Chapter 6

Images in retrospective – the issues behind the pictures

Introduction

Who took the photograph and why did he or she take it? … it is important to know the collection purpose in order to be able to interpret the evidence properly and to assess its value.¹

This thesis has traced the biographical details of the three generations of Stephen Spurling photographers in Tasmania from the 1840s through to 1941, and has looked at a selection of Stephen 3rd’s wilderness images. However, to provide an in-depth analysis of the value and significance of the Spurling legacy, it is necessary to go beyond the images and consider the issues behind the pictures.

The first issue to be considered will be the reasons for the collection. Why was this particular body of images produced, and what was its purpose? In answering this question, the prime motivating factor was clearly Stephen 2nd and 3rd’s love of the Tasmanian bush. Fortuitously, their desire to move from portraiture to scenic photography coincided with a need for photographs to advertise the island’s attractions. The first section of this chapter therefore explores the Spurlings’ contribution towards the promotion of tourism. The next section examines the major artistic and photographic conventions that influenced the ways in which father and son pictured Tasmanian scenery. In addition to artistic and photographic conventions, this chapter discusses whether the Spurlings were influenced by particular artists or photographers, and whether in turn their photography inspired or influenced others. The following section considers later Tasmanian wilderness photographers, such as Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis, and the photographic traditions that inspired their images. Since many wilderness photographers have promoted conservation issues, the next

section details Stephen 3rd’s attitudes towards the environment. Some writers have stressed the role fellow Tasmanian photographer John Watt Beattie played in alerting the public to early conservation issues, but did Stephen 3rd champion similar causes, and if so, what, how and when?

Since the Spurling achievements and images often fail to rate a mention in histories of photography, and related subject areas, this chapter also investigates some possible reasons as to how and why the Spurling legacy came close to being forgotten. Finally, having examined all these aspects, some conclusions will be drawn as to the historical and aesthetic value of the Spurling legacy.

**The collection purpose – promoting tourism**

The uses of photography by governments, by private individuals, in the press, in advertising, all need to be considered.  

As discussed earlier in this thesis, in March 1893 Stephen 2nd was one of a number of Tasmanians who wrote to Premier Henry Dobson in response to his request for suggestions on ways to increase the island’s revenue through tourism. Stephen 2nd thought photographs of scenic attractions could prove advantageous, and, by way of example, he cited his images of Denison Gorge, which he believed had already attracted hundreds of excursionists to the area. Following this fact-finding exercise, the Premier decided to create the Tasmanian Tourist Association (hereafter TTA). Not only were the Spurlings involved in the activities of this association, but also for many years, like their southern counterpart John Watt Beattie, they were official Tasmanian Government photographers.

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Such early collaborations between photographers and governments to promote tourism were unusual, but not unique. Collaboration between photographers and tourists dates back to the wet plate era, when tourists relied on photographers to record the perfect view. However, according to historian John Towner, in the nineteenth century there ‘was no official government role in tourism’ and it was not until the 1920s that governments even became interested in keeping statistical records on tourist numbers. The Beattie/Spurling experience in Tasmania demonstrates there were exceptions. A further example of an early government

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5 Email from Gael Newton, National Gallery of Australia (hereafter NGA), to Christine Burgess, 1 June 2009.
and photography firm collaboration to promote tourism occurred in France. In 1898 the French government entered into an agreement with the Neurdein Frères to ‘manage the photographic archives of the Service des Monuments historiques’. The firm’s obligations included maintaining the government photographic collection and making reprints of their own, and other photographers’ work, for use in travel guides and postcards. In supporting these ventures, the French government recognised the power of images to encourage tourism and attract investment in colonial outposts such as Algeria.

In Tasmania, the government set about attracting tourists in a number of practical ways. By the late 1890s a tourist office had opened in Hobart and government funding supported development projects at places such as Lake St Clair in the central highlands, and the Hartz Mountains in the south. Advertising campaigns attracted visitors to destinations such as Frederick Henry Bay, Browns River, and on Mount Wellington, the Springs and Fern Tree Bower. At this latter locale, the annual Strawberry Fest, which started in 1897, proved particularly popular. However, the government had only limited funds available. Consequently, in the north the citizens of Launceston augmented their government subsidy with funding drives and concerts. These activities helped finance improvement projects such as the construction of paths, bridges, a rustic summerhouse, ponds and other facilities at Cataract Gorge. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the former caretaker’s cottage also dates from this period.

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13 Julia Horne, The pursuit of wonder: how Australia’s landscape was explored, nature discovered and tourism unleashed (Carlton, Victoria, 2005) p. 155; Barbara Valentine, ‘Caretaker’s Cottage King’s Bridge’ in Paul A C Richards, Health, wealth and tribulation: Launceston’s Cataract Gorge (Launceston, Tasmania, 2007) p. 194; Henry Button, Flotsam and Jetsam (Launceston and Hobart, 1909) pp. 345-349; Examiner, 8 October 1892, p. 4 c. 7; Examiner, 22 July 1893, p. 5 c. 2.
14 Valentine, ‘Caretaker’s Cottage King’s Bridge’, p. 194.
As official government photographers the Spurlings supported tourism through three interrelated mechanisms. They supplied images directly to local and state governments, they provided images and supported projects undertaken by tourist associations, and they undertook tourist-related initiatives as an adjunct to their business activities. While the second and third mechanisms covered a range of ventures, supplying images to local and state governments was a straightforward proposition. Examples include the provision of large, framed images for local, interstate and overseas displays. Thus in 1913, the Spurlings contributed images for display at the 1913 Tasmanian Exhibition in Launceston, and as part of a
tourism promotion, they contributed a dozen images of Tasmanian scenery for display at the Kodak Company in Melbourne.¹⁵ Spurling images also featured in displays in the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau’s mainland offices. A newspaper article in 1916 reported that orders were in hand for twenty-three enlargements from Beattie’s Studio and twenty-two from the Spurling’s Studio for the Sydney office. A further six images from each studio would shortly adorn the walls of the Brisbane office.¹⁶ In 1920, Spurling and Beattie images decorated the Adelaide office, and in January 1922, the Spurlings provided forty-three photographs to the Chief Secretary’s Department.¹⁷ Sometimes the government purchased these images, but at other times they were donated by regional tourist associations.¹⁸

Spurling images were also displayed overseas. In 1889, Stephen 2nd and Anson Brothers’ images were exhibited in Paris, and in 1908 thirty Spurling and Son images featured at Anglo-Franco Exhibition in London.¹⁹ In 1938 a group of Spurling images appeared in a display of Tasmanian views at Australia House, London. Other photographs in this exhibition were from Beattie²⁰ and Breadon’s studios in Hobart, and the Burrows’ studio in Launceston.²¹

Apart from supplying images for government offices and window displays, the Spurlings also provided images for other purposes. For example, they provided enlargements for display in the state’s trains, and in late 1920 they contracted to supply fifty photographs to the Launceston City Council to adorn local trams.²²

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¹⁵ Scrapbook of newspaper cuttings relating to Tourism, 4 September 1913, p. 68 (AB 472/1/1, TAHO). See also, Mercury, 8 January 1913, p. 2; Mercury, 19 September 1913, p. 4.
¹⁶ Mercury, 8 July 1916, p. 3 c. 6.
¹⁷ Mercury, 19 October 1920, p. 6; Correspondence between the Premier’s Office and S Spurling & Son (PD 1/373, 110/1a/22, January 1922, TAHO).
¹⁸ Letter written by Stephen Spurling 3rd to the Town Clerk, Launceston, 6 October 1937 (LCC3: 39/2.7, QVMAG); Helen Ennis, Intersections: Photography, History and the National Library of Australia (Canberra, 2004) p. 86; Examiner, 27 August 1909, p. 7; Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Mercury, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5; Mercury, 12 July 1916, p. 3 c. 7.
¹⁹ Mercury, 15 May 1889, p. 2; Mercury, 26 August 1889, p. 4; Mercury, 24 February 1908, p. 5.
²⁰ Beattie’s Studio - John Watt Beattie died in 1930.
Four of these images are still on public view – in a preserved tram in Launceston. The Spurlings also provided images directly to the government for advertising. However, it seems father and son continued to have concerns about copyright issues, and they often included a copyright stamp on the verso. In addition to individual images, the Spurlings were major contributors to the Tasmanian Government tourist brochures. While the quality of these publications was variable, the large quantities of brochures held at the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office in Hobart containing Spurling images bears testament to the firm’s active involvement in promoting Tasmanian tourism. As well as supplying photographs for these brochures, the Spurlings also provided images to regional tourist associations. For example, the Mount Lyell Tourist Association brochure (pictured below) contains several of Stephen 3rd’s images, including his circa 1906 image, *Rocky Reach, Gordon River*, on the front cover.

![Image of Mount Lyell Tourist Association brochure](image)

Collection of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania


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23 Tram Bar, Mercure Hotel, 3 Earl Street, Launceston.
26 Examples include Tasmanian Government Tourist Brochures: *Historic Tasmania* (AA 378/2, TAHO); *Tasmania: The wonderland* (AA 378/6, TAHO); *Tasmania: The wonderland* (AA 378/7); *Tasmania’s Outdoor Attractions and List of Principle Sporting, &c., Events for the Summer of 1935-36* (AA 378/13, TAHO); *Tasmania (Australia)* (AA 378/19, TAHO); L F Smeeton, *Tasmania: Pearl of the Antipodes*, December 1939 (AA 378/20, TAHO).
27 See Introduction.
Still images were not the only means the Spurlings utilised to advertise Tasmanian scenery. As discussed in Chapter 4, Stephen 3rd’s movie images of the Tasmanian highlands and the lake districts in winter were screened in the Academy of Music, his own National Theatre in Launceston, and were purchased by the Tasmanian Tourist Department for screening interstate.28

The second means by which the Spurlings supported tourism was through working in cooperation with local tourist associations. In the years following the formation of the Hobart-based TTA in 1893, several regional areas also established similar organisations.29 While the Spurlings worked in conjunction with a number of these associations, their chief interactions were with the Launceston-based, Northern Tasmanian Tourist Association (hereafter NTTA). However, with respect to the NTTA, it seems Stephen 3rd maintained a degree of professional detachment, which allowed him to voice his concerns on various matters. It also appears that press reports did not necessarily acknowledge the Spurlings’ involvement in tourist-related projects.

The lack of acknowledgment of the Spurlings’ contributions possibly dates from the inaugural meeting of the NTTA in August 1898.30 During the course of this meeting the convener, E C Haviland, projected a series of views on to a large screen. The newspaper report of the meeting implies Haviland took these images, but this may not have been the case. The article describes Haviland as a ‘well-known amateur photographer and lecturer’.31 However, he does not rate a mention in Chris Long’s Tasmanian Photographers 1840-1940: A Directory, and at the present time there are no images from a photographer by this name on picture websites.32 However, the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston does

28 Weekly Courier, 23 October 1913, p. 35 c. 1; Weekly Courier, 31 August 1916, p. 27 c. 4.
31 Daily Telegraph, 23 August 1898, p. 2 c. 7.
hold four Haviland images dated 24 December 1898. They are entitled, *Thro’ the Woods, St Mary’s Pass, Falmouth Beach and Seaward*.33

The list of images shown at the inaugural NTTA meeting is quite extensive, but does not include any of the above-mentioned images. However, it does include many of the same places, such as Denison Gorge, the Mole Creek Caves, Corra Lynn [sic], Cataract, Deloraine, Leven, Mersey and Longford, photographed by the Spurlings.34 This in itself could be a coincidence except for one fact. The list also includes an image of ‘Dilston Falls [sic]’. As discussed in Chapter 4, this was a hoax image taken by Stephen 3rd. Although it is uncertain why the Spurlings circulated this image, it is possible they used it as a honey-trap to highlight their problem with other photographers copying their images. Since the report of the meeting does not actually acknowledge the authorship of any of the images, the question is whether the Spurlings contributed this, and probably the majority of the other images, or whether Haviland copied and used these images without permission. If the latter, it could explain Stephen 3rd’s occasional witticism at the expense of the NTTA, and other local tourists associations.

For example, following his ten-day, 1905 excursion on bicycle and horse-back through ‘the lake country rarely seen by visitors’, Stephen 3rd wrote an article which provided very specific information about his route, the conditions he encountered, and his recommendations to intending travellers regarding gear and provisions.35 However, he also admonished the writers of the NTTA’s *Handy Guide* for their description of ‘a mile of rolling downs’, which he found was actually a ‘deep black bog’ and a ‘rocky bank’. He went on, somewhat ironically,

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33 Email from Ross Smith, QVMAG, to Christine Burgess, 1 July 2009.
34 Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 15 October 2008. The only images unlikely to be Spurlings are those of Jenolan Caves. As far as it is known, Stephen 3rd first visit to these caves was in 1913. *Weekly Courier*, 24 July 1913, pp. ii, 22; Walker, ‘Memories, dreams and inventions’, p. 231.
35 Historian Nic Haygarth has some doubts as to whether ‘E L P’ was Stephen Spurling 3rd. (Email from Nic Haygarth to Christine Burgess, 18 December 2009.) He believes the references to England and Scotland (along with the fact that E L P stated he left from Hobart) suggest the author was some other person. However, the fact that the article was pasted into Stephen 3rd’s scrapbook, and that Stephen 3rd’s images of Great Lake, featuring many of the areas mentioned in the article, appeared in the *Weekly Courier* around the same time as the article, suggest Stephen 3rd was E L P. His use of this pseudonym may be an attempt to distance himself from his criticisms of the NTTA.
to suggest the association take soundings ‘in the middle of the track’ and that this information should be included in their next edition, ‘lest a worse thing than ruined clothes befall the unwary traveller’.\textsuperscript{36} Later in the same article he compared the scenery between Little Lake and the Tiers summit to some particularly bleak regions in the Scottish highlands. He went on to suggest the Deloraine Improvement Association should arrange for the addition of a herd of shaggy Highland cattle to complete the scene.\textsuperscript{37}

Despite Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s concerns about the reliability of the information supplied to would-be tourists, the accounts of the NTTA’s endeavours, as outlined at the annual meetings, contain references to a number of projects that he supported. These on-going projects included the construction of new, and the improvement of existing walking tracks to areas of scenic beauty. Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} supported such undertakings in his articles, and in trialling new tracks. For example, in 1904 the NTTA undertook a project to establish a track to the peak of Mount Victoria in the state’s northeast. In December of that year a party of seven, including Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}, assessed this new access route. An account of their journey, written by association member H Stuart Dove, along with a spread of Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s photographs subsequently appeared in the \textit{Weekly Courier}.\textsuperscript{38}

Other NTTA projects had Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s prior support. For example, following his 1903 winter excursion to Ben Lomond he wrote:

\begin{quote}
\text{It is a pity that such glorious scenery as is to be viewed upon Ben Lomond is not made more easily accessible by the cutting of one or more tracks to the summit \ldots the old hotel \ldots could be kept in good repair for years with a little outlay \ldots Perhaps if some energetic gentleman could be found at Avoca to form a tourists’ association \ldots and increase the facilities for visitors, the ascent, and especially the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} E L P [Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}], ‘On the Roof of Tasmania: Central Lake Plateau’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 2 March 1905, p. 3 c. 1-3.

\textsuperscript{37} E L P [Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}], ‘On the Roof of Tasmania’, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 2 March 1905, p. 3 c. 1-3. The places Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} referred to in Scotland are in the Grampian Mountains area. Why he mentions these places with such apparent familiarity remains a mystery. He is not known to have ever visited Scotland, although he had no doubt seen photographs or lantern slides of the region.

winter ascent of Ben Lomond would rapidly become one of the great attractions of our garden state.\textsuperscript{39}

In 1908 his agitation for improved access to Ben Lomond reached fruition when the NTTA undertook work to clear and mark the track from Avoca. Working in conjunction with the Fingal Council, the NTTA also proposed to upgrade an alternative route to the mountain via Mangana.\textsuperscript{40} Improvements continued, and five years later the NTTA contributed towards the cost of a tourist hut on the mountain.\textsuperscript{41} Other projects to improve access to picturesque areas in the northeast included maintenance works on the tracks to Mount Barrow and Mount Arthur.\textsuperscript{42} Stephen 3rd had written about the delights of visiting these areas some years earlier.\textsuperscript{43} In 1910 the NTTA cleared a track to Lilydale Falls, just north of Launceston, to make ‘this picturesque spot more easily accessible’.\textsuperscript{44}

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


\textsuperscript{40} *Mercury*, 22 September 1908, p. 6 c. 4; *Examiner*, 22 September 1908, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{41} *Examiner*, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{42} *Daily Telegraph*, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 1; *Mercury*, 22 September 1908, p. 6 c. 4; *Examiner*, 22 September 1908, p. 5; *Examiner*, 27 August 1909, p. 7; *Examiner*, 6 September 1910, p. 3; *Mercury*, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5.
\textsuperscript{44} *Examiner*, 6 September 1910, p. 3; *Mercury*, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 6.
As the above image illustrates, Stephen 3rd had previously photographed these falls. In 1913 the association undertook a similar upgrade to the St Columba Falls track in the northeast. Stephen 3rd had visited and photographed these falls some six years earlier. It would seem reasonable to argue that Stephen 3rd's images played a major role in initiating these NTTA projects. Not content with just improving access, in 1910 NTTA successfully lobbied the government to have Mount Arthur, Mount Barrow, and Ben Lomond declared scenic reserves.

Another NTTA project was the opening-up of the Mole Creek area. Again, Stephen 3rd had previously extolled the area’s attractions. In 1898 he recorded:

[a]mong the many beauty spots and places of striking interest to the travelling public of northern Tasmania few can, perhaps, claim more attention than the beautiful surroundings of the Mole Creek district, comprising as it does numerous caves, huge cliffs, sparkling waterfalls, picturesque river scenery, and wild mountain ranges.

The NTTA’s annual reports frequently mentioned schemes to improve facilities in this area. The association was also keen to establish its administrative authority, and in May 1906 a deputation to the Government requested jurisdiction over Mole Creek and Ballocks Caves. In 1907 Stephen 3rd photographed the newly discovered Scotts Caves and a sub-committee from NTTA visited and reported on their protection and development. In December of that year the caves sub-committee visited the area again to inspect a further subterranean discovery – King Solomons Caves. By this stage the area was attracting in excess of 1000 visitors annually. Stephen 3rd photographed these caves in October 1908, just one month prior to their official opening as a tourist attraction. This event attracted excursion parties from both the northern and southern tourist associations and Stephen 3rd photographed both groups departing Mole Creek for

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45 Examiner, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
46 Weekly Courier Annual Special Number, 7 November 1907, p. 7.
47 Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Mercury, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 6.
48 Union Jack [Stephen Spurling 3rd], ‘A holiday trip to Mole Creek’, Examiner, 22 June 1898, p. 7 c. 3.
49 Daily Telegraph, 4 May 1906, p. 2 c. 5; Mercury, 14 August 1906, p. 6 c. 5-6.
51 Examiner, 22 September 1908, p. 5.
the caves. A few weeks later the Ulverstone Tourists’ Association invited Stephen 3rd to investigate the recently discovered underground labyrinth at Gunns Plains. His description of his visit included a recount of their discovery of further galleries containing magnificent stalactites, and again he recorded the visit with his camera. When these images appeared in the press, they joined a long list of Stephen 3rd’s cave images published during the first decade of the twentieth century. Many of these were the earliest photographs of these caverns.

In 1909 the government finally agreed to allow the NTTA control of Baldocks Caves area, and the association immediately began a development project. They appointed a caretaker/guide and installed a lighting system. To encourage tourists, the NTTA planned a series of motor trips to the caves. However, by the following year it was evident that poor road conditions had a dampening effect on the popularity of these excursions. Nevertheless, the association commenced building an accommodation house at Mole Creek, and by 1911 motor excursions to the area were becoming increasingly popular. This trend continued over the next few years and in 1913 the association reported forty such trips. The NTTA was not the only association organising such excursions. The Launceston-based Tasmanian Automobile Club (hereafter TAC) also arranged outings to the area. As Stephen 3rd was also actively involved with this club, he often recorded club activities with his camera. These images appeared regularly in the Weekly Courier, and in club publications such as their annual reliability trials programs.

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52 Weekly Courier, 8 October 1908, pp. 23, 27; Weekly Courier, 5 November 1908, pp. 24, 34 c. 3-4; Examiner, 27 August 1909, p. 7.
53 S Spurling Jun., ‘Caves at Gunn’s Plains: A new discovery’, Examiner, 20 November 1908, p. 7. The entrance to the caves had been discovered some ten years earlier, but the caves not been explored until just prior to Stephen 3rd’s visit. Weekly Courier, 3 December 1908, p. 21; Weekly Courier, 10 December 1908, p. 24.
56 Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Mercury, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5.
57 Mercury, 2 September 1911, p. 6 c. 4; Examiner, 17 September 1912, p. 6; Examiner, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
58 Weekly Courier, 18 May 1907, p. 19; Daily Telegraph, 16 February 1909, p. 7 c. 6-7.
59 For example, TAC, Annual Reliability Trials (Launceston, Tasmania, 1909) contains Spurling images on the front cover and pp. 9, 13, 21, 29, 32. These images appeared in the Weekly Courier, 14 November 1907, p. 20; Weekly Courier, 1 October 1980, p. 24; Weekly Courier, 30 September 1909, p. 22.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, The Waterlilies, Scott's Caves, c. 1909, gelatin silver photograph.60

Another on-going, NTTA tourist development project was the promotion of rainbow trout fishing at Lake Leake in the state’s east. The Northern Tasmanian Fisheries Association had introduced yearling rainbow trout into the lake in May 1904, and within a couple of years fishing enthusiasts reported excellent catches. However, the lack of suitable accommodation proved a major drawback to attracting visitors.61 In 1907 the NTTA formed a sub-committee to investigate projects that would encourage tourists to the lake country.62 Three years later the NTTA in conjunction with the fishing association requested government funding to construct a lodge.63 Although their initial proposal proved unsuccessful, the following year the government allocated £600 towards the project. The official opening took place in late November 1912. Premier A E Solomon presided. Stephen 3rd was amongst the official guests and took the photographs subsequently published in the press.64 In January the following year the region received a publicity coup when the Governor-General Thomas Denman and his entourage visited the lake and enjoyed the fishing.65

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60 Weekly Courier, 18 March 1909, p. 22.
61 Weekly Courier, 5 December 1912, p. 35 c. 4.
62 Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 2.
63 Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Weekly Courier, 5 December 1912, p. 35 c. 4.
64 Weekly Courier, 5 December 1912, pp. 18, 35 c. 4; Graeme Clanett and Marcus Harvey, Tasmania: Classic Images (Hobart, Tasmania, 2006) plate 47, p. 82.
65 Examiner, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
The NTTA was also keen to promote the tourist potential of Great Lake. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the late 1890s and early 1900s the NTTA published a Handy Guide for travellers. However, when Stephen 3rd undertook an excursion to Great Lake in 1905, he found the information in the then current guide somewhat unreliable. The following year, the NTTA recorded in their annual report that a lack of interest had forced them to defer their planned trips to the lake. The report also mentioned that they had sent the Victorian Fish Protection Society and Anglers Club a ten-kilogram trout caught at the lake, along with several images of bream and trout. It is likely these images were reprints of Stephen 3rd’s Great Lake fishing images published in the press, advertising materials and as postcards around this time.

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67 Mercury, 14 August 1906, p. 6 c. 5-6.
68 In her thesis, Walker, ‘Memories, dreams and inventions’, p. 287, quotes from E M Mayes, About giant trout in Tasmania (London, 193-?), p. 3, in which he describes an image of fish caught at Great Lake. It is likely the image in question was taken by Stephen Spurling 3rd. Email from Marian Walker to Christine Burgess, 14 July 2009. A Spurling image of fish caught at Great Lake appeared Mayes’ booklet on p. 17.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Trout from Great Lake*, c. 1905, gelatin silver photograph.⁶⁹

Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Anglers, Great Lake*, 1905, gelatin silver photograph.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ *Weekly Courier*, 3 December 1908, p. 17.
In 1907 the NTTA appointed a sub-committee to investigate a scheme to ensure ‘the adequate opening up of the Lake country’ and the construction of two accommodation houses.\(^{71}\) In September of following year the association reported that the accommodation house at Interlaken, which was under the control of the Southern Tourist Association, was open for business.\(^{72}\) Two months later, the Premier J W Evans, officially opened the NTTA’s accommodation house at Great Lake. Stephen 3\(^{rd}\) was amongst the guests and photographed the proceedings. The ceremonies also included the unveiling of a Spurling portrait of John Cathcart, one of the lake’s founding anglers. While the congratulatory speeches emphasised the tourist potential of the new facility, speakers also voiced concerns about the access roads. In particular, they called for the upgrading of the link between the Steppes and Interlaken, and the conversion of the Deloraine track into a fully-fledged carriageway.\(^{73}\)

As discussed in Chapter 4, Stephen 3\(^{rd}\) had started agitating for such a road more than a decade earlier.\(^{74}\) Some five years later, in 1902, his snow scenes of Great Lake and adjacent Pine Lake had helped promote the region as a winter playground and ice-skating venue.\(^{75}\) However, the building of road access would take many more years, and considerable lobbying. Despite the calls made in 1908, for the next three years the matter lay dormant. Then at the 1911 annual meeting of the NTTA, parliamentarian G T Collins spoke ‘in favour of opening up the Lake Country by making a road from Deloraine through Golden Valley’.\(^{76}\) Following a second motion, proposed by Stephen 3\(^{rd}\), the meeting decided to appoint representatives from the Tourist Association, Automobile Club, Fisheries Association and the Deloraine Tourist and Improvement Association to consider the matter. In the following months a conference, convened in response to these motions, produced a series of recommendations.\(^{77}\)

\(^{71}\) *Daily Telegraph*, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 2.

\(^{72}\) *Mercury*, 22 September 1908, p. 6 c. 4; *Examiner*, 22 September 1908, p. 5.

\(^{73}\) *Mercury*, 25 November 1908, p. 6 c. 6-7; *Weekly Courier*, 3 December 1908, p. 17. A Spurling and Son image of Great Lake appeared in the *Weekly Courier* on 4 February 1909, p. 18 (1).

\(^{74}\) Union Jack [Stephen Spurling 3\(^{rd}\)], ‘Our trip to the Western Tiers and Great Lake via Cressy’, *Examiner*, 14 May 1897, p. 7 c. 2-3.


\(^{76}\) *Mercury*, 2 September 1911, p. 6 c. 5.

\(^{77}\) *Mercury*, 2 September 1911, p. 6 c. 5; *Examiner*, 17 September 1912, p. 6.
A second conference, called to consider the various alternatives, recommended the building of a road from Deloraine through Golden Valley to Great Lake. Following a deputation to the government the matter seemed assured, and at the next annual meeting of the NTTA, Chamber of Commerce representative J V Sullivan stressed the urgency of initiating action. Yet, despite all this effort, Parliament rejected the proposal. However, the battle was not over, and eventually an allocation of £9000 allowed construction to begin. By March 1915 the roadworks were underway and Stephen 3rd set out on a tour of inspection. Although he wrote a glowing report, the construction proceeded slowly and sixteen months later, and with virtually no funds left, eight kilometres of roadworks remained. A deputation from the NTTA and other northern associations then approached Premier Walter Henry Lee for additional money. Around this time Stephen 3rd and a group of friends once again set out to inspect developments – this time after a heavy snowfall. A spread of images taken during this trip, and featuring their snow-bound cars, subsequently appeared in the Weekly Courier. Perhaps the most famous image from this series was a picture of an ice-yacht, constructed by the American dentist Ray McClinton, and duly tested on frozen Pine Lake. Progress on the road continued to be painstakingly slow, and as a Spurling image published in December 1919 demonstrates, roadworks were still in progress more than three years later.

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78 Examiner, 17 September 1912, p. 6.
79 Examiner, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
80 Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 5.
82 Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 5.
84 Weekly Courier, 23 December 1920. According to Jetson, The Roof of Tasmania, p. 95, the road was finally completed in the 1920s.
Throughout this period the annual reports of the NTTA invariably stressed the importance of lantern slides in tourist promotions. The Spurlings’ fascination with lantern slides dates back to 1857, when Stephen 1st introduced ‘Dissolving Views’ to the citizens of Hobart Town as a draw-card to his ‘Bazaar and Fashionable Lounge’. As discussed in Chapter 2, dissolving views were a form of early slide show, incorporating two lantern slide projectors that alternatively projected images on to a single screen. Each image appeared for a short time, and then gradually faded, or dissolved, into the next image. This early use of views to attract the public was a tradition that his son and grandson would continue until the late 1930s.

As discussed in Chapter 3, for many years Stephen 2nd attended meetings of the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club (hereafter NTCC), where one of his interests included lantern slides presentations. In 1890 he lent the club ‘lantern and

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85 Weekly Courier, 29 June 1916, p. 17.
86 Courier, 28 September 1857, p. 1 c. 5-6; Courier, 13 November 1857, p. 3 c. 3-4.
enlarging apparatus’ on a trial basis.88 Eight years later a series of his son’s lantern slides of the Mole Creek track featured at a club meeting.89 Spurling slides of Ben Lomond also entertained club members at a meeting in November 1903.90 The presentation of these images to other camera enthusiasts no doubt encouraged members to make photographic expeditions into these regions. In 1907 the NTTA sent a selection of lantern slides produced by club members to London, where they were ‘greatly admired’ and proved ‘a splendid advertisement for Tasmania’.91 That same year a selection of ‘over 200 slides of a very high-class nature, and prepared by Messrs Spurling and Son (Launceston) and J W Beattie (Hobart)’ helped advertise Tasmania’s scenic wonders to South Australians, Victorians and Queenslanders. The slides were used to illustrate lecture tours undertaken by A Wertheimer, from Hobart, and L S Bruce, from Launceston, on behalf of the northern and southern tourist associations acting on a cooperative basis.92 The following year the Spurlings and Beattie supplied in excess of 200 slides for a series of eight lectures in regional New South Wales. In all approximately 5000 people viewed the presentations.93

Of the three generations of Spurling photographers, Stephen 3rd was probably the most active in presenting lantern slide lectures to promote tourism. A newspaper report described him ‘as one of the most persevering and daring explorers of mountain regions and snow-clad plains, which he has reproduced with the camera, and transferred to beautiful lantern-slides’.94 His presentations, on behalf of the Tourist Association, often took place at the Mechanics’ Institute. A report of one evening described him as ‘an artistic photographer … an ardent lover of nature, and a clear, unaffected speaker’.95 On this occasion, Stephen 3rd described five

88 Minute Book no. 1, 11 April 1890, 11 June 1890, NTCC; R A Ferrall, The Northern Tasmanian Camera Club, 100 years 1889-1989: a short history (Launceston, 1989?) pp. 6-7.
89 Australian Photographic Journal, 20 July 1898 (Sydney) p. 177; Minute Book No. 2, 17 June 1898, NTCC.
90 Minute Book no. 3, 5 November 1903, NTCC.
91 Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 1.
92 Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 1.
93 Examiner, 22 September 1908, p. 5.
94 Mercury, 24 November 1906, p. 5.
95 From an unidentified newspaper article in Stephen Spurling 3rd’s scrapbook.
different trips, including the Western Tiers, Mole Creek and Ben Lomond. He
illustrated each excursion with lantern slides and his commentary offered advice
on the best route and accommodation. According to author Barney Roberts,
‘hundreds of people … packed his [Stephen 3rd’s] lecture evenings’.96

Another NTTA initiative to promote tourism was the publication of booklets and
pictorial maps. 97 Although the association’s annual reports make no mention of
Stephen 3rd’s involvement in these projects, many of these publications included
Spurling’s Studios images. For example, in 1910 the NTTA annual report
mentioned the publication of 14,000 copies of a ‘pictorial plan of Launceston and
eenvrons … [with a centrepiece of] artistically arranged photographs’.98 This was
probably the pictorial plan (composed entirely of Spurling and Son images) that
appeared in the Weekly Courier in July 1909.99 The same report also mentioned
the NTTA publication, Launceston, Tasmania (1909), which was ‘Presented to the
delegates of the Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire, as
a souvenir of their visit to Launceston, by the Northern Tasmanian Tourist
Association’.100 The NTAA also presented special editions to the Governor Sir
Harry Barron, and other distinguished visitors.101 This publication contained five
Spurling images.102 By contributing to such publications Spurling photographs
would have circulated to countries throughout the English-speaking world.

96 Roberts, ‘Stephen Spurling – Adventurer’, p. 41. For examples of Spurling lantern slides see,
‘Spurling lantern slides’, at http://www.pictureaustralia.org/apps/pictureaustralia?action=PASea,
10/03/2009. Other Spurling lantern slides are held at George Eastman House, Rochester, NY;
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart (hereafter TMAG); Mitchell Library, State Library of
New South Wales, Sydney. See also, Mercury, 1 August 1906, p. 6.
97 Examiner, 27 August 1909, p. 7; Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Mercury, 6 September
1910, p. 6 c. 5.
98 Mercury, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5.
100 NTTA, Launceston, Tasmania (Launceston, 1909) cover title. Copies held by the National
Library of Australia (nla.pic-an21656909); Launceston Library (LSC.STK.E 919.465 LAU).
101 Mercury, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5.
102 NTTA, Launceston, Tasmania (Launceston, 1909). Spurling images are on pp. 2, 3, 4, 6, 12.
Email from Marion Sargent to Christine Burgess, 6 April 2009.
Other NTTA publications also contained Spurlings images. Apart from the NTTA’s *Handy Guide*, the circa 1908 NTTA publication, *Official guide to Launceston and northern Tasmania*, included four fold-out Spurling photographs. Another circa 1908 publication, *Official guide to Launceston and Northern Tasmania, North-West, East and West Coasts*, also featured four fold-out Spurling images. Further, the 1915 NTTA publication, *Launceston & Northern Tasmania, North West, East & West Coasts: official guide*, contained one fold-out panorama and two fold-out montages of Spurling photographs. In addition to the NTTA, the Spurlings also provided images for publications such as the Northern Tasmanian Fisheries Association’s Annual Reports.

In 1906 the NTTA experimented with ‘a novel form of advertising’. They released a set of playing cards featuring views in and around Launceston. The accompanying blurb stated the NTTA anticipated the cards would aid in ‘the dissemination of information’ and encourage enquiries. While there is no indication as to the photographer, a number of images are identifiable Spurlings. A later set of cards, circa 1920s, with ‘Tasmania, the Wonderland’ encircling the Tasmanian coat-of-arms on the reverse side, features a significant number of Spurling images.

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103 For example, the 1899 guide contained two identified Spurling images, and a number of other images that were very similar to known Spurling images. *NTTA, Northern Tasmania, a handy guide* (Launceston, 1899).


106 *Mercury*, 14 August 1906, p. 6 c. 5.

Up until mid-1910 the business of promoting Tasmanian tourism was under the auspices of the TTA and a number of local associations. Officially, the TTA and the various associations worked in harmony. For example, from time to time the TTA sent a congratulatory telegram to the NTTA, wishing them a successful annual meeting. In addition, public officials regularly stressed the importance of a national, by which they meant island-wide, promotion of tourism, and there were occasions when north and south cooperated on joint projects. However, beneath this veneer of unity, north-south rivalries simmered and occasionally erupted. In 1949 photo-historian Jack Cato (and cousin-by-marriage to John Watt Beattie) described how this rivalry dated back to the earliest years of settlement, and the northerners’ belief that their woes (such as undisciplined soldiers, belligerent convicts and bushrangers) stemmed from the south. Northerners also believed all their taxes ‘went to embellish Hobart’. Cato further claimed he was told by a Premier that the government ‘deliberately fostered’ this enmity,

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108 Mercury, 22 September 1908, p. 6 c. 4; Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Examiner, 17 September 1912, p. 6; Examiner, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
109 Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 1-3; Mercury, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5; Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 5-6; Mercury, 29 June 1917, p. 6 c. 6; Walker, ‘Memories, dreams and inventions’, pp. 245, 254.
110 Mercury, 14 August 1906, p. 6 c. 6; Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 1; Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 6.
believing it encouraged competition.\textsuperscript{111} With respect to tourism, these rivalries translated into arguments as to which part of the state was more attractive, and therefore more deserving of government promotion and support, and which region had greater share of the propaganda.

In retrospect it could be argued that having separate bodies promoting regional interests was not conducive to the overall benefit of the island. The counter argument is that regional associations, which relied heavily on the goodwill of their communities for donations and voluntary support, were more efficient, more accountable and more responsive to local needs. For years, Tasmanian tourism received minimal government financial support, with the north and south receiving differential treatment.\textsuperscript{112} For example, in 1900 the northerners became incensed over the issuing of eight pictorial stamps to publicise the island’s attractions. Of the eight stamps released, only one featured the north.\textsuperscript{113} The rivalries intensified the following year when the Hobart-based photographer John Watt Beattie, in a report of his presentation to the Royal Society, claimed that the scenery in the south would ‘stand up, in point of scenic excellence “head and shoulders” above it [the Barn Bluff district]’, and was more picturesque.\textsuperscript{114}

By 1913 the situation had become extremely tense, as signified by a long article in the \textit{Examiner} under the banner, “‘Nothing to see in the North’”. This article claimed the TTA ‘actively’ and ‘insidiously’ campaigned to discourage tourists visiting the north of the island. The author cited several examples of angry tourists, who despite the southern office’s disparaging comments, had found their way north and discovered plenty to do and see. The article concluded with the assessment that ‘at the Hobart bureau every obstacle is placed in the way of visitors coming to … [the north] of the state.\textsuperscript{115} These complaints may have been symptomatic of a more serious problem. Seven months later it became apparent

\textsuperscript{111} Jack Cato, \textit{I can take it: the autobiography of a photographer}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition (Melbourne, 1949) pp. 20–21.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Mercury}, 6 July 1914, p. 3 c. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Examiner}, 9 June 1900, p. 9 c. 4; \textit{Examiner}, 18 June 1900, p. 4 c. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Mercury}, 28 May 1901, p. 4 c. 2-4; \textit{Examiner}, 1 June 1901, p. 13 c. 1-4.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Examiner}, 20 December 1913, p. 12 c. 7; Walker, ‘Memories, dreams and inventions’, p. 257.
that the TTA’s finances were in disarray, and in July 1914 the Railway Department, under the stewardship of E T Emmett, took over the management of the association.\textsuperscript{116} Around the same time the NTTA’s accounts also came under scrutiny. Although discrepancies were uncovered, these were soon rectified.\textsuperscript{117}

The change in administration of the TTA did little to defuse north-south rivalries. Apart from contending with the alleged negative publicity from a government funded instrumentality,\textsuperscript{118} the north also struggled against inequitable distribution of funding. In the north, volunteers undertook a significant proportion of the workload. Further, while both northern and southern bureaux attracted a subsidy from the government, the citizens of Launceston had to contribute £150 before they received their grant, but there was no similar stipulation for Hobartians.\textsuperscript{119} This was despite the fact that in 1914, the turnover in the Launceston bureau was about ‘£800 more than that of the Hobart and Melbourne offices combined’.\textsuperscript{120} A further source of resentment was that government requests for assistance with tourist-related matters were carried out at the northern office’s expense.\textsuperscript{121} Such inequities caused northern residents to feel victimised.

However, the jealousies were not just one way. In 1916 an argument arose over a claim that, while the Melbourne office of the Tasmanian Government Tourist Department had ‘some admirable views of Launceston, the North and the North-West’ on display, there was only one ‘little view, hanging near the ceiling’ of the south.\textsuperscript{122} The Master Warden J W Evans of Hobart added to the fray by claiming that ‘[w]ithout being egotistical … everybody must admit that there were beauty spots in the South with which very few places could compete’.\textsuperscript{123} A week later, former secretary of the TTA, John Moore-Robinson fuelled the debate when he

\textsuperscript{116} Mercury, 4 July 1914, p. 5 c. 7; Mercury, 6 July 1914, p. 3 c. 5-6; Mercury, 11 July 1914, p. 5 c. 6; Mercury, 22 July 1914, p. 5 c. 7; Robson, \textit{A History of Tasmania, Volume II}, p. 287; Walker, ‘Memories, dreams and inventions’, p. 259.

\textsuperscript{117} Mercury, 30 July 1914, p. 4 c. 7.

\textsuperscript{118} Examiner, 20 December 1913, p. 12 c. 7.

\textsuperscript{119} Examiner, 17 September 1912, p. 6; Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 6.

\textsuperscript{120} Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 5.

\textsuperscript{121} Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 5.

\textsuperscript{122} Mercury, 5 July 1916, p. 3 c. 5; Mercury, 8 July 1916, p. 3 c. 6.

\textsuperscript{123} Mercury, 5 July 1916, p. 3 c. 5.
stated, ‘[s]urely the State is not going to spend the thousands it now is per annum to have Hobart exploited for the benefit of other parts of Tasmania’.

The whole matter came to a head in 1917. On 27 June the Launceston Examiner alleged that a ‘section of the Southern Press’ and ‘other and secret channels’ opposed Launceston’s progress and that this deliberate, ‘Machiavellian policy’, promoted discord between north and south. Two day’s later, despite Premier Walter Henry Lee’s earlier assurances that ‘the Government were [sic] not going to allow the association [NTTA] to lapse’, the Mercury reported that the government had assumed control. The following day the Examiner recorded:

On Thursday the obsequies of the Northern Tasmanian Tourist Association were performed, its work having now being merged into that of the Government Bureau. There are many who will regret the merger, for it has been one of the most successful of our local institutions … For our part we failed to see the necessity of getting rid of the old association, on which so much splendid work had been done by voluntary effort …

It is not quite clear how all this wrangling affected the Spurlings and their business. Although the firm survived and evidently expanded during this period, the bickering between south and north must have caused angst to someone like Stephen 3rd who was by nature reserved and preferred the solitude of the bush to political infighting. Nevertheless, despite his modesty, at times he was prompted to defend himself. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, he disputed John Watt Beattie’s claim to being the first to photograph the Mole Creek track area. In addition, there were times when Stephen 3rd poked fun at administrative incompetence by peppering his articles with sideswipes at officialdom. He continued this honest but somewhat undiplomatic strategy throughout his life. Even in his old age he could not resist referring to some early Launceston city councillors, who ‘in an excess of bumbledom’ legislated to forbid

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124 Mercury, 12 July 1916, p. 3 c. 7; Robson, A History of Tasmania, Volume II, p. 287.
125 Examiner, 27 June 1917, p. 4 c. 3-4.
126 Mercury, 18 July 1916, p. 8 c. 5; Mercury, 29 June 1917, p. 6 c. 6.
127 Examiner, 30 June 1917, p. 6 c. 4.
129 Examiner, 10 June 1901, p. 3 c. 4-5.
swimming at Cataract Gorge during daylight hours. However, it was probably his father, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} who was more active in campaigning for copyright laws, and agitating for reform of the taxation system. As he explained in a letter to the paper, in the early 1900s Tasmania allowed interstate photographers to visit the island, bring in their equipment duty-free, take photographs, print them elsewhere and sell them duty-free in Tasmania. By contrast, local photographers had to pay prohibitive taxes on all their tools and equipment. Such inequitable treatment had an inhibiting effect on Tasmanian photographers seeking to undertake wilderness photographic excursions. It was also a major disincentive to local, ethical photographers wishing to take photographs to publicise the island’s attractions.

For many Tasmanians north-south rivalry was personified by the two government photographers; John Watt Beattie in the south, and the Spurlings in the north. Although Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s daughter Hazel would later describe this rivalry as ‘friendly’, the evidence suggests at times the competition was intense. While Beattie devoted his energies to promoting the south, and the Spurlings specialised in photographing the north, neither photographic firm restricted their activities to these regions, and there were instances when both firms produced photographs taken from almost identical vantage spots. On other occasions the Beattie studio distributed Spurling images under the Beattie banner. Although at times the two firms cooperated, they had different strengths and priorities. While Beattie was more concerned with history, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} was more concerned with photographic innovations, and Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} with venturing into isolated regions. Although Beattie also undertook wilderness photographic assignments, according to the historian Chris Binks, ‘Steve was a far more accomplished and adventurous walker than Beattie, who tended to travel by rail, road and major track’.  

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130 Steve Spurling, ‘It was strictly “men only” at the city’s first baths’, (Dated 23 June 1956, publication details unknown – copy held by Christine Burgess).
131 Letter written by Stephen Spurling 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the Hon. Henry Dobson, 20 March 1893 (PD 1/60 file 103/93, TAHO); S Spurling, ‘The tourist in Tasmania’, \textit{ Examiner}, 30 July 1900, p. 3 c. 5. See discussion in Chapter 3.
133 See discussion later in this Chapter.
134 See discussion in Chapter 3.
135 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 27 February 2009.
Despite the demise of the NTTA, the Spurlings maintained their position as government photographers. As such, Stephen 3rd continued to support tourist-related projects including the improvement of facilities in the central lakes. This region was about to become world-famous. Around 1911 construction started on an earth-filled dam where the Shannon River flowed from Great Lake.136 Apart from raising the level of the lake, this dam also increased the volume of water entering the river, and thereby created ideal conditions for the caddis moth to multiply at an exponential rate. This fecund breeding ground improved further with the construction of the multiple-arch buttress dam at Miena in 1922.137 Now, for a few weeks in November and December, the newly-hatched moths hovered at the headwaters of the Shannon River, luring thousands of leaping trout. This phenomenon, known as ‘Shannon Rise’ attracted fishermen from near and far.138

However, construction of the 1922 dam also presented a problem. When the original accommodation house disappeared under the rising dam waters, the government constructed a new facility at Miena.139 Once again, Stephen 3rd photographed the new dam and accommodation house.140 The Shannon Rise phenomenon had been created by man interfering with nature. Over the years further Hydro Electric Commission developments reduced the volume of water in the Shannon River, and gradually the conditions that favoured the hatching of the caddis moth changed too – spelling the death knell of Shannon Rise.141 By the mid-1960s the halcyon days of Great Lake fishing had all but ended. As if in sympathy, the appropriately named Rainbow Chalet at Breona on the lake’s northern shores burnt to ashes in 1963. In its heyday it had accommodated luminaries such as Lord Baden-Powell and various Australian cricketers.142

137 Lupton, Lifeblood, p. 79, 81-82, 220; Taylor, Shannon Rise revisited, p. 5.
139 Mercury, 14 June 1922, p. 6 c. 6; Walker, ‘Memories, dreams and inventions’, pp. 282-283.
140 See photograph later in this chapter.

In the decades following the demise of the NTTA, the Spurlings continued to support tourist-related activities. For example, in June 1922, Stephen 3rd was on-hand to photograph a conference of tourist managers. In 1933, he photographed the opening of the newly-illuminated Flowery Gully caves on the West Tamar. He also continued to supply photographs for advertising materials, tourist brochures and lantern slides. For example, in 1938 he supplied lantern slides to J Palamountain, from the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau, to undertake a lecture tour of Western Australia. The Launceston Corporation purchased these slides on Palamountain’s behalf at a cost of twenty-seven shillings per dozen for black-and white, and thirty-nine shillings per dozen for hand coloured slides.

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142 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 7 May 2005; Jetson, *The Roof of Tasmania*, pp. 103, 142; *Mercury*, 18 February 1937, p. 3 c. 3. For Spurling coloured lantern slides of Lord Baden at Great Lake see Q1987.337; Q1987.338, TMAG.
143 *Mercury*, 14 June 1922, p. 6 c. 6; *Weekly Courier*, 15 June 1922, p. 28.
144 *Weekly Courier*, 30 November 1933, p. 27.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Cataract Gorge, Launceston, Tasmania*, date unknown, glass lantern slide with hand colouring, 8.5 x 8.5 cm.

Apart from working with the state government and regional tourist associations, the Spurlings also helped promote the island’s tourist industry in a number of practical ways. Both Stephen 2nd and 3rd provided information to customers enquiring about facilities at, and directions to, popular destinations.146 The Spurlings were amongst a group of Tasmanian businesses who made their darkroom facilities available free of charge to visiting amateur photographers. By contrast, Beattie’s studio in Hobart did not offer this service.147 As discussed previously, in addition to providing services directly to tourists, many of Stephen 3rd’s published accounts of his journeys included advice to intending visitors, and/or calls for the upgrading of facilities.

The promotion of the island as a tourist destination also made good business sense. For example, the Spurlings sold souvenirs such as calendars and postcards featuring scenic views.148 Sales of the latter proved particularly lucrative. Photo-historian David P Millar has described how the postcard fad started in England around 1894. The phenomenon soon spread, and early in the twentieth century postcards became a ‘financial bonanza’ for Australian photographers such as John

146 S Spurling, ‘The tourist in Tasmania’, *Examiner*, 30 July 1900, p. 3 c. 5; Letter written by Stephen Spurling 3rd to Gustav Weindorfer, 29 October 1913 (NS 234/12/3, pp. 397-398, TAHO).
Kerry.\textsuperscript{149} Not only were they fashionable, but since the public sent view postcards to friends and relatives within Australia and overseas, they also served as free advertisements. The potential of postcards to promote scenic areas did not escape the attention of the NTTA, and they too used postcards to attract tourists.\textsuperscript{150}

However, there was a downside to the craze. Photographers often had to jeopardise the integrity of their images through ‘a certain blandness of presentation’, inappropriate cropping, or poor quality reproductions.\textsuperscript{151} As discussed in earlier chapters, another difficulty arose during the First World War, when faced with a tide of anti-German sentiment; photographers had to erase ‘Printed in Prussia’, ‘Made in Germany’ or ‘Printed in Germany’ from the verso of their cards. These problems were common to many photographic firms producing postcards. In respect to the Spurlings, there is evidence to suggest they, or the people who purchased their cards, did attempt to erase the place of printing.\textsuperscript{152} In addition, the reproduction quality of many of their postcards was primitive – although today this arguably adds to their charm.

The issue as to whether, and how frequently, the Spurlings cropped postcard images is complex. According to the historian Nic Haygarth, ‘[p]oor cropping of the photographer’s generally impeccable composition and loss of definition were compromises of postcard production he [Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}] endured in order to make a living’.\textsuperscript{153} The example Haygarth provides, \textit{The Butts, Ben Lomond, Tasmania},\textsuperscript{154} appears to be the same image that originally appeared in the \textit{Weekly Courier} in 1903.\textsuperscript{155} However, the postcard had considerably more sky. This suggests either the image as it appeared in the paper and as a lantern slide was cropped, or, the more likely scenario, that extra sky was added to the postcard.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Examiner}, 6 September 1910, p. 3; \textit{Mercury}, 6 September 1910, p. 6 c. 5; \textit{Mercury}, 2 September 1911, p. 6 c. 4.
\textsuperscript{152} Email from Elery Hamilton-Smith to Christine Burgess, 3 May 2004.
\textsuperscript{153} Haygarth, \textit{The Wild Ride}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{154} Haygarth, \textit{The Wild Ride}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Weekly Courier}, 19 September 1903, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{156} See Chapter 5.
Film and sound archivist, Chris Long also believes Stephen 3rd cropped many of his postcards. Long states that Stephen 3rd’s ‘reputation has not been enhanced by the postcards made from his negatives. Many of these are poorly printed by the collotype process and are badly cropped, giving little indication of the superb composition of the original negatives’. Unfortunately Long does not provide any examples. Amongst the postcards currently available in public collections, it appears that a number of Stephen 3rd’s images, including several of his circa 1906 west coast images, were subject to cropping when released as postcards.

Nevertheless, one aspect of Haygarth and Long’s assertion requires clarification. Both imply Stephen 3rd took all the postcard images. However, the postcards had ‘S Spurling and Son’ or ‘Spurling and Son’ printed on the verso. Unless an image can be linked to one of Stephen 3rd’s trips, or appears as an original in his known collections of images, there is no way of telling who took a particular postcard image. Many of these images could have been the work of Stephen 2nd or one of the firm’s apprentices, Myra Sargent and Frederick Vaudry Robinson. In fact, Myra’s great-niece Marion Sargent, believes some of Myra’s photographs may have appeared under the Spurling banner. Despite these considerations, entries in the Spurlings’ account books suggest postcard sales were a profitable sideline. Spurling postcards came in various shapes and sizes. According to museum archivist, Rhonda Hamilton, they ‘produced postcards in series, as view cards, as well as “miniature snaps”, two fold panoramas and “real photo cards”’.

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158 Email from Marion Sargent to Christine Burgess, 2 November 2004.
159 Spurling and Son Account Books (LCC 6 35/1: 1915-1926, QVMAG); Spurling and Son Account Books (LCC 6 35/2: 1934-1940, QVMAG).
The Spurlings sale of postcards, calendars, memorabilia and framed enlargements had two positive benefits. Apart from being profitable, such sales also contributed towards advertising the island’s tourist attractions, without any direct outlay from the government. In the same way, for more than half a century Spurling press images and articles alerted locals and visitors to scenic regions. In the 1880s Stephen 2nd’s images had appeared as lithographs. Then during the next decade, both father and son contributed articles, and occasionally photographs, to daily newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph, Examiner* and *Tasmanian*.

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161 *Weekly Courier Annual Special Number*, 9 November 1909, p. 29.
In 1901 the Examiner publishers launched a quality weekly, the Weekly Courier. This magazine-style paper published Stephen 3rd’s accounts of his wilderness treks and reproduced his images in exceptionally high definition. Now ‘readers could see depictions of what was described – interesting rock formations,

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gentle waterfalls, celebrated views and inviting mountain paths ...’.

In addition to local distribution, for many years the NTTA arranged the dispatch of the Weekly Courier to the mainland and overseas. Consequently, Stephen 3rd’s photographs and recounts would have reached interstate and worldwide audiences. Although the extra revenue generated by the publication of these images helped to place the business on a secure financial footing, Stephen 3rd’s primary motivation in venturing into wilderness areas was his love of the Tasmanian bush.

Apart from the thousands of Spurling images appearing in the Weekly Courier and other publications, the Spurlings also released quality pictorial magazines. Sometimes these publications focussed on a theme or area, but usually they featured a selection of views from all parts of the island. In her thesis, academic Julia Peck describes how similar publications, produced by photographers in Victoria and New South Wales, ‘became the dominant way of consuming view photographs’, and largely replaced photographic albums. Peck argues that, while many of these publications included the word ‘picturesque’ in their titles, this was probably a reference to the technological advances in presentation rather than a reference to the images’ composition. Nevertheless, many Spurling publications also included ‘picturesque’ in their titles. Today, these publications are collectors’ items and are occasionally available through auction houses and dealers. For example, early in 2009 Camberwell Books and Collectibles advertised the Spurling Pty Ltd magazine, Tasmania Illustrated – a complete pictorial record containing 122 views of the Garden Isle, for sale at SUS237.93.

Public institutions holding copies of these magazines include the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania and the State Library of South Australia. While these magazines are now highly sought after, in the

164 Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1907, p. 8 c. 2; Examiner, 22 September 1908, p. 5; Examiner, 27 August 1909, p. 7; Examiner, 6 September 1910, p. 3; Examiner, 17 September 1912, p. 6; Examiner, 25 September 1913, p. 7.
early twentieth century they would have provided extra income for the Spurlings, and at the same time helped to promote the state’s scenic attractions.

Stephen 3rd also supported the tourism industry in other practical ways. For example, his membership of the Fifty Thousand League, which initiated a range of development projects, was a practical means of ensuring improved facilities for tourists.\(^\text{168}\) Stephen 3rd also believed that a comprehensive road network would benefit transport and communications, and enable tourists to reach destinations quickly and easily. Consequently, over the years he supported the construction of a number of roads. These included the Deloraine-Great Lake Road, the Wynyard-Waratah Road, the Derwent bridge-Linda Valley Road and the Missing Link Road between Great Lake and Bronte.\(^\text{169}\) He gave support to these projects through writing articles, photographing roadworks, and joining action groups such as the Missing Link Association.\(^\text{170}\) However, at times regional interests challenged the construction of these roads. In particular, opposition to the Missing Link campaign highlighted antagonisms between north and south. According to oral historian Geoff Furmage, ‘business interests in Hobart … didn’t want to see the access come through to the north’.\(^\text{171}\) Although the battles for an improved road network proved daunting, they were ultimately successful. As Stephen 3rd predicted these roads brought many benefits, not least of which was the opportunity to promote winter sports – another of Stephen 3rd’s passions. Apart from championing Pine Lake as a winter playground, he was also a foundation member of the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club.\(^\text{172}\)


\(^{168}\) See Chapter 4; Weekly Courier, 20 May 1926; J G Branagan, Frederick Smithies, OBE: explorer, mountaineer, photographer: a great Tasmanian (Launceston, 1985) pp. 18-19.

\(^{169}\) Jetson, The Roof of Tasmania, p. 95.


\(^{172}\) Weekly Courier, 8 April 1909, p. 21; Examiner, 17 September 1929, p. 6 c. 6; Nic Haygarth, A View to Cradle, A History of Tasmania’s Forth River High Country (Canberra, 1998) p. 141.
From this discussion it emerges that from 1893 onwards the Tasmanian government showed initiative and enterprise in encouraging tourism. The government also took the unusual step of appointing two official photographers. Despite the benefits tourism brought to Tasmania, the industry struggled for many years. For apart from being underfunded and mismanaged, regional jealousies clouded issues. At the same time, the regional tourist associations, which relied on voluntary support, played an important role in attracting tourists. In a further complication, while the government supported tourism with one arm, the inequitable distribution of resources fuelled north-south antagonisms. In addition, the government’s failure to enact copyright legislation, and to amend the taxation laws with respect to photographic equipment, proved disincentives to ethical photographers wishing to venture into remote regions to take photographs. That Tasmanian tourism prospered during this period was due to a few dedicated individuals who had a vision for the future and could see beyond the minutiae.
According to Julia Peck, in Victoria and New South Wales picturesque views played an important role in promoting tourism. Scenic views played an equally important role in promoting tourism in Tasmania. However, the Spurlings’ contribution to tourist promotion extended beyond the provision of images. They also supported the industry by cooperating with the state government and local associations, and by making practical contributions such as providing free advice, presenting lantern slide evenings, allowing amateur photographers to use their darkroom, writing articles, supporting road construction and joining associations agitating for development. However, their greatest contribution was their photography. Between them, Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} produced seven decades of images of Tasmanian scenery. Many of these images featured what would arguably become the island’s greatest asset – its wilderness areas.

**Artistic and photographic conventions**

Having considered the collection purpose, this chapter will now investigate the artistic and photographic conventions that influenced the way in which the Spurlings photographed Tasmanian scenery. This section includes a discussion of how the Spurlings’ early landscape work reflected various aspects of the picturesque and the sublime, as expounded by the Romantic artists. When the impressionist challenged these concepts, photographers also forsook traditional ways of depicting the landscape and moved towards pictorialism. For the Spurlings, this created a dilemma as to how to respond to the trend for blurred and manipulated images, and search for a deeper meaning, but remain commercially viable. By the time the f/64 photographers had rejected the ethos of the pictorial photographers, and had started producing artistic photographs with clear, focussed images, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} was nearing the end of his career. For the Spurlings, this marked the end of their professional activities. This section then discusses how, while photographers searched to find ways of making an artistic statement, some artists used photographs to inspire their pictures. Finally, this section considers

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some other early Tasmanian photographers, and reflects on the ways in which they influenced each other.

The early landscape photographers drew inspiration from the artistic conventions of their day. Concepts such as the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque all played a role in shaping the subjects considered appropriate for an image and its composition. In late nineteenth century Tasmania, one artist in particular influenced how photographers pictured the landscape – William Charles Piguenit. For John Watt Beattie in the south and the Spurlings in the north, this artist commanded respect and emulation.¹⁷⁴

There are several connections between Piguenit and the Spurlings. In the early 1850s Stephen ⁴th and Piguenit both worked in the survey department in Hobart Town and it is likely they became acquainted during this period.¹⁷⁵ This family connection may well have played a role in Stephen ³rd’s familiarity with the artist’s work. Many of his photographs bear a remarkable similarity to Piguenit’s paintings, and he refers to Piguenit in his articles. For example, as quoted in the previous chapter, he referred to Piguenit in his account of his 1904 trip to the Chudleigh lakes in winter.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, when describing his trip to Fish River Gulf, he recorded that one of his images in ‘nowise represents the full grandeur of this scenery, which requires a Piguenit to do it justice’.¹⁷⁷ Despite the influence the artist’s work had on photographers such as Stephen ³rd and John Watt Beattie, academic Roslynn Haynes points out that somewhat ironically it was the photographers themselves who ultimately ‘had an impact in their time far greater than that of Piguenit’.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ S Spurling, Jun., ‘On the Western Tiers: Trip to the Fish River Gulf’, (Date and publication details unknown – copy held by Christine Burgess).
Although Pigenot had received little formal artistic tutoring, according to the environmental historian, Tim Bonyhady, his work can ‘still be seen within a context of European art’. Bonyhady also regards Pigenot as being, ‘outstanding among colonial painters in having ventured into remote and difficult regions’.

While Pigenot emphasised the sublime aspects of nature by exaggerating the height of mountain peaks and creating sense of drama with devices such as foreboding cloud formations, both Stephen 2nd and Stephen 3rd tended to emphasise the picturesque. Their use of foliage to frame the photograph, a central point of interest and distant hills were all classic picturesque motifs. Another popular motif, employed by father and son, was the use of reflections. According to the American author and philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, ‘reflections in water (pools and puddles as well as ponds, lakes, and rivers) could show familiar natural objects in a new way’. The fact that reflections also reversed the natural order would have intrigued photographers, who laboured in the darkroom transforming negatives into positive prints.

*Stephen Spurling 2nd, Clark’s Ford, near St Leonards, c. 1890, albumen silver print.*

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179 Bonyhady, *Images in opposition*, p. 82.


181 Album of Photographs of the North West Coast, Mount Bischoff and Launceston (NS 473/38, TAHO) p. 4.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Leven River at Lobster Creek*, c. 1930s, gelatin silver photograph

Ruins were another popular picturesque motif.182 Although early-twentieth century Tasmania did not have an abundance of tumbled-down buildings, neglected convict-built structures did provide opportunities for photographs.

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Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Old Church, Port Arthur*, c. 1920s, gelatin silver photograph. 183

However, Stephen 2nd and 3rd were not just interested in the picturesque. There were times when their cameras focussed on precipitous rocks, gaping canyons, or plunging waterfalls – the sublime aspects of nature. Sometimes they also employed Piguenit’s strategy of including small figures to signify man overawed by nature, and/or as an indication of scale. 184 The difference was that the Spurlings often included only one figure, perhaps semi-concealed in the foreground, posturing mid-waterfall, or as a minute figure tottering on a cliff edge. Fellow Tasmanian photographer Frederick Smithies would later extend this motif, depicting his companions engaging in nerve-racking feats of agility. 185

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183 See Chapter 2 for Stephen 1st’s image, *Port Arthur, church and convict settlement in the background*, c. 1870. Taken some fifty years earlier, this image depicts the church when the roof was still intact.
Stephen Spurling 2nd, *View at Corra Linn*, c. 1879, albumen silver print, 10.7 x 17.3 cm.


Although Stephen 3rd sometimes included men in his landscape images, he rarely included women and children. However, there were exceptions, as the photograph below demonstrates. This image depicts a kind of Antipodean paradise. Some men, a woman and a small child are about to embark on a boating trip up the river. Children frolic nearby, and a dog and pony complete the scene of bucolic harmony. Scenes such as this were popular amongst picturesque photographers in the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, as Julia Peck discusses, the inclusion of women in a scene was in itself a picturesque conceit, and often signified an ‘align[ment] with nature’. It is perhaps significant that this image was of Lobster Creek, Leven River, not far from the settlement of Castra. Established in the 1870s as a haven for ex-Indian army officers and their Anglo-Indian families, Castra never quite lived up to the promises made by its promoter. However, Stephen 3rd’s photograph suggests a life of genteel elegance, somewhat reminiscent of the type of scene colonial artists who ‘celebrated the triumphant arrival of European civilisation in a savage and hitherto unproductive land’ might depict. It was a truly picturesque scene, but a complete departure from his usual photographs, which celebrated the raw, untamed beauty of the Australian bush.

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Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Lobster Creek, Leven River*, c. 1910s, gelatin silver photograph.

On other occasions Stephen 3rd chose to exclude figures completely. Examples include many of his images taken on his 1908 trip across the plateau. Although nearly all these images exhibit aspects of the picturesque, several images taken on his winter trips to Ben Lomond and Chudleigh Lakes forsake the usual picturesque conventions and invoke the sublime. Later Stephen 3rd re-introduced the figures, but for different purposes. In his 1913 image of Paddy Hartnett on Lake St Clair, the prospector’s figure is integral to the overall composition.\(^{190}\) In a further departure, in some of his 1920 images of Frenchmans Cap, Stephen 3rd depicted man as integral to the story behind the picture.

Some time before Stephen 3rd began his photographic career, an artistic movement, known as impressionism, had started to influence the way artists depicted the landscape.\(^{191}\) As discussed in Chapter 1, in Australia a group known as the Heidelberg School responded to some aspects of this movement. Founded in Melbourne in the late nineteenth century, the Heidelberg artists had a


significant impact on Australian art. Artists such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Charles Condor and Frederick McCubbin explored new ways of representing the Australian scenery. Discarding the traditions of artists such as William Charles Piguenit and Eugene von Guérard, who had depicted the landscape in all its grandeur, these artists idealised the Australian landscape, but in a different way. Whereas Piguenit and von Guérard depicted the Australian landscape as a version of the Anglo-European sublime, the Heidelberg artists emphasised what they saw as the uniquely Australian aspects of the scenery. Over time, the conflict between old and new polarised. Melbourne represented the traditional hierarchy, but Sydney promised greater freedom and recognition. Gradually many of this new generation of artists gravitated northwards. Amongst those who moved were Roberts, Streeton, Archibald and the Lindsays.192

According to his daughter Hazel, Stephen 3rd visited the Heidelberg artists and was friendly with Norman Lindsay.193 Although no documentary evidence has been uncovered to support Hazel’s claim regarding the Heidelberg artists, as discussed in Chapter 4, her brother Ted confirmed Stephen 3rd’s friendship with Norman and Daryl Lindsay, and ‘Archie’ Archibald.194 While it is uncertain exactly when or how Stephen 3rd first met the Lindsays, the fact that he received a wedding gift from them in 1914 indicates that they were friendly by this date. Another point of contact may have been through Gustav Weindorfer. In April 1928, Daryl Lindsay recorded his stay at Cradle Mountain with a cartoon entry in the Waldheim Visitors’ Book.195 While Stephen 3rd’s friendship with the Heidelberg artists is somewhat more problematic, it is interesting to note certain parallels between some of Stephen 3rd’s images and paintings by these artists. For example, in his images Shearing lambs – Leverington, and Shearing – Leverington, Stephen 3rd employed the same three-dimensional aspects and interplays of light and shadow as Tom Roberts depicted in his painting, Shearing

193 Hazel McCammon, Recollections.
194 Ted Spurling, Recollections as told to Christine Burgess.
195 Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 134.
the rams (1890). Although these similarities may have been just a coincidence, it seems likely Stephen 3rd was familiar with the Heidelberg artists' works, and experimented with similar themes and choices of subject matter. Certainly Roberts had a close affinity with Tasmania – he visited the island on a number of occasions and his ashes are interred near Longford, just south of Launceston.

There is another aspect to Stephen 3rd’s depiction of shearers. Julia Peck regards portrayals of shearers and miners as representing ‘archetypal examples of outback living in the nineteenth century’. Although Stephen 3rd’s image, depicted below, dates from the early twentieth-century, his images of shearing, mining and various other rural activities, taken throughout his career, illustrate Peck’s assertion that such images provided ‘a visual example … to those who have no first-hand knowledge or experience of such matters’.

![Image of shearing](image)


While artists turned to impressionism to create new ways of depicting the landscape, photographers embraced their own response – known as pictorialism.

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For many photographers the evolution from scenic to pictorial was gradual, and coincided with improvements in photographic technologies. Most early photographers preferred to work during fine weather, which presented a problem in the unpredictable Tasmanian climate. However, the introduction of the dry plate brought new possibilities. Photographers began exploring the feasibility of taking images on overcast days, and depicting misty mornings, sunrises and sunsets, cloud formations, and the interplay of light and shade.

Confusingly, various experts express differing opinions as to where Stephen 3rd and John Watt Beattie fit in the scenic-pictorial continuum. According to Nic Haygarth, although ‘Beattie and Spurling III both flirted with pictorialism, they remained in the scenic tradition’. Jack Cato goes further, claiming that while Beattie was a ‘master of the scenic view’, he worked in a ‘transitional stage between the scenic view and the pictorial’. Cato similarly regards Stephen 3rd’s work as representing ‘a link between the scenic view of the field-worker, and the self-expression sought by the Pictorial Movement’. Other writers place Beattie in the scenic tradition. Photo-historian Anne-Marie Willis states, ‘the landscape photographs taken by members of the North [sic] Tasmanian Camera Club … were clear and detailed, differing little from the view photographs of Samuel Clifford, the Anson brothers and John Watt Beattie’. Chris Long agrees with Willis’ assessment of Beattie. However, he contends that Stephen 3rd was:

one of the earliest Tasmanian photographers of the pictorial school … [his] self-expression and preoccupation with grand, broad views is in marked contrast to J W Beattie’s preoccupation with history and detail. Spurling was an athletic adventurer, pioneer motorist and occasionally an explorer. Beattie was an academic of the old school, a recorder of history working at a slightly earlier period than Spurling …

200 For example, in 1879 Stephen 2nd described the difficulties of working in unfavourable lighting conditions. Examiner, 4 July 1879, p. 3 c. 4.
203 Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, plate 7 between pp. 128-129.
204 Willis, Picturing Australia, p. 132.
205 Chris Long, ‘Research Fellowship’, Grant Submission Files (Series Number AB 780, SV/7/82, TAHO) p. 1.
While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse conflicting assessments of Beattie’s photography, the writers who mention Stephen 3rd agree his work exhibits elements of pictorialism. There is evidence to support their views. For example, many of Stephen 3rd’s photographs capture scenes at dawn or dusk, and feature apposite titles. Photo-historian Gael Newton regards such titles as typical of the pictorial movement and describes them as ‘the poetry of the indefinite’. Another popular pictorial motif was the use of emotive titles to evoke a meaning beyond the image, and elicit a deeper aesthetic response. Stephen 3rd employed this device in his image, ‘Solitude’, Swan Bay, Great Lake. This image also features the pictorial motif of illuminated clouds. Stephen 3rd’s image, Sunset – ‘The Setting Sun’, again features sun-tinged clouds and reflections. However, his image, Light and Shade, Rodger River, explores the interplay of shadows and dappled sunshine.

Although pictorialism provided opportunities for Stephen 3rd to move away from the sharp-focussed images of earlier Tasmanian photographers, he had to run a business. He could not afford to branch into a field of photography that was relatively untried in Australia and possibly not economically viable. As a compromise, he evolved a style that incorporated elements of pictorialism and the scenic view. His decision proved judicious, as exemplified by the experiences of fellow Launceston photographer Frederick Vaudry Robinson. Robinson embraced pictorialism, and, while he achieved national and international acclaim, there was little understanding or appreciation of his work in his home state.

206 For example, Early Morning, Lake St Clair, Tasmania (Harringtons’ Photographic Journal, v. 30, 2 May, 1921, p. 18); Sunset – ‘The Setting Sun’, (nla.pic-an21697618-494, National Library of Australia – hereafter NLA); ‘Eventide at Longford’ (nla.pic-an21697618-420, NLA); Sunsets – ‘The Close of Day’, (nla.pic-an21697618-493, NLA); Sunsets – ‘The Silver Moon’, (nla.pic-an21697618-492, NLA); Sunset – ‘Shades of Night’, (nla.pic-an21697618-495, NLA); Moonbeams, Table Cape, NW Coast, Tasmania (Harringtons’ Photographic Journal, 2 May, 1921, p. 17).
208 ‘Solitude’, Swan Bay, Great Lake (2002 302, NGA); Weekly Courier, 10 February 1906, p. 17.
209 ‘Solitude’, Swan Bay, Great Lake (2002 302, NGA); Weekly Courier, 10 February 1906, p. 17.
210 Willis, Picturing Australia, p. 132.
211 Long, Tasmanian Photographers, pp. 96-97; Newton, Silver and Grey, Biography under ‘F Vaudry Robinson’; Willis, Picturing Australia, p. 136.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Solitude*, *Swan Bay, Great Lake*, 1905, gelatin silver photograph, 42.0 x 59.9 cm.

While the image, ‘Solitude’, Swan Bay, Great Lake, demonstrates Stephen 3rd’s use of both scenic and pictorial conventions, the image Sunset – ‘The Setting Sun’ is very much in the pictorial style. On the other hand, the image ‘Light and Shade’, Rodger River is different again. This image bears a resemblance to Isaac Whitehead’s, In Sassafras Valley, Victoria (1875). Authors Ron Radford and Jane Hylton believe Whitehead was one of the last artists to depict the Australian bush in the ‘German-influenced landscape tradition … prior to the advent of Impressionism’. Intriguingly, Stephen 3rd either wittingly or unwittingly reproduced a similar scene, but named his image in keeping with the traditions of pictorialism. This apparent contradiction serves to confirm Cato’s opinion that Stephen 3rd drew inspiration from both traditions. While he emulated the conventions used by the earlier landscape masters, he also attempted to hint at a deeper meaning, and elicit an emotional response to his photographs more in keeping with the pictorialists.

213 Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, plate 7 between pp. 128-129.
215 Radford and Hylton, Australian Colonial Art 1800-1900, p. 96.
216 Haygarth, From the Sublime to the Skyline, pp. 39, 80 (fn. 167).
Whitehead’s painting, which featured ‘giant eucalyptus stands shelter[ing] primeval treeferns’,\textsuperscript{217} reflected an obsession with ferns that lasted from the mid-nineteenth century until the early-twentieth century. This craze, sometimes referred to as pteridomania, influenced the decorative arts and leisure activities. Ferns appeared as motifs on household furniture, plates and cutlery. Gardens featured ferneries, and indoors potted ferns adorned tables. The public also yearned to see ferns growing in the wild.\textsuperscript{218} Fern glades also proved a magnet for photographers, and both Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} made a number of such studies. Apart from depicting the luxuriant fronds, their images often included other picturesque motifs such as rustic huts, streams and cascades. However, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s image taken near Marriotts Falls, not far from Mount Field National Park in the south of the island, focuses on the ferns protected by towering trees. This image is reminiscent of Nicholas Caire’s image, \textit{Blackspur, Fernshaw} (circa 1900) which probably dates from some twenty years earlier.\textsuperscript{219}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fern.jpg}
\caption{Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, Marriott’s Falls (fern scene near), c. 1920s, gelatin silver photograph.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{217} Radford and Hylton, \textit{Australian Colonial Art 1800-1900}, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{219} Ennis, \textit{Intersections}, p. 86.
Although Stephen 3rd’s primary love was wilderness photography, he did not confine himself to this genre. As discussed in Chapter 4, he also took portraits, some of which achieved international acclaim. In addition, he undertook commercial photographic commissions for companies in and around Launceston, and he occasionally experimented with other artistic photographic genres, such as still life. For example, his image, *Wattle study in vase*, reveals both his patriotism, as evidenced by his choice of bloom, and his fascination with exploring different notions of what constitutes an aesthetically pleasing image. By placing the vase off-centre, and arranging the blooms cascading to the left, he produced an effect that had little in common with traditional western arrangements, and was more reminiscent of Japanese ikebana. Japanese art forms influenced western creativity from the mid-nineteenth century. This trend, sometimes referred to as japonisme, proved popular with photographers, especially pictorialists and symbolists, who ‘responded to Japanese art’s simplicity, its asymmetrical compositions and unusual points of view.’

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Japanese, Chinese and African symbols became increasingly influential during the Art Deco period.\textsuperscript{222} Popular motifs borrowed from these cultures during this era included patterns, flowers, plants, animals, insects and birds.\textsuperscript{223} While the Australian print-maker Lionel Lindsay employed many of these symbols in his designs, birds provided a particular source of inspiration.\textsuperscript{224} In the mid-1920s Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} also experimented with this motif when he made a study of his wife Marie, and daughter Hazel feeding pigeons at Cataract Gorge. The subject matter and the movement of the birds were significant departures from his usual photography and represent his exploration of these artistic themes.

![Image](Image_173x341_to_451x557)

Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, \textit{Feeding the birds}, c. 1924, gelatin silver photograph.

In some respects, the majority of Spurling images, which emphasised clarity, depth of field and attention to fine detail, had less in common with the pictorial movement and more in common with the ethos of group f/64. This movement, which became popular towards the end of Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}'s career, promoted using aperture of f/64 (the smallest available on most large-format cameras) to produce sharp images with maximum depth of field. Printed on glossy paper, group f/64 photographs were very different from the blurred effects promoted by the pictorialists. While pictorialists sought to achieve an artistic effect through

\textsuperscript{224} Alisa Bunbury, \textit{The Art of Lionel Lindsay: prints, drawings & bookplates} (Adelaide, 2002) p. 2.
manipulation of the negative, group f/64 enthusiasts viewed photography as an art form that relied solely upon the image created by the camera.\textsuperscript{225}

The rise in popularity of group f/64 marked the demise of the pictorial movement. While this new or ‘straight photography’ challenged earlier concepts of photography imitating art, it also attempted to respond to the new, industrialised world with avant-garde approaches.\textsuperscript{226} Many pictorialists found this extension of the movement difficult to accommodate. By 1941 the excesses of photographic modernism had reached their zenith and photographers like Cazneaux, who had no interest in this new approach felt threatened.\textsuperscript{227} For Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} it was the end of an era. At sixty-five years of age he retired and moved to Melbourne. One of his leisure activities was to visit the city’s art galleries where he found the trends towards surrealism and expressionism disturbing and diametrically opposed to aesthetic attitudes of the previous era. Many years later, his daughter Hazel explained, ‘he liked the beauties of nature left alone, and just as they were … [he] didn’t want them enlarged upon’.\textsuperscript{228}

From this discussion it emerges that both Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} found inspiration for their scenic views in the philosophies espoused by exponents of the picturesque, and the works of a number of colonial artists. However, there were times when both father and son also pictured the sublime aspects of nature. While many of their images are reminiscent of well-known paintings, it was perhaps William Charles Pigenet who had the greatest impact on the way the Spurlings depicted the landscape. In addition to Pigenet and other colonial artists, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} drew inspiration from the impressionist artists. He also embraced some of the theories espoused by the pictorialists, and attempted to search for a meaning beyond the image. Although artists influenced the way photographers represented the landscape, these influences were not one-way. For example, although the


\textsuperscript{226} Mora, Photo Speak, pp. 95, 103, 121; Hirsch, ‘Group f/64 (1932-1935)’, pp. 256-257.


\textsuperscript{228} Long, ‘Interview with Hazel McCammon’.
artist Haughton Forrest often drew inspiration from Beattie images,\(^229\) as discussed in the previous chapter, there were times when he appears to have turned to Spurling images for inspiration. In addition, Spurling images also inspired a number of lithographs used in publications such as the *Daily Telegraph*.

The issue as to whether the Spurling images inspired other photographers is somewhat more complex. However, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then the fact that John Watt Beattie used Spurling images in at least one of his albums, and the Beattie studio incorporated at least two Spurling images into their collection, suggests Beattie’s firm considered Spurling images worthy of reproduction.\(^230\)

As a further complication, many Spurling and Beattie images depict similar scenes from almost identical angles. Without positive and accurate dating of these images it is impossible to tell whether the Beattie or Spurling image came first, and therefore who, wittingly or unwittingly, imitated whom. For example, Beattie’s image (depicted below) of Cataract Gorge clearly pre-dates Stephen 3\(^{rd}\)’s image of the same scene, used earlier in this chapter. Beattie’s image was reproduced using an earlier printing process, and the vegetation on the rocks around the caretaker’s cottage is less advanced. However, the question as to who was the first to photograph this scene becomes more complicated when Beattie’s image is compared to Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)’s images of this area, taken from slightly different angles, and reproduced in Chapter 3. All these images were printed using the albumen silver process, and there is little difference in the vegetation on the rocks. Since Beattie’s image and Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)’s image, *Esk River, Tasmania*, both include the caretaker’s cottage, these photographs must date from after 1890.\(^231\) However, Stephen 2\(^{nd}\)’s image, *Cataract Gorge* [II], depicts a scene slightly to the left, and does not include the cottage, so it uncertain whether this


\(^{230}\) See discussion in Chapter 3.

\(^{231}\) Valentine, ‘Caretaker’s Cottage King’s Bridge’, p. 194; Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p. 347.
image pre-dates the construction of this building. While it is debatable which of these images is the earliest, there is much less room for debate when comparing Beattie’s image of Corra Linn (pictured below) with Stephen 2nd image (pictured in Chapter 3). Since the bridge in the Beattie image is more substantial, it is clear that in this instance Stephen 2nd’s image pre-dates the Beattie image.


John Watt Beattie (1859-1930), Corra Linn near Launceston, 189-?, albumen silver print.
While it is interesting to compare similar images from different photographers and note details that help date the images, there was an underside to the issue of imitation. Stephen 2nd’s repeated calls for copyright legislation, and the fact that for years the Spurlings took measures to name and claim copyright on their images, suggests the issue of other photographers copying their images was a serious and on-going problem for the Spurlings. On a more positive note, the Spurlings also played a role in encouraging and supporting other local photographers. Stephen 2nd’s active involvement with the Northern Tasmanian Camera Club demonstrates his interest in promoting amateur photography. His support of local photography extended beyond encouraging amateurs. In the early 1900s he employed two apprentices who would later become professional photographers in their own right. One of these, Myra Sargent, was one of a select band of early female photographers to conduct her own photography business. Another Spurling apprentice, Frederick Vaudry Robinson achieved international recognition as an exponent of pictorial photography. The tradition of Spurling support of other photographers extended to the next generation. Stephen 3rd’s former employee Bob Mackrill later opened a photography store in Launceston and was ‘one of the first photographers in Launceston to process his own color [sic] slides’. In addition, Stephen 3rd’s friendship with amateur photographers such as Ray McClinton, Charles Monds, George Perrin (and probably his wife Florence), Frederick Smithies and Gustav Weindorfer, no doubt influenced the way these photographers pictured Tasmania’s wild regions.

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232 See discussion in Chapter 3.
233 See Chapter 3.
234 Long, Tasmanian Photographers, p. 100; Marion Sargent, Myra Bessie Sargent, 1878-1940 (Unpublished document, 1998, copy held by Christine Burgess); Email from Marion Sargent to Christine Burgess, 29 July 2009.
235 Long, Tasmanian Photographers, pp. 96-97; Newton, Silver and Grey, Biography under ‘F Vaudry Robinson’.
236 Mercury, 1 February 1978, p. 10; Long, Tasmanian Photographers, p. 76.
237 Long, Tasmanian Photographers, p. 75.
240 Long, Tasmanian Photographers, pp. 103-104; C F Monds, Log of trip to Lake St Clair: Being a brief account of the experiences befalling a jolly party of three: – the pilot (Dr R McClinton) Engineer (F Smithies) & Quartermaster (the writer) ably assisted by “Sandy” the dog (Unpublished, January-February 1920, copy held by the TAHO) p. 21.
241 Letter written by Stephen Spurling 3rd to Gustav Weindorfer, 13 November 1928 (NS 234/12/4, p. 1042, TAHO). In this letter Stephen 3rd asks Weindorfer if he wants the Spurlings to order an infra-red filter from overseas.
The ‘weird melancholy’ of the Australian bush

As discussed in Chapter 1, for many early settlers the Australian bush was an alien environment. It was a place where children could be lost, a place that harboured wild animals and poisonous snakes, a place where escaped convicts and Aboriginals prowled in gloomy forests. For the majority of pioneers, the Australian bush was a feared environment. For these reasons, early artists and authors often depicted the Australian bush as a place of ‘weird melancholy’.242

Then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, attitudes towards the bush started to change, and the Australian landscape became a friendlier place. However, according to Roslynn Haynes, the Tasmanian experience was somewhat different to that on the Australian mainland. Haynes argues that here convict labour, combined with the banishment of the Aboriginal population to Flinders Island and the early eradication of bushrangers, insulated the settlers from the extreme loneliness and hardships experienced by pioneers elsewhere in Australia. Haynes believes that while there are some accounts of suffering and deprivations, many early Tasmanian settlers viewed the bush as a less intimidating place.243 With some exceptions, Stephen 3rd’s wilderness accounts support Haynes’ argument.

As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, most of Stephen 3rd’s writing reflects a love and celebration of the Tasmanian bush. His father, Stephen 2nd expressed similar sentiments.244 However, there is evidence that Stephen 3rd was keenly aware of the dangers associated with the wilds of Tasmania. His articles, which include recounts of crawling off a mountain in the dead of night, of nearly being crushed to death by a crashing tree, and of tumbling down precipices, all reinforce this theme. The same element of fear creeps into his account of his encounters with the Thylacine, and of how even the most experienced bushmen

\[244\] S Spurling, ‘The tourist in Tasmania’, *Examiner*, 30 July 1900, p. 3 c. 5.
could be spooked by the marsupial’s habit of stalking lone travellers. Similarly, his description of the Central Plateau as a ‘terror incognito’ reinforces the idea of unknown horrors lurking beyond the settled areas. However, perhaps the most significance reference to the melancholy associated with the bush occurs in his 1901 article, ‘In the Highlands of Tasmania’, in which he retells a bushman’s tale of the discovery of a ‘weird sentinel’ – the skeletal remains of ‘a solitary hunter … sitting erect and ghastly under a [sic] overhanging rock’. According to Julia Peck, it was fear of the bush, combined with the logistics of lugging massive cameras, fragile glass plates and spending extended periods away from their studios that discouraged the majority of early Australian photographers from venturing into the unknown. Stephen 3rd, and a few of his Tasmanian contemporaries, were exceptions to the rule.

Impact on subsequent wilderness photography

In her discussion on representations of the Tasmanian landscape, Roslynn Haynes states, ‘the black and white photographs of John Beattie and Stephen Spurling III had an immense impact in their time, [but] the founding father of wilderness photography as we think of it today was Olegas Truchanas’. Even a cursory glance at Truchanas’ images cannot but fail to overwhelm the viewer with admiration. He was an extraordinary man, with an extraordinary talent and extraordinary vision. Without detracting from his stature, it is interesting to consider the artistic and photographic conventions that influenced the way Truchanas depicted the Tasmanian wilderness. For example, was he aware of the work of earlier Tasmanian photographers, such as John Watt Beattie and Stephen Spurling 3rd, or was he imbued with the sensibilities of his European heritage?

249 Haynes, Tasmanian Visions, p. 316.
To help answers to these questions, his widow, Melva Truchanas agreed to an interview. In the course of this discussion, she stated that, while she believes her husband would have been aware of some of the earlier photographers in Tasmania, he was not necessarily aware of Stephen Spurling 3rd’s work. In fact, she believes when Truchanas first arrived in Tasmania, his photography was solely influenced by his European background. Melva explained that Olegas Truchanas came to Tasmania as a migrant in 1948. He then spent some years working for the Hydro Electric Commission. Soon after his arrival, he acquired a Rollei 2 1/4 inch camera and, working with only black-and-white film, he produced both portraits and landscapes. He exhibited these images in post-war European salons and achieved recognition for his work both in Europe and Australia. Subsequently, he joined the Southern Tasmanian Photographic Society.

In early 1952, with a new 35mm camera and colour film, Truchanas documented his first successful journey of twenty-eight days to Federation Peak in the Tasmanian southwest. His journey included a successful solo-climb of the peak. Afterwards, he made his first public screenings of the photographs of his journey. Later, Truchanas was invited to join a small group of Hydro Electric Commission friends251 as a member of their Miniature Camera Club. This group wished to explore the possibilities of 35mm colour photography. At this time, such photography was expensive and Truchanas had to be extremely disciplined, limiting his production of photographs accordingly. In the mid-1960s Truchanas made other exploratory trips to the southwest. Realising the need visually to document the wilderness for the public to understand the significance of the planned use of the original Lake Pedder for water storage and the loss of the Lake Pedder National Park, he moved completely to colour photography. Today, Truchanas is remembered for his early public lectures describing the vulnerable wilderness of south-west Tasmania.252

251 The group included a number of engineers.
252 Based on a telephone conversation between Melva Truchanas and Christine Burgess, 11 September 2007, and follow-up correspondence.
Although Olegas Truchanas was evidently unaware of Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s images, there are interesting parallels between the two photographers and their work. Both men loved Tasmania’s untamed beauty.\textsuperscript{253} Further, Truchanas was fascinated by the possibilities of black-and-white photography and only moved to colour at a later stage of his career. Artist and writer, Max Angus described this transition. He wrote ‘[t]here is no doubt that monochrome work provided a basis for his colour photography. Monochrome depends greatly on quality of tone – a rich variety of greys from black to white. Light, shade and texture are principal considerations’.\textsuperscript{254} This fascination with black-and-white photography is a hallmark of Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s work. However, like Truchanas, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} was also intrigued by the possibilities of colour. As noted earlier in this thesis, many of his lantern slides and enlargements were hand coloured for greater visual impact. In addition, the existence of an autochrome glass plate of his daughter Hazel, son Ted and wife Marie in front of Ray McClinton’s Chevrolet car provides evidence of his experiments with early colour processes.\textsuperscript{255}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1}
\caption{Private Collection}
\end{figure}

\begin{quote}
Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, Hazel, Ted and Marie Spurling in front of Ray McClinton’s Chevrolet car, c. 1925, autochrome glass slide.
\end{quote}

A further similarity between the photography of Truchanas and Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} is their mutual obsession with obtaining maximum impact for their images by waiting for the moment when the cloud formations were exactly right. Angus

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{253} Angus, \textit{The world of Olegas Truchanas}, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{254} Angus, \textit{The world of Olegas Truchanas}, p. 18.
\end{footnotes}
describes how on one occasion Truchanas constructed a cairn so he could rest until the clouds ‘balance[d] his composition, and … intensified the mood’. Similarly Stephen 3rd’s daughter Hazel recounted her childhood frustrations of waiting for hours on end while her father patiently bid his time, waiting for the clouds to be in perfect alignment.

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

Stephen Spurling 3rd, Cloud (near Deloraine), c. 1930s, gelatin silver photograph.

While it is unlikely that Olegas Truchanas knew of Stephen 3rd’s photography, Liz Dombrovskis stated that her husband, wilderness photographer Peter Dombrovskis probably was aware of Stephen 3rd’s work. However, she believes Dombrovskis primarily drew inspiration from American photographers such as Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter and Edward and Brett Weston. Despite this, there are interesting parallels between the works of the two photographers. As discussed previously, perhaps the most striking example is Dombrovskis’ image, Rock Island Bend and Stephen 3rd’s image, Gordon River, Butler Island. From these discussions with their widows, it seems likely Stephen 3rd’s photography played little, if any, part in the way Olegas Truchanas or Peter Dombrovskis photographed the Tasmanian wilderness. However, while Haynes assessment that

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256 Angus, The world of Olegas Truchanas, p. 20.
257 Hazel McCammon, Recollections.
258 Telephone conversation between Liz Dombrovskis and Christine Burgess, 11 September 2007. Ansel Adams and the Westons have been mentioned elsewhere in this thesis. Eliot Porter (1901-1990) was an academic whose interest in photography was fostered by Ansel Adams. Porter’s early work was in black-and-white, but he later became an early exponent of colour photography. Ken White, ‘Porter, Eliot Furness’ in Peres (ed.), The Focal Encyclopedia of Photography, p. 282.
‘the founding father of wilderness photography’ was Olegas Truchanas remains valid, Nic Haygarth’s contention that, ‘men such as J W Beattie and Stephen Spurling junior [were] the professional ancestors of Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis’,259 is equally legitimate. Although Truchanas was the father of Tasmanian wilderness photography, John Watt Beattie and Stephen Spurling 3rd were nonetheless his professional antecedents.

Stephen Spurling 3rd – attitudes towards the environment

In their article ‘Green Images’, authors Richard Flanagan and Cassandra Pybus state, ‘the Romantic vision of the Tasmanian wilderness was to be popularised by the practitioners of the new art of photography, notably S Spurling and J W Beattie’. They continue: ‘Beattie in particular was indefatigable in popularising Tasmania. Although often presented as a father figure of Tasmanian conservation, Beattie had a keen utilitarian perception of the worth of the Romantic landscapes for a tourist industry’.260 While it is easy to dismiss early photographers’ interest in the wilderness as being commercially driven, both in terms of providing an income and encouraging tourism, this issue impinges on all professional photographers. Ansel Adams biographer Mary Street Alinder points out that even Adams ‘walked a fine line between his working life as a commercial photographer and his activity as an environmentalist’.261 Rather than regarding development versus preservation as being two distinct (and opposing) positions, researcher Marian Walker describes it as a ‘progressive-romanticism’ spectrum.262 While Walker, Flanagan, Pybus and several other authors stress Beattie’s importance as an early conservationist, very few authors mention Stephen 3rd’s attitudes towards the environment. One exception is art critic David Hansen, who in his Interview for Film Australia’s Wilderness, suggests Stephen 3rd had little regard for the environment. In expanding on his comments on the picturesque, Hansen stated:

259 Nic Haygarth, A View to Cradle, p. 89
in the work of early explorer-photographers, people like [Stephen] Spurling who’s out there in the lakes, you’ll find that they will do the right picturesque thing – they’ll get themselves a grass tree and chop it out of the ground and plonk it on the right-hand side of the picture in order to get the right picturesque framing.263

As it was an interview, there are no footnotes, so it is uncertain where Hansen gleaned this information. Was it from observing Stephen 3rd’s images, and if so, to which particular image(s) was he referring? Alternatively, did he come across this information in something Stephen 3rd wrote? Nic Haygarth makes a more cautious claim. In discussing Stephen 3rd’s image, Lodden River near Frenchmans Cap (1920), he states that ‘[a] tomahawk was useful for securing bark for bedding and firewood, for falling trees for shelter – and perhaps for artistic enhancement’.264 There are two issues here. Not only did some early photographers rearrange vegetation for artistic purposes, they also hacked away vegetation to reveal views.265

There is no doubt Stephen 3rd carried an axe or tomahawk during his treks into the Tasmanian wilderness.266 On various occasions he refers to using such an implement to slash his way through otherwise impenetrable undergrowth or to clear an area to pitch his tent.267 However, there is no mention, in his known articles, to rearranging nature to ensure his images conformed to picturesque conventions, or to opening up views. The only other evidence available to substantiate such a claim is from his images. There are a few examples that could throw some light on the subject. For example, when examined closely, the image, Evening on the Gordon River, Tas reveals two tree stumps in the foreground.268 Similarly, his image, Mount Pelion Huts, Mole Creek Track depicts fallen tree

264 Haygarth, The Wild Ride, p. 103.
266 See Appendix 4 for a list of camping provisions. This list includes a ‘sheath knife’, ‘a saw’ and a ‘tom-a-hawk’. As this was his camping list, it is probably more extensive than the provisions taken on wilderness treks.
268 The tree stumps are clearly visible in the postcard version of this image. See, ‘Evening’ the Piners Hut, Gordon River, Tas (QVM: 1988: P: 412 – Box 9, QVMAG).
trunks, and the image below depicts a tree stump and a few saplings leaning at a precarious angle. According to Chris Binks, the hut in this image probably belonged to the prospector and track-maker T B Moore. The fact that this image, and the images mentioned previously, all feature huts may well explain the felled vegetation. Owner/occupiers of these huts would have needed to chop down vegetation initially to construct their dwellings, and subsequently to fuel their fires. Since in all probability they would have used the resources in the immediate vicinity before venturing further afield, the felled vegetation in these images may have been from the axes of huts’ occupants – not the photographer.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)


In his interview David Hansen refers specifically to the use of grasstrees to enhance the artistic composition of an image, and several of Stephen 3rd’s images taken during his 1906 trip up the Gordon River feature this species in the foreground. Unfortunately, a close inspection of these images throws little light as to whether the grasstrees have been photographed in situ, or moved from some other spot. However, another of Stephen 3rd’s grasstree images, taken during his 1905 trip to Cradle Mountain shows no evidence at all of nature being rearranged to suit picturesque conventions.

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270 Email from Chris Binks to Christine Burgess, 21 September 2006.


Collection of the National Library of Australia

Perhaps the claims that Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} rearranged vegetation come from confusion with fellow Tasmanian photographer John Watt Beattie. Beattie recorded how he chopped down vegetation so he could place it strategically to ensure his photographs conformed to the picturesque model.\textsuperscript{272} According to Tim Bonyhady, Tasmanian amateur photographer Morton Allport may have also used grass trees for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{273} Since Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} is not known to have commented on the subject, perhaps the final word should come from his daughter Hazel McCammon and her statement, quoted earlier in this chapter, that Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} believed nature should be left as it was – without embellishment.\textsuperscript{274}

Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}'s concerns for leaving nature undisturbed did not just relate to the rearranging of vegetation for artistic purposes. He was also concerned about safeguarding forests. In Tasmania, agitation for the protection of forests dates from early in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{275} W E Shoobridge broached the subject in November 1910 during an address to the Queenborough chapter of the Australian Natives' Association (hereafter ANA). Although there was little immediate response, Shoobridge pressed his concerns and at a meeting of the ANA in November 1912, a Tasmanian branch of the Australian Forest League was formed to 'raise the profile of forestry issues'.\textsuperscript{276} Although the League was to act independently of the ANA, club members had supported its formation. As discussed earlier, Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} was an active member of the Launceston branch of this association, and by 1913 Launceston also had an active branch of the Australian Forest League.\textsuperscript{277} Later that year, at the annual general meeting of the Tasmanian chapter, it was agreed to form a Tasmanian Forest League, which would promote 'educational, legislative, and other measures tending to ensure the preservation, extension, and renewal of the forests'.\textsuperscript{278} By this stage, sawmilling

\textsuperscript{274} Long, ‘Interview with Hazel McCammon’.
\textsuperscript{275} \textit{Mercury}, 17 June 1922, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{276} Stefan Petrow, ‘Save the Forests: forest reform in Tasmania 1912-1920’, in John Dargavel, Denise Gaughwin and Brenda Libbis (eds), \textit{Australia's ever-changing forests V: proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on Australian Forest History} (Canberra, 2002) p. 166.
\textsuperscript{277} See Chapter 4; Petrow, ‘Save the Forests’, pp. 165-168.
\textsuperscript{278} \textit{Mercury}, 1 October 1913, p. 7 c. 5.
was widespread – but inadequately supervised.\textsuperscript{279} The League promoted a range of measures to encourage the regeneration of forests and bemoaned the wanton destruction of forests through fires and land clearing practices.\textsuperscript{280}

![Image of a men and horses carting] Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3\textsuperscript{rd}, \textit{Timber Carting, Maurice, East Coast}, c. 1916, gelatin silver photograph.

The subject was of particular concern to Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}. In his article describing his 1915 trip along the then under construction Great Lake Road, he decried ‘the bare and fire-blackened gully, with its gaunt colossal gum trees, [in] … the place once so admired as “Stella Glen”’. He continued:

\begin{quote}
[i]t seems sad to see so much that was the very cream of woodland, forest, and fern glade scenery blotted out by the fire fiend. No doubt some burning is inseparable from road construction or other industrial operations, but unless those in authority are content to see the scenic beauties of many parts of Tasmania blotted out of existence, some prompt and effective measures will have to be taken to protect our national assets. The Westmoreland Falls gullies, which quite lately were quite the most popular tourist trip in Northern Tasmania, have been swept by the recent disastrous fires, and are now a mass of blackened stumps – a valuable national asset gone up in smoke. The other states are wideawake to the value of such places, and their example of declaring forest reserves and appointing rangers would be well worthy of emulation; now is the time to do it if our scenery is worthy of protection.\textsuperscript{281}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{279} Petrow, ‘Save the Forests’, p. 171.
\textsuperscript{280} Petrow, ‘Save the Forests’, pp. 170-171; \textit{Mercury}, 17 June 1922, p. 11.
Stephen Spurling 3rd, *Stella Glen, Great Lake track*, c. 1905, transparency, gelatin silver on glass, 8.25 x 8.25 cm.

Stephen 3rd returned to the theme later in this article, when he described a ‘magnificent fern gully’, which he believed ‘no patriotic Tasmanian could contemplate its destruction by fire or axe with anything but disgust’. Nearly two decades later, New South Wales bushwalker and early conservationist Myles Dunphy voiced similar concerns about log-fires, the axe, and ‘production beyond demand’, (which he believed included unnecessary roads) as potential dangers to forests. According to historian Stefan Petrov, the ‘impact of articles written by local enthusiasts’ played a significant role in awakening ‘public awareness of the need to stop the destruction of Tasmania’s timber wealth’.

As well as protecting forests, Stephen 3rd advocated the creation of national reserves. In particular, he supported plans to protect the area around Cradle Mountain. As discussed previously, Stephen 3rd visited this area in 1905 and his images taken on this trip induced Cradle Mountain pioneer Gustav Weindorfer to visit the area. During Weindorfer’s second visit in 1910, he climbed Cradle Mountain, and declared the area should become a national park. He then set about providing accommodation for the public to enjoy this scenic wonderland.

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282 Spurling Jun., ‘New Great Lake Road’, p. 37 c. 3.
284 Petrov, ‘Save the Forests’, p. 164.
285 See Chapters 1, 4, 5.
By mid-1919 Weindorfer had completed both the construction of Waldheim Chalet, and a rudimentary bathroom. In addition, a rough track enabled guests to travel on a four-horse dray to within one-and-a-half kilometres of his chalet.

![Image of Waldheim Chalet](Collection of the State Library of Tasmania)


As greater numbers of visitors started arriving in the area, it became imperative that Weindorfer’s vision for a national park should be realised. Calls for conservation, made previously, had resulted in the area being marked on the maps as a ‘proposed scenic reserve’. Despite these initiatives, the necessary legislation had not been gazetted and prospectors occupied a large section of land in the Pelion area. In the early 1920s a group of Launcestonians – Dr Ray McClinton, Charles Monds, Fred Smithies, Frank Heyward and Herbert John (Herb) King – visited Weindorfer. Following their discussions, they decided the time had come to press for the gazetting of the legislation.

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287 Stephen 3rd’s daughter Hazel would later recall how the bath was filled directly from a mountain creek. Cleansing proved a chilling experience – there was no means of heating the water. Long, ‘Interview with Hazel McCammon’.


289 ‘Beauty of the Highlands’, *Examiner*, 29 July 1921, p. 4 c. 8

The group believed the best way to achieve a positive outcome was under the auspices of the Royal Society. In April 1921, John Moore-Robinson wrote a letter to the Examiner suggesting the formation of a northern branch. In the same issue an editorial supported the idea and gave a brief history of previous, short-lived attempts to form a Launceston-based chapter. 291 The following month, after a preliminary meeting in Launceston, a number of northern nominees were elected to the Society at general meeting in Hobart. These members included Frank Heyward, W Rolph and Stephen 3rd. 292 Less than a fortnight later, on 10 June, the Northern Chapter of the Royal Society held their inaugural meeting in Launceston. 293 While the annual report listed a series of lectures on various scientific matters, according to subsequent newspaper reports, the prime motivation for the creation of the northern branch was the desire to have a ‘national scenic reserve in the highlands about Cradle Mountain’. 294 This claim is supported in the Society’s annual report, which states that during the course of 1921 the northern branch held two public meetings ‘in the interests of a National Reserve in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair area’. 295 These public lectures featured lantern slides contributed by Spurling and Son, Beattie and Company, Dr Ray McClinton, Herb King and others. 296 Around this time Gustav Weindorfer visited Launceston and Hobart to garner further support for the proposal. 297

The resultant publicity ensured a steady stream of visitors to Waldheim Chalet over the following summer. Weindorfer engaged a cook, which lessened his workload, and allowed him more time to accompany his guests on excursions. Summer highlights included the inaugural pigeon post from Cradle Mountain on 29 January 1922. Those in attendance included the artist Charles Hills, his wife

291 Examiner, 28 April 1921.
292 Mercury, 31 May 1921, p. 2 c. 8; Royal Society of Tasmania, ‘Branch Reports: Northern Branch: Report 1921’, Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1921, 28 February 1922, p. 212. Both Heyward and Rolph would subsequently play a significant role in the formation and continuation of the Northern Branch of the Society.
294 ‘Beauty of the Highlands’, Examiner, 29 July 1921, p. 4 c. 8; Examiner, 29 July 1921, p. 4 c. 3.
296 ‘Illustrated Lecture’, Examiner, 29 July 1921, p. 4 c. 8.
Beulah, Herb King and Bob Quaile. A week later Stephen 3rd and George Perrin arrived. On his departure Stephen 3rd recorded in the visitors’ book:

Tasmanian mountain & lake scenery is plentiful but in my opinion the Cradle Valley is especially favoured by tourist attractions that are easy of access & unless Tasmanians insist that these valuable assets are protected & developed by being proclaimed a National Reserve there is a danger that vandalism will wipe out much of their attractiveness.

The campaign proved successful. The proclamation declaring Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair Scenic Reserve was signed on 11 May 1922, and gazetted five days later. It had been a Herculean task, with a cast of many players. Stephen 3rd’s assistance in joining the Royal Society and providing lantern slides had played a part in the success of the campaign. The fact that Stephen 3rd’s interest in the Royal Society activities seems to have waned, once the Scenic Reserve was declared, suggests his membership was a means to an end rather than an end itself. There appears to be only one more occasion when he actively participated in Society activities. This was in 1929, when he helped arrange the loan of some scientific films for presentation at a club meeting.

While in his later years Stephen 3rd favoured protecting wilderness areas, the evidence suggests his attitudes evolved as he matured. In his younger years his writings reveal a more cavalier approach to environmental matters. For example, in March 1897 he recorded how, on a trip across Mount Arthur, he and his companions engraved their names into rocks. Four months later, on a trip to Mount Barrow they used paint to dab their signatures on boulders. A pot of red

298 Giordano, A Man and a Mountain, pp. 68-72.
299 Papers of James ‘Philosopher’ Smith (NS 234/27/1/8, Gustav Weindorfer Diary, 1 January 1921-14 April 1923, TAHO) 5 February 1922.
302 ‘Minutes of the Royal Society of Tasmania (Northern Branch), Annual Report 1929’, Minutes Book (MSS 120 Royal Society of Tasmania, Northern Branch, Launceston Library).
paint was produced for the same purpose two-and-a-half years later when he and his friends visited the Gulf. This time, however, he voiced his disapproval of the activity, describing how the ‘brush artist selected a good rock and soon desecrated it with the names of our party’. He also mentions how the ladies in the group criticised the activity. When he records how the party rolled boulders and then threw gum branches over the precipice, a sense of guilt emerges, and he describes the activity as a ‘childish habit’.305 He does not mention inscribing names again, although he does include paint and a brush in his list of camping provisions.306 Presumably, he used this paint for marking his route when trekking through trackless regions. Certainly, when he and George Perrin scaled Barn Bluff in 1909 the only record they left of their visit was a note in a tin matchbox.307

Today, leaving an indelible record of a visit to an isolated region is regarded as rebarbative. However, it was a different matter in the age of exploration. For example, in 1817 Lord Bathurst, writing on behalf of the Colonial Department, instructed Phillip Parker King to ‘take care to leave some Evidence which cannot be mistaken, of your having landed’.308 Heeding these instructions King, who was the first Australian-born coastal surveyor, carved the name of his vessel into a boab tree when he visited Careening Bay on the Kimberley coast of Western Australia in 1820. The inscription was still visible nearly two hundred years later.309 Similarly, when King visited Sharks Bay on the Western Australian coast during a subsequent voyage, he had his carpenter hammer over fifty nails into a post, to form the word ‘KING’ and the year ‘1822’. This post is now on display at the Western Australian Maritime Museum.310 Similarly, during their trip across the Central Plateau in 1886, Tasmanians Alfred Archer, William Weston and Ernest Law carved their initials and the date into a sandstone outcrop on the summit of Horizontal Hill (at the south of Du Cane Range).311

305 Union Jack [Stephen Spurling 34], ‘A trip to the Gulf and Westmoreland Falls’, Examiner, 30 January 1900, p. 7 c. 3-4.  
306 See Appendix 4.  
307 Letter written by George Perrin to Hazel McCammon, 8 February 1968 (Copy held by Christine Burgess) p. 2.  
308 Mardsen Hordern, King of the Australian Coast: the work of Phillip Parker King in the Mermaid and Bathurst 1817-1822 (Carlton South, Victoria, 2002) p. 405.  
309 Hordern, King of the Australian Coast, pp. 3, 20, 296-297.  
310 Hordern, King of the Australian Coast, p. 343.
Stephen 3rd's changing attitudes towards cave protection highlights his growing awareness of environmental issues. Although he seemed oblivious to the potential damage caused by flashlights during his early days of cave photography, within ten years he was championing cave protection. In 1908 he criticised a party who, while exploring the caves at Gunn’s Plains, had ‘left traces of their passage through the cave in several broken stalactites, muddy footprints, and candle grease on the delicate floors, and finger marks on the white stalactites’. He continued: ‘[n]o matter how careful a party may be, until caves are protected by defined pathways, with hand rails and wire netting, the work of destruction will go on apace with every party who inspect them’. 

![Image](https://www.nla.gov.au)  
Collection of the National Library of Australia


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Stephen 3rd’s attitude towards hunting is another area where he appears to wrestle with conflicting values. As discussed in earlier chapters, during his trips into wilderness areas he often relied on bush tucker for survival. Sometimes he carried a gun, and at other times he employed traps.315 While occasionally, in his articles, he referred to certain areas as providing excellent hunting facilities, these references seem more to attract tourists, rather than to endorse hunting per se.316 However, there is an exception. In 1921 he wrote a long article on the opening of the swan-shooting season at Moulting Lagoon north of Swansea on the east coast. The apparent glorification of the sport and the inclusion of photographs suggest this may well have been a commissioned article.317

Collection of the National Library of Australia


Although in this article Stephen 3rd appears to endorse swan shooting, a close reading suggests his motives may be somewhat more complex. Since the shooters included the State Governor Sir William Allardyce and the Chief Justice, Sir

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315 As Nic Haygarth points out, today the shooting of birds and animals to supplement the cooking pot is regarded as an unacceptable. Haygarth, ‘“The summit of our ambition”’, p. 211. However, before dehydrated gourmet meals were available, there was little other choice available to those venturing into wilderness areas.


Herbert Nicholls, it would have been inappropriate to criticise the event openly. However, his reference to the hunters releasing ‘their ammunition with reckless abandon’ suggests he was none too impressed with the slaughter. He continued, with what appears to be a degree of irony, ‘[i]t apparently takes a lot of lead to drop a swan, as the spent bullets at times rattled down like hail in the water around us’. These statements, combined with the poignancy of his photographs, leave the reader wondering if he was actually appalled by what he had witnessed.

Further evidence of Stephen 3rd’s ambiguous attitude towards the killing of wildlife appears in an article he wrote in 1943 for the Bengal Natural History Society, on the demise of the Thylacine. As mentioned previously, in this article he describes how, in the late 1890s, when he spent some time in the ‘practically unexplored country’ on the west coast, he twice encountered this elusive marsupial. In these wild and lonely outposts, the Thylacine’s unnerving habit of stalking bushmen for hours proved terrifying to even the hardiest old-timers. In the circumstances, men sometimes sought the protection of a gun. Reprisals on their tormentor proved contagious, and on several occasions Stephen 3rd tried to lure the animals towards his small rifle with baits, but without success. Self-protection in inhospitable terrain was one matter, the destruction of the species on the grounds it might be responsible for sheep losses was a different proposition. By 1908 some Tasmanians had become alarmed at the wanton destruction of fauna, and in 1913 the government declared a year’s moratorium on the killing of kangaroos, deer wallabies, and possums. However, the slaughter of the Thylacine continued. When Stephen 3rd wrote his article ‘a war of extermination’ had severely reduced the number of animals in the wild, and the last captive Thylacine had died some seven years previously. Before long the species was, as he predicted, extinct.

322 Mercury, 26 August 1908, p. 3; Examiner, 26 August 1908, p. 6 e. 5.
There are two issues concerning the killing of native birds and animals. The first is self-preservation. Hence, in the wilds of Tasmania’s west coast, fear could explain the bushmen’s desire to protect themselves from the Thylacine. Similarly, when starvation loomed, native species could save a man from death. Tim Bonyhady has described how, in the early years of colonisation, when the settlers faced severe food shortages, birds were literally manna from heaven. The other aspect to the killing of native species is more controversial. Should the slaughter and even extinction of certain species be sanctioned as sport, or for economic reasons? Many would argue that this type of killing is cruel and morally wrong.

While Stephen 3rd relied on native species to supply his basic need for substance during his wilderness treks, the evidence suggests he found it difficult to countenance the wholesale killing of birds and animals for other purposes.

Of the various conservation issues in Tasmania, one of the most controversial has been hydro-electric development. Writers Chris Long and Nic Haygarth have pondered Stephen 3rd’s attitudes and quoted his daughter Hazel on this subject. However, the earliest known occasion when Stephen 3rd voiced an opinion on hydro-electric development was in 1896 when, while travelling towards to Ben Lomond one autumn night, he marvelled that ‘as far as the 15-mile point the electric light was plainly visible’. This was, presumably a reference to the fact that a year earlier Launceston had become the first Australian city to boast hydro-electrically powered street lighting. This was an era when wonder at the energy of water to produce such benefits to humanity eclipsed all other considerations.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, there was considerable discussion in Tasmania concerning the feasibility of establishing a hydro-electric facility in the Great Lake region. Stephen 3rd visited this area in 1905, and, in a subsequent

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article described how, while in the St Patricks Plains region, near to where the Shannon and Ouse Rivers were about three kilometres apart, ‘a spot was pointed out … where it may be possible to establish power works in the future’. He then detailed his informant’s assessment of the feasibility of the proposed scheme. Stephen 3rd stated that he could not tell, ‘without taking levels whether it would be possible and practicable to turn the Ouse into the Lake’. While he considered a slight raising of the level of Great Lake would inundate ‘a large amount of rich pasture’, compensation for loss of private property would not be a major obstacle. However, he did call for ‘a competent person to enquire into the possibility of carrying out a scheme of this kind’. While not opposed to the proposal, he obviously considered that the scheme should only proceed after a thorough investigation. Although Stephen 3rd does not identify his informant, well-known supporters of the scheme included the midlands pastoralist, Harold Bisdee and the University of Tasmania mathematics professor Alexander McAulay.

![Image]

Collection of the National Library of Australia

Stephen Spurling 3rd, The Great Lake, Tasmanian Highlands – the northern end showing Little Lake, date uncertain, gelatin silver photograph.

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331 E L P [Stephen Spurling 3rd], ‘On the Roof of Tasmania; Central Lake Plateau’, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 March 1905, p. 3 c. 1-3.
334 *Weekly Courier*, 17 April 1919, p. 17.
The Great Lake scheme went ahead, and was officially opened in 1916. Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} visited the area some years later and photographed the newly completed second Miena dam. Built in 1922, this multiple-arch buttress dam still exists but is no longer visible. In 1965 it was submerged following the construction of a larger, rock-filled dam.\footnote{Mercury, 6 May 1916, p. 4; Lupton, Lifeblood, pp. 62, 69.}

When viewed from a modern perspective, conservationists might find it difficult to understand how someone who loved the wilderness did not become more actively involved in opposing hydro-electric development. However, by 1941 Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} and his wife had moved to Melbourne, and they were not in Tasmania when the pace of hydro-electric development began to accelerate.\footnote{Letter written by John Marriott, Hydro Tasmania, to Christine Burgess, 18 November 2004; Lupton, Lifeblood, pp. 79, 81-82, 111, 136, 140, 220-221, 336; Jetson, The Roof of Tasmania, p. 92.} Even when they returned in 1957, the major controversies were still some years away, and the conservation movement only gained momentum after Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} died in 1962.\footnote{Lupton, Lifeblood, pp. 8-9.}

\footnote{Hutton and Connors, A History of the Australian Environment Movement, pp. 93, 162-165; Martin Mulligan and Stuart Hill, Ecological Pioneers: A social history of Australian ecological thought and action (England, 2001) p. 69.}
However, there was one hydro-electric development that did cause Stephen 3rd concern. Around three years before he retired to Melbourne, a weir was constructed at the point where the Derwent River flows from Lake St Clair. This raised the level of the lake by about two-and-a half metres. The inclusion of a pumping station also allowed water to be pumped over the weir, and caused the water level to drop by up to six metres. Lake St Clair was the subject of many of Stephen 3rd’s images, and he regarded it as the gem of Tasmania’s highland scenery. In his interview with Stephen 3rd’s daughter Hazel McCammon in 1981, Chris Long broached the subject of how Stephen 3rd felt about the changed water levels. Hazel replied, ‘Yes, yes. He was very upset about that. That they’d spoil it by raising the level of the lake; because the dead trees really were unsightly’. Long then asked whether Stephen 3rd’s concerns were as a photographer or someone interested in the wilderness, to which Hazel replied:

I think interest in wilderness. He loved the bush. In later years I can remember him saying how frustrated he felt when it was a beautiful sunny day. He said, ‘Oh, I should be out on the mountains, with my camera’. And he felt very frustrated because he couldn’t do that later on although he was very fit for his age. He was in his eighties and he was beyond it really.

Later, when Long cited Hazel in an article she felt she had been misquoted. A comparison of Long’s article and the tape recording shows that, while she was not quoted verbatim, apart from the creative inclusion of an extra sentence, there was no major divergence between the intent of what she said, and Long’s version. Perhaps Hazel’s distress was due to the difficulties she encountered as the wife of a Hydro Electric Commission employee. The early 1980s were fraught times for Tasmanians torn between their love of the environment and the need for economic advancement.
For many Tasmanians concern for environmental matters was, and still is, a complex and emotion-driven issue. In addition, over time, accepted norms have changed. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when photographers such as Stephen 3rd and John Watt Beattie ventured into the Tasmanian bush, progress and development were considered essential to economic well-being. In this era tourism, mining and hydro-electric developments were regarded as key factors to growth. Rather than being diametrically opposed, early proponents of these causes believed they were linked. Hence, tours took visitors to mining regions and power stations. Tourists also wanted to visit areas of natural beauty, and this meant improved roads and/or railway lines to remote regions. According to Beattie, areas that had no worthwhile economic value, such as the Gordon River, should be set aside as reserves; while areas that had potential for mining and power generation, such as the Barn Bluff area, should be developed as such. Stephen 3rd saw the issues rather differently. While in his youth he had accepted the mores of his times, as he matured he became increasingly vocal about a variety of environmental causes. Historian Melissa Harper has described how many early bushwalkers experienced similar awakenings.

Stephen 3rd was a born-and-bred Tasmanian who was proud of his heritage. He wanted the island to progress, but at the same time he wanted its natural beauties protected. Hence, while he supported the construction of road links and other aspects of development, he deplored unnecessary desecration of wild places. He also was a strong advocate for the protection of caves and forests, and supported the creation of reserves at places such as Cradle Mountain. The fact that progress and protection, in the later part of the twentieth century, would diverge to opposite ends of the ‘progressive-romanticism’ spectrum, was still some time away. However, the evidence suggests that as Stephen 3rd neared the end of his life, the realisation that these two issues, rather than being mutually supportive, would eventually prove counter-productive caused him immeasurable sadness.

344 Weekly Courier Annual Special Number, 9 November 1909, p. 3; Weekly Courier, 22 July 1909, p. 38. This advertisement includes a tourist drive to the ‘Electric Power Station – Ticket 1/6’.
How and why the Spurling legacy came close to being forgotten

Despite the century of photography the Spurlings contributed to Tasmania; despite the wealth of wilderness images Stephen 2nd and 3rd accumulated; and despite the battles they fought for justice and recognition; their cumulative contribution is only occasionally recognised by photo-historians. Why? Some factors were beyond the family’s control, but in other instances the Spurlings were partly to blame. There were family secrets that they preferred to keep hidden.

This thesis includes biographical details about the three generations of Spurling photographers, and the matriarch of the family, Jessy Spurling. At its most basic level, the Spurling saga includes bankruptcies, family squabbles, court appearances, insanity, illegitimacy and alcohol abuse. Apart from these socially unacceptable secrets, the Spurlings had one further burden – their convict heritage. The effects of the convict stain on the Tasmanian psyche had some far-reaching repercussions. Long after the last emancipist had died, Tasmanians were obsessed with expunging all traces of their demon past.347 For many families this involved presenting the outward appearances of social acceptability. They attempted to achieve this through a strict adherence to decorous behaviour, and behaving in a manner that was ‘more English than the English’.348 Hence when the author Louisa Anne Meredith arrived in the island she found that, ‘[n]ot in the most moral circles of moral England herself is a departure from the paths of propriety or virtue more determinedly or universally visited by the punishment of exclusion from society’.349 Historian, Henry Reynolds went further. He described how this led to ‘a social life marred by snobbery and punctiliousness’.350 To survive in the small and inquisitive Tasmanian community, families with a tainted history had to subsume their past and appear respectable. As author Nicholas

348 Haygarth, Booming Tasmania, pp. 9, 12.
349 Mrs Charles Meredith, My home in Tasmania: during a residence of nine years (London, 1852) p. 36.
Shakespeare explains, ‘Tasmania – alone of Britain’s former penal colonies – has a tendency to sit on its family secrets and be nervous about them’. 351

For the Spurlings the least said (or worse, recorded) about their family history the better. The family tradition of refusing to discuss the past was so entrenched that later generations would joke how marrying into the family was like marrying into a secret society. 352 Their avoidance of discussing family history meant that the important aspects, their early experiments with photography, and their subsequent photographic achievements, became part of the exclusion zone. With the family determined to conceal its past, it is little wonder that photo-historians found it difficult to uncover the facts.

However, there were other factors at work that contributed to the Spurlings’ relegation. Chief amongst these is the phenomenon of cultural cringe. Put simply, Australians have tended to glorify those who were born and raised overseas (particularly the United Kingdom), and tended to down-grade the achievements of those who were locally born. 353 A classic example is the relegation of Phillip Parker King. While his biography claims he was ‘the greatest of Australia’s early marine surveyors’, his achievements (which include extensive surveys of the Western Australian coast, Arnhem Land, the Great Barrier Reef and in 1819 the entrance to Macquarie Harbour, Van Diemen’s Land) are rarely acknowledged. 354 Peter Cochrane faced a similar problem when he set about editing the centennial volume, Remarkable Occurrences: The National Library of Australia’s First 100 Years 1901-2001. The aim in producing this volume was ‘to build a cultural heritage, a documentary and visual record from which we might know ourselves better’. Militating against this vision was ‘indifference, embodied in that terrible view that culture, history, tradition were to be found “overseas”, somewhere else’. 355 Writer Clive James experienced this degrading of local

352 Marj Spurling (wife of Ted Spurling), Recollections as told to Christine Burgess.
354 Hordern, King of the Australian Coast, back cover blurb, pp. 2, 150-155, 233, 359.
achievement first-hand when he returned to Australia. For Stephen 2nd and Stephen 3rd, their pride in being native-born compounded their lack of social acceptability. By contrast, John Watt Beattie, who was born in Scotland, was free from the disadvantages of an Antipodean birth. Further, as the son of a ‘leading elder in the West Free Church, Aberdeen’, there was no suggestion of family scandals.

The fear of family scandals being revealed adds another layer to cultural cringe. According to Roslynn Haynes, this more insidious cringe is unique to Tasmania. She referred to it as ‘island cringe’. Haynes maintained island cringe was ‘[s]o strong … that for eighty years Tasmania marketed itself as a-historical’. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Haynes also described ‘a century of suppression at all levels’. There is no doubt the Spurlings were victims of this suppression. With a family history that dated back to the convicts, they were part of the past, part of the ‘moral morass’, part of the ‘doom’ at the ‘bottom’ of the world. To acknowledge the Spurlings required revisiting the island’s past, and that was best forgotten. The Spurlings wanted to forget, and so did the myth makers.

In addition to these issues, there were times when the Spurlings courted their unpopularity. For example, although Stephen 3rd’s willingness to criticise local dignitaries probably had a minor impact in itself, his actions would have hardly been welcomed by the subjects of his comments. Stephen 2nd’s campaign for copyright legislation would have been similarly unpopular with those who copied other photographers’ work for commercial gain. Frederick’s reprobate lifestyle clearly tarnished the family name in southern Tasmania, and Stephen 1st must have left numerous disgruntled creditors after his bankruptcies. Finally, the family’s hasty departure from New Zealand suggests a further contingent of angry business, and perhaps personal, associates in that country as well.

357 Cato, The Story of the Camera in Australia, p. 80.
358 Haynes, Tasmanian Visions, p. 179.
359 Haynes, Tasmanian Visions, p. 171.
Other reasons for the Spurlings unpopularity were largely due to factors over which they had little control. Stephen 1st’s battle with mental illness would have received little empathy. At the outbreak of the First World War, the Spurlings German-made cameras, and postcards printed in Germany and Prussia created problems as many Tasmanians regarded any connections with Germany as taboo.\footnote{Shakespeare, \textit{In Tasmania}, pp. 255, 257-258.} Further, the Spurling family associations with Gustav Weindorfer at this time would have added to their social disapproval. It also seems likely that Stephen 3rd’s remorse over Weindorfer’s burial place may have placed a strain on many of his close friendships. Finally, his decision to retire to Melbourne (although precipitated by his wife’s unhappiness due to unfounded gossip) almost certainly alienated him from many of his Launceston-based associates. In hindsight, it seems tragic that these divisions created gulfs that could not be repaired, and that these chasms influenced the way history would be recorded.

However, perhaps the main reason for the lack of recognition of the Spurlings’ contribution to Tasmanian photography is, rather ironically, the sheer volume of photographs. Although many of Stephen 1st’s photographs are still held in private collections, or perhaps attributed to Alfred Winter,\footnote{From 1876-1886 Alfred Winter advertised re-prints of Stephen 1st’s negatives for sale. It is possible when re-printed; these photographs bore Winter’s name, not Stephen 1st’s. \textit{Mercury}, 19 May 1876, p. 1; \textit{Mercury}, 27 July 1878, p. 1; \textit{Mercury}, 15 May 1883, p. 1; \textit{Mercury}, 21 September 1886, p. 1.} and many of Stephen 2nd’s landscapes are in anonymous albums; there are thousands of identifiable Spurling images available in public collections. While these images are accessible, there is very little contextual material to indicate their significance, and important images compete with a wide range of other subjects. Consequently, Stephen 3rd’s wilderness images are interspersed with portraits of private individuals and dignitaries, as well as photographs of parks, churches, schools, ships, cars, power stations, streetscapes and animals. There are images taken for commercial assignments (such as series for the Bridestowe Lavender farm and the Rapston Tyre Company) and press work photography, which includes coverage of social and sporting events, royal tours, agricultural shows, regattas and natural disasters. There are photographs taken for the Tourist Bureau and the Police Department.
There are also images featuring outings and trials undertaken by the TAC, and other societies such as the Australian Natives Association. The logistics of sorting and making sense of such a large number of images has proved an impracticable, and indeed insurmountable task for many photo-historians interested in writing over-views of Australian photography. In fact, the surprise is not that the Spurlings have been overlooked, but rather that a few writers have had the interest and commitment to delve into these collections at all.

Given the complexities of sorting through this material, it was really the family’s responsibility to ensure their history was recorded for posterity. However, as already discussed, the early generations of Spurlings shunned their family history, and were reluctant to leave written records. Although Stephen 3rd wrote extensively about his wilderness treks and a variety of other issues, he was essentially a modest and introspective man, who shied away from flaunting his, and his family’s, achievements. While he disputed inaccuracies and had no inhibitions about criticising ineptitude, like Ansel Adams he ‘questioned how interested people would really be in his life as distinct from his art’. Even though Stephen 3rd provided information to Jack Cato for inclusion in The Story of the Camera in Australia, and continued to write articles and grant interviews, apart from a few brief notes, he made no real effort to write the family history. Following his death, his son Ted Spurling and daughter Hazel McCammon, while slow to realise the potential and importance of the small amount of material they had inherited, did make some preliminary moves to formalise the records. Ted undertook some basic research and recorded significant dates and events. Hazel contacted George Perrin for some reminiscences, and provided information to the Nomenclature Board. Although both believed the history should be told, neither had the opportunity nor the resources to undertake the task. It was therefore with relief that they accepted Chris Long’s offer to undertake the project.

As discussed in the Introduction, in December 1981 Chris Long received a $3000 grant from the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board to research and write a

362 Alinder, Ansel Adams, p. 325.
book about the Spurlings. One positive outcome from Long’s research was that a large number of Spurling images were made available to the National Library in Canberra, and the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston. However, there were several much less favourable outcomes. Firstly, for various reasons, no book about the Spurlings eventuated. Secondly, while much of Long’s research was deposited at the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office in Hobart, some unidentified person has handwritten across the file ‘RESTRICTED ACCESS – AVAILABLE ONLY WITH WRITTEN PERMISSION OF C LONG’. Other material, relating to his application to the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board was subject to a twenty-five year embargo, which has only recently been lifted.

Long also deposited a series of interviews with various family members and former Spurling employees at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. However, Long claimed copyright restrictions on these tapes, and at the time of writing, this material was only available to researchers and family members with his specific permission. Although Long did provide a copy of the interview he made with my mother, Hazel McCammon, he was only prepared to release the remaining interviews on a collaborative basis. The situation at present is that these tapes will be unavailable to researchers (and family members of the interviewees) until 2039. While the single tape that was available to write this thesis has been a useful resource, the other tapes could well contain additional information that could prove invaluable in proving or disproving various assumptions and hypotheses, and complete possible missing links.

For other researchers in this field, the difficulty in obtaining permission to access these materials has no doubt compounded the problems associated with assessing the value of the Spurlings’ contribution to Tasmanian photography. Ironically, these resources were provided by family members and Spurling associates, who

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363 Long, Tasmanian Photographers, pp. vii, ix.
364 Chris Long, Notes (NS 1375/1/2, TAHO).
365 Chris Long, ‘Research Fellowship’, Grant Submission Files (Item number: AB780/1/917 File no. SV7/82, TAHO).
366 QVMAG staff and management are currently seeking advice on the conditions under which this arrangement was entered into, and are doing their utmost to have the matter clarified. Email from Jon Addison to Christine Burgess, 1 April 2009.
believed their cooperation would ensure access to their recollections. In fact, their willingness to assist Long has actually restricted access to Spurling information for what may prove to be many more decades. It is unclear why Long has placed controls on these resources. If he believes they contain useful information, why has he not published a book as he intended nearly thirty years ago? If they do not contain anything interesting, why place restrictions on their access? That publicly funded institutions in Tasmania accepted, and maintained a block on these materials for such an extended period, raises issues about ethics, ownership of copyright and the public good.

In the final analysis, the reasons why the Spurlings rarely rate a mention in history books is not a reflection on the adequacy or inadequacy of recent researchers. Instead it is more about family reticence to reveal secrets, cultural cringe, island cringe, the volume of photographs available, and circumstances that militated against the research that had been carried out, being available to others. That the Spurling history is rarely mentioned in the literature is probably not due to a conspiracy, but has arisen in response to social mores of the times in which the Spurlings lived, modesty about their achievements, and until now, a lack of hard data. The tragedy is that the current situation is exactly what Stephen 3rd’s son Ted wished to avoid. In an interview in the early 1980s he stated:

I’ll discuss with my family where the historic items and photographs ought to be kept, but I’d like to see them in a place where the public can have easy access. That is not always possible in archives and some museums.  

Conclusions

This chapter has examined a wide range of issues behind the Spurling images. From this discussion it emerges that the Spurling collection of landscape images came into being largely in response to Spurlings’ love of Tasmanian scenery and the need to attract tourists to the island.

367 "Photography in the family", (Unidentified newspaper article – possibly Examiner, 15 September 1981, copy held by Christine Burgess).
However, the Spurling legacy, which commenced with Stephen 1st and his early photographic experiments, and evolved and expanded under his sons and grandson, forms a retrospective of both Tasmanian life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and of early Tasmanian wilderness imagery.

Aesthetically, the Spurling landscape images drew inspiration from popular colonial artists such as William Charles Piguenit and the picturesque conventions. However, at times both Stephen 2nd and 3rd photographed the sublime aspects of nature. In addition, Stephen 3rd experimented with pictorial photography, and, although he did not fully embrace the movement towards blurred and manipulated photographs, he did seek to elicit a deeper emotional response through his images. Evidence of the artistic and aesthetic value of the Spurling collection rests in the fact, that more than a century after these images were taken, many are still in use. Apart from the example, cited in the Introduction, of Stephen 3rd’s image, Rocky Reach, Gordon River, which was used in the campaign to save the Gordon and Franklin rivers, other authors who have used Spurling images in recent years include Chris Binks, Graeme Clennett and Marcus Harvey, Richard Flanagan, Nic Haygarth, Roger McDonald, Lou Rae and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.368 While the Spurling images did not necessarily play a significant role in the way later wilderness photographers pictured the Tasmanian wilderness, in all probability the Spurlings did influence a number of their contemporaries.

In addition to their aesthetic value, Stephen 3rd’s photographs and concerns for environmental issues played a role in alerting the public to the need to protect forests and caves, and establishing scenic reserves at Ben Lomond and the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair region. Stephen 3rd’s images of this latter area also provided the impetus for Gustav Weidorfer’s first visit, and thereby began a series of events that led ultimately to the declaration of this region as a World

Heritage Area. Historically, the Spurling images have played a role in helping to publicise the Tasmanian wilderness. Today, they provide a record of how the wilderness was when Europeans first ventured with their cameras into Tasmania’s most isolated regions.

Despite the wealth of Spurling images, many historians have, in the past, tended to overlook the Spurling contribution to Tasmanian photographic history. This chapter also investigated some possible reasons as to how and why this happened. From this discussion it emerged that the neglect of the Spurlings’ photography is due to a number of factors including, somewhat ironically, the sheer volume of images available. In addition, the scattering of contextual information, the lack of accessibility to what research had been undertaken, and the desire of the family, and Tasmanians generally, to try to bury their past, all contributed to the Spurlings becoming all but forgotten men.

Conclusions

Photography is the only ‘language’ understood in all parts of the world, and, bridging all nations and cultures, it links the family of man.¹

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.²

Above all, we must maintain the chance for contact with beauty. When that chance dies, a light dies in all of us.³

Stephen Spurling 3⁴, St Columbia Falls, East Coast, c. 1920, gelatin silver photograph.

This thesis has explored the Spurling legacy and its relationship to the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania. To achieve the aims identified in the Introduction, it has investigated how, when and why wilderness photography emerged as a photographic genre, and related this analysis to the

³ Lyndon B Johnson, 'A more beautiful America ... ', The President speaks/ excerpts from speeches by Lyndon B Johnson (New York, 1965) p. 35 [also quoted in Mary Street Alinder, Ansel Adams: a biography (New York, 1996) p. 294].
history of the three generations of Spurling photographers. The saga of how the Spurlings came to settle in Tasmania begins in 1835, when the matriarch of the family Jessy Spurling and her nine-year old daughter embarked on a journey that would take them halfway around the world to an island then known as Van Diemen’s Land. Jessy’s son Stephen 1st (who emigrated twenty months later), two of her grandsons Stephen 2nd and Frederick, and her great-grandson Stephen 3rd all became professional photographers. Collectively their photographic endeavours date from the earliest years of photographic experimentation, and extend across a century of innovation to the dawning of Tasmanian wilderness photography.4 Recounting their history has involved considering possible reasons for Jessy’s decision to leave England, tracing the lives of each of the Spurling photographers, and exploring their responses to the social and political times in which they lived. Their photographic achievements have been recorded, and various controversies surrounding some of their images investigated. Since there are only a few examples of Stephen 1st’s and his son Frederick’s outdoor work still in existence, the available evidence suggests it was probably Stephen 2nd who laid the foundations of the Spurlings’ scenic photography. His son Stephen 3rd subsequently ventured into some of Tasmania’s remotest regions to capture the images that would become the Spurling wilderness photographic legacy.5

When Stephen 3rd commenced his photographic career, a set of fortunate circumstances converged to provide optimum conditions for his wilderness photography to flourish. His father had established a photographic business for him to inherit. Dry plate technology had revolutionised the photographic process by allowing delayed development. Printing technology had advanced to the point where newspapers could reproduce high quality images. The same technology led to an unprecedented demand for postcards, pictorial booklets, magazines and pamphlets. It was an era when lantern slides and movie films were popular forms of entertainment. Above all, the government was desperate to promote tourism, and framed enlargements, lantern slides and movies proved ideal mediums for advertising the island’s scenic attractions. At the beginning of the twentieth

4 See Chapters 1-4.
5 See Chapters 2-5.
century, Stephen 3rd was at the peak of physical fitness. He had spent time in the wilds of Tasmania’s west coast, where he had learnt the rudiments of surveying and how to survive in the bush. As his father was still actively involved in the business, Stephen 3rd could afford to spend days and even weeks away from the daily grind of opening the studio. To capitalise on these circumstances required one more condition – a love of the bush and a desire to record it pictorially.6

For Stephen 3rd the lure of trekking through the Tasmanian bush and photographing its scenery proved an irresistible combination. This thesis includes an outline of several of his more significant photographic expeditions and discusses various images taken on these trips. It also investigates the artistic and photographic conventions that influenced the way in which he, and his father, depicted the landscape, and examines issues behind the images. Topics include the relationship between tourism and photography, the ‘weird melancholy’ associated with the Australian bush, Stephen 3rd’s attitudes towards the environment, and whether the Spurlings’ images had any influence on later photographers.7 Finally, the question of how and why the Spurling legacy came close to being forgotten is investigated.

As discussed in the Introduction, the approach used in this thesis is essentially that identified by the photo-historian Anne-Marie Willis as an ‘archeological dig’.8 The problem Willis identifies with this approach is that many authors tend to focus on the biographical aspects of the photographers’ lives. In addition, many writers regard photographs as ‘primarily valuable as historical records’.9 While the provision of biographical details helps explain the reasons and motivations behind behaviours, and old photographs perform an important historical function, Willis maintains that there is a need for more in-depth analysis. This treatise has gone beyond the usual format of an archeological dig by providing contextual information, referring to when and how the images first

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6 See Chapters 4-6.
7 See Chapters 5-6.
9 Willis, Picturing Australia, p. 258.
appeared, investigating the issues behind the images, and considering questions of ‘style, aesthetics and visual conventions’. However, this is not to say that all aspects of the Spurlings’ photography have been examined in detail. As Willis points out, since its discovery, photography has played a role in wide variety of human endeavours, and individual studios have performed a range of functions, producing a diversity of images for different markets and audiences. The Spurlings were no exception. Much of their work centred on portraiture, presswork, commercial assignments and tourism promotion. Over the three generations they also pushed the boundaries of photographic innovation, produced prodigious quantities of postcards and pictorial magazines, and challenged the authorities on issues such as copyright legislation, taxation laws with respect to photographic equipment, and environmental protection. While all these issues have been discussed, the focus of this thesis has been the Spurlings’ contribution to Tasmanian, and consequently, Australian wilderness photography.

A discussion of wilderness photography in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may appear problematic, given academic Julia Peck’s findings. Peck concluded that there is little evidence of wilderness photography in New South Wales and Victoria during this era. She further argues that in these regions photographers rarely ventured into wilderness areas, that there was little exploration photography, and that there was a limited commercial market for views of the bush. Stephen Spurling 3rd’s achievements provide an interesting counterpoint to Peck’s findings, and suggest his contribution to wilderness photography is significant not just within Tasmania, but Australia as a whole.

To assess the value of the Spurlings’ contribution to the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania requires making a judgement on the relative worth of their images. As discussed in the Introduction, much of the current literature on the history of Australian photography makes little or no mention of

10 Willis, Picturing Australia, p. 259.
11 Willis, Picturing Australia, pp. 258, 273.
the Spurlings. This seems to imply that for many photo-historians, the Spurling legacy is of little or negligible value. However, somewhat contradictorily, the Spurlings do rate a mention in most directories and dictionaries of biography on Australian photographers, and in recent years Stephen 3rd (and occasionally Stephen 2nd) have started to rate a mention in books and articles on wilderness photography. To appraise the merits of the Spurlings’ work involves objective and subjective evaluations. The objective considerations include asking questions such as: are the photographs readily available, is contextual information easily accessible, and whether the photographs are still relevant. The subjective considerations are more difficult to deal with, but include asking whether a particular photograph fulfills the criteria identified at the beginning of this thesis. That is, does it provide a geographical, autobiographical and metaphorical sense of place? If an image does these things, and it produces an emotional response in the viewer, then it is a successful image.

It is relatively simple to answer the objective considerations. Firstly, the Spurling photographs are readily available. Between them, the Australian National Library in Canberra, and the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston hold in excess of two thousand Spurling photographs. Many other Australian libraries, museums and archive offices also hold significant numbers of Spurling photographs. In addition, a number of overseas institutions (including the George Eastman House in the United States) include Spurling images in their collections. Already, several hundred images held in these institutions are available on-line, and plans are in place for more images to be digitised. The increasing value of Spurling images for sale through dealers and on-line auction sites further attests to their commercial viability and investment potential. The problem until now has been a lack of contextual information. It is this second aspect of making an objective assessment of the Spurling legacy that has proved a major hurdle to photo-historians and other authors wishing to discuss the Spurling

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13 See Introduction.
15 See Appendix 5.
images. This thesis fills the void. The third aspect concerns whether the images are still relevant. The fact that many of the Spurling images continue to appear in posters, leaflets, magazines and books attests to their modern relevancy.\textsuperscript{16}

Despite these objective measurements of the value of the Spurling photographs, there are instances where authors have made negative or inaccurate comments about their work.\textsuperscript{17} Often these negative comments appear to be repetitions of statements made by earlier researchers such a Chris Long.\textsuperscript{18} As discussed in the Introduction, Long’s work (with respect to the Spurlings at least) although containing some verifiable material, also contains factual errors, and judgements based on the misinterpretations or personal biases. Other errors, repeated by a number of authors, originate from inaccurate information in newspaper articles and the faulty recollections of family and friends. Examples of such errors include conflicting statements regarding who was the first Australian photographer to use dry plates, with very few writers giving Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd} due credit.\textsuperscript{19} Other frequently recorded errors include the inaccurate dating of several of Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s trips,\textsuperscript{20} and claims he retired in 1937.\textsuperscript{21} The re-cycling of inaccurate data and biased opinions clouds and confuses both objective and subjective evaluations of the Spurlings’ photography.

The intrinsic value of a photograph is largely subjective, and different people will make different judgments. However, the willingness of some authors to accept others’ assessments, rather than uncover the facts, may also explain why (with a few notable exceptions) a succession of books and articles on bushwalking, tourism, conservation and photography devote considerable discussion to Spurling contemporaries, but make little or no mention of the

\textsuperscript{16} See Introduction; Chapters 4, 6.
\textsuperscript{17} See Introduction.
\textsuperscript{19} The evidence suggests he began using dry plates in 1879.
\textsuperscript{20} Frequently recorded errors include the dating of Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}’s 1903 trip to Ben Lomond as 1902 or 1908, his circa 1906 trip to the Gordon River as 1901, his 1908 trip across the Central Plateau as 1912, and his 1909 trip from Liena to the Forth Valley and Barn Bluff as 1913 or 1916.
\textsuperscript{21} Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd} sold his business in 1937. He retired in 1941.
Spurlings. Curiously, some of these authors use Spurling images to illustrate their arguments. The provision of facts, concrete examples and references in this thesis should provide future researchers with sufficient information to conduct their own investigations. By undertaking primary research, authors should be empowered to base their judgments on the photographic merits of the Spurlings’ images, rather than personal prejudices and inaccurate information espoused by others.

A further problem identified in this thesis is the misuse of Spurling photographs. An extreme example occurs in *The Huon Pine Story*, when the authors attribute, probably inadvertently, a Spurling image to a rival photographic firm. This misuse of Spurling images raises the question of copyright infringements. For several decades the Spurlings had to contend with other photographers copying and re-releasing their images without acknowledging their origins. Stephen 2nd’s repeated calls for copyright legislation went unheeded by colonial governments, and it was not until after federation that Tasmania was brought into line with the rest of Australia and overseas countries with respect to the protection of intellectual property. Consequently, for most of their professional lives, the Spurlings fought a rear-guard action for due recognition of their achievements. It also seems likely that their release of the image, *Dilston Fall* was a honey-trap designed to expose the fraudulent use of their images. The fact that the Spurlings had to take extreme measures to reclaim what was rightfully their own work highlights their difficulties in being given due credit for their achievements.

An additional difficulty the Spurlings had to endure was the effects of cultural and island cringe. Cultural cringe is something Australians have long felt in

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22 See Introduction.
25 See Chapter 3.
26 See Chapter 4.
regards to recognising the achievements of those of native birth. Island cringe is that distinctively Tasmanian phenomenon whereby for decades locals pretended their convict ancestry simply did not exist. The Spurlings were victims to both cringes. In addition, there were secrets of personal indiscretions the family preferred to keep hidden. The cumulative effect of these forces was that facts about the Spurlings became buried in archives and difficult to access. Contextual information became dispersed and fragmented, and Spurling related research was subjected to restricted access. The difficulties in unravelling this complex web became a task requiring resources beyond the scope of researchers interested in general over-views of Australia photography. Thus began a cycle of exclusion that was difficult to challenge or escape. The need to correct past inaccuracies, to halt the perpetuation of mistruths, and to break the cycle of exclusion is what this thesis aims to achieve, and explains why this research was undertaken.

Often, with inter-generational photographers, such as the Westons, the founder of the family photographic tradition is the most famous. However, the Spurlings lived in the Antipodes, where things are often upside down, so perhaps it is no surprise that it is the last Spurling photographer Stephen, whose photographic collection is the most extensive and best known. The Spurlings’ association with photography extends over a crucial period in the development of photographic processes. Their interest began with exhibiting dissolving views, digressed to portraiture, and then returned to scenic, and ultimately wilderness images. Hence, to explore their image making is to hold a mirror to the emergence of wilderness photography in Tasmania. That the resultant picture is at times a reversal of the accepted version of Tasmanian photographic history prompts the need for a re-evaluation of that history, and for reflection.

29 See Chapter 6.
30 See Chapter 6.
32 See Chapter 1.

Although the Spurling saga reveals a picture that is somewhat at odds with the orthodox version of Tasmanian photographic history, there are still aspects of that picture that are out of focus. Not all the evidence has been uncovered. There is still information locked away in archives and museums. There are still photographs in the attics of Tasmanian homes, or perhaps further afield. There are still links between facts that need teasing out. This thesis is not an end – it is a beginning. Hopefully, other writers will feel inspired to continue investigating the history of the Spurlings and their photography.

In their article on Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair pioneer Bert Nichols, historians Simon Cubit and Nic Haygarth stressed the need for the history of Tasmanian wilderness areas ‘to be told openly and honestly’. They sentiments

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do not just apply to characters like Nichols, who did a great deal to introduce walkers to the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair area, but also flouted regulations with respect to burning and trapping. \textsuperscript{34} The need to record the history of Tasmanian wilderness openly and honesty applies equally well to the Spurls.

In his 1995 directory, film and sound archivist Chris Long was somewhat dismissive of the value of Stephen 1\textsuperscript{st} and Stephen 2\textsuperscript{nd}'s photography. \textsuperscript{35} However, some thirteen years earlier (and nearly a year after beginning his research into the Spurling saga) he had made a very different claim with respect to Stephen 3\textsuperscript{rd}'s photography. In 1982 reporter Dennis Hodgkinson, quoted Long as stating that the Spurls had left a legacy of early scenic photography, which in terms of quantity and quality, surpassed anything left by any other Tasmanian studio. \textsuperscript{36} Although to verify this claim requires an in-depth comparative analysis with other major Tasmanian photography firms, as this thesis has demonstrated, the Spurls did make a major contribution to Tasmanian scenic photography. The challenge for future researchers and writers is to record this history openly and honestly. There is one more ingredient that is often lacking in contemporary histories of Tasmanian photography – accuracy. Too many authors continue to rely on data cited by earlier writers without checking the original documents. As a result, much of the current literature on Tasmanian photography is peppered with inaccuracies. With respect to the Spurls, this thesis has exposed erroneous dates, muddled versions of events and misinterpretations of facts.

Ultimately, only one question should determine whether more will be written about the Spurls. Is the Spurling photographic legacy worthwhile? As previously discussed, the answer to this question lies in both objective and subjective considerations. This thesis has answered the objective considerations. However, to answer the subjective considerations requires a personal appraisal. Not everyone will reach the same conclusion. Appreciation of a photographic

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\textsuperscript{34} Cubit and Haygarth, ‘Bert Nichols – hunter, guide, and pioneer ranger’, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{35} Long, \textit{Tasmanian Photographers}, pp. 105-106.
\textsuperscript{36} Dennis Hodgkinson [quoting from an interview with Chris Long] ‘Early photo bonanza!’, \textit{Northern Scene} (published by the \textit{Mercury}) 27 October 1982, p. 6 (See Introduction).
\end{flushright}
image is not just about family secrets, contextual information or the issues behind the images. While all these aspects are important, and help to make an image meaningful, in the final analysis the image itself must speak to the viewer.

The quotes at the beginning of this Conclusion identify various aspects of photography and aesthetics. Some might argue that Helmut Gernsheim’s claim that photography transcends all cultural barriers is debatable, and that Ansel Adam’s claim that a photograph should be a communication ‘to reach as many people as possible’ is perhaps more realistic. Nevertheless, Lyndon B Johnson’s plea to ‘maintain the chance for contact with beauty’, identifies what a wilderness photograph is about. A wilderness photograph must elicit an emotional response. No amount of academic discussion can determine this, for ultimately the viewer must make this decision. Likewise, to earn a place in Tasmanian photographic history, and in particular the emergence of wilderness photography, the Spurling legacy must stand on its own merits.

*Stephen Spurling 3rd, Sunsets –“The Silver Moon”, c. 1920s, gelatin silver photograph.*