

RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF KYTHERIAN SACRED SITES:

Bingara is a small north-west NSW town, that lies within *Gwydir Shire*. Population, 1300. The map shows the location of the town in relationship to the North West of NSW, the NSW coastline, and the Queensland border. Bingara is a 7 hour drive from both Sydney and Brisbane, and about 3½ hours drive to the larger coastal towns. In 1936, three Kytherians, Peter John Feros, Katschamos, (Mitata), George Ernest (Proto)Psaltis, Katsavias, (Frilingianika), and Emanuel Theodoropoulos Aronis, known as Emanuel Aroney, (Aroniadika), inspired by a “megalo ithea”, built a magnificent art deco Cinema, the *the Roxy Theatre*. Adjoining it they also built a well furnished café, the *Roxy Café*. This traded under the name *Peters and Co*. *Peters and Co* signs are still displayed on the shop fronts of numerous former Kytherian cafes throughout NSW. Behind both buildings, the partners built a large guesthouse.

The story of how the Roxy came to be built is well told by the grandson of Peter Feros, Peter Prineas, in his superbly written book, *Katschamos and the Great Idea*. More recently the Roxy has been the subject of an article in the June issue of the Magazine of the *Royal Historical Society*, and featured prominently in the first of the Fox *Bio Channel* programmes ‘As Australian As’, during May. The programme was written and narrated by Australian actor John Woods.

Those who have read *Katschamos and the Great Idea* will know that, gross over-capitalisation, and a determined opponent, Victor Peacocke, who operated the *Regent Theatre*, and a subsequent discount price war, that broke out between the two groups, bankrupted the Kytherians.

The *Roxy Theatre* passed through various hands, and various uses, until 1958, when it closed down. The (then) *Bingara Council* purchased the Theatre in 1999. The *Roxy Café* was operated by various Greek and Kytherian owners until the mid 1960’s, when it was turned into a memorabilia shop. It morphed into a Chinese restaurant for twenty years, until it was purchased by the *Gwydir Council* in 2008.

The *Roxy Theatre* successfully obtained funding from the three tiers of Government, and the *Roxy* was transformed into a veritable “palace of dreams” – in Kevin Cork’s phraseology – a ‘parthenon down under’. Triumphantly opened in 2004, it is one of the most beautiful Art Deco theatres in Australia.

In November 2009 the *Gwydir Council* was the recipient of a grant for \$750,000 through the *Department of Heritage, Environment, Water and Arts*, under the Australian Government Jobs Fund.

The staged project is multi-faceted and includes: the restoration of the Kytherian art deco café to its original splendour; a medium scale conference facility upstairs above the café; a museum that celebrates the story of immigration and acknowledges the significance of the Greek café, and the relocation of the *Tourist Information Centre* into the *Roxy* building. (Coincidentally, in the very location where another Kytherian, Dr Archie Kalokerinos, maintained a doctor’s surgery for more than a decade.)

The second stage of the project will see the incorporation of a trade training centre offering *Certificate III Level Hospitality Training* run in conjunction with the *Gwydir Learning Region*, the *Department of Education and Training*, and *TAFE NSW*. The *Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations* will fund this training centre.

Architectural firm, *Magoffin and Deakin* from Armidale, were the architects for the *Roxy Theatre* (2003), and are also the architects for the *Roxy Café* and *Roxy Museum* (2010).

Hellenic & Kytherian Sacred Sites, & pilgrimage destinations.

Most Greek-Australians are not aware that a *Hellenic Museum* exists in Australia, in the CBD of Melbourne Victoria. It is housed in the opulent *Mint Building* in William Street. It has been operating for 1½ years. The money to fund the *Museum* was donated by one Greek Australian benefactor, Spiros Stamoulis.

The word *Roxy* in its Greek and Persian origins means bright, dawn, star. But the *Roxy* is greater than a bright star. Governments have paid Greek and Kytherian Australians the ultimate tribute, by spending more than \$3 million over 7 years on creating what can best be described as Hellenic and Kytherian Sacred Sites and pilgrimage destinations.

Recently a group of Greeks and Kytherians from the local area, visited the sacred sites. They included, photo from left - right: George Kallitsis, John Calokerinos, Judy Gianneas, Peter Gianneas, Dorothy Fardouly, Con Fardouly, Paul Calokerinos. Peter Gianneas owned the *Black and Green Bar*, and then *Pete’s Place*, Inverell. George Kallitsis, owns *Universal Commercial and Catering Equipment* - Newtown and Barraba. Paul Calokerinos owns the *Canberra Cafe*, Manilla.

They were all stunned by the monetary investment expended on the *Roxy Theatre*, by the beauty of the building, by the “reverence” that many residents of the town have for the Theatre, and the Greek-Australian heritage preserved there. They were also deeply appreciative of Sandy McNaughton’s (Manager of the *Roxy*) hospitality. Con Fardouly was moved to write a letter of appreciation. I am certain, that once Hellenes and Kytherians see and utilise the “sacred sites”, they will be equally moved by the experience.

The *Roxy* currently attracts over 12,000 annually to numerous events and activities held there. The *Roxy* projects will guarantee the delivery of further economic benefits to the town through an increase in tourism, as well as the employment opportunities on offer.

Much of the original equipment in the café has been located. Some has been generously donated by local residents, and north western Kytherians. Sandy McNaughton has also tracked down and purchased many tables, chairs, booths, refrigeration units, and café artefacts, to install in the café, and display in the *Museum*. Most came from Kytherian café’s in the region.

How can Kytherians help make these sacred sites even better?

The original neon sign has been found. Already, one Kytherian family, grandchildren of Emanuel Aroney, an original *Roxy* owner, have agreed to pay to restore this unique sign.

Do you have any café artefacts that will eventually be lost? Do you have Greek costumes, or other “realia”? Consider placing them on loan, or donating them to the *Roxy*.

Are you qualified in Museum and Gallery management? Do you have other expertise? Consider donating some time?

Are you at school or university and need to do a project on this subject. Venture to Bingara, and fulfil your requirements there?

The Government funding has not included to date electronic and computer equipment to fit out the *Museum*. Can you donate equipment? Are you part of a Hellenic organisation that can?

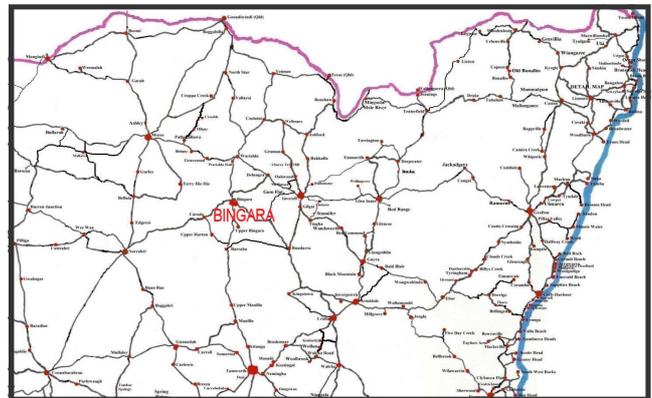
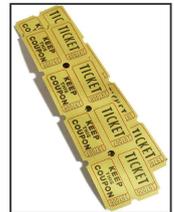
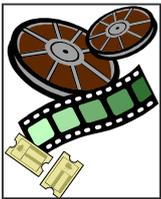
This is a chance to make a real difference.

Contact Sandy McNaughton, mob: 0427241 582 or roxy@gwydir.nsw.gov.au. Kytherians Peter Prineas, Peter McArthy (Delungra, married to Deanna Fatseas), & George C Poulos are also on the *Roxy Museum Committee*. John Wearne, and Peter A Jones, President of the *Bingara District Historical Society*, are the local representatives.

Central Web-links:



- Roxy Theatre: <http://www.kythera-family.net/index.php?nav=117-119&cid=191&did=2177&pageflip=24>
- Roxy Café: <http://www.kythera-family.net/index.php?nav=117-119&cid=191&did=17330&pageflip=1>
- Roxy Museum: <http://www.kythera-family.net/index.php?nav=117-119&cid=191&did=17831&pageflip=1>
- Katschamos and the Great Idea: <http://www.kythera-family.net/index.php?nav=6-82&cid=123&did=9989&pageflip=3>



24 Mather Street
Inverell. 2360.

23rd February, 2010.

Dear Sandy,

Just a note to express our "thank you" for your kind invitation of last Sunday to view the glory of "The Roxy" and hear the story of its past and the projections to the future of this beautiful building.

It was made even more enjoyable by your commentary and the evidence of your commitment to this historical restoration. We thoroughly enjoyed our day with you, Nancy and our fellow Greeks and appreciate your efforts, as, The Roxy restored will forever stand as a momentous, monumental and magnificent memorial to our Greek forebears who ventured to the foreign shores of Australia and instituted a tradition that your efforts will encapsulate, display and preserve for future generations to applaud and admire. Our many thanks *Sandy & Con Fardoulis*

