

Mansfield Brothers of Sydney – Architects of Distinction

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Mansfield Brothers of Sydney made a significant contribution to the architectural heritage of NSW in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Under the chairmanship of George Allen Mansfield, the firm designed many notable buildings in Sydney as well in country areas such as the Hawkesbury. The company became well known for its public and commercial buildings and also undertook major residential projects.

Born in Sydney on 15 June 1834, Mansfield was the eldest son of the Rev Ralph Mansfield and Lucy nee Shelley. He was privately educated and articled to J F Hill in 1850. By 1860 he had completed his term and had formed the architectural firm of Mansfield Bros. He had the distinction of being elected the first president of the NSW Institute of Architects serving from 1871-76.

Major commissions undertaken by the firm included extensions to Sydney Grammar School (1876), [Royal] Prince Alfred Hospital, Camperdown (1882), and Parramatta Town Hall (1880). Appointed as architects for the Council of Education, Mansfield designed public schools at Orange (1880) and Berridale (1883). Residential projects included Abercrombie House, Bathurst (c. 1870), Eulabah, Richmond (1881) and Sunny Brae, Windsor (1875). In addition, the firm designed St Peter's Sunday School, Richmond (1873) and a new grandstand for Hawkesbury Race Club, Clarendon (1896).

Sunny Brae, located at 12 Fitzgerald Street, Windsor, New South Wales, an elegant home of stuccoed brick was built in 1875 for Robert Dick, the first Mayor of Windsor. The home has been passed down through many generations of the Paine family. Of generous proportions, this home was built in the Victorian style with cast iron decorative verandah posts, slate roof and paired brackets under the eaves. The spacious garden includes many mature trees and an interesting variety of shrubs and flowers. The land along The Terrace adjacent to the Hawkesbury River was once the site of Thomas Cadell's Brewery which was demolished in 1899.

Eulabah at 27 West Market Street, Richmond, was constructed as the family home of Dr James Cameron and his wife Eliza Bowman and was designed in the late Victorian Jacobean style in 1881 who also designed the mansion Abercrombie House in Bathurst. Dr Cameron made a significant contribution to the development of the town of Richmond as well as writing an important history of the Presbyterian Church in Australia. He became minister of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Richmond in 1856 and moderator of the NSW Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. His wife Eliza was the daughter of George and Eliza Bowman whom he married in 1857. Dr Cameron died in 1905 and the home was sold to George Woodhill.

Mansfield designed over 53 buildings mostly in the Victorian Classical style for the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Limited dating from about 1871 to 1897. The structures embodied George Mansfield's ideals of elegance of form and symmetry of design.

The Windsor and Richmond branches comprise a banking chamber on the ground floor with first floor residence and rear stables. The central entrance portico is a feature of each building however at Windsor it is overshadowed by the first floor verandah. Exterior walls have a stucco finish. Although designed by the same architect there are differences employed in the design of each building.

The façade of the Windsor building erected on the corner of George and Kable Streets in 1879 features deeply recessed double hung windows with moulded arched lintels on the ground floor. Shuttered French doors open onto the first floor verandah which is adorned with iron lacework and frieze supported by Classical cast iron columns with Ionic capitals manufactured by J R Bubb of Sydney. Interior joinery is mostly original and survives in fine condition.

The branch of the Commercial Bank at Richmond was constructed on the corner of Windsor and West Market Streets in 1880 with additions to the Windsor Street frontage in about 1910. The windows on each floor feature distinctive decorative mouldings above each double hung sash window and heavily ornamented sills. No longer a bank this building now houses an antique shop and café.

In 1981 the CBC Ltd merged with the National Commercial Banking Corporation of Australia Ltd (now NAB) and in subsequent years many branches were sold into private ownership. George Allen Mansfield died in 1908 and the firm he founded continued well into the 20th century.