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Louis Stein

(courtesy XXXX)

Louis Henry Samuel Stein (1885-1952) was born in Perth in 1885, son of Bernard and Ann (nee Barnard) Stein, who married in April 1884. Ann Barnard had five children from a previous union - Violet, Alfred, John, James, and Edward. Louis was her only child with Stein. Bernard Stein was born at Warsaw, Poland and appears to have arrived in WA as a convict on the *Norwood* during July 1867, although this date is contradicted in a newspaper article at his death. Stein had a house and premises built in Barrack Street, Perth during 1884-85, designed by architect Harry Trigg. Stein established what was for a period the leading book-selling and stationery business in the State, with branches in Perth, Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and Boulder. He speculated with the erection of many business buildings, including the very prominent Federal Hotel in Wellington Street, Perth designed by James Wright in 1896. Included in his land developments were the Steinway and Welshpool Station Estate at Victoria Park, and the Killarney Estate at North Perth.

It is likely that Louis Stein initially attended a school in Perth. It was reported that he returned to WA on the *RMS Ormuz* in late 1908 from King's College, London where he had 'passed a course in architecture'. Archives of the King's College confirm that Louis studied as a day student in the Division of Architecture. He is listed as a non-matriculated student in the 1906-07 and 1907-08 academic years. For 1907-08 he was awarded a Class I Certificate of Honour in studio (architectural and freehand drawing). He was also awarded Class II Certificates of Honour in advanced sanitation, finishing trades and carcass work. As a non-matriculated student he would have been unable to take examinations for a degree, but his Certificates of Honour demonstrate that he must have been a skilled student nonetheless.

After Harry Trigg (1860-1919), John Glaskin (1886-1956), and G. Herbert Parry (1882-1951), Stein appears to have been the fourth locally-born architect to practice in WA. Trigg practiced from the 1880s, Glaskin commenced on his own account in 1907, and Parry was with the Public Works Department in 1907 before working in a private partnership around 1908. Still in his early twenties, Louis Stein established himself in practice on his own account at Perth in 1909. With the patronage of his father and others he soon had a considerable portfolio of work in hand. In 1909-10 Stein designed a number of residences and a hall at a new subdivision developed by his father in Victoria Park, immodestly known as Steinway. The opening of Steinway Hall, on William Street 'a short distance from the main Albany Road', was celebrated in March 1910.

In July 1910 Louis called tenders for a skating rink at Claremont Avenue (now Stirling Highway), Claremont and the premises were operated by his father as another of his business interests. Bernard and Ann Stein were soon living nearby at *Rose Villa*, their home in Reserve Street, Claremont, designed by Louis in 1911. Another 1910-11 project was a large residence at Walebing near Moora designed for Chas Sommers, auctioneer of Perth.

Louis Stein married Grace Fraser at Subiaco in May 1913, and for a few days moved into a house Stein had designed at Riley Road, Claremont, largely financed by Bernard Stein. The builder and the Steins disputed the cost of the project, and a writ effecting the seizure of the furniture in the house was issued on 1 July 1913, the same day Louis booked passage to Sydney for himself and his bride. The lack of tender notices in 1913-14 suggests that the young couple were away for a considerable period of time. The first of their two children, Bernard Forbes (Bob) Stein was born at Sydney in 1914, and having returned to WA around 1915, in March 1918 the couple celebrated the birth of their daughter Betty Grace Stein at their home, 70 Guildford Road, Mount Lawley.

Louis appears to have enjoyed a comfortable upbringing, and may have been gifted a considerable degree of wealth at a relatively early age following the passing of parents Bernard in 1916 and Ann in 1918. Unfortunately he appears to have been a very poor manager of money, and in the 1920s managed to fritter away his inheritance. In the period c.1918-23 Stein may have been working for another enterprise, but in December 1923 'Home Builders Ltd' was

registered as a company at the Supreme Court in Perth, with a capital of £5 000 in 5 000 shares issued at £1. Stein was a partner, and acted as consulting architect to the firm, and at one stage the company had contractors preparing five separate suburban residences on its behalf, but the business did not survive for long. Whilst working with Home Builders Ltd, tender notices indicate Stein was also practicing as an architect on his own account in 1924-25.

Following the promulgation of the *Architects Act* in WA during 1922, Stein's qualifications and experience must have been considered acceptable to the Architects Board of WA, as he was registered with the Board from 19 May 1924 through till 1 January 1926. In 1924 Stein was thus permitted to advertise as an architect, with his office at 107 Rokeby Road Subiaco. One of his more interesting projects at this time was the design of a Greek Orthodox Church for a site at the corner of Francis and Parker Streets in Northbridge. The church was not built at the time due to various constraints within the Greek community, although an Oldham Boas & Ednie-Brown design was eventually completed on the site in 1936. Other Stein designs of this period included a number of projects for Boronia Flour Mills; two brick and stone residences at Claremont; a residence at 51 Thomas Street Nedlands for Mrs Elizabeth F. Telford; and a private hospital at Beaufort Street, Mount Lawley for Nurse Lappin.

As his wife Grace put it during later divorce proceedings, in 1925 Stein 'got into some difficulties', and ... "after saying she and the family had been a drag on him, Stein went into the country. She received no maintenance and no reply to letters". The forty year old Stein was taken into custody by detectives in October 1925, charged with having used a valueless cheque to obtain £7 7s. Grace was granted a divorce from Stein in November 1929, and remarried to Albert J. Mitchell in 1933. The Stein's daughter, Betty, became a talented musician, and in October 1934 gained her Associate Diploma of the London College of Music. Unfortunately their son Bob, also a musician of some ability, died after a short illness at Margaret River Hospital in September 1935, aged only 21 years, and was buried at Fremantle. Bob had been employed with the Locomotive Department of the WA Government Railways.

It is unclear as to where Louis Stein 'went into the country', as described by his wife. In August 1926, by public auction on behalf of the Cyclone Fencing

Company the Bailiff of the Local Court in Perth offered land in Perth owned by Stein, with his address given as 92 Salisbury Street, Subiaco. In June 1927 an advertisement was placed seeking tenders for painting three houses in Hay Street, Perth and signed simply 'Stein, Australia Hotel, Murray Street'. Given the rarity of the name Stein in Perth at the time, it is possible that Louis was working in the city, and was not wishing to make his name too obvious. Notices in WA newspapers through the 1930s record the sale by government authorities of Stein's various lands due to unpaid rates and taxes, properties that were probably left to Louis through inheritance. As yet little has been discovered of the latter years of a man who initially showed great promise, but ultimately was less successful professionally. Of course without closer family testimony it is difficult to discover the salient facts around Stein's life and business.

At some stage Stein moved to New South Wales, as he married Minnie Jurd Carrie (1887-1967) at Sydney in 1939. Having moved to the east coast of Australia, Stein does not appear to have improved his financial abilities or capacity to manage his affairs, and he was made a bankrupt at Sydney in 1941. The National Archives of Australia holds a dossier on Stein of the type compiled for persons investigated in NSW during the Second World War, but this will probably only be due to his surname attracting the attention of authorities. Louis Stein, of 41 Shaw Street, Petersham in NSW died 28 October 1952 aged 67 years, and was buried at the Presbyterian Cemetery at Rookwood.

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- 'Steinway Assembly Hall', *The West Australian*, 14 March 1910, p.2 (opening of Steinway Hall).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 26 March 1910, p.3 (construction of roads at Steinway).
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- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 July 1910, p.4 (skating rink at Claremont).
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'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 October 1924, p.1 (private hospital Beaufort Street, Mount Lawley for Nurse Lappin).
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'Local Court of WA', *The West Australian*, 5 August 1926, p.2 (Cyclone Fencing Company).
'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 3 June 1927, p.20 (painting 3 houses in Hay Street Perth).
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'Single Again', *Daily News*, 13 November 1929, p.6 (decree absolute granted).
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Stein, Louis Henry Samuel (Australian) [Box 317], NAA series no. C123, barcode 7846122.
Email correspondence from King's College London Archives, London, 8 May 2013.

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Designed by Harry Trigg, Bernard Stein's Barrack Street, Perth premises were located on the site now occupied by the Bon Marche Arcade (The Western Mail, 18 December 1886, p.13).



The Federal Hotel on the south-east corner of Wellington and George Streets in Perth, c.1905. Designed for Bernard Stein by James Wright in mid-1896, it was finished in mid-1897. Wright called tenders for 10 villas on behalf of Stein in early 1896, and with this business relationship, may later have been involved in the architectural tuition of Bernard's son, Louis Stein.



Foundation stone from the Federal Hotel on the south-east corner of Wellington and George Streets in Perth. Designed for Bernard Stein by James Wright in mid-1896, it was constructed by builder G. Nicol and completed in mid-1897. The hotel was demolished to allow construction of the Mitchell Freeway in 1969, and the stone now resides at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society's premises in Broadway, Nedlands.



Rose Villa at 6 Reserve Street, Claremont, designed by Louis Stein in 1911 for his parents Bernard and Ann Stein. Purchased by the Presentation Sisters in the early 1940s, it became St Joseph's Convent (Marchant James, Ruth, *Cork to Capricorn*, 1996, p.486).



Stein designed the residence at 51 Thomas Street, Nedlands built in 1925 for widow Mrs Elizabeth F. Telford. The carport at left is a portion of 1994 alteration and addition works by John Taylor (Google 2013)



MISS BETTY STEIN, A.L.C.M., of Mary-street, Fremantle, who gained her Associate Diploma of the London College of Music, and the silver medal at the recent examination. She is a pupil of Miss Betty Kavanagh, of Fremantle.

Louis Stein's son Bob died at just 21 years of age; his daughter Betty married Victor Charles Darling in 1944, and passed away at Qld in 2003 (*The Daily News*, 29 October 1934, p.6).