



Jim Russell in 1941 (courtesy Helen Williams)

James Alexander Russell (1914-1984) was born at Leederville to Alexander and Ellen (nee Summers) Russell. Alex and 'Nellie' had married at the Presbyterian Church Subiaco in June 1911, they also had daughters Mary Constance born at Leederville in 1912, and Bessie born at North Perth in 1918. *Wises Directories* of 1912-1914 show Alex Russell living at 76 Monger (now Northwood) Street in Leederville. It is likely that 'Jim' Russell attended the nearby West Leederville Primary School.

It appears that Jim was articled to architect Reginald Summerhayes (1897-1965) around 1934 or 1935, whilst also attending design classes at the Perth Architectural Atelier (PAA). The PAA was established at Perth Technical College (PTC) in 1934 under the directorship of Murray Forster (1907-1967), but relocated to the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1936, and was renamed the School of Architectural Design. Jim was a member of the Architectural Association of WA, attended evening lectures for students at UWA, some given by the elderly Alfred Wright (1861-1939), and also the architectural design class under the brilliant architect William Leighton (1905-1990) in 1937. The studio class experienced difficulties with support, and was discontinued in the early stages of the Second World War (1939-1945), with a formal architectural course not finally established at PTC until 1946.



The Design Class at UWA Crawley, with Bill Leighton standing front left (Architectural Association's *Tee Square Journal* of 1937, p.27).

With his office tenancy at Colonial Mutual Chambers in St George's Terrace Perth, Reg Summerhayes was able to secure the role of supervising architect for the replacement Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (CML) Building built in 1936. Now demolished, the CML Building at Perth was designed by Sydney architects Hennessy, Hennessy & Co and reflected the style of a number of CML buildings built around Australia in the 1930s, only a few of which still remain. Located on the southern end of Sherwood Court in Perth, the eleven-storey Lawson Flats was constructed in 1937 by Colonial Mutual as a companion piece to the nearby CML Building. Reg Summerhayes was again commissioned with Hennessy, Hennessy & Co as architects in association. Jim Russell's fine perspective drawings of both the buildings, featuring dramatic 1930s motor vehicles, highlighted his brilliant artistic talent.



Jim Russell's perspective drawing (dated Dec. 1936) of the Colonial Mutual Life Building at St George's Terrace Perth, built in 1936, and knocked down in 1980 during Perth's rabid demolition period (Muhling Collection; 1970s photo SLWA 227242PD).



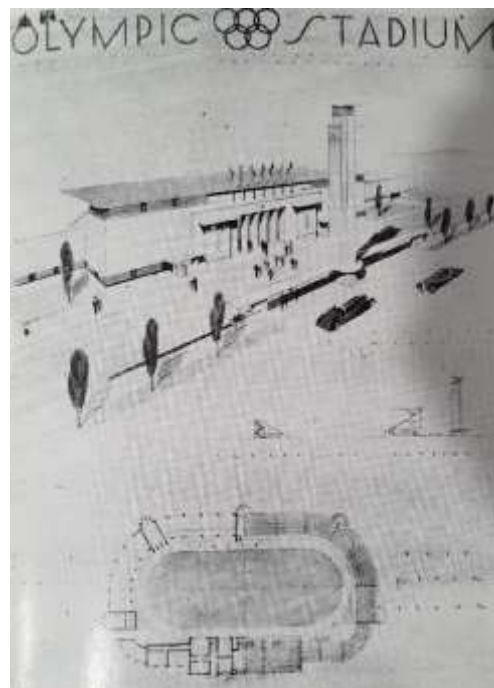
Jim Russell's perspective drawing (dated Dec. 1936) of Lawson Flats corner of Sherwood Court and The Esplanade Perth, built in 1937 (Muhling Collection; 1972 photo SLWA 160122PD).

In 1936, Summerhayes' joint design with sculptor Edward Kohler (1890-1964) won a national design competition for an equestrian statue of King George V, to be erected outside Brisbane Town Hall, bringing national recognition. Further competition success occurred in March 1937, when Reg's design for a crematorium at Karrakatta Cemetery was selected from twenty entries submitted by West Australian architects. Reg's designs at Loreto Convent, Claremont were built in 1937, but subsequently have been demolished for housing.



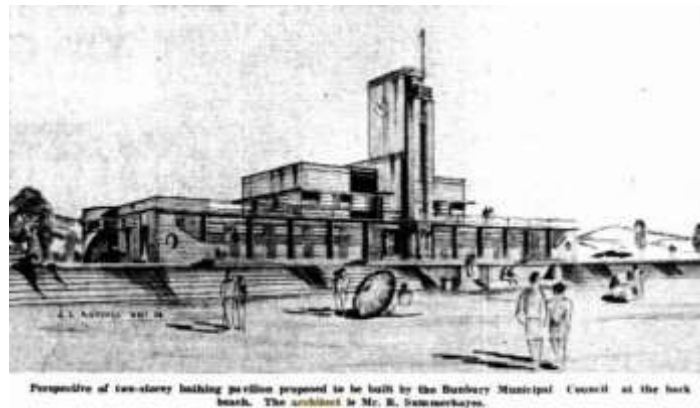
The winning entry of Mr. R. Summerhayes in the West Australian architects' competition for a design for a crematorium to be erected at Karrakatta cemetery.

Reg Summerhayes' winning design in a competition for a Crematorium at Karrakatta Cemetery. Although Jim Russell's signature is not clearly visible, the drawing is highly likely to be his work. (*The West Australian*, 2 March 1937, p.10).



Architectural Association Executive and Members 1937-38 (*Tee Square Journal*, 1937, p.5); Jim Russell's '14 Day Esquisse' design for an Olympic Stadium at the School of Architectural Design (*Tee Square Journal*, 1937, p.29).

In 1937-1938, Jim took prizes in student design competitions held by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Western Australia (RIAWA) in conjunction with their annual exhibition, with other prizes often going to his colleague Harry Downes (1918-1943). Downes, as President, and Jim were members of the Architectural Association's committee tasked with organizing the tenth annual T-Square Ball, held in May 1938 at the Embassy Ballroom.



Jim Russell's perspective drawing of the proposed Bunbury bathing pavilion (*The West Australian*, 7 May 1938, p.8).

Results of the Arts Certificate examination conducted by UWA were announced in August 1938: *This examination is held each year in August. To obtain the arts certificate candidates must pass in one of three sections-drawing, sculpture, or architecture. Since the inception of the examination no candidate has been offered in sculpture and candidates this year were all presented in architecture. Candidates, listed in order of merit, who obtained the certificate this year were: Mr. J.A. Russell, Miss M.T. Jackson, and Messrs. L.F.H. Parry, A.L.R. Camerer, R. Punschon, J.H. Stubbs and L.S. Smith.*



Circa January 1939 photograph of some of Jim Russell's close colleagues in the Architectural Association, and UWA arts certificate studies: John Henry 'Jack' Stubbs in the centre, possibly Marie Therese Jackson next right, and Laurence Sarsfield Smith at right. (Dermott Kelly).

Following the October 1938 annual examinations of the Architects Board of Western Australia, it was announced that Harry W. Downes, a pupil of Harold Boas, James A. Russell, a pupil of Reginald Summerhayes, and Fred W. Hines had all passed the examinations, making them eligible for registration as architects. In late December 1938, the press noted that Jim Russell was to depart on the *Manoora* for the Eastern States 'to gain further experience'. Recognizing his outstanding performance as an architectural student, in 1939 the RIAWA awarded Jim the Institute's Bronze (later E.G. Cohen) Medal – Downes had won in 1938. As Russell was away from Perth by this time, the medal was received on his behalf by Reg Summerhayes.

It appears Jim arrived on the east coast at the start of 1939. The RIAWA periodical *The Architect* noted in June 1940 that "Jim Russell is attending the Royal Engineer's Officers' classes in between planning a military hospital at Parramatta, Sydney." Russell had joined fellow West Australian Allan Allman Gamble (1907-2001), who had also moved to work in Sydney with architects Stephenson & Turner (S&T), including on the Concord Repatriation Hospital - commissioned in 1939 as a general hospital for the Australian Army, designed and built with great rapidity to be opened in March 1941. Bronze Medal winner of 1940, Bill Durack (1918-2010) also travelled east to join Jim at S&T in 1941.



Concord Repatriation Hospital, designed by architects Stephenson & Turner (Wikipedia); and Jean Culliford Smith in 1941 (courtesy Helen Williams).

Jim Russell married Jean Culliford Smith at Sydney in 1942. The National Archives of Australia do not appear to hold a war service record for Jim Russell, and further investigation is required to further establish his activities in the early part of the Second World War (1939-1945).

Jim moved to Melbourne with Stephenson & Turner (at 374 Little Collins Street) during the war, and in December 1943 was registered as an architect in Victoria under Section 8 (1) (c) of the Architects Act 1928. Three S&T architects who testified to Jim's 'good fame and character' in his application for registration were George Ross Philip, Rae Edwin Featherstone (1907-1987), and Edythe Ellison Harvie (1902-1984). In 1944 James Russell was elected both as an Associate member of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA), and of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA).

Jim advertised work on his own account following the war. 'James A. Russell Architect' called tenders in the Melbourne press during September 1946 for brick flats at Burke Road in Deepdene, and for a brick residence at Mountain View Road, Balwyn. During 1946-49 Jim was living at 68 Westbury Street, East St Kilda. In 1949 he was fined for having failed to observe conditions of a building permit for building his house at 26 St Hubert's Road, East Ivanhoe. He had built a garage, and used bricks for a garden wall and fence, which was against the regulations of the time – probably due to post-war shortages of materials. Russell complained to the magistrate that 'expensive hotels were being erected', to which his honour replied that he had 'better address his remarks to Parliament'!

In April 1950, Jim wrote to the Secretary of the RAIA in Melbourne asking for all correspondence to be sent to his East Ivanhoe address, suggesting this is the time he moved into the St Hubert's Road residence. His office address had previously been Flat 5, 252 Domain Road in South Yarra. In 1960 Jim was still listed at 26 St Hubert's Road, East Ivanhoe; and in 1970 he was made a Fellow of the RAIA.



Jim Russell worked with E. & G. Kolle & Associates, who designed Marland House of 1972 at 570 Bourke Street Melbourne (www.httpssria.com.au).

Registration records note a business address for Jim with E. & G. Kolle & Associates at 459 Little Collins Street in Melbourne. Architects and engineers Kolle & Associates designed a number of prominent Post-War Modernist commercial buildings in Melbourne and Sydney.

Jim's wife Jean died at Melbourne in 1967, and he retired from practice in 1974 at 60 years of age, resigning his registration in 1980. The RAIA listed Russell at 8 Duncombe Avenue, Middle Brighton in its 1975 Year Book, where he resided until 1981. Jim returned to WA in June 1981, perhaps to be with his older sister Mary, who had married in 1931. Jim's younger sister Bessie had married in 1943, sadly Bessie took her own life in 1953. James Alexander Russell died at Willetton 16 June 1984 aged 69 years, and Mary (Beecraft) followed soon after, passing at Willetton 7 November 1984 aged 72 years.

References:

- 'Weddings', *Western Mail*, 22 July 1911, p.42 (of Nellie Summers and Alex Russell at Subiaco).
 'Crematorium. Design Competition', *The West Australian*, 2 March 1937, p.10 (Karrakatta).
 'Architects' Exhibition', *The West Australian*, 26 May 1937, p.18 (prize in competition).
 'Varied Activities', *The West Australian*, 5 May 1938, p.6 (tenth annual T-Square Ball).
 'Design of £2,000 Home', *The West Australian*, 28 May 1938, p.8 (prize in competition).
 'University Arts Certificate', *The West Australian*, 17 August 1938, p.10 (results).
 'Architecture Examinations', *The West Australian*, 1 December 1938, p.20 (ABWA results).
 'Personal', *The West Australian*, 27 December 1938, p.6 (leaving WA).
 'The Students' Column', *The Architect*, September 1939, p.21 (Bronze Medal winner lauded).
 'RIAWA Annual Report 1939-1940', *The Architect*, March 1940, p.34 (Bronze Medal winner).
 'Student Notes', *The Architect*, June 1940, p.33 (at Sydney).
 NAA B883, WX1734 BEECRAFT LEONARD ST GEORGE, Service Number - WX1734 : DOB 24 Apr 1909 :POB - FARNHAM ENGLAND : POE - SUBIACO WA : NOK BEECRAFT MARY
 'James A. Russell', *The Argus*, 6 July 1944, p.2 (Associate member of RVIA).
 'Tenders', *The Argus*, 21 September 1946, p.32 (flats at Deepdene and residence at Balwyn).
 'Architect Fined', *The Herald*, 16 June 1949, p.8 (garage, garden wall etc at East Ivanhoe).
 'Heavy fines for building act breaches', *The Argus*, 17 June 1949, p.3 (Heidelberg Court).
 'James Alexander Russell', Public Record Office Victoria, architect registration files (VPRS 8838).

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