

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5991

Butler, Amelia

(1879 - 1941)

Born 18791114, Tenterfield New South Wales Australia

Died 19410205, Manly New South Wales Australia

Occupation Photographer

Summary

Amelia Butler lived and worked in Tenterfield, NSW during the 1890s. Although she went on to become a successful studio photographer based in Sydney, Butler is best known for the photographs she took of Tenterfield and the surrounding districts in the 1890s.

Details

Her father, Alfred B. Butler, was a photographer who migrated to New South Wales from England and began working for the NSW Government. In 1886 he was commissioned to travel to Tenterfield, near the border of Queensland, to document the building of the Sydney to Queensland railway line. Following this expedition he decided to move back there and establish his own photographic studio.

Amelia was the only surviving daughter in the family and was chosen by her father, ahead of her brothers, to follow in his footsteps; she began her apprenticeship with him at an early age. Her earliest work can be found in four photo albums that she and her father produced. The well-composed, 'richly toned' work shows her strong technical ability and creativity (Hall 27). Butler's photography includes signed portraits, cartes-de-visite and views that document station life, Indigenous peoples and the local landscape.

One of her photographs, *Snowfall*, 1895, captures a rare meteorological occurrence when it snowed in the town. A group of people are gathered together enjoying the occasion, with one figure holding a tripod and camera posing for Butler's camera.

When her father retired she took over his studio, even though one of her brothers had also become a photographer.

Amelia married Aaron Robert Morris in December 1902 at Tenterfield but they divorced in 1928. She bore six children in the years 1903-1917, and still continued working as a photographer and running the studio.

She eventually moved to Sydney and established a studio there; her brother took over the Tenterfield studio, which he renamed 'Butler Brothers.' Amelia is said to have returned to Tenterfield in 1934 with her camera.

Amelia died in 1941, aged 62.

Collections

Collection of the Tenterfield and District Historical Society Museum, Tenterfield, New South Wales

State Library of Victoria

Events

1890 - 1940

Active as professional photographer

Published resources

Book

The Mechanical Eye in Australia: Photography 1841-1900., Davies, Alan and Stanbury, Peter, 1986

Australian Women Photographers 1840 - 1960, Hall, Barbara and Mather, Jenni, 1986

Resource Section

Amelia Butler,

<https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/amelia-butler/>

Author Details

Anne Maxwell (with Morfia Grondas and Lucy Van)

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