

Introduction

[The Spurling glass plates] document almost every phase of Tasmanian life ... they are of stunning artistic and technical quality. They comprise by far the largest surviving scenic photographic negative collection generated by any early Tasmanian studio.¹

The glass-plates referred to in the above quote were largely the work of Stephen Spurling 3rd. However, there were three generations of Stephen Spurling photographers in Tasmania, and their photography spanned almost a century – from the early 1840s to 1941. Stephen 1st (1821-1892) dabbled in photography as an amateur before establishing a studio in Hobart Town, specialising in portraiture. Two of his sons, Stephen 2nd (1847-1924) and Frederick (1850-1942) followed in his footsteps. Frederick established a photography business in Fingal and Stephen 2nd set up a studio in Launceston. Although Stephen 2nd concentrated on portraiture, he also undertook some landscape work. His son, Stephen 3rd (1876-1962) preferred landscape work and ventured into the wildest parts of Tasmania seeking subjects for his camera. Despite the wealth of Spurling images, there is no comprehensive account of the Spurlings and their contribution to Australian photography.²

The fact that there were three generations of Spurling photographers is unusual, but not unique. In 1854 American-born Townsend Duryea set up a photographic firm in Melbourne in partnership with Archibald McDonald. They were soon joined by Townsend's brother Sanford, and the firm subsequently established branches in Tasmania and Geelong. In 1855 the two brothers moved to Adelaide from where they built up a network of studios that would extend to four generations.³

¹ Dennis Hodgkinson (from an interview with Chris Long) 'Early photo bonanza!', *Northern Scene* (published by the *Mercury*), 27 October 1982, p. 6.

² My interest in the project was inspired by mother's stories of my grandfather, Stephen Spurling 3rd.

³ Jack Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia* (Melbourne, 1955) pp. 21, 31, 172-174; Marcel Safier, 'Duryea, Townsend (1823-1888) and Sandford (1833-1904)' in John Hannavy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of nineteenth-century photography*, v. 1 (New York, 2008) p. 457; Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940: A Directory* (Hobart, 1995) p. 44.

In 1858, John Haig founded a similar dynasty in Warwick, Queensland and in 1909 Ernest Winter founded a photography business in Burnie, Tasmania that would span three generations.⁴ However, probably the best-known multi-generation professional photographers are the Weston family in America. Edward Weston was an established pictorial photographer before he pioneered straight photography in the 1920s.⁵ His sons Brett and Cole, and grandsons Kim and Mark all continued the family tradition.⁶ While there are no books about either the Duryea, Haig or Winter families, Thomas Buchsteiner has written about the three generations of Weston photographers. His book contains a few short, explanatory chapters; a large section devoted to their images and concludes with some brief biographical details.⁷

This thesis will take a somewhat different approach. It will include biographical details on the three generations of Spurling photographers, an analysis of their photography, and an evaluation of the significance of their contributions. It will argue that most literature on Australian photography underestimates or fails to appreciate the historical and aesthetic value of the Spurlings' images. This thesis will also argue that for many decades, the Spurlings were at the forefront of photographic innovations in Tasmania. In particular, the aims of this thesis are:

1. To investigate how, when and why wilderness photography emerged as a photographic genre, with particular reference to the Tasmanian experience.
2. To provide biographical details on the three generations of Spurling photographers.
3. To demonstrate how, towards the end of the nineteenth century, a convergence of technological advances in photography, the desire to boost revenue through tourism

⁴ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 128; S Barrie, 'Haig, John' in Joan Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists: Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870* (Melbourne, 1992) p. 337; Email from Patricia Boxhall, Pioneer Village Museum, Burnie to Christine Burgess, 26 February 2008.

⁵ Michael R Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, 4th edition (Boston, 2007) p. 293; Robin Lenman, (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford, 2005) pp. 678-679.

⁶ Thomas Buchsteiner, *Edward, Cole, Kim Weston: three generations of American photography*, translations from German by Rhonda Farr and James Phillips (Switzerland, c. 1995) pp. 7-8, 14-19, 98-99.

⁷ Buchsteiner, *Edward, Cole, Kim Weston: three generations of American photography*.

and the advent of photomechanical printing techniques created optimum conditions for Tasmanian landscape photography to flourish.

4. To provide an outline of Stephen 3rd's most important expeditions and significant photographic works.

5. To provide contextual information and to analyse the issues behind the Spurlings' images.

6. To evaluate the Spurlings' contribution to the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania.

Literature review

From its inception, photography has inspired literature. Two years after Daguerre invented his process of producing likenesses in 1837, the French government released detailed manuals describing his procedure.⁸ Then in 1841, the geologist and photography enthusiast, Robert Hunt produced his volume, *A Popular Treatise on the Art of Photography, including daguerréotype*. This volume, along with his later work, *A Manual of Photography*,⁹ described not only Daguerre's invention, but also details on a number of other photographic processes.¹⁰ Such 'how to' manuals have been an important feature of literature on photography up until the present day.

However, photography has inspired a much wider range of literature. From the earliest days of mechanical image making the concept of being able to 'preserve a frozen moment of time in a single snapshot'¹¹ has captured the imagination of non-fiction and fiction writers. In 1838, a year after Daguerre's announcement, the author Charles Dickens referred to the invention in his novel, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*. In a scene where the characters discuss the merits of photography versus

⁸ Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 151-152; Arthur Goldsmith, *The Camera and its Images* (USA, 1979) p. 44; Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 1.

⁹ Robert Hunt, *A Popular Treatise on the Art of Photography, including daguerreotype* (Glasgow, 1841); Robert Hunt, *A Manual of Photography* (London, 1853).

¹⁰ John Werge, *The Evolution of Photography* (Salem, NH, 1973) pp. 131-133.

¹¹ Alan Pipes, *Foundations of art and design* (London, 2003) p. 116.

painting, he has an old woman exclaim, '[t]he man that invented the machine for taking likenesses might have known *that* would never succeed; it's a deal too honest'.¹² She was not quite as perceptive as she believed. Photographers and the public enthusiastically embraced the new process for portraiture and landscapes.

Since Dickens, a number of other fiction writers have used photography as a source of inspiration. For example, in 1865 the mathematician and amateur photographer, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, using the pseudonym Lewis Carroll, penned the children's classic *Alice in Wonderland*.¹³ The second part of his tale, *Through the Looking Glass*, explores the concepts of mirror images and inversion.¹⁴ These concepts, along with the concept of negative / positive (black becoming white and visa versa) fascinated early photographers, and according to his biographers, helped to inspire Dodgson.¹⁵ In the same book, the origins for Dodgson's character, the Mad Hatter, stem from the fact that in this era hatters (and early photographers) developed tremors and delusions due to their prolonged contact with mercury.¹⁶ Nearly a century and a half later this phenomenon inspired the American writer, Dominic Smith to pen his first novel, *The Mercury Visions of Louis Daguerre*.¹⁷ Other recent fiction writers inspired by photography include the English writer, Gail Jones, who in 2004 produced 'an extended meditation on photography that takes its haunting power and weaves it back into a story'.¹⁸ The following year Australian author Estelle Pinney used old photographs during research for her novel *House on the Hill*.¹⁹

¹² Charles Dickens, *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (London, 1968) p. 79.

¹³ Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, Martin Gardner (ed.), (England, 1970) pp. 9-11; Roger Taylor and Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll: photographer* (Princeton and Oxford, 2002) p. 112 (2); Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, pp. 179-180.

¹⁴ Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, pp. 180 -184.

¹⁵ Taylor and Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll: photographer*, p. 11; Terence Wright, *The photography handbook* (London, 2004) p. 116.

¹⁶ Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, p. 90; Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*, p. 106.

¹⁷ Dominic Smith, *The Mercury Visions of Louis Daguerre* (New York, 2006).

¹⁸ Gail Jones, *Sixty Lights* (London, 2004); James Bradley, 'Sixty Lights', *Age Review*, 21 August 2004, p. 4 c. 3-7.

¹⁹ Estelle Pinney, *House on the Hill* (Victoria, 2005); 'Estelle Pinney talks about ...' ReadersVoice.com, at <http://www.readersvoice.com/interviews/2004/April/130/>, 15/01/2008.

However, the output of works of fiction inspired by photography pales when compared to the many thousands of non-fiction books devoted to the subject. These books range from definitive tomes, such as *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*²⁰ and *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*,²¹ through to coffee table books of wilderness scenery and philosophical works such as Susan Sontag's *On Photography*.²² In addition, Weston Naef's examination of the emergence of landscape photography in the American west, provides interesting comparisons and background to the Australian experience.²³ Since photography has inspired such quantities and varieties of literature, this discussion concentrates on literature relating to photography in Australia. For ease of discussion, these writings will be considered in three categories: general discussions of Australian photography (including volumes relating to specific collections and articles), dictionaries of biography and directories, and books and articles relating to wilderness photography. Each of these categories will be discussed in terms of their contribution to recording the Spurling history.

General discussion of Australian photography, including volumes relating to specific collections and articles

It took some time for Australians to recognise the importance of their photographic heritage and record it for posterity.²⁴ Although some early photographers contributed to photography magazines and newspapers,²⁵ and others, such as John Watt Beattie recorded their memoirs,²⁶ when Jack Cato's autobiography, *I can take it*, was

²⁰ Lenman (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*.

²¹ Peres (ed.), *The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography*.

²² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Harmondsworth, England, 1977).

²³ Weston J Naef in collaboration with James N Wood, with an essay by Therese Thau Heyman, *Era of exploration: the rise of landscape photography in the American West, 1860-1885* (Buffalo, Boston, 1975) pp. 12-73.

²⁴ The lack of interest in the history of photography up until the 1930s and 40s was not unique to Australia. According to the author Mary Street Alinder, 'in 1931 few people in the entire world knew much of anything about the history of the medium'. Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: a biography* (New York, 1996) p. 80.

²⁵ For example, Paul Ricochet, 'Photography in Australia', *Photographic News*, no. 260, 28 August 1863; Paul Ricochet, 'Photography in Australia', *Photographic News*, no. 261, 4 September 1863.

²⁶ Referred to by Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 81.

published it was regarded as something of a watershed. Many years later, his son John recalled in an interview how photo-journalist David Moore ‘could not believe that in the 1940s a book by an Australian photographer on Australian photography could possibly even be considered for publication’.²⁷ Inspired by the success of his autobiography, Cato spent the next five years researching what would become the first history of Australian photography – *The Story of the Camera in Australia*.²⁸

When Jack Cato wrote his exposition on Australian photography in 1955, he included a section on all three Stephen Spurling photographers.²⁹ Cato was writing from his personal knowledge of the family. He knew the Spurlings in Launceston and, as a child, had his photograph taken by Stephen 2nd.³⁰ Cato probably also received some input directly from Stephen 3rd. The two men were living within one-hundred-and-sixty metres of each other in the Melbourne suburb of Elwood when Cato wrote his book.³¹ In addition, according to the senior curator of photography at the National Gallery of Australia Gael Newton, Cato also had access to Spurling family letters.³² Although the curator Richard Neville refers to Cato’s work as having an ‘overwhelming, and highly inaccurate, influence’, with a few minor exceptions, Cato’s account of the Spurling photographers has proved factual.³³

²⁷ Jack Cato, *I can take it: the autobiography of a photographer*, 2nd edition (Melbourne, 1949); Ewa Narkiewicz, ‘Jack Cato’s Melbourne: An interview with John Cato’, *La Trobe Journal*, no. 65, Autumn 2000, p. 27.

²⁸ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 1; Anne-Marie Willis, *Picturing Australia: a history of photography* (North Ryde, NSW, 1988) p. 255; Narkiewicz, ‘Jack Cato’s Melbourne’, p. 27.

²⁹ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 165-167.

³⁰ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 166; Stephen Spurling 2nd’s photograph of Jack Cato on his second birthday, opposite p. 64.

³¹ Stephen Spurling 3rd’s address was 32 Byrne Avenue, Elwood. Jack Cato’s address was 11 Bendigo Avenue, Elwood (*Sands and McDougall Directory of Melbourne*, 1955, State Library of Victoria). Stephen 3rd’s son, Ted Spurling, confirmed the pair knew each other when they were living in Elwood.

³² Gael Newton, ‘Keast Burke, A Story of the Story’, *Photofile*, v. 4, no. 1, Autumn 1986 (Paddington, NSW) p. 8.

³³ Richard Neville, ‘Review of Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940: A Directory*’, *Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History* (3 March 1997), at <http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/reviews/long.htm>, 20/04/2008, p. 1. Examples of minor errors include his recording of Stephen 1st’s business address as 75 Murray Street and the omission of the time Stephen 1st spent in the Convict Department. Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 165-166.

Cato clearly believed the quality of the Spurling photographs was worthy of recognition. He compares Stephen 1st's work favourably with well-known portrait photographers in Sydney and Melbourne, and records his award at the 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne. He uses words such as 'outstanding' and 'great reputation' to describe Stephen 2nd's achievements. Cato then outlines some of Stephen 3rd's more arduous journeys and photographic scoops. He leaves no doubt as to his opinion of the merits of Stephen 3rd's work, stating his images of Ben Lomond in winter were 'magnificent' and 'the best examples of alpine photography done in Australia'.³⁴ In 1986, Gael Newton described Cato's work as being in the 'narrative tradition of history for a general readership'.³⁵ Two years later photo-historian, Anne-Marie Willis voiced her concerns about his style and aim to 'form some kind of golden heritage for contemporary professional photographers'.³⁶ Certainly, in reading Cato's book, it becomes obvious he focussed on positives rather than negatives when describing the lives of Australia's early photographers. However, such considerations do not alter the fact that Cato included the Spurlings in his text, and that he believed in the quality of their photography.

During the fifty years following the publication of Cato's book there were very few mentions of the Spurlings in major descriptive works on Australian photography. In 1976, Allan Sierp made a brief reference to the Spurlings in his book on Tasmanian photography,³⁷ and the following decade Gael Newton referred to them in her writings. In addition to the example cited above, Newton also made a brief reference to Stephen 2nd in her book *Silver and Grey*, and, in *Shades of Light*, she referred to him in a footnote.³⁸

³⁴ Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, pp. 165-167.

³⁵ Newton, 'Keast Burke, A Story of the Story', p. 6.

³⁶ Willis, *Picturing Australia*, pp. 255-257.

³⁷ Allan Frederick Sierp, *Colonial Life in Tasmania: fifty years of photography 1855-1905* (Adelaide, 1976) p. 16.

³⁸ Gael Newton, *Silver and Grey: fifty years of Australian Photography, 1900-1950* (Australia, 1980) Biographical notes on Frederick Vaudry Robinson; Gael Newton, *Shades of Light, Photography and Australia 1839-1988*, (Canberra, 1988) p. 190.

The general dearth of information about the Spurlings in overviews of Australian photography changed in 2006 when the historian, Roslynn Haynes devoted a paragraph to Stephen 3rd in her book, *Tasmanian Visions*.³⁹ While Haynes' account provides a factual overview of Stephen 3rd's achievements,⁴⁰ she does not comment on the quality of his images directly. Instead, she describes how both John Watt Beattie and Stephen 3rd's photographs 'gave Tasmanians a sense of pride' in their island's scenery and encouraged tourism. By helping to expunge the convict stain associated with Van Diemen's Land, Tasmanians could 'take possession of their wild landscape psychologically if not physically'.⁴¹

It is open to speculation as to why, for so many years, various authors chose not to include the Spurlings, but invariably made some mention of Spurlings' contemporaries. For example, Anne-Marie Willis, who began researching her book, *Picturing Australia* in the late 1970s, does not mention the Spurlings. However, she does refer to several other Tasmanian photographers including the Anson Brothers, John Watt Beattie, Samuel Clifford and Frederick Vaudry Robinson.⁴² Similarly, Helen Ennis, who has written two books about the National Library of Australia's collection (hereafter NLA), does not include the Spurlings.⁴³ Yet, the NLA holds six albums featuring Spurling images, a selection of Spurling lantern slides, seven photographs and over 550 Spurling images copied from original glass-plates.⁴⁴ Like Willis, Ennis mentions several Spurling contemporaries including Anson Brothers,

³⁹ Roslynn D Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions: Landscapes in Writing, Art and Photography* (Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 2006) p. 166.

⁴⁰ However, Haynes appears to confuse Stephen 3rd's time on the west coast (in 1896) with a trip along the Mole Creek track (in 1898).

⁴¹ Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 166.

⁴² Willis, *Picturing Australia*, pp. vii, 58, 60-61, 75, 80-81, 86, 89, 132, 136, 179.

⁴³ Helen Ennis, *Intersections: Photography, History and the National Library of Australia* (Canberra, 2004); Helen Ennis, *In a New Light: Australian photography 1850s-1930s* (Canberra, 2003).

⁴⁴ See National Library of Australia, Spurling images, at

<http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/picturescatalogue;jsessionid=8139C0C128FA4390BB1CC43C07EE0948,03/02/2008>.

Beattie, Alfred Winter⁴⁵ and Charles Woolley.⁴⁶ Similarly, Alan Davies in *An Eye for Photography*, which focuses on the collection held by the State Library of New South Wales, does not refer to the Spurlings, but includes their contemporaries such as Beattie.⁴⁷ Again, the Mitchell Library/ State Library of New South Wales holds a number of Spurling images, including twenty-one Spurling lantern slides.⁴⁸ However, in his earlier book, *The Mechanical Eye in Australia*, written with Peter Stanbury, Davies does record the Spurlings in his list of professional photographers.⁴⁹

There are other omissions. To obtain his wilderness images, Stephen 3rd undertook a series of pioneering treks into the Tasmanian wilderness. However, in her investigation of bushwalking in Australia, historian Melissa Harper makes no mention of his achievements. Although she included John Watt Beattie, Nicholas Caire, John W Lindt, Charles Kerry and John Paine in her discussion on the impact of photographs as the ‘main visual stimulus to tourist travel’, once again the Spurlings fail to rate a mention.⁵⁰ The following year, researcher Marian Walker analysed the images that defined the evolution of Tasmanian tourism from 1803-1939. While she devotes considerable discussion to John Watt Beattie, she rarely mentions the Spurlings. Walker innovatively based her discussion around a series of themes used by Tasmanian authorities to attract tourists, and each chapter commences with a

⁴⁵ Alfred Winter and the previously mentioned Ernest Winter and his descendants were not related to each other. Between 1876-1886 Alfred Winter re-printed Stephen Spurling 1st images. See Chapter 2.

⁴⁶ Ennis, *Intersections*, pp. 64-65, 74-75, 85-87, 91-93; *Ennis, In a New Light*, pp. 10, 13, 19-20. By way of comparison, as of February 2008, the NLA held four Anson Brothers albums, three photographs and one poster; some 207 John Watt Beattie images; forty Alfred Winter photographs and two albums, and one Charles Woolley print and two photographs. It should be noted that many of the images attributed to Beattie may not have been actually taken by him. See discussion in Chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Alan Davies, *An Eye for Photography: The Camera in Australia* (Victoria, 2004) Foreword, pp. 64-65, 68, 80, 144-145.

⁴⁸ For example, Mitchell Library/ State Library of New South Wales (ML: Slides 17 Hill Collection 1-26); SPF/ Ben Lomond [3 images]; SPF/ Gordon River [4 images] plus Spurling portraits, souvenir pamphlets and albums.

⁴⁹ Alan Davies and Peter Stanbury, *The Mechanical Eye in Australia: Photography 1841-1900* (Melbourne, 1986) p. 234.

⁵⁰ Melissa Harper, *The ways of the bushwalker: on foot in Australia* (Sydney, 2007) pp. 37-38.

reproduction of a pamphlet or poster representing these eras. Of these illustrations, only one included an identified photograph – which happened to be a Spurling.⁵¹

This general lack of recognition of the Spurlings by some Australian authors could be interpreted as an indication that the Spurling images lacked the historical or aesthetic value of other photographers. However, there may be another reason. Although Spurling photographs were available, over time contextual detail was lost. As information about the Spurlings' photography became increasingly fragmented and widely scattered, authors were unable to establish the relevance and significance of their images. Hence, the Spurlings were not included in books and so a cycle of exclusion became self-perpetuating.

While the lack of contextual information may explain why some Australian writers neglected to mention the Spurlings, there are other instances where authors do not mention the Spurlings even though it would have been appropriate. For example, in his chapter on 'Thomas Bock as a Photographer', film and sound archivist, Chris Long did not include Stephen 1st in his list of the early Tasmanian photographers.⁵² Yet in a later publication Long states Stephen 1st was possibly working in the daguerreotype era and had a photography studio in Hobart Town during the 1860s and 70s.⁵³ Although Ian Terry and Kathryn Evans acknowledge both Stephen 2nd and 3rd in their Meander Valley heritage study,⁵⁴ in Terry and Nathalie Servant's heritage study of Launceston only Stephen 2nd rates a mention. In this study the authors credit Herbert John King with 'pioneering aerial photography in the 1920s'.⁵⁵ In fact,

⁵¹ Marian Walker, 'Memories, dreams and inventions: the evolution of Tasmania's tourism image 1803-1939', (PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2008) pp. 142, 232, 240, 244, 280, 389, 390.

⁵² Chris Long 'Thomas Bock as a Photographer', in Dianne Dunbar (coordinator) *Thomas Bock: Convict Engraver, Society Portraitist* (Launceston and Canberra, 1991) p. 68.

⁵³ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 105.

⁵⁴ Ian Terry and Kathryn Evans, 'To the Westward', *Meander Valley Heritage Study, Stage 1: Thematic History* (Meander, 2004) p. 92. Terry and Evans actually state, 'Stephen Spurling II and II ...'. Presumably this is a misprint.

⁵⁵ Ian Terry and Nathalie Servant, *Launceston Heritage Study, Stage 1: Thematic History* (Launceston, 2002) pp. 85, 86.

Stephen 3rd took the first aerial photographs of Launceston in 1919.⁵⁶ Author Margaret Giordano, in her book on Gustav Weindorfer, makes a similar mistake – crediting King and Frederick Smithies as taking ‘the first aerial photographs of Launceston’.⁵⁷ Giordano makes only a fleeting reference to Stephen 3rd, who (as evidenced by records such as his entries in the Waldheim Visitors’ Book) was friendly with Weindorfer for many years.⁵⁸ There are other examples. In his book on Smithies, Jack Branagan writes about Cradle Mountain, Gustav Weindorfer, the formation of the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club and the Fifty Thousand League.⁵⁹ Although Branagan refers to Stephen 3rd as ‘one of the “greats” of Tasmanian scenic photographers’, he does not mention Stephen 3rd’s involvement in these other areas.⁶⁰ Such examples of the Spurlings’ demotion from history books are somewhat more difficult to explain.

During this period, when these various authors chose to give scant acknowledgement to the Spurlings in their writings, there was an attempt to tell the Spurling story. This project dates back to the late 1970s⁶¹ when Chris Long, by chance discovered over 550 original Spurling glass-plates in Melbourne.⁶² He contacted the Spurling descendants and they in turn encouraged him to lend the plates to the NLA in Canberra for copying.⁶³ In 1981 Long received a grant from the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board to research the Spurling saga.⁶⁴ Although for various

⁵⁶ *Weekly Courier*, 20 November 1919, p. 36 c. 3-4; *Advocate*, 13 December 1969, p. 18.

⁵⁷ Margaret Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain, the story of Gustav Weindorfer* (Launceston, 1987) p. 64.

⁵⁸ Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain*, p. 72; *Waldheim Visitors’ Book* (QVMAG).

⁵⁹ J G Branagan, *Frederick Smithies, OBE: explorer, mountaineer, photographer: a great Tasmanian* (Launceston, 1985) pp. 18-19, 54-63, 86-91.

⁶⁰ Branagan, *Frederick Smithies*, p. 11. See Chapter 4.

⁶¹ The actual date is variously recorded as 1976 (Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. ix) and 1980 (*Saturday Evening Mercury*, 30 October 1982, p. 20).

⁶² Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. ix; Dennis Hodgkinson, ‘Early photo bonanza!’, *Northern Scene*, 27 October 1982, p. 6; Dennis Hodgkinson, ‘Superb lost art comes home’, *Saturday Evening Mercury*, 30 October 1982, pp. 20, 41.

⁶³ This was arranged by Chris and Christine Burgess in consultation with Stephen Spurling 3rd’s daughter, Hazel McCammon. Letter written by Barbara Perry, National Library of Australia to Christine Burgess, 16 September 1981 (Ref. 400/1/40, held by Christine Burgess); Letter written by Barbara Perry, ‘Spurling Collection of Photographs’, to Chris Burgess, 1 May 1981 (ref. 400/1/40, National Library of Australia).

⁶⁴ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. vii, ix.

reasons his book, provisionally entitled *Spurling's Tasmania*,⁶⁵ did not eventuate, Long did copy some two-thousand Spurling images for the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (hereafter QVMAG) in Launceston.⁶⁶ Then, in 1983 he wrote a beautifully illustrated article on Stephen 3rd's experiences on Tasmania's west coast for the magazine, *This Australia*.⁶⁷ During the 1980s Long also provided information on Tasmanian photographers to Alan Davies for inclusion in *The Mechanical Eye in Australia* and Gael Newton's *Shades of Light*.⁶⁸ Finally, nearly twenty years after the discovery of the glass plates, in 1995 Long's Spurling research transmogrified into his directory of Tasmanian photographers.⁶⁹ So at least a summary of the Spurlings' work was now preserved for posterity, but there was still no comprehensive or accurate historical account of their photographic legacy.

Long's article on Stephen 3rd is one of several that have appeared since the publication of Jack Cato's book. For example, in 1978 writer Barney Roberts produced an article on Stephen 3rd.⁷⁰ Like Cato, Roberts also had a direct link to his subject. His father, Knyvet and uncle, Richard had accompanied Stephen 3rd on some of his treks.⁷¹ Roberts' article gives an overview of Stephen 3rd's adventures. He quotes from several of Stephen 3rd's articles and refers to his own albums of Spurling photographs. Although Roberts' article provides biographical detail, he mentions only few dates and, as the events are not recorded in chronological order, it is difficult for the reader to establish a timeline. Roberts does provide contextual information for some of Stephen 3rd's images, but he refers to only a few individual photographs, and offers descriptors such as 'beautiful' and '[t]he magic eye of Stephen Spurling's

⁶⁵ Chris Long, 'Tasmania's Wild Western Rivers', *This Australia*, v. 2, no. 4, Spring 1983, p. 18.

⁶⁶ Hodgkinson, 'Early photo bonanza!', p. 4; Hodgkinson, 'Superb lost art comes home', p. 20.

⁶⁷ Long, 'Tasmania's Wild Western Rivers', pp. 33-40.

⁶⁸ Davies and Stanbury, *The Mechanical Eye in Australia*, mentions Chris Long in the preface and also in footnotes throughout his text. Newton, *Shades of Light*, attributes an essay to Chris Long and mentions him in footnotes throughout the text.

⁶⁹ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. ix.

⁷⁰ Barney Roberts, 'Stephen Spurling – Adventurer', in Joan Woodberry (ed.) *The Honour Book: Short Stories, Articles, Poetry, 1978* (Hobart, 1978) pp. 38-45.

⁷¹ Knyvet and Richard Roberts accompanied Stephen 3rd on his 1905 trip to Cradle Mountain. Knyvet also accompanied Stephen 3rd on his trip 'Across the Plateau' in 1908. Roberts, 'Stephen Spurling – Adventurer', pp. 41, 43.

camera'⁷² rather than provide an analysis of their aesthetic value. In Roberts' defence, his concern was to record Stephen 3rd as an adventurer, rather than analyse his photography. Historian N J B Plomley also records Stephen 3rd's exploits. In the 1988 Eldershaw memorial lecture, he mentions Stephen 3rd's associations with Ben Lomond.⁷³ Unfortunately, he records the date of Stephen 3rd's winter ascent as 1908, rather than the more likely date of 1903.⁷⁴

More recently, other articles have appeared about the Spurlings and in particular, Stephen Spurling 3rd. In 2004, historian Nic Haygarth wrote an article for the magazine *Tasmania: Forty° South*, describing Stephen 3rd's (and other enthusiasts) wilderness photography and their adventures with early automobiles.⁷⁵ Later that year, Haygarth wrote an article for the NLA's *News*, profiling Stephen 3rd as a 'Tasmanian bushman and pioneer outdoor photojournalist'.⁷⁶ Three years later the author of this thesis wrote an article for the same publication entitled 'The Spurling Collection'.⁷⁷

As well as magazine and journal articles, occasionally newspapers publish Spurling related stories. Some of the earlier articles were written by Stephen 3rd, either under his own name or using a pseudonym. Then in 1961 the reporter, Kerry Pink interviewed Stephen 3rd and he subsequently wrote two Spurling articles.⁷⁸ Over the years, further articles have appeared about the Spurlings. Most of these articles are largely accurate and illustrated with Spurling images.

⁷² Roberts, 'Stephen Spurling – Adventurer', pp. 41-42.

⁷³ N J B Plomley, '1988 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture, Ben Lomond: history and science', *Papers and Proceedings* (Tasmanian Historical Research Association – hereafter THRA) v. 35, no. 4, December 1988, pp. 141-143.

⁷⁴ The date is often recorded as 1902. However, the more likely date was 1903. See Chapter 5 fn. 59.

⁷⁵ Nic Haygarth, 'carbs & cameras: how petrol heads and plate technology drove some of Tasmania's early wilderness photography', *Tasmania: 40° South*, issue 32, Autumn, March 2004, pp. 14-16.

⁷⁶ Nic Haygarth, 'Spurling's wild Tasmania', *National Library of Australia News*, v. XIV no. 12, September 2004, pp. 7-10.

⁷⁷ Christine Burgess, 'The Spurling Collection', *National Library of Australia News*, v. XVII no. 8, May 2007, pp. 11-14.

⁷⁸ Kerry Pink, 'Photography was an art – in the good old days!' *Advocate*, 30 September 1961, p. 13; Kerry Pink, 'Spurling captured an unseen Tasmania', *Advocate Weekender*, 26 October 1991, pp. 8-9.

However, some articles contain elements of fantasy. For example, an article, which appeared in the *Northern Scene* in 1982, included some accurate information, but also claimed that Stephen 1st's father died on Sir John Franklin's 1821 ill-fated Arctic expedition.⁷⁹ In fact, Stephen 1st's father died in Trincomalee, Ceylon in 1827.⁸⁰ This same article also renames the three generations, Stephen II, III and IV, based on the fact that Stephen 1st's father was also called Stephen.⁸¹ But if this argument is to be adopted the three Stephen photographers should be Stephen five, six and seven, as there is an unbroken lineage of Stephen Spurlings going back for at least seven generations.⁸² However, since the three generations of Stephen Spurling photographers are usually referred to as Stephen I, II and III, or (as Stephen 3rd named them) Stephen 1st, 2nd and 3rd, it seems an unnecessary confusion to change this appellation.⁸³

Family historians have also contributed to the Spurling history. At some stage (possibly during the 1980s) Suzanne Seyfried compiled the saga of the Lovett and Spurling families in Tasmania. A copy of her manuscript is available at the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO).⁸⁴ Although this document is undated and unreferenced, a close analysis of her claims (with respect to the Spurlings at least), shows her statements are essentially accurate and credible.⁸⁵ While her work only relates to the early generations of Spurlings, it provided a useful starting point for further research. In tracing the lives of the Spurling ancestors another very useful resource has been the work undertaken by Daphne and Andrew Spurling in England. Although some of their articles are now available on the

⁷⁹ Hodgkinson, 'Early photo bonanza!', p. 4.

⁸⁰ Captain's Log (ADM 51/3221, National Archives – hereafter NA, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, England).

⁸¹ Hodgkinson, 'Early photo bonanza!', p. 4.

⁸² D and A Spurling, 'The Spurling Family in East Anglia and London', (Unpublished, 2004, copy held by Christine Burgess).

⁸³ Stephen Spurling 3rd, Notes on the Spurling Family History (Undated, original document held by Christine Burgess).

⁸⁴ Suzanne Seyfried, *The story of the Lovett Family and their journey to: An Island at the Bottom of the World* (Unpublished, undated, TAHO).

⁸⁵ There are few minor factual errors. For example, on p. 2-54 Seyfried records Frederick Spurling's birth year as 1849. However, the *Tasmanian Pioneer Index 1803-1899*, records the date as 1850.

internet,⁸⁶ they have also provided several unpublished papers, relating to the Spurling family origins. Daphne and Andrew are meticulous researchers and their information has proved invaluable.

Dictionaries of biography and directories

While for many years the Spurlings did not rate a mention in the majority of discussions on Australian photography, somewhat paradoxically, the Spurlings do appear in dictionaries of biography and directories that list Australian photographers. Sometimes these lists include artists or frame-makers, and while most cover Australia as a whole, some relate specifically to Tasmania.⁸⁷ These writers often give different emphases to the various generations of Spurlings. For example, while Joan Kerr devotes most of her discussion to Stephen 1st, Sue Backhouse devotes the weight of her discussion to Stephen 3rd.⁸⁸ Some, such as M McArthur confine their discussions to Stephen 3rd.⁸⁹ In some instances this difference in emphasis may be a function of the era writers were focussing on, rather an implied judgement on the relative significance of one Spurling over the other. Nevertheless, this does not seem to explain why Stephen 2nd often appears to play a secondary role to both his father and son, and on some occasions rates no mention at all.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ See for example, Daphne Spurling, *The Boy Apprentice or White Tie and Tails* (September 2001), at <http://www.berksfhs.org.uk/journal/Sep2001/sep2001TheBoyApprentice.htm>, 28/01/2008.

⁸⁷ Wendy Rimón, 'The Spurling Family', in Alison Alexander (ed.) *The Companion to Tasmanian history* (Hobart, 2005) p. 345; 'Stephen Spurling III', Sue Backhouse, *Tasmanian Artists of the twentieth century: painters, sculptors, printmakers and photographers, 1900-1985* (Hobart, 1988) p. 194; Sandy Barrie, *Australians behind the camera: directory of Early Australian photographers, 1841 to 1945* (Sydney, c. 2002) p. 177; Davies and Stanbury, *The Mechanical Eye in Australia*, p. 234; R A Ferrall, *Notable Tasmanians* (Launceston, 1980) p. 70; R A Ferrall, *Tasmanians All* (Launceston, 1982) p. 96; 'Spurling, Stephen (c. 1858-1924)' in H J Gibbney and Ann G Smith, *A Biographical Register 1788-1939: Notes from the name index of the Australian Dictionary of Biography*, v. II, L-Z (Canberra, 1987) pp. 275-276; 'Spurling, Stephen (1821-1892)' in Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, p. 748; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 105-107; 'Spurling, Stephen', in M McArthur, *Prominent Tasmanians* (Hobart, 1924) pp. 79-80; Therese Mulford, *Tasmanian Framemakers 1830-1930: a directory* (Launceston, 1997) pp. 10-25, 27, 114-116.

⁸⁸ Kerr (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, p. 748; Backhouse, *Tasmanian Artists of the twentieth century*, p. 194.

⁸⁹ McArthur, *Prominent Tasmanians*, pp. 79-80.

⁹⁰ For example, although R A Ferrall refers to Stephen 2nd in his book, *The Northern Tasmanian Camera Club, 100 years 1889-1989: a short history* (Launceston, 1989?), pp. 5-7, 15 he does not refer

The fact that his brother Frederick rates even less frequent mentions may be a reflection of the very limited number of Frederick Spurling images still in existence. Most of these authors provide either general overviews of the Spurlings and their achievements and/ or listings of addresses; however, there are some inaccuracies.⁹¹

As mentioned previously, Chris Long's *Tasmanian Photographers, 1840-1940: A Directory* emanated from his research into the Spurling photographers.⁹² In this directory he includes entries for the each of the four Spurling photographers. However, his general descriptions of the early generations of Spurling photographers tend to be rather negative. After a brief mention of Frederick, he describes Stephen 1st's portraiture as 'rather primitive and uninteresting' and Stephen 2nd as 'not an outstanding camera artist'. He is more effusive about Stephen 3rd. He lists some of his photographic achievements, and describes him as an '[e]xcellent and prolific landscape and commercial photographer'.⁹³

Long's directory is generally well regarded. Author Margaret Glover claims, '[t]he history of Tasmanian photography was well served [by Long's work]'.⁹⁴ Richard Neville describes it as 'an essential companion ... [that] will find a place on every reference shelf'.⁹⁵ Later in his review he concludes that it is 'a curious, yet rich and valuable, book. It is a mine of information which will amply repay close scrutiny'.⁹⁶ Neville's endorsements seem somewhat at odds with his other comments such as, '[s]ometimes the entries are not clear', (a reference to confusions in Thomas Nevin/

to him in his other books. However, he does make several mentions of Stephen 3rd. See Ferrall, *Notable Tasmanians*, p. 70; Ferrall, *Tasmanians All*, p. 96. Somewhat paradoxically, Gibbney and Smith, *A Biographical Register*, pp. 275-276 devote most of their discussion to Stephen 2nd.

⁹¹ For example, a regularly recorded mistake is that Stephen 1st had a studio at 75 Murray Street in Hobart Town. The earliest known recording of this mistake appeared in the *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 5. A check of the *Assessment Rolls* reveals that the correct address was 76 Murray Street. As further evidence the address was 76 Murray Street, see advertisement in Henry Thomas, *Guide to Excursionists between Australia and Tasmania* (Melbourne, 1869-18) p. xli. A copy of this advertisement appears in Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 105.

⁹² Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. ix.

⁹³ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 105-107.

⁹⁴ Margaret Glover, 'Book Reviews', *Papers and Proceedings* (THRA) v. 55, no. 1, March 2008, p. 64.

⁹⁵ Neville, 'Review of Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940*', p. 1.

⁹⁶ Neville, 'Review of Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940*', p. 3.

Adolarious Boyd/ Convict Photographs entries) and his statement, ‘one cannot help but be a little wary of his judgements’, (a reference to Long’s subjective assessments and acknowledged biases).⁹⁷ Other reservations are mentioned by Long’s editor, Gillian Winter, who states in the introduction, ‘[i]t was desirable, but not possible, to re-check all the original data. We are well aware, therefore, of the directory’s deficiencies and alert to probable errors’.⁹⁸ While Long’s work provides a starting point for further research, the dearth of footnotes and sources makes it difficult to verify his assertions. In the course of researching this thesis it became evident that, in the case of the Spurlings’ entries at least, Long’s claims fall into one of four categories. These are, those assertions that can be verified by checking original documents; those assertions that are probably correct, but no documents have been located to verify his claims; those assertions that are, on the balance of evidence, probably incorrect, and those assertions that the documentation shows are incorrect or misinterpretations. A further concern is that subsequent writers appear to have repeated Long’s dates, facts and opinions without any evidence of independent research to justify their claims.⁹⁹

Books and articles relating to wilderness photography

In Australia, a number of writers have recorded or analysed wilderness photography. Some of these books focus on particular photographers, and include contextual information and reproductions of their wilderness images. Examples include Max Angus’ book about Olegas Truchanas and Bob Brown’s book about Peter Dombrovskis.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Neville, ‘Review of Chris Long, *Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940*’, p. 2.

⁹⁸ Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. viii.

⁹⁹ For example, Rimon, ‘The Spurling Family’, p. 345 refers to Stephen 1st’s portraiture as being ‘rather primitive’. This is the same description used by Long in *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 105.

¹⁰⁰ Max Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas* (Hobart, 1975); Bob Brown, *Wild Rivers: Photographs by Peter Dombrovskis* (Sandy Bay, 1983).

Other writers have explored the concept of wilderness and its relationship to photography. While some of these writers refer to John Watt Beattie, they do not always include the Spurlings in their discussions. For example, Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill regard Beattie as ‘an important pioneer’ in creating public interest in wilderness photography and opening up debate on conservation issues.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Drew Hutton and Libby Connors cite Beattie and ‘other campaigners’ to illustrate their statement that ‘[t]he role of the sublime wilderness and wildlife photography in the modern conservation movement has its origins in the late nineteenth century’.¹⁰²

While author Richard Flanagan quotes Beattie in his history of the Gordon River (on Tasmania’s west coast), he includes two Stephen 3rd images in his book.¹⁰³ Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus also mention both Beattie and Spurling in *The Rest of the World is Watching*.¹⁰⁴ In addition, when the Wilderness Society campaigned to save the Gordon and Franklin Rivers in the 1980s, they used a Stephen Spurling 3rd image, *Rocky Reach, Gordon River* (along with images by Olegas Truchanas, Mike Emery, Neil Davidson and Bob Brown) in one of their campaign publications.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, *Ecological Pioneers: A social history of Australian ecological thought and action* (England, 2001) p. 69.

¹⁰² Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, *A History of the Australian Environment Movement* (Melbourne, 1999) p. 77.

¹⁰³ Richard Flanagan, *A terrible beauty: history of the Gordon River Country* (Richmond, Victoria, 1985) pp. 66-67, and images 3 and 7 (between pp. 72-73).

¹⁰⁴ Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus, ‘Green Images’, in Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus (eds), *The Rest of the World is Watching* (Sydney, 1990) pp. 157-169.

¹⁰⁵ Bob Brown, Peter Thompson and Ian Cattle, *Your Rivers Need You* (Tasmania, c. 1980s) p. 3.



Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Rocky Reach, Gordon River*, c. 1906, gelatin silver, 20 x 25.5 cm.

Environmental historian, Tim Bonyhady also writes about Beattie and Stephen 3rd's interest in the Gordon River. In his article 'The Artist as an Activist', Bonyhady describes Beattie's preservation campaigns and records that, although Beattie visited the Gordon in the late 1890s, 'he took few if any photographs'.¹⁰⁶ Bonyhady continues: '[w]hen Beattie returned to the Gordon in April 1908, the Launceston photographer, Stephen Spurling, had not only taken dozens of views of the Gordon but many of them had been published by Tasmania's *Weekly Courier*'.¹⁰⁷ According to Bonyhady, when Beattie did photograph the Gordon, 'most of his photographs were almost identical to those already taken by Spurling'.¹⁰⁸

There are other wilderness writers who mention the Spurlings. As noted earlier, Nic Haygarth has written two articles on Stephen 3rd (and others) and their contribution to

¹⁰⁶ Tim Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', in Pete Hay (ed.), *Imagine Nature* (Hobart, 1996) p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ Bonyhady, 'The Artist as an Activist', p. 24.

Tasmanian wilderness photography.¹⁰⁹ Further, in his book on the history of Cradle Mountain, Haygarth makes frequent references to Stephen 3rd and includes a number of Spurling images.¹¹⁰ Haygarth has also explored in depth the emergence of black-and-white wilderness photography in Tasmania. His discussion, based on the collection held by the State Library of Tasmania (hereafter SLT), makes many references to the Spurlings.¹¹¹ Even his subsequent study, which focuses on the Anson/ Beattie studio, mentions both Stephen 2nd and 3rd.¹¹² In addition, Haygarth's most recent book, *The Wild Ride* makes frequent references to the Spurlings and includes thirty-one Spurling images.¹¹³ Haygarth is a painstaking researcher, who devotes considerable time to extracting information from archives and other sources. Intriguingly, the NLA's *Australia's Wild Places*, with a foreword by Roger McDonald, contains one Stephen Spurling 2nd image and three Stephen Spurling 3rd images, but makes no mention of John Watt Beattie.¹¹⁴

Bonyhady, Flanagan, Haygarth and McDonald are not the only authors who consider the Spurlings worthy of recognition. Roslynn Haynes describes both Beattie and Stephen 3rd as '[t]wo of the most successful ... [at providing] an important boost to the state's burgeoning tourist industry with their large format photographs of wilderness and their remarkable collections of postcards promoting wild Tasmanian scenery'.¹¹⁵ Similarly, academic and photographer David Stephenson contends that Beattie and Stephen 3rd 'were extremely active in the decades surrounding the turn of

¹⁰⁹ Haygarth, 'Spurling's wild Tasmania'; Haygarth, 'carbs & cameras'.

¹¹⁰ Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: A History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country* (Canberra, ACT, 1998) pp. 50, 77-79, 88-90, 92-93, 98-99, 204-205, 207.

¹¹¹ Nic Haygarth, *From the Sublime to the Skyline: some factors in the development of Tasmanian black-and-white wilderness photography* (Perth, Tasmania, 2005).

¹¹² Nic Haygarth, *Booming Tasmania, how the Anson/ Beattie photographic studio sold the island and itself 1880-1901* (Perth, Tasmania, 2008) pp. 10, 18, 24, 26, 54, 56, 61, 63.

¹¹³ Nic Haygarth, *The Wild Ride, Revolutions That Shaped Tasmanian Black-and-White Wilderness Photography: From the Sublime to the Skyline* (Launceston, 2008). This book contains one image by Stephen Spurling 2nd, one by Spurling and Son and twenty-nine by Stephen Spurling 3rd.

¹¹⁴ Roger McDonald, *Australia's Wild Places* (Canberra, ACT, 2009). Spurling images appear on pages 3, 15, 24, 25. The Spurlings' biographical details on pp. 110-111 contain several errors. These should be corrected in the second edition.

¹¹⁵ Roslynn Haynes, 'From Habitat to Wilderness: Tasmania's Role in the Politicising of Place', *Papers and Proceedings* (THRA) v. 49, no. 4, December 2004, p. 276.

the century ... [and] frequently focused their cameras on subjects of iconic significance – mountains, lakes, rivers, and particularly waterfalls'.¹¹⁶ This is not the first time Stephenson refers to Stephen 3rd. In an introduction to a photographic exhibition in 1985, he states 'the Tasmanian photographer Stephen Spurling catalogued seemingly every mountain and waterfall on the island'.¹¹⁷ More recently, historian Chris Binks recorded a brief outline of some Stephen 3rd's achievements in his book, *Hills of the west wind: reflections on the Tasmanian landscape*.¹¹⁸ Clearly, these authors believe Stephen 3rd's photography is worthy of mention.

A discussion of current literature about Australian photography would not be complete without mentioning academic Julia Peck's doctoral thesis completed in 2008.¹¹⁹ Although Peck restricted her research to a consideration of landscape photography in New South Wales and Victoria from 1870 to 1917, her work provides insights relevant to this thesis on two counts. Firstly, as she wrote her thesis as a researcher based at the University of Wales, her vision is that of an outsider looking in, and therefore her observations are from a different perspective to Australian writers. Secondly, by restricting her investigations to two Australian colonies/ states, her conclusions form a basis for comparison with the rest of Australia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In her thesis Julia Peck covers a range of topics. However, her main concern is whether 'the views trade in nineteenth-century Australia, despite being indebted to colonial picturesque models, could serve national discourses during the Federation era'.¹²⁰ In analysing this hypothesis, Peck investigates a number of related issues.

¹¹⁶ David Stephenson, *Beautiful Lies: Photography and wilderness*, at <http://www.utas.edu.au/arts/imaging/stephenson.pdf>, 16/08/2006.

¹¹⁷ David Stephenson, *New Landscapes: Photographs from two continents* (Hobart, 1985) p. 5.

¹¹⁸ C J Binks, *Hills of the west wind: reflections on the Tasmanian landscape* (Geelong, Victoria, 2006) pp. 311, 314, 319-322, 338.

¹¹⁹ Julia Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape: Photographic Contributions to the Construction of a Nation from New South Wales and Victoria 1870-1917', (PhD thesis, University of Wales, 2008).

¹²⁰ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', p. 346.

These include the relationship between view photography and tourism,¹²¹ the use of motifs such as ferns, roads and sunsets,¹²² Antipodean inversion,¹²³ and the depictions of people – especially women and bush characters (including shearers and miners).¹²⁴ All these topics resonate with the Spurlings' photography. In addition, Peck's discussion of 'weird melancholy'¹²⁵ in the Australian bush is a subject that Stephen 3rd occasionally touched upon, although the general tenor of most of his work was a celebration of wild places.¹²⁶ However, Peck's finding that in New South Wales and Victoria there was a virtual 'absence of exploration photography',¹²⁷ and that 'uninhabited bush remained beyond the interest of views photographers',¹²⁸ makes for interesting comparisons with Stephen 3rd's forays into remote parts of Tasmania.

Research task

From the above discussion, it is apparent that while the Spurlings are usually included in Australian dictionaries of biography and general reference books, with a few exceptions, they have not rated a mention in general overviews of Australian photography. While Stephen 3rd has come to the attention of several authors concerned with wilderness photography, at the time of writing, there is no single account devoted to the Spurlings and their contribution to Tasmanian photography. Unfortunately much what has been written about the Spurlings is based on the work of previous authors with very little research to confirm or correct statements – consequently inaccuracies have been perpetuated. Despite limited references to the Spurlings, in recent years, major libraries and galleries, along with private collectors, have started to accumulate Spurling images. This has created a need for more

¹²¹ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', pp. 136, 139, 159, 163, 351.

¹²² Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', pp. 136-137, 146, 177-178, 184, 193.

¹²³ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', pp. 208-210.

¹²⁴ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', pp. 141, 156, 159, 173.

¹²⁵ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', pp. 208-213.

¹²⁶ See discussions in Chapters 4 -6.

¹²⁷ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', p. 186.

¹²⁸ Peck, 'The Making of the Australian Landscape', p. 351.

detailed and accurate information. My research task was to address these issues by conducting extensive and intensive data-driven research into the three generations of Spurling photographers.

The first task was to locate as much primary source material as possible and to augment this with material in libraries, galleries and archives. This information then had to be unravelled, placed into chronological order and related back to relevant historical events. The second task was to investigate Stephen 3rd's journeys and to locate the relevant photographs. This involved detailed examination of the accounts of his trips and the tracing of his routes. Next, all known images had to be sorted according to geographical regions, and listed according to their plate numbers. These lists were then crosschecked against records of when a particular image first appeared in the press. Eventually patterns started to emerge and photographs could be linked to particular time and place. Finally, all this information had to be arranged into a cohesive and logical whole, and then analysed in terms of the Spurlings' contribution to wilderness photography in Tasmania.

Primary sources

One of the chief difficulties in writing about the Spurling photographers is the lack of readily available primary source material. This is particularly true for the first two generations of Spurling photographers. While the family held some documents, letters and photographs, a significant amount of material has disappeared in recent years. Although notes made by Stephen 3rd and his son, Ted Spurling of Devonport,¹²⁹ helped to fill in some of these gaps, the main sources of information on the early generations of Spurling photographers came from archival records (in both Tasmania and England), newspaper accounts, shipping records and family anecdotes.

¹²⁹ Stephen Edward (Ted) Spurling also assisted in providing memorabilia up until the time of his death in July 2004.

By contrast, there is far more information about Stephen 3rd, who wrote prolifically for local (and sometimes mainland and overseas) journals and newspapers. His articles included recounts of his photographic expeditions, reminiscences of his early years including his adventures with early motorcycles and motorcars, and his encounters with the Tasmanian tiger (*Thylacine*). He also wrote short stories and verse.¹³⁰ Many, but not all, of these works survived in a scrapbook, held by the family.¹³¹ The main problem in evaluating his articles was that they were not in chronological order, and were generally undated and un-sourced. Finding the original publication details proved tedious.

Other primary sources used to research all three generations of Spurling photographers include almanacs, assessment rolls, bankruptcy records, census records, club minutes, hospital records, lands and titles registrations, motor vehicle registrations, post office directories, trade directories, visitors' books and weather records. Many of these sources were obscure and laborious to locate.

Having obtained these primary sources, the next problem was to evaluate their validity. Family anecdotes and even family trees were often only partially reliable and required checking against government records for births, deaths and marriages, shipping records, newspaper announcements and census data. While these records were usually available for events in Australia, events in England often required checking against church records, school records, naval records, stock exchange records (for employment history) and census data. Although most of the sources in England and Australia proved reliable, there were some cases where the information was questionable.¹³²

¹³⁰ S Spurling, 'The Tasmanian Tiger or Marsupial Wolf, *Thylacinus cyanocephalus* [sic]', *Journal of Bengal Natural History Society*, v. XVIII, no. 2 (1943) pp. 55-59.

¹³¹ Stephen Spurling 3rd, Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings (Copy held by Christine Burgess).

¹³² For example, the Wayn Index at the TAHO records Jessy Spurling arriving in Van Diemen's Land (as a widow) in 1825. There is no other record of her arriving on this date and since her husband did not die until 1827, Jessy could not have been a widow at this stage. Captains' Log (ADM 51/3221, NA, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, England).

Wherever possible, events and dates were crosschecked against other records. In this respect, government and official records provided a baseline for other information. While newspaper announcements were generally accurate, personal accounts and newspaper articles tended to be less accurate and sometimes confused dates and facts. Where there was some doubt about dates, other information was sought to confirm or establish alternative timeframes. Strategies used to confirm dates included checking the information in the article against historical events. For example, one article mentioned a particular shipwreck and another mentioned the first electric street lighting in Launceston, so these pieces of information helped to confirm the date for these articles. Other articles mentioned weather conditions such as a heavy snowfall or an unusually wet summer, so the weather records helped to identify possible dates for these articles. Information about early motorcycles or motorcars helped to date motoring articles. Other strategies used to date articles included extrapolating the given information and making timelines.

Photographic resources

Although literature provided background information for this thesis, the most important resource for any writing on photographers is their photographs. In this respect, collections such as those already mentioned at the NLA, the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney and the QVMAG in Launceston have proved invaluable. However, the three generations of Stephen Spurlings left a legacy of photographs that have found their way into many more libraries, museums and archives both in Australia and overseas. For example, in recent years the National Gallery of Australia has acquired and displayed a number of Spurling originals. These images include thirteen stereographs and two large gelatin silver photographs.¹³³

¹³³ National Gallery of Australia, Spurling images, at <http://cs.nga.gov.au/SEARCH.cfm>, 18/01/2008. By comparison, as at February 2008, the National Gallery of Australia has one Henry Anson image, thirty John Watt Beattie images, no F Vaudry Robinson images and seven Charles Woolley images.

Other institutions holding significant collections of Spurling images include the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the SLT in Hobart, the TAHO and the State Library of Victoria.¹³⁴ There are numerous more, smaller collections in museums, libraries and private collections throughout the country. Overseas, the Cambridge University Library in England holds forty-six Spurling and Son prints, the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, USA has twenty-one Spurling's Studios glass lantern slides and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa has four Stephen Spurling 2nd albumen silver prints.¹³⁵

The fact that many of these collections are now accessible on-line has made the herculean task of viewing, comparing and analysing these images possible. The viewing of private collections has often proved somewhat more difficult and has often involved travel. However, some private collectors have willingly scanned images and even lent their originals. Almost without exception, these private collectors have been generous with their time and sharing of expertise. In addition, more Spurling images are constantly becoming available, both through galleries such as Josef Lebovic in Sydney, private dealers and websites such as eBay and Corbis.¹³⁶

Once located, the next issue in evaluating the images was to assign a photograph to the right Spurling photographer. Stephen 1st images usually have a stamped imprint on the verso, which includes his name and a replica of the medal he won at the 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne. However, the dating of these photographs proved somewhat problematic. Since most Stephen 1st images were portraits, sometimes a date was included along with the name, but at other times there were few

¹³⁴ These collections are continually expanding. As at February 2008, the State Library of Victoria had more than 260 Spurling images; National Gallery of Canada, <http://cybermuse.gallery.ca>, 22/09/2006.

¹³⁵ See Appendix 5.

¹³⁶ Corbis (founded by Bill Gates in 1989) is an international service offering photographic reproduction rights. In February 2008, their database included two Stephen Spurling 3rd images (only one in August 2009) but had no images by Anson Brothers, John Watt Beattie or Charles Woolley.

clues as to the date other than researching the era the subject's attire was in fashion.¹³⁷ This provided an approximate guide.

Stephen 2nd took portraits, cityscapes and landscapes. His portraits often had his name and 'Launceston' printed beneath the photograph. Again assigning dates was difficult and had to be based on the subject's costume (in the case of portraits) or the construction date of a building (in the case of cityscapes). Landscapes were even more difficult to date. However, sometimes they appeared in an album with a date on the title page and sometimes the images appeared in the press. In these cases, dates could be assigned more accurately.

Stephen 3rd's landscapes usually have a handwritten inscription along the base of the image. This inscription normally included the words 'S Spurling', the place-name and the plate number. The plate number provided some clues in dating the image – as a general guide, the lower the number, the earlier the image. Plate numbers that include the letter 'A' are from smaller glass plates¹³⁸ and usually date from the 1920s. However, plate numbers are not always reliable guides to dating images. Some very early images were re-issued with later plate numbers.

Theoretical framework

Anne-Marie Willis has identified several approaches to writing photographic history in Australia.¹³⁹ Of these, the method Willis refers to as 'the archaeological dig' most closely resembles the approach taken in this thesis. Willis defines a typical archaeological dig as one 'based on a distinct collection of photographs, generally the work of a single photographer or studio, which recently came to light and is being

¹³⁷ See Marion Fletcher, *Costume in Australia: 1788-1901* (Melbourne, 1984) for an analysis of estimating dates using costume as a guide.

¹³⁸ Mainly half-plate.

¹³⁹ Willis, *Picturing Australia*, pp. 255-276.

written about for the first time'.¹⁴⁰ These criteria fit the Spurling situation. The starting point for the thesis was the Spurling collections of photographs. In addition, although Stephen 3rd is referred to in works on wilderness photography, until now there has been no in-depth written document devoted solely to recording the Spurling contribution to Tasmanian photography.

Willis goes on to say '[g]iven the pioneering nature of such works, it is inevitable that much of the text is devoted to biography'.¹⁴¹ This raises the question as to whether a biography is a sufficiently rigorous discipline to be considered worthy of academic pursuit. According to the historian John Tosh:

One of the reasons why biography is often disparaged by academic historians is that too many biographers have studied only the private papers left by their subject, instead of weighing these against the papers of colleagues and acquaintances and (where relevant) the public records for the period.¹⁴²

Perhaps, given the problems Tosh identifies with relying on private papers to produce an academically sound document, it is fortuitous that, with the exception of Stephen 3rd's accounts of his journeys, the Spurlings left very few personal records. In writing this thesis it has been necessary to go beyond family resources, and piece their lives together from public records, newspaper accounts and other documents. By sifting and weighing the available evidence and placing it into chronological order, this thesis has attempted to record the history of the three generations Spurling photographers as accurately and from as many viewpoints as possible.

Although the researching of the biographical details on the Spurlings has required considerable archaeological digging, access to their images has been a different matter. Spurling images are widely available in libraries, museums, archives and

¹⁴⁰ Willis, *Picturing Australia*, p. 257.

¹⁴¹ Willis, *Picturing Australia*, p. 257.

¹⁴² John Tosh, *The pursuit of history: aims, methods, and new directions in the study of modern history*, 2nd edition (London, 1991) p. 66.

private collections. Most of these collectors have given permission to incorporate their images into this text. This has made the task of analysing and comparing images possible. Not all writers have this luxury. According to Mary Street Alinder, when Jonathan Spaulding prepared his PhD biography on Ansel Adams,¹⁴³ the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust refused to give Spaulding permission to use any Adams quotes or significant photographs, other than those already in the public domain. Consequently, in Spaulding's 'serious, studious biography, Ansel's photography is visually represented by only "B"- grade images'.¹⁴⁴

Willis states that the main difficulty with an archaeological dig is that many researchers fail to go beyond the 'biography and working lives' of the photographers, and neglect to analyse 'the relevance of a particular body of work to Australian photography in general'.¹⁴⁵ This thesis addresses this issue by examining the part the Spurlings played in Australian photographic history and, in particular, the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania. Willis also stresses the need 'to put images into a context, to determine their function in their own time, to ask questions such as why a particular set of images was commissioned, how they were used, for what audience they were intended'.¹⁴⁶ These subjects are particularly pertinent when examining Stephen 3rd's wilderness images. Without the context of the adversities he endured, his photographs can only be appreciated for their aesthetic qualities and not their intention, relevance and significance. For this reason, this thesis provides both contextual information about the photographs and a detailed discussion of the issues behind the images. By undertaking an archeological dig, a full and accurate account of the Spurlings' photographic history has been recorded. This new corpus of information makes a significant contribution to Australian photographic history, and provides a basis for future research and comparative studies. It also provides the necessary data to dispute the myths that have become entrenched in current accounts.

¹⁴³ Jonathan Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American landscape: a biography* (Berkeley, c. 1995).

¹⁴⁴ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, p. 382.

¹⁴⁵ Willis, *Picturing Australia*, p. 257.

¹⁴⁶ Willis, *Picturing Australia*, p. 273.

Organisation of chapters

Since the purpose of this thesis is to analyse the contribution the Spurlings made to the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania, it incorporates a discussion of wilderness photography, and contextual details on the Spurlings' images. To provide a background to the discussion, the thesis first traces the emergence of wilderness photography. Topics include concepts of wilderness, artistic representations of landscape, the discovery of photography and technological advances, photographic representations of landscapes and the evaluation of wilderness photographs.

The second, third and fourth chapters provide contextual details on the lives of each generation of Spurling photographers. The second chapter begins with a discussion of how the matriarch, Jessy Spurling emigrated to Van Diemen's Land in 1835. It then examines the life of her elder son – Stephen 1st. Topics include his early years, education, employment, experiments with photography, business ventures, time in New Zealand and the establishment of his studio in Hobart Town. This chapter includes examples of his photography, a discussion of his photographic achievements and concludes with the chronicle of his financial ruin and demise.

The third chapter examines the lives of two of Stephen 1st's colonial-born sons – Stephen 2nd and Frederick. Apart from providing contextual and biographical details, this chapter also analyses some of their photographs. It also discusses Stephen 2nd's forays into landscape photography and his association with the Northern Tasmania Camera Club. Finally, this chapter examines how, in the late nineteenth century, a lack of copyright laws in Tasmania affected landscape photographers.

The fourth chapter introduces Stephen 3rd – it includes biographical details and investigates controversies surrounding some of his images. It also aims to place his wilderness photography within the context of his total photographic output, and trace

how his career focus changed over time. This chapter also examines how the Spurling negative collection became dispersed and then re-discovered.

The fifth chapter provides contextual information to enable an appreciation of how, when and why particular Spurling wilderness images originated. This chapter includes descriptions of Stephen 3rd's more arduous treks, and examines some of his images. Stephen 3rd's accounts of his journeys highlight the difficulties and deprivations associated with obtaining wilderness images in the early twentieth century. This chapter also details Stephen 3rd's visits to Cradle Mountain and his association with Gustav Weindorfer. Stephen 3rd's images of this region span several decades, and this chapter provides the contextual background to these images, and discusses their aesthetic qualities.

The sixth chapter looks at the Spurling images in retrospective, by examining the issues behind the images. The first issue addressed is reason for the collection. While the Spurlings' move from portraiture to scenic views stemmed from Stephen 2nd and 3rd's love of the Tasmanian wilderness, it was also in response to the demand for photographs of Tasmania's tourist attractions. Other topics covered in this chapter include an examination of the artistic conventions and photographic trends that influenced how father and son depicted scenery. Stephen 3rd's attitude towards environmental issues (such as the establishment of scenic reserves, cave preservation, hydro-electric development, and fauna and forest protection) also comes under discussion. Finally this chapter explores some possible reasons as to how and why the Spurling legacy was nearly forgotten.

The concluding chapter draws all these threads together. It considers what the thesis has achieved, and the importance of the information uncovered. It examines the contribution the Spurlings' images made to the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania, and reflects on the significance of the Spurling legacy.