

ANNETTE COOPER

It's smart to be thrifty: the story of Manton's department store

Set into a line of glass blocks in the footpath of Little Bourke Street, near Swanston Street, Melbourne, are the words 'MANTON PLACE'. The name comes from the famed Manton's department store, which was once one of the most popular department stores in Melbourne, second only to Myer in its middle-class appeal. Manton's was a household name for nearly 30 years. The catchy slogan 'It's smart to be thrifty' was emblazoned across its Bourke Street facade, and it prided itself on offering a wide range of good-quality merchandise at moderate prices.

Around the corner, in Bourke Street, it is just possible, in the stylish windows extending in broad horizontal lines above the awning, to detect the Art Deco beauty of the former frontage of Manton's beneath the modern aluminium cladding of the Target store that now occupies the building. And, just to the left, behind Target's 'bullseye' logo, lies another building: the former Hoyts de Luxe, the first home of Manton's, at 240 Bourke Street. Like the Art Deco building, its facade is virtually intact beneath the cladding.

History upon history. It's a story that deserves to be told.

The stage is set

Built in 1914, and designed by notable Melbourne architect William Pitt, the Hoyts de Luxe was primarily a theatre, but it also had space for a retail

Decorations celebrating victory in the Pacific, Manton's, August 1945, photograph by CJ Frazer, 'Records of Coles Myer Ltd. and its predecessors', c. 1840 – c. 1990 [hereafter Coles Myer archive], MS 13468, COMY19301, Australian Manuscripts Collection



MANTONS

LOMBARD ST

MANTONS

It's smart to be thrifty

222

The New MANTON & PAULL Department Store



OPENING SALE

Corsets and Brassieres
All Bargains!

Table of Reducing CORSETS, cut from heavy pink corduroy, inset with elastic at bust, long heavily lined double skirt, designed for the average and stout figures. Six rubber-grip suspenders. Sizes 24 to 28. Usual value 21/-. Manton and Paull

TO-MORROW—at 9!

Advertisement for opening of Manton's in the Hoyts de Luxe building, 240 Bourke Street, *Argus* (Melbourne), 12 May 1926, p. 5

shop on its left-hand side. The theatre showed silent movies and 'talkies' and is considered the birthplace of the city's cinema culture.¹ Next door was the Theatre Royal: the grand dame of live theatre since 1872.

Both theatres were in full swing when William Vaughan Manton arrived in 1926 and opened his business with Frank Paull in the retail half of the Hoyts de Luxe building in Bourke Street. A sketch in the *Argus* shows a sign for 'Manton & Paull' proudly displayed at the entrance, and a line of parked automobiles, no doubt in anticipation of the grand opening sale.

An eye for retail and thoroughbreds

Born in 1874, Manton was no stranger to retail, having worked at a variety of shops in Ballarat from a young age and impressing his employers – apart from when he was sacked for knocking off a customer's hat with a parcel.² Around

MANTON'S
New Bourke Street Store
*Built on the Confidence
of Melbourne's Million!*



Shop at Manton's for

- Frocks
- Coats
- Underwear
- Corsets
- Millinery
- Silks
- Dress Fabrics
- Cottons
- Manchester
- Furnishings
- Maids' Wear
- Laces
- Gloves
- Hosiery
- Toilet Requisites
- Furs

MANTON'S
MANTON & SONS PTY. LTD.
Bourke Street, Melbourne, C.1

Advertisement for the new store of Manton's, *Labor Call* (Melbourne), 14 June 1934, p. 3

1893, he went to work in Ballarat for John Snow and Company, a successful drapery business, and revolutionised 'the ground floor ... in width and depth of stock'.³

The man with 'good business ethics [and a] twinkle in his eye'⁴ was then asked to join John and Sydney Snow in opening a new store in Sydney. Sydney Snow Ltd opened in 1912 and proved a great success, due to 'the excellence of the goods supplied and the reasonableness of the prices charged'.⁵ This policy stood Manton in good stead when he came to establish his own business.

After leaving Snow's in 1920, Manton dabbled in real estate, investment and the turf, becoming the owner of a young colt named Salitros, which won two derbies that year – the Australian Jockey Club and the Victoria derbies.⁶

When he left Snow's, in return for shares in the company Manton had agreed not to open a store within 15 miles (24 kilometres) of Sydney for



Ground floor of Manton's, 1942, photographer unknown, in album of photographs of store interiors of Manton's, Coles Myer archive, MS 13468, COMY10711, Australian Manuscripts Collection

15 years.⁷ So, he decided to open one in Melbourne with Frank Paull, whom he had known in Ballarat⁸ and who had run Paull's in Sydney, 'the rendezvous for economical women'.⁹ William's son Jack Manton described their 1926 investigations into the competition in Melbourne in his autobiography *A Manton or Two* (he refers to William Manton as 'father'):

Myers had, as father said, the city 'Myermerised'. Others were Paynes, Buckleys, Craig Williamsons, Treadways, Ball and Welsh [*sic*] and Georges, the latter on a much higher specialist level ... the only competitor that father constantly had his eye on was Myers.¹⁰

On 13 May that year Manton and Paull opened. Now all they had to do was entice customers away from Myer on the other side of Swanston Street.

Jack, aged 19, supervised the cleaning, among other things, in the new store. On the second morning after the store's opening, he received a surprise. 'On the first glass counter in the glove department [his father] had written with a forefinger DIRTY. He was never to do it again.'¹¹



William Manton, *Argus* (Melbourne), 1940, photographer unknown, Coles Myer archive, MS 13468 COMY16690, Australian Manuscripts Collection

William Manton was

probably the greatest retail buyer in Australia for all time of ground floor departments. Paul [*sic*] controlled all the women's clothes sections on the upstairs floors ... As good as father was, progress was slow at the start. Myermerism was deep, father unknown. Frank Paul, quite early, when the going was tough, became disillusioned ... It was not long before he left the company.¹²

William Manton changed the name of the company to Manton and Sons Pty Ltd and 'pressed on'¹³ only to encounter the Depression in 1929. But it turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as Jack Manton explained:

Those people in Melbourne who were comparatively affluent up till then, dug deeper in their pockets to find money, forgot their pride and jumped



Advertisement by Manton's for the autumn collection, *Table Talk* (Melbourne), 18 March 1937, p. 64

the Swanston Street shopping barrier ... For the items that we stocked that Myers also sold, because of our smaller overhead costs, we could sell them cheaper.¹⁴

Manton's opened Australia's first self-service grocery – a 'groceria'¹⁵ – and an arrangement with the Housewives' Association brought in additional revenue, with its members receiving a discount card as an incentive to shop there.¹⁶ Business boomed.

Last days of the Theatre Royal

The original Theatre Royal in Bourke Street had opened in 1855¹⁷ and had quickly become 'the premier theatre of Australia'.¹⁸ It was destroyed by fire in 1872¹⁹ and replaced by a more elaborate structure later that year, with subsequent renovations by William Pitt between 1904 and 1924.²⁰



Theatre Royal, 230–36 Bourke Street, with Hoyts de Luxe on left, c. 1929–30, photograph by FG Robinson, Pictures Collection, H81.171/10

Around 1933, the theatre came on the market – ‘a gift from heaven’²¹ for its enterprising neighbours. Manton’s acquired the theatre and started planning for its demolition to enable the expansion of the store. William Manton and his sons, Jack and Ivor, watched the final production at the theatre, Harold Fraser-Simson’s musical comedy *The Maid of the Mountains*.

It was, for the theatre-goers, a nostalgic last appearance, an emotional night, the end of an era. There were those who were mortified at the prospect of a store taking the place of their palace of dreams.²²

Even Whelan the Wrecker sensed the importance of the occasion and donated four bricks from the theatre to the National Museum of Victoria. They are the oldest bricks in the museum’s collection and form part of its Whelan the Wrecker collection.²³



Manton's, 222–36 Bourke Street, c. 1952, photograph by Lyle Fowler, Pictures Collection, Harold Paynting collection, H92.20/4125

Art Deco splendour

Out of the rubble emerged the Art Deco splendour of Manton's new store. Jack Manton helped design the building with architect Henry William Tompkins (of the successful Melbourne architectural firm HW & FB Tompkins).²⁴ The slogan 'It's smart to be thrifty' was adopted, according to Jack Manton, courtesy of Sears department store in the United States.²⁵

Jack Manton recalled the store's grand opening, in 1934:

As father, Ivor and I stood inside the front entrance, father said, after the first pressing, pushing, shoving, running mob simmered down a little: 'well, you boys have a great success on your hands' ... we were now coming out of the shadow of Sid Myer.²⁶

The *Herald* described the new store:

A triumph for Australian workmanship, architecture and building construction, Manton and Son's new store has arisen from the ruins of the Theatre Royal in just 17 weeks ... The display windows on the ground floor include deep island windows extending back 30 feet [9 metres] from the street ...



Glass blocks set into footpath at rear of Target store, Little Bourke Street, 2019, photograph by the author

The main feature of the design is the horizontal line which ... is repeated again and again throughout the building.²⁷

Great successes required more space, so the expansion continued. In 1936, Manton's purchased 209-13 Little Bourke Street, adjoining the rear of their new premises,²⁸ and had a four-storey building erected in a similar streamline design. Again, the architects were HW and FB Tompkins. Again, the *Herald* reported on the opening, in 1937:

The new store will carry a full range of men's clothing and luxury goods of a quality typical of that which has brought such outstanding success to Manton's women's-wear departments ...

From footpath level, however, the most striking feature is the store designation of the shopping niche Manton's have created in the street. This they term 'Manton Place,' and the name literally blazes in letters of fire from the door entrance. The effect is created by neon lights sunk under glass just below the pavement surface.²⁹

These were the glass blocks set into the pavement with the words 'MANTON PLACE' that still exist today.

In 1940, Manton's purchased 226-28 Bourke Street,³⁰ adjoining the east side of the store. Work commenced in 1941, with a new three-storey building designed by Harry A Norris being constructed.³¹ And in 1944, Manton's purchased the adjoining building at 222-24 Bourke Street, occupying it in 1951.³² Manton's now possessed an enviable portion of real estate in both Bourke and Little Bourke streets.

Our London Air-Mail



A WEEKLY FEATURE

Dear Olga,

Had a perfectly divine trip from Australia, and now for my activities here in London, which incidentally is all agog and atwitter! What it is going to be like in Coronation week I have no idea.

It seems that the joy of the coming Coronation has affected everyone, and all around is gaiety and color. I am rushing about madly, but will keep my promise and write you every week. And what news!

I have said my "How-do-you-do's" as prettily as possible to my old friends in London, and we are now faring forth for a perfect orgy of clothes-seeing, and also some clothes-buying. Would that I had the wealth of some of our Indian potentates who are now adding color to the London scene. Nevertheless, I have seen some gorgeous clothes.



(1)

The Juliet Cap is a Favorite...

This is a simple skull cap, shaped like a basin, yet at the Cheltenham races this week it surmounted some of the smartest toilettes. They were generally done in Suede, Velvet, Soft Felt or Flat Fur. They are often worn with matching Red, Green or Yellow Scarves to relieve neutral-colored tweeds. For late afternoon they reappear pulled forward with a flower posy perched over the forehead for dressiness. I have sketched it for you, dear, and numbered it (1).

Louis Borbon sponsors the Banded Toque, a little beret with a band and

a rather austere high toque reminding one of a tea cosy. Then there is the Kape effect, with high-pointed crown and rakish brim to one side. I will dash off a sketch of this for you, and will number it (2).



(2)

Hats are going higher, higher and higher. Goodness knows how short little me is going to see the Coronation procession with all these "high hats." I will have to use some of my influence with some of my influential friends here. I should say quite frankly, darling, that people are almost scratching each other's eyes out for vantage points to see the Coronation procession.

New Fabrics

Rather really exciting . . . One is called "Sights o' London," which is too, too amusing . . . tiny colored prints of Big Ben, St. Paul's Cathedral, Tower Bridge, Trafalgar Square, etc., calculated to inspire one with fierce patriotism. Lots of these Silks are now "birding" forth in the airplane to you, dear. Stiebel uses them in London to trim afternoon frocks on plain grounds, and the little colorful touches appear as bands at the neck, a sash at the waist, and again for the new redingote with large, short sleeves, tight bodices, and full circular skirts, giving that popular "swing" effect. They look very smart, these foolish, delightful patterns when made up into snug little Vestees to wear under an ensemble.

Epstein's Model

Had quite a thrill at a bright party the other night when I met "Louise," who is Epstein's model, and a vivid brunette. She portrayed the modern trend for contrast in her evening gown, which was of Dregs of Wine, and had a tomato train that could be looped up as a shawl about the shoulders, or worn as a sari over the head. Secretly, my dear, I think she is much lovelier than Epstein's creations would lead one to believe, but then perhaps, darling, I am biased because I do like things to look as they are, otherwise life becomes so frightfully confusing.

Regency Beau

I have sketched (3) a Blistered Silk Coat of an afternoon suit showing the popular "Regency Beau" flare, which is very full and flares from the hipline. This was enhanced by a tulle ruffle at the (3) neckline.



The Cumberbund

A very becoming fashion, and one you could wear beautifully, Olga, is the Cumberbund style for evening wear. Contrasting in color, it is brought high almost to the bustline and terminates in a long, flowing sash. Some of the most amazing color contrasts are used. Undoubtedly it will be one of the leading evening fashions.

Well, dear, I must fly . . . will tell you more of the Cheltenham Races next week. Must catch the air mail now.

Yours busily,

Peggy Wyks.
MANTON'S
London Representative.

Sweetheart Bonnets

To wear on that very important occasion when your soldier boy's
on leave. A delightfully romantic little hat in a host
of lovely colours. At Manton's Millinery Dept. ... **10/11**

MANTON'S

Manton & Sons Ltd., Bourke Street Central.

Advertisement by Manton's for sweetheart bonnets, *Advocate* (Melbourne), 19 March 1942, p. 14

'Our London air-mail'

A series of weekly 'air-mails' from London appeared in *The Age* and *Argus* between 1937 and 1938. Written and illustrated by Pegg Wyks, who was the London representative for Manton's, they were a clever marketing tool by Manton's.³³

The first air-mail penned by Wyks read:

Had a perfectly divine trip from Australia, and now for my activities here in London, which incidentally is all agog and atwitter! ... Hats are going higher, higher and higher. Goodness knows how short little me is going to see the Coronation procession with all these 'high hats'.³⁴

Breezy, informal and entertaining, the air-mails must have held immense appeal for readers. News of the latest fashions, as well as political and cultural

events, would have been met with keen interest, as would observations on ‘hem lines’,³⁵ ‘Paris fashion premieres’,³⁶ ‘garden parties’,³⁷ ‘exhausting struggle[s] with the French vernacular’³⁸ and ‘devastating tweeds’.³⁹

At this time, Manton’s was experiencing record profits. Ivor Manton reported at the annual meeting of shareholders:

By frequent turnover of stocks the company is able to work ... on a comparatively low margin of profit, thereby passing to the public some very exceptional values. It is also due to this factor ... that the company is able to place fresh merchandise continually before the public.⁴⁰

In October 1938, Jack Manton married Patricia Wenzel at the Toorak Presbyterian Church. It was a ‘society wedding’,⁴¹ and such was the public interest that ‘police were required to control the crowds’.⁴²

And amid all the talk of profits and weddings, a plaque by sculptor Wallace Anderson⁴³ commemorating the Theatre Royal was unveiled:

Though Manton’s in their march of progress have swept away the Theatre Royal which had such an intimate place with Melbourne’s historians and theatre lovers, the firm does not intend to allow the passing of the theatre to go unmarked. In the new section of their store where the stage once stood will be erected a memorial plaque. This fine artistic tribute will be the work of an Australian sculptor, and will cover a lead lined cavity in which will be sealed for posterity eight articles typical of 1937 life.⁴⁴

Manton’s at war

In 1939, with the outbreak of World War II, Manton’s was forced to make changes. Staff shortages caused by enlistments were addressed by bringing back former female staff, ‘referred to, not unkindly, as “old boilers”’.⁴⁵

Manton’s set up a coupon advisory service for customers: ‘Are you puzzled about Rationing? Do COUPONS appear an involved mystery to you? Manton’s have all the answers’.⁴⁶

And war-related merchandise was also sold: blackout blinds and paint;⁴⁷ khaki shirts, socks and handkerchiefs;⁴⁸ and ‘sweetheart bonnets – to wear on that very important occasion when your soldier boy’s on leave’.⁴⁹

The possibility of an invasion necessitated changes in the store itself:

The windows were mostly boarded up, a small visual square allowed customers to look into the windows. The possibility of bombing by aircraft became real, so buckets of water were distributed throughout the store to augment sprinkler systems against fire.⁵⁰

Here they are! *Seeing and feeling is Believing*

MANTON'S NEW "MEN'S STORE"

SENSATIONAL OPENING OFFER!



WOVEN STRIPE SHIRTS
With 2 Boned Collars

7/11

4/11½

Seeing + Feeling is Believing

Bring Your Cash Orders

The launching of Manton's new Men's Store is an enormous event... the values to be featured during the opening weeks are absolutely sensational! See this outstanding offer of Men's Woven Stripe Poplin Tuxedo Shirts! Note the care with which the fabrics have been selected... the infinite care taken with the styling and coloring... the choice of patterns in fashionable stripes or checks in Blues, Browns, or Greys. Each shirt is tailored with meticulous attention to detail... with T.W.O. BONDED collars to match! Sizes 13½ to 16½. Buy several. You save 2/ on every one! Usually selling at 7/11; at Manton's, 4/11½. Ground Floor.

WE PAY FREIGHT IN VICTORIA

Note... Stripes are Woven



What Value!

This sale of Men's Pyjamas took more than two months to prepare! Without a bit of exaggeration we can say that they are the finest obtainable at the price of 4/11½. The Flannellette is British... sturdy and strong... whilst the cut is particularly good, and the stripes unusually attractive. Blues, Browns, and Pinks. S.M., M., and O.S. fittings. Usually 7/11; at Manton's, 4/11½. Ground Floor.

7/11

4/11½

Seeing + Feeling is Believing

We Pay Freight in Victoria

British - Sturdy - Strong

"Margery Pym" SHEETS
5 YEARS' GUARANTEE

54 x 90 in., single bed size... pr. **12/6**
63 x 90 in., large single bed size pr. **13/11**
72 x 90 in., three-quarter bed . pr. **14/11**
80 x 90 in., double bed size . . . pr. **16/11**
80 x 99 in., large double bed . . pr. **18/11**

5 YEARS' GUARANTEE

Seeing + Feeling is Believing

There's such sturdy quality in "MARGERY PYM" Sheet- ing! It's made from carefully selected, finely spun Cotton —with the result that "MARGERY PYM" Sheets wash and wear year after year without losing their original whiteness. Take advantage of this generous offer now! Strong Twill Weaves, wrapped in cellophane.

We Pay Freight in Victoria

We Pay Freight to All Victorian Towns!

MANTON'S (Manton & Sons Limited), Bourke Street Central, Three in MANTON PLACE.

"Summer Breeze"

We make a test of "SUMMER-BREEZE" and tested hundreds of patterns together in one cut. AND NOT ONE COLOR RAN! This wonderful fabric is absolutely unobtainable for frocks that will have more than a passing acquaintance with the wash tub! It's durable as well as beautiful, too! Look at the sample... note the fast dye... and the threads... feel how strong they are! In an outstanding selection of over 200 patterns. S.S.W. to O.S.

8/11

Boilfast Sunfast Cottons

Seeing + Feeling is Believing

USE OUR LAY-BY

200 Other Patterns

See 3 Other Styles Over Page

1490

"IT'S SMART TO BE THRIFTY!"

'Seeing and feeling is believing', Manton's advertisement featuring real samples of fabric, Age (Melbourne), 9 October 1937, p. 13



Window display, Manton's, c. 1943, photograph by Lyle Fowler, Pictures Collection, Harold Paynting collection, H92.20/1494

Like other stores, Manton's supported the war effort through various patriotic initiatives. A 'soldiers' cake counter' was set up selling cakes and other items for customers to send to loved ones overseas, including prisoners of war:

Now is the time to send tobacco and cigarettes for Christmas to your menfolk who are prisoners of war in Europe ... These parcels can be sent only to prisoners of war under German or Italian control.⁵¹

The store also encouraged customers to support the Red Cross and to purchase war bonds, war savings certificates and national savings stamps.⁵²

When the war ended, the business had survived relatively well. At its annual meeting in 1945, Deputy Chairman FE (Eric) Lampe reviewed the company's performance:

Owing to the difficulty of securing supplies of merchandise to keep pace with the quick turnover of stocks which is the essential feature of Manton's business, trade suffered a slight decline in turnover during 1944-45. We are



Window display, Manton's, c. 1940 – c. 1959, photograph by Commercial Photographic Co., Pictures Collection, Harold Paynting collection, H2013.30/74

now pleased to report that stocks have once again been built up to their 1941–42 level, and that the resultant turnover is creating new records.⁵³

Jumping with customers

To compete with Myer, Manton's had to keep on its toes. Gatchy slogans, innovative advertising and eye-catching window displays were all part of the game plan.

Ivor Manton was considered 'one of the greatest retail advertising experts in Australia'.⁵⁴ He 'snatched captions out of the air and vigorously produced ads which provoked a great response. Readers do not usually buy newspapers to read the ads'.⁵⁵

Lallah Dredge, Olga Farnsworth and Hertia Winter were responsible for window and interior displays, print advertisements, internal stationery and ticket writing at Manton's,⁵⁶ with Dredge's work receiving worldwide acclaim.⁵⁷

A novel window display was staged in 1931:

A game of bridge played in the unusual setting of a city show window drew a perpetual crowd of onlookers yesterday ... all the furnishings of a card room from table to lighted lamp were provided for the players, and their afternoon tea was served during their game. The fashion for laces and fragile materials ... was attractively shown in the frocks worn by the mannequins.⁵⁸

And in a tiny advertisement in *The Age* of 8 October 1937 was a tantalising detail:

HALF A MILLION PIECES OF MATERIAL are spread through "The Age" To-morrow to celebrate the Opening of MANTON'S MEN'S STORE.⁵⁹

Samples of material were indeed to be found inside the newspaper the next day. An arrangement between Manton's and a Catholic convent had girls paste the samples into inserts, which were then placed into the papers as they came off the press. The company was swamped with orders.⁶⁰ Such events were

keyed to entertainment as well as profit, creating a feeling in the public mind of some fun and excitement at Mantons for young and old. Hopefully, if successful, each person would tell others, the greatest continuing advertising medium in the world.⁶¹

While Manton's may never have usurped Myer, the store was 'jumping with customers'⁶² and became the 'number two retailer in Victoria'.⁶³ 'We were giving Myers, still our only great competitor, a run for their money.'⁶⁴

Farewell to Manton's

In late 1954, Edgar Coles analysed the balance sheet of Manton's and considered the store's purchase.⁶⁵ The move by Edgar Coles, who was known as 'the takeover king',⁶⁶ marked the beginning of the end for Manton's.

William Manton's two sons, Jack and Ivor, initially rebuffed Coles' approach, but,

as father had retired, we decided if any offer was impressive, we would sell. In Ivor's case, it would allow him to go to New Guinea to live. In mine, it was essential, I had had enough. I was wearing out.⁶⁷

That night I told father of the possible sale of the business. He said: 'I don't want a monument, it's only concrete. Sell the store. You work too damn hard anyway.'⁶⁸



Crowds at the opening of Coles store no. 200, in Bourke Street, 1955, photographer unknown, Coles Myer archive, MS 13468, Australian Manuscripts Collection

On 2 June 1955, an agreement was signed between Manton's and Coles for the purchase of the ordinary shares. Manton's advised its 572 shareholders of the offer on 6 June. On the same day, Myer agreed to purchase the stock.⁶⁹ The shareholders of Manton's approved the offer by 1 July.⁷⁰ Jack Manton noted in his autobiography that he and Ivor 'were not financial wizards but ... had gained nearly 300% profit for the ordinary share-holders.'⁷¹

On 2 July 1955, Manton's ceased trading. Jack Manton recalled his feelings at the time:

personally, it took some time to redeem my heart out of the business. I had designed the building and extensions, all the departments through the years, the display windows, controlled 1,000 staff, laid down all the teaching procedures and manuals as 'store master'. All those exciting learning and doing years in an office shared with the greatest man I ever knew, were at an end. 'It's Smart to be Thrifty' was also at an end, it was now smart to go swiftly.⁷²



Workmen with time capsule found during extensions to former Manton's store, Coles store no. 200, Bourke Street, Melbourne, *Sun (Melbourne)*, September 1977, photographer unknown, Coles Myer archive, MS 13468, Australian Manuscripts Collection

On 14 July, refitting of the Manton's building commenced, and on 22 September, Coles store no. 200 opened.⁷³ Later, it became a Target store.

Manton's was just one of the acquisitions made by Coles in the 1950s: Selfridges (Australasia), Penneys and F&G Stores were others that 'succumbed to Coles' aggressive expansion policies'.⁷⁴

New pastures

In the 1940s, Ivor Manton had established a successful sheep stud at Monegeeta, north of Melbourne, which he continued after the closure of Manton's. In 1963, he went to Papua New Guinea to set up the country's first tea plantation. No expense was spared to ensure the finest tea was produced. He died on the Gold Coast, Queensland, in February 1994.⁷⁵

Jack Manton's life took a more artistic turn. In 1961, he started an Australian art collection focusing on the Heidelberg School. In *Australian Painters of the Heidelberg: the Jack Manton collection*, published in 1979 with an

introduction and notes on the paintings by Patrick McCaughey and notes on the collection by Manton, the latter paid homage to his father:

My father was a 'self-made' man indeed. His first work, at age eleven, was in fixing boots to the feet of skaters at the local roller rink; his last was as head of the vast department store known simply as Manton's ...

After the sale of Manton's, I ... fell to musing upon my father's early poverty, his climb to success and the tradition he had created. Suddenly, I knew what I wanted to do ... I would form a collection of paintings covering the period of his early life. It would not only be an expression of my love for him but would also symbolize his creativity and perseverance, his quest for perfection and enthusiasm for life ...

Among the Heidelberg painters ... were men, many from humble backgrounds, who not only shared the qualities I so admired in my father, but who also grew up in the same period. I had found the way to continue the tradition my father had established.⁷⁶

The Jack Manton collection is now housed in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and features such well-known works as Tom Roberts' *Mentone* (1887), Arthur Streeton's *Oncoming storm* (1895) and Charles Conder's *Coogee* (1888).⁷⁷

In 1980, Jack Manton wrote *A Manton or Two*, an account of the Manton's store and family, from which many of the quotations in this article have come. His father, William Manton, had died in 1962.⁷⁸ Jack Manton died in 1992.⁷⁹

Postscript

Today, the Theatre Royal plaque hangs in the reception area of the Target store in Bourke Street. A time capsule that was buried behind the plaque in 1937 was rediscovered in 1977 by workmen during extensions to Coles.⁸⁰ Its whereabouts today have not been ascertained.

State Library Victoria has a large collection of material relating to Manton's, including photographs, architectural drawings and newspapers. The Library also holds the Coles Myer archive, which contains a significant collection on Manton's as a result of Coles' takeover of the store in 1955.