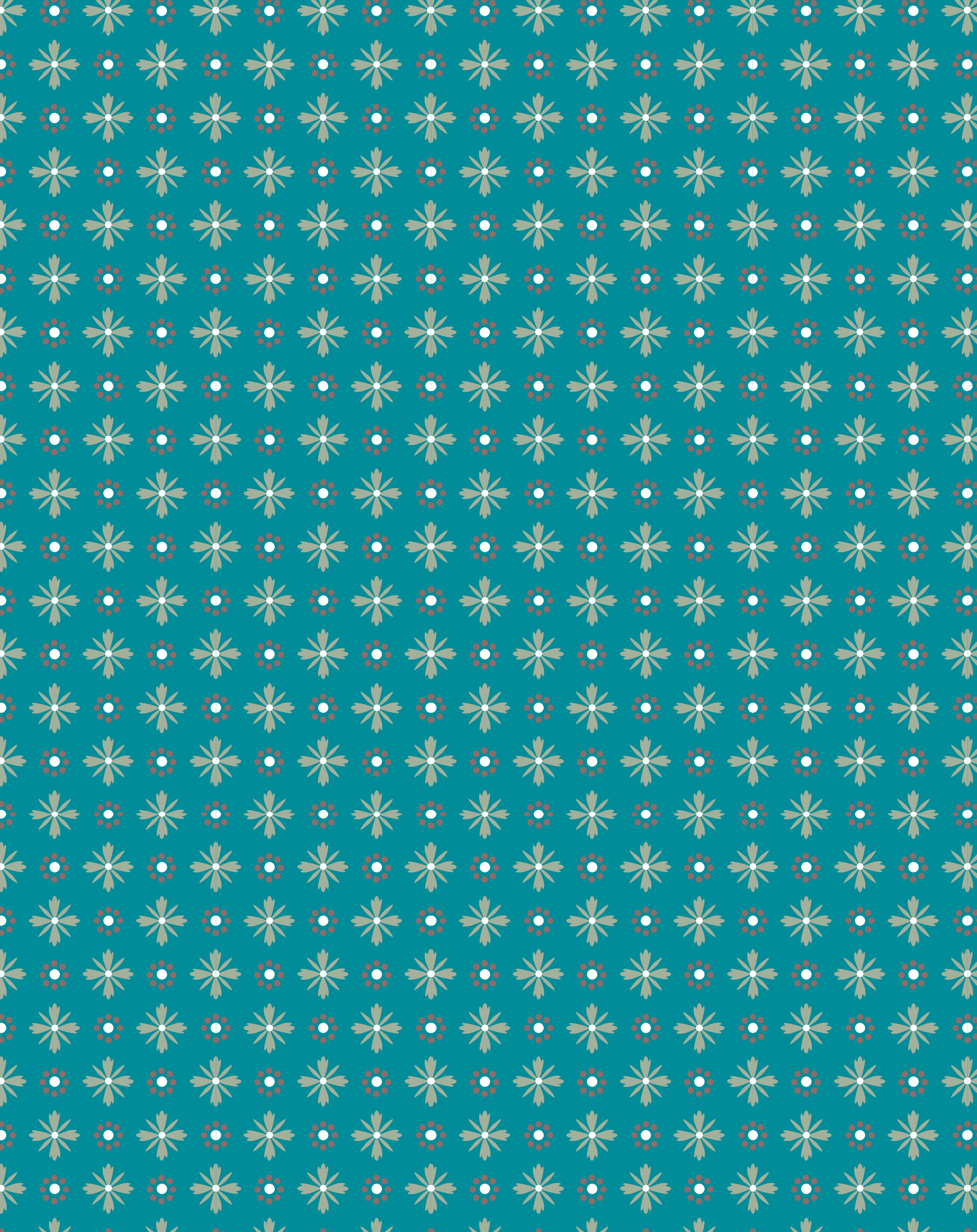


King
O'Malley





*King
O'Malley*

Canberra Museum and Gallery

29 October 2011 – 12 March 2012



Members of the Labour [Labor] Party, first Federal Parliament, 1901, National Archives of Australia.

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Dr Jauncey, King O'Malley,
Dr Maloney and Mrs O'Malley in
the O'Malley's living room, c.1940s,
National Library of Australia

Director's Foreword

A series of hundred-year anniversaries marks the journey to Canberra's official Centenary in 2013. The Yass-Canberra region was selected as the location for the Federal Capital in 1908, the Territory's boundary survey commenced in 1910, the design competition for the capital commenced in 1911, and the city was named in 1913. One hundred years on we have a unique opportunity to look back, perhaps even to reconnect, with the aspirations, ambitions and personalities that made the dream of a new Australian federal capital a reality.

The character, and indeed the legend, of King O'Malley endures as a central and colourful player in the story of Canberra's birth. Like other Americans in Australia in the early 1900s, O'Malley was excited by the democratic ideal and promise of a federated Australia. He quickly transformed himself from an insurance broker, with a finely-tuned sales pitch, into a parliamentarian, with a keen eye to the interests of his constituents.

Once he became Minister for Home Affairs, O'Malley was a strong supporter for the selection of the present-day site as the most suitable location for Canberra. With quasi-religious zeal, he described it as 'The Promised Land'. O'Malley embraced his ministerial responsibility for the design competition of Canberra with enthusiasm. Endorsing the concept of a planned capital with his characteristic flourish he hoped, '... that the Federal Capital, in a few years, will rival London in size, Athens in art, and Paris in beauty.' Though O'Malley supported the winning submission by Chicago architect, Walter Burley Griffin, he ultimately referred Griffin's design to a departmental board for revision. Like all modern cities, Canberra was born of vision ... and realised through compromise.

Canberra is a city that has evolved over time but, essentially, it remains a city with ideals; it is ordered, planned and zoned. It is marked by an ever present and distinctive surrounding landscape and sedate leafy suburbs, with the neat structures of national government at its core.

Our Social History Curator, Ms Rowan Henderson, has left no stone unturned in tracking down the stories and artefacts of King O'Malley's life. Her exhibition is both meticulous and compelling. It provides us not only with an opportunity to engage with the life and exploits of O'Malley, but also to connect, through our understanding of him, with the world in which he lived. I hope that the exhibition will also have us musing, long after we leave the building, about O'Malley's lasting influence on our capital city.

The exhibition draws upon the collections of many state and national cultural institutions, as well as generous private lenders. It also uses Canberra Museum and Gallery's own collection. I would like to thank wholeheartedly all lenders to the exhibition, and, in particular, the National Library of Australia and Mr Peter Barclay OAM, the Managing Director of King O'Malley's Irish Pub, who deserves our special gratitude for the support he has given to the exhibition and to the publication of this catalogue.

O'Malley was not shy of controversy! His personality and position will ensure he remains prominent in the story of Canberra. He talked up every contribution he made and argued tirelessly for his favourite causes. The exhibition clearly shows us the popularity O'Malley gained with the press of the day.

I believe that the best exhibitions leave us asking questions and I think that this one certainly does. How, I wonder, would Canberra have been different if it had not enjoyed O'Malley's colourful support? Who are the characters today who will be seen to have shaped this city, one hundred years hence? Has the character of Australian politics and the Australian media changed, for better or worse?

Canberra's many centenaries will be creative for its citizens if they stimulate us to debate the questions thrown up by our past, and provide us with fresh opportunities to reflect on the city we wish to leave to the Canberrans of the future.

Shane Breynard
Director, ACT Museums and Galleries



Publications about King O'Malley,
Photo: RLDI. The Legend of King
O'Malley by arrangement with the
Licensor, Michael Boddy c/o Curtis
Brown (Aust) Pty Ltd. Artist: Janet
Dawson Boddy.

Curator's Essay

Introduction

Few politicians in Australia's history have been as colourful, and none so enigmatic, as King O'Malley. O'Malley was a member of Australia's first Federal Parliament and a key figure in Canberra's history. He was also a master of self-promotion and over his long lifetime availed himself of every opportunity to remind people of his achievements and record them for future generations to admire. Yet while there have been three published biographies of O'Malley and a ground-breaking Australian play based loosely on his life, until now his legacy has never been examined in an exhibition.

In this exhibition at the Canberra Museum and Gallery the material evidence of King O'Malley's life has been brought together in an attempt to understand the man, his legend and his legacy.

Although O'Malley never lived in Canberra and was Minister for Home Affairs in the Federal Government for a total of only four years, during which the development of the city proceeded slowly, yet in that time much of the groundwork for the new capital was completed. Probably O'Malley's greatest contribution to Canberra's history will always be the organisation and realisation of the competition to design the city. Beyond his responsibilities as Minister for Home Affairs, O'Malley worked towards causes which have subsequently impacted on the lives of all Australians: the founding of a national bank, the building of the Trans-Australian railway, and important and advanced issues of social justice.

Particularly following his retirement from politics, O'Malley assiduously promoted an image of himself as a hugely influential public figure in Australia, yet he remains an enigma largely because it is so difficult to sift the facts from the fabulous stories he spun about his life.

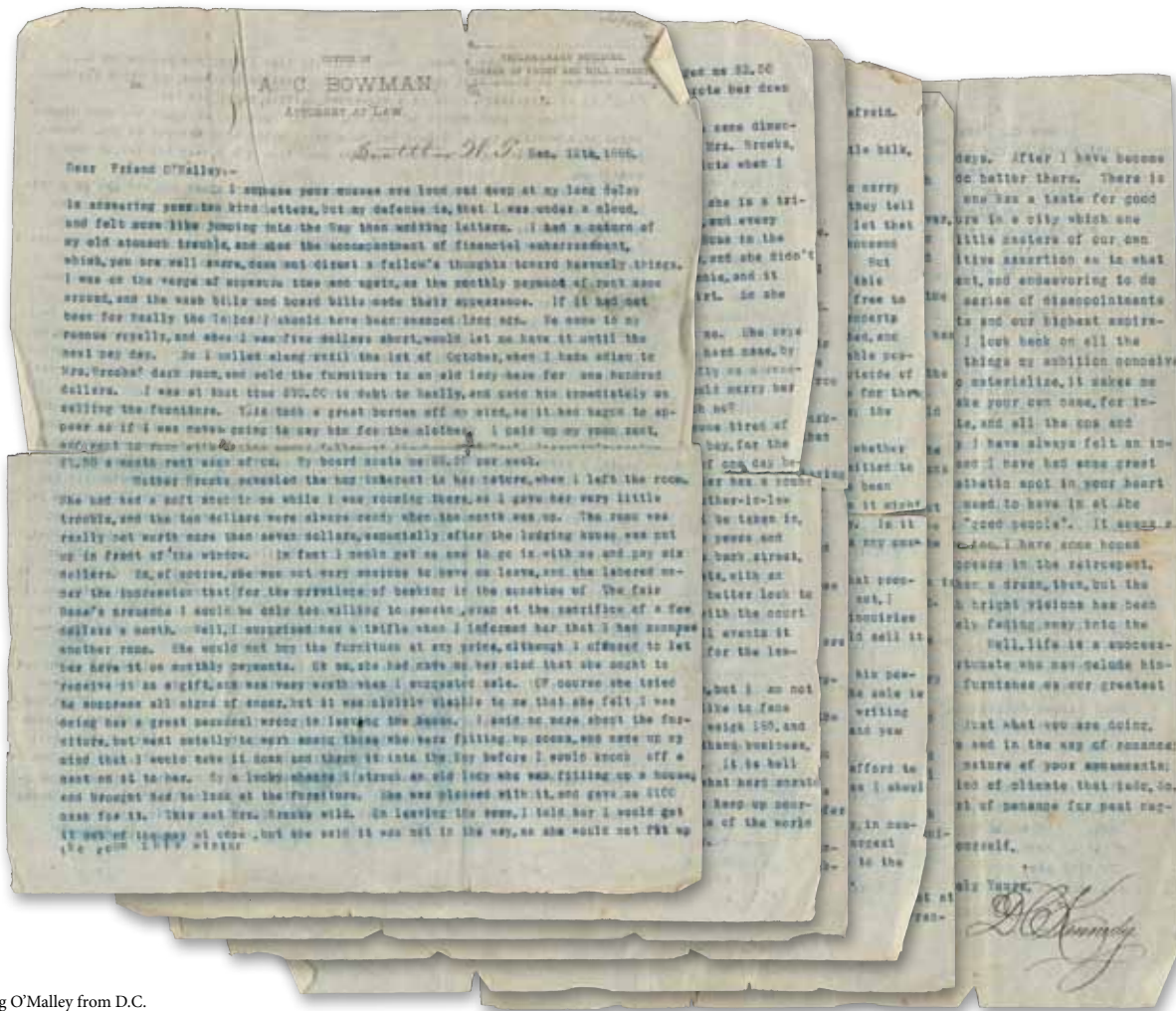
King O'Malley: the legend is born

Little is known about O'Malley's early life but it is most likely that he was born in the United States of America in 1858. He claimed that he had been trained in banking from a young age by his uncle in New York and that he subsequently worked in insurance and real estate. This is at least partially true, although there is no evidence to suggest he ever lived in New York.

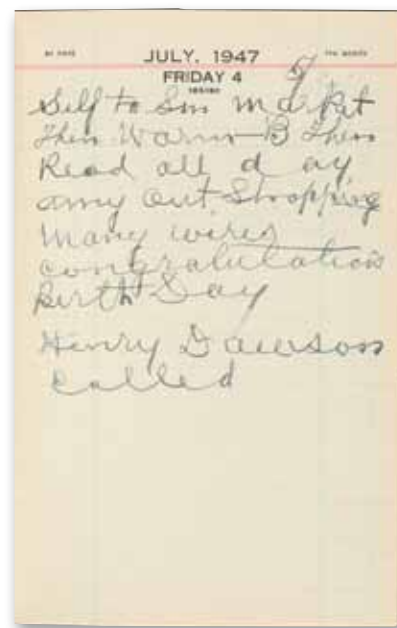
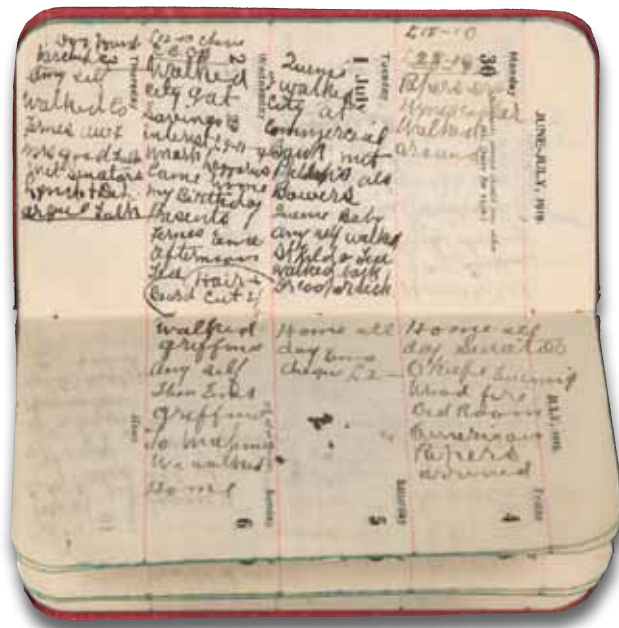
Over the years O'Malley gave differing accounts of his birth place, claiming variously to come from Canada, Iowa, New York, Washington and Kansas.¹ It is most likely that he actually came from Kansas, or at least spent some of his youth there. In the few references to O'Malley found in American newspapers in the 1880s, he is generally described as being from Kansas, and once as specifically from Wichita.² The most telling evidence is in a long letter sent to O'Malley in Australia in 1888 from an old friend, D.C. Kennedy, in which the writer relays news of friends and acquaintances from Kansas, including Kennedy's father.³

When O'Malley briefly campaigned in the 1893 South Australian election he stated in a letter to the editor of the *South Australian Register* that he was 'a citizen of this great republic [the USA]'; but by the time of the 1896 election, he was claiming to have been born in Quebec province, Canada.⁴ This was almost certainly because as an American O'Malley would not have been eligible to stand in the South Australian Parliament (or later in the Federal House of Representatives), but as a Canadian he was eligible by virtue of being a British subject to be elected to Australian parliaments.

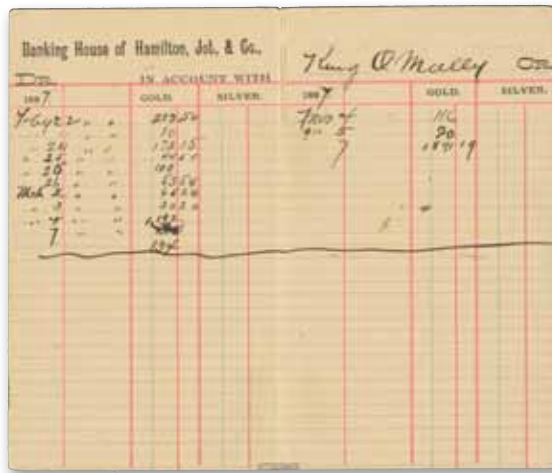
O'Malley was also inconsistent about his date of birth, originally giving it as 2 July 1858, later claiming to have been born on 4 July, American Independence Day.⁵ In his private diaries his birthday is initially recorded as



Letter to King O'Malley from D.C. Kennedy, 1888, National Library of Australia.



King O'Malley's diaries for 1919 and 1947, National Library of Australia.



Bank book, King O'Malley in account with the banking house of Hamilton, Job & Co., Corvallis, Oregon, 1887, National Library of Australia.

2 July until 1947, when it appears as 4 July; presumably O'Malley was keen to capitalise on his exotic American connections and associations with the republican spirit of independence.⁶

As the twentieth century progressed and members of the first Federal Parliament passed away, King O'Malley became one of the last survivors. Billy Hughes was the penultimate living member, and when he died in 1952, O'Malley said: 'I'm the last bird flying alone. It's sad. I'm 98 and Billy was only 88.'⁷ By then O'Malley was claiming to have been born in 1854.⁸ Thus by the end of his life it had passed into legend that King O'Malley was born on the fourth of July 1854, and as such was aged 99 when he died, the last surviving member of Australia's first Federal Parliament.

O'Malley the insurance salesman

It is on record that by 1887 O'Malley was 'well-known in insurance circles' in Chicago and was working in Oregon on the west coast of America as an agent for the Home Life Insurance Company of New York. The Chicago newspaper *Daily Inter Ocean* reported in April 1887 that O'Malley had forwarded policies amounting to \$200,000 in the short time he had been canvassing Oregon, a figure which was deemed exceptional.⁹ He also travelled to San Francisco, where he advertised that he and a man called Dunphy had established headquarters for the Home Life Insurance Company.¹⁰

O'Malley was also mentioned in the *Morning Oregonian* in early 1887 for speaking at a meeting in support of the proposed constitutional amendment then under discussion to introduce prohibition. He described himself as 'an Irishman, a Catholic, and a republican prohibitionist', and subsequently spruiked himself as 'the Wild Irishman' when speaking on prohibition.¹¹

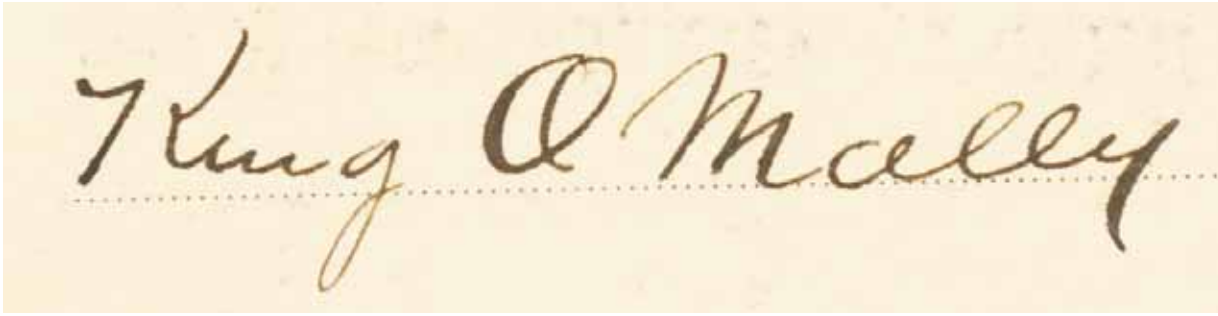
King O'Malley's business practices appear to have been somewhat dubious. His bank book for the year 1887, from the private bank of Hamilton, Job & Co. in Corvallis, Oregon, survives in the National Library of Australia. The account was opened on 22 February 1887 with a deposit of \$223.50. Throughout February and early March he regularly deposited large sums of money, including a significantly large deposit of \$1192 on 4 March. He then abruptly withdrew all the money, to the last cent, that he held with the bank.¹²

The purchasing power of \$1891 (the amount he withdrew from the bank) in 1887 is equivalent today to around \$44,000.¹³ In April 1888 the *Oregon City Courier* published this tantalising article:

King O'Malley Exposed – The Home Life Insurance Co. of New York has sent out printed slips stating that King O'Malley is no longer agent for the company and that he is not authorized to collect money as such. The company has no doubt been fully informed of the questionable dealings of O'Malley. For instance, in this city, he and his companion, Mr. Dunphy, placed policies to the amount of tens of thousands of dollars by misrepresentation. The victimized ones dropped their policies when they discovered the trick, but their money was gone. Experience is one of the most expensive of luxuries in the world. Mr O'Malley's zeal in the temperance cause helps him in pulling the long wool over the eyes of the sheep he wishes to shear.¹⁴

O'Malley comes to Australia

Two months later King O'Malley was on the S.S. *Mariposa* sailing to Australia to further his prospects in a new country. The ship arrived in Sydney in late July 1888, with O'Malley listed among its passengers as a tourist, having travelled from San Francisco in a cabin (rather than steerage).¹⁵



The *Hawaiian Gazette* reported on the Fourth of July celebrations held on board the S.S. *Mariposa*, which presumably had passed through its port. Leading the celebrations was the Hon. Frank McCoppin, the U.S. Commissioner to the Melbourne Exhibition and:

*King O'Malley, of W.T. [Washington Territory], was then called on as Orator of the Day, and delivered a very eloquent oration indeed. After speaking of the greatness of his country and of its people, he spoke of the tendency of young Americans to ape the aristocrat, and what a sorry 'mess' many of them made of it. Aristocrats, like poets, must be born so – not made.*¹⁶

Later in life O'Malley concocted a dramatic story about his journey to Australia in which, devastated on losing his first wife Rosy Wilmot to consumption (tuberculosis), he travelled around Europe until ill health sent him back to America. Living in San Francisco and suffering from tuberculosis, he was supposedly told by a stranger to go to Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia, for his health. O'Malley allegedly convinced the captain of a ship to take him as a passenger and he embarked carrying his own coffin in case he died on the voyage. Arriving in Rockhampton very ill, he lay down on the beach in the sun and was nursed back to health by a local Aboriginal man named Coowonga in a cave at Emu Park whereupon, completely cured, he walked back to Rockhampton, then to Brisbane, Melbourne, Tasmania and Adelaide.¹⁷

In the early years after his arrival in Australia, O'Malley generally claimed that he travelled to this country as a representative of either a business or the American Press to the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition.¹⁸ We don't know if O'Malley knew about the Exhibition when he boarded the *Mariposa*, but as some of the other passengers on the ship were heading there he would certainly have learned about it during the voyage.



Whatever his status at the Exhibition, O'Malley managed to have his photograph taken and included in the official International Exhibition albums, where he is listed as a representative for Thomas Evans & Co, in the American Court.¹⁹ The photograph shows O'Malley with a bushy beard, wearing an ordinary three-piece check suit with a high white collar. The official catalogue of exhibits for the American Court includes exhibits by the Thomas Evans Company, a glass manufacturer from Pennsylvania, which won first prize in its class at the exhibition.²⁰ The albums also list the representatives of the Press, and O'Malley is not among them.

During the International Exhibition O'Malley spun alternative stories about his employment and managed to convince the *Argus* newspaper that he was the Manager of the Commercial Fire Despatch Company, of which a J.R. Burns was the Secretary. In September 1888 the *Argus* published an article detailing criticisms made by these two men of the fire brigade service in Melbourne, noting five days later that O'Malley and Burns planned to open a branch of the company in Melbourne.²¹ It seems that the pair was having a bit of fun at Melbourne's expense, as J.R. Burns is listed in the International Exhibition photograph album as a representative of Adams & Co., another glass manufacturer represented in the American Court.²²

After the International Exhibition closed in January 1889, O'Malley travelled from Albury to Melbourne in March, sold real estate in Melbourne in September,²³ and represented the Equitable Life Assurance Society in Hobart in December.²⁴ He seems to have spent the next couple of years principally in Tasmania, and also in Melbourne, selling life insurance and making a name for himself as an orator.²⁵ In March 1891 O'Malley announced in the Hobart *Mercury*, in a masterstroke of self-promotion, that he had not yet decided which constituency he would represent in the general election,



King O'Malley, International Exhibition Melbourne Photograph Albums, 1888. Public Record Office of Victoria.

King O'Malley, of W.T. [Washington Territory], was then called on as Orator of the Day, and delivered a very eloquent oration indeed.

Hawaiian Gazette,
17 July 1888

but that the people should not decide their vote until they had heard his political views.²⁶ In all probability this was a stunt to attract more people to hear him speak, whereby he could sell them insurance, but it is nonetheless the first time O'Malley indicated an intention to be a politician.

O'Malley begins his run

In the early 1890s O'Malley concentrated on increasing his public profile through widely-reported shenanigans. One involved a parson called Saltau who, while holding revival services at the Memorial Church in Launceston, prayed for an earthquake to rouse the populace to religious fervour. Within a few days an earthquake actually occurred and the parson began advertising his success. He was subsequently issued with a summons to the Supreme Court in an action for £250,000 damages brought by a group including a land speculator, a comedian and an insurance agent – King O'Malley. The comedian alleged that he had sustained serious loss in his business as a showman as his audiences had declined in the wake of the earthquake; the speculator claimed that investors were frightened by the earthquake and this rendered certain of his properties unmarketable; and King O'Malley stated that he had insured many clients on the island whose lives had been greatly shortened by the earthquake shock, and the loss caused to his Society would not be satisfied with anything less than £100,000. The general insecurity of life in Tasmania through the presence of a person who could invoke earthquakes made insurance business absolutely impossible.²⁷ It is not known whether the action was pursued.

In 1893 O'Malley announced that he would stand in the South Australian election against the leader of the Liberal Party, Charles Kingston, for the district of West Adelaide.²⁸ It is likely that this was simply another exercise in

self-promotion, as he withdrew his candidature about a week later.²⁹ In addition to some policies for which he would later seriously campaign – including government control of banks and other financial institutions, federation of the colonies, and the abolition of the military forces – O'Malley advocated, absurdly, that '...the wealthy girls should be made to marry the poor boys, and vice versa, so as to equalise wealth and increase the population [and] there should be a progressive tax on old maids and widows with property who refuse to marry...' and made the promise – tongue firmly in cheek – that through the equal distribution of wealth, 'I believe the time is coming when I shall be able to arrange so that the working man shall not work at all.'³⁰

Between 1893 and 1896, it appears that O'Malley devoted himself mainly to selling insurance. There are few references to him in newspapers; occasionally surfacing in South Australian debates in support of women's rights and banking, then very topical issues. Women were enfranchised in South Australia in 1894, with the passage of the *Adult Suffrage Bill* 1894 through both houses of Parliament, and thus the 1896 election was the first at which women could vote.

Around this time O'Malley seems to have had another disappointment in his business dealings. In April 1894 he wrote to the Managing Director in charge of the liquidation of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania's oldest bank), which had suffered in the financial downturn of the early 1890s, leading to a run on the bank's deposits. The bank was forced to suspend payments and closed in 1891.³¹ In his letter, O'Malley explains that many of his clients had been declared bankrupt and therefore he was unable to repay the bank the amount he owed: 'I have been therefore reluctantly compelled to offer four shillings in the pound and all those who accept will be paid cash by Mr J.W. Ferne who has agreed to assist me providing I am saved the trouble and annoyance of the bankruptcy



courts.' He declared that he was headed to Western Australia, 'where I hope to retrieve my fallen fortune. No more life insurance for me...there is nothing to be made in life insurance now.'³²

O'Malley directed that any letters for him should be addressed to the General Post Office, Coolgardie, Western Australia. It has always been speculated that O'Malley made his fortune in Western Australia, as suggested by the Melbourne *Punch* in June 1901:

*When times were bad in 1893-4 in Melbourne, O'Malley brought his West Australian savings to Melbourne, bought up seven or eight decent little cottages, had them put in good order and has now a clear income of £200 from them.*³³

O'Malley had a base in South Australia at this time, as it is in the South Australian newspapers he makes occasional appearances. And it seems likely that O'Malley obtained his famous opal and diamond pin in South Australia. He was renowned for wearing this pin in his tie or shirt front, and is always pictured wearing it from around 1898 onwards (but it does not appear in the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition album photograph of 1888). The pin was remembered by people who saw him speak and often commented upon because it was unusual at the time for men to wear flamboyant jewellery. In 1956 V.D. Mursell remembered seeing King O'Malley arriving in Queenstown, Tasmania in February 1900, thus:

*One morning (sunshine for once) the usual crowd were at the railway station when a grotesque-looking man stepped off and was the cynosure of all eyes. Tall, wearing a golden beard and moustache, an Abraham Lincoln-like frock coat, three-decker tie with a large pin made of a big opal surrounded by diamonds, very baggy but well-cut trousers, spotless tan boots and above all a broad-brimmed and tall hat...*³⁴



Portrait of King O'Malley, c.1901, National Library of Australia.



Replica of King O'Malley's opal and diamond pin, 2003, collection of Peter Barclay, OAM

KING O'MALLEY'S MESSAGE
TO THE
SOVEREIGN ELECTORS OF ENCOUNTER BAY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

At the general election for the House of Assembly in April I shall have the honor of offering myself as a candidate for your suffrages.

Doubtless some will ask, "Who is King O'Malley?" In anticipation I am going to inform them. He was born in Canada on the 2nd July, 1858; attended school in New York; travelled round the earth three times; first arrived in Australia in July, 1888—not for the purpose of bettering his financial position, but his shattered physical condition. Health is the legal tender of life and basis of happiness. He had to make financial sacrifices in order to live in Australia, but in health he gains. There is no climate on the top of this earth equal to that of S.A., where his future home shall be. He pays taxes under two flags, the British and the American. During the past eight years, in letters to the American papers and to several friends in the United States Senate, he has continually urged the removal of the high tariff on wool in America, through which numerous Australians have pocketed thousands of pounds. He has heard debates in Washington, in forty of the State Parliaments, the British House of Commons, and in the Parliaments of all the Australasian Colonies. His eyes and ears have always been opened in search of knowledge. For years he has laboriously struggled to master the social, moral, financial and economic laws of the world. He is a "teetotaler," but not a fanatic. Believing every man to have a mission in life, he is on the side of the deserving weak, as against the selfish and too often wolfish strong. Had he never seen misery, poverty, and hopeless vice in all its heinous nakedness through the criminal negligence of wealth, doubtless he would now be a member of its S.A. ring, as his financial interests are there. Conscious, however, of the inalienable justice of the demands of the masses to equal rights and opportunities with the rich to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, he must be one of those whom the plutocrats dislike. "Ye have the poor with you always," said the Great Teacher, and many who remember this would fain forget that He also said, "and whosoever ye will ye may do them good." Yet King O'Malley has witnessed the heart-bleeding sight of the widow and orphan turned out of their home by the cruel hand of avarice; he has seen farmer, wife and ten children driven from the land to starve on the Queen's highway by the church-going and yet inhuman mortgagee. When remonstrated with the heartless brute replied that their suffering was no concern of his.

King O'Malley's message to the sovereign electors of Encounter Bay, 1896, State Library of South Australia.

*"Who is King O'Malley?" ...
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O'Malley's close friend and first biographer, Dorothy Catts, states that he found the opal near Port Augusta around 1893 and had it set in the pin with four diamonds.³⁵ No doubt this is what O'Malley told her, and it may well be true, but one never knows with King O'Malley. It is regrettable that the pin has not been preserved in the collection of any public institution. O'Malley lodged other items with various institutions, but may have kept the pin until his death, and it is not mentioned in either his or his wife Amy's will. After Amy's death the estate was sold by the Public Trustee and the proceeds invested in the King and Amy O'Malley Trust, as per their wishes. Unfortunately, no trace of the pin has been found. (Peter Barclay, the Managing Director of King O'Malley's Irish Pub in Canberra, who has a particular interest in O'Malley, has had a replica of the pin made which is on display in the exhibition.)

O'Malley enters South Australian politics

King O'Malley's first serious attempt to enter politics was in 1896 when he stood as an independent candidate in the South Australian House of Assembly election, for the coastal seat of Encounter Bay. O'Malley's stated policies were an idiosyncratic mix of socialism and conservatism, indicative of the various principles and strategies he espoused and practised throughout his political career. He seems to have been passionate and sincere as well as eccentric and opportunistic in his devotion to particular political and social causes. In South Australia in 1896 he advocated social welfare initiatives including free education and old age pensions, and supported a fair wage for public servants, but was opposed to Asian immigration.

O'Malley's support of women's social justice at this time may have been influenced by the newly enfranchised women of South Australia, whom he specifically targeted in his political advertising,³⁶ but throughout his life he was consistent in his commitment to feminist causes, including economic independence. He proposed equal divorce laws and a law that would prevent a man from selling or mortgaging his home without his wife's signature, as well as support for the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the banning of hotels employing female barmaids who were not members of the publican's family. O'Malley's wowsersism was clearly informed by his concern for the welfare of dependant women and children, but, although a prohibitionist at heart, in the 1896 election he was astute enough to support 'local option', which meant that individual communities could decide the issue of prohibition for their own region.³⁷

His proposals to establish a farmers' board of arbitration and local grain stores suggest a commitment to greater government intervention in the protection of its citizens – as does the recommendation for the appointment of a government auditor for insurance companies (no doubt born of his professional experience). O'Malley also supported federation of the colonies, arguing that the Federal Capital should be on the Murray River, fifteen miles square (making it larger than Washington D.C.), and that the land should be leased rather than sold.³⁸

O'Malley was duly elected to the South Australian House of Assembly. In some quarters his win in the election was ascribed to his popularity with female voters, whose political motives were satirised in the Melbourne *Argus*, where 'Oriël' wrote of O'Malley:

It was not till lovely woman secured the vote that the real genius of the man was recognised and rewarded ... Feminine intuition disdains the narrow reasonings of

*logic. Could a candidate with such lovely auburn hair be politically unsound? Plainly no. There is victory in the eye of the man; his whiskers breathe confidence, his bosom is a perpetual invitation to the stricken deer...*³⁹

Parliament opened on 11 June 1896 and O'Malley gave his maiden speech on 23 June, a response to the second reading of the *Early Closing Bill*. His first real political manoeuvre was an attempt to amend the *Licensed Victuallers' Bill*, which proposed to enforce the licensing of clubs and introduce local option in larger districts; O'Malley's additional clause requiring barmaids to be registered unless members of the publican's family failed to become law.⁴⁰ He also introduced a bill to compel shopkeepers to provide seats for saleswomen when they were not serving customers in the interests of public health, arguing that:

*A State can no more expect to rear healthy, vigorous, manly men and womanly women from semi-crippled, exhausted, worn-out, varicose veined, weakened-genitive-organed mothers than a stud master could expect to raise thorough-bred racehorses from broken-down, ring-boned mares.*⁴¹

The bill was not passed.

O'Malley's only legislative success was the *Legitimation Act* 1898, which legitimised children born out of wedlock whose parents subsequently married. He also succeeded in his motion that lavatories be placed in all passenger trains on journeys of more than an hour, and the lighting improved to enable passengers to read.⁴² In this parliamentary term O'Malley spoke frequently on issues affecting the House with regard to Federation, in addition to advocating matters for his electorate.⁴³

Some of O'Malley's philosophical views surfaced during this period. On the *Coloured Immigration Restriction Bill* he was reported as making these appalling observations:

*He only wished those who said that the coloured races were as good as the whites would go to South Carolina for a night and sleep with a Negro with his black woolly hair and his bad breath. The stench would be so great that he would not like to repeat the performance. Asiatics and all inferior races had certain misfortunes which pursued them to their dying day. But the Great Creator had preserved Australia from these people and their leprosy.*⁴⁴

Almost exposed

In and out of Parliament O'Malley was widely regarded as a joke, exacerbated by his taking a man called William Moorehead (also spelt Morehead) to court for slander in his first year as an elected Member. The case, which was heard in December 1896, was the closest O'Malley ever came to having his past life exposed.

O'Malley claimed damages of £490 from Moorehead for having falsely and maliciously spoken and published that he had embezzled money from the Home Life Insurance Company of New York and been 'placarded' over the Pacific Coast, and that Moorehead could put O'Malley out of the House of Assembly in twenty-four hours if he liked.⁴⁵ The action followed a series of published letters to newspapers between O'Malley and Moorehead, in which the latter queried O'Malley's claims about his background and nationality, and it seems likely that O'Malley believed the best way to deal with persistent rumours about his being American was to attack them head on through the courts.⁴⁶

Moorehead did not plead that the statements were true, as he would have had to provide evidence; rather he argued that he had not made the statements. He testified that he first knew O'Malley around 1882 in Chicago where

O'Malley was 'making a noise on politics as a "spouting politician" [laughter]. In America there were thousands of them on the sidewalks.' Moorehead claimed to have seen O'Malley in Oregon around 1886-88 where he was canvassing life insurance for the Home Life company, and heard him speak for the Republican and Prohibition Party, when he said that he was born in Kansas and had been converted from Catholicism to Wesleyanism.

Moorehead said he knew O'Malley later in Seattle, where he was in 'the land-booming business ... sometimes they sold land that didn't exist [laughter]. The title was "The Earth for Sale, by King O'Malley, the Wild Irishman" ... it was on a piece of canvas stretched across the street with letters about 2ft. long [laughter].'⁴⁷ Moorehead testified that when he was working for the *Portland Daily News* he saw 'dodgers' (circulars) pasted on walls and sidewalks and freely distributed throughout Oregon warning the public that King O'Malley was no longer employed by the Home Life Insurance company. Moorehead thought it was signed by a man named Dunphy of San Francisco, an error that was to play into O'Malley's hands later.⁴⁸

O'Malley claimed that Moorehead had sought financial assistance from him in Adelaide and when that ceased he threatened O'Malley with selling information to publicans who were looking for material to use against the prohibitionist.⁴⁹ O'Malley tendered a letter from Moorehead which read:

*Dear Sir – If you are in a position to fulfil your promise by sending me to New Zealand I am ready to start at once. It will be better for me to be out of this. I am hunted by some of your enemies seeking for information, which I hesitate to give; but a hungry man will almost dare anything...*⁵⁰

The presiding judge found that, based on the evidence of witnesses, Moorehead uttered the offending words, which



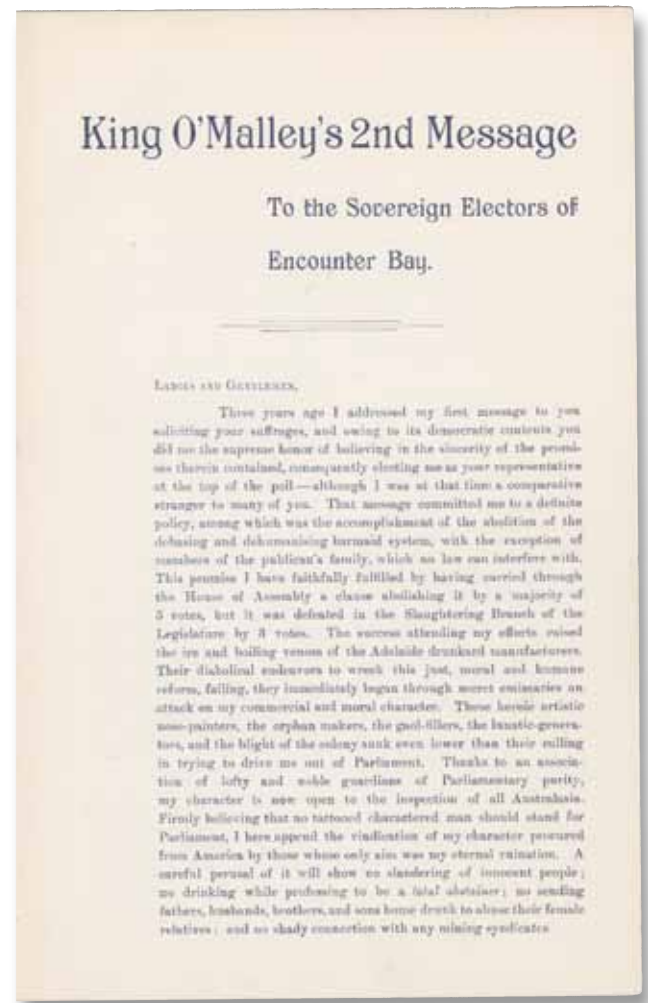
were not justified and not uttered on a privileged occasion (eg, inside Parliament) and therefore O'Malley was entitled to a judgement in his favour. However he awarded him only 40 shillings in damages, when he had claimed £490.⁵¹

O'Malley resurrected the matter in Parliament in July of the following year. He had put the last six months to good use and written to Dunphy, who was of course his cohort and alleged to have been party to the misrepresentations made by O'Malley in selling insurance.⁵² O'Malley read the letter he had received from Dunphy as 'Manager of the Home Insurance Company, San Francisco', in which Dunphy said he had never met Moorehead and never branded O'Malley as an embezzler or issued any dodgers warning people against dealing with O'Malley. He also enclosed a copy of a letter he had received from Mr Chittleborough of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, which asked for any information about O'Malley's past and whether or not he was American, as well as his answer to that letter which read:

*In reply I would beg to say that Mr. O'Malley was associated with me in the Life Insurance business in 1887, and is, I believe, a Canadian by birth ... He is an energetic worker of marked ability, and was quite successful in this business. In my dealings with him he was strictly honest, and I have had no occasion to consider him other than entirely reliable and trustworthy.*⁵³

Neither the Parliament, the public, Chittleborough nor Moorehead knew that this informant was actually O'Malley's prior partner in business, and equally implicated in the Oregon press in shady business dealings. Moreover, O'Malley's 'vindication' was staged in Parliament where everything he said was privileged.

O'Malley stood again in the 1899 election, issuing his 'Second Message to the Sovereign Electors of Encounter Bay'. Much of it consisted of O'Malley defending himself



King O'Malley's second message to the sovereign electors of Encounter Bay, 1899, State Library of South Australia.

Thanks to an association of lofty and noble guardians of Parliamentary purity, my character is now open to the inspection of all Australasia.

against attacks on his character and past, and predicting that the 'drunkeries,' or the liquor interests, would campaign heavily and dishonestly against him. He outlined his case against Moorehead and published the correspondence from Dunphy in his defence.

O'Malley promoted himself as a candidate seeking to protect morality, asking the citizens to:

...array themselves on one side or the other, either in the camp of the lovers of home, of family, social purity, free education, the Church and Sunday school, the Divine law of marriage, and the chivalrous defence of the sacred claims of women to every right possessed by man, supplemented by one more, the protection of man; or in the camp of the foe ... whose main object in life, judged by the results, appears to be to take your brave country boys when they come to the city, entice them into infamous dens, fill them with whisky ... [and] get the last shilling out of their pockets through the smiles of a scented and painted barmaid.⁵⁴

O'Malley declared his support for old age pensions, equal pay for equal work, a police superannuation fund, equal divorce laws, local option and the abolition of barmaids, and opposition to Asian immigration.⁵⁵ He devoted the closing pages of his Message to the issue of federation, where he reprinted numerous letters to the editor which he had penned on the topic. This attention to federation was due to the fact that election day in South Australia coincided with a referendum on the bill to federate Australia. O'Malley was of course championing his own credentials for the Federal Parliament, and must have had his eye on a seat already, as the principal issues regarding the proposed Constitution Bill had already been decided.

O'Malley was defeated in the election of 1899, coming third behind Charles Tucker, the previous Lord Mayor of Adelaide, and W. H. Carpenter, his own running mate. In

true O'Malley fashion he then relocated to Melbourne to resume his activities as travelling commissioner for a life assurance society.⁵⁶ Subsequently, a petition was lodged by E. E. T. Hyde against the election of Tucker in Encounter Bay on the grounds of bribery during the election, and Tucker was found guilty of a technical breach of the electoral code in offering his parliamentary salary to various committees in the district. Although there was also evidence that he had offered money to individual electors to vote for him, Tucker was allowed to recontest the seat at the by-election.⁵⁷ O'Malley quickly returned from Victoria for the election but was again defeated, and Tucker was re-elected with a slightly increased winning margin.⁵⁸

O'Malley in Tasmania

O'Malley seems to have been determined to be an elected member of an Australian Parliament by any means possible and after his defeat in South Australia he headed to Tasmania, where an election was scheduled for early 1900. He chose to contest the seat of Lyell, whose constituents were mainly miners and labourers.⁵⁹ An anomaly of the colonial electoral regulations, commented on at the time, was that O'Malley was eligible to stand for the election, but not to vote in it. In Tasmania one needed to be twenty-one years old and a British subject to contest an election, whereas to vote a citizen had to have resided for twelve months in the colony and six months in the electorate.⁶⁰

O'Malley's political platform in Tasmania reiterated his support for old age pensions, free education and a State bank, and also included policies likely to appeal to the miners, such as workers' compensation schemes and the reduction of mining rents.⁶¹ The absence of references to women's rights, which had been central to O'Malley's political ideology, may be attributed to the fact that women in Tasmania were not enfranchised until 1903.



O'Malley lost the election, coming in second of the four candidates in Lyell.⁶² (When subsequently asked his opinion of the Tasmanian parliament, he described it as 'a museum for the collection and preservation of antiquated fossils!')⁶³

O'Malley remained in Tasmania and in May 1900 he began campaigning for the first Federal election, initially focussing his efforts on signing up miners to the electoral roll. He was remembered for meeting them as they came off shift at seven in the morning, often in the rain, and greeting them with, 'Are you on the roll, Brother?'⁶⁴ The state of Tasmania was to vote as one Federal electorate, with nine men standing for five available seats in the House of Representatives and fifteen for the six Senate seats.⁶⁵

The campaign got underway properly in March 1901, with the election scheduled for 29 March. O'Malley's platform was as usual, with the addition of federal concerns such as universal suffrage, uniform patent laws, inter-state navigation and, above all, protectionism. The tariff was a principal issue in the election and candidates were listed in the newspapers as either Free Trade or Protectionist. The Federal Constitution decreed that trade between the states would be free, and Federal Parliament was given exclusive power to impose tariffs. The debate was whether goods imported into Australia should be taxed heavily (the Protectionists' position) or lightly (the Free Trade position). O'Malley was a strident Protectionist, which partially accounts for the frequent criticism of him by the (mostly free-trade) newspapers. He declared himself to be 'an inter-state free-trader, with protection against the outside world ... [who] wanted to see a reasonable tariff that would operate for the good not only of the importer but also for the good of the people.'⁶⁶

Throughout the campaign the newspapers reported that the meetings at which O'Malley spoke were always packed with people whom he kept interested and amused, yet they



Newspaper cuttings book 1888-1935, National Library of Australia.

King O'Malley will talk to the Electors of Tasmania on the Ping-pong collared Johnnies, the Polo Tadpoles, and the Flyblown Aristocrats...

Examiner,
1 December 1903



Portrait of King O'Malley, 1908,
National Library of Australia.

were surprised at how well he polled. Edward Braddon, previously Premier of Tasmania (1894-99) and a supporter of free trade was returned at the head of the poll, with O'Malley elected a close second behind him.⁶⁷

The Hon. King O'Malley MHR

O'Malley lost no time in heading to Melbourne, where the first federal Australian Parliament would sit until a capital was chosen and a Parliament House built, and was the first elected member to go to the chamber and mark his name on the seat where he was to sit.⁶⁸

The First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia opened on 9 May 1901 in the Exhibition Building in Melbourne, where O'Malley had spent his first months in Australia thirteen years before. More than 10,000 people attended the opening by the Duke of Cornwall and York, depicted in a famous epic painting by Tom Roberts commonly known as *The big picture*.⁶⁹ Less well known today is Charles Nuttall's sombre painting of the event, though the commercial photogravure of his work once hung in many homes, schools and civic buildings.

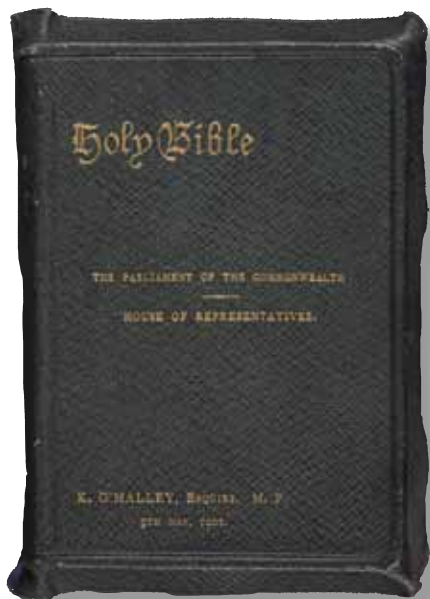
Nuttall, an illustrator by profession, had been commissioned by a Melbourne business syndicate, the 'Historical Picture Association' (as Roberts was by the 'Australian Art Association'), to paint the opening of the first Federal Parliament, including as many recognisable faces as possible, on a canvas 8 by 12 feet (2.4 by 3.6 metres). Nuttall managed to include 344 identifiable dignitaries in his painting (ensuring at least that many photogravure sales), which is now on display in the Melbourne Exhibition Building.⁷⁰ The prints were made by the leading French art reproduction firm Goupil et Cie and cannily marketed with the slogan 'No Australian Home will be complete without a Copy'.⁷¹





Charles Nuttall, *The opening of the first Federal Parliament of Australia by HRH the Duke of Cornwall and York, 1901-02*, Photogravure by Goupil et Cie, Photo: RLDI
[King O'Malley is located in the sixth row to the left.]





Bible issued to King O'Malley for the opening of Parliament, 9 May 1901, National Library of Australia.

Tom Roberts's *Big picture*, on display at Parliament House in Canberra, includes 250 individual portraits, for each of which he recorded the age, height, weight and hat size of the subjects in his diary.⁷² Apparently King O'Malley's head suited a hat size of 7 1/8, smaller than those of Braddon and Charles Kingston, although he wore the largest hat.⁷³

At the opening ceremony the Governor-General 'stood on the dais and read out the oath, whilst the members, Bible in hand, followed him in sections.'⁷⁴ Members of the first Federal Parliament were given leather-bound bibles on the occasion of the opening, and in its collection the National Library of Australia holds O'Malley's, embossed with his name and signed by the Duke of Cornwall and York.⁷⁵ Curiously, when Members were re-sworn later in the day, at the first sitting of the House of Representatives, O'Malley was the only one to make an affirmation rather than an oath. Each Member signed a parchment document containing the words of the oath, but O'Malley's included the phrase 'solemnly and sincerely affirm and declare' instead of 'swear', and omitted the imprecation 'So help me God!'⁷⁶ It is not known why O'Malley didn't swear an oath. Hoyle has speculated that he may have believed that as he was American (not Canadian) to swear an oath would be to perjure himself,⁷⁷ yet he had only to swear loyalty to the Crown, not that he was actually a British subject. To omit the religious element from the oath of loyalty could suggest that O'Malley was uncomfortable with its content either because he held certain religious convictions, or conversely because he was not a believer.



Bishop of the Waterlily Rockbound Church

O'Malley made many contradictory statements and claims regarding religion and his relationship to it over the years. Religious phrases peppered his speeches and he frequently invoked Christian principles when advocating a cause, yet O'Malley was often scathing about the practices of organised religion. His adoption of 'Brother' and 'Sister' as a form of address lent him an air of piety flavoured with socialism, characteristic of O'Malley's cultivated image of God-fearing street democrat.

At times O'Malley claimed to have been a convert from Catholicism to Wesleyanism – the eighteenth-century reformist movement that emphasised personal faith and holiness above doctrine – which is consistent with his dislike of religious dogma, but more surprisingly he claimed to have founded a church in America of which he was the first Bishop.⁷⁸

O'Malley's church gloried in the extraordinary name of the Waterlily Rockbound Church: the Redskin Temple of the Cayuse (or sometimes Chicasaw) Nation, and seems to have been a classic O'Malley scam, based on the discovery that in Texas land was being granted to religious organisations for the establishment of community settlements. O'Malley chose the Panhandle country of northern Texas and named his church to appeal to Native Americans as well as settlers, and to invoke Christian tenets of brotherly love and kindness to others. Presumably O'Malley sought to make money from land speculation but the church was brought to a sudden end when he was exposed employing the wonderfully named Mr Angel to stage miracles in the shape of flaming mountain tops.⁷⁹

In Australia in later years O'Malley claimed that he had met his first wife Rosy Wilmot as a disciple of his church, which he described as 'socialistic' in a 1912 article in the *Melbourne Herald*, which also published 'the Ten Commandments' of the Waterlily Church.⁸⁰ Apparently they did not include chicanery and fake miracles.

O'Malley of the hat

O'Malley was treated as rather a novelty in the first Federal Parliament, particularly by the press. His flowing hair and flashy dress lent him easily to caricature and made him a favourite with cartoonists.

His scrapbooks, held in the collection of the National Library of Australia, are full of news clippings about O'Malley, including many cartoons.⁸¹ He was usually depicted with an exaggerated head of hair, wearing pince-nez, and often a comically oversized hat. *The West Australian* reported on 1 July 1901 that King O'Malley had become known as:

*...O'Malley of the hat. He has a wide-brimmed head covering, which must surely have been bequeathed to him by the "bald-headed eagle of the Rocky Mountains", of whom he is fond of referring. The O'Malley is proud of it too, and by no chance does he ever take it off in Parliament, except of course, when addressing the Chair.*⁸²



Newspaper cuttings book 1888-1935, (detail), National Library of Australia.



King O'Malley by Syd Miller, c.1930,
National Library of Australia.



King O'Malley by Leo Jack Bainbridge
(Littlewood), 1942-44, National
Gallery of Australia.





King O'Malley by Will Dyson, no date, National Library of Australia.

(left)
King O'Malley, Minister for Home Affairs by Hal Gye, 1910, Nancy Gye and the National Library of Australia

O'Malley and the plan for the Federal Capital

In 1901 O'Malley moved a motion in favour of old age pensions and continued to argue the case until it was brought into law in 1908. But his most important political contribution in that first year of Parliament was his motion for,

*the Government [to] secure as federal territory an area of not less than 1000 square miles of land in a good, healthy, and fertile situation, the freehold of which shall for ever remain the property of the Commonwealth; the ground only to be let on building or other leases to utilizers, all buildings to be erected under strict Government regulations, with due regard to public health and architectural beauty.*⁸³

O'Malley felt strongly that the 100 square mile minimum land area decreed by the Constitution was insufficient. He argued that the capital's water supply should be located within the territory's borders, which should be large enough to discourage land speculators from buying land surrounding the capital and derive benefit from it without contributing to the territory's taxes. He also argued strongly that the land should be leased to those wishing to build on it, to avoid land speculation and the Government subsequently having to pay huge sums of money to repossess land for future expansion.⁸⁴

The Capital Sites Enquiry Board began investigating suitable sites for the Federal Capital in 1902, with Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate touring the regions. The Seat of Government Bill had its second reading on 6 October 1903, during which O'Malley promoted his own preference for Bombala, in south-eastern New South Wales, and outlined his eccentric views on the effect of climate on societal moral health:

*Look where we like, it will be found that wherever a hot climate prevails, the country is revolutionary. Take the sons of some of the greatest men in the world, and put them into a hot climate like Tumut or Albury, and in three generations their lineal descendants will be degenerate ... I want to have a cold climate chosen for the capital of this Commonwealth ... I want to have a climate where men can hope. We cannot have hope in hot countries. When I go down the streets of this city on a hot summer's day, and see the people in a melting condition, I look upon them with sorrow, and wish I were away in healthy Tasmania. I hope that the site selected will be Bombala, and that the children of our children will see an Australian Federal city that will rival London in population, Paris in beauty, Athens in culture, and Chicago in enterprise.*⁸⁵

By the end of the first Parliament in November 1903, the Bill had been dropped, as the two Houses could not agree on a site, although they had agreed to the proposal that the national capital site should be not less than 1000 square miles.⁸⁶

The first and second parliaments

Also debated during the first Parliament was the establishment of the federal public service, and customs and defence issues. O'Malley vigorously contributed his views on these issues and notably did not miss one day's sitting of Parliament. During discussions on the Immigration Restriction Bill, O'Malley again expressed his opinion that Australia should be preserved for 'the white race', not an uncommon view at the time.⁸⁷

O'Malley had joined the Australian Labor Party in June 1901, soon after the first Federal Parliament opened.





Members of the House of Representatives on the steps of the courthouse at Bathurst, New South Wales, May 1902, National Library of Australia.

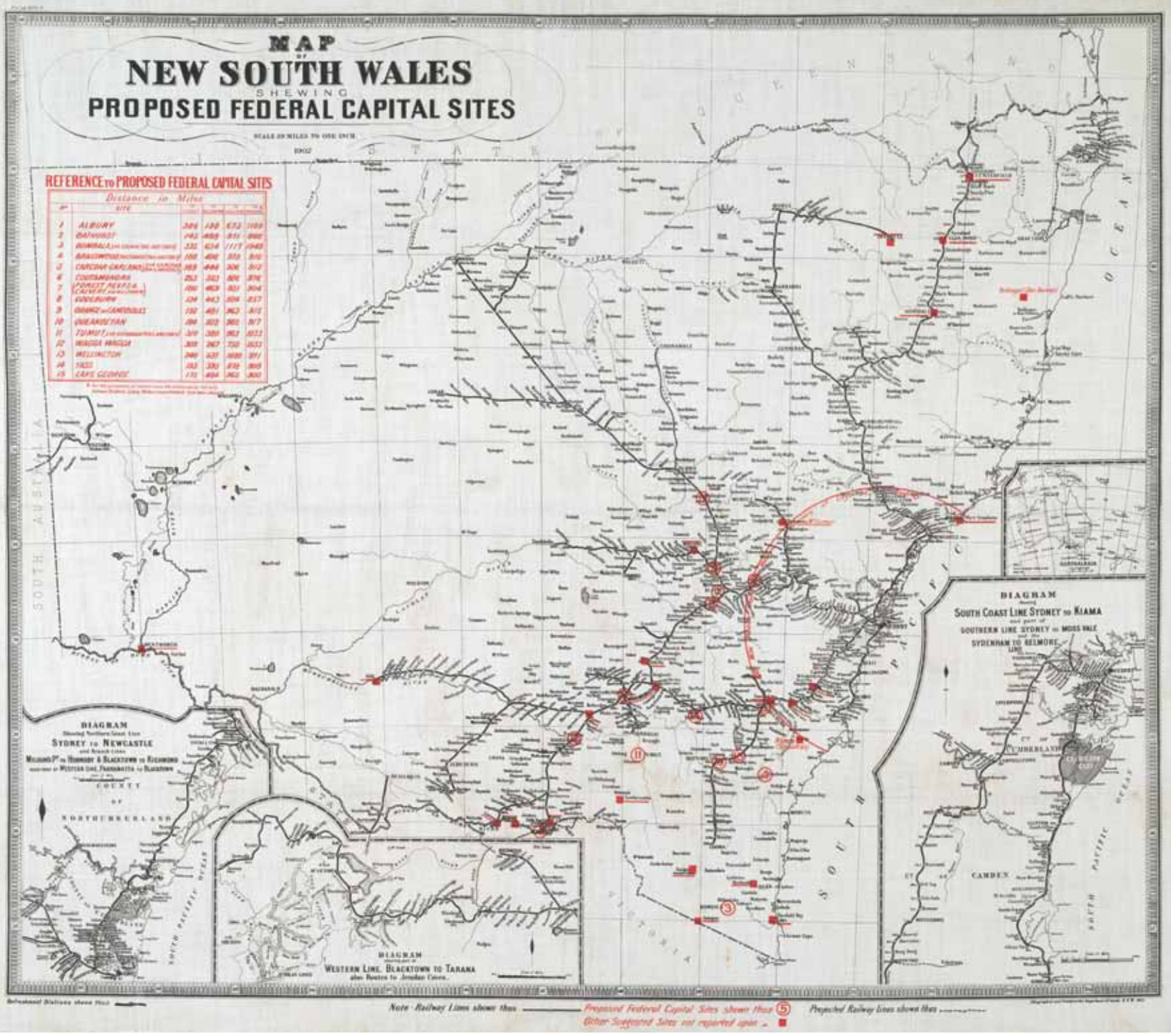
MAP OF NEW SOUTH WALES

SHOWING PROPOSED FEDERAL CAPITAL SITES

SCALE IN MILES TO ONE INCH
1902

REFERENCE TO PROPOSED FEDERAL CAPITAL SITES

Site	Distance in Miles
1 ALBANY	306 129 673 1009
2 BATHURST	292 489 811 980
3 BARRALLA (on Darling & Macintyre)	232 424 777 949
4 BASSENDEN (on Darling & Macintyre)	199 406 853 919
5 CARRINGTON (on Darling & Macintyre)	189 446 806 912
6 CUMBERLAND	252 382 806 916
7 FORT STEELES (on Darling & Macintyre)	196 463 831 904
8 GERRARD	224 443 804 877
9 GUNNIBULLI	192 481 862 912
10 HUNTERSTON	206 302 565 917
11 TUMBUCTA (on Darling & Macintyre)	319 389 582 852
12 MURUMBidgee	302 267 730 852
13 WELLINGTON	246 427 808 891
14 TESS	182 381 624 809
15 CAPE GEORGE	172 494 762 800



Silk map of New South Wales showing proposed federal capital sites, 1902, National Library of Australia.

Although no party held a majority, Labor supported Prime Minister Edmund Barton and his Protectionist ministry against the Free-trade opposition.

Tasmania was divided into electorates for the second federal election in 1903 and O'Malley won in the new seat of Darwin. He was part of the short-lived first federal Labor government of 1904, which followed the resignation of Alfred Deakin's government when it failed to retain Labor support.

In July 1904 O'Malley enacted another of his stunts, sending a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives requesting permission to erect a 5 by 10 foot Texas cowboy waterproof canvas tent in the grounds of Parliament House, claiming he couldn't exist on his parliamentary salary of £400 a year, particularly as he felt 'morally bound to contribute to innumerable charities, maintain myself respectably, and help stranded constituents.'⁸⁸

O'Malley argued that the Commonwealth paid its judges a high salary to place them beyond the temptations of bribery and that the same principle should be applied to Parliamentarians. The press did not support O'Malley's position, although some correspondents agreed that Members' salaries were incommensurate with the responsibility of the position. However, O'Malley's request was refused by the Joint House Committee of Federal Parliament.⁸⁹

O'Malley and the national bank

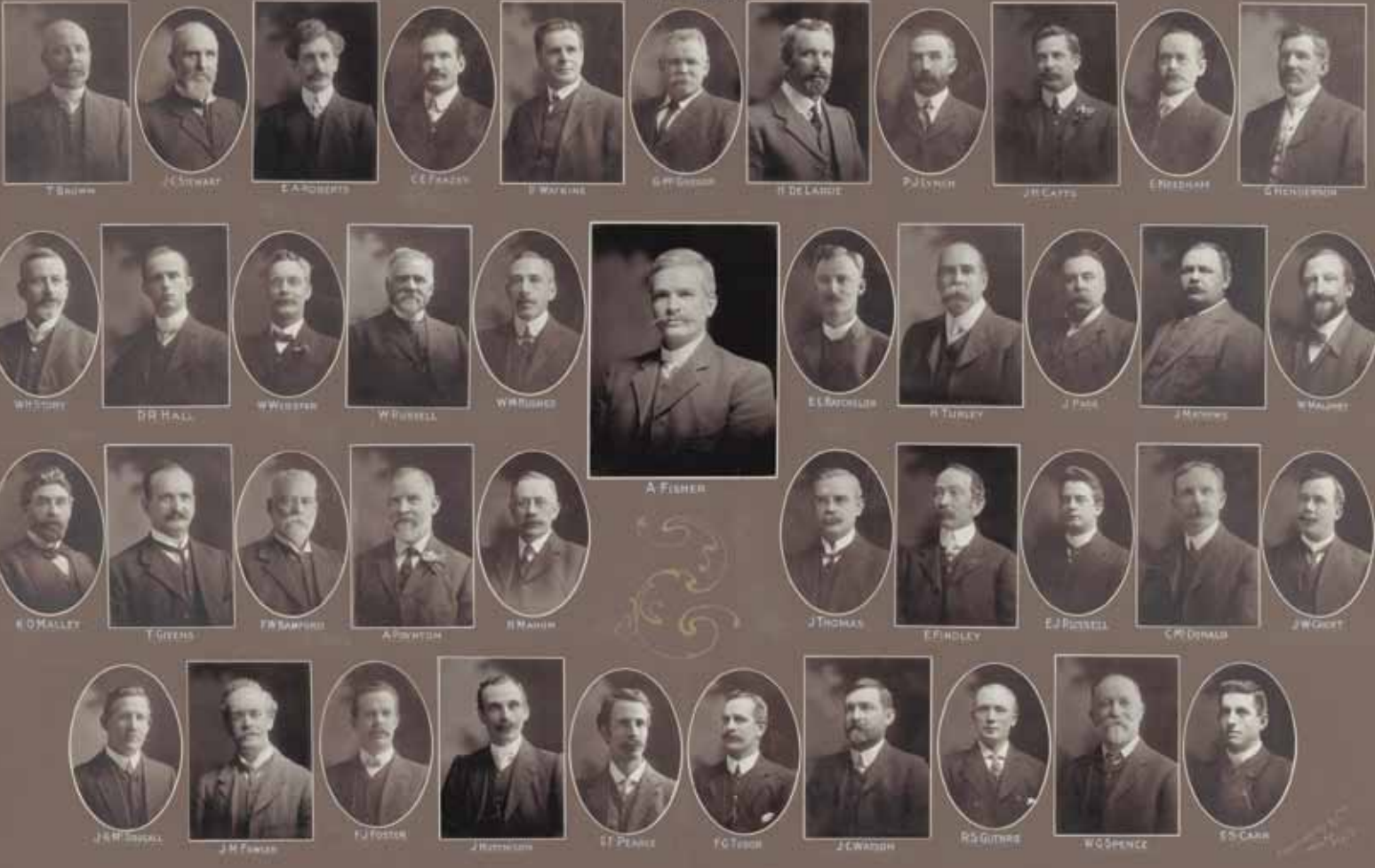
O'Malley was returned to Parliament in 1907 and 1910, and through those years lent his support to his favourite issues. His main interest then was banking, and he repeatedly raised his scheme for a national bank which, he argued, would regulate the economy through control of the issue of paper money, finance the debts of the



Members of the Labour [Labor] Party, first Federal Parliament, 1901, National Archives of Australia.

MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY THIRD COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT

15-12-1908



Members of the Australian Labor Party, Third Commonwealth Parliament, 15 December 1908, T. Humphrey & Co, National Library of Australia.



(King O'Malley detail)



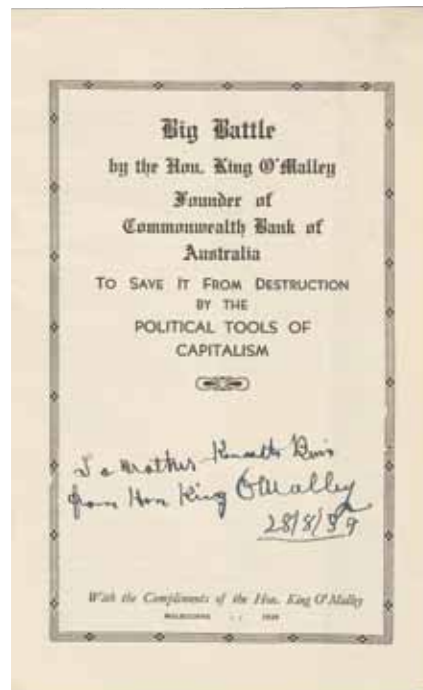
Commonwealth and the States and concentrate their borrowing power. He stated in 1906 that,

The fundamental prerogative of the Government is to create the medium of exchange, to circulate it, and to contract or expand its circulation as is desired. But today this power is in the hands of private bankers ... they are exercising a function which rightly belongs to the Government. We have given them the power to contract the circulating medium, and to gather the wealth of the people into the hands of a few. I hold that the Treasurer should have come down with a Commonwealth postal banking system of currency.⁹⁰

It took a long time for the national bank proposal to gather much support in Parliament, even among his Labor colleagues. In the Constitution, the Federal Government had been given the power to make laws with respect to (among other things) banking and the incorporation of banks, the issue of paper money, currency and coinage, telegraphic services and bills of exchange.⁹¹ While they therefore had the power to create a national bank many parliamentarians considered a government commercial bank to be unnecessary and too risky.⁹²

At the Labor Party Conference of 1905, the creation of a Commonwealth Bank of Deposit and Issue was placed on the General Platform but not the Fighting Platform, which would frame the issues pursued at the next election.⁹³ The discussions were not recorded in the official conference report, but O'Malley later maintained that it was due to his efforts that the Commonwealth Bank was adopted as Labor policy.

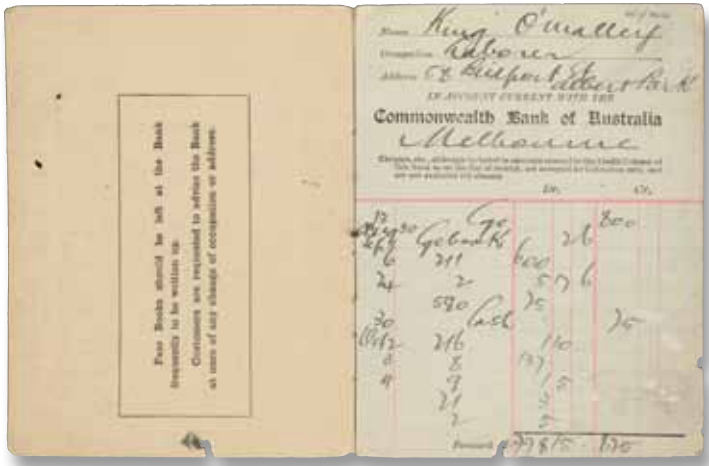
O'Malley's detailed plan for a national bank was presented to parliament in 1908: it would be free from political control, with only the States and the Commonwealth Government holding shares; it would issue notes and coins, issue loans to governments, hold government revenue



Big Battle by the Hon. King O'Malley, founder of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, to save it from destruction, 1939, National Library of Australia.



Cartoons reproduced from Melbourne *Punch*, "The Magnificent Banker" 18/1/1912 and "Untitled" 21/12/1911, Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia.



King O'Malley's Commonwealth Bank pass book for 1913, National Library of Australia.

*Without my work
there would be no
Commonwealth Bank.*

King O'Malley,
Commonwealth Bank, 1920



King O'Malley by Calton Younger, 1939, National Library of Australia.

and bank reserves, and operate as a savings bank through postal outlets.⁹⁴ To O'Malley's bitter disappointment the *Commonwealth Bank Act* of 1911 established a national bank which bore little resemblance to O'Malley's scheme – for which he blamed the Prime Minister and Treasurer Andrew Fisher and Attorney-General Billy Hughes. Instead it was to conduct general banking like a commercial bank, but without a central banking role or control of the note issue. Over the next 48 years the Commonwealth Bank would evolve to encompass these roles, with the central banking and note issue functions subsequently transferred in 1960 to the newly-established Reserve Bank of Australia.⁹⁵

Characteristically O'Malley spent the remainder of his life proclaiming himself 'the father of the Commonwealth Bank', and he published several pamphlets on the theme, eg *Commonwealth Bank: The facts of its creation* (1920) and *Big Battle by the Hon. King O'Malley, founder of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, to save it from destruction* (1939). He was largely successful in establishing this aspect of his legend and his name remains linked with the bank's founding, although historians have attempted to revise his role in the creation of the bank.⁹⁶ The movement for a national bank had in fact started long before O'Malley was even in Australia and was strengthened by the bank collapses of 1893.⁹⁷ However, within the Labor Party O'Malley certainly played a significant role in pushing for the issue, and he is widely credited as being instrumental in raising it in the public consciousness.⁹⁸

O'Malley remained a great supporter of the Commonwealth Bank throughout his life, and frequently dropped in to the Melbourne branch, where he was remembered by Calton Younger, a seventeen year-old bank worker in 1939 when he drew a caricature of O'Malley which is now in the collection of the National Library of Australia. Younger recalled that 'He used to hand out visiting cards describing himself as Founder of the Commonwealth Bank and the

Fiduciary Issue.⁹⁹ Although O'Malley was not asked to lay any of the foundation stones of the new Commonwealth Bank building in Sydney in 1913, the program from the ceremony is among his papers.¹⁰⁰

The Commonwealth Bank collected various items relating to King O'Malley for their archives, including a portrait painted in 1953 by Dudley Drew, a Melbourne artist. By then O'Malley was an old man of probably 95 (although he claimed to be 99) and Drew remembers him as frail, needing help to get out of bed and to dress in his formal waistcoat and jacket, but clearly enjoying the attention and company.¹⁰¹ The portrait depicts him as an elderly man, formally dressed and wearing a benign expression. O'Malley approved of the painting and predicted a great future for the artist.¹⁰²

Following the establishment of the Reserve Bank of Australia in 1960, some of the Commonwealth Bank archival material was transferred to the Reserve Bank, including various items pertaining to O'Malley: a framed photo of him, his rubber signature stamp and the epergne which had been a wedding present from the Labor Party. The Reserve Bank also expressed interest in acquiring the Drew portrait, but it was retained by the Commonwealth Bank.¹⁰³

Fifty years after Drew first painted King O'Malley he was commissioned by Peter Barclay OAM, who established King O'Malley's Irish Pub in Canberra in 2000, to paint a second portrait from memory. Barclay has a keen and informed interest in the social and political history of the Canberra region, and thus O'Malley's key role in the design and building of Canberra, his membership of the first Australian federal parliament, his eccentricities, and the delicious irony that he was a prohibitionist who kept the city dry for 17 years, made his name an obvious choice for an Irish pub in the heart of the city. Over the years Barclay has collected a range of material relating to King O'Malley, some of which he has lent for this exhibition.



Portrait of King O'Malley by Dudley Drew, 1953, Commonwealth Bank of Australia art collection, Photo: Tom Holland Photography.



Portrait of King O'Malley by Dudley Drew, 2003, collection of Mr Peter Barclay OAM.

Drew's second portrait of O'Malley is, by his own account, a less flattering work than his 1953 painting of the old man. His subject appears more frail yet still upright and vigorous. Although more softly rendered O'Malley has a steely glint in his eye, not present in the 1953 portrait.

O'Malley at home

In May 1910 King O'Malley married Amy Horton in a private Presbyterian ceremony at a house in Albert Park, Melbourne. The wedding was not announced, and the press only discovered the fact in early June. Interestingly the register lists King O'Malley as a widower, his wife having died in 1886, and his birthplace as Stamford Farm, Canada. He stated that he was 51 years of age (which would correspond to his birth date being 1858) and his parents' names were William O'Malley and Ellen King, and his father's occupation as a rancher.¹⁰⁴



Mrs Amy O'Malley, date unknown,
National Library of Australia.

O'Malley met Amy Horton when he began boarding with her family in South Melbourne in 1901. Even in his personal life O'Malley seemed unable to keep out of the courts and his relationship with the Horton family was no exception. In July 1903 O'Malley was charged with the unlawful assault of 73-year-old Charles Horton, Amy's stepfather, who had allegedly confronted him with a hatchet and demanded £100 from him, which O'Malley refused before wrapping him in a quilt and leaving the house.¹⁰⁵ This version of events was supported by Amy and Mrs Horton and the case was dismissed.¹⁰⁶ Horton's testimony revealed his dislike of the living arrangements in the house, whereby Amy occupied a small bedroom next to that occupied by O'Malley. Horton had found Amy's clothes in O'Malley's room and had subsequently observed the pair through a skylight together in the room.¹⁰⁷



Amy Horton was involved in another court case the following year, when she brought an action for breach of promise against a Thomas Keenan, claiming damages of £10,000. O'Malley was not involved in the case but Keenan's lawyers insinuated that O'Malley and Amy had set Keenan up, knowing that he had some money.¹⁰⁸ This doesn't seem consistent with O'Malley's character, however, and by then he was certainly comfortable with his £400 a year parliamentary salary and the proceeds from continuing insurance sales work.

It seems clear from the case, and neither side sought to dispute it, that the breaking off of the engagement between Horton and Keenan occurred immediately after, and probably as a result of, the earlier case in which Amy and O'Malley's conduct had been brought into question. O'Malley managed to distance himself from this particular court case so that it was not even mentioned in Arthur Hoyle's biography; and his other biographer, Dorothy Catts, erroneously believed that the case occurred before O'Malley knew the Hortons.¹⁰⁹

Curiously, O'Malley continued, when he was in Melbourne, to board with the Hortons for another six or seven years, at the house Amy had bought at 58 Bridport Street, Albert Park, probably with the damages awarded to her in the breach of promise case. It was at this house that the couple finally – and quietly – married.

Despite O'Malley's secrecy about the wedding, the Labor party subsequently presented the O'Malleys with a metal epergne inscribed: 'Presented to Mr & Mrs King O'Malley on the occasion of their wedding – May 10th 1910 from the members of the Australian Labor Party'.¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note the spelling of 'Labor' here, which is the form that was only later adopted as the official spelling. The subsequent decision to use the American spelling reflected the influence of the then powerful American labour (labor)



Britannia metal epergne inscribed: 'Presented to Mr & Mrs King O'Malley on the occasion of their wedding – May 10th 1910 from the members of the Australian Labor Party', Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia, Photo: RLDI.



King O'Malley, no date, photographer N. J. Caire. Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia

Red tape is the death of genius, the funeral of system and the graveyard of ability.

King O'Malley,
Barrier Miner,
14 July 1916



Rubber stamp facsimile of King O'Malley's signature, no date, Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia, Photo: RLDI.

movement, and the influence of King O'Malley. The change also made it easier to distinguish references to the ALP from the labour movement in general.¹¹¹

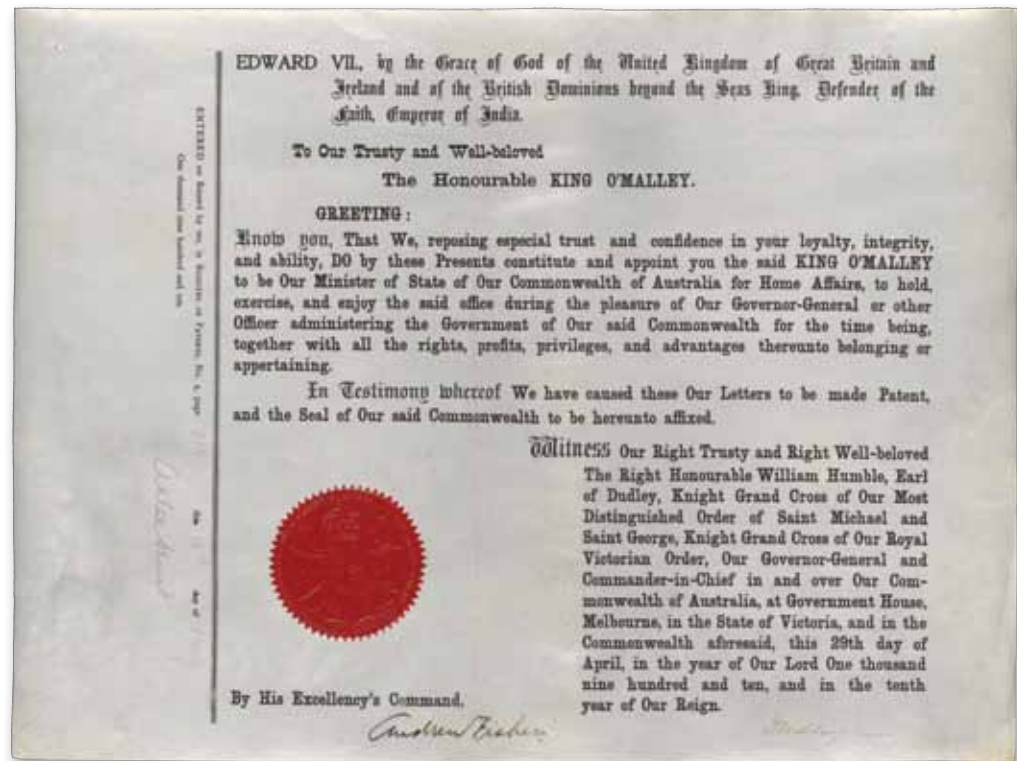
Minister for Home Affairs

Following the election of 1910 O'Malley's involvement in the history of Canberra began in earnest. Into his fourth term in parliament, he was confident of a Cabinet position and had his sites firmly set on the role of Treasurer. Despite opposition to him, particularly from Fisher and Hughes, O'Malley had the support of the radical element of caucus and enough votes. While caucus appointed the Cabinet, the Prime Minister had the power to allocate portfolios, and Fisher kept Treasury for himself and gave O'Malley the Ministry for Home Affairs, one of the least prestigious at that time.¹¹²

The Department of Home Affairs had a staff of around 175 and included the sub-departments of Public Works, Meteorology and the Office of the Statistician as well as responsibility for railway construction. Its Permanent Secretary was David Miller, who had been in charge since 1901 and had worked to nine different Ministers before King O'Malley took the post. According to Charles Daley, officer in the Department and later Secretary of the Federal Capital Advisory Commission, Miller was, 'alert and vigorous, set a high standard of duty and endeavour for himself, and was impatient of slackness' as well as being considered a tough disciplinarian, probably due to his time as a Colonel in the Boer War.¹¹³

O'Malley took to his work as Minister with vigour, but lacked any understanding or respect for the public service and its role or procedures. He clashed with Miller and his officers and at times the relationship was decidedly acrimonious. O'Malley was a stickler for the office 'time





Letters patent presented to King O'Malley upon his appointment as Minister for Home Affairs, 1910, National Library of Australia.



(right)
C.S. Daley, no date, ACT Heritage Library.



(far right)
Portrait of Colonel David Miller, first administrator of Canberra, c.1910, National Library of Australia.



Geodetic theodolite manufactured by Carl Bamberg and tripod used for the geodetic survey of the Federal Capital Territory in 1913, manufactured 1884, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of the ACT Office of the Commissioner of Surveys, Photo: RLDI.

book' and shortly after 9am each morning he would rule a red line across the page, thereby highlighting the names of anyone who arrived later.¹¹⁴The public servants' view was that O'Malley abandoned the usual Ministerial function of dealing with policy to interfere with the day-to-day running of the Department, causing uncertainty and confusion.¹¹⁵ Hoyle argues, however, that when O'Malley took over the Department it had 'a bad reputation for slowness and arrears of work'.¹¹⁶

The *Seat of Government Act* 1908 had finally been enacted by the Australian Government on 14 December 1908, identifying the Yass-Canberra region as the site for the Federal Capital. Surveyor Charles Scrivener was appointed in 1909 to identify a specific site for the 'seat of government' with ample water catchment. Within two months, Scrivener and his team delivered their recommendation of a territory of 1015 square miles (2628 square kilometres) containing the catchments of the Cotter, Molonglo and Queanbeyan rivers; a city site in the Canberra valley; and railway access to Jervis Bay as a federal port.

Scrivener described the advantages of this site thus:

*A city could be located at Canberra that would be visible on approach for many miles; streets with easy gradients would be readily designed, while prominent hills of moderate altitude present suitable sites for the principal public buildings. The capital would probably lie in an amphitheatre of hills with an outlook towards the north and north-west, well-sheltered from both southerly and westerly winds, and in the immediate vicinity of the capital there are large areas of gently undulating country that would be suitable for the evolutions of large bodies of troops.*¹¹⁷

In 1909 New South Wales handed the territory required to the Federal Government through the *Seat of Government Surrender Act* 1909 and the Federal Government accepted





Canberra site panorama, 1910, collection of Geoff Pryor.

it by the *Commonwealth Seat of Government Acceptance Act* 1909. Scrivener and his team then began a contour survey of the site.

Before his appointment as Minister for Home Affairs O'Malley had not been a great advocate of the Yass-Canberra site, describing it as 'a district which at times is so dry that a crow desiring to put in a week-end vacation there would have to carry its water bag'.¹¹⁸ However he had a remarkable change of heart in 1910, as this speech in the House attests:

*... This Territory which we have picked out as the nation's Seat of Government ought, in due time, to be a great city. Honourable members who have been there must have noticed the satisfactory character of the geographical surroundings. When I viewed the site from the hill where the Military College will be placed, it seemed to me that Moses, thousands of years ago, as he gazed down on the Promised Land, saw no more beautiful panoramic view than I did.*¹¹⁹

In passing laws for the new Federal Capital Territory O'Malley had the opportunity to push one of his favourite causes, temperance, and the first ordinance passed in relation to the Territory in 1911 forbade the licensing of any new premises and the transfer of any existing licenses to other premises.¹²⁰ This meant that the only place alcohol could be legally sold in Canberra was at the existing Cricketers' Arms Hotel at Hall, whose owner, Morrie Lazarus, was unable to transfer his license to premises closer to the workers at Duntroon or Acton. The hotel closed in 1918, leaving the Territory without a hotel where alcohol could be purchased until 1928.¹²¹ Workers therefore travelled to Queanbeyan to drink and to buy alcohol which was brought back to the camps where a sly grog trade flourished.

The Canberra Times reported in 1927 that, 'It is patent to every visitor that the ordinance has not discouraged the sale of liquor or diminished its consumption.'¹²² Queanbeyan



Canberra referendum on licensing of hotels, 1928, National Library of Australia.



First consignment of liquor following the lifting of prohibition in the Federal Capital Territory, 1928, National Archives of Australia.



Wooden box containing information about the competition to design Australia's federal capital, 1911, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of the Planning Institute of Australia, Photo: RLDI.

hotels were disobeying their license conditions to cater for the demand from Canberra. 'The farce is two sided. New South Wales liquor laws are not being administered properly around Canberra and the intention of the no license provision for Canberra is being defeated in Canberra itself ... liquor pours into the territory night and day.'¹²³

The matter came to a head when the provisional Parliament House was being completed in 1926 and preparations were underway to move both the public service and parliament to Canberra for the opening on 9 May 1927. The Federal Parliamentarians were keen to establish a liquor bar in Parliament House and the Joint House Committee passed a resolution in favour of this in June 1926.¹²⁴ There was obvious outrage over this proposal, as it would have meant that the ordinary citizens of Canberra were denied the right to buy alcohol but politicians would not. Eventually it was decided to hold a local vote on the subject when the population was more settled and Parliament was open in Canberra.¹²⁵ On 1 September 1928 the vote was taken, resulting in support for the sale of liquor on licensed premises.¹²⁶ King O'Malley's attempt to ensure the federal capital was dry had finally been defeated.

The Federal Capital competition

The idea of a competition to design the Federal Capital city had been around for years, and had been proposed by several prominent architects. King O'Malley announced the international competition on 30 April 1911 but it proved controversial, due to the arrangements for it to be judged by an unnamed engineer, architect and licensed surveyor, with the final adjudicator to be the Minister for Home Affairs, from whose decision there would be no appeal. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) argued vehemently that only qualified architects and planners should judge the entries and when O'Malley

refused to reconsider, RIBA and its aligned institutes in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania boycotted the competition, ensuring that many prominent Australian architects and town-planners did not submit entries.¹²⁷

Hundreds of competition kits were prepared and sent out to diplomatic missions and public works departments throughout the world in May 1911. The long wooden boxes contained a five-part set of instructions, maps of NSW and the Territory, geological information, rainfall and temperature statistics; a report by the Commonwealth Meteorologist on the climate and two reproductions of cycloramas drawn by architect Robert Charles Given Coulter showing 360 degree views of the city site landscape.¹²⁸

Despite the RIBA's boycott, when the competition closed on 29 February 1912, 137 entries had been received from 15 countries. O'Malley's judging panel comprised a fellow of the Victorian Institute of Surveyors, John Montgomery Coane as Chair, James Alexander Smith, president of the Victoria Institute of Engineers, and NSW architect John Kirkpatrick. The panel waded through the entries throughout March and April, creating shortlists and visiting Canberra to consider the plans in the context of the site. Despite long negotiations they were unable to agree. Smith and Kirkpatrick favoured giving first prize of £1750 to entry 29 (the entries were anonymous), while the chair of the panel, Coane, gave first place to entry 10.¹²⁹ O'Malley formally supported the majority decision of the panel.¹³⁰

The competition winners were announced at a ceremony on 23 May 1912 at the Department of Home Affairs where entry 29 was revealed as the work of Walter Burley Griffin, a Chicago architect, with second place going to Eliel Saarinen of Finland and third place to D Alfred Agache of Paris. Coane's choice, entry 10, was revealed as the work of a Sydney group consisting of architect Charles Coulter, engineer Charles Henry Caswell and Water Scott Griffiths, draftsman and map publisher.¹³¹



If an Australian can produce a design; it will be accepted; but we require the best we can get, whether it comes from Swede or Dane, from Quaker, Shaker or Holy Roller.

King O'Malley,
Hansard, 1910, p.2861



The birth of a continent's capital
[i.e. capital], 1912, National Library
of Australia.



Design of the lay out of the Federal Capital City of Australia as projected by the Departmental Board, 25th November 1912, National Library of Australia.

In a move that was criticised by the public, O'Malley then referred the winning designs to a board consisting of David Miller as Chair, John Smith Murdoch, departmental architect, George Oakeshott, Director of Works for NSW and Thomas Hill, Director of Works for Victoria. This group, which became known as the Departmental Board, was to consider how to best use the designs in building the capital city. In November 1912 the board reported to O'Malley that they couldn't recommend any of the winning plans and submitted their own plan, which they argued included all the best features from the winning designs.¹³²

There was widespread criticism of this approach, and the *Town Planning Review* considered it embodied, 'all the errors of Mr Griffin's plan exaggerated, without any of its redeeming qualities ... the "final plan" is the work of an amateur who has yet to learn the elementary principles of laying out a town.'¹³³ In O'Malley's defence, the suggestion to refer the designs to a board was forwarded by David Miller in the first instance, and although O'Malley generally supported the decision of the Departmental Board he did seek Cabinet's approval to adopt the plan, so he can hardly be said to have acted without caution.¹³⁴

Inaugurating the Capital

Work on laying out the city began quickly. Preliminary work began on building a railway from Queanbeyan to Canberra, a brickworks at Yarralumla and a powerhouse at Kingston, as well as earthworks for the Red Hill reservoir and damming of the Cotter River. O'Malley personally drove the first survey peg of the city in a ceremony in Canberra on 20 February 1913, just weeks before the larger ceremony to name the city. Never a fan of O'Malley, Charles Daley wrote in his *Reminiscences of Early Canberra* that 'O'Malley's egotism led him to anticipate the work of the Governor-General and Prime Minister Fisher ... by



The Honourable King O'Malley, Minister of State for Home Affairs, driving the first survey peg at Canberra Hill, in connection with the lay-out of the Federal City, on 20th February, 1913, National Library of Australia.





(top)
Prime Minister Andrew Fisher standing between Lord and Lady Denman and King O'Malley during the playing of the National Anthem, Canberra naming ceremony, 12 March 1913, National Library of Australia



Programme for the Laying of Foundation Stones of the Commencement Column at the Federal Capital City, 12th March 1913, National Archives of Australia.



(left)
Entry ticket to the Laying of the Foundation Stones of the Commencement Column at the Federal Capital City for Mr George Harcourt, 1913, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of Mr Grant Harcourt, Photo: RLDI.

(below)
Trowel used by the Hon. King O'Malley in laying one of the foundation stones of the Commencement Column of the Federal Capital City, 1913, National Library of Australia.





The Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley lays the third stone with Prime Minister Andrew Fisher looking on, Canberra, 12 March 1913, National Library of Australia.

arranging, three weeks earlier, an impressive function ... at which he drove in the first peg of the city survey, on Capital Hill. To temper this arrogance somewhat, he brought along also the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Charles McDonald, to drive a second peg – *arcades ambo* (blackguards both).¹³⁵ It must be said that from the photograph of the ceremony it hardly seems 'impressive'. Spectators gathered around to watch O'Malley drive a peg in a spot previously determined by surveyors to mark the centre line between Capital Hill and Mount Ainslie.¹³⁶

The combined ceremony for the naming of the capital city and the laying of the foundation stones for the commencement column on 12 March 1913 was much more impressive. Invitations on heavy card and entrée tickets backed in red leather were issued, and a program was produced detailing the proceedings. Spectators sat on tiered seating backed by the flags of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Australia, and the ceremony was filmed by Spencer's Pictures. This historic early film shows the dignitaries arriving in cars and horse-drawn vehicles and the Governor-General Lord Denman arriving on horseback. The Field Battery fired the royal salute before the foundation stones of the commencement column were laid with special gold trowels by the Governor-General, Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and King O'Malley.¹³⁷

King O'Malley was obviously in his element at this ceremony, and the film footage shows him confidently taking part in the proceedings looking very different, in his brown check suit, from Andrew Fisher in his dark suit and coat. O'Malley wore his gold pocket-watch at this ceremony, and he had it engraved with the following text:

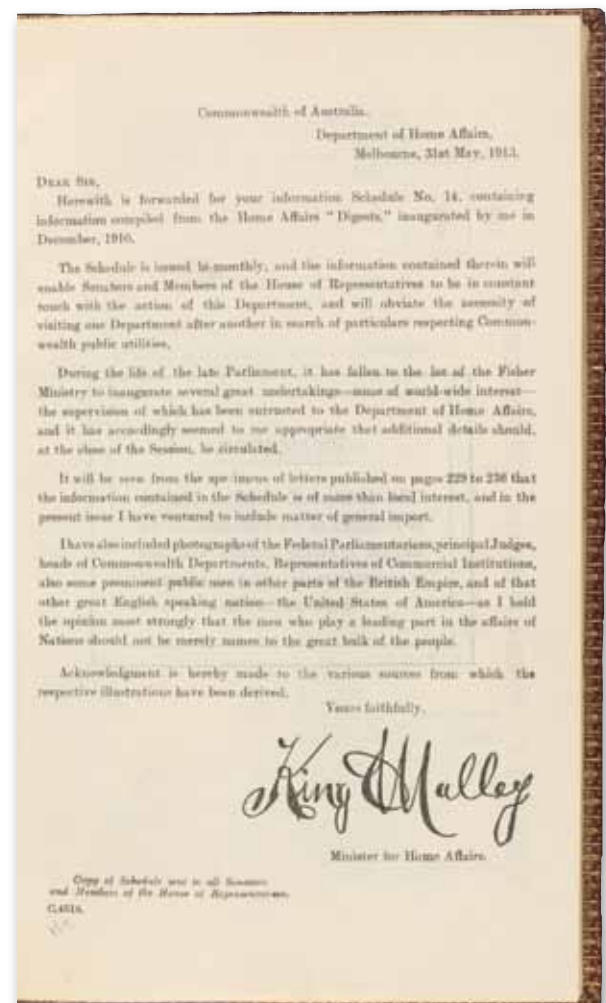
This watch the property of the Hon King O'Malley, Minister of State for Home Affairs, was used as the official timepiece on the opening of Canberra as the capital [sic] of the Commonwealth of Australia by Lady Denman 12th March 1913.

Omega gold pocket-watch worn by King O'Malley at the naming of Canberra, 12th March 1913, Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia, Photo: RLDI.

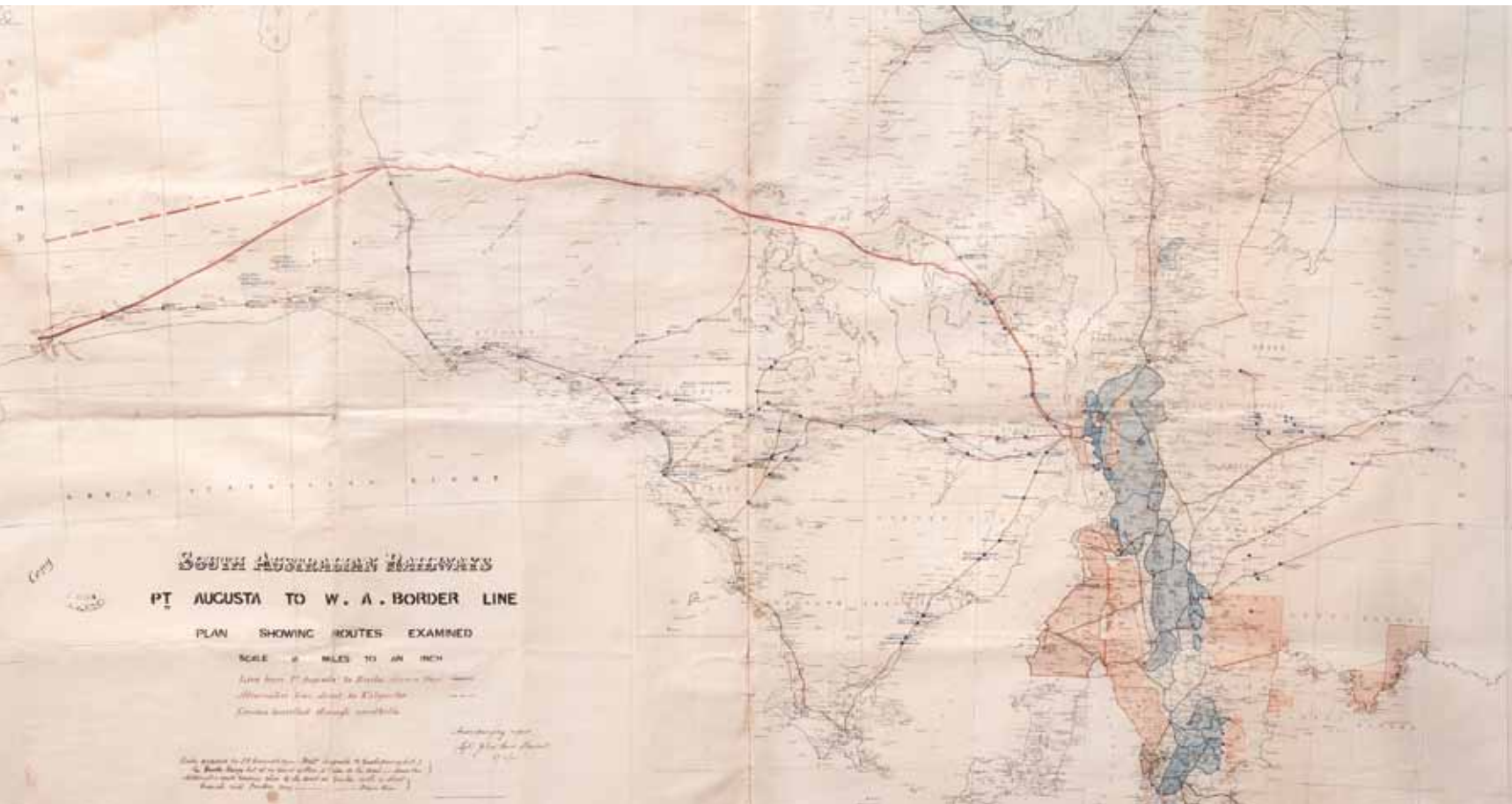


There was widespread relief when the name of the federal capital was revealed as Canberra, seen as a safe choice compared with many of the suggestions that flowed in from all over the country. Austral City, Parkes and Pacifica were suggested, as were combinations of Australian placenames such as Qualesoria and Sydmelperbrisho, as well as the silly ones such as Swindleville and Gonebroke.¹³⁸ O'Malley backed two names, one of which was Myola, supposedly an Aboriginal word. This was also a favourite of some other members of parliament, until it was pointed out that it was almost an anagram of O'Malley. O'Malley's other favourite, and the one he more commonly championed, was Shakespeare. In his speech at the naming ceremony he commented on the new capital's name, saying that, 'I regret it was not my selection Shakespeare, the world's greatest Englishman.'¹³⁹

O'Malley's first period as the Minister for Home Affairs ended with the federal election on 31 May 1913 when Fisher's government was defeated by one seat. The new government would only last a year, ousted in a double dissolution in 1914, but even then O'Malley was not elected to the ministry and had to wait until 1915 to be reappointed as Minister for Home Affairs. During his terms as Minister, one of O'Malley's practices was to compile a 'digest', which reported the work of the Department and was designed to keep Members and the public informed of the progress of Commonwealth works. It was perhaps O'Malley's greatest work of self-promotion. The first digest was produced in December 1910 and the series continued until the end of O'Malley's term. A set of fifteen books was established in the Department with columns on each page for the recording of events for the respective works. From this, a fortnightly schedule of progress on the Federal works was compiled, published quarterly and sent to world leaders and public figures.¹⁴⁰



Bound Digest 'Department of Home Affairs Schedule No. 4', 1913, National Library of Australia



South Australian Railways. Pt Augusta to WA Border Line. Plan showing routes examined, 1907 copy of 1901 map, collection of Peter Barclay OAM, Photo: RLDI.

Today we begin the new stretch of railway line welding, with ribs of steel and bands of iron, the eastern to the western shores of this continent.

King O'Malley,
Trans-Australian railway souvenir, 1912



Turning of the first sod for the Trans-Australian railway at Port Augusta, 1912, State Library of South Australia.

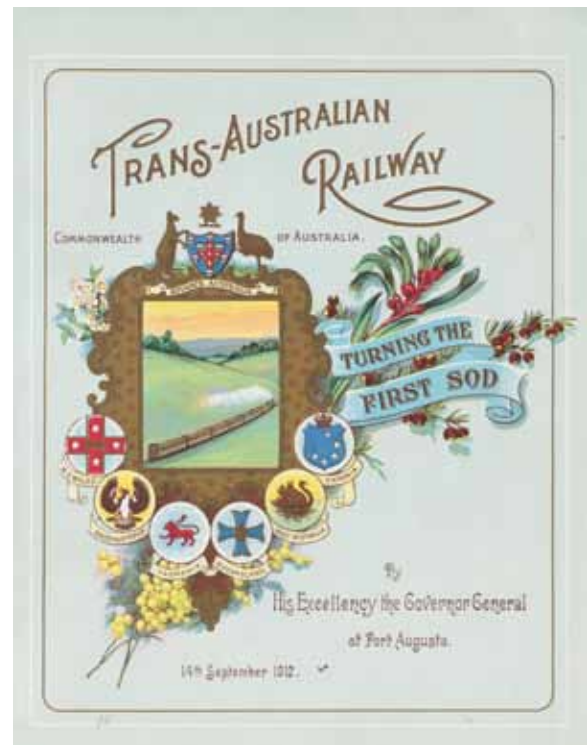


One such compilation is Schedule 4, included in King O'Malley's papers in the National Library of Australia. Hundreds of pages long, leather-bound and inscribed, it includes statistics on the public works of the Department, letters from public figures thanking O'Malley for sending them previous digests, photographs of prominent public men in the United Kingdom and the United States and transcripts of the speeches made at the naming of Canberra.¹⁴¹ O'Malley defended the publication of these schedules by claiming that they were 'a great and cheap advertisement for Australia'.¹⁴² The Digest went the way of O'Malley when he lost his position as Minister in 1913, but he reinstated it when he returned to the Department in 1915.

The Trans-Australian Railway

The other main work of O'Malley's first period as Minister for Home Affairs was the beginning of construction of the Trans-Australian railway, between Port Augusta in South Australia and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. The lack of a rail link between the east and west coasts of Australia had been a burning issue during Federation, and was a main factor in finally convincing Western Australia to join the Commonwealth. A trans-continental railway would accelerate the mail times to Western Australia as well as facilitate the movement of people and goods between the states, which previously had to be transported by sea.

The *Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta Railway Act* of 1911, introduced to the House of Representatives by O'Malley as Minister, appropriated the required revenue to enable the line to be built. The first sod was turned by Lord Denman at Port Augusta on 14 September 1912 with a shovel and wheelbarrow that are now in the collection of the National Museum of Australia.¹⁴³ The Governor-General was presented with a small gold replica shovel as a memento of the occasion.¹⁴⁴



Trans-Australian Railway: turning the first sod by His Excellency Lord Denman, the governor-general, September 14, 1912: souvenir, National Library of Australia.

The Minister for Home Affairs ordered that a special souvenir publication be issued to commemorate this event, with a colour cover, 64 pages and fold-out maps of the railway, and in true O'Malley style it includes the legislative history of the railway, photographs of the event and reprints all the speeches made at the luncheon following the ceremony, as well as photographs of the main protagonists – including of course O'Malley.

He would later be criticised for the way he had managed the railway project and in 1913 a Royal Commission reported on the affair. Unwisely O'Malley had chosen the two supervisory engineers himself, rather than leaving the decision to the consulting engineer, H Deane. One of these appointees was Henry Chinn whom O'Malley had selected without appropriate qualifications or references but because he was a Labor Party activist in Western Australia.¹⁴⁵ O'Malley's defence was pure ego:

*I do not believe in references ... If a list of men is placed before me I will pick out one and say 'This is the man for me'...*¹⁴⁶

The Royal Commission technically exonerated Chinn, but the matter was not clearly settled and certainly had a negative effect on O'Malley's reputation. It was further tarnished in 1915 during a controversy over the reappointment of a returned soldier to work on the line who had previously made serious complaints over the administration of the work, which had been found to be without basis. O'Malley took the hard line when the workers went on strike over the sacking of the supervising engineer, and was only saved when the Member for Kalgoorlie, Hugh Mahon intervened and the engineer was reinstated and the returned soldier transferred.¹⁴⁷ O'Malley's handling of the case had not been subtle or wise, and he came under implicit criticism in the later report into the affair, in which Henry Chinn and the

returned soldier were both found to be unreliable, the latter also being found a perjurer and army deserter.¹⁴⁸

O'Malley's methods of employment were attacked throughout his time as Minister. In line with Labor Party policy, he gave preference to unionists in public works and he also insisted on using day labour in building works, rather than using a contractor. He insisted that it was cheaper and more efficient in the long run, but this was debatable and the Department complained because they had to carry out many of the minor functions that a contractor would normally look after, and supervise the work much more closely.¹⁴⁹

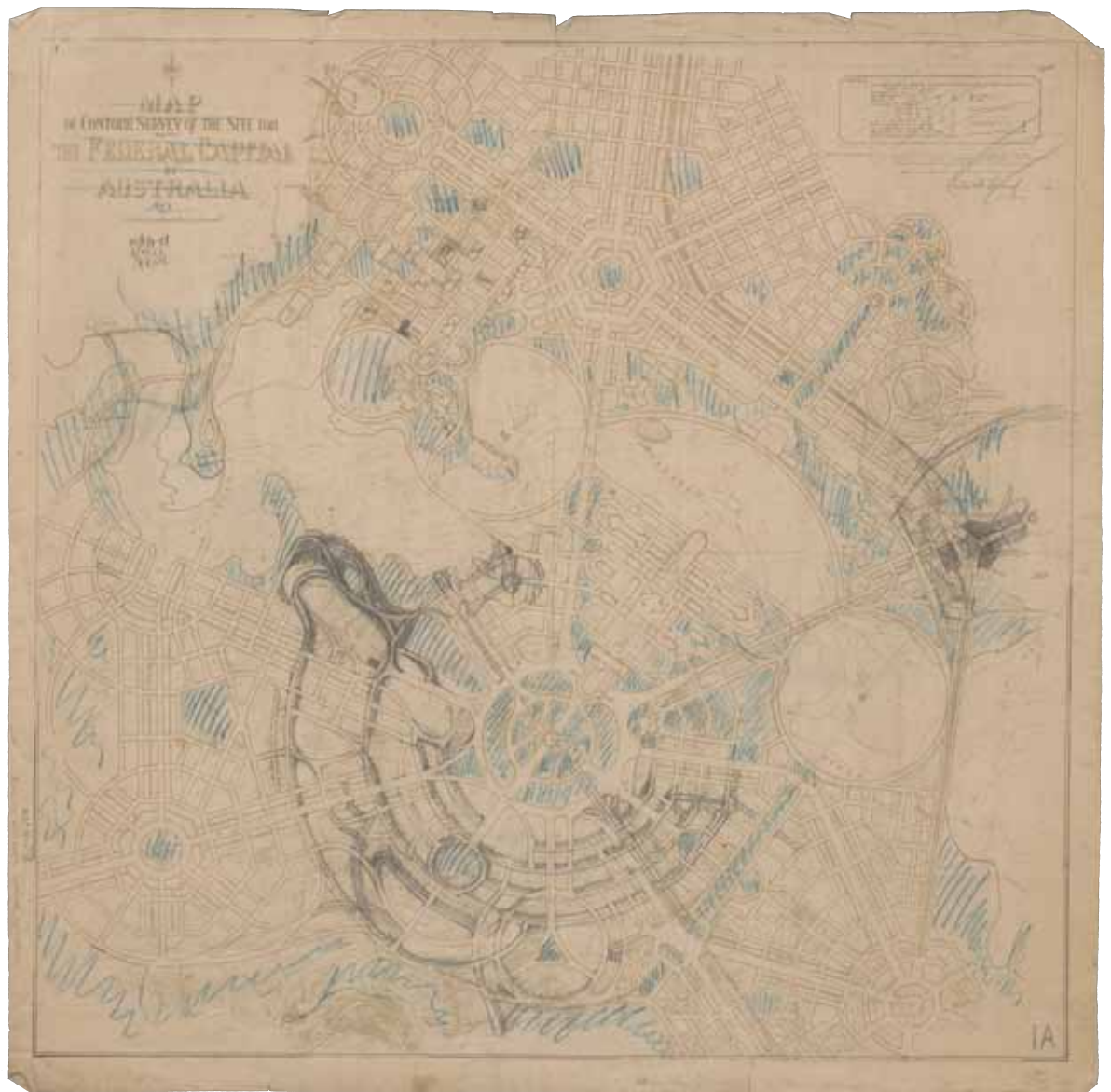
O'Malley back in the ring

O'Malley's second term as Minister for Home Affairs was brief – from 1915 to the end of 1916 – and stormy. He severely criticised his predecessor William Archibald over the construction of Canberra, but on his return progress continued only slowly. The scandals over the transcontinental railway had damaged his reputation and he encountered significant hostility from the public service, which once again objected to his management methods.

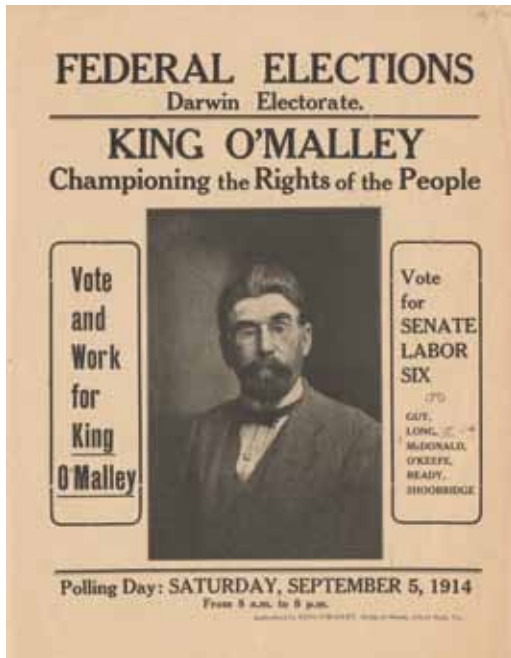
During the period between O'Malley's two terms as Minister for Home Affairs, the Government had brought Walter Burley Griffin with his wife and partner Marion Mahony Griffin to Australia to study the site of Canberra. Griffin disagreed with O'Malley's departmental board, which was favoured by the previous Minister Archibald, who chose to treat the architect as a consultant.

Griffin was appointed Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction later that year, and after a visit to O'Malley in Melbourne the two men became quite good friends, although Marion did not get on well with





Map of parkways and roadways
planned for the city of Canberra,
Federal Capital Territory, 1916,
National Library of Australia.



Federal Election campaigning pamphlet for election September 5, 1914, National Library of Australia.

O'Malley. When O'Malley returned to the Ministership he lost no time in reinstating Griffin to his previous position and continued to support him against the Department and the Chief Architect John Smith Murdoch. A Royal Commission on the Federal Capital Territory in 1917 confirmed Griffin's position, but O'Malley wasn't around by then to support his work.¹⁵⁰

O'Malley on the ropes

In the double dissolution election of 1914 O'Malley had been easily returned in a campaign that was overshadowed by the recent declaration of war by the British Empire. O'Malley had always been openly anti-militarist, but it had never been much of an issue in the public mind. In the climate of patriotic fervour at the start of the Great War, O'Malley kept relatively quiet about the issue. He only commented that he had not foreseen the need for Australia to use their defence forces so soon, and expressed dismay at the mistake the German Emperor was making in opposing the British Empire.¹⁵¹

However, when the conscription issue reared its head in 1916, O'Malley's stance began to cause him problems. Conscription was a hugely divisive issue in the Australian community and among politicians. Billy Hughes was determined that the war be won at any cost and that Australia must introduce conscription, but the Labor Party was deeply divided on the issue. Many state labour organisations and unions declared themselves opposed to conscription, but Hughes had pressed for a referendum against their wishes. O'Malley remained largely silent during the conscription referendum, which was narrowly won by the anti-conscriptionists, although his own state voted for conscription.



Campaigning pamphlet for Federal Elections 1919, National Library of Australia.



O'Malley had been opposing Hughes for being too controlling and as Minister tended to act contrary to Hughes' instructions. Hughes asked O'Malley to resign as Minister towards the end of 1916, but O'Malley argued that caucus should determine whether he should resign or not, rather than the Prime Minister. When caucus assembled on 14 November, a movement of no confidence in Hughes was presented by a deeply divided party. Hughes chose to leave the debate with his followers, rather than suffer a defeat, and he formed a new government with the support of pro-conscription Labor and Liberal MPs, who later joined ranks as the Nationalist Party.

Labor was defeated in the federal election of 1917, and O'Malley lost his seat to Charles Howroyd of the new Nationalist Party. Tasmania had returned the strongest pro-conscription vote the previous year, and it was largely on this issue that O'Malley lost the election. However, he was also criticised for not living in his electorate and only visiting his constituency when it suited his purposes.¹⁵² The West Coast still supported him, but at Ulverstone, on the North-West coast, O'Malley required a police escort to protect him from a hostile crowd.¹⁵³ The largest criticism of him from his previous supporters seems to be that he 'sat on the fence' during the conscription referendum. He had failed to declare his position openly at this time, and it was only after the issue was decided that he publicly announced his anti-conscription attitudes. In fact, Hughes claimed that O'Malley had told him that he would support the conscriptionists, but was then conveniently sick during the referendum and hid from the public spotlight.¹⁵⁴

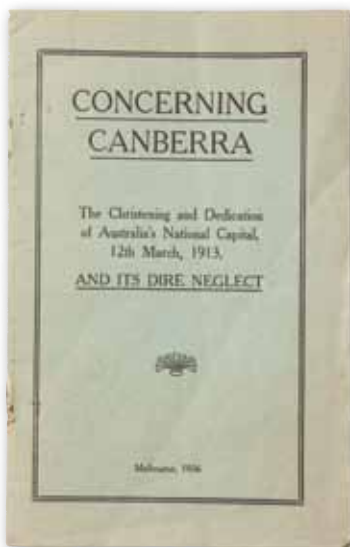
Charles Howroyd made history by dying five days after the election. Instead of re-contesting the seat, O'Malley decided to travel to the United States for the first time since he left in 1888. He did not take his wife with him, possibly because she might have discovered more about his past than he had told her. O'Malley went first to Seattle,

where it appears he still owned property, then to Chicago, New York, Washington and Kansas. He spent three months in the United States and Canada, apparently visiting his brother Walter in the small town of Kelly, Kansas, just 40 miles from Valley Falls.¹⁵⁵ He was dissatisfied with America in general, and reported to Amy that everyone he knew in Chicago had died.

O'Malley was still not quite done with politics, and managed to gain pre-selection for the seat of Denison in Tasmania for the election of 1919. Although the war had ended and conscription was no longer a major issue, he failed to gain much support in Tasmania and was easily – but not embarrassingly – defeated by Laird Smith, the Nationalist candidate.¹⁵⁶ His final election campaign was in 1922, when he stood as an independent Labor candidate for the seat of Bass, after failing to win the Labor Party pre-selection. He polled well below the other candidates, and finally admitted that his life in politics was over.

The legend of King O'Malley

The next thirty-two years of King O'Malley's life were spent in ensuring that his legend would live on. He assiduously followed the fortunes of the Commonwealth Bank and publicly advocated reform to make it into the bank he had originally proposed. He published his pamphlets on the bank and the establishment of Canberra, placing himself firmly at the centre of history¹⁵⁷ and trumpeting his message through the newspapers and radio. He was supported in his claim to be 'the father of the Commonwealth Bank' by a published book on the bank (originally a doctoral thesis), written by Leslie Jauncey: *Australia's Government Bank*, which was dedicated to O'Malley.¹⁵⁸ The two became life-long friends. O'Malley bought many copies of Jauncey's book and gave and sent them to all his friends, acquaintances, visitors and correspondents.



Concerning Canberra, 1936, National Library of Australia.



King O'Malley on his 99th birthday, National Archives of Australia.

In 1937 O'Malley re-read the speech he delivered at the naming of Canberra and it was recorded by the ABC in Melbourne.¹⁵⁹ This recording gives us some insight into O'Malley's mode of delivery, but it is surely a pale version of the street orator in full flight thirty years earlier. O'Malley was always described as an entertaining speaker – even by his opponents – but the passage of time and his reading a speech in a studio renders this recording far less engaging than it must have been to hear O'Malley in person in his heyday. His American accent is still evident, however, and his heavy emphasis on each syllable and each word corroborates many reports on his speaking style. In 1951 O'Malley was Guest of Honour on the ABC radio program of the same name, which provided another opportunity for him to spread his legend.

King O'Malley died at home in Albert Park, Melbourne on 20 December 1953. His age was reported as 99, in line with the stories he had told towards the end of his life.¹⁶⁰ He was awarded a state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral and his cremated remains were placed at Springvale Botanical Cemetery. His widow said 'My old friend is gone. He was a grand old fellow.'¹⁶¹

The King and Amy O'Malley Trust

In his final years of life, O'Malley spent a great deal of time making his will. He wished to create a trust into which all his and his wife's property would go, to fund scholarships for girls to learn housekeeping, or 'domestic economy'. Typical of O'Malley's eccentric beliefs regarding the relationship between bodily and societal health, his rationale was that 'indigestion in man or woman is not only the cause of ill-health in the individual but through that individual has a power of injury which may extend even to Nations ... Consequently ... the neglected art of cooking is essential to the benefit of mankind ...'¹⁶²



The resulting King & Amy O'Malley Trust, which continues to operate, awards annual undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships to students applying for or enrolled in tertiary Home Economics or equivalent programs such as Family and Consumer Studies, but not for commercial hospitality studies.¹⁶³ O'Malley convinced Amy to bequeath her estate to the Trust, allegedly suggesting that if she refused he would call it the 'King and Rosy O'Malley Trust' instead, named for his first wife.¹⁶⁴

Following his death Amy O'Malley contested her husband's will, which had provided her with a £500 tax-free yearly income and £8 a week to offset the rise in the cost of living. O'Malley's estate was then valued at just under £70,000.¹⁶⁵ She claimed that her own money had been placed into her husband's bank account, including rents from the properties he had settled on her upon their marriage, but she was unsuccessful in her claim.¹⁶⁶ Although 15 years younger, Amy survived her husband by only three years, and died in February 1956; her ashes were placed in an urn beside his.

Conclusion

The impression gained from even the briefest perusal of the material culture around King O'Malley is that he was a thoroughly egotistical man primarily interested in self-promotion and the longevity of his legend after his death. He appears to have believed in the adage that any publicity is good publicity. His scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings cover everything in his public life including negative and highly critical articles as well as more admiring ones. As he outlived all his contemporaries in the first federal parliament O'Malley had the unrivalled opportunity to convince several generations of Australians of his importance as an historical public figure.

O'Malley's remarkable life reveals a complex man who was a tireless worker and a genuine democrat with a passion for social welfare and state protection of its citizens. He was also a larger-than-life stump politician, a prankster who occasionally resorted to chicanery in business and politics, and who was not above securing votes by pandering to sections of the community whose views he did not necessarily endorse.

O'Malley seems to have lived his life as one long private joke, whereby he got the better of everyone and came out on top despite the obstacles encountered along the way. His passions, his eccentricities, his shortcomings and his energetic contribution to the development of the national capital mean that the history of Canberra, and Australia, is the richer for King O'Malley's part in it.

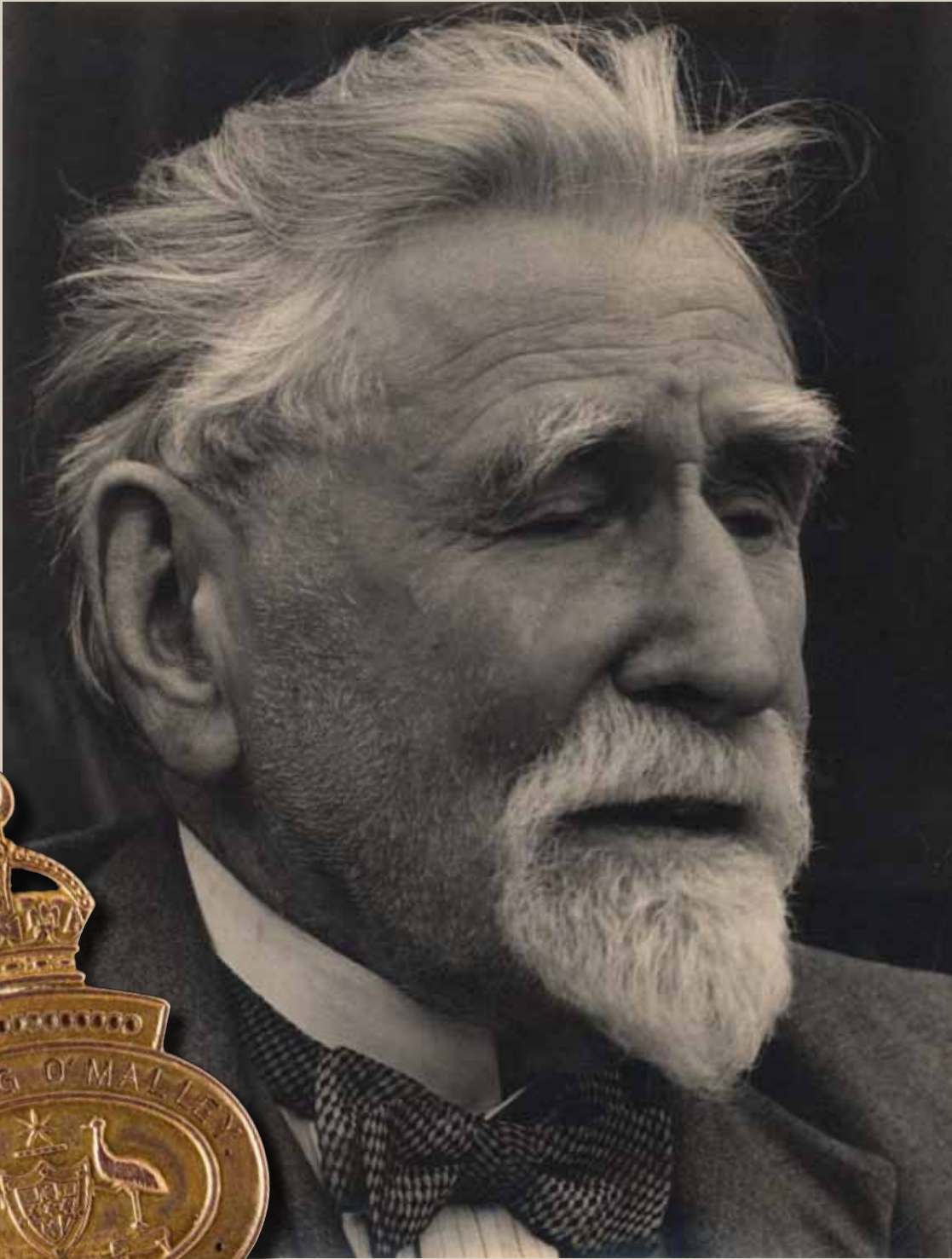
Rowan Henderson
Curator, Social History
Canberra Museum and Gallery

Endnotes

- ¹ Cited variously in: *The Advertiser*, 30 April 1896, 6; *The Advertiser*, 31 March 1893, 6; *The Mercury*, 16 December 1889, 3; *Hawaiian Gazette*, 17 July 1888, 6; *Daily Inter Ocean*, 23 April 1887, page unknown
- ² *Morning Oregonian*, 2 February 1887, 4; *Daily Inter Ocean*, *ibid.*
- ³ MS460: Box 7, Folder 67, item 4935, National Library of Australia
- ⁴ *South Australian Register*, 20 July 1893, 6; and *The Advertiser*, 30 April 1896, 6
- ⁵ *The Advertiser*, 20 May 1896, 6; Letter to E.W. Turner, *Divisional Returning Officer, Division of Darwin, Tasmania dated 18 January 1914*, MS 460; MS460: item 5001; MS460: item 5111; MS460: item 9108 *Statutory Declaration*, National Library of Australia
- ⁶ See examples MS460: Diaries for 1919 and 1947, National Library of Australia
- ⁷ *The Canberra Times*, 29 October 1952, 1
- ⁸ *The Advertiser*, 20 May 1896, 6
- ⁹ *Daily Inter Ocean*, 23 April 1887, page unknown
- ¹⁰ *Daily Alta California*, Volume 42, Number 13981, 11 December 1887; *The Insurance Times*, October 1887, 495; *The Insurance Times*, January 1888, 27
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- ²⁰ *Reports of the United States Commissioners to the Centennial International Exhibition at Melbourne, 1888* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1889), 68
- ²¹ *The Argus*, 3 September 1888, 4; *The Argus*, 8 September 1888, 4
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- ²³ *The Argus*, 7 September 1889, 7
- ²⁴ *The Mercury*, 16 December 1889, 3
- ²⁵ *The Mercury*, 16 January 1890, 2; *The Mercury*, 25 March 1890, 3; *The Mercury*, 21 June 1890, 3; *The Mercury*, 24 April 1890, 4
- ²⁶ *The Mercury*, 14 March 1891, 2
- ²⁷ *South Australian Register*, 11 February 1892, 5
- ²⁸ *The Advertiser*, 27 March 1893, 2
- ²⁹ *The Advertiser*, Friday 31 March 1893, 6
- ³⁰ *The Advertiser*, Monday 27 March 1893, 2
- ³¹ Bruce Felmingham, "Banking and Finance" in ed. Alison Alexander, *The companion to Tasmanian history*, (Hobart: Centre for Historical Studies, 2006)
- ³² SA65-88, "Secretary's Department – Archives – Biographies and Personal Papers – Personalities – O'Malley, King", Reserve Bank of Australia Archives
- ³³ Quoted in A.R. Hoyle, *King O'Malley 'The American Bounder'*, (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981), 24
- ³⁴ Letter from V.D. Mursell to author June 1956 in Catts, *King O'Malley*, 80
- ³⁵ Catts, *King O'Malley*, 47
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- ⁴⁰ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 44
- ⁴¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, South Australia House of Assembly (1896), 297
- ⁴² Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 46
- ⁴³ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 47–48
- ⁴⁴ Quoted in Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 45
- ⁴⁵ Reported in the *South Australian Register*, 3 December 1896, 10
- ⁴⁶ *The Advertiser*, 14 November 1896, 6; *The Country*, 7 November 1896, page unknown
- ⁴⁷ *The Advertiser*, 5 December 1896, 9
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- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Evening Capital Journal*, April 23, 1888
- ⁵³ Catts, *King O'Malley*, 61–62
- ⁵⁴ King O'Malley, *King O'Malley's second message to the sovereign electors of Encounter Bay*, (Adelaide: J.L. Bonython & Co., 1899), 9
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.14-18
- ⁵⁶ *Burra Record*, May 17 1899, 1
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- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
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- ⁶⁴ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 70
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- ⁶⁷ *The Advertiser*, 5 April 1901, 5
- ⁶⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 April 1901, 7
- ⁶⁹ Tom Roberts, *The opening of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia by HRH the Duke of Cornwall and York (later H.M. King George V)*, May 9 1901, 1903, oil on canvas, 304.5 x 509.2 cm, on permanent loan to the Parliament of Australia from the British Royal Collection
- ⁷⁰ Charles Nuttall, *The opening of the first Federal Parliament of Australia by HRH the Duke of Cornwall and York, 1901–02*, oil on canvas, 243.8 x 365.8 cm, Museum Victoria; Museum Victoria: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/reb/history/federation/charles-nuttalls-painting/> accessed 8 June 2011
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- ⁷³ Roberts papers, Mitchell Library MSA2481/3, cited in Humphrey McQueen, *Constitution–1901 Election*, accessed 8 June 2011, http://home.alphalink.com.au/~loge27/const/constit_1901.htm
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- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 42
- ⁷⁸ Catts, *King O'Malley*, 14; *South Australian Register*, 2 August 1899, 4; *The Advertiser*, 28 July 1898, 6
- ⁷⁹ Catts, *King O'Malley*, 14–20
- ⁸⁰ *The Melbourne Herald*, 12 December 1912, page unknown
- ⁸¹ MS 460, item 9730 and MS 460, item 9729, National Library of Australia
- ⁸² *The West Australian*, 3 July 1901, 3
- ⁸³ Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Hansard, *Question – Federal Capital Site*, Friday 19 July 1901
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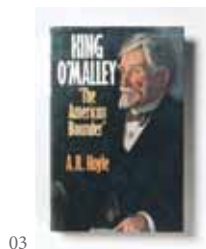
- (overleaf)
King O'Malley, no date, Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia.
- Commonwealth Railways Gold Life Pass issued to the Hon. King O'Malley, c.1912, National Museum of Australia, Australian National Railways Commission collection, Photo: Jason McCarthy.
- Maquette of King O'Malley by Caitlin Perriman, 2000, collection of Peter Barclay, OAM, Photo: RLDI.
- Replica of King O'Malley's opal and diamond pin, 2003, collection of Peter Barclay, OAM, Photo: RLDI.
- ⁸⁷ Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Hansard, *Immigration Restriction Bill, Second Reading*, 6 September 1901
- ⁸⁸ *The Argus*, 6 July 1904, 7
- ⁸⁹ *The Argus*, 14 July 1904, 5
- ⁹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Hansard, *Budget in Committee of Supply*, 8 August 1906
- ⁹¹ Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act – Section 51
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- ⁹⁴ King O'Malley, *Parliamentary Paper: A scheme for adjusting the financial relations of the Commonwealth and the States, by the Honourable member for Darwin*, 15 April 1908
- ⁹⁵ Reserve Bank of Australia, *A brief history*, accessed 15 June 2011, <http://www.rba.gov.au/about-rba/history/index.html>
- ⁹⁶ For example: R. Gollan, *The Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Origins and Early History*; K.E. Beazley, "The Labor Party and the Origin of the Commonwealth Bank", *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 9 (1963), 27–38
- ⁹⁷ Jauncey, *Australia's Government Bank*, 46; David Merrett "Banks and banking" in *Oxford Companion to Australian History*, ed. Graeme Davison et. al. (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 57–59
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- ¹⁰⁴ Marriages register no. 277, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria
- ¹⁰⁵ *The Advertiser*, 30 July 1903, 5
- ¹⁰⁶ *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 4 August 1903, 11
- ¹⁰⁷ *The Argus*, 30 July 1903, 7
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Argus*, 26 February 1904, 6
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- ¹¹⁰ MU-000236, Reserve Bank of Australia collection
- ¹¹¹ Australian Labor Party, *Labor History*, accessed 14 June 2011, <http://www.alp.org.au/australian-labor/labor-history/>
- ¹¹² Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 111
- ¹¹³ Charles Daley, *As I Recall: Reminiscences of early Canberra*, (Canberra: Mulini Press, 1994), 33
- ¹¹⁴ Daley, *As I Recall*, 24
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23
- ¹¹⁶ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 112
- ¹¹⁷ Charles Scrivener, 'Federal capital site, papers and plans etc', *Parliamentary Papers*, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, no. 66, 25 February 1909
- ¹¹⁸ Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Hansard, *Seat of Government Acceptance Bill*, 25 November 1909
- ¹¹⁹ Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Hansard, *Seat of Government (Administration) Bill, Second Reading*, 9 November 1910
- ¹²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Hansard, *Seat of Government: Ordinance of 1911. No. 1. – Provisional Government*, 1911
- ¹²¹ Jim Gibbney, *Canberra 1913 – 1953*, (Canberra: AGPS Press, 1988), 17
- ¹²² *The Canberra Times*, 13 January 1927, 8
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 1926, 11
- ¹²⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 30 July 1926, 7
- ¹²⁶ Gibbney, *Canberra 1913–1953*, 148
- ¹²⁷ National Archives of Australia, National Capital Authority and the National Library of Australia, *An Ideal City?*, accessed 27 June 2011, <http://www.idealcity.org.au/competition-1.html>
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁹ Gibbney, *Canberra 1913 – 1953*, 27
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- ¹³⁴ Gibbney, *Canberra 1913 – 1953*, 31–32
- ¹³⁵ Charles Daley, *As I recall*, 17
- ¹³⁶ Lyall Gillespie, *Canberra 1820 – 1913*, (Canberra: AGPS Press, 1991), 288
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- ¹⁴³ Shovel, 1998.0028.0018; Wheelbarrow 1998.0028.0017, National Museum of Australia
- ¹⁴⁴ Department of Home Affairs, *Trans-Australian railway: turning the first sod by His Excellency Lord Denman, the Governor-General, September 14, 1912: souvenir, issued by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, King O'Malley*, (Melbourne: the Minister, 1912)
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- ¹⁴⁷ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 160–161
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- ¹⁴⁹ Daley, *As I recall*, 23
- ¹⁵⁰ Hoyle, *King O'Malley*, 155
- ¹⁵¹ *The Examiner*, Launceston, 27 August 1914
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- ¹⁵⁷ King O'Malley, *Big battle by the Hon. King O'Malley, founder of Commonwealth Bank of Australia, to save it from destruction by the political tools of capitalism*, (Melbourne: Maxim Press, 1939); King O'Malley, *Commonwealth Bank: the facts of its creation*, (Melbourne: J. J. Miller Ptg. Co., 1920?); King O'Malley, *Concerning Canberra: the christening and dedication of Australia's national capital, 12th March, 1913, and its dire neglect*, (Melbourne: Excell Press, 1936)
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- ¹⁶³ The King and Amy O'Malley Trust, accessed 6 July 2011, <http://www.omalleytrust.com.au/>
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King Malley





List of Works

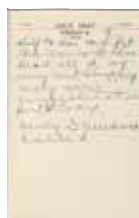


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The List of Works is arranged according to the sections within the exhibition.
Measurements shown are height by width by depth.

Introduction

01. Aileen DENT (1890–1979)

Portrait of The Hon. King O'Malley, founder Comth [sic] Bank
c.1938
oil on canvas; 92.5 x 71.6 cm
National Library of Australia

02. Dorothy CATTS (1907–1960)

King O'Malley: Man and Statesman
1957
Sydney [N.S.W.]: Publicity Press
267p, [16] leaves of plates: ill., facs., ports.; 22 cm
Private collection

03. A.R. HOYLE (1922–)

King O'Malley: The American Bounder
1981
South Melbourne: Macmillan
186p: ill., ports.; 22 cm
Private collection

04. Larry NOYE

O'Malley, MHR
2009
Hartwell, Vic.: Sid Harta Publishers
423p: ill., ports.; 22 cm
Private collection

King O'Malley of America

05. Bank book, King O'Malley in account with the banking house of Hamilton, Job & Co., Corvallis, Oregon

1887
MS460: folder 160, item 9009
National Library of Australia

06. King O'Malley's diary

1919
MS460: box 13
National Library of Australia

07. King O'Malley's diary

1947
MS460: box 13, item 7405
National Library of Australia

08. Letter from D.C. Kennedy to King O'Malley (facsimile)

1888
MS460: item 4935
National Library of Australia

09. Letter re: suspension of King O'Malley, Bishop and Prelate of above church

1917
MS 460, Folder 164, item 9105
National Library of Australia

Early Australian days

10. King O'MALLEY (1858–1953)

King O'Malley's message to the sovereign electors of Encounter Bay
1896
Adelaide: Sands & McDougall
30p; 21 cm
State Library of South Australia

11. King O'MALLEY (1858–1953)

King O'Malley's second message to the sovereign electors of Encounter Bay
1899
Adelaide: J.L. Bonython & Co.
34p; 24 cm
State Library of South Australia

12. Newspaper cuttings book

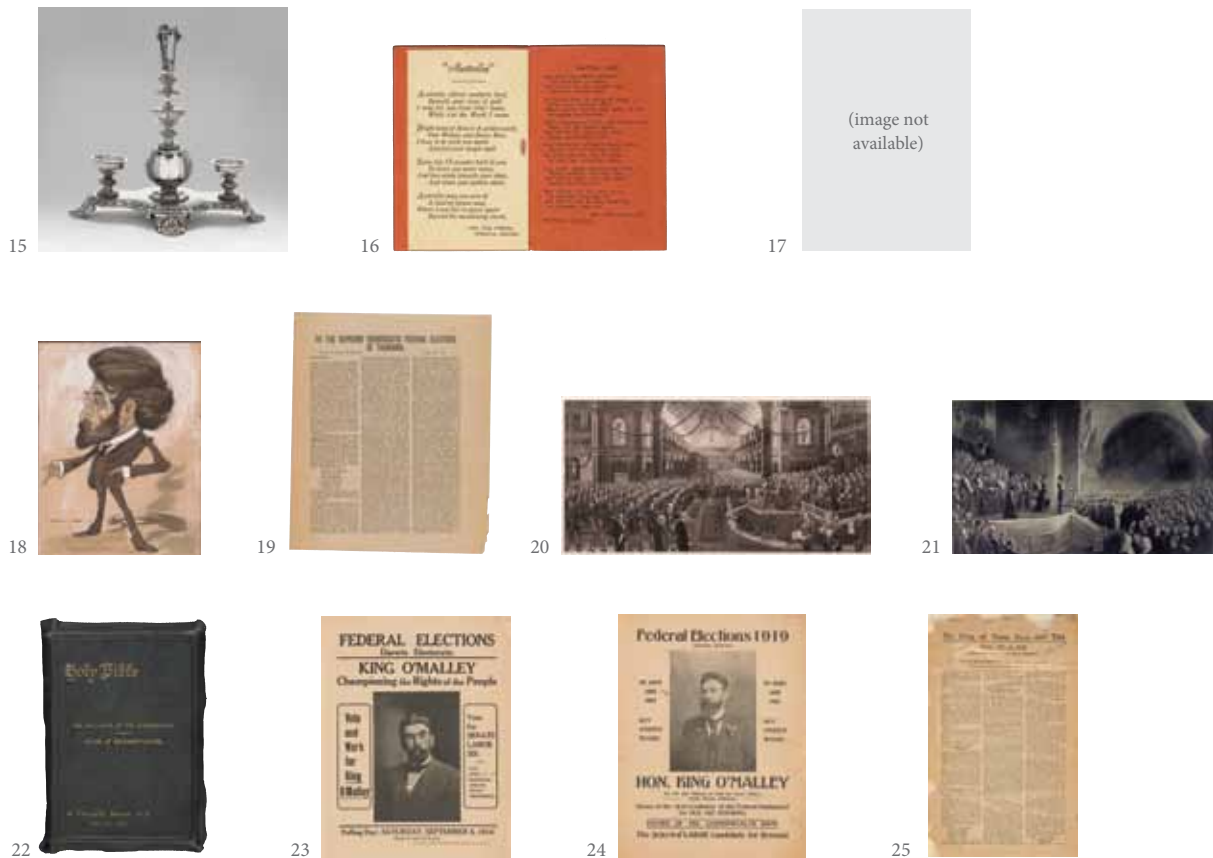
1888–1935
MS460: item 9730
National Library of Australia

13. Newspaper cuttings book

c.1887–1894
MS460: item 9729
National Library of Australia

14. Replica of King O'Malley's opal and diamond pin

2003
Opal, diamonds and silver, 2 x 1 x 0.3 cm
Collection of Peter Barclay, OAM



Mrs Amy O'Malley

15. Britannia metal epergne (trumpet and glass bowls missing) inscribed: *Presented to Mr and Mrs King O'Malley on the occasion of their wedding - May 10th 1910 from the members of the Australian Labor Party*

c.1910
Philip Ashberry & Sons, Sheffield
Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia

16. Amy O'MALLEY (c.1875-1956)
Poems by Mrs O'Malley, Austral land and Australia in an envelope signed by the author
no date
Melbourne: [s.n.]
[6]p; 13 cm
State Library of Victoria

17. Foreword by King O'Malley dedicated to Mrs Amy O'Malley (document)
no date
MS460: folder 136, items 7482 - 7484
National Library of Australia

The Honourable King O'Malley, MHR

18. William Henry (Will) DYSON (1880-1938)
Portrait King O'Malley
no date
watercolour; 31 x 24 cm., pasted on board 50 x 37 cm
National Library of Australia

19. King O'MALLEY (1858-1953)
To the supreme democratic federal electors of Tasmania
1901
Hobart, Tas.
folded sheet [4] p.: 28 cm
Dixson collection, State Library of New South Wales

20. Charles NUTTALL (1872-1934)
The Opening, Commonwealth Parliament
1901-1902
Photogravure by Goupil et Cie, 88.7 x 130.5 cm
Collection of Peter Barclay, OAM

21. Thomas ROBERTS (1856-1931)
The opening of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia by HRH the Duke of Cornwall and York (later H.M. King George V), May 9 1901
1903
Photogravure signed by artist
Collection of the Commonwealth Club, Canberra

22. Holy Bible. *The Parliament of the Commonwealth, House of Representatives, embossed K. O'Malley, Esq., M.P. 9th May 1901, issued for the opening of the first Federal Commonwealth Parliament*
1901
MS460: folder 192, item 10359
National Library of Australia

23. King O'MALLEY (1858-1953)
Federal Elections. Darwin Electorate. King O'Malley: *Championing the Rights of the People*
1914
MS460: item 9702
National Library of Australia

24. King O'MALLEY (1858-1953)
Federal Elections 1919. Denison Division
1919
MS460: item 9726
National Library of Australia

25. King O'MALLEY (1858-1953)
The King of Those Days and This from 1901 to 1916, a remarkable speech
1916
MS460: folder 178, item 9706
National Library of Australia



Minister of State for Home Affairs

26. Letters patent presented to King O'Malley upon his appointment as Minister for Home Affairs
1910
MS 460: folder 164, item 9094
National Library of Australia

27. Rubber stamp facsimile of King O'Malley's signature
no date
Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia

28. Bound Digest 'Department of Home Affairs Schedule No. 4'
1913
MS460: folder 192, item 10358
National Library of Australia

29. Harold Frederick Neville (Hal) GYE (1888–1967)
King O'Malley, Minister for Home Affairs
1910
drawing: pen and ink; 65.5 x 35.5 cm
National Library of Australia

30. Commonwealth Government of Australia Seat of Government Administration Bill. No. 25 of 1910
1910
15.8 x 25.3 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Dawn Waterhouse collection

31. Federal Capital 1910/11 and to date: statement of works carried out and preliminaries for initial works
1911
34.5 x 21 x 0.1 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Dawn Waterhouse collection

Selecting a site for the Federal Capital

32. Map of New South Wales showing proposed federal capital sites
1902
New South Wales. Department of Lands
map: silk; 60.3 x 71.2 cm on sheet 66.9 x 78.1 cm
National Library of Australia

33. Panorama of Federal Capital Site at Canberra
1910
black and white photographs, 230 x 27cm
Collection of Geoff Pryor

34. Geodetic theodolite manufactured by Carl Bamberg and tripod used for the geodetic survey of the Federal Capital Territory in 1913
1884
Theodolite: 33.5 x 55cm; Tripod: 68 x 99.5cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of the ACT Office of the Commissioner for Surveys

35. Map of contour survey of the site for the Federal Capital of Australia. Surveyed under instructions from the Minister of State for Home Affairs by Charles Robert Scrivener, District Surveyor
1910
68 x 86 cm (open)
Canberra Museum and Gallery

The Federal Capital Competition

36. Robert Charles Given COULTER (1864–1956)
Cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, view looking from Vernon
1911
Sydney: John Sands
photomechanical reproduction; sheet 20.4 x 223 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of the Planning Institute of Australia

37. Robert Charles Given COULTER (1864–1956)
Cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, view looking from Camp Hill
1911
Sydney: John Sands
photomechanical reproduction; sheet 20.4 x 223 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of the Planning Institute of Australia



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38. Cylindrical ruler owned by Charles Coulter
c.1900s
37.8 x 2.7 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of Mr Francis Stuart

39. Wooden box containing information about the competition to design Australia's federal capital
1911
10 x 89 x 9 cm
Contents:
Contour survey of the site for the Federal Capital of Australia (map)
Canberra contour survey 1911 (map)
Part of New South Wales Australia shewing [sic] position of Commonwealth Territory (map)
New South Wales Australia 1911, Commonwealth Territory shown by red tint (map)
Topographical map of the Federal Territory, Australia (map)
Cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, view from Camp Hill
Cycloramic view of Canberra capital site, view from Vernon
'Information conditions and particulars for guidance in the preparation of competitive designs' (booklet)
'On the climate of the Yass-Canberra district' with folded map: Rainfall and temperature statistics of the proposed site for the Federal Capital (booklet)
'Reports on the geology of the Federal Capital site' by E.F. Pittman with folded map: Geological survey of the site of the Federal Capital of Australia by Edward F. Pittman (booklet)
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of the Planning Institute of Australia

40. Sir Lionel Arthur LINDSAY (1874–1961)
c.1910
Black and white political cartoon inscribed 'Lionel Lindsay after Phiz'
ink, paper, wooden frame with glass insert; 68 x 58 x 5 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery

41. Hablot Knight BROWNE (aka Phiz) (1815–1882)
1843
The thriving city of Eden as it appeared on paper, illustration from *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* by Charles Dickens
13.65 x 20.95 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery

42. Map of parkways and roadways planned for the city of Canberra, Federal Capital Territory
1916
ms. map; 64.7 x 66.3 cm
King O'Malley papers, MS460
National Library of Australia

Inaugurating the Capital

43. Invitation to Mr George Harcourt to attend the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Commencement Column of the Federal Capital City
1913
12 x 18 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of Mr Grant Harcourt

44. Entry ticket to the laying of the Foundation Stones of the Commencement Column of the Federal Capital City for Mr George Harcourt
1913
12.5 x 10 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Gift of Mr Grant Harcourt

45. Postcard, Official party spectators at plinth, Canberra Foundation of Commencement Column
1913
20.5 x 30.6 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Dawn Waterhouse collection

46. Ceremony at the Federal Capital city, 12th March, 1913, laying the foundation stones of the commencement column and naming the city: Details of Arrangements
1913
Canberra: Government Printer
6 p; 33 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Dawn Waterhouse collection



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47. Canberra: capital city of the Commonwealth of Australia: laying the foundation stones of the commencement column and naming the federal city, 12th March, 1913

1913
[Melbourne]: Printed for the Commonwealth of Australia
119, [1] p: ill., ports., maps, plans, facs.; 29 cm
ACT Heritage Library

48. Trowel used by the Hon. King O'Malley in laying one of the foundation stones of the commencement column of the Federal Capital city

1913
copper with gold and ivory handle; length 32.9 cm
National Library of Australia

49. Backsaw owned by Frederick John Young (1854–1943)

1880
G&T Gray, Sheffield
42.5 x 14.5 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery, Banyard collection

50. Omega gold pocket watch inscribed, *This watch the property of the Hon King O'Malley, Minister of State for Home Affairs, was used as the official timepiece on the opening of Canberra as the capital [sic] of the Commonwealth of Australia by Lady Denman 12th March 1913*

no date
Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia

Drunkeries and Stagger Juice

51. Caitlin PERRIMAN (1970–)

Maquette of *King O'Malley*
2000
plaster, 26 x 17 x 10 cm
Collection of Peter Barclay, OAM

Founding the Commonwealth Bank

52. Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Program: Laying of Foundation Stones, 14th May 1913

1913
MS460: folder 195, item 10490
National Library of Australia

53. King O'MALLEY (1858–1953)

The Commonwealth Bank: the facts of its creation c.1924
Melbourne: K. O'Malley
National Library of Australia

54. King O'MALLEY (1858–1953)

Big Battle by the Hon. King O'Malley, founder of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, to save it from destruction
1939
Melbourne: Maxim Press
31p; 22 cm
National Library of Australia

55. L.C. JAUNCEY (1899–1959)

Australia's Government Bank, signed by King O'Malley
1933
London: Cranley & Day
288p: ill., ports.; 19 cm
Private collection

56. Bank book for King O'Malley in account with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia

1913
MS460: folder 160, item 9010
National Library of Australia

57. Calton YOUNGER (1921–)

King O'Malley
1939
drawing: pen and ink; 31.7 x 26.2 cm
National Library of Australia

58. Dudley DREW (1924–)

Portrait of King O'Malley
1953
132 x 116 cm
Commonwealth Bank of Australia

59. Dudley DREW (1924–)

2003
Portrait of King O'Malley
painting: oil, 121 x 98 cm
Collection of Peter Barclay, OAM



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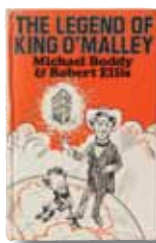
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The Trans-Australian railway

60. South Australian Railways, Pt. Augusta to W.A. Border Line. Plan showing routes examined. Signed by John Gore Stewart 3/12/01
1907 copy of 1901 map
100 x 157 cm
Collection of Peter Barclay, OAM

61. Trans-Australian railway: turning the first sod by His Excellency Lord Denman, the governor-general, September 14, 1912: souvenir
1912
Melbourne: The Minister of State for Home Affairs
64p: ill., map, ports.; 22 x 28 cm
National Library of Australia

62. Commonwealth Railways Gold Life Pass issued to the Hon. King O'Malley
c.1912
2.5 x 3.8 x 2 cm
National Museum of Australia, Australian National Railways Commission collection

Building the Legend of King O'Malley

63. King O'MALLEY (1858–1953)
Concerning Canberra: the christening and dedication of Australia's national capital, 12th March, 1913, and its dire neglect
1936
Melbourne: Excell Press
17p; 24 cm
MS460: folder 178, item 9679
National Library of Australia

64. Order of Service for the State Funeral of King O'Malley
1953
MS460: folder 193
National Library of Australia

65. Syd MILLER (1901–1983)
King O'Malley
c.1930s
drawing: crayon, white paint; 55.5 x 38.2 cm
National Library of Australia

66. Leo Jack BAINBRIDGE (LITTLEWOOD) (1918–1978)
A sheet containing print of King O'Malley
1942-44
half-tone line block, printed in black ink, from one stone; 15.4 x 11 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

The Legend of King O'Malley

67. Michael BODDY (1934–) and Robert (Bob) ELLIS (1942–)
The Legend of King O'Malley, by Michael Boddy and Robert Ellis
1974
Sydney: Angus & Robertson
117p: music; 21 cm
Canberra Museum and Gallery

68. *The Legend of King O'Malley* (poster)
NIDA – Old Tote Production, Schonell Theatre, Queensland, signed by John Bell, Director
1970
57.2 x 35.5 cm
Collection of Peter Barclay, OAM

69. Costumes from production of *The Legend of King O'Malley*
11th – 14th May 2011
Civic Playhouse, Newcastle
St Francis Xavier's College, Newcastle

Acknowledgments

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Finally, thank you to my family and friends for their unquestioning support.

Rowan Henderson
Curator, Social History
Canberra Museum and Gallery

(front cover): King O'Malley, no date, photographer N. J. Caire.
Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia.

(back cover): King O'Malley, no date, Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia.

(title page): Omega gold pocket-watch (front) worn by King O'Malley at the naming of Canberra, 12th March 1913, Museum of Australian Currency Notes, Reserve Bank of Australia. Photo: RLDI.

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