

JAMES ANDERSON
1832–1897
BUILDER AND CONTRACTOR

Life and Career

James Anderson was born at Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire, England on 20 December 1832. He was the son of Richard Anderson, a bricklayer and builder, and Hannah Gascoigne. The family moved to Leamington, Warwickshire, in the mid 19th century, where James was employed as a carpenter. Here he met Mary Evans, a Welsh housemaid, and they were married on 14 October 1854 at the Leamington Baptist Chapel.

James, Mary and their one-year-old son James junior migrated to Australia on the ship *Parsee*, arriving at Melbourne on 14 May 1858. Their six other children – William Edward, Thomas Henry, Fanny Gascoyne, Sarah Jane, Florence Rose and Charles Evans Anderson – were all born in Australia between 1859 and 1871.

The family lived at various inner-suburban localities in the period from 1858 to 1870 – 180 Wellington Street, East Collingwood; 1 Station Street, Carlton; Nicholson Street, Carlton; and 61 Moor Street, Fitzroy. In 1871 they moved to 126 Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy. The house was named *Leamington* in recognition of the couple's origins. James' business facilities and workshops were constructed at this address in about 1887.

The following biography, which was published in *Victoria and its Metropolis: Past and Present* in 1888, covers James' career up to that time:

“**Anderson, James**, Melbourne, was born in England in 1832, came to Australia in 1858, and started as a carpenter and joiner. He was a timber salesman for seven years, and commenced contracting and building in 1867. Among the many buildings erected by him are the Savings Bank, Fitzroy; the Presbyterian Church, St. Arnaud; the English Church (St. Colomb), Hawthorn; the Arcade Hotel, Little Collins Street; the Presbyterian Church, Lilydale; the Savings Bank, St. Kilda; the Land and Mortgage Bank, Collins Street; Salisbury Buildings, corner of Bourke and Queen Streets; Fraser's Buildings, Queen Street; Dalgety and Company's (Limited) warehouse and auction rooms, Bourke Street; large residence at Frankston for the late Dr. George Teague; also, at Hawthorn, for Dr. Walsh, and one for Dr. Alsop; row of shops in Beach Street, Port Melbourne, and Nelson Place, Williamstown; Town Hall, Hawthorn; Wood's Hotel, Spencer Street; new shops for Messrs. Robertson and Moffat, Bourke Street, and a large number of other buildings in the city and suburbs. His office was at 127 Flinders Lane East, but he has now removed to Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy, where he has erected large workshops, and carries on a steam joinery in addition to the building trade.”

The highlight of James' career was the construction in 1890 of the Australian Building in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. At twelve storeys, this building was Australia's first skyscraper. It was the tallest office building in Australia until 1912 and in Melbourne until 1960.

Further data concerning the above buildings and other works is given in the accompanying tables.

James was a prominent member of The Builders and Contractors Association of Victoria. He was well-known and respected in the Fitzroy community.

The financial collapse and depression of the early 1890's severely affected the economy and building industry of Victoria. The lack of work created financial difficulties for James' business and family, and probably caused his health to fail. Following an apparent heart attack or stroke which resulted in paralysis of speech, he was admitted to the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum on 18 June 1897. His condition deteriorated in the following weeks, and he died on 4 July 1897. He was buried in Melbourne General Cemetery. Mary died on 17 May 1903 at Fitzroy.

Family Relationship

Our family is related to James Anderson through his daughter Florence Rose Anderson, who married Charles Eugene Ashby in 1890.

Peter Rule
Palmyra, W.A.
July 2012
Revised January 2016

BUILDINGS & WORKS CONSTRUCTED BY JAMES ANDERSON, BUILDER & CONTRACTOR⁽¹⁾, 1876 – 1894**Page 1 of 3**

Year	Name of Building & Works	Address	Value	Architect	Remarks
1876	Presbyterian Church, St.Arnaud	McMahon Sreet, StArnaud	?	Wharton & Vickers	
1878	Private residence for Dr. Thomas Alsop	“Bonsal”, 292 (now 410) Burwood Road (cnr. Launder Street), Hawthorn	?	?	Currently in derelict condition.
1880	Melbourne Savings Bank, Fitzroy	337 Smith Street (cnr. Johnston St.), Fitzroy	£2,000	?	Currently used as retail shop.
1880?	Private residence for Dr. George Teague	“Rubra”, Mornington Road, Frankston	?	?	Exact location to be determined.
1881	Royal Arcade Hotel	303 Little Collins Street, Melbourne	?	George Wharton	Demolished.
1883	St. Columb’s Church, Hawthorn	St. Columb’s Street, Hawthorn	£1,700	George Wharton	See Note (4)
1883	St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Lilydale	64–66 Anderson Street, Lilydale	£1,000	T.J. Crouch	Foundations constructed by others.
1884	Melbourne Savings Bank, St. Kilda	197 High Street (cnr. Waterloo Street), St. Kilda	£2,000	George Wharton	Demolished in 1967 for road works. High Street re-named St. Kilda Road.
1884	Land Mortgage Bank of Victoria	289 Collins Street, Melbourne	£7,000	George Wharton	Demolished for ANZ Bank building.
1884	Robertson & Moffat store	328 Bourke Street, Melbourne	?	William Salway	Demolished in 1933 for Myer store.
1885?	Row of shops	Beach Street, Port Melbourne	?	?	Street number not known.
1885?	Row of shops	Nelson Place, Williamstown	?	?	Street number not known.
1886	Salisbury Buildings	433–443 Bourke Street (cnr. Queen Street), Melbourne	£15,000	George Wharton	Demolished in 1958.

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Year	Name of Building & Works	Address	Value	Architect	Remarks
1886	Fraser's Buildings	43–49 Queen Street, Melbourne	£16,819	William Salway	Demolished.
1886	Private residence for Dr. William Walsh	“Wilton”, 65 Cotham Road (cnr. Charles Street), Kew	?	Guyon Purchas	Currently HQ for Kew R.S.L.
1887	Dalgety & Co. office & store	461–471 Bourke Street, Melbourne	?	Charles D'Ebro	Demolished c.1969.
1887	Additions to Wood's Hotel	687 Bourke Street (cnr. Spencer Street), Melbourne	?	George Wharton	Demolished.
1888	Private residence for Mrs. G. Millar	“Hilton”, Brook Street, Hawthorn	£2,115	Inskip & Robertson	Demolished.
1888	Alterations to Beath, Schiess & Co. warehouse	170 Flinders Lane, Melbourne	£494	Oakden, Addison & Kemp	Demolished.
1889	Office fittings to Queen's Walk & Victoria Buildings	72–80 Swanston Street, Melbourne	£1,180	J. Beswicke	Demolished.
1889	Alterations to offices at Queen's Walk & Victoria Buildings	72–80 Swanston Street, Melbourne	£410	J. Beswicke	Demolished.
1889	Office fittings to London Chartered Bank, St. Arnaud	St. Arnaud	£122	Oakden, Addison & Kemp	Street & number not known.
1890	Hawthorn Town Hall	358 Burwood Road, Hawthorn	£11,763	J. Beswicke	
1890	Australian Building	49 Elizabeth Street (cnr. Flinders Lane), Melbourne	£55,585	Oakden, Addison & Kemp/ J. Beswicke	See Note (5). Demolished in 1980.
1891	Presbyterian Sunday School, Hawthorn	Rathmines Road (?), Hawthorn	£358	Oakden, Addison & Kemp	Location to be Confirmed.
1891	Store for John Danks & Son	Staughton Place, Little Collins Street, Melbourne	£943	F. DeGaris & Son/ Crouch & Wilson	Demolished.
1891	Additional storey to James McEwan & Co. warehouse	119–125 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne	£2,847	Oakden, Addison & Kemp	Demolished.

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Year	Name of Building & Works	Address	Value	Architect	Remarks
1892	Painting works, Hawthorn	Hawthorn	£15	Ruck & Cummings	Street & number not known.
1892	Malt House at Burnley Brewery	Gibdon Street, Burnley	£2,867	Beswicke & Coote	Demolished.
1892	Lodge at Austin Hospital for Incurables	Studley Road, Heidelberg	£385	Beswicke & Coote	Currently used as Austin Childcare Centre
1894	Erection of stalls & painting works at St. Patrick's Cathedral	Gisborne Street (cnr. Albert Street), East Melbourne	£222	P.A. Kennedy & E.J. Henderson	

Notes:

- (1) James Anderson's business address was 127 Little Flinders Street East from about 1870 to 1887, and then at 126 Nicholson Street, North Fitzroy from 1888 until his death in 1897.
- (2) This list was compiled using information from the following sources: *Victoria and its Metropolis, Past and Present*; *The Australasian Builder and Contractor's News*; *The Building, Engineering and Mining Journal*; *The Argus*; *Sands and McDougall's Melbourne and Suburban Directory*; *Australian Architectural Index* by Miles Lewis; and various contemporary suburban newspapers.
- (3) This list is current to June 2012. Further research is required to obtain missing information.
- (4) The first stage of construction was limited to the nave and transept, due to funding constraints. The building was not finally completed until after James Anderson's death.
- (5) At twelve storeys, this building was Australia's first skyscraper. It was the tallest office building in Australia until 1912, and the tallest in Melbourne until 1960.