

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE ARCHIVES

NAME OF COLLECTION: Pitt, Henry Arthur

ACCESSION NO: 95/132

CATEGORY: Other, individuals
ACTIVITY:

DATE RANGE: 1904 - 1995

SIZE OF COLLECTION: 8 cms (one small archive box)

DATE OF TRANSFER: c. 1995

ACCESS CONDITIONS: Open

HISTORICAL NOTE: Born in Colac on 20 January 1872, Henry Arthur Pitt was the fifth of eight children of Mark and Kate Pitt. Mark Pitt, a rural school teacher and the main educational influence on Henry, died in 1889. The financial repercussions of his death forced Henry to abandon his plans to study law. Moving to Melbourne, he entered the Victorian Public Service, thereby gaining an income enabling him to support his younger twin brothers through school and university. On April 5, 1899 he married Gertrude Augusta "Plum" Buxton, eldest daughter of J.R. Buxton, the South Melbourne real estate agent. Gertrude and Henry had four children, Lorna, Kathleen, John and Kevin. Having worked for ten years as clerk of courts in Omeo, Henry was, in 1909, promoted to the State Treasury. Studying accountancy in his spare time, he progressed steadily through the Department's ranks. His hard work was rewarded in 1914 with a trip to London to assist the Victorian Agent-General. In 1916 he was appointed Manager of the Australian Wheat Board, a position he held until 1922, and in the following year was made Under Treasurer of Victoria, later to be re-titled, Director of Finance. For a brief period in 1927 Pitt returned to London, this time serving as Agent-General for Victoria. In 1935 he was appointed to the Royal Commission into Australia's 'monetary and financial systems', and on 1 September 1937, he retired from the Public Service. Remaining active long after his retirement, Pitt became a partner in the stockbroking firm of Ian Potter & Co. and continued his work as the President of the Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria (1937 - 1955) and Vice-President of the Lawn Tennis Association of Australia. He also became a member and later Chairman of the board of directors of Georges Ltd., served on finance committees of the Royal Children's Hospital and University College and, during World War II, was Chairman of the War Workers' Housing Trust. On 3 August, 1955, Henry Arthur Pitt, C.M.G., O.B.E. died aged 83.

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NOTE ON COLLECTIONS: While small (occupying only one archive box) and sadly incomplete, this collection provides a sketch of an important public life; one involved in making nationally significant economic decisions during the Great Depression. It also affords researchers an insight into the family history of Kathleen Fitzpatrick (H.A. Pitt's daughter), whose papers also reside at Melbourne University Archives, and forms an interesting link with the Archives' J.R. Buxton Pty Ltd collection.

LISTED BY: Roger Averill
DATE: 12 January 1996

SERIES 1

CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence divides into four roughly distinct subject areas. The first relates to Pitt's time as Director of Finance of the State of Victoria, the second to his efforts during World War II, the third to his involvement with the Lawn Tennis Associations of Victoria & Australia, and the fourth with miscellaneous activities.

1/1 Director of Finance Correspondence

N.B. Unfortunately there is only one surviving letter written during the time Pitt was Director of Finance for Victoria.

1/1/1

1931

Addressed to 'Dear Bubbles', who was living in London but was about to move to Milan, the bulk of the letter forms an account of Pitt's involvement in a Canberra meeting of State Treasurers and their top officials. Due to present a report to the Commonwealth on the state of the country's economy, there was much debate as to whether it should be limited to statistics or could include more interpretative analysis and policy suggestions. Pitt argued for the expanded version and describes how he manipulated the situation to eventually succeed in having the policy suggestions presented. In the course of the letter he mentions national figures such as Hogan, Lang, Theodore and Scullin, who he describes as 'a bit of a fathead'.

1/2 World War II Correspondence

These letters all relate to Pitt's repeated offer to donate money and services to the war effort. The outward letters are in the form of pink, carbon copies, while the inward ones are either typed or handwritten originals.

1/2/1

Outward World War II Correspondence

1/2/1/1

21 June 1940

Addressed to The Right Honourable R.G. Menzies, P.C.

Pitt offers to volunteer his services to war effort and outlines his credentials as follows - Manager of the Australian Wheat Board during W.W.I; ex-Director of Finance, Victoria; Chairman of Directors of 'prosperous trading Company'; and Director of proprietary Company.

1/2/1/2

19 June 1941

Addressed to The Right Honourable R.G. Menzies, P.M.

Pitt suggests the retirement age for men should be extended from 60 to 65, so as to fully utilise available manpower for the war effort. 'The modern man is as hale and hearty at 65 as his predecessor was at 60 . . .'

- 1/2/1/3** 27 June 1944
Addressed to The Honourable J.B. Chifley, Treasurer
- A note from Pitt to accompany a cheque for 500 pounds, 'towards cost of prosecuting war'.
- 1/2/2** Inward World War II Correspondence
- NB. The following letters are addressed to H.A. Pitt Esq. Ian Potter & Co.
360 Collins Street, Melbourne.
- 1/2/2/1** 25 June 1940
From R.G. Menzies (Prime Minister), acknowledging Pitt's offer to volunteer his services to the Commonwealth.
- 1/2/2/2** 7 November 1940
From J.B. Chifley (Treasurer), thanking Pitt for his letter of congratulation (not in Collection). Chifley also refers to Pitt's appointment to the Power Alcohol Committee and briefly discusses the beauty of begonias.
- 1/2/2/3** 18 June 1942
From J.B. Chifley (Treasurer), in recognition of Pitt's donation of 500 pounds 'to help provide the necessary funds for financing the war'.
- 1/2/2/4** 1 July 1944
From J.B. Chifley (Treasurer), acknowledging another gift of 500 pounds towards the war effort. Official receipt attached.
- 1/2/2/5** 14 July 1945
From J.B. Chifley (Treasurer), apologising for not having earlier acknowledged another gift of 500 pounds.
- 1/2/2/6** Date Unknown
From A.W. Fadden (Treasurer), in recognition of Pitt's gift of 325 pounds towards 'the cost of the conduct of the war for one minute'.
- 1/2/2/7** 27 June 1946
Official receipt for 500 pounds, donated by Pitt 'towards cost of winning war'.
- 1/2/2/8** 10 July 1946
Handwritten note from J.B. Chifley (Prime Minister), thanking Pitt for his 'generous donation towards winning the war' and the help he had given the Government and Chifley personally 'in connection with the War Workers Housing Trust'.

1/3 Correspondence Relating to Tennis

This correspondence, both inward and outward, deals with matters concerning Pitt in his capacity as the President of the Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria (L.T.A.V.) and his representation of W.A. (despite not living there) on the National Council, i.e. L.T.A.A.

1/3/1

Outward Tennis Related Correspondence

1/3/1/1

18 December 1950
Addressed to Dr. Russell Kingman
New Jersey, U.S.A.

Pitt writes to reassure Kingman that the behaviour of Art Larsen, an American playing in the N.S.W. and Victorian State Championships, was not as bad as reported and should not jeopardise his chances of playing in the Davis Cup.

1/3/1/2

Date Unknown
Addressed to The Editor
"World Tennis"
New York, U.S.A.

Pitt writes to contradict Larsen's account of his experiences of playing in Australia. As with his letter to Kingman, he cites Larsen's war history as a reason for leniency, but confesses that his 'last trace of sympathy' vanished when he read Larsen's false account of events at the Australian Championships.

1/3/1/3

22 June 1954
Addressed to Judge Walker
President, Western Australian Lawn Tennis Association,
Perth, W.A.

Re appointment of State delegates to National Council of L.T.A.A., suggesting that he would not stand as W.A. representative.

1/3/1/4

29 September 1954
Addressed to Roy Youdale
L.T.A.A. Office of the London Representative, London

Pitt writes to explain his absence from the L.T.A.A. Council i.e. that it was no longer considered appropriate for a non-resident of W.A. to represent the State at the national level. He also mentions that his daughter, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 'the Professor' - is in Italy at the

present time. With a Carnegie Grant she went over to U.S.A. to do some literary work . . .'

1/3/2 Inward Tennis Related Correspondence

1/3/2/1 16 June 1954
From Judge J.L. Walker

Advising Pitt of the W.A.L.T.A.'s decision to 'as soon as possible procure that our delegates on the Council of the L.T.A.A. are persons now residing in Melbourne who formerly lived in, and were directly interested in Tennis as played in Western Australia . . .'

1/3/2/2 29 June 1954
From Roy Youdale - L.T.A.A. Office of the London Representative

This is the letter Pitt is responding to in 1/3/1/4. Youdale expresses his surprise at Pitt's absence from the L.T.A.A. Council and shares Sir Norman Brookes' (L.T.A.A. President) sentiments in congratulating him 'on long and outstanding service to tennis in Australia.'

1/3/2/3 23 July 1954
From Donald Ferguson

Re Pitt's resignation from L.T.A.A. Council.

1/4 Miscellaneous Correspondence

1/4/1 21 November 1947

Humorous letter from unknown (the signature is unclear) official of the Commonwealth Taxation Office, Melbourne, in response to Pitt's letter dated 12 November 1947 (not in Collection) that accompanied cheque for 8,857 pounds in taxation payments.

1/4/2 28 February 1952
From Pitt to W.T.W. Ballantyne
c/- United Kingdom Ministry of Supply

Re a 'transposition of photographs in *The Age*' in which a photo of Ballantyne was wrongly labelled as being of Pitt.

1/4/3 9 June 1952
From Pitt to The Secretary, Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board

Pitt complains about the conduct of conductresses and concludes 'that the public can only be safeguarded against the treatment I have referred to by replacing the girls by men . . .'

1/4/4 20 November 1952
From K.J. Binns (Under-Treasurer & State Commissioner of Taxes, Tasmania) to Pitt

Humorously disputes the claim made in an Ian Potter & Co. newsletter that, 'The rate of interest plays an important part in determining the volume of savings.'

1/4/5 27 November 1952
From Pitt to K.J. Binns

Playful response to Binns' 'outbreak', in which Pitt suggests he 'go down to the Derwent to shake off some of your pre-Adamite fallacies . . .'

SERIES 2

SPEECHES & REMINISCENCES

These pieces are not dated, but, with one exception, all appear to have been written by H.A. Pitt.

2/1 Two copies of a typed extract from 1931 letter addressed to 'Dear Bubbles' (see 1/1/1), beginning, 'On arriving at Canberra next morning . . .'

2/2 Typed transcript of a speech entitled, *The Straight Path*. The 'Straight Path', according to Pitt, is one along which protectionism is disbanded, the money market deregulated and the affairs of public utilities are conducted 'on business lines'.

2/3 Handwritten, self-deprecating reflection on Pitt's mediocre sporting history. Beginning as a straightforward first person narrative, it suddenly adopts the tone and form of a mock interview.

2/4 Handwritten transcript of a speech covering similar ground as 2/3, in which Pitt declares 'I think I can without boasting describe myself as a mediocrity of the first magnitude.'

2/5 *Memories That Bless*, a eulogy for Mark A. Pitt (Henry Arthur Pitt's father, see 5/1 for photo), written by one of his former school students.

SERIES 3

BUSINESS PAPERS

These documents can be divided into two distinct groups, the first relating to Pitt's association with the firm of Ian Potter & Co., the second to his deceased estate.

3/1 Papers Relating to Ian Potter & Co.

- 3/1/1 Handwritten draft of 'Memorandum of Terms of Proposed Partnership Arrangement between Mr H.A. Pitt and Mr W.I. Potter'.
- 3/1/2 Later, handwritten draft of partnership agreement between Pitt, Potter and James Hias McColl.
- 3/1/3 Typed 'Articles of Partnership', dated 1946, in which it is outlined that Potter owned four sevenths of the firm, McColl two sevenths, and Pitt one seventh. It also states that 'the business of the Firm is that of Stock and Shares brokers.'
- 3/1/4 'Memo of interview between Mr Phipps (a Senior Officer) and Mr Watling (Assessor) of Taxation Office Melbourne, and H.V. Sampson on Wednesday afternoon, 20th November, 1950.'

This document, written by H.V. Sampson and dated 30 Nov. 1950, details a meeting between Sampson and the Taxation Office, in which the status (i.e. private or public) of an unnamed company is discussed. The only obvious connection to Pitt is that 'the rise of the firm Ian Potter & Co.' is mentioned as an aside.

3/2 Papers Relating to H.A. Pitt's Deceased Estate.

H.A. Pitt's son, John A. Pitt, was executor to the Will and all correspondence relating to the Deceased Estate is addressed to him.

- 3/2/1 'Valuation for Probate of Freehold Properties in the Estate of the Late Mr. H.A. Pitt' made by J.R. Buxton & Co. 25 August 1955
- 3/2/2 Letter from R.R. Buxton (per J.R. Buxton & Co.) to John Pitt re H.A. Pitt Estate.
- 3/2/3 Updated valuation of properties in H.A. Pitt Estate, made by J.R. Buxton Pty Ltd.
8 March 1962
- 3/2/4 J.R. Buxton account and receipt for valuation fees
16 March 1962
- 3/2/5 Remittance of Dividend Withholding Tax Deductions Slips
30 June 1961 - 24 July 1962
- 3/2/6 The following letters were written by 'Bill' (H.A. Pitt's nephew) to John Pitt, and concern payments made to H.A. Pitt's Estate by Ida C. Fulton and Una Clara Mathew's Estates, for which Bill was executor.
- 3/2/6/1 26 November 1962
This letter originally accompanied a cheque for 400 pounds
- 3/2/6/2 9 April 1963

- 3/2/6/3** 15 January 1964
- 3/2/6/4** 20 December 1995
Letter and statement of administration of Ida Caroline Fulton's Will
- 3/2/7** The following documents refer to the subdivision and sale of 9 Campbell Street, Brighton, by John A. Pitt on behalf of the H.A. Pitt Estate. The original property was divided into two, with a maisonette built on the second Lot. Louis and Dorothy Homan bought the original 9 Campbell Street Lot, while G.D. Homan (friends, but not relatives of L.& D. Homan) bought the newly created 11 Campbell Street Lot. It appears that both properties were bought directly (i.e. without bank loans), the purchasers repaying loans from H.A. Pitt's Estate at a rate of 5% interest. The property was sold through the agency of J.R. Buxton Pty Ltd. (N.B. Henry Pitt's wife, Gertrude, was J.R. Buxton's daughter.)
- 3/2/7/1** Contract of Sale of 9 Campbell Street, Brighton
29 June 1963
- 3/2/7/2** Carbon copy of Statement of Adjustments re sale of 9 Campbell Street
4 July 1963
- 3/2/7/3** J.R. Buxton Pty Ltd Sales Account
29 June 1963
- 3/2/7/4** Ajax Insurance Co. Ltd. cover note for the building of a brick maisonette at 9 Campbell Street
4 August 1963
- 3/2/7/5** Carbon copies of letters (two on one page) written by J.A. Pitt to the Brighton Town Clerk and the Treasurer of M.M.B.W. notifying them of the sale of 9 Campbell Street
19 July 1963
- 3/2/7/6** Handwritten notes re the subdivision of 9 Campbell Street and another property in Furneaux Grove.
- 3/2/7/7** Further handwritten notes re sale of 9 Campbell Street
- 3/2/7/8** Letter from Brighton Town Clerk acknowledging receipt of J.A. Pitt's 19/7/63 letter (see 3/2/3/5)
24 July 1963
- 3/2/7/9** Letter from John Pitt to Louis & Dorothy Homan, stating adjustments of rates, tax and insurance
18 September 1963
- 3/2/7/10** Letter from Louis Homan to John Pitt, originally accompanying a cheque to cover the adjustment of rates, tax and insurance referred to in 3/2/3/9

14 October 1963

- 3/2/7/11** Letter from Virgil B. Gill, Kane & Co. (Barristers & Solicitors) to John Pitt re contracts and accompanying a Requisition of Title document
8 January 1964
- 3/2/7/12** Letter from Virgil B. Gill, Kane & Co. to John Pitt
21 January 1964
- 3/2/7/13** Carbon copy of a letter written by John Pitt in response to Virgil B. Gill, Kane & Co.'s 8 & 21 January 1963 letters (see 3/2/3/11)
5 February 1964
- 3/2/7/14** Letter from A.E. Cutler (Barrister & Solicitor) to John Pitt re the Homans' payment of the balance owing to H.A. Pitt's Estate
3 March 1965
- 3/2/7/15** John Pitt's reply to A.E. Cutler's 3 March letter (see 3/2/3/14)
4 March 1965
- 3/2/7/16** Letter from A.E. Cutler to John Pitt, accompanying Transfer document
5 March 1965
- 3/2/7/17** Letter from C.P. Allen (Registrar of Titles) informing John Pitt that 'the transfer will now proceed to registration.'
2 June 1965
- 3/2/7/18** Carbon copy of a caveat drawn up by Virgil B. Gill, Kane & Co. on behalf of Louis & Dorothy Homan
Date unknown

SERIES 4

PUBLICATIONS

Listed chronologically, these include Government papers dealing with the economic crisis of the early 1930s, clippings from newspapers reporting on events involving H.A. Pitt and obituaries.

- 4/1** *The Sun News-Pictorial* Saturday, 16 August, 1930
Clippings dealing with Sir Otto Niemeyer's meeting with Victoria's 'financial experts'
- 4/2** *Conference of Commonwealth & State Ministers - Proceedings & Decisions of Conference* 1931
Includes 'Report of Treasury Officers', co-authored by H.A. Pitt
- 4/3** *Operations in Victoria under the Premiers' Plan* 8 February 1933
- 4/4** *Royal Commission on Monetary & Banking Systems - Summary of Recommendations* 1937

- 4/5 *Bank of New South Wales - Circular*
28 March 1938
- 4/6 *The New Times - A weekly newspaper exposing the causes, the institutions, & the individuals that keep us poor in the midst of plenty*
17 September 1937
Letter to the Editor from Bruce H. Brown titled 'Exit of Mr. H. A. Pitt - Some Cruel Things', in which he criticises Pitt's de-inflationary, expenditure reduction policies
- 4/7 *The Australasian Insurance & Banking Record*
21 September 1937
Clipping re Pitt's retirement from the Victorian Civil Service
- 4/8 *Long Beach Press-Telegram*
13 July 1939
Clipping dealing with Davis Cup campaign between Australia and the Philippines
- 4/9 Clipping from *The Sun News-Pictorial*
3 October 1942
- 4/10 Clipping from *The Advertiser*, 23 March 1943, containing photograph of Pitt with other members of the Commonwealth War Workers' Housing Trust
- 4/11 'Lifetime to Lawn Tennis'
Obituary for H.A. Pitt and reproduction of E. Buckmaster portrait in Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria's *Annual Report & Financial Statement*, Year Ended 31 July 1955.
- 4/12 *The Patrician*
Obituary for H.A. Pitt in St. Patrick's College newspaper

SERIES 5

PHOTOGRAPHS & PHOTOCOPIES

N.B. The originals of the photocopied photographs are in the possession of Sheila Pitt, wife of the late John Pitt.

- 5/1 Photocopy of photograph of Mark Augustine Pitt
- 5/2 Photograph of H.A. Pitt as a young man
- 5/3 Photocopy of photograph of Gertrude Pitt (H.A. Pitt's wife). Inscribed, 'Gertrude (Plum) Augusta Pitt - nee Buxton, probably taken at time of her wedding.'
- 5/4 Photocopy of photograph of Gertrude Pitt with her daughter Lorna, taken at the Golden Age Hotel, Omeo. 1904

- 5/5 Photocopy of photograph of two men (the one on the left is probably H.A. Pitt) in front of Omeo Shire Hall
- 5/6 Black & white photograph of Henry & Gertrude Pitt and driving party, England. Note on back in part reads, 'For the dear kiddies. Taken at the old town of St. Albans . .' In a different, later hand, the card is dated 1914.
- 5/7 Photocopy of photograph of Henry & Gertrude Pitt. Inscribed, 'Mr & Mrs H.A. Pitt (Gertrude "Plum" Buxton). Taken in London in 1914 or 1915 when H.A. Pitt was acting Agent-General for Victoria.'
- 5/8 Photocopy of photograph of 'Bonleigh', Henry & Gertrude Pitt's house, 1920s.
- 5/9 Photocopy of photograph of H.A. Pitt's house in Omeo. This was taken long after he had left, as indicated by the fact that his son, John, as a young man, is posing in front of it.
- 5/10 Black & white photograph of H.A. Pitt and two other tennis officials (Pitt on left) standing on Centre Court, Wimbledon.
- 5/11 Printed reproduction of aerial photograph of Kooyong Tennis Stadium, Davis Cup Challenge Round, 1953.
- 5/12 Group, black & white photograph of three male (Pitt on far right) and nine female staff, possibly of Ian Potter & Co.
- 5/13 Black & white photograph of L.T.A.A. Committee Members (Pitt third from right) announcing tournament draw. Inscription reads, 'H.A., Thought you would like a copy. Hope you have completely recovered.' Signed, 'Harry'.
- 5/14 Black & white photograph (taken by photographer from *The Argus*) of people seated for dinner (Pitt left of only woman).
- 5/15 Black & white photograph of H.A. Pitt (on right) and other man standing.

SERIES 6

MISCELLANEOUS

N.B. Originals of the photocopied material are in the possession of Sheila Pitt.

- 6/1 Certificate from King George V appointing H.A. Pitt along with John Napier, Edwin Van-der-vord Nixon, Richard Mills, Ben Chifley & Joseph Abbott to the Royal Commission 'into the monetary and banking systems at present in operation in Australia.'
15 November 1935

- 6/2** Photocopy of transcript of R.N. Vroland's (President, Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria) address when dedicating the Southern Stand at Kooyong to the memory of H.A. Pitt and covering letter to Pitt's eldest daughter, Lorna Maneschi.
17 December 1957
- 6/3** Photocopy of a letter from Sheila Pitt to H.A. Pitt's daughters, Bat (Kathleen Fitzpatrick) and Lorna Maneschi, in which she describes her meeting the Queen and Duke at Kooyong.
28 February 1954
- 6/4** Photocopy of a magazine clipping showing Sheila Pitt and Lady Brookes at Kooyong on the occasion of meeting the Queen and Duke.
- 6/5** Photocopy of a biographical sketch of H.A. Pitt, written by his nephew, David Pitt. (**N.B.** This seems either to have informed, or been informed by, Andrew Lemon's entry on H.A. Pitt in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* [Vol.11]).

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