

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Sam Birch of Hollywood Ireland waving from the deck of the MOLDAVIA

Date

26 January 1924

Primary Maker

Samuel J Hood Studio

Medium

Emulsion on glass

Name

Glass plate negative

History

RMS MOLDAVIA II was initially built as a single funnel in 1921 by Cammell Laird and Company at Birkenhead for Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. It was launched on 1 October 1921 and was designed to service the passenger trade between Britain and Australia via Marseilles, Suez and Colombo. It could accommodate 840 tourist class passengers. In 1928, it was fitted with a second (artificial) funnel in light of criticisms of its outmoded appearance. Despite its old-fashioned design, MOLDAVIA was able to serve the passenger trade between England and Australia for fifteen years before the ship was superseded by the new 'Strath' liners. MOLDAVIA made its final voyage from Sydney to Tilbury on 17 September 1937 before it was scrapped in 1938. Samuel (Sam) John Hood (1872-1953) was born at Glenelg, Adelaide in 1872. His father, John Hood, was a photographer who worked for Duryea's Adelaide Photographic Company. In 1883 John moved with his family to Sydney, and in 1884 Sam followed his lead and began work for another photographer, William Tuttle in Tuttle's Studio, George Street, Sydney. In 1899, Sam Hood established his own portrait business at The Adelaide Photographic Co, 256 Pitt St, Sydney. Due to two fires in the studio in the early years he worked from his Balmain home, where he constructed a darkroom and photographed the shipping trade and waterfront workers, which provided a steady income for his growing family. Hood would approach a ship on the assigned tug boat and photograph it as it lay off Sydney Heads. Once the ship reached the dock, Hood would board the vessel and approach the captain to allow him to sell the photographs of the ship to the crew. The captain authorised for the photographs to be paid for by the shipping company and then deducted a fee from the crew's wages. In addition to the photographs, Hood worked with ship artists to produce views of vessels under sail. In turn, Hood's photographs of vessels with their sails furled were used by artists to paint ship portraits. Hood would approach the captain of a ship with a painting in oil or watercolour and ask to borrow the rigging plan on the promise of a similar work. Hood is known to have worked with maritime artists

Walter Barratt, Reginald Arthur Borstel, George Frederick Gregory, and John Allcot, who was reputedly hired from the MILTIADES after Hood spotted him peddling his wares on board. The State Library of NSW holds a significant collection of Hood photographs. The ANMM collection comprises some 9,000 photographs of maritime subjects. It documents the end of the sailing ship era and the growing dominance of steam vessels. This technological advancement had implications for Hood's business, as steamship crews were less inclined to request photographs of their vessels. During the 1910s, Hood had acquired cheap premises at the Dore Studio in the Queen Victoria Markets and continued to produce studio portraits, in addition to ship photography. In 1918, however, Hood transferred to Dalny Studio at 124 Pitt Street, Sydney. Originally owned by Thomas Cleary, Dalny Studio had a contract to supply photographs to the newspapers, Melbourne Argus and the Australasian. This soon also included the Daily Guardian, Daily Telegraph Pictorial, The Labour Daily, Daily News, Sun, and The Sydney Morning Herald. During the 1920s, Hood's work moved from the social and sport pages of newspapers into mainstream reportage. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Hood's employees included his children Ted and Gladys, as well as several photographers who went onto successful careers as press photographers for various newspapers. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Hood, aged 70, was recruited by the Ministry of News and Information to document the armed services. This period also witnessed the decline of formal studio portraits, which led the Hood studio to pursue more commercial commissions. Sam Hood continued working at his studio up until his death in June 1953. He had used the same modified Folmer & Schwing Graflex camera for over forty years.