



Louis Bowser Cumpston

(Bartletto studio photo c.1911 courtesy Neil Cumpston)

Cumpston, Louis Bowser (1865-1931), was born 27 November 1865 at Liverpool in England, the son of a builder. His father Louis Philippe's affairs were liquidated in 1873, and this fact may have assisted in Louis senior's decision to embark for Australia, alone, in May of that year. After receiving some early education at the Isle of Man, in January 1877 Louis junior sailed on the *Marpesia* to Australia with two younger sisters and a brother, joining their father in Victoria. Louis studied at the Grammar School in Echuca, where unfortunately his father, listed as an accountant, was insolvent again in 1885.

Although it appears he may enjoyed a less-than-privileged upbringing, after completing his schooling in the early 1880s Louis was able to spend two years in England, before returning to Australia and serving articles for three years with architect John Robertson in Melbourne. He then worked for builders James Moore & Sons for a similar period. The early 1890s were a disastrous economic time in Victoria, and many businesses had little or no work. Consequently many young men and women were forced by circumstances to move to more prosperous locations. In August 1891 the twenty-five year old sailed for Western Australia on the *Bullarra*, and following arrival at Perth, gradually established himself in business as an architect.

In 1892 Cumpston designed four single-storied shops at the corner of William and Wellington Streets in Perth for prominent businessman Wesley Maley, who remained

a long-term client. Louis continued his work at this location in 1896 with four shops in William Street for Mrs Harriet Mitchell, which he replaced with two-storey shop-offices for the same client in 1912, then moving his office into *Mitchell's Buildings* at 136–142 William Street. Some other of Cumpston's prominent building designs in the 1890s Western Australian gold-boom period include six two-storey houses at the corner of Harvest Terrace and Hay Street, West Perth (1896); a 'villa residence' on the Perth Road at 'Osborne' (Stirling Highway, Claremont) for George Cranstone (1897); and the 'new' Osborne Hotel at Claremont (1901).

Louis Bowser Cumpston married Daphne Norah Venn in March 1895. This proved to be a very unfortunate union, as it was later established that Daphne was in a relationship with her 'uncle', J.B. Simmons, who had introduced her to Cumpston. The Cumpstons lived at *Verona* 139 Lamb (Newcastle) Street, Perth for some time up until April of 1898. A 'violent quarrel' in August 1898 led to Louis leaving his wife, taking the furniture, whereupon Daphne had him charged with larceny, accused of stealing over £1,000 of goods, utilizing Simmons as her witness. The court case carried through till February of 1899, when the court found in Louis' favour. Daphne and Simmons returned to Victoria, and Cumpston was subsequently granted a divorce on the grounds of adultery, it having been established that Venn and Simmons had been 'involved' for many years, including, on the evidence of Frank Peplow, a draftsman formerly employed by Cumpston, liaisons in the architect's private office.

In happier times, Louis married Aimee Muriel Love in 1901. They had a son Graham in December 1902, then daughters Nancy in 1905, Miriam in 1908, and Mary in 1912. From 1902 the family lived at *Kirby Thore*, a grand house on the south-west corner of View and Forrest Streets, Peppermint Grove, demolished in 1974. Cumpston designed a large two-storey residence, completed in 1904 for his near-neighbor in Forrest Street, James Sharpe. St Columba's Church is another of his designs in Peppermint Grove. During late 1906, Louis called tenders for the construction of two residences at Railway Parade in Leederville, which may have been of his own development, as the Cumpstons moved from Peppermint Grove to Railway Parade in 1907. From 1910 onward the family lived at 16 Emerald Terrace, West Perth.

In practice Cumpston was particularly successful with hotel design, including the Exchange Hotel, Greenbushes; Gosnells Hotel; Boyup Brook Hotel; Nungarin Hotel; Ocean Beach Hotel, North Cottesloe; Parkerville Tavern; Railway Hotel, Mullewa;

Salmon Gums Hotel, and Cunderdin Hotel (destroyed following the Meckering earthquake of 1968). In partnership with William Wolf, Cumpston won a competition in 1907 for the design of an elaborate Kalgoorlie Town Hall and Council Chambers valued at nearly £16,000, although the local Council controversially proceeded with another scheme. Other local government works include Collie Municipal Offices, Gosnells Roads Board Offices, and Pinjarra Roads Board Offices.

Examples of Cumpston's design versatility include a King Street warehouse (1905) and a carriage factory in Wellington Street, Perth (1915). Other building types include many residences and shops at locations in the metropolitan area - such as Cottesloe, Claremont, Perth, North Perth, Mount Lawley, and Victoria Park. Additional places attributed to Cumpston include *Tom Burke House* at 191-195 Newcastle St, Northbridge; a bungalow at 30 Park Road, Mount Lawley; and simple worker housing at 34, 36, 44 & 46 Edward Street in Perth.

An online search of *The West Australian* newspaper for tender notices reveals that Cumpston was continually active throughout the first thirty years of the Twentieth Century, and as late as May 1930, in his sixty-fifth year, was advertising tenders for a new hotel at Miling in the Wheatbelt. Following a long and productive professional career, Louis Bowser Cumpston died at Subiaco aged 66, on 30 November 1931. Louis Philippe Cumpston had passed away in Perth during 1920, but Aimee (Amy) Cumpston lived on till 1973.

References:

- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 25 March 1892, p.8 (shops William & Wellington Sts for Maley)
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 22 February 1896, p.8 (shop-offices William St for Mitchell)
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 September 1896, p.6 (houses Harvest Tce & Hay St for Gatwood)
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 8 November 1897, p.7 (residence at Osborne for G.S. Cranstone)
- 'Alleged Larceny', *The West Australian*, 23 December 1898, p.3.
- 'Alleged Larceny - The Bowser-Cumpston Case', *The West Australian*, 26 January 1899, p.3.
- 'Alleged Larceny of Furniture', *The West Australian*, 2 February 1899, pp.4-5.
- 'The Cumpston Case - The Magistrate's Decision', *The West Australian*, 16 February 1899, p.2.
- 'Cumpston v. Cumpston (Simmons Co-Respondent)', *The West Australian*, 22 September 1899, p.7.
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 September 1901, p.7 (new Osborne Hotel, Claremont)
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 26 February 1904, p.2 (large two-storey residence, 131? Forrest Street Peppermint Grove for James Sharpe)
- 'Tenders', *West Australian Mining, Building, and Engineering Journal*, 10 November 1906, (2 Residences, Railway Parade Leederville).

'New Hotel at Cottesloe', *West Australian Mining, Building, and Engineering Journal*, 25 January 1908, pp.17, 19, (Ocean Beach Hotel).

'News and Notes', *The Western Mail*, 24 August 1912, p.24 (shop-offices William St for Mitchell) Battye, J.S., 'Louis Bowser Cumpston', *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham for the Cyclopedia Co. Adelaide, Vol.1, 1912, p.634-5.

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'Esplanade Improvements', *The West Australian*, 23 October 1928, p.16 (kiosk & dressing rooms).

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'Lancelot Graham Bowser CUMPSTON, K. St. John', (re Louis' son Graham Cumpston 1902-1981) accessed 12 September 2011 at <http://www.rph.wa.gov.au/emeritus/cumpston.html>

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Six two-storey houses corner of Harvest Tee & Hay St, West Perth (JTA Hobbs file 387-8, Sherwood)



Exchange Hotel, Greenbushes (Battye, 1913, Vol.2, p.459)



Ocean Beach Hotel (*WAMBEJ*, 25 Jan 1908, p.17)



Cunderdin Hotel (SLWA 280926PD)

ESPLANADE IMPROVEMENTS.



The octagonal refreshment kiosk and dressing rooms (five for men and one for women) facing the Esplanade, close to Barrack-street. The contract price was £5,991. Tenders are being called for the leasing of the premises, which the council is confident will return more than interest on the expenditure, notwithstanding adverse criticism. The architect was Mr. L. B. Cumpston.

Kiosk and sports dressing rooms, The Esplanade, Perth (*The West Australian*, 23 October 1928, p.16)



St Columba's Church, Peppermint Grove (Neil Cumpston) Kiosk, The Esplanade, Perth (Google 2012)



Gosnells Hotel (HCWA Pic2739)



Nungarin Hotel (HCWA Pic2753)



Tom Burke House, 191-195 Newcastle St, Northbridge (Google 2011)