ORANGE RAILWAY STATION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORANGE STATION BUILDING

There is perhaps not a better example on the whole New South Wales railway system of the way the culture of the organisation has changed, and has not changed, the appearance of a station structure over the years from its opening in 1877. The opposite is also correct. Orange station is the outstanding example of the way the built environment mirrors the culture of the building's owner.

Rarely were New South Wales station buildings large and extravagant and the example at Orange is consistent with that policy. Capital funding was extremely tight in the 1870s as the objective was to build trunk railway lines quickly. This was achieved by a policy of economy, which included the minimisation of expenditure on any form of building. Not one gatehouse was built at the time of line opening between Wallerawang and Orange.[1] Combination structures, which placed together departmental offices and a residence for the family of the Station Master, were one way to minimise expenditure. Ensuring that buildings were incomplete at the time they were handed over to the Railway Commissioner, as was the case at Orange, was another important plank in the policy of economy.

New South Wales railway station buildings were seldom expanded in a substantial manner after 1890. This was the case at Orange, where the major changes were implemented in 1889. From 1890, only minor additions and accretions appeared at station generally and, in many of these cases, alterations were achieved by eliminating either partly or entirely spaces dedicated to the travelling public. Another tick for the Orange building in this regard.

Very few new or replacement station buildings were approved between 1930 and 1989 in rural New South Wales. Despite plans prepared for a new station building in 1939 and 1946 for Orange, they were never built and this absence of new structures was a reflection of what was occurring over the entire New South Wales railway system. There was simply no money for new rail passenger facilities. The private motor car had trounced rail travel forever.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING TODAY

Additions were made to the structure since its existence in 1877 but, as the building appears today, some of those additions have been removed. This is particularly noticeable towards the Dubbo end where the several enclosures of the verandah on the

[1] There is the possibility of one exception. It is the brick gatehouse at the Adelaide Street level crossing at Blayney. Further evidence is required to determine the construction date.

road approach, as well as other small rooms between the end of the verandah and the toilet block wall, had been removed.

That half of the station building towards the Dubbo end appears roughly as it was in 1889. The half of the structure on the Sydney end has a more modern appearance and generally reflects the changes that were made up to and including 1962. A fine job has been made in providing the Countrylink bus/rail interchange so that it is easy to interpret this change was a much later addition than the remainder of the building. The location of the interchange at the end of the 1877 building enabled the best possible interpretation of the original design.

On the first floor, the weatherboard enclosure has the appearance of the 1960s. In 1877, there was no balcony and no enclosure of that balcony.

THE DESIGN FAMILY TO WHICH THE 1876 BUILDING BELONGS

In the 1870s, Whitton was under pressure to rethink the type of platform buildings to be provided for the trunk lines in order to save money. This was reflected in the period 1873 to 1876, which was the only time three variations of the combination structure were simultaneously used. Plans had already been prepared for combination structures for Spring Hill, Binalong, Harden and Willow Tree and these were to be copies of what Whitton had previously used. Then, there was a rethink of station policy. The rethink of station building policy was demonstrated in the decision not to build the combination examples at those four stations. Additionally, this evidence also shows the difficult financial position in which Whitton was placed. In these instances, Whitton adopted one of his new strategies – relocate redundant buildings at existing stations and leave permanent buildings to the Railway Commissioner after he handed over the line. This policy allowed Whitton to save substantial sums of capital funds. It must be remembered that the tight fiscal situation in which Whitton worked was the result of his own doing. He agreed to do the work for the sum offered by the NSW government. Some commentators refer to the high values and high principles of John Whitton but one would have thought that, if he was firm in holding these beliefs, perhaps he should have declined to accept the job of heading railway construction beyond Bathurst, Goulburn and Murrurundi.

The structure that Orange received is called a combination office/residence and was one example of a family of combination structures used between 1855 and 1884. The family contained two major variations, one with the residential accommodation behind the platform offices and, the second, with the accommodation upstairs. There were variations also between these two, broad groups. All were constructed of brickwork. The Table below sets out the locations and years in which combination structures were approved. In most cases, they were built the following year.

TABLE: COMBINATION OFFICES AND RESIDENCES 1855-1884

APPROVAL YEAR	LOCATION	TYPE & SUB-TYPE
1855	Ashfield	Single-storey
1855	Newtown	Single-storey
1856	Fairfield	Single-storey
1856	Liverpool	Two-storey – first floor positioned longitudinal – a stand-alone type
1857	Waratah	Single-storey
1857	Hexham	Single-storey
1859	Lidcombe	Single-storey
1860	Blacktown	Single-storey
1861	St. Marys	Single-storey
1861	Branxton	Single-storey
1863	Menangle	Single-storey
1864	Mulgrave	Single-storey
1864	Windsor	Single-storey
1867	Bowral	Single-storey
1868	Emu Plains	Single-storey
1869	Greta	Single-storey
1869	Wallerawang	Two-storey – first floor positioned transverse
1869	Rydal	Single-storey
1872	Tarana	Single-storey
1873	High Street	Two-storey – first floor positioned transverse
1874	Ashfield	Two-storey – first floor positioned transverse
1875	Yass (Junction)	Two-storey – first floor positioned longitudinal
1875	Bowning	Two-storey – first floor positioned longitudinal
1875	Brewongle	Single-storey
1876	Blayney	Single-storey
1876	Binalong	Two-storey – first floor positioned longitudinal – not built
1876	Harden	Two-storey – first floor positioned longitudinal – not built
1876	Spring Hill	Two-storey - first floor positioned longitudinal – not built
1876	Orange	Two-storey – first floor positioned longitudinal
1876	Willow Tree	Single-storey – not built
1876	Quirindi	Single-storey
1884	Emu Plains	Two-storey/part three-storey – top floor positioned transverse

The Table above shows 28 combination structures approved between 1855 and 1884. All examples that were built were located on new railway lines and approved by John Whitton, except the very last example at Emu Plains on an existing line, which was approved by George Cowdery, the Engineer for Existing Lines.

The combination style represented less than 1% of all platform buildings erected on the NSW Railways. The two-level examples were spilt into two sub-types, based on the positioning of the first-floor rooms. On some examples, the first-floor rooms are transverse to the ground floor, as at Wallerawang. These were smaller buildings containing two bedrooms upstairs. For those buildings requiring three bedrooms, there was insufficient space to place the rooms in the transverse plane and, instead, these larger examples had their three bedrooms set longitudinally above the ground floor rooms.

DESIGN ELEMENTS OF THE 1876 BUILDING

The structure at Orange was modest in size. Built in the rarer Flemish bond, it measured approximately 110 feet long when constructed. The floor plan was transverse to the centre pedestrian entry point, which was marked visually by the provision of a porched entry. The width of the structure was stepped. The centre space was the general waiting room, which was 21 feet wide. On each side of that space, was a room 16 feet wide – on one side being the ticket office and the other side the ladies' waiting room. On each side of those rooms were a pair of rooms 13 feet six inches wide. On the Sydney side, the spaces were the family sitting room and the kitchen. On the Dubbo side, were the Porter's and lamp room and male/female toilets.

Upstairs, were three bedrooms in a row. All rooms used by staff or the public were heated with open fireplaces, except the smallest, upstairs bedroom. There was no toilet for the family of the Station Master and no bathroom of any description. Family members had to use the single, female public closet or the two male closets.

All in all, the building was symmetrically set out. It was functional but without dominant stylistic features. What spoilt the appearance was the departmental policy to use corrugated iron sheets to enclose the yard around the kitchen at the Sydney end. The privacy screen in front of the entry to the male toilet also utilised corrugated iron sheets. This material was in full public view to people approaching the station.

The 1976 building was erected by three contractors, one of whom was the Bathurst resident, James Douglas. They signed the plan associated with the contract on 29th July, 1876.

Authors, Pam and Neil Body, wrote that "this residence was a new innovation, providing ample living space for a family."[2] That comment is incorrect but it is an understandable error as it was a statement that John Whitton made to the press in 1877, that the authors repeated as being their own comment. Simply, the statement did not tell the truth. From the preceding table, it is clear that three previous examples exactly the same as the structure at Orange were approved and built in 1875 – the year before the building at Orange was approved. Also, the use of two-storey combination structures first appeared at Liverpool in 1856 and the concept was widely used from 1869, though with a different first-floor layout. In fact, the direct opposite is the case about the claim that the 1877 built structure was an innovation. The building at Orange was the very last combination building erected on a newly-built extension of the trunk routes anywhere in New South Wales.

REACTION TO THE 1876 BUILDING

The last combination structure built on the Main West was at Orange. It was also the last time Whitton applied the design to a new railway line. Whitton received a few barbs for the building he approved at Orange from unhappy politicians. Whitton had utilised the larger version with three bedrooms upstairs, maintaining incorrectly that it was "a new innovation providing ample living space for a family". That comment was rubbish as the local press had noted that the building at Orange "was similar in design to Yass."[3] Unfortunately, much of the criticism of Whitton during his tenure was based on false information but, in the case of the building at Orange, it was Whitton who was in the wrong. At the time, public criticism was made on what was thought to be large sums of public money was spent on grand railway stations rather than on trains for the comfort of the travelling public.[4]

The building at Orange was in no way grand - simply a little larger than some prior combination structures and it was one of only two two-storey platform structures on the Main West at the time.[5] The line through Orange opened on 19th April, 1877, but the buildings was reported as "not yet finished." It was described as "neat and comely in appearance but without any special attempt at architectural display."[6] There was a

[2] P. and N. Body, *With Steam and Steel – the Life and Career of Albert George Dennis 1885-1958*, privately published, 2011, p. 36.
[3] *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 28th April, 1877, p. 2.
[4] P. and N. Body, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-38.

[5] The other structure was at Wallerawang. An unusual thing occurred in 1884 when George Cowdery approved a two/partly three-level residence for Emu Plains.
[6] *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 28th April, 1877, p. 2 and D. J. Chamberlain, *Diary of a Challenge*, privately published, no date, p. 92.

report of the accommodation for the Station Master, it being stated that it formed part of the station premises and "would be sufficiently commodious and convenient when built." It was a functional structure but the use of a combination building suggest that the town of Orange was quite small and did not rate a separate platform building with a detached residence for the Station Master. It would take a local historian to determine whether Whitton correctly matched the station building in 1876 to the then size and status of the town it was to serve.

1883 – THE FOOTBRIDGE OVER THE PLATFORM

George Cowdery approved on 31st August,1883, the provision of an iron footbridge over the railway line at the station. Tenders were called in three parts – (1) the foundations and piers, (2) the supply of the cast and wrought iron and (3) the construction of the superstructure. James Dunn & Co supplied the iron and John Warren was successful for the other two tenders. Construction date is uncertain, due to an absence of evidence, but the announcement of the successful tender for the superstructure was not made until September, 1884.[7] The footbridge is an attractive monument to 19th century engineering and survives today.

The local press was not over-impressed with the efficiency of the Railway Department. In August, 1884, it remarked:

> "Tenders are called for the erection of the superstructure of footbridge over the railway here, and after the usual amount of red tape, we may expect the affair to be completed but already what could have been constructed in six weeks has taken as many months, although the necessity for the bridge has been again and again urged upon those in office.[8]

The construction of the footbridge at Orange adds weight to the argument that some things were done on the main western line that were not implemented on the other trunk lines. The erection of footbridges could be one of those unusual items. Footbridges crossing railway lines at or near stations occurred at Wallerawang, Blayney, Orange, Wellington, Narromine and Nyngan. Yes. There were footbridges on other lines, such as at Cootamundra, Wagga Wagga and Albury, but perhaps not to the same extent that did occur in the western region of the state.

[7] *NSW Government Gazette*, 4th December, 1883, Issue 509, p. 6617 and 16th September, 1884, Issue 471, p. 6231 and *Evening News*, 21st November, 1883, p. 3.
[8] *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 9th August, 1884, p. 17.

Construction of the footbridge trained on and was still incomplete in January, 1885.[9] The bridge was subsequently extended, though in a non-matching design, as the railway yard was expanded.

It must also be recalled that the subway at Bathurst, opened in 1882, was the very first pedestrian subway used to connect two side platforms anywhere on the railway system. Why a subway and not a footbridge is a great question.

1884 – A KNOCK-BACK FOR A NEW STATION

On a visit by the Minister for Works, Francis Wright, and the Railway Commissioner, Charles Goodchap, to Orange station the local deputation stated that the station was "totally inadequate for the business transacted" and said there was a "need for increased accommodation". [10] It seems that the Minister did not see it entirely that way. Wright commented that, unless there a great necessity was shown for it and every inquiry made to see where economy could be practised in the maintenance and working of the line."[11] The local residents were not surprised at the negative response, reportedly saying that:

> "it is unlikely that anything will be done (at Orange) until the general alterations will be made to make Blayney station fit for the junction, which will necessitate the building of a new station house and the re-formlng of the yards. Those works should be started immediately, as the present accommodation is quite inadequate for the public convenience."[12]

While the people at Orange thought that the works at Blayney would be undertaken "immediately", that was not the case and alterations to both Blayney and Orange stations did not start for a further five years.

When Francis Wright came to inspect the branch line from Orange to Molong, a deputation from the people of Orange once again formed a deputation to see the Minister with the demand for a new station building for alterations to the existing facility.[13] As we now know, Wright took no action.

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[9] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8th of January, 1885, p. 7.
[10] *Evening News*, 31st March, 1884, p. 4.
[11] *Evening News*, 7th April, 1884, p. 6.
[12] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1st April,1884, p. 8.
[13] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8th of January, 1885, p. 7.

1889 – TOILET EXPANSION, AWNING REPLACEMENT AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE CIRCULAR DESIGN SYMBOL

George Cowdery approved on 25th July, 1889, a substantial extension of the building, including a gentlemen's waiting room and a ladies' waiting room and large toilets. Tenders closed on 19th August, 1889.[14] The Station Master had moved out of the residential part of the platform structure in 1885 and the former kitchen and sitting room at the Sydney end of the building were converted into a parcels office.[15] At the Dubbo end, two additional rooms were added to the structure provide the male and female waiting rooms. There was a very large semi-detached toilet block that was connected by a passageway from the ladies' waiting room into the female toilet. There was an increase in the toilet accommodation. Females went from one closet and one hand basin in 1876 to three closets and two washbasins in 1889. The boys did even better, increasing from one closet and four urinal stalls in 1876 to five closets, 12 urinal stalls and eight hand wash basins in 1889. The provision of facilities for men to wash their hands was not part of departmental policy from 1855 until the 1960s and it was highly unusual for this to be provided in the structure at Orange in 1889. The design of the urinals was also unusual as it was double sided with users facing each other. The inclusion of waiting rooms exclusively for men was another rare feature, with only 24 of over 1,500 stations having that facility. Unfortunately, the gentlemen's waiting room did not last long at Orange and the room was taken over in 1917 for use of departmental staff.

The 1889 alterations was significant in the history of station design because the work involved the early use of circular gussets in the platform awning brackets. George Cowdery had first used the circular gusset at Petersham station in 1884 and his next application of the innovation was at Orange and Moss Vale stations in 1889. Later, though not at Orange, the circular gussets would appear in cantilevered brackets which replaced the then existing practice of supporting platform awnings with vertical metal or timber posts. Another innovation that was planned for Orange was the use of a butterfly shaped awning along the Sydney end of the platform. This design was not implemented but it is interesting that the new design concept happened in 1889 when several other design features were introduced. A second plan for the awning was prepared but approved not by Cowdery but by James Angus on 16th November, 1889. George Cowdery had retired sometime between July and November, 1889, and Angus

[14] *NSW Government Gazette*, 9th August, 1889, No. 404, p. 5380. Tenders had closed on 5th September, 1888, for unspecified additions and alterations. See *NSW Government Gazette*,10th August, 1888, No. 524, p. 5588.

[15] A new, attractive brick building was erected for the Station Master in 1886 at 158 Peisley Street. It features the rare use of a faceted bay window on the street elevation.

took over his job.[16] This second approval for the platform awning at Orange provided for a conventional shaped, double-pitched awning but which retained the circular gusset design feature. Featherstone and Barbat were the contractors for the alterations. Most of the work they did for the NSW Railways was on the Illawarra line but they also worked on the Cobar line, with all their contracts occurring between 1889 and 1892.

By the end of November, 1889, the press reported that good progress had been made on the construction and that the ticket office and the gentlemen's and ladies' waiting rooms were partly erected and would be ready by Christmas. Work on the platform had almost finished.[17]

1893 – UNUSUAL DESIGN INFLUENCES ON THE WEST

In 1893, an interesting building was approved for Orange. While it was not associated with the passenger station, its unusual design adds further suspicion that railway buildings on the western line differed from the other trunk routes, possibly stimulated by the influence of architects in private practice.

The building was an ordinary two-road engine shed but what made this structure notable was its arched roof. It had a 23 feet radius and was covered with curved, No. 18 gauge corrugated iron. Such roof shapes for any building before 1896 was rare, though goods shed at nearby Nashdale in 1885 and also Muttama and Brawlin on the Gundagai line possessed similar roof styles, not to mention the three arched roofs for the Eveleigh locomotive running shed in 1885. Also, at Orange an arch roofed goods shed had been approved in 1889. Arched roofs were also used for residential toilets mostly in the 19th century. The use of such a style for the Orange engine shed in 1893 possibly reflects the popularity of circular concepts introduced by Chief Commissioner Eddy and seen elsewhere applied to elevated, locomotive water tanks and the window openings for 32 and 50 class steam locomotives.

1895 – THE PROVISION OF THE AWNING ON THE ROAD SIDE OF THE BUILDING

Orange station received a 60 feet long by seven feet wide, skillion awning on the road side of the station, excluding the toilet block. It was an attractive addition, being supported by eight inch square chamfered timber posts with capitals and ornate cast iron brackets.

At that time, the arrangement of the seven rooms, exclusive of the toilet block, remained as at was in 1889. These were from the Dubbo end:

[16] The evidence is that George Cowdery was a man who was not afraid to utilise new designs and his most spectacular work was the use of arched roofs for the locomotive running sheds at Eveleigh, which was the first application of that technology to a locomotive depot building in the world.

[17] *Australian Town and Country Journal,* 30th November, 1889, p. 15.

- Ladies' waiting room,
- Gentlemen's waiting room,
- Telegraph office,
- Station Master's office,
- General waiting room & entry,
- Booking office,
- Stairs to first floor, &
- Parcels office.

1896 - THE PROVISION OF THE REFRESHMENT ROOM AND THE BUNGLED TELEGRAPH OFFICE

At Orange, the *Western Herald* newspaper, 4th November, 1896, p. 4 reported that "the first step has been taken towards the erection of a refreshment room. It opened on 14th December, 1896.[18] It operated until closure in 1986, the same year the similar facility at Parkes was closed.

To provide the refreshment room, it was necessary to eliminate the Station Master's office and the telegraph office, these two rooms being located adjacent to the entrance on the Dubbo side of the building. It is unknown where the Station Master resided or where the telegraph office was located after the changes until 1901.

Also, construction started on a new timber telegraph office with brick foundations and a brick chimney. It was to be located almost under the pedestrian bridge. After construction commenced, official orders arrived that the new telegraph office was in the wrong place, being in the way of the dock platform, "where horses and vehicles are transhipped and, consequently, it will have to be demolished and built elsewhere. This is a stupid blunder".[19]

1897-1901 – EXTENSIONS TO THE PLATFORM AWNING

In 1897, there was a proposal to extend the awning over the platform from the end of the 1876 building towards the footbridge and, thus, provide weather protection in front of all buildings at the Dubbo end. The work was not done then, but was carried out in 1901.

In 1898, the platform awning was 207 feet long and 24 feet one inch wide and featured the use of circular gussets in the awning brackets. The awning was proposed to be

[18] C. Banger, "The Railway Refreshment Rooms of New South Wales 1855-1995," *Bulletin*, August, 2003, pp. 297-304.
[19] *Western Herald*, 4th November, 1896, p. 4.

extended towards Sydney a further 132 feet 5 ¼ inches but the use of circular gussets was to be abandoned and a fabricated steel support system utilized. At that location, the dock platform was located, it being referred locally as "the Molong line." The platform was 16 feet six inches wide and back-to-back platform seats were provided, divided by vertical board screens about six feet high. The work was not done then but was carried out in 1900.

1901 – RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED FOR THE MANAGER, REFRESHMENT ROOM AND ITS IMPACT

An indication of the tightness of money in 1901 was an instruction on the plan that "all of material to be reused." Priority was to be given in the construction schedule to the provision of the new waiting rooms. The brickwork was to use cement mortar. All windows were of the double hung sash type with the lower sash featuring "rough rolled glass" and the upper sashes to have "21-ounce clear sheet glass."

Major alterations were undertaken to half of the building. The gentlemen's waiting room and the ladies' waiting room were relocated 30 feet towards the Dubbo end of the building. The gentlemen's waiting room was divided into two smaller spaces with a bedroom on the platform side and a sitting room for the Manager on the road side. The ladies' waiting room was similarly divided with the telegraph office facing the platform and a store for the refreshment room on the road side. The layout gave the Manager no privacy. Every time someone wanted something from the refreshment rooms store, he or she had to cross the Manager's sitting room. Heaven only knows where any children of the Manager would have slept. The three upstairs rooms were occupied by the District Superintendent and his staff.

The Station Master was allocated a very tiny room measuring eight feet nine inches wide. While it was small, compared to his previous allocated space, it had one very significant design feature. A fireplace was provided in one corner of the room. This was revolutionary. Since 1855, fireplaces and stoves had been placed in the centre of one wall. In 1900, the change started with the positioning of a Dumpy stove in one corner of the building at Curlewis.[20] The allocation of the brick fireplace at Orange in 1901 was the next step in the use of corner spaces for heating. New buildings at Gilgandra and Hexham were similarly treated in 1900 and, from that time, corner fireplaces became increasingly popular for the next 30 years.

Adjacent to the new Station Master's office, was a new ladies' waiting room which replaced the space which was the former female toilet. The new female toilet was built by extending the building alignment on the road side of the building. The Department

[20] However, fireplaces in the corner of rooms of official railway residences were being provided as early as 1888.

did not increase the number of female closets from three and two hand wash basins from those provided in 1889.

The gentlemen's waiting room was also reduced in size and the toilet arrangements were awkward to say the least. While the closets and urinals were located beside the gentlemen's waiting room, the hand wash basins were located in a new extension of the building alignment again on the road side of the structure. The entrance to the male toilet was changed from the traditional end of the building to a doorway facing directly onto the platform. While the same five closets that had been provided in 1889 were maintained, the number of urinal stalls was reduced from 12 to 10. More dramatic was the reduction in hand wash basins from eight to four. There was no direct access between the gentlemen's waiting room and the male toilet and toilet users were required to walk onto the platform, into the gentlemen's waiting room, walk to the rear of that room and pass through a door to reach the hand wash basins.

The platform awning was extended a further 39 feet towards Dubbo, which permitted users of the male toilet to walk to the new entrance under cover of the awning. Heywood's glazing bars were to be fitted for the entire length of the awning adjacent to the building to permit sunlight into the rooms. These had previously been used at a number of other stations. The design of the awning extension was consistent with the then existing awning.

To give an idea of how tight space was and the need to restrict expenditure, the telegraph staff had to share their space with the Railway electrician. The alterations at Orange were typical of physical changes at existing stations, where room for staff took priority over space used by passengers.

1904-1907 – EXPANSION OF THE REFRESHMENT ROOM AND IMPACT

A major change occurred at Orange in 1904 which involved the demolition of the brick wall that divided two 13 feet wide rooms on the Dubbo side of the pedestrian entry point. The process involved the elimination of the single bedroom for the refreshment room Manager, his sitting room and the refreshment rooms store. The manager's bedroom was then relocated to the opposite end of the refreshment facility. The counter in the refreshment room was doubled in length.

At this time, the building lost its stepped wall on the road side and the structure possessed a constant building width on approach from the nearby street. What seemed an unnecessary but expensive alteration was the relocation of the three closets in the female toilet from one wall to another and the similar relocation in the gentlemen's lavatory of the four hand wash basins from one wall to another.

The rooms from the Dubbo end were:

- male toilet,
- gentlemen's waiting room with wash basins at rear,
- ladies waiting room with toilets at rear,
- Station Master's office,
- telegraph office,
- refreshment room,
- bedroom for refreshment room Manager with kitchen behind it,
- entrance hall,
- booking office,
- stairway to first floor, &
- parcels office

The only function that had remained constant instruction of the building in 1876 was the pedestrian entry point, which at that time opened into the general waiting room, a function which had been eliminated entirely by 1904.

The 1904 alterations resulted in the elimination of a store for the refreshment room and this admission was rectified in 1906 through the erection of a store room by extracting one corner of the telegraph office. At that time, the refreshment room was 30 feet 3 inches long by 20 feet 10 inches wide, with the kitchen being 12 feet by 10 feet, as was the Manager's bedroom.

One final improvement that was undertaken in 1904 was the installation of a septic tank and the connection of the male and female toilets to the septic system. This work would have involved substantial changes to the toilets and relied on the provision of a reticulated water supply to the station. It would not be surprised to find out that the septic tank was enlarged at least once. In 1921, it was a very substantial structure located well over 100 metres from the platform towards Dubbo past the Station Master's house.

In 1907, unspecified additions were made to the parcels office at the Sydney end of the building.

1916-1918 – REFRESHMENT ROOM AND OTHER ALTERATIONS

On 30th October, 1916, a new plan was issued for alterations to the refreshment room, including the creation of a separate bar measuring 16 feet by12 feet 10 inches. This division of refreshment rooms to isolate areas where alcohol was being served was common to several similar facilities in 1917 and seems to have been tied to the introduction of the new style, so-called "American bar", with its island configuration, but an American bar was not used at the Orange refreshment room. The separate bar was

provided by eliminating the adjacent telegraph office and the new telegraph office was provided by the elimination of the gentlemen's waiting room.

A 20-foot section of the verandah on the road approach was enclosed for a store for the refreshment room. At the same time, a cellar was provided with the entrance on the roadside of the building. At the other end of the cellar, a grate was inserted into the platform to provide ventilation and light. A beer pump was installed in the bar.[21]

Upstairs, a bathroom was proposed for the first time at the top of the stairs. The three former offices used for the District Superintendent were converted into bedrooms for the refreshment room staff. At some time between 1889 and 1916, balconies had been provided in front of the three bedrooms and it was proposed to enclose the two outer bedrooms with solid walls while providing lattice to enclose the middle bedroom which projected forward over the porched area below. This work was carried out in 1918. A photograph of the changes to the first-floor balcony is in P. and N. Body, *With Steam and Steel – the Life and Career of Albert George Dennis 1885-1958*, privately published, 2011, p. 36.[22]

On 4th June, 1917, the Railway Department took over management of the refreshment room at Orange. This was one part of a statewide policy to cease management of refreshment rooms by private licensees and the transfer to direct departmental control. This policy change had been implemented following a recommendation by the then Premier, William Holman.

The 1916 plan provided a statement not only of all the room functions but the dimensions for most rooms. The rooms their sizes from the Dubbo end were:

NAME OF ROOM	**DIMENSIONS**
GROUND FLOOR	
male toilet	unknown (5 closets, 10 urinal stalls and no wash basins)
telegraph office	16 feet by 12 feet 6 inches, plus battery room on road side
ladies' waiting room	16 feet by 15 feet 6 inches, plus ladies' lavatory on road side
Station Master's office	16 feet by 8 feet 9 inches
Bar	16 feet by 12 feet 10 inches
Public dining room	30 feet 3 inches by 20 feet

[21] J. Forsyth, *Station Information N to Z*, unpublished manuscript, State Rail Authority Archives, no date, p. 57.
[22] The caption states that the photograph was taken in 1905. That is incorrect.

kitchen	unknown
booking hall (used also as the general waiting room)	21 feet 3 inches by 14 feet 1 inch, plus porch on road side
ticket office	21 feet 3 inches by 12 feet
stairway to 1st floor	unknown
parcels office	unknown

FIRST FLOOR

bathroom	6 feet 6 inches by 7 feet 3 inches
bedroom	12 feet by 12 feet by 5 inches, plus balcony
bedroom	18 feet by 14 feet 2 inches, plus balcony
bedroom	17 feet 6 inches by 12 feet 7 inches, plus balcony

It was during this period that the travel conditions of men took a fundamental blow at Orange station. For a start, they had lost their exclusive waiting room and from that time joined the hundreds of other stations on the system most of which did not have a gentlemen's waiting room. The big blow, of course, to hygiene was the complete elimination of the previous four hand wash basins. These are been implemented at Orange, like the gentlemen's waiting room, from 1889 but now the elimination of hand basins made Orange station consistent with virtually every other male toilet on the railway system without facilities for washing after toilet use.

A second plan was prepared in April, 1917, with revised changes. The revisions were:

- new entrance to the male toilet with an arched opening,
- relocation of the privacy screen in the male toilet,
- reduction in the number of urinal stalls from 10 to 8,
- expansion of the telegraph office into the area where the male hand basins were located,
- relocation of the three staff instruments from the ticket office to a new enclosure gouged out of the ladies' waiting room,
- removal of the battery room from the road side of the building and relocation to the telegraph office,
- provision of a window in the Station Master's office,
- relocation of a telegraph pole outside the station on the road approach,
- elimination of a "telegram convey" from the District Superintendent's office.

The overall thrust of the changes was to increase the amount of floor space for departmental purposes at the cost of the space and facilities for the travelling public.

The obvious question is what were the proposed arrangements for the District Superintendent and his staff? Well, the plan was prepared for a two-storey brick residence containing eight rooms, plus a store and toilets. Until the present attractive, brick building was erected to house the district staff in 1937, it is unknown where the District Superintendent had his office for the next 20 years.

1919-1924 – PROVISION OF THE RAILWAY INSTITUTE BUILDING DOMINATES EXPENDITURE

Of course, the Railway Institute building had nothing to do with the passenger station but its planning and construction was important for the introduction of a new style of building. Arched roofs, circular gussets and faceted bay windows on residences were amongst the unusual design elements seen at Orange. In 1919, a plan was prepared for the Railway Institute at Orange, Cowra and Armidale. These followed the prototype Institute building at Bathurst in 1918. The structures reflected a brand-new presentation of materials to give a distinct visual presence to the Institute structures and this style continued to be applied to new Institute buildings throughout the 1920s. No railway station building had previously used the combination of horizontal weatherboards and Fibrolite sheeting on external walls and no platform building had used a combination of wainscotting and Fibrolite sheeting on internal walls.

Nevertheless, this innovation commenced in the western region of the railway system and the majority of early examples continued to be provided in that region. Why? No answer at present.

There was a little work done on the station building in 1921. Inverted gas burners and duplicate sinks were installed in the refreshment room kitchen. Improvements were also made quarters of the refreshment room staff.

The septic tank installed in 1904 was replaced in 1924 with the connection of the railway facilities to the town sewerage system.

There was considerable public disquiet about the poor management of the various refreshment rooms. What occurred at Orange in 1920 made an interesting case study. One press report stated:

> "The conduct of the railway refreshment rooms has been very much in the public eye for some time past, and adverse criticism is rampant. The indifferent way these rooms have been run since being taken over by the State is most pronounced. When the lessees were ousted, it was said that the rooms were to be run more for the convenience of the travelling public than for profit but, if they

not the best paying propositions in the State today, they ought to be, judging by the service and the manner in which they are managed. No sub-manager is allowed to purchase any necessary commodity in his own town, even if it is better and cheaper. For instance. Orange fruit will be consigned to Sydney for sale, purchased there by the powers that be, and re-consigned to Orange to be sold in the refreshment room at that place. …..It is high time the whole system under, which the railway refreshment rooms are worked was reviewed and re-constructed for the public good"[23].

1926 -THE FRUIT KIOSK ON THE PLATFORM

A kiosk was planned for erection on the platform by extending the wall of the existing refreshment room kitchen forward towards the rails. This was in response to a new departmental policy to increase the consumption of fruit by the travelling public. The idea involved the sale at all railway refreshment rooms of luncheon cartons of convenient size fruit for the price of one shilling. The cartons contained six pieces of mixed sandwich, three ounces of cake and two pieces of fruit, in season. The departmental propaganda stated that "the whole will be tastefully packed, ready for immediate sale over the counter. All the food will be the product of the railway refreshment services. It is expected that these cartons will be especially appreciated by women and children, who have sometimes difficulty in being served at refreshment room counters."[24]

1930 – THE FAILED ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE A NEW GENERAL WAITING ROOM

A general waiting room had existed in the station building from 1877 to 1904. From that time up to 1930, the entry porch acted as a de-facto general waiting room with the inclusion of a couple of platform benches. In 1930, the Railway Department proposed to provide a new general waiting room, 14 feet long, at the Dubbo end attached to the wall of the male toilet and extending to the footbridge at the immediate Wellington end of the station. An unusual feature of the proposed structure was the provision of 11 inch-thick cavity brickwork on all walls. Up to that point in time, cavity brickwork was restricted only to those walls exposed to the weather with 9-inch solid brick walls being built where there was weather protection. It was also proposed to extend the existing platform awning by 37 feet.

Neither the waiting room nor the awning were built. That was not surprising considering the terrible financial situation that was facing the Railway Department during the 1930s

[23] *National Advocate*, 24th June, 1920, p. 3.
[24] *Hillston Spectator and Lachlan River Advertiser*, 6th May, 1926, p. 5.

Depression. The Depression had a big psychological impact on people, reflected in the statistic that the local Bloomfield mental hospital had over 1,250 patients in 1933.[25]

1939 – THE WISH OF A NEW, LARGE STATION NEARLY HAPPENED

The Chief Civil Engineer, Albert Fewtrell approved on 23rd May, 1939, a design for a very large, brick station with the large hip roof covered with seldom-used Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles. The design was domestic in orientation and would have been the largest station building erected since the substantial facilities at Cootamundra West in 1917. It was not built but it needs to be recalled that the Department of Railways had no trouble in providing a large amount of funds in 1937 for the erection of an attractive, brick, two-storey office building for the District Superintendent, a brick, two-storey staff rest house and a new, large locomotive depot at Orange East Fork. There was also the new, elevated signal box in the yard, which was opened in 1938. It was a case of staff and staff requirements first and facilities for passengers a long way behind in second place.

1941-1946 - THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR TWO

The War had three major impacts to many stations. Firstly, there was the increase in demand for the services provided by refreshment rooms to cater for troops moving across the rail network. Secondly, there was an increase in the amount of parcels business. This impact resulted from the creation of many bases for the army, air-force and navy and for the dispatch of parcels to troops overseas and in many other parts of Australia. Thirdly, the Australian Railways Union became very active and, realizing the shortage of staff, demanded and received additional office facilities and amenities.

Four projects were undertaken in relation to the expansion of facilities for the refreshment room. In 1944, a further part of the front verandah on the road approach at the Dubbo end was enclosed. A 20-feet long section of the front verandah had been enclosed in 1916 for use as a refreshment rooms store. The addition to the enclosure in 1944 provided an office for the Manager of the refreshment room.

A third addition for the refreshment room in 1944 was the construction of a “bottle room” and a “covered bottle yard” behind the male toilet. This initiative made that half of the building at the Dubbo end look uniformly wider – in line with the forward edge of the verandah on the road side – than the centre section which dated from 1877. This was the first time since 1877 that the rear wall of the station building facing the road had a

[25] *Lachlander and Condobolin and Western Districts Recorder*, 26th April,1933, p. 1.

near-uniform wall alignment from the porched entry to the overhead pedestrian bridge. The building maintained its external appearance from 1944 until 1963.

Also in 1944, there was a further need for storage space and the rooms on the first floor were utilised also for that purpose. At that time, all three former bedrooms on the first floor were utilised for refreshment rooms storage. A two-hundredweight goods lift was planned to carry materials between the ground and first floors for storage for the refreshment room. The work was not carried out.

A shelter for unloading fruit had been provided at the Sydney end of the building adjacent to the buffer stops in the dock platform. Possibly this was done to assist in the supply of fruit to the fruit kiosk on the platform, which had been provided in 1926.

Two projects were undertaken in relation to the parcels traffic. Cyclone gates were installed to counter height in the parcels office, the work being completed on 22nd October, 1943. Also, an office was added to parcels office in 1944 by enclosing one corner of the existing facility.

The demands of the Australian Railways Union were reflected in 1944 in the provision, for the first time in the history of the station, of a space dedicated solely for porters. It was about five feet wide and was probably used only as a locker room. Nevertheless, the porters previously never had a locker room of their own. How was this space achieved within the building? By using the old trick of eroding space used by the travelling public. This was achieved by reducing the length of the ladies' waiting room by one-third.

A proposal was prepared in 1944 to relocate the office for the Station Master from his puny little space into a much larger space that was formally used as the telegraph office. The space formerly occupied by the Station Master was converted into a general waiting room and must have ranked as the smaller such facility on the New South Wales Railway system. That work was not undertaken until after the war, with the works been completed on 3rd June, 1946.

1946 - THE SECOND, FAILED ATTEMPT AT PROVIDING A NEW STATION

Albert Fewtrell approved on 27th September,1946 the provision of a very large brick building of the Inter War Functionalist style, except its main roof was to be gabled, rather than the dominant use of hipped roofs between 1929 and 1960. It had an attractive, dominant centre section with a flat roof and a clocktower. Like the first attempt in 1939, the building was never provided.

1962 – THE LAST PHYSICAL CHANGE TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE STATION BUILDING

On 28th April, 1961, Norm Vogan, the Chief Civil Engineer, approved a plan for the extension of the parcels office at the Sydney end of the building. It involved a projection towards the front of the building on the road approach measuring 12 feet 10 and a half inches with a width of 22 feet 1 ½ inches. The work was carried out in 1962. Unfortunately, the extension ruined the reasonable symmetry of the overall structure and survives today as a reminder that functionality dominated appearance at the time.

That project was the last time the external appearance of the building was altered. At that time, the parcels office was 48 feet long by 33 feet 8 inches wide. The extension occupied the area where the footwarmer boiler and related coal pile had been located. It would be a fair bet to assume that the heating of footwarmers was dispensed with at Orange at that time.

1963 – THE COMMISSIONER PUTS A FIRM END TO ANY HOPE OF A NEW STATION BUILDING

On 22nd October, while on tour at Orange, Commissioner McCusker responded to a newspaper request for a new station at Orange. The Commissioner replied that the "Railways were essentially a transport service and that the available finance should be utilized for improvements to the quality of the service given by way of new locomotives, goods and livestock wagons and passenger services. For these reasons, the building of a new station at Orange or at any other location in the State could not be foreseen".[26]

In making that comment, Neal McCusker firmly indicated that freight, not passengers, was the priority of the Department of Railways. Clearly, the people of Orange were never going to get a new railway station building.

1970-1980s – INSERTION OF MORE DEPARTMENTAL FUNCTIONS INTO THE BUILDING

In 1971, two of the three rooms on the first floor were converted for the use of departmental staff. One became a wash and locker room while the middle, larger room became a staff meal room. The area that was to be used by train guards and station assistants.

The former refreshment room was altered in 1984 to provide what was known as an "amalgamation of drivers' and guards' locker room." Previously, train drivers would have signed on the locomotive depot but, like many other stations in the 1980s, this function was transferred to the platform. They used the showers and toilets on the first floor. Later in the 1980s, it was proposed to relocate the train guards and roster clerks

[26] Department of Railways, Commissioner's Tour of Inspection, Tour of Inspection, 22nd October, 1963, Former State Rail Archives book R72/4, p. 3.

to the area formerly used for the parcels office but it is unknown whether this relocation did occur.

1990-1994 – COUNTRYLINK ARRIVES

Tenders closed on 27th June, 1990 for the construction Countrylink travel centre at the station.[27] The travel centre continues in operation today.

Phase two of the Countrylinkification of the station occurred in 1994 with the preparation of a plan for the construction of a "rail/coach interchange." This involved the construction of a substantial awning 4.5 metres high at the Sydney end of the building under which road coaches could stand. As an elegant acknowledgement that the architect who prepared the plan understood the significance of the 1889 platform awning, the circular motif was incorporated in the design of the roof. The "interchange" continues to be used on a daily basis.

2013-2017 – NSW TRAIN LINK MAKES LITTLE IMPACT

Apart from changing the colour of the station name boards on the platform, New South Wales Trainlink has done nothing obvious except repaint the structure in the first half of 2017.

Stuart Sharp

2nd May, 2017

[27] *Railway Digest,* July 1990, p. 262.