

PHOTOGRAPHER



CHARLES
WALTER



**ARTIST
SERIES**

CHARLES WALTER

CONTRIBUTORS

State Library Victoria
National Library Australia

Allan Layton
Kathie Maynes
Kelly Petersen
Peter & Aileen Tossol
David & Debbie Hibbert

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HISTORY

Name: Charles (Carl) Walter
Born: 1831
Migrated: 1857c
Died: 7 October 1907
Known for: Botanist, photographer, journalist

Charles was the first widely published photographer to capture photos of Marysville, Alexandra, Snobs Creek Falls and Mansfield. His photos were often reproduced as lithographs and carvings.



Early Life

Charles (Carl) Walter, was born at Mecklenberg Germany and migrated to Australia , arriving in late 1855. In Melbourne he worked as a botanist and photographer. As a photographer he is noteworthy locally as being the first photographer to take and publish a photograph of the main street of Alexandra (above). He was possibly Victoria's first photojournalist, having submitted an article and photograph on Salmon Tanks at Badger Creek in 1865, as well as another on Niagara Falls (Snobs Creek Falls) in 1868. As a botanist, he was good friends with Ferdinand von Muller, the first Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens Victoria from 1857.



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Botanist

Charles was a naturalist and was extremely active in botany in Australia. He found Australia a place of an endless natural learning opportunities and he had a deep appreciation for Australia's natural beauty.

Charles was credited with discovering a new species of mint bush on Mount Ellery, which his friend von Mueller named in his honour (*Prostanthera walteri*). Today the species is commonly called monkey mint-bush or blotchy mint-bush. Charles was good friends with noted botanist and first Director of the Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens Frederick von Mueller, and collected plant specimens from various parts of Victoria and New South Wales for him. He also collected flora specimens for Anatole von Hügel.

Charles was accompanied by missionary George Brown in exploring the Bismack Archipelago in Papua New Guinea in 1875, and worked for the Technological Museum, a part of the Public Library of Victoria, on economic products which included grasses, seeds and timbers and did similar work for the newly established Victorian Department of Agriculture. In 1889 he collected a specimen of the *Eucalyptus x brevirostris* (a hybrid between *E macrorhyncha* and *E muelleriana* or *E. obliqua*) in the region of the Upper Yarra near Warrandyte and Lilydale.

In the 1890s he was active in procuring plant specimens in the Australian Alps, accompanied by horticulturalist, naturalist and entomologist Charles French junior, whose father was naturalist and entomologist Charles Hamilton senior.

When Charles died in 1907, he was serving as the head of Economic Botany at the Technological Museum in Melbourne (Melbourne Museum). The Melbourne Museum was established in 1854.

Travelling photographer

Charles love of photography coincided with the times when photography was becoming mobile, allowing photographers to move outside of the studio and into the Australian bush. Charles took good advantage of this, becoming one of the first photographers to produce significant and lasting landscape imagery of Australia from outside of the main rural centres. He also acted as one of Australia's first photojournalists. He opened his own studio in Melbourne and advertised his ability as a Landscape Photographic Artist from circa 1862 to 1882.

During the mid 1860s he took time on numerous instances to travel into Victoria's interior as



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well as the northern and eastern districts. These trips included areas such as the Australian Alps, Marysville, Alexandra, Puzzle Ranges and Mansfield. During these long trips, he would often travel alone and carry his photographic gear and camping equipment on his back. He would camp where he could, and take help from land owners when possible. This enabled him to garnish local knowledge which enabled him to travel to and photograph areas and scenes that would otherwise be outside of his knowledge. During these trips he would also study and collect natural specimens.

He would share his works with the media who would often commission carvings based on photographs submitted. *The Australian Illustrated News* were regular publishers of his works and they commented in their Monday 23 March 1868 issue about how impressed they were at his efforts and the way he presented his works:

Mr Walter deserves the highest praise for his exertions in so ably illustrating the romantic and picturesque which nature has scattered so lavishly about us and not the least important result of the publication will be to direct the lovers of nature to places hitherto unknown, where they will be able to gratify their admiration to the full.

Photography of Aboriginal at Coranderrk

In early 1865, as a commission for Sir Redmond Barry (Commissioner and previous President for the 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition), Charles photographed the men, women and children, as well as the infrastructure at the Government's Healesville Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. Barry—the judge who later sentenced Ned Kelly to death—had earlier seen a photograph of Coranderrk taken by Walter and this resulted in him asking Charles to take more photographs at the station for exhibition at the 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition.

The *Bendigo Advertiser* wrote of this in their issue published 4 July 1865. Of the 106 plates taken, a selected number were exhibited at the 1866–67 Intercontinental Exhibition of Australia held in Melbourne. The exhibition was held at the Melbourne Exhibition Building, Corner William and Little Lonsdale Streets, (now the Hellenic Museum) and included the display of a large number of Aboriginal artefacts, including two skulls, something now recognised as deeply offensive.

While Charles' name was not mentioned in the official exhibition catalogue, it does make reference to the photographic works of Aboriginals taken at Coranderrk near Healesville which were on display at the exhibition. Further, in *The Australasian* newspaper dated Saturday 2 March 1867, an article was published listing contributors to the Museum of Art and Industry,

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with Charles listed as a contributor of Aboriginal photos from Coranderrk, Healesville. This confirms him as the source of the photographs. The omission was likely to him not being the person submitting them to the exhibition, as this was likely the owner of the photographs, Redmond Barry, who commissioned them to be taken.

Photojournalist

Charles was possibly Victoria's first photojournalist, having submitted an article on Salmon Tanks at Badger Creek in 1865 which included a photograph of the salmon tanks. This photograph was converted into a wood carving and published on 25 September 1865 in *The Australian News for Home Readers* along with the information he sourced. He again sourced information and submitted a photograph on Niagara Falls (Snobs Creek Falls) in 1868, which was published in the *Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers* on 23 March 1868.



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Height of his career

His constant media exposure lifted his public image even further and by the 1870s he was a well regarded photographer across Victoria. In the 31 December 1873 issue of *The Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers*, the publishers included a profile on the artist and a carving of him in his pith helmet, axe and camera bag. In the Saturday 18 April 1874 issue of the *Australasian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil*, Charles was shown photographing an outdoor scene which included Aborigines (below).

Walter produced numerous type of photographic media including standard prints, stereographs and Carte de Visite portraits. He shot portraits, scenery (advertised as taken in any part of the colony), street scenes, and anything else the customer may want. He sold his personal prints and stereographs into the Melbourne market via local agents during the time when photography was only just becoming a public passion.

Scientific application of photography

Walter travelled as a member of the 1869 Geodetic Survey team to Cape Howe in Victoria and was selected to accompany the Victorian Government Astronomer RLJ Ellery, to Cape Sidmouth in Queensland to photograph the solar eclipse, due in 1872. His works represent one of the more significant early uses of photography in a scientific study to occur in Australia.

Local Connection

The connection with our District is that Charles was one of the first photographers to operate as a travelling landscape photographer in Victoria and according to our research was likely the first to photograph the main street of the small rural township of Alexandra in Central Victoria and have it published in a leading Melbourne Newspaper.

TIMELINE

BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

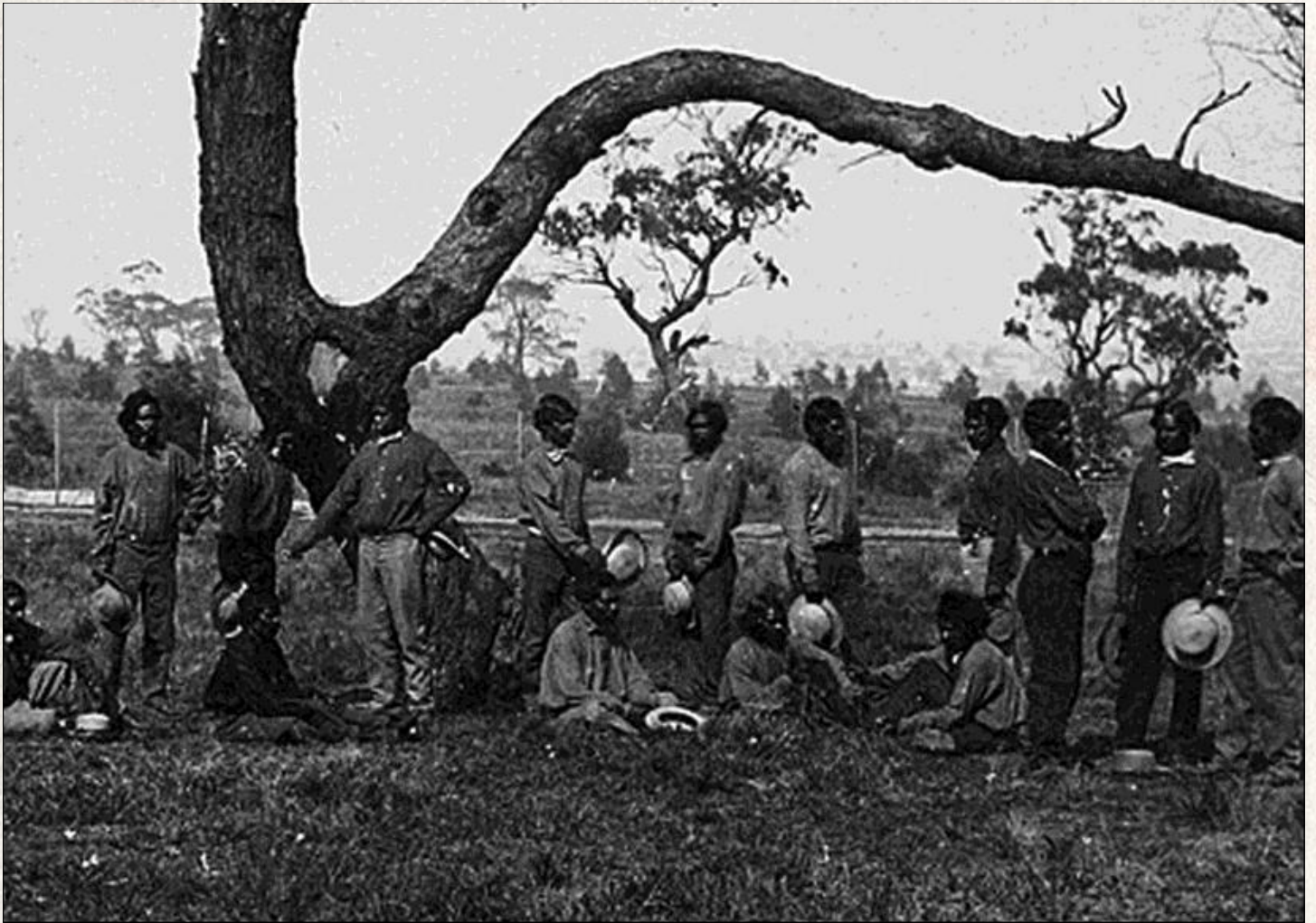
1831	Charles Walter was born.
1855	Arrived in Melbourne and commenced working as a botanist and photographer.
1860s	Travelled throughout Central Victoria on numerous trips carrying his camera and camping equipment on his back.
1862	Opened a studio in Melbourne which he operated from around 1862 to at least 1882.
Early 1865	Took 106 plates taken at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. He also took a photograph of salmon tanks on Badger Creek and submitted this for publication in <i>The Australian News for Home Readers</i> along with information he had sourced at the site. This was possibly the first act of photojournalism in Australia.
1868	While travelling through Victoria, he took a photograph of the main street of Alexandra. A carving from this photographed was published in numerous publications over time. The photograph also survived and is shown later in this factsheet.
1875	Charles was accompanied by missionary <u>George Brown</u> in exploring the <u>Bismack Archipelago</u> in Papua New Guinea.
1889	Collected a specimen of the <u><i>Eucalyptus x brevirostris</i></u> (a hybrid between <i>E macrorhyncha</i> and <i>E muelleriana</i> or <i>E. obliqua</i>) in the region of the Upper Yarra near Warrandyte and Lilydale.
1890s	Procured botanical specimens in the Australian Alps with Cjarles French Jnr.
7 October 1807	Charles died.

GALLERY

RELATED IMAGERY

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Group of natives (Botanical Reserve) 1860s

Photographer Charles Walter

Courtesy National Gallery Australia

Collection: The Nigel Lendon Collection of Australian and International stereographs, acquired 1983

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Lithograph of the Aboriginal settlement at Coranderrk in 1865
From a photography by Charles Walter

The Australian News for Home Readers
Friday 25 August 1865
National Library Australia

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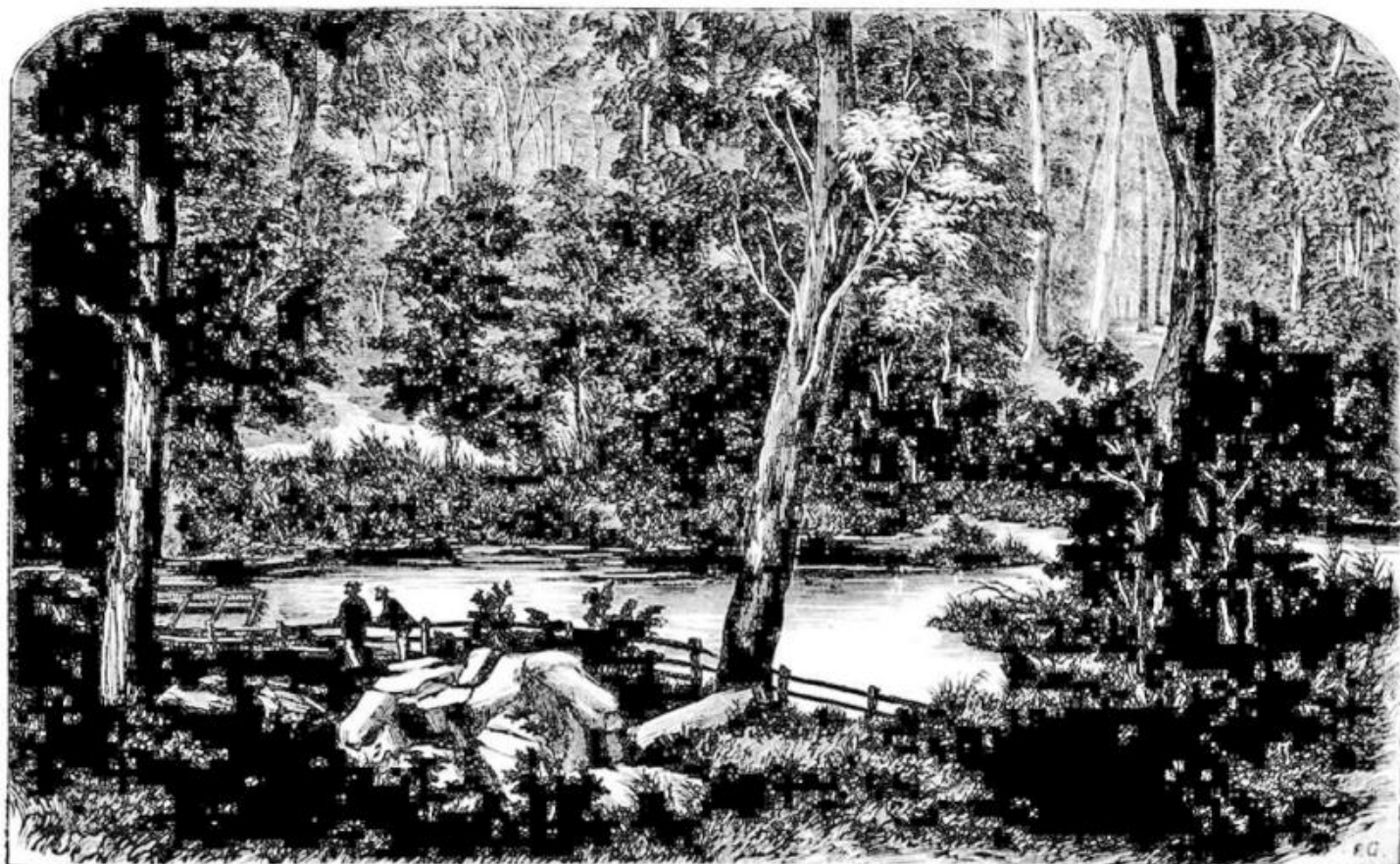


Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in 1865

Photographer Charles Walter
Courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of
New South Wales

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SALMON TANKS IN THE BADGER CREEK, UPPER YARRA—[FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLES WALTER]—SEE PAGE 10.

SALMON TANKS IN THE BADGER CREEK, UPPER YARRA.

The region of the Upper Yarra is the *locale* which has been chosen for two very interesting experiments:—the civilisation of the aborigines, and the acclimatisation of the salmon. In our last number we presented a view and gave an account of the aboriginal settlement, at Coranderrk. Fronting that settlement is the Badger Creek, and it is in that creek the salmon fry were lodged, in a tank just below the village. The creek is a clear and rapid stream, running over a gravelly bed for a considerable part of its course, having an average width of about 20 feet, and thickly wooded banks. The tank is about 18 feet long, and 4 or 5 wide, constructed of wood with a cover of perforated zinc, opening on hinges, and padlocked. The top of the tank is nearly level with the surface of the water, and being perforated at both ends, admits a constant stream of water to pass through. For some time after being deposited the tiny strangers were visible to visitors, and appeared to be in health and spirits. Doubts are entertained as to the final success of the experiment. In the first place the number of fry deposited in the tank was only about 87, and that small number was considerably reduced before they were liberated. In the second place, the dangers besetting them, should they reach the Yarra, are many and great. Men versed in the subject have said that "a new born babe has as much chance of surviving a half hour's immersion in a full cesspool as smolt have of passing to the sea with life through the last ten miles of the Yarra."

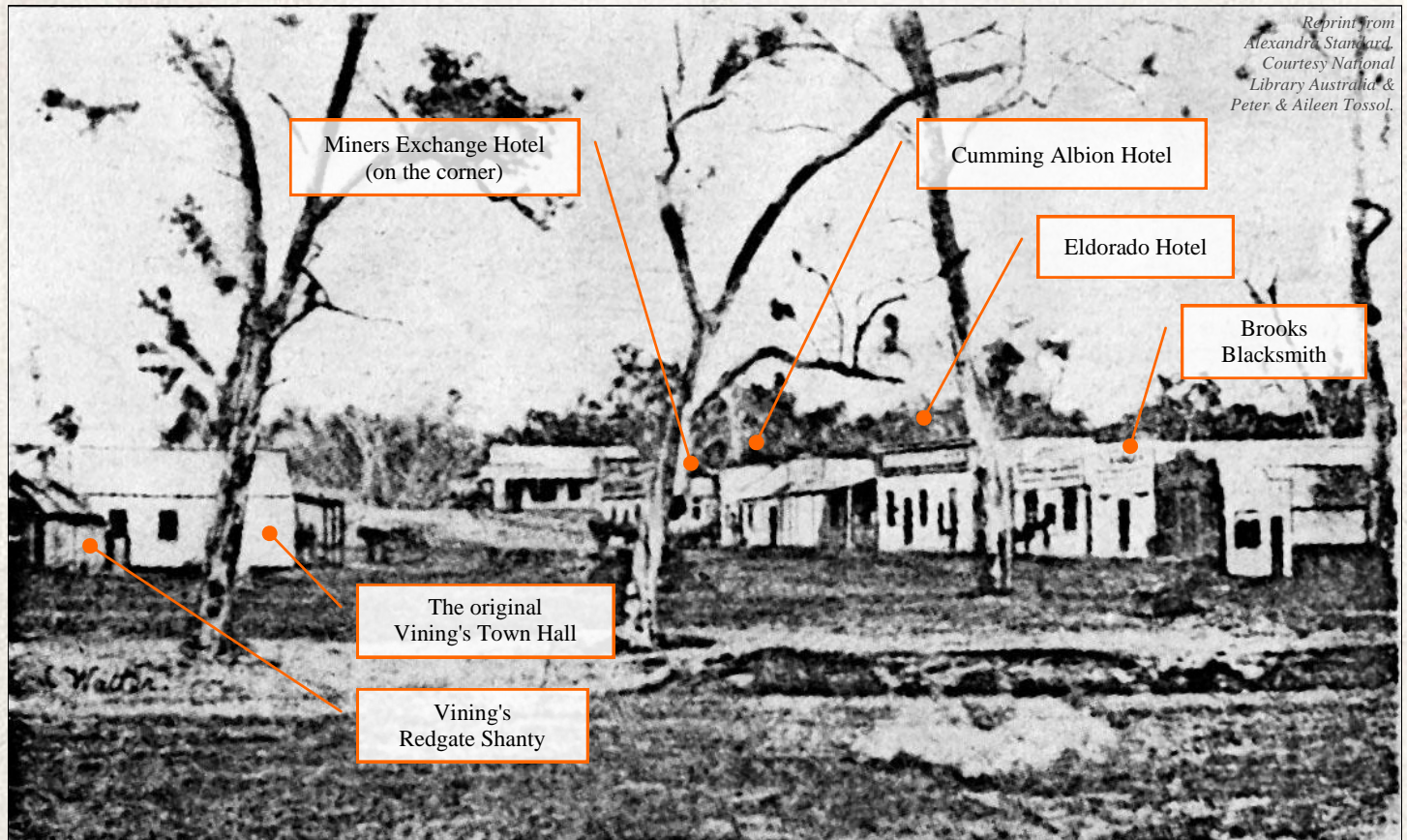
The Australian News for Home Readers
Monday 25 September 1865
Courtesy National Library Australia

Wood engraving of Badger Creek salmon ponds from a photograph by Charles Walter. This was a photograph of a scientific experiment, making it one of the first known in Victoria and possibly Australia. In the experiment salmon fry were released into Badger Creek.

The Australian News for Home Readers
25 September 1865
National Library Australia

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**1867 photo and wood carving of
Alexandra from the UT Creek
looking south along Grant Street.**

Illustrated Australian News (carving)
27 December 1867
National Library Australia
Victorian Historical Magazine
History of Alexandra, by Charles Long
(Part 1, page 56a), (Nov 1938)
Courtesy Peter & Aileen Tossol
Alexandra Standard (Centenary Issue)
3 April 1969 (photo)
National Library Australia
Alexandra & District (P89)
By Brian Lloyd (photo and carving)

**Carving (left) based on the above
photograph by C Walter in 1867**

Illustrated Australian News
Friday 20 December 1867
Courtesy State Library Victoria

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GALLERY

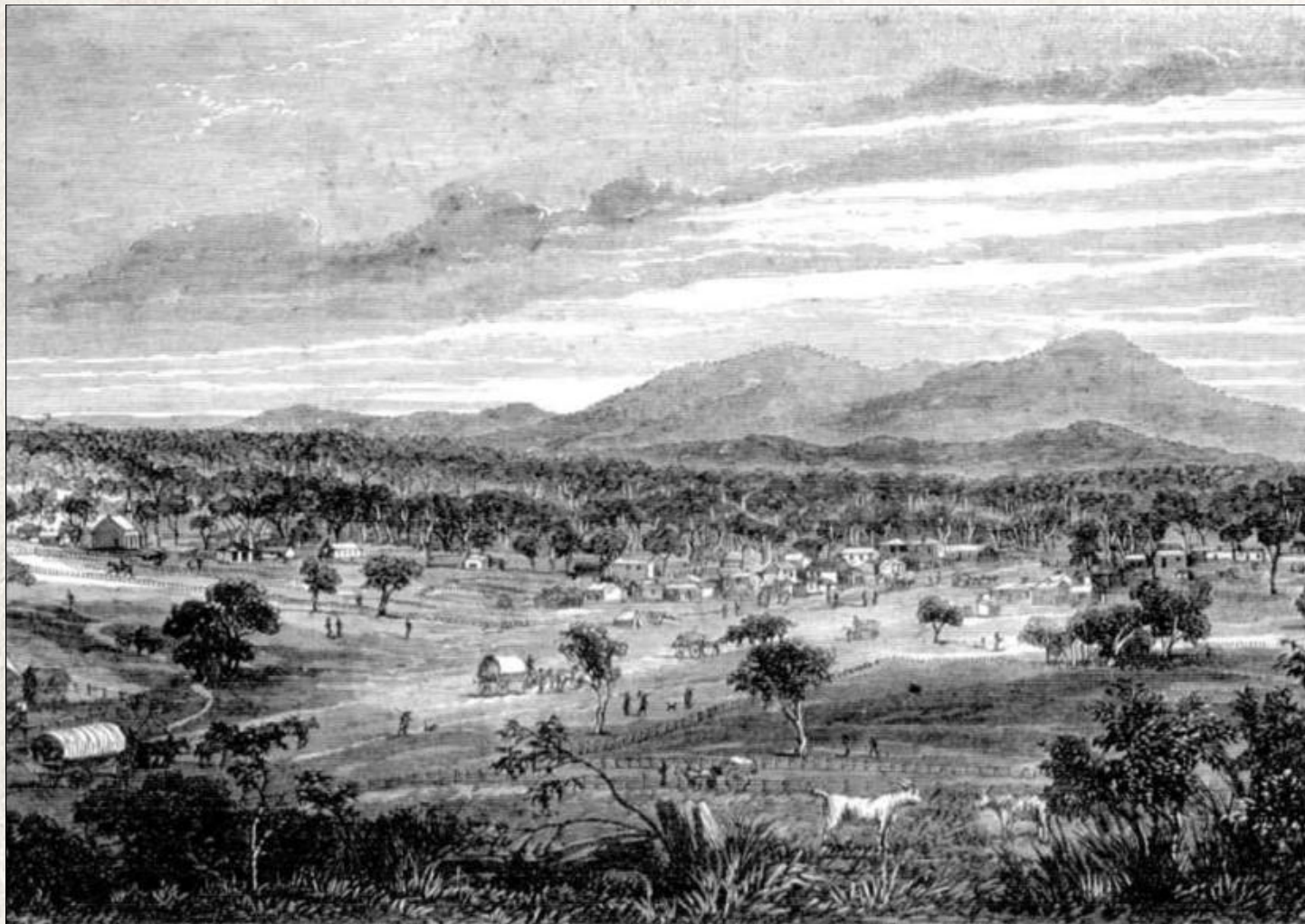


Wood engraving of the Acheron River from a photograph taken by Charles Walter in 1867

The Illustrated Australian News
26 February 1867
National Library Australia

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Wood carving of Mansfield with Maindample in the distance, as published in *The Illustrated Australian News* on 23 March 1868. It was created from a photograph believed to have been taken by Charles Walter in 1876.

From a photograph taken by Charles Walter
The Illustrated Australian News
23 March 1868
National Library Australia

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Gold mining, Gippsland circa 1871

Photographer Charles Walter
State Library Victoria

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Wood carving published in the *Australasian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil* on 18 April 1874 picturing Charles Walter taking a photograph of a group including Aborigines.

The accompanying text read:

Our engraving illustrates a characteristic phase of Australian bush life. A travelling photographer on the lookout for subjects has come upon a camp of natives. One, a half-caste girl, has attracted his attention by her wild beauty, and he has placed her in position, and is taking her photograph. Some of the natives squat close by watching the strange and mysterious process, and presently their grim figures will also be photographed to serve as ethnological specimens and curios to send to friends in England as examples of the rapidly disappearing Australian race.

National Library Australia

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Aboriginal man and his wife in 1906

Photographer Charles Walter
State Library Victoria

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FALLS ON THE NIAGARA CHEEK, MOUNT TORBRECK

Few are aware that there is a Niagara fall in this country, of course, not to be compared for a moment with its namesake, but still of sufficient grandeur to render it noteworthy. This fall occurs near the head of the stream which rises in the Mount Torbreck ranges, between the Rubicon and Jerusalem rivers. Any traveller passing that way, or parties in search of the picturesque, will find the locality about seven miles from Jones's Hotel, on the Darlingford road, or about twenty miles from the township of Alexandra.

The fall is a double one, making a descent of about 200 feet altogether, the width at top about forty feet, but varying, on account of the irregular formation of the rock, which forms the bed of the stream. It will give some idea of the dimensions of the falls to be told that their roar may be heard five or six miles off. The beautiful engraving of this wild and romantic scene is from a photograph by Mr Walter, who has devoted him self for years entirely to the landscape branch of photography, and many of the views of Australian scenery which have appeared from time to time in our pages, have been the result of his labors. Considering how far distant from civilisation many of the localities are which Mr Walter has visited in the course of his professional occupation, and also the almost inaccessible character of some the localities, especially to a man burdened as our artist is, with a heavy and cumbersome apparatus, the first feeling is one of wonder "how he managed to get there." Nor is the wonder lessened when we learn that Mr Walter travels alone, with this apparatus and 'tent upon his back - the whole weighing about fifty pounds - that, he sleeps at squatters stations, in shanties, or under a gum tree, according to circumstances, and that he supplies himself with such provisions as he can procure by the way.

The journey in the course of which he took the view of the Niagara Falls, occupied him eleven weeks. He walked the whole way from Anderson's Creek to Mount Buller, the most western culmination of

the Australian Alps, and had to cross all the intervening ranges - the Great Dividing Range, between the Caledonian diggings, and Muddy Greek, the Black Ranges between the Murrindindi and the Goulburn, and finally the Puzzle Ranges, between Alexandra and Mansfield.

His enthusiasm for his art may be gathered from the facts that his journey was performed in very stormy weather ; that he penetrated to places inaccessible to vehicle or horse, and only penetrable to human foot, after considerable clearances had been effected in the thickets by means of a tomahawk ; that he scrambled for days over rocks and ravines, through tangled undergrowth and swollen creeks, in order to get the nearest and best views. Mr Walter deserves the highest praise for his exertions in so ably illustrating the romantic and the picturesque which nature has scattered so lavishly around us, and not the least important result of the publication of the views which he has so success fully taken, will be to direct the lovers of nature to places hitherto unknown, where they will be able to gratify their admiration to the full.

From a photograph by C Walter, Illustrated Australian News, Monday 23 March 1868, Courtesy National Library Australia

NEWSPAPERS

RELATED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

An interesting series of photographs, taken by Mr Charles Walter, have been shown to us. They are views and portraits of aborigines at Coranderrk, on the Upper Yarra. We learn that there are 15 blacks on the station. They have fenced in and cultivated a great deal of ground, and they work hard every day. The adults and children attend school, and even the little ones read very well. There is a day school, and there are evening classes also. The blacks have built a neat little village, and most of the houses, as appear from the pictures, are substantial and comfortable. Wonga, the principal man of the Yarra tribe, and all the aborigines who attended His Excellency's levee, to present addresses to the Queen on the marriage of the Prince of Wales, are here and well.

Bendigo Advertiser
Tuesday 4 July 1865
Courtesy National Library Australia

Photographs taken at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in early 1865

Bendigo Advertiser
Tuesday 4 July 1865
National Library Australia

NEWSPAPERS

SALMON TANKS IN THE BADGER CREEK, UPPER YARRA.

The region of the Upper Yarra is the *locale* which has been chosen for two very interesting experiments;—the civilisation of the aborigines, and the acclimatisation of the salmon. In our last number we presented a view and gave an account of the aboriginal settlement, at Coranderrk. Fronting that settlement is the Badger Creek, and it is in that creek the salmon fry were lodged, in a tank just below the village. The creek is a clear and rapid stream, running over a gravelly bed for a considerable part of its course, having an average width of about 20 feet, and thickly wooded banks. The tank is about 18 feet long, and 4 or 5 wide, constructed of wood with a cover of perforated zinc, opening on hinges, and padlocked. The top of the tank is nearly level with the surface of the water, and being perforated at both ends, admits a constant stream of water to pass through. For some time after being deposited the tiny strangers were visible to visitors, and appeared to be in health and spirits. Doubts are entertained as to the final success of the experiment. In the first place the number of fry deposited in the tank was only about 87, and that small number was considerably reduced before they were liberated. In the second place, the dangers besetting them, should they reach the Yarra, are many and great. Men versed in the subject have said that “a new born babe has as much chance of surviving a half hour’s immersion in a full cesspool as smolt have of passing to the sea with life through the last ten miles of the Yarra.”

The Australian News for Home Readers
Monday 25 September 1865
Courtesy National Library Australia

An article published with a carving based on a photograph by Charles Walter of an experiment where salmon were released into the Badger Creek near Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. This article and photograph may represent Victoria’s first published photojournalism.

The Australian News for Home Readers
Monday 25 September 1865
National Library Australia



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

**CHARLES WALTER,
LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTIST.**

Colonial Scenery taken.

A great variety, at Moderate Prices.

**Letters addressed to THE AGE Office will be
forwarded.**

Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers
Friday 27 December 1867
Courtesy National Library Australia

Early 1867 advert

Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers
Friday 27 December 1867
National Library Australia



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

**CHARLES WALTER,
COUNTRY PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTIST.**

**MELBOURNE OFFICE:
45 BELL-STREET, FITZROY.**

**Views of Residence Seats and Scenery, taken in
any part of the Colony, at Moderate Terms.
Carte de Visite and other Portraits at
Melbourne Prices.**

The Australian News for Home Readers
Friday 25 August 1865
Courtesy National Library Australia

Early 1865 advert for his Melbourne business located at 45 Bell Street, Fitzroy

Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers
Friday 25 August 1865
National Library Australia



Artworkz

Serving the Community