The Burton Brothers Studio:
Commerce in Photography and the Marketing of New Zealand, 1866-1898

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Abstract

The Burton Brothers studio of Dunedin, the most renowned of New Zealand’s colonial photographers, was among the first to present photographs of colonial New Zealand to international audiences. From 1866 to 1898 this studio produced a stock of photographic images that recorded the industrial, social and political progress of the colony. Burton Brothers photographs were produced in series and included topographical views of locations, such as Milford Sound and the King Country, or were targeted to specific projects or events, such as the eruption of Mount Tarawera and the government survey of the Sutherland Falls. Alfred Henry Burton, the studio’s director, accompanied the Union Steam Ship Company’s first tourist excursion to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, and photographs from this series and those of King Country Maori are valued as ethnographic records of indigenous peoples. Now prized as documentary artefacts in institutional collections, the “truth” value of these photographs is compromised by their production as marketable commodities. By examining the intended purpose that informed the creation and distribution of these photographs, this thesis disrupts conventional interpretations of Burton Brothers photographs as historical records.

This thesis examines photographs as physical objects, prioritising the material properties of the photograph over image content. This methodology is informed and guided by the close and systematic study of Burton Brothers photographs in their original formats, including albumen prints, cartes de visite, stereographs, lantern slides, albums and the studio’s original wet collodion and gelatin dry plate negatives. All prints released by the studio were inscribed with the firm’s trademark (brand), negative number and a descriptive caption. Each series of photographs was promoted by a non-illustrated catalogue, containing an excerpt from the photographer’s diary or other written narrative that operated as contextual description for the photographs. These textual elements function to direct interpretation in accordance with the studio’s commercial agenda and in alignment with contemporary social and political ideologies.

The impression of New Zealand circulated by Burton Brothers photographs was derived more from the text accompanying and overlaying these photographic products than the image content. This “textual overlay” allows insight into the studio’s purpose in producing, releasing and marketing photographic products. Through this, the context of production is analysed and Burton Brothers photographs are examined as products of commercial endeavour, accessing a greater understanding of the commercial photography trade in nineteenth century New Zealand.
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Following the guidelines in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, photograph captions are expressed in quotation marks. Catalogue, series and album names are expressed in italics. Original spellings and punctuation are transcribed exactly, except for case which is altered from uppercase, where it appears, to headline style.

All images are by Burton Brothers, unless otherwise stated.

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Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

Operating from 1866 until 1898, Burton Brothers was the most famous photographic firm of New Zealand’s colonial era. A highly prolific and commercially focussed photographic practice, Burton Brothers distributed photographs widely beyond the studio’s Dunedin location. In addition to its portrait practice, Burton Brothers compiled a stock of photographic images featuring topographical views from throughout New Zealand, scenes of civic and industrial development, and ethnographic records of the indigenous Maori population. Large holdings of these photographs have accumulated in museum, library and art gallery collections throughout New Zealand and overseas. The fame of Burton Brothers has endured through the sheer numbers of its photographs in institutional and private collections. These extensive holdings ensure the continued prominence of its name, often eclipsing the photographs of equally skilled contemporaries who remain largely unstudied.

Photographs from the Burton Brothers studio – and nineteenth century New Zealand photographs in general – are rarely examined in their original form or as physical objects. Photographs accessed in research institutions are typically utilised as documentary artefacts and as visual evidence of New Zealand’s colonial past. Studies of photographers have tended to follow a biographical emphasis with photographs serving as loci in the life of the maker. Drawing upon my academic background in Art History, I initially endeavoured to reposition these photographs as art objects and as embodiments of the aesthetic and creative concerns of their makers and consumers. However, interrogation of primary source materials redirected my research to a different and unanticipated direction.

By comparison with their contemporaries, a wealth of primary material relating to Burton Brothers is extant in a variety of forms. In addition to photographs in diverse formats, Burton Brothers promoted its photographs through a range of media, many examples of which survive. Research for this thesis commenced with viewing and recording primary source material in New Zealand collections. During this initial phase, my original intention to explore and examine the visual content of photographs was soon overtaken by observations of the studio’s choices in physical format and presentation. In particular, the consistent use of textual elements that overlay and accompany photographs demanded a process of not only viewing, but reading. The use of text by Burton Brothers as a means of interpreting, presenting and marketing photographs thus became a central focus of this thesis.

Analysis of maker’s marks, such as trademarks, labels, inscribed captions and negative numbers, as well as accompanying textual material in studio catalogues and promotional
matter provides evidence for the context of production. In the case of Burton Brothers photographs, any aesthetic priorities were subsumed by the studio’s commercial imperatives. The constant and consistent application of the studio’s corporate identifier, sales and marketing methods, and even selection and presentation of subject matter indicate that these photographs were, above all, commodities. The success of the studio, over its thirty year operational life and in the continued visibility of the Burton Brothers name, was due to the commercial aptitude of the firm, primarily its directors Alfred Henry Burton (1834-1914) and Walter John Burton (1836-1880).

Burton Brothers fostered and maintained a market for photographs of the new colony of New Zealand, and its commercial emphasis influenced the selection and interpretation of subject matter. Its stock of negatives recorded the industrial, social and political development of the colony and shaped perceptions of New Zealand among both the settler community and international audiences. I argue that the production of these photographs was motivated and influenced by commercial considerations and market expectations. The “truth” value of these photographs as documentary artefacts is compromised by the politically- and commercially-motivated discourses that informed their production. Predominant ideologies and priorities remain legible in the accompanying textual elements that guide interpretation in alignment with a preferred representation of the colony.

As commodities, these photographs are ill-at-ease with the aesthetic concerns of conventional art history. Burton Brothers’ photographs were consciously sought, taken, processed and presented by the operator and studio, then promoted and packaged for financial return. Photographic products were viewed, selected, purchased, re-presented and preserved by the consumer, then later inherited by subsequent generations or transferred to museum, library or art gallery collections. Increasingly in recent years an additional layer of commodification is applied to these photographs as collectors’ items offered for sale through auction sales or antique dealers. Through these processes the photographic transaction is not limited to one between the photographer and his subject, but an ongoing chain of negotiation and transfer experienced by the physical object.

In an attempt to locate “vernacular photographies” within a critical framework, Geoffrey Batchen has suggested that “we might do well to take our historiographic clues from the objects themselves.”¹ Burton Brothers photographs command a methodology determined by material emphases. As commercial photographs produced in multiple numbers by a corporate body of operators whose individual identities are subsumed by that of the firm,

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Burton Brothers photographs confound art history’s usual prioritisation of singular authorship and originality. While consideration of authorial intention is problematic, intention remains important in questioning why a photograph was made and marketed by the studio. This is recoverable from promotional matter and the studio’s inscriptions. These materials also shed light upon how these photographs operated within the society for whom they were produced. Such a method empowers the photographic object to present a history of photography without the burden of a historical or biographical narrative derived from written sources.

However, Burton Brothers’ photographs must be placed within the historical context of colonial New Zealand in order to register the social, political and economic climate that influenced the studio’s practice. Alfred and Walter Burton were not itinerant operators; they were permanent residents in the city of Dunedin and had a vested interest in promoting the opportunities and successes of the new colony, as represented in their photographs. However, it is equally important to consider that as British citizens within an expanded empire, Alfred and Walter Burton had less perception of themselves as “New Zealanders” than as agents of an international economy and society. The studio was among the first to present photographs of New Zealand to international audiences, and its directors and practitioners were surely aware of operating within an international context.

As such, it is appropriate to consider Burton Brothers photographs within the transnational field of scholarship on nineteenth century photography. In reference to relevant international literatures and primary source documentation, I reassess the photographs of Burton Brothers as ideologically- and commercially-conditioned constructs, rather than as neutral historical documents. In doing so, I connect New Zealand photography with transnational histories of photography to consider the development and commercial application of the medium in the colonial context against identified models of international practice.

In this thesis photographs are examined as physical objects, prioritising photographic materiality over image content. This methodology is informed and guided by the close and systematic study of the material properties of Burton Brothers photographs spanning the studio’s phases of operation. Seeking to disrupt the conventional reading of Burton Brothers as stable documents of the past, I resist the interpretation of photographs as illustrations to biographical or historical narratives. Instead, I argue that the impression of New Zealand circulated by Burton Brothers was derived more from the text accompanying and overlaying its photographic products than the visual image content. Analysis of photographic images as evidence of New Zealand’s history is therefore abandoned for an examination of how historical events and circumstances influenced a photograph’s material form and the photographic object’s making. Furthermore, this thesis recontextualises the photographs
released by Burton Brothers as products of commercial endeavour that were subject to the studio’s commercial imperatives and associated agendas. This in turn informs a new understanding of the commercial photography trade in New Zealand in the nineteenth century and the role of commercial photographers in the construction of an ideal of New Zealand.

**Burton Brothers in New Zealand Photographic History**

As the most famous and revered of New Zealand’s colonial photographers, Burton Brothers has dominated our photographic history. Burton Brothers is one of the few photographic firms known outside this country, and Alfred Burton and his studio figure in inclusions of New Zealand photography in international studies on the history of photography.\(^2\) However, New Zealand’s photographic history is only really beginning to be discussed in academic scholarship. Publications on nineteenth century New Zealand photography have been limited to broad overviews, thematic histories and biographical monographs, intended for a popular readership. Consequently, no formal programme for the study of the history of photography exists, and no clear parameters have been established locally for this field of knowledge. This thesis is pioneering as a sustained, critical analysis of the Burton Brothers firm as exponents of colonial photographic practice. No other doctoral theses on nineteenth century photography are known to have been completed in New Zealand.

Despite the dearth of academic scholarship on the history of New Zealand photography, my research draws upon an existing body of related research. These publications must be acknowledged for recording essential information, and facilitating further research and an appreciation for the significance of New Zealand’s photographic heritage. Hardwicke Knight (1910-2008), a pioneering figure in the study of New Zealand photography, began to publish books on New Zealand photographic history after his retirement as photographer for the School of Medicine at the University of Otago. Knight’s *Photography in New Zealand: A Social and Technical History* (1971) was the first major text to detail New Zealand’s

photographic history. This was followed with *New Zealand Photographers: A Selection* (1981), a collection of biographical summaries and comprehensive listing of many of New Zealand’s known nineteenth century photographers based on the author’s personal collection and major public collections. While not without error and omission, Knight’s work is significant for delineating important trajectories in the advent of photographic technology in New Zealand. He also identified many of the pivotal personalities in photography’s early phases in this country, particularly in Dunedin.

Around the time that Knight was writing, two organisations were established to promote New Zealand photography. Both PhotoForum (founded 1974) and the New Zealand Centre for Photography (founded 1985) helped to foster enthusiasm for historical research and the collecting of New Zealand photographs. The directors of these organisations, John B. Turner and William Main respectively, along with Hardwicke Knight form the three seminal figures in the development of scholarship in New Zealand photography. Main and Turner’s most significant contribution is *New Zealand Photography from the 1840s to the Present* (1993), a survey of the development of photography in New Zealand through biographical entries on individual photographers. This publication is recognised as a useful reference tool for study on New Zealand photography and is adequate for a general readership. However, the biographical structure of the text limits thematic or comparative study, and the lack of adequate citation compromises its reliability. The limitations of their approach to the history of New Zealand photography were identified at the time of publication. The book was observed to be “about photographers primarily, not photography” and provided an anthology rather than a historical survey. Comments of this nature reflect the intellectual crisis facing the study of New Zealand photography. Lacking any identified authority and standards of

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7 Ireland, 42.
excellence in criticism and scholarship, the audience for the history of New Zealand photography “was doomed to attend a play of fascinating characters without a plot.”

David Eggleton sought to revisit and update the information contained in both New Zealand Photography from the 1840s to the Present and Knight’s earlier research in Into the Light: A History of New Zealand Photography (2006). Eggleton, an established poet and art commentator, employed a narrative structure to present a concise survey of photography in New Zealand which he acknowledges as a “personal response.” Into the Light is intended for a general audience and therefore does not aspire to academic rigour, yet it offers a useful contribution in the range of material covered and the thematic structure applied to New Zealand’s photographic history.

The fame of Burton Brothers is reflected and reinforced by their inclusion in all published histories on New Zealand photography. In addition to anthologies, Burton Brothers has been the subject of a monograph, a feature film and a number of exhibitions and articles. The popular history of the Burton Brothers firm has been largely shaped by Knight’s monograph Burton Brothers: Photographers (1980). A biography of Alfred and Walter Burton, Knight’s book is significant in that the author sought out and recorded comprehensive information on the Burton Brothers studio. However, the publication is not without its problems. It has few citations, and there are a number of unqualified statements that cast doubt on the accuracy of certain information. Knight’s focus is also drawn to Dunedin, with the inclusion of much extraneous information on peripheral personalities and issues. Although he compiled a reasonably thorough bibliography on the Burton Brothers studio and associated

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8 Ireland, 45.


10 Eggleton, 6.

practitioners, this is by no means complete and was limited by the research facilities and technologies available at the time.

Following the publication of his monograph, Knight was employed as technical advisor on *Pictures* (1981), a feature film based on the Burton Brothers photographic activities and the personal rivalry between the directors of the studio. Knight had misgivings on the historical accuracy of this production and recalled that much of his advice was ignored. The chronology of the film was greatly altered, with many of the featured events actually occurring after Walter Burton's death in 1880. Interestingly, none of the photographs featured in the film were taken by either Alfred or Walter Burton. However, the final scene of the film showed the Burton Brothers negatives “decaying” in storage at the National Museum of New Zealand (now Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa), which acquired the collection in 1943. The publicity and criticism attracted by the film generated significant interest in the legacy of Burton Brothers studio, and in 1986 central government funding was secured for a six-year project to conserve and appropriately store the glass plate negatives.

Knight’s research and the international distribution of the film generated interest in the Burton Brothers outside of New Zealand, particularly in centres where the studio’s photographs had accumulated in institutional collections. In 1987 Knight co-curated an exhibition of Burton Brothers photographs at the Museum voor Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnology), Rotterdam, Holland and contributed an essay to the exhibition catalogue. Drawing upon the museum’s holdings of Burton Brothers photographs and examples from Knight’s collection, this exhibition utilised the photographs to illustrate the lives of the photographers and the history of colonisation in the Pacific. However, this approach failed to provide a sustained critical analysis of the photographs. The curation and discussion was framed by an emphasis on the ethnographic, presenting an adversarial view of colonisation with the indigenous population portrayed as the victims of their “British Oppressors.”

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12 Hardwicke Knight, interview by author, Dunedin, 19 October 2006.


the authors of the catalogue essays address the commercial imperatives of Burton Brothers’
endeavour, they appear to accept the photographs as truthful documentary records.16

This ethnographic emphasis has persisted in other international exhibitions and
publications featuring Burton Brothers photographs. In 1997 The Art Gallery of New South
Wales hosted *Portraits of Oceania*, an exhibition exploring the portrayal of Pacific peoples in
nineteenth century photography. Twenty-four Burton Brothers photographs featured in the
exhibition and are discussed in the exhibition’s catalogue. Paul Fox and Michael Hayes
(Philatelist and Pacific Historian, respectively) both focussed on Alfred Burton as
photographer in his representation of indigenous populations in *The Camera in the Coral
Islands* and *The Maori at Home* series.17 Both these essays discuss the politics of a male
Victorian photographer touring among indigenous populations with the aim of securing and
circulating their image. Hayes in particular challenges the “faithful observation” of Burtons
representations and interrogates the language in his published diaries, with the frequent use of
terms such as “capture,” “loot” and “taking” reinforcing the predatory nature of the camera
and illuminating Burton’s colonialist agenda.18 These essays are valuable for placing the work
of Burton Brothers in the context of Pacific history and post-colonial scholarship. However,
by not consulting the full range of primary sources available, Fox and Hayes both
inadvertently included inaccuracies in their analysis.19

Alfred Burton’s photography and its relationship to colonisation is again the focus of
Hayes’ essay “Photography and the Emergence of the Pacific Cruise: Rethinking the
Representational Crisis in Colonial Photography,” published in the anthology *Colonialist
Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*.20 Using the example of the series of photographs

16 Anneke Groeneveld, "The Burton Brothers," in *Burton Brothers: Fotografen in
Nieuw-Zeeland*, 30.

17 Paul Fox, "Portraits of Oceania," in *Portraits of Oceania*, 23-28; Michael Hayes,


19 Three of the photographs selected for scrutiny by Hayes were taken not by Alfred
Burton but by E. W. Henderson. They were subsequently acquired and relicensed by the
Burton Brothers studio (as indicated in the studio’s negative register) Both authors feature a
portrait of a Samoan female with Mr W. T. Still, one of the Wairarapa’s passengers, and enter
into some speculation as to why this was not included in the catalogue of prints for sale.
However the studio negative register states clearly that this was a “Private View” and was
therefore not intended for general circulation.

20 Hayes, “Photography and the Emergence of the Pacific Cruise,” in *Colonialist
Photography*. 
taken by Burton on two 1884 South Pacific tourist expeditions aboard the Union Steam Ship Company’s *Wairarapa*, Hayes explored tourism as an extension of colonialism in the Pacific and the camera as a mechanism of Western power in the representation of indigenous peoples. Hayes’ essay is again useful for its location of Burton’s photography within the framework of post-colonial scholarship, yet is weakened by its focus on the individual photographer and expresses the same inaccuracies found in his earlier catalogue essay. However, this remains one of the few publications on Burton Brothers photographs published for an academic readership.

A new generation of museum professionals, historians and art historians has emerged in recent years, and their research provides a more rigorous, scholarly approach to the study of New Zealand photographic history, including Burton Brothers. As an Art History Honours candidate at Victoria University of Wellington, Lissa Mitchell conducted research into Burton Brothers photographs of the Milford Sound region.\(^2\) Mitchell commenced her discussion by comparing these photographs with visual representations of the region by landscape painters and surveyors, while aligning Burton Brothers photographs with the government’s agenda for the region and the purposes of explorer and tourist host Donald Sutherland in promoting tourism in the Milford Sounds. Although unpublished, Mitchell’s research is thorough and significantly acknowledges the photographer’s “point of view,” while also addressing the function of Burton Brothers photographs as a marketing tool. Mitchell revisited this research in an article on photographing the Sutherland Falls, Milford Sound, published in the *New Zealand Journal of Photography*.\(^2\) Her essay provides a clear picture of the competition among photographers to secure views of landscape features for an eager market.

Brett Mason conducted research into the original negatives of the Burton Brothers studio as part of an internship at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa for his qualification in Museum and Heritage Studies.\(^2\) While Mason’s research is unpublished, his findings on *The Camera in the Coral Islands* series formed the basis for the exhibition *Innocents Abroad: Touring the Pacific Through a Colonial Lens*, which was developed for

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\(^2\) Brett Mason is currently Director, Museum of Wellington City and Sea, Wellington.
the 2006 New Zealand International Festival of the Arts and subsequently toured nationally.24

Primarily referring to Alfred Burton’s published diary, Mason’s catalogue essay provides a succinct overview of Burton’s output during his excursion aboard the Union Steam Ship Company’s Wairarapa. Mason’s text is accompanied by two essays: maritime historian Gavin McLean provides some insight into the operations of the Union Steam Ship Company, and poet Tusiata Avia ponders the social context of these photographs. While brief, *Innocents Abroad* is important for demonstrating the continued and developing interest in Burton Brothers photographs.

The international significance of the Burton Brothers studio is confirmed by its inclusion in the *Oxford Companion to the Photograph*. In her entry on Burton Brothers, Elizabeth Edwards acknowledges the commercial success of the firm and concentrates her brief discussion on the *Camera in the Coral Islands* and *The Maori at Home* series, the former she describes as: “bland scenes and poses typical of the transient photographer.”25 Of particular interest is Edwards’ reference to Rotterdam Museum of Ethnology’s *Burton Brothers: Fotografen in Nieuw-Zeeland, 1866-1898* as the authoritative text on Burton Brothers, rather than Hardwicke Knight’s earlier publication. However, this is perhaps due to the scarcity of the latter text outside of New Zealand.

The representation of the Burton Brothers in published literature is constrained by the prevailing dependency on biographical and historical narrative. This thesis acknowledges and draws upon the work of previous writers on New Zealand photography, but departs from this literature to pursue an alternative approach. Rather than constructing the history of the Burton Brothers studio through a dispersed array of known facts in the life of the studio and its operators, I interrogate photographic objects and primary source literature to present not only the story of a photograph’s making, but an analysis of how these photographs functioned for consumers. This is founded upon a conviction that photography is a deliberate act, especially in the situation of nineteenth century colonial photography with materials often scarce and processes laborious. Photographs are the product of individual, or collective, motivation and generally made for a purpose. Examined as objects, photographs bear the permanent traces of past interactions and can reveal the intentions of their makers.

I resist the interpretation of photographs and photographic practice within the parameters of a singular academic discipline, preferring to traverse the methods of art history,


museology, social and political history, anthropology, cultural studies and literary criticism, among others. This interdisciplinary approach benefits from access to the wealth of international literature that considers photographs as primary sources for analysis, specifically photographic materiality and theories of language and photography.

**Photographic Materiality**

Systems of managing historical photograph collections in New Zealand’s research institutions have developed in response to the practice of using photographs only as supporting sources. These widespread systems have in turn influenced a history of photography constructed mainly through written sources. It is an accepted convention in museums and libraries in New Zealand, and elsewhere, to study photographs in reproduction. Following the practice established and promoted by the Alexander Turnbull Library (National Library of New Zealand), holdings of photographic prints are reproduced and filed within categories derived from the subject matter conveyed in the image content.26 This approach is necessitated by the inherent fragility of the medium and enables unrestricted public access to photographic images, with the original objects preserved in controlled storage environments. However, the interpretation of photographs within a library framework emphasises the visual content of the image over the object’s physical properties. Photographs in museum and library collections are generally classified according to library systems, with subject headings derived from the Library of Congress cataloguing protocols or other subject thesauri.27 With general access to photographs limited to reproductions, increasingly through electronic image databases, the user is dependent on the priorities of the cataloguing system to recover information on the original object.

The examination of photographs in reproduction results in the loss of information integral to a fuller interpretation of a photograph. Information pertaining to the context of production, the photographer’s *modus operandi* or possible intentions is reflected in the chosen format (negative type, print size and type, form of support) and peripheral information such as inscriptions and mode of presentation (a loose print or presented in album or presentation wallet, for instance). Without access to this information, photographs are typically understood as images and are studied for their documentary capacity. Examining

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26 This assessment is drawn from my own experience as a cataloguer and curator of photographs in museum collections.

27 Many New Zealand collections classify photograph items according to subject heading derived from Kathleen Napier, *Colonial Keywords: A Thesaurus of Early Settlement Life in New Zealand* (Napier: Bookmarks Indexing and Editing Services, 2001).
photographs as individual reproductions limits understanding of the context of production as the object is divorced from its original presentation and associated material, and opportunities for comparative and sequential analysis of related photographs are usually curtailed.

The interpretation of historical photographs is therefore limited by their use. Historians in recent years have addressed the typical use of photographs as illustrations to a broader narrative rather than as primary sources for historical research. New Zealand historian Bronwyn Dalley recognised the tendency for historians to use photographs as “visual quotations” that are usually identified and located after the written text is complete. In this manner photographs “amplify the written text, they show the point we wish to make, and they support our arguments: they decorate.” Historian Martha A. Sandweiss attributes this reluctance among historians to use photographs as primary sources to a lack of visual literacy among historians and a bias towards literary sources in the teaching of history. I argue that the widespread systems for managing access to photographs, as described above, compromise the usefulness of the photographic object as a historical source and cultivate a shallow understanding of photography.

The study of photographs in their original formats and as three-dimensional artefacts rather than two-dimensional images is central to this thesis. The material properties of a photograph are intrinsic to its production, but have largely been neglected by writers on photography and its history. One exception is the anthology, Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images edited by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart. Edwards and Hart’s approach to photography derives from the “material turn” experienced in anthropology, which foregrounds objects as socially-defined sites for the exchange of meaning and memory. Edwards and Hart observe that popular methods of looking at photographs prioritise visual image content over the material aspects of a photograph:

The prevailing tendency is that photographs are apprehended in one visual act, absorbing image and object together, yet privileging the former. Photographs thus become detached from their physical properties and consequently from the

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functional context of materiality that is glossed merely as a neutral support for images.31

A photograph’s image content and “indexical appeal” – that is, the understanding of a photograph as a physical trace of a past reality – are essential attributes that generally form the basis for the production, acquisition and preservation of a photograph. However, twenty-first century collection management practices have placed even greater emphasis on the documentary properties of the photograph by creating digital image databases of photographic collections recoverable through written descriptions and keywords. Joanna Sassoon, former manager of photographic collections at the State Library of Western Australia, analysed the altered meaning of photographs in this widespread library, museum and art gallery practice.32 In her essay “Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction,” Sassoon applied Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” to analyse the transformation made to photography when reduced from a three-dimensional material object to a digital representation. Benjamin determined that through the reproduction of a work of art by photographic means, the artwork’s image content becomes widely-circulated yet its status as a work of art is diminished. Sassoon witnessed the equivalent process in digitally reproduced photographs which are translated from their unique material state to a standardised image file on a computer screen. Transmission of the photographer’s intention is further interrupted by the additional layer of textual descriptive material as appears on the collection database (known as “metadata”).33 This metadata is essential for the continued access to and interpretation of the featured object, yet its content and character are determined by the subjectivity and knowledge of the individual cataloguer and the priorities and foci of the institution. These factors compromise the reliability of this data and interrupt the photographic meaning transmitted by a digital reproduction.

Sandweiss also recognises the threat to photographic materiality presented by the increasing availability of historical photographs as “disembodied digital images” on online databases.34 Urging historians to consider the value of photographs as primary sources, she encourages her colleagues to consider the physical properties of photographs in their original

31 Edwards and Hart, 2.


33 Sassoon, 190-193.

forms to access information about their production and meaning. While acknowledging the usefulness of pictorial content to scholarly enquiry, Sandweiss recommends that historians borrow tools from art history to consider the story of a photograph’s making:

Although art historians may pose different questions than do historians, they nonetheless have an abiding interest in something to which historians need to give greater attention: the physical form of the photograph. For photographs are not just images; they are physical artifacts. The physical form of the photographic image, prescribed by prevailing technology, determines what can be photographed, how it can be displayed or published, how it can be encountered by others, how it can circulate through public culture. Visual images may circulate freely now over the Internet, but original photographs (at least those not created by digital technologies) remain time-bound physical objects, and historians must be mindful of photographs as objects if they wish to make responsible use of them as primary-source documents. 35

Sandweiss’ discussion stems from her earlier consideration of the role of photography in the exploration of the North American Western frontier and the use of photographs to support expansionist policies. 36 She uses photographs as primary sources and considers photographic technology and the context of production in determining the meaning of a photograph. This information is only recoverable by viewing photographs in their original form, particularly in the form intended for public circulation:

Those who would use historical photographs as evidence must consider pictorial content but must also pay attention to the pictures’ physical form and the ways in which they appeared before the public eye. As an engraved reproduction in a newspaper, as a framed print at an exposition, as a stereograph for sale in a railroad office, a photograph could communicate different meanings and convey different sorts of authority. 37

Through her analysis of photographic formats, Sandweiss recognised that with the advent of photographic prints on paper, text was more readily applied to photographs than on the earlier formats of metal or glass supports. 38 This transformed the application of photographs and

35 Sandweiss, "Image and Artifact," 197.

36 Martha A. Sandweiss, ed., Photography in Nineteenth-Century America (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1991); Sandweiss, Print the Legend.

37 Sandweiss, Print the Legend, 8.

enhanced their narrative potential by enabling the direction of the intended meaning from the associated text:

So fully and persuasively did such words shape the public meanings of the photographs that viewers could remain unaware that the picture might illuminate the intentions of their creators more fully than they could illuminate the subjects they purported to describe.  

Analysing the means of presentation and the message conveyed by the text affects an alternative means to access the intention of the photographer that is not reliant upon biographical information. Although biography remains relevant as part of the context of production, it is not the only way to “read” photographs. The message carried by the text juxtaposed against the visual content can reveal the photographer’s priorities and attitudes towards the subject depicted as well as the intended purpose and audience for a photographic image.

“Reading” Photographs

Semiotic theories of photographic meaning have called attention to the constructed nature of photographs and the role of the photographer in creating and conveying a visual message. While semiotics accepts that each viewer will interpret a photograph according to his or her own circumstances, experiences, and interests, it asserts that interpretations will be guided by certain visual signs included by the photographer. This determines the act of viewing a photograph as one of active engagement, enlisting the viewer to decipher the visual signs contained within an image, thereby “reading” the visual text of the photograph.

Many writers on photographic meaning and its role in society reference Roland Barthes’ critical writings. Barthes identified two levels of meaning in a visual image: the “denoted” message (the thing represented) and the “connoted” message (the meaning inferred through the mode of representation). In the case of the photograph, the connoted and denoted messages are usually indistinguishable, thus the denoted message is received as the only legible meaning – hence the commonly mistaken correlation of documentary photography with reality. Here Barthes identified a vital paradox in that the connoted message lay within

39 Sandweiss, Print the Legend, 9.

40 Barthes’ writing on photography was discussed extensively in publications from the 1970s and 1980s by John Berger, Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula and John Tagg. The writings of these authors have in turn been applied by more recent scholars on photographic theory, including Geoffrey Batchen, Elizabeth Edwards, Alex Hughes, Andrea Noble, Mary Price and Clive Scott. References to these authors are contained in the bibliography.
the photograph’s apparent objectivity – in the selection of pose, setting, peripheral objects and the style of composition and presentation including technical method and manipulation. He concluded that this connoted meaning was culturally-generated and dependent on shared knowledge for comprehension: “its signs are gestures, attitudes, expressions, colours or effects, endowed with certain meanings by virtue of the practices of a certain society.”\(^{41}\) Therefore, the photograph possesses no neutral denotative value and its meaning can only be relayed through interpretation of the connotative message which is ideologically constructed and constrained, thus undermining the objectivity of the photograph.\(^{42}\)

Barthes identified written text as a third level of signification in photographs. Using the example of press photography, he discussed the peripheral text that accompanies the printed photograph as a co-existent structure that inflects meaning on the image. The caption, headline and newspaper masthead impose a “parasitic message” upon the denotative and connotative messages of the photographic image.\(^{43}\) Barthes observed that the relationship between photographs and text was reversed. While formerly photographs functioned to illustrate and clarify the written message, instead the text “loads the images, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination.”\(^{44}\)

Barthes identified two key functions performed by textual accompaniments: “relay” and “anchorage.”\(^{45}\) Relay describes instances where the text and image are complementary, such as dialogue in comic strips or film. Anchorage, however, is the more frequent function of the linguistic message and applies in instances where the text acts as a substitute for the image, such as informative captions for press photographs. This concept literally describes the “anchoring” of the various possible meanings conveyed by the signifieds to the meaning intended by the photographer or publisher of the photograph. Accepting that images are polysemic, anchorage functions to “fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs.”\(^{46}\) Anchorage is rarely redundant and tends to guide interpretation rather than identification. Furthermore, anchorage is often ideologically based.


Barthes’ analysis of the interplay between image and text has informed later writers on this topic. In *The Photograph – A Strange Confined Space* (1994), Mary Price considers the function of text as mediator between viewer and image.\(^{47}\) She identifies the capacity of written description to direct and limit the way a photograph is interpreted.

Describing is necessary for photographs. Call it captioning, call it titling, call it describing, the act of specifying in words what the viewer may be led both to understand and to see is as necessary to the photograph as it is to the painting. Or call it criticism. It is the act of describing that enables the act of seeing.\(^{48}\)

Although foregrounding the implications of text upon the reception of photographic meaning by the viewer, Price acknowledges that this process is limited by the visible content of the image. However, she further acknowledges that the function or application of a photograph determines its meaning. Price uses the distinction of a photograph printed in a newspaper in the context of news versus that same photograph exhibited as a framed print in an art context; the discourse of each institutional context inflects further meaning on the photograph beyond its visual content. In an argument derived from John Tagg, Price considers the institutional power structures which subject photographic meaning to their own agenda, thus influencing interpretation: “The relevant codes are outside the photograph and inside social structures.”\(^{49}\)

In the case of historical photography, Price later states that meaning can be determined by examination of the original context of production in order to determine the intended meaning.\(^{50}\) However, she cautions that the interpretation of this context and the meanings it generates will be dependent on the subjectivity of the analyst and “couched in terms of the critic’s profession,” thus imposing a further layer of rhetoric upon the photographic image.\(^{51}\)

Clive Scott’s *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* examines the language of description as a determiner of meaning in the reception of contemporary photography.\(^{52}\) Scott

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\(^{48}\) Price, 5.

\(^{49}\) Price, 11.

\(^{50}\) Price, 35.

\(^{51}\) Price, 42.

borrows from Barthes the concepts of *studium* and *punctum*. These terms address the viewer’s response to a photographic image and the culturally inflected meanings derived from photographs. *Studium* is the intended, generally-perceived meaning of a photograph which Barthes described as a “contract” between photographer and viewer. Through shared cultural understanding and “education,” the viewer may access the photographer’s intention and read the image in accordance with this preferred response. *Studium* is language-dependent as external cultural texts – be they written, spoken or just shared knowledge – are required to access the intended meaning. *Punctum*, however, describes the incidental meanings derived from a viewer’s personal response. Co-existent with *studium*, *punctum* disrupts the intended meaning through details that arouse the viewer’s personal, emotional response. Also referred to by Barthes as “trauma” and “obtuse meaning,” *punctum* is activated through “non-selective seeing” and is thus pre-linguistic.

Scott applies these concepts to his interrogation of photographs as inherently historical documents – at the moment of capture, the moment is immediately past. The indexical links between the photograph and the moment in reality become obscured through the passage of time as details of the photograph’s making are lost. Instead, the viewer interprets photographs through *punctum* in response to details visible in a photographic image. In order to recover indexicality, the photograph becomes subject to language which defines the circumstances at the moment of capture: “language alone can be relied upon to give a photograph an intention.”

This argument is extended to Scott’s analysis of the function of titles and captions. In relation to photography’s “inescapable pastness” he considers the caption as mediator which seeks to counteract the distance between a photograph and its viewer. However, captions (or titles) restrict possible interpretations to that contained within the verbal message. The

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53 Scott, 24-25.
56 Scott, 30.
57 Scott, 29.
58 Scott, 33-35.
59 Scott, 55.
polysemic potential of photographic meaning renders photographs vulnerable to this “linguistic ballast.”

It [the title] is itself a lens which determines or tries to regulate, the spectator’s psychological distance from the image, the uses to which the image is put, the generical implications that cluster round it. What the image depicts is what we see it depict; the title does not identify so much as create certain kinds of optical awareness. In the photograph everything is already there, but in no particular order and without intentionality. The title asks the photograph to have intention, to pull itself into a concerted shape, a design.\textsuperscript{60}

Scott’s argument need not be limited to the loss of indexical meaning through time – it is equally applicable to the loss of meaning through geographical distance and differences in culture and context. His argument combines the approaches of semiotics, materiality and the interplay of the photograph and text and, along with the theorists from whom his arguments are derived, offers a rigorous and flexible methodology for interpreting the photographs of the Burton Brothers studio.

**Reading Burton Brothers**

Viewing products from the Burton Brothers studio involves a process of reading. Each print released by the studio was inscribed with the firm’s signature, the negative number and a descriptive caption. The studio released photographs in series which were promoted with a published mail-order catalogue, providing a caption and unique negative number for each photograph in the series. The influence of textual devices upon the interpretation of the studio’s photographic products can be understood in relation to the theoretical approaches developed by Barthes, Price and Scott. As Scott describes, the inclusion of the photographer or producer’s textual interpretation alongside the photograph enables their constant presence, “as a bystanding consciousness presiding over the image.”\textsuperscript{61} This “textual overlay” – as I describe it – provides an access point to the context of production and allows some insight into the commercial operations of the studio, the photographers’ intentions and their ideological motivation. This necessitates studying the photographs in their original formats, as advocated by scholars on photographic materiality.

While no Burton Brothers business records are known to exist and only a small amount of outgoing correspondence has survived, many of the studio’s original glass plate negatives and the accompanying negative register have been preserved and are held at Museum of New

\textsuperscript{60} Scott, 62.

\textsuperscript{61} Scott, 52.
Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). The negative register is an important reference point for analysing Burton Brothers photographs. The register supplies a number and descriptive caption for nearly six thousand negatives in the studio’s portfolio, and it remains a useful collection management tool at Te Papa. In addition to these whole plate negatives, the register itemises around one thousand stereographic negatives and five hundred large format 10 x 12 inch negatives. It is not only important as an inventory of Burton Brothers’ work, but also points to the studio’s systems of organisation to describe and arrange photographs. The register is introduced with an index that categorises the negatives by geographical location or by series, such as *The Maori at Home* and *The Camera in the Coral Islands*. Major series and projects are also identified in the body of the register as negatives are grouped according to their association with these events, for instance “West Coast Road: 1st series” and “Sounds 1st Sounds Series: March ’74, ‘Luna.’”

For this thesis, Burton Brothers photographs were viewed at museums and libraries throughout New Zealand. A particularly high concentration of original prints are held in Dunedin collections at the Hocken Collections, Otago Settlers Museum and Dunedin Public Library, with smaller holdings at the Dunedin City Archives and in private collections. This accumulation is in part due to repatriation of Dunedin- and Otago-related subject matter to the city and the interest in local enterprise among the community, but also signals that the studio retained a strong local clientele while distributing photographs throughout New Zealand and overseas.

As well as loose photographic prints, a number of albums were viewed in institutional collections, revealing repeated patterns in formatting and arrangement. Other photographic products were also examined, particularly the portrait formats of *cartes de visite* and cabinet cards, stereographs, lantern slides, large scale carbon prints and a sampling of the studio’s original negatives at Te Papa. The most numerous examples were, however, the whole plate prints that were Burton Brothers’ preferred format and formed the focus of the studio’s series and catalogues.

Six of Burton Brothers published catalogues remain extant in library collections: *Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery* (1875); *Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery* (1879); *New Zealand through the Camera: A

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62 Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa holds a small amount of Burton Brothers correspondence as part of Hardwicke Knight’s collection and in the Dominion Museum’s Director’s correspondence files, 1890s-1910s.

63 *Burton Bros. Catalogue of Views*, microfilm, 10322, Hocken Collections, Dunedin (original held at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa).
Catalogue of Three Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery (1884); The Camera in the Coral Islands (1884); The Maori at Home (1885), and Wintering on Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri (1889). A further illustrated catalogue containing Burton Brothers negatives was published in 1901 by Muir and Moodie, who took over the business and negative stock in 1898.

These non-illustrated catalogues follow a standard format featuring a list of photographs identified by their negative number and accompanied by a caption. Although generally listed in numerical (and therefore chronological) sequence, lists were sometimes arranged thematically, reinforcing the presence of the associated series. The catalogues provide clear insight into the means of promoting and circulating photographic products and the ways in which contemporary audiences accessed these photographs. Caption listings functioned as the description from which customers could order photographs, using the negative number as the reference. Orders were encouraged by mail and formats were promoted as being easily transmittable by post: “The Mounted Views can be safely packed and transmitted by book post, to any part of the Colonies or the mother country.” Discounts were available for orders of a dozen or more, and postage charges were waived for bulk orders. The studio also offered to compile collections of photographs (“sets”) based on the customer’s preference:

We will carefully select “Sets” of any extent for our customers upon their informing us what districts, and what class of scenery they would prefer: whether snowy mountains or fertile plains, wild gorges or busy towns, waterfalls or glaciers, rivers or lakes, “workings” or flumes, “bits” of bush or “studies” of trees: or they can be ordered by the appended numbers.

Catalogues also typically contain an excerpt from the photographer’s diary or other written narrative which aimed “to serve in some measure as descriptive text for the photographs.”

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64 See Appendix 1 for a list of these catalogues with associated series and negatives numbers.

65 Muir & Moodie, Catalogue of New Zealand and South Sea Scenery (Dunedin: Muir and Moodie, 1901).

66 Burton Brothers, Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1875), n.p.


68 Burton Brothers, The Maori at Home: A Catalogue of a Series of Photographs, Illustrative of the Scenery and of Native Life in the Centre of the North Island of New Zealand. Also, Through the King Country with the Camera: A Photographer’s Diary. This will Serve in some Measure as Descriptive Text for the Photographs (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1885).
some instances this text elucidates the content of the photographs, but it also provides an indication of the values the studio held and sought to promote. The photographer’s diary was also frequently published in Dunedin newspapers and occasionally syndicated to other centres. This, along with published advertisements and editorial comment, complete the large volume of primary source material employed to interrogate the Burton Brothers studio in this thesis.

As mentioned, systematic study and recording of photographs revealed patterns in the studio’s presentation of photographs, particularly in regard to albums. Many albums compiled by Burton Brothers contain as a frontispiece a montage entitled “Maori Land.” The studio issued three montages under this name in order to promote new series of photographs or recent additions to the studio’s negative stock. These montages reflect Burton Brothers’ preferred method for presenting and marketing the studio and as such, an analysis of these montages provides a succinct introduction to their photographic products and studio operations, as well as their commercial priorities and agendas.

The studio’s first “Maori Land” montage was produced circa 1880 and is listed in the negative register as whole plate negative one (Plate 1). Arranged symmetrically, it contains cartes de visite and miniature studio portraits of Maori, photographs of kainga (settlements) and photographs in various sizes showing characteristic New Zealand scenery and flora. The montage text supplies a title for the composition: “Maori Land.” This title operates to unify and anchor the assembled images as representations of “Maoriland,” a popular expression for New Zealand among the colonial community. Representations of Maori were central to the “Maoriland” myth because subjects indigenous to New Zealand were utilised to equip the settler community with a unique history and character. Images of the sublime landscape scenery fed into this romantic vision of New Zealand, which along with Maori subjects were reduced to symbolic meaning. Burton Brothers’ visual representation of this term shows their awareness of an emergent nationalising influence and an effort to align their photographic products with popular representations of New Zealand.

The sub-heading “The Maori Portraits are Originals - Taken from Life” offers a claim to authenticity and demonstrates the studio’s attempt to position their photographs as a natural, true and “original” reflection of New Zealand life. This claim is spurious, as although these may be “taken” from living subjects the portraits show Maori photographed in the artificial surrounds of the portrait studio. This sub-heading also addresses conventions of photographic

practice and indicates that the prints were made from original negatives. While the prints featured in the montage may have been produced from the original negatives, most, if not all of these negatives were not made by the studio’s practitioners. The Maori portraits were acquired around 1878 from an Auckland studio, The American Photographic Company, while the photographs of the Devil’s Punchbowl waterfall and of the kainga at Te Aroha were taken by contract photographers Charles and George Spencer in 1878. However the photographer’s credit attributes authorship to the Burton Brothers studio: “Burton Brothers / Photographers / Number Forty-One Princes St. / Dunedin.”

From the *Maori Land* montage we can clearly see the studio’s reliance on text, arrangement and association in order to convey a message. Physical arrangement, the choice of words and the relationship of text and images are all employed to meet the studio agenda – in this instance to establish and promote the studio’s name and products. The visual content is subordinate to the text. Photographs depicting members of the indigenous population and natural features of the land are packaged into an iconic assemblage of New Zealand’s exoticism. Functioning as a title page, the montage serves to introduce and encapsulate the content contained in the album, and to guide interpretations of the individual photographs in accordance with the developing nationalist ideology reflected in the montage. As promotional material, the montages project the ideology and motivations of the firm, and hold more value in this regard than as a representation of the subjects depicted.

**Chapter Outline**

Following the chronological sequence of the studio’s development, this methodology will be applied to the major photographic series and projects conducted by the Burton Brothers studio in order to gauge a better understanding of the commercial operations of the firm and the production and trade of photography in nineteenth century New Zealand. Relevant literature will be introduced and discussed as applicable to themes considered in the following chapters. Themes addressed include the commercial trade in photography, intersections of photography with tourism operations and tourist literature, connections with commercial photographic operators and government uses of photography, and issues of race and place in photography of the colonial era.

The thesis begins with an introduction to the photographic practice operated by the Burton Brothers studio. The commercial motivations of the firm are established against an overview of the professional photography trade in nineteenth century Dunedin. The studio’s consistent reliance on a range of textual devices to promote and mediate their photographic products demonstrates this commercial focus, particularly their use of a consistent corporate
Chapter Two analyses the Burton Brothers corporate identity and considers this in the context of brand marketing. A historical discussion of copyright protection and licensing of photographic media is included in this chapter, and mechanisms for the sale and distribution of photographs are examined.

Chapter Three examines the first topographical views released by the studio and considers the practice of producing photographs in collective series and albums. The overriding project of the Burton Brothers studio was to acquire a portfolio of photographic negatives showing the range of New Zealand’s geographic features, material progress and indigenous characteristics. The scope of this project widened in accordance with photographic technology which enabled the production of photographs in regions remote from studio infrastructure. Travel became integral to the studio’s practice and is reflected in the promotion and presentation of photographs for commercial release. The chapter also considers the influence of arrangement of photographs in series and albums to impose constructed narratives, specifically travel narratives, upon the reading of these images.

In 1884 Alfred Burton joined a tourist excursion to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga aboard the Union Steam Ship Company’s Wairarapa. The photographs from this trip were released as a series entitled The Camera in the Coral Islands with an accompanying catalogue containing the photographer’s diary. Burton repeated this model in 1885 in a tour through the North Island’s King Country and released these photographs as a series entitled The Maori at Home. Chapters Four and Five consider the influence of the catalogues and narrative texts on the reading of these photographs and the subjects portrayed. With emphasis on the commercial purpose of these photographs, Chapter Four considers the function of the studio’s published catalogues and photograph captions to reinforce popular stereotypes and direct the portrayal and perception of indigenous subjects. Following this methodology, Chapter Five further examines the function of the caption and catalogue text in The Maori at Home (Through the King Country with a Camera). The agency of human photographic subjects is also addressed in relation to the political motivations of King Country Maori in having their likenesses circulated in photographic portraits.

Throughout the studio’s phases of operation, newspaper reporting and advertising played an essential role in promoting the celebrity of the studio and the sale of their work. This is clearly evident in the proliferation of material on the Burton Brothers studio printed in newspapers in the period after the eruption of Mount Tarawera on 10 June 1886. Chapter Six examines Burton Brothers’ use of news mechanisms and advertising to publicise its activities and considers the role of photography in circulating news and promoting colonial agendas. The newspaper presented an essential promotion tool for the sale of the studio’s photographs.
taken prior and subsequent to the eruption and their 1886 nationwide lecture series, *From Tongariro to the Terraces*. Chapter Six examines this material to analyse the studio’s use of news as a vehicle to promote the Burton Brothers brand and its practitioners. This chapter also considers the studio’s business acumen in recontextualising earlier bodies of work to meet new agendas and respond to the popular *zeitgeist*.

Frontier landscapes were visited and revisited by the studio. These projects show the studio sharing the methods and rhetoric of surveyors, reflecting and promoting government priorities for these regions. In 1888 two teams of photographers from Burton Brothers studio and rival commercial studio Morris & Co. accompanied a government survey party to measure the Sutherland Falls in Milford Sound, thought at that time to be the highest waterfall in the world. Chapter Seven analyses Burton Brothers’ photographs from this expedition against published and unpublished accounts of the trip. This analysis reveals the often complementary practices of photographers and surveyors and the efforts of both occupations to support colonial “vision” on the frontier. The chapter considers the relationship of commercial photographers, particularly Burton Brothers, to the colonial administration which used photography to support its endeavours in tourism, survey operations and infrastructural development.

The methodology of prioritising photographic material and “textual overlay” underpins the chapters outlined above. However, I accept that historical photographs possess continued utility as evidence and illustrations to historical narratives. I also acknowledge that photographic images are necessarily polysemic. The multiplicity of meaning accessed by diverse audiences according to cultural or personal priorities is both a valid and vital aspect of the study of photography. However, I have attempted to strip photographs of their external narratives in order to examine them in the forms in which they were produced. This has facilitated a broader and deeper analysis of New Zealand’s photographic industry than a predominantly biographically-derived approach would allow.
Chapter 1

BURTON BROTHERS – COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS

Professional Photography in Dunedin

By the early 1860s, professional photography was well-established in Dunedin with photographic studios converging on Princes Street, then the business hub of the city. A reporter for the Dunedin newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, noted the proliferation of portrait photographers in 1863:

As a stranger walks through the streets of Dunedin, he cannot but be surprised at the ubiquitous presence of the fine arts, as represented by photography. He is almost reminded of the City-road – dear to the Cockney – where at every other door he is forcibly taken possession of by a dingy man in black cotton gloves, and shocking bad hat, who *nolens volens* insists upon presenting him with a second self for the ridiculously small sum of sixpence. Photography has indeed invaded Dunedin. But the other day the upper stories of our own office were occupied by a professor of this art; and the exterior of our walls decorated with glass cases containing numerous “portraits of a gentleman” and the whole premises pervaded with the essence of collodion, and chemicals more powerful than odorous. Princes Street is the stronghold of the art. The sovereigns of the profession there reign supreme. There, at one establishment, the curious in these things may make himself acquainted with the faces of the Dunedin “big-wigs,” looking, some stern, some simpering out of innumerable *cartes de visite*; and at another immediately opposite, may be seen the likenesses of Melbourne celebrities, including the perpetual Governor of Victoria in his perpetual lieutenancy suit, and an engaging looking young man in large whiskers and a cavalry uniform. The presence of so many photographers we rejoice at as a sign of progress; for photography is certainly an art, and its professors artists. But if all of these photographers make a living, which it is to be hoped they do, the vanity of the good people of this district must certainly be more egregious than is generally supposed.¹

From its introduction in Dunedin, photography was understood as a profession and a commercial enterprise. The presence of commercial photographic studios was received as a sign of progress and a reflection of the advancement and sophistication of the city. Indeed, the comparison made between Princes Street and London’s photographic district indicates that Dunedin fulfilled the expectations of a progressive, commercial city. Photography, specifically photographic portraiture, was accepted as part of a modern city and a service to the local citizens who required personal likenesses. Also evident in this statement is a clear

¹ *The Daily Telegraph* (Dunedin), 15 May 1863.
positioning of photography as a fine art – a status that remained contested in international debates.²

Prior to the widespread commercial application of photography in the 1860s, early technological innovations and applications of photography in Britain were conducted predominantly by the gentlemen amateurs who dominated early photography there.³ New Zealand’s colonial population included a number of similarly wealthy and independent individuals who experimented with photography. In Christchurch Dr. Alfred Charles Barker made collodion wet plate photographs of the settlement and its inhabitants from around 1858 and the Reverend John Kinder photographed the Auckland region from 1860.⁴ The earliest recorded instance of a photograph taken in New Zealand was by the amateur John Edward Eyre, Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, in 1848.⁵ In addition to these amateurs, professional photographers were active in New Zealand in the first decades of both the colony and the medium. From 1848 newspaper advertisements were placed by travelling daguerreotypists who conducted tours throughout the country. In Auckland and Wellington J. Polack, J. Newman and H. B. Sealy all advertised their intention to take daguerreotype portraits and commissioned landscape views, while a Wellington wholesaler W. B. Rhodes & Co. imported complete daguerreotypes for sale.⁶

Gold was discovered in the Otago province in 1861.⁷ Since Otago’s foundation as a Scots Presbyterian colony in 1848, gold mining activities in the region precipitated mass-migration and an economic boom. Dunedin was transformed from a small and isolated

² In 1857 Lady Elizabeth Eastlake asserted that photography was not an art. Regarding photographic portraiture she maintained that photography’s indiscriminate treatment of surface detail made it incapable of flattering its subject and therefore could not be considered an artform. Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, "Photography," in Classic Essays on Photography, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete’s Island Books, 1980), 60.


⁵ Knight, Photography in New Zealand, 18.

⁶ New Zealander (Auckland), 20 May 1848; New Zealander, 5 August 1848; New Zealand Spectator and Cook’s Strait Guardian (Wellington), 16 August 1848; New Zealand Spectator and Cook’s Strait Guardian, 19 August 1848.

settlement to New Zealand’s largest and most prosperous city. With residual commercial activities in banking, shipping and law as well as the requisite infrastructure to support a sizeable population, Dunedin was the financial capital of New Zealand and remained so until the decline of gold in the 1870s and subsequent economic recession in the 1880s.

The precise arrival of professional photography in Dunedin is difficult to determine. The first trade directory was not published until 1863, at which point four individuals are listed as photographers or photographic artists. Harnett’s Dunedin Directory lists photographers Fred Baume and Thomas Pringle, photographic artists William Meluish and John McGregor, and chemist J. F. Black as a supplier of photographic goods. Prior to 1863 newspaper advertisements constitute a reliable source for determining photographic activities in the city. Itinerant daguerreotypists are likely to have visited the region, although Dunedin would not have presented a lucrative market for portraiture until the commencement of the gold rush. In Dunedin’s Otago Witness of 1855 advertisements appear for Mr Shaw’s “Daguerrean Gallery,” announcing its closure in March 1855 due to business engagements elsewhere and the ensuing winter months preventing “his prosecuting this art.” Shaw emphasised the value of daguerreotype portraiture as a “souvenir” which would be gratefully received by friends and family “at home,” hence demonstrating an awareness of the commercial potential of photographic portraiture.

From 1857 to 1860, James Wilson operated a photographic studio in Princes Street, believed to be Dunedin’s first permanent photographic studio. Hardwicke Knight, the pre-eminent compiler of Dunedin’s photographic history, initially attributed this feat to William Meluish in 1856. Knight subsequently established through newspaper evidence that Meluish first arrived in New Zealand in December 1858, initially working as a photographer in the Nelson area. Meluish relocated to Dunedin in 1860 and took over Wilson’s premises in March of that year. Wilson had arrived in Dunedin on the William and Jane in February 1857, advertising at the end of that month as a “Photographic Artist” taking portraits at the

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9 Otago Witness (Dunedin), 17 February 1855.


11 Knight does not state his source for his initial assertion, but he cites a photograph showing Meluish’s business premises with the name on the fascia board: “Meluish. Photographers. Established 1856.” Knight, Photography in New Zealand, 36.

Medical Hall. By October he had opened his “Photographic Gallery” on Princes Street, adjacent to the Oddfellows’ Hall. The following month he advertised his ability to take photographs by the “new collodian [sic] process” most likely in the form of ambrotypes. Correspondence between two amateur photographers, the Port Chalmers brewer William Strachan and Dunedin watchmaker Arthur Beverly, reveals that adequate materials were in short supply during the late 1850s and photographers were required to experiment with readily available chemicals and equipment. According to Strachan, Wilson could “make nothing himself in the way of chemicals” and brought his supply from Britain. Advertisements from daguerreotypists in New Zealand in the 1840s also indicate problems in accessing materials. However, problems of imported supply would have diminished in 1860s Dunedin which – prior to the establishment of the railway network – was reputed to have greater access to the rest of the world than with the neighbouring province of Canterbury.

Knight considered Wilson to be a less significant figure in the history of photographic practice in Dunedin, preferring to acknowledge Meluish as Dunedin’s “Father of Photography.” On assessment of the available evidence, Wilson’s importance in Dunedin’s photographic history is considerable. He established a practice of commercial photography which can be shown to have influenced his successors, being the first to regularly advertise and articulate his services in the newspapers (fig. 1-1). Wilson advertised the availability of photographs in a range of formats including calotypes, stereographs on glass and paper, and “Collodion Portraits,” presumably ambrotypes. Commissioned work was offered in portraiture and photographic copying, but Wilson sought to supplement his business in the sale of pre-produced “views” of Dunedin and Great Britain, also available in a range of finishing and formats.

Wilson’s advertising style was subsequently adopted by Meluish, who emulated the format and content of Wilson’s regular display advertisement (fig. 1-2). Meluish supplemented his business through the supply of photographic consumables and offered his

13 Otago Witness, 14 November 1857.
14 Otago Witness, 24 October 1857.
15 Otago Witness, 14 November 1857.
17 Olssen, 70.
services as an instructor in photography; both of these activities had considerable influence on the development of photography in Dunedin. Meluish’s studio was later purchased by Daniel Louis Mundy, and negatives attributed to Meluish were subsequently sold to and reissued by Frank Coxhead and later Burton Brothers, and then Muir and Moodie at the turn of the century. Wilson’s studio was taken over by Meluish, thus demonstrating the sustained, albeit indirect, influence of Wilson upon the development of professional photography in Dunedin.

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19 In Meluish’s first advertisement placed in the Otago Witness he concluded his notice with “The Art Taught.” Otago Witness, 31 March 1860. James Wheeler Allen is believed to be among those who learned photography from Meluish.

20 Knight, "The Individual in Local Photographic History," 49.
Hardwicke Knight credited another early photographer in Dunedin, John Tensfeld, with making the earliest surviving photograph of the settlement. The photograph showing Dunedin from Bell Hill gains its attribution to Tensfeld and date of 1858 through a printed label on the mount bearing the photographer’s name and date. In a memoir on early Dunedin photography published in the *Otago Witness* in 1927, Alfred Eccles attributed this photograph to Wilson. The evidence of Eccles, a writer and historian who lived in Dunedin from the 1860s, is circumstantial as he was apparently unaware of Tensfeld’s presence in Dunedin at that time. The photograph was subsequently copied and published by Muir and Moodie under their insignia, acknowledging the image as “The oldest known photo.” of Dunedin, yet erroneously dating it to 1852. Regardless of the actual date of this photograph or the identity of its photographer, this image demonstrates the early use of photography to record the progress of the colony for circulation overseas. Tensfeld continued this practice and in 1869 published *A Trip Through New Zealand: A New Zealand Souvenir* – an album containing twenty collodion prints of Otago, Canterbury, Westland, Nelson and Wellington being “Interesting Views of the Most Important Places in New Zealand.” Tensfeld’s style of topographical photography and his marketing methods provide a significant precedent in the commercial exploitation of photography in the New Zealand context.

As indicated by the article published in *The Daily Telegraph* in 1863, photographers descended on Dunedin among the migrants of the early 1860s. Knight has identified no less than thirty photographic studios operating in the city during the 1860s and serving a range of clients. Dunedin’s settler community included an elite of merchants, farmers, landowners and professionals who presented a demand for portraiture of themselves and their families. The advertisement for James Wilson’s Photographic Gallery (fig. 1-1) indicates the available technologies for photographic portraiture being collodion, presumably on glass (ambrotypes), and calotypes on paper, although no New Zealand-made examples of the latter are known to

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22 Eccles.

23 For example, Muir and Moodie, “Dunedin from Bell Hill 1852. The Oldest Known Photo.,” c.1898-1916, dry gelatin copy negative, 1/2-091262-F, Alexander Turnbull Library.


exist. The Daily Telegraph reporter confirmed the production of ambrotypes, noting the use of photographs in “glass cases” and the odour of collodion. The author also notes the proliferation of carte de visite portraits, indicating the popular use of this new technology almost contemporaneous with its enthusiastic introduction in Great Britain in 1857. The period of “cartomania” experienced in Britain from 1860-64 rendered photography a viable commercial pursuit and the popularity of cartes spread internationally.  

In Dunedin professional photography strongly adhered to the model established in Great Britain. The development of commercial photography in Britain was inhibited by the expense and patent restrictions associated with the daguerreotype process and William Henry Fox Talbot’s retention of patent on the calotype process. Although Talbot relaxed his patent for amateur use in 1852, he retained the licence for “photographic portraits for sale to the public.” The availability of the collodion wet plate process from 1851 and albumen printing from 1855 transformed photography in Britain. Released with no patent restrictions, these technologies allowed for the large-scale production and distribution of photographic images, thus making photography accessible to the middle classes and providing the basis for a commodified product. In response to this, wholesalers set up in business to supply materials to the trade and also for the mass production and distribution of celebrity portraits.

Following the example of their British counterparts, New Zealand photographic studios supplemented commissioned portraiture with sales of stereographs and portraits of local and international “notables.” The Daily Telegraph noted the supply of cartes de visite depicting “Melbourne celebrities,” thus appealing to Dunedin’s many recent migrants from Victoria. James Wilson included among his stock “Stereoscopes and Views embracing some of the Finest Scenery in Britain,” indicating the fashion for stereoscopy had arrived in New Zealand by the mid-1850s. The novelty factor of stereoscopy presented a means of marketing topographical photographs, further aided by the standard card format being suitable for posting within the colony and overseas.

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27 Edwards, 71; Seiberling, 69-70.


29 Edwards, 78.

30 Otago Witness, 31 July 1858
The Daily Telegraph reporter observed a culture among the competing Princes Street studios, reminiscent of the character of the London photographic precinct. The author described street hawkers outside photographic establishments in City Road touting for business. Writing in 1862, Stephen Thompson described this overt sales approach as a regrettable feature of the photographic trade. He deplored the poor quality products and work practices that rapid commercialisation had brought to photography, observing sweated labour and excessive prices: “Every one is under-paid and over-worked on the one hand, and the public is over-charged on the other.” While competition and commercial rivalry were not uncommon amongst firms, with many studios proclaiming to be the leaders within their region, New Zealand’s photographic profession did not experience the negative effects of growth and competition until the 1890s, when an apparent downturn in photographic sales resulted in poorer working conditions and pricing discrepancies. A group representing the “photographic profession” met in Christchurch in October 1890 to discuss various issues besetting practitioners at that time. The meeting observed a “great amount of sweating” within Christchurch’s photographic studios and moved to establish a universal pricing code for photographic products that reflected the charges received by studios in Britain.

By 1890 the conditions deplored by Thompson had arrived in New Zealand’s commercial photographic industry. The cause of the downturn in professional photography was not stated, but a likely catalyst was the advent of consumer photography and the renewed empowerment of the amateur. Advertisements for “Marion’s Amateur Photography” instructional sets for negatives and prints appeared in New Zealand newspapers from 1885. The availability of pre-coated gelatin dry plate negatives from the mid-1880s and roll-film by the end of that decade made photography more accessible to the amateur practitioner. Prior to this, professional photography in New Zealand – and particularly Dunedin – had flourished, catering to the market for portraiture and view photographs of New Zealand’s cities and scenery.

Burton Brothers of Dunedin: A History of the Firm

Commercial photography was well-established in Dunedin by the time Walter John Burton founded his photographic studio there in 1866. Burton was an established photographer and is thought to have worked in the printing industry in Australia prior to his


32 "Meeting of Photographers," The Press (Christchurch), 15 October 1890.

arrival in Dunedin.\textsuperscript{34} He formerly worked within his father’s chain of English photographic studios, John Burton and Sons, and maintained this association in the formation of his Dunedin studio.

An 1866 advertisement published in the \textit{Otago Daily Times} indicates the calibre of Walter Burton’s promotional ability and the standard of his business (fig. 1-3). Published in a column with advertisements for three other Princes Street photographers, this advertisement further indicates the competition and buoyancy of the commercial photography trade at this time in Dunedin. Meluish, having retired from practising studio photography, supplied chemicals and materials to the trade and proudly promoted his business as “The Cheapest House in the Colonies,” while J. W. Allen and the Dunedin Photographic Rooms were producing \textit{carte de visite} portraits, stereographs and whole plate photographic prints of Dunedin scenes. Messrs Mountfort and Company announced the opening of new photographic rooms fitted-out for portraiture, complete with a separate waiting area for female clients. This firm was short-lived and is only known to have operated in Dunedin until 1867.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Knight, \textit{Photography in New Zealand}, 134.

These advertisements demonstrate the dependency of colonial photographic operators upon the supply of materials and models of the photographic trade from Britain. Meluish advertised the arrival of new stock “ex Rowena” that had arrived in Port Chalmers with cargo from London on 6 October 1866.³⁶ Although he promoted his business as a “Direct Importer,” Meluish’s stock supply was contingent on international shipping channels which prior to

steamship transportation, took a minimum of three months to arrive from Britain. Burton’s experience within a professional studio likely formed the model for his practice and commercial operations. His affiliation with the family firm was made evident in this advertisement, identifying himself as being “Of the Firm of John Burton & Sons.” The name and accolades of his father’s firm were also used on Burton’s studio products, such as the standard printed material on the reverse of the carte de visite mount (fig. 1-4). Burton established his firm within the illustrious pedigree of John Burton and Sons in their appointment as sole photographer to the Shakespeare Tercentenary Festival and as a contributor to the Illustrated London News. It is unclear whether Burton’s Dunedin studio actually operated as a branch of the English firm or whether the use of the larger firm’s name was exploited for the credibility it attracted. This convention persisted into the late 1870s, with Burton continuing this familial association in his sole practice, “The Royal” Gallery of Photography, named in recognition of the erstwhile role of John Burton and Sons as photographers to the royal family.37


An 1867 advertisement from John Burton and Sons’ Derby branch shows striking similarities to Burton’s style of advertising (fig. 1-5). Both studios featured the Royal coat of arms and identified their esteemed patrons. The body text of both advertisements contains similar word choice and reflects a comparable range of available photographic products. The links with the English firm undoubtedly enabled access to technologies, equipment and supplies not readily available in New Zealand. John Burton and Sons’ advertisement promoted the new technology of cabinet card portraits, the “New and Favourite Style” in photographic portraiture. By December 1867, cabinet cards were advertised as available in the Dunedin studio, noting that these were the “newest thing in England.”

Cabinet cards were first used by a London photographic firm in 1862 and were readily available from 1866. Given the lag in transportation of goods from Britain, this suggests that Burton had ready access to materials, probably through his father’s firm. Furthermore, examples of carte de visite mounts from both firms are near identical in format, typography and word-choice, suggesting the blank cards were designed and printed by the same manufacturer (figs. 1-6 and 1-7). As the wholesale infrastructure for the manufacture of photographic consumables did not exist within New Zealand and all supplies were imported, it is plausible that the Burton Brothers’ materials were accessed through the same channels as the English firm. Many carte de visite and cabinet card mounts from Burton Brothers and other New Zealand studios bear the imprint of Marion and Co., a major producer of photographic materials for the trade in Britain and Europe, confirming that New Zealand studios utilised the same suppliers as their European contemporaries.

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38 *Otago Witness*, 6 December 1867.

Fig. 1-5. Advertisement for John Burton & Sons, *Derby Mercury*, 15 May 1867.

Fig. 1-6. John Burton and Sons, Unidentified portrait, late 1860s (verso). *Carte de visite*. Brett Payne, Derbyshire.
The firm of John Burton and Sons demonstrated an entrepreneurial streak that was also manifested in the commercial opportunism of the Burton Brothers studio. John Burton and Sons was the sole studio selected for the Shakespeare Tercentenary at Stratford-upon-Avon, occupying a studio on site at the festival pavilion.\textsuperscript{40} The significance of this appointment is attested to by the repeated and prolonged mentioning of this in publicity material for both John Burton and Sons’ firm and Burton Brothers. Such monopolies at fairs were both prestigious and highly lucrative, especially in the days before amateur photography. The inclusion of this honour on print mounts and studio publicity testifies to the success of the firm and also invests the studio with high culture associations.

Business at Burton’s studio had grown to the extent that late in 1867 he announced to the Dunedin public that he had invited his elder brother Alfred Henry Burton to join him in partnership (fig. 1-8). At this point, the trade-name Burton Brothers was introduced, although

\textsuperscript{40} Robert E. Hunter, \textit{Shakespeare and Stratford-upon-Avon, a "Chronicle of the time": Comprising the Salient Facts and Traditions, Biographical, Topographical, and Historical, Connected with the Poet and his Birth-place; Together with a Full Record of the Tercentenary Celebration} (London: Whittaker and Co., 1864), 146.
the name “Walter J. Burton & Bro.” appears on a number of extant cartes de visite from the late 1860s to 1870s.\footnote{For example, Walter J. Burton & Bro., Portrait of Walter J. Burton, late 1860s to 1870s, carte de visite, B24174/5, Album 214, Hardwicke Knight collection, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.}

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Fig. 1-8. Advertisement for Walter J. Burton (detail), *Otago Witness*, 6 December 1867.

A full column advertisement (fig. 1-9) reveals the extent of the firm’s operations by 1867. Photographic products were available in a range of formats: “Miniatures for Lockets, Brooches, and Pins. Cartes de Visite. Enlargements up to Life-size. Cabinet Portraits.” In addition to commissioned portraiture, a stock of images was also available for purchase that included views of Dunedin, recent portraits of English royalty and “Colonial Nobilities,” such as New Zealand Governor Sir George Grey, as well as “A very extensive and choice Selection of Card Portraits of the Beauties of the English, French, and German Stage.” While photography appears to have been the primary trade, the business was supplemented through the sale of fine art reproductions (chromolithographs and coloured-photographic reproductions) and “Fancy Goods,” which encapsulated leather-goods, luxury items, toys, photographic accessories (frames, albums and stands) and even furniture. Although not stated in this advertisement, it is presumed that these items were imported (the wooden furniture was
available in exotic timbers), indicating the possible trade networks utilised by the studio at the time. Marketing photographic items alongside luxury items positioned photography as a superior product, reinforced by the studio’s association with royalty and aristocrats as clients and subjects. A later advertisement notes the arrival of a new shipment of “Fancy Goods” carried by the Warrior Queen, all “PERSONALLY SELECTED, in the best English and Foreign Houses, and bought for cash.” This confirms the studio directly imported this stock, which expanded to include Scottish tartan and Masonic regalia. Such diversification of business was not uncommon and was a reality of frontier society. In 1858 James Wilson advertised the sale of violin strings through his photographic gallery, and Meluish’s trade was supplemented by the importation of photographic chemicals and materials.

42 Otago Daily Times, 28 February 1868.

43 Otago Daily Times, 19 March 1868.

44 Otago Witness, 5 August 1858.
Photography, Fine Arts, and Fancy Goods.

Under the Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen.
H.R.H. The Prince of Wales,
H.R.H. The Princess of Wales.
And the Nobility generally of the English Midland Counties.

 Burton Brothers,
Artists and Photographers,
And
Fine Art and Fancy Goods Dealers,
Princes Street, Dunedin.

Photography.
Miniatures for Lockets, Brooches, and Pins.
Cartes de Visite.
Enlargements up to life-size.
Cabinet Portraits.
(This is the newest thing in Photography in England.)
Views of Dunedin and neighborhood.
A great variety of Portraits of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, in Scotch, Naval, and Private Views.
The newest Portraits of the Queen, and other members of the Royal Family.
Portraits of His Excellency Sir George Grey, and numerous other Colonial Notabilities.
A very extensive and choice selection of Bird Portraits of the Beauties of the English, French, and German Stage.

Fine Arts.
Engravings, Chromo-Lithographs, and Colored Photographs, in Frames.

N.B.—A very beautiful selection of Chromo-Lithographs (the most recent published) and brilliantly colored Photographic reproductions of the Gems of the French School, from the Exhibitions of 1867, to arrive by an early ship.

Fancy Goods.
Leather Goods.—Ladies’ Bags, Gentleman’s Corner Bags, Leather Desk, Porcelain Vases, Grecian Book, Compasses, Scott Case, &c.
Ladie’s and Gentleman’s Boots in Rosewood, Walnut, and Mahogany.
Paper Maché Goods in great variety, Photographic Albums, Photographic Frames, Photographic Cases, and Passpartouch, Perfumery, Toys, and a varied stock of most articles coming under the designation “Fancy Goods.”

Burton Brothers,
Photographers and Artists, and Fine Art and Fancy Goods Dealers,
Princes street, Dunedin.

Photography, Fine Arts, and Fancy Goods.
Burton Brothers,
Princes street.

Cabinet Portraits.
The newest and most beautiful style.
Burton Brothers,
Princes street.

The Beauties of the English, French, and German Stage.
Burton Brothers,
Princes street.

H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh,
Card and other Portraits in 50 different styles—Scottish, Naval, and Private.
Burton Brothers,
Princes street.

Her Majesty the Queen, and the other members of the Royal Family a great variety of Card Portraits.
Burton Brothers,
Princes street.

Fancy Goods: A well selected stock of Burton Brothers,
Princes street.

Fig. 1-9. Advertisement for Walter J. Burton (detail), Otago Witness, 6 December 1867.
Alfred Burton’s name is recorded in Dunedin directories from 1868 onwards. An expansion of the studio’s operations following his arrival is indicated by their commissioning of a mobile darkroom from coachbuilders J. Robin and Co. in 1869. This fully operative darkroom was constructed in the style of a two-seater buggy with a full height ceiling that could be collapsed for travelling. Collodion wet plate, the predominant photographic process of the era, required the preparation of the plate, exposure and developing before the emulsion dried, hence a mobile darkroom was required to enable photography beyond the immediate proximity of studio premises. Without such facilities, the studio’s photography was confined to Dunedin locations, so the dark van was essential for extending their operations. A newspaper report announced Burton Brothers’ commission of the buggy and confirmed the studio’s intention to travel, stating that one of the photographers “is about to start on a photographic tour of the interior.” Throughout September 1869, Burton Brothers advertised in Oamaru’s *North Otago Times*, announcing their proposed “first journey” through the province to acquire photographs for their series on New Zealand scenery.

Alfred Burton utilised collodion wet plate in his first three expeditions to the West Coast Sounds (1874, January 1879, and June 1879), as well as a tour of the Southern Alps (Summer 1874-75) and various trips to Central Otago and the Southern Lakes in the 1870s. In a memoir published in 1898, he described the difficult conditions for the preparation of wet plates on an early expedition to Milford Sound:

> The coating of plates before plunging them into the sensitising bath was truly a delightful experience in a region where the tiny but potent sandfly worked his wicked will. Pouring the collodion upon a plate so as to produce an exactly even film is easy enough – in a room; but in the field, with hundreds (hundreds! thousands! millions!) of those little wretches taking a mean and malignant advantage of one’s hands being occupied... it is an achievement requiring an amount of pluck and determination...

> I have with grim determination and with set teeth carefully coated a plate, when, just as it was ready, a self-immolating sandfly would, with devilish art, plump himself right in the middle of it.

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46 *Otago Witness*, 23 October 1869

47 "High-Class Photography," *North Otago Times* (Oamaru), 3 September 1869.

It is likely that Burton and his party utilised the more manoeuvrable dark tent rather than the dark van in these remote locations. Regardless, the studio’s initiative in commissioning this contraption demonstrates their intention to extend and adapt the available technology to meet the demand for photographs of New Zealand’s geographical wilderness.

This was not an original or unique venture. Dr. A. C. Barker utilised a travelling dark van from at least as early as 1864, and mobile darkrooms would have been used by Meluish, Mundy and Tensfeld in their wet plate photography of the Otago interior. Topographical photographs, particularly of the South Island, had been available from the 1860s. E. P. Sealy photographed the Southern Alps from 1863, carrying a wet plate camera up the Hooker, Mueller and Tasman glaciers. Later in that decade, photography of the Otago region had become common enough to warrant its own terminology: “Otagan Scenery”. The Otago Witness reported on photographs of “Otagan Scenery” by Joseph Perry in 1866 and B. Reimann in 1867, noting the commercial availability of photographic prints in albums or on a subscriber basis. In a letter to Alfred Eccles in 1865, Perry described a selection of his photographs of Central Otago settlements and gold mining operations, revealing his ability to produce and promote prints of remote locations and the public interest in such photographs.

That Burton Brothers should become more well-known for this practice over the considerable work of their predecessors and contemporaries testifies to their skill in marketing and distribution. The Burtons also benefited from their later arrival to the province and the change in circumstances they encountered. Whereas Meluish, Mundy and – it is presumed – Tensfeld followed the gold rush to Melbourne and then to Otago, the Burtons’ arrival in the late 1860s followed the exodus of the initial gold mining population and coincided with the subsequent need to promote immigration and travel to the region. The 1870s also saw the introduction of organised tourism in New Zealand and Burton Brothers responded to this by photographing the beauty of local scenery for both promotional material and souvenirs.


51 “Photographic Pictures of Otagan Scenery,” Otago Witness, 21 July 1865; Otago Witness, 8 June 1867.

52 Joseph Perry to Dr. Eccles, 13 November 1865, Misc-MS-1464, Dr Eccles: Papers relating to Joseph Perry, Photographer, Hocken Collections.

boom in New Zealand tourism of the 1870s and 1880s corresponded with the rise in photography’s popularity and resultant commercial success.\textsuperscript{54} Advertisements for their first photographic series, \textit{Otago Through the Camera}, demonstrate Burton Brothers’ awareness of the commodity value of photographic views of local scenery, promoting prints as “a little present for those in the old country, or as a \textit{souvenir} of New Zealand for those who are leaving its shores.”\textsuperscript{55} This shift in subject matter served the immediate need to promote the country, meeting the public interest and the burgeoning new market of tourism.

The studio’s expansion into topographical photography also reflects other business ventures entered into by the brothers. Among the earliest “Country” photographs listed in the Burton Brothers’ negative register are scenes at Macraes Flat, St. Bathans and the Central Otago mining region. The date of the expedition during which these photographs were taken can be confirmed as October 1870 through a newspaper report that notes the attendance of “Messrs Burton Bros.” at the launch of a new dredge for the Duke of Edinburgh Company at Macraes Flat. The brothers took photographs of the dredge, named “Ida Lydia” after the eldest daughter of one of the directors, “Mr. A. R. Ruston.”\textsuperscript{56} It is no coincidence that Alfred Burton’s own eldest daughter was also named Ida Lydia. Company records of the Duke of Edinburgh Quartz Mining Company include the brothers among the eleven directors at the registration of the company in May 1869.\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{New Zealand Gazette} records Alfred as a shareholder in another two mining companies, Caledonian Quartz Mining Company of Macraes Flat in 1870 and Arrow River United Gold Mining Company near Arrowtown in 1873.\textsuperscript{58} Furthermore, a published report of a meeting of the Fiord County Prospecting Association names Alfred Burton as a subscriber to the Association and discusses his recent trip to the region.\textsuperscript{59} Along with his assistant “Bruswitz” (the Nelson photographer Henry Brusewitz), Burton was a member of a party that found traces of gold and quartz and


\textsuperscript{55} "High-Class Photography," \textit{North Otago Times}, 12 May 1871.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Otago Witness}, 22 October 1870.

\textsuperscript{57} "The Duke of Edinburgh Quartz Mining Company Registered," 1869, CBAT-D480-2i-51, Defunct Mining Company Files, Archives New Zealand, Dunedin Regional Office.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Otago Provincial Government Gazette}, no. 658 (23 March 1870): 127-28; \textit{New Zealand Gazette}, no. 57 (2 October 1873): 553.

\textsuperscript{59} "Meetings and Reports: Exploration of the Fiord County," \textit{Otago Witness}, 17 December 1881.
recommended the immediate prospecting of the region. In this context, a cynical reader may consider earlier reports of the discovery of gold on Aoraki Mount Cook by two photographers in the employment by Burton Brothers to be less serendipitous than its portrayal by the press. The two photographers, Charles and George Spencer, discovered gold in the Waihoa River during a planned ascent of Aoraki. The amount of gold presented “sufficient inducement… for them to abandon photographing for gold digging.”

After the decline in gold yields from 1865, merchants and professionals entered the industry, providing capital for gold dredging and quartz mining operations. Investors founded mining companies and sustained the industry until the end of the century. Such diversified investment was not uncommon among individuals in unrelated fields; indeed Mundy and Tensfeld also appear as shareholders for mining companies in 1869 and 1870 respectively. In the case of the Alfred and Walter Burton, financial interests in gold mining provided access to remote locations and indicates that Burton Brothers’ interest in the New Zealand landscape extended beyond the marketing of its picturesque scenery to the exploitation of its rich resources. Alfred Burton’s gold mining interests ran consistently throughout his career and into his retirement, when he appears as a director of The Island Creek Gold Dredging Company. In the early 1900s he also compiled a series of handbooks for investors in gold mining companies, demonstrating his perceived expertise in this field.

It has been presumed that Walter Burton operated the studio’s portraiture business, which provided their regular source of income, while Alfred Burton undertook photographic expeditions throughout the South Island and beyond. This is attested to by Alfred’s inclusion as photographer on expeditions to the Milford Sounds, Southern Alps and Lakes region from

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60 *Evening Post* (Wellington), 23 April 1878; *New Zealand Times* (Wellington), 9 May 1878.

61 Olssen, 65-66.


63 “The Island Creek Gold Dredging Company Limited,” 1900-01, DAAB-90050-D91-671-619, Archives New Zealand, Dunedin Regional Office.

as early as 1874.\textsuperscript{65} It is not known whether Walter also participated in this activity, but an 1879 panoramic photograph of Dunedin directly attributed to “Walter J. Burton” indicates his interest and ability in photography beyond the studio.\textsuperscript{66} This division of labour is the popular view of the Burton Brothers studio promoted by Burton Brothers biographer, Hardwicke Knight and perpetuated by subsequent writers.\textsuperscript{67}

A popular view of the studio has circulated that promotes professional rivalry between the brothers as a direct cause of the breakdown in the studio partnership.\textsuperscript{68} Primary source evidence casts doubt on this popular conception and suggests an alternative explanation. The Gazette notice declaring the dissolution of partnership on 25 November 1876 stated the reason being “mutual consent.”\textsuperscript{69} Walter’s alcoholism was a probable factor in his departure from the firm. Court records show that he was committed to a six month period in a psychiatric institution in October 1878 for “curative treatment as a dipsomaniac.”\textsuperscript{70} This immediately followed his tour of Europe to investigate advances in professional photographic facilities and the establishment of his own studio, The Royal Photographic Gallery in August 1878.\textsuperscript{71} In a

\textsuperscript{65} A. H. Burton received free passage aboard the Government Steamer \textit{Luna} in an expedition to inspect South Island coastal lighthouses in February-March 1874. This is noted in many newspaper reports of the time, but the terms of the arrangement are identified in annotations to correspondence received from A. H. Burton by the Colonial Secretary in 1874. Burton Brothers to the Colonial Secretary, 4 May 1874, IA-1-1071/1874, Colonial Secretary's Inwards Correspondence, Archives New Zealand, National Office. Prior to 1874 the studio’s negative register records photographs of the Central Otago region, although the photographer is not identified.

\textsuperscript{66} Walter Burton, “Panorama of Dunedin,” 1879, albumen print panorama, Album 167, Otago Settlers Museum.


\textsuperscript{68} This rivalry is the central plot focus of the feature film on the studio, \textit{Pictures}, directed by Michael Black (Auckland: Endeavour Roadshow, 1981).

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{New Zealand Gazette}, no. 1 (4 January 1877): 9.


\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 28 August 1878; "The Royal Gallery of Photography."
petition to the Supreme Court his wife, Helen Burton (known to Walter as “Ellen”) testified to the effects of his alcoholism on his business:

2. That for some years past the said Walter John Burton has at various times suffered from attacks of delirium tremens
3. That the said Walter John Burton is at present recovering from an attack of delirium tremens and is likewise through the excessive use of intoxicating drinks wasting his means and neglecting his business…

Given this state of affairs, it is more likely that the partnership collapsed due to Walter’s financial mismanagement, caused by his alcoholism. No records can be found to confirm whether Walter served this detention period, although the afore-mentioned 1879 panorama is taken from a hill directly behind the “Lunatic Asylum.”

Walter committed suicide in May 1880. The inquest into his death found that he “committed suicide in a state of temporary insanity,” the cause of death being ingestion of potassium cyanide. In his evidence at the coroner’s inquest Alfred stated that he had seen little of his brother since the dissolution of the partnership, but confirmed that he was aware of his brother’s alcoholism and that it had presented difficulties.

The extent of this can be seen in the Inventory of Estate (30 June 1880) included in Walter’s probate papers. The effects, stock and lease of The Royal Photographic Gallery were sold to rival photographic studio Clifford & Morris with the proceeds used to clear the accumulation of debt in overdue gas and rent accounts and mortgage payments on his residence. The inventory also notes payment of £100 for a one-way passage to England for Helen Burton. Once all debts, funeral costs and solicitor’s fees were despatched, the balance of £75 19s. 10d. was forwarded to Mrs. Burton in England. From this it can be presumed that if The Royal Photographic Gallery had met with commercial success, the proceeds were lost due to mismanagement and misappropriation.

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73 “Inquest on the Late Mr. W. J. Burton,” Otago Witness, 15 May 1880.

74 “Inquest on the Late Mr. W. J. Burton."

On the dissolution of the partnership Alfred continued the studio at 41 Princes Street under the Burton Brothers trade-name. He employed the portrait photographer Thomas Mintaro Bailey Muir (1853-1930) to maintain the studio income that funded his photography excursions. Alfred also employed photographers to undertake photographic work in the field. The Visitors’ Book of the Milford Sound hostel, known as “the City,” records that throughout the 1880s photographers visited the Sounds as representatives of the Burton Brothers studio. While Alfred appears in the Visitors’ Book among the earliest entries from 1882, contract photographers for the firm appear from 1887 with Frederick Muir and Brusewitz visiting the sounds for a six week photographic excursion. A Burton Brothers party sent to Milford to photograph the Sutherland Falls in 1888 included Harold Burton (Alfred’s son), George Moodie and R. Greig Ferguson (“tourist and assistant”). Shipping notices frequently record Alfred’s transit on excursions as “Burton and Party,” suggesting that it was common for a number of photographers to work on projects, with or without Alfred.

The 1880s were productive years for the studio. A probable affiliation with the Union Steam Ship Company saw Alfred and/or his photographers accompany tourist voyages throughout New Zealand and to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. In 1885 Alfred accompanied a railway survey party through the central North Island King Country and the resultant photographs led to his nomination as a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Also in 1885, a second premises was opened in the Exchange Court, Dunedin. Advertisements state that their business had “extended beyond the capacity” of their premises at 41 Princes Street and the Exchange Court site was “beautifully appointed” and “admirably adapted for carrying on Business of the highest character.” Knight presumed that Muir was promoted to the position of partner at the time of the opening of the Exchange Court studio.

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76 New Zealand Gazette, 4 January 1877, 9

77 Visitors’ Book, 1872-1924, AG990/001, Sutherland, Donald: Papers relating to the 'City of Milford' at Milford Sound, Hocken Collections, University of Otago, AG990, pages 359-360. Burton Brothers negative numbers 4486-4500 were taken by Muir and Brusewitz as contract photographers for the firm. From 1888 Frederick Muir appears as a photographer for Morris Photographers, Dunedin and as an independent photographer.

78 Visitors’ Book, “City of Milford,” pages 375-376. The Sutherland Falls expedition is the subject of Chapter 7 of this thesis.

79 Alfred Burton used the letters “F. R. G. S.” in the studio’s 1889 catalogue Wintering on Lakes Te Anau and Milford.

80 Otago Daily Times, 7 March 1885.

81 Knight, Burton Brothers, 35.
co-proprietor of the firm in the advertisements from 1883, although Dunedin City Council rates records show Alfred Burton as the sole-lessee on both addresses.\textsuperscript{82} Rates records also document the firm’s vacation of the Exchange Court premises in 1890, and The Exchange Court Studio Company took over the premises.\textsuperscript{83} Muir left the firm in 1892 and did not resume his engagement with Burton Brothers until he took over the business in 1898. Business directories and newspapers show Muir in sole practice in Dunedin from 1892 and in Invercargill from 1893 to 1898.\textsuperscript{84} While Muir may have been appointed partner to the studio, Alfred evidently remained dominant in the business.

The sudden closure of the Exchange Court premises suggests a downturn in business. No catalogues were published after 1889 and the studio’s negative register shows considerably less activity from 1890. While upwards of 4,000 negatives are traceable to the 1880s, less than 1,000 negatives appear in the register for the period 1890 to 1898.\textsuperscript{85} Knight has attributed this period of inactivity to Alfred’s loss of interest in photography, exacerbated by the amputation of his son Harold’s arm in 1890, rendering him unable to photograph or contribute to the family firm. Photographic expeditions in the 1890s were conducted by George Moodie (1864 – 1947), including an extended seven week trip in the Mount Cook region. In Moodie’s account of this trip, which he conducted “for Messrs. Burton Bros.,” he expressed his intention to photograph “the most difficult and interesting places where camera had never been before placed.”\textsuperscript{86} His success in this endeavour is seen in the attainment of 176 whole plate and large format negatives, recorded in the studio’s register. A later trip made by Moodie to the Subantarctic Islands indicates his continuation of Burton Brothers’ project to photographically capture remote and unpopulated locations.

\textsuperscript{82} Dunedin City Council V/2 Valuation Roll, High Ward, 1885-6, #1370: section 40, vol. 53, Dunedin City Council Archives; \textit{Stones’ Directory of Otago & Southland} (Dunedin: Stone, Son and Co., 1886), 243.

\textsuperscript{83} Dunedin City Council V/2 Valuation Roll, High Ward, 1890-1, #1367: section 40, vol.58, Dunedin City Council Archives; \textit{New Zealand Tablet} (Dunedin), 10 October 1890.


\textsuperscript{85} While the chronology in the negative registers is not totally consistent, negatives can be dated through occasional references to dates and by cross-referencing projects to documented expeditions. Negative numbers 1042 to 4958 can be dated to the 1880s and numbers 4959 to around 5912 appear to cover the period from 1890 until Muir and Moodie’s takeover of the firm in 1898.

\textsuperscript{86} George Moodie, "Seven Weeks with the Camera among the Glaciers of Mt. Cook," \textit{The New Zealand Alpine Journal} 1, no. 4 (November 1893).
On Alfred’s retirement from photography in 1898, Moodie entered partnership with Muir and purchased the studio and its stock of negatives. The *Stone’s Directory* of 1899 lists the studio at 41 Princes Street as “Burton Bros (Geo. Moodie, Thos. M. B. Muir), portrait, landscape, and commercial photographers” and the following year lists “Muir and Moodie” in the same premises, although apparently with the entrance relocated around the corner to Moray Place. Many prints from Burton Brothers negatives appear with the signature “Muir and Moodie / late Burton Brothers,” yet over time the Burton Brothers name was removed from the negatives and replaced with the Muir and Moodie trade-name. Muir and Moodie published their first catalogue in 1901, reissuing Burton Brothers negatives from the entire back catalogue combined with recent work to form an “exhaustive series” of 7,500 photographs. While Muir and Moodie do not mention the original studio in their text, an article appended from the *Otago Daily Times* acknowledges Burton Brothers as the preceding firm and, with Muir and Moodie, credits them with pioneering “photography in the Southern Hemisphere.” The retention of associations with the earlier brand suggests the continued credibility of Burton Brothers’ reputation.

The craze for postcards from the late nineteenth century saw a resurgence in the demand for Burton Brothers photographs. Although rarely identified as Burton Brothers, the photographs were reproduced and reissued under the “Muir and Moodie” and “Grand Postcard Emporium” trade-names and remain in circulation as collectors’ items to this day. Identifiable Burton Brothers images were also used on lantern slides for the Government Tourist and Publicity Office throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

On the dissolution of Muir and Moodie’s partnership in 1916, the Princes Street premises and contents were purchased by another Dunedin photographer, James Webster. A fire in the studio in the latter years of the First World War caused smoke and heat damage to a

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87 "Local and General," *Otago Witness*, 7 July 1898.

88 Many examples exist of this convention – for instance, Album 365, c.1900, P90-015, Hocken Collections, pages 10, 15, 18, 19 and 21.

89 Muir and Moodie, *Catalogue of New Zealand and South Sea Scenery* (Dunedin: Muir and Moodie, 1901).

90 Examples of Muir and Moodie postcards bearing Burton Brothers images often appear as auction lots, particularly on the New Zealand online auction site, *Trade Me*, http://www.trademe.co.nz.

91 Examples of these are held by Archives New Zealand: New Zealand Government Publicity Glass Lantern Slides, 1903?-c.1950, 8315, Archives New Zealand, National Office.
number of the negatives, but Webster sold the estimated 5,000 to 6,000 remaining negatives to booksellers and stationers Coulls, Somerville, Wilkie (later Whitcoulls) around 1920:

Mr Webster approached Coulls Culling regarding the possibility of commercializing the collection but owing to the rather poor quality of the negatives and the initial costs of reproduction our people decided they had little value apart from an historical one. More with the idea of preservation than anything else the collection was purchased rather than see it destroyed.92

A number of gelatin silver whole plate contact prints from these negatives are held by the Hocken Collections. These bear the negative inscription of Burton Brothers, plus stamps of both Webster (“Jas. J. Webster / Successor to / Muir & Moodie”) and Coulls, Somerville, Wilkie Ltd.93 It appears that Coulls, Somerville and Wilkie made prints from the negatives while in their possession and made some attempt to “commercialise the collection.”

In 1943 the Dominion Museum (now Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa) purchased the collection from Coulls, Somerville and Wilkie for £100.94 An estimated 12,000 negatives, the customised cabinet in which were housed and three negative registers were acquired at the recommendation of the museum photographer J. T. Salmon. He noted at the time of acquisition that all the negatives were labelled and “would be especially useful if at some time the Museum were to have an Historical Hall.”95 The acquisition of the Burton Brothers negatives represented a significant shift in the Museum’s collecting of photographic material that was previously dominated by photographs commissioned for museum purposes.96

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92 T. R. Coull (General Manager, Coulls, Somerville, Wilkie) to John B. Turner (Photographer, Dominion Museum), 21 April 1970, Burton Brothers Collection Records, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Collection documentation also indicates that J. J. Webster retained a financial interest in the negatives.

93 For example, “4417 - Mt. Earnslaw - From Near Kinloch - Lake Wakatipu,” [c.1890s negative, 1920s print], silver gelatin whole plate contact print mounted on card, E4458/18, 691.00192, Hocken Collections.

94 Minutes of Management Committee, Dominion Museum, 12 March 1943, Burton Brothers Collection Records, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. The figure of 12,000 negatives is now thought to be erroneous. Lissa Mitchell, Collection Manager – Photography, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, conversation with the author, 13 November 2006.

95 Minutes of Management Committee, Dominion Museum, 3 May 1940, Burton Brothers Collection Records, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Products, Formats and Distribution

The studio’s strong emphasis on large-scale distribution and sales can be seen in the considerable numbers of original Burton Brothers photographic prints and albums in public collections throughout New Zealand and overseas. Studied in the original, these photographs reveal much in the studio’s choice of format, style of presentation and methods of branding and captioning their photographs. Analysis of these artefacts in relation to Burton Brothers published catalogues, advertising and newspaper articles presents a fuller interpretation of the studio’s context of operation. This demonstrates the prolific use of text and marketing as part of the studio’s operations, a primary focus of this thesis.

The range of photographic products offered for sale by Burton Brothers reflected that currently availed by photographic technology. Early studio advertisements identify formats of cartes de visite and cabinet cards (the studio also used these standard portrait formats for city and landscape views) as well as customised miniatures and hand-coloured enlargements. They also supplied photograph albums as blanks, or in the studio’s pre-designed formats such as Views of New Zealand or the more emotive Land of Loveliness.

The catalogues for the studio’s stock of topographic and ethnographic photographs indicate that prints were available in a range of formats. Whole plate (or “standard” measuring approximately 6 x 8 inches) albumen prints were the common form of photographic print available, either unmounted or mounted on card ready for binding into a album (at the standard page dimensions of 9 x 11 inches). With no means of enlarging from whole plate negatives, they could only be contact printed, thus the print size of 6 x 8 inches was determined by the size of the negative. The studio maintained three different registers for whole plate negatives, stereographs and 10 x 12 inch negatives. The registers confirm that whole plate negatives were the most common negative used, and consequently the quantity of these extant in public and private collections far outweigh stereographs and 10 x 12 inch prints. However, the image content of these lesser formats correspond with that of the whole plate negatives, indicating that either multiple cameras were carried on photographic excursions or the studio’s equipment enabled output in multiple formats.

97 Burton Brothers, Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1875).

98 This is also in part due to the function of each format as whole plate prints were intended to be presented in albums, whereas stereographs were vulnerable to damage due to repeat handling and large 10 x 12 inch prints were intended for framing and were prone to deterioration from the effect of environmental factors (sunlight, smoke, dampness etc.)
Images were later available in other formats, rephotographed as lantern slides and “Extra Large Size for framing, 17 x 13 inches” as “PERMANENT PICTURES printed in carbon [original emphases].” The introduction of the carbon or Autotype process presented a significant development in commercial photography. The carbon process was developed in response to observations that silver photographic prints faded prematurely, particularly when framed for display and exposed to environmental factors. Initially this was rectified through hand-colouring over the photographic surface – a practice conducted by the Burton Brothers and John Burton and Sons – but this was felt to compromise the integrity of the photograph. Experimentation in the carbon process began in 1855, and the commercial application of the process was realised by the Autotype Printing & Publishing Company (also trading as Autotype Fine Art Company) which acquired the English patent rights in 1868. Carbon printing enabled photographic enlargement with the retention of fine detail and tone; hence it was particularly well suited for the reproduction of artworks. The first recorded use of the process in New Zealand was in 1876 by D. L. Mundy who obtained the exclusive right of the patent in New Zealand and acted as agent for the Autotype Company. Mundy advertised the carbon process for large format printing, promoting his ability to produce prints of “up to three feet.” The process was also often utilised for book illustrations and the previous year Mundy’s publication Rotomahana was illustrated with Autotype photographs printed in London.

Burton Brothers obtained the Otago licence for the carbon process early in 1878. The firm first promoted its use of the carbon process in large prints suitable for display and produced images from the series New Zealand Through the Camera as large format prints

99 Burton Brothers, Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1879).


102 The Press, 18 November 1876.

103 Evening Post, 7 July 1875; D. L. Mundy and Ferdinand von Hochstetter, Rotomahana and the Boiling Springs of New Zealand: A Photographic Series of Sixteen Views (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1875).

104 Otago Witness, 2 February 1878.
“measuring 18in x 14in, the largest of the kind ever attempted in the Colony.” The benefit of this technological advancement was clear to an Otago Daily Times reporter, who noted that the large format carbon prints were “permanent” and enabled persons to “hang them up in their drawing-rooms without the least apprehension that they will fade.”

Twelve large format carbon prints were commissioned from Burton Brothers by the Dunedin City Council for display at the Sydney Exhibition of 1879-80, presenting both the skill of the photographer and the progress of the city of Dunedin through the use of advanced and modern photographic technology. Nine of the twelve photographs are held in the Dunedin City Council Archives, bearing the original label which attests to the significance of the utilisation of the new carbon process (fig. 1-10). These photographs were well-received with one reviewer praising the photographer’s “artistic intuition of selection with the scientific knowledge of the manipulation” and further exclaiming that “I do not think photography can be pushed much further as an art.”

Fig. 1-10. "Colonial Bank of N. Z. Dunedin," c.1879 (detail of label, verso). Carbon print, 14 x 17" (356 x 432mm). 1989/38, Dunedin City Council Archives.


106 “The International Exhibition at Sydney,” New Zealand Mail (Wellington), 8 November 1879.
The studio employed a range of devices to market and sell their photographic products. The Burton Brothers’ premises provided an ample shop frontage which was utilised as a showcase for their products and services, as indicated by photographs of the studio premises showing use of the window for promotional purpose (fig. 1-11). Indeed, newspaper accounts describe “exhibitions” of photographs in the studio window. Correspondence between Walter Burton and the Town Clerk requesting permission to erect a sunshade on the street frontage further emphasises the importance of the shop window as an exhibition space and promotional mechanism. A sunshade over the shop window was made necessary by the strength of New Zealand sunlight, which also contributed to the appeal of the “permanent” carbon process and the studio’s exploitation of this new technology within the local context.

Fig. 1-11. Burton Brothers' first premises at Princes Street, Dunedin, c.1868. Carte de visite. Brett McDowell Gallery, Dunedin.

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107 Otago Witness, 9 July 1870; Otago Daily Times, 12 June 1886.

108 Town Clerk to W. J. Burton, 5 December 1867, 30/4, Dunedin City Council Town Clerk’s Correspondence, Dunedin City Council Archives.
The studio’s topographical views and stock photography were promoted in series via mail-order catalogues that the studio would despatch “post free, to any address.” Agents were contracted throughout New Zealand and in London. Newspaper advertisements and inscriptions on original photographs locate numerous agents throughout the country from as early as 1871. Agents were either specialist photographic agents or engaged in unrelated trades that enabled access to an expanded customer base. Extant sample albums from two separate agencies are held in Wellington collections and demonstrate the means of marketing photographs for sale outside of the studio. Photographic prints were mounted four per page, double-sided, in large format albums that held five hundred prints per album. Prints were displayed with minimal description, supported only by the negative number inscribed on the page and the caption information visible in the studio’s negative inscription (fig. 1-12).

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Fig. 1-12. Burton Brothers sample album, showing photographs 581-584, Knox Church Dunedin and The Taieri at Henley. AM004:1:1, Wellington City Archives.

109 Burton Brothers, One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery.

110 Knight, Burton Brothers, 35. For a list of known agents for the Burton Brothers, see Appendix 3.

111 Pearson album, [between 1860s and 1890s], PA1-f-048, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington; Burton Brothers Sample Books, [c.1890], AM004:01:01-AM004:04:01, Wellington City Archives.
These sample albums also include photographs taken by others studios that were reissued under the Burton Brothers’ name and included within the sequence of negative numbers. Negatives known to have been taken by the American Photo Company, Herbert Deveril, William Hart & Co. and E. W. Henderson were purchased or otherwise acquired by Burton Brothers and included in their image stock. Photographs of Dunedin in the early 1860s – prior to the Alfred or Walter Burton’s arrival in the city – appear with Burton Brothers’ brand-name and also that of Dunedin photographer F. A. Coxhead, although the original photographer may have been William Meluish. Negative appropriation and relicensing, common practices of the era, will be examined further in the context of branding and copyright practices in Chapter Two.

The Burton Brothers’ topographical stock photographs can be isolated from the studio’s other outputs in portrait and commissioned photography. The studio maintained a separate negative register for the stock photographs and identified each negative (and thus each print) with a sequential number. Portraits and other commissioned work bear no such marks. The topographic views can be further isolated through their production and presentation in series. These series are identified in the studio’s negative register, the earliest being the first Milford Sounds series aboard the *Luna* in 1874. There is some speculation that the negative register was compiled retrospectively by Muir and Moodie in 1898, hence series may have been retroactively constructed in the register. The sequence of the negative numbering, however, infers chronological development, thus confirming that regions and subjects were photographed as dedicated projects, equivalent to series.

The studio’s series can be recognised through their published catalogues and the identifiers assigned to individual prints. These also serve to chart the general chronological development of the firm in terms of their geographical and thematic interests and their access to certain regions. The first series *Otago through the Camera* commenced in 1869 and was released in 1875 with a catalogue that also contained the series, *Scenes in the Southern Alps*. The studio’s portfolio soon expanded beyond Otago and a second catalogue, *One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery*, was published in 1879. This catalogue included the two earlier series and also promoted a series of photographs taken en route to Dunedin.

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114 Burton Brothers, *Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery*. 
Mount Cook through the Mackenzie Country as well as two series of photographs taken by commissioned photographers Charles and Edward Spencer, *The Christchurch-Hokitika Road* and *The Glaciers of the West Coast*.\(^{115}\)

In 1878 the studio began marketing a series entitled *New Zealand through the Camera* that included all prior series and re-arranged the back-catalogue (numbering 3,000 in 1884) according to geographical location. The catalogue for this full series, *New Zealand through the Camera*, was published in 1884.\(^{116}\) Released simultaneously with this was *The Camera in the Coral Islands*, a catalogue and series dedicated to photographs taken on Burton’s tour to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.\(^{117}\) Later series reflected the specific projects from which the photographs were derived and were marketed to capitalise on the public interest in the studio’s activities. The following year the series *The Maori at Home* was released with an accompanying catalogue that listed photographs taken by Burton during his 1885 tour up the Whanganui River and through the King Country.\(^{118}\) Both these catalogues contained excerpts from the photographer’s diary that offered a descriptive narrative for interpreting the photographs. Burton’s final series, *Wintering on Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri* was released in 1889, following the studio’s expedition to photograph the Sutherland Falls at Milford Sound in 1888 and a season spent by Burton at Te Anau and the recently opened Milford Track.\(^{119}\)

The studio’s use of series as a means of marketing and presenting their photographs is a clear example of their commercial emphasis. Studio projects were encapsulated as discrete packages that enabled targeted marketing to attract the attention of the press and the public.

\(^{115}\) Burton Brothers, *One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery*.


\(^{117}\) Burton Brothers, *The Camera in the Coral Islands: A Series of Photographs Illustrating the Scenery and the Mode of Life in the Fijis, the Navigator Islands (Samoa), the Friendly Islands (Tonga) Taken During the Two Trips to the South Seas of the Union S.S. Co.’s "Wairarapa," in June and July, 1884* (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1884).

\(^{118}\) Burton Brothers, *The Maori at Home: A Catalogue of a Series of Photographs, Illustrative of the Scenery and of Native Life in the Centre of the North Island of New Zealand. Also, Through the King Country with the Camera: A Photographer's Diary. This will Serve in Some Measure as Descriptive Text for the Photographs* (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1885).

and therefore to attract sales. For instance, the *New Zealand through the Camera* series was used by Burton Brothers as the basis for an Art Union whereby on advance payment of a one guinea fee subscribers would receive “THREE VIEWS EVERY MONTH FOR FOUR MONTHS, making one Dozen of our Series “New Zealand through the Camera” (whole-plate or “Standard” size, 8 inches by 6, on tinted mounts).” A similar exercise was conducted in 1874 with works from the *Otago through the Camera* series.

This commercial emphasis is perhaps attributable to Alfred Burton’s influence on the firm. It should be noted that the 1875 catalogue identified the studio as “Burton Brothers, Artists and Photographers” whereas by 1879, after the dissolution of the partnership, the firm was identified as “Burton Brothers, Portrait, Landscape & Commercial Photographers.” This latter convention was followed, usually with visual emphasis on “Commercial Photographers,” in the studio’s subsequent publicity material. The former descriptor of “Artist and Photographer” was preferred by Walter Burton who employed this terminology in the branding of his Royal Photographic Gallery and appears to be the convention adopted from John Burton and Sons (figs. 1-5 and 1-6). Steve Edwards examined the usage of the term “artist” by photographers at the expansion of commercial photography in the 1850s and 1860s. In the context of rapid industrialisation and the automation of image-making by photographic processes, the use of the term “artist” reasserted the intervention of individual skill and endowed the photographer with the status of an artisan rather than mechanical operator. A more pragmatic explanation can be inferred from Burton Brothers’ use of the term “artist”; from its inception the Dunedin studio offered the services of an artist in the hand-painting of photographic enlargements. This service appears to have diminished upon Alfred Burton’s arrival.

Semantic convention complicates the use of the term “commercial.” Alfred Burton appears to have used the term “commercial” to indicate the studio’s availability for commission work, something distinct from their practice as landscape photographers. Grace Seiberling attempted a definition of the term in a nineteenth century context and noted a

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120 The use of series and albums to collectively market photographs and the impact of narrative association on the reading of images is discussed in Chapter 3.

121 Burton Brothers to the Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1880, IA-1-3639/1880, Colonial Secretary's Inwards Correspondence, Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington.

122 *Otago Witness*, 23 May 1874.

123 Edwards, 45-64.
distinction between “professional” and “commercial” photographic practice. By the 1860s and the advent of the carte de visite era, photography had become a commodity in Britain and was served by commercial photographers who produced photographic prints of celebrities or popular subjects for mass distribution. Professional photographers, however, were generally smaller operators, some of whom had previously practiced as amateurs or had entered photography from the graphic arts, such as printing or illustrating. The professionals operated portrait studios, but they also adapted for commercial application the types of non-portrait photography established by the amateurs, utilising popular conventions in landscape and architectural views. While Seiberling’s argument is significant for distinguishing the work of amateurs from professionals, her three tier stratification of Victorian photographic practice is of less relevance in the context of nineteenth century New Zealand, where a smaller market necessitated greater flexibility and diversification. Professional studios, such as Burton Brothers and their immediate competitors, conducted the business of portrait and commission photographers, while supplying pre-produced cartes and stereographs for mass circulation and photographing the subjects popularised by the amateurs for widespread sale and distribution. Given Alfred Burton’s financial interest in scouring the Otago landscape for its rich mineral resources, he and his staff evidently “prospected” the New Zealand wilderness for commercially appealing subjects and scenes. For the purposes of this study, the term “commercial” is considered synonymous with “professional” and indicates the practice of photography for financial gain as opposed to amateur interest.

There can be no doubt that the Burton Brothers studio produced topographical photographs for financial enrichment and therefore operated a commercial venture. The large amount of surviving publicity material from the firm attests to their commercial orientation, but it may also be an indicator that business was not necessarily always prosperous. The editor’s introduction to Alfred Burton’s “Landscape Photography in New Zealand: Mostly Old Style,” notes that Burton’s efforts were not always met with financial reward:

Mr Burton’s enthusiasm on the subject of the matchless scenery of this country is known to many, but what is less known is the amount of pluck, endurance, and enterprise that went to the collection of the earlier part of Burton Bros.’ extensive series of view negatives. It will be a subject of widely-felt regret that the outcome has not been to him the commercial success which has certainly been merited.

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124 Seiberling, 68-72.

125 Burton, "Landscape Photography in New Zealand: Mostly Old Style."
Burton was aware of the capacity of photographs to promote New Zealand and to serve the immediate public interest. The aura of success was an important marketing tool, as was government-endorsement. An example of Burton’s “pluck, endurance, and enterprise” is evident in a letter to the Premier Hon. Sir Robert Stout in 1886, in which Burton offered to sell to the government photographic prints for mass-distribution overseas:

We have the honor to bring under your notice the facts as below and to make the following offer: -

1. That we have now a Collection of View negatives of New Zealand Scenery amounting to Four Thousand [original emphasis]; a quantity, we believe simply without parallel South of the Line; and of a quality which we think is pretty well known.

2. That these photographs are of various sizes, from four inches by three, to seventeen inches by thirteen (or thereabouts) but our Standard Size, of which we have the 4000, as above, is eight inches by six; or technically “whole-plate”.

3. That the distribution of such photographs in the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, on a systematic and liberal – even a lavish – scale, would be a most valuable adjunct to the present means for stimulating immigration hither.\(^{126}\)

In addition to this, Burton proposed a pricing schedule for the supply of bulk amounts of whole plate prints:

We therefore offer to supply unmounted prints – whole-plate size – (say eight inches by six) at

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With a minimum suggested order of 10,000 prints, it is clear that Burton’s aspirations were high, and possibly that the business required the injection of an order of this magnitude. The Colonial Secretary responded that Burton’s offer was declined: “Regret we have to vote and doubt if one would pass.” The letter was addressed from Wellington at a time when Burton was conducting a lecture tour and lantern slide show following the eruption of Mount Tarawera on 10 June 1886.\(^{127}\) Perhaps buoyed by the considerable publicity he received on this tour, Burton seized the opportunity to promote the studio’s earlier bodies of work.

\(^{126}\) Alfred Burton to the Colonial Secretary, 12 July 1886, IA-1-2452/1886, Colonial Secretary's Inwards Correspondence, Archives New Zealand, National Office.

\(^{127}\) New Zealand Mail, 16 July 1886.
Conclusion

Primary source material such as this makes the Burton Brothers studio a rich topic for academic research. The studio’s concerted economic drive, evident in Burton’s letter to the Premier, underpins the reinterpretation of the Burton Brothers as commercial operators and informs my positioning of their photographic products as commodities rather than art objects. This commercial orientation inflects an alternative, fuller meaning on their photographs than one exclusively derived from visual content might allow. In light of this, analysis of the physicality of Burton Brothers photographs and the studio’s methods of marketing and promotion direct a reading that highlights the role of photography within the colony.

The studio’s commercial orientation is most evident in its clear corporate identity that resists analysis of Burton Brothers photographs as the work of individual operators. For the purposes of this study, the work of the Burton Brothers studio is defined as that which bears the studio’s trade-name, regardless of individual photographers or phase of operation. The Burton Brothers name became indicative of a distinctive character and high calibre of photographic work that consumed and concealed the identities of individual photographers.
Chapter 2

BURTON BROS., DUNEDIN: THE BRAND

“Under the Style of Burton Brothers”

Upon his arrival in Dunedin in the late 1950s, Hardwicke Knight observed that the name of Burton Brothers was still well-known among the city’s residents despite the studio’s closure six decades earlier. This popularity, he believed, was mainly due to the continued presence of the studio’s trade-name in gilt lettering above their former premises at 41 Princes Street.¹ The conspicuous and consistent identification of Burton Brothers’ products with the firm’s insignia was a key contributing factor to their commercial success and remains essential to the longevity of the studio’s name. Most importantly, indelible naming methods enable identification of the studio which is crucial for classification and discovery in the context of the institutional archive, where many Burton Brothers photographs are now preserved.

The trade-name “Burton Brothers” was introduced on Alfred Burton’s entry into partnership with his brother in December 1867. Prior to this Walter Burton had operated under his own name with reference to his father’s firm in the United Kingdom, John Burton and Sons. Upon announcing Alfred’s impending arrival in Dunedin, Walter re-launched the studio and made it known that “the business will in future be carried on under the style of Burton Brothers.”² The Burton Brothers name was retained by Alfred upon the dissolution of the partnership in 1876:

Notice is hereby given, that the Partnership subsisting between us, the undersigned Walter John Burton and Alfred Henry Burton, as Photographers at Dunedin under the style and firm of “Burton Brothers,” has been dissolved by mutual consent as from the twenty-fifth day of November last. The business will in future be carried on by Mr. Alfred Henry Burton, under the same style as heretofore, who will pay all debts and moneys owing to, the late firm.³

Following the takeover of the firm by Thomas Muir and George Moodie in 1898, the studio name was changed to Muir and Moodie, yet reference to the earlier name was retained

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¹ Hardwicke Knight, interview by author, Dunedin, 19 October 2006.
² Otago Daily Times (Dunedin), 1 January 1868.
in publicity material released by the studio and their agents. Upon reissuing prints from Burton Brothers’ negative stock, Muir and Moodie appended their name with “late Burton Bros.,” enabling an association with the established brand. References to the Burton Brothers name were gradually lost as the Muir and Moodie name developed its own cachet during the postcard era.

Burton Brothers’ methods for inscribing their signature can be closely defined, and this limited variation enabled consistency and the strong formation of a brand identity. Consistent with the studio’s primary practice in portraiture, the first formats produced by the Burton Brothers were *cartes de visite* and cabinet cards. While a variety of pre-printed card mounts can be identified among extant examples in public collections, mounts were printed in bulk quantities with consistency in style and appearance across different print runs. Initially the firm adapted the typography and style employed by John Burton and Sons (fig. 1-6 and 1-7). Examples of *cartes de visite* from the 1870s, printed by European photographic wholesaler Marion and Co., use the studio name “Burton Brothers, Artists and Photographers” on the face and reverse of the mount (figs. 2-1 and 2-2). No inscription was made within the image area. The geographical connection with Dunedin, New Zealand is consistently made, and early examples show the country’s name hyphenated as “New-Zealand.”

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4 For example, an advertisement placed by A. Ferguson, Muir and Moodie’s Wellington Agent, in the *Evening Post* on 14 October 1901 referred to the studio as “Muir and Moodie (Late Burton Bros)” and promoted the sale of the studio’s “repertoire” of over 7,500 subjects.

5 The “Burton Bros.” name was later used as a trademark by a firm of Dunedin ironmongers from 1910 to 1919. Burton Bros. Limited, 1910-1919, DAAB-9055-93-3b-2158, Defunct Company and Incorporated Society files, Archives New Zealand, Dunedin Regional Office.
By the mid-1880s – after Walter Burton’s departure from the firm – the studio introduced a logo featuring the stylised words “Burton Bros., Dunedin.” This was used on cartes de visite and cabinet card portraits, stereographs and album page mounts as well as publicity material printed by the firm. A carte de visite portrait, probably showing Dunedin solicitor and prohibitionist John Archibald Duncan Adams, is a typical example of the placement of this device (figs. 2-3 to 2-5). The logo was gilt-stamped on the face of the card and printed on the reverse. The photographic image was also blind-stamped with the studio’s logo to ensure the maker’s mark would remain legible if enclosed within a window mount (such as in a carte de visite album) or photographically copied.
Fig. 2-3. “Portrait of J. A. D. Adams,” c.1880s. Carte de visite. Author’s collection.

Fig. 2-4. Detail of blind stamp within image area (recto, lower right).

Fig. 2-5. “Portrait of J. A. D. Adams” (verso).
Whole plate negatives printed as albumen contact prints became the studio’s standard output format with their expansion into topographical photography from the early 1870s. The different function of these photographs necessitated a change from the standard formats preferred for studio portraits. Early examples of these photographs show minimal identification, often with the visible maker’s mark being a blind-stamp on the cardboard print mount (figs. 2-6 and 2-7). The cardboard mount was an integral to presenting fragile albumen prints and served as the album page when bound into an album or backing board if framed. It also provided an ideal vehicle for supporting or promotional material, the reverse of which was even sold as advertising space. The blind-stamp, with the words: "Burton Brothers / Photographers / and / Artists / Dunedin N.Z.,” was imprinted on the reverse of the page mount appearing as embossed positive text on the face (fig. 2-7). Generally, a label was also applied to the reverse of the mount bearing the maker’s mark, caption information and name of the associated series (fig. 2-8).

Fig. 2-6. “[428] Otago Through the Camera: Bridge over Water of Leith,” c.1874. Albumen whole plate print. 1986/735/1, Otago Settlers Museum. The blind-stamp is located in the lower centre of the mount, below the image.

6 The Hocken Collections hold Burton Brothers original prints with the mount verso printed by Mills, Dick & Co. (Dunedin) with advertisements for businesses unrelated to the photographers or the content of the photographs (Loose prints, E3050/30A, E1431/41, E2762/15, F275/10, Hocken Collections).
This labelling and identification practice persisted until the 1880s, appearing on prints from negatives known to be taken in 1883. After this time, the maker’s mark became more prominent and was visible within the image area. The name “Burton Bros., Dunedin” was applied to the original negative in gold leaf through a stencil, appearing as white text when printed (figs. 2-9 and 2-10). This method enabled total consistency in appearance and was retroactively applied to the earlier numbers of the studio’s catalogue. Embedding the studio’s name in the negative enabled an indelible mark within the visible image area that could not be cropped or obscured and would be transferred to a secondary copy if reproduced photographically.

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7 The latest example of this labelling found during the course of this research is on prints from negative number 1783 showing Princes Street Dunedin after the completion of the Bank of New Zealand building in 1883 (1986/298/1, Otago Settlers Museum).
Fig. 2-10. Detail showing stencil of Burton Brothers trade name on image positive. “3609 – Te Kumi – King Country – Scene of the Hursthouse Outrage.” 1885. Albumen whole plate print. F-21475-1/2, Alexander Turnbull Library. For full image, see fig. 5-15.

From the mid-1880s the trade name “Burton Brothers” was commonly replaced by “Burton Bros.” in the studio’s publicity material, indicating a reassessment of their marketing and presentation, probably brought about by the simultaneous release of the studio’s series *New Zealand through the Camera* (1884) and *The Camera in the Coral Islands* (1884). Consistency in defining the studio name and presenting the maker’s mark was clearly of importance to the firm, as it is to any manufacturer whose business relies on recognition within the marketplace. The importance of defined authorship indicates the necessity for photographic studios to differentiate their products, suggesting a competitive market of ostensibly similar products. Contemporary photographic studios adopted similar identification practices, although without the consistency and clarity of Burton Brothers.

Although a number of operators were employed by the Burton Brothers studio, the individual photographer is never identified on the photographic product. Burton Brothers photographs were consistently assigned the studio’s corporate identity, even in cases where the individual practitioners were known and publicised, such as the photographs produced by Alfred Burton during his tours of the King Country and the South Pacific. Furthermore, this brand was often assigned to photographs definitely not taken by the firm’s employees or known to be taken by independent contract photographers. This is justification for the position of this thesis which elects to examine the work of the Burton Brothers as the study of a corporate identity rather than individual authorial practitioners.

The assigning of a collective identity to the studio’s products rather than acknowledgement of the individual photographer further emphasises the value of a recognisable and consistent name. The collective name functions as a brand identity, rather than a signature in the artistic sense. This chapter considers the Burton Brothers name as a commercial brand and examines the meanings generated and perpetuated by the brand and its representation in the marketplace. Trademark practice and copyright legislation also influenced naming practices and determined how the studio chose to represent itself and mark its products, which in turn affected the development of the brand’s identity. Finally, the brand will be examined through its operation in the commercial sphere of the nineteenth century to
ascertain the image of the Burton Brothers brand projected to contemporary audiences and perpetuated to this day.

**What is a Brand?**

The term “brand” has existed as a signifier of commercial production since the mid-nineteenth century. The word “brand” is etymologically derived from the Old English word for “burn,” and the origins of the term lie in the act of “branding” livestock by burning marks of ownership into an animal’s hide. “Brand” was in popular usage in association with consumer goods in New Zealand from the 1840s. Newspaper advertisements frequently represented products by their brand names, particularly imported manufactured or packaged goods such as wine, spirits and dry foods. By the mid-1860s advertisements are seen to assert the superiority of brands by claiming characteristics such as “quality” or “value for money,” demonstrating the early development of brand marketing in New Zealand.

The basic function of a brand is to differentiate the products and services of one provider from competitors in the marketplace. Through branding, consumers are able to distinguish and recognise specific products, particularly if seeking to repurchase or recommend those items. Theories of brand marketing have expanded to acknowledge consumer engagement in the activation of a brand. Aspects of naming, packaging, advertising and presentation are all encapsulated by the corporate brand, designed to appeal to the consumer’s aesthetic, emotional or rational responses. Characteristics evoked by the brand are attached to the product and the corporate entity, such as associations of quality, value or exclusivity. Branding has become a means of expressing the commercial identity and culture of the firm and a personal expression of the individual consumer.

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8 For instance, Wellington wholesaler Robert Waitt advertised beer, wine and spirits according to the products’ “brand” in New Zealand newspapers throughout the 1840s. For example, Rutherford & Drury’s brand sherry, Madeira and champagne advertised in the *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 18 June 1842 and Dunbar & Brydge’s brand ale and porter in *New Zealand Spectator and Cook’s Strait Guardian*, 8 January 1848.


The elements of branding are traced to ancient Greece and Rome and are pronounced in nineteenth century business practice. The identification of individuals as makers of certain goods and the ongoing association of that individual as a provider of particular products or services is a necessary component of retail sales in any sector and era. The shift in retail practice from purchasing raw materials by volume to goods pre-packaged by the manufacturer presented an opportunity to assign the mark of the maker to the packaging. Brand identification originated with the assigning of the company name to that packaging. Adrian Room perceived a parallel development in the practice of the shopkeeper’s name appearing above the door, which extended in application from the name of the individual operating the business to the products offered for sale and the standard of service. Room noted the example of British retailer Marks and Spencer (est. 1884), whose business name extended from a company identifier to a brand name applied to entire lines of product throughout their stores.

The advent of mass production and the concomitant widespread circulation of manufactured goods stimulated a need for effective, memorable brand names. The types of names chosen extended from personal names identifying the maker, to geographical names or designations with positive association, such as “status” names that evoke higher social echelons (for example, “Regal Shoes”). The development of manufacturing beyond the production and supply of raw material to products based on “the mixing together of ingredients” presented a need to identify the manufacturer. This especially applied to patented goods such as medicines, sold in packages bearing the maker’s mark and declaration of patent.

Advertising historian T. R. Nevett credited advances in print technology and the concurrent development of newspaper advertising with the growth of modern branding in Britain. The introduction of machine type-setting, the steam printing press and roll paper in the second half of the nineteenth century enabled faster production of daily newspapers in greater volumes. The reduction of price following the abolition of stamp duty combined with technical advances that allowed greater circulation led to the rise of the newspaper as a tool of

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14 Room, 14-15.

15 Nevett, 24.
mass-communication. Greater demand from advertisers followed, transforming the newspaper into a vehicle for propagating brands:

The second half of the century also saw the widespread introduction of branding into the area of basic household commodities and foodstuffs, and though many manufacturers still resented the intrusion of advertising into commercial practice, it seems to have been true that in any particular product field, the first firm to begin promotion on a substantial scale would see a dramatic increase in sales which would force its competitors into employing the same weapon in retaliation.16

The practice of branding has been subject to analysis by cultural commentators critiquing consumer practice. Semiotician Marcel Danesi examined the cultural aspects of naming and correlated the practices of naming products with naming children. Both acts share an ostensible function of identification, but the choice of name reflects social and cultural characteristics of the parents and, through them, the child. In semiotics this is the denotative and connotative functions of naming: the denotative function being the form of identification to distinguish one individual or product from another and the connotative function being the cultural meanings and associations embodied by that name.17 While the association with a name enables identification, it also bestows identity.

As applied to products, a branded product enables the consumer to distinguish and value a product’s characteristic attributes – however indistinct these may be from competitors’ products – through associations generated and retained in the process of naming. As Danesi observes:

A product has no identity; a brand does. It garners an identity through its name, its association with cultural meaning, its dissemination through mass manufacturing and advertising campaigns, and other strategies designed to give it what can be called “cultural relevance”.18

Nevett recognised that photographic studios were among the first to utilise modern advertising in the mid nineteenth century.19 Brand marketing and the semiotic implications of brand association are clear in the products of the Burton Brothers studio and inflect a reading of their photographs in relation to the characteristics of the brand. For instance, a

16 Nevett, 67.
18 Danesi, 25.
19 Nevett, 37.
photographic print by an unknown maker may operate as a documentary artefact, valued for the informational content of the image. If assigned a maker’s mark the appreciation of the object is transformed from the scholastic to the aesthetic and may be conferred the aura of a work of art. In October 2007 I purchased an original albumen photographic print photograph of Christchurch Cathedral from a second-hand bookseller for twenty New Zealand dollars (fig. 2-11). Although the print bears no maker’s mark, it is identifiable as Burton Brothers through the negative number and style of inscription. Identified Burton Brothers albumen prints regularly sell at specialist auctions for over one hundred New Zealand dollars, demonstrating the continued value of the name. An original albumen print from the same negative yet bearing the Burton Brothers’ stencilled mark, is held in the collection of the Auckland Art Gallery, purchased through the Ilene and Laurence Dakin Bequest to fund the purchase of historical New Zealand art. In accordance with the Gallery’s cataloguing methodology and primacy of the individual maker, the artist is identified as Alfred Burton (fig. 2-12).
Fig. 2-11. “1448 – Cathedral – Christchurch,” c.1882. Albumen whole plate print. Author’s collection.
In this instance, the brand name operates as an artist’s signature, enacting Danesi’s observation that through the processes of branding, manufacturer’s names are extended psychologically and culturally from simple identifiers to evoking “traditions of artistic authorship.”²⁰ Danesi’s argument echoes Walter Benjamin’s concept of aura: the authenticity

²⁰ Danesi, 20.
of a product, its aura, is bestowed by its brand name signifying direct association with the original maker. The print from Auckland Art Gallery’s collection possesses the aura of a work of art through the presence of the artist’s signature. The print I own is an impression of the same negative, yet without the artist’s name exists as a mechanical product and not an authenticated, authorial work of art.

The application of the studio’s name on Auckland Art Gallery’s print from this negative has transformed the photograph’s value from documentary artefact to fine art object, and it is invested with the characteristics of the studio’s total output and activities. The metaphorical frame through which the photograph is viewed is also broadened from the circumstances of the exact moment of capture to the full trajectory of the studio’s life. The photograph was taken between the completion of the Cathedral’s nave and spire in 1881 and the destruction of the original spire by an earthquake in 1888. This negative was included in the studio’s New Zealand through the Camera Catalogue of 1884, further narrowing the date to between 1881 and 1884. This was a period of high activity for the studio, at which time a number of photographers were employed by the firm to amass their stock of topographical views. Auckland Art Gallery’s assertion of individual authorship is problematic, as it is quite possible in light of studio practices that Alfred Burton was not the photographer of this image. This demonstrates a lingering disconnect between the cultures of art and consumerism, but also suggests the studio’s naming practices are more akin with corporate branding than with the signing of a work by an artist.

**Legal Aspects of Naming: Trademarks and Copyright**

Brands are commonly understood as synonymous with trademarks or logos. Branding, however, has a broader definition extending beyond tangible elements to apply to a corporation’s projected character or identity. While a particular trademark, logo or slogan may be associated with a brand’s identity, these elements can also exist independently of the brand. Legal mechanisms of trademarks, patents and copyright operate to protect a brand’s uniqueness and ownership.\(^21\) Trademark legislation arose in response to manufacturers’ demands for a means to protect brands from forgery or fraudulent use.\(^22\) In effect, a trademark is a legally protected brand.

A news article in Dunedin’s *Otago Witness* of 1864 offers a description of trademarks which seems akin to the function of branding:

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\(^{21}\) Murphy, *Brand Strategy*, 124.

\(^{22}\) Murphy, *Brand Strategy*, 18-19.
If the reader possesses a pocket-knife of a well known maker, and opens it, he will see that, in addition to the name, there is a Maltese cross and a plain cross stamped upon the shoulder of the knife. This is the trade mark, the indorsement of the firm with respect to its excellence. This trade mark is very valuable; possibly the manufacturer would not sell it for £20,000.

The writer further described the functions of these pictorial marks as a means of reaching a non-literate and often geographically remote market, “where the peasantry can understand a simple emblem, when they would not be able to read a maker’s mark.” The trademark offered a reference allowing repeat orders of items from the same manufacturer, thus the mark conveys the character of quality or excellence. This article also notes the maker’s strategic choice of pictorial device in order to appeal to a certain sector of the market.

While the reference to Canadian examples in the above article suggests that it was syndicated from an international source, international trademark practice was beginning to operate among manufacturers in New Zealand by the 1860s. The practice of assigning and protecting trademarks in New Zealand was formalised in The Trade Marks Act of 1866. This act, following the precedent of British legislation, established the system for registration of trademarks at a central government office. No trademark would be recognised until formal application had been completed with the Registrar. This entailed submission of two copies of the proposed trademark with a description of the goods to which it would be applied and payment of a fee of £3 3s. Within ten days the Registrar would publish the proposed trademark in the Government Gazette. Provided that no opposition was heard within a period of sixty days, the application would be approved and the exclusive use of that trademark protected under law. Although the act was repealed by subsequent legislation in 1953 and 2002, a similar system of trademark registration and protection operates in New Zealand to this day.

The 1866 act defined the term “Trade Mark” as including “any and every such name signature word letter device emblem figure sign seal stamp diagram label ticket or other mark.” A trademark and brand perform the same function of identifying goods with the

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23 *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 5 November 1864.


25 The Trade Marks Act, 1866, s.2.
manufacturer’s mark for the benefit of the consumer, and ultimately the manufacturer, through the exercise of the consumer’s buying power. New Zealand’s trademark legislation was tested in an 1893 case *In Re Powell’s Trade Mark*. The judge established the following practical definition which provides an indication of how trademarks operated in the nineteenth century market:

The function of a trade mark is to give an indication to the purchaser or possible purchaser as to the manufacture or quality of the goods – to give an indication to his eye of the trade source from which the goods come, or the trade hands through which they pass on their way to the market. It tells the person who is about to buy, or considering whether he shall buy, that what is presented to him is either what he has known before under the similar name, as coming from a source with which he is acquainted, or that it is what he has heard of before as coming from that similar source.

This is strikingly similar to definitions of modern branding, confirming the operation of a trademark as a legally protected brand.

The Burton Brothers studio’s consistent usages of their company name as a stencil applied to the negative, as a blind-stamp on prints and album pages and later the more ornate insignia, accord with this definition of trademarks. However, no record can be found of the official registration of these trademarks by the studio. The expense incurred in the registration process seems a likely deterrent – a further fee of £1 1s. was charged to issue the trademark certificate – and given New Zealand’s small population at the establishment of the firm in the late 1860s, duplication or fraudulent use of the trademarks would have constituted a negligible risk. Furthermore, basic protection against fraudulent use of a trade name was offered by the common law tort of “Passing Off” in which action could be taken against a manufacturer found to have deliberately “passed off” goods under the name or distinctive manner of another manufacturer.

For commercial photographers, copyright legislation offered another form of brand protection and presented additional reasons for clearly inscribing the studio name or maker’s mark on photographic products. Formal copyright protection for photographic objects was introduced in New Zealand with the Fine Arts Copyright Act 1877. Protection of photographs was central to the development of this act and to New Zealand’s copyright

26 Lord Justice Bowen in *In Re Powell’s Trade Mark* [1893] 2 Ch, 388, 403-4, quoted in Brown and Grant, 12.

27 Brown and Grant, 137-140.

28 The Fine Arts Copyright Act, 1877.
legislation. The implementation of legislation to protect works of art by New Zealand practitioners was first mooted by Captain William Russell, Member of the House of Representatives for Napier, who claimed “many gentlemen employed in taking photographs of scenery in different parts of the country had suffered very considerably by the piracy of their works. They complained that they were subjected to very serious loss.”

Two years earlier, a Napier photographer had raised the need for improved copyright law. While the jurisdiction of Imperial copyright legislation could extend to the colonies, recourse was impractical. The Fine Arts Copyright Bill was prepared and presented by William Thomas Locke Travers, Member for Wellington and a skilled amateur photographer. Based on equivalent English legislation, the bill – and subsequent act – provided for the copyright of “Works of Art” by authors resident in New Zealand in media of “every original painting, drawing, engraving, useful or ornamental design, sculpture, and photograph, and the negative of any photograph.” Copyright was not automatic; authors seeking copyright protection registered works of art at the central office and upon payment of a fee were guaranteed exclusive right to sell, copy and reproduce that work of art for the duration of their lifetime and to his/her estate for seven years upon the author’s death. The act made no requirements for the identification of authorship to be inscribed on works of art, but promoted an awareness of rights of proprietary and authorship by penalising persons found fraudulently applying their signature or name to a work of art by another author.

The Fine Arts Copyright Act allowed for the protection of exclusive rights of intellectual property for a single author or “proprietor” of a “work of art.” An 1879 amendment to the act provided for delegation of authority to an “assignee” or agent, but it did not allow for collective ownership of copyright and required the identification of a sole author. This aspect of the act was tested in 1887 in a civil action taken by Wellington mapmakers Charles St. Barbe and F. H. Tronson against the Lyttelton Times Company, publishers of the Canterbury Times. The plaintiffs held that a map of the Western Pacific registered for copyright protection in their names was reproduced by the Lyttelton Times Company and published without their consent as a supplement to the Canterbury Times. In

29 "Copyright," New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (7 August 1877), 245.

30 Evening Post (Wellington), 5 July 1875.

31 The Fine Arts Copyright Act, 1877, s.2.

32 The Fine Arts Copyright Act 1877 Amendment Act, 1879.

33 "Alleged Infringement of Copyright," Evening Post, 23 February 1887.
arguing the case the defendant’s lawyer, Mr Gully, revealed weaknesses in the Fine Arts Copyright Act and the process for registration of copyright of works of art. Acknowledging the act’s provision for copyright to be held by only one person, Gully observed that “if registered in the name of two persons it would be impossible to say how long the rights should exist.” He cited the 1883 case of *Nottage v. Jackson* heard by the English Court of Appeal which held that a photographic operator was the actual author and owner of copyright, not his employer.\(^34\) The Magistrate observed that if this interpretation were correct, “it would probably affect many of the copyrights registered in New Zealand as it appeared that the Registrar was in the habit of receiving applications made in the names of two persons.” The Magistrate held in favour of the defendants on the grounds that St. Barbe and Tronson’s copyright application was void as had not been made in the name of a single author.\(^35\)

The statement of sole authorship – and probable enhanced stringency at the Copyright Office – directly affected the Burton Brothers studio. Following a fire at the Copyright Office in April 1887, and consequent destruction of the Copyright Register and records, the Burton Brothers studio responded to a request from the Registrar to re-register all previously copyrighted items. Correspondence shows that twenty-five negatives from *The Camera in the Coral Islands* series were copyrighted in September 1884 and twenty-five from *The Maori at Home* series in July 1885, plus three Christmas Cards also granted copyright in July 1885.\(^36\) In June 1888 the studio sought to re-register the fifty view photographs and filed prints with the Copyright Registrar for this purpose.\(^37\) Annotations on the original correspondence show the Registrar’s insistence for a single author to be identified: “The firm must be asked to state

\(^34\) *Nottage v. Jackson*, Law Reports No.11, Queen’s Bench Division, 627 (1883). The plaintiffs G.S. Nottage and H. J. Kennard trading as the London Stereoscopic and Photographic Company sued an employee, Jackson, for copyright infringement. The defendant had under his own initiative photographed a visiting team of Australian cricketers. The case centred on the definition of “author” as pertains to photographs. The Court held that as the plaintiffs had contributed no more than supplying the equipment they could not be seen to be instrumental in the arrangement of the photograph and therefore their application for copyright as authors was void. The influence of this decision in British copyright legislation for photographs is discussed in Ronan Deazley, "Struggling with Authority: The Photograph in British Legal History," *History of Photography* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 2003).

\(^35\) *Evening Post*, 1 March 1887.

\(^36\) See Appendix 2 for a full list of negatives officially registered for copyright by Burton Brothers.

\(^37\) Many of these prints are now held in the Patent Office collection, PAColl-4300-1, Alexander Turnbull Library.
whose name as proprietor(s), and whose name as author is to be entered in the Register. The latter must be the individual who took the view [original emphasis].\textsuperscript{38}

As per these instructions, the firm responded with a completed Copyright Application Form identifying the proprietors of copyright for the fifty photographs as “Alfred H Burton, Kaikorai and Thomas B. Muir Dunedin, trading as Burton Bros., Dunedin” with Alfred H. Burton named as the author of all fifty works. While complicit with the Registrar’s request to identify sole authorship, the form bears amendments made by the firm: “I [overwritten] We Burton Bros. of Dunedin, do hereby certify that I am [overwritten] We are entitled to the Copyright in the Copyright in Works of Art [Register] kept at Wellington [original emphases].”

In October 1888 the firm applied for copyright of two large format negatives of the Sutherland Falls, known to have been taken by studio employee George Moodie and publicised as such in contemporary newspaper reports. However, the accompanying form shows the proprietor and author both identified as “Burton Bros. Photographer, Dunedin.”\textsuperscript{39} In this instance the Registrar processed the application immediately and granted copyright with no requirement for sole authorship. This demonstrates the persistent importance of collective authorship to the firm and, possibly, Alfred Burton’s caution against authorship and/or copyright being claimed by individual operators contracted by the studio.

The limited application of the Fine Arts Copyright Act as applied to photographs is evident in the relatively small number of photographs registered for copyright by the Burton Brothers studio. In the Register for the period May 1887 to April 1911 only the fifty-two photographs stated above are registered for the Burton Brothers studio. A comparison with the studio’s contemporaries shows similarly low application numbers: Dunedin photographer F. A. Coxhead registered twelve negatives of the Sounds region in 1887 to 1889; William Dougall of Invercargill registered twenty-four negatives in 1888; J. R. Hanna of Auckland registered over fifty negatives from 1889 to 1900; J. R. Morris also of Dunedin registered twelve negatives in 1888; James Ring of Greymouth registered five negatives from 1887 to 1898; Wellington firm Wrigglesworth and Binns registered twenty-one negatives from 1887 to 1898, and Auckland based photographer G. D. Valentine registered forty-two negatives of

\textsuperscript{38} Copyright Application, 88/46 - Burton Brothers, June 1888, PC-4-88/46, 18982, Patent Office, Copyright Application Files, Archives New Zealand, National Office.

\textsuperscript{39} Copyright Application, 88/64 - Burton Brothers, 1888, PC-4-88/64, 18982, Patent Office, Copyright Application Files, Archives New Zealand, National Office.
the Hot Lakes region between 1886 and 1889. Correspondence from William Dougall reveals that photographers found the copyright process prohibitively expensive with a fee of £3 6s. charged for each item registered – more than three times the equivalent fee charged in England. While Dougall found this fee reasonable for single items the absence of a graduated scale of charges made an application for multiple items a financial impossibility. He urged that a revision of charges may result in “a much more extensive use of this protection.” The Registrar appears receptive to Dougall’s advice and forwarded this correspondence to the Colonial Secretary for comment, noting his personal recommendation for reduction in charges. The Colonial Secretary’s response simply stated that the schedule of charges was imposed by Section 5 of The Fine Arts Copyright Act 1877.

The act was rendered even more ineffective through lack of enforcement. Although the amendment of 1879 made it an offence to apply any marks signifying copyright registration to any item not officially registered for copyright protection, claims to copyright can be seen in a number of Burton Brothers prints not registered for copyright. The entire series of The Camera in the Coral Islands was issued as “Copyright Series” when only twenty-five negatives were registered for copyright from the series of over 250 individual images. The words “Copyright Series” were inscribed on the original negatives and printed on the mounts and repeated in the catalogue and advertisements for the series (fig. 2-13). Interestingly, examples of prints from the series deposited at the Patent Office are void of the words “Copyright Series” on the prints (fig. 2-14). Viewed in the original, it is further evident that the printed mark “Copyright Series” has been erased from the print mounts. This demonstrates some awareness of the dubious legality of their actions.

40 "Register of Proprietors of Copyright in Paintings etc." May 1887 - April 1911, PC-13-2, Archives New Zealand, National Office.

41 William Dougall to Registrar of Copyright, 1888, PC-4-88/43, 18982, Patent Office, Copyright Application Files, Archives New Zealand, National Office.
Fig. 2-13. "2545 – Levuka – Fiji," 1884. Albumen whole plate print. E1207/12, Hocken Collections.

Fig. 2-14. "2724 – Tongan Girls – Nukualofa," 1884. Albumen whole plate print. PAColl-4300-1, Alexander Turnbull Library.
Other examples exist of the studio claiming copyright for works not properly registered. The earliest instance is seen in 1878: a large scale photographic portrait of the Dunedin Catholic leader Rev. Father Hennebery was offered for sale by Art Union. The advertisement attested to the item’s uniqueness, noting that it was “copyright” and therefore unauthorised copies were not obtainable.\footnote{"Art Union," \textit{New Zealand Tablet}, 3 May 1878.} Patent Office records show no application for copyright registration on this photograph. This practice is also evident in the work of other photographers and operates to signify the intention of the proprietor to defend their rights of customary ownership.

The Patent Office did not condone this practice and in February 1883 took legal action against a number of persons in Dunedin who had sold unregistered photographs bearing the mark “copyright.”\footnote{\textit{Evening Post}, 2 March 1883; \textit{North Otago Times} (Oamaru), 28 February 1883.} A firm of printers, two photographers and a bookseller – all with identity suppressed – were tried collectively in the Dunedin Magistrates Court for breaches under the Fine Arts Copyright Act. The Resident Magistrate dismissed the case and held that the Registrar, Eustace Brandon, had misinterpreted the force of the statute as photographic copies were not “works of art” in the interpretation of the act as they were made “simply by mechanical labour, and did not require great skill.”\footnote{\textit{Evening Post}, 2 March 1883.} That being so, photographic copies were not covered by the act and the defendants’ actions in applying the word “copyright” could not be perceived as a deliberate breach of the law. The definition of “photographic copy” or the specific articles in question were not offered by any newspaper reports, and the Magistrate’s judgement or proceedings were not reported.

The most explicit reporting of the case was in the \textit{Timaru Herald}, which implied that Brandon brought the prosecution in an attempt to extort funds to cover his personal expenses and dismissed his declared intention to raise the profile of copyright legislation:

Mr Brandon in his evidence said it was desired to “bring the Fine Arts Copyright Act into public notice.” In other words it was desired to frighten a number of tradesmen into registering so-called works of art, and thus filling the “Registrar’s” pockets with fees.\footnote{\textit{Timaru Herald}, 10 March 1883.}
Brandon filed libel charges against the *Timaru Herald*, disputing the facts as reported in their editorial and asserting that he was acting under instruction from the Government.\(^{46}\) The potential ramifications of this case for photographers eluded the photographic community, or at least contemporary news reporters. The Magistrate’s decision that “photographic copies” were not “works of art” in the interpretation of the act effectively rendered second or subsequent generation photographic prints exempt from copyright legislation.

Alfred Burton spoke out against the copying of photographs by visual artists and illustrated newspapers. Such copying used photographs as source material with no acknowledgement to the original photographer. To illustrate the physical and financial hardship incurred by a photographer in order to obtain photographs of wilderness regions, Burton voiced his frustration at the unauthorised copying of photographs without acknowledgement to the original maker:

An “artist” sees it [the photographic print], purchases a copy for, say, eighteenpence, and makes an effective oil painting from it – being indebted to it for everything but colour. Is the photographer entitled to any portion of the credit? For instance, I saw in an exhibition in Dunedin some time ago a large oil painting of Passage Point Cove, Acheron Passage, Dusky Sound. Every detail of that picture was copied from a photograph of mine. I found the spot and composed the picture, and I think I may say that I know that the painter could not possibly have been on the ground. Ought not that work of art to have been described as “painted by So-and-So, from a photograph by Burton Brothers”? Or is an artist justified in saying, “The photograph I used was mine; I paid one and-sixpence for it”? I pause for a reply. The Australian illustrated papers are also sinners in this respect. They copy our photographs and then coolly put their artist’s name on the engraving! Even the New Zealand Government use them without the slightest acknowledgement. How is this for “protection to native industry,” eh, Sir Harry Atkinson [Premier]?\(^{47}\)

Burton observed the confusion that existed in ownership of copyright pertaining to photographs and the lack of recourse available. These comments also establish that copyright protection was of concern to the firm and other commercial photographers. However, the unauthorised reproduction of photographs was not isolated to practitioners working in other media. In 1882 a case was tried against Auckland photographer Charles H. Monkton, who photographically copied and marketed under his own name portraits of King Tawhiao taken

\(^{46}\) *Timaru Herald*, 10 March 1883; *North Otago Times*, 19 March 1883.

by John Blackman of Pulman’s Studio. This may have established legal precedent for recourse against such action, yet negatives were often legitimately transferred and reissued under another studio’s name. Furthermore, the act only provided grounds for recourse over photographs officially registered for copyright, enabling photographers to assign their name or signature to the unregistered work of others with impunity. The Burton Brothers studio is known to have assigned their name to negatives taken by Hart, Campbell and Co., the American Photographic Company and E. W. Henderson. Similarly, the Burton Brothers mark appears on photographs of Dunedin taken prior to their arrival in the city.

George Hutchison, Member of the House of Representatives for Patea, recognised the inadequacy of the Fine Arts Copyright Act for the protection of photographs. As the current system of copyright registration was expensive and protracted, in 1896 Hutchison, supported by Samuel Carnell, photographer and Member for Napier, sought to provide a system of protection for photographers of primarily scenic views. On the bill’s second reading in Parliament, Carnell outlined the existing situation which necessitated more rigorous copyright controls:

He [Carnell] was aware that for many years past photographs taken by the leading professional men in New Zealand had been pirated to a great extent. He also knew that photographs of the Sounds, which photographers had been at great expense to take had been sent to Germany and that piles of them were reproduced there and sent out again to the booksellers in New Zealand and sold at a low price. This was very unfair to the photographers, who not only spent their time and money, but often ran considerable bodily risk in their endeavours to reach the best views.

In response, Premier Richard Seddon disputed the necessity of the bill and argued that the unauthorised reproduction of New Zealand photographs by European publishers served the promotion of the colony’s scenic beauty. Hence, he was satisfied that no government intervention was necessary or appropriate. In defence of Carnell’s assertion, Thomas Mackenzie, Member for Clutha, argued that the service of photographers benefitted the nation as a whole. In 1888 Mackenzie had accompanied an expedition to the Sutherland Falls with photographic parties representing Morris and Burton Brothers. He cited the example of these two firms to demonstrate the activities of photographers in investing considerable financial expense and “very severe hardship and exposure [of personal risk], in order to bring to the

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49 "House of Representatives: Photographic Copyright Bill," New Zealand Parliamentary Debates 93, no. 27 (22 July 1896): 400.
centre of our population photographs of any new country.”

Illicit reproductions of these photographs were therefore “villainous” and the poor quality of these reproductions compromised the impression of New Zealand presented to international audiences.

However, Hutchison’s bill was intended to only hold jurisdiction over the domestic piracy of photographs that were often sold in competition with the original photographer. While the Fine Arts Copyright Act offered some protection against unauthorised copying, discussion in the House recognised that the current system required photographers to undertake unreasonable expense in order to first achieve their photographic view and then to secure exclusive use of their invention, effectively imposing an additional tax on business activities and curtailing the right to free-trade. Members repeatedly emphasised their primary concern in protecting photographs that “showed the scenery of New Zealand to the greatest advantage” and not to photographs of persons. An additional amendment to the bill was enacted, establishing the copyright of commissioned portraiture to reside with the sitter, rather than the photographer.

The Photographic Copyright Act 1896 provided copyright protection without the requirement of registration for a period of five years from the date of capture. Protection was automatic upon the inscribing on the negative the name of the “person or firm taking and producing such photographs” with the word “PROTECTED” and the “true date” of the photograph’s moment of capture. This act supplemented the protection offered by the Fine Arts Copyright Act, and all pieces of pre-existing copyright legislation were consolidated in The Copyright Act, 1908.

The Photographic Copyright Act effectively formalised the established practice of commercial photographers inscribing their names on photographic products as a mark to signify authorship and ownership, thus institutionalising branding practices as law. The imbedding of the name within the image – such as inscribing or stamping the name on the negative – provided an indelible mark that would transfer if a photographic print was reproduced by mechanical means. Secondary copies from a print would bear the original maker’s mark, unless artificially masked or physically erased from the original negative.

The application of the act was interpreted loosely by practitioners, as can be seen in the inscriptions used by Muir and Moodie on their succession to the Burton Brothers firm in July 1898. Muir and Moodie progressively added their own name to the stock of Burton Brothers negatives that they acquired upon purchasing the firm. A clear example of this is shown in

50 “House of Representatives: Photographic Copyright Bill,” 401.

51 The Photographic Copyright Act, 1896.
Muir and Moodie prints from the Burton Brothers negative “3585 At Taumarunui – King Country” (figs. 2-15 and 2-16). The original caption and the standard Burton Brothers stencil, has been appended with “12 Sep 98 / Protected.” This negative was taken in 1885 on Alfred Burton’s tour through the King Country, although this was not among the twenty-five negatives from The Maori at Home series registered for copyright. As Muir and Moodie took over the Burton Brothers studio upon Alfred Burton’s retirement in July 1898, it is clear that the date of 12 September 1898 was applied by the latter firm. Burton could – and seemingly did – transfer his rights of copyright to Muir and Moodie, yet the maker’s name inscribed in the photograph persists as “Burton Bros., Dunedin.” Although this is accurate in that the Burton Brothers firm was the true author of this negative, in legal terms the statement “Protected” offered no protection to the parties publishing this photograph, Thomas Muir and George Moodie. Furthermore, by 1898 the photographs from The Maori at Home series were well-publicised and distributed so the benefit in claiming copyright on this image seems negligible, especially as their claims to authorship would not be legally recognised. Yet, the word “Protected” also acts as an authenticator and attests to the superior quality of this photograph. Here the mechanisms of copyright are seen operating beyond the intentions of the act – not to show something as protected, but of sufficient calibre to be worthy of protection.

Fig. 2-15. Muir and Moodie print from Burton Brothers negative, “3585 At Taumarunui – King Country,” 1885. Sepia-toned silver gelatin whole plate print. Album 365, P90-015, Hocken Collections.
Marks of copyright functioned as a mechanism of brand marketing that signified authenticity and quality. While the Fine Arts Copyright Act enabled photographers to nominate specimens of exceptional quality or character for legal protection, the Photographic Copyright Act allowed the equivalent status to be assigned to every photograph released by a studio. The same ends had been achieved by spurious claims to copyright for unregistered items, but now practitioners were able to conduct these practices with legal authority.

While today copyright has an expanded application to protect the intangible intellectual and moral rights of creation and invention, nineteenth century copyright was primarily a commercial concern. Governed by the same authority that administered the issuing and protection of industrial patents, copyright was a means of securing a maker’s exclusive right to his or her invention and the financial benefit this realised. Debates surrounding the implementation of copyright legislation for photographs were concerned more with protecting the financial and material investment of the maker than recognising their exclusive right to their own intellectual property. In this a clear distinction was made between the art of the photographer and more traditional art forms; photography as an art was a commercial endeavour that could also serve the interests of the state. The parliamentary debates preceding the introduction of the Fine Arts Copyright Act 1877 and the Photographic Copyright Act 1896 emphasised the role of photography to serve the interests of Government in the promotion of New Zealand’s natural scenery to international audiences – a specialist service more directly rendered by photography than any other form of art.

The legal implications of naming imposed by copyright regulations enriched the power of the Burton Brothers name as the collective identifier of the firm. The Burton Brothers studio assigned their company name to every photographic product released and consistently withheld acknowledgement of the individual photographer engaged in the making of an image. To the firm, the making of photographs was a collective process conducted by a team of specialist operators: one operator taking the view, another in the studio processing the negative, another producing the print, a shop-hand generating sales and another promoting the studio’s business. The Fine Arts Copyright Act 1877 established the legal status of copyright for photographs as belonging to employers and not to contracted or commissioned...
photographers. However, the case of *Nottage v. Jackson* and its subsequent recognition in the New Zealand courts established a precedent for the right of first ownership to be vested in the individual photographer who made the negative. The assignation of a collective name to the studio’s products established the intellectual property as belonging to the firm and in doing so brought into association the full body of work produced by the firm. The Burton Brothers name developed a recognisable character regardless of the idiosyncratic styles of individual photographers employed by the firm.

**Burton Bros. Dunedin – The Brand**

The practice of branding is not unfamiliar to photography. The “Kodak” name is often cited as one of the oldest and most successful extant brands, an entirely fictitious name registered as a trademark by George Eastman in 1888. Eastman’s account of the creation of the Kodak name showed his awareness of the practical functionality of effective trade names as “short, vigorous” and “incapable of being misspelled to an extent that will destroy its identity.” Eastman favoured the letter K as a “short, incisive sort of letter” to aid the retention of the name in consumer minds. The success of the Kodak name is also attributed to its non-descriptive basis, enabling the brand to transcend linguistic and regional borders and the firm’s ongoing product development.

While the Burton Brothers trade name pre-dates Kodak, the success and retention of the name can be attributed to similar principles. The name originated in 1868 as a functional description of the business arrangement between two brothers. This followed the “name over the door” shopkeeper convention outlined by Room and followed the familial model of their father’s firm, John Burton and Sons. The use of the name “Burton” enabled a clear association between the studios and permitted the younger firm to share in the accolades earned by the older firm, while “Brothers” asserted familial connection. The name “Burton Brothers” said nothing about the trade of the business, thus enabling the diversity of their trade – a commercial necessity in frontier society.

Although branding has become synonymous with twentieth century marketing and business practice, an equivalent concept appears to have been understood and utilised by the Burton Brothers. While their trade name commenced as a literal description of a business relationship, the continued use of the Burton Brothers name indicates that it possessed value

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53 Room, 16.
analogous to a modern brand. At the split of the partnership in 1876, Alfred Burton announced his decision to continue on the business under “the style” of Burton Brothers. There is nothing remarkable in this choice of phrase “the style,” which in common usage indicated a designated business name, synonymous with “trading as.” This also indicates that the selection of a trade name was a conscious act and need not reflect the identities of the business operators. From Burton’s advertisement it is clear that the most important qualities of a business name were consistency and recognition.

Walter Burton also used the expression “under the style” in 1878, when he publicised the launch of his own portrait studio, “‘The Royal’ Gallery of Photography.”54 This choice of name also demonstrates the conscious use of associative language in choice of trade name: the word “Royal” transmits positive associations and refers to the Royal commissions received by the English “father” firm, while the description of the premises as a “Gallery” shows the aspiration to place photographic portraiture within a fine art context. The name “Burton Brothers” was not a registered trademark, so no legal restriction existed to prevent Walter from opening a studio under his own name. His choice of an alternative business name indicates value was attached to the Burton mark, and its exclusive use within the photography trade in Dunedin was retained by Alfred Burton.

Likewise, Alfred’s continued use of the Burton Brothers name suggests the firm’s existing name held more value than if he were to practice under his own name, marking a shift in the studio’s style of presentation and a departure from literal naming, there being no brothers involved in the partnership. From at least 1878 Alfred employed photographers to undertake studio work and to operate in the field, thus name of Burton Brothers encompassed the creative products of many individuals. Contemporary photographic studios that employed multiple practitioners chose general names that avoided specifically representing the company directors or their employees, for example the American Photographic Company and the London Portrait Rooms.55 Those operating under personal names, such as the studios operated by Robert Clifford and John Morris, underwent various permutations to describe the precise business relationship operating at that time (“Clifford Morris & Co.,” “Clifford & Morris,” “Clifford & Co.,” “J. Morris”). By comparison the Burton Brothers firm was consistently represented by the same name throughout its phases of operation, the only minor variation


being the abbreviation of “Brothers” to “Bros.” This clearly demonstrates a value in the name – the brand.

At a phonetic level the choice of the words “Burton” and “Brothers” satisfies the recommended criteria for successful brand names advocated by branding specialists and exemplified by many of the most enduring international brands. Firstly, the name is alliterative, the first letter of each word being “B.” Secondly, the consonant “B” is a plosive sound which is articulated strongly and quickly. Such sounds are thought to be more easily recalled than softer sibilant consonants.\(^{56}\) Both these characteristics are held to make a name memorable. Two nineteenth century brand names that employed these phonetic devices are Kodak (1888) and Coca Cola (1886). The double “B” of Burton Brothers also possessed aesthetic appeal, as seen in the firm’s use from the mid 1880s of a distinctive logo that utilised the shared “B” as the central design element (fig. 2-5).

The semantic meanings of the name also suggest that the firm sought to create positive associations through its name. The retention of the word “Brothers” in the trade name despite the split in partnership may be accounted for by the familial associations projected by the use of this word. As mentioned, there was probable benefit in the inference of a family operated firm and a collectively run enterprise, rather than an individual operator. This also personalises the business and allows the personality of the individuals within the firm – in this case the charismatic Alfred Burton – to inform the character and identity of the brand. The tendency to personalise the firm is seen in newspaper reports and agents’ advertisements that often refer to the firm as “Messrs Burton Brothers”. Notably, Alfred and Walter Burton were both active Freemasons, so the connection of the word “Brothers” with the Masonic brethren may also have lent strength to the brand.

Both the brand marking applied to photographic products and the publicity materials released by the firm consistently accompanied the business name with the place name “Dunedin.” As the physical location of the firm’s premises, this performed a practical function, advising the site of business for reprints and further orders. Initially, this may have also functioned to distinguish the Dunedin firm from the studio of John Burton and Son in Britain, while also inserting the studio into an international network. However, by comparison with other photographic studios operating in New Zealand during this period, the Burton Brothers studio was unusual in assigning a geographical identifier of “Dunedin” in isolation, without reference to New Zealand. The captions assigned to Burton Brothers photographs also

rarely referenced New Zealand. The studio certainly aspired to international distribution for their photographs, yet reference to the country of origin appears redundant or unnecessary. This suggests a level of value existed in the association with Dunedin – then New Zealand’s largest city and centre of commerce. Photographers operating in other urban centres rarely used the name of their studio location as consistently or frequently as the Burton Brothers. The consistent geographical connection of the Burton Brothers photographs to Dunedin suggests some cachet existed in this association, thus enhancing the value and recognition of their name.

The development of a strong and highly recognisable brand performed a vital representative function for the Burton Brothers studio. In modern advertising, brands are often supported by illustrations of their associated products or by images representing values the advertiser wishes to project. The inexpensive reproduction of photographs in newspapers and circulars was not enabled until the development of half-tone printing which was not in use in New Zealand until the 1890s.\(^\text{57}\) Therefore photographers and artists seeking to promote their work were more reliant on words to describe their work and influence its reception among the public. For the Burton Brothers in geographically remote Dunedin, the iteration of the brand in advertisements and applied to products acted on their behalf encapsulating the quality and range of their product and projecting an appropriate image of the studio.

An effective brand is the tool that enables a company to sell its products or service \textit{in absentia} through agents (or in the retail context, shops).\(^\text{58}\) Widespread product distribution also contributes to the strength and popularity of a brand as the studio’s products bearing their trade name were circulated nationally and internationally. Operating independently in the marketplace and at the point of sale, a brand must act on behalf of the producer in the interaction with the consumer. Hence the marketing of the manufacturer’s product tends to place greater emphasis on promoting the brand and strengthening its image than on the attributes and benefits of the product.

\(^\text{57}\) The first successful half-tone print appeared in the New York Graphic on 4 March 1880. However, the process was not in widespread use in newspapers until 1897, by which time half-tone plates were improved to be compatible with high-speed printing presses. Hardwicke Knight cited examples of half-tone block reproductions appearing in New Zealand publications from 1891. Hardwicke Knight, \textit{Photography in New Zealand: A Social and Technical History} (Dunedin: J. McIndoe, 1971), 147-148; Robert Taft, \textit{Photography and the American Scene; A Social History}, 1839-1889 (New York,: Dover Publications, 1964), 436-447.

\(^\text{58}\) Murphy, "What is Branding?," 4.
The strength of the Burton Brothers name, or brand, is best indicated by the firm’s ability to promote and sell its products *in absentia*, through agents. From the mid-1870s the studio sold stock photographs through agencies in other centres, initially in geographically close locations, but the geographical range of their agents expanded with their subject matter. While the high profile of the Burton Brothers name enabled the sale of their goods through agents, the active promotion of the brand by these agents directly influenced the distribution of Burton Brothers products and strengthened their name throughout New Zealand. While the firm may have had little involvement in the preparation of such publicity, consistency in style and word choice in a number of advertisements chart the development of recognisable characteristics of the brand.

Agents for Burton Brothers operated in a variety of professions and trades. Some were specialist photographic agencies or commission agents, while others were stationers and booksellers. Agents were also found in totally unrelated trades, such as plumbers and opticians. The Wellington employment bureau France Brothers was a major promoter of Burton Brothers photographs in the mid-1880s, even sub-contracting agents in other centres. The business relationship was reciprocal: agents filled orders for Burton Brothers prints and in return took a commission from sales and promoted their own names by imprinting the photographs they issued with their company’s stamps (figs. 2-17 and 2-18). The studio was active in contracting agents and advertising for representatives in areas where they did not have a presence. These advertisements stress the benefits that such arrangements offered for both parties. Prospective agents were expected to possess “pluck,” a sense of responsibility and capital to invest in the venture. In return for his own efforts, a “pushing man” could not fail to find the arrangement lucrative. Newspaper evidence reveals that some agents went to considerable effort to generate sales from the Burton Brothers portfolio, placing frequent newspaper advertisements and even adapting their premises for the display of specimen prints.

59 For a list of known agents for the Burton Brothers, see Appendix 3.

60 *West Coast Times* (Hokitika), 21 August 1884.

61 *Wanganui Herald*, 27 May 1886.
The power and meaning of the Burton Brothers brand is best understood on examination of the advertisements of their most pro-active agent, France Brothers. In May 1884 France Brothers obtained the contract to represent Burton Brothers in the Wellington region and converted their office into a showroom for prints from the New Zealand through the Camera series. As with most other agents, France Brothers promoted photographs according to the series designated by the studio and often offered sales of prints on a subscriber basis, a marketing strategy first initiated by the studio in 1880 for the sale of prints from the series

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Fig. 2-17. France Brothers stamp applied to the reverse of Burton Brothers photographic print mount, “1718 – Lawyer’s Head,” c.1882 (negative), c. 1884 (print). Albumen whole plate print. E3979/14A, Hocken Collections.

Fig. 2-18. A. H. Ross & Co. stamp applied to the reverse of Burton Brothers stereograph, “[122] Mount Armstrong,” after 1879. Albumen stereograph. O.005555, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

62 *Evening Post*, 13 May 1884.
New Zealand through the Camera.\textsuperscript{63} Under this scheme, annual subscribers would receive one whole plate print per week at a special price of one shilling each. Subscribers could choose their own images from the samples held by the agent or selection could be made on the subscriber’s behalf. Initially, the France Brothers placed advertisements emphasising the lower price for these photographs, under the heading: “Cheap Photographs of New Zealand Scenery” (fig. 2-19). This first advertisement, placed for three consecutive days upon first announcing their appointment as Burton Brothers’ agent, also emphasised the volume of prints available, promoting an “enormous supply” from the studio’s 2000 negatives.

\begin{center}
\textbf{CHEAP PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW \ 
ZEALAND SCENERY,} \ 
By BURTON BROS. \\

M\textit{ESSRS. FRANCE BROS. have con-} 
\textit{tracted with Messrs. Burton Bros.} 
\textit{for an enormous supply of their Landscape} 
\textit{Photographs of New Zealand Scenery.} 

\textit{Subscribers for 52 views receive one per} 
\textit{week, neatly mounted and finished, at the} 
\textit{low price of ONE SHILLING EACH.} 

\textit{Nearly 2000 views to choose from. First} 
\textit{shipment will be on view at the end of the} 
\textit{week.} \ 

FRANCE BROS., \ 
Wellington Labour Exchange.
\end{center}

Fig. 2-19. Advertisement for France Brothers, agent to Burton Brothers, \textit{Evening Post}, 13 May 1884.

A few months later, France Brothers launched a new campaign that ran in the \textit{Evening Post} on consecutive days for one month.\textsuperscript{64} This advertisement demonstrates a shift in the tone and style of promoting the studio, now emphasising quality over price (fig. 2-20). Advertisements such as this were essential for establishing and reinforcing the reputation of the studio and the strength of its name. A close analysis of this campaign reveals much of the perceived value of the Burton Brothers brand and how it operated in the marketplace.

\textsuperscript{63} Burton Brothers to Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1880, IA-1-3639/1880, Colonial Secretary's Inwards Correspondence, Archives New Zealand, National Office.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Evening Post}, 7 July 1884.
The campaign promoted the sale of “views” from Burton Brothers New Zealand through the Camera series, drawing upon the studio’s own mode of marketing and presenting their photographs in series rather than describing the content of the prints (such as “New Zealand Scenery” or “Landscape Photographs”). The studio was introduced as “…the Well-known Photographers, Messrs Burton Bros., of Dunedin.” In its own marketing from the mid-1880s, the studio often referred to itself as “well-known” or “widely known,” and was frequently described in this manner in newspaper reports and editorial. This attests to the popularity of the brand, referred to here according to the studio’s standard practice of associating itself with Dunedin. Furthermore, by referring to the studio as “Messrs Burton Bros.” the brand is personalised and individuated, however inaccurately, there being only one Mr. Burton operating at the studio at that time.

The first lines of the body text emphasise abundance and up-to-date currency, with “Fresh ones” being regularly made available to the agents. This operates to demonstrate
France Brothers close working relationship with Burton Brothers with a guarantee of access to the latest stock, thus ensuring repeat visitation to their showroom. More importantly for the Burton Brothers brand, this established that the photographers were continuously working in the field capturing the latest wilderness scenery discovered and accessed. “Fresh” is of course a positive associative word still popularly used in advertising today to reflect newness, innovation and purity.

The function of the Burton Brothers mark is clearly indicated, as are the reasons for its consistent application. The agent warned the public that they would only issue prints “that bear the name of Burton Bros., without which none are genuine.” This shows that the mark was important not only to guard the intellectual and commercial property of the maker, but also to authenticate the product to show legitimacy for the agent. It also implies that unauthorised copies existed – or had the potential to exist – in the market, so the consumer was advised to be wary of photographs in circulation without the Burton Brothers mark. The Burton Brothers name and the products of their studio were attractive to illicit duplication, indicating the commercial appeal of their product and the competitiveness of the market. Consistency in the appearance of their name as applied to the negative, and thus the print, was necessary to ensure that the product would be recognisable and perceived as authentic. In combination, these features are the essential attributes of a distinctive brand. This advertising campaign also demonstrates that although the Burton Brothers name was not officially registered as a trademark it was able to function as one. Furthermore, this brand identity worked to protect their distribution networks.

The advertisement concludes by announcing that “Canvassers will call and solicit orders,” showing the agent’s pro-activity in directly marketing the subscriber scheme through door-to-door sales. Finally the name of the agent is identified as “France Bros., Sole Agents for Burton Bros.” This infers exclusivity and attests to the significance of their business relationship with Burton Brothers, although is an exaggeration as France Bros only held an exclusive contract for the Wellington region.

This advertisement does not describe the content, aesthetics or physical properties of the photographs available nor did it suggest what the consumer might do with one’s selection of fifty-two prints. Yet France Brothers were aware of the importance of this information. The agent’s advertising campaign of May 1884 shows a concerted strategy to promote the sale of Burton Brothers photographs and to dominate the marketplace as the studio’s agents. The advertisement first placed in the Evening Post on 13 May 1884 was introduced by an editorial comment that announced France Brothers’ engagement as Wellington agents for Burton Brothers. These eight editorial lines did little more than announce the contract between the
agency and the studio and did not promote the subscriber scheme that formed the subject of the advertisement. In response, France Brothers reprinted as a paid advertisement in the *Evening Post* a fifty-four line editorial passage from the *Lyttelton Times* introducing the Burton Brothers subscriber scheme offered by Christchurch agent D. N. Adams, with an additional paragraph that announced the availability of this scheme in Wellington through France Brothers’ agency.\(^{65}\) This performs an alternate function to the display advertisement; being written by an external party it provides an endorsement and a sense of credibility, but also describes in detail the calibre and range of photographs available. The available print format for the subscription is the “standard” or whole plate size, presented on tinted boards. It also outlines the benefit of this scheme, allowing subscribers to amass a “good and truthful photographic collection of the best “bits” of New Zealand scenery” which could be sent to the “Old Country” or kept for personal enjoyment.

The article also emphasised the importance of the Burton Brothers name as an authenticator and mark of quality:

> As for the merits of the pictures from an artistic point of view, the name of the form of photographers supplying them is guarantee of the very best character, to anyone acquainted with photography in New Zealand that the work will be of the highest order. The specimens submitted to us are certainly very good, and up to the high standard of everything bearing the stamp of Messrs. Burton Bros.

Agents, such as France Brothers, were dependent on the strength of the studio’s established brand to promote and attract sales. Building on the recognition of the brand, the promotional efforts of agencies further bolstered the popularity of the Burton Brothers brand and products in order to appeal to a client base eager to embrace new technologies and to promote the colony’s progressiveness to international audiences.

**Conclusion**

By the mid 1880s the Burton Brothers name had developed from a descriptive business identifier to a well-known and recognisable mark of quality. The efforts of the studio to have their work promoted and sold throughout New Zealand fuelled the fame of their name and through this the work of the studio became widely endorsed and understood. In short, the Burton Brothers name became fully functional as a modern brand. The consistent practice of the firm in acquiring the negatives of other photographers and publishing them with the Burton Brothers name demonstrates that individual artistic integrity was not a core concern. The firm’s adoption of copyright practices indicates an awareness of the threat of

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\(^{65}\) “Photographs of New Zealand Scenery,” *Evening Post*, 22 May 1884.
unauthorised reproduction, yet copyright was utilised more for the protection of a commercial asset than intellectual capital. Furthermore, marks of copyright operated as mechanisms of brand marketing and attested to the authenticity and originality of the photograph or series presented. Assigning copyright to a collective body rather than the individual practitioner also benefited the strength of the name and legally protected the firm from losing their rights over specific photographs to contract photographers.

A brand defines every item produced by a manufacturer with the characteristics projected by that corporate identity. Each print released by the Burton Brothers studio possessed characteristics of innovation, artistic excellence and superior quality, communicated through the character of the brand. The image projected by the brand in advertising, promotional material and media publicity reinforced these characteristics despite the fact that their projects were not always successful and their prints were not of superior quality to their competitors. It is doubtful that the firm was a financial success, so the legacy of the reputation of Burton Brothers that survives today is due to the strength of the brand identity and its continued recognition despite the passage of a century. This attests to the strength of the Burton Brothers brand. The practice of brand marketing was extended to other aspects of the studio’s operations. The following chapter examines the branding of photographic series and albums to package and promote an impression of New Zealand for circulation to the world.
Chapter 3
PACKAGING NEW ZEALAND, LAND OF LOVELINESS: SERIES AND ALBUMS, 1868 – 1883

Opening Up the Landscape: Photography and the Cult of Travel
Examining the topographical photographs released by the Burton Brothers studio in its first era of operation, this chapter considers the effect of producing and marketing photographs in series. Photographs of remote locations required the photographer to travel from the studio to reach his destination. The products of these photographic trips were packaged and promoted collectively in series and usually arranged in a chronological sequence that reflects the progress of the journey and the aspect of travel. Narrative text supplied in the studio’s catalogue or newspaper reportage further exposes the tale of the journey, and purposely produced albums retain the photographs within their series beyond the studio. An analysis of the text applied to and accompanying individual prints and albums shows the level of intervention in an apparently unmediated “view.” These modes of presentation were informed by the process, systems and language of travel and served an agenda to promote New Zealand’s industrial and commercial progress and supported tourism to and within the colony.

Burton Brothers’ register of whole plate, stereograph and 12 x 10 inch topographical negatives is entitled Catalogue of Views.1 The term “views” was consistently applied to this type of photograph in the studio’s literature and was in common usage among other topographical photographers. “Views” described photographs of both natural scenery and urban locations, and the Burton Brothers’ portfolio of “view” photographs was distinguished from other bodies of work as being made speculatively rather than on commission. Implicit in this term is the act of looking, positioning the photographer as mediator between the depicted scene and the consumer. As applied to photographs of the natural world, “view” photographs reflect an anthropocentric response to nature, objectifying natural scenes according to the photographer’s subjective experience.2 As speculative products “views” were made to meet market demand and the natural world was presented according to consumer expectations. As

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1 Burton Bros. Catalogue of Views, microfilm, 10322, Hocken Collections (original held at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa).

such, the topography of New Zealand was captured and delivered according to preconceived notions of "landscape," following the conventions established in earlier photographic responses as well as in painting and literature.

Remote locations were witnessed, processed and presented according to a set of assumptions shared by the photographer and the consumer. "Landscape" supplied a common visual language and system of signs based on a cultural understanding of the natural world. Borrowing from the idioms of Romanticism, sites were revered for their sublimity, grandeur, wonder and embodiment of the picturesque. The circulation and standardisation of these values and conventions of representation naturalised landscape as a given, concealing the cultural layer that defined and mediated the natural scene.³ Packaging the natural world according to cultural precepts laid a location bare for reinterpretation by the values of the receiving culture: "wonder deprives its object of its own meanings and prepares it for a takeover."⁴ Photography's process of taking and classifying the landscape mirrored the process of colonisation and made remote locations familiar and conceptually accessible.

The quest for picturesque landscapes fuelled the desire for travel and through that the commodification of the land as an object for tourist enquiry. The "picturesque was not only an idealised vision of landscape: it was actively sought as if it actually existed."⁵ The same impulse compels today's travellers to photographically document travel experiences. Photographs supply physical evidence of travel and a trophy of the experience, but this is limited to that deemed worthy of documenting. Susan Sontag recognised that photography developed "in tandem" with tourism and provided travellers with a means of conceptualising and processing unfamiliar environments through conventional responses:

A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it – by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir. Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs.⁶


⁵ Giselle Byrnes, Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2001), 72.

The conventionalisation of natural scenery as “landscape” was an appealing subject for photography from its early development and early amateur photographers adhered to models of picturesque landscape painting as a “visual prototype” for photographing the natural environment.\(^7\) The widespread popularity of this type was a factor that enabled and encouraged the production of photographs on a commercial scale. The introduction of the collodion wet plate process in 1851 allowed production of accessibly-priced paper prints in multiple numbers and the public interest in landscape provided an ideal subject with a ready market.\(^8\)

Locations and scenes pre-determined to be of touristic interest were repeatedly photographed by commercial photographers and sold to both travellers and “armchair” tourists.\(^9\) Photographs operated as substitutes for experience; the qualities and attitudes projected in an image supplanted the genuine experience of witnessing an actual location. Commercial photographers offered artefacts that presented and perpetuated mythical values associated with distant sites.\(^10\) Photography, with travel literature, informed popular knowledge about a place and established a presumed understanding through which these locations were encountered: “photographs-as-a-surrogate-for-travel transformed the world into a collection of destinations and packaged them for easy consumption.”\(^11\) In the repetition and entrenchment of mythical values, locations were known and understood through these secondary representations and existed only as cultural manifestations.\(^12\) Landscape photographs therefore operate as simulacra, embodying a shared cultural response to a place rather than an objective representation. Furthermore, as singular images, photographs stood as

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\(^8\) Joel Synder, "Territorial Photography," in *Landscape and Power*, 179.


\(^10\) Osborne, 17 and 52.


\(^12\) Osborne, 22.
metonyms of the places they purported to represent, reflecting cultural priorities and celebrated qualities rather than the experience of reaching or witnessing a location.\(^\text{13}\)

The acquisition of photographs of remote locations within the home was an important aspect of the colonial project, fuelled by the Victorian predilection for collecting and the compilation of taxonomies.\(^\text{14}\) As few of those who collected photographs actually travelled, the colonised world was received and interpreted through visual images, primarily photographs.\(^\text{15}\) Beyond this, photographs were commodities and were produced to satisfy the popular expectations of both the subject depicted and the function of photography among a general audience. Peter Osborne identified the widespread expectations of travel photographs among nineteenth century consumers:

Photographs were expected to provide equally the neutral accuracy of the photographic trace, the shop window spectacle of the exotic and the epiphanous engagement with the sacred. Each of these effects was expected to carry viewers beyond their everyday existences and yet confirm their most central assumptions concerning the world in general and the non-European world in particular.\(^\text{16}\)

Advances in photographic processes and the greater portability of the medium made travel photography a lucrative commodity with a popular market. The collodion process enabled a high-quality negative that provided detail and clarity, and could be printed in large editions. The accepted character of photography as a mechanical rather than hand-made art imbued photographs with a sense of objectivity and reliable realism compared with other artforms. Just as portrait photographs were accepted as accurate “likenesses” of their subjects, topographical photographs were valued as an objective and truthful representation of locations probably unseen to the viewer: “[t]hese photographs too came to be thought of as integumental likenesses – as passive recordings of pre-existing sights [original emphasis].”\(^\text{17}\) Photography’s capacity for verisimilitude was further enhanced through the commercial production of stereographs from the mid-1850s. Collodion negatives allowed stereo images to be mass-produced from a single negative, and a twin lens camera was patented in 1854 for

\(^{13}\) Schwartz, 33.


\(^{15}\) Osborne, 54.

\(^{16}\) Osborne, 19.

\(^{17}\) Synder, 176.
this purpose. Viewed through a binocular stereoscope the dual images gave the appearance of three-dimensionality, seeming to transport the static viewer to remote destinations. Stereoscopy’s illusion of spatial depth was particularly suited to the genre of travel, and landscape and architecture were popular early subjects. In response to this demand, large photographic and publishing establishments were formed at or near sites of tourist interest, dedicated to the production and distribution of prints and stereographs on a commercial scale.

Burton Brothers followed international precedents of commercial photographers operating in other colonies and countries. Among the earliest to conduct commercial photographic tours was the English photographer Francis Frith, who travelled through Egypt in the 1850s producing photographs in a range of formats at “near industrial” production levels and *modus operandi*. In the colonies, Samuel Bourne established a commercially successful travel studio in India, delivering to the English public photographic images that reflected commonly held attitudes towards the region. Bourne’s photographs reinforced the ideology of the colonial project by positioning the viewer in a relationship of encounter with the sites and indigenous people represented: “Bourne’s business was selling the consumption of colonialism, and selling it primarily to those who had produced it.”

The international introduction of photography to travel occurred contemporaneously with the formal settlement of New Zealand from 1840 onwards and the commercial opportunities of travel photography can be seen in the work of topographical photographers in nineteenth century New Zealand. Resident and itinerant photographers repeatedly visited sites identified as being of significant scenic or industrial importance and a common itinerary was established through the Otago interior, made accessible through gold mining operations in the region. Among the photographers working in the Otago region, a conscious project was undertaken to “complete” the task of photographing every accessible site in order to compile a representative portfolio of the region. Selection was determined by the development of

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19 Synder, 179.

20 Osborne, 21-22; Molly Rogers, "Travel Photography," in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, 633.

21 Osborne, 44.
surrounding infrastructure, but it was also shaped by the photographer’s expectation of scenes that would appeal to both local and distant audiences.

Textual descriptions written by Joseph Perry to accompany his 1865 photographic series “Otagan Scenery” reveal his motivations for selecting certain locations and views. Perry’s commentary was personally prepared for his customer, Dr. Eccles, and describes not only the aspects to which he wishes to draw the viewer’s attention, but also offers additional information on the context of the photograph. This information elucidates details within the photograph – such as the depth of a lake or the height of a peak – but also describes aspects obscured or excluded and outlines the events prior and subsequent to the taking of the photograph. For example:

No. 68
This beautiful view is the commencement of the Matukituki Gorge which river takes its rise in the north western snow clad ranges, belonging to the Mt. Aspiring group. It is not very deep except after a good fall of rain or after the melting of the snow from the above mentioned group. It is several miles long dividing itself into two forks east and west forks. The country is very rough all up the river & very swampy making it difficult to travel with horses, the two pack horses employed in carrying the Photographic Apparatus being frequently bogged up to their belly. This river has a shingly bed extending from ½ to ¾ of a mile in breadth and full of quicksand which allow a man to sink to the knee in some places.22

Perry’s text demonstrates an adherence to expectations of travel photography to reflect the beauty and wonder of the land, but adds wilderness exploration and adventure. The end product in the activity of photographing New Zealand’s landscape was a story of adventure and discovery as much as a portfolio of scenic views. Reports of physical and personal hardship consistently figure in accounts of photographers travelling in New Zealand and constituted justification for protecting the proprietary rights of the photographer in debates surrounding the implementation of copyright legislation.23 Such reports of hardship were genuine; prior to the introduction of dry plates and roll film, the transportation of cumbersome photographic equipment and supplies to remote destinations entailed considerable logistical difficulty. Having been attained in adverse conditions, the resultant photographs were endowed with a quality of exclusivity and rarity, but they also functioned as illustrations to

22 Joseph Perry to Dr. Eccles, 13 November 1865, Misc-MS-1464, Dr. Eccles: Papers relating to Joseph Perry, Photographer. Hocken Collections.

23 “House of Representatives: Photographic Copyright Bill,” New Zealand Parliamentary Debates 93, no. 27 (22 July 1896): 400-03.
the story of the journey. The photograph provided physical evidence that a photographer had been at a specific location.

The essence of photography’s early popularity was its ability to visually represent something absent and distant, rendering its power to transcend time and space. Colonial expansion and improvements in infrastructure that enabled enhanced access to the colony provided commercial photographers the opportunity to commodify this aspect of photography. The end of the New Zealand Wars (1860-1872) and the advent of steam shipping attracted a boom in tourism to and within the islands from the early 1870s. For the first time, people began to visit New Zealand for pleasure.

Photographers were also travellers. From the inception of the studio travel and mobility were central to Burton Brothers’ practice. As migrants to a new colony, the practitioners’ awareness of their geographical remoteness from their homeland is evident in early “view” photographs that documented civic and industrial development in the city of Dunedin for transmission to a distant audience. Early numbers listed in the studio’s negative register feature scenes of central Dunedin in the proximity of their Princes Street premises, the range restricted due to limitations of wet plate negatives. By commissioning a mobile darkroom, the studio extended the photographic project beyond the boundaries of Dunedin. Travel thus became integral to the process of acquiring a comprehensive catalogue of the country’s natural scenery and material progress.

The travelling dark-van overcame the limitations of photographic technology by enabling wet plate negatives to be developed in the field. In contrast to their previous confinement to the studio, Alfred Burton and his operators were now able to conduct photographic expeditions. Burton’s first use of the more transportable medium of gelatin dry plates in 1882 further enabled distant photographic trips as the negatives were pre-coated and did not require immediate development after exposure. The expansion of the Burton Brothers’ portfolio to topographical views was aligned with social and economic developments in the greater accessibility of local and overseas travel through steamship transportation and the popularity of leisure travel and tourism. Otago’s hinterland presented a

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24 Osborne, 10.


largely untapped pictorial resource, ripe for the studio to exploit. Photographs performed a vital role in “opening up” the wilderness landscape by circulating visual images of remote scenic locations among domestic and international viewers. On his 1882 photography trip in the Milford Sound Burton revealed his idea of photography as synonymous with the act of exploration and discovery:

In photographing such a country as this, a billhook is almost as necessary as a camera, for while one (the photographer-in-chief) spots and “composes” the view, the other clears away the undergrowth that would have blocked up the pictures and thus “opens up the country.”

As a regular passenger aboard the Union Steam Ship Company’s summer tourist excursions to the Milford Sound region – accompanying seven commercial cruises between 1879 and 1888 – Burton’s photographs promoted tourism and fuelled the impression of New Zealand as a land of unspoilt natural beauty and wonder. Tales of his often arduous expeditions through difficult terrain in order to reach and capture the view, supported the popular view of New Zealand as a terra incognita of extraordinary beauty and rich resources, awaiting the taming influence of Britain’s economic and industrial power. Burton’s photographs and published diaries also promoted the civilisation of the New Zealand wilderness, recording the infrastructural development necessary for access to these sites. By clearing away the vegetation that concealed scenes, Burton established a metaphor with the physical process of exploration and the role of photography in exposing locations previously unseen by a European audience. Furthermore, his admission of manipulating and arranging the landscape for optimum photographic results reflects the compositional conventions of landscape painting and the aesthetic values of picturesque scenic beauty.

The emergence of a tourism industry was accompanied by a surge in publications promoting travel to the region that reinforced the country as a suitable site for both the advancement of imperial interests and for the enjoyment of leisure and scenic wonderment. Texts produced for both commercial and personal interests adhered to similar content, reinforced by the early establishment of a common travel route and the widespread acceptance of “must-see” attractions, facilitated by the development of necessary infrastructure. The format and presentation of photographic products from Burton Brothers reflect the language and values popularised and circulated by travel literature. The focus of travel writing on the

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27 Burton, “A Month Amongst the Mountains.”

journey rather than the destination is evident in the studio’s production of photographs in series, emphasising the process of travel over the content of the individual image. The studio’s convention of presenting photographic prints in albums mirrored the format of the book. The adoption of a familiar and popular mode of presentation and the utilisation of common tropes provided the means of appealing to the market and thus selling not only photographic prints but also New Zealand itself.

The narrative structure imposed by the production of photographs in series or their presentation in albums was particularly well-suited to travel photography, as it physically conveyed the journey conducted by the photographer in acquiring the images. Burton Brothers’ production and promotion of work in series tended to reflect the projects and expeditions in which the studio’s operators were engaged. Beyond these endeavours, the studio also contracted photographers for the systematic photographing of all the country’s sites of significance. Having “finished” photographing the South Island in 1878, the studio commenced the series *New Zealand through the Camera*. London photographers Charles and George Spencer were hired to photograph Mount Cook and the Southern Alps of the South Island and followed this with an expedition to the North Island thermal lakes region and central plateau.29 However, through his published diaries and travel accounts Alfred Burton presented himself as the main practitioner in these endeavours and as an experienced and intrepid traveller.

Unlike such international counterparts as Frith and Bourne, Burton was not an itinerant photographer, but an active agent in the settler community that photographs promoted. With investments in mining ventures and gold prospecting, he had an incentive to promote the commercial opportunities and successes of the new colony beyond the commodity value of his photographic products. While Burton adhered to the model of travel photography by capturing the wonder and grandeur of “new” landscapes, he demonstrated genuine interest in the unique aspects of New Zealand’s natural environments. Native plant species, such as cabbage trees, flax and the Mount Cook lily, *Ranunculus lyellii*, recur in Burton’s photography and are often specified in the studio’s negative register.30 While this interest can


30 Listings in the Burton Brothers negative register for photographic negatives acquired during Burton’s 1875 trip to Lake Wakatipu (nos. 441-568) contain many references to native plants viewable in the image, yet these details are omitted from the published caption information. Among the West Coast Road series is a negative showing *Ranunculus lyellii* (no. 752) which is excluded from the published catalogue for this series. It is assumed that these photographs and details were recorded for the personal interest of the photographer.
be attributed to a celebration of the new and exotic, his photographs manifest a tendency to record that which is unique and indigenous to New Zealand, rather than to highlight introduced elements transplanted from English parks and countryside. As a permanent resident of New Zealand personally invested in its economic and industrial progress, Burton possessed a depth of engagement with the colony which belies the disinterest of the typical itinerant travel photographer.

Numerous examples of Burton Brothers topographical prints and albums are held by institutional and private collections within New Zealand. While some of these items have been repatriated from international sources, many trace their provenance to local estates and collections, indicating the existence of a strong domestic market for these photographs. The studio’s catalogues and advertisements promote the suitability of photographic prints for international postage and as “a little present to friends in the old country, or as a souvenir of New Zealand to those who are leaving its shore.” Yet, local patronage was also encouraged; the frequent newspaper accounts of the studio’s activities invariably contain an inducement for local readers to visit the studio or their agents to view and acquire prints for their own purposes. This extends the established model of travel photography, as Burton’s photographs not only appeal to international viewers they also consolidate and affirm the colonial experience among New Zealand’s settler society.

**Selling the Journey: Photographic Narrative and Series**

Burton Brothers commenced the project of actively photographing New Zealand in 1869. An advertisement announcing Alfred Burton’s “first journey” through the Otago province was simultaneously printed in the *Otago Witness* and *North Otago Times* in September 1869 (fig. 3-1). Appealing to “Runholders, Settlers, and country inhabitants generally,” Burton invited commissions in portraiture and landscape along a route north from Dunedin to Palmerston and inland through Central Otago to Queenstown and “thence westward: or otherwise as circumstances may govern.” While private patronage was solicited, the advertisement suggests a process of photographing speculatively was already underway.

31 "High-Class Photography," *North Otago Times* (Oamaru), 12 May 1871.

32 "New Zealand through the Camera," *Otago Daily Times*, 19 December 1878. This news report on the release of Burton Brothers’ *New Zealand through the Camera* catalogue encouraged reader to purchase photographic prints for the drawing room walls and to “adorn their albums with New Zealand scenery.”

33 "High-Class Photography," *North Otago Times*, 3 September 1869; "High Class Photography," *Otago Witness*, 4 September 1869.
with the purpose of the trip identified as “extending our greatly admired series of Photographic Views of New Zealand.”

**HIGH-CLASS PHOTOGRAPHY.**

We beg respectfully to announce to Runholders, Settlers, and country inhabitants generally, that our Mr ALFRED H. BURTON is about to make a tour through the Province, with the object of extending our greatly-admired series of PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS OF NEW ZEALAND, and particularly Otagan scenery; and that he will be prepared to undertake private commissions, both in Portraiture and Landscape. He proposes to leave Dunedin (for his first journey) about the 27th of September, passing through Hawkebury and Palmerston, through Mount Ida and Dunstan Districts to Queenstown, and thence westward—or otherwise as circumstances may govern.

Communications on the above subject should reach us before the date mentioned.

BURTON BROTHERS,
Princes-street,

Sept. 1st, 1869.

Dunedin.

Fig. 3-1. Advertisement for Burton Brothers, North Otago Times, 3 September 1869.

The commercial production of photographs showing “Otagan Scenery” was commenced by Burton’s predecessors, including Joseph Perry and B. Riemann who both photographed the region and made their prints available for government purposes and public sale.³⁴ While Riemann appears to have photographed within the city limits of Dunedin, Perry conducted an

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³⁴ "Photographic Pictures of Otagan Scenery," Otago Witness, 21 July 1865; Otago Witness, 8 June 1867.
extensive tour of the Otago province, with financial support from the Provincial Government and the guidance of Government geologist James Hector. The first of Perry’s photographs of the region were presented at the Dunedin Exhibition of 1865, where Hector’s maps of the Otago province and geological specimens were also displayed. Thirty-five prints were shown representing “the first instalment” of Perry’s intended series of one hundred prints of Otagan Scenery, available for sale by subscription. By July 1865 the full series was complete and was exhibited in Dunedin. The popularity of these photographs, hailed as “the first collection of ‘Illustrations of the Scenery of Otago,’” is evident in the extension of the exhibition period to satisfy early subscribers to the scheme.

Releasing prints as a defined and cohesive series was a preconceived and important aspect of Perry’s project. Accompanied by his written account, the series overcame the individual photographs’ inherently static and isolated nature through elaboration of the journey’s context. From the outset, Perry worked to a “well-defined plan” driven by the imperative to acquire a “complete collection” of one hundred negatives rather than as a response to the locations he encountered. This practice was also followed by Riemann in the production of his “Photographic Album of Scenery in Otago” (1867). Photographic prints were packaged into albums or shaped into series before the negatives were acquired or the content of the images perhaps even sighted. While subscribers received prints at a rate of two prints per month, the presentation of the blank album predated the actual production of the photographs. This was in part a fiscal measure as selling the concept of a series or album to a subscriber base with payment in advance reduced the risk of a speculative venture. This appears to have been successful for Perry: one reporter noted that the subscribers to his scheme included many of the “leading residents in the Province.”

Riemann’s subscription scheme continued until at least December 1867, at which point he released a second series which included photographs taken by the new Burton Brothers studio. Given this association with Burton Brothers, Reimann’s practice of formulating

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36 Otago Witness, 30 September 1865.

37 "New Zealand Exhibition: No.III," Otago Witness, 18 February 1865. Dunedin doctor Thomas Morland Hocken was a subscriber to Perry’s scheme. The albums containing ninety-nine of Perry’s photographs are among his collection gifted to the people of Dunedin: Albums 12 and 14, Hocken Collections.

38 Otago Witness, 20 December 1867.
photographs within series seems a likely precedent in the studio’s presentation of photographic series and branded albums. Burton Brothers’ method of branding and marketing their studio name extended to the photographic products they released. Topographical photographs showing diverse locations were consolidated into series and standardised albums, amalgamating prints into marketable packages and arranging individual prints as a sequence that reflected the narrative of the journey. Through the use of text applied to and accompanying prints, the travel narratives became marketable products that supplemented the inert visual images and resisted the static nature of individual prints as metonymic representations of the locations they depicted. But these narratives reflected broader ideological constructs and served the project of promoting industrial progress, tourism and immigration.

In the essay “Undecisive Moments: The Narrative Tradition in Western Photography,” Martha A. Sandweiss describes the emergence of the narrative tradition in photography among the early photographers of the North American West. From the early daguerreotypists of the 1840s and 1850s, photographers mimicked the linear narrative structure employed in the popular entertainments of painted panoramas and magic lantern shows, depicting the adventures, battles and material progress at the Frontier for distant audiences. The emergence of paper prints in the 1860s enabled direct affixing of printed text to photographs, which were then multiplied and circulated thus consistently communicating the photographer’s intent.

By including the phrase “undecisive moments” in the title of her essay, Sandweiss directly challenges Henri Cartier-Bresson’s assertion that the success of a photograph is dependent upon the “decisive moment” of a photographer’s action in recognising a significant instant to activate the shutter. Instead, she examined photography prior to and beyond the moment of capture to consider the determinants that affected and influenced the production and circulation of photographs in the nineteenth century. As part of a broader project to recover the context of photography’s reception among nineteenth century audiences, Sandweiss recognised that early photographers did not have a ready-market and needed to generate an audience for photographic products. This was especially challenging for

photographers on the frontier who did not find a constant supply of subjects for commissioned portraiture and instead photographed landscape scenery for distant audiences. Sandweiss argued that in the context of production, these photographs were not conceived as singular images or artworks, but rather were reliant on additional images or textual description to provide meaning, seemingly born from collective understanding that photographs conveyed greater meaning in narrative association: “With words the enigmatic image could become a precise icon, the fragmentary photograph an important scene in a longer story.” This led to the production of daguerreotypes, and later photographic prints, in series with appended text to reflect a sequence or narrative. Burton Brothers’ production and presentation of photographs in series accords with this observation and suggests the transnational conventions of nineteenth century commercial photographic practice.

Sandweiss identified the obvious economic incentives of this practice: it enabled the photographer or publisher to sell multiple prints, and a single print in circulation effectively publicised the remainder of the series. This practice also elucidates how photographs were received and consumed among early audiences. In an effort to make the new technology relevant and appealing, the marketing of photographs in series or albums with interpretative text provided an equivalent to the lantern slide show or panorama, without the direct interpolation of the photographer or presenter. In effect, this marketing provided a domestic version of the spectacle of these popular entertainments.

The promotion of photographs in series was an economic measure for Burton Brothers. The series offered inducement to a subscriber base and, through persuasive marketing and description, enabled receipt of payment in advance of delivery of the product. While local subscribers were able to view sample prints at the studio or agents’ offices, others were reliant on the descriptions provided by the studio’s catalogue or in newspaper reports. Issuing photographs in series also provided an attractive and cohesive product for discussion in newspaper editorial. Newspaper editors reinforced the title, concept and scope of the series and actively promoted its sale. The following excerpt is typical of published endorsements for the studio’s projects:

“NEW ZEALAND THROUGH THE CAMERA”
From time to time we have had occasion to refer to the series of photographic views being issued from the studio of Messrs Burton Bros., the well-known artists and photographers of Princes street [sic], under the title of “New Zealand

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44 Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments," 115.
through the Camera.” It will be remembered that at first the artists confined themselves to obtaining views of our own Provincial district, and named them “Otago through the Camera.” Encouraged by the approbation that these views elicited, they so extended their sphere of action that at present time there is not a spot in the whole of the Middle [South] Island, remarkable either for its picturesqueness or for some incident or other that has taken place there, that is unrepresented in their collection. The Middle Island finished, the artists to whom has been entrusted the task of taking the pictures, have pushed their way into the North Island, and are now actively engaged in completing the collection.45

This report clearly outlines the intention of the studio in compiling the series. Following the earlier Otago through the Camera series (commenced in 1869), the studio conducted the project of photographing scenically “remarkable” or historically significant sites throughout the South Island. The description of having “finished” photographing the South Island and “completing the collection” of North Island photographs, signifies a well-conceived and finite project with a defined end-point. While acknowledging a propensity for exaggeration, this choice of language indicates the active and deliberate process of collecting topographical “spots,” which reflects the process-orientated work of explorers and surveyors in revealing and charting the wilderness.

While advertisements reinforce that the fulfilment of a photographic series was a premeditated activity, projects were also opportunistic. Burton’s presence around mining and dredging operations is attributable to his financial interest as an investor in these ventures. Photographic expeditions also coincided with the establishment of seasonal portrait rooms in towns outside Dunedin; photographs of Oamaru from 1871 and Lawrence taken in 1873 coincide with the opening of studios in those locations.46 Topographical photography was initially conducted by the studio as a supplementary activity to portraiture requiring commissions to make topographical projects commercially viable. Newspaper advertisements confirm that early speculative photographic projects were secondary to commissioned portraiture.

The studio’s first opportunity for an independent photographic project came in the form of a sponsored trip to the Milford Sounds region, or West Coast Sounds, as it was then popularly known. This location was to become a major subject for Burton Brothers and its competitors. In this, Alfred Burton’s first visit to the region, he accompanied a party aboard the Government steamer Luna to survey lighthouse locations around Foveaux Strait and the West Coast of the South Island. The expedition included central and local government

45 “New Zealand through the Camera.”

46 North Otago Times, 3 September 1869; Tuapeka Times (Lawrence), 6 February 1873.
officials and members of parliament. Burton was invited for the specific purpose of photographing the scenery encountered on the voyage: “At the special request of the General Government, Mr. A. H. Burton, the photographer, has taken his passage by the Luna and will photograph some of the beautiful scenery of the West Coast.”47 The Luna departed from Wellington on 14 February 1874, and Burton subsequently joined the expedition at Port Chalmers. He accompanied the voyage south to Stewart Island and along the West Coast through the Sounds and disembarked at Westport.48

The expedition was of considerable interest nationwide and received extensive newspaper coverage, with the publication of travel journals and accounts from a number of passengers and crew. Reports were published by unidentified “Special Correspondents” and “Special Reporters,” who charted the journey of the Luna, noting remarkable scenery, available natural resources and opportunities for infrastructure development. Correspondents aboard the Luna invariably mentioned the presence of Burton as photographer for the voyage and the engagement of his “services as a photographer… for the purpose of obtaining views of some of the romantic scenery to be visited by the Luna during her cruise.”49 No official report of the voyage exists, but accounts suggest that Burton’s inclusion on the excursion was vital to its ends. Efforts were made by the captain and crew to ensure that photographic opportunities were met and a separate “photographic boat” and crew enabled Burton to conduct exploratory trips when the Luna was at anchor.50

The anticipation of Burton’s photographic encounter with “romantic scenery” suggests a predefined agenda for his photographs to supply spectacular images of great beauty and wonderment. The expedition was also preconceived as a voyage of discovery for its passengers. The statement from one reporter aboard the vessel characterised expectations for the voyage and indicates that the terra incognita of Milford Sound already manifested a strong impression in the collective colonial conscience:

One thing was certain: the Luna would go into many out of the way places, and her passengers would have an opportunity of seeing wonders of New Zealand scenery of an unusually favorable [sic] character. It was expected that most of the ports in the [South] Island would be called at, and thus the excursionists would obtain a capital knowledge of the coast. It was believed that what may be termed

47 "Trip of the Luna," Otago Witness, 28 February 1874.

48 Refer to "Map of New Zealand Geographical Locations Referred to in the Text."

49 "A Trip to Stewart's Island and the West Coast," Otago Witness, 28 March 1874.

the *terra incognita*, the land of the Sounds, at the south-west would be explored, and it might be that Milford Sound, that great wonder, would be steamed up.\(^{51}\)

Burton’s photographs were not the first of the Milford Sounds region, but were pioneering in their commercial availability. One correspondent noted the presence of an “experienced photographer” aboard the schooner *Jessie Niccol* which was moored in Milford Haven upon the *Luna*’s arrival. A private expedition for the yacht’s English owner, C. F. Wood, was touring the coast of New Zealand collecting photographs and objects as souvenirs of sites he visited.\(^{52}\) Wood’s photographer, who remains unidentified, had accompanied the party on an earlier cruise to Fiji and other islands of the South Pacific, and showed photographs from this voyage to the *Luna* party. These photographs and artefacts collected by Woods on the *Jessie Niccol*’s voyage were well-received when displayed at an exhibition of the Mechanics’ Institute in Auckland.\(^{53}\) This would have impressed upon Burton the opportunity for providing photographic services to tourist excursions, and perhaps it is no coincidence that he accompanied the Union Steam Ship Company’s first tourist voyage to Milford Sound and later to the islands of the South Pacific. While enabling Burton access to remote locations, his photographs operated as physical evidence and a souvenir for those on the voyage and satisfied a growing market for photographs of exotic scenes.

Visual artists were already established in performing this role and the painter Charles Heaphy was also aboard the *Luna* to document the sites of interest. Heaphy arrived in New Zealand in 1839 as draughtsman to the New Zealand Company. He was engaged as a surveyor through the 1840s and 1850s and served as Chief Surveyor in the 1860s.\(^{54}\) Under the influence of topographical painters such as Heaphy, New Zealand was known through pictorial representations influenced by European values of the sublime or picturesque. The association with scientific practices in surveying and geology confirmed the picturesque “vision” promoted in topographical paintings as the widely understood perception of New Zealand.

\(^{51}\) "Traveller: The Cruise of the Luna."

\(^{52}\) "Lights and Lighthouses. No. IV," *Otago Guardian* (Dunedin), 23 March 1874.


Zealand. The position of photography was still contested alongside painted or sketched representations and presented perceived technical short-comings for its inability to render conventional understandings of places known in painted representations. The scenes encountered in unfamiliar territories were held to be of such wonder that it was beyond the technical aptitude of either photography or language to recreate landscapes of such awe. As one correspondent aboard the Luna noted:

…I feel convinced that the photographer’s art will prove almost as powerless as mere word painting in conveying an adequate idea of what is to be seen in Milford Haven, Doubtful or Dusky Sounds or the Acheron passage. The only means of representing the characteristics of the Sounds for the benefit of those who have not visited them, is to induce some landscape painter of undoubted genius to spend a twelvemonth, at least, in the study of the wonderful sights to be met with in such boundless profusion.

The sublime territories of the West Coast Sounds were held to be the preserve of the painter as photography, poetry or prose could not capture aesthetic expectations of the awesome scenery. Another correspondent perceived photography’s weakness in capturing the colour of the foliage:

…the bush was dense and from the different shades of green, fit scenes for the painter’s art. The drawback of photography is that everything is black and white. It gives one the idea of form, but the colour is absent, and in the bush on the West Coast the colour is of as much importance as the form and contour of the country.

Problems of conveying colour were not limited to photography’s monochromatic palette. Collodion’s inability to register blue resulted in a loss of tonal contrast; prints depicting a snowy peak against a blue sky, for instance. The inadequacy of photography to replicate the sense of scale experienced in this location was of particular concern to other writers. A reporter for the Otago Witness reviewing Burton’s exhibition of proof prints from the excursion repeatedly noted weaknesses in compositions for not “conveying the bulk and height of the cliffs,” even describing one view of Doubtful Sound as a “failure” for its


56 "A Trip to Stewart's Island and the West Coast."

inability to render scale. In a comparison of two views of Bowen Falls, he described one as disappointing, since the image of the falls was diminished by the size of its mountainous backdrop. The second view was found to be more successful as the photographer used a larger lens that eliminated the background view, demonstrating the manipulation of scenic views through photographic technology.

A Wellington writer reviewing the series suggested that problems in conveying scale might have been easily rectified through more frequent inclusion of “a standard of comparison” into every picture. Citing a view showing the Luna at the base of a mountain, the writer observed: “The chief wonder of many of the Sounds is the gigantic scale on which all things have been created, and the eye does not appreciate that, either when looking at the actual mountains or a picture, unless there is something to afford an idea of magnitude.” In concession, the writer further noted Burton’s attempts to alleviate this shortcoming by appending prints with “memoranda” as to the height of featured peaks, demonstrating the functional capacity of textual annotations. Despite these criticisms, the writer held Burton’s series of Milford Sound to be “complete” and superior to earlier renditions of the region:

As views of some of the most wondrous scenery in the world, they are highly interesting, and they will prove a very welcome addition to collections. Ere this, sketches of the Sounds have been but in pencil and ink, and as all those who have made them have admitted, mere description cannot give a good idea of the Sounds.

The writer suggested the apparent advantages photography possessed over manual forms of representation. Conflicting recollections among verbal and written accounts of the voyage presented a benefit in the perceived detachment of photographic observation. One correspondent aboard the Luna noted that no two observers would view a natural scene in the same way. He recalled an earlier voyage to Stewart Island, when a party of six who shared the same vantage point could not reach consensus as to the physical attributes of the coastline they had seen. His written account could serve no more than “picturing the trip from [his] own point of view.” Another correspondent from the Luna was driven to contribute his own account of the voyage because his recollections differed from the three published versions he

58 “The Trip of the Luna: Photographic Views of the West Coast Sounds,” Otago Witness, 4 April 1874.

59 “West Coast Scenery and Resources: Mr Burton's Photographs,” New Zealand Mail (Wellington), 11 April 1874.

60 “Notes of the Luna Trip,” Otago Witness, 7 March 1874.
had read: “not two of them agree, for each has looked at the West Coast from his own point of view.”

Burton’s photographs, by comparison, presented “truthful representations of West Coast scenery” to another writer who had personally experienced the locations featured in these views.

A major advantage of photographic representation was its reproducibility and portability. While a watercolour or oil painting remained an isolated view, photographic prints could be viewed in the sequence of the associated series. This is reinforced by a review of an exhibition of Burton’s photographs from the *Luna* trip that took place after his return to Dunedin. The writer’s description of the photographs mimics the geographical and chronological sequence of the journey. The following excerpts show the reinforcement of the journey through the arrangement of the photographs in series:

The series commences with two views taken at Codfish Island, off the coast of Stewart’s Island where the Luna lay for a few hours before visiting Port William.

…
The next views were taken in Preservation Inlet.... Passing from Preservation, we come to Chalky Inlet, where three views were taken while the Luna lay at anchor at North Port.

…
No views were taken of Bligh Sound, and the next of the series begin with Milford Haven. Commencing at the head, three views, taken from different standpoints, give excellent representations of the mountains overlooking the Freshwater Basin.

…
Three splendid views are given of Harrison’s Bay, where the Luna and Jessie Niccol lay at anchor.

…
The series is brought to a conclusion with a couple of views representing the return of the party to civilisation.

The reviewer’s heightened knowledge of the *Luna*’s itinerary and the locations visited suggests he accompanied the voyage, although this is not disclosed. Given this awareness, Burton’s photographs are evaluated by their accuracy as “truthful representations” of the sites depicted. While addressing the photographs’ value as “splendid specimens of photography,” the review focused on Burton’s skill in deploying photographic technology to accurately portray the locations depicted. By emphasising the content of the photograph rather than the aesthetic response an impression is created of not only the site, but the journey there.

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61 "Notes of the Luna’s Trip," *Otago Witness*, 11 April 1874.

62 "The Trip of the Luna: Photographic Views of the West Coast Sounds."

63 "The Trip of the Luna: Photographic Views of the West Coast Sounds."
Knowledge of the itinerary of the trip induced the reviewer to mention sites of interest visited on the voyage that were excluded from Burton’s series and urged the photographer to revisit sites where the photographic representation was held to be inadequate. This narrative exposes the parameters imposed upon the series. The meaning and scope of the series is derived not from Burton’s aesthetic or conceptual response to the region, but from external declarations of sites of interest, or in this case, the voyage.

Burton capitalised on public interest in the expedition to generate publicity for the studio, drawing upon the story of the journey to promote the sale of these prints. The prints were despatched as a series to agents, with advance promotional sets of prints supplied to the press. Writing to the Colonial Secretary, Burton also endeavoured to sell the prints to the central Government in April 1874:

Sir

We send by this Post three sets of the “Sounds” completing the order. It will be noticed that Views nos. 252, 253 & 254 though at first sight near similar, were taken at different times of the day, and exhibit distinct effects. Views 245, 244 and 247 constitute a Panorama of the Head of Milford Sound, and Views 250, 251 with either of the first – named (252, 253 or 254) another Panorama, taken from the Centre of the Sound. But for the very unfavorable weather during most of trip, and the very short stays at each point of interest, we should have been able to produce a very much more extensive series.

We have the honor to be obedient Servants

Burton Brothers

As Burton’s accommodation and meals were provided and his return passage to Dunedin was subsidised by the Government, the Colonial Secretary felt the prints ought to be supplied free of charge. In his letter, Burton used the journey to account for shortcomings in the photographic project, noting disadvantages experienced due to inclement weather and the brevity of stops on the voyage.

Burton had now established the photographic expedition as a means of making and marketing photographic prints. Attracting the attention of newspaper editors keen to cater to public interest in travel and discovery, the studio’s photographic trips were consistently publicised and reported by the popular press. The adventures of Burton and his employees offered a travel narrative with a clearly defined goal of reaching and recording remote sites of natural beauty. Burton’s next expedition was through Burkes Pass in the Mackenzie District to the Southern Alps and Aoraki Mount Cook, travelling by horseback and on foot, or by

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64 Burton Brothers to the Colonial Secretary, 4 May 1874, IA-1-1071/1874, Colonial Secretary's Inwards Correspondence, Archives New Zealand, National Office.
horse-drawn cart where the terrain permitted. An account of the expedition published by the *Otago Daily Times* and reprinted in the *Otago Witness* and again in the studio’s catalogue continued the emphasis on the journey, reconstructed through the landscape scenes presented in the photographs. The final product is a series where “grandeur is the pervading characteristic of the scenes photographed.” This is juxtaposed against the concerted, militaristic description of their “photographing campaign” as they “‘work’ the country” battling the unpredictable elements of weather and nature. The elucidation of aspects not evident in the final photographs consolidates the series as a journey of “not unenjoyable roughing” and justifies the writer’s praise for the enterprise of the studio.

The following year Burton spent seven weeks photographing Queenstown and the Lake Wakatipu region and was claimed in the press to be pioneering in the presentation of subjects that had never before been circulated in pictorial form. Quoting Burton, a reporter for the *Lake Wakatip Mail* noted that he had “not exhausted the district, but only tapped its resources.” As a commodity producer, Burton used the natural environment as his raw material, transforming visual experience into a marketable and transmittable form. A comparison with painter W. H. Raworth, who toured the Wakatipu region at the same time, reveals the contested position that photography continued to occupy in recording New Zealand’s topography. The second part of the report, “Lake Scenery,” concerned the watercolour sketches produced by Raworth during his stay in the district. The linking phrase “Now turn we in the direction of real art” juxtaposed the photographs produced by Burton with fine art. Attempting to justify the superiority of painted media over photography, the writer asserted that the position of photography was to circulate an objective record, whereas painting, even watercolour sketching, captured the “true” character of the location:

Photography, even in the present stage towards perfection, utterly fades before the painter’s art, in giving anything like a true conception of nature in glowing colors [sic] – to depict the grandeur and scenery of the Lake, by the former process is impossible. Although one must concede the vast superiority of the quickening tints of the painter to convey a correct idea of the true grandeur and scenery of the Wakatip, it must be admitted that we have to depend, mainly upon the photographer to give universality to these attractions – for the product of the one is within reach of the few, while those of the other are within reach of almost all.

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66 "Lake Scenery," *Lake Wakatip Mail* (Queenstown), 24 June 1875.
While painting and watercolour sketching may have been preferred as the traditional means of conveying grandeur and awe, the relative immediacy and reproducibility of photography secured a position for the medium in the circulation of landscape imagery among local and international audiences.

**Consolidating the Series: The Role of the Catalogue**

Burton Brothers capitalised on photography’s relative ease of large-scale distribution and the commercial opportunities this allowed. By 1875 a collection of five hundred topographical negatives had been amassed and was published in the studio’s first catalogue, *Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery by Burton Brothers* (fig. 3-2). The catalogue introduction emphasised the studio’s ability to post prints to “any part of the Colonies or the mother country” and their willingness to select “sets” of prints based on the customer’s preferred region or “class of scenery”: “Whether snowy mountains or fertile plains, wild gorges or busy towns, waterfalls or glaciers, rivers or lakes, “workings” or flumes, “bits” of bush, or “studies” of trees.” Classification of the natural environment into recognisable and commodifiable types was an essential function of the catalogue; with no illustrations, written description and endorsement was essential to marketing the product. The studio’s catalogues were generally printed by the Otago Daily Times and therefore photo-mechanical reproduction was restricted by the limitations of standard newspaper printing processes. Illustration of the studio’s catalogues was not achieved until 1901 when Muir and Moodie re-released the full Burton Brothers negative portfolio with a catalogue illustrated with half-tone reproductions printed by the Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Co., Ltd.67

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67 Muir and Moodie, *Catalogue of New Zealand and South Sea Scenery* (Dunedin: Muir and Moodie, 1901).
The catalogue further reinforced the photographic series and accompanying narrative. Two series, *Otago through the Camera* and *Scenes in the Southern Alps*, were published in this catalogue and are listed as distinct bodies of work. The larger series *Otago through the Camera* is broken into a number of sub-series through the arrangement of photographs by their geographical subjects, starting with “Dunedin and Suburbs,” extending to “Port Chalmers,” “Tokomairiro [Milton] and the South Road” and “Palmerston and the North Road.” This arrangement presents an aspect of journeying, with Dunedin emphasised as the geographical centre of the photographic activity, projecting outwards by means of road access. Central Otago mining settlements are also isolated under the heading “The Diggings Townships, &c.” The photographs of the Lake Wakatipu region (“The Lakes”) and those from the *Luna* expedition (“The Sounds of the West Coast”) are also isolated within the catalogue. Among the latter sub-series, the aspect of the journey is further emphasised by arranging the photographs chronologically, as determined by the sequential negative numbers. Furthermore, the listing commences with “Stewart’s Island” and ends with “Bits in Westport” – destinations visited on the *Luna*’s voyage but not within the geographical limits as defined by the heading “West Coast Sounds.”

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68 See Appendix 1: Burton Brothers’ Series and Catalogues.
The narrative is further amplified with written endorsements and accounts extracted from newspapers. The studio’s ten-part panorama from the spire of Dunedin’s First Church is accompanied by a report on its production that was earlier published in the *Otago Guardian* and that elaborated the logistics of this venture and the features depicted. The “Lake Scenery” sub-series is accompanied by an excerpt from the *Lake Wakatip Mail* report, which excludes the discussion of the painter Raworth. Textual interpretation is also offered for “Scenes in the Southern Alps” by means of a reprinted account of the photographers’ journey from the *Otago Daily Times* and an excerpt from L. J. Kennaway’s *Crusts: a Settler’s Fare due South* (published in 1874), which the studio felt provided an “admirable description” of the Southern Alps region. Both Kennaway’s text and the catalogue introduction attempt to interpret New Zealand’s landscape for a European audience, declaring that the “wondrous” scenery depicted in the photographs rivals Swiss alpine scenery. Compared with popular tourist destinations in mountain regions of Europe, New Zealand offered the benefit of solitude and newness. Kennaway also injected the “essential element” of adventure into his narrative of exploring New Zealand’s alpine regions, justifying this as “the exquisite sensation of dearly risking his own life and neck in doing it.”

To be effective in generating sales, broad distribution of the catalogues was required and this was elicited through advertisements and newspaper editorial. A report in the *Otago Witness* on the release of *Photographs of New Zealand Scenery* offered little more than a transcription of the introductory text, but promoted the “very neat and instructive catalogue” as “well-printed and got up” and a credit to its producers. Without the accompaniment of visual images, the writer’s claims of quality were applied to the standard of the catalogue’s printing and the arrangement and depth of information. This further reinforced the studio’s textual markers and assisted the marketing of photographs as cohesive packages or series. The publication of later catalogues was supported by subscription schemes and art unions drawn from the series being promoted.

Beyond the catalogue, identifiers of series accompany individual prints to hold them in context and to point to the associated series in various ways. Burton’s 1874 letter to the Colonial Secretary demonstrates the practical use of negative numbering as a form of identification and means of both locating and associating individual photographs within the broader context of the series. The negative number was utilised as the key identifier to

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70 “New Zealand Scenery,” *Otago Witness*, 4 September 1875.
individuate photographic prints and was used as an identifier for describing “views,” particularly when locating prints as parts to form a panorama. In the catalogue listing “appended numbers” formed the reference for customers ordering prints by mail. Numbers were generally assigned consecutively as projects were conducted, so this numerical order also implies a chronology. Viewing photographs in association with the preceding and following images engages the viewer in the photographer’s activity prior and subsequent to the taking of a photograph – a “before and after” effect. Even without the accompanying photographs in the sequence, the inscribed number on the photographic image remains suggestive of a narrative as it is not merely an individual item but part of a broader inventory of images.

Among prints from this period, the labels affixed to the reverse of print mounts clearly identify the accompanying series (fig. 3-3). Following the naming protocols established in the catalogue, these labels designate the series and sub-series (where applicable), the caption for the specific print and the studio’s brand identifier. Labels did not contain negative numbers, as this was generally inscribed within the visible image area of the negative. For means of expendability, labels were bulk-printed with a broad caption to encapsulate multiple images. For instance the example in fig. 3-3, “Half-Way Bay, Lake Wakatipu,” varies in designated caption from that listed in the catalogue: “Half-Way Bay, the Staircase Range.” This print, from negative 532, is among a sequence of seventeen negatives described in the catalogue as showing Halfway Bay and different aspects of the surrounding scenery. The bulk-printing of labels with a generic caption was an economic measure. The life of these series was extended by changing type-setting and font on the labels, suggesting particular prints sustained multiple print-runs. The appearance of hand-written captions on pre-printed labels shows the studio resisting the need to print unique labels for each photograph sold (fig. 3-4).

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71 Burton Brothers, *Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery.*

72 While earlier numbers within the studio negative register accord with chronological sequence, some shifts occur as blocks of numbers were assigned to specific projects in advance, thus interrupting the chronological order. Later, Muir and Moodie retroactively assigned (“back-filled”) earlier numbers to substitute negatives where negatives were unsuccessful or broken, further compromising the chronology.
Establishing a collective body of work and enacting a narrative also functioned as a commercial mechanism to encourage add-on sales. Catalogue listings arranged negatives as a “set” of views or complete illustrated story, thus generating the potential for sales of multiple prints. However, the effectiveness and meaning of devices such as labels and catalogues could be compromised once in the possession of the consumer; the recipient was free to collect, arrange and display prints as they saw fit. Loose prints were typically bound in albums at the instruction of the consumer, often with the work of other photographers and with the studio’s labels cropped or obscured. While negative numbers may remain visible within the image, if not viewed in consultation with the catalogue the numerical reference loses its associative meaning and the link to the remaining series is lost. The studio’s series became subordinate to the narrative created and imposed by the consumer. However, Burton Brothers retained some control over the reception of their photographs by presenting prints within pre-produced album formats marked with their branding and identifiers.

**Domesticated Journeys: Travel Writing and the Photograph Album**

Contemporary news reports and published travel accounts activated the latent narrative in Burton Brothers photographs by providing the background information to the production of the photographic series. Reports also reveal that this narrative component was not only desired but expected. An account on the publication of Burton’s series *Scenes in the Southern Alps* appreciated the directness of photographic representation of the dramatic scenery...
encountered but recommended that a textual account would enhance the portrayal of the photographer’s experience:

Mr. Burton’s photographs tell more at a glance than columns of letterpress, although it would be interesting if a brief journal of his route and proceedings were annexed to the full series of plates, for Mr. Burton’s tour was not without incident.73

The report concluded with an allusion to the function of these photographs in a domestic environment. With a portfolio of fifty to sixty views of the Southern Alps region, Burton was held to have captured the range and diversity of the region and to have provided an “important addition to the topography of the district.” The comprehensiveness of the series also offered a substitute for the experience of being there:

It is not given to every one to have time and opportunity to visit those scenes. Mr. Burton has, however, done the next best thing, as he has brought them within the range of our own fireside, where, with the help of a magnifying glass, one may become acquainted with every line as drawn by that most accurate of artists – light.

This passage demonstrates photography’s mediation of distant locations by offering a distilled impression of the experience of travel. The writer also hints at the limitations of photographic representation as a recorder of reflected light, supplying a visual impression of the outline of the location without volume or mass. The photograph is reduced to an index with its meaning generated and projected by the surrounding discourse.74 What is required to complete the picture is the verbal or written account supplied by the maker.

Sandweiss’ observation that topographical photography functioned as a “story-telling medium” is clear in the Burton Brothers portfolio.75 The sequential or serial presentation of photographs enabled images to convey a narrative through association and arrangement, thus reducing the reliance on written or oral commentary. Sandweiss’ observation of the correlation between photographic series and the sequential presentation of visual images in painted panorama or magic lantern shows was less applicable to the colonial experience in New Zealand. While such entertainments existed in New Zealand, they were exceeded in popularity and availability by travel writing. Conventions of travel writing are evident in

73 “New Zealand Scenery,” Illustrated New Zealand Herald (Dunedin), 9 April 1875.
74 Osborne, 10.
75 Sandweiss, "Undecisive Moments," 115.
Burton Brothers’ practice of marketing and presenting photographs in photograph albums, as well as consumer-compiled albums and as illustrations to commercial and private travel journals.

**Travel Journals**

Functioning as sources of information and entertainment, written accounts of travel to and throughout New Zealand were an essential tool in the activity of colonial encounter. With the expansion of tourism from the 1870s, travel texts developed a different function and character.\(^{76}\) Commercial publications by professional writers and the recorded experiences of private travellers informed the perception of New Zealand among prospective settlers and “armchair” travellers, and reinforced the status of the colonial project.

These books helped to shape the preconceptions of and expectations of boatloads of steamer tourists. Their express purpose was to evaluate the success of British imperial expansion, and their wider effect was to contribute to the development of print capitalism as a primary agency of imperialism.\(^{77}\)

The compilation of a journal was an expected activity of the traveller or tourist, travelling either for pleasure or professional purpose. The validation of experience in print affixed the journey to a standard set of responses, “as if the journey is not complete until it is received as a text.”\(^{78}\) Tourist operators also produced travel guides to instruct prospective travellers on what to see and how to see it, establishing a recommended travel route and itinerary of “must-see” attractions.\(^{79}\) For non-travellers, an impression of New Zealand was projected to a common readership by establishing comparisons with European landmarks and enforcing English cultural values and tastes. Travel texts became commercially conceptualised and driven, selling both the printed record and the impression of the subject portrayed.

One of the earliest of these commercially-oriented travel texts was *The New Zealand Tourist*, published in 1879 by the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand with text by the Dunedin poet Thomas Bracken. *The New Zealand Tourist* established the rhetoric for conceptualising travel in New Zealand and also endorsed a standard itinerary based on the

\(^{76}\) Wevers, 1-11.

\(^{77}\) Wevers, 140.

\(^{78}\) Wevers, 155.

\(^{79}\) Wevers, 5-6.
Union Steam Ship Company’s coastal routes. In 1877 the Union Steam Ship Company published *The Southern Guide*, which focussed on the Hot Lakes district of the North Island, while *The New Zealand Tourist* covered the “whole colony.” These guides were published in response to demand in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States for information to instruct international tourist in a new era of “cheap and expeditious travel.”

Bracken, best known as the lyricist for New Zealand’s national anthem, “God Defend New Zealand,” established the language and tone that persisted as the standard for promotional writing on New Zealand. He commenced with a comparison of New Zealand to historical attractions (mainly architectural) in Europe, stating that while the colony could offer no equivalent attractions it offered other spectacles to “woo the pleasure-seeker to our shores.” Bracken exclaimed:

But we have a land, yet fresh from the hand of its Maker, formed in all the wild prodigality of natural beauty… The romantic character of our New Zealand scenery is not surpassed in any other portion of the world. This is not an individual opinion, but the general verdict of numerous experienced travellers of taste and culture who have visited the Colony.

He supported this assertion with the examples of Milford Sound and the “sublime” Mitre Peak, the Southern Alps, Mount Cook and the Pink and White Terraces at Rotomahana. Bracken further sets this topography in competition with the scenery and attractions of Australia, a destination also serviced by the Union Steam Ship Company. The aesthetic appeal of New Zealand was determined by its sublimity and grandeur. Alternately, Bracken noted its equivalence with the English countryside, praising the beauty of sites subjected to acclimatisation activities, such as the “romantic hills of Otago” ablaze with gorse hedges in blossom and the song of introduced birds at Nichol’s Creek, Dunedin. Urban centres were similarly judged, with resemblance to English models of domestic and commercial architecture received as a sign of prosperity and material progress.

Photography was soon integrated into this project in the form of illustrations to support these descriptions. Later publications by the Union Steam Ship Company, such as *Maoriland* (1884), were extensively illustrated with engravings from photographs by Burton Brothers,

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80 Thomas Bracken and Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., *The New Zealand Tourist* ([Dunedin]: Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, 1879), v.

81 Wevers, 178.

82 Bracken and Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., vi.
James Bragge, Charles Spencer, Josiah Martin and Dunedin studio Coxhead and Le Sueur. Private travellers also used photographs to illustrate their personal travel journals. Two examples held in the collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, show the use of photographs to amplify or enhance written travel commentary. Rev. G. G. Collins’s travel journal demonstrates the contribution of photographs to the documentation of travel and the impression of New Zealand projected by a private author. Collins’ use of photographs in his journal demonstrates consumer use of commercial photography to illustrate personal narratives. Furthermore, the availability of commercially-produced photographs to match his itinerary shows the astuteness of studios in catering to travellers’ expectations. Collins arrived at Bluff around 1887 on the Union Steam Ship Company steamer Te Anau from Melbourne. He continued by steamer to Dunedin, Lyttelton and Wellington, then returned south to Westport, proceeding overland from that port. Original photographs were placed throughout the journal, generally prints from photographers based in the area under discussion (Burton Brothers photographs for Otago, James Ring for the West Coast, Wheeler and Son for Christchurch and Wrigglesworth and Binns for Wellington). Collins presents a generally unfavourable impression of New Zealand, finding the buildings and facilities inferior to Britain, yet he expressed appreciation for the natural scenery. A tendency to accommodate the novelty of his surroundings by comparison with the familiar shows his adherence to models of travel writing, substantiated by reference to advice gleamed from Maoriland.

A more animated and informal response to travel in New Zealand is found in John McNab’s journal entitled “Off for a holiday or glimpses of Maoriland (24 February – 31 March 1886).” Unlike Collins, McNab resided in New Zealand, working in Timaru as a jeweller. Far from Collins’ critical eye, he presents the response of a young settler exploring his adopted country as a domestic tourist. He stated the purpose of his journey as twofold: “to experience by personal knowledge the ideas conceived of reading and the recital of wonders to be seen in the North Island” and to visit friends in Whanganui. Versed in travel literature, McNab was induced to view the sites described with his own eyes, yet used the rhetoric of popular travel writing to describe his experiences. The journal is almost exclusively illustrated.

83 Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., Maoriland: An Illustrated Handbook to New Zealand (Melbourne: G. Robertson, 1884).


85 ”McNab, John, b 1855: Diary and travel account, Off for a Holiday or Glimpses of Maoriland,” 24 February - 31 March 1886, MS-Papers-6190, Alexander Turnbull Library.
with Burton Brothers’ photographs and he uses phrases associated with their marketing, such as “Maori at Home” and “Maoriland” – possibly derived from the Burton Brothers’ “Maori Land” montage which serves as the frontispiece to McNab’s journal.

In both these examples and the Union Steam Ship Company’s Maoriland the photographs exist independently of the text and appear to have been added at the completion of the written content. Nowhere is mention made of photographs in the text, even though the photographs visually augment the written description. The arrangement of prints in Collins’ handwritten journal includes spaces left for illustrations; one such page is annotated with “Kea,” suggesting that the author sought an image of a Kea (bird) to occupy that space. A package of loose prints accompanies the volume, indicating that the photographs were collected en route and subsequently added to the journal, which was most likely compiled retrospectively upon his return to England. While McNab made reference to photographs acquired on his journey – such as a portrait taken at a studio in Woodville and action photographs of canoe hurdle racing at a regatta in Mercer, Waikato – he makes no comment on the Burton Brothers photographs, seventy of which illustrate the journal. This collection of prints was most likely assembled in Dunedin or through an agent in Timaru.

The association of text and image in these private travel accounts shows the use of photographs to supplement – or even complete – personal recollections of travel experience. The extensive use of Burton Brothers photographs of locations throughout New Zealand reveals the studio’s commercial awareness in engaging with this process, supplying a full inventory of places visited on popular tourist itineraries. Burton Brothers’ stock of negatives includes images of all the locations visited by the Union Steam Ship Company vessels and promoted in tourist guidebooks, thus the range of views released by the studio corresponded with – or perhaps influenced – the typical tour of New Zealand conducted by international and domestic tourists.

Yet photographs also acted independently, operating in an equivalent structure to printed publications. The topographical photographs released by the Burton Brothers studio offered a visual equivalent to the cult of travel writing and fed the European appetite for accounts of far-off lands. Producing photographs in series and albums enabled a marketable and tangible package, adhering to the key areas ascertained and reinforced in travel texts. Burton Brothers catered to the popular audience for travel accounts by producing pre-compiled and formatted albums of photographs that adopted the rhetoric and values projected in travel publications. Utilising the familiar book format, the studio’s albums bore titles including Burton Bros.’ Views of New Zealand, New Zealand Scenery and Land of Loveliness that adhered to the same lexicon as the travel writers.
**Photograph Albums**

The etymological origin of the word “album” is the Latin word *albus* meaning blank or white.\(^{86}\) In her study of Victorian family photograph albums, Martha Langford traces the concept of the album as a repository for autographs that soon extended to other ephemera such as stamps, poems and drawings. With the advent of photographic portraiture and the popularity of *cartes de visite*, individuals and families began to amass collections of photographs, and albums were utilised to house and display these objects. The first commercially produced photograph albums were designed specifically for *cartes de visite*, to “furnish the photographic consumer with a tool for collection management.”\(^{87}\) The photograph album catered to the Victorian craze for collecting, and Langford attributes the early popularity of photography to its compatibility with collecting other objects, such as autographs, watercolours or pressed botanical specimens. Photographs could be collected and presented by the same means as these objects in the established format of the album which was a popular fixture of the Victorian drawing room.

Unlike family albums, which Langford perceives to rely on surrounding oral traditions for the transmission of meaning, the albums produced by Burton Brothers were intended as consumer objects and were designed to function independently. Whereas in family albums the “text” is carried by conversations and collective memories, the Burton Brothers commercial albums communicate through the inscriptions imbedded in the photographic print, applied to the album page and print mount or through the arrangement and format of the album itself. By producing their own blank albums compiled by their neighbouring bookbinders on Princes Street, Ferguson and Mitchell, they exerted some control over the arrangement, association and reception of photographs.\(^{88}\) The internal narratives projected by print captions resisted the private narratives that might be constructed by the consumer’s selection and arrangement within each album, and the design of the album’s cover also projected an interpretation of its content.

Burton Brothers’ 1879 catalogue promoted the availability of blank albums suitable for consumer-selected arrangements of whole plate prints:

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\(^{88}\) *Daily Southern Cross* (Auckland), 4 April 1862. A Melbourne establishment of engravers and lithographers, Ferguson and Mitchell opened their Dunedin branch in 1862.
We have had made for us in London, Albums handsomely bound in Morocco [goatskin] and Russia [leather], to contain forty or eighty (as may be desired) of our “Standard” Size Views. These are admirably adapted for presents. 89

The studio’s importation of the album blanks shows their continued engagement with the international wholesale trade in commercial photographic materials and supplies. Their description promotes the album as a luxury, high quality item and through this association solicits multiple sales of prints. The Hocken Collections hold an album that meets this description, although unfortunately the front cover and spine are now removed. The album contains eighty photographs from the Otago through the Camera series. The prints bear no imbedded inscriptions and page mounts are without the studio’s standard labels, yet they are hand-inscribed with the series name (set-off in quotation marks), print caption, and the first page of the album bears the photographer’s name (figs. 3-5 and 3-6).

Fig. 3-5. Detail of album page inscription, lower left, “Otago through the Camera”: Dunedin from the S. W.,” c.1870s. Albumen whole plate print. Album 369, P90-015, Hocken Collections, page 1.

Fig. 3-6. Detail of album page inscription, lower right.

89 Burton Brothers, Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1879).
A more standardised method of album presentation was employed from the early 1880s. Albums entitled *Burton Bros.’ Views of New Zealand* recur most frequently in New Zealand institutional collections (fig. 3-7). These carry a uniform gilt-stamp on the cover and are formatted to contain fifty to sixty whole plate prints on the standard sized page mount. Examples contain prints from negatives dating prior to 1884 and are highly variable in content, yet typically represent topographical scenes of the South Island, reflecting the studio’s portfolio to that date. The use of the possessive form “Burton Bros.” foregrounds the studio as the maker and owner of the photographs and the protagonist on the journey to attain the “view.” However, in most examples, prints are not arranged in geographical or negative sequence, and the impression of the journey is replaced by a sense of the album as a cornucopia of photographic delights.

Fig. 3-7. Front cover, *Burton Bros.’ Views of New Zealand*. Photograph album. Album 81, Otago Settlers Museum.
A smaller format album entitled *Land of Loveliness* also frequently appears in New Zealand collections (fig. 3-8). The semantic choice of title: “Land of Loveliness New Zealand Photographed by Burton Bros., Dunedin”, positions the studio in a more passive relationship with the landscape, acting as the viewers’ agent in bringing the landscape to them. However, the elaborate cover design and incorporation of the studio’s logo reveal this to be a sophisticated and considered product. The *Land of Loveliness* albums borrowed conventions from travel literature. With pocket-sized proportions – the external cover measures 165 millimetres high and 130 millimetres wide – these albums were designed to be portable and hand-held, a very different engagement with the object than the larger whole plate albums that required a table surface or lectern for viewing. Approximating the format of the tourist guidebook, the *Land of Loveliness* albums were designed to travel.

![Front Cover, Land of Loveliness, New Zealand. Photographed by Burton Bros. Dunedin. Photograph album. Album 44, Otago Settlers Museum.](image)

The *Land of Loveliness* albums contain ten 3 x 4 inch (80 x 105 millimetre) prints, made from stereographic negatives and mounted on card at approximately the size of a cabinet card. These mounted prints are referred to as “Cards for the Album” and “Album Card Views” in
the studio’s 1879 catalogue, locating the implementation of this format to that time.\textsuperscript{90} An 1878 review for the \textit{New Zealand through the Camera} series outlines the studio’s available formats as whole plate, large format carbon prints and “the album size,” which presented a lower cost option for those wishing to “adorn their albums with views of New Zealand scenery.”\textsuperscript{91} The studio’s probable intention was for this “card” format to be inserted into album sleeves ready-made for cabinet cards, in an effort to insert topographical photographs into the conventional domestic form of the family album. While the prints generally do not bear negative numbers, in consultation with the stereograph register these negatives can be dated to the late 1870s to early 1880s. The phrase “Land of Loveliness” (and in one instance, “Land of Loneliness”) recurs in the studio’s promotional material in the mid-1880s, suggesting the continued production of this format.\textsuperscript{92}

Many \textit{Land of Loveliness} albums commence with the studio’s first “Maori Land” montage. Functioning as a title page or frontispiece, the montage serves to introduce and encapsulate the album’s contents. The use of the “Maori Land” trope draws upon the popular mythology associated with this term to introduce the packaged assemblage of New Zealand’s exoticism. Representations of Maori and New Zealand’s sublime landscape scenery were central to the romantic vision perpetuated by the “Maoriland” myth. Burton Brothers’ “Maori Land” montage reduced these subjects to symbolic meaning, further diminished within the miniature format of the album and its promise of “loveliness.”

\textsuperscript{90} Burton Brothers, \textit{One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery}.

\textsuperscript{91} “New Zealand through the Camera.”

The image content of *Land of Loveliness* albums varies considerably, and was likely selected by consumer or by the studio or their agents on the consumer's instruction. An album held at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, formerly in the collection of Hardwicke Knight, exclusively features views of Dunedin.\(^93\) As the album remained in Dunedin it was possibly compiled by a resident of the city. Another example, held by the Brett McDowell Gallery, Dunedin shows views of the Southern Lakes region and suggests the documentation of a journey. A further example held by the Hocken Collections features images acquired on the 1879 Union Steam Ship Company tourist excursion to the Milford Sound aboard *Rotorua* and includes a photograph of that vessel.\(^94\)

A *Land of Loveliness* album held in the collection of the Otago Settlers Museum is stamped on the inside back cover with the mark of the commission agent, Alfred R. Hardy, Dunedin. The assembled prints contain a broad representation of the scenery and development


of Dunedin. This selection combined with the agent’s mark suggests that albums were also pre-compiled and sold through agents. The *Land of Loveliness* title and style was also applied to a larger format album (240 x 310mm) designed to hold whole plate prints. Examples of these albums have international provenance and it is possible these were facilitated by an international agent.\(^9^5\)

Other examples are less consistent in their subject matter and arrangement, possibly reflecting the idiosyncratic choices of their purchasers. An example from the McNab Collection in the Dunedin Public Library contains a seemingly random selection of prints. Following the “Maori Land” montage on the first page are: an urban view of Wellington; Dunedin Public Gardens showing mature cabbage trees alongside introduced trees and shrubs; a yacht on Lake Wanaka; Hall’s Arm, Smith (now Malaspina) Sound; two photographs of the Avon River, Christchurch, one showing the Public Hospital; a second Wellington street scene; Manawatu Gorge, and finally view from Albert Park, Auckland. The mixed geographical arrangement does not reflect a journey, but the inclusion of photographs from the four main urban centres of New Zealand alongside celebrated scenery indicates an intention to provide representative illustrations of the whole colony. Residential dwellings and commercial buildings are shown in the two prints of Wellington and public facilities are showcased in the photographs of the Dunedin Botanical Gardens and Christchurch Hospital. The tamed and picturesque Avon River further celebrates infrastructural development as does the view of Manawatu Gorge where road access had been constructed in 1875 and is evident in the photograph.

The final print of Albert Park completes the collection as a statement of the colonial condition (fig. 3-10). Not conventionally picturesque, the emphasis of the image is on the cannon that protrudes into frame – a relic of the military barracks that occupied the site from the 1840s until 1871. Prior to being commandeered as a defence post against a feared attack from Waikato Maori, the hill was the site of Rangipuke, a Maori kainga, and a fortified pa, Te Horotiu. Once the barracks were disestablished the site was redeveloped as a park in the early 1880s.\(^9^6\) The cannon remained as a feature of the landscaped park and a potent symbol of

\(^9^5\) *Land of Loveliness, New Zealand. Photographed by Burton Bros. Dunedin*, photograph album, Album 141, Hocken Collections. The large format *Land of Loveliness* album in the Hocken Collections was repatriated from London. Another example sold on the E-Bay internet auction facility in 2007 was found in Massachusetts, USA.

\(^9^6\) Auckland City Council, “Albert Park.”
colonial control. Under the protective guard of the cannon, the observer is permitted to sit and enjoy the view from the hill, and the urban development spanning below.

Fig. 3-10. “Albert Park – Auckland,” c.1883, albumen print, 105 x 80mm, in Land of Loveliness, New Zealand. Photographed by Burton Bros. Dunedin. Photograph album. McNab Room, Dunedin Public Library.

Conclusion

The “Land of Loveliness” packaged and presented by Burton Brothers was one of sublime landscape scenery, established and industrialised urban centres and a pacified and conciliatory indigenous population. New Zealand’s “Loveliness” was found in the beauty of its land and people and the experience of travelling through terra incognita. The hardship of exploring remote locations and in establishing industrial infrastructure was sanitised against a
serene landscape backdrop. Unresolved conflict between Maori and the Crown was suppressed. Indeed, while the indigenous occupants of “Maoriland” were celebrated on the first page, they were typically excluded from the remainder. Progress, scenic beauty and civil order were distilled in pocket-sized form to be possessed and transported by the owner. The compiling of photographs in an album and containment of their subjects constitutes a potent metaphor for the process of colonisation: “Collecting mirrored in miniature the colonial process of surveying, classifying and gathering up. It was a game of ownership and control.”

The process and systems of travel continued to inform and shape the work of the studio for the next decade. For Alfred Burton’s next projects he travelled to the Pacific Islands and through the King Country on his ongoing project to amass an exhaustive collection of negatives to meet the demand and expectations of domestic and international consumers. While topographical photography remained a staple of the studio through to the 1890s, Burton’s transition to ethnographic subjects extended the appeal of his photographs to an international audience and earned him both commercial and professional rewards.

97 Osborne, 63-64.
Chapter 4  
CAPTIONS, CATALOGUES AND CLASSIFICATION:  
THE CAMERA IN THE CORAL ISLANDS, 1884

Alfred Burton’s activity as a travel photographer was consolidated in his next venture as part of the Union Steam Ship Company’s inaugural tourist excursion to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga aboard the Wairarapa in June and July 1884. Travelling as part of a group of one hundred first class passengers, Burton toured the islands for one month, photographing the Wairarapa’s passengers and crew, the locations visited and the European and indigenous peoples he encountered. In September 1884 the full series of 230 photographs was released by the Burton Brothers studio as The Camera in the Coral Islands. These photographs performed a dual function. They were a commercially viable product for attracting sales and furthering the interests of the studio, and they simultaneously promoted the tourist operations of the Union Steam Ship Company.

The Camera in the Coral Islands is significant as Burton Brothers’ first series of photographs where the primary subjects are people, photographed outside the confines and contrivances of the studio environment. Previously, the studio’s photographic modes could be isolated as studio portraiture and topographical views. If human subjects appeared in the latter, they were generally incidental or included to convey scale within a landscape surrounding. In this series, people were the primary subjects; both Burton’s accompanying tourists and the occupants of the ports visited. However rather than demonstrating a conceptual shift in the studio’s practices, the circumstances of this excursion permitted and demanded an approach that focused on human subjects.

The appeal of photographs from The Camera in the Coral Islands series to international audiences of anthropologists and ethnologists has ensured the widespread distribution and longevity of these photographs. The dispersal of this series beyond New Zealand has granted The Camera in the Coral Islands greater international exposure than other series from the Burton Brothers portfolio. Large collections of prints from this series are held in the Pitt Rivers Museum of Anthropology and World Archaeology at Oxford, the Museum of Ethnology in Rotterdam and the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum of Ethnology in Cologne. These photographs have been interpreted and presented in an anthropological framework by
those institutions and by the parties who originally collected the prints. While this series is the least representative of Burton Brothers’ total output, scholars accessing these photographs in international collections in isolation from the studio’s other work have framed Burton as an ethnographic photographer. This series is rarely considered within the teleology of the studio’s total output and modus operandi. Without appreciation for the patterns and systems of Burton’s broader photographic practice, he is easily misconstrued as an ethnographer, not a commercial operator.

Following the chronology of the first and second Wairarapa voyages, this chapter charts the development of textual devices and demonstrates a shift in meaning and approach as Burton advances through the islands and is exposed to different cultural behaviours and attitudes among the indigenous inhabitants. Applying the methodology of analysis of text and image to an entire series, I will show Burton’s reliance on textual devices to mould photographic images into a cohesive journey and to shape attitudes to indigenous encounters.

“Steam Yachting in the Pacific”: The 1884 Pacific Tour of the Wairarapa

Alfred Burton was the sole representative of the Burton Brothers studio aboard the Wairarapa. The Union Steam Ship Company’s first tourist expedition to the South Pacific

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1 Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, holds two collections of prints from The Camera in the Coral Islands; one collection of fifty-eight prints was donated in 1921 by the estate of Professor S. H. Vines, a member of the Ashmolean Natural History Society of Oxfordshire (1998.238.1-29), and a second smaller collection was acquired among a donation from the Oxford University Department of Anatomy in 1939 (1998.246.4-10). The Museum of Ethnology, Rotterdam, acquired a collection of Burton Brothers prints including examples from The Camera in the Coral Islands series from the estate of local ethnologist G. Vershuur, who purchased the photographs in 1889. These were the basis of the museum’s exhibition and catalogue Burton Brothers: Fotografen in Nieuw-Zeeland (Photographers in New Zealand), 1866-1898 (Amsterdam: Fragment Uitgeverij, 1987). The Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum of Ethnography, Cologne, received prints from The Camera in the Coral Islands through a bequest of Polynesian photographs from the Cologne ethnologist Georg Kuppers-Loosen; photographs from this collection were included in a 1995 exhibition of Samoan photographs jointly curated by the museum and the Southeast Museum of Photography, Daytona Beach, Florida; Casey Blanton ed., Picturing Paradise: Colonial Photography of Samoa, 1875 to 1925, exhibition catalogue (Daytona Beach: Southeast Museum of Photography, 1995).

2 Hardwicke Knight, Burton Brothers: Photographers (Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1980), 31. Knight erroneously stated that Alfred Burton’s son Harold accompanied him on the second excursion of the Wairarapa. Knight misidentified a young European male as Harold Burton in a group portrait of excursionists at Naikorokoro, Fiji. The Wairarapa’s passenger list shows only Alfred Burton and his diary contains no reference to a photographic assistant accompanying him on the trip. "Second Excursion of the Wairarapa", Otago Daily Times (Dunedin), 18 July 1884; The Wairarapa Wilderness: In which are to be Found the Wanderings of the Passengers on the Second Cruise of the S.S. Wairarapa from Auckland to the South Sea Islands and Back, During the Month of July, 1884 (Dunedin: Union Steam Ship Company, 1884).
was in fact two excursions. The first left Auckland on 4 June 1884 with an itinerary that included Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. A case of measles among the passengers curtailed the trip, with only a tour of Fiji undertaken as landing was refused at Samoan and Tongan ports. A second voyage had already been planned, owing to excess subscription for this first trip, and the *Wairarapa* left Auckland again with a full load of passengers on 7 July 1884. In compensation for the shortened first voyage, the Union Steam Ship Company subsidised a number of passengers, including Burton, for the second excursion.³

The *Wairarapa*’s excursion occurred during a period of transition for the island nations visited by the cruise. Fiji, Samoa and Tonga were subject to European contact and influence from traders, whalers and missionaries from the early 1800s.⁴ Fiji became a British colony in 1874 and the archipelago was governed by a centralised colonial administration. A large British settler community drove commercial industry in the production and export of cash crops, principally sugar cane. In a government initiative to expand the sugar cane industry and avert the exploitation of Fijian labour, migrant workers from India were contracted from 1879, limiting the engagement of the indigenous population with colonial industry.⁵ In Samoa, colonial authority was contested by Britain, Germany and America, all of which had trade and naval interests in the region. The 1880s were a period of unrest in Samoa with the signing of treaties with foreign powers and the advancement of commercial enterprises.⁶ Samoa retained political independence under a confederation of chiefs until its annexation in 1899 by Germany, followed shortly thereafter by the United States’ annexation of Eastern Samoa. Unlike Fiji and Samoa, the Tongan archipelago was less conveniently located as a trade route, so it had experienced less inward traffic from traders, settlers and colonial officials.⁷ In the absence of other external influence, Wesleyan missionaries were a sustained and dominant authority within Tonga and guided the island nation in its early political transition. By the time of the *Wairarapa*’s visit, Tonga was a politically unified and

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³ Burton Brothers, *The Camera in the Coral Islands: A Series of Photographs Illustrating the Scenery and the Mode of Life in the Fijis, the Navigator Islands (Samoa), the Friendly Islands (Tonga) Taken During the Two Trips to the South Seas of the Union S.S. Co.’s “Wairarapa,” in June and July, 1884* (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1884).


⁵ Campbell, 202-203.

⁶ Campbell, 178-181.

⁷ Campbell, 93 and 102.
independent kingdom under King George Tupou I (c. 1797-1893), who had established mechanisms to achieve political and economic independence for Tonga.

The islands were also of strategic importance to New Zealand, at a time when the colony considered its political position in the Pacific and sought the expansion of trade networks and commercial interests. The Union Steam Ship Company (hereafter USSC) was pursuing its own expansion into the Pacific for freight traffic and tourist ventures. The USSC first established a presence in the Pacific islands in 1877 as operator of the mail and passenger run from Sydney to Noumea, New Caledonia, but efforts to expand this trade route were thwarted by insufficient remuneration. The growth of the sugar industry in Fiji presented greater volumes of cargo, and in 1881 the USSC commenced regular freight and passenger services to Fiji from Auckland and Melbourne. In 1883 the company director James Mills visited Fiji and was convinced of the demand to expand their routes through the Pacific with a fleet customised for Pacific conditions. The excursion of the Wairarapa in 1884 allowed a reconnaissance of these ports while making use of the passenger vessel in the quieter winter months. Fitted with a refrigerated chamber for the transport of perishable foods, the Wairarapa also served as a trial of the Company’s capacity in the carriage of frozen meat, prior to its eventual entry into the frozen meat export trade.

The Wairarapa’s excursion provided the opportunity to promote the USSC’s expansion into tourist operations. The Company had been quick to respond to the emergent demand for leisure travel, offering tourist cruises to the West Coast Sounds region from the late 1870s, initially as an adjunct route on its trans-Tasman passenger service. In 1883, USSC introduced dedicated tourist excursions to the West Coast Sounds aboard their newest steamer, Tarawera. In January 1884 USSC proposed to utilise this steamer on a tourist excursion to the South Pacific Islands, capitalising on the popularity of leisure travel and to extend the conventional itinerary of the European “grand tour” to South Pacific destinations:

8 Ron Crocombe, The South Pacific (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 2001), 417.


11 "Union Steamship Company's Arrangements," Otago Witness (Dunedin), 6 October 1883; "Union Steam Ship Company," Otago Witness, 6 September 1884.
The Union Company are clearly of opinion that the tourist traffic is susceptible of expansion, and that with their fleet of palatially fitted ocean steamers that they are in a position to expand it. That, I suppose, is the meaning of their proposal to send the Tarawera on a holiday excursion to Fiji and Samoa. No doubt they are right. There must be in Australia a great many rich people who have made the modern “grand tour” – to Europe by Suez, and back across America – and who have “done” New Zealand and Tasmania, and are now ready to be attracted along new lines of summer travel.\textsuperscript{12}

From April 1884 the USSC advertised an “Excursion to the South Sea Islands” aboard the \textit{Wairarapa}, a steamer commissioned by the Company in 1882 for trans-Tasman passenger service and refitted for the Pacific tour.\textsuperscript{13} The emergence of a new style of travel – travel for pleasure – presented a wealthy market of individuals with “plenty of money and nothing to do with it.” A journalist aboard the \textit{Wairarapa}’s first voyage detailed the passenger list, noting the presence of a great number of “globe-trotters,” young men of independent means who travelled for no purpose other than pleasure. While the writer did not enjoy the company of these “globe-trotters” and deplored their frivolity, poor manners and “ability to smoke in any weather,” he reluctantly conceded that this type of passenger was necessary for the expansion of the tourist operations of the USSC and the development of South Pacific tourism.\textsuperscript{14}

The Pacific cruise of the \textit{Wairarapa} received national attention. Essential to the venture’s popular success were reports by unidentified correspondents from both trips of the \textit{Wairarapa} published in newspapers in Dunedin, Auckland and Wanganui, and both voyages received regular news coverage. Reporters from the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} and the \textit{Melbourne Argus} were aboard the \textit{Wairarapa}’s first voyage, and the presence of journalists among the passengers was noted by one anonymous correspondent.\textsuperscript{15} Taking the form of travel narratives, these accounts record the wonder of the scenery encountered, the range of activities available (shipboard and ashore) and the quality of the accommodation. Along with accounts of the voyage, newspaper coverage often endorsed and promoted the luxury shipboard experience offered by the USSC. Reports were rarely critical of the USSC facilities and service, and they invariably concluded with a recommendation for readers to book on a

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Otago Witness}, 12 January 1884.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 7 April 1884; N. H. Brewer, \textit{A Century of Style: Great Ships of the Union Line, 1875-1976} (Wellington: Reed, 1982), 30-33.

\textsuperscript{14} “The Wairarapa's Cruise in the Pacific,” \textit{Te Aroha News}, reprinted from the \textit{Auckland Star}, 9 August 1884.

future voyage. Some endorsed and encouraged the commercial opportunities revealed by the excursion:

The Union Steamship Company, in keeping with their past and present far-sighted enterprise, are doing a great-national work, and it is now for our New Zealand (legislative men) Parliament, our financial companies, our enterprising merchant firms, and individuals to follow up this bold step with a view of seeking to secure to this colony the mine of wealth that at the present time is lying comparatively dormant at its very door. Our geographical position indicates clearly that we ought to be the great distributing centre of the Pacific Isles.  

This illuminates the political climate of colonial expansion and the pivotal role played by private shipping companies in connecting New Zealand to the rest of world. The advance of western cultural and economic values in the Pacific Islands was documented in the shipboard newspaper for the second excursion, *The Wairarapa Wilderness*. Edited by the USSC employee Mr. W. F. Wheeler and printed onboard, *The Wairarapa Wilderness* commenced with general information pertaining to the operations of the excursion, including meal-times, shipboard formalities and facilities, including the availability of manned boats “for landing and exploring.” An introduction was provided for each island group on the itinerary, for which the editor compiled a range of facts and statistics on geography, history, economics and race.  

*The Wairarapa Wilderness* introduced the officers and crew and supplied a list of passengers. Among the seventy-nine passengers, forty-eight were based in New Zealand, twenty from the United Kingdom, ten from Australia and one from the United States of America. Of the New Zealanders, the majority hailed from the South Island and over half of them were from Otago, the location of the USSC’s main business offices. The newspaper was also a record of the excursion’s daily activities, especially the shipboard entertainments that “combined to make the time slip away with great rapidity.” The tourism experience promoted and facilitated by the USSC was centred on the vessel and the view from the deck, not from the shore. A “General Amusement Committee” was formed from passengers and crew to coordinate “Concerts, Athletic Sports, and any amusements which may be agreeable to the passengers generally.” Entertainments occupied the passengers during evenings and at times outside of the organised tours facilitated by the USSC. Pre-arranged day-trips and onshore excursions included visits to sites of scenic interest or introduced industry, such as sugar mills and coffee plantations. As all meals and accommodation were provided aboard the

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16 "The Wairarapa’s Cruise in the Pacific."

17 *The Wairarapa Wilderness.*
Wairarapa, the excursionists experienced limited contact with local inhabitants. Indigenous locals, in particular, were distanced from the excursionists and denied the opportunity of providing services and gaining financial reward from organised tourism. This model of organised travel was established by the tourism entrepreneurs Thomas Cook and Sons, and it became the standard expected by the travelling European public. By limiting spontaneity and opportunities for encounter, the tour company could afford a level of protection “ensuring that travellers’ racial and cultural preconceptions went unchallenged.”

The literature produced by the USSC and their passengers perpetuated dominant stereotypes of indigenous peoples. Meeting passengers’ preconceptions of racial difference aided the popularity and commercial success of the venture. As such, written accounts marginalised indigenous peoples as peripheral to the experience facilitated by the USSC. Statistical information supplied in The Wairarapa Wilderness reinforced contemporary Eurocentric perceptions of racial difference, as in the following excerpt from the entry on Fiji:

POPULATION – Whites, 2,500; Natives, and coloured immigrants, about 125,000
RACE – The Fijians are a branch of the Papuan race, and are a fine, well-made people; dark complexion, good physique, and fairly intelligent cast of countenance. Their great pride is their hair, which is remarkably thick and wiry, and naturally becomes a bushy form.

The indigenous population is classified as a discernable type, polarising the European minority against an ethnically diverse “Other.” The introduction also outlines the political status of Fiji, emphasising the advancement of colonial influence upon the indigenous population:

On the arrival of the “Wairarapa” at Suva, the passengers, as might have been expected, wandered about anxious to see the sights of a country so lately admitted to the benefits of civilisation. The questions to be asked were, how far has contact with Europeans affected the natives, and has the native Fijian the capacity to adapt himself to the higher civilization of the British race?

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19 The Wairarapa Wilderness, 10.

20 The Wairarapa Wilderness, 10.
The editor’s narrative of daily events established a contrast between the civilised comfort and protection experienced by the Wairarapa’s passengers and occasional encounters with indigenous life. The infiltration of European values was shown to have enabled a noble and civilised race, within the setting of an exotic paradise, with an emergent infrastructure to support colonial interests. The projection of this perception was essential to USSC’s commercial motivations in both promoting tourism to the region and encouraging trade traffic.\(^{21}\) This balance of familiar comforts with exotic spectacles was a consistent element in the marketing of tourism to the South Seas. USSC’s Australian competitor, Burns Philp & Co. began to operate trade routes through the Pacific in the mid-1880s and tourist cruises from the 1910s.\(^{22}\) Literature produced to support and promote Burns Philp & Co.’s tourist operations were filled with paradoxes pertaining to indigenous life: “The bounds of adventure and the opportunities for dalliance with normlessness were shown to be open but they were also well enough policed to ensure that nothing would run out of control.”\(^{23}\)

Alfred Burton appears in The Wairarapa Wilderness as a regular contributor to the evening entertainments, delivering recitals of poetry and Shakespearean readings. Other than this, his activities as a photographer are not mentioned in the shipboard newspaper, and his attendance among the excursionists was not officially acknowledged. His activity as a photographer is unmentioned in other published accounts, with the exception of one correspondent for the Auckland Star, who noted two group portraits arranged by “Photographer Burton.”\(^{24}\) In the final days of the second trip, Burton acknowledged that although the camera had “done its work” he had no measure of the results of the endeavour which “development only can show.”\(^{25}\) This statement reveals that Burton utilised gelatin dry plates for this project. Dry plates did not require a mobile dark room for on-site preparation, immediate exposure and development, thus allowing for quicker and more flexible travel photography. As the negatives were processed and printed after the return to Dunedin, his fellow excursionists did not see the results of Burton’s photographic activity while aboard the vessel and were thus given little cause to comment on his endeavours. Burton’s description of

\(^{21}\) Steel, 200.


\(^{23}\) Gibson, 33.

\(^{24}\) “The Wairarapa’s Cruise in the Pacific.”

\(^{25}\) Burton Brothers, 19.
himself as “Photographer-in-Chief” may also indicate the presence of other photographers among the excursionists, probably amateurs.26

**The Camera in the Coral Islands**

Burton enjoyed an established relationship with the USSC, having accompanied their steamers to the West Coast Sounds from 1879, first as a passenger and later as shipboard photographer on the annual tourist cruises.27 While Burton’s professional engagement aboard the *Wairarapa* is unclear, the USSC undoubtedly benefited from the photographic firm’s promotion of the series and the excursion. Immediately upon his return to New Zealand and prior to the release of the series, Burton’s diary from the trip was published in the *Otago Daily Times* and *Otago Witness*.28 Printed under the anonymous by-line “Our Correspondent” and with all references to photographic activity edited from the text, this publication favourably publicised the USSC’s service and the popularity of the trip. In September 1884 the photographs were released and the series was previewed in editorials published in Dunedin newspapers.29 These editorials coincided with the publication in the *Otago Daily Times* of the studio’s first advertisement to promote *The Camera in the Coral Islands* (fig. 4-1). Both editorials and the advertisement emphasised the collection of photographs as a cohesive series, clearly stating the series name and addressing the context of the journey.

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26 Burton Brothers, 11-12

27 The studio’s negative register identifies the voyages Burton accompanied to and around the Sounds. Records for the *Tarawera* trip of January 1884 show significantly greater negatives portraying passengers and crew members (numbers 1187-1203 and 2001-2064).


The studio launched *The Camera in the Coral Islands* with a catalogue containing a list of all available negatives in the series, the unabridged text of the photographer’s diary and excerpts from the reviews published in the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star*. The catalogue was not illustrated, so this text provided not only material for interpretation of the series, but also the primary means for selecting photographs. Both newspaper reviews provided strong endorsement for Burton’s photographs and attested to the novelty of this photographic project. The catalogue presented the photographs of the Pacific islands as pioneering, extending the studio’s project of visually acquainting “the untravelled public of New Zealand” with the remote locations Burton reached with his camera.\(^{30}\) Burton’s diary

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\(^{30}\) "The Camera in the Coral Islands."
was later published in the international specialist journal, *The Photographic News*, showing his positioning of *The Camera in the Coral Islands* as being of photographic importance.31

By 1884 photography was not new to the islands of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Missionaries and travellers brought cameras to the islands and professional photographers were resident in Fiji and Samoa from the 1870s.32 Burton was introduced to photographs of the region in 1874, when he met a photographer aboard the private yacht *Jessie Niccol* during its tour of the South Pacific.33 The work of Burton and other early photographers of the South Pacific was informed by the rhetoric surrounding indigenous peoples that circulated in literature, visual culture and science. One passenger aboard the *Wairarapa* noted his motivation to book his passage on the excursion in the “halo of romance” that surrounded the highly publicised South Seas voyages of Captain James Cook.34 Europeans conceptualised, visualised and classified Pacific peoples according to the integrated systems of art and science, in the service of scientific enquiry and imperial expansion.35 The dual operatives of art and science combined to construct and “invent” indigenous people of the Pacific in the popular consciousness of Europe.36 While art functioned as an empirical tool of science, phases of art practice and style came to bear on scientific representation. Neoclassicism informed the visual stereotype of the noble savage, while Romantic art and poetry perpetuated

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33 See Chapter 3.

34 "My Trip to Coral Islands," *Wanganui Herald*, 2 August 1884.


the popular view of the Pacific as an earthly paradise and its inhabitants the unspoiled children of nature.  

Burton’s photographs from the Wairarapa’s 1884 excursions are among the earliest commercially produced photographs of the islands, and his project is pioneering for its association with organised tourism. Prior to consumer photography, tourist photographs were the product of commercial operators and were thus detached from the momentary encounters and events of the individual tourist. Burton’s photographs from this voyage do not document the daily activities and experiences of the excursionists, as might be expected of tourists’ photographs today. Instead, they represent the photographer’s perspective of the highlights of the trip and the ports visited. Written accounts, particularly Burton’s own diary, amplify the subject and context of the photographs to complete a fuller narrative of the journey.

Burton’s diary reveals his personal attitudes towards the experience of the excursion and the places and faces he encountered. Continuing the exploratory mode he established in previous photographic tours, he fosters an aspect of discovery in his writing. Yet he positions himself as a passive agent of the camera’s active response to the abundance of photographic opportunities: “fresh pictures revealed themselves on every hand, and the day was but too short for the camera to secure all it could see.” However, these photographs are not spontaneous snapshots. Burton’s diary reveals that he made conscious choices whether or not to engage the camera, and even whether to carry it with him. Some days ashore were spent “prospecting” in advance for photographic material. For Burton the act of photography was premeditated and carefully considered.

Despite the publication of his diary, Burton’s primary product was photographs, not words. The diary concludes with a disclaimer that distances his account from any official record of the trip. In doing so he aims to deflect attention from his written account towards the photographic:

In the above scribble, “it goes without saying” that there is no special attempt at conveying useful information. It is just what it pretends to be – a hastily written account of what a busy man, rushing through three groups of islands with the camera on his shoulder might be expected to see and hear.

37 Smith, 5, 327-29.
38 Nordström, "Photography of Samoa," 22.
39 Burton Brothers, 10.
40 Burton Brothers, 20.
Burton’s diary offers a personal account of the daily encounters of the tourist party and their interactions with indigenous peoples. He structures the narrative around his photographic activity, supplementing the visual encounters portrayed in the photograph with verbal descriptions of the heat of the climate, the songs and languages of the people and the physical labour in carrying his photographic apparatus from site to site. In this context, Burton’s diary operates as an interpretive device for the photographic image, consolidating individual negatives into a fuller multi-sensory narrative of the journey.

*The Camera in the Coral Islands* series was supported and promoted by a range of other textual material and devices. Each negative was inscribed according to the studio’s established convention (studio name, sequential number and caption) and additionally stamped with the words “Copyright Series.” Prints were then mounted on pre-printed card supports bearing the series name, studio logo and repeated the statement “Copyright Series” (fig. 2-13). This statement of copyright protection was somewhat erroneous, as only twenty-five of the negatives were registered with the Copyright Office. Nevertheless, this assertion of copyright suggests the value the studio vested in this body of work.\(^{41}\)

This background forms the context to Burton’s photographic project aboard the *Wairarapa*. His photographs show people and places previously conceptualised mainly through written accounts, and Burton’s choice of language and description were informed by the established tropes of travel writing and the growing popularity of anthropology, which was in the process of being formalised as an academic discipline.\(^{42}\) For contemporary audiences viewing photographs from *The Camera in the Coral Islands*, text was unavoidable. Photograph captions, catalogue listings, the photographer’s diary and the accounts of other excursionists facilitated stereotypical readings of the subjects depicted and overlaid these photographs with written narratives and agendas beyond the visual information contained in the image. In his dual roles as photographer and diarist, Burton assimilated his photographs into the broader discourses of anthropology and travel literature, while also fulfilling the commercial agendas of both the USSC and the Burton Brothers studio.

*The Catalogue as Classifier: Fiji*

Burton’s photographs from the *Wairarapa* voyage were consolidated as a series in the photographer’s studio in Dunedin. Produced after all negatives were exposed, printed and

\(^{41}\) See Appendix 2 for a list of the negatives registered for Copyright by Burton Brothers.

\(^{42}\) Maxwell, 38.
selected, the catalogue formed the first point of contact for the majority of viewers of these photographs. The published catalogue directs interpretation through a number of devices: the graphic design and layout, the listing of the photographs and the narrative content. Applied to Burton’s photographs from Fiji, the catalogue operates to package photographs collectively as marketable units, appealing to established values and preconceptions. As an interpretative device accompanying the reading of these photographs, the catalogue imposes a narrative upon the images that is not always inherent in its subject or visual content.

The catalogue’s title and cover text emphasise the scope of Burton’s photographic project (fig. 4-2). Printed in Dunedin by the *Otago Daily Times*, the typographic style, cover art and word choice provide the initial frame for viewing these photographs. The main title “The Camera in the Coral Islands” is printed in a calligraphic typeface evocative of non-Western visual culture. Strongly emphasized visually, the title employs alliteration to create a memorable catchphrase to encapsulate Burton’s project. The contrast of “Camera” as an agent of Western technology against the mythical “Coral Islands” conjures a scene of innovation, novelty and adventure. This aspect was recognized by a journalist reviewing the series for the *Otago Daily Times*, who noted that “The above title both looks and sounds novel.”

43  The choice of the word “Camera” instead of “photographer” positions Burton as a passive operator of the photographic apparatus and enhances the allure of objectivity of these photographs. “Coral Islands” is also strategically chosen, evoking remoteness and mystery, in contrast to the more romantic “South Sea Islands” favoured by the USSC in their publicity material for the excursion. This word choice was possibly also informed by H. Stonehewer Cooper’s book on the South Pacific islands, *Coral Lands* published in 1880 and referred to in the account of another passenger on the *Wairarapa*.44

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43  “The Camera in the Coral Islands.”

The main title is followed by the extended subtitle: “A Series of Photographs illustrating the Scenery and the Mode of Life in The Fijis, The Navigator Islands (Samoa), The Friendly Islands (Tonga) taken during the two trips to the South Seas of the Union S.S. Co.’s "Wairarapa," in June and July, 1884.” Differentiation in typeface places emphasis on the island locations, identified by their colloquial names: “The Fijis,” “The Navigator Islands” and “The Friendly Islands.” The subtitle defines the photographer’s intention to “illustrate” the natural scenery and “mode of life” in these islands. This signals a documentary function, not only revealing to viewers the physical appearance of these locations but also appealing to anthropological interest by recording the customary life of the inhabitants. The extended subtitle provides the specific facts of the photographs’ origins; they were taken during the Wairarapa’s double excursion to the “South Seas” in June and July 1884. The USSC is strongly associated with the series both by the subtitle and by advertisements for 1885 cruises to the South Sea Islands and West Coast Sounds on the back cover.
The listing of available photographs is introduced with a statement of available print formats: “Standard or Whole-plate Series – size of print 8 inches by 6. If mounted, size of mount 11 inches by 9.” This is the standard print size available, and the availability of a single negative size indicates the camera carried by Burton on the voyage. A later page in the listing advertises a selection of twenty-four of the images as “slides for the stereoscope.” Burton’s diary notes the production of a “set of stereos,” but it appears his main emphasis was on the series of whole plate negatives from which prints were produced for the album.45 The listing follows the chronological sequence of the excursion and begins with scenes in Fiji. Negatives from both voyages are conflated into one sequence with no differentiation made in the listing. The negatives are arranged in a numerical sequence and are grouped geographically in the order that destinations were visited: “Suva and Neighbourhood,” “Levuka, Ovalau and Neighbourhood,” “Taviuni” and “Mango.”46

The catalogue listing reflects the studio’s standard format with photographs arranged geographically with descriptive emphasis on topographical or built features within each image. The first photographs in the series show “The Colonial Sugar Company’s Mill on the Rewa Rewa, Viti Levu.” As the first destination of both trips, this reflects the tour organised by USSC in visiting sites of industrial progress and trade potential. The catalogue listing for Fiji emphasises evidence of European influence on the islands, identifying harbour infrastructure, government buildings, hospitals, schools, the newspaper office and branches of New Zealand banks. Landscape and natural scenery is also included by such descriptions as “Studies of Tropical Foliage,” “Characteristic Tropical Scenes near Levuka” and “Among the Cocoa Nuts.”

The descriptive information for photographs of Fiji’s human inhabitants is considerably less specific than that provided for built structures or natural scenes. The only Fijian subject identified by name is “Thakombau,” a phonetic spelling of “Cakobau.” This was the honorific name of Ratu Seru Epenisa Cakobau (1815-1883), the former King of Fiji who ceded sovereignty to Queen Victoria in 1874. King Cakobau died the year prior to the Wairarapa’s visit, yet his fame is evident in the references to him in the passengers’ published accounts. He was also a popular subject of celebrity cartes de visite.47 The individual photographed by

45 Burton Brothers, 17.
46 Burton applied a phonetic spelling for “Mago,” and many other locations visited in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Burton’s spellings of locations in original titles, photograph captions and quotations are unchanged in this thesis.
47 d’Ozouville, 60.
Burton was a relative of Cakobau, who acted as the tour party’s guide in Levuka and attended a dinner aboard the *Wairarapa*.\(^{48}\) *The Wairarapa Wilderness* identified him as Sovita Baleinabuli, while a reporter held him to be Cakobau’s son and referred to him by another name:

Ratu Epeli (pronounced Abel) was invited aboard to inspect the steamer. After lunching with us, Photographer Burton took his photograph on the promenade deck. He is a remarkably fine-looking man, and carries a close resemblance to his late father, King Thakombau.\(^{49}\)

The catalogue lists two photographs from this encounter as “Thakombau on board ‘Wairarapa.’” Although learned readers may not have expected Burton’s photograph to show the late King, the ambiguous description is strategic, catering to the cult of celebrity associated with Cakobau’s name. Burton also photographed Cakobau’s *drua*, or double-hulled canoe, identifying the image as “Thakombau’s Canoe – Nai-koro-koro.” The identification and naming principles applied to these photographs demonstrates the studio’s use of descriptive language to market and promote sales, independent of the visual content of the image.

Other references to indigenous Fijians neglect to individuate the subjects of the photographs. Fijian men and women are identified collectively as “Groups of Fijians,” “Fijian Girls” or “Girls bathing.” Others are identified in relation to their geographic location (“Fijian Women, Ndremba”) or by their activity (“Fijian Gathering Cocoa Nuts”). While none of Burton’s Fijian photographs are described as groups of men, groups of women are distinguished and described as “Women” or “Girls.” All of the photographs of “girls” show bare-breasted young women, with no males present. Sequential arrangement of the photographs by negative number was interrupted in order to group together images of similar content. For instance, four images are defined by the catalogue description “Fijian Girls” (numbers 2520, 2521, 2527 and 2528). Examination of these photographs shows they were taken at two separate encounters and reveals contrasting levels of interaction with the photographer (figs. 4-3 to 4-5). The captions inscribed on the negatives differentiate these photographs by the locations at which they were photographed and describe the female subjects in 2527 as “women” rather than the more connotative “girls” assigned to the young women depicted in 2520 and 2521.

\(^{48}\) *The Wairarapa Wilderness*, 14.

\(^{49}\) “The Wairarapa’s Cruise in the Pacific.”
Fig. 4-3. Muir and Moodie, from Burton Brothers negative, “2520 – Fijian Girls – Near Suva,” 1884. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.017414, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Negative 2521 is a slight variation of this image showing a slightly wider view of the same subjects.

Fig. 4-4. Muir and Moodie, from Burton Brothers negative, “2527 Fijian Women – Near Suva,” 1884. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.017417, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
By grouping images collectively with one associated description, human subjects are classified into recognisable and marketable types, irrespective of the identity of the individual or circumstances of the photograph’s making. “Fijian Girls,” for instance, catered to the prurient appeal of bare-breasted exotic females, drawing upon cultural stereotypes of licentious Pacific Island women. Should any reader of the catalogue not detect the euphemism, Burton’s diary text makes explicit the contact with partially-clad females including a description of his encounter with the subjects featured in the above photographs. Coyly articulated in third-person and cloaked in militaristic metaphors, Burton’s description makes clear his manipulation of photographic subjects to secure images of prurient interest:

…just before reaching the summit… they [Burton and party] were confronted by a large body of coolies (female). Their disposition was excellent, but after a brief engagement they were all duly “taken.” The chieftess of the party (a Brahmin, it afterwards appeared) was decorated with silver anklets and wristlets, a ring of about three inches in diameter through one nostril, and change for three English sovereigns in small silver coins disposed over her person. Despite the temptation, no attempt was made to “loot.” This lady, on the approach of the victors, appeared to consider it the correct thing to veil
herself, which she did, partially, with a corner of her robe; but on the Photographer-in-chief imitating her with a corner of his robe (coat-lap), she laughed at the joke, dropped the garment, and let all who would gaze their fill.

The emphasis on the subjects’ ethnicity in catalogue descriptions also presents the women as depersonalised ethnographic types. Adherence to generic types and avoidance of contextual details enabled photographs with non-scientific ethnographic content to be applied to the science of anthropology and the construction of ethnic stereotypes.\(^{50}\) Photography’s arrival in the Pacific coincided with colonial expansion and the growth of anthropology as a scientific discipline and subject of interest for a wider public. Few nineteenth century field anthropologists were photographers, so photographs were acquired from diverse sources and applied to the task of anthropological investigation.\(^{51}\) Photographs testified to assumptions and perceptions of race and culture regardless of the intentions of the photographer and his engagement with his subjects. However, photographers also produced images to meet the needs of anthropological analysis and expectations of racial differentiation. Following the tropes established by earlier forms of graphic representation and written description, photography confirmed imagined stereotypes and reinforced essentialist perceptions of race.\(^{52}\) Regardless of whether it was subconscious or strategically intended, adherence to the established and familiar rhetoric surrounding indigenous peoples ensured the popular reception of photographs of unfamiliar people and places:

Photographers’ perceptions of their subjects were influenced and reinforced by a diverse array of familiar administrative practices, commercial enterprise, artistic and literary traditions, as well as the ongoing scientific investigation and classification of racial types. That the photographers shared attitudes with other colonial structures made these images readily accessible to the imaginative conceits of a broad range of Western viewers.\(^{53}\)

\(^{50}\) Nordström, "Photography of Samoa," 13.


\(^{53}\) Hight and Sampson, 1-2.
The diary confirms Burton’s premeditated and systematic approach to photography and suggests that his objective was to “prospect” for photographic material in accordance with preformed stereotypes:

After taking a panorama of Levuka, pushed on to the villages of Ndremba and Nai-Koro-Koro, to work the ground prospected yesterday. Pictures of native houses and their inhabitants – studies of tropical trees – then more groups – characteristic verdure again. Such was the order of the day, as fast as one could go, until the sun dropped behind the Levuka hills, when back self and bearers drudged to the ship – thirty “exposures” being the day’s “bag.”

Burton clearly engaged in a purposeful expedition to explore and sample the characteristics of the locations visited based on European priorities of aesthetic or scientific interest. The catalogue listing reflects the classification of subjects as generic types, with recurrent emphasis on picturesque scenery, botanical studies, villages and group photographs of indigenous Fijians. The listing also directs attention towards content relevant to current affairs and political or social interest. A number of listings refer to “Groups of ‘Labour’” on sugar plantations on the Rewa Rewa River and at Taviuni. Burton’s use of quotation marks is deliberate and recurrent in his writing. While not entirely consistent, this device is used to denote proper nouns and euphemistic or colloquial terminology, but it can also evoke external meanings. In the context of public concern for labour practices within the South Pacific, Burton’s references to “Labour” assume a critical tone. Negatives are arranged according to catalogue listings, “Groups of ‘Labour.’” “Rewa River, Groups of ‘Wairarapa’s’ Passengers and ‘Labour’” and “‘In the Sugar Field Muster of ‘Labour.’” Classifying these men as “Labour” induces the reader to question the basis of their employment and implies that the workers are indentured labourers. Against the popular assumption of indentured labour as quasi-slavery this evokes an element of moral questioning. Collective identification also depersonalises the workers as individuals, particularly when photographed in the company of passengers and crew from the Wairarapa (fig. 4-6).

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54 Burton Brothers, 11.

55 “Report of the Western Pacific Commission,” Star (Christchurch), 23 April 1884, 3; "Steam Yachting in the Pacific: Cruise of the Wairarapa."
The negative caption for this photograph is a point of distinction. Photographs that include passengers and crew from the Wairarapa consistently include a location and a specific date. No other captions include a date reference, indicating that these portraits were formatted as a record of the journey and event and were intended for sale as souvenirs. Without the date imbedded in the negative, other prints were allowed greater appeal, distribution and longevity.

**Captions and Containment: Samoa**

Captions inscribed on negatives operate independently of the catalogue listing to facilitate interpretation of photographs by identifying the subject or context of the image. This function is not always neutral as the caption can mediate and direct the viewer’s response. The caption may extend the information offered by the visual content of the image, but it also imposes an external narrative upon the photograph or anchors an ideological meaning through language. Burton Brothers consistently employed imbedded captions to contextualise or direct photographic meaning, and the function and purpose of this is apparent in *The Camera in the Coral Islands*. An analysis of the captions assigned to individual photographs within this series, in particular the photographs taken in Samoa, demonstrates the function of captions to facilitate the interpretation of these photographs in accordance with external agendas.
As with the catalogue listing, captions – or titles – serve to classify subjects as predetermined types: for example “Samoan Girls,” “Samoan Women” or “Samoan Village.” In her survey of early commercial photography in Samoa, Alison Devine Nordström identified a trend in the use of captions among studios and practitioners including Burton, Josiah Martin of Auckland and Sydney-based commercial photographers Kerry & Co, finding “that the images intended for mass-market sales tended to reiterate popular conceptions of the South Seas in a shorthand of simplistic captions.” Captions reveal an adherence to popular themes of partially-clad dusky maidens, brave warriors and regal persons in the commercial photography trade. Burton’s captions are less emphatic in their appeal to popular stereotypes than the descriptions supplied in the catalogue. For instance, photographs captioned “Samoan Girls,” “Samoan Women” or “Samoan Village” are listed in the catalogue within the more emotive definition “Samoan Charmers.”

Compared with other textual devices, the inscribed caption can operate as a more neutral linguistic device. Negative number 2529 shows two bare-breasted Samoan women photographed outside a fale (house) with a young boy looking on from inside the fale (fig. 4-7). The studio’s negative register describes this image among a sequence of negatives entitled “Near Apia: Native Village” and differentiates this negative as “2 girls.” The published catalogue listing includes this negative among the group “Samoan Charmers,” while the inscribed negative caption corresponds with the register: “Samoan Village – Near Apia.” The description in the negative register reveals the visual emphasis perceived by the studio: the negative shows a “native” habitat with two young women. The catalogue as a device to promote and sell the photographs defines the subject as “Charmers” inferring the allure and attractiveness of the female subjects. The caption, however, contains no specific reference to the image content and locates the scene geographically, although non-specifically, as “Near Apia.” The two women are not only anonymous, but the purpose and the photographer’s intended meaning for this photograph is left coyly unspoken.


57 Burton Bros. Catalogue of Views, microfilm, 10322, Hocken Collections (original held at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa).
The exclusion of visible image content from textual definitions is notably recurrent in photographic captions for *The Camera in the Coral Islands*. Viewed according to the intended mode of presentation – mounted on a card support that identifies the individual print as a component of the broader series – captions serve mainly to locate the image within the series and journey. By anchoring the subject geographically, human subjects are defined by their surroundings and denied any autonomy to move beyond the confines of the image area. In contrast to the photographer, who captures portraits as he freely moves from place to place, the indigenous subjects are frozen within a particular moment and place. For example, the women encountered by Burton at the “Samoan Village – Near Apia” become tokens of his journey and representative of the tourist experience, rather than autonomous individuals pausing briefly in their day’s activity to humour a passing tourist.

Nevertheless, Burton’s photographs of the indigenous people of Samoa show a greater level of engagement with human subjects than his photographs taken in Fiji. Because *Wairarapa*’s first excursion in June 1884 did not disembark at Samoa and Tonga, Fiji received uninterrupted attention from Burton and the development of his photographic style for this project can be seen in the photographs taken there. Initially, his photographs of both
tourist groups and locals are composed as group portraits, drawing upon his background in studio photography (for example, fig. 4-6). Other photographs show figures supplementing landscape scenes with the landscape content emphasised in the image caption, if not the composition (fig. 4-5). Burton’s photographs in Samoa, by comparison, suggest a greater level of spontaneity and ease with the local inhabitants, seen in the more informal compositional arrangements and by the narrative relayed through image captions.

A number of the captions accompanying Burton’s Samoan photographs contain references to specific encounters and occurrences, thus operating as mementoes for the excursionists and amusing travel anecdotes for a general audience. In these instances the narrative offered by the catalogue amplifies the content of photographs and deciphers the story for the uninitiated. Two photographs are captioned Samoan “‘Flends’ – Pango Pango” (figs. 4-8 and 4-9). A third from this encounter is not listed in the catalogue, but is included in the studio’s sample book and negative register and marked “Private.” Recurring in the catalogue listing and studio negative, “Flend” is Burton’s rendering of the Samoan pronunciation of “friend.” While the photograph depicts the partnering of a group of Wairarapa’s male passengers with Samoan women, the complicity of the female subjects is unclear. This element of satire elicited by the caption further complicates this relationship and invites further investigation.
Burton’s diary describes with discernible amusement the excursionists’ introduction to the “flend” system upon their arrival at Pago Pago, a port thought to possess strategic commercial and political importance as a rare deep water natural harbour within the Pacific islands:

Here we found flourishing the “flend” system, of which most of us have read in books of South Sea travel. The arrangement is very simple. The inhabitants flock down to the landing place to meet the visitors, and by a process of “elective affinity,” each one attaches him or herself to one of the strangers with the naive query – “You be my flend?” Should the answer be favourable, the bond is supposed to continue as long as the ship stays. Many little services are assiduously rendered, and then at parting the propriety of a present in return is delicately suggested.  

58 Burton Brothers, 14.
Burton’s reference to prior knowledge of the “‘flend’ system” through travel literature implies an element of fantasy in his observation of this practice. While the Samoan population may have exhibited entrepreneurial intelligence in seeking financial benefit from foreign visitors to the port, the “‘flend’ system” as portrayed here appears a construct of European thought. Implicit in Burton’s commentary is an expectation that the services rendered were of a sexual nature. He arranged two “flends” for himself; a male, William, serving as “beast of burden,” and an unnamed female whom Burton employed as photographer’s model. He emphasised the practical nature of this engagement and his deviation from the norm by selecting a “flend” of each sex. Both abandoned their duties in the course of the day; his female “flend” grew weary of her role as model while William was unwilling to travel through the territory of a neighbouring tribe. Burton’s inclusion of these statements shows his acceptance of the level of agency retained by these individuals and their ultimate control of the relationship.

By giving this system of interaction a name, albeit comical, and citing references to it in “books of South Sea travel,” Burton institutionalises the “‘flend’ system” as an expected aspect of travel in the Pacific. This is not reflected in The Wairarapa Wilderness’ account of Pago Pago, which does not mention the “‘flend’ system” by any name and describes the indigenous people as “disappointing” compared with Fijians, and “as bad beggars as one would expect to find in a large city.”59 Burton’s reference to the “‘flend’ system” fuels the stereotype of Pacific Island women as sexually liberated and available. His diary describes this incident as a spontaneous meeting of Samoan women and male excursionists:

The photographic party were now arrested by a request to turn aside and take a group who were ready posed in a beautiful little dell. Here were a number of the jeunesse dorée of the “Wairarapa” paired off with the prettiest maidens of the country. The centre of the picture was occupied by a popular globe-trotter and his “flend,” the fair Faaolatana, a young lady of the highest social standing in the neighborhood; while others were arranged around in positions of the most delicious abandon. It was evident that the sensuous influence of the climate and the other surroundings was beginning to tell upon the impressible visitors.60

Burton attempted to distance himself from the scene, claiming that the photographs were made by request and that the group were “ready posed.” This account was edited in the version of his diary published in the Otago Daily Times and Otago Witness. No mention was made of this encounter and the “flend” system is referred to as the “feud” system, indicating

59 The Wairarapa Wilderness, 17.

60 Burton Brothers, 15.
that the matter was considered indecorous among polite Dunedin society. The *Otago Daily Times* review of *The Camera in the Coral Islands* also omitted reference to this episode, although it was expressed in full detail in the publication of Burton’s diary in *The Photographic News*. However, the *Otago Daily Times* reviewer pondered if the subjects of Burton’s photographs of Samoa fully comprehended the process of being photographed or were “willing to lend it their passive assistance.” This writer was perhaps unwittingly perceptive in this observation. While Burton repeatedly attested to his passive engagement with the photographic process, he possessed full control over the camera, if not his subject. The individuals were free to walk away from the photographic encounter – as occurred with Burton’s unwilling female “flend” – but once “captured” their images and personae were constrained by the photographer’s choices in presentation and delivery.

Burton enticed the reader of his catalogue with an extended titillating account, attempting to enliven his photographs with a narrative of intimacy and recklessness. He also sought to appease the moral compromise of this arrangement by excusing the “impressible” men for their behaviour. Burton suggested they were seduced by these young women and “no-one indeed could be starched and square-toed among the children of nature who frolicked around.” This is belied by his photographs of the encounter, which fail to capture the air of relaxation and reckless abandon that he describes in his diary. The women appear tense and uncomfortable and exhibit no affection to the men, who are shown initiating varying levels of physical contact with them. The circumstances of this encounter remain ambiguous, but Burton’s text attempts to mould these photographs to preconceptions of Pacific Island women as licentious and seductive. While the Samoan women may possess a level of agency in their interaction with the excursionists, their representation is controlled by the photographer.

In comparison to Burton’s accounts from the *Wairarapa*’s dual excursion to Fiji, his diary entries for Samoa are mainly focussed on interactions with the locals. The Samoan section concludes with a passage relating to a young woman who infatuated a number of the male excursionists and was a willing subject for a series of photographs. She is represented in photographic captions as “The Fair ‘Sauimatani,’” a rare instance in which Burton identified a female subject by her name (figs. 4-10 and 4-11). He referred to her by this name in his diary, dubbing her “the beauty with the languishing eyes” for her “dreamy eyes fringed with the


62 "The Camera in the Coral Islands."

63 Burton Brothers, 15.
longest lashes (her admirers said) ever seen.” For this she was judged “Belle of the Coral Islands” by Burton and her admirers. Analysing this photograph, the Samoan New Zealand poet Tusiata Avia was immediately drawn to her name, which translates from Samoan as “Come with the man” or alternatively “Come away from the man.” Burton’s reference to her name in quotation marks may indicate that this is a nickname assigned to her by the excursionists in their limited comprehension of Samoan, rather than her given name.

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Fig. 4-10. “2668 – Pango Pango – Samoa – The Fair ‘Sauimatani,’” 1884. Albumen whole plate print. PA1-f-178-13-1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

Fig. 4-11. Detail showing caption inscription.

While Burton’s diary offers a lengthy description of Sauimatani’s physical attractiveness, including a three-line poem, little other information is provided regarding her identity and the circumstances of this photograph. The encounter with Sauimatani appears to have been a spontaneous meeting; two male excursionists observed her paddling in Pago Pago Harbour and persuaded her to be photographed. Two photographs are described in the published catalogue as “The Fair Sauimatani (the ‘Samoan Beauty with the Languishing

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Eyes’),” These photographs both show her alone in her canoe, wearing a man’s watch and belcher chain as a necklace. Two additional negatives, not listed in the catalogue, show Sauimatani with male excursionists. The studio’s negative register designates these as private negatives and identifies the male subjects as “Popham” and “Bloomfield,” presumably the excursionists that vied for her affection. The portrait with F. A. L. Popham, an English “globetrotter” cannot be located; the print from this negative is pasted over with another print in the sample book for this series held at the Wellington City Archives. The other portrait remains in circulation, showing Sauimatani with either G. R. or L. R. Bloomfield, both from Auckland (fig. 4-12). Photographed in the convention of a marital portrait – the female standing behind the seated male – Sauimatani exhibits greater discernable affection than the “flends,” but as a commissioned portrait for the excursionists, she is reduced to an exotic souvenir in the form of a photograph.

Fig. 4-12. “[2670] ‘Sauimatani’ and Bloomfield. Private Neg.,” 1884. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.017669, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

The photographic encounter with Sauimatani poses many questions, and the coyness of Burton’s narration evades further analysis. Avia considered Sauimatani’s apparent behaviour unusual in the context of Samoan custom and culture: “Young Samoan women did not (and
do not) just go paddling off by themselves to see strange Palagi men – not without serious consequences.” The purpose of Burton’s discussion was not to provide an insight into the life of a young woman in nineteenth century Samoa – as researchers today may seek to glean from a photograph such as this – but to promote Samoa as an island of considerable beauty and to mark his achievement for “capturing” the woman deemed to be the “Belle of the Coral Islands.” His entry on Samoa concludes with a sad postscript to this tale:

The steamer's whistle warned us that time was up. We hurried on board just in time to get half-a-dozen snap shots at the fleet of canoes of all sizes, full of natives, that crowded round the ship, and then up came the anchor and we were soon fast leaving Pango Pango behind, and bidding good-bye to Samoa and the Samoans. Almost the last thing noted was a little canoe a long way astern, carrying a single person waving farewells with a handkerchief to someone on board the steamer. A binocular told that this was “the beauty with the languishing eyes.”

In the narrative of the Wairarapa’s voyage, Sauimatani exists as a souvenir and a metonymical representation of the mythologized “dusky maiden.” In photographic form, she is aestheticised and objectified as a trophy of the tourists’ encounter. Her personal agency in the encounter is eviscerated by the textual markers that define her and constrain her to the narrative of the voyage, as told by Burton.

**Meta-linguistic Devices: Tonga**

Burton’s photographs of Samoa present a complicated relationship between the photographer and his subjects. His diary supports and elucidates the information supplied in photographic captions to shape the reception of subjects in terms of established stereotypes. His control over this system of representation was confounded by the people of Tonga, who adhered more closely to Burton’s assumptions of Western civilisation and thus resisted the control exerted by his textual narrative and the limitation of their representation to predetermined stereotypes. He remained photographically productive, taking fifty-six negatives in Tonga, compared to sixty-two in Samoa, but the text lost potency and Burton reverted to familiar visual devices to portray his experience.

His first photographs of Tonga show the harbour at Neiafu on the island of Vava’u, taken from the shore looking towards the Wairarapa. Next are photographs showing the interior and exterior of the Wesleyan Church, a wide-angle view of the Royal Residence at Neiafu (captioned “The King’s Palace”) and portraits of Tongan “notables” at the palace. By

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65 Avia, n.p.

66 Burton Brothers, 16.
comparison with Burton’s representation of Fiji and Samoa, these first images place emphasis on the European and missionary influence on Tonga and its people.

His diary entry for Tonga begins with an account of protracted negotiations with port authorities to allow the passengers to disembark at Neiafu. Entry was eventually allowed, and that afternoon a party of excursionists were taken for a tour of the Coral Cave, described in the *Wairarapa Wilderness* as Ana-uku or diving cave, located at the entrance to the harbour. Burton provides an account of the cave trip in an extended quotation from travel writer Constance Frederica Gordon Cumming (1837-1924), who toured the Pacific in the early 1880s and visited a cave on the island. Whether this is the same cave is questionable, as what Gordon Cumming exclaims as “truly exquisite” and a “scene of dream-like loveliness,” *The Wairarapa Wilderness* describes as “nothing remarkable” and “not interesting.” Burton concedes some exaggeration in Gordon Cumming’s “capital bit of word-painting,” but his deference to her account is revealing; there are no negatives from this excursion, as the cave was presumably too dark to allow photography.

The following day was spent in the “orange groves” of Neiafu, where Burton observed a distinction in Tongan behaviour and mode of life in comparison to the people of Samoan and Fiji:

Both houses and people presented a marked difference from Samoan houses and people. Whereas the houses in Samoa are just a roof on pillars, with a series of Venetian-like screens, which can be let down or raised so as to exclude or admit light or air at will, – the Tongan dwellings are similar to the Fijian, and have permanent walls, with two or perhaps three doors. The characteristic of the people which strikes the stranger at once as varying from that of the other two groups is the greater prudery or perhaps modesty of the women. While the Fijian and Samoan women – for the most part – seemed to look upon the upper garment as one to be either worn or thrown off – especially when the latter course was suggested for aesthetic reasons – the Tongan women seemed to regard a wish that they should do likewise as somewhat of a liberty.

Unlike Fiji and Samoa, Tonga retained political and economic independence. In 1875 a constitutional monarchy was formed under King George Tupou I, who appointed his long-time aide, former missionary Reverend Shirley Baker to the role of Prime Minister in 1880. The power of traditional chiefs was limited and reforms were initiated to encourage individuals to cultivate cash-crops on Tongan soil. Tupou’s nationalist reforms were enacted not only to promote internal unity and independence, but to establish Tonga as a modern and

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67 *The Wairarapa Wilderness*, 27 and 29.

68 Burton Brothers, 17.
developed territory on the world stage. European commercial ambitions in the region were acknowledged, but controlled by Tongan government restrictions. Treaties were negotiated with Germany in 1876 and Britain in 1879 that granted use of Tonga’s harbour in exchange for recognition of Tongan nationhood.69

The “prudery” of Tonga’s women observed by Burton is an indication of the assimilation of European cultural values among Tongan people, reflected in their manner and dress. His observation also reveals the photographer’s intervention in persuading Fijian and Samoan subjects to expose their breasts, a suggestion that affronted the women encountered in Tonga. The greater agency of the Tongan women triggered a shift in Burton’s stylistic approach and his collection of negatives shows less inclination to make the objectification of unidentified indigenous subjects the primary focus of his compositions. To ensure broad market appeal, a small number of negatives direct the viewers’ attention to the physical attractiveness of the Tongan women: “A Tongan Belle,” “Tongan Beauties,” “Dusky Charmers of Tongatabu.” However, these all show women fully clothed and are fewer in number than similar material from Fiji and Samoa, with only seven negatives isolated in the catalogue listing as “The Dusky Beauties of Tonga.”

Instead, Burton reverts to portrait conventions, photographing individuals in expected poses with some attempt to convey aspects of their character. One of the first photographs taken in Neiafu shows a German resident with his Tongan wife, identified in the studio’s negative register as “Mr and Mrs Kronfeld (fig. 4-13).” Though not named in the caption or the catalogue listing, the composition of this portrait and his representation of Mrs Kronfeld presents a contrast to earlier treatments of indigenous subjects. The caption, “Neiafu – From Mokotu – Vavau,” locates the couple geographically and creates the impression that the picket fence visible to the left in the image is that of their home. They occupy only the lower-left quadrant of the image and serve to “introduce” the view beyond, as though conveying some authority or ownership over the territory. Both are dressed elegantly in European attire and Mrs Kronfeld is shown seated on a cane rocking chair, an incongruous piece of furniture on the road-side setting, but operative as a studio prop to show her as demure and civilized. The composition is reminiscent of Thomas Gainsborough’s double portrait Mr and Mrs Andrews (c. 1750).70 The visual correlation – probably not unknown to Burton and his

69 Campbell, 104.

70 Oil on canvas, 698 x 1194 mm, The National Gallery, London.
audience – brings with it the associations and meanings of that portrait, and Mr and Mrs Kronfeld are cast as the wealthy landowners surveying their estate.71

The King’s Neiafu residence is visible in the distant right of this image, and it is to there that Burton next escorts the viewer. King George Tupou I is photographed in the grounds of his house, against the backdrop of the verandah (fig. 4-14). Again, studio portraiture conventions are followed, and Tupou is photographed standing on a mat, with the standard props of a bent-wood chair and a cane. His helmet is removed and is placed on the chair, but he wears leather gloves, frock-coat and tie. Without the background imagery, this forms a visual equivalent to typical compositions of carte de visite and cabinet card portraits. The caption fully identifies the sitter, but also attests to some achievement in securing this portrait: “King George of Tonga (At 86).” The Wairarapa Wilderness contains mention that Tupou “was too old to see us, as he would like to have done,” hence Burton’s Royal audience was an

unexpected feat. In light of Tupou’s frailty, the chair and cane, while operating as props, also undoubtedly provided practical utility in assisting him to pose for the picture.

![Fig. 4-14. “2686, King George of Tonga (At 86),” 1884. Albumen whole plate print. AM004-2-1, Wellington City Archives.]

While a valuable addition to Burton’s stock of celebrity portraits, this portrait session also presented considerable benefit to the King. He is shown as majesterial and in the trappings of a smart English gentleman. This method is further applied to a group portrait of Tongan government officials, photographed in a negative entitled “Tongan Notables,” signifying that these are men of evident importance (fig. 4-15). Arranged in the same location as that for Tupou, all are clearly identified, their names inscribed beneath their feet in the photographic negative. Both European and Tongan subjects, all receive equal treatment in the inscription. An awkward composition, with Junia at the far right hand side almost excluded from the frame, the subjects are positioned according to their seniority with Premier Baker and King Tupou’s son Prince Wellington in the centre. J. Afu, the only subject whose title is

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72 The Wairarapa Wilderness, 27.
not included, is lower ranked as the Chief Clerk of the Finance Department and stands behind the other figures.

Fig. 4-15. “2687, Tongan Notables: Rev. J B Watkin (Supt. Of Vavau circuit), Fotofili (Gov. of Niufoou), J. Afu, Rev. S Baker (Premier), Prince Wellington (Gov. of Vavau) Junia (Min. of Finance),” 1884. Albumen whole plate print. 1/2-082388-F, Alexander Turnbull Library.

Tongan officials clearly used photography for their own political ends. They are portrayed as important, organised and with a clearly defined hierarchy, testifying to their political independence and constitutional strength. Indigenous subjects are portrayed as adhering to models of European officialdom, and not according to the stereotypes of anthropology or travel art and literature. The political motivation for these portrait sessions is echoed in Burton’s diary in which he described an after dinner speech delivered by Baker aboard the Wairarapa. Baker proclaimed the economic health of the state and credited his own work in achieving this. In response to the prospect of Tonga’s annexation to New Zealand, Baker recited his motto: “Tonga for the Tongans.” He declared Tonga’s resistance to cede administrative control to any colonial power, but stated the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with Great Britain and the colonies, especially Auckland. Baker was also aware of the trade benefits presented by an alliance with the Union Steam Ship Company and increased visitation to Tongan ports.

73 Burton Brothers, 17.
At Nukualofa, the Tongan capital, Burton returned to this format, photographing Tupou’s daughter Princess Salote Mafileo and grand-daughter Princess Anaziene on the verandah of the Royal Palace. Accompanying them in the photograph is Ji’aogi Fatafehi, the Governor of Ha’apai. As before, their names are inscribed directly into the negative, and all are defined by their role and/or relationship to the King. Most other photographs taken on the islands of Vava’u and Tongatapu show groups of Tongans outside houses, churches or schools, while photographs taken in villages generally show mixed family groups and rarely female subjects in isolation. Alongside topographical views, these emphasise the material progress of Tonga and the development of familiar European infrastructure with the comfortable assimilation of the indigenous population to Western systems of spirituality, education and commerce.

The positioning of unidentified and unacknowledged human subjects within topographical scenes recurs in Burton’s Tongan series. As spectator figures, individuals are photographed with their back to the camera and are shown enjoying the view captured by the camera. A popular device in Romantic painting, and seen in early topographical paintings of New Zealand, spectator figures function as guides or narrators for the viewer, instructing where one should look and humanising a wilderness landscape scene. Four negatives from Tonga feature male and female spectator figures looking towards inland and coastal views (fig. 4-16). The negative caption and catalogue listings contain no mention of the figures; instead, they anchor the image geographically. This device was employed sparingly in Fiji and Samoa – twice in Mago (2603, 2611), once in Apia (2640) and once in Pago Pago harbour (2656). With the exception of the image from Apia, these negatives all show a male spectator figure looking towards the Wairarapa at anchor in the distance; a metaphorical statement announcing the arrival of European presence with Burton’s camera capturing the final moments of customary life.


75 Frances Steel observed that one image from Mago shows a group of newly recruited labour from New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands. Like Burton, they were recent arrivals and foreign to the land. Steel, 199.
In contrast, the spectator figures from Tonga not only guide but control the view, indicating where the viewer is permitted to look. Perhaps unintended by Burton, the spectators exert control over the view and the territory they occupy, reflecting the sense of independence and power over the photographic process as seen in his portraits of Tongan notables. Furthermore, as the viewer’s stand-in they possess equal status and are not themselves the object of the scene, as directed by the geographical caption. The lack of identifying information in the caption may reduce the figure to their geographical association, but conversely, this shows no attempt by Burton to apply a linguistic level of interpretation to the figure, allowing them to retain their individuality and autonomy.

The changing application of Burton’s linguistic tools to different subjects reveals the erosion of his control in cohering human subjects to recognisable stereotypes. The power of text to manipulate polysemic images into singular and acceptable readings was undermined by subjects who possessed sufficient agency to control their own representation. Text has also influenced the continued reception of this series and its shifting function through the fields of commerce, tourism and anthropology. Although Burton’s primary consideration undoubtedly lay in the commercial potential for these views and in his service as photographer to the

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Fig. 4-16. “2705 - Nukualofa - Tongatabu,” 1884. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.017500, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
Union Steam Ship Company, *The Camera in the Coral Islands* has been conceptualised by scholars and curators as a study in anthropology.

**“Touring the Pacific through a Colonial Lens”: Twenty-first Century Perspectives**

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, *The Camera in the Coral Islands* continues to be overlaid with meanings imposed by external texts. Among the photographic series released by the studio, this series has received the most rigorous and sustained attention. As a discrete body of 230 photographs with a clearly defined scope in the passage of time and subject matter, *The Camera in the Coral Islands* is concise and readily isolated for study. Today, the catalogue persists as an interpretive accompaniment to these photographs and can be accessed online as a digital transcript. The Pacific Island subject matter has garnered these photographs considerable attention from post-colonial scholars and cultural historians. The continued reception and reassessment of *The Camera in the Coral Islands* by recent authors interrogates these photographs in the colonial context of their making and considers the cultural meanings derived from this series. However, a reading of this scholarship against an understanding of the studio’s *modus operandi* exposes some contradictions and omissions.

In 1988 the Museum of Ethnology, Rotterdam, presented an exhibition of Burton Brothers photographs held in their collection, acquired on a trip to New Zealand in 1889 by the donor G. Verschuur. The accompanying exhibition catalogue contains a chapter on *The Camera in the Coral Islands* written by museum curator Paul Faber. His interpretation was derived from the photographer’s diary, published histories of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga and consultation with Hardwicke Knight. Faber positioned Burton’s photographic practice within

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76*Innocents Abroad: Touring the Pacific through a Colonial Lens*; Paul Faber, "Alfred Burton on Fiji, Samoa and Tonga," in *Burton Brothers: Fotografen in Nieuw-Zeeland (Photographers in New Zealand)*; Michael Hayes, "Photography and the Emergence of the Pacific Cruise: Rethinking the Representational Crisis in Colonial Photography," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*; Maxwell; Nordström, "Early Photography in Samoa"; Alison Devine Nordström, "Voyages (Per)formed: Photography and Tourism in the Gilded Age" (PhD, The Union Institute, 2001); *Picturing Paradise; Portraits of Oceania: 27 August - 26 October 1997*, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997).

77*Burton Brothers.*, *The Camera in the Coral Islands: A Series of Photographs Illustrating the Scenery and the Mode of Life in the Fijis, the Navigator Islands (Samoa), the Friendly Islands (Tonga) Taken During the Two Trips to the South Seas of the Union S.S. Co.'s "Wairarapa", in June and July, 1884* (Wellington: New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2005). http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-BurCame.html (accessed 25 June 2006).

78Faber.
the framework of ethnology and upholds *The Camera in the Coral Islands* as representative of Burton’s conscious shift towards ethnographic photography.

Faber illustrated his essay with photographs from the series, plus a number of photographs known to be taken neither by Alfred Burton nor by photographers employed by his firm. These include negatives that the studio’s negative register acknowledges as coming from the studio of E. W. Henderson. Among these are examples that adhere most closely to the conventional anthropological trope – frontal oriented full-length portraits against a blank studio backdrop. Although the curators acknowledge the uncertain authorship of some of these photographs, the inclusion of these in the catalogue illustrations and text complicates the character of Burton’s series and his attitude towards indigenous subjects.

Faber’s acceptance of Burton’s photographs as simultaneously fulfilling commercial and documentary functions presents another problem. As a tool of science, photography’s perceived ability to record “truth” was akin to the scientific pursuit of empiricism and was essential to its application to anthropological investigation. His discussion of Burton’s photographs against the context of the islands’ political and economic history extends the documentary function to that of illustrating and verifying historical fact. While these photographs may adequately serve this purpose, his suggestion that Burton was sympathetic to his indigenous subjects is compromised by the commercial agenda that underlined the production of these photographs. Like his photographs of remote regions of New Zealand, Burton’s photographic encounter of the islands is constrained by logistical factors of time and physical access. Burton and his fellow excursionists only visited harbour towns on both tours and did not venture into the islands’ interiors. Consequently, Western presence permeates the majority of scenes depicted, reflecting an agenda to portray the locations visited not for the indigenous lifeways of the inhabitants, but as civilised sites awaiting expansion and commercial development. Indeed, the photographic act is of itself an exponent agent of Western infiltration. What is documented is not a record of an indigenous culture, but the photographer’s interaction with these individuals and his chosen method of representing them as metonyms of their culture and as suitable subject for commercial photography.

Nordström recognised this contradiction in her analysis of Burton’s photographs in the broader context of colonial photography in Samoa. Acknowledging Burton’s mass-market approach and clear commercial emphasis, she positioned his photographs within the growing market for exoticised photographs of Pacific peoples. Nordström foregrounded the context of

79 Maxwell, 11.

80 Nordström, "Photography of Samoa,” 22-24
production, reading these photographs not for their information content but as “artifacts of Western culture.”\textsuperscript{81} However, she concurred with Faber in asserting that these photographs fulfil a documentary function in presenting the westernisation of the Pacific peoples with little attempt to “pretify or romanticize”.\textsuperscript{82} While Burton may have sought to present the available infrastructure existent in the Pacific in 1884, his diary and other textual accompaniment reveal his manipulation of the subjects depicted. He adhered to the stereotypes of indigenous peoples established by travel literature and the popular imagination and shaped his subjects according to commercial precepts. Nordström and Faber’s arguments are both formed with minimal reference to surrounding textual materials and without consideration of Burton’s motivations in a speculative project to acquire commercially appealing photographs and in association with the agenda of the USSC.

Michael Hayes confronted this omission in his discussion of \textit{The Camera in the Coral Islands} within the context of the Pacific tourist cruise.\textsuperscript{83} Positioning tourism as an extension of colonialism, the camera becomes an operative of power in the relationship between photographer and subject.\textsuperscript{84} The act of photography clearly differentiates the viewing culture and the “Other,” but by creating and perpetuating popular stereotypes, images of the unknown become familiar. This process of confirming stereotypes served the USSC by making the strange and remote locations appear safe and accessible. However, Hayes aligns Burton closely with the USSC and the tourist experience and does not consider the impact of Burton’s role as a commercial photographer upon the portrayal of indigenous subjects. The photographer was probably provided subsidised passage in exchange for a series of photographs that promoted travel to the Pacific. While undoubtedly sympathetic to the imperatives of the USSC, Burton did not necessarily share them entirely, and the photographs were promoted and circulated independently of the voyage. Burton’s experience as an independent practitioner resulted in the production of photographs beyond that required for the USSC’s publicity, some of which erode the power relationship attested to in Hayes’ model.

An alternative strand of scholarship attests to a higher level of agency for indigenous subjects than allowed by a theory supporting the dominant power relationship possessed by a

\textsuperscript{81} Nordström, "Photography of Samoa," 12.

\textsuperscript{82} Nordström, "Photography of Samoa," 23.

\textsuperscript{83} Hayes.

\textsuperscript{84} Hayes, 172-73.
photographer over their subject. The conceptualisation of indigenous cultures within a framework favouring Western attitudes and responses has been challenged by indigenous scholars who seek to articulate an indigenous voice. Nicholas Thomas recognised a denial of plurality in the cultural theory born of the long legacy of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), perpetuating the polarisation of coloniser and colonised and homogenising characteristics of each culture:

The tendency is to insist upon the will to dominate in imperial culture, science and vision without investigating the ways in which the apparatuses of colonialism and modernity have been compromised locally. Rather than explore the plurality of distinct histories on the margins of colonialism and indeed beyond it, the tendency is to reintroduce a notion of the inscrutability of the other, as an unknowable alterity beyond discourse. If, however, indigenous traditions are alluded to, but not discussed and engaged with, the most generalized and stereotypic images of tribal art and culture are likely to be sustained.85

Thomas and his co-editor Diane Losche advocate reading texts – including visual images – “against the grain” to recover the experience of indigenous subjects in the interactions described in written and visual representations.86 Burton’s diary text and the accounts of others aboard the voyage reveal a range of responses to his photographic project and the presence of the excursionists. The restrictive caption information and catalogue listing demonstrate Burton’s will to homogenise the people of these islands into recognisable stereotypes and to cohere to the parameters and narrative of the series.

The 2006 exhibition *Innocents Abroad: Touring the Pacific through a Colonial Lens* employed these devices to access a counter-narrative derived from indigenous voices. Curated by Brett Mason, this touring exhibition was a joint project of the Museum of Wellington City and Sea and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. It featured photographs sourced from these institutions and collections throughout New Zealand. *The Camera in the Coral Islands* series was examined as a site of encounter between coloniser and colonised and as a source of “insight into how a Victorian man viewed the Pacific islands and its people.”87 The exhibition title, *Innocents Abroad*, was extracted from the *Otago Daily Times* review of *The Camera in the Coral Islands* series, itself a reference to Mark Twain’s novel of the same


86 Thomas, 8.

name. The “Innocents Abroad” are not, as one might assume, the indigenous inhabitants of the Pacific, but the European travellers. In the manner of Twain’s satirical account of the cruise of a group of Americans to the Mediterranean, the writer figures the Wairarapa’s “Innocents Abroad” as out of place in indigenous company, as portrayed in Burton’s photographs:

Very cool and comfortable they look in loose, white raiment, armed with the natural defensive weapons of the tropical tourist – the helmet and the umbrella. Very strange, too, does it seem European ladies and gentlemen standing complacently side by side with the dusky sons and daughters of the soil.  

In this exhibition, the photographs were interpreted and presented according to Burton’s accompanying text, curatorial narration and the responses of twenty-first century Pacific commentators. Photograph titles were transcribed from the inscriptions on original photographs or, if unavailable, the title assigned in the studio’s catalogue listing was applied. This approach gave priority to the photographer’s authorial voice as a means of determining the intended interpretation. Hence, Burton’s writing and contemporary texts were used as a means of recovering the context of production and prevailing attitudes. While this approach affirms the dominance of textual accompaniment over the reading of photographs, the insertion of the interpretations of the curator and current commentators compromised the exhibition’s aim “to observe a Victorian way of thinking about these islands” through Burton’s words and photographs. What was achieved was a complex intertextuality that undermined rather than prioritised Burton’s point of view.

Present day interpretations of these photographs are derived from the viewer’s personal subjectivity and reveal more punctum than an analysis of the interaction between photographer and his subject. Although photographs were sometimes read in reference to Burton’s text, often images are interpreted independently of this textual information and the individual viewer’s experience and knowledge come to bear on the projected meaning of the image. For instance, the series contains a photograph depicting a European house, bearing the caption “A German Merchant’s – Funcalor – Tongatabu” (fig. 4-17). In the yard are a group

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88 “The Camera in the Coral Islands.”

89 Many of the exhibition prints were made from the original negatives held in the collection of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Where these did not exist or were not usable, copy-prints were made from original prints. In both forms of reproduction the studio’s original caption information was perished or lost in some examples.
of Tongan and European men, all of whom are engaged with the photographer by looking directly at the camera.

Fig. 4-17. “2710 A German Merchant’s – Funcalar – Tongatabu,” 1884. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.016839, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Dr. Okusitino Māhina, Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Auckland, and Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, Curator of Pacific Cultures at Te Papa, provided a response to this photograph. Both of Tongan descent, the writers’ response to the information provided by the caption has elicited a deep reading of the photograph within the political context of colonial Tonga:

The labour trade of the late-1800s caused many problems. Many of the traders in Tonga were Germans selling European goods and commodities. They also brought copra cheaply from locals and made huge profits by exporting it to Europe. The able-bodied men depicted were most likely labourers who worked for the German merchant for their livelihood. Many labourers were not only exploited but also indebted to their employers through excessive loans. This led to their perpetual dependency on the trader who then kept them under strict control.⁹₀

⁹₀ Didactic panel, Innocents Abroad: Touring the Pacific through a Colonial Lens, exhibition, Hocken Collections, 29 June to 25 August 2007.
Led by Burton’s chosen identification of this site as a “German Merchant’s,” Māhina and Māhina-Tuai have accessed a history of colonial exploitation and oppression that undermines the vision of Tonga promoted by Burton’s photographs. In his writing, Burton typically veers away from addressing political issues and his personal political position is difficult to ascertain. His omission of comment is revealing as it confirms his motivation to present the experience as positive and politically neutral. Burton’s photographic representation of Tonga as independent and unified is directed by the subjects and contradicts the perspective asserted by Māhina and Māhina-Tuai.

These conflicting readings confirm the ability of photographic presentation to direct and constrain meaning. Not only Burton’s words but also the written responses of contemporary and recent commentators influence the reading of these photographs, demonstrating the sustained influence of textual narrative. While Mason’s curatorial concept addresses the importance of the photographer’s point-of-view in reading these photographs, this is often suppressed by post-colonial arguments that prioritise an indigenous voice over the photographer’s intention and context of production. However, Māhina and Māhina-Tuai’s commentary also shows the function of Burton’s captions to elicit meaning, even if in contravention to the intended reading.

**Conclusion**

*The Camera in the Coral Island* series has endured a long life, far beyond the duration of the voyage and the lives of its subjects and maker. These photographs continue to shift in meaning as analysed by different academic disciplines and alternative ideologies. Although disproportionately represented in international scholarship in relation to the studio’s total output, *The Camera in the Coral Island* has special importance for demonstrating the development of Burton Brothers’ commercial enterprise in presenting photographs of travel and tourism. Studied in the context of the studio and its commercial operations, the series and its accompanying promotional and interpretative material show an important development in Burton’s entrepreneurial savvy and the methods he employed to subjugate photographic subjects to his own agenda.

The commercial motivations for this series are entrenched in the selection of photographic subject matter and the methods of the studio to appeal to prevailing European attitudes towards indigenous Pacific peoples. In addition, the portrayal of these geographical locations as the sites of tourism and trade potential accords with opportunities for New Zealand’s expansion into the Pacific, as encouraged in contemporary news reports. In particular, *The Camera in the Coral Island* demonstrates the function of the photographic
caption, catalogue listing and accompanying narrative to present a fuller account of the photographer’s journey, while photographs correspondingly serve to visualise events within the travel story.

The application of the caption, catalogue and written narrative as interpretive tools changes in response to Burton’s encounter of the different cultures of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Shifts in levels of interpretation from the highly stereotypical descriptions of the people of Fiji and Samoa compared to the greater individuation of subjects in Tonga reveals diverse cultural behaviours and the agency of individuals in their engagement with the photographer. The deviation in photographic style and manner of interpretation resists the classification of the peoples of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga as a homogenous “Other” and exposes the cultural characteristics of each population. However, the presentation of these photographs as a collective series under a title that evokes the popular understanding of life in the Pacific undermines the autonomy of individual subjects within a package of exotic spectacle.

The commercial validity of this model and Burton’s personal enjoyment of this style of expeditionary photographic is attested to by his next venture: photographing King Country Maori in The Maori at Home.
Chapter 5

“TANGATA WHAKAAHUA”: PHOTOGRAPHING THE MAORI AT HOME, 1885

In June 1885, the New Zealand Herald reported Alfred Burton’s arrival in Whanganui after a tour through the King Country in the centre of New Zealand’s North Island. Syndicated in the Otago Daily Times, this first news report of Burton’s tour signals the motivations for his trip and the function of the resultant photographs.1 Burton accompanied a survey party for the North Island Main Trunk Railway up the Whanganui River to Taumarunui and overland to Kihikihi.2 His photographs – as yet undeveloped gelatin dry plate negatives at the time of the article’s writing – were alleged to show the “great and substantial progress made towards the pacification of the country” through territory “where 18 months or two years ago a European’s life was not worth an hour’s purchase.” Burton had already conceptualised these photographs as a series, entitled The Maori at Home. This series would enable the public to become acquainted with “the scenery of a territory which has hitherto been practically a terra incognita.” What these photographs depicted was not a terra incognita in the truest sense, but a region navigated, occupied and protected by Maori.

The newspaper headline “The Camera in the King Country” establishes an immediate association with the series The Camera in the Coral Islands, issued the previous year. This report – undoubtedly informed by Burton’s own perceptions of the trip and strategic marketing – continues the mode of his previous photographic expeditions in capturing and revealing remote locations for an untravelled public. Burton also continued the mode of publicity and presentation employed for The Camera in the Coral Islands. The series of 150

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1 "The Camera in the King Country," Otago Daily Times (Dunedin), 13 June 1885.

2 This thesis observes the preferred spelling of the city and river as “Whanganui.” The spelling for both the river and town as “Wanganui” – followed by Burton and his contemporaries – is the result of a misinterpretation of the name by Europeans when transcribing the local Maori name for the area. The spelling of the river as “Whanganui” was officially reinstated in 1991, and the change of the city’s name to “Whanganui” was resolved by a New Zealand Geographic Board decision in September 2009. In December 2009 the Minister for Land Information upheld alternative official names for the city as both “Wanganui” and “Whanganui.” Diana Beaglehole. ‘Wanganui,’ Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 18 January 2010. http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/Places/Wanganui/Wanganui/en.

Spellings of “Wanganui” in original titles, photograph captions and quotations are unchanged in this thesis.
photographs was released soon after his return to Dunedin, accompanied by a catalogue containing a descriptive listing of the negatives and the text of the photographer’s diary, entitled “Through the King Country with the Camera” (fig. 5-1) which was designed to “serve in some measure as descriptive text for the Photographs.” The catalogue also emphasises the dual purpose of the series: to illustrate the “scenery” and “native life” of “the centre of the North Island.”

Fig. 5-1. *The Maori at Home*, 1885, catalogue (front cover).
The location of the King Country is referred to only in the title of Burton’s diary, giving the studio licence to broaden the geographic scope of the *The Maori at Home* series. However, it was the King Country that gave this series its point of interest as a territory unsettled by Europeans and perceived as inaccessible due to its geographical remoteness and the hostility of the Maori population. The King Country gained its name as the territory associated with the King Movement – a pan-tribal confederation of central North Island iwi (tribes) established in resistance to the sale and confiscation of traditional Maori lands and loss of self-governance to the colonial government. In 1858 Waikato chief Te Wherowhero was crowned as the first Maori King and took the name Potatau. In 1860 he was succeeded by his son Tawhiao, who led the Kingitanga (the followers of the King) through the New Zealand Wars of the 1860s.\(^3\) Defeated against government troops at the battle of Orakau in 1864, Tawhiao retreated into King Country territory traditionally occupied by Ngati Maniapoto and reputedly defined his remaining territory by the area covered by the brim of his hat where it lay on a map – the Rohe Potae (literally, “area of the hat”).\(^4\)

To settlers and colonial officials, the King Country represented New Zealand’s final frontier. For the remainder of the 1860s and throughout the 1870s the aukati (boundary) of the Rohe Potae was defended against the entry of unauthorised Pakeha, including surveyors and government representatives. Under the rule of Tawhiao, the region existed as an independent state subject to its own laws and administration and operating as a haven for Maori fugitives.\(^5\) For Pakeha (non-Maori), the King Country was indeed *terra incognita* as no maps existed to define the topography and few photographs described its features and inhabitants. Furthermore, the north and south of the North Island were effectively cut-off from overland access as Tawhiao’s aukati curtailed the progress of road and rail infrastructure. Agreements reached between the government and local iwi in the early 1880s negotiated the progression of the railway and by the mid-1880s heightened government interest in the King Country led to greater efforts to enter the region and open it up to surveys and transport links.


For Alfred Burton, the opportunity to photograph the interior of the King Country continued and extended his activities in photographing New Zealand’s unseen and unfamiliar frontier landscapes. By 1885 the studio’s negative portfolio featured Milford Sound and Fiordland, Central Otago and the Southern Lakes, the South Island West Coast and Southern Alps, and all of New Zealand’s main centres and popular tourist destinations, such as the North Island thermal region. Unlike previous excursions to remote locations which were generally achieved by opportunism or invitation – such as those aboard the Luna to Milford Sound and Wairarapa to the Pacific – Burton’s expedition through the King Country was self-initiated. He left Port Chalmers by sea for a “photographic trip” in the North Island which was intended to include the King Country although by what means “he had but the vaguest idea.”

Burton identified two locations to enter the “mysterious” King Country: from the north at the current terminus of the railway at Te Awamutu, or from the south via the Whanganui River. The latter route was only achievable in the company of an experienced guide, so Burton was furnished with a letter of introduction from government “high officials” in the hope that he would meet Railway Engineer John Rochfort, who was in the Whanganui area on reconnaissance for the North Island Main Trunk Railway. Making his way overland to Whanganui, Burton fell and injured his leg, requiring six days of rest that delayed his progress. This delay proved serendipitous, as when Burton eventually arrived in Whanganui on 1 May he encountered Rochfort staying at the same hotel. The engineer invited the photographer to accompany the expedition party on their route up the Whanganui River and through the King Country. Also accompanying the party was English artist Edward William Payton (1859-1944), who toured New Zealand from 1883 to 1886 making sketches of the scenery and the people that were later published in his written account, Round About New Zealand.

Burton intended to tour through the King Country. His reasons for this venture, however, are not clear. By April 1885 the Burton Brothers business had progressed to the extent that Burton’s prolonged absence from the firm was easily accommodated. The studio had opened its second Dunedin premises in the Exchange Court, operated by Thomas Muir,

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6 Burton Brothers, The Maori at Home: A Catalogue of a Series of Photographs, Illustrative of the Scenery and of Native Life in the Centre of the North Island of New Zealand. Also, Through the King Country with the Camera: A Photographer's Diary. This will Serve in Some Measure as Descriptive Text for the Photographs (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1885), 7.

and had appointed an agent in Dunedin to generate and fill orders from the studio’s negative stock.\textsuperscript{8} Hardwicke Knight was the first to propose a now widely accepted theory that Burton’s exposure to the indigenous populations of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga enlightened him to the potential for photographing New Zealand Maori. Burton, according to Knight, was frustrated with the familiarity of Pacific Islanders with the camera, and sought indigenous subjects less accustomed to European technology and culture.\textsuperscript{9} The King Country provided an opportunity to continue his project in photographing frontier landscapes while extending his ambition to photograph indigenous subjects in domestic situations rather than contrived studio portraits. The progress of the North Island Main Trunk Railway was steadily opening up the King Country to Europeans. At the same time popular opinion held that the Maori race was declining. Immediate action was required by Burton to ensure his photographs attained unique appeal and maximum sales potential.

Burton’s diary is a key text from which to analyse the political context of this trip and the situation that he encountered. This diary is just one of a number of contemporary accounts by non-Maori travelling through the King Country. Edward Payton’s published account provides an alternative and at times conflicting record of this expedition that simultaneously reveals Burton’s attitudes and interactions with his photographic subjects. Both accounts describe the itinerary and conditions of the trip, revealing a different travel experience than the organised tourism facilitated by the Wairarapa excursion. Further interrogation of Burton’s diary in conjunction with the catalogue listing, caption information and visual content of The Maori at Home photographs shows a closer engagement between the photographer and his Maori subjects than in the earlier Pacific Islands series. His style of verbal and visual description also suggests his motivation for this trip and series differs from earlier bodies of work. Compared with The Camera in the Coral Islands, this project was more politically-motivated and less concerned with ethnographic interest and commercial imperatives. Rather than specifically seeking subjects less accustomed to photography and colonial culture, as proposed by Knight, Burton extended the studio’s reach in appealing to popular interest in non-European cultures, ensuring the commercial success and longevity of these photographs.

\textsuperscript{8} New Zealand Tablet (Dunedin), 24 April 1885; Otago Daily Times, 7 March 1885.

\textsuperscript{9} Hardwicke Knight, "Alfred Burton and the Maori at Home," in Burton Brothers: Fotografen in Nieuw-Zeeland (Photographers in New Zealand), exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam: Fragment Uitgeverij, 1987), 60.
**Popular Representations of King Country Maori in 1885**

By May 1885, the King Country frontier was starting to erode. While the region was visually unknown to Burton, the political and social conditions he encountered were familiar to him. Written accounts of the region were widely published and newspapers frequently printed items relating to the progress of government officials and surveyors entering the King Country and the responses of the indigenous population. Maori leaders also utilised the popular media to communicate their position and demands, and many had attained a status of fame (or infamy) through the popular press. Burton’s diary reveals extensive prior knowledge of the region, expectations of the individuals he might encounter and the likely reception he would meet. Published accounts of preceding tours through the region provide the probable source of information considered by Burton and generated the popular impression of the area and its people. These travel narratives also presented a model and masterplot for Burton’s own writing and photographs.

British explorer James Henry Kerry-Nicholls’ book *The King Country; or Explorations in New Zealand* was published in 1884 by the London imprint Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington. This book’s subtitle, *A Narrative of 600 Miles of Travel through Maoriland*, signals its scope and clearly positions the text within the trope of travel writing, emphasising the journey within a narrative structure that adheres to the popular representation of wilderness New Zealand as “Maoriland.” Kerry-Nicholls did not elaborate on the purpose for his expedition other than to state that the territory known as the King Country was “virtually a blank on the maps” and that he endeavoured to enhance knowledge of the region “reputed to be rich in natural resources.” While defining his motivations as “purely scientific,” the text places considerable emphasis on the social and political conditions of the Maori population and recent interactions with the colonial government. An Otago newspaper reporter revealed that the expedition was commissioned by the *New Zealand Herald* “for the purpose of obtaining correct information as to the nature of the district.” Kerry-Nicholls’ written account was published in the Auckland newspaper shortly after the resumption of his journey, with the author identified as a “Special Commissioner” for the *New Zealand Tablet*.

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10 J. H. Kerry-Nicholls, *The King Country; or, Explorations in New Zealand: A Narrative of 600 miles of Travel through Maoriland* (1884; repr., Christchurch: Capper Press, 1974).

11 Kerry-Nicholls, *The King Country*, 131.

12 *New Zealand Tablet*, 22 June 1883.
An apparently spontaneous conversation with the editor of the Auckland newspaper who expressed a “warm interest” in the efforts of the current government to open up the King Country was the catalyst for the expedition. Kerry-Nicholls enthusiastically met the challenge of exploring a region perceived in the colonial imagination as mysterious and threatening:

...an imperium in imperio, situated in the heart of an important British colony, a terra incognita inhabited exclusively by a warlike race of savages, ruled over by an absolute monarch who defied our laws, ignored our institutions and in whose territory the rebel, the murderer and the outcast took refuge with impunity.

Kerry-Nicholls perpetuated this representation of the King Country in a paper delivered to the Royal Geographical Society in London in February 1885. While his Herald article emphasised the benefit of his explorations to the colony, particularly in gaining knowledge of the area’s topography and natural resources, to the Society he expressed the reluctance of the New Zealand Government to assist with the venture.

Although Kerry-Nicholls’ narrative of daring exploits was exaggerated to satisfy both the commercial imperatives of the commissioning newspaper and the expectations of an English readership, responses indicate that his account did not impress New Zealand readers. The Waikato Times criticised his exaggerated account of the region for misrepresenting the physical extent and inaccessibility of the aukati. Recalling Kerry-Nicholls’ earlier serialised journal in the New Zealand Herald, the reporter scoffed at the Englishman’s naivety in recounting his adventures. His traveller’s tales amused rather than thrilled or informed readers of the Herald, as “he forgot that this supposed unknown land was by no means unfamiliar to quite a large number of people.”

While the Waikato Times reporters and readership possessed considerable knowledge of the region through geographical proximity, the reviewer for the Otago Daily Times in distant Dunedin expressed similar amusement at Kerry-Nicholls’ disingenuous portrayal of the King Country. By the commencement of the author’s journey in 1883 the worst conflict had ceased, and Native Minister John Bryce had already conducted his “famous” tour through the aukati.

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13 J. H. Kerry-Nicholls, "Explorations in the King Country," New Zealand Herald (Auckland), 2 June 1883.

14 Kerry-Nicholls, "Explorations in the King Country."


16 Waikato Times (Hamilton), 31 July 1884.
Indignant at Kerry-Nicholls’ contrivances to present his journey as one of “extraordinary daring,” the reviewer claimed “we in New Zealand, of course, know better.”

The contrast between Kerry-Nicholls’ representation of the King Country and the popular perceptions held by settlers locally and in the South Island, suggests disparity in colonial ideals for the region. Domestic newspapers downplayed Kerry-Nicolls’ record and expressed indignation at the description of the territory as \textit{terra incognita}. By contrast, Kerry-Nicholls met a positive reception from the Royal Society, whose president demonstrated empathy towards King Country Maori by suggesting that their actions in resisting colonial interference were justified “for the natural instinct of the white man was to spread everywhere,” generally eventuating in the “disappearance” of the indigenous race. The president perceived inherent benefit in the self-imposed isolation of the King Country’s inhabitants and urged that they be allowed to remain in that state for their own protection.

Kerry-Nicholls’ statement of the political situation is regarded as accurate by some New Zealand historians, notably James Belich. Under Tawhiao, the King Country existed as an independently governed state, with boundaries shifting in accordance with changing alliances with central North Island iwi. Non-Maori were granted access only by prior authority, and Pakeha who breached the aukati without permission were imprisoned or killed. The government sought no reprisal for these crimes and did not contravene the restrictions imposed on the region by Tawhiao and his followers. Negotiations between the colonial government and the Kingites proceeded in the late 1870s as demand heightened for the commencement of public works, particularly the North Island Main Trunk Railway. Tawhiao’s authority over the Rohe Potae was compromised as Maori near the edges of the aukati began submitting their lands for consideration by the Native Land Court – the system by which individual title of land-ownership was determined and legally recognised. In 1882 and 1883 a series of agreements were reached by the Native Minister and Ngati Maniapoto leader Wahanui that would allow construction of the railway through Ngati Maniapoto territory in exchange for a guarantee of the iwi’s continued ownership and control of their

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 18 October 1884.
\item[18] Kerry-Nicholls, "A Recent Exploration of the King Country, New Zealand."
\end{footnotes}
lands. Tawhiao was excluded from these negotiations as he held no customary authority over Ngati Maniapoto lands.

Cooperation of King Country Maori was essential for the railway to proceed, and its advancement was of vital importance to the progress of the colony. Maori used these negotiations to advance their own purposes and to retain their agency while conceding to government ambitions: “You want a railway and we want local self-government. You grant us one and we will grant you the other.” Negotiations with Wahanui and Rewi Maniapoto allowed for the progress of surveyors within the Rohe Potae to plot the route of the railway and prospect for mineral resources. Reports of surveyors and government officials travelling through the King Country were frequently published in newspapers from 1883, revealing a mixed response among Maori, comprising both friendly hospitality and “native obstruction.”

In January and February 1885 New Zealand Premier John Ballance conducted a tour through the King Country attending hui (meetings) in Maori settlements to meet with leaders in person. The major purpose of these hui was to negotiate the exchange of land for the North Island Main Trunk Railway, but Ballance also wished to promote his legislation on the administration of Maori land through the Native Land Court. His tour was effectively a peace-making exercise, responding to the preference of Maori to engage face-to-face – “kanohi ki kanohi.” As many King Country leaders were aware, a positive relationship with the Government was also necessary for the advancement of Maori society. Ballance’s tour was positively received, and the first sod of the North Island Main Trunk Railway was turned on 15 April 1885 – the very day that Burton left Port Chalmers on his voyage north.

Railway construction was the major component of an infrastructure development programme under the administration of Premier Julius Vogel during the 1870s. Vogel’s objectives continued to be pursued in a variety of major rail and road construction projects to

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23 Rewi Maniapoto quoted in "The King Country: Opposition of the Kingites to the Survey", Wanganui Herald, 2 February 1884.

24 Evening Post (Wellington), 4 January 1884; Taranaki Herald (New Plymouth), 4 January 1884; "Through the King Country," Hawera and Normanby Star (Hawera), 23 February 1884.

the end of the nineteenth century. A key force of Western modernity, the railway network transformed notions of space and created a sense of nationhood by physically connecting centres via land, over rivers and through mountains, and enabling access to the interior of both islands. Railway construction also provided a major source of industry, as forests were felled, railway workshops were established and labour was engaged in the planning and construction of rail-lines. The advance of the railway was a potent symbol of colonial dominance: “paths of civilisation, bringing order and doom to natives and nature: huge, smoking, iron engines leading the charge of progress.”

The North Island Main Trunk Railway would comprise a significant section of the national rail network. A line traversing the central North Island was vital to connect the major cities of Auckland and Wellington, while the railway’s penetration into this region enabled the formation of smaller settlements and sites of industry along the rail corridor. Internationally, rail had eclipsed river and coastal shipping networks in domestic freight and passenger transportation, and it was also a bold statement of the progress of Western technology over topography and distance. In other frontier societies, particularly in North America, the commencement of the public rail networks coincided with the widespread introduction of photography, and photographers accompanied and documented the survey and construction of rail lines. Photography and railways worked in conjunction as “perhaps the nineteenth century’s two most insidious agents of social spatialization.”

The advance of the railways enabled access to previously unknown or unseen places, while photographs circulated visual evidence of the railway’s progress to promote rail transportation and facilitate its economic viability. Photographers were actively engaged in documenting the construction of railways in the North American West, and the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869 was recorded by both official United States Government photographers and commercial operators, who identified the remunerative potential in recording the advancement of modern technology’s conquering of distance.

26 Belich, Making Peoples, 353.


While not an official member of Rochfort’s survey party, Burton’s photographs similarly aided the advancement of the North Island Main Trunk Railway by circulating knowledge of the region. Much of the mystery and contrary perceptions of the King Country undoubtedly lay in the lack of visual representation of its topography and people. A significant aspect of Kerry-Nicholls’ publication was the inclusion of illustrations and a full map of the King Country (fig. 5-2). Included as an appendix, the map charts the topography and includes Maori names for geographical features obtained by the “half-caste” interpreter accompanying Kerry-Nicholls on the expedition. It is annotated with the boundary of the Rohe Potae and shows the route taken.
Kerry-Nicholls' forty-five “numerous illustrations” comprised sketches made by him of the scenery and identities that he encountered, and photographic studio portraits of notable Maori leaders reproduced as plates by the Meisenbach process, an early form of the half-tone
photo-mechanical process (patented in 1882). The photographs are credited to Auckland photographer Elizabeth Pulman and “J. Bartlett of Auckland,” possibly Robert Henry Bartlett. A portrait of Tawhiao that illustrates the frontispiece was acquired by Kerry-Nicholls during the king’s visit to London in June 1884. Other photographers in the King Country were few. Prior to Burton’s tour in 1885 professional photographers are not known to have accompanied survey parties or official government tours. Itinerant photographer C. H. Monkton advertised photographs taken by himself at the Whatiwhatihoeh i in May 1882; these photographs represented Tawhiao, his family and “all the principle chiefs in the King Country,” including Rewi Maniapoto, Wahanui, Horikeri and Witiora. Monkton claimed that his studio, the London Photographic Company, possessed portraits of “the best and only good selection of living Maori celebrities in New Zealand.” However, Pulman claimed to have registered copyright for Monkton’s portrait of Tawhiao and charged him with breaching the Fine Arts Copyright Act 1877. The trial was delayed until September 1882 due to Monkton’s reported absence in the King Country. Despite the considerable evidence against him, he was acquitted as the judge held that copyright regulations were “informal and inoperative” and therefore no offence had occurred. Monkton’s claim to portraits of other King Country Maori was not disputed, indicating that he photographed behind the aukati before Burton.

Burton’s aim was to create a photographic record of the Rohe Potae and its inhabitants. Rather than photograph well-known individuals in studio environments, he endeavoured to photograph the people of the King Country “at home” and in doing so effectively produced a visual equivalent to published written accounts. His project was hastened by the construction

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31 “King Tawhiao in London,” *Te Aroha News*, 16 August 1884.


33 *Taranaki Herald*, 8 May 1883.

34 *Wanganui Herald*, 24 August 1882.
of the railway. This would ease the entry of Pakeha through the region and thus necessitated some urgency in order for his photographs to achieve unique appeal. Like Kerry-Nicholls, Burton capitalised on heightened public interest in the King Country to ensure the popularity of the series. The widespread acceptance that the Maori population was declining throughout New Zealand lent his project impetus and immediacy. Kerry-Nicholls was satisfied to find a high proportion of Maori living “much in their primitive style” throughout the King Country, but observed a weakening in physical stature, concluding that “this splendid type of savage would soon become a matter of the past.”35 The fear of the Royal Geographical Society that King Country Maori were at threat of “extinction” as a result of cross-cultural contact was perceived as a foregone conclusion by many Pakeha. A Waikato Times editorial, reprinted from the Lyttelton Times, refuted the impression given in accounts of King Country surveyors that Maori presented a threat to Pakeha in the region. Under the headline “The Maoris Dying Out” the writer asserted that Maori were a weakened race facing their own extinction and had no capacity for war or armed aggression.36 Restating superintendent Isaac Featherston’s famous phrase, it was believed that the role of New Zealand’s race relations policy was to do nothing more than “smooth down their dying pillow.” In this vein, Burton’s task was to photographically capture this dying race before their inevitable disappearance.

“Through the King Country with the Camera”: Telling the Tale of Travel

The events preceding Burton’s tour through the King Country generated awareness of the region and fuelled popular interest. His diary, “Through the King Country with the Camera,” echoes the character of journeying, adventure and encounter evident in Kerry-Nicholls’ text and the surveyors’ reports. His references to Maori leaders demonstrate preconceptions of their personalities, and his narrative contains references to recent political events and to the history of conflict in the region. Following his photographic work in the Pacific and the marketing of The Camera in the Coral Islands, Burton’s King Country photographs show an adept use of captions and catalogue text to chronicle and convey the narrative of the journey. An analysis of these textual markers reveals the nature of his travel experience and his perception of encounters with Maori subjects.

A rare near-complete set of photographs from The Maori at Home is held at Christchurch’s Canterbury Museum in a collection of five albums. Inscriptions and bookplates inside each album indicate that they were compiled for Christchurch accountant

35 Kerry-Nicholls, The King Country.

Rookwood Comport Bishop and later acquired by A. C. Brassington, who gifted them to Canterbury Museum in the 1950s. Each album has the standard Burton Brothers’ “New Zealand Scenery” cover with each spine gilt-stamped “The Maori at Home” and sequentially numbered from one to five. The photographic prints within the albums are ordered in numerical sequence and comprise 135 of the 150 prints released in the series, plus an additional twenty prints not included in *The Maori at Home*. The albums are unusual for the adherence to the numerical sequence of the negatives and the apparent efforts of the compiler to collect and present the series in its entirety. The albums were bound for Bishop in Christchurch by the bookbinders H. J. Davis (presumably a local agent for the Dunedin studio), whose label is affixed to the inside front cover of each album. All pages are sequentially numbered on the verso in vintage ink; this suggests a predetermined arrangement following the stipulations of the compiler. All the photographs are albumen whole plate prints mounted on standard album pages that bear no inscriptions other than the negative number, caption and maker’s mark inscribed in the negative. The effectiveness of these textual devices to control the reception and presentation of these photographs is evident in the preservation of branding elements, such as the series name, and the retention of the photographer’s intended viewing sequence. Viewed in sequence, the visual information and caption text present a conscious narrative of the journey, but a subtext is also present that details the conditions in which the photographs were made and provides clues as to how they were consumed.

The first album commences with a photograph entitled “Russell – from Flagstaff Hill.” Situated in Northland’s Bay of Islands, Russell was not on Burton’s itinerary for this trip and is not included in *The Maori at Home* series. Numbered “2361” this negative precedes Burton’s excursion aboard the *Wairarapa* and may be dated circa 1884. An unidentified steamer – possibly the *Wairarapa* which berthed at Russell *en route* to Pacific ports – is shown at anchor in the harbour, conceptually signifying the commencement of the overland journey visualised in the following photographs. The photographer’s viewpoint also adds poignancy to this image’s placement at the start of the albums; the photograph is taken from Maihi Hill or Flagstaff Hill, the promontory so-called for Hone Heke’s repeated felling of the British flagstaff in protest of the colonial government’s undermining of Maori authority following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The album thus commences with a photograph showing a site of Maori/Pakeha conflict, foregrounded by Burton’s captioning of the image with the location’s popular rather than proper name.

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37 The photographs excluded from the Bishop Albums show duplicated content.
The following photograph is also not from the series and presents a subject essentially irrelevant to the journey. Negative 2449 depicts Waiwera, a thermal spa north of Auckland which was first commercialised as a tourist resort in the 1870s. This is perhaps included as a memento of Bishop’s own travels or for the attractiveness of the image, but its inclusion invests the album with a sense of journeying. The following eighteen photographs carry a shift in geographical context showing landscape views of the Wairarapa and Manawatu regions, located to the south of the King Country. While geographically removed from the two preceding images, these photographs relate to Burton’s journey from Wellington to Whanganui, where he met Rochfort and commenced his journey into the King Country. These photographs are also the visual complement to his published diary in which he describes fully his overland passage to Whanganui and the episode in which he injured his leg while photographing in Forty Mile Bush, Manawatu. Introducing the album and series with these photographs suggests the compiler’s intention to follow the direction of the studio and compile an album to reflect the geographical and chronological sequence in the making of these photographs.

On the twenty-first page of the first album, The Maori at Home series proper begins with a print from negative number 3502 “Upokongaro – Wanganui River” (fig. 5-3). Twelve kilometres north-east of Whanganui up the Whanganui River, Upokongaro is described by Burton as a “white settlement” in contrast to his description of the many Maori “kaingas” in the Whanganui River region. The photograph shows the settlement as influenced by Europeans, featuring a Maori man in European attire in the foreground looking over the river to St. Mary’s Anglican Church and other European structures.

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39 This is not the first negative in The Maori at Home series, which the catalogue listing designates as 3501, but the image content is similar.
This presents a contrast with the subsequent images that show Maori kainga along the river and adhere to the formula established by Burton in *The Camera in the Coral Islands* photographs of “capturing” Maori in their home environment with minimal engagement with the camera. A photograph of a group of Maori women at Parikino resembles the compositional structure and content of the Pacific Islands photographs, showing them posed outside a carved house, described by Burton as a wharepuni or buried house, which functioned as a place for gatherings and as accommodation for visitors (fig. 5-4). Burton’s pre-existing practice of defining subjects as generic types is continued in the catalogue listing for this photograph which is included among: “Groups of Maoris in front of Wharepuni at Parekino.”
Burton’s photographs at Parekino follow an established formula in presenting the subjects as a fleeting moment captured during his travels. This effect is reinforced by captions that specify locations and define human subjects by their relationships to particular sites and render them inseparable from it. This photograph’s caption leads one to read as its key content not the women and children on the paepae (threshold) but the built structure behind them. At Parekino Burton learned a Maori name for the camera as “taipo,” translated by him as “devil.” Taipo is more commonly translated as goblin or ghost and is generally intended as an insult. Hence, it is probable that the emotion he perceived as fear was more likely resistance or resentment at the imposition of the camera. Indeed, the facial expressions and body-language of the women gathered outside the wharepuni seem to register their resistance. Caution and curiosity is visible in another early photograph from the series entitled “Village Scene – Koroniti – (Corinth-) Wanganui River” showing a group of men and children within a kainga (fig. 5-5). All are staring at the camera – some with clear concern and others more challenging. Burton has not entered the kainga, and the fence isolates the subjects; a physical and conceptual barrier is present between the Maori subjects and the photographer.

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However, in another photograph taken at Parekino one individual is named as “Ngakura” in an inscription within the image (figs. 5-6 and 5-7). By identifying Ngakura by name, Burton acknowledged her as an individual and in doing so granted her some autonomy in the photographic transaction. This also reveals a greater level of engagement surrounding the moment of photographic contact. In his diary he described Ngakura as a “very fine woman” who demonstrated less “timidity” at “the sight of the camera” than her fellow villagers.41 While her physical attractiveness and confidence may have rendered her more suitable as a photographic subject, her identification by name confirms the existence of dialogue between Ngakura and the photographer and suggests that the photographic encounter was negotiated rather than unilaterally taken.

41 Burton Brothers, 8.
A discernible shift in Burton’s stylistic approach can be detected in his foregrounding of the human subjects as individual agents rather than exemplifiers of their ethnicity. The practice of naming individuals within the caption or image area was continued throughout this series, often showing the name in speech-marks, as Burton had done in *The Camera in the Coral Island*. “3517 ‘Neha’ at Koroniti (Corinth) – Wanganui River” and “3518 ‘Ngahino’ at Koroniti (Corinth) – Wanganui River” show a Maori male and female respectively, each posed outside a carved whare. The catalogue listing duplicates this identification but amplifies with descriptions in brackets: “Maori Warrior” for Neha and “Maori Belle” for Ngahino. Without these qualifiers a non-Maori reader would most likely be unable to determine the content of the photograph, and Burton’s choice of language shows the lingering persistence of popular ethnographic stereotypes as a means of describing his subjects.
Burton’s individuation of the human subjects and the concomitant expression of affinity with indigenous people can be attributed to the practical realities of his journey in the King Country. This trip was a very different travel experience from the organised tourism facilitated by the Union Steam Ship Company that reduced contact with indigenous people in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Although afforded protection by accompanying an official government survey party and ushered by Maori guides, there was no luxurious steam ship for accommodation and no professional crew to feed and tend to the survey team. The party were dependent on the hospitality of the people in the kainga they visited for food, accommodation and protection. Furthermore, this tour was conducted in May and June – New Zealand’s winter – with much cooler temperatures and more changeable weather conditions than the heat and humidity experienced by Burton in the Wairarapa’s Pacific tour twelve months earlier. The importance of the co-operation of local Maori for warmth and shelter was therefore vital. In this colder climate Maori were fully clad in a combination of European attire and traditional cloaks, which did not match the indigenous stereotype of scantily-clad dusky maidens and noble warriors. Burton developed an alternative manner of representation of Maori as host and friend. This is manifested in the information provided in the photographic captions which show greater understanding of his subjects than the detached observation or tourist spectatorship characteristic of his photographs of the Pacific.

Burton’s frequent use of Maori language in his photograph captions and diary text is immediately apparent. Travelling along the Whanganui River, the party visited many kainga that were established as missionary settlements and assigned names derived from the Bible and transliterated in Maori. Burton recognised the origins of these names in the missionary journeys of St. Paul, adding another layer of journeying to his narrative.42 In the photograph captions he refers to these locations by their Maori names, retaining the English equivalent as an appendage; for instance “Atene (Athens),” “Koroniti (Corinth),” “Karatea (Galatia).” Burton’s captions and diary also contain Maori terminology left without English translation; for instance wharepuni, whare, kainga, korero and tangi recur in caption descriptions. Burton’s fellow traveller Payton recognised that using Maori words without translation was customary among writers when referring to Maori and “their doings.”43 He also satirically noted Burton’s limited proficiency in Te Reo Maori, knowing only “seven words, which he used with great effect.”44

42 Burton Brothers, 9.
43 Payton, viii.
44 Payton, 250.
Other elements within the photographs emphasise the narrative and present a sense of familiarity and affinity with the locations visited and the people encountered. Captions indicate the manner and mode of travel and accommodation with statements such as “Our Canoe and Crew,” “Our Camp” and “Our Whare,” the latter showing Burton and Payton outside a raupo hut at Taumarunui where they slept for the duration of their stay at the settlement. Others indicate knowledge of the subjects’ circumstances and level of intimacy with their daily life, not only by naming individuals but also stating familial relationships, for instance: “3572 – ‘Ngatai’ and Family – Taumarunui…,” “3601 - Ngaparu and wife (Kahu Topune) at Waimiha…,” “‘Tamaki’ and his dog ‘Pore’ at Whatiwhatihoe.” In other examples, the content of the photograph belies the caption to reveal the manner of interaction experienced; “3582 – Taumarunui – King Country,” a negative included in the catalogue heading “Various Characteristic Village Groups,” shows a group of Maori outside a whare, one of whom is Payton dressed in Maori costume.

As with previous series, The Maori at Home captions also serve to locate the individual print within the sequence and context of the journey. The series is divided into two parts: the canoe journey up the Whanganui River and the overland journey from Taumarunui to Kihikihi. Returning to Canterbury Museum’s albums of The Maori at Home, the remainder of Album One, all of Album Two and most of Album Three feature photographs from the party’s journey up the Whanganui River. Photographs are clearly identified by their positioning within this sequence with the caption containing a specific location identifier followed by either “Wanganui River” or “King Country.” Although only the upper reaches of the Whanganui River were contained within the Rohe Potae, the emphasis on the river in this series is understandable as it constituted a vital transport route into the King Country region. It also formed the focus of Rochfort’s explorations for this survey, following the eastern side of the river to select road-lines from the river to the proposed line of the railway.\footnote{Burton Brothers, 9.} The topography of the river also provided dramatic and beautiful scenery, while instilling an element of adventure through the rough water and rapids the party encountered. Travel along the river also presented a tangible route for structuring Burton’s narrative, and he was probably aware of the river narrative trope in contemporary literature made popular by Mark Twain’s \textit{Adventures of Huckleberry Finn} (1885) and later elaborated by Joseph Conrad’s \textit{Heart of Darkness} (1902).\footnote{Mark Twain, \textit{Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade)} (New York: Charles L. Webster and Co., 1885).} The river journey traced the party’s penetration into unknown...
territory, while the unpredictability of natural waterways presented an element of human vulnerability of river travel that trains were soon to supplant.

The narrative element of this series is particularly pronounced when viewing the prints in their sequential arrangement in these albums. Burton states that he intended his diary to “serve in some measure as descriptive text for the photographs,” with this statement punctuated with a pointing-finger symbol (fig. 5-8). Known as a “manicule” or “index,” this symbol was common in print media from the late medieval period. It typically appeared in marginalia to indicate to the reader an item of particular importance. Burton’s statement anticipates semiotic theories of the photograph as an indexical sign, a trace of a past reality that is contingent on the discourses associated with the depicted reality to transmit meaning.

As such a photograph is comprehensible only through knowledge of the context of its creation, recovered through accompanying text. The functional importance of the diary is confirmed in the captions, which often refer to elements of the narrative contained within the diary. The caption operates as a medium between the photographic image and diary, directing the viewer towards the narrative and activating the complementary relationship between image and text. Conversely, the diary also refers to the making of photographs and specific moments of photographic encounter, identifiable among the photographs through the information contained in the caption.

Fig. 5-8. The Maori at Home, 1885, catalogue, front cover (detail).


Photographs such as “3452 – ‘A Tangi’ – Te Eke - King Country” (fig. 5-9) invite speculation as to the circumstances of this episode, particularly among those unfamiliar with Maori language and custom. In his diary, Burton flippantly explains a tangi to be a ceremony of welcome, consisting of a “gesticulating and howling” followed by “the rubbing of noses.” Now commonly understood as a term for a Maori customary funeral, Burton follows the traditional meaning of the word tangi as “to wail.” The interpretation of tangi offered by Burton is equivalent to the modern understanding of powhiri, a welcoming or opening ceremony. Descriptions of tangi recur in Burton’s diary and Payton’s published account, including one that occurred mid-river between their party and a group of Maori. The circumstances of the tangi in this photograph are described as being for the benefit of a member of the canoeing party who was returning to his home kainga. The constant wailing caused Burton and the Pakeha members of the party to retreat, but upon leaving he “fired a Parthian shot (with the camera), and surreptitiously ‘took’ the ceremony.” The scene is portrayed as a soft focus vignette to evoke sentimentality, but may also compensate for the poor quality of the photograph which was made in haste.

Fig. 5-9. “3452 – ‘A Tangi’ – Te Eke - King Country,” 1885. Albumen whole plate print. E1436/13, Hocken Collections.

49 Burton Brothers, 10.

50 Burton Brothers, 15; Payton, 272.

51 Burton Brothers, 10.
Sentimentality is also evoked in Burton’s photographs of Ngati Haua-te-rangi chief, Topine Te Mamaku (fig. 5-10). The image caption provides sufficient detail for this image to stand alone, independent of the series: “Topine Te Mamaku – (100 Years Old) – Tawhata – King Country.” However, the diary text presents the story of Burton’s encounter with the “venerable” chief Topine, whom he found to be a polite and cooperative sitter. He is photographed facing the camera and occupying the centre of the image. The chief is eye-level with the camera, indicating that Burton lowered his viewpoint to the level of his subject. Topine is shown seated outside a calico tent, which he slept in every night, despite his age and the inclement climate, and the blanket he is shown wearing was allegedly his only item of clothing.

Fig. 5-10. “3562 – Topine Te Mamaku – (100 Years Old) – Tawhata – King Country,” 1885. Albumen whole plate print. 83018-ac-1/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.
Despite the success of his portrait sitting and the human engagement with his subject, Burton observed that the camera was unable to fully record Topine’s character and the atmosphere that surrounded him, noting that painting would best capture the mood of the scene. Bohemian painter Gottfried Lindauer had previously toured the King Country and painted a portrait of Topine. At the encouragement of his patron Henry Partridge, Lindauer amassed a collection of portraits of Maori elders that were widely celebrated for the fidelity and gravitas with which he depicted “notable Maoris.” Lindauer’s Maori portraits – and perhaps even his portrait of Topine – were most likely known to Burton. The influence of these painted representations no doubt fuelled his apparent frustration with the perceived impartiality of the camera’s recording. Instead, he offered a written description that transforms the image from a portrait of a frail and elderly man to that of a great warrior, celebrated and adored among his people:

This evening I longed to be an artist in very truth, and not a mere “machine man”… in order that I might secure a group exhibiting the most delicious Rembrandt effects. Old Topine was seated at the door of his tent, a good-looking Maori boy was lolling at his feet; a winsome damsel at his side; while round the fire was a circle of admirers and gossips. At the racy anecdotes, which evidently formed the staple of the talk, the venerable chief would cackle his delight, and ever and anon he would give, in cracked and quavering tones, reminiscences of his own earlier life, and – “the fitful firelight” glinting on his cut and carven face – his bleared eyes would light up for a moment as the recollection of perhaps some warlike deed suddenly passed across his mind.

The diary also reveals that many individuals featured in these photographs and identified in the captions were members of the party, enhancing the impression of the Maori as friend. Ngatai, who features in a number of the photographs, was described by Burton as “the boss Maori” and “our chief” and led the canoe party up the Whanganui River. He was also a local chief of some standing and was the nephew of Topine; this kinship connection facilitated Burton’s meeting with him. Ngatai was rivalled in his position by Taitua, a steersman of the canoe who had “pretensions to chieftainship” and also posed as a subject in

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52 Gottfried Lindauer, *Hemi Topine Te Mamaku*, oil on canvas, 630 x 522mm (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of Mr H E Partridge, 1915). Lindauer’s portrait of Topine is undated and the date of his tour through the King Country is also unrecorded. As Lindauer is known to have produced painted portraits after photographs, it is possible that his portrait of Topine was made after the chief’s death in 1887. *Maori Paintings: Pictures from the Partridge Collection of paintings by Gottfried Lindauer*, 3rd rev. ed. (Wellington: Reed, 1977).

53 "Herr Lindauer," *The Star* (Christchurch), 18 October 1879.
several photographs. With this rivalry in mind, Taitua is seen to use photography to his personal advantage as he is photographed first in a domestic scene with two girls (presumably his daughters) and later in the manner of a noble warrior chief, in full traditional regalia and wielding a taiaha (weapon) (fig. 5-11). Taitua developed a fondness for Burton and gifted him a pounamu (greenstone) pendant upon their parting at Taumarunui, confirming his willingness to be photographed.

Fig. 5-11. “3579 – ‘Taitua’ – At Taumarunui – King Country,” 1885. Albumen whole plate print. 10704-ac 1/1, Alexander Turnbull Library.

However, the diary can also undermine the impression conveyed in the photographic image. Three photographs of a predominantly deserted kainga at Tukipo on the Whanganui River belie Burton’s description of the hospitable and friendly people they met there. Although Burton makes no mention of the Tukipo residents’ refusal to be photographed, the diary contrasts their considerable hospitality with the reception the party met at Utapu. The kainga of Utapu is represented by a distant view, barely visible through a haze of smoke and the branches of a foreground tree (fig. 5-12). The catalogue listing describes this negative as

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54 Burton Brothers, 17.

55 Burton Brothers, 12.
showing the “Ultra Hauhau Village” of Utapu, and the diary completes the narrative by clarifying this as the kainga occupied by a rebel leader identified by Burton as Taumata and “a nest of the rankest Hauhauism.” Te Hauhau or Pai Marire was a faith movement founded by Te Ua Haumene in Taranaki in 1862. Although founded upon principles of peaceful resistance, followers reverted to violent action and were outcasts in the Whanganui River region for their 1864 attempted siege of Moutoa Island, upriver from the township of Whanganui. Utapu was also the site of recent hostility against Pakeha, and the chief was said to possess an extensive collection of seized theodolites and other surveyors’ equipment. Burton was advised against approaching the village, but photographed it from a distance, professing to find the tension associated with the site to be “irresistible.” In doing so he was challenged by a Maori man who objected strongly when it was suggested he pose for a photograph. Burton later regretted this missed opportunities as a scene of genuine conflict would have enlivened and “sold” the series:

On the way a fine view presented itself, which only wanted 'life.' This seemed to be furnished by a Native, with a most deliciously cannibal-like face, who turned up at the moment. A polite request - conveyed by signs - that he should form an item in the picture was resented in a manner that made the camera tremble to the bottom of its tripod. The expression which that savage put on ... let the photographer know plainly enough that instead of his making a life-like picture of him, his tattoooship would amazingly enjoy the making of a death-like picture of Tangata Whaka-ahua. Snugly seated at home, as I am just now, I cannot help wishing that I could truthfully chronicle even a trifling assault on the part of the Utapu malcontents. It would certainly have given a zest to this article, and oh, wouldn't it have 'sold' the photographic series - 'the Maori at home.' But it cannot be, for the simple reason that, unfortunately, no assault was committed. Not a man, woman or child attempted to 'go for' the Taipo.57


57 Burton Brothers, 11-12.
Payton’s account also recalls this episode, but insinuates Burton was considerably less brave than his hindsight might convey:

B___ carried his camera [on the approach to Utapu], and before we had got half-way spied a pretty view of the river that he wanted to immortalize, so we stopped, and I asked a native who was passing to condescend to make a foreground for the view. As soon as he comprehended that he was wanted to have his great person photographed, he turned on us and gave the most awful snort of disgust and rage I ever heard, even from a Maori. B___ did not like the look of his eye, and did not ask any more old fellows to have their photos taken for a long time.\(^{58}\)

Payton often presented a different view of Burton’s photographic experience, which exposes the capacity of the photographer’s captions and diary text to direct meaning towards his personal recollections of the events. For example, at Parikino, Payton enjoyed the hospitality of the local women who were eager the party received a full-meal during their brief visit. He recalled that Burton made a number of successful photographs in and around the kainga, but when it came to human subjects “he was very much disgusted because the native women

\(^{58}\) Payton, 259.
would not allow themselves to be photo’d unless they put on their best European garments, utterly refusing to be made immortal in everyday attire.” With this in mind, Ngakura (fig. 5-5), who was valued by Burton for her “lack of timidity,” was probably found to be more obliging for agreeing to wear a traditional korowai (cloak) rather than a blanket. This also demonstrates considerable agency on the part of the subjects, who controlled not only whether or not they would be included in a photograph, but also how they would be represented. This threatened to foil Burton’s endeavours to achieve a naturalistic record of Maori in their home environment.

Throughout his diary, Burton referred to himself as “Tangata Whakaahua” or “the man who makes likenesses.” The origins of this phrase is unclear, but was probably a pre-existing Maori term for photographers. Burton’s plates remained undeveloped until his return to his studio, so the people he photographed would not have seen likenesses of themselves. However, he brought with him a portfolio of photographs from The Camera in the Coral Islands. Showing them to interested Maori, Burton claimed that they perceived the subjects as “all same Maori.” Payton described Burton’s photographic exploits and interactions with Maori throughout his own account. Although Burton had no finished photographs from the trip to show local Maori, Payton conceded that many found photography to be of more interest than his own finished sketches.60 Maori reactions to Burton’s photography are the subject of a sequence of cartoons by Payton published by the London Illustrated News in 1887. Satirising the purported fear of photography among Maori, Payton shows a group of Maori posing for a photograph, with the adversarial sounding title: ‘Shooting’ a native: an anxious moment (fig. 5-13). This is followed by an image of Maori running from the camera (Terrified, they take to their heels) and finally a Maori woman peering into camera lens with Burton behind the camera (Reciprocity).

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59 Payton, 248.

60 Payton, 280.
Although intended as comical, these cartoons reveal the act of photography to be a dialogue between photographer and subject. Payton’s account described situations where Maori refused to allow Burton to photograph and others where the camera was considered an object of entertainment and fascination. He also revealed situations where portrait sessions were manipulated by the sitter to present themselves in a “positive” (generally Pakeha) manner. Published after Burton’s catalogue and photographs were released and possibly as a conscious response to his account, Payton’s record must also be read with some scepticism. Regardless, the existence of an alternative written account heightens awareness of the subjectivity of Burton’s photographic and textual responses. Reading Burton’s written and visual record against a contrasting, and sometimes contradictory, recollection of events exposes the means by which he sought to influence the perception of his subjects and reveals the political subtext of his portrayal of Maori and the King Country.

“...my business was just to take photographs”: The Political Currency of The Maori at Home

The very title The Maori at Home evokes the presentation of a definitive view of homogenised Maori in their domestic environments. Like an ethnographic safari, Burton endeavoured to document the traditional mode of living of an indigenous people who were popularly believed to be approaching extinction. This goal was often obfuscated by the
political reality of the area that he visited and widespread knowledge of recent conflict in the region, particularly aggressive action towards Pakeha. The political climate became unavoidable once the party left the Whanganui River and entered deeper into King Country territory, and this is clearly legible in his textual accompaniments. Burton’s captions and catalogue text associate photographs with a political agenda, compromising a neutral portrayal of Maori subjects by subjugating portraits to the external motivations of both the photographer and subject.

Sites of earlier interracial conflict appear throughout Burton’s photographs and in his diary. While enjoying the hospitality of the people at Taumarunui, he recalled the murder of William Moffatt in November 1880 at Tuhua, near Taumarunui. Moffatt, a Pakeha settler, married the Maori woman Emiri Mokena (Emily Morgan) and lived with Maori.61 During the New Zealand Wars he produced gunpowder and supplied it to Maori at Tuhua, an offence for which he was imprisoned.62 Some years following his release from prison Moffatt attempted to re-enter the King Country to recover personal possessions from Tuhua, but he was denied access by chiefs Wahanui, Rewi Maniapoto and Taonui, who suspected that he intended to prospect for gold.63 Despite threats that he would be shot if he trespassed within the Rohe Potae, Moffatt proceeded and was killed by a party of Maori at Tuhua.

Burton narrated the sequence of events leading to Moffatt’s murder in relation to his personal experience of the people of Taumarunui:

We have no cause to suspect the motives of any of the good people of Taumarunui, but it is not possible to quite forget that the place is associated with a little “difficulty” that occurred only four years ago – and that was the Moffatt murder. Moffatt had been on good terms with the Maoris, but had lost their confidence, and was told that he would be welcome among them no more. He disregarded this, however, and made his way into the interior. He was warned again and again and eventually one night a meeting was held in one of the whare-puni written of above [Hikurangi and Ngapua-iwha at Taumarunui]. The matter was solemnly debated, with the result that seven men were told off to shoot him should he persist in his determination to pass through the King Country. He had reached the river about four mile above Taumarunui, and some well-wishers

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urged him to go back in vain, for he crossed the river, and the men appointed to kill him met him and killed him there. No doubt we have shaken hands with these very men; indeed the ringleader is, we have reason to believe, in full view just now as we sit at dinner.64

The individual whom Burton insinuates as the assailant is Ngatai, their guide on this expedition and host at Taumarunui. Reported as the leader of the ambush, Ngatai was pardoned for his actions in January 1885, as Native Minister Bryce held that the murder was committed in accordance with the principles of the King Movement and not due to personal malice.65 Moffatt’s murder was therefore included within an operative amnesty on political crimes and was considered one of the final acts of fatal conflict between Maori and Pakeha in the King Country. Writing of Moffatt’s murder forty years later, historian James Cowan considered it to be “the last of what may be termed political murders in the Maori country,” which he held to be in the manner of a political execution rather than an aggressive attack.66

Despite Burton’s lengthy description of the murder, no photographs appear in The Maori at Home series that may be linked explicitly to Moffatt’s murder. It is probable that he feared offending his host by drawing attention to the conflict. However, contemporary New Zealand readers would have known Ngatai’s association with Moffatt’s murder, and an element of drama is inserted in the potential threat to Burton’s personal safety through his proximity to the protagonists of this well-reported conflict. Photographs of other sites of conflict reveal Burton’s penchant for sensationalism. One of the final photographs of the series records the site of the 1864 battle at Orakau, the decisive conflict that resulted in the formation of the Rohe Potae and the defence of the aukati line. Captioned “Battle Field of Orakau – From Kihikihi,” this photograph shows a wide view of rural sections containing European dwellings and structures (fig. 5-14). With three Western-attired men positioned in the foreground surveying the view, the scene is more pastoral idyll than battlefield, but the caption draws attention to activities on this site twenty years earlier. The scene of European settlement and productive farmland was the former site of a fortified pa where significant loss of life was sustained.67 Burton’s diary text acknowledges the juxtaposition between the

64 Burton Brothers, 16-17.
65 “Native Affairs: Wahanui Surrenders the War Sceptre,” Wanganui Herald, 2 December 1885.
66 Cowan, 39.
history of the site and the visual impression, expressing his delight at the “European township” of Kihikihi, which despite its “ultra-Maori name” boasts “three hotels, stores in abundance, and, above all, it is on the telegraph-line.” His photograph seeks to confirm that traces of the conflict exist only in history; the individuals involved are placated and all is resolved:

Here the combined Waikato and Ngatimaniapoto made their grand final stand under the fighting chief Rewi, on which occasion he declared that he would never surrender, adding emphatically in his native tongue “ake! ake! ake!” which very freely translated may mean that “he would see the Pakeha Sir Joseph Portered first.” He now enjoys a fine house opposite the Star Hotel, provided by a considerate Government, together with a pension of £210 a year. Ahem!


While the “Battle Field of Orakau” is shown as calm, civilised and settled, at other locations Burton’s chosen captions seek to imbue the scene with the tension of recent conflict. Captions clearly direct the interpretation of photographs taken by Burton at Te Kumi, a Maori

Burton Brothers, 23. “Sir Joseph Portered” is probably rhyming slang for “hung, drawn and quartered.” Sir Joseph Porter is a reference to the character in Gilbert and Sullivan’s musical HMS Pinafore (1878).
settlement near Te Kuiti. One photograph shows the manner of life at the settlement, depicting the structure and arrangement of dwellings, the proximity of the kainga to a waterway and the daily activity of the inhabitants. As such the image has been used in the twentieth century as an historical document for illustrating the construction methods of traditional housing and the utilisation of waterways by Maori as a food source and transport link.\(^{69}\) This reading was also accessible to contemporary viewers, yet Burton’s choice of caption directs a political reading through reference to recent events: “Te Kumi – King Country – Scene of the Hursthouse Outrage” (fig. 5-15).

![Image of a Maori settlement](image)

**Fig. 5-15.** “3609 – Te Kumi – King Country – Scene of the Hursthouse Outrage,” 1885. Albumen whole plate print. 1/2-021475-F, Alexander Turnbull Library.

On 20 March 1883 surveyor Charles Wilson Hursthouse was captured and imprisoned for 41 hours at Te Kumi.\(^{70}\) The ambush was led by Te Mahuki, a leader and prophet who was allied to Te Whiti and lived at Parihaka from the late 1870s and was active as a ploughman in

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resistance to the surveying of land near the kainga. He was arrested by the Armed Constabulary during the 1881 siege of Parihaka and was imprisoned in Dunedin. Upon his return to Te Kumi, Te Mahuki established a kainga modelled on Parihaka and opposed the advance of the railway believing it would compromise the occupancy and use of their traditional lands. Hursthouse was a prosecution witness at the trials of Te Whiti and Tohu, which may have accounted for the unduly rough treatment inflicted upon him while in captivity. Hursthouse was freed by Rongowhakaata prophet Te Kooti with a Ngati Maniapoto party, who escorted him to Te Kuiti, where Te Kooti had been living since the 1870s. Expressed in news reports as an “outrage,” Te Mahuki’s actions appalled Pakeha and Maori alike.71 Wahanui, who among other King Country leaders had condoned Hursthouse’s entry into the region, responded by forcing through the passage of the railway.72 Te Mahuki reacted to this by leading a march upon Wahanui’s settlement at Alexandra (Pirongia), where he was immediately arrested and transported to Auckland for trial.

The caption of this photograph operates at a basic level to identify the location, but Burton’s choice of language and content expands the narrative beyond the visual information to invoke the story of past events. By referring to the incident as “the Hursthouse Outrage,” he assumes wider knowledge of the event among his viewers, but a lengthy narrative is provided in his diary for those unfamiliar. Burton clarified in his diary that he “secured a view of the village” which included within it the whare where Hursthouse was held.73 By combining text and image to illustrate the site of recent events, Burton’s photographic mode possesses a photo-journalistic aspect. Anchored by the inscribed caption and expanded by the photographer’s diary, the photograph is intended to operate as a manifestation of external events, but is reliant on these textual devices to convey this message, rendering the visual information secondary to and detached from this meta-narrative. Yet, this is not attempted in neutral terms, as Burton perpetuates the tone established in news reports by describing the incident in biased terms as an “outrage,” thus positioning himself, and by association the viewer, in opposition to Te Mahuki and his followers. The (most likely) innocent occupants of Te Kumi depicted in the photograph are also implicated in the narrative of “outrageous”


72 “Native Obstruction,” Bay of Plenty Times (Tauranga), 24 March 1883.

73 Burton Brothers, 21.
As events of over one year earlier. This further instils the image with an element of danger in evoking the potential for further violent confrontation.

Burton heightened the air of danger by following this image with a photograph of Te Mahuki and his “henchman” Paru Kau (fig. 5-16). Both are identified by inscriptions within the image area, introducing Te Mahuki as “Mr Hursthouse’s Chief Assailant.” His diary explains that after photographing the village and “after some demur, he induced the archscoundrel Te Mahuki and his henchman, Paru Kau, to make a picture for the camera.” This description indicates that the subjects retained full agency in the photographic transaction and controlled the manner of their representation. However, their confrontational poses, wielding weapons and staring directly at the camera, undoubtedly suited Burton’s sensationalist account of the preceding events. It is probable that few, if any, photographs of Te Mahuki had been circulated prior to this point, so these photographs of Te Mahuki and the kainga at Te Kumi provided an important visual reference point for those following political developments in the region. Burton continued this documentary mode in photographing other individuals associated with the “outrage”: Te Haere, “Companion in Mr Hursthouse’s Imprisonment,” who was photographed in both European and Maori attire, and Whaaru, who was identified as the “Leader of Hursthouse Rescue Party.” At the end of his journey Burton met Hursthouse and enjoyed the opportunity to “corroborate” the story of his capture.

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74 “3613 – Te Haere – Companion in Mr Hursthouse’s Imprisonment;” “3619 – Te Haere – Companion in Mr Hursthouse’s Imprisonment;” “3631 – Whaaru (Leader of Hursthouse Rescue Party) and Wife at Whaaru’s House – Alexandra).”

75 Burton Brothers, 23.
Te Mahuki’s arrest is claimed as one of the significant markers in the process of opening up the King Country to European infrastructural development and the erosion of the independence of the King Movement. In documenting “the last political murder” and the Hursthouse “outrage” Burton subscribed to and fostered a view of the King Country frontier as eroding and the Maori as cooperating with colonial interests. Indeed, Wahanui had shown allegiance to the colonial government by opposing Te Mahuki’s actions and allowing the progression of the railway survey through the King Country. With his support, the North Island Main Trunk Railway advanced as a cooperative venture, with the first sod ceremonially cut by Wahanui at Te Awamutu on 15 April 1885. It was reported that Hursthouse’s captors were among a group of Maori who offered to construct a section of the line.

Burton’s visit to Haerehuka, in the final days of his journey, coincided with a hui of Maori leaders, and he enjoyed the opportunity to meet and photograph the “Maori aristocracy,” many of whom had “made their mark in colonial history.”

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76 Belich, Making Peoples, 264.

77 “The North Island Main Trunk Railway: Turning of the First Sod,” Evening Post, 16 April 1885.
Here were Rewi (Manga), the great Ngatimaniapoto chief; Wetere te Reringa and Rangituatuka, chiefs of Mokau; Tainui [Taonui], our host; Te Haere [Haere], companion of Mr Hursthouse’s imprisonment who now enjoys a pension from Government, awarded as a solatium for his sufferings on that occasion; Te Naunau, Whitinui, Tawhana, and others of greater or less celebrity. It is unnecessary to say that in my introduction to these gentlemen I felt no uneasiness as to their past record. Government has condoned, by, I believe, an all-including amnesty, any little over-zealous acts that were done in the dim past; and where a Native Minister can shake hands and be “Hail, fellow, well met!” it does not become a humble photographer to hold aloof….78

Burton was clearly aware of the pre-existing political situation in the King Country and the personalities involved. He also demonstrated his acceptance that the Government’s amnesty on war criminals had absolved these men of any incrimination against Pakeha, rendering former conflict resolved and confined to the past. Burton made a number of photographs at Haerehuka, photographing the men individually, with their families and in group portraits. In many of these portraits he dispensed with the practice of identifying the location where a photograph was taken in the caption. Whereas elsewhere in the series photographic subjects were defined by their connection to a geographical site, here the identity of the individuals photographed was of greater importance than their immediate surroundings, and the portraits would carry meaning beyond the context of the King Country series. Maori leaders – including these men – were popular subjects of commercially produced cartes de visite, and Burton must have been eager to capitalise on the marketability of these portraits. However, he made a number of photographs of the assembled leaders at Haerehuka and identifies the location as a means of recording the hui as a historic event (fig. 5-17). The caption acknowledges the importance of these men: “Great Chiefs at Whare-Komiti – Haerehuka – King Country.” In addition, the name of each man is inscribed beneath their position in the photograph, fostering a sense of their celebrity.

78 Burton Brothers, 21.
As in his photographs of “notables” in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, Burton has reverted to familiar portrait types to represent these men. With the exception of negative 3623, which shows the assembled leaders in posed debate, figures are arranged in static poses often in standard group portrait compositions. Subjects are featured variously in European and Maori attire, reflecting Burton’s complaint that many of the Maori leaders had “more or less, adopted European costume. Another sign of the times! For it is evident that the true Maori dress is doomed and that the korowai and even the blanket must soon give place to shirt and pants all over the country.”

While the assembled “Great Chiefs” were photographed wearing blankets, European shirts are visible beneath their outer garments and most are also photographed wearing European suits. This suggests some coercion from Burton to attain a more “authentic” portrait, but it appears the preference of these individuals was to be represented as European gentlemen. Wetere Te Renga is photographed individually clothed in a blanket and again with his wife and son in a three-piece suit and overcoat (fig. 5-18). His wife is dressed traditionally wearing a korowai, but this covers a European dress and in

79 Burton Brothers, 22.
another photograph the same korowai is shown worn by an older woman. Wetere’s son is shown in the manner of a smart European boy, and the group portrait conveys the impression of an affluent Victorian family. Wetere was pivotal in persuading Wahanui and Rewi Maniapoto to negotiate with the colonial government in the opening up of Ngati Maniapoto lands and was eager to encourage positive relations with Pakeha having been influenced by colonial culture from a young age. This manner of representation was appropriate and probably controlled by Wetere. Rather than “A Maori at Home,” Wetere appears as a travelling gentleman on business and the contrivance of the portrait setting is revealed by the woven mat they stand on, which recurs as a prop in Burton’s photographs at Haerehuka.

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80 “3625 – At Whare Komiti – Haerehuka – King Country.”

Similarly, Burton’s portraits of Wahanui taken at his home in Alexandra represent a man of substance and stature (fig. 5-19). As with the portraits of the other “Great Chiefs” Wahanui is clearly identified and contextualised in the caption information: “The Great Ngatimaniapoto Chief ‘Wahanui’- at his house – Alexandra.” Seated on a timber verandah, he commands the camera’s view and occupies the full-frame. A subsequent wider view showing Wahanui surrounded by Maori identified as “Family and Friends” confirms the house to be a
substantial European villa with a deep verandah. In his diary Burton stated that this house was provided by a “paternal Government” that paid Wahanui a pension. He described Wahanui as a “Maori Machiavelli” and noted his recent shift in public character evident in his central role at the ceremonial launch of the railway construction. This apparent transformation in character was attributed to Rewi and Wahanui’s joint resolution to cooperate with Pakeha in the opening up of the King Country, exercising control of the process from within as a means of retaining their autonomy and mana.82 The same approach can be seen in Wahanui’s control of his public image. Again, Burton’s “Maori at Home” appears in the trappings of Pakeha affluence, his hair and beard in European contemporary style and wearing a full suit with the lower button undone, in accordance with the fashion at Eton College.83 Even his taiaha resembles an ornate walking stick or regal sceptre, enhancing the air of authority generated in this portrait. In the context of Tawhiao’s decline in power it suited Wahanui to be portrayed in a regal manner, which Burton has allowed and perpetuated in the making and presentation of this image.


83 Knight, 78.
Burton described a meeting with Tawhiao at Whatiwhatihoe, but no portrait sitting appears to have occurred and no photographs of Tawhiao are listed in the catalogue or studio negative register. Once again, Burton was disappointed with his subject’s choice of attire as Tawhiao, who had appeared “more Maori” when dressed in a blanket preferred to receive his
guests in “a pot hat and suit of solemn black.” 84 Payton’s account of this meeting is more revealing:

…we left for Whatiwhatihoe to see Tawhiao, the so-called king, but who really has no more influence over the Maoris than some half-dozen other chiefs. Tawhiao was at home, having recently returned to Whatiwhatihoe in a sulky fit, in consequence of some railway works being carried on in his “dominions,” in spite of his royal prohibition. We met him strolling about in a white blanket and a blue Tam o’Shanter, looking a fine, tall savage as he is; but he objected to being seen by pakehas in this guise, and forthwith retired to put on his royal garments, which, since his visit to London, consist in a tall, black silk hat, black frock-coat and trousers, black gloves, and an umbrella. He shortly appeared in these garments, looking like a Methodist parson out for a holiday. 85

Payton ridiculed Tawhiao’s choice of European attire and, with Burton, considered this a sign of the weakening of Maori cultural and political independence. It is significant that Burton toured the King Country and did not photograph the King. This renders Tawhiao invisible in the context of the series, but also manifests his diminishing authority over his dominion, as articulated by Payton. While Burton concluded his diary with his account of meeting Tawhiao, he did not report the content of their conversations. Instead, he noted his disapproval at the actions of the King’s female companions in exposing their bare backsides to Burton and Payton – a customary Maori expression of protest. The omission of verbal and visual representation isolates Tawhiao from the narrative and the series. Instead, Burton represented the seat of power as vested in Wahanui and the “Great Chiefs” photographed at Haerehuka, whom he portrayed as stately and regal gents. In doing so he signalled the destabilisation of the King Movement under Tawhiao and the accessibility of King Country lands to Pakeha.

Payton’s account confirms that Tawhiao and other Maori had total control over their representation. Maori were not the passive subject of the camera, but were instead well aware of the power of photographic representation and the circulation of their personal images. Despite Burton’s repeated pleas of political detachment (“my business was to just take photographs;” “I must not be led into politics”), he activated the political mechanism of the camera and entered into a transaction of political engagement with his subject and the viewer. By photographing Maori individuals who played an active role in their self-representation, he allowed the expression of their political and personal agendas, but through the use of textual

84 Burton Brothers, 24.

85 Payton, 288.
accompaniment he simultaneously sought to align these photographs to the expectations and ideology of a colonial audience.

**Conclusion**

As portrayed by Burton, “The Maori at Home” were friends and allies to the colonial government and settler community. Through a combination of text and photographs, he created a positive impression of subdued and assimilated Maori with interracial conflict confined to the past. Episodes of resistance and accounts of former conflict recur in his written narrative, staging a contrast with the recent past of the King Country and the situation encountered during his tour. Burton reflected that his journey through the region had generated some suspicion that the “great Native difficulty question” existed only as a “bogey” and would have been resolved long ago were it not “for certain interests involved in its continuance.” He inferred that the ambitions of Tawhiao and his followers prolonged the “difficulty,” which he was satisfied was now “as ‘dead as the Doges.’” However, the remoteness of the region and its reputation in the popular imagination as mysterious and threatening lent his series commercial appeal, and he capitalised on the attraction of the region to the news media and general public by publishing his diary in newspapers within Dunedin and the North Island.\(^8^6\)

Burton’s pacified portrayal of the King Country benefited the government in their efforts to continue infrastructural expansion in the region and to open up the lands to Pakeha investment and settlement. Payton’s conclusion to his King Country chapter demonstrates the positive potential of this portrayal to colonial interests, surmising the threat to traditional Maori cultural life as an inevitable side-effect of progress:

The North Island Trunk Railway, which has already been commenced at both ends, is destined to run through a considerable part of the country I have described; and if it is destined to destroy romances, and cause Maoris to give up their own picturesque garments for “chimney pot” hats and black frock-coats, it will, at any rate, open up a large tract of country containing excellent land, timber of extraordinary size, vast opportunities for sport, and some of the most lovely scenery in the world.\(^8^7\)


\(^8^7\) Payton, 289.
The commercial success of *The Maori at Home* is difficult to determine without access to the studio’s sales records, but photographs from this series are now common in national and international collections and Burton is best known for this body of work. Owing to the continued appeal of Maori themed material, original Burton Brothers’ photographs showing Maori subjects continue to attract higher prices on the resale market than prints of non-Maori scenes. Contemporary news accounts indicate the appeal of these photographs to popular colonial thought, one reporter noting that the series illustrated “the manner and customs of our aboriginal predecessors in New Zealand,” meeting the demand among tourists who sought to “preserve mementos of the country.” Burton’s efforts in recording Maori culture and manner of life was recognised formally by the Royal Geographical Society, which accepted him as a Fellow in 1886. While it is interesting to reflect that his project was not equivalently acknowledged by the Royal Photographic Society, this gesture confirmed the status of *The Maori at Home* as a significant contribution to knowledge of indigenous cultures and reinforced Burton’s ostensible role as a recorder of history.

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88 Brett McDowell, conversation with author, 13 October 2006.

Chapter 6

PHOTOGRAPHY ALONG THE FIRE BELT:
ALFRED BURTON’S COMMERCIALISATION OF THE
TARAWERA ERUPTION, 1886

Alfred Burton’s expedition through the King Country gave him a taste of the photographic potential of the central North Island. But while The Maori at Home series was “tolerably successful” in its measure of “coin and kudos,” Burton was not personally fulfilled.¹ From Taumarunui he glimpsed a view of Mounts Ruapehu and Tongariro in the central North Island thermal region and began planning a photographic tour to this region. He commenced this expedition in October 1885 and included in his itinerary Lake Tarawera, Rotomahana and the Pink and White Terraces, the naturally formed silica deposits internationally renowned as “the wonderland of the Southern Hemisphere.” As the central attraction of the “Hot Lakes District” – as the surrounding region was popularly known – the area was fast becoming “the great sanatorium of Australasia” as international and domestic tourists availed themselves of the therapeutic properties of the geothermal waters, made more accessible through the recently established steamer network.²

This was Burton’s first visit to Tarawera and the Terraces, yet in late June 1886 a Dunedin reporter declared his name to be inextricably associated with this location: “Burton and Tarawera – the names will be associated for as long as the language and photographic albums endure.”³ During the intervening months disaster had struck; in the early morning of 10 June 1886, Mount Tarawera erupted, dramatically transforming the surrounding landscape and destroying the Pink and White Terraces. Settlements around the base of the mountain were buried in ash, including Te Wairoa, where many tourists were accommodated. An estimated 150 people lost their lives in the eruption, of whom almost all were Maori from settlements on the shores of Lake Tarawera and other lakes in the vicinity.⁴ Seven Europeans

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³ *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 25 June 1886.

were also killed, being settlers and tourists at Te Wairoa. Using a combination of visual and verbal media, Burton directly catered to the news interest in this disaster, earning him the reputation as the pre-eminent photographer of the region.

This chapter considers the positioning of Burton and his studio as paramount photographers of the region. His fame was escalated through his association with the Tarawera eruption and his visual representation of the region’s disaster zone. Photographs played an integral part in the promotion of Rotomahana and the Pink and White Terraces before, during, and after the eruption. Photography also played a vital role in the recontextualisation of the region after the eruption as a “historic ruins,” a strategy that sought to retain the site’s international tourist appeal. The colonial perception of the Terraces prior to the eruption was generated by linguistic and visual representations that shared common stylistic tropes reflecting colonial values for the location. Burton’s pre-eminence as a photographer of the Tarawera region was contingent on the written word and his business acumen in revising and remarketing the studio’s earlier bodies of work to meet a new agenda and public interest.

Photographs of the Terraces followed conventional approaches developed in conformance with those established in other media. After the eruption, photography became the authoritative medium to record and circulate evidence of the destruction, alongside extensive newspaper reportage. Throughout the Burton Brothers studio’s phases of operation, newspaper reporting and advertising played an essential role in promoting the celebrity of the studio and its practitioners, and the sale of their work. The studio exploited news media to promote their photographs of the Rotomahana thermal landscapes preceding and immediately following the eruption. Newspaper reporting and advertisements, along with the textual markers that overlaid and accompanied photographic products, show the studio targeting existing photographs and initiating new projects in response to a significant news event: the Tarawera Eruption and the resultant destruction of the famed Pink and White Terraces. This strategic use of news media now provides a record of the studio’s activities and tangible evidence of their operations and marketing methods. Many photographic studios were engaged at the Terraces before and after the eruption, but the popularity of Burton Brothers imagery is attributable to the studio’s awareness of consumer expectations for photographs of the region and the utilisation of news channels and public interest as a promotion tool.

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**The Pink and White Terraces in the Colonial Imagination**

The eruption of Mount Tarawera was a pivotal moment in the development of colonial New Zealand society and its emerging cultural identity. The destruction of the internationally renowned Pink and White Terraces gave New Zealand its own “historic ruins” and generated stories of tragedy, survival and heroism that attracted interest around the world. The eruption was a significant natural disaster unequalled in New Zealand’s colonial experience. It shocked the settler community and the wider international public, who believed that as no major volcanic activity had occurred in New Zealand in the 150 years of European interest in the islands, the thermal “wonderland” around Lakes Taupo and Tarawera was the “dying embers” of previous volcanic activity. The suddenness of the eruption stimulated considerable interest, and international newspapers immediately responded. Accounts of tragedies, survival stories, the recovery effort, and speculations as to the scientific causes of the eruption filled newspaper columns for days, weeks and months following the eruption. Alongside any available facts pertaining to the eruption and recovery effort, accounts were published that described the region prior to the eruption. Travel literature, such as the Union Steam Ship Company’s guidebook *Maoriland* (1884), J. A. Froude’s *Oceana* (1886) and J. H. Kerry-Nicholls’ *King Country* (1884), were heavily quoted in these accounts to emphasise the natural phenomena that had been destroyed. Burton’s own writings about these events fit into national and international interest in the disaster and the studio’s photographic representations of the region were enlisted to graphically convey the gravity of the loss, even before photographs of the scene of the eruption were attainable.

The Pink and White Terraces were of economic importance to both Pakeha and Maori. Travel narratives describe the experience availed to tourists to access the Terraces, reflecting the highly organised arrangements and business relationships established to maximise financial return from the widespread popularity of the location. Standard routes and itineraries were followed to and around the Terraces, which were only accessible through the escort of

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6 McClure, 18-19.

7 Keam, xiv.

8 “The Volcanic Eruption in New Zealand,” *The Times*, 16 June 1886.

9 Keam, 159-165, 257-263.

Maori guides, most frequently either Guide Kate or Guide Sophia. Tourists visiting the Terraces were based at Te Wairoa, where they had a choice of two hotels: Moncrieff’s Terrace Boarding House or McRae’s Rotomahana Hotel, the latter being more popular on account of being licensed to sell alcohol. Parties were generally carried by boat across Lake Tarawera to Lake Rotomahana, where they were provided with lunch and opportunities to purchase produce from local Maori. At Te Wairoa, Maori entertained tourist groups with regular haka performances, in exchange for a “certain remuneration.” The loss of the Pink and White Terraces threatened the stability of New Zealand’s developing tourist economy and with it the potential for further immigration and investment.

Interest in the eruption among Londoners was undoubtedly heightened by the profile of New Zealand at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, which opened in London on 4 May 1886. New Zealand’s display at the exhibition featured representations of the Terraces, including paintings by Charles Blomfield and the English travel writer Constance Frederica Gordon Cumming, as well as photographs by Josiah Martin. Other exhibits, including the work of twenty-seven photographers, emphasised the colony’s scenic attractions and the material progress of New Zealand’s towns and cities, consistent with a general theme that celebrated the “onward march of the country” and supported an assessment of the opportunities for capital investment. While photographs of the Terraces were most likely intended to be perceived in this manner, the events of 10 June 1886 transformed these images from illustrations of unique natural scenery to testimonials to the destructive capacity of nature. Reports from London noted the considerable demand for photographs of New Zealand scenery among visitors attending the exhibition in the period following the eruption.

11 Froude, 239-240.
12 Kerry-Nicholls, 87-89; Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., 262.
13 Kerry-Nicholls, 93; Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., 279.
14 Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., 269.
16 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 267-269.
18 New Zealand Herald (Auckland), 1 September 1886.
In London circles it was popularly believed that the colony was “hopelessly ruined” by the eruption. Exaggerated reports about the future of the colony circulated in metropolitan spaces, where it was further claimed that the British settlement of New Zealand was threatened because the colony was “in danger of some day suffering the same fate as Pompeii or Herculaneum.” Intervention was required to restore the impression of progress in the colony that the New Zealand exhibit sought to promote. Officials in London attempted to suppress the negative connotations of the eruption and to reassure readers that the “vast material resources and rapid progress of New Zealand” remained unaffected by volcanic activity in the North Island. Writers suggested that the deposits of volcanic ash would improve the soil culture and would thus benefit agriculture. Other writers aimed to inflect a positive outcome from the eruption in the gaining of a new tourist attraction at the site of nature destroying “one of her loveliest pieces of handiwork.” Immediately following the eruption, there were reports of tourists travelling to Rotorua in order to view the scene of the disaster. Some writers even suggested that the altered landscape and the spectacle of destruction were more appealing than the beauty of the terraces. Guided by written descriptions and photographs of the area prior to the eruption, travellers witnessed the sites where identified structures and features once stood and were populated by celebrated personalities, some of whom were killed in the eruption. Newspapers soon reported discoveries of the “New Wonderland” created by the eruption, and the Government was urged to restore road access to the region to enable tourist access.

For Tuhourangi, the Maori hapu (sub-tribe) who lived in the Tarawera area, the reality of this situation was very different from the “New Wonderland” promoted in news reports.

19 Otago Witness, 8 October 1886.


21 Bowen.

22 Evening Post, 31 December 1886.

23 "Volcanic Eruption in New Zealand."

24 Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand Ltd., New Zealand: The Wonderland of the World (Dunedin: Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, 1886), 34.


Ash deposits and altered lake levels made habitation in the vicinity impossible as their homes, natural resources and livelihoods were destroyed. Many Maori who had formerly acted as service providers to the tourism industry were either killed or forced to resettle outside the region. The coach road from Rotorua to Wairoa was not reconstructed until the 1890s, and this affected the ease of access to the area.27 However, by 1900 tourism was reinstated and scenes of the devastation persisted as sites of touristic interest. The “Buried Village” of Te Wairoa remains a popular tourist attraction to this day, operating as a private enterprise since 1931.28

The widespread circulation of representations and remembrances of the Rotomahana region has ensured that subsequent audiences possess knowledge of the fame and beauty of the Terraces. Despite monochromatic photography’s inability to capture the key attraction of the terraces – their remarkable colour – the region lured many photographers. Tuhourangi Maori who served as kaitiaki (guardians) to the Terraces knew the value of pictorial representations and from 1877 imposed a fee on photographers intending to operate in the region.29 The Maori awareness of the value of their cultural property indicates a presumption of the mercenary nature of pictorial representations. The implementation of the £5 charge was born from an expectation that photographers would “receive a great deal of money for their photographs when exhibited for sale.”30 The extent of this regulation was tested by Constance Frederica Gordon Cumming. During a guided visit to the Terraces in 1877, she persisted in sketching despite objections from Maori who insisted upon payment of the requisite fee.31 Gordon Cumming refused, asserting a distinction between water-colour sketching and photography. In response, Tuhourangi resolved she pay a greater fee “because the coloured drawings give a truer idea of the place, and must therefore be more valuable.”32 This, Gordon Cumming believed, would be of benefit to local Maori as her representations would induce further travellers and bring greater wealth to the region. Her resistance continued and under the threat of confiscation she smuggled the sketches out of the district, eventually exhibiting

27 Ritchie, 41-44.
30 *North Otago Times* (Oamaru), 20 April 1877.
32 Gordon Cumming, 303.
them at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. Gordon Cummings narrative of this episode and her dismissal of Tuhourangi’s proprietary rights as “extortion” demonstrates the stubborn belief among the travelling European public of their right and duty to record and document the places and peoples they encountered.\(^\text{33}\)

In his discussion of tourist attractions in nineteenth century America, John F. Sears recognised that tourism is essentially an aesthetic experience and has its origins in the Romantic Movement in art and literature. To satisfy this aesthetic impulse, tourism “demands a body of images and descriptions” to visually manifest these places as a fetishised experience and present an inducement to travel.\(^\text{34}\) The proliferation of such images forms a popular and mythologised understanding of places that obscures the authenticity of the natural location to the cultural layer imposed upon it, essentially reducing these places to become their visual equivalents.\(^\text{35}\) This is particularly potent in the case of the Pink and White Terraces, which may now be experienced only as visual representations. Photographs initially created for the agenda of tourism assumed new meaning in the wake of the disaster and the sudden disappearance of the fetishised object. The destruction of the Terraces and its associated human tragedy inform the cultural layers by which these images are now understood. Commonality of approach in literary and visual representations by contemporary writers and image makers reflects a shared response to the subject. This response was influenced by the highly organised experience of visiting the locations and references a standardised lexicon of descriptions for the geographical features and associated characters.

**Burton Brothers and “The Hot Springs District”**

Photographs of Rotomahana and the Terraces first appear in the Burton Brothers’ negative register as numbers 878 to 957, identified by the heading “Hot Lakes.” These negatives were initially promoted for sale as part of the *New Zealand through the Camera* series in 1878 and were included in the studio’s *Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery* released in 1879.\(^\text{36}\) The catalogue lists these photographs as a sub-series

\(^{33}\) Wevers, 194.


\(^{36}\) Burton Brothers, *Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery* (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1879).
entitled “The Hot Springs District,” available as “standard size” whole plate prints, as “card views” for the photograph album and as stereographs. Unusually, prints from this sub-series were also offered in an additional “extra large size for framing” at a size of 17 x 13 inches, printed in the “permanent” carbon process. The studio’s application of new technology reflects the perceived desirability of these images and the predicted demand for consumers to frame and hang these prints for permanent display. Making prints available in a range of formats enabled flexibility and broader appeal, and examples from this series are commonly found in institutional collections as stereographs, loose prints, and mounted prints bound in albums. In albums, prints of the Terraces are often bound among Burton Brothers photographs from later series, as well as photographs made after the eruption and those by other photographers.37 Prints from this sub-series and prints from the studio’s subsequent collections of photographs of the region were also used to illustrate published travel guides and unpublished tourist diaries.38

The studio’s photographs of the Terraces exemplify their broader project to amass a stock of pictorial representations of New Zealand’s identified locations of scenic, industrial or civic interest. The ability of their prints to be instantly recognisable and to appeal to universal expectations of how a geographical location should appear produced generic types that could be applied to narratives other than those generated by the studio. Accordingly, the negatives were described in the catalogue in a manner that corresponded with the standard itinerary registered in tourist diaries and guidebooks. The listing followed the popular convention of referring to the Terraces by their Maori and English names, and popular names are used to identify features of the Terraces: “Boiling Cauldron,” “The Boar’s Head,” “Umbrella Buttress” and “Tourists’ Tablets.”39 The catalogue formed an inventory of celebrated geographical features and utilised tourism rhetoric and popular names to make natural features identifiable and familiar. This common lexicon of names for geographical features,

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37 An example of this is an album of Burton Brothers whole plate prints entitled Views of New Zealand in the collection of Puke Ariki, New Plymouth. This album comprises whole plate prints of the North and South Islands of New Zealand and includes a print inscribed “880 Boars Head – White Terrace” (1878) and prints from negatives taken on Alfred Burton’s 1885 trip to Rotomahana and negatives made subsequent to the eruption.

38 The travel diary of John McNab includes Burton Brothers photographs of Rotomahana and the Terraces that supplement his written narrative of visiting the region in March 1886. McNab, John, b 1855: Diary and travel account. Off for a Holiday or Glimpses of Maoriland,” 24 February - 31 March 1886, MS-Papers-6190, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

39 Burton Brothers, 9-10.
often supplanted customary Maori names, although the retention of Otukupuarangi and Te Tarata, for the Pink and White Terraces respectively, invested the locations with ethnic association, reflecting the typical tourist experience of accessing the terraces through the accompaniment of a Maori guide.

However, the act of assigning European derived names and definitions for geographical features and locations is itself a powerful statement of colonisation and control over natural resources. The recurrent use of these names in literature and in the captions and written descriptions accompanying visual representations reinforced the popularity of the new designations and the cultural connotations they conveyed. “Rotomahana,” for instance, literally translates from Maori as “warm lake.” Following the convention of literature and newspapers, Burton’s published catalogue and negative register refers to the region as “The Hot Springs District” and “Hot Lakes.” While semantically “Hot Lakes” may not seem a departure from the Maori name for the area, the use of the plural “lakes” suggests abundance and expands the geographical area beyond Lake Rotomahana and the rohe (territory) of Tuhourangi to include Lake Tarawera, Te Wairoa and Ohinemutu on the shores of Lake Rotorua. The terms “Hot Lakes District” or “Lake District” also achieved a semantic association with the Lake District of North-West England, a well-established tourist attraction that was renowned for its scenic beauty and celebrated in the work of Romantic poets and artists.

Indeed, the name “Pink and White Terraces” was itself a colonial construct in popular usage by the mid-1870s. Upon describing his trip to “the Auckland Lakes and Hot Wells” in 1872, Anthony Trollope identified the “pink terraces” and the “white terraces” but does not use these terms in collective association or as proper nouns. By 1874 newspapers referred to the “White Terrace” and “Pink Terrace” as identifiable place-names, often in association as the “pink and white terraces.” This soon developed in common usage as the proper noun,

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43 *Otago Witness*, 4 April 1874; *Evening Post*, 25 July 1874.
“Pink and White Terraces.” Prior to this, the Terraces were referred to most commonly by their Maori names, Te Tarata and Otukupuarangi. Maori associated these features with physical characteristics other than their colour: “Te Tarata” was translated to English as “tattooed rock” reflecting the natural impressions in the siliceous surface; and “Otukupuarangi” was translated to mean “cloudy atmosphere, from the continually ascending steam-clouds.” By contrast, “Pink and White Terraces” identifies these features collectively and differentiates them by their colour, thus investing the locations with aesthetic values. This consistent referencing in simple and memorable terminology conferred familiarity on the location and carries implications of colonial cultural possession. However, the emphases of linguistic representations could be misleading to those experiencing the locations in person. For instance, one tourist described his surprise and dismay on visiting the Terraces that the “characteristic of the Pink Terrace from which it has derived its name has almost faded.”

The circumstances behind Burton Brothers’ procurement of their first series of “Hot Lakes” photographs indicate the studio’s targeted approach in response to consumer demand for photographs of the region. As Burton did not visit Rotomahana until 1885, it is clear that the photographs were taken by contract photographers or employees of the studio. A news item in the Otago Witness of September 1878 recorded that Burton Brothers contracted the London photographers Charles and George Spencer and a certain “Edwards” to photograph the Lake Country and Tongariro. The Spencer brothers were already engaged in the service of the studio for a photographic project on the West Coast of the South Island, where they famously encountered gold deposits on Mount Cook and photographed the Southern Alps and glaciers.

Charles Spencer opened a portrait studio in Tauranga in 1879 and established a reputation as a leading photographer of the thermal lakes region, publishing Spencer’s Illustrated Guide to the Hot Springs in 1885. Following the eruption, Spencer was commissioned as a photographer for Percy Smith’s government survey party to the scene of

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44 Bay of Plenty Times (Tauranga), 23 May 1877

45 Ferdinand von Hochstetter, New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology, and Natural History; With Special Reference to the Results of Government Expeditions in the Provinces of Auckland and Nelson (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1867), 410 and 417.

46 McNab, 64.

47 Otago Witness, 28 September 1878.


the eruption, thus confirming his authority in photographing the region.\(^{50}\) Spencer’s pedigree as a specialist photographer of the “Hot Lakes” may have had its origins in the Burton Brothers’ commission, but the studio extended no credit to Charles or George Spencer in identifying the photographic prints by the studio’s standard insignia. The studio’s negative register records a second series of “Hot Lakes” photographs in May 1882 and identifies Spencer as the photographer.\(^{51}\) Alfred Burton added a third “Hot Lakes” series when he visited the region in 1885.\(^{52}\)

The Spencer brothers’ commission filled a significant gap in the Burton Brothers’ portfolio of New Zealand landscape photographs. From the mid-1870s, the studio had endeavoured to extend its project beyond Otago. Despite these aspirations, its output was generally limited to the South Island. The studio’s 1879 catalogue presented the “first instalment” of photographs representing the North Island, consisting of photographs of Wellington, Auckland, Thames, Tauranga and the thermal region.\(^{53}\) The negative sequence follows the expected itinerary from the West Coast to Nelson and by sea to Auckland via Wellington, thus suggesting that the Spencer brothers took these photographs as an extension of their West Coast commission. Based in Dunedin, Alfred Burton did not have the easy access to the Rotomahana region that Auckland photographers enjoyed, causing a lag in the studio’s coverage of North Island locations. This was not fully addressed until Burton’s King Country expedition in 1885. The studio’s representation of Rotomahana and the Terraces was therefore not pioneering and adhered to conventions established by travel literature, visual artists, and other photographers.

**“Photography Along the Fire Belt”: Photographs as News**

Written and visual impressions of the Pink and White Terraces and the region around Tarawera and Rotomahana acquired new value following the eruption of Mount Tarawera. Burton immediately realised the potential for the expanded and rejuvenated market and promoted the studio’s existing portfolio of views from the Rotomahana region to suit these ends. His success in this endeavour is reflected in the sentiment expressed by the editor of the *Taranaki Herald*, who lamented the loss of features in the affected region that were now

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\(^{50}\) Keam, 318-319.

\(^{51}\) Negatives 1301 to 1328.

\(^{52}\) Negatives 3835 to 3933.

\(^{53}\) Burton Brothers.
consigned to the past, “the only record of them being Burton’s photographs.” The studio’s photographs of the Rotomahana region were far from unique, and Burton Brothers was far from pioneering in accessing and photographing the Terraces and surrounding locations. Photography of the region was developed according to a set of standard responses, based on the priorities of the audience and the protocols established in other media.

Even before the eruption, Tarawera and the Pink and White Terraces were noteworthy as sites of extraordinary beauty and for the touristic potential of this “wonderland.” Photographic representations were consistently associated with text to substantiate the beauty, wonder and scientific interest of the location. Prior to the introduction of the half-tone process, photographs were difficult to circulate in reproduction. Popular and collectable photographic formats of stereographs, cartes de visite and cabinet cards satisfied the demand for images of notable people or places. Photographs on paper were occasionally pasted directly into books or magazines, but more often were copied by artists and printed alongside text as engravings or woodcuts. Photographs were held to convey an authentic response, even when reproduced in other media the photographic origins of an image were made explicit in accompanying captions.

The first photographs of the Terraces were taken by Bruno Hamel, who accompanied Austrian geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter’s North Island Government Scientific Exploring Expedition in 1859. The photographs were produced to support the geological survey and were reproduced as chromolithographs in Hochstetter’s published record of his account of New Zealand expedition. Hamel also released the photographs independently as salt prints (albums of these prints are held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Auckland City Libraries and Auckland War Memorial Museum). A comparison of Hamel’s “Te Tarata”

54 Taranaki Herald (New Plymouth), 11 June 1886.


57 Hochstetter.

(1859) and A. Meerman’s chromolithograph of this photograph published in Hochstetter’s report, reveals photography to be subordinate to the written description and the agenda of the survey. The chromolithograph, claimed by Hochstetter to be “as true to nature as possible,” amplified or exaggerated numerous features of the original photograph. However, the published caption for the chromolithograph retained the association with its photographic source: “A. Meermann after B. Hamel photograph, Te Tarata on the Rotomahana Lake, Boiling spring with terraces of siliceous deposits.”

Newspaper advertisements indicate that commercial photographers were operating at Rotomahana in the early 1870s. Photographs by two commercial photographers, Charles Moeller (Möller) and Dunedin-based photographer Daniel Louis Mundy, were included in an 1873 travel guide to the North Island by Oxford scholar J. Ernest Tinne. The photographs were reproduced as carbon prints, or autotypes, and Tinne was aware of the novelty of illustrating his text with photo-quality (“correct”) reproductions. He was eager to distinguish this guide-book from the estimated four hundred existing publications on New Zealand and sought to do this by describing his personal experiences in the North Island, rather than restating facts and statistics about the destinations he visited. Reproducing photographs by

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59 Bruno Hamel, “Te Tarata,” 1859, whole plate salt print, Album 84, Auckland War Memorial Museum, page 16; A. Meermann after B. Hamel photograph, “Te Tarata on the Rotomahana Lake, Boiling spring with Terraces of Siliceous Deposits,” in New Zealand: Its Physical Geography, Geology, and Natural History, between pages 410 and 411. In Meerman’s chromolithograph, figures are added to Hamel’s portrayal and the amount and density of foliage is also exaggerated, supporting Hochstetter’s description the Terrace densely vegetated.

60 Hochstetter, 411.

61 Photographs of Rotomahana and the Terraces by Charles Moeller, William Collie and “Watkins” were advertised by booksellers and agents in Wellington and Napier: Evening Post, 21 October 1872; Evening Post, 17 June 1875.


63 Tinne, 2.

64 In stating his purpose he quoted a phrase in Latin: “Segnius irritant animam demissa per aurem, Quam quæ sunt oculis submissa fidelibus” (Images sent through the ear stimulate the mind less vividly than those which are sent to the trustworthy eyes). I am indebted to Dr. Linda Whybrew for the translation of this passage. This phrase is from Horace’s Ars Poetica
the carbon process rather than through the intermediary mechanism of engraving or lithography enabled a more direct and reliable transmission of the photographic content. In 1875 Mundy published a selection of sixteen Rotomahana photographs as an illustrated book, again by means of the carbon process and produced by the same London publisher as Tinne’s book. However, unlike the earlier text the photographs constituted the primary emphasis and were supported by text. “Descriptive notes” were supplied by Hochstetter, whose commentary contains direct references to the photographs and expands on details of the image content.

By the late 1870s, more and more commercial photographers were adding views of the Rotomahana region to their portfolios and by 1886 most photographic studios included views of the Terraces in their negative stock. A number of practitioners, including Alfred Burton, established their reputations as specialist photographers of the region. Burton was perceived as the paramount photographer of the region, despite the fact he had personally visited the Terraces only once. This reputation was largely based upon the representation of Burton and the studio in newspaper articles and on Burton’s enterprise in circulating his photographs of the region, utilising broader means than merely the distribution and sale of prints.

The disastrous events at Tarawera were of immediate interest to the general public because of the widespread knowledge and celebrated beauty of the location. An extended excerpt from Burton’s diary account of his trip to the Terraces in 1885 was printed in the Otago Daily Times, six days following the eruption on 16 June 1886. Entitled “Photography (lines 180-181) and relates to a hierarchy of the senses in which sight was valued as the most trustworthy and direct. Niall Rudd (ed.), Horace: Epistles Book II; and, Epistle to the Pisons (Ars poetica), Cambridge Greek and Latin classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 179.

65 D. L. Mundy and Ferdinand von Hochstetter, Rotomahana and the Boiling Springs of New Zealand: A Photographic Series of Sixteen Views (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1875).


67 In his analysis of the “Wiley Disaster” of 1826, John F. Sears recognised that destruction of a family home by avalanche in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Maine attracted significant interest due to the dramatic location. Sears, 74.

68 Burton, "Photography Along the Fire Belt."
Along the Fire Belt,” Burton’s revised account focussed on his personal experience of the affected country around Tarawera. However, the main objective of this trip was to ascend Tongariro. In October 1885, he commenced his journey overland from Napier to Lake Taupo, then by boat to Tokaanu on the opposite side of the lake from Taupo settlement, then summited Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngaruhoe. Crossing the lake again, he proceeded to Rotomahana photographing Huka Falls, Wairakei, Rotorua, Ohinemutu and Te Wairoa en route. This alternative itinerary, Burton advocated, offered a more extensive experience of the district without allowing one’s journey to be dominated by the Terraces: “try to exhaust all the wonders of the neighbourhood; then see Rotokanapanapa and the Terraces, and go on to Auckland [Burton’s emphases].”

Most of Burton’s commentary concerned areas that transpired to be less affected by the eruption and a large portion of the text narrates his ascent of Mounts Tongariro and Ruapehu. Intending to clarify the impact of “the terrible convulsions of Nature now at work,” Burton annotated his discussion of the Rotomahana region with additional post-eruption commentary. On analysis, these comments operate to recontextualise pre-existing photographs to fit the new market demand for visual imagery relating to the site of the eruption and to illustrate the scene of the disaster. Having photographed exhaustively at Te Wairoa, he offered morbid speculation about its destruction:

Before taking [a] boat for the Terraces I took every object of interest in Wairoa – the fall (Te Maina), the old Maori church, the wharepuni, or runanga house (Hinemihi), the hotel, the landing place, Lake Tarawera itself from all points, the boss chief Aporo, his wife Ngareta, and everybody else of sufficient importance or of sufficient charms.

[A special, if melancholy interest now attaches to these pictures. The hotel is destroyed, many of the inhabitants are no more, and the face of nature generally here is no doubt greatly changed.] 69

Through his commentary, Burton provided an inventory of the studio’s available photographs of Te Wairoa which, situated on the shore of Lake Tarawera, was covered in over one metre of ash from the eruption and rendered uninhabitable. 70 His annotation clarified for readers that the features he photographed were all impacted by the disaster and sought to validate his status as a witness to the scenes of the destruction. Burton applied the same treatment to his discussion of Te Ariki, a smaller settlement at the foot of Mount Tarawera. Of

69 Burton, ”Photography Along the Fire Belt.”

70 Ritchie, 42.
the Te Ariki inhabitants whom Burton persuaded to enter “into the picture business,” he feared that most, if not all, were killed by the eruption.

The Pink and White Terraces were Burton’s final destination before departing the region for Auckland. His discussion of the Terraces in the original text attempted to downplay these attractions in comparison to the locations visited earlier on his journey. “I am not going to ‘gush.’ Litterateurs, poets and painters have all pictured it by pen and pencil, but I question if any one can truly realise the beauty of this terraces, and of its pink neighbor, by merely making the ordinary tourist’s passing visit.” Once again, Burton presented himself as an independent traveller, a status superior to the standard tourist in terms of itinerary and experience. Burton viewed the scene with prolonged and intense scrutiny while camping at the White Terrace for eight days, lending his photographs greater authority than those of his peers, positioning his photographs as equivalent to his personal experience of sight:

Encamped as I was, right in front of the White Terrace for eight days, I would sit gazing at it for hours – constantly finding new beauties and on the very last day, when taking a final look, discovering fresh charms. [Surely the sadness we must feel at the loss of life that we know has attended the present eruption, will not have to be increased by hearing that these terraces have disappeared, or been defaced].

At the time of Burton’s annotations to his diary, news of the destruction of the Terraces had not yet circulated, but he clearly shared the widely expressed fears as to their current condition. The interjection of his 1886 commentary disrupts the reading of his experience – and an interpretation of the associated photographs – as irreconcilably confined to the past. The power of his photographs as substitutes for experience were heightened by the knowledge that many of the scenes depicted were now absent and could only exist in image form.

At this time, the studio did not have visual representations of the eruption and did not have immediate access to photographs showing the aftermath, but he served the need of the Dunedin public for graphic representations of the disaster by realigning the studio’s existing portfolio of Rotomahana photographs with the latest news of the eruption. While his annotated diary publicised the availability of this material, he utilised enterprising means to circulate these photographs to a broader public in the absence of photographically illustrated newspapers. The Otago Daily Times reprint of Burton’s diary text was supplemented with a news item reporting his studio’s “unique display of photographs of the scenes of the

71 Burton, “Photography Along the Fire Belt.”
devastating eruptions.” “Almost every place” mentioned in despatches from Rotomahana since the eruption was depicted in photographs displayed in the studio’s street-front window on Princes Street. Views of the Terraces were featured “by the score,” including a five plate panorama showing the terraces in relation to each other and their proximity to Mount Tarawera. This, the reporter believed, justified supposition that the Terraces had been destroyed in the eruption. While this display educated Dunedin residents in the physical appearance of the affected locations, the reporter identified the clear benefit this exercise presented to the studio:

We have often complimented Messrs Burton Bros. upon the enterprise they have shown in their photographic illustrations of the colony; and we think the evidence now exhibited of their pluck in this direction will especially commend itself to their fellow colonists.73

Studio advertisements also suggested that the motives behind this exhibition were more than a service to the community. On 11 June, the day following the eruption, Burton Brothers placed an advertisement in Dunedin’s *Evening Star* announcing the availability of photographs of Mount Tarawera, Lake Tarawera and “scores of other Pictures of the very scenes of the pending Eruptions” (fig. 6-1).74 The wording of this advertisement exposes the studio’s method. The main header, “The Eruptions” accords with the news headlines filling the newspapers at this time, but by making no attempt to localise the event establishes familiarity and currency. The body text emphasises the abundance of available photographs, and positions them as relevant to the ensuing disaster. Showing the “very scenes of the pending Eruptions” these photographs cater to the demand for authenticity and immediacy also seen in news gathering.

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73 “Messrs Burton Brothers, Photographers and the Eruptions.”

74 *Evening Star* (Dunedin), 11 June 1886.
Fig. 6-1. Burton Brothers advertisement, *Evening Star*, 11 June 1886.

This advertisement was reprinted over the following days, and the studio’s agents in Wellington and Whanganui similarly published adverts announcing the impending availability of photographs that had just been despatched from Burton Brothers’ studio.\(^{75}\) Crowds of Dunedin residents flocked to the studio to view this unique display. However, as the *Otago Daily Times* reporter unwittingly revealed, these photographs only possessed meaning as illustrations to written news stories:

Almost every place mentioned in the various telegrams is here to be found. In one picture is the very site where a boiling spring suddenly burst forth in the middle of the road at Ohinemutu, a few weeks ago, as described by a correspondent in our issue of yesterday.\(^{76}\)

By aligning his existing photographs with popular news, Burton compensated for the lack of visual material in the non-illustrated newspapers. As the studio possessed no photographs of the aftermath of the eruption, the photographs that were circulated to illustrate the current events were taken as early as 1878. For twenty-first century audiences for whom still and moving images instantly accompany any reportage of news events, it seems remarkable that the public receiving the news of the Tarawera eruption would be satisfied with images showing the stated locations undisturbed by recent events.

The time-lag in obtaining photographic representations of the aftermath indicates the relative lack of immediacy besetting the illustrated press at this time. Engraved reproductions

\(^{75}\) *Wanganui Herald*, 11 June 1886; *Evening Post*, 12 June 1886.

\(^{76}\) “Messrs Burton Brothers, Photographers and the Eruptions.”
from photographs showing the aftermath of the eruption did not appear in New Zealand newspaper supplements until July 1886 – one month after the eruption. Internationally, the availability of commercially manufactured pre-coated dry plates in the early to mid-1880s allowed photographers to respond simultaneously to news events, and disasters quickly became lucrative photo-opportunities. Photographs could be produced swiftly as stereographs or cartes de visite, but the appearance of photographs in illustrated newspapers was inevitably delayed by the need for an engraving or other artist’s rendering to be produced. This would not be resolved until the widespread utilisation of the half-tone process in the 1890s that allowed for photographs to be directly reproduced and printed on the letter-press. With mechanical reproduction, as well as further advancement in camera and film technology, photography was enlisted to record news events and became “a partner of the printed word.”

“From Tongariro to the Terraces: A Photographer’s Flight”

The popularity of Burton’s venture is evident in a Public Notice that excused the studio’s inability to fill all the orders in time for the departure of the English mail for “Photographic Views of the Terraces and of the Scenes of the recent Mighty Convulsions.” Clearly local residents were not only acquiring these photographs for personal interest, but were also sending them overseas. Given the positive response to the studio’s window displays, Burton found a mechanism to reach a broader audience and enliven the photographs with his own narrative. Utilising his experience as an orator and stage performer, he announced his intention to present these photographs as an illustrated lecture “by means of the

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78 Carlebach, 150-160.


80 Carlebach, 160-165; Taft, 446-447.


82 Otago Daily Times, 21 June 1886; Evening Star, 21 June 1886.
Lime-light.” Photographs illustrative of “the desolating Calamity by which the Terraces have been destroyed” were projected from lantern slides in a live performance narrated by Burton.  

As a temporal event, the lantern slide show is recorded through advertisements and reviews that appeared in daily newspapers. The earliest advertisements were printed on 15 June and announced the studio’s intention to present by limelight a “Series of Views” and “Descriptive Lecture” by Burton, relevant to the “desolating Calamity” caused by the eruption. Initially the limelight show was framed as a journey, with Burton as the guide (fig.6-2). The public were cast as passengers, departing from the Princess’s Theatre for a tour “From Tongariro to the Terraces,” conveyed by the means of photography – “A Photographic Flight.” The programme is expressed in diminutive terms, inviting interested persons on a “little Trip” accompanied by “Sundry Little Talks.” Through this style of advertisement, the authority of Burton as lecturer is asserted, aligning the pictorial and descriptive content to his personal experiences.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

**Fig. 6-2. Burton Brothers advertisement, *Evening Star*, 19 June 1886.**

In other advertisements the narrative of the journey is introduced in less metaphorical terms as Burton’s account of his own travels:

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83 *Otago Daily Times*, 17 June 1886.

84 *Evening Star*, 15 June 1886.

ALFRED H. BURTON, having traversed Camera on shoulder the whole of the Fire Belt of the North Island, will, to the best of his ability, by means of the LIMELIGHT and his Tongue convey to such of his Fellow Colonists who have not visited that region a clear idea of the extent of the desolation produced by the recent Mighty Convulsions….86

An alternative approach pitched the presentation in sensationalist terms, outlining the proposed content of the lecture and its relevance to current events (fig. 6-3). Among the attractions advertised were “THE DESTROYED WHITE TERRACE” and “THE DESTROYED PINK TERRACE,” followed by “MOUNT TARAWERA, The source of all the mischief.” Te Ariki (“The Buried Village”) would be featured, including photographs of former inhabitants, “Groups of Maoris – now smothered under volcanic stones and dust.” Similarly, advertisements itemised structures and features at Te Wairoa known to be “now destroyed,” including McRae’s Hotel, where the tourist Edwin Bainbridge was killed, and Mr Hazard’s House, where five members of the Hazard family were found dead.87 The appeal to sensationalist interest in the disaster is obvious and by itemising the list of features “now destroyed” the studio inventoried their extensive coverage of the affected sites.

86 *Otago Daily Times*, 21 June 1886.

The studio’s publicity established Burton as a celebrity, presenting his knowledge, experience, and oratory skills as a central attraction. A member of the Dunedin Shakespeare Club, Burton was a seasoned stage performer and later taught elocution following his retirement from photography. Burton was experienced in delivering lantern slide lectures; already in 1875 he presented a series of projected photographs of New Zealand scenery at a conversazione of the Otago Institute. The studio’s photographs were produced to order as

88 "Mr. Alfred H. Burton [obituary],” *Otago Witness*, 4 February 1914.
lantern slides from the 1870s and were used by other lecturers for their own lantern shows, such as an 1881 meeting of the British Association in New York that featured a number of Burton Brothers photographs.\textsuperscript{90}

International and local precedent also existed for touring lantern slide shows. In the United States of America, Andrew J. Russell’s photographs of the Trans Continental Railroad were toured as an illuminated lecture series by Stephen J. Sedgwick. A former teacher, Sedgwick marketed the lectures as entertaining and educational, with scenes illustrated in “a most vivid and life-like manner.”\textsuperscript{91} In New Zealand, a lantern slide show entitled “Clifford’s ‘Mirror of the World’” toured the colony in 1876 to 1878 and again in 1884 to 1885. The proprietor, G. P. Clifford, was a former Dunedin resident and had toured the show in Australia before his 1876 tour of New Zealand. Billed as “the best entertainment of its kind ever placed before the public,” the programme of slides featured photographs and painted illustrations of scenery, buildings and monuments throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States, including a “Real Snowstorm” and “Vesuvius in Eruption.”\textsuperscript{92} In 1876, Clifford’s Dunedin show was praised as a novelty and the sixteen square foot projections were held to convey the scenes “as boldly as a stereoscopic view.”\textsuperscript{93} Clifford’s show was undoubtedly known to Burton as banners promoting “Clifford’s ‘Mirror of the World’” are included an 1884 Burton Brothers photograph showing the Oamaru Public Hall.\textsuperscript{94}

Advertisements and reviews for “Clifford’s ‘Mirror of the World’” do not explicitly state whether spoken narration accompanied the show, but mention is given to musical accompaniments. However, the spoken word was a vital component of Sedgwick’s show which, as Martha A. Sandweiss recognised, confirmed photography’s dependence upon linguistic interpretation:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{89} "Otago Institute Conversazione," \textit{Otago Witness}, 20 November 1875.
\item \textsuperscript{90} "News of the Week," \textit{Otago Witness}, 29 October 1881; Burton Brothers, \textit{Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery}.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Martha A. Sandweiss, \textit{Print the Legend: Photography and the American West} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 174-176.
\item \textsuperscript{92} \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 3 December 1884.
\item \textsuperscript{93} "Clifford's Mirror of the World," \textit{Otago Witness}, 7 October 1876.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Burton Brothers, “2880 – Oamaru Public Hall,” [1884], dry gelatin whole plate negative, C.012733, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
\end{itemize}
Even as photographs vivified and gave confirmation to the written and spoken word, they were simultaneously dependent on these words, incapable, alone, of ever being self-explanatory or of fully communicating complex narrative tales.\textsuperscript{95}

The spoken word was also an integral component of Burton’s show. The review of the first performance on 21 June emphasised this by praising the effectiveness of the “magnificent” large-scale photographic projections which were enhanced by Burton’s insightful lecture, “delivered with variety of tone and expression.”\textsuperscript{96} The reviewer’s description and published advertisements indicate that many of the photographs were from Burton’s 1885 series and were arranged to follow the itinerary and narrative of that journey. Similar to the published extract from his diary, his lantern slide show included a “long series” of views showing Tongariro, Lake Taupo and areas to the south of Tarawera, but the audience’s main interest was in the photographs showing the Rotomahana region. Views of the Pink and White Terraces were reserved until last, and Burton deferred to the description of A. Wilson in \textit{Maoriland} to accompany them. The performance was held to be a success as an “entertainment of unique interest.”

However, Burton Brothers’ lecture series was not a unique event in Dunedin. Invercargill photographer William Dougall also staged an illustrated lecture on the “Hot Lakes Volcanic District” scheduled on three consecutive nights at the Lyceum Hall. Dougall’s advertisements consistently appeared on the same pages as those for the Burton Brothers’ show and similarly aligned available photographs with current events.\textsuperscript{97} Pictorial content included Mount Tarawera, the Terraces, Lake Rotomahana, and a recognised hero and survivor of the disaster, Guide Sophia. Dougall supplemented his lantern slides with scenes of international interest seemingly chosen to evoke comparison with the North Island’s thermal landscapes – Mount Vesuvius, Switzerland, and celebrated tourist attractions Niagara Falls and “Rock Temples of Central India.” Dougall’s first showing received a lukewarm response in comparison with Burton. Attendance was “fair,” and while the reviewer found the means of projection excellent, the photographs were of variable quality. However, as with Burton’s show, the audience highlight was slides of the Terraces and geysers around Rotomahana, and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95} Sandweiss, 176.
\item \textsuperscript{96} “Views of the Volcanic District: Mr Burton's Exhibition,” \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 23 June 1886.
\item \textsuperscript{97} \textit{Evening Star}, 17 June, 21 June and 23 June 1886.
\end{itemize}
in this regard Dougall’s show was deemed to be of “very high merit.”98 The theatrical reporter for the *Otago Witness* considered both performances and found Burton to have “the pull” in attendance, but believed both to be of equal standard.99

Burton’s lantern slide show was repeated on four nights, and an encore showing on 28 June necessitated the delay of the last train to Port Chalmers and for a passenger carriage to be added to the late-night freight train to Mosgiel, Milton and Balclutha.100 On one night, the profit (not full proceeds) was donated to the Rotorua Relief Fund, and all other admission fees were collected by the studio. Burton’s charity was itself an item of interest, used by the studio’s New Plymouth agent as a newsworthy item to promote sales of Burton Brothers’ photographs of the region.101 At a charge of one or two shillings per person and playing to consistently full houses, the studio stood to profit considerably. No doubt encouraged by this response, Burton took his lantern slide show beyond Dunedin to the other main metropolitan centres.

Throughout July 1886, Burton and his party toured Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland, showing his illustrated lecture to full houses with four or five performances in each city. The tour was effective in extending his authority and appeal beyond Dunedin with nationwide coverage, and enhanced Burton’s personal reputation by promoting his name in isolation from the studio and distancing his associate practitioners by asserting himself as the primary figure and the creator of these photographs. The show was advertised with the title “Tongariro to the Terraces,” a name that recurred in advertisements towards the end of his season in Dunedin. By the first showing in Christchurch, he included slides depicting the aftermath of the eruption, enabling the graphic comparison of sites of interest before and after 10 June 1886.102 In Wellington, the selection was expanded again with a slide showing the Phantom Canoe – the mythical waka (canoe) allegedly seen by a tourist party on Lake Tarawera the day before the eruption.103


100 "Late Advertisements," *Evening Star*, 26 June 1886.


102 "Amusements, Meetings, &c: Burton Bros.’ Lecture Entertainment. 'From Tongariro to the Terraces,'” *The Star* (Christchurch), 6 July 1886; *The Star*, 6 July 1886.

103 "Advertisements," *Evening Post*, 7 July 1886. For a discussion on the “Phantom Canoe” see Keam, 61-76.
Again, Burton was not unique in promoting the display and sale of prints showing the effects of the eruption. Christchurch photographic firm E. Wheeler and Sons had sent an operator to the site of the eruption and were only the second commercial firm to do so. The availability of E. Wheeler and Sons’ finished prints coincided with Burton’s lecture series in Christchurch. In Auckland Josiah Martin delivered a public lecture, “Rotomahana: Past and Present” using his own photographs to illustrate his experiences. Again, Martin’s lecture coincided with Burton’s appearances in Auckland. However, despite the many photographers, firms and agents actively promoting work depicting the scenes of the eruption, Burton’s authority was unquestioned and newspapers even referred to his lectures as a source of information on the eruption.

The marketing of Burton’s Tarawera photographs and illustrated lectures is characterised by a consistency of message and approach that distinguishes him from his peers and confirms the strategy of the studio to generate sales from the public interest in the region. Recent events and news coverage were utilised to generate interest in the studio’s photographs and to recontextualise existing photographs to fit current concerns, but the studio’s publicity material retained control of the representation of the meaning produced by these photographs. The campaign commenced with the publication of Burton’s diary excerpt, annotated to make it relevant in light of recent events while introducing his portfolio of available photographs. The display of the photographs in the studio window simultaneously generated sales and promoted the lantern slide show. The integration of spoken word and image exerted Burton’s control of a narrative that detailed his journey to visit the Terraces and associated it with the series of available photographs. The format of the lantern slide show reflects and extends the control of narrative elicited in the studio’s use of pre-formatted photograph albums. Burton followed established studio conventions by marketing his performances under a consistent title, but the format of the album was now transformed into a two hour spectacle in a darkened theatre, in which a pre-arranged sequence of large-scale projections of images was accompanied by the photographer’s voice. Given that the oral presentation and image projections were intangible and fleeting, this package is historically encapsulated in the tour’s itinerary and published reviews accessible in contemporary newspapers.

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The Aftermath

In order to complete the narrative of the event in the Burton Brothers’ inventory, the acquisition of photographs showing the material consequences of the Tarawera eruption was essential. Photographers were among the first to access the region after the eruption, and the work of these studios and practitioners conveys the story of the eruption. The editor of the *Otago Witness* suggested that photographers were the only profession to succeed in turning a profit from the eruption and speculated that “it will turn out in the end that the eruption occurred chiefly in the interest of the photographers.” Alfred Burton was singled out in this commentary for his entrepreneurial skill in maximising the commercial opportunities in “first taking photographs of the Tarawera country and then having it burst up.” Couched in cynicism, the editor noted Burton’s geographical detachment from the scene of the eruption which allowed him to consider the events with “perfect calmness, and purely from a business point of view.”

Representatives of Burton’s studio were not among the first photographers to visit the scene of the eruption. Spencer was commissioned to accompany the Government scientific expeditions to Tarawera led by Hector from 14 to 19 June and S. Percy Smith in July. Independent commercial photographers preceded the government party to the scene. The first photographer on site was A. L. Hawkins, representing the Auckland office of the Sydney-based firm Tuttle and Co. These photographs were taken immediately following the eruption – Tarawera historian R. F. Keam suggested a date of 13 June and an advertisement indicates the photographs were taken “a day or two” following the eruption – and were licensed to Messrs Simpson and Co. of Auckland. A selection of these photographs was printed as a supplement to the *Auckland Evening Star*, and it is possible the newspaper commissioned Hawkins for this purpose. Sydney photographer A. A. Ryan was also early on the scene, and his photographs were available through a Tauranga agent by 17 June. Keam conducted comparative analysis of these two series and despite minute differences believed them to be taken at the same location and same time, indicating that Hawkins and Ryan shared resources. However, this could equally reveal that only one of the photographers physically attended the location and that a parallel set of negatives was made for the other photographer.

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108 Keam, 300.

109 *Waikato Times* (Hamilton), 8 July 1886.

110 Keam, 300.
The photographs included in Burton’s limelight show from 5 July and listed in the studio’s negative register as numbers 4061 to 4072 were almost certainly from Ryan’s series. The description in the negative listing and in the advertisements and reviews for Burton’s show correspond with agents’ descriptions of Ryan’s photographs. A Burton Brothers’ print from negative 4069 showing a group portrait of the survivors at Te Wairoa contains Ryan’s copyright mark on the lower left quadrant of the image, confirming the origins of these photographs (figs. 6-4 and 6.5). Another photograph showing the ash-covered remains of Tikitapu Bush (Burton Brothers negative 4072) was printed in a supplement to *The Weekly Press*, credited to Ryan as the photographer. All the photographs attributed to Ryan are presented in Burton Brothers’ usual manner with the standard insignia, a sequential negative number and a descriptive caption.

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Fig. 6-4. Burton Brothers from A. A. Ryan negative, “4069 - Group of Survivors – Wairoa,” 1886. Albumen whole plate print. Album 188, P81-024, Hocken Collections.

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111 Negatives 4073 to 4077 were taken in the days immediately following the eruption and may also be from Ryan, but these were listed in the register in different handwriting suggesting these were acquired later than the first set of negatives.

112 *Bay of Plenty Times*, 17 June 1886; *Hawkes Bay Herald* (Napier), 14 July 1886.

113 “After the Eruptions.”
The series of photographs acquired from Ryan are emotive in their visual content and show the damage caused mainly to European buildings in the vicinity of Tarawera. Included in the series are McRae’s Hotel, a mill building, Captain Way’s house, the church at Wairoa and two showing Maori whare buried in ash. These images were shown in Burton’s illustrated lectures as a contrast to the same scenes prior to the eruption and stimulated the consistent response of “hushed stillness” among audiences.114 Audience members found these images to “convey more graphically than any written description, an idea of the complete destruction which has overtaken the district.” Establishing a contrast between scenes of the location prior to and immediately following the eruption presented a dramatic and direct impression of the disaster.

During his brief time at Rotomahana, Ryan photographed sites near the epicentre of the eruption. These were also the sites of interest established in tourist literature and therefore were widely represented in visual and verbal forms prior to the eruption. This ensured the recognition and relevance of these locations and features to the general public, while presenting a graphic depiction of the force of the disaster through the contrast with earlier representations. Other photographs responded to information circulated in the news, such as the group portrait of named survivors (fig. 6-4). The provision of visual evidence also stimulated news interest; the story of Rewiri is an instance of this (fig. 6-6). The man identified seated outside his buried whare as “Rewiri” was Rawiri, an elderly Maori man who survived the eruption but refused to leave despite the persistence of the rescue parties.115

114 “Limelight Exhibition of the Lake District,” New Zealand Herald, 20 July 1886; The Star, 6 July 1886.

115 Keam, 240.
Eventually, he was forcibly removed, but Ryan’s photograph of Rawiri at home permanently situates him at this location and captures the encompassing story. This print was one of the most popular among the post-eruption photographs marketed by Burton Brothers.  

To satisfy the demand for visual representations of the eruption, Burton added artist impressions of the moment of the eruption to the studio’s portfolio. The commencement of the eruption was hand-painted over a pre-existing photograph showing Lake Tarawera from Te Wairoa (fig. 6-7). The scene is humanised with the addition of a Maori family fleeing their burning whare as volcanic debris hails around them and lightning strikes across the night sky. Three alternative versions of this image were created, showing the eruption at progressive phases (negatives 3996, 3998 and 3998½) and a fourth image depicted the eruption from the location of the White Terrace (4000). All three images of Te Wairoa are identical with increasing amounts of matter expelling from the crater in each successive image (fig. 6-8). This reveals that copy negatives were made of the painted photograph in stages, presenting a

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Fig. 6-6. Burton Brothers from A. A. Ryan negative, “4066 – Buried Whare – Wairoa,” 1886. Albumen whole plate print. PAColl-9027, Alexander Turnbull Library collection.

116 The Hocken Collections hold three copies of this print and it is among the most numerous of any other Burton Brothers photograph in their collection.
sequential narrative of the eruption in action. These imagined renderings were derived from first-hand reports and knowledge of the scientific phenomena of volcanic activity. As projections in Burton’s lantern slide presentation and as a sequence of prints for the album they convey the human drama of the disaster and fill the narrative void between the available photographs of the scene before and after the eruption.

Fig. 6-7. “3998½ – Mt Tarawera in Eruption – June 10, 1886 – From Wairoa.” Albumen whole plate copy print from hand-painted photograph. Album 188, P81-024, Hocken Collections.
These artist impressions are naïve in their execution and non-naturalistic in their portrayal, but the implausibility of this representation appeared to not reduce the effectiveness in conveying the narrative of events. The representation of the mythical Phantom Canoe in Lake Tarawera shown in Burton’s Wellington and Auckland lectures was produced by the same method (fig. 6-9). The review of the Auckland show described this image as having been obtained “by a new photographic process.”¹¹⁷ In the studio’s negative register and the comprehensive catalogue of Burton Brothers negatives later published by Muir and Moodie, the description of these images is not differentiated from conventional photographs.¹¹⁸ They are also presented in the studio’s standard manner, inscribed with a negative number, authoritative caption defining the visual content and stamped with the studio’s signature. Additionally, each of these artist impressions is marked with “Copyright” suggesting the value of these images to the studio, although none of these negatives were formally registered for copyright protection. By presenting these images in the manner of photography, the authority of these representations is undistinguished from “real” photographs of the location.

¹¹⁷ “Limelight Exhibition of the Lake District.”

¹¹⁸ Muir and Moodie, Catalogue of New Zealand and South Sea Scenery (Dunedin: Muir and Moodie, 1901), 20.
An album in the Hocken from an Otago collection shows all three versions of the Te Wairoa photograph with the earlier photograph of the scene prior to the eruption, indicating that consumers valued these representations as a visual record of events.\footnote{M. E. and F. C. De Bazin Album, compiled c.1889, Album 188, P81-024, Hocken Collections. The album was found in a house in Milton, Otago.}

In August 1886 Burton Brothers sent contract photographer Frederick Muir to the site of the eruption.\footnote{“Rotorua News,” \textit{New Zealand Herald}, 19 August 1886.} His first trip was marred by poor weather, but he returned in September and succeeded in amassing a large collection of negatives of the region.\footnote{\textit{New Zealand Herald}, 23 September 1886. Negatives 4078 to 4188.} Muir’s photographs are distinguishable from the earlier set of negatives acquired from Ryan in a number of ways. Firstly, in their visual content Muir’s photographs depicted a greater range of content and deviated from the standard locations and items of interest. Without the time pressure in having to acquire a pioneering set of photographs of the aftermath, Muir spent greater time in the region – two months in total. His photographs show remote locations, often without built
structures and are generally unremarkable in their visual information (fig. 6-10). By contrast with the dramatic before-and-after juxtapositions enabled by Ryan’s photographs, Muir’s ash-laden landscapes stimulate less emotive responses.

Fig. 6-10. Frederick Muir for Burton Brothers, “4086 - Lake Tarawera from Wairoa – After Eruption, June 10 ‘86,” 1886. Albumen whole plate print. 1999/18/162, Auckland, Auckland Art Gallery.

In Muir’s series, captions operate in a different way. His photographs show generally unrecognisable sites, necessitating descriptive captions to locate the scene and enable interpretation. Furthermore, the caption assigned to each photograph generates an atmosphere of drama with the inclusion of the statement: “After Eruption, June 10 ’86.” This phrase is consistently applied and operates as a brand to unify these photographs as a series and associate each image with the events of 10 June 1886, rather than the date of photographic execution. Reference to the disaster is encapsulated by the brief term “Eruption” followed by date with no further specificity, suggesting the popular understanding of the events of 10 June 1886.
“After Eruption, June 10 ’86” was later applied to the set of negatives acquired from Ryan, possibly by Muir and Moodie. The studio’s photographs predating the eruption were also relabelled or inscribed in reference to the disaster, such as “Destroyed in Volcanic Eruption, June 1886” (figs. 6-11 and 6-12). For later audiences this imposes a reading of photographs showing the Pink and White Terraces and surrounding locations in connection with the Tarawera Eruption and invests pre-existing photographs with new relevance and poignancy in knowledge of the subsequent transformation of the locations depicted.

Fig. 6-11. “Pink Terrace. Destroyed in Volcanic Eruption, June, 1886,” c. 1885 (negative), post-1886 (print). Albumen stereograph. O.021682, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Fig. 6-12. Detail of verso, lower left, showing label.

Muir’s photographs are less common in institutional holdings than those of the series acquired from Ryan, which are more numerous in public collections than prints from most other Burton Brothers series. The reason for this popularity is possibly due to timing; orders were received for prints from Ryan’s negatives from early July when interest in the eruption was still at its peak. Muir’s photographs were available from late September by which time public interest had declined. Burton’s lantern slide show also promoted sales of the earlier photographs, and his New Zealand tour was complete by the time Muir’s series was available. However, sales of prints from the Ryan negatives and those showing the locations prior to the eruption continued in circulation during Muir and Moodie’s ownership of the firm; many prints from these negatives bear Muir and Moodie’s stamp in place of Burton Brothers (fig. 6-9). However, the Tarawera photographs by Frederick Muir (cousin of Thomas Muir) are excluded from the series of photographs showing “Wairoa after the Eruption” in the Muir and Moodie catalogue of 1901. These images were therefore withheld from the body of images widely circulated as postcards by the later firm, and are consequently less familiar than those by Ryan, for which the Burton Brothers studio is now widely recognised.

Burton was overseas at the time of the completion of Muir’s series, having departed Wellington for London on 26 August 1886 to present his lantern slide show to English audiences. The absence of his celebrity and aptitude to promote Muir’s photographs may further explain the comparatively few prints from these negatives in circulation. In London Burton eclipsed the popularity of the established English authority on the Central North Island region, J. H. Kerry-Nicholls. While Burton’s images and narration were enthusiastically received by the London audience, Kerry-Nicholls failed to attract more than a limited audience when lecturing on the same topic at the Royal Society of Arts.

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123 The Hocken Photograph Collection, comprised of photographs sourced from Otago collections, contains triplicate copies of many of the negatives attributed to Ryan but only fourteen prints from the seventy-three Tarawera negatives known to be made by Muir.

124 Audiences for Burton’s Auckland lantern slide shows were smaller than at previous centres, thought to be a sign of dwindling interest in the disaster. "Limelight Exhibition of the Lake District."

125 Muir & Moodie, 20.

126 “The Aorangi,” New Zealand Herald, 13 September 1886. Now promoted with its full title, From Tongariro to the Terraces: A Photographer’s Flight through a Firebelt, he delivered the lecture in London and provincial centres, including his hometown, Leicester.

127 Te Aroha News, 19 March 1887.
**Conclusion**

Burton’s enduring association with the Pink and White Terraces and the story of the Tarawera eruption is extraordinary given that this was not a location where he sustained any unique or genuinely authoritative contact. The importance of visual imagery, particularly photography, to encapsulate and project colonial perceptions of the Rotomahana region prior to the eruption is evident in the quantity of commercially-produced photographs in circulation prior to the eruption. The similarity in presentation of these photographs reflects the standard set of responses to the location and the nature of the public interest. The positioning of Burton and his studio as an authority on the location is due to the strategic marketing and the exploitation of public interest in the area, qualifying the statement that the names of Burton and Tarawera “be associated for as long as the language and photographic albums endure.”

This was achieved not only through the persistence of accompanying verbal and written representation, but through Burton’s manipulation and control of this and the presentation of these images, evident in his studio window displays and the lantern slide shows. The relative lack of popularity of Muir’s series of post-eruption photographs testifies the importance of these mechanisms to actuate sales.

Burton and his firm were presented as the owners of the story of the Tarawera eruption through the application of their name to widely-circulated photographs and through the spoken narrative of the touring lantern slide show in which Burton directly controlled the representation and the interpretation of the photographs. It was through the broad coverage and distribution of images enabled by the lantern slide show, coupled with Burton’s personal presence over a greater geographical range that cemented his authority in relation to photographic coverage of the eruption. However, the mechanism of the news secured the firm’s success in this endeavour and continued to manifest their activities and reputation. By tailoring photographic representation and availability to the information and message of the news, Burton was assured these photographs would meet audience appeal and understanding. He then utilised that same mechanism to promote and celebrate his work as the firm’s activities were contextualised as news. The items of importance reflected in newspaper coverage were derived from the places and persons of significance established in tourism literature and earlier visual representations. By catering to this popular interest Burton ensured the broad appeal of his photographs to contemporary audiences, which does indeed continue to this day.

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Since Alfred Burton’s first trip to Milford Sound aboard the *Luna* in 1874, the West Coast Sounds region of the South Island was a staple subject in Burton Brothers’ growing negative inventory. From 1874 to January 1888, Burton or representatives of the studio conducted nine photographic expeditions to Milford Sound, producing eight identified series of negatives. In addition, Burton visited the surrounding lakes and alpine regions of Manapouri and Te Anau in his capacity as both photographer and minerals prospector. The studio’s sustained attention to this location reached its peak in the late 1880s. In the aftermath of the Tarawera eruption and the destruction of the Pink and White Terraces, the Milford Sound region attracted new interest as government representatives and tourist operators looked southward for a new scenic attraction.

The photographic projects of the studio worked to support and promote government priorities for this region. For Burton Brothers, accompaniment of survey parties enabled access to remote locations and availed financial assistance. Survey projects and priorities are often reflected in the selection of projects undertaken by the studio: the Otago interior, the Hokitika to Christchurch Road, and the North Island Main Trunk Railway were all significant survey projects photographed and promoted by the studio. This strategy ensured their work met government and societal interest and priorities, and that photographic output was commercially viable. Awareness of survey practice and activity is also evident in the studio’s presentation of photographic products. While Burton Brothers’ use of textual markers and

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2 Burton first visited Lake Manapouri as a member of an exploration party for the Fiord County Prospecting Association, to which he was a paid subscriber. “Meetings and Reports: Exploration of the Fiord County,” *Otago Witness* (Dunedin), 17 December 1881.
language reflect the rhetoric of travel literature, the studio’s use of language also relates to the practices of surveying.

Milford Sound and the West Coast Sounds was one of the last regions of New Zealand to be fully explored and surveyed. The coastline had been described in nautical charts by sealers and later in the nautical circumnavigation of the islands of New Zealand by the *Acheron* in 1848-55. While these charts described and named the various sounds and inlets on the southwest coast of the South Island (or “Middle Island, Te Waipounamu”), and identified peaks and lakes known to exist, the interior of the region remained virtually undescribed.³ In an attempt to improve communication to the region, in August 1886 the Government considered the provision of a regular steamer service to Milford Sound and Martin’s Bay, to the north of the Sound.⁴ This was primarily intended in the interests of minerals prospectors, the request having been raised by the House of Representatives’ Goldfields Committee. The Government Survey Office also turned its attention to the region, commissioning the cutting of tracks and roads around Milford Sound, Martin’s Bay and the southern lakes. The Chief Surveyor for the Otago Province, C. W. Adams, urged the Government to consider the strategic importance of the location to New Zealand: “Seeing that for the magnificence of scenery they surpass anything else of the kind in the known world, I do not see why the stream of tourists visiting our shores could not be considerably augmented.”⁵

Tourism was one industry set to expand in this region, but improved knowledge of and access to the West Coast Sounds opened the area for minerals prospecting, mining and other private enterprises.⁶ The identification and promotion of sites of interest was essential to attract increased tourist numbers and private investment. In 1880 Donald Sutherland, the sole permanent resident of Milford Sound, had discovered and named the Sutherland Falls, thought to be the highest waterfall in the world. Estimated at a height of between 4,000 and


⁴ “House of Representatives,” *Evening Post* (Wellington), 16 August 1886.


⁶ Alan Trachtenberg observed that the United States’ government funded geological surveys of the post Civil War era stimulated and supported private enterprise in mining, railroads and timber. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 124.
5,000 feet, the Falls promised a unique attraction with the potential to match the popularity of the Pink and White Terraces. The Survey Office commissioned Sutherland to cut a track to the Falls in 1888, and completion was anticipated for August that year. Overland access to the Sound was also imperative, and by 1888 attempts were underway to discover a route from the head of Lake Te Anau to Milford Sound. Since their discovery in 1880, no visual representation had been made of the Sutherland Falls in their entirety. The completion of Sutherland’s track to the Falls was seen as a significant milestone in accessing the site, but surveyed measurements and photographs of not only the Falls, but also the route from Milford Sound were required so that “the tourist will then know exactly what to expect.” An official report to verify the height and “wonder” of Sutherland Falls was therefore essential to establish Milford Sound as a tourist destination.

An official Survey Office contingent was assembled in Dunedin and departed for the Sound on 24 September 1888. Led by Adams, the official party consisted of surveyor G.A.G. Stables, Dunedin stamp officer W. Wyincks and Adams’ son C. E. Adams. The party also included Thomas Mackenzie, Member of the House of Representatives for Clutha, and William Pillans of Balclutha, but both “soon detached themselves” to explore independently, “much to the disgust of C. W. [Adams].” Also accompanying the survey party were two groups of photographers from the studios of Burton Brothers and Morris and Co. The Burton group was comprised of George Moodie, Alfred Burton’s son Harold and a sailor R. G. Fergusson, while Morris’ studio was represented by former contract photographer to Burton Brothers, Frederick Muir, Percy Brodie and Muir’s cousin, J. M. Forrester of Oamaru, who described his role as “scribe.” Brodie (a warehouseman from Dunedin) and Forrester were identified by Adams as “tourists,” however both performed useful roles in supporting the photographers and surveyors. Forrester’s written account exists as a vital narrative of the expedition and enhances the personal record of the expedition recorded in the Visitors’ Book for Sutherland’s Milford Sound hostel, “the City.”

Adams outlined the purpose of the expedition “to measure the height of Sutherland’s Waterfall, to make a reconnaissance survey of the watershed of the Arthur River, and to find a track overland from Te Anau.” Eager to add a new attraction to its annual Sounds excursion,

7 "The Highest Waterfall in the World (from the Dunedin Star)," *Evening Post* (Dunedin), 14 July 1888.


the Union Steam Ship Company subsidised roundtrip passage for some of the men to Milford Sound aboard Company steamers and also supplied timber for a boat on Lake Ada, en route to the Falls. A statement of the expedition’s total costs and programme of works tabled in the House of Representatives detailed the professional engagement of the members of the parties. No members of the photographic parties were paid by the Survey Office and photographic expenses were not subsidised. Sutherland and his men were paid a wage for their contribution to the expedition, and while Pillans was officially engaged as a member of the survey party, Mackenzie was not. Adams did not stipulate the arrangement by which the photographic parties were retained, nor did he address the intentions in contracting photographers as opposed to sketchers in the employment of the Survey Office. The presence of two parties of photographers guarded against technical failure and verified the truth of each other’s images. Including two parties of commercial photographers from rival studios also introduced an element of competition that incentivised the studios and attracted public interest. A personal account of the expedition from Forrester, however, reveals a spirit of cooperation among the two parties and any competition is conjured only by news accounts and studio marketing upon the production of the resultant photographic prints in Dunedin.

An analysis of Burton Brothers’ photographs from this expedition against published and unpublished accounts of the trip reveals the complementary practices of photographers and surveyors and the efforts of both occupations to encourage tourism. These projects also show the studio sharing the methods and rhetoric of surveyors, reflecting and promoting the colonial vision for the frontier. Burton Brothers’ photographs from the Sutherland Falls expedition also demonstrate the utilisation of textual elements employed in the presentation and promotion of photographic material and the use of these devices to access external agendas.

**Photography and the Colonial Survey Effort**

Photography was employed as an aid to the Survey Office in the practice of visually recording physical aspects of the land and topography. The Crown Lands Department oversaw the activities of the provincial Survey Offices until the formation of the Department of Lands and Survey in 1891. The Crown Lands Department also administrated the work of photographers, who produced photographic negatives for survey purposes and on occasion fulfilled other government functions. For instance, the Crown Lands Department annual

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10 "Accounts and papers - Milford Sounds and Sutherland Falls, cost of expedition to," 1890. LE1-299-1890/147-31, Legislative Department, Archives New Zealand, National Office.
report for 1886 recorded 529 photographic plates made by the Department’s photographers in that financial year for a range of departments and purposes, of which only half were for the Survey Department.11

In 1885 the Survey Department published a volume of images of New Zealand scenery and settlements, purported “to enable people at Home to form a better idea of what the Colony really is.” Entitled The Sounds, Lakes and Rivers of New Zealand, this illustrated book was intended for international distribution and was anticipated to be “a novel and attractive form of advertising” that would “doubtless give a handsome return to the Colony for the expenditure.”12 However, the publication met with criticism due to the quality of printing and presentation of the images and the inadequacy of written accompaniment:

Imagine the sounds, lakes and rivers of the most varied and picturesque country in the world, disposed of in 34 pages of blurred, smudged, spongey lithographs drawn from amateur sketches or old photographs by nobody in particular and explained by five (-and-a-half) pages of totally undescriptive letter-press.13

In his annual report for 1886 the Crown Land Commissioner, A. Barron, urged the Government to invest in improvements to the Department’s photographic facilities. He described the potential application of photography to the work of his and other departments:

I regret very much that another year has passed without more room being provided for the increasing work required from the photo. and litho. offices. The science and art of photography is developing so rapidly that, unless some effort is made to, at any rate, follow in the steps of experimenters and discoverers in other countries, we shall be unable to work up to the standard of public taste – unable to comply with the reasonable demands which the Government may make on the department. With the splendid atmosphere New Zealand has for the production of sun-pictures, we ought not to be unable to take advantage of the new processes yearly being discovered in Europe and America.14

11 "Department of Crown Lands Annual Report for year ending 31 March 1886," AJHR, 1886, C.1A. (Wellington: Government Printer, 1888), VIII-IX. In the financial year 1885/6 237 negatives were made for survey purposes, eighty-eight for forests, seventy for public works and the remainder for Museum, Exhibition, Education, Premier, Post and Telegraph, Mines, Defence and Printing purposes. Only 114 were produced as silver prints with the majority printed as lithographs.

12 Otago Daily Times (Dunedin) 26 May 1885.


14 "Department of Crown Lands Annual Report for year ending 31 March 1886," X
Barron’s office was constrained by the unavailability of technology for the production of multiple, high quality prints. Silver printing allowed the highest quality prints, but the process was time- and resource-consuming and impractical for mass-circulation in government publications. Photo-lithography was ideal for mass reproduction, but this process reduced the fidelity of the original image and was thought suitable for “drawings in line only.” Barron alluded to half-tone printing as an alternative means of reproduction that allowed for improved image reproductions to be made by the printing press and recommended advances be made in this regard. In 1886 half-tone printing was technologically novel and had not yet entered conventional usage in the illustrated newspapers of America and Europe.\textsuperscript{15} Half-tone photographic reproduction was not introduced in New Zealand until the 1890s.\textsuperscript{16} Barron was possibly aware of early experimentation in the process, but he was more likely familiar with overseas publications on New Zealand subjects with illustrations printed with the Meisenbach process, an earlier related method for photo-mechanical reproduction.\textsuperscript{17}

In the absence of preferred printing facilities, the Department was aided by the activities of commercial photographers in documenting locations and projects relevant to survey operations. Photographs were sold as loose prints or in albums, as stereographs or large-format prints and circulated throughout New Zealand and overseas, thus promoting the work of the Survey Office and the progress of the colony within the current limits of government expenditure. Half-tone printing was eventually employed by the Lands and Survey Department from 1893, and pictures reproduced with this process illustrate the Department’s Annual Report from that year. The Department’s introduction of half-tone was hoped to open up “a path of usefulness by means of which the scenery of the colony may be cheaply and effectively illustrated.”\textsuperscript{18} This coincided with a marked decline in Burton Brothers’ promoted activity and a considerable reduction in the addition of negatives to the studio’s stock. A decade later, the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts – formed out of the Department of Lands and Survey in 1901 – was convinced of the value of photography in the promotion of

\begin{itemize}
\item[17] See, for example, J. H. Kerry-Nicholls, \textit{The King Country, or, Explorations in New Zealand: A Narrative of 600 Miles of Travel through Maoriland} (London: Sampson Low Marston Searle & Rivington, 1884).
\end{itemize}
“the colony’s scenery, wonders, and agricultural, pastoral and industrial life.” However, the Department had grown resistant to the high prices imposed by professional photographers and commissioned Californian photographer Melvin Vaniman for a set of negatives of identified attractions to be used for advertising and promotional purposes.

International precedents existed for the use of photography as a tool for frontier surveys and exploration. Photographers had accompanied North American survey teams from the 1850s with the advent of wet plate photography. Although the equipment was cumbersome and the process prone to failure outside of the studio environment, wet plate photography was more portable and more commercially viable than other available processes at that time. Wet plate negatives, combined with albumen printing, allowed the production of crisp, high quality images on paper supports. The ability to produce multiple prints on paper made photography a useful tool for surveyors and their commissioners, who included images in printed documents that recorded and promoted exploration, particularly of the western territories of the United States. Photography was an integral component of Canadian survey expeditions too, beginning with the first Government commissioned exploring expedition of Assiniboine and Saskatchewan in 1858. While survey photographers were employed by the Canadian Government, more often independent commercial photographers were contracted to accompany surveys. The images produced by these photographers were utilised in published reports and the illustrated press, but many studios also added these negatives to their commercial portfolio. Commercial photographers produced prints in a variety of popular formats, including albums, lantern slides and stereographs, thus ensuring the efforts of surveyors and expeditionary parties became recognised among a popular audience. In addition, the content of survey photographs influenced other landscape photographers to enter the field and to meet the appeal of frontier imagery by featuring the results of exploration and


21 Sandweiss, 166.

22 Sandweiss, 141; Carol Williams, Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50, 58-59.

23 Williams, 9, 51.

24 Sandweiss, 181-183; Williams, 9.
expansionist activity in their own portfolios. Survey photography by its nature prioritised topographical features, dramatic landscape and the insertion of man-made features within those spaces. This in turn influenced an aesthetic in North American landscape photography that is now recognised as a characteristic style and provided a precedent for Modernist “straight” photography.\(^{25}\)

In their studies of frontier photography in the Pacific North-West, Martha A. Sandweiss and Carol Williams have both observed the importance of textual accompaniment to printed photographs for the communication of the photographer’s or publisher’s intended message. Whether presented as a photographic print mounted in an album, as a stereograph, or reproduced as a lithographic or photo-mechanical reproduction, the appearance of photographs on paper readily enabled the attachment of texts to images. These messages influence and direct the viewer’s interpretation of images in ways already discussed in this thesis, but such texts have particular potency in relation to frontier and survey imagery. Photographs made by operators accompanying survey and expeditionary parties were intended to record and reflect the narrative of that event, so they depend upon text to qualify and explain visual content. Commercial operators, even those independent of official government activity, photographed and reinforced the ideological and political agendas that drove frontier exploration, alluding to these activities and agendas in text assigned to photographs. As Sandweiss noted, photographers on the frontier “could not convey their forward-looking message about the region’s promise without the assistance of words.”\(^{26}\) Williams applied this argument to consider the role of photography and text in (mis)representing the indigenous populations of British Columbia and to reinforce the colonial ethos:

The captions assigned to photographs heightened the authority of statements made about colonial existence, and these, like the photographs, were repetitively circulated in government brochures and emigrant guides promoting settlement overseas… While the adjoining text or caption promised to amplify the meaning of the image, it also possessed the capacity to misrepresent. The complex dynamic struck between the caption and the image seen in the numerous photographs used to promote and represent colonial settlement makes the relationship a necessary component of historical analysis.\(^{27}\)

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\(^{26}\) Sandweiss, 171.

\(^{27}\) Williams, 28.
Giselle Byrnes recognised a similar linguistic emphasis in her analysis of survey operations in colonial New Zealand. In her interrogation of the systems, conventions and language applied by colonial surveyors to conceptualise the land she arrived at a description of survey activity as “colonising through language.” Survey systems of naming and mapping were intrinsically linguistic as the land was captured and consolidated within universal schema and conceptualised for colonial purposes. The assigning of place names was a particularly potent statement of colonialism as imposing statements of power and possession, as well as “assertions of presence and signifiers of occupation.” The practice of geographical naming also inevitably usurped customary Maori names with others evocative of “Home” or commemorative of persons significant to the colonial society or to the individual surveyor.

Visual articulation was required to reinforce naming practices and circulate new names and references. The visual application of names to places was activated through the production of maps that attached names to defined geographical features and locations to “encode knowledge in a visible and spatial dimension.” Physical markers (such as signs), sketches and paintings were also commonly employed to visualise the land. Byrnes’ discussion did not extend to the work of photographers, but Alan Trachtenberg considered the application of photographs to reinforce the results of the surveys of the American West: “The name lays claim to the view. By the same token, a photographic view attaches a possessable image to a place name. A named view is one that has been seen, known, and thereby already possessed.”

Byrnes detected a correlation in the work of surveyors and landscape artists in the methods used by each discipline to conceptualise the land according to conventions of visualisation and the imposition of external narratives upon inert geographical and topographical scenes. Visual and textual representations typically corresponded to what she identifies as material and aesthetic “strategies of vision.” Understanding vision as an active

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29 Byrnes, 80.

30 Byrnes, 80-83.

31 Byrnes, 90.

32 Byrnes, 79, 90.

33 Trachtenberg, 125.
perceptual system rather than the passive process of observing and recording. Byrnes analysed representations of the land for the colonial motives they embodied. The “material gaze” reflected commercial and scientific concerns, recording values in the land that represented its commodity or resource potential, or as an empirical record of natural features.\textsuperscript{34} The “aesthetic gaze” sought values of the panoptic or picturesque. The panoptic – “as far as the eye can reach” – activated colonisation by visually capturing a broad expanse of land, typically from an elevated viewpoint or imagined bird’s-eye view. The picturesque imposed a cultural layer on the land as topography was interpreted as “landscape” and natural features were read according to conventional values of scenic beauty. Byrnes perceived the potency of the aesthetic gaze as a tool of colonial surveys for its ability to “consume” the land by purging it of existing values and visualising geographic locations in terms of the potential for future development.\textsuperscript{35}

The priorities and “strategies of vision” identified by Byrnes are seen in the work of early photographers in the Otago region, particularly John Tensfeld, Daniel Louis Mundy and Joseph Perry. These photographers accompanied surveyors or followed survey activity and documented the outcome of survey projects in the formation of towns and cities, material signs of infrastructure development or in the discovery of spectacular locations. All operated independently of official government explorations, but government endorsements of these representations is evident in the inclusion of their work in promotional efforts, particularly international exhibitions.

The same strategy of surveying is evident in the first two decades of work from the Burton Brothers studio. Their first published catalogue from 1875 described photographs showing roads to the north and south of Dunedin and inland to the Central Otago gold diggings.\textsuperscript{36} The “Scenes in the Southern Alps” series – listed in the 1875 catalogue – traversed the South Island high country, accessing the region from Burke’s Pass, and stopping at sheep stations along the way to Mount Cook. The celebrated highlight of the catalogue was a panorama of Dunedin from the near-complete spire of the First Church.\textsuperscript{37} Burton Brothers produced a ten-part panorama of central Dunedin taking in the harbour and presenting the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Byrnes, 39-51.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Byrnes, 62-76.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Burton Brothers, \textit{Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery} (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1875).
  \item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{Otago Witness}, 12 December 1874.
\end{itemize}
street plan, public buildings, houses and scenery in “graphic fidelity.”\footnote{38} Described as having a “map-like” appearance, this panorama provided a new and unique means of visualising the city for Dunedin settlers.\footnote{39} The panorama had added popularity as it encapsulated the full extent of the physical appearance of the city in a form that could be sent overseas.

Published responses to the studio’s 1878 series showing the West Coast Road demonstrate that these photographs were interpreted according to the expectations of “vision” identified in Byrnes’ analysis.\footnote{40} The “Christchurch to Hokitika Road” across the Southern Alps connected the East Coast city with the West Coast goldfields, so that Christchurch could benefit from “gold fever,” as Dunedin had done. In March 1866 construction of all stages of the road was complete, including two alpine passes, two gorges and numerous fords and river crossings.\footnote{41} The 160 views selected for Burton Brothers’ series accorded to expectations of the picturesque, most of which were characterised by “striking grandeur, while others are characterised more by the subdued beauty of the scenery of a gentleman’s park on a grand scale.”\footnote{42} The descriptions of these photographs in the studio’s published catalogue and in the \textit{Otago Witness} drew attention to the physical infrastructure of the road, highlighting roadcutting, bridges and the notorious “zig-zag” through Otira Gorge. Accommodation houses and small settlements sprang up along the length of the road and were also the subject of the studio’s photographs.

A photograph captioned “Telegraph Station – Bealey” was described by the writer as a “heartless” representation of the township consisting of “one telegraph office, two or three small out-houses, a sheep pen, two sheep, and a number of telegraph posts” (fig. 7-1). Possibly guided by the caption’s foregrounding of the significance of this outpost in providing communication between the east and west coasts of the South Island, the writer interpreted this photograph as a vision of the future: “…there is plenty of room for it to grow

\footnote{39} \textit{Otago Witness}, 12 December 1874.
\footnote{40} Burton Brothers, \textit{Catalogue of One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery} (Dunedin: Burton Brothers, 1879).
considerably larger, and to become a flourishing municipality, with a mayor, a council, and the inevitable application for a grant of 2000 acres of the waste lands of the Colony.”  

The studio’s selection of photographic projects and use of written interpretation is consistent with the motivations of the colonial administration and survey practitioners. By using professional photographers with secure reputations and established markets and circulation methods, the Survey Department was able to secure greater exposure for the Sutherland Falls expedition than if they had commissioned and produced photographs internally.

**Photographing the Sutherland Falls**

Burton Brothers’ involvement with the Sutherland Falls expedition was their first explicit, publicised association with an official survey project. The presence of the

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43 “The Southern Alps.”

44 Alfred Burton’s travelled with the *Luna* to Milford Sound as a tourist, while his association with Rochfort’s survey party in the King Country was in an informal capacity.
photographic teams on this expedition formed a focus for newspaper reports on the progress and success of the expedition. The pursuit of a photograph that recorded the full height of the Falls attracted considerable excitement, and the promise of such a photograph was accorded greater evidential importance than Adams’ intended measurement:

Two parties of photographers are going by the same boat [as the survey party], one on behalf of Messrs Burton Brothers and the other from Mr Morris’ establishment, so that before long the people of Dunedin will have an opportunity of judging for themselves how far rumour is correct with regard to the height of the Sutherland waterfall.45

Prior to the 1888 expedition, four individuals were reported as the first Europeans to have witnessed the Sutherland Falls. Donald Sutherland, with John McKay, first sighted the waterfall in 1880 while exploring the Upper Arthur Valley for a passable route to Lake Wakatipu. The discovery registered little public attention until reports circulated of a photograph taken of the Falls in 1883. Samuel Moreton and photographer William P. Hart, both of Invercargill, visited the Falls on 9 March 1883, and there made a sketch and photograph. Neither representation showed the full height of the waterfall and omitted the bottom, thus eliminating any sense of scale with which to judge its magnitude, however Hart’s image was reported in newspapers nationally as being the first photograph of the Sutherland Falls. Following an item on Hart’s trip in the New Zealand Times newspaper, regional newspapers reported on the photographer’s visit to “the highest waterfall in the world” at an estimated height of “not less than 5,700 feet high.”46 However, the name of the waterfall was incorrectly given as “Southern’s Fall, from its first explorer Mr Southern,” and this was the name circulated in regional newspapers in reference to Hart’s achievement and in recognition of the significance of this discovery.47 It is unlikely that many newspaper editors or their readers ever saw the photograph, but its very existence acted as verification of the mighty Falls.


46 Hawkes Bay Herald (Napier), 10 May 1883; Waikato Times (Hamilton), 12 May 1883; Otago Witness, 5 May 1883; "An Attraction," Southland Times (Invercargill), 4 May 1883; "A Fine Waterfall," Timaru Herald, 1 May 1883.

47 A number of newspapers also reported on the discovery of “Southern’s Falls” without reference to Hart. Tuapeka Times (Lawrence), 9 May 1883; Clutha Leader (Balclutha), 11 May 1883.
The association of Hart’s photograph with public knowledge of the Sutherland Falls is reinforced in later records that claimed he had given the Falls their name and had personally advised the Surveyor General and Adams of its location.\(^{48}\) The claim that Hart named the Sutherland Falls is not supported by contemporaneous news reports and is possibly informed by a misinterpretation of an 1888 report on Moreton and Hart’s expedition that stated: “Mr Hart took a photograph [of the falls] on 9 March 1883, and called it the ‘Sutherland Waterfall.’”\(^{49}\) This same report noted that Sutherland’s initial reports of his discovery were regarded as “traveller’s tales” and his estimate of the height as between 4,000 and 5,000 feet was considered incredulous.

However, news of Sutherland’s discovery motivated some, primarily artists and photographers, to verify the claim themselves. Among the travellers recorded in the Visitor’s Book for Sutherland’s Milford Sound Accommodation House from its inception in 1882 to Adams’ 1888 expedition, many note their profession as artist or photographer. Moreton visited the Sounds in 1882 and viewed the Falls on that occasion.\(^{50}\) Alfred Burton had attempted to reach the Sutherland Fall that same year, but made little mention of this endeavour until after the 1888 expedition. However, the published account of his 1882 trip identified the Falls as a target of exploration and a tantalising challenge for visual artists and tourists to reach:

> The programme of the scenic entertainment promised included a waterfall more than 4000 feet high, appropriately named after its discover, Sutherland Falls. Visitors to Milford Sound, who have noted with admiration the Bowen Fall, are invited to imagine its height multiplied by eight!\(^{51}\)

Prior to 1888, the pursuit of the Sutherland Falls was led by visual artists rather than surveyors. The government contract to Sutherland to cut a track to the Falls was the first official initiative to verify the location and magnitude of this landmark. The government’s contribution was meagre, paying £50 on his completion of the work on 30 September 1888, even though Sutherland had incurred personal costs of an estimated £300 in tools, materials


\(^{49}\) "The Highest Waterfall in the World (from the Dunedin Star)."

\(^{50}\) Samuel H. Moreton, *Milford Sound and the Scenery of the West Coast of the Middle Island of New Zealand* (Invercargill: Printed by Henry and John Feldwick, 1882), 11.

\(^{51}\) Anonymous [Alfred Henry Burton], "A Month Amongst the Mountains: A Photographer's Diary," *Otago Witness*, 1 April 1882.
and labour.\textsuperscript{52} In his written accounts Adams did not acknowledge the inclusion of the photographers, nor did he address the public expectation for photographic representations.\textsuperscript{53} This omission may be credited to government reluctance to promote private enterprise, but the inclusion of the photographers ensured the success and lasting public interest in this expedition.

\textbf{Narrative: The Sutherland Falls Expedition}

The popular knowledge of photographic activity in Milford Sound and previous attempts to photograph the Falls informed and stimulated widespread public interest in Burton Brothers’ and Morris and Co’s activities on the Sutherland Falls expedition. The anticipation of photographic documentation of the Sutherland Falls attracted public interest to the survey expedition in general. Popular understanding of the expedition and the activities of the photographers was circulated in news reports that preceded the appearance of any photographs from the expedition. Newspaper reporting alongside the photographs produced by both parties and the associated captions and promotional material support the narrative of the expedition and constitute the lasting record of the event. These news reports also reveal the context in which the photographs were received and interpreted by contemporary audiences. While photographs serve to illustrate events described in published and unpublished reports from the expedition, they are dependent on these written sources to activate the associated narrative. Independently, the photographs project limited meaning, and without the “textual overlay” and narratives carried by published and unpublished reports are susceptible to diverse interpretation.

The series features a number of populated landscapes that register the group of people involved and the cooperative nature of the expedition. Some of these photographs include figures in the landscape as a device to suggest scale, but others are conscious group portraits, commemorative of the event and suitable for interpretation by a general audience.\textsuperscript{54} One such widely reproduced photograph has come to represent the expedition – and the Sutherland Falls – in historical accounts (fig. 7-2).\textsuperscript{55} The photograph, taken by George Moodie, is

\textsuperscript{52} “City of Milford” Visitors’ Book, Hocken Collections, page 378.


\textsuperscript{54} Lissa Mitchell discussed the prevalence of the group portrait form in the Sutherland Falls expedition in her BA Honours dissertation: Lissa Mitchell, "Burton Brothers: Images of Milford Sound." (BA Hons. diss.,Victoria University of Wellington, 1999), 14-19.

\textsuperscript{55} Hall-Jones, 36.
captioned “The Sutherland Fall Expedition – Milford Sound – Oct. ‘88” and features most of the members of the survey and photographic parties. The accounts of the expedition reveal it to be personality-driven, with members of the parties granted raised profiles through the publication of the accounts of two members, Mackenzie and Forrester. Despite this, the names of the individuals depicted in the photograph are not inscribed in the negative, as the studio had done in the past, and the identity of the subjects and context of the image is found only in published accounts. One print from this negative, formerly in the collection of Hardwicke Knight, is inscribed on the reverse with the names of all the subjects. Featured from left to right are Pillans, Adams, Muir (with camera), Wyinks, Fergusson and Forrester (standing in boat), Mackenzie, Adams junior (seated), Burton, Brodie and Stables (with theodolite). Knight acknowledged the source for identification as Forrester’s published diary, which referred to this portrait sitting and provides the date as 28 September. The date noted in the caption – October 1888 – records the month in which the Falls were reached, rather than the date the portrait was staged, further indicating through the caption that the photograph was intended to commemorate and represent the event of reaching the Falls.


57 Burton Brothers, “4787 – The Sutherland Fall Expedition – Milford Sound – Oct ’88,” 1888, albumen whole plate print, Hardwicke Knight collection, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa. Tongarewa; Knight’s print from this negative is reproduced with the accompanying names in his history of the studio. Hardwicke Knight, *Burton Brothers: Photographers* (Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1980), 42.

58 Knight, *Burton Brothers: Photographers*, 42.
Fig. 7-2. “4787 – The Sutherland Fall Expedition – Milford Sound – Oct. ’88,” 1888. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.016260, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

While this portrait suggests a cohesive group engaged in realising a common shared goal, the published and unpublished accounts suggest a very different group dynamic. The group portrait functions as an official record, with the print bearing the name and date of the expedition and the individuals captured with their professional attributes. Forrester’s diary indicates that the portrait was made at the commencement of the expedition, on the morning following their arrival at Milford and after Adams and the survey party claimed “the City” for themselves, leaving the photographers to sleep in tents. The presentation of a unified group belies the ensuing events and interpersonal tensions. Forrester’s published account provides an amusing account of the portrait staging:

Having doffed their “ashfelt” suits and donned a garb more in keeping with bush life, the whole party were, next morning, photographed by the “shadow catchers” of the party, as Sutherland calls them. It was no easy task to stand quiet for the required time on account of the sandflies, which were particularly numerous close to the water, and between exposures a chorus of slaps and blessings found a lively interlude.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Forrester, "A Terra Incognita: Expedition to Sutherland Falls."
This account invests the portrait with a character of camaraderie as the “ashfelters” rid themselves of their city clothing and comforts to explore “terra incognita,” united against the common enemy, the sandfly. However, Forrester’s unpublished and unedited diary text presents a contrasting account of this portrait staging, elaborated with occurrences and exchanges before and after the group were assembled:

**Sep 28**
Up at 5am, had early breakfast and struck the tent much regretting the time spent on our comfortable mattress. Loaded one of Sutherland’s boats for the first stretch of the journey, 2½ miles up the Arthur River. Before leaving we were photographed. This proved quite an ordeal owing to our friends the sandflies. All being ready we manned the boat and moved off. We had not proceeded far when the chief [Adams] called us back and proceeded to address us. He told us he was in charge of the Expedition and thought it fitting that he should remind us of the unforeseen perils we might meet, begs us not to quarrel and for the benefit of Mac [Mackenzie] & P [Pillans] spoke of those who were in the habit of doing nothing but sight seeing. It all went like water off a duck’s back.60

Adams’ detachment from the group is evident in the photograph as he sits in the boat, seemingly despondent, waiting to leave with Pillans at the oar. He is also more formally attired than the rest of the group, still dressed in his “Ashfelt” suit. This interchange followed an announcement from Mackenzie, Pillans and the photographic parties that they intended to proceed immediately to the Sutherland Falls, where Sutherland was currently working to complete the track. Although Pillans was a paid member of the survey party, Thomas Mackenzie, a member of the House of Representatives, retained independence from Adams’ party. This portrait and Forrester’s published account convey a false sense of unity as the “whole party” was soon to disband.

Any sense of unity is further disrupted by the Visitor’s Book from “the City” in which the names of the members of the photographic parties were entered without their knowledge or permission:

On September 27th 1888 the following party arrived at the head of Milford Sound by S. S. “Ohau” C. W. Adams Chief Surveyor of Otago in charge of the expedition. The two gentlemen above mentioned [Mackenzie and Pillans who entered their names prior to Adams’ entry], G. A. G. Stables Surveyor, C. E. Adams, W. Wyinks; also two parties of photographers one from Messrs Burton Bros. Princes St. D’n’r consisting of G. Moodie, H. Burton, R. G. Ferguson and one from Mssrs Morris George St. Dunedin consisting of Fred B. Muir photo.

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60 Forrester, "Sutherland Falls Expedition, 1888," Otago Settlers Museum.
Dunedin, J. M. Forrester Architect Oamaru, Percy Brodie Warehouseman Dunedin (Tourists). The object of the expedition is to measure the height of Sutherland’s Waterfall, to make a reconnaissance survey of the watershed of the Arthur River, & to find a track overland to Te Anau.  

The photographic parties objected to being listed among Adams’ party and annotated the visitor’s book with a statement of their autonomy: “We the above photographers consider it a damn impertinence to insert our names without our knowledge or consent” (initialled by all members of each party). Mackenzie and Pillans also entered their names separately and noted their intention to head immediately to Lake Te Anau, contravening Adams’ stated purpose of the expedition. Written accounts indicate that the photographers retained their independence and experienced better relations with Sutherland, who maintained some animosity towards the Government.

The first published account from the expedition was that of Mackenzie, printed in the Otago Daily Times on 12 October 1888 with the heading “The Sutherland Waterfall, The Highest in the World.” He described arriving at the Sutherland Falls with Pillans and Sutherland on 1 October, the first among the expedition to reach the Falls. Impressed by the grandeur of the location, he estimated the Falls to be between 2,000 and 3,000 feet in height and would be sure to attract “thousands of tourists” and a route from Te Anau to Milford would establish an “attractive and interesting highway.” Mackenzie and Pillans then set out to explore this route. Returning to Milford for supplies, they met Muir and party, en route to the Falls, at the head of Lake Ada. Further on, they encountered Moodie and party at the bottom of the lake, also on their way to the Falls, and lastly Adams’ party, which had remained in Milford Sound taking survey measurements.

Mackenzie’s account confirms the disparate nature of the parties’ activities and establishes the journey to the falls as something of a race. His early report attracted nationwide interest and Wellington’s Evening Post anticipated that the Sutherland Falls would be accessible before the summer tourist season. In this the Government was praised for its haste in opening up the Milford Sound district to travellers, apparently unaware of the eight year delay in sending a survey party to the Falls. The Government was further recognised as a vital agent in enabling access to the Falls:

It is satisfactory to find that the Government are so far alive to the interests of the colony that they do not begrudge expenditure upon rendering available to

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62 Mackenzie, "The Sutherland Waterfall: The Highest in the World."
sightseers what is described as the most sublime scenery yet known south of the Line.\textsuperscript{63}

While the account of Mackenzie, himself a member of the House of Representatives, presents a highly successful early report of the trip, the second published report by a representative of the \textit{Otago Daily Times} communicates the activities of the expedition in greater detail.\textsuperscript{64} The lengthy article was probably written by reporter F. A. Joseph, who visited the Sounds from 15 to 22 October. Unable to visit the Falls himself due to a slip that had recently obstructed the track, Joseph compiled his account based on interviews with party members. The report was also greatly influenced by Sutherland, whom the writer considered “most entertaining and willing to give any information relating to the exploration of the West Coast Sounds.”\textsuperscript{65} Sutherland is placed at the centre of the narrative, perpetuating the myth of “The Hermit of Milford Sound.” While credited with undertaking much of the work in “opening up” the Sounds, it was maintained that Sutherland’s interest did not lie in financial return for his efforts. However, given the Government’s “ridiculously low price” paid to Sutherland for cutting the track to the Falls, Sutherland expressed his reluctance to cut a track to Te Anau due to the lack of monetary inducement. His primary interest in Milford Sound, it was stated, was not in tourism or exploration but in prospecting for minerals and the “chance of making something handsome or of making nothing at all.”

Joseph’s article also contained the first report of the surveyed measurement of Sutherland Falls. The route to the fall was described in detail: from “the City” one travelled by boat up the Arthur River to the boathouse known as “Ferntree Hut” at the foot of Lake Ada. The lake was then crossed and the journey continued by foot along a track cut to Birch Hut. The Falls were located one mile from this hut, accessible by Sutherland’s track, described as “not yet in anything like good order.” The first view of the Falls was obtained from a distance of two miles, near the point from which Hart had photographed in 1883. In the vicinity of Mount Hart, which Sutherland had named for the photographer, a small hill was designated by Adams as “View Mount,” for it seemed “to have been placed there for the express purpose of affording the tourist a view of the falls.”\textsuperscript{66} The track continued to the pool

\begin{footnotes}
\item[63] "The New Wonderland of the South: Arrangements for Reaching the Sutherland Waterfall," \textit{Evening Post}, 18 October 1888.
\item[64] "Exploration of the West Coast," \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 29 October 1888.
\item[65] “City of Milford” Visitors’ Book, Hocken Collections, page 377.
\item[66] "Exploration of the West Coast."
\end{footnotes}
at the foot of the Sutherland Falls, and from here Adams based his trigonometric calculations of their full height. He confirmed the Falls to consist of three leaps measuring 815, 751 and 338 feet, making a total height of 1904 feet. This, Joseph asserted, made it “one of the highest waterfalls that has yet been discovered in the world.” As a comparison he offered the steeple of the Knox Church, which at 160 feet high was dwarfed by the full height of the Sutherland Falls.

The article continues with a summary extracted from Adams’ diary that provides an account of the hardship encountered by the survey and photographic parties. On 3 October a storm hit the head of the Sound, leaving the parties hut-bound for several days. The Arthur River flooded and rising waters inundated the camp at an upper landing where supplies had been deposited. Both photographic parties suffered losses with Moodie’s tent flattened and the destruction of several glass photographic plates and tins of biscuits. Muir’s tent was also swept away, as was his canvas boat. No more mention is made of the losses of the photographic party. Adams’ diary next describes a treacherous boat journey through rapids with Sutherland’s assistant Davis. The intensity of the rapids required the boat’s occupants to disembark and drag the boat through the water – a dangerous activity for the risk of being swept away in the current. Then, the boat began to take on water as the process of dragging had knocked out the thole pin that plugged the bottom of the vessel. Here Adams saved the day not once, but twice as he fashioned a new thole pin from an axe handle and then used a candle he had sequestered to navigate to the landing in the dark.

Adams creates an impression of his collaboration with Sutherland’s men and the photographic parties that is refuted by Forrester’s published and unpublished recollections of the same events. The damage sustained by the photographic parties after the storm was considerable.

We arrived at the lower camp, after having been six hours on the way, to find that the camp had been completely submerged in the flood and our provisions carried away and destroyed, except a few tins of preserved meat. The canvas boat was gone and one of the cameras [Muir’s] ruined, and enough glass was lying around in the shape of damaged “dry plates” to make a decent glasshouse. Here was a pretty go. Our tent was 7 feet above the water, and the flood line was 10 feet above that, 17 feet of a rise. We found that Burton’s party had been camped on a rise about 10 feet above our camp since Tuesday. They had placed their whole supply of biscuits under one fly the night they came up, and the flood had destroyed them also.  

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67 Forrester, "A Terra Incognita: Expedition to Sutherland Falls."
Forrester’s unpublished diary elaborated that Burton’s party had also placed their cameras and photographic equipment under the tent-fly, but had gone to the campsite and removed their cameras once the rain started, there being nine inches of water in the tent by that stage. The whole plate camera belonging to Morris’ party had been tied to a ridge-pole which was submerged in six feet of water and was subsequently “in an awful mess being partly in pieces with its case still full of water.” With their supplies diminished and equipment compromised, the photographic parties shared resources and set up camp together as they engaged in “Robinson Crusoe business” while awaiting Sutherland’s return with a boat. Moodie, Burton and Forrester carried supplies to the men who were sheltering at the Sutherland Falls hut and Brodie, the assistant to Burton’s party, constructed a raft to carry the men across Lake Ada. The next day was fine and Muir, who had already visited the Falls, guided Moodie and Forrester to the hut, with Forrester acting as assistant to Moodie.

Adams’ survey party remained at Sutherland Falls until 21 October, delaying the expedition’s departure from Milford. This angered the photographic parties, whose provisions were limited and whose work at Milford Sound was complete:

He had wasted valuable time during the fine weather following the flood, sitting in the house at the “City” doing his calculations which might have easily been done on wet days while his men were being eaten up by sandflies. He was well aware of the fact that we who had gone ahead, had suffered the loss of our food supplies, yet he insisted that the boat be kept waiting in the Sound. The fact of the matter is that he was deeply annoyed that we had gone off so promptly and had reached the objective before him.⁶⁸

Forrester levelled much criticism at Adam’s assumed leadership and management of the expedition, but conceded that his behaviour provided much amusement. Stables, from the survey party, informed Forrester that during the boating episode noted in Joseph’s article, Adams had sat at the bottom of the boat “in order that he might not see the snags.” In Forrester’s published account another tale was told, though with the omission of names, of Adams admiring two graves at the rear of Sutherland’s hut which he considered a mark of the explorer’s good character. When related to Sutherland this story met with much amusement as the mounds were not burials, but potato pits!⁶⁹ Some encounters were less amusing and the men were angered to discover that two life-belts borrowed from the Union Steam Ship

⁶⁸ Forrester, "Sutherland Falls Expedition, 1888," Otago Settlers Museum.

⁶⁹ Forrester, "A Terra Incognita: Expedition to Sutherland Falls."
Company were withheld by Adams for the use of himself and his son, while they would have been better utilised by the men in Muir’s treacherous and ill-fated canvas boat.\footnote{Forrester, "Sutherland Falls Expedition, 1888," Otago Settlers Museum.}

Reflected in all accounts is the cooperation between the photographic parties: “With one obvious exception the utmost good fellowship prevailed throughout even amongst the ‘shadow catchers.’”\footnote{Forrester, "Sutherland Falls Expedition, 1888," Otago Settlers Museum.} Forrester noted the considerable tension between Adams and Burton’s party, whom Adams presumed would act as assistants to the survey party following the desertion of Pillans and Mackenzie:

He [Adams] and Burton’s party had been at loggerheads and much plain-speaking was indulged in on both sides in which Fergusson – the sailor man – excelled. For one thing they refuse to act as chain men. In revenge they had photographed Adams wading in about a foot of water, as usual, wearing his life belt which never left him on or near the lake.\footnote{Forrester, "Sutherland Falls Expedition, 1888," Otago Settlers Museum.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{“4783 – Lake Ada – Milford Sound,” 1888. Dry gelatin whole plate negative. C.015685, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.}
\end{figure}
Viewed against Forrester’s account, this portrait (fig. 7-3) seems a more accurate record of the personalities and conditions of the expedition than the group portrait made at its commencement (fig. 7-2). With the generic caption, “Lake Ada – Milford Sound” the photograph ostensibly shows Lake Ada, the vital transport link between Milford Sound and the Sutherland Falls. Accompanied by insights supplied by published accounts and the shared knowledge reflected by Forrester’s unpublished diary, this photograph registers some of the personal dynamics of the expedition and the nature of early exploration in the Milford Sound. The centre of the composition is occupied by the boat, manned by Sutherland and his assistant Davies. The boat and Sutherland’s knowledge and hospitality were vital to the success of the trip. Adams, shown in ankle-depth water wearing the life-jacket that had caused much frustration, is to the right of the boat. The flanking figures are Fergusson and Brodie to the left and Adams Jr. to the right, subjects peripheral to both the composition and the narrative.

When considered in conjunction with the accompanying narratives, “Lake Ada – Milford Sound” seems to emphasise the journey, rather than the objective of the expedition to survey and record Sutherland Falls. Showing members of each party with Sutherland, the sense of collaboration is conveyed, as well as the practical assistance that enabled the survey and photographic parties to achieve their objectives on the expedition. However, Adams is visibly and physically distinct, and he attempts to enter the centre of the composition that is rightly occupied by Sutherland.

**Selling the Sutherland Falls**

Any sense of collaboration diminished upon the parties’ return to Dunedin, whereafter the Burton and Morris studios competed to promote and sell their photographs. As soon as news broke that both teams of photographers were successful in obtaining photographs of the Sutherland Falls, newspaper coverage was diverted away from the narrative of the journey to focus on the Falls as an isolated object of interest. Reports and advertisements were littered with superlatives, as each studio competed to assert their success in securing the first complete view of the highest waterfall in the world. Debates as to the true height of the Falls and its ranking as the world’s highest waterfall were played out in newspaper articles and letters to the editor, while photographs operated to validate and promote the work of the surveyors and their findings.

Written narratives reflect the inexperience of Burton’s party in comparison to that of Morris. Under Muir’s leadership, the Morris party had considerable prior experience photographing in the location and enjoyed Sutherland’s friendship and privileged support. Back in Dunedin, detached from the camaraderie of the expedition and under Alfred Burton’s
influence, the Burton Brothers studio asserted its superiority in promotion and presentation to assert the standing of its own products over those of the rival studio. The first reports of the photographic parties’ success were printed on 29 October 1888, the day following the expedition’s arrival at Port Chalmers. The editor of the *Otago Daily Times* was shown negatives from Burton Brothers of the “now famous Sutherland falls, and Mount Balloon.” In contrast to the studio’s usual practice of not identifying practitioners – other than Alfred Burton – the photographic operator is identified as George Moodie, an apparent attempt to capitalise on his mention in despatches from the expedition. The report emphasises the technical and aesthetic appeal of the realised photographs:

Favoured with the best of weather, Mr. Moodie succeeded in photographing the falls from well chosen points on Wratten’s instantaneous plates 12 x 10, and smaller sizes including stereoscopic. The pictures show three distinct leaps, measuring in all 1904ft correct survey measurements. We understand the photographs are the largest size taken from nature by any firm, are beautifully clear, and well defined.\(^\text{73}\)

Through this report, the photographs of Sutherland Falls are presented as technically advanced. The operators utilised the latest dry plate technology and made photographs of the Falls on the studio’s Meagher large format camera. The negatives on 10 x 12 inch plates were promoted as unique and pioneering, being as the “largest size taken from nature by any firm.” The Burton Brothers photographs of the Falls were presented as aesthetically appealing, but more importantly, accurate and complete, confirming the “correct survey measurements” and showing all three leaps of the Falls. In the same column, a report was printed on the success of Morris and Co. By contrast, the *Otago Daily Times* was visited “at an early hour this morning” by studio director John Morris with “two enlargements (25in by 19in).” While Morris’ prints were physically larger, they were made by enlargement as distinct from the contact prints made by Burton Brothers from large format negatives. One showed a view of the Clinton River on the pass to Te Anau, a location to which Burton’s party had not ventured. The other showed the Sutherland Falls, yet only two leaps were fully visible and only the commencement of the lower section was included. Regardless of this shortcoming, the report asserted that “A capital idea of its height has been secured.” Both studios announced their intention to display the photographs in their studio windows at the earliest opportunity.

On 1 November 1888 Burton Brothers placed their first advertisement for the Sutherland Falls photographs in the *Otago Daily Times*, confirming the availability of the photos.

\(^{73}\) *Otago Daily Times*, 29 October 1888.
prints for distribution. Leading with the header: “Burton Brothers, Success Assured,” the studio advertised that they had obtained “The Only Photographs in Existence from Nature, Shewing the whole of the Sutherland Fall from Top to Bottom.” This, they informed readers, was “The Highest Waterfall in the World.” As large format contact prints, rather than enlargements from whole plate negatives, the prints promised greater fidelity and immediacy, there being no intermediate process between the negative and the production of the print. The studio’s “Unique Series” also offered views on the track to the Falls and of the scenery of the region, specifically Mount Balloon. On 31 October 1888 the studio applied for copyright protection for two 10 x 12 inch photographs of the Sutherland Falls, confirming the commercial value the studio vested in these photographs and the belief in the uniqueness of their achievement. The studio’s haste in submitting the copyright application indicates the genuine competition that existed among photographers to reach and record the “now famous” Sutherland Falls.

However, the ability of the photographs from either studio to accurately represent the Falls was questioned, and to some it seems the photographs presented something of a disappointment:

The photographs of the Sutherland Falls which have been exhibited during the past three days have attracted a great deal of attention. It was found a very difficult matter to get a good view of the whole fall. Of course a photograph of a scene of such magnitude can at best give but a poor idea of it, especially when it is considered that the mountains which rise on either side have to be ignored all together it being impossible to get far enough back to obtain a thoroughly comprehensive view.

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74 Otago Daily Times, 1 November 1888.

75 Lissa Mitchell considers this statement to be false as the first complete photograph of Sutherland Falls was taken by F. A. Coxhead during his 1884 trip to Milford Sound. Lissa Mitchell, "Photographing Sutherland Falls," New Zealand Journal of Photography, no. 63 (2007): 20. However, Coxhead did not photograph the Falls until January or February 1889 and applied for copyright protection of these photographs in March 1889. See "Artists in Milford Sound," Otago Daily Times, 20 February 1889; Copyright Application, 89/7 - F A Coxhead - South Island Scenes, 1889, PC-4-89/7, 18982, Patent Office, Copyright Application Files, Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington. No record has been found of any photographer reaching the Falls between Hart’s visit in 1883 and the Sutherland Falls expedition of 1888.

76 Copyright Application, 88/64 - Burton Brothers, 1888, PC-4-88/64, 18982, Patent Office, Copyright Application Files, Archives New Zealand, National Office.

77 "The West Coast Explorations," Otago Daily Times, 1 November 1888.
While these photographs verified the existence of the Falls, the ability to convey the scale of the scene was limited, as the portrait orientation necessary to include the full height of the waterfall obliterated the surrounding topography. Writing four years later, Adams recognised the limitations of photographic representation, maintaining that: “1,904 feet is easy to write down, but it is not in the power of the photographer’s art to give you a picture by which you can realise the magnitude of this vast descent.” Instead he urged his readers to “go and see it for yourselves.”

Adams’ text is from the published transcript of a lecture he delivered to the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science, illustrated with fifty lantern slides showing “the chief points of interest in the sounds, and on the way to the Falls.”

His use of photography to promote Milford Sound and the Sutherland Falls, which by 1892 had become a popular tourist destination, indicates that photography performed an important role in informing the public of the physical appearance and attractiveness of the region.

Captions: Naming the View

Given photography’s short-comings in conveying scale, Burton Brothers’ photographs of the Sutherland Falls operate as a symbol for the waterfall while its meaning is carried by text. Photographic captions function as amplifiers, attesting to the significance of the photograph and applying the surveyors’ process of naming and measuring to a tangible and transportable object. Hart’s 1883 photograph entitled “Sutherland Falls” utilises this same device. The photograph shows a tent pitched on the bank of the Poseidon River, with his companion Moreton sketching in the foreground and the upper leap of the Sutherland Falls, descending the mountain range in the distance, behind dense bush. A closer view was unobtainable to the men, but the waterfall is made the subject of the photograph through the photographer’s permanent negative inscription: “Sutherland Falls, 5700 ft., Poseidon River, Milford Sound, N.Z.”

By attaching the assigned name to a visual representation, Hart confirms the name of the geographical feature and establishes a claim to the first photograph. Although the waterfall was not measured at this time, he included in the caption his estimate of the height of the falls – 5700 feet – and in doing so staked his claim as not only the first to photograph the fall, but the first to photograph the highest waterfall in the world.

The narrative of the discovery and exploration of the Sutherland Falls and surrounding locale persisted in the naming of features endorsed and circulated in photographic captions. Reports that Hart had taken a photograph and “named it the ‘Sutherland Falls’” reveals the potency of this device among a colonial audience to whom these sites remained unknown. Hart’s caption elevates the background feature of the image to its central subject, but it also...
visually connects the name with a physical location. In recognition of Hart’s achievement, Sutherland named Mount Hart, near Sutherland Falls, after the photographer.

Reports of Burton Brothers’ photographic activity in Milford Sound typically consisted of lists of locations visited and photographed. Given the exploratory nature of these expeditions, the iteration of these names in photographic captions, catalogue listings and promotional reports brought them into the public realm. A report on Alfred Burton’s trip to Milford Sound in February 1882 commended his success, having “opened up fresh ground so far as photography is concerned” by taking his camera beyond the foot of Lake Ada. The article supplies the names of locations visited: “Giant’s Gate,” “Devil’s Armchair” and “Mount Balloon,” while mention was also made of Sutherland Falls and its alleged height of 4,000 metres. The article is ambiguous whether Burton was among the party that reached the falls on this expedition. However Samuel Moreton, who had just preceded Burton’s trip to Milford and was at “the City” at the same time, states that Burton did not reach the Falls. In his published narrative of the trip, Moreton records a number of names recently assigned by Sutherland and their sources: “Wick Mountains” named for Sutherland’s hometown in Scotland, “Moreton Peak” for the artist Samuel Moreton, “Hall Peak” for the solicitor and member of Moreton’s party W. Y. H Hall, and “Mount Daniels” for a member of the Bluff Harbour Board.

The 1888 Sutherland Falls expedition and overland crossing from Lake Te Anau was particularly fruitful for the naming of geographical features. “McKinnon Pass” was named for Quintin McKinnon, who led the party that discovered the Pass from Te Anau to Milford and who arrived in Milford during the Sutherland Falls expedition. Sutherland named “Mount Pillans” for William Pillans, while Ernest Mitchell, who accompanied McKinnon, named the “Ernest River” for himself. Mackenzie, Pillans and Muir ventured along McKinnon’s route from Milford to Te Anau and named Kenneth Rapids, the Heron Waterfall, Lake Ida and Lake Mintaro – a Muir family name. In the Clinton Valley, the party entered a veritable naming spree, titling features after “leading public men” and serving politicians. These elements of

80 Moreton, 12.
81 Moreton, 5, 9-10.
82 "Exploration of the West Coast." Thomas Mintaro Bailey Muir was Frederick Muir’s cousin.
the landscape were among those photographed by Muir and promoted in Morris’ series of the overland route.83

This practice of naming did not escape attention and angered some members of the public. In a letter to the editor of the Otago Witness, “A Pakeha Maori” from Dunedin responded to the “naming of natural wonders being brought to light on the West Coast.” The correspondent urged that “Without detracting from the honours due to the discoverers, we can easily improve on “Sutherland Falls,” “Ernest river,” or “Lake McKinnon.”84 Instead, a Maori name was recommended to reflect the grandeur of the waterfall and its recognition as the highest in the world: “Waiteitei or wairewa (high water), hinga-nui (large fall),” or “nuinga (greatness).” “Pakeha Maori” recommended the assigning of names as Maori translations of physical attributes celebrated in colonial perception. Although tokenistic, by highlighting the lack of Maori names in common use in the Milford Sound region, the writer exposed the overlay of colonial knowledge and culture upon the land, with the privilege of naming being vested in the first European “discoverer.” Milford Sound, or Piopiotahi, was not terra incognita, but was known to Maori who continued to stop at the location and on whose advice the crossing from Lake Te Anau was mapped by Pakeha explorers.

Another correspondent, identified only as “H” from Invercargill, objected strongly to the “wholesale system of naming” employed in the mapping of Milford Sound, and particularly to Mackenzie’s reported practice of naming:

Surely we have a right to object to some of the finest scenery in the world being plastered over to its everlasting disfigurement with the names of a lot of second rate colonial politicians… Every other race seems to express its sense of awe or beauty, or to denote natural features when naming mountain peaks; but the Colonial Anglo-Saxon explorer’s first idea appears to be to pick some hideous personal name out of his rough vocabulary, and dab it on every new mountain, lake or river he comes across.85

The writer, possibly William Hart, claimed familiarity with the region having spent two summers there. He expressed concern at the overwriting of Maori names with European substitutes, giving the example of the renaming of “Aorangi,” as “Mount Cook,” and advised against the selection of geographical names to advance political relationships. Nevertheless, this writer deemed Sutherland and McKinnon worthy of recognition:

83 “The West Coast Explorations."

84 “The Sutherland Falls, &c.” Otago Witness, 2 November 1888.

85 H., letter to the editor, Otago Daily Times, 3 November 1888.
“Sutherland Falls” may well remain, and “McKinnon Pass.” after the plucky discoverers, but at least let the map of the newly explored country show that better taste in nomenclature has gained the day. Let us have Native words or something fitting or descriptive.

The issue as to the Sutherland Falls’ ranking as the highest in the world was also played out in letters to the editor and newspaper commentary. Following Adams’ calculation of their height, Sutherland was convinced of the significance of his discovery, recording it for posterity in the Visitor’s Book on 26 October 1888: “Height of the Great Sutherland Waterfall Milford Sound is 1904, highest waterfall in the world. Discovered 10th Nov 1880 by D. Sutherland Milford Sound.”86 The first newspaper reports, before Adams’ calculations were confirmed, celebrated the Falls as “The Highest in the World.”87 After Adams’ calculation of 1,904 feet was announced, the Otago Daily Times reported on 29 October that this measurement made it “the highest waterfall that has yet been discovered in the world.”88 When this article was reprinted in the Otago Witness on 2 November, this statement was modified to “one of the highest waterfalls that has yet been discovered in the world.”89

During the intervening days, a letter was written to the editor of the Otago Daily Times by “E.” of Dunedin. “E.”, a former acquaintance of Donald Sutherland’s father in Scotland, read the published reports of the Sutherland Falls expedition with considerable interest. The writer feared that a tendency towards exaggerated statements and unsubstantiated claims might diminish the significance of Sutherland’s discovery:

The Sutherland Falls are of sufficient height and magnitude, and will attract sufficient attention from the tourist world, to require no puffing or unfair comparison; and I write to draw your attention to the fact that it would be a pity that any claim should be made on their account which cannot be substantiated.90

“E” identified the highest waterfalls in the world as the Yosemite Fall in California at a total height of 3,100 feet and the Orca Falls, Monte Rosa, Italy at 2,400 feet. The Otago Daily Times responded to this 1 November by producing evidence from a number of published texts with recorded heights of the highest known waterfalls in the world. No conclusion was drawn,

87 Mackenzie, "The Sutherland Waterfall: The Highest in the World."
88 "Exploration of the West Coast."
89 "The Sutherland Waterfall," Otago Witness, 2 November 1888.
90 "Waterfalls," letter to the editor, Otago Daily Times, 30 October 1888.
but it was found that the extent of variation in the sources consulted made them “anything but reliable.”

On 14 December, the *Otago Witness* published correspondence from “X” who formed the opinion that the Sutherland Falls was indeed the highest in the world. Two contenders, the Ribbon Waterfall at Yosemite and the Orca Fall were dismissed, as both relied on snow-melt for the volume of water in the fall and were not visible all year round. This left the Yosemite Fall as the only rival, but that was also ruled out of contention as “X’s” research indicated that it was in fact two distinct waterfalls, each measuring less than the full height of the Sutherland Falls. Though from a distance the Yosemite Fall appeared as “a single uninterrupted fall (and this is the point usually chosen by photographers),” the tiers were quite distinct and were separated by a deep shelf of rock. The three tiers of the Sutherland Falls, by comparison, formed a continuous drop and were fed by a permanent snow-source, so remained constant throughout the seasons. By way of evidence, “X” encouraged readers to view a shop window in Princes Street, where photographs of the Yosemite Fall and Sutherland Falls were exhibited together. These photographs, he believed, would convince any “unprejudiced person” that the Sutherland Falls were “fairly entitled to be called the highest waterfall in the world.”

While photographs verified the existence of the Sutherland Falls and may have aided in presenting the magnitude of the location, the real value of Burton Brothers’ photographs of Sutherland Falls lay in the status of the waterfall as the highest in the world. Laying claim to the “highest waterfall in the world” was an issue of national pride and posed considerable commercial benefit to the colony in terms of potential tourism. Though Burton Brothers first advertised their photographs of the Sutherland Falls as showing the whole of the highest waterfall in the world, the debates and discussions surrounding the status of the Falls is seen in the studio’s captions for photographs of the Sutherland Falls, which change according to prevailing opinion. One print from negative 4764 from the Sutherland Falls expedition bears the caption inscription “The Sutherland Fall Near Milford Sound 1904 Feet / The Highest Waterfall in the World.” Another print from the same negative is inscribed, “The Sutherland

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91 "The West Coast Explorations."

92 The assertion that the three tiers formed a continuous waterfall perhaps influenced the convention followed by Burton Brothers, among others, of referring to the Sutherland Falls in singular: “Sutherland Fall.”

93 Album 365, P90-015, Hocken Collections, Dunedin, page 11.
Fall - 1904 Feet / The Highest Waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere.” A print from negative 4766 is mounted in an album in the Hocken Collections, probably compiled in the 1890s or early twentieth century. The negative inscription reads: “The Sutherland Fall 1904 Feet,” with no amplifier. A print, from negative 4833, offers a more moderate description: “Sutherland Fall, 1904 feet, near Milford Sound - one of the highest waterfalls in the world (fig. 7-4).”

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94 Pearson Album, PA1-f-048, Alexander Turnbull Library, page 56.

95 Album 103, Hocken Collections, page 2.

96 “4833 - Sutherland Fall, 1904 feet, near Milford Sound - one of the highest waterfalls in the world,” 1888, albumen whole plate print, O.000855, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
Fig. 7-4. “4833 - Sutherland Fall, 1904 Feet, Near Milford Sound - One of the Highest Waterfalls in the World,” 1888. Albumen whole plate print. O.000855, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
The use of these captions is as much an appeal to scientific accuracy as a device to boost the appeal of the photographic subject. The inclusion of the surveyed measurement in the image caption publicises the work of the Survey Office in obtaining this measurement and testifies to the abilities of Western science and knowledge. By including the name and the recorded height of the Falls, the studio provides a statement that the subject depicted had been discovered, mapped and recorded, and was therefore officially identified and “possessable”.97 In addition, without the inclusion of the measurement, the photograph offers no scale for the viewer to judge the height of the Falls. Indeed, survey measurements were frequently included in the studio’s photographs of other waterfalls and peaks. Muir attempted to address the sense of scale in a subsequent visit to the Falls in November 1888. Revisiting the Falls, he photographed all three tiers at an oblique angle and positioned his companion, McKinnon, at the foot of the Falls to indicate scale. Holding a white survey flag, McKinnon was discernible as only a white speck, achieving an indication of the magnitude of the location.98

The Legacy of the Sutherland Falls

The Sutherland Falls expedition was the vital final link in opening up Milford Sound to tourist traffic. In late 1888 a map of the region was completed by the Survey Office, showing the pass to Lake Te Anau and the track to Sutherland Falls, recording the surveyed measurement of 1904 feet (fig.7-5).99 This was circulated through tourist agencies Thomas Cook and Son, the Union Steam Ship Company and the Agent-General in London.100 In the summer tourist season of 1888-89, forty visitors accessed the Sutherland Falls via the new track. The following season this number had increased to seventy, and by the summer of 1890-91 the number of tourists had reached one hundred. Adams anticipated this number would continue to increase, particularly if the existing rough track was improved.101

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97 Trachtenberg, 125.
98 Otago Daily Times, 20 November 1888.
101 Adams, 4.
Sutherland had married in 1889 and his wife, Elizabeth, was eager to capitalise on tourism opportunities and established an accommodation house at the head of Milford Sound.\textsuperscript{102}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map}
\caption{Fig. 7-5. Detail from T. M. Grant, The Western Lakes & Sounds, Middle Island, N.Z., 1888. Map. MapColl 834.6atu 1888 37296, Alexander Turnbull Library.}
\end{figure}

The expedition also had a lasting legacy in the Burton Brothers’ portfolio and promotional activities. In 1889 Alfred Burton spent two months photographing in Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau with his son Harold. The trip was strategic, and Burton photographed identified features at the head of Lake Te Anau and on the pass to Milford, accompanied by McKinnon as guide. Seemingly compensating for his lack of involvement in the Sutherland

Falls expedition, his published narrative was configured in relation to the earlier expedition. His diary text was serialised in the *Otago Daily Times* soon after his return to Dunedin and was printed in the catalogue for this series.\(^{103}\) In the diary he described the two earlier attempts made by him to photograph the Sutherland Falls. The first, in 1882, was thwarted by poor weather, while the second, in 1883, was prevented by more sinister means. In a sequence of events he termed “The Planted Canoe” fiasco, Burton claimed that he was prevented from reaching the Falls as the boat he expected to find to carry him across Lake Ada was absent. He had no choice but to return to “the City” and boarded the next steamer for Dunedin. However, Burton later discovered that a member of the party had hidden the canoe and that an artist and another photographer had succeeded in reaching the Falls.

In response, the culprit immediately wrote to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* and identified himself as Samuel Moreton, who claimed he had hidden the canoe from Burton. Moreton and Sutherland believed that Burton would be unable to confidently manage the route to the Falls – there being no formed track in 1883 – and was at a particular disadvantage with no assistant to carry his swag. Moreton also noted that although he and his companion, Hart, had succeeded in reaching the Falls on this occasion, Burton had made no subsequent attempt to photograph the Sutherland Falls after 1883 and questioned: “If he had the utmost confidence in himself, how is it he never went by a party organised for his own purpose?”\(^{104}\)

The story of “The Planted Canoe” formed the central interest of Burton’s account of this later expedition, heightened by the *Otago Witness*’s reprinting of the photographer’s diary alongside Moreton’s letter to the editor and the responses of Burton and a detractor, known as “Good Feeling.”\(^{105}\)

Burton’s 1889 expedition filled the gap in the studio’s portfolio by adding views of locations identified and promoted by news reports of the cutting of the McKinnon Pass. The catalogue announced that the studio had “thoroughly remodelled our series of Lake Wakatipu and Milford Sound,” a reflection of the rescaling and repositioning of Milford Sound as a destination accessible for the public to explore, rather than to passively observe from the deck of the steamer. The catalogue description sought to appeal to tourist taste by listing

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\(^{104}\) Samuel H. Moreton, letter to the editor, *Otago Daily Times*, 5 October 1889.

\(^{105}\) *Otago Witness*, 17 October 1889.
photographic views in the sequence encountered en route from Lake Te Anau to Milford Sound.

Our pictures of Lake Te Anau, the Clinton River, the Track to Mount Balloon, the Sutherland Fall, the Poseidon River, Lake Ada, the Arthur River, and so to Milford Sound, form a perfect series of photographic illustration of this matchless route, which we venture to predict will ere long be ranked amongst the grandest journeys to be made in the whole world.106

Upon his retirement from photography in 1898, Burton compiled his memoirs for the Otago Daily Times.107 In this he continued his protest at having been unfairly prevented from reaching the Falls in 1883. He also ventured an opinion on whether the Sutherland Falls was, “as we New Zealanders delight to think – the very highest fall in the world.” Burton understood this issue to be one of national pride and was dismissive of reports of higher waterfalls, concluding that: “Sutherland Falls is nearly 11 times the height of Niagara! So there now!”

After Moodie took over the studio with Thomas Muir in 1898, Muir and Moodie relaunched the Burton Brothers’ entire negative stock in their own name, and included in their catalogue photographs of “Milford and all other Sounds,” and “the newly-opened up Tourists’ Track to Milford from Te Anau.”108 These photographs were all “direct photographs from Nature and not enlargements, being taken by a camera of the size,” the alternative being “mere mechanical photographs.”109 This continued Burton Brothers’ emphasis on the technological prowess of the firm and the greater authenticity this vested in their topographical photography. Ten photographs of Sutherland Falls were listed in the catalogue, including six from the Sutherland Falls expedition, two negatives added later in 1888 and two negatives from F. A. Coxhead, acquired by Burton Brothers upon Coxhead’s departure for California in 1893.110 Muir and Moodie also promoted the discovery of the Sutherland Falls and reinstated it to the position as the highest in the world (fig.7-6).

106 Burton, Wintering on Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri, 15.


108 Muir and Moodie, Catalogue of New Zealand and South Sea Scenery (Dunedin: Muir & Moodie, 1901), 3.


110 Mitchell, "Photographing Sutherland Falls," 20-21. A print from negative 5803, stamped with the Burton Brothers’ insignia is in an album at the Hocken Collections, Dunedin

This postcard, from a drawing based on a photograph, was intended for international distribution and encapsulates the excitement generated by the discovery and measurement of the Sutherland Falls. Produced at least a decade after the expedition and twenty years after its publication (Album 021, page 34). The caption inscription: “Sutherland Falls, Milford Sd., N. Z.,” does not accord with Burton Brothers’ style as they rarely abbreviated their caption information and never included “New Zealand” in their captions. However, the type face and linguistic style match those found in Coxhead’s captions.
discovery, the postcard celebrates the waterfall as a significant landmark. Despite the caption “‘Sutherland Fall’ Milford Sound. N. Z. 1904 feet.…,” the postcard does not show an image of the Falls but instead presents its discover, Donald Sutherland. Positioned on a tree-trunk for a plinth, Sutherland is shown in the pose of heroic statuary. This postcard encourages the inextricable association of the Sutherland Falls with the individual who discovered them.

The substitution of a portrait of Sutherland for a visual representation of the Falls suggests that photographs of the Sutherland Falls may not have met the public demand anticipated by the studio. Comparatively few prints from the Sutherland Falls expedition remain in institutional collections; a near complete set is held by Alexander Turnbull Library within an agent’s sample album, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa holds some original whole plate negatives from the expedition and a small number of the images as photographic prints and lantern slides. Prints from the two 12 x 10 inch negatives of the Falls are held with the Patent Office records at Archives New Zealand, submitted by the studio to accompany their copyright application. The lack of extant examples with provenance to private collections suggests that low numbers of prints from the series were in circulation. This leads to consideration that the subject matter and style of photography were no longer of interest to the general public, but, an album in the Hocken Collections presents another explanation. The album was compiled by the former owner, A. R. Hardy, probably in the 1890s. The sixty-four selected photographs all show the Milford Sound region, and while almost half (twenty-eight) are from Burton Brothers the balance of the album contains prints from the studios of Morris and Coxhead. Sutherland’s Visitors’ Book further attests that by 1888 Burton Brothers were no longer the sole professional photographers of remote New Zealand.

Ironically, the employment of photographers within the Department of Lands and Survey and their early utilisation of half-tone photo-mechanical reproduction was another probable factor that triggered the decline in the Burton Brothers’ output of topographical photographs. The Departmental photographers’ production of negatives for survey purposes and for other departments increased steadily from 1890 to 1895. During this period, the only series promoted by Burton Brothers was George Moodie’s series of photographs from

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111 A. R. Hardy Album, Album 021, Hocken Collections.

112 The Department of Lands and Survey’s annual reports record 379 negatives made in the financial year 1890 to 1891. This increased every year, and by 1895 the Department produced 873. Of these negatives, only sixty-three were produced as silver or bromide photographic prints. “Department of Lands and Survey Report,” AJHR, C.1., 1890-91, 1891-92, 1893-94, 1894-95.
the Mount Cook alpine region in 1893. This body of work was of particular interest to the alpine community, many of whom were themselves keen amateur photographers. From 1893 the New Zealand Alpine Club held photographic exhibitions, showing the work of both professional and amateur operators. The Club’s journal was also advanced in utilising half-tone reproductions, and a photograph from Moodie’s 1893 expedition was reproduced in the New Zealand Alpine Journal in 1895. Affordable and efficient means of reproducing photographs, the rise of amateur photography and the government’s access to internally produced photographs all conspired to limit the demand for the products and services of commercial studios.

**Conclusion**

By the turn-of-the-century, commercial studios – including Muir and Moodie – refashioned their businesses as postcard emporia. Postcards such as ““Sutherland Fall’ Milford Sound. N. Z.” appealed to a popular market by commemorating recent events in New Zealand’s history and catering to a developing sense of national identity. The photographs from the Sutherland Falls Expedition exist mainly in the literature that surrounded the discovery and survey of the waterfall. Those that have survived possess limited meaning in isolation and interpretation is enabled through association with these written narratives. This connection allows the persistent reinforcement of the survey effort as the narrative of discovery and classification continues to permeate viewers’ understanding of these photographs. Rather than immutable records of locations and events, these photographs commemorate the activities of 1888 and the personalities involved, and encapsulate the spirit of the colonial survey.

Burton’s 1898 memoirs reinforce the benefit he perceived his photographic projects presented for the interests of the colony. Photographers not only supported but foresaw the commercial potential in New Zealand’s hinterland and urged Government investment in

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115 "Winter Exhibition of Photographs," The New Zealand Alpine Journal 1, no. 4 (November 1893).

surveys and infrastructure to make these locations accessible to tourists. Sutherland Falls and Milford Sound are pivotal to his argument as justification for infrastructural improvements that would secure New Zealand’s future as a world-renowned tourist destination:

Much, I am aware, has been done towards rendering the track between Lake Ada and Milford Sound practicable for tourists; but very much remains to be done. In the Union Steam Ship Company’s annual excursions – when the weather is quite favourable – even ladies will carry a “swag” to the Sutherland Fall; but the number of tourists who are game to swag it all the way from Milford Sound to the head of Lake Te Anau is very small. But when the New Zealand Government shall truly realise – as they have never done yet – what a magnificent asset the country possesses in its matchless scenery, and what an important item in that asset is represented by the region I am speaking of, and shall, at great outlay, but with the truest wisdom, make a real “road,” and not a mere track to connect Milford and Te Anau… it may be safely predicted that the fame of such a journey will extend far and wide; the globe-trotters will flock hither in constantly-increasing numbers; and we enthusiasts will be able to declare again our belief – and this time to no incredulous ears – that we possess the loveliest country in all the earth!117

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117 Burton, "Landscape Photography in New Zealand: Mostly Old Style."
Throughout his photographic career, Alfred Burton’s purposeful recording of New Zealand’s colonial history is evident in the photographs produced by his studio. He was positioned by his contemporaries – and by himself – as a pioneer, and he was consciously driven to achieve photographic “firsts.” Burton credited himself as the first colonial photographer to “expose a plate” in Milford Sound, and the studio strove to be the first to photograph Sutherland Falls in its entirety. ¹ Photographs taken by the firm as early as 1867 were held by contemporary viewers to possess “historic value.”² As a colonial settler, he was aware of the ongoing function of his photographs in recording the early European settlement of New Zealand for future generations.

The studio’s photographic projects reflect an effort to record New Zealand’s colonial history as it happened: for instance, the “opening up” of the Otago interior through survey activity and infrastructural expansion. Burton’s expeditions to places considered terra incognita and his projects photographing the indigenous ways of Pacific Island and Maori populations before their total assimilation into European culture, perceived as inevitable and imminent among colonial and international audiences, show the studio’s attempt to record life in the Pacific detached from European settlement. Burton also photographed sites of significance in New Zealand’s recent past, such as the scene of the “Hursthouse Outrage” at Te Kumi, sites of conflict at Pukearuhe, Moutoa and Wairau, and scenes of disaster following the eruption of Mount Tarawera in 1886. These efforts to compile a photographic record of historic sites paralleled the contemporaneous development of the photographic survey movement in the United Kingdom. Led by Photographic Societies, amateur photographers – in particular – set their attention to record the ancient buildings, monuments and traditional customs of Great Britain while they still survived. The authenticity and “truth” value of these

¹ Alfred Henry Burton, "Landscape Photography in New Zealand: Mostly Old Style," Otago Daily Times (Dunedin), 16 July 1898.

² Photographs taken by Burton Brothers of the newly completed Dunedin Water Works were held by the Otago Witness to possess “historic value” for recording the opening of this important infrastructure project. Otago Witness (Dunedin), 20 December 1867.
photographic records was compromised by tensions between the mechanical nature of the medium and aesthetic impulses towards pictorialism.\(^3\)

Similarly, the value of Burton Brothers’ photographs as historical record is compromised not only by the subjective choices of the operator in making the photograph, but by the purpose of these photographs as commodities. As a commercial practitioner, Burton was compelled to ensure his photographs appealed to the expectations and ideologies of the buying public. Novelty was a founding tenet of the firm, and the desire for innovation was driven by a competitive market for photographs in Dunedin. The introduction of new photographic technologies and formats enabled the photographing of unseen places and fuelled the drive to record places the general New Zealand population and international audiences may never have otherwise seen. Photographic projects and modes of presentation were aligned with public interest and expectation, often reflecting current events, trends in popular culture or government policies.

Government use of Burton Brothers photographs imbued their representations of New Zealand with a character of authority. Their photographs were used by government departments from 1867 through to the twentieth century, when the firm was no longer in operation.\(^4\) This official endorsement of the studio’s products was an important aspect of Burton Brothers’ enduring success. The studio’s consistent presence at government-sponsored international exhibitions was another important vehicle for their photographs, as it was for most photographers of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Vacillating between art and science in exhibition displays, photographs were praised for both their technological and pictorial properties. The ability of photographs to convey the advancement of the colony was their most valued attribute, hence such photographs functioned as documentary artefacts.\(^5\) However, it was not the locations depicted so much as the Burton Brothers’ representations of

\(^3\) Elizabeth Edwards, "Unblushing Realism and the Threat of the Pictorial: Photographic Survey and the Production of Evidence 1885-1918," *History of Photography* 33, no. 1 (February 2009), 5.

\(^4\) In 1867 a collection of photographs of Dunedin and Otago by local photographers, including Walter Burton, was used by Commissioners of the Provincial Government to encourage the Duke of Edinburgh to visit Otago. *Otago Witness*, 20 December 1867. Government use of Burton Brothers photographs to promote travel to New Zealand continued by the New Zealand Government Tourist Department in the early decades of the twentieth century with the issuing of Burton Brothers photographs as lantern slides. New Zealand Government Publicity Glass Lantern Slides, 1903?-c.1950, 8315, Archives New Zealand, National Office.

these places that appealed to audiences. Exhibition viewers were aware that the allure of Burton Brothers’ images themselves occasionally outweighed the appeal of the places represented. Burton Brothers’ collection of large format carbon prints of Dunedin and Otago were shown at the Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition of 1879, presented in association with the City of Dunedin (fig. 1.10). A reviewer at that exhibition noted:

It is not only the scenery of this portion of Otago that you have to become suspicious of falling in love with, but you must equally guard yourself against the growing impression that Burton Brother’s [sic] photographs may not only [be], as they are now termed, a luxury of life, but become a necessary to all lovers of New Zealand.6

Contemporary audiences, not necessarily equipped with knowledge of the places represented in the photographs, were aware of the measures taken by the studio to capture images of locations and make them available for purchase. The studio’s marketing and professional mode of delivery further promoted their authority in representing New Zealand, but for contemporary viewers this reinforced the function of these photographs as commodities. Reviews of series frequently urge readers to purchase these photographs and contain commendations of the “enterprise” of the firm.7 Yet, through the passage of time the function of these photographs has changed; they are now valued as antique collectors’ items and documents of the past. Through the loss of the photographer’s mediation and material evidence pointing to the original purpose of the photograph, emphasis is drawn to the two-dimensional image. As Clive Scott observed, without access to this context, indexicality is lost and “all photographs become, with time, documentary.”8 Consequently, Burton Brothers photographs have been received as history.

Burton’s awareness of his role as a recorder of history discredits the reliability of his photographs as impartial historical records. Given the constructed nature of both photography and history, caution should be taken if reading these photographs as objective and “true”

6 ‘The International Exhibition at Sydney’, *New Zealand Mail* (Wellington), 8 November 1879. Quoted in Rice, 10.

7 This rhetoric was particularly pronounced during the 1870s when the studio amassed their first series of topographical photographs of New Zealand. For instance, ”West Coast Scenery and Resources: Mr Burton's Photographs,” *New Zealand Mail*, 11 April 1874; "Scenes in the Southern Alps," *Otago Witness*, 27 March 1875; "The Scenery of the Southern Alps", *West Coast Times* (Hokitika), 26 August 1878; "New Zealand through the Camera," *Otago Daily Times*, 19 December 1878.

representations of the subjects depicted. Martha A. Sandweiss recognised a parallel between the writing of history and the making of a photograph, each being a subjective and constructed process:

Photographs are intrinsically historical; they necessarily capture a specific and fleeting moment of time. And making a photograph has much in common with the practice of crafting a history. One begins with a curiosity about the world, sifts through the evidence for presentation to a broader audience. Photographer and historian alike are storytellers who must choose what to include and what to leave out, how close to stand to their subjects and how to frame their tales.  

Practices in the viewing of photographs impose even greater distance between viewer and maker. Most commonly encountered as multi-generational prints, electronic image files or as reproductions in books or journals, the image that many researchers access is a copy for which there may no longer be an original. The aspect of the “original” photographic object is further complicated by the after-life of the Burton Brothers’ original negatives beyond the studio. The negatives were reissued by subsequent owners, Muir and Moodie, Whitcombe and Tombs and former Muir and Moodie employee, James Webster, and bear the marks and motivations of those makers. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa also continues to produce prints and scans from these negatives, many examples of which are reproduced in this thesis. In subsequent reprinting of the negatives engagement with Burton Brothers as maker is compromised, but not necessarily lost.

This thesis has shown that by retracing the photographs to an original form, the context of production may be recovered through the manner of presentation, textual markers and associated marketing material. Reconnecting photographs with this contextual information recovers an understanding of the purpose of the photographer, less reliant upon biographical detail or speculative reasoning. A consideration of intention undermines the security of these images as historical representations and explores the reasons why and how a photograph was made. While now the Burton Brothers photographs may be valued as historical documents and for the visual content portrayed in the images, they are not a stable and objective record of history. Burton’s recording of history was motivated by commercial imperatives and by the conscious positioning of himself as a pioneer. His photographs were produced and packaged to appeal to market demand and as such satisfied the ideology of the dominant discourse.

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Bronwyn Dalley suggests that an appreciation of photographic intention may limit the use of photographs for historians. She equates the context of production to the function of a caption that “loads” the image with meaning, potentially conflicting with the secondary narrative to which it is applied. With Burton Brothers photographs, contextual information is made explicit through the “textual overlay” that forms a link between maker and viewer. In this regard, Dalley is correct; the context does inflect meaning on the photograph, but this meaning is the photograph. Rather than interrupt the reading of the two-dimensional image, awareness of context qualifies interpretation by identifying facts of the object’s making. The reasons why a photograph object was produced and the physical properties that bear the marks of production – including captions – expose layers of history that the two-dimensional image may conceal if considered in isolation.

Scott observed that when links to the photographer’s intended meaning are broken or obscured, all meanings that are recovered are punctum. Dalley advocates the use of photographs as primary sources for historical research, but recommends reading photographs “against the grain” to access details illustrative of the period of history to which they belong. This method is perfectly valid for the purposes of augmenting historical discussion, but misses opportunities to enhance knowledge of the photograph and to access the histories that it may convey. The “chance residues” recovered through interrogation of incidental details in a photograph – a style of dress, manifestations of social customs or work practices, for instance – fall within the realm of punctum. For example, Burton’s photograph, “Te Kumi - The Scene of the Hursthouse Outrage” (fig. 5-15) has been reproduced without the studio’s caption to illustrate a discussion on traditional Maori “dwellings and domestic activities.”

The photographic image serves the applied purpose to illustrate a discussion on housing construction methods, but this interpretation is vastly divergent from the political meanings legible in the studio’s means of presenting this photograph.

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11 Dalley, 172.


The ethnographic readings of *The Camera in the Coral Islands* series further demonstrate that personally-inflected readings dominate analysis of historic photographs when photographs are considered as images, in isolation from the surrounding body of work and associated material. Alfred Burton’s photographic images may further the post-colonial arguments to which they have been applied, but interpretations developed with limited knowledge of the photograph and its context inevitably leads to error and omission that threaten to destabilise rather than support an author’s argument.

So, if Burton Brothers’ representations of New Zealand’s past are not reliable as objective historical documents, what use are they in the study of history? As Alan Trachtenberg recognised, “The value of photographs as history lies not just in what they show or how they look but how they construct their meanings.” This thesis has demonstrated that interrogating photographic materiality and the context of production elicits a historicist understanding of the operations of the commercial photography trade in colonial New Zealand. This recovers insight into the climate of professional photographic practice including technical limitations, commercial imperatives and audience expectations, economic incentives and constraints, and political agendas. In addition, this history illuminates business practices among the settler community, clarifying the multiple roles required by individuals in order to get ahead in the colonial economy and the intersections of professional and personal lives. This study also reveals the personal investment of individuals in the colonial economy and indicates that government agendas were often realised by individual agents for their own financial or political gain.

This methodology may be extended to Burton Brothers’ products and aspects of their practice that fall beyond the scope of this thesis. The studio’s activity in portrait photography was highly commercial and competitive as well as stylistically mannered, offering rich material for an isolated study. Specific photographic media also present a large volume of material to be considered in association with contemporary trends in international photography, such as stereographs, lantern slides and large-format photographs. The diaspora of Burton Brothers photographs in overseas collections and the connections of the photographs to those communities also present rich subjects for further research.

The Burton Brothers studio was not alone in its use of text to interpret and promote its products and reputation. As with most things, Burton Brothers employed this mechanism in a highly visible and consistent manner. A study of “textual overlay” may also be conducted in

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regard to the work of other professional photographers, now less known but no less productive in the colonial era, such as Hart, Campbell and Co., Clifford and Morris and Frank Coxhead, to name a few.\textsuperscript{15} Primary source material for these photographers may be less numerous than the Burton Brothers, but recent advances in information technology greatly expand the field of research, in particular the advent of keyword searchable digital versions of numerous nineteenth century New Zealand newspapers.\textsuperscript{16}

Despite Burton Brothers’ fame and predominance over their contemporaries, the studio did not achieve financial success. Upon Alfred Burton’s retirement it was noted that the firm had not always met with financial reward.\textsuperscript{17} It appears that Burton also reaped little remuneration from his activities in other fields, as upon his death in 1914 his wife was left in such a poor financial state that she was unable to incur the costs of obtaining probate.\textsuperscript{18} For Burton Brothers, success was obtained in other terms, perhaps beyond Alfred Burton’s imagination. The effectiveness of Burton Brothers branding and marketing and the widespread distribution of their products and promotional material earned the firm a profile that remains familiar to twenty-first century audiences of photography. And it is through this that Burton Brothers made history.

\textsuperscript{15} I have applied this methodology to the photographs of Port Chalmers professional photographer, David De Maus. Christine Whybrew, ”D. A. De Maus and the Documentation of Daily Life at Port Chalmers,” in Capturing Port (Port Chalmers: Port Chalmers Museum, 2008).


\textsuperscript{17} Editor’s introduction to Burton, ”Landscape Photography in New Zealand: Mostly Old Style.”

\textsuperscript{18} “BURTON, Alfred Henry – Dunedin – Elocution Teacher,” 1921, DAAC-9075-D239/382-7319, Dunedin Probate Files, Archives New Zealand, Dunedin Regional Office.
Appendix 1

BURTON BROTHERS’ SERIES AND CATALOGUES

Catalogues and major series released by Burton Brothers, with identified sub-series and corresponding negatives numbers.

- **Catalogue of Photographs of New Zealand Scenery** (1875)
  - *Otago through the Camera* (series commenced 1869)
    - *Dunedin and Suburbs*: negatives 4-427, interrupted sequence
    - *Port Chalmers*: 40, 43-44, 98-99, 301, 309-320
    - *Tokomairiro and the South Road*: 180-199, 210-221
    - *Palmerston and the North Road*: 110-120; 201-208
    - *The Lakes*: 441-566
    - *The Diggings Townships, etc.*: 121-179, 211, 222-223, 567-568
    - *The Sounds of the West Coast* (1874): 236-263
  - *Scenes in the Southern Alps* (series commenced 1869): 356-413

- **One Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery** (1879)
  - *The Hot Springs District* (1878): 878-947

- **New Zealand through the Camera: A Catalogue of Three Thousand Photographs of New Zealand Scenery** (series commenced 1878, catalogue published 1884): negatives 53-3237, interrupted sequence

- **Camera in the Coral Islands** (1884): 2501-2754

- **The Maori at Home** (1885): 3502-3656

- **Wintering on Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri** (1889): 4836-4958
Appendix 2

NEGATIVES REGISTERED FOR COPYRIGHT BY
BURTON BROTHERS

Source: Patent Office Files, PC4, Archives New Zealand, Wellington Regional Office.

Registered prior to 15 July 1885, but not re-registered: three illustrated Christmas Cards

**Camera in the Coral Islands**
First registered 24 September 1884; re-registered 9 July 1888 (Application CR88/46)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative number</th>
<th>Burton Brothers caption</th>
<th>Copyright registration number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2501*</td>
<td>Colonial Sugar Co's Mill - Rewa River - Fiji</td>
<td>651</td>
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<tr>
<td>2517*</td>
<td>Village - Near Suva - Fiji</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2522*</td>
<td>Native Village - Near Suva - Fiji</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2524*</td>
<td>Fijian Girls Bathing</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2527</td>
<td>Fijian Women - Near Suva</td>
<td>655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2556*</td>
<td>Gathering Cocoa Nuts - Levuka - Fiji</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2569*</td>
<td>Waitova Near Levuka - Fiji</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2600*</td>
<td>Fijian Sugar Field - Mango - Loading the Cane</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2627*</td>
<td>Samoan Village - Near Apia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2630*</td>
<td>Samoans - Apia</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2644</td>
<td>[Near Apia Four Girls on Ground]</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2646*</td>
<td>Samoan House - Apia. Kawa-making</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2663*</td>
<td>Samoans - Pango Pango</td>
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<td>2666*</td>
<td>Pango Pango Harbour - Samoa</td>
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<td>2668</td>
<td>Pango Pango - Samoa - The Fair &quot;Sauimatani&quot;</td>
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<td>2671*</td>
<td>Pango Pango - Samoa</td>
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<td>2681*</td>
<td>Wesleyan Church - Neiafu - Vavau - Tonga</td>
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<tr>
<td>2686*</td>
<td>King George of Tonga [...] obscured</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2687*</td>
<td>Tongan Notables: Rev. J B Watkin (Supt. Of Vavau circuit), Fotofili (Gov. of Nuiafoou), J. Afu, Rev. S Baker (Premier), Prince Wellington (Gov. of Vavau) / Junia (Min. of Finance)</td>
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<td>2708*</td>
<td>Princess Anaziene - Granddaughter of King George of Tonga</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2709*</td>
<td>At the Palace - Nukualofa - Tongatabu; [from left:] Princess Salote Mafileo / Daughter of King George; Princess Anaziene / Grand-daughter of the King; Jiaogi Fatafehi / Governor of Hapau</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2719*</td>
<td>Tongan Woman - Nukualofa</td>
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<tr>
<td>2721*</td>
<td>A Tongan Belle</td>
<td>673</td>
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<tr>
<td>2722*</td>
<td>Tongan Beauties - Nukualofa</td>
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<td>2724*</td>
<td>Tonga Girls - Nukualofa</td>
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* Registration print held in Patent Office collection, PAColl-4300-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
The Maori at Home
First registered 15 July 1885; re-registered 9 July 1888 (Application CR88/46)

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<td>3509*</td>
<td>Wharepuni at Parekino - Wanganui River</td>
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<td>3514*</td>
<td>Wharepuni at Koroniti - (Corinth) Wanganui River</td>
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<td>3516*</td>
<td>Village Scene - Koroniti - (Corinth-) Wanganui River</td>
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<td>Huriwhenua - Major Kemp's Council Hall -Ranana - (London-) Wanganui River</td>
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<td>3547*</td>
<td>Ti Eke - Wanganui River - King Country</td>
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<td>3551*</td>
<td>Wanganui River Near Utagu - King Country</td>
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<td>Otaianga - Wanganui River - King Country</td>
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<td>&quot;Topine Te Mamaku&quot; - (100 Years Old) - Tawhata - King Country</td>
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<td>3566*</td>
<td>Kakahi Fall Near Tawhata - Wanganui River</td>
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<td>3576*</td>
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<td>&quot;Ani&quot; - Taumarunui - King Country</td>
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<td>&quot;Te Hau Hau&quot; - At Te Kuiti - King Country</td>
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<td>Maori Tomb - Te Kuiti - King Country</td>
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<td>Te Kumi - King Country / Te Mahuki / Mr. Hursthouse's Chief Assailant / Paru Kau</td>
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<td>Rewi / Tawhana / Taonui / Wetere Te Rerenga / Te Rangituatataka / Te Naunau / Great Chiefs at Whare Komiti - Haerehuka - King Country</td>
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<td>The Great Ngatimaniopoto Chief &quot;Wahanui&quot;, Family and Friends - at his house - Alexandra</td>
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<td>3631*</td>
<td>Whittora - At Whatiwhatihoe - King's Residence</td>
<td>698</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[itemised on application as 3632]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3640*</td>
<td>&quot;Huingatini&quot; - At Whatiwhatihoe - King's Residence</td>
<td>699</td>
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<tr>
<td>3650</td>
<td>[Paetae (three quarter Figure) At Whatiwhatihoe King Country]</td>
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Registered 31 October 1888 (application CR88/64):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative number</th>
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<th>Copyright registration number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>[Sutherland Falls – 12 x 10 inch negative]</td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>[Sutherland Falls – 12 x 10 inch negative]</td>
<td>714</td>
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* Registration print held in Patent Office collection, PAColl-4300-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
## Appendix 3

### AGENTS FOR BURTON BROTHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of Agent</th>
<th>Trade/Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Series promoted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>&quot;Mr Iles,&quot; Tees Street (Burton Brothers leased premises)¹</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oamaru</td>
<td>&quot;Grand Art Union&quot; (chromolithograph, hand-coloured photographic reproductions, engravings); <em>Otago Through the Camera</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Lyon &amp; Blair²</td>
<td>Stationers and Booksellers</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>A. H. Ross &amp; Co.³</td>
<td>Opticians</td>
<td>Dunedin</td>
<td><em>Otago through the Camera</em> - stereographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>Newbold's Bookshop⁴</td>
<td>Stationers and Booksellers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883-</td>
<td>D. N. Adams⁵</td>
<td>Stationers and Booksellers</td>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>&quot;Views of New Zealand Scenery&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>France Brothers⁶</td>
<td>Employment Agency</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera - subscription</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Itchen Street (Burton Brothers leased premises?)⁷</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oamaru</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera - subscription</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>John Gilmour (sub-contracted by France Brothers)⁸</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Plymouth</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera - subscription</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ *North Otago Times* (Oamaru), 11 July 1871.

² *Evening Post* (Wellington), 11 May 1874.

³ Agent’s stamp on Burton Brothers stereographs: E5103/44, Hocken Collections; O.005553 and O.005555, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

⁴ Agent’s stamp on Burton Brothers stereograph: O.005592, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

⁵ *The Star* (Christchurch), 1 February 1884 and 21 May 1884.

⁶ *Evening Post*, 13 May 1884 and 7 July 1884; agent’s stamp on Burton Brothers whole plate prints: E3979/14A, Hocken Collections; PA7-32-27 and PA7-33-20, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁷ *North Otago Times*, 30 September 1884.

⁸ *Taranaki Herald* (New Plymouth), 11 October 1884.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of Agent</th>
<th>Trade/Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Series promoted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand Photograph Agency</td>
<td>Photographic Agency</td>
<td>Dunedin</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera</em> - subscription; <em>The Camera in the Coral Islands</em> - subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>G. M. Hewson</td>
<td>Commission and General Agent</td>
<td>Whanganui</td>
<td>&quot;New Zealand Scenery&quot; - subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>R. W. Grove</td>
<td>Employment Agency</td>
<td>Oamaru</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera</em> - subscription; <em>The Camera in the Coral Islands</em> - subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Cooper and France; Cooper &amp; Co. (Formerly France Brothers)</td>
<td>Employment Agency</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Through the Camera</em> - subscription; <em>The Camera in the Coral Islands</em> - subscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Thomas Avery</td>
<td>Printer and Stationer</td>
<td>New Plymouth</td>
<td>&quot;Hot Lakes District,&quot; before and after eruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Cooper and Stewart</td>
<td>Employment Agency</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>&quot;Photographs of New Zealand and South Seas Scenery.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>(Formerly Cooper &amp; Co.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>F. Parsons</td>
<td>Wholesale Agent</td>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c.1880s</td>
<td>Plumbers</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

9 Otago Daily Times (Dunedin), 3 May 1884; New Zealand Tablet, 24 April 1885.
10 Wanganui Herald, 15 January 1885.
11 North Otago Times, 31 January 1885.
12 Evening Post, 15 July 1885
13 Taranaki Herald, 1 June 1886.
14 Evening Post, 19 June 1886.
15 Wanganui Herald, 27 May 1886.
16 Wises Directory of New Zealand for the Year 1887/88 (Dunedin: H. Wise & Co. 1887).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of Agent</th>
<th>Trade/Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Series promoted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.1880s</td>
<td>John Rammage(^{18})</td>
<td>Plumber and Tinsmith</td>
<td>Balclutha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1880s</td>
<td>W. Robinson(^{19})</td>
<td>Photographic Agency</td>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.1880s</td>
<td>Alfred R. Hardy(^{20})</td>
<td>Tea Merchant and Commission Agent</td>
<td>Dunedin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890s?</td>
<td>G. T. Chapman(^{21})</td>
<td>Bookeeper and stationer</td>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>Burton Brothers negative portfolio (through Muir and Moodie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>A. T. White, The Gaynor Art Studio(^{22})</td>
<td>Furnishing Warehouse</td>
<td>Wanganui</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>A. Ferguson(^{23})</td>
<td>Stationer</td>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{18}\) Burton Brothers whole plate prints, Brett McDowell collection, Dunedin.

\(^{19}\) Burton Brothers whole plate print, PA7-35-12, Alexander Turnbull Library.

\(^{20}\) Album 44, Otago Settlers Museum.

\(^{21}\) Album 341, Hocken Collections.

\(^{22}\) *Wanganui Herald*, 07 September 1900.

\(^{23}\) *Evening Post*, 14 October 1901.
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