

APPENDIX D

SYDNEY SUBURBAN AND NSW COUNTRY CIRCUITS

LOGISTICAL INFORMATION AND YEARLY SURVEY OF SUBURBAN CIRCUIT AND THEATRES

The Sydney suburban and New South Wales circuits operated along similar methods to the Queensland tours in that rail was the preferred form of transport for the company. According to information supplied by Charles Norman and Thea Row Hoskings, the company would generally travel to a show on the suburban circuit together - meeting at some central location in the city or at the Newtown Bridge Theatre. The use of rail to transport performers, equipment and sets between towns on the country circuit, meant that the company relied on the ready availability of labourers at each centre to help load and unload each troupe's requirements, as well as move them to the venue. It is known, however, that in later years Harry Clay employed his own truck drivers to move equipment between his city theatres and the suburban venues. Charles Norman remembers a man by the name of Long Ted who used to work for Clay in this capacity for many years.

The circuit also ran along certain patterns with the country circuit troupes coming off tour and onto the city circuit - following various routes (which changed over the years). The same would occur in the case of the Queensland tourists, with those who were contracted to stay with the company moving straight onto a circuit troupe at the completion of the northern tour.

There was obviously quite a deal of competition between the various companies as well as the venue managers within the organisation. This has become apparent through a number of insights published over the years which relate to the breaking of house records (and with wagers being placed on many occasions) and the attitude of the performers touring with the various troupes. The following are just a few of the examples:

A tenner offered by the [Clay's] management to anybody breaking the record held by Maurice Chenoweth's bunch at this house [Gaiety] (E: 13 Apr. 1921, 15)

From time to time great jealousy has been caused by this company being styled the No 1 Company. They are fully entitled to this honour, as they were the first revue company formed, and have drawn record business for the management wherever they have performed, it being a known fact that in the country people wait for the return of this popular company, and at Newtown during their week not one seat is vacant.... A word must not be forgotten for Arthur Morley (the writer of the revues, who also has been producer for the last three years), who during this time, has put on a new production each week, which in itself is a big record (AV: 23 May 1917, n. pag.)

Aside from these insights, little else is known about the circuits that have not already been discussed in the body of the thesis. It is likely, however, that more information can be found through further research into the NSW regional centres that the tours operated in.

The following is a list of known regional centres and suburban circuit venues serviced by Clay's. Due to there being less information published in the newspapers and trade journals during the early and late years of Clay's operations, however, these two periods still remain somewhat unclear.

1903 - 1908

| | | |
|------|------------|--------------------|
| Fri: | City | (Masonic Hall) |
| Sat: | Nth Sydney | (Masonic Hall) |
| | Newtown | (St George's Hall) |
| | Petersham | |
| | Balmain | |
| | Parramatta | |

Note: In Aug. 1907, a review notes that "the Harry Clay Co showed in the St George's Hall last Saturday evening with their bioscope and moving pictures" (NC: 31 Aug. 1907, 4).

1908

Fri: Nth Sydney (Masonic Hall)
Sat: City (Standard Theatre)
Newtown (St George's Hall)
Petersham
Balmain
Parramatta

1909

Suburban circuit during the year: (continues through until August 1910)

Mon: Petersham
Tue: Balmain
Wed: Newtown (St George's Hall)
Thu: Ashfield (Town Hall)
Fri: Nth Sydney (St Leonard's Masonic Hall)
Sat: City (Standard Theatre)

[Source: TT: May 1909, 18 / Nov. 1909, 23]

1910

Suburban circuit as of August:

Mon: Nth Sydney (Masonic Hall)
Tue: Leichhardt (Town Hall)
Wed: Newtown (St George's Hall)
Thu: Ashfield (Town Hall)
Fri: Parramatta (Town Hall)
Sat: City (Standard Theatre)

[Source: TT: Sept. 1910, 22]

Suburban circuit as of November:

Mon: Parramatta (Town Hall)
Tue: Leichhardt (Town Hall)
Wed: Newtown (St George's Hall)
Thu: Ashfield (Town Hall)
Fri: Randwick (St Jude's Hall)
Sat: City (Standard Theatre)

[Source: TT: Nov. 1910, 10]

1913

Suburban circuit as of November:

Newtown (Bridge Theatre) [St George's Hall prior to 19 July]
Balmain (Balmain Theatre)
Parramatta (Town Hall)
Nth Sydney (Masonic Hall)
Ashfield (Town Hall)
Leichhardt (Coronation Theatre) Saturday nights

[Source: AV: 15 Nov. 1913, 7]

Note: Clay closed down his circuit in December, playing only the Bridge Theatre and the Coronation Theatre, Leichhardt after that time.

1914

Suburban circuit is:

Bridge Theatre, Newtown
Coronation Theatre, Leichhardt (Saturday nights)

1915

Bridge Theatre, Newtown

1916

Suburban circuit as of September:

| | |
|------------|--------------------|
| Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) |
| Nth Sydney | (Coliseum Theatre) |
| Mascot | (Rosebury Theatre) |
| Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| Parramatta | (Town Hall) |
| Auburn | |

[Source: TT: Nov. 1916, 49]

NSW country circuit - South-Western Line, as of September:

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Goulburn | Murrumburrah |
| Wagga Wagga | Young |
| Cowra | Grenfell |
| Bathurst | Albury |
| Portland | Lithgow |
| Katoomba | Yass |
| Cootamundra | |

[Sources: AV: 27 Sept. 1916, n. pag. / TT: Nov. 1916, 49]

1917

Clay's companies returning from the country tour would play the following engagements:

WEEK 1:

Tue: Rockdale
Wed: Surrey Hills (Crown Star Theatre)
Thu: Parramatta
Fri: Ashfield (Town Hall)
Sat: Nth Sydney (Coliseum)

WEEK 2:

Mon: Nth Sydney (Coliseum)
Tue: Nth Sydney (Coliseum)
Wed: Mascot (Rosebury Theatre)
Thur: Mosman (Town Hall)
Fri: Newtown (Bridge Theatre - one week engagement, generally third in circuit rotation)

[Source: AV: 27 June 1917, n. pag.]

Suburban circuit as of June:

| | | |
|------|--------------|----------------------|
| Mon: | Nth Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| Tue: | Nth Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| | Rockdale | |
| Wed: | Mascot | (Rosebury Theatre) |
| | Surrey Hills | (Crown Star Theatre) |
| Thu: | Mosman | (Town Hall) |
| | Parramatta | |
| Fri: | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| Sat: | Nth Sydney | (Coliseum) |

* Clay open the National Theatre, Balmain on 23 June with shows announced for every evening

[Source: AV: 13 June 1917, "Harry Clay's Show..."]

Suburban circuit as of November:

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Manly | (Eden Gardens) | Rockdale | |
| Nth Sydney | (Coliseum) | Mosman | (Town Hall) |
| Mascot | (Thornton's Rosebury Theatre) | Parramatta | (Town Hall) |
| Surry Hills | (Crown Star Theatre) | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| Bondi Junction | (Coronation Theatre) | Daceyville | |
| Coogee | | | |

Note 1: Eden Gardens was being played nightly from 22 December through to the end of the summer holidays in 1918.

Note 2: The Coliseum was still operating three nights a week.

NSW country circuit - South-Western Line, as of June:

| | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|--|
| Goulburn | | Harden | |
| Albury | | Young | |
| Cowra | | Junee | |
| Bathurst | | Katoomba | |
| Lithgow | | Cootamundra | |

[Source: AV: 13 June 1917, "Harry Clay's Show..."]

NSW country circuit - South-Western Line, as of November:

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Goulburn | (Majestic Theatre) | Harden | |
| Albury | | Young | |
| Cowra | | Junee | |
| Bathurst | | Katoomba | |
| Lithgow | | Cootamundra | |
| Wagga Wagga | | Yass | |
| Grenville | | Wyalong | |

[Source: AV: 19 Nov. 1916 / 3 Oct. 1917, n. pags.]

1918

Suburban circuit as of August:

| | | | |
|------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) | Burwood | |
| City | (Princess Theatre) | Coogee | |
| Manly | (Eden Gardens) | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| Nth Sydney | (Coliseum) | Bondi Junction | (Coronation Theatre) |
| Parramatta | (Town Hall) | Surry Hills | (Crown Star Theatre) |

[AV: 30 Aug. 1919, n. pag.]

Note 1: Eden Gardens, as well as the Coliseum, both playing three nights a week (Sat, Mon, Tue). Advertising during the year doesn't mention all the venues, adding at the end of each list "and Elsewhere)

Note 2: Clay opened his account at the Princess Theatre in March

NSW country circuit - South-Western Line, as of August:

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------|--|--|
| Goulburn | (Majestic Theatre) | | |
| Bathurst | | | |
| Katoomba | | | |
| Lithgow | | | |

Note: Clay temporarily closed down most of the country circuit during the winter months, reopening it in October (AV: 11 Oct. 1918, 13)

Oddfellows' Hall, To-morrow (Sat.) Night.

AND EVERY SATURDAY.

Harry Clay's Master Companies.

(PRESENTED BY WALLY EDWARDS.)

TWO GREAT SPECIALTY ACTS, FIRST SPECIALTY ACT:—

WHIMSICAL WALKER, Whirling Wheelman.

SECOND SPECIALTY ACT:—

McLEAN and DRURY, Whirlwind Dancers.

THE FOLLOWING FAVORITES WILL ALSO APPEAR:—

- SLAVIN AND THOMPSON.
- GEORGE CROTTY,
- IDA JARVIS,
- ALICE WALTON,
- FRED. WEBBER,
- WILL CARLYON,
- GEORGE KENDALL,
- MADAM HUGGARD.

GRAND MUSICAL REVUE:—

"30,000 Miles a Minute."

(A FAST PRODUCTION.)

PRICES AS USUAL. SEATS MAY BE BOOKED AT CONFECTIONER'S SHOP.

Saturday: Trades Hall. Saturday.

PARAMOUNT SERVICE presents another Two star Programme of unusual quality—

"The House of Lies," 5000 ft.

Featuring EDNA GOODRICH, is a picture of high merit, and shows the temptation of beautiful girls, and the wiles of degraded men. It is beautifully acted, and stands as a masterpiece of EDNA GOODRICH.

"FRECKLES." 5000 ft. "FRECKLES."

Features LOUISE HUFF and JACK PICKFORD in a picturisation of the famous book. It is a most exciting and wonderful production, and JACK PICKFORD takes the part of the one-armed little wail nicknamed FRECKLES. He is quite a hero, and holds his own in many a good scrap. It is a picture full of humor and amusement.

We also show 2000ft. COMEDY, and an "AMERICAN GAZETTE" which complete a Programme of the usual high-class standard.

Matinee at 3 p.m. Matinee at 3 p.m.

Full Programme at both shows. A real treat for the children in this 5000ft. PICKFORD FUN-MAKER. Be there to see JACK at his best.

DON'T FORGET the GREAT BENEFIT to be given by the—

Newton-Carroll Dramatic Co. in Trades Hall To-Night.

1919

Suburban circuit as of February:

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) | Bankstown | |
| City | (Princess Theatre) | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| Nth Sydney | (Coliseum) | Leichhardt | (Town Hall) |
| Manly | (Eden Gardens) | Surry Hills | (Crown Star) |
| Bondi Junction | (Coronation Hall) | | |

[Source: AV: 7 Feb. 1919, n. pag.]

Note 1: Clay took over the management of the Gaiety Theatre (in collaboration with Andy Kerr) as of November.

Note 2: The country circuit closed early in the year due to the flu epidemic.

1920

Suburban circuit as of April:

| | | |
|------|----------------|---|
| | Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) |
| | City | (Gaiety and Princess theatres) |
| Mon: | North Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| Tue: | Rockdale | (Town Hall) |
| Wed: | Manly | (Paris Gardens / Chatswood (School of Arts) from August |
| Thu: | Bondi Junction | (Coronation Theatre) |
| Fri: | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| Sat: | North Sydney | (Coliseum) |

[Source: TT: Apr. 1920, 33]

Suburban circuit as of December: (now 2 circuits)

| | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) |
| | City | (Gaiety and Princess theatres) |
| Sat: | North Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| | Manly | (Paris Gardens) |
| Mon: | North Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| | Hurstville | (Queen's Theatre) |
| Tue: | Rockdale | (Town Hall) |
| | Paddington | (Oxford Theatre) |
| Wed: | Manly | (Paris Gardens) |
| | Mosman | (Town Hall) |
| Thu: | Bondi Junction | (Coronation |
| | South Kensington | (Democratic Hall) |
| Fri: | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |
| | Wollongong | (Boland's Theatre) |

[Source: AV: 24 Dec. 1920, n. pag.]

HARRY CLAY'S CIRCUIT

STILL GROWING

FEATURING MUSICAL, COMEDY AND VAUDEVILLE.



EDEN GARDENS, MANLY.—Opening Shortly.
 BRIDGE THEATRE, NEWTOWN.—Every Evening.
 COLISEUM THEATRE, NORTH SYDNEY.—Every Sat., Mon., Tues.
 SUBURBAN CIRCUIT.

Parramatta, Ashfield, Mosman, Crown Street, Rockdale, Mascot.
 COUNTRY CIRCUIT.

Clay's Majestic Theatre, Goulbourn, Albury, Wagga, Cootamundra, Junee, Harden, Young, Cowra, Bathurst, Lithgow, Katoomba, etc.

LONG ENGAGEMENTS ASSURED—GOOD VERSATILE ARTISTS—AND

WITHIN A STONE'S THROW OF SYDNEY.
 NO DAY WORK!—A FAIR DEAL!—A FAIR SALARY!—
 AND NO SWEATING!

(Australian Variety 20 June 1919, n. pag.)

HARRY CLAY'S CIRCUIT

REVUE AND VAUDEVILLE.

Embracing PRINCESS THEATRE (Railway Square), EVERY EVENING AND MATINEE EVERY SATURDAY; BRIDGE THEATRE (Newtown), EVERY EVENING; COLISEUM (North Sydney), SATURDAY, MONDAY; EDEN GARDENS (Manly); SATURDAY, MONDAY, and . . .

BANKSTOWN ASHFIELD, LEICHHARDT, SUEBY HILLS, BONDI JUNCTION, and ELSEWHERE.

WANTED

HIGH-CLASS SPECIALISTS AND GOOD HANDY PEOPLE FOR REVUE. Call or Write J. H. White, Clay's Agency, 256 Pitt St. Sydney

(Australian Variety 8 Aug. 1919, n. pag.)

Harry Clay's Vaudeville

NIGHTLY, AT 8

THE

**PRINCESS
THEATRE**

RAILWAY SQUARE
(George Street)
VAUDEVILLE &
REVUE.

Prices: 6d. to 2/-
MATINEES:
Sat. and all Holidays,
at 2.30.

NIGHTLY, AT 8.

KEER'S

**GAIETY
THEATRE**

OXFORD STREET
(Hyde Park.)
VAUDEVILLE &
REVUE.

Prices: 6d. to 2/-
MATINEES:
Sat. and all Holidays,
at 2.30.

NIGHTLY, at 8.

THE

**BRIDGE
THEATRE**

Right at the Bridge,
NEWTOWN.
VAUDEVILLE &
REVUE.

Prices: 6d. to 2/-.

CLAY'S VAUDEVILLE BOOKING AGENCY,

4 Young's Chambers, 256 Pitt St., City.

ALWAYS AN OPENING FOR GOOD VAUDEVILLE AND REVUE PEOPLE.

ALL CLASSES OF PERFORMERS SUPPLIED FOR GARDEN FETES, AT HOMES, SMOKE CONCERTS, Etc. See J. H. WHITE ("Whitie.")

(Australian Variety 11 Dec. 1919, n. pag.)

1921

Suburban circuit as of March:

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------|--|
| | Newtown City | (Bridge Theatre) (Princess and Gaiety theatres) |
| Sat: | North Sydney Manly | (Coliseum) (Paris Gardens) |
| Mon: | North Sydney Hurstville | (Coliseum) (Queen's Theatre) |
| Tue: | Rockdale Paddington | (Town Hall) (Oxford Theatre) |
| Wed: | Manly Mosman | (Paris Gardens) (Town Hall) |
| Thu: | Bondi Junction South Kensington | (Coronation) (Democratic Hall) |
| Fri: | Ashfield Wollongong | (Town Hall) (Boland's Theatre) |

[Source: E: 30 Mar. 1921, 22]

Suburban circuit as of September:

| | | |
|------|------------------------------------|--|
| | Newtown City | (Bridge Theatre) (Princess and Gaiety theatres) |
| Sat: | North Sydney Leichhardt | (Coliseum) (Town Hall) |
| Mon: | North Sydney Gladesville | (Coliseum) |
| Tue: | Rockdale Five Dock | (Town Hall) |
| Wed: | Balmain Parramatta | (National Theatre) (Town Hall) |
| Thu: | Bondi Junction South Kensington | (Coronation Hall) (Democratic Hall) |
| Fri: | Wollongong Ashfield | (Boland's Theatre) (Town Hall) |

[Source: TT: Sept. 1921, n. pag.]

1922

Suburban circuit as of March:

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--------------|
| | Newtown City | (Bridge Theatre) (Princess and Gaiety theatres) | | |
| | North Sydney Croyden | (Coliseum) | Parramatta Auburn | |
| | Mosman Hurstville Five Dock | (Town Hall) | Bondi Junction Burwood | (Coronation) |
| | Balmain Ashfield | (National Theatre) (Town Hall) | Wollongong | (Boland's) |

[Source: TT: Mar. 1922, 16]

Suburban circuit as of December:

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Newtown City | (Princess and Gaiety theatres) | | |
| North Sydney | (Coliseum) | Randwick | (Randwick Theatre) |
| Leichhardt | (Town Hall) | Manly | |
| Ryde | | Glebe Junction | |
| Balmain | | Bondi Junction | (Coronation Hall) |
| Campsie | | Rockdale | (Acme Theatre) |
| Ashfield | (Town Hall) | | |

[Source: TT: Dec 1922, 23]

NSW country circuit as of December:

Maitland
Cessnock
Wallsend
West Wallsend
Kurri Kurri
Lakemba

[Source: TT: Dec. 1922, 23]

1923

Suburban circuit as of June:

| | | |
|------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| | Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) |
| | City | (Princess and Gaiety theatres) |
| Sat: | North Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| Mon: | North Sydney | (Coliseum) |
| Tue: | Hurstville | (Queen's Theatre) |
| Wed: | Balmain | (National Theatre) |
| Thu: | Bondi Junction | (Coronation Theatre) |
| Fri: | Ashfield | (Town Hall) |

[Source: TT: June 1923, 27]

1924

Suburban circuit as of September

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) |
| City | (Princess and Gaiety theatres) |
| North Sydney | (Coliseum) |

Note: Individual suburbs not advertised or mentioned, although the circuit is still operating (TT: June 1924, 21)

1925

Suburban circuit as of September

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Newtown | (Bridge Theatre) |
| City | (Princess, Gaiety and Hippodrome) |
| North Sydney | (Coliseum) |

Note 1: Individual suburbs not advertised or mentioned, although the circuit of some size is still operating

Note 2: The Hippodrome was being used Saturday nights only

1926

Suburban circuit as of August:

| | |
|--|---|
| Newtown City | (Bridge Theatre (Gaiety and Hippodrome) |
| Leichhardt Ashfield North Sydney | (Strand Theatre) (Town Hall) (Coliseum) |

[Source: JI: 26 Aug. 1926, 21]

1927

Suburban circuit as of

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Newtown City | (Bridge Theatre (Gaiety) |
| Balmain North Sydney | (Coliseum) |

Note: Only a few individual suburbs are mentioned, although the circuit is still operating (JI: 19 May 1927, 29)

1928-29

Very little concerning Clay's circuit or its artists was published during the last two years of its operations. It is known, however, that the Gaiety was still under Clay's management until mid to late 1929, with the Bridge Theatre closing under the Clay banner in late November (at which time it was leased by Harry Kitching and Amy Rochelle). The North Sydney Coliseum license was not renewed during 1929. Other details established to date include:

- The company appears to have been playing seasons in Wollongong in 1928. The *Illawarra Mercury* reports, for example that Clay's Vaudeville Company, headed by Billy "Skeeta" Cass, played a one night season at the Crown Theatre on 9 March (9 Mar. 1928, 10).