

Prepared by Dandenong Historical Society 21/6/2011

Boomerang Picture Theatre
The Royal Hotel
Thomas Street, Dandenong.

The Boomerang Theatre was built in 1924 by Henry L Leber, who later became a Dandenong Shire Councillor and Shire President.

The theatre's main hall was 120 ft x 56 ft and the total length of the building 150 ft., with provision for a gallery to hold 400. Seating capacity of the main hall was 1100 and the stage was 40 ft x 20 ft.

The theatre cost £12,000 to build. Around 1941 it was remodelled and re-named the Mayfair Theatre.

In 1968 it was demolished to make way for the construction of Hanover Arcade.

The theatre was well patronized and served the residents of Dandenong for 44 years. Most local memoirs recall happy times at the Boomerang or Mayfair Theatre.

Initially the State Electricity Commission (SEC) had its office in the Boomerang Buildings.

The Boomerang Theatre was in Thomas Street, just a house-block south of Walker Street and was built in the days of the silent movies. During the running of a film, the back-ground music was from a piano played by Miss Grieg, who worked in Tommy Blain's music shop in Foster Street. I think the 'talking' pictures arrived here during the 1930's, although for a start they were only half-and-half, and would be advertised as 'Part Talkie'

The previous owner of that land, prior to the building of the Boomerang Theatre was Mrs Dunbar, who owned the first Royal Hotel on that whole corner area. A new Royal Hotel was built in 1886 on the corner of Walker and Lonsdale Street with Hanover Arcade beside it running from Lonsdale Street through to Thomas Street.

It is stated that Thomas Dallimore drove the first stage coach from Dandenong for Mrs Dunbar. Cob & Co stage coaches stopped at the Royal Hotel owned by the Dunbar family on their way from Melbourne to Gippsland. Cob & Co even today remain a symbol of the journey from Melbourne to Dandenong which was known as the Gateway to Gippsland and to places further afield. The Royal Hotel, which was twenty miles from Melbourne and as far as the horses could travel before being changed, became a staging stop and a resting place for travellers along the journey.

This site later became the Boomerang Picture Theatre which was built in 1924 by Henry L Leber, who later became a Dandenong Shire Councillor and Shire President.

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Mrs Rodd, who was born in Dandenong, retained memories of the camping places of the local aborigines: where the Boomerang Theatre stood in Thomas Street, and on the site of the nearby Salvation Army Hall; and at the back of the Royal Hotel. She spoke of them as a harmless lot, the last of their tribe.

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The three names, Boomerang, Mayfair or Dunbar are all relevant names for that area with a long history associated with the development of Dandenong.

Photos and more detailed information can be supplied. Contact Carmen Powell 9796 2456