Local History sources

Research Guide to local history records at Queensland State Archives

This guide lists records relevant for local history research available at Queensland State Archives.

To find information on a Queensland town, shire, or other area in records at Queensland State Archives, it is necessary to search a variety of indexes and registers created by different departments and courts, as well as the finding aids available in the Reading Room and on the Queensland State Archives’ website. There is no single index or catalogue at Queensland State Archives which lists all references to a particular locality. A comprehensive search for a particular locality can be time consuming.
A number of sources are available at Queensland State Archives for research in the preparation of local history. Records of the following agencies (and successor agencies) may be useful:

- **Colonial Secretary's Office** 10/12/1859–6/8/1896
- **Education Department** 12/8/1957–12/2/2004
- **Lands Department** 7/8/1866–26/2/1996
- **Public Works Department** 7/8/1866–7/12/1989
- **Survey Office** 26/10/1874–13/12/1975
- various courts including Courts of Petty Sessions, Circuit Courts, District Courts, and Magistrates Courts.

The QSA references for these records are in ArchivesSearch (the Queensland State Archives' catalogue).

Research guides have been prepared on topics such as maps, school histories, electoral rolls, and land tenure. They are available in the Reading Room and on the [Research guides web page](#).

### Local authorities

Descriptions and records of local authorities can be found by searching for the name of the local authority in our catalogue. The descriptions include dates of establishment of divisions or divisional boards, shires, councils, municipalities, towns, cities, boroughs, etc.

Notifications of the boundaries of local authority areas were gazetted in the *Queensland Government Gazettes*. Refer to page 5 for details about the *Queensland Government Gazettes*. Relevant indexes and records available on Microfilm 338 at Queensland State Archives include:

- notifications in the Gazette of the boundaries of local authorities’ areas, 1880–1960 in Series ID S16158. This series includes an index and copies of the Gazette notices
- index to the notification in the Gazette of the boundaries of various Petty Sessions Districts including the establishment of aboriginal reserves, bores, orphanages, quarantine stations, rifle ranges, town halls, and tramways for the years 1859–1962 in Item ID ITM103940.

The records of some divisions or divisional boards, shires, councils, municipalities, towns, cities, and boroughs are at Queensland State Archives. These are listed in our catalogue under the relevant name. For example, records of the Nebo Divisional Board include the following:

#### Minute Books
18/3/1883–12/1/1898
Series ID S6919

Minutes of meetings of the Nebo Divisional Board.

#### Rate Books
Circa 1/1/1883– Circa 31/12/1903
Series ID S7995

Details include rate number, name of person rated, name of owner of rateable property, description, rateable value, general rate in the pound, arrears, and total amount charged.

#### Rate Cash Books
28/5/1883–Circa 31/10/1943
Series ID S6931

Details include date, number in rate book, by whom paid, whether person paying is owner or occupier, number of receipt, folio in the rate book, and amount.

Valuation Registers
Circa 1/1/1883–Circa 31/12/1902
Series ID S6923

Details include number, name of occupier, trade of occupier, name and residence of owner, description of rateable property (county, parish or town, portion, etc.) and rateable value.

Alphabetical registers of divisional boards are available in:

Registers of Divisional Boards – boundaries
Circa 1/1/1880–Circa 31/12/1889
Series S16440

By-laws of local government authorities and lists of members are contained in:

Executive Council Minutes - Public Works Department
3/4/1862–31/12/1963
Series S6395

Correspondence about the formation and work of Divisional Boards is arranged alphabetically by board name in:

Correspondence - Divisional Boards
30/5/1879–3/6/1891
Series S16477

Correspondence between the local authority and the Colonial Secretary, later the Home Secretary is found in:

Correspondence Relating to Local Government
Circa 1/1/1861–Circa 31/12/1929
Series S11942

Works Department records

Records about roads and bridges may be found in the Colonial Architect records, and records created by the Engineer of Roads, 1860–1900, which are part of the Works Department. The records of the Engineer of Roads for various districts give information about exploration, construction and maintenance of roads. These are mostly unindexed.
Railway Department records

The main Railway Department correspondence records exist in two series; General Correspondence and Hard Batch Series.

**General Correspondence**  
Circa 1/1/1871–21/3/1991  
Series ID S6873

Correspondence includes subjects such as new and existing railway lines, railway stations, gates and crossings, private sidings, tramways, surveys, railway reserves and other real property, railway accommodation and buildings, refreshment rooms, railway traffic, supply of material and contracts, naming of stations, water supply, sawmills and ballast quarries, conveyance of and rates for goods, passengers, parcels, mail, livestock and minerals, co-ordinated services, road competition, proposed rolling stock and modifications, unification of gauges, postal work, closure of lines, inspections and reports, track gang conveyances and breakdown trains, employee quarters and railway passes.

Many files are listed in our catalogue. If a search of the catalogue does not find a general correspondence file, search the Registers of Letters Received, Series ID S10001.

**Registers of Letters Received**  
Circa 1/1/1889–31/12/-/1967  
Series ID S10001

These registers record general correspondence received, including the correspondence received for various Queensland lines. These registers are used to find records in General Correspondence, Series ID S6873 and Hard Batch Series, Series ID S9790.

**Hard Batch Series**  
1/1/1867–31/12/1970  
Series ID S9790

These batches consist of material extracted from the general correspondence series because of its particular subject matters, e.g. construction of railway lines, Brisbane Tramways, railway commissions and inquiries. To find files in hard batches, search the Registers of Letters Received, Series ID S10001 and the List of Hard Batches, Series ID S6839.

**List of Hard Batches**  
Circa 1/1/1867–31/12/1960  
Series ID S6839

This series consists of one Item ID ITM267875. It is used to find records in Hard Batch Series, Series ID S9790. It is an incomplete departmental index. It complements the *Guide to the hard batch series of correspondence 1867–1960* (compiled by Queensland State Archives). Ask the archivist on duty about access to this finding aid.

For more information see the Research Guide to Railway records.
Court records

The Court of Petty Sessions is of central importance to the study of a local area. In earlier periods, the Clerk of Petty Sessions performed many functions additional to his court functions. Often, the clerk was the local land agent, the local mining warden, and the dispenser of licenses for hotels, hawkers and peddlers, timber cutting, and gaming houses including bagatelle. License lists may also be found in the *Queensland Government Gazettes*.

Registration of firms was also undertaken by the Clerk of the Court of Petty Sessions. The records provide information on local affairs which reached the court. This information may be found in letter-books, plaint, deposition and record books, bench and summons records, judgment books, etc.

Material from other courts, e.g. Magistrates, District, Circuit and the Supreme Courts may provide valuable information for the researcher. Court records are listed in our catalogue under the name of the Court, e.g.:

- Court of Petty Sessions, Bundaberg
- District Court, Charters Towers
- Magistrates Court, Mackay
- Circuit Court, Barcaldine
- Supreme Court, Northern District, Townsville

For more information see the *Research Guide to Court records*.

Lands Agent records

Land Agent records provide information on land tenure. See the *Research Guide to Land tenure records* and the *Research Guide to Land Agent’s records*.

Reserve files

Reserves are areas of Crown land set aside for a particular public purpose such as schools, cemeteries, police stations, forestry, national parks, marine reserves, nature conservation, water resources, defence, and mining.

**Reserve Files**
Circa 1/1/1856–Circa 31/12/2003  
Series ID [S17925](#)  
Access: 30 years

For more information see the QSA [Search procedure: Reserves](#).
Mining records

Mining Wardens’ records include letter-books, proceedings of the Mining Warden’s Court, registers of mining companies, mineral leases, gold leases, mining accidents, mining claims and business licenses. Other records exist within the Mines Department's records although only a small amount of correspondence survived from the pre 1920 period. The following series of records are indexed in Mineral Leases 1871-1940.

Gold mining leases
1/8/1871–31/7/1919
Series ID S18221

Mineral leases
21/1/1884–11/10/1940
Series ID S18222

Index to Coal Mining Licence Register under the Act of 1886
12/1/1888–23/7/1954
Series ID S7367

Mineral and Water Race Leases
16/9/1910–30/11/1933
Series ID S9132

Refer to the Research Guide to Mining records for more information

Auditor-General’s Records

Reports by the Auditor-General on the financial records and papers of government organisations and public institutions such as benevolent institutions and fire brigades are in the following series:

Reports on Financial Books and Papers of Government Organisations – General
Circa 1/1/1885–Circa 31/12/1887
Series ID S10765

The series is unindexed.

Other records

Other records useful for researching specific local history topics include:

- records of the Lands Department and the Department of Agriculture and Stock may be useful for researching a locality where sugar growing is a major industry.
- records of naturalisations maybe used for locating concentrations of non-British populations.
- inquests or magisterial inquiries for details of fires in buildings including houses.
- school files for information about local residents and local events.
Government publications

- the *Queensland Government Gazette* - an official publication of the government which covers public business notices of government departments such as appointments to various official positions, administration of wills, land sales, pastoral holdings, proclamations, changes of administrative procedure and licenses. For more information see the Research Guide to Government Gazettes
- *Votes and Proceedings* of the Queensland Parliament (later titled *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*) from 1859–1961. This includes annual reports from government departments
- the *Queensland Blue Books* provide details of senior officers employed by the government including government departments.

Need more information?

Check our online catalogue [ArchivesSearch](#). Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can [email](#) an archivist.