

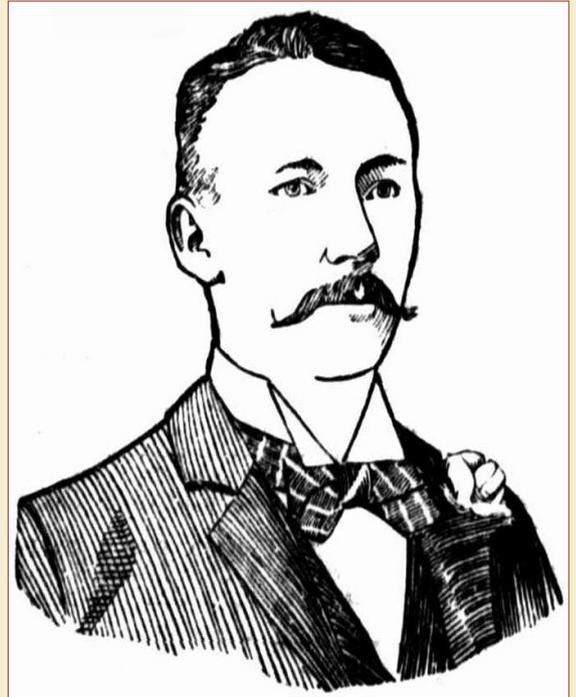
HAROLD T. MORGAN

(1865-) Sydney solicitor, businessman, alderman and Newtown Mayor.

Harold Morgan was the legal representative of vaudeville entrepreneur Harry Clay from the early 1900s. In 1912 he became a partner in the company which Clay's Bridge Theatre, Newtown. Morgan continued to manage the company's legal affairs after Clay's death in 1925, with these duties later falling to his sons. The family also continued acting for Catherine Clay up until her death in the early 1960s.

Born in Wollongong in 1865, Harold Thomas Morgan one of at least seven children born to Michael Thomas Morgan, a native of Bristol, England, who came to Australia in the early 1860s. Michael Morgan later went on to co-found Willmot and Morgan, a railways and public work contracting company. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* one of his nephews was Sir Charles Morgan, a former president of the Institute of Civil Engineers (London) and a leading railways expert.¹ The *Australian Star* newspaper also records that Harold T. Morgan was a fourth-generation Australian, his maternal great-grandfather having been a prominent figure in the country's early colonial history.²

Educated as Newington College, Stanmore, Harold Morgan studied law at Sydney University and was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court in 1889. In 1891 he won his first election as a Newtown alderman and over the remainder of the decade was elected unopposed on three occasions. When opposed he reportedly won by an overwhelming majority. In 1895 he served as Mayor, a position he was again elected to in 1902, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, and 1918. The *Australian Star* further records that Morgan served as president of the Boomerang Branch (Newtown) of the Australian natives Association (A.N.A.).³ He also became a Notary Public and Commissioner for Affidavits for New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland during the 1890s.



Australain Star (Sydney) 24 Feb. 1902, 5.

One of Harold Morgan's more notable achievements as Newtown Mayor was to convert the public lights in Newtown from gas to electricity. As a member of the Council's finance committee Morgan was well-aware that the change would be more economically viable and allow for lighting in the streets to be permanent, as opposed to the gaslight system which left the suburb's main centre in darkness on average five nights a month. According to the *Newtown Jubilee Souvenir* of 1912, Morgan had to spend some considerable time and effort to push his lighting agenda through the council, with the electric lights eventually going into operation on the New Year's Eve leading into 1911.

While there remains quite a deal more to be established concerning Morgan's life and career, it appears that his association with Harry Clay was a long and fruitful one. The earliest record of his involvement in the entrepreneur's career and personal life is in the handling of the Clays' purchase of 218 Glebe Point Road in 1908. Whether or not he was one of several people to finance Clay's early career ca.1901, when the entrepreneur initially began running his Queensland tours is unknown. It is possible that they had begun their association as early as the mid-late 1890s, however. It is more than likely that he and Clay would have met and had business interests during the mid to late-1890s as the vaudeville manager was by then also establishing himself as an emerging entrepreneur in Newtown through his [St George's Hall](#) base of operations.

While it is not known when Harold Morgan founded his legal firm, his business address for some time was:

Harold T. Morgan & Sons
Solicitors and Notaries
74 Pitt Street (btw Martin Pl and Hunter St)
PO Box 195 G.P.O.

¹ "Mr Michel Thomas Morgan," 15.

² "Mr Harold T. Morgan," 5.

³ Ibid, 5.

One of Morgan's sons, Alfred T. Morgan: BA. LL.B was both a solicitor and Commissioner for Affidavits for South Australia, Tasmania, and Fiji, while another, Harold E. Morgan, (also a solicitor) became Commissioner for Affidavits for New Zealand and the Western Pacific. The only anecdotal reference to Morgan in any of the trade magazines found so far is in 1917, when *Australian Variety* records:

Harold Morgan, an alderman for Enmore for many years, and one of the directors of Clay's Bridge Theatre Ltd was very much in evidence with his gorgeous motor car during the week, giving artists a lift home after the show. Making as he did, a special trip of it each evening, shows thoughtfulness to an extent which will be long remembered by many, and for which too much thanks cannot be given him. The car, it might be mentioned, is one of the best in Australia.⁴

Legal papers belonging to Harry Clay, his wife and daughter ([Essie Clay](#)) held in the New South Wales State Government Archives indicate that [Catherine Clay](#) retained Morgan as her legal representative and financial manager affairs up until at least 1948, with his sons continuing to handle her affairs up until her death. Records also indicate that Moran also loaned her a significant amount of money at one stage, further suggesting that the relationship between he and the Clays was quite close.

SEE ALSO

- [Harry Clay](#)
- [Clay's Bridge Theatre Co](#)
- [Bridge Theatre](#)

FURTHER REFERENCE

- "Alderman H. T. Morgan: Mayor of Newtown and Alderman for 28 Years." *Sunday News* (Sydney) 25 May 1919, 8.
"Mr Harold T. Morgan." *Australian Star* (Sydney) 24 Feb. 1902, 5.
"Mr Michael Thomas Morgan." [Obituary] *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 Sept. 1931, 15.
"Newtown: Candidature of Alderman Morgan." *Sydney Morning Herald* 30 July 1904: 14.
"Newtown Election." *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 May 1907, 8.
"Newtown-Erskinvile: Mr. H.T. Morgan's Candidature." *Australian Star* (Sydney) 16 July 1898, 5.
Jubilee Souvenir of the Municipality of Newtown – 1862-1912. *Newtown Project* (sighted 16/04/2011) [see pages 44 and 58]



Newtown Diamond Jubilee Souvenir (1922), 2.

⁴ *Australian Variety* (Sydney) 15 Aug. 1917, n. pag.