The interior of the Civic Theatre once included an orchestra pit and a central stairway leading from the foyer to the middle of the auditorium (from the Tom Lennon Collection, RW1574/120).

Theatre giants of Wagga's past (Part 2)

Wayne Doubleday

As it fell into decline, the theatre's trustees, Mr Fitzpatrick, opened the theatre briefly for short-term rental before it was purchased by a local firm, Jeremy, Brown & Cox, on January 20, 1969. The company sold wholesale and retail farming products and only planned to use the Oxford's ground floor. Jeremy, Brown & Cox initially began as Thompson, Manning and Jeremy in 1863. Two of the founders were local to Wagga: Thompson's father was Wagga's first police magistrate and Jeremy was the catalyst for the construction of the Tumbarumba railway. The firm later became Jeremy and Co. in 1900 and 50 years afterwards, Jeremy Brown Pty Ltd.

However, despite its long success, the firm did not hold a solid grip on the old Oxford Theatre. The building was later altered into an army disposal store and eventually demolished on June 22, 1966. In its place we were development plans for a finance company.

The Civic Theatre

The Civic Theatre was built through a collaboration of funding from various groups, including the Wagga City Council, the Wagga School of Arts ($37,000), the Wagga War Memorial City Hall Fund ($30,000), and the Community Aid Fund ($27,000).

The Civic Theatre was one of many buildings in the Civic Precinct, which has been one of Wagga's most ambitious developments. The Civic Theatre alone had cost a total of $65,000 and was the largest building in the area. Once completed, the Civic Precinct included a Baby Health Centre (opened in November 1961, prior to the theatre), WWCC administration building offices, a Civic Auditorium and a public library, museum and art gallery. Presently, the Civic Theatre is still in full use and has become a popular entertainment venue in Wagga for all ages and groups.