Dating old photos
Tips, tools, shadows and social media

by Anthea Brown and Fiona Sullivan

Where you can find us online

Moments in Time

(fortnightly series asking "can you date/locate this photo?")

- Archives Outside blog: http://archivesoutside.records.nsw.gov.au

- Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/state-records-nsw/

State Records

- State Records NSW website: http://www.records.nsw.gov.au

- Photo Investigator: http://investigator.records.nsw.gov.au/asp/photosearch/

Social Media accounts

- Twitter: http://www.twitter.com @srnsw and @archivesoutside

- Facebook:

  o State Records - https://www.facebook.com/srnsw

  o Archives Outside - https://www.facebook.com/pages/Archives-Outside/113404465429545

- Slideshare: http://www.slideshare.net/srnsw

- YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/staterecordsnsw

Tips for dating photos: A community-generated list from Archives Outside

BUILDINGS & STREET SCAPES

Architectural styles/eras	• Old Colonial (1788-1840) • Victorian (1840-1890) • Federation (1890-1915) • Inter-War (1915-1940) • Post-War (1940-1960) • Late 20th Century (1960-present)
Book	'*A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architectural Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present'* by Apperly, Irving and Reynolds
Building Signs	Can help identify streets: • Check old directories (Sands for Sydney and Sands & McDougall for Melbourne) for business names • State Library holds a complete set of microfiches of Telephone Directories
Petrol Bowsers	• The brands or types of petrol being sold and the dates they went on and off the market can be used to clarify date range
Phone Booths	Can help provide a date: • Check for information about the style of phone booth and the dates it came into use
Telegraph poles / overhead wires	• A very large number of thin wires supported via small insulators on several cross-arms would be pre- 1900 telegraph wires made of steel • A small number of thick wires supported on just one or two cross-arms would be electric power wires made of copper or aluminium • Tamworth was the first city in Australia to have electric street lighting (1888)

	• Sydney electric street lighting officially 'switched on' at Pyrmont Power Station in 1904
Websites	**Aerial photos** WW2 1943 aerial photos of Sydney and some suburbs can help date buildings and cityscapes Department of Lands Spatial Information Exchange website [SIX Viewer] https://six.maps.nsw.gov.au/wps/portal/ **Australian Residential Styles** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_non-residential_architectural_styles **Australian Non-Residential Styles** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_non-residential_architectural_styles **Dating old photos from light poles** http://www.telephonecollecting.org/lightpoles.htm **Maps** Google Maps http://maps.google.com.au/ Old maps (see Trove) http://trove.nla.gov.au/ **NSW Heritage** http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/ **Street lights (City of Sydney)** http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/sydneystreets/Minding_the_Streets/Lighting_Up/default.html

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CARS (NSW)	
Useful dates	• 1910 – first NSW license plates were issued • 1912→ license plates included "NSW" • pre-1924 – license plates were black lettering on white background • pre-1937 – license plates contained numerals only • 1951 → license plates had three characters + three numerals • Windscreen wipers - became mandatory on Australian cars 6 Sep 1933
Book	'*Australian Number Plates*' by the Blue Mountains Family History Association http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/34771098
Tyres/Wheels	• Skinnier profiles and bigger diameters are earlier • Visible badging or hubcap emblems – look for manufacturers unique style and shapes
Body Style	• Some body styles are uniquely Australia – the early utilities and the "sloper" • Radiator shape for veteran to vintage, front grill for later – some like RR or Bugatti radiators are pretty easy, as is a 'coffin nose Willys', as are the distinctive bonnet of early 'Bulldog' Mack trucks
Websites	Examples of license plates http://www.worldlicenseplates.com/world/AU_NSWX.html Surrey Vintage Vehicle Society - http://www.svvs.org/help25.shtml Vehicle registration http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vehicle_registration_plates_of_Australia#New_South_Wales

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CLOTHING & FASHION	
Book	'*Dating Family Photos 1850-1920*' by Lenore Frost http://members.optushome.com.au/lenorefrost/dfp.html
Picture Australia	Search categories: Men, Women, Children, Weddings, Funerals, War...any events where there will be people and probably a bus or car in the back ground. Many photo results will give an approx or factual date
Websites	**Australian fashion** http://www.eurekacouncil.com.au/Australian-Culture/australian-fashion.htm **How to date old photos by costume** http://www.fashion-era.com/

Surveying of Devonshire Cemetery in preparation for the building of Central Railway Station, Sydney. Surveyor: George Melrose Digital ID: 17420_a014_a014000263

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PHOTOGRAPHERS & PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESSES	
Books	'*Australians behind the camera: directory of early Australian photographers, 1841 to 1945*' http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/10541014 '*The Mechanical Eye in Australia*' by Alan Davies and Peter Stanbury '*The Care and Identification of 19th Century Photographic Prints*' by James M. Reilly (Kodak publication)
Frank Hurley	Appears to have been in the Sydney postcard game for about 5-6 years prior to WW1 and during his time several sets of initials and marks are used on images http://www.photo-web.com.au/frankhurley/jfh/
Look for a name/initials	Are there initials or a name written on the photo that can identify the photographer?
Paper	Just prior to WW1 many postcards and general photographs in NSW were issued on 'Empire' series paper stock. Kodak did not have a total monopoly
[Albumen] photographs	Mostly out of use by the early 1900s - replaced by silver gelatine
Websites	Louis Nadeau's website www.photoconservation.com provides example images of different processes as well as a brief history and tips on how to identify them

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RAILWAYS & TRAMWAYS

Books	(Heavy rail) '*The Greatest Public Work: the NSW Railways 1848-1889*' by Robert Lee
	Australian Railway Historical Society Library for various books http://www.arhsnsw.com.au/portal.htm
	'*Stations on the Track*' by JM Cottee
Locomotives	Check when locomotives (and sometimes wagons and passenger cars) went into service to narrow down a date
Stations	Check when a railway station opened (as well as additions/extensions to the station)
Sydney Tram system	• Electrification began in 1898 and most of the system was converted by 1910.
	• Tram system closed in 1961 (last service to la Perouse)
Sydney Train	Underground system opened in 1926
Websites	Railway Commissioners Annual Reports http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/result?q=Railway+Commissioners+Annual+Report
	Sydney Trams https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_Trams

OTHER RESOURCES

Ask the locals	Family/Local History Societies
Books	Australian pictorial history books
Websites	Picture Australia http://www.pictureaustralia.org/ TROVE http://trove.nla.gov.au/ • (National Library of Australia) is a great place to start. You can search, among other things: old newspapers, maps, photos, books as well as some digitised archives

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Moments in Time
The State Records Authority of New South Wales