

Hocking, Sidney Edwin (1859–1935)

Sidney Edwin Hocking (1859-1935), newspaper proprietor, was born on 24 December 1859 at Nairne, South Australia, son of Nicholas Hocking, blacksmith, and his wife Sarah, née Shore. He arrived in Coolgardie 1893, and sent articles to the *Adelaide Advertiser* and *Register*, the Melbourne *Age* and *Argus* and the *West Australian*. With James MacCallum Smith, and later joined by his brother Percy, he floated a company to publish the weekly *Goldfields Courier*, which he edited, and the daily *Golden Age*. He also ran a stationer's and newsagent's business and speculated in town lots.

When the new Kalgoorlie goldfield began to drain the life from Coolgardie, Hocking inspected the fabulous 'Golden Mile' and decided that its future was assured. He and his partners sold the Coolgardie company and in August 1895 Hocking bought the weekly *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, founded by Mott Bros., the previous November. After buying an up-to-date plant, Hocking also launched the daily *Kalgoorlie Miner*. He temporarily employed (Sir) Hal Colebatch as editor and, in Adelaide, recruited (Sir) John Kirwan. In 1896 he launched Hocking & Co. Ltd with himself, Percy, another brother Ernest, Kirwan and their printer W. W. Willcock as shareholders. Hocking became mining editor, leaving the business management of the two papers and an associated stationery and job-printing house to Percy and the editorial management to Kirwan. When Percy died in 1900 Hocking took over the commercial side and Kirwan, when he became too deeply involved in politics, was replaced by Edward Hamilton Irving who managed the paper until his death in 1929.

Hocking shared a house with his sister Emma until his marriage on 15 August 1900 to 21-year-old Effie Fenn; they had eight children. For many years chairman of the Kalgoorlie Racing Club and president of the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Commerce, he was also almost permanent president of the Fresh Air League, which sent goldfields children for seaside holidays. He was an enthusiastic gardener, who is said to have planted the first of Kalgoorlie's many peppercorn trees, and in his later years he enjoyed golf. His reputation as a good boss was valuable in a town like Kalgoorlie, dominated by the democratic ethos; the accepted legend that he had never sacked a man was not true, but he was certainly remarkably lenient. In 1895, and from 1907, he served on the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council and was mayor in 1909-10. Modest and intensely domestic, however, he generally shunned the limelight. He left Kalgoorlie rarely and was only twice overseas, first in 1899, when he purchased modern newspaper plant, and in 1930 when he was a delegate to the Imperial Press Conference in London. In an endeavour to keep his newspapers unbiased he avoided political involvement.

In regards to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce, Sidney was on the Executive from 1901 to 1935 and President from 1919 to 1933. He was instrumental in establishing the Chamber's first premises and even loaned the Chamber some of the money for their first building, 226 Hannan Street, which the Chamber still owns today.

Hocking died on 29 January 1935 during a heat wave and was buried in Kalgoorlie cemetery. His estate, valued for probate at £54,769 in Western Australia and Victoria, was left to his family, all of whom survived him. Three of his sons became directors of Hocking & Co. Ltd.