'Murd' Hopkins (courtesy Joan Moloney)

Murdoch McKay Hopkins (1865-1904) was born 21 October 1865 at Ballarat, Victoria to John William and Alexandrina (nee McKay) Hopkins. He had various siblings including James Albert Hopkins (1867-1933) and John Marquis Hopkins (1870-1912). Murdoch attended school 1879-1882 at Torrumbarry in northern Victoria, and passed the University of Melbourne matriculation examination at Brunswick College in December 1890. The Hopkins were at Boolarra in the Gippsland area of Victoria for a period in the latter nineteenth century. With crippling economic circumstances prevailing in Victoria during the 1890s, the brothers joined a large exodus to the gold-boom in Western Australia and set up businesses in the eastern goldfields at Boulder from around 1896. Both James and John were at times elected as Mayors of Boulder, whilst Murdoch was employed as an engineer by the local council for a period. John also served as a State politician in the Legislative Assembly.

Before leaving Victoria, Murdoch married Amelia (Millie) Johnson Gaull in May of 1897. They had children: Kenneth McKay 1898-1901, Ian Baden 1900-1947, Keith McKay (Pete) 1902-1953, and Murdoch McKay (Mack) 1904-1962. Murdoch was in residence at Lapsley Road Claremont by June 1897, from whence the funeral of Alexandrina (c.1841-1897) proceeded. It was noted at this time that his father had previously passed away.

Tender and other notices reveal that 'Murd' was in practice as an architect at Boulder from around 1897 until 1903 when, following health issues, it was reported that 'Hopkins, upon his return from a trip to the Eastern States intends to practice in Perth'. The peak of gold production and population in the

Kalgoorlie-Boulder area occurred about 1903, the same year that the goldfields water supply was connected from Mundaring, in the Perth foothills. Thus Hopkins had been designing in the context of the peak boom at one of the richest goldfields in Australia. Another ex-Victorian, Andrew Oswald Wilson relocated to the goldfields and worked with Hopkins at Boulder from 1899-1902, before again practicing on his own account at Boulder during 1902-1908. Wilson's grandest work in Western Australia was the ornate Town Hall at Boulder, completed in 1908. This project culminated his ongoing efforts toward the building, first commenced when employed by Hopkins.
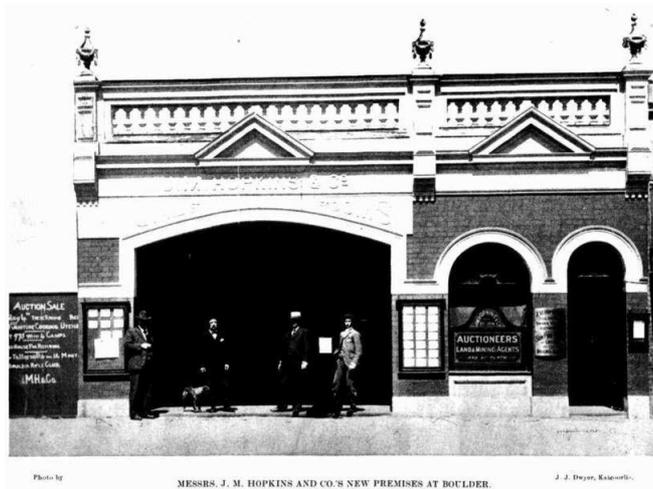

The Australian Bar Hotel and shop at 43 Burt Street Boulder of 1898 (Google 2016)

The *Western Mail* reported in late 1899 on *'... the well-known goldfields firm of M. McKay Hopkins, civil and mining engineers, architects, land and mining surveyors. This firm have made a specialty of architecture and most of the principal edifices that grace the main thoroughfares of Boulder City were designed in their office, a fact that "speaks volumes" for the architectural ability of the principals and their staff. ...'*

The Boulder Masonic Hall remains at 134 Burt St Boulder of 1901 (F.A. Sharr 1974)

Murdoch Hopkins designed the J.M.Hopkins & Co premises of 1902, which remain at 24-26 Burt Street Boulder (*Western Mail*, 4 October 1902, p.28)

Other architects who lived and practiced in the region during the highly-charged eastern goldfields boom period of the 1890s included Edwin Summerhayes, Edward Danker, Dan Edmunds, Geoffrey Moline, Geoffrey Hawkins, Ernest Porter, Edmund Thomas, George Lavater, Harvey Draper, and Tom Roberts. In this extremely competitive environment, Hopkins' better known buildings included a number of commercial premises at Boulder, the Boulder Masonic Hall of 1901, the Union Club Hotel of 1901, and Ryan's Hotel in 1904.

Ryan's Hotel (Gala Tavern) cnr Lane and Cheetham Streets Kalgoorlie of 1904 (Google 2016)

Unfortunately Murdoch Hopkins passed away, apparently from tuberculosis, at 'Boogong' 5 Alvan Street Mount Lawley on 9 December 1904, at the very young age of just 39 years, and was perhaps denied the prime years of his architectural career. Amelia survived him by nearly fifty years, and died at Cottesloe in 1951, aged 83. Following his death, an obituary from the *Kalgoorlie Western Argus* provided some background for 'Murd' Hopkins:

When the late Mr. Hopkins left his Gippsland home to carve out a fortune in the booming West he first took a position as a draughtsman and engineer under the Public Works Department, and in this capacity he saw the initiation of many of the harbor improvements at Fremantle. He came to Boulder about 1896, and joined his two brothers, who had then worked up a flourishing agency business.

When the town was surveyed he practised his profession as an engineer and architect, and he soon worked up a big connection. He was appointed city engineer by the original council, and in this capacity he laid the foundations of the Boulder City of to-day. When Mr. Nethercott, the city's first town clerk, severed his connection with the council the offices of town clerk and engineer were combined, and Mr. Hopkins was elected to fill the dual position. … His private practice also had assumed such proportions that his civic positions must have entailed considerable sacrifice, so it occasioned no surprise when he resigned. … None but those in the inner circle fully realise how truly the Boulder Racing Club is a Hopkins' institution, and how large a share of its present prosperity is to be credited to the now dead hand which designed its original modest grandstand, and then by successive stages- plotted out the present beautiful park and designed the fine up to-date pile of buildings.

… The sedentary life ... soon began to tell a tale on his robust, vigorous constitution, but up to about the beginning of last year he had not been afflicted with a serious illness. He then changed his residence to Perth but returned to Boulder prior to the last general elections. Soon after he was stricken with an attack from which it was thought he would never recover. He, however, struggled through, but was left such a physical wreck that his friends thought his life only a matter of days or, at most, weeks. He left for Perth with his wife and his young family, and since then his life has been one of rallies and relapses. He leaves a widow and a young family, the youngest being a babe in arms. At his sad death, in the prime of a promising life, the people of Boulder feel the deepest regret, and to the present generation the name of "Murd" Hopkins will bring back memories of a true man of sterling character, and of a professional man who helped to lay the foundations of Boulder City, ... For his widow and his three little sons – too young yet to realise the sad blow which has darkened their opening life -the deepest sympathy is felt.

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'Deaths', *The West Australian*, 29 June 1897, p.4 (death of mother at Claremont).

'Tenders', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 28 July 1897, p.2 (Mechanics Institute at Boulder).

'Tenders', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 August 1897, p.4 (fencing Recreation Reserve Boulder).

'Tenders', *Coolgardie Miner*, 23 November 1897, p.2 (storage tank and piping).

'Tenders', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 28 February 1898, p.6 (butcher shop Burt St Boulder).

'The Australian Bar', *Evening Star*, 17 December 1898, p.4 (hotel for Emmett and Harrold).

'Tenders', *Coolgardie Miner*, 22 March 1899, p.8 (hotel Piesse Street Boulder).

'J.M. Hopkins and Co.', *Western Mail*, 9 December 1899, p.56 (notes M.M. Hopkins' work also).

'Public Works at Boulder', *Evening Star*, 21 December 1899, p.4 (C.F. Mathea letter Town Hall).

'Tenders', *Sun*, 7 October 1900, p.8 (hotel MacDonald St Kalgoorlie for Jacob Taylor).

'The Hopkins Grand Stand', *Sun*, 28 October 1900, p.5 (F.H. Cunningham letter re Boulder).

'Boulder Council', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 30 October 1900, p.36 ('scene' over grand stand).

'Tenders', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 19 December 1900, p.7 (hotel and theatre cnr Hamilton & Moran Streets Boulder for J.M. Hopkins Esq.).

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'New Church', *Evening Star*, 15 March 1901, p.2 (timber Methodist Church at Boulder).

'Deaths', *Daily News*, 22 March 1901, p.2 (death of Kenneth, parents at Fraser St Claremont).

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'News and Notes', *West Australian Mining Building and Engineering Journal*, 10 October 1903, p.18 (Hopkins intends to practice in Perth).

'Tenders', *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 October 1903, p.6 (2 storey brick hotel cnr Lane and Cheetham Streets Kalgoorlie for James Ryan).

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'Obituary - Murdock McKay Hopkins', *Evening Star*, 10 December 1904, p.2 (notes 'Murd').

'Death of Mr M.M. Hopkins', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 13 December 1904, p.17 (obituary).

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Family notes from MMH granddaughter Joan Moloney, Falcon WA, October 2016, and JAH granddaughter Anne Munjak, Booragoon WA, December 2016.

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Citation details:

Union Club Hotel of 1901 for Jacob Taylor at 1 MacDonald Street Kalgoorlie (Google 2016)

This shop at 51 Burt Street Boulder was most likely the one that was designed by Hopkins for G.R. Brown in 1903 (Google 2016)