

PHOTO
A. A. Edward Danker
(courtesy xxx)

August Adolf Edward Danker (1867-1922) was born 14 August 1867 at Rockhampton, Queensland to Johann Frederick (John) and Amelia Dorothy (nee Rice) Danker. At least nine children were born to the couple. Arriving in Australia from Hamburg in 1855 with little knowledge of the English language, John was an accidental pioneer in the Rockhampton district. Notice of August's early talent was found when he displayed an architectural drawing at the Rockhampton School of Arts exhibition in 1884. At some stage young Danker moved further north to Cairns, probably to advance his career, and in late 1891 the *Cairns Post* carried notice of his winning prizes in the „Works of Arts“ section of the Agricultural Pastoral & Mining Association's first annual show – for an architectural drawing, a pen and ink sketch, a water-colour landscape, and a water-colour portrait. A.A.E. Danker of Cairns was elected an associate of the Queensland Institute of Architects in June 1893. Records in Queensland could provide further indications of his early education and architectural training.

At 26 years of age Danker travelled across Australia to seek career advancement with the richer prospects of gold-boom Western Australia. He wrote from Hay Street, Perth to the *Daily News* in Perth during May 1894 of his ideas for sail-power to be utilised in a proposed railway between Southern Cross and Coolgardie, noting himself both as an architect and civil engineer. It appears he may have been sensitive to his German heritage, preferring to use the name Edward, and in Western Australia advertised using the name A.A. Edward Danker. Danker joined in business with engineer George Bellingham at the rapidly developing town of Coolgardie in June 1894. They traded as „Bellingham & Danker surveyors, architects, civil engineers, draftsmen &c“.

At the opening by the mayor of the „Coolgardie Chambers“ at Bayley Street in late May 1895, the two-storey brick offices by Bellingham & Danker were described as having „everything belonging to the building ... on elaborate scale“. Despite apparent business success in the thriving town, Danker and Bellingham dissolved their partnership in May 1895. This action may have in part facilitated Edward's marriage, as he married Eleanor Williams at St George's Church in Hobart during June 1895. With Edward's confidence in the ongoing prospects of the area, the couple soon returned to Coolgardie, and in December 1895 Danker produced an „illuminated address“ presented in a send-off to the ex-mayor of Coolgardie. The Dankers had three children at Coolgardie: John Henry (1896-1897) lost at just 10 months, Olive Mai (b.1897), and Gwendoline (b.1901). Their fourth child Vera (1905-1907) was born at South Perth. Tragically Vera also died as an infant, in Sydney.

Compared to the more outwardly successful architects of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Danker appears to have produced a modest number of projects, but he may well have been involved in less obvious engineering work for the mining companies proliferating in the region during the 1890s. Edward called tenders in 1896 for a shop in Hannan Street Kalgoorlie for chemist J. Laybourne Smith; in 1897 for additions and alterations to the Club Hotel at Kalgoorlie; in 1898 for the Masonic Hall at Southern Cross; and in late 1900 for a hotel at Burbanks 9km south of Coolgardie, for R.T. Jones. Another hotel project of 1900 was the Premier Hotel at Kunanalling, another now-abandoned town, but in this instance 32km north of Coolgardie. The ruins of the hotel still remain at the old townsite.

Danker is listed in *Wises Directory* at Coolgardie until 1902, when the declining fortunes of the town and his own financial difficulties precipitated another move. Within later bankruptcy proceedings (during 1905), it was reported that Danker, then a civil servant living at Applecross, had a doleful tale to tell: „A couple of years ago he was a somewhat prosperous architect of Coolgardie, and had £1000 in the bank, in addition to some outside property. He decided to take his wife and family to the eastern States for a holiday, leaving a man in charge of the business. On his return he found his £1000 reduced to £260, and over £200 of debts contracted. Sometime later, finding himself indebted to the amount of £175, he offered his property for sale to clear the debt, but could not

get a price. "White ants" had taken possession of the place, and it was now practically un-saleable. He attributed his misfortunes to the downfall of Coolgardie, the loss of business and repute through the man left in charge, and sickness in his family."

In May 1902 Edward announced in *The West Australian* that he was practicing his profession as an architect, building surveyor and civil engineer at the Colonial Mutual Chambers in St George's Terrace, Perth. A lack of tender notices suggest he was not successful in the metropolis, and with his office at the corner of Brisbane and William Streets in Perth, he was only able to call tenders in January 1903 for a residence at North Perth. By July 1904 Danker was appointed by the Public Works Department in Perth as a temporary draftsman, at the very ordinary salary of £200. Although at least a couple of his siblings had also moved to WA, with the financial crisis, he would have found the pressure of raising his young family quite difficult.

The Dankers moved to Sydney around 1906, where presumably Edward found further gainful employment, perhaps with further engineering emphasis, as within a 1920 *Sydney Morning Herald* notice he describes himself as a civil engineer. Edward Danker died 3 October 1922 at his residence *Arcadia*, 81 Cambridge Street Paddington, Sydney. Eleanor, Olive Mai, and Gwendoline survived him. The story of architect A.A. Edward Danker's move to Western Australia is perhaps atypical, but not singular. Many of the other young architects who ventured to the 1890s gold-boom expansionary activity stayed in WA, eventually finding stable business conditions to successfully settle down and remain. There were, however, others who returned to home countries and States when business conditions reverted to a less buoyant state.

References:

- „Rockhampton School of Arts“, *Morning Bulletin Rockhampton*, 28 August 1884, p.5.
- „Works of Arts“, *Cairns Post*, 12 September 1891, p.2 (Agricultural Pastoral Mining Assoc show).
- „Queensland Institute of Architects“, *Brisbane Courier*, 27 June 1893, p.6 (elected AQIA).
- „Proposed Railway from Southern Cross“, *Daily News*, 12 May 1894, p.3 (wind driven wagons).
- „Bellingham & Danker“, *The West Australian*, 18 June 1894, p.5 (commence at Coolgardie).
- „Opening of New Chambers“, *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 31 May 1895, p.11 (Coolgardie Ch).
- „Notice“, *Daily News*, 7 May 1895, p.3 (Bellingham partnership dissolved).
- „Marriage Danker-Williams“, *Mercury*, 22 June 1895, p.1 (marriage in Hobart to Eleanor).

„The Ex-Mayor of Coolgardie“, *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 13 December 1895, p.6 (address).
 „Tenders“, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 6 November 1896, p.3 (shop Hannan St for J. Laybourne Smith).
 „Tenders“, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 30 March 1897, p.3 (adds & alts to Club Hotel, Kalgoorlie).
 „Tenders“, *The West Australian*, 1 April 1898, p.1 (Masonic Hall Southern Cross).
 „Tenders“, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 22 September 1900, p.7 (hotel at Burbanks for R.T. Jones).
 „Tenders“, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 19 December 1900, p.7 (stone & brick Premier Hotel Kunanalling).
 „Edward Danker“, *The West Australian*, 8 May 1902, p.4 (announces working in Perth).
 „Tenders“, *The West Australian*, 6 January 1903, p.1 (residence North Perth).
 „Rockhampton in the Early Days“, *Morning Bulletin*, 11 April 1903, pp.6-7 (father J.F. Danker).
 „White Ants, the Downfall of Coolgardie“, *Daily News*, 19 September 1905, p.8 (bankruptcy).
 „Deaths“, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1907, p.6 (death of Vera at Sydney).
 „Silver Weddings“, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 June 1920, p.12 (describes himself as engineer).
 „Deaths“, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 October 1922, p.12 (at Paddington).

Danker, SROWA bankruptcy file, cons no. 3560, item 1905/092.

Contributing author: John Taylor

Heritage Committee meeting approval date: 21 Nov 2013 Last updated: 21 Nov 2013

Citation details:

Taylor, Dr John J., „August Adolf Edward Danker (1867-1922)“, Western Australian Architect Biographies, <http://www.architecture.com.au/> accessed DATE.



Coolgardie Chambers, Bayley Street Coolgardie under construction in 1895 (SLWA 009092D)



Bayley Street Coolgardie in 1900, with Coolgardie Chambers at left (TCIWA p.569).



Southern Cross Masonic Hall of 1898 (<http://www.southerncross.crc.net.au/gallery/masonic-lodge/view>)



Premier Hotel at Kunanalling of 1901 (www.outbackfamilyhistory.com.au)



Danker's last place of residence at 81 Cambridge Street Paddington, Sydney. Further research could determine if this house is of his design. (Google 2013)