Gundagai Album
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Early Photographs of an Australian Country Town

Edited with an introduction by Peter Quartermaine

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Preface

In 1971 the National Library of Australia was presented with two remarkable collections of photographs of Gundagai, an old-established town on the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales. The photographs, dating apparently from the 1890s and early 1900s, were the gifts of two Gundagai residents, Mr A. C. Butcher and Mr O. I. Bell, B.E.M., who had separately come into possession of roughly equal numbers of negatives. With some later additions, the A. C. Butcher Collection and the O. I. Bell Collection in 1975 totalled 898 negatives, all on 5" x 4" glass plates.

The Butcher Collection was found in the mid-1950s following the purchase of premises in Sheridan Street, Gundagai, that had formerly belonged to Mr Samuel Young. Among some abandoned effects in the buildings was the medical library of C. L. Gabriel (1857-1927), who had practised medicine in Gundagai from about 1889 until his death. Together with the books were several boxes of glass negatives; from their subject matter, and from Dr Gabriel's known interest in photography, of which there is living memory, these negatives are presumed to have been his work.

Mr Butcher printed a few of the negatives and included them in 1956 in a book on the history of Gundagai; in 1971 he generously presented the collection to the National Library. A few months later Mr Bell, president of the Gundagai and District Historical Society, offered the National Library a similar collection of negatives, which in his belief were the work of several photographers: C. E. Weston, W. J. Bell (his father), a schoolteacher named Packer and Dr Gabriel. As will be seen from the plates in this book—which are representative of the whole body of work except for two or three clinical photographs—the Butcher and Bell Collection negatives have an overlapping range of interest and subjects, and seem as if they might once have comprised a single collection of material that became divided. Probably it will never be possible to identify any of the negatives as being without doubt the work of one photographer or another, but within the National Library the negatives have come to be spoken of collectively as the 'Gabriel photographs', and rightly or mistakenly it is to C. L. Gabriel that they are mainly attributed.

The glass negatives were printed over a period of months, in the intervals of other work, in the Photographic Unit of the Library, under the supervision of David Reid. This was a slow process, because many of the negatives had deteriorated to the point at which their emulsion was lifting, and many had such a wide range of contrast that it was difficult to capture every detail of the original image. Reproduction negatives of uniform contrast were made of the Library's set of master prints as they were completed, so that the material can now, it is hoped, be preserved and duplicated indefinitely.

As the printing went on, it became clear what a fine resource of visual history the National Library had been given, interesting for its intimate portrayal of a country town at the turn of the century, and for the wealth of information it revealed about costumes, interiors and countless other details of everyday life. The material is no less interesting in terms of photography, partly because it stands as such an early and such a substantial body of work by an amateur: a father figure, one might say, to countless Australian amateurs of later days.

In 1973, fifty-six of the photographs were published in the National Library's engagement calendar for 1974, Gundagai Days. This aroused much interest, which encouraged the Library to plan the publication in a more permanent and serious form of a wider selection of the material. In 1974 Peter Quartermaine, lecturer in Australian Arts and Letters, University of Exeter, was invited by the Library to edit a selection of the material. He was then at the Australian National University, Canberra, as an honorary visiting fellow engaged in research into early Australian photography. His introduction and the plates follow.

At the end of the book are some notes on the content of the plates contributed by present and former residents of Gundagai, and offered for the interest of some readers, without claiming that every detail which memory has recalled is infallible.

G. Chandler Director-General
Editor's acknowledgments

The purpose of this book is to make available a selection of prints from the A. C. Butcher and O. I. Bell collections of Gundagai photographs held by the National Library of Australia, in a form which allows an appreciation of the nature of the original material. It is hoped that it will interest the general public while encouraging the recognition of Australian photography as an important part of the nation's cultural heritage.

I had the unexpected opportunity to discuss the collection with John Szarkowski, Curator of Photography at the New York Museum of Modern Art, when he visited Australia in May 1974 under the auspices of the Australian Centre for Photography, and recall with appreciation his interest and advice. Dr Ralph Gabriel and his wife kindly provided invaluable information on the history of the Gabriel family. Mr Cliff Butcher, his daughter Elizabeth, Mr Carl Weekes, Miss Hilda Morley, Mrs Minna Potts and Mr J. W. Robinson all contributed identifications and reminiscences of Gundagai. The staff at both the National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library, Sydney, were unfailingly helpful in the course of my researches.

My stay in Australia was made possible by travel grants from the British Council and the Literature Board of the Australia Council. I am properly grateful for the opportunities their support gave me. Without the generosity of Geoffrey and Beth Barnes and of David Malouf, I could not have undertaken this book. I also owe a special debt to Brian Matthews, who made it possible for me even to think of going to Australia for a year, and to my former professor, Moelwyn Merchant, who encouraged Australian arts and letters to flourish in Devon. Finally I am grateful to the English Department at the Australian National University for hosting me as an honorary visiting fellow during my stay, and to Professor Bernard Smith for awakening and encouraging my interest in the Australian visual arts.

Peter Quartermaine
Exeter
May 1975
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Introduction

The town of Gundagai
Gundagai, on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, is a town where a traveller can break his journey along the Hume Highway between Sydney and Melbourne. Since the early days it has been a stopping place: for diggers on their way to the goldfields, for teamsters bringing wool from the Riverina stations, for itinerant bush workers in search of a job, a meal, or a town in which to spend their cheques. Two groups of Aborigines, from the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee tribes, assembled periodically by the river but by 1900 most of them had settled on the Brungle mission, and came into town only for the annual agricultural show.

The original site was surveyed on the half-mile-wide alluvial flats on the north side of the river, between what is now Morley's Creek and the Murrumbidgee. About 1840 the first settlers took up their lots from the Government and the growth of the township began. When Dr Robert Davison's general store opened in 1842, it was probably the only one between Yass and Melbourne. In 1843 a post office was opened, and by 1850 there were four hotels, several stores, a blacksmith, a school, twenty houses and some tents.

On the night of 23 June 1852, the Murrumbidgee flooded the settlement to a depth of seventeen feet, destroying seventy-one buildings and drowning eighty-one inhabitants. Many people were saved by Aborigines living in the area. After this disaster the main township moved to the lower slopes of Mount Parnassus. Sheridan Street, which had been the highest street in the original town, now became the main street and remains so today in the northern township, forming part of the Hume Highway.

In 1858 the original hospital was opened in Otway Street, and forty years later was still described in The Australian Handbook as 'a fine commodious structure', even though Dr Gabriel criticised it in 1889 as 'faulty' in design and construction and 'ill suited' to the requirements of a modern hospital. In 1885 the population of the town was over a thousand and the Literary Institute was recorded as holding six hundred and fifty volumes.

In the 1850s Gundagai was the principal town south of Yass on the Sydney-Melbourne road and travellers to the Victorian goldfields ensured its prosperity. In 1861 gold was found in payable quantities at Spring Flat, near the town, and the diggings flourished for some fifteen years.

The importance of the site as a natural crossing place was recognised from the first, and in 1865 the construction of a traffic bridge was begun to replace the punt ferry that had linked the settlements on the north and south banks of the river. In 1858 Francis Cadell in the steamer Albury reached the town from Adelaide, and for many years afterwards vessels paid periodic visits. The Platypus, specially built for service on the Murrumbidgee, made several trips to Gundagai from Wagga Wagga during the 1879 season. On 21 July 1886, a railway line from Cootamundra to the northern township was opened, and on 12 October 1903 the line was extended south to Tumut, via a bridge.
Charles Louis Gabriel, 1857-1927

Dr Gabriel came from a family whose connections with Australia go back to the early years of the nineteenth century, and whose fortunes before that had been varied. The family was French in origin, but his grandfather (who may also have been a doctor) married a Jewish woman and was forced by his family to drop the family name, de Sense, and to take his wife's name, Gabriel. Shortly before the French Revolution, they apparently emigrated to Martinique.

Dr Gabriel's father, also Charles Louis, was born in Martinique, West Indies, and is believed to have returned soon after 1800 to France with his mother and to have acquired medical qualifications. Family history next records him sailing to the Pacific with a French expedition which visited Sydney in the early years of the nineteenth century. Discovering on his return to France that his mother had died, he decided to return to Australia, and may have come out with Major Kemp, who arrived in Sydney on 2 December 1837 on the convict ship Asia, in command of the military guard, and who subsequently obtained him a medical post at Port Macquarie.

In 1845 Dr Gabriel senior is known to have settled at Kempsey, on the Macleay River, and it was probably here that he first met Rhoda Rudder, a sister had died in infancy. Rhoda's father, Enoch Rudder, was the virtual founder of Kempsey, having come from Monmouthshire in England and taken over from one Samuel Onions a grant of land which he then offered for auction in Sydney in November 1836. On one of the highest allotments he built a house called 'The Hill', and on 31 December 1836 sailed from Sydney for the Macleay, with his family and possessions, on the chartered vessel Medena. Enoch Rudder's History of the Macleay and Origin and Present State of the Family of the Rudders (both in the Mitchell Library, Sydney), contain much interesting information on the settlement of the Kempsey area. The former, written in 1887, mentions Major Kemp as still living at Kempsey, aged 94; perhaps it was he who suggested Dr Gabriel move to Kempsey from Port Macquarie.

Dr Gabriel seems to have owned considerable amounts of land in the Kempsey area, but in 1864 he suffered along with others who had lacked the foresight or the opportunity of Enoch Rudder when he built on high ground. Rudder recorded, 'At Dr Gabriel's house at East Kempsey the river rose three feet six inches above the level of the verandah, the Doctor's family, with that of Captain Thornton took refuge in Mr E. W. Rudder's house on the hill.'

Dr Gabriel was clearly esteemed in the small community; he was presented with an illuminated address from the townspeople. A similar address dated 28 December 1892 expressed their gratitude to him for a relationship lasting 'upwards of thirty-three years' and records that they also presented him with a buggy, which they trusted he would find useful.

Charles Louis junior was born at Kempsey in 1857, third of thirteen children. A sister had died in infancy. Not much is known of his childhood, but a silver medallion now in the possession of his nephew records his winning the Materia Medica First Prize at the University of Edinburgh in 1884, so he would seem to have justified the expense of sending him to such a distinguished institution. He also returned promptly to Australia, for on 10 March 1886, Dr C. Louis Gabriel was entered in the register of medical practitioners in New South Wales as 'Lic. R. Coll.
Phys. Edin. 1885, Lic. R. Coll. Surg. Edin. 1885. Dr Gabriel's earliest recorded connection with Gundagai is an advertisement in the Gundagai Times of 14 June 1887 which announced that 'Dr C. Louis Gabriel, Physician and Surgeon, may be consulted at Chidgey's Club House Hotel. Medical Card'. By the following month Dr Gabriel already had rooms 'adjoining Chidgey's Club House Hotel', for on 5 July he advertised for consultation there, while by 19 July he was registered by the Medical Board of New South Wales; Medical Officer to the Oddfellows Lodge, Gundagai'. He seems to have been already well established in the communal life of the town, for in November he attended the hospital ball in fancy dress, as 'BA Aberdeen' and also attended the monthly advisory meeting of the Gundagai Literary Institute, offering to present the library with 'a copy of the Sydney Mail for a year at least'. In the following year he was appointed Government medical officer to the Gundagai hospital.

Dr Gabriel took over the hospital at a difficult time. During 1886, the year before he came to Gundagai, the Gundagai Times had carried many reports attesting the unhappy state of affairs. A report by the Hospital Committee to the annual general meeting of subscribers in January quoted the opinion of the Inspector of Charities.

Built many years ago, before the laws of sanitation were so thoroughly understood, it is in many respects unsuited for a hospital conducted upon modern principals [sic]. He suggested certain additions and alterations. The hospital had been built in 1858, and the need for improvements was recognised by the committee. The reason for its lack of action was explained in the same report: 'Your Committee ... cannot but express their regret at the little interest taken by the public in the affairs of the Hospital, and the small amount of public donations made towards its funds.'

Staffing problems were also worrying the committee. Various changes have taken place during the year; Dr O'Dwyer having resigned his appointment as medical officer to the institution, and on the 9th of last September Dr Canny was, by a public meeting of subscribers, elected in his place; that gentleman, however, failing to make stay, and having resigned, the subscribers re-elected Dr O'Dwyer to fill the vacancy. Dr O'Dwyer's resignation was requested at a special meeting of the hospital committee held on 12 April and advertisements placed in the Sydney papers invited applications for the position of medical officer, 'such applications to be sent in by noon on Thursday, 22nd instant'. The problems of succession were apparently complex, for a newspaper report of 9 July noted that Dr Murphy was in charge of the hospital, though Dr O'Dwyer was 'awaiting the appointment of his successor'. The report of the committee in February 1887 made it clear that things were still far from satisfactory.

There is ... a failing off rather than any increase in public sympathy and support. Your committee have to report that during the past year the medical supervision has been subject to frequent change ... Dr Freeland was in the end appointed presumably after Dr Murphy and your committee trusts that this period of change is now over.

Dr Gabriel inherited this situation the following year, and although he fulfilled the committee's hopes for an end to the 'period of change' as far as staffing was concerned, he emphasised from the start the need for change in conditions at the hospital. Reporting to the hospital committee in February 1889, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the building. Built thirty years ago, upon a site that required extra care and attention, it was from the first faulty in its construction and ill suited for the requirements of a hospital in these days. The kitchen, store room and wardens' offices have . . . passed beyond repair, and nothing but the construction of new buildings will meet the necessities of the case. He made it clear to the subscribers that they would be 'called on to face a very considerable outlay' before they could 'place their hospital and its appurtenances in a proper condition'. It was a challenging statement, and the columns of the Gundagai Independent of 1889 reveal some of the salient facts behind it. On 18 February Dr Gabriel had refused to admit a fever patient to the general ward, and wired to the Board of Health in Sydney that he would not endanger the health of the nursing staff by admitting a fever patient to the general ward while the present system of drainage remained as it was. Faced with this stand, the com-
committee announced on 11 March that it would 'carry out his instructions to the letter' and would meet the total bill of £14. The Independent took a leading part in the dispute. Under the heading 'Our Hospital—Committee v. Doctor', it launched its own investigation of conditions at the hospital, and its findings certainly did not suggest that Dr Gabriel was unreasonable in demanding improvements. The ward was found to be bug-infested, and the bed supports have to be placed in tins filled with kerosene to keep these troublesome and disagreeable bed-mates out of the way. The operating room is a small apartment off the dispensary, and until quite recently there used to stand quite close to the operating table the safe in which were kept the butter etc. for the patients.

The cause of the 'storm in a teacup' we were taken to see. It is a hole some six feet deep, and bricked all round, and into it is poured the slops and refuse of the hospital. The inmates of the hospital must live in a lovely atmosphere.

The Independent came out strongly in favour of the doctor. The Council seems not to care a fig about the abuse and we are pleased to see that there is at least one man in our midst who is determined to fight for this matter. If the doctor stands to his guns he must win; common sense and decency are with him.

In 1895 the surgery walls were repaired and an operating table was installed. Four dozen ornamental shrubs were planted in the hospital gardens.

Contemporary comment suggests that Dr Gabriel's energy and outspokenness were not characteristic of the town. In 1896 the Gundagai Times remarked that 'things are so slow in Gundagai just now that we would not be surprised if creation expired before tea time'. Three years later the Independent was even more critical.

We are now referred to as a sleepy people; our town is termed quaint and our actions peculiar. We let opportunities slip of showing the town ahead, and nothing short of an earthquake will arouse the people from the daydream in which they indulge, and bring them down to the basis of reality and sound common sense.

In May 1896 a public meeting was called to discuss the impending visit of the Premier, Mr (later Sir George) Reid. Gabriel is reported to have said that he 'would like to see some responsible members of the Hospital Committee interview the Premier, with a view to getting the hospital subsidy paid'. When Mr Dodd MLC remarked that the claims for a road to Reno 'should not be overlooked', Dr Gabriel 'ventured the opinion that if they could only get the Premier to go to Reno, a road would be made straight away'.

Obtaining adequate funds for the hospital from the public was as much of a problem as ever, and people could show ingenuity, when faced with a collector. Very few indeed refused to put something in the various boxes, and pennies came in very handily. One man in town was selling ten pennies for a shilling, and soon had his supply of copper exhausted.

A record sum was however collected that day.

From the local newspapers, it seems that Dr Gabriel's photographs reflect the pace of life in Gundagai remarkably well. Many of them depict day-to-day social affairs within his circle of friends, while unusual events receive the coverage they merit. One such event was a Masonic funeral in November 1899. As medical officer of the Oddfellows Lodge, the doctor's camera must have been directed with special care. His pictures capture something of the proceedings' strange solemnity.

The funeral of the late Mr W. Dicken­son took place last Thursday afternoon, and it moved from his late residence at four o'clock. Thirty-two Masons marched in front of the hearse wearing the regalia of the order, and the cortège was one of the longest ever seen here.

One of the most important events in the town from Dr Gabriel's point of view must have been the opening in 1904 of the new hospital which he had urged for over fifteen years. It was officially opened on 25 May, and Dr Gabriel the photographer recorded the event no doubt with satisfaction.

Gabriel married the widow of W. Walton, Jessie Violette Young, on 30 March 1891 in Sydney. His mar­riage certificate describes him as a bachelor. Friends suspected he had been married before, but he never spoke of his first wife, nor of any children. His second marriage produced none, and if he felt the lack, he seems to have compensated with an energetic interest in cultural and intellectual matters, earning a respected
position in the town as 'chief medical officer, student, scholar and . . . gentleman'.

Dr Gabriel was certainly Gundagai’s most talented man. Outside being a fine surgeon and a good doctor, he was a scholar of fine attainments—a man of high literary standing and deep learning. To spend an hour in company with the doctor and listen to him as he talked on current literature, as he delved into the classics, and as he critically, yet fairly analysed the latest magazine features, was really like an hour spent in a high class school. The interest in town affairs revealed in his photography also found outlet in various communal activities. Some felt that the hospital inspired in him all the passion of a hobby: ‘he certainly got a salary for the job, but for every shilling Charles Louis Gabriel drew from the hospital coffers he put in pounds’.24

In January 1927 local papers referred to the doctor’s ill health, and the hospital committee expressed the hope that he might ‘long be spared to continue his good work’. By the end of the month, however, his condition had deteriorated to such an extent that surgery was necessary, although only an operation could save him. The surgeons were Dr Claude Browne of Tumut and Dr Byrne of Gundagai. First reports indicated that the operation had been successful and that he was doing well, but later the verdict was ‘very little hope’, and many of his friends from Gundagai motored to Tumut to ‘bid him a last farewell’. Dr Gabriel died at 1 a.m. on 10 February 1927 aged 69, of post-operative complications after an appendectomy. The Gundagai Independent’s obituary verse probably expressed the feelings of many townspeople.

For He shall say, ‘Your name in dust is hid,
No thought or word has earned you immortality:
Immortal only are the kindly things you did—
Amen, I say, you did them unto Me.’

A tombstone was placed in the Roman Catholic section of the Gundagai cemetery; Willy Miaki, a Japanese cook in the town, erected a plaque to his memory on the gates of the Roman Catholic church.

It is his photographs, however, never mentioned by the newspapers of the day, that have ensured the immortality of ‘Gundagai’s most talented man’. For the first time, perhaps, that talent can be properly appreciated.

Photography in Australia

This volume is intended to include as wide a range of subject matter as possible, from surviving negatives of good quality, to illustrate their importance in documenting the life of a country town at the turn of the century. The final selection thus reflects the aspects of life in Gundagai photographed by Dr Gabriel, and his own preoccupation with hospital affairs, town events and portraits. Like most amateurs, he directed his camera according to his interests, and this selectiveness, once recognised, gives the collection a valuable personal perspective.

The photographs provide a unique focus on the life of a single town over some twenty years, and a rich source of material for scholars. Photography’s wealth is accessible to all; it is unfortunate that many recent books on early Australian photography have exploited the variety and immediacy of historical photographs without giving sufficient attention to the procedures and conventions of photography at the time. Although little Australian photography survives in negative form, the amount of print material available from archival and other sources has often led to photographs being reproduced without the historical context necessary to appreciate them fully. Thus, although some of the images created by early photographers have become relatively familiar, the role of early photography in depicting Australian life and scenery, and the photographer’s place in the social and artistic life of the time, are still not understood. A critical account of early Australian photography from the artistic and historical viewpoint has yet to be written and, until it is, a unique part of Australia’s visual history will remain largely unappreciated for lack of the correct context in which to see it.
From its earliest days photography was important in Australia, as the only visual medium which provided a mirror in which the ordinary Australian could see himself and his way of life reflected, as well as an invaluable source of accurate visual impressions of other parts of the land. The earliest known photography in Australia was done in 1841, portrait work by a visiting daguerreotype photographer, who travelled with his 'Reflecting Apparatus' from city to city, advertising his arrival in advance. The earliest surviving album by a professional photographer is *Australia* by Antoine Fauchery, ten copies of which were issued in Melbourne in 1858. It contained fifty-three photographs of public buildings, public figures, goldfields, Aborigines, and landscapes—a selection typical of the many albums compiled by professional photographers up to the turn of the century.

Through innumerable albums like Fauchery's, the growing popularity of photographic views and portraits, the many intercolonial exhibitions, and the increasing reliance of the popular illustrated journals upon photography as a source (although often unacknowledged) for their own engravings, the medium exercised a considerable influence on the way Australians saw themselves and their country in the late 1850s. Many reviewers comment on the 'delicacy of detail' possessed by these early photographs, and the 'truth of the pictorial record' they provided was a valuable corrective to the tendency of many writers and painters to accommodate Australian life and scenery to the expectations of the English reading public, or the London Royal Academy. Writing of its cover illustration for May 1860, the *News Letter of Australasia* claimed it would recommend itself to all old colonists by its faithful portraiture of Kennedy's Punt, Campaspe River. To those who assert that this colony is deficient in the picturesque, it affords an unqualified denial, the original sketch being taken by the aid of that invaluable delineator, the photographic apparatus, it is free alike from the flattery of the artist or the adventitious charms of writing.

The role of photography as a 'faithful witness' can be seen in the context of the concern shown by topographical artists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for the accurate depiction of typically Australian landscape. By 1840, the year after the photographic process was made available to the world, picturesque and documentary vision had blended to such an extent that, as Bernard Smith has put it, 'the artist was able to publish a painting with an appeal both for the scientist and the man of taste'. Yet while it is in general true that, with the introduction of the camera, 'science adopted photographic methods for making its graphic records; art became increasingly a vehicle of personal expression'. It was equally true that, 'since the medium was born, the best of photographers had been artists, but they had, perhaps to their advantage, not often been told so'.

What Beaumont Newhall termed 'the fundamental belief in the authenticity of photographs' has always given photography a 'psychological difference' compared to the other graphic arts, and Jack Cato has rightly stressed the importance of portrait photography in the 1850s in enabling families in Australia to keep 'in contact' with relatives in England. The members of the family felt they were no longer lost to each other in distant places. They could frame the little print for a place on the mantel, and as they saw their sons and daughters they had the feeling that they were still close to them . . . Here, beyond all the coloured statements of the written word, was the true picture that resolved the doubts and the worries.

In country towns, on the goldfields and in the bush, the camera recorded its images with an attention to detail which gives them that quality of reality peculiar to photography. As Oliver Wendell Holmes noted in 1859, The very things which an artist would leave out, or render imperfectly, the photograph takes infinite care with, and so renders its illusions perfect. What is the picture of a drum without the marks on its head where the beating of the sticks has darkened the parchment?

The selection of prints from the Hollermann Collection published by Keast Burke in 1973 made known to a much wider audience the superb quality of much early documentary photography, but the importance of such images at a time when Australians were 'searching for ways in which to define themselves as cultural nationals' has still to be assessed. It is a measure of the limited perspective within which the
Australian visual arts of the late nineteenth century have been seen, that representative work such as the Holtermann Collection cannot be accommodated in the accepted view of the period, but appears rather as a magnificent exception. Yet, in spite of this neglect of the photographer's art, it remains true that 'this photographic record has indelibly shaped Australia's memories of its past'.

The work of the early photographers has been treated throughout mainly as a potential source of illustrations to the printed word, and the value of documentary photography, not simply as information but as a revealing record of a nation's image of itself, has never been recognised. Photographs by early photographers in public collections are still filed under subject headings, with scant regard for the man who took the pictures or for the fact that professionals often travelled for two days through mountainous terrain with their heavy wet plate equipment in order to secure a single view.

Much of the cameraman's work was preparatory, prospecting for views. Perhaps this is the key to the excellence of these photographs. Perhaps the very despair of the photographer worked, in the long run, for him. Casual, promiscuous snapshotting was impossible. Every exposure was an effort.

Modern scholarship may have underrated the impact of photography on the way Australia saw itself in the nineteenth century, but even in 1867 the Australian Monthly Magazine, reviewing the 'Landscape Photography' at the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition that year, saw it as a most important branch of an interesting and valuable art, which but seldom calls forth in these colonies the powers of a critic's pen, or attracts the attention of art worshippers. Yet the official catalogue of the Exhibition recorded of the picture gallery that, 'on side walls, screens and in cases between the screens, are photographs upon photographs, their names being legion'.

The popularity from 1857 of the carte de visite, a small photograph (originally a portrait) the size of a visiting card, boosted the circulation of photographs in the country, and the introduction around 1885 of dry plate negatives into Australia made photography easier and more flexible. A wide range of hand cameras, needing no tripod because of the faster dry plates, appeared on the market in the 1860s and by the early 1890s the pages of Australian photographic journals reveal a well established body of amateur photographers throughout the country, fully conversant with developments in Europe.

Dr Gabriel was one of these enthusiastic amateurs, and the comprehensiveness of the record he made is an essential aspect of the value of early photography. Some of his posed portraits have a period charm, while other photographs have a dramatic or poignant quality which claims our attention, but in general it is his camera's ability to capture the people of Gundagai in their day-to-day life which makes his work important. His pictures are a visual record of people and events which offer a unique impression of the pattern of life in a country town.

In the same year that Dr Gabriel took up his post at Gundagai hospital, George Eastman, a manufacturer of photographic plates in New York, took out a patent on the name 'Kodak', which he applied to a new and simple hand camera he had perfected. Eastman's revolutionary idea was that anyone could 'take' photographs, and then return the camera complete to Kodak for processing. The original roll film had a paper base, but in 1889 the system was further improved by the introduction of nitrocellulose film and the possibilities of home processing opened up. The era of the snapshot as we know it had begun.

A photographer need no longer be a skilled craftsman, preparing his glass plates, developing them and printing the picture. The days of the 'artist photographer' were over; the only skill necessary now was the operation of a simple camera similar in principle (and appeal) to that of today. The appearance of the Kodak camera made photography the first genuinely popular visual medium — 'You press the button, and we do the rest'.

Dr Gabriel's photographs are among the first examples in Australia of the snapshot picture that the simplification of the hand camera was to make ever more popular, and it is important to see that their value is inseparable from the amateur quality that the photographic medium encouraged.

Time has allowed us to see the beauty as well as the documentary value of early Australian painting, and
to recognise the stark human impact of photographs such as those in the Holtermann Collection, but Dr Gabriel’s pictures are perhaps still too close to our own times, to our own snapshots, for their historical importance to be seen in perspective. Yet their value as visual documentation could be compared to the sketchbooks of naval officers, surveyors and amateur draughtsmen of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many of whom would certainly have used a camera, had it been available.45

It is fitting, then, that these photographs now form part of the rich historical collection of visual material held by the National Library, where they can be studied in a perspective of which they form a small but unique part and to which they bring yet another dimension in the visual history of Australia. In George Eastman’s words, they form ‘a collection . . . these pictures may be made to furnish a pictorial history of life as it is lived . . . that will grow more valuable every day that passes’.46

The plates
The plates printed here were selected from some 900 5" x 4" negatives in the A. C. Butcher and O. I. Bell collections in the National Library of Australia. Dr Gabriel was a keen amateur photographer, and many of the negatives are attributed to him by informed local residents, confirmed by the many pictures of hospitals and nurses in the collections. Many other pictures can be assigned to Dr Gabriel on the grounds of subject matter and style.

Gabriel was not the only photographer in Gundagai around 1900. Charles Edward Weston, the ‘busy draper’ whose shop appears in several photographs of Sheridan Street, had a photographic department and studio on the premises and was responsible for processing Dr Gabriel’s plates. He was commissioned by the Dunlop Tyre Company to take pictures of the Sydney to Melbourne motorcar reliability trial in 1905, Gundagai being an overnight stop, and he may be responsible for other photographs in the collection. The negatives of public events, which Gabriel may have been kept from by hospital duties, may well be by Weston. His shots were printed on postcards and sold by the stationer, Ephraim O’Sullivan. Some of Weston’s negatives are known to exist in Maitland, and publication of this book may throw more light on his work. His departure in 1910 for Maitland may explain the abrupt cessation of Gabriel’s photographic activities.

Positive identification of Gabriel and Weston negatives would be of great interest, but it is not crucial to this book, which aims rather to make available a coherent selection of photographs illustrating the role of the camera towards the end of the nineteenth century. For this reason no detailed captions have been provided for the photographs; they speak for themselves. Their wealth of local detail has been confined to the ‘Notes on the plates’ at the end of the book.

We do not know with what type of camera the negatives reprinted here were taken. Some prints in the National Library’s collection show the shadow of the photographer and his tripod, while others show him apparently holding a box camera. By the 1890s box cameras, holding a magazine of glass negatives, were available in Australia, and many pictures included in this book suggest that a portable apparatus of this kind was used. Simple hand cameras were popular by the time Dr Gabriel came to Gundagai, as an advertisement by Baker and Rouse in the Pictorial Australian of December 1888 makes clear:

What shall we give as a New Year’s Gift?
Why! One suitable to Lady, Gentleman or Child.
A Photographic Outfit.
The price quoted was 45 shillings. Such is the background to the photographs printed on the following pages.

Notes to the introduction
1 I am indebted to Dr R. L. Gabriel of Sydney for much useful information on the family history. The written family records appear to have been lost with the death of his aunt, Mrs Adelaide Williams.

2 Enoch Rudder (‘Labori’), ‘The Origin and Present State of the Family of the Rudders of the Macleay River of the Colony of New South Wales, calculated to 1873’, MS, Mitchell Library.
Rudder records that his daughter, Rhoda Emma, born at Machen, Upper Monmouthshire on 10 February 1831, ‘married Charles Louis Gabriel, Surgeon, a native of the island of Mar-
tinique, W.I.'. Also birth certificate of Dr Gabriel junior, Registrar-General's Department of New South Wales.


Other information on Kemp, and a portrait, is published in Valley of the Macleay, The History of Kempsey and the Macleay River District by Marie H. Neil, Wentworth Books, Sydney, 1972. Records in the Mitchell Library show that the Surgeon Superintendent of the Asia was John Gamon, Esq.

4 Enoch Rudder, History of the Macleay, 1887. Mitchell Library. In Neil, op. cit., he is mentioned as 'having attended several members of Surveyor Darke's family at Belgrave . . . as early as 1855', but Rudder clearly dates his arrival as ten years prior to this.

5 J. H. Watson, op. cit.


7 The medallion awarded at Edinburgh in 1884 records his date of birth as 1858. His birth certificate states it was 25 June 1857, at Kempsey West.

8 First Register of Medical Practitioners and Minute Book of the New South Wales Medical Board, 1838-1854, p. 228. Mitchell Library.

9 Gundagai Times for 1 and 18 November 1887. Mitchell Library.

10 At the time of writing, copies of the Gundagai Times for 1888 were not traceable at the Mitchell Library, but an issue of 4 January 1889 already refers to him as the medical officer of the hospital.

11 Gundagai Times, 29 January 1886.

12 Ibid.

13 Gundagai Times, 5 March 1886.

14 Gundagai Times 13 April, 4 June, 9 July, 10 September, 21 and 24 December 1886, and 22 January 1887.

15 Ibid., 22 February 1889.

16 Gundagai Independent, 18 February 1889.

17 Ibid., 1 and 11 March 1889.

18 Ibid., 18 February 1889.

19 Ibid., 1 February 1899.

20 Ibid., 5 May 1899.

21 Ibid., 21 June 1899.

22 Ibid., 18 November 1899.

23 Ibid., 10 February 1927.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 31 January 1927.

26 Ibid., 10 February 1927.


28 The only surviving copy of this album is in the La Trobe Library, Melbourne. Some photographs from it are reproduced in Cato's book.

29 Jack Cato, op. cit., chapter 18, 'The Painter-Photographers', and Daniel Thomas, 'Tom Roberts,
A useful introductory work on attitudes to the Australian landscape in Australian literature is *The Writer in Australia, A Collection of Literary Documents 1856 to 1964*, edited with commentaries by John Barnes, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1969.


37 *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1859.

Quoted in Newhall, op. cit., p. 71.

38 Richard Rudisill, *Mirror Image, The Influence of the Daguerreotype on American Society*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1971, p. 31. The remark is made of America in the 1850s. There are several lines of approach in the early chapters of Rudisill's book which are of interest in an Australian context.


40 Newhall, op. cit., p. 80, writing of accounts of field photography in the mid-nineteenth century.

41 *Australian Monthly Magazine*, vol. III, no. 17, January 1867.


44 The term 'snap shot' appears to have been first coined in May 1860 by an English manufacturer, Alfred Pumphrey, to describe the noise his camera made. See Gernsheim, op. cit., p. 411.

45 See Bolton, op. cit., p. 5.

46 Quoted in Gernsheim, op. cit., p. 414.
The plates
View of Dr Gabriel's house
Interiors of Gundagai houses
The Gundagai hospital
The old hospital in Otway Street
The new hospital
Collecting for the new hospital
The 1900 flood
Railway scenes
Showgrounds, racecourse and goldfields
Showgrounds
The Boer War and politics
The Dunlop reliability trial
Gundagai residents
Gundagai pastimes
Notes on the plates

xi Dr Charles Louis Gabriel on his verandah at 'Fontenoy'.

xii Dr Gabriel's surgery at 'Fontenoy'.

1 View of 'Fontenoy' from the front. The occasion is the turning-on of the town's piped water supply in 1909. Toasting the venture (right) is Jeffrey Milburn Dodd, MLC, whose house 'Tara' was next door. Another of the group would be Mr Refshaw, the engineer responsible for the construction of the reservoir on Mount Parnassus. Harry Gardiner is driving the doctor's sulky.

2 The Royal Hotel and convent school, seen from Dr Gabriel's house 'Fontenoy', on the corner of Homer Street and First Avenue.

3 Dr Gabriel's desk, with his watch and cigar-case. The photograph above is labelled 'International Medical Congress, Sydney, 1892'.

4 Dr Gabriel's surgery and examining table.

5 Sitting room, probably at the Bruces' house, 'Strathallan'. Mrs Bruce's family, the Fergusons, came from Scotland; there is a photograph of a boy in a kilt on the wall.

6 Gathering, probably at Dr Gabriel's. Far right is Mrs David Bruce, whose husband was the Clerk of Petty Sessions in Gundagai. At left is Arthur Podmore, an accountant with the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, who married Mrs Bruce's sister, Elsie. Centre is Nurse Cross.

7 Dining room in the Bruces' house; on the wall at right is a picture of Mrs Bruce dressed in yellow, while on the right of the mirror is a series of photographs of David Bruce (top), his sons Nigel, Ernest and Allan (centre) and wife Alice (bottom). The overhead lamps were acetylene-fuelled and designed by Ernest Bruce.

8 Mrs Bruce at the piano at 'Strathallan'.

9 In the grounds of the old hospital in Otway Street, built in 1858. From left, a nurse, Dr Gabriel and Mrs Bruce.

10 Three nurses by the front steps of the old hospital.

11 Two nurses in the dispensary at the old hospital.

12 A nurse Dr Gabriel often photographed.

13 Opening the new Gundagai hospital. The foundation stone was laid on 13 January 1904. Mounted troopers can be seen at left, and Matron Young at the top of the steps.

14 Nurses at the opening of the new hospital. Third from the right is Sister Anne Louise Morley, born about 1856, who ran a small private hospital in the town and often assisted Dr Gabriel, particularly with the typhoid cases that abounded in summer.

15 View of the completed new hospital. Ten acres of land, and £1000, were donated by James Robinson of 'Kimo'.
16  At the new hospital; Matron Young conferring with two military gentlemen, one of them Colonel Ryrie, of a pastoral family from Michelago. Later knighted, Granville Laurent de Laune Ryrie (1865-1937) represented Queanbeyan in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly (1906-9), was Liberal MHR for North Sydney (1911-22) and National Party MHR for Warringah (1922). He served with the Mounted Rifles in the Boer War and with the 2nd Light Horse Brigade in World War I. In 1927 he was appointed Australian High Commissioner to London. The National Library holds a collection of the Ryrie family papers.

17  A nurse relaxing, possibly on the verandah of the Family Hotel. Her photograph appears in Plate 3, on Dr Gabriel's desk.

18  Nurse Cross in her room at the new hospital.

19  Patients on the verandah at the new hospital.

20  Bringing in a patient. During outbreaks of infectious disease such as measles, isolation wards were set up in tents in the hospital grounds, regardless of the weather.

21  The wards at the new hospital; Matron Young (right) presiding.

22  The operating theatre at the new hospital, Matron Young at right. The hospital, thanks to Dr Gabriel's progressive ideas, had gas lighting some years before the town did; severe burns from kerosene lamps were still common there.

23  An operation in progress at the new hospital.

24  Matron Young at the new hospital, where she was the first matron.

25  Collecting for the hospital. Funds were sought for its construction, and later Hospital Saturdays were held every so often to defray maintenance costs. Here Adelaide and Florence Marshall, daughters of another doctor in the town, are seen with some children, probably their Renou nephew and nieces (see Plate 82).

26  Matron Young (third from right) and helpers collecting money from Mrs Wallace Robinson (fourth from right), Wallace Robinson (second right) and John Walsh (second from left).

27  Procession in Sheridan Street, perhaps on Empire Day. Marchers assembled at Beatty's Corner in Sheridan Street and proceeded to the showgrounds, accompanied by martial music from the town band. There was massed singing of patriotic songs and an address by the mayor. Then a picnic lunch packed in paper bags was passed round by teachers and mothers, and the children carried mugs which were filled with raspberry and lemon syrup.

28  This photograph was probably taken at the opening of the Boer War memorial, in front of the court-house. The drapery of another keen photographer, C. E. Weston, is visible in the right background. The Ephraim O'Sullivan on the shop sign sold newspapers at the Gundagai railway station and was famed throughout the State for his cry, 'The Hage, the Herald, and the Hargus!' The old building with prize-fighters on its facade was at one time used as a sort of club where young men went to learn to box. The mounted soldiers are probably members of the Volunteer Australian Light Horse.

29  The Gundagai public school; Harry Dennis, the headmaster, at left.

30  Jeremiah Leary, who kept the Criterion Hotel, succeeded by his son Ted and his grandson.

31  Naismith's chemist shop at Reno goldfields, some time before 1900. Gold was first discovered in the area in 1861, at Spring Flat, by an Italian, Gaspard Billiard.

32  The rabbit-o on his way to the freezing-works with a load of carcasses.

33  Licensee McCutcheon in the door of Walker's Family Hotel. Mac, the cockatoo, was notorious for its language, picked up from the men at the bar. Opposite the hotel Dr Mawson, brother of the Antarctic explorer, practised from 1906.

34  In front of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building are Arthur Podmore (on the boy's left), Mrs Wilfred Palmer of 'Gnalta' (nee Robinson), her neighbour Laura Owen, and David Bruce.
35 Troopers in front of the Bank of New South Wales, now demolished. Second from the right is Bill Luff, who served in the Boer War. The premises next door today house a comprehensive collection of Dr Gabriel's photographs.

36 Masonic funeral, believed to be for a bank manager who committed suicide. Dr Gabriel was medical officer to the Lodge.

37 Wirth's Circus comes to town. Once a year two special trains arrived, inciting small boys to play truant and help unload, in the hope of free tickets. The girls had to be content, from a vantage point in the convent-school playground, with watching the circus progress up Sheridan Street.

38 View of Sheridan Street. The lane turning off by the Capstan sign led to Leary's Bridge, over Morley's Creek.

39 Jabez Nicholls, grazier of 'Edwardstown'; Charles Mudear, the saddler; and Sam Nicholls, grazier of 'The Five Mile'. Though of a prominent pastoral family, the Nicholls liked to dress as swagmen when they came to town; note the ram's horn walking-sticks. The W. Bibo on the sign behind them was a German bachelor who kept a hardware store in Gundagai and became an alderman.

40 A load of timber coming along Sheridan Street; the Royal Hotel is on the left and Mount Kimo in the background. Standing second from the right is Charles Fraser, solicitor and frequently mayor of Gundagai.

41 The Angus coloured bullock team from 'Kimo' was the only Angus team in New South Wales and the bullocks' hind feet were shod. When tired, the whole team sank, still yoked, to its knees. The black poll team in front was only used in cool weather; it would not work in the heat. The drovers are 'Captain' Ted Sheather and his son Ned.

42 The wool clip from 'Abingdon', owned by Wallace Robinson (born 1867); the bales are stencilled 'W.A.R.', dating the photograph post-1910. The Assembly Hall in the background was not often used for meetings; it was too small, though salesmen displayed their wares there. Meetings and balls were always held in Tracy's Hall, next to Tracy's Clubhouse Hotel. Balls were held on two consecutive nights, the first for the adults (children could watch from the gallery if accompanied by their parents), and the second a fancy-dress ball for the children, ending at an earlier hour. A lavish supper was spread on trestle tables on the balcony of the hotel opposite and for weeks beforehand Miss Siefeldt's sewing-machines ran hot, making costumes.

43 Boiler coming round Beatty's Corner, on its way to the Johnson's Hill goldmine. The street from which it is turning was, until the great floods, the main road into Gundagai, and is now Kitchener Street. The saddler whose sign appears on the left was Bill Carr, who lived in First Avenue.

44 Group of men around a motor-cycle, whose rider is said to be Tommy Brinstead.

45 View of Gundagai from the common. In the background can be seen the rear of the post office and the Royal Hotel. On the boy's left, at the edge of the town, is a gabled cottage belonging to John Clement Morley, who lived there before building the Royal Hotel, and lent it to accommodate girl immigrants sponsored by Caroline Chisholm, until they could find domestic positions with settlers; they were known as 'Caroline Chisholm's Poddies'. Between the two gum trees on the right was the Noah's Ark Inn, appropriately washed away in the 1852 flood. To the left of the taller tree can be seen a long stone house, used by Nurse Morley as a private maternity hospital. The photograph may be tentatively dated pre-1900, as many familiar buildings in the town have not yet been built.

46 View of the 1900 floods. The Corbett family later bought 'Carinya', a nearby property. Next to their store was a bakery and Chinese Mrs Ah Lee's sweet shop, on the way to the Literary Institute where Dr Gabriel was the founding spirit. Lamps like that shown were lit each night by Samuel Bayle, who carried his ladder round the streets, followed by a procession of fascinated children. He had the foresight, when the 'pictures' came, to rent Tracy's Hall for showings. A piano accompaniment was an added attraction on Saturday nights at the Globe Pictures (adults one shilling).
47 Major floods were common on the Murrumbidgee River until the Burrinjuck Dam was built; in 1900 the water rose 33' 6''.

48 View of the road bridge spanning the 1900 flood. The building visible on the banks of Morley's Creek was once Flood's flour mill and then a freezing-works preparing rabbit carcasses for export.

49 View of the floodwaters from the south bank, looking north across Byron Street. The white-bearded man (centre) is Jeremiah Leary; the corner of the Criterion Hotel is visible at right, and standing nearby is red-bearded Dennis Kenny, a farmer and brewer.

50 Promenading on the bridge. Fine dresses and parasols were paraded before the young men of the town. The best-regarded and most expensive dressmaker was Miss Siefeldt, who lived with her mother in First Avenue. The nursemaids of 'better' families used the bridge to wheel their charges up and down.

51 Building the railway bridge. This one-way line opened to Tumut in 1903. In the background (right) is Kenny's brewery, and immediately behind the bridge C. E. Butcher's store, which was moved from its path.

52 Outside the railway station. On the far right is R. McClemens, the station-master. The mounted trooper on his left is Constable McElligott, who retired in Gundagai. A gruff Irishman, he was 'noted for picking up the wrong people' and once arrested, for disorderly conduct on the mail coach, a man who turned out to be the hangman on his way to an execution at Yass, a neighbouring town.

53 On the railway platform, Bill Wright, a stock and station agent in Gundagai, is posting a letter through the late-mail slot in the guard's van.

54 The man at the left is J. M. Dodd, MLC; at right is Mr McPherson, of the Pastures Protection Board.

55 On the railway platform, Bill Wright, a stock and station agent in Gundagai, is posting a letter through the late-mail slot in the guard's van.

56 Mrs Bruce and Arthur Podmore (far right) 'farewelling' Mrs James McEvoy and David Bruce on the train to Cootamundra. Dr Gabriel often set up such imaginary situations for his photographs, and meeting the train was a favourite diversion for the townspeople. Mrs McEvoy (Evelyn Mure, a chorus girl in J. C. Williamson's Floradora) was later instrumental in founding the Melbourne store George's.

57 Mothers and children at the showgrounds.

58 At the races; the dresses and handbags date this about 1910.

59 At the racecourse.

60 Man 'in drag' at the Gundagai show.

61 At the racecourse.

62 The girl on the right by a bark hut at Reno goldfields is Ida Pearce, whose sister Alice was apprenticed to Miss Siefeldt, the dressmaker. On the left is Mrs Spiller, whose American husband was a dentist in Gundagai.

63 Grasping a pony from a mineshaft on the goldfields.

64 Humpy at Reno goldfields.

65 The girl on the right by a bark hut at Reno goldfields is Ida Pearce, whose sister Alice was apprenticed to Miss Siefeldt, the dressmaker. On the left is Mrs Spiller, whose American husband was a dentist in Gundagai.

66 Rescuing a pony from a mineshaft on the goldfields.

67 Makeshift housing at the goldfields.

68 Humpy at Reno goldfields.

69 Troopers Jack Priddle and Bill Luff (right) are welcomed back from the Boer War, where Sergeant James Griffin of Gundagai was killed. Third from the left, carrying Priddle, is John Clement Morley, one of the town's aldermen, who lived on the corner of Virgil and Sheridan streets. Wearing a white button-hole and carrying Trooper Luff is Bill Carr the saddler. Sir William Lyne, Federal Member for Hume, can be seen in a top-hat at right.

70 Scaffolding in front of the courthouse, around the rising Boer War monument. Built in 1858, the courthouse burned down in the 1930s but was rebuilt in the original style. The brick wall shown here was later removed, the better to display the memorial. Behind the courthouse was the gaol, its great wooden door bearing a metal plate to cover the hole cut out by enterprising cattle duffers, who escaped with their confiscated booty and were about to destroy the evidence when they were recaptured. Foreground left is Mr Kyle.

71 The unveiling of the Boer War monument by Sir William Lyne (1844-1913), onetime Premier of New South Wales. He was also first Federal
Minister for Home Affairs, Treasurer in 1907-8, and twice Minister for Trade and Customs. Ah Chee's and Park's stores were later occupied by Petrich brothers. There were many Chinese in the district; 'Kimo' was cleared by Chinese labourers, and a joss-house was built at Bushell's Flat, on 'Abingdon'. Chinese gardeners were at this time growing corn for James Robinson.

72 Sir William Lyne (right) with Colonel Ryrie. Lyne's election campaign was waged against poverty in the area; his slogan declared, 'Remember, a title does not ruin a man!'

73 Arthur Elworthy, owner and editor of the *Gundagai Times* (left), with a member of his staff, George Gray, later editor of an Albury paper.

74 A political meeting, perhaps, outside the Royal Hotel, probably taken about 1910 when motorcars first began appearing on the streets.

75 J. M. Dodd, MLC (left), Arthur Elworthy (centre) and Sir George Reid (1845-1918). Reid was Premier of New South Wales in 1894, Prime Minister in 1904 and first Australian High Commissioner to London in 1909.

76 Casting a vote at the court-house on polling day. At the top of the steps is David Bruce; further down, with his hands in his pockets, is Mr Fincham the police magistrate.

77 The Dunlop Reliability Trial passed through Gundagai in 1905; this shows contestant No. 24. Far right is Donald Turner, later a dentist in the town.

81 A wedding at St John's Church of England, built next to the old hospital in Otway Street. The rectory was built in 1883, and the vicar about the time of this photograph was the Rev. Harry Champion.

82 Wedding portrait: back row is Mrs Henry Morton Marshall and her daughters, Adelaide and Flo. The bride is Edith Marshall and the groom William Ashley Renou. The flower-girl is Dorrie Elworthy. Dr Marshall came to Gundagai in 1874 and built next to the Commercial Banking Company building; he also owned the Family Hotel at one time. After his death Dr Gabriel rented the upstairs floor of his house and practised there till about 1912, before moving to 'Fontenoy'.

83 At 'Kimo': James Robinson with his family. From left, Maude Robinson, Edith Palmer (who died while young), Mrs Martha Robinson (James's second wife), James junior (the present owner), Judge Docker's wife, Miss Hislop the governess, and J. W. Robinson.

84 Ernest Weekes, a solicitor, with his wife and elder daughter, Constance, at their house 'Lyndale'. Mrs Weekes was a noted worker for charity, and Dr Gabriel was a great friend of the family.

85 The man has been tentatively identified as Captain Edward Bruce, RN, on a visit from England.

86 David Bruce with his wife (far right) and daughters Marjorie and Minna (far left). Dr Gabriel went to lunch each Sunday at their house, 'Strathallan'.

87 Group in front of Cutcliffe the chemist's. From left is Mrs Weekes with her daughter Constance, Adelaide and Flo Marshall; far right is Arthur Podmore.

88 On Dr Gabriel's verandah; Mrs Weekes standing right. In the cage Dr Gabriel kept canaries; he also had a sea-gull, an ibis, a cockatoo and ducks.

89 Jack and Isabel Fraser on the front steps of their house, one of the earliest in Gundagai and built by the Payne family. Charles Fraser, their father, was a solicitor and married an heiress, a Miss Richardson of 'Detroit' station.

90 Group outside the Adelong Crossing Hotel. Standing at left is Bill Sibthorpe, a remittance-man who came of an old English family. His wife is seated at second left.

91 A nurse from the hospital with Wallace Robinson.

92 Dr and Mrs Goodwin Hill, who lived at 'Balmoral' in Sheridan Street.

93 Mrs Bruce and Nurse Cross.

94 At Reno goldfields. Maude Delicia Robinson, wife of Wallace, and Mrs Davies, whose husband was manager of Reno Mines. The black cord on
which Mrs Robinson wears her watch, tucked into her waistband, was a more modern fashion.

95 Mrs Bruce and Matron Young driving Dr Gabriel's sulky and pony, Belle, at the showgrounds. Mrs Bruce often drove the sulky, though the doctor himself was always driven by his lame groom, Harry Gardiner.

96 In front of the Methodist church is Mrs Rose Baker, who taught the Robinson girls dancing. Her sister was married to Ormond Edwards, the police magistrate.

97 Group of women in a garden: seated are Mrs Bruce (left) and Flo Marshall; standing (centre) are Mrs Weekes and Mrs Sam Moffitt (second from right), wife of the Bank of New South Wales manager.

98 On Dr Gabriel's verandah: Barney Engelen, a jeweller from Antwerp, who named his house 'Maison d'Anvers'.

99 Tim Nicholls, headmaster of the Gundagai public school, and his wife.

100 David Bruce and his elder daughter Marjorie in the yard of their house, at the corner of Otway and Hanley streets, where they lived before moving to 'Strathallan'. St John's Church and the old hospital are visible in the background.

101 Cyclists: Tom Field at left.

102 At the new hospital: Matron Young with Dr Gabriel's pet monkey, Beppo, who lived in a cage in the yard and was later given to Nurse Morley. The boy at right is Wilfred Palmer's eldest son, Max.

103 Mrs Bruce is second from left, Mr and Mrs Weekes next to her. The Weekeses' house is seen in the background.

104 Flo Marshall with Dr Gabriel's cockatoo, behind the Marshalls' house in Sheridan Street.

105 The chess game: a trick photograph using the same subject twice.

106 Ted Sheather and his son Ned, with a large Murray cod.

107 On the Weekeses' private tennis court. Fourth left is Monty Russell, manager for Davis and Kershaw at 'Mount Horeb'. Note the fly-veil worn by the lady sitting front left. These helped prevent conjunctivitis and sandy blight in summer, and were usually of a green colour. The men wore them too, as eye diseases were rife; Dr Gabriel attached one to his pith helmet, worn with the white silk tussore suit he always sported in summer.

108 At St John's tennis courts. At left is Mrs Arthur Elworthy; second from right Arthur Podmore, who owned the fox terrier. The lace veil about the lady's shoulders (right) dates this scene as an early one.

109 Going round Mount Kimo, on the Nangus road. The mountain was sacred to the Aborigines, who sang a song about it, phonetically rendered as:

Kimo, kimo, kimoleri, kimo
Strimstream bobaleri, larribone kimo.
Select bibliography

History of Gundagai


History of photography

General


Australian photography


Several valuable articles by Keast Burke on Australian photographers were published in the Australasian Photo Review during the 1940s and 1950s.


Suzanne Mourot. This Was Sydney: A Pictorial History from 1788 to the Present Time. Ure Smith, Sydney, 1969.

General critical works


Aaron Scharf. Art and Photography.

Television material

Australian Broadcasting Commission A Track Winding Back. Produced and directed by Anne Whitehead. 30 mins, 1972. Deals with the Gabriel photographs and includes many not reproduced in this volume.

The Great Lindt. Produced and directed by Geoffrey Barnes. 34 mins, 1971. Examines the life and work of John William Lindt (1845-1926) and is a valuable study of the role of the photographer in Australian life around the end of the century.

Neither film is available for hire, and applications to view should be directed to the ABC departments concerned, respectively:

Supervisor, New South Wales Education Department, ABC, Box 487 GPO Sydney 2001.

Assistant Federal Director of Television Programs, ABC, Box 487 GPO Sydney 2001.
In 1971 the National Library of Australia was given some 900 glass negatives of Gundagai, a small town by the Murrumbidgee River, on the main Sydney-Melbourne highway. Of the collection found by chance, 120 selected plates are reproduced in this book.

The photographs were taken at the turn of the century and are believed to be the work of Charles Louis Gabriel, a doctor who added an exotic French flavour to that loyal bastion of the British Empire, Gundagai. Medical men often used their knowledge of chemistry to attempt amateur photography, and equipment was becoming easier for a non-professional to use. Gabriel was an enthusiastic and prolific cameraman.

Gundagai is immutably caught in his 'snapshots'. Its streets, houses and shops are fixed permanently in photographic emulsion; its people turn to his lens their slightly self-conscious faces, found working or promenading or gossiping, all intrigued with the novelty of themselves in pictures.

Gabriel's own interests provide a closer focus: a new hospital, the nurses he worked with, the people who were his friends, and the interiors of their houses are all recorded. Between these scenes and more public events, the doctor drives in his smart sulky, a witness to marriages, funerals, floods and elections, the coming of trains and circuses. His eye and his camera give us a very special and quite irreplaceable record of Australian provincial life two generations ago.