



A. Oswald Wilson

(Kalgoorlie Western Argus, 14 July 1908, p.19)

Andrew Oswald Wilson (1866-1950) was born 16 August 1866 at Victoria Parade in Melbourne, second son of William and Mary (nee McHarg) Wilson. Wilson, who preferred to use the business name A. Oswald Wilson, was apprenticed as a carpenter and joiner in Melbourne in the period 1883-1893. He attended Melbourne Technical School and Working Men's College. Moving to Western Australia, he practiced as a carpenter in Perth from 1893 before commencing independent practice during 1896, mainly undertaking the design of housing at this time.

Wilson relocated to the goldfields and worked with Murdock McKay Hopkins at Boulder from 1899-1902, before again practicing on his own account from Tattersall's Chambers in Lane Street, Boulder during 1902-1908. Wilson produced both St Matthew's Rectory and Church at Boulder, along with various commercial works, community projects such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union Girls' Home, and a number of fine houses including Dr Frank Sawell's residence and surgery at 121 Piesse Street. The peak of gold production and population in the area occurred about 1903, the same year that the goldfields water supply was connected from Mundaring. Thus Wilson was designing in the context of the peak boom at one of the richest goldfields in Australia. With an exceptional portfolio of Federation-era designs, Wilson's grandest work in Western Australia is undoubtedly the ornate Town Hall at Boulder, completed in 1908 at a cost of some £11 000. This project culminated his ongoing efforts toward a town hall at Boulder, first commenced as early as 1900 when employed by Hopkins.

Moving back to Perth at the end of 1908, Wilson was extremely successful with housing design, producing quality residences in the metropolitan area for the next seven odd years. One of his first examples in this period was the picturesque abode commenced in 1909 for George R. Brown at The Avenue, Nedlands and poised over a sweeping Swan River landscape. Wilson supervised Edwin Summerhayes' work while the latter travelled to Papua & New Guinea in 1910. Both architect's offices were in the Summerhayes-designed Forrest Chambers at 62 St George's Terrace, Perth and it is likely that they had previously gained mutual respect whilst working at the goldfields. Wilson was able to validate the strength of his professional credentials when he was made a Licentiate of the Royal British Institute of Architects in 1911, proposed by George Allan and Thomas Anthoness.

The 44 year old Wilson married May Livingston at the Presbyterian Church in Havelock Street, West Perth on 17 December 1910, and the couple enjoyed a short honeymoon on the south coast at Albany. In 1910 Wilson's residence was at Hooper Street, West Perth; by 1913 the couple had named their new 30 Heytesbury Road, Subiaco home *Dunollie* - probably following either the Scottish heritage of his mother, or of his wife May, whose father had been a leather merchant in Glasgow.

Resultant from his involvement with the Presbyterian Church in West Perth, Oswald Wilson designed a brick church hall at the corner of Hay and Colin Streets, built in 1913. By August 1913, he was able to deliver a lecture in the new hall on 'Emerson', before the West Perth Literary Society. It was noted that 'Mr. Wilson is well known in literary society work, and a good attendance is expected'. With rapid growth in the area, the site soon accommodated James Hine's 1916 design that became the Ross Memorial Church.

Wilson was quite prolific with design of metropolitan residences in the period up to 1915, when the uncertainty of the First World War slowed development. A periodic examination of newspaper advertisements reveals that in 1912 he called tenders for residences at Vincent Street North Perth for Albert Brooks, at 63 Grosvenor Road North Perth for Robert Bennett, at Loch Street Claremont for Thomas Rogers, at Melville Street Osborne (Claremont) for Andrew Christie, and for two villas on the corner of Walcott Street & Clifton Crescent in Mt

Lawley for Morris Middlewick. During 1913-1915 Wilson called tenders for residences at 8 Shaftesbury Street Leederville for Norman Knight, at 'Harrilwood' on Main Parade West Guildford for J.R. Greenwood, at Grant Street Osborne for A.J. Campbell, at Charles Street South Perth for J.F. Lynch, at the south-east corner of Bay Road and Barcoo Avenue in Claremont for James Mutton, at Elizabeth Street Nedlands for Albert Mayor, at Queens Crescent Mt Lawley, and a pair of two-storey residences at Wilson Street Perth.

At the end of 1914 Oswald had done sufficiently well to be able to afford to build a new home for himself and May, again named *Dunollie*, on the north-east corner of Congdon Street and Hillside Avenue, Osborne. Oswald appears to have undertaken a number of projects for his brother Charles McHarg Wilson. In March 1914 he called tenders on behalf of C.M. Wilson for additions to a store at Railway Parade, West Perth; and in March 1915 for a residence near to his own, on the east side of Grange Street, Osborne. Construction of the houses for the brothers was perhaps related to realization of their father's estate – William Wilson died in May 1914, and he had previously been resident at Hillside Avenue. In 1916 Wilson was advertising as an architect and quantity surveyor further along St George's Terrace, in the AMP Building.

In late 1916 Oswald and May were moved to place their household effects and recently built home up for sale, as they had decided to leave for England. During 1917 Wilson took up non-active service in the First World War - in early 1918 a Kalgoorlie newspaper recorded that Wilson was 'supervising the erection of buildings for the Ministry of Munitions in various parts of England'. National Archives of Australia records contain note of Wilson returning to Australia in mid-1919, and through the YMCA branch in Sydney, obtaining the rank of honorary second lieutenant in Australian Forces in 1920, with an address c/- American Trading Company 40 King Street Sydney.

Further research is required to establish Wilson's activity from 1920 onward. By that time he was 54 years old, and presumably had some more architectural contributions to make in Australia. He does not appear to have returned to live in WA, and died 19 June 1950 at St Andrew's Hospital in Melbourne. He was noted in a newspaper notice as the 'dearly beloved husband of May of Sherbrooke, Victoria'; and 'brother of Maimie, Charles, Agnes and Margaret'.

References:

- 'Births', *Argus*, 27 August 1866, p.4.
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 September 1896, p.6 (brick cottages Wellington St).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 February 1897, p.6 (2 storey brick residence in Outram St).
- 'Supreme Court Civil Sittings', *The West Australian*, 10 March 1897, p.6 (fees hotel at Subiaco).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 8 November 1897, p.7 (brick cottages Outram St for WR Dick).
- 'Boulder Council', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 31 August 1900, p.2 (Boulder Town Hall, M.M. Hopkins).
- 'Mr A. Oswald Wilson', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 June 1902, p.4 (advert with address).
- 'WCTU Girls' Home Formal Opening', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 21 February 1903, p.2 (in Piesse St).
- 'Doctor's Residence at Boulder', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 29 March 1904, p.20 (Dr Sawell's).
- 'New Building', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 28 February 1905, p.18 (shop Piesse St Boulder).
- 'Boulder New Rectory', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 March 1905, p.4 (St Matthew's Rectory).
- 'Boulder Town Hall', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 6 March 1906, p.35 (competitive designs).
- 'New Church at Boulder', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 30 October 1906, p.17 (St Matthew's built of timber in Moran Street in Gothic style).
- 'Boulder Town Hall', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 14 July 1908, p.19 (description & photos).
- 'Personal', *The West Australian*, 15 December 1908, p.5 (arrives in Perth from Boulder).
- 'Mr Oswald Wilson', *The West Australian*, 13 January 1909, p.4 (opens office in Perth).
- 'Irreligion on The Gold Fields', *The West Australian*, 18 May 1909, p.3 (letter to the editor).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 July 1909, p.1 (2 storey shops & offices Katanning for Chas A Harris).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 6 November 1909, p.7 (large res Nedlands for GR Brown).
- 'A Riverside Residence at Nedlands', *Western Mail*, 21 May 1910, p.28, p.34 (for G.R. Brown).
- 'Marriages Wilson-Livingstone', *Western Mail*, 14 January 1911, p.31.
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 1 April 1912, p.3 (res/stable Vincent St Nth Perth for A Brooks).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 June 1912, p.3 (res Grosvenor Rd Nth Perth for RM Bennett).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 7 August 1912, p.1 (w-b res Loch St Claremont for TH Rogers).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 20 August 1912, p.1 (res Melville St Cottesloe for A Christie).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 30 August 1912, p.1 (two villas cnr Walcott St & Clifton Crs Mt Lawley for Morris Middlewick).
- 'Laying of Foundation Stone', *Western Mail*, 16 May 1913, p.31 (Presb Church Hall West Perth).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 31 July 1913, p.4 (res Shaftesbury St Leederville for N Knight).
- 'New Presbyterian Church Hall', *Daily News*, 18 August 1913, p.5 (West Perth Literary Society).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 January 1914, p.4 (res at 'Harrilwood' Main Parade West Guildford for JR Greenwood).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 10 February 1914, p.4 (res Grant St Osborne for AJ Campbell).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 20 March 1914, p.1 (adds to store Railway Parade West Perth for CM Wilson).
- 'Deaths - Wilson', *The West Australian*, 5 May 1914, p.1 (death of father at Manly NSW).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 25 June 1914, p.3 (res Charles St South Perth for JF Lynch).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 July 1914, p.4 (res cnr Bay Rd and Barcoo Avenue Claremont for JH Mutton).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 1 March 1915, p.3 (res Grange St Osborne for CM Wilson).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 8 April 1915, p.1 (res Bay Rd Claremont for JH Mutton & res Charles St South Perth).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 15 June 1915, p.1 (res Nedlands for Albert Mayor & res Queens Crs Mt Lawley).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 17 August 1915, p.9 (pair 2 storey residences Wilson St Perth).

'Auctions', *Sunday Times*, 13 August 1916, p.4s (selling property and leaving for England).

'Personal Items', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 11 January 1918, p.4 (working in England).

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'Deaths', *Argus*, 20 June 1950, p.18.

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Dr Frank Sawell's Residence built in 1904 at 121 Piesse Street [n-w corner Brookman] Boulder
(*Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 29 March 1904, p.20)



Boulder Town Hall completed in 1908 (*Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 14 July 1908, p.19)



Riverside residence at The Avenue, just east of Broadway, Nedlands completed in 1910 for George R. Brown, first president of Nedlands Tennis Club. It has been demolished and replaced with units. (*Conservation Plan for Nedlands Tennis Club*, John Taylor Architect, October 2009, p.18).



63 Grosvenor Road North Perth, built in 1912 for Robert M. Bennett (Google 2013).



Wilson designed 36 Congdon Street Claremont, built in late 1914 for himself and wife May. They sold the house in late 1916 and moved to England (Google 2013).