

J.F. Allen (Battye, J.S., *Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1, 1912, p.567; RIAWA c.1930)

**Joseph Francis Allen** (1869-1933) was born 6 August 1869 at Perranzabuloe, Cornwall, England, son of William Allen, carpenter, and Salome, née Williams. Allen moved with his parents to Parramatta, New South Wales when he was 10 years old, and in 1884 was articled to Scottish-born architect Gordon McKinnon (1856-1922) in Sydney. Allen then worked for Rhodes & Co, civil engineers, and from 1894 for Henry Simon & Co, milling engineers. In 1896 he moved to Western Australia where, after working as an assistant engineer on the Fremantle harbour works, he commenced practice as an architect in 1897. With two of his brothers acting as groomsmen, Joseph married Jean Symington Buntine at the East Fremantle Presbyterian Church in September 1900, and they had a daughter Janet in 1902.

Living exclusively in the Fremantle area after arrival in WA, Allen was very active with civic, commercial and residential work around the port, but he also designed buildings at many other places around the Perth metropolitan area and in the State of Western Australia. Some of Allen's better-known individual works included the East Fremantle Town Hall (1899); a hall and offices at Midland Junction for the WA Locomotive Union (1903); two explosives magazines at Woodman's Point for Elder & Shenton (1903); the Fremantle Trades Hall (1904); the Strelitz Buildings, Hay through to Murray Streets, Perth (1907); and the Victoria District Co-Op flour mill at Geraldton (1909).

One of Allen's engineering achievements was the design and supervision in 1905 of the first steel ship built in WA, the 133 foot long *Westralian*, which amongst other journeys, was used for Fremantle to Rottnest Island voyages.



East Fremantle Town Hall on Canning Highway of 1899; Fremantle Trades Hall, 6 Collie Street Fremantle of 1904. The '888' on the façade signifies '8 hrs work, 8 hrs leisure, 8 hrs sleep,' an initial aim of trade unions. (both Google 2016)

At Cottesloe, Wanslea is the name now given to a group of buildings that includes the Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) orphanage by honorary architect Allen. The orphanage is a two-storey, Federation Free Style, 'blood and bandages' red brick and corrugated iron roofed building. Governor Bedford laid one of two foundation stones on 22 February 1905, and the building was completed by 13 August of the same year. In 1919, the orphanage was extended with a Soldiers' Memorial Wing, also designed by Allen, to accommodate children of soldiers killed in the First World War.



IOOF orphanage Cottesloe of 1905 and 1919 (Emma Wynne, 720 ABC Perth, 2015).

In May 1907 Allen was commissioned by Smith & Wadham to prepare plans for the erection of a warehouse and offices in Bay Street (now 10 Elder Place), Fremantle and by October the building had been completed by Mr C. Moore. Allen and Moore had worked together on the number of building projects in

Fremantle including a factory and showrooms for Instone and Co, Essex Street (1906), and premises for Strelitz Bros in Henry Street (1906). Other diverse projects of Allen's practice in this period included St Paul's Presbyterian Church at Duke Street Northam of 1907 (now Link Theatre), and the Club House for Fremantle Golf Club completed in April 1911.



St Paul's Presbyterian Church (fmr) Northam (Google 2016); Fremantle Golf Club House (*Western Mail*, 21 October 1911, p.46).

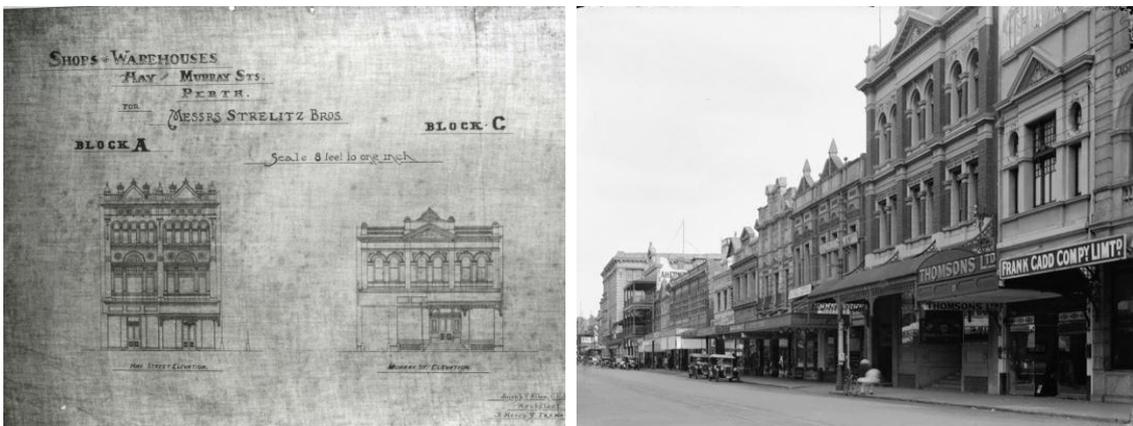
Allen called tenders in December 1911 for the Commercial Travellers' Club at 11 Cantonment Street Fremantle, in 1912 for the Chamber of Commerce at 16 Phillimore Street Fremantle, and in 1914 for the Vacuum Oil Company's bulk oil store at West Perth. Allen may have designed earlier Vacuum Oil Company premises at 7 Pakenham Street Fremantle, and by 1919 at Thompson Road North Fremantle, a large warehouse, laboratory and office had been built for the company to the designs of Allen & Nicholas.



Commercial Travellers' Club, Cantonment Street Fremantle; Chamber of Commerce, Phillimore Street Fremantle (both Google 2016).

Around 1900, Allen established an important business relationship with the Hamburg-born brothers Paul and Richard Strelitz at Fremantle. The Strelitz's first company buildings at 32 Mouat Street at Fremantle were designed by architects Cavanagh & Cavanagh and occupied in 1897, just as Allen

commenced practice in WA on his own account. Extremely successful merchants, the Strelitz Bros, who amongst many import-export enterprises had an agency for Alfred Nobel's Hamburg explosives company, purchased a property at 26 Mouat Street Fremantle in 1900, and Allen soon designed a warehouse for the site. He also produced bulk stores at South Fremantle for Strelitz Bros in 1902 & 1905, premises in Henry Street Fremantle during 1906, large business premises with frontages to Hay and Murray Streets Perth built in 1908 (sold in 1924 to the City of Perth), and the grand residence 'St Just' at 44 View Street Peppermint Grove for Richard Strelitz, occupied in 1910.



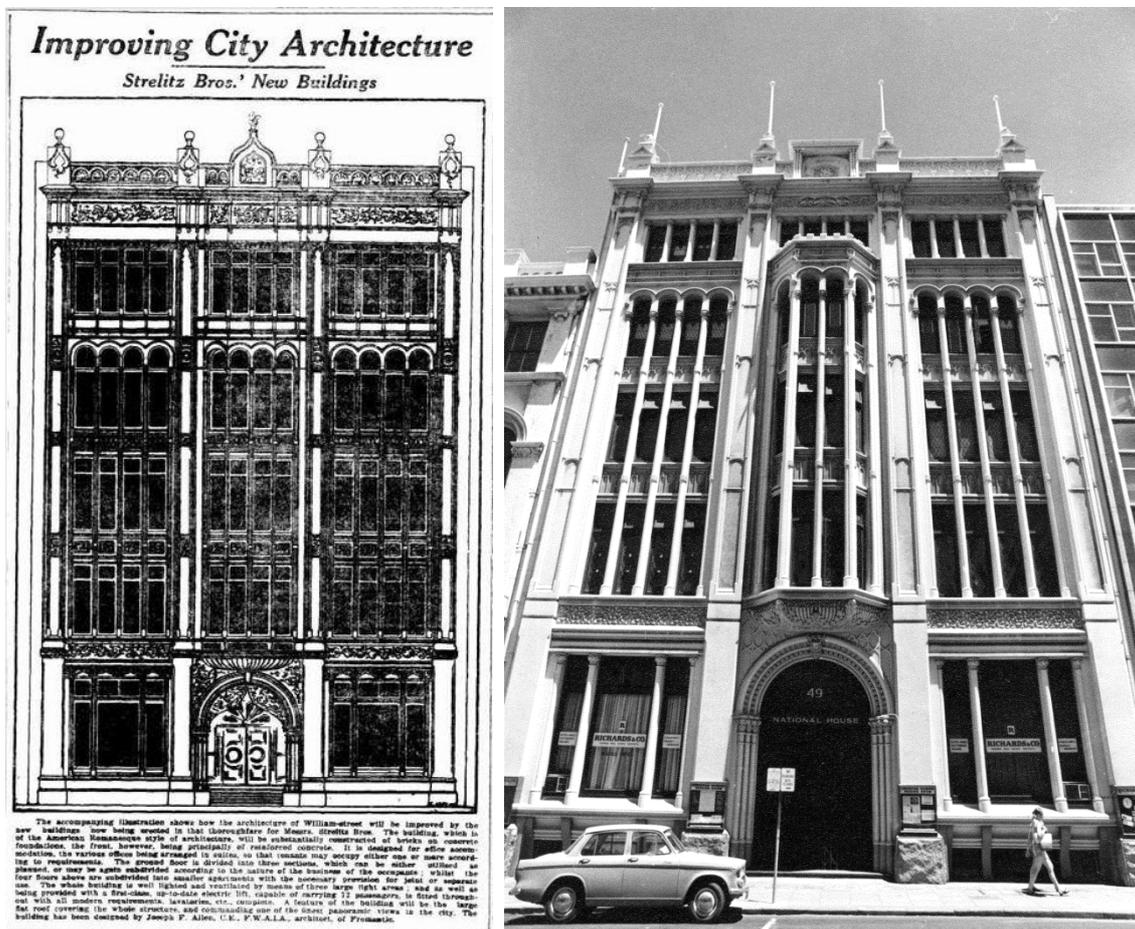
Allen's elevation drawings for the 1907 Strelitz Buildings fronting Hay and Murray Streets Perth. It appears the Murray Street building had another storey added to that shown on the drawing. Occupied by the City of Perth at 203-207 Murray Street from 1924 onward, the Strelitz Buildings are at the left of Thomsons Ltd in the photograph (Muhling collection; SLWA 6744PD).



Strelitz Warehouse 26 Mouat Street Fremantle; St Just, Peppermint Grove (both Google 2016).

In December 1911 Allen elevated the young but highly-talented Claude Henry Nicholas (1889-1966) to be a named partner in the practice Allen & Nicholas Architects. Ken Duncan (1898-1983), also to become a well-known architect in WA, was articulated at Allen & Nicholas from 1914, before enlisting to serve in the First World War in late 1917.

Built in 1912, Viking House in William Street, Perth was designed as a commercial venture for Strelitz Bros. Allen described the design as American Romanesque, and the building also incorporated elements of Art Nouveau in its details. C.L. Oldham's imaginative five-storey Emanuel Building of 1907, built nearby in the Perth CBD, was another one of the very few buildings in the State illustrating the sinuous forms of Art Nouveau. Strelitz Bros made note in the Battye Cyclopaedia of 1912 their intention to move their head office to Perth with the completion of Viking House. During the First World War the Strelitz brothers were interned by authorities as enemy aliens, and it appears they moved with their families to New South Wales in the 1920s.



Viking House, William Street Perth (*Sunday Times*, 4 February 1912, p.9; SLWA 013371d).

After the *Architects Act of Western Australia 1921* received formal assent, Allen was one of the first group of architects to register with the Architects Board on 29 May 1922, in alphabetical order receiving registration number 1 ahead of other notable practitioners such as M.F. Cavanagh (2), J.H. Eales (3), J.J.T. Hobbs (4), and J.L. Ochiltree (5).

Allen was active in local and State politics throughout his time in WA. In 1903 he won a seat on the East Fremantle Town Council and held it, but for one year, until his death in 1933. He served as mayor in 1909-1914 and became property-owners' representative on the East Fremantle Tramways Board and a member of the board of the Fremantle Public Hospital. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1912, Allen entered State parliament in 1914 as a Liberal member for the West Province of the Legislative Council, but was defeated in the 1920 election. Henceforth his political influence was to be exclusively outside parliament. None-the-less, Allen remained prominent in public affairs.

In 1928 he became chairman of the Rottnest Island Board of which he was a foundation member in 1917, and in 1931 he was elected mayor of East Fremantle for the second time. He also held office in the Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Board, Fremantle Chamber of Commerce (President 1921-1925 and 1933), and Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia (President 1928-1929, 1932-1933).

Allen died suddenly on 23 May 1933, aged 63 years, probably of a heart attack, as a post-mortem examination found that 'the right side of the heart was distended and there was a clot of blood in the right ventricle'. His body was found in the Swan River at East Fremantle, and the coroner found no suspicious circumstances. Coincidentally, another architect, Ernest Hugh Hamilton, had died in 1928 by falling into the Swan River at Barrack Street, Perth after a medical incident. Survived by daughter Janet, Joe Allen was buried in the Presbyterian section of the Fremantle cemetery, joining Jean who had died in 1912 aged 51 years.

Amongst many other community service projects, Allen was the honorary architect for the committee that appointed Pietro Porcelli to sculpt the 1911 C.Y. O'Connor memorial at Fremantle; Allen & Nicholas were the honorary architects for the First World War Memorial on Monument Hill, Fremantle. No doubt with recognition of the importance of Allen's standing within the community; Claude Nicholas continued the practice name for some 30 years following Allen's passing. This article contains just a 'snapshot' of the works of Allen (& Nicholas) – a notable Western Australian architect whose influence and contributions, particularly at Fremantle, remain to be thoroughly documented.



**Design for Fremantle War Memorial.**  
 It is proposed to erect the memorial on Manning Hill, Fremantle, to perpetuate the memory of the sailors and soldiers of the State who lost their lives in the Great War. The design is that of Messrs. Wilkinson and Ross, of Claremont, and the estimated cost £2,000. To gather this amount, a public appeal was launched at Fremantle last Tuesday night.



First design for Fremantle War Memorial by Wilkinson & Ross; Allen & Nicholas' design opened in 1928 (*Western Mail*, 27 April 1922, p.7; 2006 photo by Gngarra - commons.wikimedia.org).

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'Presentation to Mr W.C. Forsyth', *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 26 March 1897, p.2 (of illuminated address by Mr Joseph Allen, architect, Fremantle).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 28 August 1897, p.3 (two storey residence Cantonment Road Fremantle for P. Aitken).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 27 October 1897, p.8 (extensions to premises for The Economic Ltd at High Street Fremantle).

'Social Notes - Weddings', *The West Australian*, 2 October 1900, p.2 (marriage to Jean).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 September 1901, p.7 (extensions and construction of a cellar to business premises at George Street Plympton [East Fremantle] for George Lacey).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 18 October 1902, p.5, (store South Fremantle for Strelitz Bros).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 March 1905, p.3 (large bulk store Sth Fremantle Strelitz Br).

'Tenders', *Northam Advertiser*, 25 September 1907, p.2 (brick Presbyterian Church Northam).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 28 November 1907, p.4 (large business premises fronting Hay and Murray Streets Perth for Strelitz Bros).

'On the Terrace', *West Australian Mining Building and Engineering Journal*, 18 January 1908, p.20, (Strelitz premises to Hay and Murray Streets Perth, contract worth over £27,000).

'On the Terrace', *West Australian Mining Building and Engineering Journal*, 18 July 1908, p.20, (honorary architect for C.Y. O'Connor Memorial).

'New Presbyterian Church', *Northam Advertiser*, 15 August 1908, p.1 (foundation stone laid by George Throssell MLC, inscribed silver trowel presented by C. Nicholas on behalf of architects).

'W.A. Institute of Architects', *The West Australian*, 1 April 1909, p.5 (Allen elected a Fellow).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 October 1909, p.3 (large brick residence Cottesloe– St Just).

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*Western Mail*, 8 November 1912, p.27 (photo Fremantle Chamber of Commerce Phillimore St).

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'Perth Prattle', *Sunday Times*, 10 March 1918, p.17 (R. Strelitz sale of furniture at Pepp Grove).

*Weekly Herald*, 14 December 1923, in SLWA MN 268 Press Cuttings Book, PR 4390 from the estate of C.H. Nicholas, p.64 (*Westralian* ship building).

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'Modern Warehouse', *The West Australian*, 8 March 1930, p.13 (Lysaght Building cnr Pakenham and Short Streets Fremantle).

'Drowned in River', *Daily News*, 23 May 1933, p.1 (details of achievements, events to death).

'Mr J.F. Allen Dead, Body Found in River', *Western Mail*, 25 May 1933, p.20 (details of events).

'Mr J.F. Allen's Death', *The West Australian*, 7 June 1933, p.16 (evidence at inquest into death).

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