

BRISBANE



Neo-Renaissance Spinning Chair, 1907, hand carved by L.J. Harvey and exhibited the following year at the Franco-British Exhibition in London.



Carving feature on a French Draw Leaf Dining Table which was used as a style template for two matching sideboards designed and manufactured by G.N. Olsson.



Reproduction White Beech Sideboard manufactured by G.N. Olsson.



Carved Grandfather Chair with Victorian toe and buttoned velvet upholstery manufactured by Harvey Bros in 1982.

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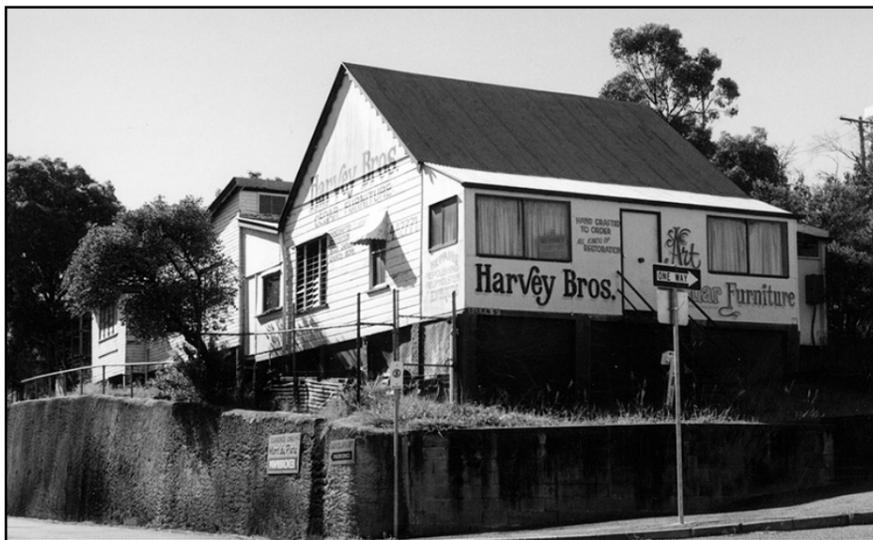
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Harvey Bros. buildings at Allen St, South Brisbane just prior to demolition in 1999.



L.J. Harvey, late 1920s

In Harmony with Harvey

IT IS always important to acknowledge the heritage and tradition upon which a business is based.

Whilst sorting through memorabilia I came across a small brown book titled *LJ Harvey and his School* which I'd bought for myself more than fifteen years ago. This book, published by the Queensland Art Gallery, was released to coincide with the 1983 Visual Arts Programme **L.J. Harvey Exhibition**. The book is a reminder of the respect that I have for talent, skill and tradition. Lewis Jarvis Harvey was an extremely talented master craftsman specialising in woodcarving, the making of ornate Art Nouveau and other finely designed furniture and also in many other of the visual arts, including sculpture, pottery, modelling, pokerwork, leatherwork, metalwork, etching, lettering and china painting.

Lewis was also the father of Elvin and George Harvey of the famous firm of Harvey Bros in Brisbane, Queensland. I became a tradesman under the guidance of Elvin and his cabinet-making tradesmen. Elvin, like his father, was a highly skilled artist, master craftsman and teacher. He had inherited a rich tradition from his father which influenced his own style and approach. Eventually I too was to become a recipient of the traditions and I too have been influenced by each of them in my design work, craftsmanship and business conduct. A more thorough knowledge of L.J. Harvey's life work and achievements will give you an appreciation of what all this means.

Lewis Jarvis Harvey was born in England in 1871. His father immigrated to Australia three years later and established an engineering firm in Brisbane. As a young man Lewis developed his hobbies of whittling and woodcarving under the guidance of an English woodcarver, Edward G. Madley (who operated a carving business in Elizabeth St, Brisbane) and another woodcarver, Cuthbert Vickers of Wickham St, Fortitude Valley. He also began art training at the Brisbane Technical College with friend Harold Parker, whose father, Daniel, was a keen supporter of them both and a fine cabinetmaker.

Lewis commenced exhibiting his woodcarving and sculptures in 1890 and continued to do so until the year he died. The Queensland Art Gallery paid homage to his life and artworks through the 1983 exhibition which was held 41 years after his death. It wouldn't surprise me if his work is still being exhibited today, given his long association with the Royal Queensland Art Society and the Half Dozen Group.

By 1892, Lewis Harvey had opened up his own wood and stone carving business in North Quay, Brisbane. This business was later transferred to Elizabeth St and then again to 111 George St, opposite the Government Printing Office. In 1902 he commenced his long and distinguished teaching career at the Brisbane Technical College. Renowned artists, such as Daphne Mayo MBE and W. Leslie Bowles, began their careers under his tutelage.

In 1903 his first son, George, was born. Later,

at the age of 38, Lewis exhibited a hand-carved spinning chair at the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition in London. The Governor of Queensland became his official patron in 1909. In 1911 he became a member of the Council of the Queensland Art Society, a position which he held until his death.

Harvey's second son, Elvin, was born in 1913, and this was also the year the family moved to a larger house, Milo, in Grey St, Hill End. At the age of 45 Lewis closed his business to take up full-time teaching. He also became a Trustee of the Royal Queensland Art Society and a member of its selection and hanging committee in 1929. By 1933 he had been elected as a life member of the Royal Queensland Art Society.

Prestigious 'royal commissions' gained by Lewis included those for pieces for presentation pieces for His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII (1920), the Queen Mother (1934), and the Duke and Duchess of York (1901 and 1927). Many State, private and church commissions were undertaken during the course of his life too. In 1912, for example, he executed a commission for a seven-foot figurine of St Brigid for the new St Brigid's Church at Red Hill.

Lewis' student, Daphne Mayo, completed her Diploma and then went to England and Europe as the holder of several scholarships before returning to Australia in 1925. In 1927 she received the commission which made her reputation – the tympanum of the Brisbane City Hall.

George Harvey went to college where he received tuition from his father and others. He then began work as a stonemason. His achievements include stone carvings on the Treasury Building, the Ann St Masonic Temple and the Anzac Square War Memorial (for which Daphne Mayo received the commission in 1932).

Elvin graduated from his father's course at the Brisbane Technical College and then obtained a teaching diploma. He taught carving and modelling at the Central Technical College from 1946 to 1977. He also taught at the School of Applied Arts in Horsham House, Adelaide St in 1949. This was the school his father had founded immediately after retiring from the College.

It was in the year 1934 that Lewis Harvey's sons combined their talents to found Harvey Bros, manufacturers of fine quality carved furniture. This business ran successfully for more than sixty years prior to Elvin retiring and closing the business in the late 1990s.

My indenture with Harvey Bros began in the late 1970s, long after George had died. I remember going there with my father who spoke on my behalf to Mr Elvin Harvey. At the time there were three tradesmen: a cabinetmaker, a French polisher and a woodcarver. There was also a young lad who was nearing completion of his apprenticeship. By this time Elvin Harvey ran the establishment and provided woodcarving and design expertise. Unfortunately, Mr Harvey said they did not require an apprentice and I was

turned away. However, on my father's advice, we returned to enquire again, and on more than one occasion! Finally, Mr Harvey rewarded my tenacity and my training began.

Two particularly memorable works I was engaged on come to mind. The first was a commission from the State Government which required a gift for the wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales. The theme for the gift was Queensland, naturally. Elvin designed a two-metre tall cedar grandfather clock, intricately carved with Queensland floral and faunal motifs and emblems. The second commission was for the formal executive furniture for the new State Parliament House. This was all in the Harvey Bros style of ornately carved, fine design work.

A considerable quantity and variety of fine furniture was manufactured over the sixty years during which the business operated. Such pieces are highly valued and prized today thanks to their long lasting quality and craftsmanship. I learnt the arts of the restoration of antique furniture and the design and manufacture of fine furniture from my association with Harvey Bros, and I've never regretted a day spent there.

And the circle goes around. I am well pleased to note that the Treasury Building, which George Harvey worked on, was graced by my own presence when the building was restored for the Treasury Casino. I had the pleasure of working on the executive boardroom table and the reproduction Treasury document boxes. I remember the tight time schedule preceding the official presentation of these boxes to the then Premier, Treasurer and Leader of the Opposition. Before and after this, I enjoyed working on Federal Parliament, State Parliament and High Court commissions. The tradition lives on.

Alas, to date the only 'royal commission' I have received was from an Arabian Prince. Still, I am comparatively young and who knows what the future holds? In the meantime I have the pleasure of meeting lots of interesting people, many of whom share my passion for antique and fine furniture.

L.J. Harvey once wrote, 'Ornament is that which is added to adorn and makes objects beautiful and interesting, without detracting from their use... ornament should not weaken either the constructive appearance of an object or its form.' I still incorporate this wise advice into the manufacture of both contemporary, cleaner lined custom furniture and the more traditional, ornate fine furniture. Indeed time tells all – for the restoration work I do invariably includes redesigning fault areas fashioned by tradesmen who did not have the benefit and influence of Lewis J Harvey's wisdom.

GARY OLSSON
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