

Early Settlers Biographies

Edwin Bastings



Edwin Bastings arrived in Victoria in about 1849 with his brother Horace. The brothers had originated from London and possibly spent some time on the goldfields before settling in Northcote. It may not have been a co-incidence that the Bastings brothers picked Northcote. One of the very first shopkeepers in Northcote, ironmonger William Shade, was probably related to the Bastings through his mother Annie Bastings.

The brothers clearly had some money as in 1854 Edwin built a formidable two storey blue stone general store. Across the road, his brother built the Peacock Inn Hotel. Horace did not stay in Northcote long, selling the hotel to George Plant in 1855.



Post Office Store, High Street, erected in 1854.

Bastings General Store was on the west side of High Street facing down Bastings Street. It was demolished in 1962.

On the 1st August 1854 the Bastings store became Northcote's first post office, although the amount of mail received in those early days was minimal. The combining of general store and post office made Bastings very successful and his store quickly became the place to go for a gossip. It also proved a valuable resource in forging Edwin Bastings political career.

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When on 11 April 1864 Northcote joined the Epping Road Board it was natural for Bastings to be one of three representatives sent from Northcote. When Northcote and Preston left the roads board in 1871 to form the Shire of Jika Jika, it was Bastings who was selected as the first Shire President. He served as President from 1872 to 1874 and then a second term in 1881/2.



Edwin Bastings, George Plant and Charles Demaine on the way to a Council meeting in 1874. This photograph was taken in Northcote near Bastings Street.

In 1883, despite opposition from the Council, Northcote separated from the Shire of Jika Jika to form the Borough of Northcote. Bastings became Northcote's first Mayor. He was also to serve as Mayor in 1899/1900.

Bastings, a member of the Order of the Rechabites, was a strong advocate for development in Northcote, whilst other Northcote strongman George Plant was a publican and passionate defender of Northcote's most noxious industry, the meat industry. It must have led to some interesting Council meetings.

During the land boom of the 1880s Bastings opened a real estate agency. The land crash came in 1888, only one year after Bastings had opened his agency. Nevertheless by merging with fellow real estate agent Stott, he was able to stay in business when most of his competitors went broke.

During the last years of Bastings time as Councillor the Council was beset by in fighting, nevertheless when he retired shortly before his death in 1909 Bastings had served as a local government representative for nearly 45 years, a unique record. Amongst his achievements



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were serving three terms as Shire President of Jika Jika, and two terms as Mayor of Northcote. Edwin's son Harold, followed his father into local politics, becoming Mayor of Northcote in his own right in 1911/12.