



North Sydney

Heritage Leaflet 24

HAROLD CAZNEAUX

Harold Cazneaux was born on 30 March 1878 in Wellington, New Zealand, son of Pierce Mott Cazneaux, an English-born photographer, and his wife Emily Florence, née Bentley, a colourist and miniature painter from Sydney. In the 1890s the family moved to Adelaide and Mott became manager of Hammer & Co.'s Rundle Street studio. He was more interested in art than photography and attended evening classes at the Adelaide School of Art and Design. In 1898 he saw an exhibition of photographs by the new Pictorial Movement in Adelaide, he realised that *'through the lens of the camera'*, he could combine the two.

Pictorialists strived to have photography appreciated as art. The images they created used shadow, grain, and focus to create beautiful, often moody, representations of landscapes and people. In time Cazneaux became a master of the play of light and the evocation of mood. His photographs of Sydney's buildings shared pictorial qualities with the pencil works of artists such as Sydney Ure Smith and Hardy Wilson.

Harold and Mabel Winifred Hodge met as fellow workers, employed in the Photographic Studio of Hammer and Company in Adelaide. In 1904, Harold left Adelaide for Sydney to take up a better position at the Photographic Studio of Freeman and Company, George Street. In the following year his wage increased to 2 pounds 10 shillings per week and he was then able to ask Winifred to join him. They were married on September 1, 1904 and in 1905 they moved into 10 Riley Street, North Sydney.

It was at this time that Cazneaux's career as a photographic artist began, independently of his full-time work at Freeman's. With his first camera, an English-made Midge, he started to record the people, places, events and the city and its foreshores, on his way to and from work, during his lunch hour and at weekends. With very little equipment or money, he carried out all his photographic work at 10 Riley Street, using an outside laundry as an improvised darkroom and daylight for the exposures of his prints, as there was no electricity. He took a rare interest in the people of the waterfront and found a dark beauty in the intensity of Darling Harbour and Circular Quay.

Cazneaux joined the Photographic Society of NSW in 1907. His membership gave him access to darkroom facilities. At meetings he gave lectures and demonstrations, sharing his never-ending experimenting in photographic procedures. He also wrote articles, reviews and criticisms, all without a fee. At the same time, he contributed photographs to periodicals, journals, newspapers and books.

In 1909, Cazneaux was invited to put on a 'one-man show', the first of its kind in Australia. This was held in the rooms of the Photographic Society in Hamilton Street, Sydney. As he could not afford to frame his works, he mounted and bound each one in *passe-partout* style. This exhibition established him as a major photographer and was the beginning of his life-long exhibiting in Australia and overseas.

In 1914, Kodak ran an Australia-wide competition for photographers to send in ten prints depicting *'Happy Moments'* with a first prize of 100 pound. Cazneaux entered and won. These photographs were mainly centred around his family, for by this time he and Winifred had four daughters. Winifred was his constant and never-tiring support in all his work.

During 1915 Cazneaux moved to semi-rural Roseville where he later opened his own studio and had another daughter and a son. Money was scarce and the family supplemented the pantry with what they could grow in the orchard and garden. Their fortunes changed when, in 1920, Cazneaux became official photographer for *The Home* magazine, published by his friend Sydney Ure Smith. The magazine catered to the tastes of Sydney's upper middle class and cultural elite. Cazneaux's artistic abilities placed him in demand as a society portraitist and photographer of grand homes and gardens. Among those properties he recorded was 'Nutcote', designed for illustrator and author May Gibbs and her husband, J.O. Kelly by the renowned architect, B.J. Waterhouse. His interior images were used 80 years later to recreate the interior of the house-museum at 'Nutcote'.

Cazneaux's photographs of old Sydney evinced a mood of nostalgia. But he was also fascinated by change and the landscape of modernity. Cazneaux photographed the Harbour Bridge from its beginning to its completion in 1932. In 1934 he was commissioned to photograph the BHP works at Newcastle and the following year at Whyalla, South Australia. It was on this trip in 1935 that he saw the Flinders Ranges for the first time. He returned in 1937 to photograph the region which held a special fascination for him. One of his best known images, that of a twisted gum tree, 'The Spirit of Endurance', was taken at this time.

In 1937, The Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain conferred an Honorary Fellowship upon him *'for long services rendered to photography'*, the first Australian to receive such an award. In 1952, he was honoured in Sydney with a *'National Tribute'* from the Photographic Clubs of Australia with two thousand people present and messages from all over the world. Cazneaux died in his sleep at home in June 1953 aged 75. It was from 10 Riley Street, North Sydney, that all this had begun.

In 1995 a bronze plaque was installed outside Cazneaux's former residence at 10 Riley Street as part of North Sydney Council's historical plaque program. The plaque wording reads:

10 RILEY STREET

This was the home of HAROLD CAZNEAUX (1878-1953) from 1905 to 1915. He was a leading photographer of the Australian Pictorial Movement. While living in this house he achieved national and international recognition for his photographic work, teaching, lecturing, writing articles, preparing exhibitions and exhibiting here and overseas.

This was carried out independently of working a full six-day week at the Studio of Freeman and Company of Sydney.

His influence on Australian photography and generations of photographers has been profound.

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