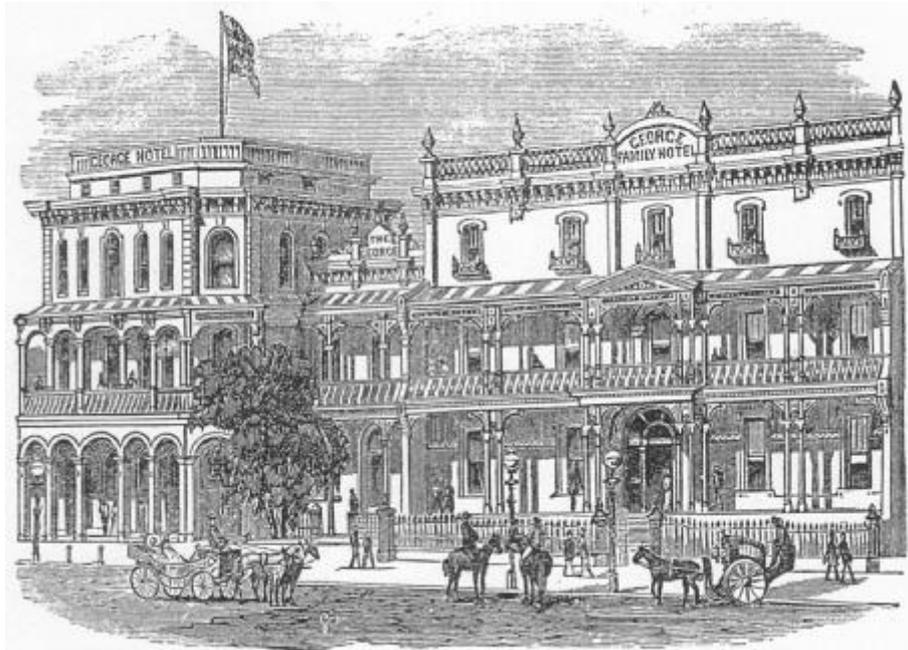


George Hotel, formerly **The Terminus** and **Seaview 1857 -**
125-129 Fitzroy Street, corner Grey Street, St Kilda
MEL: 58 A8



George Hotel, 1881



George Hotel, 1890



Grey Street with the George Hotel at left, c.1876

The trajectory of the history of the George Hotel, from grandeur to dilapidation and back again, is said to reflect the fortunes of St Kilda itself. While the current building was constructed in stages between 1880 and 1930, the Terminus Hotel, as it was known until 1868, was built in 1857 to cater to the passengers travelling from Melbourne to the newly opened St Kilda railway line terminus opposite. Architect Robert Risby Cowl called for tenders for additions in 1873 and for sash frames and a staircase in 1874. In a business where the turnover of licensees is often rapid, the George appears as an anomaly remaining within one family for much of its life. Frederick Wimpole was its proprietor and publican from 1874, while his son Frederick, took over from the 1900s to the 1950s.

During this period, the hotel underwent several physical renovations. The corner section, designed by Harry B Gibbs, is a large and ornate example of Boom-style Italianate architecture. By 1930 successive additions created a 169-room hotel, which rendered it one of the largest and most well known hotels in Victoria, and certainly the largest in Melbourne outside the city. The rear wing contains the large dining room, now known as the highly decorated and richly historical Ballroom. During the 1930s, it was a favoured wedding venue for fashionable brides. Even during the war years when other hotels were suffering the after-effects of the Depression, the George's very proper reputation seemed untarnished. Yet, like post-war St Kilda itself, more a centre for cheap housing than a tourist resort, the George could not retain its classy image. The George, renamed the Seaview in 1976, became the centre of Melbourne's alternative and punk music scenes. With the burgeoning popularity of punk and new wave, the venue, known varyingly as the Wintergarden, Crystal Ballroom, Seaview Ballroom or Ballroom, played host to up-and-coming local bands, most notably Nick Cave and the Birthday Party, but also INXS and Hunters and Collectors. By 1987, however, the hotel's associations with drug dealing and

other criminal behaviour led to a forced closure and de-licensing. In 1991, the hotel was reopened by restaurant entrepreneur Donlevy Fitzpatrick, whose visionary redevelopment in 1996-97 contained apartments, with bars, cafes and shops at ground level, and the ballroom becoming a function room.



George Hotel, 2004