

WOLLONGONG'S FIRST COURT HOUSE

Whilst wandering around the 1858 court house, I toyed again with a question that has been bothering me for years: where was the *first* court house in Wollongong? There are plenty of references to indicate it was a brick building erected in 1834 in Harbour Street, even Lady Franklin observed that, and Gardiner-Garden confirms it, but just where was it to be found in Harbour Street?

Page 26 of Gardiner-Garden's Port of Wollongong seems to have the answer: One C. S. is reported in the Illawarra Mercury of 8th December, 1856 as saying "the courthouse is still in the same rascally broken down condition." Gardiner-Garden then goes on to say:

At that time plans were in course of preparation for a new structure, and it was decided that it should be immediately contiguous to the existing building.

As the 1858 court house was immediately contiguous to the existing building and the existing building fronted Harbour Street, the first court house must have been where the carpark for the "old" court house is now. That explains why the stone building was placed so far to one side of the site.

Incidentally, Gardiner-Garden continues with details of tendering and construction of both the court house and the gaol. In November 1859 the Illawarra Mercury reported on the gaol:

This structure is all but ready for tenancing, but we are happy to say no tenants are awaiting its completion.