

# From Red House to State

## Establishment

*Sunday Express 4-12-83*

Throughout the winter of 1980 the Old State Hotel shook and reverberated to the sounds and impacts of hammers and power tools.

Those who had known the place of old were moved to shake their heads in sadness as their familiar old watering hole was virtually dismembered, and the generally unattractive but comfortable exterior made ready for a major facelift.

The spring came and those same old patrons who were able to get a look through the jungle of ladders, trestles, festoons of electrical wiring, stacks of timber and rolls of carpet could see that what was happening to their old pub was something exciting.

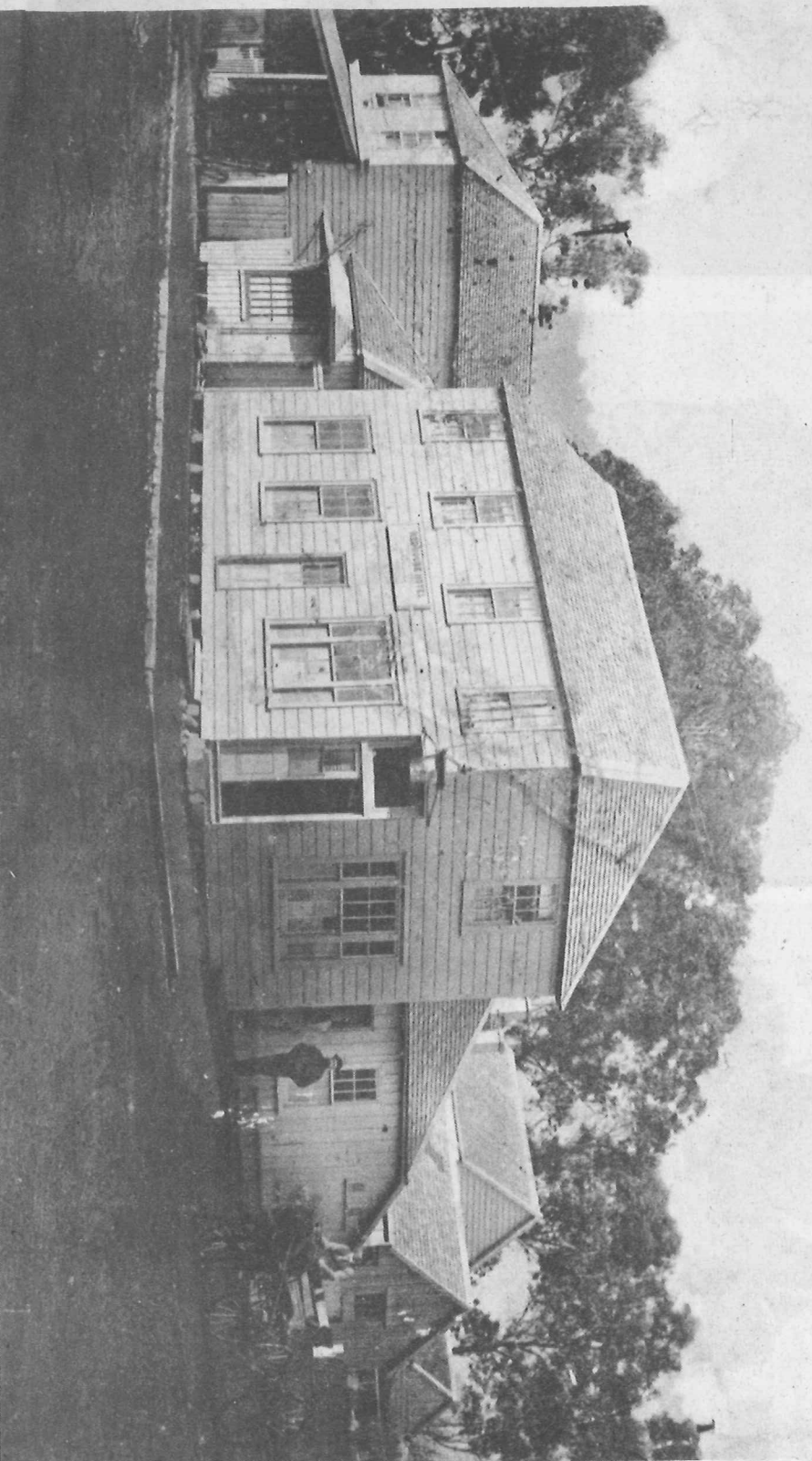
With the reopening of the building in September 1980 it was a bit difficult for the old patrons to get used to all the changes. But it was only for a while. They were soon just as comfortable in the State Establishment as they had ever been in the old State Hotel or the Red House, as some were old enough to remember it as.

The State had survived major changes before, and it took this, the greatest of all its changes, absolutely in its stride.

The State was built by one of New Plymouth's founder settlers, Richard Langman, who with his wife Mary and three sons, arrived here on board the Blenheim on November 7, 1842. Langman put in 20 years of varied pursuits before going into the hotel business. He was a farmer, constable, mail carrier, Rifle Volunteer and land speculator at various times.

In October 1863 he is recorded as having received the Crown grant to the section on the corner of Devon and Gover Streets. It is presumed that he began building his hotel soon afterwards.

The opening of the hotel, known as the Red House, in 1864 turned out to be a tragic affair for the Langmans. During the bustle and excitement of



moving into the new premises Mary Langman caught a severe chill. On top of this she suffered a stroke and died on June 30.

Richard Langman had the hotel until 1883. In that time he twice leased the premises firstly to Joseph Flower Carter who was there in 1866 and went bankrupt in June 1867. This Carter was one of the partners with Scott, Ross and then not so famous "Finker" Smith who in 1866 did the first exploring for oil in New Zealand near

where the root of the bankrupt. Richard Langman ran the Red Ngamotu. They erected a derrick but most of the when he again leased the

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hole was dug out by man-power. Oil was found but it did not pay. After Carter went

premises, this time to Edmund Dover, till 1877, when Langman had the hotel again till he sold it to

The Red House in the 1870s — already beginning to collect a variety of tacked-on additions.

W. Brooking on May 7, 1880.

Like most buildings of the period, it started as a small place, and was added to as occasion demanded, it appears to have had a dozen additions, each by a different architect (if any) and each architect choosing a different (if any) style of architecture, and to make the muddle worse, parts of the building had their second floor starting on and ranking in

height from about 9 to 12 feet.

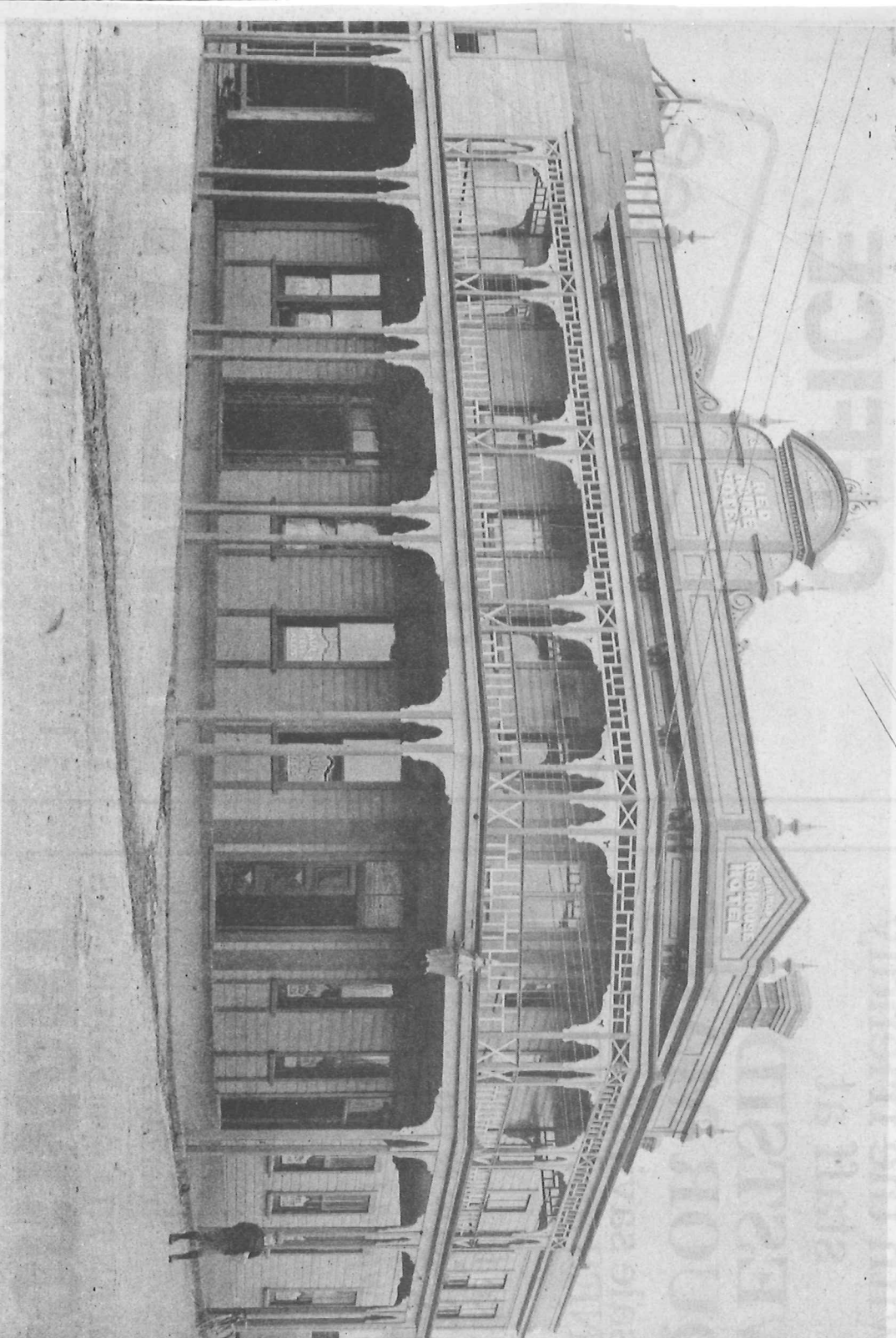
On September 4, 1883, Brooking sold out to John Coldwell. Coldwell sold to Richard Grylls, once of the South Road Hotel, Oakura Hotel, and later of the Taranaki (now Royal) Hotel. While Grylls was there, in April 1886, fire destroyed the kitchen. He was followed in July 1887 by Charles Coombes who went bankrupt, the hotel passing in October 1887 to Horatio Hammond, who did extensive alterations to both the Gover and Devon Street frontages.

He sold out to James Hawkins in September 1897, who first leased to Stephen Hooper then sold to him in 1899. In May 1900, Hooper leased the premises for a while to Arthur George Bishop. In 1892 a violent storm demolished the chimneys of the hotel, and the falling of bricks did considerable damage.

The present corner building was erected in the continental style of the period and in June 1902, Hooper leased the premises to a syndicate of four gentlemen, one whom, Edwin Whittle, had the licence in his name. Later in the same year, Whittle had the lease on his own. He purchased the premises from Hooper in 1920.

In January 1926, Benjamin Dunn purchased from Whittle and he in turn sold to Adam Lile in 1930.

The modern additions to the Gover Street frontage were added in September 1938 and in June 1937 the old name of Red House went, and the hotel was renamed the State Hotel. Mr Lile died in September 1964 and a son then carried on the hotel.



An opulent Red House Hotel photographed during the proprietorship of Arthur Bishop in 1900.

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