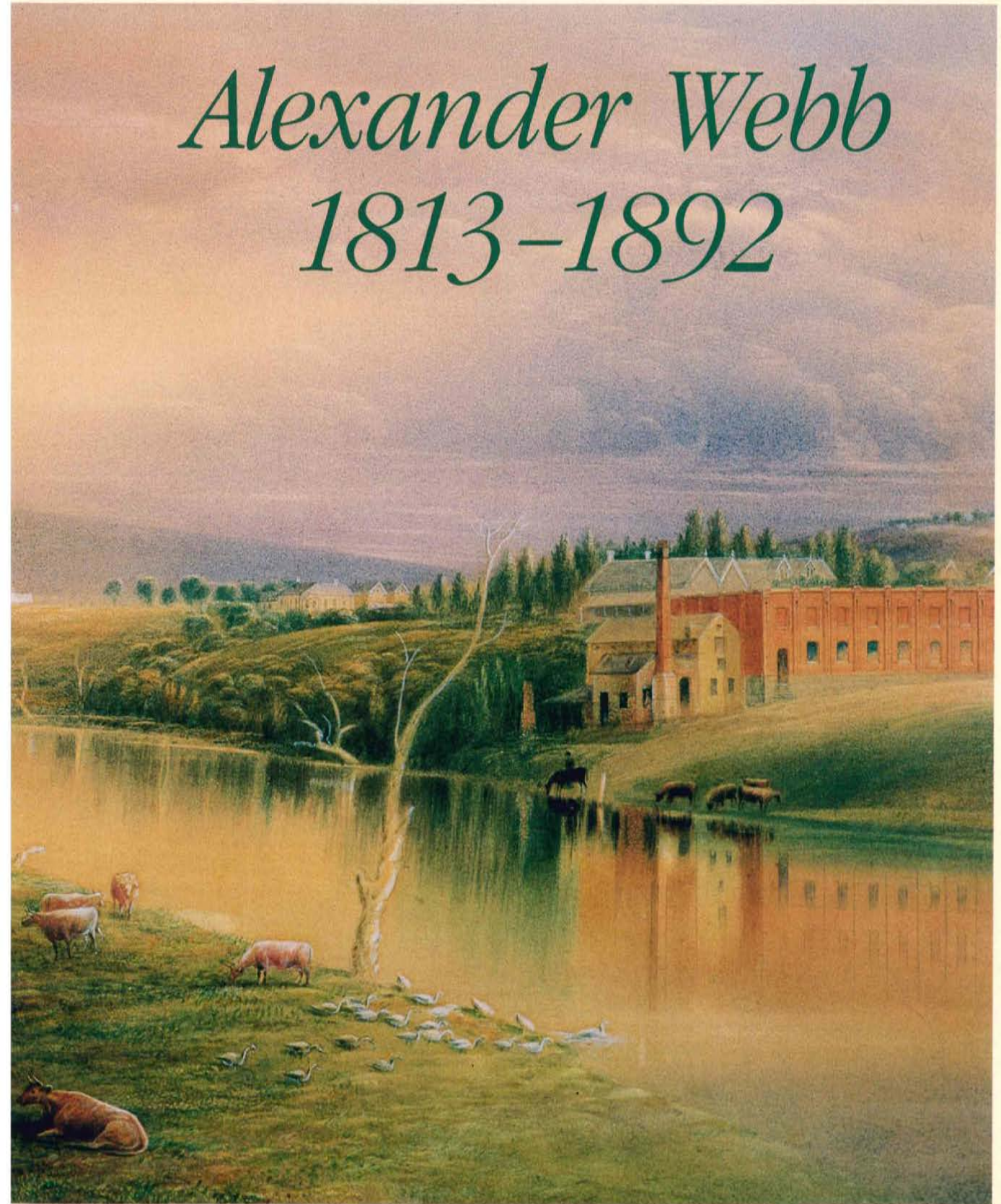


# *Alexander Webb*

## *1813-1892*



*Alexander Webb  
1813-1892*



Alexander Webb

*8 December 1989 — 28 January 1990*

*This exhibition has been indemnified  
through the Victorian Government  
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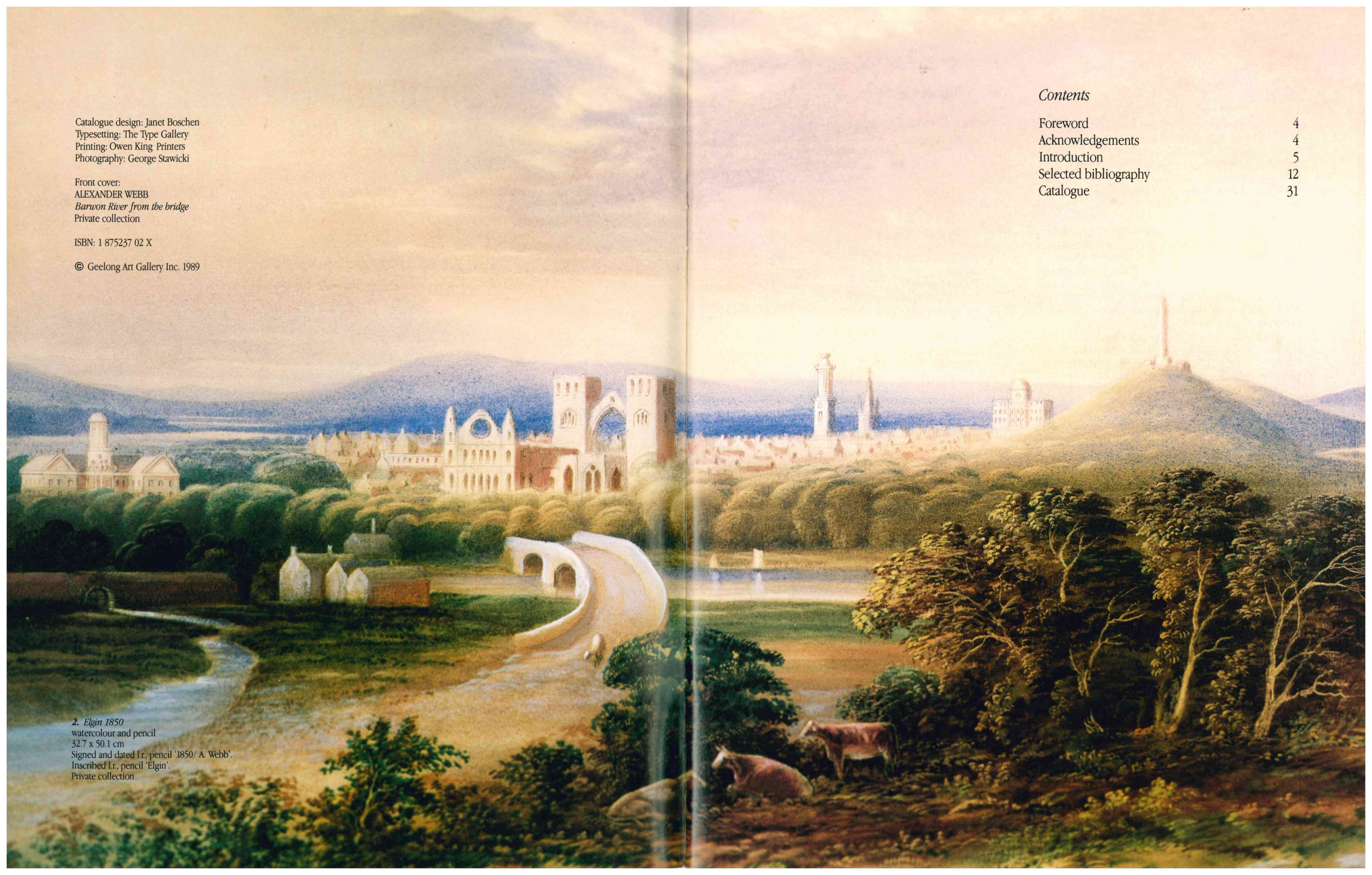
Front cover:  
ALEXANDER WEBB  
*Barwon River from the bridge*  
Private collection

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2. *Elgin 1850*  
watercolour and pencil  
32.7 x 50.1 cm  
Signed and dated l.r., pencil '1850/ A. Webb'.  
Inscribed l.r., pencil 'Elgin'.  
Private collection



## Foreword

Alexander Webb holds a prominent position as a colonial artist. He is perhaps the most important painter working in Geelong during the second half of the nineteenth century, and certainly one of the town's most enthusiastic and persistent recorders.

The Geelong Art Gallery has been pursuing the concept of this exhibition, and tracing Alexander Webb's watercolours and paintings, for a number of years, and it is with considerable satisfaction that the Gallery's Registrar, Veronica Filmer, has succeeded in putting together *Alexander Webb 1813-1892*. His works have been lent by a large contingent of private collectors, and included in the exhibition are two watercolours from the Gallery's permanent collections – *Malop Street from Johnstone Park* and *Yarra Street, Geelong* – both images familiar to tens of thousands of Gallery visitors.

Images depicting colonial Geelong and decorative arts made there during that period form a significant area within the Gallery's permanent collections. The growth of the town from the late 1830s is well documented by watercolours and other works on paper, silver and gold, and paintings by Eugen von Guerard, William Duke and J.W. Curtis. The work of Alexander Webb comprises a central feature of this area of the collections, and the research into Webb undertaken by Veronica Filmer adds considerably to our knowledge and understanding of the artist and his work in colonial Geelong.

*Susie Shears*  
Director

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who have been involved in the making of this exhibition. In particular, the descendants of Alexander Webb who, through their enthusiastic support, have made this a most enjoyable project.

Acknowledgements are also due to all the private lenders who have so generously made their works available to the exhibition, as well as those who have provided valuable research assistance:

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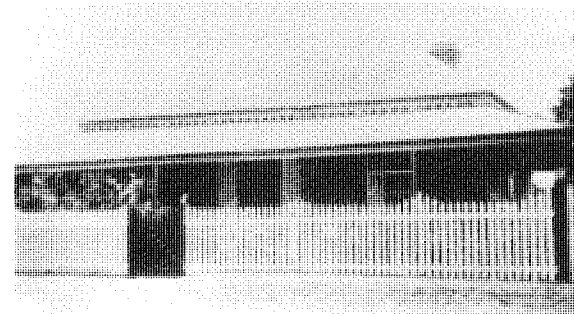
I am also most grateful to conservator Prue Keys, whose unstinted efforts have restored the majority of the works on display to some of their former glory.

I would like to thank both the staff of the Gallery, Susie Shears, Heather Lord and Larry Elizalde, and the Gallery committee for their unfailing support over the past months.

*Veronica Filmer*  
Registrar

## Introduction

Alexander James Webb was born on 8 October, 1813<sup>1</sup> at Inverugie, a small estate near the coastal Scottish town of Hopeman in Morayshire. The second of nine children to James, a veterinary surgeon, and Mary Webb, Alexander lived and worked in Scotland for almost forty years before sailing to Australia during the turbulent years of the 1850s. Settling in the rapidly-developing Victorian town of Geelong, it was not long before Webb made his mark on his adopted country. Through his enthusiastic participation in and encouragement of the growth of local art, it was in Australia that Webb was to gain a firm reputation as a highly-talented artist.



Ashford Cottage, Belmont

This exhibition draws together a comprehensive body of paintings which illustrate Webb's diversity as an artist. A prolific painter, the surviving works by Webb are predominantly watercolours depicting Scottish and Australian landscapes. There are also several townscapes as well as examples of marine views and religious paintings. Although largely undocumented, these works are of historical significance, both in the context of the images portrayed as well as providing a glimpse of the various concerns of a 19th-century colonial artist.

Little is known of Webb's formative years as an artist. Although he displayed an early talent for drawing, and may have received private art lessons from local amateur painter, Lady Eliza Maria Gordon Cumming<sup>2</sup>, Webb does not appear to have received any formal art training. Instead, Webb was taught, probably through an apprenticeship, the skills of a housepainter at a time when housepainting was acknowledged to be a viable training ground for potential artists lacking the means to pursue an art career for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Skills such as woodgraining and marbling, which recreated the visual effects of various specimens of wood and marble through the paint medium, were an essential feature of the housepainter's craft. Many households, unable to afford the actual materials, demanded a painted version, which required the housepainter to have both a masterly knowledge of the working medium as well as a detailed and painstaking accuracy in the actual execution of the work. Occasionally, he was also asked to paint large-scale murals, made in imitation of more expensive, contemporaneous scenic wallpapers.<sup>4</sup> For many housepainters, the artistic content of their profession encouraged the practice of the fine arts, either in addition to their housepainting activities or, as in the case of Scottish artists such as David Roberts and William Leitch, as new and successful careers.

1. In the Duffus parish register Alexander Webb's birth date is entered as 28 September, 1813. This may be an error, as family documents record his birth on 8 October, 1813.

2. Although this has not been documented, Webb's association with Lady Gordon Cumming, who spent some time at the nearby family estate of Gordonstoun, holds a firm place in family tradition.

3. GUITERMAN, Helen and LLEWELLYN, Briony – *David Roberts*, Phaidon Press and Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1986 p.9. John Graham, Master of the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh advised, in respect to David Roberts' artistic talents that 'as the parents of the boy were poor, he had best be apprenticed to a house-painter, where he might still practise drawing, and learn an art by which he could earn his living'.

4. Ayres, James – *The Home in Britain*, Faber and Faber. Ltd., London, 1981, pp.170-175.



Housepainting, however, was not simply an accepted preparation for a career in art. It provided a secure future, and it was undoubtedly with this in mind that Webb began his life-long career in this field. In 1837, together with Alexander Asher, he first established the firm of Webb & Asher, Housepainters, Paperhangers and Glaziers in High Street, Forres. In 1842, the business moved to 21 Batchen Street, where it remained for the next ten years. The partnership of Asher & Webb was dissolved in 1846, when Asher left to open his own business in Elgin, but by 1851 Webb was joined by his brother, George to form the firm of A. & G. Webb, with each brother employing two men. Together the two brothers pursued a steady and apparently successful trade, continuing to sell paper hangings 'of the newest patterns', and executing 'all kinds of Painting'.<sup>5</sup>

Although earning a living as a housepainter, Webb was nevertheless keen to also establish himself as an artist. He produced a prolific number of paintings, which he either distributed amongst local booksellers to display in their shop windows, or sold directly from his Batchen Street premises. The majority of these paintings appear to have been landscapes depicting Forres, other well-known towns and landmarks in and around Morayshire as well as places further south in central Scotland. Paintings such as *Elgin* (cat. no. 2) and *Forres* (cat. no. 4) reveal Webb's fine draughtsmanship, probably gained through his experience as a housepainter, and his keen eye for detail in the precise linear drawings of the towns' major buildings. Together with paintings that include *Ben Cruachan*, (cat. no. 3), *Loch Katrine* (cat. no. 5) and *Landscape with river and road* (cat. no. 8), the works also show Webb's sensitive use of light and colour to impart a romantic, atmospheric quality to the subjects.

Such paintings, with their idealized treatment of well-known scenes, would have appealed to the immediate public and would have given Webb a moderate reputation as an artist. Indeed, through his work as housepainter and as artist, Webb was, in 1851, acknowledged as 'our clever townsman'.<sup>6</sup> By this time, Webb's paintings were also appreciated on a more significant level than as picturesque adornments for the home. In his review of Webb's paintings, a reporter on the *Forres Gazette* notes the 'purity of colour and... the softened atmospheric effect of skies and distances' as well as the 'truth to nature' of the works which, when reproducing characteristic features of Forres, would be 'highly prized by Forres loons in distant lands'.<sup>7</sup> This was an

oblique reference to the growing number of Scottish families leaving towns such as Forres, in an effort to escape the oppressive living conditions created by such factors as the industrial revolution, a decline of the pastoral industry, overpopulation and clearances. The circulation of literature promoting emigration attracted the attention of many and, with the added incentive of the government's financial assistance, most towns were soon losing a significant number of their population to the lure of fresh beginnings in a new land.

Webb's paintings, which accurately and attractively recalled familiar scenes, would have had a strong nostalgic appeal to many displaced Scotsmen. Given the circumstances, however, this was not a lucrative market: money was too scarce to be spent on paintings. It would appear that general economic difficulties were also beginning to affect the business of A. & G. Webb for, in April 1852, having decided to leave Forres, the firm advertised its closure.<sup>8</sup> The Webbs too, were ultimately forced to consider the prospect of emigration.

Their destination was to be the distant land of Australia which, with the discovery of gold, attracted many immigrants to its shores. As with many of their countrymen, the two brothers may have hoped to share in the colony's increased wealth. However, uncertain of living conditions in Australia, and the viability of establishing a successful business there, Alexander left his young family at Bishopsmill, the hometown of Jane, his wife of eight years, before sailing for Australia.<sup>9</sup>

The details of the voyage to Australia are not known and it is not certain that the two brothers left Scotland together. Webb is first recorded in the Geelong ratebooks of 1853, the owner of an unfinished two-roomed cooper's shop, in Foster Place, off Lt. Rylie Street. In 1854 the shop, now with another room but not yet fully-built, housed the firm of A. & G. Webb, Painter and Glazier. Once established, Webb was rejoined by his family, who arrived in that year on the ship *Brilliant*. Over the following years the building was extended to accommodate the growing family while a separate workshop was kept for the business. During the 1860s George Webb left the partnership, possibly starting his own practice in Terang,<sup>10</sup> and in 1866 Alexander sold his Foster Place premises to Charles Corbett, a mason, while the family moved into Ashford Cottage, Belmont. Entries in subsequent trade directories, however, still list Webb at Foster Place as well as at Belmont, indicating that he may have taken a lease on the workshop or on a room, from which he continued to conduct his housepainting business.

Webb arrived in Victoria at a time when the fever of the 1850s gold rush was still high. He was one of thousands who landed at Geelong's port, hoping to benefit directly or indirectly from the colony's new wealth. Many headed directly for gold fields further inland; while others immediately established their own businesses in what was fast becoming a thriving commercial town. Competition was rife, and there was a high turnover of tradesmen. Yet, in spite of the turmoil of this period, it was not long before Webb began to make an impact on the community. In 1856, praising both the prize-winning marble and wood graining specimens, and the highly-commended painting of Venice exhibited by Webb in the Victoria Industrial Exhibition, a reporter on the *Geelong Advertiser* remarks, 'It is to be hoped that as Mr. Webb has paid so much attention to his profession and to the advancement of art in Geelong, he may be well patronised and encouraged to persevere in his laudable attempts at scientific progression'.<sup>11</sup> The 'clever townsman' of Forres was again acquiring a reputation as both a skilled craftsman and, through his continued and enthusiastic activities in this area, as an artist.

There was not a great demand for works of art in Geelong during this decade, and amateur and professional artists eagerly made use of the various available avenues to gain exposure of their work. As an adjunct to his housepainting work, Webb offered his services as a banner painter. One of his earliest, that for the 'Ancient Order of Forresters', was 'pronounced the best finished banner in the colony'.<sup>12</sup> Later banners and flags, such as those for the St. Mary's Total Abstinence Society (1873), the Geelong and Western District St. Patrick's Society (1874) and the Cadets of Temperance (1874) also received a great deal of praise.

Although his paintings would also have been sold from his work premises, one of Webb's most immediate steps to gaining public awareness of his art would have been to have paintings placed on display in shop windows. Until Henry Franks opened an art gallery in 1872, above his bookseller's establishment,<sup>13</sup> a number of local shops, including that of Franks, the bookseller George Mercer, and the painters and glaziers Bradley and Drew, provided limited but vital exhibition venues.

8. *Forres Gazette*, April 7, 1852.

9. COCKBURN, E. — Private correspondence, 1854.

10. In the 1868 Balliere's *Victorian Directory* a George Webb is listed as housepainter in Terang.

11. *Geelong Advertiser*, December 12, 1856.

12. *Geelong Advertiser*, December 12, 1856.

13. *Geelong Advertiser*, September 5, 1872.

14. *Geelong Advertiser*, May 12 and May 21, 1873.

On a larger and more public scale, organized exhibitions provided further invaluable opportunities for the display of works of art. Webb made good use of these generally infrequent opportunities. In 1856 he was represented in the Victoria Industrial Exhibition and the following year in the Geelong Mechanics' Institute Exhibition. The guiding philosophy of these early industrial exhibitions was the affirmation of industrial progress in the young but rapidly developing colonies. As such, the display emphasis lay on industrial exhibits and, during the earlier years, Webb was represented by his specimens of marble and wood graining, which gained first prize in the Victoria Industrial Exhibition, examples of gilding on glass, as well as by a number of paintings.

From the 1860s Webb was able to include his paintings in exhibitions that were devoted to the fine arts. In 1869 he submitted four paintings to the Geelong Mechanics' Institute Fine Arts Exhibition, and in 1872 participated in the Henry Franks' Art Gallery opening exhibition. As a member, he also exhibited in several of the annual Victorian Academy of Arts exhibitions, held between the Academy's establishment in 1870 and its demise in 1888. In the 1873 Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition he achieved some of his former success by winning a bronze medal for his landscape paintings, which included two views of the ranges near Ararat, Victoria and two scenes in Westmoreland, England. Interestingly, in its praise of the 'very clever original views' of the ranges, the Sydney Morning Herald adds the rather dubious compliment that Webb (now 60), was a 'young artist of some promise'.<sup>14</sup> Webb also entered a number of works in the substantial adult art section of the 1879/80 Geelong Industrial and Juvenile Exhibition, the inaugural exhibition of the recently-erected Geelong Exhibition Building.

Webb's paintings covered a variety of subject-matter, predominantly landscapes. A significant number were copies of works by popular artists ranging from old masters, such as Raphael, to more contemporary artists, such as David Roberts and J.M.W. Turner. Although undisguised copies, Webb's versions of original paintings were not simply slavish imitations. His own style and artistic vision could be evidenced in works such as the Raphael-like *Devotions* (cat. no. 6) which, though dominated by the figure of the praying Madonna, contains a glimpse of landscape in the background which evinces Webb's characteristically fine brushstrokes and his concern with imparting a sense of atmosphere.

5. *Forres Gazette*, April 7, 1849.

6. *Forres Gazette*, April 7, 1849.

7. *Forres Gazette*, April 7, 1849.





3. *Ben Cruachan*  
watercolour  
sight 24.0 x 35.0 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
On loan from Neil Stewart

Similarly, the Turner-inspired *Venice* (cat. no. 7), which recaptures the romantic overtones as well as the compositional elements of its original, *The Dogano, San Giorgio, Citella, from the Steps of the Europa*,<sup>15</sup> reflects Webb's own painterly concerns. Webb works within his own distinctive, lighter palette of soft blues and browns and his delineation of the various figures, objects and buildings is much sharper, isolating these elements from the surrounding, melting washes of colour. *Glamis Castle* (cat. no. 13), after Cattermole, with its imposing castle surrounded by forest land, has a similar level of execution to *Venice*, while both *Linlithgow Palace* (cat. no. 9), after fellow Scotsman David Roberts, and *Bombay Harbour* (cat. no. 12), after Umfield, are more cursory, quick sketches of a familiar landscape and an exotic marine view containing anecdotal figures drawn in Webb's typically summary manner.

Paintings such as these were not simply artistic exercises on Webb's part, they were also a response to the early colonial preference for European, particularly British art. Copies of popular paintings or popular subjects were not uncommon. As with murals that imitated unaffordable paperhangings, such copies took the place of unobtainable original works. Webb's apparent skills, which offered a combination of imitation with individuality, provided him with some success in this field. In 1864, one of Webb's earliest patrons, prominent landowner A.S. Robertson, commissioned him to paint two watercolours, one being *The origin of the Harp*, after Maclise, and the other *Bacchus and Ariadne*, after Turner. The watercolours were temporarily displayed in the window of bookseller George Mercer, and the *Geelong Advertiser*, remarking that they '*deserve more than a passing notice*', observed that the '*imparting (of) an aerial softness to sky and distance seems to have been mastered by Webb*'.<sup>16</sup>

In this particular instance, Webb's abilities as a copyist attracted the attention of one of the most fruitful and sought after sources of patronage for the colonial artist — the wealthy landowner. Robertson continued to show interest in Webb's art, and in 1872 again commissioned Webb to paint for him. On this occasion the watercolours were to portray Robertson's properties, including the expansive *Struan* station (cat. no. 10), in which Webb captures the vastness of the sheep station with its many buildings, such as the large bluestone shed and the sheltered homestead. Flocks of sheep graze on the land, while, on the domestic front, the home's inhabitants relax by the river or on the verandah. The paintings were temporarily displayed in Henry Franks' bookselling establishment.<sup>17</sup>

15. J.M.W. Turner *The Dogano, San Giorgio, Citella, from the Steps of the Europa* 1842, oil on canvas, The Tate Gallery, London.

16. *Geelong Advertiser*, January 30, 1864.

17. *Geelong Advertiser*, February 6, 1872.



4. *Forres 1850*  
watercolour  
34.5 x 50.2 cm  
Signed and dated l.r., brown paint '1850/ A. Webb'.  
Inscribed l.r., brown paint 'Forres'.  
On loan from the Misses Stewart



5. *Loch Katrine*  
watercolour  
sight 25.7 x 37.0 cm  
Signed reverse u.r., pencil 'A.W.'  
Inscribed reverse u.r., pencil 'Loch Katrine'.  
On loan from Len Harty



Another large district property represented by Webb was that of J.J. Currie's Lara station. Three paintings of Lara, by Webb, were included in the 1869 Geelong Mechanics' Institute Fine Arts Exhibition: *Larra in 1848*, probably copied from an earlier representation; *Larra in 1868*; and *Larra looking towards Camperdown* (cat. no. 11). Webb may have produced these paintings independently, hoping to attract the custom of Currie. It is more probable, however, that Currie commissioned Webb to make a pictorial record of his possessions and to thereby show the growth of the property under his ownership.

The concept of the painting as visual documentation was, indeed, intrinsic to the nature of Australian colonial art. During the early decades of settlement, such art was intended mainly for the amusement or edification of the British public as well as, on a lesser and more personal level, the glorification of individual landowners. By the 1860s and 1870s, however, an increasing sense of self-awareness was emerging within the colonies and, in conjunction, towns such as Geelong were displaying a greater sense of civic pride. This was reflected in the increasing importance attached to paintings and photographs depicting the town and the surrounding district. In 1872 Harvey and Dunden produced a postage album of Geelong views;<sup>18</sup> the February 1875 issue of the *Australian Sketcher* contained seven representations of the Geelong area as well as a carefully compiled history of the town;<sup>19</sup> and leading local photographers such as Fred Kruger and John Norton were winning medals for their landscapes.<sup>20</sup>

Webb also responded to the growing pride that Geelong's residents felt in the development of the town from what had been an essentially pastoral community to a thriving commercial township. His paintings of the more developed areas of the Barwon capture the coexistence of the region's pastoral origins and the rise of its increasingly powerful industrial interests. *Barwon River from the bridge* (cat. no. 1) depicts both farming properties such as Kardinia, with its sheep and cattle as well as, across the river, the Riversdale Steam Flour Mill (built 1836 and demolished 1886) and the Albion Woollen Company's Mill (built 1869), two of the many mills that spread throughout the district. *Kardinia and flour mill* (cat. no. 14) depicts the same scene from a different angle, concentrating more on the entrance to the Kardinia estate, with the Albion Woollen Company's Mill seen only as a smoking chimney in the distance.

18. *Geelong Advertiser*, December 12, 1872.

19. *Geelong Advertiser*, February 13, 1875.

On the other side of town, Webb's paintings of the harbour show the intensive shipping traffic that contributed to Geelong's prosperity. *Geelong Harbour, East* (cat. no. 17) and *Geelong Harbour, West* (cat. no. 16) depict various makes of sail craft in the harbour, varying from small fishing boats to large passenger ships such as the Geelong. The panoramic views of the town's eastern and western shorelines show the size of Geelong in the 1870s, with its buildings clearly and accurately delineated.

Webb's draughtsmanship is again apparent in his streetscapes, where the buildings that line the streets, including those of *Malop Street from Johnstone Park* (cat. no. 15) and *Yarra Street, Geelong* (cat. no. 28), are recorded with a painterly, yet almost photographic accuracy. Webb's precise drawing, and his characteristic use of a strong, linear perspective is, as in all his works, softened by the gradual transition from a foreground executed in fine and exacting detail, to a background of impressionistic, melting washes of colour, endowing the stark street scenes, such as *Yarra Street*, with its picturesque view of the bay and You Yang ranges, with a strong romantic quality.

Not only do these paintings provide records of the structure of Geelong, they also provide glimpses of life in Geelong during the 1870s. Picnickers relax beside the flagstaff in Johnstone Park, while, beyond the small group, and making their way between horse-drawn carts, pedestrians move about their business in Malop Street. Yarra Street, too, is full of human activity, with shoppers, tradesmen, horseriders, dogs, wagons and carts caught in ordinary, everyday situations. Noteworthy images include the barefooted aborigine on one side of the street with a boomerang lying on the other; a small cart pulled by a goat; and, on a more humorous note, an errant dog fleeing an irate lady.

Webb placed the harbour and street paintings on display at Henry Franks' bookshop prior to entering them in the 1872 Victorian Academy of Arts exhibition. Noting that they were 'admitted by the most competent authorities to be the best specimens of local artistic talent' to be exhibited, the *Geelong Advertiser's* reporter was moved to further suggest that 'If Mr. Webb should but apply himself to the representation of our forest scenery, there is little doubt that he would ultimately obtain a high reputation as a colonial artist.'<sup>21</sup> Combined with the pride in the town's visible growth and achievements was the pride in the picturesque surroundings which often attracted the admiration of visitors. Possibly spurred by this comment —

20. Kruger and Norton won gold and silver medals respectively in the Geelong Industrial and Juvenile Exhibition 1879-80 for Best Panoramic View of Geelong and Best collection Landscape Views.

21. *Geelong Advertiser*, February 29, 1872.

22. *Geelong Advertiser*, October 3, 1874.

newspaper reviews were an all too infrequent, but essential, form of publicity for an artist and therefore not to be taken lightly — Webb produced *Waterfall at Loutit*, which appeared in the 1873 Victorian Academy of Arts exhibition. Apparently successful, Webb painted additional versions which were placed on display in the 1874 and 1875 Academy exhibitions. *Erskine Waterfalls, Loutit Bay* (cat. no. 18) which may have appeared in one of these exhibitions, shows the use of more sombre browns and greens than in the majority of Webb's paintings. This contributes to the impression of the density and dampness of the rainforest, enhanced by the crowded trees which loom in the background. More trees overhang the embankment, providing a compositional arch over the water which rushes over rocks to fall into seemingly calm pools. Within this setting a small group of picnickers relax, chatting and fishing, while their dog fossicks in the grass. Webb has captured the sense of an untamed wilderness, but it is one which was accessible to and in which humans had a place. His watercolour version of the falls *Erskine Waterfalls, Loutit Bay* (cat. no. 19) with its lighter palette and more stylised and open compositional approach, moves even further away from the untouched nature of the forest land.

His painting of this area did, however, achieve the desired result. Referring to the 1874 depiction of Loutit Bay, the *Advertiser's* reporter commented: 'The fine romantic scenery of this portion of the Otway Forest is very accurately depicted, and... his efforts in depicting truthfully the beautiful features of the fine forest lands that contribute so much to natural resources of the portion referred to, have hardly been excelled by any of his contemporaries.'<sup>22</sup> The visual qualities of the painting were readily acknowledged and admired, but it was also the land itself, and the pride in that land, which contributed to the success of the work.

Webb painted numerous landscapes capturing the scenery around Geelong. The appeal of many of these, such as the two views of the Barwon River — one depicting a sheltered, secluded section of the river, with lively falls rippling between high banks, *The Barwon* (cat. no. 20), and the other showing a more open terrain, with a flat tree-studded tract of land on one side and cliffs on another, *The Barwon* (cat. no. 21) — lay primarily in their picturesque qualities. *Barrabool Hills from Fyans Park* (cat. no. 22), with its dramatic sky and rolling hills bathed in the glow of the low sun, has a similar picturesque appeal. Yet it gains greater historical significance with the realization that the young vines studding the hillsides would grow to help form one of the region's major vineyards.



6. *Devotions*  
oil on canvas  
comp. 64.8 cm diam.  
Signed reverse I.L., ink 'Painted by A. Webb'.  
Inscribed reverse I.L., ink 'Devotions'.  
On loan from Mrs. I. Stewart

Webb also produced several works that depicted views beyond the Geelong area. Both *Fiery Creek* (cat. no. 23) and *Scene near the Grampians, Victoria* (cat. no. 27) are amongst the many landscapes Webb painted of scenes toward or near the far town of Ararat. *Fiery Creek* captures the calm waterway meandering through the vast, rolling plains and distant mountain ranges, while in *Scene near the Grampians*, workers either toil with or rest amongst stacks of hay. Also containing a strong sense of atmosphere, as well as an exotic Australian quality, is the exquisitely detailed *Landscape with lyrebird* (cat. no. 26), depicting the native kangaroo and lyrebird placed within a picturesque scene of lake and ranges. Two other landscapes depicting views of a majestic mountain, also contain native Australian animals. In *Landscape with kangaroos* (cat. no. 24) kangaroos race across a flat plain before the cliffs, while in *Landscape with emus* (cat. no. 25) emus wander through a more fertile area and black swans share the lake with several ducks.



*Inverfarigaig, Inverness* (cat. no. 29), *Scottish ranges* (cat. no. 30), *On the Findhorn* (cat. no. 32), and *Landscape with mountains and lake* (cat. no. 33) provide a different aspect of Webb's oeuvre. The view of Inverfarigaig appeared in the 1876 Victorian Academy of Arts exhibition,<sup>23</sup> while the unidentified Scottish landscape may be the *View near Inverleigh* seen in the 1875 Academy exhibition and *On the Findhorn* contemporaneous to an oil painting of the same title displayed in the 1880 exhibition. These paintings are amongst a significant number of Scottish landscapes which Webb produced after his arrival in Victoria. They may have been copies or, like the Loutit Bay paintings, were different versions of pieces that Webb had executed at an earlier date. There was a large body of Scottish immigrants in the colony and Scottish landscapes would have had a limited but nostalgic appeal to this group.

Although Webb continued to work as a professional housepainter until his death in 1892, his artistic interests were an integral part of his life. He not only advertised himself as a housepainter but, with his move to Belmont, was also listed as an artist in the local trade directories. The variety of subjects that he produced were aimed at different sectors of the small art market and indicate a professional, almost entrepreneurial attitude towards his work. Indeed, in 1873 he organised his own art union in which he offered eight of his paintings up for lottery.<sup>24</sup> Yet the enormous number of works that Webb produced over his life-time show an underlying passion for painting, one which he was eager to share with those around him.

Each of the paintings included in this exhibition exemplify these two motivational forces. Although the topographical views of Geelong are of great historical significance, taken in conjunction with the primarily picturesque scenes, Scottish landscapes and the copies, they also provide a close and valuable insight to the working life of a colonial artist. Webb may not have become a fully professional artist, but he represented the majority of working artists in Geelong, who though involved in another profession, took their art seriously and made a tremendous contribution to the town's growing art community.

23. In the catalogue for the exhibition, the painting is incorrectly recorded as Inverfarra King, Invernesshire.

24. *Geelong Advertiser*, May 12, 1873.

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 THOMAS, Daniel — *Australian Art in the 1870s*, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976.



7. *Venice, after Turner (1856)*  
 watercolour and ink  
 29.4 x 43.0 cm  
 Not signed. Not dated.  
 Private collection

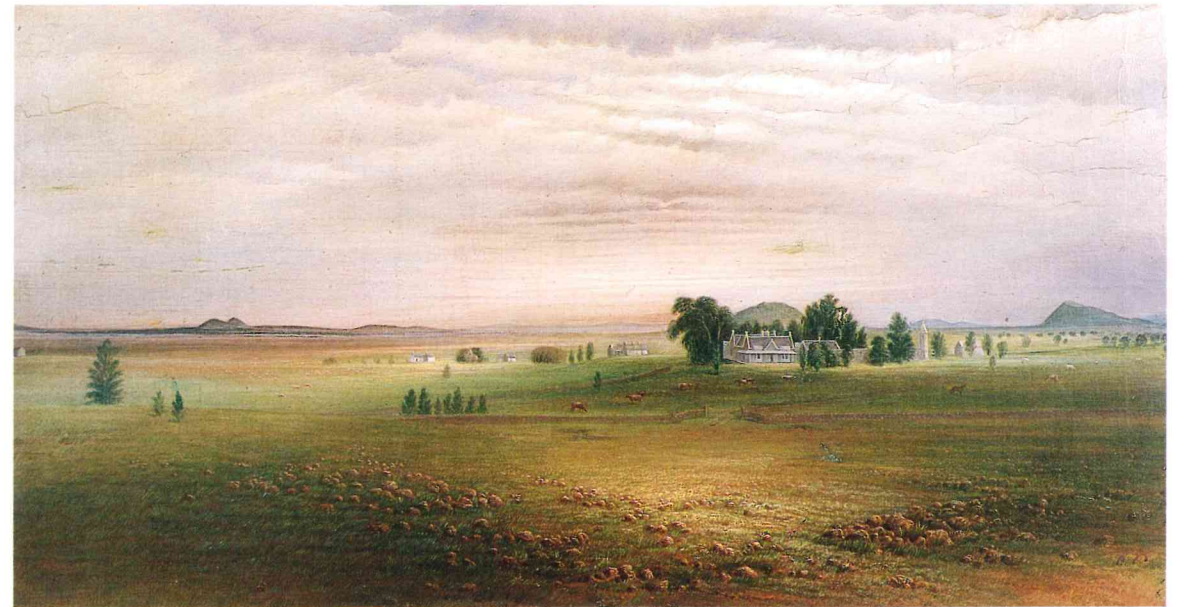


8. *(Landscape with river and road)*  
 watercolour  
 44.0 x 63.7 cm  
 Signed I.I., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
 On loan from Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Cosier





△ 9. *Linlithgow Palace*  
watercolour and pencil  
20.6 x 30.6 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
Private collection



▽ 10. *Struan* (1872)  
watercolour  
52.6 x 77.0 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
Private collection



△ 11. *Larra looking towards Camperdown* (1869)  
oil on canvas  
sight 44.1 x 84.4 cm  
Signed l.l., paint 'A. Webb'.  
Private collection



▽ 12. *Bombay Harbour*  
watercolour  
19.9 x 29.3 cm  
Signed l.r., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
Inscribed l.l., pencil 'Bombay harbour'.  
l.r., pencil 'after Umfield'.  
On loan from Keith Berryman

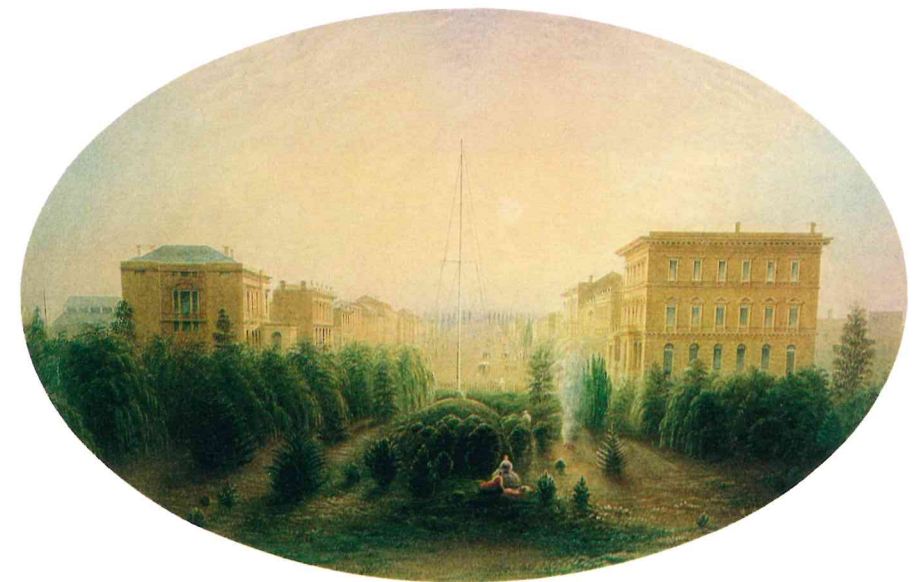




**13. Glamis Castle**  
 watercolour, ink and pencil  
 30.2 x 41.4 cm  
 Signed l.l., pencil 'Alex Webb'.  
 Inscribed l.l., pencil 'after Catermole (sic) Glamis Castle' and l.r., pencil 'Glamis Castle'.  
 On loan from Keith Berryman



**△ 14. Kardinia and flour mill**  
 watercolour  
 38.6 x 56.2 cm (oval)  
 Signed l.l., ink 'A. Webb'.  
 On loan from John Richardson



**▽ 15. Malop Street from Johnstone Park (1872)**  
 watercolour and pencil  
 sight 46.0 x 66.2 cm (oval)  
 Signed reverse u.r., red pencil  
 'Painted by/ Alexander Webb/ Geelong'.  
 Inscribed reverse u.r., red pencil  
 'No 6 Malop Street, Geelong, Johnstone Park'.  
 Collection Geelong Art Gallery  
 Purchase 1976





**16.** *Geelong Harbour, West* 1872  
watercolour and ink  
46.4 x 68.0 cm  
Signed and dated l.l., pencil '...1872/ Alexr Webb'.  
Inscribed l.l., pencil 'Geelong Harbour, West'.  
Private collection



**17.** *Geelong Harbour, East* (1872)  
watercolour  
42.8 x 68.0 cm  
Signed l.l., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
Private collection





**18. Erskine Waterfalls, Loutit Bay** (c.1874)  
 oil on canvas  
 comp. 74.9 cm diam.  
 Signed reverse c., ink 'A. Webb'.  
 Inscribed reverse u.l., pencil and c., ink 'Erskine Waterfalls/ Loutit Bay'.  
 Private collection



**19. Erskine Waterfalls, Loutit Bay**  
 watercolour and ink  
 52.5 cm diam.  
 Signed l.l., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
 Private collection

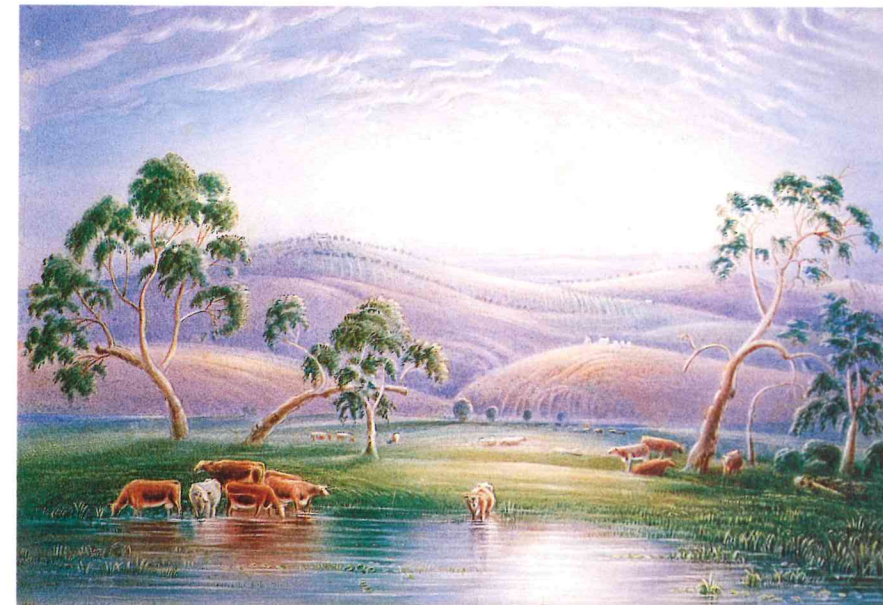




△ 20. *The Barwon*  
watercolour  
33.8 x 48.5 cm  
Signed l.l., pencil '...A. Webb...'  
Inscribed l.l., pencil 'The Barwon/ A. Webb/ Geelong'.  
On loan from Neil Wallace



▽ 21. *The Barwon*  
watercolour and ink  
36.4 x 53.5 cm  
Signed l.r., ink 'A. Webb'.  
Private collection



△ 22. *Barrabool Hills from Fyans Park*  
watercolour  
38.4 x 54.3 cm  
Signed l.l., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
Private collection



▽ 23. *Fiery Creek*  
watercolour  
37.2 x 53.1 cm  
Signed l.l., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
Private collection

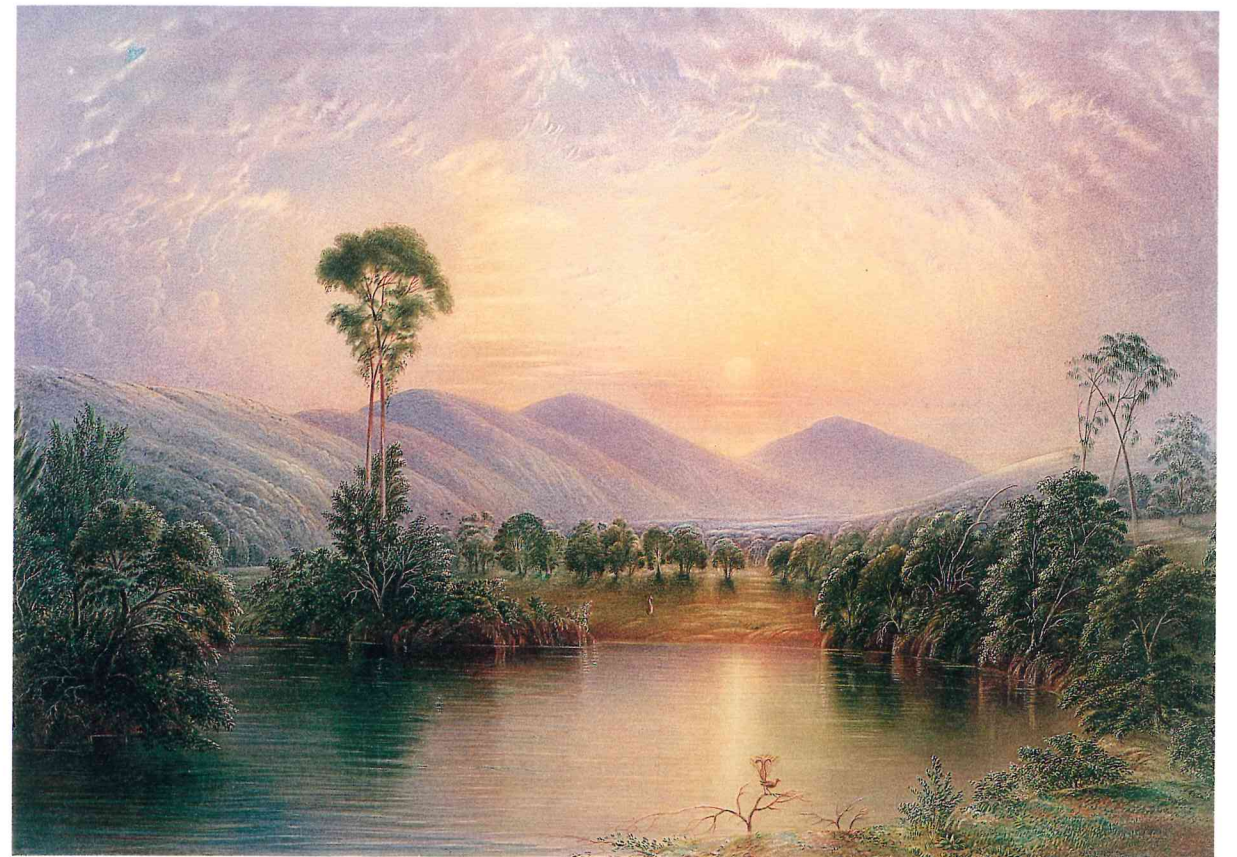




△ 24. (*Landscape with kangaroos*)  
watercolour  
40.1 x 58.0 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
Private collection

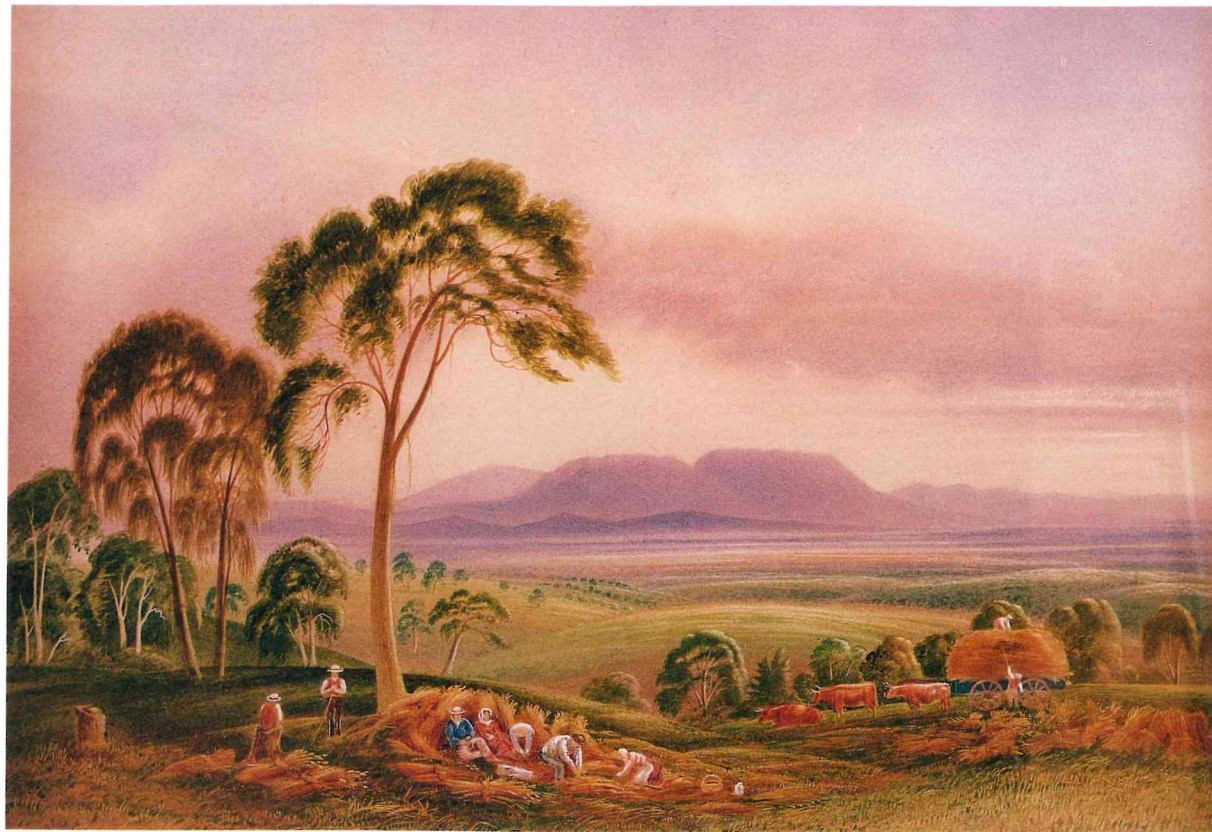


▽ 25. (*Landscape with emus*)  
watercolour  
40.5 x 58.3 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
On loan from Keith Berryman



26. (*Landscape with lyrebird*)  
watercolour  
sight 60.0 x 85.6 cm  
Signed l.l. pencil 'A. Webb/ Geelong'  
On loan from Mr. and Mrs. Michael McCoy





**27. Scene near the Grampians, Victoria**  
 watercolour  
 50.0 x 24.8 cm  
 Not signed. Not dated.  
 Inscribed reverse l.l., pencil 'Scene near the Grampians/ Victoria'.  
 On loan from the estate of Ian Stewart



**28. Yarra Street, Geelong 1872**  
 watercolour, ink and pencil  
 48.9 x 73.0 cm  
 Signed and dated l.l., pencil '...1872/ Alex Webb' (twice).  
 Inscribed l.l., pencil 'Yarra St/ Geelong 1872' (twice).  
 Collection Geelong Art Gallery  
 Gift of the artist's grandchildren, 1932

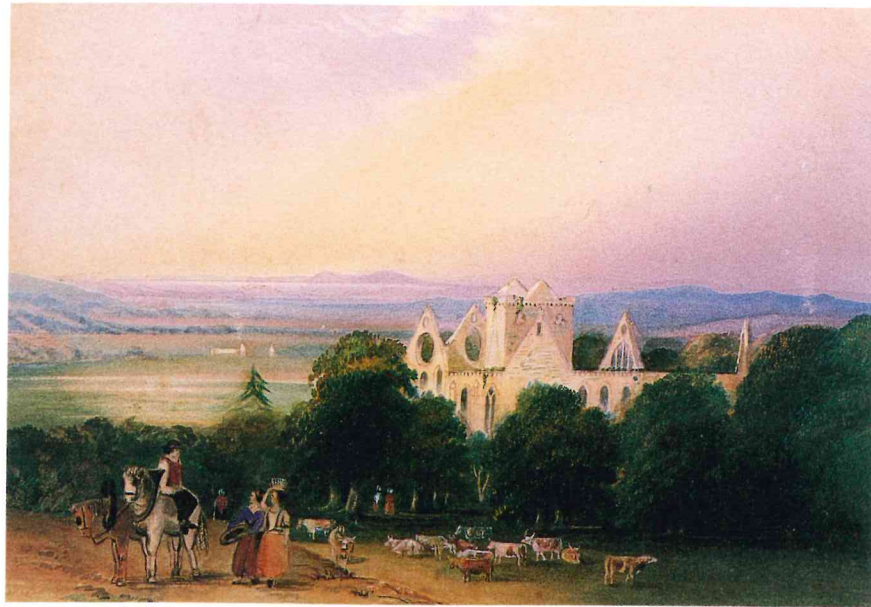


**29. Inverfarigaig, Inverness (1876)**  
 oil on canvas  
 54.3 x 81.0 cm  
 Signed l.l., incised and reverse l.l., ink 'A. Webb'.  
 Reverse l.l., ink 'Inverfarrakaig (sic)/  
 Invernesshire'.  
 On loan from Mrs. J. Clark



**30. (Scottish ranges)**  
 oil on canvas on cardboard  
 51.0 x 76.2 cm  
 Not signed. Not dated.  
 On loan from Mrs. J. Clark





△ 31. *Scene in Scotland*  
 watercolour and ink  
 21.3 x 29.5 cm  
 Not signed. Not dated.  
 Inscribed reverse u.l., pencil 'Scene in Scotland'.  
 Private collection



▽ 33. (*Landscape with mountains and lake*)  
 watercolour  
 39.2 x 57.3 cm  
 Signed l.l., pencil 'Alex Webb'.  
 On loan from William L. Berryman



32. *On the Findborn*  
 watercolour  
 63.1 x 46.9 cm  
 Not signed. Not dated.  
 On loan from Mrs. E. Fiedler





34. *Seascape*  
watercolour and pencil  
35.0 x 55.2 cm  
Signed l.l., pencil 'A. Webb'.  
Private collection

## Catalogue

1. *Barwon River from the bridge*  
watercolour  
sight 41.5 x 69.5 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
Private collection
2. *Elgin* 1850  
watercolour and pencil  
32.7 x 50.1 cm  
Signed and dated l.r., pencil  
'1850/ A. Webb'.  
Inscribed l.r., pencil 'Elgin'.  
Private collection
3. *Ben Cruachan*  
watercolour  
sight 24.0 x 35.0 cm  
Not signed. Not dated.  
On loan from Neil Stewart
4. *Forres* 1850  
watercolour  
34.5 x 50.2 cm  
Signed and dated l.r., brown paint  
'1850/ A. Webb'.  
Inscribed l.r., brown paint 'Forres'.  
On loan from the Misses Stewart
5. *Loch Katrine*  
watercolour  
sight 25.7 x 37.0 cm  
Signed reverse u.r., pencil 'A.W.'  
Inscribed reverse u.r., pencil  
'Loch Katrine'.  
On loan from Len Harty
6. *Devotions*  
oil on canvas  
comp. 64.8 cm diam.  
Signed reverse l.l., ink 'Painted  
by A. Webb'.  
Inscribed reverse l.l., ink  
'Devotions'.  
On loan from Mrs. I. Stewart
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# *Alexander Webb* *1813-1892*

