Melbourne City Baths, by J.J. and E.J. Clark
University of Melbourne Archives

John James Clark (English/Australian, 1838–1915)
and Edward James Clark (Australian, 1868–1950)

Melbourne City Baths, 1904
compilation of drawings (originals pen, ink and wash on paper)
J.J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089
University of Melbourne Archives
Melbourne was dubbed ‘Smellbourne’ in the late 19th century, as its water and waste management systems struggled to keep pace with the rapid expansion of population following the gold rush and subsequent economic boom. At that time, the majority of Melbourne's population could not bathe or shower at home — public baths were used as much for cleanliness and health as for exercise or recreation. The 1904 Melbourne City Baths complex replaced facilities that had opened in 1860.

Plans for the building by J.J. Clark show that all facilities were segregated. A swimming pool, 16 slipper baths, six spray baths and a gymnasium were provided for men, and another swimming pool and baths were provided for women. There were also Turkish and vapour baths, a Jewish ceremonial bath and a laundry. Class distinctions were observed, with second-class facilities in the basement and first-class on the floor above.

The City Baths began to fall into disrepair in the 1930s due to economic constraints, and by the 1970s were threatened with demolition. This threat averted, the distinctive building was refurbished in the 1980s and today provides facilities for the inner city’s population. University of Melbourne Archives holds additional plans of the complex among its extensive collections of the drawings and other records of numerous Australian architects.

**Teaching ideas**

The University of Melbourne’s curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, contact a collection manager.

**Australian Architecture**

Examine architectural plans held by the University of Melbourne Archives to understand the development of architecture in Melbourne, from the city’s founding to recent times. Consider construction, landscape design and urban planning.

**Measured Drawings and Digital Heritage**

Research, measure and document the Melbourne City Baths building, using resources at the University of Melbourne Archives.

**Applied Heritage Conservation Techniques**

Consult the architectural plans for the City Baths in exploring conservation issues affecting built heritage. Consider structural issues, as well as interior and exterior decorative finishes.

**City Futures**

Explore cultural, environmental, economic, social and political contexts of urbanism – in the past, present, and future – using Melbourne as a case study.

**Urban History**

Using examples of sites in Melbourne, focus on specific features and concepts of space and community, considering the social, economic, political and environmental processes of urban change.

**Changing Melbourne**

Investigate why Melbourne can be called one of the world’s most liveable cities, by examining its built, natural and social environment from a range of scientific, design and engineering perspectives.

**City Cultures**

Explore and analyse architectural plans and documents to uncover issues around immigration and mobility, social identities and urban spaces, environmental sustainability, and post-industrial economies.
City Lights: Cities, Culture and History
Question the appeal and value of the city in the past and present, by using archival documents to evaluate specific places against historic, heritage and civic criteria.

Gender, Globalisation and Development
Using Melbourne as a case study, examine relationships between gender, globalisation and development.

Intersecting objects
J.J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089
University of Melbourne Archives

Bates, Smart and McCutcheon Pty Ltd Collection, 1969.0013
University of Melbourne Archives

To learn more, visit the website of the University of Melbourne Archives.

References

A wealth of detail, University of Melbourne Archives (brochure).