



maitland

city council

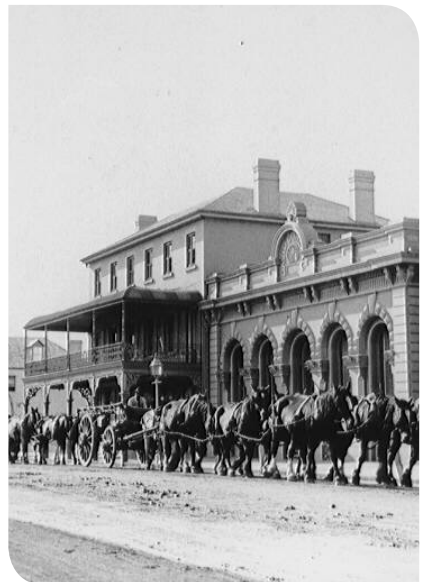
Encounters with Maitland's early Jewish community

With acknowledgement to the Wonnarua people and their elders past, present and future, you are walking on their land.

Early colonial Maitland was a rough and tumble place. It grew into a commercial and trading hub. Respectability became etched on the buildings and the way of life. Successful merchants built impressive buildings and homes. They adopted lifestyles to match. Public buildings, places of worship, schools became features of the city's centre. The dominant language was English, the dominant religion Christianity, the dominant settlers were from Britain or of British origin.

Into this milieu came individuals, families and groups from Jewish backgrounds. Visits to the following sites provide a taste of the challenges, successes, trials, failures and complexities of their lives.

Most places mentioned here are privately owned. Be respectful of owners' privacy and property. Look but do not trespass!



SITE 1: MAITLAND JEWISH CEMETERY

112-114 Louth Park Road

This is the earliest and largest dedicated Jewish cemetery in NSW. Jews from Maitland and beyond, some not of British backgrounds, have been buried here from 1849. Almost half are children. Notice the Hebrew inscriptions and the fine texture of the local Ravensfield sandstone.

The condition of the cemetery has changed over the last one hundred years, with a recent focus on its conservation and care by Maitland City Council and the Friends of the Maitland Jewish Cemetery. The cemetery is now listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.



*Maitland Jewish Cemetery, 1970s
(Australian Jewish Historical Society).*

SITE 2: ROSE INN

Around 220 High Street (demolished)

Until 1893 the Hunter River swung in and came up to High Street at about this point. A wharf and store were built where the river met the street. In 1830 a part of the store became the Rose Inn. The Inn was a focus for many early social, political and cultural events in Maitland. Philip Joseph Cohen's soap and candle factory was located nearby. Cohen, along with relatives Solomon Levien and Alfred Levien, held the licences to the Rose Inn intermittently in the 1830s to 1850s.

Alfred Levien's two infant children are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.

SITE 3: DAVID COHEN & CO BUILDING

226 High St (now Centrelink)

Built: 1865, Architect: Edmund Blacket

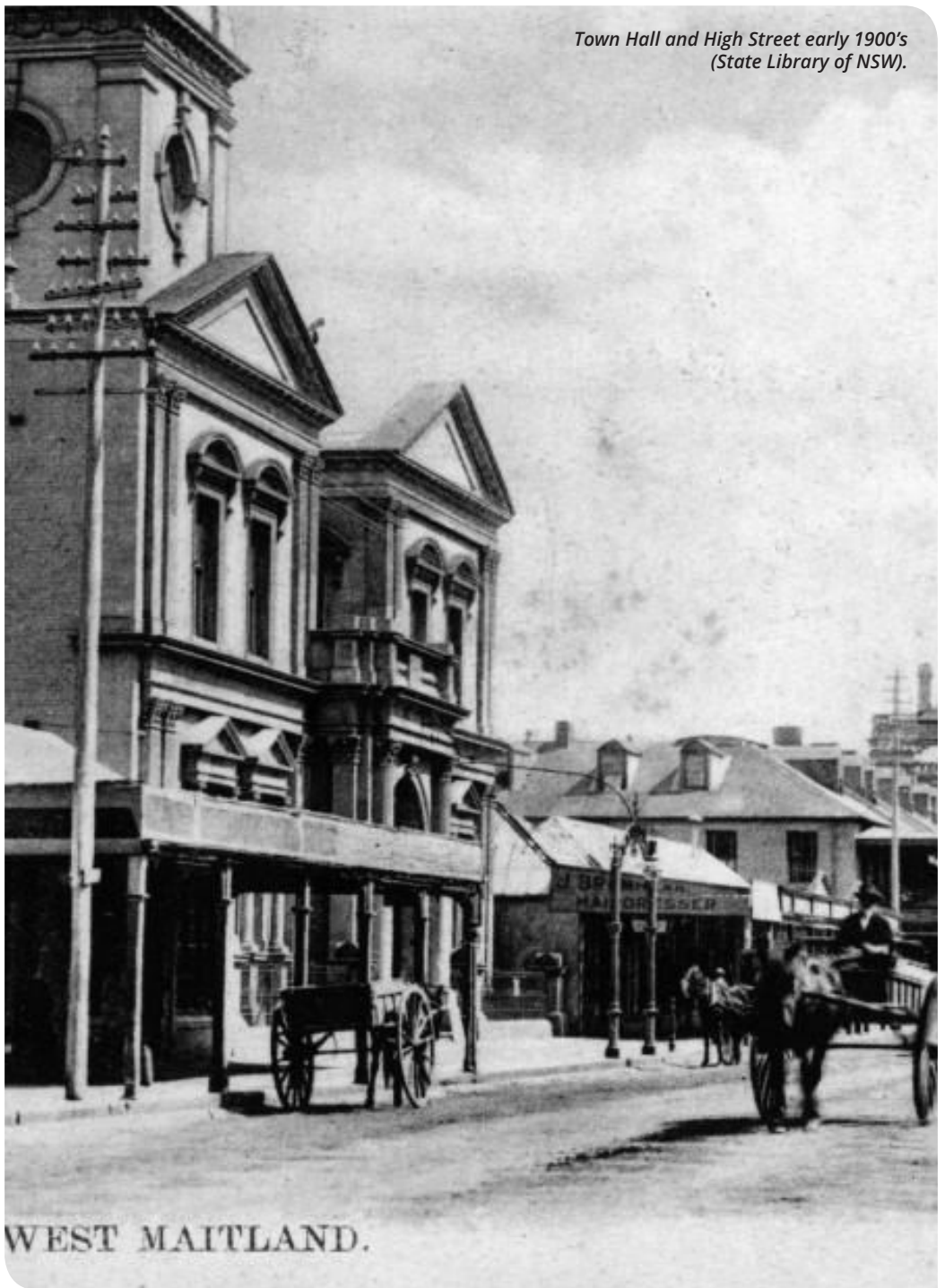
David Cohen and Company, wholesale and retail merchants, established their business on this site in the 1840s. The founding partners, two brothers and a cousin, played a central role in Maitland's Jewish community and in Maitland's commercial development. A number of their relatives are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.

The current building dates to 1865 and is made from local Ravensfield sandstone. It was originally three storeys. In 1970 a fire destroyed all but the bottom floor. Notice the grotesqueries above the windows carved by sculptor Benjamin Brain (who sadly committed suicide in 1877 in Ballarat).



*David Cohen building fire, June 1970
(Maitland City Library).*

*Town Hall and High Street early 1900's
(State Library of NSW).*



WEST MAITLAND.

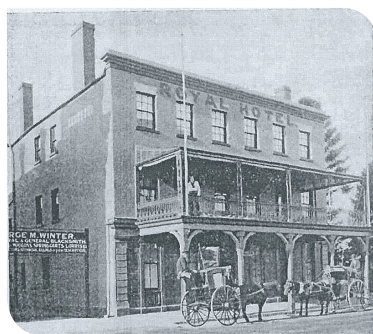
SITE 4: ROYAL HOTEL

246 High Street

In December 1919 Hyam Mandelson was found dead in a shed behind the Royal Hotel. He had died from natural causes. Mandelson, aged 58 at the time of his death, was a single man who had worked in the Maitland district as a rabbit-dealer and general rural worker from the mid-1890s. He came from Tumut where his father had a general store.

Mandelson lived a rough and tough life. He appeared in court a number of times both as defendant and as plaintiff. On one occasion the court records noted 'the sulphuric character of [his] vocabulary'.

Hyam Mandelson is buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.



*Royal Hotel, c1910
(Maitland City Library).*

SITE 5: MORRIS BENJAMIN AND SONS

256 High Street, corner of Hunter Street (Maitland Mercury building)

Original structure demolished

Morris Benjamin's boot, shoes, drapery, clothing and general merchandise store (known as 'Trade Hall') occupied the Maitland Mercury site from 1867 until 1899. Benjamin and his sons also opened a boot factory and other stores elsewhere in Maitland.

Benjamin played a significant role in the local Jewish community. In 1879, when the foundation stone was laid for the Maitland Synagogue, he was the president of the local congregation.

Benjamin, and relatives Elizabeth Israel and Charles Lewis Israel are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.



Morris Benjamin (Private collection).



*Cohens and its environs early C20th
(Newcastle Regional Public Library Collection)*

SITE 6: MITCHELL'S ARCADE

293 and 295 High Street
(part of the Arcade, rest demolished)

Two buildings remain from a row of seven small nineteenth century shops that faced High Street. They were called Mitchell's Arcade. From 1888 to 1893 Goulston and Company's drapery store was located in the Arcade. The photo of the 1893 flood captures the edge of the Arcade's balcony and, sitting among the people gathered there, is John Goulston, one of the owners of the drapery store. The business was relocated following the 1893 flood.

John Goulston went on to have a successful commercial career in Sydney and to contribute to the Jewish and the wider Sydney community. He also rose to the position of Pro Grand Master of the Freemasons.

In the early 1860s, John Goulston's uncle, Joseph Goulston, had the Little Wonder Boot and Shoe Bazaar in Maitland. In 1865 he absconded with creditors' money and stolen goods. He fled to England where he was arrested. Two of his children, Rosina and Solomon, are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.



View of High Street from corner of Victoria Street, 1893 flood (Private collection).

SITE 7: CURRENT MASONIC LODGE

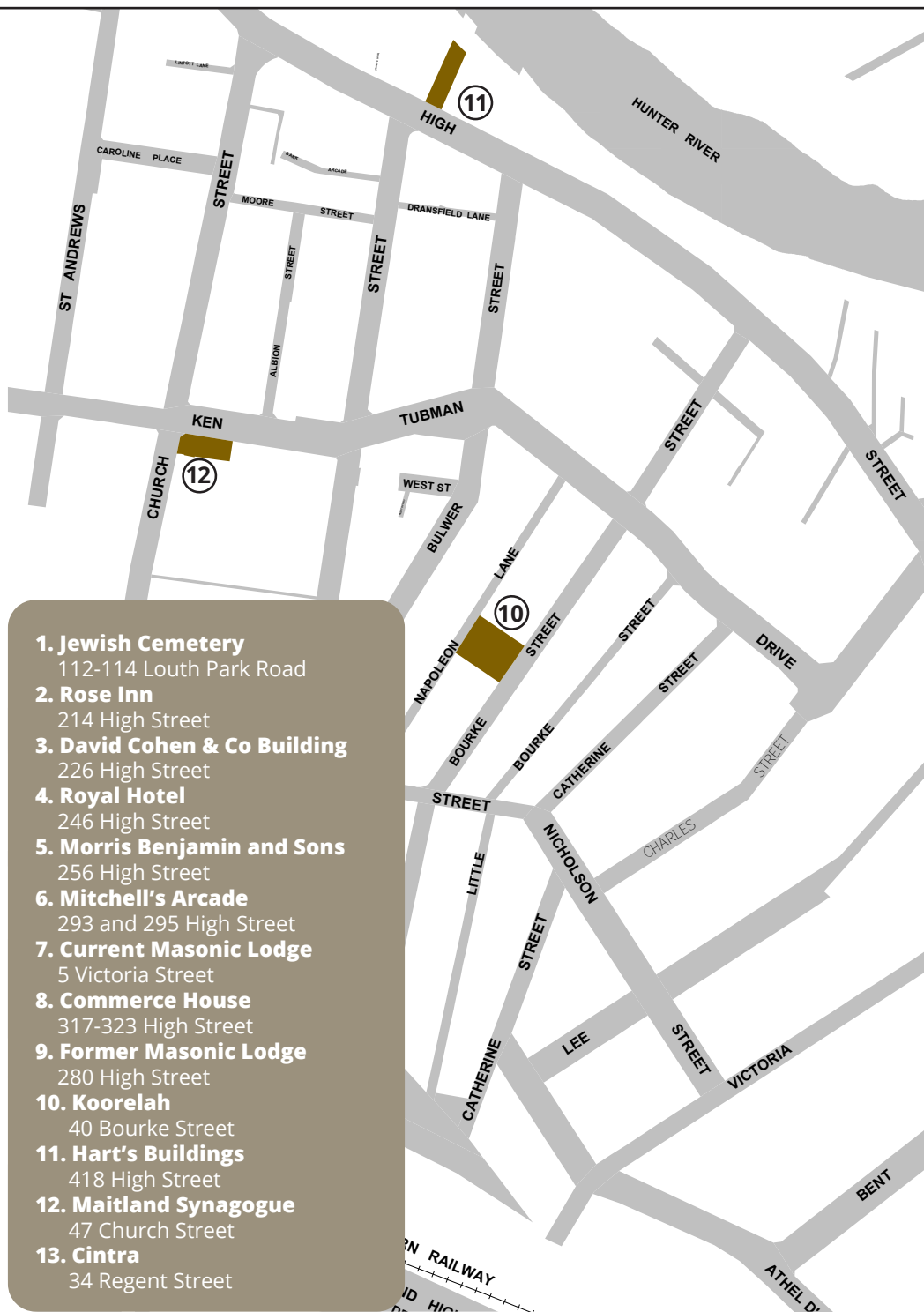
5 Victoria St

Built: 1887, Architect: J.W. Pender

Philip Joseph Cohen, publican of the Rose Inn, soap factory owner and Maitland postmaster was the foundation First Worshipful Master of the Maitland Lodge when it was formed in 1840. Lodge meetings were held in his pub, the Rose Inn (see site 2). His portrait hangs proudly in the current Masonic premises. He was the first of a number of members of the local Jewish community who were Freemasons. He was also a significant pioneer of the Sydney Jewish community. His nephew and niece, George and Myalla Levien, are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.



Philip Joseph Cohen (Australian Jewish Historical Society).



1. Jewish Cemetery

112-114 Louth Park Road

2. Rose Inn

214 High Street

3. David Cohen & Co Building

226 High Street

4. Royal Hotel

246 High Street

5. Morris Benjamin and Sons

256 High Street

6. Mitchell's Arcade

293 and 295 High Street

7. Current Masonic Lodge

5 Victoria Street

8. Commerce House

317-323 High Street

9. Former Masonic Lodge

280 High Street

10. Koorelah

40 Bourke Street

11. Hart's Buildings

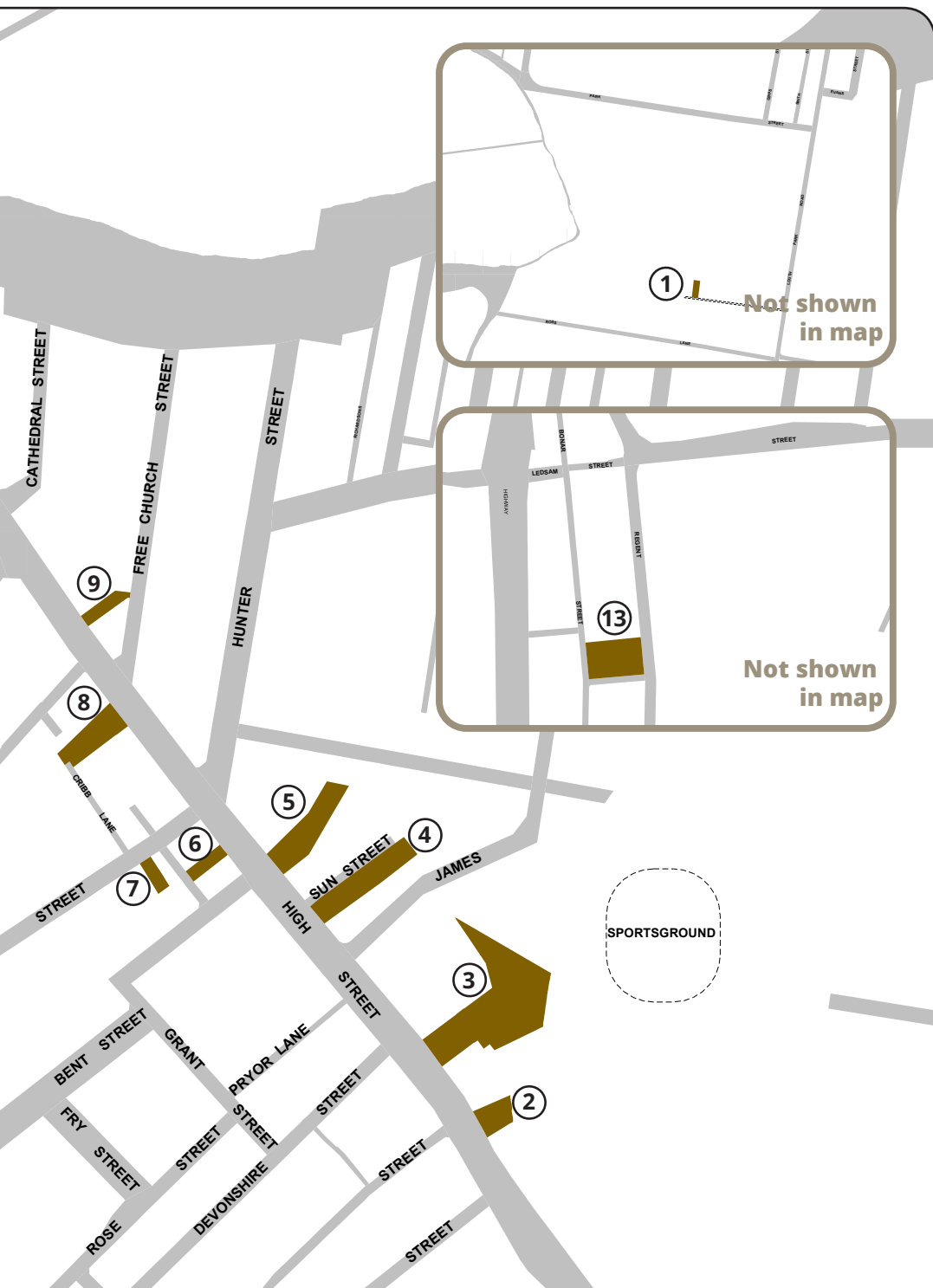
418 High Street

12. Maitland Synagogue

47 Church Street

13. Cintra

34 Regent Street



SITE 8: COMMERCE HOUSE

317-323 High Street

From 1865 to 1881 Joseph Marks' drapery store operated from the older, right hand end of this building. Joseph Marks and his family lived upstairs.

Joseph Marks was an active member of the local Jewish community and of the wider local community. He was the treasurer for the Maitland synagogue, a judge at the Maitland show, a board member of Maitland Gaslight Company, a regular donor to charities. He was also a practicing Jew. Along with other Jewish businesses in town he closed his shop on the Sabbath (Saturdays) and on Jewish holidays, and he advertised these closing times.

Joseph Marks' wife, Elizabeth, and baby daughter, Harriet, are buried in Maitland Jewish Cemetery.



Commerce House, 1878.

SITE 9: FORMER MASONIC LODGE

280 High Street

Built: 1877

From 1877 to 1887 this building was jointly owned and occupied by a local building society and the Freemasons. The Masonic Hall was on the first floor. A number of members of the local Jewish community were active Freemasons (see site 7).



*Commerce House (RHS),
High Street West Maitland*

SITE 10: 'KOORELAH'

40 Bourke Street

Built: 1850s and extended

Henry Robert Reuben purchased this prime Bourke Street property in 1852. At the time it had a four-room cottage with detached kitchen. He had already purchased property on the opposite side of the street.

Reuben was an early member of the Maitland Jewish community, and was one of the trustees appointed to administer the Maitland Jewish Cemetery in 1846. He had a ginger beer brewery in High Street.

Reuben left Maitland in 1859. His son-in-law and daughter, Morris and Deborah Cohen, lived here until the property was sold in 1861. New owners added the second storey and named the property 'Koorelah'. In 1875 Morris Cohen purchased the property and he and his family lived there until his death in August 1878.

Henry Reuben's infant son, Morris (who died in Mudgee), and Morris Cohen are buried in Maitland Jewish Cemetery as are other members of the extended Cohen family.



Maitland Post Office on the corner of High and Bourke Street, West Maitland (Maitland City Council Collection)

SITE 11: HART'S BUILDING

418 High Street (now OPSM)

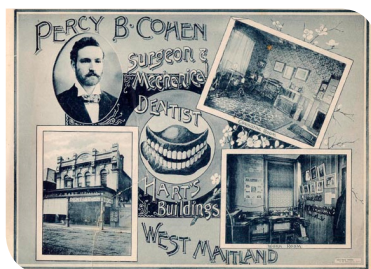
Built: 1885, Architect: Frederick Menkens,

Builder: John Cox

In 1885, Newcastle architect Frederick Menkens designed this building for jeweller and watchmaker, John Hart. The display windows had 'clocks of almost every description', jewellery, 'electro-plated ware and pianos'. Upstairs were offices. One of the long-term upstairs tenants during the early twentieth century was dentist Percy Brighton Cohen. John Hart and Percy Cohen were both Jewish. From the 1850s to the 1880s, John Hart's father and then brother owned the Fitzroy Store that was located on the site to the left of Hart's Building and now occupied by the Colonial Arcade. When John Hart came into ownership, he renovated the building and created a façade to match the Hart's building you can see here. The current Colonial Arcade replaced the older building in about 1985.

John Hart's parents Samuel and Elizabeth, his brother Henry, and uncle Benjamin are buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery. Henry and Benjamin who were living in Sydney both requested burial in Maitland.

Percy Brighton Cohen was the son of Nathan and Esther Cohen from Tamworth. His infant sister, Ethel, is buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery.



*Percy B Cohen, advertisement, 1896
(Maitland City Library).*

SITE 12: MAITLAND SYNAGOGUE

47 Church St, cnr Ken Tubman Drive

(now Chromis Occupational Medicine)

Built: 1878-1879, Architect: J W Pender,

Builder: John Pritchard

Designed by local architect John Wiltshire Pender (whose home was next door in what is now the Pender Place car park), the synagogue opened in 1879. It served the local Jewish community until 1898. The proceeds of its sale in 1926 assisted the building of the Newcastle Synagogue.

The Maitland synagogue building was subsequently used for a variety of purposes including a vehicle repair shop. In the 1980s it was restored and conserved and, in 1999, was placed on the NSW State Heritage Register.



*Maitland Synagogue, c1900
(Australian Jewish Historical Society).*

SITE 13: 'CINTRA'

34 Regent Street

Built: 1878-1879, Architect: J W Pender,

Builder: Robert James

Benn W. Levy, son of one of the founders of David Cohen and Company, commissioned this opulent Victorian residence surrounded by a landscaped garden. The house provided a focal point for family gatherings and social occasions. It is a statement of the affluence of the extended Levy and Cohen families. Benn Levy departed for England in 1887 and his cousin, Neville Cohen, took up residence.

The property was sold in 1917. Benn Levy's infant daughter, Julia Alpha, is buried in the Maitland Jewish Cemetery, as are other members of the extended Levy and Cohen families.



Cintra, c1878 (Maitland City Library).



*Levy family members at Cintra, c1899.
(Private collection)*

For further details about the places and people encountered in this tour, visit Views of Maitland – Jewish Sites, hfrc.une.edu.au/heritagefutures/maitland/



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Compiled by Janis Wilton with thanks to Joe Eisenberg, Clare James, Judy Nicholson, Val Rudkin, the Friends of Maitland Jewish Cemetery and the families of early Jewish settlers. Maitland City Council, July 2017.