

Observer (Adelaide, SA : 1905 - 1931)

Saturday 9 July 1927

WILCOX MOFFLIN LIMITED.

Mr. Sidney Wilcox's Retirement.

On June 30, 1927, Mr. Sidney Wilcox (Chairman of the Adelaide Board of Directors of Wilcox, Mofflin, Limited), the well known Australian firm of wool, skin, and hide merchants retired from the active life of the firm after 40 years association with it. "It has been a very happy, time," he remarked to a representative of The Register. "It was fairly hard work in the early days, but as we got our staff round us the load lightened; to-day we have-a remarkably good staff throughout Australia."



Mr. Wilcox who has resigned from the firm of Wilcox, Mofflin, Limited in 1927

He has had an interesting career. He is a son of the late Mr. George Wilcox, and towards the end of 1880 he obtained his first employment with a firm of grocers for a few months, after which he entered the services of the old Commercial-Bank of South Australia, in which he remained until 1887. He then went into the office of Messrs. George Wilcox & Co., and was the only clerk employed there at the time.

In 1893 he went to Sydney, and was managing partner there for about 12 years. After an absence abroad for two years Mr. Wilcox returned to Adelaide, and occupied, an office; alongside of Mr. Glen Legoe, and they proceeded to develop the big business from this end. Mr. Wilcox has pastoral interests, and owns Brenda Park, a beautiful property on the River Murray near Morgan, upon which he has expended a large amount of money. He is also a member of the firm of Hamilton & Wilcox, Limited, owners of Koonamore Station, and in future he will be located in the Adelaide office, of that company. Fond of mechanics as a hobby, Mr. Wilcox spends many pleasant hours in his elaborate workshop at his home at North Adelaide. His disposition to do good by stealth, has caused many people to be grateful to him for their advancement in life. With Mr. A. E. Hamilton he and his sister have rendered great practical assistance to the University of Adelaide in the establishment of a reserve at Koonamore Station to enable research in the preservation of native flora to be carried out.

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A Farewell Dinner.

Members-of the Adelaide staffs of the firm recently gave Mr. Wilcox a farewell dinner at the Cathedral Hotel; North Adelaide.

There were 38 people present, and Mr. Glen Legoe, who presided, proposed the toast of "Our guest," and referred in eulogistic terms to his pleasant business association, extending over 38 years with Mr. Wilcox. Mr. Legoe's remarks were supported by Messrs. T. Phelps, A. E. Rosman, W. B. Holt, and B. K. Simpson.

In behalf of the staff, Mr. Phelps made a presentation to Mr. Wilcox, and expressed the hope that he would enjoy his retirement for many years. Musical items were given by Misses, Atwell and Drummond and Messrs. A. G. Woods and A. E. Rosman.

Firm's Romantic History.

The firm of Wilcox, Mofflin, Limited, has become an important factor in the industrial life of Australia, due to the energy and foresight of the founders. The late Mr. George Wilcox (Mr. Sidney Wilcox's father) was born in 1838, and came to South Australia in the Admella in 1858. He proceeded to Gawler and opened a grocery business, merging in 1860 with his father's general store keeping business under the title of J. and G. Wilcox. In 1860 Mr. George Wilcox was buying wool, skins, gum bark, wheat, flour and gold, or rather taking these products in barter for stores and shipping them for sale to his father Joseph Wilcox, in England, where the proceeds were used to buy English goods for the store keeping business. Mr. George Wilcox was also interested in a small wool washing plant on the Para River, and in the sixties and early seventies in a boiling down plant, combined with soap and candle works. In 1872 Mr. George Wilcox sold out at Gawler and took his family back to England with the intention of living there, but returned to Adelaide in 1874, as he found the English climate too rigorous for him. From 1874 he intermittently bought wool, skins, and so on for shipment to England, and while actively engaged in handling these products he first came into contact in Melbourne with Mr. William Mofflin in 1876. From an historical point of view this meeting was a momentous one. Mr. William Mofflin had proceeded to Melbourne to take charge of a wool and produce brokering business, and after some acquaintance with Mr. George Wilcox he suggested a partnership, with the idea of entering into the export of wool, skins, and produce. The partnership was entered into, and the firm of William Mofflin and Co. established, and carried on until June, 1889. In 1888 a branch was opened in Sydney, and this was the beginning of a chain of offices and branches through out Australia. A few months later a branch was opened in Melbourne. In 1887 Mr. Sidney Wilcox entered the Adelaide branch.

Extension of Business.

In June, 1889, Mr. William Mofflin sold out his half-share of the partnership to Mr. Glen Legoe and Mr. Sidney Wilcox. Immediately after this sale Mr. Mofflin left for England with his wife and family, and upon his return rejoined Messrs. Kugelmann & Rickards, who had previously separated from William Mofflin and Co. The Wilcoxes established a Sydney office, and traded as George Wilcox and Co. and in 1894 the title of William Mofflin & Co. ceased to exist. In the same year Mr. George Wilcox retired, and gave his share of the business equally to his two sons, George Seabourne and Murray Wilcox, who had joined the Sydney staff. In 1900 Mr. Mofflin acquired Mr. Rickards's interest, and traded until 1908 as W. Mofflin & Co. In the same year he converted it into a limited liability company. In July, 1915, George Wilcox & Co was also converted into a limited liability company. From 1894 George Wilcox & Co. extended their interests, and opened branches at Brisbane, Bockhampton, and Townsville, and established agency relations in W.A. However, Mofflin, Rickards & Co. had been the first to pioneer the Queensland territory in Brisbane, and a

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little later Mr. L. M. Triggs was sent to pioneer further north, and had opened the Rockhampton and Townsville branches. The arrival of G. Wilcox and Co., on the scene in this territory led to intense rivalry between the two organizations. While on the one hand G. Seabourne Wilcox, by his bold buying had become known as the "king" of the trade, William Mofflin, sen., was handling deals of considerable size, in one instance involving the purchase of £175,000 worth of ox hides from the one source of supply.

Another instance of their business methods was the quiet buying during the Russo-Japanese war of opossum skins, which were practically a drug on the market at very low prices. G. Wilcox and Co., Limited, bought and bought until they had collected upwards of 1,750,000 skins on which they eventually made considerable profit when the revived demand set in.

A Big Amalgamation.

Prior to 1917 it had become apparent that if the resources of the two concerns were combined and merged into one company, not only would the business be more easy to conduct, but probably the combined facilities would lead to increased turnover, inasmuch as orders could be readily executed and any one of a number of centres used as an assembling point if circumstances demanded. These proposals were earnestly advocated, by Messrs. Glen Legoe and Sidney Wilcox, representing the Wilcox interests, and by Mr. L. M. Triggs. who had been brought back to Sydney as managing director of the Mofflin interests. After many interviews a satisfactory scheme was evolved which ultimately led to the amalgamation of the two concerns. Later on floated into the present company of Wilcox, Mofflin, Limited one of the biggest companies of its kind in the world. In addition the firm conducts the Border Preserving Works, founded by the late Mr. G. Wilcox, in 1900. and also the Adelaide Meat Stores, of which there are now more than a score in the metropolitan area.