

PHOTO REQUIRED

Herbert N. Davis

(courtesy xxx)

Herbert Nathaniel Davis (1867-1900) was born 20 December 1867 at 98 King Street, Sydney. Both Herbert's parents were of English origin, and his father Eleazor [also spelt Eleazer] M. Davis married Frances (Fanny) Matilda Lazarus at Sydney in 1856. Of Jewish faith, Eleazor was an importer, toy merchant and retailer of 'fancy goods'. Herbert had an elder brother, Edward, born in 1857, but it appears that several stillborn children followed, and the birth of second son Herbert after ten years must have been a relief to the family. During the 1860s and 1870s Eleazor's business 'The Civet Cat' bazaar was based at 98 King Street, and unfortunately almost all his stock was destroyed by fire during December 1865. Although insured, Davis' loss was considerable, and with his having sustained insolvency in 1860, the financial circumstances of young Herbert's upbringing may have been rather precarious.

Herbert's early education at Sydney has not yet been established. His involvement in debate of the 'Hebrew Literary and Debating Society' held at the Sydney Synagogue Schoolroom during September 1889 suggests that by this time, he was a mature and articulate young man. His mother had died in early 1888, and with difficult economic circumstances on the east coast of Australia in the early 1890s the young architect eventually determined that he should move to Western Australia to improve his business prospects. Davis first office was briefly set up at Swan Chambers in Hay Street, Perth during late 1892, but he soon established himself at the port town of Fremantle, where he was to remain until his premature death at the turn of the century.

Herbert N. Davis is listed as an architect in *Wises Directory* during 1893-94 at the Town Hall Chambers in Fremantle. In May 1894 Herbert gave notice of his move from the Town Hall to the West Australian Bank Chambers further west in High Street, Fremantle and in February 1896 moved from the Bank Chambers to Cliff Street Chambers at 22-32 Cliff Street (now the McDonald Smith Building). In March 1896 Davis announced that he had taken George Anketell Wright Wilson of Ballarat into partnership at Cliff Street, hence trading as Davis

& Wilson. *Wises Directory* of 1897 lists Davis & Wilson at Cliff Street, and by 1898 they were located in the Rialto Chambers at 58 High Street, Fremantle. The partnership was dissolved by mutual consent in February 1898, and Wilson soon joined in another partnership at Fremantle, with Wilkinson & Smith, until September 1899. Herbert Davis is still listed at 58 High Street for 1899, but he may already have been ill at this time, as his tender notices cease from mid-1898, and he was not pre-listed in *Wises* 1900 directory – the year of his death.

Davis' projects in Western Australia were almost exclusively at Fremantle. They include alterations and additions to the Pier Hotel at Cliff Street in 1893; the conversion of premises to form the Esplanade Hotel in late 1895; a villa at Cottesloe Beach for Sydney Durrant; business premises at Cliff Street for shipping merchant James Lilly completed in 1896; J. & W. Bateman premises on the corner of High and Henry Streets; Tolley & Co three storey warehouse in Pakenham Street; Cliff Street Chambers at 22-32 Cliff Street; a 12 room residence overlooking the Swan River for M.L. Moss, MLA and next door in Riverside Road, an 8 room villa for H.J. King; 3 villas in upper High Street for Messrs F. Instone, Gray, and F. Cadd; a villa and shop in Hampton Road for Mrs Cable; a cottage at Belle Vue for C. Langoulandt; in 1897 2 storey shops and dwellings in Hampton Street; three 3-storey shops and offices High Street for W. de Lacy-Bacon; in 1898 a shed at Beach Street for Bells Asbestos Co.; and a villa at Richmond for C. Nathan.

Herbert Nathaniel Davis was an important part of the rapid development that occurred at Fremantle in the 1890s, and responsible for many fine buildings in a relatively short period of time. He died at his 55 Ord Street, Fremantle residence on 14 March 1900, aged just 32 years, and was buried at the Jewish Orthodox portion of the 'new' Fremantle Cemetery. There does not appear to be a contemporary report listing the cause of his demise, and a copy of his death certificate would provide reason for the premature and untimely passing of such a talented young man. Davis had married Miriam (May) Louise Levine at Fremantle in August 1894, and their daughter Gladys Elizabeth (Poppy) was born in October 1895. Miriam arranged for the sale of all Herbert's office fittings, instruments, and books from the office in May 1900. Eleazor Davis lived on to 1908, dying at his first son Edward's home in London.

References:

- 'Births', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March 1857, p.1 (birth of Edward).
- 'Notice – partnership', *Empire*, 27 October 1859, p.1 (Eleazer dissolves general importers partnership with Jacob Levy, trading as E. Davis & Co at the Civet Cat, King Street).
- 'New Insolvents', *Empire*, 16 August 1860, p.5 (Eleazer Davis, of King Street t/a E. Davis & Co).
- 'Fire in King Street', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 December 1865, p.7 (Civet Cat premises).
- 'Births', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1869, p.1 (birth Herbert 20 December 1867).
- 'Meetings', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 September 1889, p.5 (Hebrew Literary & Debating Soc.).
- 'Marriage', *The West Australian*, 4 October 1894, p.4 (marriage to Miriam at Fremantle).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 21 September 1892, p.8 (alts and adds to Pier Hotel, Cliff St).
- 'Building Improvements in Fremantle', *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 30 November 1894, p.6 (single storey shops on 'Walker's Corner', 2 shops on High St & 2 shops on Market St).
- 'New Buildings at Fremantle', *The West Australian*, 20 May 1895, p.5 (5 shops for J. & W. Bateman cnr High and Henry Streets, Fremantle; conversion of premises to Esplanade Hotel).
- 'A Seaside Hotel', *The West Australian*, 7 October 1895, p.6 (premises of Esplanade Hotel).
- 'Tenders', *Daily News*, 25 October 1895, p.3 (villa Cottesloe Beach for Sydney Durrant).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 25 October 1895, p.6 (business premises Cliff St for J. Lilly).
- 'Progress of Fremantle, New Business Premises, No. 1', *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 24 January 1896, p.9 (J. & W. Bateman premises High & Henry-Sts; A. Tolley & Co 3 storey warehouse Pakenham St; Cliff St offices for Harry Shaw; 3 warehouses Cliff St for J. Lilly).
- 'Progress of Fremantle, New Residences, No. 2', *Inquirer & Commercial News*, 31 January 1896, p.14 (12 room residence for M.L. Moss, MLA and next door in Riverside Road, an 8 room villa for H.J. King; 3 villas in upper High St for Messrs F. Instone, Gray, and F. Cadd).
- 'Tenders', *Daily News*, 17 February 1896, p.3 (villa and shop Hampton Rd for Mrs Cable).
- 'Business Announcements', *The West Australian*, 24 March 1896, p.6 (with G. Anketell Wilson).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 27 March 1896, p.6 (cottage Belle Vue for C. Langoulandt).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 27 August 1896, p.3 (2 storey shops & dwellings Hampton St).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 21 September 1896, p.3 (three 3 storey shops and offices High St for W. de Lacy-Bacon).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 13 November 1897, p.3 (shed Beach St, Bells Asbestos Co).
- 'Notice', *The West Australian*, 14 February 1898, p.2 (dissolves partnership with G.A.W. Wilson).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 1 April 1898, p.1 (villa Richmond for C. Nathan).
- 'Deaths', *The West Australian*, 15 March 1900, p.4 (death of Herbert at Ord Street).
- 'Office Fittings', *The West Australian*, 10 May 1900, p.2 (sale of materials without reserve).
- 'Marriage', *Daily News*, 4 December 1918, p.3 (marriage of daughter Gladys).

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Herbert Davis designed the original portions of the Esplanade Hotel at Fremantle in 1895. Architect J. Herbert Eales further modified the place in 1903. (SLWA 010131PD cropped)



Lilly's Buildings 34-42 Cliff Street Fremantle of 1896 (Google 2013)



J & W Bateman, later Union Stores, Premises south-east corner High & Henry Streets Fremantle of 1896 (Google 2013)



Cliff Street Chambers 22-32 Cliff Street Fremantle of 1896 (Google 2013)



Tolley & Co Bonded Warehouse Pakenham Street Fremantle of 1896 (Google 2013)