Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6010

Brown, Irene

(1898 - 1985)

Born	18980101, Hay New South Wales Australia
Died	19850221, Hay New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Photographer

Summary

Irene Brown was a self-taught, prize-winning amateur photographer from Hay, NSW. Her subjects included children at play, and everyday life in regional Australia.

Details

Irene Brown was born in 1898, in the wheat growing area of Hay, NSW. In 1910, aged 12, she received her first camera as a gift from her father, and started teaching herself photography. Brown once said of photography that '[a]nyone can click a camera, that's how I started, without any training I just picked up a camera and looked it over to see what was going on and then started. It's really in the developing that the skill lies. I had to be very satisfied with the print I made into a postcard or exhibited because I did all my own printing' (Hall 25).

Brown received some commissions but was not interested in pursuing a career as a commercial photographer. She enjoyed photographing children, and would take care to ensure they felt at ease as she took their photographs. Most of her work relates to everyday life around Hay and major events that occurred such as the flood. She recalled putting on her gumboots and going out in a boat on her own, tucking her skirt into her bloomers and setting up her camera to capture what she saw. Some of these photographs were published by the local newspaper, but she also used them to produce some postcards which she sold to the locals.

Brown participated in the local Hay Show photography show ten times, and received first prize on nine occasions. She recalled that she was eventually told that '… if I won that much I must be a professional' (Hall 25).

Information regarding her life and technical aspects of her photography is limited.

Collections

Dease Studios Collection of Photographs. State Library of Western Australia

Events

1899 -
Irene Brown participated in the Hay Show ten times and received first prize on nine occasions.

Published resources

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

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

Created 16 November 2016
Last modified 24 April 2026