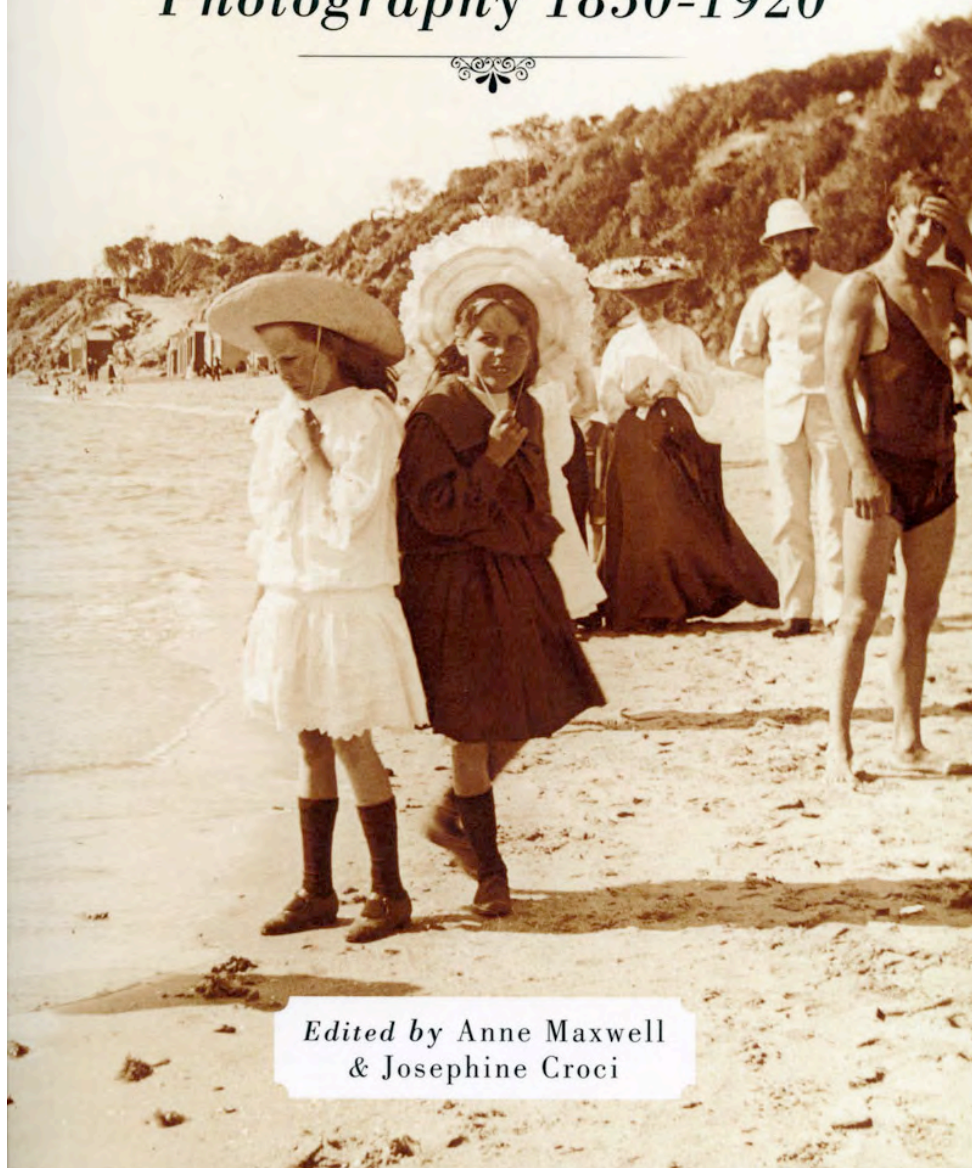


SHIFTING FOCUS
*Colonial Australian
Photography 1850-1920*



*Edited by Anne Maxwell
& Josephine Croci*

This PDF contains the article by Gael Newton previously published (see above) as one of the papers in the book based on the seminar held in Melbourne in 2012. The following first few pages contain details of that book - for copies of the book please contact Australian Scholarly Publishing – see address within.

Dedication

To Gael Newton who in her role as Senior
Curator of Australian and International
Photography at the National Gallery of
Australia for many years, has been an
inspiration to all of us who have studied
and worked with photographs.

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Frontispiece: J.W. Lindt, 'Sylvan Solitude', c1890-92. Silver Gelatin Photograph, State Library of Victoria H2775 5

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	xi
The Shifting Focus of Early Australian Photography 1860-1920 <i>Anne Maxwell and Josephine Croci</i>	xiii
<i>Part One</i> Early Australian Camerawork	
Framing Exchange French Images of Australian Aborigines, 1878-1885 <i>Catherine de Lorenzo</i>	3
Capturing the Dream The Beginnings of Photography in the Top End <i>Tim Smith</i>	15
Selling the Colonial Dream Photographs from the 1869 Northern Territory Survey Expedition <i>Kitty Magee</i>	26
The True Story of the 'Capture of Ah Kim at 10.20p.m. on the 11th May, 1875' <i>James Steele</i>	37
Overlooked and Forgotten Representations of Aboriginal Pastoral Workers in Nineteenth-Century <i>Victoria Elizabeth Willis</i>	46
The Interesting Couple Simon Wonga in 1857 Jane Lydon	58
<i>Part Two</i> The Late Nineteenth Century	
An Australian Spiritualist's Personal Cartes-de-visite Album <i>Martyn Jolly</i>	71
J. W. Lindt's 'Characteristic Australian Forest Scenery' (1875) and the Construction of an Emblematic Australian Landscape <i>Ken Orchard</i>	88
Cultural Relativity as Exchange J.W. Lindt's 'Bush Character and Aboriginal' from 'The Grafton Album', circa 1872 <i>Victoria Garnons-Williams</i>	100
The Bushman and His Bride J. W. Lindt's 'Australisches Brautpaar' <i>Nicola Teffer</i>	112
Narrative and J. W. Lindt's 'Picturesque New Guinea' Series, 1885 <i>Antje Lubcke</i>	123
A Commercial Animal During Times of Social Upheaval John Davis in Samoa, 1871-1903 Dirk H. R. Spennemann	134
The Colonial Gaze Beatrice Grimshaw in the Pacific Heather Waldroup	153

Analysing Context for Nineteenth-Century Pacific Photography <i>Geoff Barker</i>	164
Ethnographic Pictorialism and George Brown's Portraits <i>Prue Ahrens</i>	179
Part Three Australian Photography in the Era of Colonial Modernity	
An American in Australia, 1888 <i>Frederic Schell and the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia Erika Esau</i>	193
Photographs in Colonial Australian Illustrated Newspapers <i>Peter Dowling</i>	204
Thomas McMahon's Pacific Neighbours An Early Australian Photojournalist <i>Max Quanchi</i>	216
Out of Sight R.Vere Scott and R. P. Moore: Forgotten Federation-Era Panoramic Photographers <i>Gael Newton</i>	228
Celebrities of Theatre and Bohemia The Stylish Portraits of May and Mina Moore <i>Anne Maxwell</i>	239
'That's me up there!' Amateur Photography and Lantern Slide Projection in Edwardian Melbourne <i>Elizabeth Hartrick</i>	253
Frank Hurley, 'Mirror Room in Golestan, Tehran, 16 April 1944' <i>Robert Dixon</i>	265
List of Contributors	29

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Finally, a very warm thank you to Gael Newton without whose unfailing initiative and support the symposium and the publication would never have been embarked upon, and to Max Quanchi who suggested the idea of a symposium.

OUT OF SIGHT

*R. Vere Scott and R.P. Moore:
Forgotten Federation-Era
Panoramic Photographers*

Gael Newton

The National Gallery of Australia recently acquired works by R. Vere Scott and R.R Moore, both well-established specialist panoramic photographers who were active between 1900 and 1930.¹ The acquisition research on Vere Scott and Moore has highlighted the low profile in photographic histories of Federation-era photographers, that is, practitioners whose careers began after the era of pioneer colonial photographers of the 1850s-1870s and before the Modernist art and commercial photographers of the 1920s-1950s.

Key late nineteenth-century figures such as J.W. Lindt, who worked energetically through the first decades of the twentieth century, are well accounted for but often with an emphasis on their pre-1900 work.

Robert Vere Scott was born in Brisbane in 1877, the seventh of ten children of a Scottish immigrant storekeeper father and an Australian mother. Nothing is known of his early life or training other than that he was based in Port Pirie, South Australia and was working as a photographer when he married in Adelaide in 1899. Vere Scott is first listed professionally in outback Broken Hill in 1900 but signed his images in the negative rather grandly as 'R. Vere Scott'.²

By 1901 he was almost certainly using a Kodak Panorama No. 4 camera released in 1899, or the No. 1 of 1900.³ These new, easy to manage panoramic cameras used roll film and had a rotating lens to capture between 112 to 142 degree views. The Panorama camera had a curved back while the later and larger Kodak Cirkut camera, patented in 1904 and marketed by Kodak until 1941, was a professional tool. The Cirkut camera rotated on a small turntable at speeds set by selecting the size of several cogwheels and it captured 180 degrees, making it ideal for the photographing of sports events and school groups.⁴

From 1903 to 1907 Vere Scott continued to be based at Port Pirie, from where he explored markets further afield. For example, he produced panoramic pictures of Auckland, Sydney and Brisbane, all of which are currently held by the State Library of New South Wales and are dated around 1904 (see figure 44).

The panoramic format was not new. Panoramas comprised of separate plates had been made since the earliest years of photography chiefly for topographic information and the spruiking of civic progress, but the range of new turn-of-the-century cameras also allowed for a novel single contextual sweep while also accommodating foreground figures that imparted a sense of the personal.

The latter aspect was used by both Vere Scott and R.P. Moore (about whom more is to come). Not only were the new panoramic cameras being made for a wider class of users, both amateur and professional, but some local commercial photographers also used them to cater to local civic and domestic audiences for whom the scenes were familiar, as well as travellers and a long-established market of curious buyers from overseas.

Vere Scott was not the only professional to adopt the new format. Panoramic images from the new cameras featured in magazines in Australia and New Zealand in the first decades of the new century. It is possible that Vere Scott's panoramic work overlapped with the activities of the Adelaide explorer Richard T. Maurice (1859-1909), who used a panoramic camera on his last 1904 Transcontinental Expedition and published the images in 1905 in *Wide World Magazine*. It may also have overlapped with the wide-angle turn of the century landscape photographs of South Australian amateur art photographer H.H. Tilbrook (1884-1937).⁵ Further east, Harry Phillips (1873-1944) had moved to the Blue Mountains in New South Wales in 1908 and he also had dedicated his life and business to taking and publishing panoramic images extolling the beauty of the region.⁶

Panoramas were popular with the public due to the well-publicised visit to Australia and New Zealand in 1902 of the flamboyant American photographer Melvin Vaniman (1866-1912), who made exquisitely printed and very detailed views from extraordinarily high ladders and balloons. Significantly, Vaniman was in Adelaide in 1904.

By 1907 Vere Scott had quite a profile in South Australia: he was producing panoramic postcards and in 1908 was invited to judge the Boulder Technical School Camera Club competition. Most revealing is the degree to which he had embraced the new largely amateur pictorialist photography movement that was particularly advanced in Adelaide in these years due, in part, to the influence of Adelaide-born art photographer John Kauffmann (1864-1942).⁷

That Vere Scott was regarded as an equal to Kauffmann is seen by their equal billing and high profile in the Christmas number of the Adelaide newspaper *The Observer*.⁸ *The Adelaide Register* also devoted a column to their work in the issue under the title 'Local Photographic Masters', reporting that Vere Scott had 'recently imported the largest panoramic camera that had yet been brought to the Commonwealth, and that it was designed to take pictures 24 x 9 inches'.

The popularity of his beautiful pictures soon induced him to devote attention solely to this class of work.⁹ His earliest panoramas had had an old-fashioned topographic effect. The art photography of the era had an aestheticizing effect on the topographical tradition of the panoramic view and this surfaced in the form of the heavy use of chiaroscuro and other picturesque effects in Vere Scott's new work (see figure 45).

However, photography of this sort possibly did not pay well since around 1907 Vere Scott moved to Kalgoorlie, Western Australia. Most people were lured to Kalgoorlie by the prosperity of the new gold mining operations, however Vere Scott was very active making panoramic views as well as covering sports and other local events.

He was soon travelling again: images of Wellington and Christchurch are dated to 1910-14, and a Brisbane river view to 1915. Despite this level of activity, in 1916 with no farewell notices Vere Scott migrated with his wife and children to California where his brothers George, Henry and Alfred had already settled, and established a studio in San Francisco in 1918.

A number of his images appeared in E.J. Brady's 1918 book *Australia Unlimited*, but Vere Scott largely disappears from view after 1915.¹⁰ He separated from his wife in 1920 and in 1924 returned to Sydney where another brother called James resided, but did not stay long as passenger vessel records show him as arriving back in San Francisco in September 1924, and no securely dated images from Australia in the 1920s have been located.

His World War Two draft registration card of April 1942 lists his occupation as a scenic photographer in lodgings in Boston. Despite his long career and evident expertise and talent, nothing is known of his life in North America and no known examples of his work have been located in North American collections. Some fifty works are held in Australian public and private collections. The fate of his archive and whereabouts of descendants are as yet unknown.

I have previously characterised Federation-era commercial photographers like Vere Scott as transitional figures. The reasons for this are twofold: not only was he living in an era of national transition, but his work bridged the topographical priorities of nineteenth-century views belonging to trade photographers, and the aesthetic tastes and ambitions of turn of the century art photographers. For the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, Vere Scott was successful enough with this mixed approach to earn a living and produce a large output of attractive yet informative panoramic prints. His success points to the existence of a substantial local market, which is in contrast to the nineteenth century when photographs containing 'views' were directed overseas to establish an image of colonial prosperity and respectability.

Very little is known of the life and work of Vere Scott's younger and even more prolific contemporary, the New Zealand photographer Robert Percy Moore. He was born in Christchurch in 1881, the son of draper Charles Moore, and only started his career in Queensland during World War One, making portraits of recruited soldiers and marketing Queensland postcards when he was thirty-five.

His new profession may have been spurred by his marriage in 1914. He criss-crossed the Tasman to work in eastern Australia and New Zealand in the 1920s and 30s and was hugely productive for more than two decades, from 1915. Following his death (he died at the large family home in Strathfield, Sydney in 1948) over 2000 of his rolled negatives and four albums of his panoramic prints were deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.¹¹ Some 200 of Moore's panoramic prints are held in the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, with a further 100 or so spread across Australian library collections.

R.P. Moore established his first studio in Kelvin Grove, Brisbane in 1916 but moved south in 1919 to a studio at 379 Kent Street, Sydney. However, he returned to Brisbane in 1920 for the visit of the Prince of Wales. He was working from Lyon Street, Five Dock, Sydney from 1920 until the early 1940s. From 1923 to 1931 Moore also operated from a studio at 88 Manners Street, Wellington, advertising himself as 'The Cirkut Photographer'.

At the time of his greatest output Moore travelled extensively in New Zealand, often driving his big Buick to photograph affluent homesteads and properties, major public events, royal visits, group portraits and a range of urban and rural scenery. From 1936 to 1941 Moore was in partnership with his former assistant James Thompson in the Panora studio at the mineral springs resort town of Rotorua.

As the studio name implies, the partners specialised in panoramic views. Most were made using a Cirkut #10 panoramic film camera that held film 10 inches wide by 48 inches long. This format gave an almost dizzying sweep of foreground detail and distant context. The expansive multiple-point perspective in the images was particularly suited to vistas with people randomly scattered across the field of view. Cirkut-type cameras continued in use for sports team and school group photos until superseded only recently by panoramic digital cameras.

In New Zealand, Moore made use of door-to-door salesmen to tout for commissions with local businesses. The expertise and drama of his work are impressive. What awareness Moore had of the work of Vaniman, whose New Zealand panoramas date from 1902, is not known, but the American's images were well publicised. Moore appears not to have published many images or exhibited in salons. However, the number of his prints surviving in their original oak frames suggests a ready market.



Top *Figure 44*

R. Vere Scott, 'Ben Buckler Bondi, NSW c 1905-10. Gelatin Silver Photograph.
Photograph Collection, National Gallery of Australia.

Bottom *Figure 45* R. Vere Scott, 'Fremantle Harbour,' c 1900-10. Gelatin Silver Photograph.
Photograph Collection, National Gallery of Australia.

Figure 46

R. P. Moore. 'Peace Celebrations, Sydney, Scene in McQuarrie [sic]
Street, 19 July 1919', 1919. (Detail below.)
Gelatin Silver Photograph. Photograph Collection, National Gallery of Australia.



All the appeal of early twentieth-century panoramic photographs can be seen in Moore's jam-packed panorama of the street parades in Sydney that took place on the 19 July, 1919 - the day of the Peace Celebrations (see figure 46). The Great War of 1914-18 had officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in France on 19 June, 1919 and the 19th July was 'set apart for the celebration of peace throughout the Empire'.¹²

In Sydney the Peace March involved thousands of officials, citizenry and returned soldiers who first marshalled in the Domain and then moved along Macquarie, Bridge, George, Elizabeth and Park Streets, all of which were bedecked with arches and bunting. Moore's seemingly chaotic image — which rather prominently features a press photographer on a ladder in the middle — is a curious phenomenon.

Its dazzling density demands close scrutiny to appreciate the detail, but this is then in defiance of the all-encompassing view it provides of the massed crowds. Pictorial coverage of the event was not abundant and Moore's panorama seems superior to any other visual record of the event that was available to the public.

Sydney artist Will Ashton (1881-1963) painted a view of the crowds, flags and bunting looking deep down Martin Place.¹³ The prominent Sydney art photographer Harold Cazneaux made an image of a resting ploughman called *Peace after War and Memories*, which was published in *Photograms of the Year* for 1920, and this too was more than likely inspired by the July event. In general it was only rarely that the artists and art photographers of this era took public events as their subject matter.

While it is understandable that Vere Scott should slip from view - after all he had practiced for only fifteen years and then left for America - it is not clear why Moore has been largely forgotten for the past seventy-five or so years. His very large archive at the Alexander Turnbull Library was the subject of a touring exhibition in the 1990s, but he himself has attracted only passing reference in the published histories of the previous seventy-five years.

Moore's panoramic negatives and prints however, have recently begun to feature quite regularly in publications and websites promoting or representing New Zealand.¹⁴ The reasons for this cannot be pursued in this essay, but they may have to do with the suitability of panoramic images for web page banners and the revived interest in panoramic images among contemporary art photographers.

In the last decade a number of scholarly studies and exhibitions have begun to re-engage with the early twentieth century. There are even signs that some scholars are beginning to adopt a more positive view of the variety and innovations of Federation-era photography.¹⁵ The now better understood careers of Vere Scott and R.P. Moore, as Australasian photographers who specialised in the use of panoramic film cameras to record their nations in the early to mid twentieth century, should form part of this enriched picture of the era.

Notes

1. Acquired from the dealer gallery exhibition, catalogue Photographic Panoramas. Collectors' List No. 153, Sydney: Josef Lebovic Gallery, 2011. This is the first commercial sale of panoramic photography in Australia. The catalogue can be accessed at http://www.joseflebovicgallery.com/Catalogue/CL_153_2011/Pages/pg03.html
2. Information from page three of the Scott family genealogy typescript provided to the author by family historian Debi Krych, 2012. No photograph of Scott is known to exist but his American draft registration card in WWI sworn on September 12, 1918, records 'Robert Scott, photographer, resident of 594, 62nd Street, Oakland, Alameda County, CA.,' as 'Tall Height, Medium Build, Blue Eyes, and Brown Hair, 3 Fingers from left hand lost, physically disqualified.' The location of his studio was 340 Kearney Street, San Francisco.
3. Vere Scott's use of a No. 4 Camera is evidenced by the 1901 image *Camels and men gather at the start of the expedition to survey the Trans-Australian Railway*. This 16.0 x 50.0 cm print, which binds together men and camels in front of a flat landscape, is held by the State Library of Western Australia and is inscribed with the words 'Copyright R. Vere Scott': <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/12080624>. The fate of Scott's negatives is unknown and no large single holding exists of his work. He mostly signed his work as 'R. Vere Scott' on the image and indeed seems to have used 'Vere Scott' as a surname, but also occasionally 'R. Scott' and 'R.V Scott'.
4. For an online introduction to Kodak panoramic cameras see www.kodaksefke.nl/4-panoram-1899.html and in print the exhibition catalogue *The Panoramic Image* (Southampton, UK: John Hansard Gallery, Southampton University, 1981).
5. See Maria Zagala's entry on R.T. Maurice in *A Century in Progress: South Australian Photography, 1840s-1940s*, Exhibition Catalogue (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2007), 135.
6. See Phillip Kay, *The Far-Famed Blue Mountains of Harry Phillips* (Leura, NSW: Second Back Row Press, 1985).
7. See Gael Newton, *Soft But True: John Kauffmann 1864-1942, Art Photographer* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1996).
8. An advertisement on page six of the *Adelaide Register*, 4 Dec 1907 promised that the illustrations would be 'the finest ever published within the State'. Scott and Kauffmann were the only two photographers profiled and they had equal billing. Scott's image titles were; 'The Belair Road', 'On the Greenhill Road', 'Waterfall Gully', 'Brownhill Creek from the shortcut to Belair', and 'The Railway Viaduct near Blackwood and Bridgewater'.
9. *South Australian Register*, 19 Dec (1907): 7b.
10. A large collection of photographs assembled by E.J. Brady is held in the National Library and merits investigation.
11. It is not known how the archive came to the Alexander Turnbull Library, but it was most likely after probate on Moore's estate was granted in New Zealand in 1949. Two albums of some 260 original prints were restored and over 2000 rolled panoramic films copied in the 1990s. These albums, with images taken from the new copy negatives, were exhibited at the Turnbull Library in Wellington between November 1995 and February 1996 and then toured nationally. There was no catalogue.
12. Moore's 'Historic Day in Sydney' was reproduced in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 July 1919, 9. The accompanying article said of this date that 'it has an especial significance for Australians, who scarcely dreamed that so early in their career as a nation they were to be tried in so fierce a furnace, and were to emerge, tried and proven, with so much glory'. See 'Peace Day', *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 July 1919, 8. Last accessed 20 October, 2012: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/15857949>

13. The painting *Victory Celebration, Martin Place, Sydney*, 1919, by Will Ashton is illustrated as #33 in the exhibition catalogue *Spring Exhibition, Joseph Brown Gallery, Melbourne, 7-23 October 1974* (Melbourne: Joseph Brown Gallery, 1974).
14. A supersize digital version of Moore's 1923 panorama of Christchurch Cathedral Square is a feature of the website for the Christchurch Art Gallery, while his view of Milford Sound appears on the brochure for a photographic conservation conference that was held in Wellington in February 2013.
15. These studies include Christine Burgess's 'The Spurling Legacy and the Emergence of Wilderness Photography in Tasmania', PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2010; and Julia Peck's 'The Making of the Australian Landscape: Photographic Contributions to the Construction of a Nation from New South Wales and Victoria, 1870-1917,' PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Newport, 2008.

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