



Christian Mouritzen

(Battye, J.S., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1, 1912, p.762)

Christian Frederik Ludvig Mouritzen (1862-1927) was born 11 May 1862 in Copenhagen, Denmark. He became a student of architecture at the Technical College at Copenhagen, obtaining a medal for efficiency and completing his studies at the age of nineteen. After three years at the College, he voyaged to South Africa c.1882, where he spent a couple of years in the railway service, then setting sail for Australia in the mid 1880s. Landing in Queensland he travelled to Charters Towers, from which he engaged in architecture. The Croydon goldfield in Queensland was discovered in late 1885, and following a rush from 1886 Mouritzen erected a saw-mill on the banks of the Norman River, supplying timber for the mines, but the mill was washed away in the 'wet'.

Returning to Denmark, Mouritzen married Jenny Hansine Carolina Berg at Copenhagen in 1887. The couple had a son, John Peter born 1888 at Croydon, but he died in 1889. Two other sons and two daughters survived infancy - Albert Christian born at Toowoomba (1890), Ebba and Stella born in Perth (1893 & 1895), and Walter Roy born at York (1897). Roy was killed while flying a Sopwith plane at an aerodrome in Essex, England, during June 1917.

It appears that Christian's brother, building contractor Carl Ludvig (also Charles Henry) Mouritzen, who had also been at Croydon, arrived in Western Australia at Fremantle in September 1891 as an 'advance party' for the family. Carl was followed by his wife and the children of both couples in December. Christian and Jenny Mouritzen may have needed to finalise matters on the east coast, and they arrived at Fremantle aboard the SS *Nemesis* on 26 April 1892. With

the two families living in rented premises in Perth, Christian Mouritzen soon obtained employment with the Public Works Department (PWD), where he was appointed as a draftsman in May 1892, salaried at £180 per annum. His signature appears on drawings for the Government Printing Offices in 1893. During 1894 he worked on Beaconsfield School and the Bunbury Post and Telegraph Offices, and in 1895 worked on the Bunbury School and Post Office and the York Hospital. By late 1895 he was living at York and the rental of his Subiaco house was being managed by Carl.

Christian was appointed as a supervisor in July 1896, his salary raised to £200 p.a., and then promoted again to district officer from July 1897 at £240. At York he designed his fine family homestead built in 1897, now modified and known as *Laureville*, and the 'new' municipal chambers opened by the Governor in September 1897. The chambers now form the original part of the Old York Fire Station. During November 1897 Carl Mouritzen completed construction of the Wyndham Hotel for Connor, Doherty & Durack Ltd, and in May 1898 with his own family accompanied Jenny and her 3 younger children on a trip to Europe. Perhaps forewarned of his upcoming retrenchment in September, Christian advertised his house for sale or lease from July to December 1898, and left York in early 1899. During the period 1899-1900 he was in business at Perth as Selway & Mouritzen, auctioneers and produce merchants, although in April 1900 his tender for construction of the Grass Valley post office was accepted.

In 1901 Mouritzen took over the lease of the Federal Hotel in Fremantle, and with Alex Watson organised the construction of the Howard Evans-designed Newmarket Hotel on Rockingham Road, Coogee, opened in mid-1905. From 1907 to 1909 Christian and Jenny revisited Denmark with their four offspring. Returning to WA, Mouritzen purchased a share of the lease of the Hotel Perth, corner of Murray and Barrack Streets, and a sheep farm at Burracoppin. Although naturalised in 1902, with strong anti-German sentiment in Australia during the First World War of 1914-1918 Mouritzen was forced on a number of occasions to clarify his nationality. He was able to obtain passports to allow a holiday with Jenny and Stella to Java in 1917, seeing his nephew Dr Jensen. Based at the Imperial Hotel in Wellington Street Perth in 1919, Mouritzen called tenders for the erection of three houses at South Perth. These were his own

family residence *Riverina* at 43 The Esplanade, and two houses he built for Albert and Ebba and their families directly behind on Suburban (now Mill Point) Road, whilst Stella remained with her parents.

In 1920 Mouritzen founded and built the Calyx Porcelain factory at Jolimont near Subiaco. It was reported from London in December 1920 that: 'Mr C.F. Mouritzen, chairman of the directors of the Calyx Porcelain and Paint Company, Perth (WA), has completed arrangements for starting porcelain and china works in Subiaco. He visited Stoke-on-Trent and certain Continental factories, consulting experts and studying the process of manufacture and the layout of factories and kilns. He has purchased machinery of the value of £5,000, and engaged fifteen experts for the Subiaco factory, which will occupy three acres of land. The building will be started in April next and the works will employ about 100 hands. ... The industry is new to Australia, and Mr Mouritzen is confident that it will result eventually in the withdrawal of Japanese and Chinese goods from the Commonwealth.'

The porcelain and china business went through 'ups and downs' over the years, using names such as Wembley Ware, Bristile and Australian Fine China. With the eventual closure of the factory in 2006, Australian Fine China relocated its operations from Subiaco to Welshpool. Mouritzen appears to have decided to return to architectural pursuits after instigating the china works. Following the promulgation of the *Architects Act* in WA during 1922, his qualifications and experience were considered acceptable to the Architects Board of WA, and he was registered with the Board (no.59) on 28 July 1922.

In late 1924 Mouritzen joined in a partnership with his former boss at the PWD, George Temple Poole (1856-1934), working on a number of high-profile projects in Perth, including Levinson's Sheffield House at 713-721 Hay Street, and the Capitol Theatre - Temple Court adjoining buildings at the foot of William Street. With the opening of the Capitol Theatre in May 1929 it was noted in *The West Australian* that Mouritzen drew up the original plan, and that he was 'an advocate of the Continental style, but Messrs. Carberry and Chard, of Sydney, who acted as advisory architects for the lessee, were biased in favour of the American type of theatre. Collaboration between the two firms produced a design embracing the beauty of both schools ...'

Mouritzen has previously been credited with the design of the Palace Hotel at Southern Cross, built in 1911, but this attribution appears to be an error. However, with Mouritzen's contacts and experience in the hotel industry a key factor, Poole & Mouritzen were the architects for the development of a number of country hotels in this busy mid-1920s period, including those located at Merredin (1925), Morowa (1926), Three Springs, Goomalling, Dowerin, Esperance, Kununoppin, and Carnarvon (1927). After recuperating from an operation in August of 1927, Mouritzen died at Warwick Hospital in Perth on 9 September, aged 65 years, and was buried in the Anglican section of Karrakatta Cemetery. Jenny lived on to the age of 88, passing away at South Perth in 1951.

References:

- 'Shipping', *Daily News*, 7 September 1891, p.3 (arrival in WA on the *Bullarra*).
- 'Criminal Sittings', *The West Australian*, 19 December 1895, p.10 (Subiaco house, brother).
- 'The Governor's Tour', *The West Australian*, 9 September 1897, p.5 (municipal chambers York).
- 'Wyndham Hotel', *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 21 January 1898, p.3.
- 'The German Mail Steamer', *Daily News*, 5 May 1898, p.3 (Mouritzens to Europe on the *Gera*).
- 'York', *The West Australian*, 19 April 1899, p.5 (Christian leaves York).
- 'Passengers on the *Darmstadt*', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 1899, p.6 (wife and 3 younger children return from Europe).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 9 December 1904, p.3 (Newmarket Hotel by Howard Evans).
- 'Going Forward', *Sunday Times*, 30 April 1905, p.1 (Newmarket Hotel near completion, lease).
- 'Newmarket Hotel, Rockingham Road', *The West Australian*, 2 May 1905, p.2 (7 year lease offered, tenders c/- Federal Hotel, Fremantle).
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- 'To the Editor', *The West Australian*, 26 October 1914, p.4 (proving nationality).
- 'A Challenge', *Sunday Times*, 9 January 1916, p.2s (proving nationality).
- 'Mr and Mrs C.F. Mouritzen', *Daily News*, 23 October 1917, p.8 (holiday in Batavia).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 26 May 1919, p.7 (three residences South Perth).
- 'Mr C.F. Mouritzen', *Sunday Times*, 8 August 1920, p.2s (travel to Europe & Denmark, Calyx).
- 'A New Industry', *Western Mail*, 23 December 1920, p.14 (Calyx Porcelain and Paint Company).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 15 December 1924, p.1 (Sheffield House for Levinsons).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 3 November 1925, p.12 (adds to Commercial Hotel Merredin, headlights for motor cars).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 20 April 1926, p.1 (demo Wests' Esplanade Picture Gardens).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 2 August 1926, p.15 (hotel Morowa for Charles Edward Kelly).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 21 March 1927, p.4 (adds Goomalling Hotel for Mrs M.E. Coombs, adds Commercial Hotel Dowerin for A.O. Rippon).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 30 March 1927, p.11 (Donnybrook stone monument in Karrakatta Cemetery).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 June 1927, p.5 (Pier Hotel Esperance for Mrs J. Heenan).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 21 July 1927, p.16 (hotel at Kununoppin for T. Hickey).

'New Kununoppin Hotel', *The West Australian*, 6 August 1927, p.8 (tenders for corner hotel).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 27 August 1927, p.20 (hotel at Three Springs for R. Barnhart).

'Mr Christian Frederick Mouritzen', *The West Australian*, 10 September 1927, p.12 (death).

'Mouritzen', *Western Mail*, 29 September 1927, p.37 (death, family remaining).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 29 November 1927, p.15 (rebuilding Settlers' Hotel Carnarvon for Port Hotels Ltd).

'Capitol Theatre', *The West Australian*, 1 May 1929, pp.12-13 (opening, photo).

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Contributing author: John Taylor

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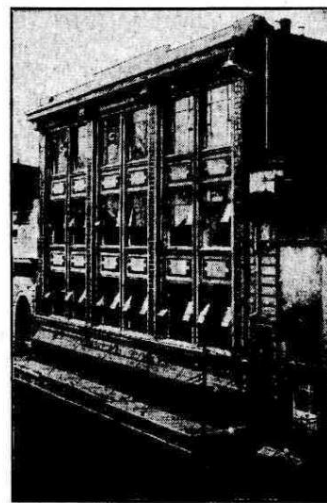
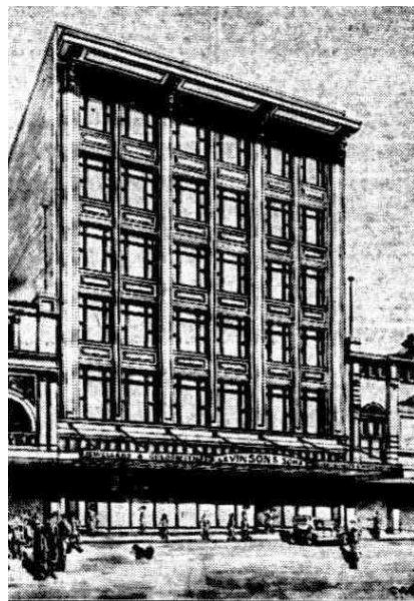
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Substantially altered, Mouritzen's residence built in 1897 at Panmure Road, York is now known as *Laurelville* (A5A9245-vcopy, www.sarahtonkin.com.au)



Old York Fire Station of 1897 (Google 2014); *Riverina* 43 The Esplanade South Perth of 1920 (Richard Mouritzen)



LEVINSON AND SON'S NEW BUILDING.
The accompanying illustration depicts Levinson and Son's new building on the southern side of Hay-street, near William-street, comprising four storeys and a basement, which is being erected at a cost of about £45,000, and is now near completion. Designed by Messrs. Poole and Mouritzen, architects, the building has a frontage of 68ft. to Hay-street, and a depth of 150ft., and is strong enough to carry two more storeys. The contractor (Mr. C. W. Arnott) commenced operations in April last year.

Sketch of Levinsons' Sheffield House in Hay Street, Perth showing two top floors that were not built; and the 4-storey building completed in 1926 (*The West Australian*, 28 February 1925, p.7; *The West Australian*, 10 July 1926, p.8).



The Capitol Theatre, William Street, Perth in 1931 (SLWA 101412PD, SLWA 101413PD).