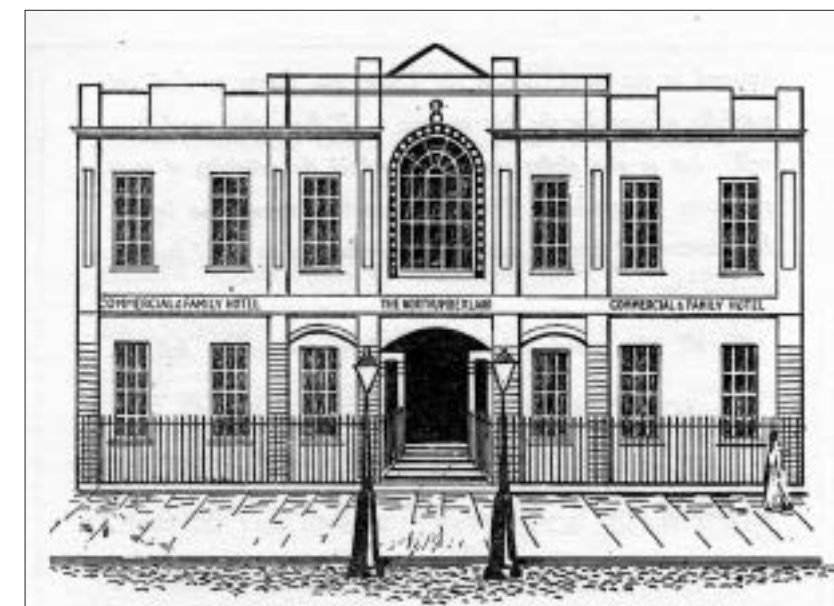


Liberty Hall

This Golden Jubilee year also sees the finalisation of the plans for the rebuilding of Liberty Hall, a new structure representing pride in the past and hope for the future.

FIFTY YEARS OF LIBERTY HALL; THE GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE IRISH TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION 1909-1959, p. 92



Northumberland Hotel, Beresford Place



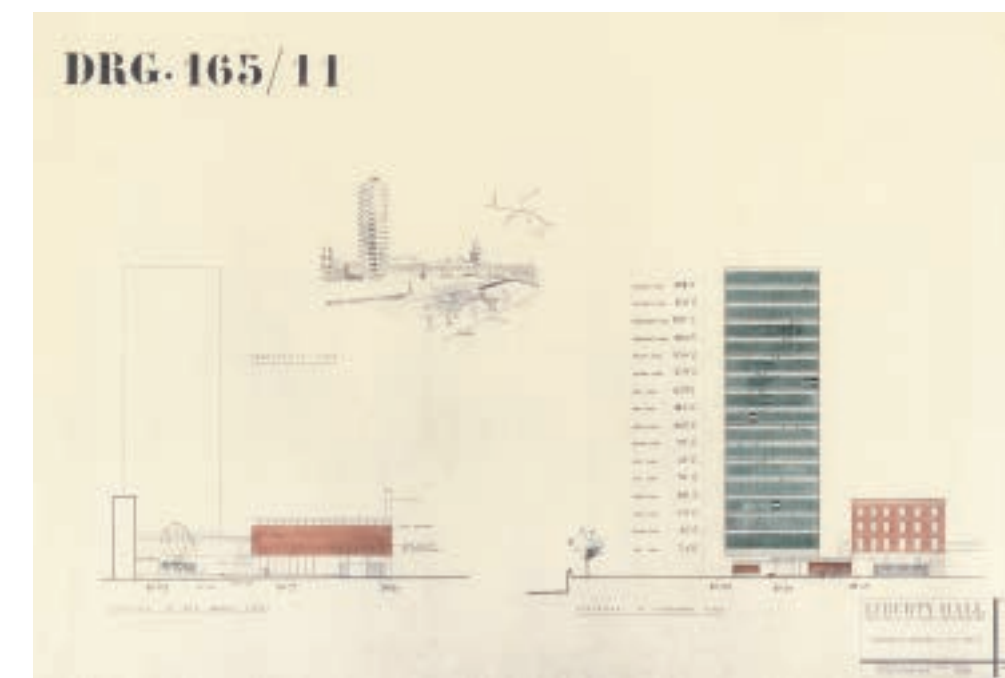
Liberty Hall, May 1916
IAA Westropp Collection, 96/57 Vol. 10 p. 48 2



Liberty Hall viewed from Busáras, c. 1950
IAA Photographic Collections, 52/82V2



Survey drawings by Desmond Rea O'Kelly, 1952
IAA 2009/111



Presentation drawing, new Liberty Hall, Desmond Rea O'Kelly, 1961
IAA 2009/111



Liberty Hall, Hugh Doran photograph, c. 1966
IAA 2005/23

One of the buildings most associated with the events of Easter Week is Liberty Hall. Headquarters of James Connolly, and of the Irish Citizen Army, it was here that the Proclamation was printed, here that the leaders of the Rising gathered on Easter Monday morning, and from here that they marched to occupy the GPO. Liberty Hall was targeted on 26 April 1916 by the gunboat Helga, but by then its role in the Rising was over. Unoccupied except for its live-in caretaker, the building suffered considerable damage, as did the surrounding houses, collateral casualties of the limited but not entirely accurate shelling.

The first Liberty Hall began life in 1826 as the Northumberland Hotel. Having fallen on hard times, it was described as being semi-derelict in 1912 when it was acquired by the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. It was refurbished and renamed in time to play its part in the traumatic events of the 1913 Lockout.

By March 1917 the building was being repaired to serve again as the Union's head office, but it was found to be increasingly unsuitable as Union membership and activity expanded. Plans to replace Liberty Hall gathered pace from the end of the Second World War, and culminated in a decision in 1955 to

construct Dublin's first 'sky-scraper' on the site. The Union was conscious of a looming anniversary – not the fortieth or even fiftieth of the Rising but its own Golden Jubilee in 1959. The old Liberty Hall was demolished in 1958 but the 1959 deadline was missed. The foundation stone was not laid until 12 May 1962, the 46th anniversary of the execution of James Connolly.

Designed by Desmond Rea O'Kelly and built of reinforced concrete with pre-stressed concrete beams, the new Liberty Hall rises in seventeen stories to 197 feet above street level. Dubbed 'the Crystal Tower' by the Irish Builder when it opened in May 1965, a name that completely failed to catch on, the building proved controversial from the start. Many never reconciled themselves to its presence and even for those who championed its bold modern intrusion on the city skyline, the 'concrete millinery' of its mosaic-clad folded concrete roof could be just 'a bit too jazzy for comfort'.