

EASTERN MARKET - SOUTHERN CROSS

There is contrast enough to be found in these two pictures of the corner of Bourke Street and Exhibition Street. The old one, done when Exhibition was called Stephen Street, shows the Eastern Market that was opened in 1859. The new one is mainly occupied by the Southern Cross Hotel that was opened on the same site one hundred and three years later. One might be tempted to think that the whole story of Melbourne's development during the century is to be read in a comparison of the two drawings.

The early picture was sketched by Hy. Gritten (it was lithographed by J. B. Philp) from the top of the Whittington Tavern on the opposite (north) side of Bourke Street. This building changed its name to the Angel Hotel in 1867, and still exists today, though not as a hotel, as Harold Freedman discovered when looking for a matching vantage point. Gritten's drawing shows an arcaded, vaulted market place done in the colonial spirit, although in iron and wood. It is indeed so colonial in spirit, so simple, repetitious, consistent and elegant that it could almost be a design for a display pavilion in a world fair of the 1960s. But there was no sophistication in its conception. It was built for the wholesale distribution of vegetables and hay. Men with other products to sell used it later in the day, and on Saturday nights, when this end of Bourke Street was about the brightest and rowdiest quarter of all these colonies, it was a riot of horses and people, noise and money, shoddy goods and sudden fights. They called it Paddy's Market.

Harold Freedman's drawing shows that it is still a market place today, after a hundred years, although one of a different colour. Two floors of small, independent shops ring a square courtyard, whose open top

is just visible in the lower middle of the picture. No hay is sold here now, but anything from imported neck-ties or glassware or jewellery to severed kangaroo paws mounted as bottle openers, and imitation aboriginal souvenirs of a makebelieve outback.

Americans arranged, financed and designed the Southern Cross Hotel. The architect was Welton Beckett of California, in association with Leslie M. Perrott of Melbourne. Its sky-blue panels and zig-zag patterns may not be universally admired, but it has given the central city its only example of a multi-level shopping precinct, where the pedestrian is master, his car left below on a basement parking floor. The thirteen-storey wing rising on the left contains the 200 bedrooms, although the floor numbering in the lifts jumps from 12 to 14 and 13 appears nowhere. For this is a thoroughly American hotel, with the nearest available thing to the International Set sipping martinis in panelled cocktail lounges and wide polished foyers smelling of cigars and detergent.

In both drawings evidence of Collins Street is glimpsed across the foreground roof tops. In Hy. Gritten's day the buildings grew more gracious as they climbed the hill, and reached a modest climax in the dignified pile of the Treasury building in the left background. Today the neighbourhood is dominated by the I. C. A. building, forming a vertical centreline to Harold Freedman's drawing. On either side of this tall building Freedman looks far across the Yarra valley, across railway lines and wide stretches of gardens, to the tower of Government House on the left, and the Shrine of Remembrance on the right.

In the contrast between the two drawings, as already mentioned, the

whole drama of Melbourne's cultural development this last century appears to be delineated: from a hay-making colony of England to a people knocking at the jealously guarded doors of the world culture club. However, this is not really the whole drama. It is only the first and last acts; the middle act is missing. Spectacular as the development may appear between the times of Gritten's and Freedman's drawings, the real transformation was in fact even more remarkable, for a long intermediate stage here receives no recognition. In fact the old crude Paddy's market disappeared in 1877. Then a much more ambitious building - something precisely halfway between Paddy's market and the Southern Cross - was erected. It was what every Melbourne citizen now over the age of twenty remembers as the Eastern market, a vast square two-storeyed block decorated like a birthday cake, almost to the candles on the roof. It was designed by none other than Joseph Reed, the star architect of his day, and it represented in a way the most exciting part of the whole story: the boom days of last century, now almost forgotten.