

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Skiffs sailing near The Heads, Sydney Harbour

Date

1890s - 1930s

Primary Maker

William James Hall

Medium

Cellulose nitrate negative, black & white

Name

Nitrate Negative

History

Photographer William James Hall was born in Woolloomooloo, Sydney on 11 May 1877. His Australian-born mother, Caroline Asimus, married William Frederick Hall, a butcher from England, in 1883. William Hall senior had had a variety of occupations, including fingerprint expert at Long Bay gaol, before he established a photographic studio in in 1890 in Phillip Street, Sydney. William James Hall joined his father in the photographic business from a young age and took over its operations in 1902. In August 1901 William James Hall married Alice Rosina Hopson in Bowral, and in 1904 he set up Hall & Co, a photographic business at 44 Hunter Street, Sydney. William James Hall developed a keen interest in sailing and sailing craft and became a fixture on Sydney Harbour, photographing the weekend sailors and yachts. Between the late 1890s and the 1930s William James Hall created an extensive collection of maritime photography that provides an important pictorial record of recreational boating in Sydney Harbour. His images document the great variety of activities and technologies that were an integral part of Sydney's sailing community, from the large racing and cruising yachts, to the jostling skiffs and even the new phenomenon of the early twentieth century - motor boats. The collection also includes images of the many spectators and crowds who followed the sailing races. Each Monday morning in his shop window, Hall would display the photographs he had taken of the weekend races. The shopfront became a part of Sydney yachting life as people filed past, vying to view the images and dissect the weekend's activities. William James Hall was not himself a sailor, and mainly used a motor launch to mingle and chase the yachts of the harbour as he worked. However Hall's interest in photography was not limited to the subject of sailing and he came to cover a wide variety of themes such as landscapes, portraiture, aerial photography, military work and livestock. He came to be known as one of the best photographers of animals and was in great demand at Royal Sydney Show time. His work was widely published in rural industry journals and stud stock advertisements and from July 1928 to December 1929 he made an extended tour of South Africa to photograph merino studs. Survived by his second wife, Edith Hannah Gilkes, William James Hall died on 26

August 1951 at St Luke's Hospital, Darlinghurst. 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 Blight Street in Sydney city from 1890 onwards.