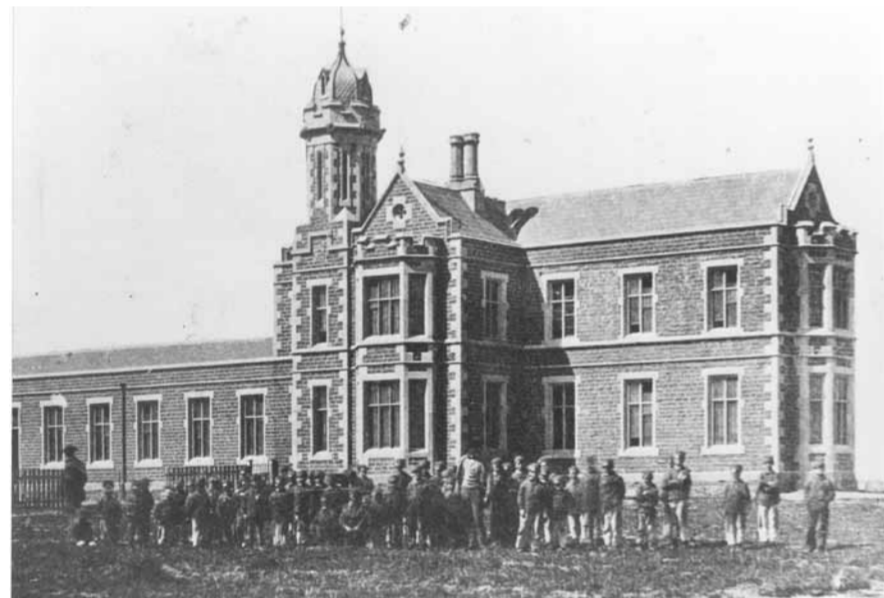
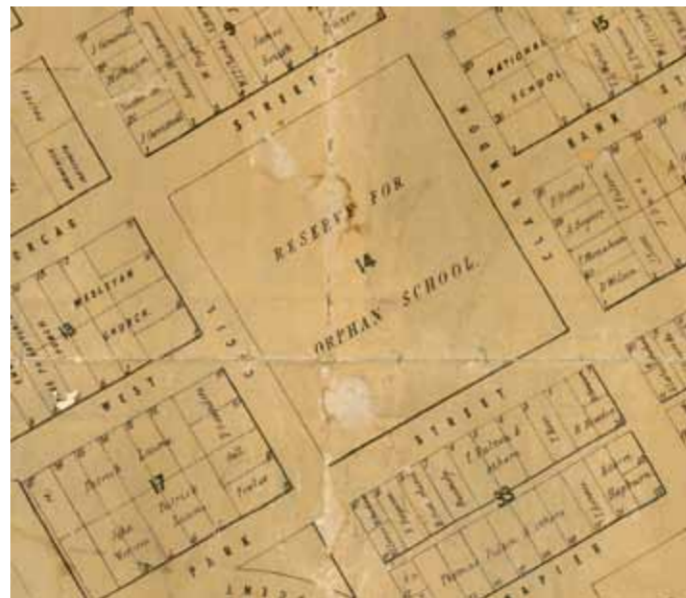




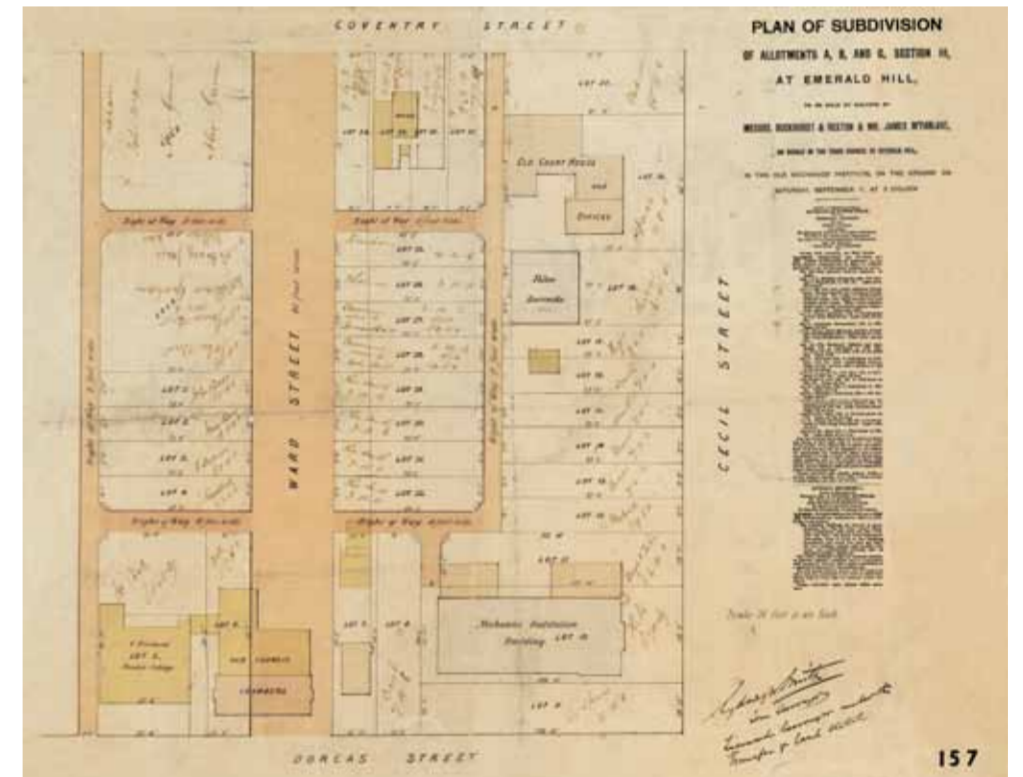
Corroboree on Emerald Hill 1875. Artist: W F E Liardet (1799 – 1878). Watercolour with pen and ink, gouache and pencil. Courtesy State Library of Victoria



Melbourne Protestant Orphanage 1870s. (PPCC sm0527)



Site of Orphanage (PPCC sm2690)



The site of the first municipal chambers in Dorcas St, c1855. (PPCC sm0408)

## The Site

South Melbourne was first known as Emerald Hill because the hill on which the Town Hall now stands was a green island surrounded by swamps. The Hill was a traditional social and ceremonial meeting place for the Yalukit Willam, one of the five clans of the Boon Wurrung, members of the Kulin nation. A great gathering was witnessed there in 1840 by a number of the early European settlers.

In 1855, Emerald Hill became the first suburb outside of Geelong and Melbourne to become a municipality. The City took as its motto *In Ordine Primum*, translated as 'first in the field'.

The land on which the Town Hall was later built was the site of the Melbourne Protestant Orphan Asylum from 1855 - 1878. The Government had granted the land for this purpose, however over the next twenty-five years the community grew quickly and ideas changed about the use of this land.

Between the years 1855 and 1871 the population of Emerald Hill tripled and the Orphanage site was dividing the emerging town into halves. After a great deal of campaigning, in 1878 the Orphanage was relocated to a site in Brighton. Preparations commenced to build a new town hall on this prominent location.

# CITY OF SOUTH MELBOURNE.



DAVID WOOD, Photo.

South Melbourne.

## Town Hall.

South Melbourne Town Hall c1889. Photographer: David Wood. (PPCC smo437)



## A Monument to Civic Pride

*The South Melbourne Town Hall, one of Victoria's grandest Town Halls, was officially opened on 24 June 1880. This magnificent building was a symbol of the prosperity and importance of South Melbourne during Victoria's building boom years. Today, the Town Hall stands as an expression of civic pride.*

The imposing two-storey building, designed by Charles Webb, features an elaborately ornamented façade, bluestone steps leading up to a substantial portico and a handsome, three storey tower featuring a clock in four sides of the middle storey. The original Emerald Hill Town Clock was awarded first prize in horology at the 1880 International Exhibition held in Melbourne, and was installed at the Town Hall in 1881.

The mansard rooves, urns and ornamental chimneys that adorn the building were removed in the late 1930s - early 1940s. They were progressively reinstated in the 1990s. Since 2000, the former grey colour of the Town Hall façade, familiar to many residents of South Melbourne, has been rendered and restored to resemble the original sand stone colour.

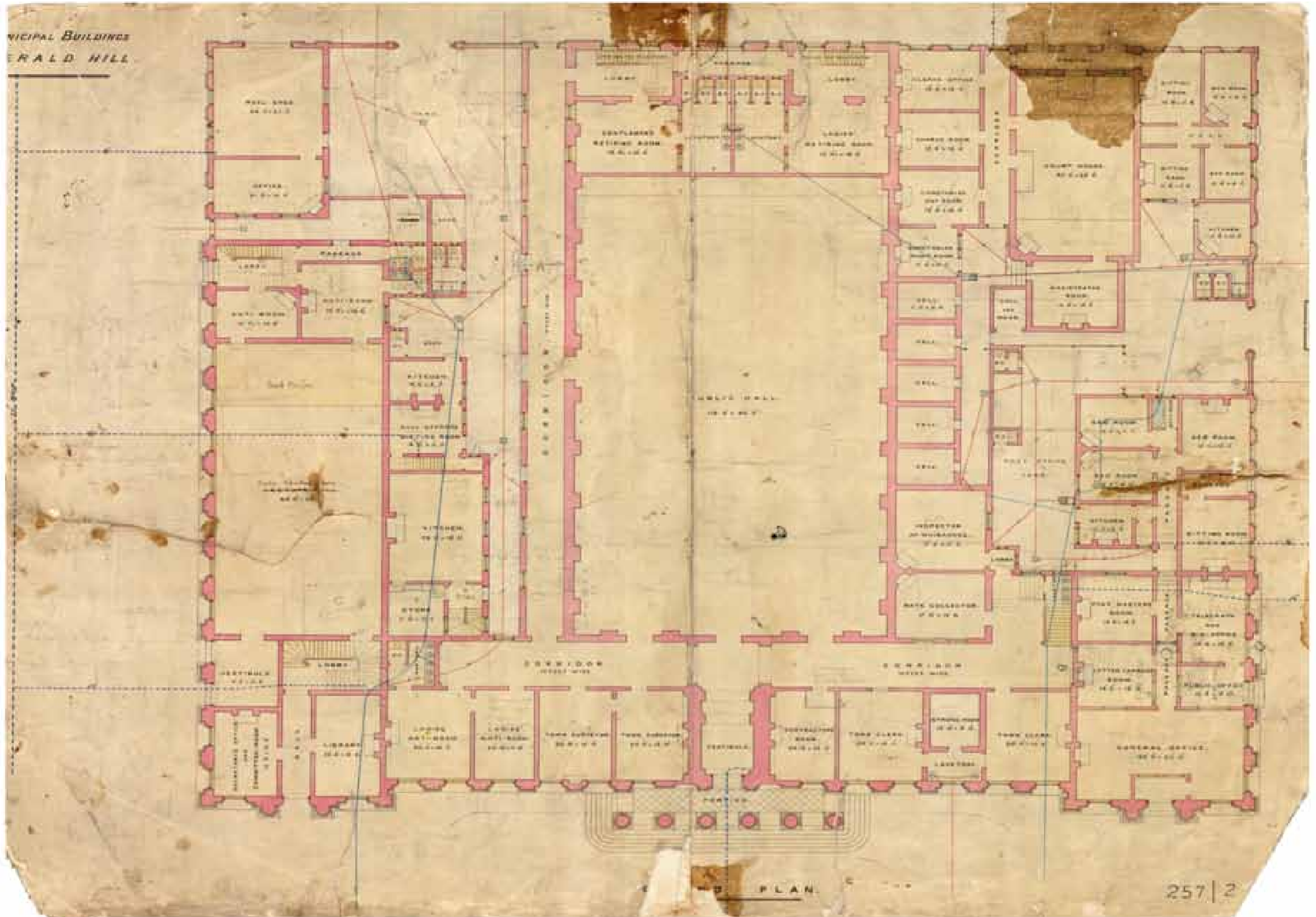
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Emerald Hill Municipal Chambers Floor Plan 1879. (PPCC)

The fire brigade station, a small building consisting of a shed for the fire reel, a bell and a room for the members, was located at the back of the west wing facing Daly Street.

The west wing of the Town Hall with the entrance in Bank Street housed the Mechanics' Institute. A lecture room occupied the ground floor. Upstairs was the main reading room, a ladies reading room and chess, smoking and card rooms.

The Police Station and Court House were entered from Daly Street. Within this precinct was a yard with an iron gate leading to a row of five cells. The police sergeant's house and quarters for unmarried constables was also located in this area.

The Post and Telegraph Office was located in the east wing with the entrance in Bank Street. There was also a five roomed residence for the Postmaster. The first person to hold the position was a Postmistress, Mrs Mary Kate Oldham.



The New Municipal Buildings, Emerald Hill 1879. Artist: C F Pittard. (PPCC sm0112.1)

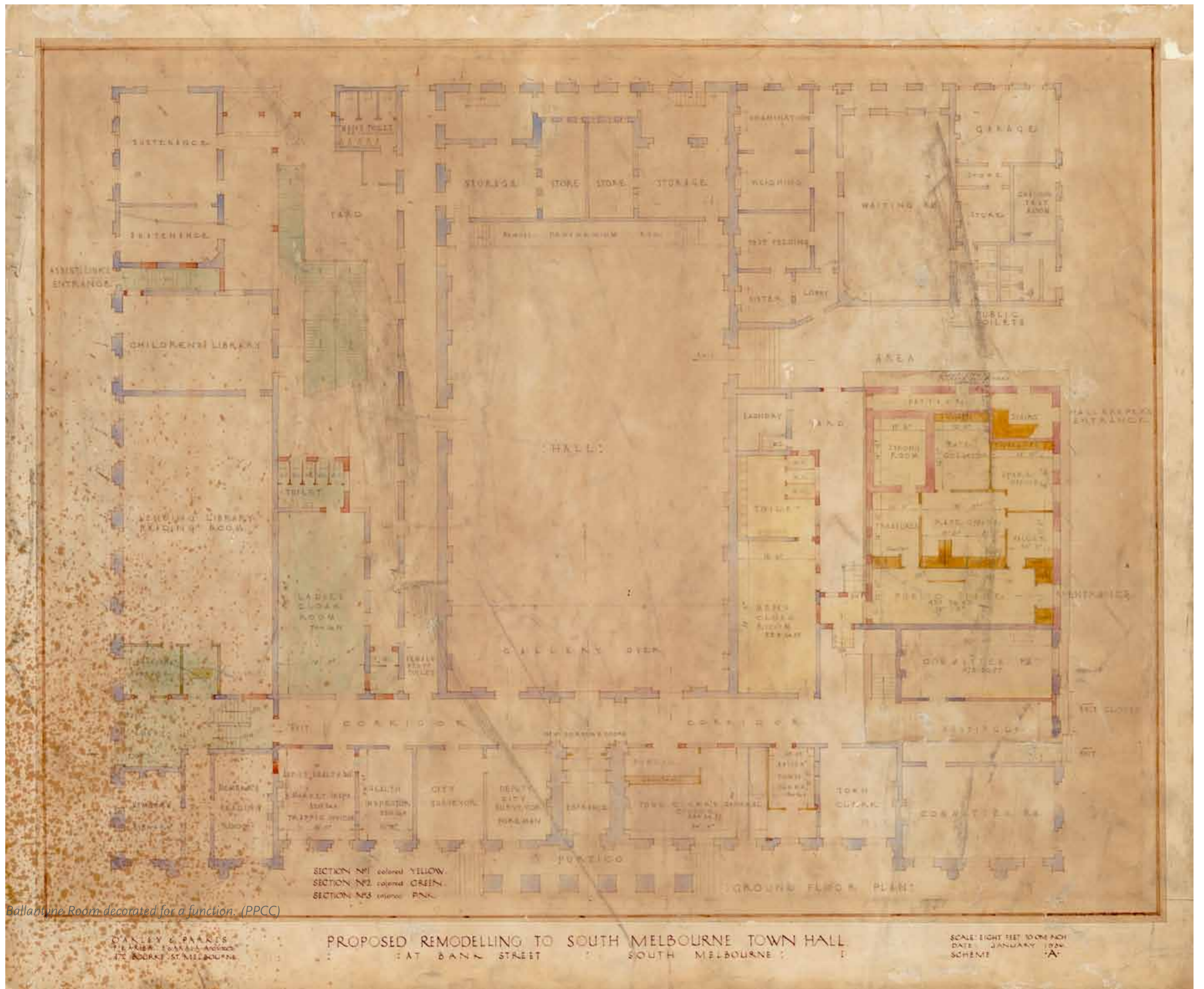


Council workers outside South Melbourne Town Hall 1900. (PPCC sm0522)

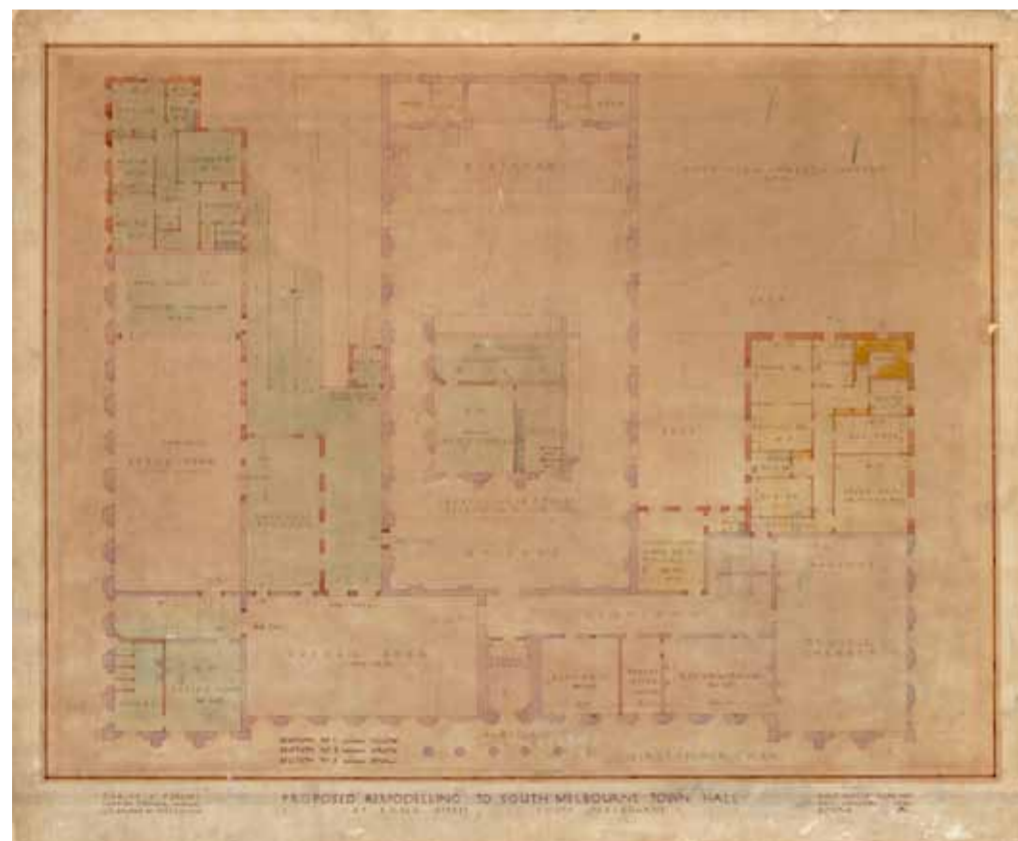
## A Town Hall For All

*“The opening of the handsome pile of buildings for the Town Council, the Mechanics’ Institute, the Post and Telegraph Office, the Police Department and the Fire Brigade, marks an important epoch in the history of Emerald Hill.” - The Record, 25 June 1880*

The South Melbourne Town Hall was to be a true civic centre with accommodation not only for the municipal council, but also for other essential, educational and community services.



Ballantine Room decorated for a function. (PPCC)



Plan of proposed renovation of South Melbourne Town Hall by Oakley and Parkes 1936. (PPCC sm0412.1-2)

## A Significant Renovation

*In 1938 the interior of the Town Hall underwent major changes in order to accommodate Council's changing civic responsibilities, and to consolidate much of the extra space. The Post Office had relocated in 1913; the Court House and Police Station in the 1920s and by 1937 the Mechanics' Institute had ceased functioning.*

Significant interior reconstructions were made to improve the library which, by 1938, occupied a large portion of the downstairs section of the west wing where the Mechanics' Institute had been located. In the main hall, the stage was remodelled. The Council Chamber was also significantly remodelled, redecorated and refurnished.

The South Melbourne Town Hall was renovated by architects Oakley and Parkes at a cost of £20,000.



South Melbourne General Library 1950-1959. Architect: Horace J. Tribe. (PPCC sm0425)



South Melbourne Town Hall theatrette 1970s. (PPCC sm2050)



South Melbourne Public Library 1944. (PPCC sm0825)

## Mechanics' Institute & Library

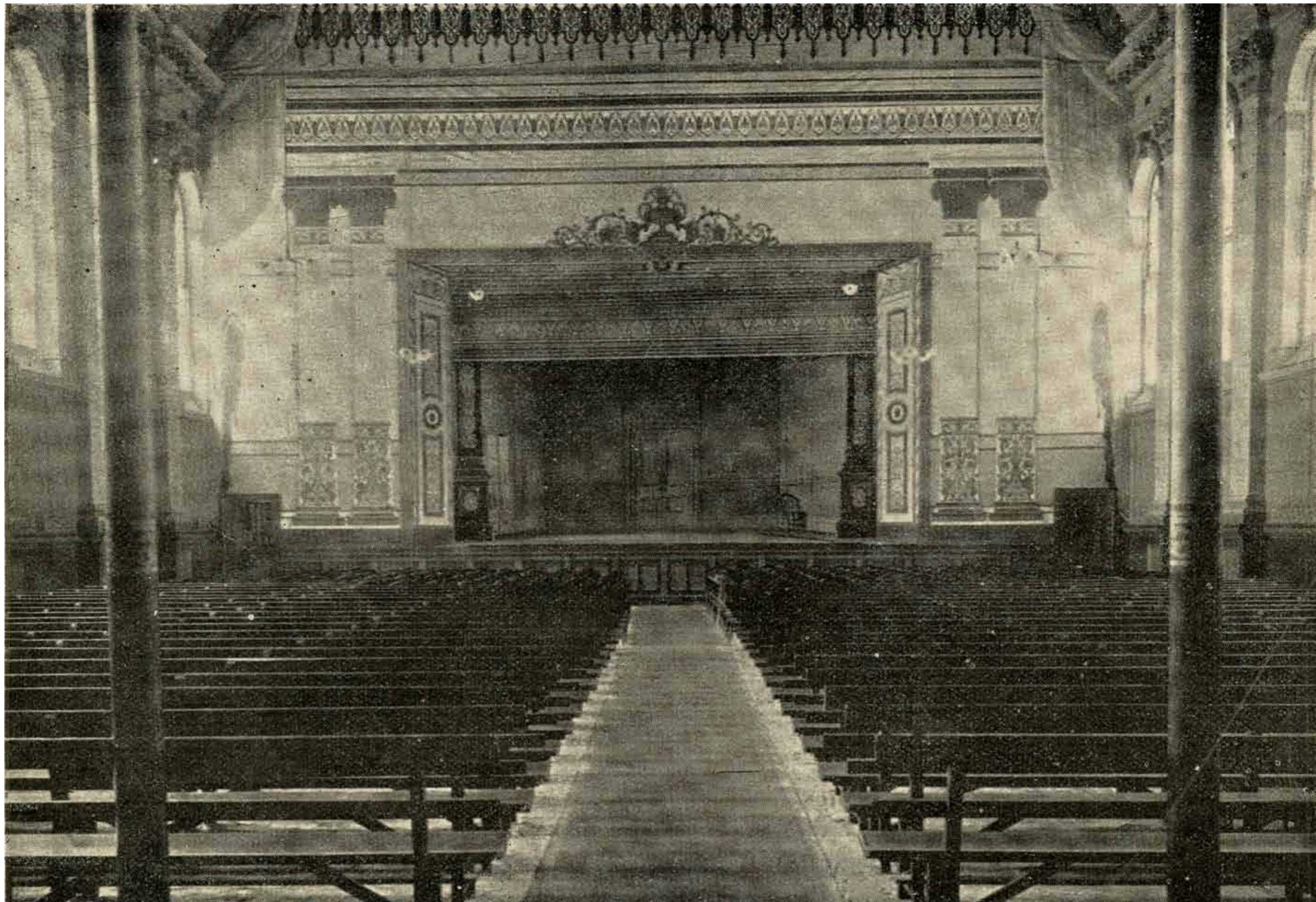
*Mechanics' Institutes were established in Britain in the 1820s to provide working men with access to technical books and lectures on their crafts. The original Emerald Hill Mechanics' Institute opened in 1857 in Cecil Street. It offered a subscription library, reading room and lecture series for its members.*

A new Mechanics' Institute was incorporated into the design of the 1880 Town Hall on the western side of the building. In 1887, the South Melbourne Mechanics' Institute opened its reading room to the general public. By the end of the 19th century, a free public lending library had been established for all.

In 1904 the Council took over the management of the Mechanics' Institute and continued the services of the library. By 1922 a children's library had also been established.

The 1938 renovation saw improvements to the library, including a theatrette for lectures and films. At the same time, the Mechanics' Institute ceased to operate, and the library was renamed the South Melbourne Public Library.

From the mid 1980s a smaller library relocated elsewhere in the Town Hall, where it remained until 1995.



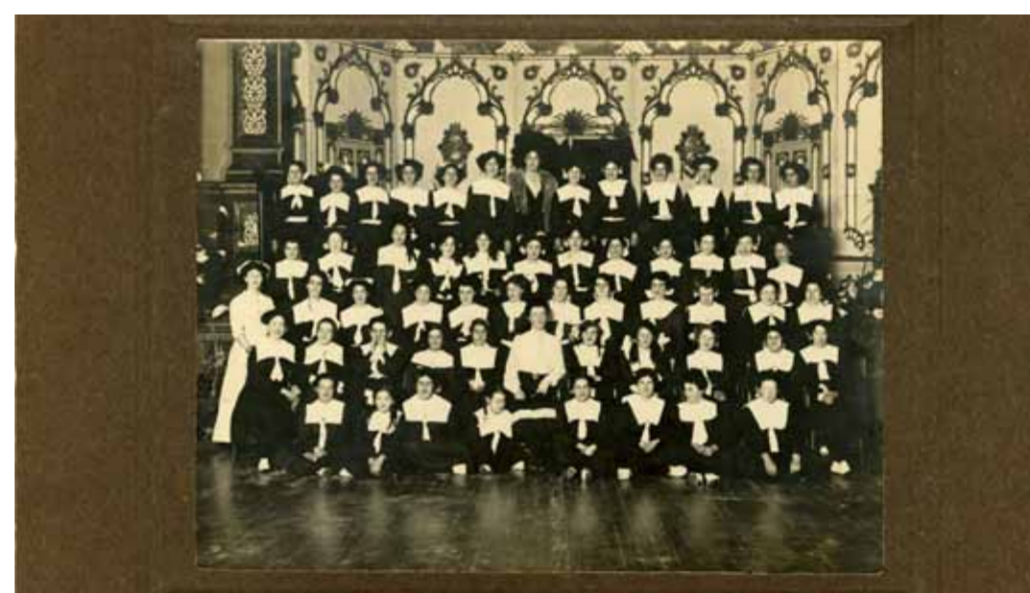
Interior of the main hall 1900-1910. (PPCC sm1268)



Naturalisation ceremony, South Melbourne Town Hall 1960s. (PPCC sm1082.1-2)



Interior of the main hall c1950. The proscenium arch was removed from the stage during the 1930s renovation. (PPCC sm2471)



Gym display at South Melbourne Town Hall 18 October 1909. (PPCC sm2452)

## Main Hall

*The opening of the Town Hall was celebrated in style in 1880 with several social events including a grand ball for which the main hall was tastefully decorated and opened to many guests.*

With its polished timber floor, majestic 40 foot high ceilings, imposing stage and rear balcony, and 2000 seat main hall, it has remained a truly grand "Town Hall" bringing people together through a variety of community events. Citizen's balls, luncheons, theatrical entertainments, dance and gym displays as well as musical recitals have been features of the main hall throughout the years.

Howson's Pictures leased the Town Hall on Saturday nights, holding regular picture shows until the 1930s - finally coming to an end when the main stage was changed.

George Whinney's Dance Studios ballroom dances and competitions were held every Saturday night in the Town Hall in the 1940s.

Young debutantes were welcomed into society and migrants participated in naturalisation ceremonies.

The South Melbourne Symphony Orchestra gave its inaugural concert in the hall in 1946 as part of the South Melbourne Arts Festival and continues to perform here.

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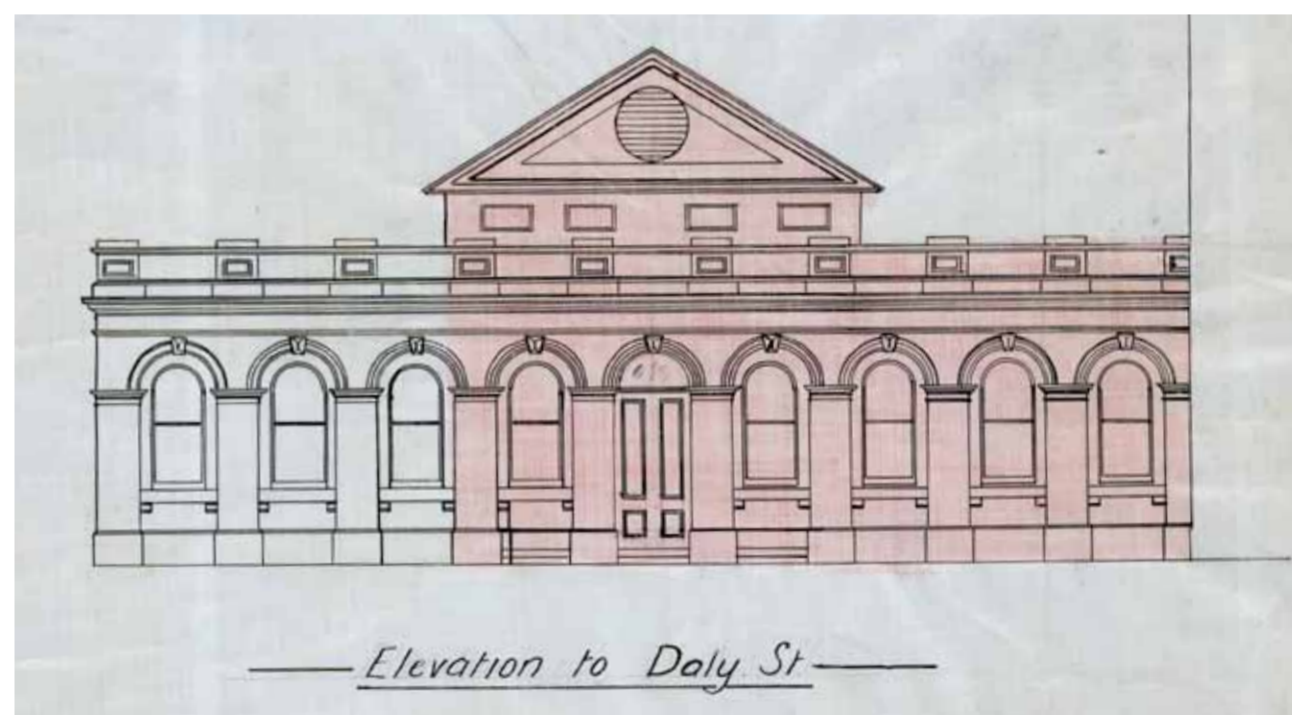




Former Court House, South Melbourne Town Hall 1930s. (PPCC sm0529)



Emerald Hill Volunteers Fire Brigade outside the Court House 1880. (PPCC sm0516)



Architectural plan of exterior view of conversion of existing building to Baby Health Centre 22 March 1930. (PPCC sm2433)

## Baby Health Centre & Court House

*The first Baby Health Centre in South Melbourne opened in a room in the west wing of the South Melbourne Town Hall on 1 July 1918. Sister Eva Perrett was the first nurse employed, and remained with the Council for a further forty years.*

This South Melbourne site became the first Centre and Training School for Infant Welfare Sisters. The Training School was opened by Lady Forster, wife of the Governor-General, on 1 July 1920. It was later transferred to new premises next to the Women's Hospital in Carlton in 1928.

When the Police Station and Court House were relocated to Bank Street in 1927, the vacated space was converted into a new Baby Health Centre which operated here from 1930 for several decades.

After the Baby Health Centre moved premises, a branch of the Commonwealth Bank was established on this corner. The Daly Street frontage retains the Commonwealth lettering to the façade. From the 1960s the site was used for municipal offices.

The former Court House is now known as the Ballantyne Room.

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Ballantyne Room decorated for a function. (PPCC)



Ballantyne Chandelier.  
(PPCC P1010074)

## Ballantyne Room

*This room derives its name from the magnificent Ballantyne Chandelier which, since the 1980s, has been a feature of this space.*

The chandelier was donated to the City of South Melbourne by the Ballantyne family, whose food business had been established in South Melbourne in the late 1940s. A commemorative plaque located in the room acknowledges this generous donation.

The chandelier was originally from the Royale Ballroom in the Royal Exhibition Building. It was purchased by Dennis Catering, a subsidiary of the Ballantyne Group, when the ballroom was demolished.

After years of storage in McCauley's warehouse in Layfield Street, the grand chandelier was installed in this room.



Town Clerk's Office pre-1935. (PPCC sm0634)



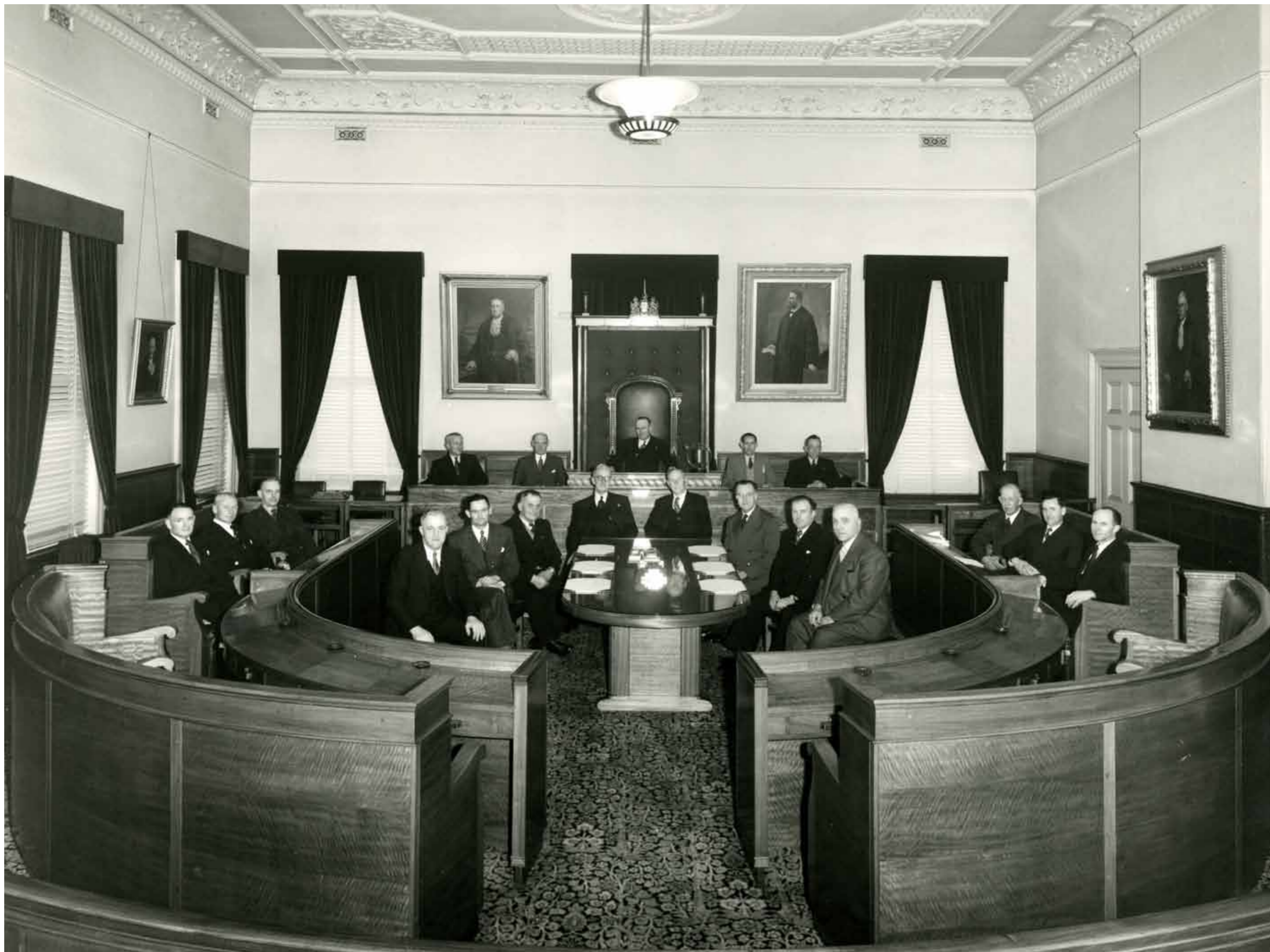
Frederick George Miles, Town Clerk 1879 – 1909.  
(PPCC sm0074)

## Town Clerk's Office

*Municipal Offices originally occupied the Bank Street frontage of the South Melbourne Town Hall.*

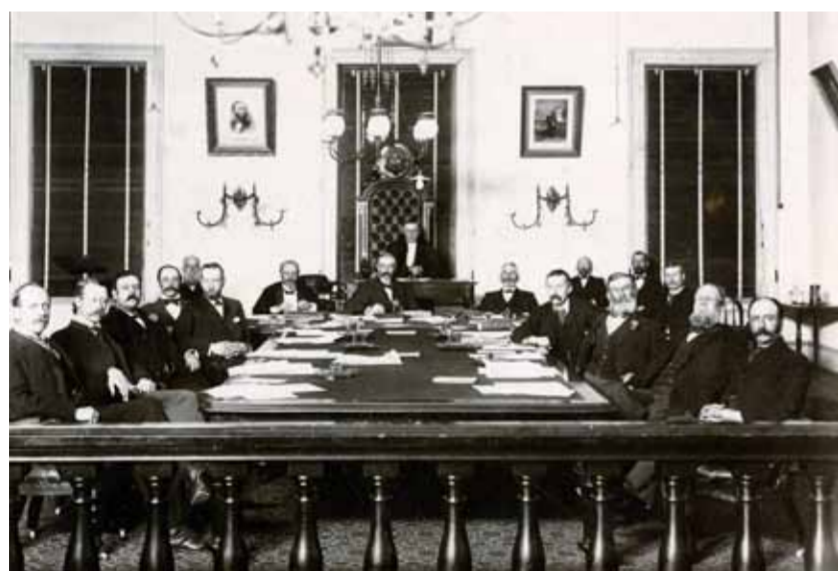
This included two spacious rooms for the Town Clerk and the Town Surveyor.

Frederick George Miles was Town Clerk from 1879 until 1909. He was born in England in 1835 and arrived with his family in Melbourne in 1842. In 1861 he entered the public service working as a surveyor. He became Town Clerk of Brunswick in 1870 and in early 1880 took up the appointment of Town Clerk of Emerald Hill. He held this position until September 1909 when ill health caused him to resign. He died in October 1909. Miles was the longest serving Town Clerk in South Melbourne's history.



Council Chamber 1938. (PPCC smo879)

Interior of recently renovated Council Chamber with council members: Cr W A Wright; Cr R J Morris; Cr R McLaughlan; Cr J L Murphy, MLA; Mr R E Darling (Chief Clerk); Mr H Alexander (Town Clerk); Cr H A Layfield (Mayor); Mr A E Aughtie (City Engineer); Mr W S Day (Hallkeeper); Cr J J Curtain; Cr R Nuzum; Cr R H Cogan; Cr H T Chapman; Cr R G McKenzie; Cr G R Holland; Hon A Crofts, MLC; Cr A L Parry.



South Melbourne Council Chamber 1880-1899. (PPCC smo885)



Visitors in the Council Chamber 1960s. (PPCC sm1083)

## Council Chambers

*The Council Chamber is one of the few rooms in the South Melbourne Town Hall that has remained in its original location since the opening of the Town Hall in 1880. However, the Council Chamber was entirely remodelled, redecorated and refurnished in the 1938 renovation.*

The Queensland maple furniture specifically designed for the Council Chamber as part of the 1938 Town Hall renovation was restored in 2010, and is still in place in the Chamber. City of Port Phillip Council meetings rotate between South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and St Kilda Town Hall Council Chambers.

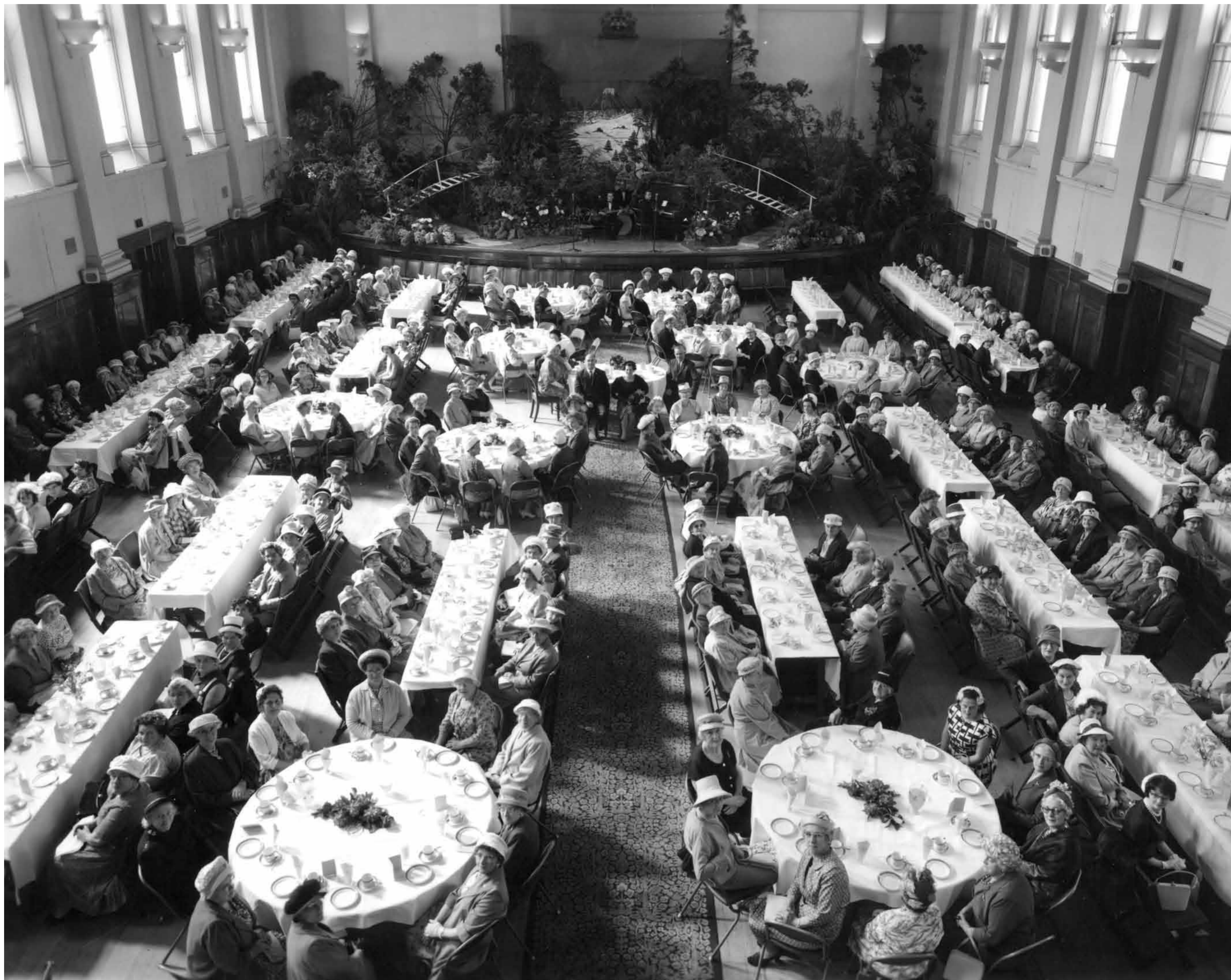
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Auxiliary lunch in the main hall 1950s. (PPCC sm0954)



Mayor's Room, South Melbourne Town Hall pre-1935. (PPCC sm0628)

## Mayor & Mayoress' Rooms

*These rooms were used by the Mayor and Mayoress in an official capacity to organise the many charitable and social functions on behalf of the community.*

The Mayoress traditionally championed a range of causes, and organised events such as auxiliary lunches held in the main hall. One of the beneficiaries of the auxiliary fundraisers was the former Prince Henry's Hospital.

South Melbourne Council was noted for its initiatives in developing and supporting community services. Proposed by Town Clerk Harold Alexander in 1945, the Community Chest raised funds for programs and organisations within the municipality. Its Meals on Wheels program, established on 1 July 1953, was Australia's first service of this kind.

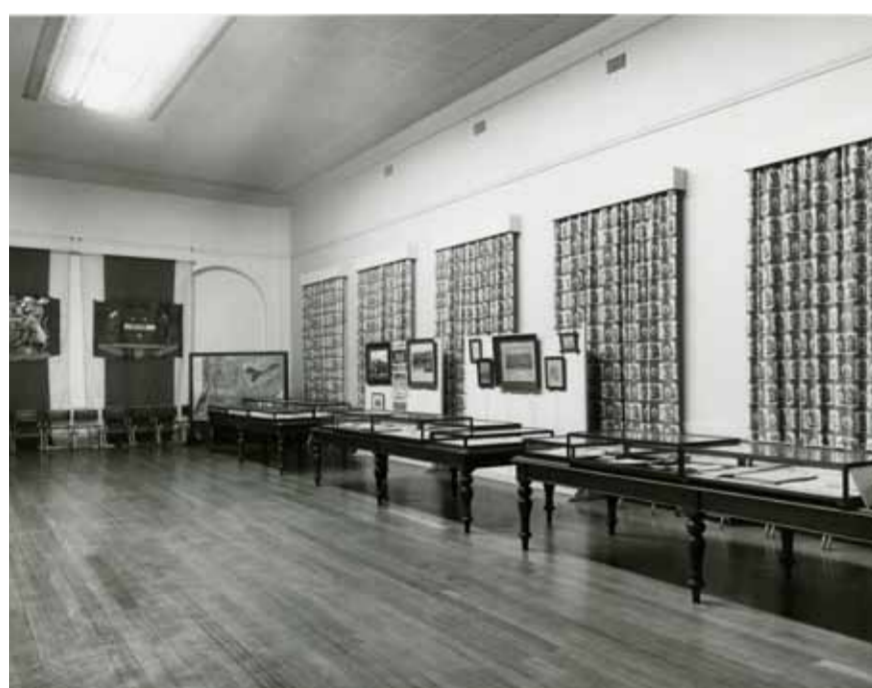
The Mayor and Mayoress' rooms were refurnished as part of the 1938 renovations. Like the adjacent Council Chamber, both rooms demonstrate the Victorian and 1930s periods. In particular, the most recent decorative treatment of the space has retained features from both major periods.

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South Melbourne Arts Festival 1946. (PPCC sm1195)



Town Hall Supper Room. (PPCC sm1105)

## Supper Room

*From 1938, the Supper Room was located in the western section of the upper floor of the Town Hall (where previously the upper floor of the Mechanics' Institute was located). The adjacent caterer's room, whose supplies were brought up from a kitchen underneath, enabled this room to be used for a number of functions over the years.*

The Supper Room was mainly used as a function room in conjunction with activities held in the main hall.

In 1946 the Supper Room was transformed into an exhibition space for the City of South Melbourne Arts Festival representing a comprehensive survey of Australian art and including many significant artists. The Festival ran for a week and included theatre and musical performances.

From the late 1930s to the early 1990s, the Supper Room was available for hire for private functions.

The hall keeper occupied a residence at the rear of this room until the 1980s.

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