In 1840 Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General of the British Crown, chose a rocky promontory on Sydney harbour for his home. He built a cottage in the style of Gothic Revival, popularized in England by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin and documented in popular copy books shipped with his baggage from his home country. The house perfectly expresses the imaginative dislocation of European culture into the romantic wilderness. Whether they came out of duty, like Mitchell, or in the hope of opportunity, the European immigrants viewed Australia as a »terra nullius«, as an empty land, a vacant space waiting to receive a model of Christian civilization.

It took a century to realize that the dream did not comfortably fit the continent. The story of Australian architecture might be said to parallel the endeavours of Australians to adapt and reconcile themselves with their home and neighbours. It is the story of 200 years of coming to terms with the land: of adaptation, insight and making do. Early settlers were poorly provisioned, profoundly ignorant of the land and richly prejudiced towards its peoples. They pursued many paths over many terrains. From the moist temperate region of Tasmania with heavy Palladian villas to the monsoonal north with open, lightweight stilt houses, the continent has induced most different regional building styles.

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Photographs by the renowned Max Dupain and the present proprietor of his firm, Eric Sierins, including many especially commissioned for this book, support the text. Contributing authors have supplied material where vital local knowledge is essential.

Bill MacMahon is an architect practising in Sydney, a lecturer at the University of New South Wales and a contributor to various Australian architectural and design journals. He is best known for his work with D4Design whose projects included the Rockpool Restaurant and the Regents Court Hotel.
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The Architecture of East Australia
An architectural history
in 432 individual presentations

edited by Bill MacMahon
assisted by Anne Finnerty
with contributions by
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Foreword

This is a guide to the architecture of the most populous corner of the continent of Australia. It covers less than a quarter of the land mass but includes its sections of greatest habitation. It is a large area covering as much distance as from Sicily to Denmark and from Madrid to Turin. Included are the State capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart.

The island continent of Australia is often described as a vast and ancient land. Geologically the landscape of the interior remained unchanged for many millennia. Over 56,000 years it was home to a continuous living culture, evidenced by the discovery of ceremonial burial remains at Lake Mungo (NSW21). When the first fleet arrived in 1788, the indigenous population was made up of over 500 tribes. Australian Aboriginal culture however was that of nomads who left no buildings as a record of their society.

The spirit of these people is an inspiration to the contemporary creative culture of the country which struggles to reconcile itself with its place in the world. A contemporary concern of Australian architects remains as to whether their architecture reflects our place in the world. Does an Australian architecture exist? Certainly up until recent times Australian architecture has been the story of the adaptation of first British and then international ideas of architecture. In recent years some architects have sought inspiration from Aboriginal ideas dealing with land and place. The best of this work remains centred in a European/American Modernist language yet it responds to the sensibilities and strictures of the dreaming.

It was considered important that buildings included in this book were accessible and warranted a journey to view them; for this reason many houses were excluded. Landscape screening and alterations over the decades have obscured what made many houses worthy.

Most of the projects featured display some of the following characteristics:

a. They are included in major histories of Australian architecture.
b. They have recently been published by design journals.
c. They are illustrative of a general building type.
d. They are illustrative of a cultural or economic condition.
e. They tell the story of the place.

The buildings in the book are arranged first by location according to the state of Australia in which they are located. The states are ordered by population with the most populous, New South Wales first and the least populous, Tasmania, last. In each section the state capital appears first followed by the regional centres. Smaller towns within each state then follow.

In Australia there is a cultural divide between the city and country areas so I have attempted to include the larger regional centres: Newcastle, Broken Hill, Ballarat and Bendigo are described in detail. Smaller interesting towns such as Terowie, Carcoar, Ross and Richmond are also included. It is intended that the inclusions in this book will comprehensively describe (in detailed terms) the history of Australian architecture and also show the light and shade of regional differences.

Within this structure the buildings are listed chronologically to give some sense of the historical sweep of development. Buildings are identified by a letter of the alphabet which either signifies the state capital city or the state in which it is located then by a number locating it in its chronological sequence.

My thanks to the contributors to this book who have laboured over the entries. My special thanks to Anne Finnerty for editing the text at its many stages. To Tempe Macgowan for the entries on Sydney’s City Projects. To Sue Serle for her contributions to the Melbourne entries and for the introduction to Melbourne. To David Vivian-Jones for his assistance with Tasmania. Thanks to Gina Levenspiel and Timothy Hill for advice.

Thanks also to Anne Prichard who typed most of the text for the book, coordinated the entries, laboured long over the numbering and patiently participated in the process for more than a year and a half. Thanks to Eric Sierins who shared over 6,000 km of car travel across our corner of the continent. Eric not only was responsible for most of the photos in the book but was also an indispensable support on ensuring the text was clearly expressed and logically organised. Thanks to Ute Rose without whom this project would not have been undertaken.

Lastly thanks to Jacqueline for her patience and inspiration.

Bill MacMahon
The future was dark and the past was dead
As they gazed on the sea once more
And away on the furthest seas,
The loneliest land in the wide world then,
In the lands of our fathers' birth;

The story of Australian architecture is the story of the European expansion into and gradual possession of the Australian landscape. The story commences with the arrival of the first fleet in 1788. This was during the great period of European expansion that on one hand brought Christianity and European culture to the Australian landscape. The story of migration, taking possession of and making do in a new land. The continent’s original people could tell an alternative story, a story only recently listened to by architects, but it is not the story of this book.

The European settlement of Australia commenced with the arrival of the first fleet in 1788. This was during the great period of European expansion that on one hand brought Christianity and European culture to the world and on the other opened up new commercial opportunities to the Europeans. As the British plied their ships across open oceans looking for new lands so they crossed the open plains of the continent of Australia on foot, horseback and bullock dray. Little thought did they give to the rights of the indigenous population as they pushed out along the shores of the continent and then into the mainland. Their fortune lay in the way of accumulating farmlands and opening up trade routes. Long would they toil to make the landscape economically productive.

Yet the first fleet were merely the first of successive waves of migrants who continue to this day to arrive at Australian ports. Like the first settlers today’s migrants share a similar burden of having to make a place for themselves in a new world.

A central theme of Australian architecture is this making do or vigorous adaptation of old ideas to new settings. Migrants to Australia, up until the 1970s, came mainly from Europe or were of a European origin. The ideas on which Australian architecture is based are still largely of a European or American basis. While not every good Australian architect was born or studied elsewhere it is evident through a brief survey of the history of Australian architecture that, so far at least, the main events that make up the story of Australian architecture can be told by reference solely to architects born elsewhere.

Australia has been graced by the arrival of young architects from Francis Greenway through to Harry Seidler. Architects trained overseas have come to Australia to do their best work. These have included William Wardell, who built St Patrick’s Cathedral (M6) in Melbourne and St Mary’s Cathedral (S38) in Sydney. Joseph Reed who designed the State Library of Victoria (M2) came from Cornwall. John Verge, who brought the Regency style to Australia was from Hampshire, England while James Barnet who designed the General Post Office (S47) in Macquarie Street, Sydney, was born in Scotland. John Horbury Hunt came to Australia from Canada via Boston; Walter Liberty Vernon who built the State Library of New South Wales (S56) and Sir John Sulman who had great influence upon the planning of Canberra were both English and worked in London before coming to Australia. Later in the 20th century architects who migrated to Australia included Leslie Wilkinson from Britain, Walter Burley Griffin from the United States of America, Frederick Romberg, who was born in Tsing-tao, China and educated in Switzerland, Harry Seidler, born in Austria and educated in Canada and the United States and Alex Popov, born in China. Visitors to Australia would include Jarn Utzon and recently Renzo Piano. Even Glenn Murcutt speaks of the importance of his very early years spent in New Guinea.

A feature of these architects is that many moved around the continent rather than settling in one place all their lives. People like Wardell, Hunt, Griffin and Romberg built in many disparate locations. It would seem that the energy that brought them to Australia kept propelling them around the country after they arrived.

The 20th century being the great age of travel, many local born young architects did their first degrees in Australia and then travelled overseas to undertake postgraduate studies and spent some years practising overseas (a practice which is still very popular in Australia and carries great weight among the profession). Peter Muller, Lawrence Nield and Bruce Rickard in Sydney would be included in this group.

Even today, architects such as Glenn Murcutt adapt ideas and devices from international sources. Murcutt has been very clear about the inspiration he has gained from trips to Greece and Africa and has been specific
about how this has been applied to the material form of his built works. This hybridisation of ideas from overseas is the strength of Australian work.

Ashston Raggatt MacDougall sets out the extreme example of this tendency. Howard Raggatt has talked of Australian architects’ cargo-cult mentality, meaning that Australian architects are accepting the importation of ideas from overseas as if they were free to pick them up off the back of a boat. Works such as the extension to St Kilda Town Hall (M45), with its copying of the form of the Finlandia Congress Hall by Alvar Aalto is a radical example of the copying of ideas by Australian architects which brings into sharp focus the fact that much architecture in Australia takes ideas directly from overseas and then in some way changes them.

One would almost hope that the opportunities of isolation in the continent of Australia would provide opportunities for new ideas to emerge, but in fact Australian architecture has offered no new orders or ideas to world architecture. Every building can to some extent, either through materials, shape, proportion, or arrangement of parts, be found internationally. It is, however, the resourcefulness and the originality of the amalgam of the parts that give the life and vibrancy to Australian architecture.

Settlement

For the first 50 years, the story of Australia’s European history centres on Sydney. After the First Fleet’s arrival in 1788 and the establishment of the colony at the fertile Sydney Cove survival of the colonists and convicts became the main priority of these stranded colonists. The search for fertile farmlands saw the establishment of the settlement of Parramatta in 1791, a location with far better soil for farming.

For the early years of the colony travel by sea remained an important form of communication and the colony grew by the development of settlements up and down the coast. Areas such as Broken Bay, Newcastle and Port Macquarie were settled early on in the days of the colony.

Hobart, located in Tasmania, an island off the south coast of Victoria, became the second city of the colony. It was more amenable to these sturdy people from England. The development of Tasmania was driven by two factors. One was the need for an alternate place of further punishment for convicts who could not be controlled within Sydney. Secondly, it also became an important farming area, offering rich farmlands for graziers.

While Hobart was settled 14 years after the first fleet sailed into Sydney harbour, the period of construction of important buildings in Hobart does not commence until about the 1820s. Fear of the French establishing rival colonies upon the continent drove the British to mark out the periphery of the continent with separate colonies.

Regional characteristics

The different regions of the country tended to also have identifiable differences in their regional culture that was expressed in differences in regional architectural characteristics. These differences were partly due to the variations in climate and available building materials, but may also have been influenced by the composition of the different migrant groups who composed the colonies. For example, the buildings in Burra built housing which was very similar to houses in Cornwall.

Wall. On the other hand, Queensland architecture responded to the heat and Queenslanders tended to build bungalows raised on stilts. This is partially due to the availability of good timbers in Queensland and also the need to have well-ventilated houses which could quickly cool down.

In Sydney and Melbourne from 1890 to 1914 the Federation style of architecture developed. The Federation style was an amalgam of different styles including Queen Anne brought from England, but also had something of the Arts and Crafts movement in it and saw the embellishment of buildings with local motifs. It was often regarded as the first Australian style of architecture.

The establishment of alternate colonies to New South Wales, in Queensland (1824) and South Australia (1836) saw the diversifying of authority within Australia. The separate colonies of Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania, and Brisbane were the genesis of the State system in Australia.

As the richness, complexity and population of the colonies grew, Australians began to desire to clarify their identity as well as to make sensible arrangements for defence and trade within the colony. The separate states operated virtually as separate countries with their own armies and systems of taxation.

A movement grew during the 1890’s for the country to be federated and for a central government to be formed in Australia to take care of matters such as trade and taxation. It was not until Federation in 1901 that the country, Australia, was born.

Federation was proclaimed at the site now occupied by the Federation Pavilion (S121) in Centennial Park, Sydney and saw the opening of the first Federal Parliament in Australia within the Melbourne Exhibition Building (M111) in the Carlton Gardens.

Federation in 1900 saw the establishment of central government plans to provide a capital in Canberra.

After World War I, Australia boomed. This period left a legacy of Renaissance revival banks in a Chicago skyscraper style and picture palaces adorned with fantasy interior architecture. A great range of diversity was established in a wealthy colony.

Australia is a largely urbanised country and between 1990 and the 1930’s there was much building of suburbs within Australia.

Sydney during this period was characterised by a spread of housing along the rail lines that were built to the designs of Dr. John Job Crew Bradfield. The Sydney Harbour Bridge was built at this time. Areas of Sydney such as Strathfield and Croydon were built on garden-city lines with many picturesque gardens planting. It also established the quarter acre block as the predominant settlement unit in Australia.
Cities such as Melbourne, with their street grids containing red roofed bungalows on a flat landscape were ensconced for miles around based on the multiplication of this defining unit. The depression of the 1930s affected Australia dramatically and it was not until the conclusion of World War II that building activity strongly increased again. Australia benefited by the settlement of migrants from Europe during this time. In a farsighted program, Australia encouraged settlement by the dispossessed from Central and Eastern Europe. At this time, many Italians, Poles and Latvians among others came to settle in Australia and with them came a range of architects and tradesmen. Most representative of this post-war migration would be the famous Harry Seidler, who came to Australia during the late 1940s.

Mainstream architecture in Australia after World War II was motivated by international practice. Many young architects had the opportunity to undertake postgraduate studies overseas. Many spent a portion of their twenties working in London or Europe which was seen as a legitimate way of gaining a toe-up in Australia and tended to often bring back good ideas for the country.

At the same time, while architects generally designed large commercial and public buildings, builders designed the majority of houses in the country.

A trip across any of the suburbs built after World War II in any of the Australian cities offers little joy, and 95 percent of the contemporary housing being built in the country was of a poor standard from an aesthetic and environmental point of view.

Exceptions to the range from the wonderful Pettit and Sevitt houses designed by Ken Woolley’s office during the 1960’s and 1970’s.

The downturn in the rural economy has diminished the amount of work being done in the country areas except for a growth in the building of tourist resorts and weekenders for wealthy city people.

Smaller industrial centres are undergoing post-industrial transition, characterised by the adaptive reuse of industrial buildings into facilities to house service industries such as phone centres, financial brokers and the like.

Sydney has been dominated by construction activities brought on by the Olympic Games, which has seen the upgrading of the infrastructure including train lines and freeways and of course the creation of the games site on the setting of an old abattoir.

Australian architects continue to be concerned about the nature of Australian-ness at the end of the millennium. Architects such as Murcutt have shown what it means to design for a particular client at a particular place, however even Murcutt maintains that there is no such thing as an Australian architecture.

The creation of the Merrima Aboriginal Design Group with the NSW Public Works Department shows an interesting development in Australian architecture that, at the end of 212 years of settlement, we now have Aboriginal architects designing architecture for other Aboriginal indigenous people.

One suspects the status of Australian architecture shall continue to be the creation of a peculiar brand of adaptation of ideas and trends taken from other parts of the world and the outstanding architects shall be those who seek to resolve technology, climate and location into works which specifically fit the place in which they reside.

The outstanding feature of Australian architecture is its internationalism, coupled with a modesty of purpose. Across the length and breadth of the continent, we find an architecture that is primarily a migrant architecture that speaks of the distant homes and a coming to terms with a new land.

Today

Today architects in Australia practise their profession with vigour. In a very general sense, the architecture of Melbourne is seen to be driven by stimulating design ideas, whereas Sydney offers a solid humanist approach although currently enjoying an enthusiasm for the minimal.

Queensland architecture at its best is different to both Sydney and Melbourne. Some critics have called the architecture that best represents the state the Stick style of architecture. It is interested in the creation of outdoor rooms and the filtering of light through various means.

Tasmania, with a population of approximately one-tenth of the city of Sydney, is a quiet presence on the architectural scene.

The state of architecture at the turn of the millennium is influenced by a number of factors.

The downturn in the rural economy has diminished the amount of work being done in the country areas except for a growth in the building of tourist resorts and weekenders for wealthy city people.
Sydney:

Sydney-siders believe Sydney is the best city in the world. Visitors will regularly hear that Sydney has the best harbour, best beaches, best food and best parties. Certainly the climate and geography have combined to create a hedonistic, sun-worshipping culture.

The beauty of Sydney beaches is equalled by special places at each of its limits: the Nepean River at the foot of the Blue Mountains; the joys of Pittwater that sits like an unspoilt Sydney Harbour on the northern fringes of the city; and the Georges and Woronora Rivers to the south. Within these boundaries, however, sit a sprawling city offering kilometre after kilometre of brick and tile suburbs that fill a river basin surrounded by low mountain ranges. For each wondrous highpoint of the city are ten suburbs of bleak monotony. While the seaside suburbs benefit from ocean cooled breezes, the interior suburbs swelter in still air under the summer sun.

Critics of Sydney say that it is a place of light and movement offering no cultural depth. They say that architecture in Sydney serves only as a platform for viewing the harbour. It is probably true that the most adventurous architecture in Australia is found in Melbourne while the architecture of Sydney displays a quiet decorum. If Melbourne is intellectual then Sydney is New Age.

Sydney has a diverse population. From its earliest days as a seaport it has attracted people from all over the world. Today various ethnic groups gather to form cultural clusters within its suburbs: Italians in Leichhardt, Greeks in Marickville, Vietnamese in Cabramatta and Islanders in Flemington. Across the suburbs mosques have risen next to Methodist churches, Taoist temples next to Catholic Cathedrals and Baha'i temples next to Baptist churches.

Sydney grew first as the major seaport for the colony and later as a centre of industry providing goods for the colony. In recent years it has grown to become the major service centre for the nation and a major financial centre for the Asia-Pacific region serving as a regional base for many multi-national corporations.

The planning of Sydney is more chaotic than any other city in the country. The roads about the city centre still follow the paths of the bullock drays that wove along the contours of its undulating hills. Attempts at planning the city, such as the efforts of Bradfield from 1911, proved to be beneficial in that it integrated transport with settlement and gave the city the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The Cumberland plan, however, which attempted after World War II to consolidate growth and ameliorate urban sprawl, had only a short-lived effect. The city of Sydney has over 30 local councils and planning at both local and state level is driven by political considerations. Even today there exists only a generalised long-term plan for the growth of Sydney.

Transportation about Sydney is afforded by an amalgam of train, bus, ferry and tram. Transport about the city is easy while, with the exception of travel about the major train lines, transport in the suburbs is difficult to plan due to the diversity of bus companies that support the system.

Aboriginal Sydney

Visitors to Sydney hoping to see evidence of the Aboriginal heritage of Sydney will be sorely disappointed. Sydney architecture owes nothing to its Aboriginal past. Certainly Aboriginal tribes occupied the valleys around Sydney Harbour, although little is known of the Dharug tribe that occupied the settlement other than what remains on the records from the first European settlers. We really know nothing of the spiritual significance which locations around the Sydney District had for the indigenous people of the time. The Aboriginal community left remnants of their lives in the form of rock carvings and middens, however, no built structures survived within the Sydney area.

The Sydney Opera House (S90) is built over middens. Certainly Sydney Harbour is the most suburbanised harbour in the world. Many of the remains of the shellfish that were tossed away after being eaten. Even around Bondi there are reports that builders during the 1930s used lime from the midden piles to make cement. To Sydney Harbour, although little is known of the Dharug tribe that occupied the settlement other than what remains on the records from the first European settlers. There is poetic significance in what remains on the records from the first European settlers. There is poetic significance in the remains of the shellfish that were tossed away after being eaten. Even around Bondi there are reports that builders during the 1930s used lime from the midden piles to make cement. To the shores of Aboriginal built structures one must venture to the far west of New South Wales, but even then the remaining structures are in the form of fish traps.

Traces of the early European settlement do exist, mainly in the areas around Sydney Cove, now called Circular Quay, and in the settlement around the rich farming lands of Parramatta, now in the centre of the Parramatta commercial district.

The early years

In little over a decade after Captain Cook first sailed up the East Coast of Australia, a group of several ships arrived in Botany Bay, setting out to establish a new colony for Britain. The ships contained two groups, members of the British Marine Corps and a substantial number of convicts. There is poetic significance in these two groups, one representing centralised, authoritative control in Australia and the other the more libertine and chaotic side to the Australian character.

The early years of settlement were difficult as the convicts arrived with virtually no tradesmen, few farmers and no architects to give form to the settlement. They even had precious little in the way of tools.

The early years of settlement were hard and the colony came close to starvation at more than one point. The settlement was centred around what is now Circular Quay, in those days an area of sandy soils mixed with many rocks in the topsoil – an area unsuitable for farming. A second settlement was therefore established at Rosehill, later known as Parramatta.

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the freshwater source for the first settlers that flowed into the western side of Circular Quay, were to be government facilities, while the convicts were allowed to occupy the area of The Rocks. Even today the area spreading to the high ground up towards Macquarie Street is still occupied by buildings of importance, whereas the area of The Rocks is a zone of closely built buildings of a private nature. The Rocks area has retained its 19th century fabric intact and land features such as the convict hewn Argyle Cut has a direct link to Sydney’s convict past.

The area back from the Quay on the western side was the centre for the garrison of troops of the Sydney Corp, and they had their barracks and parade ground around the area now occupied by Grosvenor Tower (S16). South from the Quay on the gentle slope where the Museum of Sydney (S124) lies was the site of the first Government House for Governor Phillip, a prefabricated building imported from England. The Governor established his own domain, sealing off the eastern side of Circular Quay and occupying the whole of Farm Cove, laying down the basis for what is now the Botanical Gardens and the Domain. Later encroachments to the Domain include the strip along the eastern side of Circular Quay, now occupied by the building designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker which has been christened The Toastery by Sydneysiders.

Before the earlier Modernist buildings which previously occupied the site, the eastern side of Circular Quay was home to a number of warehouses and bond stores which serviced the ships that tied up about the harbour. Still surviving in Sydney Cove is Cadman’s Cottage (S8), a small government building of this time which was possibly designed by Francis Greenway. Now sitting back from the Cove, Cadman’s Cottage would originally have had the water lapping at its edge. Circular Quay has been greatly filled-in and the original shore line can still be seen traced across the front of Custom’s House Square (S169) sitting outside of Custom’s House (S46). The sea wall added during the 1830’s was to the design of Major George Barney. The earliest extant buildings of this period are not to be found around Sydney Cove. Circular Quay, but instead out west at the settlement at Parramatta, which Phillip founded after being dissatisfied with the potential for transport at Port Jackson. At Parramatta, houses such as Elizabeth Farm (S1) and Experiment Farm (S2) give a good indication of the sort of dwellings which were built by the settlers in the first decades of Euro-American occupation of what is now Australia.

John Macarthur who arrived in the colony with the second fleet built Elizabeth Farm. Macarthur was a serving captain in the British Army and Elizabeth Farm was to the design of Major George Barney. Sydney 16

Elizabeth Farm possibly has the first verandahs to soften the effects of the Australian summer. It is an essential feature of Australian architecture because of the need to control the sun and to provide sheltered outdoor spaces that could provide cover while also providing access to cooling breezes.

Also found in Parramatta is the later Government House (S3) which is open to public view, and it is said that some of the original out-buildings which are still in existence are in fact the earliest remaining buildings in the Commonwealth.

Convict architecture

The most prominent figure within the early days of the Sydney Colony, who had a great impact upon the current nature of Sydney, was Governor Macquarie, a man who appeared to have had a sense of Sydney’s destiny. Governor Macquarie arrived in the colony in 1810, 22 years after the arrival of the First Fleet. He was a distinguished military man who founded his architecture from among the convict community.

Architect Francis Greenway, transported to New South Wales for forging the details of a debt in a contract, became the means through which Macquarie achieved his vision of settlement. Governor Macquarie built many of the major buildings found in Macquarie Street, including Hyde Park Barracks (S10), the State Parliament Building (S7) and what is called the Mint Museum (S6), all located on Macquarie Street.

These two latter buildings are the remaining two-thirds of the original Rum Hospital built by Macquarie, and show the basic needs of the colony and the uncompromising means by which these were achieved in a context of few resources. Governing in a far away colony such as Australia at that time must have been like working in a vacuum.

Macquarie had no directive from Whitehall in London to design the buildings of Sydney. He appeared to have had a sense of Sydney’s destiny. Governor Macquarie arrived in the colony in 1810, 22 years after the arrival of the First Fleet. He was a distinguished military man who founded his architecture from among the convict community.

The best representative of this class was W.C. Wentworth. Wentworth was born within two years of Lord Macquarie and was a staunch advocate of the rights of the colonials. Wentworth was the main mover in the Constitu tion of the State of New South Wales in the grand mansion that he built called Vaucluse House.

Vaucluse House (S4), is located in Vaucluse, approximately 10 km from Circular Quay. It is really a series of Gothic buildings with broad verandahs resulting from various periods of building. Its setting within its original gardens (now a public park) allows the building to be more suitably connected to its Vaucluse houses. This building is open to public view and has a collection of period furnishings from Europe including a collection of French porcelain, revealing the firm links which were retained between the colony and Europe.

Vaucluse House is the purest expression in Sydney of the neoclassical buildings of the early settlers. This transition to wealth is very clear in the contrast between Elizabeth Farm, built by Captain John Macarthur shortly after his arrival, and Camden Park (S18), which was built for the sons of Captain Macarthur in 1831. It took under 40 years for the Macarthurs to rise to prominence within the colony due to their brilliant fortune and entrepreneurial skills.

Camden Park is a large Regency building with Palladian wings. It is a grand country dwelling with a very beautiful, sandstone-pillared loggia/verandah to its entrance.

John Verge built a series of fine dwellings, a number of which can be seen about the area of Potts Points. Elizabeth Bay House (S23), which was built for the Colonial Secretary, is today open to the public, The Regency house is a gem. Buildings of a similar scale include Tusculum (S19) in Manning Street, Potts Point, now the headquarters of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. One street down from this is the small crystal of a building, Rockwall (S24).

The revival styles

The wealthy inhabitants of Sydney have always had an eye for fashion, especially as defined in London, and the Gothic Revival style was taken up in Australia with great gusto. Not only was it found in churches but it also became a favourite style for dwellings in New South Wales. One of the finest is Darlington Point and the Governor's House overlooking Circular Quay defines this movement.

Government House (S23) at the Quay was designed by Thomas Telford in the 1830s and opened in 1835. It was visited the colony and displayed a particular ignorance of the climatic conditions. The house had to be modified shortly after its construction by the addition of verandahs to soften the effects of the Australian summer sun.
While the Gothic was thought of as the appropriate style for churches and houses, the Classical Revival style was favoured for institutional buildings. The Darlinghurst Courthouse (S21) by Mortimer Lewis is in this style and is still an imposing government building located at Taylor's Square on Sydney’s Oxford Street. It is interesting to compare this large, grand building with a smaller but still imposing courthouse built the following year in Hartley (NSW) by the same architect. The size of the building had no bearing upon the grandeur of the order selected.

The growth of institutions

A feature of architecture in New South Wales was the important role played by the Government Architect within the colony. Australia has always had a distinct separation between government and private enterprise, but the government in Australia has always been very strong and has tended to impose tight controls over development in the far reaches of colonial life.

The Government Architect’s office was founded in Sydney to provide the skills needed to provide the colony with the institutional buildings necessary for expanding settlement. Architect’s who held this office included Edmund Blacket, Mortimer Lewis, James Barnett and Walter Liberty Vernon.

While the office contained many individual architects and draughtsmen, they all laboured under the name of the Government Architect. Due to the efforts of this office the standard of institutional buildings even in the most remote towns is very good.

It should be remembered that the colony was founded by the British Army which played a very significant role, not only in the founding of the City of Sydney, but also played a very active role in the layout of the settlement of country towns.

Even today the landscape of New South Wales have a sense of military order and precision to them. In 1829 Governor Darling set out regulations to govern the layout of towns and it was these regulations which, until today, set the major form of towns throughout New South Wales. These required that blocks of land be one chain wide and five chains deep with corner blocks being two by one and a half chains. It was with these regulations that the gridbed town became a monotonous feature of Australian towns.

Sydney sandstone

Sydney’s most distinctive material is the sandstone that greets visitors at the Heads. The most outstanding buildings in Sydney from the 19th century are faced in Sydney sandstone. The architect responsible for the greatest buildings in this material is Barnett, who was the Government Architect responsible for the Government Post Office (GPO) (S47) in Macquarie Street and the row of fine New South Wales Government buildings, including the Lands Department Building (S41), the Department of Education, and the Colonial Secretary’s Building (S43) in Bridge Street.

Sydney sandstone is a material which comes out of the ground relatively soft, hardening after it oxidises, taking on a wonderful deep yellow colour after exposure to the air. It is a material that sadly suffers badly from the effects of rain and salt and many of the buildings built of this material have to be constantly repaired to prevent serious deterioration. The best sandstone in Sydney was quarried in the area of Pyrmont.

The Gothic

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The other more mainstream Modernism was a gentile, urbane Modernism that came from English emigres such as Hardy Wilson and Professor Lesley Wilkinson. Wilkinson’s main contribution to architecture was a local variation of the English Queen Anne style. His own house, Greenway (S63), is one of the best examples of his work and there exists also the wonderous housing block, Ways Terrace (S65), which he designed in his first years in Australia located at Pyrmont and also an outstanding block of apartments built in Traniloe Road, Bellevue Hill. Wilkinson’s buildings are some of the most delightful buildings of the time and may well have had a strong bearing upon the design of simple, Sydney houses in the 1960s which were well-proportioned, used warm colours and were simple in form.

Hardy Wilson’s main contribution to architecture was through his writing and sketches and he produced a famous series of drawings on the early Colonial Architecture of New South Wales and Tasmania. His main influence was that he promoted a return to simple forms while advocating the discussion of ideas about architecture. Erydine (S80) is an example of his work.

The growth of Sydney

A major impact on Sydney in 1932 was the completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (S71). This was the brainchild of Dr. J. C. Bradfield and was part of an integrated rail network that made the middle suburbs of Sydney accessible from the central business dis- trict. Places such as St Ives and Pymble were sud- denly within easy reach of the city. The completion of the bridge led to an increase in development of the upper north shore.

In the mid 1930s the P&O style arrived in Sydney. It was a simple, white, cubic architecture. Places such as the Wyldefel Gardens (S73) by Crowle & Brogan were a series of terraced apartments cascading down from the ridge of Potts Point to Elizabeth Bay. They featured the use of concrete and brickwork with strong horizontal banding and curved glass. This was streamlined terrace-style architecture.

A building which is related to the P&O style would be the Prevost House (S78) designed in Kambala Road, Bellevue Hill by Prevost & Ancher. Ancher built the Prevost House after a stint working in Europe and the United States. It has strong ties to the work being done in Czechoslovakia during the 1930s, in particular the Tugendhat House by Mies van der Rohe. It features horizontal banding, curving planes, round win- dows, the use of glass blocks, steel framed windows, timber handrails and a curved roof space.

The 1930s also saw in Sydney a flowering of the Art Deco style with prominent buildings such as the Anzac Memorial (S70) by Brickwood and Shirley Towers (S78) by Emil Solomun. Being prime examples of major buildings built in this manner, King’s Cross has a range...
of Art Déco apartment blocks that included the Macleay Regis Building. Features of the local idiom include the use of cubic shapes, steel framed windows, textured brickwork, and the use of veneered paneling in the foyers and decorative trowel treatments to floors and thresholds.

Immediately before the outbreak of World War II, the New South Wales Government Architect under the hand of Harry Bennett built the most wonderful modern building. The Automotive Engineering Building (S80) at Ultimo was built in the style of Willelm Dudok and used a very dramatic massing of very plain cubic shapes and features satin aluminum-clad doors. It is a beautiful building that has been retained in its original form, although currently it is undergoing some alterations. This building shows that Australia was on the verge of confronting Modernism before the arrival of a series of emigre architects after World War II.

Post World War II

With the arrival of the Japanese in New Guinea in 1942, Australia’s war effort became total and saw the cessation of major building projects. Even in the years following World War II, there were restrictions on building materials that had a large impact on the course of domestic buildings at this time. Like the United States, one of the lastest benefits of the war for Australia was the arrival of waves of immigrants to its shores. To its credit, Australia was farsighted enough to actively seek immigrants from areas of the world to which it previously had little contact. While the White Australia Policy still excluded most of the world’s population from immigration to Australia, immigrants came from Italy, Greece, the Baltic States, Finland, Denmark, the Ukraine, Germany and Yugoslavia. Many immigrants were brought out on a scheme by which they were engaged to labour on the massive Snowy Mountains Scheme, but many others came on their own reconnaisance and immediately elevated the level of cultural debate in the country.

One of the earliest and most significant of these was Harry Seidler. Seidler had spent the first part of the war interned in Canada where he later received his initial architectural education in Manitoba. He rounded off his studies with a master's degree from Harvard studying under Walter Gropius and worked for a period with Oscar Niemeyer. Immediately before the outbreak of World War II, he worked for a short stint under Walter Gropius and worked for a period with Frank Lloyd Wright and Peter Muller, whose designed the ABSOLUTELY STANDING ALONE PIECE OF WORK OF SYDNEY DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.

The Sydney School

The strongest local movement that developed in Sydney during the 1960s was the growth of the Sydney School. It could trace its roots back to Wilkinson and Hardy Wilson in that it was a movement that was small-scale and centred around the provision of buildings carefully placed upon their site. They revelled in their relationship to the native vegetation. It was char-
acted on by open planning, often over several levels and enjoyed the use of warm, natural materials.

The architect Russell Jack, one of the founders of the firm Allen Jack & Cottier, built his own house with his business partner, John Allen, and in collaboration with Pamela Jack. This was a very influential Sydney School house. It won the RAIA Sulman Prize in 1957. The design of this house followed a trip by Russell to Japan, after which he prepared a paper on the use of materials in Japanese architecture.

The theme of Russell's work was later taken up by Philip Cox and Ian McKay with their 1963 Sulman Prize-winning St Andrew's Presbyterian College (S96) in Leppington. Their equally successful Tocal (NSW2) won the RAIA Sulman Prize in 1965. Both these buildings had a monastic air to them. They used rough fired bricks and relied heavily on the use of large sectioned timbers, finished in mission brown stain. They enjoyed the use of rude timber craft and were designed in a way to allow the landscape up to and between the buildings.

The third major proponent of this period was Ken Woolley. His own house built in Mosman in 1962 displayed how this style could be applied to a steeply sloping site and the house was a series of internal floor levels looking each other beneath a single plane of heavy masonry tile roofing. Although it is a more sober time, this style still remains a very strong influence in Sydney. Recent practitioners of this form would include Glenn Murcutt, who worked for Woolley for a time on his Pettit and Sevitt Houses that are in the Sydney School style, and the masterful Richard Le Plastrier. Among the younger fraternity, Peter Stutchbury's work remains, at its core, Sydney School. It would probably not be drawing too long a bow to claim that architects such as Neil Dur- bach, with his strongly material-based works and rigorous sense of geometry, also might be stated to repre- sent a flourishing of what.

Critics of the Sydney School would say that the style has been a drawback to Sydney architecture, be- cause of its somewhat reverential attitude. It has de- nied the participation of the local scene in the some of the more flamboyant, theoretical enterprises of the lat- ter 20th century. Melbourne architects such as Peter Corrigan would seem to be the antithesis of the Sydney School.

Today

A building boom that has really been rising to a cres- cendo during the 1990's today is fueling Sydney archi- tecture. Current popular scenes include the rise of minimialism, championed by practitioners such as En- gelen Moore and the interior designers turned archi- tects, Burley, Katon and Haliday.

Architects such as Stephen Varady are producing witful, fractal inspired works. Cracknel Longerman are doing lively client-reliant projects for Aboriginal groups, while they also involve themselves in collaboration with others such as artist-architect Richard Good- win.

In the city the influence of the wider world is being felt in the Aurora Place project (S179) by Renzo Piano. He has produced a project that seems to be peculiarly Australian in its heavy reliance on the use of glass louvres to protect its east-facing façade from the ravages of the northeast breezes.

In conclusion, the story of Sydney architecture is the story of an imported culture, first by Francis Greenway who was forced to travel here by the British Gov- ernment, and then by a range of architects who have won Sydney an exciting place to practise. These in- clude John Verge, Horbury Hunt, Blacket, Wardell, Henry Epstein, Harry Seidler, Jorn Utzon. One sus- pects that, in the past, Sydney was an alluring place but, because of its isolation, tended to separate prac- tioners from the mainstream of the world. Practition- ers would arrive with new skills that would then fall out of favour, as fresh arrivals of immigrants with the latest styles from overseas would appear on the scene.

In recent years, with Sydney being far more inte- grally connected to the outside world, architects will most likely come and go with ease; building one or two buildings at a time. Firms will practise their skills in Sydney, Melbourne, London, Paris and Hong Kong and architects will travel from office to office, dividing their time between various projects. Nevertheless, in the foreseeable future it seems that Sydney will be the place where outside architects bring their own ideas to the Sydney turf and, at their best, shall see the adapta- tion of those ideas into new varieties on this antipodean soil.

S1 Elizabeth Farm

70 Aice Street, Parramatta 1793. Architect possibly John Macarthur

Public access available, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales

This site may contain the oldest buildings still standing in Sydney. Recent archeological studies by the firm Design Five suggest that some of the extant out- buildings formed part of the original complex.

S1 Elizabeth Farm

northern verandah was added (possibly about 1810), the roof was simply extended at a shallower pitch. The enclosure was in-filled at either end by two small, brick-lined rooms and the softist was lined to create a high ceiling.

The presence of a verandah upon a house was a sign of prestige, offering a greater degree of comfort than the more common squat cottage which was a typical form of house in early Sydney. Such verandah- less houses were similar in form to rural or mine work- ers houses in England. The presence of a verandah therefore indicated the occupant to be a person of a more leisurely social class.

The small cottage with a front verandah enclosed at the sides was known as a bungalow, a term also defining a single storied house built of light construc- tion or of a temporary nature. It is a building form as- sociated with British colonial architecture around the world, including South Africa, India and Sri Lanka. Its transmission about the world is often attributed to the British Army, an international organisation which trained its engineers in building design and construc- tion and was, therefore, the perfect vehicle for the cas- ual transmission of popular building forms.

The house has been much altered. It is thought that, at a later time, additional rooms were built as lean-tos upon this cottage. A later building built close to the current street makes this a homestead group of build- ings.

S2 Experiment Farm Cottage

9 Ruse Street, Parramatta C. 1794. Architect unknown

Public access available, National Trust of Australia

This is another house from the early colonial period which, fortunately, has been retained. The house proba- bly dates from just after 1794 when John Harris pur- chased the farm from James Ruse. The house is a good example of a Georgian style, early colonial farm- house. It has a low pitched, hipped roof with a flagged sandstone verandah to its front. The main rooms of the house open onto the verandah which has turned tim- ber columns. The interior of the house retains much of its early cedar joinery.

S3 Old Government House

Parramatta Park, near O'Connell Street, Parramatta 1799–1815. John Watts, Francis Greenway

Public access available, National Trust of Australia

In 1790, Governor Phillip built the original Government House at Parramatta, in the vicinity of the existing building.

This site may contain the oldest buildings still stand- in Australia. Recent archeological studies by the firm Design Five suggest that some of the extant out- buildings formed part of the original complex.
In 1800, Governor Hunter built his two-storeyed Government House. The designer of this early version was probably James Bloodsworth, who designed the original Government House on the corner of Bridge Street in Sydney. Bloodsworth was a master bricklayer transported to Sydney as a convict, whose knowledge and skills were in such demand that he soon gained his freedom. Bloodsworth was responsible for building most of the substantial buildings in Sydney during the periods covered by the governorships of Philip, (Lt. Gov) Grose, (Lt. Gov) Paterson, Hunter and King.

In about 1816, Watts virtually rebuilt the building. He added a new front section, about the same size as the original building. Two single storey wing buildings were added to complete the Palladian assemblage. The tendency to render buildings in the early colony can be explained by the porous quality of the early bricks. The portico and fanlight are attributed to Francis Greenway.

S5 The Female Orphan School
University of Western Sydney Nepean, Parramatta Campus off Victoria Road, Rydalmere 1813–21. Attributed to Francis Greenway
Public access to campus

The foundation stone of this building was laid in 1813 by Governor Macquarie and was initially completed in 1815. However, the work was found to be inadequate and, almost immediately, plans were laid for further work to make the building more satisfactory for its intended use as an orphanage. Work on the building was supervised by the Reverend Samuel Marsden. While Greenway did prepare plans for the building, it is uncertain as to what degree his drawings were adhered to. The building has been modified greatly over

S4 Vaucluse House
Wentworth Road, Vaucluse
1803. Architect unknown
1827–30. Architect unknown
1829. George Cookney (stables)
1839. Architect unknown (front wing verandah)
1847. Architect unknown (renovation)
Public access available

The house was built over a number of periods. The original land grant was an 80 acre (32 ha) grant to Thomas Leycock in 1792. The first house was built in 1803 by Sir Henry Brown Hayes, a nobleman sentenced to convict transportation for abducting an heiress. He sold the house to Sir Morris O’Connell who in turn sold it to Captain John Piper. (Piper later built the famous Henrietta Villa, now demolished, on Point Piper, a suburb named after him). In 1827, William Charles Wentworth, statesman and explorer, owned the land and set about a major enlargement process. The house is famous if only for the fact that Wentworth lived there. He was a ‘currency lad’, a colloquial term for a native-born Australian, whose father had arrived in the colony on the second fleet. Wentworth gained his reputation early when, in 1813, at the age of 22 and in the company of Messrs Blaxland and Lawson, he made the first crossing of the Blue Mountains and, thereby, discovered a trafficable route from Sydney to the Western Plains. Wentworth was an outstanding character in the colony. He is said to have drafted the Colony of New South Wales’ Constitution in the library of this house and, in 1872, he became President of the New South Wales Legislative Council. Lucy Turnbull, in her book Sydney: Biography of a City, refers to Wentworth as an Australian Jefferson, and Vaucluse House as the Australian Monticello.

The grounds around Vaucluse House were resumed by the Government and proclaimed a public park in 1911. The house has been open to the public since 1920.

Vaucluse house is furnished within and its contents are of great historical interest. Some of the outbuildings are worthy pieces of architecture in themselves, including the sandstone stables designed by George Cookney in 1829.

S2 Experiment Farm Cottage
This is an outstanding early colonial house in close proximity to the centre of Sydney. The house as it stands is a mixture of Georgian and Tudor Gothic. It is characterised by its colonial verandah overlooking the gardens which roll down to Vaucluse Bay. It is an exceptional remnant of 19th-century architecture, with its flagstone, service courtyard at the rear and its Gothic crenellated parapets. The house is also exceptional for having one of the few large-scale, intact early colonial gardens in Sydney, and the areas surrounding the house are, in themselves, worthy of viewing. Note that a considerable effort has been made in recent years to recreate the kitchen garden.

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Much of the most beautiful architecture in the Middle East is Islamic architecture and not in ruins at all. For instance, the Agha Bozorg mosque in Kashan, Iran is from the 18th century but exhibits many of the architectural details we associate with Islamic and Middle Eastern architecture. Note the ogee arches, where the highest point of the arch comes to a point. This common arch design is found throughout the Middle East, in beautiful mosques, secular buildings, and public structures such as the 17th century Khaju Bridge in Isfahan, Iran.

The buildings included within this guide extend from the first examples of Australian architecture by convict architect Francis Greenway to the works by today's rising generation. The eastern states of Australia are the states adjoining the east coast of Australia. These are the mainland states of Victoria, Queensland, and New South Wales; the Australian Capital Territory and Jervis Bay Territory, while not states, are also included. The term usually includes the island state of Tasmania. On some occasions, the state of South Australia is included in this grouping.