

Basic Detail Report



00027559

Title

Domain Baths

Date

1870 - 1890

Medium

Silver gelatin print

Dimensions

Overall: 280 x 357 mm

Name

Photograph

History

From at least 1815, colonists in Sydney European were bathing in Woolloomooloo Bay. It was not necessarily for leisure or fitness, but predominantly for cleanliness - bathing in seawater was an acceptable alternative. Its location close to the main settlement but far enough away from the main thoroughfare meant the site of what would become the Domain Baths was popular with women and men. In 1833 a Mrs Biggs is known to have operated a 'Domain Baths for Ladies' with specialized facilities and additional privacy for women. In 1858 the City of Sydney constructed the first free public baths which were known as the Corporation Baths, or the Fig Tree Baths. Facilities included changing rooms, diving jetties and separate areas for women. After 50 years the council saw the need to upgrade the site - demand had grown with the population and recreational swimming was becoming an increasingly popular pastime. The new development, opened in 1908 and referred to as the Domain Baths ('The Dom') or Municipal Baths, could now comfortably accommodate spectators to swimming carnivals, diving displays, a poolside deck and refreshments. Harbour swimming was still popular despite the allure of the nearby beaches.