

## Title Deeds in history

The story of the man behind the L J Hooker real estate chain has been written by his granddaughter, Natalia Hooker.

While most Australians are familiar with the group and its "nobody does it better" slogan, very few know the man behind its foundation was actually Leslie Joseph "LJ" Tingyou.

His deed-poll name change to Hooker in 1925 was only revealed nine years after his death, in a 1985 article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* by my property editor predecessor, Michael Laurence.

The article's publication surprised even his long-term colleagues and closest friends.

Believing the story of her grandfather deserved to be told, Natalia spent six years researching

the project during visits from her home in Europe.

Sir Leslie Joseph Hooker was born in Canterbury, NSW, in 1903 and died in 1976.

His birth certificate lists only his mother, Ellen "Nellie" Tingyou.

The book, *LJ Hooker: The Man* suggests his father may have been a cabinetmaker, Harry Hookin, also known as Howe Hook Yin.

Natalia suggests Leslie, who was part-Chinese, was forced to hide his identity because of the White Australia policy.

His mother's 1884 birth certificate used the surname Harlet and at the time of her 1911 death her name was given as Ellen Hookin.

"One can presume that Hooker is an Anglicised version of Hookin," Natalia says.



Hidden heritage ... L J Hooker and wife Delzie at their family home in Mosman with their three children, David, Annette and Ross, their dog Sabrina and cat Mitzi.  
Photo: John Hearder, 1956