

Basic Detail Report



00054930

Title

Mariners' Church foundation stone 1844 : Sydney Bethel Union

Date

1844

Medium

Stone

Dimensions

Overall: 610 × 1300 × 200 mm, 280 kg

Name

Foundation stone

History

The site of the Rawson Institute for Seamen is close to the original foreshore of Sydney Cove at the foot of The Rocks, an area which became the early focus of maritime activity in the colony. A Mariners Church was established on the site in 1859. It was built and run by the Bethel Union who advocated and provided for the well being of seamen. In 1895 the Missions for Seamen took over the lease and running of the Mariners Church. In 1906 it was clear that the space was no longer adequate and suggestions were proposed for the expansion of services and facilities at the site. New South Wales Governor Harry Rawson, an ex seaman, advocated the proposal and in 1909 laid the foundation stone for the extensions: "The foundation plaque was laid by Governor Rawson, and the enlarged and remodelled building, which became the Rawson Institute for Seamen, was opened by the new governor, Lord Chelmsford, on 21 December 1910. The extensions, enveloping the Mariners' Church, made it virtually unrecognisable. The pitched roof of the chapel, and its fine parapeted pediments, were taken off and another storey was added. The entrance porch, which had been constructed over the George Street entrance, was replaced by the new entrance and other additions built to the street boundary on the west. More rooms were added on the south side. The former chapel was converted into a recreation hall. The posts and floor joists of the gallery were removed, and the oeil-de-boeuf windows on the west side were filled in. The new main stair and landings were constructed in reinforced concrete, an early example of the use of this material. The exterior design of the three-storey George Street façade was dominated by a segmental pediment. The Free Classical composition embodied references to Bibb's original design. The name RAWSON INSTITUTE FOR SEAMEN appeared in modelled letters on both west and east fronts. The activities of the enlarged Institute expanded."