Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5988

Armytage, Ada

(1858 - 1939)

Born	18580101, Balmoral Victoria Australia
Died	19390903, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Photographer

Summary

Ada Armytage was the daughter of the wealthy pastoralist Charles Henry Armytage who owned Como House during the period 1865-1959. Her photographs document life within the stately house and amongst the social elite of the times.

Details

Ada Armytage was born in 1858. One of eight children, her father was Charles Henry Armytage and her mother was Caroline. They lived at Fulham Station on a large sheep station outside of Geelong. Her father purchased Como House in 1865 and the family moved there; her mother was to have another two children, one of whom died. The family oversaw the renovation and refurbished Como house but by 1876 Charles Armytage died.

The family was very wealthy and travelled to the continent on a number of occasions, each time acquiring artefacts to bring back to Melbourne. They were known for the many parties and social events they hosted. Caroline Armytage was keen for the children to be educated – the girls as well the boys – and she sent them abroad to be educated.

In May 1906 Caroline Armytage married Captain Arthur Fitzpatrick, who was the aide-de-camp to the governor of Victoria. The couple moved to England but soon after her husband left her, taking the 70 thousand pound dowry with him. She returned to Melbourne and never married again.

Ada took her niece, Edna Armytage, to England in 1913 to see her sisters Constance and Leila but ended up being stranded there with the outbreak of the WW1. The three sisters were middle aged at the time – Ada 55 years old, Constance 43 and Leila 39 – but they joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) in England for the Red Cross and were sent to France to assist with the war effort.

They returned to Melbourne after 11 years' absence. Having been greatly affected by their war experiences the sisters went about making changes to Como House; their renovations saw the house losing its Edwardian grandeur.

Exactly what inspired Ada to develop an interest in photography is unclear, as is when this took place, as well as whether she received any formal training. What is certain, however, is that she had a keen interest in photography and documented the Armytage family's life at Como House over the years. Ada's photographs and her sisters' diaries, letters and journals make up the Armytage family archive, which preserves the significant moment in history. Ada died in 1939.

In 1959 the Armytage family sold Como House to The National Trust of Victoria.

Collections

Armytage Family Collection, University of Melbourne Archives

Published resources

Thesis
Living at Como: The Armytage Sisters and Their Relationship to Como Between 1863- 1959, Dawe, Fiona Elizabeth, 1997

Resource Section
A Case for Photographs, Benjamin, Jason,
http://library.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1378871/benjamin.pdf

Como House and the Armytage Family,
http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/built-environment/como-house-the-armytage-family/

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