

# Local history sources

## Brief guide 6 | Queensland State Archives

This brief guide lists some of the records that are 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 Public Search 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 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).

[Brief guides](#) have been prepared on topics such as maps, school histories, electoral rolls, land tenure. They are also available in the Public Search Room.

### Local authorities

Descriptions and records of local authorities can be found by searching for the name of the local authority in [ArchivesSearch](#). 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 16158](#). 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, tramways for the years 1859–1962 in [Item ID 103940](#).

The records of some divisions or divisional boards, shires, councils, municipalities, towns, cities, boroughs are at Queensland State Archives. These are listed in [ArchivesSearch](#) 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 6919](#)

Minutes of meetings of the Nebo Divisional Board.

**Rate Books**

[Series ID 7995](#)

Circa 1/1/1883– Circa 31/12/1903

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

**Rate Cash Books**

[Series ID 6931](#)

28/5/1883–Circa 31/10/1943

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, amount.

**Valuation Registers**

[Series ID 6923](#)

Circa 1/1/1883–Circa 31/12/1902

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 16440](#)

Access: Open

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 6395](#)

Access: Open

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 16477](#)

Access: Open

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 11942](#)

Access: Open

## 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 6873](#)

Access: 10 years

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 [ArchivesSearch](#). If a search of the catalogue does not find a general correspondence file, search the Registers of Letters Received, [Series ID 10001](#).

### Registers of Letters Received

Circa 1/1/1889–31/12/-/1967

[Series ID 10001](#)

Access: Open

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 6873](#) and Hard Batch Series, [Series ID 9790](#).

### Hard Batch Series

1/1/1867–31/12/1970

[Series ID 9790](#)

Access: 10 years

These batches consist of material extracted from the general correspondence series because of its particularly 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 10001](#) and the List of Hard Batches, [Series ID 6839](#). There is also a finding aid titled *Guide to the hard batch series of correspondence 1867–1960* in the Public Search Room. This finding aid was compiled by Queensland State Archives.

### List of Hard Batches

Circa 1/1/1867–31/12/1960

[Series ID 6839](#)

Access: Open

This series consists of one Item ID 267875. It is used to find records in Hard Batch Series, [Series ID 9790](#). It is an incomplete departmental index. It is complemented by a finding aid titled *Guide to the hard batch series of correspondence 1867–1960*. This finding aid was compiled by Queensland State Archives and is available in the Public Search Room.

All of the above written material is supplemented by a large collection of railway maps and plans.

Further information in [Brief guide 3: Railway records](#) and the *Departmental Guide: the Railway Department 1863–1991* available in the Public Search Room

## 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 he was the local land agent, the local mining warden, and the dispenser of licenses for hotels, hawkers and pedlars, timber cutting, and gaming houses including bagatelle. License lists may also be found in the *Queensland Government Gazettes*. Refer to page 5 for details about 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 Courts, District Courts, Circuit Courts and the Supreme Courts may provide valuable information for the researcher. Court records are listed in [ArchivesSearch](#) 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](#)

Further information in [Brief guide 22: Court records](#).

## Lands Agent records

Land Agent records provide information on land tenure in particular areas.

Information in [Brief guide 5: Land tenure records](#), and [Brief guide 29: Land Agents' 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, mining. Files in the following series can be accessed by the purpose of the reserve or by the name of the County or Parish:

### Reserve Files

Circa 1/1/1856–Circa 31/12/2003

[Series ID 17925](#)

Access: 30 years

Further information in *Search procedure 20: Reserves* available in the Public Search Room.

## 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](#) on the Queensland State Archives' website:

**Gold mining leases**

1/8/1871–31/7/1919

Series ID 18221

**Mineral leases**

Series ID 18222

21/1/1884–11/10/1940

**Index to Coal Mining Licence Register under the Act of 1886**

12/1/1888–23/7/1954

Series ID 7367

**Mineral and Water Race Leases**

16/9/1910–30/11/1933

Series ID 9132

Further information in [Brief guide 13: Mining records](#), and the Pathways: Mines which is available in the Public Search Room.

**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 10765](#)

The series is unindexed.

**Other records**

Other aspects appropriate to a particular local area may occur to the researcher. Queensland State Archives holds many records useful for researching specific local history topics. For example:

- 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 may be 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 following publications are available on microfilm in the Public Search Room:

- The *Queensland Government Gazette* is 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. There is a general index in each volume. Further information in [Brief guide 33: 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 following publication for years ranging from 1859 to 1949 is available in the Public Search Room:

- The *Queensland Blue Books* provide details of senior officers employed by the government including government departments.

## Finding aids

- [Image Queensland](#) (part of [ArchivesSearch](#)) enables users to search and view digital copies of public records.  
The example below is Gill Street, Charters Towers, 1897.



Queensland State Archives [Digital Image ID 5150](#)

- **Indexes on the Queensland State Archives' website**

[Indexes](#) on the website are grouped under subject categories. Entries in the indexes provide people's names in alphabetical order, and include the Queensland State Archives references. The introductory section of each index provides background details and information on how to use the index.

- **Town guides (Signposts)**

These are guides to records about specific geographical regions and they are available in the Public Search Room. Please note, the guides were written several years ago and records acquired more recently can be found in [ArchivesSearch](#).