

Ron Rathbone Local History Prize 2024

# Tempe House. Change of Purpose, Change of Landscape

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2024

This work is the entry to the 2024 Ron Rathbone Local History Competition

**Tempe House. Change of Purpose, Change of Landscape**

## Introduction

This study is based on the story of Tempe House Estate guided by the diaries of estate's owner, Mr Alexander Brodie Spark, and told through a selection of the artworks depicting his property on the south bank of Cooks River. The research was supported by the relevant original sources and visual analysis of paintings, sketches, maps and drawings. For the best results, the author explored the connection between the subsequent owners and the artists; cross-referenced artworks with the original historical documents; produced a visual analysis of artworks, which as a result drew new conclusions and interpretations on a few aspects of the property.

The author of this paper argues that if any textual sources are traditionally accepted as the main source of historical information, the non-textual such as visual sources are overlooked in such regard as considered of having little or no historical value and being considered as unreliable historical records as influenced by the creator's own vision. In fact, visual interpretations were rarely scrutinised from a point of historical research and were disregarded as the original visual documentation. This collective body of work is presented in a timely manner for the first time. It adds something unexpected, something hidden that was not mentioned in a small number of publications on Tempe House's history.

Commonly, whether portraying a person or a building, the commissioned artworks represent not only artistic trends of the time, skills of the creator. It is at the same time heavily influenced by the individual who pays the bill and therefore made to satisfy commissioner's expectations and liking. Despite all mention, some discoveries can be made if one look between the lines and beyond the brush strokes. The search behind such a vast number of sources helped the author to unveil previously unmarked connections between people, businesses and spaces, and to establish new related interpretations.

Please note that the terms of 'graphic' or 'visual' materials in this study are applicable to the maps, architectural drafts and schemes along with sketches, drawings, paintings, stained or lead glass and photography, all of which are also commonly known as non-textual sources in the field of academic historical research. All such materials are reproduced in this study with the permission of the holding institutions or the authors unless otherwise stated. It must be unacknowledged that all visual materials reproduced in this study were made available by the holding institutions for free.

The author appreciates the help of the Good Samaritan Order and its archivists, who patiently provided guidance through their holdings and faith.

The author appreciates the help and support of the State Library of NSW, Art Gallery of NSW, artists and their relatives, for allowing the use of visual materials.

The author also acknowledges the help, support and encouragement of friends and family when working on this project. \*\*\*

### **Proud Estate owner**

Initially vast swamp land, and the Aborigines' hunting grounds, the south bank of the Cooks River became a desirable subject to own and the source of income. It was the intention of the Crown to encourage the use of land, whether granted for free or in a form of purchase, to build on it, to farm creating employment and economic growth of the young country. Most of all, it was expected that the land would become inhabitable.

Amongst those earliest settlers on the south banks of Cooks River were brothers Robert and John Townsend, whose land later became known as Lord's Forest and subsequently Gannon's Forest; Reuben and David Hannah; F. W. Unwin and Hannah Laycock. William Packer (1769-1816), a Sergeant of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Rum Corps, was also one of them.<sup>1</sup>

Discharged on March 4, 1811, Packer received a large parcel of land on the south bank of the Cooks River, which meant for him a life changing venture as a former officer was to become a farmer. Packer was selling general goods. Now he split his time between his residence in Pitt Street and the farm. The farm he called *Bundelwarre* provided its natural resources to sell split timber and lime with a minimum investment. He advertised for labourers to work on his farm offering as a payment the bags of lime produced on site and shell deposits from Aboriginal middens along the foreshore. It is known that his wife Sarah (married on to William Packer in 1801) was handling the farm after Packer's death in 1816. His passing allowed their oldest son, William James known as James, to spend time in Europe, and when he returned, to join his mother in not only running the farm, but also to purchase a few adjacent parcels of land.<sup>2</sup> It was William James Packer, who sold the land to A. B. Spark.

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<sup>1</sup> [australianroyalty.net.au: https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/I26798/William-James-Packer](https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/I26798/William-James-Packer)

<sup>2</sup> [colsec.records.nsw.gov.au](https://colsec.records.nsw.gov.au)

The purchase of Packers' 100 acres located along the current Marsh Street, was the beginning of what we know as Tempe House Estate now. Later Spark added to the initial parcel of land a few smaller adjacent allotments north of Tempe, occupying the space all the way to Wolli Creek. Further purchases were added in a due course on the other side of Marsh Street totalling over 250 acres.<sup>3</sup>

By the early 1820s, "a struggling, worrying clerk with literary pretensions," Alexander Brodie Spark, had arrived in Sydney after a trip across Europe. Soon Spark, a free migrant, established himself "as a leading citizen," and became, as claimed by Abbott and Little, a "speculative trader, a rich banker, merchant, churchman, landowner and private collector."<sup>4</sup>

Since his arrival in NSW, Spark had been granted a few parcels of land across the country and built an estate of outstanding architectural quality in Sydney. John Verge, a retired builder in London, who arrived in the colony to farm the land, became a successful architect.<sup>5</sup> He was commissioned to design Spark's Tusculum, a grand house located in present day Potts Point, a suburb of Sydney. It was not destined to become home for Spark, but Tempe was. Also designed by Verge, it took over five years to complete the building. Tempe was ready in 1836.<sup>6</sup>

Completed almost at the same time as Tusculum, Tempe House, now the residence of A. B. Spark, Esq., became one of the best estates in Sydney at the time. The white building with its classical columns and the symmetry of the front elevation, so typical of its architect John Verge, was set amongst exotic and indigenous plants with access restricted to a private jetty across the Cook's River. The scenery of Tempe House was noticed by the High Society, admired by the visitors to the Colony,<sup>7</sup> and written about.

The earliest written references to the place known as Tempe, A.B. Spark's estate, and the owner's activities on that land are contained in Spark's diary. A letter of Thomas Birkby, Spark's gardener, to his father provided a detailed account of improvements undertaken changing the purpose of the property and its landscape for the second time. Referring to Spark as 'one of the Gentlemen of the Colony' who

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<sup>3</sup> PA 49227: Vol 12084 Fol 249 and 250 viewed via <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au>

<sup>4</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*, Sydney University Press

<sup>5</sup> John Verge (1782-1861), Preston Harley, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 2, 1967. online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/verge-john-2757](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/verge-john-2757)

<sup>6</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*

<sup>7</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*: "550 visitors recorded for this year," December 31st, 1837; 543 persons visited Tempe: December 26<sup>th</sup>, 1838; 778 visitors during this year, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1839; At least 500 visitors December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1840

owned then 250 acres at Tempe, Birkby was in charge of “a new garden making, about ten acres, for working which I have thirteen convict labourers.”<sup>8</sup> Then there were recollections of Lady Franklin who visited Tempe in July 1839,<sup>9</sup> and a number of newspaper articles.

‘The respectable Sydney merchant,’ Spark indeed displayed his appreciation of fine arts when he tastefully decorated his new home with over 100 artefacts brought from the Continent along with his extensive library of over 500 volumes. He also often purchased pictures from exhibitions, artists’ studios and private art dealers.<sup>10</sup> According to the ‘traveller,’ the rooms in the house ‘were richly and elegantly furnished. There was a library and an aviary, and the walls were hung with Flemish and Italian paintings.’ In 1839 Spark discussed the building of a picture gallery at Tempe with Lady Franklin during her mentioned visit.<sup>11</sup> His dream was never realised as his genteel life was cut short.

The scenery, where the beauty of nature was in harmony with the elegance of the building, inspired them all, some free settlers and others transported as convicts, some trained and others self-taught, some hobby artists and those painting professionally. Spark was acquainted with some of them, consulted them, listened to their recommendations, and usually was purchasing the works of an exquisite quality and from a prominent artistic hand for his own collection. He commissioned just a few.

There are also some paintings and drawings that are impossible to locate now, but their existence is known. Maurice Felton’ sketch produced on 1st March 1841 was titled *View from Tempe* and his still life of the four pomegranates purchased by Spark from the artist, are mentioned in Spark’s diary and are yet to be traced.

It was there, in Spark’s diary, one finds an entry dated 10th April 1837 stating, “some impressions engraved on stone, from my Portrait by Rodius, have been sent out... for distribution.”<sup>12</sup> This lithograph by Forbes Mudie is the only known picture of Spark, where the artist rendered a highly detailed image of a self-content and likeable young man dressed in a fashionable manner of the time.

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<sup>8</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*, pp 42-43

<sup>9</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1839

<sup>10</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, December 20, 21, 1839

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1839

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1837

The initial drawing by Rodius was not located by the author, nor mentioned in the latest exhibition of Rodius works held by the State Library of NSW.<sup>13</sup>



Alexander Brodie Spark, Charles Rodius (1802-1860), 1836  
Lithograph laid onto card, 28x22,7 cm  
Signed "Drawn On Stone by Forbes Mudie 1836"  
in lower left corner.  
Printed at A. Friedels Establishment, 15, Southhampton St.  
Strand in lower corner. "A.B. Spark"  
printed signature and date lower centre.  
State Library of NSW, call number P2/373

Charles Rodius, an artist of German descent, was charged in England with stealing a reticule,<sup>14</sup> sentenced and transported in 1829 to New South Wales. From 1829 he was working as a draughtsman engaged by the colonial architect in producing plans for almost every building of the colony. Describing himself as a pupil of the Royal Academy of France, Rodius taught drawing and perspective to the children of Sydney's reputable men. A ticket of *Exemption from Government Labour* was granted to him in 1832,<sup>15</sup> and a Certificate of Freedom was dated 1 July 1841.<sup>16</sup>

Rodius contributed a small number of works to the exhibitions staged by the *Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia* in 1847, 1849 and 1857, and is known by his portraits of Sir Francis Forbes, John Manning, Sir Ralph Darling and Ludwig Leichhardt. The high quality of Rodius' lithographic work made his name largely known within the colony.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Rodius, *The first ever retrospective of 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia's best known artist Charles Rodius (1802-1860)*; Curator Dr David Hansen; Also, *Charles Rodius*, booklet, State Library of NSW, ISBN 978-1925831-28-3 (print)

<sup>14</sup> Reticule - (Fr.) purse, small ladies bag; (Hist.) small ladies' bag, old version of spelling

<sup>15</sup> MHNSW: StAC: INX [4/4285' 4/4062. Entry 32181

<sup>16</sup> *Charles Rodius (1802-1860)* by Gay, Jocelyn, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 2, 1967. online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rodius-charles-2599](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rodius-charles-2599); MHNSWStAC: NX-65-110202, Rodius Charles; MHNSW Court Index [4/4367]41/0853; [4/4092] 34/78; INX-65-110204; INX-65-110203

As for Spark, in the mid-1830s, he was about to change the purpose of his property from farmland to a stunning home surrounded by stunning gardens.

The only known commissioned depiction of Tempe was made by Spark himself soon after the completion of the house. With established lawns and gardens around it, the picture was perfectly created to the owner's great satisfaction. The landscape commissioned Conrad Martens by Spark was displayed in his house when finished.

It was Samuel Elyard, an artist and Spark's acquaintance, who introduced Martens to Spark on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1836,<sup>17</sup> when the decision on the commission to paint Tempe was made. Having no doubts in the artistic abilities of the painter, he had some concerns about the presentation of the garden: "I am desirous of having Tempe taken, but not before the leaves are lost and recovered." The realisation of the commission took longer than Spark anticipated as the fire, robbery and repair of damaged artworks that arrived from the Continent preoccupied his time and finances.<sup>18</sup> Only in November 1837 did Martens, his wife and Spark exchange visits prior to finalising the contract. A month later they "...drove to Tempe in the afternoon with the view of sketching." Martens visited Tempe on several occasions for that same reason and shared his compositions with Spark.

The proud owner of the vast land on the south of Cooks River, Spark wanted to make a visual record of the place. He noted in his diary on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1838, the "Abundance of fruit... at Tempe. Apricots, Mulberries, Figs, Peaches, Nectarines and Plums..." But there was not even one fruit in the sketch produced ten days later to the satisfaction of both the artist and the owner.<sup>19</sup>

This drawing expressed fully the artist's excellence of technique.<sup>20</sup> Later Martens gave an excellent account of his landscape practice in a lecture at the Australian Subscription Library in 1856, stressing that

*...the sketch should be slight as it is for the purpose only of giving a general idea of the subject to be painted. It may be made in pencil only, in order to show how the forms will combine, or it may be made in black and white for the purpose of arranging light and shade... as a guide...*

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<sup>17</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1836

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, May 8; June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1837

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1836; May 8<sup>th</sup>, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1836, June 1837; November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1837; December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1837; January 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 1838; March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1838

<sup>20</sup> Martens, Conrad, *Lecture upon Landscape Painting*, published in *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: the Colonial Period*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1975, pp 96-111. Transcript ML ZC 38, f8



Martens considered the space and freedom to be a privilege of a graphite pencil, his favourite medium. He also claimed that the “sketch may be read as a finished painting, where the latter is a subject of consciousness and formal restraint.”

Only one sketch of Spark’s property by Martens is known. It became a signature view of Tempe House Estate.



*Tempe, Cook's River, 22 January 1838, Martens, Conrad*  
graphite on paper  
pencil sketch from the collection. Published in *Sketches of Australia, 1835-1865*  
State Library of NSW, call number PXC 295, 14 of 103



*Tempe, Cook's River, 1838, Martens, Conrad*  
watercolour on paper  
Art Gallery of South Australia

Produced in watercolour, a medium popular at the time due to its compact size and light weight, which was easy to both transport to and carry around the colony, the picture delivers a romantic, idyllic, almost Arcadian scenery of Tempe. In 1961, Miss Madeline Spark of Roseville, Spark's granddaughter, auctioned this watercolour and reportedly purchased by Mr Stanley Lipscombe for 90 guineas.<sup>21</sup> According to "a yellowed newspaper clipping in Miss Spark's possession, the name Tempe was suggested to him [Spark] by its resemblance to the landscape of the Vale of Tempe in Thessaly." It was the same Miss Madeline Spark, who presented Spark's 'meticulously maintained Diary from 1838 to September, 1856' to the State Library of NSW the very same year, the only original source of information for researchers that survived to the present.<sup>22</sup>

Martens' watercolour is the only painting of Tempe commissioned by Spark. It was produced to satisfy his taste and liking. As three human figures at the jetty in the middle ground were not present on the sketch, it is not possible to conclude whether they were added at Spark's request, but definitely with his approval. Therefore, artwork opens another, more romantic, gentle and sensitive side of a profit driven Sydney merchant.

Here we also see a sentimental tribute of the master Spark to his servant Willie—the boatman. William Kerr was one of three convicts assigned to A. B. Spark upon his arrival in the colony. On Christmas day 1836 Kerr along with two other convicts, "[Thomas] Douglas and [Tom] Jackson had been very outrageous on Xmas Day, forcing their way into the house in their drunkenness and attacking Mary and Margaret," servants on the estate. On his return, Spark "sent for Constable ... to take them into custody." Despite such incident and Willie being separately charged with theft from his employer and found not guilty, the master and the servant, remained dedicated to each other for over two decades.<sup>23</sup>

Kerr rowed Spark across the river almost every day, and so each of the hundreds of his master's visitors on his skiff to the meandering walkway leading to the grand white house on the hill. The completion of the dam and causeway in 1840 allowed vehicle access to the property so Willies' service as a boatman was over.

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<sup>21</sup> *Historic Sydney Painting Bought*, an article, *Daily Telegraph*, January 25, 1961, the Good Samaritans Order, archival file

<sup>22</sup> Murray, Francis, *Dairy of A.B. Spark*, in *Herald*, 8/7/1961, newspaper clipping from the Good Samaritans Order, archival file

<sup>23</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856, January 2nd*, 1837. Also: *Servant & Master, Building and Running the Grand Houses of Sydney 1788-1850*, Dyster, Barrie, NSW University Press, 1989, chapter 9.

Spark became much alarmed when Willie was brought home in a dying state. In February 1848, when Willie died, Spark wrote in his diary:

*It is upwards of twenty years since he first entered into my service as an assigned servant, and I can bear testimony to far more fidelity than is usually met with from a man of his class.*<sup>24</sup>

The two were buried in St Peter's Anglican Church Cook's River graveyard. The actual location of the graves remains unknown.<sup>25</sup>

This Martens' landscape is the only artwork pinpointing the location of the jetty in the centre of the composition. Here is the gentleman, presumably Spark himself, helping a lady alight from Old Willie's skiff. Perhaps Spark himself is helping Mrs Radford to disembark. Was it a dream? Was it a wish? Was it a hope? By 1838, when the painting was completed, Frances Maria Radford was already widowed with her remaining three children. Doctor Radford, an 'excellent friend,'<sup>26</sup> named Spark an executor of his will. Within the next two years, Mrs Radford was mentioned in Spark's diary many times. She was destined to play an important part in one of his next best creations, a loving family.

Conrad Martens (1801-1878)<sup>27</sup> was probably the only professional artist who arrived in Sydney as a free migrant. A student of the prolific English watercolourist Copley Fielding (1789-1835),<sup>28</sup> Martens mastered delivering outstanding climatic effects and composing impressive landscapes. Upon his arrival in Sydney, Martens opened a studio. Rarely exhibiting solo, his preference was for participation in group exhibitions. A leading landscape artist in New South Wales, whose work quality was consistent and often was re-produced in lithographs, Martens was accepting commissions from the National Gallery of Victoria and the Art Gallery of NSW. He sold his works extensively to a clientele of wealthy landowners and merchants.

Amongst his admirers were Lady Franklin, Governor Bourke, Alexander Macleay and obviously Mr A. B. Spark.<sup>29</sup> The admirers of Spark's residence left some recollections in writing.

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<sup>24</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1848; SMH, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1848

<sup>25</sup> [stpeterscooksriverhistory.wordpress.com](http://stpeterscooksriverhistory.wordpress.com)

<sup>26</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1836

<sup>27</sup> Conrad Marten (1801-1878), Dundas, Douglas, *Australian Dictionary of Australia*, Vol 2, 1967, online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/martens-conrad-2434](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/martens-conrad-2434)

<sup>28</sup> Fielding, Anthony Vandyke Copley (1787-1855), *Victorian watercolours*, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 2017

<sup>29</sup> Conrad Martens' Obituary, *Town and Country Journal*, August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1878, page 5

On July 6<sup>th</sup> 1839, Lady Franklin, wife of the Governor of Tasmania, visited Tempe. Spark's Diary has a short description of the visit. Lady Franklin produced a lengthy entry in hers giving a detailed description of the Estate. She wrote in her diary:

*... front door and window each side, from which projects a circular colonnade supporting pleated roof, over this is ornamented with medallion containing Prince of Wales' feathers in plaster - to left and behind, rock rises steep, but is of most insignificant height, though styled Mt. Olympus - forms a sort of small promontory, at foot of which is small wharf or jetty and bathing house - the intended dam begins a little higher on the opposite bank, takes a curve or bow upwards, and is to abut on this promontory - Sir. G. begins to think it will never be done for want of convict labour, no ships have come in for some time ... view from Olympus of winding of river in flat bush and swamps, and see heads of Botany Bay - all ugly enough : [garden] walks at right angles crossing and Norfolk Island pines at intersections ... orange and lemon trees. .. casuarina trees stripped of leaves with convenient branches planted in aviaries for perches of birds - parakeets don't do so well as pigeons, ducks and pheasants ... dining and drawing room prettily furnished - pictures in each, one of Martens, a view of Tempe in watercolour - told Mr S I had a sketch of it - seemed surprised and pleased - had handsome luncheon - very pretty china - oysters from bay brought here to fatten - an immense pineapple from his own growing, juicy but scarcely any flavour - has small library containing some tolerable pictures and small plaster antiques, with busts of Canning, Brougham, William 4th, 2 Napoleon - means to build a room with lights from above, Mr S is a bachelor - gentleman and quiet.<sup>30</sup>*

When she saw Marten's *View of Tempe* on the house wall, she mentioned to Spark that she had the sketch of this work in her possession.<sup>31</sup>

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1839, R. G. Jameson, the surgeon superintendent of emigrants to South Australia, attended the Consecration of St Peter's Church and then attended a reception in Tempe. In his book "New Zealand, South Australia, And New South Wales: A Record Of Recent Travels In These Colonies, With Especial Reference To Emigration And The Advantageous Employment Of Labour And Capital" published in 1842, R.G. Jameson provides an extensive accounts on Tempe, its grounds including the following:

*In front of the mansion, a lawn, tastefully and ornately laid out sloped gently down to the edge of the river, across which the visitors were ferried in boats. The mansion itself, a large cottage with an exterior verandah and colonnades and snow white walls, constituted the chief ornament of a very pleasing landscape and presented a lively contrast with the variegated and umbrageous foliage of the garden, rich in specimens of the rarest plants, native and exotic, which had been scientifically grouped according to their botanical characters.<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant*, A. B. Spark, Sydney University Press, page 44

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, page 43

The Book was signed: “To A. B. Sparke [sic], Esq of Tempe, New South 'Wales, this volume is respectfully dedicated, as a mark of the author's regard and esteem.”

*View of Tempe on Cook's River near Sydney, NSW, Martens, Conrad, 1845*  
watercolour on paper, 22x34 cm  
National Library of Australia, call number PIC Solander Box A3#T1727 NK1191



In 1845, Martens painted another landscape of Tempe. By then Spark's financial difficulties took a turn for the worse. Whether due to this circumstance or due to a different season, the picture is equally beautiful, but bares the sense of sadness, loneliness and sorrow expressed with the shades and tones of sienna.

In comparison with his earlier work, the lavishness of Tempe disappeared, the grounds too are seemingly forlorn and lack the opulence once admired by Spark's contemporaries. All the glory faded under the harsh Australian sun.

This watercolour, framed Tempe from a different angle. With some notable changes in the composition, the main house is not easy seen. It is lit lightly by the searing sun. The former grand white house is now blended, faded with the lawn, and the rich greenery is shown as burnt by the sun. There is no walkway from the jetty, it is hardly seen behind the trees of the foreground. But there are the boats with the faceless human figures and distant from either bank. There it has no dam shown across the river even though it was completed by then.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The Dam was completed in 1839-1841, as in *Damming the Cooks River* by Vanessa Whitton, 2013, in Dictionary of Sydney: [https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming\\_the\\_cooks\\_river](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming_the_cooks_river)

To augment his income, Martens reproduced his watercolours as lithographs and published them titled *Environs of Sydney* (1850) and *Sketches illustrative of the scenery of New South Wales* (1851). He also undertook sketching in the Darling Downs and Brisbane. Later he was appointed the Deputy Parliamentary Librarian in 1862. For nearly forty years, he was the leading landscape artist in New South Wales. Martens' early paintings of Sydney were made in the traditional English picturesque manner whilst he was capturing the romantic grandeur of Australian settings.<sup>34</sup>

The name of Samuel Elyard (1817-1910)<sup>35</sup> was mentioned earlier in this work. It was Elyard who introduced Conrad Martens to Spark. Even though he was not ever commissioned to produce any artworks by Spark, the two remained friendly for a long time, and Elyard's depictions of Tempe are also well known.

Samuel Elyard (1817-1910) was the third brother to Arthur and William. The brothers never attended parties or soirees but stopped by at Tempe often on their way to Shoalhaven. Usually painting directly from nature, Elyard was sometimes found 'sketching at Tempe.' This monotone ink drawing, often taken for a photograph of the painting, exemplifies skilful mark-making of the artist in interpreting texture. The technique, the use of perspective and the subject matter married perfectly in this work. The scenery is tranquil, peaceful, almost static.<sup>36</sup>



*Tempe House*, c1839-1840,  
Elyard, Samuel  
20x28.2 cm, ink on paper  
State Library of NSW, Call  
number SSV\*/Sp Call/Elyard/2

<sup>34</sup> Conrad Marten (1801-1878), Dundas, Douglas, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 2, 1967, online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/martens-conrad-2434](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/martens-conrad-2434)

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Elyard (1817-1910) by M. J. Saclier in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, 1972, online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elyard-samuel-3890](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elyard-samuel-3890)

<sup>36</sup> William Elyard (1804-1864), M. J. Saclier, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, 1972, online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elyard-william-3482](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elyard-william-3482). The third brother Alfred (1806-1842): <https://australianroyalty.net.au/tree/purnellmccord.ged/individual/172617/Alfred-Elyard>

Claimed to be mentally disturbed from the age of 23, he displayed an outstanding artistic talent during studies at Mr Gilchrist's school. He continued artistic education under Conrad Martens and John Skinner Prout.<sup>37</sup>

Samuel also gained secure employment as a clerk in the Colonial office in the mid-1830s, and held positions until his retirement in 1868. Frequent country trips helped Samuel, and a solid artistic folio was left for the enjoyment of future generations. He extensively exhibited his landscapes.<sup>38</sup>

Spark mentioned in his Diary: "Three limners presented themselves on my reaching Cook's River, Mr Felton, Mr S. Elyard and Mr Prout."<sup>39</sup>

*They had been sketching in the neighbourhood, Mr Prout having taken a view of Tempe and another of the garden house, and were in a fit state to receive some refreshment. I showed them my pictures, and gave them dinner."*<sup>40</sup>

No other sketches of Tempe by Felton or Prout have been located.

Recently Ian Tyrrell, the author of *River Dreams: the People and Landscape of the Cooks River*,<sup>41</sup> expressed his concern regarding the date of this artwork. The fact that this image has a resemblance to other visual representations of the Cooks River Dam built in the late 1830s, puzzled many researchers as it was originally dated well before the completion of the dam. In my opinion, Tyrrell is correct, but the absence of the toll house on either side or the cross walk and stately presence of Tempe House suggest otherwise. During the low tide, it was possible to cross the river by foot.

Elyard returned to Tempe three decades later and made the dam its main subject. Executed in watercolour, this sketch has no human presence, but of human creation. Tempe House is almost hidden from the viewer's eyes. Tints of burnt sienna overpower the splashes of greens and yellows along with light blues of the water and sky. Later in life, Samuel Elyard had an interest in photography and published the facsimiles of his works in "Scenery of Shoalhaven" (Nowra, 1892).

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<sup>37</sup> John Skinner Prout (1805-1876) by V. W. Hodgman in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 2, 1967 online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prout-john-skinner-2565](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prout-john-skinner-2565)

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Elyard (1817-1910) by M. J. Saclier in *Australian Dictionary of Australia*, Volume 4, 1972, online 2006: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elyard-samuel-3890](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elyard-samuel-3890)

<sup>39</sup> John Skinner Prout (1805-1876), Australian artist. *Australian Dictionary of Biography* via: [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prout-john-skinner-2565](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/prout-john-skinner-2565)

<sup>40</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1841

<sup>41</sup> Tyrrell, Ian, *River Dreams: the People and Landscape of the Cooks River*, NewSouth Publishing, University of New South Wales Press Ltd, University of NSW, ISBN 9781742235745; Comment by Ian Tyrrell to the artwork listing in the State Library of NSW online catalogue



*Dam, Cook's River*, Elyard, Samuel, unsigned dated 'Wed. 25 July, 65', 36.8x25.9 cm  
Published in *Views of Sydney, 1862-1873*  
unsigned, watercolour, State Library of NSW, Call numbers DGD 5, f 20

Since the glorious times of Tempe's owner were numbered due to the owner's insolvency, not many significant personalities visited the grounds. Tempe House was no longer the main subject of artworks. The Dam across the Cooks River, as an example of technical and industrial progress in the colony. Tempe took its place of the right of the centre. Therefore, the Dam, was featured as an example of human ingenuity and technical progress in the Colony, calls for some exploration here.<sup>42</sup>

The Government was concerned with Sydney's polluted water and the related public health issues. After long discussions and negotiations, it was decided to place a dam across Cooks River. The dam was meant not only to separate the salt water from fresh, but also to serve as a road to the southern district across the river. The latter proved to be a great success. However, the dam proved to be a failure as regards to segmenting Sydney's water supply. Destroyed 60 years later, the bridge over the river was built as part of Princes Highway in its place.<sup>43</sup>

Alexander Brodie Spark, the owner of the neighbouring land, was very much supportive of the project. He even had personal encounters with those involved in its

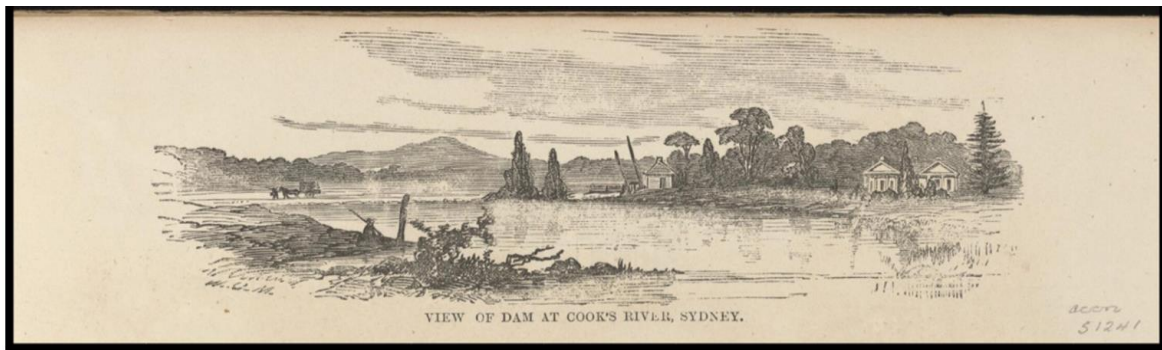
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<sup>42</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*, Sydney University Press

<sup>43</sup> *The Dictionary of Sydney*, via [dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming\\_the\\_cooks\\_river](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/damming_the_cooks_river)



construction including the Governor at the time. He wrote in the Diary: *His Excellency Sir George Gipps, Major Barney, Colonial Engineer, and others conveying them to Tempe. Their subject was to ascertain after surveying Cook's River, the practicability of damming it up so as to furnish a constant supply of fresh water for the town. Major Barney called on me afterwards in town, and said that if I did not object to it, the dam might be run across below the Bathing House, and the only apprehension was that my garden might be flooded. To be surrounded with the fresh water instead of salt would be highly desirable and I did not object...*<sup>44</sup>



*View of Dam at Cook's River.* Engraving by Walter G. Mason (signed) from painting by John Skinner Prout. *Sydney Illustrated*, 1842-1843 published by John Rae, M. A. and artist John Skinner Prout, page 5, State Library of NSW

From the time the dam was erected, it gained more attention from the artists and these alike than Tempe house. From the mid-1800s, latter was not a focal point of artistic attention for about 100 years.

The image reproduced by the enterprise of John Rae, M.A. (1813-1900), Spark's acquaintance, was made after the drawing by John Skinner Prout. Rae arrived in Sydney in 1839 as an accountant and was a notable figure as a published writer and artist, lecturer in the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts on English Literature and reviewer of lectures on art by John Skinner Prout, (1806-1876).<sup>45</sup>

Prout spent less than 10 years in Australia living in Tasmania and visiting Van Diemen's Land. Together, Rae and Prout intended to enlighten the Europeans on the life, technical progress, leisure and beauty of Australia through illustrated text. The comments for *Sydney Illustrated* were written by Rae, where Prout produced drawings. As financially viable, the publication existed only in 1842-1843. According to the facsimile copy produced by the Sydney City Council held in the State Library of NSW; only 8 copies of the original edition survived.

<sup>44</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, November 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 1838

<sup>45</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant*, A. B. Spark, Sydney University Press. Page 8

Spark was involved in the formation of the Fine Arts Society, which aimed for the promotion of fine arts in Sydney. Spark lent fourteen artworks from his own collection for the Society's first exhibition in 1847. All of them were by European artists of the 16th and 17th Centuries and included those by Flemish and Italian masters. In 1848, J. S. Prout was a secretary of the Fine Arts Committee. In 1851, he exhibited some of his Australian paintings at the Great Exhibition held in London.

Walter G. Mason (1823-1866), the son of a well-known English wood engraver Abraham John Mason, began his trade studies with his other brothers. He earned his reputation by working for *The Illustrated London*, *Punch*, *Pictorial Times*, and other periodicals along with more than 40 books, 17 of these for children. Walter's brothers immigrated to Australia in the 1850s and worked as wood engravers in Sydney. Walter agreed to join them and arrived in Sydney two years later. Soon he was involved with *The Illustrated Sydney News* as the engraver. Within a few months the original proprietors left the business, and Mason became the printer and publisher. The final issue of *The News* is dated 30 June 1855.<sup>46</sup>

Mason's business venture, *The Illustrated Sydney Journal*, was a failure, after which Mason was declared insolvent. He died in his work room on 12 May 1866.<sup>47</sup> The most extensive collection of his work is contained in *The Australian Picture Book*, a publication established by J. R. Clarke in Sydney in 1857. Portraits, events, architecture, scenes from everyday local life recorded by several Australian artists, were published from Mason's engravings.<sup>48</sup>

The magazines related to the Australian lifestyle and the beauty of the native bush-lands, happily reproduced this image in the 1850s. The J. R. Clarke and T. M. Johnson publishing houses also reproduced it along with several Mason's engravings, aiming to deliver visual knowledge of the young colonies of Australia and their technical progress to the larger European audience right at the time of the introduction of the free migration programs from the 1830s. The high cost of production, many publications of the time were short lived.

Another reproduction of this engraving was located in the *Australian Picture Pleasure Book* published by Frank Flower in 1857. This 'peep-show' is set up as a

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<sup>46</sup> Mason, Walter George, (1820-1866), *Dictionary of Australian Artists*, Kerr, Joan, Melbourne, 1992

<sup>47</sup> Insolvency, 1857; 1860. <https://www.printsandprintmaking.gov.au/references/8264/>

<sup>48</sup> [mychildrenancestors.weebly.com](http://mychildrenancestors.weebly.com)

collection of pictures with commentaries and was considered as an ‘indulgence.’ At the same time, the author claimed that “These pictures... will be found eminently useful, inasmuch as they are eminently truthful.” He added in his introduction: “... this work, filled as it is with well-drawn local views, by artists of acknowledged ability, can be sent home to your friends in England as a reliable picture of Australia, and a faithful portraiture of Australians.”<sup>49</sup>

On the left side of the composition, we can see a figure of the boatman, as an indication of the transportation across the Cooks River. At the time, the spot selected by Spark originally as a ‘retreat from the cares of business,’ within an easy distance from Sydney, could be reached by the current Unwins Bridge up north to the Cooks River or by boat. It was possible though to cross the river by foot during the low tide season.<sup>50</sup>

The free migration to Australia needed the promotion of its progress was growing. More image of Australia appeared in British media. Another engraving by W. Harris was published in 1850 in the *Australasian Sporting Magazine*.<sup>51</sup> The original artwork for this lithograph was not mentioned.



Tempe, W. Harris, engraver, *Australasian Sporting Magazine*, Volume 1, number 2, dated November 1850, State Library of NSW  
*The authorship of the original artwork was not provided and still undetermined to nowadays.*

The muddy and swampy banks of the river may suggest the low tide season of the river filled with wood logs. Richly vegetated hill of Mount Olympus has the

<sup>49</sup> *The Australian Picture Pleasure Book*, Frank Flower, introduction, Liverpool Street, February 13th, 1857, engravings by W. G. Mason

<sup>50</sup> *Early Settlers of St George*, St George Historical Society Inc

<sup>51</sup> [https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/version\\_history/william-harris/biography/?p=1&revision\\_no=17](https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/version_history/william-harris/biography/?p=1&revision_no=17)

buildings on its either side, where the two bath houses are present on one. The foreground is filled with mud and broken or rotten tree branches which may suggest that is the earliest representation of Tempe.

Short lived, the *Australasian Sporting Magazine* reflected on the current life in the country including a variety of articles on the visual arts, retail advertising, promotion of social events and sporting activities. Much earlier, from the 1830s football, horse racing and cricket were initially the forms of social integration across social classes and a large part of social life in the colony. Regular sporting competitions were held in Australia since the mid-1850s. Spark personally enjoyed golf and swimming, horse and car riding. He recorded teaching his boys to swim: "Alick, Stanley and I now bath in the morning. Alick is a good swimmer; I am teaching Stanley, but he is still a very little fellow."<sup>52</sup>

There are several entries in Spark's *Diary* on attending regattas and horse racing, sometimes with wife and children. Tempe, called 'Sydney's playground,' was providing its vast lawns and grounds for leisure and entertainment to hundreds of Spark's visitors.<sup>53</sup>

The comment to the picture by Rae reads as following:

*"the spot formerly displayed all those wild features of the unbroken interior, which yield indescribable charms to the seeker after the tranquillity of romantic retirement. The Avenger has, however, broken through the once apparently impenetrable serenity which prevailed—a massive dam, presenting its rude masonry to the briny waves of the far-famed Botany Bay, now supplies the place of Old Willie and his skiff..."*<sup>54</sup> *"This delightful villa residence ... the seat of A. B. Spark, Esq., is situated on the western bank of the river named after the immortal martyr of Owhée, Captain Cook. Selected originally as the retreat from the cares of business, yet, within easy distance of the town, the set formerly displayed all those wild features of the unbroken wildness, which held indescribable shares to the seeker after the tranquillity of romantic retirement. The Avenger has, however, broken through the once apparently impenetrable serenity which prevailed - a ... presenting its rude masonry to the briny waves, now supplies the pace of Old Willie and his skiff..."*

William Harris was known for his copperplate production skills in the 1840s-1850s. At least a dozen samples belonging to his hand are now housed by the

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<sup>52</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1851

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 550 visitors in 1837, 543 in 1838, 778 in 1839, at least 500 in 1840

<sup>54</sup> Verge, Will Graves, *John Verge, Early Australian Architect. His Ledger & His Clients*, 1962

National Library of Australia. The collection includes those produced for John Saunders, first Australian stationary company, and several individual works. Unfortunately, most of them have no acknowledgement of the artist even though housed within the prominent cultural institutions in Australia as perfect examples of the strong influence of British artistic schools and traditions.



*Tempe on the Cook's River, New South Wales, c 1830s, Clarke, James (1814-1852)*  
watercolour on paper, 30,8x45,5 cm  
National Library of Australia, PIC drawer 2641 #R3998

Artists-brothers John and James Clarke took separate paths travelling from England, and were reunited in Sydney in 1827. James was noted as a musician, architect and artist. There are three unsigned watercolour views of Sydney attributed to Clarke: *Balmain, Rushcutters Bay from Darling Point, NSW, View of Parramatta River, Mount Wellington and Part of Hobart*, all were undated and attributed to James Clarke. But *View of Parramatta River* (c 1840) for some reason was attributed to his brother John. *View of Tempe on the Cook's River* dated circa the 1830s, pictured above has a completed dam in its composition, which renders the date questionable. The picture delivers a tranquil rural scene with a single building on either side of the river, distant views to the background and a strong human presence.

Only two originally undated and since unidentified newspaper cuttings mentioned James Clark's death at the age of thirty-seven at his residence at Old South Head Road (28 March 1852). He left a widow and two children. Another undated cutting stated that James Clark 'was noted as a musician, followed the profession of architecture and painted many pictures.' Contemporary art researchers claim that the

reporter confused James with the architect Francis Clarke, a resident of Old South Head Road, whose wife was a professional singer. The mystery of the name of the artist is unresolved. The name is spelt differently in various sources.<sup>55</sup>



No date, medium or location of original artwork is not known  
Photographic reproduction from the  
Canterbury-Bankstown Council Library Local History Collection  
SL of NSW PXA 1441

Amongst these artists who possibly have not met the owner of Tempe but drew and painted the Spark's Estate, were John Glover, Frederic Casemiro (Charles) Terry and an eccentric Viscountess Sherbrooke (c1813-1884), and each of their work provide the audience with the different aspects of Tempe surroundings at the time. They were not mentioned in Spark's known Diaries but deserve the reader's attention.

Two lively rural scenes on the banks of Cook's River were depicted in both works attributed to Frederic Casemiro (Charles) Terry (1825-1869). It is almost nothing is known about the artist apart from his arrival in Sydney in the early 1850s from England. Soon he joined a circle of professional watercolourists such as Conrad Martens. Terry worked for *Sands*,<sup>56</sup> where many of his engravings were published in the *Australian Keepsake* series (1855).

Terry was also known by his submission of a design for a medal to the NSW Commissioners for the 1855 Paris Universal Exhibition. He won the second prize for the exquisite finish of his design. His painting of the grave of Fr Receveur at La

<sup>55</sup> daao.cJames and Clarke John Clarke, b 1814, as in Design & Art Australia online: [daao.org.au/james-and-clarke-john-clarke/biographyom.au](http://daao.org.au/james-and-clarke-john-clarke/biographyom.au); [australainartauctions.com](http://australainartauctions.com); Marian Minson on [teara.govt.nz](http://teara.govt.nz)

<sup>56</sup> Publishing Company that produced Sand's Sydney Directory

Perouse, was presented by the NSW Government to the French Government the same year. It is now hung in the Marine Museum in Paris. Along with Conrad Martens, George French Angas and Adelaide Ironside, Terry represented Australia in Paris. He illustrated Sydney's surroundings, and his works are now represented in the Art Gallery of NSW, the Mitchell and Dixon libraries, and the National Library of Australia, Canberra.<sup>57</sup> There is no evidence of his acquaintance with Spark.

The name of Georgiana Lowe begins a lineup of works produced by the artists who were not acquainted with Spark but inspired by the local landscape. Lowe, known as Lady Sherbrook was popular in Sydney for creating gardens commercially, and scandalously selling the surplus of her own produce. She valued native foliage, flowers and the siting of buildings within the landscape. Lowe left a great picturesque recording of Australia of the time. She also preferred the company of her albino husband, who had poor sight, to large party, therefore we have no records of the Viscountess ever visiting Tempe. After spending over a decade in Australia, the Lowes returned to England, where they received the title in recognition of her husband's significant influence in establishing Australian law and his role in politics. Following her death, the Viscount remarried.<sup>58</sup>



*Landscape, Tempe House, Lowe, Georgiana*  
from the album of drawings of New South Wales, pencil and sepia ink drawing on paper, c 1842-1850  
State Library of NSW

<sup>57</sup> Australian and New Zealand Art Sales Digest via: [aasd.com.au/artist/886-frederick-casemero--charles-terry/works-in-the-past-sales/](http://aasd.com.au/artist/886-frederick-casemero--charles-terry/works-in-the-past-sales/) Marian Minson on [teara.govt.nz](http://teara.govt.nz)

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/georgiana-lowe/biography/>

Australia provided a continuing inspiration to Georgiana Lowe, landscape gardener, as revealed in the vast number of her sketches held by the State Library of NSW.<sup>59</sup> The wife of British statesman, and politician of the 19th Century, Robert Lowe,<sup>60</sup> Georgiana was known as 'rather loud and violent, not particularly attractive, but such a sketcher in pencil and colours both, that her volume of Australian sketches is something well worth seeing.'<sup>61</sup>



*The River Peneus at Tempe*. Attributed to Glover, John  
pencil on paper, undated  
NGA DL PXX 39 f. 17 v

Titled in its lower centre, the sketch is unsigned, but a pencil note in the bottom left corner possibly by Sir William Dixon's hand states: "Drawn by J. Glover." The collection of Sketches of NSW, Tasmania and Victoria by various artists, where this pencil drawing is located and dated c 1830-1869. The attribution to John Glover (1767-1849) has never been disputed. The presumption of Glover and Spark were acquainted was never opposed or confirmed.

<sup>59</sup> Sherbrooke, Georgiana Lowe, Viscountess, ca. 1813-1884, Album of drawings of New South Wales views, ca. 1842-1850 State Library of NSW: Call Numbers: SAFE/PXD 390

<sup>60</sup> Vivienne Parsons, *Robert Lowe (1783-1832)* in: <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lowe-robert-2375>

<sup>61</sup> *The Dictionary of Australian artists, painters, sketchers, photographers and engravers to 1970*. Edited by Joan Kerr, pp 480-481



A farmer's son, Glover established himself in London as a drawing-master, and later became an art instructor. He was soon appointed as the President of the Old Watercolour Society and exhibited with the Royal Academy. Known as the English Claude after Claude Lorraine, a French Romantic painter, this reputable landscaper arrived in Australia in 1831. His Tasmanian landscapes accurately depicted the flora of the island. It is confirmed Glover was acquainted with John Skinner Prout.<sup>62</sup>

This Glover's sketch is titled 'after the Pineios (Peneus)' has a strong reference to the connection between Tempe Estate in NSW and the river in Greece which runs along the narrow Vale of Tempe and named after the River God Peneus. According to the map of Greece, the river flows from the Pindus mountains to the Aegean Sea.<sup>63</sup> Delta of Peneios lays at the foothills of Mount Olympus.<sup>64</sup>

It is claimed that it was the beauty of the vale was behind the naming of the new estate. He visited it during his extensive travel. Spark also receiving a classic education and had a sound knowledge of Greek mythology. The Vale of Tempe is known as a place, where Apollo caught beautiful Daphne.<sup>65</sup>

To resist persistent Apollo, Daphne asked for help her father river God Peneus, who then turned her into a laurel tree. Since then Apollo will always wear the perpetual honours of her foliage, laurel wreath. The story echoed in a large number of artworks on the mythological subject, where one being by Edward Paxman Brandard's (1819-1898, England).<sup>66</sup>

When speaking about Tempe, it must be mentioned that for some Australians of the 20 century and war historians the Pineios River was a site of Australian and British soldiers' battle during the World War II against Germans.<sup>67</sup>

As for A. B. Spark, after his business success, Tempe was his own proud creation. Another great achievement also celebrated through commissioned artwork, was his beloved family.

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<sup>62</sup> John Skinner Prout (1805-1876), artist, V. W. Hodgman, in Australian Dictionary of Biography, access via: [adb.anu.edu.au](http://adb.anu.edu.au)

<sup>63</sup> Sir William Dixon (1870-1952), Australian businessman, collector of Australiana and a major donor to the State Library of NSW

<sup>64</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*. Also: [themountolympus.com/pineios-delta-river/](http://themountolympus.com/pineios-delta-river/)

<sup>65</sup> *Apollo and Daphne* in Greece: [greeka.com/greece-myths/apollo-daphne/](http://greeka.com/greece-myths/apollo-daphne/)

<sup>66</sup> Edward Paxman Brandard, *Apollo and Daphne in the Vale of Tempe*, illustration for Turner Gallery, 1859-1876, [www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/22054](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/22054). Dward Dodwell. A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece, during Years 1801, 1805 and 1806, Vol II, London, Rodwell and Martin, 1819

<sup>67</sup> [www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84364](http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84364)

## Proud Family Man

Spark was acquainted with the family of his “excellent friend’ Dr Radford” very closely. Spark was named an executor in Doctor’s Will.<sup>68</sup> But it is not known whether any of these two could ever have predicted the future events.

There is no indication as to when Spark’s affection for Radford’s widow was kindled. It seems that happened a few years after her husband’s passing. They both attended dinners at the Governor’s house on 24 June 1839. Mrs Radford rarely attended rarely Spark’s parties in Tempe, but occasionally they saw each other at exhibitions, church services and luncheons in the city. Several entries in his diary reflected on “improvement of the spirits’ every time Spaark saw Mrs Frances Maria Radford. They both became godparents to a mutual friend’s child. We could only see in his *Diary* over time that Maria’s company was becoming more desirable by this long standing bachelor.

In February 1840, Mrs Radford passed to Spark a “Watch key containing a portion of Dr Radfords hair entwined with her own, ...this most valuable gift.”<sup>69</sup>

It took Spark almost four years since his friend’s, Dr Radford, Maria’s late husband, passing to decide on the next significant creation since building Tempe. On 9 April 1840 he wrote Mrs. Radford a letter, which he was “anxious to have ... delivered” offering the widow “to be styled [as] the lady of the land and its owner.” “That kind of romantic letter could be written by a person deeply in love. It was signed “Most affectionately and faithfully yours.” Maria rushed to reply on the same day:

*My dear Mr. Spark, I have no hesitation in returning an immediate answer to the communication you honoured me with this morning, nor could I in justice to my own feelings give other than an answer of peace and assure you in all sincerity and confidence that I am yours ever affectionately, Maria Radford, April 9th, 1840.*<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1837

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1840

<sup>70</sup> Spark, A. B. *The Diaries 1836-1856*, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1840



*Mrs Alexander Brodie Spark, Felton, Maurice, 1840*  
oil on canvas, Art Gallery of NSW

The original frame was commissioned by Mr A. B. Spark from Solomon Lewis, brother-in-law of the artist, in 1840 and was restored in 2008

The very next day Spark thanked “heartily” his dear lady for a “prompt and delightful reply” and noted two days later: “We met in the afternoon and our lips sealed the contract.” Two days later exultant Spark ordered a new suit and visited Mrs.

Radford: “Took a ring from her finger as a measure for a more important one. ... and I dropped the golden toy in the river as I crossed it.”<sup>71</sup>

Excited, “in love and amity,” Spark recorded every movement spent with his fiancée when they “wandered about for a pleasant hour.” He spent considerable time choosing “some pearls which [he] wanted to present to Mrs Radford.” Finally “the large casket of pearls” and “a beautiful golden watch with gold chains, which [is] to become the property of the lady, when she can lay claim to the initials engraved on the back, F.M.S.” [Francis Maria Spark], were purchased. They were married in St Peter’s Church of England Cook’s River on 27 April 1840.<sup>72</sup>

Two weeks after the wedding, Spark commissioned the portrait of his ‘beloved’ one from a friend, artist Maurice Felton. On 18 May 1840 at the request of Spark, “Mr Felton sketched Francis Maria Spark at Tempe for the Portrait” to his “bonny bride’s likeness” and “of the desired attitude.” Spark followed closely the progress of the portrait, brought Maria to the artist’s studio, and even stopped there unannounced to “criticise the painting,” By July 4, Spark and his ‘better half’ had seen the nearly ready portrait.<sup>73</sup>

It seems that each attribute of the model was painted exquisitely and with fine precision. Wearing a silk dress richly decorated in fine lace organza, adorned in jewellery and styled with fine leather gloves, Mrs. Alexander Brodie Spark leans on a stone wall resting her hand on a book. The cool colours of the dress visually enhance the lightness and transparency of the young woman’s skin. The view from the garden wall to the endless vista with a bright horizon line in the background.

This carefully planned composition takes the viewer to explore the hidden meaning given to every detail. The pearls are a symbol of a lovely nature, the longevity and fertility of the woman. A “large casket of pearls” that lays elegantly on the neck of the model, is possibly the one Spark had chosen for his bride as a gift. Spark does not provide any description of his purchase, but it is so much likely that this particular object is depicted on the painting.

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<sup>71</sup> Spark, A. B. *The Diaries 1836-1856*, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1840

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 9th November 1838

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, June-July 1840

Sydney's Jeweller and collector Anne Schoefiel explored many similar items. She included this portrait as an illustration in her book and claimed that such semi-parure<sup>74</sup> were "popular in Britain during 1830-40s and consisted of hundreds of seed pearls [each weights less than ¼ grain] threaded on horsehair and stitched in elaborate patterns on a base of mother pearl shell creating the effect is of exquisite lace work."<sup>75</sup>

The large Angels Trumpet flower, a new horticultural specimen introduced to NSW in the 1830s, used as a symbol of the vivacity and vibrancy. It draped over the stone wall and almost 'kneels' before the beauty of Mrs Spark. The flower may be the one seen by the traveller R. G. Jameson, who visited Tempe in 1839: "Here I saw ... the gigantic lily, said to be the chief floral ornament of the Australian wilderness."<sup>76</sup>

The red book held by Mrs Spark has Spark's family crest and motto embossed in the Latin 'Virtue et Valore,' a slogan of the translating as 'with strength and valour.' Having a personalised book cover probably made of leather was a sign of the owner's status at the time. In this period, the books were often sold with no jacket at all, so the owner would order personalised lavishly decorated covers usually made of leather for books in their library.

In Spark's opinion, Felton's "paintings so justly commanded, tended much to encourage the love and cultivation of his elegant art among the inhabitants of Sydney,"<sup>77</sup> "a true prophet of his own demise."<sup>78</sup>

The finished portrait was hung in the dining room of Tempe. Spark envisaged to have a paired portrait of himself, both hung on either side of the fireplace in the arched recesses of the salon. He noted in his diary sitting for it at Felton's studio.<sup>79</sup> The portrait was never completed, possibly due to Spark's financial difficulties at the time or due to the artist's untimely death. The sketches have not been located either. The portrait of Mrs. Spark now belongs to the collection of the Art Gallery of NSW.

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<sup>74</sup> *Parure, semi-parure* [Fr.] - a set of jewellery that would include the necklace, earrings, bracelet, broche (Fr.); in absence of at least one item, the set was to be called semi-parure (Fr.)

<sup>75</sup> Schoefield, Anne, and Fahy, Kevin, *Australian Jewellery. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, David Eli Press, 1990

<sup>76</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*, Sydney University Press, page 43

<sup>77</sup> Abbott, Graham, Little, Geoffrey, *The Respectable Sydney Merchant, A. B. Spark*, Sydney University Press, page 7

<sup>78</sup> Spark, A. B., *The Diaries 1836-1856*, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1842

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1840

Maurice Felton (1803-1842) arrived in Sydney with family in the late 1830s as a surgeon appointed to an immigrant ship. Self-taught as a portraitist, and a friend of Conrad Martens, he exhibited extensively. He soon started to earn his living mostly by painting landscapes and his 'elegant art of portraiture'. A copy of the portrait he had produced of Her Majesty Queen Victoria was displayed in Felton's Sydney medical office. Now the works by Felton are held by the most prominent art galleries in the country. Felton experienced an untimely death under unexplained circumstances in 1842.<sup>80</sup>

It is known that Felton produced one sketch *View from Tempe* on 1 March 1841, which was purchased from the artist by Lady Franklin, the wife of the Governor of Tasmania. Its location and that of four pomegranates painted by Felton purchased by Spark are also not known.

When Maria Radford became Mrs. Alexander Brodie Spark, she had already given birth eight times, but only three children Alicia (Alice) Maria, John Robert and Henry Wyatt Radford survived. They were living at Tempe. At almost annual intervals she gave birth to six other children. All from Alexander in 1841, they were Frances Maria Ann, Mary Gordon, Edith Burnet, Stanley Herbert and Florence Sophia, born in 1850. All kids were gathering at Tempe for holidays. As a family, all of the Radfords and Sparks, went to the church and to the races. In December 1843, Spark described all six children sitting three on each side of their mother making his Maria happy. Spark mentions children often in his diary calling them 'my darlings', 'my dearest' or 'little' every time. He had a very special relationship Alice. He even purchased pearls for "his little friend" before marrying her mother. The couple congratulated the young lady on her 21st birthday with a gold watch. It was Spark whom "Alicia made confidant in a love affair" in 1848. Three years later Maria's oldest daughter was leaving "for an untried world" in 1851.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> [www.portrait.gov.au](http://www.portrait.gov.au); [www.daa0.org.au](http://www.daa0.org.au)

<sup>81</sup> A. B. Spark, *The Diaries 1836-1856*, June 2<sup>nd</sup>. 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1851



*Alicia Maria Radford*, W. Nicholas, 1848,  
*Robert Radford*, attributed to W. Nicholas, one undated  
(according to AB Spark's Diary)  
State Library of NSW, call numbers MIN 243, 244

Miniature portraits were fashionable at the time. In the absence of photography, the size of miniature portraits would allow them to be kept literally in places close to one's heart, and to be carried around. Spark "trusted to have her [Alicia] likeness taken" by William Nicholas (c. 1807-1854),<sup>82</sup> the most fashionable portraitist of the time. This British born water-colourist, etcher and lithographer arrived in Sydney on 25 February 1836. Lionel Lindsay, a renowned Australian artist, claimed that Nicholas was fond of depicting Shakespearean and mythological subjects with their erotic tendencies.

He was known for his outstanding series, *Profiles of Australian Aboriginals* and *Profiles of Natives*, which Nicholas produced as lithographs from drawings by other artists using the zincography technique. Samuel Elyard recollected that Nicholas was in demand amongst the Colony's social and professional elite.

Nicholas used his studio-residence located at 6 Elizabeth Street South. Spark's Diary records "Alicia sitting for Mr Nicholas" in April 1848 and a record of purchasing a portrait from Mr Nicholas for 3 guineas. It is quite possible but not yet confirmed that both miniatures belong to the same artistic hand. John Robert and Henry Wyatt Radford spent all holidays in Tempe along with all their siblings, mother and stepfather.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> A. B. Spark, *The Diaries 1836-1856*, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1848

<sup>83</sup> [www.daa.com.au](http://www.daa.com.au)



*Portrait of children Stanley Herbert and Edith Burnet Spark, 1849-1851, State Library of NSW Call number ML 1434*

Almost nothing is known about the artist. The artwork is not to be on public display ever due to its fragile state. The dried pastel is falling off the paper. The desire to view this painting provided the author with a very rare opportunity of visiting the underground storage of the State Library of NSW. The maze of staircases, pathways, corners and corridors lead into a huge underground storage space lined up with the rows of high sliding metal meshes on either side, with artworks hung on it.<sup>84</sup>

Spark spent his last years residing as a tenant of the house he built but surrounded by his family. He died at sixty four, on 21 October 1856. The gravestone with his name on it could not be located in St Peter's graveyard, though he was buried there.

Tempe had to be sold and Maria moved in with her relatives.<sup>85</sup> The estate was subdivided, and the first 123 suburban lots ranging from half to two acres. The parcel of land where the house stands was sold to the brothers Patrick and Thomas Maguire on 24 August 1859 for £2000.<sup>86</sup> The property was solely owned by Thomas after Patrick's passing on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1877. The brothers never resided at Tempe Estate. They lived in Kangaroo Valley running a dairy farm and supplying their produce to Sydney. Consequently, the property was sold after passing of the second brother, Thomas.

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<sup>84</sup> In conversation with the Librarian during the author's visit of the State Library of NSW

<sup>85</sup> Spark, A, *Maria Radford Spark*, 2022

<sup>86</sup> Book 307 number 963 viewed via hlv.com



In their twenty years of ownership, however, the property was leased out to a number of tenants, most notable of them was Caroline Chisholm, one of Australia's greatest philanthropists. Chisholm leased Tempe House to open a school for girls calling it 'Green-Bank' after the name of the home of Elizabeth and William Rathbone, philanthropic friends who lived in Liverpool, UK. Caroline taught her students English, Grammar, Composition, Geography, Arithmetic and Writing as well as extras including French, Music, Dancing and Drawing. In 1863 to 1865 she promoted her educational establishment for Young Ladies as the following: "Mrs Caroline Chisolm has removed her Educational Establishment to that delightfully situated residence Green Bank Cook's river formerly the property of A. B. Spark, Esq." Then followed a more elaborate description:

*The Rooms of the House are spacious, lofty, and well ventilated, and the out-buildings are excellent. There are about twelve acres of Pleasure Grounds and Gardens attached, with a fine, large, and open Orchard of Fruit trees intersected by wide and shady walks. There is also a good Bath-House adjoining the House, where Young Ladies will have the further benefit of Sea-Bathing, as often as may be deemed desirable." She adds "... that horse drawn buses run from Sydney and Newtown to within five minutes walk of Tempe. Caroline's school at Tempe House lasted until about the middle of 1864.<sup>87</sup>*



*Cook's River Dam, c 1858-1862, Brees, Samuel Charles, watercolour  
State Library of Victoria*

It is known that painting above work illustrated this particular time at Tempe was produced by the British-born, and trained as a civil engineer in Bristol, Brees (1810-

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<sup>87</sup> Goldman, Sarah, *Caroline Chisholm: an Irresistible Force*, Harper Collins, 2017

1865). It was on display at the Commercial Chambers in Pitt Street on during *Water Colour Sketches of Australian Scenery* exhibition which was open on 21 August 1861.

Samuel Charles Brees was employed as a railway engineer and surveyor. He notably participated in designing the London to Birmingham line. Brees published two technical monographs, had outstanding architectural abilities and created a number of typographical works. It is known that between 1832 and 1838, while residing in Birmingham, he had several landscapes accepted for the exhibitions at the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists. The surname Brees is of Dutch origin.

After signing a contract with a New Zealand Company, he moved to Wellington with his wife and three children. A few years later the company was no longer able to pay him, which freed time for his painting practice. His sold works paid for the whole family's passage back to England. There, in 1847, he published *Pictorial illustrations of New Zealand*, which excited much interest. The two subsequent editions each had an introduction and descriptive captions. In the late 1850s, Brees exhibited a much-admired panorama consisting of enlargements of his sketches of Wellington.<sup>88</sup>

Brees visited Australia in 1851 and died on his return voyage to England. The State Library of Victoria has fourteen watercolours, where each work is an accurate pictorial record.<sup>89</sup> It is not known under what circumstances the above painting was produced. The outstanding brilliancy of the colour in this painting was achieved by using arabic gum as a binder to produce a watercolour when mixing with pigment. The arabic gum also affected the flow of the watercolour but produced a beautiful effect. Using this technique also makes it easier to lift watercolour off the paper in the event of a mistake. Brees's watercolours stand out by their bright colours and fine details.<sup>90</sup>

Around that time, the beginning of the 1860s, Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877), philanthropist and educator was known for her care of the women's education.<sup>91</sup> Her portrait was painted by Angelo Collen Hayter known as Angelo Collen in 1852,<sup>92</sup> and most likely commissioned by Chisholm's elder daughter, E. Dwyer-Gray, in

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<sup>88</sup> [teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b31/brees-samuel-charles](http://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b31/brees-samuel-charles)

<sup>89</sup> [australainartauctions.com](http://australainartauctions.com); Marian Minson on [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz)

<sup>90</sup> [teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b31/brees-samuel-charles](http://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b31/brees-samuel-charles)

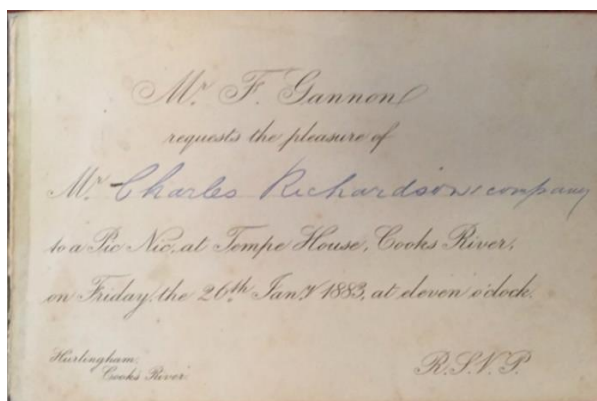
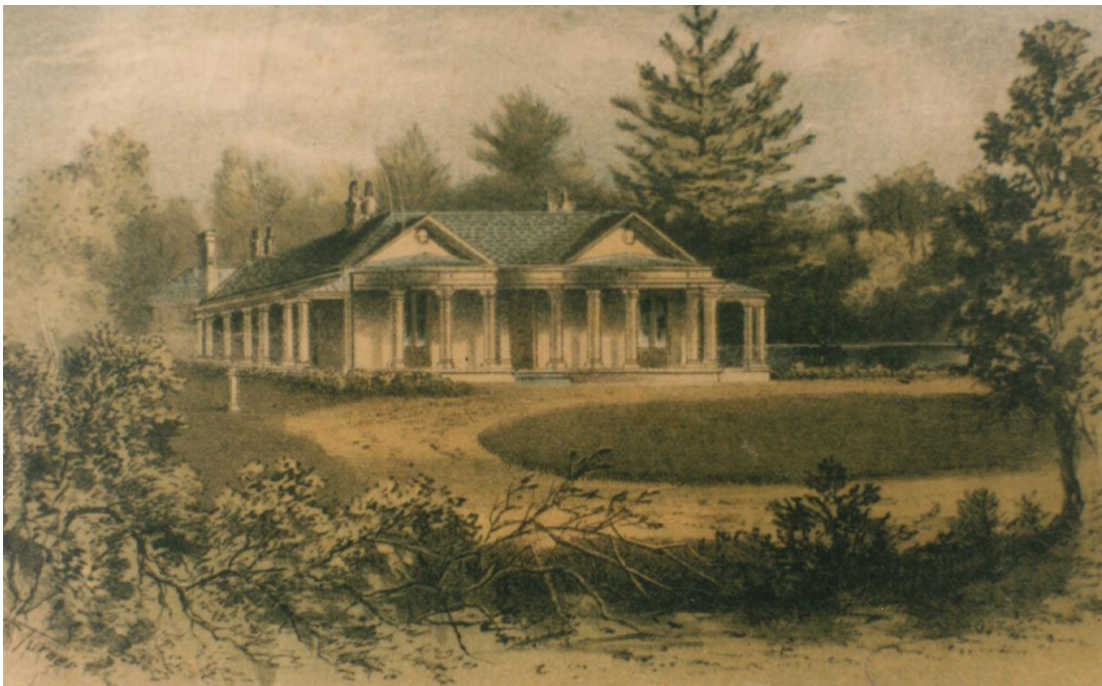
<sup>91</sup> Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877), Iltis, Judith, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 1, 1966, online 2006 via [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chisholm-caroline-1894](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chisholm-caroline-1894)

<sup>92</sup> State Library of NSW, call Number DG 459; [collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/YezdBkK9#viewer](http://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/YezdBkK9#viewer)

England.<sup>93, 94</sup> The portrait was identified only after comparison with its reproduction in the catalogue of the complete dictionary of contributors to the Royal Academy of Arts 1769-1904 and was purchased from the Godolphine Gallery, Dublin on 26 September, 1983. The connection of this artwork to Australia continued with its partial reproduction on a five dollar note. It is now part of the State Library NSW collection.

Angelo Collen Hayter (1819-1898) a civil servant, and a painter in England between 1848 and 1852 is known for exhibiting with the Royal Art Academy.

Chisholm's short lived educational venture was later continued by the Order of the Good Samaritans, which was owned by the Order for over 100 years, making it another chapter in Tempe House history.



Invitation card to the Picnic, 1883  
Printed by John Sands company  
lithograph by C. Turner,  
SGHS Inc Archives  
Lydham Hall, Bexley, NSW

<sup>93</sup> oxfordonline.com; State Library of NSW

<sup>94</sup> Hayter, Angelo Collen, *Caroline Chisholm*, 1952, State Library of NSW Collection, call number P2/388

Within the next decade the ownership of Tempe Estate was to change at least twice. The Letter from Mabey & Anne Carolan to Sister Gerard, dated March 2nd, 1989, explains that the pioneer of Tempe was Michael Gannon known as the owner of the largest part of the land in the St George Parish, and was the father of six sons and four daughters Gannon. Frederick Gannon, one of ten of Michael's children who "owned Tempe House for a brief time" the letter says. In the mid-1870s. He built the Hurlington on the northern bank of the Cooks River, where the bus depot is currently located, and moved there.<sup>95</sup>

This elaborate invitation states that "Mr F. Gannon requests the pleasure of Mr Charles Richardson's company for a Picnick at the Tempe House, Cooks River on Friday 26 June 1883 at eleven o'clock. RSVP." How this card was landed in the hands of Arthur Ellis, a local historian and a member of the St George Historical Society, is not known. But later he deposited the card to the archives of the Society, where it is held until today. The furniture used by the Richardsons during their residence in Tempe is now furnishing the rooms of Lydham Hall, Bexley.<sup>96</sup>

Turner's engravings were published by the *John Sands Company*, which specialised in the publishing and stationery business and was operating in Sydney from 1837. 'John Sands' has retained its name and subsequently became part of a global business in 1978, when control was relinquished after 141 years of existence. It was acquired by a family owned American Greeting Card business.<sup>97</sup>

The English born engraver and artist, Charles Turner (1773-1857), arrived in Sydney in the mid-1850s, and was soon accepted as a water-colourist and engraver in his own right.

Michael Gannon arrived in Sydney in 1820 as a convict. After being pardoned, he opened an Inn on the Cooks River Road with the money he made as a carpenter when building Argyle Street in Sydney, Cambridge Street Sydney, 1881. He died at the age of 81 in his home Hurlington, in Tempe, which still stands in Union Street, and is now heritage-listed.

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<sup>95</sup> The Letter from Mabey & Anne Carolan to Sister Gerard, Good Samaritans Order Archives, 2 March, 1989. Also St George Historical Society Inc Bulletins, March 1990, based on talk by Alderman Ron Rathbone in 1987

<sup>96</sup> The original card is part of the Museum collection located within the walls of Lydham Hall, Heritage listed house in Bexley, NSW: Sedneva, Olga, *Lydham Hall, Beyond the Bricks and Mortar*, 2022

<sup>97</sup> [johnsands.com](http://johnsands.com)

One of his sons, Frederick Gannon was born 21 March 1836, in Argyle Street, Sydney, married Clarissa Rebecca Murray in 1861 in Sydney, NSW.<sup>98</sup> Died on 10th October 1923 at Tempe, Sydney, NSW, aged 87. Educated at Sydney College (now Sydney Grammar), he became a successful Solicitor, having been admitted to the bar in 1864. At the time of his death was the oldest practising Solicitor in NSW. Gannon Street in Tempe was named after the Gannon family.<sup>99</sup>

It was Michael Gannon, who bought what later became known as Gannon's Forest, 2000 acres across current Bexley, Rockdale, Carlton, and Hurstville. That was Michael Gannon responsible for the toll-gates placed on the Northern side of the Cooks River dam often included in pictures:<sup>100</sup>

*Michael Gannon was a shrewd man. There was only one way of getting into Gannon's Forest to cut firewood, and only one way to come out – that was at the dam at Tempe. There was a toll-gate there, and Michael Gannon was on the spot. Every cart going in to cut firewood had to pay toll to the owner of the forest for his load. Thousands of loads were cut every day to keep the home fires of Sydney burning.*<sup>101</sup>

One will never know the real purpose of the Picnic, nor what was common between the two. At the time, the Richardsons were leasing Tempe as a private residence to Mr C. T. Richardson. They moved out as soon as their new home Wickam in Arncliffe was built.<sup>102</sup> That Picnic [sic] party of 26 June 1883 possibly played a particular role in the future of Tempe Estate as in November 23, 1884, the property was sold at Auction to Frederick Gannon for £4000.<sup>103</sup> It was mortgaged in April 1885, and just a few months later, Fred Gannon sold Tempe to the Sisters of Good Samaritans for a sizeable sum of £6,750 making a healthy profit of over two and a half thousand pounds.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Marriage references No 50 Sydney, NSW 1861

<sup>99</sup> <https://fretwelliana.com/the-boys/the-gannon-boys/michael-and-james-gannon/>

<sup>100</sup> NSWSA&R, Online Indexes, Publicans Licenses; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1845, p.2; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July 1846, p.2

<sup>101</sup> <https://fretwelliana.com/the-boys/the-gannon-boys/michael-and-james-gannon/>

<sup>102</sup> The Wickam was demolished in 1950

<sup>103</sup> Indenture Book 308, number 933, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1885, viewed via hlv.com

<sup>104</sup> PA 49227 viewed via hlv.com,



*Tempe, Cooks River [a view of houses across the river], 1883*  
 Andrews, William (1840-1887), watercolour on paper, signed WA, State Library of NSW

This watercolour by William Andrews depicted Tempe surroundings at the time when the mentioned Picnic took place.

Andrews' watercolours were sometimes described as having 'Turneresque effects' after the great English painter Turner, and his works always were considered as 'a meritorious specimen of watercolour painting.' The combination of river and woodland provides atmospheric scenery and a great sense of space and stillness. Artist's small works similar to the one above were more successful amongst the public than larger works and oils by Williams. The shadows of the trees on the water, and the boat moored to a post on the beach, certainly convey an impression of deep tranquillity.

The Art Society of NSW Committee member, Andrew Williams,<sup>105</sup> was called 'a most promising artist' in 1886. It was him who depicted Tempe just before another change of hands. The next year this son of a merchant passed away. Also known as W. A. and Mr W. Andrews Junior, the artist began his professional artistic career in 1860, being an amateur and earning his living as a draughtsman.<sup>106</sup>

As for Tempe Estate, Williams depicted a scenery that was seen by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan Order:

*... it was all bush and there were plenty of fruit trees, also wild life snakes, bats, flying foxes and native cats. The entrance was a big double gate for carriages and a side gate. Just inside the gate was a lodge then there was the Hill all bush and the*

<sup>105</sup> Active with the Art Society in 1840-1887:

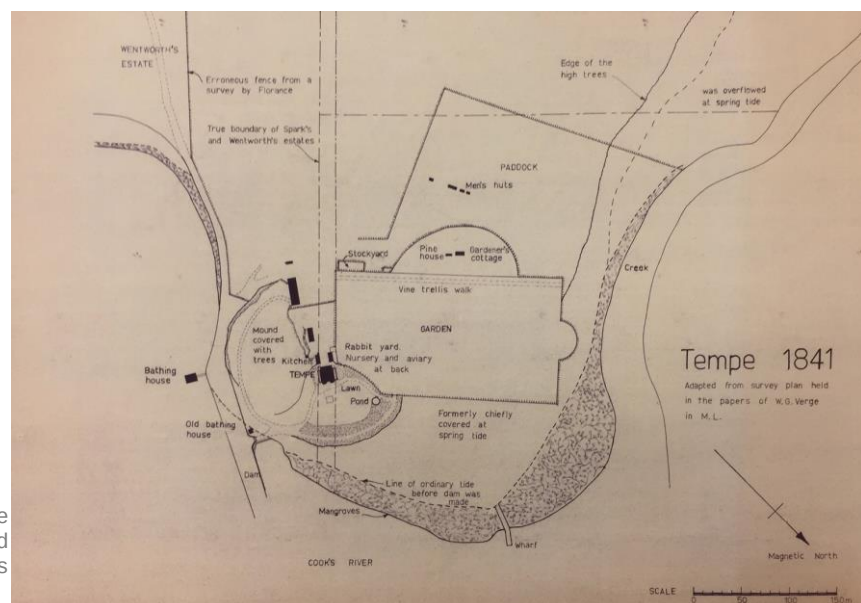
<sup>106</sup> McDonald, Patricia, 1992in: <https://www.daaao.org.au/bio/william-andrews/biography/> Sydney Morning Herald 1887, newspaper cutout, Good Samaritan Archives

*lawn had three pine trees also two banana trees at the side of the Convent but never a banana.*<sup>107</sup>

The vast land was slowly subdivided and sold over time bit by bit. The sale of 11 and a half acres with Spark's grand house between the Australian Trust was sealed on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1885, and signed by the Trustees of the Good Samaritan Order, Mary Anne Adamson, otherwise known as Superior General Magdalene, and Sister Margaret Mary Byrne.

### Change of Purpose. Change of Landscape

The Indenture marked the beginning of a new chapter in life of Tempe. None of new buildings that changed Tempe's landscape caught the artists' attention until the 1960s. There is a good reason to look at new owner of the property how the purpose of the Good Samaritans changed the landscape in accordance with their needs. One may consider it as a lucky opportunity to have a chance of comparing the plan drawn by John Verge and the plan that was created for the Good Samaritan Order. It must be mentioned here that the Sisters also took up the opportunity of cashing in a further subdivision of their 11 and a half acres, and changed the purpose of the property and therefore the landscape overall as reflected in the next map produced in the late 20 Century.<sup>108</sup>

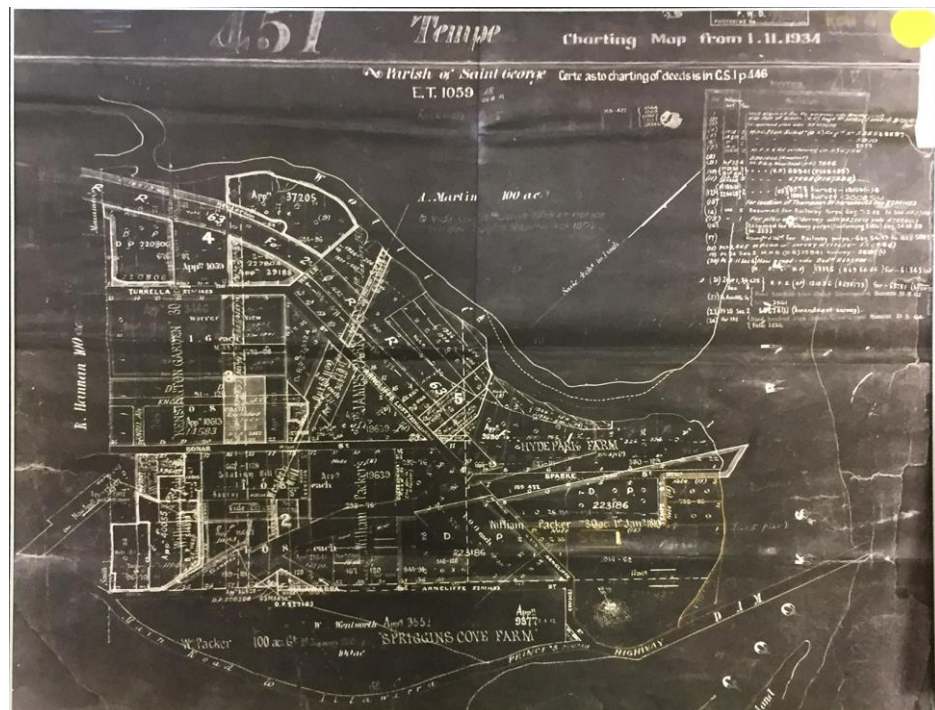


*Tempe, 1841, John Verge*  
Adapted from original. The Good Samaritans Order Archives

<sup>107</sup> *The Annals of the Sisters of the Good Samaritans, 1857-1938*, Good Samaritans Archives, Glebe, NSW St Magdalen's Retreat – Tempe. Opened October 16, 1887

<sup>108</sup> Walsh, Margaret, *The Good Sams: Sisters of Good Samaritans 1857-1969*, John Garratt Publishing, 2001, p.162

The map below reflects the initial purchase of 200 acres by A. B. Spark from William and James Parker adjacent to his own 45 acres. We also can see the changes of ownership for a number of land plots including subdivision since the initial land holders. In the bottom right corner, the area next to the Spriggins Cove Farm shows the land adjacent to Princes Highway and Dam, that was purchased by the Good Samaritans with an indication of Mount Olympus. It must also be mentioned that Sisters cashed it on further subdivision of Tempe.



Tempe. Charting Map 451, 1.11.1934, Carte as to charting deeds in C.S.I p 446 Parish as "St George" E.T. 1059. Carbon Print, 1934, The Good Samaritans Archives

The Sisters of the Order run a few establishments dedicated to education, recreation and support of the colony's female population. "The members of the Order who were introduced to Australia by the late Archbishop Polding had built by then two hospitals, an orphanage, eight convents, and established numerous schools in the Diocese of Sydney."<sup>109</sup> There were the Industrial School for destitute young girls at Manly (1881-1910), the Parramatta Roman Catholic Orphan School (1859-1886), Manly orphanage (1881-1910) and the short lived 'Albina Villa.' A 'Home for Inebriates' at Concord (1867-1868) was in operation on its founding purpose of care and reform. The Sisters applied for mortgage to pay £6,000 for Tempe Estate where the Retreat was to be used as a place for women and girls in need of care.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, Thu 3 Jan 1889, page 7 "News of the Day"

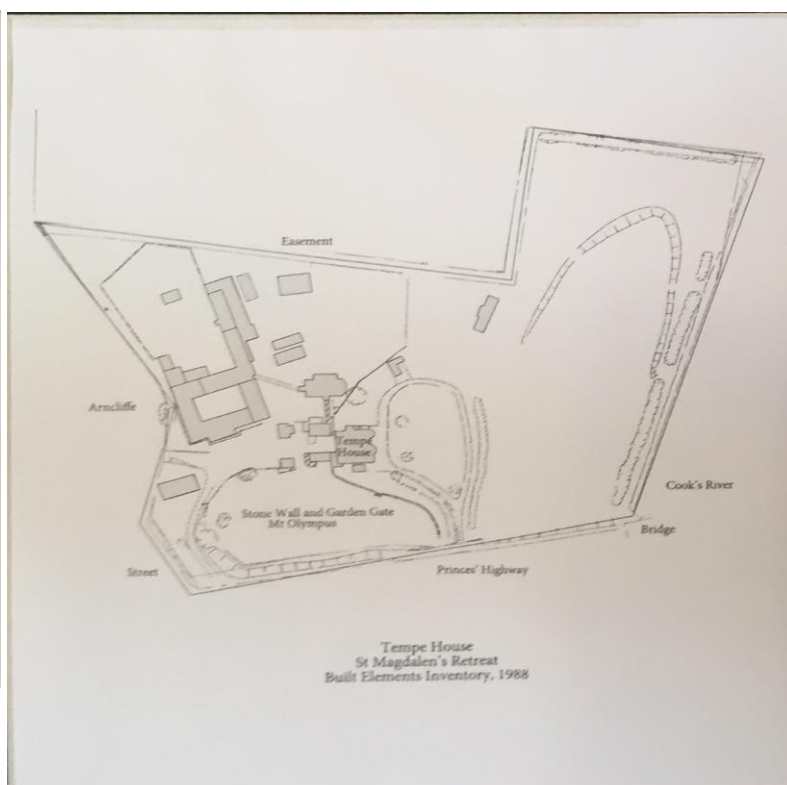
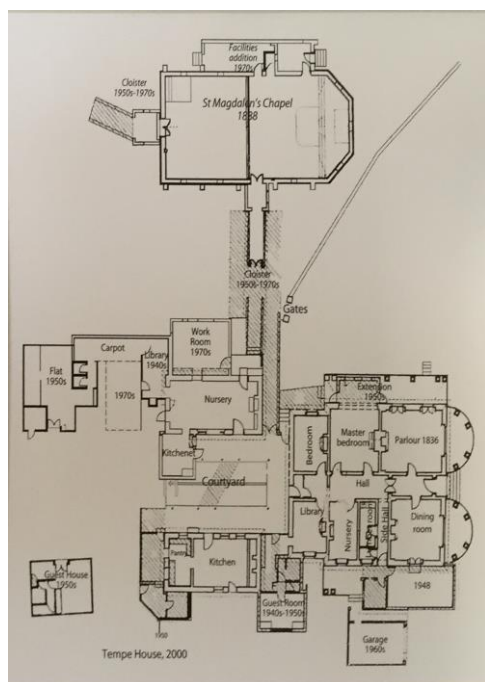
<sup>110</sup> The Annals of the Sisters of the Good Samaritans, 1857-1938, Good Samaritans Archives, Glebe, NSW



The establishment of St Magdalen's Retreat at Tempe grew out of the seminal experiences of the House of Good Shepherd and the Parramatta Orphanage. "The choice of site was a clear statement of the congregation's desire to situate the new home in a locality which Sydney people associated with natural beauty, picnics, river walks and with a historical past very different from the penal beginnings of the House of the Good Shepherd. Tempe House eminently met these requirements."<sup>111</sup>

The word *retreat* was chosen deliberately to distance the initiative from the Refuge on Pitt Street established previously and mainly associated with the prostitution. The Order's Pitt Street property was facing a mandatory acquisition by the Government to be demolished and giving was to the new Railway Station.<sup>112</sup>

Named after a beautiful harlot from a gospel story, the Retreat was offering care to women in need of it. It was the place where the monastic perfection of the Benedictine rule was achieved through active works of mercy.<sup>113</sup> But the public perception followed the Retreat and was often referred to as an *asylum*.



A draft of built elements, 1988, The Order of the Good Samaritans Order Archives, Glebe, NSW  
 Note changes to the land were made in 1894, continued in the 1950s, 1960s and in the 1980s

<sup>111</sup> Walsh, Margaret, *The Good Sams: Sisters of Good Samaritans 1857-1969*, John Garratt Publishing, 2001, p.162

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid* pp.167-180

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p. 170

The Foundation stone of the St Magdalen's Retreat was laid on November 23rd, 1885. The state of the art laundry and accommodation for the first 40 penitents building was opened two years later by the Cardinal Moran.<sup>114</sup> This first building was commissioned to the renown architectural firms *Sherrin & Hennessy*. They worked hard to create working spaces and the laundry space to accommodate the state-of-the-art machinery imported by the Sisters from England and the United States.<sup>115</sup> The building was in use from 1886. At the time, it was around 80 laundries operating in NSW, but for the Sisters it was a chance to rehabilitate severely disadvantage and unfortunate penitents in response to the society of the time. Unfortunately, the laundry building in Tempe was deemed as having no significance and was demolished to make way to the current residential development. There are though a few photographs located in the Good Samaritans archive.<sup>116</sup>

*Sheerin & Hennessy* designs are known in many other Roman Catholic buildings in Sydney and New South Wales country areas, including St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill (1884-94), St Vincent's College, Potts Point (1886), the Cathedral of St Mary and St Joseph, Armidale (1910-11), the now demolished Hordern Bros' drapery store (1886) and Tattersall's Club (1892) in Pitt Street and ten stores for (Sir) John See. Many large suburban residences were built to their plans. In 1912 Sheerin left the firm and retired in 1923. Hennessy's son, Jack, then joined his father to complete W. W. Wardell's plans for St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney,<sup>117</sup> for which they designed the crypt and the main staircase.<sup>118</sup>

A number of support buildings were erected from 1894 following large fundraising campaigns. One could only guess why paperwork such as drafts, bills or contracts is non-existent. But the original blueprint of the laundry is held in the Archives of the Order. St Magdalen's Chapel conveying the original architectural features of the laundry was in use from December 1888.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Cardinal Moran, Patrick (1830-1911), the third Archbishop of Sydney as via: [www.catholic.au/s/article/Patrick-Francis-Moran-1830-1911](http://www.catholic.au/s/article/Patrick-Francis-Moran-1830-1911)

<sup>115</sup> *Catholic Press*, September 19, 1900, newspaper cutout, Good Samaritans Archives

<sup>116</sup> Published in Walsh, Margaret, *The Good Sams, Sisters of the Good Samaritans, 1857-1969*

<sup>117</sup> St Mary's Cathedral was completed in 1928: [stmarydcathedral.org.au/history-art/history-of-the-cathedral](http://stmarydcathedral.org.au/history-art/history-of-the-cathedral)

<sup>118</sup> <http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~sherring/family/parry/54.html>

<sup>119</sup> St Magdalen Refuge Chapel, Tempe, Daily Telegraph, 7 Jan 1889 page 3 as in: [nla.gov.au/news-article235866994](http://nla.gov.au/news-article235866994)

Indeed, Sisters deemed laundry work appropriate to the status of the girls and women who were placed in Sister's care.<sup>120</sup> Uneducated and expected to do little else but domestic work, the women on Sister's care were taught basic literacy and numeracy and given skills to gain employment after two years at Good Samaritans. The Sisters even involved the owners of other commercial laundry businesses to train their 'penitents' how to use the steam machinery, to mend, iron and fold textiles. With time recreational and studying spaces were erected.<sup>121</sup> Further extensions to the new building contained a refectory connected to the servery and kitchen. Additional storey over the engine room, now had drying room and served as additional dormitories.<sup>122</sup> The penitents had to stay with the Sisters for two years and, if the girls proved themselves as hard working and behaving, they were to receive a set of clothes, a sum of money, and possibly recommendation and sometimes even an offer of employment outside the Order.<sup>123</sup>

Other buildings were erected following large fundraising campaigns. One could only guess why no paperwork such as drafts, bills or contracts survived. But the original blueprints of the laundry survived and were located in the Good Sams' Archives.

Whilst further additions were made to the laundry building to accommodate study rooms, the house remained largely unaltered until 1944-1945. In 1947 the name was officially changed to The Good Samaritan Training Centre, Arncliffe, for Female Delinquents. The foundation stone laid on 19 Oct 1947.<sup>124</sup> It was engaged in the rehabilitation of women. The sisters moved across schools and welfare. From now on teaching was the preferred and the only ministry for most of the Order's Sisters.<sup>125</sup>

1954 saw the new wings built on the grounds along with the amenities and the pool, boiler house and smoke stack, recreation and arts building, field and chaplain houses, shed, cottage, car pots, and east cottage.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> More on the subject: Franklin, James, *Convent Slave Laundries? Magdalen Asylums in Australia*, in *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 34 (2013), pp 70-90

<sup>121</sup> *A Shameless Slander Exposed*, article in *Freeman's Journal*, NSW, Saturday 14 July 1906, pp 16-17

<sup>122</sup> Tempe Estate. Historic Building Survey, Anglin Associates, Qantek, undated, pp 36-68

<sup>123</sup> Good Samaritans Archives graphic materials

<sup>124</sup> Good Samaritan Training Centre. Foundation Stone Ceremony, advertisement in *Legion Review*, October 1947, newspaper cut out, Good Samaritan Order Archives

<sup>125</sup> *Tempe Estate. Historical Building Survey*, 1977, Anglin Associates, QANTEK, Qantas Information Technology Ltd, undated

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, pp 36-68

Alterations to the buildings were recorded in 1950 and 1954 included installation of the pool, which changed the property landscape further.<sup>127</sup> In the mid-1940s, the Order's aims were revised, changing gradually from care and correction to social rehabilitation and education for the girls. The name of the institution was changed to The Good Samaritan Training Centre, Arncliffe. In time, many nuns were trained as educators. The Sisters were moving across schools and welfare, and teaching became their preferred and the only ministry for the Order's Sisters. Later, in 1970s, they also introduced what is now known as a vocational education.<sup>128</sup> The change of purpose changed the landscape of Tempe once more.

The Sisters also took up a very serious step of establishing connections with the community. The Rockdale Council invited the representatives of Tempe residents to participate in the Centenary celebration. With this the doors to the Catholic establishment in Tempe were open to the general public. That is why the first drawings on the property appeared published in late 1960s.



*Tempe House,*  
Albert N. Clarke, undated  
published in the St George Leagues' Club Journal, August 1969  
Reproduced with the permission of St George League Club Administrator

The first known was Albert N. Clarke. He depicted the Verge's creation surrounded by rich vegetation. Two figures on the right are probably of the Sisters taken a relaxed walk in the grounds. Just behind them we can see a suggestion of the

<sup>127</sup> See illustration/map TBC

<sup>128</sup> Walsh, Margaret, *The Good Sams: Sisters of Good Samaritans 1857-1969*, John Garratt Publishing, 2001, p. 182

enclosed veranda, which was part of the library. The Prince of Wales features were removed from the front facing of the gables and a large Cross is present on the roof.

In 1970s the Sisters offered a public access to Tempe House, but not to the Chapel. It was no services run for the public. The garden wall was in place to separate the Chapel and the Convent grounds from the front lawns of Tempe House on the banks of the Cooks River.

Designed in Victorian style, the Chapel was to match the laundry's L-shaped building. Its corbelled stone eaves around neo-Gothic stained glass windows, pediments above the aps windows and stunning cedar boarded vault ceiling have provided charm to this became the house of faith, trust and beauty for the past 135 years.

St Magdalen's Chapel was the second building in Retreat erected in 1888. For many decades it was only attributed to the *Sheerin & Hennessy*. And it seems to be true. Reportedly, the contractor for the erection of both was Mr James Poole, and the built was executed by the Stuart Brothers.<sup>129</sup> Unfortunately, the laundry building was deemed as having no significance and was demolished to make way to the current residential development. There are though a few photographs located in the Good Samaritans archive.<sup>130</sup> Hidden from the public eye by the brick wall which surrounded the Retreat, the Chapel was considered as 'plain',<sup>131</sup> but not for Don Frasier of whom we know simply only one thing. The Good Samaritans Order confirmed that was no member of the Order with such name, nor penitent. Neither then less, Frasier's skilful artistic hand depicted a few corners of the chapel in 1988.

The only drawings depicting St Magdalene's Chapel and laundry were recently located in the Good Samaritans Archives. They were produced by Don Frasier, a mystery artist with exquisite hand, in 1988.

*St Magdalen's Retreat, Arncliffe,  
NSW, Laundry Building, 1988,  
Frasier, Don, signed  
dated, graphite on paper  
Good Samaritans Order Archives,  
Glebe, NSW*

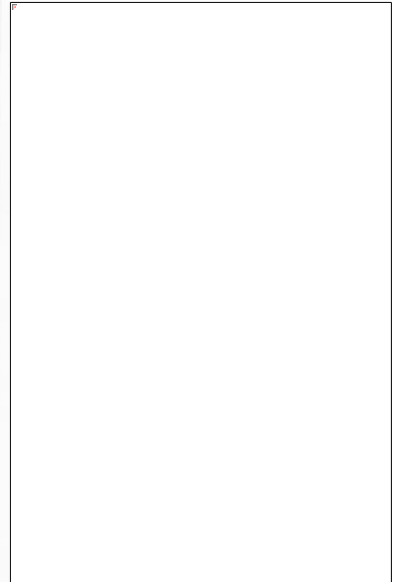
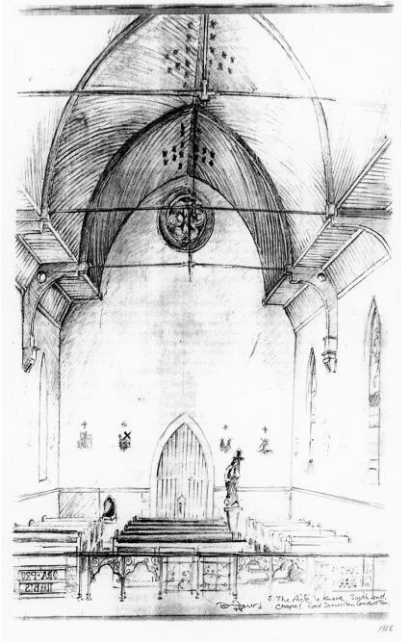
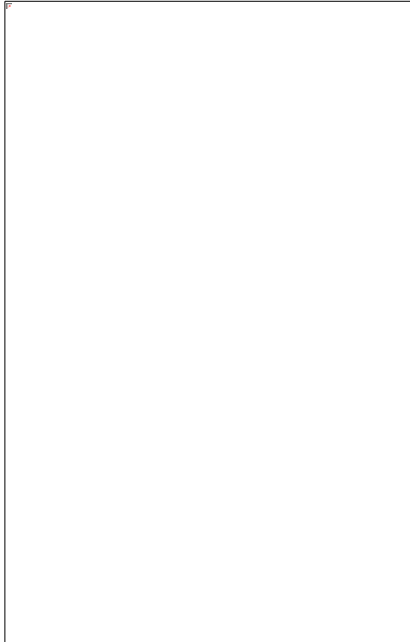
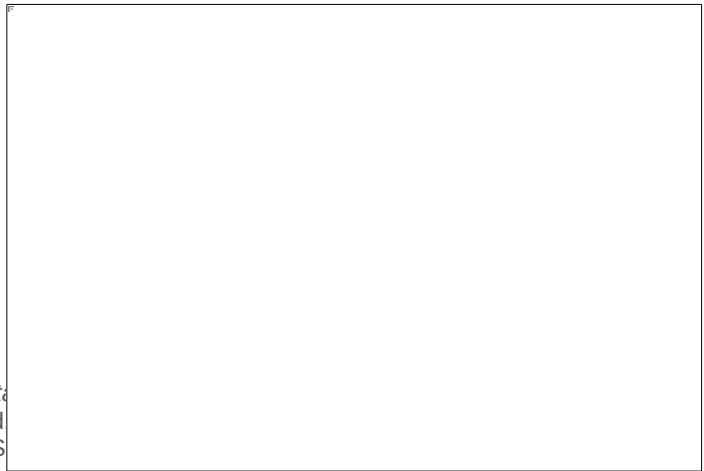
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<sup>129</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1889, page 3 column 4

<sup>130</sup> Published in Walsh, Margaret, *The Good Sams, Sisters of the Good Samaritans, 1857-1969*

<sup>131</sup> Heritage NSW, via: [hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5045451](https://hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5045451)

*The Good Samaritan*  
 graphite and charcoal on paper, signed  
 Good S



Middle Left: North Side of St Magdalen's Chapel, graphite on paper, signed, dated, Good Samaritans Archives, Glebe, NSW  
 Middle: *The Aisle and Knave South End Chapel. Good Samaritans Convent, Tempe*, Don Frasier, 1988  
 Middle Right: *Temp Chapel, South Entrance*, Don Frasier, 1988, felt pen, signed, dated, Good Samaritans Order Archives, Glebe, NSW  
 Bottom: *Temp Chapel, North East Portal*, Don Frasier, 1988, ink on paper, Good Samaritans Archives, Glebe, NSW

If was only in the 1960s, the lay people were able to get closer to the main building of the former Tempe Estate. Some even preferred to copy images from the past adding the stipple of the Chapel to the background. This image copied from the post card that was mentioned in the Part 1 of this work. Gifford Eardley did it for a reason.

Draughtsman by trade and a local researcher, Gifford Eardley (1899-1974) is regarded as a foundation member of the Australian Railway Historical Society and one of the early members of the St George Historical Society Inc. Drawings and historical research were his lifelong passion. Giff, as his peers called him, wrote and illustrated many stories on local buildings and people. A draughtsman by trade, he produced at least two known sketches of Tempe House within its surroundings between 1940 and the 1970s. A hobby artist and a passionate historian, he produced over 3,000 drawings between 1923-1975 whilst travelling across NSW, Tasmania and Queensland, all are now held in the State Library of NSW.<sup>132</sup> He illustrated St George Historical Society Inc Bulletins, including two of his sketches depicting Tempe House are known.



“Tempe” Cooks River  
Gifford Eardley, undated

<sup>132</sup> *Giff, the Railway Man*, Sedneva, Olga, 2017



TEMPE HOUSE

Tempe House,  
Gifford Eardley, undated



*Tempe House*  
Emanuel, Cedric, drawing, Image:  
Geeves, Philip, Sydney. Drawings by  
Cedric Emanuel, Angus and Robertson  
Pty Ltd, 1981



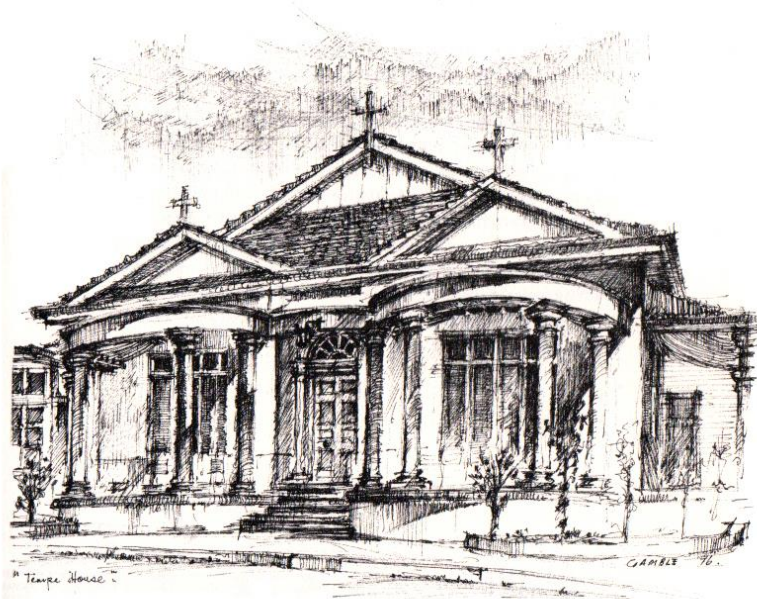
*Tempe House 1828*  
Emanuel, Cedric, drawing, Image:  
Geeves, Philip, Sydney. Drawings by  
Cedric Emanuel, Angus and Robertson  
Pty Ltd, 1981

Historian Philip Geeves (1917-1983) wrote: “I sometimes despair of Sydney  
siders. They are so hell-bent on rushing from place to place they seldom pause to  
enjoy the fascinating corners in which this city abounds. I made a list of locations that  
had a particular appeal to me, and my friend, Cedric Emanuel, agreed to sketch



them.” Geeves, a member of the Royal Historical Society at the time, first discovered Tempe House, when researching for the history of Rockdale in the mid-1950s, “ever since [Tempe] has been a place of historical pilgrimage.”<sup>133</sup>

Emanuel (1906-1995) exhibited his early prints, engravings and etchings with the Australian Commercial and Industrial Artists’ Association and the painters-etchers and Graphic Design Art Societies from the 1930s. Born in New Zealand to a family of Jewish dentists on his paternal side, he was the eldest of four children. Emanuel was raised in Sydney and spent his teenage years with the Bondi Surf Club. His early employment in a commercial studios, Smith and Julius, where Lloyd Rees worked as a boy as well, and later with the State Studio, provided him the opportunity to excel in ink and pen drawing. At night, he studied drawing from Datillo Rubbo and learnt etching from Sydney Long. He enjoyed a life-long affair with historians and fifteen of his own publications based on visual recordings of Australian architecture.<sup>134</sup>



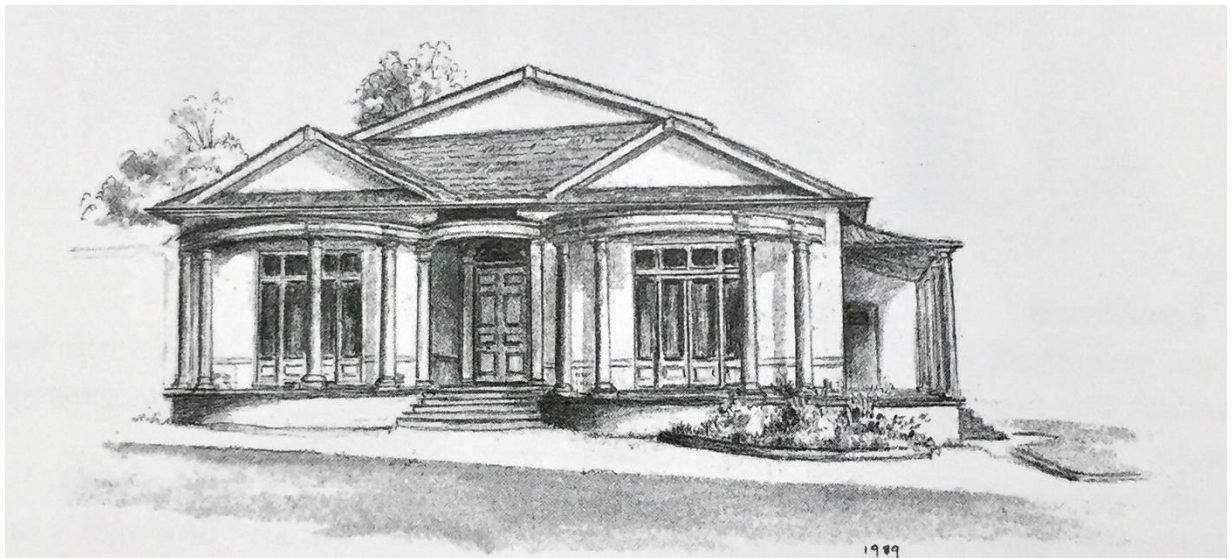
*Tempe House*, Allan Gamble, 1976 drawing, pen on paper,  
Published in *Bay Sketchbook*, RIGBY, 1970s

Allan Gamble (1907-2001), a Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Alderman of Mosman Municipality for 24 years, an academic at the University of Sydney and an artist in his own right, illustrated several books on Sydney’s architecture as part of a published series of Sketchbooks by RIGBY Publishing house

<sup>133</sup> *Portrait of Sydney*, Drawings and Notes: Cedric Emanuel, 1971

<sup>134</sup> Emanuel, Cedric, Interviewed by Barbara Blackman in 1986, NLA Collection

in the 1970s. Gamble also produced sketches of Tempe House, Primrose House and Lydham Hall within the St George area.



*Tempe House, 1989, Kingston, Daphne, pencil on paper*  
Reproduction from *Early Colonial homes of the Sydney Region, 1788-1838, 1990*

As a local artist, Daphne Kingston (1928-2019) dedicated many years recording buildings, some of which have since been demolished. She studied at the Julian Ashton Art School in The Rocks, then furthered her interest in photography and architecture. Kingston published her illustrated books notably on early Colonial homes and early Slab buildings, Hawkesbury Region architecture and many other related topics. A long standing member of the Historic Houses Association, now Trust, Daphne left behind “a remarkable record of the life cycle of each building, ... that often ended abruptly by the avalanche of housing development and frenzy of roadworks.”<sup>135</sup>

This drawing as do many others produced by Kingston, tells the story of a building in disrepair and neglect during the 1980s. From when the Good Samaritans vacated the premises, no subsequent owners until quite recently were sufficiently bold and brave to undertake restoration of this piece of local history which is exemplary of the architecture of its day.

Convent of the Good Samaritans, Tempe, Originally Home of A. B. Spark – c. 1840  
Jean Young, undated

<sup>135</sup> Judy Pitaway, Emeritus CEO of Historical Houses Trust, NSW, introduction



Seasons Greetings

*Tempe House*, Sharp, Bruce (c 1990s)  
the location of original artwork is not known, unsigned  
reproduction from the Christmas Card  
with the permission of the owner and artist's daughter

Until not long ago, Bruce Sharp (1931-2023) was possibly the only living artist who drew Tempe House in the 1990s. A Bexley artist and a former Olympic gymnast, Bruce run his business as a sign writer. Good in landscape and portraiture. He completed several commissions including those from the local Council. The artist engaged in local historical society and illustrated the Lydham Hall collection for the publications. This sketch in charcoal was produced in the early 1980s. The artist was very happy with the outcome and produced the sketch as a Christmas card to be sent out.

Since the late 1980s, Tempe Estate with its House and the Chapel have changed hands a couple of times. It took almost twenty years to come up with the idea of a 21st Century urban development to be established and raised where “... *the restoration of the historic Tempe House and St Magdalen’s Chapel, and the surrounding parkland that runs down to the Cooks River*” was a part of this development.<sup>136</sup> A number of buildings erected by the Sisters were demolished. The Chapel and the House with its external kitchen and nursery were carefully restored by the current owner. They all admired by the public. For unknown reasons the Chapel is still appear rarely as a subject of artwork.

<sup>136</sup> *The Landcom Annual Review Report*, 2001

The 2010s mark the establishment of the new residential development around Tempe House. Discovery Point residential Development is now home to many thousands of people, not to just one. The beauty designed by John Verge still getting some attention of these creative souls. But the Chapel is still lacking attention. The public performances, childcare and event table tennis club fill daily life of that exquisite Chapel that has less secrets now than before.

Tempe House is now photographed more than sketched, painted or drawn. St Magdalen Chapel for some reason is not inspiring new artworks of any kind. Both though are now considered as a prestigious place for staging exhibitions and cultural events continuing of A. B. Spark's arts and culture appreciation.

## **Conclusion**

We explored when and why Tempe House, such a grand creation of an architect and the realisation of the owner's vision inspired artists to produce their works; how the relationship between the artists and the property's owner influenced any visual interpretation of the building within its natural environment across time. This work is an exploration of Tempe' landscape changing according to the owner's or resident's purpose: from being a granted parcel of land to a place of retreat and a family home, and eventually becoming a place of education, worship, recreation and finally becomes home to many thousands of people, placing a very new social and housing environment into the given landscape. In short, Tempe landscape changed from the romantic to colonial industrial pride, from a short lived educational establishment to a place of worship, and then to a place of recreation.

The cross referencing artworks with original documents offered a new interpretation of A. B. Spark, Esq, as a proud owner of an exquisite home on the south bank of Cooks River, and a romantic, loving husband and a happy family man.

We followed the artworks through time that illustrated changes in physical and social change of landscape from the colonial times to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. We

discovered previously unknown artworks and looked at Tempe precinct landscape through the eyes of the artists, former residents and their contemporaries. How it will be seen in another fifty or hundred years?

There is no future without knowing and understanding the past.\*\*\*

2024

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