Chapter 3

The currency lads – Tasmanian born Spurlings

For several decades the ‘currency lads and lasses’ were looked down upon, but … they slowly gained the respect, albeit grudgingly, of many of the free settlers …¹

Introduction

This chapter examines the lives of two of Stephen Spurling 1st’s sons – Stephen 2nd and Frederick. These two ‘currency lads’ became photographers, yet their careers took very different directions. Stephen 2nd established a studio in Launceston, but his life was far from easy and at times he found himself embroiled in controversy. Meanwhile, Frederick struggled to find a direction in life. This chapter explores the difficulties both brothers encountered in pursuing their chosen profession, the social and political times in which they lived, and the innovations in photographic technology that occurred during their lives.

The first section explores Stephen 2nd’s move from portraiture to landscapes, and his contribution to technological advances in photography in Tasmania. Subsequent sections discuss how a lack of copyright laws in Tasmania during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected the emergence of landscape photography, and detail Stephen 2nd’s interactions with the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club.

The next section outlines Frederick Spurling’s life. Although his career as a photographer spanned some seventy-five years,² he appears as a shadowy figure. Perhaps his greatest claims to fame were his longevity and his association with the bushranger, Martin Cash.³ Like a sort of doppelgänger to his higher achieving older brother, Frederick has slipped into the history books almost by default. Yet his story

² *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 e. 4-5.
³ *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 e. 4-5.
is of value, for it demonstrates that to earn a living as a photographer in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was no easy task. It was even more difficult
when one fell through the cracks of social acceptability and had to endure the
disapprobation of both family and society. Frederick’s story is one of survival in
difficult circumstances. This chapter concludes with an assessment of the
contribution the two brothers made to Tasmanian photography.

Stephen Spurling 2nd (1847-1924) – the innovator

The picture we make is never made for us alone; it is, and should be, a
communication – to reach as many people as possible without dilution of
quality or intensity ...”

Stephen Spurling 2nd was born on 7 May 1847.5 Compared to his father’s early
years, he started his life in very different circumstances. For Stephen 2nd was born in
Hobart Town, half a world away from where his father lived as a young child.6 While
his father’s ancestors amassed comfortable fortunes during their lives,7 Stephen 2nd’s
maternal grandfather came to the colony as a convict.8

In Van Diemen’s Land social acceptability was prized above all else. According to
the historian, Henry Reynolds, '[m]emories were long in the intimate island

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4 John Paul Schaefer, The Ansel Adams Guide: Basic Techniques of Photography: Book 1 (Boston,
1992) p. 3.
5 Tasmanian Pioneer Index 1803-1899 (Informit, Melbourne, 1993).
by Christine Burgess) p. 7.
7 Stephen Spurling 2nd’s ancestors:
Great-great-grandfather: Stephen Spurling of Dedham (1734-1788) is believed to have owned an iron,
steel and implement factory.
Great-grandfather: Stephen Spurling of Whitechapel (1758-1804) was a barber.
Grandfather: Stephen Spurling RN (1791-1827) worked in the Stock Exchange and then joined the
Royal Navy.
Great-uncle: John Henry Spurling (1785-1858) worked in the Stock Exchange, invested in railways
and left a sizable estate. D and A Spurling, ‘The Spurling Family in East Anglia and London’, pp. 1-

7.
8 Stephen 2nd’s maternal grandfather, George Lovett was convicted of embezzlement in July 1830. He
was sentenced to transportation for fourteen years. Suzanne Seyfried, The story of the Lovett Family
and their journey to: An Island at the Bottom of the World (Unpublished, undated, Tasmanian Archive
community and few emancipists could cast off the fetters of their criminal past.\textsuperscript{9} Not only was it difficult for the emancipists to escape their former misdeeds, but their descendants fared little better. A barrier existed between those with the taint of convict ancestry in their lineage and the free settlers.\textsuperscript{10} Families might try to hide their origins, and aspire to respectability, but would remain the subject of gossip and innuendo for several generations.\textsuperscript{11}

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Creator unknown, \textit{Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}}, 1921, b&w print.
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As well as these differences in social acceptability, father and son also had different educational experiences. Stephen 2nd’s father attended a boarding school in England, where he would have received a rigorous education. However, for his sons growing up in Hobart Town, there were limited learning opportunities. When Lieutenant Governor Sir John Franklin and his wife Jane arrived in the colony in 1837 they discovered that, despite the initiatives of their predecessors, there were few schools and these offered a basic education. Wealthier parents often chose to send their sons to England to be educated, while their daughters usually stayed in the colony, where the establishments for young ladies taught little more than dancing and the social graces. For those boys who remained in the colony the educational outlook was bleak. Observers remarked on the significant difference in the social and intellectual skills of parents, who had been educated in England, and their locally educated children. The Franklins determined to address these problems, but their visions of an improved education system met with considerable resistance. Nevertheless, they did begin the debate, and by the time Stephen 2nd was ready to commence his formal tuition in the mid-1850s, there were fledging grammar schools, based on the English model, in Hobart Town and Launceston. Despite these developments, the situation did not improve significantly and as late as 1882, ‘35 per cent of the population was illiterate’.

Although Stephen 1st could have chosen to send his sons to the then well-established Hutchins school in Hobart Town, the school records contain no mention of the Spurling boys. However, there are some clues as to where the Spurling boys might

12 Christ’s Hospital children’s registers (Ms 12818/ 15 no. 30 Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, England).
14 Fitzpatrick, Sir John Franklin in Tasmania, p. 52; Bernard Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific (Sydney, 1985) p. 290.
18 Email from Tony Smithies, Hutchins School, Hobart to Christine Burgess, 2 November 2007.
have been educated. In 1861, when Stephen 1st was declared bankrupt, the creditors included Alexander Ireland, who claimed £18 15s 9d in unpaid school fees.19 (Given that at this time, teachers usually received around £75 per annum, this sum probably represented a quarter of a teacher’s yearly salary.20) At the time of Stephen 1st’s 1861 bankruptcy, Ireland was headmaster at Chalmers School, 91 Bathurst Street in Hobart Town.21 It therefore seems likely that this school, which emphasised such subjects as English, Latin, French, arithmetic, geography, history, drawing and mapping, is the school the young Spurling boys attended. Although this school aimed to produce pupils who would be suited to careers in architecture, engineering and surveying, it would have provided a very different environment to the rigours of Christ’s Hospital, their father’s boarding school in England.23

Just how the teachers at Chalmers School fared in educating Stephen 1st’s sons is unknown. However, it seems they succeeded to some degree – although it must have been something of a challenge. The young Spurlings were native-born Australians and descended from a convict. In the common vernacular, they were ‘currency lads’. Their father, on the other hand was born and educated in England, and consequently viewed as ‘sterling’.24 In England, cultured manners and academic achievement were paramount, but in the Antipodes, traits such as ‘initiative, hardihood, quickness in decision and improvisation [sic]’25 were more important. Evidently Stephen 2nd excelled in these areas and as a young man he enjoyed success as ‘a prominent oarsman and rifle shot’.26 Stephen 2nd was proud of his heritage. Many years later, in

19 Mercury, 20 September 1861, p. 3 c. 5.
21 Hobart Town Daily Mercury, 6 January 1860, p. 1 c. 8; Mercury, 27 March 1861, p. 4 c. 2.
22 Hobart Town Daily Mercury, 6 January 1860, p. 1 c. 8; Hobart Town Daily Mercury, 23 June 1859, p. 3 c. 6.
23 Christ’s Hospital presentation papers (Ms 12818A/96, no. 79, GL).
26 Weekly Courier, 7 February 1924, p. 29 c. 5.
a letter to the press he wrote, ‘I am an ardent admirer of the natural beauties of my native land’.  

Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s education probably came to a halt at the time of his father’s bankruptcy. He was then fourteen years old. As discussed previously, some twenty months later, on 1 April 1863 the family departed for New Zealand. Here they established a grocery store and bakery on the main supply route between Invercargill and the gold fields. The following year they fled to Melbourne, where Stephen 1\textsuperscript{st} gave his namesake £1 0s and then the rest of the family returned to Hobart Town. Alone in Melbourne, sixteen year-old Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} went to Bendigo where, according to later newspaper accounts, he was attracted by the gold diggings. However, by 1864, the days of individual prospecting were over and companies working underground undertook most of the mining activity. The township had expanded after the initial gold rush, and now boasted a variety of secondary industries.

Given these circumstances, the family version that Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} found work in a bakery, seems a more likely scenario. We can only guess as to why he chose to go to Bendigo. However, at this time a George Spurling resided in town and, while there is no definite link between the two families, there is evidence to suggest they were relations. Both George and the Stephen Spurlings had ancestors who originated in

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  \item S Spurling, ‘The tourist in Tasmania’, \textit{ Examiner}, 30 July 1900, p. 3 c. 5.
  \item The fact that Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} was then aged fourteen meant his education would probably have ceased about this time anyway – he had passed the school leaving age of twelve years. Phillips, \textit{Making More Adequate Provision}, p. 58.
  \item \textit{Mercury}, 31 March 1863, p. 1 c. 1; \textit{Southland Daily News}, 8 April 1863, p. 2; Letter written by the Spurling family and other passengers to Captain Wm Young, Barque \textit{India} (\textit{Southland Daily News}, 11 April 1863, p. 2, Invercargill Public Library, New Zealand).
  \item Harnett & Co., \textit{Directory of Dunedin and Invercargill} (Dunedin, Invercargill, 1864) p. xx.
  \item \textit{Argus}, 9 February 1864, p. 4 c. 1; \textit{Argus}, 5 March 1864, p. 4 c. 1; Stephen Edward – hereafter Ted Spurling, Devonport, Tasmania, Recollections as told to Christine Burgess.
  \item Ted Spurling, \textit{Recollections}.
  \item \textit{Weekly Courier}, 7 February 1924, p. 29 c. 5; \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 6 February 1924, p. 4 c. 7.
  \item George Mackay, \textit{History of Bendigo} (Bendigo, 2000) p. 38.
  \item Email from Ron Thomson to Christine Burgess, 7 March 2003.
\end{itemize}
Suffolk, England, and both families were descended from cutlers/ implement manufacturers. George was probably an inappropriate person to offer Stephen 2nd shelter. George was a publican and evidently enjoyed imbibing along with his patrons. After twenty years in the colony he died on 28 June 1870 suffering from chronic alcoholism and epilepsy. He was forty-one years old and left behind a widow and four young children.

It is not known when Stephen 2nd returned to Tasmania. However, the records show a Mr Spurling travelled from Melbourne to Hobart Town aboard the Southern Cross in July 1864, so it is possible this was Stephen 2nd. In any event he was back in Tasmania by around 1867, when he and his brother Frederick started working in their father’s photographic studio at 76 Murray Street.

At some stage during this period Stephen 2nd met his future bride, Julia Emily Long. Julia was the daughter of Richard Long and Sarah Overell who had married in Hobart Town in 1843. Julia was their third daughter and she was born in Hobart Town on 3 October 1849. Around 1851 the family moved to Victoria where Richard set up as a publican at the Bridge Hotel, Back Creek near Bendigo. Tragedy struck on 7 January 1858 when Richard died of head injuries sustained after a fall from his horse. Sarah died seven years later, leaving Julia and her siblings orphans. Julia was fifteen years old. From letters held by the family it is evident Julia’s sister, Alice was back in New Town, Tasmania on 27 January 1866 when she arranged for an agent in Bendigo to

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37 George Spurling, Death Certificate (No. 6968, Sandhurst, 1870, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Melbourne, Victoria) shows he was born in Suffolk, England and his father, William Spurling was a cutler. It is believed Stephen 2nd’s ancestor, Stephen Spurling of Dedham owned an iron, steel and implement factory in East Bergholt, Suffolk. D and A Spurling, ‘The Spurling Family in East Anglia and London’, p. 1.
38 George Spurling, Death certificate.
40 Mercury, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 4; Ted Spurling, Notes (Undated, copy held by Christine Burgess).
41 Julia Spurling (née Long), Birth certificate (Rgd. no. 33, Registration no. 1926, Hobart, 1849, TAHO); Spurling Family Bible, held by Barbara Cassidy (née Dineen) of Launceston.
settle their father’s affairs. It is possible Julia had accompanied her sister back to Hobart Town and this is where she met Stephen 2nd. However, according to family legend, the pair actually met during Stephen 2nd’s stay in Bendigo. Julia and Stephen 2nd married on 17 February 1873. The ceremony took place at the home of Reverend John Wilkes Simmons, 287 Liverpool Street, Hobart Town in accordance with the rites of the Congregational Church, although the Spurlings usually claimed to be Church of England. Stephen 2nd was twenty-five and Julia was twenty-three.

When Stephen 2nd and Julia married Tasmania was in the midst of ‘a period of great political complexity and instability’. During the 1870s the colony experienced seven changes of government. However, the decade also heralded a period of economic prosperity in the west and north of the island. Much of this prosperity came from the discovery of commercially viable mineral deposits. In 1871 the prospector James (Philosopher) Smith discovered tin at Mt Bischoff near Waratah on the west coast. Within two years a company began mining, ‘the richest deposit of tin on the planet’. In addition, the on-going discovery of gold, silver and coal at various locations in the colony’s north, including Fingal and Beaconsfield, led to land in these areas being opened up for development. The mining boom created increased employment opportunities and a surge in economic confidence. As a result, ‘for the first time in fifteen years the colony recorded an excess of arrivals over

42 Ron Thomson, ‘Letters from Fiji’, Australian Family Tree Connections (Australia, December 2005) p. 41; Research into the Long family by Ron Thomson, New South Wales; Spurling/ Long Family papers held by Barbara Cassidy, Launceston and Graeme Dineen, Hobart.
43 Research into the Long family by Ron Thomson, New South Wales.
44 In the 1848 Census, Stephen Spurling 1st gave his denomination as Church of England [Anglican]. Stephen Spurling 1st, Census record (CEN 1/89 p. 40, Trinity, 1848, TAHO).
45 Stephen Spurling 2nd and Julia Long, Marriage certificate (Rgd no. 37, Registration no. 261, Hobart, 1873, TAHO); Seyfried, An Island at the Bottom of the World, p. 2-54; Mercury, 10 September 1873, p. c. 1.
departures’.  

This was despite the fact that males from areas such as the north-west departed for Victoria. These changes in demographics meant gradually the ratio of males to females started to equalise. By 1880 there were ninety females per hundred males, nearly double the forty-six females per hundred males in the 1840s. Although the economy boomed, up until 1886 there was scant attention to the health needs of the townfolk and sanitary conditions in both Hobart and Launceston were completely inadequate. Eventually the ravages of infectious diseases forced local governments to address the problems. This issue, as with many others, was the subject of north-south rivalries. Each town claimed to be healthier. However, according to historian Stefan Petrow, ‘the commitment of the Launceston Corporation to sanitary improvements was greater than the Hobart Corporation’.

The shift in economic viability from the south to the north of the island affected the Spurling family. In 1873 Stephen 2nd left the family business and moved to Launceston, where in September he opened a photography studio in St John Street. This premises had an apartment above the studio, and while living here the couple’s first two children were born. Hilda May arrived on 8 September 1874 and Stephen 3rd on 28 October 1876. In March 1878 Stephen 2nd moved his photographic business from St John Street to a studio opposite the Brisbane Hotel at 83 Brisbane Street. These premises also included a residence, which the family occupied for the next five years. During this period two more daughters were born. Stella Nightingale

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52 Robson, A Short History of Tasmania, pp. 46-53.
53 Hobart Town became Hobart on 1 January 1881.
55 Petrow, Sanatorium of the South, p. 52.
57 Tasmanian Pioneer Index 1803-1899, Mercury, 10 September 1874, p. 1 c. 1.
58 Ted Spurling, Notes; Mullford, Tasmanian Framemakers, pp. 13, 115; Examiner, 11 March 1922, p. 33 c. 1-2; Tasmanian, 30 March 1878 p. 9 c. 4.
arrived on 19 October 1878 and Ella Maud on 10 May 1881. By the time Julia and Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s youngest daughter, Lilla Emily arrived on 28 December 1883, the family was living in a house in Galvin Street. Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} continued to operate his business from 83 Brisbane Street until 1902, when he and his son relocated to 93 Brisbane Street.

![Collection of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery](image)

Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd} [?]. *View of the rear of the Spurling photographic studios [probably 83 Brisbane Street], c. 1880, b&w print.*

When Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} and Julia settled in Launceston, the township had grown considerably since Lieutenant Colonel Paterson founded it in 1806. Situated at the confluence of the North and South Esk Rivers, its strategic position meant that by 1824 the town was designated the main centre for northern part of the island. Around this time construction began on St John’s Church of England. However, it was the

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59 *Tasmanian Pioneer Index 1803-1899.*
60 Spurling Family *Bible* held by Barbara Cassidy, Launceston; Lilla Emily Spurling, Birth certificate (Rgd. no. 33/63 Registration no. 1226, Launceston, 1884, TAHO).
laying of the foundation stone for the town hall in 1864, which signalled the township was well on the way to sustainability.\textsuperscript{63} That same year the completion of King’s Bridge\textsuperscript{64} linked the two banks of South Esk River.\textsuperscript{65} Prior to this a ferry had transported people across the waterway, while a punt moved goods and livestock.\textsuperscript{66} The former caretaker’s cottage, which clings to the cliffs above the bridge and is perhaps one of Launceston’s best-known landmarks, dates from 1890.\textsuperscript{67}

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Collection of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania
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Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{68}, \textit{Cataract Gorge [I]}, c. 1890, albumen silver print.\textsuperscript{68}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Button, \textit{Flotsam and Jetsam}, p. 288.
\item Ian Terry and Nathalie Servant, \textit{Launceston Heritage Study, Stage 1: Thematic History} (Launceston, 2002) p. 28.
\item Button, \textit{Flotsam and Jetsam}, p. 252.
\item Anonymous Photo Album (NS 473/37, TAHO) p. 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Stephen Spurling 2nd, *Esk River, Tasmania*, c. 1890, b&w photograph, 18 x 22.5 cm.

Image removed due to reproduction right restrictions. It can be viewed on the National Gallery of Canada web site: cyermuse.gallery.ca

Stephen Spurling 2nd, *View of the Iron Bridge Leading into the Town [View of Launceston and Kings / Cataract Bridge]*, c. 1880s, albumen silver print, 18.3 x 23.5 cm.
Within two years of Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s arrival in Launceston, his father’s business in Hobart Town faced insolvency. Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} had lent his father cash and provided him with goods to the value of £201 1s, and was amongst the creditors. On 12 August 1875 he instigated proceedings to have his father adjudicated bankrupt.\textsuperscript{70} The reasons behind Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s decision are uncertain. However, in a statement he made during a court case the following year, he claimed he ‘would never have asked his father to repay it [the money] if he had not become bankrupt’.\textsuperscript{71} Perhaps he felt remorse for his actions, which resulted in his father losing his business and his brother losing his glasshouse. However, as discussed previously, perhaps his father had warned Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} about his impending bankruptcy and Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} had instigated proceedings, hoping to preserve as many assets as possible for the family.\textsuperscript{72}

Although his father’s business had failed, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s venture proved viable. Initially, most of his work centred on portraiture. In this era, portraits were highly

\textsuperscript{69} Album of Photographs of the North West Coast, Mount Bischoff and Launceston (NS 473/38, TAHO) p. 13.
\textsuperscript{70} Mercury, 13 August 1875, p. 2 c. 5.
\textsuperscript{71} Mercury, 13 January 1876, p. 3; Mercury, 11 February 1876, pp. 2-3.
\textsuperscript{72} Mercury, 29 November 1875, p. 3 c. 7.
prized, and ‘... the vast majority of photographic images made during the nineteenth century were portraits’. Film and sound archivist, Chris Long describes Stephen 2nd’s portraiture as being ‘far more innovative than his father’s, but ... not outstanding’. However, according to the photo-historian Jack Cato, Stephen 2nd was ‘the most important studio man in [the] city ... [and] had a great reputation for his pictures of children’. An advertorial in the *Examiner* newspaper stated ‘[the Spurlings] have always been to the fore in portraiture, and have a special reputation for being most successful in this branch, especially with photographs of children and high class enlargements’.

As the examples below illustrate, Stephen 2nd’s portraits varied in tone and ambience. He pictured solicitor and businessman, William Ritchie in a serious pose – he appears conventional and determined. By contrast, the image of his brother-in-law William Long hints his subject’s flamboyant life-style. Stephen 2nd photographed Willie (as his friends called him) in a relaxed mode, staring directly at the camera. In the Victorian era, such intimacy with the viewer was deprecated, and often photographers ‘either averted [eyes] from the gaze of the viewer or distanced from the lens so that no stare intruded upon the viewer’s personal space’. (The same rule did not apply when photographing children, criminals or those considered racially inferior.) In a different vein, the demure expression on the face of the unknown woman contrasts with the poignancy of his portrait of the artist and writer, Louisa Anne Meredith clasping a young boy (possibly her grandson). Finally, his image of an unknown girl poised beside a rustic seat, suggests a childhood uncomplicated by cares and sorrows. Unlike modern portraiture, which invariably features the sitter smiling, these portraits capture their subjects in reflective moods. The exception is Willie Long who seems to be repressing a desire to burst into laughter.

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76 *Examiner*, 11 March 1922, p. 33 c. 1.
Stephen Spurling 2nd, *William Ritchie*, solicitor, Launceston, carte de visite, c. 1870s, albumen silver print, 11 x 8 cm.


Stephen Spurling 2nd, *Portrait of woman*, date unknown, carte de visite, albumen silver print, 11 x 7 cm & verso showing photographer’s name and address.
Some of these portraits date from the wet plate era, when taking a photograph was a complicated process. Jack Cato described how the photographer had to prepare his own glass photographic plates and coat them with collodion:

[w]hen he was ready to take a picture … [he] placed one of the collodion-coated plates in … [a] sensitising solution for a few seconds, then inserted the plate in its carrier, took it to the camera, exposed it on his subject for five seconds – and returned it to the darkroom and developed it immediately while it was wet.79

The process was complex and dangerous, difficult in a studio and fraught with dangers outdoors. Several factors contributed to the hazards of outdoor photography. Firstly, the photographer had to carry the highly unstable chemicals used in the sensitising and developing processes to the site. Secondly, there was the problem of providing a darkroom. Usually photographers took a tent, but this often proved less

79 Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, p. 29.
than satisfactory, especially in cold or hot climates. In 1863 Paul Ricochet described the difficulties of taking a wet plate camera into the Tasmanian bush.

the wet process, with a tent, is nearly useless in Australian photography. With the thermometer at 98°F in the shade, the interior of the tent is like the sudatorium in a Roman bath; and added to this, there are frequent hot winds, which cover your plates with fine dust, and often blow the tent over.

Despite the great technical difficulties associated with outdoor work in this era, not all Stephen 2nd’s photographic work was in his studio. At times he ventured further afield. As he started to explore the possibilities of outdoor work, the need for an on-site darkroom became paramount.

Like many other photographers, Stephen 2nd found some innovative solutions to this problem. However, there is some confusion as to exactly when and how this happened. According to Jack Cato, ‘when the Launceston and Western Railway opened, Stephen II had a special van on the train, converted into a darkroom’. In 1871, the Launceston and Western Railway Company opened the first railway line in Tasmania, between Launceston and Deloraine. The inaugural train trip, on 10 February, created great excitement. The Governor Charles du Cane and his entourage travelled in a flag-bedecked carriage, while other carriages accommodated the accompanying dignitaries. Despite the auspicious beginning, a little over a year

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81 In this instance, Paul Ricochet was describing a photographic excursion to Mount Wellington, Tasmania. The fact that the weather he experienced was hot suggests the trip took place in midsummer. As wet plate photographers required sunlight to assist in the printing of their images, this was the best season for photographic excursions.
later the company ran into financial difficulties and the government had to assume control of the line.\textsuperscript{87} The ensuing tumult polarised public opinion against the government and it was not until 1904 that the company was officially wound up.\textsuperscript{88}

Although Jack Cato claims Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} had a darkroom on the train, this is not mentioned in newspaper accounts, and no photographs or other records of his involvement in the opening have been located.\textsuperscript{89} Chris Long refers to the account as a legend and states that, although he was unable to confirm the claim, many of Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}'s ‘landscape shots are taken very close to railway lines and he took shots of early railway accidents’.\textsuperscript{90} To date, these photographs have not been located. While the date of Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}'s first use of a darkroom in a train is unclear, there is no doubt he did have photographic facilities on a train carriage at least by 1879. In a letter to the editor of the \textit{Examiner} that year, he states how he found it extremely difficult to ‘prepare and develop wet plates in a train in motion’.\textsuperscript{91} Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}'s arrangement with the railways may have historical significance. In 1981 newspaper journalist Ron Williams suggested Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}'s appointment as ‘official photographer to the Launceston and Western Railway Company … made him unique as Australia’s first recorded documentary photographer’.\textsuperscript{92} Since supporting documents have yet to be located, it is not possible to verify this claim. Early overseas documentary photographers include the Frenchman Maxime du Camp, whose images of the Near East appeared in 1849-50, and the Englishman Roger Fenton who, five years later, captured the final stages of the Crimean War.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{87} Chamberlain, \textit{The Launceston and Western Railway}, pp. 45-48; Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania, Volume II}, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{88} Chamberlain, \textit{The Launceston and Western Railway}, pp. 50-52; \textit{Mercury}, 10 February 1951, p. 14 c. 3-6.
\textsuperscript{90} Long, \textit{Tasmanian Photographers}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{91} S Spurling [2\textsuperscript{nd}], ‘Photographs for the Sydney Exhibition’, \textit{Examiner} 4 July 1879, p. 3 c. 4.
\textsuperscript{93} Mark Osterman, ‘Documentary Photography’ in Michael R Peres (ed.), \textit{The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography}, 4\textsuperscript{th} edition (Boston, 2007) p. 70.
Stephen 2nd continued to seize every opportunity to take outdoor photographs. However, he had yet to learn the importance of having the creative freedom to choose when and where he took his images. In 1879 he undertook a contract to take a series of photographs for entry in the Sydney International Exhibition. The photographs were to feature the scenery along the Launceston and Western Railway line, and, as mentioned above, Stephen 2nd had to prepare and develop his wet plates while the train was moving. However, it was the wrong time of year for such an undertaking, and the light was insufficient to produce quality results. In addition, some of the commission members dictated when and where Stephen 2nd was to take the images.

When printed, the commissioners pronounced the photographs as ‘so badly taken that they would only take one copy.’ Controversy reigned at a meeting of the commissioners in Launceston on 2 July 1879. Their comments, reported in the press the following day, prompted Stephen 2nd to defend his actions. In a letter to the local paper he explained the technical difficulties involved, and vowed, ‘it will be a caution to me not to undertake cheap work again in a hurry’. An editorial comment, printed below his letter, described one of Stephen 2nd’s photographs as a ‘melancholy production’ and stated ‘[n]ot a particle of judgment has been displayed in selecting a suitable point of view’. The editor concluded that ‘the fault is not Mr Spurling’s … some of the Commissioners accompanied him on the tour and selected the spots’.

The debacle had one positive effect. Stephen 2nd decided to search for an alternative to the wet plate. A recent overseas discovery provided the solution to his problems. In 1871, the English physician and amateur photographer, Richard Leach Maddox had invented the dry plate and by 1878 these plates were being manufactured and sold in England and Germany. Jack Cato explained the impact of the dry plate:

94 ‘Sydney International Exhibition’, Examiner, 3 July 1879, p. 2 c. 7.
95 S Spurling [2nd], ‘Photographs for the Sydney Exhibition’, Examiner 4 July 1879, p. 3 c. 4.
96 Examiner 4 July 1879, p. 3 c. 4.
the invention of the Dry Plate … created modern photography. All that went before can be considered the dark ages of the process. Now an operator could go out with a bag of slides containing a dozen plates, take his pictures, and develop them a week later if he wished. … the photographic plate that had once had a sensitive life of two or three minutes now lasted at least two years.\footnote{Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, p. 62. Note: This dry plate was different from the preserved collodion plates used by Paul Ricochet on his trip to Lake St Clair. See Osterman, ‘Collodion without the darkroom’ in Peres (ed.), The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography, p. 62.}

In 1879 Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} set about obtaining his own dry plates. The technology was new in Australia and the Weekly Courier later claimed he was ‘the first photographer in Tasmania to use the present dry plate method’.\footnote{Weekly Courier, 7 February 1924, p. 29 c. 5.} According to Jack Cato, 1879 was earliest date for dry plate use, not just in Tasmania, but also Australia. However, Cato postulates it was his cousin-by-marriage John Watt Beattie, who was the first Australian photographer to use these plates.\footnote{Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, pp. 80-81.} Beattie’s biographers, Margaret Tassell and David Wood reiterate this claim.\footnote{Margaret Tassell and David Wood, Tasmanian Photographer, from the John Watt Beattie Collection (Melbourne, 1981) p. 7.} In fact, Beattie only claimed to be the first photographer to use dry plates at Lake St Clair.\footnote{Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, p. 81; Mercury, 25 June 1930, p. 7 c. 5.}

Although there is general agreement on the date, other photo-historians have shied away from naming the first Australian photographer to use dry plates. For example, in her glossary, Gael Newton agrees dry plate arrived in Australia around 1879, but states ‘[m]any Australian photographers claimed to be the first to use the new gelatin dry plates’.\footnote{Gael Newton, Shades of Light, Photography and Australia 1839-1988 (Canberra, 1988) p. 208.} However, in the body of her text, Newton implies the dry plate arrived in Australia in 1878, and mentions Beattie’s 1879 trip to Lake St Clair.\footnote{Newton, Shades of Light, p. 79.} She also claims J W Lindt ‘had been among the first to test the new [dry] plates’, and mentions Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} as a contender for the claim in a footnote.\footnote{Newton, Shades of Light. pp. 44, 190.} Yet, Lindt’s dry plates did not arrive in Australia until March 1880,\footnote{Shar Jones, J W Lindt, master photographer (Victoria, 1985) pp. 2, 8.} and as already stated Beattie only claimed...
to be the first to use the plates at Lake St Clair. Therefore, it seems strange that she relegates Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} to a footnote. Other photo-historians are even less specific about the first Australian photographer to use these plates. Alan Davies and Peter Stanbury claim ‘the first Australian [made] dry plates were used in August 1880, although English dry plates had been used by a few photographers a little earlier’.\textsuperscript{107} Anne-Marie Willis mentions Beattie’s use of dry plates during his 1879 trip to Lake St Clair, but she makes no claims as to the significance of this trip. She observes, ‘[s]everal English firms were manufacturing dry plates by 1878’ and that in 1880 Phillip Marchant of Adelaide became ‘[o]ne of the first to manufacture and sell dry plates in Australia’.\textsuperscript{108} For these researchers, it seems the first photographer to use dry plates in Australia is either unknown, or unworthy of mention.

Chris Long supports the contention that Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} was probably the first Australian photographer to use dry plates.\textsuperscript{109} He argues Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s dry plate images of Corra Linn (near Launceston) probably pre-date Beattie’s images by some months. Long states Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} imported his dry plates from the British firm, Wratten & Wainwright around 1879.\textsuperscript{110} This company, along with the Liverpool Dry-Plate Company, advertised the world’s first manufactured dry plates for sale in April 1878.\textsuperscript{111} Fifteen months later, on 16 July 1879, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} advertised he had ‘introduced several valuable processes’ at his studio. He went on to claim that ‘[t]he photos, turned out from this date will be far superior in style and finish to anything previous. Portraits taken in any weather’.\textsuperscript{112} It is possible the ‘several valuable processes’ to which Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} referred included his introduction of the dry plate. Although this advertisement does not provide irrefutable proof, on the balance of

\textsuperscript{107} Alan Davies and Peter Stanbury, \textit{The Mechanical Eye in Australia: Photography 1841-1900} (Melbourne, 1986) p. 114.
\textsuperscript{108} Anne-Marie Willis, \textit{Picturing Australia: a history of photography} (North Ryde, NSW, 1988) p. 75.
\textsuperscript{109} Long, \textit{Tasmanian Photographers}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{110} Long, \textit{Tasmanian Photographers}, pp. 12, 106. As yet, it has not been possible to verify this claim.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Examiner}, 16 July 1879, p. 4 c. 1. A few weeks earlier William Burrows of Brisbane Street, Launceston, advertised he was introducing ‘all the newest styles known in the art’. \textit{Examiner}, 21 June 1879, p. 1 c. 3.
evidence, it seems reasonable to suggest Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} may well have been the first photographer in Australia to employ this new technology.

When Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} visited Corra Linn for his early experiments with dry plate photography, he chose an area that had already inspired several artists. In 1848 Francis Guillemard Simpkinson painted a watercolour entitled *Corra Lynn* [sic] *on the North Esk River, Van Diemen’s Land*.\(^\text{113}\) The artists Haughton Forrest\(^\text{114}\) and Louisa Anne Meredith were also inspired by the area. Their artworks, which depicted a rocky gorge, and the turbulent waters of the North Esk, employed motifs such as vegetation framing the foreground and a middle distance featuring a wooden bridge, have much in common with picturesque.\(^\text{115}\) Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} employed these conventions when he photographed the same spot. However, his other image of the area, which emphasises the perpendicular rocks, also incorporates elements of the sublime.

![Image](image.png)

Collection of the Tasmaniana Library, State Library of Tasmania

Louisa Anne Meredith (1812-1895) *Corra Linn*, 1879, print, collotype, 23 x 32 cm.

\(^{113}\) Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 126.


Image removed due to reproduction right restrictions. It can be viewed on the National Gallery of Canada web site: cybermuse.gallery.ca

Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Stephen Spurling 2nd, View of the Rocky Gorge with Rapids and a Bridge [View at Corra Linn], c. 1880s, albumen silver print, 18.3 x 23.5 cm.

Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 2nd, Esk River, Tasmania, showing large rock cliff edges [Corra Linn], c. 1880s, b&w photograph, 18 x 22.3 cm.
These images have a strong sense of perspective. They transport the viewer towards a distant point, positioned slightly off-centre to the picture as a whole. Stephen 2nd explores this theme further in *Avenue, Mount Pleasant, Tasmania*. In this image the straight road, bordered by exotic trees, and merging into a blurred distance, help to heighten the sense of perspective. In addition, the interplay of light and shadow in the foreground, and the two small figures in the middle distance, make the whole image feel slightly illusory and more in tune with pictorialism, which became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century. 116 While Stephen 2nd’s images of Corra Linn exhibit elements of both the picturesque and the sublime, his image of Mount Pleasant is more reminiscent of European ordered landscapes. 117

Following his introduction of dry plates, Stephen 2nd continued to experiment. One aspect of photography that fascinated him was the challenge of capturing objects in motion. Photographers had wrestled with this problem for years, and as early as 1859

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had produced stereoscopic views of people walking along streets in Edinburgh and New York.\textsuperscript{118} In 1869 the English photographer, Eadweard Muybridge invented an early camera shutter, and in 1878 he made a series of photographs of a racehorse in action.\textsuperscript{119} Working at a less sophisticated level, in 1880, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} used ‘a home-made drop-shutter’ operated by elastic bands to produce his own instantaneous (or action) pictures of yacht races on the River Tamar. According to Jack Cato, these images were the ‘first instantaneous pictures [taken] in Tasmania’.\textsuperscript{120} The following year Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} advertised Tamar Regatta images ‘taken by an entirely new process, fifty times quicker than anything ever done in Tasmania before, show[ing] distinct impressions of yachts, boats, and figures in motion’.\textsuperscript{121} Anne-Marie Willis explains ‘to capture a moving subject was a technical as well as an aesthetic achievement’, and photo-historian Weston Naef claims that recording motion was ‘one of the most significant and influential accomplishments of nineteenth-century photography’.\textsuperscript{122}

\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}

\textit{Collection of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania}

\textit{Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}, Regatta Scene, c. 1881, albumen silver print.}\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{119} Newhall, \textit{The History of Photography}, pp. 119-121.
\textsuperscript{120} Cato, \textit{The Story of the Camera in Australia}, p. 166; Ted Spurling, Notes.
\textsuperscript{121} Examiner, 5 March 1881, p. 4 c. 1.
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Album of Photographs of the North West Coast, Mount Bischoff and Launceston} (NS 473/38, TAHO) p. 24.
Stephen 2nd also took photographs further afield. Jack Cato claims he acquired a huge camera, which produced 40 x 33 centimetre images. For ease of movement Stephen 2nd mounted it ‘on to a hand-truck so that it could be wheeled from place to place’.\(^{124}\) Cato states Stephen 2nd used this camera to make ‘an outstanding series covering the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining company’s works at Waratah, and many beauty spots around Launceston’.\(^{125}\) These images of Mount Bischoff may be the twelve images Stephen 2nd offered to sell to the company in early 1887. According to company minutes, the directors declined Stephen 2nd’s offer.\(^{126}\) Somewhat ironically, this was around the time John Watt Beattie ‘was commissioned by the North Mt Lyell Company to photograph their works, mine and railway route’.\(^{127}\)

An ‘anonymous’ album of photographs now held in the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office contains one possible and three identifiable Stephen Spurling 2nd images of Mount Bischoff. This album also contains a large number of identifiable Stephen 2nd photographs of areas in and around Launceston, sailing yachts, Hobart and environs, the northeast and the northwest.\(^{128}\) Another ‘anonymous’ album held at the same office also contains two identifiable Stephen 2nd images.\(^{129}\) These images, together with the papers from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, and an advertisement Stephen 2nd placed in the local press in 1886, announcing views and panoramas of the north, northwest and northeast,\(^{130}\) confirm that in the mid- to late-1880s Stephen 2nd photographed areas throughout Tasmania.

\(^{124}\) Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 166. Although Cato does not specify whether the plates were wet or dry, their large size suggests they were more likely to be wet plates. In this era, photographers preferred the inconvenience of large glass plates and the correspondingly large cameras to the expense and complexity of producing studio enlargements from smaller plates.

\(^{125}\) Cato, *The Story of the Camera in Australia*, p. 166.

\(^{126}\) Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company Papers, Meetings of Directors, 17 and 24 March 1887 (NS 911/5, TAHO).


\(^{128}\) Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 9 January 2008. *Album of Photographs of the North West Coast, Mount Bischoff and Launceston* (NS 473/38, TAHO). The Mount Bischoff images are photographs 45-48. Photograph 76 also features Mount Bischoff, but it is difficult to identify the photographer.

\(^{129}\) *Anonymous Photo Album* (NS 473/37, TAHO). Photographs 2 and 40 are embossed ‘Spurling’.

\(^{130}\) Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 15 October 2008.

Stephen Spurling 2nd, *Mount Bischoff*, c. 1886, albumen silver print. 131

131 *Album of Photographs of the North West Coast, Mount Bischoff and Launceston* (NS 473/38, TAHO) p. 46.
Some of Stephen 2nd views of Mount Bischoff, as well as some of his images of Beaconsfield, featured at the Tasmanian Court of the Centennial Exhibition in Melbourne in 1888. These images, along with some Anson Brothers’ photographs, were then forwarded Paris for display at the 1889 ‘Exposition Universelle’.

Stephen 2nd had other successes. Apart from his panoramas of townships in Tasmania’s north, Stephen 2nd also produced wide-angle images of his hometown. It is believed he made his circa 1881 panorama by taking ‘three exposures on large dry plates and contact print[ing] them in his studio’. The resultant picture, ‘taken from Burke Street, West Launceston’, provided ‘a fascinating panorama of the city 75 years after the first soldiers and settlers disembarked on the banks of the Tamar’.

In 1999 the Friends of the Launceston Library produced one thousand reprints of the panorama.

Not content with this panorama, Stephen 2nd continued to experiment. In 1886 he created another panorama, this time taken from the Firebell Tower. He took this panorama as a series of nine photographs, and when joined the panorama measured eight feet long by fourteen inches high. For its time, this was ‘the largest panoramic view’ ever made of Launceston. The Examiner newspaper described it as ‘one of the best photographic views yet exhibited of Launceston’ and stated that the image ‘reflects very great credit on Mr Spurling’. Stephen 2nd advertised this panorama, mounted in book form, for 26 shillings.

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132 Mercury, 2 August 1888, p. 4.
133 Mercury, 15 May 1889, p. 2; 26 August 1889, p. 4.
134 Examiner, 10 December 1999, p. 48 c. 4. The date is an approximation, based on the construction dates of the buildings in the photograph.
135 Examiner, 10 December 1999, p. 48 c. 3.
137 Examiner, 11 May 1886, p. 2.
138 Examiner, 11 May 1886, p. 2.
139 Examiner, 20 May 1886, p. 1 c. 5.
Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 360° Panorama of Launceston, 1886, nine albumen silver prints, each 23.8 x 27.0 cm.

A few years later Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} started to experiment with flashlight photography. From the 1860s photographers had experimented with various ways of illuminating their subjects.\textsuperscript{140} However, it took many years to discover the most effective and economical means of achieving a desirable outcome.\textsuperscript{141} These experiments were often dangerous, and ‘accident followed accident, [with] fires and explosions causing loss of life and limb – literally’.\textsuperscript{142} As mentioned in Chapter 1, photographer Charles

\textsuperscript{140} Naef, Era of exploration, p. 67; Newhall, The History of Photography, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{141} Chris Howes, To photograph darkness: the history of underground and flash photography (Carbondale, c. 1989) pp. 100-109.
\textsuperscript{142} Howes, To photograph darkness, p. 106.
Kerry was an early exponent of flashlight photography in Australia. He started experimenting in 1888, and four years later exhibited thirteen flashlight images of caves.143 Stephen 2nd was not far behind. According to his grandson Ted Spurling, Stephen 2nd employed an improvised bellows operated firing device and six clay pipe-fulls of magnesium powder to produce a flashlight photograph at the Albert Hall shortly after it opened in 1891.144

Although there is no other evidence to confirm this date, there is evidence that two years later Stephen 2nd and his son Stephen 3rd photographed cave interiors, ‘illuminated by powerful magnesium lamps’.145 It is possible Stephen 2nd was referring to some variation of the magnesium powder burner, which operated on the principle of blowing a ‘reservoir of [magnesium] powder … into the flame of a spirit burner by a puff of air’.146 These burners were variously known as ‘puff lamps’, ‘insufflator lamps’ or ‘powder lamps’, and were initially used in studios, but soon became popular for subterranean photography.147 According to underground photography expert, Chris Howes, the use of such apparatus to photograph caves overseas dates from around 1888.148 While such procedures produced sufficient illumination to take a photograph, their use was risky and gave the photographer only limited control over the amount of light produced. However, for many years there was no other alternative. The safer and more reliable flashbulbs date from 1925 – the year after Stephen 2nd’s death.149

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147 Howes, *To photograph darkness*, p. 102.
148 Howes, *To photograph darkness*, pp. 102, 108.
While flashlight devices illuminated the subject, their tendency to emit suffocating smoke and fumes made their use in studios undesirable. The most obvious solution was to install electricity. According to the *Examiner*, the Spurlsings utilised ‘a temporary installation’ some years before electricity was available in the town. As a result, their studio was the first in Launceston to introduce artificial lighting. This innovation enabled them to take portraits when there was limited natural light. Launceston’s first electrical lighting system, at the Waverley Woollen Mills, dates from 1889. Six years later, on 10 December 1895, the commissioning of the Duck Reach power station meant the main streets were illuminated by electric power.

The 1890s proved a period of changing economic fortunes for Tasmanians. In the early part of the decade the mineral booms in the west and east led to new settlements in the north-west, and a period of general expansion in the north. Launceston became the epicentre of this growth and in 1891 it hosted an exhibition to highlight primary and secondary industries. However, just a few months prior to the exhibition’s opening, the Bank of Van Diemen’s Land teetered on the point of collapse. Stephen 2nd’s cousin-by-marriage, George Parker Fitzgerald was one of the joint trustees appointed to act when the bank went into liquidation. The bank’s collapse triggered a period of financial uncertainty; unemployment soared and by 1893 the colony’s economy was in turmoil. According to photo-historian, John McPhee, photographic studios also experienced a downturn during this period. In an effort

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154 Robson, *A Short History of Tasmania*, p. 75; Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II*, pp. 168-171. The catalogue shows there were no professional photographers amongst the exhibitors.
156 Robson, *A History of Tasmania, Volume II*, p. 174. George Parker Fitzgerald married Stephen 2nd’s cousin, Emma (Minnie) Lovett on 5 August 1882. Minnie was the eldest daughter of Emma Spurling and Frederick Lovett.
to address the situation, the Premier Henry Dobson looked for creative ways to attract money. He decided to encourage tourism and sought suggestions from the public on promoting the colony as a desirable destination.\textsuperscript{159}

Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} was amongst the many Tasmanians who responded to this plea. In March 1893 he wrote to the Premier suggesting scenic photographs could help attract tourists. He explained how his images of Denison Gorge had encouraged hundreds of visitors to use the Scottsdale railway and stated how, in the coming months, he intended to undertake photographic excursions to a number of other potential tourist destinations. These included ‘Chudleigh Caves and Falls; Sheffield Falls, Forest Scenery between Scottsdale and St Helens, Ben Lomond Ranges, St Patricks Head, Pillar Rocks and Gully at Coal Mines, Emu Bay Falls and many others’. He also proposed that Tasmania should follow the initiative of other colonial governments and pay photographers to take scenic photographs and allow their images ‘to be placed, free of charge in Railway Carriages, Stations etc’.\textsuperscript{160} The government evidently approved of this suggestion, and for many years Spurling photographs adorned the walls of Tasmanian trains and trams.\textsuperscript{161}

Less than two weeks later Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} wrote a second letter to Henry Dobson. This time he included his article, published in the \textit{Examiner}, describing a recent trip with his son, Steve [Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}] to Chudleigh Caves.\textsuperscript{162} He also enclosed some of his son’s cave photographs taken by the light of (the previously mentioned) magnesium lamps.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{159} Morris, ‘In Pursuit of the Travelling Man’, pp. 22-23.
\textsuperscript{160} Letter written by Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the Hon. Henry Dobson, 20 March 1893 (PD 1/60 file 103/93, TAHO).
\textsuperscript{162} Photos [Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}] ‘A Visit to the New Caves at Mole Creek’, \textit{Examiner}, 15 April 1893, p. 3 c. 6.
\textsuperscript{163} Letter written by Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the Hon. Henry Dobson, 1 May 1893 (PD 1/60 file 103/93, TAHO); \textit{Examiner}, 15 April 1893, p. 3 c. 6.
Just over two weeks later, on 18 May, Henry Dobson ‘called a meeting which led to the formation of the Tasmanian Tourist Association over which he presided until 1914’.\textsuperscript{164} The association aimed to protect the island’s scenic attractions ‘from alienation and vandalism’ and promote them by improving access and advertising.\textsuperscript{165} The other members of the association included the Hobart based photographer, John Watt Beattie. According to the historian Lloyd Robson, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} was also active in the association.\textsuperscript{166} Given that Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} was only sixteen at the time and had barely embarked upon his photographic career, it seems more probable it was his father who initially participated in this association. The committee instigated several projects to promote the island. These included providing all visiting English steam ships with an album depicting Tasmanian scenery.\textsuperscript{167} In addition, in 1899 the committee arranged to publish a series of postage stamps featuring the colony’s attractions.\textsuperscript{168} However, controversy erupted when it became apparent only one of these stamps featured a view from the north of the island. The matter was further complicated by the fact that no-one could establish the location of the scene.\textsuperscript{169}

In his first letter, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} stated that his images of Denison Gorge had attracted many hundreds to use the Scottsdale railway.\textsuperscript{170} From the time of its opening in 1889 this railway had brought growth and prosperity to the local economy. The prospect of attracting tourists, and thereby increasing passenger numbers, would have appealed to the government as it had huge railway construction loans to repay.\textsuperscript{171} Denison Gorge, which flanked the Denison River, just east of Lebrina in Tasmania’s northeast, was

\textsuperscript{165} Mercury Supplement, 30 December 1893, p. 5 c. 1.
\textsuperscript{166} Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania, Volume II}, p. 285.
\textsuperscript{168} Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania, Volume II}, p. 285.
\textsuperscript{169} Examiner, 18 June 1900, p. 4 c. 4-5. The stamp in question, \textit{Dilston Fall} [sic] was taken by Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}. For a full discussion see Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{170} Letter written by Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the Hon. Henry Dobson, 20 March 1873 (PD 1/60 file 103/93, TAHO).
\textsuperscript{171} Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania, Volume II}, pp. 114, 116; Robson, ‘Damnosa Haereditas?’, p. 91.
close to the railway line and was a popular tourist attraction.\footnote{C J Dennison, \textit{Where in Tasmania} (Glenorchy, Tasmania, 1994?) p. 30; Nic Haygarth, \textit{From the Sublime to the Skyline: some factors in the development of Tasmanian black-and-white wilderness photography} (Tasmania, 2005) p. 13.} The fact that the area abounded with fern trees would have made it particularly desirable. In the nineteenth century people were obsessed with growing ferns, using fern motifs for decoration and visiting fern gullies. Denison Gorge soon became northern Tasmania’s equivalent of Fern Tree Gully in the Dandenong Ranges, Victoria or Fern Tree Bower near Hobart.\footnote{Tim Bonyhady, \textit{The Colonial Earth} (Carlton South, Victoria, 2000) pp. 102-105; Tim Bonyhady, \textit{Images in opposition: Australian landscape painting 1801-1890} (Melbourne, 1985) p. 64; Haynes, \textit{Tasmanian Visions}, p. 101; Haygarth, \textit{Booming Tasmania}, p. 13.}

![](image)

Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}, \textit{Denison Gorge}, c. 1890, stereograph.

In the south, Fern Tree Bower was relatively easy to access, and the government directed funds towards making it a popular destination for day-trippers.\footnote{A McConnell and L Scripps, \textit{Focus on the Fringe: Layered use and meanings in a natural context: Wellington Park Historic Heritage Inventory & Audit Project: Volume 2 – Inventory, Place Audit & Plan/Strategy Review} (Hobart, Tasmania, 2005) p. 70 records the date as 1960. However, the author holds a photograph showing the falls were unaffected by flood action as late as January 1966.} A cascade, known as Silver Falls, situated at the heart of the bower, soon became a prime attraction. Today these falls are somewhat changed. This is due in part to human modifications and deposits of rubble, following floods in the late 1960s.\footnote{Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania, Volume II}, p. 286}
images of waterfalls are typical of the sublime, cascades such as these falls exhibit features more in common with the picturesque.\textsuperscript{176}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Image removed due to reproduction right restrictions.}
\textit{It can be viewed on the National Gallery of Canada web site: cybemuse.gallery.ca}
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\caption{Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa}
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Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}, \textit{Tropical Forest Scene} [Silver Falls, Fern tree Bower], c. 1880s, albumen silver print, 17.9 x 23 cm.\textsuperscript{177}

This scene is reminiscent of Nicholas Caire's image, \textit{Fern Terrace on the River Watt}.\textsuperscript{178} Both images feature luxuriant fern growth but, while Caire depicted a stream in the foreground, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} depicted water cascading over a rocky ledge and, perhaps in the tradition of William Charles Piguenit, a small, partly obscured human figure contemplating the scene.

\textsuperscript{176} Brian J Hudson, \textit{Waterfalls of Jamaica: sublime and beautiful objects} (Kingston, Jamaica, c. 2001) p. 10.

\textsuperscript{177} This image is similar, but not the same as an Anson Brothers image of the falls in \textit{Tasmanian Views Album}, 1883 (QVM: 1998: P: 0172, QVMAG).

\textsuperscript{178} See Chapter 1.
During the 1890s Stephen 2nd began involving his family in the business. Five months after their Easter trip to Chudleigh caves, Stephen 3rd ‘started working at photography’ on 4 September 1893.179 Three years later he went the west coast, but was back in Launceston by May 1897, when he wrote an article for the Examiner about a trip to the Western Tiers.180 Another sibling may have also worked in the studio. It is possible Stephen 2nd’s eldest daughter Hilda joined the staff some time prior to her marriage in 1898.181 When Stephen 3rd became a partner in the firm in 1902, the Spurlings had a custom-built studio constructed at 93 Brisbane Street.182

Family members were not the only people Stephen 2nd employed during this period. In 1900 Frederick Vaudry Robinson joined the firm as an apprentice.183 Vaudry spent four years with the Spurlings and then a further decade at Alfred Percy Whitelaw’s portrait rooms. In 1916 he set up a studio in Launceston with his brother Robert. Vaudry was an imaginative photographer, who was at the forefront of photographic developments. He championed the pictorial movement in his home state, and was a talented printmaker. His photographs were innovative and some of his best-known works featured photographs superimposed one upon another. However, many of his images proved challenging to his local clientele. Vaudry also produced oil paintings and possibly studied with the local artist Lucien Dechaineux. The Robinsons remained on good terms with the Spurlings, and when Stephen 3rd discontinued the portrait side of his business in 1924, he commended his clients to the Robinson studio.184

179 Stephen Spurling 3rd, Notes on Employment (Undated, copy held by Christine Burgess).
180 Examiner, 14 May 1897, p. 7 c. 2-3.
181 Hilda Spurling and Leslie Lakin, Marriage certificate (Rgd no. 37, Registration no. 506, Launceston, 1898, TAHO) shows she was a photographer’s assistant at the time of her marriage.
182 Examiner, 11 March 1922, p. 33 c. 1; Ted Spurling, Notes. The new building had an area for re-touching, colouring and mounting photographs and a photographic studio with a glass-clad, pitch roof.
183 According to the Tasmanian Pioneer Index, his name was Frederick Vaudry Robinson, born 23 February 1885. While Long, Tasmanian Photographers, p. 96-97 refers to his name correctly, Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, p. 169 erroneously refers to him as Francis Vaudry Robinson.
Vaudry Robinson was not the only Spurling apprentice. In the early twentieth century Myra Bessie Sargent also joined the firm. Sargent worked for the Spurlings for a few years, and may have taken some Spurling studio images. She evidently received a good grounding in all aspects of the business, for a year after moving to Wynyard with her parents and siblings she opened her own studio. Sargent operated her business from 1912 to 1920. During this time she took portraits of local residents, photographs of buildings in and around Wynyard, and community events. She also took two images of the Tasmanian tiger, prior to the demise of this species. Today the Wynyard Historical Society, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, (hereafter TMAG) and the Tasmaniana Library, Hobart, all hold small collections of her images.\(^{185}\) Sargent was not the only female employee at the Spurling studio in the early 1900s. A Miss L Thorne also worked there until her marriage in 1910.\(^{186}\)

\(^{185}\) Marion Sargent, *Myra Bessie Sargent, 1878-1940* (Unpublished document, 1998, copy held by Christine Burgess); Email from Marion Sargent to Christine Burgess, 5 November 2004; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 100; *North-Western Advocate and Emu Bay Times*, 21 December 1915, p. 4 c. 2.

Other people employed at the Spurling studio in the early twentieth century included Ray Burke and Leonard Ferrall, both of whom worked in the dark room from the mid-1910s until around 1937. According to Chris Long, it is possible Ferrall also did some presswork for the firm during the 1920s. Then in 1926, Stephen 3rd employed Bob Mackrill as an errand boy. When in 1937, Kodak took over the Spurling business, Mackrill continued to work at the studio. Over the next two decades he progressively acquired experience and skills. Then in 1955, he opened a camera store in Brisbane Street in partnership with N Direen. Later, he opened his own store, also in Brisbane Street, where he worked until his retirement in 1978.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Australian colonial newspapers started to include illustrations. One such paper was the Launceston-based *Tasmanian*. This paper began publishing on 21 January 1871, and at the beginning of 1886 commenced producing a quality pictorial supplement. The paper continued to publish lithographs and photographs on a regular basis up until 28 December 1895. It is likely that many of these lithographs were based on photographs, a number of which may have been Spurling originals. Certainly a series of four lithographs, published by Aikenhead and Button of Launceston from the Fire Brigade Tower in 1886, bear a very close resemblance to Stephen 2nd’s 360-degree panorama taken that same year. Another chromo-lithograph of Launceston, reproduced by Rider and Mercer appeared in a supplement to the *Daily Telegraph* on 22 May 1890. This

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190 *Examiner*, 1 January 1886, p. 2 c. 3.
192 For example, the four lithographs of Launceston, which appeared on 1 and 15 January 1887.
lithograph was based on ‘photographs supplied by Mr S Spurling’. According to historian Nic Haygarth, Stephen 2nd also supplied images for the ABC Pictorial Advertising Book, distributed free through the Colonist newspaper in 1890.

When the Tasmanian ceased publication, the Launceston Examiner filled the void and started publishing similar articles. These usually appeared in the Saturday edition or in specially released supplements. From time to time the Spurlsings contributed photographs to this paper. When the Examiner commenced publication of a subsidiary, the Weekly Courier on 6 July 1901, the first edition featured several Spurling images. A week later, the paper used Spurling photographs in their extensive photographic coverage of a royal tour in Launceston. From then on, both Stephen 2nd and his son regularly contributed photographs to the paper.

The Hobart based newspaper, the Tasmanian Mail published its first images in 1895. Apart from images supplied, on a regular basis, by their ‘own artist of photographs’, John Watt Beattie, the paper also used images taken by other southern photographers. In addition, some northern photographers also rated publication. For example, Spurling images appeared on 7 March 1896 and again on 9 January 1897. On 20 February 1897, ‘Mr S Spurling’ provided nine photographs for a full-page spread covering the Launceston races and further Spurling photographs appeared in July that year.

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194 Daily Telegraph, 22 May 1890. p. 2 c. 5.
195 Haygarth, Booming Tasmania, pp. 56-58.
196 The Tasmanian: Illustrations 1883-1895, p. 2.
197 For example, Stephen Spurling 3rd’s photographic coverage of the Examiner sponsored trip from Liena to Barn Bluff in 1898 appeared in a supplement to the Examiner on 9 July 1898 pp. 1-3, 6, 8 and again in Examiner Christmas Supplement on 19 December 1900, pp. 23-25.
198 Weekly Courier, 13 July 1901.
199 Dan Sprod, Victorian and Edwardian Hobart from old photographs (Sydney, 1977) p. xi.
200 Spurling, Front View of Building, c. 1896, Tasmanian Mail, 7 March 1896 p. 18; Tasmanian Mail, 9 January 1897.
201 Tasmanian Mail, 20 February 1897, p. 17; Tasmanian Mail, 3 July 1897; Tasmanian Mail, 17 July 1897.
The next few years brought several changes in fortune. In 1895 Stephen 2nd received an award at the Intercolonial Photographic Exhibition in Geelong, and in 1906 he won a bronze medal for some slides at an exhibition in Sydney.\footnote{Argus, 15 April 1895, p. 7 c. 4; Minute Book No. 3 (Newspaper article between 27 April 1906 and 21 June 1906) Northern Tasmanian Camera Club – hereafter NTCC (Held by the Launceston Local Studies Collection, Launceston Library); Mercury, 19 May 1906, p. 7.} In 1897, after twenty-four successful years in Launceston, Stephen 2nd decided to expand his business. On 15 May, he opened a second studio at 88 Liverpool Street, in Hobart.\footnote{Mercury, 14 May 1897, p 1; Mercury, 16 June 1897, p. 1. The rooms at 88 Liverpool Street, Hobart, had previously been occupied by the photographer Henry Baily.} Despite extensive advertising, the project proved short-lived. Perhaps, his final advertisements provide an insight into the problem. After the main heading, the adverts stated, ‘Mr S wishes it distinctly understood, to prevent mistakes, that Mr F Spurling has no connection whatever with above’.\footnote{Mercury, 29 June 1897, p. 1; Mercury, 3 July 1897, p. 1S.} Clearly, his brother Frederick’s notoriety was having a deleterious effect on Stephen 2nd’s new venture.

There were other changes. Spurling images now featured in the press and tourist promotions, and as scenic views, postcards, and lantern slides.\footnote{Original Spurling lantern slides are held at George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; Mitchell Library, NSW; National Library of Australia (hereafter NLA); TMAG; Royal Historical Society of Victoria; SLV; Military Museum of Tasmania Inc., Hobart.} The additional income meant that after decades of hardship, the family’s finances started to improve. After constantly moving house,\footnote{Tasmanian Post Office Directories.} the family enjoyed the stability of a permanent residence. In 1911 they had a Federation-style home, which they named Lonah, constructed at 27 Bourke Street, Launceston.\footnote{M Morris-Nunn, Federation Builders in Launceston, Domestic Architecture: 1893-1914 (Launceston, 1987) p. 168; Examiner, 7 December 1911, p. 3 c. 4.} That same year, when Stephen 2nd’s youngest daughter Lilla married, the family financed a memorable wedding.\footnote{Sylvia, ‘Wedding Bells’, Examiner, 7 December 1911, p. 3 c. 4.} As their financial situation improved, the Spurlsings broadened their investments. In 1908 they acquired the first of two orchards at Gravelly Beach in the Tamar Valley. These orchards evidently produced quality fruit, and in April 1917 the Spurlsings ‘secured the champion for [the] best three cases [of] packed fruit’ at the Exeter Fruit
Show.209 The family maintained these properties until Stephen 2nd’s death in 1924.210 Despite the appearance of affluence, the reality was somewhat different. Throughout this period Stephen 2nd accumulated a sizable debt.211

![Collection of the National Library of Australia](image)


Around 1914 the Spurlings instituted some changes to their business. In addition to selling cameras, accessories and a full range of Kodak materials, they introduced a developing, printing and enlargement service for amateur photographers.213 However, the outbreak of the First World War created an unexpected problem. Some of the Spurlings’ cameras came from Germany, and they had their postcards printed in Germany and Prussia. The war unleashed a tide of anti-German sentiment, forcing the Spurlings to remove the German-made cameras from their display cabinets, and store them for the duration of the hostilities.214 They also had to erase ‘Printed in Germany’ or ‘Printed in Prussia’, from the verso of their postcards.215

209 *Mercury*, 2 April 1917, p. 6 c. 4.
210 Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Land Data Registration Branch, *General Law Index*, Tasmania, pp. 1460-1461; *Tasmanian Post Directories* (1912-1924).
211 Stephen Spurling 2nd, Will and Associated Documents (AE 241/147, Probate 14699, Launceston, 1921, TAHO).
212 Lalla Orchard was owned by Mr Walker. *Mercury*, 1 March 1917, p. 2 c. 4.
213 * Examiner*, 11 March 1922.
215 Email from Elery Hamilton-Smith to Christine Burgess, 3 May 2004.
By 1923 Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s ill health precluded him from being actively involved in the business. After nine months of illness he died at his home on 5 February 1924.\textsuperscript{216} He was seventy-six years old. His funeral, followed by an interment at Carr Villa Cemetery, took place two days later.\textsuperscript{217} The \textit{Weekly Courier} stated in their obituary, that ‘[b]oth for his marked ability in the photographic art and his personal high character, [the] deceased was esteemed in the city.’\textsuperscript{218} Despite this idealised public persona, in private Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} was a troubled man, who relied on alcohol to keep his demons at bay. His indulging, in an era when temperance societies enforced social condemnation of liquor consumption, caused the family considerable anguish.\textsuperscript{219} However, they also remembered his compassionate side. In 1981 his granddaughter Hazel recalled that while he enjoyed life, he was a gentle, thoughtful and sensitive man, who delighted in growing roses.\textsuperscript{220}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Collection of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd} outside his home ‘Lonah’ – with his grandson, Stephen Edward (Ted) Spurling, c. 1920, b&w print.}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[216] \textit{Examiner}, 6 February 1924, p. 1 c. 1.
\item[217] \textit{Examiner}, 7 February 1924, p. 1 c. 1.
\item[218] \textit{Weekly Courier}, 14 February 1924, p. 30 c. 3.
\item[219] Recollections of family members as told to Christine Burgess; Haygarth, \textit{Booming Tasmania}, p. 50; Nicholas Shakespeare, \textit{In Tasmania} (NSW, 2004) pp. 258-260.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In his will Stephen 2nd left his shares in the business to his son, Stephen 3rd. The remainder of the estate was held in trust for his wife, Julia and upon her death was to be divided equally between his surviving daughters. When the estate was valued, it was found the gross value of ‘personalty’ was £168 and the capital value of the ‘realty’ was £1400. Encumbrances amounted to £430, leaving a net value of £970, less fees.221 The estate duty amounted to £82 13s. 222 While Stephen 3rd inherited the firm, he also inherited a debt. The division of the estate left all sides feeling cheated. To add to the complications, Hilda’s husband Leslie Lakin was executor of the will. Stephen 2nd’s daughters inherited their share of the estate when Julia died seven years later on 24 July 1931. She was buried with her husband.223

During his lifetime, Stephen 2nd achieved many photographic successes. However, his life was not easy, and he endured both personal and professional demons. His personal demons originated in his convict ancestry, the ignominy of his father’s bankruptcies and incarceration in an asylum and, later his own unsettled family life. His professional demons were no less complex. Apart from the Sydney International Exhibition debacle, Stephen 2nd was embroiled in other controversies. Perhaps the most difficult of these was the ongoing battle he fought for Tasmania to adopt copyright legislation.

Copyright issues in Tasmania during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

Copyright law has a long and complex history. Originally, the concept of ownership of the right to copy related to literary works, but over the years it expanded to include other art forms. While it was relatively straightforward for copyright legislation to protect the creators of literature, art or music, the situation was far from

221 Stephen Spurling 2nd, Will and Associated Documents (Probate 14699, AE241/147, Launceston, 1921, TAHO).
223 Mercury, 25 July 1931, p. 1 c. 1; Carr Villa Cemetery, Lot B 10, 158.
clear for photographers. There was debate as to whether photography was an art form or simply a mechanical process and, if it was an art form, who actually produced the image? Was it the person who conceived the original concept, the photographer, the developer, or the printer? Alternatively, perhaps it was the sun, without which the photograph could not have been made. In addition, since it was possible to copy a photograph, did the person who made the original have the sole right to copy? On the other hand, did the purchaser of an image or a negative have these rights? The situation was even more complicated if the photograph happened to be a portrait, as the question of the rights of the subject deserved consideration. 224

Before Federation in 1901, each Australian colony was responsible for its own copyright laws. In 1852 New South Wales became the first colony to enact laws addressing the issue. Over the following decades, all the other colonies, except Tasmania, enacted similar legislation. In Tasmania, the only copyright legislation passed through parliament was an Act, in 1891, relating to the copyright of newspaper articles, 225 and general copyright issues remained neglected. Hence, by 1895 Tasmania was the only colony without a comprehensive copyright law, or a copyright register. 226 Although this was most probably due to the colonial government’s inertia, in the case of photography, it may have also been an inadvertent outcome of an 1877 court case.

In July of that year, a young Hobart Town photographer, Joshua Anson was prosecuted by the solicitor-general, R P Adams227 for larceny. His indictment was, ‘feloniously stealing a quantity of photographic goods from his employer, H H Baily,

225 ‘The Newspaper Copyright Act, 1891’, Anno Quinquagesimo-Quinto, Victoriae Regine, no. 49, Tasmania, 1891.
photographer”. The case related to a number of items found in a workshop at Joshua’s home. These goods included ‘views, portraits, mounts [and] albums’. During the course of the trial the ownership of these items was the subject of some debate. It was a confusing situation. Two of the albums exhibited were not Bailly’s property, but contained views taken from his negatives. The complexities of the case, reported in detail in the local press, highlighted the difficulties surrounding the legal ownership of photographic goods versus the right to copy other photographers’ work. In this case, Adams determined that since:

> it was not shown distinctly that the views which had been copied from negatives belonging to Mr Bailly had been printed on paper that was his property that could not be considered as larceny, although the surreptitious procurement of such views might be fraud.

Although the jury declared Anson guilty, and he received a two-year prison sentence, the implications of the solicitor-general’s statement proved far-reaching. His statement implied that providing a photograph or negative was obtained legally, and was not printed on stolen paper, it could be copied with impunity. As a result, some Tasmanian photographers believed they could copy their competitors’ images.

Consequently, in Tasmania today there are instances where the same early photograph is attributed to more than one photographer. For example, the State Library of Tasmania database shows the Tasmanian photographer Charles Whitham has several images with joint attributions. One of these images, *Regatta Point, Strahan*, dated 1917 is also attributed to Stephen Spurling 2nd. This same database also shows the Hobart-based firm, Anson Brothers has examples of joint attributions. One of these images, *Launceston*, also appears in an album of photographs

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228 *Mercury*, 11 July 1877, p. 2 c. 6; *Mercury*, 12 July 1877, p. 2 c. 5; Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, pp. 6-7.
229 *Mercury*, 11 July 1877, p. 2 c. 7.
230 *Mercury*, 11 July 1877, p. 2 c. 7.
231 *Mercury*, 12 July 1877, p. 2 c. 5.
Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} and his wife Julia presented to Mr and Mrs W Golding on 21 July 1879.\textsuperscript{233} Mrs Golding was Julia’s sister Alice.\textsuperscript{234} It would seem unlikely Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} would give his wife’s family an album of photographs containing an image taken by a competitor. On the other hand, Joshua Anson, who was one of the proprietors of Anson Brothers, already had a conviction for the theft of photographic items.\textsuperscript{235} His brother Henry also spent a brief time in gaol.\textsuperscript{236}

![Collection of the W L Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania](image)

*Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd}, Launceston, c. 1879, albumen silver print, 10.7 x 17.3 cm.* [Image also attributed to Anson Brothers].

It is not always possible to tell which photographer took the image and who made the copy. As a further complication, photographers sometimes included other

\textsuperscript{233} *Album presented to Mr & Mrs W Golding from S & J E Spurling*, 21 July 1879 (W L Crowther Library – hereafter WLCL, SLT).

\textsuperscript{234} *Tasmanian Pioneer Index*. Alice married William Henry Golding on 16 December 1869. William Golding founded the jewellery company Golding and Son in Hobart Town in 1875.

\textsuperscript{235} *Mercury*, 11 July 1877, p. 2 c. 6-7; *Mercury*, 12 July 1877, p. 2 c. 5.

\textsuperscript{236} On 5 July 1889 Henry Anson was convicted of drunkenness and sentenced to one month in gaol. However, he was able to pay a fine in lieu of his sentence and was released the same day. These records show that Henry was unable to read or write, so presumably he played only a minor role in the management of the family photography business. Tasmanian Family History Society Inc., *Campbell Street Gaol Gatebook data base*; Laurie Moody, ‘Campbell Street Gaol Inmates 1870-1890’, *Tasmanian Ancestry*, v. 24, no. 4, March 2004, pp. 199-200.
photographers’ work in their albums. For example, a photograph of Silver Falls, Fern Tree from William Cawston’s album, *Tasmanian Scenery*, clearly shows ‘Anson Bros, Hobart’ written across the lower edge of the photograph.  

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Stephen 2nd became concerned about the lack of a copyright act and registration procedure in Tasmania. He mentioned the matter in his 1893 letter to Premier Henry Dobson and repeated his anxieties when he wrote to the *Examiner* in 1900. In this letter, he explained how he, and others, had for years called for copyright legislation, but their entreaties went unheeded – the government had failed to act. The lack of copyright laws in Tasmania meant that when John Watt Beattie purchased Anson’s studio in 1891, the sale included their ‘entire negative collection, which he then relabelled as his own’. Examples of this relabelling include Beattie stamping his name over Anson’s in a photograph album, and on the verso of an Anson image. It is possible Beattie was justified in some of these actions. He had worked for Anson’s for several years and may have taken some of these photographs.

However, in other instances, Beattie claimed credit for photographs that were clearly not his work. For example, some of the images Beattie used in his lantern slide shows were not Beattie originals, yet he sold copies of these slides both locally and overseas – badged under his name. Intriguingly, in 1895 Beattie registered seven images with the Copyright Office of the Stationers’ Company in England. In each

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241 *Picturesque Southern Tasmania* (PH 30/1717-1730, TAHO), last page.
case, he claimed to be the ‘copyright owner and author of [the] work’. Further, two images of Aboriginal Tasmanians at Oyster Cove must date from before 1876, when the last full-blood Aboriginal died. Beattie could not have taken these images either – he arrived in the colony two years later, in 1878. In the same vein, an image of the bushranger Martin Cash is often credited to Beattie. Presumably, archivists assume Beattie took this image because there are copies of the image inscribed with Beattie’s name. However, Cash died in 1877, a year before Beattie arrived in the colony. Beattie, whose appointment as the official government photographer dates from 21 December 1896, clearly believed he had the right to use these works and claim the copyright. According to Chris Long, Beattie ‘copied many early Tasmanian photographs, particularly of the Tasmanian Aborigines, early Hobart scenes, and the convict establishments’. Photo-historian, Helen Ennis claims ‘Beattie continued to reprint Woolley’s negatives of William Lanney and Truganini in the 1890s’. As photo-historian Alan Davies explains, ‘Beattie was a prolific photographer of Tasmanian scenery and recycler of views from other photographers’.

There are very few examples of the Spurlings using images from other photographers. One example is the Spurling enlargement of Charles Woolley’s image.

246 Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, p. 80.
249 The TAHO holds two such images. One is a black-and-white postcard, which has ‘Beattie Studios’ stamped on the verso (PH 30/1/ 672). The other photograph has ‘Beattie’, handwritten in the right-hand corner (PH 30/1/4133).
251 Hobart Town Gazette (1/1-29/6, 1897, p. 280, TAHO); Robson, A History of Tasmania, Volume II, p. 168; Tassell and Wood, Tasmanian Photographer, p. 7; Haygarth, Booming Tasmania, p. 68.
254 Davies, An Eye for Photography, p. 68.
of a group of Aboriginal Tasmanians, held by the TMAG. As this image has ‘Spurling Enlargement’ clearly stamped on the verso, there is no attempt to claim authorship.\footnote{Studio Portrait of Tasmanian Aboriginals (TMAG Q13023). Email from Vicki Farmery, TMAG, to Christine Burgess, 20 April 2010.} A further example is a Spurling carte de visite of Queen Victoria, held by the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston (hereafter QVMAG).\footnote{Held by the QVMAG (QVM: 1991: P: 2676, QVMAG).}

![Collection of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery](image)

From an original by Alexander Bassano (1829-1913), Portrait of Queen Victoria, 1882, carte de visite, Spurling print.

This image, taken by the London-based photographer, Alexander Bassano in 1882, was released as the official jubilee portrait in 1887. It was widely distributed, and today there are various versions of this image, with differing inscriptions, in public and private collections.\footnote{See National Portrait Gallery, England, Portrait of Queen Victoria by Alexander Bassano, at http://www.npg.org.uk/live/search/portrait.asp?search=ss&sText=Queen\%20Victoria&LinkID=mp04634&rNo=54&role=sit, 05/01/2008.} Terence Pepper, who curates photographs at the National
Portrait Gallery in London, suggests two possible scenarios as to how the Spurlings came by this image.\(^{258}\) One possibility is that the Spurling print might be an unlicensed, pirated version of the original. The second possibility is that, since this image was the official jubilee portrait, there may have been a special copying licence issued for its distribution.

Given Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)'s public campaign for copyright legislation, along with the clarity of the image, the royal subject matter and the fact that the printer’s name, Trapp & Münch, Berlin, appears under the Spurling inscription, it seems unlikely this image is a pirated version, and more likely that the Spurlings had some form of distribution arrangement with the printers. Such images of the royal family and other celebrities were fashionable during the Victorian era. Anne-Marie Willis explains: ‘[t]hrough photographic representations of these famous people, the cultural power of Europe was given a tangible presence in colonial society’.\(^{259}\) In Australia, images of bushrangers and other anti-heroes also proved popular.

Other examples of the Spurlings copying images concern the photographing of art works. For example, one of the Spurlings (probably Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)), photographed Robert Dowling’s *Tasmanian Aborigines* for inclusion in Henry Button’s book, *Flotsam and Jetsam.*\(^{260}\) In addition, the National Library of Australia holds a Spurling copy of a painting of Port Arthur in 1849.\(^{261}\) In other instances, such as the photograph of an etching of Cataract Gorge, the photograph may be a copy of a print based on the original photograph.\(^{262}\) Such examples are difficult to unravel. However, since, in at least some of these examples, the photographs appeared in print, it is unlikely this would have happened without the artist’s prior agreement.

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258 Email from Terence Pepper, Curator of Photographs, National Portrait Gallery, London to Christine Burgess, 8 January 2008.
259 Willis, *Picturing Australia*, p. 47.
261 NLA, Spurling copy of painting of Port Arthur (nla.pic-an21697618-344).
262 NLA, Spurling photograph of an etching of Cataract Gorge (nla.pic-an21697618-126 and nla.pic-an21697618-446).
When Australia became a Federation in 1901, copyright laws became a Commonwealth responsibility. However, it was not until 1905 that the Government passed appropriate legislation. The Act, which became operative on 1 January 1907, aimed to create a national register of copyright registrations. Up until this time, Tasmanian artists, authors (with the exception of newspaper journalists) and composers had no means of protecting their intellectual property. For Stephen 2nd the situation during this period was clearly unsatisfactory. In 1901 he went to the trouble and expense of registering eight Spurling images with the Copyright Office of the Stationers’ Company in England. The 1905 Copyright Act promised to give photographers some level of protection for their creative works. Under this Act, ‘the records of the five former registrars of copyright were passed to the new Commonwealth jurisdiction, which used the same type of registration system as the former colonial administrations’. However, the transfer of these registration procedures proved a lengthy and difficult process. A number of agencies and administrations were involved. In Tasmania, the situation was even more complex. The State had no bureaucratic structures to administer copyright registration, so although laws were in place, there was no way of implementing them.

In these circumstances, there was little to discourage some photographers from continuing to claim authorship of other photographers’ images. In an effort to address this problem, the Spurlings normally took the precaution of placing their name on their photographs. Stephen 2nd usually included an embossed seal in the lower, right-hand corner of his images. Unfortunately this was often difficult to see, and, if the image was copied, the seal became almost invisible. This explains the existence of ‘anonymous’ albums in public collections, which actually contain Spurling images.

263 Minell, A Nation’s Imagination, p. 83.
266 Minell, A Nation’s Imagination, p. 83.
267 Minell, A Nation’s Imagination, pp. 83-84.
As previously mentioned, two ‘anonymous’ albums in the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office contain between them at least fifty identifiable Stephen 2nd photographs.268 Perhaps to overcome the problem of the almost invisible embossed seal, Stephen 3rd often included a hand-written inscription along the lower edge of his images. In the case of framed photographs the name ‘Spurling’ was either embossed on the image, or on the cardboard surround. In a few instances, the Spurlings released photographs with copyright marked on them.269

Despite their precautions, other photographers continued to use Spurling images. For example, around 1909 John Watt Beattie produced a leather-bound album of photographs. The flyleaf stated, in gold lettering, ‘Photographic Views of Tasmania by J W Beattie’. However, twelve of the twenty-four images in the album were clearly marked ‘Spurling’.270 It is open to speculation as to why and how this happened. If Beattie produced this album with the Spurlings’ agreement, why was there no attribution to them on the flyleaf? If there was no agreement, why include clearly identifiable Spurling photographs? Whatever the case, there appears to be ‘no effort at deception beyond the album title’.271 A similarly intriguing example is the cropped and slightly modified version of Stephen 3rd’s photograph, Evening on the Gordon River, Tas which was renamed Evening, Gordon River, W Coast, Tas, and attributed to Beattie’s Studio in Garry Kerr and Harry McDermott’s book, The Huon Pine Story.272 A similar copy of the Spurling original, and a copy of another Spurling image, A Peep on Gordon River, W Coast, Tas, were available for reproduction and

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268 Album of Photographs of the North West Coast, Mount Bischoff and Launceston (NS 473/38, TAHO); Haygarth, Booming Tasmania, p. 54; Anonymous Photo Album (NS 473/37, TAHO). Various albums held by the NLA may also contain Stephen Spurling 2nd views.


270 J W Beattie, Tasmanian Scenery (NS 2404/1/1, TAHO). The Spurling images appear on pp. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. Of these, nine images were from Spurling 3rd’s 1908 journey ‘Across the Plateau’, one from his 1909 trip ‘Liena, Forth Valley and Barn Bluff’ and two from a trip to Devil’s Gullet/ Alum Cliffs circa 1908. Hence the Beattie album would have been published no earlier than 1909.

271 Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 7 March 2008.

sale at Beattie’s Studio as recently as October 2008. While both images had Spurling identification on the front, they had Beattie’s Studio catalogue numbers on the verso.

The copyright laws changed in 1912 when the Commonwealth Government passed a new Act, based on the British 1911 *Imperial Copyright Act*. This legislation revoked previous copyright legislation and aimed to bring Australia into line with international laws. For photographers, copyright now extended for a period of fifty years after the negative’s creation. When the courts subsequently interpreted this Act, they ruled ownership of the negatives implied ownership of copyright. It seems this Act was more effective in establishing copyright controls, and blatant examples of Tasmanian photographers ‘borrowing’ each other’s work decrease from this date. Although the 1912 Commonwealth copyright legislation had clarified a number of issues, other matters remained unresolved. In addition, the 1912 Act did not prevent state governments legislating with respect to the deposition of books in public libraries, and in 1917 a deputation met with the Attorney-General to discuss the need for an Act that would require a copy of any book published in Tasmania be deposited with the Tasmanian Public Library in Hobart. This Act was passed in December of that year. Despite various inadequacies and loopholes, the 1912 Act (with a few amendments) remained in force until 1968, when the Federal Government passed more comprehensive and effective legislation. For the Spurlings this was too late to be of benefit during their professional careers.

273 Beattie’s Studio, 51 Tiger Head Road, Dodges Ferry, Tasmania, 7173.
274 Beattie’s Studio catalogue numbers: 2572A and 2573A. When reproduced, the Spurling identification on *Evening, Gordon River, W Coast, Tas*, becomes difficult to discern.
277 *Mercury*, 1 August 1917, p. 4 c. 6.
In 2007 the Sydney lawyer Benedict Atkinson challenged the theory ‘that copyright laws were designed to provide creators with the incentive to produce’ and argued ‘creators will always create regardless of their rights’. This theory may hold true for creators during most of the twentieth century when copyright laws were in place. However, it does not appear to be applicable to the Spurlings’ experiences during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when there were no copyright laws in Tasmania. In fact, the evidence suggests up until the early part of the twentieth century the lack of copyright protection in Tasmania had a deleterious effect upon landscape photography. Not only did photographers have to contend with others copying their images, but also there was little incentive to venture into wilderness areas to take photographs. In his letter to the Examiner in 1900 Stephen 2nd stated:

We have in Tasmania numberless beautiful scenes, and many beautiful waterfalls, unknown even to many Tasmanians; but it does not pay our local view-photographers to go to the expense of securing photos of them, unless within a short distance of our two large centres of population, for the following reasons: – We have no copyright act in Tasmania, so any fine new photo of worth-visiting subjects is quickly copied, and the man who deserves kudos for his enterprise is robbed of his rights.

Stephen 2nd explained that a further disincentive to local photographers taking images of Tasmanian scenery related to the taxes the Tasmanian government imposed on cameras and photographic materials. Visitors to the island, who had obtained their cameras and equipment duty-free, could take photographs of Tasmanian scenery and sell their images at prices local photographers were unable to match. The whole situation was strangely ironic. The government needed images to advertise the island, but the tax regime and lack of copyright laws proved major disincentives to local photographers wanting to take scenic views.

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281 S Spurling, ‘The tourist in Tasmania’, Examiner, 30 July 1900, p. 3 c. 5.
282 S Spurling, ‘The tourist in Tasmania’, Examiner, 30 July 1900, p. 3 c. 5.
The Northern Tasmanian Camera Club

During his career Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} faced various other professional disappointments. One particular disappointment occurred towards the end of the 1880s, when he entered a photograph entitled \textit{Launceston} in the 1888-89 Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne.\textsuperscript{283} Although this image failed to receive an award from the judges, he would have been somewhat mollified when some of his other entries were subsequently displayed in Paris.\textsuperscript{284} However, other more serious disappointments stemmed from his association with the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club (hereafter NTCC). This Launceston-based club, founded by F Styant Browne in 1889, aimed to promote quality photography and to explore photographic innovations.\textsuperscript{285}

Although club rules restricted membership to amateurs,\textsuperscript{286} members regularly called upon professionals to act as judges in their competitions.\textsuperscript{287} As Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} had a reputation as ‘a superb technician, chemist and darkroom operator,’ he often acted in this capacity for the club.\textsuperscript{288} According to the \textit{Minute Books}, he started judging landscape competitions for the club in February 1890\textsuperscript{289} and continued as a solo judge until 1896, when he and the local artist Lucien Dechaineux became joint judges.\textsuperscript{290} For the next eleven years Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}, usually assisted by Dechaineux, continued to judge the club’s competitions. At various times other professional photographers also acted as judges.\textsuperscript{291} However, the club experienced difficulties attracting alternative

\textsuperscript{283} Official Record of the Centennial International Exhibition, 1888-89, Melbourne (State Library of Victoria). Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s image was Number 50 in Class 12 – Photographic Proofs and Apparatus.
\textsuperscript{284} \textit{Mercury}, 15 May 1889, p. 2; 26 August 1889, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{286} \textit{Minute Book no. 1}, 13 September 1889, NTCC); Ferrall, \textit{The Northern Tasmanian Camera Club}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{287} \textit{Minute Books nos 1-4}, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{288} Long, \textit{Tasmanian Photographers}, p. 106; Ferrall, \textit{The Northern Tasmanian Camera Club}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{289} \textit{Minute Book no. 1}, 14 February 1890, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{290} \textit{Minute Book no. 2}, 18 March 1896, NTCC; Long, \textit{Tasmanian Photographers}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{291} \textit{Minute Book nos 1-4}, NTCC.
judges, and at times had to call on Stephen 2nd and Dechaineux when other judges withdrew.\textsuperscript{292} Consequently, Stephen 2nd was the most frequent judge and until 1907 he acted in this capacity, either singly or jointly, on some twenty occasions.

During this period Stephen 2nd also attended club meetings and participated in a variety of activities. As well as allowing members to adjourn to his studio to enlarge photographs, he also presented books, lent and displayed photographs, provided critiques for the members and contributed to lantern slide shows.\textsuperscript{293} In addition, at a meeting held in June 1898, a series of lantern slides of the Mole Creek track, taken by his son, Stephen 3rd formed part of the evening’s entertainment.\textsuperscript{294} On a number of occasions club members also invited Stephen 2nd to their field days. An album of one such excursion, held on 9 November 1900, included two of Stephen 2nd’s images.\textsuperscript{295} That same year, Stephen 2nd also lent the club a ‘lantern and enlarging apparatus’ on a trial basis. His offer to sell this equipment to the club for £6 10s was subject to some debate, but eventually declined.\textsuperscript{296} The members subsequently agreed to spend a maximum of £5 on purchasing a lantern, without the enlarging feature. When this proved impracticable, club members agreed to import a lantern from England at a cost of £6 6s plus freight and duty.\textsuperscript{297} The lantern finally arrived, three years and four months after the club had trialled Stephen 2nd’s apparatus.\textsuperscript{298}

Evidently this vacillation did not affect Stephen 2nd’s interactions with the club, and up until 1907 there are frequent references in the club minutes expressing appreciation of his contributions. Phrases such as ‘Mr S Spurling was unanimously

\textsuperscript{292} Minute Book no. 2, 22 December 1899; 20 February 1901; 20 March 1901; 25 March 1901.

\textsuperscript{293} Minute Book nos 1-3, NTCC.


\textsuperscript{295} NTCC, A Pictorial Record of the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club Field Day on November 9th November1900 (Private collection, copy held by Christine Burgess).

\textsuperscript{296} Minute Book no. 1, 11 June 1890, 11 April 1890; Ferrall, The Northern Tasmanian Camera Club, pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{297} Minute Book no. 1, 9 July 1890, 10 December 1890, 14 January 1891.

\textsuperscript{298} Minute Book no. 1, 18 October 1893.
 accorded a vote of thanks for his kindness\textsuperscript{299} and a ‘hearty vote of thanks was accorded Mr Spurling for judging\textsuperscript{300} leave no doubt his contributions were well regarded. At a meeting on 16 July 1902 members voted unanimously ‘that in view of the many services rendered to the club by Mr S Spurling Snr …., all exceptions be made in this case to Rule 19, and that he be elected an honorary member of the club\textsuperscript{301} He was not the only professional to become an honorary member. Two years later John Watt Beattie presented a fee-attracting lantern lecture on the Hartz Mountains, which resulted in a profit of £4-19-00 for the club. Presumably by way of gratitude, members voted in favour of declaring Beattie an honorary member.\textsuperscript{302} It is possible Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} felt slighted that club members equated his years of service with one profit-making lantern lecture. However, the minutes show he continued to participate in club activities for the next few years. A newspaper cutting pasted in the minutes records the club’s indebtedness to Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} and Dechaineux, ‘who are always willing to help the club’ and conveyed thanks for the ‘able way they judged the competitions’.\textsuperscript{303} During the early years of its existence the members of the NTCC explored different aspects of photography and related scientific advances. At club meetings held in 1896 members saw exhibitions of the newly discovered X-ray process. Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} was amongst those in attendance on 16 September.\textsuperscript{304} The Spurlings continued to be involved with the introduction of X-ray technology in Launceston. According to Ted Spurling, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} assisted in the establishment of the first X-ray unit at St Margaret’s Hospital.\textsuperscript{305}

\textsuperscript{299} Minute Book no. 1, 8 April 1891, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{300} Minute Book no. 1, 17 December 1894, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{301} Minute Book no. 3, 16 July 1902, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{302} Minute Book no. 3, NTCC, 26 October 1904; Minute Book no. 3, NTCC, 16 November 1904; Examiner, 21 July 1905, p. 3 c. 5.
\textsuperscript{303} Newspaper article pasted into Minute Book no. 3, NTCC; published in the Examiner, 21 July 1905, p. 3 c. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{304} Richards, ‘A Brisbane Street homeopath: Frank Styant Browne’, pp. 267-268; Minute Book no. 2, 16 September 1896, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{305} Ted Spurling, Notes. St Margaret’s Hospital was built in 1912 and became St Vincent’s Hospital in 1944. Today Calvary Health Care has responsibility for the hospital. Email from Stephanie Dilger to Christine Burgess, 11 September 2008.
This long history of positive interactions with the club suddenly ended in 1907. In February of that year, the *Weekly Courier* published a Spurling Studio image of an international exhibition of photographs by the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club.\(^{306}\) Then just a few weeks later an unexplained record appeared in the club minutes. On 6 March 1907 the club passed a motion to make payments to three judges. Stephen 2\(^{nd}\) was to receive 21 shillings, but two other judges – Dechaineux and Beattie were to receive 23 shillings each.\(^{307}\) Two weeks later another record in the minutes noted ‘[c]orrespondence from … S Spurling’.\(^{308}\) There is no mention as to the nature of this correspondence and the letter in question is not extant. However, the next section of the minutes recorded, ‘proposed by Mr Styant Browne … that Mr Spurling [sic] resignation be accepted with regret carried’.\(^{309}\) The following motion proposed the appointment of Beattie and Dechaineux as judges.\(^{310}\) The annual report of the club’s activities sheds no further light on the incident. However, the president did mention ‘that he was sorry to find that the numbers on the roll had slightly decreased’ during the year.\(^{311}\)

It appears Stephen 2\(^{nd}\) had limited association with the club for the next three years, but then resumed his involvement on an intermittent basis. In July 1910 the Spurlsings wrote to the club, offering their studio for a demonstration of portraiture by electric lighting.\(^{312}\) At a meeting five months later, the club members agreed to attend a session, in March of the following year, at the Spurling studios.\(^{313}\) It is uncertain as to whether this actually took place, as the minute books contain no record of this meeting. In September 1911 Stephen 2\(^{nd}\) and Mr Robinson stated they wished to rescind their services as judges over the issue of changes to Rule 19, which allowed

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\(^{306}\) *Weekly Courier*, 23 February 1907, p. 19.
\(^{307}\) *Minute Book no. 3*, 6 March 1907, NTCC. A description of this exhibition appeared in the report of the club’s Annual Meeting. *Examiner*, 26 July 1907, p. 6 c. 4.
\(^{308}\) *Minute Book no. 3*, 20 March 1907, NTCC.
\(^{309}\) *Minute Book no. 3*, 20 March 1907, NTCC.
\(^{310}\) *Minute Book no. 3*, 20 March 1907, NTCC.
\(^{311}\) *Examiner*, 26 July 1907, p. 6 c. 4.
\(^{312}\) *Minute Book no. 4*, 20; 21 July 1910, NTCC.
\(^{313}\) *Minute Book no. 4*, 14 December 1910, NTCC.
semi-professionals to compete in competitions.\textsuperscript{314} Beattie however, had no objections to the changes.\textsuperscript{315} The following year, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} demonstrated some cinematograph pictures and in 1914 the Spurings lent slides for a club meeting.\textsuperscript{316}

For more than two decades, the NTCC had ‘set the pace in Tasmanian photographic art’.\textsuperscript{317} However, it was difficult to maintain the momentum and by October 1911 many of the members had fallen behind with their subscriptions, and the club had difficulties meeting their financial obligations.\textsuperscript{318} Around 1913 the club minutes become patchy, reflecting a general lack of interest in their activities, and, according to Launceston businessman and author Raymond Ferrall, the club ‘went into recess on the outbreak of World War I’.\textsuperscript{319} With the cessation of hostilities, the club enjoyed a limited resurgence of interest\textsuperscript{320} and when Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} died in 1924, club representatives attended his funeral and sent a floral tribute.\textsuperscript{321}

Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}’s 1907 resignation from the NTCC and his campaign for copyright protection, epitomise the battles he fought for recognition and appreciation. However, there were times when he received accolades for his work. An article in the Daily Telegraph in 1889 described his views of Launceston, the South Esk, Corra Linn and ferns near Scottsdale as ‘the finest collection of photographic views of Northern Tasmania we have seen … every one is a work of art’.\textsuperscript{322} Despite such accolades, photo-historians make little mention his work. His contribution to Tasmanian photography is either ignored,\textsuperscript{323} rates little more than a fleeting

\textsuperscript{314} Minute Book no. 4, 20 September 1911, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{315} Minute Book no. 4, 18 October 1911, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{316} Undated article from 1912 in Minute Book no. 4, NTCC; Minute Book no. 4, 16 June 1914, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{317} Long, Tasmanian Photographers, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{318} Minute Book no. 4, 18 October 1911, NTCC.
\textsuperscript{319} R A Ferrall, Tasmanians All (Launceston, 1982) p. 96.
\textsuperscript{320} Ferrall, Tasmanians All, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{321} Weekly Courier, 14 February 1924, p. 30 c. 3.
\textsuperscript{322} Daily Telegraph, 9 December 1889, p. 2 c. 6.
\textsuperscript{323} R A Ferrall, Notable Tasmanians (Launceston, 1980) p. 70; Ferrall, Tasmanians All, p. 96; Milford McArthur, Prominent Tasmanians (Hobart, 1924) p. 79-80, all refer to Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} but not Stephen 1\textsuperscript{st} or 2\textsuperscript{nd}.
mention or is devalued with statements such as ‘not an outstanding camera artist’. Gael Newton relegates his early adoption of dry plates to a footnote, and makes a brief reference to him within the entry for F Vaudry Robinson in her book *Silver and Grey*. While Helen Ennis states ‘[i]t was not until the 1890s that significant Australian-born photographers began to emerge’, she cites Charles Kerry as her only example. Ennis goes on to say, ‘[t]heir work, from the mid-1870s through to the 1890s, spanned a period of rapid economic expansion and was distinguished by its confidence and clarity’.

Although Stephen 2nd was Australian-born, he was probably at his most creative during the period Ennis cites, and produced innovative and memorable images, by the end of the twentieth century, he was almost a forgotten man.

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Frederick Spurling (1850-1942) – portrait of a struggling photographer

... had he been ‘handled properly’ the bushranger [Martin Cash] might have been a better character.329

Of all the Spurling photographers, Frederick Spurling is probably the least remembered – yet his photographic career spanned some seventy-five years.331 His birth, on 22 January 1850 in Church Street, Hobart Town, possibly caused some consternation as he was christened the same day.332 Perhaps he was not expected to live. However, he did survive and he went on to live a long and tumultuous life.333

331 *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 5.
332 Frederick Spurling, Birth certificate (Rgd no. 33, Registration no. 2053, Hobart, 1949-50,TAHO); Frederick Spurling, Christening record (Rgd no. 32, Registration no. 3709, Trinity, Buckingham, 1850, TAHO).
333 *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 4 -5. Article written on Frederick Spurling’s 92nd birthday.
By the time Frederick was twenty-five he had experienced several life-changing events. In August 1861, when he was eleven years old, his father’s business faced insolvency. One of the creditors was Alexander Ireland, the headmaster of Chalmers School, which suggests Frederick might have been a pupil at this establishment. As he was approaching the current school leaving age of twelve, Frederick probably ceased his education at this time. Nearly two years later, he accompanied his family to New Zealand and on their return, his father set up a photography studio at 76 Murray Street. Within a couple of years, Frederick and his brother, Stephen 2nd had started working for him. This arrangement ended in 1873 when his brother moved to Launceston. In 1875 the Spurlings’ Hobart Town studio faced bankruptcy and the trustee gave instructions for the auction of the glasshouse, at the rear of Frederick’s premises, to help pay the creditors. In May of the following year Frederick advertised that he was retiring from business, and intended auctioning off his all his photographic equipment. The sale included approximately 10 000 negatives. Presumably, these were the original negatives from his father’s firm. Frederick’s actions suggest that at this stage he was disenchanted with the profession.

The following years brought more changes. On 22 October 1877 Frederick married Angelina Mary (known as Mary) Hackett at the Pier Hotel, Swansea. They married by special licence. The usual, lengthier procedure by proclamation of banns, required an announcement of the intended marriage on the three Sundays prior to the

334 Hobart Town Advertiser, 27 August 1861, p. 3 c. 1; List of Persons Declared Insolvent (Supreme Court of Tasmania, Series 84, Code no. 328/43, 1837-1879, TAHO); Mercury, 27 March 1861, p. 4 . 335 Phillips, Making More Adequate Provision, p. 58; Mercury, 20 September 1861, p. 3 c. 5. 336 Southland Daily News, 8 April 1863, p. 2; Southland Daily News, 11 April 1863, p. 2. 337 Assessment Rolls, 1866 (TAHO). The Mercury article of 22 January 1942 p. 5 c. 5 states the address was 75 Murray Street. The Assessment Rolls show this address is incorrect. 338 The date is derived from the Mercury, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 5, which states in 1942 it was ‘about 75 years since … [Frederick] first started photography’; Stephen Spurling 3rd, Notes on the Spurling Family History. 339 Ted Spurling, Notes. 340 Stephen Spurling 1st, Minutes of Proceedings in Bankruptcy (Supreme Court, Registrar’s Office, SC 34, 7/03/1871-17/07/1942, 1875, TAHO); Mercury, 29 November 1875, p. 3 c. 7. 341 Mercury, 16 May 1876, p. 4; Mercury, 18 May 1876, p. 4. 342 Frederick Spurling and Angelina Mary Hackett, Marriage certificate (Rgd no. 37, Registration no. 168, Glamorgan, 1877, TAHO); Seyfried, An Island at the Bottom of the World, p. 2-54.
cereomy. However, a special licence allowed the parties to marry quickly, in a non-
church setting, and with less stringent residency requirements.343 Frederick and Mary
married according to the rites of the Church of Scotland, although until his brother’s
wedding, the family claimed to be Church of England. The changes in religious
affiliations continued. When one of Mary and Frederick’s sons enlisted for the First
World War, he stated he was Roman Catholic.344

Mary’s origins are difficult to trace. There is no record of her birth in the colony or
of her arrival as a settler, but according to her death certificate, her ‘reputed
birthplace’ was Tasmania, and she was forty-nine when she died on 24 March 1910.345
If this is correct, she must have been born around 1861, making her sixteen when she
married. However, her death certificate states she was twenty-three when she
married, and her marriage certificate states she was twenty-one. Such conflicting
information makes it difficult to determine how old she was at the time. Frederick’s
age on the marriage certificate was also incorrect. He claimed he was twenty-three,
but was actually twenty-seven. To complicate matters, at the time of their marriage
Mary was pregnant with their second child. Their first child, Frederick Harold had
been born ten months earlier, on 28 December 1876 at Franklin.346 The combination
of Frederick fathering a child out of wedlock, and marrying a pregnant (and possibly
teenage) bride, who may have been of a different religious denomination, probably
put a further strain on his already difficult relationship with his family. Despite this
inauspicious start, their marriage produced eight children.347

343 Northcote W Thomas and J M Irvine, ‘Marriage’ in David Patrick and William Geddie (eds), The
344 Richard Leslie Spurling, Defence service records (AIF Army, Series B2455, item no. 3176, National
Archives, Australia).
345 Mary Spurling (née Hackett), Death certificate (Registration no. 1314/1910, Hobart, 1910, TAHO).
346 Tasmanian Pioneer Index.
347 Mercury, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 5. Their other children were: Ethel May Spurling (Longford, 26
May 1878), Frank Spurling (Launceston, 24 June 1880), Linda [or Lynda] Lilian Spurling (Hobart, 29
June 1882), Leslie Lovett [known as Richard Leslie] Spurling (Hobart, 29 Oct 1884), Irene Elsie
Spurling (Hobart, 23 Oct 1886), Percy Norman Spurling (Hobart, 20 March 1888), Sydney Roy
[known as Roy] Spurling (Hobart, 1 March 1890). Tasmanian Pioneer Index. Strangely, Mary’s
death certificate states she had five children – three males and two females.
The years 1876 to 1882 were unsettled for Frederick and his family. From the records of the birthplaces of their children, he and his wife moved around the island for a while. Although he claimed to be a photographer on his marriage certificate, his address listings for the next few years do not record his occupation. In 1881 he was living in Bridge Street, Campbell Town. The existence of a portrait of a young boy, sporting a boater hat and woollen suit, while standing somewhat uncomfortably against a fence, and taken by ‘F Spurling … Campbell Town’ suggests Frederick was working as a photographer during his time there. The following year Frederick was back in Hobart for the birth of his daughter Linda. According to the Post Office Directory the family lived in Hobart from 1890 to 1898, but moved house several times. Then in 1899 Frederick moved to Fingal, while Mary remained in Hobart. There was probably a degree of relief when Frederick left. For some years he had been repeatedly before the courts for a range of offences that including failing to provide for his children, being drunk and disorderly, disturbing the peace, deserting a whaling barque, and pursuing clients for non-payment for photographs.

From 1900 to 1908 Frederick’s whereabouts are difficult to trace. His apparent absence from the records suggests he was living an itinerant lifestyle, and he and his wife were estranged. Further evidence of an estrangement is suggested in the death notice for their eldest son Frederick Harold who died in 1902. This notice refers to the deceased as the ‘beloved son of Mary Spurling’, but makes no mention of Frederick. When Mary died on 24 March 1910 at her residence at 58 High Street, Hobart, her death certificate recorded ‘not stated’ in the space for the name of her...

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348 Francis Bedford Maning, Maning’s Tasmanian Directory for 1881-82 (Hobart, 1881) p. 222.
349 Held by the QVMAG (QVM: 1999: P: 0801, QVMAG).
350 Tasmanian Pioneer Index.
351 Tasmanian Electoral Roll, Electorate of Bass, Subdivision Fingal, 1899-1900.
352 Tasmanian Post Office Directories (1890-1910).
353 Mercury, 1 January 1878, p. 3; Mercury, 5 October 1899, p. 4; Mercury, 20 April 1899, p. 3; Mercury, 22 August 1899, p. 2; Mercury, 9 September 1897, p. 3; Mercury, 1 April 1886, p. 3.
354 Frederick Spurling is not listed in the Tasmanian Post Office Directories during this period, and does not appear in Electoral Rolls for Fingal in 1905 or 1906.
355 Mercury, 10 July 1902 p. 1 c. 1. The notice read, ‘SPURLING – At the Hobart Hospital, Frederick Harold, beloved son of Mary Spurling after a short but painful illness, in the 26th year of his age’.
However, her death notice in the *Mercury* referred to her as the ‘beloved wife of Frederick Spurling’. Mary’s death certificate shows her occupation as ‘laborers [sic] wife’, suggesting that at this time Frederick had to supplement his earnings as a photographer with whatever alternative employment was available. Nevertheless, the 1909 *Electoral Roll* lists Frederick as a photographer in Fingal, and the publication of some of his photographs in the *Weekly Courier* during this period provides further confirmation of his photographic activity. From 1913 onwards Frederick’s situation seems to have improved. The records show him living in Fingal and working as a photographer until around 1939. At this stage he returned to Hobart and went to live with his son Richard.

Frederick Spurling, *New Bridge over the South Esk River*, 1908 [This newly constructed bridge at Top Marshes was named ‘Northcote Bridge’] print from newspaper.

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356 Mary Spurling (née Hackett), Death certificate.
360 *Tasmanian Electoral Roll*, Electorate of Bass, Subdivision Fingal, 1913-1917, 1919, 1921; *Tasmanian Electoral Roll*, Electorate of Wilmot, Subdivision Fingal, 1922, 1925. According to the *Tasmanian Post Office Directory* Frederick had a photography business in Fingal from 1924 until 1938/39. However, the dates given in the 1942 *Mercury* article suggest he moved to Hobart c. 1936.
361 *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 5. Richard Spurling lived at 283 Argyle Street, Hobart. Although registered at birth as Leslie Lovett Spurling, it appears he changed his name, and was known as Richard Leslie Spurling when enlisted in the Australian Armed Forces on 2 August 1915, citing his sister, Mrs C Chaffey (née Linda Spurling) as his next of kin.
When interviewed for the *Mercury* on his ninety-second birthday Frederick recalled knowing the bushranger Martin Cash. According to this article, ‘[p]hotographs illustrating one of the books dealing with Cash’s exploits were the work of Mr Spurling’. Although the article does not identify the book, the best-known account of Martin Cash is his autobiography, initially published in 1870. The earliest edition to include illustrations appeared in 1911. Of the four illustrations in this book, one has the name ‘C Gruncell’ inscribed on the image. The three other images feature *Mt Wellington, Hobart, and the Harbour; Port Arthur, Dead Island* and *Eaglehawk Neck*. Although there is no mention of the photographer, it is possible these are the images referred to in the *Mercury* article.

Frederick died at his son’s residence on 15 December 1942. He was ninety-two. He left few reminders of his life and only a handful of photographs. Those that have survived are in the QVMAG, the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, the TMAG and the *Weekly Courier* newspaper. Except for one portrait, these photographs are of buildings or rural in nature, and provide limited clues to Frederick’s technical and creative abilities. Unlike his brother, Frederick’s images fit uneasily with ‘civic’ or ‘scenic’ traditions. Like other, ‘[s]mall town and itinerant photographers … [his] subject matter … could not always be accommodated within prevailing visual conventions’. While some of Frederick’s images are landscapes, others feature buildings or rural pursuits. It seems apart from the occasional newspaper assignment, Frederick’s main customers were probably portrait-seekers in his local community. If so, most of these images have either not survived, or are held in family albums.

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363 *Mercury*, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 4.
365 *Mercury*, 16 December 1942, p. 12 c. 1; Seyfried, *An Island at the Bottom of the World*, p. 2-54.
366 *Cooley's Hotel* (NS 31/5, TAHO), *Kelly's Cordial Factory* (NS 693/63, TAHO).
367 Claremont before Cadbury’s was built, c. 1880s (TMAG Q1355), *View from Claremont – Gate of Hospital for Soldiers*, c. 1880s (TMAG Q1354). See also Long, *Tasmanian Photographers*, p. 105.
368 Willis, *Picturing Australia: a history of photography*, p. 61.
Frederick Spurling, *Returning from a Hunting Trip after Ringtail Opossums, North-Eastern Tasmania*, 1913, print from newspaper.\textsuperscript{369}

Frederick Spurling, *Apple Growing in North-Eastern Tasmania*, 1913, print from newspaper.\textsuperscript{370}

\textsuperscript{369} *Weekly Courier*, 18 September 1913 p. 21.
\textsuperscript{370} *Weekly Courier*, 18 September 1913 p. 21.
Conclusions

Although Stephen Spurling 2nd and his brother Frederick started their photographic careers in their father’s studio, their personal and professional lives unfolded in very different ways. Frederick’s contribution to Tasmanian photography appears to be little more than minimal. His experiences demonstrate that to be a successful professional photographer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries required considerably more skills than an ability to take and develop a photograph. Not only was it necessary to have sufficient creative flair to produce a memorable image, but it was also necessary to be an astute financial manager and to have a socially acceptable background. Once Frederick had incurred the disapproval of the close-knit Tasmanian community through his associations with his father’s bankruptcies and his brushes with the law, it proved impossible to regain respectability. Frederick spent the rest of his life on the fringes, moving from place to place, probably trying a range of occupations, but always returning to his true vocation – photography. Finally, in his old age, he could reflect on his life’s achievements and at the very least claim to be ‘[p]robably the oldest photographer in Tasmania’.371

By contrast, his older brother Stephen 2nd made some significant contributions to Tasmanian photography. However, there are two obstacles to making an informed assessment of his achievements. The first is the confusion that exists in determining which photographs were actually his works. Apart from the facts that other photographers copied many of his images, and that many of his images were reproduced as lithographs and attributed to the publishers, there is also confusion as to which Stephen Spurling was responsible for a particular photograph. For this reason, the only Spurling photographs definitely assignable to Stephen 2nd are those taken in Launceston between 1873 and 1893.372 The second obstacle to making an informed assessment of Stephen 2nd’s achievements is more complex. In the past,

371 Mercury, 22 January 1942, p. 5 c. 5.
372 In 1873 Stephen 2nd moved away from his father’s studio in Hobart to set up his own studio in Launceston. His son, Stephen 3rd started his photography career in 1893, although it was not until 1902 that he officially joined his father’s firm.
Tasmanians have tended to play down the achievements of the currency lads, especially those descended from convicts, preferring instead to honour those who can trace an unblemished history directly back to England. Historian, Roslynn Haynes describes this phenomenon as ‘island cringe’ and refers to ‘a century of suppression at all levels’ .\(^{373}\) For Stephen 2\(^{nd}\), this could help explain the on-going criticism and lack of recognition that plagued him during his life and posthumously.

Despite these problems, there are images available in public and private collections, both in Australia and overseas that bear testament to Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)'s photographic skills.\(^{374}\) In addition to his photographs, Stephen 2\(^{nd}\) pioneered the use of the dry plate in Australia and for many years was at the forefront of photographic innovation in northern Tasmania. His achievements include panoramas of his hometown, experiments with early forms of flashlights and the pioneering of documentary, cave and landscape photography in Tasmania. He was the first photographer in Launceston to use electric lighting and the first Tasmanian photographer to take instantaneous images. He agitated for the introduction copyright laws in his home state, played a role in the formation of the Tasmanian Tourist Association, and for many years was actively involved with the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club. He also recognised the power of the camera to alert the public to the beauty of their environment. In doing so, he laid the foundations for his son to pursue his wilderness photography. For these reasons, Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)'s contribution to Tasmanian photography deserves re-consideration.

\(^{373}\) Haynes, *Tasmanian Visions*, p. 179.
\(^{374}\) For example, four Spurling images held by the National Gallery of Canada.