilkinson) saw the



architecture of Spain and in particular the derivative colonial aspects found in America as ideal for Australia" [14]. The Mediterranean and Georgian references were often combined in his designs [15]. Others, among whom Hardy Wilson was outstanding, sought to revive early Australian Georgian or colonial styles. In the two decades between the wars, one architectural historian of the period has written, the most important period influence of all was the Georgian "which had enjoyed a revival in the United States...and in the English work of Sir Edwin Lutyens" [16].

Both Wilkinson and Hardy Wilson were predisposed by their interest in the Georgian style and their emphasis on light and simplicity of outline to look favourably on the early architecture of Sydney and to see the qualities they most admired in the surviving buildings of the first half century of settlement in New South Wales. Wilkinson shared Hardy Wilson's love of Burdekin House and other Macquarie Street buildings. It was not surprising that he and fellow architects in the Institute of Architects of New South Wales allied themselves with those who struggled against demolition in the 1930s and moved towards leadership in preservation debates. Much of their knowledge of such buildings they owed to the historians or to the architects who had actually participated in the colonial revival.

Among architects in Sydney occasional interest in colonial buildings had begun as early as the late nineteenth century. In the 1880's, James Barnett, New South Wales Colonial Architect, replaced Francis Greenway's Macquarie Lighthouse with a faithful

recreation built nearby and in 1889 John Sulman praised 'the old colonial' while advocating architectural reform [17]. In 1899 James Barnett compiled a list of old colonial buildings, praising Francis Greenway and dispelling a popular belief that these buildings were amateur pieces designed by Governor Macquarie [18]. John Barlow, as editor of a new Sydney journal, Art and Architecture, became "an enthusiastic champion of Sydney's Rocks area", and in 1908 published a series of articles on Sydney's Georgian architecture by Frank Walker, a founding member of the Royal Australian Historical Society [19]. The Sydney Institute of Architects' Secretary, George Sydney Jones, praised "the buildings of Macquarie"; to him, they were "a welcome escape from 'the cloying forces of tradition' which 'bound Australia's spirit'" [20].

Although considered by one historian to be "at the end of a long line of revival activity" in his use of early colonial models in the houses he designed [21], William Hardy Wilson had a great influence on the approach of architects and the general public to early colonial buildings and in this way helped to create an awareness that preceded concern for their preservation.

Hardy Wilson, born in 1881, began his training as an architect in Sydney at the turn of the century. In 1905 he left to pursue his studies in Britain and from there with fellow architect, Stacey Neave, travelled in Europe to study masterpieces of European architecture [22]. Italy, especially,

appealed to them. They made measured drawings of buildings and considered the suitability of Mediterranean styles for the Australian environment [23]. They then toured the United States and Canada before returning to Australia in 1910 [24]. In America, according to Tanner, Wilson was interested in the work of the contemporary American architects whose inspiration derived from the 18th century American Georgian tradition and Roman Imperial Grandeur [25]. Wilson wrote during his travels that it seemed likely architecture in Australia would "follow the same course which had been taken in the United States". The old colonial style was the "most beautiful that Australia has known" and subsequent developments had been inadequate [26]. He had the idea then that "the way to improve might be through the old colonial style since the cost was not too great nor the style too advanced" [27]. As Lionel Lindsay later recalled,

"Hardy Wilson was the first Australian to study at first hand, with line and rod, the Italian masterpieces of architecture. His taste for Georgian led him later to Virginia, to examine the beautiful examples of Old Colonial so carefully conserved in the Southern United States; so that, when he settled in Sydney, upon his return in 1910, he possessed a fixed intention and ideal. This was the revival, with improvements of our colonial architecture." [28]

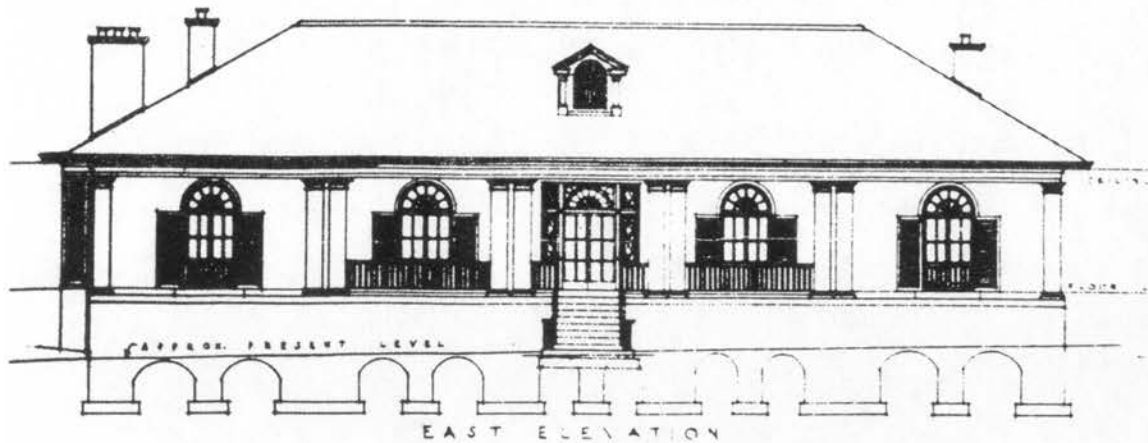
On his return to Sydney, Wilson was disappointed by prevailing standards of architecture in Sydney and only the persistent persuasion of friends prevented him from moving to Canada [29]. He regarded much of Australian architecture as unsuitable, particularly the Gothic style which was designed for a cold climate and utterly overworked [30]. It was in these circumstances that he first set out to examine and record in drawings or watercolours the early colonial buildings of

Australia. Some of his earliest drawings were exhibited in Melbourne in 1910 [31]. In 1911 he set up in practice with Neave but early commissions were "few and ungratifying" [32]. Often in low spirits, he later wrote, he found inspiration and solace in the contemplation of the older buildings of Sydney.

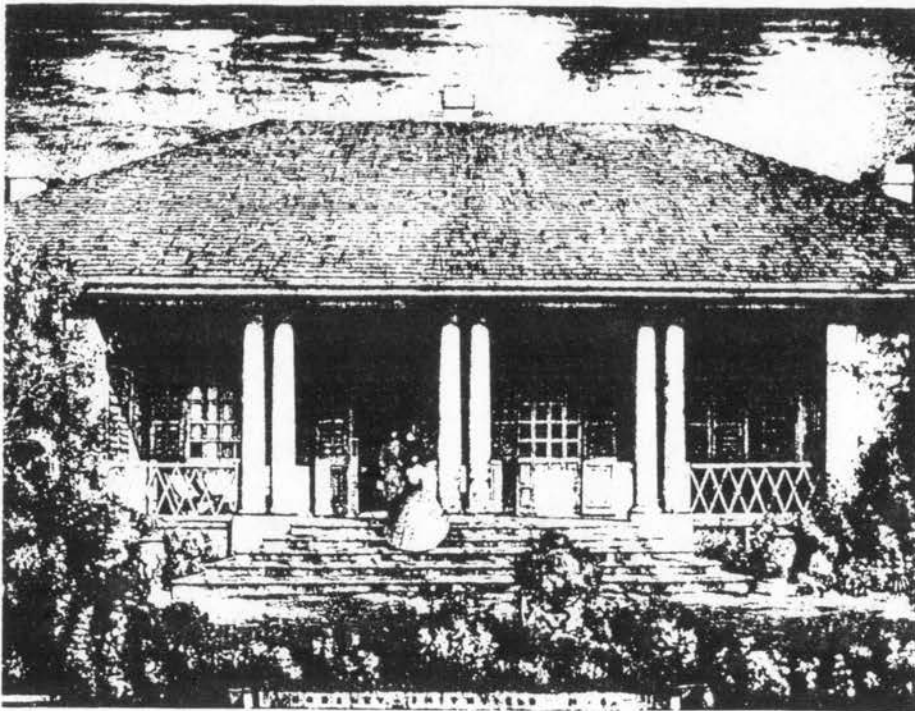
"I found joy, hope and determination in contemplating St. James' Church and the old Hyde Park Barracks, each bearing a name I have come to love and revere: Lachlan Macquarie Esq.....I shall carry on the tradition laid by Greenway instead of hopping from fashion to fashion." [33]

The influence of both southern American colonial and the Australian colonial styles showed in his early commissions, and it was not until 1912 to 1913 that the designs became consistently Australian colonial, coinciding with Wilson's new preoccupation: the recording by illustration, of the best late-Georgian architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania [34].

In 1913 he found a new client in a contemporary, E.G. Waterhouse (later Professor) and was commissioned to design a house in Gordon. The result, Eryldene, was his first building in a style that came to be described as 'colonial revivalist' [35]. A year later, in 1915, he designed and built for himself, Purulia, at Warrawee, with its white walls, apple-green shuttered windows and wide-eaved roof with tiles of shingle pattern [36]. Neave enlisted for overseas service and the practice was closed, but after several years it reopened and Wilson and his partners, including John L. Berry [37], worked in the 'Georgian' or 'colonial' style, with some use of Chinese styles in buildings undertaken directly by Wilson. The buildings Wilson designed based upon the colonial ideal included: Macquarie Cottage,



*William Hardy Wilson's design for proposed cottage in Claremont Road, Burwood (c. 1914). This was designed in the Australian colonial style which Wilson developed from his study of colonial houses such as Horsely. From William Hardy Wilson - 20th Century Colonial (National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), Sydney, 1980).*



*Horsely, Smithfield (c. 1832). Drawing by W. Hardy Wilson, 1916. From William Hardy Wilson - 20th Century Colonial (National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.), Sydney, 1980).*

however in 1930 after a long spell of overseas travel. He became extremely restless, increasingly disillusioned about architecture and finally, after having spent five years on a Tasmanian farm and making two more trips to Europe, moved to Melbourne in 1936 [40]. Sydney Ure Smith wrote to Lionel Lindsay in April 1930 that Wilson had returned to Australia "as disgruntled as ever - not only Australia is lousy - but England is down and out - America impossible and the rest of Europe - hopeless. The only thing he prescribes for the world's salvation is the use of Chinese architecture" [41]. In later years before his death in 1955, "wavering between genius and eccentricity" [42], he devoted himself to writing and produced designs for fantasy buildings in a future city of Kurrajong. Wilson himself wrote of his general disillusionment, speaking in the third person, "to adventure forth in quest of a new style was beyond the imagination of his people" [43].

Varying estimates have been made of the importance of Wilson's work and its impact on contemporaries, ranging from Saunders' view that the colonial revival style itself "never achieved much of a place at all" to D. Johnson's claim that "Leslie Wilkinson and Hardy Wilson not only had widespread influence on architecture in general, but on the acceptability of the various forms of the new architecture, especially the International Style" [44]. The issue is not really relevant to the present work, which is more concerned with the impact of his drawings and writings, for this was the area in which he influenced the growth of the concept of preservation.

Wilson was himself both artist and architect. While an architectural student he had taken lessons in drawing and painting from Sydney Long [45], and, although essentially romantic and even sentimental, his art was a more direct and architectural statement than that of many of his contemporaries. He practised in both pen and ink and watercolours, and was exhibiting as early as 1903 [46]. Wilson joined the Society of Artists of which Julian Ashton was President and it was Ashton who encouraged him to write as "a means of arousing the indifference of the people to the necessity of beauty in their midst" [47].

From 1913 Wilson set about making an architectural record of the best examples of late-Georgian architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania. Finding that no such record existed he determined to make it himself [48]. These were "about the pleasantest years of my life", he later recalled, "when (I was) seeking and finding beautiful old buildings in the early settled parts of New South Wales and Tasmania", the "pictorial beauty" of which he found "irresistable" :

"When footsore and weary I plodded, mile on mile never knowing what the day would bring forth; when, like as not, there would be no prize at the end of the journey. But I cared not a straw, for pioneering in the footsteps of the pioneers who made the wilderness a garden and planted it with Beauty, gave me to rejoice." [49]

The task continued at every opportunity until 1922 when the last drawing was completed [50]. The end result was a series of approximately one hundred drawings and sketches and fifty measured drawings, in which he had had the help of S. Neave and

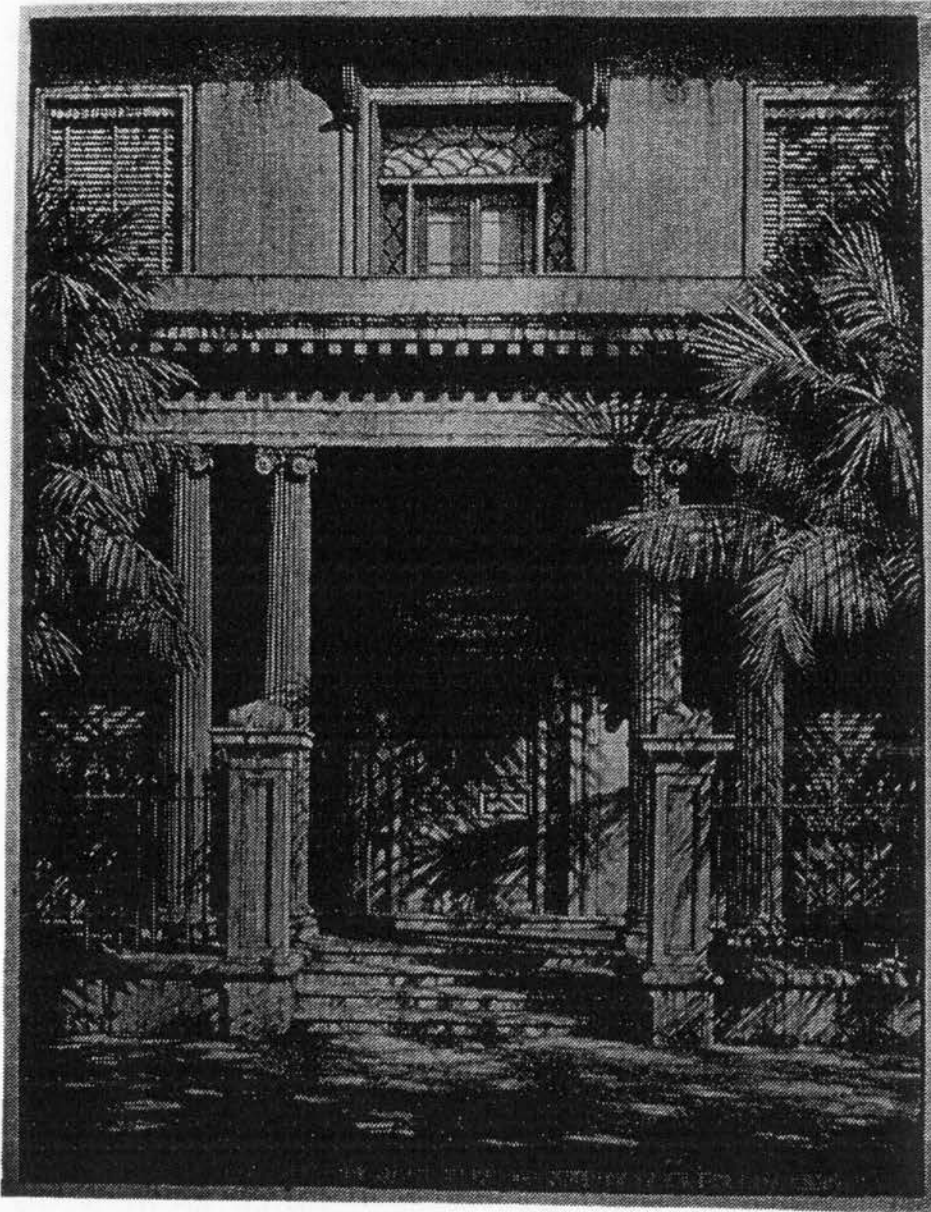
John Berry [51]. About fifty of the drawings were exhibited in the Fine Art Gallery of Anthony Horder's Store in 1919. In the catalogue for that exhibition Wilson described the principles that had guided him.

"In making this record most of the time has been given to the search for the finest architecture of the period. As the work included had to be that which showed architectural refinements, information usually proved misleading. Consequently there was nothing for it but a personal search from street to street and from town to town." [52]

The area covered extended from Port Macquarie to Nowra and inland to Goulburn and Hartley in New South Wales and included most of the settled districts of Tasmania. The period ranged from 1809 to about 1850 [53]. Occasionally the 'search for the finest architecture' led to a decision which might seem surprising to the conservationists of to-day. For example, the Old Government House at Windsor and Elizabeth Farm House at Parramatta were acknowledged to be older than the earliest buildings selected but were omitted on the grounds that they were "not so interesting in design or planning" [54]. The catalogue contained a powerful plea for preservation and deplored the indifference which led to decay, 'thoughtless' alterations and demolition. Buildings of the finest period were still standing, equal to any that had gone, he claimed, St James' Church, Burdekin House, Subiaco, Newington and Horsely. In Sydney, he considered that at the present time only two survivors of the best period, Burdekin House and the Old Treasury Building in Lang Street, were worth preserving. Further afield, old houses were less likely to be destroyed but they were more likely to be disfigured by alterations.



"At Newington..alterations have been made which could not well have been carried out with less regard to the original design. At Subiaco and St Matthew's, Windsor, the alterations are equally thoughtless. Almost everywhere alterations and additions show not the least understanding of the style. And all this could have been done just as easily without disfigurement." [55]



*"The Burdekin House". Pencil drawing by William Hardy Wilson. From W. Hardy Wilson, Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania (1924).*

In 1923 Wilson accepted an invitation to show his work in London. The British Department of Education arranged for the display to be held at the Victoria and Albert Museum [56]. It was well received, and Wilson was able to make arrangements for the publication of Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania, containing fifty of the drawings exhibited. The reproductions were made by Arthur Jaffe, of the firm of Max. Jaffe, Vienna [57]. The publication of the book in Europe and America was handled by the Medici Society; six hundred of the one thousand copies were sent to Australia where the author acted as publisher [58]. It too was very well received. William Moore wrote in 1926 that the drawings seen in the book represented "the greatest achievement in research ever attempted by an Australian architect"; the most beautiful examples of the priceless tradition of early Australian architecture which, as Wilson said 'is the basis of our culture', had now been placed on record for all time [59]. Lionel Lindsay considered it a "beautiful book", "a noble folio" and the fulfilment of the artist's destiny [60]. In March 1925 the Editor of Art in Australia urged that the original drawings should be "bought and retained in this country...No record such as this has ever been made, and it is unlikely that it will ever be attempted again...If the originals are sold separately to private buyers, they will be lost to students and historians" [61]. In early 1926 the Commonwealth Government agreed to purchase the collection of one hundred and sixty drawings and measured drawings for the National Library, which was soon to be founded in Canberra [62]. The timing and nature of the decision is

indicative of the strong impact the book made immediately upon publication.

The drawings reflected Wilson's individual mix of architect and artist. Lionel Lindsay wrote, "his work is deliberate, it owes nothing to the casts of change", he searches, arranges, establishes the architectural character of each building by logical exposition of its form and yet "there is nothing too formal or didactic in his presentment....the obviously picturesque, the bravura of romance are banished from these pages." The work was a "monument raised to the beauty of these old, old buildings, a record which was itself a work of art" [63]. Another contemporary commentator, John Lane Mullins, noted the blend of artist and architect in Wilson, and commented on his own admiration for Macquarie period buildings:

"The artist and architect are happily blended in a strong personality, and the problem for himself (Wilson) and his friends is to determine which predominates..... He has devoted particular attention to buildings of the Georgian type erected under Governor Lachlan Macquarie between the years 1810 and 1821....They possess much inherent beauty of form which the consequent tones of age enrich. Any harshness of outline is subdued by the same mellowing agency. All the glory of their comparative antiquity and the softening effects of time are reproduced with skill, fidelity and imagination by Hardy Wilson." [64]

Wilson wrote in 1919 that he had drawn the buildings as accurately as he could and endeavoured to show detail clearly although as the drawings progressed, he became more and more interested in the representation of the textured surfaces of the old buildings and the beauty of light. The earliest drawings were more architectural than the later, but in all he had made "the architectural excellence of the buildings (his) first

consideration" [65]. Again in 1923 he wrote,

"I began with the intention of making an architectural record, but the work had not progressed far when the pictorial beauty of the subjects proved irresistible, and I looked at the buildings with a painter's eye as much as with an architect's.

Thenceforth those subjects were selected which appeared likely to result in beautiful drawings, and the beauty of architecture lies as often as not, in the light and setting as in the form, colour and architectural excellence..... Thus, as I came to know the Old Colonial work better, it was the play of shadows on sunlit walls, the surrounding gardens, and golden reflections that held by admiration, and from hard and tight architectural drawings, I turned to the pursuit of that most elusive of beauties, light! Side by side with light was the textured surface of buildings and the foliage of trees.....

Although beauty in light and texture, and in the setting, became more and more of an attraction in the later years of making the collection, yet the quality of the design in the buildings selected was never disregarded." [66]

Although he had a general love of early Australian architecture, it was the buildings of the Macquarie period which received his highest praise. Among them he included Burdekin House which he, like others, suspected had been wholly or partially designed by Greenway. In the Macquarie years he saw an idyllic period of "simple charm" expressed in "the peaceful life of the gentry on the countryside in the old Colonial days of New South Wales..." [67].

"At the head of this peaceful community was Lachlan Macquarie, Esquire, Governor of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. By his beneficent rule and humane administration, by his courage and unwavering belief in the future of the new Colony, and by his enthusiasm for fine architecture, Macquarie lifted the life of the colonists from primitive conditions to a state of security and stability. Under his patronage well-constructed stately buildings were erected, and responding to his encouragement and initiative the landholders followed his example." [68]

Although his administration was short-lived, Wilson claimed that Macquarie had managed to establish "beautiful architecture in

what is often called the 'Macquarie' style and on which Old Colonial has developed" [69].

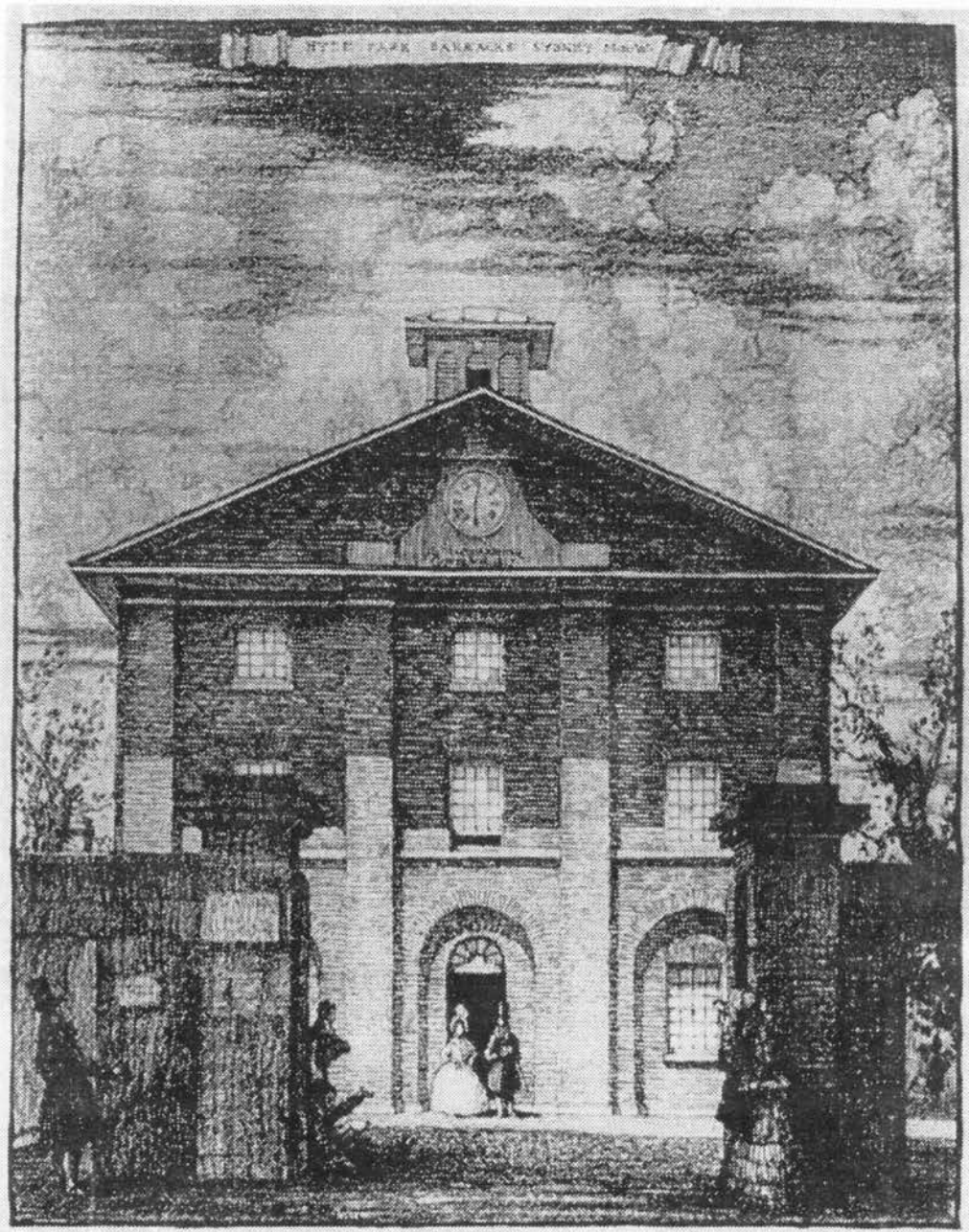
This was the period of Francis Greenway, whose architecture, Wilson wrote in Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania, had "never been excelled in this land" [70]. In Art in Australia's Macquarie Book, published in 1921, he wrote of Greenway as the originator of a local architectural tradition. It was a poignant essay, expressing an empathy with the life of an artist struggling against an unsympathetic environment:

"There is sadness in the task before me; the Life of which I have to write was, perhaps, the saddest in the early history of New South Wales. Nevertheless it is a task that fills me with delight, for in undertaking it, I hope to reveal in his true light an obscure artist who succeeded, in the face of overwhelming difficulties and ceaseless opposition and, I might almost say, in spite of himself, in creating architecture which has become singularly precious because there is so little of it and because it is the foundation of art in Australia, well and truly laid.

.....Greenway was an artist in the art of architecture, and was I believe, something of a painter too. Although he was twice forbidden expression in his art, he designed enough buildings, during the few years when he worked with Macquarie, to show that he was the most accomplished architect who has dwelt in Australia." [71]

In his introduction to Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania he singled out for special praise the Hyde Park Barracks building, a building that was to be at the centre of the preservation debate in the 1930s,

"To the simplest structures he (Greenway) gave a monumental scale, beautiful proportions, and delightful textured walls. His bigness of scale, rarest excellence in his art, is nowhere better expressed than in the Hyde Park Barracks...which are barren except for Greenway's rare feeling for scale." [72]



*"Hyde Park Barracks". Pencil drawing by William Hardy Wilson.  
From W. Hardy Wilson, Old Colonial Architecture in New South  
Wales and Tasmania (1924).*

Like Lionel Lindsay, Wilson believed that "materialism had destroyed creativeness" in present day civilization, and art and the artist were the only means of rectifying that destruction. Like Lindsay too, he wrote as a means of arousing the interest of people to the necessity of beauty in their midst and had been encouraged to do so by Julian Ashton. "Through all history" he wrote, "in past ages of every land, it is only beauty which remains as evidence of a people's art in upholding the position of humanity on earth. People are judged by the works of beauty they leave". He believed that beauty alone survived the test of time and centuries of critical judgement [73]. He perceived beauty in the old buildings of Macquarie's day and lamented their limited appreciation in his own time:

"Even in Australia where there are no ancient buildings, the test of beauty is applied. What lover of the beautiful passes before the Burdekin House to consider the convenience of its plan? Who the critic that sees afar the colonnade of the Commonwealth Parliament Building, crowning the rise at the end of Bourke Street in the City of Melbourne, and reckons the cost of it?

...In Australia, beautiful old buildings become precious in the eyes of few persons. There are folk in our midst who take a curious pride in saying that beauty means nothing to them; and nothing alters their attitude, which, for the most part, proves unchangeable." [74]

It is surprising then to find that this man, who had been the architect of the colonial revival movement, did not actively participate in preservation issues, particularly when they involved the Burdekin House and Hyde Park Barracks, the two Sydney buildings chosen for illustration in his Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania. Wilson did wish to see preserved the 'best' of the early colonial buildings and in the early years issued strong pleas for the safeguarding of the

buildings. In 1919 for example, he wrote

"In all probability there are not existing in New South Wales more than a dozen buildings built before 1830, that should be carefully guarded from disfigurement or destruction. If they are allowed to pass beyond restoration to their original designs we shall lose the foundation of architecture in Australia. From the early work we learn what was done in the beginning; what changes were made to suit the climate; what wood and brick and stone has best withstood decay...Without them we have no familiar past on which to build. And when an architect needs to refresh his memory with the sight of work well done or to renew his feeling for scale, symmetry and proportion, he goes to the buildings where in craftsmanship of an earlier day he finds a standard higher than his own. And these old buildings hold the memory of Pioneers better than the books in our libraries or the pictures on our walls. Maybe we have not learnt to appreciate their beauty and their usefulness, but love for them is dawning. And it is certain that students will go to them that they may learn. Already they are doing this for there is no better way." [75]

However by the time the issues required more active support, Wilson's attention had turned elsewhere. He was deeply disillused with 'his people' and his profession and had retired before the debate centred on the Macquarie buildings.

Indirectly his contribution to the growth of knowledge, respect and love of the old buildings, had been immense. The Sydney Morning Herald leader of July 1, 1922, entitled 'Looking Backwards', gave credit to Wilson for having taught Australians how to look at Sydney and its environs with a more appreciative eye; by the exercise of his craft, it said, he had rescued many a gem from forgotten obscurity [76]. Without Wilson's research and drawings of the buildings, without his writing, his promotion of the colonial revival style and without his influence on contemporary architects and artists, preservation issues would have had a less sympathetic audience.



John L. Berry, a younger partner in Hardy Wilson's firm which he joined in 1920, also designed in the colonial revivalist or 'Georgian' style. He contributed articles on architecture and interior design to The Home, in several of which he examined the Australian architectural tradition and its early colonial origins. In May 1928, for example, his article "The Message of our Fore-Builders, An Examination of Some of The Work of Our Early Colonial Architects" praised the Macquarie era buildings:

"It was he (Governor Macquarie) who first gave to these buildings an architectural character, or attempted to plan the settlements with some regard to architectural order. He administered here a short eleven years, but his influence lived on another quarter of a century, and we have much to thank him for." [77]

These buildings, he wrote, had been neglected for so long because of "the potency of Victorianism" which had "overwhelmed this transient offshoot of Georgianism" and "exercised its baneful sway as actively here as in other English communities" [78]. Fortunately, he continued, Victorianism had run its course and become "impotent before the changes of modern taste", with the result that "there comes a revival of interest in these early buildings of ours, almost exactly a century after the time that Lachlan Macquarie, the greatest of the pioneer builders, was a sojourner in this land". Berry warned that there were still dangers despite the new respect for the Georgian styles, for these were signs that "the lessons to be learned from the Macquarie buildings" could be easily forgotten under the stress of "modern industrialism"; it was preferable Berry wrote, that such designers (and he does not make clear which designers) had remained content with mediocrity, "than that they should drag our

only traditions in the dust" [79]. The article was accompanied by large photographs showing details of early colonial homes. Each was chosen to illustrate Berry's 'creed' of the dignity, simplicity and thoughtful design of the Macquarie era and having been photographed by some of the best Sydney photographers of the period, provided evocative pictorial material [80].

A year later, again in The Home, Berry published another article, "Old Colonial Buildings, Showing the Genesis of the More Dignified Forms of Australian Architecture". He described modifications made to the European tradition for the Australian climate with its intense sun and long summers [81]. "By these unaffected means", Berry concluded "did our early Colonial builders make their small contribution to traditional Architecture". Burdekin House, Sydney, one of those most admired by both Berry and Wilson, was described by Berry in The Home in 1929, drawing attention to evidence that the "dictates of climatic and local conditions have made themselves felt, and instead of the restricted portico so usual with the others (English Georgian), we have here a fine range of wooden columns supporting a wooden cornice across the full width of the front" [82].

Berry's essays suggest several aspects of revivalist thought, particularly, renewed respect for Georgian styles and a consistent emphasis on the Macquarie era buildings. It was a source of satisfaction and pride that through its early architecture, Australia was connected to the Classical

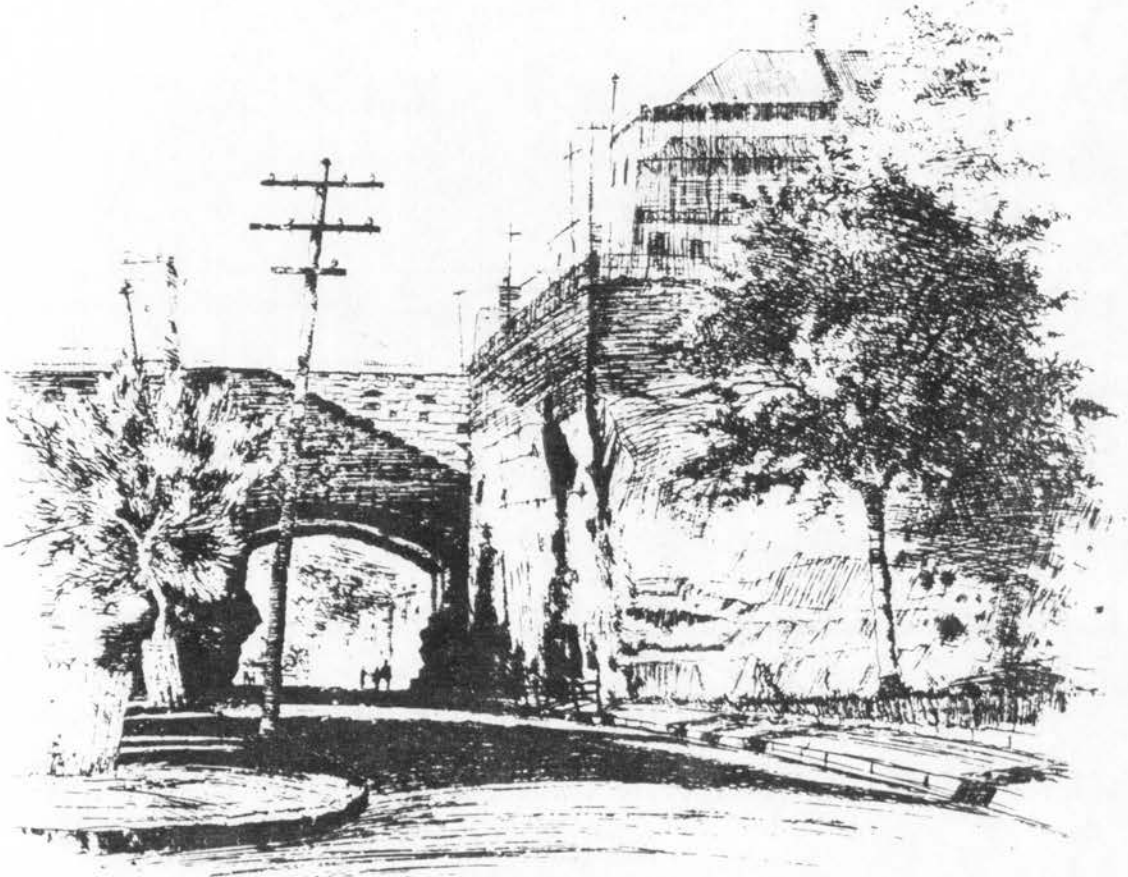
tradition, the greatest of all traditions in the Arts. 'Good Taste' and 'Beauty', of primary importance, were epitomised in tradition.

Interest in the early architecture of Australia was not confined to those who practised in the colonial revival style. Raymond McGrath, a friend of both Lionel Lindsay and Sydney Ure Smith and a producer of etchings, was essentially a 'modernist' architect and an expatriate from the 1920's onwards [83]. He produced a book entitled Twentieth Century Houses in 1933 in which he made favourable comments on Australia's early colonial buildings:

"My first love was for the Macquarie buildings, of which there are good examples in Sydney, Richmond and Windsor. The architect for these was Francis Greenway, who was made Government architect by Macquarie in 1816....He may have had no money, but he had uncommon good taste. He put up a number of great churches...with all the qualities of St. Paul's, Covent Garden....Every house he put up was first-rate. If present-day buildings in Australia kept up the quality of the best examples of such early work as this - Burdekin House, Subiaco, Clarendon, Riversdale, Graystones - that country would be equal to any in the art of building." [84]

As Sydney Ure Smith said, McGrath's modernity "has not been allowed to blind his eyes to the preservation of beauty, and his great tribute to Greenway's work as an architect should weigh with those who would sweep such a good example out of existence" [85].

In short, it was not necessary to be a Hardy Wilson or a John Berry to be interested in the early buildings or to desire their retention. Other architects, who considered themselves to be 'traditionalist' without claiming to design in the 'old



*"Argyle Cut, The Rocks". Etching by Raymond McGrath, 1922. From Raymond McGrath Prints, compiled by Roger Butler (Deutscher Galleries, Victoria, 1979).*

colonial' tradition, were interested in the surviving buildings and were to prove strong supporters of their retention. They included Leslie Wilkinson, John D. Moore, B.J. Waterhouse and R. Keith Harris. The architects introduced to the movement several important ideas other than those of a purely architectural nature, the most valuable of which was the need for protective legislation and, later, for a National Trust. Not surprisingly, given their bias towards the local 'Georgian', their activity centred on buildings dating from the Macquarie era.

The architectural profession as a whole naturally took a keen interest in the urban improvement programmes planned for Sydney. As early as 1910 the Institute of Architects of New South Wales, as it was then named, decided to invite Municipal Councils, together with other Associations and Institutes, including the Historical Society, to send delegates to a meeting to discuss the best means of urging upon the Government "the immediate necessity of taking such action as will start the carrying out of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Improvement of the City of Sydney and Suburbs". The advancement of the city and suburbs was proceeding so rapidly that the Institute felt seriously that any delays in implementing the programme would result in confusion, and disappointment, inconvenience, congestion and general loss to the community [86]. The delays that did follow only accentuated their concern. By the 1930's, when major remodelling plans were drawn up, architects were divided. Many were enthusiastic supporters of urban modernisation. George and Florence Taylor were outstanding proponents of the "put a bungler under them" attitude; they considered that the old buildings stood in the way of

progress and the city of the future [87]. Some architects were concerned for the future of the old colonial buildings, while others wavered between the seeming demands of a 'beautified city', and a respect for the old existing buildings.

It would be easy to present a dramatic confrontation between those who sought to preserve the old buildings and those who disregarded them in their enthusiasm for modernity, progress and the city of the future. But the situation was more complex. There were many who while supporting retention of the nation's heritage, recognized that the city had to expand and that there was a need for compromise. Many in the Royal Australian Historical Society felt this way, as did numerous architects. B.J. Waterhouse was one whose attitudes well reflected the dilemma of many [88]; he strongly supported preservation but later advocated the demolition of the Barracks to facilitate major proposals for the redesign of Macquarie Street. This was a period when, as Peter Spearritt has pointed out, most Sydneysiders "glowed with pardonable pride" to see the "giant strides their city was making" [89]. For the Institute of Architects and its members, there was a further complication. The major urban projects were being planned by one or other level of government, probably to be designed and executed by government-employed architects and many architects were concerned to ensure that the opportunities offered by these major projects were opened up to the whole profession, such as through the holding of open competitions, as was suggested in 1926 and again in 1938 for the redesigning of the Macquarie Street area

[90]. While the architectural profession as a whole battled with these dilemmas, many individual architects were concerned over the loss of existing historic buildings affected by those major undertakings.

Hardy Wilson and R. Keith Harris, architect and later lecturer in town planning at the University of Sydney, were among the first to make individual pleas for preservation. In 1919 Hardy Wilson spoke of the deterioration and destruction of so many old colonial buildings, warning that "we shall lose the foundations of architecture in Australia" [91]. Harris's interest is first evident in the early 1920's but continued throughout the next two decades; he was probably the most persistent and the most important of the architects behind the scenes as well as in public. After an absence of seven years overseas, Harris returned to Sydney in 1920 and was in the same year elected to the Council of the Institute of Architects. He was Secretary of the Town Planning and Housing Committee of the Institute in 1920-21 and in 1921-22 [92]. It was at this time that he wrote two articles for Art in Australia, praising the work of pioneers and the "simple form and fine proportions" of some of the earlier buildings. "They prove that a thing of beauty, irrespective of fashions or fancies, is not for its age alone, but for all time" [93]. In the following issue of the magazine he contributed an article specifically on the Hyde Park Barracks and its possible future use as a Memorial Hall; it was introduced with a reproduction of a recently discovered portrait of Greenway. It argued for preservation; in the past, Harris wrote, Australians had failed to see beauty in the simple lines

and studied proportions of much of their early architecture, which had thus been too often allowed to fall into decay, or else been wantonly abandoned:

"Even Greenway's building for Macquarie Barracks at the east end of King Street, one of the finest examples of the style in Sydney - is threatened. Examples of Gothic Revivals, Pseudo-classic and Neo-everything, surround it on all sides, ineffectually challenging its simple lines and fine proportions. Hemmed in by the most degrading collection of oddities which ever emanated from a Government Architect's office, it stands to-day as an aristocrat among 'nouveaux riches', who, not content with stripping it of all, are now clamouring for its very life." [94]

He ascribed neglect of historic buildings to the country's commercialism "which valued nothing that did not produce an immediate profit". Americans, he said, recognized art as having a moral effect upon the nation and possessing intrinsic value in itself; if Philadelphia and Boston could give the hearts of their cities to their historic buildings, the old Independence Hall and the Old State House respectively, "surely we in Sydney can spare to Greenway's Barracks the lot they stand on". The care and pride lavished on these two American buildings were "a bitter reproach to us". For the Macquarie Barracks, he wrote, there was still work which it could do and "do better than any other (building) in the city" and it would be an outrage if it was lost:

"This historic pile - page of our country's history - is only waiting the call to fulfil its duty to the soldiers of to-day as it did to their forebears a century ago. Its position is ideal from a utilitarian viewpoint. It needs but understanding and the eye of an architect whose mind is in accord with the spirit of the work to clear away the debris which surrounds it, to remodel the interior and provide a setting in character with the style and in harmony with the building.." [95]

It is likely that Harris was one of the main instigators of



activity in favour of preservation in the Institute of Architects and Town Planning Association. A colleague of John D. Moore and B.J. Waterhouse, he was also closely associated with Wilkinson, particularly after his appointment as Lecturer in Town Planning in 1934 [96]. Harris and Wilkinson received a joint research grant from the Carnegie Corporation, which resulted in a report, dated 1938, on Sydney, in which they expressed general disgust with the lack of planning in Sydney. It was Harris who led the 1934 deputation to the N.S.W. Government requesting assistance for preservation.

As early as 1922 the Institute of Architects formed, with the Royal Australian Historical Society, a deputation to wait on the Minister for Education to enlist his support for dedicating Burdekin House to the community as a museum [97]. Representing the Institute on that deputation were Professor Wilkinson, then Dean of the School of Architecture at Sydney University, B.J. Waterhouse and possibly a Mr. Pickering. The deputation was typical of the cooperative relationship which existed between the Institute of Architects and the Royal Australian Historical Society throughout the first half of the century.

In the early years the architects drew heavily on the knowledge of the Historical Society and its members for much of their information about the history of Australian architecture and individual buildings. Prominent members of the Royal Australian Historical Society were regular speakers at meetings of the Institute of Architects. As early as 1907 Frank Walker

lectured on the early colonial Governors' homes to the Institute and published an article in Art in Australia in which he recommended the preservation of historic places. [98] In 1920, now an Honorary Member of the Institute of Architects of New South Wales, he contributed to Architecture an article on "Historical Photography" and in 1924 spoke on "Australian Towns with a History" [99]. In 1926 he lectured on "Early Colonial Architecture", illustrating his lecture with sixty slides showing churches and historical buildings of New South Wales, Tasmania and Norfolk Island [100]. Karl Cramp lectured on "Historical Memorials and Buildings" in 1933 [101] and Frank Walker lectured again in 1935 [102]. In 1936 W.L. Harvard read a paper on Greenway to the Historical Society, and his lecture was attended by many architects [103]. A popular speaker from the Royal Australian Historical Society was Charles Bertie, who, in October 1926 told to the Institute of Architects "a most entrancing story in pictures of 'How Sydney Grew', tracing the first faint meanderings of George Street around the shores of what is now Circular Quay, and carrying his audience by means of plans, sketches, photographs and anecdote, through wonderful years of city-building" [104]. In the following year he gave an illustrated lecture on the history of Sydney to an audience that was "deeply appreciative of the many touches of quaint anecdote and personal history recounted 'en passant' - some pathetic, some humorous stories closely woven in and around the old buildings shown on the screen, practically all of which have now disappeared." In thanking the lecturer on this occasion the President, Professor A.S. Hook "questioned thoughtfully: Are we

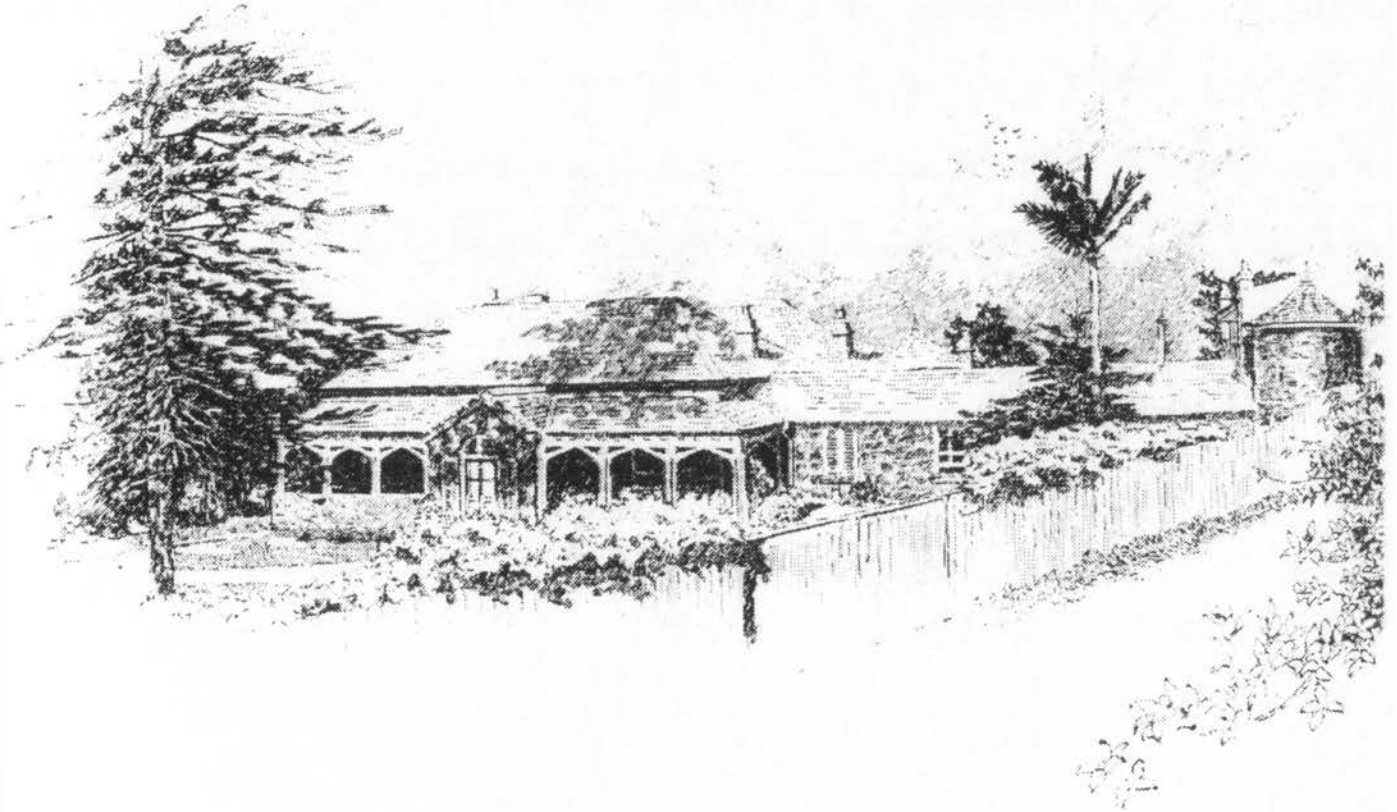
building as worthily as did the old souls who built the houses we have been looking at? I cannot help feeling that there is a very valuable lesson in the old, quiet, beautiful buildings of the past" [105].

A further opportunity for collaboration with the Royal Australian Historical Society came in 1930 with the decision of the Institute to make the Architectural Exhibition of 1930 an historical as well as educational event. With that end in view, representatives from Schools of Architecture at the Sydney University and Sydney Technical College and the Royal Historical Society (sic) were invited to join the Institute's Exhibition Committee. The exhibition included "old prints, photographs and drawings of historical buildings" [106].

In the thirties especially, the architects having expanded their own knowledge were active participants in preservation and their Institute gave professional support to deputations and debates. The mutual interests of historians and architects was cemented in their joint efforts on preservation issues such as the Hyde Park Barracks and then finally in the establishment of the National Trust in 1947. Both groups were well represented on that body when its first officials were named.

In 1934 the Institute of Architects strongly supported the preservation of Bronte House, the former home of Robert Lowe, located in the Sydney suburb of Bronte, and approached Waverley Municipal Council suggesting the conversion of the grounds of the house into a park for the purpose of securing preservation of the

house and grounds. While acknowledging that there was no immediate threat of demolition the Institute felt that it would be well if the house "could be preserved in its present character" as an "interesting example of the domestic architecture of its time" [107]. It was unusual for the Institute at this time to support the retention of one building so vigorously. Influenced perhaps by recollections of the recent



*"Bronte House". By Sydney G. Smith. From C. H. Bertie, Old Sydney, illustrated by Sydney Ure Smith (Art in Australia, 1911).*

demolition of Burdekin House, it gave strong support to one of the members of its council, K.H. McConnell, who urged that Waverley Council be asked to resume Bronte House as an Historic Building [108]. As usual, it sought to act in conjunction with the Royal Australian Historical Society [109]. In late 1935 a joint approach was made by the Historical Society and Waverley Council to urge the Government to resume the property for the nation [110]. A delegation was organised in 1936 on the initiative of Waverley Council and the Institute of Architects was represented [111]. Bronte House was exceptional to the architect's general pattern of involvement in preservation; it was neither a Macquarie era building, nor a particularly interesting one architecturally, other than that it represented an example of the domestic architecture of the period [112].

Without being active supporters of preservation of the old colonial style, many architects were drawn into the debate over the future of the Macquarie Street buildings, even as early as the 1920's when discussions of the future of the street were initiated. Major remodelling of the city was in the offing. Discussion of the future of Martin Place and the building of the City Underground, with outlets in the Hyde Park Area, opened up debate over the future of the whole of Hyde Park and the complex of buildings around Queen Victoria Square at the Macquarie Street end [113]. The future of the Hyde Park Barracks was thereby under consideration. Architects who were not directly concerned with the historical associations of the building were nevertheless professionally involved in the issues and forced to form an opinion one way or the other. At this time B.J.

Waterhouse recommended preservation of the Barracks:

"I know there is a great deal of difference of opinion as to the value of the structure, but occasionally on old building will carry on the traditions of our past history, and is worthy of retention...Apart from its usefulness ( and I contend that it can be put to use) the Barracks Building is beautiful in its simplicity and character. It has been said that it may interfere with the proposed scheme for the re-modelling of Macquarie St., and the erection of the new Mint, Parliament House and Sydney Hospital, but I think it can very fittingly be worked in as part of the complete scheme." [114]

He and others were deeply concerned that the Institute become involved in "probably one of the biggest civic improvements that is possible in our time" [115], and that the design opportunities be opened up to architects other than those employed by the state and city authorities. Planning on this scale lapsed with the depression and with it the latent conflict in the profession when it faced demands for preservation and demands for participation in architectural redevelopment.

Architects were again prominent in the deputations and discussion of the future of Macquarie Street and the Barracks in the 1930s. The December 1934 deputation, led by R. Keith Harris, was formed to urge upon the Government the need for preservation protection [116]. It included, besides representatives of the Royal Australian Historical Society and other groups, B.J. Waterhouse, President of the Board of Architects, W.R. Richardson, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (New South Wales Chapter) and A.J. Brown, architect and President of the Town and Country Planning Association of New South Wales. Harris put forward a personal request that the Barracks should be retained as a soldiers and sailors memorial, a suggestion he had made years earlier in Art in Australia. It was further suggested

that Macquarie and the early architects had given Sydney an architectural character which had been almost lost, but that where it remained it should be preserved; the arguments put forward from the deputation reflected an architectural point of view. Shortly afterwards the Institute took the first steps towards legislation in seeking overseas information about protective measures [117].

One of the earliest committees formed for preservation of the Barracks was the 1935 Council of the Associated Arts' Committee, which included both R. Keith Harris and John D. Moore as delegates. B.J. Waterhouse and A.J. Brown were appointed members of the 1934 Macquarie Street Replanning Committee; Waterhouse presided over the sub-committee which finally recommended demolition, while Brown, although concurring in the Committee's recommendations, made it known that he was not convinced of the need to demolish. The Committee as a whole claimed to have 'agonised' over the issue, and finally left it unresolved [118]. Professor Wilkinson was among the first to criticize the Committee's initial recommendation; it was ridiculous, he said, to say that the Barracks could not be put in a state of repair and there could be no necessity to use the site for other purposes if the Government looked upon it as an Australian Historical Monument and realised that they were the trustees of the few remaining historical buildings for the nation. The actual area covered by the Barracks would be small, he continued, if the "ugly excrescences were removed", and it could be made to fit into the scheme for the street as suggested

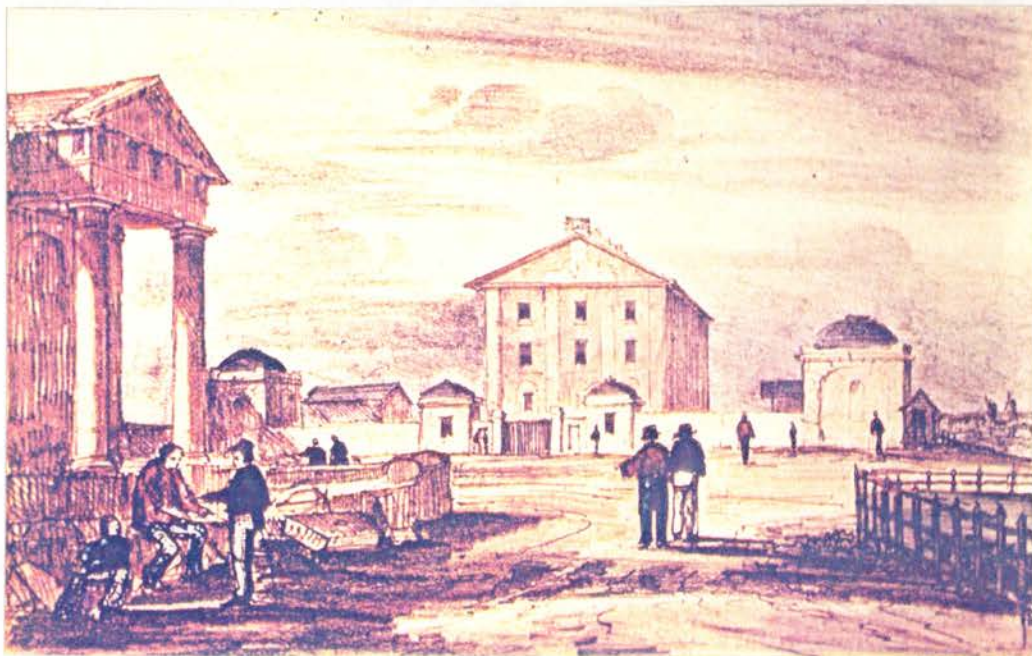
by the "fine drawing of Mr. R. Keith Harris" shown a few days previously in the Sydney Morning Herald. He continued:

"Macquarie Street used to be a beautiful street. Burdekin House was a stately feature of it, and the demolition of that historic building was a crime and a tragedy... We have made too many mistakes in removing beauty... Now, if the barracks are destroyed, half of a brilliantly planned scheme is swept away.

By the expenditure of a few thousand pounds a dignified, historic structure could be retained, which, at the same time, would provide considerable accommodation for housing increasingly valuable historical relics and records." [119]

The deputation of 1937 which followed the announcement of the Replanning Committee's recommendations included W.R. Richardson, Vice President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (New South Wales Chapter), who stated that he generally deplored the destruction of historical buildings with architectural merit and felt the destruction of Burdekin House had been a crime. The Barracks and St. James' Church would form the nucleus of an attractive city square and any deficiency in their architectural value would be compensated for by their historical associations [120]. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that many city architects strongly objected to the Committee's proposal for demolition of the Barracks; R. Keith Harris, for example, had said that from the town planning point of view, the retention of the barracks was as important as anything that had been suggested in all the Macquarie Street replanning discussions and John D. Moore had said that if the Barracks was submitted to a jury of half a dozen famous architects, the verdict would be that the building compared favourably with other major buildings in Sydney [121].





*"St James' Church". Watercolour by John D. Moore. From  
The Macquarie Book, Art in Australia, No. 10, 1921.*



*"Macquarie Lighthouse". Watercolour by John D. Moore. From  
The Macquarie Book, Art in Australia, No. 10, 1921.*

There are several explanations for the growing strength of the architectural interest in preservationist thought. The renaissance of interest in a local architectural tradition and the colonial revival school, perhaps the most important, have been discussed at length. Two other influences were evident. One is to be found in the nature of urban development in these decades. The latter, associated with images of 'beautification' and improved civic aesthetics, had become a major political issue; it was no longer sufficient to justify demands for the retention of an historic building on the basis of its age or historical associations, it was now necessary to argue for the building's contribution to the visual quality of the city as was apparent in all debates on the future of the Macquarie Street buildings. It is also interesting to consider the effect of professionalism in tilting the scales towards the architectural viewpoint. Whereas the historians were largely amateurs and their opinions were often stated with exaggeration and excess, characteristic of amateur enthusiast, the architects presented a professional image, one which possibly commanded public respect to an extent not awarded to the historians.

The contribution of architects added great strength to preservation both its ideas and practice, and undoubtedly helped preserve the buildings of Macquarie Street such as the Hyde Park Barracks. Whether colonial revivalists or preservationists, architects were a major influence on the movement for preservation from the turn of the century to 1939, and largely determined the nature of the preservation movement after World War Two.

## NOTES : Architects: Colonial Revivalists and Preservationists

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- 17 Conrad Hamann, op.cit., p.400.
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- 28 Lionel Lindsay, "'Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania', A Review", Art in Australia, Series 3, No.2, March 1925.
- 29 Caroline Simpson, op.cit., p.10. Howard Tanner, op.cit.,

- p.19.
- 30 Howard Tanner, op.cit., p.19.
- 31 Ibid.
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- 33 Ibid., p.19. Caroline Simpson, op.cit., p.10.
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- 103 Meeting of Members, 31 March 1936, Royal Australian Historical Society Council Minute Book, c. July 1933-April 1938. RAHS Archives.
- 104 Institute of Architects, Ordinary General Meeting, held 12 October 1926. Reported in Architecture, November 1926, p.13.
- 105 Institute of Architects of New South Wales, Ordinary General Meeting, held 5 April 1927. Reported in Architecture, May 1927. Professor A.S. Hook had joined the University of Sydney as an Associate Professor in Architectural Practice in 1926.
- 106 Architecture, January 1931.
- 107 Secretary, Institute of Architects to Sec. Royal Australian Historical Society, 19 April 1934. Royal Australian Historical Society Correspondence File, 1934 (marked '1924'). RAHS Archives.
- 108 Minutes of Ordinary General Meeting of the New South Wales Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 3 July 1939. Architecture, August 1934, p.171. This was the only occasion, as far as can be ascertained, when McConnell took an interest in historic buildings. In 1930 the Institute devoted an evening to a discussion of Modernism and traditional architecture and at that time he took the side of Modernism.
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## CONCLUSION

From Federation to 1939 the movement for preservation was dominated by the three groups whose interests and activities have been the subject of this analysis. Historical interests, represented mainly by the Royal Australian Historical Society, artists and architects were the core of the movement. Sometimes acting as individuals, and at other times as representatives of their group or professional association, they contributed both important ideas and active leadership and sponsorship. By 1939 they had learned to act jointly in campaigns for preservation, providing in this way sufficient strength and cohesion for their influence to be felt in public and official attitudes towards the built environment.

By the late 1920's there was ample evidence of a new attitude towards the buildings sites and structures of the past, a growing awareness of the gradual erosion in numbers of these 'relics' and a new perception of the need to act to safeguard their future. Historians were most vocal on the subject, but artists and architects such as Sydney Ure Smith and William Hardy Wilson made important contributions. The Sydney Morning Herald's leaders gave important support. Actual campaigns in the period were typically on small issues. They elicited token government response and achieved some minor successes. Gains were made only where local or state administrations recognised a need to meet public demands at minimal cost, or where a few individuals took



the initiative as in the case of the Swanns or Leo Buring. Many buildings were lost, including Veteran Hall and Calder House. Preservation supporters had not yet developed the skills of organised protest and they lacked a sense of direction and strength, qualities they would only gain at the expense of continued losses and from the accumulation of wider support for their cause. The latter was in turn dependent upon public acceptance of the importance of the 'historic sense'. The Royal Australian Historical Society played a crucial role in developing the community's 'historic sense' and in its support for preservation. Although seemingly of a minor nature the advances made in this period, namely recognition of the need to act to safeguard the future of the buildings of the past and the actual steps taken to this end, when considered as aspects of the broader change towards a greater appreciation of historic buildings, are the hallmarks of the period and identify it as the beginning of the preservation movement.

In the 1930's the issues became more numerous and more complex and preservation supporters responded with increasing sophistication. The demolition of Burdekin House in 1933 proved to be a watershed, and from that time on protests gained wide support. Leaders of agitations spoke with greater confidence and urgency. Charles Bertie of the Royal Australian Historical Society coined the phrase 'century disease' and others repeatedly drew attention to a staggering depletion of the State's historic resources. It was towards the end of the period that a seemingly irreconcilable conflict emerged between those who sought to

preserve the old buildings of the inner city area and enthusiastic sponsors of urban development. By virtue of its support of the latter, and its failure to retain historic buildings in its possession, the State Government became a focus of attack. Support for preservation had broadened and developed in its ideas but still found itself unequal to the task. Recognition of the inadequacy of its present circumstances gave rise to suggestion of the need for an organisation solely devoted to the purpose of promoting and seeking preservation.

Emphasis on the increasing support for preservation throughout the 1920's and 1930's should not be taken to imply that the pressure was continuous or without omissions in its application. In fact there were major limitations to that interest, illustrated well by the examples of the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the attitude towards the Victorian terrace houses of the inner city suburbs. The land around Dawes Point had been occupied by buildings dating from the earliest days of settlement. However when many of these were demolished to make way for the Sydney Harbour Bridge and its approaches little protest arose. No letters on the subject appear in the records of the Royal Australian Historical Society, the main forum of protest at the time. Probably support for the Bridge was so overwhelming that protest did not seem an option. Less surprising was the lack of interest in the inner city terraces, many of which were 'cleared' for slum eradication programmes or the construction of flats. Those who clamoured to save buildings dating from the Macquarie and early colonial periods did not

raise a voice for the Victorian terrace. A primary concern with buildings of the colonial era, particularly those associated with Governor Macquarie and his architect Francis Greenway, was characteristic of all three groups of preservation advocates, historians, architects and artists. It was not until the late 1940's, when the artist Sali Herman first began his series of inner city landscapes, that a more sympathetic view of the Victorian terrace house appeared.

During the campaigns for Hyde Park Barracks and the buildings of Circular Quay, enthusiasts for preservation had experienced the benefits of combining their efforts. Individual architects, artists, town planners, historians and others had been drawn in on occasion. The Royal Australian Historical Society continued to be preeminent among the groups involved in these campaigns, although other professional organisations and interests were often vocal and influential. The need for an independent organisation to promote preservation had been advanced. Some individuals had acquired knowledge of overseas organizations with similar aims during travels abroad and that knowledge had lent confidence to the campaigns. The combined effect was not sufficient to secure from the government a firm commitment to the long term preservation of the Macquarie Street buildings, but there was a major achievement in the dramatic concessions the Government was induced to make in saving them from immediate demolition.

During these formative years a preservation movement had

emerged, broadened in scope and interests, and more sophisticated politically. It had grown from the relatively minor interest of a few historically-minded persons to a well developed movement with wide community support, a substantial group of active campaigners, a history of agitations, both successful and unsuccessful, and a faith in the validity and rightness of their cause. By 1939 it had emerged with a set of ideas and ideals which challenged and yet gained strength from the new concepts of urban development.

No doubt the outbreak of World War II saved the Mint Building, whose fate was considered sealed in 1939, but behind the survival of both the Barracks and the Mint lay a new awareness of the value of such buildings to the community. The long years of building the 'historical sense' had born fruit. Techniques of agitation had been tested and the benefits of cooperation had been experienced. Without this awareness the movement for preservation could not have evolved so rapidly after the war. It provided a firm foundation on which the National Trust, formed in 1947 with support of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the architects, was to build.

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