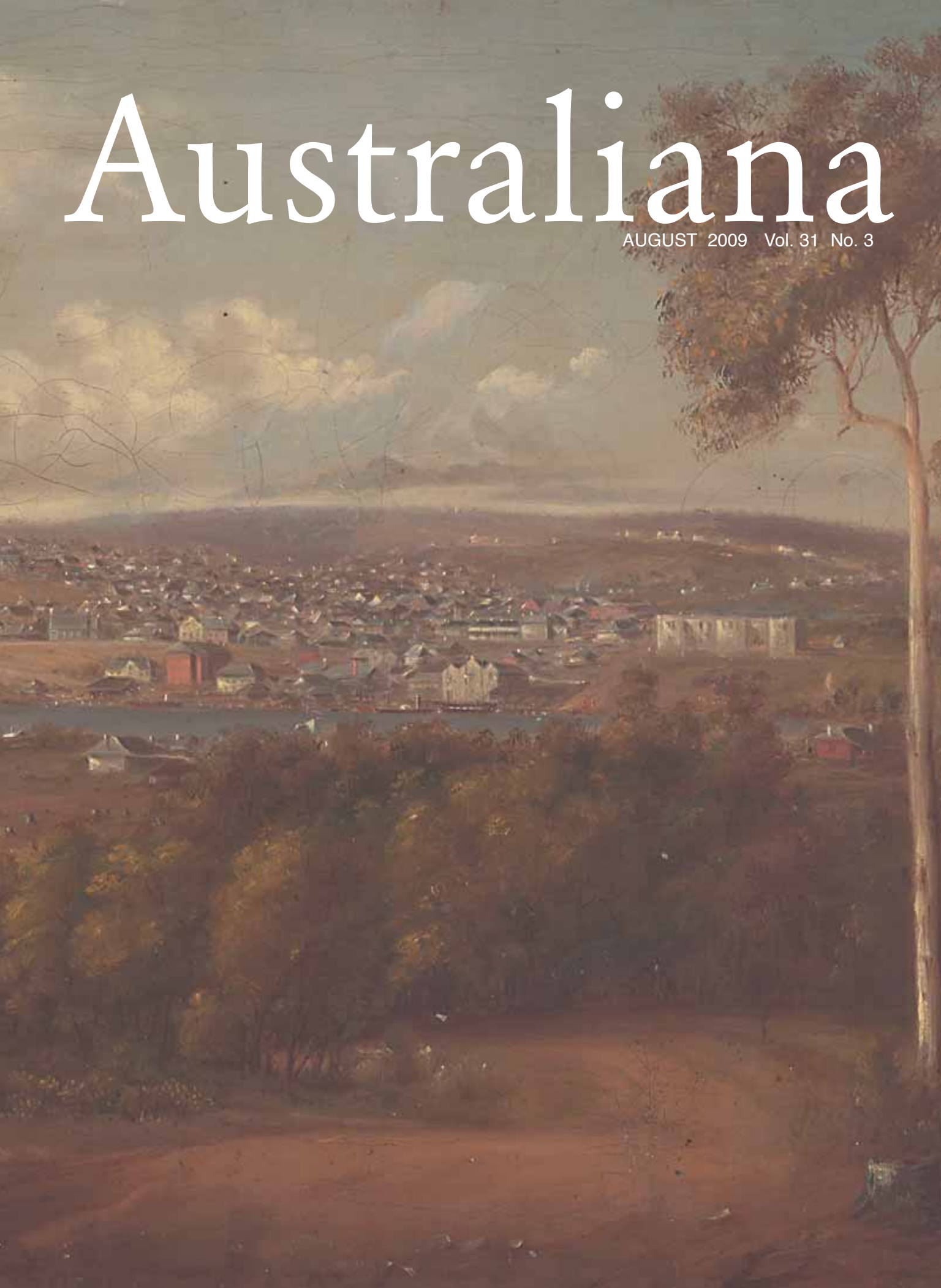


Australiana

AUGUST 2009 Vol. 31 No. 3





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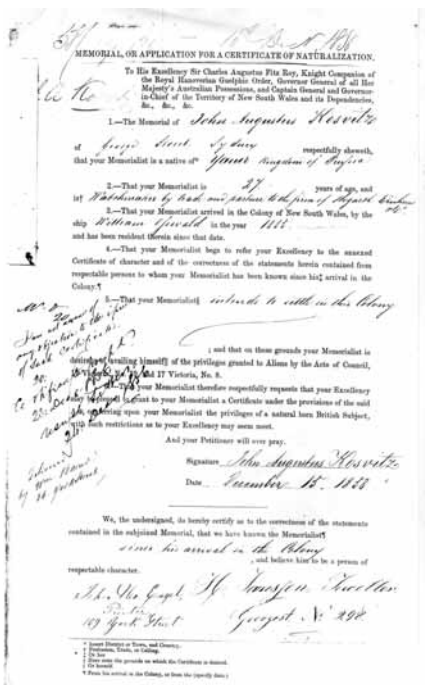
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An early jeweller in Queensland: the life and career of Augustus Kosvitz



Augustus Kosvitz, Prussian-born watchmaker and jeweller, worked in Brisbane during the years immediately after Queensland's separation from New South Wales in 1859. His business thrived in the young colony, and was responsible for introducing new styles of jewellery and decoration to Queensland, particularly jewels using colonial gold and the emblematic motifs that were emerging from firms such as Hogarth, Erichsen & Co. in Sydney.

Timothy Roberts

SON of saddler Friedrich Kosvitz and Elizabeth Schmidt, Augustus John Kosvitz was born in Prussia in 1831. Kosvitz undertook his training in horology in Europe, claiming to have worked in London with the firm of Edward Dent, before arriving in Sydney from Hamburg on 11 April 1855 aboard the *William Oswald*. It is tempting to contemplate Kosvitz's motivation for travelling to Australia, but no evidence has been found to shed any light upon this. Nonetheless, he quickly established himself within the artistic community in Sydney, forging relationships which he would continue to develop throughout his career.

By 1858 Kosvitz had obtained a position at the workshop of Hogarth, Erichsen & Co., and in December that year he applied for a certificate of

Archives Authority of New South Wales, John Augustus Kosvitz, Memorial, or Application for a Certificate of Naturalization. Item Number 58/4930, container 4/3390

naturalisation, which was duly granted to him.¹ His application (in the name of John Augustus Kosvitz) was supported by Johann Alexander Engel, printer of 109 York Street and H Janssen, jeweller of 298 George Street, Sydney. This is the jeweller Henry Janssen, who is recorded in the 1858-59 edition of *Sands Directory* as being in partnership with Christian Hafer at 298 George Street; after his arrival in 1857, Hafer had been employed by Hogarth, Erichsen & Co before opening his own shop, but was still supplying goods to his old employer.² Kosvitz never ranked a mention in these directories individually, probably due to his partnership in other firms and residential tenancies.

In 1859 Kosvitz moved to Brisbane and established his own retail operation selling jewellery and fancy goods. He briefly traded from stores opposite Kingsford's drapers before relocating in 1860 to the newly erected premises owned by Patrick Mayne in Queen Street. The new shop was quite commodious, being fitted with acetylene gas lighting and large plate windows, no doubt an impressive site in the rapidly developing city.³ The Brisbane public was quick to patronise the store and before long Kosvitz was securing important commissions. In 1862 he placed an advertisement seeking an apprentice, no doubt to assist him with his constantly increasing patronage⁴

Kosvitz relocated his premises in 1863 further north in Queen Street, in rooms opposite the First Queensland Parliament House. The prime position of the shop was complemented by store fixtures manufactured by the architect James Furnival. Kosvitz remained here until the fire in December 1864 which destroyed much of Queen Street. He reopened temporary rooms opposite the Australian Joint Stock Bank in Queen Street, north of his ruined premises⁵ Kosvitz returned to his former shop when it was rebuilt in 1865, and later would move to premises opposite the Supreme Court building.

In 1865 Kosvitz sued his insurer, the Queen Insurance Company, for losses incurred during the fire. As well as stating in evidence that he was a 'working


Kosvitz's first
advertisement in the
Moreton Bay Courier,
3 Jan 1860

**A. KOSVITZ,
PRACTICAL JEWELLER,
CHRONOMETER, WATCH AND
CLOCK MAKER,**

(Late of the firm of Hogarth, Erichsen and Co., Sydney, by special appointment Jewellers and Watchmakers to His Excellency the Governor-General.)

HAS the pleasure of informing the public of Brisbane and its vicinity that he has opened a shop in Queen-street, opposite Mr. Kingsford's, and has on sale a large assortment of Jewellery, of English and Colonial manufacture.

English and Foreign Watches. A great variety of opera and stock glasses, fancy goods, etc., etc.

 All kinds of watches, clocks, and jewellery repaired.

jeweller', the case revealed a number of suppliers of jewellery and fancy goods for his store.⁶ His suppliers included Adolphus Blau in Sydney, who provided Kosvitz with his silver pieces and mounted emu eggs, watches and jewellery. The emu eggs were frequently displayed in the front window of the shop, and were described frequently in *The Brisbane Courier*.⁷ Berens, Levi & Seligman supplied Kosvitz with watches, jewellery, precious stones, watchmaker's tools and other materials. The Sydney importer Henry Schilsky had supplied Kosvitz with jewellery since 1857. Kosvitz moved among the circle of his fellow German-speaking businessmen, and he would have known many of these jewellers during his residence and employment in Sydney. A second law suit in 1865 against Angelo Tornaghi, the Sydney-based scientific instrument maker, indicates a professional relationship between the two men.⁸ There is no doubt that the Queensland public enjoyed the taste of the objects stocked at Kosvitz's boutique, and had acquired several thousand pounds worth since the establishment of the business.

While Kosvitz was developing his successful business operations in Brisbane, he kept a pet dog. The effort of managing a thriving business and completing many commissions had resulted in Kosvitz being brought before the Central Police Court in 1866, charged with omitting to

pay the registration for his beloved pooch! The charge against Kosvitz was dropped when he paid the debt.⁸

On 20 October 1868 Kosvitz married 21-year-old Elizabeth Mary Josephine Doyle at St Stephen's Church, Brisbane. On 3 December 1869 she bore their first and only child, Augustus James.⁹ They travelled to the Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition the following year and acquired stock for the shop. However in 1871 a very public feud between the couple resulted in legal proceedings and the sale of the contents of the couple's home in Queen Street; and in 1872 Kosvitz was successfully sued by Thomas Faulkner for work done.¹⁰

In 1873 Kosvitz travelled to Sydney to exhibit two lots in the Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition, a quantity of gold and mineral samples from Queensland, and a mounted emu egg, for which he received a commendation.¹¹ Despite this, his business troubles did not subside, and later that year Kosvitz applied for insolvency, claiming that he was unable to meet his engagements due to 'losses in business caused by family troubles and illness.'¹² Kosvitz's illness no doubt referred to his excessive drinking, which had reached a critical stage at the time of the insolvency; his bookkeeping skills also left much to be desired.¹³ In 1874, his wife sued him for not providing for

A. Kosvitz's Fresh Importation of Watches and Jewellery.

JUST received, Ex Yarra Yarra, a Splendid Assortment of GOLD AND SILVER LEVER WATCHES, DIAMOND RINGS, &c., &c.

The undersigned having been employed for three years as a Practical Watchmaker and Jeweller in the celebrated House of E. Dent, of London, Watchmaker to the Queen, is a sufficient guarantee to the public that nothing but First-class Workmanship is performed on the premises.

A. K., finding from experience, that the Gentry of Brisbane will have nothing but First-class goods, has made arrangements with the above House for regular shipments of the same; and invites the public to inspect the lot just received.

A. KOSVITZ,
Queen-street.

Kosvitz, an early advertisement,
Moreton Bay Courier, 5 June 1860

her and his son, and the contents of his shop were sold at public auction on 7 April. Even nearing insolvency, Kosvitz maintained an inventory of fine wares, including stock of the popular silver-mounted emu eggs.

Although solidly attributed commissions or presentation pieces by Kosvitz have yet been located, the record of articles that Kosvitz created during his career reflect not only the quality of his workmanship and his debt to the style of Julius Hogarth, but also the youthful exuberance that was apparent in Queensland throughout the years following its separation from New South Wales. The commissions that Kosvitz completed before Queensland's financial crisis in the mid 1860s follow the social development of the colony, particularly in the settlements in south-east Queensland. In several instances, Kosvitz

Letterhead of Augustus Kosvitz in 1873, just prior to his insolvency that year

has used distinctly Australian elements and emblems in his work. This is without any doubt a debt to the work of Julius Hogarth. Many of the important commissions by Kosvitz are listed below.

In 1861 Kosvitz manufactured a relief-worked silver medal for the Volunteer Rifle Prize on 1 Jan 1862. It bore a laurel wreath on the obverse and Australian coat-of-arms flanked by a pair of rifles on the reverse. Kosvitz displayed in his shop window a rifle which was to be presented as a prize at the same event.¹⁴

In 1863 Kosvitz completed the Drum Major's staff for the Queensland Volunteer Regiment Band. The staff was made from colonial lightwood by Andrew Petrie and was surmounted with silver decoration in the form of a coat-of-arms supported by a kangaroo and emu. Kosvitz valued the work at £20.¹⁵

Three presentation articles by Kosvitz were reported in 1864. These are:

1. A spade for the Governor's wife, Lady Diamantina Bowen to turn the sod on the first railway line in Queensland. The spade was made of silver and was decorated with emblematic designs. It was engraved by Thomas Ham, the prominent engraver and lithographer. A silver-mounted wheelbarrow from Sydney complemented the spade¹⁶
2. A silver mount for a cricket bat, which was engraved 'Intercolonial Cricket Match, Brisbane, 1864. Presented to Mr D. Jacobs for efficiency in long-stopping.' The intercolonial cricket match was played between Queensland and New South Wales at Green Hills in Brisbane. Mr Jacobs was presented with the bat on Monday 4 July 1864.¹⁷ Kosvitz also retailed a British parcel-gilt

cup with figures of cricketers around the base at the same period, which was reported as a possible trophy for the intercolonial match.¹⁸

3. A mount for a whip and a pair of spurs, in 22 carat gold. The whip mount featured a kangaroo and crest, and possums decorating the spurs. The style without doubt owes itself to the work of Julius Hogarth, who was decorating his wares with imagery of Australian wildlife during the time Kosvitz was employed at Hogarth, Erichsen & Co. The mount and spurs weighed seven ounces, and were presented to the prominent Queensland businessman, pastoralist and parliamentarian W H Yaldwyn, for his services as President of the North Australian Jockey Club. The gold is said to have been sourced at Peak Downs, and this is possibly the most important presentation group that Kosvitz completed during his career.¹⁹

The same year, it was reported that Kosvitz had produced a medal for the Queensland Horticultural Society's exhibition. It bore the design of a wheat sheaf surrounded by a wreath and was inscribed 'Presented by the proprietor of the Weekly Herald, Jan 14th 1864.'²⁰ A contemporary source suggested that he may also have been the creator of the ceremonial trowel used to lay the foundation stone of the new City Hall in Brisbane in 1864.²¹

Kosvitz fashioned a set of solid silver implements, comprising of a trowel, square, and plumb, in 1866 for the laying of the foundation stone for the new Brisbane bridge on 9 June that year. The stone was laid by the Hon. Arthur

QUEEN STREET

Opposite the Supreme Court Buildings

Brisbane, 4 Sept. 1873.

Mr J. M. Lennberg

Bought of A. KOSVITZ,

PRACTICAL WATCHMAKER AND OPTICIAN. MANUFACTURING GOLD AND SILVERSMITH.
WATCH AND JEWELLERY REPAIRS CAREFULLY EXECUTED. ACCOUNTS RENDERED MONTHLY.

Macalister, Minister for land and works; and the bridge would replace the temporary bridge erected across the river the previous year.²²

Kosvitz created a number of articles for various Queensland Masonic Lodges. Between 1861 and 1866 he created a variety of jewels for the Prince of Wales Lodge, the North Australian Lodge, the Lodge of St John, Victoria Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Queensland. In 1864 Kosvitz created a presentation jewel for William Murray, Master of the North Australian Lodge, from the members of St Andrews Lodge for his assistance in the formation of their Lodge. The jewel was fashioned from gilt-silver and contained the five points of fellowship and the emblems of the past master on a blue enamel ground. Another gold jewel from Kosvitz's workshop was presented in 1864 to Mr A J B Jenner, secretary of the Grand Lodge.²³

Like many retailers in Brisbane at the time, Kosvitz's boutique also sold theatre and event tickets. Other articles were sold on consignment, as evidenced by a painting of Brisbane which was displayed at the boutique in March 1866. The landscape was painted in oils by Joseph Backler during his travels around northern Australia and documented a view of Brisbane city from the high ground at South Brisbane. This is almost certainly the oil painting of Brisbane recently attributed to Backler by Richard Neville, now in the National Library of Australia (Rex Nan Kivell collection, NK 6307), and though much smaller, an important comparison to J.A. Clarke's 1880 panorama of Brisbane.²⁴ There is a striking similarity between the view in the NLA collection and *The Brisbane Courier's* description of the work hanging in Kosvitz's store. The work is typical of Backler's landscapes, with trees placed prominently in the foreground, somewhat compensating for the lack of detail in the city itself. It is very much like his landscapes of Tenterfield and Gympie.

After his 1873 insolvency, Kosvitz maintained his work as a jeweller and resided at Cairns Street, Kangaroo Point

TUESDAY, APRIL 7.

**EXTENSIVE AND UNRESERVED SALE
BY AUCTION
OF THE
ENTIRE STOCK-IN-TRADE
OF**

**GOLD AND DIAMOND JEWELLERY
GOLD AND SILVER WATCHES
ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND AMERICAN
CLOCKS
ELECTRO-PLATED WARE
VALUABLE SHOP FIXTURES
MATERIAL, &c.**

THE ENTIRE VALUED AT £2500.

All of which must be absolutely sold in consequence of the continued ill-health of the proprietor.

On the premises in Queen-street, lately occupied by Mr. A. Kosvitz.

To Watchmakers, Jewellers, Private Persons, and Others.

ARTHUR MARTIN has received instructions from Mr. James Martin to sell by auction, on the premises lately occupied by Mr. A. Kosvitz, Jeweller, Queen-street (nearly opposite the Supreme Court), on **TUESDAY, April 7**, and following days, commencing each day at 11 o'clock,

The Entire of the Valuable Stock-in-Trade, chiefly comprising—

Valuable Gold and Diamond Jewellery, Brooches, Bracelets, Earrings, Solitaires, Necklets, Ladies' and Gentlemen's Rings in variety, Handsomely Mounted Emu Eggs in Glass Shades and Stands, English, French, and American Clocks, a Regulator Clock, Electro-plated Ware in great variety, Ornaments, a Large Assortment of Sundries too numerous to particularise, a Quantity of Working Materials, &c., &c.

Also,

The Business with Valuable Shop Fixtures, comprising Large Counter Glass Cases, Upright Glass Cases, Cedar Counters, Expensive Window Fittings, Gas Fittings, a Milner's Fire Proof Iron Safe, &c., &c.

NOTE.—The above Valuable Stock will be sold without reserve, as the proprietor has, in consequence of his continued indisposition, to relinquish this branch of his business.

Terms at Sale. 3709

Advertisement detailing the sale of stock from Kosvitz's boutique.

The Brisbane Courier, 6 April 1874

and Elizabeth Street, Brisbane. His business never recovered to the heights which it enjoyed during the early years, and was rarely reported in the news of the day. Kosvitz never received shipping announcements in the newspaper or advertised using his name, suggesting that he may have been in partnership or working for another jeweller at this time. Kosvitz was admitted into the Brisbane Hospital on 3 July 1894 and died on 12 July that year, he had suffered from a mediastinal tumour and bronchitis.²⁵ He was 63 years of age. He was buried on 17 July at South Brisbane cemetery.

Augustus Kosvitz enriched the artistic development of Queensland both through his creations and his retail operations. His shop served as a vehicle for the exhibition and sale of some of the premier artistic and design efforts in Australia during the early 1860s, and his

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28.

**EXTENSIVE, ATTRACTIVE,
AND
UNRESERVED SALE BY AUCTION
Of a Really Choice and Prime Collection of
HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE.**

Removed to the Mart for Convenience of Sale.

100 OUNCES STERLING SILVER PLATE
Large-sized Mantelpiece Glass, in Gilt Frame
Ladies' Mahogany Wardrobe
Suite of Drawing-room Furniture
Oval Centre Table to match
Circular Chess Table in Walnut-wood
Handsome Drawing room Carpet
Handsome Bronze Fender and Irons
Handsome Tubular Four-post Double Bedsteads
Glass, China, and a Large Variety of Electro-plated Ware, &c., &c., &c.

To Parties Furnishing, Furniture Brokers, and Others.

ARTHUR MARTIN has received instructions from Mr. A. Kosvitz, who is relinquishing housekeeping, to sell by auction, at the City Auction Mart, on **THURSDAY, December 28**, at 11 o'clock,

The entire of his Really Valuable **HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE** and **EFFECTS**, chiefly comprising—

DRAWING-ROOM—

A Handsome Suite of Drawing-room Furniture, comprising 6 Chairs, 2 Easy Chairs and Couch, Centre Oval Table, Circular Chess Table, What-not, Very Handsome Yellow-wood Table, Very Handsome Glass-case, Leather Ornamental Vase and Flowers; Very Handsome Axminster Carpet, large size; Hearth Rug to match, Bronze Circular Fender and Set of Cut-steel Fireirons, Portable Grate, Framed Engraving of Joan of Arc, Very Handsome Pair of Bronze Figures, Handsome Window Curtains, Cedar Poles and Rings, Venetian Window Blinds, Reeking Chair and Cushions, Papier Maché Cabinet, Musical Box, a Variety of Handsome Ornaments, Very Handsome Time Piece, and Sundries.

BEDROOMS—

Very Handsome Double Tubular Four-post Iron Bedstead, Mosquito Net Curtains, Pair Palliasses, Horsehair Mattresses, Bolsters and Pillows, Bedding; a Very Superior Ladies' Mahogany Wardrobe, fitted with bonnet boxes, &c., &c.; Large Size Chest of Drawers, Highly-polished Dressing Tables, Dressing Glasses, Cedar Washstands, Toilet Services, Bidets, Night Commodes, Towel Aiers, Carpets, Bedroom Chairs, Soiled Clothes Baskets; Engravings, framed and glazed; Window Blinds, and Sundries.

DINING ROOM—

Dining Table and Cover, Chiffonier, Book-case, Cane seat Chairs, Cedar Table, Oilcloth on floor, Bread Plate and Knife, 100 ounces Sterling Silver Plate, Electro-plated Tea and Coffee Pots, Cruets, Toast Racks, Knives, Forks, Spoons, Butter Cooler, Sugar Basins, Large sized Trays, Salvers, Candlesticks, Set Covered Jugs, Mugs, Dinner Ware, Dessert Ware, White and Gold China, Kerosine Lamps, Timepieces, and Sundries.

KITCHEN, Etc.—

Pine Tables, Chairs; a Very Capital American Cooking Stove, with fixtures, quite new; Iron Tube, Iron Buckets, Water Casks, Sets of Dish Covers, Large Oval Boilers and Saucepans, Sets Trays; Washing Tub, zinc-lined; Meat Safe, Kitchen Dresser, Kerosine Lamps, Clothes Horses, Clothes Baskets, Clothes Pegs, Clock, Smoothing Irons, Parrots and Cages, a quantity of Tinware, Door Mats, and a large Variety of Sundries.

NOTE.—The above furniture is all in first-class order and condition, and is well worth the attention of Purchasers, especially as it is for positive unreserved sale.

Terms—Cash. 5598.

Advertisement detailing the sale of furniture and effects from the home of Kosvitz. Note the fine but not ostentatious decoration of the home.

The Brisbane Courier, 22 Dec 1871



Joseph Backler, *View of Brisbane*, 1866. Oil on canvas
38.3 x 58.7 cm.
nla.pic-an2256194.
National Library of Australia

commissions and presentation articles introduced the people of Queensland to the freshly developing jewellery styles being produced by southern jewellers, notably Hogarth, Erichsen & Co. His output follows the social development of the colony and reflects the growing demand for fine works of decorative art in the early years of Queensland. The rediscovery of a piece fashioned by Augustus Kosvitz would be an important and exciting find for both Queensland's and Australia's decorative artistic history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Dianne Byrne, Librarian Original Materials, Heritage Collections, State Library of Queensland for her generous provision of documents pertaining to Kosvitz; and to Glenn Cooke, Curator Queensland Heritage, Queensland Art Gallery for his information regarding the Backler painting at the National Library of Australia. Thanks to the National Library of Australia, particularly the efforts of Sylvia Carr, Pictures Department for allowing the reproduction of Joseph Backler's *View of Brisbane* 1866.

Timothy Roberts is a researcher in Australian colonial heritage and decorative arts. He is a graduate with honours in Art History and Theory from the University of Sydney. This is his first article for *Australiana*. He can be contacted at timothyjroberts@hotmail.com.

NOTES

- 1 Archives Authority of New South Wales, John Augustus Kosvitz, Memorial, or Application for a Certificate of Naturalization. Item Number 58/4930, container 4/3390.
- 2 J B Hawkins, 'Julius Hogarth, behind the shopfront' *Australiana* vol 22 no 2, May 2000, p. 42.
- 3 *Moreton Bay Courier*, Tue 24 July 1860, p 2.
- 4 *Moreton Bay Courier*, Wed 26 Mar 1862, p 3.
- 5 *The Brisbane Courier*, Sat 17 Dec 1864, p 10.
- 6 Kosvitz v Queen Insurance Co, reported in *The Brisbane Courier*, Mon 8 May 1865, p 2; Thurs 11 May 1865, p 2; Fri 12 May 1865, p 2; Sat 13 May 1865, p 4.
- 7 Many silver mounted eggs were reported in *The Brisbane Courier*, no doubt supplied by Adolphus Blau or another fine colonial jeweller. See *The Brisbane Courier*, Tue 4 Aug 1863, p 2; Sat 28 Nov 1863, p 2; Sat 30 April 1864, p 2.
- 8 *Kosvitz v Tornaghi*, Supreme Court of Queensland record 1865/126.
- 9 *The Brisbane Courier*, Wed 21 Oct 1868, p 2; Sat 4 Dec 1869, p 4. Queensland Marriage Certificate 1868/B2514. Queensland Birth Certificate 1869/B10565.
- 10 Kosvitz v Kosvitz, reported in *The Brisbane Courier*, Mon 28 Aug 1871, p 3. Faulkner v Kosvitz, reported in *The Brisbane Courier*, Tue 4 June 1872, p 2.
- 11 *The Brisbane Courier*, Wed 14 May 1873, p 5. *Catalogue of the Metropolitan Intercolonial Exhibition 1873*, Agricultural Society of NSW, 1873, pp 82-83.
- 12 Statement of the Debts and Liabilities of Augustus John Kosvitz of Brisbane. Queensland State Archives ID 1056955, file no 235, 1873.
- 13 Kosvitz's drinking habits are thoroughly described in *The Brisbane Courier's* report of the insolvency case on Thurs 20 Nov 1873, p 3. The lack of appropriate bookkeeping was a point clearly made

during the insurance case in 1865. It appears that Kosvitz did not address his business errors, as *The Brisbane Courier*, Tue 21 April 1874, p 3 reported the cash book as only recording income and no expenditure.

- 14 *Moreton Bay Courier*, Sat 28 Dec 1861, p 2; Tue 31 Dec 1861, p 2.
- 15 *Moreton Bay Courier*, Mon 2 Nov 1863, p 2.
- 16 *The Brisbane Courier*, Mon 29 Feb 1864, p 2.
- 17 *The Brisbane Courier*, Fri 1 July 1864, p 2.
- 18 *The Brisbane Courier*, Wed 1 June 1864, p 2. The article reports that Alderman Mayne suggested it could be presented to the highest scorer on the Queensland side of the Intercolonial Cricket Match. The cup retailed for £15.
- 19 *The Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 26 Oct 1864, p 2. The testimonial was valued at 50 guineas.
- 20 *The Brisbane Courier*, Fri 15 Jan 1864, p 2.
- 21 *The Brisbane Courier*, Tue 26 Jan 1864, p 2.
- 22 *The Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 19 July 1866, Supplement p 2.
- 23 *Moreton Bay Courier*, Tue 5 Nov 1861, p 2; Fri 5 Dec 1862, p 2. *The Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 7 April 1864, p 2; Thurs 24 Nov 1864, p 2; Tue 29 Nov 1864, p 2; Mon 5 June 1865, p 2; Mon 9 Oct 1865, p 2; Wed 21 Mar 1866, p 2. Kosvitz also sold tickets to Masonic events through his premises.
- 24 *The Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 29 Mar 1866, p 2. A description of the work states 'the foliage in the foreground is admirably represented, and although the details as regards the houses in the city are not very minutely carried out, the effect, as a whole, is very good.' This is congruent with other landscapes by Backler, notably those of Tenterfield and Gympie. While travelling through Queensland, Backler based himself in Costin's Buildings, Queen Street. He advertised his portraits in *The Brisbane Courier*, Sat 10 Feb 1866, p 2.

S. John Ross, the Silhouette Man

Few portrait artists can claim to have created images of such diverse luminaries as Al Jolson, Sir Robert Menzies and Queen Elizabeth II.

These were just three of the tens of thousands of sitters who posed for silhouette artist S. John Ross who died recently after a 70-year career.

Silas Clifford-Smith

S. John Ross (the S stood for Sebastian) was born on 25 April 1919, and raised in Detroit, Michigan. As a boy he first saw a silhouette artist working at the Michigan State Fair and was captivated by the skill of the cutter. After leaving school he worked and trained with silhouette artist Joseph Budd-Jack (c. 1900-1961) for three years, working the fairs of the northern states of the USA, and later in Hollywood. Some of his early celebrity 'cuts' included Stan Laurel, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mickey Rooney and Spencer Tracey.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Ross was drafted into the US Army. Corporal Ross arrived in Australia in 1942 and was later transferred to the Philippines. During the war years he was involved in protecting General Douglas MacArthur and celebrity entertainers such as Bob Hope. Ross made



silhouette images of both these men and garnered notice in the wartime press for his skill with his trademark surgical scissors and a piece of black card.

After the war, Staff Sergeant Ross left the army and returned to Australia where he married an Australian, Phyllis Counsell. Since 1948, Ross toured the Australian agricultural show circuit and was a regular at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney for 60 years. His long time connection with the Sydney show saw him awarded the title 'show legend' for 2007. A man of great humour, Ross was heard to say that he would 'rather be a living legend than a dead one.' He was also a regular at the Royal Queensland Show (the Ekka), the Royal Adelaide Show and at Sydney's Luna Park and Centrepont Tower.

Despite suffering from prostate cancer for many years, Ross worked right up to the end of his life. In 2008, he charged \$10 for his silhouette

S John Ross at the Brisbane Ekka, August 2007. Photograph from Peter Dunn's "Australia @ War" web site www.ozatwar.com

portraits. One of his last major events was the Royal Easter Show in Sydney in April 2008. He became ill at the Cairns Show in July and died on 24 August 2008, aged 89. Arguably Australia's most prolific portrait artist, few examples of Ross' silhouettes are in public collections. Hopefully Australiana Society members will do their bit to redress this neglect.

Silas Clifford-Smith is the *Dictionary of Australian Artists Online's* current Researcher in Residence, supported by the Power Institute Foundation for Art & Visual Culture, University of Sydney.

The creation and furnishing of Government House, Hobart by Lt Governors Sorell, Arthur and Franklin between 1817 – 1843

PART III – LT GOVERNOR SIR JOHN FRANKLIN (1837-1843)

John Hawkins concludes his series on furnishing Tasmania's vice-regal residence under one of its most famous Lieutenant Governors, the naval officer and explorer Sir John Franklin and his intelligent wife, Jane.



Plate 1. In the Franklin inventory, this cedar cabinet is probably one of the pair described as '2 plain cabinets or shelves with folding wooden doors.' It survives in totally untouched condition, unlike its pair. I suggest the plain solid form implies the workshop of Woolley

Plate 1A. Detail of the shelf with cross-banded back to show the fine colour and patination

John Hawkins

In 1836, the authorities in London recalled Lt Governor Sir George Arthur. After selling his private furniture in a contents sale at Government House, he departed from Hobart on 29 October 1836. Kenneth Snodgrass acted as interim Lt Governor from 29 October 1836 until 5 January 1837, the day the new Lt Governor, Sir John Franklin, arrived. He remained Governor for over six years, until 21 August 1843.

Franklin found Government House virtually devoid of furnishings, and ordered new furniture. Three years afterwards, Lord Stanley's secretary in London, the Hon. John Russell, queried





the payment for refurnishing. Franklin reported the facts of the case in a dispatch he sent from Government House in July 1841.¹

The Franklins had ordered the new furniture during a boom but by 1840 this had become virtually a total financial collapse and it was at that time, when money was short, that repayment was being requested.

Upon my arrival in this colony I found the Government House in almost every respect unfurnished, some few articles the property of the Crown were left by my predecessor [as listed in Appendix B Part II and in Appendix A Part III,] but nearly the whole of the furniture which appears to have been the private property of Sir George Arthur was removed before my arrival. It became therefore necessary to refurnish the house entirely at a considerable personal outlay, independently of that portion which I was led to believe it was usual for the public to defray. I beg however to refer your lordship to the accompanying report which will, I have no doubt, afford a satisfactory explanation of this expenditure.
[signed] Sir John Franklin

In an attachment to this dispatch Franklin refers to his actions over this query from London.

... with respect to the furniture supplied for the Government House and for the country residence at New Norfolk I have directed the assembly of a Board consisting of Mr Boyes, the Auditor, and Major Kelsall Commanding the Royal Engineers.

The report of this board appointed by Franklin was attached to this dispatch but most unfortunately two of its attachments are missing,² and are not to be found in London or Hobart despite the best efforts of my researchers.

The board appointed by the Annexed Government Order 7272/3 consisting of the Commanding Officer of the Royal Engineers and the Auditor, having met for the purpose of taking into consideration and reporting upon certain documents so far as they relate to furniture &c supplied to the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment in the year 1837 amounting to nine hundred and sixty nine pounds, ten shillings and four pence, have now the honor to submit their report for the information of the Lieutenant Governor.

REPORT

The Board understands that previously to the year 1837 no regulations respecting the furniture for Governors houses had been



Plate 2. The companion cedar cabinet, a pair to plate 1, showing a sliding (folding?) door to the centre fitted with specimen drawers. The fitting to the top is not original and should be removed and the top remade to match Plate 1

Plate 2A. Drawer knob. This form of turning may be a clue to the maker

received from the authorities in England with the exception of Mr Stanley's circular of the 1 January 1834 and no specific regulations are laid down for determining what should or what should not be provided at the public expense. In the Printed Book of Rules and Regulations which was not received in this colony till November 1837 it is, first stated that "the several rooms and apartments in a Governors House which are usually appropriated for the reception of company on public expense. 'All furniture supplied at the public



Plate 3. The larger cedar four-door version, also untouched, which makes up probably the finest matched suite of cabinets in Australian furniture. It is not listed on the Franklin inventory

Plate 3A. Detail of a pilaster common to all the cabinets in the suite

expense is to be kept complete, and any article lost or damaged other than by fair wear, is to be made good at the expense of the officer occupying the Government House for the time being' – as these, the only instructions that have been received upon the subject, are of a somewhat general nature, the board apprehend, notwithstanding their attention had been directed by the Government order to the several items or expenses objected to by the Lords of the Treasury, that they shall best discharge the duty allotted to them if they show that the regulations emanating from Her Majesty's Government, have not been departed from in any material point, and that no expense has been incurred which, with proper regard to the officer in view, could have been avoided.

The company received at Government House on public days vary in number from three to six hundred persons, and upon such occasions the whole of the rooms upon the ground floor are appropriated for the accommodation. [see Appendix A]
An inventory of the furniture

distributed over those apartments, seven in number, has been examined by the board and from the document it is evident that with due regard to the comfort and convenience of the visitor for whose use it has been almost exclusively provided no material portion of it could be dispensed with. Besides the rooms upon the ground floor, there are two chambers furnished at the public expense which do not fall properly under the denomination of reception rooms – it is however obvious that independent of the rooms required for the Lieutenant Governor's family, some apartments must be especially appropriated for the occupation of distinguished individuals, for instance the Governor in Chief the General Commanding, or the Lord Bishop of Australia, who may upon occasion visit the Government, indeed if provision were not made in the Governor's house for a contingency of this nature it is difficult to understand where or how with proper attention to their rank and convenience such visitors could be accommodated. It must be observed that during the administration of His Excellency's

predecessor, the furniture, with the exception of a few articles in the dining room which of course remained, was private property, and therefore upon Sir John Franklin's taking possession of the Government House it became necessary to furnish every room. The furniture provided is plain and substantial and considering the high wages given to the better class of workmen and the large profits usually exacted by the tradesmen of Hobart Town the Board are of the opinion that the prices paid for the various articles were by no means exorbitant. The beds and mattresses were purchased for the Government Cottage at New Norfolk and there is no doubt that they were indispensably necessary that is to say, if the Cottage is to be kept in any habitable state and fit for the occasional residence of the Lt Governor's family.

Among the items of expense pointed out for explanation by the Lords of the Treasury there is a charge of sixty four pounds and eight shillings, for harness, against which there may appear at the first view to exist some reasonable objection but upon enquiry the board find that the

harness is of a description only adapted for an officer of high rank traveling in his official capacity and altogether unsuitable for any private equipage in this colony.

It was purchased to replace a set found in the harness room upon Sir John Franklin's arrival in the Colony and supposed to have been used upon State occasions by His Excellency's predecessor, but so much worn as to be altogether unserviceable.

The new harness is in every respect appropriate to the establishment of the Lieutenant Governor and is considered to be as much public's property as any of the furniture or fitting up of Government House.

G W Boyes, Auditor

R. Kelsall, Major Royal Engineer
Hobart Town 12 July 1841

Papers returned with this report

1: Inventory of furniture

[see Appendix A]

2: Distribution of furniture

3: Reference to bills for furniture

Unfortunately, the last two documents are missing from the file.

From the above it can be stated that Sir John and Lady Franklin, soon after their arrival on 5 January 1837 had spent nearly £1,000 refurnishing Government House. John Lee Archer's diary between January and December 1837 contains the following references to his involvement:³

1 March 1837, with Colonial Secretary, Lady Franklin taking account of furniture at Government House and what was required.

14 March 1837, the Colonial Secretary sent for me about furniture for Government House

15 April 1837, with Woolley, ordered floor cloth

20 April 1837, with Hamilton, arranging about bookshelves [see Library, Appendix A]

In 1838, Franklin had abolished Archer's position as civil engineer and colonial architect. Archer was appointed

police magistrate for the district of Horton, and when addressed by Franklin's Private Secretary in April 1841 over the matter he deferred the request to Mr Doolin, then living at the Lennox Arms, Richmond.⁵

Sir,

Application having been sent to Mr Archer for particulars of the furniture left in Government House by the late Lt Governor, Sir Geo

Arthur, that officer has referred to you as being the person best qualified to supply the required information, the inventory having been forwarded by you, I am therefore to request that you will have the goodness at your earliest convenience to supply me, for His Excellency's information, with any particulars on this subject that you may be able to collect or remember.



Plate 4. 'A Screen' is listed in the small dining room in Arthur's 1834 inventory. small screen is made entirely of musk, only some 4ft high and could be a excluder. I suggest that the Franklins had this made, using what they would considered an exotic timber, possibly by Hamilton rather than Woolley in 1837

Plate 4A. Detail of the brass knuckle that controls the screen opening



I am Sir
Your obedient servant
F. Hartwell Henslowe
Private Secretary

Doolin replied in a letter to F Hartwell Henslowe Esq Governor Franklin's Private Secretary on 22 April 1841:⁶

With respect of what furniture had been left at Govt House Hobart by Sir George Arthur, I have the honor to state for His Excellency's information that there existed an order for the Col. Engineer to inspect the furniture at the various public buildings which return was annually (I believe every 2nd year for Govt House) but this I am positive of they were regularly furnished and marked ED which I presume is still on all the old furniture. Previous to the embarkation of the late Lt Governor the list was compared and found correct, subsequent to His Excellency's departure the Col Engineer being out of town it became my duty to attend on the Colonial Secretary which I did agreeable to that officers directions at Govt House and such furniture etc being too old or dilapidated were removed and by order replaced by more description on and subsequent to Sir John Franklins arrival I was directed to attend on Lady Franklin and received such instructions as Her Ladyship might please to order amongst them a list was required of what furniture being then [in the] house which I had the honor to furnish her Ladyship. Mr Maconochie and I went thro all the building copies are to be found at the Director General of Works office but not by any means of what is now there the list being only made up the date what is marked on the inventory. The Honorable Mr Elliott paid part of the account? All can be seen at Captain Cheyne's office. I have the honor to be
Rob Doolin

This letter is in part self explanatory. It suggests that prior to Arthur's departure in October 1836 furniture at Government had been marked ED for the Engineers Department, presumably as a result of Archer's inspections and inventories. Franklin's furniture, purchased from Hobart retailers after his arrival in 1837, would appear to be either unmarked, or marked only with a broad arrow.

A record of the total sums billed by each cabinetmaker has now been discovered⁷

Furniture supplied for Government House and Cottage [New Norfolk]

Several persons	£107-14-0
J Sanders [sic]	£24-10-0
W Hamilton & Co.	£295-0-0
J W Woolley	£362-8-0
A Brunton	£74-0-0
D Dunkley	£42-0-4
	£905-12-4

Harness & Sundries	
John Wiseman	£63-18-0
	£969.10.4

Biographies of these free settler cabinetmakers, who may have been using assigned convicts from the Lumber Yard to make this furniture, are found in Appendix B.

This document lists the total for each supplier, but unfortunately not the goods supplied. Woolley is still the leading contractor and we know that Hamilton was discussing with J Lee Archer bookshelves for the house in April 1837. I suggest that Woolley supplied most of the furniture and Hamilton fitted a library as per the 1841 Franklin Inventory 'Library, 1 complete set of Bookshelves' which may or may not be the Huon pine library now at Carolside, Hobart.

All this paperwork was forwarded with dispatch number 109 to London on 21 July 1841, but further enquiries had obviously been made from England and another query was raised against further purchases by the Franklins in 18388, as another document mentions a payment of a special nature in the Colonial

accounts of Van Diemen's Land for 1838 for the sum of £463/6/5d for furniture, a horse and harness but without any specific detail. This furniture may have been required for the completion of the furnishing of the State Rooms in Government House and therefore chargeable to Colonial funds. Trevelyan asks for an explanation. This document lists part of the charge as an expense to Mr J W Woolley for articles of furniture supplied to Government House, Hobart Town for £109/3/3 in August 1838 under Warrant 597 (plate 17A, B & C). How this matter was finally reconciled, and what was purchased, is as yet unknown.

Lord Stanley resolved the matter of a repayment for the furniture in a letter addressed to Franklin⁹

Downing Street, 21 Feb 1842,
to Lt Gov Sir John Franklin.
Sir, I communicated to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury a copy of your dispatch, with its enclosures, dated the 21 July, No 109, containing the explanation which, at their Lordships request, you have been called upon to furnish with regard to certain payments of a Special nature included in the account of the Colonial Treasury of VDL for the year 1837: and transmit to you herewith, for your information and guidance, a copy of the reply which has been received from the secretary to the Board. You will observe that with the exception of the items for furniture of the Government House and Cottage, and for the harness purchased for your use, the Lords Commissioners are satisfied with the explanations contained in your dispatch.

I concur in the reasons assigned by their Lordships for declining to admit as a charge against the public and portion of the charges for furniture provided for the Government House and Cottage except that portion of it which may have been required for the Reception Rooms of the former, and I

have, therefore, to direct that you will prepare an Inventory of that portion, and otherwise, account for the remaining furniture charged in the Colonial Account, in the manner pointed out in the accompanying letter.

You will repay into the Colonial Treasury the amount of the payments made on account of the harness provided for your horses, which I also concur with the Lords of the Treasury in regarding as inadmissible as a public charge.

Lord Stanley

The detail as to how this was to be done was enunciated in the attachment dated at the Treasury Chambers 14 February 1842 and issued by Stanley's Secretary C E Trevalyn as an attachment to Lord Stanley's letter, but nothing seems to have transpired until the arrival of his successor forced Franklin's hand, resulting in a letter dated 2 November 1843 from Sir John Franklin to Lord Stanley regarding payment for furniture.¹⁰

Van Diemen's Land Hobart Town
2nd November 1843.

My Lord,

In reference to the correspondence which has taken place on the subject of the Furniture provided for Government House at the period of my entering upon this Government, and which was rendered absolutely necessary by the very scanty and inferior description of the Articles which had been left; it had been my



Plate 5. Large screen, perhaps the finest surviving item ordered by Franklin. The figured parcel gilded Huon pine, when combined with its large size, make this a most opulent object. It is more Hamilton than Woolley in its conception and execution. Listed on the Franklin inventory in the Large Dining Room as '2 large screens', I suggest that the screen started as two three-fold screens being joined for use in the current extremely large Porden Kay Government House Dining Room

Plate 6. I suggest this is the 'breakfast table' listed in the 1841 Franklin inventory in the small dining room. The cotton-reel mouldings of Scottish form, the fluted column and thin paw feet point to the employment of Scottish workmen. The general solidity and choice of cedar indicate Woolley rather than Hamilton as the supplier, while the feet point towards Hamilton; see the work table in the J B Hawkins advertisement, *Australiana*, November 2006

Plate 6A. Detail of the Huon pine stringing to the top and cotton-reel moulding. The top is one superb single piece of solid cedar, cross-banded and strung



Plate 6B.
Original inset Gillows-type castor



Plate 6C.
Carved hairy paw foot, with scroll detail which suggests Hamilton rather than Woolley as the originating workshop





Plate 7. One of a set of at least 12 cedar chairs on turned reeded legs, this one struck XII, possibly from the Franklin's small dining room



Plate 7A. Detail of the 1/2 inch chisel mark XII. As with the Arthur chairs, the lack of corner blocking as strengtheners is unusual, while the pegged drop in seat is standard. No arms survive, the set probably supplied by Woolley



Plate 7B. Back splat detail



Plate 8A. Detail of Scottish cotton-reel moulding and broad arrow mark



Plate 8B. Detail of the scroll end with cottonreel mouldings. This suite would have been made 10 years after the suite for Arthur. Times had moved on with different skilled men involved, whose backgrounds in the use of decorative detail were reflected in their work in Woolley's workshop

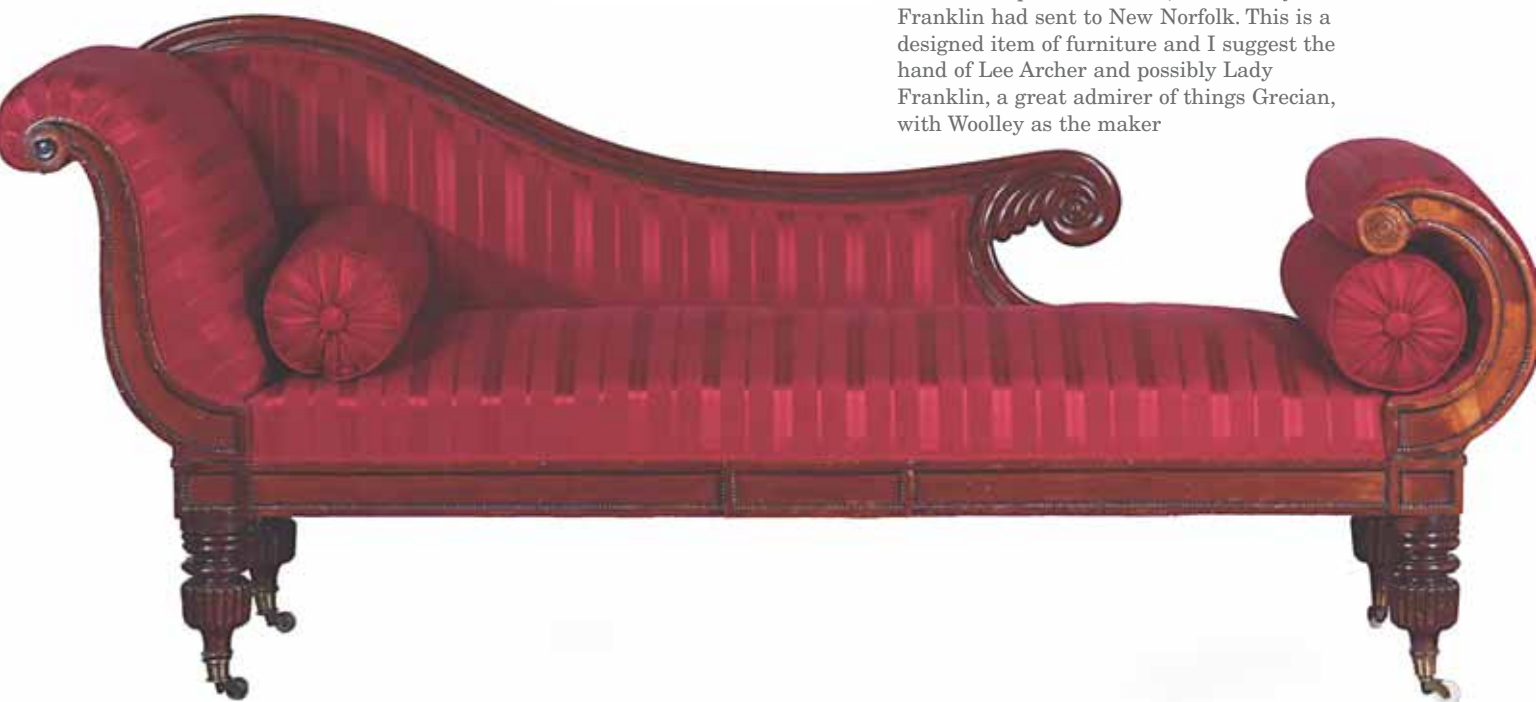


Plate 8. This cedar couch, designed to stand in the middle of the drawing room, is decorated to all sides and has many similarities in decoration to the breakfast table (plate 6), in particular the fluted column and cotton-reel mouldings. I suggest that another couch and a matching sofa have been dispersed and that this suite replaced Arthur's, which Lady Franklin had sent to New Norfolk. This is a designed item of furniture and I suggest the hand of Lee Archer and possibly Lady Franklin, a great admirer of things Grecian, with Woolley as the maker

intention of some months previous to the arrival of my Successor to address Your Lordship in detail, for the purpose of showing not only that the Strictest economy has been observed in the purchases made, but that the articles charged for Government, were such as, especially in the absence of all regulation on the subject, (the printed book not being issued at that time) I had been led to expect would be supplied by the public, being necessary for the completeness of the residence. Did I not feel that it would be invidious to quote precedents, I could, I think have satisfied your Lordship that I had every reason to suppose that no question would have been raised on the subject. Having however always, and more particularly in the latter part of my administration, found the care of the public interest left me but little time to devote to the arrangements of my private affairs, this question had been neglected; and when Sir Eardley Wilmot arrived and conveyed to me the first intelligence of my recall it became necessary to remove at a moment's warning all my private property from the Government House. Under these circumstances I caused all such furniture as was admitted by the Regulations and by your Lordship's Dispatch to be strictly public, to be separated from that to which no objection had been raised. This latter portion I find to amount to the sum of three hundred and forty six pounds, nine shilling and a penny, which in conformity to the Instructions of the Secretary of State, I yesterday caused to be paid into the Colonial Treasury. I trust however that on my return to England, when I shall be able to furnish full explanations as to the necessity of these articles being supplied at the time they were in 1837, that their Lordships of the Treasury, will sanction the revival of these accounts with a view to the

repayment to me of a considerable portion of this money.
I have the honor to be
Your Lordship's most
obedient Servant,
John Franklin, Captain R.N.

This letter confirms that the purchases for the refurnishing of Government House were made in 1837. They would have been required instantly, and the majority of the items, according to the accounts, were supplied by either Woolley or Hamilton. In the captions, I have attempted to attribute each individual item on stylistic grounds to these firms, although in the absence of the original bills this can only be supposition.

On the departure of Sir John and Lady Franklin, a sale of their furniture took place at Government House.¹¹ The £346 worth of furniture at Government House he ordered between 1836 and 1838 and now paid for was either sold or returned with them to England. Bearing in mind Woolley's 1838 purchases in the UK, as shown in plate 17, not all of it was made in Hobart.

The remaining furniture supplied to the State Rooms was thus finally paid for by Government authority and the survivors are still to be found in the magnificent William Porden Kay designed Government House, built in the Domain between 1853 and 1858.

What part did Lady Franklin play in all this? A contemporary quote states

Government House, Hobart Town, contained a famous sanctum which was certainly more like a museum or a menagerie than the boudoir of a lady, snales [sic], toads, stuffed birds



Plate 9. In the 1841 Franklin inventory, '4 chairs' are listed in the Front Hall. These hall chairs with fanned backs of Irish form, turned and faceted front legs and faceted seat rail are inset with the broad arrow as a painted crest, rather than that of Franklin, so have always been Government House furniture. They are not in Arthur's inventory. I suggest they are one of the first things Lady Franklin ordered, probably designed by John Lee Archer and made in Woolley's workshop

Plate 9A. Detail of painted crest with broad arrow, the crest of the Sidney family, here used as an indicator of Government property and indicative of power

Plate 10. An oolitic marble slab, possibly all that remains of the '3 side tables with slabs' now mounted on a Trollope table, from the Porden Kay order to Trollope of 185



and animals, weapons of savages, specimens of wood and stone fossils, and, last though not least, a juvenile lubra [Mathinna] arrayed in bright scarlet being the staple articles of furniture.¹²

Sir John Franklin had no children by his second wife Jane, and these quotes would suggest that her interests were less than familial.

Lady Franklin's attempts to introduce evening parties in the 'conversazione' style were highly unpopular with the pretty Tasmanians, who declared that they 'had no idea of being asked to an evening party, and then stuck up in rooms full of pictures and books, of shells and stones, and other rubbish, with nothing to do but hear people talk, lectures, or else sit mute as mice listening to what was called good music. Why could not Lady Franklin have a military band in, and the carpets out, and give dances, instead of such stupid preaching about philosophy and science, and a parcel of stuff that nobody could understand?...'¹³

Lady Franklin's intellectual interests found a practical expression in the autumn of 1839 when she bought 130

Plate 11. One of a set of 4 'hat or cloak pins' with black-painted cast iron feet all in the finest figured and well carved Huon pine. The current pins are later Victorian replacements for the originals (see plate 14A); they should be recast and replaced. These magnificent objects were, I suggest, supplied by Hamilton, possibly initially as colza oil two-burner lampstands, placed either side of the sideboard in the dining room to match the screen

Plate 11A. Detail of cast iron foot. Objects like these and the Huon pine screen prompted London to investigate the costs. They pose the question, were the Library and State Bedroom as grand?

Plate 12. This could be the sole survivor of a set of six chairs ordered for the library, of similar format to plate 7 without the decorated back rail. If so, as with the Arthur order, the same chair was made with minor variations to keep costs down, so Woolley should be the supplier



acres of land near Hobart. Her stepdaughter reported

We are told by several people who have visited that it is the most beautiful spot they have ever seen. It is a valley clothed with myrtle, fern, sassafras and mimosa trees, and through which runs a clear mountain stream.... Mama wishes to give it a name, but has not yet decided upon one. The problem was put before the scientific society itself: there was some difficulty Jane thought in making out business for the evening, but it was helped by my setting the gentlemen to fix at last a name derived from the Greek for my mountain garden. The Dictionaries, Greek, Latin & French were searched, much criticism bestowed on the names already selected & at last a wholly new one fixed on which [seemed] to all unexceptionable in its derivation & not amiss in sound. This was Ancanthe, or the vale of flowers.¹⁴

By the end of March 1842 Lady Franklin was free to carry out with her husband a most formidable expedition, an overland journey to the disused penal settlement of Macquarie Harbour. The only Europeans who had attempted the journey before them were convicts who had perished on the way back after escaping from the penal settlement; one who survived the overland journey was the cannibal convict, Alexander Pearce.¹⁵

As a result of the successful completion of the overland trip, Lady Franklin had a walking stick made for Dr Arnold, out of a Huon pine grown on the banks of the Franklin, 'with the date of our passage of that frightful river engraved on top of it'. But this was September 1842, and Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School and their advisor on Ancanthe and other educational schemes, was dead.¹⁶

These quotes intimate that Lady Franklin's interests in exploration, the natural world, collecting and historical display were considerable. I suggest that they would be reflected in the interiors



of Government House and its furnishing, concluding with the construction of the Museum at Ancanthe to which some of her collections were eventually removed.

With the departure of the Franklins, the Ancanthe Museum fell into disrepair. In 1853 its cases and fittings were sold to the Royal Society and its library partly dispersed; the source and the fate of its contents and collections for the purposes of this article have not been investigated.¹⁷

William Porden Kay was a nephew of Sir John Franklin's first wife, Eleanor Porden; his father Joseph Kay was married to Sarah Henrietta, the daughter of the distinguished Gothic Revival architect, William Porden. Kay arrived in Van Diemen's Land by invitation of Governor Franklin and not by a Colonial Appointment to take up the position of Colonial Architect on 20 May 1842. His official status was always controversial and insecure, partly due to charges of nepotism but mainly because his appointment had not originated through London.

In London his grandfather, William Porden, created the interiors for Lord Grosvenor at Grosvenor House. It was rumoured that His Lordship had spent £120,000, of which the alterations and decorations cost £16,670 and the Gillows furniture over £7,000,¹⁸ so both his father and grandfather were at the cutting edge

of fashion in Regency London. His grandfather Porden, writing to Lord Grosvenor, voiced his disapproval of his Lordship's choice of Gillows furniture designs and offered to undertake the designs himself with the assistance of his son-in-law, Joseph Kay (1775–1847). Kay was to be placed in charge of the draperies, Porden noting that they were placed 'under the active direction of Joseph Kay, who understands them as both a painter and an upholsterer.'¹⁹

William Porden Kay's greatest achievement in Tasmania was the creation of the asymmetrical Tudor Gothic Government House in the Domain, Hobart between 1853 and 1858 and which Anthony Trollope called 'the best belonging to any English Colony.' This family animosity against Gillows may be why the English firm of Trollope (no relation to Anthony) received the furnishing contract. So William Porden Kay was well versed through his father and grandfather in architecture, upholstery and the arts and well connected by marriage with Sir John Franklin, hence his arrival in Hobart. No wonder Archer no longer wished to associate himself with Franklin, Kay or Government House.

The visiting novelist Anthony Trollope summed up life in Government House Hobart perfectly, in words that are as appropriate now as they were then:



Plate 13. '1 table' is listed in Franklin's library; it may not be a leap of faith to suggest that it was a library table. This cedar library table has quad mouldings inside the drawers, consistent with a date in the late 1830s. Its King's Yard mark suggests its supply as office furniture, probably from the hands of John Lee Archer and Woolley

Plate 13A. Quad mouldings to drawer interior

Plate 13B. King's Yard mark

the climate is perfect, the scenery magnificent, the residence all the Government House should be, spacious, well built, and beautifully situated; the people beyond measure loyal and English; the cellar is sufficient for the house and the work easy. I do not say I am fit for the situation, but I should like it. It is required of a Governor in such a colony that he should not do foolish things, that he should not say silly things, that he should be discreet, hospitable, willing to spend his salary, and above all be a gentleman.²⁰



Plate 14. This cedar wardrobe epitomises the solid functional products of Woolley's workshop. Another, originally almost identical but altered in construction, with a Franklin provenance, still belongs to the Woolley family

Plate 14A. Clothes hanging pin. These have, I suggest, been removed from the 'hat or cloak pins' when a new set was supplied, presumably when some of the originals had been lost or broken. Those saved were re-used in this wardrobe

APPENDIX A

From the Public Record Office at Kew, England I obtained 'Enclosure 3 in Sir John Franklin's Dispatch No 109 of 21st July 1841, Van Diemen's Land, Inventory of Furniture in Government House.'

This 14-page document covers the Government owned contents of seven Principal Rooms, as well as the contents of 16 Bedrooms, Butler's Plate Room, Housekeepers' Room, Servants' Hall, Confectionary Room, Pantry, Beer Cellar, Kitchen, Bakehouse, Laundry, Larder, Dairy, Footman's Room, Wine Cellar, Lofts, Stable Yard, Cow House, Pig House, Harness Room, Men's Kitchen, Men's Sleeping Room, Coach House, Stores Room, Carpenters Shop complete with tools, Boot House, Oil House, Brew House, Wood Cutter's Room, Tailor's Shop and the House Superintendent's Office and Bedroom – in fact a complete and proper establishment mostly created after the departure of Arthur by the Franklins between 1836 and 1843.

It was to investigate this expense that Franklin was asked to provide the relevant inventory which I am using for a Principal Room comparison with the Inventory supplied by Arthur in 1834.

FURNITURE COMPARISONS

1834 Inventory – Arthur Drawing Room	1841 Inventory – Franklin Drawing Room
1 Pair of couches without ends	2 couches complete (plate 8 , only one survives)
1 Sofa (Part II, plate 3)	1 Sofa complete (missing)
24 Chairs (Part II, plate 7A)	18 Chairs, 1 much broke – (The reduction in number of drawing room chairs may be because 6 had been sent to New Norfolk (Part II, plate 7A))
	2 Plain cabinets or shelves with folding wooden doors (plate 1 & 2) a third cabinet exists at Government House with 4 doors but is not on the inventory (plate 3)
	1 Ottoman
	Portrait of Geo IVth
	2 Tables

I suggest that Lady Franklin had these cabinets (plates 1, 2 & 3) made for the drawing room to hold, in part, her various Tasmanian collections. The survival of the couch (plate 8) suggests that the Franklins had moved Arthur's suite of two couches, a sofa and six chairs to the cottage at New Norfolk and replaced them with a new turned-leg suite, possibly supplied by Woolley.



Plate 15. Large Gothic cedar bookcase, possibly designed by J L Archer and made by Woolley. It is one of a pair, the other now in the Premier's Office. The King's Yard mark suggests that it was originally made as State office furniture when the offices were within Government House, hence they would not appear on the Franklin inventory

Plate 15A. Detail of egg and line moulding

Plate 15B. Detail of King's Yard mark

1834 Inventory – Arthur Large Dining Room	1841 Inventory – Franklin Large Dining Room
9 Brass sconces	9 Brass branches
2 Pairs bell pulls	4 Bell pulls
1 Lamp	1 x 4 Burner Chandelier
5 Rods and curtains	5 Window curtains, 5 Cornices and 5 Curtain holders, Brass
24 Chairs (Part II, plates 7B & 7C)	26 Chairs (Part II, plates 7B & 7C)
1 Set of dining tables, 10 in number (Part II, plate 11)	1 Set of tables A 6 leaves (Part II, plate 11 & 11A) 1 Set of coarser ditto B 4 leaves (Part II, plate 11D) ditto 1 set forming a table
1 Square side table (Part II, plates 12, 12A, B & C)	1 set ditto, each side of fireplace
	1 Screen (plate 4) 2 Large screens (plate 5)
1 Carpet	1 Old carpet
2 Hearth Rugs	2 Old Hearth Rugs
2 Fenders	2 Brass fenders
	1 Sideboard, probably from small dining room in 1834 Inventory if so (Part II, plates 13, 13A, B & C)



Plate 16. This cedar writing table would be in keeping with the wardrobe, plate 14, and would probably have been matched with a similar dressing table and washing stand as per the inventory. I suggest this was part of a cedar suite supplied by Woolley, for the Franklins' bedroom

The only change in seven years is the addition of two chairs to Arthur's set of 24. The sideboard and small screen may have come from Arthur's small dining room and the two large screens may have been joined together to make an impractical and difficult to move six-fold screen for the enormous dining room in the Porden Kay Government House where it now resides.

1834 Inventory – Arthur Small Dining Room	1841 Inventory – Franklin Small Dining Room
1 Table	1 Breakfast table (possibly plates 6, 6A, 6B)
12 Chairs	12 Chairs (plate 7) 2 Arms ditto
2 Reclining chairs	2 Couches
1 Screen	
1 Sideboard (Part II, plate 13, 13A, B & C)	[Both moved to large dining room, so now missing from this inventory?]

I suggest the sideboard has been moved to the large dining room as has the screen. The screen mentioned may or may not be Arthur's, as it is musk not cedar which was used in all of Arthur's dining room furniture.

1834 Inventory – Arthur Front Hall & Passage	1841 Inventory – Franklin Front Hall & Passage
	4 Chairs (plate 9)
1 Table	3 Side tables with slabs (plate 10 for slabs)
	1 Barometer
	4 Sets of hat or cloak pins (plate 11& 11A)
3 Lamps	1 Two burner lamp

The entrance hall had been much improved with the addition of four hall chairs and four hat or cloak (stands) pins in Huon pine. They may well have been colza oil lamp stands, a very luxurious item, subsequently altered to 'pins'. The three side tables no longer survive but the oolitic marble tops may be on the tables now in the Conservatory, the bases being part of the Trollope order. Oolitic limestone is found in the Chudleigh Valley and was mentioned by Arthur on his visit to Mole Creek in 1829.

1834 Inventory – Arthur Small Drawing Room	1841 Inventory – Franklin State Bedroom or Toiletry Room for Company
1 Reclining chair	1 Hair bottomed easy chair
2 Looking glasses	2 Dressing glasses
1 Chest of drawers	
1 Dressing table	2 Dressing tables
1 Wash stand	2 Washing stands
	1 Four poster bedstead, chintz hangings, palliasse, hair mattress, feather bolster and feather pillows 1 Set of bed steps 1 Small writing table 1 Small bedside table 2 Towel stands 6 Cane bottomed chairs (plate 17B, 6 satinwood chairs?) 1 Wardrobe

If the State Bedroom was refurnished in cedar, the wardrobe should match the bed and all the other bedroom furniture. I suggest that this, which the Franklins termed the State Bedroom', would be in Huon pine with the Franklins' bedroom in cedar.

1834 Inventory – Arthur	1841 Inventory – Franklin Library
Executive Council Offices	This must be a conversion of use on the ground floor of Arthur's extension created to house the Executive Council with the adjoining anteroom
	1 Complete set of bookshelves [possibly by Hamilton] 1 Bronze fender Set of steel fire irons 6 Chairs, possibly (plate 12) 1 Table (possibly plate 13) 1 Small globe
	<u>Ante Room</u> 1 Press or cabinet 1 Bronze fender 6 Chairs
	<u>Turkish Tent</u> 1 Two burner lamp 1 Set of druggetts 6 Setting cushions 17 Smaller cushions 1 Brass frame, presumably to hold up the tent

This list of the furnishings of the Turkish Tent probably relates to the octagonal summer house, illustrated in part I, plate 1, facing the Derwent and is a further reflection of the interests and decorating abilities of Lady Franklin.



Plate 16B. This desk or writing table (it has no drawers to the frieze) with pylon-shaped doors may have been in Franklin's Private Study. It bears many similarities to Hamilton's pylon-shaped sideboards. The King's Yard mark would imply State office furniture

Plate 16C. King's Yard mark

1834 Inventory – Arthur Bedroom 2	1841 Inventory – Franklin Upper floor 1 st Bedroom
This is a principal bedroom for use of the Governor, with a fireplace	Governor's Bedroom
1 Bedstead furniture	1 French bedstead
1 Set of drawers	1 Set of Chintz hangings
1 Wash stand	2 Sets of Chintz window curtains
1 Reclining chair	2 Venetian blinds
1 Hearth rug	1 Hearth rug
1 Fender	1 Fender
1 Set of fire irons	1 Pair of tongs, 1 Pair fire dogs, 1 pair of bellows
1 Bell pull	1 Pair of bell pulls
	1 Smoke screen
	1 Wardrobe (plate 14)
	1 Chest of drawers
	1 Secretary
	1 Set of book shelves
	1 Writing table (plate 16)
	1 Dressing table
	1 Swing glass
	1 Washing stand
	1 Towel stand
	4 Chairs
	2 Armchairs

The Woolley archive supplied to me by Lewis Woolley contains a photograph of a wardrobe of nearly identical form, but altered in the centre section, with a history that it was ‘made for Sir John Franklin circa 1840.’ It now belongs to a Woolley descendant in Hobart.

Governor Franklin had converted the upstairs bedroom no 4 into his Private Study which contained the following furniture.

1 Large writing table (plate 16B)
1 Small writing table
6 Chairs, possibly same model as either plates 7 or 12
1 Easy chair
1 Bookcase, possibly (plate 15)
1 Press with bookshelves

In 1837 John Lee Archer was still in charge of the Engineer’s Department and therefore the King’s Yard. I suggest that he designed furniture for the use of Franklin as the Administrator of the Colony, rather than for use by the Household, but with time and changes of Governor this distinction was lost and Governors’ items moved into general furnishings, especially after the move to the new Government House in the Domain. This may be the history of the bookcase marked KY, plate 15; other KY marked furniture, now at Government House, illustrate this point.

APPENDIX B

Free cabinetmakers, whose names appear in the records and may have been involved in the furnishing of Government House between 1827 and 1840

The convict biographies will be written by Robyn Lake, drawing on her ongoing research into the manufacture, importation, sale and use of furniture in Tasmania from the beginning of European settlement to the 1930s. For the past decade the focus of this research has been to identify the more than 500 convicts with furniture trade skills who arrived in Van Diemen’s Land between 1804 and 1853.

These records bring to light for the first time the furniture history riches that lie camouflaged within the convict records. Her biographies of the convicts will be part four of this series and will be published in a later edition of *Australiana*. Her article will include new perspectives on contemporary material used in this article, particularly in relation to access to skilled convict labour. In this article the free cabinet maker biographies with the exception of Hamilton and Woolley are also written by Robyn Lake to whom I am most grateful.

Bridekirk, Joseph: Upholsterer, cabinetmaker and undertaker. One of the five people listed in the 1825 Hobart Directory as a cabinet-maker. In 1823 he was in partnership with Robert Household, 1824 in business on own account, advertising in the *Hobart Town Gazette* where he mentions ‘has received from first houses of London drawings of drapery, foot stools, sofas etc. a pattern of which will be completed for

inspection.’ The only other reference to Bridkirk’s presence in Tasmania is the 1825 Tasmanian Almanac where he is referred to as an undertaker and cabinet maker. Fahy, Simpson & Simpson in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* list a Joseph Bridkirk, in 1834 at Clarence Street and in 1855-57 at Edward Street, Sydney.

Brunton, Alex: Brunton arrived in Hobart Town on the *North Briton* from

Leith in May 1831 (MB2/39/1, p165) as a free settler and within a year had established himself as both a cabinet- and chair maker: ‘cabinet and chair making A. Brunton, having commenced in the above branches hopes by strict attention to merit a share of public favour. A. B. has on hand a quantity of horse hair for stuffing, hair cloth, Spanish and Honduras mahogany, rose wood veneers, &c. Macquarie Street, Aug 9, 1832.’²¹

Alex Brunton of St David’s Parish married Janet McBeath on 23 April 1836 at the New Town Church. They had one daughter Elizabeth born 20 July 1837, baptised at the Presbyterian Church on 24 September 1837, father noted as a cabinet-maker of Macquarie Street, Hobart Town. Mrs Janet Brunton aged 29 yrs died 7 November 1839 and was buried in St Andrews Cemetery in Hobart Town. He advertised as both a ‘Cabinet and Chair Maker’; his shipmate and fellow Scot, James Fayll, a chair maker by trade, was involved in the venture. In the 1834 *Hobart Directory* Brunton’s calling is shown as builder.

His convict workforce identified to date: in 1834 he was assigned wood

[illegible]

Plate 17B. The chair patterns are illustrated in the reconstruction document. If for use in a Huon pine State Bedroom, then delicate chairs in Huon pine would have been breakable, hence the supply of satinwood bedroom chairs as a colour match with strength

Fancy Sweep Back
Chairs

Each
Seton P. 1876
#10 Walnut 14/-
#11 Seton 15/-
both with seat

#9 front legs may be
brown by piece of paper
knee round the rails

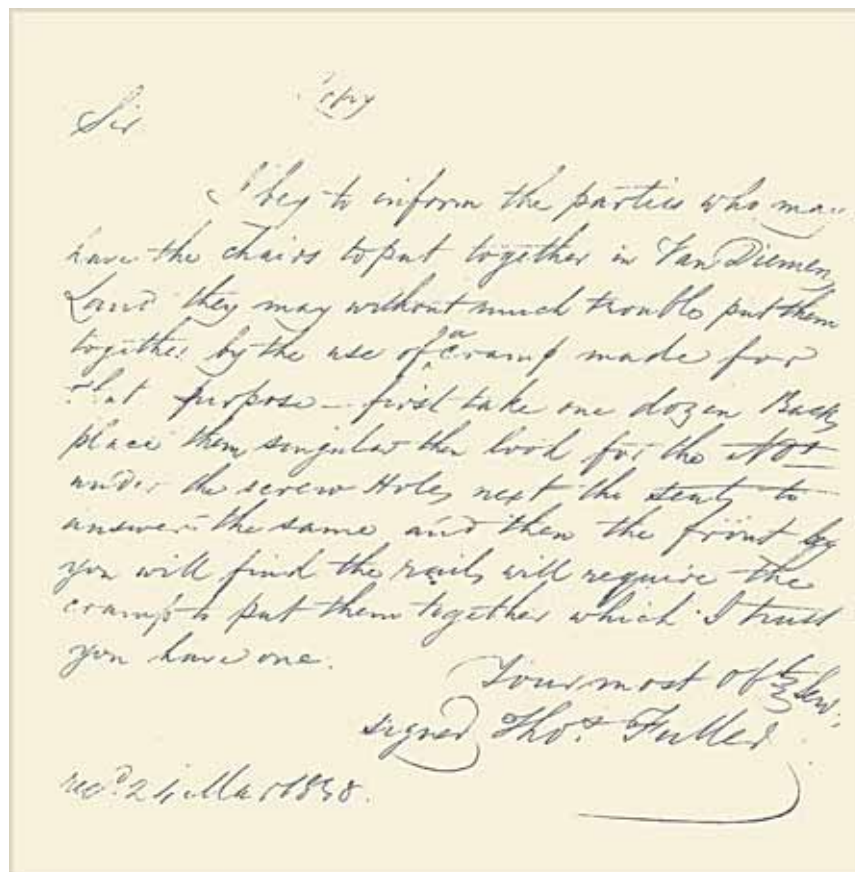
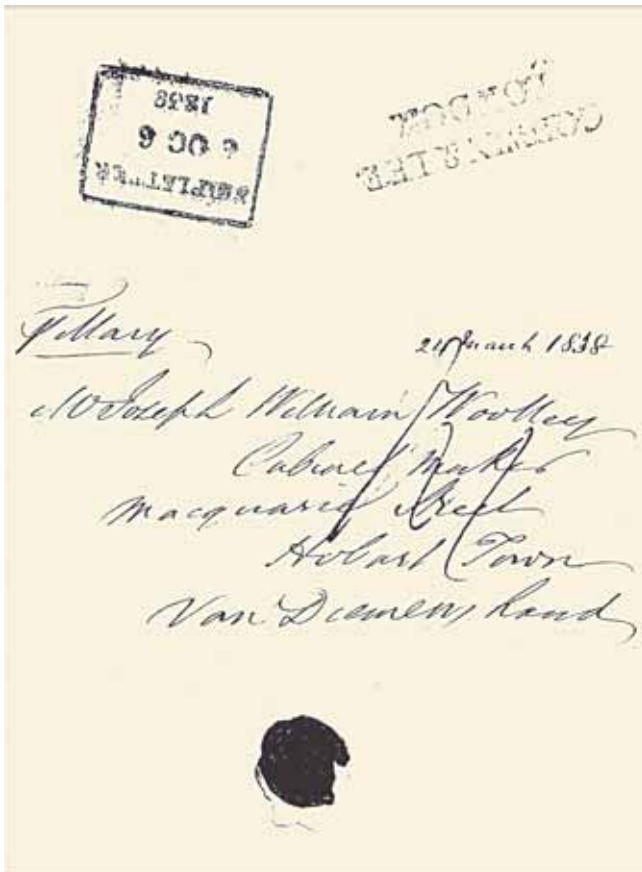
Seton
at 14/-
#13 Oak
at 14/-
#14 Seton wood
at 15/-

S.B. all warranted
Rich wood chairs
Dormie material

Seton Wood

the Bell of London 2001 T. T. T. T. T.

Alexander is not listed in any directories and only one death entry was found, in Geelong Presbyterian Church, Victoria in 1840. A fine cedar wardrobe labelled by Brunton and of very similar form to the work of Woolley for Government House is illustrated for sale



in *Australiana*, August 2003, Vol 25, p 87, by Colonial Hill Antiques.

Doolin, Robert: A Mr Doolin arrived in the cabin, from NSW, on the *Currency Lass* on 18 June 1834 (AOT, MB2/39/2, p 77). This is the only arrival found for the name Doolin.

Robert Doolin was appointed as a draughtsman in the Royal Engineers Department on 1 July 1834 (CSO50/9). Until 1838 he was acting foreman of works at Rocky Hills probation station (East Coast) 12 August 1841 (CSO50/16), then at Launceston in April 1846 (CSO50/21).

Robert Doolin, aged 35 years, noted as an architect, married Mary Ann Buscombe, daughter of John, of Richmond, at St Luke's Church Richmond on 29 February 1840. Mary Ann's brother, James Kestall Buscombe, owned the 'Lennox Arms' in Richmond.

Robert died aged 50 years, late Foreman of Works at Salt Water River [Tasman Peninsula] 18 April 1853. His will mentions he had a life insurance with Colonial & General Life Assurance

Company in London for £1,000. One of his executors was John Thomas Kift of Eccles Street in the City of Ireland, for any money or property Robert may be entitled to in Ireland (AOT, AD960/3, p 459, no. 510).

Dunkley, David: David Dunkley was tried in Leicester in March 1818 for robbery. He was sentenced to seven years transportation arriving in Hobart Town on the *Lord Melville* in December 1818. Aged 28 yrs, native place, Flore in Northampton. His convict record lists him as a sawyer (CON31/9;CON23/1).

A daughter Esther was born in 1830, father David Dunkley, a dealer, and mother Ann. David Dunkley was a cart manufacturer and a general dealer of Liverpool Street, Hobart Town in the 1833-1835 directories. In 1832 D Dunkley supplied 4,500 ft of timber to the Public Works for the Female Factory in Hobart Town (CSO1/773/16514, p 39). David Dunkley, widower, married Elizabeth Dutton the widow of Henry Dutton, a carpenter, on 21 November 1836 at Trinity Church.

Plate 17C. Document addressed to Joseph William Woolley 'Cabinetmaker', presumably forwarded via London agents Corwen & Lee

Plate 17D Assembly instructions: 'Sir, I beg to inform the parties who may have the chairs to put together in Van Diemen's Land they may without much trouble put them together by the use of a cramp made for that purpose - first take one dozen Backs, place them singular then look for the No's under the screw hole, next the seats to ensure the same and then the front leg, you will find the rails will require the cramps to put them together which I trust you have one. Your most obdt servant, signed Thos Fuller, recd 24 March 1838

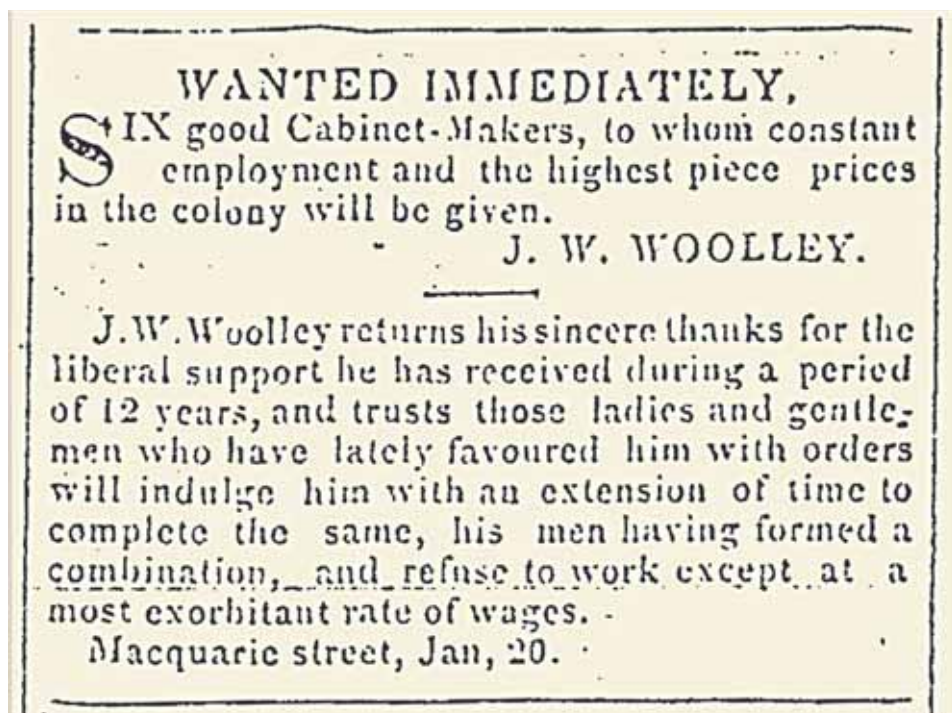


Plate 18. *Hobart Town Courier*, January 1836. Woolley may have been averse to having convicts in his workshop as he appears to have rarely used them, hence this advertisement

David purchased three acres of land known as Dunkleys Point where he lived until his death in 1860. David was thrown out of his chaise cart, falling on his head and died a few days later. Dunkleys Point is where Wrest Point Casino is today. He built the Duke of Wellington Hotel on the corner of Barrack & Macquarie Street, Hobart in 1846. The name of the hotel, plus 'Dunkley' and the date 'AD1846', can be seen carved into the stone work on this hotel which is still licensed today. Elizabeth Dunkley later owned the hotel. She died in 1880.

Hamilton & Co: See Fahy & Simpson, *Australian Furniture Pictorial History and Dictionary* (AFPHD) for a good biography of this business. Captain Michael Fenton RN sold his commission in India in 1828 and emigrated to Tasmania to take up land at Fenton Forest near New Norfolk. The family had been gentlemen farmers in Ireland; as a result, with his Irish connections, he brought out in 1838, on *The Lindsays*, 76 men, women and children as his indentured servants. Among these were the Irish tradesmen William Hamilton, James Whitesides and John McLoughlin; these three men worked together until 1839 to pay off their indentures as Hamilton & Co. As Fenton progressed within the colonial system, he was nominated to the Legislative Council in 1840 and as a result Hamilton & Co were in a good position to promote themselves over Woolley who until 1840 was the dominant force supplying Government House.

Hamilton's forte was, I suggest, veneered work in Huon pine, musk and blackwood. His large account for furnishings at Government House probably relates to the fitted library and would be one of Hamilton's first major commissions after his arrival in Hobart.

Hamilton, an Irishman may well prove to be the finest maker of Tasmania's veneered furniture; his exhibition pieces are magnificent and set a standard rarely if ever excelled by other Australian cabinetmakers working before 1840.

Hamilton & Co was in fact a partnership until 1839 when James Whitesides left to set up his Cabinet and Upholstery Warerooms in October 1839. Hamilton and McLoughlin continued as Hamilton & Company. The partnership between Hamilton and McLoughlin was dissolved in September 1840, when he went into business on his own account 'on part of the premises in Argyle-Street, lately occupied by Hamilton & Co.'¹² When William Hamilton moved to Elizabeth Street in 1842, McLoughlin moved into the Argyle Street premises which William Hamilton had been occupying for the previous couple of years.

Jeffrey (or Jefferies), James: Scottish cabinetmaker James Jefferies was about 28 when he and his wife arrived in Hobart in 1824 as free settlers aboard the Australian Company's ship *Portland* from Leith. In November 1828 he advertised as 'J. Jeffrey, Cabinet, Chair Maker, &c.' removing to new premises and offering 'choice stock of Cedar in planks and boards.' He imported 10,710 ft cedar from Sydney in December 1829. He operated the Cabinet Makers Arms (which was a house of call) for a couple of years during the early 1830s. He was prominent in the Free Labour Movement during the mid 1840s when the flow-on effect of the change from the assignment to the probation system resulted in an influx of cheap skilled labour into Hobart and Launceston. Cabinetmaker James Jeffrey, an 'old and respected resident' died in Hobart in 1860.

Owen, G: In 1822, Owen advertises a considerable variety of imported furniture and says he is going into business as Upholsterer, Cabinet and Mattress Maker. By June 1822 he moves

to larger premises, his stock includes 'large square sofa,' In 1823 he advertises an 'elegant full size wardrobe' of choicest wood and workmanship. His premises are taken over in September 1823 for a 'British repository.' By 1826, G. Owen is operating the Swan Inn at Constitution Hill, 23 miles from Hobart.

Rooke, James: Arrived Hobart in 1824, first listed in the 1825 Hobart directory as 'G. Hook, Chairmaker, &c Melville Street, then in 1826 'G. Rook (bedstead & chairmaker) Elizabeth Street'. In an advertisement of August 1826 he has on sale at his 'Manufactory, late the residence of James Lord Esq. rosewood, lightwood and cedar chairs, in setts [sic]... sofas... completed in first style and workmanship.' By 1827 Rooke had moved to Sydney as recorded in *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver* 'We heard that Rooke of Pitt-Street turns out excellent furniture. The Chief Justice it is said, has patronised him, and received good specimens of his skill as a cabinet maker. Like Owen he then appears to have become a publican. *The Dictionary of English Furniture Makers (DEFM)* lists a J. Rook at 10 Crown Street, Soho, London in 1819.

Saunders, J: This reference relating to Saunders and his cabinet making activities is from *The Hobart Town Courier* 12 February 1836, p1, c2:

Loo and dining table. J. Saunders, cabinet maker and upholsterer, No.16 Macquarie Street, begs leave most respectfully to solicit the inhabitants of Hobart Town and its vicinity, to inspect his stock of cabinet furniture, particularly a dining table upon a new construction, never before introduced into this colony, which can be appropriated to suit convenience either to a handsome loo table or a dining table sufficient to accommodate a dozen of people. An Apprentice wanted for which a premium will be required.

Whitaker, Samuel: Following his arrival in Hobart in September 1822 Samuel Whitaker worked for Mr. Owen. He went into business on his own account as a 'Cabinet Maker, Upholsterer, mattress Maker, and Undertaker' in October 1823, telling his potential customers that he had 'experience in every branch of the above business, which he has exercised in most of the principal Cities of England and Ireland.' Lending confirmation to his claims are several entries in the *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers (DEFM)* which indicate that he was apprenticed to Liverpool cabinetmaker Edward Lowe in 1802, in business on his own account in Liverpool in 1812, and is probably the Samuel Whitaker listed in an 1820 London Directory as living at 11 Skinner Street, Bishopsgate.

In 1824 he moved to new premises at the corner of Harrington and Davey Street and in 1828 advertised furnished apartments to let. In 1831 a license for the Freemason's Tavern at this location was issued to Samuel Whitaker. When offered for sale in 1836 the premises comprised '40 well arranged apartments' which included dining and sitting rooms, a large room lately used as a theatre, bedrooms, stores, counting houses etc. 'the whole being fitted up with every attention to the requisite convenience for so large an establishment.' The sale did not eventuate and the property was put on the market again in the 1840s, with his financial difficulties continuing until 1845 when he was declared insolvent. By 1849 Samuel Whitaker had moved to Victoria, where he died in 1861.

Robyn Lake drew my attention to the chalk initials, illustrated in *Australiana*, Part II, plate 15B, as possibly being S W for Samuel Whitaker rather than J W, hence his inclusion in this section of biographies.

Woolley, Joseph William: Arrived in Hobart on the *Venerable* in December 1822 as a free man with his chest of cabinetmaking tools. This magnificent

chest survives in the possession of his descendants with its original 8-page list of contents giving a total value on arrival of £51/16/6d. The chest contained his furniture makers stamp 'J.W. Woolley', 5 turning chisels and 2 turning tools, 2 complete sets of forming (10) and mortice chisels (10) but no carving chisels.

As noted in Part II of this series, though he was making furniture for Government House by 1827, he is not listed as a cabinet-maker in the *Tasmanian Almanac* for 1826. Only four cabinet-makers are listed: W. Fisher in Murray St, R. Household in Elizabeth St, John Jackson in Elizabeth St and Samuel Whitaker in Harrington St. G. Rook is a bedstead and chairmaker and J W Stapleton a piano forte maker. Woolley's obituary states that he began work as a cabinetmaker at the corner of Harrington and Elizabeth Streets, 'some years afterwards he purchased the property in Macquarie Street well known as Woolley's Corner.'

In the *Van Diemen's Land Almanac* for 1831 he was listed as a cabinet-maker at 10 Macquarie Street. By 1835 he was in a considerable way of business as evidenced by his advertisement in *The Hobart Town Courier* (plate 18). These problems over workmen combined with Franklin's order in 1837 for £362 worth of furniture on the Government account and probably an even larger, but unknown, sum on the Governor's personal account, probably caused him to start importing to keep up with boom-time demand (plate 17).

In 1836 he supplied G W Boyes with a chiffonier at £7/10/0 and two others for the large drawing room at Hawthornden in Davey Street, Hobart, perhaps as a precursor for the suite of three cabinets for Government House (plates 1, 2 & 3). On 31 December 1839 he leased premises near the corner of Murray Street from Alexander Brunton. This may suggest a prior connection between the Scottish cabinet maker who immigrated from Leith (the port for Edinburgh) and Woolley.

APPENDIX C

An interesting but unfortunately incomplete set of volumes for Treasury records, TRE13 series, 'Ledgers of Receipts and Expenditure of the Colonial Government,' survive in the Tasmanian Archives Office. These cover:

Vol. June 1830 to Dec 1832

Vol. Dec 1833 to Nov 1835

Vol. Dec 1835 to July 1837

Vol. Jan 1837 to Dec 1838

Vol. May 1840 to Dec 1842 (with a gap between Jul 1840 to Jan 1842)

Vol. Jan to June 1843

These records show the gradual replacement of Woolley by Hamilton as principal supplier to Government.

The entry for March 1838 for various persons who supplied sundries for Government Cottage, Launceston under Warrant No. 145, total £183-19-61/2 the same as GO1/43, p367, for Government Cottage, Launceston. The Warrant Number for J W Woolley in August 1838, No. 597, is missing.

The entry for J Saunders, 4 April 1837, £24-10-0, furniture supplied to the Engineer's department is possibly the same as AJCP Reel 502, CO280/32, p426

Date	Name	Item	Department	Warrant No.	Amount
TRE13/1/1					
23 Jul 1830	HOUSEHOLD R	Tables, chairs, desk etc.	Ordnance	246	£42/ 5/ 0
20 June 1831	WOOLLEY J W	Chair, webbing, hair seating	Ordnance	191	£10/ 8
17 Jan 1832	JEFFREY J	Cedar	Ordnance	597	£3/ 1/ 3
28 Jun 1832	DUTTON Henry	Cedar Presses	Engineer	204	£1 9/ 0
23 Nov 1832	DUNKLEY David	Chairs, tables	Engineer	499	£3/ 4
TRE13/1/2					
23 Jul 1834	WHITESIDES J	Pine	Engineer	205	£100/ 0/0
24 Dec 1834	DUNKLEY D	Fire dogs	Ordnance	567	£22/ 15/0
TRE12/1/3					
26 Sep 1836	ARTHUR P	Amount of furniture reserved for service of Government	Government House	546	£40/0/0
25 Oct 1836	HAMILTON W	Tables supplied	Colonial Store	652	£12/18/ 0
13 Dec 1836	SAUNDERS J	Tables supplied	Colonial Store	792	£7/0/0
4 Mar 1837	HAMILTON W	Mattress	Engineer	223	£42/10/ 0
4 April 1837	SAUNDERS J	Furniture supplied	Engineer	223	£24/10/0
7 Apr 1837	HAMILTON W	Desk supplied	Colonial Store	225	£3/0/0
25 Apr 1837	WOOLLEY J W	Roller blinds	Engineer	223	£1/10/0
25 Apr 1837	WOOLLEY J W	Curtains	Engineer	232	£14/6/6
25 Apr 1837	WOOLLEY JW	Binding	Engineer	234	£1/15/8
25 Apr 1837	WOOLLEY JW	Dressing Table	Engineer	234	£2/10/0
26 May 1837	SAUNDERS J	Office Press & supplies	Colonial Store	356	£18/5/0
12 Jun 1837	DUNKLEY D	Furniture supplied	Engineer	374	£18/18/0
TRE13/1/4					
8 Mar 1838	DENHAM JA	Sundries supplied to Government Cottage	Engineer	145	£41/0/2
8 Mar 1838	CORBETT J	Ditto	Ditto	145	£26/11/10 ?
8 Mar 1838	BELL ROBERT	Ditto	Ditto	145	£81/3/0
8 Mar 1838	De LITTLE R	Ditto	Ditto	145	£21/14/4 ?
8 Mar 1838	Mc KILLOP & ANDERSON	Ditto	Ditto	145	£2/4/0

21 Mar 1838	ROBERTSON J&D CAMPBELL W & CO, SHERWIN J	Ditto	Ditto	145 £2/12/0	£3/16/6 £3/18/3
21 Mar 1838	PARKER W	Ditto	Ditto	145	£19/4 ?
TRE13/1/5					
24 Jul 1840	SOLOMON H	Silver plate	Lt Governor	536	£32/10/0
22 Feb 1842	HAMILTON W	Fitting up new public offices in Murray St	Furniture etc	215	£228/14/0
24 Mar 1842	HAMILTON W	Furniture	Ditto	343	£43/1/ 0
9 Apr 1842	HAMILTON W	Furniture supplied	Ditto	397	£85/12/0
18 Jun 1842	WOOLLEY J W	Repairs to late Commissioners Office	Public Buildings	655	£18/1/6
24 Jun 1842	WOOLLEY J W	Furniture supplied	Furniture & etc	681	£31/5/3
25 Jun 1842	HAMILTON W	Furniture	Ditto	681	£4/7/9
2 Jul 1842	HAMILTON W	Fittings	Public Buildings	696	£4/8/0
28 Jul 1842	HAMILTON W	Bills for furniture	Post Office	831	£20/15/0
5 Aug 1842	HAMILTON W	Furniture supplied	Furniture & etc	877	£65/1/0
20 Sep 1842	WHITESIDES J	Ditto	Ditto	1009	£8/4/0
29 Sep 1842	WOOLLEY JW	Ditto	Ditto	1059	£6/10/0
TRE13/1/6					
13 Feb 1843	HAMILTON W	Table	Furniture & etc	184	£5/10/0
23 Mar 1843	PEARSON L	Bookcase	Furniture & etc	326	£7/0/0
3 Apr 1843	WHITESIDES J	Furniture	Ditto	332	£3/12/0

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been greatly helped by Warwick Oakman who arranged my visit to Government House, Hobart, kept notes of the visit, arranged the photography and gave me many insights into early colonial Hobart and its cabinetmakers. My two principal researchers, Thelma McKay of Hobart and Sara Joynes in London for a great deal of archival work. Robyn Lake for her help over the biographies of the cabinetmakers on which she is the acknowledged expert. Brian Rieusset for photographs and help over the Penitentiary chairs. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and its Director, Bill Bleathman for photographs and access to the chair in the Museum. Anne Parker at Government House, Hobart and my photographers Uffe Schulze and Peter Motton. I apologise to Lewis Woolley for not, as yet, completing a biography of his cabinetmaker forebear but a start has been made. Brett Manley's efforts over the Champ library table published in *Australiana*

NOTES

- 1 AOT,GO33/38 dispatch No 109, dated 21st July 1841, addressed to the Rt. Hon John Russell, p885
- 2 AOT,CSO5/279/7272, p200-206
- 3 AOT,NSI/20 John Lee Archers diary, extracts from this diary were taken by R W Giblin in 1952. The original was in London in 1927.
- 4 These bookcases possibly survive at a house called Carolside in Hobart, where a fitted Huon pine library was constructed circa 1860. This would coincide with the demolition of the original Government House in Franklin Square, from where they could have been removed. Information supplied by Warwick Oakman
- 5 AOT,CSO5/283/7462, p68 16 April 1841, Government House
- 6 AOT,CSO5/283/7462 p 61-62 Richmond 22 April 1841
- 7 AOT,AJCP Reel 502, CO280/132, pp 419-443 with particular reference, p.426
- 8 AOT,GO1/43PP363-372 Treasury Chambers [England] 5th August 1841, James Stephen Esq. from C E Trevelyan
- 9 AOT,GO1/45, pp 149-159, 21 February 1842, No 53 Downing Street, and

- addressed by Lord Stanley to Lt Governor Sir John Franklin
- 10 AOT,GO33/46, pp439-441
 - 11 *Hobart Town Advertiser* 5 Sept 1843, p3, c4
 - 12 The description of Lady Franklin's sanctum and of her visit to Cascade Factory is taken from an unpublished manuscript by Robert Crooke, "The Convict, a Tale Founded on Fact" 1886 quoted by Mrs Fitzpatrick. p211 and published in *Portrait of Jane, A life of Lady Franklin* by Frances J. Woodward.
 - 13 *Ibid.* p223
 - 14 *Ibid.* p224
 - 15 *Ibid.* p236 - 237
 - 16 *Ibid.* p. 245
 - 17 *Ibid.* p227
 - 18 Old Grosvenor House, British History on Line, The Survey of London, Vol 40
 - 19 *The Architect* 29th August 1902, p 136 and Old Grosvenor House article *ibid.* p3
 - 20 Terence Lane and Jessie Serle *Australians At Home*, p 92, with three illustrations of the interior of the newly built house.
 - 21 *Hobart Town Courier*

Antiques are green

Emily Cloney &
Michael Reid

What with the credit crunch and the swine flu there has been a dearth of things to celebrate recently. But here is one. It's official: ANTIQUES ARE GREEN. They are sustainable, re-usable and resaleable. It is time to relinquish your collection of allen keys, reclaim those hours lost in furniture superstores, and reacquaint yourself with the joys of beeswax polish and the feather duster. Flat pack is out. Antiques are back.

The revelation that a large number of the world's most influential business houses were complicit in a 21st century financial markets reworking of The Emperor's New Clothes has made us suspicious of slick delivery and the quick fix. It has forced us to consider our behaviour; to think about what we do and why we do it, about what we buy and from whom we buy it.

We may even be looking for virtues in our possessions that we lack ourselves. Buying antiques is one way to by-pass the frenetic materialism of following the latest trends. It connects us with our past and supports the values of the local and the crafted.

During financial turmoil we value solidity and are drawn towards the intrinsic value of antiques rather than furniture that depreciates in value the minute it leaves the shop. The very existence of antiques is testament to their longevity. These are not items to be purchased and then discarded when a once-fashionable look dates. Antiques are unlikely to crowd the nature strip on council clean up day and can be handed down through generations who will prize them for their craftsmanship, history and

sentimental value. We no longer want to continue with the superficiality of the disposable society. New and shiny are all very well but no worthy opponents for provenance and patina.

Aesthetic considerations aside (although who would favour pegs and screws over a dovetail joint?), buying antiques is now our environmental duty. Antiques are green. Whether or not this is a timely marketing ploy perpetrated by dealers and auctioneers in an attempt to assume a more fashionable, eco-warrior image, buying antiques really does tick all the boxes on the green manifesto.

The green movement sees changes made in individual lifestyles and choices as the first steps towards sustainable living – SIMBY or Start In My Back Yard. It promotes waste reduction through cutting consumption – either by buying less or keeping what you buy for longer – and champions supporting individual craftsmen and artisans rather than mass production. And then of course there is recycling of which antique collecting must surely be a more absorbing and attractive example than the weekly wheelie bin ritual.

The size of carbon footprints drags on many a conscience. Companies subscribe to all sorts of tree-planting and carbon off-set schemes. Some of this is 'greenwashing' (trying to make themselves look more green than they actually are), but antiques are blissfully removed from any such obligations or accusations as their carbon footprints have long since faded. By buying antique furniture rather than the latest designs, you not only reduce your carbon emissions but can rest easy on furniture that does not harbour any nasty carcinogenic, ozone forming solvents.

Your halo will glisten all the more brightly when your purchases do not

come swathed in huge amounts of cardboard and EPS (expanded polystyrene) which goes on to clog up landfill sites. In addition, by giving your custom to a local antiques dealer or auction house you will avoid unnecessary gas-guzzling journeys to enormous, public transport inaccessible, out-of-town centres and will be supporting your local economy rather than a huge multinational corporation.

Keeping up with the design times is far from a new phenomenon. Fierce competition in the supply of furniture in mid-eighteenth century England forced suppliers of household goods to diversify, allowing their customers to show off knowledge of the latest fashions through their furnishings. More recently we have fallen victim to a media wave of aspirational house improvement propaganda. Even the word 'renovating' has itself had a makeover. Rather than meaning 'renewing' and 'refreshing', it has come to signify the obliteration of past design and major structural change. But things have moved on and the era of sheep-like following of prescribed looks and buying only the mass produced is over.

So put the sledgehammer away and leave the wall in situ. It can provide the perfect backdrop for an antique sideboard. It is time for individual design, quality, craftsmanship and a pleasing degree of smugness at having saved another tree (and wall) from being felled.

Emily Cloney & Michael Reid

are rewriting the book *How to Buy and Sell Art* and can be contacted at Michael Reid Fine Art, michaelreid.com.au



Queensland folk art

Michael Beckmann

By 1909, when Queensland celebrated its jubilee, it already had a flourishing art community. Art exhibitions had been held in Brisbane since the 1870s, followed over the next decade by the first public art classes and formation of the Queensland Art Society; which in turn led to the establishment of the state gallery in 1895. These developments centred on Brisbane and sought to emulate contemporary European 'fine arts' practice.

But beyond this somewhat rarefied art community, there was another, more humble stream of artistic endeavour. Everyday Queenslanders, predominantly those living in rural areas and lacking the cultural opportunities of the urban centre, expressed their creativity in a range of forms outside accepted fine art practice. Drawing on their immediate surrounds, they created objects that were both ornamental and practical, incorporating materials readily at hand

and using these in inventive new ways. It is these folk art works that comprise the *Queensland Folk Art* exhibition, shown exclusively at the Ipswich Art Gallery until 9 August in celebration of the state's sesquicentenary.

Showcasing the creativity and skill of everyday Queenslanders, the exhibition surveys over 100 years of artistic production and covers a remarkable range of techniques and materials—inlaid woodwork, rustic furniture, chip carving, tramp art, spatterie, embroidery, gum-leaf painting, emu egg carving and more.

Top: Sarah Midgley (1864–1954), *Australian Aboriginal dolls* c.1935. Mixed media: baked clay (faces), cotton sateen (bodies), hand-sewn and painted details, wool (hair), fur (loincloths), timber (weapons), seed-pod (shields). Various dimensions: a. male 36.9 x 17.5 x 7.4 cm; b. female 28.1 x 20.4 x 6.6 cm; c. chief Moopil 40.4 x 16.3 x 5.8 cm; d. witch doctor Vitchi 34.3 x 19.8 x 5.7 cm. Collection: Queensland Museum, gift of Mrs Nell Ball 1987–88

Right: Sarah Midgley with one of her dolls c.1945. Reproduced courtesy of Queensland Museum

It draws on many public and private collections, and includes numerous pieces that have never before been on public display. Also included are distinctly Queensland crafts of fish-scale embroidery and shell work.





Left: Maker unknown, *Chair and table* c.1900. Eucalypt, made at Poona, near Hervey Bay. Chair: 110 x 79.3 x 58.2 cm, table: 57.4 x 77.9 x 63.4 cm. Private collection

Below left: Peter Thomle (1848–?), *Occasional table* 1879. Cedar inlaid with cedar, acacia, beefwood, casuarina, palm wood, silky oak and tulipwood, made in Brisbane, c. 1870. 75.9 x 59.1 x 59.5 cm. Collection: The Australiana Fund



Above: Maker unknown, *Table centrepiece* c.1935. Cotton velvet, tinted fish scales, 35.8 x 54.8 cm. Collection: Redland Museum, gift of Mr Doug Johnson 2006

Sadly, relatively few examples of Queensland folk art have survived. Some forms, particularly those employing textiles and paper, have been vulnerable to the ravages of the Queensland climate; and numerous items would have been lost to fire and flood. Additionally, the significance of folk art has, until recently, been broadly undervalued – and consequently, a great number of items

were probably discarded due to neglect and ambivalence.

Nevertheless, these circumstances draw greater attention to the folk art objects that were made and which have survived. Created by ordinary people, these extraordinary objects open a vivid and compelling window onto our past, revealing valuable insights into the lives and aspirations of Queenslanders over more than a century.

Michael Beckmann is the Director of the Ipswich Art Gallery, one of Australia's most interesting and innovative regional galleries, only an hour out of Brisbane by road or rail and well worth a visit.

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated colour catalogue available for \$35 plus \$5 postage from the Ipswich Art Gallery shop, telephone 07 3810 7222 or email info@ipswichartgallery.qld.gov.au



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Patrick Walsh Piggy bank c.1935
Queensland Museum, purchased 1988

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Letters to the Editor

All our authors and your editor strive for accuracy and completeness, but no one should expect to get everything right all the time. Letters provide readers the chance to give us feedback, to correct or comment on articles and to add more information. It also proves that people are reading our magazine, so, for many reasons, we welcome the feedback.

FROM DAVID KELLY

In *Letters to the Editor* in the February 2009 issue of *Australiana* (vol 31 no 1 p 38), I criticised the use of provenance by Ruth Dwyer and Brett Manley in their article 'A "champ" of a library table by William Hamilton' (*Australiana* vol 30 No 4, November 2008, pp 15-20). I refrained from criticising their attribution of the table to William Hamilton (the well-known Van Diemen's Land cabinet-maker), since attribution is a subject that requires more extensive treatment.

When I received the February issue of *Australiana*, I found that Warwick Oakman had described the Dwyer/Manley article in laudatory terms. In particular, he had the following to say:

It is one of the finest, simplest and most succinct pieces of research

that you have published in this area. It does not make loose leaps of faith [emphasis added], is versed in excellent primary research that cuts fresh ground ...etc.

Because this can be read as implicit approval of the Dwyer/Manley attribution of the library table to Hamilton, I have decided to put aside my initial reluctance to deal with the issue. The general subject still requires more extensive treatment, but this particular attribution needs to be dealt with immediately.

The authors say that the library table 'can safely be attributed' to William Hamilton. And they even describe it as 'made' by Hamilton. There is no evidence of any provenance to Hamilton, nor does the table bear his stamp, which we know he used (Fahy & Simpson, *Australian Furniture*, p 59-60). The basis of the attribution has to be inferred from the authors' statements about the design features of the library table and two other tables said to be by Hamilton. As to the library table itself, they say that 'the use of paterae and similar techniques is typical of Hamilton's oeuvre and shows a Georgian, rather than Victorian influence ...'. That may be true, but it establishes nothing as to the maker of the table. Paterae were commonly used by cabinet-makers of the period. The 'similar techniques' are not identified.

The two other tables said to have been made by Hamilton are a tilt-top musk on cedar table (the 'Champion Table'; see Anne Watson, 'A "Champion" Table', *Australiana* 1993 no 4 p 98ff) and a huon pine pedestal wine table; both now held by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. According to the authors, these tables show 'similar techniques' to those apparent in the library table:

The tilt-top, that of musk wood veneer on red cedar, c 1850, exhibited at the Great Exhibition, London, 1851, has a petal-carved apron, with similar decoration to the triangular base of the pedestal. Hamilton's labelled huon pine table, also c 1850, has a similar apron with decoration likewise to the base and bears his trade label.

And that is all! The sole design similarities mentioned are between the two Powerhouse tables themselves. There is no suggestion of any design similarities between the two Powerhouse tables, on the one hand, and the library table, on the other; let alone ones which identify Hamilton as the maker of the latter. The two decorative motifs mentioned by the authors lead nowhere. There are paterae on the library table, but not on the two Powerhouse tables; and the two Powerhouse tables have 'petal-carved' aprons, while the library table does not. Like paterae, 'petal-carved' aprons were, of course, not unique to Hamilton.

Unless something has been left out of the authors' account, there is simply no basis for attributing the library table to Hamilton, rather than to any of the other cabinet-makers working in Van Diemen's Land at the time. This does not mean that Hamilton did not make the table; just that *we have no idea whether he did or he didn't*. Nor does it reflect badly on the table itself. The table should be judged on its own merits, without reference to Hamilton.

Attribution of an item to a particular early colonial maker is a serious business. It can increase the value of an item by thousands of dollars. To attribute an item to a particular maker, it should be at least probable, on the evidence that is available, that the item was made by that maker.

An attribution that is not supportable on that basis can distort the market and may decrease confidence in it. It can also lead to errors of scholarship: through the passage of time, mere speculation can become accepted fact. Regrettably, many attributions of colonial furniture to early cabinet-makers run both these risks. They display little appreciation of the standards applicable to attribution in the analogous area of the fine arts.

David Kelly is a Melbourne lawyer, colonial furniture dealer and frequent contributor to *Australiana*.

FROM DENIS LAKE

I disagree with Warwick Oakman's praise of the article 'A Champ of a library table' and his assertion that it 'does not make loose leaps of faith'.

I dispute two claims especially: that it 'can be safely attributed to the cabinet-maker William Hamilton' and that 'John Lee Archer was responsible for adapting George Smith's designs.'

My reading of the article is that William Hamilton is named as maker solely because of a superficial resemblance between the turned and shaped paterae on the myrtle table and the turned and carved collar on the pillar of the Powerhouse Museum table.

The article correctly notes that the use of paterae shows a Georgian influence. Turned paterae, often carved, were applied to late Georgian and Regency furniture. Cast and pressed brass paterae were also used. Their long popularity was probably because paterae provided a simple way of adding a decorative detail.

In the case of the 'Champ' table, the patera was first turned on the faceplate of a lathe. To make it look more like carving, it was then worked, presumably by the cabinet-maker. His first task was to step out the positions of the holes on the turned blank with compasses. Once the spacing was correct, a mark would be made with

an awl and the hole drilled. A saw cut was made radially from the edge to the hole. This was then shaped using a flat cabinet-maker's chisel. The end result was an attractive detail that looks like carving. However it required neither the specialised skills of a carver nor any of his expensive shaped chisels. It was also a convenient way of covering the hole drilled in the uprights to house the stretcher.

This technique of turned and shaped paterae was certainly not something known only to William Hamilton. There were plenty of cabinet-makers and turners, both free and convict, who had these skills.

The turned collar of the illustrated Powerhouse Museum piece is quite different. It is part of a heavily carved and shaped column, clearly the work of a skilled carver after the initial work of the turner.

The 'Champ' table is made in the solid from selected burl and figured myrtle. The table shows the work of skilled hands. The turning is neat and detailed. The cabinet-maker knew what he was about, the work is precise, the mouldings are well executed. He would have known the risks of working in the solid with such wild grained timber. This inherent instability now shows in the cracks and undulations in the top.

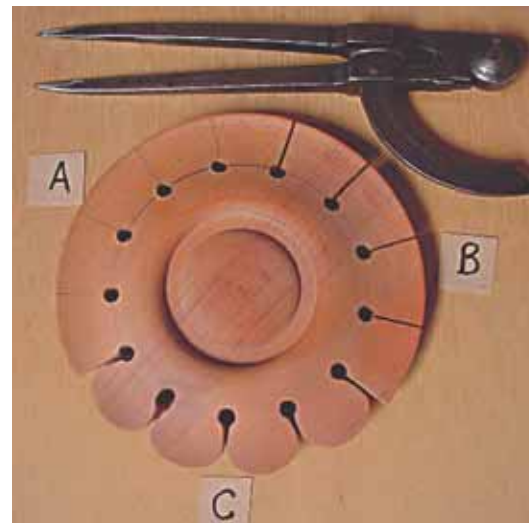
The article states, without explanation, that the table shows 'an Irish influence' and then gratuitously drops the architect John Lee Archer's name into the mix.

The unknown cabinet-maker was perfectly capable of adapting Smith's grand design to a more modest scale to match his own capabilities, resources and the hours required to match the payment. Gone are all the carved details and extra flourishes on the shaped ends. The carved paterae are replaced with the simpler alternative. The feet are plain flat buns. These are just the sort of adaptations that regional cabinetmakers in Britain and elsewhere routinely made when adapting city

designs to their skills and market.

I see no reason to link this table with Hamilton nor Archer. It is a fine table, and the way the myrtle was used seems to indicate an exhibition piece. It should be appreciated for what it is; inventing stories only obscures its true value.

Denis Lake is an antique furniture restorer in Launceston, Tasmania



Three stages in making a patera. Top: Compasses for stepping out the holes. A: the turned blank is marked out and drilled. B: radial saw cut. C: final shaping

FROM PETER COLLENETTE

I am flattered to appear in a footnote to part II of John Hawkins' series on Government House, Hobart, in the May issue of *Australiana* (p. 33) – but I am afraid I must gently disown the statement he attributes to me.

To my knowledge, the term 'lightwood' is never used for blackwood nowadays. Furthermore, as implied by Craig, Fahy and Robertson in the remark Mr Hawkins quotes, it was apparently only ever current in southern Tasmania, not in the north.

Nevertheless, every Tasmanian furniture maker certainly knows that blackwood does vary from a rosewoodor ebony-like darkness to the colour of unpalatably milky coffee.

Book review



SCOTTISH VERNACULAR FURNITURE

Bernard D. Cotton

Thames & Hudson, London, 2008. 304 pages, 544 illustrations, \$145

Reviewed by Peter Collenette

Visiting Orkney, off the Scottish mainland's north-eastern tip, I once slept in a box bed not unlike the ones shown on page 34 of this outstanding book – and very snug it was too.

The surroundings were just like those pictured here, and in several of the book's other fascinating photographs, paintings and engravings of interiors (and exteriors) in the Highlands and islands: a long low house of rough stone with the odd tiny window and no comforts, huddled on a bare, windy moor, or in this case shore.

Even a holidaying student could get a brief glimpse of the hard lives that had been lived there, and Mr Cotton's book offers many more like it.

The author of *The English Regional Chair* has gone to a great deal of trouble to explore and display the context of Scottish furniture over several centuries. The interiors shown, whether photographs or often-folksy Victorian paintings, are usually peopled. The pile of cooling bannocks sits to one side; the

smoke from the fire in the centre of the floor gathers under the low roof.

That smoke layer, according to the author, explains why some chairs have short legs. Others have low arms to facilitate sewing and knitting. Using both words and pictures, Mr Cotton succeeds very well in his mission of installing furniture as a record of social history.

'Vernacular' here means approximately 'in wide use by ordinary people'. It does not necessarily mean locally made, still less in local or even British timber. Many of the several hundred items pictured, and carefully described in long captions beside extensive running text, were made in production runs in the cities and larger towns, the main factories being listed and detailed.

However, the crudely rustic extreme and examples of simple hand craftsmanship are also fully represented. Geographically the book covers the whole of Scotland, but there is some emphasis on the far-flung Orkney, Shetland and Hebrides Islands.

The common thread is the domestic context, ranging from hovel to middle-class prosperity but stopping, with next to no exceptions, firmly at the door of the grand house rather than venturing inside.

Consequently, and naturally, this book offers scant nourishment for lovers of high style. Nevertheless it is striking how many of the pieces, chairs especially, display the unmistakable influence of the Sheraton taste (they have this in common with, for example, the earliest Van Diemen's Land furniture). There are also some charming and beautifully proportioned examples of country Chippendale.

The book is organised by furniture type, and it covers the wilder shores of cradles, spinning wheels, barrels and the like as well as all the more obvious items. At least to the eyes of a non-specialist, it does its

job exhaustively, and the pictures are all first-class – those of individual items being uniformly of studio quality. I suppose you could ask for a jot more on tools, techniques and the relationship between them, but only if you were an unrepentant technical buff.

There is nothing in *Scottish Vernacular Furniture* about furniture made by Scots overseas. This can hardly be called an omission, but the topic will arouse curiosity. Other experts will no doubt be able to see in occasional Australian pieces some of the regional peculiarities that are so lovingly and thoroughly explained here.

Meanwhile Mr Cotton's book is a highly desirable work of reference, and destined to stay that way for decades at least.

Peter Collenette is a furniture designer and maker in Launceston with a special interest in the classical manner and the Georgian period. His work can be viewed at www.tasmanianfinefurniture.com.



This 19th-century ash chair with a pine seat, unstained and unpainted, is a Perthshire version of what was called the brander-back design (a brander iron being a gridiron). The top rail is rounded in an unusual way



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'A New Discovery'

A topographically interesting panorama of Hobart and Mount Wellington, painted in Hobart, circa 1827, by a yet unknown artist.



A magnificent Tasmanian Blackwood occasional table made some fifteen years later with a superbly veneered specimen timber segmented top, by Hamilton of Hobart, circa 1840.
I will be exhibiting these Australian treasures and a Botany Bay wood work table to a Gillows design of circa 1796 at the Sydney AA&ADA Fair in August.

