

General Post Office, Sydney

The original section of the General Post Office (GPO) Sydney was erected at the George Street end of the existing Martin Place site. The building was designed by New South Wales colonial architect James Barnet. Opened in 1874, it replaced an earlier building on the same site that the postal service had occupied since 1830. With constant extensions and renovations the GPO building functioned as the centre of the New South Wales postal system until 1996.

Records relating to the Sydney GPO

The National Archives in Sydney holds a wide range of records relating to the Sydney GPO and the operations that occurred within its walls. These include many thousands of photographs, a range of architectural plans and drawings (including original hand-coloured plans signed by James Barnet and an extension proposal by Walter Burley Griffin), and a range of correspondence files relating to the history of the building, its management and maintenance. Examples of these records are included in the table below.

The development of the Sydney GPO led to the conscious remodelling of the surrounding area. Records in series C3994 detail the resumption of the entire side of an opposite block and the development of the precinct in a style that was sympathetic to the GPO. St Martin's lane became Martin Place – lined with the GPO and new suitably statuesque buildings, it became an important public space in Sydney.

Records of Sydney GPO

Photographic records

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Photographic negatives</u>	1860–1967	C4076
<u>Dead letter office</u>	1910	C4076, HN1487
<u>Mail Branch football club</u>	1967	C4076, HN12034
<u>Historical photographic prints</u>	1870–1914	C4009
<u>James Barnet (architect) atop column</u>	1870	C4009, 38
<u>Despatch Room, Mail Branch, Christmas Day, 1914</u>	1914	C4009, 34
<u>Photographic negatives</u>	1888–1976	C4078

<u>Postmen at GPO</u>	1937	C4078, N878A
<u>GPO posting windows, 1927</u>	1945	C4078, N2458
<u>Poster of carvings of heads above GPO facade</u>	1953	C4078, N4350
<u>Fire at Sydney GPO</u>	1965	C4078, N23851
<u>Australian Construction Services photographic records of heritage properties and sites</u>	1870–1995	C5018
<u>Building and construction of GPO and its surroundings, interior and aerial</u>	1877–1982	C5018, album 2

Architectural plans and drawings

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Plans and drawings of the GPO, Sydney</u>	1867–1980	C3793
<u>Pitt Street extension – basement plan (hand-coloured cloth paper signed by Barnet)</u>	1880	C3793, 41305
<u>George Street extension – 1st floor plan (tracing paper)</u>	1890	C3793, 50236
<u>Colonial Architect's plans of Sydney GPO</u>	1881	SP1136/1
<u>Pitt Street extension – 3rd floor plan (hand-coloured cloth paper signed by Barnet)</u>	1881	SP1136/1, PMG41313/5B
<u>Pitt Street extension – elevation to Pitt Street (hand-coloured cloth paper signed by Barnet)</u>	1881	SP1136/1, PMG41313/7B
<u>Post Office plans and drawings</u>	1887–1952	C4001
<u>Plans of GPO by Barnet</u>	1887	C4001, 10
<u>Proposed extensions to GPO drawn by W B Griffin</u>	1920	C4001, 11

Correspondence files

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Title documents regarding ownership of GPO site</u>	1804–89	SP1307/1
<u>Post Office historical files</u>	1850–1988	C3994
<u>Plans, correspondence, etc, re development of Martin Place c.1885–1900</u>	1879–1953	C3994, 22/8
<u>Booklet to 1874 opening of new GPO</u>	1874–1960	C3994, 25
<u>Sydney GPO carvings</u>	1878–84	C3994, 26
<u>GPO, Sydney building specifications</u>	1879–1985	C4017
<u>PMG building files</u>	1908–57	SP366/1
<u>Property files</u>	1909–48	SP351/1
<u>Hoffnung's building – lease</u>	1938–39	SP351/1, CL3586
<u>Inspection/Buildings Branch correspondence files</u>	1913–50	SP305/1
<u>Works and Services – property acquisition files</u>	1913–69	SP857/1
<u>GPO Sydney</u>	1945–73	SP857/1, PA/968
<u>Works and Services – property acquisition files</u>	1914–58	SP857/2

<u>GPO Sydney – lease of adjoining property to John Sands Pty Ltd</u>	1914–58	SP857/2, PA1940/163
<u>GPO – aquisition of adjoining property (Hoffnung's Chambers) and remodellling of GPO</u>	1923–39	SP857/2, PA/138
<u>Post Office personality files</u>	1955–88	C3641
<u>Walter Burley Griffin's involvement with the GPO</u>	1970	C3641, GRIFFIN WB
<u>Correspondence files of the Chief Property Officer</u>	1920–51	SP228/1
<u>Acquisition of easement for the construction of a tunnel connecting GPO and Commonwealth Bank</u>	1939–48	SP228/1, CL10196
<u>Correspondence files of the Chief Property Officer</u>	1936–47	SP246/2
<u>Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (re land titles surrounding GPO)</u>	1911–21	SP246/2, NL/223
<u>PMG building files</u>	1940–45	SP1411/3
<u>Specifications – Director of Works, NSW</u>	1947–53	SP277/1
<u>Accommodation files re GPO and postal buildings</u>	1962–75	SP1856/1
<u>Administrative accommodation – GPO reconstruction</u>	1965–70	SP1856/1, TW1041/1 part 1
<u>Correspondence files – accommodation and site redevelopment</u>	1962	SP1856/2
<u>Exhibition material (includes photographic copies of some items from SP1307/1)</u>	1983–	C3623

1939 Royal Commission into Sydney GPO

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Transcripts of evidence, exhibits and report of the Royal Commission</u>	1939	SP971/2

For more information

For information on the National Archives holdings of similar records see:

- *Fact sheet 50 - Post Office records*
- *Fact sheet 23 - Customs House, Sydney*