

23-4-1887; Rees, 1945: 2). A report in 1905 (*The Pastoralists' Review*, 15-2-1905: 928) says that he had come along the Old Coast Track seventeen years earlier (ie., 1886 or 1887). During the late 1880s and the 1890s he was active in the Katherine races, both running horses and as an official (*Northern Territory Times*, 17-11-1888, 31-12-1888, 29-11-1899, 15-9-1893, 19-1-1894, 25-5-1894). He was one of the first to reach Willeroo homestead after the spearing of Scott in 1892 and he provided a graphic description of the scene (see entry for Willeroo). From 1899 to at least 1901, and possibly until 1903, he was working for Joe Bradshaw as head stockman on Bradshaw station (Log Book of Bradshaw's Run). In 1901 he took 100 head of cattle from Bradshaw for sale at Brocks Creek (*Northern Territory Times*, 7-9-1901, 4-10-1901). Also in that year he became a foundation member of the North Australia League (*Northern Territory Times*, 11-10-1901).

Early in 1904, on behalf of the Arafura Company (the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company), Palmer took delivery of Hodgson Downs station. Later he took delivery of Wollogorang station (*Northern Territory Times* 18-3-1904) and cattle from Hodgson, Wollogorang and Elsey were sent to stock Arafura (*Northern Territory Times*, 22-7-1904; 17-3-1905, 23-9-1904). One source states that he was sent from Arafura to take delivery of Wollogorang station (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-5-1914), but another says he rode across from Hodgson to take delivery (*Graziers' Review*, April 16 1929: 115). In July 1904 he sent a herd of 7000 Wollogorang cattle to Arafura (*Northern Territory Times*, 22-7-1904) and by January 1905 he was said to have delivered 18,000 cattle there (*Northern Territory Times*, 6-1-1905).

H. Anning, the manager of Wollogorang who had handed that station over to Palmer in 1904, wrote that:

Palmer was good company, and was considered the champion cribbage player of the Territory. He had a most peculiarly shaped head, something like a particularly long pine melon. There was quite a definite sharp ridge along the top, from which the hair fell away sharply on either side. The blacks had nicknamed him "Watermelon" which rather amused him. He told us quite freely that he had sold his head to the medico in Port Darwin – retaining a life interest, of course! (*Graziers' Review*, April 16, 1929: 116-17)

Anning also mentions a Victoria River Aboriginal woman working as a 'stockboy' for drover Jock McPhee who knew Palmer from his time on Bradshaw. On the morning that McPhee's team left Wollogorang with cattle, bound for Arafura, Anning says this woman called out to Palmer:

"Good-bye, Watermelon; ah, my poor old man – weentofuller altogether go away, leavem you behind. No good country this one Watermelon – more better Bigtoria Ribber (Victoria River). Good-by, Watermelon; poor old man Watermelon." Her voice kept rising higher and higher as we rode away, and quite affected my nerves, sounding like a death wail, but Palmer laughed heartily (*Graziers' Review*, May 16, 1929: 234).

The Arafura Company experienced financial difficulties in 1905 and Joe Bradshaw relinquished his position as General Manager (*Northern Territory Times*, 17-3-1905). Palmer probably lost his position too, because he and Joe arrived back at Bradshaw together