

# Albury's Royal Palais

*Greg Ryan*

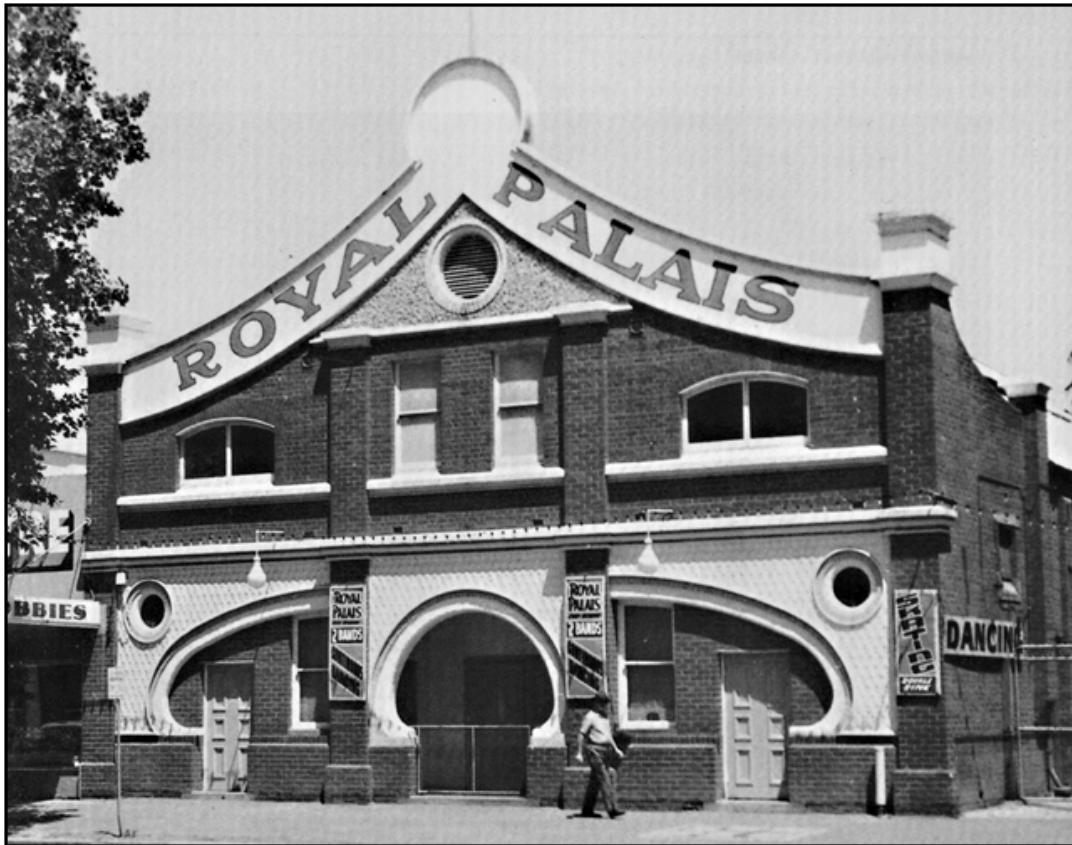
Albury locals will remember the Royal Palais as a venue for balls, dancing, boxing bouts and skating. Many young Albury ladies made their 'Debut' at the Palais

The Kiewa street theatre was built for Fred Blacklock by Albury builders and architects Frew and Logan. It was designed to seat 1000 and was opened in May 1914 as the "Theatre Royal" by mayor Alf Waugh.

The opening programme featured "humorous and sentimental pictures, remarkably clever accordion playing by 'Rellami,' ... and a truly wonderful turn by Bailey's Posing Dogs."

During World War I the theatre hosted several patriotic meetings. These included launch of the "Patriotic Fund" in August 1914 to raise funds for the war effort and recruitment rallies.

In December 1917 Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes addressed 1500 at the theatre, encouraging his audience to vote 'Yes' in a plebiscite proposing more Australian troops for the war in Europe. The 'Albury Banner' reported that "the people were unanimously with the 'Yes' cause" and "the cheering could be heard two miles from the hall."



Albury's Royal Palais Theatre

Mr Phil Howard leased the theatre from 1914 to 1924. The venue hosted variety concerts, vaudeville shows, films, school concerts, musical performances as well as political rallies. Blacklock sold the theatre in 1924 to the Lee Tet brothers who ran open-air pictures during the summer.

The Lee Tets sold the theatre to Charles Henry "Pivot" Smith. In July 1937 he opened the theatre as the Royal Palais declaring that "modern dance with the Royal Palais Troubadours would be conducted each Friday" and that Boyd's orchestra would play for old-time dance on Saturdays.

The dance floor catered for 650 dancers. Smith was director of "Albury Amusements Pty Ltd" who also owned the Regent Theatre (the Smith family is still there) and the Ritz ballroom.

Smith made improvements to the building and all the large balls and receptions were held there including indoor/outdoor roller-skating and for a short time, ice-skating.

In about 1980 the Palais was demolished and West End Plaza opened on the site in 1983.