Mining records

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Queensland State Archives holds an extensive collection of mining records of the Queensland Mines Department and Mining Warden's Offices. The records are about the development and government administration of the Queensland mining industry. There are separate series of records for the three main types of mining; gold, coal and base metals, as specified in the *Mining Act* and the *Coal Mining Acts*. Some early letterbooks are too fragile to be read, and unavailable for public access.

This brief guide provides a list of the main series of records at Queensland State Archives.

Mining records are searchable in [ArchivesSearch](https://www.archives.qld.gov.au) (the Queensland State Archives catalogue) using headings such as,

- Assistant Mining Registrars, for specific regions
- Inspector of Mines, for specific regions
- Mining Wardens, for specific regions
- Mineral Lands Commissioner, for specific regions, for the years 1872–1898
- [Mines Department](https://www.archive.qld.gov.au)

[Image Queensland](https://www.archive.qld.gov.au) (part of ArchivesSearch) enables users to search and view digital copies of public records. The example below is the ‘Scottish’ Gold Mine, Gympie, c1897.

Queensland State Archives, Digital Image ID 2247
Brief history and mining legislation

From 1859 until January 1862 the Colonial Secretary's Office administered the mining industry.

From 1862 until 1874, the Lands and Works Department Series ID 13757, Correspondence Received and the Works Department Series ID 16455, General Correspondence provide a record of activities. For example, coal in the Ipswich area; copper at Peak Downs, Kariboe Creek, Mount Perry, Mount Coora, Mount Clara, Dee River, Daintree, and Keelbottom Creek; goldfields at Etheridge, Gympie, Talgai, Clermont, Ravenswood, Cape River, Charters Towers and the Palmer Goldfields; tin mining at Stanthorpe, Star River, Cannibal and Granite Creeks, Tinaroo, Herberton and Tate River.

There are few records about specific mines and miners from 1860 -1870. Legislation did not require that the working of mines be provided to the government. There were no Mines Reports, and records in the general correspondence series of departments is not recorded in register format.

The Goldfields Act 1874 established the office of Mining Warden to regulate the issues of miner's rights and auriferous leases, and the extent of jurisdiction of mining wardens' on goldfields. The Act provided for the management of goldfields through local mining warden's offices. The Mines Department was established as a separate Department in 1876.

Mineral selections could be freehold. They were administered by local lands commissioners, under the Mineral Lands Act 1872 and the various Crown Lands Acts.

Search the Lands and Works Series ID 13757, Correspondence Received, and Public Lands Department Series ID 6363, General Correspondence for information about mineral selections. Details about holders of mineral selection land tenures are on certificates of title. The passing of the Mineral Lands Act 1882 provided for mineral leases rather than freeholds. These mining leases were published in the Queensland Government Gazette.

Coal legislation

The New South Wales Registration and Inspection Act 1854 was nominally in force in Queensland.

Regulations for non-competitive sale of Crown lands containing coal were introduced in 1865. Areas from 80 acres to 640 acres could be purchased and if one ton of coal per acre was mined and sold in the first year and the balance of the purchase price paid to the government, the land could be freeholded. The Burrum River coalfield was the first coal mining area developed under these regulations. Reductions to the minimum area were made under the Crown Lands Act 1868, and subsequent amendment in 1872.

The first legislation providing for the supervision of coal mines was the Mines Regulation Act 1881 which established an active Inspectorate of Mines. The Employers Liability Act 1886 extended the provision of workers compensation to miners. Coal mining lease tenures, of up to 320 acres, were introduced under the Mineral Lands (Coal Mining) Act 1886, which came into operation in February 1887.

Licenses for prospecting for coal from 1888 to 1955 can be found under the name of the prospector by using Series ID 7367, Index to Coal Mining Licence Register and Series ID 6649, Register of Prospecting Licences for Coal.

Since 1874, significant modifications to the mining law included the shift in emphasis with the Mining Act 1898. Under the Mining Act, 1898 the Office of Mineral Lands Commissioner was abolished and all existing Commissioners were appointed Mining Wardens, that is control of mining fields and gold fields was amalgamated into one office.

Under the Mining Act Amendment Act 1930, authority to prospect on private lands was introduced and with later legislation, there was a shift from the small miner to mining companies.
Types of mining records at Queensland State Archives

Mining Leases

The following series have been used to compile the online index Mineral leases 1871-1940:

Gold Mining Leases
Circa 1/8/1871–Circa 31/7/1919
Series ID 18221
GMLs include the name of the applicant, period of the lease, where situated, area of land, date of commencement of lease, minimum number of miners to be employed, county and parish, description and sketch map of boundaries of lease, transfers and amount of rent.

Mineral and Water Race Leases
16/9/1910–30/11/1933
Series ID 9132

Mineral Leases
21/1/1884–11/10/1940
Series ID 18222
MLs provide details of gold or minerals sought, location and boundary of the lease, the date of the lease commencement, name of the applicant, period of the lease and amount of rent.

Index to Coal Mining Licence Register under the Act of 1886
12/1/1888–23/7/1954
Series ID 7367
Arranged by Mineral Land Commissioner’s District, and numerically by number of licence within each district details include licence number, name and folio number.

Mines Department

General Correspondence
Circa 1/1/1874–Circa 31/12/1969
Series ID 7645

Alphabetical Registers of Letters Received
Circa 1/9/1874–Circa 31/1/1921
Series ID 14241

Letterbooks
These letterbooks are letters sent by the Mines Department and the Geological Survey of Queensland officials. They include correspondence with mining wardens, other departments, private organisations and individuals. Subjects include administrative issues, geological reports, records of assay samples and artesian water supplies, Inspectors of Mines records.

Letterbooks
26/6/1874–31/1/1921
Series ID 14246
Letterbooks of the State Mining Engineer (Chief Inspector of Mines)
30/1/1883–31/1/1921
Series ID 18220

Letterbooks
Circa 1/8/1877–Circa 30/6/1923
Series ID 7060

Local Mining Warden's office records
Mining Warden's records include: registers of claims; leases; water rights; miners rights; warden's court minute books; cash books; miners homestead leases; statistics of machinery and mining production, tailings areas, and workers compensation claims. View an online example of Warden's Office records in the online index Miners rights 1874–1880.

Lands Department

Mineral Selections Registers
Circa 1/1/1868–Circa 31/12/1883
Series ID 10364
These registers record details about land granted as mineral selections to individuals, groups, or companies. Each selection is numbered in sequential order. There is an index to holders of the selections in the front of some volumes. Information given in the register of grants of mineral selections includes name of selector, location and acreage of selection, a description of the land, and which mineral is to be mined.

Residential tenures on gold and mineral fields
Miners Homestead Lease card registers are a useful starting point. Early residential tenure on goldfields was the town allotments where holders of business licenses had erected buildings on when the town reserve was surveyed; refer to Goldfield Town Lands Act 1869. Miners homesteads were provided for in the Goldfields Homestead Act 1870. Holders of miner's rights, business licenses, and other authorised adults with six months residence on the goldfield could apply for homesteads of up to 40 acres. Residence applications were recorded in either registers of residence areas or in registers of applications for all forms of mining tenures for the local Mining Warden's Office. For more detail view Brief Guide 48 Miners Homestead Leases.

Other sources of information

- An early Queensland State Archives' guide - Pathways – Mining (1982) is available in the Public Search Room. For the complete list of records in our collection, search ArchivesSearch (the Queensland State Archives catalogue).
- For published information including annual reports presented to Parliament for the Mines Department from 1877, the Government Geologist, Inspectors of Mines and Geological Survey Reports on Mining Fields and prospecting expeditions, search the Queensland Votes and Proceedings on microfilm in the Public Search Room.