

Building the Central Market

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On Saturday 23 January 1869 at about 3.15 am a small but noisy procession wound its way from the East End Market towards the Victoria Square environs. To the lively strains of the Concordia Ban, eight carts laden with produce were driven by market gardeners in a determined attempt 'to secesh' from the East End Market.¹

Having reached a site between Gouger and Grote streets, in only a few hours about 500 purchasers quickly bought out the entire stock of goods for sale, so that for those hurrying to the scene of activity after 6 am, there was nothing left to buy.² So began the first day of the Central Market (then called City Market) back in 1869 in Grote Street on a site without any structure other than a fence and a couple of gas lights.³ The official opening, less lively, was a year later in 22 January 1870.⁴ From then onwards until the present day the Central Market has continued to evolve to be a vital part of the cultural heritage of the city, becoming a mecca for trading for any merchant, grower, wholesaler or retailer selling directly to the consumer. Reflecting the evolution of the market are the brick remains of the Grote Street facade of 1900 and a group of seven two storey shops in Gouger Street, completed in 1906.

Before land was bought for the Central Market in September 1867 for a total sum of £2600 for three town acres, (333, 379, 380) a council operated public market had commenced on what was called the 'corporation acre' until the early 1860s. The Town Hall buildings were then constructed across all of the town acre set aside for its municipal purposes which displaced the market.

As early as November 1838, the *South Australian* bemoaned the fact of the 'loss which the colonists sustain in consequence of the want of a proper market place.'⁵ It was January 1855 before the City Corporation was in a strong enough position to open up the 'City Market'.⁶ This late start was due to the colony's shaky start bedevilled by an early economic crisis and an abortive first attempt to establish a municipal corporation in 1840 which was moribund by 1843. Only when the Council was re-

established in 1852 and more financially secure, could it contemplate a public market. However, under its first reign, the Council had established the sheep and cattle market in the Park Lands opposite the Newmarket Hotel where a grand two storey slaughterhouse had been built by the government for the corporation. But it was not envisaged that the Corporation would have to pay for it until they were presented with the bill. This unforeseen debt lessened any chance of opening further markets.

When the new 'City Market' was opened late in January 1855, it was from 6 am until 8 pm in a shed 150 x 40ft., containing twenty-six stalls on the 'corporation acre' in King William Street⁷ but it was not a success. Thomas Worsnop, later town clerk for the corporation, wrote 'it was in all respects unsuited for the purpose, and it was soon closed'.⁸ But the city still needed a produce market that was conveniently located and roomy. Richard Vaughan quickly provided what was needed, off the then unmade East Terrace between Rundle Street and North Terrace from 1861.⁹ The corporation was powerless to intervene when such a facility was seen as desperately needed. Nevertheless, they intended to provide and profit from one in the future when several town acres could be acquired. In the meantime, of Vaughan's market, the City inspectors were told 'not to interfere more than necessary with vehicles in Rundle Street until the new market was established'.¹⁰ In the time Vaughan had to build up his enterprise without competition from a corporation market, his venture went from strength to strength.

The corporation procrastinated during the early 1860s, when several choice city blocks became available. They were investigated and much discussed regarding their suitability. Even an area on the Park Lands opposite 'Waterhouse Buildings' in North Terrace was considered,¹¹ but the Chief Secretary in July 1866, 'declined to allow land forming part of the Government reserve' to be used as a market site.¹² The failure of the Corporation to act swiftly in providing market facilities only strengthened Vaughan's position and guaranteed him eventual permanency for his private market. From then, until 1988, the East End Market's importance to the city equaled that of the Central Market.

By the time the corporation had finally bought the first three town acres, Vaughan's

market was 'filled to overflowing with gardeners from all quarters'. Close to the corporation's second attempt to open their own market in January 1869, it began to throw its weight about regarding the legality of the operation of the East End Market, which apart from anything else, was grossly overcrowded. A few days before the corporation's market opened, a 'little undue energy' from the police soon convinced the crowded-out traders that some of them should simply move on. This interference by the police and the corporation in the East End Market activities, did not go unnoticed by parliamentarians who alluded to the past days events in the House of Assembly and then passed the problem onto the attorney general to investigate.¹³

Vaughan was forced to put his market onto a more legal footing and 'he applied for and obtained first an Act for the establishment of markets in 1871 and in 1872, a private Act for making and maintaining a market at East Terrace.'¹⁴ During these negotiations the corporation did all it could to prevent the Act for Vaughan's market being assented to, but was unsuccessful.

After the 'Central City Market' was finally opened, it was six months before any structure in the form of wood and iron sheds were constructed and completed in June 1869. Opened for business on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturday mornings, as many as 50 to 100 produce carts were making use of the new facilities. Initially one shed 160 x 50 ft x 16 ft. high was constructed with another one completed several weeks later. When the first shed was completed 87 carts managed to stow themselves under the one roof. The two completed sheds side by side were soon fitted up with gas lighting.¹⁵ The Mayor's Report of 1873 recorded that the two sheds were jointed together by 'throwing a roof over the central roadway between sheds A and B and the erection of a lofty and well-built shed along the western boundary of Acre 380'.¹⁶

Because of all the activities on-site, it became necessary to build a five roomed dwelling for the clerk of the market so that 'greater attention and care would thus be given and exercised over this valuable property'. It was built on Town Acre 333 on the northwest frontage sometime in 1875 with a new verandah being added about a year later in 1876. In November 1877, it was reported that 'this city market is slowly but steadily working its way into public favour.'¹⁷

From the time that the market sheds were built for stall-holders, several shops each year were also built on the perimeter of the market facing the streets. By 1878 the four town acres which had originally cost the corporation £4000 was now worth, with all its structures, £25 000.¹⁸

Because of the market's increasing popularity and the need to provide facilities such as accommodation and stronger refreshment for the men, a two storey twenty-seven room hotel known as the Langham Hotel was built with a stable block to the rear.¹⁹ The market in the early 1880s is recorded as having the following goods being sold from its premises, vegetables, fruit, hay, fish and game, but pressure was being felt by the mayor to seriously consider providing facilities for a fish market. There was no place in Adelaide where the occasional large supplies of fish could be received for resale so that the supply of fresh fish was scarce even though there were plenty to be caught. The opening of the railways to the north to Port Augusta and Port Pirie also saw the possibility of regular supplies of fish being available for the public to buy if there was a central depot from which it could be distributed.²⁰ As it was, only one fishmonger, Edwin Daw, was selling fish from the shops he had rented, on three days a week. On 20 December 1884, a new brick fronted shed, especially set apart as a fish market had been constructed and was to remain on-site until September 1923, but in the meantime was leased as a whole to Daw. This was leased in the first instance for thirty years. It was situated on Town Acre 379 facing Gouger Street.

From this time until 1900 sheds, shops and stalls were crammed into the existing spaces as the demand arose on the site that was known as the Central Market, but it was becoming very evident that this collection of structures was far from ornamental. It was providing accommodation for 35 shops and 260 stalls but the earlier sheds of 1869 were now considered dilapidated.

Almost thirty-one years after the original wood and iron sheds were built on-site, plans were drawn up for the rebuilding the market, with an impressive two-storey brick facade facing Grote Street. At first, the *Advertiser* stated 'the idea was to do the work piecemeal, but it was decided to carry it all out on a settled plan, so that the

completed building should form one homogenous whole'.²¹

The design was created within the corporation with chief draughtsman, R. Sloan, under the direction of the city engineer, J. Vicars. It was hoped that such a facade would also grace Gouger Street:

The building will be in red brick, with terra-cotta facings, and will undoubtedly be seen to special advantage in Grote Street, the magnificent width of this thoroughfare giving excellent opportunities for viewing architectural beauties. As can be seen the building is to be two storeys in height, the lower of which is to be filled with shops, with handsome plate-glass fronts. The arches above the shop fronts are to be filled with stained glass, which will greatly add to the appearance.²²

Included in the plans were provisions for an 80 x 32 ft assembly room on the first floor where wedding parties, dances and parties could be held.²³

The large shed covering the existing stalls was also to be rebuilt as were extensive additions to Edwin Daw's fish market which since its establishment, had been updated by the addition of a refrigeration plant for fish as well as fruit and vegetables. Sixteen shops were also incorporated into the Grote Street additions. The foundation stone was laid 8 February 1900.

Not long after the Grote Street additions were completed, which in the end was not quite as the plans first depicted, a 121 foot veranda was added to the facade.²⁴

The gas lighting that had been sufficient for almost 35 years gave way to the new technology of electricity in 1902. Installed in March, the mayor and members of his council visited the market on a Saturday night to witness the effectiveness of the new lighting.²⁵

In 1905 seven old shops at the southern end of the Central Market facing Gouger Street were demolished to make way for larger two-storey shops that were completed in 1906. These shops are now an essential part of the market buildings in Gouger Street. Seven shops were also demolished on the western side of the market and replaced in 1905.²⁶

In 1906 alongside the Grote Street brick facade, three, two storey shops were built and leased out for twenty years to W.H. Bruce. This building went on to be the successful Empire Theatre that opened in April 1909 and remained as such until 1952 when the Peoplestores Ltd. acquired it and converted it to be part of their stores which until then, had a Gouger Street frontage.

As can be seen, the Central Market acted much like a magnet for other businesses wanting to cash in on the market's success. While attracting other forms of business to the area, like the rebuilding of the nearby Hampshire Hotel in 1911, the theatre now known as Her Majesty's and the eventual huge Moore's Department stores in 1914, the Central Market still continued to develop by replacement, additions and alterations to its market proper buildings. It also provided all kinds of amusements such as darts, billatelle, shooting galleries, ball bowling, hoop-la and cheap-jacks.

One of the most ambitious building programs at the market, apart from the frontage to Grote Street, was the construction of the arcade of shops in 1915 to utilise all the remaining vacant land. It was built on the eastern side of the market.

On these frontages it is proposed to build 36 first-class one storey modern shops and on the eastern frontage nine second-class shops to replace the 10 existing shops there. The roof of the arcade is to be constructed of glass in iron framing, and floor will be of tiles of slagetto paving.²⁷

The cost of the improvements was estimated to be £28 957 and work commenced in April 1915. The arcade was built between Grote and Gouger streets extending from the eastern market roadway to Moore's department store fronting Victoria Square. A 30 ft wide arcade 201 feet long running east and west from the eastern roadway of the market to Page Street was the main feature. Off this main arcade, were several others. Much stain glass and Wunderlich ceilings were incorporated into the structure and large louvre lantern lights divided into bays with panels of stamped metal, surmounted the centre of the arcades for their whole lengths. The arcades were closed with ornamental iron gates hung at the northern and southern entrances, with large

collapsible gates at the main eastern and western entrances. The design for the arcades was prepared in the engineer's department of the corporation. In April 1920, Tuesday trading commenced.²⁸

In December 1922 the lease to the fish market expired and the corporation decided rather than renew the lease it should be demolished to make way for a further large extension to the market. The Fish Market premises took up land 115 ft x 125 ft and it was suggested that an arcade running north and south from the existing main arcade could be erected on the eastern portion of the land with shops in each side. This scheme cost £18 989 and was built by Anderson and Co. providing an extra 32 shops.²⁹

Early in the morning of 27 December 1925, the market at its northeastern part suffered damage through fire. The prompt efforts of the fire brigade prevented it spreading into the arcade and only two shops were gutted and eight slightly damaged.³⁰

The corporation continued to improve the market by replacement of antiquated facilities as and when it became necessary. In 1927 the market consisted of 252 stalls, three promenades, two roadways for vehicles with a centre promenade running east and west. However, there was always, it seemed, further room for development, such as re-modelling or providing new sanitary arrangements to dispose of the rubbish accumulated during market hours.

From the early 1920s there was growing criticism of the butchers' stalls that were seen as insanitary and generally in poor repair and reports from the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board first confirmed these fears in 1922.³¹ But it was 1929 before the corporation acted when they decided not to renew the leases of the butchers in November. Understandably the butchers' protests reached the *News*, 29 October 1929. Sales of meat were very high, especially at the weekends when as much as £5000 worth was sold. One tenant, I. Meredith, who leased a stall for thirty-two years, said 'sales of meat there were a public necessity. Customers came from all suburbs, and from as far as Gawler'. It was also voiced that 'if meat stalls go hundreds of customers will be affected'. The Metropolitan Abattoirs Board had first contacted the corporation six

years before and now they insisted the butchers' stalls be improved or demolished but the corporation took its time in doing anything about the issue. In June 1930, the city engineer's office proposed a scheme for the reconstruction of stalls suitable for butchers' and fish stalls which were fly proof while maintaining the essential feature of the market. In order to pay for the costs of new stalls, the rents for these traders rose by 58 percent to fifteen shillings for the fish stalls and by 131 percent to £2-15s for the butchers, but works did not begin until 1933 when on 3 March, the *Advertiser* reported that seven new butchers' stalls were at last going to be rebuilt.

The Depression had begun to effect the trading of the Market by 1931. In the Annual Report of 1931 it was stated that 'of 41 shops in the market one is vacant, while of 74 in the Arcade 23 are unoccupied. One only of the five work-rooms is untenanted'. The tenants through the Central Market Stallholders' Association wrote asking for a reduction in fees for the occupancy of the stalls at the Market.³² On 20 May 1931, the corporation decided to decrease all fees for stalls held by agreement by 20 per cent and 10 per cent for those occupied under daily tenancy. This was to take effect from 1 October.³³

From the Depression until the 1960s, no major works were done at the market, only repairs, washing and painting. It is no wonder that when the council decided to do something about the market in the 1960s, the works were of a radical nature.

The Central Market had not undergone any major alterations for over thirty years from 1931, and this reflected the city as a whole. Following on from the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, when not much building away from the city centre took place, it was not long before Australia was at war. This further thwarted the city's development when a national building restriction for all but the most important projects from 1942 was implemented. Further, this was followed by a period after the war when building materials were hard to obtain and when priority for building in the suburbs was paramount. Adelaide, apart from its main streets, had become generally rundown and dilapidated by the mid 1950s. It was no wonder that when materials at last became easier to obtain, that developers were anxious to rebuild in the new modern styles, rather than refurbish or remove existing old fashion and rundown

building stock.

It was within this spirit of a new broom sweeping clean, that the corporation planned to sweep away old fashioned elements of the Central Market which regretfully included all the iron and glass market arcades. Only the Grote Street brick facade was retained and shops fronting Grote and Gouger streets. At this time the automobile was given the highest priority in the city. City roads were widened or newly created and car parking on former residential and commercial sites were built in increasing numbers. When the Central Market was first under review for redevelopment in 1955-56, a rooftop car park for 230 cars was also planned for the market. In March 1958, it was reported that 'Adelaide City Council would be justified in spending at least £2 million in redeveloping the city market area.' Further, it was stated, that it was seen as expenditure that would not only profit the council but could also stimulate a dramatic growth in the southern section of the city.³⁴

Stimulation the city certainly needed, for the city's population was plummeting. It had already dropped to 28 000 from 35 000 in 1951 and continued to drop to 14 000 in 1972. Councilor Bert Edwards pointed out that 'it is time Adelaide City Council paid more attention to the south-west section of the city, which is screaming out for development and where already some progress had been made.'³⁵ Dall the Jeweler, of one of the arcade shops, wrote to the town clerk in September 1960 that the 'shop fronts and general appearance of the arcade leaves much to be desired. General feeling of shopkeepers is that the arcade is losing ground in present commercial business and would welcome assistance from Council to stimulate trade'.³⁶

Advice was sought by the corporation regarding the redevelopment plans for the market. Finally in November 1963, preliminary sketch plans by architects, Cheeseman, Doley, Brabham & Neighbour were approved with authorisation to produce final sketch plans and an estimate of cost for redevelopment of the market area which was expected to be over £400 000. Wilckens and Burnside Limited won the tender for the reconstruction in November and commenced on 18 January 1965.³⁷ At this stage the eastern end facade of the market in Grote Street was demolished.

On 17 June 1966, Lord Mayor Irwin, OBE, ED, opened the new market. The rooftop car park on its first trading day saw a turnover of 3600 cars using the 230 bay car park. Building works had begun on the eastern half of the site. The *News* of 16 June reported:

In the meantime, much preparatory work had been carried out by Corporation staff in planning and allocating temporary accommodation for stallholders in Grote Street and at the northern end of the Arcade. On August 27, 1965, the south-east quarter of the new Market was reoccupied and stallholders in the north-western quarter moved out. Four weeks later, the remainder of the eastern half was reoccupied and all of the western half vacated. Finally all stallholders in the western half moved back into the Market on June 10 this year.

Behind the Grote Street brick facade, all traces of the old market were removed and redeveloped in two stages. The 76 remodeled stalls were situated on six brightly lit malls running north-south with the facility for selling from both sides instead of one as previously.³⁸ Each had 'mezzanine storage areas above and additional shops were constructed under the car park ramps'. Escalators were installed between the ground floor and car parks.

During the 1960s, redevelopment of the market, the corporation decided that the market should have its title officially recognised. Up until 16 August 1965, the market had always been the City Market. After this date it was the Central Market.

In February 1967, a lease for 50 years was granted to Weinarts (Victoria Square) Pty Ltd. for the redevelopment of the eastern two acres that had contained an arcade of shops and the Langham Hotel.³⁹ In June 1968, the first stage of the redevelopment was completed and a month later C.J. Coles opened for business.

For ten years, the Central Market had few alterations except that it could now accommodate 530 motorcars under cover at this 'one-shop' shopping complex. However, on the night of 27 June 1977, a major portion of the southern stall area of the market was badly damaged by fire causing half a million dollars worth of damage.

Major restoration and rejuvenation works were quickly undertaken ⁴⁰ but from this time onwards until 1983, the market was bedevilled by several major redevelopment schemes that never came to fruition. Fierce competition from suburban shopping centres caused much concern and stallholders first raised proposals to attract more shoppers to the area through increased overhead car parks.⁴¹

The market has since undergone major refurbishment and still continues to be one of the major attractions of the city. On the 16 August 1965 the market was officially titled the Central Market.

¹*South Australian Register [SAR]*, 25 January 1869

²*Observer*, 30 January 1869

³*SAR*, 19 June 1869, supp. 4h.

⁴*SAR*, 24 Jan. 1870, 3c.

⁵*South Australian*, 24 November 1838, p.3.

⁶*Observer*, 23 December 1854, 5 February 1855.

⁷*ibid*

⁸Worsnop, T., *History of the City of Adelaide*, 1878, p.328.

⁹Warburton, E., *The history of St Peters*, p.63-5.

¹⁰*ACC Digest of Proceedings*, notice papers, 20 February 1865.

¹¹*ibid*, 14 May 1866, notice papers

¹²*ibid*. 30 July 1866.

¹³*Observer*, 23 January 1869.

¹⁴Burgess, H.T., *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, Vol. 2, pp. 204-9.

¹⁵ *SAR*, 19 January 1869, supp. 4h

¹⁶Mayors's Report, ACC 1873, p.2.

¹⁷*ibid*, 1877, p.11.

¹⁸*ibid*. 1879-80, p. 8.

¹⁹*ibid*. 1879-80, p.96.

²⁰*ibid*. 1881-80, p.133.

²¹*Advertiser*, 8 February 1900.

²²*ibid*.

²³Mayors Report, 1899/1900, p.102.

²⁴Annual Report, 1901, p.10.

²⁵*ACC Digest of Proceedings*, 17 March 1902.

²⁶Annual Report, 1905, p.49.

²⁷*SAR*, 20 October 1914.

²⁸Annual Report, 1915, pp. 30-1; 1916, p.22; media release to *Advertiser* and *SAR*, 10 August 1915.

²⁹Annual Report, 1922, pp.13,41.

³⁰*ibid*. 1925, p.30.

³¹ACA, T.C. Dept. C15/S4/157A

³²Annual Report, 1932, p.28, *Advertiser*, 10 May 1932.

³³*Advertiser*, 31 May 1932.

³⁴*News*, 25 March 1958

³⁵ibid.

³⁶ACC T.C. Dept. C15/54

³⁷Annual Report, 1964-65, p.53.

³⁸*Advertiser*, 15 June 1966.

³⁹Annual Report, 1966-67, p.6.

⁴⁰ibid, 1976-77.

⁴¹*Australian*, 3 September 1983.