

At some point James Corbett purchased a section in Arawa Street ¹. In 1924 he announced plans to erect a “fine up-to-date building” on the site, with foundations in place by early 1926. J. M. Mercer, Dentist, occupied the premises upstairs from 1928, and a dental practice remained there until at least the year 2000. The building is illustrated below right. Today it is occupied at street level by the Red Cross charity shop.

Ownership of this site is somewhat confusing as Colin Ross is recorded as owning it, while the chemist later operated from the Bennett Building, a two storey structure built in 1922 and described in the Waikato Times of 29 March 1922 as ‘newly built’ ²

The presence of the Goonan siblings - niece and nephew of James Corbett - as mortgagors on the Colin Ross title aligns with the provisions of James and his sister’s wills ³. Additional titles remain to be investigated.



Bennett’s Buildings

¹ Part of Section 10, Block VII, Matamata Town

² Waikato Times, 29 March 1922

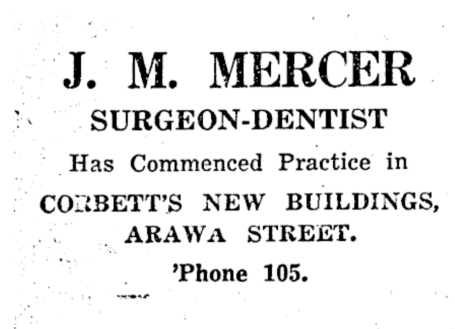
³ Will of James Corbett

Mr. J. Corbett, of Matamata, now has plans ready for the erection of a fine up-to-date building next his present shop, comprising two shops on the first floor and a suite of offices on the second. Mr. Corbett expects to commence building early in the New Year.

Matamata Record, 24 November 1924

Arawa street is at last replying to the building boom in Tower road, the foundations for a fine two-storey building for Mr. J. Corbett, chemist, now being under construction.

Matamata Record, 28 January 1926



Matamata Record, 8 March 1928



Corbett's New Building. J. Corbett inscribed on the verandah to left of the power pole.

It was not until 1936 that he finally developed the section on the corner of Arawa Street and Broadway. Now occupied by the ANZ Bank.



Booth & Chapman Ltd, 1963

MATAMATA SHOPS ANOTHER NEW BLOCK

Three for Broadway

Another new block of shops is to be built in Matamata almost immediately. This block will be for Mr. J. Corbett. The site is on the corner of Broadway and Arawa street extension, which is generally regarded as being one of the best in the town.

The new building will be an asset to the town, and the general design will correspond with the adjacent block of shops, which is also owned by Mr. Corbett.

The new block will have frontages of 48 feet to Broadway and 102 feet to Arawa street, and the foundations will be strong enough to take further storeys in the course of time if necessary. The building will be divided into either two or three shops according to the result of negotiations now pending, but in any case the corner shop will be 20 feet on the Broadway frontage, with a depth of 102 feet along Arawa street. This large shop will be tenanted by the old-established firm of D. McL. Wallace Ltd., which, following the recent fire, has decided to keep its present garage going on the old site but to transfer the retail section of the business to Broadway. The firm expects to be in its new premises by the end of August.

Although the certificate of title records the transfer of Section 4, Block IV, from Corbett to Union Theatres Ltd on 4th February 1932, newspaper reports indicate the sale occurred in 1927. The Regent Theatre was subsequently built on the site and officially opened in May 1930 ⁴. This raises the possibility that Corbett was more closely associated with Union Theatres Ltd than is immediately apparent, or that the title deed has been misinterpreted.



Regent Theatre in 1978. MHS collection 78020-5

Perhaps it was with the proceeds of the 1932 sale that James Corbett bought the section⁵ on which Ivan Black (the "One property owner in Arawa street" of the newspaper article on this page) had been hoping to build his picture theatre.

James sub-divided that section and sold the separate parts in 1937 & 1938.

NEW PICTURE THEATRE. IN TOWER ROAD.

Corbett's Section Bought.

Plans Being Prepared.

There has been a good deal of talk during the past year in regard to the likelihood of private enterprise building a picture theatre at Matamata. Some have supported the assertion that there was something in the report, and others have scouted the very idea. During the past few months, however, rumours have given place to definite statements. One property owner in Arawa street made no secret of his intention to get a picture theatre built upon one

of his present sections, if possible. Now there comes the definite information from Mr. J. Clothier that he has sold, on behalf of Mr. J. Corbett, the latter's section of 66 feet by 165, between Mr. Stewart's bakery and Mr. Rowe's billiard saloon, to a syndicate, for the express purpose of building a picture theatre. The plans, Mr. Clothier states, are in course of preparation, and the tenders will be called almost immediately.

Matamata Record, 14 March 1927

Mr. James Corbett, of Matamata, has purchased the large section on the western side of Arawa street, opposite the Bank of Australasia. The site was formerly occupied by Wallace Supplies, Ltd., but the building was demolished by fire some years ago. The sale was conducted by Mr. J. Clothier.

Matamata Record, 9 Nov 1933

⁴ Matamata Record, 29 May 1930

⁵ Section 3, Block VI, Matamata Town

It didn't seem to take James Corbett long to develop a retail business alongside his pharmaceutical one.

In 1930 the Matamata Town Hall once again proved too small to hold those desirous of seeing the Matamata High School Staff Production. "Are You a Mason?"⁶. - Liberty was taken with the dialogue to introduce local quips. The newspaper report expanded :-

"Perhaps the best of the local touches was the list of eligible young men read by Mrs Bloodgood when considering the application for her daughter's hand..... Mr James Corbett, a shocking flirt who seems to regard a lady's toilet as his own special business."

Many products were made on the premises. The Department of Health had inspectors to perform random checks, and James Corbett was prosecuted for selling Camphor Oil at a higher strength than that permitted by the Act. However, as you can read on the next page, the Department was reprimanded by the judge, and costs awarded.



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⁶ Matamata Record, 30 October 1930

DEPARTMENT CASTIGATED MAGISTRATE'S REMARKS

Health Authorities in Court

After listening to what in the circumstances proved to be a trivial case of prosecution, Mr. S. L. Paterson, S.M., took the opportunity in the Matamata Court on Thursday to severely criticise the procedure adopted by the Health Department.

The case was one in which James Corbett, chemist, was charged at the instance of Inspector Martindale, of the Health Department, with selling camphorated oil which was above the strength required by the Act.

Inspector's Evidence

The inspector detailed the purchase, remarking that the chemist said he had no 4oz bottles made up, but had a jar full in process of manufacture. An analysis had proved the sample from this to be over-strength.

At this stage the Magistrate advised the inspector he could not prove his case without the regulations, and the case was held up until these were obtained.

Under cross-examination, witness admitted a reference was made by defendant to the camphor being in suspension and not dissolved, and that witness had made a jocular statement that there could be no prosecution for over-strength. The oil purchased had been obtained from the dispensary, from a bulk supply.

Counsel: Was it fair to take a sample from a supply you admit was in process of manufacture?

Witness: Well, he gave it to me.

Counsel then submitted that on the evidence of the inspector there was no case which should have been taken up. No attempt had been made to cloak the position, and the inspector should have taken the 2oz bottles which were exposed for sale.

The Magistrate: Or two 2oz bottles if he wanted 4oz.

Counsel agreed, and held it was not fair to prosecute in such a case.

The Magistrate: You had better give me short proof.

Defendant's Evidence

Defendant then entered the box and stated he had told the inspector the oil was in process of manufacture, and that it was obtained from the dispensary. It was not exposed for sale, and if anyone had wanted a larger supply than was in the 2oz bottles on sale they would have to have waited until the camphor dissolved.

Comment by Magistrate

The Magistrate then launched forth into a quiet but very pointed comment on the Health Department. He stated defendant was charged under the Foods and Drugs Act with selling an article not complying with standard laid down. The facts were that the inspector had asked for camphorated oil. He had been offered a 2oz bottle, but had asked for 4oz. He was then informed that none was made up but that there was some in course of preparation. It was obvious to both that this oil was not fit for human use. The camphor was in lumps in a state of suspension. The information must fail; first, because the prosecution

had not proved all the necessary ingredients. The prosecution was of a highly technical nature and there were certain essentials which had to be proved and had not been. He was not blaming the constable because it was not right that a constable should be expected to understand a highly technical Act without instruction. It was incumbent on the Health Department to see that this information was supplied or a Crown solicitor employed. In this case he (the Magistrate) had to elicit from the inspector three things it was essential to prove: (1)

That the inspector informed the seller he was an inspector; (2) that the seller was informed at the time of the sale the sample was for analysis; (3) that the regulations be produced for proof. It was not the duty of the Bench to act as prosecutor.

Another essential was that the regulations required that the article sold comply with the British Pharmacopoeia and this must be produced. An analysis certificate had said so, but that was not sufficient. That was only prima facie evidence of the sample. It had not been proved as the standard required under the act and so the prosecution must fail on that ground. It must also fail on the merits of the case, as the seller had proved to the satisfaction of the court that the sample was not offered,

exposed or intended for sale.

Judgment was then entered for defendant with costs.

Matamata Record, 5 November 1934