

SUPREME COURT BUILDING (MARITIME MUSEUM)

Now the home of the Maritime Museum, it was Victoria's first concrete building when it was erected in 1889. Matthew Baillie Begbie, the famous "hanging judge" presided here. He had little faith in the ability of jurors to reach the right verdict. One prisoner, on being found not guilty was told to "Go, and sin no more" by an indignant judge.

In the days when this site was occupied by the old Bastion Street prison, an alley ran north from the prison to the Boomerang Saloon. The Boomerang provided not only food and drink but also a convivial atmosphere for the inquests and church services occasionally held on the premises.

In 1887 the construction of a new Court House was authorized and the site chosen was that of the old police barracks and jail on Bastion Street. Herman Otto Tiedeman who had formerly been architect and engineer to the colonial administration provided the designs. He had also designed the old colonial administration buildings familiarly known as "the birdcages" and the previous court house, "the rookery". Ostensibly in the Romanesque Picturesque style, it was rumoured at the time of construction that the design was inspired by some court buildings in the architect's native Munich. Completed in 1889 at a cost of \$35,000 the Court House was Victoria's first concrete building with its massive form only slightly relieved by grooves in the cement facing to resemble the grouting of huge granite blocks. Towering over the surrounding buildings the Court House set a monumental tone for the area and was centrally located as a fitting image of legal authority in the fast growing capital city.

Though the overall effect is imposing the structure must have always seemed an awkward combination of forms and motifs plundered almost at random from popular architectural text books: elements of Renaissance Revival in cornices and mouldings; neo-Baroque in the rustication and portico arches; Richardsonian-Romanesque in massing, fenestration, and picturesque roofline.

In 1900 an ornate open-cage elevator was installed for the aging Chief-Justice Davis and remains a high point of the interior. Now the Maritime Museum it is well worth a visit.