

# NATURE PRINTING IN AUSTRALIA



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## INTRODUCTION

Nature Printing is the technique of making an impression from natural objects such as leaves, flowers or feathers on paper by applying ink directly to the object to be depicted. This eliminates the need for an artist to reproduce the object by etching an image onto copper or by drawing it on stone, which is then inked and impressions made by placing paper over it and applying pressure to ensure the resulting image is clear and precise. Nature printing not only eliminated the possibility of artistic distortion, but was also a much more economic method of reproducing objects for illustration.

The publication in 2010 by the British Library of *Impressions of Nature. A History of Nature Printing* by Roderick Cave discloses a remarkable connection between nature printing and Australia. This connection is twofold.

The first involves the Imperial Printing Works in Vienna, the Kaiserlich-Königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei. In 1841 Alois Auer (1813-1869) was appointed Director and oversaw the expansion of the Staatsdruckerei into one of the largest printing establishments in Europe. At the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, it was awarded the only medal given for printing. Under Auer's encouragement the Staatsdruckerei pioneered the use of nature printing on a commercial scale, as a more economic method of illustrating works on natural history, especially botany. The first three items in this Catalogue are productions of the Staatsdruckerei, each with an Australian connection.

The second Australian connection with nature printing is more circuitous but no less intriguing. Following the success of the Staatsdruckerei at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, technical secrets of the nature printing process were obtained through industrial espionage by Henry Bradbury, who subsequently patented the process. Bradbury was the son of one of the leading English printers, William Bradbury, who produced such popular titles as *Punch*, *Field* and the *Daily News*. In 1855-56 Henry Bradbury produced *The Ferns of Great Britain and Ireland Nature Printed by Henry Bradbury* by Thomas Moore, Curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden.

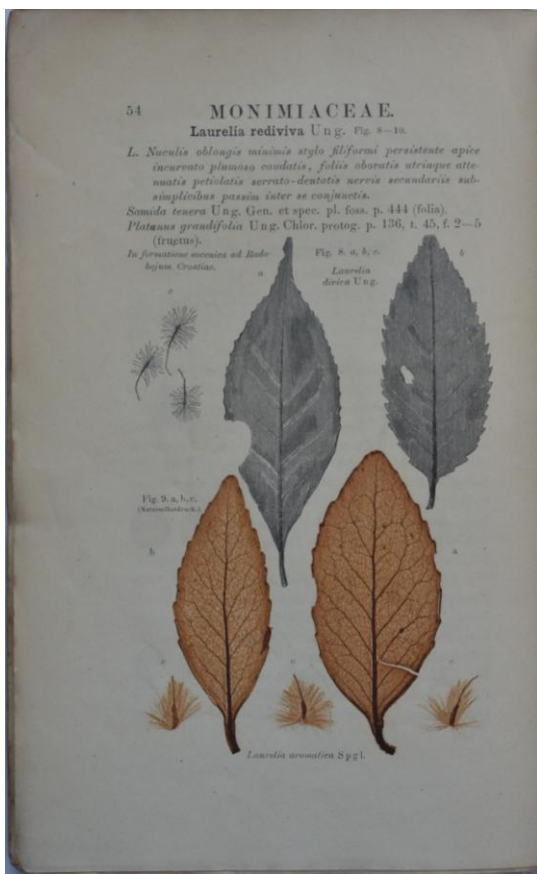
Moore (1821-1887) began life as a gardener at Regents Park in London, and it is probable that he knew John Bailey who was engaged in horticulture before leaving London for Adelaide in 1838. He was the father of the future Queensland Government Botanist Frederick Manson Bailey, who between 1874 and 1889 produced five works illustrated by the nature printing process, all of which are contained in this Catalogue.

## 1. UNGER, Franz.

### **Neuholland in Europa. Ein Vortrag gehalten im Ständehaus im Winter des Jahres 1861.**

Vienna, Braumüller, 1861. Colophon: Aus der k.k.Hof-und Staatsdruckerei.

Large 8vo. 24.5 cm. 72pp. with 19 woodcuts and **41 nature printed illustrations in text, many in colour**. Original yellow wrappers with title repeated on cover inside double lines. New spine strip. Wrappers minimally dusty, contemporary Vienna bookseller's stamp on bottom of front cover and title-page. Number sticker on front cover and stamp on rear cover. Publisher's advertisements on inside front wrapper. Uncut and unopened.



Franz Unger (1800 -1870) Professor of Botany and Zoology in Graz was one of the pioneers of paleobotany. Between 1841 and 1847 he published *Chloris Protogaea, Beiträge zur Flora der Vorwelt*, in which more than 120 new species of Tertiary flora are described, illustrated and classified under existing genera. In 1844 Unger was appointed to the new Chair of Plant Anatomy and Palaeontology at the University of Vienna.

This work is a lecture delivered by Unger in Vienna in 1861 in which he outlines the similarities between the structure of plants existing in Australia and fossil specimens from the Eocene era in Europe. Unger proposed the theory that the European plants had originated in Australia, which in turn proved that the

landmasses were connected in the Eocene period.

Unger had previously opposed this thesis, first postulated by Constantin von Ettingshausen, but in this Lecture he claims it as his own. This Lecture was translated and published in *The Journal of Botany* (Feb. 1865) under the title "New Holland in Europe", but without the nature printed illustrations contained in the original work.

Ferguson 17490. Cave p. 100 (illus.)

\$5,000

## 2. ETTINGSHAUSEN, Constantin R. von

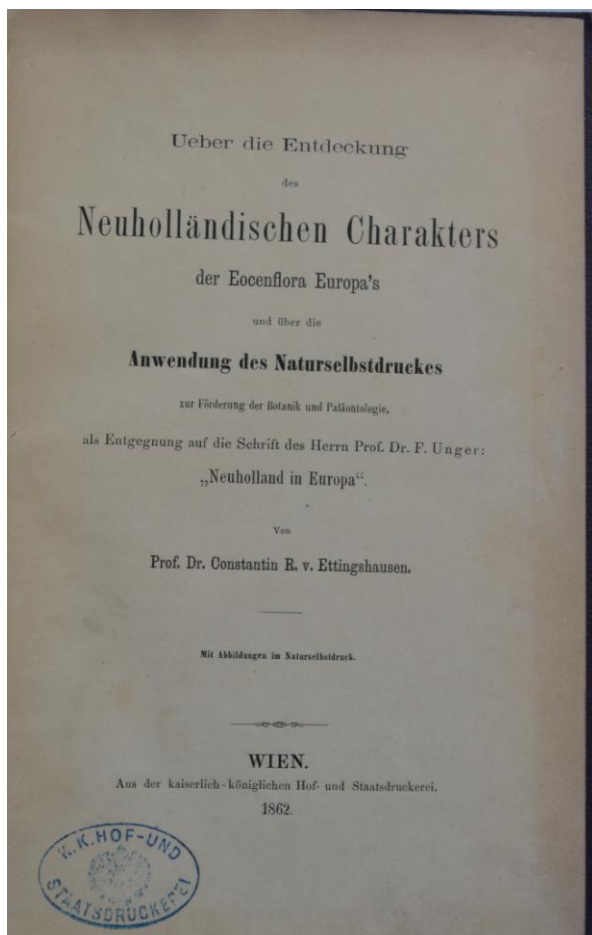
**Ueber die Entdeckung des Neuholländischen Charakters der Eocenflora Europa's und über die Anwendung des Naturselbstdruckes zur Förderung der Botanik und Paläontologie, als Entgegnung auf die Schrift des Herrn Prof. Dr. F. Unger: Neuholland in Europa.**

Large 8vo 24cm pp.1-94 (last blank) with **153 black and white illustrations printed by the nature printing process.**

Bound in pinhead buckram with lines on front and back covers and gilt lettering on spine (spine faded).

This is a remarkable association copy, being from the Library of the Austrian government printing office (Staatsdruckerei), with a paper label on the front and inside front cover "Bibliothek der Staatsdruckerei" followed by a catalogue number, and an oval rubber stamp of the Staatsdruckerei at the bottom of the title page containing the Imperial crest, making this the publisher's file copy.

This work is a rebuttal in the strongest possible terms by Ettingshausen of Unger's claims in the previous work of priority of discovery of the connection between Australian and European plants of the Eocene era.



Constantin R. von Ettingshausen (1826 -1897) was Professor of Botany in Vienna before being appointed to the same post at the University of Graz in 1871. He was the leading paleobotanist in Europe.

Between 1883-1886 Ettingshausen published *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Tertiärflora Australiens* printed at the Imperial Printing Office in Vienna, containing one nature-printed plate. This was translated into English and published by the NSW Government in 1888 as a Memoir of the Geological Survey of New South Wales.

Not in Ferguson. Only one copy recorded in Trove (SLNSW).

\$6,000



### 3. ETTINGSHAUSEN, Constantin R. von

**Über fossile Banksia-Arten und ihre Beziehung zu den lebenden.** (drop title).

8vo 24.5cm. pp.1-16, two plates. In modern brown paper wrappers.

Colophon at bottom of last page: "Aus. Der k.k. Hof. Und Staatsdruckerei in Wien".



This is an off-print or separat from *Aus den Sitzungsberichten d. kais. Akademie d. Wissenschaften in Wien*, (Transactions of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna) Vol. 99 Pt.1 (1890). The title translates as "On fossil Banksia, and their relation to living ones".

The two plates depict 9 and 10 leaves of Banksia species, printed on thick wove paper in sepia

"Naturalselbstdruck", i.e. by the nature printing process, each plate with original tissue guard.

These two plates represent the pinnacle of the nature printing process. Each plate has been finely coated with kaolin in order to heighten the visual contrast between the sepia inked leaves of the Banksia specimen and the heightened white background.

\$450

#### 4. BECKER, Ludwig.

***Macadamia Turnfolia***, printed in green ink. Plate. In “An Account of some New Australian Plants” by Ferdinand Mueller in *Transactions of Philosophical Institute of Victoria*, Vol. 2, part 1 (1857) between pp. 72-3.

8vo. 21.5 cm. Original printed wrappers. Wrappers a little chipped and browned, name in ink and private name stamp on upper wrapper.

This is the first nature print produced in Australia.

Ludwig Becker (1808-1861) was born in Darmstadt into a family of Court officials and academics. He fled Germany after the Revolution of 1848, arriving in Tasmania in 1851 and Melbourne in 1854. His wide-ranging interests in science and natural history, as well as his talent for drawing, gained him membership of the local learned societies to which he contributed papers on astronomy, zoology and geology. He illustrated many papers published in the Philosophical Institute *Transactions* usually employing lithography or mezzotint engraving.

It is not known whether Becker had seen examples of nature printing in Germany before he left Europe or whether he saw nature printing from Europe after he arrived in Melbourne. It is probable that Ferdinand Mueller, the Victorian Colonial Botanist, who commissioned Becker to illustrate several of his botanical works, had a copy of Moore's *The Ferns of Great Britain and Ireland* (1855-56) produced in London by Henry Bradbury.

Although he is mainly remembered now for the remarkable series of drawings done in his capacity as artist to the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition, in which he was also a casualty, Becker's ability as an illustrator was wide-ranging. Some of his plates, especially of the night skies to illustrate comets and stars, have a bravura quality. This is especially true of his mezzotint plate opposite the title page of Georg von Neumayer's *Results of the Meteorological Observations taken in the colony of Victoria etc.* (1864).

It is also clear that he experimented with different techniques for illustrating natural history subjects especially employing lithography. It is not surprising that he recognised the potential of nature printing when he encountered it and that he should attempt to try his hand at this new technique. The use of green ink to reproduce the *Macadamia* leaf adds a touch of reality to the image.

See Cave p. 143.

Illustrated on the front cover.

\$400

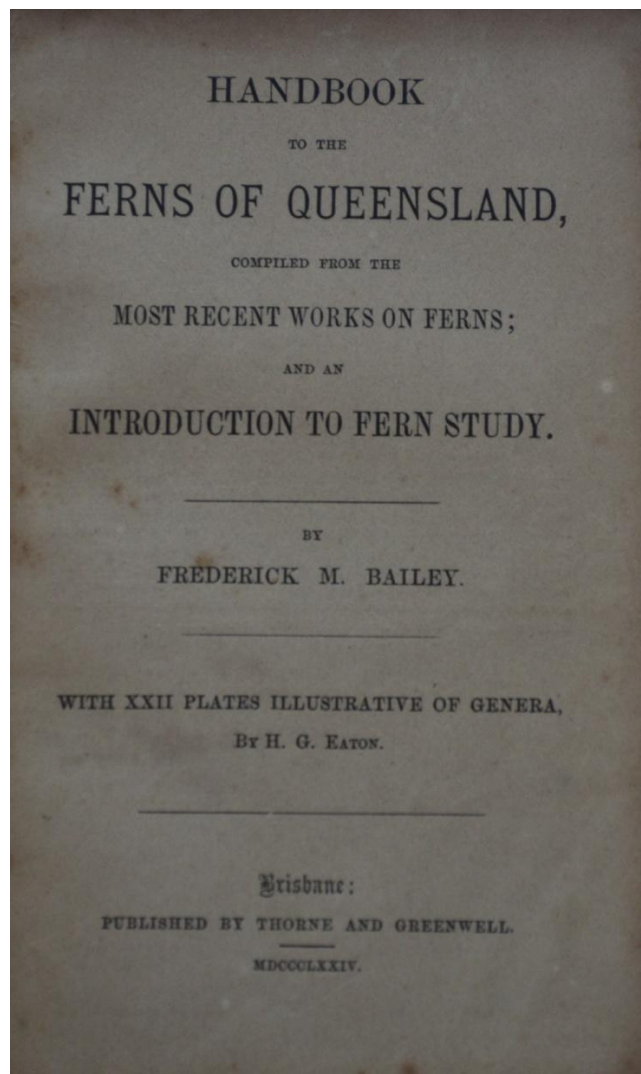
## 5. BAILEY, Frederick Manson

**Handbook to the Ferns of Queensland compiled from the most recent works on ferns, and an introduction to Fern Study with XXII plates illustrative of genera by H.G. Eaton.**

Brisbane, Thorne & Greenwell, 1874.

Small 8vo. 16.5cm. 72 pp. with **22 lithographed plates**, by H.G. Eaton, illustrating 63 species. Original cloth with printed label. Rebacked with new cloth strip, evenly tanned throughout.

“It only remains to add that the system of classification here adopted is that used by Thomas Moore Esq, FLS [...], being the curator of the Chelsea Botanic Gardens, and the author of some many works upon ferns, is, probably, our highest authority on the subject”. (Preface, pp. iii-iv).



The illustrator, Henry Green Eaton (1818 – 1887) arrived in Brisbane in the early 1860s and worked as an 'artist lithographer'. His work included the view of Somerset in Jardine's *Narrative of the Overland Expedition of the Messrs Jardine, from Rockhampton to Cape York, Northern Queensland* (Brisbane, 1867). He is best remembered as the lithographer of the 126 plates illustrating Silvester Diggles' *Ornithology of Australia*, a remarkable folio work produced in Brisbane between 1866 and 1870.

*Handbook of the Ferns of Queensland* is Bailey's first book and it employs lithography rather than the nature printing method used for some of his later works.

Ferguson 6497.

\$850

**6. BAILEY**, Frederick Manson.

**An illustrated monograph of the Grasses of Queensland. Electrotyped by K.T. Staiger FLS. Vol. 1. – 1878. [all published].**

Brisbane, Warwick & Sapsford, 1879.

Folio. 37 cm.

**42 electrotyped plates after nature prints within a printed border in maroon ink.** Both text and plates printed on thick wove paper.

Half red calf and matching cloth, new endpapers, text and plates remarkably clean and bright. Small hole in margin of title page (10mm), else fine.

This work was issued by the board appointed by the Government of Queensland in 1875 to inquire into the causes and the various diseases affecting live stock and plants.

“The illustrations will be found faithful representations of the species, but often a small portion or plant had to be used to suit the size of the plate. The first impression being obtained by the process called Nature-printing”.  
(Preface).

It is probable that some plates were distributed prior to publication. The *Australian Town and Country Journal* of 28 September 1878 reported the publication of 11 plates: “A volume consisting of the portraits (natural size) of 11 of the principal pasture grasses indigenous to Queensland has just been published by the board of inquiry into diseases of stock and plants. The lithographs [*sic*] are tinted puce colour, from drawings, by K. T. Staiger Esq., F.L.S., from specimens collected by Mr. F. M. Bailey and seem to be fairly executed. We presume this volume is but an instalment, and will be followed by others in due time. If so, the publication will be valuable to graziers and others, resident in all the colonies. Each portrait is accompanied by, what we must say is, a very scanty note, giving the supposed quality of the grass.” The Note at the end of the Preface states that “Seventeen of these plates are of a former issue”.

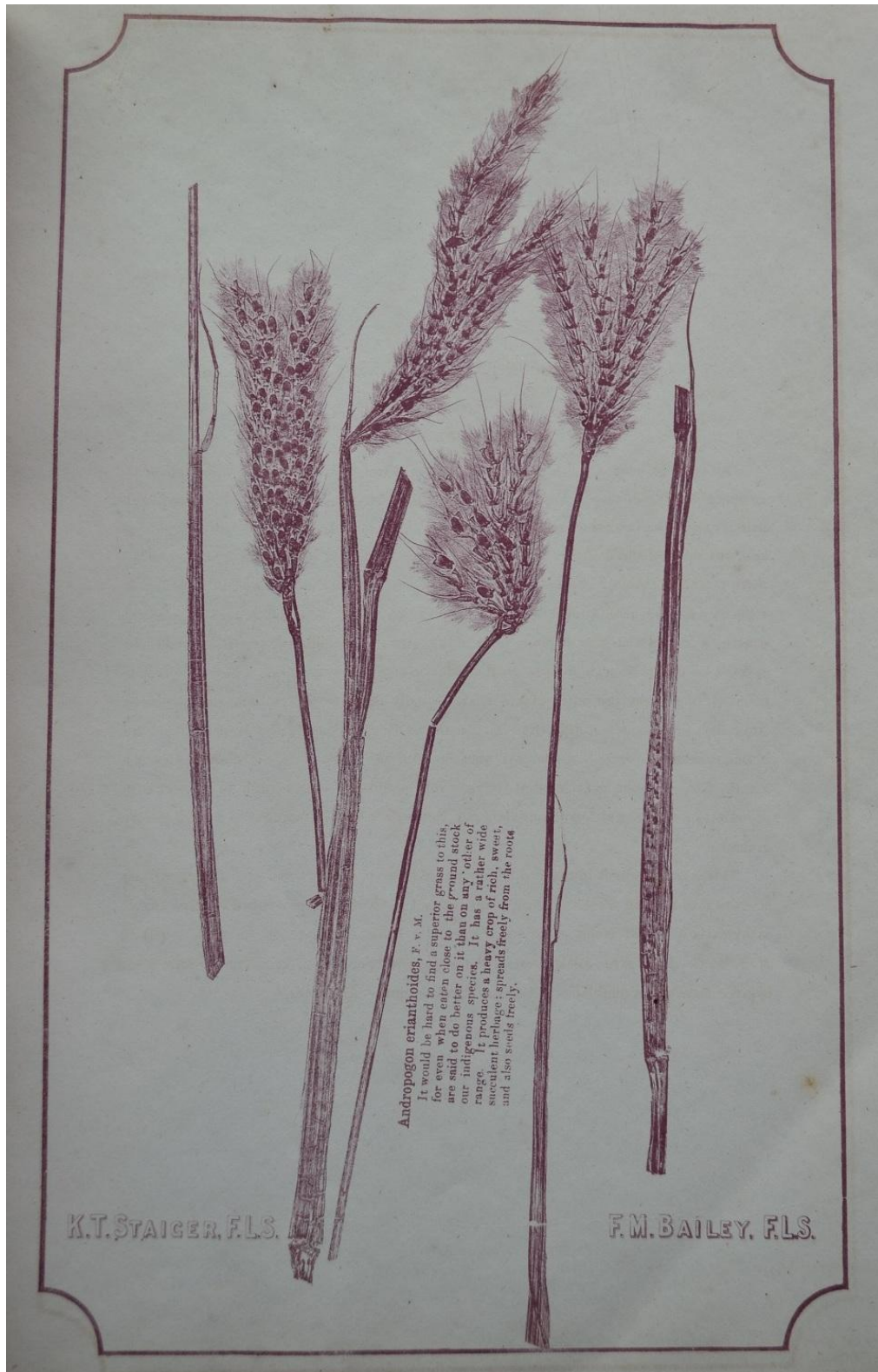
The plates were reproduced from nature-printing by the electroplate process carried out by the Queensland Government Analytical Chemist Karl Theodor Staiger (1833 – 1888), a German-trained Chemist for the Queensland Government between 1873 and 1880. Staiger was also the first professional curator of the Queensland Museum from 1876 - 1879.



This is one of the largest and best-produced botanical books published in Australia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Ferguson 6497c. Cave p. 143 (illus.)

\$2,500



7. [BAILEY, Frederick Manson and STAIGER, Karl Theodor]

**Native Grasses of Queensland** [cover title].

[Brisbane, ca. 1875].

8vo. 22 cm.

**8 electrotyped plates after nature-prints in green ink on gloss wove paper with green border.**



Original green cloth with blind-stamped title. Slight wear to binding, recased with new endpapers.

This would appear to be the preliminary or trial issue of the previous item. The descriptions are clearly by Bailey and match the descriptions in the previous work.

The absence of any imprint would indicate that this work was never formally issued.

The contrast between this work and the final published monograph gives us some insight into Staiger's experiments in producing these plates. He has moved from using gloss paper in this preliminary issue to thicker matte paper, and decided that

the green ink has a less convincing natural appearance than the puce (maroon) colour.

This would appear to be Staiger's own copy, and he has stamped plate 1 and 5 with his purple name stamp, a practice we have noted in other books owned by him.

Very rare and unrecorded.

\$950

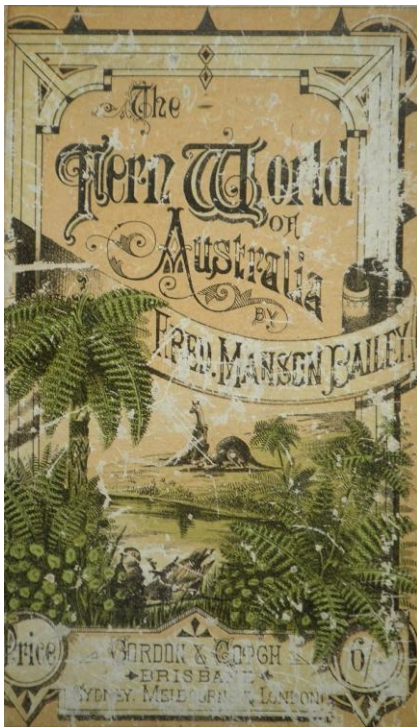
**8. BAILEY, Frederick Manson.**

**The Fern world of Australia with homes of the Queensland species.**

Brisbane, Gordon and Gotch, 1881.

8vo. 21.5 cm. [10], 106, 8 pp. [supplement], 1 double-page lithographed plate and **1 folding lithographed plate with 7 illustrations based on nature-prints.**

Papered illustrated boards. New cloth spine with original spine strip laid down, some wear to front board, old ownership entry, very slight foxing.



Not all copies contain the 8-page supplement.

The illustrated cover depicts ferns, kangaroos and other native fauna. There are advertisements on the back cover.

With this work Bailey was responding to the popular worldwide fern craze of the 1870s and early 1880s.

This book would have been issued in large numbers but due to its popularity few copies have survived and it is rarely seen on the market today.

Ferguson 6498.

\$450





**9. BAILEY, Frederick Manson.**

**Lithograms of the Ferns of Queensland.**

Brisbane, Government Engraving and Lithographic Office, 1892.

23 cm. 7 pp., **191 lithographs after nature-printed plates**. Original printed wrappers with title on the front wrapper. Tanning to paper as always, else very good.

Bailey had a lifelong interest in ferns and this is his last major work.

Frederick Manson Bailey (1827 – 1915) arrived in Brisbane in 1861 and established himself as a seed merchant and a collector of plants to sell to overseas institutions. In 1881 he was appointed Colonial Botanist and he held the position for the rest of his life. During the depression of the 1890s the Government withdrew funds to his department but Bailey continued working unpaid until his reinstatement in 1902.

Like the Hookers at Kew and the De Candolles at Geneva, Bailey was the most hard-working and prominent member of a botanical dynasty. His father was South Australian Government Botanist from 1839 – 1841, his son John Frederick Bailey succeeded him as Queensland Government Botanist, who was in turn succeeded by his grandson Cyril Tenison White.

Not in Ferguson. Cave p. 143.

\$350

**10. QUEENSLAND FERNS.**

Circa 1880 album with 37 separate thick sheets of paper with Queensland fern specimens arranged around decorative borders drawn in ink, each one with its own rustic-inspired design.

31 x 27.5 cm.

With leather spine lettered in gilt and solid timber boards (6 mm thick). A Mauchline ware album, produced in Mauchline, Scotland by the firm of W. & A. Smith.

Slight yellowing and abrasions to the lacquer without any loss to the nature-printed surface. Some mild browning inside, a few fern specimens loose.



The unknown collector, most probably a young lady, went to a great deal of trouble to collect and paste the fern specimens onto each sheet.

Most sheets contain a variety of ferns, many preserving their original colour, thus giving a striking impression which heightens the visual effect of the arrangement.

This album is a remarkable survival from an era of frontier colonial fascination with the natural world.

A unique artefact.

\$1,650





## REFERENCES

Ferguson, John Alexander. *Bibliography of Australia*. 7 volumes and Addenda. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1941 – 1969

Cave, Roderick. *Impression of Nature. A history of Nature Printing*. London, British Library / Mark Batty, 2010