

CHAPTER XXII.

The Town Hall—Foundation Stone Laid, 1859—Town Hall Finished—Description of Building—The Memorial Tablet Question—The Word "Honourable?"—Fighting Tactics in Council—Melbourne Amused—The End—No Inscription on Town Hall—Opening of Town Hall—Council's First Sitting in Town Hall, January. 4, 1860—A Notable Ball—Additions to Town Hall Proposed—The 1869 Town Hall Agitation—Councillors and Ratepayers—Supreme Court Judgment—The New City Hall —The 1883 —The Battle for Sites—The Organ Bait of James Mason —Carlisle Street Site Selected—Opening of the City Hall—City Statistics—Proclamation of the City of St. Kilda by Lord Hopetoun—Counillor O'Donnell Mayor—The City Hall—Alterations and Additions—St. Kilda New Police Court and Station—The Town Hall's End.

IN the year 1859, the St. Kilda Council obtained from the Government a grant of Crown land, at the junction of Acland and Barkly Streets. Permission was given by the Government to sell the land, and to devote the proceeds obtained from the sale to the two-fold purpose of forming a new road, from Carlisle Street West, to Acland Street, and the Esplanade, and also to apply the moneys towards building a much needed Town Hall and Municipal offices. Before the councillors were able to purchase the land to open up this roadway and thereby do away with the street's blind end, they had prolonged and tedious negotiations with the owners. After many days they succeeded in buying the land they required. They made the road, and also built a bridge over an open drain. In May, of the same year, the Council directed the Town Surveyor, Sydney W. Smith, to draw plans, and specifications, for the erection of a town hall. The plans were prepared, and approved of by the Council, and the work of the building of the town hall was commenced. The foundation stone of the St. Kilda Town Hall, without any inscription being placed upon it, was laid on July 12, 1859, by the chairman of the municipality, the Honorable Alexander Fraser, M.L.C. A silver trowel, with a suitable inscription, was presented to the chairman by his brother councillors "as a mark of the esteem they entertained for him."

In the month of September, 1859, the Town Hall building was nearing its completion, and the councillors anticipated that the offices would be ready for occupation in a month. Councillors admitted that the building was, "without any great pretensions to architectural excellence. The mount, at the disposal of the Council, was merely sufficient to carry out the work on the strictest economical principles, nevertheless the edifice," it was said, "will prove an ornament to the municipality, and reflects great credit on the architect." The first Council meeting, in the new Town Hall, was not held until January 4, 1860.

A description of the building, evidently from the hand of the Town Surveyor himself, states: "Both fronts are in the Roman Doric style with Italian windows. The facade to each street is 63 feet in length, and the depth of the building is 58 feet, 6 inches, thus forming nearly a square. On entering the Town Hall, from Grey Street, there is, on the right hand, and, on the left, entering the building from Barkly Street—the municipal chamber where the meetings of the Council will be held. This room extends the whole length of the building, viz., 58 feet, 6 inches, with a breadth of 32 feet. There are two entrances to the chamber, from the lobby, one close to each porch. That near Grey Street, opens on to the main body of the hall, appropriated to the public, whilst the door, at the Barkly Street entrance, will lead to a moveable dais, 21 feet by 32, which will be for the members of the Council. In this portion of the hall will also be situated the reporters' box. The ceiling of the large hall is what is termed an elliptical cove ceiling, 21 feet in height, and the architect hopes, that by the manner in which it has been constructed, he will be able to secure a perfect sound, without laboring under the disadvantage of an echo. A Roman Doric cornice for the internal, as well as the external decorations, is in that style. It extends round the four sides of the room, and is supported by Doric pilasters. A large, and handsome centre flower piece is placed in the middle of the ceiling. By daytime, the hall will be lighted by the windows at each end ; viz., two ordinary windows on either side of a bay ; at night, it will be illuminated by two large sunlights, fixed in the ceiling, and supplied with gas. On the left hand of the lobby, which is 9 feet, 6 inches in breadth, and facing each street, is the Town Surveyor's room ; an apartment 18 feet by 15 feet, and 17 feet in height. Immediately at the back of it, and with doors

communicating with it, as well as with the lobby, is the contractors' room, 18 feet by 12 feet. Next to that room, and with an entrance, both from the lobby, and the Town Clerk's office, is the committee room, for the use of the members of the Council. This chamber is the same size as that of the contractors."

"Behind the Committee room, and facing Barkly Street, is the Town Clerk's office, 18 feet by 15 feet. All the offices are of the same height, viz. 17 feet. Each room will be lighted by gas, having brackets fixed in the wall. The ventilation of the building has been well attended to, there being four ventilating shafts, along the whole of the building, on either side. The walls of the edifice, which are of brick, are covered with Portland cement. The elevation from the ground is 26 feet. The municipal chamber, besides being appropriated to the use, to which it was specially destined, will be eminently adapted, from its large size, to many other purposes, such as public meetings, balls etc. In this respect, it is soon intended to turn it to account, as the Wesleyans purpose holding a bazaar in it towards the close of the year." The bazaar was held to raise funds to pay for the brick chapel, in Fitzroy Street, which had superseded a wooden chapel.

Continuing the description, the report states, that "The members of the Church of England, resident in St. Kilda, have also been thinking of a similar proceeding. In addition to this, there is some idea of inaugurating the opening of the Town Hall by a dejeuner, to be succeeded in the evening by a ball. The building, which has been erected on ground, granted for municipal purposes to the Council, by the Government will cost, when completed, about £1,850, a sum which will include the gas, fittings etc. The contractor for the Town Hall is Mr. William Allen of Robe Street, and the contract has been carried out under the superintendence of Mr. W. Sydney Smith, the Town Surveyor and the original designer of the edifice."

"In addition to the building of the Town Hall, a considerable improvement to the Court House is in the course of being effected, by the erection of a handsome portico with pediment, and flight of steps, facing the angle, formed by the junction of Grey, and Barkly Streets, and on either side of the portico, facing the two above named streets, is a colonnade of pillars in the Roman Doric style. This alteration, in the Court House, is being carried out at the expense of the Government, which

granted £500 for the purpose, but the design was prepared by Mr. Sydney Smith, although the plans, and specifications, were submitted for the inspection of Mr. Wardell, the Government architect, whose approval they met with. As soon as the Town Hall is ready for occupation the two offices in the Court House, now tenanted by the Town Clerk, and Town Surveyor, will be given up to the Bench, and will be available for the use of the magistrates, and the Clerk of Petty Sessions, for whom, at present, there is no accommodation."

Whether a memorial tablet should be placed upon the Town Hall building, and, whether the names of the councillors, showing their honorable prefixes, should be graven upon the tablet for posterity to read, were questions before the St. Kilda Council on Thursday, November 24, 1859. The proposals formed the subject of acrimonious discussions, at the Council meeting, and these discussions continued for successive meetings. The core of the trouble was, whether the words, "the honorable," were to appear on the memorial tablet, prefixed to the name of the Council's chairman, Alexander Fraser, M.L.C. The year before, 1858, Fraser had been elected to the Legislative Council for the Western Province. The majority of the St. Kilda councillors was of the opinion, that Fraser was entitled to be described as "The Honorable," in the wording of the record, that was to inform the residents of St. Kilda, and others, who would come hereafter to gaze on the Town Hall, that the building was erected in the year 1859, and the Chief Citizen was an honorable member of the Legislative Council of Victoria. That was it, the honor was one of Parliamentary distinction, associated with Her Majesty, the Queen's councillors. Those in favor said it ill became municipal councillors to sniff at such an honor, conferred upon a man who was their colleague. The opposition said in effect:

"If, Fraser is an honorable man,
So are we all, all honorable men:"

When the question was put to the vote Fraser as Chairman of the Council, gave his casting vote in favor of the words being placed upon the tablet. He said, in doing so, that there was no reason why he should be shorn of the distinction conferred upon him by Her Majesty the Queen. The minority consisting of Councillors Spicer, Tullett, and MacNaughten put up a stone wall made of recurring amendments. Their ingenuity in

doing so was not exhausted, till Councillor MacNaughten said, "They had discussed the subject usque ad nauseam." The last amendment, moved by Councillor Spicer, was that the tablet should not be paid out of municipal funds, but that each councillor should subscribe 110 towards the object. This amendment was carried unanimously, in the absence of two councillors, who had withdrawn from the chamber. Councillor Spicer then gave notice to the Chairman, that, at the next meeting of the council, he would move, "That the whole proceedings should be upset on the ground that they were illegal." He pointed out that his own amendment, which the Council had passed, was in direct contravention to the one previously agreed to, on the *same* subject, by the Council.

At the following meeting of the Council, Councillors Spicer, and Tullett, lodged a protest against the resolution involving the councillors in the payment of 10 pounds. The Chairman refused to receive the protest. He ruled the protest was not couched in courteous language. This decision provoked a sharp discussion. To abate heated argument the Chairman put the question to the vote, and the chairman's ruling to reject the protest was confirmed, but the victory was only won by the Chairman again exercising his right to give his casting vote. The protest was ordered to remain in the Town Clerk's custody. Councillor Spicer declared he would have the protest published, and then, when it was in the news sheet, the public could judge whether it was discourteous. There was not, he said, anything discourteous in the protest. It demurred at the Chairman's ruling; it stated that the majority of the Council, on the tablet question, was vacillating, and inconsistent, as shown by the majority councillors arriving at three opposite resolutions, on the same subject.

Councillor Tullett gave notice of motion, "That, at the next meeting of the Council, he intended to move a protest against the non reception of the protest." On the majority side, Councillor Hale gave notice of motion, that at the next meeting of the Council, he would move, "That the Town Surveyor be instructed to call for tenders for the inscription, and erection of the Tablet, in the manner considered orthodox by the majority of the Council."

Melbourne was beginning to take an interest in what was known as, "The Tablet Question, at St. Kilda." To outsiders,

the position continued to develop humor. The forlorn fight put up by the minority councillors had something of the mock heroic in its incidences. To them, the determination was fixed to prevent the attachment of the Tablet to the wall of the Town Hall, so long as the municipal chairman was described as "The Honorable," on the tablet. This mighty to-do about a trifle, was the most amusing debate the St. Kilda council had yet provided for the gaiety of readers of municipal news. It was thought that the minority councillors must be beaten in the long run, that they must come to the end of their tactics of opposition. In the meanwhile the "tablet question" became an amusing serial story in the newspapers with the addition of "To be continued in our next."

When the St. Kilda Council met on December 1st, Councillor Hale moved, "That a call of the Council be made, for Wednesday next, to rescind the resolution arrived at, during the temporary absence of certain of its members, with reference to payment for the tablet ordered to be erected by the Council." Councillors Spicer, and Tullett, were the two councillors who opposed this resolution. They were still fighting in the last ditch, but their fight appeared to be a hopeless one. The motion was carried. Then Councillor Hale launched, with every prospect of success, the motion that was drafted to score a victory over the minority, and to place the tablet on the walls of the new town hall. His motion was, "That the surveyor be instructed to carry out the resolution of the Council of Wednesday last, viz.: That the tablet be erected, in accordance with the recommendations of the Public Works Committee No. 119 Section 2." Strange to say not one councillor could be found, who would second the motion. The majority, with victory within sight, made no move to obtain the laurels. The St. Kilda councillors were sick of the "Tablet Question". The motion was allowed to lapse. With the abandonment of the motion came the end of "The Tablet" question. No attempt was ever made again to revive the proposal to place a record, on the first Town Hall, of the names of the Councillors of St. Kilda, at the time of the building's erection. The absence of such a memorial has been commented upon by those who had not any knowledge that the reason was, that the word "honorable" on the tablet, was distasteful to a fighting minority of the Council, and the majority was so wearied by marches, counter marches, and

public criticisms, and witticisms, that they were glad to abandon the prospect of being immortalised, in name, on a brass tablet rather than to sustain a fight for the amusement of the people of Melbourne.

Melbourne newspaper readers learnt, from their daily news sheet, on December 19, 1859, that "an inaugural lecture, to the members of the St. Kilda Mechanics' Institute, which has been recently established at St. Kilda, was delivered last evening, at the new municipal hall, of that place, by Archibald Michie, Esq., M.L.A. The subject selected by the learned lecturer, was one of peculiar interest to all namely : Colonists Socially, and in Their Relations with the Mother Country.' The interest taken by the inhabitants of the district, in the opening of what has, of late years, become a distinguishing feature, in all newly proclaimed townships, and municipalities, was testified by the large attendance of ladies and gentlemen, last evening, the room, some minutes before the hour of 8 o'clock, being completely filled. On the platform were, the Hon. Mr. Fraser, M.L.C., the Chairman of the Municipality, and the members of the Council, also Colonel Pitt, the Rev. Messrs. Seddon and Currie, and Messrs. Johnston, M.L.A., Nash, Jennings, Hart, Powell, McDowell, Trenchard, Burnie, Worsley, Rolfe, J. Smith, D. Blair and Rusden. On the motion of Mr. Kelsall, seconded by Mr. Cowderoy, the Hon. Mr. Fraser took the chair. The Chairman stated that he felt much pleased to meet so many people present that evening, the occasion of the opening of the Town Hall, and the inauguration of the St. Kilda Mechanics' Institute."

The Argus newspaper states, in its issue of January 5, 1860: "The St. Kilda Council signalled their entrance into the new Town Hall yesterday evening, which was then occupied by them for the first time, the furniture, and other fittings, being just complete, by resolving to appropriate a sum of money for the erection of rifle butts, within the municipality, for the benefit of the local volunteer Company. The resolution was arrived at, *in* consequence of an application from Lieutenant Nash, who estimated the expense at about £60."

The Council informed the ratepayers in March, 1860, that the Town Hall, and fittings, were completed. The hall was lighted with gas, the hall filled with seats, and there was ample accommodation provided for the purpose of holding public meetings. With money supplied by the Government, the Council

had been enabled to complete the portico, and colonnade, to the Court House of Petty Sessions. Such works were designed and carried out by the Council's surveyor, Mr. Sydney W. Smith. The Council congratulated the ratepayers in the saving thus effected. It was believed, at the time, to be the only Town Hall, in the colony, for which premiums for the design, and commissions to the architect for superintendence, had not been paid. In March, 1861, we learn that "Those portions of the walls of the Court House of Petty Sessions, which were not finished, have since been cemented, to correspond with the remainder of the work, and the Town Hall, thereby greatly improving the appearance of this important block of building." The Councillors, and the burgesses of St. Kilda, were proud of their new town hall.

Not only was the Town Hall a building that enhanced the corporate dignity of the Council, but it also served as the centre piece of the public social movements, and a place for philanthropic societies, and committees of charitable movements, to use as their head quarters. The spacious hall—for the hall was considered to be a spacious one in those days—enabled the residents of St. Kilda to give balls, as well as other entertainments, and the facility for doing so was freely used. When the new city hall was built the old town hall of St. Kilda was used for the purposes of the St. Kilda Police Court. By that time its past glories were forgotten, and it had fallen from high favor. It was a dingy depressing barn-like place, that seemed to be a not unfitting housing for much of the human misery that became articulate there. The flooring boards, no longer polished for a dance floor, had become roughed by the footsteps of many litigants, police, and people, and few persons who attended the St. Kilda Police Court, held in the old Town Hall, knew that the inhospitable place, with its faded yellow colored walls, its weather and water stained cornices, its large broken centre flower piece, its cracked ceilings, was once the hall wherein the intellectual giants of Melbourne displayed their oratorical powers, and showed the fruits of their erudition; a place where the first ladies in the land, squired by their men, preened themselves in the mazes of fashionable gatherings ; a flower clad hall, wherein beauty found pleasure in the citizens' delightful balls that were held at St. Kilda. Here too, in the old Town Hall, Grey Street, was the arena of many a hard fought political

battle. Then was the hall crowded to almost suffocation with electors, and the windows opening on the street, were filled with the heads of electors, who were unable to gain admission to the hall, and so, perforce, they thrust their necks, as far as they were able to do, inside the window frames to listen to the political speeches of a Michie, a Fellows, and others.

Into this dingy room, before its declension, had come the Government House party to attend a ball at St. Kilda. Here is a report of a ball held in the St. Kilda Town Hall, on Wednesday evening October 28, 1863. "The St. Kilda Spring Ball took place last evening, and proved in every respect equal to its precursors. The company included the élite of the neighbourhood, and must have numbered nearly 200. His Excellency the Governor was absent through indisposition, but Lady, and Miss Darling, were present, attended by Captain Tyler, and Mr. H. L. Warde, His Excellency's aide-de-camp, and private secretary. The St. Kilda Town Hall, and its admirable suite of apartments, offered all the conveniences needed for such an occasion. The handsome council chamber, which was decorated with flags, and floral devices, was the *salle à danser*. Supper was laid in the petty sessions court, light refreshments were served in the magistrates' room; the apartment sacred to the Town Clerk, was placed at the disposal of Lady Darling, and the office of the town surveyor was converted into a ladies' retiring room. Lady and Miss Darling, arrived at about a quarter past nine o'clock, and their entrance into the ball room, was signaled by the performance of the National Anthem. The ball was opened immediately afterwards by Miss Darling, and the Hon. Matthew Hervey, with a quadrille. Polka, waltz, lancers, and other dances, followed in rapid succession, until midnight, when supper claimed, for a while, the attentions of the party, but after a short interval, the attractions of the ball room again resumed their sway, and it was not until an advanced hour the festivity terminated. The supper was provided by Mr. James Collins of the Prince of Wales Hotel, St. Kilda, and thanks to the completeness of the arrangements, and the polite attention of the stewards, the *réunion* was of the most exceptionable character."

This report, with its jewelled French phrases, is indicative of the elegant literary furnishings of a genteel newspaper writer of those florid Victorian days. Lingering in the heart of the

report is the subtle aroma of powdered beauties. Thoughts come of ball room gowns, with flowing trains, that had to be looped, and held up, by the maids, and dames, as they danced the dances of other days.

Six years after the St. Kilda Town Hall was completed, Councillor Tullett tabled a motion in June, 1865, to the effect—"That the Surveyor be instructed to prepare plans, and estimates of the cost of additions, and improvements to the Town Hall, embracing a hall, with say twice the present accommodation ; a library, committee room, strong room, and clock tower." At the Council meeting, held on June 19, 1865, there being present Councillors Bunny, Cowderoy, Tullett, Peterson, Turner, Oldham, and Ford, the Town Surveyor delivered his report, and plans, in connection with the proposed new Town Hall. After discussing the propriety of calling a public meeting of the ratepayers, for the purpose of obtaining their opinion, upon the proposal to build a new town hall, it was decided the better course to pursue, for the time being, was to place the plans for the new town hall on view for the period of one week in the Council chambers. Whatever the ratepayers thought of the proposal, their judgments were colored by the thought, that a new town hall meant an increased rate, and that thought, possessing ratepayers, has usually a wilting effect upon any of their expansive civic impulses. Councillor Tullett's idea like a spark, gleamed for a moment upon the municipal stage and then went out into darkness.

A certain restlessness was noticeable among the residents of St Kilda, who lived on the crown of the hill, and they desired to place a new Town Hall, with increased accommodation, in the vicinity of their properties. This restlessness was expressed on December 3, 1866, when a petition was prepared, and presented to the Chairman of the Municipality. The petition read: "We, the Ratepayers of St. Kilda, having heard that the Council has before them the propriety of purchasing a site of land suitable for a new Town Hall We, the undersigned, would submit to the Council, that it is self evident, that such a step is not only necessary, but expedient, and would therefore respectfully urge, that the land offered for sale, to the Council by Mr. Mathew Hervey, situated at the corner of High Street, and the Alma Road, is in every way from its commanding position, suitable

for the purpose, and in trust that no delay will be taken in securing the same, providing it can be obtained on suitable terms."

Ratepayers to the number of 108 attached their signatures to the petition. Among the signatories were G. Connibere, draper, High Street; A. G. Arnold, chemist, High Street; T. W. Feassey, grocer, High Street; T. Tompson Bates, importer, Thomas Adcock, baker, Alfred Tartakover, pawnbroker, Joseph Fitch, poulterer, Ann Taylor, greengrocer, John Sundercombe, bootshop, all of High Street. George Gissing, tailor, Fitzroy Street, J. Crouch, architect, Waterloo Street. The petition was read, and it was filed, and it still remains a fruitless document.

In September, 1868, the interior of the Town Hall, and the Court of Petty Sessions, and the Public Library were painted and otherwise renovated.

The small Court House, from a street view of the building, had passed out of recognition. A paragraph in a Melbourne newspaper, October 10, 1868, seems to suggest that the St. Kilda Court was no longer held in the small court house, the narrow little building that occupied the apex of Grey, and Barkly Street. Probably the Court was held in the Town Hall, and the first Court House had become the Clerk of Petty Sessions' office. The paragraph reads :—"There is in St. Kilda, a neat commodious little Court House, but this, for some reason, has fallen into disuse, and is to be given up to other purposes." The Court House was used for the purposes of the St. Kilda Mechanics' Institute, i.e. the public library.

In the year 1869, the councillors were of the opinion that the St. Kilda Town Hall was lacking the necessary accommodation for the proper discharge of the business of the municipality. For this reason, they proposed to make certain additions to the Town Hall, but the burgesses strongly protested against the municipal funds being spent for that purpose. As the councillors, the Mayor, Henry Tullett, and Councillors B. F. Bunny, S. P. Lord, Charles Gray, W. G. Murray, W. C. Biddle, John Oldham, Florence Gardiner, and T. J. Crouch, persisted in their determination, the ratepayers invoked the assistance of the Attorney General.

A ratepayer, acting for his fellows, George Rolfe, lodged a formal complaint. On the strength of that complaint, the

Attorney General began a suit in Equity, to obtain an injunction, to prevent the Council from making the proposed additions to the Town Hall. The application for the injunction was heard on June 25-26, 1869. The facts disclosed were, that before the Council struck its rate, an estimate of the expenditure for the year was made, and the whole of the estimate, and receipts, for the year, amounting to £9,111.15.0 were thereby appropriated to the annual expenses of the borough, and certain specified public works, a rate being levied on the basis of that estimate. After this estimate had been received, and approved, a proposal was made, that the sum of £10,000 should be borrowed, of which sum £4,250 was earmarked for the cost of alterations, and additions, to the Town Hall. In April the Council advertised for designs for the alterations, offering a premium of £100 for the plans. Differences of opinion existed in St. Kilda towards the proposal, and to satisfy the burgesses, the Council decided to have a poll on the subject. A poll was taken, and a majority of fifty three ratepayers was found to disapprove of the proposed expenditure on the Town Hall. On May 31, the result of the poll, on the proposal, was reported to the Council. A majority of the Council nevertheless decided to carry out the alterations, and the additions. On June 10, a design was accepted, and tenders were called for the work, to be sent in on June 21. There was a sum of £3,000 of borough funds in hand, which had not been expended on works set out in the last year's estimate.

The Council's case was, that the Town Hall (commenced in July, 1859) had not sufficient accommodation, and that the Council had the surplus moneys mentioned in hand, as well as £1,900 arrears of rates owing to it, which amount had not been included in the estimate. Mr. J. W. Stephen, and Mr. Holroyd, appeared for the Attorney General, and Mr. Webb, for the Corporation of the Borough of St. Kilda.

Mr. Justice Molesworth, in delivering judgment, said that the councillors were about to do an act that they could only do, either by incurring a prospective liability, or going beyond the ways, and means of the current year, and running themselves into debt, neither of which things they had a right to do. Dealing with the case simply on that ground, His Honor thought it right that the councillors should be restrained from proceeding further, and he granted the injunction.

The question of a Town Hall with adequate accommodation rested in abeyance until the year 1883. In February of that year, the Council waited upon the Government, and asked that a piece of land, in the centre of the Borough, at the corner of Brighton Road, and Carlisle Street, valued at £15,000, might be permanently reserved, for the purpose of a site for a new Town Hall. The Government granted the request. The land had been temporarily reserved as a market site for St. Kilda, and it abutted on a section of land, already permanently reserved, and utilised, for church sites by the Anglican and Methodist authorities. The market site had a frontage of 550 feet to Carlisle Street, and 462 feet frontage to the Brighton Road. Householders, after the custom of their kind, in the vicinity of vacant land, with a no-man's land appearance, found it convenient as a dump for domestic, and garden rubbish. At one time, it was clearly swampy creek land, sweepingly described by some of the scoffing St. Kilda residents, as of "no use now, whatsoever, and it never will be." Later, the low lying land was utilised as an authorised municipal rubbish tip, the ultimate purpose of which was to reclaim the land. When the work of reclamation had advanced sufficiently the Council made use of it as a municipal storage yard. The creek, to become eventually one of the main drains of St. Kilda, threaded the land, and the difficulties that the creek, or drain, presented, were such that the early residents did not foresee that it was possible that the land, some day, might be reclaimed.

In 1886, the St. Kilda Council advertised for the submission by sellers of other sites, suitable for the purpose of erecting the proposed new Town Hall. Several sites were offered, but none of them were regarded with favor by the Council. In 1887 the Council resolved to float a loan of £100,000 for the carrying out of a large number of public works, including the erection of a new municipal Hall. At the same time a poll of the ratepayers was to be taken to determine where the site of the building should be. The Council intended that the poll should be cast in favor of the reserved land in the South Ward, with an area of 2 acres, 3 roods, and 10 perches, known as "The Greyhound site," or for an extension of the lands of the old Town Hall, the site of which had an area of one rood, and three perches. The ratepayers in the North Ward, put in a claim for the building to be erected in their ward, and claimed, as a

right, that a site to be submitted by them should be included in the ballot. After discussion in the Council, and some display of feeling, the request of the North Ward ratepayers was agreed to. The North Ward ratepayers then disclosed their site, which was known as Rankin's corner, after Dr. Rankin, who lived there. It was situated at the south western corner of High Street, and Alma Road. The price asked for the corner, which had an area of three roods, was £9,850. The site was a portion of Crown Section 70A of ten acres, with 170 feet frontage to Alma Road, and 503 feet frontage to High Street.

For seven months the battle raged over the question of the site for the new Town Hall. The newspapers were inundated by letters from ratepayers, keen in their advocacy of the "best site." Slanderous rumors were abroad. Charges of concealed interests, and of hired advocacy, were not wanting. The Australian Natives' Association promoted a mock trial of "The Sites" that created amusement. Some of the St. Kilda councillors took part in the farce, the Mayor, Councillor George Turner, acting at the trial as the Clerk of Courts. On July 25, 1887, the Council decided that two polls of the ratepayers should be taken, one on August 11, and the other on August 25. Something in the nature of a "bolt from the blue," in the shape of a letter, appeared in The Argus newspaper of August 8, three days before the date of the first poll. The letter was signed, "A St. Kilda Ratepayer," and the writer stated his intention, in the event of the "Greyhound site" being selected, to present a sum of £1,000 to the Council towards the erection of an organ in the new building. The writer enclosed a bank draft for £1,000 which the editor of The Argus held, pending the result of the poll. It transpired that the "Ratepayer", who conditionally offered the £1,000, was Ex-Councillor James Mason.

The Council considered that the most suitable form of voting would be one that would test the "survival of the fittest" site. At the first poll each voter was directed to strike out only one site, and on the result of the second poll the final decision was to be found. The first poll resulted in the following figures:—

North Ward Site.. ..	.. . . . .	1240 Votes
West Ward Site..	.. . . . .	2101 "
South Ward Site.. . . .	.. . . . .	1551 "

The North Ward was struck out in the running, and the second ballot, on August 25, resulted as follows:-

South Ward Site	.. . . .	1665 Votes
West Ward Site	.. . . .	1291 "

At a meeting of the Council, held on September 5, 1887, the decision of the ratepayers was accepted, and confirmed.

Many of the ratepayers, dissatisfied with the result of the poll, made, from time to time, efforts to prevent the wishes of the majority from being carried out. Undeterred, the Council, in September, had the necessary documents prepared to float a loan of £100,000. The amount to be spent out of the loan for the erection of the Town Hall was fixed at £16,000. On December 12, 1887, the Council finally resolved to float a loan of £100,000 at 4½ per cent. for the erection of permanent works within the borough. Plans were prepared of the proposed works, the specifications, estimates of the cost, and the statements required by the Local Government Act, were submitted to, and adopted by the Council. No objection to them was received from the ratepayers, and therefore the various orders were made. The loan was floated in April 1888, in London at 4½ per cent., realising a premium of £6/4/-. The Council appropriated the net premiums of the loan towards the cost of the building.

Five different designs were sent in for the Town Hall, and that of Mr. William Pitt, was selected in December 1887. The plan provided for a tower to rise to the height of 178 feet. The pediment of the tower was to be enriched by an allegorical design of Neptune, and the figure of Britannia. The Council accepted the tender of Messrs. Clark & Smith, contractors, for building the Town Hall, on May 16, 1888, at a cost of £23,000, but that sum did not include the cost of building of the tower, which the Council decided could be erected at a later date.

Doubts having arisen, as to the legality of the Council spending more than £16,000, the sum set out in the loan schedule of works for the cost of the Town Hall, and also, as to the Council's action in appropriating the premiums of the loan for building purposes, a certain section of the ratepayers, led by a Mr. George Read, brought a suit in Equity against the Council, to restrain the Council from spending the moneys in the way that was proposed. The councillors had fortified themselves by obtaining the opinions of learned counsel, Dr. Madden, who said that all that it was necessary for the council to do was to spend

all the £16,000 in erecting the Town Hall, and that, as the council had placed the full £100,000 to the credit of the loan account, it could use the net premiums as it had determined, and that the council was perfectly justified in acting in the manner it proposed, and that anyone, who thought differently, should "think again" before bringing a suit against the council.

Public meetings were held, at which Mr. Edward O'Donnell was chairman, and as an outcome of these meetings, two deputations waited on the council. Mr. O'Donnell said that what the section of the ratepayers he represented, desired was, that they should be given an opportunity to express their views by vote, as to whether the sum already earmarked for the erection of the Town Hall, £16,000, should be exceeded. The council, by a majority, refused to submit the question of the expenditure to the ratepayers. Another section of the dissentients then obtained the legal opinion of Sir Bryan O'Loughlan, Mr. Hodges, and Mr. Isaacs. These learned counsel were in conflict with the opinion given to the council by Dr. Madden. Shortly, they said that the council had acted illegally and contrary to, the provisions of the Local Government Act. In the end, George Read asked the Supreme Court for an injunction which was refused by Mr. Justice Williams.

Clark & Smith's contract did not provide for the completion of the building. To complete the design a further sum of from £12,000 to £15,000 would have been necessary. The newly erected building was occupied by the council, for the first time, on June 23, 1890. Invitations had been issued to past mayors, and councillors of St. Kilda, to mark the occasion. After the council meeting, an informal social gathering was held in the mayor's room, and "Success to St. Kilda" was toasted. In replying to a toast, ex-Councillor Oldham, stated that he remembered stone walling tactics in the council, when he was mayor. He had sat in the mayoral chair, until 2 a.m., the councillors playing chess, and he himself asleep, with a glass of water before him, the councillors hoping he would give in, and leave the chair, while he was as determined that he would remain.

On the north front of the building, facing Carlisle Street, is a stone attached to the Town Hall building, bearing the following inscription:—

55 OPENING OF TOWN HALL

"ERECTED 1890.

MAYOR

CR. EDWARD O'DONNELL, J.P.

COUNCILLORS:

S. E. JEANS

GEO. PILLEY

R. MARRIOTT

GEO. CONNIBERE

GEO. TURNER

H. JENNINGS

S. JACOBY

JNO. STEDEFORD

JNO. W. BROWNE

TOWN CLERK.

WM. PITT

ARCHITECT.

MESSRS CLARK & SMITH

BUILDERS."

The opening of the Town Hall was celebrated by a ball of unusual splendor, given by the mayor, Councillor O'Donnell.

On August 24, 1892, the City Hall organ, built by Fincham and Hobday at a cost of about £2,000, was opened in the presence of His Excellency, the Governor, the Earl of Hopetoun, and a locally distinguished party of councillors, and residents, invited by the mayor, Councillor Marriott. The organist, on the occasion, was the City Organist, Mr. H. J. Inge. A civic concert was given to the residents on August 26, and a Masonic choral service was held on August 28.

Ex-councillor James Mason, and Mrs. Mason, were present at the opening of the organ. Before the organ was tendered for, the council, anxious to secure a fine instrument, appeared to Mason to be delaying the purchase. This opinion led him to withdraw his gift of £1,000 towards the cost of the organ. The council was not alarmed. The gift was a conditional one. The ratepayers had accepted the gift, by carrying out the conditions Mason imposed upon them as the price of its acceptance, and the council held the donor's cheque.

In the council's possession is a photograph of Councillor James Mason in frock coat, standing stiff at attention, with a silver headed malacca cane, and a pair of gloves in his hands. The photograph is a good portrait of James Mason. Though somewhat choleric, he had very generous and charitable impulses, which had full advertisement. A notable gift of his was that of 165 acres of land to the Government to establish the

Epileptic Hospital at Clayton. He donated the Casualty Ward to the Homeopathic Hospital and the Alfred Hospital shared in his benefactions. He made substantial donations every year, while living, to hospitals, and other helpful institutions, and he left instructions, in his will, that such donations were to be continued, until the whole of his estate was gone. He was a shrewd man, who lent money on mortgages over bricks and mortar. For real estate he favored hotel properties, and he owned hotels in St. Kilda, Prahran, and elsewhere. At one time he was the owner, and licensee of the Royal George Hotel, Prahran. It was said that Mason's efforts to place the new town hall of St. Kilda, the City Hall, in Carlisle Street, were not altogether unconnected with the real estate interests of ex-Councillor James Mason.

Music could not have had any great charms for Mason, because he was so unfortunate as to be more or less deaf, a distressing infirmity that increased greatly towards the end of his long life. A hand cupping one ear, a slight stoop, and a frequent raucous "Eh ?" was James Mason's settled habit, when anyone bravely attempted to surmount the difficulties of carrying on a conversation with him. James Mason died at "Alfriston," Brighton Road, St. Kilda, on Tuesday, October 6, 1914, at the age of 94 years. He claimed to be the father of the first Local Government Act. He was a member of the St. Kilda Council 1861-62.

No one can doubt now, that, in view of St. Kilda city's wonderful expansion, in the only direction it could expand to the south, and south-east municipal boundaries that the 1,655 ratepayers, who voted for the new City Hall to be placed on the Greyhound site, in September, 1887, were right in their selection, though their majority, of 364 votes, was not, in the circumstances, a great one.

During the municipal year of 1868-69 the borough of St. Kilda was divided into wards. The councillors at the time of the division were—Mayor, Henry Tuned, Councillors Florence Gardiner, B. F. Bunny, T. J. Crouch, W. G. Murray, W. C. Biddle, John Oldham, S. P. Lord and Charles Gray The ward system was in force at the municipal elections of 1869-70, when eleven councillors were returned to represent the ratepayers for the three wards. The three wards were the North, South and West. The assessment books of 1870, show us that the number of tene-

On September 8, 1890, at the Executive Council Chambers, Melbourne, there being present His Excellency the Governor, John Adrian Louis Hope, K.C.M.G., Earl of Hopetoun, Councillors Gillies, Deakin, Dew, Patterson, Anderson and Dr. Pearson, St. Kilda, in response to a petition presented under the common seal of the Borough of St. Kilda, was, by Lord Hopetoun, declared to be a City, by the name of the City of St. Kilda. Its revenue for the year ending September 30, 1889, was declared to be not less than £20,000.

On September 29, 1890, the old municipal buildings in Grey Street were sold to the Government for the sum of £2,500.

In October, a public meeting of the ratepayers was held, in the City Hall, to decide how the commemoration of the proclamation of the city was to be honored. The day set apart for the Proclamation, was December 2, 1890. The streets of St. Kilda were decorated with flags. School children lined High Street, for a distance of half a mile. They were formed into a procession, and accompanied by the St. Kilda cadets. The children numbered about five thousand glad youngsters, clad in holiday attire. The majority of them waved small banners as they marched to the St. Kilda cricket ground where various sports were enjoyed.

At noon, the Mayor, Councillor A. E. Moore, accompanied by the Town Clerk, Mr. John Narberth Browne, and Councillors O'Donnell, Turner, Jacoby, Kelly, Marriott, Stedeford, Jeans and Jennings the members of the reception committee, and their secretary, Mr. Frederick Tullett, met, and presented Lord Hopetoun with an address of welcome. Afterwards, Lord Hopetoun passed under a triumphal arch, and then he was driven along the city boundaries, Beaconsfield Parade, the Esplanade, Acland Street, Barkly Street, Elwood Road, St. Kilda Street, Glen Huntly Road, Brighton Road, Hotham Street, Dandenong Road, Wellington Street, Crimea Street, Alma Road, Westbury Street, Carlisle Street to the City Hall. At the City Hall His Excellency held a levee, and about 500 citizens were presented to him. After a light repast, His Excellency read the proclamation of the City, and then he planted a tree in the grounds of the City Hall, immediately before the main entrance to the Hall. Then he drove to the Cricket Ground, where the 5,000 children gathered there sang the National Anthem. In the

evening a fireworks display was made at the end of the St. Kilda Pier, and thousands of spectators gathered, on the Esplanade, to watch the illuminations.

Behind this gaiety lay concrete evidences of St. Kilda's advance in wealth, and increase in population. St. Kilda had passed from the stage of a puling infant in the arms of its nurse, the first council, past the stage of the lusty youth, and had entered into its manhood of a city. Its number of tenements was, North Ward 1,303, South 1,715, West 1,038. Assessment, North £94,113, South £107,784, West £103,609. Annual revenue, North £5,882, South £6,737, West £6,475. Number of ratepayers, North 1,110, South 1,482, West 930. Populations, North 6,006, South 7,184, West 5,245. The following are the totals with a table of the figures of 1857. The total income of the borough in 1890 from all sources was £33,426 3/6.

	1857	1890
Tenements	900	4,056
Assessment	£95,613	£305,506
Revenue Rates	£4,780	£19,094
Ratepayers	1,000	3,530
Population	2,700	18,435

Ten years later, viz. in 1900, the figures were:-

	1890	1900
Tenements	4,056	4,236
Assessment	£305,50	£182,113
Revenue (Rates)	19,094	£18,211
Ratepayers		3,611
Population	18,435	19,863

An important decision, regarding the City Hall, was made on August 7, 1922. For some time previous to that date experience had shown that, with the volume of municipal business growing greater every year, a readjustment of the civic offices, and of the facilities for work was necessary. The City Hall committee placed certain recommendations before the council and they were carried. Among the more important of those recommendations was the one, suggesting that competitive designs be invited for the erection of a portico to the City Hall, and the remodelling of the entrance vestibule, and stairways, including also the rearrangement of the cloak rooms. When the original design of the City Hall was carried out, several drawbacks were found to exist, when the plans on paper were translated into bricks and mortar. Hence, years after-

wards when it was possible to remove the architectural disadvantages, and to also improve the municipal offices, the opportunity was taken. At the council meeting, where the Town Hall Committee's report was adopted, Councillor Unsworth expressed his opinion that the Council should complete the unfinished portion of the Town Hall. He probably referred in part to the naked brickwork, though some of its nakedness is veiled with a fairly wide-spread growth of virginia creeper, the foliage of which, in autumn, shows so many beautiful and diverse tints, the City Hall building, at that season presenting a delightful picture of artistic harmonies. The creeper was planted on the suggestion of His Worship the Mayor, Councillor Victor Lemme.

Councillor Unsworth was very keen to have the City Hall completely finished and he moved resolutions to that effect. They were supported by Councillor O'Donnell. However, as it happened the majority of the councillors thought differently. A prize of £75 was offered for the best design of a portico submitted, and another prize of £50 for the best plan for remodelling certain sections of the City Hall. A Committee of the Institute of Architects judged the plans submitted. Messrs. Sale & Keage, architects, won both prizes. When the alterations were made, and the portico added to the main entrance of the City Hall, it was seen what a remarkably fine civic building had been evolved, from what was an unsatisfactory structure. A stone commemorative of the work was placed at the portico. It reads—

"THIS PORTICO ERECTED AND ALTERATIONS
IN THE MAIN STRUCTURE MADE
1925.

MAYOR CR. J. B. LEVI, J.P.

COUNCILLORS:

E. O'DONNELL, J.P.

R. H. MORLEY, J.P.

J. G. ALLEN, J.P.

R. T. TAYLOR

BURNETT GRAY

T. UNSWORTHY

S. T. ALFORD, J.P.

F. L. DAWKINS

G. B. RENFREY, J.P.

G. CUMMINGS

E. B. CLARKE

FREDK. CHAMBERLIN.

TOWN CLERK

MESSRS. SALE & KEAGE.
ARCHITECTS.

MESSRS COCKRAM & COOPER
BUILDERS."

The Council, at this time, bought the massive wrought iron double entrance gates that had been in use at "Corry," the late Sir Lachlan Mackinnon's house, in Toorak. The gates were made by Bayliss of London, and they are wonderful examples of honest craftsmanship, in the difficult work of making wrought iron gates. Viewed from the City Hall's upper windows, as they stand, facing the intersection of Carlisle and High Streets, their fine iron work has the appearance that delicate lace patterns present when held up to the light. They are probably the finest wrought iron gates to be found in Melbourne. Examined closely they appear to be flawless. Even the keys of the gates are of solid British workmanship, with artistic mouldings, the like of which in key making is not seen today.

Inseparably linked with the history of the first town hall in St. Kilda are the court office, and contiguous police offices. The police offices in the beginning were situated at the Junction, then they were moved to Robe Street, and then they settled for years at the corner of Barkly, and Grey Streets. They ante-dated the town hall. The court became a projection of the town hall, the nose of the building at the point of the streets junction. The little building of naked brick was clothed in cement to correspond with the newly erected town hall. The police court served its day as we have already narrated. Time did not improve either the town hall, or the police quarters, more especially as the Government would not expend money on them for repairs. Some day there was to be a new court, a modern building conforming to the rules of sanitation, and to the requirements of the civil, and police business, in petty sessions, of a city of the status of St. Kilda. In the meanwhile, the court business had to be transacted under conditions that were a reproach to the Chief Secretary's Department, or to the Government, that would not provide the necessary money to enable the deplorable court, its offices, and the police quarters to be replaced by a modern building. Prompted by the chairman of the St. Kilda honorary magistrates, Councillor G. B. Renfrey, the St. Kilda Council again, and again, made efforts to have a police court, and offices erected, or repairs done to the dilapidated buildings. The Chief Commissioner of Police was written to, also the Under. Secretary of the State, who controls the police administration, but to little purpose. The descriptions of the court house given

by the Council were admitted to be true, but, it was answered, there was "no money available for repairs, and other police stations had requirements more urgent." Letters are easily answered. The Council decided to beard the Under Secretary in his office, even though he intimated to the proposed deputation that the position was as he had explained. Still the St. Kilda Council, with that spirit of persistence, which is its heritage from 1857, continued to knock at the door of the Chief Secretary's Department. The Nationalist member for St. Kilda, the Hon. Frederic William Eggleston, who, in keeping with the best political traditions of parliamentary representatives of St. Kilda, was a Minister of the Crown, being the Attorney General, bought a site for the new police court, and offices, in Chapel Street, on the east side, close to Carlisle Street. That was the foundation step of the building. Then came a parliamentary election, the Labor Party defeated the McPherson Nationalist State Ministry, and a new Attorney General of a Labor Government came into power, the Hon. W. Slater. The steps for the new court house and offices, were then so advanced, thanks to the St. Kilda Council, and Mr. Eggleston, that the new Attorney General felt it incumbent upon him to approve of the building of the court house. In the year 1928, the tender of Wood & Jarvis, contractors, Eildon Road, St. Kilda, for the erection of the new police station, was accepted at the contract price of £5,636.

The new court house and offices were opened on Wednesday morning, January 22, 1930, by the State Attorney General, Mr. Slater. The Mayor of St. Kilda, Councillor G. H. Robinson, and Councillors, accompanied by the Town Clerk, Mr. Fred Chamberlin, represented the city and citizens at the ceremony, supported by the local honorary justices of the peace. Though the court house, and the police offices were outside the ambit of the St. Kilda Council's authority, the creation of the court house, and its appurtenances, was due to the Council, and to St. Kilda's then Parliamentary representative, F. W. Eggleston, and to Councillor Burnett Gray, M.L.A. The proceedings at the opening of the building were under the Chief Magistrate of the City, the Mayor, who invited the parliamentary member for St. Kilda, Councillor Burnett Gray, to address the gathering. Councillor Gray mentioned that he held in hand, through the courtesy of St. Kilda's very old resident, and ancient photographer, Mr. George Wall, the "Municipal District of St. Kilda's Roll, for 1859." In

that year, the number of ratepayers was 1250. The population of St. Kilda in the year 1930 had reached the total 43,000. The oldest local justice, Mr. Joseph Levi, was present at the opening. His honorary service to St. Kilda citizens covered a period of 29 years. It was Mr. Levi who proposed the usual vote of thanks to the Attorney General, and the Police Magistrate, Mr. E. R. Stafford, who was to open the first court, endorsed Mr. Levi's words, as did also Sub-Inspector T. Cullinan for the police, and Mr. L. Jones for the lawyers. Immediately afterwards the court was opened, and the first case listed was called.

At the time of writing (August, 1930), the old court, and police offices, are abandoned, untenanted, unguarded. The police quarters, with its four bluestone cells, are no longer locked up. The winds from the four quarters of the heavens, have free entrances and free exits. Bolts, and bars, there are in plenty, but they no longer hold prisoners. The old court house doors are shut. The appearance of the whole building is that of a dead thing. Deserted, dead, yet it stands in the midst of city life, with the electric tramcars rushing past its closed doors, and its dusty windows. Truly a strange fate for the once St. Kilda Town Hall, the pride of the citizens of St. Kilda in the year 1859. The abandoned building belongs to the Government. The Crown authorities have yet to decide what they will do with the historical derelict. Its passing is not without its sadness to those citizens of St. Kilda, who associate many civic, and legal, memories with the yellow brown, water-stained old Town Hall and court building.