

Howard Hasler Evans

(*Geraldton: 150 Years 150 Lives*, p.60; *Twentieth Century Impressions of WA*, 1901, p.594)

Born at Barrow-in-Furness on 8 June 1872, **Howard Hasler Evans** (1872-1939) arrived at Fremantle on the *SS Yeoman* from England with his brother Arnold and his father, architect **Howard Evans senior** (1845-1919). Tragically for the family, wife and mother Jane Evans had died in England and, with charge of two daughters and two sons, Howard senior decided a change was required. On the day of the Evans' arrival, 21 June 1887, the predominantly British colonists at Western Australia raised a toast to their Regent, celebrating Queen Victoria's golden jubilee - fifty years on the throne.

The Evans were present the next day at Fremantle as celebrations were held for the opening of the landmark Town Hall, designed by renowned Melbourne architect Charles D'Ebro. Evans senior found work in the north-west at Roebourne, supervising the construction of the Union Bank in 1887-88, leaving his two sons at school in Perth. At Roebourne, Evans met Anglican minister Canon Groser and assisted him with Sunday School and Sunday services. Groser later moved to Beverley, and made extensive use of Evans' architectural and lay reader services in that district.

In 1889, Evans senior was employed as clerk of works by contractor John Hurst on the Union Bank at Fremantle, designed by another important Melbourne architect, George Inskip. In the absence of a local professional body at this time, with Inskip's guidance Evans was granted Royal Victorian Institute of Architects membership whilst in practice at Fremantle. It was noted in November 1889: 'Mr Howard Evans (*Victoria University, Manchester*) - who served his articles with a well-known London architect and RIBA, and having held high municipal appointments in Manchester, &c, and since his arrival in this colony has had professional charge of the new Union Banks at Roebourne and Fremantle during their erection – has commenced practice in this colony.'

With his office at the Fremantle Town Hall from January 1890, Evans senior's early work included a speculative theatre design for Perth (1891); the stone Beaconsfield Mission Church in Gothic style (1891); a memorial church to Henry Lukin - All Saints' Church, Haisthorpe, eight miles from Beverley (1892); St Mary's Church, Beverley (1892, 1904); the Temperance Hall at the corner of James and Limbo [Museum] Streets Perth (1893); a new chancel to Holy Trinity Church at York (1893); St Alban's Marradong, a brick church on the Pinjarra-Williams Road at Boddington (1894); a church at Seabrook, twenty miles from Beverley on the Great Southern Railway (1895); a set of four villa residences in Quarry Street, Fremantle (1895); the Wesleyan Mission Hall, East Fremantle (1895); Wandering Shire Hall (1896); St John's Parish Hall built of stone at Northam (1897); and an Agricultural Hall built of granite with brick dressings at Kellerberrin (1898, enlarged 1907-08).

Whilst working as an architect, Evans snr appears to have embraced other primary employment, also running a photographic business in High Street, Fremantle during 1897-1917. His two daughters came to WA and married in the early twentieth century. At this time Evans was generally involved in relatively small scale architectural work, and as he moved into his sixties, was involved in a greater amount of civic matters for the Anglican Church and other community organisations. None-the-less, tender notices confirm that his practice was still very active, and in 1903, Evans combined with another prominent Fremantle architect F.W. Burwell to design St Peter's Anglican Church (demolished) on the Canning Road [Highway] at East Fremantle. In 1911 Evans designed St James' Anglican Church at West Northam.

Formerly chairman of the Fremantle Board of Education and secretary of the Fremantle Cemetery Board, Howard Evans senior died 7 August 1919 aged 74, and was buried at the 'new' Fremantle Cemetery. In 1908 Evans had been instrumental in works to move and alter monuments from the two previous cemeteries. A newspaper notice of 1919 stated that he *'had one absorbing hobby in addition to the founding of parish churches. This was carving in wood and stone, some fine examples of which are still to be seen in such far-removed places as London and Kent, Barrow-in-Furness, Roebourne and Fremantle, Beaconsfield, and on the Perth house of his son Howard Evans, jun.'*

Howard junior later gave both interesting and amusing recollections of some of the Evans family's early days in WA:

A strange thing happened – our tickets had been bought for Australia. Father was still away in Barrow-in-Furness, and wrote to say that he could not get his business finished in time and we would have to leave by a later ship. The vessel sailed and has not been heard of since. [The Kapunda]... Father went up north for the Union Bank and he put Arnie and I at Briggs Grammar School. As soon as father had gone I ran away from school. I had not come to Australia for that. I got a job and kept myself until father's return. When my sisters came out we then had our home in Fremantle.

Father started practising his profession as Architect at the Town Hall. I served three years and got my articles. A very funny incident happened whilst I was there. The caretaker, Mr. George, was an old man and many a time I used to run up the steps and wind up the Town Hall clock and put up the flag for him. I remember on one occasion by mistake I put the flag up upside down, to the consternation of the Fremantle people, because a flag upside down on the Town Hall is a sign of a town in distress. People were rushing to the Town Hall to know what was wrong. I soon ran up and put it right, but the Perth and other papers made a joke out of it.

Going back to these years (nearly fifty) my late father who was without doubt a really good Christian man, having taken, when he was young, Holy Orders – he could preach in any Church of England and conduct a marriage ceremony, which for many years he did. During his life, would not accept a penny for it. On one occasion he was presented with an address and a cheque for forty pounds. He thanked them for it and immediately put it in the poor box. This I would have never known but for Cannon Grace [Groser]. On lecturing on the life of my father after his death stated so. I saw it in print in the Church News afterwards.

With the commonality of the names, some historians have confused the work of Howard junior with that of his father. Howard Hasler Evans served articles with his father at the Fremantle Town Hall, then joined the government Lands and Surveys Office in Perth, and eventually the Public Works Department. Travelling to Geraldton for a holiday circa 1895, Howard junior met 'Parson Dunston', who required alterations to his church. Evans sent for his instruments and drawing board, and while producing the plans found himself in demand for other jobs. He soon decided to settle in Geraldton. By October 1895 Howard Hasler Evans had produced the very prominent Railway Hotel on Marine

Terrace, and a good number of domestic works. One of his housing designs that remains is a grand two-storey limestone homestead on the Brand Highway at Greenough now known as *Corringle*. Originally 'Woodburn House', it was constructed c.1897 in Federation Filigree style.

Like his father, H.H. Evans enjoyed several occupations, becoming proprietor of the well known Club Hotel at Geraldton around 1900, which he resold by 1907. In fact Evans junior entertained multiple business interests, and perhaps having gained other talents from his father, in 1901 was described as a skilled photographer with a well appointed studio in the main street of Geraldton - although due to his other commitments he had appointed a manager there. He was also noted as 'a musician of great talent and for some time organist of the Church of England'.

Evans junior returned to Fremantle around 1906, and may have briefly assisted his father again in architecture or photography or both. He soon found more work on his own account, designing and supervising the construction of the Fremantle Municipal Baths, with the ocean-side facility opened in January 1907. H.H. Evans was soon working for the Lands Office again after returning to Perth, and in 1912 a newspaper lauded the photographic skills and devotional enterprise applied to his work for that department. In 1909 he was living at 195 Lake Street, Perth, in 1912 at 7 Lincoln Street, Highgate Hill, and by 1918 at Park Street in Subiaco. Howard Hasler Evans died on 29 July 1939 aged 67, and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery.

Howard Hasler Evans had married Edith Mary Hanlon at St John's Fremantle in 1901, they had three daughters - all born at Geraldton: Edith Muriel 1902, Dorothy 1906, and Byril in late 1907. Sadly, Howard junior became an alcoholic; he and Edith separated in 1919. Family descendants record that 'owning a pub and being a brilliant pianist, patrons expected him to play in the saloon and would ply him with alcohol to encourage him'. His work appears to have suffered a resultant decline, as there is no mention of his architecture in later years, and he did not register as an architect when the *WA Architects Act* was first proclaimed in the early 1920s. This was a disappointing lack of later achievement by one who had initially been an extremely promising practitioner, perhaps only the second locally-trained architect in WA, following Harry Trigg.

References:

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'Mr Howard Evans', *Daily News*, 21 November 1889, p.3.

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'The New Anglican Church at Beverley', *The Western Mail*, 2 April 1892, p.17.

'How Geraldton is Progressing – A Stroll Round Town', *Geraldton Express*, 16 October 1895.

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 September 1896, p.6 (Studio in William Street, Fremantle, for Messrs. Nixon and Merrilees).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 February 1897, p.6 (chancel for St Stephen's Church, Newcastle [Toodyay]).

'Howard Hasler Evans', *Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, P.W.H. Thiel & Co, Perth, 1901, pp.593-4, 596.

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 May 1903, p.3 (joint architect for Anglican Church at East Fremantle with F.W. Burwell).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 28 October 1905, p.7 (Shop, Store, and Cottage, Forrest-rd and Rockingham-rd, Hamilton Hill for Alex Watson).

'Fremantle Municipal Baths', *The Western Mail*, 19 January 1907, p.34 (H.H. Evans).

'A Cemetery in Ruins, Government Assistance Sought', *The West Australian*, 5 February 1908, p.4.

'Old Colonists Reinterments at Fremantle', *The Western Mail*, 13 June 1908, p.43.

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 January 1911, p.2 (brick Anglican Church at West Northam).

'Peeps at People', *The Sunday Times*, 11 August 1912, p.1s (Howard junior).

'Peeps at People', *The Sunday Times*, 17 August 1919, p.2s (Howard snr).

'Howard Evans 1845-1919 - An Appreciation' (By Canon Groser), *West Australian Church News*, 1 September 1919, p.3.

Geraldton: 150 years, 150 lives, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p.60 (Howard junior).

HCWA Register of Heritage Places, Assessment Documentation for *Corringle* (H.H. Evans designed 'Woodburn House') 9 May 2006.

Email to John Taylor 30 July 2008 from Betty Oliver, wife of H.H. Evans' grandson Ron, citing Evans' story told to Nina Byril Goonan (Nina was Ron's Aunt – his mother Edith Muriel's sister).

Email to John Taylor 2 August 2012 from Judith Teulon, H.H. Evans' granddaughter.

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Heritage Committee meeting approval date: 30 August 2012 Last updated: 30 August 2012

Citation details:

Taylor, John J., 'Howard Hasler Evans (1872-1939)', *Western Australian Architect Biographies*, <http://www.architecture.com.au/i-cms?page=13453>, accessed DATE.



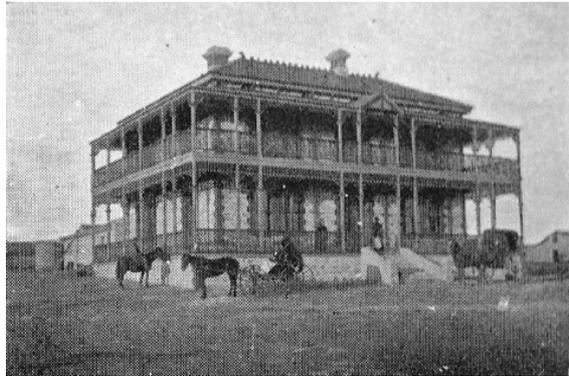
Former Union Bank, supervised by Howard Evans in 1888 at Roebourne (John Taylor 2009)



Howard Evans designed St Mary's Church (1892, 1904) at Beverley (SLWA 008034D)



Railway Hotel, Marine Terrace, Geraldton, designed by H.H. Evans in 1895 (SLWA 006089PD).



Now known as *Corrigle*, on the Brand Highway at Greenough *Woodburn House* was designed by H.H. Evans c.1897 (*Twentieth Century Impressions of Western Australia*, p.616).



Fremantle Municipal Baths designed by H.H. Evans, and opened in January 1907 (*The Western Mail*, 19 January 1907, p.25).