Alfred Edward Cox

(Battye, J.S., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1, 1912, p.628)

Alfred Edward Cox (1869-1942) was born 21 May 1869 in Adelaide, and educated at Whinham and St Peter's Colleges. Cox was employed in the Broken Hill branch of Elder Smith & Co for about two years in the late 1880s, then became articled to Evans & Evans, a firm of Adelaide architects and surveyors. His designs for 'labourers' cottages and English farm' won prizes at the Adelaide Exhibition of 1889, and became a member of the South Australian Society of Arts in the same year. In 1890, he was admitted as an Associate of the South Australian Institute of Architects, and became a Fellow in1901.

In 1893, Cox arrived in Western Australia, 'landing at Geraldton and walking to the Murchison goldfields', where he worked in mining surveying while establishing his architectural practice in Cue, 'the whole of which town he practically designed and built'. Among the buildings Cox claimed as his design were the Government Buildings, the Gaol, Cue Hotel, Murchison Club Hotel, and the Band Stand in Austin Street, which marks the site of the town's first well. In 1895 Cox had obtained a coveted salaried appointment as a Public Works Department (PWD) supervisor at Cue, worth £240 per annum, and was also able to take on private commissions. By 1897 he was PWD 'officer in charge', in 1900 resident officer for the Murchison area at £300 p.a., and in 1905 district architect for the Geraldton area. Cox was retrenched in March 1905, and soon after joined C.L. Oldham in private practice in Perth.

1895 onward Government Buildings, Cue (M. Lewi 30125DIG135zA4-D16_D36)

Alfred Cox was a Mason, and was the organist for his lodge for many years. He played a number of sports, and was a member of the first interstate bowling team to represent Western Australia. In 1897, he married Harriet Eliza Siviour, and they had children – Alfred Richard Baxter 1898, Linwood Gillard 1900, Richard d.1905, Jeffrey Pamplin 1906, Doreen Pamplin 1906, Marion Beatrice 1909 and Florence Adelaide 1913.

1896 Murchison Club Hotel, Cue (M. Lewi 30125DIG001-D16_D37)

In 1912 it was noted that the Oldham & Cox partnership operated from Perth and had designed 'the commercial premises of George Wills & Co and Dobbie & Co, Copley's Buildings in Roe Street, Emanuel Buildings, AMP Chambers, and the Marlborough Hotel'. Also recorded at this time was that Oldham and Cox were responsible for the design of 'a large and ever-increasing number of the most important homesteads, hotels, and villa residences in the area surrounding the metropolis. Worthy of special mention is the Geraldton Town Hall, ...'

At left, 1907 Geraldton Town Hall, later Art Gallery, October 1985 picture (SLWA 222498PD Fritz Kos); at right, 1912-13 Geraldton Club (John Taylor 2016)

The climax of Oldham and Cox's Perth buildings came in 1912 when they were commissioned for the new AMP building on the corner of St George's Terrace and William Street. The seven-level building, completed 1915, was one of Perth's most impressive landmarks. It provided an interesting skyline with a group of symbolic statuary surmounting the corner site. The statuary was commissioned from renowned sculptor Pietro Porcelli. With demolition of the AMP building in 1972, the artwork was bought by Lew Whiteman, and later sold to land-developers who installed the group at Churchlands.

At left, AMP Building completed in 1915, cnr St George's Terrace & William Street, Perth, shortly before its demolition in 1972 (Fritz Kos SLWA 341133PD); at right, 1922 Alliance Assurance Company Building, 96 St. George's Terrace, Perth (SLWA 235204PD)

It is likely that with reduction in business opportunity during the First World War, the Oldham & Cox affiliation became difficult to sustain. In May of 1918, the thirteen year old partnership was dissolved by mutual consent, and the two architects again conducted their own practices. Tender notices indicate that Cox soon took up many of the opportunities available as the effects of the 'Great War' diminished. Cox was not doubt shocked and saddened by the unfortunate and early demise of his former partner Oldham, on 20 March 1920.

Cox's eldest son, familiarly known as 'Derf', served in the First World War but returned safely and also became an architect, both men registering with the Architects Board of Western Australia in 1922. Cox senior entered into partnership with his son from 1923 as A.E. & A.B. Cox. In 1928 Alfred Baxter Cox joined builders A.T. Brine and Sons for a period before going back into practice on his own account around 1933, later working with W.T. Leighton. Tender notices indicate Alfred Edward Cox continued practicing right up until work 'dried up' with the commencement of the Second World War, and we can surmise that he retired soon after reaching the age of seventy years.

A Fellow of the Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia, Cox was a practitioner with a highly distinguished portfolio of constructed works, and one of the longest-serving architects in WA. Resident at 11 Goldsmith Road, Claremont in his later years, Alfred Edward Cox died at Tresillian Hospital in Nedlands on 28 July 1942, aged 73.

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'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 February 1919, p.4 (adds & alts to residence 24 King's Park Road, Perth for F. Cairns Hill).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 8 March 1919, p.9 (brick motor garage, cnr Outram & Wellington Streets, Perth).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 22 July 1919, p.6 (adds to Commercial Travellers Club, Perth).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 12 November 1919, p.4 (3 storey flats, St George's Terrace, Perth for Mrs E.G. Bushell).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 May 1920, p.8 (conversion of 2 storey residence 132 Mounts Bay Road, Perth into flats).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 7 August 1920, p.10 (2 storey additions to business premises, Murray Street, Perth for E.E. Krug).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 18 July 1921, p.4 (kiosk Claremont Show Grounds for Nestle's Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company, Australasia Ltd).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 15 October 1921, p.3 (residence Wingfield Avenue, Crawley for W. Lehoar).

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'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 12 August 1922, p.6 (adds & alts to residence North Perth).

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'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 March 1923, p.2, 25 June 1923, p.3 (removal of brick cottage Lot 4, H20, new warehouse store Hay Street, Perth for Perdriau Rubber Company Ltd).

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