

Salmon, Charles Carty (1860–1917)

by **I. R. Hancock**

Charles Carty Salmon (1860-1917), by Swiss Studios, 1909-17

Charles Carty Salmon (1860-1917), politician, was born on 27 July 1860 at Amherst, Victoria, sixth child of Frederick Browne Salmon, storekeeper, and his wife Susannah Carty, née Arnell, both English born. Educated at Scotch College, Melbourne, in 1877 he joined his uncle's tobacco importing and manufacturing company, Arnell & Dudgeon, but, not liking the job, returned to his father's grazing property. He enrolled in medicine at the University of Melbourne in 1886 and resided at Trinity College where he became an accomplished sportsman and debater. He obtained Scottish qualifications (L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S., Edinburgh, and L.F.P.S., Glasgow, 1891), registered as a doctor in that year and entered practice at South Yarra.

Carty Salmon, as he was commonly known, was honorary surgeon for the South Yarra Relief Committee and in the course of his medical work met **Alfred Deakin**. The two formed a lifelong personal and political friendship. On impulse Salmon nominated for the rural seat of Talbot and Avoca in the Legislative Assembly, winning a by-election in December 1893 as an Independent on a platform of restraining expenditure. Immediately he abandoned medicine for politics and soon identified with the liberal causes of anti-sweating legislation, a shorter working week and a high tariff. He also campaigned for Federation and, by joining the Australian Natives' Association in 1894 (president, 1898-99), thrust himself forward as a frequent public speaker on the issue. In 1899-1900 he was one of the 'young Turks' in **Allan McLean's** administration in which he was minister without portfolio, then minister for public instruction and commissioner for trade and customs. On 3 October 1900 he married Nancy Anne, daughter of **Sir Matthew Harris**, at St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Sydney.

Salmon was elected in 1901 to the Federal seat of Laanecoorie in western Victoria, which he retained until it was abolished by the 1912 redistribution. His Federal career was undistinguished except for his period as chairman of committees in 1904-05, membership of the royal commission on postal services (1908-10) and his elevation to Speaker in July 1909 after the death of **Sir Frederick Holder**. Salmon was a Liberal Protectionist and an Australian Briton whose major objectives were to maintain a White Australia, to promote strong national defence based on a volunteer force and to enact the policy of New Protection. His loyalty to Deakin was almost absolute, drawing him into the Imperial Federation League in 1905 as vice-president and into the Fusion of 1909 as a devoted back-bencher. His reward was Deakin's support for the Speakership, achieved despite Fusionist misgivings and the hostility of Labor and Independents, and after a parliamentary debate of unprecedented length and bitterness. Ousted as chairman of committees in 1905, when even his political friends thought he was weak and incompetent, Salmon lacked the personality to control the unruly House where his authority was repeatedly challenged by Labor's obstructionism and undermined by his own party's disloyalty. The Fusion defeat in the 1910 election relieved him of a job and of a terrible strain.

He was narrowly defeated in the 1913 Victorian Senate election as a Liberal. In 1914 he relinquished preselection for the safe Balaclava seat in favour of **W. A. Watt** and did not stand in the double dissolution election. After winning Grampians from Labor in a by-election in February 1915 he joined the Nationalists under **W. M. Hughes** and easily retained his seat in the landslide of May 1917.

Carty Salmon led an active public life. He was managing director of Arnell & Dudgeon, a lay member of the Ballarat Anglican synod for twenty years, a lay canon of St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, a member of the councils of the Melbourne diocese, Trinity College and Melbourne Grammar School. A keen Freemason he joined the Talbot Lodge in 1882 and, from 1914, was grand master of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Victoria. In 1894 he had joined the Victorian Mounted Rifles as surgeon-captain and after transferring to the Australian Medical Corps in 1903 was promoted lieutenant-colonel in 1912. For some months in 1914 he commanded a base hospital in Melbourne.

Friends and the press described Salmon as upright, courteous and genial, a quiet but effective organizer of the charities and institutions he joined. Critics regarded him as a loyal servant rather than a policy-

maker, inclined to anonymity in sparkling intellectual company, perhaps a trifle dull—but he was universally liked.

Survived by his wife and three sons, Carty Salmon died of cerebral tumour at his South Yarra home on 15 September 1917 and was buried in Melbourne general cemetery with full military honours and Masonic rites. The funeral service at St Paul's Cathedral was attended by Prime Minister Hughes and the leader of the Opposition, and the archbishop of Melbourne delivered the panegyric.

Select Bibliography

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Citation details

Hancock, I. R., 'Salmon, Charles Carty (1860–1917)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/salmon-charles-carty-8328/text14611>, accessed 14 September 2012.

This article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, (MUP), 1988



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National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an23184910

Life Summary [details]

Birth

27 July 1860
Amherst, Victoria, Australia

Death

15 September 1917
South Yarra, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Cultural Heritage

- English

Religious Influence

- Anglican
- Presbyterian

Occupation

- Anglican lay leader
- army medical officer
- colonial militia (Australia)
- federationist
- liberal/conservative politician
- Member of Lower House
- surgeon

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