

William Drake (courtesy Megan Stevens, historian, and Janet Taylor, Wellington, NZ)

**William Adams Drake** (1861-1928) was born 11 January 1861 at 141 Bourke Street in Woolloomooloo, Sydney. A talented young man, in 1876 William Drake passed the New South Wales Civil Service Examinations. He had six brothers and sisters who all suffered the relatively early deaths of parents - their father John died at Woolloomooloo in August 1877 aged 42 years, and mother Matilda passed away in February 1878 aged 41 years.

Family relative Ross McCay has indicated the significance of Drake family links to Western Australia, and the Alfred Hillman personal diaries of 1877-1884 which are those of a Perth banker who was with the West Australian Bank from its founding. Hillman wrote in August 1878: *“Showed Lochee the plans sent by Willie Drake for a new Bank, he showed them to the Directors and they expressed unqualified approval, and think the smaller building will do first rate when they want to build, everyone who has seen them praises the plans, as being first rate, and he is only 17 years old, not out of his articles yet.”* In April 1881 Hillman wrote *“Colonial mail in this morning, letter from the Drakes, sending me all their photos, Willie is in the Government Architects Office, getting 100 pounds a year, 60 pounds of which he pays Uncle Purkis towards the general expenses of the family, a very good boy.”* It is clear that at just twenty years of age Drake was working to support both himself and his siblings.

In 1885 Drake's name was still published in the NSW Civil Service List as a draftsman for the Colonial Architect, but by November of that year architects Drake and Walcot of Paddington received a second place premium for a competition design for Goulburn Hospital. In April 1886 William Drake and John

Walcot were successful in a competition for the design of a Masonic Hall at Kogarah. Then located at the Commercial Union Chambers, Pitt and Hunter Streets in Sydney, the partners called tenders for the works at Kogarah in May of 1886. In June 1887 the Mayor laid the foundation stone of a new £4 000 Oddfellows' Hall in Castlereagh Street, Sydney designed by Drake and Walcot. The young architects were doing well in prosperous times, and recognizing their professional acumen, at a meeting of the Institute of Architects of NSW in October 1887 both Drake and Walcot were admitted as Fellows of the Institute.



W.A. Drake and J.T. Walcot designed the Leichhardt Town Hall in 1888 (*Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 13 October 1888, p.773)

The keystone of new premises for the Pastoralists' Association at Kirribilli Point Sydney was laid in December 1890, with the £70 000 buildings under the joint supervision of architects Drake and Walcot, and H.C. Kent. Perhaps reflecting the increasingly dire economic conditions of the early 1890s on the east coast of Australia, Drake and Walcot dissolved their partnership in May 1891. In August 1891 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Drake had won first prize for plans for new swimming baths at Manly. At Sydney's inner-west Petersham, Drake designed additions to the Town Hall in 1893. From 1891 to 1895 Drake's office is listed at the Hoffnung Buildings, 163 Pitt Street Sydney. By October 1895 Drake's projects were somewhat less salubrious, and he advertised for alterations to the Grosvenor Hotel, corner Morehead and Phillip Streets Waterloo. Drake may have finally seen that the economic prospects in NSW were continuing to deteriorate, and in 1895 he prepared to join an exodus of architects

(and many others) seeking work in the gold boom economic conditions of Western Australia. By February 1896 the press carried news under the heading 'A Sad Case': *A woman named Elizabeth Powell, now residing at Fairfield, some few days ago applied to the Parramatta Court for a summons against W.A. Drake, till recently an architect at Petersham, for the support of her two illegitimate children. Drake and the woman appear to have lived together at Petersham as man and wife for some years; but he has, it is said, deserted her, and (beyond a belief that he has left the colony for Western Australia) nothing can be gathered as to his whereabouts. The woman and children are on the verge of absolute want; and the former (on appearing in Court on Monday) seemed in need of kindly sympathy as well as of material help. She has evidently done her best for the children, but says she must now seek relief for them through the Boarding-out Department. ...*



Stock Exchange, St George's Terrace Perth, at left as completed in 1897 and at right, severely 'modernised' in the 1930s (SLWA 004197D & 341164PD)

Soon active on the west coast at Perth, in May of 1896, as a sole practitioner Drake advertised for tenders in *The West Australian* newspaper to erect new St George's Terrace premises for the Stock Exchange Company Limited. By June of 1896 he was listed as the architect and engineer in a prospectus for the 'W.A. Ice, Cold Storage and Fresh Fish Supply Company'. Drake may have returned

briefly to Sydney to tidy up his unfinished business affairs and perhaps also to resolve his personal circumstances, as a newspaper reported in July 1896 that he was in the company of politicians and clearly quite visible to public scrutiny: *A number of gentlemen met at the Australia Hotel on Wednesday and bade farewell to Mr W.A. Drake, architect, who is about to reside In West Australia. Mr W.J. Trlckett, M.L.C., presided. Complimentary speeches were made by the chairman, Mr B. Backhouse, M.L.C., Alderman Russell, J.P., Woollahra, and Mr Russell Jones, M.P., all of whom wished Mr Drake success. ...*

Another ex-NSW architect, Felix Whitwell (1859–1936) resigned from the WA Public Works Department at Perth in mid-1896 to commence private practice in partnership with Drake. ‘Drake & Whitwell, Architects and Engineers’ first major project was the Stock Exchange building that Drake had initiated, and the foundation stone was laid by Premier John Forrest on 22 October 1896. The partnership called tenders in July 1896 for four three-storey dwellings on the corner of Monger and Beaufort Streets for J.O. Oxley; and in September 1896 on behalf of Joseph Charles for a hotel to be erected at the corner of Broome Road (now Hay Street), Rokeby Road, and Rowland Street, Subiaco, although the premises appear to have been used as a ‘coffee palace’ rather than a hotel.



Terrace Houses at 235-241 Beaufort Street Perth for J.O. Oxley, shown in 2005 (HCWA 03134)



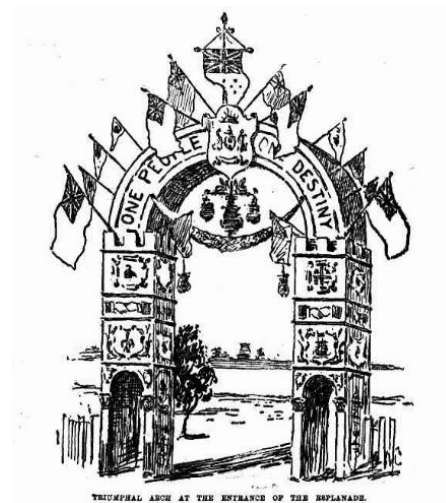
Premises constructed on the corner of Broome Road (now Hay Street), Rokeby Road, and Rowland Street, Subiaco, for Joseph Charles circa 1897 (SLWA 113531PD; Google 2013).

Drake & Whitwell also undertook domestic work, and in 1897 the partnership designed the enormous E.C. Shenton residence 'Haddon Hall' in South Perth. It was demolished c.1976. There is note of further commercial activity at Barndon Hill (Rivervale) for the WA Brewery Company in 1898. The partnership of Drake and Whitwell lasted three years. It was dissolved in July 1899.



Ernest Shenton's Haddon Hall of 1897 at South Perth (*The Architect*, March 1968, cover)

During 1899, William Adams Drake married Leirene Finlay McCay (1872–1931) in Western Australia. They had one son, John McCay Drake, born at Cottesloe 22 October 1900, but neither the marriage or the birth appear to be mentioned in the local press!



Drake's design for an archway celebrating Federation at the entrance of The Esplanade, Perth (*Western Mail*, 5 January 1901, p.31)

In early 1902 the *Sunday Times* reported with disdain on public accounts for the 1901 visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to WA, under the heading 'Aroma of The Aftermath' noting that: *though the Royal Celebrations Committee provided everything in the way of adornment, including the streets and arches (except the Government buildings), and spent £2,717 thereon, yet the high-jinks Government officials frittered away over £2,000 on the public buildings alone-not so much in the interest of the Ducal show as that of their bosom friends. Of this sum no less than £595 was paid Architect Drake for the Post Office block ...*

Drake may have tired of such scrutiny for his work in Australia, and records in South Africa indicate that he worked as an architect at Durban from at least 1903. By March of 1909 Drake is mentioned as a quantity surveyor by the NSW Institute of Architects in correspondence with the Master Builders' Association. In August 1909 the *Daily Telegraph* at Sydney reported that "Mr William A Drake, architect, is calling tenders for the erection of nine brick cottages at Coogee. Mr Drake was at practice in Sydney for a number of years but fourteen years ago left for West Australia, and subsequently went to Africa, continuing to practice his profession in Perth and Durban. After a number of years of experience abroad, Mr Drake has decided to resume work in Sydney, and the tender referred to marks his reappearance." Later the same month, the newspaper published a much longer article reporting Drake's opinions on a number of architectural topics, and it is clear he was determined to re-establish himself in the profession in NSW.

Drake's work appears to have been primarily domestic in nature from this time onward. In May of 1912, then located at Terry's Chambers 14 Castlereagh Street, Sydney he called tenders for the erection of four more residences at Coogee. In February 1916, he had designed residences to be built at Vaucluse and Rose Bay. On his son's enlistment papers in 1918, Drake's private address is given as Spofforth Street in Mosman, and he still worked in the city. By 1920 he was elected as President of the Quantity Surveyors' Association at Sydney.

Then living at *Deraa*, 24 Park Avenue Mosman, William Adams Drake died at a private hospital in North Sydney on 30 April 1928, aged 67. Leirine Finlay Drake died 21 April 1931 aged 60 years. Both are buried at Macquarie Park Cemetery, North Ryde. Perhaps illustrative of his father's influence, at his enlistment for VDC service in 1942, John Drake's occupation is listed as Quantity Surveyor.

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