

Brick business 1839-1985.

John Watts came to South Australia in 1836 and settled in the Hindmarsh area. In 1839 he turned his hand to brick-making and produced some of the first bricks in Hindmarsh.

In 1858 the family moved to Nairne and continued in the brick-making business. Joseph Samuel Watts joined the business by 1879. As industry increased in South Australia the demand was great for fire-bricks that could withstand intense heat. Bricks were provided to such companies as Wallaroo Mines, Cornwall Mines Association, Worthing Mines and Smelting Co and Scott's Creek Smelting Works.

Firebricks of all shapes and sizes were being produced for furnace linings, roasting furnaces, industrial chimneys, boiler furnaces, brick kilns, lime kilns, bakers' ovens, domestic stoves, the Gas works, and for merchants for resale.

Luke Watts started a brick-making business with John and Joseph Watts at Littlehampton around 1880. Luke became the brick-maker at Littlehampton in 1887 and Joseph was in charge of the Hutchinson Road factory at Nairne.

John Watts died in 1895 aged 80.

Joseph senior and his son Joseph registered their business as J Watts & Son in 1900. Upon the death of Joseph senior in 1913 Albert joined his brother in the company. In the 1930s Albert and Joseph's sons joined the business. In 1939 the business began producing bricks which could withstand higher temperatures. The demand for these firebricks became so large that for about 20 years few building bricks were produced.

Joseph Watts died in 1946 and Albert in 1954.

In the 1950s the brick-making plant was upgraded to meet the increasing demand. In the 1960s oil firing of the kilns was installed. Building bricks were produced again as the demand for firebricks declined, especially those used for lining the fire boxes of steam locomotives.

In the 1970s Reg, Hope, and Dave Watts retired from the business and Joseph and Ernest bought their share of the business, still trading as Watts & Sons. In 1981 the two formed a company known as the Traditional Brick Co Pty Ltd. In 1982 industry in South Australia was in decline, changes in insulation techniques led to the decline in the demand for firebricks and although there was still a demand for building bricks and pavers Joseph and Ernest decided to make the July kiln firing of 1983 the last burn. On 14 February 1985 the business was sold to Greg and Richard Timmins of Nairne.