

**SMITH, Chris COLLECTION**  
**Architecture Museum, Adelaide University**

**SMITH, Christopher Arthur (Chris)**

**SERIES 334**

**BIOGRAPHY**

Chris Smith (19/11/1892–2/3/1952) figured prominently in the design and development of picture theatres and municipal buildings in Adelaide and regional South Australia during the 1920s and 1930s.

Born in the Port Adelaide area, Smith completed less than eight years of schooling, leaving in 1906 to start a film distribution business with his five brothers. By 1915 he had trained as a master carpenter under Frickers and Son. Although he had no formal architectural training he practised as an architect and structural engineer between 1922 and 1932 in offices in King William Street, Adelaide. In the early 1930s he bought a property at Prospect and designed a fine Art Deco-style home that H.J. Emery built on the property's tennis court; he then worked from an office and studio above the garage.

Although not fully accepted by Adelaide architects, Smith counted Caradoc Ashton, Norman Fisher, Jack Cheesman and Maurice Doley as friends. After the *Architect's Registration Act* came into force in 1939 he was registered from 1941 until his death in 1952, having fulfilled the requirement of working as an architect for the specified period.

While the extent of Smith's connection with the York Theatre (opened November 1921, demolished 1961) in the city is unclear, for the next ten years he was involved in the construction of cinemas, including the Austral Picture Palace, Kilkenny (1922); Capri at Goodwood (1926; now on the State Heritage Register (SHR)); Ozone Amusements at Alberton (1924); the Princess Theatre, Marryatville (1924, now known as the Chelsea and on the SHR for the 1941 Art Deco renovations designed by F.K. Milne); the Garden Theatre, Colonel Light Gardens (1926); and the Ozone Theatre, Enfield (1926), which was furnished and decorated on a lavish scale.

Smith designed town halls for the regional towns of Clare (1925) and Peterborough (1926–27). His municipal council buildings designed between 1935 and 1941 are all listed on the SHR. His Art Deco-style theatre/hall commissioned by the Hindmarsh Council (1936) is acknowledged as 'a remarkable example of civic architecture of the period.' Other municipal offices and council chambers, again in Art Deco style, were designed for the Brighton Council (completed 1937) and Port Adelaide (1939), the latter being described as a fine example of Inter-War Functionalism.

By 1941, Smith's calls for tenders had ceased, coinciding with his appointment as Inspector of Places of Public Entertainment. His years connected with film and the cinema ensured a strong commitment to public safety, and he criticised any practices that he regarded as unsafe. He was also on a committee during the war years for assessing buildings in case of bombing.

In January 1946 Smith was admitted as an Associate of the South Australian Institute of Architects, although by then he was no longer working as an architect. Posthumously, he has received some recognition from the profession, with five of his buildings appearing in the Royal Australian Institute of Australia's listing of South Australia Significant Twentieth Century Architecture.

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Smith died at home in his 60th year, having had a diverse and successful practice and leaving behind notable Art Deco buildings.

This is an abridged version of: Alison McDougall, (2008) 'Chris Smith', *Architects of South Australia database*, online at

[http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/arch\\_full.asp?Arch\\_ID=39](http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/arch_full.asp?Arch_ID=39)

**SOURCES**

Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P. (1989) *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, Angus & Robertson, Australia.

Alison McDougall, (2008) 'Chris Smith', *Architects of South Australia database*, online at [http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/arch\\_full.asp?Arch\\_ID=39](http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/arch_full.asp?Arch_ID=39)

Sands & McDougall, *Directory of South Australia* (1918–52) Sands & McDougall, Adelaide. 'South Australian Chapter' (1949–51), *Year Book of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects*.

Thorne, R. (1976) *Picture Palace Architecture in Australia*, Sun Books, Melbourne.

Walker, D. (1996) *Adelaide's Silent Nights*, National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra

**COLLECTION DESCRIPTION**

The Chris Smith collection is comprised of a scrapbook containing newspaper clippings, photographs, correspondence, programmes and ephemera relating to buildings designed by Chris A. Smith c.1921-1939. It also contains a book on Grecian, Roman, Italian and Gothic Architecture and a folio on the architectural orders.

**Series List**

Series No.	Description
S334/1	Scrapbook containing newspaper clippings, photographs, correspondence, programmes and ephemera relating to buildings designed by Chris A. Smith c.1921-1939. Buildings include: architect's own house at 5 Prospect Road, Prospect; Hindmarsh Town Hall c.1936; Brighton Town Hall; Ozone Theatre, Alberton, c.1924; Roxy Theatre, Everard Park, 1937; Synagogue and Rundle Buildings, Adelaide; Austral Theatre, Naracoorte, 1935; Onkaparinga District (Woodside) Hospital, 1928; Ozone Theatre, Semaphore, 1929; The York Theatre, Adelaide, 1921; Star Theatre, Unley, 1928; West's Olympia Theatre (Winter Garden 1923); Marryatville Theatre (photographs); Port Adelaide Council Chambers, 1939; Picture theatre, Gawler, c.1934; Clare Town Hall, 1926; Sea baths, Glenelg; Semaphore Soldiers' Memorial Hall, 1929; National Pictures Ltd., Victor Harbor, 1923; Peterborough Town Hall, 1927; Colonel Light gardens Theatre; Kadina's Picture Palace, 1921; Prospect Theatre, 1923; Star Theatre, Norwood; Theatre, Murray Bridge; Glenelg Palais Theatre, 1922; and drawing of a gate-post lantern (ink on linen).
S334/2	Book - Parker, J.H. (1879) 'A concise glossary of terms used in Grecian, Roman, Italian and Gothic Architecture', James Parker and Co., London.
S334/3	Folio - American School of Correspondence, 'The Orders'

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S334/4/1-2 House plans and specification for A.H. Heath, lot 107 Anglesey Avenue, Highfield (now St Georges), 1942

Page no	Type of item pasted into scrapbook	Description	Date
S334/1/1	Cover		
S334/1/2	Inside cover		
S334/1/3	Title page	"Chris. A. Smith, Architect, 5 Prospect Road, Prospect – Telephone M 2670"	
S334/1/4	Blank page		
S334/1/5	Newspaper clipping	'New Town Hall and Offices proposed for Brighton'	
S334/1/6	Black and white photograph	Ozone Theatre	
S334/1/7	Newspaper clipping	'Synagogue Porch Memorial'	
S334/1/8	Newspaper clipping	'New Austral Picture Theatre opens next Wednesday- epoch making event in the history of Narracoorte', Narracoorte Herald	13/12/1935
S334/1/9	Blank page		
S334/1/10	Newspaper clipping	'Onkaparinga District Hospital'	
S334/1/11	Newspaper clippings	'Woodside Hospital ' and 'Onkaparinga Hospital'	
S334/1/12	Newspaper clipping	Advertisement for opening of new Semaphore Theatre, Register News Pictorial	7/12/1929
S334/1/13	Newspaper clippings	'New Ozone Theatre'; 'Talkies at Semaphore'	
S334/1/14	Booklet (7 pages) and newspaper clipping	'Souvenir programme Commemorating the opening of The York, Adelaide'	5/11/1921
S334/1/15	Newspaper clipping	'Foundation Stone Laid' (Hindmarsh Town Hall)	
S334/1/16	Booklet (8 Pages)	'Souvenir Programme of Gala Opening, Hindmarsh New Town Hall'	16/12/1936
S334/1/17	Newspaper clipping	'Grand Opening New Town Hall Hindmarsh) (The Advertiser)	16/12/1936
S334/1/18	Newspaper clipping	'Theatre to cost 10,000 (pounds) Everard Park, Anzac Highway' (Roxy Theatre)	3/6/1937
S334/1/19	Blank page		
S334/1/20	Black & white photo	Interior of a theatre	
S334/1/21	Black & white photo	Interior of a theatre showing ticket box	
S334/1/22	Newspaper	'Co-operative Pictures – New theatre for	

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	clipping	Marryatville'	
S334/1/23	Blank page		
S334/1/24	Newspaper clipping	'New Picture Theatre, Regal Amusements Ltd.' (Gawler) (31 August.....)	
S334/1/25	Blank page		
S334/1/26	Black & white photo	Photo showing ceremony of door opening with officials and crowds	
S334/1/27	Black and white photo	Photo showing ceremony of door opening with officials and crowds	
S334/1/28	Booklet (7 pages) and black & white photo	'Corporation of Clare – opening of the New Town Hall' Photo of opening of the New Town Hall at Clare	21/4/1926
S334/1/29	Newspaper clipping	'Opening of New Town Hall' (Clare) (Northern Argus)	23/4/1926
S334/1/30	Newspaper clipping	'Adelaide's New Picture Theatre' (York)	
S334/1/31	Newspaper clipping	'Hindmarsh Town Hall' (The Advertiser)	16/12/1936
S334/1/32	Newspaper clipping	'New Picture Theatre for Alberton' (Ozone)	20/2/1924
S334/1/33	Newspaper clipping	'Unley's New Theatre' 'Unley Picture Palace'	25/1/1928
S334/1/34	Newspaper clipping	'West's Olympia' 'Winter Garden Opened' 'A Fairyland'	
S334/1/35	Newspaper clipping	Part clipping 'Sturt Pictures, Maud Street'	
S334/1/36	Black and white copy of drawing	Semaphore Soldiers Memorial Hall	
S334/1/37	Black and white photo	Semaphore Soldiers Memorial Hall	
S334/1/38	Newspaper clipping	'The Soldiers' Memorial Hall' Semaphore	19/7/1929
S334/1/39	Blank page		
S334/1/40	Black and white photo and newspaper clipping	'Wonderview'  'Saturday August 11 1923'	
S334/1/41	Magazine clipping	'New Picture Theatre for Victor Harbour' From 'The Builder'	
S334/1/42	Black and white photo	Dress Circle of theatre 'Arcadia'	
S334/1/43	Blank page		
S334/1/44	Blank page		
S334/1/45	Booklet (39 pages)	'Souvenir – opening ceremony of The New Town Hall' (Peterborough)	15/11/1927
S334/1/46	Blank page		
S334/1/47	Black and white	A theatre stage	

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	photo		
S334/1/48	Blank page		
S334/1/49	Newspaper clipping	'Theatre at Colonel Light Gardens'	
S334/1/50	Blank page		
S334/1/51	Newspaper clippings	'Opening of Kadina's Picture Palace' 'The Plain Dealer'	22/7/1921
S334/1/52	Newspaper clipping	'Re-modelled Theatre for Prospect' (front elevation)	
S334/1/53	Newspaper clipping	'A New Picture Theatre – Prospect' (Register)	1/6/1923
S334/1/54	Newspaper clipping	'A New Picture Theatre' Prospect Residents as Shareholders' (Adelaide)	
S334/1/55	Newspaper clipping	'Norwood Star Theatre'	
S334/1/56	Newspaper clipping	'New Picture Theatre at Murray Bridge'	
S334/1/57	Newspaper clipping	'New Star Theatre opened at Norwood'	
S334/1/58	Newspaper clipping	'Glenelg Palais Theatre'	24/1/1922
S334/1/59	Newspaper clipping	'Pen Portraits of People - Theatrical Architect – Chris A Smith'	4/10/1924
S334/1/60	Newspaper clipping	'Moving Pictures a vast Industry'	
S334/1/61	Newspaper clipping	'The Clare Town Hall'	22/4/1926
S334/1/62	Newspaper clippings (2)	'Hot Sea Baths at Glenelg' 'Design for Glenelg's proposed salt water baths'	
S334/1/63	Newspaper clippings	'York Theatre' Rundle Street 'The Mail'	5/11/1921
S334/1/64	Booklet	'The New Star Theatre – Unley' and a ticket for the opening	24/1/1917
S334/1/65	Newspaper clipping	'Skyscraper for City? Rundle Street Corner Plan'	
S334/1/66	Sketch	Elevation of 'Soldiers Memorial Hall'	
S334/1/67	Newspaper clipping	'Clare's New Town Hall' (The Northern Argus)	23/4/1926
S334/1/68	Newspaper Clipping	'Clare New Town Hall' (laying of foundation stone)	24/7/1925
S334/1/69	Back cover		
1	Magazine clipping (2 sided)		
2	Magazine clipping (2 sided)		

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3	Architects ink drawing on linen		
4	Newspaper clipping		
5	Newspaper clipping		
6	Newspaper clipping		
7	Black and white photo		
8	Black and white photo		
9	Black and white photo		
10	Black and white photo		
11	Black and white photo		
12	Black and white photo		
13	Black and white photo		
14	Black and white photo		
15	Newspaper clipping		
16	Newspaper clipping		
17	Newspaper page (extremely fragile – in pieces)		
18	Correspondence		
19	Correspondence		
20	Correspondence		