

Local history sources



Research Guide to local history records
at Queensland State Archives

Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the official repository for Queensland Government records selected for permanent retention because of their continuing value. The archived public records are from state government departments, state courts, local government authorities and statutory authorities. The records are in our facility at [Runcorn, Brisbane](#), and open records are available for viewing in the Reading Room, free-of-charge.

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the [Queensland State Archives' online catalogue](#) (known as ArchivesSearch).

The following citation abbreviations are used throughout our catalogue:

- ITM QSA Item (describes the item)
- PR Physical Representation (generally the original or microfilm copy)
- DR Digital Representation (for a digital image)
- S Series ID (for a series of records)
- A Agency ID (for the creating or responsible agency).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.

To find information on a Queensland town, shire, or other area in records at Queensland State Archives, it may be necessary to search a variety of indexes and registers created by different departments and courts. 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. 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.

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

Local authorities

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

Refer to the following series of records for notifications of the boundaries of local authority areas which were gazetted in the *Queensland Government Gazettes*, available in the Reading Room:

- Gazettal References – Various, [S16158](#), 1848-1960
- Index to Gazette Notices [Petty Sessions Districts], [S16160](#), 1859–1962 (this includes the establishment of aboriginal reserves, bores, orphanages, quarantine stations, rifle ranges, town halls, and tramways)

Records of divisional boards, shires, councils, towns and cities

The records of some divisions or divisional boards, shires, councils, municipalities, towns, cities, and boroughs are at Queensland State Archives. These are listed in [ArchivesSearch](#) under the relevant name. For example, records of the Nebo Divisional Board include minute books, rate books, rate cash books, and valuation registers.

Rate books typically 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 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 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

[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

[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

[S16477](#)

Correspondence Relating to Local Government

Circa 1/1/1861–Circa 31/12/1929

[S11942](#)

Works Department records

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

For more information see the [Research Guide to Government building records](#).

Railway Department records

The main Railway Department correspondence records are in General Correspondence and Hard Batch Series.

Registers of Letters Received

Circa 1/1/1889–31/12/-/1967

[S10001](#)

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

General Correspondence

Circa 1/1/1871–21/3/1991

[S6873](#)

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, [S10001](#). Files include 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, coordinated 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.

List of Hard Batches

Circa 1/1/1867–31/12/1960

[S6839](#)

This series consists of [ITM267875](#). It is used to find records in Hard Batch Series, 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, and available on Reading Room computers under *Finding Aids by QSA, Others* tile.

Hard Batch Series

1/1/1867–31/12/1970

[S9790](#)

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

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. Other court records include Magistrates, District, Circuit and the Supreme Courts, and are listed in our catalogue by name of the Court, eg:

- [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.

For more information 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 1/1/1856–31/12/2003

[S17925](#)

For more information see the [Search procedure: Reserves](#) available in our Reading Room.

Mining records

Mining Wardens' records include letter-books, proceedings of the Mining Warden's Court, registers of mining companies, mineral and gold leases, mining accidents, mining claims and business licenses. Other records exist within the Mines Department's records. The following series of records are indexed in [Mineral Leases 1871-1940](#).

Gold mining leases

1/8/1871–31/7/1919

[S18221](#)

Mineral leases

21/1/1884–11/10/1940

[S18222](#)

Index to Coal Mining License Register under the Act of 1886

12/1/1888–23/7/1954

[S7367](#)

Register of Coal Prospecting Licenses

12/1/1888–23/7/1959

[S17138](#)

Prospecting Area Applications

Circa 1/1/1886–31/12/1981

[S18223](#)

Mineral and Water Race Leases

16/9/1910–30/11/1933

[S9132](#)

For more information see the [Research Guide to Mining records](#).

Auditor-General's Records

Reports by the Auditor-General on the financial records and papers of government organisations are available in the series below.

Reports on Financial Books and Papers of Government Organisations – General

16/6/1878–9/3/1888

[S10765](#)

This series is unindexed. It is comprised of early audit reports completed throughout Queensland on government entities such as land agents, local authorities, government departments, custom's houses, post and telegraph offices, harbours, gaols, fire brigades, hospitals, orphanages and police. Reports include audit books and accounts, annual financial statements, collections of receipts, loans and funds, bank statements, certificates, and balance sheets. As well as correspondence between the Auditor-General, auditors, audit inspectors and local authorities, some ordinary meeting and business papers are included.

Other sources of information

Other records useful for researching specific local history topics include:

- records of the Lands Department and the Department of Agriculture and Stock
- records of naturalisations 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.

The following government publications may also be useful:

- the *Queensland Government Gazette* - an official publication of the government including notices of government departments such as appointments, administration of wills, land sales, pastoral holdings, proclamations, administrative arrangements. The full-text for the years 1859 to 1900 are available as downloadable PDF files in [Text Queensland](#).
- *Votes and Proceedings* of the Queensland Parliament (later titled *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*) from 1859–1961. This includes annual reports from government departments. These are available on request in the Reading Room.
- the [Queensland Blue Books](#) provide details of senior officers employed by the government. The years 1869 and 1916 are available online. Later years up to the 1940s are available on request in the Reading Room.

Need more information?

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