

## Early Settlers Biographies

### Edward Wood

Edward Wood sailed from England with his wife and 5 children aboard the sailing ship, "Harpley", arriving in Melbourne in January 1850. It must have felt odd to have hot sunny weather after travelling from the cold chill of England.

Mr. Wood bought ten acres of land between Darebin Creek and High Street, next to another early family, the Tyler's. The family groups were members of a Baptist church from Brighton in England and planned to set up a community and start a new life in Victoria.

Very soon after they arrived, Edward Wood built and opened the first General Store in the area, at the corner of High and Wood Streets. This store would have been very busy selling goods like household tools, furniture and all sorts of things needed in the house and garden. He chose a good spot for his shop as it was the first place where Cobb and Co mail coaches stopped as they drove out from Melbourne.

There were no trains, trams or cars when Edward set up his shop, and horses and carts of would have been the fastest form of transport, carrying people many miles. They would have been pleased to stop at Woods Store and pick up any items needed.



*A hay cart and horse belonging to the Wood family*

Mr Wood also became the first Postmaster, looking after all the parcels and letters coming in and out of the area. When his son took over the Postmaster's job in 1856 he was paid \$20 per year to run the post office.

The local families wanted a name for the township and did not like "Irishtown" as another early settler, Samuel Jeffrey, had named the locality. So they decided to use the name, "Preston", after a small village they knew well in Sussex, England.

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Wood's Store bluestone store was passed onto his son, also called Edward, his grandson, Hubert and after his death, his widow carried on running the store which became a well-known landmark. In fact, the store eventually closed in 1950 after one hundred years of continuous service.



*Here is a photograph of Wood's Store and Post Office in 1907 – the store also sold grain and corn as well as household items and groceries*



*The store around 1910 – can you see the girl peeping out of the window upstairs?*

The Wood family was also very involved in Church life and Edward played an important role in the Baptist Church. In 1856 he was one of the first trustees who bought some land near Percival Street to build the district's first church.