

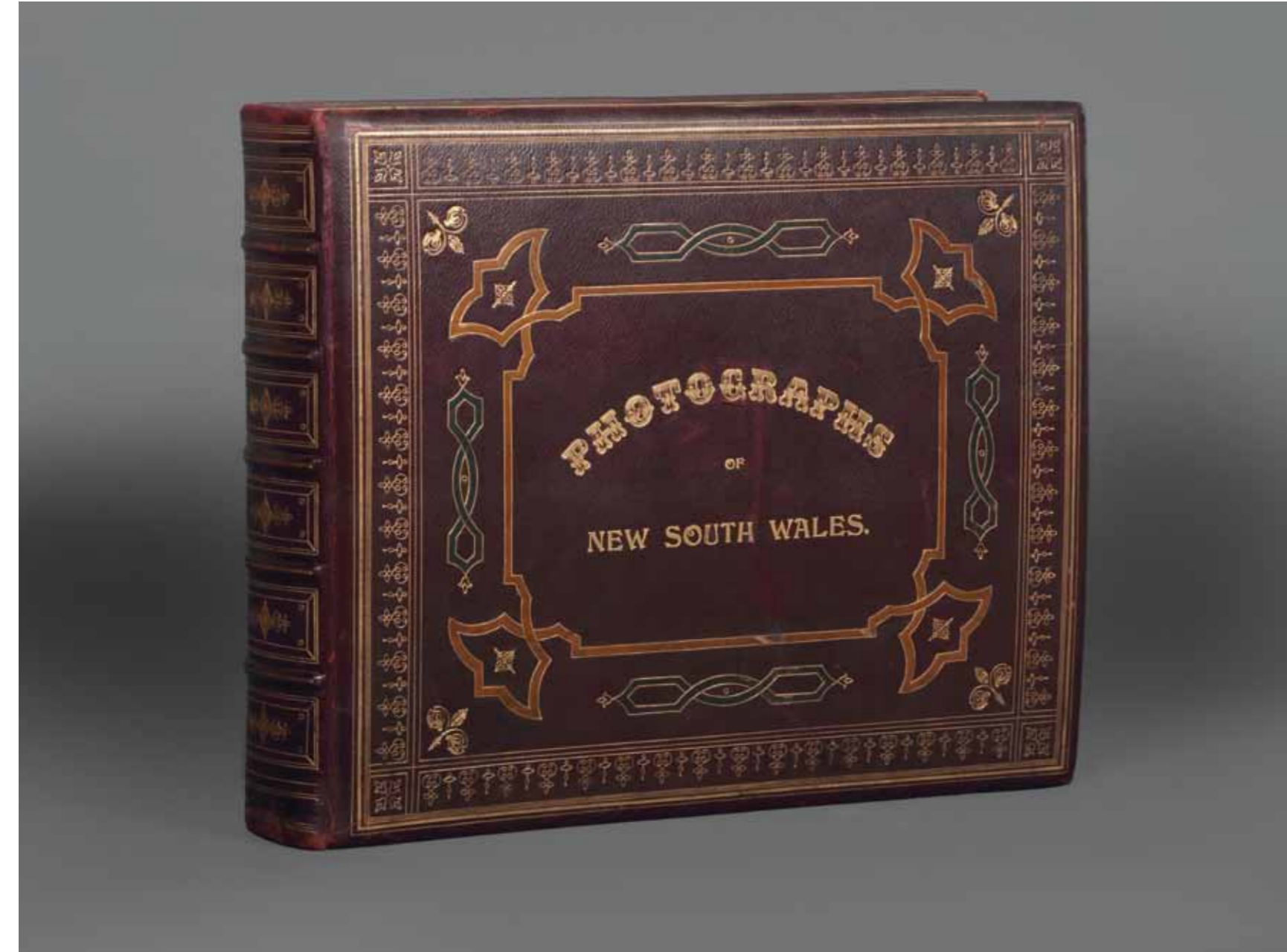
# HORDERN HOUSE

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LEVEL 2, 255 RILEY STREET · SURRY HILLS · SYDNEY NSW 2010 · AUSTRALIA  
+61 2 9356 4411 · WWW.HORDERN.COM · RARE@HORDERN.COM



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIDGE ST—SYDNEY.



## NEW SOUTH WALES: GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

### Photographs of New South Wales...

*Large album, substantially thick and heavy folio, containing 99 silver-gelatin photographs mounted on thick board within printed borders, each photograph full page 279 x 355 mm (or the reverse); in a splendid binding of full burgundy morocco elaborately gilt, with ochre and green inlays, spine with raised bands and gilt compartments; moirésilk doublures, gilt dentelles. Sydney, New South Wales Government Printing Office, 1897.*

### UNIQUE NEW SOUTH WALES ALBUM, GIFTED BY PREMIER TO PRIME MINISTER

A unique and magnificent (and at 18.5 kgs remarkably substantial) specially prepared photographic album in a superb and complex binding by the Government Bindery. The album showcases the virtues of New South Wales, and was presented by George Houston Reid as Premier of New South Wales to the Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria in 1897. Reid and Laurier together with other Colonial Premiers were guests of the elderly Sir William Gladstone at his estate Hawarden.



The album documents Sydney in wonderful style as a beautiful and thriving metropolis, the enlarged photographs capturing the harbour and waterways as centres of industry as well as featuring impressive architectural and municipal views, together with striking topographical views of the Nepean River and the Blue Mountains (Katoomba in particular) and further afield. In short, the album showcases New South Wales as a hub of the British Empire.

This colonial angle suited the moment: Reid and Laurier both had significant roles to play at the Diamond Jubilee since the Colonial Secretary Chamberlain had conceived of the celebrations as a “Festival of the British Empire” to celebrate Britain’s “true crown jewels—its colonies”. Canada and New South Wales had both sent substantial delegations.





Wilfred Laurier was Prime Minister of Canada from 1896 to 1911, and subsequently leader of the Opposition until his death in 1919. George Houston Reid was Premier of New South Wales from 1894 to 1899, during which time he advanced the cause of Federation, and after which he served as federated Australia's fourth prime minister from 1904 to 1905. He was popular in Britain and served there as Australian High Commissioner from 1910 to 1916, after which he was elected to the British parliament as a Unionist MP. It was during his time in London for the Diamond Jubilee that Chamberlain briefed him on the amendments desired by Britain to the proposed Australian federal constitution, though back in Australia 'he denied that he had been talking with "Joe" ...'.

#### **The Government Printing Office**

Julia Peck has summarised the history of the Government Printing Office in the *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* (2007):

'The New South Wales Government Printer (NSWGP), a public works department in Sydney, was established in 1859 as an extension of the postage stamp department. The first Government Printer, Mr. Thomas Richards, established the "Photolithographic and Lithographic" department in 1868 and the "Photomechanical" department in 1877. Richards' intention for the photographs was the depiction of natural features and the material progress of the colony; the distribution of the photographs was promotional.

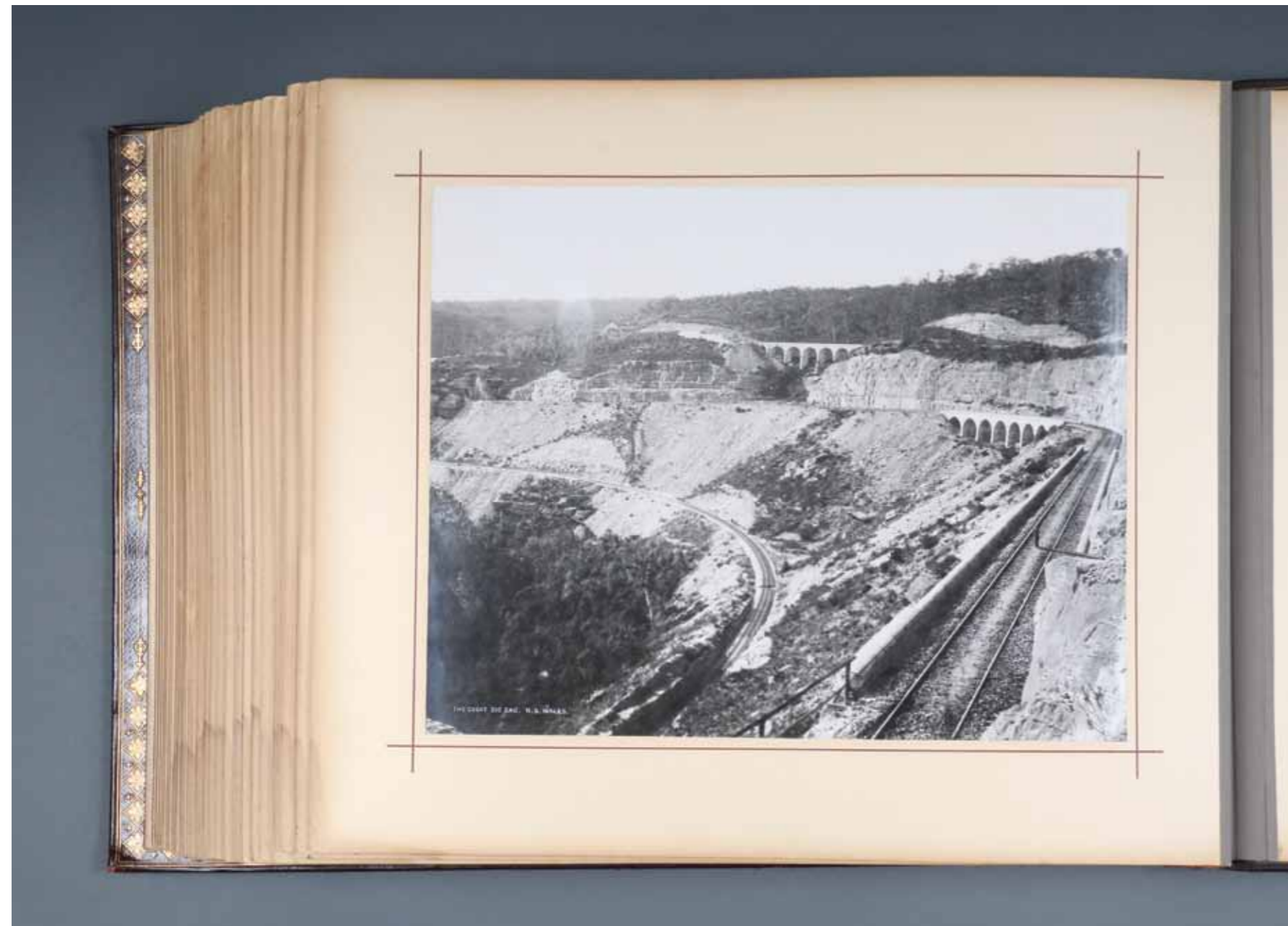
'Photographs were sent to international exhibitions, including the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888, when the department sent 178 photographs. The main form of presentation, however, was in album format, produced internally by the Printer's binding department. The quality, style and size of the albums were remarkable and produced as gifts for official visitors. The "Album of Views of New South Wales" presented to Lord Knutsford, the Colonial Secretary, in 1891 at the first Federal Convention includes civil works, public buildings, bridges, the Sydney Botanic Gardens and outlying districts.

'The photographers within the department remain unknown, but the "Narrative of the Expedition of the Australian Squadron to the South East Coast of New Guinea, October to December, 1884" (1885) has been attributed to Augustine Dyer (w. 1873-1923). Photographs were purchased and commissioned from commercial operators including Henry King, Charles Bayliss and Charles Kerry. Mr. Charles Potter succeeded Mr. Richards as the Government Printer in 1886'.

#### **Other albums**

The Knutsford album referred to above is an album bound in red morocco and stamped in gilt to note its presentation by the Premier of New South Wales (and "Father of Federation") Henry Parkes to the British Colonial Secretary Lord Knutsford in 1891. It is held in the State Library of Victoria today and the photographs can be seen online.

Another similar album presented to the Iron Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the late 1880s, with a stamped presentation inscription in gilt on the front cover, has recently been identified. Although slighter physically, and containing only 70 photographs, it has broadly equivalent contents to the present album.



Hordern House has handled two New South Wales albums, though both much less substantial or ambitious and without any details of presentation. Although such lesser albums are not common, they do seem to have been available in the New South Wales of the 1880s and 1890s, perhaps reserved for the official visitor or foreign dignitary.

#### **Contents of the album**

Sixty-five photographs depict Sydney: street scenes, institutions, churches, public buildings, statues, parks, the banks, railways, the harbour and its bays; the other 34 show every aspect of country New South Wales, not so much rural scenes as development: silver mines, the Zig Zag railway, post offices, courthouses, along with some idyllic landscapes of waterfalls and rivers.

Alan Davies, writing in *Masterpieces of Australian Photography* (Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney, 1989) about a collection of such photographs noted that NSWGP photographs 'were mostly promotional images for publications, exhibitions and presentation albums. The collection also incorporated... the work of other photographers, such as Joseph Bischoff's 1875 'Grose Valley'. As the Government Printer employed many photographers, the attribution of the photographs to any one photographer is difficult... Most of the 200,000 negatives that constitute the collection, still housed by the NSW Government Printer, are only identified as being by staff of the Photographic Branch. Contemporary prints from the negatives are rare, and very few are held by the Government Printer today. Most images were presented in albums; it is rare to find individual images of high quality.'

#### **The photographers**

The anonymity insisted on by the NSWGP means that few individual images can be attributed to specific photographers. We do however know from other evidence that the photographers who either worked directly for the department or supplied images as outside contractors included at least Charles Pickering, Joseph Bischoff, Nicolas Caire, Charles Bayliss, Augustine Dyer, Henry King, and Charles Kerry

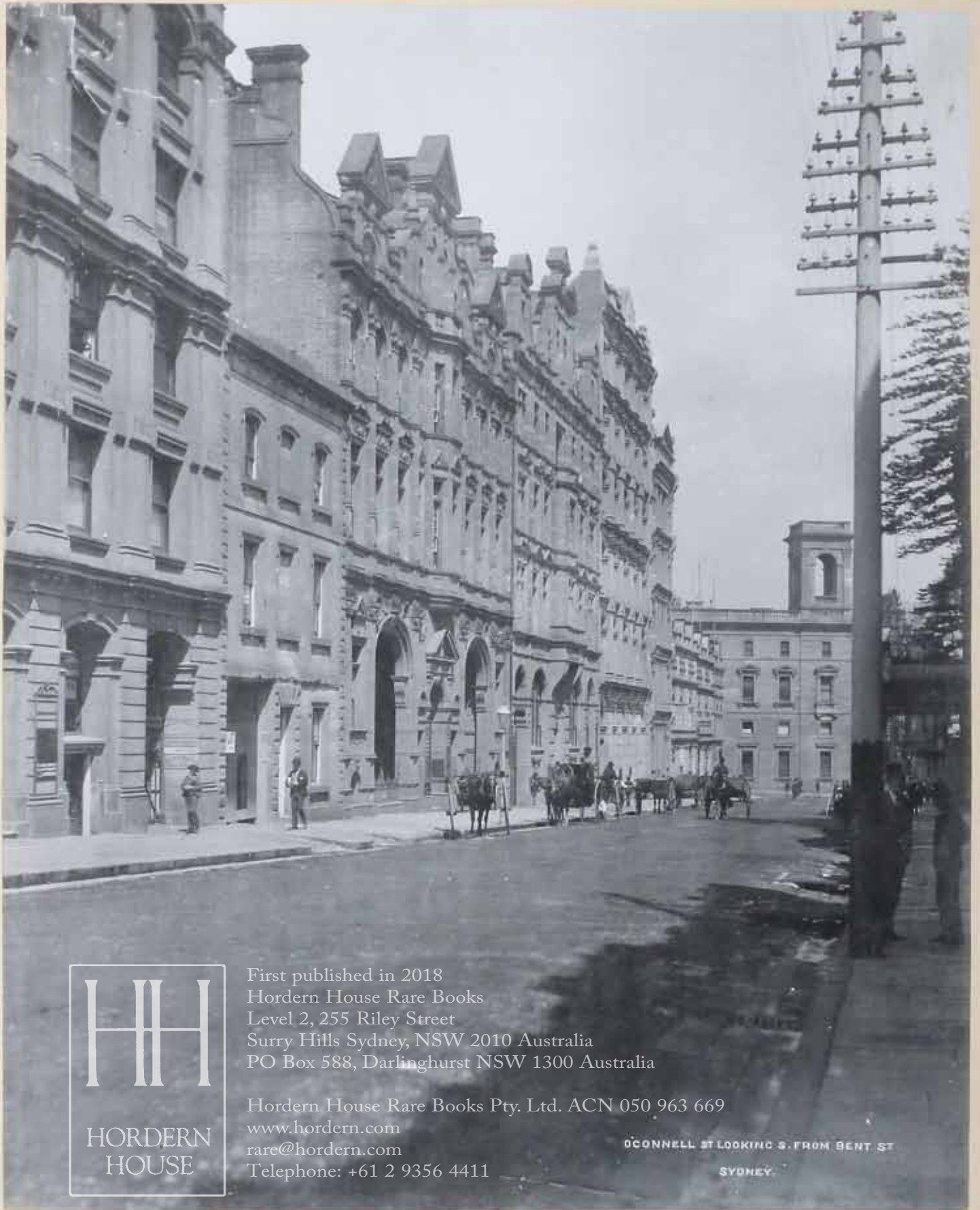
*A full list of the photographs contained in the Reid/Laurier album is available on request.*

PROVENANCE: With calligraphic label "Presented to the Right Hon. Sir Wilfred and Lady Laurier by G.H. Reid, Prime Minister of New South Wales, in Honour of the Visit of the esteemed Premiers to Great Britain upon the occasion of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee 22nd June 1897".

**\$28,750**

*Alan Davies, Masterpieces of Australian Photography (Josef Lebovic Gallery, Sydney, 1989); Julia Peck, Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography (2007)*

Full condition report and further images. <http://www.hordern.com/details.php?record=4504802>



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Level 2, 255 Riley Street  
Surry Hills Sydney, NSW 2010 Australia  
PO Box 588, Darlinghurst NSW 1300 Australia

Hordern House Rare Books Pty. Ltd. ACN 050 963 669  
[www.hordern.com](http://www.hordern.com)  
[rare@hordern.com](mailto:rare@hordern.com)  
Telephone: +61 2 9356 4411

O'CONNELL ST LOOKING S. FROM BENT ST  
SYDNEY