



**George Geoffrey Lavater**  
(*Narrogin Observer*, 11 April 1984, p.5)

**George Geoffrey Lavater** (1870-1938) was born on 2 February 1870 in Carlisle Street, St Kilda, Melbourne, the youngest son of Swiss-born George Theodore Adams Lavater, civil servant, and his English-born wife Emily. His father had migrated to Victoria after the 1851 gold rush. George junior was educated at St Kilda Grammar School and the University of Melbourne.

After serving his articles with the Melbourne firm of Ellerker and Kilburn, George, later well known as 'GG', qualified as an architect, and first branched out on his own behalf at Mildura in Victoria. In 1896, he landed at Esperance in Western Australia, and practiced on the eastern goldfields.

George's eldest brother Louis Isidore Lavater (1867-1953), became well known as a composer, musician and writer in Victoria. The next brother Percival Gilbert Diethelm Lavater (1868-1950), a surveyor, also moved to WA, and *Wises* directories for 1897-1901 show the pair in business together as *Lavater Brothers* at Norseman, where their main business was mining engineering. GG designed at least one hotel at Norseman, and with other community interests and responsibilities, he was secretary for the Norseman Hospital in 1899.

Percy is noted as both Town Clerk and surveyor from 1897 at Norseman, but in January 1901 moved to take on the position of Town Clerk at Leonora. In 1902 George is still listed as an architect at Norseman, although Percy may have soon negotiated for George to take over his position, as GG was noted

as Town Clerk at Leonora in 1902 and 1903, where he designed new council chambers. In 1903-05 Percy is listed as a surveyor at Lawlers, by 1912 he was an agent for the Great Fingall Consolidated Mining Co, eventually taking up farming east of Narrogin. GG retired from his post at Leonora in February 1904, and later that year was advertising services as an architect at Narrogin.

George married Gertrude Florence Whidborne (1873-1908) at Mount Malcolm in 1901. The couple had three sons, Geoffrey Whidborne (1902-1993), Caspar Whidborne (1905-1984), and Louis Whidborne Lavater (1908-1997). Unfortunately Gertrude died from complications shortly after the birth of Louis. GG remarried in 1911 at Fremantle to Marion Amy Clifton (1889-1968), and they had three further children Theodore Clifton (1913-1983), Hazel Clifton (1918-2006), and Leonard Clifton Lavater (1928-). Marion was a sister of WA architect Charles Gordon Clifton (1884-1967).

Examination of newspaper tender notices reveals that Lavater and Bertram Dods, another relatively young architect from Melbourne, produced the majority of significant building designs in the rapidly developing Narrogin and surrounding areas from 1904 until the First World War. With declining architectural work as the area became better serviced, and following the onset of war, the pragmatic Lavater became secretary of the Narrogin Road Board in 1915, a post he occupied until his retirement in 1935. In this period GG still took on architectural projects for the community, and was also very active with many sporting and other organisations in the district. GG Lavater died at Narrogin on 24 July 1938.

Lavater is noted on the Heritage Council of Western Australia database as the architect of the residence *Carinya*, corner Homer & Harper Streets Narrogin; Highbury Hotel, corner Scott Street & Blight Road, Highbury; Pingelly Town Hall, 20 Parade Street Pingelly; Wagin Fire Station, 7 Traverse Street Wagin; and the Narrogin War Memorial Pavilion. The War Memorial Pavilion is noted as being designed by Lavater, ARVIA (Associate of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects), and built by local contractor Hugh Marsh, both of whom had been responsible for the design and construction of the Narrogin Town Hall. Lavater also provided design work gratuitously for the Council on occasion, such as for the Egerton Street Bridge across Narrogin Brook.

## References:

- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 18 December 1900, p.1 (hotel at Norseman).
- 'Send-Off at Gwalia', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 22 April 1902, p.10.
- 'Leonora', *Western Mail*, 21 February 1903, p.24 (new council chambers at Leonora).
- 'A Leonora Deputation', *The West Australian*, 5 September 1903, p.25.
- 'Leonora', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 1 March 1904, p.12.
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 19 December 1904, p.2, (Wickepin hotel for T.G. Palmer)
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 20 March 1905, p.2, (brick hotel at Williams for Narrogin Trading and Agency Co. Ltd).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 17 May 1905, p.2, (offices for Narrogin District Roads Board).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 17 May 1905, p.2, (brick residence Cuballing for James Fitt).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 1 July 1905, p.10, (hotel Wolwolling Siding for G. Lavater, brick shops Narrogin for W.E.C. Moss, weatherboard villa Narrogin for D.C. Scott).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 1 August 1905, p.2, (brick villa Narrogin for L.M. Cullen)
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 October 1905, p.2, (brick and stone hotel Popanyinning).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 October 1905, p.2, (2 brick shops at Cuballing).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 April 1906, p.2, (brick villa Pingelly for E.L. Smith).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 2 May 1906, p.4, (brick hall Wickepin).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 22 September 1906, p.3, (brick villa Pingelly for S. Connor).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 31 October 1906, p.9, (Masonic Lodge Narrogin No72 WAC).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 15 December 1906, p.3, (2 storey business premises Pingelly for G.M. Sewell).
- 'Narrogin Notes', *Western Mail*, 2 February 1907, p.10 (Masonic Hall).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 9 March 1907, p.4, (Agricultural Hall Kokeby).
- 'Personal', *Albany Advertiser*, 24 April 1907, p.3 (secretary Narrogin Agric. Soc. £30 p.a.).
- 'State News', *Western Mail*, 27 April 1907, p.31 (Egerton St Bridge across Narrogin Brook).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 15 June 1907, p.5, (Catholic Church Narrogin, brick shop).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 10 July 1907, p.3, (brick Agricultural Hall, Pingelly).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 25 October 1907, p.2, (2 storey brick residence-shops Pingelly for G.M. Sewell).
- 'New Roman Catholic Church at Narrogin', *Western Mail*, 16 November 1907, p.41.
- 'Narrogin', *The West Australian*, 23 March 1908, p.5 (town hall, library and offices approval).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 9 May 1908, p.7, (town hall, library and institute).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 17 June 1908, p.7, (brick hotel, head of Narrogin-Wickepin Railway).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 2 December 1908, p.9, (brick Agricultural Hall, Gillimanning).
- 'Narrogin', *The West Australian*, 10 December 1908, p.6 (town hall opened cost over £3,000).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 26 June 1909, p.8, (Mourambine Roads Bd office Pingelly).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 20 September 1909, p.4, (Masonic Lodge No75 WAC).
- 'Pingelly', *The West Australian*, 9 October 1909, p.6 (Roads Board offices Park Street).

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 April 1910, p.8, (Residence Pingelly for G.M. Sewell).  
'State News', *Western Mail*, 2 July 1910, p31 (public hall and roads board offices Wickepin).  
'State News', *Western Mail*, 30 July 1910, p31 (2 storey shops Federal Street Narrogin for W.E.C. Moss)  
'Royal Victorian Institute of Architects', *The West Australian*, 22 September 1910, (ARVIA).  
'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 11 November 1911, p.3, (additions/alterations to Pingelly Hotel for G.N. Murdoch).  
'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 5 July 1913, p.8, (Grandstand for Pingelly Agricultural Soc.)  
'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 21 September 1914, p.2, (extensive additions to Hordern Hotel Narrogin for Michael Brown).  
'Narrogin', *The West Australian*, 23 September 1915, p.5 (Church of England church).  
'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 November 1922, p.10, (wood and iron hall at Woodlands).  
'Narrogin', *The West Australian*, 21 September 1926, p.5 (new Narrogin Roads Board office).  
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'Chain of Base Hospitals- Narrogin's Project', *The West Australian*, 23 September 1932, p.25.  
'Narrogin and District', *Western Mail*, 26 October 1933, p.7 (general background on GG).  
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Contributing author: John Taylor

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Town Hall Narrogin (SLWA 011358D)



Masonic Lodge, Narrogin (Google 2011)



Wagin Fire Station (HCWA Pic4689)



St Matthew's Catholic Church, Narrogin was replaced in 1964 (SLWA 011359D)



*Hadleigh*, residence of G.M. Sewell, Pingelly (Battye, J.S., *Cyclopedia of WA*, Vol.2, 1913, p.660)



War Memorial Narrogin (SLWA 011363D)



Hordern Hotel Narrogin (SLWA 007626D)