**GRACE PARK AND THE NELL FAMILY**

Frederick Augustus Nell, born in Speier, Bavaria 5 October 1832 (3.3), landed in Melbourne in August 1853, passenger on the *Cartyne* from Liverpool. (1.1) Although described as “Merchant”, it appears that he worked as a teacher in the Victorian system from at least 1856, and probably earlier. He is recorded as “Acting” from 13 October 1856 to 15 November 1857, and permanent from 1 April 1857 until his retirement on 10 December 1886. Official reports recorded him as being a very good teacher and good manager. (3.3) Letters to *The Age* in 1935 recalling his time at Carlton State School No.112 commented that the school was known as “Nell’s”, and that he was, as head master, ”a German with a wide knowledge and a broad humanity”. (5.17) Other comments were less complimentary; one pupil’s recollection was that they “floundered badly when F A Nell gave us dictation, for we could not understand his broken English, and were called ‘stupit tonkeys’ in consequence…” Minor misbehaviour was treated harshly. (5.18) Another quoted “An old verse: Mr Nell is a very good man, He tries to teach us all he can. To read and write, arithmetic; He never forgets to use the stick”. (5.19)

On his retirement he was presented with “a valuable pair of bronze statues, suitably inscribed…” after 33 years of service. (5.8) He was superannuated at £238.4.10 pa. after service of 29 years 7 months and 13 days. His average annual salary for the 3 years prior to retirement was £492.18.4. (3.3)

He married Jane Treeby, age 28, from Devonshire, in Castlemaine in 1853. (1.2) They had two children, John Frederic August Nell in 1854, who died the same year, (1.3) and Jane Treeby Nell in Moonee Ponds on 17 June 1856. (1.4) Her mother died in that year, possibly in childbirth.

In 1860, he married Grace Elder Pullar. (1.7) She died in 1877. They are not recorded as having children. Miss Pullar established her own school in Grattan Street Carlton in 1858, which was claimed to be the first school in Carlton. In 1861, Nell took charge as Head Teacher, and remained until his retirement in 1886. With more than 100 students in attendance at the wooden building, accommodation was inadequate, and Nell’s request for a new building was successful, and the Faraday Street school was completed in May 1874. (5.19) Examinations and prize-givings were noted (5.2, 5.6), it was one of the first “practising” schools, a night school functioned there during the 1870s. It closed in 1972, but the building still exists. (4.10)

He is recorded as living in Brunswick Road East Brunswick in 1866-68 ( (4.3, 5.1), and is listed together with Mrs Nell as Head Teachers living at Park Street Brunswick in 1869-71. In 1872-73 Frederick and Mrs Nell are listed as Head Master and Mistress at Carlton Common School, cnr. Faraday and Cardigan Streets Carlton, living in High Street. From 1875-82 and 1884-86, he was listed as Head Master or Teacher at State School No.112, cnr Faraday and Cardigan Streets Carlton, residential addresses at 12 Eliza Terrace, Barry Street Carlton (1877) and 3 Elgin Street Carlton (1884-86). 1887-9 found him at 217 Cardigan Street Carlton, in a house which he had built and named “Bavaria House” (now demolished) (5.19) following his marriage to Emma Higgins in 1882. In 1889 they moved to Hampton Street Brighton, cnr Dendy Street, where he lived until his death 12 January 1908. (4.3) He is recorded as being a “Retired schoolmaster” in 1889. (2.1 )

He married Emma Higgins in St Kilda in 1882 (1.9) and they had 11 children, five of whom survived infancy. The eldest was Frederick Augustus James Nell, born in Carlton 1884, followed by Penelope Ida, 1887 (d. 1887); Dorothy Emilie Ida, 1890; Elsie Irene, 1891 (d. 1892); Theon Ernest Oscar, 1893; Stella, 1895; John, 1898; (d. 1898) Arthur Theophilus, 1889; (d. 1889); Janet, ?; Margarita Emma Isabel, 1896 (d. 1903); Edwin Arthur Richmond, 1901. (1.11)

Notices of family matters were recorded in newspapers: the marriage of Grace’s sister Jane at the Nell house in Brunswick in 1866 (their father was John Pullar of Dundee, Scotland) (5.1); the death of Mrs Weis, Nell’s youngest sister at Worms, Germany in 1865 (5.3), his father John at Speier aged 84 in 1881 (5.5) and his only brother Edward at Visalia, California in 1886. (5.7)

His eldest son, Frederick Augustus James Nell, who became a bank manager and was joint executor with his mother of Nell’s estate, married Marie Vera Gordon in a combined ceremony with her sister at “de Kerilleau”, the Gordon’s Wodonga grazing property in 1917. (5.15) Their two boys were featured in an article in *Table Talk* in 1927, while they were living in Millicent Ave. Toorak. (5.16) He died in October 1931 aged 46, following an operation, at the time being Manager of the Casino branch of the Union Bank of Australia, and formerly of Ayr. (5.21)

Nell senior appears to have been an active member of the Presbyterian church, being one of the trustees of the Erskine church in Carlton in the 1860s (5.4) and recorded as attending the jubilee celebrations of the Brunswick Presbyterian church in 1904 (5.14). While never living in the Greensborough area, he was nevertheless prominent in the Heidelberg Railway Extension League (Hon. Sec. in 1888) (5.9) and offered six acres of Grace Park land free for one of the rail routes under consideration (which would have by-passed Greensborough!). After moving to Brighton, he was noted as attending the Mayoress’ “At Home” at Brighton Town Hall in November 1900. (5.12)

Secondary sources state that in 1877 he purchased 682 acres of land from Crown Grantee John Brown, a Sydney investor who had bought large tracts of land at the first Port Philip land sale in Sydney 17 March 1838. While Brown does not appear as owner in Rate Books prior to the alleged sale, his ownership is verified in Parish Plans of the area. (3.5) Nell’s purchase would have been made under “Old Law”, i.e. prior to the introduction of the Torrens title system in 1862. An application was made for conversion of his title to the purchased land, which was registered in the Certificate detailed below.

Certificate of Title Vol. 2142 Fol. 343 is for 682 acres 2 roods and 21 perches being part of Crown Portion 17 at Greensborough Parish Shire of Keelbundora County of Bourke dated 15th June 1889 in the name of Frederick Augustus Nell of Hampton St Brighton Retired schoolmaster (2.1), describes the land which he named “Grace Park”, presumably after his second wife. This was not Nell’s only interest in land investment; Emma, F A J and F A Nell each applied unsuccessfully for 1280 acre lots in Timboon in 1903. (5.13) Emma also purchased some 18 acres west of Greensborough Road (then called Heidelberg Road) from the Australian Deposit and Mortgage Bank in 1903. (2.9) He is also noted as paying rates on “Fenced land, 666 acres, Allotments 5 & 6 Bundora, Prospect Hill Estate, Plenty River” (which was presumably an earlier name for Grace Park). (3.4) On Nell’s death 12 January 1908, Emma Nell and Frederick Augustus James Nell became executors of his estate. The Estate was valued for Probate at £8400.00 in Real Estate, and £223.6.9 in Personal Estate. (3.2) After Nell’s death, Emma moved to Kew, where she died in 1935. (1.10)

Transfers were made on 9 July 1914 to the Shire of Heidelberg and on 14 July 1914 to the Victorian Railway Commissioners of land in the vicinity of the current Watsonia Railway Station and Watsonia Road. Then followed a series of 27 transfers of residential allotments of various sizes commencing from 5 March 1915 to 12 September 1930, comprising most of the eastern part of the original holding.

The western part is the subject land of Certificate of Title Vol. 3857 Fol. 263, 377 acres one rood and 14 perches dated 24 December 1914 derived from the above title, now in the names of Emma Nell and Frederick Augustus James Nell as Joint proprietors. (2.2). Apart from a further transfer to the Victorian Railways Commissioner on 4 February 1926, and the creation of a number of easements, the whole of this land was transferred to John Donaldson of 456 Collins St. Melbourne, Director on 15 January 1920. A transfer was made from this on 4 May 1948 to His Majesty King George VI of approximately 20% of the land. This was probably in order to provide supplementary facilities, such as housing, to the newly formed Watsonia Barracks, located on land south of Yallambie Road acquired from Ainslie Meares. John Donaldson died on 8 May 1948, probate being granted to the Public Trustee, and a transfer of 287 acres 3 roods and 20 perches was made on 3 February 1949 to the Director of War Service Homes, becoming Certificate of Title Vol. 7232 Fol. 289. (2.6) This land, exclusive of an area bordered on the north by Nell St. and to the south by Nepean St. (formerly Arthur St.) now occupied by Greensborough College and formerly the site of Watsonia Technical School, was subdivided into 1029 residential lots plus easements between April 1955 and June 1982, the majority in the years 1958 and 1959.

It has been stated that Frank Watson purchased much of this land, now known as Watsonia, subdividing it and offering it for sale in 1924. To date, no documentation of Frank Watson’s landholdings has been found. What has become clear is that Watson was instrumental in petitioning the Railways Commissioners to build a station in between Macleod and Greensborough, and obtained agreement from them that they would proceed if £1300 was raised by landowners in the area to fund its construction. (4.6, 4.7) Watson and his associates Black and Donaldson were major contributors, and in fact the advertisement for the “Grace Park Station Estate” auction on 12 April 1924 of 64 residential allotments stated that £2200 had been raised. (4.8). Watson’s contribution to the development of the area was recognised by Heidelberg Council and the Railways by naming both the station and the district “Watsonia” after him. It seems that the 1924 auction, where blocks brought between £60 and £115 each, and a later one for the “Electric Station Estate” on 16 October 1926 (4.9) was of land owned by the Black Family, principally William Black. John Donaldson’s land, purchased as above, was never put up for auction, so it is clear that while the name of Nell’s “Grace Park” was used by developers to identify the general area, early development was only of land adjoining it.

*Peter Simmenauer gp&nell ` v.05 August 2016*

**Appendix 1: BDM Records (Victoria. Dept. of Justice and other doc. sources)**

* 1. Frederick Augustus Nell b. 1833 Bavaria (F John Nell M Marguerite Schiren) d. 12/01/1908 Hampton St. Brighton. RN 679

1.2 F A Nell m. Jane Treeby ag. 28 yr from Devonshire in Castlemaine 1853

1.3 John Frederic August Nell b. 1854 RN5977 d. 1854 RN5226

1.4 Jane Treeby Nell b. Moonee Ponds 17/06/1856 RN7014 d. 21/02/1919 Queenscliff Vic.

1.5 Jane Nell nee Treeby d. 1856. RN 3605 or 3281

1.6 J T Nell m. Charles Frederick Lethbridge Surgeon, Talbot Vic. 1884 RN5535

1.7 F A Nell m. Grace Elder Pullar (F John Pullar, M Jane Elder) 1860 RN 1776. (illegible)

1.8 Grace Nell d. 1877 RN665

1.9 F A Nell m. Emma Higgins ag. abt 26 (F Richmond Higgins M Sarah Hutton) in St Kilda 1882 RN2361

1.10 Emma Nell res. 54 Charles St. Kew (1919) d. Kew ag 79 1935 RN1259.

1.11 Issue of F A Nell and Emma Higgins:

* Frederick Augustus James b. 1884 Carlton Vic. RN8781. M. Marie Vera Gordon b. 1890?

Euroa (F George Gordon Grazier M Marie Home) at Wodonga 10/04/1917. RN3624 Occ. Bank Clerk/Accountant/Manager. Res. Brighton 1909, Alexandra Vic. 1917, Herbert Q 1922-30. d. 15/10/1931. Joint exec. With Emma Nell of F A Nell’s will.

* Margarita Emma Isabel b. Carlton 1896 RN8721 d. Brighton 1903 RN12495
* Stella b. Brighton 1895 RN1228 d. Preston ag 22 1917 RN702
* Penelope Ida b. Carlton 1887 RN26781 d. Carlton 1887 ag 5 wks RN12942
* Arthur Theophilus b. Brighton 1889 RN946 d. Brighton 1889.
* Janet n.d.
* Dorothy Emilie Ida b. Brighton 1890 RN10077 d. East Melbourne ag. 45, 1937. RN10967.
* Elsie Irene b. Brighton 1891 RN30427 d. Brighton 10wks 1892 RN770
* Theon Ernest Oscar b. Brighton 1893 RN10315 d. Heidelberg ag. 64, 1958. RN1081
* John b. Brighton b. 1898 RN16564 d. Brighton 1898 RN11031
* Edwin Arthur Richmond b. Brighton 1901 RN24829 d. Surrey Hills ag. 67, 1969. RN13536

**Appendix 2: Land title records (Land Victoria)**

2.1 Cert. of Title Vol. 2142 Fol. 343 Frederick Augustus Nell 15/06/1889

2.2 Cert. of Title Vol. 3857 Fol. 263 Emma Nell and Frederick Augustus James Nell 24/12/1914

2.3 Cert. of Title Vol. 4284 Fol. 610 Arthur Harold Marshall 17/12/1919

2.4 Cert. of Title Vol. 4690 Fol. 801 Frank John Howard 20/04/1923

2.5 Cert. of Title Vol. 5393 Fol. 590 Annie Florence Veness 3/05/1928

2.6 Cert. of Title Vol. 7232 Fol. 289 Director of War Service Houses 3/02/1949

2.7 Cert. of Title Vol. 9310 Fol. 300 …Shire of Diamond Valley 16/09/1977

2.8 Title Plan TP845272P 25/08/2004

2.9 Cert. of Title Vol. 2879 Fol. 610 Australian Deposit and Mortgage Bank Limited 1903.

**Appendix 3: Other archival records (PROV)**

3.1 *Unassisted Inward Passenger Lists to Victoria 1852-1923.* (MF049 004) Frederic Augustus Nell

3.2 *Victorian Wills Probate and Administration Records 1841-2013.* Frederick Augustus Nell. 8/06/1899. Occ. Victorian Pensioner, Education Department. Buried Melbourne General Cemetery 14/01/1908. Codicil 19/10/1905 appointed FAJ Nell as additional executor with Emma Nell, and added: “should my real estate, Grace Park, Shire of Heidelberg not produce sufficient income for maintenance of wife and children, trustees authorised to sell portion…”. Probate granted to Emma Nell and F A J Nell.

Deceased estate: Real estate eight thousand four hundred pounds, personal estate two hundred and fourteen pounds three shillings and fourpence. Assets: 682 acres pt. of Crown Portion 17 at Greensborough Parish of Keelbundora County of Bourke Vol. 3148 Fol. 343 Municipal value £8400. Personal estate incl. 2 head of cattle,, chaffcutter, wagonette, 16 harness and saddles. Total 8623.6.9. Will contents: personal estate (furniture etc.) left to widow Emma. Trustees to manage real estate until 1/1/1919 – rents to Emma. If she died before this date, proceeds to all children of their marriage in equal shares. Trustees may sell after 1/1/1919 and hold proceeds in trust for wife and children in equal shares.

3.3 *Teachers Record Book* (MF) entry 2738. (VPRS13718 MF)

3.4 *Greensborough Riding Rates Book 1885* (VPRS2870/P00000/1)

3.5 *Parish Plan Keelbundora County of Bourke* (K2856-2 Historic Plan VPRS 16171)

**Appendix 4: Other documentary sources**

4.1 *The Diamond Valley Story,* by Dianne H. Edwards. Shire of Diamond Valley, 1979.

4.2 *Cinderella in Suburbia*, by Dianne H. Edwards (Unedited ms. of 4.1)

4.3 *Sands & Kenny, Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory.*1860-1900.

4.4 *Watsonia 3087.* Only Melbourne, May 2016. (based on entry *Watsonia* by Jill Barnard in *Encyclopedia of Melbourne.* Cambridge UP, 2005)

4.5 *Watsonia, Victoria.* Wikipedia 13/04/2016

4.6 *The Time when three men owned Watsonia*. Diamond Valley News 29 September 1964 p. 28-30.

4.7 *Could we only walk a mile in their shoes*, by Rosalind Reseigh. Diamond Valley News 30 June 1978 p.2

4.8 Grace Park Station Estate, Grace Park auction notice *Herald,* 9 April 1924.

4.9 Electric Station Estate, Watsonia auction notice.

4.10 *Vision and realisation. Vol. 3 p.18*

**Appendix 5: News clippings**

5.1 *Marriage* of Patrick Whyte, head master of the Model Schools, Melbourne, to Jane, youngest daughter of John Pullar Esq., of Dundee Scotland. at the residence of F. A. Nell Esq. Brunswick *(Argus 13 June 1866)*

5.2 Examination of the Carlton Schools under the mastership of F. A. Nell took place on 19th inst., Rev. James Ballantyne presided. … vote of thanks to Mr and Mrs Nell …there are upwards of 500 children on the roll of the schools. *(Leader 28 December 1867)*

5.3 *Death* Weis on 18th October 1865? At Worms Germany, Mrs Weis, youngest sister of F. A. Nell of Brunswick. *(Argus 9 August 1869)*

5.4 Melbourne Presbytery monthly meeting at Scot’s Church … J. Ballantyne, clerk …approved of as trustees for Erskine Church …F. A. Nell. *(Age 7 April 18?)*

5.5 *Death* Nell on 28th December 1881 at Speier, Germany, John Nell, aged 84 years, the beloved father of F. A. Nell, of Carlton. *(Argus 24 February 1882)*

5.6 The Carlton State Schools seventh annual distribution of prizes at Melbourne Town Hall …No. 112, head master Mr. F. A. Nell *(Age 22 December 1883)*

5.7 *Death* Nell on the 25th August at Visalia, California, Edward Nell, only brother of F. A. Nell, aged 52 years? *(Argus 26 October 1886)*

5.8 Presentation of a valuable pair of bronze statues, suitably inscribed, was made to Mr. F. A. Nell, head teacher of the Carlton State School by the pupils and teachers of the school, on the occasion of his retiring from the profession after 33 years service… *(Age November 1886)*

5.9 Heidelberg Railway Extension League At meeting of 1th inst. F. A. Nell was one of 5 delegates from Greensborough League, to meet with Diamond Valley & Eltham, and was elected hon. Sec. for the Heidelberg Extension League. … leave question of route to the Railway authorities… *(Age March 1888)*

5.10 The Eltham Railway – ministerial visit of inspection of rival routes … F. A. Nell and the Greensborough Estates Company offered free land for a route passing through Grace Park paddocks half a mile distant from Greensborough township. *(Mercury and Weekly Courier 13 July 1900)*

5.11 The Mayoress “At Home” (Brighton Town Hall), November 1900. F. A. Nell present. *(Oakleigh Leader 1 December 1900)*

5.12 Heidelberg Council 29 May 1901. F. A. Nell urged acceptance of his offer of six acres of Grace Park free of charge for the Macleod-Eltham alternative route. *(Mercury and Weekly Courier 31 May 1901)*

5.13 Local Land Board 25th February 1903. Applications refused: Parish of Timboon F. A. J. Nell 1280 acres, allots. 16 and 17; F. A. Nell 1280 acres allots. 8 and 9; Emma Nell 1280 acres allots. 4 and 5. (*Bairnsdale Advertiser 28 February 1903)*

5.14 Brunswick Presbyterian Church Jubilee. Among many old members of the congregation present … F. A. Nell, one of the first school teachers… *(Coburg Leader 20 August 1904)*

5.15 *Marriage* Nell – Gordon and Richardson – Gordon 10th April 1917 at “de Kerillean” (sic), Wodonga. Frederick A. J. Nell, Bank, Alexandra to Marie Vera; also Robert Richardson Wodonga to Linda Mayhew, daughter of Mr and Mrs George Gordon, “Kerillean”, Wodonga. *(Punch 31 May 1917)* (NB. The property was named “de Kerilleau”, after a French nobleman who emigrated to Australia in 1794 and married a convict. The existing house was built by the Huon family in 1870)

5.16 “Attractive Portraits of Bonny Young Australians”… John and Pat the two sons of Mr and Mrs F. A. J. Nell , Millicent Ave Toorak. *(Table Talk 17 March 1927)*

5.17 Letter from “J. P.” Carlton Schools. …following death announcement for “the widow of Frederick A. Nell”. “State School No. 112 was fifty or sixty years ago always referred to as “Nell’s”. Mr. F. A. Nell was head master, a German with a wide knowledge and a broad humanity…” *(Age 2 March 1935)*

5.18 Letter from “Fair Play” recalling Nell’s school “… our average age being about 11, we often floundered badly when F. A. Nell gave us dictation, for we could not understand his broken English, and were called “stupit tonkeys” in consequence…” *(Age 30 March 1935)*

5.19 Letters from Geo. E. Winning: “My mother, Mary McAdam attended Mr Nell’s school, Faraday Street Carlton. She went to Miss Pullar’s school in Grattan Street, which was transferred to a wooden building in Faraday Street when she married Mr Nell, and they both conducted the school, which became known as “Nell’s”. From J. Pilbeam: quotes “The old verse “ Mr Nell is a very good man, He tries to teach us all he can. To read and write, arithmetic. He never forgets to use the stick.” And, “… he built a home (still standing) in Cardigan st. almost opposite Argyle square, and named it Bavaria House…” *(Age 1 March 1941)*

5.20 “F. A. Nell and Richard Sawers to be trustees of the land set apart for Presbyterian church purposes in Carlton…” (*Government Gazette 8 May 1869)*

5.21 *Death* Frederick A. J. Nell, aged 46, Manager of Casino branch of Union Bank of Australia, formerly Manager of Ayr branch, leaves a widow and two sons. *(Brisbane Courier 17 October 1931)*

Thanks to Peter van Eeken, who retrieved most of the above newspaper articles on the Nell Family and their activities from *Trove.*