

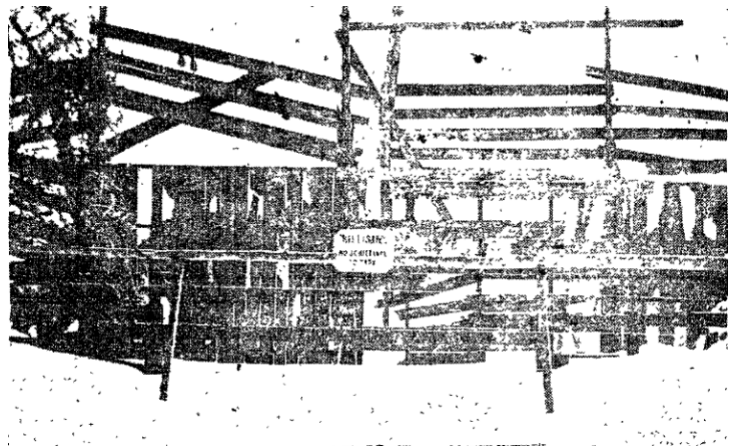


Earl of Ossipee Park

Building Lucknow

Plant's pursuit of a dream retirement estate in Moultonborough, NH caused problems with the locals. His disagreements with the Lee family were reported in February 1912 newspapers. The Lees' property fell right in the middle of his Ossipee Mountain Park parcels and they resisted selling at his offered price. A "spite fence"

was constructed – either at Plant's directive or on his behalf – which featured outrageous graffiti and hideous drawings to annoy the Lees and block their views of the lake and mountains. When the Lees finally sold, Plant burned down all remaining buildings in the park. He even attempted to remove the Lees' family cemetery, but gave this up when the Carroll County sheriff ordered him to do so. As these dramas played out in the press, Plant was sometimes referred to as the "Earl of Ossipee Park."



Probably inspired by previous landowners, the Plants opened their Lucknow Estate to the public in 1917. As in the Ossipee Mountain Park hotel era, tourists and locals could once again enjoy horse drawn carriage rides and nature walks on this beautiful mountain property. However, an incidence of vandalism resulted in the Plants closing the property to the public in 1922, which was reported in the media and probably further harmed Plant's reputation. Of course, the estate would provide jobs for a number of locals over the years and the Plants were not friendless despite the disagreements and negative press.

Spending Habits

Surprisingly, Thomas Plant had difficulty managing his personal finances in retirement despite his business acumen. He seems to have overindulged in philanthropy, investing, and spending in general. The construction of the Bald Peak Country Club on his property in 1920 may have struck the final blow – what was meant to be an investment turned out to be a financial failure (though the Club still exists and prospers today). By 1924, Lucknow was placed on the market for sale and Tom and Olive began to mortgage their property in parcels. Plant's great wealth had dissipated by the time he died in 1941, and, at that time, Lucknow went into foreclosure.



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What was Thomas Plant really like? Varying accounts assign him personality traits ranging from compassionate to callous.

Business

Plant's interest in the welfare of his shoe factory employees hints at a concern for the conditions of working men and women. His factory in Jamaica Plain, MA (seen at right) featured modern and efficient workspaces, as well as recreation and wellness facilities for employees. This was certainly a form of "welfare capitalism," most likely inspired by a desire for loyal staff and an efficiently run factory, but did benefit workers who wouldn't have received such treatment from other employers. For employees working in his home at Lucknow, work facilities and living quarters were above and beyond what many domestic servants could have expected in the early twentieth century.



Personal Life

Plant's failed marriage to first wife Caroline was widely reported in the media from 1910 to 1912. His infidelity with an employee spurred divorce proceedings, which were finalized in 1912. Tom and his second wife, Olive, were married in 1913 and appear to have had a much quieter relationship, without the turbulence and limelight of his first. Olive wrote in 1930 of her husband getting a "good deal of attention," while referring to the absence of children in their lives. There are very few photographs of the couple together, but relatives of Olive describe her as happy and content at Lucknow.



Olive Dewey Plant;
Thomas Plant's
second wife.

Philanthropy

Tom's charitable contribution to his home town of Bath, Maine, is also a part of his legacy. In memory of his parents, he created a home providing permanent living facilities, free of charge, for the elderly poor. The Plant Memorial Home still exists and serves the same mission today. The original portrait painting of Thomas Plant by artist Alphonse Jongers hangs in the Home's lobby.