

2017:

News, Musings, and Exploring our APSC Artefacts

1 September 2017

Judd adds important 19th Century volumes to the Collection

Anyone working in the History of Australian Christianity knows the work by Stephen Judd and Ken Cable on Sydney Anglicans. Judd's work there, and at Hammondcare, have made significant contributions to the understanding evangelical Christianity in the country, and so retaining the sources which underpin such a work is valuable both in itself and as a contribution to future histories yet to be written. It is therefore with great pleasure that Alphacrucis College has taken receipt of over 40 volumes from the "Judd Collection", which will combine with the Piggin Collection to provide a wider view of the thought and action of evangelical Christians in Australia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The oldest piece in Collection is W.G. Broughton's *The Church in the Colonies: Dioceses of Australia and New Zealand* (vol. II), (London 1846), an extremely rare volume complete in itself given (as the inscription in the front of the book notes) by James Beck to Henry F. Cowper as a gift in 1847. The volume includes "Two Journals of Visitation by the Lord Bishop of Australia 1843" and "Letters from the Bishop to SPG in visitations to NZ 1842 and 1843". The volume is a real contribution to the "rare books" collection of the Centre, and assists, as with the other books in the Judd Collection (such as *Autobiography and Reminiscences* by the first Australian-born Anglican Clergyman, William Macquarie Cowper, a very suitable addition to a collection based on "Cowper Street", Parramatta!), in filling out the growing reference collection illustrating the history of Christianity in Australia. Our warm thanks go to Stephen Judd and his family, not only for the gift the collection, but for their significant contributions to the great heritage of the gospel in Australia.

Wednesday, 4 October 2017

The Matson (Eric and Edith) Photograph Collection

Recently, as I was sorting through our collection at the APSC, I came across yet another plastic bag full of what I thought might be, a collection of unassuming, miscellaneous items. I quickly realised the error of assumption, finding inside a pile of beautiful leather-bound photo albums and notes for travellers by road and rail in Palestine and Syria. In amongst this collection were three small cardboard boxes. I carefully lifted the lid off one of the three boxes and discovered what must have been at least 100 small photos

(approx. 65 x 90 mm). I decided that along with the leather-bound photo albums, these small photographic prints needed some attention, so I began the process of digitising, registering and cataloguing them. Unfortunately, (or perhaps fortunately-



Many of the photographs taken by the Matson Photo Service had strong biblical allusions. Inscription on back reads "Boat filled with fish – galilee." [Reg No. 187]

because 'archivists' get excited about a challenge) there was little information in the plastic bag in relation to the collection's provenance – except for a note "Chaplain General Rev. Allen Brooke CBE, ED. According to sources such as the Australian War Memorial Embarkation Roll and newspaper clippings, Allen Brooke served in the infantry during First World War, and on his return, held various positions in the Church of Christ in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. [1]

After noting that the vast majority of the photographs were stamped on the back with "COPYRIGHT: THE MATSON PHOTO SERVICE JERUSALEM, PALESTINE," I decided that it was worth doing a little bit of research.



A photo depicting General Rev. Allen Brooke (left) and friend. Inscription reads "Holman Hunt's Memorial Seat – On the road to Bethlehem." [Reg No. 262]

As the name suggests, the photos were produced by Eric and Edith Matson whose photo service emerged out of the former "American Colony Photo Department," in c. 1940.[2] Interestingly, the American Colony Photo Department was established by a group of American and Swedish emigrants who made Palestine their home from 1881 and arrived in subsequent waves over the following decades. [3] This group of likeminded individuals, initially known as the "Overcomers," and later "the American Colony", together formed an autonomous, utopian Christian sect.[4] Their journey to Jerusalem was variously motivated by their quest to overcome various personal tragedies and belief that their settlement in Jerusalem was a prerequisite for the impending return of Christ at the Millennium. [5] During the initial



"Bethlehem from the Church of the Nativity" [Reg No. 251]



"The place of Christs' Baptism River Jordan near Jericho" [Reg No. 266]

decades, the Colony was led by Norwegian-born Anna Spafford. Her husband, Horatio Spafford, had squandered \$100 000 in Chicago, subsequently fleeing to the Colony in an attempt to escape the debt to which he was answerable. [6] Under Anna's leadership the Colony operated as something of a commune – and hand-to-mouth living was a daily reality. However, they quickly earned the respect of the local Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities on account of their benevolent acts and social services to the sick and disadvantaged. [7] Nevertheless, historian Geniesse reveals that other practices (albeit disguised behind closed doors) were "strange and seamy." [8] By the 1900s, the Colony had established

a foothold in the tourist trade (the hostel they built and ran – "American Colony Hotel", still exists). In 1898 members of the Colony enthusiastically took to photographically documenting the visit of Wilhelm II – King of Prussia and the German Kaiser – along with his wife, who came to ceremoniously dedicate the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. The selling of these photos raised a swarm of public interest and culminated in the establishment of the "American Colony Photographic Service" in 1898.[9]

Eric Matson (1888-1997) emigrated from Sweden to Jerusalem to join the American Colony with his family in 1896. It is uncertain exactly as to when he began working as a photographer, yet we do know that he worked in the Department's darkroom as a teenager with his American wife, Edith Yantis. His marriage to an American woman affiliated him with the American contingent of the Colony. Eventually, rising tensions between the Swedes and Americans within the Colony, along with the death of Anna Spafford in 1923, caused significant tensions and in 1934 the original Colony fell apart. Consequently, Eric Matson took it upon himself to operate the still burgeoning photographic service, renaming it "The Matson Photo Service" in 1940. [10] His photographic service captured scenes in everyday Palestine, often including holy sites and actors dressed in costume re-enacting scenes from the Biblical scriptures. In addition, they captured the cultural, architectural and social milieu before the First World War through to the reign and fall of the Ottoman Empire up until the Second World War and the birth of the State of Israel. Because Matson and his photographers lived and breathed in Palestine they knew the land and people intimately, which rivalled the work of commercial and transient photographers operating in the same period. [11]

In 1946, the Matsons left their photographic service in Jerusalem to resettle in Southern California due to rising violence in Palestine. Resultantly, the majority of the negatives were shipped to the United States,



"Bringing back lost sheep" [Reg No.188]

although the business continued to run in Jerusalem until the early 1950s. The demise of the tourism industry and presence of violence in Palestine were factors leading the business's eventual closure.

Eric Matson understood the significance of the collection he had established and donated some 13,000 negatives and eleven albums to the Library of Congress in 1966. Subsequent parts of the collection, some of which had water damage, were donated in 1970, 1978 and 1981. [12]

References

[1] Australian War Memorial, "First World War Embarkation Roll: Allen Brooke", accessed 4 October, 2017; "For City Church of Christ: Pastor Allen Brooke", *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane, Qld: 1933-1954), December, 1938, p.4.

[2] "The American Colony and the Matson Photo Service," accessed 12 July, 2017, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/matpc/colony.html>

[3] Yaakov Ariel and Ruth Kark, "Messianism, Holiness, Charisma, and Community: The American –Swedish Colony in Jerusalem, 1881-1933", *Church History*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (1996): 641.

[4] "The American Colony and the Matson Photo Service."

[5] Ariel and Kark, "Messianism, Holiness, Charism, and Community; "The American Colony and the Matson Photo Service" 641;

[6] Heather J. Sharkey, review of *American Priestess: The Extraordinary Story of Anna Spafford and the American Colony in Jerusalem*, by Jane Fletcher Geniesse. *Middle East Journal*, Vol 62, No 4 (2008): 735.

[7] Ibid, 734.

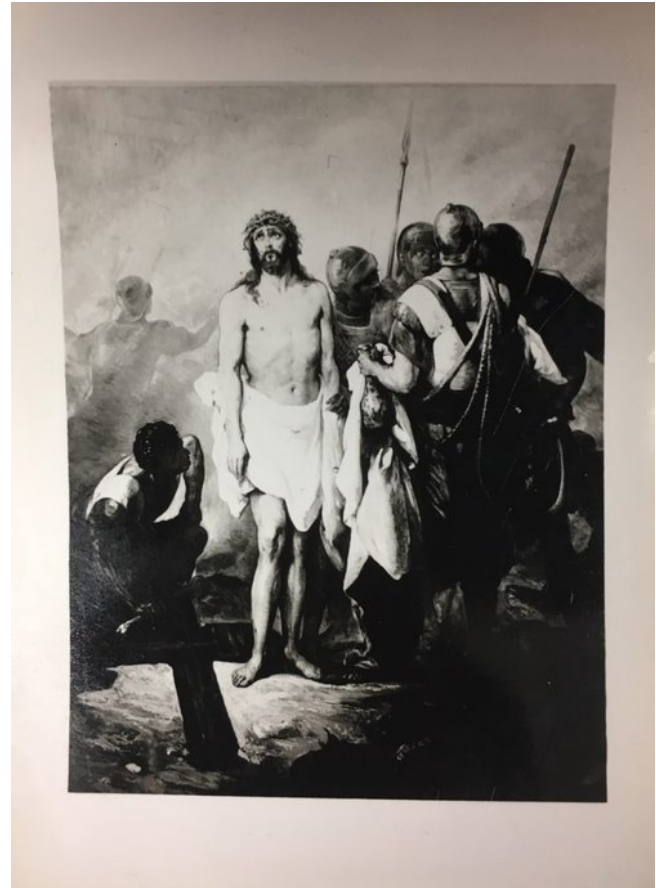
[8] Sharkey on Geniesse, "American Priestess."

[9] "The American Colony and the Matson Photo Service."

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid, "Background and Scope of the Collection."

[12] Ibid. "The American Colony and the Matson Photo Service."



"Christ's garments parted by Lot" [Reg No. 257]

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