

Basic Detail Report



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Title

10-footer COMMONWEALTH sailing on Sydney Harbour

Date

1920-1930

Primary Maker

William James Hall

Medium

Emulsion on glass

Name

Glass plate negative

History

William Frederick Hall (1855-1943), formerly a butcher from England, became a well-known photographer whose photographic career in Sydney spanned a number of decades. He was a fingerprint expert at Long Bay Gaol and set up a photographic studio in Sydney in 1890. He and his wife, Caroline Asimus, had a son William James Hall (1877-1951), who followed his father's lead and became a photographer. William James Hall joined the business and took over its operations in 1902. He established Hall & Co in 1904. Each Monday, Hall would display photographs of weekend races on Sydney Harbour in the window of his studio at 20 Hunter Street. Hall also ventured into other areas of photography, and is generally considered to have pioneered the art of livestock photography in Australia at the start of the 20th century. Hall's company, Hall & Co were also known for their aerial, landscape, portraiture, city and rural photography. Survived by his second wife, Edith Hannah Gilkes (he married Alice Rosina Hopson on 14 August 1901 in Bowral), Hall died on 26 August 1951. Although neither the father nor the son were sailors, both developed a keen interest in sailing and sailing craft. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, William Frederick Hall documented the weekend sailors and yachts of Sydney Harbour. William James Hall took over the tradition until the early 1930s, capturing photographs from his motor boat. A number of photographic studios were established by William F Hall and William J Hall. Known at different times as Hall Studio, Hall & Co, W F Hall and Hall W, the businesses were located variously at 7 Castlereagh Street, 39, 44 and 70 Hunter Street, 91 Phillip Street and 21 Bligh Street in Sydney city from 1890 onwards. Their images of sailing, yachts and motor launches on Sydney Harbour and nearby are extremely well-known and highly respected for their composition and the detail they have recorded. Yachting was a major pastime on Sydney Harbour, and well-established by the mid-1800s. A number of clubs were formed, catering for all classes and types of sailing vessel, and for their owners from different backgrounds. Yachts tended to belong to successful businessmen, and their clubs such as the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron reflected the class structure of the time. Races were held throughout summertime, and in Sydney most were restricted to Sydney Harbour

and other enclosed waterways, with occasional short offshore events. It was popular with the public who came to watch many important races when they were held on the harbour, gathering on the foreshores or watching from ferries that followed the races. Races were widely reported in the media as well, including drawn illustrations of the yachts, which were later replaced by early versions of photographs.