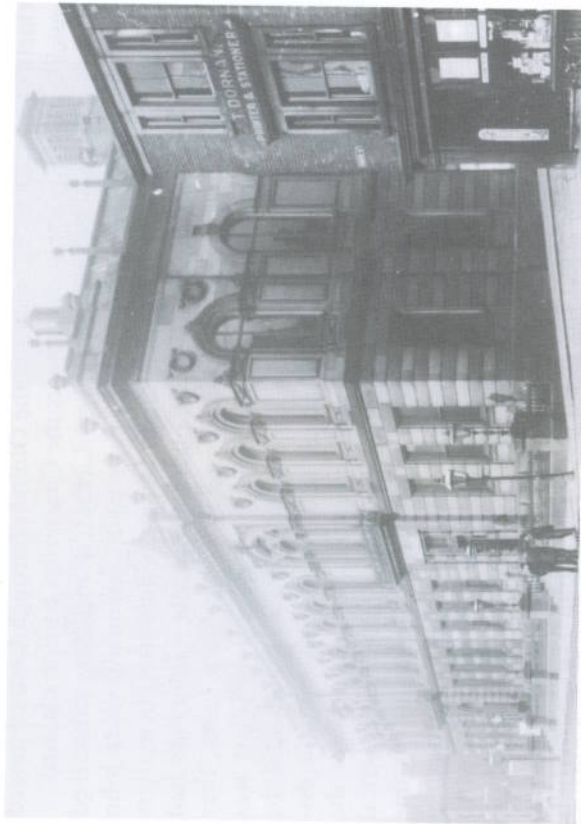
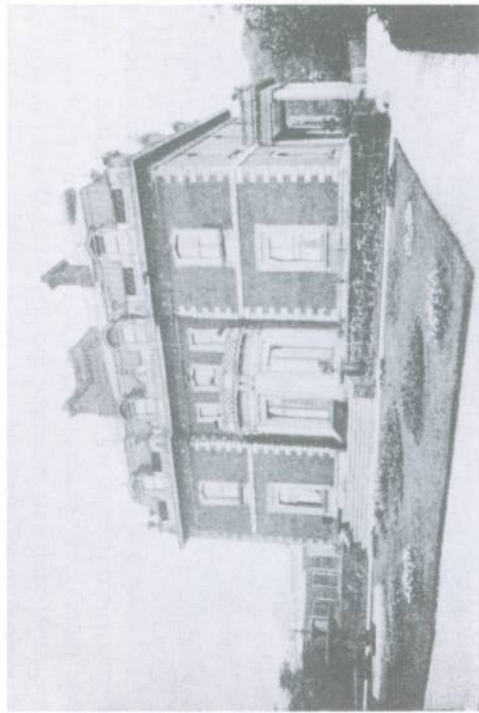




The Lyceum/School of Science & Art Building, Union Street, Oldham, after the new section for the school (nearest) had been added by John Platt's sons as a memorial to their father.

principal establishment in Oldham concerned with the betterment of education was the Lyceum. To the furtherance of this establishment both John and James Platt made notable contributions. The Lyceum had been founded, in 1840, as a mutual improvement society for working men. At first, meetings were held in premises in Henshaw Street but shortly afterwards a move was made to Queen Street where a library, newsroom and reading room were installed. In 1854 James Platt, who by then had been elected President of the Lyceum, resolved a superior building was required and he planned and organised, in the Working Men's Hall, an exhibition, of scientific, historical and cultural items, loaned from all over the country, to raise funds for such a building. The event proved an out-standing success, enabling the foundation stone for the new building, situated on Union Street, to be laid by James Platt himself in 1855. The new building was opened a year later when the curriculum of the Lyceum was extended to include classes in scientific and cultural subjects for which, initially, the teachers gave their time free. The new building was topped with a splendid observatory, the telescope for which was the present of James Platt. Later, John Platt offered the Lyceum a collection of equipment to found a permanent school of science and art, provided the facilities were



John Platt's residence, Werneth Park Oldham.

thrown open to the residents of the wider Oldham area, irrespective of their being members, or not, of the Lyceum. The school, housed in a building next door to the Lyceum, was another success. In accordance with John Platt's wishes it offered classes in mathematics, applied mechanics, chemistry, drawing and, in Latin and French. After John Platt's death his sons had the original building demolished and erected, in its stead, a new building, adjoining and in the style of the main Lyceum building, as a memorial to their father. The new building was opened by the Earl of Derby in 1881.

During the period of the cotton famine, John Platt was deeply concerned to prevent the workforce of Oldham from leaving the town, for emigration to the USA and Australia was seen by many of the unemployed as the solution to their plight. It has been seen what he undertook in his own sphere, textile machinery, to avert such happening but, also, he constantly warned that emigration was fraught with disaster and seized on adverse reports, on the experiences of those who had taken the step, to stress his warnings. At a public meeting he stated "Letters have been received from persons who have emigrated to Queensland which are most discouraging. Employment is said to be scarce, and their families are advised not to come out and starve." Naturally, he supported the scheme to use the unemployed to build a public park in Oldham (Alexandra Park), which apart from the immediate advantage it offered, he and his brother James had always thought desirable. When the first abortive attempt to create a park was made, in 1846, Hibbert, Platt & Sons had donated £60 to the