

QUEEN'S WHARF

This is the business end of Melbourne, and the oldest. Hereabouts the founders hopped out of their little boats and stumbled up the muddy bank to stand among the spare gumtrees and decide they liked the place. One of them, John Pascoe Fawkner, built a wooden house in the middle of the scene. When it was not four years old, about 1840, a masonry building took its place. That was the first Customs House, a modest building the design of which is usually credited to another of the pioneers: Robert Russell. In fact it is unlikely that he did more than set out the building on the ground. This was one of his surveying duties after he was sent here by Governor Bourke of New South Wales to map out the settlement which the unruly adventurers from Tasmania were carrying at the head of Port Philip Bay.

The early Customs House was soon altered and finally in 1858 was replaced by the one to be seen centrally in both drawings. This was by the architectural firm of Knight, Kemp and Kerr, and the alterations seen in the modern picture were made by the Public Works Department between 1873 and 1876. Robert Russell, however, did leave one heirloom in Melbourne. It is Old St. James' Cathedral, Melbourne's only authentic example of the transported Georgian style of early New South Wales and Tasmania, the style popularly known as the 'Old Colonial'. Russell had been well trained in London. He had taste, and he built sensitively in accordance with this ruling style. Nevertheless his building did not look like those of the older colonies, for he used the hard, dark local basalt - so different from the soft, light tones of Sydney or Hobart. We can see the grey, square tower of his tiny cathedral rising behind the rigging of the sail and steam ship at the left of F. Cogne's drawing of 1864. It was then twenty-two years old. Exactly fifty years later this church was lifted stone by stone and removed to King Street, where it still stands.