

## Biography

### JOHAN FRIEDRICH CARL (FRED) KRUGER (1831-1888)



Artist and photographer who was internationally acclaimed for photographic panoramas, landscapes and portraits of the Aboriginal people at Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission Station and the first Aboriginal cricket team in 1866.

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Fred Kruger was born in Berlin, Germany in 1831. After his school years, Fred established himself as an upholsterer in Berlin – as did his brother, Bernhardt.

After Bernhardt migrated to Victoria in 1854 and set up an upholstery business in Rutherglen in northern Victoria, Fred moved to join him in the business. The brothers also advertised themselves in the local newspapers as paper hangers and makers of mattresses.

Fred's wife, Auguste and his oldest son followed him to Victoria a few years later. The couple went on to have 11 children, but only two sons survived to adulthood.

Fred took over the business at Rutherglen from his brother. Around this time, he also began to experiment with photography, documenting the changes in the landscape as Victoria's population grew rapidly.

Of particular interest to Fred was capturing photographic images that showed the changes in the social milieus of the period.

Fred's photographic work saw him travel a great deal around Victoria. It seems the upholstery business was left to run itself for a time. Eventually, he became a full-time photographer, setting up a studio first in Carlton in 1866, then later in Prahran, Preston, and lastly in Geelong.

His carefully constructed landscape views began to sell well and win prizes at exhibitions. He became quite well known. One of his photographic panoramas, exhibited at the Geelong Industrial Exhibition of 1879-1880 was three metres long and attracted considerable attention. He also won medals at the Vienna Exhibition of 1872 and the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition which gained him international fame.

However, it was not only Fred's landscapes that gained him recognition. His portraits of the Aboriginal people residing and working at Coranderrk Aboriginal Mission Station settlement near Healesville became famous, and still are used by historians today. They were used heavily in the campaign through the 1870s to save the inhabitants from being evicted from their fertile lands. Local farmers pressed government authorities to release the Aboriginal land so they could acquire it for farming. Eventually, the farmers were successful in their lobbying campaign.

Fred had been commissioned by the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines to document the way of life on Coranderrk that was then coming under threat. It appears that he was personally involved

as well. His portraits show he had gained the trust of the Aboriginal inhabitants and that he was very aware of how these images could be used to their benefit.

His photograph of the very first Aboriginal Cricket Team taken in 1866 was used across the world.

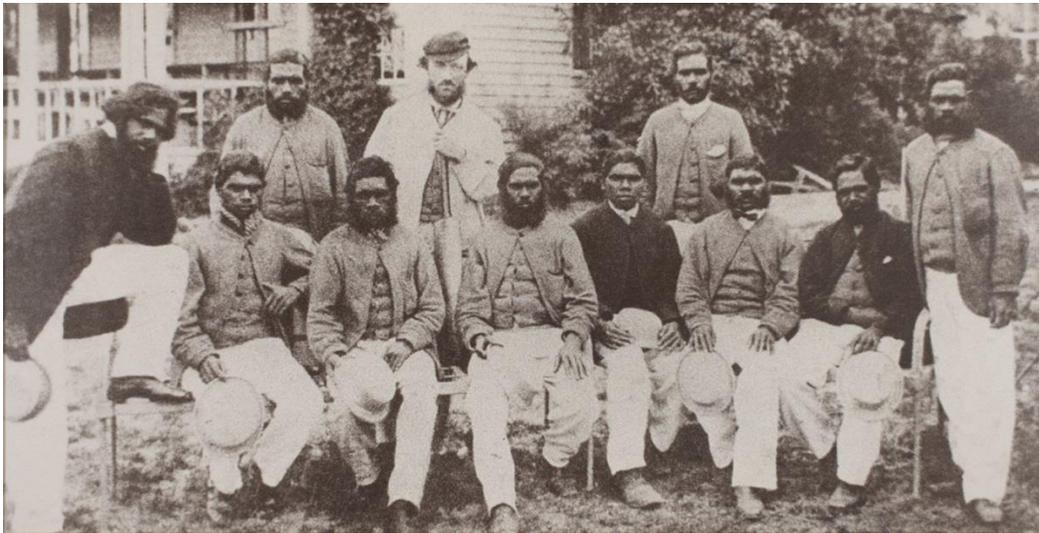
Fred and his wife had settled in Geelong but he died at the home of his son in Surrey Hills in February 1888 aged 57. He was buried at Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery the day after his death.

Find out more

Annear, J. *The Photograph and Australia*, (2015)

Clark, I. *A Peep at the Blacks: a history of tourism at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station 1863-1924*, (2016)

James, A. *Coranderrk: we will show the country*, (2013)



First Aboriginal Cricket Team 1868-NMA



Coranderrk c 1883-NGV



Queen Mary and King Billy-NGV