

At the Archives



BY WAYNE DOUBLEDAY

Doctor of high note

DOCTOR Egbert Florance, a well-known and highly esteemed member of the Cootamundra community, spent 25 years looking after the health concerns of the residents of his adopted district. He arrived in Cootamundra about 1893 and practised there until his death in 1928 at the age of 84 years.

The Early Years

DR EGBERT Florance was the son of Dr William Florance who was medical officer for the Chester and Hollyhead Railway Company in England. Dr William Florance, a surgeon, gained his qualifications through the Local Supervisory Authority, London in 1825. William emigrated from London to Australia and arrived in Melbourne aboard the "California" in October 1853.

Egbert Harrall Florance was born in Chester, England, on March 19, 1845. Egbert and his seven siblings arrived in Geelong with their mother Eliza aboard "Maria Hay" on August 17, 1855, two years after his father arrived in Victoria.

Off to New Zealand

WITH very few possessions, the clothes he was wearing and one shilling in his pocket, Egbert began his life's adventures in 1861, at the age of 16 years, by stowing away on "The Sea Nymph", a small brig moored at the wharf on the Yarra River. The brig was carrying a cargo of sheep and horses and was headed for Dunedin, New Zealand.

In July 1862, Egbert embarked on the sailing ship "Abbot Laurence" and went back to Melbourne where he stayed for about six weeks before boarding the "Ackrington" with about 1000 gold diggers heading for the goldfields in New Zealand.

Egbert had many and varied experiences in New Zealand including tending sheep, panning for gold and labouring in Dunedin; he even guided a party of four Melbourne men to the goldfield and assisted in teaching them how to exist and survive in the relative isolation, which he had learnt the year before.

It could be said that Egbert began his medical career when he billeted with Dr W Jackson, who knew his parents in Melbourne. Prior to a 50-bed wooden hospital being built in



HIGHLY REGARDED: Doctor Egbert Florance (1845 to 1928) was born in England and immigrated to Australia as a boy. He participated in the New Zealand gold rush and the Maori Wars. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1884 and finally settled in Cootamundra, where he spent the last 34 years of his life as the local doctor. (The original photograph is held by the University of Pennsylvania Archives.)

1863, Dr Jackson started a tent hospital, the first in Dunstan in the Otago Region of New Zealand. Egbert looked after patients and assisted in all sorts of operations.

In 1863, Egbert with two of his friends, Mark Mansfield and Bob Hatton, volunteered to join up during the Maori War and were appointed to the 3rd Regiment, Waikato Militia, Company No.8. In 1864, Cambridge on the Waikato River was founded and Egbert remained seventeen months before he resigned from the regiment having taken part in a number of confrontations with the Maori people.

Back to Australia

IT IS unknown exactly when Egbert returned to Australia; however, he married Leila Gertrude Paton in 1874 at Geelong, Victoria and went to Avenal, the first of many places where he practised professionally.

The Victorian Gazette

Pharmaceutical List revealed that Dr Egbert Florance was listed as being registered on May 13, 1877 (Certificate No.134) and was in business in Victoria before October 1, 1876. From 1876 to 1878, Egbert was a dentist and chemist, as well as a doctor, when needed at the Mooropna Hospital, Victoria, where his nephew became the medical superintendent.

The Shepparton News, December 9, 1918, stated that "Dr Egbert Florance in those far back days, must be a man of more than ordinary versatility, initiative and resolution by the use he has made of his life".

In 1878, Egbert left Mooropna and selected land at Kalamalite, but that venture did not work out so he decided to move once again.

United States of America

IN ABOUT 1881, Egbert and his family went to the United States where

he enrolled in the School of Medicine at Pennsylvania University. He graduated as a doctor of medicine on May 1, 1884, with an honourable mention, having written a thesis on snake bite.

After graduation, Egbert with his wife and four small children were travelling by train across America, looking for work, and when there was a stopover at Remo, he went for a walk into the town.

He inquired at the real estate agency if there was an opening for a doctor and was told that their doctor had died the day before. He said he would go back to the train to tell his wife but that caused great concern as they could not have a lady in town, the late doctor having been shot and the one before dying in a similar way only a short time beforehand. Egbert rejoined the train and they went on to San Francisco.

Australia Once Again

ON RETURNING to Australia, Egbert practised in south-eastern NSW in Bungendore (1884), Cooma (1885 to 1887), Bungendore again (May 1888 to 1890), and Braidwood (1890 to 1893). He went to practise in Cootamundra from 1893 until 1928.

Dr Egbert Florance was a community man and believed in everything that made a better life. He loved art, literature and music; he was a sporting enthusiast, rifle shooting being one of his many interests.

Dr Florance led an interesting life and the stories he had to tell of his exploits and of the people he met along the journey are detailed in his memoirs, which are held at the CSU Regional Archives in the Florance Family Collection.

— Compiled by June Dietrich

References: The Florance Family Collection (CSURA, RW253/1); the Australian Medical Pioneers Index; Ancestry.com; the Victorian Gazette Pharmaceutical List; *The Shepparton News*, December 9, 1918; University of Pennsylvania, Catalogue and Announcements, 1884 to 1885; NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages; Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 15, 1928.

The CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of the month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours.

The next Saturday opening will be on July 5 from 10am to 3pm.

INFO

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.

Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

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