

Plant Family:

Paul Michell, 2015.

The Plant family are an early family that settled in Northcote. The most notable connection being as owners of the Peacock Hotel. Early municipal representatives.

George Herbert Plant (1834-1895)

From 1862 elected Epping Road Board and Borough of Jika Jika.

Northcote councillor: 1884/5 - 1890/1. Mayor: 1889/90, 1890/1.

Was a hotel keeper, contractor, bacon business. kept live stock, racehorses, councillor and was politically conservative.

Came to Melbourne in 1855 (doing contracting work) and a year later settles in Northcote. Having bought the Peacock Inn (1856) from Bastings Brothers (who had built it). Marries Catherine Hayes and together run the hotel. It would stay within the Plant family til 1920.

1855 – Arrives in Melbourne doing contracting work. (Argus 9/9/1895)

1855 – Christmas merrymaking on Boxing Day at the hotel including footrace 200 yds – two sovereigns prize, , cricket match, shooting match (entrance 5d) – prize a fat pig given by Plant. Quoit and skittle matches.

1856 – Buys Peacock Hotel from Bastings Bros.

1858 – Supplying metal for road-works. (Argus 9/9/1895)

1859 – Constructed Reilly St drain from Napier St to the Yarra (Argus 9/9/1895)

1860 – Cuts down Ruckers Hill – contractor G H Plant (Swift) (Argus 9/9/1895)

1861 – Construction of section of Ballarat railway. (Argus 9/9/1895)

1862 – Elected to Epping Road Board (Argus 9/9/1895)

1864 – Epping Road District – Northcote members: E Bastings, F Mitchell, G Plant (Swift)

1866 – Trophy of silver, and gold to be presented. Includes Peacock designed handle.

1867 – Erection of Flemington cattle yards. (Argus 9/9/1895)

1869/70 – Epping Road Board – Northcote members: E Bastings, J Garton, G Plant. Collector – B Plant (Swift)

1872 – Shire divided into three – Northcote, Preston & Gowerville. Northcote reps: W H Dennis (new), E Bastings & Plant (President). Collector W J Plant (Swift)

~~1874 – Submission re Outer Circle Railway~~

1875 – Death of young son – George Henry Marples Plant (3rd son) of hip disease aged 5 years. Next year letter to Argus complaining about surgeon Beaney.

??? – Establishes bacon curing business – Bastings St

1878 – Exhibiting animals – mainly pigs and greyhounds at National Agricultural Society Show. Wins many prizes.

1879 – Leaves bacon curing business. Shuts up. Months later business sold to King, Smith & Kenighan. (Collingwood Mercury: 23 Aug 1879, p 2)

1882 – with John Roberts purchases shares in newly floated Northcote Brick Co. (Lemon)
 1884 – Inspected for selling unsuitable / reduced liquor – Trademarks. (Collingwood Mercury: 23 Feb 1884, p 2)
 1886 – Continues running Peacock.
 1889/90 – 90/91 – Mayor. Foundation stones for Town Hall. (Swift)
 1890 – 7 Oct. Earl of Hopetoun arrives in Northcote (accompanied by Plant) to proclaim the Borough. (Swift)
 1891 – 11 March first Northcote council meeting. Plant provides Mayoral Robe, Town Clerk gown. (Swift)
 1891 – Defeated by ex-Councillor Smith. Retires from public life due to bad health. (Argus 9/9/1895)
 1892 – Owned racehorses: Grand National entries: ns br m Omaha (5 years), ns ch go Tayforth (5 years). Grand National Steeplechase – ns br g Jack's the Lad (6 years). (Argus, 31 May 1892, p 7)
 1893 – Insolvency. Liabilities £26,494. Assets £24,520. Losses in purchases and sales of sheep £7624. (copy) (Argus: 6/9/1893 p 5)
 1895 – Dies aged 61 of heart disease. (Argus 9/9/1895) Wife Catherine continues running Peacock.

Frederick Joseph Plant (1862 - 1934)

Councillor: 1897/8 – 1917/18. Mayor: 1900/1 -1905/6 (5 times)
 Sportsman and Valuer. Northcote Bowling Club, landholder, Councillor (Cain Feud), JP and Police court activity.
 Primarily interested in sports. Founding member of Northcote Bowling Club, footballer with Melbourne Football Club. Later life active in bowling. Sworn Valuer with National Trustees Co and travelled extensively throughout Victoria for this work.
 Lived at 202 Clarke St at his death. Brother of Georgina Horn, licensee of Peacock 1915.

1862 – Born at Peacock Hotel.
 1884 – Purchases land at Yea (Billian) 320a. North of Havanah Laidlay's selection on land forfeited by W Copley. Also Frederick Henry Mitchell (Northcote connection ?) 320a at Billian, north of F J Plant. (Seymour Express ... 15 Feb 1884, p 3)
 1892 – Purchases allotment 5a (part) – 669a at Billian. Forfeited by Patrick Rafferty. (Yea Chronicle, 28 July 1892, p 2)
 1897/8 – 1917/8 – Councillor
 1898 - Georgina (youngest daughter late G H Plant and wife) marries Rufus Hore at St Patricks. Bride was given away by her brother F J. Seven brothers of the bride and five of the groom attended. (Australasian, 29 Oct 1898, p 45)
 1900/1 – 1901/02 – Mayor
 1901 – Plant's subdivision estate sale – 57 Lots. Leader, 23 Feb 1901.

1902 – Fitzroy Direct Railway construction. (Age, 25 Feb 1902, 5)

1902 – Mrs F J Plant, Mayoress of Northcote made life-governor of Women's Hospital re entertainments provided? (Argus, 12 July 1902, p 11)

1902 – March. Proposed National Park at Eltham to be approved by Northcote Council. Inspection. (Leader, 15 March 1902, p 8)

1903 – President Northcote Poultry Socy. (Australasian 12 Dec 1903, p 16)

1904/5 – 1905/06 – Mayor

1907 – Justices Justice. Letter complaining that a drunk man was given a light sentence by F J whilst on the bench. Complaint that F J ran a pub. Claim that F J does not run the hotel and has no interest in it – his mother does and he does not live there. (copy made) The Age, 16 Jan 1907, p 8

1908 – Fire at Criterion Hotel, Trafalgar. F J first to raise alarm . (Morwell Advertiser, 21 Aug 1908, p 4)

1909 – F J magisterial inquiry of Alexandra Robina Baker, 2.5 years scalded to death. She fell into the copper. Accidental death by deputy coroner. (Bendigo Advertiser, 20 July 1909, p 5)

1914 – Opposes expenditure of electric light in excess of Council loan. If its not provided for, should not be spent. (Northcote Leader, 14 March 1914, p 2)

1915 – Wins championship at Northcote Bowling Club. He is president. Won last time he was president. Note – J S Whalley wins second time championship at Thornbury Bowling Club. (Preston Leader, 20 Feb 1915)

1915 – Belgian Relief Fund. F J & Wife donate £2/2/-. (Preston Leader 13 March 1915, p 2) Note that Herbert Hoover (engineer living in London) instigated shipment of 697 million pounds of flour. Several hundred decorated sacks given to Hoover. See Hoover archives / Wikipedia.

1915 – Police raid hotel. Brother of licensee – Georgina Hore (nee Plant). F J resides at hotel. No conviction. (despite weight of police evidence) (Melbourne Truth, 20 Nov 1915, p 2)

1915/1916 – Cain / Plant Feud

Cain – Plant . Frederick Plant vs John Cain in 1915. Newly elected councillor Cr Cain opposed council that dissenting voices against the war should be heard. At a council meeting After a Australian Peace Alliance gave a talk with Adela Pankhurst (same family in UK) from UK lecturing, then stayed. Crowds came to Town Hall against conscription. Stating

“The boys who were falling at the Dardanelles are being shot with bullets made with British capital.”

Plant – “If you went to the front you would be doing some good. Your are nothing but a shirker.”

Cain – That’s my business. I must fight for the right of public expression ...”

At next council meeting feud continued. Cain called a shirker again. Saying

“If I was as young as you I would go (to war).” Cain replies not a matter of age but fitness.

Cain – “Your business (hotel trade) has killed more of our people than the Germans are killing today.”

By 1916 feud continued. March council was supporting call for conscription. Cain spoke at 'Monster Anti-Conscription Meeting' held on banks of Yarra in Melbourne in March. Adela Pankhurst spoke but soldiers set up an opposing meeting nearby and drowning her out. Next council meeting Plant attacks Cain again – he being employed by Defence Dept. Only Cr Schwaebesch defends Cain. Plant suggesting as he opposes conscription opposes Enlistment too (not true). Sam Dennis objected to Cain 'sponging' a system then making a living from it.

Sadly one of Northcote's early German residents - Carl Adolph August Schwaebesch's family were severely targeted during this period. They had lived in Northcote since 1852. By 1917 because of this they moved to Geelong. (Lemon, p 175, 6)

- 1917 – Group of Vic bowlers going to Brisbane inc F J. Photo. (Referee, 8 Aug 1917, p 11)
- 1917 – Sept. Northcote Bowling Club Winter cards night and festivities. (see article)
- 1918 – Aug. 200 Trees planted by Northcote Bowling club commemorating fallen members children. Inc T Plant. (Australasian 3 Aug 1918, p 42)
- 1918 – Passing out of F J. Not contesting council ward. Held East Ward for 21 years without a break. Rare occasions been opposed. Autocratic rule. For some years absolutely dominated council. Underground drainage completed. Was in ill health. (Preston Leader, 10 Aug 1918, p 2)
- 1918 – Sept. Northcote Bowling Club Mrs F J Plant presents club with a flag she made. F J still president. (Preston Leader, 2 Sept 1918, p 3)
- 1920 – Sells ? Peacock Hotel
- 1926 – Mob of 22 youths invades his garden in Robert St, Northcote. Ostensibly trying to steal apples. F J attacked whilst trying to restrain one youth. F J described as Land Valuer. (Argus, 9 march 1926, p 8)
- 1934 – Death.

Other Plant family members:

John W Plant – brother of George Herbert was a newsagent in Northcote and Preston. Became Heidelberg Town Clerk. (Membrey)
Northcote Councillor – 1883. First council of Borough (Swift p 53)

George Herbert had 6 sons including: Frederick Joseph (see below), George Henry Marples (see 1875 above).
Georgina Horn (daughter of George Herbert)

W J and B are either sons or brothers of George Herbert.

John W (brother of George Herbert) Newsagent – Preston & Northcote. Heidelberg Town Clerk (Membrey)

Percy George (aged 27 years) killed at Gallipoli, 1915. Lone Pine. Body never recovered. Son of George William Plant. Only child.
(Darebin Heritage WWI database).

1903 – David Northcote Plant (youngest son) marries Eva Catherine Brophy.
1912 – Merridale House (13 Bayview St). W S Stott may have built this house c1912. Sells to **Thomas** Plant c1917. He sells it in 1920 to Richard Bennetts (builder of the house ?).

(Butler, Vol 2 pp 43)

1916 – Death at Camberwell of Herbert Plant aged 45 years. Ill for some time.