

Gentleman painter of colonial Sydney



King Street looking east, circa 1843. Photo courtesy of the State Library of NSW.

These watercolours are the work of Customs officer Frederick Garling (1806-1873), who served on the Sydney waterfront during colonial times.

They are among a selection of his paintings which were recently on exhibition at the State Library of NSW.

The exhibition, *Frederick Garling*, presented 40 works by Garling from the Library's distinguished colonial art collection, including his famous paintings of ships, social events, significant buildings and recently discovered paintings of Sydney street life in the 1840s.



Garling was one of Australia's first locally-trained European artists and is mainly known for his views of Sydney's wharves and maritime life.

Apart from arriving in Sydney in 1815, at the age of nine, little is known about his early years.

He was an employee of Sydney's Customs Department for 33 years and he reputedly painted ship portraits after hours to supplement his income.

A prolific painter, Garling referred to himself as an artist only twice in his life - 'Gentleman' was printed on his death certificate.

State Librarian and Chief Executive Dagmar Schmidmaier said, "Library staff were delighted to discover while planning the exhibition that many unsigned paintings in our collection are actually the work of Mr Garling and depict street life in the colony not usually recorded by artists of the time."

Exhibition curator Richard Neville said, "Once we identified Garling's signature style of elongated buildings and even tonal ranges, we could put a

name to the paintings that have been unnamed for up to 90 years."

Visitors to the exhibition can view the recently discovered Garling paintings of King, Fort and Bridge Streets and Old South Head Road in Sydney, a portrait of his daughter's wedding and a 'wallpaper display' of his ship paintings.

The exhibition was made possible by the Jean Garling Bequest, which also funded the conservation of the Library's 90 Garling watercolours.

For further information about the exhibition go to the Library's website at www.sl.nsw.gov.au.

Circular Quay. Photo courtesy of the State Library of NSW.