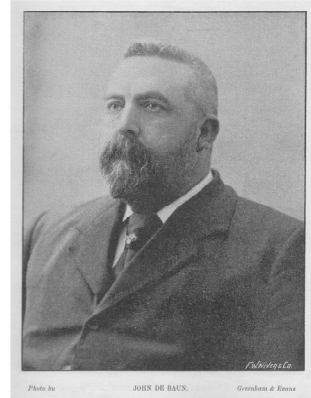


THE Melbourne

PERTH'S BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Originally opened in April 1897, the Melbourne Hotel is a Federation Free Classical style building that was built and owned by entrepreneurial businessman John de Baun. This hotel was constructed amidst a hive of building activity in Western Australia, mainly attributed to the gold rush period of the 1890s in which the State's population quadrupled.

Born in New Jersey USA in 1852, John de Baun migrated to Australia in the 1880s. Seeking his fortune in mining related activity, de Baun went in search of gold, prospecting through Victoria and New South Wales. When mineral deposits were found at Broken Hill, birthplace in 1885 of the iconic mining company BHP, he was able to capitalise. With freshly found wealth, around 1888 de Baun built the Grand Hotel, still standing today. Returning considerable profits as his portfolio flourished amidst the riches of Broken Hill, de Baun invested in speculative mining stocks and amassed a minor fortune.



John de Baun c.1897 (Kimberly, p.191)

In 1892 de Baun lost his empire as a result of a major economic downturn in eastern Australia. Debt-laden, he was forced to seek alternative commercial activity, whereupon he embarked for Western Australia. Convinced of the gold-bearing potential of the new field at Coolgardie, de Baun started four businesses supplying the goldfields population and within a short time returned to the stock market, where he compiled another fortune.

Resuming his interest in hotels, de Baun established the Great Western Hotel in Coolgardie (no longer extant). He then turned his attention to the City of Perth where he was to build two more new hotels. In 1896 de Baun purchased the Retreat Inn, located on the corner of Hay Street and Melbourne Road (later Milligan Street), from the Swan Brewery Company. The Inn was promptly demolished to make way for the new Melbourne Hotel, designed by architect Peter John Wilson. At this time de Baun was also building his other opulent and landmark Perth hotel, the Palace, on the corner of St Georges Terrace and William Street.

Due to its proximity to the city, John de Baun's decision to build the Melbourne Hotel on the previously much less developed site is not surprising. Positioned on a prominent corner site, in an easily accessible location, the hotel would attract both local patrons and visitors to the metropolis. Accessed from the nearby railway, and by the tramcar service which passed the door along Hay Street, the Melbourne Hotel was intended to 'provide a model resting place for both boarders and visitors, with first-class cuisine and liquors'. As a result of its location, being the western-most city hotel situated between the CBD and upper-class residential areas in West Perth, the Melbourne quickly became a popular meeting place.

The early years of operation were not without incidence. During the early hours of 12 October 1897, a safe was removed from the office of the premises. Exiting from the main door on Milligan Street, thieves used a stolen horse and cart to escape. The unlocked safe and its unimportant contents were soon recovered, although partially burnt, nearby.



Melbourne Hotel, 19 July 1955 (State Library of Western Australia 103129PD)

Maintained as a 'pub' for the majority of the Twentieth Century, the Melbourne Hotel has been modified and altered numerous times over the course of its over one hundred and ten year history. With various different expansions, renovations and refurbishments the building continued to be used as a hotel until the 1970s, when some accommodation portions of the building were modified for use as a nightclub and then a cabaret lounge. The popularity of live music and entertainment saw the ground and portions of the first floor of the building in the 1980s and early 1990s used variously as Tiffany's Nightclub, The Firm Nightclub, The Pink Galah Cabaret, Middleways Piano Bar, and Meccanos.

A major building upgrade was initiated in 1994-95. The exterior detailing that had fallen into disrepair was restored, the delicate cantilevered balcony was reconstructed, and missing decorative iron lace work was copied and recast. The façade and main structural aspects of the building were retained and remained virtually identical to the original, including the grand timber staircase and decorative ceilings. During additional refurbishment in 1997, the Melbourne was renovated to allow its hotel accommodation usage to be fully restored.

Beautifully appointed, The Melbourne has established itself as Perth's premier boutique hotel. A landmark in the City, the hotel provides 33 Deluxe Rooms, and 1 Executive Apartment. Guest facilities include 24 hour reception, room service, same day laundry/dry-cleaning services, hire car arrangements, wireless internet access, business centre services, valet parking, banquet and conferencing facilities for up to 270 guests (three separate function rooms), plus a restaurant, cafe and bar.

This magnificent three storey building has been listed on the Register of the National Estate, listed on the State Register of Historic Places, and classified by the National Trust of Australia. A vibrant and busy enterprise, The Melbourne remains today as one the most well recognised and loved meeting places within the City of Perth.

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