

HISTORY OF THE ADELAIDE CENTRAL MARKET

On Saturday the 23 January at about 3am, a small but noisy procession wound its way from the East End Market towards the Victoria Square environs. To the lively strains of the Concordia Band, eight carts laden with produce were driven by market gardeners to a site between Gouger and Grote Streets.

So began the first day of the Adelaide Central Market (then called City Market) back in 1869, in Grote Street on a site without any structure other than a fence and a couple of gas lights.

The official opening was a year later on 22 January 1870. From this day onwards, the Central Market has continued to evolve to be a vital part of the cultural heritage of the City, becoming a Mecca for trading for any merchant, grower, wholesaler or retailer selling directly to the consumer.

Reflecting the heritage and character of the market are the brick remains of the Grote Street facade of 1900 and a group of seven two storey shops in Gouger Street, completed in 1906.

Land was bought for the Central Market in September 1867 for a total sum of £2600 for three town acres (333, 379, 380). It was not until January 1855 before the City Corporation was in a strong enough position to open up the "City Market" and when opened it was located in King William Street on the "corporation acre". Trading hours were 6am until 8pm in a shed 150 x 40ft, containing twenty six stalls, however this market was not a success.

Thomas Workshop, later town clerk for the corporation wrote: "it was in all respects unsuited for the purpose, and it was soon closed". But the City still needed a produce market that was conveniently located and roomy. Richard Vaughan quickly provided what was needed, off the then unmade East Terrace between Rundle Street and North Terrace. From 1861, this venture went from strength to strength. Vaughan's position and concept guaranteed him eventual permanency for his private market. From then, until 1988, the East End Market's importance to the City equalled that of the Central Market.

The corporation then bought the first three town acres, since Vaughan's Market was: "filled to overflowing with gardeners from all quarters". This prompted the movement of traders to the Central Market location.

When the "Central City Market" opened, it was six months before any structure in the form of wood and iron sheds were constructed and completed in June 1869.

The Central Market opened for business on Tuesdays and Saturday mornings, with as many as 50 to 100 produce carts making use of the new facilities. Initially, one shed 160ft x 50ft x 16ft high was constructed, with another one completed several weeks later. When the first shed was completed, 87 carts managed to stow themselves under the one roof. The two completed sheds side by side were soon fitted up with gas lighting. The Mayor's Report of 1873 recorded that the two sheds were joined together by "throwing a roof over the central roadway between sheds A and B and the erection of a lofty and well-built shed along the western boundary of Acre 380'.16."

From the time market sheds were built for stall-holders, each year several shops were also built on the perimeter of the market facing the streets. By 1878 the four town acres which had originally cost the corporation £4000 was now worth, with all its structures, £25 000.18.

The market in the early 1880s is recorded to have sold vegetables, fruit, hay, fish and game, but pressure was being felt by the Mayor to seriously consider providing facilities for a fish market. There was no place in Adelaide where the occasional large supplies of fish could be received for resale, so the supply of fresh fish was scarce, even though there were plenty to be caught. The opening of the railways to the north to Port Augusta and Port Pirie also saw the possibility of regular supplies of fish being available for the public to buy, if there was a central depot from which it could be distributed.

Almost thirty-one years after the original wood and iron sheds were built on-site, plans were drawn up for rebuilding the market, with an impressive two-storey brick facade facing Grote Street. At first, the Advertiser wrote "the idea was to do the work piecemeal, but it was decided to carry it all out on a settled plan, so that the completed building should form one homogenous whole".

The design was created within the corporation with chief draughtsman, R Sloan, under the direction of the City Engineer, J Vicars. It was hoped that such a facade would also grace Gouger Street:

The building will be in red brick, with a terra-cotta facing, and will undoubtedly be seen to special advantage in Grote Street, the magnificent width of this thoroughfare giving excellent opportunities for viewing architectural beauties. As can be seen the building is to be two storeys in height, the lower of which is to be filled with shops, with handsome plate-glass fronts. The arches above the shop fronts are to be filled with stained glass, which will greatly add to the appearance.

Included in the plans were provisions for an 80 x 32ft assembly room on the first floor where wedding parties, dances and parties could be held. The large shed covering the existing stalls was also to be rebuilt, so too the extensive additions to Edwin Daw's fish market, which since its establishment had been updated by the addition of a refrigeration plant for fish as well as fruit and vegetables. Sixteen shops were also incorporated into the Grote Street additions. The foundation stone was laid 8 February 1900.

Not long after the Grote Street additions were completed, which in the end was not quite as the plans first depicted, a 121 foot veranda was added to the facade. The gas lighting, which had been sufficient for almost thirty-five years, gave way to the new technology of electricity in 1902. Installed in March, the Mayor and members of his council visited the market on a Saturday night to witness the effectiveness of the new lighting.

In 1906 alongside the Grote Street brick facade, three two storey shops were built and leased out for twenty years to W.H. Bruce. This building went on to be the successful Empire Theatre which opened in April 1909. It remained as such until 1952 when the People Stores Ltd acquired it and converted it to be part of their stores, which until then had a Gouger Street frontage.

The Central Market acted much like a magnet for other businesses wanting to cash in on the market success. While attracting other forms of business to the area, like the rebuilding of the nearby Hampshire Hotel in 1911, the theatre now known as Her Majesty's and the eventual huge Moore's Department stores in 1914, the Central Market still continued to develop by replacement, additions and alterations to its market proper buildings. It also provided all kinds of amusements such as darts, billatelle, shooting galleries, ball bowling, hoop-la and cheap jacks.

One of the most ambitious building programs at the market, apart from the frontage to Grote Street, was the construction of the arcade of shops in 1915 to utilise all the remaining vacant land. It was built on the eastern side of the market.

The cost of the improvements was estimated to be £28,957 and work commenced in April 1915. The arcade was built between Grote and Gouger Streets, extending from the eastern market roadway to Moore's department store fronting Victoria Square. A 30ft wide arcade 201 feet long, running east and west from the eastern roadway of the market to Page Street, was the main feature. Off this main arcade were several others. Much stained glass and Wunderlich ceilings were incorporated into the structure. Large louver lantern lights, divided into bays with panels of stamped metal, surmounted the centre of the arcade for their whole lengths. The arcades were closed with ornamental iron gates hung at the main eastern and western entrances. The design for the arcades was prepared in the engineers department of the Corporation.

In April 1920, Tuesday trading commenced.

In December 1922 the lease to the fish market expired and the Corporation decided that rather than renew the lease, it should be demolished to make way for a further large extension to the market. The fish market premises took up 115ft x 125ft of space and it was suggested that an arcade running north and south from the existing main arcade could be erected on the eastern portion of the land with shops in each side. This scheme, costing £18,989, was built by Anderson and Co. and provided an extra 32 shops.

Early in the morning of 27 December 1925, the North Eastern part of the market suffered damage through fire. The prompt efforts of the fire brigade prevented it spreading into the arcade and only two shops were gutted, with eight slightly damaged.

From the early 1920s there was growing criticism of the butchers' stalls, which were seen as unsanitary and generally in poor repair, and reports from the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board first confirmed these fears in 1922. But it was 1929 before the Corporation acted, when in that year, they decided not to renew the leases of the butchers in November. Understandably the butchers' protests reached the news, 29 October 1929.

The Depression had begun to effect the trading of the Market by 1931. In the Annual Report of 1931 it was stated that of 41 shops in the market one was vacant, while of 74 in the Arcade, 23 were unoccupied. One only of the five work rooms was untenanted. The tenants, through the Central Market Stall Holders Association, wrote asking for a reduction in fees for the occupants of the stalls at the Market. On 20 May 1931, the Corporation decided to decrease all fees for stalls held by agreement by 20 per cent and 10 per cent for those occupied under daily tenancy. This was to take effect from 1 October 1931.

Then, behind the Grote Street brick facade, all traces of the old market were to be removed and redeveloped in two stages. The 76 remodelled stalls would be situated on six brightly lit malls running north-south. In order to pay for the costs of new stalls, the rents for these traders rose by 58 percent to fifteen shillings for the fish stalls and by 131 percent to £2-15s for the butchers. Works did not begin until 1933 when on 3 March, the Advertiser reported that seven new butchers' stalls were at last going to be rebuilt.

From the Depression until the 1960s, no major works were done at the Market, only repairs, washing and painting. It is no wonder that when the council decided to do something about the market in the 1960s, the works were of a radical nature.

The Central Market had not undergone any major alterations for over thirty years from 1931, and this reflected the City as a whole. Following on from the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, when very little building away from the City centre took place, it was not long before the Central Market Stall Holders Association, wrote asking for a reduction in fees for the occupants of the stalls at the Market. On 20 May 1931, the Corporation decided to decrease all fees for stalls held by agreement by 20 per cent and 10 per cent for those occupied under daily tenancy. This was to take effect from 1 October 1931.

Australia was at war. This further thwarted the City's development when a national building restriction on all but the most important projects from 1942 were implemented. This was followed by a period after the war when building materials were hard to obtain and when priority for building in the suburbs was paramount. Adelaide, apart from its main streets, had become generally run down and dilapidated by the mid 1950s. It was no wonder that when materials at last became easier to obtain, that developers were anxious to rebuild in the new modern styles, rather than refurbish or remove existing old fashion and run down building stock.

By the 1960s, the City was in need of stimulation, for the population was plummeting. It had already dropped to 28,000 from 35,000 in 1951 and continued to drop to 14,000 in 1972. Councillor Bert Edward's pointed out that "it is time Adelaide City Council paid more attention to the south-west section of the city, which is screaming out for development and where already some progress had been made."

Dall the Jeweller, of one of the arcade shops, wrote to the town clerk in September 1960 that the "shop fronts and general appearance of the arcade leaves much to be desired. General feeling of shopkeepers is that the arcade is losing ground in present commercial business and would welcome assistance from Council to stimulate trade."

Much advice and guidance was sought by the corporation regarding the Market's redevelopment. Finally in November 1963, preliminary sketch plans by architects, Cheesemen, Doley, Brabman and Neighbour, were approved with authorisation to produce final sketch plans and an estimate of cost for redevelopment of the market area, which was expected to be over \$400,000. Wilckens and Burnside Limited won the tender for the reconstruction in November and commenced work on 18 January 1965. At this stage the eastern end facade of the market in Grote Street was demolished.

On 17 June 1966, Lord Mayor Irwin, OBE, ED, opened the new market. On its first trading day, the rooftop carpark saw a turnover of 3600 cars using its 230 bays. Building works had begun on the eastern half of the site.

In the meantime, much preparatory work had been carried out by corporation staff in planning and allocating temporary accommodation for stall holders in Grote Street and at the northern end of the arcade. On August 27 1965, the south-east quarter of the new market was reoccupied and stall holders in the north western quarter moved out. Four weeks later, the remainder of the eastern half was reoccupied and all of the western half vacated. Finally all stall holders in the western half moved back into the Market on 10 June this year.

During the 1960s redevelopment of the market, the corporation decided that the market should have its title officially recognised. Up until August 1965, the market had always been the City Market. After this date it became the Central Market.

In February 1967, a fifty year lease was granted to Weinerts (Victoria Square) Pty Ltd. for redevelopment of the eastern two acres, which had contained an arcade of shops and the

Langham Hotel. In June 1968, the first stage of the redevelopment was completed and a month later C.J. Coles opened for business.

In the meantime, much preparatory work had been carried out by corporation staff in planning and allocating temporary accommodation for stall holders in Grote Street and at the northern end of the arcade. For ten years, the Central Market had few alterations except that it could now accommodate 530 motor cars under cover at this 'one stop' shopping complex. However, on the night of 27 June 1977, a major portion of the southern stall area of the market was badly damaged by fire, causing half a million dollars worth of damage. Major restoration and rejuvenation works were quickly undertaken, but from this time onwards until 1983, the market was bedevilled by several major redevelopment schemes that never came to fruition. Fierce competition from suburban shopping centres caused much concern, and stall holders first raised proposals to attract more shoppers to the area through increased overhead car parks.

The market has since undergone major refurbishment and still continues to be one of the major attractions of the City. The year 1999 saw The Central Market celebrate 130 years of trading. The Market is currently managed for the Corporation by Knight Frank Pty Ltd and a Central Market Authority has been formed. The market currently has a total lettable area of 3349 square metres which is operated as 76 shops and stalls.

U-Park located above the market consists of approximately 1000 car park spaces with entry available from Grote and Gouger Streets.

The Central Market still provides the best local produce, freshest seafood and meat and the largest range of gourmet items available under the one roof.

Central Market is surrounded by Market Arcade (formally Victoria Square Arcade) and Market Plaza; including these stores, the Central Market offers more than 250 traders under one roof.