

# A Family of Builders — From Cottages to Cathedrals

Romantic Story of A. T. Brine & Sons—An Organisation that has Played a Leading Part in Perth's Expansion

## Magnificent Structures

Testify to Capabilities of Famous Builders

### Foundation and Growth of a Local Enterprise

Thirty-six years ago a small cottage was constructed in Leeder-street (now Carr-street), Leederville—the first building job done in Perth by the late Mr. A. T. Brine.

To-day scores of magnificent city structures bear testimony to the excellent work of the firm, which is now headed by his son, Mr. W. L. Brine, and operates under the title of A. T. Brine and Sons Ltd.

Such magnificent edifices as the University of Western Australia, St. Mary's Cathedral, W.A. Trustee Building, Royal Insurance Building, Shell House, Anzac House and the State War Memorial are lasting tributes to the building capabilities of A. T. Brine and Sons.

The progress of the business has been the progress of Perth itself.

The founder of the firm, the late Mr. A. T. Brine, was one of the thousands who came to the West from Victoria in the mid-nineties to try his fortunes. In Victoria, everything was in a depressed state; the Golden Gate offered opportunities for vigorous young men not afraid of work.

Arriving here in 1856, he spent some time on the goldfields, being associated with Lionel Salmon and Son's display at the Coolgardie Exhibition. Then, in 1859, he set up as a builder in Perth, early jobs being the erection of six-plate mazzines on the goldfields. The late Mr. Brine's

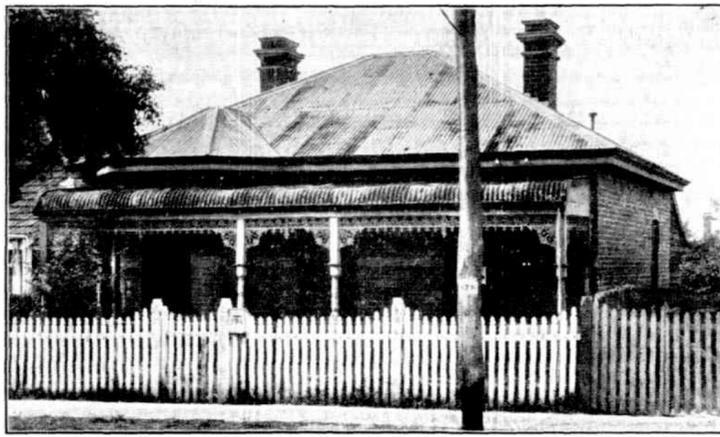
**FIRST CONTRACT**  
of any dimensions was the erection of the various wards at the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, which work was commenced early in 1907. This work, in fact, was a succession of six contracts. Then followed the Grand

Brine, becoming joint managing directors.

In 1925, work in hand included St. Mary's Cathedral, State War Memorial, Skipper Building, service station and the Victoria Hotel, James-street. Then followed

**BIG CONTRACTS**  
In the metropolis—additions to Charles Moore and Co., Metropolitan Markets, Hackett Memorial Buildings and Shell House. Next came the construction of the Church of England (South Perth), Commonwealth Bank (Midland Junction), National Bank (Fremantle), the supply of Donnybrook stone for the Commonwealth Bank (Perth), Anzac House and more recently additions to Boans Ltd.

At one stage, in 1929, the firm had contracts for over £450,000 in progress—the University, St. Mary's Cathedral, Metropolitan Markets,



FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS—BRINE'S FIRST JOB  
A cottage built in Carr-street (formerly Leeder-street), Leederville, in 1859.

## CHANGING PERTH

Straggling Village to Great Metropolis

### The Part Its Builders Have Played

Every year sees remarkable changes in Perth's building skyline.

The straggling village of 50 years ago has become an imposing city of magnificent structures.

Yet, viewed in the light of famous cities of the Old World, Perth is still an infant. Its progress, however, has been amazing, and the fine buildings which grace its principal streets are evidence of the confidence of its people and a tribute to its builders.

Passing through the main streets of Perth to-day, or looking down on the picturesque capital from the heights of King's Park, it is difficult to imagine the Perth our fathers or grandfathers knew.

In 1827, when many English towns from which the early settlers came were veterans, Perth had 350 houses, and a population of less than 500. Its first houses were necessarily primitive, and even years later we read of St. George's-terrace as

**A SANDY WASTE.**  
along which vehicles passed with difficulty.

Pictorial records show us the unimpressive buildings of the colony's early days, the rising township of the sixties, convict-made roads and public buildings of seventy years ago, then

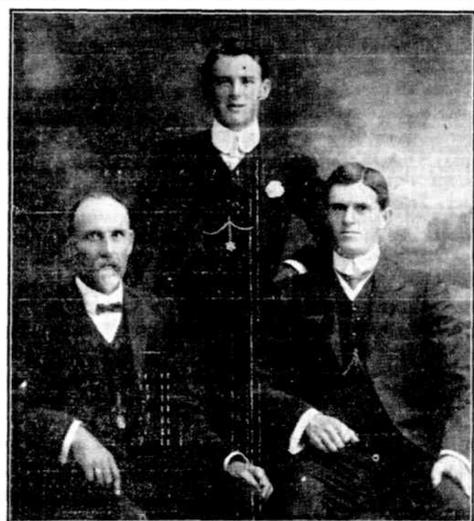
### FIRM'S MANAGING DIRECTOR

Mr. W. L. Brine, managing director of A. T. Brine and Sons Ltd., is a son of the founder of the firm, and left schoolteaching to follow his life's ambition of architectural engineering.

Born at Stawell, Victoria, in 1886, he came to this State as a boy of nine years and went to school here, finishing off at Hale School. Then, after two years at the Teachers' Training College, Claremont, he became a master at the Perth Modern School. Four years later, in 1914, he went to the Manchester University for theoretical training in architectural engineering. Then the war came to interfere with his studies, as it did with so many other young men. His efforts to join up with the forces were not successful, but he was able to do his bit in munition work and at the British War Office and the National Physical Laboratory, Teddington.

Returning to Western Australia in 1919, W.L.B. joined his father and brother in the business of building contractors, establishing the firm of A. T. Brine and Sons. The father, Mr. A. T. Brine, died in 1926, and four years later the other son severed his connection with the business.

In 1928 the business was floated into a limited liability company, and has carried out many outstanding building contracts in Western Australia, with Mr. W. L. Brine at the helm.



**A NOTABLE FAMILY OF BUILDERS**  
The founder, the late Mr. A. T. Brine, sen. (on left), with his sons, Mr. W. L. Brine (right), the managing director, and Mr. A. T. Brine (standing), who severed his active association with the firm in 1930

### VALUABLE BUILDING PLANT

Building plant to the value of £10,000 is owned by A. T. Brine and Sons Ltd., for use in its big contracts. It includes the latest machines required for big city contract work.

House, Anzac House, Alliance Building, just to mention a few which the firm constructed, while away from the city's heart such excellent work as is to be found in St. Mary's Cathedral and the Hackett Memorial Buildings of the University of Western Australia are but just a few examples of the firm's constructional ability.

The Brine name is indelibly linked with Perth through its buildings.

### BUILDING REVIVAL

#### Evidence of State's Advance

The revival in the building trade in Western Australia is emphasized by Government figures covering permits for the erection of buildings in the metropolitan area.

Back in 1925-27, 3042 permits for new buildings, alterations, and additions were granted for the metropolis, work being valued at £1,931,800.

In 1929-30 the value of work carried out was £1,825,974. Then came the slump, and in the following year the figure fell to £392,756.

Since then there has been a gradual improvement, touching £987,728 for 1933-34, while for the nine months between June, 1934, and March last, the total exceeded £1,000,000.

The improvement marks Perth's progress, and the confidence of its business people and home builders.

Perth is justly proud of the rapid progress it has made, and the advance is more particularly noticeable to people who return to the State after an absence of a few years.

### EARLY PUBLIC BUILDINGS

#### The Old Courthouse and Old Government House

One of the State's first public buildings was the old Courthouse (now housing the Arbitration Court) with its Doric portico. Built in 1824 at a cost of £2200, it has many successive uses, and from 1836 to 1846 served as an Anglican Church. Old Government House was also put up in the early thirties, close to the site of the gate lodge of the present Government House. It was removed in the improvement of the gardens in 1887, having been succeeded 23 years earlier (in 1864) by the present building.

## Additions to Boans' Premises

Outstanding Features of Work

### A. T. Brine & Sons Ltd's Contract

Outstanding features of the new additions to Boans' premises carried out by A. T. Brine and Sons Ltd. have been the construction of a complete basement at the Wellington-street end, the floor of which is about two feet below the highest general water level, and the demolition of the heavy brick eastern wall.

This wall supported the whole of the floors and contained about 2000 tons of material (in which were around 600,000 bricks), and was demolished without interfering with Boans' big business operations.

Tenders for the additions to the premises of Boans Ltd. were called by Messrs. F. G. B. Hawkins and Associates in July, 1934, and some thirteen builders submitted tenders. The lowest (and successful) tender came from A. T. Brine and Sons Ltd. at £53,257.

The contract documents were signed on August 7, 1934, and the work commenced almost immediately. The drawings provided for the construction of a basement from Wellington-street through to Murray-street, and with a ground first and second floor to Wellington-street frontage to correspond with the existing building, and additions to the full height of the existing premises at Murray-street. The Wel-

lington-street frontage is 49ft. 6in. by a depth of 186ft., and the Murray-street portion is 49ft. 6in. by a depth of 237ft. 2in.

### GENERAL WATER LEVEL.

This work was carried out by the use of interlocking steel piling preventing the possibility of any seepage of sand from the surrounding areas.

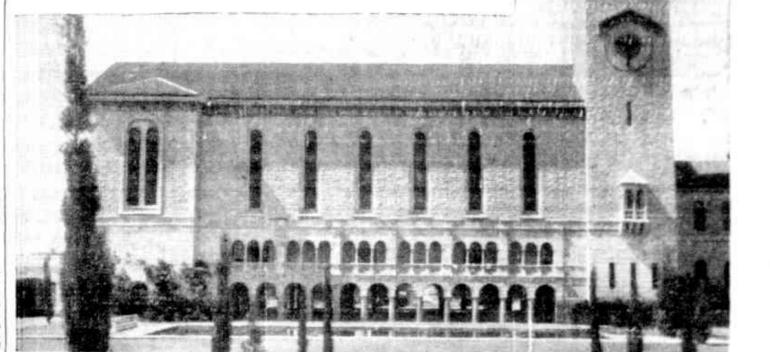
An outstanding feature of the work has been the construction of a complete basement with 2ft. 6in. of head room at the Wellington-street end. The floor of this portion of the building is about two feet below the highest general water level and has required special treatment in making it impervious.

The heavy station bases which

anticipated that by Christmas, 1935, the whole of the building will be ready for occupation.

In view of the difficulties which the building presented it is a credit to those concerned that the work has been completed in such short time. The proprietors have been caused little inconvenience and no damage has been caused to stock.

**SUB CONTRACTORS.**  
Sub contractors were: Steel work, Messrs. Forwood Down and Co. Ltd., Lifts, Messrs. Waygood-Otis, Pty. Ltd., shop fronts and lift enclosures, Messrs. Arcus Ltd., counters and show fittings, Messrs. Binning Bros., karris in joists, etc. Stags Saw Mills; general timber, Messrs. Whittaker Bros., painting, Messrs. C. Wood and Son;



PERTH'S PICTURESQUE UNIVERSITY  
The Hackett Memorial Buildings, one of the largest contracts (approximately £210,000) carried out by A. T. Brine and Sons.

ligning-street frontage is 49ft. 6in. by a depth of 186ft., and the Murray-street portion is 49ft. 6in. by a depth of 237ft. 2in.

Soon after the commencement of the work it was decided to erect high speed lifts of improved design at the southern portion of the building, running from the basement to the fourth floor. This necessitated a lift pit eight

feet approximately three feet deeper than the basement floor, well below low water level and steel caissons were used for the sheeting of the concrete work.

The excavation of the site to make provision for the basement was carried out by the steam derrick excavator used by the Main Roads Board in their heavier excavation work. It has since been used at Mt. Eliza for the new reservoir.

### HEAVY BRICK WALL

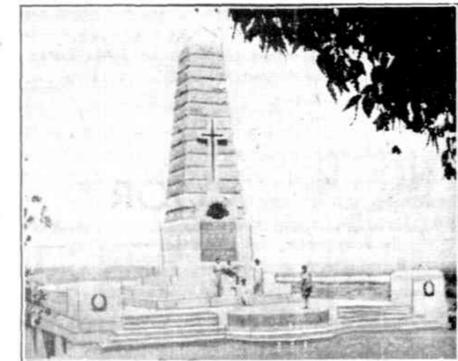
which supported the whole of the former eastern boundary of Boans. This supported the whole of the floors and carried heavy steel beams also supporting all floors. In order to proceed, it was necessary to carry the whole of the steel work on independent temporary stanchions, and then cut away the wall. The work was largely done by the use of compressed air rock breakers and had to be executed at periods when the least number of workmen were about. The spoil which resulted was used by a road board as ballast.

Two cranes were constantly in operation in the building, one being elevated to the top floor, when the steel framing was erected. The design of the building was set up on sound lines. The whole of the supporting framework is of rolled steel joists, imported from the Broken Hill Proprietary Company of Newcastle, and fabricated by Messrs. Forward Down and Company Ltd. of Perth and Welshpool. The floors throughout are of jarrah and the basement in concrete.

The contract time for the work as specified, was two years, i.e., August 7, 1936. Actually the Wellington-street end of the work was handed over to the proprietors early in July last, and the ground floor at the Murray-street end early in November, while it is an-

### KING'S PARK HAS SEEN PERTH'S GROWTH.

King's Park, from which one can look down on picturesque Perth and its imposing building skyline, had its origin in 1872, when the whole of the area was virgin bush. In October of that year a small portion of the Crown lands on Mt. Eliza was set aside for a park, and in the following year a further area was added by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Malcolm Fraser, who was then Surveyor-General. This brought the reserved portion up to 432 acres. Sir Malcolm Fraser was afterwards appointed Administrator in the absence of the Governor, and in the absence of the Governor, and in that capacity he approved of the recommendation he had made as Surveyor-General, and the Park was gazetted on July 6, 1873. There still remained some 550 acres of Crown lands outside the park already gazetted as a reserve, and this remained open for sale to individuals for some time. The part that was still unsold in 1890 was then added to the park lands, and in August, 1890, 882 acres of park were gazetted as the property of the people for all time.



THE STATE WAR MEMORIAL

Another work carried out by the firm of A. T. Brine and Sons.

Theatre, additions to the premises of Sargood (now Western Australian Farmers' nurses' quarters at the Ross Hospital) and other Government jobs.

In 1926, with the formation of A. T. Brine and Sons, the firm built the freezing works at Robb's Jetty, the reclamation of the trotting ground, the Repatriation Ward at the Perth Hospital, W.A. Trustee Buildings, Alliance Assurance Building, alterations to the Perth Town Hall, Pastory buildings, Swan Brewery cellars, premises for the Western Ice Company, Goode, Durron and Co. and the Royal Insurance Co.

Mr. A. T. Brine, sen., died in 1926, and two years later the business was changed to a limited liability company, the sons, Messrs. W. L. and A. T.

### HISTORICAL LINKS

Just as the name of that famous builder, Christopher Wren, will always be associated with London and her great buildings, so the name of Brine has become firmly linked to the city of Perth through the many notable structures for which A. T. Brine and Sons have been responsible during the past quarter of a century.

additions for Charles Moore and Co., and the Royal Insurance Building—and they were paying over £1800 a week in wages to 360 men.

Not only is the firm fully equipped to carry out actual building operations, but it has a

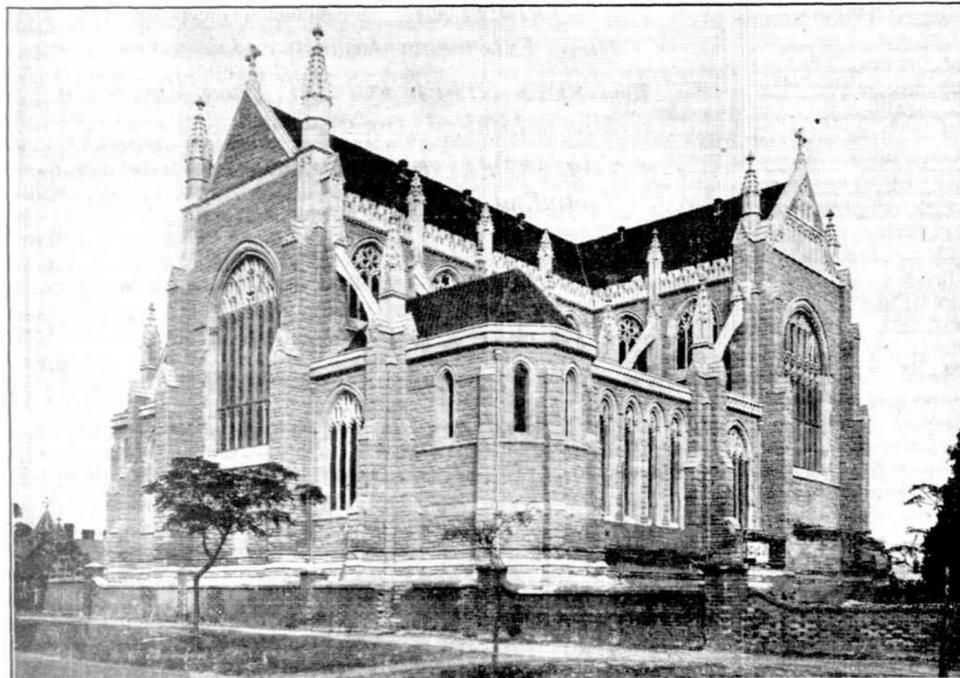
**TWO-STORY JOINERY SHOP**  
complete with all the machinery necessary for builders' contracts, a stone yard equipped with machinery for handling granite, freestone or marble, including a carbide-tipped saw which cuts marble or freestone to a six-inch thickness in much the same way as a circular saw cuts timber and leaves a highly polished surface.

At Donnybrook the company has a freestone quarry with a face of good stone developed over 1300 square feet. The ordinary plant consists of two electric derrick cranes, hand cranes, concrete mixers, air compressors, cement gun and scaffolding for large building work.

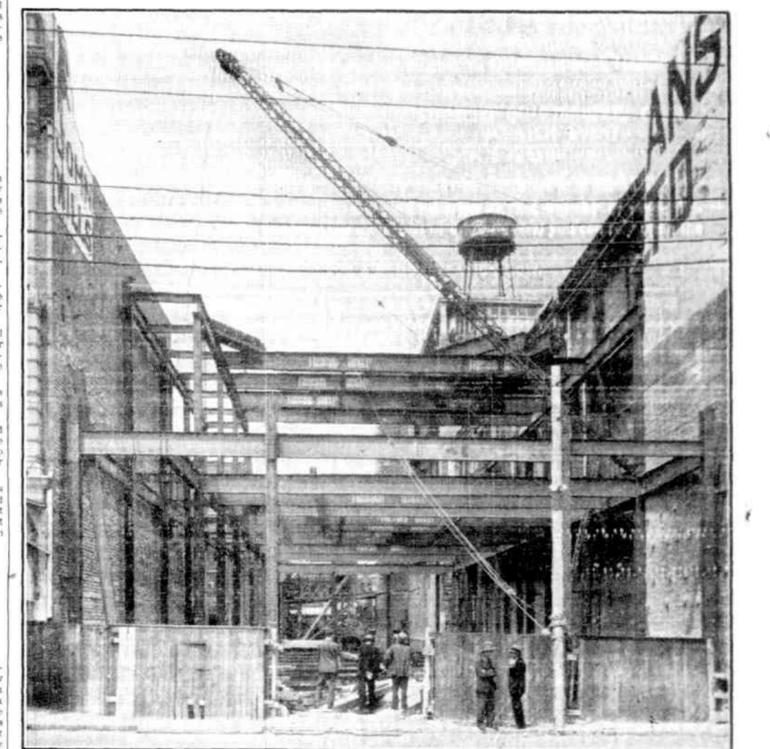
Inclusive of trucks running on the road, the value of plant owned by A. T. Brine and Sons exceeds £10,000.

### CITY BUILDING WORK.

For the 12 months to the end of October, building permits to the value of £24,619 were issued for the City of Perth, an increase of £189,448 on the amount of the previous year.



St. Mary's Cathedral, Perth—a fine example of the workmanship of A. T. Brine and Sons.



FINISHING BOANS' MOUNTAIN OF MASONRY

The Wellington-street frontage at an interesting stage. Work being carried out by A. T. Brine and Sons Ltd.