

ABOUT THE NSW SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM



PAST USES

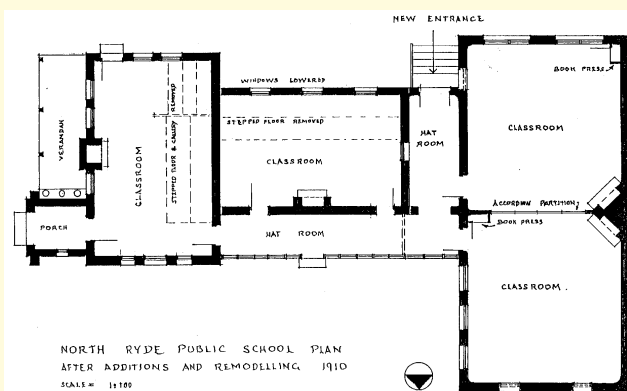
The NSW Schoolhouse Museum of Public Education is housed in North Ryde Public School's original classrooms. The first single schoolroom and a teacher's residence were built on one acre of land donated by Richard Wicks. It is built on Wallumedegal Country.

Completed in late 1877, the building opened to 45 pupils on 25 January 1878, rapidly increasing to 53 by early March. Originally called City View, its name changed to North Ryde Public School in 1879.

Enrolments steadily increased and by the early 1890s up to 76 pupils were crowded into the original schoolroom. A second room was erected in 1893. By 1910 the school population had reached 133 and two additional classrooms were built. Extra playing area was also acquired - from Mr W J Cox.

The 1910 rooms remained in use as classrooms until 1985. The 1877 and 1893 rooms have had varying uses including a library, staffroom and headmaster's office. In 1986 the complex was converted to Department of Education District Offices and was vacated about three years later.

As a result of lobbying by interested school and community members, approval was received to establish the complex as a museum. Renovation commenced in January 1992 and was undertaken by a group of volunteers using the building's original plans. The museum was officially opened in November 1992 by the then Minister for Education, the Hon. Virginia Chadwick MP.



1877 SCHOOLROOM

Mr G A Mansfield, Architect to the Council of Education, designed the 1877 building. His school designs were based on the general philosophy of the era that the Neo-Gothic style of architecture was most suitable for school buildings. At the North Ryde site he also used Neo-Romanesque design elements, for instance, the semi-circular arched windows.

Reflecting the strong relationship between religion and education of the era, school buildings resembled churches and the interiors were similar to chapels. The high walls and steeply gabled ceilings also enabled a high volume of air for ventilation. Evidence of one circular and two rectangular ventilation ducts can be seen in the ceiling.

The only light provided in the schoolroom was by the windows which were situated high to minimise distractions. They were usually coloured or frosted to reduce glare. A greater area of glass has been provided on the northern side of the building allowing light to fall over the students' left shoulders. At the time, students were permitted to write only with their right hand.

The 1877 room has been restored to its original specifications and is furnished with original desks obtained from the former Department of Education's school furniture complex. The schoolroom accommodated students from first class to fifth class with the younger pupils located in the infant's gallery on the southern side of the room.

The roof was originally covered with shingles and a ship's tank, now reinstated, provided water. This tank, measuring 4' x 4' x 4' could hold 400 gallons of water. Due to staining from the timber shingles, however, this water was often undrinkable and students had to bring water from home.

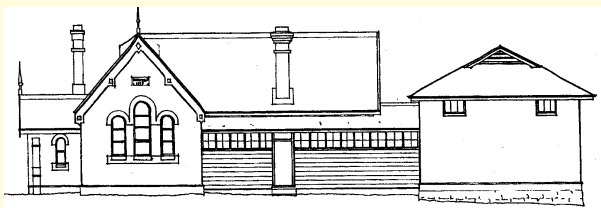
A wash trough located on the veranda enabled handwashing in enamel basins.

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1893 SCHOOLROOM

The external appearance of the 1893 schoolroom is similar to the 1877 room. This addition was designed by Mr W E Kemp and demonstrates his ability to sympathetically blend the new with the old. He has, however, included some of his own details, for instance, a lower boarded ceiling with a round air vent is included in the interior and there is an Italianate bargeboard on the western end of the addition.

Kemp also designed the verandah outside the 1893 room. Removed to provide a brick amenities block in the 1950s, it has been reinstated using original building materials acquired from the former Marsfield Public School. The 1893 room was fitted out similarly to the 1877 room, including a stepped floor and higher windowsills.



Original room, 1877 1893 Addition 1910 Addition

1910 CLASSROOMS

1905 saw major reform in education. The 'New Syllabus' provided for kindergarten work, a broader range of subjects, reform of teacher training and the provision of post-primary education. Schoolrooms were abolished and classes of similarly aged children were to be taught in separate classrooms. Stepped floors were to be levelled, separate access was to be provided to each room, new furniture installed, and windowsills were to be lowered. At North Ryde this work was undertaken in the 1893 room when the two extra classrooms were erected in 1910.

The 1910 dual rooms represent the 'ideal' in classroom design as set down by the Department of Public Instruction. In this era of school architecture the emphasis was on providing an efficient and hygienic interior. The walls have a smooth finish to prevent dust accumulating, internal corners are rounded for ease of cleaning, built in bookpresses are provided, and the flexible partition is designed to exclude sound but permit light. Also, the doors to the rooms open outwards, and the windows are high in the walls, wider and with lower sills to provide more light, cross-ventilation and airflow.

CIRCA 1920s TIMBER DEMOUNTABLE

Not an original building of North Ryde Public School, the unlined weatherboard demountable of two classrooms was relocated to the site from the Department of Education's furniture complex. This building is located on the site of the original schoolmaster's residence – a four-room brick cottage.

One of these rooms is furnished with timber desks as a recreated 1950s-1960s classroom.

COLLECTION

The NSW Schoolhouse Museum of Public Education collects and preserves furniture, objects, books, documents, and photographs relating to primary public education in NSW. Dating back to the 1870s, these items have been collected from a range of sources such as public schools that have closed, Department of Education heritage collection, purchases and personal donations. Additions to the collection are welcome.

MANAGEMENT

An incorporated body, the NSW Schoolhouse Museum's operation is self-funded through visit fees. The building is owned and maintained by the NSW Department of Education.

SCHOOL EXCURSIONS

The museum is open for pre-booked school excursions on Mondays to Fridays. Students experience early school lessons, examine a range of objects and artefacts and do outdoor activities such as games, drill and maypole dancing.

FIRST TEACHER

The first teacher appointed to North Ryde Public School was Mr Charles Crew. From Goulburn, he and his wife and six children took up residence in the four-room schoolmaster's residence. His wife would have been expected to teach needlework to the girls as was the case at the time. Charles became gravely ill and passed away in early August 1880.



Charles Crew and his wife Elizabeth on their wedding day, 1868