Louis Bowser Cumpston (courtesy Neil Cumpston)

Louis Bowser Cumpston (1865-1931) was born 27 November 1865 at Liverpool in England, the son of a builder. His father Louis Philippe's affairs were liquidated in 1873, and this fact may have driven Louis senior's decision to embark for Australia, alone, in May of that year. After receiving some early education at the Isle of Man, in 1877 Louis junior sailed on the *Marpesia* to Australia with two younger sisters and a brother, joining their father in Victoria. Louis studied at the Grammar School in Echuca, where unfortunately his father, listed as an accountant, was insolvent again in 1885.

Although it appears Louis may have enjoyed a less-than-privileged upbringing, after completing schooling in the early 1880s he was able to spend two years in England, before returning to Australia and serving articles for three years with architect John Robertson in Melbourne. He then worked for builders James Moore & Sons for a similar period. The early 1890s were a disastrous economic time in Victoria, and many businesses had little or no work. Consequently many young men and women were forced by circumstances to move to more prosperous locations. In August 1891 the twenty-five year old sailed for Western Australia on the *Bullarra*, and following arrival at Perth, gradually established himself in business as an architect.

In 1892 Cumpston designed four single-storied shops at the corner of William and Wellington Streets in Perth for prominent businessman Wesley Maley,

who remained a long-term client. Louis continued his work at this location in 1896 with four shops in William Street for Mrs Harriet Mitchell, which he replaced with two-storey shop-offices for the same client in 1912, then moving his office into *Mitchell's Buildings* at 136–142 William Street. Another example of Cumpston's prominent building designs in the 1890s WA gold-boom period was a group of six two-storey houses at the corner of Harvest Terrace and Hay Street, West Perth (1896).
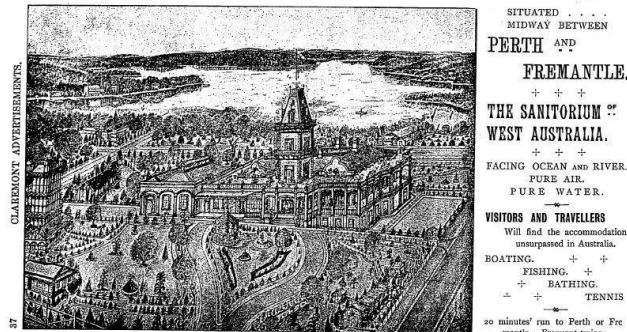

At front of photo (with Parliament House in background) in 1896 Cumpston designed six two-storey houses corner of Harvest Tce & Hay St, West Perth (JTA Hobbs file 387-8 Sherwood)

Louis Bowser Cumpston married Daphne Norah Venn in March 1895. This proved to be a very unfortunate union, as it was later established that Daphne was in a relationship with her 'uncle', J.B. Simmons, who had introduced her to Cumpston. The Cumpstons lived at *Verona* 139 Lamb (Newcastle) Street, Perth for some time up until April of 1898. A 'violent quarrel' in August 1898 led to Louis leaving his wife, taking the furniture, whereupon Daphne had him charged with larceny, accused of stealing over £1,000 of goods, utilizing Simmons as her witness. The court case carried through till February of 1899, when the court found in Louis' favour. Daphne and Simmons returned to Victoria, and Cumpston was subsequently granted a divorce on the grounds of adultery, it having been established that Venn and Simmons had been 'involved' for many years, including, on the evidence of Frank Peplow, a draftsman formerly employed by Cumpston, liaisons in the architect's office!

In late 1897 Cumpston called tenders for a 'villa residence' on the Perth-Fremantle Road at 'Osborne' (Stirling Highway, Claremont) for George Scott Cranstone. A manager of *The West Australian* and *Western Mail* newspapers, Cranstone had in 1895 married Annie Hearn Grave, the eldest daughter of James Grave – developer of the spectacular Osborne Hotel in 1894. The Cranstones left WA hurriedly in early 1899, shortly before proceedings for George's bankruptcy were instigated, and Annie returned with their children later in the year. George appears to have been a less-than-scrupulous man, leaving Annie, and later being charged with drunkenness and assault.

Osborne Hotel (Wises Directory, 1899, p.37)

In 1898 James Grave had also found himself financially embarrassed, having to sell the Osborne Hotel to W.D. Moore, remaining on as its manager until 1901 when it was sold to the Loreto Sisters. Grave's wife, also named Annie, may have acquired the Cranstone 'villa'. In June 1901 William Mumme sought a provisional certificate to licence premises rented from Annie Grave at the corner of Harry (now Airlie) Street and the Perth-Fremantle Road at Claremont, with further premises 'about to be erected'.

The Brighton Hotel in 1930 (Grove Community History CPM00350)

In September 1901 Louis Cumpston called tenders for the 'new' Osborne Hotel at Claremont. By April 1902 the *Daily News* reported that the new Osborne Hotel had been built and opened under Mumme to replace the premises occupied by the Sisters of Loreto school and convent, and in deference to the wishes of the Sisters, named as the Brighton Hotel. The curious halved nature of the main elevation of the new hotel suggests that Cumpston added on to his 1897 Cranstone house design. The Brighton Hotel was demolished in 1969 and the Sundowner centre was built, itself also demolished in recent years for a new apartment complex.

The Cumpston residence *Kirby Thore* was built in 1902 on the south-west corner of Forrest & View Streets in Peppermint Grove. Demolished 1974 (courtesy Neil Cumpston)

In happier family times, Louis Cumpston married Aimee Muriel Love in 1901. They had a son Graham in December 1902, then daughters Nancy in 1905, Miriam in 1908, and Mary in 1912. From 1902 the family lived at *Kirby Thore*, a grand house on the south-west corner of View and Forrest Streets, Peppermint Grove. Cumpston soon designed *Bontherambo*, a large two-storey residence, completed in 1904 for his neighbor at 133 Forrest Street, Wooleen Station pastoralist James Sharpe.

The height of the tower at James Sharpe's *Bontherambo* at 133 Forrest Street in Peppermint Grove, built in 1904, has been reduced over time (Battye, J.S. (Ed), *The history of the North West of Australia,* 1915 p.303; Google 2011)

During late 1906, Louis called tenders for the construction of two residences at Railway Parade in Leederville, which may have been of his own development, as the Cumpstons moved from Peppermint Grove to Railway Parade in 1907. From 1910 onward the family lived at 16 Emerald Terrace, West Perth.

The Stock residence of 1903 at 31 Leake Street, and St Columba's Church of 1909 are examples of Cumpston's Peppermint Grove designs (Google 2020; courtesy Neil Cumpston)

In practice Cumpston was particularly successful with hotel design, including the Exchange Hotel, Greenbushes; Gosnells Hotel; Boyup Brook Hotel; Nungarin Hotel; Ocean Beach Hotel, North Cottesloe; Parkerville Tavern; Railway Hotel, Mullewa; Salmon Gums Hotel, and Cunderdin Hotel (destroyed following the Meckering earthquake of 1968).

Exchange Hotel, Greenbushes (Battye, J.S. (Ed), *Cyclopedia of Western* Australia, Vol.2, 1913, p.459)

Ocean Beach Hotel (*WAMBEJ*, 25 Jan 1908, p.17)   Cunderdin Hotel (SLWA 280926PD)

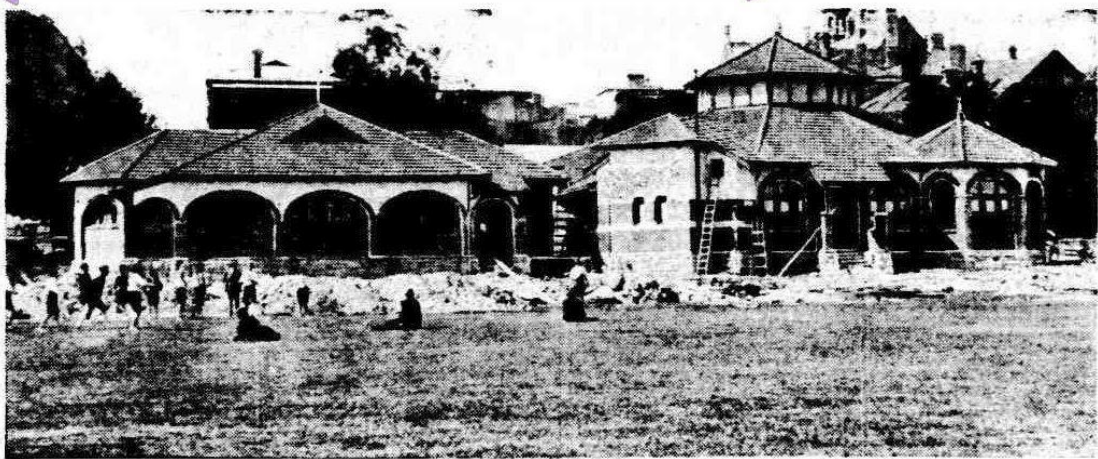Gosnells Hotel (HCWA Pic2739)   Nungarin Hotel (HCWA Pic2753)

In partnership with William Wolf, Cumpston won a competition in 1907 for the design of an elaborate Kalgoorlie Town Hall and Council Chambers valued at nearly £16,000, although the local Council controversially proceeded with another scheme. Other local government works include Collie Municipal Offices, Gosnells Roads Board Offices, and Pinjarra Roads Board Offices.

Tom Burke House, 191-195 Newcastle St, Northbridge (Google 2011)

Examples of Cumpston's design versatility include a King Street warehouse (1905) and a carriage factory in Wellington Street, Perth (1915). Other building types include many residences and shops at locations in the metropolitan area - such as Cottesloe, Claremont, Perth, North Perth, Mount Lawley, and Victoria Park. Additional places attributed to Cumpston include *Tom Burke House* at 191-195 Newcastle St, Northbridge; a bungalow at 30 Park Road, Mount Lawley; and simple worker housing at 34, 36, 44 & 46 Edward Street in Perth.

ESPLANADE IMPROVEMENTS.

The octagonal refreshment kiosk and dressing rooms (five for men and one for women) facing the Esplanade, close to Barrack-street. The contract price was £5,991. Tenders are being called for the leasing of the premises, which the council is confident will return more than interest on the expenditure, notwithstanding adverse criticism. The architect was Mr. L. B. Cumpston.

Cumpston designed the kiosk and sports dressing rooms on The Esplanade at Perth (*The West Australian*, 23 October 1928, p.16)

The kiosk, shown here on The Esplanade at Perth in 2012, has since been relocated closer to the Swan River on Elizabeth Quay (Google 2012)

A search of *The West Australian* newspaper for tender notices reveals that Cumpston was continually active throughout the first thirty years of the Twentieth Century, and as late as May 1930, in his sixty-fifth year, was advertising tenders for a new hotel at Miling in the Wheatbelt. Following a long and productive professional career, Louis Cumpston died at Subiaco aged 66, on 30 November 1931. Louis Philippe Cumpston had passed away in Perth during 1920, but Aimee (Amy) Cumpston lived on till 1973.

References:

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 25 March 1892, p.8 (shops William/Wellington Sts for Maley)

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 22 February 1896, p.8 (shop-offices William St for Mitchell)

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 September 1896, p.6 (six two-storey houses cnr Harvest Tce & Hay St West Perth for Mrs Gatwood)

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 8 November 1897, p.7 (residence Osborne, G.S. Cranstone)

'Alleged Larceny', *The West Australian*, 23 December 1898, p.3.

'Alleged Larceny - The Bowser-Cumpston Case', *The West Australian*, 26 January 1899, p.3.

'Alleged Larceny of Furniture', *The West Australian*, 2 February 1899, pp.4-5.

'The Cumpston Case - Magistrate's Decision', *The West Australian*, 16 February 1899, p.2.

'Cumpston v. Cumpston (Simmons)', *The West Australian*, 22 September 1899, p.7.

'Notice of Application', *The West Australian*, 20 June 1901, p.2 (W. Mumme seeks provisional certificate to licence premises corner of Harry Street and Perth-Fremantle Road, Claremont).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 September 1901, p.7 (new Osborne Hotel, Claremont)

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 11 August 1903, p.1 (stone residence Leake Street Peppermint Grove for Mr Stock)

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 26 February 1904, p.2 (large two-storey residence, Forrest Street Peppermint Grove for James Sharpe)

'Tenders', *West Australian Mining, Building, and Engineering Journal*, 10 November 1906, (2 Residences, Railway Parade Leederville).

'New Hotel at Cottesloe', *West Australian Mining, Building, and Engineering Journal*, 25 January 1908, pp.17, 19, (Ocean Beach Hotel).

'News and Notes', *The Western Mail*, 24 August 1912, p.24 (shop-offices for Mitchell)

Battye, J.S., 'Louis Bowser Cumpston', 'Richard Stanley Cumpston', *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Hussey & Gillingham for the Cyclopedia Co. Adelaide, Vol.1, 1912, pp.634-5, 731.

'Cumpston, Louis Bowser', Architects Board of Western Australia, 31 July 1922, reg no. 67.

'Esplanade Kiosk', *The West Australian*, 21 April 1928, p.10 (kiosk etc Esplanade, Perth).

'Esplanade Improvements', *The West Australian*, 23 October 1928, p.16 (kiosk & dressing rooms).

'Cumpston, Louis Bowser', in Kelly, Ian, *The Development of Housing in Perth (1890-1915)*, Department of Architecture, University of Western Australia, MA thesis, 1991.

'Cumpston Research', http://www.cumpston.org.uk/#/louis-philippe-cumpston/4533360313 , http://www.cumpston.org.uk/#/australia-trees-census/4535704801 accessed 12 Sep 2011.

'Lancelot Graham Bowser CUMPSTON, K. St. John', (re Louis' son Graham Cumpston 1902-1981) accessed 12 September 2011 at http://www.rph.wa.gov.au/emeritus/cumpston.html

Contributing author: John Taylor

Heritage Committee meeting approval date: 13 October 2011 Last updated: 3 Dec 2020

Citation details:

Taylor, John J., 'Louis Bowser Cumpston (1865-1931)', Western Australian Architect Biographies, http://www.taylorarchitects.com.au/Biographies.html, accessed DATE.