

Alice Anderson in her Hupmobile Touring car

University of Melbourne Archives



Unknown photographer

Alice Anderson in her Hupmobile Touring car, c. 1918

silver gelatine photographic print

Frances Derham Collection, 1988.0061, BWP/2757

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Alice Anderson (1897–1926) had no run-of-the-mill career for a woman in the early 20th century, for she was a driver and motor mechanic. Her father owned a business providing a chauffeur service between Alexandra railway station and Healesville in Victoria, along a route now known as the Black Spur. It was there that Alice began her career.

The purchase of an eight-seat American Hupmobile Touring car enabled Alice to establish her own enterprise, and by 1917 she was operating a chauffeur service from Melbourne to Healesville. Alice then entered a male-dominated trade by becoming a fully qualified motor mechanic, opening a successful garage in Melbourne. Most of her staff and clients were women, the garage providing popular services and opportunities for them. In 1918 she helped found the Women's Automobile Club. Her entrepreneurship even extended to an invention, the 'Anderson get out and under board' – a flatbed on castors for working under cars, but unfortunately she did not gain an official patent.

How Alice Anderson entered an unusual industry for a woman of her day is richly illustrated through photographs, letters and other archival documents in the collection of Frances Derham, Anderson's sister, who was an artist and early childhood educator.

Teaching ideas

The University of Melbourne's curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, [contact a collection manager](#).

Sex, Gender and Culture: An Introduction

Using Alice Anderson as a case study, analyses how gender operates both in representation and in people's embodied everyday experience.

Thinking like an Entrepreneur

Examine the processes of creating a successful new venture, using Alice Anderson in the motor industry as a case study.

Foundations of Entrepreneurial Practice

Demonstrate entrepreneurial skills and use these to produce an entrepreneurial innovation related to a business represented in the University of Melbourne Archives.

Mechanical Design

Study the design of elements and machines, and approaches to uncertainty in design problems, including those related to the environment in the motor industry.

Encounters with Writing

Using objects such as photographs and letters as triggers of memory and creativity, initiate and develop detailed knowledge in self-initiated creative writing projects.

Knowledge, Learning and Culture

Visit the University of Melbourne Archives to explore historical, social, political and cultural influences on knowledge and the analysis of information and ideas from multiple perspectives. Encounter objects to show how direct experience can lead to greater understanding and knowledge.

Digital Humanities: Working with Archives

Choose a subject in the University of Melbourne Archives to examine what constitutes a digital archive, to critique and evaluate those resources.

Documentation and Display

Using a range of media tools, build production pathways for documenting, editing, displaying and archiving photographs, letters and ephemera from the University of Melbourne Archives.

Australia in the World 1914 to 2014

Using Alice Anderson as a case study, examine changes to women's roles in Australia after World War I.

Australian Economic History

Explain the influence of factors such as geography, political and legal institutions, and international events on the development of Alice Anderson's business career.

Intersecting objects

Frances Derham Collection, 1988.0061
University of Melbourne Archives

To learn more, visit the website of the [University of Melbourne Archives](#).

References

Geoff Laurenson, 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained: Alice Anderson – mechanic, chauffeur and entrepreneur', *University of Melbourne Collections*, issue 14, June 2014, pp. 16–21.