
TAIT, John Taylor

PRG 796
Series List

John Taylor Tait was born in the Orkney Islands, Scotland, on 17 March 1852, second son of Peter Tait, carpenter and shipwright, and Margaret Inkster. He arrived in Geelong, Victoria, with his parents and brother James aboard the James T. Foord on 22 December 1852. Peter Tait set up as a boat builder in Geelong, a business carried on by his youngest son Robert after his death in 1899.

John Taylor Tait left Geelong in 1875 to begin his own career. He married a New Zealander, Sarah Annie Elliot in Melbourne on 26 January 1877, and the couple were living at Glanville, South Australia, in 1878. There was one child of this marriage, Harriet. Sarah Tait died in December 1879.

John Taylor Tait worked for some years as foreman for Baillie, Davis and Wishart and in 1882 won contracts on his own account building railway sheds at Aldgate and Hergott Springs, followed by a contract for the Jamestown railway station and Station Master's residence.

On 7 May 1885, he married Jessie Craig in Adelaide and with her moved to Port Pirie where seven children were born, Christina, Peter, Isabella, Margaret, Jessie, John and Jean.

Apart from wharf building contracts at Port Pirie and elsewhere, John Taylor Tait established a boat building business and operated a cutter, Maggie. In 1895 he built additions to Semaphore Railway Station and to Petersburg station in 1896. Subsequently he and his brother Will, with whom he had replaced Geelong's Prince Albert Bridge in 1889, travelled to Western Australia where they erected poppet heads and winding gear for the Great Boulder Mine.

Jessie Tait died in 1899. John Taylor Tait won tenders for construction of the BHP company's jetty at False Bay in 1900 the Murat Bay screw pile jetty in 1902 and additions to Port Broughton jetty in 1903 before he moved briefly to Middle Park, Victoria, in 1903. In 1905 John Taylor Tait worked in Broken Hill. Railway contracts at Petersburg, Port Lincoln and Outer Harbour followed.

Between 1903 and 1909 John Taylor Tait and his brother Will undertook a considerable number of works on Kangaroo Island including extensions to Hog Bay jetty, a new jetty at Kingscote and the St Alban's lighthouse tower. The brothers raised the Point Lowly lighthouse in Spencer Gulf in 1909. John Taylor Tait then executed extensive works at Mile End Railway.

His last public works consisted of a wharf at Osborne in 1919, the Haycock jetty at Normanville in 1921 and finally the ferry point landing at Tailem Bend in 1924. John Taylor Tait died at the home he had built at Seaton Park on 16 December 1937. Amongst his sporting and community interests were the Grange Dinghy Club of which he was patron and the Seaton Park Tennis Club of which he was president. He also endowed a small library at Seaton Park.

The papers comprising Private Record Group 796 were donated to the Mortlock Library in 1988 by Mrs Vivien Counsell, granddaughter of John Taylor Tait. Series 2 - 5 have been arranged and the contents numbered by Mrs Counsell whose History of John Taylor Tait provides a more extensive account of his career and includes a list of contracts undertaken by him and members of his family. Marginal annotations by Mrs Counsell with F, D and P prefixes relate to items in series 2, 3 and 4.

Source:

Counsell, Vivien Mary. History of John Taylor Tait, a Pioneer Builder, 1988. PRG 796/1.

R.N.A., December 1988.

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| History of John Taylor Tait, a Pioneer Builder
by Vivien Counsell.
1988. 18p. Typescript. | <u>1</u> |
| Scrapbook
1850 - 1987. 1 volume. Typescript, printed and electrostatic
copies.
[Arranged by Vivien Counsell F1-F35.
Contains photographs, certificates of births, deaths and marriage
registration, character testimonials, family photographs,
photographs of sketches and photographs of works
undertaken by John Taylor Tait.] | <u>2</u> |
| 'Documents'
1891 - 1987. 5 cm. Manuscript, typescript, printed and
electrostatic copies.
[Arranged by Vivien Counsell D1-D19.
Cover title documents. Comprises letters relating to Tait family
history, pamphlets and copies of contracts for works undertaken
by John Taylor Tait, will and accounts in the estate of John Taylor
Tait and Tait family tree.] | <u>3</u> |
| Photographs
ca.1889 - 1937. 27 items.
[Arranged by Vivien Counsell P1-P12.
Comprises Tait, Farquhar and Mackey family photographs
together with 14 stereographs and two photographic prints of Great
Boulder Mine and other Western Australian views.
SEE SPECIAL LIST. See also series 2, 7 and 8.] | <u>4</u> |

Map	<u>5</u>
1977. 1 item. Printed. [Arranged by Vivien Counsell MI. Comprises Department of Marine and Harbors map of jetties and lights on which features relating to works of John Taylor Tait have been highlighted by Vivien Counsell.]	
In memoriam cards.	<u>6</u>
1870 - 1895. 5 items. Printed. [Comprises card in memoriam James and Betsy Taylor 1864 and 1870, James Taylor 1874, Ann Taylor 1887, Malcolm Taylor Gray 1893 and James Johnston 1895 printed in New Zealand and in Scotland.]	
Ambrotypes	<u>7</u>
ca.1860. 2 items.	
Portrait albums.	<u>8</u>
ca.1870 – 83. 3 volumes. [Includes Taylor, Elliot and Tait portrait photographs. Volume 3 is inscribed "To Jessie Craig a Christmas present from her affectionate brother George 25.12.83"]	
Architectural plan.	<u>9</u>
1913. 1 item. Manuscript [Comprises ground plan and elevation for house of timber and iron construction built by John Taylor Tait as his family home at Grangeville.]	