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News of the Day

Open Schoolhouses Building the Future of New South Wales, 1880-96

Kirsten Orr

University of Technology Sydney

It is claimed that “architectural history is the stepping stone into various ways of interpreting and understanding the past” because of its broad, inter-disciplinary nature. A relationship exists between architecture, economics and the social functioning of human society. Old buildings are relics of an epoch, reflecting the ethos of the society that built and used them. Thus the modest school buildings designed by William Edmund Kemp, New South Wales Architect for Public Schools between 1880-1896, represent the achievement of the introduction of public education and are expressions of the hopes and aspirations of the Colony of New South Wales in the final decades of the Nineteenth Century. The challenge for anyone attempting to construe the history and significance of Kemp’s vast oeuvre of school buildings is to overcome the very limited evidentiary field on which an historical analysis might rest. This paper draws upon primary material found in the newspaper reports of 72 schoolhouse openings. It examines the discourse of the policy-makers—the politicians, community leaders and newspaper editors of the day—to reveal the intersections between public issues and personal views and uncover the ideological function of Kemp’s schools. The schoolhouse, around which the ceremony revolved, provided a venue for civic engagement, symbolised progress, generated pride and exposed people to the broader interests of the state. The schoolrooms were to mould future citizens with the moral virtues and literacy necessary to advance the nation-Colony. Kemp’s school buildings were an outcome of societal aspirations and, in turn, played an active role in shaping the social and political progress of New South Wales.

It is claimed that “architectural history is the stepping stone into various ways of interpreting and understanding the past” because of its broad, inter-disciplinary nature.¹ A relationship exists between architecture, economics and the social functioning of human society. Thus the modest school buildings designed by

1. Dana Arnold, Elvan Ergut & Belgin Özkaya (eds.), *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xvi.



William Edmund Kemp, New South Wales Architect for Public Schools between 1880 and 1896, represent the achievement of the introduction of public education and are an expression of the ethos and aspirations of New South Wales (NSW) colonial society in the final decades of the Nineteenth Century. The challenge for anyone attempting to construe the history and significance of Kemp's vast oeuvre is to overcome the limited evidentiary field on which an historical analysis might rest. This author has previously examined late-nineteenth-century school building practice and its influence on Kemp's development of new architectural styles,² and has placed his work within the contextual environment of imperialism, growing colonial independence and popular architectural styles of the era.³ To uncover the contemporary responses to Kemp's school buildings and the intersection between public issues and personal views it is necessary to examine primary sources, such as his surviving buildings, correspondence and material in newspapers. A 2012 conference paper adopted a user-perspective, examining the scarce-recorded experiences of pupils, teachers and inspectors inhabiting the schoolrooms.⁴ In contrast, this paper looks to the policy-makers—the politicians, community leaders and newspaper editors – to understand their thoughts about the ideological function of Kemp's schools. It draws upon a thematic analysis of material found in the newspaper reports of 72 school openings in the period 1880-1896 (refer Appendix). This is supplemented by the annual reports to Parliament of the Ministers of Public Instruction, which include the Architect's Report. The public demonstrations celebrating openings conveyed local aspirations and civic pride, colonial aspirations and official ideologies about the role of schoolhouses in shaping the future of the Colony. As such, they shed light on the significance of Kemp's buildings to the narrative and architectural history of NSW.

Celebrating School Openings

One month after the NSW Public Instruction Act came into force on 1 May 1880 the opening of a small schoolhouse at Aberglasslyn (1880), an agricultural settlement near Maitland, was an event of “too much importance to be unmarked by any public demonstration.”⁵ This sentiment was shared throughout the Colony and no matter how small or remote the school, its opening heralded a new era and great rejoicing. The Act was a milestone marking a new, liberal education for all children that was

2. Kirsten Orr, “W. E. Kemp's School Buildings, 1880-1896: 'Seed-germ of the Australian architecture of the future?'” *Fabrications* 19, no. 1 (2009): 96-121.

3. Kirsten Orr, “Empire, Education and Nationalism: The School Architecture of William Edmund Kemp, 1880-1896,” *Fabrications* 20, no. 2 (2011) 60-85.

4. Kirsten Orr, “‘The old bark school is gone . . . There's a brick school on the flat': Reflections on the Fitness for Purpose of William E. Kemp's School Buildings,” in *Fabulation: Myth, Nature, Heritage, 29th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand*, ed. Stuart King, Anuradha Chatterjee and Steven Loo (Launceston, Tas.: SAHANZ, 2012), 824-46.

5. *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), June 4, 1880, 3.

compulsory, free and secular. Celebrating school openings was not a passing phase but continued until at least the mid-1890s. In opening the new schoolhouse at Stroud (1885), where Kemp had spent his childhood, the Minister of Public Instruction, William Joseph Trickett, observed that “parents and children might possibly in after years look upon [the event of the school opening] as one of the most important in their lives; for might not this Public school at Stroud be the first step . . . to many a bright young mind, who might sometime hereafter take a prominent part in the history of the progress of this grand colony?”⁶

6. *SMH*, July 21, 1885, 5.

Communities established fund-raising committees and invited government representatives and local dignitaries to preside over formalities. For some remote communities like Burrowa (1885) it was the first time that someone as important as Trickett had ever visited their district. Newspapers reported the disappointment when no government representative attended. Public holidays were often declared and festivities frequently commenced with a procession. At Young (1884), a thriving gold-rush town, the procession numbered “a thousand souls” led by the town band and the Mayor, followed by Councillors and members of the local lodges waving banners and flags, with six hundred children bringing up the rear. It passed along the principal streets, past the town hall and courthouse, to the new schoolhouse.⁷ At Middle Falbrook (1889), a small settlement north of Singleton, a festive atmosphere was established by a “band playing lively and inspiring airs,” followed by “children clad in gay holiday attire and then the adults on foot, in vehicles, and on horseback. The sight was a pretty one.”⁸ Picnics, sports days, balls, banquets and concerts followed. At Keiraville (1891), near Wollongong, the children’s activities included races, skipping, a flower arranging competition and a lucky dip, while adults competed in handicap and wheelbarrow races, plus a ladies’ race for trimming a hat.⁹ The opening of new buildings at Paddington (1893) was marked by a more formal program featuring an ode written for the occasion and set to music by Mr Hugo Alpen, sung by a choir of 150 children and the headmaster.¹⁰

7. *Burrangong Argus*, August 16, 1884, 1.

8. *Singleton Argus*, October 9, 1889, 2.

9. Centenary Committee, *Keiraville Public School 1891-1991* (1991), 33.

10. *SMH*, December 9, 1893, 7.

All eyes were on the new buildings decorated with banners, shields, flags and floral garlands. They assumed a symbolic status as beacons of the liberal system of education and as achievements of local aspirations. The buildings varied in their size and character, ranging from simple buildings of timber or brick, whose construction had been supervised by the local



inspector working from one of Kemp's standard plans (Fig. 1), to large, individually-designed brick schools in classical styles supervised by the Architect's office. Peter Tonkin has classified these into stylistic groups: the "Cottage Style" (1881-93), "Grand Classic Style" (1881-85), "Simple Classic Style" (1884-96) and "Romanesque Style" (1889-96).¹¹ Their commonality was the layout of the schoolrooms to suit the English pupil-teacher system of teaching. Although Kemp attempted to endow all of his schools with an architectural style that was secular and "school like," it was easier to praise some than others. He bravely abandoned the picturesque Gothic style, for which there was a popular and enduring nostalgia, and developed his own styles to meet functional requirements. The *Sydney Morning Herald* report on the opening of Pymont (1884) described it as "plain in appearance,"¹² no doubt reflecting public opinion that the aesthetics were austere compared to the picturesque style of George Mansfield's earlier Gothic school around the corner.¹³ At the end of his career Kemp was naturally disappointed by public criticism of the style of his schools and reflected, "I have been told that the buildings I have erected during my tenure of the Office of Architect for Schools are not like schools, and that they are not picturesque. I have generally found as far as I could ascertain what my critics meant, that they in some way connected both the picturesque and the school-like with steep roofs, sharp gables, and pointed windows."¹⁴ The parliamentary reports of the Ministers of Public Instruction make clear that Kemp's school designs and systems of ornamentation were further modified by fluctuating economic conditions; competing demands for public expenditure; the rapid expansion of the Colony due to railways, mining and pastoral activities; and, finally, the priority afforded by the incumbent Minister to the building of schools.

11. Peter Tonkin, "School Buildings 1848-1930: An Analysis of the Form and Function of Public Schools in New South Wales," BArch (hons) thesis, University of Sydney, 1975, 97-99.

12. *SMH*, November 8, 1884, 11.

13. Kirsten Orr, "The Public Face of Elementary Education in New South Wales," in *Audience: Proceedings of the 28th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand*, ed. Antony Moulis and Deborah van der Plaats (Brisbane: SAHANZ, 2011).

14. William E. Kemp, "School Buildings: Paper Read before the Sydney Architectural Association, 3 July 1893," *Australasian Builder & Contractors' News*, July 8, 1893, 15-17.



Figure 1. Plan of Public School and Teacher's Residence dated 1883. State Records NSW, Education; NRS 3830, Subject Files 1875-1984, Architect 1876-83, [20/12484], February 5, 1883.

Expenditure

When Kemp was appointed in 1880 he probably expected the Government to continue increasing its expenditure on school buildings as it had in the past. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that, “The vote had gone on increasing year by year without a murmur as to its amount; and . . . as it had been in the past so it would in the future.” £180,000 had been voted for 1875, £250,000 for 1876 and £349,197 for 1880, which “was a good round sum for a population that did not exceed 740,000 souls.”¹⁵ However the increase in expenditure did not continue indefinitely. Spending on school sites, new buildings and additions, teachers’ residences, weathersheds, repairs, furniture, rents and rates peaked in 1883 and 1884, before decreasing to half that value for the remainder of Kemp’s tenure.

15. John Fitzgerald Burns, member for the Hunter, *SMH*, June 4, 1880, 3.

Figure 2. Correlation between annual expenditure on new schoolhouses, the numbers of buildings completed and the incumbent Minister of Public Instruction. Compiled from the annual Report of the Ministers of Public Instruction, 1880-96.

Year	Minister	Number of new school houses completed 1 Jan – 31 Dec (does not include teachers’ residences, weathersheds, or additions to existing schools)		Expenditure		
		By Architect	Total	£	s	d
1880	John Robertson (May 1880-Nov 1881)			98,903	1	7
1881	John Robertson / Francis B Suttor			102,688	9	3
1882	Francis B Suttor	67		228,391	11	2
1883	George H Reid	90	211	395,961	2	2
1884	Joseph P Abbott (Acting) / William J Trickett	78	406	304,383	9	7
1885	William J Trickett / James Young	21	259	178,001	15	7
1886	James Young / Arthur Renwick (Feb 1886-Dec 1886)	22	172	155,072	0	7
1887	James Inglis	23	132	119,957	3	10
1888	James Inglis	14	121	84,575	0	9
1889	Joseph Carruthers	33	140	109,575	18	10
1890	Joseph Carruthers	36	131	150,441	0	2
1891	Francis B Suttor	63	138	191,373	17	6
1892	Francis B Suttor	42	136	157,679		
1893	Francis B Suttor	42	98	112,856		
1894	Jacob Garrard	15	65	73,791		
1895	Jacob Garrard	28	130	104,397		
1896	Jacob Garrard	9	87	56,752		

In 1888, 1894 and 1896 very little was spent at all, reflecting an economic downturn and sharp bout of unemployment in 1886 and the depression from 1892.¹⁶ In each case there was a delayed effect upon expenditure because parliamentary money was voted in advance, schools were planned and contracts issued over an extended period, and cost savings took time to implement.

16. Contraction of public investment occurred later in NSW than other colonies because of the revival of railway building.—N G Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development 1861-1900* (Canberra: ANU, 1976), 442-50.



Minister of Public Instruction, James Inglis, drastically reduced the budget and “tried to fulfil the government’s promise of retrenchment but was attacked for his economics.”¹⁷ The *Northern Star* complained bitterly about his austerity measures and their impact on country districts where life was already “rough and ready.”¹⁸

The major drop in expenditure on school buildings in 1885 and subsequent years did not correlate with the number of new schools built. Kemp reported that, “the accommodation provided bears about the same proportion to that of last year . . . The certificates issued in 1884 averaged over £117 each, while this year they only averaged about £68.”¹⁹ Cost savings were made by erecting timber structures in place of brick and by eliminating architectural ornament from brick buildings. Thus two schools designed in the “Simple Classic Style” are markedly different. Waterloo designed in 1884 features restrained classical detailing, with a stone entrance and belfry, while Australia Street designed in 1888 is much plainer with limited ornament.

17. Martha Rutledge, “Inglis, James (1845-1908),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, online at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/inglis-james-3834/text6087> (accessed January 2, 2013).

18. *Northern Star*, April 27, 1887, 2.

19. William E. Kemp, ‘Report of the Work of the Architect’s Office for the Year 1885’, in Arthur Renwick, *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction 1885* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1886), 87.



Figure 3. Two schools in the “Simple Classic Style.” (L) Waterloo (R) Australia Street.



Figure 4: Young Public School designed in 1883 in the “Grand Classic Style.”³

Young Public School narrowly escaped the economising. Standing on a table at the entrance gate, with the elegant “Grand Classic” schoolhouse as a backdrop, the Mayor opened the school with the words, “we may well feel pleased on this occasion. Under the present parsimonious rule, £10,000 would probably be considered too large a sum of money to be expended on the erection of a school outside of Sydney.”²⁰

20. *Burrangong Argus*, August 16, 1884, 1.

Civic Engagement within the Local Community

The public nature of school openings, whether in a suburb of Sydney, a regional town or a distant settlement, provided an opportunity for civic engagement. Personal relationships developed from engaging in shared activities, and events built a local “community of memory and hope.”²¹ A cultural system for the development of individual and group identity, constructed “of lived experience and communicated meanings,” arose from inhabiting and interacting within the schoolroom, playground and town.²² Participation in the ceremonial drama and spectacle of school openings encouraged people to view their particular locale with new eyes and to forge stronger links with their social community.

21. Linda Everett Kruger, “Understanding Place as a Cultural System: Implications of Theory and Method,” PhD diss., University of Washington, 1996, 65-66.

22. Kruger, “Understanding Place as a Cultural System,” 66-70.

No one wanted a cultural life to be founded on notions of primitive frontier values and thus the erection of a fitting building symbolised local prosperity and progress and the level of civilisation achieved. Opening Plattsburg (1884), near Newcastle, the Acting Minister of Public Instruction, Joseph Abbott, complimented the community on its progress from a “population of 5016 persons, of whom 1978 were convicts” to a district with 84 public schools. He exclaimed “What a change! What a field for reflection!”²³ Fine public buildings, including a schoolhouse, were the expectation of every aspiring town and there were many reports like that of Forbes: “Great progress is being made in the town, new buildings are going up on every hand. The new public school building is almost complete, and is a fine commodious structure At the town hall the contractor is making good headway, and this building when finished will add materially to the appearance of the town.”²⁴

23. *SMH*, May 5, 1884, 9.

24. *Australian Town and Country Journal*, December 6, 1890, 14.

It was thought that the schoolhouse should be an adornment to the town and complement the other public buildings. Not all communities were satisfied that the buildings they were



given adequately reflected their progress and status. The new school at Tamworth (1883) was described by Minister of Public Instruction, George Reid, as a “handsome” building. However, the local member, Abbott, complained at the opening that in general, “the public buildings in the Northern districts of the colony were by no means equal to those which had been erected in other parts.”²⁵ Further north, the community of Lismore (1885) was extremely unhappy with its new school, which was “hardly up to the requirements of the town” and could not “be considered a work of art, being a plain substantial building with a low roof, somewhat resembling a lock-up.”²⁶

25. *SMH*, August 10, 1883, 8.

26. *Northern Star*, September 6, 1885, 2.

The civic pride of these townspeople was wounded. They had overcome adversity on the frontier, facilitated the expansion of the Colony and achieved substantial material progress. Now they demanded recognition through better school buildings. The temporary timber buildings thrown up in country districts were seriously deficient in many ways, including their response to the climate. The residents of Wallalong (1884) were outspoken about the inadequacy of their “small, ill-ventilated wooden structure” which was “like an oven in summer time.” It was hoped that “the white ant may destroy the new school right speedily, that they may have a chance to get a better one ere long.”²⁷

27. *Australian Town and Country Journal*, November 29, 1884, 41.

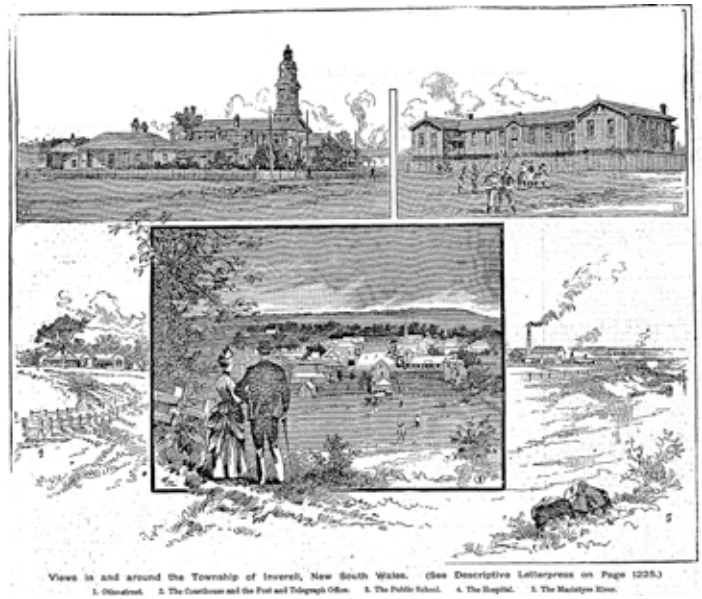
Civic Engagement and Colonial Aspirations

The new schoolhouse and the district’s material progress were frequently placed within the broader context of the progress of the Colony. The *Australian Town and Country Journal* published hundreds of images of NSW towns that celebrated the diversity of individual principalities but essentially depicted the same things: the townscape nestled harmoniously into the natural landscape and individual views of important public, commercial and industrial buildings. Images of NSW towns such as Inverell started to resolve the differences between principalities, encouraging civic engagement beyond the local community and contributing to a coherent national culture and identity.

The opening of new schools, although only relatively minor events, shared some of the characteristics of mega-events such as the nineteenth-century Australian international exhibitions²⁸ and modern Olympic Games. It has been shown that such mega-events offered elites an opportunity to promote official objectives

28. Kirsten Orr, “A Force for Federation: International Exhibitions and the Formation of Australian Ethos (1851-1901),” PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 2005.

Figure 5. Views in and around the Township of Inverell, NSW. Kemp's School is in top right corner. Australian Town and Country Journal, June 11, 1887, 26, 29.



29. Maurice Roche, *Mega-events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 71.

30. *Singleton Argus*, March 29, 1884, 2.

31. *Northern Star*, April 29, 1882, 3.

32. *Singleton Argus*, December 11, 1889, 2.

33. *SMH*, May 10, 1893, 8.

34. *SMH*, January 20, 1885, 5.

at the same time as nurturing “citizenship, social membership and cultural inclusion.”²⁹ In a more limited fashion, school openings provided a focus on place that encouraged the local community and assembled crowd to engage with broader interests of the state. Speech-making reminded the assembled local dignitaries, schoolteachers, parents, pupils and other locals, as well as distant newspaper readers, that *their* individual school building was the realisation of the vision of politicians and educationists for a better future through public education. Self-congratulatory ministers’ speeches recognised that a good school building promoted the diffusion of a liberal system of education. At the opening of Whittingham (1884) it was said that the building “shows that the Government values education ... and it shows that the people of the colony value education and desire its general diffusion.”³⁰ At Ballina (1882) it was thought that the schoolhouse “should lead the pupils to higher thoughts and aspirations”³¹ and, conversely at Roughit (1889), that “want of proper arrangements must exercise unfortunate influences” upon the children.³² Analogies were repeatedly drawn between the new buildings and popular metaphors for knowledge. Thus the elaborate two-storey bluestone school at Kiama (1893) was a “temple of knowledge”³³ and Waterloo (1885) added “another step to the ladder of knowledge.”³⁴

Public education, now established, had moved beyond the confines of politics to become a vehicle for social progress and Trickett maintained that opening a new school was a noble act



because it heralded a bright future. Statistics on the rolling-out of public instruction were reported annually to the Parliament and made social progress quantifiable and concrete. Sometimes these statistics were partially recounted at school openings such as Tamworth, where Reid gave an overly detailed and lengthy account of NSW expenditure compared to the other Australian colonies and New Zealand. He claimed that the Colony had spent more on public education than any other colony and, if Victoria was removed from calculations, had spent “a larger sum annually than the whole of the rest of Australasia put together.” The school buildings being erected were “too elaborate and costly a character, considering the enormous demands upon us from all quarters of the country.”³⁵ Mr Johnson, Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, opening St Ives (1889) referred to his recent visit to Great Britain and America, where he had seen “nothing that would compare [to NSW] in discipline, in effective instruction, and in all that constituted a good school.”³⁶ Minister of Public Instruction, Jacob Garrard, opening the “splendid” new wing of Newtown (1896), proudly announced that 78% of eligible children were attending public schools and that only a small percentage “failed to participate in the benefits of the grand educational system of the colony.”³⁷ The large proportion of the Colony’s children attending public schools and the high quality of education they were receiving was testament to the fundamental contribution made by the new schoolhouses to the social structure and cultural advancement of the Colony. To this end, Minister of Public Instruction, Joseph Carruthers, enthusiastically advocated increasing the expenditure on school buildings. He recommended the cessation of erecting temporary timber buildings, which were “a poor economy to the State where a brick building with some architectural design could have been erected at a moderately-increased outlay.”³⁸ During his term, new architectural styles were experimented with at Kogarah, Albury and Wagga Wagga South that he claimed to have been influenced by the stately designs of the London and Birmingham School Boards.³⁹

35. *SMH*, August 10, 1883, 8.

36. *SMH*, June 10, 1889, 7.

37. *SMH*, February 29, 1896, 12.

38. Joseph Carruthers, *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for 1890* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1891), 84-85.

39. There is a need for a more thorough investigation of influence of Edward Robert Robson and the London and Birmingham School Boards on Kemp’s schools.

Shaping the Future Colony

Premier Henry Parkes always referred to schools as places in which to “plant another seed plot of national life” and in which to nurture qualities from which the future of the nation would be derived.⁴⁰ Speeches commonly linked the moulding of future citizens to the school building. Trickett referred to the children as

40. *SMH*, May 26, 1880, 7.

“Young Australia” and measured the advantages of new buildings not only in terms of the present generation of children passing through them, but in terms of the future generations of young men and women who would “help to constitute . . . this great country.”⁴¹ Carruthers thought the buildings should be of “fair architectural design” because it would leave an impression on the minds of children and train their minds “up to higher thoughts.”⁴²

41. *SMH*, November 21, 1883, 10.

42. *SMH*, August 25, 1891, 3.

The Public Instruction Act regulations 141 and 142 dealt with the moral values—cleanliness, orderly behaviour, obedience, respect for property, honesty, truthfulness, conscientiousness and discipline—that should underpin children’s education and provide the foundation for all other learning. Inside the schoolroom, the layout and furniture were carefully designed by Kemp to provide uninterrupted surveillance by the teacher and the neat rows of desks arranged in a stepped gallery enforced discipline. Discipline and drills were preparation for employment in an industrialised workforce that would economically advance the Colony.⁴³ Likewise the importance of working hard at school was emphasised with the desire that children should be productive citizens who would “grow up manly and self-reliant, and go out and fight life’s battles as their fathers did before them.”⁴⁴ Wall maps and pictures stimulated the mind and at Birchgrove (1885) it was claimed that, “the careful and artistic arrangement of the school material, and of all pictures and illustrations, is a silent and good lesson in good taste, and will go far to make children love order and neatness.”⁴⁵ Home life for many children left something to be desired and it was intended that school life should redress the deficiencies. Garrard thought that, “good solid architecture had a splendid effect upon the young people and inculcated in them a liking for the beautiful.”⁴⁶ Many people shared the opinion that an attractive school environment would also lead to better homes, which would provide “the foundation and safe guard of national stability and greatness.”⁴⁷

43. Maree Murray, “Children and Schoolwork in New South Wales, 1860-1920,” Working Paper 99-15, 1999, online at <http://ro.uow.edu.au/commwkpapers/18/> (accessed February 17, 2012), 21.

44. *SMH*, May 10, 1893, 8.

45. *SMH*, March 17, 1885, 11.

46. *SMH*, March 11, 1895, 5.

47. *Singleton Argus*, December 11, 1889, 2.

48. J. J. Fletcher, “The New South Wales Department of Education and the Education of Aborigines, 1880-1940,” *Leader* 5, no. 3 (1973), 52-57.

49. *SMH*, August 10, 1883, 8.

50. *SMH*, February 5, 1884, 5.

Despite the exclusion of aboriginal children,⁴⁸ the Act mandated that schools be open to all, without discrimination. Inside the Tamworth schoolroom, Reid described the “beautiful and encouraging spectacle” of “group after group of happy faces, all ancient discords of creed and colour lost in a sweet Australian harmony of prosperity and equality.”⁴⁹ Educated side by side, he hoped the children would become “fellow-citizens as well as fellow-country men.”⁵⁰ At the opening of Fairfield (1889) Parkes played on the pun of the school’s name with his observation that,



“There was a fair field and no favour, and the son of the poorest inhabitant had just as good a chance of winning fortune, distinction and honour, as the son of the richest man in the country.”⁵¹ In contrast, Garrard hoped that when the children entered the world “they would show that the Australian drawn from the Public school was full of brotherly love and kindness of heart.”⁵²

51. *SMH*, February 25, 1889, 9.

52. *SMH*, May 14, 1895, 3.

The new public schools were to facilitate universal literacy, necessary for the franchise. Opening Seelands (1889), John See MLA, emphasised the role of education in improving the mind and enabling a better understanding of politics.⁵³ On a deeper level, Carruthers likened the erection of every new school to the “erection of a bulwark of intelligence and knowledge to safeguard our liberties” and hailed them as providing assurance to the free constitution.⁵⁴

53. *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, November 23, 1889, 4.

54. *SMH*, October 4, 1890, 7.

Throughout the period of these school openings there was a growing debate within the Colony around the need to develop an Australian style of architecture suited to the climate, landscape and lifestyle of the people. Kemp had been actively engaged in this debate since the early 1870s when he had written letters to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in response to the British ‘Battle of the Styles’ and to the *Australian Churchman* advocating utility in the design of church buildings. He was a “faithful working member” of the Art Society of New South Wales from 1883 and a founding member of the Sydney Architectural Association in 1891.⁵⁵ In the context of the desire for an Australian style of architecture, Kemp’s design for the school at Pyrmont was praised for embodying architectural principles that might be “the seed-germ of the Australasian architecture of the future.”⁵⁶

55. Orr, “Empire, Education and Nationalism,” 73-75, 80-81.

56. “Schools and School Buildings,” *Australasian Builder and Contractor’s News*, July 15, 1893, 32.

In a step towards what can be regarded as a conscious attempt to develop an Australian style of schoolhouse, Australian-born Kemp took particular care to respond to environmental requirements. His larger schools were universally praised for their incorporation of the latest science of lighting and ventilation. At Windsor (1885) it was noted that “not only do the sashes of the seven large windows open up or down, but there are four air traps in the inside wall, near the ceiling, which can be opened at pleasure, and there are also ten patent ventilators in the east, west and south walls.”⁵⁷ The imposing design of Wagga Wagga South (1892) included a stone arcade that protected the building from the sun, completely shading the walls. It was thought that the building would be greatly enhanced when the native shade trees attained a few years growth.⁵⁸

57. *Hawkesbury Chronicle and Farmers Advocate*, July 11, 1885, 2.

58. *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, January 19, 1892, 3.

Kemp also endeavoured to give his schools an Australian character with verandahs and separate weathersheds to provide protection from the elements. At Coonabarabran (1889), one of the hottest parts of the Colony, the handsome brick schoolhouse was finished with two verandahs on the west side, one for the boys and one for the girls.⁵⁹ At Sutton (1883) a “spacious verandah” was supplemented by a “comfortable weathershed.”⁶⁰ By 1886 weathersheds were quantified in the Ministers’ reports. The schools attempted to support an Australian lifestyle, although this went unrecognised in the opening speeches. Looking back, it is clear that they expressed an Australian identity that would have impressed itself upon young minds. They were clearly different from the schools of England or America.

59. *Australian Town and Country Journal*, May 25, 1889, 14.

60. *Queanbeyan Age*, September 14, 1883, 2.

Year	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896
Number of new weathersheds	19	Not stated	14	9	35	11	Not stated	4	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated

Figure 6. Number of weathersheds listed in Reports of the Minister of Public Instruction. Compiled from the annual Report of the Ministers of Public Instruction, 1880-96.

As might be expected, school openings provided opportunities for patriotic fervour and a valuing of imperial ties with Britain. The national anthem was sung and toasts proposed to the Queen. The patriotic tone of speeches peaked in 1885 when NSW’s offer to send a contingent to the Sudan was accepted by the British Government. That year, Trickett’s speeches exhorted the children to “Let our national watchword, “Advance Australia,” spur you to raise yourselves and your country”⁶¹ and to “cultivate an affectionate regard for this country, in which they had been born, and also for that grand old country from which most of them had sprung, and to which they still were proud to belong.”⁶²

61. *SMH*, January 20, 1885, 5.

62. *SMH*, May 29, 1885, 5.

Conclusion

Kemp’s school buildings symbolised the social, political and economic progress of the Colony of NSW in the late-Nineteenth Century. Carruthers, Minister of Public Instruction in Sir Henry Parkes’s last ministry, claimed that each opening formed “one of the many links in a chain of . . . advancement.”⁶³ This proclamation in October 1890 was made at a time of significant social and political change, closely following the Federation Conference in May and Parkes’s Tenterfield Oration in 1889.

63. *SMH*, October 4, 1890, 7.



The openings were significant occasions: Schoolhouses provided a venue for civic engagement, generating pride at the local community level and exposing people to the broader interests of the state. Children inhabiting the schoolrooms were being moulded into future citizens with the moral virtues and literacy necessary to advance the nation-Colony. Kemp's school buildings generally responded to local conditions, while at the same time embodying ideas arising from the strong imperial connection. They were an outcome of societal aspirations and, in turn, played an active role in shaping the advancement of NSW.

Appendix: Analysis of Themes in Opening Speeches

Minister of Public Instruction or Department representative responsible for speech	Year / Name of school (listed in chronological order of opening)	Symbolism of building with regards to education	Decorations for opening	Activities: Parade, Picnic, Banquet, Sport, etc	Description of the building	Comment on the cost	Location of the building	Civic pride and progress of the town	Role of building to mould individual for society	Importance of the home	Influence of building on health and well-being	Facts and figures relating to education in NSW	Comparison with other colonies / nations	Material progress of the Colony	Curriculum specific to the needs of NSW	Building response to climate:	Productive workers	'Future' of the country	Citizenship	Influence of building on social progress	Free (democratic)	Patriotism	Imperialism
1880																							
Wilkins	Molong			•																			
Parkes	Blayney			•	•				•			•	•	•					•	•			•
	Aberglasslyn																						
	Wilberforce			•																			
1881																							
	Granville			•	•		•					•		•	•			•		•			
Suttor Robertson	Goulburn Sth		•	•				•						•								•	
1882																							
Renwick	Grafton			•																			
	Ballina				•				•		•												
	Swan Bay				•			•															
1883																							
	Bega			•	•	•																	
	Micalago				•		•																
Reid	Tamworth		•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•					•		•		•	
	Forest Lodge				•		•										•						
	Sutton			•	•	•	•	•				•					•						
Trickett	East Maitland	•		•	•	•			•			•			•		•	•		•		•	
1884																							
Reid	Croydon		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Whittingham	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•									•	•	•	•
Abbott	Plattsburg			•	•	•		•		•						•							•
	Young			•	•			•															•
Johnson	Pymont		•	•	•	•		•			•					•							
	Wallalongo			•	•																		
1885																							
Trickett	Waterloo	•	•	•	•		•	•			•				•	•			•	•		•	
Trickett	Birchgrove			•	•		•	•	•		•	•		•					•			•	•
Trickett	Burrows	•	•	•	•		•		•		•	•								•		•	•
	Windsor				•						•						•						
Trickett	Stroud			•	•	•			•				•	•					•			•	
	Lismore				•	•					•						•						
	Breadwater		•	•																			
1886																							
	Auburn			•	•		•																
	Marrickville			•	•		•	•															
	Annamdale			•	•	•	•															•	
	Gundagai			•																			
	Dural			•	•																		



Minister of Public Instruction or Department representative responsible for speech	Year / Name of school (listed in chronological order of opening)	Symbolism of building with regards to education	Decorations for opening	Activities: Parade, Picnic, Banquet, Sport, etc	Description of the building	Comment on the cost	Location of the building	Civic pride and progress of the town	Role of building to mould individual for society	Importance of the home	Influence of building on health and well-being	Facts and figures relating to education in NSW	Comparison with other colonies / nations	Material progress of the Colony	Curriculum specific to the needs of NSW	Building response to climate:	Productive workers	'Future' of the country	Citizenship	Influence of building on social progress	Free (democratic)	Patriotism	Imperialism
1887																							
	Toongabbie			•			•	•															
	Carlingford				•		•				•												
	Balmain						•										•						
	Wilcannia				•																		
	Goulburn East				•	•																	
	Arnccliffe	•	•																				
1888																							
1889																							
Parkes	Fairfield		•	•				•				•						•		•		•	
	Coonabarabran				•						•					•							
	St Ives							•				•	•									•	
	Mid Fairbrook	•	•	•			•	•			•												
	Seelands			•	•		•	•			•									•	•		
	Roughit		•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•				•		•	•	•	•	•	
	Balgownie	•	•				•	•														•	
1890																							
Carruthers	St Peters			•	•			•				•	•						•		•		
Carruthers	Rydalmere				•	•	•																
	The Meadows			•																			
1891																							
Carruthers	Katoomba		•	•				•		•			•										
Carruthers	Burwood				•	•		•	•		•	•			•			•	•				
Carruthers	Kogarah				•	•	•	•			•	•						•					
	Keiraville			•																			
Minister's report 1891																							
1892																							
	Wagga South				•	•	•	•	•		•		•			•	•		•	•		•	
Suttor	Leichhardt			•	•	•	•					•			•							•	
Carruthers	Hurstville			•	•	•		•	•		•	•				•							
Suttor	Maitland High			•								•											
Suttor	Penrith																						
	Albury				•	•																	
1893																							
Suttor	Albion Park			•	•	•						•	•					•		•		•	
Suttor	Kiama	•			•							•				•						•	
Suttor	Muswellbrook			•																			
Suttor	Dulwich Hill			•	•	•		•				•											
	Concord				•		•									•							
	Paddington			•																			
1894																							
Suttor	Leichhardt W	•		•	•	•					•	•											
Garrard	Ashfield				•		•	•															
1895																							
Garrard	Canley Vale					•		•															
Garrard	Albion Street	•		•	•	•	•	•		•			•			•				•			
1896																							
Garrard	Newtown			•	•	•		•				•	•										
	Mt Kembla		•	•																			
Garrard	Blackheath		•	•								•	•										