

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

JOHN WATTS

Reminiscences, 1901

Reel M680

**Mrs A.T. Peppercorn
Bendrose Grange Cottage
Amersham Common
Buckinghamshire**

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Filmed: 1958

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

John Watts (1821-1902), the son of a doctor, was born in Frampton-upon-Severn, Gloucestershire. He worked as a farmer and blacksmith, before emigrating to South Australia in 1840. He returned to England in 1843. In 1847 he again sailed to Australia and settled in Queensland. He worked as the manager on two sheep stations in the Darling Downs owned by Charles Mallard, 'Budgelaing' and 'Felton Downs'. By 1856 he was working for Arthur Hodgson at 'Eton Vale' and subsequently entered into a partnership with Hodgson.

Watts had a relatively brief career in Queensland politics. In May 1860 he was elected to the first Parliament as the member for Drayton and Toowoomba. He resigned in July 1862. His wife died in 1863 while he was visiting England. On his return, he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council in April 1864, but resigned on 31 October on his election to the Legislative Assembly as the member for the Western Downs. On 21 July 1866 Watts was appointed minister for Lands and Public Works in the caretaker Herbert Government. When Arthur Macalister returned to power on 7 August 1866, he made Watts was Minister for Public Works. Watts resigned on 3 in May 1867.

Watts sold his share of 'Eton Vale' and returned to England in 1868. He re-married and he and his wife lived at Norton Court, Gloucestershire. He died at Wimborne, Dorset, in 1902.

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Reminiscences of John Watts, written in 1901 when he was aged 80 and living in retirement in England, mainly dealing with his life in Queensland in 1847-68. (typescript)

The reminiscences refer briefly to his childhood in Gloucestershire, before describing his voyage to South Australia in 1840, his work on a farm at Mount Barker, later employment with the contractor of the government wood supply in Adelaide, and the return voyage via Cape Horn in 1843. The main part of the manuscript begins with Watts's voyage to Sydney in 1847, his impressions of Brisbane, and his work managing stations on the Darling Downs. Initially working for Charles Mallard on 'Budgelaing', he refers in some detail to sheep farming, moving sheep and cattle between stations, the erection of huts, floods, relations with Aborigines, the Native Mounter Police and murders of Aborigines, boundary disputes, and his work and partnership with Arthur Hodgson at 'Eton Vale'. The last part begins with the formation of Queensland as a separate colony in 1859, and continues with the election of Watts to the first Parliament, his illness and return to England in 1863, his travels in Europe with Hodgson and Sir Daniel Cooper, the death of his wife, his appointment to the Legislative Council and election to the Legislative Assembly in 1864, problems faced as Minister for Works in relation to the management of the railways, the opening of the first railway to the Darling Downs, his resignation from Parliament and return to England. At the end are some general reflections about his life in Queensland and the development of the colony since 1847.

On page 83 Watts referred to George Dalrymple as being premier when Watts was briefly minister for Lands and Public Works in 1866. In fact, Robert Herbert was the caretaker premier.

Scattered through the text are a number of photographs, the subjects including bush scenes, farms, 'Eton Vale', Brisbane, Drayton, Toowoomba, Watts and his first wife, Sir Arthur and Lady Hodgson, Sir George and Lady Bowen, and the garden at 'Norton Court'. The reproductions are extremely poor.

Note: The manuscript was filmed from right to left on the reel.