



It is likely, but not confirmed, this is a photo of Dan Edmunds (courtesy Anne Nicolay).

Daniel Thomas Edmunds (1864-1925) was born 22 June 1864 at Queenstown, Adelaide; the first of seven children to surveyor Robert Henry and Emily Edmunds. Robert Edmunds later became superintendent of South Australia's largest prison at Yatala, from c.1892-1904. Dan Edmunds began his architectural career in the service of the South Australian Government during the early 1880s.

Dan had moved to Mildura, Victoria by 1888 with his younger brother Arthur, an engineer, possibly at the invitation of entrepreneur William Chaffey. In April 1889, tenders were called for the erection of Chaffey's grand residence *Rio Vista* by the architectural firm of Sharland & Call. Responsible for the design of many buildings in the Mildura area, the business was known as Clarke & Sharland & Co in 1888; Sharland & Call 1888-89; E.C. Sharland 1889-90; Sharland and Edmunds 1890-91; and D.T. Edmunds 1890-95.

Edmunds had first advertised for work as an architect and quantity surveyor at Mildura in August 1888, and appears to have gradually worked his way to prominence in the area. Although Sharland was the original designer of both the Coffee Palace and *Rio Vista* at Mildura, Edmunds was involved with both buildings, designing considerable additions to the former and supervising completion of the latter. Together, in 1890-91 they designed Mildura's first hospital, known as the Cottage Hospital. Although they collaborated on the design and building of the Coffee Palace, their first team effort took place when they produced the winning design for Chaffey Agricultural College in 1888. The two men were the most prolific of early Mildura's architects, enjoying a close working relationship with the Chaffey brothers. Canadian-born George and William Chaffey were water-engineering specialists who had established irrigation schemes in California, subsequently doing the same in Australia.

Although still a young man, in 1893 Dan enjoyed success in his profession, advertising himself as 'Architect to the Chaffey Brothers', with offices both at Deakin Avenue, Mildura and further down the Murray River at Ral Ral Avenue, Renmark, South Australia. In August 1895 Dan Edmunds and another architect soon to move to WA, George Geoffrey Lavater, were both advertising in the business directory of *The Mildura Cultivator*, along with an auctioneer, E.C. de Garis - whose first son C.J. (Jack) de Garis was to have an important later association with Edmunds. Unfortunately Dan's time at Mildura was relatively short-lived. Symptomatic of general economic malaise on the east coast of Australia at this time, Chaffey Brothers Ltd went into liquidation in December 1895. Soon after this time Edmunds joined a general exodus of desperate job-seekers embarking for the gold-boom conditions of Western Australia.

Edmunds arrived at Kalgoorlie around 1896, and in the exceptional and expansionary conditions of the late 1890s he became one of the town's most prominent architects. Some of his earliest work in the WA Goldfields was in early 1897, acting as Clerk of Works for architects *Moline, Summerhayes and Hawkins* on Parer's Restaurant in Hannan Street. Geoffrey Handfield Prichard Moline, Edwin H. Summerhayes, and Geoffrey Oswald Hawkins were also 'refugee' architects from the eastern seaboard.

In September 1897 Dan was working with Hawkins, as *Hawkins & Edmunds Architects*, on John Heale's Imperial Wine and Beer Saloon in Hannan Street. It seems that in the cut-throat business conditions of the frontier town, partnerships were hastily formed to ensure procurement of ongoing projects. Also in 1897, it was reported that: 'Messrs Lee & Magor recently invited competitive designs for the erection of a hotel and shops on the present site of the Australia Hotel and adjoining buildings, Hannan-street. Nine designs were sent. Mr J.P. Lee now informs us that the choice has fallen on that sent in by Messrs *Edmunds & Moline*, of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, while Mr R.J. Dennehy, Kalgoorlie, secures the bonus of £10 for the second best design.' The new Australia Hotel on the corner of Maritana & Hannan Streets in Kalgoorlie was completed in 1898. Edmunds must have been an impressive professional, as in 1897-98, having 'established his credentials', Dan is given sole credit for Parer's Albion Hotel in Burt Street, Boulder.

With frontages of 140 feet to Hannan Street and 165 feet to Porter Street, one of Edmunds' larger building designs in Kalgoorlie was the Tattersall's Hotel and adjoining Cohn's buildings of 1899. But his most detailed, delightful and impressive work was the York Hotel on Hannan Street, built in 1901. A story passed down through descendants relates that after the York Hotel was completed, Dan Edmunds opened the bar for all the men who worked on the hotel. They supposedly drank French champagne all night - on the basis it was cheaper than water or beer in Kalgoorlie at that time! Across the road, Dan's design for the City Markets on Hannan Street was also completed in 1901.

At Kalgoorlie, Edmunds married Elizabeth Anne Bennett, who ran the first private hospital in the town. Dan had first met Bennett in Mildura. Sadly, one of Elizabeth's sons, Charles Claude Bennett, died aged 23 at their Collins Street home in 1898. Elizabeth died 12 May 1915 at Katanning aged 59, which means she was born c.1855 - around 8 years older than Dan, and at the time was noted as 'the mother of Thomas, Maude and Olive'. The youngest, Olive Irene Bennett was born in 1890, so it appears that Dan became a step-father.

With a decline in work at the start of the twentieth century, Edmunds faced bankruptcy in July 1903, citing a downturn in work, family illness, and having to deny insobriety. He claimed in a hearing to have a major project pending, a theatre at Kalgoorlie, but obviously had little prospect of this occurring, stating he was 'hoping for a job in the Water Supply Dept'. By 1904 he was in Perth working with H. Gaston & Co, who advertised that 'clients buying land through them and intending to build, will have the plans prepared for them free of charge, by the firm's architect, Mr D.T. Edmunds, whose work on the goldfields and in the eastern States has been greatly admired.'

By 1906 Dan Edmunds had again followed economic developments and moved to Ravensthorpe. He was responsible for a number of buildings in the town, including Lansell's Store in Morgans Street, and in 1907 for adding the major part of the Port Hotel that now exists at Hopetoun. Edmunds appears to have branched out into parallel business ventures to cope with the paltry architectural opportunities available in his rural environment, utilising old South Australian contacts. In 1911 he purchased Coc(k)anarup Station at Ravensthorpe 'on behalf of an Adelaide syndicate'.

Edmunds is listed as an architect at the larger town of Katanning from 1913 to 1918, and in 1914 designed a new wing for St Joseph's Convent at Albany for Father Briody, opened in September of that year. In 1914 he also designed a Catholic church at Mount Barker, now demolished. With Great War austerity, his step-children grown-up, and unable to enjoy the prolific professional success possible in the heady turn-of-the-century days at Kalgoorlie, Dan returned to Adelaide around 1919. Utilising his knowledge of south-west property in WA, he arranged another land 'deal' in 1920. Edmunds audaciously purchased the Hassell Family's Kendenup Estate, which given the large cost involved, was probably again completed with syndicate backing. Dan sold the extensive property to the infamous promoter-developer Jack de Garis later in 1920, making a small fortune in the process.

It is not clear if Edmunds continued to practice architecture following his return to South Australia. It was noted that he had interests in mica mining in the MacDonnell Ranges in the early 1920s. Having returned to his 'roots', and to the comfort of his siblings and their families, Dan Edmunds died at *Hillpara*, Grange, Adelaide on 25 September 1925.

References:

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'A long-felt want', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 13 October 1898, p.15 (4 semi-detached villas Dugan Street 'immediately opposite the State School') [45-47 Dugan Street on State Register].
'New Kalgoorlie Buildings', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 8 June 1899, p.27 (Tattersall's Hotel).
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'A Fine Hotel', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 5 March 1901, p.20 (description & photo York Hotel).
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De Garis, Clement John, *Victories of failure: A business romance of fiction, blended with, and based on, fact*, Modern Printing Company, Melbourne, 1925, pp.364-75.
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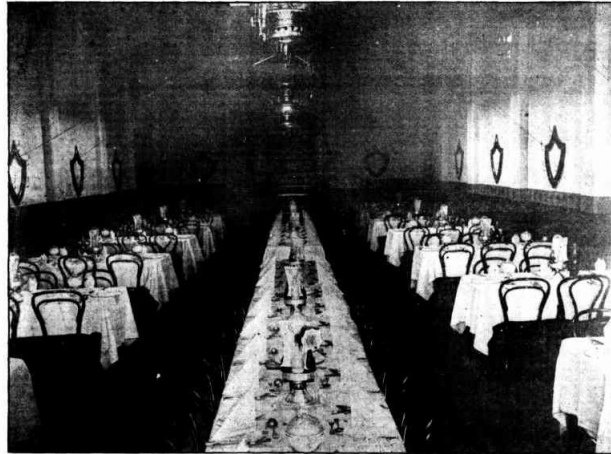
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See Photo Co. J. C. PARER & CO'S RESTAURANT, HANNAN STREET, *[Kalgoorlie]*



See Photo Co. J. C. PARER & CO'S RESTAURANT—INTERIOR. *[Kalgoorlie]*

J.C. Parer's Restaurant ,Hannan Street Kalgoorlie (*Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 13 May 1897, pp.12-13).



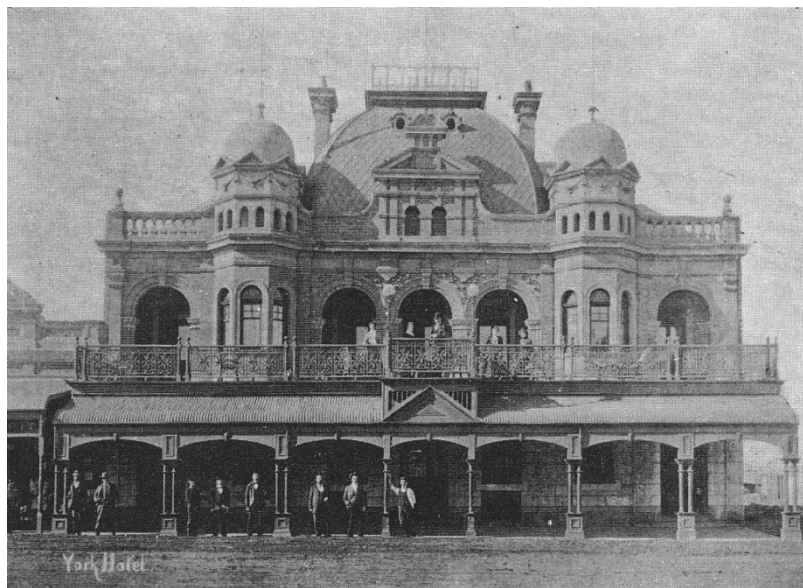
Parer's Albion Hotel, Burt Street, Boulder 1897-98 (Google 2012)



Australia Hotel, Hannan Street Kalgoorlie 1898 (Google 2012)



Tattersall's Hotel and Cohn's Buildings, Hannan Street Kalgoorlie 1899 (Google 2012)



York Hotel, Hannan Street Kalgoorlie 1901 (*Twentieth Century Impressions of WA* p.645)



City Markets, Hannan Street Kalgoorlie 1901 (Google 2012)



Port Hotel, Hopetoun 1907 (Google 2012)



New wing to St Joseph's Convent, Aberdeen Street Albany 1914 (Google 2012)