Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6001

St John, Dorothy

(1907 - 1984)

Born	19070212, Victoria Park Western Australia Australia
Died	19840623, Coburg Victoria Australia
Occupation	Photographer

Summary

Dorothy St John was an amateur photographer who was trained by her father, a street photographer. Her photographs record the everyday life in rural Western Australia.

Details

Dorothy St John was born in 1907 to William St John and Catherine St John. She developed an interest in photography at an early age and was taught by her father who, on his return from the Boer War, worked as a street photographer in Perth. Her mother was skilled in needlework and this may well have influenced Dorothy in her own work.

Dorothy brought her own camera, a Kodak Brownie Junior 6-20 and a developing/printing kit out of her own savings when she was fifteen years old.

In 1911 the family moved to Ongerup, near Albany, WA, where under the Closer Settlement Scheme they were able to buy land. The whole family worked hard to build up a farm that they named ‘Hazelwood.’ St. John recalled that ‘[t]here were so few interests in Ongerup. Perhaps the best memories … were all the annual picnics at Easter and Christmas when all the settlers in the area would gather’ (Hall 33).

Photography was an expressive outlet for St John; using her camera, Dorothy recorded the world around her, the land, life on the farm, and social events such as the Christmas and Easter annual picnics.

In 1926, Dorothy St John left Hazelwood at the age of 19, hoping to head to New Zealand. However, with the onset of the Depression the family lost the farm, so St John stayed in Australia (remaining in Melbourne) and gave up photography.

Technical

Dorothy St John used a Kodak Brownie Junior 6-20 and a developing/printing kit.

Collections

Private Collections

Toowoomba Camera Club collection, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

Events

1922 - 1926
Active as amateur photographer

Published resources

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

Author Details
Anne Maxwell (with Morfia Grondas and Lucy Van)

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