

Colin Mort c.1945, 1948, 1972, c.1996 (courtesy Joanne Eggleston)

**Colin Mort** (1926-2016) was born 26 March 1926 at Goomalling, Western Australia, the son of mercer John Henry (1889-1973) and Emma (1884-1977) Mort nee James, who had married at the Methodist Church in Greenbushes during January 1910. The couple had seven children: Gladys (1910-2005), Raymond (1912-2000), Beryl (1916-2010), Ethel (1918-1995), Audrey (1922-2003), Kevan (1925-2008), and Colin (1926-2016). John Mort appears to have maintained a number of shops through his working life. In the year of Colin's birth, 1926, John is listed in *Wises Directory* as having billiard room -tobacconist premises at Victoria Street in Bunbury, with his residence in Edward Street.

From these modest origins, Colin attended Bunbury High School c.1939-1943, before undertaking some war service in the later part of the Second World War (1939-1945). Details of his service records have not been examined, but they may contain details of assistance toward post-war education. Colin studied for the five year Bachelor of Architecture degree at the University of Sydney in the period 1947-1951, residing at the University's architecturally impressive Wesley College. He graduated in 1952 with others who were to become prominent in Australian architecture including Geoffrey Twibill, Neville Gruzman, T.J. Hindmarsh and David Standen.



Wesley College at the University of Sydney - from a card sent by Colin Mort to his sister Audrey in late 1951 (courtesy Joanne Eggleston)

Mort registered as an architect in Western Australia (no. 237) 10 June 1952, and worked 1952-1954 in the office of F.G.B. Hawkins and Desmond Sands Architects, under the energetic and creative Des Sands (1911-1999). Colin designed offices at the prominent corner of Spencer and Stirling Streets Bunbury in 1952, whilst at Hawkins and Sands. The client for the project was N.L. Payton, whose accountant was Kevan Mort – perhaps indicating a client relationship developed through family sources.

## Development At Well-known Corner



This two-storey building to be erected by Mr. N. L. Payton on the corner of Spencer and Stirling streets is expected to cost in the vicinity of £22,000.

Colin Mort's sketch view of proposed offices and shops at the corner of Spencer and Stirling Streets Bunbury (*South Western Times*, 21 August 1952, p.8).



Payton's building, at the corner of Spencer and Stirling-streets, has brought a modern touch to Bunbury's commercial structures.



Mort designed these shops and offices for N.L. Payton at 2 Spencer Street Bunbury in 1952 (*South Western Times*, 12 November 1953, p.21; Google 2019)

Mort departed Western Australia in June 1954 for an extended working holiday, and lived in England and Canada during the years 1954-1956. Upon his return, a local newspaper article noted: "Recently returned to Bunbury from nearly three years' travel in Western Europe and North Central America, Mr Colin Mort, a Bunbury architect, is full of memories of the countries he has visited. During the two years he spent in Europe, he saw something of Norway,

Sweden, Denmark, Western Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain, Portugal and the Low Countries, as well as many parts of Great Britain, where he worked in his profession for a considerable time.” Spain fascinated Colin, and he took particular delight in visiting Seville, Cordoba, and Granada.

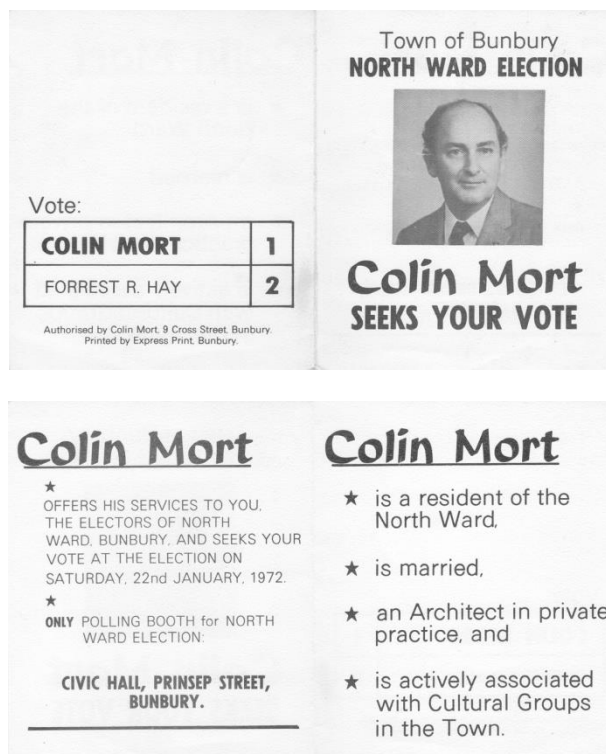
Travelling west across the Atlantic to North America, for some months Mort worked at Toronto in Canada, but noted that he preferred Ottawa, ‘less devoted to commerce’. Colin took the opportunity to spend as much time as possible in the United States, visiting the cities of Pittsburgh, Washington, Detroit, Kansas City, and Chicago to study architecture and urban development. Finally resuming his travels westward back to Australia; he passed through Banff on the edge of the Canadian Rockies, and Vancouver. Heading southward he noted visiting Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles before travelling by air to Mexico to see the cities of Mexico and Guadalajara. Adventuring onward through Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, Colin departed Panama City for the final leg of the journey back to Australia.

Colin established his own practice at Bunbury following his return to WA, and reintegrated himself into the community. Lacking archival records of his business, we can only surmise that Mort supplemented domestic projects in the South-West of WA with occasional commercial works in Bunbury and surrounding towns. His office was at Edward Street in Bunbury in 1964, the same year in which his additions to the Bunbury Council Chambers were built.

He had prepared sketch plans in 1963 which would provide extra office space, a new Infant Health Centre on the east boundary fronting Stephen Street, relocate the Mayor’s Parlour, and retain the assistant Town Clerk’s office in its existing location. In January 1964, the Bunbury Council approved the new Infant Health Centre, to be built between the Council Chambers and the Post Office. In February, Mort was instructed to prepare detailed plans and specifications for alterations to the Council Offices, including entrances, doors and windows, removal of the fireplace, hearth and mantle, removal of some partitioning, and installation of new partitioning. In July 1964, it was formally announced to the public that the Council Offices were to be re-constructed to Colin Mort’s drawings, at an estimated cost of £16,500.

At Bunbury, Mort continued to enjoy his relationships with his parents, his siblings and their families, and his clients in the wider South-West community. Colin married Josephine Marguerete Watson (1921-2002) in 1965. It was Josephine's second marriage; she had previously married Noel C. Palmer in 1951. Colin and Josephine did not have children. Mort's office had moved to 6 Spencer Street Bunbury by 1968, and he continued to be active with local developments. In 1970, he was commissioned to prepare plans for a new science block at Bunbury Senior High School, which was part of a Commonwealth Government programme to provide schools throughout Australia with modern facilities for science education. In November 1971, Mort prepared plans for extensions to the library at Bunbury High School that show a partial plan of the existing library and adjacent classroom, and proposed alterations and additions to enlarge the library and provide specialised areas.

Colin Mort's office was at 8 Edward Street Bunbury in 1972 – alongside the family home at 10 Edward Street. Is it possible that Colin designed the 'Edward Court' offices at 8 Edward Street, but this requires further checking into Council archives. He was active in community service roles, serving as a Bunbury Town Councilor from January 1972 through to March 1974.



Card for Colin Mort at Bunbury Council elections in 1972 (courtesy Joanne Eggleston)



The seven Mort children – Colin is the youngest at the right hand side of the photo; the family home from at least the 1930s at 10 Edward Street is extant; and Colin may have designed the 'Edward Court' offices adjacent at 8 Edward Street. (b/w photos courtesy Joanne Eggleston; colour Google 2019)

The State Records Office has file holdings of Colin Mort Architect, including 1972 plans for the Bunbury Arts Centre, additions to the Adam Road Primary School at Bunbury 1973-1974, and additions to the Manjimup Training Centre 1973-1974. Colin's father John died at Bunbury in 1973 aged 84 years, and his mother Emma died at Bunbury in 1977 aged 93 years. These changeful events may have assisted in leading Colin to seek wider work horizons in Perth.

Colin Mort was appointed to the State Electricity Commission of WA in 1974, which became the State Energy Commission in 1975, and in 1979 he was a staff architect at SECWA. At that time he was living with Josephine in a modest house he had designed at 141 Forrest Street, Peppermint Grove. Colin's community service ethos was retained, he was a director of the Rotary Club at Mosman Park in 1979, and a councillor of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (WA) from 1981 to 1986.

Colin Mort's individual contributions to SECWA projects are not readily apparent, and it likely that he retired around 1991, when he was 65 years old. Josephine died at Peppermint Grove in September 2002 aged 81 years.

Significant as an architect who maintained a regional practice over many years, Colin died 10 March 2016 at Gracewood Nursing Home in Salter Point, just short of 90 years of age, and was cremated at Karrakatta Cemetery. In a funeral notice, he was remembered “with great fondness as a lovely and gentle man with a wicked sense of humour, a sharp intelligence and an abundance of human kindness”.

References:

‘Development at Well-known Corner’, *South Western Times*, 21 August 1952, p.8 (shops and offices for N.L. Payton).

‘Modern Streamlined Building is Evidence of Bunbury’s Progress’, *South Western Times*, 12 November 1953, p.21 (shops and offices for N.L. Payton).

‘Social News and Chatter’, *South Western Times*, 3 June 1954, p.18 (leaves for England).

‘Bunbury Architect's Impression of Cities and Peoples of Many Lands’, newspaper clipping n.d., likely to be from *South Western Times*, c.1957, in papers of Joanne Eggleston.

MORT COLIN: Service Number 84628: Date of birth 26 Mar 1926: Place of birth GOOMALLING: Place of enlistment PERTH: Next of Kin MORT JOHN; NAA A9301, 84628.

SRO Plans Nov 1972, Colin Mort Architect, Bunbury Arts Centre Cons 3704 Item 07.

SRO Manjimup Training Centre - Additions 1973/74 - Centre - Commission to Private Architect - Colin Mort.

SRO Adam Road Primary School (Bunbury) - Additions 1973/74 - 1/2 Cluster & Rooms - Commission to Private Architect - Colin Mort.

‘Mort, Colin, BArch(Syd)’, in *The Way 79. Who is Who. Synoptic biographies of Western Australians*, Crawley Publishers, 1980, p.277.

‘Bunbury Council Chambers’, HCWA Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation, 28 January 2011.

‘Bunbury Senior High School’, HCWA Register of Heritage Places Assessment Documentation, 13 July 2012.

‘Colin Mort’, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/colin-mort-obituary?pid=178058509> accessed 8 July 2019.

Pers. comm. Joanne Eggleston (Audrey’s daughter) 15 July 2019, 6 August 2019; David Standen 6 August 2019.

Contributing author: John Taylor

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