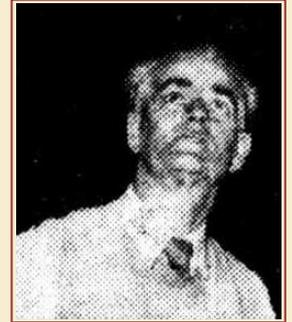


# TED GABRIEL

Stage manager. Edward Gabriel was employed by Harry Clay's as a stage manager at his Bridge Theatre headquarters from as early as 1914. In this respect he was very much a Newtown identity, being associated with the venue until it ceased being associated with Clay's in 1930.

Often referred to as "Handsome Ted" in *Australian Variety*, Ted Gabriel was considered one of the most popular members of Harry Clay's staff at the Bridge Theatre, Newtown, by some of Sydney's theatre industry writers. His popularity was reportedly not just down to the professional manner in which he "put on" the shows, but also due to his agreeable disposition (an attribute mentioned quite often in the pages of the trade journals over the years). Gabriel, whose duties were considerable, was said in 1914 to have had "a personality that will win everyone's regards. He is ever attentive, and most obliging, and the Bridge Theatre are [sic] most fortunate in securing such a steady, good fellow as Ted."<sup>1</sup>



*Sun* (Sydney) 4 July 1950, 18.

One of five children born to James Morris Gabriel (-1906) and his wife Emily Sarah (ca. 1853-1933), Ted Gabriel was likely born in the Mount Morgan district of Queensland sometime between the late-1880s and early to mid-1890s. His father was employed by the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company from ca. 1884 until his death in 1906. His mother, who was born in Middlesex, England, immigrated to Australia in 1873 and soon afterwards settled in Maryborough. She and James married in Mount Perry (south-west of Bundaberg) before moving to Mount Morgan. One of their sons, Ernest, was reportedly the first white child to be born at Mount Morgan.<sup>2</sup>

Gabriel eventually left Queensland and settled in Sydney where he secured employment with Harry Clay. Although it has not yet been ascertained when he first began working for the Sydney-based entrepreneur it is highly likely that he had been involved with Clay's operations well-before November 1914, when his name is first mentioned in association with the Bridge Theatre. In this respect he may have been the venue's stage manager from its opening in 1913. He also possibly travelled around Clay's suburban circuit as stage manager even earlier than that.

Gabriel remained at the Bridge Theatre after Clay died in 1925, and is mentioned in a report by the New South Wales Fire Brigade as being the manager on duty when a small fire broke out in the stage area of the building in 1930. The theatre was at that time being leased by former *Australian Variety* editor, turned producer Harry Kitching.

Gabriel is believed to have left the Bridge Theatre in 1930 to join the staff of the Prince Edward Theatre. That venue, which opened in November 1924, was overseen by Dan Carroll for more than a quarter of a century. Gabriel himself was still at the theatre in 1949, employed as chief mechanist.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that he moved to the Trocadero (George Street, Sydney) the following year.<sup>4</sup>

## HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. Two of Ted Gabriel's brothers were associated with the theatre industry. Ernest Gabriel was for a while the secretary of the affiliated Theatrical and Amusement Employee's Association. Another brother, E. Gabriel was the electrician who installed the wiring and electrical fittings at Birch Carroll and Coyle's Wintergarden theatres in Brisbane and Rockhampton. He also installed the fittings and lighting effects at the Brisbane Town Hall. A third brother, William J. Gabriel, was reportedly a noted runner and footballer.<sup>5</sup>

## ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

**1914:** Ted Gabriel, the stage manager at Harry Clay's Bridge Theatre, Newtown, is quite a busy man. Those in front do not know how much depends on him; he is very popular for the reason that he has a personality that will win everyone's regards. He is ever attentive, and most obliging and the Bridge Theatre, are most fortunate in securing such a steady, good fellow as Ted (*Australian Variety* 11 Nov 1914, n. pag.).

<sup>1</sup> *Australian Variety* (Sydney) 11 Nov. 1914, n. pag.

<sup>2</sup> "Mount Morgan News." *Evening News* (Rockhampton, Qld) 20 April 1933, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Jim MacDougall. "Contact." *Sun* (Sydney) 29 Nov. 1949, 1.

<sup>4</sup> "Fourth of July Ball" *Sun* (Sydney) 4 July 1950, 18.

<sup>5</sup> "Mount Morgan News," 11.

- 1914:** Ted Gabriel is an acrobat all right. At the Bridge Theatre - where, by the way, he is a permanent fixture - he strolls into the orchestral well, and putting one hand on to the stage he is the next moment up there on both feet. Amazing is the ease and agility with which he appears to get about in his duties as a stage-hand. Mr Gabriel strikes one as being able, when the occasion requires it, to do the work of just about six ordinary men (*Theatre Magazine* Dec. 1914, 39).
- 1916:** Ted Gabriel, that handy man at Harry Clay's, is an obliging youngster who is always ready to help artistes. He is prepared to do any little job they require for their set, and this scribe can [unreadable] work. Try him (*Australian Variety* 7 June 1916, n. pag.).
- 1917:** Handsome Ted (they are all handsome at Clay's) is doing splendid work for the firm lately. He is one of the best dispositioned men we have met, and also knows all there is to be known about the business. He is immensely popular with artistes playing the Bridge Theatre (*Australian Variety* 6 June 1917, 9).
- 1917:** Ted Gabriel is a busy man lately, but seems to keep the ball rolling. The strike has made no difference with him owing to his cycling abilities. Ted is worth his weight in gold, and would take some replacing (*Australian Variety* 15 Aug 1917, n. pag.).
- 1917:** Some actor: Ted Gabriel got a chance to distinguish himself when **Lester Brown** put him into a sketch at the Bridge Theatre. Years to come, when Ted is being interviewed by the great dailies, he will tell of the wonderful success he made in the day gone by (*Australian Variety* ? Oct. 1917, n. pag.).<sup>6</sup>
- 1918:** "Long Ted" Gabriel, first cousin to a spring poet, has written several verses which will shortly appear in this paper. They are always welcome, possessing a rich fund of humour (*Australian Variety* 26 Apr. 1918, 14).
- 1918:** Ted Gabriel (handsome Ted) is a busy man of late, and this scribe often wonders when he gets his beauty sleep; he seems to be up at all times. Ted is very very popular with all artists visiting Clay's and he is one of the best-tempered fellows you could wish to meet. he would certainly take some replacing (*Australian Variety* 25 Jan. 1918, n. pag.).
- 1920:** Ted Gabriel at Harry Clay's is responsible for the good setting at the Bridge Theatre this week. The same Ted has presented some very fine settings during the past twelve months. He understands situation, lights, and in fact every detail in all departments, so no wonder his work is always correct (*Australian Variety* 12 Feb. 1920, 5).

**RULES WHICH MIGHT BE FOLLOWED WITH ADVANTAGE.**

**Ted. Gabriel**, of Clay's Bridge Theatre, Newtown, gets in some subtle comedy with the following rules, displayed in prominent places around the stage and its environs:—

**The seclusion of the dressing room** until your turn, prevents your being an obstacle on the stage.

**Artistes are requested** not to send their laundry out until we have seen your act.

**Don't tell us what you've done—** do it.

**To All Your Peanut Friends.**—If you can't carry away the shells, eat them also, as the staff strongly object to cleaning up after you; don't be cross, but keep your "nuts."

**If you wish** to make a hit with the stage-hands, tell them how to do their work; they will appreciate it.

**We know the stage is rather small—** not up to Drury Lane. We know the dressing-rooms are bum—not elaborate, but plain, We also know Caruso and Melba are off the bill.

**Artistes are requested** to give the air a chance to blow through a clear entrance.

**To tack and hammer stage managers:** Don't tell us how you hung the scenery in the States—it's been done to death.

**Lean against the switch—**it tickles. We will go to your funeral.

**The scenery is self-supporting;** please don't hold it up.

**Keep clear of the switchboard;** we have an electrician, thank you!

**We know you**, what you do, how you work, what your act is like, and how much you get; we read "Variety and Show World"—it tells us your value.

*Australian Variety* (Sydney) 16 Nov. 1917, n. pag.

<sup>6</sup> This quotation is sourced from a photocopy made in 1997 at the Mitchell Library. Unfortunately the citation details have been misplaced. A notation on the back of the par identifies it as October 1917 only.