

James Eunson (c1833 – 1914) Eureka Casualty & Glass Merchant

P Michell, 2018.

Eunson Ave is a small non-descript street leading to Merri Ck from St Georges Rd near Northcote High School.

This name and the area however has a fascinating history in the development of Victoria.

Originally part of Captain Andrew Clarke's land holding – stretched eastwards all the way to Rathmines St in Fairfield! Clarke (1824-1902) was the surveyor general for Victoria from 1853 replacing Robert Hoddle. He expedited land sales in the fledgling colony. Duly becoming a politician. Leaving Australia in 1858, spent a short time in Singapore as the second governor. Clarke St and Clarke Quay are named in honour of him.

Prior to establishment of Northcote High in St Georges Rd (1928), the site was the former Inebriate's retreat (1873-1892). One of the first institutions to treat alcoholics in the nineteenth century. Dr Charles Mcarthy who managed the Retreat was the next door neighbour of the Eunson family.

In 1880 James Eunson, Glass Merchant, acquired land west of St Georges Rd from Clarke St to the boarder of the Inebriates Retreat. Possibly living in Sir Andrew Clarke's former residence. (The building was still standing in 1928.) By 1889 the land was being sold and subdivided for housing.

James Eunson moved to Brunswick and passed away in 1914. Had lived in Victoria for some 58 years. In Ballarat he was wounded during the Eureka uprising and later (1862) became a hawker there. Trading must have been moderately successful as by 1874 he had established with two others, as an importer of glass and earthenware business. Sensing a business opportunity by the 1880s he was co-owner of the Tyne Flint Glass Works in Flinders St, Melbourne. The company had connection with the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880s, manufacturing drinking glasses for wine tasting.

In 1882 Mr C showers, son of Cr Showers of Fitzroy, purchased the glassworks and expanded it. He duly became councillor too, of Preston.

In 1886 the Eunson family was involved with rescuing a young boy, William Normoyle, from drowning in the Merri Ck. Two sons – John and James Jnr were awarded bronze medals of bravery from the Royal Humane Society. Honourable mentions were given to the father and mother as well as Dr Mcarthy. Unfortunately Normoyle would be leading a life of crime by the 1930s.

Though James Eunson sold and moved back to Brunswick in 1890, his son James Jnr had a longer connection with Northcote. Building a house in Clarke St. In 1893 was tendering for a builder. James Jnr had become a real estate agent - advertising in 1899 as Knox and Eunson, later with McPhee.

James lived at #3 Clarke St until 1935, after which Mrs Emily E Eunson occupied the house until 1960.

James Eunson Snr had some twenty children and lived for some time at Hazel Glen (now Doreen).

His funeral in 1914 showed his many connections. Those attending included A G Healing, the founder of Healing bicycles and later electrical appliance company. F H Williams with connection to William Williams a veteran of Eureka. Eunson's glass trading company had links with significant businesses of the day - Levy Brothers and Clarke and Co, both large mercantile stores in Melbourne. Representative from these companies attended as well. This was widely reported at the time.

Apart from James Jnr, other siblings had significant lives:

Rev T A Eunson, Baptist Minister, of Gold St, Collingwood a minister for Baptists Tabernacle from 1908 to 1950. He was minister at Melbourne Hospital in 1924, when he advised a wounded escaped prisoner to peacefully surrender, thereby avoiding a potentially lethal situation.

J W Eunson, Engineer, returned to Australia in 1930 from England, after serving 7 years as assistant engineer of rolling stock and tramway & transport depot of Plymouth City Council. Was chief engineer of Woods Gilbert Rail Remodelling, a Melbourne firm.

James Jnr's sons included:

Donald ? Wallace Eunson went to South Africa in 1901, during the Boer War, and later enlisted in World War One as a Corporal.

Three other sons also enlisted in the Great War - **Ernes Ellis, Elliott Maurice and Charles Campbell**.

Sources:

Sands & McDougall Directories

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Wikipedia – Andrew Clarke