

Mélanie Méthot — Fierce and romantic: Annie Holt and her Melbourne matrimonial agency



Australian
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FEEDBACK MERCHANTS
SERIES 2023

Special Seminar
National Centre of
Biography (ANU)



Before Tinder there was Holt's Matrimonial Agency (1884-1948)

In 1938, reporter Stuart Lacy interviewed the manageress of Sydney's Holt's Matrimonial Agency and shared her experiences and insights in matching lonely hearts. In a prominent box, he highlighted important facts. "Established in 1884", the agency "had been responsible for 50 000 marriages." "Three generations in one family have been married through the agency." And finally, when the agency also conducted weddings "it retained three fully ordained clergymen on its payroll, and the original building in Melbourne had its own chapel."

Benefitting from a corpus of nearly 1000 newspaper articles dealing with the agency, numerous bigamy cases, as well as surviving matrimonial gazettes held by the descendants of Annie Holt, I will share Annie and James Holt's journey into the Australian marriage market. The agency quickly dethroned other players and continued to thrive despite economic depressions, changes to marriage acts, and negative press coverage.

Professor Mélanie Méthot has been researching bigamy in Canada and Australia for many years. In 2020, she received a SSHRC grant for her research project "Marrying Too Much: Bigamy in Australia." She has recently developed a website featuring bigamy stories and their relevance. Her engaging presentation style has her audience feeling stimulated and enriched.

Méthot has a special interest in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). In addition to founding the Augustana Conference on Undergraduate Research and Innovative Teaching (ACURIT), she regularly shares her expertise at SoTL conferences.

Time:

Tuesday 25 July 2023
11:00am-noon

In Person:

Seminar Room 5.72
Level 5 RSSS Building
146 Ellery Crescent
ANU