

# Historic Hotel Corones

## Charleville's Leading Hotel

### History

In 1907 Harry Corones and his young cousin Jimmy left the Greek island of Kythera to seek fame and fortune in Australia. By 1909 they had worked their way north to Charleville in Western Queensland. Marriage to Effie, one of six daughters of the Greek Priest of Sydney followed, and by 1924 together they set about creating a legend - the Hotel Corones.

Completed in 1929, Corones became the hub of a glittering social scene, where guests dressed in Paris gowns, danced to the strains of imported orchestras and savoured an international cuisine prepared by the finest chefs.

Harry became "Poppa", the genial host to dignitaries as diverse as Amy Johnson, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Gracie Fields, Johnnie O'Keefe, Gough Whitlam, Princess Alexandra and Bryan Brown. Effie, gentle and refined, was mother to Peter, George, Alick, Nita and Nina and "Nanna" to everyone else.

The legend lives on. Guests today are still enjoying the elegance and comfort, quality and service that was Poppa's dream.

"The climate of Charleville demands special attention to sleeping accommodation, and this fact was taken into consideration when the bedrooms were being built. Every room, double and single, opens with double doors on to a spacious balcony, and the larger rooms have windows as well.

The rooms are furnished throughout in maple or sycamore, with spacious wardrobes, large mirrors, and writing tables. Soft, deep-piled carpets tone harmoniously with the furnishings, and from each double room one enters a luxurious private bath-room, mosaic floored, the walls tiled in shades agreeing with the colouring of the furniture and furnishings of the bedroom attached, where one may enjoy the delights of either a hot or cold bath. Naturally, hot bore water is laid on in all those rooms, where scrupulous cleanliness is the keynote."

... Extract from the original Souvenir Booklet circa 1929.

When I came with my husband and eight children to Charleville and the Hotel Corones in 1985, only the shadows of its former beauty remained. At that time tourists wanting to see the Outback were practically non-existent, but I felt instinctively that one day in the future, people would come to Charleville just to see Poppa's Hotel Corones.

We settled in, tidied up the essentials, added motel rooms and then in 1990 Charleville made news around Australia with a flood which devastated the town and surrounding district. But the flood put Charleville on the map and skilled trades people poured into the town, painters, carpenters, plumbers and importantly - furniture restorers! We decided to strip back a few doors (where to begin when the building occupies a whole block?) That was 1992 and as any owner of an old home will understand, restoration leads one on and on!

Now it's 1996 and we read our bible,



the visitors book nightly and comments such as "Historic Treasure" and "Lovely Hotel - so glad we found it", continue to spur us on.

I believe that Poppa's dream was to create for his guests a unique experience of Western Queensland, and so we are in our own way following Poppa.

- Fran Harding, October, 1996

### A few words about Harry Corones

**CORONES, HARALAMBOS (HARRY)** (1883-1972), hotelier and businessman, was born on 17 September 1883 at Kithira, Greece, son of Panayiotis Coroneos, fisherman, and his wife Stamatea, nee Freeleagus. From 1904 to 1906 Harry completed national service as a first-aid orderly. Having unsuccessfully applied to enter the United States of America, he emigrated to Australia, disembarking in Sydney on 10 August 1907. Six weeks later he went to Brisbane where he worked in the brothers' oyster-saloon in George Street. About 1909 he moved to Charleville and took over a cafe. In 1911 he opened the Paris Cafe on the corner of Wills and Galatea streets; from its rear premises he operated a silent-picture cinema and staged vaudeville shows with performers brought from Brisbane and Sydney.

In 1912 Corones acquired the lease of the Charleville Hotel. Reputedly, Paddy

Cryan—a commercial traveller for the Castlemaine Perkins Brewery—had visited the Paris Cafe for a meal and was so impressed with Harry's conviviality that he suggested he move into the hotel business. Harry told him that he didn't know anything about hotels and didn't have any money. Cryan persuaded him that he could learn the trade, and the brewery would help to finance the deal. Corones was naturalized in June 1912. At Holy Trinity Church, Surry Hills, Sydney, on 29 April 1914 he married with Greek Orthodox rites Eftehia. Fire had destroyed the Charleville Hotel in 1913, but it was rebuilt and Corones ran it until the lease expired in 1924.

An enthusiastic supporter of air transport as the means to end the isolation of Queensland's west, in 1922 Corones bought 100 original shares in Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd. He catered for the airline, supplying picnic hampers and sit-down meals for transit passengers in a converted hangar at Charleville airport. He has also been credited with suggesting the names for the airline's first five aircraft—



**Haralambos (Harry) Corones (1883 - 1972), by unknown photographer, c1932, courtesy of State Library of Queensland. 49944. [with Commissioner W.H. Ryan].**

Hermes, Atlanta, Apollo, Diana and Hippomenes—drawing on the classical mythology of his native Greece.

In July 1924 Corones leased another hotel (the Norman) at Charleville. After purchasing the freehold, he demolished the building to begin construction of the Corones Hotel: built in stages, it was completed in 1929 at a cost of £50,000. By then, Charleville was the centre for a booming wool industry. The hotel, with its jazz hall, embossed plaster ceilings and en-suite bathrooms, was an oasis for graziers, wool-buyers and commercial travellers. Charleville became a scheduled stopping-off point for the fledgling aviation industry, bringing a host of visiting celebrities who passed through the hotel. They included the , Gracie Fields and , and the aviators Amy Johnson, Elly Beinhorn and .

At Quilpie, Corones ran three additional hotels under the management of his nephews. He had purchased the Quilpie Hotel in 1921 and four years later built the Imperial Hotel. In 1934 he leased the Club Hotel from the Castlemaine Perkins Brewery. His other business interests included a 17,000-acre (6880 ha) station, Whynot, near Thargomindah, and a half-share in an importing firm that operated from Sydney until the Depression.

To commemorate his membership (1916-69) of the Charleville Hospital Board and his sometime chairmanship of its works committee, the nurses' quarters were named the Harry Corones Block. He was a member of the original committee (1919) of the ambulance centre and was involved in its affairs until 1958. In addition, he served on the local fire-brigade board for over twenty years. Corones was a foundation member and major developer of the golf and bowling clubs, and a foundation patron and life member (1966) of the All Whites Football Club. His 'perennial youthful exuberance and impishness' made him the focus of many stories. He was a Freemason. In 1965 he was appointed M.B.E.

Survived by his wife, two daughters and by two of his three sons, Corones died on 22 March 1972 at Charleville and was buried with Anglican rites in the local cemetery.