



CELEBRATING THE PAST:
The Growth of Amateur History in South Australia

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Should this thesis fulfil the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy I consent to it being made available for photocopying and loan.

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ABSTRACT

South Australians have formed numerous organisations to celebrate and preserve the past. However, compared with residents of the other states of Australia and of the United States, the other settler-society in the new world, they were late to form societies to commemorate their history.

This thesis attempts to explain the reasons for the tardy development of historical organisations and in South Australia through a comparison of developments with the United States and the rest of Australia. Chapters one to six trace the growth of amateur history in the United States, in the other Australian colonies/states, and in South Australia over three periods - from settlement of each region until 1920; from 1921 until 1945; and from 1946 until 1974, the year the Historical Society of South Australia was founded. While the main focus of the study is South Australia, for each time period the thesis looks first at developments in the United States and then at the movement in the other Australian states, highlighting similarities and differences in the commemoration of history in both regions. It then details the growth of historical awareness in South Australia. The study outlines where South Australians followed the models already in place in the other two regions, and where they acted independently.

Chapters seven and eight analyse the current state of historical organisations in the three regions, and explore possible reasons for the staggering growth of amateur history in the last 30 years. Chapter Seven examines responses to a questionnaire sent to officials of historical organisations in the United States, the other Australian states, and South Australia. The data elucidate the similarities and differences in the development of amateur history between the three regions. In addition, they challenge the often unsubstantiated claims proposed by commentators to explain the phenomenal growth in historical awareness among the general public. Chapter Eight focuses on South Australia and reviews data obtained from a questionnaire sent to individual members of historical organisations. The collected information provides a profile of membership of historical groups in South Australia and again questions the reasons for the rise in amateur history.

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CELEBRATING THE PAST:

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VOLUME I



INTRODUCTION

South Australians proudly celebrate the early settlement of their state and have formed numerous organisations to accomplish this. The Historical Society of South Australia concentrates on the history of the whole state while other societies research and record the history of their own local area. Many of these societies also operate museums that preserve artefacts relating to the history of their district. Other societies have formed solely to operate local historical museums. Thousands of South Australians belong to genealogy and family history societies and delve into their own family backgrounds. Members of all these organisations, and many other South Australians, have written copious volumes detailing the local history of their regions or the background and exploits of their families. Yet, compared with residents of the other states of Australia and of the United States, the other settler-society in the new world, South Australians were late to form societies dedicated to recording and commemorating their past. This thesis attempts to explain the reasons for the tardy development of popular history in South Australia through a comparison of developments in the three regions, namely the United States, the rest of Australia, and South Australia. It also examines why, in each of the regions, the number of history-based groups has mushroomed from the 1960s.

The discipline of history at the present time is divided into three broad levels. At the top stands academic history, which trained scholars pursue in universities. Its practitioners have interests in periods of history dating back to ancient times and in multifarious aspects of society. Academic historians carry out research that is generally, although not always, of interest only to their fellow academicians or to their students, some of whom are potential academics. Although the number of historians employed in universities has increased greatly since the Second World War, it would currently be less than 1000 throughout Australia and the number is declining. The next level of history is professional history. Professional historians usually have some academic training and make their living by writing commissioned histories of businesses or other institutions, or by working in a history-related field outside the academy such as a museum. This branch of history has developed only over the last 20 years, prompted by both a decline in employment opportunities for historians in the academy and a growing interest in

recording their past for posterity by local governments, businesses and other organisations. The number of such historians is fewer than those employed in universities. Academic and professional historians combined make up only a fraction of those devoted to the third level of history, amateur history, whose practitioners number in the tens of thousands.

Most amateur historians have no academic training and receive no compensation for their efforts. They eschew the grandiose visions of their trained colleagues and generally concentrate on the minutiae of the past. Since they concentrate on a confined area, usually the town or suburb in which they live, they are known as local or community historians and, because they write for a general, non-academic audience, the history they produce is often referred to as popular history. They show their interest in history in various ways: by founding or joining historical societies that research the history of their towns; by founding or joining museum committees that collect and display artefacts relating to their towns; by founding or joining heritage groups that work to preserve old buildings, monuments and open spaces; by founding or joining descendants or genealogical groups that record and venerate the lives of ancestors; or by writing histories of their towns. Academic and professional historians practise a craft in which they were trained and which is their bread and butter. But why ordinary people preserve the past or form organisations to commemorate the history of their area is less clear.

Amateur history is the oldest method of recording history. From the earliest civilisations some men (and initially they were nearly always men) chronicled events of the past. In the nineteenth century, particularly in the United States of America, the number of amateur historians increased. These historians, who came primarily from the educated classes, began to unite together in societies to collect and preserve documents and relics relating to the past, to commemorate the history of their own regions, and to advocate the preservation of buildings connected with founders and great statesmen. Other Americans formed genealogical or hereditary groups to memorialise their ancestors and their deeds. Still others, sometimes but not always members of these groups, researched the history of their own locality and published their efforts in sizes ranging from small pamphlets to monstrous tomes.

Whereas Americans were proud of their founding, their revolutionary war heroes and their democratic heritage, Australians had no illustrious past nor few propitious events to celebrate. Yet from the beginning of the twentieth century Australians also combined to commemorate the foundings of the various states and then local areas, to lobby for the preservation of colonial buildings, and to form hereditary societies, and individuals recorded and published histories of their towns, districts and families. The only state that had beginnings that it could unreservedly celebrate, since it was founded without convicts, was South Australia. But South Australians lagged behind those from the other Australian states in forming societies to celebrate the past.

For many years in the United States researchers have written on the development, growth and relevance of popular history. Many historical societies have published their own histories as either articles in their journals or as separate books. In addition, several books look at the development of a group of societies. These are Leslie Dunlap's *American Historical Societies 1790-1860* (1944); Walter Muir Whitehill's *Independent Historical Societies: An Enquiry into Their Research and Publication Functions and Their Financial Future* (1962); and Clifford L. Lord's *Keepers of the Past* (1965), which contains biographies of the founders of some early historical societies. The American Association for State and Local History has produced many publications that include an outline of the growth of the movement. David Van Tassel, in *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America 1607-1884* (1960), studied the contribution local historians have made to the development of historical studies in the United States. He analysed the early growth of historical societies in frontier communities and the impetus for the writing of popular history. Wallace Evan Davies' *Patriotism on Parade: The Story of Veterans' and Hereditary Organizations in America 1783-1900* (1955) examined the development of descendants' groups. In *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s* (1988) David Russo looked at the writing of local history by amateur historians. Charles B. Hosmer Jr. has written two hefty volumes on the development of the preservation movement in the United States, *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement before Williamsburg* (1965) and *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National*

Trust, 1926-1949 (1981). Cultural historians have also acknowledged the relevance of amateur history and its place in the formation of an American cultural identity. Michael Kammen discussed history-based groups in *Selvages and Biases: The Fabric of History in American Culture* (1987) and *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1991). Volumes that include articles which critically assess the growth and direction of amateur history include Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig's *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (1986) and *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (1989), edited by Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig. Added to this, numerous contributions in journals discuss the development of popular history and examine its place in modern society. Thus Americans for a considerable time have recognised the field of amateur history and have recorded and analysed it.

Australia has a much more limited historiographic tradition in this area. As in the United States, several societies have written their histories either as contributions to their journals or as separate publications. *Australians: A Guide to Sources* (1987), edited by D.H. Borchardt and Victor Crittenden was the first individual volume to provide an overview of the writing of Australian history. Brian Fletcher, in *The 1888 Centenary Celebrations and New Developments in the Writing of Australian History* (1988) and *A Passion for the Past: Writers of Australian History in New South Wales 1900-1938* (the John Alexander Ferguson Memorial Lecture, delivered in 1990) put the writing of Australian history in the context of the times. Fletcher was the first in Australia to recognise the importance of historical organisations to the development of Australian history when he incorporated the founding of the Royal Australian Historical Society and several local historical societies in his study *Australian History in New South Wales 1888-1938* (1993). Two special editions of *Australian Historical Studies*, *Making the Bicentenary* edited by Susan Janson and Stuart Macintyre (1988) and *Packaging the Past? Public Histories* edited by John Rickard and Peter Spearritt, include articles on the public celebration of history. These, with Tony Bennett's *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy* (1988) are comparable to Benson *et al.* and Leon and Rosenzweig. *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*

(1994) edited by Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton is a pioneering work on assessing the power of memory and the presentation of history in Australia. But no researcher has produced a comprehensive history of the growth of historical societies, historical museums, genealogical and hereditary groups, or the preservation movement in Australia. Thus this thesis is the first attempt to trace these manifestations of popular history. Further, since most Australian history is written about the east coast or from an east coast perspective, its concentration on South Australia helps to balance the presentation of Australian history.

While a comparable rise in interest in local history occurred in the United Kingdom at the same time as in the United States, the comparison of developments in South Australia and in the rest of Australia with the United States is apposite for several reasons. Both America and Australia are settler societies in the new world that drew the majority of their first white settlers from the British Isles, with a small percentage from northern Europe, and then experienced a massive inflow of people from other European and non-European countries. From the nineteenth century social commentators repeatedly have compared Australia with America and viewed the United States as a model for the newer nation of the new world.¹ This view continued and some Australian nationalists, for example members of the Australian Natives' Association who published *Our Australia* in the 1920s, and contemporary cultural historians such as Richard White,² Stephen Alomes³ and John Rickard,⁴ believe Australia to be either in danger of becoming, or indeed even as already being, a replica of America. Given that the United States acted as a model for many developments in Australia, it is interesting to discover if the amateur history movement in Australia was another example of Australia following in the footsteps of the United States. If the movements prove to be unrelated, another consideration is whether the forces that motivated individuals to write about and to preserve aspects of their history differed in each country or, despite the disparate foundations of Australia and the United States, were similar. The comparison between

¹ See Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*. Sydney (1981), pp.48-62; L.G. Churchward, *Australia and America 1788-1972. An Alternative History*. Sydney (1979), p.183.

² *Inventing Australia*.

³ *A Nation at Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*. Sydney (1988).

⁴ *Australia: A Cultural History*. Melbourne (1988).

South Australia and the other Australian states is also relevant. South Australia, with its idealistic foundations, its settlers drawn from the non-conformist religions, and with its planned settlement, resembled both the New England colonies, which formed the first historical societies in the United States, and the midwestern regions of the United States, which established historical societies often before they gained statehood. Therefore it is pertinent to discover whether South Australians followed the American precedent, emulated the movement in the other Australian states, or, conversely, followed their own path. The most important question in this work is why South Australians, who alone of all Australians could unreservedly be proud of their heritage, were so late in forming both a state historical society and local historical organisations.

Although its proponents often do not consider state history to be synonymous with local history,⁵ for the purposes of this thesis local history includes the study of a town, a city, a region or a state. This is because amateur historians provide the major portion of membership of both state and local historical societies. In addition, when the state historical societies began in New South Wales (1901), Victoria (1909), Queensland (1913) and Western Australia (1926), the populations of these states were considerably less than that of their capital cities now. Members of these groups considered the areas outside their city to be as much a part of their own lives as they were of the residents of these rural towns. Moreover, the current population of South Australia is less than one and a half million people, considerably less than the population of either Sydney or Melbourne. Thus state history fits into the criteria of local history.

The work focuses on the formation of historical, museum, genealogical and preservation societies, since these are all evidence of the growing interest in history among the general public. Because professional historians are few in number and difficult to categorise, I have excluded them. However, the study does include a brief discussion of

⁵ For example, Ian McLaren states that "the term 'local' differentiate[s] it from 'national,' 'state' or 'general' histories", "Local History in Australia", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.26 (1954), p.2; see also Ian McLaren, "Sources of Local History", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.37 (1966), pp.104-107, where he lists six categories of local history but does not include state history; and John J. Alderson, *A Handbook for Historical Societies*, Havelock, NSW (1967), p.12, who claims that state history is a different category from local history. The fact that the organisation of historical societies in the United States calls itself The American Association for State and Local History indicates that in that country, while local and state history have similarities, they are regarded as essentially different.

the development of academic history in the three regions to provide context and to show interaction between amateur and academic history. Local, state and federal governments and their financial assistance to societies, initiatives to establish historical museums, and legislation to protect the built environment receive greater attention since often such activity was vital to the foundation and/or continuation of a society or to the preservation of a building. The thesis also looks at the writing of local histories by non-academic historians because this provides a graphic example of the growth of the amateur history movement. The thesis does not look at histories of businesses or companies because professional historians usually write these. Nor does it examine histories of institutions, schools, churches and similar organisations since inclusion of these would make the work unmanageable. Because the expansion in the writing of family history is a fairly recent phenomenon, this genre is not included. Also excluded are reminiscences, biographies and autobiographies since these are primarily concerned with recording the lives of individuals, although at times they do give detailed accounts of particular periods or places.

The societies studied in this thesis are non-profit, membership organisations. Most preserve and transmit the heritage of a given political or geographical unit, however some focus on forms of machinery or on workplaces. Some historical societies include museums while in other instances independent societies with similar aims to historical societies have formed specifically to operate their own museums. Genealogical groups comprise both societies with membership restricted to descendants of first settlers or participants in a specific event, and organisations with open membership that concentrate on researching and writing family history. Preservation groups focus on saving aspects of the physical environment. These heritage groups are not always linked with historical societies, but the preservation of the built environment is a valid expression of an interest in the past, particularly where groups aim to convert the preserved buildings to historical museums or if they include in their objectives research into the history of the buildings they wish to save. The thesis, however, does not consider residents groups that are simply concerned with the amenity of their area. While preservation also embraces the natural

environment, the work examines only those organisations that have given equal or greater attention to the built environment.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Chapters One to Six trace a comparative history of the growth of amateur history in the United States, Australia and South Australia from settlement of each region until 1974. A brief history of the early societies in the United States and of the growing interest in that nation's history provides the framework for comparison of the development of the movement in Australia, and particularly in South Australia. This permits contrasts and correspondences while also highlighting instances of direct influence. A history of the growth of historical societies in the other Australian states, particularly of the state societies, emphasises the different pattern of development of the movement in South Australia. Since the primary aim of the thesis is to study the evolution of amateur history in South Australia, the work concentrates on events in South Australia. It provides a detailed history of the development of historical, museum, genealogical and preservation groups and the writing of local history, and attempts to explain why certain individuals initiated societies dedicated to preserving the past. The first part of the thesis finishes in 1974, the year that South Australians at last formed a state historical society.

Chapters Seven and Eight of the thesis explore the reasons for the foundation of history-based societies in the three regions and, in particular, the staggering growth in their number and membership since the 1960s. Social commentators and historians have suggested many reasons for this growth, including dissatisfaction with the present and fear of the future, increasing nostalgia for a 'golden' past, widespread suburbanisation and industrialisation resulting in destruction of the known landscape, and an increasingly educated population with greater leisure time to pursue interests and hobbies. Most commentators have formed their conclusions from a general analysis of society but do not appear to have consulted the actual participants in the movement.

To untangle the multitude of reasons posed for the formation of history-based societies and their increase in the last 30 years is an imposing task. I decided that the most appropriate starting point was the societies and their members, and formulated two sets of questionnaires. The first questionnaire was sent to presidents/secretaries/ chairmen

of a randomly selected group of historical organisations in randomly selected states in the United States of America, to a randomly selected group of historical organisations in the other Australian states, and to each historical group in South Australia. Its purpose was to gain a comparative overview of the current state of historical organisations in the three regions and to ascertain whether, despite the different periods of gestation and disparate beginnings of each region,⁶ the societies are now analogous. The second questionnaire was sent to members of historical societies in South Australia in an attempt to discover why people join historical groups.⁷

This is the first study that compares the growth of amateur historical institutions in the United States and Australia, outlines the development of local history and preservation in Australia, furnishes a detailed chronological account of the development and growth of amateur history in South Australia, and provides a current overview of the state of the local history movement in America, Australia and South Australia.

⁶ Clearly the United States is not a unified region. However, since the study is considering the current state of the historical movement and regional differences are declining, it is appropriate to consider it as one region.

⁷ A survey of the three regions would have given a greater understanding of the history movement, but was impossible because of constraints of time and resources. Additionally, as the focus is on South Australia it was important to expand on the information outlined in Part 1.



CHAPTER ONE

Part I: "A Nation of Joiners" - The Birth of Amateur History in the United States of America, 1607 to 1920

The first stirrings of a historical consciousness in the United States of America occurred in the New England area. While the southeastern part of the country was the first settled, the northeastern region developed at a faster rate and from 1630 population rapidly increased. Towns developed, enabling the inhabitants to establish cultural institutions and other amenities of town life. Because of the relatively high level of literacy and the increasing prosperity of its inhabitants, the area evolved into the intellectual centre of the fledgling colonies. New Englanders were the first to develop an American identity, and this, combined with the value they placed on education, led to an attitude of superiority among the intellectual class. Although many of the heroes of the Revolution of 1776, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, came from Virginia, New Englanders assumed much of the credit for freeing their country from English rule and regarded themselves as custodians of the ideals of their revered leaders.

It is not surprising then that the first historical society in the United States originated in the Northeast. In 1791 the Calvinist clergyman Jeremy Belknap founded the Massachusetts Historical Society to provide a safe refuge for the papers of the founding fathers. Thirteen years later Belknap's associate John Pintard founded the next historical society, the New-York Historical Society. Isaiah Thomas initiated the American Antiquarian Society in 1812, based in Worcester, Massachusetts. In the 1820s, prompted by increasing pride in American achievements, historical societies commenced in Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, all northeastern and mid-Atlantic states.¹ Provincial pride was not the sole motivation behind the New Englanders' penchant for history. Their religious background encouraged them to believe that law and order were products of preceding generations, and they regarded the past as a model for and a disciplinary agent in the present. By forming commemorative societies they hoped that the fine deeds of the country's founders would be preserved and serve as exemplars to succeeding generations. The formation of these societies ensured that New Englanders

¹ Dixon Ryan Fox, "Local Historical Societies in the United States", *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 13 (1932), p. 263.

dominated the history business. From the early nineteenth century the history of the United States became the history of the New England area, with the remaining regions relegated to footnotes.

Nevertheless, citizens from other regions also formed historical societies. In the South state societies formed in Georgia in 1831, in Maryland in the early 1840s, and in South Carolina in 1855. The sparseness of the population attributed to the South's dilatoriness, and the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 further curtailed historical activity in the South. The southern view of history became limited and insular as a consequence of defeat. Not until the early years of the twentieth century did southerners throw off the shackles of the Civil War and take an interest in their own past. In an intriguing development midwesterners formed historical societies before or soon after the territories gained statehood. The Indiana Historical Society began in 1830, and the Ohio Historical Society in 1831. In 1838, a mere three months after the establishment of the Territory of Iowa, the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser* published the following plea: "Almost every state of the union can now boast of its Historical Society ... Why, then, we have often asked ourselves, is Iowa without one?"² In 1854 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin developed from a private state society formed in 1846, two years before Wisconsin achieved statehood. In the middle period of the nineteenth century the confidence that Americans had in their future and the romance and myth that had developed around the expansion to the West inspired the pioneers to establish societies to record their struggles and achievements. Midwesterners believed that their region was as important as the Northeast.³ While no monuments or revolutionary war sites existed in these areas, the remains of Indian civilisations abounded. These relics, along with reminiscences of pioneers and the preservation of the memoirs of the first settlers, were among the earliest concerns of the western societies.

² Leslie Dunlap, *American Historical Societies 1790-1860*. Philadelphia (1974), pp.11-12. Five years later a historical society was inaugurated in Burlington and the present state association formed in Iowa City in 1857.

³ Julian P. Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies in the United States", *The American Historical Review*, Vol.15 (1934), p.23.

By the centennial of the American Revolution in 1876 the United States boasted 70 historical societies, mainly in the states east of Texas.⁴ While the first societies were generally state-wide, county historical societies also developed. The oldest was the Essex Institute, established in 1848 at Salem, Massachusetts. As population increased towns and villages formed historical societies to gather every fact about their early years.⁵ Societies sponsored lecture series, placed historical markers and called attention to important places and dates in their localities' histories. State societies concentrated more on research and publishing activities than did the smaller, more introverted local societies. Thus, historical organisations began to specialise as local history become more defined.

Societies in the Northeast remained private bodies. However, in the Midwest historical societies were often financed almost completely by state governments since the transience of the population made it difficult for any cultural organisation to survive.⁶ The legislatures and prominent citizens encouraged historical societies because, along with schools, churches and branches of fraternal lodges, they assured existing and potential settlers that civilisation had reached the regions.⁷ Historical societies in the Northeast concentrated on a limited and learned audience while societies in the Midwest disseminated information among the general public.⁸ These different approaches equated with the attitudes espoused by a majority of the educated population in each of the regions. The societies in the Northeast were elitist, even exclusionist, in their membership and generally attracted professional men who could advance their prestige. In contrast, the state-supported societies in the more recently settled and egalitarian West regarded it as their mission to educate the general public, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

⁴ In fact at least 111 historical societies had organised by 1860 but as William Rawle commented in his first address as President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, then as now, many societies were "marked only by vivacity of inception, apathy of progress, and prematureness of decay". Quoted in Boyd, p.22. Of the 65 historical societies in existence in 1860 about half were still active in 1944. Dunlap, p.vii.

⁵ David Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: An Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America 1607-1884*. Chicago (1960), p.101.

⁶ Larry Gara, "Lyman Copeland Draper", in Clifford L. Lord (ed.), *Keepers of the Past*. Chapel Hill (1965), p.44.

⁷ Van Tassel, p.96.

⁸ Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies: An Enquiry into Their Research and Publication Functions and Their Financial Future*. Boston (1962), p.564.

Founders had mixed motives for initiating historical societies. Some were writing histories and wanted help in collecting materials,⁹ while others hoped that a celebration of their state's history would restore its self-esteem and prestige.¹⁰ George H. Callcott contends that it was "a single moving spirit brimming with enthusiasm for collecting and studying history" that inspired the founders, and maintains that men initiated and joined historical societies because of a desire for intellectual companionship and an interest in the past.¹¹ Clifford L. Lord attributes the growth in the number of historical societies to a reverence for the deeds of the founding fathers and a growing sense of nationalism.¹² Dunlap considers that patriotism, state pride, a recognition of the importance of preserving old records, and a respect for ancestors were equally important reasons for individuals forming historical societies.¹³ Americans were proud of their past and were keen to preserve evidence of their achievements, particularly of the legacy of the Founding Fathers and the heroes of the Revolution. As a result of jingoism, Spanish-American War fervour and a "*fin-de-siècle*" introspection, this reverence for the past increased during the later part of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ The development of an American literature (in particular James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving), the evolution of a national language, and the creation of indigenous folk heroes (such as Davy Crockett) also increased feelings of patriotism and paralleled the growing interest in history.¹⁵

But other forces were at work, and in the later nineteenth century fear and uncertainty prompted the founding of specialist societies devoted to commemorating the past. Many 'old' Americans worried that the immigration, industrialisation and urbanisation of the late nineteenth century were disturbing the fabric of American society,

⁹ George H. Callcott, *History in the United States 1800-1860: Its Practice and Purpose*. Baltimore and London (1970), pp.35-36.

¹⁰ Randolph Roth, "Why Are We Still Vermonters? Vermont's Identity Crisis and the Founding of the Vermont Historical Society", *Vermont History*, Vol.59, No.4 (1991), pp.197-198.

¹¹ Callcott, p.36.

¹² Clifford L. Lord, "By Way of Background", in Lord (ed.), *Keepers of the Past*, p.4.

¹³ Dunlap, p.12.

¹⁴ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York (1991), p.179. However, in *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* Kammen points out that a contrary attitude also existed, and still exists, in America and that Americans have an undeveloped sense of tradition and little regard for their past. See esp. chapter 1.

¹⁵ Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore and the Historian*. Chicago (1971), pp.94-107.

replacing its homogeneous, rural character with a society diversified in national origin, cultural inheritance and religion. Americans who could trace their ancestors back to the early days of settlement formed exclusive hereditary societies based on descent, and by 1895 there were 22 such groups.¹⁶ Members of these patriotic ancestral groups believed their associations acted as bulwarks against the destructive forces of society and ensured the continuation of the American way of life.¹⁷ By using history to inculcate patriotism in the newcomers, old Americans appropriated the past for their own ends.

These patriotic hereditary societies were predominantly the preserve of the cultural elite. They originated either in New York City or Washington and flourished in the urban areas of the Northeast. They did not prosper to the same extent in the Midwest since the region lacked a closely-settled population and contained a high immigrant population that did not fulfil the membership requirements. Even if Midwesterners had the necessary background to join such groups they had no facilities to enable them to trace their genealogies. Moreover, the region showed less enthusiasm for such societies since it contained no reminders of either first white British settlement, or the Revolution or the Civil War, the principal foundations of the ancestral societies.

In the years to 1920 the astounding growth in the number of state and local historical societies - from 70 in 1876 to over 400 by 1904 - resulted from the positive stimuli of patriotism, the various anniversaries of Revolutionary and other events beginning in 1876, personal needs and ambitions, and the negative reactions to fear and uncertainty caused by increasing immigration, changing social structures and loss of identity. However, the temper of the times facilitated the formation of these groups. In the second half of the nineteenth century, history increasingly occupied a vital place in the minds of Americans. Historical themes dominated in architecture, painting, theatre and poetry; popular magazines carried large quantities of material on history; and popular historical journals proliferated. Americans began to regard an interest in the past as a sign

¹⁶ Eugene Zieber, *Ancestry: The Objects of the Hereditary Societies and the Military and Naval Orders of the United States and the Requirements for Membership Therein*. Philadelphia (1895).

¹⁷ See David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill, N.C. (1990); ¹⁷ Wallace Evan Davies, *Patriotism on Parade: The Story of Veterans' and Hereditary Organizations in America 1783-1900*. Cambridge, Mass. (1955); and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*. New Brunswick, NJ (1955), pp.32, 53, 75.

of cultural maturity, and historians became eminent among men of letters.¹⁸ Other factors included the social attractions provided by historical societies;¹⁹ increasing leisure time, enabling an educated and wealthy elite to pursue historical activities and to delve into family background; urbanisation; sustained economic growth; and the expansion of the rail network. These forces also prompted the foundation and growth of other groups, and in 1885 the *National Tribune* commented that "organisation into groups is the law of our community today ... Our population has become so large, and our social system so complex, that subdivisions into societies ... has become imperative" to compensate for the decline in "neighbourliness". In the last two decades of the nineteenth century associationalism flourished. For example, membership in Masons, Odd Fellows and Elks increased to two and a half million by the end of the century, and during the nineties more than three hundred new fraternal benefit societies formed. This was because Americans, being both gregarious and nationalistic, were "a nation of joiners".²⁰ Historical organisations were simply one manifestation of a general trend, although an important and long-lasting one.

National feeling had begun to overshadow state loyalties in the decades following the War of 1812, and the greater availability of transport permitted people from distant regions to gather together, allowing the growth of national organisations. Amateur historians formed their own national organisation, the American Historical Society, in Washington in 1835, but it was short-lived.²¹ A national magazine, *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America*, which aimed to facilitate communication between local historical societies, began in 1857 and continued until 1875.²² In 1904 the American Historical Association recognised the increasing importance of local history and created a Conference of State and Local Historical Societies.²³

¹⁸ Callcott, pp.25-26.

¹⁹ Davies, p.119.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.1,28,44.

²¹ According to Whitehill the Society ceased to exist in 1839 (p.174), but Davies mentions it as still being in existence in 1876 (p.60).

²² Dunlap, p.120.

²³ For a history of the American Historical Association and the interaction between its amateur and professional (that is, academic) members, see David D. Van Tassel, "From Learned Society to Professional

The participation of women in the history-based groups is interesting. Urbanism and increased leisure gave ample time for women from the elite classes to engage in activities outside the home. These women believed they were living in the era of the "new woman" and often expounded that the nineteenth century was "essentially woman's century". So many women's organisations, including abolitionist groups, temperance leagues and suffragists, flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century that in 1898 one small town, "with less than five thousand inhabitants, boast[ed] forty secret Orders for women, thus largely dividing the time, energies and finances of those interested."²⁴ Nevertheless, women only rarely joined historical societies. It was not just an educated elite that controlled the presentation of America's past, it was an educated male elite.

However, women were initially at the forefront of historic preservation. The first protest against destruction of old buildings began in Boston in 1808 with the threatened demolition of the "Old Brick" meeting house. The growth of female participation in the preservation movement coincided with the escalating interest in areas outside the home and the growing influence of the women's emancipation movement. Women also became involved in genealogy, and female hereditary groups formed soon after their male counterparts. Ancestor hunting became particularly the pastime of unmarried women who, with no children of their own to concern them, devoted their time to their forebears.²⁵ For patriotic purposes and to enhance a sense of an American past, female ancestral associations agitated to preserve historic sites and buildings.²⁶ Women became the conservators of the past and acquired responsibility for transmitting civic values and

Organization: the American Historical Association, 1884-1900", *American Historical Review*, Vol.89 (1984), pp.929-956.

²⁴ Quoted in Davies, p.56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.47.

²⁶ Jill Conway suggests that women became more active in public life whenever women of a marriageable age outnumbered marriageable males. Society was then forced to consider some role for them outside the family. Thus the upsurge of feminism in the northeast United States in the 1840s and in England in the 1850s when there was a surplus number of marriageable females because of the outmigration of males to the West or to the colonies. "Gender in Australia", in Stephen R. Graubard (ed.) *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium*. Sydney (1985), pp.349-350. The growth of women's interest in preservation and in genealogical pursuits occurred during this period, and a similar explanation may partly account for their participation in these activities, particularly since so many unmarried women were involved.

loyalty to the state.²⁷ This, combined with a strong tradition of voluntary activity and stress on the education of women, produced a class of women who played prominent roles in public life. However, women stayed at the forefront of preservation only so long as it concentrated on patriotism. When architectural merit became the criterion for saving a building, men took the lead.

The first state preservation organisation, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, formed in 1888 to preserve sites associated with the first permanent English settlement, and also to restore several buildings associated with the revolution and its heroes. In the preservation of the nation's heritage, as in the settlement of America, Virginia had taken the lead. But again Massachusetts gained pre-eminence. In 1910 William Sumner Appleton founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. The New England society broadened the idea of preservation and advocated the retention of any interesting early building regardless of its connections. The first government moves to protect America's heritage occurred in 1916 when the Department of the Interior established the National Park Service. This organisation looked after both the natural and built environment and took a leading role in the preservation movement in the United States.

The buildings preserved and the reasons for preserving them changed between the nineteenth century and the 1920s. In the 1850s the preservers had hoped that retaining reminders of the Founding Fathers would heal disunity between the northern and southern states. After the Civil War they believed that reflecting on the past in the preserved historic buildings would encourage a new sense of national dedication. Later in the nineteenth century, preservationists thought that contemplation of the simple, rugged pioneer life of earlier settlers would act as an antidote to materialism. With the waves of immigration in the 1890s they hoped that the preserved buildings would help Americanise immigrants. During the Spanish-American War and World War I they visits to historic sites were encouraged to bolster militant loyalty to American traditions.²⁸

²⁷ Jill Ker Conway, "Frontiers of Nationhood: the US and Australia", *The Sydney Papers* (Spring 1993), pp.140-141.

²⁸ Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg*. New York (1965), pp.298-300; Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History

Sometimes, however, there were other more insular reasons. After the Civil War wealthy individuals in the South preserved and restored their own homes in an effort to retain their standing and as a challenge to those with newly-created wealth. Throughout the whole period some citizens in the South and the West retained vestiges of their heritage as a defence against the cultural and political hegemony of the northeastern seaboard.²⁹

Interest in the preservation of houses connected to prominent early Americans and their conversion to house museums became popular during the late nineteenth century. Hasbrouck House, built in 1725, was the first historic house museum and opened in 1850. Mount Vernon, Washington's plantation home, opened as a museum in 1860 and became the model for the preservation of the homes of other influential men. By 1910 middle-class professionals and civic leaders had restored and preserved over 100 historic houses and had opened them to the public as museums. To preservation groups such as the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities these restored buildings became cultural emblems and symbolised the social order prevalent before mass immigration.³⁰ Some historical societies also assembled collections and opened them to the public. Most house museums presented formal displays but in 1909 George Francis Dow of the Essex Institute reproduced a lived-in atmosphere and clothed his three female guides in dress appropriate to the period. This was the first living history museum in the United States and was the forerunner of a movement that expanded in the 1920s and 1930s.

The federal government also supported the presentation of American history. The historical collection of the United States National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution had accumulated slowly since 1840. It increased dramatically after the Museum acquired more than 40 freight cars of artefacts that had been displayed at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876. As with the historic house museums, the National Museum emphasised great men and patriotic acts, and served as a shrine to America's past.³¹

Museums in the United States", in Susan Porter Benson *et al.*, *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Philadelphia (1986), p.141.

²⁹ William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. Pittstown, NJ (1988), p.30.

³⁰ Warren Leon and Margaret Piatt, "Living History Museums", in Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (eds), *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*. Urbana (1989), p.65.

³¹ Gary Kulik, "Designing the Past", in Leon and Rosenzweig, pp.7-9.

While it is impossible to find out who belonged to the early historical organisations or how many members they attracted, broad membership trends can be outlined. In the 65 societies in existence by 1860, membership probably averaged between 25 and 200. Although most had only a handful, in 1860 the New-York Historical Society had approximately 1500 members. Surprisingly, many of the founders of these gentlemen's clubs were relatively young. All of the founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society were under 50, and seven of the 11 organisers of the New-York Historical Society were under 35.³² As membership was often by proposal, undesirables could be blackballed and some societies limited their membership to men from the educated professional classes. Included in the 268 original and associate members of the Maine Historical Society were 160 lawyers, 56 clergymen, 16 physicians, and some professors, merchants and 'gentlemen'.³³ Foundation membership of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, the local historical society of Deerfield, Massachusetts founded in 1870, read like a 'Whos Who' of the County.³⁴ Historical societies in the western states differed from those in the Northeast and attracted, and accepted, members from humbler backgrounds. This was probably because the Progressive Era, a time of political reform and increased educational opportunities, influenced the West earlier and to a greater extent than it did the remainder of the country. These forces, combined with increasing affluence in the community, changed the focus of historical societies and broadened the interests of their members.³⁵

The egalitarian ethos of the Midwest was one reason for the failure of ancestral or hereditary groups to prosper in the region. But the more stratified social structure in the

³² Dunlap, pp.23,25.

³³ Edward P. Alexander, "The Rise of American History Museums", in Bryant F. Tolles, Jr., *Leadership for the Future: Changing Directorial Roles in American History Museums and Historical Societies*. Nashville (1991), p.8.

³⁴ David Russo, "The Deerfield Massacre of 1704 and Local Historical Writing in the United States", in Paul Fritz and David Williams (eds), *The Triumph of Culture: 18th Century Perspectives*. Toronto (1972), p.327.

³⁵ Lord, "By Way of Background", p.4.

East proved fertile ground for these organisations. Like the early historical societies, hereditary societies discriminated in their membership, thus attracting a high proportion of persons of distinction.³⁶ Eligibility did not necessarily mean admittance, and membership was by invitation in many of the societies. Their small size was often their strongest appeal as it added to the exclusiveness. While most members came from the elite classes of society, particularly in New England, the rising fear of immigrants encouraged many recruits from the economically and socially less secure. This latter group clung to ancestry as a badge of distinction in an increasingly urbanised and heterogeneous society, and though membership of a hereditary society was at times an economic luxury, to some it was an emotional necessity.³⁷ Of course, leadership remained reserved for the upper members of society. Ancestral societies, antiquarian associations and local history groups often had overlapping membership, and growth in one group could prompt the expansion of another. The Historical Society of Connecticut revived in the late nineteenth century because aspiring members of hereditary societies needed proof of ancestry. Since only members could use the society's library, potential Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution joined to use its genealogical records.³⁸

Not only the native-born formed historical societies in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Some immigrant groups were fearful themselves of losing their respective cultures. At the same time, these groups wanted to blend into the new society. Formation of immigrant historical organisations met these diverse needs, and from the 1880s many immigrant societies formed to remember the deeds and hardships of their ancestors. The American Jewish Historical Society inaugurated in 1892 both to preserve the distinctive Jewish culture and to show the contributions made by Jews to the United States.³⁹ But other immigrant historical societies played down the origins of their members in their attempt to achieve respectability and acceptance among the Anglo-Saxon elite. During the first two decades of the twentieth century the American-Irish Historical Society, whose members came largely from the professions, preserved a history

³⁶ Davies, p.79.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.49.

³⁸ Christopher P. Bickford, *The Connecticut Historical Society 1825-1975: A Brief Illustrated History*. Hartford, Conn. (1975), p.73.

³⁹ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, p.233.

based on Irish-American contributions to the American revolution, thus ignoring the heritage of the pioneers who made up the bulk of Irish immigrants.⁴⁰

History interested a far greater number of Americans than those who actually joined historical and hereditary societies. Many Americans pursued this interest through reading or writing about the past. Early writings concentrated on single events that had left a mark, for example Indian attacks and massacres or, in the Northeast, on colony-wide histories cast in a religious mould that attributed many events to the hand of God.⁴¹ As with the formation of historical societies, northeasters were pre-eminent in the writing of history. Puritanism, with its support for education and its appeal to the past for guidance and as a means of keeping the community together, had bolstered the founding of historical societies. So too, these ideals supported the writing of local history. Like membership in the northeastern historical societies, the writing of local histories was the preserve of the educated establishment to whom it was both a hobby and an expression of a love of the past. The writers concentrated on a small upper class, usually of founding families, and ignored the development of communities from rural, agricultural, cohesive small towns into industrial centres with substantial immigrant populations. For the few early local historians not from the wealthy classes, the study and writing of history provided an antidote to the tedium of earning a living.⁴² As with the founding of historical societies, motivation for writing local histories came from varied stimuli. Some local histories were written to attract immigrants. Others were commercial volumes that included stories and photographs of as many people as possible.⁴³ Yet other histories promoted local and national heroes and mentioned every 'important' person associated with the region.

When national histories began to appear after the American Revolution, local histories retained their popularity since Americans retained their colonial allegiance. After 1815, in response to growing nationalism and to inter-state competition and because

⁴⁰ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton (1992), p.69.

⁴¹ David J. Russo, *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s*, New York (1988), pp.9-10.

⁴² Callcott, p.72.

⁴³ James C. Neagles, *The Library of Congress: A Guide to Genealogical and Historical Research*. Utah (1990), p.46.

different regions wanted due recognition in national chronicles, fact-laden histories proliferated, particularly in the Northeast. They were partisan to family, town, state or region and still often served to lure settlers into new areas.⁴⁴ From the 1840s these histories became so common that in a survey of local histories in 1846 Hermann E. Ludewig noted, "No people in the world can have so great an interest in the history of their country, as that of the U.S. of North America: for there are none who enjoy an equally great share in their country's historical acts."⁴⁵ Writers also believed it was their duty to commemorate the pioneers.⁴⁶ During the nineteenth century historical societies often commissioned local histories and utilised their newly assembled collections of documents and artefacts. Written histories also became an outlet for memorialising the lives of forebears, another aspect of the worship of ancestors. The midwestern region again demonstrated its egalitarianism, and in 1912 historian Dwight Goss advised members of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society that it was "not necessary to become a student in an advanced class of a great university" to write local history, all aspiring authors needed was to be observant.⁴⁷ Southerners continued to object to the Northeast's assumption of the principal role in the settling of the United States and in its struggle for independence. They also railed against the version of southern history presented by northern historians. In 1895 John Lesslie Hall of the College of William and Mary in Virginia advised members of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities to:

weed out of your libraries those nauseous volumes filled with lying abominations which, under the name of history, are teaching the youth of Virginia that they are sprung from convicts and felons rather than from the flower of the Anglo-Saxon race.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ As explained in the Introduction, the definition of 'local history' used in this study includes 'state' history; likewise it includes regional history and family history. The main criterion is that the history is written by an amateur historian. National histories have been excluded because, since the beginning of this century, these have been written primarily by academic historians.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means*. Nashville (1986), p. 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Quoted in D.D. Parker, *Local History: How To Gather It, Write It, and Publish It*. New York (1944), p.xi.

⁴⁸ James M. Lindgren, "For the Sake of Our Future'. The Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the Regeneration of Traditionalism", *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol.97, No.1 (1989), pp.53-54. Convict descent had the same unfortunate connotations in America as it did in

The development of history as an academic discipline from the late nineteenth century slowly began to override such a partisan approach to history.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century interest in the American past splintered into three distinct categories. Historical societies in general retained a membership drawn from the educated and wealthier sections of society and concentrated on recording the history of their towns or states. Adherents of genealogy devoted their energies to unearthing dry facts and dates connected with the lives of ordinary people. While genealogical and hereditary societies attracted members from the upper sections of society, many ordinary Americans also joined these groups. The new professional historians, usually associated with universities and colleges, concentrated on national history, great events and important people, and gave scant attention to local manners and customs or to ordinary people. This professionalisation of history changed the content of some written histories since the new writers analysed rather than simply related events. The first professor of American history was George Washington Greene, appointed to Cornell University in 1871.⁴⁹ Friction developed between the new young academics and the generally older amateur historians. In 1897 the academic historian John Franklin Jameson chided state and local historical societies for lagging behind their French and German counterparts in their contributions to knowledge, for their tardiness in improving the quality of their publications, for concentrating on the events on and preceding 1776, and for misusing funds to satisfy the voracious interest in genealogy.⁵⁰ Conversely, the more established amateurs did not want the academics 'treading on their patch' and in some cases restricted access to manuscript material. As late as 1910 the voluntary librarian of the Massachusetts Historical Society would not let graduate students from Harvard University use the society's card catalogue.⁵¹ This distrust between amateur and

Australia, and southerners as well as Queenslanders, New South Welshmen and Tasmanians attempted to mask it. New Englanders, as did South Australians, gloried in their purer past!

⁴⁹ History had been taught in colleges for a considerable time before this. Jared Sparks was the first professor of civil history in an American university when he was appointed McLean Professor of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard College in 1838. However, Greene's was the first appointment to concentrate on United States history.

⁵⁰ John Higham, "Herbert Baxter Adams and the Study of Local History", *American Historical Review*, Vol.89, No.5 (1984), p.1237.

⁵¹ The extent of the professionalisation should not be exaggerated. As late as 1911, 70 per cent of the members of the American Historical Association were amateurs and it was not until after the Second World War that academic historians predominated. Terrence O'Connell, "Pitfalls Along the Path of Public History",

professional historians was particularly evident in New England. In the midwestern states relations between the two groups remained cordial, where many state historical societies developed close and fruitful relationships with the history departments in their state universities while continuing to serve the historical interests of the general population.⁵² So again regional differences in approaches to history are apparent in the United States.

Whatever the different development patterns and objectives, by 1920 amateur historical organisations, genealogical societies,⁵³ preservation groups and historical museums had appeared throughout the United States, as had histories of states, regions and towns. The majority of the participants in this history movement were amateurs with no historical training who studied the past of their local area for the love of it. They had formed or joined historical societies for many reasons including enthusiasm for collecting history, desire for intellectual companionship, recognition of the importance of the preservation of old records, and respect for ancestors. Some of the originators of historical organisations had founded them for their personal benefit. While all groups appropriated the past to suit their own ends, this was particularly the case with the ancestral and hereditary associations, which hoped that public celebration of the past would unify the nation. But combined with all these impulses for forming and joining historical organisations was a sense of pride in being American, patriotism for the new country, and reverence for the founding fathers (whether of the revolution, of New England, or of small provincial towns).

Despite the vastly different beginnings and early histories of the two countries Australians by the 1920s had also formed societies to celebrate their past.

Part II: "The 'First Fleet' ... was no Mayflower" - The Birth of Amateur History in Australia, 1788 to 1920

The founding of Australia bears no similarity to the beginnings of the American colonies. Australia's first settlers comprised the gaoled and their gaolers, and free

in Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Briar and Roy Rosenzweig (eds), *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Philadelphia (1978), p.239.

⁵² Higham, p.1237.

⁵³ These included both the ancestral and hereditary organisations, which had restricted membership, and broad-based genealogical societies to which anyone could belong.

immigrants did not come in large numbers until the gold rush in Victoria in the 1850s. Unlike the Northeast of the United States, Australian settlement of the eastern colonies lacked a substantial religious basis. This is not to say that religious beliefs were ignored in New South Wales. The Anglican church was the state church in the early years, while a large minority of Irish convicts and free settlers were Catholics. American Puritans believed the past provided a model for the present and hence encouraged historical endeavours. However, in Australia neither of the predominant religious groups promoted contemplation of the past since both feared this would cause further segregation in a society already divided on sectarian lines.⁵⁴ Moreover, there was little in the past of the majority of the early settlers that *could* provide a model. Even after transportation ceased, settlers displayed more interest in opening up the land and in making money than in considering the foundation of Australia and the relevance of this to the present and the future. The convict beginnings of the colonies continued to haunt the new Australians well into the twentieth century. And unlike the settlers in America's western states, who looked back at previous Spanish settlements or to Indian civilisations to provide a past for their raw settlements, the newcomers to Australia ignored the history of the Aborigines, believing Australian history began only with the arrival of the white man.⁵⁵

The reverence afforded to ancestors in the United States provided the first stimulus in Australia to form an association to commemorate the past. During a visit to government offices in Pennsylvania George Coppin was impressed by the respect given to those who had participated in the founding of the nation:

⁵⁴ Brian Fletcher points out that even in the second half of the nineteenth century both these churches feared that history, if taught in secular institutions, could undermine religious belief or even give an advantage to opponents or rivals. Brian H. Fletcher, *Australian History in New South Wales 1888-1938*. Sydney (1993), p.3. See also K.S. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists*, Melbourne (1974), pp.82-84 for a comparison of the approaches to religion in the foundations of Australia and the United States; and Patrick O'Farrell, "The Cultural Ambivalence of Australian Religion", in S.L. Goldberg and F.B. Smith (eds), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge (1988), pp.8-9 and Alan W. Black, "The Sociology of Religion in Australia", *Sociological Analysis*, Vol.51: (1990), pp.35-36 on attitudes to religion in Australia.

⁵⁵ Flora Eldershaw, "History as Raw Material for Literature", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.20 (1934), p.15; see also "Headlong Lines by a Policeman" (Launceston, 1843) quoted in G. Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*, Melbourne (1957), p.59. Australians collected Aboriginal artefacts but, because they considered Aborigines to be outside history, they did this in the interests of science. See also Graeme Davison, "The Australian Heritage Movement", in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*. Melbourne (1991), p.14 and Chris Healy, "Histories and Collecting: Museums, Objects and Memories", in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*. Melbourne (1994), p.33.

a tall, ungainly American thrust his arm over our shoulders, [pointed] to a name upon the list, and said, "I guess that was a great man - that Mr. Jenkinson. Indeed, I replied, we have not heard of him, the names of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and others are familiar, but we have not heard of him. Very likely, very likely, he said. They were all A. I. at talking, but for results, he was worth all the others put together. I know, he repeated. He was my grandfather ... I feel proud ... I began to wonder if the Old Colonists of Victoria would ever feel, and act like that gentleman.⁵⁶

In May 1869 shortly after returning to Melbourne he formed the Old Colonists' Association of Victoria, which aimed "To assist necessitous Old Colonists, To promulgate facts relating to the early history of The Colony, To promote the advancement of native born Victorians, and to encourage friendly recognition between the Members." All those who had lived in Victoria for 25 years, and their descendants, could join.⁵⁷ Despite intending to record the early history of the colony the association concentrated on the charitable aspects of its charter by providing old folks' homes.⁵⁸

The first attempt to found a society dedicated solely to the study of history was also in Victoria when in 1885 Robert T. Litton initiated the Historical Society of Australasia.⁵⁹ As with the Massachusetts Historical Society, only professional and educated men could join because, "The average Australian ... was perfectly indifferent to the bygone history of this splendid land ... The study of history in its widest sense must be left to the select few - the aristocracy of the intellect."⁶⁰ Similar to the early American historical societies, it had broad aims: "the cultivation and advancement of the study of History, more especially as it relates to the Australasian Colonies, and the collection of information for the compilation of a complete and accurate History of Australasia."⁶¹ David Blair explained at the inaugural meeting that *Chambers Encyclopaedia* contained only an inch and a half of information on the discovery of Australia, and much of this was wrong. He considered it the duty of the new society to separate fact from legend and

⁵⁶ Archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. The Old Colonists' Association. Extract from a journal written by George Coppin.

⁵⁷ Coppin.

⁵⁸ Residents groups, pioneer societies and old identities associations also sprang up in a number of rural towns in Victoria from the late 1860s to the 1880s. In general, each aimed to gather information on the early history of the town and to collect and preserve associated documents and relics. See Healy, pp.45-46.

⁵⁹ Litton, a stock and share broker, also established the Geological Society of Australasia and edited its *Transactions* and its journal, the *Australian Scientific Magazine*.

⁶⁰ Melbourne *Argus*, 9 May 1885.

⁶¹ Archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Historical Society of Australasia.

produce a truthful history of Australia.⁶² Thus, unlike the early American societies it seems that Blair was not interested in veneration or mythmaking.

Victoria spawned the first historical society in the Australian colonies because of the wealth generated by the gold rushes. Some Melburnians had acquired the education, motivation and leisure to pursue an interest in history. New South Wales did not share to the same extent in this wealth and hence displayed less vitality and optimism. Thus, the prevailing social conditions in Victoria combined with the emerging Australian nationalism of the 1880s provided fertile ground in which historical study could grow.⁶³ Initial membership was between 50 and 70 but the society failed to prosper, meeting only about five times in 1885 and 1886.⁶⁴

Historian Peter Biskup attributes the failure of the society to the hectic lives led by Melburnians of the time. But these men would have been no busier than those in the United States who initiated or joined historical societies, nor than those who later founded or joined successful historical societies in Australia. In 1891, in his introduction to a volume of papers delivered at the meetings of the society, Litton stated:

It has long been the intention of the members of this Society to infuse more spirit and energy into its composition than has hitherto existed. No adequate efforts to attain that end have as yet been made by reason of the speculative excitement of recent years, which has disturbed all classes of society. But it is now hoped, while there is a temporary lull, to establish the Society on a practical basis, and, by a system of continuous and united action, to carry out the objects originally proposed.⁶⁵

In other words, the Historical Society of Australasia failed because of Melbourne's uncertain financial climate.

Citizens of Ballarat, again in Victoria, were the next group formally to preserve their past when in 1896 they formed the Historical Records Society. It aimed to collect and preserve documents so that the town's history would be remembered and studied in the future. It did not start on barren ground since one of its founders, W.B. Withers, had published *A History of Ballarat* in 1870. This society organised at the same time as other

⁶² *Argus*, 9 May 1885.

⁶³ Peter Biskup, "The Historical Society of Australasia, 1885-6", *Australian Cultural History*, No.8 (1989), p.17.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁶⁵ Robert T. Litton, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Australasia*, Melbourne (1891), p.iii.

local community groups, including the School of Mines, the Town Mission, the local football league, the Ballarat Club, numerous state schools, the South Street Society, the Fine Art Gallery and the Old Colonists' Society. In this it seems to equate with the situation in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century when associationalism flourished. Ballarat also appears to resemble the emerging towns in the American West, where the development of such organisations cemented the towns' cultural reputations. But in his history of Ballarat, Weston Bate ascribes the formation of the Historical Records Society to the stabilisation of the population resulting from the depression of the 1890s, the dwindling gold reserves and the ageing of Ballarat's pioneers. He claims that the declining population encouraged the older inhabitants to dwell on their former achievements, and pioneers formed the society because they were proud of their youthful days.⁶⁶ In the United States, Americans generally founded historical societies in a mood of optimism about future prospects whereas in Ballarat the locals formed the society because the past looked better than the future.

Unlike the situation in America, when the centenary of the revolution in 1876 had encouraged an interest in history, no anniversary prompted the citizens of New South Wales to establish a society to record their past. The *Sydney Bulletin* compared the Australian centenary with the centenary of American independence and pointed out that the celebrations in the United States were held "not on account of an empty flight of years, which pass alike for man and beast, for the noble and the ignoble, the slave and the freeman, but in honour of the triumph of liberty over grasping tyranny."⁶⁷ The commemoration of history remained stifled because of the problem of the foundations of the colony, and in 1888 the *Sydney Morning Herald* printed a history of the first fleet without reference to the convict passengers.⁶⁸ The *Melbourne Age* distanced Victorians from the centenary celebrations because they "are not a hundred years old, and do not enjoy the privilege of tracing our *genus et proavus* [birth and ancestry] to the sturdy

⁶⁶ Weston Bate, *Lucky City. The First Generation at Ballarat: 1851-1901*. Melbourne (1978) pp.189-191.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Tony Bennett, "Introduction: National Times", in Tony Bennett *et al.*, *Celebrating the Nation: A Critical Study of Australia's Bicentenary*. Sydney (1992), p.xii.

⁶⁸ Stuart Macintyre, "The Writing of Australian History", in D.H. Borchart and Victor Crittenden (eds), *Australians: A Guide to Sources*, Sydney (1987), p.16.

thieves and beggars who were landed on the shores of Sydney Cove."⁶⁹ While by the late nineteenth century associations were common, and economists, artists, zoologists and naturalists, to mention a few, had formed professional societies, and amateurs had established the Geographical Society and the Royal Society, not until 1911 did historians gather as a separate group at the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science.

Several prominent citizens of Sydney moved in 1898 to form a historical society, principally to encourage the New South Wales government to provide a home for the storage of a collection of Australiana, with an accompanying endowment of £70,000, offered by bibliophile David Scott Mitchell.⁷⁰ These initiatives failed and no historical society formed until a dispute about the exact date of the laying of the foundation stone of St. Philip's Church prompted contributors to the debate to found the Historical Society of Australia (Royal from 1918). It began more with a whimper than a bang. The five men who attended the initial meeting in the Sydney Town Hall on 30 October 1900 passed a resolution to form the Australian Historical Society and then adjourned until 6 November, hoping for a larger audience. A provisional committee called a public meeting on 15 March 1901 to inaugurate the society. Membership remained small; only 19 had joined by the end of that year and not until 1910, when it had 177 financial members, was the society on a secure footing.

The founders probably modelled their organisation on societies in the United States since one of the early movers, Edward Dowling, had recently been to America and had perhaps come into contact with historical societies in that country. The founders took the history of all of Australia as their brief. They never intended to be concerned with merely 'local' history and rejected the name 'The Sydney Historical Society', insisting that the society's interests should cover the whole of Australia.⁷¹ Despite this intention, the

⁶⁹ Quoted in Bennett, p.xiv.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.17. The New South Wales government did not accept the offer until 1906, and even then many of the legislators still regarded the collection as a "lot of convict rubbish".

⁷¹ D.I. McDonald, "Ward Havard and the Royal Australian Historical Society", *Canberra Historical Journal*, New Series No.11 (1983), p.29. Jacobs claims that Mitchell had little to do with the foundation of the Society and that no evidence exists to support the claim that he influenced the naming of the Society. Marjorie Jacobs, "The Royal Australian Historical Society 1900-1985. Part I. 'Students of a like hobby': the Society 1900-1954", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.73 (1988), p.247.

society restricted its interest to New South Wales, implicit in the resolution carried at a meeting on 30 November 1900 that the society concentrate on preserving the early history of the colony.⁷² Andrew Houison, the first president, stated in his introductory address on 15 March 1901: "The history of New South Wales and its pioneers is a history worth studying, and such a society ... would give valuable help in the collection and preservation of the necessary materials."⁷³ Most of the 217 members in 1914 came from Sydney, with a few from the suburbs and the rural areas of New South Wales. E.A. Petherick, a bookseller and collector of Australiana in Melbourne, was the sole interstate member. If the membership for this year is taken as representative, then the society was indeed local from the outset.

However, it *was* an 'amateur' society. In contrast to the membership of early societies in the Northeast of the United States but similar to that of societies in the American West, history was a hobby indulged by its members in their spare time.⁷⁴ Academic scholars and public figures who are usually associated with the founding of the society actually played only a marginal role. Of the five principal founders, only one had any academic training and three of the five were or had been public servants. Men of the cloth continued to be well represented in the early office bearers. Moreover, of the 13 office bearers only four lacked letters after their names. Again using the 1914 membership figures as an example, ten were Reverends, six were medical doctors, ten others had university degrees, eight had the title of Honourable, three were designated as Sir and five had a military rank. The remaining 145 males were just plain Mr, but presumably a further study would show that many held prominent public or private positions. So, while the premier New England historical societies probably had a higher concentration of educated members, the Australian Historical Society was similar in that it was the professional men who held office. Although women joined the society from its inception, they remained a tiny minority. Of 30 female members in 1914, ten were connected with a male member. The only notable female member was Grace Hendy-

⁷² K.R. Cramp, "The Australian Historical Society - The Story of its Foundation", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.4 (1917), p.11.

⁷³ Andrew Houison, "Introductory Address read before the Society", 15 March 1901. *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.1 (1901), pp.13-14

⁷⁴ Jacobs, p.247.

Pooley, who wrote extensively on the local history of New South Wales and published historical items in newspapers and in historical journals.

Historic preservation did not achieve the same prominence in Australia as in the United States in this period. While in 1899 Captain Cook's landing site at Kurnell became the nation's first proclaimed historic site,⁷⁵ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries few Australians cared about retaining their early buildings. However some grand homes were saved. In 1910 the New South Wales government bought Vaucluse House, originally home to pastoralist, explorer and politician William Charles Wentworth, restored it and opened it as a public museum. Local historians such as C.H. Bertie of the Royal Australian Historical Society drew attention to the "charm" and "romance" of Sydney's early buildings,⁷⁶ but did not imagine that they could stop their destruction. The Local Government Act 1919 provided for preservation of buildings, but local councils rarely utilised this option. The federal government first entered the field of historic preservation in 1919 when Prime Minister Billy Hughes legislated to save Kirribilli House.

Members of the Australian Historical Society noticed the changing character of Sydney but did not have the resources to purchase or restore any property, nor did many think this necessary. Instead they compiled a photographic record of many of the early buildings.⁷⁷ Unlike some American historical societies, the society did not concern itself with saving the homes of famous forebears, and the collection and preservation of artefacts and records and the compilation of a chronology of interesting Australian events were its main aims.⁷⁸ But some members *were* aware of the need to save reminders of the past and approved of the veneration with which many Americans regarded their history. In 1907 Frank Walker questioned the values of the "'money-making' establishment" and called for the preservation of the historic landmarks of Sydney.⁷⁹ As did American

⁷⁵ Max Bourke, "The Preservation of Historical Places", *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol.51 (1980), p.5.

⁷⁶ Graeme Davison, "The Australian Heritage Movement", in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*, Sydney (1991), p.15.

⁷⁷ Houison stressed this in his introductory address: "Year by year old land marks are being removed to make room for modern improvements, and in each year the hand of death is laid upon some of the older inhabitants. Of those who helped to make its history but few now remain." Houison, p.13.

⁷⁸ Fletcher, *Australian History*, p.45.

⁷⁹ Frank Walker, "The Historic Landmarks of Sydney: Their Need of Preservation, *Art and Architecture*, Vol.4 (1907), p.88.

preservationists, Walker recognised the educational and patriotic value of mementoes of the past. He suggested that the statues of pioneers and explorers surrounding the Lands Office be re-sited in the Botanic Gardens or Parks "where, legibly inscribed, they would undoubtedly convey a more striking lesson to our youth, and possibly arouse some patriotic feeling and interest in the lives of those who had their part and parcel in the 'making of Australia.'"⁸⁰ During these years residents of the other states remained unconcerned about saving their historic buildings.

Despite the coincidence of the formation of the Australian Historical Society and federation of the Australian colonies, patriotism played no part in the foundation of the society.⁸¹ Thus, while the first historical societies in the United States formed to revere the Founding Fathers and to preserve the ideals of the American Revolution, Australia had no such obviously edifying personages or occurrence to commemorate. Australia had convicts, who were best ignored, self-serving politicians, and strong ties with its former colonial mistress. Some Australians did revere James Cook and equate him with the Pilgrim Fathers, and in 1899 at the dedication of a memorial at Cook's landing place, Joseph Carruthers proclaimed that, "As Plymouth Rock is the most sacred ground to Americans, so may this historic place, rich in its traditions, be the one place in our island continent more consecrated than any other to the great man who first set foot upon our shores."⁸² This wish was never fulfilled. Cook was just one of Australia's hand-me-down English heroes whose main exploits occurred outside Australia; later heroes were mainly bushrangers and explorers.⁸³ Furthermore, while America could celebrate its unique political structure and its constitution, Australia had only a derived political heritage.

The catalyst for the establishment of the Historical Society of Victoria, the next historical society to form in Australia, was an article in the *Argus* on 20 March 1909 in which W.J. Hughston called for the collection of the reminiscences of early colonists. On a visit to America, Hughston had come across an American student who was researching

⁸⁰ Walker, p.88.

⁸¹ Jacobs, p.244.

⁸² Quoted in Chris Healy, *The Training of Memory: Moments of Historical Imagination in Australia*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne (1993), p.34. Healy's thesis details the growing iconography of Cook in Australia.

⁸³ For a complete discussion of Australia's heroes, see Manning Clark, "Heroes", in Stephen R. Graubard (ed.), *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium*. Sydney (1985), pp.57-84.

Australian land legislation. This student was amazed that Australia did not have even a lectureship in Australian history and emphasised the value of university training in history. He advised Hughston to form a league with a catchy name and to go out, talk to the pioneer settlers and write down their reminiscences.⁸⁴ The newspaper article led to a meeting between Hughston, A.W. Greig and E.A. Petherick, the sole interstate member of the Australian Historical Society. With others, they inaugurated the Historical Society of Victoria at a meeting on 21 May 1909. Like the historical societies in the northeastern region of the United States and the Australian Historical Society, the Historical Society of Victoria elected leading members of the community to its council. It also encouraged the establishment of local societies to search out the history of their own portion of the state.⁸⁵ In 1911 the Rev. George Cox established the first sub-branch at Yarram, South Gippsland. While no other branches formed before 1920 interest in Victoria's history was spreading. But this was not along the lines approved by the society and the president, W. Harrison Moore, regretted that, "the promoters of such movements are not yet alive to the advantages of organised co-operation."⁸⁶

In the early twentieth century some Australians also began to acknowledge the importance of their own personal heritage and to unite to commemorate their ancestors. Considering the hated 'convict stain' it is interesting that the first such hereditary organisation in Australia, the Australasian Pioneers' Club, formed in New South Wales.⁸⁷ In his discussion on the formation and work of historical societies in New South Wales, Brian Fletcher comments that "there was a concern lest the establishment of a society devoted solely to investigating and discussing Australia's past reveal unpalatable and embarrassing facts" that persisted after 1900. Yet he makes no mention of the irony that Douglas Hope Johnston founded the Pioneers' Club in 1910.⁸⁸ Johnston, the great-grandson of an officer of the First Fleet, promoted the club to "foster mutual help and

⁸⁴ The Melbourne *Argus*, 20 March 1909.

⁸⁵ Report of Council for Year ending 30 June 1911, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.1 (1911), pp.155-156.

⁸⁶ Report of Council for Year ending 30 June 1913, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.3 (1913-1914), p.86.

⁸⁷ This is primarily a club where members dine and meet with other members from all over the world. However, as one of its objectives was the promotion of Australian history, and in particular the achievement of the pioneers, I have included it in my study.

⁸⁸ Fletcher, *Australian History*, pp.41,46-47.

friendship among the descendants of pioneers, to foster the pioneering spirit in Australasia, and to promote the study of Australasian history."⁸⁹ It had a restricted membership based on residence, and existing members could veto new applicants. Johnston expected the club to attract members from the successful descendants of pioneers, which indeed it did. While descendants of convicts could join, the pioneers referred to in speeches given by leading members of the club were always governors, explorers or wealthy pastoralists and land holders. At the Annual General Meeting on 31 July 1913 some members unsuccessfully attempted to introduce a rule excluding the descendants of convicts.⁹⁰ While the club never approved a formal ban, perhaps those with lower social standing or with 'unfortunate' ancestry were simply denied admission, as was the case with the descendants' groups in the United States. Indeed, the founders admired the American groups, and in his speech opening the clubhouse, Edmund Barton urged members not to leave out "the Mayflower Club, which commemorates one of the most stirring and momentous episodes in the Empire's History."⁹¹

Despite the intention to promote the study of Australasian history few members displayed any interest in preserving or celebrating Australasia's past. The first president, James Cox, was a founding member of the Australian Historical Society and Johnston, founder and second president, also belonged to that society and displayed a keen interest in Australian history. Another early member, Milton F. Johnson, requested each member to provide details of his pioneer ancestor that would be bound in volumes which "would be unique in the annals of any country". He exempted members from furnishing any confidential information, thus alleviating the embarrassment of having to divulge details of a convict forebear.⁹² A later president, R.J. Black, supported the club's historical objectives and in 1917 appealed for the collection of reminiscences and biographies of the pioneers for the club library. In 1918 he set up a committee to organise historical lectures but these ceased in 1920. He regarded the Royal Australian Historical Society as

⁸⁹ *Australasian Pioneers' Club. An Introduction.* (Leaflet handed out to prospective members).

⁹⁰ Undated appeal for members written by D. Hope Johnston sometime before the inaugural meeting on 2 May 1910. P.D. Lark and R. McKenzie, *A History of the Australasian Pioneers Club, Sydney 1910-1988.* Brisbane (1988), Appendix 2.

⁹¹ Lark and McKenzie, Appendix 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*, letter dated 29 November 1913, Appendix 5.

a "kindred institution, in sympathy with us in many ways" and loaned club memorabilia to the society for some of its exhibitions.⁹³ Notwithstanding this occasional individual interest, history remained a minor concern for most members.

While the Australasian Pioneers' Club was the first hereditary group in Australia, it was not the first manifestation of an interest in ancestors. The success of the various biographical listings of notable colonists and their achievements published at the end of the 1880s shows that colonials were taking an interest in who they were, where they had come from and what they had achieved.⁹⁴ Also, as in the western states of America, a 'cult of the pioneer' developed. Beginning particularly in the late nineteenth century Australians developed a pride in the early (free) settlers who had suffered hardships to found the new nation, and pioneers were honoured, as had already happened in Victoria with the Old Colonists' Association. In the absence of renowned statesmen, explorers became symbols of greatness, and colonists granted them the same respect and veneration they bestowed on pioneers. Growing urbanisation fuelled the reverence for pioneers, since settlers viewed cities as dangerous to racial and national health.⁹⁵ This coincided with the increasing interest in forebears in the United States. In addition, the industrial unrest current throughout the 1890s perhaps encouraged this regard for ancestors, as similar conditions had bolstered the formation of hereditary societies in the United States.

The Royal Australian Historical Society did not follow the same pattern as the Historical Society of Victoria, and in New South Wales independent local societies formed. Lack of direct involvement by an established group was perhaps the reason for the failure of a proposed historical society in the Hawkesbury area, an early-settled district of New South Wales. In 1906 a local resident had suggested the creation of a society that would arouse the interest of younger members of the community and generate "a veneration for history and antiquarian research". This fell on deaf ears and the district did not form such a society for 50 years.⁹⁶ Where members of the state society did assist,

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁹⁴ These included T.W.H. Leavitt, *Australian Representative Men*, Melbourne (1887), 2 vols.; E. Digby (ed.), *Australian Men of Mark*, Sydney (1889), 2 vols.; P. Mennell, *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography: Comprising Notices of Eminent Colonists from the Inauguration of Responsible Government down to the Present Time (1855-1895)*, London (1892).

⁹⁵ J.B. Hirst, "The Pioneer Legend", in John Carroll (ed.), *Intruders in the Bush*, Melbourne (1982), p.31.

⁹⁶ Fletcher, *Australian History*, p.55.

success was achieved. In 1913 the 125th anniversary of the foundation of Parramatta, the state's second city, prompted several prominent citizens to approach the mayor and ask him to call a public meeting to found a historical society. Frank Walker, president of the Australian Historical Society, addressed this meeting. Both the Parramatta and District Historical Society and the Royal Australian Historical Society were amateur groups and both were concerned with local history. But the Parramatta society was the first historical group in New South Wales to confine its interests to a single district and to attract mainly local residents. Its council consisted of local politicians (the mayor was the first president), businessmen and representatives of the leading families; the society attracted members from the local area; and it restricted its objectives to collecting the history of the Parramatta district.⁹⁷

The only other historical society to form in Australia before 1920 was the Historical Society of Queensland. The society, inaugurated in 1913, differed from the other early historical societies in Australia since academic historians initiated it and remained connected with it. The two principal founders were F.W.S. Cumbrae-Stewart, foundation Registrar of the University of Queensland and also its part-time librarian, and A.C.V. Melbourne, who taught history and economics at that university. Moreover, one-third of the original executive had some connection with the university. As with the other societies, those on the founding council came from the upper section of the community and included two Hons., two parliamentarians, five with university degrees (including two professors), three military officers, and the obligatory reverend gentleman.⁹⁸ Included in the foundation membership were four Sirs, 14 members of parliament, six reverends, five with military rank, seven academics, three others with university degrees, two aldermen, four lawyers and judges, two medical doctors, and three with ISO following their names. Thus 50 of the 98 males in the society had some distinction; again an examination of the background of the remaining 48 males would no doubt reveal that many had some claim to fame. The ubiquitous E.A. Petherick, member of the Australian

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.48-49.

⁹⁸ Raphael Cilento, Presidential Address: "The Society's Approaching Jubilee", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.6 (1961-62), p.736.

Historical Society and of the Historical Society of Victoria, was a foundation member.⁹⁹ There were only five women members, three of whom had connections to male members of the society.

At its inaugural meeting A.C.V. Melbourne succinctly stated the reasons for founding the society:

The Australian differs from the Englishman. He is the product of his own environment and he demands a different treatment. Australian statesmen and Australian citizens must study the history of their own country; the one in order to appreciate the country's needs, the other in order to obtain a knowledge of his duty as a citizen.¹⁰⁰

But while Melbourne viewed Australian history as being a distinct entity, Australia remained part of Britain, and the principal object of the society was the study of the part of the British Empire that included Queensland, New Guinea and the near-by Pacific islands. In line with the increasing interest in pioneers the society also intended to collect genealogical and biographical information relating to the first settlers and their descendants. This was similar to the intention of the Historical Society of Victoria, as was its goal of forming sub-centres that would concentrate on the local history of their immediate area.¹⁰¹ The first branch began in May 1914, and Cumbræ-Stewart hoped that others would soon follow.¹⁰²

The beginnings of the Historical Society of Queensland appeared robust. Foundation membership of over 100 compared more than favourably with the early membership of the other state societies. However, membership declined rapidly, partly as a result of the First World War but also because of a decline in interest in Queensland history. Additionally, conflict developed between amateur and academic historians. In the

⁹⁹ Petherick was an 'inveterate joiner'. He was one of the earliest and greatest collectors of Australiana, was active in the Royal Society of Australasia, council member of the Victorian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia from 1910 to 1917, from 1913 to 1915 was vice-president of the Library Association of Victoria (formed 1912), and from 1909 to 1915 was a council member of the Historical Society of Victoria. For more information, see Peter Biskup, "Edward Augustus Petherick and the National Library of Australia, 1909-1917", in Peter Biskup and Maxine K. Rochester (eds), *Australian Library History. Papers from the Second Forum on Australian Library History. Canberra, 19-20 July 1985*. Canberra (1985), pp.75-99.

¹⁰⁰ Raphael Cilento, Presidential Address: "Historical and Archival Activities", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.5 (1955), p.1015.

¹⁰¹ While not in its original aims, the Australian Historical Society extended its objectives in 1905 to include the formation of branches 'wherever and whenever it may be deemed advisable.' McDonald, p.30.

¹⁰² Archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. 152/9, MS000504. Letter from Cumbræ-Stewart to A.W. Greig, Hon. Sec. of the Historical Society of Victoria, 6 June 1914.

Historical Society of Queensland, as in the other state societies, many members came from pioneer families. They were primarily interested in the deeds of their own ancestors and had little interest in an analytical approach to history. The antagonism to the university was probably also heightened by the generally low level of education among Australians at the time.¹⁰³ This animosity and distrust between the academic and the amateur again mirrored the situation in America.

While the preservation and publication of the papers and records of important statesmen was one of the principal reasons for the founding of historical societies in the Northeast of the United States, this was less important for Australian societies. The New South Wales government had financed publication of historical records before the formation of the Australian Historical Society. Using material in the Public Record Office in London, James Bonwick had transcribed sufficient material for the publication of eight volumes of *Historical Records of New South Wales* (1892-1901). Since the commonwealth government later broadened the scope of the project and oversaw the production of 31 volumes of the *Historical Records of Australia*, the Australian Historical Society did not institute its own program to publish the state's early records. Conversely, notwithstanding the fact that governments in Queensland (1883) and Victoria (1885 and 1886) had also employed Bonwick to search out relevant records, the historical societies in these states aimed to publish historical documents and records.

In the United States the first historical societies formed before history was an academic discipline whereas in Australia they formed at about the same time that Australian history appeared on university syllabi. In 1891 the University of Sydney appointed its first professor of history, G.A. Wood. The first professor at the University of Melbourne to be a distinguished historian of Australia was Ernest Scott, appointed in 1912. Academic historians had the greatest connection with the Historical Society of Queensland, but to a lesser extent they became involved in the other two societies. Wood attended only one meeting of the provisional committee of the Australian Historical Society, in November 1900. He did not become active in the society until after 1915,

¹⁰³ For a history of the Society, see Peter Biskup, "The Politics of Preserving the Past: The Early Years of the Historical Society of Queensland", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.13 (1988), pp.289-306.

when his interest in Australian history had deepened. Three of the 27 members of the foundation executive of the Historical Society of Victoria had associations with the University of Melbourne. One of these, Ernest Scott, became chairman of the society in 1915 and president from 1921 to 1923. While the antagonistic relationship between the amateur and the academic in the United States was not as great in Australia, the friction between the two groups in the Historical Society of Queensland indicates that some problems existed. Nevertheless, academic historians provided professional expertise to the fledgling groups, and ensured their success.

No national historical museums formed in the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century. Perhaps, as Chris Healy suggests, this was because there was as yet "no generalised historical memory".¹⁰⁴ But even after Federation little support existed for museums dedicated to either local or national history, and contrary to the situation in America none of the early Australian societies established museums. Around 1916 the Australian Historical Society collaborated with the Australian Museum, the National Art Gallery and the Public Library of New South Wales to prepare a submission to the premier on the formation of a historical museum. However, the four parties disagreed on various aspects of the proposed museum and the idea lapsed.¹⁰⁵ The Australasian Pioneers' Club also showed an interest in collecting artefacts, and in a membership appeal Johnston listed the founding of an Australasian Pioneers' Historical Loan Collection as one of its aims. The club did collect many portraits of the nation's founders and early settlers, some of which it loaned to the Australian Historical Society for inclusion in exhibitions, but the collection did not develop into a museum. Some private individuals or proto-historical societies such as old residents groups or pioneer societies displayed miscellaneous items including natural history specimens, Aboriginal remains and artefacts, memorabilia from the original homelands of settlers, and a variety of relics of local identities or important events. The organisers of these collections delighted in securing and displaying 'first of' artefacts, for example items belonging to the first settlers in the area, or connected with the first shop.¹⁰⁶ Even though small and badly organised,

¹⁰⁴ Healy, "Histories and Collecting", p.42.

¹⁰⁵ Jacobs, pp.256-257.

¹⁰⁶ Healy, "Histories and Collecting", p.46.

these collections were the foundations of a collective memory for local inhabitants and served to build up feelings of pride and community spirit.

None of these museums received financial assistance from government whereas historical societies did obtain some government subsidies. In 1912 the state treasurer allocated £100 to the Historical Society of Victoria for the printing of "approved works".¹⁰⁷ In 1909 the New South Wales government granted an annual subsidy of £50 to the Australian Historical Society to help with publication costs of its journal, and in 1916 gave it a special grant of £40 to assist in the marking of places of historic interest. The society hoped that this would be an annual grant but it received it only once, forcing it to modify its program and to seek other funding. In 1915 the state Department of Education allowed the society free use of a lecture theatre and an office, and the government increased its subsidy to £250.¹⁰⁸ In addition the Premier, W.A. Holman, in 1919 gave £100, of £1000 requested, to subsidise the recording of reminiscences of pioneers. Again, because the amount was much less than hoped, the society curtailed the project, abandoning it in 1921.¹⁰⁹ The Historical Society of Queensland received no government assistance, despite lobbying by its patron Sir Hamilton Gould-Adams.¹¹⁰ It is a paradox that in the United States, the land of free enterprise, elected governments instituted and supported historical organisations. In Australia, where public support for private initiatives was expected, state and federal governments gave little assistance to societies dedicated to preserving the country's history. Politicians in Australia did not have the same high regard for the importance of history as did their American counterparts. However, local government played a major role in preserving, or assisting in the preservation of, local records and in the recording of local history. In 1898 Sir Matthew Harris, Mayor of Sydney, allowed the use of a room in the Town Hall for the preliminary meetings of the Australian Historical Society, and in 1917 joined the society. The Sydney County Council co-operated in the placing of historic markers.

¹⁰⁷ W. Harrison Moore, "Report of Council for Year ending 30 June 1912", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.2 (1912), p.177.

¹⁰⁸ K.R. Cramp, "Twenty-five Years of Progress, 1915-1940", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.27 (1941), pp.168-169.

¹⁰⁹ Jacobs, pp.253, 256, 257.

¹¹⁰ Biskup, "The Politics of Preserving the Past", p.292.

The foundation of the early historical societies followed a pattern repeated by later historical organisations in Australia. Some historical societies evolved from or were assisted by local progress associations or other pre-existing community groups. The press, both local and state, has been a powerful force in advocating and in supporting the formation and continuation of many of the societies. It reported the meetings of the Historical Society of Australasia,¹¹¹ the need for a photographic record of Sydney that renewed moves to form the Australian Historical Society,¹¹² the early moves to establish the Historical Society of Victoria,¹¹³ and the need for preserving Parramatta's past.¹¹⁴ Although patriotism was not the principal driving force behind the formation of these societies, they developed at a time when a feeling of pride in being Australian was spreading. The international exhibitions held in Sydney in 1879 and in Melbourne in 1880 and 1888 had proved the worth of home-produced manufactures.¹¹⁵ The *Sydney Bulletin*, begun in 1880, from the 1890s became an influential voice for Australian nationalism and republicanism, and during the same period the Heidelberg artists developed an indigenous style of painting. In the 1890s the leaders of the Australian Natives' Association in Victoria advocated adoption of 26 January, the date of arrival of the First Fleet, as a day of national celebration. Those who initiated or became founding members of the first historical societies championed the teaching of Australian history in schools, the preservation of untouched bushland and native fauna, and the erection of plaques to explorers. They believed that the "growing interest ... in the records of the past is plainly indicative of an advance in the development of national consciousness".¹¹⁶ By 1901 three-quarters of the population was Australian-born. The relationship to Britain, while strong particularly among the more well-to-do and conservative Protestant sections

¹¹¹ Melbourne *Argus*, 28 March, 9 May and 25 November 1885.

¹¹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 and 25 April 1900; 15, 17, 18 and 22 October 1900; 24 December 1901. Cramp recognised the importance of the press and commented "it does seem advisable to point out that the splendid advocacy by the *Sydney Morning Herald* of the formation of an Historical Society has not been sufficiently recognised in any past discussion on the subject. There is little doubt that the two articles appearing in the columns of that paper in April and October, 1900, and particularly the later article, provided the necessary stimulus to transform a potentiality into an actuality.", "The Australian Historical Society", p. 14.

¹¹³ Melbourne *Argus*, 20 March 1909.

¹¹⁴ Parramatta *Cumberland Argus*, 18 September 1912.

¹¹⁵ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, New York (1963), pp.306-307.

¹¹⁶ W. Harrison Moore, "Report of Council for Year ending 30 June 1913", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.3 (1913-1914), p.86.

of society, was slowly weakening. In the 1890s the social commentator Francis Adams noted of the inhabitant of the east coast cities, "all he knows or even cares for England lies in his resentment and curiosity concerning London."¹¹⁷

The national celebration of Empire Day on 24 May from 1905 exemplifies the dual loyalty of Australians. For many, this day was a celebration of the continuing ties of Empire, but republicans and some Irish-Australians rejected it, and from 1911 in New South Wales it was Catholic policy to celebrate 24 May as Australia Day.¹¹⁸ Paradoxically, despite drawing the majority of their membership from the class of society most likely to support links to Britain,¹¹⁹ historical societies upheld the idea that Australia had differentiated itself from the mother country. In a speech at the annual meeting of the Australian Historical Society in 1916 Peter Board, Director of Education in New South Wales, declared that Australia:

has an individuality that is not the inheritance from her forefathers. The Australian nation is not merely a group of British people living under southern skies. It is not merely a group of the sons and daughters of British people. Come in these latter days to greater maturity, this people is Australian with qualities of national character and modes of thinking and personal habits which differentiate it from what is purely British.¹²⁰

So while ties to Britain remained, in the early years of the twentieth century a growing national consciousness developed. And as in America, this pride encouraged the formation of societies to celebrate the national heritage.

No historical societies had formed in Tasmania or Western Australia in this period, probably in part because of their small populations. But it also could have been because the inhabitants had not overcome the shame of the convict past. In Tasmania the convict period had been particularly brutal, and in Western Australia it was still recent in time. In addition, these states had received fewer Irish immigrants, who were more likely

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Briggs, p.323.

¹¹⁸ Stewart Firth and Jeanette Hoorn, "From Empire Day to Cracker Night", in Peter Spearritt and David Walker (eds), *Australian Popular Culture*, Sydney (1979), pp.23-24. This was a result as much of sectarian bitterness as of national feeling, and Empire Day continued to be successful until overshadowed by the commemoration of Anzac Day after 1916.

¹¹⁹ One of the founding members of the Australian Historical Society, the Rev. Francis Bertie Boyce, was also leader of the British Empire League (founded in 1901) and worked for the adoption of Empire Day as a celebration to show patriotism and strengthen love of Empire. See Firth and Hoorn, p.18

¹²⁰ *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.3 (1910,1914), p.292.

to develop a sense of Australian identity, than had those states that had established historical societies. Nevertheless, Western Australians and Tasmanians did make some efforts to preserve their history. In Western Australia the public library collected records and other historical documents. In 1914 A.W. Greig of the Historical Society of Victoria wrote to J.S. Battye, Chief Librarian of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, asking for information on the recording of local history in that state. Battye sent details of the histories that had been published on Western Australia, on the few instances of local history and on the collecting of original sources.¹²¹ However, this correspondence did not prompt Battye to initiate a historical society. Tasmania began consolidating official records, and in 1902 the Royal Society of Tasmania published "The Walker Memorial Volume" containing a number of papers of historical value.¹²² Tasmanians lagged in instituting a historical society but in 1915 Tasmania became the first state in Australia to legislate to protect historic sites. In 1916, in a remarkable display of foresight and against some local opposition, the Tasmanian government proclaimed Port Arthur as a historic site.

From 1788, when Captain Arthur Phillip wrote about first settlement, Australians had recorded their history. Later, explorers wrote journals of their travels, the pioneers penned their memoirs and, as in the United States, histories designed to encourage new arrivals appeared. These early histories, appearing first in New South Wales, were broad in scope and covered the whole colony. The early historians wrote to influence English opinion and colonial policy as much as to inform Australian readers.¹²³ In the 1850s, after most colonies had gained self-government, historians no longer wrote to support the fight for liberty but to emphasise the remarkable progress of the colonies.¹²⁴ However, the early volumes had only limited impact since most colonists preferred reading British history.¹²⁵ In the 1860s and 1870s, although the titles included 'history', many of the

¹²¹ Archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Box 152/9 MS 000504.

¹²² Historical Society of Victoria, "Special Quinquennial Report, 1909-1914", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.4, No.1 (1914), p.2. Asa Briggs dates this nascent nationalism from the 1890s. See Briggs, p.317.

¹²³ John M. Ward, "Historiography", in A.L. McLeod, *The Pattern of Australian Culture*. Melbourne and Ithaca (1963), p.198; Walter Campbell, "Discovering Queensland History", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.14 (1990), p.165; Macintyre, "The Writing of Australian History", p.7.

¹²⁴ Ward, p.9.

¹²⁵ Fletcher, *Australian History*, p.2.

works published were merely lengthy real estate brochures to lure new settlers. Not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when locals outnumbered immigrants, did authors write equally for a local and an overseas audience.¹²⁶ From this time, writers who celebrated the feats of explorers, the exploits of bushrangers, the hardships of the pioneers and the mateship of the bushmen, achieved great popularity. These amateur historians did not write in a vacuum and were influenced by British, European and, particularly in the later part of the century as Federation approached, American writers.¹²⁷

The number of commercial publishing ventures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicates the widespread appeal of Australian history to readers in all parts of Australia, and between 1900 and 1913 cyclopaedias for New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia appeared.¹²⁸ As in America, publishers and authors produced commemorative histories that included biographies of well known citizens, usually written and paid for by these citizens.¹²⁹ While these histories celebrated local progress, their main focus was on prominent citizens.¹³⁰ As in America, the production of these pseudo-histories ceased at the outbreak of World War I because of wartime restrictions.

Local histories gained favour later than regional and national histories because the inhabitants of small towns usually disregarded their history. Stimulated by changes wrought by the gold rush, Victorians were the first to produce local histories. The first was *History of Ballarat*, written in 1870 by W.B. Withers, one of the founders of the Historical Records Society. Other early local histories in Victoria were Richard Osburne's *The History of Warrnambool* (1887) and William Earle's *Earle's Port Fairy* (1896). Hampered by their convict foundations, New South Welshmen lagged in the writing of

¹²⁶ Ward, p.204.

¹²⁷ Mark Hutchinson, "A Note on Nineteenth Century Historians and their Histories: 1819-1896", *Australian Cultural History*, No.8 (1989), pp.114-124.

¹²⁸ These and other ventures show a considerable amount of interstate associations: Hussey and Gillingham, an Adelaide printer, produced both the South Australian and Western Australian cyclopaedias; the Victorian firm of F.W. Niven and Co. published W.B. Kimberly's *History of West Australia* (1897). Kimberly, an American who arrived in Western Australia in 1880, also produced local histories of Ballarat and Bendigo for Niven.

¹²⁹ Ward, p.16.

¹³⁰ G.C. Bolton, "The Belly and the Limbs", *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol.53 (1982), p.15.

histories of their local areas. The fiftieth anniversary of settlement in 1838 received almost no attention and prompted no commemorative volumes. Francis Myers wrote the first local history, *Botany, Past and Present*, in 1885, and the centenary of settlement in 1888 prompted the publication of several new colony-wide histories, including the official *The History of New South Wales from the Records* (published 1889-1894). Queenslanders were even slower to record their past and produced no local histories until George Loyau wrote *The History of Maryborough and Wide Bay and Burnett Districts from the year 1850 to 1895* and J.J. Knight produced *The Growth of a City: Brisbane, Old and New ...*, both in 1897.¹³¹ Writers from all colonies produced directories that included a history of an area with other topical information on the town. These were merely collections of facts and anecdotes and a chronological listing of 'significant' events that had usually been witnessed by the authors. The federation of the colonies into one nation in 1901 had little impact on the writing of either local, regional or national history in Australia, but jubilees of local government areas from around 1910 produced a rash of celebratory tomes. The journals published by the state historical societies and also the geographical societies became the main outlet for local historians, and the early volumes contain histories of many districts.

Sometimes the men who wrote history were educated. H.W.H. Huntington had legal training, Andrew Houison was a doctor, and Norman Selfe was an engineer. Others were like William Freame, a gold miner and outback worker whose marriage into a wealthy pioneer family allowed him the money and time to pursue his hobby. The lectures these early writers delivered to church and civic groups, their contributions to newspapers, and the books they produced were based largely on their own experiences. After the opening of the Mitchell Library in Sydney in 1910 historical writing in New South Wales improved in depth and quality since it allowed authors access to primary documents. Some of the newer writers, such as K.R. Cramp and Charles Currey, both active in the Royal Australian Historical Society, had historical training. Others were

¹³¹ For bibliographies of local histories on Victoria, see Carole Beaumont, *Local History in Victoria: An Annotated Bibliography*, Bundoora (1980); on New South Wales, see Christine Eslick *et al.*, *Bibliography of New South Wales Local History*, Sydney (1987); and on Queensland, see W.R. Johnston and Margaret Zerner, *A Guide to the History of Queensland*, Brisbane (1985).

teachers, doctors, librarians, lawyers, botanists, clergymen, businessmen, journalists, politicians and public servants, often from the Lands Department, to whom history was a hobby. Most were prominent in their occupations and in their community, belonged to several professional societies, and were active within their churches. They determined to overcome the neglect of Australian history by inspiring pride in past achievements.¹³² Indeed, the reasons for recording the events of the past were similar in both the United States and in Australia, although Australians usually did not show the chauvinism of Americans. And those who recorded Australia's past resembled those who recorded America's history in both education and social standing.

Summary

In some instances the reasons for the formation of historical organisations and the writing of local history in the United States and in Australia, such as feelings of state and local pride, a respect for ancestors, and a growing awareness of the unique aspects of each society, were similar. In both countries, historical society membership and the writers of local history came largely from the professional elite and often succumbed to antiquarianism and nostalgia. The social situation in both countries was also at times analogous: both experienced a long economic boom from the mid nineteenth century; railways made travel easier in both countries; decreased working hours and gradually diminishing family size gave the population of each country greater leisure time in which to pursue social activities; Australians, as did Americans, belonged to a "nation of joiners" who supported the many professional and amateur associations formed in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century.

But, even allowing for the differences in population size and period of settlement in Australia and the United States, the relative growth in the number and size of historical societies and in the writing of local history in Australia did not equal that in America. Several reasons account for this. Whereas in the midwestern regions of the United States state legislatures initiated and financially supported historical societies, in Australia

¹³² Brian H. Fletcher, *A Passion for the Past. Writers of Australian History in New South Wales 1900-1938*. The John Alexander Ferguson Memorial Lecture, Royal Australian Historical Society (1990), pp.3-7.

governments were reluctant to give even niggardly handouts. This is interesting since government support for private initiatives was much more common in Australia than in the United States. But this is just another example of the importance given to the recording of the past in each country. Americans regarded it as essential to their cultural development. Conversely, most Australians looked to the future, preferring to ignore the foundations of settlement. However colonial, then state and federal, governments did assume responsibility for publishing official records. Thus Australians did not initiate or join societies merely to use the library facilities as was the case in the early New England societies. Likewise they did not follow the lead of Americans and form ancestral groups nor encourage the study of history because of increasing industrialisation, urbanisation and immigration. The manufacturing sector in Australia did not grow to the extent it did in America. Australia, unlike the United States, had always been highly urban, and thus the growth of cities did not cause the same dislocation in this country. Added to this, apart from the decade following the gold rush in the 1850s, Australian cities and towns grew at a much slower rate than the industrialising centres on the east coast of the United States, and workplaces remained smaller. Whereas both nations were composed of immigrants, immigration to Australia was homogeneous and came largely from Britain. Australia did not experience the divisiveness and fear prompted by the arrival of southern Europeans in the United States. Industrialisation, urbanisation and immigration were less disruptive in Australia and did not threaten the pattern of Australian society.

Both Australia and the United States were settled first on their east coast and then their respective populations spread westward. But Australia's westward expansion was not as buoyant as America's, and in Australia settlement outside the capital cities remained sparse. In the United States, towns developed in the hinterland and pioneers settled as neighbours. These towns then became the cultural hubs for their regions,¹³³ generating feelings of pride and cohesiveness absent in the smaller settlements in Australian rural areas. Whereas the lengthy period of economic growth in the second half of the nineteenth century encouraged the growth in historical societies in the United

¹³³ G. V. Portus, "Americans and Australians", *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1942), pp. 32-33.

States, in Australia none of the early societies developed during the boom period from the 1850s to 1880.

However, the principal reason that Australians neglected their past is related to their retarded sense of nationalism. Australia had not severed its colonial ties and remained attached to England. Hence few Australians perceived their history as being separate from that of the motherland. Added to this, Australians, unlike Americans, had few great statesmen to revere or stirring events to celebrate. But the greatest impediment to acknowledging the past was the 'unfortunate' beginnings of most Australian colonies.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, despite the seemingly infertile ground, feelings of local identity did grow in the late nineteenth century in the eastern parts of Australia.¹³⁵ Paradoxically, those very elements that had been most responsible for the embarrassment about the Australian past nurtured this growth. Descendants of convicts had greater ties to Australia than to England. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century these descendants, combined with the descendants of many bond and free Irish settlers, espoused a belief in Australia and all things Australian that permeated through the whole society. This rising national consciousness encouraged other Australians to acknowledge the importance of the founding of their regions. Some, predominantly from the upper sections of society, formed or joined organisations to celebrate the early settlement. They modelled their groups on historical and ancestral societies in the United States, and aspired to equal or even surpass the achievements of the American organisations.

Thus by 1920 the inhabitants of several Australian states had overcome the shame of their convict beginnings. They had realised the importance of the past and had formed historical societies to preserve details of settlement and past achievements. But what of the only colony in Australia that had no official association with the convict settlement of

¹³⁴ This applies particularly to New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania but also to Victoria and Western Australia. After Victoria gained autonomy it would not accept convicts but it had begun as part of the penal settlement of New South Wales. While Western Australia originated as a free settlement, it later accepted convicts and was the last colony to end transportation.

¹³⁵ Brian Fletcher, *The 1888 Centenary Celebrations and New Developments in the Writing of Australian History*. Sydney (1988), p.2. The contention that Australians did not develop even a rudimentary public historical sphere until after the First World War is countermanded by the formation of the state societies in New South Wales and Victoria and of the descendants' group. See Tony Bennett, *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections of Australian Museum and Heritage Policy*. Cultural Policy Studies: Occasional Paper No.3. Brisbane (1988), p.5.

the country? The next chapter looks at the development of historical consciousness in the free settlement of South Australia.

CHAPTER TWO

“Some names ... will go down with honour to the coming generation as the names of the Pilgrim Fathers are now honoured in New England” - The Birth of Amateur History in South Australia, 1836 to 1920

Although the impetus for founding the colony of South Australia arose from conditions prevalent in England, the influence of the United States on the settlement of the colony is manifest in the stated intentions of the supporters of the new colony:

The object of ... establishing a British province in South Australia, is to render the industrious class in the United Kingdom, as prosperous, and as satisfied as they are in the United States of North America. In the United States, wealth and population increase with a rapidity unparalleled and unknown in old countries; and in the United States, the field of employment for the accumulating wealth, and the multiplying people, continues to be so expansive and so ample, that profits and wages remain high; that throughout the Union every working man, with industry and frugality, may speedily become a capitalist and a landed proprietor.¹

Thus the promoters used America as a model for the new settlement. Land was sold in a manner similar to a system that had operated in America for many years. The mode of settlement was to follow that of Virginia, except that free labourers were to work the land instead of slaves.² As with the New England colonies, the new colony in Australia was to be self-supporting and expected no financial aid from England.

These objectives were economic and centred on raising living standards in Great Britain as well as ensuring the financial success of the colony. But included with their capitalistic and economic expectations, the promoters of South Australia entertained idealistic goals akin to those in the New England region of the United States.³ The proposed names for the new colony, Felicia, Felicitanian or Liberia, suggested a utopian colony that would operate on scientific principles.⁴ The sinecures of the older colonies and the aristocracy of England were unwelcome in South Australia, and its promoters guaranteed religious liberty, free trade and freedom of the press. To ensure the success of

¹ R. Torrens, *Colonization of South Australia*. London (1835) (Facsimile ed., Adelaide, 1962), p.4.

² South Australian Land Company, *Proposal to His Majesty's Government for Founding a Colony on the Southern Coast of Australia*. London (1831) (Facsimile ed., Adelaide, 1964), pp.7,12.

³ Ideas for implementing planned colonisation developed and changed over a period of years before 1836 but the various promoters always espoused idealistic and philanthropic principles. For a complete picture of the evolving plans for colonisation see Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia 1829-1857*. London (1957), chap.3.

⁴ Eric Richards, “South Australia Observed, 1836-1986”, in Eric Richards (ed.), *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, Adelaide (1986), p.1.

the venture, the Company promised to “provide a sufficient number of teachers not merely to instruct the infant and adult inhabitants to read and write, but to spread among them as far as possible, knowledge which will be useful in their new state.”⁵ Thus, South Australia followed the New England colonies in its social objectives as well as its economic parameters. The settlers in South Australia believed, as did the founders of New England, that literacy, equality and liberty should be available to all sections of society. The leaders of both settlements formulated their ideals to correct the wrongs of English society. And in South Australia, as in New England, many of the early settlers were religious dissenters who emigrated to escape the restrictions placed on them because of their beliefs. The religiosity of the colony and its similarity to the first American colonies were apparent in its early years, and the Colonisation Commission reported that, “In no colony since the first British settlements were planted in New England by the sufferers for conscience sake has there been a deeper or more earnest tone of religious sentiment prevail than that which exists in South Australia.”⁶ Indeed, if the number of clergy is a barometer, South Australia was perhaps more religious than New England since it was home to more clergy in its first fifteen years than was Massachusetts.⁷ The belief in the similarity with New England was widespread, and in an early promotional volume William H Marcus predicted that, “Some names ... will go down with honour to the coming generation as the names of the Pilgrim Fathers are now honoured in New England.”⁸

The cornerstone of the colonisation plan was the selection of potential emigrants and concentration and control of settlement by the sale of land at a ‘sufficient price’. E.G. Wakefield, whose philosophical principles underlay the planned colonisation, believed that the existing colonies in Australia had failed because England had sent out settlers for the wrong reasons:

⁵ E.G. Wakefield, *Plan of a Company to be Established for the Purpose of Founding a Colony in Southern Australia*. London (1832) (Facsimile Ed., Adelaide, 1962), p.9.

⁶ *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, quoted in Pike, p.146.

⁷ Douglas Pike, “The Utopian Dreams of Adelaide’s Founders”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.53 (1952), p.77.

⁸ William H Marcus (ed.), *South Australia: Its History, Resources, and Productions*, London (1876), p.146.

Whether the end aimed at has been the punishment of convicts, the relief of parishes, or the acquisition of an asylum from poverty or misery at home, the result has in all cases been the emigration of an undue proportion of males, many of them drafted from classes in a high degree unsuited to the wants of a colony.⁹

In contrast, Wakefield planned to recruit only suitably qualified young married or marriageable free males and females in equal numbers as potential settlers. Additionally, to prevent any internal dissension in the colony, the South Australian Company nor the Emigration Board in London, which assumed control of the allocation of assisted passages to potential emigrants, recruited few Irish emigrants.¹⁰

While the concept of the founding of South Australia was idealistic, the actuality did not fulfil the founders' intentions. Settlers did not come in the expected numbers nor conform to the required model, settlement was not ordered, and wealth and comfort remained an illusory goal for many. Of greater consequence, as early as 1837 convicts began arriving from other colonies, prompting Judge Jeffcott to comment "politically speaking, South Australia was in a dreadful state, and the criminal calendar really quite appalling".¹¹ Some Irish also made their way into this 'purest' of Australian colonies. After only six years South Australia lost its unique charter and assumed the same status as England's other colonies.¹² However, even though the intended utopia did not eventuate and the original ideals remain unfulfilled, South Australians believed that they lived in a superior colony and that South Australians were superior colonists. Pike characterised the prevailing attitude in South Australia at the time of Federation:

Adelaide might exploit her neighbours' markets and gold, but she refused to share their origins and ambitions. She saw some value for herself in federation and consented to be wooed into it, but clung tenaciously to state rights. Her people refused to admit that South Australia was ever a *colony*; it was an outlying English *province* with its own peculiar foundations, its own national song, its own commemoration day. Its parochialism was almost exclusive. Of its 362,604

⁹ Wakefield, p.44.

¹⁰ Christopher Nance, "The Irish in South Australia during the Colony's First Four Decades", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No.5 (1978), pp.66-68.

¹¹ Quoted in A. Grenfell Price, "Pioneering Difficulties", in *The Centenary History of South Australia*. Adelaide (1936), p.62.

¹² Because of the commercial nature of settlement of South Australia initially both the British government and the Board of Commissioners, which controlled land sales and emigration, appointed representatives to the new colony. The government representative was the governor and the Board of Commissioners appointed a resident commissioner, thus giving the colony double government. This strange arrangement proved unworkable, and in 1842 the Board of Commissioners was abolished leaving the governor in sole charge.

people in 1901, eighty per cent. had been born in Australia, but only five per cent. in other states. Taught by the founders to dread the vulgarities of convict settlements, the urban pioneers abhorred the slur 'colonial'¹³

Given the similarity between South Australia and the New England area of the United States, where the first historical societies in America formed, and the consciousness of difference from the other Australian colonies, it is odd that by 1920 South Australians had not initiated a distinct society to preserve and to sanctify their special and hallowed past. This is particularly surprising since inhabitants of the older Australian colonies/states overcame their embarrassment about their beginnings and commemorated their history, even if in a limited and bowdlerised manner, by forming historical societies.

Part I "an outlying English province" - Historical Consciousness to 1885

South Australian colonists were not backward in forming cultural institutions and learned societies, both amateur and professional. The South Australian Literary Association began in London before the proclamation of the colony and in 1839 merged with the recently formed Mechanics' Institute. A Natural History Society formed in 1838, followed by the South Australian Agricultural Society (1838), the Total Abstinence Society (1840), the Statistical Society (1841) and the Society of Arts (1857); by 1850 the Freemasons had three lodges, and a number of mutual benefit societies also formed by mid-century. The Adelaide Philosophical Society, formed in 1853, became the Royal Society of South Australia in 1880.¹⁴ A choral society, a German Liedertafel and amateur theatre groups also organised. So, as in the United States and the other Australian colonies, associationalism was widespread and South Australia too was a "nation of joiners".

As in the other two regions, some South Australians amassed collections of artefacts connected with early settlement. The Corporation of the City of Adelaide began acquiring objects relating to the city as early as 1853. The collection centred on the development and history of the city and included memorabilia relating to the city's

¹³ Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, pp.495-496.

¹⁴ John Blacket, *History of South Australia: A Romantic and Successful Experiment in Colonization*. (2nd ed.), Adelaide (1911), pp.122-125

namesake, Queen Adelaide, mementoes of events connected with the city and portraits of the corporation's members and officers. As the corporation did not allocate funds to purchase items and depended on gifts to enlarge its holdings, the collection remained small. Moreover, it was not accessible to the public on a regular basis and so did little to encourage a sense of history in South Australians.

Some institutes in urban and rural regions of the state also established museums. The charter of the South Australian Institute stated that it was "to comprise a Public Library and Museum and, by means of lectures, classes, and otherwise, to promote the general study and cultivation of all or any of the various branches or departments of art, science, literature, and philosophy."¹⁵ While history is not specifically mentioned, at this time history and literature were linked, so the charter possibly covered a study and commemoration of history. However, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries history remained a minor consideration. Institute museums such as the one at Port Adelaide concentrated on natural history, curios and Aboriginal artefacts, devoting only a tiny space to the display of relics of the early days. None of their curators at first considered items relating to the white settlement of South Australia to be worth saving and displaying, perhaps because their own lives and those of their forebears seemed too prosaic to record. They considered museums to be places of education and relaxation, where people could actually touch items that they had read or been told about.¹⁶

Individuals also accumulated unusual specimens and one such collector, Mrs. Kreusler, built two rooms on to her small house in Gawler, one to display her collection of mineral specimens and various types of rare birds, animals and insects, while in the other room another collector displayed stuffed birds and photographs.¹⁷ Kreusler's parents were German but she did not collect or display any artefacts relating to German settlement, again probably because she thought this past was commonplace.

Although the Gawler Institute did not display any Australian history in its museum, the members of its committee showed their colonial pride and interest in the

¹⁵ Brian Samuels, *Government Initiatives for the Preservation and Promotion of South Australian History: A Select Historical Chronology*. Prepared for the History Trust of South Australia (1988).

¹⁶ Michael Page, *Port Adelaide and its Institute 1851-1979*. Adelaide (1981), p.97.

¹⁷ George E. Loyau, *The Gawler Handbook: A Record of the Rise and Progress of that Important Town*. Adelaide (1880), p.99-100.

past in other ways. To celebrate its second anniversary in 1859 the Institute offered a prize of ten guineas for the best words and ten guineas for the best music for a national song. The competition created widespread interest and attracted 96 entries for the words for the new song; the number of entries for the music is not known. Coincidentally the winners represented both sexes and the two main settler groups in South Australia; Mrs. Carolyn Carleton, of English stock, won the prize for the words, and the German-born Carl Linger won the music section. *Song of Australia* soon became the accepted national song in South Australia.

For its fourth anniversary in 1861 the Institute held a competition for the best history of South Australia. With a prize of 200 guineas it aroused great interest, and in his history of Gawler, written in 1861, George Nott reported that the project was “warmly and liberally supported, subscriptions in aid being promised from all parts of the colony to an extent which will doubtless enable the Committee to liberally increase the amount offered as a prize.”¹⁸ The conditions of the competition required the writer to include:

The Discovery and Exploration of the Land, its Physical Characteristics and Natural Products; the Origin, Formation, Rise and Progress of the Colony, Politically and Socially considered, with notices of Persons and Places, the various Events and Circumstances, combined with statistics, which make up the Chronicles of the Province, together with the fullest account of the Aboriginal Tribes.¹⁹

Despite the high hopes of the organisers and the initial enthusiasm of the population, many subscribers (including several former colonial governors) were dilatory in paying their contributions. The competition attracted just one entry, from Henry Hussey, a printer with only a primary school education. In 1855 Hussey had published a book on his travels, including his visit to Virginia in the United States and his conversion to the Disciples of Christ, which had given him training in researching and writing. To prepare his history, Hussey used the files of the *South Australian Register* and the *Adelaide Observer* and also government files. He also approached the founders and early settlers of the colony to obtain access to their papers and to listen to their memories of the early

¹⁸ G. Nott, “The Foundation of Gawler--Position--Early Days--Governor Gawler--Dr. Nott’s Account of the Rise and Progress of the Town up to 1860” in G.E. Loyau, p.22.

¹⁹ Quoted in G.L. Fischer, “Henry Hussey’s ‘History of South Australia’”, *South Australiana*, Vol.8, No.1 (1969), p.17.

days. Hussey did not complete the work by the closing date of 25 June 1862 and submitted an unfinished manuscript of 1,200 pages.

The five judges found Hussey's work intimidating. They did not read all of it, admitting that they had insufficient time to verify the contents, and stated that the work needed "the services of a competent editor, who could devote his whole time and undivided attention to the work".²⁰ George Fife Angas, one of leading citizens interviewed by Hussey, then offered Hussey an amount of money greater than the Gawler Institute prize to enable him to complete the work. Hussey obtained a release from the institute and agreed to extend his history up to 1872. His work never appeared under his own name but was published in a condensed version as part of *The History of South Australia from its Foundation to the Year of its Jubilee with a Chronological Summary* (1893) edited by Edwin Hodder, Angas' biographer. Hussey was pleased to see his manuscript finally in print but "regretted that many incidents were omitted that would have been interesting to the colonial, if not to the English, reader."²¹ Hodder did not acknowledge his debt to Hussey, merely commenting in his Preface that "Angas had collected a vast number of documents from all available sources and for many years employed a secretary to set them in order."²² Notwithstanding the failure of the competition, the Gawler Institute committee was the first organisation to encourage the dispassionate recording of South Australia's history.²³

As with the United States and other Australian colonies, many of the early works were 'booster' histories (referred to as "puffs" at least in South Australia²⁴) and were remarkably similar in style and content in all places. The three main early histories of the colony, produced for major trade exhibitions, belong to this category. The South Australian Government commissioned William Harcus to edit *South Australia: Its*

²⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.22.

²¹ Henry Hussey, *More Than Half a Century of Colonial Life and Christian Experience with Notes of Travel, Lectures, Publications etc.* Adelaide (1897), p.297.

²² E. Hodder, *The History of South Australia from its Foundation to the Year of its Jubilee with a Chronological Summary* (2 vols.). London (1893), Preface.

²³ For a list of local histories published in South Australia, see Kerrie Round, *Chronological List of Local Histories Published in South Australia from 1846 until 1990*, Unpublished.

²⁴ G.L. Fischer, "The South Australian Archives Department: Its Founders and Contribution to South Australian Historical Studies 1920-1960", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No.13 (1985), p.5.

History, Resources and Productions, for distribution at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. It then used the work as promotional literature for potential immigrants from Great Britain and Ireland. In 1879 the *South Australian Register* prepared a supplement entitled *History, Progress, Resources, and Present Position of South Australia* for the issue of 6 September to be used at the South Australian Court at the Sydney Exhibition in that year. The *Register* reprinted it as a pamphlet and distributed it free of charge at the Exhibition, and revised and updated it in 1880 for use as a handbook for intending immigrants. J.F. Conigrave produced the third history, *South Australia: A Sketch of its History and Resources: A Handbook* in 1886 to be distributed to exhibitors at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London as an inducement to them to exhibit their wares at the International Exhibition to be held in Adelaide in 1887. In 1886 Thomas Gill compiled *Bibliography of South Australia*, a comprehensive listing of all publications relating to the colony, also for use at this exhibition.²⁵ Other authors, such as F.S. Dutton, wrote histories extolling the virtues of individual regions, again to attract settlers. For these authors the recording of events of the past served a commercial purpose, and the history they included was superfluous to the main aim of the publications, which was to sell local products to a wider market and to attract settlers, thus increasing the size of the local market.²⁶ Another reason for writing history was for personal gain. In the eastern states collected biographies of prominent citizens, often with entries paid for by those same citizens, had appeared. In South Australia also there was a market for such volumes. George Loyau produced two collections of biographies of distinguished settlers, both living and dead. There is no evidence that those included in these volumes paid for the privilege, but as Loyau hoped to earn an income from the sale of these works it is unlikely he would have offended any potential purchasers.²⁷

²⁵ Gill recognised the propaganda value of his bibliography but also hoped that it would assist in the writing of future state histories. See *ibid.*, p.7.

²⁶ Brian Samuels, "South Australian Local Histories", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, Vol.15 (1987), pp.124-129. For information on these and other writers on early South Australia, see John Young, "South Australian Historians and Wakefield's 'Scheme'", *Historical Studies*, Vol.15, No.53 (1969), pp.32-53.

²⁷ Loyau, who lived in various colonies of Australia, also produced other local histories - *Tales of the Early Days of Settlement in N.S.W.*, and *The Bargunyah Records* and *The History of Maryborough and Wide Bay and Burnett Districts from the year 1850 to 1895* (Queensland) - as well as a biography of Leichhardt, numerous works of verse and fiction and several autobiographical volumes. He also penned *The Secret*

Fortunately for South Australians of later generations these commercial volumes were not the only histories written in the colony, and some early writers recorded the events of the past solely to preserve it for the future. Their products were smaller in scope than the general histories and concentrated on individual districts. In 1861 George Nott's "Rise and Progress of Gawler" appeared in a commercial directory of Gawler and in 1880 in George Loyau's handbook on Gawler. J.F. Conigrave produced *The City of Adelaide: Historical Sketch of a Municipality* in 1871 from a series of articles he wrote for the *Advertiser* and *Weekly Chronicle*. Thomas Worsnop, who assisted Conigrave in preparing his pamphlet, wrote his *History of the City of Adelaide* in 1878. Unlike many of the early historians in North America, the South Australians were in full-time employment. Nott was a doctor and one of the leading citizens of the rural town of Gawler. From 1874 to 1887, Conigrave was Secretary of the South Australian Chamber of Manufactures, and in 1887-88 Secretary of the Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition. Worsnop was Town Clerk of Adelaide from 1869 to 1898.²⁸ In keeping with most histories written in the nineteenth century, these early works were chronicles of events and lists of people. Hussey's "idea of a reliable history was that the events that had taken place should be faithfully recorded, more than the compiler's views and opinions in regard to them."²⁹ The other authors differed little from this view.

Thus, in the nineteenth century South Australians recognised the value of collecting and displaying historical artefacts and of recording local history. However, no leading citizen or amateur historian suggested the formation of a historical society to commemorate the white settlement of South Australia, or the establishment of a museum specifically dedicated to preserving mementoes of white settlement. The descendants of both the English and the German settlers ignored the formal celebration of their past. But this did not mean that they disregarded their history or forgot the original settlers. As in the other colonies the pioneer settlers received special treatment, in particular because the majority of those who had come to South Australia directly from England had no past to

Organizations of Pennsylvania. He was another nineteenth-century writer whose writings were profuse and diverse.

²⁸ Samuels, "South Australian Local Histories, 1836-1920", pp.124-129.

²⁹ Hussey, p.293.

hide. Indeed, as early as 1840 the ‘old colonists’ were revered, and this increased as the years passed.³⁰

The Old Colonists’ Association of Victoria was probably the model for the Old Colonists’ Association, formed in South Australia on 11 January 1883, since its objectives were almost identical.³¹ But it was less successful. Just two years after its formation George Loyau lamented, “The Old Colonists Association is never heard of now. Why? In Victoria a similar institution is a great success, and there is no reason that it should lack support in South Australia.”³² However, the association was more active than Loyau believed, and in 1887 produced a book on the jubilee of South Australia.³³ In the early 1900s it co-operated with the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia and the Australian Natives’ Association in collecting reminiscences of early settlers, but seems to have disappeared by 1916.³⁴

During the late nineteenth century South Australians acquired the same amenities of civilisation as Americans and other Australians. The number of institutes, which provided libraries, debating societies and other cultural pursuits, continued to expand in both urban and rural areas. The Education Bill of 1875 made education compulsory for children aged between seven and 13. The University of Adelaide began teaching in 1876. From 1873 the eight-hour working day gradually gained acceptance, giving men and some women more leisure time. The first railway in the colony began operating in 1854, and by the 1880s lines extended to the farming settlements in the north. In 1881 the National Gallery first exhibited paintings and in 1884 the public library and the museum formally opened. Thus, the same social and educational infrastructure that had precipitated the formation of historical societies in the United States existed in South Australia. And as South Australians did not have a convict background to hide, the same local pride was evident. South Australia’s population remained small, but societies had

³⁰ Pike, *Paradise of Dissent*, p.510.

³¹ Old Colonists’ Association [South Australia], *Rules and Regulations*.

³² George E. Loyau, *Notable South Australians*, Adelaide (1885), p.288.

³³ Old Colonists’ Association of South Australia, *An Account of the Celebration of the Jubilee of South Australia, 1886, with the Reminiscences of Early Settlers, the Names of the Pioneers who Arrived in South Australia in the year 1836 ...* Adelaide (1887).

³⁴ Some rural towns established old residents’ associations also formed, for example the Mount Gambier Old Residents’ Association formed in 1910, but these were primarily social groups and, unlike those in Victoria, were not concerned with collecting the history of the area.

formed in the less populated western towns of the United States. They had not united to celebrate their revered past because they considered themselves an outlying British province whose history was inseparable from the motherland.

Part II: "A history worth enquiring into" - Historical Consciousness from 1885 to 1920

One reason for the lack of any historical society was the youth of the colony. While the midwestern states of America had formed societies to preserve their history soon after gaining statehood, they had the eastern examples to follow. The formation of historical societies became a matter of pride and a badge of civilisation. Before 1885 South Australians had no-one or nothing to emulate. Additionally, despite the pride in their foundations, they had an ill-developed sense of history. As the *Register* reported: "When a number of gentlemen interested in preserving the records of the early history of South Australia and the memories of its first settlers met together to form the Old Colonists' Association, the objects of the organization were not well understood." However, the jubilee in 1886 celebrating 50 years of settlement changed that, and South Australians realised that they had "a history worth enquiring into, and records which merit careful preservation, and men and women worthy of the greatest appreciation".³⁵ The jubilee also prompted the press to devote space to historical material and to print colonial reminiscences.

Despite the new-found interest in the colony's formative years, the jubilee does not appear to have influenced the foundation of the local branch of the Geographical Society of Australasia, which assumed some of the functions of a state historical society. Moves to initiate this society had begun in 1883, but the instigators decided that the time was not appropriate and that geography could become a subsection of the recently-established Royal Society.³⁶ Nevertheless, interest in forming a society remained, encouraged by the Sydney branch of the society that hoped to establish an Australasia-

³⁵ Quoted in *An Account of the Celebration*, p.70.

³⁶ Considering that the New South Wales branch of the Geographical Society had begun after the geography subsection of the Royal Society in that colony had failed to attract members, this decision is puzzling. Nevertheless, 19 of the 82 foundation members also belonged to the Royal Society indicating there was some overlap of interest.

wide organisation. A.C. MacDonald, a founder of the Victorian branch (begun in late 1883) and later a founding member of the Historical Society of Victoria, visited Adelaide and persuaded several leading colonists to inaugurate a branch of the society, which they did on 10 July 1885. Of the 82 foundation members, 24 were Justices of the Peace, 13 were parliamentarians, four held the honorific Sir and five sported university degrees. Five clergymen, including a Bishop, appear on the list, as do the Chief Justice of South Australia, the Director of the Botanic Gardens, the Registrar of the University of Adelaide, and the Mayor of Adelaide.³⁷ Thus the academic and social standing of members of the branch mirrored that of the members of the historical societies in the United States and in the historical societies formed later in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.

The provisional council was aware of the importance of the history of the state and included in the constitution "all such matters as lie within the province of either Geographical or Historical Science". In its draft of proposed objectives it included as its penultimate object, "Historical - The collection and publication of historical records of geographical interest, and of memoirs of notable men of Australasia."³⁸ It believed that combining the related topics of geography and history would prove more efficient and useful than having two separate societies, especially since it believed the population of Adelaide to be too small to support separate groups.³⁹ Moreover, the provisional council felt the need to include history as "very many here would decline to unite with our Society were Historical omitted, who would work with us if it were included." A founding member, Langdon Bonython, attempted to give equal weight to history and geography since this:

would thus increase its usefulness and add to its attractiveness ... The geographical and historical elements would not at all clash, as in a young colony such as this the history and geography were to a great extent interwoven, and in

³⁷ Founders of the South Australian Branch, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.1 (1885-86), pp.109-110.

³⁸ *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.1 (1885-86), p.22.

³⁹ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Correspondence Book 1885-1892. Letter from A.T. Magarey, Hon. Secretary, Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch to Francis Gerard, Hon. Treasurer, Geographical Society of Australasia, New South Wales Branch, 24 April 1886.

compiling the one they must describe the other; but there was also much of historical interest which was not connected with geography. In Victoria an historical society had lately been established, and in the New England States of America such Societies not only existed, but did much valuable work. The subject of local history was an important one, and if the work of collecting data were commenced at once, it would both simplify matters and prove advantageous in years to come.⁴⁰

Thomas Gill supported Bonython's suggestion, believing membership would then double. He also intimated that the matter was urgent since "the pioneers of the colony were rapidly passing away, and opportunities for obtaining information with reference to the early days were continually growing less."⁴¹

The idea of giving history equal status with geography appalled Ferdinand von Mueller, president of the Victorian branch, who, in reply to the South Australians' request for comment on their proposed constitution, pronounced that, "If we encumber our Society with incongruent and lateral obligations we shall make our work still more onerous, get our attention diverted from the legitimate objects before it, and involve ourselves in additional responsibilities."⁴² Because of such opposition from both inside and outside the branch the council followed the example of the English Geographical Society and the branches in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland and restricted its title and its main focus to geography. But at least the study of history remained as one of its objectives.

Despite the failure to give greater prominence to history, many members retained an interest in the colony's past. While they relished the history of exploration they were

⁴⁰ *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.1 (1885-86), pp.17-18. This is presumably a reference to the Historical Society of Australasia, formed in Melbourne on 8 May 1885. As mentioned, A.C. MacDonald, who was instrumental in persuading the South Australians to form a geographical society in South Australia, was also one of the founding members of the Historical Society of Australasia and probably told the South Australians of its formation and ideals when he visited Adelaide in 1885.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁴² Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Letters Received 1885 to Dec. 1919. Letter from von Mueller, Geographical Society of Australasia Victorian Branch to A.T. Magarey, 23 May 1886. This attempt to include history in the title of the organisation, and the subsequent inclusion of a study of history as one of the Society's objectives, must have influenced the other branches. An honorary secretary of either the New South Wales or Victorian branch, probably A.C. MacDonald, wrote a precis entitled "Aims of the Geographical Society" (*Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia New South Wales Branch*, Vols. 3 and 4 (1 Jan.1885-31 Dec.1886), pp.245-246) in which he extolled the study of history and included history along with the other three objectives of the original branches. Subsequently the New South Wales and Victorian branches introduced new rules and included a copy of the South Australian branch's object number four. The Queensland branch, organised at the same time as the South Australian branch, also included a similar objective. However none of the other branches accorded the same emphasis to history.

also interested in the foundations of the colony and in recording the experiences of the pioneers. In a book written as an adjunct to the Jubilee International Exhibition held in Adelaide in 1887, H.J. Scott remarked that:

The early struggles of pioneers and settlers are, to a considerable extent unknown, because hitherto unwritten. The origin and history of names of localities, with some sketch descriptive of founders of interesting settlements, should all be gathered in before the only persons who are cognizant of the facts pass away from us.

Should any visitor to our Jubilee Exhibition be in a position to supply or to obtain items of historical interest, such would be placed in permanent form in the 'Proceedings' of the [Royal Geographical] Society, if sent to its honorary secretaries.⁴³

Thus from its earliest days the Society took, and was seen to take, an active role in recording the colony's past.

Thomas Gill, the treasurer, became the advocate for the cause of history. A senior public servant for 55 years, Gill was an authority on Australian history and geography as well as an ardent bibliophile; in 1905 he was to publish *The History and Topography of Glen Osmond*, in 1911 a biography of Colonel William Light and in 1912 *A Brief Sketch of the Coinage and Paper Currency of South Australia*. However, while he promoted an interest in history he feared that the establishment of a separate historical society would divide membership. With only a small percentage of a small population having the education, the means or the inclination to join such learned societies this concern seems reasonable. In 1888 Gill, supported by Charles Todd, furthered the cause of history by proposing that the Society set up five sub-sections, including one devoted to things "historical and ethnological".⁴⁴ In 1890 the council appointed members to these sub-sections, but there is no record of them actually achieving anything.

Over the years members of the society continued to display an interest in preserving the memory of the pioneers. In 1901, in his presidential address at the annual meeting, R.K. Thomas lamented that the branch had not formed a separate historical society. He mentioned the establishment of the historical and ethnological section but

⁴³ H.J. Scott (compiler), *South Australia in 1887: A Handbook for the Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition*. Adelaide (1887), p.79.

⁴⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of the Annual Meeting, 28 June 1889.

noted (without giving reasons) that, "it was then found impracticable to carry on the work." Thomas claimed that historical matters had not been overlooked and commented on the additions to the records of the society and to its museum. He continued:

Your Council ... have been confronted with great difficulties in their attempt to add to the storehouse of knowledge in reference to the early history of the State. Many of our old colonists, now so rapidly passing away, can afford and are always ready to give in private conversation information of the utmost value and greatest interest ... An effort should ... be made to ... [ask] some of our pioneers to put the more notable of their early experiences into writing.⁴⁵

To this end, the society approached the Australian Natives' Association and the Old Colonists' Association requesting their assistance with the collection of reminiscences of pioneers. The three organisations jointly sent out several hundred circulars to members of the Old Colonists' Association and to other early settlers. At the annual meeting on 5 June 1903 the council reported that, "gratifying success had attended their efforts to acquire records of the early history of South Australia." The society published a collection of reminiscences of the earliest settlers in several volumes of its Proceedings.⁴⁶

Many members were captivated by explorers, and a large number of historical activities revolved around commemorations of their deeds and memorials to their deaths. Members sought better protection of tablets and monuments to pioneers and explorers, and in a deputation to the Chief Secretary on 12 September 1902 requested the government to introduce a Bill along the lines of the Ancient Monuments Protection Act that the English Legislature had passed in 1882.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, since the government did not regard the preservation of aspects of the past as important, it declined the request.⁴⁸ In 1902 the society organised a ceremony to honour Matthew Flinders' sighting and naming of Mount Lofty, and arranged for the Governor of South Australia to unveil the Flinders Memorial tablet at Mount Lofty and name the column there Flinders Column.⁴⁹ At this ceremony the acting president, Simpson Newland, confirmed that,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Minutes of the Annual Meeting, 31 May 1901.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Minutes of the Annual Meeting, 5 June 1903. The reminiscences appeared in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.5 (1902), Vol.6 (1903) and Vol.7 (1904).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Letter from the Chief Secretary's Office, 9 September 1902. Minutes of Council Meeting, 7 August 1902.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 9 October 1902.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 28 February 1902.

“Among the many objects of the society one of the most important is to promote and foster a healthy interest in the history of this country, and especially of this State.”⁵⁰ In 1904 the society requested the government to declare as national reserves those areas holding public memorials.⁵¹ In addition, it collected relics and mementoes of famous explorers. Because it relied on donations this collection remained meagre, but from time to time members arranged exhibits of old books, maps and objects of interest.

In 1905 the society, through the urging of Thomas Gill and George Cockburn Henderson, Professor of Modern History and English Literature and Languages at the University of Adelaide, purchased the York Gate Library. This contained a substantial collection of works relating to geography, maritime and inland discovery, and colonisation. It was of inestimable value, yet perhaps was not a fortuitous acquisition since the York Gate Library was possibly one of the reasons that a separate historical society did not eventuate for many years. Those members interested in exploration history and early colonisation, and these were the majority of historians in South Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, needed to belong to the Royal Geographical Society to gain access to material contained in the York Gate Library.⁵² They feared that the society would prevent access to members of an independent group.

Nevertheless, amateur historians remained dominant in the society, evidenced by the papers published in volumes 1 to 11 of the *Proceedings*. Of the 87 papers published between 1885 and 1909, 31 deal with Australian history and biography. Fifteen of these are recollections or reminiscences of old colonists, resulting from the appeal for reminiscences. The remaining 16 papers are mainly devoted to the exploits of explorers.⁵³ This compares with 20 papers devoted to geography and exploration,

⁵⁰ Reported in the *Advertiser*, 24 March 1902.

⁵¹ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Council Meeting, 18 April 1904.

⁵² In 1882 E.A. Petherick, later to be a member of the Australian Historical Society, the Historical Society of Victoria, the Historical Society of Queensland and the Victorian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, compiled the bibliography of the York Gate Library when he was living in England. When William Silver, owner of the collection, died in 1905 it was Petherick who arranged the sale of the library. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.5, pp.438-439.

⁵³ “An Epitome of the Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia South Australian Branch. Vols. i to xi”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.11 (1909), pp.v-xi.

supposedly the society's main focus. So even though the members eschewed giving history equal status with geography, history in fact was the senior partner.

In 1909 H.P. Moore recommended the appointment of a committee to report on a historical section, referring to the suggestion Thomas Gill had made years earlier.⁵⁴ Nothing eventuated until the annual meeting on 12 July 1910 when W.J. Sowden, in moving the adoption of the annual report, hinted:

that a suggestion made years ago by his friend Mr. Thomas Gill might be adopted. In the society, in the records of Australian geography, they had all the ingredients of an historical geographical pudding, and as the lines of research in geography were naturally being circumscribed, particular attention might be given to the historical side.⁵⁵

The council appointed a sub-committee to consider the suggestion, which recommended the formation of a historical committee.⁵⁶ Six years passed before this historical committee took any action, but in 1917 the following item appeared in council minutes, "The President having referred to a recent meeting held to consider the formation of a Historical Society, Mr. Wilkinson gave notice of a motion to establish a historical section of this Society at the next Annual Meeting."⁵⁷ The next mention of the matter is in the minutes of the council meeting on 21 September 1917 when interested parties were invited to confer with council members.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, no record remains of the suggested meeting. Perhaps the move to form the historical section failed because of the unsettled times.⁵⁹ However, as the correspondence and other papers are missing it is impossible to discover whether any other reasons contributed to the failure to form a historical section that might have taken on the functions of a dedicated historical society.

W.J. Sowden, a members of the historical committee, was the guiding light in South Australia of the Australian Natives' Association, a friendly society formed in Victoria in 1871 with membership restricted to males born in Australia.⁶⁰ In addition to

⁵⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Council Meeting, 11 June 1909.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Minutes of Annual Meeting, 12 July 1910. Sowden was aware that the age of exploration was over in Australia and that unless the Society found another activity he believed it would cease to be relevant.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 4 August 1911.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 13 April 1917.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 21 September 1917.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 22 February 1918.

⁶⁰ The Australian Natives' Association paralleled the descendants' groups in the United States, but even though it depended on birthplace as a prerequisite for membership it was not otherwise exclusionary. As well

its mutual aid provisions it provided a venue for the improvement of its members, and promoted “the welfare, progress and development of Australia, by upholding a high standard of life and living and stimulating a keen interest in Australian Art, Literature, Science and the fullest utilization of Australia’s natural resources.”⁶¹ Its members took an active part in Australian public life, in particular in the moves towards federation. While the objectives of the association did not include any mention of Australian history it was an early champion of the teaching of Australian history in schools, and in 1907 succeeded in introducing Australian history as a secondary subject in Victorian schools. Edward Dowling, secretary of the New South Wales branch of the association and a leader in its campaign for federation, was an instigator of the Australian Historical Society. A.G. Proudfoot, a former Chief President, attended the inaugural meeting of the Historical Society of Victoria. The Australian Natives’ Association assisted the Historical Society of Victoria to collect and preserve reminiscences of old colonists and other information connected with the early history of Victoria, perhaps following the success of the collaboration between the organisations in South Australia.

The South Australian branch of the association, initiated on 12 January 1888, played a much more significant part in the federation movement than would be expected from a small group from a small colony. In addition, in the late nineteenth century members of the association were prominent workers for the establishment of the National Park at Belair, Flinders Chase, and the Field Naturalists’ Section of the Royal Society. Sowden was on the executive of the Board of Directors of the South Australian branch of the Australian Natives’ Association from its inception and was South Australian president in 1892 and from 1901-1904. He joined the Royal Geographical Society in 1900 and was a member of the society’s council from 1910. Sowden, an advocate of Australian nationalism, had an interest in Australian history, and endorsed the joint efforts to collect and publish the reminiscences of the pioneers. Since he hoped that Adelaide “would attain to the distinction of being the Boston of the Commonwealth” in both scientific and

membership in the association depended simply on nationality and not on involvement in a momentous event, for example arrival on a certain ship or participation in a war.

⁶¹ Quoted in John E. Menadue, “The Historical Impact of the Australian Natives’ Association”, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.42 (1971), pp.501-502.

cultural institutions⁶² and in 1906 organised through the *Register* a competition for the best three short stories on “The Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers of our State” written by state school children,⁶³ he more than likely knew of the Massachusetts Historical Society. In 1911, while President of the Public Library Board, he delighted that South Australians were showing a growing interest in the pioneering days of the state and requested them “as a matter of local patriotism” to donate to the Public Library documents and manuscripts relating to early settlement.⁶⁴ In 1912 he published *An Australian Native's Standpoint*, a collection of his addresses on Australian nationalism. However, in none of his exhortations on the value of preserving memories of early settlement of the colony/state, nor in any of his patriotic outpourings, did he suggest the formation of a historical society to assist with these aims. This is all the more puzzling since he belonged to several institutes, one of which produced its own history, and was on the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery at the time of the establishment of the Archives.

Other members of the Royal Geographical Society were also on the executive of the Australian Natives' Association. These included J. Langdon Bonython, who had pleaded for equality for history in the society, and J.F. Conigrave, author of *The City of Adelaide: Historical Sketch of a Municipality*. Like Sowden, Bonython was community-minded and had initiated or joined many organisations. In addition, Bonython had been a member of Federal parliament at the same time as Alfred Deakin. Being a personal friend, Bonython probably knew that Deakin was a founding vice-president of the Historical Society of Victoria. Yet despite their interest in the history of the colony/state, neither Conigrave nor Sowden nor Bonython made any moves to initiate a separate society dedicated to preserving South Australia's past. Perhaps, notwithstanding its deficiencies, they believed they could accomplish this through the Royal Geographical Society.

⁶² “Comments on the Annual Report”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.7 (1904), p.xxv.

⁶³ Elizabeth Kwan, “Making ‘Good Australians’”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.29 (1991), p.47.

⁶⁴ *The Register*, 18 February 1911.

In addition to the efforts of the Royal Geographical Society to collect relics of explorers and memorabilia of South Australia's settlement, the City Council continued to increase its holdings. T. George Ellery, town clerk from 1899 to 1919, encouraged the collection of portraits of mayors and lord mayors that were then displayed in the council chambers. Sir John Cockburn, a former premier of South Australia and its agent-general in England from 1898 to 1901, also championed a municipal collection. While resident in London he sought the donation of relics relating to Adelaide's development. E. Angus Johnson, a councillor from 1902 to 1903 and from 1907 to 1924 and a member of the Royal Geographical for many years, supported the civic collection. One of his hobbies was collecting Australian curiosities, and he acquired a fine Australian library and many Australian drawings and curios. Between 1915 and 1924 he donated to the Corporation of the City of Adelaide many relics relating to the early development of the city and the state.⁶⁵ Although the collection expanded it was never organised into a museum and few members of the public knew of its existence.

A more public manifestation of interest in the past was the publication of historical works. Interestingly, not only did the jubilee of settlement in 1886 fail to stimulate any South Australians to form historical societies, it also failed to promote any historical writings. Nevertheless, from 1885 to 1920 several histories of South Australia did appear. W.F. Morrison produced *The Aldine History of South Australia* in 1890 as a volume in a series of histories of the Australian colonies. The lot of amateur historians was not always a happy one and its publication received a mixed reception. Some subscribers were so dissatisfied with the accuracy of the work that they refused to pay. A court action brought by Morrison to recover these debts, which called 'expert' witnesses on South Australian history, found against him and sent him bankrupt.⁶⁶ The major historical publication of the period was the two-volume *Cyclopedia of South Australia* edited by H.T. Burgess, which appeared in 1907 and 1909. It was one of a series of descriptive surveys published on Tasmania (1900), Victoria (1903-05), New South Wales

⁶⁵ Archives of the Corporation of the City of Adelaide. *Annual Reports. Corporation of the City of Adelaide*, 1920-1924; *Advertiser*, 1 December 1919.

⁶⁶ G.L. Fischer, "Premier Thomas Price and the Publication of *The Aldine History of South Australia* (1890) and *The Cyclopedia of South Australia* (1907-09)", *Facts and Events*, Vol.8, No.3 (1994), pp.53-54.

(1907) and Western Australia (1912-13). Methodist clergyman John Blacket produced the only history of South Australia in this period that did not have interstate connections. This was *Early History of South Australia: a romantic experiment in colonization (1836-1857)*, published in 1907. Since Blacket updated and expanded his work in 1911, a market for South Australian history had obviously developed.

Amateur historians continued to publish histories of their local areas. The Church Bazaar Committee of the Hindmarsh Congregational Church produced the short pamphlet *The Latest Stratagem, with Short History of Town and Trade of Hindmarsh* in 1891 in the hope that sales of the work would reduce the debt on the church building. Another pamphlet, *Sixty Years of Port Adelaide: A Retrospect* (1899) by E.J. Stacy, a journalist for the *Register*, was a collection of items that had appeared in that paper. J.J. Pascoe included a history of Adelaide in *History of Adelaide and Vicinity: With a general sketch of the province of South Australia and biographies of representative men* (1901). Pascoe, a Melbourne journalist, had assisted the American W.B. Kimberly to research and write the monumental *History of Western Australia: A narrative of her past, together with biographies of her leading men* (1897). No doubt Pascoe followed Kimberly's example of including biographical sketches of prominent men, paid for by them, with a local history.⁶⁷ G.K. Soward, Mayor of Glenelg from 1895 to 1898, produced *Glenelg Illustrated 1836-1896* (1896) to promote tourism, but it also contained a brief history of the area. Other writers published histories of the older towns, often to celebrate an anniversary. G.W. Gooden, an employee of the Corporation of Kensington and Norwood, and T.L. Moore, a school teacher, produced *Fifty Years' History of the Town of Kensington and Norwood* in 1903. Two short histories of Unley appeared, *City of Unley* (1911), reprinted from the *Register* of 15 July 1911, and Blacket's "History of Unley" (1913).⁶⁸ These last works, which correspond with the jubilee histories published by municipal corporations in the other states, show that some South Australians were

⁶⁷ Kimberly may have intended to collaborate with Pascoe on this history but left Australia soon after 1897 as he was disappointed with the public response to his *History of Western Australia*. See G.C. Bolton, "Western Australia Reflects of its Past" in C.T. Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia*. Nedlands (1981), p.679.

⁶⁸ Samuels, "South Australian Local Histories", pp.124-129.

interested in and recognised the importance of their past. It is also a further illustration of the importance of local government in the recording of local history.

A few institutes sponsored written histories. The librarian of the Port Adelaide Institute, F.E. Meleng, published *Fifty Years of the Port Adelaide Institute, Incorporated with Supplementary Catalogue* in 1902. The Glen Osmond Institute requested Thomas Gill to write *The History and Topography of Glen Osmond*, published in 1905, possibly to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. Gill hoped that, "If each Institute throughout Australia would ... publish a short historical account of its locality, a valuable and authentic collection of historical records would be produced, which would be of great value for reference purposes."⁶⁹ Unfortunately this never happened. However, the Gawler Institute, no doubt prompted by the celebration of both the institute and the local council jubilees in 1907, in 1910 published E.H. Coombe's *History of Gawler 1837 to 1908*. Coombe edited the *South Australian Institutes' Journal* (1904-08) and the labour paper, the *Daily Herald* (from 1914), and for several years was a member of parliament. Thus, these later writers of South Australian history are similar to the earlier amateur historians. They were educated but not rich. History was a hobby that they indulged in after hours or, as with Burgess, took up after retirement. As with the earlier group, they produced substantial volumes of work. Though none of these authors depended on revenue from sales of their works, it is doubtful that they would have continued to produce them if they had not been well received by the general public.

The Board of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery initiated several moves to preserve the history of the state. In 1917 it recommended the publication of theses written on the history of South Australia in the hope that this would encourage further research, would provide factual details on early settlement, and that perhaps could be exchanged with similar publications from other libraries.⁷⁰ Despite these noble intentions, it published only three titles. All were written by pupils of Professor Henderson who were winners of the Tinline prize, an award given for original research in South Australian history. The board also collected paintings, relics and memorabilia

⁶⁹ Thomas Gill, *The History and Topography of Glen Osmond*. Adelaide (1905), p. iv.

⁷⁰ Valmai Hankel, "Introduction", in Barry W. Peade (compiler), *Facsimile Editions of the Libraries Board of South Australia*. Adelaide (1992), p. 1.

connected with early settlement. The first donation came in 1889 when E.T. Smith donated three water-colour drawings of early Adelaide by Colonel William Light, the planner of Adelaide. Smith also drew the attention of the Fine Arts Committee of the board to further drawings by S.T. Gill that were in the South Australia Company's office in London. The company subsequently donated these works to the Art Gallery. On 2 June 1890 a special committee appointed by the Fine Arts Committee resolved to collect the drawings of colonial Adelaide and South Australia that had been donated and exhibit them in a single area of the Art Gallery, which at that time was in the Exhibition Building on North Terrace.⁷¹

The National Gallery presented its first display of historic objects in 1909 when it exhibited the gold tokens produced during the currency shortage of the 1850s and dies used in their production. From 1916 the Art Gallery dedicated a separate room, referred to as either the Historical Room or the Historical Museum, to house its collection of historical relics.⁷² The gallery had received its first donations of historic artefacts, portraits of Queen Adelaide and William IV and a handkerchief belonging to the Queen, in 1879. It did not have a specific collection policy and accepted anything that was donated, hence its display was eclectic. It included such diverse objects as pieces of grass picked by Miss Bessie Fisher (later Lady Morphett) from the ground on which the first Proclamation Ceremony was held on 28 December 1836 and a cedar writing desk said to have belonged to the first Chief Justice of South Australia, donated by W.J. Sowden. However, because the Art Gallery dedicated insufficient space to the collection and the lighting was poor, the display was never satisfactory.⁷³

South Australians lagged behind their compatriots in the eastern states in forming historical societies and in collecting and displaying historical artefacts, but in other ways they were in the forefront of historical endeavours. Between 1903 and 1908 the public library initiated a program to record on wax cylinders the voices of leading citizens, the first attempt in Australia to preserve voices of the present for future generations. In 1900

⁷¹ State Records (SA) GRG19/355. Minutes of the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. I am grateful to Christine Finimore for alerting me to this information.

⁷² *South Australian Parliamentary Papers* No.13 of 1916.

⁷³ *Ibid.* No.13 of 1916; No.13 of 1917; No.13 of 1918.

W.J. Sowden had suggested the recording of speeches of state dignitaries. When this move failed he changed the focus to federal politicians, prompted by the growing realisation of the historical importance of federation. The Board of the Public Library appointed Samuel Way, Charles Todd, Richard Sanders Rogers and Sowden to a special committee that approached the first governor-general, the first prime minister, second governor-general, and other distinguished men, and asked them to speak into a phonograph. As the initial letter sent to prospective interviewees explained, "The Board are desirous of preserving ... short Federal messages from men who have held distinguished positions in the Commonwealth, to be in the (perhaps far distant) future, historical records of great interest and value."⁷⁴ While the project ran into difficulties and only Lord Tennyson agreed to be recorded, from its inception to its demise it was an informed attempt to record history. That three of the committee were involved with the Royal Geographical Society is further proof of the continuing importance of history to some members of this society.

Another initiative of the Public Library of South Australia in the cause of South Australian history was the formation of the Archives. The library had haphazardly acquired archival material relating to the colony's history from as early as 1867. In the 1890s this collecting became more focused because of the interest of three members of its Board of Governors, Samuel Way, W.J. Sowden and Thomas Gill. These three, all members of the Royal Geographical Society, donated documents relating to early settlement to the library's holdings. However, it was George Cockburn Henderson, a member of the Board since 1903, who suggested the establishment of an archive dedicated to collecting the documentary history of South Australia. Professor Henderson, who had assisted Gill in acquiring the York Gate Library in 1905, was the state's first academic historian. While Gill, Way and Sowden wished to preserve evidence of South Australia's progress and achievements, Henderson intended to preserve all documents. Undergraduate courses in history at the university covered only British history, but Henderson had introduced a fourth year of study funded by a scholarship from a bequest

⁷⁴ For the full story of this project, see B.S. Baldwin, "The Public Library of South Australia's Oral History Project, 1903-1908", *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol.6, No.7 (1976), pp.292-302.

in 1908 by Sir George Murray. Recipients of Tinline Scholarships prepared a thesis on a South Australian topic based on a study of original documents. Thus Henderson was the first academic historian in Australia to encourage the study of local history at university.

Henderson, who was writing a biography of Sir George Grey, Governor of South Australia from 1841 to 1845, and the first Tinline scholars, Mabel Hardy, A.C.V. Melbourne, later prominent in the Queensland Historical Society, and Bessie Threadgill, encountered problems in finding sources for their research. The documents contained in the library were few and were housed in the general collection. Henderson argued for the separation of this material into a public records department. Thus, he followed the example set by the founders of historical societies in New England and took steps to establish an organisation to collect manuscripts of value to him. Whereas New Englanders initiated private organisations, Henderson advocated a state-supported institution. In 1911, when president of the History-Geography Section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, he suggested that the public libraries in each state should jointly petition the Secretary of State in London requesting the transfer of duplicates of all despatches from Government House to the public library in each state.⁷⁵ While on study leave in England in 1914 he examined European archives. His findings, which he presented in a report to the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery when he returned to Adelaide in 1915, recommended that, "all important historical documents that are likely to be of service in the compilation of a history of the state" be gathered together and housed in the old ordnance store behind the Art Gallery. Henderson intended the Archives to include:

diaries, more particularly those of explorers; maps and plans, records of municipalities and district councils, newspapers, letters and other private papers of public men; contemporary books and pamphlets, annual reports, proceedings and transactions of important societies, conferences and public companies, directories, almanacs, autobiographies and reminiscences; paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, and portraits of public men.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Kwan, p.46.

⁷⁶ G.C. Henderson, "Report on the Collection, Storage and Preservation of Archives in Europe", *South Australian Parliamentary Papers* No.46 of 1915; G.C. Henderson, *The Archives Department of South Australia*. Adelaide (1920), p.9.

Since the collection was to be so varied, he recommended calling it The Department of Historical Records.⁷⁷ The range of material now available is extensive because it was a historian who set the parameters.⁷⁸

An early project of the archives coincided with one of the aims of the Australian Historical Society. In 1914 the library's chief clerk, Hatley Marshall, had suggested collecting photographs of important buildings and people. He and the government photolithographer, A. Vaughan, contributed a large number of photographs of events and scenes that Henderson regarded as "already interesting", and which would be "far more so in the future."⁷⁹ The result was an impressive record of hundreds of photographs of early Adelaide. Notwithstanding this populist project, Henderson had an elitist view of history and, like the early American academics, viewed amateur historians with disdain. Readers in the archives had to show a letter guaranteeing their credentials before they were allowed access to the manuscripts. Henderson doubted the historic sense of ordinary South Australians, "Public opinion is not yet educated out here to a proper appreciation of the value of these important documents".⁸⁰ While objecting to the centralisation of state documents in Melbourne, at that time home to the federal government, he balked at the idea of rural areas retaining their own manuscripts, "It is necessary to remember that people in country towns rarely are inclined to estimate historical documents at their proper value, and are therefore unwilling, in the great majority of cases, to provide the funds necessary for their collection and preservation."⁸¹ To Henderson, as to other South Australians, history remained the preserve of the educated elite.

Members of this same elite were among the few South Australians to show concern for the built heritage of the state in these years. While the Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society (founded in 1883) and the Parklands Preservation Society (founded in 1906) formed to fight for the protection of the natural environment, no society advocated the preservation of buildings associated with early settlement.

⁷⁷ Henderson, "Report".

⁷⁸ For a full account of the formation of the Archives see Carl Bridge, "The Foundation of the South Australian Archives", *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol.12, No.1 (1984).

⁷⁹ Henderson, *The Archives Department*, pp.12-13.

⁸⁰ Henderson, "Report".

⁸¹ Henderson, "Report".

However, because of the slower pace of development in South Australia, old buildings were not under the same threat as in the United States or elsewhere in Australia. Nevertheless some notable buildings disappeared. In 1913 Sowden lamented the proposed demolition of an old church at the rear of the art gallery, claiming that, "it would be a great pity if in any rebuilding scheme that little edifice should be sacrificed." He suggested that the old church "would lend itself aptly for the display of some of the antiquarian objects which the Museum held."⁸² An article in the *Chronicle* on 25 January 1913 reported a call to the mayor and local council of Thebarton to acquire William Light's home.⁸³ The amateur historian John Blacket, another who was concerned with saving the state's heritage, on several occasions wrote to the *Register* regarding the state of Colonel Light's cottage and in 1917 applauded the moves to "secure to the nation the cottage originally owned by Colonel Light."⁸⁴ In the same letter he expressed the hope that monuments to explorers on Kangaroo Island would be protected, believing that this would encourage visitors to the island and thus increase the wealth of the community. Furthermore, Blacket claimed, "By preserving them we shall be conferring a benefit upon posterity."⁸⁵ The state government showed some interest in preservation. In 1916 Charles Reade, South Australia's (and Australia's) first town planner, included a provision to protect items of architectural and historic worth in a proposed planning bill worked out with the co-operation of Premier Crawford Vaughan. But because of community apathy, the bill lapsed.⁸⁶

Notable in South Australia is the absence of women in any move to preserve the past. The participation of women in public life in South Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resembled that in the United States and the other Australian states. Inspired by an American campaigner who spoke in Adelaide in 1886, women became active in the temperance movement, and within three years 23 local temperance

⁸² State Records (SA). GRG19 71/2. Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery Cuttings Book. The *Daily Herald*, 15 March 1913, the *Register*, 15 March 1913. Sowden's hopes were realised and this building subsequently housed the Archives.

⁸³ See John Tregenza, "Colonel Light's 'Thebarton Cottage' and his Legacy to Maria Gandy: a Re-Consideration of the Evidence", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No. 17 (1989), p.19.

⁸⁴ *Register*, 30 November 1917.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Jim Warburton, "Introduction", in Jim Warburton (ed.), *Focus on Our Built Heritage*, Publication No.83, Department of Continuing Education, University of Adelaide. (June 1981).

unions had a membership of over 1100. Other reformist groups included the Social Purity Society, the Working Women's Trades Union, the Education League, and the Women's Suffrage League, which achieved the vote for women in 1894.⁸⁷ Most societies in South Australia permitted female membership. Nevertheless, women did not join the Royal Geographical Society until 1910 and, unlike their American sisters, South Australian women took no interest in calling for the preservation of early buildings or of the homes of the founders and explorers. Perhaps the social improvement groups absorbed all the energies of the politically-active females. More likely, although the early buildings did not bear the convict 'taint', they were regarded as unworthy by British standards, the only standards that most South Australians respected.

Attitudes to preserving the past varied among Australians from all regions. The majority probably never thought about it at all while others believed that Australia was too young and its past too nondescript or embarrassing to remember. Only a minority of the population thought it worth saving. The failure to establish a dedicated historical society in South Australia before 1920 does not mean that South Australians differed in their appreciation of past events from the inhabitants of the other states in Australia that formed historical societies. Many initiatives to preserve aspects of the history of settlement in South Australia pre-dated moves in the other Australian states. The first archives department in the country developed in South Australia because of the relatively homogeneous population, the absence of convicts and the pride of the descendants of the pioneer families. These same reasons, combined with pathbreaking initiatives such as votes for women and other democratic improvements, should have instilled pride in the population and ensured that the first state historical society developed in South Australia. But this did not happen.

Summary

By the first decades of the twentieth century South Australia superficially resembled New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and the four states had much in

⁸⁷ Details of these societies appear in Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: Women in South Australian History*. Adelaide (1986).

common with the northern and western areas of the United States.⁸⁸ The social situation was similar, railways had expanded, working hours had shortened, and family size had slowly begun to decline. These changes came into being at similar times in the three areas and had the same liberating effects in South Australia as in the other regions. South Australians initiated and joined a comparable number of associations, both local and national, as did inhabitants of the other areas. South Australia also differed from the United States in the same ways as did New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. It shared the same economic vicissitudes as the other Australian states, and underwent a similar scattered inland expansion. Like other Australians, South Australians lacked the heroes and heroic events so celebrated by Americans. As in the other states, immigration, urbanisation and industrialisation did not threaten the social fabric as it did in the United States. Migrants originated mainly from the British Isles, and manufacturing remained on a small scale. While Adelaide gradually dominated the state and by 1901 its percentage of the state's population had risen to 39%,⁸⁹ its increasing size did not cause alienation or loss of sense of community, and the city with its surrounding suburban areas remained an overgrown country town.

Despite these similarities with the rest of Australia, South Australia differed in certain key respects. The mining towns in rural South Australia were never as vibrant as the Victorian gold towns. When their boom times had passed the inhabitants did not, as did the pioneers of Ballarat, form societies to commemorate the early days and their own exploits. The remaining substantial rural communities, and these were few, supported a scattered agricultural population. These towns and many smaller villages had formed institutes that served as cultural, social and educational centres. Most of the inhabitants of these communities did not perceive the history of their area as significant, and so made no attempt to formally acknowledge it either in a museum or by forming a group to collect information on it. The settlement of the rural areas of South Australia lacked the

⁸⁸ But not the southern states of America because of the legacy of slavery and the resultant division in the population.

⁸⁹ J.W. McCarty, "Australian Capital Cities in the Nineteenth Century", in C.B. Schedvin and J.W. McCarty (eds), *Urbanization in Australia. The Nineteenth Century*, Sydney (1974), p.23.

buoyancy and optimism of western settlement in the United States that resulted in the early establishment of historical societies in the newly settled regions of that country.

The efforts of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery and the South Australian Archives to establish collections and to preserve records were official rather than amateur. Nevertheless they are relevant to the development of amateur historical societies in South Australia since it was partly initiatives of these organisations to preserve reminders of South Australia's settlement that inhibited the formation of amateur societies. Early societies in the United States, such as the Massachusetts Historical Society, formed to preserve documents and artefacts related to the history of their area, while individuals initiated or joined later societies to further their own research or to validate their lineage. While this was of lesser import for the societies in Australia, they nevertheless included the collection of documents and artefacts in their objectives. The Art Gallery, with its assortment of paintings and relics, and the Public Library, and later the South Australian Archives, with the collections of documents relating to the early history of the colony, fulfilled these functions.

The Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch recorded the history of the colony/state. Even though this society had decided against incorporating 'historical' in its title, history remained important to many of its members. They constantly worried that if they did not include history the society would fade into oblivion, yet they also doubted that a historical society could stand on its own because of Adelaide's small population. But population size is irrelevant since Brisbane, with a population of a similar size to Adelaide, managed to support both a geographical society and a historical society, while in Sydney and Melbourne, both much larger cities, the geographical societies failed and the historical societies prospered. With Henderson's interest in local history, had he joined the Royal Geographical Society he might have encouraged its separation into two societies. But the marriage between geography and history was never harmonious, and in the frequent squabbles geography always triumphed.

Thus there are several minor reasons for the absence of societies to commemorate the past in South Australia. But the major factor was South Australia's particularly strong

attachment to Britain. Despite their continuing subservience to England, by the beginnings of the twentieth century the three mainland states of Australia had developed a rudimentary Australian consciousness and sufficient pride in their past to initiate amateur historical societies. This was because of the influence of the descendants of convicts and the Irish. But South Australia, with no direct transportation of convicts and few from internal migration, and with a relatively small number of Irish, lacked the necessary impetus to form a national consciousness. The Irish who settled in South Australia followed the pattern of their eastern brethren and rejected Britain, but since their numbers were small and they valued their isolation from the convict-founded states,⁹⁰ they did not challenge the prevailing attitudes of the Anglocentric majority. In the words of historian J.B. Hirst, "the social composition of South Australia was different from that of the eastern colonies. There were no convicts and fewer Irish to harbour resentment against the well-to-do."⁹¹ South Australians rejoiced that theirs was the only freely settled colony in Australia. The minority of German settlers, which by the beginning of the twentieth century made up about 10% of the population, failed to shake South Australians' faith in their past and present, and South Australians felt no need formally to prove themselves or their lineage. They gloried in their Britishness and hence formed no independent amateur historical society, ancestral association, preservation group or historical museum to commemorate their Australianness. They did write local histories to record the details of settlement and the feats of the pioneers, but in fewer numbers than in the other regions. The lack of a state historical society hampered the formation of smaller groups and of a historical museum to record details of the colonisation and early settlement of the state. Not until the 1930s, the decade of the centenary of white settlement of South Australia, did an awareness of the need for societies to commemorate the past emerge.

⁹⁰ Margaret M. Press. *From Our Broken Toil: South Australian Catholics 1836-1906*. Adelaide (1986), p.264.

⁹¹ J.B. Hirst, *Adelaide and the Country 1870-1917*. Melbourne (1973), pp.45-46.

CHAPTER THREE

Part I: “the historical society is a vital part of our community and national life” - The Growth of Amateur History in the United States, 1921 to 1945

As in the last decade of the nineteenth century, in the years after the ending of the First World War some Americans feared the disintegration of society. Labour unrest and social turmoil appeared to be destroying the traditional American way of life. This unease was heightened by the increasing popularity of the automobile, which led to the building of new roads, strip development along these new roads and increasing urbanisation and suburbanisation. This resulted in a drastic transformation of the landscape and threatened the physical and natural environment.¹ These conditions challenged the fabric of American society, heralding fragmentation and discord. To counteract this threat some Americans again looked for a means of fostering a national identity and re-establishing ideals inherited from the revolution. Interest in history, in decline from the second decade of the century, revived as a knowledge of the past provided an anchor in the rapidly changing world.

Local anniversaries and regional observances bolstered this interest in history and initiated a boom in the formation of historical societies sponsored by local communities. From the 1920s state historical societies, particularly in the Midwest, sponsored scores of local societies. However, either because of their artificial beginnings or because of the severe downturn in the economy starting in 1929, many lasted only a short time. While the depression also caused the failure of some older more entrenched societies, it did not kill the celebration of history, and the 1929 stock market crash resulted in a renewed earnestness in searching for the past in the United States. Again in troubled times Americans turned to history for entertainment, patriotic renewal, education, consolation and inspiration.² Julian P. Boyd conservatively estimated that in 1934 there were between 700 and 800 historical agencies with a combined investment in funds, books and property

¹ Thomas D. Clark, “Local History: A Mainspring for National History”, *Local History Today*. Papers Presented at Four Regional Workshops for Local Historical Organizations in Indiana, June 1978-April 1979, p.37.

² John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton (1992), p.173.

ten times greater than it had been 25 years, previously and that since 1792 the societies had published several thousand volumes.³

From 1920 to the end of the Second World War most societies in the Northeast concentrated on building great libraries for the use of scholars, while societies in the western states continued with their mission to popularise history. In all regions the major state societies expanded and became large employers of university trained historians. The State Historical Society of Iowa believed its dominant purposes were research and publication, and in the 25 years prior to 1934 it employed 26 trained personnel and produced 720 publications ranging from documentary sources to popular essays. The Minnesota Historical Society produced a popular journal, *Minnesota History*, provided news releases to Minnesota newspapers, radio broadcasts, travelling museum exhibits and promoted historical pilgrimages. These popularising activities increased membership and encouraged an awareness of history among public officials and legislators in Minnesota. Historical societies in Illinois, Michigan and Missouri conducted similar activities. Notable exceptions to the introverted attitude of the north-eastern historical societies were the New York State Historical Association, which encouraged publication of local history in the weekly newspapers, and the Pennsylvania State Historical Association (formed in 1933), which applied some of the techniques of the western societies to broaden the base of its membership.⁴

Interest in history was not uniform throughout the United States and length of settlement had little to do with the formation of a historical society. The first European settlement in North America was in, yet not until 1921 did Florida have a state historical society. The first attempt to form a historical society in California, which experienced rapid growth after the 1840s gold rushes, was in 1852. This failed, as did two subsequent attempts, and a successful historical society was not founded until 1922. This society was largely the work of business and professional men and had few links with academic institutions. No society formed in Santa Barbara, settled in 1782, until 1932, and this remained largely inactive until 1954. Similarly San Diego, settled in 1769, did not have a

³ Julian P. Boyd, "State and Local Historical Societies in the United States", *The American Historical Review*, Vol.40 (1934), p.30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.30-35.

local historical association until the San Diego Historical Society was incorporated in 1928. Whitehill attributes the late formation of historical societies in these two states to their settlement patterns. California lacked the educated elite of the north-eastern seaboard and the established family groups of the Midwest. Its pioneers concentrated on making money and were more mobile than those in other regions of the United States. Despite its early settlement, Florida also lacked an educated elite and established family groups, and was slow to acquire a distinct identity.⁵

By 1940 there were more than a thousand historical organisations in the United States and Canada. Leaders of some of the major societies had become so disenchanted with the American Historical Association that they formed a separate organisation, the American Association for State and Local History, to work exclusively for the benefit of local history. The new association had broad aims: to compile lists of local historians and genealogists; to encourage the writing of good state and local histories; to promote the establishment of adequate courses on state and local history; and to provide information on the functions of a historical society such as marking historic sites, conducting historical tours, staging historical celebrations and pageants, preserving historic buildings, and preparing and broadcasting historical radio programs. It planned to co-operate with patriotic and civic organisations, the National Park Service and the Works Progress Administration Historical Records Survey in recording events of the past and in celebrating American history.⁶ Although the new society had committed itself to advancing both academic and amateur history, it gradually concentrated on the needs of nonacademics.⁷

Along with the changing cultural attitudes of the American population came the democratisation of genealogy. This broadened the membership of those exclusive and elitist ancestral and hereditary groups that had formed in the 1890s. Perhaps because of the resulting lessening of prestige, membership in these groups declined in the 1930s. Some groups, such as the Virginia Society, Sons of the Revolution and its rival the

⁵ Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies: An Enquiry into Their Research and Publication Functions and Their Financial Future*. Boston (1962), pp.196-197, 227-229, 402-403.

⁶ William T. Alderson, Jr. "The American Association for State and Local History", *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.2 (1970), p.176.

⁷ Whitehill, p.509.

Virginia Society, Sons of the American Revolution, combined, realising the benefits of co-operation in a time of decreasing membership. Other ancestral and patriotic groups redefined and broadened their aims.⁸ At the same time that membership in ancestral groups declined interest in family history boomed, leading one commentator to enthuse, "Truly one of the blessings of American democracy is that it has brought genealogy and pedigrees and an escutcheon within the reach of the common man ... It is only in America where the butcher, the baker and the bookstore-dealer may aspire to genealogical distinction."⁹ The publication of family histories mushroomed, and in April 1930 several groups combined to form the Federation of American Family Associations. Its first directory, published in 1931, listed more than 500 family associations.¹⁰

The number of museums devoted to history expanded, as did their focus. Historic house museums presented the history of the house and its inhabitants, while large museums like the National Museum presented an overview of the whole country. In 1923 the Museum of the City of New York became the first museum dedicated to the history of a major city. Mystic Seaport, opened in Connecticut in 1929, was the first museum to concentrate on the maritime history of the United States. The New York State Historical Association, founded in 1899, was the first historical society to develop an outdoor museum when in 1942 it opened the Farmers' Museum at Cooperstown, where demonstrations by costumed interpreters and visitor participation were as important as brochures and labels.¹¹

Great as the increase in membership in genealogical groups and historical societies was in the years from 1920 to the end of the Second World War, even greater was interest in the preservation of the physical reminders of the past. In the 1920s

⁸ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York (1991), p.332.

⁹ Cedric Larson, "The Rising Tide of Genealogical Publications in America", *The Colophon*, Vol.3 (Winter 1938), p.111. This article also shows the insularity of Americans and highlights that, while Australians were conscious of developments in local history in the United States, Americans were ignorant of similar movements outside their own country.

¹⁰ Robert M. Taylor, Jr. and Ralph J. Crandall, "Historians and Genealogists: An Emerging Community of Interest", in Robert M. Taylor, Jr. and Ralph J. Crandall (eds), *Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History*. Macon, Ga. (1986), p.12.

¹¹ Edward P. Alexander, "The Rise of American History Museums", in Bryant F. Tolles Jr. (ed.), *Leadership for the Future: Changing Directorial Roles in American History Museums and Historical Societies*, Nashville (1991), pp.3-19.

preservationists hoped to instil a sense of national identity in old and new Americans and to give them a shared past. As in the late nineteenth century, preservation was an antidote to fear of alienation, discord and social unrest. But other factors in preserving reminders of the past slowly gained prominence. One stimulus was the changing appearance of the countryside and towns brought about by the increasing popularity of the car. This encouraged the spread of suburbia into what had been farmland, and rural towns that had altered little for 50 to 100 years now expanded. Old, often neglected but visually pleasing buildings were torn down and replaced with commercial developments or standardised housing. Middle-class Americans in particular resented this transformation of the landscape and acted to prevent it.¹² Additionally, Americans now recognised that buildings of architectural merit, whether or not they were connected with a famous figure or event of the past, were worth saving. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the number of preservation groups slowly increased. Historical societies in the Northeast, albeit often reluctantly, and individual chapters of patriotic organisations increasingly became involved in the preservation of buildings and their associated collections of documents and museum artefacts. Societies saved some of these old houses to use as offices and as repositories for their collections. They preserved others to serve as a patriotic inspiration to the general public, to attract new members, and as a means of raising funds.¹³

The financing of preservation generally followed the pattern of the funding of historical societies. Preservation societies in New England were privately supported because New Englanders did not believe that state and local governments would respect the history of the region. Even though private funds supported historical societies in the Mid Atlantic states, these states turned to the state and city for aid for preservation, perhaps because of the costs involved. The rural nature of the South discouraged the formation of a large number of local preservation organisations. Small chapters of the

¹² This change on the urban and rural landscape should not be exaggerated and took place slowly during this period. The 1930 census shows that the United States had 1833 cities of greater than 5000 inhabitants, 1332 towns between 2500 and 5000 and 3087 places between 1000 and 2500. There were still 10,346 villages with less than 1000 residents. However, some Americans foresaw an ever-increasing pace of change and moved to save part of the country's heritage.

¹³ Hosmer, pp.298-301; Elizabeth A. Lyon, "The States: Preservation in the Middle", in Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette J. Lee (eds), *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage*. Washington DC (1987), p.83.

Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and some chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution remained the only local groups working for preservation. National organisations saved a few homes but only if they were significant to the entire nation. In the western states, state-owned historic sites were the norm.¹⁴

Since many historic sites and museums depended on gate receipts for their livelihood they had to attract the general public and not just high-minded individuals intent on preserving an American national identity. Museum managers proved extremely successful in popularising history, and the commercialisation of history was well entrenched by the 1930s. In 1934, 31,457 tourists visited the country's first major historic restoration, Williamsburg, the colonial capital of Virginia. By 1936 this had risen to 95,497, and in 1941 Williamsburg attracted 210,824 visitors.¹⁵ Paradoxically, the automobile that had threatened to annihilate America's past was the vehicle that allowed preservation to prosper. Without a cheap convenient form of transport and improved roads, tourists could not have visited the preserved buildings and historic museums. The increasing ease of travel among all social classes helped to blur distinctions between high and low culture and led to the democratisation of the presentation of American history. The common man, and not just the powerful, now began to appear in historic displays.¹⁶

Coincident with the changing emphasis on preserved buildings was a change in the make-up of the groups responsible for preserving the past. The success of the preservation group founded by Ann Pamela Cunningham and of other groups established on her model by women in various parts of the country had suggested that women would continue to be leaders in the preservation movement in America. However, they remained at the forefront only so long as preservation stressed history and patriotic inspiration. When, beginning towards the end of World War I, architectural merit gained ascendancy as a reason for preservation of a building, men took the lead. The social status of preservationists also altered. While before the early decades of the twentieth century

¹⁴ Hosmer, p.301; William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, Pittstown, NJ (1988), pp.51-61

¹⁵ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, p.367.

¹⁶ Only the large well known museums were financially successful. Most of the small house museums struggled to survive, and many historical societies regretted venturing into such undertakings. See Hosmer, chap.13.

preservationists generally had come from the middle class, two of the nation's richest men financed the country's first major historic restorations. During the 1920s and 1930s Henry Ford established Greenfield Village at Dearborn, Michigan, and John D. Rockefeller Jr. financed the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Another change was in the involvement of government. In the nineteenth century, with a few exceptions, private individuals acting alone or in groups had spearheaded the movement, but during the inter-war period local, state and federal governments became involved.¹⁷ In 1931 the city council zoned the Battery in Charleston, South Carolina, as an 'Old and Historic District', the first such historic district in the United States. In 1937 the Louisiana state legislature gave similar protection to the Vieux Carre, the historic French quarter of New Orleans.¹⁸ Preservation was no longer the preserve of middle-class women.

During the inter-war period the National Park Service, established in 1916 and authorised to care for both the natural and physical environment, accelerated its acquisition of historic properties, in particular on the east coast. Beginning in 1931, it employed trained professional staff to manage the increasing number of historic properties. The depression acted as a catalyst to increasing an awareness of America's past when President Franklin Roosevelt, a devotee of history, established the Historic American Buildings Surveys to create work for 1200 unemployed architects and draughtsmen. This program resulted in the first national survey of historic architecture in the United States. Other depression employment programs were equally important in the recording of the country's history. The Works Progress Administration hired archaeologists to excavate and record sites about to be flooded by such massive river-damming programs as the Tennessee Valley Authority. The Federal Writers' Project utilised the skills of historians to produce 276 sizeable volumes and 701 pamphlets on folk history, autobiographical narratives and thematic guides to regions, cities and small communities. Between 1934 and 1941 the Civilian Conservation Corps undertook

¹⁷ Until 1920 Congress had been reluctant to spend money on preserving or commemorating any aspect of the past. Its first contribution was in 1920 to support the Pilgrim Tercentenary Commission in Massachusetts (to the chagrin of southerners), and it subsequently, though meagrely, supported several other commemorative events.

¹⁸ Murtagh, pp.58-60; J. Myrick Howard, "Where the Action Is: Preservation and Local Governments", in Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette J. Lee (eds), *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage*. Washington DC (1987), p.115.

restoration projects that employed 300,000 young men, including hundreds of historians and historical technicians, in archaeological, reconstruction and repair projects and in state and national parks.¹⁹ These workers learned about conservation, history and historic preservation, and the Corps “was a major step in transmitting the message of state and local history to every crossroad of the nation.”²⁰ Unfortunately, very few of the depression era programs survived. Government support for national, regional and local traditions was too new and unconventional by American standards to outlive the disruption of World War II.²¹

In 1933 President Roosevelt transferred all national military parks, battlefields and monuments to the control of the Department of the Interior, to be supervised by the National Park Service, thus quadrupling the historic areas administered by the Service. In 1935 the Department of the Interior authorised the Historic Sites Act that allowed the National Park Service to acquire property, to preserve and operate privately-owned historic or archaeological sites, to construct museums, to place commemorative tablets and to develop educational programs. To carry out this mandate the Service established the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings and employed a large number of historians to survey all historic sites and place them on a national preservation listing. These moves put the Park Service at the forefront of the preservation movement.²²

While preservation gained an increasing number of adherents from the early 1920s, the popularity of local history publications declined during this decade and the social standing of the writers altered. Professional men, who had dominated the field for the previous one hundred years, became more involved in their occupations and the number of women, local councillors, printers and journalists increased. Although from a lower social order, these new writers were still successful townspeople who produced uplifting histories that encompassed the lives of other successful townspeople. They covered the same ground that local historians had for the last one hundred years, but the

¹⁹ Frederick L. Rath, Jr. “Local History and the New Deal”, in *Local History, National Heritage: Reflections on the History of AASLH*. Nashville (1991), pp.23-36; W. Brown Morton III, “What Do We Preserve and Why?”, in Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette J. Lee (eds), *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage*. Washington DC (1987), pp.162-163.

²⁰ Rath, p.28.

²¹ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, p.474.

²² *Ibid.*, p.469.

standard of their work in general did not match that of the earlier writers.²³ This decline was particularly evident in the work of county historians, who produced little of note after 1919.²⁴ The depression further affected the writing of amateur history. The majority of local histories had been written about two types of communities, New England towns and growing cities throughout the country. The utopian, religious character of New England towns inspired local historians to record the community building they exemplified. And it was the buoyant economic growth of the rising cities that encouraged their memorialisation. But both bodies of work celebrated success and with the onset of depression the assumption of continued progress was called into question and the movement lost momentum.²⁵

During the inter-war period, and for some time preceding it, commercial publishing companies had become involved in producing local histories and gradually had expanded in the field. Some companies continued publishing formulaic histories that included biographies of local worthies. But unlike the publishers of 'mug books' of earlier years, these companies employed prominent local persons such as retired judges or journalists to edit histories of their local areas. These knew their regions and how to find accurate sources, both written and oral, unlike the earlier authors who had usually spent only a week or two in the towns about which they were writing. The greatest difference between local histories written in the years between 1920 to 1945 and the earlier volumes was their length. The earlier encyclopaedic volumes that had included lists, data, statistics and sources lost favour, to be replaced by brief narrative histories. These were easier to read and cheaper to produce, and thus were widely accessible.²⁶ During the 1930s, perhaps because of the depression, the popular press gave greater attention to local history in its features pages. History had proved to be a money-earner and newspaper proprietors, no longer paid to print large volumes of history, included it in their own publications. Small-town newspapers often published regular columns on local events of

²³ Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means*. Nashville (1986), 28.

²⁴ P. William Filby, *A Bibliography of American County Histories*. Baltimore (1985), p.xi.

²⁵ David J. Russo, *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s*. New York (1988), p.207.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.187.

the past written by a member of a local historical society or an independent amateur historian, but the results were usually tedious and boring. Other proprietors used professional journalists who, being more interested in entertaining readers and pleasing editors than in ferreting out minor details, sometimes 'improved' a story and made their work more appealing by reproducing the local dialect and incorporating familiar sayings. Some critics objected to the sloppy, inaccurate and biased work of these journalists, but they popularised history for the ordinary person as did other forms of historical writing.²⁷ The car, films, radio and the tabloid press had inaugurated in America a mass culture geared specifically to the common man and available to rural as well as urban dwellers. These developments influenced writers of local history, and some popular biographers of formerly sacrosanct heroes divulged details of these heroes' intimate lives, their shortcomings and their more questionable activities.²⁸ When the general public became tired of such 'debunking', some biographers began to write on the more sensational characters of the past, "a process characterized by one sour critic as a change from 'pulling down idols' to 'setting up criminals for inspection.'"²⁹

Americans from other regions continued to resent the domination of New Englanders over the writing of American history. New Englanders had increasingly assumed primacy in the settlement of the United States and in its fight for independence. This particularly piqued Virginians. In exasperation at a New Englander's claim that women played a more important role in early Plymouth than in early Virginia, in 1925 the Virginian historian Philip Alexander Bruce wished for "a band of local historical scholars who ... possess both the means and the literary culture to enforce on the attention of the world the superior part which Virginia played in the history of colonization".³⁰ But this was to no avail, and New Englanders retained control of the presentation of the past.

²⁷ Carol Kammen, pp.151-152.

²⁸ Popular writers in other countries also indulged in this form of biography. In a talk given to the Royal Australian Historical Society Flora Eldershaw cited several similar works written about British icons and attributed it to a "reaction against the exaggerated deference paid to authority in Victorian times." "History as the Raw Material of Literature", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.20 (1934), p.3.

²⁹ George E. Mowry and Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Nation 1920-1980*. New York (1981), p.21.

³⁰ Quoted in Michael Kammen, *Selvages and Biases: The Fabric of History in American Culture*. Ithaca and London (1987), pp.158-159.

The elite stature of many historical societies continued in this period. In 1944 Leslie Dunlap claimed that a majority of early American historical societies had located in the capital or metropolis of a region, or in a college or university town, because they “can exist only where there is considerable interest in cultural institutions.”³¹ In these areas the educated and/or wealthy sections of society retained control of historical organisations, and the history they perpetuated continued to be on those stratum of society. But contrary to Dunlap’s view, historical societies did exist in small towns without such cultural facilities. These drew their members from a wider cross-section of society and displayed a more democratic approach to history.

During the interwar decades some societies forged closer associations with university history departments. Dixon Ryan Fox, an academic, was president of the New York State Historical Association from 1929 until 1945. The state historical societies in the Midwest continued their fruitful relationships with their state universities. From 1900 until 1953 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin Library shared a building and although they had separate libraries, they followed a co-operative policy in the purchase of books.³² The depression years propelled some societies into closer contact with academic historians since the declining number of academic positions encouraged many younger, university trained historians to seek employment in historical societies, providing a new generation of leadership.³³ Despite this development most academic historians continued to disdain the small local historical, preservation and genealogical groups. In 1923 James Truslow Adams had found the past preserved by these amateur groups to be dangerous:

On all sides the American historian meets organizations devoted to the glorification of the past, societies formed to celebrate the deeds of ancestors, racial groups bent on magnifying the share of certain elements in the formation of our country, “patriotic” groups bent on distorting the glorious story of human America into an allegory of the conflict between the powers of darkness and the powers of light.³⁴

³¹ Leslie Dunlap, *American Historical Societies 1790-1860*. Philadelphia (1974), p.15.

³² Boyd, pp.34-36.

³³ Rath, p.32.

³⁴ Quoted in Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, p.485.

This approach to history continued even after the number of trained historians in historical societies increased, and immediately prior to and during the Second World War many historical societies and museums distorted history in the name of patriotism.

Colonial Williamsburg and other restored towns and districts of the 1920s commemorated national history while other more modest projects that proliferated during the 1930s, such as Salem's Pioneer Village, celebrated local events. But as rumours of war proliferated, all these restored areas and museums emphasised the story of American democracy. They cloaked American values in a mantle of American history and used America's democratic traditions to promote national allegiance. Increasingly they provided a retreat from current problems. With the onset of World War II the interpretation program at Williamsburg, initially uncoordinated and lacking any true direction, became a propaganda tool to inspire patriotism in the armed forces. Such courses as "This War and Williamsburg: one day course in American history for soldiers" reinforced a sense of heritage among servicemen and women and instructed them on America's position in the world.³⁵ Whether the courses were actually necessary is debatable. One serviceman commented, "Of all the sights I have seen, and the books I have read, and the speeches I have heard, none ever made me see the greatness of this country with more force and clearness than when I saw Williamsburg slumbering peacefully on its old foundations."³⁶ The restored town might have been sufficient of itself.

Members of the new American Association for State and Local History also stressed the importance of history in the cause of democracy. At its founding meeting in December 1940, Alexander J. Wall, director of the New-York Historical Society, observed that:

The world is now struggling for democracy. Unless we can show what democracy has done, how can we save ourselves? Historical societies, without funds have gathered and preserved tremendous collections of manuscripts, books, and

³⁵ Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Colonial Williamsburg: The First 25 Years*. Williamsburg (1951); Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States", in Susan Porter Benson *et al.*, *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, Philadelphia (1986), pp.151-152.

³⁶ Quoted in Kenneth Chorley, "What's Wrong with Historic Preservation." Address given at *Historic Housekeeping: A Short Course* held under the joint auspices of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and New York State Historical Association, September 19-24 1955, Cooperstown, New York.

newspapers. Now their collections should be interpreted and used in telling the story of democracy.³⁷

In 1942 Loring McMillen, a contributor to the Association's *Bulletin*, amplified the duties of amateur historical societies:

For now, as at all times, the historical society is a vital part of our community and national life. It is the comprehensive and natural custodian and means of expression of those democratic traditions and ideals for which we and that part of the world allied with us are fighting. A fundamental purpose of the historical society is the preservation and expounding of these ideals as expressed in the history of a particular locality.³⁸

Thus, in the United States historical societies assumed a political function as well as an educational role. Members of these groups saw it as their duty to direct the preservation of history and to inculcate, through the means of history, their elite view throughout the nation. While historical societies in Australia also attracted members largely from the educated classes who perpetuated an elite view of history, they never took on the role of crusader and assumed a less dramatic part in the preservation of the past and its use in the present.

Part II: "no one is responsible for his ancestors" - The Growth of Amateur History in Australia, 1921 to 1945

The First World War wrought different changes to Australia than it had in the United States. A minority of the population reacted against the appalling casualty rate suffered by Australian troops and became hostile to war. Skirmishes ensued between these protesters and returned servicemen but these were never as violent as similar incidents in some European countries, and the social disruption was not as great as in the United States. In Australia, the debacle of Gallipoli became a symbol of nationhood, something that had been lacking since federation in 1901, and Anzac Day, celebrating a terrible defeat, became Australia's first truly national day. But Australian historians and historical societies, unlike their American opposites, refrained from using national conflict as a rallying cry for patriotism. Ernest Scott, member of the Historical Society of Victoria and professor of history at the University of Melbourne, warned that, "the

³⁷ Quoted in Whitehill, p.510.

³⁸ Loring McMillen, "Using Volunteers in the Local Historical Society's Program", *Bulletins of the American Association for State and Local History*, Vol.1, No.3 (1942), p.51.

nourishing of patriotism is not the primary object of history, and ... the pressing of it into a patriotic mould has been one of the most fruitful causes of the manufacture of much pestilentially bad history."³⁹

Australians observed a series of anniversaries in the 1920s and 1930s. While the main celebration was the nation's 150th birthday in 1938, this concentrated in New South Wales and, more particularly, in Sydney. Like the celebrations in 1888, the organisers ignored the convicts. While in the former year this was perhaps understandable, by 1938 Australians should have been more at ease with their past. After all, the Royal Australian Historical Society had researched the history of the state since 1901. In 1922 members had listened to a paper given by Professor G.A. Wood in which he declared that, "The most important founders of New South Wales were the convicts". He denounced the view that the convicts were depraved, claiming they were victims of social conditions and harsh justice in Britain.⁴⁰ But some members of the society supported the consensus view, with Cramp asserting that "the splendid work done by individual men who had been transported for offences had been done by them, not as convicts but as free citizens."⁴¹ In his efforts to deflect attention away from the convict beginnings of Australia he was at odds with members of the society and with H.J. Rumsey, President of the Genealogical Society, as well as several prominent members of the community, the Sydney press and members of the public.⁴² Some Australians were ready to acknowledge the part played by convicts in the foundation of the country, and to laugh at those who still cringed because of the early settlers.⁴³ Miles Franklin and Dymphna Cusack's satirical work, *Pioneers on Parade*, mocked the pretensions of Sydney's elite descendants groups and their attitude to the past.⁴⁴

³⁹ *History and Historical Problems*, Oxford (1925), p.141. Quoted in Graeme Davison, "The Use and Abuse of Australian History", *Historical Studies*, Vol.23, No.91 (1988), p.62.

⁴⁰ G.A. Wood, "Convicts", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.8 (1922), p.177.

⁴¹ Quoted in Gavin Souter, "Skeleton at the Feast", in Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt (eds), *Australians 1938*. Sydney (1987), p.18. See also Julian Thomas, "1938: Past and Present in an Elaborate Anniversary", *Historical Studies*, Vol.23, No.91 (1988), pp.77-89 for further details on this anniversary.

⁴² Brian Fletcher, *Australian History in New South Wales 1888-1938*. Sydney (1993), pp.160-161.

⁴³ This acceptance of convict beginnings was only tenable while convicts appeared to be victims of harsh British justice and were handkerchief thieves and minor poachers. The revisionist view of S.H. Roberts, professor of history at the University of Sydney, that convicts were as likely to be murderers as minor offenders attracted few followers. See Fletcher, *Australian History*, p.163.

⁴⁴ Sydney (1939).

Other states largely ignored the sesquicentenary and commemorated their own founding - Western Australia in 1929, Victoria in 1934 and South Australia in 1936. Combined with these major anniversaries, Australians throughout the country observed a host of minor jubilee celebrations. History featured strongly in all these events and promoted an increased sense of state and, to a lesser extent, national pride. In 1934 Flora Eldershaw had advised members of the Royal Australian Historical Society there was:

a certain lack of historic sense here ... There have been no violent divisions in our history, no wars fought upon our soil, no invasions, no conquests ... We have no bitter wrongs to keep our history alive in our memories, no lost provinces to brood upon, no hereditary enemy ... National consciousness is focussed on the present.⁴⁵

But in 1939 Charles Daley considered that, "To-day, as never before, the Australian people are more intensely interested in the history of their own land, more eager to learn of its past, and of those who bore a prominent part in its progress".⁴⁶ Prompted by various anniversaries, community associations and church groups invited speakers to talk on, or formed historical committees to write, the history of their local area. While this new sense of nationalism did not result in a dramatic increase in the number of historical societies as similar sentiment and celebration had done in America, 19 history-based societies formed between 1920 and 1945, making a total of 25 historical societies.⁴⁷ Twelve of the new societies were in New South Wales, giving a total of 15 societies. Five formed in Victoria, making a total of seven societies in that state, and Western Australia now boasted two historical societies. Queensland remained with one historical society and Tasmanians still had not formed a society. Not all these new societies succeeded, some being unable to survive the depression and at least one lapsing once it had met its objectives.

In New South Wales the Royal Australian Historical Society continued to grow, attracting members from other Australian states and from overseas. Membership reached

⁴⁵ Eldershaw, p.15.

⁴⁶ Charles Daley, "The Growth of a Historic Sense in Australia", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.25 (1939), p.230.

⁴⁷ R.S. Reid and A.F. Reid, *Into History: A Guide to Historical, Genealogical, Family History and Heritage Societies, Groups and Organisations in Australia*. (2nd ed.), North Ryde (1992). These figures are based on societies that are still operating. It is possible that other historical societies, now defunct, formed during these years but no record remains of their existence. The number of such societies would be small. In some instances the formation dates listed by Reid and Reid are incorrect and I have used the correct dates.

a peak of 889 in 1928, rivalling the New-York Historical Society. During the depression these numbers dropped, as happened in most other organisations, but almost recovered by the outbreak of war in 1939.⁴⁸ In the inter-war years interest in memorials to explorers and pioneers and on excursions to historic sites continued. Activities focused on education, and members unsuccessfully attempted to convince the New South Wales Department of Education to include more Australian history in the senior school curriculum. History lessons continued to depict Australian history as provincial, and only important insofar as it related to the history of Britain.⁴⁹ In an effort to promote Australian history the society donated copies of its *Journal* to high schools, offered prizes and medals for top high school and tertiary students, and encouraged the formation of history clubs in high schools to nurture an interest in Australian history among the young. The gathering of the history of rural areas remained high on the agenda since the society believed that the history of a small country town was as important as that of a large city.⁵⁰ Members played a prominent role in preparations for New South Wales' 150th anniversary in 1938, organising a major historical exhibition and delivering short talks on historical subjects. Cramp became chief historical adviser to John Dunningham, the minister arranging the festivities. After the Pioneers' Club lost interest in a project initiated by them in 1916 to secure a shared home for both societies, the Royal Australian Historical Society set about raising funds to procure a permanent home, which it achieved in 1940.⁵¹ In 1943 W.J. McKell, Premier of New South Wales, made a special grant to the society of £2000 to pay off the property and also increased the annual government subsidy to £500.⁵² Obviously history had become too important in New South Wales for politicians to continue to ignore it.

⁴⁸ Marjorie Jacobs, "The Royal Australian Historical Society 1900-1985. Part I. 'Students of a Like Hobby': The Society 1900-1954", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.73 (1988), p.255.

⁴⁹ Stuart Macintyre, "The Making of a School", in R.M. Crawford, Manning Clark and Geoffrey Blainey, *Making History*, Melbourne (1985), p.6.

⁵⁰ Aubrey Halloran, "The President's Address", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.10 (1924), p.58.

⁵¹ Jacobs, pp.258-259. Unfortunately the Society let slip an opportunity to purchase Elizabeth Bay House, a home connected with illustrious figures in New South Wales history, for a very reasonable price but instead purchased a building with no architectural or historical merit.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.259.

Members still compared their achievements with the work of historical societies in the United States. In a short paper on the work of societies in America and Canada read at the forty-third annual meeting, Cramp assured members that, "their Society and other kindred Australian societies had no reason to be ashamed of their record when their work was compared with that of the overseas organizations that he had mentioned."⁵³ A major move in 1934 was the admission of affiliated societies. Four local groups soon joined, but the majority of remained independent. Perhaps the rural Richmond River Historical Society (formed 1936), could see little benefit in uniting with a group centred in Sydney, but this does not explain the failure of the urban groups to join with the premier historical society. These urban societies, Manly-Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society (1924), Mosman Historical Society (1934) and Illawarra Historical Society (1944), perhaps feared that the larger society would control their activities, direct their research or demand any original documents that came into their possession.⁵⁴

Three major religious historical societies, all based in Sydney, also formed in this period: the Australasian Methodist Historical Society (1932), the Australian Jewish Historical Society (1938) and the Australian Catholic Historical Society (1940). They shared some membership with other historical groups in New South Wales, in particular the Royal Australian Historical Society. Methodists, Jews and Catholics had at different times experienced discrimination engendering feelings of insecurity and alienation, and recording of their past served both to educate other Australians about their history and to reinforce a sense of worth among their adherents.⁵⁵ While the three groups concentrated on preserving the religious history of their denominations, they placed this intention

⁵³ "Report of the 43rd Annual Meeting", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.30 (1944), p.82.

⁵⁴ This fear may have been well-founded as Cramp continually stressed the seniority of his society. In a talk he gave at the inaugural meeting of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Cramp wished the new society well and hoped it would affiliate with the Royal Australian Historical Society "which already had associated with it several junior societies." "First Business Meeting", *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol.1 (1939), p.6.

⁵⁵ Fletcher reinforces the importance of discrimination as a prime motivation for the formation of these societies when he points out that Anglican clergy saw no need to form a society to record the history of the Church of England as theirs was the dominant religion. See Brian Fletcher, *A Passion for the Past: Writers of Australian History in New South Wales 1900-1938*. The John Alexander Ferguson Memorial Lecture, Royal Australian Historical Society (1990), p.13. A Church of England Historical Society covering the Sydney Diocese did form in 1955, perhaps because this denomination no longer dominated the religious and social scene.

within different frameworks. Methodism was the first denomination in Australia collectively to celebrate its history, modelling its group on the Methodist Historical Society in England.⁵⁶ The society focused on internal matters and ignored interaction with other religious groups and society at large. The Australian Jewish Historical Society recorded the history of notable Jewish colonists. The founders hoped that by publicising the achievements of the Jewish population and their contributions to the community, Australian Jews would escape the persecution that was spreading throughout the world.⁵⁷ Catholics had borne the main brunt of prejudice, and in particular the charge of disloyalty to Britain had been frequently levelled at them. The founders of the Australian Catholic Historical Society felt that the time was right to initiate the society as the intense sectarian conflict of the 1920s had begun to subside. This left them free to stress a distinctive Australian past without fear of accusations of disloyalty, particularly as they believed British Australia to be almost dead. The society had broader objectives than the other two denominational societies and advocated "The advancement of Australian historical study on religious, patriotic and scientific lines".⁵⁸ For many years it retained a close relationship with the Royal Australian Historical Society, using it and the American Catholic Historical Society (formed in 1884) as models.

Two other national groups, both based in Sydney, began at this time. In 1929 Douglas Hope Johnston, founder of the Australasian Pioneers' Club, assisted his wife and others to form the Women's Pioneer Society of Australasia. The society of Australian Genealogists formed in 1932, modelled on hereditary groups in the United States and the United Kingdom. H.J. Rumsey, its founder, was interested in history and had given papers to the Australian Historical Society and to the Parramatta Historical Society. A visit to Salt Lake City in Utah stimulated an interest in genealogy that was intensified on two subsequent visits to England in 1924 and 1932. Members of the Society of Australian Genealogists also had connections with other historical societies. P.W. Gledhill, a vice-president, was a member of the Manly-Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society, and

⁵⁶ *Journal of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society*, Vol. 1, Part 1 (1933), p.1.

⁵⁷ Isidor Solomon, "The Australian Jewish Historical Society (Victorian Branch): A Retrospect", *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 10, Pt.4 (1988), p.224.

⁵⁸ A.E. Cahill, "The Australian Catholic Historical Society: The First Fifty Years", *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, vol.12 (1990), p.31.

F.R. Swynny, a Methodist minister and another vice-president, was one of the founders of the Methodist Historical Society.⁵⁹ As in the Australasian Pioneers' Club, members thought highly of their ancestors and equated the first fleet with the "Mayflower".⁶⁰ The society overcame the problem of ancestor hunters finding skeletons in their backgrounds by proclaiming that, "no one is responsible for his ancestors but each one is definitely responsible for 'improving the strain' - for leaving better descendants."⁶¹

Despite the depression, the period between 1920 and 1945 was a time of consolidation and moderate growth for historical societies in New South Wales. Societies in Victoria were not so fortunate. While Victorians had formed the first historical society in Australia and had published the first local history, their state now trailed New South Wales in its commemoration of the past. Membership growth in the Historical Society of Victoria remained slow. Even though in 1920 it incorporated the Victorian branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, between 1920 and 1945 the society seldom had more than 200 members. Because of their society's slower growth the Victorians were at times wary of the aims of their counterpart. The larger size and greater age of the Royal Australian Historical Society encouraged its executive to foresee that the New South Wales society would become the premier society in Australia sooner rather than later. In August 1935 Cramp advised Daley that, "we look forward to the time when the greater State Societies such as yours, Queensland, etc., will be willing to affiliate as the State Branches of the R.A.H.S. The name of our Society is appropriate to prevent any provincial suggestion in such affiliations."⁶² No record remains of Daley's reply, but he presumably gave the suggestion short shrift

Apart from these occasional differences relations between the Historical Society of Victoria and the Royal Australian Historical Society were cordial, and both societies carried out remarkably similar programs. Since 1902 the study of local history had been incorporated in the syllabus of Victorian primary schools in grades 6, 7 and 8. On the

⁵⁹ Fletcher, *Australian History*, p.52.

⁶⁰ Archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Miscellaneous Correspondence with other societies 1934-36, Charles Daley. Archives Box 3. Circular advertising the Society of Australian Genealogists, produced c1935.

⁶¹ Circular advertising the Society of Australian Genealogists..

⁶² Archives of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Miscellaneous Correspondence with other societies 1934-36, Charles Daley. Archives Box 3. Letter from Cramp to Daley, 19 August 1935.

fiftieth anniversary of free, compulsory and secular education in Victoria in 1922 members of the society who were teachers or members of the educational bureaucracy prompted the Department of Education to organise an exhibition of district histories produced by students and/or their teachers. The organisers received over 700 offerings, ranging from single pages to bound volumes.⁶³ In 1928, through its membership on the Historical Memorial Committee of Victoria, it co-operated with the Royal Australian Historical Society and the South Australian branch of the Royal Geographical Society to erect memorial cairns along the route taken by the explorer Charles Sturt in 1829-30. In 1929, with the Trustees of the Public Library, members organised a historical exhibition that was so successful they repeated it annually until the Centenary celebrations in 1934 and 1935. The society took a major role in the centenary celebrations and, again in co-operation with the trustees of the public library, set up a large exhibition of maps, documents, pictures, photographs and other relics illustrating the history of Victoria. It also assisted with a series of free lectures on Saturday afternoons.⁶⁴ Charles Daley, secretary of the society, was a member of the historical sub-committee that compiled the centenary volume *Victoria: The First Century*. Daley, A.S. Kenyon, the society's president, and several other committee members travelled throughout Victoria taking part in the centenary celebrations in rural towns.

Smaller local historical societies also formed in both rural and urban areas. Prompted by the centenary, the town clerk of Warrnambool, H.J. Worland, assisted in setting up the Warrnambool and District Historical Society in 1935 and became its first president. Societies also formed in Ballarat and Bendigo, towns connected with the state's gold rush of the 1850s.⁶⁵ In 1944 a society formed in Geelong, one of Victoria's oldest inland towns. The Geelong Historical Society had the support of its local council and was affiliated with the local library and museum. As its first undertaking it set up a historical exhibition on the early history of the town. It also arranged a series of historical talks, two of which were given by Charles Daley and G.R. Leggett of the Historical

⁶³ Chris Healy, *The Training of Memory: Moments of Historical Imagination in Australia*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne (1993), pp.122-123.

⁶⁴ "News and Notes", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.15 (1934), p.58

⁶⁵ "Notes", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.15 (1935), p.148.

Society of Victoria.⁶⁶ The Brunswick Historical Association, formed in 1936 in the metropolitan area, sought the help of the local council to collect photographs of the local area and of pioneer settlers and to copy these onto lantern slides. It aimed to exhibit these and make them available to local residents, to place an album of photographs and a collection of relics of historical interest in the local library, to exhibit a large map of the City of Brunswick illustrating the sites of events of historic importance, and write a history of Brunswick.⁶⁷ It achieved some of these aims but not the writing of the history, and Brunswick had to wait until 1971 for the local council to produce a brief history.⁶⁸ In 1941, objecting to the domination of New South Welshmen, Victorians established the Genealogical Society of Victoria. As in New South Wales, not all societies affiliated with the state's main historical society, and only the Warrnambool and District Historical Society did so.

Neither the historical societies in the eastern states nor in the United States influenced the formation of the first historical society in the west, the Western Australian Historical Society. This society was inaugurated in 1926 by members of pioneering families who objected to the depiction of the foundations of Western Australia expressed in J.S. Battye's *History of Western Australia* (1924) and E.O.G. Shann's *Cattle Chosen: the Story of the First Group Settlement in Western Australia, 1829 to 1841* (1926). They wished to present their own view of settlement since in their view the pioneers and their descendants were best suited to write about their past. In the words of Paul Hasluck, a foundation member, "Who else knew as much about Western Australia as we who had grown up with it? Some of us knew it all at first hand. All of us had heard it from our parents."⁶⁹ These descendants of pioneers wanted an expurgated history, and in the early years members suppressed some recently-discovered letters to a convict because, in their view, Western Australia "was founded as a free colony by gentlefolk: the convicts came

⁶⁶ "Geelong Historical Society", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.20 (1944), pp.103-104.

⁶⁷ C.A.J. Dollman, "Recording the History of Brunswick", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.19 (1942), pp.105-106.

⁶⁸ See Carole Beaumont, *Local History in Victoria: An Annotated Bibliography*, Bundoora (1980).

⁶⁹ Paul Hasluck, *An Autobiography*. Melbourne (1977), p.142. For further information on the early years of the Society, see Paul Hasluck, "The Founding of the Society: Some Personal Reminiscences", *Early Days*, Vol.8 (1977), pp.7-22.

later and unwanted, and should not be associated with it.”⁷⁰ From 1929 the society prospered, helped by the press and by a drive to interest people in the familiar things about them.⁷¹ In its formative years it contained the usual sprinkling of reverends, doctors and honourables, but had an unusually high number of women members; in 1930 almost two-thirds of the membership of 183 was female.⁷²

Interestingly, both Shann and Battye were active members of the society and, with Paul Hasluck, were the only members to undertake original research.⁷³ More so even than the societies in the eastern states, the Western Australian Historical Society was primarily antiquarian and concentrated on collecting the stories of older citizens. Members, drawn from the same social class of a small isolated population, knew each other, each family’s history and Western Australia’s history. A quaint practice of sending birthday cards to all Western Australians older than 64, which continued until at least 1949, probably increased membership and encouraged Western Australians to donate their family papers.⁷⁴ Like the Royal Geographical Society in South Australia in its early years and long after the obsession with pioneers in the eastern states had passed, the Western Australian Historical Society recorded the memories of the pioneers:

In many rural districts of the State pioneering history is being made at this very moment. In other parts the last remaining links with an age of pioneering within human memory, are fast being severed. At some time or other the moment will come when this local history will be sought, and sought eagerly. The question arises, why not begin recording it now?⁷⁵

But society members believed they had a duty to disseminate the history of the state and the story of the pioneers to a wide audience. In 1939 they:

⁷⁰ Alexandra Hasluck, *Unwilling Emigrants*, Melbourne (1959), p.xiii, quoted in Tom Griffiths, “Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in our History-making”, *Australian Cultural History*, No.6 (1987), p.25.

⁷¹ Archives of the Pioneers’ Association of South Australia. Correspondence File. “Summary of talk given by Mr. Malcom [sic] Uren of the Royal Historical Society of W.A.”, given to the Historical Division of the Royal Geographical Society, 10 September 1947.

⁷² Numbers calculated from the lists of members published in the Society’s journal have to be treated cautiously. The 11th Annual Report in 1936 notes that of the 290 members only 135 were financial and similar discrepancies appear in other early years.

⁷³ Battye was born in Victoria and did not come to Perth until 1894 when he was 23. Most members were descended from the pioneers and it was probably only because of his long-time interest in and writings on Western Australian history that he was accepted into the closed circle of the historical society.

⁷⁴ “Summary of talk given by Mr. Malcom Uren”, p.3.

⁷⁵ “The Year in Retrospect”, *Early Days*, Vol.4 (1941), p.4.

decided to issue the papers in a form that would bring them under the notice of a wider public and help foster a wider interest in and knowledge of local history. The publication of "Early Days," of which this is the second number, is the result. It is proposed to bring out this publication annually ... and to place it on public sale as well as distributing it to members.⁷⁶

They may have owned Western Australia's history and controlled its presentation, but members recognised that this was worthless unless their view became the accepted norm. Dissemination among a wide general audience achieved this. In line with this approach, the society also encouraged the formation of branches in rural areas and included in its journal an invitation to any person interested in forming such a branch to contact the honorary secretary. By 1938 two branches had been founded, at Katanning and Busselton.⁷⁷

Of all Australian historical societies, the Western Australian Historical Society most closely resembled the societies in the midwestern states of America that formed soon after settlement and disseminated history among the masses. But in its pious view of history and its appeal to the established educated elite it also resembled the first historical societies in the north-east of the United States. Even though it formally did not have restrictive membership, with its interest in pioneers it fulfilled the functions of the hereditary groups in the United States. Thus, the one society democratised history while at the same time ensuring the elite retained control of the presentation of the past.

The democratising of local history in Australia is evident in the space devoted to it in the local press. In Australia, as in the United States, the media expanded its coverage of local historical topics. Cramp praised the press for the keen interest in historical matters it developed in the 1920s, in particular regarding the establishment of a historical museum.⁷⁸ In Western Australia two daily papers and a weekly paper published historical columns. Malcolm Uren of the Historical Society of Western Australia pointed out that these articles were "not always strictly accurate, but [were] sufficiently interesting and compelling to arouse interest." He believed they were useful as "explanations, and

⁷⁶ "The Society's Activities", *Early Days*, Vol.2 (1939), p.64.

⁷⁷ Diane Foster, "Grass Roots History in the West", in Alan Roberts (ed.), *Grass Roots History*. Canberra (1991), p.38.

⁷⁸ K.R. Cramp, "Twenty-five Years of Progress, 1915-1940", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.27 (1941), p.171.

contradictions add further information and increase interest in the features.⁷⁹ A.S. Kenyon, president of the Historical Society of Victoria, commented in the annual report of 1931-1932 that, "A sign of increased general interest in Australian history is the attention and publicity given in the Press in the form of articles, letters, and enquiries which, being informative and suggestive, meet with a wide appreciation."⁸⁰ During the sesquicentenary of New South Wales and the centenaries of Victoria and Western Australia the press devoted large amounts of space to historical topics, and newspapers in each state produced supplements on the anniversaries. This coverage was not confined to the large city dailies and rural papers also published items on local history.⁸¹ Journalists, popular authors, and amateur and academic historians all contributed historical pieces. In Victoria the Melbourne newspapers of October, November and December of 1934 contained hundreds of columns relating to the centenary celebrations.⁸² In 1941 commercial radio in urban and rural New South Wales broadcast a series of programs entitled "These Old Homes" that presented in dramatised form a historical survey of many of the old homes of New South Wales and of the families who had lived in them.⁸³ As had happened in the early twentieth century, the press took a leading role in promoting the formation of historical societies in the period from 1920 to 1945.

The writing of state histories dominated the academic field in the 1920s, emphasising the failure of federation to forge a common identity in Australia. National history writing did not come of age until 1930 when two seminal works appeared - *Australia* by W.K. Hancock and *Economic History of Australia* by E.O.G. Shann. These works and the major regional works written in the 1920s, including Battye's *History of Western Australia* and *Foundation and Settlement of South Australia 1829-1845* by A. Grenfell Price, were written by university-trained men, and Hancock, Shann and Price taught in universities. Thus, during this inter-war period the writing of state and national history became the preserve of the academy while local history writing remained the province of the amateur. The journals published by historical societies were the major

⁷⁹ "Summary of talk given by Mr. Malcom Uren", p.1.

⁸⁰ "Twenty-third Annual Report", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.14 (1932), p.202.

⁸¹ Fletcher, *Australian History*, pp.162-163.

⁸² "News and Notes", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.15 (1934), p.58.

⁸³ Note in the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.26 (1940), p.112.

source of information and articles on local history. But these continued to be largely antiquarian. Some members had no illusions about their quality, and Charles Long of the Historical Society of Victoria referred to them as "chronicles".⁸⁴

Unlike the journals of American historical societies, those published by Australian societies did not assume a propaganda role during the Second World War. However, a few references to the importance of history in instilling patriotic values into the population do appear in their publications and in the writings of their members prior to and during the war. Charles Long believed that national monuments encouraged "the feeling of close relationship to the past and recognition of race kinship" and thus aided in "cementing together [the] race, and urging it onward to fresh efforts through the sentiment of great possibilities",⁸⁵ and considered them valuable in "invigorating the efforts of patriotism".⁸⁶ But historical societies in Australia never suggested changing the emphasis in history to support the country's cause, as occurred in the United States. Occasionally members of historical societies referred to the dangers of war and the value of Australia's democratic heritage. At the ANZAAS Conference in 1939 Charles Daley alluded to the value of history in times of danger:

In Australia to-day the insistent urge to nationhood, the consciousness of imminent dangers in a warring world, pride in the "storied enterprise" and achievement of race, the formation of a distinct Australian character, and the appreciation of our goodly heritage, that together demand obvious duties, serve greatly to direct attention to the importance of a historical viewpoint that gives clearer vision and a more coherent purpose for national aspirations.⁸⁷

In 1941 Cramp concluded his summary of the progress of the Royal Australian Historical Society by claiming, "The Society is doing public service in developing a purified and enlightened patriotism, and stimulating a historical sense in the community."⁸⁸ Given that these words were written in the second year of the war, they show moderation and restraint. After the end of the war in 1945 the editor of the Western Australian Historical Society's journal, *Early Days*, commented:

⁸⁴ Charles R. Long, "Monuments, Local Histories, and Commemoration Days", in James Barrett (ed.), *Save Australia: A Plea for the Right Use of our Flora and Fauna*, Melbourne (1925), p.31.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.26-27.

⁸⁷ Daley, p.234.

⁸⁸ Cramp, p.174.

The Society's importance and power for good, particularly in the present time of international stress and uncertainty, cannot be over-emphasised, and it is the constant effort of the Society to expand its activities so that it may the more effectively fulfil its function.⁸⁹

This was the only time that the journal's editorials suggest that history should be used to promote the good of the country. Editions in 1941, 1942 and 1943 mention the war only because of the restrictions that hindered the work of the society. Australians did not think of themselves as the guardians of democracy. Thus historical societies in Australia did not take on the crusading zeal of American local historians, museums and historic villages, and in Australia history did not become a pawn of patriotism.

Nor did Australians use preservation to instil patriotism and love of country in the general population, no doubt because of the different attitudes to history held in each country. Americans were proud of their past and regarded their democratic system as superior to all other methods of government. They treated the preserved buildings, still primarily associated with the authors of that democratic system, as shrines. Australians were more cynical about their leaders, and no Australian politician was honoured as Americans revered their founding fathers. Moreover, even had preservationists wished to use reminders of the past to imbue love of country, only a few buildings of the early colonial periods had been preserved, and many had some connection with convicts. The reconstructed cottage of Captain James Cook was the only early building that evoked in Australians similar patriotic sentiments to those common in the United States. Indeed, the similarities between comments on Cook's cottage and Colonial Williamsburg are striking. Of Cook's cottage, in 1935 one visitor wrote:

There is something monstrous [sic] and terrifying about Melbourne today - the huge buildings, the immense crowds, the roar of traffic ... It all seems sinister, unwholesome and threatening ... And to walk out of the tumult and the rush and come to the quiet and simple cottage of the famous seaman, is like a return to reason and sanity ... There was formed the character of the most famous man, connected with Australia ... the sight of Captain Cook's Cottage and the thought of what it means has helped one man - and doubtless many many more - to see the

⁸⁹ *Early Days*, Vol.8 (1945), p.1. The editor has an inflated vision of Australia and its place in this war as he refers to Australia's efforts and to the help of "our many allies", as though Australia was central to the action.

real things somewhat obscured [sic] by the glare and glamour of modern Melbourne.⁹⁰

In 1931, a visitor to Colonial Williamsburg had commented:

Here in Williamsburg, you go from place to place, increasing your respect for the founders of this Republic ... It is not only beauty that they are restoring, recreating, there in Williamsburg. They are not only preserving sacred historic sites - they are giving us one more chance, when we visit it, to be proud we are Americans.⁹¹

Some Australians resembled Americans and found the past more appealing than the present, but they remained a tiny minority. This was perhaps one of the reasons that the preservation movement in Australia did not achieve the momentum of the movement in the United States in the years between the wars.

But there were other, more compelling causes for the lack of interest in preservation. Australia had been an urban nation from settlement and so Australians were not as horrified at the spread of suburbs as were Americans. In 1921 the state capitals accommodated between 24% (Hobart) to 52% (Adelaide) of their populations, and this percentage continued to increase.⁹² While suburbanisation affected farmland close to the cities, rural towns remained small or even contracted. The greatest changes in the period occurred in the expanding city centres. Sydney in particular experienced a boom in the mid-1920s, and developers earmarked for destruction many of the buildings of the convict era. Interest in preservation in Australia lagged far behind that in the United States primarily because many Australians continued to believe that Australia had no history. Flora Eldershaw, in a talk to the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1934, maintained that:

National consciousness is focussed on the present. We have not yet reached our zenith; there is no reason why looking back should give us more satisfaction than looking forward. As a people we do not look back over-much. There are so few historic monuments, so few tangible traces of our history to remind us.⁹³

The historical society had barely made an impact on the historical awareness of many Australians. The few historic buildings that had been saved had aesthetic merit and had

⁹⁰ Letter from Mr Adney to Russell Grimwade, 1935. Quoted in Healy, p.36.

⁹¹ Anne Hard, "A Sleeping Beauty Town", *St. Nicholas Magazine*, reprinted from the *Raymond Riordan School Parents' Bulletin*, June 1931, p.13.

⁹² D.T. Merrett, "Australian Capital Cities in the Twentieth Century", in J.W. McCarty and C.B. Schedvin (eds), *Australian Capital Cities*. Sydney, (1978), p.175.

⁹³ Eldershaw, p.15.

belonged to some of the wealthy members of the Australian community. The homes of poorer, although perhaps more 'typical', Australians were not so fortunate. In 1922 Prime Minister Hughes, who had assisted in the retention of Kirribilli House, supported a move to save Henry Lawson's family home in rural New South Wales as a national memorial. This attempt failed, as did several other later efforts. The building was demolished in 1947 despite Lawson being described in 1931 as "the most important Australian short story writer" and "the most representative figure in Australian creative literature".⁹⁴

Many members of the Royal Australian Historical Society accepted the destruction of Sydney's colonial past. Aubrey Halloran, the society's president in 1924, contended:

Old Sydney is rapidly vanishing under the hammers of demolition, and a new Sydney is springing up in our midst. Everywhere are heard the dull thuds of hammers on crumbling stone and mortar, and the detonations that blast the foundations of old buildings ... No one with a knowledge of the history of our city can fail to feel a certain regret as he, or she, watches the passing of Old Sydney. But they realise that the very hammers that spell death to many of Sydney's old buildings are making history with their every blow. Out of the ruins of time and decay is arising a modern city of skyscrapers, a city that tells its story of progress and prosperity.⁹⁵

Preservation of historic buildings was of so little importance to the society, or the results of efforts to save reminders of old Sydney so ineffectual, that in his report of the achievements of the society in the twenty-five years between 1915 and 1940 Cramp made no mention of it. The real preservationist concerns of the society at this time appear to have been the retention of old names, and Cramp lists several that the society successfully lobbied to have preserved.⁹⁶ Fortunately, some members fought to preserve buildings of old Sydney, co-operating with the City Council, the Town Planning Association and the Institute of Architects. They assisted in the preservation of Burdekin House (1922, but subsequently demolished in 1933-34) and the Mint and Hyde Park Barracks (late 1930s). Protests and demonstrations did not always work, and the society failed to save the Commissariat Store and the old Taxation Building at Circular Quay during 1938 and

⁹⁴ H.M. Green, quoted in Robert Darby, "A National Literary Shrine: Attempts to Save the Henry Lawson Family Home, 1935-1946", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.74 (1988), p.240.

⁹⁵ Halloran, pp.62-63.

⁹⁶ Cramp, p.174.

1939.⁹⁷ Preservationists had to fight against those who believed that all buildings associated with the convict days should be torn down as they exercised a “sinister influence on the community”.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, preservation was never a major platform of the Royal Australian Historical Society, and most of its members continued to find history in the written word, ignoring the evidence in the bricks and mortar that surrounded them.

Other residents of Sydney showed more anxiety about the changing character of their city. In 1935 Annie Wyatt, worried about the loss of Sydney’s old buildings and its natural environment, wrote to the English National Trust requesting copies of their Acts and other literature to enable her to found a similar organisation in New South Wales. The outbreak of war interrupted her initiatives, but in 1944 she submitted a proposal for the formation of a national trust to be considered at a Save the Trees - Conserve our Forests Conference. To support her motion she wrote:

Our League is putting forward a suggestion that as quickly as possible we ask the Government to give us something approximating the National Trust of England, which functions not only for the trees, forests and parklands but also for historic buildings or anything which adds to the beauty and interest of the countryside, such as a lovely bridge or anything that is deemed worthy of preservation for the enjoyment of the people, even a little old cottage or an old farmhouse - all those things which are typical of England and worthy of preservation.⁹⁹

Unlike the preservationist bodies in the United States, Wyatt wished to save a variety of old buildings.

Although there is no evidence that Wyatt knew of the preservation movement in the United States, in one respect she resembled her American counterparts. She too believed that buildings connected with the early days of settlement would serve as exemplars to the young and create a feeling of nationalism, “It is only by the cherishing of such treasure that we can hope to evolve a National Soul. Australian youth needs imagination, veneration and tradition to balance the more material qualities”. But she was

⁹⁷ Jacobs, p.258.

⁹⁸ Prison reformer John B. Steel, who also held that “crime had practically ceased at the Rocks since the old convict buildings had been razed to make way for the Harbour Bridge.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1937, quoted in Peter Spearritt, “Demolishing Sydney: Property Owners Vs Public Rights”, *Heritage Australia*, Winter (1985), pp.2-3.

⁹⁹ Quoted in I.F. Wyatt, *Ours in Trust: A Personal History of the National Trust of Australia (NSW)*. Pennant Hills, NSW (1987), p.14.

not as unsympathetic to the modern world as the American preservationists of this period and believed that "material qualities" were "admirable and necessary ... in their due proportion." She also hoped the Trust would "create community spirit and civic pride in remote settlements".¹⁰⁰ The National Trust of Australia formed on 6 April 1945 at a small gathering of five supporters who decided not to launch it publicly until it was established and accepted.

Historical societies in other states also campaigned to preserve old buildings, although some were selective about their targets. The Historical Society of Queensland rejoiced when it gained occupation of Newstead House. Even though this was not Brisbane's oldest building, it had the benefit of having had illustrious owners. To one member of the society, this made it superior to "the portions of more ancient buildings to be found in Brisbane - relics of the sinister days of convictism" which had been incorporated into later buildings and thus "are now more or less hiding themselves in shame from the eyes of the curious."¹⁰¹ In 1942 members of the Council of the Historical Society of Victoria approached the owners of La Trobe Cottage and pleaded for its retention. They were not completely successful but seemed satisfied in saving the front portion of the building.¹⁰² The Western Australian Historical Society, through its Memorials Committee, lobbied the state government for the preservation of the Old Round House in Fremantle. It suggested converting the building to a museum of shipping and local historical relics, and as an inducement stressed its value as a tourist attraction. It also suggested the formation of a National Monuments Bill to provide for the permanent protection and control of historical memorials and sites.¹⁰³ As in the United States, state governments began to acknowledge their responsibility to heritage, and in 1944 Victoria passed the Town and Country Planning Act, providing for preservation of places of historical interest. Sometimes colonial buildings were to be preserved for their own sake and their future use remained undecided, but not infrequently preservationists suggested that restored buildings be converted to history museums.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹⁰¹ A.G. Davies, "Significance of 'Newstead.' Oldest Residence in Brisbane", *Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.3 (1940), p.57.

¹⁰² "News and Notes", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.19 (1941-1942), p.120.

¹⁰³ Ninth Annual Report, *Early Days*, Vol.2, Part 16 (1934), p.18.

Despite several attempts prior to the 1920s to establish historical museums, by 1933 only three museums devoted solely to history had been established. These were Vaucluse House in Sydney; and the Australian War Memorial, still only a collection of artefacts without a home,¹⁰⁴ and the historical collection in the Parliament Building, both in Canberra. Indeed, Australian museums, which equalled their American counterparts in displays on geology, biology, anthropology, archaeology and science and technology, showed remarkably little interest in history. A report commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York on art galleries and museums in Australia noted that few museums had collected or exhibited historical material and that “in no museum are there reproductions of the buildings occupied by the earlier settlers.” The report regarded this as “one of the most notable gaps in the whole of the existing museum collections.”¹⁰⁵

This absence of museums did not result from a lack of interest by either historical societies or members of the general population but from insufficient government support. Exhibitions in 1920 and 1922 in the Department of Education’s building organised by the Royal Australian Historical Society aroused interest in the establishment of a permanent historical museum in Sydney. Following a spate of editorials and letters to the editor in the press supporting the idea, the society approached the government for support. The Legislative Assembly passed the first reading of a bill to constitute a Historical Museum Trust, which was to include several members of the historical society, but unfortunately because of unconnected political events the bill lapsed. In 1937 G.H. Abbott, president of the society, suggested that the New South Wales government should turn the threatened Hyde Park Barracks over to the society to house historic relics. Perhaps because of other financial commitments, the government did not accede to the request. But unlike the government, the general public had never shown so great an interest in the past. The major historical exhibition for the state’s 150th anniversary in 1938 attracted favourable comments. Those attending stressed the worth of the exhibition and the need for a

¹⁰⁴ The museum, first suggested in 1917, opened in 1941. Even though it was the only museum devoted to Australian history, most of the events commemorated took place away from Australian shores. It was thus a museum celebrating Australians rather than commemorating the history of Australia.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Tony Bennett, *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy*. Cultural Policy Studies: Occasional Paper No.3. Brisbane (1988), p.5.

permanent historical collection, but nothing eventuated and the relics were dispersed.¹⁰⁶ Historical societies in other states also moved to instigate museums. With the help of the state government, in 1940 the Historical Society of Queensland established a museum at its headquarters, Newstead House. However, the Western Australian Historical Society's suggestion that the Old Round House in Fremantle be converted to a museum was not acted on.

The most successful historical venture of these years was the transfer and reassembling of a house reputedly associated with Captain James Cook from its home in Great Ayton, Yorkshire to Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne. Because Cook had never set foot on any land that became part of the state of Victoria, Sydneysiders were miffed that Melburnians had acquired such a unique relic of the nation's pre-eminent hero. They felt that Kurnell was a more appropriate site. But all Australians revered Cook since, unlike Phillip and his First Fleet, he had no connections with convicts. While the museum exemplified the growing Australian nationalism it also symbolised the continuing ties with Britain, and demonstrated that Australians still lacked confidence in the validity of their own past. Russell Grimwade, who financed the purchase of the property, explained that, "it was to introduce some solid reminder of the old world to this young country that first stimulated me to bring out the cottage and to endeavour to foster national traditions that must necessarily be absent in so young a country as ours." But contrary to Grimwade's view those national traditions were already present, and Victorians and other visitors flocked in their tens of thousands to view the reconstructed cottage filled with memorabilia of Cook.¹⁰⁷

In the main, academic historians showed little interest in the establishment of history museums and left it to amateur historians to lobby for their formation. Neither did academics take a major role in the centennial and sesquicentennial celebrations in any of the states. In Western Australia, Batty organised the historical parade through the city, and lay members of their respective state historical societies advised the organising

¹⁰⁶ Cramp, pp.172-173.

¹⁰⁷ Healy, pp.33-36.

committees in Victoria and New South Wales.¹⁰⁸ Academic historians remained enclosed in their ivory towers, unconvinced of the relevance of Australian history. In 1936 Keith Hancock, author of *Australia* and previously Professor of History at the University of Adelaide, argued against the appointment of an expert on Australian colonial and imperial history to replace Scott at the University of Melbourne, claiming that, "Colonial history is quite important but not important enough to be central in a history school." G.V. Portus, Hancock's successor at the University of Adelaide, was even more definite. In a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne he stated bluntly, "I do not think Australian history is a university subject at all."¹⁰⁹ Yet between October 1934 and November 1936, 417,475 people had visited Captain Cook's cottage. It is strange that university historians could so readily dismiss Australia's history.

Interaction between amateur and academic historians was more prolific in some historical societies than others. Perhaps the Western Australian Historical Society attracted so little academic interest because another society, the Economic and Historical Society, existed within the university, with Shann being the only joint member. The aims of these two societies did not coincide. The academic society was not solely concerned with local history. It produced a journal in 1934 and 1938 comprising honours and masters theses, only some of which discussed Western Australian history, that otherwise would not have been widely circulated. In Queensland the collaboration between the university and the Historical Society of Queensland continued as it did also in Sydney. When Stephen Roberts, professor of history at the University of Sydney, spoke at the opening of History House he thanked the Royal Australian Historical Society for the help its meetings and publications gave to research students. He continued, slightly disparagingly:

I should thus like to place on record, both in a personal and professional capacity, my profound belief that you have achieved the greatest body of preliminary research in Australia. I do not wish to imply anything inferior by the use of the term 'preliminary research.' If many of the papers have tended to be in the nature

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Macintyre, *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History*. Melbourne (1994), pp. 181-182.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 199.

of spade-work, that is all to the good, because the spade-work is the indispensable pre-requisite of the more general and synthesized histories of Australia.¹¹⁰

To Roberts, academic historians were the interpreters of history while amateur historians simply compiled the evidence. He urged members to continue collecting material, and strangely, to widen their scope to include all of Australia, even Tahiti.¹¹¹ But no animosity existed between the university and the society, and Roberts called for closer co-operation. Thus, although by 1945 Australia had emulated the United States and formed a clear division between academic and amateur history, some academic historians continued to belong to state historical societies. By raising the image of such societies and creating standards of research these academics ensured the viability of these groups.

Summary

While Australians still lagged behind Americans in forming historical societies and museums, in preservation of the built heritage, and in the writing of local history, between 1920 and 1945 they displayed an increasing interest in their past. In the United States the celebration of history had progressed from being the preserve of the elite to becoming the property of (almost) all Americans. The American past and national icons gained credence, and Americans no longer thought their history inferior to the lengthy history of Europe. From the beginnings of the republic, Americans had institutionalised a collection of beliefs, symbols and rituals that had developed into a civil religion.¹¹² The American view of the Second World War as a moral crusade codified this religion into the "American Way of Life", and a veneration and commemoration of the past became the means to reinforce it. Nothing like this occurred in Australia.¹¹³ Australians viewed their past circumspectly and thus generally refrained from using it to bolster current ideologies. Nevertheless, they were slowly developing a genuine national spirit and pride in their achievements, encouraged by the formation of a national capital and the opening

¹¹⁰ C. Price Conigrave, "History House: Official Opening", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.27 (1941), p.9.

¹¹¹ Roberts, quoted in *ibid.*, p.11.

¹¹² Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, "Civil Religion in America", in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (eds), *American Civil Religion*, New York (1974), p.29.

¹¹³ Although in 1937 Ernest Scott, Professor of History at the University of Melbourne, suggested a "calendar of great men" along the lines of the religious calendar of the saints, and thus was aware of the power of civil religion. See Macintyre, p.181.

of federal parliament in Canberra in 1927. The evolution of two national commemorative days, Anzac Day and Australia Day, helped to unite Australians in national celebration.¹¹⁴ Descendants were rehabilitating their convict ancestors, and they and the descendants of the Irish were championing an Australian nationalism. Indeed, the founders of the Australian Catholic Historical Society, believing that British Australia had died, had included 'Australian' in its title to emphasise the country's independence.¹¹⁵

The formation of three genealogical groups in Australia is interesting. Australians did not experience alienation, loss of sense of community, or fear of newcomers, the principal motivating forces for such groups in the United States. It would be expected that concern about unearthing unpleasant information relating to forebears would have militated against the formation of hereditary groups. Some Australians remained concerned about the convicts, evidenced by Cramp's efforts to obliterate them from the sesquicentenary celebrations, and they worried some members of the Australasian Pioneers' Club. But this was perhaps a concern only of the elite, while ordinary Australians had come to terms with their past. The genealogical groups that formed in 1932 and 1941 did not have the restrictive membership of the descendants' groups, and attracted members from a wider cross-section of society. Many of these descendants of convicts and Irish had developed a sense of Australian nationalism and promoted an Australian history rather than reinforcing Australia's British heritage.

In the United States between 1920 and 1945 the preservation movement grew to become the major manifestation of that country's preoccupation with the past. While the changes induced by increasing industrialisation and the growing number of cars were the primary factors supporting the movement's growth, the preserved past also provided a focus for promoting current American ideology. Early preservationists had hoped that reflection on the past would reinforce declining values. In the 1930s and 1940s preserved buildings and living museums became symbols of America's political heritage. The Second World War produced a new cohesiveness in America where all but a tiny

¹¹⁴ However, South Australians remained reluctant to accept 26 January as a day of national celebration - see Chapter 4.

¹¹⁵ Cahill, pp.32-33.

minority were united against an evil dictatorship. Previously, Americans had used history as a crutch in times of perceived disunity and disintegration. It now became apparent that history could equally swell pride in a time of certainty, when faith in the rightness of the American way of life had never been higher. The preservation movement in Australia paled in comparison. Those involved expressed little patriotic sentiment, principally seeking to preserve the appearance of the past while ignoring its provenance.

While Australia lacked the great wealth of America, it still had its share of affluent citizens. But because of the greater regard Americans had for their past, rich Americans supported historical societies, historic preservation and museums to a much greater extent than did prosperous Australians. Some Australians donated documents and papers to historical societies, enabling them to establish useful research libraries, but this was the extent of most of their collections. Fewer Australians donated money or artefacts to either historical societies or museums and fewer still donated buildings; hence the growth in the number of historical museums that occurred in the United States in this period was not duplicated in Australia. Likewise, Australian governments showed less concern for history. In the United States the depression acted as a stimulus to the preservation of America's past through the New Deal's make-work programs, but Australian governments lacked the foresight or the means to promote similar schemes. They provided menial work but offered no employment for professionals. Even in more prosperous times they gave scant attention to history, refusing many requests for financial and other assistance to establish museums.

State and local pride was obviously a reason for the formation of historical societies and museums and in the writing of local history both in the United States and in Australia, as was its converse, a need to reinforce self esteem in a declining region by emphasising the positive attributes of the past. State and local rivalry also played a part in each country. In the United States, Southerners promoted the history of their region to counteract the slanted view perpetuated by New Englanders, and Westerners celebrated their history to prove that civilisation had reached their area. In Australia, New South Welshmen, Victorians and Queenslanders were also eager to promote their own areas above others.

Despite the eastern states' efforts at self-aggrandisement, South Australians treated them condescendingly and emphasised their own free and enlightened beginnings. Members of the Royal Geographical Society continued to divide their attention between history and geography and to celebrate the state's pioneers. But finally some South Australians realised the importance of preserving the past and took it upon themselves to organise independent historical societies to record and celebrate the unique history of their state..

CHAPTER FOUR

“we in South Australia were particularly fortunate in our ancestors” - The Growth of Amateur History in South Australia, 1921 to 1945

Rather than declining, South Australians' Britishness and belief in their superiority increased with time. Geographer and historian A. Grenfell Price believed that the character of the free settlers, bolstered by their “exemplary” behaviour throughout myriad trials, remained evident in South Australians well into the twentieth century. To South Australians of his time he applied Governor Grey's assessment that, “There was a worth of sincerity, a true ring about [the settlers] which could not fail of great things”.¹ The absence of convicts in initial settlement remained a source of pride, and some South Australians even believed that their state experienced relatively little serious crime because it had welcomed only free citizens.² Whereas the other states had to prove their worth through their historical societies, and their citizens joined together to resurrect or invent a legitimate history, South Australians, with few exceptions, had such confidence in the superiority of their past that they felt no need to bolster pride through such groups.³

In 1920 the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia South Australian Branch remained the sole organisation commemorating the history of the state. The social elite continued to control the manner in which the society remembered South Australia's past. They maintained the emphasis on pioneers and explorers, thus reinforcing the British connection. It was a triumphalist approach, celebrating the successful conquering of the land by British imperialists. But Professor George Henderson believed that this attitude to the past did not serve the needs of all South Australians interested in history and moved to initiate an independent historical society. He also hoped that the establishment of a separate group would allow his students greater access to historical material in the York Gate Library. In October 1922 he and Thomas Gill, treasurer of the Royal Geographical Society, discussed the formation of a historical society that could use the library, and Gill

¹ Quoted in A. Grenfell Price, “Pioneering Difficulties”, in *The Centenary History of South Australia*, Adelaide (1936), p.70.

² W. Oldham, “The Character of the Population”, in *ibid.*, p.128.

³ Some were prepared to challenge the prevailing attitude and admit the convict presence in South Australia. In his book on the developing Australian culture Rex Ingamells claimed: “Five capital cities of Australia and the country around them owe important degrees of their early development to convict slavery; no state - not even bragging South Australia - can say that convictism left it entirely unaffected.” *Conditional Culture*, Adelaide (1938), p.15.

arranged a special meeting of the society to discuss the proposal. Henderson did not attend this meeting and all that eventuated was a resolution that, "the Society welcomes new Members and that in the event of students of the University wishing for special facilities in connection with the Library the [Society] Council will be pleased to discuss the matter with [Henderson] at a time to be mutually arranged."⁴ This was the last time the Royal Geographical Society referred to the matter. Perhaps members worried about loss of membership should such a society form. In the event, Gill's death in 1922 and Henderson's departure for Sydney in 1923 removed the two main supporters of a society whose main function would be to research local history.

Whether Henderson left any correspondence or other papers in his departmental files is not known, but his successor, W.K. Hancock, also moved to initiate a historical society. The suggestion for the South Australian Historical Society, formed in 1926, possibly came from Bessie Threadgill, one of Henderson's star pupils, or perhaps A. Grenfell Price encouraged Hancock to form an independent society. Price knew that many Royal Geographical Society members objected to the formation of a separate historical society and so would have realised the futility of working through it. The society that Hancock initiated was very different from the one Henderson had envisioned. Whereas Henderson's concerns lay with South Australian history, Hancock's interests were broad, and his society aimed "to prepare and discuss papers on any topic of historical interest."⁵ Only nine of 24 papers presented to the society dealt with South Australian topics, two others were on Australian history, and the rest covered a wide range of subject matter with no connections with Australia. A special meeting featuring a talk on Edward Gibbon Wakefield by R.C. Mills, Professor of Economics at the University of Sydney, attracted 80 listeners, but generally attendance ranged from eight to 35.

The society had the same obsession with explorers as had the Royal Geographical Society and historical societies in the other states, and its committee offered Charlotte

⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Council Meeting, 27 October 1922.

⁵ Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia. SRG66. Letter from Wilfrid Oldham inviting interested persons to attend a meeting to inaugurate the historical society.

Sturt, daughter of the explorer Charles Sturt, life membership even though she lived in England.⁶ The press reported some of the society's talks, but, unlike in the eastern states, this did not engender support among the general public. Some readers objected to its interpretation of history, one correspondent observing that, "It is doubtful whether there exists any other historical society which can of itself, achieve the events which it is the *raison d'être* of the society to record and celebrate. 'History made while you wait!'"⁷ A committee member, Hately Marshall, who had promoted the photographic history of Adelaide, suggested that, "papers based upon original research should be submitted to the local newspapers for publication",⁸ but this was in the hope of receiving free reprints rather than for publicity, for increasing membership, or for the dissemination of knowledge.

Initial membership was about 35 but then declined. Strangely, given the precarious financial situation of the society, in September 1929 the committee decided to restrict membership to "those who showed an interest,"⁹ perhaps thereby hoping to achieve the stature of societies such as the Massachusetts Historical Society. Probably because of the effects of the depression, at a meeting in March 1930 the president, A. Grenfell Price, suggested reducing membership dues and holding meetings at St. Mark's College (where he was Master and hence the meeting room would be rent-free) or in the studio of another of the committee members, Miss Violet de Mole. Presumably the savings accrued from the second suggestion would compensate for losses resulting from the first. Possibly because neither membership, stature nor attendance improved, on 17 July 1930 the committee again opened membership to all, recording that since "a main object of the Society is to encourage interest in history ... no effort should be made to restrict ... membership".¹⁰ However, the committee appears to have lost hope and at a meeting less than three weeks later it discussed merging with the Royal Geographical Society. It decided not to but left it to Price to discuss the matter informally with the

⁶ *Ibid.* Minutes of Committee Meeting, 8 October 1926. Whether she accepted this offer is not recorded. She was a friend of Mrs. John Fairweather who represented the Royal Geographical Society on the Historical Society.

⁷ *Ibid.* Undated cutting from the *Advertiser*.

⁸ *Ibid.* Minutes of Committee Meeting, 2 September 1927.

⁹ *Ibid.* Minutes of Annual Meeting, 25 September 1929.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* Minutes of Special Committee Meeting, 17 July 1930.

society. No evidence remains of any further discussions or amalgamation but the historical society held only two further meetings, on 17 September and 15 October.¹¹

At least five of its members also belonged to the Royal Geographical Society.¹² No doubt they were dissatisfied with the attention devoted by that society to history and hoped that a separate society would adequately celebrate South Australia's past. However, the South Australian Historical Society did not follow the example of the other state historical societies and concentrate on the history of its own area, despite the fact that the large audience for Mills' talk on Wakefield indicated the interest in South Australian history.¹³ The other state historical societies focused on the history of their states and appealed both to academic historians and to the general public. Academic historians provided stature and research experience, but equally important was the involvement of amateurs who searched out and recorded minute details of the past. While the South Australian Historical Society attracted academic interest, because it lacked a local focus it failed to attract members of the general public. In the only state in Australia that could boast idealistic origins and could be unconditionally proud of its founders, this was a strange situation indeed.

Only two of the known members of the South Australian Historical Society who were not already members of the Royal Geographical Society joined it when the historical society disbanded. Perhaps in an attempt to retain and attract the membership of those concerned about history, in 1927 the Geographical Society had formed a Historical Memorials Committee. Like the state historical societies, this committee intended to commemorate pioneers and explorers and "to stimulate interest in matters regarding local history".¹⁴ However, most of its activities centred on commemorating the deeds or deaths of explorers, and the president of the society, A.A. Simpson, hoped:

¹¹ For a full outline of the activities of the Society, see Tony Stimson, "The South Australian Historical Society 1926-30", *Historical Society of South Australia Newsletter*, No.78, (Sept. 1988), pp.7-16.

¹² These were W. Fairweather, A.G. Price, A.S. Diamond, G.H. Pitt and T.C. Borrow.

¹³ Unfortunately Hancock left no record of his association with the South Australian Historical Society and so his motivations and intentions are unknown. This disregard of documents is surprising in a historian but is in keeping with Hancock's philosophy. In his memoirs he boasts that while at the University of Adelaide "one of my colleagues kept the record of student performances in a large exercise book which lasted us for years, while I myself answered letters as they came and destroyed them as soon as I had answered them. I took no copies of any correspondence, I kept no files". *Country and Calling*, London (1954), p.106.

¹⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Historical Memorials Committee, 25 March 1927.

that at a later date the zeal of the schoolmaster or the interest of some local authority might establish an annual Explorer's Day in towns or villages through which a particular explorer had passed. Thus a cult of exploration might arise that would be wholly commendable - for exploration was impossible without toil and self-sacrifice¹⁵

In 1930 the committee further emphasised its attachment to explorers by reversing the original intention of honouring "pioneers and explorers" to "explorers and pioneers".¹⁶

And although in 1936 the Historical Memorials Committee wished:

to be known throughout the length and breadth of South Australia, not as individuals wishing to interfere in local affairs, but as a Committee anxious to foster an historical background in the State and to ensure accuracy in regard to all subjects of an historical or geographical nature,¹⁷

it virtually ignored the sedentary citizens of South Australia.

Whatever its shortcomings, the Royal Geographical Society remained South Australia's *de facto* historical society and assumed the duties of a state society. In 1929 it co-operated with the Historical Society of Victoria in honouring Charles Sturt, and this society again contacted it in 1932 asking for support in organising the next ANZAAS meeting in Melbourne in 1935.¹⁸ The Historical Memorials Committee undertook some of the same responsibilities for centenary commemorations in South Australia as had the historical societies of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. As early as 1930 it requested Charles Fenner and A. Grenfell Price to draw up a plan for a centenary volume dealing with the development and progress of the state.¹⁹ Initially the state's Centenary Committee refused to finance a substantial history, intending to produce a small tourist handbook that would include a brief history of the state. Members of the society felt it would reflect badly on South Australia if the state did not produce a history comparable with the centenary volumes published in Western Australia and Victoria. They offered to underwrite the cost of the history if the Centenary Committee would

¹⁵ *Advertiser*, 25 October 1927.

¹⁶ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Historical Memorials Committee, 10 October 1930.

¹⁷ Quoted in H.J. Finnis, "Summary of the Society's Activities in History", a talk given to the Branch in 1960. Copy of this talk in my possession.

¹⁸ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Council Meeting, 1 August 1932.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Minutes of Historical Memorials Committee, 10 November 1930.

recognise it as the official history and purchase a substantial number of copies.²⁰ Unlike the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Historical Society of Victoria during their states' centenaries, the Royal Geographical Society did not assist in the preparation of South Australia's historical exhibition, leaving this to the Archives Department and the newly formed Pioneers' Association of South Australia.

Some members of the Royal Geographical Society continued to press for the formation of a separate historical society. In 1942, following the reorganisation of the York Gate Library into separate historical and geographical sections, T.C. Borrow, who had been a member of the South Australian Historical Society, and C.C. Deland instigated a meeting to consider the formation of a Historical and Geographical Research Group.²¹ They included "geographical" in the title simply to appease hostile elements within the society. The meeting, held on 8 December 1942, elected Wilfrid Oldham, who also had been a member of the South Australian Historical Society and was a lecturer in history at the University of Adelaide, chairman of a committee that was to encourage, stimulate and initiate historical and geographical research and publish papers of historical and geographical interest.²² The committee approached at least 14 interested members about their research interests and activities. Eight replied that they were too busy with war work and other duties to undertake any research. Only two responded favourably, and one of these wanted to work on Western Australian history. While the committee's honorary secretary, G.H. Pitt, reported that at least four members continued with their historical research, he recommended the disbanding of the research group.²³ He advised the council of the society that, "the hopes of those who proposed the formation of the Committee could be more effectually realized by the establishment of an historical section of the Society."²⁴

The Royal Geographical Society formed yet another committee to consider this proposal, which met on 1 June 1944. This sub-committee, comprising Borrow, Oldham and C. Beresford, pointed out that the inclusion of the words "to stimulate interest

²⁰ *Ibid.* Report of the Editorial Board.

²¹ *Ibid.* Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 26 October 1942.

²² *Ibid.* Minutes of Historical and Geographical Research Group, 8 December 1942.

²³ *Ibid.* Letter to T.C. Borrow from G.H. Pitt, 8 June 1943.

²⁴ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 24 April 1944.

regarding local history” in 1931 had allowed the study of local history to become a normal function of the society, and so it need not change its rules to allow the establishment of a new history section. It recommended that the Historical Memorials Committee continue to erect memorials to explorers and pioneers while the History Section would stimulate interest in the study of local history in both the city and the country.²⁵ The recommendations presented some legal difficulties but finally in 1945 the council of the society resolved that, “interested members and others should meet with a view to submitting the names of four persons, who with others to be selected by the Council, would form an Advisory or History Research Committee to carry on pending the amendment of the Rules.”²⁶ South Australians seemed at last about to get a society dedicated solely to recording their history.

From 1936 other South Australians began to show an interest in their past. In 1927 Hermann Homburg, state attorney-general and member of the Royal Geographical Society, had complained that, “The average boy or girl is woefully ignorant of the early days, but, what is worse, there seems to be no system followed in our schools to acquaint them with such things.”²⁷ At this time South Australians of all ages lacked knowledge of the past of their state and their country. Indeed, until 1939 the curriculum in primary schools emphasised that children were not Australian and their country was not Australia.²⁸ But South Australia’s centenary altered the disregard for history among the adult population, evidenced by the changing clientele of the Archives and the relaxation of the restrictions for use of its holdings. A daily record of users was not kept until 1927-28, but the increased number of people served between then and the centenary year is staggering - in 1927-28 the Archives received 402 enquiries; in 1928-29, 901; 1304 in 1932-33; 1932 in 1934-35; and 2779 in 1935-36.²⁹ A newspaper reported that the Archives “is not only a resort for ancient historians and Government research workers. Many women of South Australia and from other States spend hours there, delving among

²⁵ *Ibid.* Letter dated 8 June 1944.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 25 June 1945.

²⁷ *Advertiser*, 20 June 1927.

²⁸ Elizabeth Kwan, “Making ‘Good Australians’”, *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.29 (June 1991), p.38.

²⁹ G.L. Fischer, “The South Australian Archives Department: Its Founders and Contribution to South Australian Historical Studies 1920-1960”, *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No.13 (1985), p.22.

the piles of yellowed, camphor-scented documents and pictures.”³⁰ G.H. Pitt acknowledged its importance to the general public, and in his compilation of indexes of ships’ registers and other documents and in his detailed subject catalogues he addressed the needs of those unused to researching records.³¹ Another contemporary report commented:

The present year has been the busiest on record for the Adelaide Archives Department, as, on the eve of its first centenary, the whole of South Australia seems to be history-minded.

Day by day, a procession of interesting and interested people passes through the doors of the appropriate old-world building in North terrace, intent on many and varied quests. Among them are budding authors and playwrights engrossed in the dramatisation of great moments of the past ... artists seeking inspiration and accurate local color for pictures and posters, business firms preparing illustrated advertising matter such as catalogues and leaflets, pageant organisers and “Back to” country town committees.

The majority, however, consist of the general public who make use of the archives to the full, seeking records of the arrival of their parents and grandparents in this or that sailing ship before 1846, and the settlement of city and country districts. Some remain but a few moments, and there are others who sit silently for hours, and prolong their visits over weeks and months.³²

Thus the centenary encouraged an interest in the past of South Australia among a broad range of people. It also led to the formation of societies to commemorate the past, although the presentation of this past was controlled by the social elite. And because South Australians venerated their ancestors,³³ it is not surprising that the first historical societies glorified the achievements of pioneers.

The first to form a history-based society were members of the approximately 10% of the population who were German or of German descent and who clung to their heritage as strongly as did British South Australians. Heinrich Krawinkel prompted a group of prominent German-South Australians to form the German Australian Centenary Committee whose objectives were to renovate a German pioneer cemetery, to restore the grave of Carl Linger (the German-born composer of the music for *Song of Australia*) and

³⁰ State Records (SA) GRG19/71. PLMAG Cutting Book, Vol.6. Undated, unsourced newspaper cutting, but probably around October 1935.

³¹ G.L. Fischer, “Archival Development in South Australia”, *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol.18, No.3 (1969), p.74.

³² State Records (SA) GRG19/71. PLMAG Cutting Book, Vol.6. *The Advertiser*, undated but probably around October 1935.

³³ J.B. Hirst, ‘The Pioneer Legend’, in John Carroll (ed.), *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*. Melbourne (1982), p.36.

to commemorate his death, to reinstate three German place names that had been changed during the First World War, to prepare historical records of German immigration and settlement in South Australia since 1836, to participate in the general centenary festivities, and to encourage the visit to Adelaide of a German warship.³⁴ Premier R.L. Butler and other public figures supported these objectives.

Before the end of 1936 the committee had successfully achieved the restitution of the original German names for Hahndorf, Klemzig and Lobethal, and with the help of the *Advertiser* had raised the funds to restore Carl Linger's grave. On 17 June 1936 the premier, in front of a crowd of more than 1000, dedicated the memorial to Carl Linger and praised Krawinkel and his committee as "deserving of the highest commendation ... but after all, such a spirit is typical of South Australia. We are fortunate indeed that all sections of our community are ever ready to unite in a common effort for the common good."³⁵ The South Australian community supported the restoration and beautification of the Klemzig cemetery, and on 25 July 1936 200 school children planted trees in commemoration of the centenary of German settlement and in honour of these first German settlers. On 29 August the governor of South Australia dedicated the memorial stone before more than 4000 spectators, many of whom were not of German descent. The work of the committee had captured the hearts of Anglo-Australians, who supported this commemoration of the state's pioneers. The committee faced difficulties with some of its projects. Some fund-raising ventures failed and consequently it did not participate in the official centenary program nor complete the collection of material for its history of German settlement. Krawinkel re-formed the group into the South Australian German Historical Society to continue its work and encourage links between Germany and Australia.³⁶ He became president and Adolph Schulz, principal of the Teachers Training College, was elected treasurer.³⁷ South Australians of British descent supported this

³⁴ Lutheran Archives. Minutes of the German-Australian Centenary Committee, 8 January 1935.

³⁵ Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide. *German Settlers in South Australia: Miscellaneous Papers 1776-1964*. "Speech made by the Premier of South Australia, Hon. R.L. Butler M.P. on the Occasion of the Unveiling of a Monument in Honour of Carl Linger, the Composer of the 'Song of Australia' on Wednesday the 17 June 1936 at 3 p.m."

³⁶ *Ibid.* For example, see unnamed, undated newspaper cutting; Lutheran Archives. Minutes of the German-Australian Centenary Committee, 13 February 1937.

³⁷ Lutheran Archives. Minutes of the German-Australian Centenary Committee, 31 October 1936.

celebration of the German heritage of the state until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, when their opinions on all things German altered.

In 1939 the South Australian German Historical Society voluntarily disbanded. But what the general community had acknowledged as a celebration and commemoration of pioneering South Australians became to the intelligence section of the Australian Military Forces, and to many South Australians, a deliberate undermining of Australia's way of life and an attempt to mobilise German-Australians to the cause of the Third Reich. Five members of the historical society, including Krawinkel, were interned and security forces considered six others to be pro-German.³⁸ Hermann Homburg, a member of the South Australian parliament and an instigator of the society although never a committee member, was interned briefly and then exiled to Ballarat for 18 months. The authorities held dossiers on at least 21 historical society members and believed that a large number of others were German sympathisers.³⁹ The intelligence forces could not prove beyond doubt that any members of the historical society were Nazis or that they intended, or were indeed capable of, contributing to the formation of a Nazi state in South Australia. If the society was an agency of national socialism, it was an ineffective one.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the efforts of the first society formed exclusively to celebrate aspects of the state's past ended tragically.

Paradoxically, the ultra-nationalistic Australian Natives' Association had been one of the strongest supporters of the Centenary Committee. Although its base was in Victoria, W.J. Sowden was one of its main national spokesmen.⁴¹ From August 1920 the South Australian head office produced *Our Australia*, a monthly magazine that publicised events of local branches and broadcast the patriotic aspirations of the association. The first item in the first issue is the full text of the words of "Song of Australia", printed under a map of Australia. The association supported the German Australian Centenary Committee's moves to commemorate Carl Linger, and promoted "Song of Australia as

³⁸ Australian Archives. SA:D1915, Item 1550. The South Australian German Historical society, undated report, p.1.

³⁹ *Ibid.* SA:D1915, Item 1550. *The South Australian German Historical Society*, 18 November 1944, p.10.

⁴⁰ For full details of this society, see Kerrie Round, "The Tragic Tale of the South Australian German Historical Society", *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, No.21 (1993), pp.25-48.

⁴¹ In 1920 membership in Victoria had reached 35,000 while in South Australia membership was a mere 5000.

the national song.⁴² However, apart from the continuing interest in promoting Australia-wide acceptance of "Song of Australia", reverence for pioneers, lobbying for the preservation of Dingley Dell, briefly the home of Adam Lindsay Gordon, and organising an annual pilgrimage to this shrine, by the 1920s the South Australian branch of the Australian Natives' Association had discarded its former interest in South Australian history.

Fortunately, prompted by the centenary, other South Australians moved to establish an organisation to celebrate the state's past. To reinforce the state's British heritage members of Adelaide's social elite formed the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Initially in 1934 Mabel Marryat, T.C. Borrow and Sir Henry Newland had attempted to form subsidiaries of the pioneers clubs in Sydney, which they believed would "one day ... be as famous as 'The Pilgrims' in the United States of America."⁴³ When these moves failed they established an independent pioneer society in South Australia.⁴⁴ The first preliminary meeting was held on 27 May 1935, and by 8 September the association had 170 members. Women were particularly attracted to the group to the consternation of Borrow, who suggested that the executive committee "needs to be strengthened by adding another man, as we have rather a large percentage of women on this committee."⁴⁵ Virtually no women had joined the Royal Geographical Society. Although women had belonged to historical societies in other states since their beginnings, except in Western Australia where the society concentrated on celebrating the pioneers of settlement, they had always been a minority. The high participation of women in the pioneer groups in Western Australia and South Australia follows the pattern of hereditary associations in the United States. In Australia groups that focused on pioneers possibly appealed to women because they celebrated the achievements of both sexes, whereas males were the heroes of the Royal Geographical Society and of the majority of historical societies.

⁴² "Carl Linger Memorial Fund", *Our Australia*, Vol.17, No.8 (1936), pp.1-2.

⁴³ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Correspondence File. Letter to Borrow from Newland, 14 December 1934.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 April 1935.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Letter to Newland from Borrow, 8 September 1935. T.C. Borrow outlined the formation of the Pioneers' Association in *The Genesis of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia*. Adelaide (1946).

Members of the Pioneers' Association previously had unsuccessfully tried through the South Australian Historical Society and the Royal Geographical Society to celebrate the colony's British past. Ten of the 25 original committee members of the association also belonged to the Royal Geographical Society and of these, Borrow and Price had also been active in the South Australian Historical Society. The failure of both these groups to honour sufficiently the first settlers stimulated the formation of a society whose members could devote all their energies to recording the deeds of their British ancestors. The Pioneers' Association presented a limited view of history, acknowledging the importance only of those who arrived in the colony prior to 1845. This gave members a feeling of superiority, but the association eschewed the overt elitism of the earlier American hereditary societies and also the implied social exclusiveness of the Australasian Pioneers' Club. Newland, the first president, believed that if the association became "too high-brow" it would lose the interest of many of those who knew much about the early history of the state. He questioned, "who amongst us ... would not gladly shake the hand of John Ridley or Cornelius Birdseye, the latter being, I understand, the first man to use a plough in South Australia - if they were alive today?"⁴⁶ Because none of the pioneers were convicts, all could be considered worthy.

Despite this apparent equalitarianism, as with the historical societies in the other states and with the Royal Geographical Society, members of the Pioneers' Association came largely from the educated and wealthy sections of society. Being a descendants' group it probably had a greater percentage of 'old money' among its members than did these other groups. These members celebrated their 'pure' inheritance, and Newland boasted that "we in South Australia were particularly fortunate in our ancestors".⁴⁷ No doubt because of overlapping membership between the Royal Geographical Society and the Pioneers' Association, both groups co-operated in various projects. Together they requested the postmaster general to issue a Light memorial stamp; in 1938 they jointly celebrated the Mount Barker Centenary;⁴⁸ the Royal Geographical Society allowed the

⁴⁶ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Correspondence File. Speech given by Sir Henry Simpson Newland at the inaugural meeting of the Pioneers' Association, 19 September 1935.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 25 March 1938, 12 April 1938, 9 December 1938.

association use of the York Gate Library for meetings; and both groups approached the Tax Department to have the sales tax on memorial tablets removed.⁴⁹ Their main divergence was in the past that they each celebrated. The Royal Geographical Society celebrated explorers while the Pioneers' Association venerated the pioneers. The immediate success of the Pioneers' Association suggests that South Australians revered the British connection more than the efforts to open up Australia. Whereas it had taken 50 years for membership in the Royal Geographical Society to reach 200, in the Pioneers' Association it approached 600 in its first year, a significant number in a state that had previously largely ignored the formal commemoration of its past.

Members of the German-Australian Centenary Committee and the Pioneers' Association belonged to the Royal Geographical Society and so probably knew each other. The Pioneers' Association supported some of the aims of the Centenary Committee, and in an address on the founders of South Australia given at its inaugural meeting A. Grenfell Price appealed for the restoration of three German place names. But no evidence exists of overlapping membership between the Centenary Committee and the Pioneers' Association nor of co-operation on any project, an unusual situation given their similarity. The Pioneers' Association ignored the state's German heritage and celebrated only the history of those of British descent. Perhaps this was because the German community was still largely self-contained, but it could have been because of anti-German feeling. In 1914 Collier Cudmore, a member of parliament and a foundation member of the Pioneers' Association, had opposed the candidature of anyone of German birth or parentage in the 1915 elections. This was directed specifically at Hermann Homburg, and his antipathy to German-South Australians appears to have continued.⁵⁰ Whether this attitude was widespread in the Pioneers' Association is not known, but the presence of even one person with such obvious feelings might have dissuaded the descendants of the German settlers from joining even after their own society had folded.

The approaching centenary inspired yet another move to form a history-based society. In 1935 E. Phillipps Dancker, an Adelaide architect and former member of the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 November 1944.

⁵⁰ Australian Archives. CRS A367, Item CE5376. Military Intelligence subsequently dismissed Cudmore's evidence against Homburg and regarded the specific complaints against him as inconclusive.

South Australian Historical Society, proposed the formation of a Colonial Historical Society. Apart from lectures and research, he planned that the society would undertake the “recording and possible preservation of interesting old buildings, pioneer cottages, wind and water mills, and other landmarks connected with the early days ... as to preserve them is our immediate duty to posterity.” He referred to various societies in England as well as the National Trust in that country that worked to preserve England’s past.⁵¹ He was the first South Australian to suggest the formation of an organisation to preserve the built heritage and to realise that buildings were as important as documents and other relics as records of the past. But he was before his time and received little support. At a meeting called to form the Colonial Historical Society Dancker outlined plans for a museum displaying “anything of interest associated with the development of the State” to be housed in the old Consumptive Home on North Terrace, adjacent to the Botanic Gardens.⁵² However, the meeting decided “to postpone any further action until the formation of the proposed Pioneers’ Association, with which body it is hoped to work in conjunction.”⁵³ Moves to form a Colonial Historical Society foundered, but Dancker then supported C. Stanton Hicks’ moves in 1936 to establish a historical museum.

Suggestions for a museum celebrating some aspect of the past were not new. After the First World War the federal government had promised to establish a branch of the Australian War Museum in Adelaide for the permanent exhibition of valuable and interesting trophies. While a similar museum in Melbourne opened on Anzac Day 1922, nothing eventuated in Adelaide,⁵⁴ and the relics already donated languished in the basement of the Old Exhibition Building pending the provision by the state government of a permanent display area. The Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery Board and the Returned Servicemen’s League organised an exhibition of war relics on the top floor of the museum as part of the centenary celebrations.⁵⁵ But in June 1939 the government dispersed the collection among other interested bodies. The state government was not

⁵¹ *Advertiser*, 8 June 1935.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 12 June 1935.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5 July 1935.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 November 1922.

⁵⁵ *News*, 9 March 1936, *Advertiser*, 10 March 1936.

interested in financing a war museum in Adelaide and the federal government was more concerned with the national war museum in Canberra.

The only historical museum supported by the state government in South Australia in the inter-war years was Dingley Dell, a small cottage near Port Macdonnell that from 1864 to 1865 had been home to the poet Adam Lindsay Gordon. Gordon societies in Melbourne and Sydney; the Dingley Dell Restoration Committee formed by local residents; and the Mount Gambier branch of the Australian Natives' Association, approached the state government to purchase the home,⁵⁶ which it did in 1921 and included it with its five other "pleasure resorts" operated by the Tourist Bureau. The director of the Tourist Bureau, Victor H. Ryan, believed that:

The house and surroundings ... provide an additional attraction to tourists by reason of the scheme in progress for beautifying the place in rustic style, and maintaining, so far as possible, the earlier atmosphere and environment from which the picturesque poet, sportsman, and politician drew much of his inspiration.⁵⁷

The cottage appealed to touring South Australians, and the Tourist Bureau had included it on the itinerary of its organised tours at least as early as 1918. No visitor figures are available for the first years of operation by the Tourist Bureau, but during 1927 2678 tourists signed the visitors' book.⁵⁸ Because the site was 300 miles from Adelaide, Ryan had made the purchase of the property conditional on the appointment of a local advisory committee to oversee its maintenance and preservation. Initial local enthusiasm soon weakened, and in 1929 the Dingley Dell Committee asked the Tourist Bureau to assume full control of the property.⁵⁹ The bureau declined and formed a committee of representatives of nearby local councils, the Mount Gambier Branch of the Australian Natives' Association and the Mount Gambier Progress Association,⁶⁰ which, at times with difficulty, oversaw the site until the mid or late 1930s.⁶¹ Unlike similar sites in the United States Dingley Dell did not become a shrine, and the government did not promote

⁵⁶ Department of Environment and Planning. File 7022.10256 - Dingley Dell, Port Macdonnell.

⁵⁷ *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*. Annual Report of the National Pleasure Resorts, 1921-22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1926-27.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1928-29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1929-30.

⁶¹ Department of Environment and Planning File 7022.10256 - Dingley Dell, Port Macdonnell. Memorandum from Director of Environment and Conservation to the Minister of Environment and Conservation, 1 November 1973.

it to reinforce patriotism. It was merely an interesting reminder of the past and a boost to tourism.⁶²

During the 1920s the Tourist Bureau also controlled two other National Pleasure Resorts, both within the Adelaide metropolitan area, that had historic significance although neither became museums. The Toll House at Glen Osmond was a reminder of the early days of the state but had no relationship to any single person, and so it is perhaps not surprising that the Tourist Bureau did not consider it to be important. The second property, "Marino House", designed, built and lived in by George Strickland Kingston, is more interesting. Kingston had assisted William Light in surveying the site for Adelaide, had discovered and mined copper at Burra, had sat in the Legislative Council, and had played a major part in winning a democratic constitution for the colony. After his death in 1880 one of his sons, Charles Cameron Kingston, lived in the house until he died in 1908. Charles Kingston had served in the parliament of South Australia as attorney-general from 1884-1885 and 1887-1889 and as premier from 1893-1899, was prominent in the moves for federation, and was federal minister of trade and customs from 1901-1903.⁶³ When in office in South Australia he had introduced the legislation that gave women the vote and provided for industrial arbitration. Not only was Kingston an effective leader who dominated South Australian politics, he was also a colourful character. Before he became premier he had challenged a member of the Legislative Council to a duel, for which he had been arrested and bound over to keep the peace for a year.⁶⁴ He was thus one of the few politicians in South Australia who had the commitment and the personality to earn the admiration and affection of South Australians.

Since Kingston had no children, after his widow died the house was left vacant. In 1919 and 1921 the government refused requests to restore the house and open the grounds to the public,⁶⁵ but in 1924 it purchased a portion of Kingston Estate to be administered as a National Pleasure Resort.⁶⁶ "Marino House" had far greater historical importance

⁶² Another of Gordon's houses, this one in Ballarat, Victoria where he lived in 1867 and 1868, was also restored and opened as a museum in 1934.

⁶³ South Australian Government, *Public Buildings Department: Heritage Buildings Survey*, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, pp.9-10.

⁶⁴ R.M. Gibbs, *A History of South Australia*. Adelaide (1969), pp.120-121.

⁶⁵ South Australian Government, *ibid.*, p.10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Annual Report of the National Pleasure Resorts, 1924-25. *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*.

than Dingley Dell. With its links to key persons involved in federation and its association with the successful colonisation of the only free state of Australia, it had national significance; with its links with key persons in the settlement and early development of South Australia, it had state significance; and with its links to the beginnings of the district, it had local significance.⁶⁷ Yet in the 1920s South Australians could not see this, and despite the prominence of the two men who had lived there no-one suggested that it become a museum dedicated to the Kingstons or, more broadly, to the pioneer or political history of South Australia. No doubt had they lived in the United States, George Kingston's prominence and Charles Kingston's political acumen and roguish personality would have guaranteed reverence and a perpetual memorial. But in South Australia "Marino House" (now Kingston House) served the needs of campers and holidaymakers, and South Australians between the wars forgot the Kingston connection.

Indeed, the 'cult of personality' appears to have played little part in the celebration of history in South Australia. The Royal Geographical Society revered the explorers, particularly Charles Sturt. The Pioneers' Association perpetuated the memory of Colonel Light and Governor Hindmarsh and encouraged commemoration of Proclamation Day, the anniversary of the first landing in South Australia. But they failed to induce in South Australians the filio piety aroused in Americans by their founding fathers. And in South Australia neither organisation overtly used the past to inculcate feelings of national pride and patriotism. The minutes of the Royal Geographical Society mention the Second World War only in relation to falling membership. The Pioneers' Association referred to the upheavals created by wartime conditions, but believed that its meetings helped members to forget them. While it did call on members "to take courage from the example of our Pioneers",⁶⁸ this is a far cry from the exhortations of the American historical societies. The organisations avoided using their icons as exemplars for contemporary South Australians. At no time did they exhort their members to follow the examples of the pioneers and undergo hardships for a greater cause.

⁶⁷ Department of Environment and Planning File 6628-10617, Pt.1. Barry Rowney, "Kingston House (Marino Homestead) - Kingston Park", 11 November 1981.

⁶⁸ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Annual Report, 25 September 1941.

Neither was patriotism a motivating force for other attempts to establish museums in the years between 1920 and 1945. The Port Adelaide Institute continued to include some historical items in its eclectic museum collection. In 1933 S.F. Markham, secretary of the British Museums Association, and H.O. Richards, professor of Geology at the University of Queensland, visited the Port Adelaide museum on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation and the British Museums Association. They declared it “an unqualified disgrace, [which] for the good repute of other museums should be closed without delay.”⁶⁹ This prompted the institute committee to seek advice from H.M. Hale, director of the South Australian Museum, who suggested culling the exhibits and reorganising them to form a nautical museum focusing on South Australia’s maritime history.⁷⁰ The secretary of the institute, E.J.R. Morgan, accepted this suggestion, acknowledging that the museum could not compete with the Adelaide Museum in natural history specimens but had “an opportunity to make a unique historical and maritime museum”.⁷¹ The museum’s honorary curator, Vernon Smith, approached the Centenary Committee for a grant to obtain relics associated with the maritime history of South Australia.⁷² Undeterred by a refusal, he approached the state government requesting funds for a larger and more suitable building,⁷³ but again failed. Because of the general lack of interest in the settlement of the state, politicians saw no political value in devoting money to displaying the state’s past.

Not only was the Centenary Committee loathe to finance a maritime museum, it was equally parsimonious towards other aspects of the state’s centenary celebrations. Initially it had hoped to fund a historical exhibition through private contributions. The Historical, Arts and Sciences Group Committee of the Centenary Committee approached the Adelaide Children’s Hospital to organise the exhibition, believing that a charitable institution was more likely to attract financial and voluntary assistance than was an official body. The Adelaide Children’s Hospital Board was reluctant to assume sole

⁶⁹ *Advertiser*, 11 January 1933.

⁷⁰ State Records (SA). GRG58/170/4. Letter to Vernon Smith from Herbert M. Hale, 3 February 1933.

⁷¹ *News*, 4 April 1933.

⁷² *Advertiser*, 12 April 1934.

⁷³ State Records (SA). GRG58/170/1. Port Adelaide Institute General Committee Minutes, 9 September 1935.

financial responsibility for organising the exhibition, so the committee requested assistance from various other organisations.⁷⁴ The City Council declined, the Public Library Board (through the Archives) was organising its own exhibition, and the Royal Geographical Society wished to consider the request. Only the Education Department offered full support. But then the Board of the Adelaide Children's Hospital decided not to proceed with the project. The committee withdrew its proposal to hold its own historical exhibition,⁷⁵ and instead financed the exhibition of relics, books and papers dealing with the early history of the state planned by the Archives in collaboration with the Pioneers' Association.⁷⁶ This took up four large sections of the new wing of the Art Gallery and drew large crowds from 18 November 1936 until 4 January 1937.

Provision of a permanent collection of historical relics representing the pioneer history of South Australia had exercised the minds of some South Australians for many years. On his return from Europe in 1927 S. Talbot Smith, director of the Art Gallery, reported on museums and galleries on the continent. He recommended the formation of a separate "folk" museum to house "a collection without (perhaps) artistic merit, but having historical value."⁷⁷ His suggestion produced no response, but the approaching centenary encouraged further interest in a historical museum. Hately Marshall, secretary to the Board of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery and previously a member of the South Australian Historical Society, supported E. Phillips Dancker's proposal to establish a folk museum and offered some national relics currently held by the museum but too large to display.⁷⁸ Later in 1935 C. Stanton Hicks, professor of Pharmacology and Human Physiology at the University of Adelaide, wrote to Premier Richard Butler advocating the establishment of an Australian National Museum of Colonial History. Dancker supported Hicks, as did members of the Pioneers' Association and other leading South Australians.⁷⁹ Hicks showed political acumen when approaching the government

⁷⁴ State Records (SA). GRG49/2. Minutes of the Historical, Arts, and Sciences Group Committee, 17 May 1935.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1935.

⁷⁶ Report of the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery for 1936-1937, p. 12.

⁷⁷ State Records (SA). GRG19/ PLMAG. Letter from S. Talbot Smith to the Premier, 22 February 1936.

⁷⁸ *Advertiser*, 6 July 1935.

⁷⁹ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Correspondence File. Letter to T.C. Borrow from Newland, 27 November 1935; Minutes of Executive Committee, 27 April 1936; Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 28 September 1936.

with his scheme. He implied that apart from the establishment of a trust fund, no expenditure would immediately be necessary. He also called on state pride, pointing out that no such institution existed in the other capitals nor in Canberra. He felt certain that “the time will come when Adelaide will be known throughout the Empire for its possession of so unique and valuable a Museum”. The suggested title implied that the museum would cover the colonial history of the whole of Australia, but Hicks’ draft outline reveals that his focus was on the pre-settlement and settlement of South Australia with only minor attention to the other areas of Australia.⁸⁰ It would have been the history of Australia writ from the middle of the south, not from the usual perspective of the east coast! His final sentence to his submission is illuminating: “Educationally, as a foundation for citizenship and good government, it would form a traditional appeal of immeasurable value.”⁸¹ Like Americans, Hicks saw that history could be used to inculcate democratic values and foster national pride.

While Hicks’ intimation that the museum would enhance Adelaide’s charm to tourists appealed to Ryan, who was organising director of the Centenary Committee and previously director of the Government Tourist Bureau, Ryan advised Butler against financing the museum.⁸² The main obstacle was appropriate housing. The Architect-in-Chief reported that the buildings behind the Art Gallery were beyond repair and “their architectural and historic values, do not warrant action being taken to retain them as a memorial of early colonial days.”⁸³ He also considered that the Infectious Diseases Hospital and Consumptive Home adjacent to the Botanic Gardens, another possibility, would be too expensive to convert. Correspondents to the *Advertiser* championed the establishment of a local history museum,⁸⁴ which the *Advertiser* supported with several leading articles. An editorial in 1935 referred to the neglect of the early days of settlement and to the difficulty of displaying relics in a museum devoted increasingly to

⁸⁰ State Records (SA). GRG24/6/1195/1935. Letter to The Hon. the Premier from C. Stanton Hicks, 19 November 1935.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* Letter dated 19 November 1935.

⁸² *Ibid.* Memorandum to the Premier from Victor H. Ryan, 4 December 1935.

⁸³ *Advertiser*, 19 June 1935.

⁸⁴ I.C. Farr, *Advertiser*, 4 April 1936; H.L. Ward, *Advertiser*, 9 April 1936; Anonymous, *News*, 8 April 1936; W.H. Langham, *Advertiser*, 30 July 1938; Violet de Mole “one-time hon.sec to the now dormant South Australian Historical Society”, *Advertiser*, 18 August 1938.

natural history.⁸⁵ A year later the paper again supported the formation of a museum to house diverse objects even if they were of comparatively recent origin:

A Museum of History, here, cannot expect such treasures as London has dredged at various times from the singularly tenacious and preservative Thames mud. But antiquity is a term merely comparative. Familiar objects quietly grow into disuse, and are forgotten ... What could be more interesting, in years to come, than a faithful reproduction of the settler's hut, or the magnate's drawing-room, of just on a century back?⁸⁶

Thus, while Hicks hoped that the museum would increase patriotic pride, the *Advertiser* was merely interested in collecting a 'cabinet of curiosities'. But whether Hicks' approach or that of the *Advertiser* would have succeeded is immaterial because the government ignored all suggestions and again failed to finance a history museum. History remained the province of the elite, and though this group had some political clout such a venture needed widespread public endorsement to force the government to release its purse strings. However, local government was more aware of the importance of history and at times supported the concept of a historical museum. H. Gill-Williams, a member of the Walkerville Council, suggested that his council should collect literature and photographs relating to the early history of the town and welcomed donations.⁸⁷ These efforts proved equally unsuccessful, and Adelaide remained without a museum.

As the likelihood of the government funding a separate building diminished, hopes turned to the establishment of a permanent historical display in the Art Gallery. In 1938 its director, Louis McCubbin, suggested the addition of a new wing to house among other exhibits a South Australian Historical Section. He suggested a presentation that would include small dioramas representing the state's historical and industrial progress. He predicted that, "A display like this would be unique among the cities of Australia. In Melbourne there is a small collection of relics, not displayed at all well. Here we have the beginnings of a most interesting display, but much more space is required."⁸⁸ The

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 May 1935.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 May 1936.

⁸⁷ *Advertiser*, 18 June 1936. This suggestion does not seem to have succeeded as in 1970 the Council sought assistance in setting up a collection of historical relics and again called for donations of photographs, letters and other manuscripts. Pioneers' Association of South Australia *Newsletter* No. 75 (1970), p. 1.

⁸⁸ Louis McCubbin, *Report on the Systematic Development of the Collections*. Issued by the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery of South Australia. Adelaide (1938); *News*, 21 February 1938.

Pioneers' Association endorsed his decision.⁸⁹ As some members were unwilling to donate relics for a permanent display, the association suggested that members and their friends lend relics for a temporary exhibition.⁹⁰ However, of almost 600 circulars sent out by the Pioneers' Association requesting donations of relics, less than 12 were returned.⁹¹ Perhaps the pioneers, relishing the exclusiveness of their group, were unwilling to share their treasures with less fortunate South Australians.

Participants at a meeting on 5 November 1941 held at the School of Mines initiated another move to form a museum, and established the State Technical and Historical Museum Society to undertake preparatory work to set up a technical and historical museum once the war had finished. The ubiquitous G.H. Pitt and A. Grenfell Price were foundation members as were two other members of the Royal Geographical Society, A.G.F. Leonard and C.E. Rosevear. The main thrust of the museum was to be applied art and science, and it was to exhibit the resources of the state and their uses and to provide an opportunity for the general public to keep abreast of the latest advances in technology. The existing School of Mines Technological Museum was to provide the nucleus of the collection, but it was also to display technological exhibits currently housed at the National Gallery and various departments within the University and the Waite Research Institute.⁹² "Historical" appeared in the title because the society intended "to prevent the destruction of valuable and historical material which will help to link the State's pioneering days with the present and future."⁹³ The intention "to foster the preservation of old buildings and similar landmarks of interest, natural and fabricated, throughout the State of South Australia"⁹⁴ was perhaps included because E. Phillips Dancker, a foundation member, still hoped that a preservation society would be established in South Australia. The founding committee expected the state government to

⁸⁹ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Minutes of Executive Committee, 29 June and 4 August 1938; Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 27 September 1938; Minutes of Meeting, 11 November 1938.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Minutes of Meeting, 11 November 1938.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1939.

⁹² *Advertiser* 6 November 1941.

⁹³ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Historic Buildings File. Letter to the Hon. A.L. McEwin, Chief Secretary from A.G.F. Leonard, 16 November 1942.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Letter from A.G.F. Leonard, 16 November 1942.

provide the major finance, but the government again declined to fund a museum and the idea died.

Citizens from the metropolitan area were not the only South Australians who wished to commemorate their history. E.H. Tilbrook, assistant editor of the *Northern Argus*, and other residents of the mid-north town of Clare formed their own Historical Memorials Committee in the early 1940s. As the parent committee's files contain no record of a campaign to form rural committees the initiative must have come from Tilbrook. The committee promoted and commemorated the history of the area and erected a memorial to two of the town's pioneers, Ulrich and Martha Hübbe. Its major activity was an attempt to convert Clare's original courthouse, built in 1850, into a museum. The courthouse had become a casualty hospital in 1878 and for a short time from 1924 was an infectious diseases hospital, but in 1942 the Hospital Board announced plans to demolish it and use the building materials elsewhere. Tilbrook publicised this in his paper, prompting J.J. Simons, principal of the *Perth Sunday Times* and a former resident of Clare, to offer £100 to the Hospital Board to secure the building if it would delay destruction until one year after the war's end. Simons believed that townspeople "owe preservation [of] early buildings as our tribute to the Pioneers whose work makes us all so proud of Clare."⁹⁵ A condition of his offer was that an equivalent amount be subscribed by others, but the only other donation recorded was from Mrs. John Christison who gave £20 to save the diamond-paned windows. Tilbrook and Simons hoped to use the building to house a "Historical or similar Society" that would be formed "in the interest of the Centenary just passed".⁹⁶ The board agreed to Simons' request and placed the money in a trust account. In 1944 Simons suggested adding a wing to the hospital building to house a display of wagons and ploughs. Notwithstanding the encouraging signs, Simons' plans did not come to fruition. After his death in 1944 the Hospital Board arranged with the executors of his will to transfer his money to another hospital fund.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *Northern Argus*, 29 January 1943.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Robert J. Noye, *Clare. A District History*. Adelaide (1975), p.186. For some reason, the government did not demolish the hospital but unfortunately only two of the diamond-paned windows remain. When the Clare and District branch of the National Trust formed in 1964 they leased the building, now owned by the Corporation, and converted it to a museum so Simons' dream eventually came true.

Another attempt to establish a museum in South Australia had failed, this time because of war time conditions, but also again because of the short-sighted vision of public officials.

The call for museums in the colonial buildings of South Australia is an indication that some South Australians appreciated the value of their built heritage. In the early 1920s they feared that increasing prosperity would lead to the destruction of many early and now outmoded edifices unless they were given new functions. Primary and secondary industries were expanding and the population was growing, with a resultant extension in housing and transport. Although South Australia's wealth continued to come largely from its rural sector it was Adelaide that absorbed most of the increasing population. By 1921 South Australia had a greater relative number of city dwellers than any other state.⁹⁸ Suburbs expanded into farmland and Adelaide began to sprawl. However, from the second half of the 1920s, because of the reliance on rural industries, a lack of primary resources and the gradual decline of manufacturing industries, South Australia's economy contracted. When the full depression hit in 1929, South Australia suffered more and for a longer period than the remainder of Australia. Because its economy had not grown as fast as that of New South Wales or Victoria, Adelaide did not experience to the same extent the building boom of the second half of the 1920s in the capital cities of those states. This did not lessen the threat to old buildings. It simply replaced deliberate demolition with slow deterioration through neglect.

An early concern of the Historical Memorials Committee was the preservation of buildings connected with explorers. For some years it agonised over whether the Grange, home of Captain Charles Sturt, remained as it had when he had lived in it. That matter was clarified in 1930, but the committee seemed to lack heart and negotiations to buy the property broke down. In 1934 it declined to co-operate with the Council of Henley and Grange, which also wanted the building saved, in a request to the state government to purchase the home as a centenary project.⁹⁹ However, in 1936 the committee became more forceful and "in view of the desirability of preserving authentic memorials of the

⁹⁸ D. T. Merrett, "Australian Capital Cities in the Twentieth Century", in J. W. McCarty and C. B. Schedvin (eds), *Australian Capital Cities: Historical Essays*, Sydney (1978), p. 175.

⁹⁹ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Historical Memorials Committee, 25 March 1927, 5 December 1929, 1 August 1930, 10 October 1930, 25 February 1935.

pioneering times and of perpetuating the memory of those who took a leading part in the discovery, exploration and administration of this Colony in its earliest stages”, urged the government to preserve the house as a National Historical Memorial. It also offered to landscape the grounds and to assist the government in the future care of the building.¹⁰⁰ But only a minority of South Australians advocated the preservation of old buildings. After the completion of the new parliament house in 1939, the government planned to demolish the old Legislative Council building and replace it with a garden. While McCubbin commented that “the old Parliamentary building is not without architectural charm, and is of historic interest”, he agreed with its destruction and prepared a sketch of the proposed garden.¹⁰¹ Premier Playford supported the project and showed no concern at the loss of the historic building.¹⁰² Americans and other Australians would have protested at the threatened destruction of a building with such admitted historical and architectural merit, but there was no outcry in South Australia since most South Australians failed to recognise the need to preserve their own history. Neither did the premier or his government propose any legislation to protect buildings connected with the history of the state, as had happened in the United States and in Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales.

Similar to members of the Royal Australian Historical Society, some Adelaideans were content to preserve the memory of early buildings through documents, drawings and photographs. M.J. MacNally referred to the collection of photographs of colonial buildings in New South Wales held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney and suggested that South Australia should commence a similar project:

Just at the back of the Public Library are some fine old buildings surrounding an open space, presumably at one time a parade ground. These places with the archway at the entrance breathe history, and are well worth perpetuating, for it does not look as if they will be allowed to remain for long ...

I sincerely hope this suggestion will bear fruit. There is a somewhat limited field in South Australia, but what there is is of intense interest and value from a historical standpoint and it rests with “the powers that be” to give this proposed [photographic] collection their benign blessing and help.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council Meeting, 24 July 1936.

¹⁰¹ *Advertiser*, 4 January 1939.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*; *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 18 July 1939, p.149.

¹⁰³ *Mail*, 13 June 1936.

South Australia's centenary prompted McNally's interest in old buildings, as it did other suggestions to preserve and restore the Destitute Asylum and the old Police Barracks, Sturt's home and the Infectious Diseases Hospital and Consumptive Home.¹⁰⁴ Members of the Pioneers' Association also championed the retention of Adelaide's old buildings, and at the first annual meeting "attention was drawn ... to the desirability of making a catalogue of all historical buildings. It was suggested, also, that there be a monument to pioneers and a national Trust for the preservation of historic sites."¹⁰⁵ Some members supported moves to save the Grange, and the executive committee protested to the government against the projected demolition of the Police Barracks.¹⁰⁶

Preservation of historic buildings and the formation of museums were not the only activities encouraged by the centenary. As in the other states the anniversary increased the attention given to local history by the urban and rural press. The press also supported the activities of the state's historical bodies, and on behalf of the German-Australian Centenary Committee the *Advertiser* conducted the penny fund that raised the money for the monument to Carl Linger. The *Advertiser*, *News* and *Mail* supported the work of the Historical Memorials Committee in its commemoration of the early explorers, its placing of monuments and in its calls for preservation of Sturt's home. The *Chronicle*, a rural newspaper that served the entire state and beyond, each week published a historical feature in its women's pages. The press would not have devoted space to these activities if South Australians were not interested in reading about them.

The centenary also prompted the publication of a state history. The Centenary History of South Australia, produced by the Royal Geographical Society, was the major historical publication of the period between 1920 and 1945. No doubt because they realised that women would largely be omitted from the official centenary history, the Women's Centenary Council produced *A Book of South Australia: Women in the First Hundred Years*. Along with short stories, poems and plays, this volume contained articles on various phases of the life and work of women in the state and records of pioneer

¹⁰⁴ State Records (SA). GRG49/2. Letter to Centenary Committee from Mrs. F.W. Rymill, 4 May 1934; Letters to the Editor in the *Advertiser*, 13 June 1935, 20 June 1935, 21 June 1935.

¹⁰⁵ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 28 September 1936.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Minutes of Executive Committee, 23 September 1938, 9 March 1942.

women. The authors included Mabel Hardy, Mrs. George Morphett, Lady Newland and Mabel Marryat, all connected with the Pioneers' Association, and Violet de Mole, who had belonged to the Historical Society of South Australia. So, although not at the forefront of the historical movement, some women were involved in the writing of history. The only other substantial historical work produced in these years was Rodney Cockburn's two volume *Pastoral Pioneers of South Australia*, a collection of 230 biographical sketches that had appeared weekly in *The Adelaide Stock and Station Journal* from 10 January 1923 until 10 August 1927. Blacket revised and slightly expanded *The History of Unley and Goodwood*, originally published in 1913, but he did not extend the history beyond the date of the original, 1907. He also prepared a third edition of his *History of South Australia*, originally published in 1907 and again in 1911, in time for the centenary, but the government declined to publish it.¹⁰⁷ The journal produced by the Royal Geographical Society regularly published historical offerings, and so to some extent carried out the functions of the journals of the historical societies in the other states.

While only one substantial state history appeared between 1921 and 1945, the period particularly from 1932 to 1940 was a time of remarkable activity in the publishing of local history. Spurred on by the centenary and by countless local jubilees and anniversaries the number of publications containing local histories of suburbs and rural towns mushroomed. In 1920 only three local histories (two of which were reminiscences) were published, but from the second half of the decade the number generally increased, although there were still some lean years. In 1930, at the peak of the depression, only three appeared, but in 1936 the number of publications that included local history exploded. These were mainly small pamphlets devoted to local centenary celebrations. The interest in history must have been evident throughout the community because for the first time South Australians used history in commercial publications. A travel company, Bonds Scenic Motor Tours, included brief town histories in its brochures promoting trips to centenary celebrations ceremonies in rural areas. In 1936 Bonds produced five *Land*

¹⁰⁷ State Records (SA). GRG24/6 CSO Letters Received 1935/69. Memorandum of 19 January 1935. Blacket claimed his second edition had sold out but the government refused to publish his third edition, claiming that there were eleven copies of the second edition lying unwanted in the Chief Secretary's Office.

and Air Cruises to ... Centenary Celebrations and seven *Land Cruises to ... Centenary Celebrations* brochures on rural towns and four similar publications to other towns during the next two years. The majority of the remainder of the publications were "Back to" pamphlets and jubilee celebration booklets. These followed a similar format and contained a history of each town, its institutions and often notable residents and photographs of buildings and people, both past and present, as well as a program of events of the celebration, interspersed with advertisements.

Although the history contained in these pamphlets is cursory, this is the first widespread manifestation of an interest in the past of their state by ordinary South Australians. In many instances groups of townspeople formed committees to produce these publications. Thus often large numbers of residents of small towns became involved in the projects. Local councils gave financial support or helped in other ways. Without exception they were 'booster' histories that extolled the progress and growth of their areas. Even though many of the rural towns would have been severely affected by the depression, few mentioned the economic situation. Since the brief story they told stopped well before 1929, the writers could ignore the current economic state. But South Australia had experienced a series of depressions, some of which had crippled rural areas, and the authors also ignored these. Like Americans and other Australians, South Australians showed interest only in a history of success and progress.

The state archivist, G.H. Pitt, recognised the dangers of such local history. A suggestion by C.J.S. Harding that each town or district should collect a summary of local events for inclusion in a centenary history of South Australia worried him. Pitt believed that, because most towns and districts had experienced little of consequence, this method would result in an imperfect volume consisting of "accounts of the foundation of the town, the dates of erection of the important public buildings, the coming of the railway, and so on."¹⁰⁸ However, because one person could not accurately research the history of every town in South Australia, Pitt opted for the adoption of Harding's proposal. Fortuitously, the Centenary Committee accepted the scheme put forward by the Royal Geographical Society and Harding's planned history was rejected. However the many

¹⁰⁸ *Advertiser*, 26 September 1932, 27 September 1932.

“Back to”, jubilee and tourist pamphlets compiled in the years surrounding the centenary equated with the volume proposed by Harding.

Members of the Pioneers’ Association were the most fruitful recorders of the history of South Australia, particularly in the years between 1937 and the end of 1945. In these years they wrote 28 of the 54 published local histories. Their domination of the writing of local history is even more striking if just the period between 1940 and 1945 inclusive is considered, when members of the Pioneers’ Association published 25 out of 29 publications. G.C. Morphett was the most prolific author, being responsible for 17 of the 29 pamphlets published between 1936 and 1945 and co-authoring another.¹⁰⁹ While the majority of the pamphlets had fewer than ten pages they represented the first concerted effort to record the pioneering history of South Australia since the Royal Geographical Society had published the reminiscences of the pioneers in its *Proceedings* in 1902, 1903 and 1904.

Apart from the Centenary History of South Australia and two other works by Price,¹¹⁰ local histories written by amateurs were the only histories about the state produced in the inter-war years. When Henderson left the University of Adelaide, research on South Australian topics declined and not until after 1945 did academic output match that of the years before 1920.¹¹¹ Oldham, one-time member of the South Australian Historical Society, joined the Royal Geographical Society and took part in negotiations to institute a Historical Section but produced little published work. Hancock did not join the Royal Geographical Society after his own historical society failed, probably because he was not interested in South Australia’s past. Even though he wrote his path-breaking work *Australia* while at the University of Adelaide, he showed no other interest in Australian history, let alone South Australian history, and did not encourage its study. Even though he also researched and wrote on Australian and South Australian topics, Hancock’s successor, G.V. Portus had even less time for South Australian history,

¹⁰⁹ Some of the pamphlets produced by the Pioneers’ Association are family histories or biographies. I have included them in local history as their purpose was to increase the knowledge of South Australia’s past and the authors chose to do this by outlining the history of certain individuals and families.

¹¹⁰ *The Foundation and Settlement of South Australia* (1924) and *Founders and Pioneers of South Australia* (1929).

¹¹¹ Fischer, “The South Australian Archives Department”, p.20.

and little indeed for Australian history, evidenced by the comments both made on the appointment of a successor to Scott at the University of Melbourne.¹¹² With this attitude to Australian history, it is no wonder that amateur history in South Australia lacked the academic guidance that it had gained in the other Australian states and in the United States of America.

Summary

Between 1921 and 1945 some South Australians became interested in their history. They had always been proud of their state's beginnings and, prompted by the centenary, they began to celebrate them openly. In so doing they highlighted their perceived superiority to other Australians. As Portus wryly commented in his contribution to *The Centenary History of South Australia*: "Pride of ancestry dies hard. It has given generations of South Australians a genteel glow to point out that no bar sinister of felony appears on their family escutcheon."¹¹³ Members of the Pioneers' Association were reluctant to accept 26 January as Australia's national day because this commemorated the establishment of a convict state. South Australians had celebrated their own foundations on 28 December since 1837 and they intended to continue to do so. They celebrated their attachment to Britain and saw Australia's destiny as being linked to that country. This obsession retarded the development of a local historical consciousness. Members of the Pioneers' Association were proud of South Australia's foundation and of their ancestors but saw them as offshoots of Britain, displaying British virtues and courage. The Pioneers celebrated the Britishness of South Australia, not its Australianness. By this time in the other mainland states of Australia, state historical societies catered for the historicism of the educated elite, and smaller local historical societies met the needs of less prominent members of society. The members of these local groups, stimulated by a growing national consciousness, helped to democratise the presentation of the past, to rehabilitate the convicts, and to prise the control of the past away from the elite. In South Australia, the

¹¹² See Stuart Macintyre, *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History*, Melbourne (1994), p.199.

¹¹³ "Social Experiments", p.274. But he wryly added: "surely it was an impish trick of Fate to contrive that the man to whom South Australia owes its immunity from such birth stains should himself have concocted his proposal from behind prison-bars."

elite controlled every attempt to establish a historical society or a museum as well as the writing of local history.

Additionally, the early development and popularity of the Archives continued to inhibit the formation of a state historical society. The Royal Geographical Society recognised that the Archives was "the proper repository for the final custody of all documents of historic value".¹¹⁴ The society maintained its collections of books and continued to exchange periodicals with other learned bodies, including historical societies, but apart from items relating to explorers made no attempt to build up a manuscript collection, one of the main concerns of historical societies in the United States and to a less extent of societies in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. The Pioneers' Association also acknowledged the importance of the Archives and placed any family records that came into its possession into this repository. So, unlike the societies in the other states and in the United States, historical societies in South Australia acquired meagre collections of historical documents.

Each of the three levels of government exhibited a different attitude to history. Not surprisingly, local government displayed the greatest concern for celebrating local events and people. The Council of Henley and Grange attempted to preserve the home of Captain Charles Sturt, and the District Councils of Stirling, Crafers and Noarlunga co-operated with the Royal Geographical Society in commemorating the death of the explorer Captain Collet Barker. Local government bodies helped to maintain Adam Lindsay Gordon's cottage at Port Macdonnell. The only incursion of the state government into local history matters was its purchase of Dingley Dell in 1921. It made no lasting contribution to celebrating the history of the state in its centenary year. From 1938, when Thomas Playford became premier, the causes of history and preservation received even lower priority. The utilitarian Playford did not believe in wasting the state's money on what he regarded as unnecessary refinements or on old and useless buildings. Likewise, the federal government made no contribution to the preservation of South Australia's history in the inter-war years.

¹¹⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Correspondence File. Letter from T.C. Borrow, C. Beresford and Wilfred Oldham to the President, 8 June 1944.

Apart from Gordon's home, the preservation of South Australia's colonial buildings with either architectural merit or with connections with renowned South Australians received a low priority both with government and with the general population. Because of its slower pace of development, South Australia did not undergo the drastic changes to its urban and rural areas experienced by many regions of the United States and the south-eastern states of Australia. The longer period of depression in the late 1920s and 1930s in South Australia slowed growth even further, and the greatest threat to buildings was through neglect. Only rare individuals like E. Phillips Dancker recommended the registering and preserving of buildings. While the Pioneers' Association also suggested this approach, until the 1950s its members did little to promote the ethic of preservation among the general public.

Like the other Australian states, South Australia lagged behind the United States in establishing historical museums and in converting the homes of past heroes into shrines. Despite many suggestions no state history museum eventuated, and only Dingley Dell was restored and opened as a house museum. In contrast to similar homes in the United States, this six-room cottage, only one room of which served as a museum, had no added symbolism. South Australians ignored Marino House, home to the two prominent Kingstons, because of the lack of respect given to politicians. And while some South Australians advocated the restoration of the Grange, and local government gave its support, this was not sufficient to convince the state or federal governments of its importance. Thus in South Australia, as in the rest of Australia, neither local or national heroes nor popular or political figures achieved the stature of similar figures in the United States, and none became models to emulate and admire.

South Australians at times still deferred to American examples, as when the Pioneers' Association hoped to become as famous as the Pilgrims, but they virtually ignored movements in the other Australian states. Although members of the Royal Geographical Society knew that other states had formed historical societies, they only half-heartedly attempted to form such a society in South Australia. Price was involved in every history-based movement in the state yet he did not take it upon himself to initiate a state historical society. Although he published extensively on the history of South

Australia he feared for the survival of the geographical society. When the choice was between history and geography, he supported geography.

From 1921 to 1945 the only two societies in South Australia that celebrated the history of the state presented a circumscribed view of the past dictated by members of the establishment. The Royal Geographical Society catered to the enthusiasms of those interested in explorers and drew most of its members from the educated section of society. The Pioneers' Association had attracted the descendants of the earliest settlers but was restrictive in its membership. They rejoiced that their state had avoided the disgrace of being founded by convicts and poor Irish. Yet it was the virtual absence of descendants of convicts and Irish settlers that hindered the development of a historical consciousness which could have led to the establishment of a state historical society. But gradually South Australians began to appreciate the importance of their own history. In the next 28 years South Australia caught up with the United States and the other Australian states in the celebration of the past.

CHAPTER FIVE

Part I: “as a nation we need today something to which we can anchor our faith of America” - The Maturing of Amateur History in the United States, 1946 to 1974

Whereas the upheavals created by the Second World War resulted in a decline in membership of historical societies in the United States, the conflict increased awareness of their past among many Americans. The democratisation of history continued as various national organisations campaigned for improved teaching of history in schools.¹ Museums sustained their emphasis on America’s democratic heritage and to an even greater extent utilised the past to inculcate love of country and to reinforce national identity. The use of history for the purposes of propaganda increased as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified. Thomas J. Wertenbaker, a historian working for Colonial Williamsburg, declared:

It would be difficult to exaggerate the educational value of historic restorations. At a time when the foundations of our country are under attack, when foreign nations are assailing our free institutions with all misrepresentations which malice can suggest, when they are seconded by a powerful Fifth Column within our borders ... it is of prime importance that we live over again the glorious days which gave us our liberty.²

This approach to the presentation of the past was particularly practised by living history museums.

By the 1950s living history museums operated in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and North Carolina. Some had utilised buildings already *in situ*, other museums had re-sited old buildings, while others consisted solely of reproductions. They all had in common the celebration of America’s ‘glorious’ past and showed how earlier Americans had overcome hardships and, through sacrifice, had made the United States great. They depicted a lop-sided representation of early American life and concentrated on Protestants from the middle- and upper-income brackets mainly from rural areas.³ But the growing number of visitors proved that this was the way Americans liked their history. In 1954 about 1000 historic house museums, restored villages and

¹ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of American Culture*. New York (1991), p.531.

² Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Colonial Williamsburg: The First Twenty-Five Years*, Williamsburg (1951), p.35.

³ Warren Leon and Margaret Piatt, “Living History Museums”, in Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (eds), *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*. Urbana (1989), p.65.

historic sites attracted approximately 48 million visitors.⁴ All but one of the outdoor museums were on the east coast although they were spread from north to south. Thus New England did not dominate the presentation of living history as it had the documentation of written history. Henry Ford had opened Greenfield Village, his outdoor museum in Michigan in the Midwest, in 1929, but the concept did not spread widely in the western states until the 1960s. Conner Prairie Settlement, opened in 1964, was the first outdoor pioneer museum in the west and was soon emulated by many others.⁵

Interest in preservation was not confined to the retention of old buildings to serve as museums. After 1945 urbanisation and industrialisation, restricted during the depression and throughout the Second World War, exploded and transformed the countryside at a greater rate than had occurred in the 1920s. Developers demolished entire areas and urban renewal devastated the metropolitan landscape. By 1966 one half of the 12,000 properties recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey in the 1930s had been destroyed.⁶ This wholesale destruction angered many Americans, who previously had ignored their surroundings, and provoked them to form organisations to defend the historic environment.

Americans had known of the English National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, founded in 1894, since at least 1900 when one of its members had unsuccessfully attempted to found a similar national body in their country.⁷ Some Americans retained an interest in the formation of a group akin to the English National Trust and in the 1940s they unified the diverse interests of members of the many local and regional preservation organisations. As an interim measure they established a National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings that encompassed genealogists, professional and amateur historians, archaeologists, architects, planners and engineers as well as professionals from the National Park Service and Colonial Williamsburg. The council prepared a charter bill for a national trust that President Truman signed on 26

⁴ Michael Kammen, p.540.

⁵ Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States", in Susan Porter Benson *et al.* (eds), *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Philadelphia (1986), p.151.

⁶ Michael Wallace, "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation", in *ibid.*, p.173.

⁷ William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. Pittstown, NJ (1988), p.34.

October 1949. On 31 October the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States came into being.⁸

The trust acquired its first property, Woodlawn Plantation in Virginia, in 1951. By 1958 it owned four historic house museums, one each in Washington, D.C., Virginia, Louisiana and California, membership had grown to about 2200, and it employed five professional staff.⁹ The spread of properties throughout the United States showed that New England's claims to historic pre-eminence did not influence the directors of the trust. The Lilly Foundation and the DuPont family gave financial support, but its main benefactor was the Mellon family who set up a \$2.5 million endowment in 1957.¹⁰ Officials of the trust succeeded in reviving the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1957 and, in collaboration with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, improved the interpretation of historic sites. But its impact was minor and, as had the earlier local preservation groups, it drew its membership from the educated professional class.¹¹ Clearly it could not become a major force in society until membership increased and its support widened.

This happened in the 1960s when a growing number of middle- and working-class Americans began to resist urban renewal in inner-city neighbourhoods. The new preservationists feared that destruction of neighbourhoods would lead to a loss of national identity, a fear emphasised by leaders of the National Trust who warned of "a future in which America found itself without roots, without a sense of identity, with nothing to lose."¹² In 1966 the trust and Colonial Williamsburg jointly issued *With Heritage So Rich*, a report on preservation in the United States and in several European countries that condemned unrestrained growth as being dangerous to national identity: "A nation can be a victim of amnesia. It can lose the memories of what it was, and thereby lose the sense of what it is or wants to be."¹³ Once again Americans viewed an understanding of

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.42; Wallace, "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation", p.174.

⁹ Murtagh, p.45.

¹⁰ Wallace, "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation", p.174.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Quoted in *ibid.*, p.175.

¹³ Sidney Hyman, "Empire for Liberty", in *With Heritage So Rich*. Washington DC (1983), p.23..

history, this time in the guise of restored buildings adapted for commercial use, as an antidote to the potential disintegration of American society.

In response to pressure from the trust and the general public, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. This established a National Register of Historic Places that would encompass all sites, buildings, structures and objects regarded as significant in American history, architecture, archaeology or culture. The Act created the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that slowed but did not prevent the further destruction of neighbourhoods. As well, it allocated federal funds to the trust through a matching grants program that allowed the National Trust to expand its activities. Within the next few years membership, which had reached just under 20,000 in 1966, increased to more than 100,000.¹⁴ The trust's focus also broadened from emphasising single grand houses to including such projects as the Main Street Program, Rural Conservation Program and Neighborhood Conservation Program.¹⁵

Not all those interested in preservation or affected by the bulldozing of neighbourhoods joined the National Trust, and many Americans formed local groups to lobby for their own areas. By 1966 the number of preservation groups had grown to 2500 and by 1976 had swelled to 6000.¹⁶ The response of local government to preservation also widened. Whereas in 1955 only 20 cities had been declared historic districts, by the mid-1970s this number had risen to more than 120. State governments became involved in the management of historic sites, and a national survey conducted in 1964 indicated that 42 states had functioning management programs.¹⁷ Following pressure from the National Trust and preservationists in the National Park Service, Congress passed the Environmental Protection Act in 1969 to close some of the gaps in the 1966 legislation.¹⁸

Concomitant with the growth in the interest in preservation was an increase in the number of local historical societies. During the 1950s some leaders of historical societies emulated the approach to the presentation of America's past taken by Colonial

¹⁴ Murtagh, p.46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Wallace, p.185.

¹⁷ Elizabeth A. Lyon, "The States: Preservation in the Middle", in Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette J. Lee (eds), *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage*. Washington DC (1987), p.8.

¹⁸ Wallace, p.186.

Williamsburg. They believed that they had a mission to save the world from totalitarianism by promoting America's democratic traditions. S.K. Stevens, president of the American Association for State and Local History from 1946 to 1950, declared that:

All of us who are members of state historical societies are interested in a great and common cause ... local history and its use to enlighten and to inspire our people. Never before was there a time when America needed more to draw on the great reservoir of understanding, inspiration, and soundly based idealism which can result from a knowledge of the history of this nation ... I may be wrong, but it seems to me that as a nation we need today something to which we can anchor our faith of America.¹⁹

In the same publication Clifford L. Lord, director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and from 1956 to 1960 president of the association, reiterated these views, claiming that to "Study local history ... we dissipate the fog of intangibles, the great mystic trends of the popularizer and the Marxist ... We begin to comprehend why democracy is still potentially the greatest revolutionary force on the face of the earth."²⁰

Despite this rhetoric and the implication that the United States would fall victim to totalitarianism unless Americans venerated the past, the number of historical societies grew only slowly between the end of World War II and the early 1960s. Indeed, after viewing historical societies in England and the United States in 1955, A.A. Morrison, a former president of the Historical Society of Queensland, reported that many historical societies in the United States faced difficulties in these years. Morrison claimed that many small societies based in villages and towns and even some urban historical societies were languishing and required financial support from the major state societies to which they were affiliated.²¹ The explosion in the number of new historical organisations and the expansion of established societies did not occur until the mid-1960s. The perceived threat to the fabric of American society from outside the United States did not occasion this growth; rather the increased interest in preserving the past emanated from changes that had occurred within American society.

¹⁹ S.K. Stevens, "An Anchor for our Faith in America", in S.K. Stevens, Clifford L. Lord and Albert B. Corey, "Making our Heritage Live", *Bulletins of the American Association for State and Local History*, Vol.2, No.5 (1951), p.129.

²⁰ Lord, p.147.

²¹ A.A. Morrison, "The Study of Local History Overseas", *Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.5 (1955), pp.1035-1036.

Some of the reasons for the growth in the number of historical societies, such as the changing urban and rural landscape, paralleled those that motivated the formation of preservation groups. But it was not just the altered physical environment that prompted Americans to turn to organisations dedicated to preserving America's history. The social unrest and political alienation of the late 1960s and the early 1970s altered perceptions of America's past. Following the civil rights unrest of the 1950s and the 1960s, and the gender, sex and ethnic liberation movements and the anti-war protests of the 1960s that continued into the 1970s, some Americans took a fresh look at their history. They realised that the United States had never had a classless society. They also began to appreciate that the history of ordinary people was as important as that of national heroes. They called for a revision of the past that was presented at the major historical museums, and also began to record their own history. Thus many small towns initiated local historical societies, as did organisations and special interest groups. Ordinary Americans, realising that small events as well as the major happenings had shaped America's destiny, privatised history and changed its focus from national or state to local.²²

The popularisation of America's past encouraged a wider cross-section of Americans to join historical societies, particularly the newer, less elitist groups. Contrary to Dunlap's claims in 1944 that only urban centres were large enough to nurture sufficient interest in cultural institutions,²³ in the 1960s and 1970s many small societies formed in communities with populations of 25,000 or less. But, as Whitehill pointed out, the established societies particularly in the Northeast retained their insularity:

Well into the twentieth century, state and local societies were chiefly handmaidens to academics, closed to the general public as a matter of philosophy and policy, and as far removed from the marketplace of ideas as they could get ... Little link had yet been forged with popular audiences. The ivory towers were still open only by appointment and then only to an initiated few.²⁴

Whitehill supported this elitist approach and disparaged the efforts of the Chicago Historical Society to appeal to a popular and commercial audience. He contended that

²² Carey Carson, "Front and Center: Local History Comes of Age", in *Local History, National Heritage: Reflections on the History of AASLH*, Nashville (1991), p.86. In line with the changing perceptions in history, Carson modified the presentation of history at Colonial Williamsburg and attempted, not always successfully, to concentrate on the lives of ordinary citizens.

²³ Leslie Dunlap, *American Historical Societies 1790-1860*. Philadelphia (1944), p.15.

²⁴ Carson, p.73.

societies could not undertake critical research or publish scholarly contributions, to him their most important duties, if they popularised history.²⁵

The ambivalent association between academic and amateur historians continued in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The large, well established state societies throughout the country and the academically oriented societies on the east coast cultivated their connections with university professors. But both academic historians and members of the older historical societies scorned many of the newer societies and considered their members to be inexperienced and lacking in historical judgement.²⁶ Leading members of the elitist historical societies provided the foundation membership of, and continued to occupy influential positions on, the Council of the American Association for State and Local History. Thus the bias displayed by the association against both untrained historians and those outside the social elite is not surprising. In "Writing Local History Articles" Marvin Wilson Schlegel commented:

Do not be alarmed because you have never had any historical training. A year or two of graduate study is helpful but not essential. Many of our great historians never had any special historical instruction. James Ford Rhodes was a businessman; Albert J. Beveridge was a lawyer; Carl Sandburg is a poet. Even Columbia's famed Professor Allan Nevins got his training as a journalist."²⁷

He made no mention of the possibility that the writer of local history could be a farmer or a shopkeeper or a housewife.

In the two decades after the war academic historians continued to disparage genealogists as amateurs consumed with a passion to track down famous ancestors but with little other interest in the past.²⁸ Local historians, in the nineteenth century indistinguishable from genealogists, also viewed the researches of genealogists unfavourably. S.K. Stevens of the American Association for State and Local History implored local historians "to cut completely loose from the flavor of antiquarianism and

²⁵ Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies: An Enquiry into Their Research and Publication Functions and Their Financial Future*. Boston (1962), p.215.

²⁶ Whitehill, pp.374-375.

²⁷ Marvin Wilson Schlegel, "Writing Local History Articles", *Bulletins of the American Association for State and Local History*, Vol.2, No.2 (1949), p.49.

²⁸ Robert M. Taylor Jr. and Ralph J. Crandall, "Historians and Genealogists: An Emerging Community of Interest", in Robert M. Taylor Jr. and Ralph J. Crandall (eds), *Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History*. Macon, GA. (1986), pp.15-17.

ancestor worship which at one time characterized the field of local history.”²⁹ He wished to see an end to the image of meetings of historical societies “attended entirely by elderly persons, descended from the first families, listening to an abomination called ‘papers,’ by means of which the members tell each other from time to time about the glories of their respective families.”³⁰ Despite appeals by some genealogists to probe the past and record the lives of their ancestors as a counter to totalitarianism,³¹ interest in genealogy waned after the Second World War and did not regain its previous momentum until the mid-1960s with the celebration of the Civil War Centennial. Attitudes to genealogy changed in the late 1960s and the 1970s when historical interest turned from veneration of past heroes to an interest in the doings of ordinary people. Both local and academic historians came to value the groundwork of genealogists in uncovering the minutiae of past lives. This new approach to history created a revitalised alliance between professional and amateur historians and genealogists.³²

The same populist trend that had influenced new directions in amateur and professional historical research appeared in the writing of local history. In 1947 the American Association for State and Local History began publishing *American Heritage: A Journal of Community History*, aimed at school children and members of historical organisations throughout the United States and Canada. In 1949 a change of format and name to *American Heritage: New Series* boosted its circulation to 30,000 copies. In 1954 a former executive of the Time-Life organisation took over publication and produced *American Heritage*, a high quality publication directed at an upper middle class white audience. It was highly successful and in three years had a circulation of 300,000.³³ Its popularity spawned similar ventures, notably *American History Illustrated*, and encouraged mass circulation magazines such as *Life* to publish historical articles. Either prompted by the success of *American Heritage* or in response to independent stimuli,

²⁹ Stevens, p.132.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Taylor and Crandall, p.13.

³² See Van Beck Hall, “New Approaches to Local History”, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol.55 (1972), pp.239-248.

³³ Edward P. Alexander, “Valiant Efforts and Good Intentions: AASLH, 1940-1956”, in *Local History, National Heritage*, pp.44-45; Roy Rosenzweig, “Marketing the Past: *American Heritage* and Popular History in the United States”, in Susan Porter Benson *et al.* (eds), *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*. Philadelphia (1986), p.25.

some state historical societies in the Midwest converted their scholarly journals to magazine format, hoping to attract the average reader.³⁴

The publication of local histories of counties, towns and villages, in decline since the depression, decreased further in the decades after World War II, probably because of changes in society. Companies increasingly developed a national focus and those likely to write a history of a local area, the middle-class professional or business person, now often lived in a town for only a short period before being transferred. Coincident with this, the progressive nationalisation of American life blurred differences between regions.³⁵ The quality of the writing of local history in the post-war decades also declined because historians simply ransacked the findings and research of those who wrote before the 1940s, in contrast to earlier periods when subsequent historians expanded on the original versions.³⁶ From the 1960s a new breed of academic historians became interested in local history and used new methodologies to investigate community life. They squeezed out the amateur historians who remained in awe of the prodigious output of their predecessors.³⁷ Newspapers continued to feature columns devoted to local history written by journalists, local historians, members of local historical societies and academic historians. These exhibited the change in emphasis in historical studies from concentrating on well known heroes to examining the every-day lives of ordinary people, although this medium had always shown more interest in the common people than had other avenues of local historical writing.

While the main growth in amateur history coincided with the American Bicentennial in 1976, in the decades immediately following the Second World War history became big business. Increasingly commemorations and historic sites played a large part in the promotion of tourism, and the number of Americans visiting such places and events grew throughout the period. Commentators attribute this yearning for the past to a nostalgia for a 'golden age' when Americans supposedly lived together in

³⁴ Michael Kammen, p.541.

³⁵ David J. Russo, *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s*. New York (1988), p.208.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Carol Kammen, p.172.

harmonious communities.³⁸ Preserved houses, restored villages and hand-made crafts recreated these coveted times, as did belonging to a society that attempted to preserve local history. But Australians, who were not overcome with the same sense of destiny nor feelings of nostalgia, also formed and joined historical societies, established museums and moved to preserve the physical remains of the past.

Part II: “we are seeking for greater awareness of ourselves as Australians” - The Maturing of Amateur History in Australia, 1946 to 1974

Responses to the new world order differed in the United States and Australia. Probably because of Australia’s small size, distance from Europe and the insignificance of its armed forces, Australians did not see themselves as guardians of the free world. Moreover, they saw no reason to appropriate their history for patriotic purposes. In Australia neither government nor individuals embarked on a deliberate program of indoctrination of national values through the use of the past either to Australianise recent immigrants or to reinforce democratic values. Individuals who formed museums and historical societies did so out of a growing sense of nationalism or simply to recover the history of their local area.

While post-war Australian society exhibited similar paranoia to the threat of communism and experienced some turmoil, material discomforts and antagonism,³⁹ its leaders used different methods to counter the threat. The Australian government, believing that if Australia’s population did not rapidly expand the country would be an easy prey to communist invaders, embarked on a massive immigration program. Previous immigration had been principally from the United Kingdom and Ireland. But in 1947, both to provide an enlarged workforce and to augment the population of Australia, the federal government extended the assisted immigration program to displaced persons from eastern Europe and then to settlers from southern Europe. To allay any anxiety that this may have caused among the native-born population Arthur Calwell, the minister responsible for immigration, stressed that the government intended to bring out ten

³⁸ Michael Kammen, p.618; Carson, p.88; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge (1990), p.50; Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, New York (1979), chap.5; Gerald D. Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities*, Chicago (1972), pp.187-188.

³⁹ See W.E.H. Stanner, “The Australian Way of Life”, in W.V. Aughterson (ed.), *Taking Stock: Aspects of Mid-Century Life in Australia*, Melbourne (1953), pp.1-14.

British migrants to every "foreign" migrant. He maintained that this would safeguard Australia's British heritage and would also protect foreign immigrants from any hostility from Australians.⁴⁰ This promise proved to be of little value since 35% of newcomers from northern and eastern Europe and 75% of those from southern Europe migrated to Australia without government assistance. Between June 1947 and June 1966 the number of non-British migrants was just under 50% of the total number - 1,165,019 non-British migrants predominantly from Italy, Greece, Holland, Germany and Yugoslavia compared to 1,300,123 British migrants.⁴¹ Thus, the number of immigrants entering Australia in these years relative to the existing population was proportionally equal to immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although Australians did not always accept these immigrants with open arms, they displayed little of the fear and uncertainty exhibited by Americans,⁴² and in Australia non-British immigration did not lead to an increase either in the number of hereditary groups or in membership of existing groups. Nor did it encourage Australians to use their past to Australianise the new immigrants.⁴³

Several reasons account for the different reactions to foreign immigration evident in each country. Australians were still struggling to define their national identity and so could not view the newcomers as a threat to something that did not yet exist. The non-British immigrants to Australia came from similar racial stock to those who went to the United States, but Australians accepted these migrants more readily because the newcomers were better educated and more 'modern' than those who had gone to America half a century earlier. Australians expected the foreigners to assimilate immediately to Australian conditions, as indeed most did. In Rennie's words:

⁴⁰ Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia*. London (1969), p.246; Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1978*. Sydney (1980), pp.132-133.

⁴¹ Department of Immigration, "Nationality of Permanent and Long Term Arrivals, 1947-1966", *Australian Immigration: Consolidated Statistics*. No.1. Canberra (1966), pp.33-38.

⁴² See Sandra Rennie, "The Factor of National Identity: An Explanation of the Differing Reactions of Australia and the United States to Mass Immigration", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.68 (1982), pp.133-143; David Hilliard, "God in the Suburbs: the Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s", *Historical Studies*, Vol.24, No.97 (1991), pp.403-404; W.D. Borrie, "New and Old Australians", in Aughterson, pp.169-186.

⁴³ The period under consideration for the United States is approximately twice the length of time being considered for Australia. Nevertheless, most of the reaction to the immigrants in the United States occurred in the first twenty years and so is analogous with the Australian experience.

Australia lacked any nostalgia for an agricultural society of the past, a past which Americans had believed the immigrants were destroying. Her industrialization was accepted with far less reserve than it had been in America in the nineteenth century. Australia was seen as a vast, unfilled continent which needed to be filled. The frontier had not disappeared as it had in America by the time the 'new' immigrants came there.⁴⁴

In addition, many of the new immigrants from eastern Europe opposed the communist regimes in their home countries. The Australian government and people expected them to continue to hold and openly to express these views in their adopted land, thus reinforcing the fight against totalitarianism.⁴⁵ This was in direct contrast to the situation in the United States, where immigrants were synonymous with anarchists, and native-born Americans feared the newcomers would agitate for a communist state. Thus differences in cultural, economic and physical conditions in the United States and in Australia resulted in dissimilar treatment of and reaction to the immigrants in each country. Yet for other reasons immigrants may have influenced the study of history in this country. In his guide for local historians, Philip Geeves comments:

Preservation, conservation, and the erection of plaques and memorials on historic spots ... may have been stimulated in some measure by post-war immigration, which has brought us a flood of new settlers from old civilisations where history and tradition are accepted facts of life.⁴⁶

Migration to the United States caused Americans to institute historical and genealogical societies for negative reasons, in Australia migration influenced the formation of similar societies for positive reasons.

While migrants perhaps encouraged a sense of tradition, old Australians were increasingly uniting to commemorate their past, and between 1946 and the end of 1960 59 historical societies formed. Interestingly, the majority were outside the metropolitan centres and many of those that formed within urban areas specialist societies. Of the 28 new societies in New South Wales, 21 were outside the Sydney metropolitan area and one of the urban societies was a denominational group. Of the 18 new societies in Victoria, 11 were in rural areas; of the seven urban societies, one was the National Trust and three were denominational groups. Queenslanders formed five new historical

⁴⁴ Rennie, p.141.

⁴⁵ James Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*. Melbourne (1966), p.9.

⁴⁶ Philip Geeves, *Local History in Australia: A Guide for Beginners*. Sydney (1971), pp.3-4.

societies in rural towns, and the only urban society formed was Australia's first all-female historical society. Four historical societies formed in rural Western Australia while the only metropolitan group was the National Trust. Of the two societies in Tasmania, one was in a rural town and the other, in Hobart, had connections with the University of Tasmania.⁴⁷ Perhaps the residents of rural towns exhibited that level of community feeling that Morrison had noted in the United States and to which he had attributed the strength of the historical society movement in that country. That four of the urban societies concentrated on denominational history, one society restricted its membership to women and two societies were hereditary organisations also supports the notion that societies formed more readily when members felt some connection with each other. Further evidence to support this view comes from Geoffrey Serle, an academic historian who in 1963 commented that:

the conspicuous lack of a local tradition and an attitude to locality is one of the remarkable things about Australian life compared with Europe or even the United States ... Our city life is suburban, anonymous. We are all shut in on ourselves in our fifty foot blocks, almost surrounded by high paling fences. We have ... no sense of local loyalty. Who could feel any loyalty to Moorabbin or Broadmeadows?⁴⁸

Serle hoped that the development of historical societies, which by the 1960s had begun to increase within metropolitan Melbourne, would encourage a sense of local tradition and belonging.⁴⁹

The motivation behind the founding of these societies varied, as did their aims. Unlike the other eastern states the convict background of Tasmania had continued to retard the development of a historical consciousness among Tasmanians, who preferred to emphasise their Britishness. This was because the penal settlements in Tasmania had been especially brutal. In addition, Tasmania had received fewer Irish convicts than had

⁴⁷ R.S. Reid and A.F. Reid, *Into History: A Guide to Historical, Genealogical, Family History and Heritage Societies, Groups and Organisations in Australia*. (2nd ed.) North Ryde, NSW (1992). As explained in Chapter 3, while this is the most comprehensive listing of historical societies available and therefore the only source for this information, it is not entirely accurate nor does it mention societies no longer active.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Serle, "The General Approach to Local History", *Local History and the Library: Papers of a Workshop held at Ballarat, June 29-30, 1963*. Library Association of Australia, Public Libraries Section, Victorian Division. Melbourne (1964), p.5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

New South Wales, perhaps in the hope that the colony would remain Protestant.⁵⁰ The brutality of the convict years and the absence of significant numbers of Irish deprived the state of important stimuli to the development of a national consciousness, and Tasmania was the second last state in Australia to form a state historical society. Members of the executive committee of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association, established in 1951 and the equivalent of the state societies, came from the university, the archives, the army and the public service. While membership quickly grew to 50, the executive recognised that only a few would attend meetings. Consequently, as a means of keeping its scattered membership informed of recent research, it placed greater emphasis than the other state societies on frequent publication of its *Proceedings*. The association hoped to counter the bias of historical research in Tasmania, as illustrated by an editorial in the first volume of its *Proceedings*:

It is well known, and is therefore the more regrettable, that what little has been written in the study of Tasmanian colonial history has almost exclusively concentrated on what I shall [call] the preliminary period - 1803 to 1856. If history, in the sense of a study along analytical lines, does not exist until it is written, then Tasmania has no history beyond 1856.⁵¹

But it only slowly achieved its aims. Before the 1960s travel books, magazine and newspaper articles and tourist guides rarely mentioned the island's history. While the Tasmanian government had appeared farsighted in preserving the penal settlement of Port Arthur, visitors appreciated it for its recreational amenities and grassy picnic areas rather than its historic significance.⁵² Tasmania had a shameful past to overcome, and so its scenic beauty and Englishness became the mainstays of tourism. State agencies could not envision that convict remains would ever be of historic interest.⁵³

Recording the history and achievements of the individual denominations motivated the founders of the Methodist Historical Society (Victoria, 1949), the Australian Jewish Historical Society (Victoria, 1954), the Church of England Historical Society (New South Wales, 1955), and the Australian Churches of Christ Historical

⁵⁰ L.L. Robson, *The Convict Settlers of Australia*. London (1965), pp.89-91, 130-131.

⁵¹ *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, No.1 (1952), p.1.

⁵² Brian J. Egloff, "Port Arthur Historic Site", *Heritage Australia* (Summer 1982), p.3.

⁵³ Michael W. Evans, "Tasmania: Landscape and the Past", *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Vol.16 (1984), pp.37-38.

Society (Victoria, 1957). In response to the growing awareness of the history of Australian Jewry and its own growing strength, the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Sydney encouraged the establishment of a branch in Victoria.⁵⁴ The Queensland Women's Historical Association aimed to interest women in Australian history and in particular to commemorate and celebrate the achievements of women in the pioneering days in Queensland. Although not in its original charter, in 1967 it acquired a large house and opened a museum devoted to the history of pioneer women in Queensland.⁵⁵

The Canberra and District Historical Society is of particular interest since the first permanent residents, mainly public servants, did not arrive in this government town until 1927, and its inhabitants still come predominantly from other areas in Australia. The society formed on 10 December 1953 when W.P. Bluett, a local journalist who was a pioneer of the district, called a meeting to protest at the increasing destruction of the countryside around the growing city.⁵⁶ Whereas in the United States the establishment of a historical society so early in a district's history was not unusual, this is the only instance in Australia. The society combined history and preservation and its aims included both the collection of local history and the "protection and maintenance of places of historic and aesthetic value such as houses, buildings, cemeteries, survey marks and trees of special significance in their location".⁵⁷ Another society to form in a town with a relatively small population was the Northern Territory Historical Society. Local residents formed this society in 1964 because, unlike the new territories in the United States of a century earlier where local governments initiated societies to record events from the time of settlement, no government agency was taking an active interest in the Territory's past.

As in the United States, the number of local history groups mushroomed in Australia in the 1960s. From 1961 to 1970 70 historical societies formed in New South Wales, 72 in Victoria, 17 in Queensland, 15 in Western Australia, four in Tasmania and

⁵⁴ Isidor Solomon, "The Australian Jewish Historical Society (Victorian Branch): A Retrospect", *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, Vol.10 (1988), p.224.

⁵⁵ Ann Wood, "The Evolution and Growth of Women's Organisations in Queensland, 1859-1958", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.6 (1959), p.207.

⁵⁶ Lyall Gillespie wrote a brief history of the Society in *Canberra Historical Journal New Series*, No.2 (1978), n.p.

⁵⁷ Questionnaire to Historical Societies.

one in the Northern Territory, a total of 179 new societies.⁵⁸ A considerable number of Australians now researched, recorded or showed an interest in the past of their districts. Nevertheless, while in 1968 the 78 organisations affiliated with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria⁵⁹ had a combined membership of about 5000,⁶⁰ this was only a fraction of the population of Victoria. I.T. Maddern, president of the Morwell Historical Society, complained that in his town of more than 16,000 only a “pathetic handful of members” attended the historical society’s monthly meetings.⁶¹

Males continued to control historical and museum societies and national trust groups. They initiated the societies and the early presidents were usually male while women became the secretaries. In a sample of 39 societies established before 1974, 13 were founded by males and only three by females, one of which was the Queensland Women’s Historical Association, while the rest were initiated by an unspecified group (19) or a government body (4). Of societies that listed initial membership, seven had a greater number of male members while in 12 societies females predominated.⁶² Ross Holloway probably represented the general attitude to the participation of women in historical societies when he characterised the early workers for the Swan Hill Folk Museum as being “a team of country boys and girls [and] I include the girls because our wives took a very active part in this.”⁶³ Both in the state societies and in the smaller local groups women were important, but as workers rather than as leaders

The state societies in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia remained the predominant historical societies, and an increasing number of smaller local historical societies and other historical groups affiliated with them. Societies that had been reluctant to unite in earlier years now recognised benefits in access to advice and the chance of financial assistance. The state societies encouraged affiliation since they believed this would increase their effectiveness.⁶⁴ In 1960 the Royal

⁵⁸ Reid and Reid.

⁵⁹ The Historical Society of Victoria appended Royal in 1952.

⁶⁰ Marjorie Tipping and Warren Perry (eds), *How to Write Local and Regional History*. Report of the First Victorian Historical Conference, 1 October to 3 October 1965. Melbourne (1966), p. 80.

⁶¹ “The Role of Affiliated Societies (III), in Tipping and Perry, p. 164.

⁶² Information extracted from a questionnaire sent to a random sample of historical societies in Australia.

⁶³ Ross Holloway, “The Growth of a Folk Museum”, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol. 39 (1968), p. 53.

⁶⁴ See the Editorial in *Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol. 4 (1952), p. 598.

Australian Historical Society had 31 affiliated societies; by 1974 160 groups had affiliated. A similar growth occurred in Victoria where the number of organisations affiliated with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria grew from six in 1958 to 137 in 1978.⁶⁵ The dominance of the state societies may have stultified the development of historical societies in metropolitan regions and been as equally responsible for the slow growth of urban historical societies as was the lack of community spirit. Whatever the reason, the number of historical societies in rural areas remained greater than the number in the metropolitan region - of the 178 new societies formed between 1961 and 1970, 133 were outside the metropolitan areas of the state capitals.⁶⁶

Notwithstanding the different approaches to history taken by the societies in each country, until the 1960s members of Australian historical societies continued to compare their own efforts with the activities of American historical societies. After his visit to the United States in 1955 A.A. Morrison of the Historical Society of Queensland argued that the study of local history was not as advanced in Australia because of the different patterns of development in the two countries. In the United States small groups had formed isolated independent communities that had then instituted their own local government. In contrast, in Australia the state had developed first. Thus Australian settlers did not require the same level of co-operative effort, and community feeling had never been as strong.⁶⁷ In 1956 the president of the Queensland Historical Society, Raphael Cilento, advocated a system for lending books to isolated members of his and other historical societies in a manner similar to one practised by the New England Historical and Genealogical Library. He also commended the American Historical Association's bibliography of books held by historical societies in the United States.⁶⁸ But as confidence in the success and strength of historical societies in Australia increased, references to societies in the United States and comparisons with them decreased. Members no longer needed to look outside the country for encouragement and

⁶⁵ Ellie V. Pullin, "What Has the R.H.S.V. Done in Seventy Years?", *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol.50 (1979), p.56.

⁶⁶ Reid and Reid.

⁶⁷ Morrison, pp.1025-1027.

⁶⁸ "Presidential Address", *Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland*, Vol.5 (1956), pp.1142-1143.

affirmation. They became confident of the importance of their own local history and in their ability to record it.

While patriotism did not direct the attitude to the past taken by members of historical societies in Australia to the same extent as it did in the United States, a growing sense of nationhood encouraged Australians to take a new interest in their history.⁶⁹ In 1963 Serle commented that:

The last 20 years has seen a new stage in the growth of our national conscience, a new maturity. We are now viewing the world as Australians, neither cringing nor assertive. As a reflection of this on a local level there is the growth of a large number of local historical societies on a stable basis.⁷⁰

Paul Hasluck, Australia's governor-general, alluded to a similar sentiment in his speech at the opening of the new home of the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1971:

I am sure that we are seeking for greater awareness of ourselves as Australians - what sort of people are we. We are seeking a greater understanding of ourselves, and seeking an account of the life we live in Australia - an account free of all fantasy, free of all romantic legend, and one that will help us to find out truly what sort of people we are.⁷¹

As in the United States, the growing interest in history encouraged a reappraisal of the presentation of the past. Australians did not seek to glorify their past or to emphasize the commendable aspects, and thus wanted more than myths and legends. Australian history had never been devoted to a very few individuals who inspired reverence and filio piety as had been the case in the United States.⁷² But Australians, showing increasing pride in their forebears, wanted to see beyond the great explorers, early pastoralists and pioneers and to understand how the ordinary person had coped with life and laid the foundations of a distinctly Australian society. This was the aim of the founders of the Swan Hill Folk Museum, who hoped that "if we can make some of these boys and girls who come in,

⁶⁹ See Stephen Alomes, *A Nation At Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*, North Ryde, NSW (1988), pp.124-129.

⁷⁰ Serle, p.6.

⁷¹ "Speech by His Excellency the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Paul Hasluck, G.C.M.G., C.G.V.O., K.St.J., at the Official Opening of History House", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.58 (1972), p.82.

⁷² While Vaucluse House, the home of pastoralist and politician William Charles Wentworth acquired by the New South Wales government and opened as a museum in 1910, has now assumed the status of a national shrine, it was not always so. At the time of its purchase the harbour frontage in Sydney was largely in private ownership. The government purchased the property to allow access to the water to the nearby residents. See Peter Watts, "Vaucluse House - a Reassessment", *Heritage Australia*, (Summer 1982), pp.47-49.

some of the tourists, and some of our own adults leave our site feeling a little bit more proud of being an Australian and what Australians have done for Australia, then ... our whole effort is worthwhile."⁷³

Members of the state historical societies recognised their responsibility to give direction to the burgeoning history movement. Beginning in 1948 the Royal Australian Historical Society held occasional joint meetings with its affiliated societies. From the early 1960s it conducted an annual conference with member societies and, from 1964, published the proceedings of these conferences in its *Journal*. The Society also offered published advice, in 1966 utilising a grant from the New South Wales government to produce *Local History in Australia: A Guide for Beginners*, compiled by Philip Geeves, and in 1968 publishing E.W. Dunlop's *Local Historical Museums in Australia*. Geeves' work proved so popular that the society reprinted it in 1971. In 1950 the Victorian Historical Society distributed its publication *Genesis of an Historical Society*, which gave information on the formation and running of a historical society. As shire councillors were among its recipients, the society believed that the publication stimulated many councils to initiate historical societies in their districts.⁷⁴ The first biennial Victorian Historical Conference on local and regional history took place at the University of Melbourne in October 1965, organised by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria to enable members of historical societies from throughout the state to meet to discuss common problems and to receive guidance from experts in their field.⁷⁵ At the 1967 conference, historical societies in several areas formed regional associations. In 1966 the Royal Western Australian Historical Society held its first conference with affiliated societies. Also that year, following a request from the Armidale and District Historical Society, the Department of University Extension of the University of New England held a seminar for local historical societies that attracted 88 participants, representing at least 16 historical societies and kindred bodies from several states.⁷⁶ In 1967 both bodies again

⁷³ Holloway, p.59.

⁷⁴ Kitty McEwan, "Mr. Latham Looks Back over Fifty Years", in Warren Perry (ed.), *A Souvenir of the Society's Diamond Jubilee, 1909-1969*, Melbourne (1969), p.13.

⁷⁵ Tipping and Perry, p.80.

⁷⁶ C.M. Williams, "Preface", *Local History: Report on the Proceedings of the Seminar for Historical Societies*, University of New England, January 1966.

combined to hold a conference on preservation in local history.⁷⁷ In 1967 the Australian Council of National Trusts assisted the Department of Adult Education at the Australian National University to hold a seminar on historic preservation in Australia.⁷⁸

Professional bodies not directly connected with historical societies also acknowledged the growing interest in history. In 1955 the University of New England offered an adult education course on local history, and in June 1963 the Library Association of Australia held a workshop on "Local History and the Library". In 1965 the Colleges of Advanced Education in Victoria conducted an adult education course on natural history and included a session on "How to Collect and Write Local History". Despite this growing interest in history and the increasing visibility of historical societies, co-operation between states was minimal. That the organisers of the seminar at the University of New England in 1966 believed it was the first meeting of its kind in Australia and were unaware of the Victorian Historical Conference held the year before is just one example of the divided state of the amateur history movement. Whereas in the United States historical societies had met together since 1904 and had formed their own federal organisation in 1940, in Australia societies in neighbouring states knew little of each other's activities.

Much of the advice offered in the publications and seminars had little impact on amateur historians. In a paper critical of some activities of local historical societies and their members written in 1975, Theo Barker of the Royal Australian Historical Society lamented that local history:

is often local to the point of parochialism, and its practitioners are for the most part amateurs who, overall, are producing too much that is of dubious quality. There is a great need to lift the standard because we are in an age when the consumers of the product are becoming increasingly sophisticated. The public are more critical, tourist associations and similar bodies are becoming increasingly edgy about the proliferation of second rate museums, academic scholars are suspicious of it (though local history could offer them much)⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ See *Preservation in Local History: Proceedings of the University of New England Seminar*, January 1967.

⁷⁸ See *Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia*, 11-13 August 1967.

⁷⁹ Theo Barker, "A View of Local History", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.61 (1975), p.120.

From a survey of the 124 societies affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1973, Barker drew a picture of “middle aged and elderly people organized in small scattered groups, coping with financial (and other) problems and not very certain about what their objectives are.”⁸⁰ This is strikingly similar to the picture that Morrison drew of historical societies in the United States 20 years earlier.

Local government continued to play a prominent role in the formation and support of local history groups. In its report on the first Victorian Historical Conference the conference chairman, Marjorie Tipping, advised that “The Society ... believe[s] that local societies need the support of Shire Councils before they can function adequately, and believes that Shire Councils should help sponsor new societies.”⁸¹ In fact, many councils co-ordinated the inaugural meetings of historical societies and continued to provide financial and other support.⁸² Colin Angus, treasurer of the North-Eastern Historical Society at Wangaratta, Victoria, applauded the attitude to local history taken by local government, demonstrated by the number of rural councils affiliated with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.⁸³ In some instances, community groups assisted councils in the formation and running of historical societies and museums. In 1952 the Country Women’s Association combined with the Lismore City Council to organise and open a museum of local history. Led by an American immigrant, Mrs. L.T. Daley, it revived the Richmond River Historical Society (founded in 1936), changing its name to the Lismore Historical Society to make it more identifiable with the town.⁸⁴ In other instances the motivation to form a historical society came from progress associations (the Knox Historical Society, 1965⁸⁵) and probably also from service clubs and other community groups. Thus, the pattern established in the earlier period of local councils and community groups assisting in the formation and upkeep of historical societies and museums continued. Most state governments increased their financial support of historical societies. In the late 1950s the Royal Historical Society of Queensland

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Tipping and Perry, p.83.

⁸² Responses to Questionnaires.

⁸³ Colin Angus, “Affiliated Societies: Problems of Local Historical Societies in Country Areas”, *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.39 (1968), p.64.

⁸⁴ Response to questionnaire, Richmond River Historical Society.

⁸⁵ Response to questionnaire, Knox Historical Society.

successfully lobbied the federal government for an annual subsidy of £500 that the state government matched with an equal grant. In 1967 the New South Wales government gave an initial grant of \$2500 to the Royal Australian Historical Society to foster the growing network of affiliated societies, which increased to \$3000 in 1968 and to \$6000 in 1969.⁸⁶

Moves in Australia to preserve buildings lagged far behind similar efforts in the United States. Although the National Trust had formed in Sydney in 1945 and before its kindred organisation in the United States, it moved cautiously in the early years. In its first two years the trust, composed only of “invited members”, joined with the Royal Australian Historical Society and other organisations to protest against proposed demolition of the Mint, Parliament House and Hyde Park Barracks, but did little on its own. Trust members failed to interest the government in heritage legislation, although they were more successful in gaining public support. The first public meeting of the Trust, on 5 November 1947, attracted about 270 people, while the first suburban meeting, in February 1948, drew an audience of 200. The National Trust of Australia (NSW) became the model for the nascent preservation movement in the rest of Australia, and it supplied literature and advice to individuals in Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia on the establishment of trusts in those states. Victoria established a National Trust in 1956, Western Australia in 1959, Queensland in 1963 and the Australian Capital Territory in 1976. A Trust formed in Tasmania in 1946, lapsed in 1954 and then re-formed in 1960. In the Northern Territory, a Trust formed in 1958, lapsed in 1964 and re-formed in 1976. In 1965 the state bodies formed the Australian Council of National Trusts.

The relationship between historical societies and national trust groups varied. In the early years members of the Royal Australian Historical Society supported the work of the National Trust of Australia (NSW). But this cosy relationship did not last. Some senior trust members viewed Cramp, who in 1949 had become its second president, as ineffective. Several members of the Royal Australian Historical Society feared that the trust would usurp some of their activities and would attract society members. Members of

⁸⁶ Gail Griffith, “The Historical View from the Royal Australian Historical Society”, in *The Local History Co-ordination Project, Locating Australia's Past: A Practical Guide to Writing Local History*. Kensington NSW (1988), p. 13.

the historical society believed the trust should concentrate on saving the built environment, while trust members held that their group had a wider brief that included nature conservation. Tension increased when the trust did not re-elect Cramp as president in 1949, and when three prominent historical society members were defeated at trust elections in 1953 the historical society withdrew affiliation. The National Trust then became the major advocate for the preservation of historic buildings and of the natural environment in New South Wales. While both organisations continued to support many of the same objectives and oppose many of the same developments, only gradually did the groups begin to work together again, the society re-affiliating with the trust in 1960.⁸⁷

In other instances, national trust groups and historical societies co-operated amicably on projects of mutual interest, and in some states members of historical societies encouraged for the formation of a national trust. The Royal Historical Society of Victoria advocated the formation of a trust in Victoria because it realised that a specialist body would have more success in preserving buildings. In Western Australia historical societies and the National Trust had overlapping membership, and some historical societies sought the trust's advice on preservation and in the establishment of local museums.⁸⁸ In general, members of national trusts and historical societies recognised the potential for conflict but acknowledged the necessity for the two different streams to work together.⁸⁹

By 1960 membership in the National Trust (NSW) had grown to 2000 and it had become a respected body. When in 1958 the Department of Agriculture threatened to demolish Macquarie Field House, a stately colonial house on the outskirts of Sydney, the trust acted as an intermediary between the department and a private individual who offered to restore the house at his own expense. In 1959 the trust supported moves to save another colonial residence, St. Malo, threatened with demolition to make way for a new expressway. This house, which had little architectural or historical interest, assumed

⁸⁷ I.F. Wyatt, *Ours in Trust: A Personal History of the National Trust of Australia (NSW)*. Pennant Hills, NSW (1987), pp.21-24.

⁸⁸ "National Trust of Australia (W.A.)", *Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia*, 11-13 August 1967, p.2.

⁸⁹ Colin Angus, "Affiliated Societies: Problems of Local Historical Societies in Country Areas", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.39 (1968), p.67.

symbolic value for the burgeoning preservation movement, and in 1959 24 letters appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* supporting the trust, with as many news items and articles. The impending destruction became front-page news and university students marched in protest.⁹⁰ While the campaign failed and in July 1961 the Department of Main Roads demolished the building, the controversy and publicity raised the profile of the trust and brought in many new members. But changes in public attitudes to preservation remained slow, and in 1971 Justice R. Else-Mitchell, president of the Royal Australian Historical Society and a member of the first council of the National Trust, mourned, "It is sad to reflect that in ... twenty years ... little or nothing has been done to ensure the preservation of historic buildings and others which are characteristic of an era." He regretted the public apathy to the destruction of the historic environment but was somewhat cheered by articles and letters to the press in opposition to a recent spate of demolition.⁹¹ In 1973 membership in the New South Wales National Trust had reached 20,000, but its efforts to slow the pace of destruction of buildings were disappointing. As in the United States, it remained the preserve of the educated elite and, like its counterpart in America, could not become a major force in society until its support widened.

National trusts in other states experienced similar vicissitudes. The trust that formed in southern Tasmania in 1946 had only a brief life but, on the initiative of Elizabeth Craig, re-formed in Launceston in 1960. In 1962 it established southern and north-western regional committees that together formed the Council of the National Trust in Tasmania. By 1977 the Tasmanian trust had approximately 2500 members and had eight regional branches. It concentrated on preserving historic buildings since the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which took over from the Scenery Preservation Board, covered the conservation of the natural environment.⁹² Notably, the trust ignored the remains of buildings directly associated with the convicts and concentrated on the gracious Georgian houses that emphasised the state's Englishness.

⁹⁰ Helen Baker, *The Preservation Movement in Australia*, Master of Town and Country Planning Thesis, University of Sydney (1969), p.79; Wyatt, pp.25, 39.

⁹¹ "The New History House, Presidential Address, 23 February 1971", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.57 (1971), pp.283-284.

⁹² J.N.D. Harrison, *The National Trust in Tasmania*. Adelaide (1977), pp.226-227.

In the 1950s, Victoria's residents showed little concern about the destruction of its Victorian-era buildings, a style of architecture generally considered unfashionable at the time. But in 1955 the threat to demolish Como, an elegant mansion built in 1855, spurred Sir Daryl Lindsay, Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, J.T. Burke, professor of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne, the architect Robin Boyd, and others to initiate moves to found the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The founders, almost all of whom belonged to the Town and Country Planning Association (formed in 1914), sought the support of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Royal Institute of Architects and obtained information from the trusts in New South Wales and South Australia. Like these two organisations, the National Trust in Victoria cited the success of the English National Trust, but it referred directly to the operations and activities of the trust in New South Wales. Its inauguration in 1956 was both a symptom of the increasing awareness of the past, evidenced by the growing number of local historical societies and written histories of towns and suburbs, and a contributor to it. This was particularly so after the opening of Como to the public, which further stimulated public interest in the state's past.⁹³ From the inaugural meeting members of the university community collaborated with the trust, and many academics served on the council and specialist committees.⁹⁴ The politicising of the trust's work in the 1970s widened its appeal, and membership increased to 25,000. While this confirmed the view that the heritage lobby remained ineffective until it actively involved all classes of society, the trust lost many battles to save heritage buildings, particularly those of minor architectural importance.

The first national trust in the Northern Territory formed in Alice Springs in 1958 when the town's population numbered less than a thousand and it had little notable architecture. The group grew out of the John Ross Memorial Fund, founded in 1953 by Adela Purvis to erect a memorial to the district's pioneers. But it remained parochial and suffered from fluctuating membership and public indifference. Although incorporated in 1963, it had been in an unstable state for several years and in 1964 went into recess.⁹⁵

⁹³ Tony Dingle, *Settling*, Melbourne (1984), p.251; Celestina Sagazio and David Francis, "The Origins of the National Trust in Victoria", *Trust News*, Vol.22 No.2 (1993), pp.8-9.

⁹⁴ Sagazio and Francis, pp.8-9.

⁹⁵ Annette Bird, *The National Trust in the Northern Territory 1958-1980*. Darwin (1986), pp.1-9.

The National Trust of Australia (NT) formed in Darwin in 1976. In this instance the community spirit present in Alice Springs had not been enough to keep the group viable, and Dunlap's opinion that historical societies could exist only in urban centres appears to have some validity,⁹⁶ although Darwin was by no means a major metropolis.

Whereas the trust groups in New South Wales and Victoria had attracted members from the local establishment and intellectual elite, the trusts in Western Australia and Queensland were less exclusive.⁹⁷ Whether it was because they lacked the political and social esteem of the earlier trusts is not clear, but the national trusts based in Perth and Brisbane faced particular difficulties. The Act of Parliament giving the National Trust of Australia (WA) statutory authority stipulated that it was to be primarily an educational institution that would hold classes, lectures, seminars, exhibitions, meetings and conferences and would also publish suitable material. It did not mention conservation of properties until sub-clause 12. In November 1965 the state government allocated an annual grant of \$4,500 to cover administrative costs, but gave little support in the fight to save heritage buildings. Despite this, membership grew steadily from 112 in 1960 to 712 in 1968 and by 1974 had reached 1869. Individuals donated three properties, Old Farm at Albany, Blythewood at Pinjarra and Bridgedale at Bridgetown, but the Trust had insufficient resources to restore them. A list of classified buildings that it compiled produced mixed results; many Western Australians campaigned for the retention of classified buildings, but some developers took fright and sent in bulldozers before the public could organise to oppose demolition.⁹⁸ The situation was even worse for the National Trust in Queensland, whose members envied the trust in Western Australia because, although minimal, at least the state government gave some financial support. The state government in Queensland consented to support a national trust only if it agreed never to ask for financial aid. This provision merely reflected the attitude of the majority of Queenslanders, who had a greater impatience with the past than other Australians. Of eight buildings the trust had classified in its first years to be preserved under all

⁹⁶ Dunlap, p. 15.

⁹⁷ Graeme Davison, "A Brief History of the Australian Heritage Movement", in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*, North Sydney (1991), pp. 18-19.

⁹⁸ Charles Staples, "Conservation, the National Trust and Historical Documentation", *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1983), pp. 149-150.

circumstances, two had been demolished by 1967, while in the same period one or two 'B' category buildings disappeared each week.⁹⁹

In Australia the construction boom occurred later than in the United States but during the 1960s and early 1970s developers demolished many inner-city buildings, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, and cut swathes through residential areas to make way for roads. As in the United States when similar actions had mobilised the population, many people who had been unaware of their surroundings united to prevent wholesale destruction of the familiar landscape. By 1970 over 50 resident action groups had formed in metropolitan Sydney to fight against development. Their campaigns resulted in unlikely but effective alliances and heralded a new appreciation of the built and natural environments in Australia. The first successful collaboration to save open space in Sydney was between a left-wing union and a group of matrons from Hunters Hill, one of Sydney's most fashionable suburbs. The Hunters Hill ladies had approached the local council, the mayor, their state member and the premier seeking assistance to save Kelly's Bush, the last remaining open space in the area, but these had all failed. Having read about the ideas of social responsibility held by the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation, in 1971 the "Battlers for Kelly's Bush" approached the union's president, Jack Munday, for assistance in their fight. The union placed a "Green Ban" on the land, preventing the development of an exclusive residential area. The combined actions of the residents' group and the union saved the open space and prompted further alliances between residents and builders labourers. In the three years following the fight for Kelly's Bush the union, in concert with resident action groups, imposed 42 Green Bans, delaying over \$3,000 million worth of 'development' projects.¹⁰⁰ The bans saved over 100 buildings classified as historic by the National Trust,¹⁰¹ and the public support for them

⁹⁹ Robin Boyd, "The Future of Our Past", in *Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia*, pp.4-5; "The National Trust of Queensland", in *ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁰⁰ Jack Munday, "Preventing the Plunder", in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Staining the Wattle*, Fitzroy Vic. (1988), pp.174-178. Munday explains that, "the bans the union imposed were different from the Black Bans that trade unionists everywhere have used to exert pressure on employers for better wages and conditions; the workers in the N.S.W.B.L.F. were not imposing these bans in their own economic interests a ban to save open parkland was in the interests of the entire community. So the new ban became known as a 'Green Ban'", pp.176-177.

¹⁰¹ Clem Lloyd, *The National Estate: Australia's Heritage*. Sydney (1977), p.15. Despite the apparent co-operation between the two groups, Munday reveals that while some National Trust members supported the green bans, "it would be well to remember that the official organisation of both the National Trusts and the

encouraged the state government to introduce tighter development laws.¹⁰² Similar joint campaigns conducted by unionists and residents' groups in other states, in particular Victoria, also succeeded.¹⁰³

In 1974 the Hope Committee of Enquiry into the National Estate recognised the involvement in the preservation and conservation movement of all social classes:

3. It has sometimes been suggested that conservation is a 'middle class' issue. Our hearings, observations and travels round Australia have convinced us that this is just not true.

4. The conservation of the National Estate is the concern of everyone. The forces which threaten it directly affect the quality of life of the less privileged urban people, whose access to and enjoyment of parkland, coast and natural bushland, of familiar and pleasant urban cityscapes, and sometimes of their own dwellings, are endangered. Often it is these less-privileged who are initiating and supporting action to preserve the best features of our present way of life.¹⁰⁴

As in the United States, preservation had a greater chance of success once all classes joined the fight.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, even with spreading support, preservationists and the national trusts faced daunting challenges in their attempts to save the natural and built environments and often failed. But without their efforts the situation would have been worse. The Hope Committee recognised their importance and stated:

The involvement of individual citizens, through organisations they have set up for the purpose, has played a major part in the preservation of the National Estate. It is doubtful if any government in Australia has, for example, made a contribution toward conservation of the built environment to match the voluntary work of the National Trust.¹⁰⁶

However, although largely ineffective, government bodies *had* acknowledged the adverse effects of progress on the physical environment, and over the years had introduced at least some measures to preserve the historic landscape.

As early as 1946 the newly formed Cumberland County Council in Sydney had included in its Planning Scheme Ordinance a clause enabling the proclamation of

Architects' Institutes distanced themselves from Munday's green bans and the then N.S.W. Branch of the B.L.F.", Jack Munday, "Green Bans and the Unions", *Heritage Australia*, (Summer 1982), p.21; "The Common Man", in G. Seddon and M. Davis (eds), *Man and Landscape in Australia*. Canberra (1977), pp.346-356.

¹⁰² Munday, "Preventing the Plunder", pp.174-178.

¹⁰³ Frank Crowley, *Tough Times: Australia in the Seventies*. Richmond Vic. (1986), p.46.

¹⁰⁴ Hope Committee, *Report of the National Estate*, Canberra (1974), p.334.

¹⁰⁵ Unionists only imposed bans when their work was in demand. When unemployment rose in the later 1970s they became more concerned with their own livelihood than with saving the environment.

¹⁰⁶ *National Estate*, p.316.

buildings of scientific or historic interest and their acquisition by a responsible authority. After this became law in 1951 the County Council set up a Historic Buildings Committee composed of representatives of interested non-government bodies. The committee embarked on a program of research and publication and drew up a list of historic buildings, several of which were later proclaimed by the Governor to prevent demolition or alteration.¹⁰⁷ The committee met from 1958 until 1964 when the State Planning Authority replaced the Cumberland County Council.

In 1949 Waverley Council in suburban Sydney created a precedent and utilised a rarely used section of the Local Government Act, 1919, to acquire "for historical purposes" Bronte House, built for the lawyer Robert Lowe in 1839. But the Council carried out perfunctory repairs only and leased the house to caterers; thus its preservation was incomplete, and only a few had access to it. Until 1969 just two other Sydney councils had exercised their powers under the Act - Parramatta Council restored Hambleton Cottage, and Mosman Council converted a Victorian mansion to house its municipal library.¹⁰⁸ During the 1970s many local councils in New South Wales legislated to protect historic buildings within their areas, including Woollahra Council, encompassing the inner city area of Paddington, and Windsor Council, which at the time covered a rural area on the outskirts of Sydney. In 1971 the Sydney City Council, concerned about the rapid redevelopment of inner Sydney, invited the Royal Australian Historical Society and the National Trust to participate in a conference to determine a plan of action to save Sydney's remaining historic buildings.¹⁰⁹ This meeting resulted in a strategic plan that recognised the need for practical measures to preserve places and structures of architectural or historic significance.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, because the Council lacked the power to prevent demolition and the financial resources to recompense owners for the loss of property values ensuing from their inability to utilise their sites to their full economic advantage, the plan did little to halt the changing face of the city.

¹⁰⁷ Baker, p.78. The Cumberland County Council had been established to co-ordinate the activities of the forty-two councils in the Sydney metropolitan area and to enable the preparation of a comprehensive town plan for metropolitan Sydney.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.100.

¹⁰⁹ Else-Mitchell, "The New History House", p.285.

¹¹⁰ R. Else-Mitchell, "Presidential Address, 10 April 1973", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.59 (1973), p.73.

Local councils in New South Wales showed the greatest concern for saving the built environment, but in other states some councils also moved to preserve their heritage buildings. In 1949, obviously unimpressed with the efforts of the National Trust in New South Wales, the Australian Council of Local Government Associations suggested the establishment of a Commonwealth Trust, similar to the National Trust in England, for the "conservation of objects of historical and national interest". Prime Minister Chifley rejected the proposal, claiming that this was a state responsibility.¹¹¹ In Tasmania in the early 1960s, Hobart and Launceston City Councils set aside an annual amount of \$10,000 and \$5000 respectively for five years to help prevent the destruction of historic buildings.¹¹² They also introduced legislation prohibiting, on the recommendation of the National Trust, demolition of buildings of historic or architectural interest.¹¹³ Local government acts in Western Australia and Queensland likewise provided for the protection of historic buildings. In the historic port city of Fremantle in Western Australia the city council, in co-operation with the state and federal governments during the Whitlam years, played a major part, through purchase and legislation, in retaining the character of the area.¹¹⁴ However, preservation legislation was often easy to circumvent. In 1967 a petition from 800 ratepayers and an offer by the National Trust to restore it failed to prevent a shire council in Western Australia from bulldozing a colonial house, built in 1856.¹¹⁵

State governments also gradually assumed a more positive role in the preservation of heritage buildings. The Tasmanian government, through the Scenery Preservation Board, was the first state government in Australia to restore and preserve such buildings. Between 1945 and 1947 it supervised the restoration of some of the stone prison buildings at Port Arthur and at Richmond, and in 1950 opened Entally House, a restored colonial building, as a historic house museum. It also donated \$60,000 for the restoration of Clarendon, one of Australia's great historic homesteads, bought Runnymede House

¹¹¹ *Advertiser*, 23 August 1949.

¹¹² "National Trust of Australia (Tas)", *Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia*, 11-13 August 1967, p.2.

¹¹³ *National Estate*, p.152.

¹¹⁴ Stan Parks, "The Management of Historic Fremantle", *Heritage Australia* (Winter 1984), pp.33-37.

¹¹⁵ "National Trust of Australia (W.A.)", *Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia*, 11-13 August 1967, p.4.

and leased it to the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), and provided the trust with the finance to renovate Franklin House. This represented a substantial allocation of funds, and neither the other states nor the commonwealth came anywhere near matching it for many years.¹¹⁶ As previously mentioned, the government in Western Australia gave an annual grant of \$4,500 to the National Trust and assisted in the restoration and landscaping of heritage buildings. From 1972 the Victorian government had given grants for preservation to the National Trust and in 1974 introduced the Historic Buildings Act, Australia's first effective heritage legislation. The New South Wales government had given minor grants to the National Trust since 1959 that gradually increased in value over the years.

The federal government responded to the growing outcry against the devastation of the natural and built environment. Between 1967 and 1972 the Australian Labor Party when in opposition developed a wide-ranging urban affairs policy that included consideration of the nation's natural and built environments. It came into office in 1972, and in 1973 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam commissioned the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate, adopting this title from a speech made by John F. Kennedy when President of the United States. In 1974 the Committee reported that:

The Australian Government has inherited a National Estate which has been downgraded, disregarded and neglected. All previous priorities accepted at various levels of government and authority have been directed by a concept that uncontrolled development, economic growth and 'progress', and the encouragement of private as against public interest ... in every part of the National Estate was paramount.¹¹⁷

The government responded promptly to the committee's far-reaching recommendations to save the environment. It allocated grants-in-aid that in 1974-75 amounted to more than \$7 million, including \$1,820,000 to national trusts for 142 projects.¹¹⁸ The government proclaimed the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act in 1974. In 1975, using as precedent the United States National Historic Preservation Act,¹¹⁹ proclaimed the Australian Heritage Commission Act. Thus in Australia, following the precedent of the

¹¹⁶ Lloyd, p.245.

¹¹⁷ *National Estate*, p.334.

¹¹⁸ Lloyd, p.19.

¹¹⁹ Kerry Clarke, "Historic Preservation in Western Australia", *Renewable Resource and Environmental Management in Western Australia*, Report No.4 (1983), p.11.

United States, local, state and federal governments acknowledged the importance of buildings of the past and, both on their own initiatives and through volunteer preservation bodies such as the National Trust, worked to preserve them. However, in some aspects of preservation, Australia was slower to follow the American example.

Even though Australians were beginning to celebrate their unique history, they had less sense of the historic importance of entire towns than had Americans. From the zoning of the Battery in Charleston, South Carolina as an 'Old and Historic District' in 1931 and of the Vieux Carre, the historic French quarter of New Orleans in 1937, the number of similarly protected areas in the United States had multiplied. Australians generally disregarded the relevance of the history encompassed in the older sections of cities or rural towns and villages, considering the derelict buildings to be a sign of decay and a bar to progress. The first moves to protect a collection of buildings did not eventuate until 1963 when the National Trust of Australia (NSW), in association with local, historical and tourist associations and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, sponsored the formation of the Berrima Village Trust. In 1965 residents of Richmond, a small town about 35 km from Hobart that had developed around a convict gaol built in 1825, agreed to form a Richmond Preservation and Development Trust. In 1966 the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) declared the rural town of Maldon a Notable Town. In 1967 and 1968 the National Trust in New South Wales held seminars on Notable Towns, a concept similar to the historic district designation in the United States. In the mid-1960s the New South Wales Minister of Lands moved to designate the former gold mining town of Hill End and the attractive rural town of Berrima as Historic Sites.¹²⁰

The Interim Committee on the National Estate acknowledged the problems inherent in protecting historic precincts and townships and the inadequacy of planning legislation to preserve groups of buildings.¹²¹ Property owners were reluctant to forego any right to develop their properties and in most of the towns at least some residents objected to moves to preserve heritage buildings. In Berrima, lack of money and power prevented the Village Trust from discharging its responsibilities effectively and

¹²⁰ Baker, pp.117-118; Tom Griffiths, "Country Towns", in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville, *A Heritage Handbook*, North Sydney (1991), pp.148-151.

¹²¹ *National Estate*, p.139.

parochialism defeated an attempt to ensure that the local council consulted the National Trust before initiating any new building. Consequently many landmarks in the town lost their historic character. The Preservation Trust in Richmond initially had only minor impact but did secure a master plan for the future development of the town. Because the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) neglected to educate Maldon residents, the townspeople were unsure of the restrictions the designation would place on upkeep and disposal of their property, and they objected to being classified as a "Notable Town". However, the Trust realised its error and began a campaign to explain the financial and social benefits of the designation and gradually won the support of the residents. In 1970 the Town and Country Planning Board gazetted an Interim Development Order, thus initiating the first co-operative attempt in Australia to preserve an entire town.¹²²

In the formation of historical museums also Australia lagged behind the United States, again because of the different attitudes to history in each country. In 1956 the National Trust offered to assist the New South Wales government to establish a historic relics museum, perhaps in the Hyde Park Barracks. While the Trust made clear that the collections in this museum would not overlap with those of other museums or the Mitchell Library, Premier Cahill did not support the idea. The press supported the establishment of a historical museum, and in mid-1956 John Kenny of the editorial staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald* proposed a museum of social history for the State, but this came to nothing.¹²³ The National Trust was more successful in the formation of a museum dedicated to Henry Parkes. Unlike the United States, where museums recording and revering the lives of civic leaders were commonplace, this appears to be the first Australian museum devoted to a politician. For years members of the trust and others had worked to save the Tenterfield School of Arts in rural New South Wales where Parkes had made his historic speech advocating federation in 1889. Finally work began in January 1958 to convert the building to the Sir Henry Parkes National (War) Memorial Museum and Library.

¹²² J. Bartlett, "Historic Towns", in Derek Whitelock (ed.), *Where Now With the National Trust?* Proceedings of a Seminar arranged by the Department of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide and the National Trust of South Australia, 4-6 October 1968. Adelaide (1968), pp.50-66; Lloyd, p.76.

¹²³ Wyatt, p.33.

For many years the Royal Australian Historical Society had collected historical relics and operated a small museum in History House. From 1946 members had debated whether the society should establish a museum on its own premises or look for a larger building to display its artefacts. After the society moved to the new History House in 1971 it could not display the collection as effectively as previously and thus attracted few visitors. Realising that it had insufficient resources to operate an effective and relevant museum it decided to channel its energies elsewhere.¹²⁴ Whereas the society's museum had followed traditional lines, Eric Dunlop suggested a more innovative approach. In 1955 he lamented that after 168 years of settlement Sydney had no major historical museum.¹²⁵ He recognised that Australian history as depicted at this time had little appeal to most Australians, who:

do not find the idea of an historical museum a very exciting one. The name probably conjures up visions of glass-topped showcases packed with a heterogeneous collection of curious objects associated in some way with great men or events of our past - a collection in which appropriate objects for display might include a slipper or comb used by W.C. Wentworth, a letter from Sir Henry Parkes to his wife, a convict leg-iron, or a pistol used by Ben Hall.¹²⁶

Dunlop proposed museums along the lines of the folk museums prevalent in Europe and increasing in number in the United Kingdom. Surprisingly he made no mention of the open air museums in the United States that by this time had outstripped their European precursors in research and presentation. Dunlop wanted a museum that would give "a reasonably complete and accurate picture of what life was really like in the early days of our country" and that would employ costumed guides.¹²⁷ His suggestions fell on deaf ears, but even had the Royal Australian Historical Society attempted to implement his ideas they would probably have failed since the state government would not have given financial support. Dunlop had more success outside Sydney and in 1960 he reported on the formation of two folk museums, the Museum of Education at the Armidale Teachers'

¹²⁴ Hazel King, "The Royal Australian Historical Society Part II. Growth and Change: The Society 1955-1985", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.73 (1988), p.275. When the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences established a museum of Australian History in the old Mint Building in 1979 the Society donated most of its collection to this new institution.

¹²⁵ Eric W. Dunlop, "Movement Towards a Museum of Social History", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.41 (1955), p.174.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.176.

College, opened in 1956, and the Armidale and New England Folk Museum, opened in 1958 and supported by the Armidale council.¹²⁸ Other councils, for example at Parramatta, Albury and Dubbo, also supported local history museums. The Local Government Act gave councils power to “provide, control, manage or subsidise museums”. They thus acquired suitable premises that local historical societies often converted to museums, which ensured the preservation of buildings that otherwise would have been demolished or neglected.¹²⁹

Despite Dunlop’s failure to win support for his grand scheme for a national folk museum in Sydney and smaller regional museums in rural areas, some country towns adopted his ideas. In 1968 he commented on the increasing number of rural museums dedicated to “showing the people of to-day how the people of other days lived.”¹³⁰ Hasluck, in his speech at the opening of History House, likewise remarked on the proliferation of folk museums:

I have been struck by the way in which in town after town and district after district, sometimes by local historical societies, sometimes by the enthusiasm of individuals, folk museums are growing up, collecting together objects, documents, mementoes of the past because it is felt that they are precious. Anybody who has the opportunity of visiting some of these museums is amazed at the amount of material of very great interest that has been assembled in these small folk museums and local museums in country towns and, indeed, in some cases on private farms.¹³¹

Other states experienced a similar proliferation of small museums, some operated by the local historical society and others by specialist committees. In Tasmania in the late 1950s a private group, with government assistance, established a folk museum in Narryna, a substantial colonial house.

Despite the abundance of old buildings, until the 1960s Australia had developed neither the open air folk museums common in Europe nor reconstructed villages, which were so popular in America. But in 1966 Victorians again led the way in commemorating history when the Historical Society of Swan Hill established one of the few professional

¹²⁸ Eric W. Dunlop, “The Folk Museum Movement in New England”, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol 45 (1960), pp.269-280.

¹²⁹ “Notes for Presentation by the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.) on Historic Preservation in New South Wales”, Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia, 11-13 August 1967.

¹³⁰ Eric W. Dunlop, *Local Historical Museums in Australia*, Sydney (1968), p.2.

¹³¹ “Speech at the Opening of History House”, pp.82-83.

rural museums, the Swan Hill Folk Museum. Sovereign Hill, a more ambitious project presenting a reconstruction of the gold mining history of Ballarat in Victoria, opened in 1970 and has remained Australia's premier historic town.¹³² Unfortunately, the majority of museums, whether the traditional kind, historic houses or reconstructed or renovated villages, consisted of poorly displayed collections of miscellaneous objects that fell far short of Dunlop's aspirations. *Museums in Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections*, Canberra (1975), referred to the museums at Swan Hill and Ballarat as "pioneer ventures - and cultural landmarks - in Australia", with "courageous" management committees. Nevertheless, it also recorded that "segments of the display in each museum are disasters in historical terms". J.B. Hirst noted that while the pioneer villages "strike the visitor with a sense of the pioneers' achievement", they leave out the pioneers themselves. They show "empty buildings, disembodied achievement, and [the visitor is] told nothing of the social and economic factors which determined who had the chance to achieve what ... These pioneer villages are powerful contributors to the consensus views of Australia's past."¹³³ Thus, although less overtly, museums in Australia were as prone to celebrating success and promoting nationalism, patriotism and conservatism as were museums in the United States.

Australia also trailed the United States in the promotion of historic sites and history museums as tourist destinations. While in 1965-66, 38,000 people paid to take a guided tour of Port Arthur,¹³⁴ the Tourist Bureau in Hobart acknowledged that tourists showed little interest in visiting other historic sites. It attributed this to lack of adequate information, inept publicity and lack of facilities for visitors.¹³⁵ Residents of the economically stagnant town of Maldon ignored the tourist potential of preserving its historic character, believing instead that modernising the buildings, adding neon signs

¹³² Ballarat was also the site of the Eureka Stockade, an event regarded by many Australians as the birth of nationalism and Australian identity, but visitors largely ignored the monument to Australian radicalism erected there in 1921. However, this has changed now that a museum presenting displays of the rebellion using lasers, videos and electronic puppets has opened opposite this memorial. Thus, to make an impact representations of history must be entertaining and fun.

¹³³ J.B. Hirst, "The Pioneer Legend", in John Carroll, *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*. Melbourne (1982), p.35. See also Donald Horne, *Ideas for a Nation*, (Sydney) 1989, p.124.

¹³⁴ J.G. Mosley, "Scenic Reserve and Fauna Sanctuary Systems of Tasmania", in L.J. Webb, D. Whitelock and J. Le Gay Brereton, *The Last of Lands: Conservation in Australia*. Brisbane (1969), p.163.

¹³⁵ Baker, p.99.

and increasing the number of service stations would show its progressive nature and thus attract investment.¹³⁶ In other areas of Australia history proved to be of more interest. The president of the North-Eastern Historical Society, a rural group in Victoria, recognised the importance of tourism and its relevance to historical societies and included the necessity “to prepare massive material of local history for presentation in the support of tourism” among the functions of his society.¹³⁷ The living history museums were immediately popular. A quarter of a million visitors, many of them school children, toured the Folk Museum in Swan Hill in 1967 and 1968.¹³⁸ By 1975 Sovereign Hill Historical Park was attracting half a million visitors a year.¹³⁹

Members of the National Trust (NSW) were as aware of the activities of similar organisations overseas, particularly in the United States, as were members of historical societies. Its founder, I.B. Wyatt, acknowledged the success women had achieved in preserving memorials of the past in the United States when, in 1952, she wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, protesting that an American-owned oil company proposed building a refinery at Kurnell, the site where Captain Cook first landed in Australia. Wyatt wrote that, “Desperation has driven me to take the liberty of making this appeal to you, and through you to the women of America, to intercede on our behalf.”¹⁴⁰ While Australians did not use history to bolster patriotism, they knew of its influence in the United States and that country’s need for allies. Wyatt alluded to the current political situation as a further attempt at persuasion, “At a time when civilization demands the unity of America and Australia, should we permit mere business interests to imperil friendship? I plead with you to use your great influence to prevent this act of irreparable vandalism.”¹⁴¹ This appeal failed and Eleanor Roosevelt did not reply. But when the trust acquired the Tenterfield School of Arts and advised the American National Trust, the members were no doubt cheered by the response:

¹³⁶ Lloyd, p.76.

¹³⁷ W.D. Sheppard, “The Role of Affiliated Historical Societies (II), *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.37 (1966), p.155.

¹³⁸ Holloway, p.52.

¹³⁹ Dingle, p.253.

¹⁴⁰ Wyatt, p.27.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

we are pleased the property will be used as a community centre and library ... we have found those properties that are simply maintained as historic house museums, with a velvet rope across the door and an air of arrested decay, soon evoke the indifference they deserve while those that still serve a living function attract and hold public interest increasingly.¹⁴²

As in the United States, historians in Australia often regarded genealogy merely as a form of antiquarianism, although the division between genealogists and amateur historians was not as great in Australia because of the low academic standing of Australia's historical societies. Again, similar to the situation in the United States, interest in genealogy declined in the 1940s and 1950s but increased in the late 1950s. The growing number of inquiries to the library of the Society of Australian Genealogists coincided with a slight easing of restrictions on the release of convict records that, prior to the 1950s, most Australians had been unable to see.¹⁴³ In the 1960s interest in ancestors boomed and many people approached the society for help in tracing their ancestors. When compiling genealogies members collated information relating to transportation and subsequent assignment separately from the body of the report, permitting those reluctant to discuss their convict ancestry to omit the information if they wished. However, most people displayed curiosity about their 'shady' forebears and researched their lives further. An article on the society that appeared in a Sydney weekly paper produced such an overwhelming volume of requests for help in tracing ancestors that in 1965 the society published *Compiling your Family History*, a guide for beginners that enabled them to undertake their own research.¹⁴⁴ The evolution of convict ancestry from a source of shame to a badge of pride prompted the formation in Sydney of two descendant-based organisations akin to the Mayflower Descendants and the Sons/Daughters of the American Revolution. The Fellowship of First Fleeters began in 1968, and those attracted to such esoteric groups but ineligible to join formed the less restrictive 1788-1820 Pioneer Association later that year.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.35.

¹⁴³ Beverley Earnshaw, "Genealogy and Family History: Australia 1988", *The Push from the Bush*, No.26 (1988), p.51.

¹⁴⁴ Nancy Gray, "Tracing Family History", in David Dufty, Grant Harman and Keith Swan, *Historians at Work: Investigating and Recreating the Past*. Sydney (1973), pp.118-119.

¹⁴⁵ Thus, the academic historian R.M. Crawford's view, published in 1960, that "The 'First Fleet' ... was no Mayflower to which widening circles of descendants would seek to trace their ancestry, but a freight of misery, to be left, if not in silence, at least in the decent anonymity of general description" was either out of date or quickly superseded. See R.M. Crawford, *An Australian Perspective*. Melbourne (1960), p.7.

This growing interest in the earliest settlers prompted the release of further convict records, and in 1969 the government supported a program to microfilm these records.¹⁴⁶ Interest in genealogy was not confined to New South Wales, and in 1973 some members separated from the Genealogical Society of Victoria and formed the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies. This new society sponsored branches in Western Australia (1979) and Tasmania (1980).¹⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that Western Australia was late in forming a genealogical society as it was the last state to end transportation and so the convict era was more recent and, therefore, perhaps still shameful. Additionally, the Royal Historical Society of Western Australia celebrated the pioneers of the state and attracted those of their descendants who were interested in their forebears. Tasmanians had formed the Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association in 1974, to which descendants of both convict and free settlers who had arrived in Van Diemen's Land prior to 1804 could join. The genealogical group formed in 1980 was open to all Tasmanians. While it had taken longer in some states than others, all Australians had gradually overcome the reluctance to admit to convict ancestry.

In Australia some academic historians appreciated the work of amateur historians and did not show the elitist attitude to the writing of local history displayed by many academic historians in the United States, perhaps because of the late flowering of Australian history as an academic discipline. The University of Western Australia was the first in Australia to make a full-time appointment in Australian history, appointing Paul Hasluck as reader in 1948 and F.K. Crowley to a chair in Australian history, which he held in 1949 and again from 1952 to 1964.¹⁴⁸ Hasluck, who had played such a prominent part in the Historical Society of Western Australia from its early years, brought to the academic discipline a respect for amateur historians. Geoffrey Serle, another academic, considered that "any person of reasonable intelligence can get quite a long way in writing

¹⁴⁶ Earnshaw, p.51.

¹⁴⁷ Andrew G. Peake, *The Growth of Interest in Family History and its Contribution to Australian History*. Paper delivered to Australian Historical Association National Conference, Adelaide, August 1986.

¹⁴⁸ G.C. Bolton, "Western Australia Reflects on its Past", in C.T. Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia*, Nedlands (1981), p.684. Paradoxically, another academic historian who had made his name writing local history criticised *Westralian Suburb: The History of South Perth, Western Australia*, one of Crowley's works on local history, claiming it was too heavy with explanation and lacked balance and evidence. Weston Bate, "The Good Old Cause in Local History", *Historical Studies*, Vol.11, No.41 (1963), pp.120-124.

history simply through hard work, common sense and breadth of interest.” He admitted that the vast majority of local histories have faults, but nevertheless provide background information that can then be extended.¹⁴⁹ In a similar vein, Keith Swan, another academic historian, pointed out that not only academic and professional historians could write good history but that anyone familiar with a local area can write invaluable history. While authors untrained in historical scholarship sometimes produce chronological collections of facts assembled in an uninteresting manner, Swan considers that these works contain information that benefit national and general historians.¹⁵⁰ Notwithstanding these positive attitudes, the relationship between academic and amateur historians remains tenuous. Academic historians have joined the state societies and have often been prominent in their affairs, but few have joined local historical societies. While some are too busy, others are cynical about the value of “parish pump” history. But academics are not solely to blame. Amateur historians often do not encourage academic members because of a fear of being disdained and considered inferior. Additionally, they are wary that academics will make use of their detailed research without acknowledging their efforts.¹⁵¹

Contrary to the experience in the United States, where the quality of local and regional histories declined from the 1940s, the best amateur and academic historical writing on Australia has appeared since the 1960s.¹⁵² In 1956 the historian Eric Irvin lamented the dearth of regional histories: “No regional history of sufficient consequence exists to throw a revealing light on our understanding of our national past”.¹⁵³ His plea was answered and the writing of regional history flourished in the 1960s, including such academic works as Margaret Kiddle’s *Men of Yesterday* (1961), G.C. Bolton’s *A Thousand Miles Away* (1963), R.L. Heathcote’s *Back of Bourke* (1965), R.B. Walker’s *Old New England* (1966), and Keith Hancock’s *Discovering Monaro* (1972) as well as

¹⁴⁹ Serle, p.8.

¹⁵⁰ Keith Swan, “Finding Interest and Significance in the Local Community”, in Dufty, Harman and Swan, p.133.

¹⁵¹ Carol Liston, “History in the Community - Local Historical Societies in N.S.W.”, paper delivered to the Australian Historical Association Conference, Adelaide, August 1986.

¹⁵² Historian Allan Martin dates it from 1945. See Ann Curthoys, “Into History”, in Ann Curthoys, A.W. Martin and Tim Rowse (eds), *Australians from 1939*, Sydney (1987), p.448.

¹⁵³ Eric Irvin, “A Plea for Regional Histories”, *Historical Studies*, Vol.7 (1956), p.211.

others by non-professional historians. However, in the 1970s the growing popularity of local history caused a decline in the number of regional works and a proliferation of publications dealing with local and urban history, largely produced by non-academic historians.¹⁵⁴ Many of these were prompted by centenaries and other anniversaries. The quality of this local history improved in the 1960s and 1970s because local historians realised the need for scholarly standards. They also had access to better facilities including increasing availability of primary sources and also computer technology.¹⁵⁵ Throughout the country, local government sponsored histories of council areas, usually stimulated by an impending anniversary, but individuals and historical societies also collected and published local histories. To satisfy the growing appetite for local history some members of historical societies suggested the publication of a broad-based magazine devoted to history that would appeal to the general public. Theo Barker believed that the journal produced by the Royal Australian Historical Society had become too academic. In 1975 he proposed a Journal of Local History that would consist of papers read at meetings of affiliated historical societies and which would also include contributions from school children.¹⁵⁶ This idea came to nothing, and no Australian historical society developed a magazine akin to *American Heritage*. Australians had to be satisfied with historical articles that appeared in the local press. Some newspaper proprietors considered history saleable. The Sydney evening paper, the *Daily Mirror*, had since 1945 devoted a full page, without any advertisements, to a historical feature. These articles were syndicated to papers in the Murdoch group in other mainland states as well as occasionally to two papers in Texas and until 1966 were collected and sold separately as a monthly magazine, *Parade*. While not initially devoted to Australian topics, Australian topics featured more from the 1960s, perhaps in parallel with the increasing interest in Australian history.¹⁵⁷ Stimulated by anniversaries or other celebrations, other newspapers also devoted space to historical articles.

¹⁵⁴ G.C. Bolton, "Regional History in Australia", in John A. Moses (ed.), *Historical Disciplines and Culture in Australasia. An Assessment*. St. Lucia (1979), p.218.

¹⁵⁵ G.C. Bolton, "The Belly and the Limbs", *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol.53 (1982), p.20.

¹⁵⁶ Barker, "View of Local History", p.133.

¹⁵⁷ Paula Hamilton, "'Stranger than Fiction': The *Daily Mirror* 'Historical Feature'", in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt, *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*, a special issue of *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.24, No.96 (1991), pp.202-205.

Thus a remarkable similarity in the development of historical societies, local museums and preservation groups occurred throughout Australia. The concurrent growth is interesting since all states developed at different rates, and metropolitan regions grew sometimes at what seemed an alarming rate while rural towns and villages declined. This modifies the claim that Australians formed historical and preservation groups to defend the built environment.¹⁵⁸ While it is true that preservation societies formed in direct response to environmental destruction, the expansion of the historical society movement pre-dated that of the preservation groups and has continued after the stabilising of growth in these groups.

Summary

After the Second World War Americans utilised their history to reinforce patriotic pride and as a bulwark against the threat of a world dominated by communism. During the period of the Cold War, history stressed filio piety and encouraged reverence for the Founding Fathers and for the democratic traditions they had instituted. But other compelling social forces were at work between 1945 and 1974. During the 1950s and early 1960s the United States experienced extreme social unrest. Desegregation, achieved often through violent protest, resulted in a questioning of accepted values. Further unrest in the 1960s and into the 1970s, mainly of the country's young people who were objecting to America's involvement in the Vietnam War and conscription into the armed forces, followed this destabilisation. The anti-war protests overlapped with social changes engendered by the fight for women's rights. These protest movements reversed the attitude to their past held by many Americans, who now became concerned with ordinary people and how they had coped with life in earlier years. In addition, blacks and women emphasised their own history, which again challenged the traditional presentation of history.

A wave of nostalgia that swept the country further fuelled an interest in the past. Americans believed that in the nineteenth century they had achieved a rural idyll, where family and community life were paramount and everyone cared for each other. The new

¹⁵⁸ Griffith, pp.12-13.

order, which questioned much that Americans had held sacred, unsettled many people and encouraged them to remember the past 'golden' days. The assassination of President John Kennedy in 1963 caused Americans to question their democratic institutions. The desecration of the natural environment, with the spread of industrial areas, the pollution of rivers and lakes, the destruction of native forests and the enveloping of productive farm land with expanding suburbanisation, added to the sense of gloom. Architectural styles, films, television series and literature reflected the prevailing attitudes, but history particularly thrived on this feeling of foreboding.

Australia experienced few of the disturbances that so unsettled the United States. During the 1950s and 1960s the federal and state governments deleted many of the discriminatory laws against Aborigines.¹⁵⁹ Protest movements, such as Student Action for Aborigines' 'freedom rides' in northern New South Wales in 1965 supporting Aborigines in their push for equality, emulated American precedent, but Australia avoided the widespread violence encountered in the United States.¹⁶⁰ Australia did experience disturbances during the years of the Vietnam War,¹⁶¹ and protests occurred in all major centres. While these caused division and ill-feeling between Australians they did not have the same effect as they had in the United States, no doubt because Australians had never revered their leaders in the way Americans had and so did not feel as betrayed. Indeed, Australia's traditional heroes "express anti-civic values ... They are Ned Kelly, or they are non-functional or dysfunctional white males who can't bond with anyone ... do not respect public authority, and, furthermore, are never reconciled to it".¹⁶² So the disturbances of the late 1960s and early 1970s reinforced Australian attitudes to the past rather than overturned them. Australia experienced the moves for equal rights for women,

¹⁵⁹ Tim Rowse, "Assimilation and After", in Ann Curthoys, A.W. Martin and Tim Rowse (eds), *Australians from 1939*, Sydney (1987), pp.133-139.

¹⁶⁰ This, of course, did not mean that white Australians were generally more tolerant than white Americans, just that Aborigines were too few in number to create the turmoil or to arouse the white support that blacks had in America.

¹⁶¹ See Stephen Alomes and Catherine Jones, *Australian Nationalism: A Documentary History*, North Ryde, NSW (1991), pp.290-321 and Greg Langley, *A Decade of Dissent: Vietnam and the Conflict on the Australian Home Front*. Sydney (1992). Both books claim that life in Australia did change in the 1950s and 1960s in part because of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, but I still hold that Australia experienced less turmoil and fewer changes than did the United States.

¹⁶² Jill Ker Conway, "Frontiers of Nationhood: The US and Australia", *The Sydney Papers* (Spring 1993), p.146.

but the protest was not as strident as in the United States and therefore caused less social turmoil. Australia also lost a national leader, but the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967 created only limited reactions and elicited nothing like the sense of loss experienced by Americans on the death of Kennedy.

Despite the differences in the social situation between the United States and Australia, historical, museum and preservation societies in both countries increased gradually between 1946 and 1960 and then exploded in the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁶³ However, history never achieved the pre-eminence in the Australian consciousness it had for Americans. Australian historical societies and museums remained smaller and poorer than similar institutions in the United States. Members of historical societies did not develop a national association to promote the aims of amateur historians. Immigration caused differing responses in the United States and Australia. In America the flood of incoming settlers instituted a 'closing of the ranks' of the native born and an increase in membership in and the number of hereditary societies. While Australians often resented migrants and the changes they introduced to their own accepted way of life, they did not follow the American precedent by forming nativist associations.

Pride in and nostalgia for the past were perhaps prime motivating forces for the increase in interest in history in the United States. But different stimuli were at work in Australia. Probably the greatest inducement for the development of historical and museum societies and for the increasing number of written histories of villages and towns throughout Australia was an increasing national consciousness. After World War Two, two sets of cultural forces competed in Australia, traditionalism and modernism. The British ideal was still strong but was weakening, and Australians began deliberately to throw off their servitude to all things British. An Australian identity had been present in the convict colonies from the early nineteenth century. It gained increasing currency during the twentieth century, enhanced after the advent of Australian citizenship in 1949. Albeit admitting that Australians had not yet attained their own "solid cultural ground", in 1953 social commentator W.E.H. Stanner noted that, "The old-style recognition of

¹⁶³ *Museums in Australia*, p.21.

England as 'home' seems to be dying fast. I have not myself heard the expression used for many years."¹⁶⁴ The 'new nationalism' encouraged by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his Labor government from 1972 inspired a new confidence in Australians and a pride in their history.¹⁶⁵

If stimuli for the development of historical societies and museums in the two countries were not always analogous, neither were the reasons for the growth of the preservation movement. Americans developed organisations to save the built environment (Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 1853) before the natural environment (the formation of Yellowstone Park in 1872 was their first conscious act of conservation). Australians, on the other hand, began pressing for protection of native fauna and flora in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although not a national park in the current sense, since it included exotic plantings and its sponsors intended to exploit its resources,¹⁶⁶ the first national park in Australia, the Royal National Park in Sydney, was established in 1879,¹⁶⁷ years before most Australians gave any serious consideration to preserving the physical environment. This difference emanates from the reverence that Americans had for buildings connected with their founding fathers, whereas until the 1960s most Australians preferred to see reminders of the convict past demolished. They generally viewed the changing cityscapes with pride, seeing social and economic progress in the new concrete and glass towers. Yet an appreciation of wilderness encouraged an awareness of historical landscapes. In both countries moves to halt the destruction of the natural and physical environment came from the same social grouping, the middle class, and often involved the same people.

Both the United States and Australia formed national trusts based on the English predecessor. In the United States this was a national body, while in Australia each state developed its own autonomous organisation that later achieved some unity of action

¹⁶⁴ Stanner, p.8.

¹⁶⁵ Tony Bennett, *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy*. Cultural Policy Studies: Occasional Paper No.3. Brisbane (1988), pp.9-10.

¹⁶⁶ D.N. Jeans and Peter Spearritt, *The Open Air Museum: The Cultural Landscape of New South Wales*. Sydney (1980), pp.1-3.

¹⁶⁷ By the early 1900s most states had established national parks and by 1930 had introduced legislation to protect native wildlife. For information on each state, see individual articles in L.J. Webb, D. Whitlock and J. Le Gay Brereton (eds), *The Last of Lands: Conservation in Australia*. Brisbane (1969).

through the Australian Council of National Trusts. The Trusts in Australia assumed wider responsibility than the American Trust and in most states undertook the care of both the built and natural environments. As with historical societies and museums, the Australian Trusts received less financial assistance from government grants and private donations than their American counterpart. In both countries the Trusts remained ineffective until the mass of the population recognised the need to save the environment and joined forces with the established groups. The adoption of the term 'National Estate' from its American context acknowledged that America was ahead of Australia in conservation matters and served as a model for Australians. However, by the end of 1974 neither country had introduced effective heritage legislation, and preservationists had achieved only limited success in slowing the rate of environmental destruction.

Thus, in both the United States and in the Australian states similar, although not identical, forces motivated the formation of organisations dedicated to preserving the past. In both countries the large state societies formed first. They were the most prestigious historical organisations and directed the activities of the smaller local history groups. As the next chapter shows, from the 1950s South Australians formed many small local groups to celebrate their "history of difference".¹⁶⁸ And with the formation of the Historical Society of South Australia in 1974 they at last caught up with the other two regions.

¹⁶⁸ From the title of Derek Whitelock, *Adelaide, 1836-1976: A History of Difference*. St. Lucia (1977).

CHAPTER SIX

“a new pride and interest in our origins” - The Maturing of Amateur History in South Australia, 1946 to 1974

While at the end of the Second World War Adelaide still resembled a provincial town, its population of 382,454 in 1947 comprised almost 60% of the population of South Australia. It was considerably smaller than Sydney (1,484,004) and Melbourne (1,226,409), almost the same size as Brisbane (402,030) but larger than Perth (272,528) and Hobart (76,534).¹ Adelaide trailed Sydney and Melbourne economically, and not until the mid-1950s did the city, its suburbs and some rural towns expand.² As with the rest of Australia, immigration to South Australia increased in this period and the state experienced proportionally larger growth from immigration than any other state. Between 1947 and 1971, 71% of its population growth came from immigration, 56.5% of which was foreign born.³ Despite this massive number of newcomers, because South Australia drew the majority of its immigrants from the United Kingdom it experienced even less turmoil from increased post-war immigration than the other mainland Australian states.⁴

Adelaideans cherished this stability and emphasised their Englishness and difference, an attitude that was obvious to many commentators. In 1952 Douglas Pike, a historian at the University of Adelaide, commented that South Australians never forgot “to remind themselves that this free province was in many ways superior to that penitentiary for lawbreakers [New South Wales].”⁵ Russel Ward also attributed a unique character to South Australia because of the absence of convicts and the Irish, and believed that this still held in 1958 in Adelaide and its surrounding agricultural districts.⁶ In an article in the popular press Clif Eager pronounced, “You just can’t judge Adelaide

¹ Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians. Historical Statistics*. Sydney (1987), p.41.

² To gain an impression of development in rural towns, see Tom Griffiths’ comments on Clare in “Country Towns”, in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*, North Sydney (1991), p.143.

³ Ian Burnley, “The Suburban Metropolis in Australia: Some Demographic Forces at Work”, in G. Seddon and M. Davis (eds), *Man and Landscape in Australia*. Canberra (1976), p.253.

⁴ Nevertheless, South Australia received some non-British immigrants. In 1947, only 2.1% of Adelaide residents were born in non-English speaking countries whereas by 1966, 13.6% were. See Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society*, Adelaide (1986), p.236-240, on some of the effects of immigration.

⁵ Douglas Pike, “The Utopian Dreams of Adelaide’s Founders”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.53 (1952), p.65.

⁶ *The Australian Legend*. Melbourne (1983), p.7; see also Jeanne MacKenzie, *Australian Paradox*. London (1962), p.159 for a similar view.

and many Adelaide people by the standards of the rest of Australia. You have to accept it as a community that was set in a provincial, self-satisfied mould a very long while ago".⁷

Academic Donald Horne described Adelaide as a city:

of wide boulevards, grass squares and stone colonial buildings, set out on the grand scale; of men of property and family running affairs in a gentlemanly way from behind the green shutters and cedar doors of the Adelaide Club; of a community established without the 'Irish element' or the 'convict stain'; assured, in control of powerful interests, but puritanical and dull; dedicated to civic pride, high business ethics, good works, good taste.⁸

In 1967 local poet Geoffrey Dutton wondered why Adelaide and South Australia should have become "more British than the British."⁹

South Australians might have rejoiced that their settlement had succeeded without the help of convict labour or the divisiveness of lower-class Irish and thereby distanced themselves from other Australians.¹⁰ But, as mentioned previously, the absence of convicts and Irish hindered the formation of historical groups. While some of the early settlers had come to South Australia because of dissatisfaction with Britain, they nevertheless retained an affection for Britain and the monarchy. The other colonies comprised a large minority of descendants of convicts and disgruntled Irish, both convict and free, as well as other poor immigrants who were more likely to reject England and celebrate the new nation.¹¹ The nationalism present in these groups permeated to the middle and upper classes, who developed an Australian consciousness and realised the history of their states was worth recording. In South Australia this did not happen. The elite continued to look to Britain, and thus retarded the nascent national consciousness present in the other mainland states

⁷ *Adelaide Mail*, n.d., quoted in MacKenzie, p.160.

⁸ *The Lucky Country. Australia in the Sixties*. Melbourne (1965), pp.55-56.

⁹ "My Adelaide", *Bulletin*, 23 September 1967, p.28.

¹⁰ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. The Pioneers' Association objected to celebrating the day convicts landed in Australia. In 1958 the Association advised the Australia Day Council that "January 26th had no historical significance and ... either January 1st (to commemorate Federation) or May 24th (Empire Day) could well be held as Australia Day", thus emphasising the State's distinctiveness from the other Australian states and its connections with England. Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 18 December 1958. In 1967 the Association reluctantly agreed to observe the proclaimed Australia Day, while still believing that "for historic reasons Australia Day should not be observed on January 26th." Minutes of Council Meeting, 1 February 1967.

¹¹ Tasmania was the only state that had been founded by convicts that lagged in the development of historical societies, but as explained previously the particularly harsh penal history of the state plus the relatively small Irish population retarded the development of historical consciousness. Tasmanians, like South Australians, clung to their British heritage.

The static nature and homogeneity of its society produced problems, particularly for South Australians of non-British descent, and the first group in South Australia to show pride in its heritage suffered for it. The harsh treatment of members of the South Australian German Historical Society had unfortunate repercussions for the study of the history of German settlement in South Australia.¹² While A.J. Schulz, who had been the society's treasurer, continued to collect information on the German pioneers he did not complete his intended history. After his death Derek van Abbé, reader in German at the University of Adelaide, persevered with the history without help from the German community. Hermann Homburg, who also had been connected with the historical society, sympathised with the community's reticence :

Yes! the sudden death of Dr. Schulz cuts away the main source of information.

...

What next! It is a problem. Others with whom I discussed your wishes are not interested. Some even fear a repetition of "1939". Their experiences are still fresh in their memories.

Sorry; but I can see big hills in front of anyone who takes on the task you are seeking.¹³

In a later letter Homburg again mentioned this problem:

I have made the enquiries you desired but with poor results.

"1939" is still the barrier. Those actuated by the same spirit as now moves you to pursue the subject and for no other than historical reasons were hard hit.

They are afraid.¹⁴

The events during the war had dampened the urge of German-South Australians to commemorate their past as openly and inclusively as they had in 1936. Immigrants who arrived after 1945 rekindled interest in the German heritage, but older German-Australians remained in the background; they did not want to suffer again.

The Royal Geographical Society and the Pioneers' Association continued to record details of the foundation of South Australia. Members of the Royal Geographical

¹² Even after the end of the war some South Australians remained suspicious of the Society. In 1945 C.A. Price (son of Grenfell Price) used the tightly knit German-descended population of South Australia as an illustration of the dangers of non-British immigration, citing the "subversive" activities of the Society. He unquestioningly accepted the intelligence section's accusations that members of the historical society worked to spread Nazism in South Australia not surprisingly, since he had belonged to that section during the war. C.A. Price, *German Settlers in South Australia*, Melbourne (1946).

¹³ Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide. *German Settlers in South Australia: Miscellaneous Papers 1776-1964*. Letter dated 18 February 1956.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Letter dated 26 April 1956.

Society were concerned that the state, though “rich in tradition, as the first attempt at planned colonisation in the Empire ... lagged behind other States where historical sections were firmly established in a number of cities and towns”.¹⁵ They finally succeeded in gaining greater recognition for history and in 1947 established a Historical Division within the society.¹⁶ This division had similar objectives to the state historical societies and intended to “encourage the establishment of country divisions or sections” as well as to publish a journal.¹⁷ It attracted 85 members in its first year but by 1949 membership had dwindled to 23.¹⁸ It slowly climbed but always trailed that of the parent group, and the largest membership recorded was 99 in 1957 (compared with 349 in the Royal Geographical Society).¹⁹ Many in the society remained opposed to the formation of a separate division, and friction developed between those members who thought the emphasis should be on geography and those who wanted to accord a higher importance to history. Contrary to its intentions, the division did not establish its own journal and papers presented at its meetings appeared in the *Proceedings*. This irritated many in the society since historical papers often were longer than those on geographical themes. Additionally, the geographers felt that the increased emphasis on history altered the original aims of the publication.²⁰ An editorial in the *Proceedings* in 1954 conceded that, “it would be churlish not to compliment the Historical Division on its industry and enthusiasm”, but it called for “work at once more truly geographical and more original in its nature” and hoped that the election of several members of the university’s Department of Geography to the Council would correct the imbalance.²¹

Some members also joined an independent and more academic Geography Association, which created further tension. In 1957 C.C. Deland, one of the founders of

¹⁵ *Advertiser*, 24 July 1947.

¹⁶ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Council Meeting, 17 November 1947.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1948; 6 March 1952.

¹⁸ Historical Division Report for Year Ending 30 September 1949, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.50 (1948-49), p.93.

¹⁹ Unfortunately many of the records of the Division are missing, so I do not know whether membership increased or declined after this date. The minutes of the meetings that remain and the annual reports of the Division which appear in the *Proceedings* record little other than the titles of talks.

²⁰ However, as shown in Chapter 3, historical offerings had always featured in the *Proceedings*.

²¹ *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.55 (1954), p.ix.

the Historical Division and a long serving and committed member of the society, protested that:

only one of the members of the Council who are members of the Geography Association has any background or tradition based upon personal or family history within the State, and those so often are only making their stay in South Australia a stepping stone to more lucrative appointments in other teaching activity.²²

Many of the older members of the Royal Geographical Society were descendants of pioneers and objected to newer members with no connection with the state. Because of their antecedents these original members had continued the adulation of explorers and pioneers. But when geography became an academic discipline the focus broadened and their heroes were no longer considered important by the new breed of academic geographers.²³ An attempt to change its name to the Royal Geographical and Historical Society failed. Disagreements over subscription fees and the publication of historical papers dragged on, but the fundamental dissension centred on the surrender of control of the society's libraries to the Public Libraries Board. In March 1966 some members unsuccessfully suggested dividing the society into the Royal South Australian Historical Society and "another", which proved to be the death knell for history within the Royal Geographical Society. The number of meetings of the Division declined and it went into suspension in 1968. At its meeting on 27 May 1969 the council of the Royal Geographical Society declared the Historical Division defunct.²⁴ After more than 80 years the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia South Australian Branch relinquished any pretensions to being a historical society.

Even though the two disciplines seemed to intersect it proved impossible to reconcile the disparate aims of geographers and historians, and the creation of a separate historical section failed to ease the situation.²⁵ Nevertheless, while conflict between

²² Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Letter dated 24 March 1957.

²³ Grenfell Price represented the Royal Geographical Society on the committee of the Historical Division but never joined in his own right. He resigned in 1950 and later joined the Geography Association, thus confirming his preference for geography over history.

²⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Meeting, 19 March 1963; Minutes of Council Meeting, 8 March 1966; Minutes of Council Meeting, 27 May 1969.

²⁵ Although the Society now concentrates on geography, it has not been able to separate itself completely from history. On his death in 1980 Maj-Gen. G.W. Symes, president from 1954 to 1957, bequeathed \$5000 to the society "to provide from time to time an award for historical research into the history of South Australia and the Northern Territory insofar as it affects the history of South Australia". While the Historical

history and geography had always limited the achievements of those members who were historically minded, until the formation of the Pioneers' Association the Royal Geographical Society was the only organisation concerned with recording the history of South Australia. From its inception it had published accounts of the early days of the state, and from 1926 the Historical Memorials Committee had commemorated the lives and deaths of explorers and pioneers.²⁶ Members of the society worked for a more inclusive celebration of history through the Historical Division but hopes that it would fulfil the functions of state historical societies elsewhere in Australia were never realised. The failure of the division to publish a historical journal or to establish affiliated societies, two of the main achievements of the other state societies, confined its influence to only a minority of South Australians.

Until its change in direction, the Royal Geographical Society had co-operated with the Pioneers' Association in many historical activities. However, in 1947 members of the association objected to a move by their executive to affiliate with the Historical Division for two reasons. First, if they used the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society they would have to provide their own chairs, and second, and perhaps more importantly, they would not be able to have afternoon tea.²⁷ Nevertheless, both groups collaborated in celebrating explorers, pioneers and milestones and on several occasions held joint meetings. This is not surprising given that the executive membership in both groups overlapped, and no doubt, because most belonged to the establishment, interacted in other economic, cultural and social activities.²⁸

Society of South Australia had formed in 1974 and was by this time well established, Symes stipulated that if the society lapsed the fund should be transferred to the University of Adelaide or some other suitable body for the same purpose. And, although Symes played a major role in the foundation of the National Trust, he also disregarded this body.

²⁶ This Committee declined after the institution of the Historical Division and finally "expired" at the beginning of 1961. Historical Memorials Committee Report, 1962. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol. 63 (1962), pp.93-94.

²⁷ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Executive Committee meeting, 6 October 1947; Annual General Meeting, 21 October 1947; Executive Committee meeting, 30 October 1947; General Committee meeting, 17 November 1947; General Committee meeting, 4 March 1948; Annual General Meeting, 27 September 1948.

²⁸ G.C. Morphett was president of the association from 1937 to 1957 and president of the Royal Geographical Society from 1938 to 1943; Harold Finnis was president of the Pioneers' Association from 1957 to 1968, president of the Royal Geographical Society from 1950 to 1953 and chairman of the Historical Division from 1950 to 1952 and from 1955 to 1964; K.T. Borrow, long-time member of the Pioneers' Association and president from 1973, was an active member of the Royal Geographical Society and honorary secretary of the Historical Division for many years. The honorary secretaries of the Pioneers'

Unfortunately the Pioneers' Association presented a limited history and focused only on the lives of those who had arrived in the first ten years. It presented an extreme example of the attachment to the 'mother country'.²⁹ Perhaps because of this circumscribed view, combined with its restricted membership, it did not maintain its initial growth rate and indeed declined. Two years after its founding membership had stood at 575 but by 1945 it was 479 and, despite a drive to reach 1000 members in 1946,³⁰ membership remained below 500, declining to 389 in 1966. The Pioneers' Club of Australasia countered a similar decrease by extending its qualifying period for membership. The Pioneers' Association rejected this option, fearing the dilution of its exclusive nature, and hoped that it could recruit the many eligible ancestors who had not joined.³¹ By following this course the descendants of some of Adelaide's leading families restricted the flow of new blood into an organisation in decline, thus reducing its contribution to recording the history of the state.

Despite the declining membership, in 1952 G.C. Morphett enthused:

Recording our history, preserving relics of the past and fostering our traditions is the real purpose of this Association. We are all linked in a common heritage, the heritage of adventure, initiative, self reliance and love of country. These things are still of the greatest importance.³²

But even in its early years only a very few members had participated in historical activities and this situation continued. Of the 42 publications printed between 1946 and the end of 1955, Morphett wrote 11, T.C. Borrow ten, L.J. Ewens three and Vernon Smith and J.S. Rees two each, with 14 other members writing one each. From 1956 the number of publications declined and the president repeatedly called for greater research input

Association from 1935 to 1968, T.C. Borrow and G.T. Clarke, also belonged to the geographical society. Morphett, Finnis and Clarke, among others with membership in both societies, played major roles in the formation and early years of the National Trust of South Australia.

²⁹ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. An item in the Annual Report for 1952-53 reads: "The family histories of the early pioneers that we have been able to authenticate will be of great help to historians in compiling a record of the growth of this British community, and a great incentive to younger generations to take pride in their ancestry and further their good work."

³⁰ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Special Committee Meeting, 25 March 1946.

³¹ *Ibid.* Committee Meetings, 30 October 1947 and 4 March 1948; President's Annual Report, Annual General Meeting, 28th September 1959. The population of South Australia in 1845 was 25,893; thus a large percentage of those entitled to join had not.

³² *Ibid.* Report of the President, Annual General Meeting, 29 September 1952.

from members.³³ In 1966 the future of the association seemed particularly precarious. G.T. Clarke, the honorary secretary, finally acknowledged that the majority of members simply wished to preserve sentimental ties with an association that honoured pioneers. Most only occasionally attended meetings but enjoyed the country excursions with fellow descendants of pioneers, particularly if they were to places connected with the early history of the state. Whereas Clarke believed that “There is no society or organisation other than our own (as far as I know) which attempts to cater for people with the common ties of pioneer ancestry, to study history and to provide social events of popular appeal”, history remained a minor consideration.³⁴

Members of Adelaide’s elite had established and joined the Royal Geographical Society and the Pioneers’ Association. In the 1940s and 1950s some Adelaideans, in the main drawn from this same establishment group, realised the importance of the natural and physical environment and the need for a dedicated lobbying body to protect them for the benefit of future generations. Whereas Adelaide’s slower rate of growth meant that the city did not expand like Sydney or Melbourne, development increased as a result of the increased industrialisation encouraged by Premier Thomas Playford.³⁵ While the threat to Adelaide’s colonial architecture still came as much from neglect as from demolition, during the early 1950s the central business district began to alter. Coincident with the changes in the city centre, sprawling suburbia and the clearing of land for cultivation threatened the natural environment. Between 1945 and 1961 the expansion of Adelaide and its metropolitan area approximately equalled that of the whole preceding period.³⁶ Some individuals realised that unless they took action much of the known landscape would disappear.

For many years members of both the Royal Geographical Society and the Pioneers’ Association had agitated for the renovation of certain heritage buildings and for

³³ *Ibid.* See President’s Report at the Annual General Meetings of 26 October, 1956, 28 September 1959, 8 November 1963, 11 November 1966, 28 November 1968.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Memorandum presented to the Annual General Meeting, 11 November 1966.

³⁵ For details of Playford’s industrialisation policy, see N. Blewett and D. Jaensch, *From Playford to Dunstan: The Politics of Transition*, Melbourne (1971) and Stewart Cockburn, *Playford: Benevolent Despot*, Adelaide (1991).

³⁶ A. Marshall, “The Growth of Subdivision in the Adelaide Urban Area”, *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.62 (1961), p.66.

the retention of open spaces and untouched bushland. In 1947 a deputation to the premier consisting of representatives from the two groups requested that the old Legislative Council Building be preserved as a historic memorial.³⁷ The same year G.T. Clarke of the Pioneers' Association, former member of the Royal Geographical Society and the local Liberal and Country League member for the metropolitan seat of Burnside, asked the premier to restore this building and make it available to patriotic and learned societies for a meeting place.³⁸ In each instance Playford replied that, because the building was in a bad state of repair and hampered the beautification of North Terrace, it would be demolished. On 12 February 1951 a deputation composed of members of Adelaide's establishment urged Playford to preserve Austral House on North Terrace (known as Ayers House from the mid-1960s), a gracious old home connected with the mining magnate and five-time colonial premier Henry Ayers, and convert it to a museum of South Australian history. The deputation proposed gathering relics of the early days of the state and also transferring the historical collection from the National Gallery to display in the new museum, which was to be modelled on Vaucluse House in Sydney.³⁹ Playford agreed to prevent structural alterations to the building and promised that, when it was no longer required as a nurses' home, he would give "sympathetic consideration" to the wishes of the deputation.⁴⁰

The deputation heard nothing from Playford, and after two years some members decided to take further action. The Royal Geographical Society arranged a meeting of representatives of 14 societies. They met on 14 June 1953 and appointed a committee of

³⁷ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Minutes of Council Meeting, 16 April 1947. Sir Lavington Bonython and Sir Douglas Mawson represented the society and George Morphet and Travers Borrow represented the Pioneers' Association.

³⁸ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. General Committee meeting, 12 June 1947. The linking of patriotic and learned societies should not be surprising. Various societies had shared rooms in the Institute Building and membership of the different groups often overlapped, for example the cross-membership between the association and the Royal Geographical Society.

³⁹ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Historic Buildings File. The members of this deputation were: The Honourable Mr. Justice Abbott, Chairman, Libraries Board of South Australia; His Honour Mr. President Morgan, Chairman, Art Gallery Board; The Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor, Mr. Arthur Rymill; Sir Lloyd Dumas, Editor, *Advertiser*; K.M. Yelland, President, South Australian Institute of Architects; H.J. Finnis, President, Royal Geographical Society; J.D. Cheesman, Past President, Royal Australian Institute of Architects; Sir Douglas Mawson, Museum Board of South Australia; H. Womersley, Royal Society of South Australia; T.C. Borrow, Pioneers' Association; and W.H. Bagot, Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

⁴⁰ President's Report 1951. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.52 (1951), p.61.

five to “examine the claims of any structural relics brought to its notice, to submit an opinion thereon, and make any recommendation it thought desirable.”⁴¹ Thus, this committee acted as a quasi-national trust but it had little impact. It examined four buildings but recommended only that the government establish a historical museum in Austral House,⁴² and wrote to the premier reminding him of his previous commitment. Again Playford procrastinated and a further request in 1954 failed even to have one room of the house set aside for use as a historical museum. Indeed, prospects for preservation appeared so grim that E.J.R. Morgan, president of the National Gallery Board and a member of the committee, advised that “no further step is opportune at the moment ... I feel that we have no chance of attaining the end we think desirable at present, and to take some action might do harm rather than good.”⁴³

Other South Australians were not so easily dissuaded, and in 1948 G.T. Clarke suggested that the government establish a national trust, to which the parliamentary draftsman replied:

It is bad policy to create any new public authority unless the need for it is clearly shown. Each new public authority involves additional work and expense, and we have a very large number of them at present.

So far as parks and open spaces are concerned, there are ... quite enough authorities at present with power to acquire, create and manage them ...

As regards the preservation of buildings and monuments and remains of historical interest ... in my view there are not sufficient buildings, monuments and remains of this kind in South Australia to justify the creation of a public authority to maintain them.⁴⁴

In view of such a strong recommendation, and the obvious lack of concern for the state's built heritage, it is not surprising that the government took no action. Undeterred, on 15 July 1949 Clarke introduced to the premier a deputation led by G.C. Morphett, requesting the formation of a national trust to oversee the preservation of natural flora and fauna and

⁴¹ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Historic Buildings File. “Historic Buildings of South Australia. Report of Committee”.

⁴² President's Report 1953. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, Vol.54, (1953), pp.44-45. The other three buildings were Sturt's home, the Mohammedan Mosque and the Old Legislative Council Building.

⁴³ State Records (SA). GRG24/6 118 1951. Letter dated 26 August 1953; Letter to the Premier from The Hon. Mr. Justice Abbott, Chairman, Libraries Board of South Australia, 26 August 1954; letter to Justice Abbott from the Premier, 24 September 1954. State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library. PRG368/10. Letter to H.J. Finnis from E.J.R. Morgan, 12 January 1955.

⁴⁴ State Records (SA) GRG24/6 819 1948. Memorandum from E.L. Bean, Parliamentary Draftsman to the Hon R.J. Rudall, Attorney General, 27 October 1948.

to receive bequests.⁴⁵ Later that year Clarke repeated his call for the formation of a national trust along the lines of the National Trust in England. He regretted that members of the House displayed little interest but commented that, “there is a tremendous body of public support for such a trust and that many organizations and enthusiastic people are awaiting a move for its establishment”.⁴⁶

One such enthusiast was H.A. (Bill) Lindsay, a prolific writer of adult and children’s fiction, a frequent contributor of natural history articles to newspapers and magazines, and an avid conservationist who helped launch the Adelaide Bush Walkers Club in 1946. In 1947 he read about the National Trust in England and decided that an organisation modelled on this body could protect the natural environment in South Australia and could also safeguard the state’s built heritage.⁴⁷ Although he received no support for his idea at a public meeting he called in February 1948, he continued to work for the formation of such an organisation. In February 1949 he wrote an article in the *Sydney Bulletin* outlining the functions of the English Trust and suggesting the formation of a similar body in South Australia. He accepted an invitation to join Clarke, Morphett, J.B. Cleland and E.E. Anthony in their unsuccessful deputation to the premier. While Clarke was primarily interested in saving buildings and Lindsay’s main concern was conserving the natural bushland, each envisioned an organisation that would care for both aspects of the environment. Initially they acted independently, unaware of the other’s moves, but later worked together to promote their ideas.⁴⁸ Although they knew that the National Trust of Australia (NSW), based on the English group, had formed in Sydney in 1945,⁴⁹ and recognised that the English model would have to be adapted to conform to Australian conditions, neither contacted the trust in Sydney for advice on its approach. Both Clarke and Lindsay envisioned a trust free from government control, modelled on

⁴⁵ E.E. Anthony, MLC., J.B. Cleland, Chairman of Commissioners of National Park, and Lindsay, founder of the Adelaide Bush Walkers, were the other members of the deputation.

⁴⁶ *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 9 August 1949, p.201.

⁴⁷ State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library. PRG33/25. H.A. Lindsay, “Precis of steps taken to form a National Trust in S.A., 1947-1951”.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* PRG33/41. They worked together on a plan to authorise honorary park rangers to protect flora and fauna reserves. Letter to Clarke from Lindsay, 29 July 1949.

⁴⁹ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. *Minute Book, National Trust for Sth. Australia*. Clarke mentioned the work of the NSW Trust at a meeting of the trust on 27 March 1951. State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library. PRG33/25. The Secretary of the National Trust in England mentioned it to Lindsay in a letter dated 21 July 1949.

the English trust. But they realised that their proposed body needed government support to free its properties and its funds from taxes, hence their repeated approaches to Playford.

Others reiterated the call for a national trust. When J.T. Burke, professor of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne and later one of the founders of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), visited Adelaide in April 1950 he suggested a national trust that would concentrate on buildings since the natural environment already had sufficient defenders, “Beautiful buildings in Australia should be as inviolate as parks. There is a tremendous outcry when anybody pulls down some trees. But trees can be grown again; an old building cannot be reconstructed.”⁵⁰ The *Advertiser* also supported moves to form a national trust to protect the physical and natural environment⁵¹ and in a lead article in 1951 questioned, “who is to take the first step?”⁵²

A group of residents mainly from the Adelaide hills took this first step in March 1951 and formed the National Trust for South Australia. The trust aimed to “preserve flora, fauna and objects and sites of historic or scientific interest or natural beauty”, based on the trust in England, but its primary concern was to protect the properties of its members who lived in the Adelaide hills from encroaching suburbanisation.⁵³ Clarke and Lindsay joined the organising committee, but just as it was finalising arrangements for a public meeting to launch the trust, the government announced that it was forming its own State Trust, to be controlled by the National Park Commissioners.⁵⁴ The National Trust for South Australia postponed the meeting and appointed a deputation to wait on Premier Playford. The deputation offered to co-operate with the State Trust, but the premier “did not favour a Trust run by Private Citizens as they frequently lost interest and there would be no guaranteed continuity.”⁵⁵ Because Playford and the members of the National Trust

⁵⁰ *Advertiser*, 14 April 1950.

⁵¹ See, for instance, editorials for 12 July 1949; 14 April, 1950; 17 April 1950.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5 January 1951.

⁵³ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. *Minute Book, National Trust for Sth. Australia*. See Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, 19 March 1951; *Advertiser*, 21 March 1951.

⁵⁴ *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 27 June 1951, p.7.

⁵⁵ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Special General Meeting, 5 July 1951; Report of Deputation to the Premier, 26 July 1951. The deputation consisted of Basil Harford, G.T. Clarke, H.H. Shannon (local Member of Parliament), Robert Napier, O. Symon, H.A. Lindsay and H. Clare. Playford probably already knew of the existence of the group since, at a Liberal-Country League meeting at Gumeracha (exact date of meeting unknown but around 1951), the trust and its work were mentioned but

for South Australia could not agree on the composition of the proposed trust, Playford introduced the Bill as drafted and then let it lapse.⁵⁶ From this time the National Trust for South Australia confined itself to local matters although it continued to push for appropriate legislation and submitted an amended proposal to the parliamentary draftsman. Bean redrafted the Bill in 1954, but matters went no further until 1955.

The catalyst for the formation of the National Trust of South Australia in 1955, as it had been for the National Trust for South Australia, was a threat to the natural environment.⁵⁷ Government action in revoking a bird sanctuary on Youngusband Peninsula in the Coorong, donated to the government in 1948 by Sir James Gosse, precipitated these moves.⁵⁸ A.A. Abbie, professor of Anatomy and Histology at the University of Adelaide, chairman of the South Australian Aboriginal Affairs Board and member of the Flora and Fauna Committee, wrote to the *Advertiser* criticising the government's decision.⁵⁹ Other letters followed,⁶⁰ prompting Abbie, backed by J.B. Cleland, chairman of the National Park Commissioners, to press for the creation of a national trust to administer wild life sanctuaries in South Australia.⁶¹

Lindsay knew that Cleland had worked for a trust financed by government that would concentrate on the natural environment and hence would be anxious to retain control of any new body. He therefore acted promptly to ensure the provision of a private

Playford showed no interest and was indeed hostile to the group. Personal communication from Frank Hurrin, son of one of the founders of the trust, 12 August 1993.

⁵⁶ State Records (SA). GRG24/6 614 1949. Memorandum from E.L. Bean, Parliamentary Draftsman, 26 November 1951; *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 28 November 1951, p.1535.

⁵⁷ However, earlier letters to the *Advertiser* (from F. Kenneth Milne on 17 May and H.J. Allen on 19 May 1955) concerned with the demolition and neglect of Adelaide's old landmark buildings prompted the *Advertiser* to support the movement to form a national trust.

⁵⁸ *Advertiser*, 3 March, 26 March, 19 April, 23 June 1955.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 25 June, 2 July 1955.

⁶⁰ On 2 July, 6 July (two), and 7 July (three). The *Advertiser* also published letters opposing the sanctuary, for example 8 July, 12 July, 13 July, and 16 July, 1955.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7 July 1955. State Records (SA). GRG24/6 187 1955. While the *Advertiser* carried several stories on the issue (19 April, 23 June, 30 June, 8 July) and opposed the revocation of the sanctuary in its leader, the attitude of the editor, Sir Lloyd Dumas, is interesting. On 7 July he wrote to "Tom" [Playford] pointing out that, though Gosse may not have explicitly stated that his donation be designated a bird sanctuary, Gosse had indicated to him that the preservation of the land "centred on the preservation of the native life aspect." Dumas continued, "I do not know whether you had much to do with this handing over of the property, but I did feel that I should tell you what I know beyond doubt was his intention. *I will, of course, not use this in 'The Advertiser'*" [my italics]. Because of his commitment to Playford's Government, Dumas was prepared to go only so far in opposing Playford's intentions!

trust to protect both the physical and the natural environment.⁶² He persuaded G.W. Symes and C.C. Deland, fellow members of the Royal Geographical Society, to join him to finalise incorporation of the National Trust of South Australia. Probably because he was aware of the increasing concern in the community about the need to conserve the natural and physical environment, this time Playford listened. The deputations and requests to the government dating from 1948,⁶³ combined with the growing agitation in the press, at last convinced him that it was politically expedient to support the public's wishes.⁶⁴ The closing sentences of a summary of the work of the National Trust for South Australia adds weight to this argument:

It is regretted that such a long time has elapsed since the last meeting of the Trust but the Premier has been sitting on the Bill and the Publicity given to the newly formed Trust has shaken him somewhat of his lethargy. Let us hope he will now go full speed ahead. Every day in the papers one reads of fresh necessities of the existence of a National Trust and we must not relax our efforts to see that it properly eventuates.⁶⁵

Playford had played scant attention to town planning and, in his push for industrial growth, had allowed developers to ravage Adelaide and the surrounding areas.⁶⁶ Finally some South Australians rebelled against wholesale destruction of the environment, and Playford took notice.

On 12 August 1955 Playford held a conference between those who wanted a state-run body and the advocates of a private trust,⁶⁷ opening it with the words: "You've been here before about this. Since then I've been to England, have seen what their National Trust does and now I know what you're driving at ... You'll want a special Act passed.

⁶² State Records (SA). GRG24/6 614 1949, While Lindsay's primary interest was the natural environment, he was also concerned with retaining aspects of the built environment.

⁶³ *Ibid.* GRG24/6 187 1955. Playford also received personal letters objecting to the revocation of the bird sanctuary from P.G. Palfrey, Honorary Secretary of the Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society, R. Beruldsen, Honorary Secretary of the South Australian Ornithological Association, O.D. Waite and Robert Gosse, son of the donor of the land. One letter on file, from D.H. Susman, supported the revocation.

⁶⁴ This assessment of Playford's motives is justified; in his generally uncritical biography of Playford, Cockburn acknowledges that Playford acquiesced to public pressure for political reasons but then offered little further support. See in particular the appointment of Stuart Hart as Town Planner, p.164.

⁶⁵ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. *Minute Book, National Trust for Sth. Australia*. "Notes on Proceedings of Trust to date", n.d. but probably written in August 1955.

⁶⁶ Walter Crocker, *Sir Thomas Playford: A Portrait*, Melbourne (1983), p.144.

⁶⁷ Present at this meeting were J.B. Cleland, representing the National Park Commissioners; H.M. Hale, representing the Flora and Fauna Committee; Basil Harford, representing the National Trust for South Australia; H.A. Lindsay, representing the Adelaide Bush Walkers; L.T. Ewens, representing the National Trust of South Australia; and G.W. Symes, representing the Royal Geographical Society. Cleland and Hale supported a state-run body while the others wanted a private organisation.

I'll put it through for you."⁶⁸ But as all previous approaches to him to initiate a trust had presented the national trust in England as a model, and the members of the deputations had carefully explained the functions of that body and the reasons for emulating it, this seems to have been mere face-saving on Playford's part.⁶⁹ Cleland had hoped that Playford would create an organisation similar to the National Parks Service in the United States, with Cleland at its head, but he only partly succeeded in increasing the power of the National Park Commissioners. Playford agreed to amend the National Park Act to "enable the Commissioners to hold and administer any properties approved by the Minister",⁷⁰ but he also initiated legislation to incorporate a National Trust of South Australia. Despite his previous wishes, Playford relinquished control of the new body. The proposed legislation enabled the trust to hold property and be exempt from some taxes and council rates but did not commit the government to any expenditure. Ironically, the new body did not assume control of Younghusband Peninsula, the catalyst for its formation, since Gosse had specifically bequeathed the land to the government and the trust was to be a private body.⁷¹

Between 1946 and 1955 initiatives to preserve historic buildings concentrated in Adelaide and few people at this time seemed concerned about buildings distant from the capital. In 1949 members of the Pioneers' Association did not protest over the submerging of a gracious 1842 homestead at Williamstown but simply requested that the government name the new dam "Wongalere" after the historic property. However, Lindsay saw the value of enlisting country members in the National Trust of South Australia. He made the first moves to establish its extensive branch network when he wrote to H.C. Kempe in Renmark pointing out that, "We haven't the historic buildings to

⁶⁸ State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library, PRG33/25. H.A. Lindsay, "Notes on abortive attempt to form National Trust, 1949", 9 August 1965.

⁶⁹ Despite Playford's apparent change of heart about the need for a national trust, he remained an unregenerate developer. According to Sir Mark Oliphant, nuclear scientist and later Governor of South Australia, Playford was "surprisingly indifferent ... [to the] rape of the natural environment away from Norton Summit" in the Adelaide hills where he owned property. In the mid-1960s, before Playford's defeat, Oliphant complained to Playford about "ugly industrial developments on the Fleurieu Peninsula." He remembers Playford responding that "so long as I am Premier, and I can see one more square yard of Fleurieu Peninsula which can be exploited for the economic benefit of this community it will *be* exploited." Quoted in Cockburn, pp.329-330.

⁷⁰ State Records (SA). GRG24/6 614 1949. Memorandum to the Minister of Lands from the Premier, 22 August 1955; *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 23 August 1955, p.592.

⁷¹ *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 23 August 1955, p.592.

preserve which they have in the older countries, but we do have the beauty spots to save from despoliation, the harmless wild life and our native flowers and plants to preserve.” He asked Kempe and his wife to become foundation members of the trust and “to draw the attention of the Council to things which should be done.”⁷²

Thus, for many years some South Australians had worked to establish a national trust in South Australia. The motivation of those involved in the National Trust for South Australia was primarily the desire to protect their privileged lifestyle, but Clarke and Lindsay had no such self interest. Clarke became interested in antiquities while in the Middle East during the Second World War and realised the value of saving remnants of the past for future generations.⁷³ Lindsay displayed an interest in history from an early age and had his first historical piece, “Hyde Park - A Brief History”, published when he was only 16. Conserving the natural environment became one of his passions, and he worked for a national trust because he realised the need for a central body to which conservation groups could turn for support and assistance.

The fledgling National Trust of South Australia continued largely to ignore the National Trust of Australia (NSW). In an article in *The Riverlander* in October 1955, Lindsay outlined the formation of the trust and advised that, “There is nothing to stop the other States of Australia following suit.” In the same issue an editorial lamented that Sydney and Melbourne had suffered the ravages of development far more than had Adelaide and commented that:

Melbourne is becoming interested in a ‘Preserve Our Past’ movement to guard what remains of the city’s most distinctive architecture and it is said that Sydney may found a kindred society ... The best safeguard will be to extend the Trust born in South Australia to other States.⁷⁴

It is highly probable that the trust in New South Wales had contacted the National Trust of South Australia in 1955,⁷⁵ but if so, no co-operative ventures resulted. The National

⁷² State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library. PRG33/41.

⁷³ Personal communication, Jeffery Clarke, 29 July 1994. G.T. Clarke had intended to include a chapter in his memoirs on “Extramural activities” that presumably would have covered his associations with the Pioneers’ Association and the National Trust but unfortunately he died before writing it. His son holds the unpublished manuscript.

⁷⁴ H.A. Lindsay, “One State is Doing Something for Posterity”, *The Riverlander* (October 1955).

⁷⁵ State Records (SA). GRG24/6 614 1949. On 2 November 1955, I.F. Wyatt of the Trust in NSW, sent a copy of its Annual Report to Premier Playford and asked him for a contact address for the new body.

Trust of Australia (Victoria), launched in 1956, did not officially seek the advice of the South Australian body even though one of that organisation's founders, J.T. Burke, had been an early advocate of a trust in South Australia. However, when Robin Boyd, another founder of the Victorian group, was in Adelaide on other business he sought advice from various members of the trust.⁷⁶ While the South Australian body joined with the New South Wales and Victorian trusts in 1956 in a successful approach to the federal treasurer to gain exemption from some taxes and duties, as late as 1960 it declined reciprocal membership with the Victorian trust, believing itself to be "insufficiently developed".⁷⁷ Its reluctance to join with the other states perhaps caused Adela Purvis to turn to the National Trust of Australia (NSW) for guidance when establishing the Northern Territory National Trust in 1958, despite the greater similarities between Alice Springs and towns in rural South Australia than between Alice Springs and Sydney.

Members of the trust were wary about the formation of a Federal Council of National Trusts and declined an invitation to take part in a suggested convention in 1963. After a meeting of representatives from New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia in 1963, the South Australian group decided to "do all in its power to stop the formation of a Federal body in its present form" and instead to promote a loose affiliation based on its own proposals.⁷⁸ When the Australian Council of National Trusts incorporated in Canberra in February 1965, only the trust in South Australia did not join. However, for reasons unrecorded, in November 1966 the council of the trust unanimously agreed to join the federal body. While little co-operation existed between the Australian bodies, the National Trust of South Australia corresponded with the trust in England⁷⁹ and proposed "to follow the example of this great voluntary enterprise, and build up for the benefit of the people and the State its own pattern of similar endeavour."⁸⁰ The leaders of the trust were part of Adelaide's establishment and so turned to England for guidance rather than to their fellow Australians. Although it had

⁷⁶ Personal communication, Gavin Walkley, 16 July 1994.

⁷⁷ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Executive Committee, 31 October 1960.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 31 October 1960; 1 April 1963.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* Minutes of Council, 27 March 1956.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Annual Report, 1957, p.11.

declined reciprocal membership with the trust in Victoria in 1960, it readily accepted a similar offer from the English trust just a year later.⁸¹

South Australians were uncertain of the worth of the state's built heritage. Some trust members considered that, "In South Australia buildings of historic or architectural interest are comparatively few",⁸² while others held that this paucity of heritage buildings made their retention even more important. Clarke regarded the brief history of the state to be the main reason for establishing a national trust, as did J.T. Burke, who propounded that, "preservation of old and historic buildings was even more important in Australia than in England, because England had such a wealth of them and Australia so few."⁸³ Because of this ambivalent attitude to the built heritage, the initial focus of the trust centred on the natural environment.⁸⁴ An early promotional leaflet emphasised that its main interest was to be "the acquisition of places of natural beauty or scientific interest, of areas of rare or beautiful flora, or sanctuaries for fauna".⁸⁵ Thus what became for a time South Australia's *de facto* state historical society, taking over this role from the Royal Geographical Society, originally ignored the history of settlement.

The number of properties donated in these early years is remarkable. The trust received its first donation, 113 acres at Humbug Scrub near Kersbrook, before it even incorporated, and by 1965 had acquired 15 properties. Added to this, the government gave or leased two properties, and the trust and its branches purchased or leased a further nine properties. These totalled almost 2000 acres and included 21 reserves, three buildings, one paddle steamer and one ruin.⁸⁶ This accumulation of property was quite outstanding and indicates that at least some South Australians realised the value of the

⁸¹ *Ibid.* Minutes of Executive Committee, 2 August 1961.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Advertiser*, 14 April 1950.

⁸⁴ The ambivalent attitude to the State's buildings continued years after the trust's foundation, and in 1967 A.A.R. Cooper explained the trust had concentrated on the natural environment because "South Australia ... lack[ed] the rich colonial architecture perceptible in New South Wales and Tasmania." In this instance Cooper actually regretted that South Australia had no convicts, as he euphemistically commented that the buildings in these states date back "to the foundation of Australia when they enjoyed an abundance of labor." A.A.R. Cooper, "Outline of the Position which has been Reached in the Field of Historic Preservation in South Australia", Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia, 11-13 August 1967.

⁸⁵ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Leaflet sent to interested persons, 1955.

⁸⁶ *Silver Jubilee Handbook, 1955-1980: The National Trust of South Australia*, Adelaide (1980), pp. 14-19.

natural environment and were becoming conscious of the need to protect the physical remnants of the past.

But what was even more extraordinary was the growth in the branch network of the National Trust. H.C. Kempe organised the first branch in Renmark in 1957, and the Millicent and Mount Gambier branches formed in 1960. Others quickly followed; by the end of 1965 there were 15 rural and two urban branches, and by December 1974 39 rural and seven urban branches.⁸⁷ In some instances representatives from the central office visited country areas and suggested the formation of a branch, but in the majority of cases the impetus came from within the community. The branches often developed from moribund historical groups,⁸⁸ active historical committees, or progress associations, which approached the trust for advice on forming a branch. Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions and Apex also often promoted the formation of a branch in their town. Thus, while the executive of the trust actively promoted a branch network, in many cases the wish to form a history-based society already existed in the community, and the trust simply provided the organisational framework.

The focus of many branches diverged from the original emphasis on the natural environment. In the trust's first annual report the president had emphasised that, along with the reservation of open spaces, the aim of branches must be to set aside "a room or building ... for the collection, preservation, and display of records and relics of all kinds."⁸⁹ Consequently, the majority of branches realised the necessity to care for both the natural and the physical environment. They acquired old, often neglected buildings that they restored and opened as museums, and collecting artefacts for these museums became their most important activity. The experience of the Minlaton branch is probably not unusual:

At first the branch did not quite know what to do with itself, until [it] decided ... to stage an exhibition. It was a sort of desperate attempt to justify its existence, and the committee never visualized anything large or permanent arising from the

⁸⁷ Not all the branches survived and the Mannum, Northern Port Augusta, and Port Augusta branches went into recess. Penneshaw and Tumby Bay remained sub-branches of larger branches.

⁸⁸ Comment by R. Lewis, former president of the trust, mentioned in Susan Marsden, "History in the South: The Development of Historical Societies in South Australia", in Alan Roberts (ed.), *Grass Roots History*. Canberra (1991), p.47.

⁸⁹ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. *Annual Report*, 1956, Item 12.

suggestion. But somehow this captured the imagination of the town and our humble intentions were forcibly enlarged by the enthusiastic support we received. Contributions of historic relics, furniture, clothing, letters, photographs, utensils and documents came pouring in unsolicited, and what we had planned as a minor weekend venture became a big and lasting collection. We were not allowed to dismantle it!⁹⁰

Thus, residents of rural areas, whether or not they joined the National Trust, were proud of their past and wanted it preserved. By paying tribute to pioneer settlers, trust museums enriched the residents' lives and ensured their own continuity. The museums reinforced a sense of place in old residents and gave the decreasing number of new residents a chance to become involved in the town and to learn about its past. Local councils supported museums because they had potential to create revenue from tourists. Additionally, trust members began to value rural buildings and realise that, while rarely of architectural significance, they represented the life of the early settlers and so should be preserved. While the National Trust in Adelaide directed the movement, because of their number the branches could at times influence the policy makers at head office. A list of historic buildings in South Australia prepared by W.H. Bagot in 1956 included only 14 rural buildings.⁹¹ However, in the *Register of Historic Buildings 1972*, prepared by the trust, buildings listed in Adelaide encompass pages 1 to 7; suburban buildings, pages 8 to 21; and buildings in rural areas, pages 22 to 63. South Australians had at last recognised the worth of both urban and rural architecture.

The largest number of history-based organisations to form in the years between 1955 and 1974 was branches of the National Trust. As with the central trust, the local establishment played a prominent role in branches in prosperous rural areas. Judy Murdoch, a founding member of the Naracoorte branch, commented that, "it is odd, looking back on it, to realize how important having an 'old family' member in the Chair seemed".⁹² But this attitude changed. Rural dwellers were the first South Australians to acknowledge their unique Australian past. In celebrating more than the British heritage of the state they attracted townspeople from a wider cross-section of the community

⁹⁰ Diana Cook, *The Striding Years: A History of the Minlaton District Council Area*. Minlaton (1980), p.38.

⁹¹ State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library, PRG368/11, Letter to H.J. Finnis from W.H. Bagot, 7 October 1956. This list was not an official trust list but one Bagot prepared for a proposed book of historic buildings in South Australia. Nevertheless, as one of the guiding lights of the early trust, Bagot's list is a good indication of the opinion of most of the trust members in Adelaide of the worth of rural architecture.

⁹² Response to Questionnaire, Naracoorte branch of the National Trust.

including tradespeople, teachers, business men and women and farmers. Thus, in South Australia the democratisation of history began in the rural areas and then spread to the metropolitan region.

However, whether rural or urban, South Australians, like most other white Australians, cared principally about the past of the white settlers. Few considered saving the relics of Aboriginal society. Members of the National Trust were no different and made little effort to preserve Aboriginal artefacts. Had Abbie and Cleland achieved a greater input into the new body they might have encouraged specific reference to Aboriginal relics since both worked to preserve the cultural remains of Australia's first inhabitants.⁹³ Although Lindsay had co-authored two books dealing with Aboriginal culture,⁹⁴ he did not suggest that the trust care for Aboriginal relics. Indeed, the concerns of the trust reflected the class of the majority of the founders and the culture in which the organisation began. Members of the new body, all of Anglo-Saxon descent, acted to save aspects of the history of white settlement. At a seminar in October 1968, arranged jointly with the Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide, Robert Edwards, a member of the trust and secretary to the Aboriginal and Historic Relics Preservation Board, attempted to correct this imbalance. A discussion group chaired by him resolved that the trust "should be more actively interested and involved in the preservation of our Aboriginal heritage",⁹⁵ but since few members really cared about Aboriginal heritage, the trust's focus did not change.

The National Trust of South Australia began as a cautious and conservative body, anxious not to offend business or property interests. At the inaugural meeting on 7 March 1956 the Chairman, Keith Angas, advised that initial progress would be slow and steady;

⁹³ State Records (SA). GRG24/6 614 1949. For example, see the Minute from W.W. Moorhouse, Secretary, Flora and Fauna Committee to the Under Secretary and to the Premier, 23 August 1950, that precipitated the "Places of Scientific or Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Act, 1951". Moorhouse states that "a committee should be formed by legislation with necessary funds to protect rock carvings and other interesting national treasures. This led to a discussion on the formation of a National Trust for South Australia."

⁹⁴ With anthropologist Norman Tindale, Lindsay wrote a children's book, *The First Walkabout* (1954) and *Aboriginal Australians* (1963).

⁹⁵ R. Edwards, "Aboriginal Heritage: The Need to Preserve the Relics of South Australia's 20,000 Years of Prehistory", in Derek Whitelock (ed.), *Where Now with the National Trust?*, Proceedings of a Seminar arranged by the Department of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide and the National Trust of South Australia, 4-6 October 1968. Adelaide (1968), p.85.

that the trust wished to co-operate with all persons and bodies with similar aims; and decried the idea that the trust would “interfere with or usurp the functions of any existing bodies.”⁹⁶ Thus, he immediately allayed any fears held by sedate Adelaideans that they had a revolutionary organisation in their midst. The election of Sir Arthur Rymill, former Lord Mayor of Adelaide and now a member of the Legislative Council, as president set the tone of the organising committee. The conservative approach continued and in the first annual report Rymill reminded members that the view expressed at the inaugural meeting that “the National Trust should build on a solid foundation and gain strength steadily, rather than try to achieve spectacular results immediately” still held.⁹⁷ In the same year W.H. Bagot lamented the precarious existence of many historic buildings but regarded it as “hopeless to try and save the old block of the R[oyal] A[delaide] Hospital and [held that] owners of Banks can hardly be restrained from rebuilding in King William Street.”⁹⁸ This fear of controversy and resignation in the face of progress continued. In the his annual report for 1956 Rymill pondered:

How to reconcile two other things, the preservation of beautiful country and of beautiful buildings ... [and] the development of our State and provision of modern amenities? Often early buildings of historical or architectural interest are threatened with demolition so as to make way for a new structure larger, and perhaps, more convenient, but far less comely. How can the Trust, which must at all costs avoid becoming a universally interfering instructor, help to cement a happy marriage between the preservation of the beauty of our country, our townships, and our capital city, and the march of progress and the benefits which science can bring?⁹⁹

Dean Berry, as chairman of the Early Buildings Committee, reported that, “it was impossible to preserve many of the old buildings in Adelaide but portions might be preserved in an area set aside for the purpose.”¹⁰⁰ In 1965 the trust regarded as

⁹⁶ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of the Inaugural Meeting, 7 March 1956.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* Annual Report, 1956, Item 16.

⁹⁸ State Library of South Australia, Mortlock Library. PRG368/11. Letter to H.J. Finnis from W.H. Bagot, 7 October 1956.

⁹⁹ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Annual Report, 1961, p.7.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* Minutes of Executive Committee, 4 March 1963. The function of this Committee was to “classify existing buildings of architectural or historic interest (or both) built, or of which the major part was built, before 1886, whether churches, public buildings, banks, houses or of any other kind and whether in the metropolitan area or elsewhere in South Australia; and where it seems appropriate to the Committee to keep a record of the history and construction of such buildings.” It was extremely conservative - Berry believed that “the list of buildings which must be preserved at all costs should be kept as small as possible if it were to be of any use at all.” Minutes of Early Buildings Committee, 4 October 1961.

“regrettable but inevitable that the old E.S.&A. Bank building should go”, and was content to receive a “magnificent scale model”.¹⁰¹ And highlighting the competing strands within the trust, Arthur Rymill, its first president, presented the model in his position as chairman of the State Board of the AMP Society, the organisation responsible for demolishing the building. But this acquiescence to progress and to big business produced ructions both within and outside the trust and caused it to change its conservative policy.

In 1970 Mainline Corporation, a large construction company, announced plans to demolish the old ANZ bank in King William Street, completed in 1879 for the Bank of South Australia. Though superficially dilapidated the building was in very good condition, was of outstanding workmanship and design, and not only had an “A” classification in South Australia but was included on the national list of the Australian Council of National Trusts.¹⁰² However, the State Planning Authority, under the Liberal and Country League government of Steele Hall, had excluded it from its list of protected buildings because of strong objections by the owners. While formally objecting to its demolition, the trust appeared unwilling to fight to save the building. It was in a particularly difficult position because Berry, its current president, was the principal partner in the firm of architects employed by Mainline to design its replacement. Berry did not handle the details of the commission,¹⁰³ and absented himself from any discussion of the matter, but the trust at first seemed hesitant in its approach. Berry was “very upset ... to think that one of Adelaide’s best buildings may have to disappear because of the economics of the situation”. But he maintained that, “it is not feasible to retain everything which the Trust feels is desirable for the benefit of posterity”, and accepted that photographs and drawings would be adequate.¹⁰⁴ S.B.H. Game, now chairman of the Early Buildings Committee, worried that the trust’s image would diminish if it made no effort to save the building and encouraged action. After unsuccessful appeals to Mainline and to Labor Premier Don Dunstan to save the building,

¹⁰¹ *Ibid. Annual Report*, 1965, p.7.

¹⁰² *Ibid. Minutes of Special Executive Committee*, 17 December 1970.

¹⁰³ *Advertiser*, 5 January 1971.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

the committee decided it could do nothing on its own but would collaborate with others to preserve the building.¹⁰⁵

While the trust was going through the formal motions but achieving nothing, an ANZ Bank Building Preservation Committee had formed and launched an appeal. It sought the support of the trust but was disappointed, the trust declining assistance because of its own precarious financial position.¹⁰⁶ The Preservation Committee felt betrayed because, as Barbara Best, one of its members, explained, “the National Trust, as the only constituted preservation and conservation organisation, should take up ‘the cudgel’ whenever public opinion strongly indicates its help is needed, irrespective of the result or the cost.”¹⁰⁷ The committee collected 31,000 signatures on a petition to save the bank but failed to raise the necessary money.¹⁰⁸ In desperation, and following the precedent in New South Wales, members sought help from the unions and also considered enlisting the support of students to hold street demonstrations and marches.¹⁰⁹ The local branch of the Plumbers and Gasfitters Union agreed to ban plumbing and electrical work on the new building, and some young supporters agreed to help with a march. But neither assistance was needed since at the last minute Dunstan announced that his government would buy the building to house the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the Arts Development Branch.¹¹⁰

The bank affair was unpleasant and shook the trust. One member expressed his disappointment with “the Executive’s hesitant and half-hearted attitude” and regretted

¹⁰⁵ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Special Executive Committee, 17 December 1970; 29 January 1971.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Annual Report, 1971, p.15.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara J. Best, *Preserving Our Heritage: A Story of the Struggle to Preserve an Historic Building Written from ‘Behind the Counter’*. Adelaide (1973), p.16.

¹⁰⁸ The amount raised was pitifully small - just over \$6000, with a further \$6000 in pledges. However, had the appeal been conducted by the National Trust, donations would have been tax-deductible and hence the appeal might have succeeded.

¹⁰⁹ Best, pp.88-89.

¹¹⁰ Dunstan had originally declined government help because of lack of funds but then found that, “we were doing financially rather better than we had forecast due to a number of unforeseen but useful events, and that in addition we had a windfall in this financial year because the bills for construction of the Festival Centre would not come to hand till the following financial year.” He decided to “buy the bank” and convert it to a “Palace of Love, Life, Death and Dreams”. Don Dunstan, *Felicia: The Political Memoirs of Don Dunstan*, Melbourne (1981), pp.182-183. Despite Berry’s apparent reluctance to preserve the bank, he was “a great antiquarian and restorer”. Dunstan was so impressed with Berry’s architectural skills that he commissioned him to prepare the plans for the restoration of the bank and to implement these plans. Don Dunstan, “The Vandals at the Gate”, *Adelaide Review* (May 1995), p.18.

that, “the only element lacking [to save the building] appears to be a strong and purposeful lead from the Trust itself.”¹¹¹ C. Warren Bonython, its new president, was more optimistic and viewed 1971 as “a year of gains, with some losses (of certain faithful members and supporters) and a year of change, with a certain measure of turmoil at times, but it turned out finally and overall to be a year of consolidation and advance.” But he had noted the divisions in the trust. He was moved by a member at the annual general meeting who reminded those present that “the National Trust is a much greater force in the community than the numerical total of its membership indicates. It is a force for good to be reckoned with, to be heeded by the man in the street, by companies of men and by governments.”¹¹²

After 1971 the trust took a proactive role in preservation, and rather than waiting for historic buildings to be threatened approached their owners to enlist support in preserving them. Among other initiatives in 1974, the trust urged Adelaide and Wallaroo Fertilizers Limited to restore the Hughes Chimney stack at Wallaroo; attempted to acquire the historic home, Cummins; successfully requested the government to preserve the old “Z” Ward at Glenside Hospital; and proposed that a renewed effort be made to secure a large national park in the Murray Riverland area.¹¹³ The direction of its work in other areas also changed, albeit slowly. In a paper on historic towns given at a seminar in 1968 J.C. Bartlett, an architect and chairman of the Junior Group of the trust, proposed that 12 towns in South Australia should be considered historic. He suggested that the trust preserve whole areas, following the lead given by independent groups and national trusts in other states.¹¹⁴ Participants at the seminar recommended the appointment of a working group “to define criteria and assess claims and subsequently determine towns for classification of notable historic towns.”¹¹⁵ However, the trust did not deviate from its

¹¹¹ Letter from Peter Skellon to C. Warren Bonython, 17 April 1971. Quoted in Best, p.17.

¹¹² Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. *Annual Report*, 1971, p.8.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, *Annual Report*, 1974.

¹¹⁴ The towns were: Gawler, Robe, Goolwa, Burra, Willunga, Melrose, Kadina-Wallaroo-Moonta, Tanunda, Angaston and Clare. Participants at the seminar added Bethany, Kapunda, Kingscote, Paechtown, Quorn, Strathalbyn and Wellington. J.C. Bartlett, “Historic Towns”, in Whitelock (ed.), *Where Now With the National Trust?*, p.64.

¹¹⁵ In his summary of the proceedings of the seminar, Berry took his usual cautious approach. Regarding the proclamation of historic towns, he cautioned: “here I would issue a warning that the biggest problem in my view is the necessity for thorough appraisal before any proclamation whatsoever is made. ... it is something that must not be embarked upon lightly, or without the most thorough investigation, and again I feel that the

preoccupation with individual buildings until encouraged by funding from the federal government's National Estate program in 1978.

Despite its hesitancy in supporting many preservation projects the trust played a major role in the ongoing calls for the restoration of Ayers House, perhaps because it hoped to be allocated office space in the building. In 1964 Playford allowed the trust use of the stables and coach house for its administrative headquarters.¹¹⁶ But the trust did not move into the main part of Ayers House until 1973 when Premier Dunstan leased some of the main rooms to the trust for display purposes and to serve as offices. Because he wanted the house to be part of the life of Adelaide and be more than a museum of static exhibits,¹¹⁷ and perhaps in the hope of making the building pay for itself, the house included a formal restaurant and the coach house was converted into a casual eating place. This represented a marked change in approaches to preservation. Previously, the only use for restored buildings was as museums, but Dunstan pioneered their use in South Australia for commercial purposes.

The opening of Ayers House as a museum almost coincided with the opening, at last, of a museum celebrating the history of the state. Calls for such a museum, frequent before 1939, continued after 1945. In 1947 T.C. Borrow suggested that the Pioneers' Association appoint a custodian of historic relics and form its own museum,¹¹⁸ and on another occasion suggested that individuals donate their family relics to the Historical Section of the Art Gallery.¹¹⁹ But even had they followed this advice, the gallery could not have displayed their treasures because of a lack of room. In 1947, in an article on the need for a historical museum in Adelaide, John Harding Carroll described the historical collection as "nothing more inspiring than a singularly small collection of historical relics, with which is mixed an equal number of foreign articles of no significance to the

criteria should be such that very few towns in the whole of Australia could and should be eligible for such an honour." "Summing Up", in Whitelock (ed.), *ibid.*, p.116.

¹¹⁶ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. *Annual Report*, 1963, p.4.

¹¹⁷ Dunstan, p.181. Not all members of the trust approved of the joint functions of Ayers House. A descendant of the Mortlocks, the original owners of the house, offered to return one of the original chandeliers to hang again in the ballroom but when she found that this room was to house the restaurant and not be under the direct control of the National Trust she insisted it be hung in the National Trust area. This was done, but it became a danger to anyone over six feet tall. *Ibid.*, pp.181-182.

¹¹⁸ Archives of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia. Meeting of 6 October 1947.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* Annual General Meeting, 25 September 1950. The National Gallery changed its name to the Art Gallery in 1945.

State". He suggested a museum to bring together the diverse collections held by the Art Gallery, the Archives, the Royal Geographical Society, and in private hands.¹²⁰

In 1945 the Art Gallery Board had itself pressed the case for a historical museum "controlled by a Board whose interests were predominantly historical, rather than artistic". Additionally, it had requested that the government not demolish any public building erected prior to 1886 before considering its possible use as a historical museum. From 1946 the state government gave £100 per annum for the purchase of historical items, although most accessions continued to come from donations.¹²¹ But no museum eventuated, perhaps because J. Hunt Deacon, keeper of both the historical and numismatic sections from 1938 until his retirement in 1966, was more interested in coins and medals than in history. His retirement in 1966 coincided with the removal of the State Archives from the old Ordnance Store behind the gallery to the state library. The Art Gallery Board then decided to use the vacated building for a museum of paintings and relics relating to the history of South Australia. Renovation work dragged on, but finally in May 1972 the historical museum opened and Adelaide at last had a museum of South Australian history. Regrettably, the collection policy remained limited and concentrated mainly on paintings, prints, coins, weapons, costumes and medals, and hence the museum never developed into comprehensive museum of South Australia's history.¹²²

As well as calling on the state government to finance a museum dedicated to the history of the state, during the years from 1945 to 1974 some South Australians suggested the formation of museums of local history. In 1954 H.A. Lindsay decried the possibility that the contents of a private historical museum would be dispersed: "Such indifference makes a marked contrast to America, Britain and Europe, where the small local museum is regarded as a first class tourist attraction and an aid to education."¹²³ He believed that local history museums and archives containing town records were essential because "then local history cannot be forgotten or garbled."¹²⁴ In a follow-up editorial, the *Advertiser*

¹²⁰ *Advertiser*, 2 August 1947.

¹²¹ Annual Report of the Art Gallery Board of the National Gallery of South Australia, 1945-46, pp.7-8. For lists of acquisitions, see *Bulletin of the National Gallery of South Australia*.

¹²² In 1981 the government established the History Trust of South Australia to co-ordinate the presentation of the history of the state and the museum closed.

¹²³ *Advertiser*, 13 February 1954.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

suggested that “the solution to the problem of founding country museums ... might well be found through a heightened civic consciousness.”¹²⁵ In one successful instance, this “heightened civic consciousness” came from a newly arrived immigrant from Lithuania.

In 1949 Jonas Vanagas, with his wife and young son, emigrated to Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills. Vanagas had grown up speaking German and felt comfortable in Lobethal, which had been settled by Germans in 1842 and where many of the townspeople still spoke German. To establish a past for himself in Australia to compensate for losing the past of his own country he began compiling a photographic history of Lobethal. In addition, he believed that the Communists would be driven out of Lithuania and he wanted a permanent record of Lobethal because he intended to return to his birthplace. He also wished to describe the town where he was now living to friends who had scattered throughout the world. By chance the family doctor was C.C. Jungfer, former member of the South Australian German Historical Society. Jungfer had dreamed of collating the history of Lobethal but had never had the time. When he saw Vanagas’ history as well as some odd bits and pieces he had collected he was delighted and encouraged further efforts. Vanagas then wrote *Lobethal 1842-1954: An Historical Study* in English, which he completed in 1954.¹²⁶ Although never published, it received widespread praise.¹²⁷

Vanagas continued amassing his collection. Initially the local residents thought his obsession strange, but after seeing an exhibition of pieces collected from the surrounding area held in August 1955 many donated items or invited him to search through their disused sheds and houses for any likely objects. When the collection grew

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 15 February 1954.

¹²⁶ The Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum holds the only copy, and the Public Library of South Australia, the Lobethal Archives and the library of Kent State University in Ohio, USA., hold micro-film copies. Interview with Mrs. Claudia Vanagas, 17 August 1993; Jonas K. Vanagas, “Records and personal correspondence leading to the establishment of the Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum”. Unpublished. Held by Claudia Vanagas. Jonas K. Vanagas, “A documentary collection concerning Mr. Jonas K. Vanagas, and his activities”. Unpublished. Held by Claudia Vanagas.

¹²⁷ *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 24 November 1955, p.1831. When supporting the Bill for a National Trust of South Australia, H.H. Shannon commended Vanagas for his document and suggested that the government should support similar movements in other towns. Van Abbé, who had taken over writing the history of German settlement following the death of Schulz, considered Vanagas’ book “an admirable collection” and offered to give financial assistance to the publication “of a short descriptive work on Lobethal history.” Letter to Vanagas from Van Abbé, 9 December 1955. Vanagas, “A documentary collection”.

too large to store in his two-room cottage, Jungfer organised a room at the Lobethal Institute to house the "Vanagas Collection" where it could be open to the public. As well as Jungfer and Vanagas, the first committee of management included G.S. McDonald, deputy director of Education, and H.C. Brideson, principal librarian of the Public Library; and H.G. Schubert and R. Cameron of the institute committee.¹²⁸ Premier Thomas Playford, local member for the district, officially opened the museum on 6 May 1956, the day the townspeople celebrated the founding of Lobethal.

At a meeting on 26 January 1956, Jungfer (president), B. Schubert (honorary secretary), Vanagas (curator) and E.W. Dearman had formed a provisional committee for a historical society that was to oversee and add to the collection. Premier Playford agreed to become patron of the society. The committee hoped that the Lobethal Historical Society would affiliate with the South Australian Historical Society,¹²⁹ a curious wish considering that no such body existed. No historical society eventuated from this meeting, and on 10 June 1957 the Lobethal Community Progress Association and the Committee of Management of the museum jointly called a public meeting to form a historical society.¹³⁰ The new committee suggested affiliating with the Royal Australian Historical Society but rejected any association with the National Trust, "as they would be of no benefit to us, and also had no financial resources."¹³¹ The historical society as a separate entity was short lived, its last meeting being on 20 August 1958. It became a section of the Museum's management committee in 1961,¹³² and members never produced a promised history of Charleston, a nearby town.

The collection soon outgrew the room in the Institute so the Committee of Management proposed a new building, to be built around the old pug structure that had

¹²⁸ Archives of the Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum. Minute Book. In 1958 the Committee of Management was enlarged to five representatives from each of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, Inc., the Historical Committee of the St. John's Lutheran congregation, Lobethal, and the Lobethal Historical Society, plus two advisory members appointed by the Minister of Education, and the Curator. McDonald and Brideson remained on the committee as the representatives of the Minister of Education until 1973, after which there was no government representative on the committee.

¹²⁹ Vanagas, "Records". Letter to Kramer, Lobethal Institute Committee from C.C. Jungfer, 30 January 1956.

¹³⁰ Archives of the Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum. Minute Book.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* Minutes of meeting, 20 August 1958. The trust had previously procrastinated on a request for help to preserve the first Lutheran seminary in Lobethal.

¹³² *Ibid.* Minutes of Meeting, 9 July 1961.

been a Lutheran college and seminary. Playford, for so long deaf to pleas to assist in preservation and conservation, agreed to the committee's request for assistance from the Architect-in-Chief's Department in planning the new building. Additionally, the Government Tourist Bureau donated £500.¹³³ The new museum opened on 22 October 1961, with Playford again present.¹³⁴ It initially proved extremely popular with tourists and was included in the itinerary of day trips organised by the Tourist Bureau. It was also a model for others in their efforts to establish museums of local history, not all of which succeeded.

Derek Van Abbé, an Englishman who had lived in Adelaide since 1952, was dedicated to preserving the state's German heritage. He had taken on the task of writing the history of German settlement begun by Schulz. In 1956 he appealed to families in the Barossa Valley to preserve records and articles related to the development of the Valley since the Department of German at the University of Adelaide wished to establish an archives and museum on German settlement in South Australia.¹³⁵ Impressed by Vanagas' success,¹³⁶ in 1957 Abbé became involved in a project to establish a museum of German settlement in a derelict Lutheran school in Hahndorf.¹³⁷ He asked F.J.H. Blaess, principal of one of Adelaide's Lutheran secondary colleges, to launch an appeal to restore the Hahndorf Academy and convert it to a museum commemorating German settlers.¹³⁸ But Blaess doubted whether "the Hahndorf people would be very enthusiastic about spending money on equipping this old place as a Museum for S.A. German History

¹³³ *Ibid.* Minutes of Building Committee, 11 March 1960; Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 19 November 1961. Playford's assistance with the project is not as strange as it first appears. As the local member he was interested in supporting local initiative. The museum was to be self-funding and might have appeared as a money earner for local businesses, and so it fitted with Playford's philosophy. At the opening ceremony Playford enthused: "As Tourist Minister I can say how much this building and its contents does for the State's tourist industry." *Advertiser*, 23 October 1961.

¹³⁴ Playford gave such great assistance to the museum that the current secretary listed him, along with Vanagas and Jungfer, as a founder. Response to Questionnaire, Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum.

¹³⁵ *Nuriootpa and District Diary*, No.6 (April 1956).

¹³⁶ *Advertiser*, 26 November 1960.

¹³⁷ Van Abbé had been impressed by Vanagas and "hoped that the remaining old scholars will search their attics for mementoes of their schooldays and that people all over the Mount Barker district will support the holdings of the museum as those of the Lobethal district support theirs." *Advertiser*, 26 November 1960.

¹³⁸ Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide. *German Settlers in South Australia: Miscellaneous Papers 1776-1964*. Letter to Blaess from van Abbé, 10 October 1957.

and Life [since] two world-wars have made the majority of the people disinclined to publicise their German descent."¹³⁹

A further plea to Blaess also failed.¹⁴⁰ No further progress ensued until 1960 when Walter Wotzke, a local artist who had once used the building as an art gallery and was the son of an academy old scholar, tried to convince Playford's government to purchase the building. When this failed Wotzke determined to save it himself and convert it to a museum, an archives and an art gallery.¹⁴¹ Van Abbé; Jungfer; H.H. Shannon of the National Trust for South Australia; and S.B.H. Game and Jeffery Clarke, son of G.T. Clarke, of the National Trust of South Australia, all played some part in attempts to preserve the building.¹⁴² The Hahndorf Academy Museum Trust formed on 10 November 1960 to purchase, restore and maintain the academy. Van Abbé took note of Blaess' suggestion and promised that, since "the school was never exclusively German ... it is fit and proper that it should now serve, at least in part, as a museum for the whole vicinity, not merely for the German-descended population."¹⁴³ While Wotzke's father had come from Germany, most South Australians of German descent remained reluctant to celebrate their history. Another non-German immigrant, Latvian Karlis Lidums, stepped in to save part of the state's German culture and purchased the building, promising to keep it unchanged until the trust could buy it.¹⁴⁴ The Museum Trust had hoped to raise £25,000 to buy and restore the building but, despite working for several years and gaining publicity in both the local and the Adelaide papers,¹⁴⁵ was unsuccessful.¹⁴⁶ In 1965 Dean Berry, on behalf of the National Trust, supported not just the preservation of the academy but of the whole town,¹⁴⁷ but did little to aid the Museum Trust.¹⁴⁸ The Museum Trust

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* Letter to van Abbé from Blaess, 17 October 1957.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 November 1957.

¹⁴¹ Lutheran Archives 550.000, 1,1 Hahndorf. Letter to F.J.H. Blaess from Wotzke, 6 April 1960.

¹⁴² Since he returned to England in 1962 Van Abbé had little to do with the Hahndorf Academy Museum Trust.

¹⁴³ *Advertiser*, 26 November 1960.

¹⁴⁴ Reg Butler, *A College in the Wattles: Hahndorf and its Academy*, Adelaide (1989), p.232.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, *Mount Barker Courier*, 15 June, 13 July, 30 November 1960; 15 August 1962; 9 November 1966; *Advertiser*, 2 July, 5, 19, 26 November 1960; 4 April, 20, 25 September, 9 October 1962; 28 October, 5, 9, 25 November 1963; 22, 24 June 1965; 19 August, 4 November 1966.

¹⁴⁶ Archives of the Hahndorf Academy Museum Trust. Minutes of Meeting, 25 August 1966. Only \$900 in total was donated to the building appeal between 1960 and 1966.

¹⁴⁷ *Advertiser*, 24 June 1965.

had anticipated government support,¹⁴⁹ but approaches to Playford and later to Labor Premier Frank Walsh failed to gain financial assistance for the restoration.¹⁵⁰ In 1966 a public appeal for funds elicited only four responses.¹⁵¹ Elva Wotzke, Walter Wotzke's wife, had become interested in the history of the district and had opened a small cottage museum in the main street of Hahndorf. In 1966 she purchased the academy to save it from demolition, and she and her husband restored it.¹⁵² Perhaps understandably the focus of the building became an art gallery and the hoped-for museum remained merely a jumbled collection of relics.

The interest exhibited by newcomers to Australia in this period is interesting. Tamara Harevan claims that in the United States many immigrants and their descendants were driven by assimilationist pressures to make a self-conscious search for roots and shared experiences after their particular groups ceased to be replenished by new migrants.¹⁵³ This also happened in South Australia and ethnic groups established museums dedicated to their own culture.¹⁵⁴ But the interest in South Australian history came at a time of high immigration, and concentrated on the history of the migrants' new country, not of their old. Perhaps, as was the case with Vanagas, the need to establish a past in the new country also affected other immigrants.

New Australians were not alone in supporting local museums. In 1953 Charles Fenner, president of the Royal Geographical Society, renewed calls to restore and

¹⁴⁸ In a letter to the editor, Dean Berry acknowledged the desirability of preserving the town but the only support he offered was to declare that, "the National Trust would be delighted to see the Hahndorf Academy saved at this 11th hour". *Advertiser*, 7 July 1966.

¹⁴⁹ Lutheran Archives. 550.000,1,1 Hahndorf. Letter soliciting funds for the restoration of the Academy written in 1963.

¹⁵⁰ Hahndorf Academy Museum Trust. Minutes of Meeting, 18 August 1966. A deputation to the Premier on 29 April 1965 met with no success, and a letter from the premier dated 11 August 1966 stated that the government was in no position to help financially.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² The members of the trust were divided on the legality of this sale and several members, including Game and Clarke, resigned in protest.

¹⁵³ Tamara K. Harevan, "The Search for Generational Memory: Tribal Rites in Industrial Society", *Daedalus*, Vol. 137 (Fall 1978), p. 147.

¹⁵⁴ Following his success with the Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum, the Lithuanian community approached Jonas Vanagas to assist in establishing a Lithuanian Museum and Archives. This museum opened in 1958, and while it featured art work by Lithuanian-born Australian artists, its purpose was "to show the members of Adelaide Lithuanian community and to all visitors at least the part of Lithuania's history, culture, crafts, etc." The museum ignored the history of the Lithuanian community in South Australia. This approach has changed slightly and the museum is now developing an interest in the life of Lithuanians since their arrival in South Australia. Personal communication, Kate Walsh, Migration Museum.

preserve the Grange as a memorial to the explorer Charles Sturt. He lamented that the government previously had refused to help,¹⁵⁵ and urged South Australians to “rise up ... and do something before it is too late.”¹⁵⁶ The *Advertiser* supported his plea and advocated the establishment of a more broadly based national trust than the “National Trust of SA” that had formed in 1951. The new body “could be responsible for preserving where possible buildings and other places which help develop a sense of history and tradition, or are of scientific interest.”¹⁵⁷ While several correspondents to the paper proposed the formation of a Sturt Memorial Committee to raise the necessary funds to purchase and care for the house,¹⁵⁸ not everybody thought the house was worth saving. The committee of five, formed from the representatives of the 14 societies that had met on 14 June 1953 had concluded that Sturt’s original house was “a ruin, and quite beyond repair”, and “the garden, in which Sturt took such pride, has ceased to exist.” It declined to take any responsibility for the preservation but, acknowledging the local interest in the house, suggested the establishment of a fund to raise money for the purchase of the home and land.¹⁵⁹

Nothing could be done until the owner agreed to sell, which he did in February 1955. At this time D.J. Newlands, Mayor of Henley and Grange, unsuccessfully urged the government to buy the Grange and preserve it as a memorial to Sturt and his achievements.¹⁶⁰ As well as having a genuine wish to save the home, he hoped that the restored house and gardens would become a tourist attraction and would thus financially benefit his ratepayers.¹⁶¹ Correspondents to the *Advertiser* supported his campaign to raise the £3000 to purchase the property,¹⁶² and the *Advertiser* advocated that the house be saved and suggested that the proposed National Trust might look after it.¹⁶³ In

¹⁵⁵ State Records (SA). GRG49/2. Minutes of the Executive Committee, State Centenary. In 1934 the government declined a suggestion from the Henley and Grange council that the Grange be restored as a Centenary project. In 1946 the Government Tourist Bureau had rejected suggestions that the government purchase Sturt’s home as a national memorial. *Advertiser*, 5 October 1948.

¹⁵⁶ *Advertiser*, Letter to the Editor, 13 May 1953.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 14 May 1953.

¹⁵⁸ 15 May 1953, 9 June 1953.

¹⁵⁹ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch. Historic Buildings File. “Historic Buildings of South Australia. Report of Committee”.

¹⁶⁰ *Advertiser*, 11 February 1955.

¹⁶¹ *Sunday Mail*, 7 May 1955.

¹⁶² 17, 19 May, 2, 23 August 1955.

¹⁶³ 24 August 1955.

February 1956 Newlands convinced his council (four votes for, three against) to purchase the Grange.¹⁶⁴ He hoped that the National Trust would help the newly formed Charles Sturt Memorial Committee to co-ordinate an appeal for funds and would eventually take over the running of the house.¹⁶⁵ However, he was to be disappointed. The trust withdrew from the committee because of a poor response to preliminary attempts to raise funds. It had no resources of its own and so could not cover the sum of over £3000 that had to be guaranteed before the appeal started.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the trust supported the Memorial Committee in its appeal, and its honorary secretary, George Symes, acted as Liaison Officer. Jeffery Clarke, John Bonython, Robert Edwards and R.D.J. Weathersbee, all prominent members of the National Trust, also worked on the Memorial Committee at various times, as did H.S. Newland and K.T. Borrow, long-time members of the Pioneers' Association and the Royal Geographical Society.

The first appeal was spectacularly unsuccessful. The committee launched the appeal at the same time as state-wide fund-raising campaign to aid victims of the disastrous floods along the Murray River was in progress. Present human need appeared more deserving than an old decayed building, and the response from the general public as well as large companies for restoration of the Grange was meagre. Requests interstate for assistance also failed. The Historical Society of Canberra offered its support, but the Royal Historical Society of Victoria refused and the Royal Australian Historical Society did not even respond. A second fund-raising drive, this time for £30,000, was launched on 2 June 1960 by a rejuvenated committee, the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust. This campaign also only limped along. The *Advertiser* published names of donors and their gifts. The only large donations appear to be from the *Advertiser* and SA Associated

¹⁶⁴ Archives of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, Historical Memorials Committee. Newlands was correct in his certitude that the Grange was original. A sub-committee of the Historical Memorials Committee met on 23 March 1956. It compared photographs of the main building as it appeared at present with photographs taken in 1928 and earlier, with an authenticated copy of a water-colour sketch painted by Sturt, and with a copy of a sketch of the residence held in the Royal Empire Society, London. M.R. Casson and H.J. Allen gave details of the history of the property. The sub-committee resolved that, "it is unanimously of the opinion that the present structure is essentially and indisputable the residence which was built and occupied by Captain Charles Sturt."

¹⁶⁵ *Advertiser*, 20 February 1956; Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Council, 27 March 1956; Minutes of Executive Committee, 23 October 1956.

¹⁶⁶ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Executive Committee, 27 June and 12 July 1956.

Brewers, which each gave £500, and the Bank of Adelaide, which donated £150; the National Trust donated £6.6.0. The appeals committee approached Premier Playford, who consented to subscribe £3000 over three years. By December 1960 the appeal had reached £6500 plus the £3000 donated by the government, and the campaign all but lapsed.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, restoration work began in September 1961 on the nursery cottage that adjoined the main house and was completed by early 1963.

The funding situation improved and in 1965 the Henley and Grange Council presented the deeds of the house to the trust.¹⁶⁸ However, the problems of the Museum Trust were not over. Running a profit-making venture proved to be very different from conducting a financial appeal, and the Museum Trust considered merging with the National Trust or the art gallery.¹⁶⁹ At first the art gallery was the most appealing since the Museum Trust believed that the gallery was establishing a historical division and hoped that the Grange “could form the nucleus of a future State Historical Museum that could be erected on the adjoining property.”¹⁷⁰ When negotiations with the gallery failed the Museum Trust explored the possibility of joining or becoming part of the National Trust. With a degree of reverence commonly found in America but not often heard in Australia, David Sturt-Bray, descendant of Sturt and chairman of the Museum Trust, heralded this as:

a wise and foreseeing move, for under this powerful Trust with Government backing the safety and care of our beloved Capt. Sturt's House and relics will be additionally safeguarded for the benefit of the people of Australia and for this State ensured for the children's children and their children for the next hundred years or more. We have fulfilled our task and acted in the highest and best regard for our trusteeship, without self interest or personality.¹⁷¹

The National Trust intimated interest in taking over the Grange at a peppercorn rental,¹⁷² but the Henley and Grange Council refused to hand over the property, arguing that as ratepayers had financed the Grange they would have to give their approval.¹⁷³ When the

¹⁶⁷ Various editions of the *Advertiser*, June to December 1960.

¹⁶⁸ Archives of the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust. *Chairman's Report*, 1965.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Letter to C. Stanton Hicks, President, Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust, from R.D.J. Weathersbee, 20 March 1967.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Letter to C. Stanton Hicks from L.T.P. Berry, R.J. Edwards, G.H. King and R.D.J. Weathersbee, 4 July 1967. Correspondence file 1967-68.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* Chairman's Report, 1969.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* Minutes of General Committee Meeting, 9 April 1969.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 19 November 1969.

Council offered to form its own committee to run the museum, the Museum Trust decided to continue operating the house even though a subsequent appeal for financial assistance from the state government of at least \$20,000 failed.¹⁷⁴

The members of the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust acknowledged that the Grange was not architecturally outstanding nor even significant in itself. They wished to preserve it as a memorial to Sturt and hoped it would become a national monument to “one of the great men in South Australian history.”¹⁷⁵ Thus they continued the cult of the explorer and the pioneer, and also the perpetuation of colonial ties since Sturt had returned to England and many of his descendants still lived there. But this is hardly surprising. Those who took the major part in the work to restore the house were those same members of the establishment who belonged to the Pioneers’ Association, the Royal Geographical Society and the National Trust.

Other historical museums opened that were not controlled by this establishment group. In November 1961 N.T.R. Lothian, chairman of the National Park Commission, opened the sole historical building controlled by the Commission, Old Government House at Belair National Park. Cleland’s idea of establishing an organisation comparable with the National Park Service in the United States had foundered. While many local councils had supported the establishment of museums to be run by historical groups, only one opened its own museum. This was Glenelg Council, which in 1964 set aside a room in the Glenelg Town Hall as a museum containing relics of early days of the state.¹⁷⁶ Its action was not surprising since the council boundaries encompassed the site of the first landing in mainland South Australia on 28 December 1836,¹⁷⁷ and thus councillors were proud of the area’s historic associations.

Between 1965 and 1974 the number of new historical museums exploded, as illustrated in the following table:

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 April, 21 May 1969.

¹⁷⁵ F. Kenneth Milne, “The History of Sturt’s Home”, Address given at the Annual General Meeting of the National Trust of South Australia, 17 April 1961. In my possession.

¹⁷⁶ *Advertiser*, 29 April 1964.

¹⁷⁷ The settlers had first landed on Kangaroo Island off the south coast of South Australia, but this landing was never celebrated.

Growth of Historical Museums, 1965-74

End of Year	New Museums	Total Museums
1964		4
1965	2	6
1966	2	8
1967	5	13
1968	7	20
1969	5	25
1970	7	32
1971	7	39
1972	12	51
1973	7	58
1974	3	61

Source: *A Survey of Historical Museums in South Australia*, Tourist Development Branch, Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport (Tourist Bureau Division), Adelaide (May 1975).

Of these, the national trust and its branches operated 37, historical societies four, community associations five, the government two, two were managed by incorporated bodies, one was institutional and one was controlled by a trust. Private operators managed eight of the museums, presumably for profit. Nineteen of the museums were renovated buildings, equating with the historic house museums in the United States. The others focused on transport (4), maritime history (6), mining (2), agriculture (5), local history (8) or showed a general collection of objects (17). In 1975 the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport estimated that these museums attracted approximately 258,000 visitors.¹⁷⁸ South Australians were indeed exhibiting as much interest in their own history as were residents of the other Australian states, although neither equalled the Americans in their passion for their past.

Museums in urban areas celebrated a general history, but rural museums concentrated on events of local significance. Rural dwellers developed museums dedicated to the past of their towns. For example, in 1967 representatives of the National Trust spoke at a public meeting held at Prospect Hill to encourage local residents to preserve the history of the area. As a result Keith Griggs donated an old dwelling and the town's original post office and store. A committee formed from members of the Prospect Hill War Memorial and Community Centre and converted the house to a museum, which

¹⁷⁸ *Survey of Historical Museums in South Australia*, Tourist Development Branch, Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport (Tourist Bureau Division), Adelaide (May 1975), Appendix 1.

opened in 1973.¹⁷⁹ In 1969 the Riverton District Council purchased the small industrial complex belonging to Harold Scholz, who had carried on the joint business of wheelwright, blacksmith, machinist and coachbuilder, and converted it to a museum that was run by a voluntary committee.¹⁸⁰ In 1970 the Orroroo Progress Association restored an early cottage in the town and opened it as Early Settlers Cottage.¹⁸¹ The rebuilding of an old pug and pine hut by members of the Loxton Branch of the National Trust so impressed local residents that they determined to reconstruct an entire village. Members of the National Trust and others formed the Loxton District Historical Society in 1971 that, with the assistance of the local council, opened the state's first pioneer town, Loxton Historical Village, in 1974.¹⁸² This covered two hectares and consisted of nine buildings. It was much smaller than the Swan Hill Folk Museum or Sovereign Hill in Victoria and, unlike them, did not include 'living history'.

Many organisers of both urban and rural museums had a romanticised view of the past and used displays to reinforce their ideas of the "good old days". Mary Burrows, a worker for Scholz Park Museum, no doubt expressed the ideas of most when she said:

Our world today is very speedily minimising the need for personal effort in the home (dishwashers) and at work (full scale machinery), but at the same time it is taking from us our motivation and our joy in individual performance. A browse through Scholz Park Museum can indelibly impress on the mind the fact that the independence of outlook, the joy of achievement and the support of a good united family and community life displayed here have seemingly been lost in the cause of progress.¹⁸³

As in the other Australian states and in the United States, the quality of the displays and the presentation of the past in local history museums remained poor. Labelling of objects was minimal, museums usually exhibited every item they had acquired, and organisers displayed a poor understanding of the historical process. To improve the quality of these museums, in 1969 the Art Gallery of South Australia in conjunction with the Department of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide held a seminar on the collection, conservation and presentation of objects. Among the speakers were Ross Holloway,

¹⁷⁹ Response to Questionnaire, Prospect Hill Museum.

¹⁸⁰ Mary Burrows, "A New Museum at Riverton", *The Local Museum*, Vol.2, No.1 (1980), pp.20-21.

¹⁸¹ Response to Questionnaire, Early Settlers Cottage.

¹⁸² Geoff Speirs, "Loxton Historical Village", *The Local Museum*, Vol.2, No.2 (1980), pp.2-3.

¹⁸³ Burrows, p.22.

director of the Swan Hill Folk Museum, who spoke on the activities of his own museum; Robert Edwards, secretary to the Aboriginal and Historic Relics Preservation Act Board, who gave a talk on the conservation of Aboriginal artefacts and historic sites; and Dick Richards, keeper of the Historical Section and Applied Arts of the Art Gallery of South Australia, who explained methods of display and record keeping in small museums.¹⁸⁴ This seminar did not improve the standard of museum presentation, and the Regional Museum Committee, formed by the National Trust, likewise failed. In 1973 one of its members, R.D.J. Weathersbee, lamented that, "he had found some Museums apathetic and hostile; he had spent a number of weekends travelling around giving advice, which had largely been ignored."¹⁸⁵ In 1975 R.M. Gibbs, a founder of the Historical Society of South Australia, criticised many aspects of local museums. But on a more positive note he concluded that, "one must admire the energies and enthusiasm of the bodies which have set up and now control the museums. It is apparent that they are making a significant contribution to the life of their own communities and to others."¹⁸⁶

Some of the earliest museums and historical societies concentrated on different forms of transport. Changing technology encouraged enthusiasts to preserve old rolling stock and other artefacts relating to outmoded systems of transport. Between 1945 and 1974 these enthusiasts established five societies concerned with the history of transport. One of these was a museum and four were historical societies, some of which also collected and displayed exhibits.¹⁸⁷ The first transport society to form was the South Australian division of the Australian Railway Historical Society, established in 1952.¹⁸⁸ The society originally presented static displays and in 1962 began to store equipment on an area of land leased from the Railways. In 1970 it opened this site to the public as the

¹⁸⁴ Archives of the Hindmarsh Historical Society. Seminar program.

¹⁸⁵ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Executive Committee, 24 July 1973.

¹⁸⁶ R.M. Gibbs, "Report on Local Museums in South Australia", commissioned for *Museums in Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections*, Canberra (1975). Unpublished. Copy in possession of R.M. Gibbs.

¹⁸⁷ The majority of the members were, and are, more interested in machinery than in history and they are only coincidentally historical societies. Nevertheless they perform an important function in preserving the physical remains of the past.

¹⁸⁸ While this thesis is primarily concerned with societies based in South Australia that concentrated on South Australian history, I have included this society because it was one of the first historical societies in the state and was concerned mainly with local railway history.

Mile End Railway Museum.¹⁸⁹ In 1966, when all broad gauge steam trains ceased operation in South Australia, the society negotiated with South Australian Railways for the retention of four steam engines. It began operating these for excursions and this gradually became its main focus.¹⁹⁰ Another society devoted to preserving and maintaining obsolete rail equipment was the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society, formed in 1973. This society has its home in Quorn in the state's north and now operates the only remaining narrow gauge line in the state.¹⁹¹

The removal of street tramways in Adelaide in 1957 motivated a small band of devotees to form a South Australian Branch of the Australian Electric Transport Museum.¹⁹² They began accumulating a representative collection of tramcars to send to a transport museum being developed in Sydney. When the cost proved too great the group looked for a site in South Australia, choosing an area of unused state government land at St. Kilda. It took almost ten years to collect and restore the rolling stock and to prepare the museum, and it did not open to the public until 1967. Other early societies concentrated on aviation and agricultural machinery. Aficionados began the West Beach Aviation Group in 1962 to preserve the history of aviation in South Australia and, most unusual for a history-based society, to keep a record of present events. Members photograph aircraft, preserve old aviation photographs and memorabilia and foster an interest in aviation history.¹⁹³ The Booleroo Steam and Traction Preservation Society grew out of a private collection of farm machinery and cars. When B. Knauerhase decided that his private collection had become too large to handle he sought public assistance to form a district museum. He had intended to donate his collection to the

¹⁸⁹ From the beginning of 1975 the museum became a separate entity. It gained a Bicentennial grant and in 1988 moved to Port Adelaide and became the Port Dock Station Railway Museum. Response to Questionnaire, Australian Railway Historical Society.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*; John Wilson (comp.), *The Mile End Railway Museum: The First Ten Years*. Adelaide (1974), pp.3-4.

¹⁹² This group evolved from the Australian Electric Traction Association, South Australian Branch. This association's primary objective was to encourage the development of superior forms of electric transport, which involved considerable criticism of the transport authorities. The proponents of the museum needed to co-operate with the transport authorities because they hoped these authorities would donate exhibits, and so established the separate organisation. However, both organisations shared, and still share, membership. Response to Questionnaire, Australian Electric Transport Museum.

¹⁹³ Response to Questionnaire, West Beach Aviation Group.

National Trust agricultural museum at Gawler. When this did not eventuate, in October 1968 he assisted with the formation of the preservation society.¹⁹⁴

As in New South Wales and Victoria, members of the Methodist Church were among the first to form a historical society. Participants at the forty-ninth South Australian Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia in 1950, which was also the jubilee year of Methodist union in South Australia, resolved to form a Methodist Historical Society to “promote the study of Methodist history, biography and literature” and to establish an archive to hold “books, documents, pictures and relics of historical value.”¹⁹⁵ While its brief was “Australasian Methodist historical research”, it confined its interests to South Australian matters. It drew the majority of its members from the Methodist (Uniting Church from 1977) clergy, although others also joined. J. Hunt Deacon from the Art Gallery was vice-president from 1955 until 1962, and Victor Ryan, the organising secretary of the state’s Centenary Committee and supporter of the German Australian Centenary Committee, was on the committee for several years.¹⁹⁶ The society was never large, but it fulfilled an important function in preserving documents of the Methodist/Uniting Church in South Australia. The only other denomination to form a historical society was the Church of England. In 1961 Archbishop T.T. Reed encouraged the formation of the Church of England Historical Society to record the history of the church in South Australia. The society began with a flourish and attracted up to 300 people to its initial meetings, but despite interesting speakers this number quickly declined and it suspended activities in the 1970s. Its main achievement was the generation of a number of parish histories.¹⁹⁷

Gradually during the 1960s the number of South Australians interested in local history increased. In 1962 an edition of the television documentary program *Four Corners* devoted to the German culture of the Barossa Valley resulted in an influx of tourists to the area. This alerted two local residents of German descent, Roger Teusner

¹⁹⁴ Response to Questionnaire, Booleroo Steam and Traction Society.

¹⁹⁵ Uniting Church Historical Society Archives. Minutes of the Forty-Ninth South Australian Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia, 28 February 1950. It does not appear to have had any formal connections with the Methodist historical societies in New South Wales and Victoria, but its founders undoubtedly knew of the existence of these kindred groups.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, *Annual Reports, Methodist/Uniting Church Historical Society*, 1950-1974.

¹⁹⁷ Telephone conversation with Archdeacon Brian Smith, 9 August 1994.

and Laurel Hoffmann, to the unique cultural heritage of the Valley and prompted them to call a public meeting in Tanunda in April 1963 to found the Barossa Valley Archives and Historical Trust. Teusner was probably influenced by Vanagas' efforts at Lobethal since he would have known about the museum through his father, the local member for Tanunda. But the local German-descended population remained wary about openly celebrating their heritage. Initial membership was only 20, rising to a peak of approximately 50 in 1969.¹⁹⁸

The first local history group to form that did not celebrate the German heritage was the Kapunda Historical Society. In 1966 the local council refused to allow the demolition of an old Baptist Church that had been built in 1866. It called a meeting of residents of the town to establish a historical society to oversee the establishment of a museum in the old church. The Kapunda Historical Society only slowly acquired artefacts. A membership drive in 1969 brought in some enthusiastic volunteers and the museum opened in 1971.¹⁹⁹ Other historical societies in rural areas followed. Members of the Saddleworth Progress Association formed the Saddleworth and District Historical Society in 1967, prompted by a Back to Saddleworth weekend in 1965.²⁰⁰ Also in 1967, a historical society formed in Murray Bridge.²⁰¹ The Mallala Historical Society formed in 1968, as did the Pinnaroo Historical Society, which originated from the private collection of Donald Wurfel; the Warooka Historical Committee formed in 1970;²⁰² and the Kimba and Gawler Ranges Historical Society held its first meeting in 1971.²⁰³

Because of its strength, many South Australians from both metropolitan and rural areas established branches of the National Trust rather than independent historical societies. Residents of Naracoorte formed a branch of the trust because the National Trust had "status and continuity ... a number of historical societies ... had flourished briefly then folded, leaving a collection no-one accepted responsibility for."²⁰⁴ Residents of

¹⁹⁸ Response to Questionnaire, Barossa Valley Archives and Historical Trust.

¹⁹⁹ Response to Questionnaire, Kapunda Historical Society.

²⁰⁰ Response to Questionnaire, Saddleworth and District Historical Society.

²⁰¹ This society lapsed in 1981 and re-formed in 1984.

²⁰² Response to Questionnaire, Warooka Historical Committee. This became Warooka and District Museum in 1980.

²⁰³ Response to Questionnaire, Kimba and Gawler Ranges Historical Society.

²⁰⁴ Response to Questionnaire, Naracoorte branch of the National Trust.

Beachport followed a similar course.²⁰⁵ In other cases members of existing historical societies saw advantages in joining with the National Trust. In 1974 the Balaklava Historical Society, formed two years previously, became a branch of the trust.²⁰⁶ Some urban residents shared this view and in 1970 the Coromandel Valley Historical Society, formed in 1969, voted to become a branch of the National Trust because its members believed that this provided "more continuity of responsibility" for their collection.²⁰⁷ The trust executive promoted this view. In 1970 G. Killingham approached the trust requesting information on establishing a branch since local residents of the Port Adelaide district had expressed interest in forming a historical society or similar group. A.A.R. Cooper replied that currently the only urban branches were in the outer environs of Adelaide, but that "we in the Trust see Historical Societies as a useful and interesting stepping stone for ultimate development as Branches of the Trust."²⁰⁸

The concentration of trust branches, historical societies and local history museums in rural areas follows the pattern in other states in Australia. While closed, integrated communities provided more fertile ground for the growth of historical groups,²⁰⁹ particularly in thriving communities such as Naracoorte, other motivating forces were at work in less fortunate regions. In some towns, as older residents died, others moved to preserve the past of their town before it was forgotten. In addition, the decline in many rural towns induced by decreased employment opportunities motivated some townspeople, particularly members of progress associations and service clubs and supported by local councils, to gather the history of their area. By reinforcing the positive aspects of the past, current residents regained pride in their communities. Local councils hoped to replace the revenue lost from the decline in local employment by an increased share of the tourist dollar.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Response to Questionnaire, Beachport branch of the National Trust.

²⁰⁶ Response to Questionnaire, Balaklava branch of the National Trust.

²⁰⁷ Response to Questionnaire, Coromandel Valley branch of the National Trust.

²⁰⁸ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. File on proposed branches.

²⁰⁹ The close bonds in rural communities should not be exaggerated. A study of a rural town revealed considerable internal differentiation into six status groups depending on income, occupation and place of residence. Reported by R.J. Holton, "Twentieth Century South Australia: From a Patrician to a Plebeian View", in Eric Richards (ed.), *The Flinders History of South Australia. Social History*. Adelaide (1986), pp.573-574.

²¹⁰ Graeme Davison, "The Meanings of 'Heritage'", in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*. Melbourne (1991), pp.6-7.

Although more prolific in rural areas, interest in local history also existed in the suburbs of Adelaide. From the late 1960s suburbanites established historical societies in areas defined by local council boundaries. The first two societies within the metropolitan area were the Unley Historical Committee and the Hindmarsh Historical Society, both established in 1968. Inspired by the forthcoming centennial of the founding of the town, the mayor of Unley, Lewis Short, formed the Unley Historical Committee principally to gather relics for a museum and to publish a history of the area. Short believed the council had a responsibility to preserve relics and other reminders of the early days of Unley, which would otherwise be lost. But he displayed a warped sense of history, and in the same speech that he championed the need for a museum he advocated that:

Unley's continuing task is to press for good type development, the establishment of tertiary industries in our commercial areas such as the Auto-magic Car Wash Company which opened recently on Unley Road, and the replacement of the older type housing with modern flats and dwellings.²¹¹

Perhaps because of this limited approach, the committee lasted only five years. Membership never exceeded 14, including the mayor and the town clerk. However, it published a history of the area,²¹² and collected material relating to Unley that it displayed in several exhibitions and which formed the basis for the Unley Museum, opened in 1986.

The Hindmarsh Historical Society met with greater success. Like the Unley Historical Society, this society was sponsored by the local mayor. Among those present at a meeting on 23 September 1968 called to discuss the formation of a historical society were C.D. Hutchens, the local member of parliament, and C.R. Lawton of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide. The executive committee formed at this preliminary meeting resolved that the main aims of the new society would be to write a history of Hindmarsh and to establish a historical museum, and it would also arrange talks and conduct excursions. The public meeting to inaugurate the society was held on 3 March 1969. Speakers at this meeting were Dean Berry of the National Trust and J.C.

²¹¹ *Community Courier*, 17 July 1968.

²¹² G.B. Payne and E. Cosh, *History of the City of Unley 1871-1971*. Unley (1972).

Tolley, Chairman of the Historical Division of the Royal Geographical Society.²¹³ The society achieved its aims. In 1971 it opened a museum of local history, and in 1974, the centenary of the founding of Hindmarsh, Ronald Parsons published *Hindmarsh Town*, a history of the town and its district council.

In 1970 the District Council of Woodville held celebrations to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook's landing on Australian shores. The success of this celebration encouraged the deputy town clerk, D. Hamilton, to suggest the formation of a historical society to record the history of the area in preparation for the town's centenary in 1975. This public meeting formed a steering committee to oversee the formation of a historical society, but the society did not eventuate until 1975. In the meantime the council purchased the Brocas, the oldest building in Woodville, to be converted to a museum and which became the meeting place for the committee.²¹⁴ In neighbouring Port Adelaide concern about the preservation of the town's early buildings as well as danger to Port Misery, the site of the first port in Adelaide, induced members of the Largs Bay Rotary Club to call a public meeting in 1972 to form the Port Adelaide Historical Society.²¹⁵

Local government supported the societies in Unley, Hindmarsh and Woodville and they were all prompted by a forthcoming centenary. Port Adelaide Historical Society differed in that it was sponsored by a service club and formed because of concern about decline and destruction of the district's early buildings. But Unley, Hindmarsh, Woodville and Port Adelaide were all regions in decline. They were older, primarily working class suburbs that were losing population and whose residential areas were becoming commercial and industrial. So in many respects the motivating forces that prompted the formation of societies in rural areas were present in the suburbs of Adelaide where the first urban historical societies formed.

Other specialist historical groups also formed in these years. South Australians' passion for pioneers and explorers continued. In 1964 a group of descendants of some of

²¹³ Archives of the Hindmarsh Historical Society. Agenda of the Inaugural Public Meeting. The presence of J.C. Tolley is interesting since the Historical Division had gone into recess in 1968.

²¹⁴ Response to Questionnaire, Woodville Historical Society.

²¹⁵ Response to Questionnaire, Port Adelaide Historical Society.

the participants in John McDouall Stuart's expedition that crossed Australia in 1861-62 formed the John McDouall Stuart Society, no doubt prompted by the centenary of the event.²¹⁶ Another society dedicated to a pioneer, Carl Linger, hero of the German Australian Centenary Committee, formed in 1972. As with most other societies with German connections, a non-German South Australian initiated the Carl Linger Memorial Committee. By the 1970s interest in history had spread throughout the community and employees began to record the history of their institutions. Prompted by changes psychiatric practices, in 1969 staff of Glenside Psychiatric Hospital formed a body to collect, preserve and display items from the past. Additional concerns were the demolition of some hospital buildings and the fear that a collection of photographs assembled in preparation for the centenary of the hospital in 1970 would be lost if nothing was done to preserve them.²¹⁷

As in the United States and in the other Australian states, interest in genealogy gradually increased in South Australia. In the late 1960s Andrew Peake had become interested in family history. He was a member of the Society of Genealogists in London and, while not a member of the genealogical societies in Sydney or Melbourne, subscribed to the magazines of both societies. He joined the Pioneers' Association, the only descendants group in South Australia, in the hope of meeting like-minded people. However, because he was at least 20 years younger than other members and no-one else in the association showed much interest in research, he decided to look elsewhere. He joined the Royal Geographical Society but was again disappointed since the society's main interests by this time centred on geography. He realised that the only way he could associate with people with similar interests was to form his own group. In 1971 Peake suggested to T.T. Reed, the instigator of the Church of England Historical Society, the formation of an organisation to serve those interested in genealogy and heraldry. For many years Reed had conducted a course in heraldry through the Workers Educational Association and Peake thought that a society with dual strands would have a greater

²¹⁶ Response to Questionnaire, John McDouall Stuart Society. Initially most members were descendants of expedition members but from 1988 the society encouraged others to join.

²¹⁷ Response to Questionnaire, Glenside Hospital Historical Society.

chance of success. Only 14 people attended the first meeting on 19 April 1972,²¹⁸ but by early 1973 the group was confident of success and incorporated as the South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society. It held its first public meeting on 21 February 1973 and Dr. Reed became its patron. The Society had 81 ordinary members at the end of the first year but progress was slow until 1977.²¹⁹

Thus, by the early 1970s South Australians no longer lagged behind their fellow Australians in celebrating their history and had formed historical, museum and genealogical societies. Indeed, by the end of 1970 South Australia had a larger number of societies per head of population than any state in Australia. New South Wales boasted 112 historical societies, one society to every 42,315 residents; Victoria had 93 societies, one to every 37,634 residents; Queensland had 24 societies, one to 75,975 residents; Western Australia had 22 societies, one to 46,721 residents; and Tasmania had six societies, one to 65,000 residents. While South Australia had only 37 historical groups, these averaged out at one society to 31,670 residents.²²⁰ Even if membership of South Australian societies was lower than in the other states, and there is no way of finding out these figures, quite clearly by 1970 South Australians had found their past.²²¹

But South Australia still lacked a central society that concentrated solely on history. In 1972 some Adelaideans finally took on the task of establishing such a group. While still a history student at the University of Adelaide, Brian Samuels had written to Premier Dunstan suggesting the formation of a History Section in the Public Service. He received no reply and so decided to form a society without government assistance. After first considering working through the Royal Geographical Society, in February 1974 he determined that the best course would be to establish an independent historical society. However, he hoped to retain the goodwill of the Royal Geographical Society and the

²¹⁸ Interview with Andrew Peake, 29 June 1994.

²¹⁹ "President's Anniversary Dinner Speech", *The South Australian Genealogist*, Vol.2, No.3 (1993), p.4. The society claimed that by March 1993 their highest membership number was 6150. This appears to be based on the total number who have joined the society and takes no account of members who have lapsed. A more likely figure is a financial membership of around 3000.

²²⁰ As I could not find out details of societies concerned with the history of transport in the other Australian states, I excluded from my calculations the five transport societies in South Australia.

²²¹ The statistics are calculated from the 1971 population census. Museum societies are not included in the numbers.

National Trust.²²² At the same time R.M. Gibbs, a consultant with the Department of Education in South Australia, became interested in the formation of a state historical society. Early in 1974 he had met Justice R. Else-Mitchell, president of the Royal Australian Historical Society, at a conference of history teachers in Sydney. Else-Mitchell had chided Gibbs that South Australia was the only state in Australia that lacked a state historical society. Else-Mitchell saw the benefits of a federation of historical societies that could approach the federal government for financial assistance, but believed that such a federation would be successful only if it represented all states. Gibbs took this message back to the History Teachers' Association who discussed the matter but took it no further. In February 1974 Samuels convened a meeting at which he, Gibbs and John Tolley, a local historian and former member of the Historical Division of the Royal Geographical Society, were elected to a steering committee to work towards establishing the Historical Society of South Australia. The committee met several times to formalise the formation of a society and to organise the inaugural meeting, which was held on 19 July 1974.²²³ For the first time in South Australia a new state history-based society did not include a large number of members of pre-existing societies. Of the 200 foundation members of the National Trust, approximately 40 had also belonged to the Royal Geographical Society, including nine former presidents, and at least 11 had belonged to the Pioneers' Association. Indeed, some trust members belonged to both bodies. Several members of these groups had also played prominent roles in the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust and in the Hahndorf Academy Museum Trust. Some members of local history societies joined the new state body, but John Tolley and the ubiquitous Robert Edwards appear to be the only members of the defunct Historical Division to join.²²⁴

That so few members of the Pioneers' Association and the National Trust joined was probably not coincidental; neither organisation welcomed the newcomer. Members of the Pioneers' Association discussed the formation of the society and "agreed that we are prepared to assist with advice on how to form a society, but not to provide

²²² Archives of the Historical Society of South Australia. Correspondence file.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Edwards had served on the councils of the Pioneers' Association, the National Trust, the Royal Geographical Society, the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust and was secretary to the Aboriginal and Historic Relics Preservation Board.

information concerning our members to the organisers of a Historical Society.”²²⁵ After the inaugural meeting of the Historical Society of South Australia, the Pioneers’ Association “resolved to welcome the formation of an Historical Society as a vehicle for those whose family arrived after 1845, and to offer support.”²²⁶ While the 1836 Group, the junior group of the trust, promoted the inaugural meeting in the trust’s July 1974 Newsletter, the executive of the trust was luke-warm about the new body. After attending one of the preliminary meetings its director, G.W. Toogood, recommended that:

at present, the Trust should do no more than offer moral support. The meeting showed a great deal of uncertainty on the part of the organisers on the need for such an organisation and the nature of its objectives. There was a distinct reluctance on the part of those present to take office on the committee and the general atmosphere at the meeting was not conducive to a progressive or successful body.²²⁷

Members of Adelaide’s establishment had belonged to and held leading positions in the Royal Geographical Society, the Pioneers’ Association and the National Trust since their foundation. For the first time in the state’s history, university-trained historians played an active part in a major state-level historical organisation. Members of the Royal Geographical Society had seen what had happened to that organisation when academics had taken over. They knew that neither pioneers nor explorers nor the architectural qualities of buildings would be the main foci of the new group, and they feared losing control of the presentation of the state’s past.

As well as the academics elected to the committee of the society, several historians from the University of Adelaide and Flinders University became foundation members. Some historical societies previously had encouraged historians from the academy to attend their meetings and utilise their materials. The Hindmarsh Historical Society had invited students from the Department of History, University of Adelaide, to present a paper on the social history of Hindmarsh at its first annual general meeting and assured the students that it would make available any documents and objects of historical interest for future research.²²⁸ However, the co-operation of academic historians, who

²²⁵ Archives of the Pioneers’ Association of South Australia. Minutes of Council Meeting, 2 April 1974.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* Minutes of Executive Committee, 2 July 1974.

²²⁷ Archives of the National Trust of South Australia. Minutes of Executive Committee, 23 April 1974.

²²⁸ Archives of the Hindmarsh Historical Society. Copy of article sent to Messenger Press, 1 September 1970.

had shown little interest in local history, was rare. Wilfrid Oldham had belonged to the Royal Geographical Society and G.V. Portus, professor of Political Science and History from 1934 to 1950, had joined the Historical Division of the Royal Geographical Society. Douglas Pike, reader in History from 1950 to 1960 had also belonged to the Historical Division and given numerous papers to its meetings. They had researched and written on South Australian topics. Portus had lamented that:

it is unfortunate that we in Australia have, and have had, so few amateur scholars. Our learning has tended to be professionalized, if not professorialized. Our specialists forget that Grote, Gibbon, and Macaulay were not professional historians ... Amateurs! the very word sends our specialists scuttling back to their labs and their studies in horror.²²⁹

But he did nothing to initiate a historical society to encourage amateurs. Neither did Pike, who had promoted the study of South Australian history at the University of Adelaide and genuinely believed in the importance of amateur history.²³⁰ John Tregenza from the Department of History became a foundation member of the society and first editor of its journal, but Australianists from Flinders University, the new kid on the block, were more prominent in the society.

Notwithstanding the academic presence, the organisers of the Historical Society of South Australia emphasised their wish for a diversified membership. In his opening speech at the inaugural meeting Gibbs stressed that, "the Society should be as much for amateur historians as for professional historians, as much perhaps for a person who has limited time and a beginning interest for historical things as for a person who is writing his second doctoral dissertation."²³¹ The founders made a conscious decision not to collect manuscripts or other library materials nor to own property, thus diverging significantly from the aims of the earlier state societies. Additionally, they hoped that their group would benefit from the involvement of South Australians from all walks of life, reflecting the democratic approach to history now current in the other Australian states and in the United States.²³²

²²⁹ G.V. Portus, *Happy Highways*. Melbourne (1953), p.257.

²³⁰ Personal communication from R.M. Gibbs, 9 December 1994.

²³¹ Reprinted in Historical Society of South Australia *Newsletter*, No.54 (June 1984), p.9.

²³² Archives of the Historical Society of South Australia. Correspondence file. Eric Richards from Flinders' University chose to talk on "History from Below" at the inaugural meeting since he wanted to appeal to a wide audience and did not want academic historians to dominate the Society.

Whereas the state government declined to assist with the formation or initial funding of a state historical society, it was at times more generous in assisting the preservation of the physical environment. Playford occasionally loosened his government's purse strings. In 1963 he gave £1000 towards a total public subscription of £5000 for the restoration of the paddle steamer "Marion" by the National Trust. His government also donated buildings in Gawler and Melrose to trust branches.²³³ Labor Premier Don Dunstan was more generous, as noted above when he stepped in and restored Ayers House and saved the ANZ Bank.

Local councils were even more beneficent, and at least 16 rural branches of the National Trust received some help from district councils.²³⁴ In most instances, the mayor called the public meeting to initiate the branch and in some cases continued to offer assistance. Historical societies also received help from local government, which often organised the initial public meeting, donated buildings to house museums, and gave cash grants.²³⁵ This assistance signified a change in the attitude of councils to the value of preservation. In the years immediately after the Second World War they had concentrated on public works and housing renewal. However, with the growing interest in the preservation of old buildings, they realised that their ratepayers would accept money being channelled into heritage projects. Local councillors also supported the writing of local history since these histories usually celebrated their achievements and glorified their precursors. From 1950 councils sponsored histories of their own districts, often spurred by an impending anniversary. Thus local and state government acknowledged to some degree their responsibility to commemorate history and to protect and preserve the physical environment. As elsewhere in Australia, the federal government began funding heritage projects in 1973 through National Estate grants. It allocated funds to the National Trust, gave a grant to the state government to preserve Fort Glanville and the old Attorney General's building, and awarded grants to several smaller groups, including the Port Adelaide Historical Society, to assist local projects.

²³³ Cooper, "Outline of the Position which has been Reached", p. 5.

²³⁴ Responses to Questionnaire.

²³⁵ Responses to Questionnaire.

As pointed out above, the National Trust devoted its efforts to preserving the remains of white settlement in South Australia and paid scant attention to Aboriginal heritage. Fortunately a few South Australians were not so blinkered and became concerned at the desecration of Aboriginal cave paintings and rock carvings. Over the years individuals and groups had requested the government to protect these sites, and in 1963 a conference of representatives of the Department of Lands, South Australian Museum, Aboriginal Affairs Department, Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee and the University of Adelaide recommended the introduction of legislation to protect Aboriginal sites. On behalf of the Playford government, Baden Pattinson introduced this legislation in August 1964. It passed through the House of Assembly without opposition, but some members of the Legislative Council feared that the rights of landholders would be trampled and the Bill lapsed. In March 1965 the Labor Party defeated the Playford government. Although the new government introduced much reformist legislation and Don Dunstan, the future premier who prided himself on protecting South Australia's heritage, was Minister of Aboriginal Affairs,²³⁶ H.K. Kemp, a member of the LCL in the Legislative Council, reintroduced the legislation in a Private Member's Bill. He revised the offending sections and broadened its scope to include the protection of "Any trace or remains of the exploration and early settlement", which was intended to overlap and add to the work of the National Trust, the Tourist Bureau and the National Parks Commissioners.²³⁷ As well as protecting Aboriginal relics, the Act, assented to on 9 December 1965, protected "All relics of European origin appearing to have been made or executed prior to 1865".²³⁸ Although limited, South Australia had at last legislated to protect the physical environment. But the thrust of the Act was to protect Aboriginal relics, and included only sites controlled by government.

By the 1970s those concerned with preserving the European heritage of the state considered the existing legislation inadequate and pressed for wider controls. In 1974 the government responded and released the Urban Systems Report, which recommended the

²³⁶ Nor did Dunstan support the National Trust Bill in 1955. It seems his passion for saving the environment developed later, perhaps as a pragmatic response to community pressure.

²³⁷ *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, 1965, p. 1334.

²³⁸ "Aboriginal and Historic Relics Preservation Act, 1965", *South Australian Statutes*, 1965.

restoration of the Adelaide Barracks, the development of the Adelaide Gaol as a cultural centre, the development of historic trails within the city, the listing of 286 separate features for preservation, the establishment of a railway museum, the creation of a historical museum [yet again!], and the fixing of plaques to places of environmental significance.²³⁹ Unfortunately, because it did not support its recommendations with sufficient finance the government accomplished only some of the proposals.

Thus in the years after the Second World War South Australia's history gained greater prominence in both the private and the public sphere. In one particular arena, the writing of the history of their local area by amateur historians, it grew by leaps and bounds. A local history competition in 1950 organised by the Country Women's Association was so successful that it held another in 1951 to commemorate the jubilee of federation.²⁴⁰ It attracted 34 entries, provided a boost to local history writing, and although not all entries proved suitable, resulted in the publication of at least ten histories of rural towns. The 1950 competition so impressed official organisers of the Jubilee Year celebrations that they promoted their own competition, the winner of which was published by the *Advertiser*.²⁴¹ The Country Women's Association held further competitions in later years.²⁴² Despite this increasing interest in local history, between 1946 and 1955 members of the Pioneers' Association continued to produce the bulk of local history publications and wrote 42 of the 97 publications to appear in those years. Although this number declined after 1955 members still produced several publications in most years until 1964. Because of the declining influence of the jubilee of federation, nine fewer local histories appeared between 1956 and 1965 than in the previous decade. In 1966 only eight local histories were published, with ten in 1967, but then local history

²³⁹ Historical Society of South Australia *Newsletter*, No. 1 (1974), p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Eleanor Dolling, a contributor to *A Book of South Australia: Women in the First Hundred Years* who since 1937 had written historical features for the rural newspaper the *Chronicle* under the name Eleanor Barbour, organised this competition. Much of her knowledge of the state's history came from her association with members of the Country Women's Association. See K.M. Esau's Foreword to Mary Broughton, *Chronicle Cameos*. Jamestown, SA (1977), p. 3.

²⁴¹ J. Moyle won the competition with *Portrait of a Village: Watervale 1839-1951*.

²⁴² Archives of the Country Women's Association.

publications mushroomed, with 20 appearing in 1968. After a slight decline in 1969, the number rose to 49 in 1974.²⁴³

The focus of writers and publishers was broad and covered many aspects of local history. In 1962 H.C. Brideson, director of the State Library, instituted a series of facsimile editions of rare and out-of-print books, an innovative venture that was later emulated by other learned institutions. Some of the 78 titles published between 1962 and 1979 were reproductions of early colonial writers on South Australia. Others continued the fascination with explorers and were copies of the journals of great navigators and explorers, including the South Australian heroes Matthew Flinders, Charles Sturt and John McDouall Stuart. This is not surprising since one of the scheme's greatest supporters was A. Grenfell Price, who gave Brideson suggestions and advice.²⁴⁴ In 1962 the library also began publishing *South Australiana*, a journal devoted to historical and literary records of South Australia held mainly in the Archives Department.²⁴⁵

South Australia did not share in the explosion of regional histories produced by academic and amateur historians in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and the histories produced concentrated on a limited region. In each year until the late 1960s, histories published by local councils, members of the Country Women's Association and the Pioneers' Association, and facsimiles produced by the Libraries Board outnumbered local histories produced by individuals or other organisations. But from about 1969, while local councils continued to sponsor histories of their districts, they no longer dominated the annual output. The National Trust began to publish pamphlets on local history and interesting architecture, and historical societies produced histories of their areas. Interest in local history had grown to such an extent that in 1969 Rigby, a commercial publisher based in Adelaide, began a lucrative series of sketchbooks of mainly rural towns that featured drawings of historic buildings accompanied by brief histories.²⁴⁶ In the 1970s the number of local histories increased each year. The number of reprints or revised

²⁴³ Kerrie Round, *Chronological List of Local Histories Published in South Australia, 1846 to 1990*. In possession of author.

²⁴⁴ Colin Kerr, *Archie: The Biography of Sir Archibald Grenfell Price*, Melbourne (1983), pp.155-156. Despite its success, the Libraries Board decided that its first priority was the provision of a public library service and abandoned the program in 1981.

²⁴⁵ It ceased publication in 1985.

²⁴⁶ Similar series appeared in other Australian states.

editions also appearing from this time is a further indication of the growing interest in local history, as was the growing number of items on the subject in the press. And, unlike the other Australian states, South Australia for a brief period had a popular journal of history. In August 1971 Les Hampel began *Historical Reporter*, a monthly newspaper that included reports on family history and church history, articles of interest from museums, and other bits and pieces on history and historical societies. He hoped his "newspaper will ... help historical societies and historians to collect history [and] that the general public, especially school children, will subscribe to the newspaper as interesting and educational articles will be included in it."²⁴⁷ Despite these hopes, neither historical societies nor museums subscribed in large numbers. Only six editions appeared; these were poorly produced, contained nothing of substance and Hampel himself contributed the majority of items. However, even had the magazine been of better quality it is unlikely that South Australia, or even Australia, would have sustained a publication of the standard of *American Heritage*.

Because of the limited focus of the Pioneers' Association, their publications concentrated on the early pioneers and were often merely short family histories. But these were not the only local histories that displayed a restricted vision. R.M. Gibbs complained about the narrow focus of many local histories and commented that, "it is almost as if the line of interest can be marked on a map, so that anything beyond a certain road or district boundary need not be considered." In particular, he regretted the inadequate attention given to Aborigines, pointing out that they were "dismissed in a few lines at the beginning of the story or, rarely, left to make an occasional side-stage appearance in later parts of the drama, while the white pioneers act out their heroic roles for all to see." Additionally, he bemoaned the lack of regional histories and the fact that South Australia was virtually ignored in national histories, which concentrated on the eastern states. He attributed these problems to the lack until 1974 of a state historical society to guide and promote local, regional and state history.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ *Historical Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1971), p. 1.

²⁴⁸ "The Study and Writing of Local History", in Derek Whitelock (ed.), *Aspects of South Australian History*. Papers given at Local History Seminars held by the Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide, 1975 and 1976, Adelaide (1976), pp. 2-3.

Prior to 1974, in the absence of a state historical society, the National Trust in conjunction with the Department of Adult Education had assumed the task of directing the burgeoning history movement undertaken in the other states by their central societies. In 1968 the trust and the department jointly arranged the seminar "Where now with the National Trust?". Ninety-seven participants from both rural and metropolitan branches attended this seminar and took part in discussions on historic buildings, historic towns, Aboriginal heritage, flora and fauna, and the preservation of the rural landscape. In 1969, they attracted 148 participants to a three-day seminar on Robe and the South East, and 90 participants to a three-day summer school in Adelaide on the historic copper towns of South Australia.

The Department of Adult Education also independently and in combination with other organisations provided courses on local history and the management of historical museums. In 1961 it initiated an experimental project intended as a pilot scheme for the writing of local histories of country districts in Kingston in the southeast of the state. With financial assistance from the district council, which paid half the expenses, it employed a trained historian to guide a group of 25 local volunteers in gathering and collating material for a history of Kingston. The project went well and the Department hoped that the historian would complete the work in 1963.²⁴⁹ Other councils expressed interest but the lack of trained historians limited the project. The local Methodist minister, under the guidance of the State Archivist, led a program in Millicent, but the departure interstate of the appointed historian caused the cancellation of a program at Tea Tree Gully.²⁵⁰ The project then ceased, obviously not from a lack of interest but because the university had failed to respond to community needs and train historians skilled in local history.

In 1963, to assist entrants in the local history competition, the Department collaborated with the Country Women's Association and held a school on the writing of local history that attracted 41 students. To assist authors further it distributed a taped lecture on the writing of local history to branches in remote country districts. While

²⁴⁹ The history does not appear to have been published.

²⁵⁰ *Annual Report*, University of Adelaide, Department of Adult Education (1961), p.18; *Annual Report*, University of Adelaide, Department of Adult Education (1962), pp.13-14.

history was never as popular as natural history and attracted fewer classes and participants,²⁵¹ the Department of Adult Education held courses on the writing of local history in 1964 and 1969 as well as other courses on local history. But sometimes the convenors had their own reasons for conducting classes. In 1969 R.P. Griffiths offered “History of Hindmarsh”, which was to guide members of the class in “the collection of records of life in Hindmarsh with a view to the collected material being used in a written history of Hindmarsh.” Moreover, “members of the class will be encouraged to become members of the Hindmarsh Historical Society”.²⁵² In another instance the entry in the course guide clearly indicates that David Dolan had his own agenda when he designed “Aspects of Victorian Adelaide”: “Mr. Dolan’s interests are in buildings, urban development and prominent personalities of nineteenth century Adelaide and he hopes that class members will agree to gather material in one or more of these areas.”²⁵³

Rural areas also hosted courses on local history. The Moonta branch of the National Trust combined with the Yorke Peninsula Adult Education Centre to hold a seminar on the history of Moonta in 1970. This concentrated solely on the architectural history of the area and included no general pleas for the recording of local history nor any affirmation of the value of local history. As would be expected of a conference organised by a branch of the National Trust, it did call for the preservation of the physical remains of the past.²⁵⁴ The Workers’ Educational Association, the non-university adult education organisation, also displayed an interest in history. In 1965, in conjunction with the Adult Education Association of Victoria, it arranged a three-day workshop on “Some Aspects of South Australian History”. Interestingly, Douglas Pike, who had moved from the University of Adelaide to the Department of History at the Australian National University, was the main speaker. As mentioned above, he had been a member of the Historical Division of the Royal Geographical Society and regularly presented papers at

²⁵¹ By 1955 the Field Naturalists Section of the Royal Society had 1000 members, about twice the combined membership of the Pioneers’ Association and the Historical Division of the Royal Geographical Society.

²⁵² *Course Guide*. University of Adelaide, Department of Adult Education (1969), p.32. Archives of the Historical Society of Hindmarsh. Lawton, one of the convenors of the society and a member of the Department of Adult Education, might have organised this course. However, as the *Annual Report* for 1969 did not list it, it might not have attracted sufficient enrolments. Griffiths is not listed as attending the inaugural meeting of the historical society.

²⁵³ *Catalogue of Courses*, Department of Adult Education (1974), pp.10-11.

²⁵⁴ “History of Moonta” Seminar held 19-20 September 1970.

its meetings but had shown little other interest in promulgating an interest in history among the general public. Had he given greater leadership, a state historical society might have formed earlier than 1974.

In the other states academic historians had either founded or become influential members of the state historical societies. In South Australia Professor George Henderson, professor of history at the University of Adelaide and the driving force behind the establishment of the Archives, had encouraged original research on the state, but when he resigned in 1924 interest in South Australian topics declined. In 1926 his successor, Keith Hancock, initiated the South Australian Historical Society, but this had only a short life and was not concerned solely with South Australian history. Other academic historians, such as Wilfred Oldham, G.V. Portus and Douglas Pike, wrote on aspects of South Australian history. However, they did nothing to encourage the general public to form a society dedicated to recording the past. The academic who wrote most prolifically on South Australian history from the 1930s to the 1950s was A. Grenfell Price. Although he enjoyed history his allegiance was to geography, and he did not want to harm the Royal Geographical Society by forming a separate historical society. South Australians thus lacked the guidance and leadership of academic historians in forming a state historical society.

Summary

As in the rest of Australia no members of historical groups in South Australia used history overtly for patriotic purposes, as was commonly done in the United States, and the Cold War had little effect on the presentation of history. Apart from some discord over involvement in the Vietnam War, South Australians, like other Australians, avoided the social disturbances of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. While members of historical groups in South Australia never indulged in a rhetoric of nationalism to bolster patriotic allegiance, as in the rest of Australia the growing number of history-based societies did coincide with a growing sense of Australian identity. In South Australia from the 1960s increasing national consciousness accelerated as the Anglo-centric elite

gradually lost their social power. Coincident with other parts of Australia, nationalism intensified in the years of the Whitlam Labor government from 1972.

South Australians did regret the disappearance of the familiar landscape. Many also were wary of changing life styles, and industrialisation motivated some South Australians to create societies to save vestiges of the past before it was lost. Changes in technology stirred some sections of the community to initiate groups to rehabilitate and preserve obsolete forms of transport, and museums such as Scholz Park Museum glorified hand made over mass produced products. But South Australians did not succumb to an orgy of nostalgia, and a yearning for past certainties generally did not act as a stimulus for the formation of historical groups. The majority of South Australians welcomed the changes introduced by the Walsh, Hall and Dunstan governments,

While members of many branches of the National Trust, historical societies and local councils hoped that their museums would attract tourists and revenue to their areas, they were disappointed. The Lobethal Archives and Historical Museum succeeded in attracting visitors for several years, but its popularity declined and tourist operators removed it from their itineraries. Surprisingly, considering the prominence given to pioneers, only one pioneer village museum, the Loxton Historical Village, formed in this period. This was on a much smaller scale than similar museums in the United States, and it did not achieve the popularity of the Swan Hill Folk Museum or Sovereign Hill in Victoria. This, however, resulted more from the small population and fewer tourists than from a lack of interest of South Australians.

The growing awareness of the physical environment democratised the history movement in South Australia, first in country districts and then in the metropolitan area, and encouraged greater diversity of membership. But despite the development of a few resident action groups, the preservation movement in Adelaide remained predominantly middle-class and elitist. True, Barbara Best successfully enlisted the support of trade union members in the fight to save the old ANZ Bank building. She also saw the value of using similar tactics to the anti-war demonstrators and considered encouraging university students to hold a street demonstration and march.²⁵⁵ But because of changing

²⁵⁵ Best, pp.88-89.

circumstances these strategies were unnecessary, nor were they used in other battles. Hence no effective alliance for preservation between different social classes materialised. And unlike groups in the United States and some organisations in the rest of Australia, few women played leading roles in the formation of history or heritage groups in South Australia nor made significant contributions in their early years. Exceptions to this were Nora Hutchinson, who played a prominent role in saving the Grange, and Barbara Best who worked to prevent the destruction of the old ANZ Bank building. But in the National Trust, dominated as it was by male members of the establishment, the only two women on the foundation council were representatives of the Youth Hostels Association and the Country Women's Association, and neither played a prominent role. No woman headed a trust group until 1969 when the Port Pirie branch elected a woman as president.

The intertwining of conservation and preservation and the growth of interest in both demonstrate the increasing value placed on vestiges of the past. The National Trust of South Australia focused more on the natural environment than did any other trust in the United States or in Australia.²⁵⁶ Early leaders of the National Trust considered the state's colonial buildings to be inferior to those elsewhere and so concentrated on conserving native flora and fauna. As in the other Australian states, white Australians largely ignored the relics of Aboriginal society even though these were of proven antiquity. This was particularly incongruous since many of the leaders of the trust also belonged to the Royal Geographical Society, which had over many years catalogued and studied Aboriginal culture. But Aborigines had always been marginalised, and so it is not surprising that few white Australians took account of this ancient heritage.

The preponderance of National Trust branches and historical societies in rural towns corresponds to the situation in the other states, disproving Dunlap's assertion that such societies could only survive in centres of culture. Since many of these organisations began after the towns had begun to decline, the claim that present community pride and cohesion was an important ingredient in the founding of all such groups is suspect. In country towns it was more likely an attempt to publicise past achievements as a means of

²⁵⁶ To 1970 Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania controlled no nature reserves, Queensland had two, and New South Wales eight.

regaining pride, a situation also apparent in the founding of some historical societies in the United States. The strength of the national trust movement perhaps encouraged South Australians to appreciate their vernacular architecture earlier than other Australians. This was because rural towns formed branches of the National Trust, whose focus also incorporated the built environment, rather than independent historical societies. The strength of the National Trust stifled the growth of historical societies in South Australia.

As in other Australian states and in the Mid-west of the United States, in South Australia governments and individuals co-operated to form historical societies and museums and in the writing of local history. Local groups sought and received help from councils in the form of buildings, help in kind, or direct financial assistance, and many would have folded without this assistance. The National Trust did not succeed until it had government agreement to introduce legislation to free it from certain taxes. Many councils supported the writing of a history of their local government area. While the motivation for the founding of societies came from the general public, assistance of government, both financial and legislative, was often important. This is particularly so with regard to conservation of the natural and the physical environment, and many of the failures of the National Trust were compounded by ineffective legislation. In other instances lack of government support resulted in the failure of a proposal, such as that for a state history museum.

In keeping with its feelings of superiority and Englishness, South Australians formed historical, museum and preservation societies independently, with little reference to other Australians or to Americans, and the only body outside Australia of which they took notice was the National Trust in England. While the National Trust of Australia (NSW) predated the National Trust of South Australia, it appears to have had no influence on the formation of or the direction taken by the South Australian body. While in other states independently formed historical societies affiliated with the main state societies, in South Australia the branches of the National Trust, which assumed the role of historical societies, started under the umbrella of the central body and remained part of that body. The trust in South Australia was the only trust to promote branches so soon

after formation, although some of the other states later developed similar, albeit smaller, networks.

In South Australia from the mid-1960s expanding immigration from both within and outside Australia accomplished what the presence of convicts and the Irish had brought about years earlier in the other states. It broadened the outlook of the local citizens, diluted the British component, and began a gradual loosening of colonial ties. In particular, the declining British affinity enabled South Australians to examine their own history and realise that their unique past was worthy of celebration. Additionally, some non-British immigrants initiated groups to commemorate the past of their adopted home, providing a model for native-born South Australians. Another motivating force for the increasing awareness of the past among urban dwellers was the changing physical environment of central Adelaide as the population moved into the suburbs and the city became a commercial centre. This opened the eyes of at least some residents to the value of the existing landscape and led to an increasing awareness of the history of both the city and the surrounding suburbs. For different reasons rural residents also became aware of the uniqueness of their heritage, both natural and built, and took action to save it. This widening appeal of history served to democratise the presentation of the past and the social elite lost control. The culmination of this process was the formation of the Historical Society of South Australia in 1974. At last South Australians had caught up with the United States and the rest of Australia. They now had a central society to lead them in celebrating the “new pride and interest in [their] origins”.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Derek Whitelock, “Editor’s Introduction”, in Derek Whitelock (ed.), *Aspects of South Australian History*. Papers given at Local History Seminars held by the Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide, 1975 and 1976, Adelaide (1976). However, Alan Roberts believes that state societies have been losing their primacy since 1945 because of the fragmentation and specialisation of the amateur history movement. This perhaps explains why the Historical Society of South Australia has not been successful in convincing local historical societies to affiliate with it. Alan Roberts, “The Future of Historical Societies: Part I”, in Alan Roberts (ed.), *Grass Roots History*. Canberra (1991), pp.69-70.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Why *do* people join historical societies?

The previous chapters have considered the growth of amateur historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia until the mid-1970s. However, while organisations dedicated to recording and preserving the past have existed in the United States since the late eighteenth century and in Australia from 1901, until the 1950s the numbers of such societies remained relatively small and their membership usually came from the educated sections of society. But in the 1950s in the United States and Australia the number of historical groups jumped and in the 1960s exploded, remaining firm into the 1970s and 1980s.¹ In South Australia this growth did not occur until the 1960s, but from this decade it equalled and even surpassed the other two regions. Parallel with the growing number of new societies was an increasing membership of well established groups. Membership also widened and included people from all strata of society. Explanations for this growth vary.

Until the mid-1960s commentators generally attributed the interest in history among ordinary people to actual events within the community. For the United States Clifford Lord posited the following reasons for the popularity of amateur historical organisations in the early twentieth century:

The development of the automobile made possible the rapid growth of shrines and sites; the emancipation of women brought them to new posts of power and influence in historical organizations; the progress of science and medicine brought more elderly people to the rolls of active membership; the growing gross national product brought more funds, both public and private to this type of activity.²

In 1962 Richmond Williams, in a report sponsored by the American Association for State and Local History, suggested that:

the initiative and impulse for creating local societies arose almost exclusively out of local circumstances; the grass-roots forces of leadership, resources, and special purposes ... There has also been the stimulation of such events as national, state, and local centennials, which have resulted in the founding of many societies; and

¹ In 1985 there were over 6000 historical societies and museums listed in the Directory of the American Association for State and Local History, over half being founded since 1960. Gerald George, "The Perils of 'Public' History: An Imaginary Excursion into the Real World", in Barbara Howe and Emory L. Kemp (eds), *Public History: An Introduction*. Malabar, Fl. (1986), p.21.

² Clifford L. Lord, "By Way of Background", in Clifford L. Lord (ed.), *Keepers of the Past*. Chapel Hill (1965), pp.3-4.

recently, state agencies have given encouragement and assistance in the founding of many more.³

However, commentators have taken a different perspective to explain the phenomenal growth of historical organisations since the 1960s. The first and most influential was Alvin Toffler. In *Future Shock* (1970) he asserted that individuals could not adapt to modern, rootless society and predicted that:

No society racing through the turbulence of the next several decades will be able to do without specialized centres in which the rate of change is artificially depressed. To phrase it differently, we shall need enclaves of the past - communities in which turn-over, novelty and choice are deliberately limited.

These may be communities in which history is partially frozen, like the Amish villages of Pennsylvania, or places in which the past is artfully simulated, like Williamsburg, Virginia or Mystic, Connecticut.⁴

Other commentators have expanded Toffler's view that the ever-increasing pace of change in the modern world has encouraged people to turn to a past they believe was simpler. One of the most influential of these is David Lowenthal who, in *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), explored the current obsession with the past expressed especially in the preservation movement.⁵ In addition, Lowenthal contended that "mistrust of the future also fuels today's nostalgia. We may not love the past as excessively as many did in the nineteenth century, but our misgivings about what may come are more grave."⁶ In his views on the mania for nostalgia Lowenthal concurs with sociologist Fred Davis. In *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (1979), Davis alleged that the pace of change in modern life has fuelled the rapid growth in the 'nostalgia industry' and that people turn to the past when they are uncertain about the present and the future.⁷ George Mowry and Blaine Brownell reiterated this view, although they applied it to an earlier period:

In [the twenties] politics, a fear of the future, a desire to escape present troubles, and the urge to return to the values of a fancied Golden Age of the past combined to sound one of the two dominant chords of the decade ...

³ "A Report on the Survey of Local Historical Societies", in Clement M. Silvestro and Richmond D. Williams, *A Look at Ourselves: A Report on the Survey of the State and Local Historical Agencies in the United States. Bulletins of the American Association for State and Local History*, Vol.2, No.12 (1962), p.432.

⁴ p.353.

⁵ pp.384-406.

⁶ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge (1990), p.11.

⁷ Chap.5.

The almost universal social malaise following World War I was well calculated to inspire a "retreat to the past".⁸

R.M. Taylor agreed and showed that genealogical activity peaked in the United States during the Civil War, the Great Depression and the Vietnam era, all periods of social unrest.⁹ However, in opposition to Taylor and to his own views, Davis also suggested that:

Paradoxically ... a strongly figured present tends to dissipate the nostalgic resources of the past. War, severe economic hardship, and cataclysmic natural disasters, for example, can so rivet the attention of a people on the present as to stifle "for the duration" any collective nostalgia.¹⁰

When looking at the growth of the history movement since the 1960s, Cary Carson supported the view that distrust with the present has encouraged an interest in the past, but placed it from the end of the 1960s:

Widespread disillusionment with unresponsive and irresponsible big government, an aimless and unwinnable war in Vietnam, a pusillanimous Congress, and a string of corrupt, incompetent, mendacious, or simple-minded high public officials turned people inward to seek solutions to society's problems nearer home and to find comforting precedents in local history.¹¹

More prosaically, and following the thinking of Lord and Williams, Carol Kammen suggested that a greater number of people are looking to the past because the population is better educated and more attend adult education classes. In addition people have greater leisure time, increased availability of records, and newly discovered material.¹²

Australian commentators have also pondered the reasons for the growth in the interest in history among the general population. Robin Boyd attributed the rising concern for the changing physical environment partly to nostalgia for a time when architecture was less commercial and garish. He also suggested that some supporters of the National Trust retained "a certain provident quality that has perhaps come to us with our Scottish settlers: an intense dislike of waste if waste is avoidable", while it distressed others "to

⁸ George E. Mowry and Blaine A. Brownell, *The Urban Nation 1920-1980*. New York (1981), p.33.

⁹ "Summoning the Wandering Tribes: Genealogy and Family Reunions in American History", *Journal of Social History*, Vol.16, No.2 (1982), pp.21-38, quoted in Graeme Davison, "The Use and Abuse of Australian History", in Susan Janson and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Making the Bicentenary*, a special issue of *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.23, No.91 (October 1988), p.68.

¹⁰ Davis, p.61.

¹¹ "Front and Center: Local History Comes of Age", in *Local History, National Heritage. Reflections of the History of AASLH*. Nashville (1991), p.86.

¹² *On Doing Local History. Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means*. Nashville (1986), pp.172-175.

see so much physical destruction of things already achieved, at the same time as Australia is still so busily involved in trying to build itself into a nation.”¹³ Bernard Smith believed that those who establish and patronise history museums do so to improve their own well-being:

The provision of a museum of local antiquities, even if it begins only with a room in the local library, should be encouraged ... The psychologists tell us that we do not see that which we do not know. It follows therefore that in order to perceive our own environment as an historical and contemporary reality, we need much more exact knowledge about it. And since we are in part moulded by our environments, a knowledge of one's environment is an aspect of self-knowledge; and conversely an incapacity to perceive one's environment becomes an incapacity to perceive an aspect of personal being.¹⁴

Graeme Davison agreed with the assessments of Lowenthal and Davis that feelings of nostalgia prompted by “the senses of disorientation, of decline and of national immaturity” motivated many in the heritage movement.¹⁵ He also suggested that from the 1960s preservationists in Australia were simply following a world-wide environmental trend. To Davison “the creation of the National Estate and the Museum of Australia might as readily be seen as an indirect creation of UNESCO as a symptom of Whitlam's new nationalism.”¹⁶ Conversely, Tony Bennett argued that a growing sense of Australian nationalism spurred the growth in historical museums and a general interest in history.¹⁷ Gail Griffith ascribed the growth in the history movement in Sydney from the early 1960s to spreading urbanisation and consequent rapid alteration of the environment. This “triggered a deep sense of insecurity [and] led to a mushrooming of local historical societies and National Trusts in Sydney's suburbs and in many country areas.”¹⁸

¹³ “The Future of Our Past”, in Proceedings of a Seminar on Historic Preservation in Australia, 11-13 August 1967, pp.5-6.

¹⁴ “On Perceiving the Australian Suburb”, in G. Seddon and M. Davis (eds), *Man and Landscape in Australia*. Canberra (1977), p.304.

¹⁵ “The Meanings of ‘Heritage’”, in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*. Sydney (1991), p.5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁷ *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy*. Cultural Policy Studies: Occasional Paper No.3. Brisbane (1988), p.10. Patrick Boylan, a British museums specialist, attributes the establishment of national museums in countries in Latin America and Africa within the first decade of gaining independence to a “consequent emergence of a sense of nationhood and national cultural identity.” “Museums and Cultural Identity”, *Museum Journal*, Vol.90, No.10 (1990), p.30.

¹⁸ “The Historical View from the Royal Australian Historical Society”, in The Local History Co-ordination Project, *Locating Australia's Past. A Practical Guide to Writing Local History*. Kensington NSW (1988), p.12.

Susan Marsden, when state historian for South Australia, followed Davison and linked the growth in amateur history in South Australia to the world-wide expansion of environmental awareness resulting from the degradation of the natural and built environments. Like Carol Kammen she concluded that an increase in leisure time enabled individuals to “appreciate the environment and work voluntarily”, and that improved education permitted them to “pursue intelligent interests”. Marsden also proposed that the real-estate and building boom and consequent loss of much local history and heritage further encouraged an interest in history. Because this boom occurred later and less drastically in South Australia, she claimed that South Australia’s jump in historical society numbers came in the 1970s rather than in the 1960s.¹⁹ In a similar vein to Marsden, Max Harris suggested that the ordinary person’s search for an ancestry was “a search for forgotten certitudes ... The truth is that the more savagely urbanised this country becomes, the more persistently a preoccupation with the past continues, deeply embedded in the inclinations of thinking people.”²⁰ Brian Crozier concluded that, “the community-based historical movement ... is the outcome of a search for historical identity”.²¹

Many of these explanations for the increasing interest in the past sound plausible, but most comments on the behaviour of individuals and the state of society are impressionistic rather than empirical and have little evidence to support them. With regard to the United States, Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan lamented that:

The number of historical organizations has grown enormously; in fact, their number has doubled since 1960. Yet chronicles of this dramatic growth, and the changes it has created, have been in large part impressionistic, journalistic accounts or observations of disparate individuals, both newcomers and old hands.²²

This assessment applies equally to Australia and to South Australia. To ascertain the validity of some of the assertions made by commentators I set out to quantify and

¹⁹ “History in the South: The Development of Historical Societies in South Australia”, in Alan Roberts (ed.), *Grass Roots History*. Canberra (1991), p.48.

²⁰ *Australian*, 24.6.1972.

²¹ Brian Crozier, “Owning the Past: Community-based History in South Australia”, *Australian Historical Association Bulletin*, Nos.64-65 (1990), p.54.

²² *The Wages of History: The A.A.S.L.H. Employment Trends and Salary Survey*, Nashville, Ten. (1984), p.3.

catalogue data about historical societies and their members. I forwarded a questionnaire to the president/chairman of groups in South Australia, in the rest of Australia and in the United States. It included questions on the reasons for the foundation and growth of societies, and sought a membership profile to ascertain whether interest in history has peaked and is now waning. It requested information on age and sex of members to determine whether females or males exhibit a greater commitment to history. It also asked respondents to speculate on the reasons that their members had joined. (See questionnaire, Appendix 1). Additionally, in South Australia I canvassed members of societies to obtain information about individuals and their reasons for their interest in history. The questionnaire sought similar information to the general questionnaire, such as age, sex and reasons for joining a historical group, and also more detailed personal information on background, on attitudes to history and views on present-day society (see questionnaire, Appendix 2).

Since the focus of this research is amateur history, for each region I included a society or museum only if a member or members of the general public had founded and operated it, a committee and members ran it, and it had no direct connection with an academic institution. The first questionnaire was sent to randomly selected historical groups in the United States, in the other Australian states, and to all historical organisations in South Australia. To choose societies within the United States I randomly selected ten states and then, from the thirteenth edition of the *Directory of Historical Agencies in North America*, published in 1986 by the American Association for State and Local History, randomly selected 15 historical organisations from each of the ten chosen states. The chosen societies are listed in Appendix 3. For Australian societies I randomly selected 15 societies from each of the five states other than South Australia (the Australian Capital Territory was included with New South Wales) and also included the four historical organisations that had formed in the Northern Territory. The societies, listed in Appendix 4, were chosen from the second edition of *Into History*, compiled by Ralph and Amy Reid (1992). I sent questionnaire forms to historical organisations in South Australia whose names appear in two directories published by the History Trust of South Australia, *South Australian Historical Organisations 1990-1991* (October 1990),

and G. Speirs and J. Pech, *Museums in South Australia 1990-1991* (1990).²³ Appendix 5 contains a list of these groups.

The selection of a sample to answer the second questionnaire proved difficult since I did not have access to membership lists or even to numbers of members in each society. Brian Samuels of the History Trust of South Australia advised that the majority of groups had fewer than 100 members, that some of the transport historical groups, the Historical Society of South Australia and the Pioneers' Association of South Australia had several hundred members, and the South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society and the head office of the National Trust of South Australia had several thousand members.²⁴ Taking into account these varying membership numbers I forwarded ten forms to the societies with less than an estimated 100 members, 20 forms to groups with several hundred members and 100 forms to the South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society and the head office of the National Trust of South Australia. However, I had no control over how the forms were distributed within each organisation, nor who completed the forms. Thus the survey of individuals is not based on a random sample. But it does provide a snapshot of membership of historical societies in South Australia in 1991.

The data provided by historical organisations in the United States, Australia, and South Australia, and from individuals in South Australia were entered into a computer. Printouts from the two data sets, one containing information from societies in the three regions and the other containing information from members of South Australian societies, are in Appendix 6.²⁵ The data give an overview of the state of historical organisations in the three regions, with an emphasis on societies in South Australia, and on individual members of organisations within South Australia. They allow a comparison of the

²³ I used the most recent listing of historical organisations in each region but the data is not necessarily accurate. The *Directory of Historical Agencies in North America*, which lists almost 10,000 agencies, points out in the preface that "some states' listings were more extensive than others", hence some societies in my selected states might not be listed. Again, while Reid and Reid have endeavoured to publish a complete listing of historical organisations in Australia I cannot be certain that all societies have been included. Additionally the foundation dates of 14% of the American societies and 23% of the Australian societies are unknown, so the proportion of societies founded in each decade is only approximate. Nevertheless, these are the only available figures and at least they give some indication of the development of the amateur history movement.

²⁴ Personal communication, 20 March 1991.

²⁵ The analysis of the data is not exhaustive. With more time and money a greater amount of information could have been obtained from each survey.

different regions and provide some explanation of the differences and similarities between these regions. The data also present a profile of membership of historical organisations in South Australia. Further study and analysis of this data would be interesting and worthwhile.

An examination of the foundation dates of all societies in the three regions supports the contention that the number of historical organisations has multiplied in the last 30 years. Tables 1 and 2 summarise this growth. Table 1 shows that in the United States the number of new historical groups began to increase in some states in the 1930s, with a slightly lower growth in the 1940s. The western state of California showed the greatest activity, where 31 new societies formed in the two decades. However, of the southern states no new societies formed in Arkansas, and residents of West Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina formed only four, five and seven groups respectively. In the 1950s interest in history exploded, and the number of new societies was treble the number begun in the previous decade. Whereas this growth was more uniform throughout all the sample states than was the growth in the 1940s, activity in California strengthened. In the 1950s Californians formed 47 historical organisations, more than twice the number established in any other sampled state. While this signified an upsurge of interest in history by Californians, it did not challenge New Englanders' pre-eminence in recording and preserving the past. As the table reveals, with Maine and Connecticut ranking first and second in the number of historical societies as a proportion of population, New Englanders continue to show the greatest interest in their past, followed by those from the midwest (including Wyoming), then southerners, with Californians lagging far behind in the percentage of historical groups to population.

Table 1. Number of new historical organisations by decade in ten selected states in the United States

Founded	AR	CA	CT	ME	MO	NC	TN	WV	WI	WY	Total
Pre-1900	-	6	8	4	2	1	3	-	5	1	30
1900-09	-	2	6	2	-	1	-	-	5	-	16
1910-19	1	3	7	1	2	2	-	-	4	-	20
1920-29	1	4	6	7	4	3	3	2	5	-	35
1930-39	-	17	11	6	6	4	3	2	12	2	63
1940-49	-	14	10	2	7	3	2	2	10	-	50
1950-59	9	47	19	14	16	15	11	4	14	6	155
1960-69	12	81	46	37	46	23	11	11	28	5	300
1970-79	18	75	29	35	42	29	30	12	43	4	317
Total	41	249	142	108	125	81	63	33	126	18	986
Not known	5	33	28	13	20	12	12	7	30	2	162

		Number of Hist Socs	Population 1980 ²⁶	Ratio Soc/Pop	Rank
AR	Arkansas (South)	46	2,286,000	1:49,696	6
CA	California (West)	282	23,668,000	1:83,929	10
CT	Connecticut (New England)	170	3,108,000	1:18,282	2
ME	Maine (New England)	121	1,125,000	1:9,298	1
MO	Missouri (South)	145	4,917,000	1:33,910	5
NC	North Carolina (South)	93	5,882,000	1:63,247	8
TN	Tennessee (South)	75	4,591,000	1:61,213	9
WV	West Virginia (South)	40	1,950,000	1:48,750	7
WI	Wisconsin (Midwest)	156	4,706,000	1:30,166	4
WY	Wyoming (Mountain)	20	470,000	1:23,500	3

²⁶ *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1982-83*, 103rd ed., Washington DC (1983), p.10.

New South Wales was the only Australian state to rival the activity in California in the 1930s and 1940s, hosting 15 of the 21 new groups formed in Australia in these years (Table 2). All Australian states showed a similar upsurge in historical activity in the 1950s, and slightly more than three times the number of societies formed in this decade than in the previous one. As indicated by the 15 new societies that formed in Victoria in the 1950s, more than seven times the number that had formed in the previous decade, Victorians in particular became aware of their past. In Australia it has been possible to differentiate between the growth in historical organisations in urban and rural areas. Until the end of the 1940s the number of historical groups in urban areas outnumbered those in rural regions. However, this changed from the 1950s when new rural societies exceeded new urban groups in all states except Tasmania, and by the end of this decade Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, had more historical societies in rural areas than in their metropolitan regions. In the 1960s both the foundation of and total number of historical groups in rural areas outstripped that in urban regions in all Australian states. This seems to negate the claims of those commentators who insist that development and the subsequent loss of local history was the principal stimulus to the growth in the amateur history movement. If this was the case many more historical societies would have developed in urban areas, which experienced the greatest changes to their physical environment, than in rural areas.

As Table 2 shows, South Australia began to catch up with the other Australian states in the 1950s. In this decade it outpaced all but New South Wales and Victoria in the formation of new historical organisations. The growth of new societies in the 1960s was even more dramatic. While the number of new historical groups in New South Wales in the 1960s was almost four times that of the 1950s, and in Victoria it was almost five times that of the previous decade, in South Australia the number of new societies jumped sevenfold from seven new societies in the 1950s to 49 new groups in the 1960s. This challenges Marsden's claim that the number of historical societies did not jump in South Australia until the 1970s.²⁷ Following the pattern of the other states, where

²⁷ "History in the South", p.48.

Table 2. Number of new historical organisations by decade in Australian states⁺

Founded	NSW		VIC		QLD		TAS		WA		Total		SA	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1900-1909	1		1								2			
Total	1		1								2			
1910-1919	2			1	1						3	1		
Total	2		1	1	1						4			
1920-1929	2								1		3			
Total	2								1		3			
1930-1939	5	3								1	5	4	2	
Total	8								1		9		2	
1940-1949	5	2	1	1	1	1				1	7	5	1	
Total	7		2		2				1		12		1	
1950-1959	8	10	6	9		3	1		2	3	17	25	5	2
Total	18		15		3	1			5		42		7	
1960-1969	14	55	19	52	5	13	2	4	3	8	43	131	12	37
Total	69		71		18	6			11		174		49	
1970-1979	19	34	21	34	6	27	3	1	6	12	55	108	18	33
Total	53		55		33	4			18		163		51	
1980-1989	26	51	14	48	7	23	3	7	4	9	54	138	22	37
Total	77		62		30	10			13		192		59	
TOTAL	82	155	62	145	20	67	9	12	16	34	189	412	60	109
Unknown		76		35		13		6		32		162		16

	Number of Hist Socs*	Population 1981 ²⁸	Ratio Soc/Pop	Rank
New South Wales (including ACT)	236	5,347,826	1:22,660	4
Victoria	180	3,832,443	1:21,410	3
Queensland	70	2,295,123	1:32,787	6
Tasmania	17	418,957	1:24,644	5
Western Australia	69	1,273,624	1:18,458	2
South Australia	126	1,285,033	1:10,199	1

⁺Because of the small number of societies and also its small population, the Northern Territory has been omitted. The total for South Australia is slightly inflated since it includes societies that have now ceased to operate, but as the figures for the other regions also probably include a small number of such groups this should not affect the overall result.

*To make these calculations comparable to those for the United States, the number of historical societies is the total to the end of 1979 plus those with unknown foundation dates. While some of the latter might have begun after this date, this is the best way to make a valid comparison.

societies formed in urban areas earlier than in rural districts, four of the six new societies in the 1950s were in Adelaide and its suburbs. Similarly, as with the other Australian states, this situation reversed. In the 1960s all but 12 of the 49 new groups formed in rural areas. It is difficult, therefore, to agree with Marsden's view that a boom in real estate and development was responsible for the ever-increasing number of historical organisations in South Australia.

A summary of the reasons for the founding of historical groups included in my survey shows the prime motivations for the formation of historical groups in each of the three regions.

*Table 3. Stimulus for the founding of historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia**

Region	Local Anniversary	State Anniversary	National Anniversary	Destruction Built Envir	Destruction Natural Env	Other Reasons	No Reason	Total no. societies
USA	7	4	12	18	4	23	24	83
% of total	8%	5%	14%	22%	5%	28%	29%	
Australia	7	4	5	16	1	28	10	67
% of total	10%	6%	7%	24%	1%	42%	15%	
SA	24	8	5	44	5	28	9	113
% of total	21%	7%	4%	40%	4%	25%	8%	

*Individual entries do not equal the number of societies in each region because some societies nominated more than one prime motivation for their founding.

Despite my previous comments, these figures seem to demonstrate that the destruction of the built environment was indeed the single most important reason behind the formation of historical organisations in the three regions. Thus those commentators who claim that expanding suburbanisation, the disappearance of old buildings and the changing face of cities was a primary stimulus for the founding of historical societies appear to be correct. In particular the data for California, where five of the eight surveyed societies begun since 1950 cited destruction of the physical environment as a prime motivating force, seem to support this view. But a further breakdown of the figures for the United States as a whole reveals that the number of surveyed societies that were initiated in response to threatened or actual destruction of buildings was greatest in the earlier decades of the twentieth century. Of the nine surveyed societies established between 1920 and 1950, four (44%) were formed because of this reason. For the 1950s it was four out of 13 (30%), the 1960s six out of 21 (29%) and the 1970s six out of 25 (24%). Thus, even though the built environment changed most drastically progressively from the 1950s, the

number of societies forming in response to this declined. A more likely explanation for the expansion of historical interest in California is provided by historian John Bodnar, who contended that:

In the decade after World War I heightened attempts were made to replace vernacular interest in immigrant and local pioneers with expressions of loyalty to the nation-state. The effort on the part of cultural leaders to incorporate vernacular cultures into official ones actually accelerated during the 1930s and during the years of warfare in the 1940s. These attempts did encourage creative responses on the part of subcultures themselves in a valiant attempt to preserve something of their own interests.²⁹

Californians had become more conscious of their own heritage, and like the southern states in earlier decades wished to ensure that this was not subsumed. Californians did not have to fight only against the New England hegemony of the past. They also had to deflect those who wished to emphasis the unity rather than the diversity of the nation by creating a national history that overshadowed the preservation of a local and more personal past. While the number of historical organisations in California did not increase significantly in the 1920s, this was no doubt one of the stimuli for the formation of so many new historical organisations in the succeeding decades.

As the data show, the situation in Australia was slightly different. Of the seven Australian societies surveyed that had formed in the 1950s, only one (14%) attributed its formation to a concern for the destruction of the built environment. Seeming to support the contention that the changing face of the landscape in the 1960s spawned an interest in history, seven (37%) of the 19 surveyed societies that formed in this decade cited concern for the built environment as a reason for their formation, and in the 1970s eight (44%) of 18 surveyed societies did. Yet four of the groups from the 1960s are rural - one National Trust group from Tasmania, two historical societies from Western Australia and one historical society from Queensland. Unfortunately no urban historical organisation that had formed in the 1960s in suburban Sydney was chosen for the survey. I was therefore unable to discover whether the great changes to the built environment in this decade

²⁹ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton (1992), p.43.

stimulated residents of these areas to initiate and join historical organisations.³⁰ In Victoria one of two urban groups included in the survey that had formed in the 1960s cited concern for the built environment as a motivating force. But this society was in an outlying area little affected by suburban development. Its founders wished to preserve a single building and were not concerned about the widespread destruction of their built heritage. However, in the 1970s four of eight societies citing concern for the built environment as the principal reason for formation were metropolitan societies, two being from Perth and one each from Sydney and Brisbane. Thus the view that the increasing population and the changing appearance of the built environment prompted Australians to form societies to preserve their heritage probably has some validity for urban areas in Australia, although it should be treated with a little caution.

The greatest increase in the number of historical organisations in Australia was in country districts. Few rural towns experienced building booms, and as younger people left for the cities the towns began to decay. Therefore other reasons must have prompted the surge in historical interest in these areas. Paradoxically, it appears that rural dwellers formed historical groups precisely because there was *no* increase in population or development in their towns. Additionally, as mentioned in several survey responses, those remaining realised that the history of their area was disappearing with the deaths of older settlers. They became concerned about the retention of both the human history and the built heritage of their towns. Tasmanians, however, might have had a further motivation. In the 1960s and 1970s rural Tasmanians had a greater concern than other Australians for the preservation of the physical environment and feared for the survival of their colonial buildings. While these predominantly Georgian-style buildings were gracious and did indeed warrant preservation, as suggested in earlier chapters Tasmanians were even at this late date embarrassed about the beginnings of their state. The preserved elegant buildings presented a more pleasant version of the past than the often violent human past that most people associate with the island.

³⁰ However, a survey of historical societies in New South Wales conducted by the Royal Australian Historical Society in about 1989 revealed that many suburban societies "had been spurred into saving their local history by accelerated urban growth and changes in residential and land-use patterns." Gail Le Bransky, "The Future of Historical Societies. Part II", in Alan Roberts, *Grass Roots History*. Canberra (1991), p.74.

Influenced by the philosophy of National Trust groups in the early years of the historical society movement in South Australia, South Australians showed the greatest concern for saving the built environment, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. South Australian societies stimulated by a concern for the physical environment

Group	1950s			1960s			1970s			1980s			Total		
	Env	Tot	%	Env	Tot	%	Env	Tot	%	Env	Tot	%	Env	Tot	%
Urban National Trust	1	1	100	4	4	100	1	2	50	-	-	-	6	7	86
Rural National Trust	-	-	-	12	21	57	4	8	50	2	3	66	18	32	56
Urban Historical Society	-	1	-	-	2	-	2	7	29	-	9	-	2	19	11
Rural Historical Society	1	1	100	-	3	-	2	6	33	4	13	31	7	23	30
Urban Transport Society	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	50	1	4	25
Rural Transport Society	-	-	-	1	1	100	2	2	100	-	-	-	3	3	100
Urban Preservation and Heritage Society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	50	1	2	50
Rural Preservation and Heritage Society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	100	1	1	100
Rural Oral History Society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Urban Genealogy Society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Rural Genealogy Society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	4	-
Urban Institutional Historical Society	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	50	1	2	50	2	4	50
Urban Historical Museum	1	1	100	-	2	-	1	1	100	-	2	-	2	6	33
Rural Historical Museum	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	3	33	1	6	17
Total	3	5	60	17	34	50	13	33	39	11	41	27	44	113	40

This table shows that 62% of National Trust groups formed because of a threat to the physical environment. Similar to the situation in the other Australian states, the majority of societies that had been formed to protect the physical environment were located in rural areas. But unlike the other states in Australia, and akin to the situation in the United States, preservation of the built environment as a stimulus for the formation of a historical group decreased from the 1950s to the 1980s. This is perhaps because so many of the first historical organisations took on the task of lobbying for protection of the built heritage. Nevertheless, the fact that a state that experienced less commercial and economic development than the three mainland eastern states showed the earliest and greatest concern for preservation of the built environment indicates that it was more than development which prompted South Australians to turn to the past.

Another view that this survey challenges is the importance of the destruction of the natural environment in the growth of the amateur history movement. The survey does not support this. Only 5% of societies in the United States, 1% of societies in Australia, and 4% of South Australian societies cite concern for the natural environment as a stimulus for their founding. This is particularly interesting for South Australia, where the National Trust was formed in response to the threatened revocation of a bird sanctuary. Furthermore, the first properties donated to many rural branches of the trust were areas of land that were to be conserved as flora or fauna reserves. The claim that concern for the natural environment did not stimulate the formation of their groups could simply be because current members do not know the history of their organisation. But it also challenges David Lowenthal's claim that new countries such as the United States and Australia that have a very short recorded human history emphasise the antiquity of their natural environment.³¹ If this were indeed the case, then amateur historians should still show concern for the natural environment. While these findings contest Lowenthal, they support Tom Griffiths and Charles Fahey, who both suggest that the preservation of the human past conflicts with the conservation of the natural environment.³² Conservationists, who wish to return the landscape to an imagined "state of nature", object to the retention of the hand of man on that landscape. Thus, local historians are unlikely also to be concerned with the natural environment.

The most common 'other' reason for the formation of historical groups in all three regions was the desire to preserve or protect the history of a town or region, often prompted by the ageing and death of old residents. Eleven responses from the United States, eight from Australia and eight from South Australia indicated that their societies formed simply to preserve the history of their area. Other responses stated that residents of some regions formed historical societies because neighbouring towns and districts had, and so they felt that their district should have one as well. Residents of one small Californian town formed a historical society because they were concerned that their

³¹ Lowenthal, p.54.

³² Tom Griffiths, "History and Natural History: Conservation Movements in Conflict?", in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt (eds), *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*. A special issue of *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.24, No.91 (1991), pp.1-15; Charles Fahey, "The Ever-Changing Landscape", in Graeme Davison and Chris McConville, *A Heritage Handbook*, North Sydney (1991), p.174.

history was being subsumed into the history of two nearby cities. Similarly, inhabitants of a New South Wales country town formed their own society because they felt that the old established historical society in a neighbouring town was ignoring their history. In several instances in the United States, Australia and South Australia the publication of a local history of a town or suburb spurred residents to form a historical society to continue research into the local area. The donation of objects and the subsequent formation of a museum were cited by several groups in each region as the reason for their founding. The major state historical societies continue to encourage the establishment of smaller groups. A member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria instigated a local historical society when he moved to a town in rural Victoria. In another case, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria directly drew the attention of residents of a Victorian rural town to the need to record and publish their town's history.

As some commentators have suggested, anniversaries have influenced the formation of historical societies, but local, state and national anniversaries have had a different prominence in each of the regions. Marsden mentions local anniversaries as a stimulus in South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia, but local anniversaries have been twice as influential in South Australia in the founding of historical groups than in either the United States or the rest of Australia. This is perhaps because of the insularity of South Australians. Additionally, the relatively slow population growth and the decline of rural towns in South Australia encouraged the celebration of anniversaries. The coincident formation of societies commemorated the achievements of the past as a means of reinforcing pride. State anniversaries proved to have only a minor influence in all three regions on the founding of historical organisations. Insufficient information is available to speculate on the reasons for this in the United States. In Australia it is probably because state anniversaries are usually centred in the capital cities and therefore have had little impact in rural areas. From the responses in all three regions it appears that the Bicentennial in the United States was much more important in creating an interest in the past among Americans than was the Australian Bicentenary among Australians. Yet in Australia four of the nine surveyed societies that began in 1985 or later attributed their founding to the Bicentenary. Of these four, two are in rural Tasmania, one is in rural

Queensland and one is in suburban Sydney. Perhaps, therefore, the data set is too limited to give a clear overall picture of the influence of the Bicentenary on amateur history in Australia, and further research needs to be carried out to clarify the situation.³³ With regards to South Australia, where 113 of 163 eligible societies (69%) responded to the survey and 104 of these groups indicated the stimulus for their founding, there is no doubt that the Bicentenary had minimal impact.³⁴

Whereas the Bicentenary had only half the impact on the foundation of historical organisations in Australia as the American Bicentennial had in the United States, both celebrations were important in stimulating growth in membership in societies in each of these two regions, as demonstrated in the following table:

*Table 5. Stimulus for the growth of historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia**

Region	Local Anniversary	State Anniversary	National Anniversary	Destruction Built Envir	Destruction Nat. Env	Other Reasons	No Reason	Total No. Societies
USA	9	7	18	15	2	18	21	83
% of total	11%	8%	22%	18%	2%	22%	25%	
Australia	7	6	14	6	1	16	23	67
% of total	10%	9%	21%	9%	1%	24%	34%	
SA	13	16	5	24	4	25	36	113
% of total	12%	14%	4%	21%	4%	22%	32%	

*Some societies designated more than one prime motivating factor for their formation.

In South Australia, the Bicentenary proved to be as inconsequential for the growth of historical organisations as it was for the formation of such groups. Local anniversaries in South Australia had less impact on the growth of societies than on their foundation, but the state's 150th birthday was a greater stimulus to promoting than founding societies. The Bicentenary was more than twice as influential as concern for the built environment in increasing membership in societies throughout Australia. Only in South Australia was concern for the built environment a major consideration for members of historical organisations. Again this challenges the prevailing view of the importance of changes to

³³ Jan McMahon claims that the Bicentenary had a greater impact in Western Australia than the 1938 national celebrations. This was because the 1988 program emphasised unity and national identity. She explained, "When the sun set in the West, it was setting on Australia, not on the small British colony on the west coast of the continent." Nevertheless, only 13 minutes of the four-hour television program "Australia Live", marking the start of the Bicentenary, were devoted to Western Australia. "Media Myths in the Wild West", in Lenore Layman and Tom Stannage (eds), *Celebrations in Western Australian History*, Nedlands, WA (1989), p.1-7.

³⁴ Marsden also credits the strong German heritage in South Australia and an expanding number of government agencies dedicated to preserving local history with influencing the history movement in South Australia (Marsden, p.49). Unfortunately, the data is not extensive enough to either support or refute these claims.

the physical environment to the historical society movement since the state with the least changes exhibited the greatest concern.

A new development in the celebration of the past is the growing number of societies that are devoted to family history and genealogy. Americans became absorbed in genealogy and family history in the 1970s. The authors of an instructional book on writing family history produced by the Genealogical Institute in the United States in 1972 comment that, "family history is the fastest growing hobby in America and one of the newest interests of the historical profession".³⁵ Alex Haley's book *Roots* (1976), a fictionalised history of a black family, and the subsequent television mini-series based on this work (1977), further increased interest in genealogy. Although the author's main purpose was to highlight the injustices and abominations of slavery and to promote self-awareness and pride among black Americans, it spurred white Americans to examine and to record their past.³⁶ During the 1980s Australians turned from a study of local history to a concentration on family history and genealogy, and in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania the growth of family history and genealogical societies in this decade was phenomenal. The figures for the various states are:

Table 6. Formation of family history/genealogy societies in Australia in the 1980s

State	Urban		Rural	
	Family History/ Genealogy	Total New Societies	Family History/ Genealogy	Total New Societies
New South Wales	13 (50%)*	26	33 (65%)	51
Victoria	2 (14%)	14	20 (42%)	48
Queensland	5 (71%)	7	14 (61%)	23
Western Australia	- (-)	4	2 (22%)	9
Tasmania	3 (75%)	4	3 (50%)	6
South Australia	1 (6%)	22	3 (8%)	37

*Family history/genealogy societies as a per cent of total number of new societies.

The four eastern states, the sites of first white settlement, appear to have experienced the largest growth in such societies. But the figures do not tell the whole story. In most states

³⁵ Vincent L. Jones, Arlene H. Eakle and Mildred H. Christensen, *Family History for Fun and Profit* (rev.ed), Utah (1972), Preface.

³⁶ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, New York (1991), pp.642-645. For a full discussion of the "Roots" phenomenon, see Gary B. Mills and Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Roots and the New 'Faction': a Legitimate Tool for Clío?", *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol.89 (Jan.1981), pp.3-26.

in Australia individual families and towns have established descendants' groups. However, in South Australia the South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society encompasses these smaller groups as well as descendants' groups based on nationality, thereby eliminating the need for a multitude of societies. A comparison of membership of genealogy/family history groups in all Australian states verifies the strength of the movement in South Australia.

*Table 7. Membership of family history/genealogy societies**

<u>State</u>	<u>Society</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>1990 Population</u>
New South Wales (including ACT)	Urban societies	16,668	19,419	6,116,232
	Rural societies	<u>2,751</u>		
Victoria	Urban societies	7,500	9,938	4,378,592
	Rural societies	<u>2,438</u>		
Queensland	Urban societies	3,915	5,262	2,899,283
	Rural societies	<u>1,347</u>		
Western Australia	Urban societies	1,650	1,766	1,613,049
	Rural societies	<u>116</u>		
Tasmania	Urban societies	1,529	1,764	462,188
	Rural societies	<u>235</u>		
Northern Territory	Urban societies	130	130	163,728
South Australia	Urban societies	3600	3,756	1,432,056
	Rural societies	<u>156</u>		
Total			42,035	17,065,128

*This is only approximate since the membership of 35 genealogy/family history societies throughout Australia is not known.

New South Wales (including the Australian Capital Territory), which is home to approximately 36% of Australia's population, has 46% of the membership of Australia's family history/genealogical societies. While the number of members of these groups residing interstate is not known, the figures nevertheless indicate that family history and genealogy are particularly strong in New South Wales. Western Australia, which has approximately 9% of Australia's population, has only 4% of the membership of family history/genealogy societies while the Northern Territory, with 1% of the population has only .3% membership of genealogical societies. The percentage of membership of family history/genealogy societies in the remaining states approximates their percentage of

population.³⁷ South Australia, with 8% of the population, has 9% of the membership of family history/genealogy societies.

Reasons for the sudden upsurge in the number of these groups throughout most of Australia are not clear. Taylor's thesis that in the United States genealogical activity peaked during periods of social unrest does not seem applicable. Australia did undergo an economic downturn and a prolonged period of recession and unemployment during the 1980s. However, this decade experienced less student agitation than occurred in the 1960s, when students protested against Australia's participation in the Vietnam war, and less worker unrest than in the 1970s, when there were frequent strikes in a quest for improved wages and conditions. Interest in genealogy and family history did not surge in either of these more turbulent decades. Immigration, a major cause of the growth of the movement in the United States in the late nineteenth century, was also of little consequence in Australia. Some Australians particularly in Sydney and Melbourne resented the increasing Asian immigration to Australia, but encouraged by government policy most Australians accepted the nation's growing multiculturalism. E.C. Best, president of the Society of Australian Genealogists, attributed the growth in genealogical interest in New South Wales to "the Cook Bicentenary, the American mini-series 'Roots', the new national consciousness and preparations for the forthcoming Australian Bicentenary". Together these "began to break down the prejudices that had divided some descendants of free settlers from those with convict ancestry and had adversely affected the attitudes of most Australians to their family history."³⁸ This is a Sydneycentric view of the movement and does not explain the growth in the rest of Australia. A more probable explanation is the increasing age of the country. None of the surveyed family history or genealogy groups maintained that a local, state or national anniversary prompted their founding. However, the growing number of anniversary celebrations in the 1970s and 1980s and, as Best suggests, the lead-up to the Australian Bicentenary no doubt convinced Australians that their country did have a past, and that their forebears had helped to shape it. Historical societies had already formed in many districts, but these

³⁷ Population figures are taken from *Year Book Australia 1995*, Canberra (1995), p.93.

³⁸ "Address given by the President, Mr E.C. Best, on the occasion of the Society's 60th Anniversary", *Descent*, Vol.22, No.3 (1992), p.102.

were concerned primarily with the founders and pioneers of their area and paid scant attention to the majority of settlers. The descendants of these forgotten settlers sought to redress this imbalance, and formed groups dedicated to researching the history of individual families.

The absence of family history/genealogy groups in Western Australia and the Northern Territory is interesting. For Western Australia this could be because the Royal Historical Society of Western Australia continues to cater for the descendants of the early settlers. Another possible explanation is the relatively recent growth of population in both Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Many of their citizens are newcomers with no family history or roots in the area. Thus if they wish to trace their background, they are more likely to join a society in the region from which their family originated. In this way, Western Australia and the Northern Territory equate with one region in the United States in the late nineteenth century. As discussed earlier, citizens of the mid-western states did not follow their eastern brethren in founding and joining ancestral and hereditary groups, partly because they were new to the region and also because their family records were elsewhere. Another possible explanation for the Northern Territory is the number of Aborigines in the population. These people often do not feel comfortable in white organisations, yet have not formed their own formal genealogical groups.

This examination of historical societies reveals that commentators have been partly right in their assessments of the reasons for the growth in the number of historical organisations since the 1950s. But their pronouncements should be accepted with caution since they tend to be sweeping generalisations that hide individual trends. Studies of selected groups of societies reveal that other stimuli have also been present. An examination of the reasons for individuals joining such groups similarly modifies the pronouncements of these gurus. In particular, Alvin Toffler and David Lowenthal have emphasised that disenchantment with modern life and the pace of change in the second half of the twentieth century have encouraged individuals to turn to the past as an anchor of stability. While the questionnaire provides only the impression of the respondent, it does dispose of dissatisfaction with the present as being a reason for individuals joining historical organisations.

Table 8. Why individuals joined historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total*
US	36	27	24	13	46	1	4	5	5	11	3	175
% of total	21%	15%	14%	7%	26%	1%	2%	3%	3%	6%	2%	
Aust	19	23	17	6	28	3	4	2	4	7	2	115
% of total	17%	20%	15%	5%	24%	3%	3%	2%	3%	6%	2%	
SA	37	14	29	15	63	3	11	7	4	11	2	196
% of total	19%	7%	15%	8%	32%	2%	6%	4%	2%	6%	1%	

*Some respondents designated more than one prime reason for members joining their societies.

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | An interest in history in general | 7 | To meet likeminded people |
| 2 | An interest in family history | 8 | Because friend/spouse/partner joined |
| 3 | To find out more about the local area | 9 | To be entertained |
| 4 | An interest in old buildings | 10 | As a community service |
| 5 | A wish to preserve the past for future generations | 11 | Other |
| 6 | Because society is changing rapidly | | |

The response of American societies is particularly interesting. While the urban and rural landscape of the United States has changed significantly, only one of the 83 respondents gave the pace of change as a reason for members joining. The numbers in the other two regions were also minuscule, with only three of 67 Australian respondents and three of 113 South Australian respondents citing this as a prime motivation for members joining their groups. The speculations of Toffler and Lowenthal, therefore, appear to be unfounded, and most individuals have not joined historical organisations as an escape from a modern world that is moving too fast.

In all regions the wish to preserve the past for future generations was the principal reason for membership in a historical organisation. Interestingly, despite the strength of the National Trust of South Australia and its members' concern for the physical environment, respondents did not believe that an interest in old buildings encouraged many of their members to join. However, supporting the importance of the interest in family history in other Australian states, this ranked second in the reasons for membership in this region. In the United States it ranked third, and in South Australia fourth. However this figure is distorted for South Australia because only five of 113 societies belong to this group whereas for the rest of Australia it was 12 of the 67 societies that responded. Thus this figure was lower in South Australia because a significantly smaller percentage of surveyed societies were family history/genealogy groups.

Whereas the majority of the founders and members of the first historical organisations in the three regions were men, over the years this changed. The following

table drawn from information supplied by the survey indicates that women now dominate membership in these groups.

Table 9. Historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia showing highest male and female membership

Society	Beginning				Current				Total number historical societies
	No. with greatest male membership	No. with greatest female membership	No. with equal male/female membership	Number valid responses	No. with greatest male membership	No. with greatest female membership	No. with equal male/female membership	Number valid responses	
US	16	25	6	47	8	32	4	44	83
% Total	34%	53%	13%		18%	73%	9%		
Aust	12	28	5	45	7	43	2	52	67
% Total	27%	62%	11%		13%	83%	4%		
SA	40	30	10	80	30	47	8	85	113
% Total	50%	38%	13%		35%	55%	9%		

Because of the random selection of historical organisations, only three societies begun in the nineteenth century in the United States have been included in the survey. Hence it appears that males have usually been in the minority in historical organisations, although this was definitely not the case in the early years of the movement. But women have become more involved gradually over the course of the twentieth century, and the figures clearly indicate that women are now much more involved than men in organisations dedicated to preserving the past. This is particularly the case in Australia where 83% of societies have more female than male members. The explanation for this lies in the growth of family history/genealogy societies, which tend to attract women to their ranks. Seven of the eleven such groups included in the survey gave a membership breakdown for both the founding year and the present. These groups had from two to seven times more female than male members. One group that only indicated current membership had three times as many female members. While this follows the pattern of membership of genealogical groups in the United States in the late nineteenth century, which attracted mainly female adherents, it is unlikely to be for the same reasons. Currently females do not predominate in the population as they did then, and unlike in the earlier period other avenues now exist for women to exercise power. More likely, women dominate family history/genealogy groups because, despite changing gender roles, they remain guardians of the family and the custodians of its history.

South Australia differs from the other two regions in its gender balance in historical groups, as shown in Table 10. Half of the historical organisations had a greater

number of male members in their founding year compared with 34% in the United States and only 27% in Australia. While this proportion has declined, societies in South Australia continue to have a greater number of societies with more male than female members than do the other two regions. The survey showed that 35% of organisations have a majority of male members in this state compared with only 18% in the United States and a mere 13% in the rest of Australia. In their initial years, societies in 11 of the different groupings had a majority of male members. In particular, in all but one instance societies associated with forms of transport or connected with the workplace had a significant majority of male members. An analysis of membership in similar organisations in the United States and in the other Australian states would no doubt also reveal that males predominated in organisations with a similar focus. But even if these societies are excluded from the calculations, males still outnumbered females at the outset in 45% of organisations. Even excluding the transport and institutional historical organisations from a calculation of current membership, in which case females are in the majority in 60% of societies, a greater percentage of societies in South Australia currently has more male than female members. In particular, museums in both urban and rural areas remain with more male members. However, the National Trust, the preservation societies and the South Australian Genealogy and Heraldry Society now have more female than male members. The only grouping to equate with historical groups in the rest of Australia is the urban historical societies, which had 67% of societies with a majority of female members at their formation (62% for historical organisations for Australia as a whole), and now have 83% of societies with more women (83% for Australia as a whole).

Table 10. Historical organisations in South Australia showing highest male and female membership

Society	Beginning			Total number valid responses	Current			Number valid responses	Total number historical societies
	No. with greatest male membership	No. with greatest female membership	No. with equal male/female membership		No. with greatest male membership	No. with greatest female membership	No. with equal male/female membership		
UNT	2	1	1	4	-	3	-	3	7
% Total	50%	25%	25%			100%			
RNT	9	8	4	21	6	15	3	24	32
% Total	43%	38%	19%		25%	63%	13%		
UHS	3	8	1	12	1	10	1	12	19
% Total	25%	67%	8%		8%	83%	8%		
RHS	9	6	4	19	9	9	3	21	23
% Total	47%	32%	21%		43%	43%	14%		
UTS	3	-	-	3	3	-	-	3	4
% Total	100%				100%				
RTS	2	-	-	2	1	-	-	1	3
% Total	100%				100%				
UPH	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	2
% Total		100%				100%			
RPH	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1
% Total	100%					100%			
ROH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
% Total									
UGS	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	1
% Total	100%					100%			
RGS	-	3	-	3	-	4	-	4	4
% Total		100%				100%			
UIH	3	1	-	4	3	1	-	4	4
% Total	75%	25%			75%	25%			
UHM	4	1	-	5	4	1	-	5	6
% Total	80%	20%			80%	20%			
RHM	3	1	-	4	3	1	1	5	6
% Total	75%	25%			60%	20%	20%		
SA	40	30	10	80	30	47	8	85	113
% Total	50%	38%	13%		35%	55%	9%		

In this and subsequent tables, the following abbreviations are used:

UNT	Urban National Trust	RPH	Rural Preservation and Heritage Society
RNT	Rural National Trust	ROH	Rural Oral History Society
UHS	Urban Historical Society	UGS	Urban Genealogical Society
RHS	Rural Historical Society	RGS	Rural Genealogical Society
UTS	Urban Transport Society	UIH	Urban Institutional Historical Society
RTS	Rural Transport Society	UHM	Urban Historical Museum
UPH	Urban Preservation and Heritage Society	RHM	Rural Historical Museum

In addition to looking at the composition of membership of historical organisations it is interesting to consider whether evidence that membership has peaked and is now declining is indeed correct.³⁹

Table 11. Period of highest membership of historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia

Region	Number with greatest initial membership	Number with greatest current membership *	Number with same membership	Number of valid responses	Total number of historical societies
US	15	53	-	68	83
% of Total	22%	78%			
Australia	9	44	2	55	67
% of Total	16%	80%	4%		
SA	34	52	8	94	113
% of Total	36%	55%	9%		

*Because the questionnaire was distributed at different times, the current membership for the United States is for 1992, for Australia 1993 and for South Australia 1991.

These figures show that overall in the three regions membership of historical organisations is greater now than when these organisations began. The more detailed figures for South Australia (Table 12) support this trend, although to a lesser extent, with 55% of societies showing a greater membership now than initially.

³⁹ Telephone conversation with Carol Liston, 19 August 1993;

Table 12. Period of highest membership of historical organisations in South Australia

Group	Number with greatest initial membership	Number with greatest current membership *	Number with same membership	Total number of valid responses	Total number of historical societies
UNT % Total	2 33%	3 50%	1 17%	6	7
RNT % Total	14 54%	11 42%	1 4%	26	32
UHS % Total	6 35%	11 65%	-	17	19
RHS % Total	8 42%	7 37%	4 21%	19	23
UTS % Total	-	2 66%	1 33%	3	4
RTS % Total	-	2 100%	-	2	3
UPH % Total	1 100%	-	-	1	2
RPH % Total	-	1 100%	-	1	1
ROH % Total	1 100%	-	-	1	1
UGS % Total	-	1 100%	-	1	1
RGS % Total	1 33%	2 66%	-	3	4
UIH % Total	1 25%	2 50%	1 25%	4	4
UHM % Total	-	5 100%	-	5	6
RHM % Total	-	5 100%	-	5	6
SA % Total	34 36%	52 55%	8 9%	94	113

However, if the peak membership of societies is compared with current membership a different picture emerges.

Table 13. Peak membership of historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia

Region	Peak Membership Now	Peak Membership Earlier	Number of valid responses	Total number of historical societies
US	32 44%	41 56%	73	83
Australia	18 33%	37 67%	55	67
SA	24 28%	61 72%	85	113

In the United States 44% of valid responses indicated that societies have a higher membership now than previously. In Australia the figure is 33% of societies, and in South Australia it is only 28% of societies. Thus in all regions membership of historical societies has declined, with the greatest fall-off being in South Australia. Within South Australia (see Table 14) the National Trust groups have experienced the highest loss of membership, with only one out of 22 rural branches that supplied information having a greater membership now than previously. In none of the five urban National Trusts that indicated numbers is current membership higher than previously. However, half the urban historical societies (seven of 14 responses) report that their highest membership was in 1991, the year of the survey. Perhaps this means that the strength of the historical society movement in South Australia has moved from rural areas back to the metropolitan region. The decline in rural membership of historical organisations probably is connected with the declining rural population. In earlier years newcomers to country towns no doubt boosted the membership of local historical groups. There were exceptions to this. An American respondent from a town that had changed from being rural to one housing workers from a nearby city regretted that most newcomers displayed no interest in local history. Nevertheless, David Lowenthal's observation of the situation in England probably is also applicable to Australia:

To compensate for their own lack of local roots, newcomers to old English villages may take keen interest in the local past; they often come to dominate

Table 14. Peak membership of historical organisations in South Australia

Group	Peak Membership Now	Peak Membership Earlier	Total number of valid responses	Total number of historical organisations
UNT % Total	-	5 100%	5	7
RNT % Total	1 5%	21 95%	22	32
UHS % Total	7 50%	7 50%	14	19
RHS % Total	4 21%	15 79%	19	23
UTS % Total	1 33%	2 66%	3	4
RTS % Total	1 33%	2 66%	3	3
UPH % Total	-	1 100%	1	1
RPH % Total	-	1 100%	1	1
ROH % Total	-	1 100%	1	1
UGS % Total	-	1 100%	1	1
RGS % Total	1 33%	2 66%	3	4
UIH % Total	2 66%	1 33%	3	4
UHM % Total	3 60%	2 40%	5	6
RHM % Total	4 100%	-	4	6
SA % Total	24 28%	61 72%	85	113

historical and preservation societies, as militant defenders of old land-marks against bulldozers manned, likely as not, by unsentimental village old timers.⁴⁰

But in Australia, with changes in technology and in commercial and government practices, bank employees, teachers and stock and station agents among others no longer spend time in country towns, and this new blood has ceased to flow into local historical groups.

A factor influencing the membership of historical societies is the age of the organisation. Table 15 demonstrates that long-established societies have older members:

Table 15. Percentage of retired members in historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia

Region	Mean starting year	Nil	<24 %	25-49%	50-74%	75-99%	100%	Number of valid responses	Total no. historical societies
US	1959	-	6%	23%	51%	20%	-	70	83
Australia	1971	3%	19%	19%	29%	32%	-	59	67
SA	1974	10%	18%	19%	30%	21%	3%	97	113

The United States, where the mean starting date for all surveyed historical organisations is 1959, has 71% of its societies with greater than 50% of its members retired. In Australia, with an average foundation date of 1971, 61% of societies have more than half their members retired. South Australia, with a later average foundation date of 1974, has 54% of societies with greater than 50% of their membership retired.⁴¹

Individual groups in South Australia deviate slightly from this pattern, as illustrated in Table 16. Nevertheless, the figures for all groups highlight the fact that older people are more likely to belong to historical organisations. This agrees in part with the findings of Kammen for the United States and Marsden for South Australia.⁴² Both commentators attribute the growth of the historical society movement to increasing leisure within the community, allowing time to appreciate the environment and to work voluntarily. Thus, retired people have the time to undertake the duties of such groups, and also an interest in a period that is closer to their own youth. However, a consideration of the length of membership of most members of historical organisations modifies this view. In the United States members of 59% of societies (47 of 79 responses) had belonged for

⁴⁰ Lowenthal, p.38.

⁴¹ Numbers of retired members must be used with caution. Some rural societies responded that farmers never retired, while other societies queried whether women ever retired. The percentages in all cases might therefore be higher than indicated.

⁴² Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, pp.172-175, Marsden, p.48.

Table 16. Percentage of retired members in historical organisations in South Australia

Group	Mean starting year	Nil	<24%	25-49%	50-74%	75-99%	100%	No. valid responses	Total No. Societies
UNT % Total	1966	-	-	1 17%	2 33%	3 50%	-	6	7
RNT % Total	1969	-	3 11%	4 14%	11 39%	8 28%	2 7%	28	32
UHS % Total	1977	-	3 18%	2 12%	8 47%	4 24%	-	17	19
RHS % Total	1978	4 19%	5 24%	5 24%	5 24%	2 10%	-	21	23
UTS % Total	1969	2 66%	-	-	1 33%	-	-	3	4
RTS % Total	1973	-	-	-	1 100%	-	-	1	3
UPH % Total	1983	-	-	-	1 100%	-	-	1	2
RPH % Total	1985	-	-	1 100%	-	-	-	1	1
ROH % Total	1986	1 100%	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
UGS % Total	1973	-	1 100%	-	-	-	-	1	1
RGS % Total	1982	-	1 25%	1 25%	-	1 25%	1 25%	4	4
UIH % Total	1980	2 50%	-	1 25%	-	1 25%	-	4	4
UHM % Total	1972	1 20%	4 80%	-	-	-	-	5	6
RHM % Total	1980	-	-	3 75%	-	1 25%	-	4	6
SA % Total		10 10%	17 18%	18 19%	29 30%	20 21%	3 3%	97	113

greater than ten years, in Australia it was 45% (29 of 64 responses), and in South Australia it was 54% (54 of 100 responses). Thus many members probably joined societies before they retired.

But it appears that now fewer younger people are prepared to devote what time they have to historical organisations.

Table 17. Age ranges of members of historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia

Region	15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	No. valid responses	Total No. Societies
US	15	36	48	47	55	60	61	83
% of Total	25%	59%	79%	77%	90%	98%		
Australia	15	25	31	41	48	48	54	67
% of Total	28%	46%	57%	76%	89%	89%		
SA	19	35	57	65	87	76	103	113
% of Total	18%	34%	55%	63%	84%	74%		

Only around 25% of societies in each of the regions have members under 25 years of age. The regions show a wider diversity in membership between the ages of 26 and 35, with 59% of American societies having members in this age range, 47% of Australian societies, and only 34% of South Australian groups. Thus, although American societies have an older membership on average, they attract more members from a wider age range than do Australian or South Australian organisations. As Table 18 demonstrates, in South Australia young people are attracted more to historical societies than National Trust branches, whether it be in urban or rural areas. This might be because the National Trust is still viewed as an elite institution controlled by members of the establishment. Many of those interested in history now do not come from this section of society, and feel more comfortable joining a historical group with a broad-based membership.

Table 18. Age ranges of members in historical organisations in South Australia

Region	15-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+	No. valid responses	Total No. Societies
UNT	-	-	1	3	5	5	6	7
% Total			17%	50%	83%	83%		
RNT	3	5	11	11	25	24	30	32
% Total	10%	17%	37%	37%	83%	80%		
UHS	5	9	13	12	17	16	17	19
% Total	29%	53%	76%	71%	100%	94%		
RHS	4	7	11	18	18	13	22	23
% Total	18%	32%	50%	82%	82%	59%		
UTS	1	3	3	3	3	1	3	4
% Total	33%	100%	100%	100%	100%	33%		
RTS	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3
% Total	50%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%		
UPH	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2
% Total					100%	100%		
RPH	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
% Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		
ROH	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
% Total					100%			
UGS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
% Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		
RGS	-	2	3	3	3	3	4	4
% Total		50%	75%	75%	75%	75%		
UIH	-	-	2	3	1	2	4	4
% Total			50%	75%	25%	50%		
UHM	3	3	5	5	5	4	5	6
% Total	60%	60%	100%	100%	100%	80%		
RHM	1	2	4	3	4	3	6	6
% Total	17%	33%	66%	50%	66%	50%		
SA	19	35	57	65	87	76	103	113
% Total	18%	34%	55%	63%	84%	74%		

The highest concentration of members in historical organisations in the three regions is over 46 years of age. Most societies see this imbalance as a problem, as illustrated in Table 19.

Table 19. Main problems of historical organisations in the United States, Australia and South Australia

Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total no societies*
US	15	14	23	23	6	40	10	4	2	3	17	83
% of total	18%	17%	28%	28%	7%	48%	12%	5%	2%	4%	20%	
Aust	21	16	13	17	7	36	8	6	9	4	7	67
% of total	31%	24%	19%	25%	10%	54%	12%	9%	13%	6%	10%	
SA	50	26	23	16	11	57	6	11	12	6	18	113
% of total	44%	23%	20%	14%	10%	50%	5%	10%	11%	5%	16%	

*Societies listed more than one problem.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Insufficient membership | 7. Inadequacy of government support |
| 2. Ageing/dying membership | 8. Lack of interest by general public |
| 3. Inability to attract younger members | 9. Lack of or inadequate office/meeting/display space |
| 4. Lack of enthusiasm and commitment of members | 10. No problems |
| 5. Lack of time of members | 11. Other |
| 6. Insufficient funds | |

While lack of funds was the principal problem facing societies in each of the regions, ageing/dying members and an inability to attract younger members ranked highly for many groups. Because of their older membership profile, societies in the United States especially were concerned about their inability to attract younger members. These findings agree with the those of Carol Liston in 1986, who found for New South Wales that:

Many societies, especially in country towns, still have their foundation members from the 1960s - ardent spirits who in their younger days scavenged the local tip to retrieve treasures, dismantled threatened slab cottages and stored them ... But most of these people are now into their seventies or even eighties ... And where is the next generation? ... In country towns facing a constant drift to the cities of their young people, the population is simply not there.⁴³

The current age imbalance in membership of historical groups discourages younger members to join. Again in the words of Carol Liston, "The geriatric appearance of most of the audience at a regular meeting of an historical society is in itself enough to scare off all but the most foolhardy history buff who ventures along."⁴⁴ As indicated in Table 20, in South Australia proportionately more urban National Trust groups considered

⁴³ Carol Liston, "History in the Community - Local Historical Societies in N.S.W.", paper delivered to the Australian Historical Association Conference, Adelaide, August 1986, p.3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

ageing/dying membership a major problem than did groups in the United States, Australia or any other groups within South Australia.

Table 20. Main problems of historical organisations in South Australia

Society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total no. societies*
UNT	3	3	4	1	-	3	1	1	1	-	1	7
% Total	43%	43%	57%	14%		43%	14%	14%	14%			
RNT	20	10	7	5	2	17	2	5	-	-	4	32
% Total	63%	31%	22%	16%	6%	53%	6%	16%				
UHS	4	4	6	4	3	6	1	1	2	2	3	19
% Total	21%	21%	32%	21%	16%	32%	5%	5%	11%	11%		
RHS	13	5	3	1	6	11	-	1	4	2	7	23
% Total	57%	22%	13%	4%	26%	48%		4%	17%	9%		
UTS	1	-	-	2	-	2	-	1	1	-	1	4
% Total	25%			50%		50%		25%	25%			
RTS	1	1	1	1	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	3
% Total	33%	33%	33%	33%		100%	33%					
UPH	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
% Total			50%							50%		
RPH	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
% Total	100%			100%								
ROH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
% Total												
UGS	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
% Total	100%			100%								
RGS	1	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	2	-	-	4
% Total	25%					100%			50%			
UIH	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	4
% Total	75%	25%				25%			25%			
UHM	2	1	-	-	-	5	-	-	17%	-	1	6
% Total	33%	17%				83%						
RHM	-	1	1	-	-	4	1	2	-	1	-	6
% Total		17%	17%			66%	17%	33%		17%		
SA	50	26	23	16	11	57	6	11	12	6	18	113
% Total	44%	23%	20%	14%	10%	50%	5%	10%	11%	5%	16%	

*Societies listed more than one problem.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Insufficient membership | 7. Inadequacy of government support |
| 2. Ageing/dying membership | 8. Lack of interest by general public |
| 3. Inability to attract younger members | 9. Lack of or inadequate office/meeting/display space |
| 4. Lack of enthusiasm and commitment of members | 10. No problems |
| 5. Lack of time of members | 11. Other |
| 6. Insufficient funds | |

Rural historical groups were more concerned with declining membership than with lack of funds. This again parallels the decline in rural population mentioned by Liston. Only 5% of societies considered they had no problems at present. Two respondents specifically stated that their societies were prospering because they had no input from academic historians. Thus the divide between the academic and the amateur historian remains.

This study of historical societies has revealed that the often unsubstantiated claims of commentators have some validity, although they must be treated with caution. This applies particularly to sweeping generalisations, as demonstrated by the different growth and membership patterns of historical organisations in the three regions. Some explanations for the rising number of and membership in historical organisations, such as increasing leisure and education within the community, hold for all regions and groups. In other instances, regions and groups respond slightly differently to similar stimuli. Local, state and national anniversaries have elicited distinct reactions in the different regions. South Australians especially were influenced more by local celebrations than state and particularly national commemorations. In yet other instances, similar responses have resulted from diverse situations. In metropolitan areas and some growing rural towns the rising population, spreading urbanisation and increasing commercial and residential development have spurred some individuals to initiate or join historical organisations dedicated to preserving vestiges of the past. Paradoxically, in many rural districts a declining population and stagnating commercial and residential development have encouraged a similar response.

Some of the proposed reasons for the interest in the past, such as Boyd's contention that Australians disliked waste, could neither be proved or disproved. Positive reasons such as pride and optimism, plus awareness of the passing of time, appear to have been the prime motivation behind the growth of the amateur history movement. Negative reasons, such as Toffler's assertion that it is a revolt against a modern, rootless society and Lowenthal's belief that it stems from the ever-increasing pace of change, seem doubtful. Equally contentious are the views of Carson who attributes the increasing interest in the past in the United States to disillusionment with government. For Australia, Bennett's claim that the rising interest in history is evidence of a growing sense of

Australian nationalism appears to have some validity, negating Davison's suggestion that it has been a result of disorientation, decline and national immaturity.

This chapter has looked at the views of the secretaries/presidents/chairmen of historical organisations. While it illuminates some of the reasons for the development and growth of such organisations, each response is the official response from that organisation. The next chapter, which examines the responses of individual members of historical groups, gives a more considered explanation of the reasons individuals in South Australia have joined such societies.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Focus on South Australia

Little is known of who actually joins historical organisations or the reasons why individuals participate in historical activities. In an attempt to gain some understanding this chapter gives a profile of members of all amateur historical organisations in South Australia. This includes National Trust branches, historical societies, museum societies, preservation groups and family history/genealogy organisations. Because of the difficulties of gathering information the data is not statistically accurate. For example, whereas data in Chapter Seven revealed that more women than men belonged to historical organisations, 50% of respondents to the questionnaire to individuals were male. Thus the information from the second data set is not representative of the historical society movement across the state. Nor can it be extrapolated to the rest of Australia or in the United States. Nevertheless, the collected information does provide some understanding of why individuals join such groups and reveals the similarities and differences between members of different groups. It also allows some assessment of the reasons that have been suggested for the membership of historical organisations.

In the early years of the historical society movement in South Australia many individuals belonged to more than one historical organisation, and this continued. Cross membership between genealogical societies and other groups remains relatively high. As Table 21 shows, 59 respondents (12%) belong to one of the varieties of historical organisations and to a genealogical society in either the metropolitan area or a country district. Not surprisingly, many members of rural genealogical societies belong to urban genealogical groups, but 16% of respondents from urban historical organisations also belong to genealogical groups. Cross membership between urban historical organisations and the Historical Society of South Australia is reasonably high, with 15% of respondents from urban historical societies and 17% of respondents from urban National Trusts also belonging to another urban historical society. Thus some South Australians continue to have a broad interest in history.

Table 21. Cross membership between historical organisations

Group	UHS	RHS	UNT	RNT	UTS	RTS	UPH	UOH	ROH	UGS	RGS	UIH	UHM	RHM	No resp.	Total no. resp
UNT %	3 12%	1 4%	-	-	1 4%	-	-	-	-	2 8%	1 4%	-	1 4%	-	9	25
RNT %	3 8%	10 9%	-	-	-	1 1%	-	2 2%	3 3%	11 10%	6 6%	1 1%	2 2%	2 2%	41	109
UHS %	14 15%	1 1%	16 17%	-	-	-	4 4%	1 1%	-	15 16%	-	1 1%	3 3%	-	55	94
RHS %	-	3 3%	4 4%	4 4%	-	-	-	-	-	9 10%	1 1%	-	-	2 2%	23	90
UTS %	-	-	-	-	2 12%	2 12%	-	-	-	-	-	-	7 41%	-	11	17
RTS %	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 10%	1	10
UPH %	1 14%	-	2 28%	1 14%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 14%	-	5	7
RPH %	-	-	1 33%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
ROH %	-	-	1 50%	-	-	-	-	-	1 50%	-	1 50%	-	-	-	3	2
UGS %	5 13%	-	1 3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 8%	-	-	1 3%	-	10	40
RGS %	-	-	-	3 25%	-	-	-	-	-	6 50%	2 17%	-	-	-	11	12
UIH %	3 21%	-	2 14%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 7%	-	6	14
UHM %	1 4%	-	2 8%	-	3 12%	4 15%	-	-	-	-	-	1 4%	-	-	11	26
RHM %	2 6%	4 13%	3 10%	1 3%	-	-	-	-	-	2 6%	-	-	-	-	12	31
Total SA %	32 7%	19 4%	32 7%	8 2%	7 1%	7 1%	4 1%	3 1%	4 1%	48 10%	11 2%	3 1%	16 3%	5 1%	199	480

In this and subsequent tables, the following abbreviations are used:

UNT	Urban National Trust	UOH	Urban Oral History Society
RNT	Rural National Trust	ROH	Rural Oral History Society
UHS	Urban Historical Society	UGS	Urban Genealogical Society
RHS	Rural Historical Society	RGS	Rural Genealogical Society
UTS	Urban Transport Society	UIH	Urban Institutional Historical Society
RTS	Rural Transport Society	UHM	Urban Historical Museum
UPH	Urban Preservation and Heritage Society	RHM	Rural Historical Museum
RPH	Rural Preservation and Heritage Society		

Many members of historical organisations belong for considerable periods of time. As would be expected the rural National Trusts, which are generally the oldest historical organisations in the state, have the greatest number of long-serving members. Table 22 reveals that 50 respondents (56%) have belonged to their group for more than ten years, and 18 of these (36%) for more than 20 years. Some members of these groups joined the head office of the Trust in Adelaide and then joined the local branch when it began. Thus, even before local organisations formed rural dwellers demonstrated their interest in and concern for saving the past. But overall, given the more recent founding of many urban historical societies, there is little difference between rural and urban groups in the number of members who have belonged for greater than ten years, and two urban dwellers have served in historical organisations the longest, 40 years and 36 years.

Some commentators have suggested that newcomers to districts are the most likely to show an interest in local history,¹ while others claim that it is long-time residents who are the mainstays of such activity.² Table 23 lists the years of residence in their current suburb/town of respondents. This table indicates that those living in an area for less than five years comprise only a small portion of membership of most historical organisations. The exceptions are urban preservation and heritage societies and urban institutional historical societies. This is not surprising since length of residence in a district is not connected with membership in a society within these groupings. Urban preservation and heritage societies encompass the whole of the Adelaide metropolitan area. Hence, membership in these societies is not dependent on length of residence. Similarly, urban institutional historical societies are based in workplaces, and thus change of employment rather than of residence affects membership of these groups. Particularly in the four largest groupings - urban and rural National Trust branches and urban and rural historical societies - length of residence has a bearing on membership, and a significant number of the respondents have lived in the same district for greater than 30 years. Beverley Kingston believes that this longevity of residence enriches societies:

¹ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge (1985), p.38.

² David J. Russo, *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s*. New York (1988), pp.207-208

Table 22. Years of membership in historical organisations

Society	1-5 years	6-10 years	>10 years	Number of replies	No. > 20 years	Longest membership
UNT %	9 45%	4 20%	7 35%	20	3 15%	22 yrs
RNT %	20 22%	19 21%	50 56%	89	18 20%	31 yrs
UHS %	30 37%	30 37%	21 26%	81	2 2%	36 yrs
RHS %	21 31%	22 33%	24 36%	67	8 12%	24 yrs
UTS %	-	5 31%	11 69%	16	8 50%	40 yrs
RTS %	1 11%	2 22%	6 66%	9	1 11%	21 yrs
UPH %	5 100%	-	-	5	-	5 yrs
RPH %	2 67%	1 33%	-	3	-	6 yrs
ROH %	-	1 100%	-	1	-	6 yrs
UGS %	6 20%	16 53%	8 27%	30	-	20 yrs
RGS %	4 50%	4 50%	-	8	-	18 yrs
UIH %	2 18%	5 45%	4 36%	11	-	18 yrs
UHM %	4 21%	5 26%	10 53%	19	5 26%	34 yrs
RHM %	7 39%	4 22%	7 39%	18	1 6%	21 yrs
Total SA %	110 29%	118 31%	149 40%	377	46	

Table 23. Years of residence of members of historical organisations

Group	1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26-30 years	< 30 years	Number of Replies
UNT %	3 12%	3 12%	6 24%	5 20%	-	-	8 32%	25
RNT %	15 14%	18 17%	12 11%	7 7%	7 7%	2 2%	46 43%	107
UHS %	11 12%	7 7%	8 9%	10 11%	12 13%	9 10%	37 39%	94
RHS %	8 9%	10 11%	7 8%	5 6%	3 3%	6 7%	51 57%	90
UTS %	4 24%	3 18%	1 6%	2 12%	2 12%	-	5 29%	17
RTS %	-	-	1 10%	2 20%	2 20%	1 10%	4 40%	10
UPH %	3 43%	1 14%	-	1 14%	-	1 14%	1 14%	7
RPH %	-	-	2 67%	-	1 33%	-	-	3
ROH %	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 100%	2
UGS %	4 10%	3 8%	10 25%	2 5%	5 13%	8 20%	7 18%	39
RGS %	2 17%	2 17%	1 8%	-	1 8%	1 8%	5 42%	12
UIH %	5 36%	3 21%	1 7%	2 14%	1 7%	-	2 14%	14
UHM %	5 19%	4 15%	6 23%	2 8%	-	1 4%	8 31%	26
RHM %	3 10%	6 20%	3 10%	4 13%	2 6%	1 3%	12 39%	31
Total SA %	63 13%	60 13%	58 12%	42 8%	36 8%	30 6%	188 39%	477

Some communities are lucky enough to have people who have always lived in that place and have taken an active interest in its activities. As they grow older they become a source of stories about its past ... they are invaluable as links between past and future. Their memories add to their community a dimension of time which can never be procured or artificially created. Once lost, it is irreplaceable.³

Given the number of societies that began in order to record the memories of old residents (see previous chapter), it would seem that Kingston is correct in her assessment.

A particular point of interest is whether individuals who have joined these groups also belong to other community organisations, as was the case in the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States when Americans belonged to a 'nation of joiners'.⁴ Table 24 shows that members indeed belong to many other groups including community organisations such as school committees, scouts, tourism associations; church groups; and sporting clubs. Thus, members of historical societies are likely to be civic minded citizens who enjoy being involved with the local community. The data also indicates that members of historical organisations might be more religious than the community at large. In the 1981 census 74% of South Australia's population attested to belonging to one of the Christian denominations. Table 25 reveals that 81% of members of historical organisations profess religious affiliation. Members of urban and rural National Trust branches have the highest religious affiliation, with 92% of urban members and 87% of rural members belonging to a Christian religion. While the Uniting Church is not the largest denomination in the state, the greatest number of respondents belong to this religious group. In 1981 only 8% of South Australians claimed to be members of the Uniting Church, but in 1991 30% of members of historical societies belonged to this congregation.⁵ In four rural groupings and four urban groupings more members belonged to the Uniting Church than to any other denomination, and in two urban groups they ranked equal with one of the other denominations. This strong Uniting Church presence shows the continuing pattern of early settlement in South Australia,

³ Beverley Kingston, "The Use and Function of Local History", in The Local History Co-ordination Project, *Locating Australia's Past: A Practical Guide to Writing Local History*. Kensington, NSW (1988), p.7.

⁴ Wallace Evan Davies, *Patriotism on Parade: The Story of Veterans' and Hereditary Organizations in America 1783-1900*. Cambridge, Mass. (1955), p.44.

⁵ 1981 census figures appear in W.W. Phillips, "Religion", in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Sydney (1987), p.424.

Table 24. Membership of other community groups

Group	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	Number responses	Total no. respondents
UNT %	6 24%	11 44%	5 20%	8 32%	3 12%	9 36%	5 20%	1 4%	48	25
RNT %	1 1%	40 37%	18 17%	30 28%	31 28%	60 55%	18 17%	6 6%	204	109
UHS %	8 9%	24 26%	9 10%	27 29%	29 31%	36 38%	8 9%	13 14%	154	94
RHS %	9 10%	41 46%	13 14%	28 31%	25 28%	53 59%	10 11%	4 4%	183	90
UTS %	1 9%	4 24%	-	3 18%	3 18%	3 18%	-	-	14	17
RTS %	3 30%	2 20%	1 10%	1 10%	2 20%	2 20%	-	-	11	10
UPH %	1 14%	1 14%	-	-	3 43%	4 57%	2 29%	-	11	7
RPH %	-	-	1 33%	2 67%	-	3 100%	-	-	6	3
ROH %	-	-	-	1 50%	1 50%	2 100%	-	-	4	2
UGS %	2 5%	9 23%	2 5%	9 23%	11 28%	10 25%	2 5%	2 5%	47	40
RGS %	1 8%	-	1 8%	2 17%	5 42%	3 25%	-	-	12	12
UIH %	1 7%	1 7%	2 14%	5 36%	2 14%	7 50%	1 7%	-	19	14
UHM %	-	4 15%	3 12%	2 8%	6 23%	11 42%	1 4%	2 8%	29	26
RHM %	4 13%	11 35%	3 10%	4 13%	2 6%	17 55%	6 19%	-	47	31
Total SA %	37 8%	148 31%	48 10%	122 25%	123 26%	220 46%	63 13%	28 6%	789	480

Y Service club (Rotary, Lions, Probus etc.)

Z Church group

AA Charitable group (non religious, non service club)

AB Sporting club

AC Hobby group (theatre and literary groups etc.)

AD Community group (RSL, Tourism Association, school committees, scouts)

AE Conservation group

AF Professional group

AG Other

Table 25. Religious affiliation of members of historical organisations

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Number of Replies
UNT %	6 24%	3 12%	2 8%	-	8 32%	4 16%	-	2 8%	-	25
RNT %	33 31%	-	8 7%	9 8%	29 27%	14 13%	1 1%	13 12%	-	107
UHS %	20 21%	-	4 4%	-	24 26%	21 23%	-	23 25%	-	92
RHS %	16 18%	3 3%	8 9%	10 11%	31 35%	6 7%	1 1%	13 15%	-	88
UTS %	5 29%	1 6%	-	1 6%	4 24%	-	-	6 35%	-	17
RTS %	-	-	-	1 10%	5 50%	1 10%	-	3 30%	-	10
UPH %	1 17%	-	-	-	1 17%	3 50%	-	1 17%	-	6
RPH %	-	-	2 67%	-	-	1 33%	-	-	-	3
ROH %	-	-	-	-	1 50%	1 50%	-	-	-	2
UGS %	7 18%	2 5%	6 15%	1 3%	12 31%	6 15%	-	5 13%	-	39
RGS %	1 9%	-	1 9%	-	5 45%	1 9%	-	2 18%	1 9%	11
UIH %	4 29%	-	1 7%	-	2 14%	2 14%	-	4 29%	1 7%	14
UHM %	6 24%	-	1 4%	-	7 28%	4 16%	-	7 28%	-	25
RHM %	6 20%	1 3%	4 13%	2 7%	12 40%	-	-	5 17%	-	30
Total SA %	105 22%	10 2%	37 8%	24 5%	141 30%	64 14%	2 -	84 18%	2 -	467

- 1 Anglican
- 2 Baptist
- 3 Catholic
- 4 Lutheran
- 5 Uniting

- 6 Other Christian
- 7 Non-Christian
- 8 No religion/Agnostic
- 9 Atheist

when many immigrants were Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians (the groups that combined to form the Uniting Church). However, the relatively low number of respondents who professed to be Lutherans contradicts Marsden's assertion that Germans have predominated, and continue to exert a strong influence, in the historical society movement.⁶

In Chapter Six I illustrated that the social elite lost control of the presentation of the past in South Australia in the 1960s, and that from that decade membership in historical organisations broadened. Tables 26 to 29 give a profile of the educational background and employment status of current members of historical societies. Table 26 reveals that almost three-quarters of respondents attended state schools. This is lower than the census figure for 1981 of 83% of all students enrolled in schools in South Australia in that year. Nevertheless, the data support the contention that it is now not only members of the social elite, who are more likely to have had a private education, who are interested in preserving the history of the state.⁷ Table 27 details the occupations of members of historical organisations. Those respondents who are now retired supplied what had been their principal occupation. The greatest number of respondents (23%) are in the lower professional class, including nurses, teachers and technicians of various kinds. Clerical workers, such as clerks, typists and salespersons, make up the next largest category (20%). Farmers and graziers come next, with 15% of respondents belonging to these two categories. Given the large number of rural historical organisations it is surprising that this proportion is not higher. The low number of farmers and graziers perhaps indicates that the core of members of rural historical organisations come from towns rather than from the surrounding farming properties. Members from the upper professions, including doctors, lawyers and architects, comprise only 7% of the respondents. This confirms that the social elite no longer controls the celebration of the

⁶ "History in the South: The Development of Historical Societies in South Australia", in Alan Roberts (ed.), *Grass Roots History*, Canberra (1991), p.49.

⁷ 1981 census figures appear in Denis Grundy and F.F.F. Yuan, "Education and Science", in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Sydney (1987), p.343.

Table 26. Type of school attended by members of historical organisations

Group	State	Catholic	Other private	Number of Replies
UNT %	17 74%	2 7%	4 17%	23
RNT %	67 65%	6 6%	30 29%	103
UHS %	70 75%	2 2%	21 23%	93
RHS %	61 78%	7 9%	10 13%	78
UTS %	15 88%	-	2 12%	17
RTS %	8 80%	-	2 20%	10
UPH %	2 33%	1 17%	3 50%	6
RPH %	2 67%	1 33%	-	3
ROH %	1 50%	-	1 50%	2
UGS %	26 65%	5 13%	9 23%	40
RGS %	8 73%	2 18%	1 9%	11
UIH %	5 50%	1 10%	4 40%	10
UHM %	19 86%	1 5%	2 9%	22
RHM %	23 92%	-	2 8%	25
Total SA %	324 73%	28 6%	91 21%	443

Table 27. Occupation of members of historical organisations

Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	No. Replies
UNT %	1 4%	-	9 36%	3 12%	-	2 8%	5 20%	1 4%	3 12%	-	-	-	-	-	1 4%	25
RNT %	6 6%	12 11%	20 19%	5 5%	4 4%	13 12%	18 17%	1 1%	6 6%	1 1%	2 2%	-	4 4%	1 1%	12 11%	105
UHS %	12 13%	-	31 34%	9 10%	-	2 2%	19 21%	1 1%	5 6%	-	2 2%	2 2%	5 5%	-	2 2%	90
RHS %	2 2%	4 5%	13 16%	3 4%	1 1%	20 24%	10 12%	1 1%	5 6%	4 5%	5 6%	-	7 8%	8 10%	7 8%	83
UTS %	2 12%	-	1 6%	-	-	-	10 59%	-	2 12%	-	-	1 6%	1 6%	-	-	17
RTS %	-	1 10%	4 40%	-	-	2 20%	2 20%	-	1 10%	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
UPH %	-	-	3 50%	1 17%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 33%	-	-	6
RPH %	-	-	2 67%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 33%	-	-	-	-	-	3
ROH %	-	-	1 50%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 50%	-	-	2
UGS %	5 13%	-	8 21%	3 8%	1 3%	-	11 29%	-	2 5%	1 3%	1 3%	-	4 11%	-	2 5%	38
RGS %	-	-	3 25%	-	2 17%	2 17%	1 8%	-	1 8%	-	-	-	2 17%	-	1 8%	12
UIH %	4 29%	-	3 21%	4 29%	-	-	2 14%	-	-	1 7%	-	-	-	-	-	14
UHM %	2 8%	1 4%	6 23%	5 19%	-	5 19%	5 19%	-	1 4%	-	-	-	1 4%	-	-	26
RHM %	-	-	1 4%	3 11%	4 14%	3 11%	7 25%	-	-	1 4%	3 11%	-	1 4%	-	5 18%	28
Total SA %	34 7%	18 4%	105 23%	36 8%	12 3%	49 11%	90 20%	4 1%	26 6%	9 2%	13 3%	3 1%	28 6%	1	31 7%	459

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|----|-----------------|
| 1 | Upper professional | 10 | Shop assistants |
| 2 | Graziers | 11 | Factory workers |
| 3 | Lower professional | 12 | Drivers |
| 4 | Managerial | 13 | Service workers |
| 5 | Shop owners | 14 | Miners |
| 6 | Farmers | 15 | Farm labourers |
| 7 | Clerical workers | 16 | Labourers |
| 8 | Armed services, police | 17 | Home duties |
| 9 | Craftworkers | | |

These categories have been taken from Glen Withers, Anthony M. Endres and Len Perry, "Labour", in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Sydney (1987), p.148. Since no respondents classed themselves as miners or farm labourers these categories were omitted from the table. Home duties was not in the original list.

past in South Australian. However Table 28, which details the education level of respondents, indicates a high level of education among members of historical organisations. While 12% of respondents had only completed primary school and almost half (48%) had finished their schooling at secondary school, a high 40% had some post-school education, with 21% having a tertiary qualification. Of those with graduate qualifications, the majority had a Bachelor of Arts or other undergraduate degree or a teaching diploma (55%). A total of 13% of respondents had postgraduate qualifications (Table 29). Therefore the control of the past is still in the hands of an elite, but an educated elite rather than a social elite.

Kammen and Marsden both suggest that individuals have become interested in history in the last 30 years because of increasing educational levels and the availability of adult education classes.⁸ Tables 30 and 31 give details of the number of respondents who have studied Australian history and South Australian history respectively at school, tertiary institution or adult education classes. While 45% of respondents had studied Australian history in secondary school, only 33% had studied South Australian history. Again more respondents had studied Australian history than South Australian history at a tertiary institution (9% and 5% respectively). Only a very small number had taken adult education classes in either Australian history or South Australian history (4% and less than 1% respectively). Although between approximately one third and one half of respondents had studied South Australian and Australian history at school, few had taken advantage of any courses offered at adult learning centres. From this information it is doubtful whether increasing interest in history can be attributed to the availability of such courses.

⁸ Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means*. Nashville (1986), pp.172-175; Marsden, p.48.

Table 28. Education level of members of historical organisations

Group	1	2	3	4	5	Number of Replies
UNT %	3 13%	10 42%	2 8%	4 17%	5 21%	24
RNT %	16 16%	50 50%	5 5%	15 15%	15 15%	101
UHS %	4 4%	34 38%	12 13%	9 10%	30 34%	89
RHS %	20 23%	46 53%	5 6%	6 7%	10 11%	87
UTS %	-	13 76%	1 6%	-	3 18%	17
RTS %	1 10%	5 50%	2 20%	-	2 20%	10
UPH %	-	2 29%	1 14%	1 14%	3 43%	7
RPH %	-	1 33%	-	-	2 67%	3
ROH %	1 50%	-	-	1 50%	-	2
UGS %	1 3%	20 50%	8 20%	2 5%	9 23%	40
RGS %	1 9%	8 73%	1 9%	-	1 9%	11
UIH %	1 8%	3 23%	2 15%	2 15%	5 38%	13
UHM %	4 15%	11 42%	2 8%	3 12%	6 23%	26
RHM %	5 18%	16 57%	2 7%	1 4%	4 14%	28
Total SA %	57 12%	219 48%	43 9%	44 10%	95 21%	458

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Primary school | 4 | Professional qualification (nurse etc.) |
| 2 | Secondary school | 5 | Tertiary qualification |
| 3 | Technical certificate | | |

Table 29. Tertiary qualifications of members of historical organisations

Group	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA	BB	Total No. Respondents
UNT %	2 18%	1 9%	-	2 18%	3 27%	1 9%	2 18%	-	11
RNT %	6 17	6 17%	3 9%	9 23%	4 11%	5 14%	3 9%	2 6%	35
UHS %	11 22%	10 20%	11 22%	9 18%	-	2 4%	8 16%	3 6%	51
RHS %	6 29%	3 14%	2 10%	6 29%	-	-	4 19%	2 10%	21
UTS %	-	3 75%	1 25%	-	-	-	-	-	4
RTS %	1 25%	-	-	1 25%	-	-	-	-	4
UPH %	1 20%	-	-	-	1 20%	1 20%	1 20%	-	5
RPH %	1 50%	1 50%	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
ROH %	-	-	-	1 100%	-	-	-	-	1
UGS %	2 11%	5 26%	3 16%	3 16%	1 5%	-	-	-	19
RGS %	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
UIH %	-	2 22%	3 33%	-	3 33%	-	2 22%	-	9
UHM %	2 18%	2 18%	1 9%	-	2 18%	-	1 9%	1 9%	11
RHM %	3 43%	-	-	1 14%	-	-	-	1 14%	7
Total SA %	35 19%	33 18%	24 13%	32 18%	14 8%	9 5%	21 12%	9 5%	182

AU BA

AV Other undergraduate

AW Postgraduate

AX Teachers College diploma

AY Nursing diploma

AZ Institute qualifications

BA Technical college qualification

BB Other

Table 30. Members of historical organisations who have studied Australian history

Group	Secondary School	Tertiary Institution	Adult Education	Other	Total No. Respondents
UNT %	13 52%	5 20%	1 4%	2 8%	25
RNT %	48 44%	12 11%	4 4%	7 7%	109
UHS %	43 46%	9 10%	3 3%	11 12%	94
RHS %	35 39%	7 8%	2 2%	13 14%	90
UTS %	8 47%	-	-	1 6%	17
RTS %	8 80%	-	-	1 10%	10
UPH %	4 57%	2 28%	1 14%	-	7
RPH %	3 100%	-	-	1 33%	3
ROH %	1 50%	-	-	-	2
UGS %	19 48%	3 8%	-	1 3%	40
RGS %	7 58%	-	-	1 8%	12
UIH %	6 43%	1 7%	1 7%	1 7%	14
UHM %	11 42%	2 8%	3 12%	3 12%	26
RHM %	9 29%	2 6%	2 6%	2 6%	31
Total SA %	215 45%	43 9%	17 4%	44 9%	480

Table 31. Members of historical organisations who have studied South Australian history

Group	Secondary School	Tertiary Institution	Adult Education	Other	Total no. respondents
UNT %	11 44%	1 4%	1 4%	3 12%	25
RNT %	34 3%	9 8%	2 2%	13 12%	109
UHS %	30 32%	5 5%	2 2%	15 16%	94
RHS %	27 30%	2 2%	1 1%	17 19%	90
UTS %	8 47%	-	-	-	17
RTS %	5 50%	-	-	2 20%	10
UPH %	3 43%	2 29%	1 14%	-	7
RPH %	1 33%	-	-	1 33%	3
ROH %	-	-	-	-	2
UGS %	13 33%	3 8%	-	6 15%	40
RGS %	5 42%	-	-	-	12
UIH %	5 36%	-	-	1 7%	14
UHM %	10 38%	2 8%	-	2 8%	26
RHM %	6 19%	1 3%	2 6%	3 10%	31
Total SA %	158 33%	25 5%	2	3	480

As well as requesting details of the education and employment status of members of historical organisations, the survey sought information on marital status and age of respondents. This was to ascertain whether any particular categories were drawn to such organisations, as had happened in the nineteenth century in the United States when single women predominated in genealogical groups. Table 32 gives information on marital status of members of historical organisations. Married persons constituted the majority of respondents in most societies. In only urban preservation and heritage societies did single persons make up a significant portion of the membership. They were only 8% of urban genealogical groups and 17% of rural genealogical groups, so the situation in the United States in the late nineteenth century is not replicated in South Australia in the late twentieth century. Additionally, it might have been expected that divorced or widowed individuals would join historical organisations since they might have had more spare time and also might have appreciated the companionship of a shared interest, but this was not the case.

Data from this survey does agree with the findings of the surveys on historical organisations that such groups are composed mainly of older residents.⁹ Table 33 sets out the age ranges of the respondents to the questionnaire. In all but three instances more than 50% of respondents from each group are over 50, ranging from 53% (urban transport societies) to 100% (rural oral history, although this group comprises only two respondents). Many respondents from rural National Trust groups and urban and rural historical societies in particular are over 50 (75%, 70% and 75% respectively). This supports the data in the previous chapter concerning the age profile of members of historical organisations. Table 34 further emphasises the conformation of ages of members of historical organisations. This shows that 182 of 479 respondents (38%) are retired, while only two respondents (<1%) are students.

⁹ Alternatively it might just mean that retired people have more time to fill in forms.

Table 32. Marital status of members of historical organisations

Group	Never married	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Number of replies
UNT %	6 24%	18 72%	-	1 4%	25
RNT %	15 14%	71 66%	4 4%	18 17%	108
UHS %	13 14%	66 73%	5 5%	7 8%	91
RHS %	7 8%	69 78%	3 3%	9 10%	88
UTS %	-	17 100%	-	-	17
RTS %	-	9 100%	-	-	9
UPH %	3 43%	2 29%	1 14%	1 14%	7
RPH %	-	3 100%	-	-	3
ROH %	-	-	-	-	-
UGS %	3 8%	30 77%	5 13%	1 3%	39
RGS %	2 17%	8 67%	-	2 17%	12
UIH %	2 14%	9 64%	3 21%	-	14
UHM %	3 12%	19 73%	2 8%	2 8%	26
RHM %	2 6%	25 81%	2 6%	2 6%	31
Total SA %	56 12%	346 74%	25 5%	43 9%	470

Table 33. Age of members of historical organisations

Group	<30	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-70 years	71-80 years	81-90 years	No. of replies
UNT %	1 4%	4 16%	6 24%	2 8%	8 32%	4 16%	-	25
RNT %	-	13 12%	14 13%	13 12%	50 47%	12 11%	5 5%	107
UHS %	3 3%	6 6%	19 20%	22 23%	28 30%	16 17%	-	94
RHS %	2 2%	8 9%	12 13%	25 28%	35 39%	7 8%	-	89
UTS %	-	-	8 47%	4 24%	5 29%	-	-	17
RTS %	-	1 10%	1 10%	6 60%	1 10%	1 10%	-	10
UPH %	2 29%	-	-	1 14%	4 57%	-	-	7
RPH %	-	1 33%	1 33%	1 33%	-	-	-	3
ROH %	-	-	-	2 100%	-	-	-	2
UGS %	-	4 10%	5 13%	12 30%	16 40%	3 8%	-	40
RGS %	1 8%	1 8%	3 25%	3 25%	3 25%	1 8%	-	12
UIH %	1 7%	-	8 57%	2 14%	1 7%	2 14%	-	14
UHM %	2 8%	4 15%	8 31%	3 12%	4 15%	5 19%	-	26
RHM %	1 3%	4 13%	5 16%	8 26%	10 32%	3 10%	-	31
Total SA %	13 3%	46 10%	90 19%	104 22%	165 35%	54 11%	5 1%	477

Table 34. Employment status of members of historical organisations

Group	Full time	Part time	Home duties	Unemployed	Retired	Student	Number of Replies
UNT %	11 44%	2 8%	2 8%	-	10 40%	-	25
RNT %	24 22%	14 13%	15 14%	3 3%	53 49%	-	109
UHS %	29 31%	9 10%	14 15%	-	42 45%	-	94
RHS %	26 29%	15 17%	14 16%	2 2%	32 36%	-	89
UTS %	12 71%	1 6%	-	2 12%	2 12%	-	17
RTS %	4 40%	3 30%	-	-	3 30%	-	10
UPH %	1 14%	1 14%	-	1 14%	3 43%	1 14%	7
RPH %	-	2 67%	1 33%	-	-	-	3
ROH %	-	1 50%	-	-	1 50%	-	2
UGS %	7 18%	8 20%	7 18%	1 3%	16 40%	1 3%	40
RGS %	3 25%	2 17%	3 25%	1 8%	3 25%	-	12
UIH %	10 71%	1 7%	-	-	3 21%	-	14
UHM %	15 58%	2 8%	-	1 4%	8 31%	-	26
RHM %	11 35%	2 6%	10 32%	2 6%	6 19%	-	31
Total SA %	153 32%	63 13%	66 14%	13 3%	182 38%	2	479

Interest in South Australian history is confined largely to Australian-born residents. Table 35 reveals that 87% of respondents were born in Australia, while 10% were born in Britain and only 17 out of 478 respondents (4%) were born elsewhere. Moreover, the ancestry of members of historical organisations appears to be principally British, with 89% of respondents having British forebears, 20% German ancestors, and only 6% ancestors from other countries (Table 36). This again mirrors the early settlement pattern of the state, with the majority of settlers coming from Britain and the next greatest number from Germany. And those whose ancestors arrived earliest in the state's history exhibit the greatest interest in their past. Table 37 highlights that the ancestors of more than half of the respondents (58%) arrived in South Australia before 1850, and a further 35% did so before 1900. Only 29% of respondents had ancestors who arrived after 1900. This agrees with the speculation in Chapter Seven that Australians are becoming interested in their history simply because of the increasing length of Australia's past. Hence those with the longest connections, in this case with South Australia, are the most eager to preserve it.

However, not only do South Australians show an interest in their Australian history. Many still search the story of their forebears before their arrival in Australia. While on average 75% of respondents regard their pre-Australian heritage to be very important (Table 38), interest varies between the different groupings. Respondents from the urban National Trust groups show the greatest interest in their pre-Australian heritage (88%). This could be because these groups contain remnants of the social elite who continue to emphasise the British heritage of the state. In line with my previous suggestion that rural South Australians first began to acknowledge their unique Australian heritage, members of rural groups in most instances have less concern for their pre-Australian heritage than do their urban counterparts. The primary reasons offered for interest in pre-Australian heritage were that it provides family background and a sense of continuity (Table 39). The most common reason given for not having an interest in pre-Australian history was that the respondents are Australian and therefore their Australian history is the most important.

Table 35. Country of birth of members of historical organisations

Group	Australia	Britain	Germany	Other Europe	Other	Number of Replies
UNT %	22 88%	3 12%	-	-	-	25
RNT %	95 88%	6 6%	2 2%	2 2%	3 3%	108
UHS %	75 80%	16 17%	-	-	3 3%	93
RHS %	78 87%	8 9%	3 3%	-	1 1%	90
UTS %	15 88%	1 6%	1 6%	-	-	17
RTS %	10 100%	-	-	-	-	10
UPH %	6 100%	-	-	-	-	6
RPH %	2 67%	1 33%	-	-	-	3
ROH %	2 100%	-	-	-	-	2
UGS %	40 100%	-	-	-	-	40
RGS %	12 100%	-	-	-	-	12
UIH %	12 86%	2 14%	-	-	-	14
UHM %	17 65%	7 27%	-	-	2 8%	26
RHM %	28 90%	3 10%	-	-	-	31
Total SA %	414 87%	47 10%	6 1%	2 1%	9 2%	478

Table 36. Country of origin of ancestors of members of historical organisations*

Group	Great Britain	Germany	Other Europe	Other	Total no. responses
UNT %	23 92%	2 8%	-	-	25
RNT %	94 86%	14 13%	7 6%	2 2%	109
UHS %	89 95%	15 16%	3 3%	3 3%	94
RHS %	72 80%	33 37%	6 7%	1 1%	90
UTS %	16 94%	7 41%	-	-	17
RTS %	8 80%	5 50%	-	-	10
UPH %	6 86%	-	1 14%	-	7
RPH %	3 100%	-	1 33%	-	3
ROH %	2 100%	-	-	-	2
UGS %	38 95%	8 20%	1 3%	1 3%	40
RGS %	12 100%	2 17%	-	-	12
UIH %	11 79%	1 7%	-	-	14
UHM %	25 96%	2 7%	-	-	26
RHM %	29 94%	6 19%	1 3%	1 3%	31
Total SA %	428 89%	95 20%	20 4%	8 2%	480

*Some rows total more than 100% because respondents gave more than one region of origin for their ancestors

Table 37. Year ancestors came to Australia

Group	<1850	1851-1900	1901-1950	1951-1970	>1970	Number Replies
UNT %	14 64%	6 27%	1 5%	1 5%	-	22
RNT %	57 61%	30 32%	4 4%	2 2%	-	93
UHS %	47 62%	24 32%	2 3%	2 3%	1 1%	76
RHS %	40 51%	32 41%	2 3%	5 6%	-	79
UTS %	5 36%	8 57%	1 7%	-	-	14
RTS %	6 60%	4 40%	-	-	-	10
UPH %	3 50%	2 33%	1 17%	-	-	6
RPH %	-	1 100%	-	-	-	1
ROH %	2 100%	-	-	-	-	2
UGS %	30 77%	8 21%	1 3%	-	-	39
RGS %	7 58%	4 33%	-	1 8%	-	12
UIH %	3 33%	5 56%	1 11%	-	-	9
UHM %	5 19%	8 50%	1 6%	2 13%	-	16
RHM %	14 56%	10 40%	1 4%	-	-	25
Total SA %	233 58%	142 35%	15 4%	13 3%	1	404

Table 38. Importance of pre-Australian heritage to members of historical organisations

Group	Very	A little	Not at all	Number of Replies
UNT %	22 88%	3 12%	-	25
RNT %	80 78%	22 22%	1 1%	103
UHS %	74 84%	13 15%	1 1%	88
RHS %	65 72%	22 24%	3 3%	90
UTS %	8 47%	6 35%	3 18%	17
RTS %	5 50%	4 40%	1 10%	10
UPH %	5 71%	1 14%	1 14%	7
RPH %	1 33%	1 33%	1 33%	3
ROH %	2 100%	-	-	2
UGS %	31 78%	6 15%	3 8%	40
RGS %	8 67%	4 33%	-	12
UIH %	7 70%	1 10%	2 20%	10
UHM %	14 54%	5 19%	7 27%	26
RHM %	22 76%	6 21%	1 3%	29
Total SA %	345 75%	94 20%	24 5%	461

Table 39. Reasons for the importance of pre-Australian heritage*

Group	CP	CQ	CR	CS	CT	CU	CV	Total no. responses
UNT	8	9	3	1	4	-	-	25
%	32%	36%	12%	4%	16%			
RNT	24	34	9	1	8	20	7	109
%	22%	31%	8%	1%	7%	18%	6%	
UHS	28	28	12	1	9	16	9	94
%	30%	30%	13%	1%	10%	17%	10%	
RHS	25	27	4	-	8	9	12	90
%	28%	30%	4%		9%	10%	13%	
UTS	3	4	2	-	1	-	7	17
%	18%	24%	12%		6%		41%	
RTS	1	-	-	-	2	1	4	10
%	10%				20%	10%	40%	
UPH	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	7
%		14%					43%	
RPH	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
%							67%	
ROH	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
%	50%	50%						
UGS	9	15	5	1	4	4	2	40
%	23%	38%	13%	3%	10%	10%	5%	
RGS	2	5	3	-	-	-	-	12
%	17%	42%	25%					
UIH	3	1	2	-	-	1	3	14
%	21%	7%	14%			7%	21%	
UHM	4	4	5	-	-	3	7	26
%	15%	15%	19%			12%	27%	
RHM	8	10	1	-	2	2	5	31
%	26%	32%	3%		6%	6%	16%	
Total SA	116	139	46	4	38	56	61	480
%	24%	29%	10%	1%	8%	12%	13%	

CP Provides a sense of continuity/roots

CQ Family background

CR For future generations

CS To learn from the past

CT General interest/curiosity

CU Pride in ancestors/past achievements

CV Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response.

Not surprisingly, more respondents acknowledged the importance of their Australian heritage than their pre-Australian heritage, with 84% overall claiming it is very important to them (Table 40). Interestingly, while all respondents from urban National Trust groups consider their Australian heritage to be very important, only 90% of members of rural branches do. Given that rural dwellers were the first to celebrate their Australian heritage and showed less interest in their pre-Australian heritage than did urban dwellers, this is surprising and suggests that more information of this aspect is necessary. Slightly more respondents from urban historical societies consider their pre-Australian heritage as very important than they do their Australian heritage (84% and 81% respectively). Again this is a puzzle. Of those who claim that their Australian heritage is very important, the greatest number (27%) say it is simply because they are Australian and the history is Australian, while 20% attribute it to patriotism (Table 41). Thus a growing sense of national consciousness is encouraging individuals to join historical organisations.

A large number of respondents had compiled their family tree. As would be expected, all respondents from the urban genealogical societies have done so, as have 75% of members of rural genealogical societies. Members of urban transport societies showed the least interest in their family background, followed by members of institutional historical groups and urban museums. More members of National Trust groups, both urban and rural, have researched their family trees than have members of historical organisations (Table 42). Of those who have compiled their family trees, the majority have researched their family history prior to their ancestors' arrival in Australia (Table 43). The most common reason given by respondents for this is that it provides family background (38%), although 24% have done it because of general interest and curiosity (Table 44). Thus, even though Australians are now acknowledging their own unique history, they are still anxious to search further back for their roots.

Table 40. Importance of Australian heritage to members of historical organisations

Group	Very	A little	Not at all	Number of Replies
UNT %	19 100%	-	-	19
RNT %	91 90%	8 8%	2 2%	101
UHS %	66 81%	15 19%	-	81
RHS %	67 82%	14 17%	1 1%	82
UTS %	8 50%	7 44%	1 6%	16
RTS %	10 100%	-	-	10
UPH %	6 86%	1 14%	-	7
RPH %	1 33%	2 67%	-	3
ROH %	1 100%	-	-	1
UGS %	33 87%	4 11%	1 3%	38
RGS %	11 92%	1 8%	-	12
UIH %	10 83%	2 17%	-	12
UHM %	19 73%	5 19%	2 8%	26
RHM %	24 86%	2 7%	2 7%	28
Total SA %	365 84%	62 14%	9 2%	436

Table 41. Reasons for importance of Australian heritage*

Group	CX	CY	CZ	DA	DB	DC	DD	Total no. responses
UNT %	7 28%	3 12%	2 8%	1 4%	2 8%	2 8%	1 4%	25
RNT %	28 26%	8 7%	7 6%	2 2%	21 19%	15 14%	2 2%	109
UHS %	25 27%	6 6%	6 6%	8 9%	22 23%	20 21%	13 14%	94
RHS %	26 29%	3 3%	5 6%	5 6%	21 23%	6 7%	12 13%	90
UTS %	6 35%	1 6%	-	-	2 12%	-	5 29%	17
RTS %	2 20%	-	-	-	4 40%	2 20%	-	10
UPH %	2 29%	-	-	-	4 57%	1 14%	1 14%	7
RPH %	2 67%	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
ROH %	-	-	-	-	1 50%	-	-	2
UGS %	9 23%	6 15%	2 5%	1 3%	6 15%	7 18%	2 5%	40
RGS %	2 17%	1 8%	-	-	3 25%	5 42%	-	12
UIH %	5 36%	-	2 14%	2 14%	4 28%	1 7%	1 7%	14
UHM %	3 12%	-	3 12%	2 8%	3 12%	2 8%	6 23%	26
RHM %	14 45%	3 10%	-	3 10%	2 6%	4 13%	5 16%	31
Total SA %	131 27%	31 6%	27 6%	24 5%	95 20%	65 14%	48 10%	480

CX Because I am Australian/history is Australian

CY Family background (actual details)

CZ For future generations

DA Sense of continuity/roots

DB Patriotism - love of country and pride in its achievements

DC Pride in ancestors/past achievements

DD Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response

Table 42. Number of members of historical organisations who have compiled their family tree

Group	Yes	No	Number of replies
UNT %	18 75%	6 25%	24
RNT %	75 72%	29 18%	104
UHS %	61 69%	27 31%	88
RHS %	52 60%	34 40%	86
UTS %	5 29%	12 71%	17
RTS %	4 40%	6 60%	10
UPH %	3 43%	4 57%	7
RPH %	-	3 100%	3
ROH %	1 50%	1 50%	2
UGS %	40 100%	-	40
RGS %	9 75%	3 25%	12
UIH %	5 36%	9 64%	14
UHM %	9 35%	17 65%	26
RHM %	16 53%	14 47%	30
Total SA %	298 64%	165 36%	463

Table 43. Number of members of historical organisations who have compiled their family tree from prior to arrival in Australia

Group	Yes	No	Number of replies
UNT	13	4	17
%	76%	24%	
RNT	55	16	71
%	77%	23%	
UHS	47	15	62
%	76%	24%	
RHS	38	15	53
%	72%	28%	
UTS	5	-	5
%	100%		
RTS	3	1	4
%	75%	25%	
UPH	1	1	2
%	50%	50%	
RPH	-	-	-
%			
ROH	1	-	1
%	100%		
UGS	39	1	40
%	98%	2%	
RGS	8	2	10
%	80%	20%	
UIH	5	1	6
%	83%	17%	
UHM	6	5	11
%	55%	45%	
RHM	11	4	15
%	73%	27%	
Total SA	232	65	297
%	78%	22%	

Table 44. Reasons for researching ancestors prior to arrival in Australia

Group	DG	DH	DI	DJ	DK	DL	DM	Number researchers
UNT %	2 15%	6 46%	2 15%	1 8%	-	3 23%	-	13
RNT %	4 7%	18 33%	5 9%	2 4%	16 29%	7 11%	3 5%	55
UHS %	5 11%	21 45%	8 17%	3 6%	9 19%	7 15%	1 2%	47
RHS %	1 3%	13 34%	4 11%	3 8%	12 32%	5 13%	2 5%	38
UTS %	1 20%	1 20%	-	-	-	2 40%	-	5
RTS %	1 33%	-	-	-	-	2 67%	-	3
UPH %	-	-	-	-	1 100%	-	-	1
RPH %	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ROH %	-	1 100%	-	-	-	-	-	1
UGS %	3 8%	14 36%	3 8%	1 3%	11 28%	4 10%	1 3%	39
RGS %	-	5 62%	-	-	2 25%	-	-	8
UIH %	-	2 40%	-	1 20%	2 40%	1 20%	1 20%	5
UHM %	-	3 50%	1 17%	-	1 17%	-	-	6
RHM %	1 9%	5 45%	-	-	1 9%	2 18%	1 9%	11
Total SA %	18 8%	89 38%	23 10%	11 5%	55 24%	33 14%	9 4%	232

DG Provides a sense of continuity/roots

DH Family background

DI For future generations

DJ To find or keep in contact with kin/visit homeland

DK General interest/curiosity

DL To assist in the writing of a family history

DM Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response

Many respondents have published their research on local or family history (Table 45). Rural dwellers are the most prolific publishers, with 51% of respondents from rural National Trust branches and 68% of respondents from rural historical societies having published their research. They outnumber publishers from urban and rural genealogical societies (40% and 25% respectively), indicating that research into local history is a public activity while genealogical research is a private occupation.

Lowenthal has suggested that new countries like Australia emphasise the antiquity of the land to compensate for the relatively short span of human history.¹⁰ Jim Russell holds a similar view and claims that, "Aboriginals provide for the newcomer society the authenticity of a 40,000 year antiquity (that may help loosen a historical dependency on Britain), and are a stepping stone in the saga of progress toward a modern industrialized nation."¹¹ If this is the case then it would be likely that South Australians, with a white history extending a mere 150 years, combined with increasing feelings of nationalism, would be interested in the Aboriginal history of Australia. Table 46 shows that more than half (59%) of respondents are indeed interested in this history¹² However, only 23% of the respondents believe that Aboriginal history is part of Australian history (Table 47). A far greater number of respondents are interested in their own pre-Australian heritage than the pre-European history of Australia (75% and 59% respectively). In the American West some founders and members of the earliest historical societies took an interest in preserving traces of Indian civilisation. Perhaps, as Lowenthal and Russell suggest, this could have been a means of lengthening their own history. But in Australia, as mentioned in the early chapters of this thesis, Aborigines have largely been ignored and their history regarded as inconsequential. Australians have not exhibited any need or wish to extend their own recorded history by emphasising the antiquity of the Aboriginal occupation of the land. Thus, broad assertions should not be considered applicable to specific regions without a thorough analysis of the individual characteristics of an area.

¹⁰ Lowenthal, p.54.

¹¹ Jim Russell, "Relating Heritage to the Environment in Australia", *Environmental History Review*, (Fall 1991), p.70.

¹² Unfortunately 7% of respondents misunderstood the question

Table 45. Number of members who have published research on family/local history

Group	Yes	Total No. of Respondents
UNT	8	25
%	32%	
RNT	56	109
%	51%	
UHS	40	94
%	43%	
RHS	61	90
%	68%	
UTS	3	17
%	18%	
RTS	3	10
%	30%	
UPH	3	7
%	43%	
RPH	1	3
%	33%	
ROH	2	2
%	100%	
UGS	16	40
%	40%	
RGS	3	12
%	25%	
UIH	5	14
%	36%	
UHM	10	26
%	38%	
RHM	12	31
%	39%	
Total SA	223	480
%	46%	

Table 46. **Members of historical organisations interested in the pre-European history of Australia**

Group	Yes	No	*	Number Respondents
UNT	15	7	-	22
%	68%	32%		
RNT	65	32	7	104
%	63%	31%	7%	
UHS	61	29	2	92
%	66%	32%	2%	
RHS	51	26	10	87
%	59%	30%	11%	
UTS	7	10	-	17
%	41%	59%		
RTS	5	3	2	10
%	50%	30%	20%	
UPH	6	1	-	7
%	86%	14%		
RPH	2	1	-	3
%	67%	33%		
ROH	2	-	-	2
%	100%			
UGS	19	18	3	40
%	48%	45%	8%	
RGS	4	5	2	11
%	36%	45%	18%	
UIH	8	6	-	14
%	57%	43%		
UHM	14	9	3	26
%	54%	35%	12%	
RHM	15	11	4	30
%	50%	37%	13%	
Total SA	274	158	33	465
%	59%	34%	7%	

*Misunderstood the question

Table 47. **Reasons for interest in Aboriginal history**

Group	EY	EZ	Number Respondents
UNT %	5 33%	1 7%	15
RNT %	18 28%	18 28%	65
UHS %	21 34%	16 26%	61
RHS %	13 25%	8 16%	51
UTS %	1 14%	4 57%	7
RTS %	-	2 40%	5
UPH %	1 17%	1 17%	6
RPH %	2 100%	-	2
ROH %	-	-	2
UGS %	4 21%	4 21%	19
RGS %	2 50%	2 25%	4
UIH %	1 13%	2 25%	8
UHM %	4 29%	2 15%	14
RHM %	1 7%	5 33%	15
Total SA %	73 27%	64 23%	274

EY Need to understand and know more about Aboriginal history/culture - am interested in Aboriginal history/culture

EZ It is part of Australian history

Again Lowenthal along with Davis and Carson suggest that individuals turn to the past when they are dissatisfied with the present and fear the future.¹³ The validity of this assertion was tested in a question. Table 48 sets out reasons for members joining historical organisations. By far the greatest number of respondents (44%) joined such groups because of an interest in family history. Naturally, more members of urban and rural genealogical societies (80% and 75% respectively) give this reason than do members of other societies. But even if these two groupings are taken out of the calculations, an interest in family history still ranks as the most common reason for respondents joining historical organisations (40%). However, close behind is an interest in history in general (38%). With or without the respondents from the genealogical societies, only 3% of respondents claim they joined historical organisations because society is changing rapidly. So Lowenthal, Davis and Carson could be wrong in their views.

But if none of the suggested reasons for the growth of historical organisations are valid, what has prompted individuals to join such organisations in the last 30 years? As Table 49 shows, a total of 39% of respondents, the largest response for this question, were influenced by a person. Of these, 16% were friends or relatives and 10% were members of historical societies (Table 50). Although books had some influence (13%), films and television shows had only a minor impact on respondents (1% and 2% respectively). This is unlike the situation in the United States where Alex Haley's *Roots* is attributed with being one of the major influences in fuelling a renewed interest in the past, particularly in genealogy.¹⁴

¹³ Lowenthal, pp.38, 41, 52; Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, New York (1979), chap.5; Cary Carson, "Front and Center: Local History Comes of Age", in *Local History, National Heritage: Reflections of the History of AASLH*. Nashville (1991), p.86.

¹⁴ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, New York (1991), pp.642-645; Gary B. Mills and Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Roots and the New 'Faction': a Legitimate Tool for Clio?", *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol.89 (Jan.1981), pp.3-26.

Table 48. Reasons for members joining historical organisations*

Group	BK	BL	BM	BN	BO	BP	BQ	BR	BS	BT	BU	BV	Total no. respondents
UNT %	6 24%	5 20%	5 20%	7 28%	12 48%	2 8%	-	1 4%	-	-	1 4%	1 4%	25
RNT %	47 43%	24 22%	31 28%	22 20%	46 42%	10 9%	6 6%	8 7%	7 6%	3 3%	23 21%	4 4%	109
UHS %	39 41%	23 24%	17 18%	11 12%	14 15%	6 6%	4 4%	5 5%	5 5%	2 2%	9 10%	3 3%	94
RHS %	42 47%	13 14%	13 14%	5 6%	29 32%	3 3%	4 4%	4 4%	4 4%	-	8 9%	1 1%	90
UTS %	3 18%	-	1 6%	-	6 35%	1 6%	-	3 18%	-	2 12%	4 24%	2 12%	17
RTS %	2 20%	-	1 10%	-	8 80%	-	-	1 10%	-	1 10%	-	-	10
UPH %	4 57%	-	-	2 29%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 14%	-	7
RPH %	-	-	-	1 33%	2 67%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
ROH %	1 50%	-	-	-	2 100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
UGS %	7 18%	32 80%	1 3%	3 8%	9 23%	1 3%	-	3 8%	1 3%	-	2 5%	1 3%	40
RGS %	2 17%	9 75%	-	1 8%	2 17%	-	-	1 8%	1 8%	-	-	-	12
UIH %	5 36%	2 14%	2 14%	2 14%	6 43%	3 21%	-	1 7%	-	-	1 7%	1 7%	14
UHM %	6 23%	2 8%	1 4%	-	11 42%	-	-	3 12%	-	-	2 8%	2 8%	26
RHM %	9 29%	3 10%	5 16%	3 10%	9 29%	-	-	1 3%	1 3%	-	7 23%	1 3%	31
Total SA %	173 36%	213 44%	77 16%	56 12%	156 33%	26 5%	14 3%	31 6%	19 4%	8 2%	58 12%	16 3%	480

BK An interest in history in general

BL An interest in family history

BM To find out more about the local area

BN An interest in old buildings

BO A wish to preserve the past for the future

BP Because of destruction of the environment

BQ Because society is changing rapidly

BR To meet like minded people

BS Because friend/spouse/partner joined

BT To be entertained

BU As a community service

BV Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response.

Table 49. Influences encouraging members to join historical organisations

Group	Person	Book	TV Show	Event	Film	N ^o paper story	Other	Total no. respondents
UNT %	8 32%	1 4%	-	1 4%	1 4%	2 8%	4 16%	25
RNT %	41 38%	11 10%	-	15 14%	-	7 6%	25 23%	109
UHS %	48 51%	17 18%	2 2%	20 21%	2 2%	9 10%	24 26%	94
RHS %	41 46%	13 14%	1 1%	15 17%	-	4 4%	25 28%	90
UTS %	7 41%	4 24%	-	1 6%	-	4 24%	6 43%	17
RTS %	3 30%	1 10%	1 10%	1 10%	-	1 10%	2 20%	10
UPH %	3 43%	1 14%	1 14%	-	-	1 14%	2 29%	7
RPH %	-	-	-	1 33%	-	3 100%	-	3
ROH %	2 100%	-	-	2 100%	-	-	1 50%	2
UGS %	14 35%	6 15%	1 3%	4 10%	1 3%	1 3%	6 15%	40
RGS %	5 42%	1 8%	1 8%	-	-	2 17%	2 17%	12
UIH %	2 14%	-	-	-	-	-	6 43%	14
UHM %	7 27%	2 8%	-	1 4%	-	1 4%	6 23%	26
RHM %	8 26%	5 16%	1 3%	5 16%	1 3%	2 6%	11 35%	31
Total SA %	189 39%	62 13%	8 2%	66 14%	5 1%	37 8%	120 25%	480

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response.

Table 50. Details of influence

Group	CD	CE	CF	CG	CH	CI	Total no. responses
UNT	3	1	1	1	3	-	25
%	12%	4%	4%	4%	12%		
RNT	22	-	4	5	11	28	109
%	20%		4%	5%	10%	26%	
UHS	19	2	-	2	7	31	94
%	20%	2%		2%	7%	33%	
RHS	15	1	-	1	14	41	90
%	17%	1%		1%	16%	46%	
UTS	3	-	-	-	2	8	17
%	18%				12%	47%	
RTS	-	-	-	-	-	3	10
%						30%	
UPH	1	-	-	1	2	2	7
%	14%			14%	29%	29%	
RPH	-	-	2	3	-	-	3
%			67%	100%			
ROH	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
%					50%	50%	
UGS	5	-	-	-	3	9	40
%	13%				8%	23%	
RGS	1	-	-	-	1	4	12
%	8%				8%	33%	
UIH	1	-	-	-	-	4	14
%	7%					29%	
UHM	2	-	1	-	2	8	26
%	8%		4%		8%	31%	
RHM	5	-	-	-	2	10	31
%	16%				6%	32%	
Total SA	77	4	8	13	48	149	480
%	16%	1%	2%	3%	10%	31%	

CD Friend/relative

CE Messenger press

CF Newspapers in general

CG Destruction of familiar environment

CH Member of historical society

CI Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response.

Table 51 casts further doubt on the opinions of Lowenthal and others who deplore the current state of society and believe people are looking for an escape. While 35% of respondents cited their wish to find out about the past as a reason for joining a historical organisation and 34% claimed they had joined to preserve evidence of the past, only 9% suggested they had joined because of a nostalgia for a past era, and a tiny 3% claimed that it was because they did not like the current state of society. Thus, while individuals are concerned about saving vestiges of the past, they are not dissatisfied with the present or fearful of the future. Table 52 supports this view. By far the greatest majority believe that a knowledge of the past tells how life really was (37%), encourages pride in country or state (35%) and helps us to learn from that past (31%). Only 3% of respondents suggested that a knowledge of the past helps us forget present-day problems. This was despite 83% of respondents believing that life was simpler 30 years ago (Table 53).

When asked directly why they thought South Australians have become interested in the past in the last 30 years (Table 54), respondents gave greater credence to the influence of the current state of society, and 14% of respondents thought it was because the world is changing rapidly. However, only 4% attributed it to a distaste for the current state of society. The greatest number of respondents ascribed it to an increased feeling of Australian identity (34%) and an increased feeling of South Australian identity (32%). While 19% contended it was because of commemorative events, only 7% believed that historical dramas on film and television have had any influence. Again, the data show that South Australia differed from the United States and that the mass media has had little influence in increasing interest in history among ordinary people. In contrast to the views of Kammen and Marsden, only 8% attributed the increased interest in history to a greater amount of leisure time. The data support the contention made in earlier chapters that South Australians have become interested in their past because of a growing sense of South Australian and Australian identity. South Australians have always been proud of the beginnings of their state. They now acknowledge that it is a history worth celebrating. Whereas until the 1960s South Australians had emphasised the Britishness of their state, they now rejoice in its Australianness. Additionally, they commemorate the achievements of *all* early settlers, not just those who made their name.

Table 51. Reasons members of historical organisations are interested in history

Group	DP	DQ	DR	DS	DT	DU	DV	DW	Total no. respondents
UNT	8	5	4	1	2	7	1	-	25
%	32%	20%	16%	4%	8%	28%	4%	-	
RNT	48	30	29	14	12	40	3	1	109
%	44%	28%	27%	13%	11%	37%	3%	1%	
UHS	31	15	19	9	11	31	3	-	94
%	33%	16%	20%	10%	12%	33%	3%	-	
RHS	33	22	22	6	8	25	3	1	90
%	37%	24%	24%	7%	9%	28%	3%	1%	
UTS	5	-	2	3	-	8	2	-	17
%	29%	-	12%	18%	-	47%	12%	-	
RTS	3	-	-	2	-	5	-	-	10
%	30%	-	-	20%	-	50%	-	-	
UPH	4	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	7
%	57%	-	-	14%	28%	-	-	-	
RPH	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3
%	-	-	-	-	-	100%	-	-	
ROH	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
UGS	7	2	25	1	1	9	2	-	40
%	18%	5%	63%	3%	3%	23%	5%	-	
RGS	2	1	10	1	1	2	-	-	12
%	17%	8%	83%	8%	8%	17%	-	-	
UIH	7	1	1	-	1	9	-	-	14
%	50%	7%	7%	-	7%	64%	-	-	
UHM	9	1	-	3	1	13	-	-	26
%	35%	4%	-	12%	4%	50%	-	-	
RHM	7	6	41	1	2	12	1	-	31
%	23%	19%	3%	3%	6%	39%	3%	-	
Total SA	167	83	116	42	41	164	15	2	480
%	35%	17%	24%	9%	9%	34%	3%	-	

DP Find out about the past in general

DQ Find out about the area in which you live

DR Find out about your family background

DS Nostalgia for a past era

DT Help you to understand the present

DU Preserve evidence of the past

DV Because you do not like the current state of society

DW Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response

Table 52. Usefulness of knowledge of the past for members of historical organisations

Group	DX	DY	DZ	EA	EB	EC	ED	Total no. respondents
UNT	2	8	9	8	-	1	-	25
%	8%	32%	36%	32%		4%		
RNT	11	51	44	35	5	6	1	109
%	10%	47%	40%	32%	5%	6%	1%	
UHS	11	32	31	29	1	5	1	94
%	12%	34%	33%	31%	1%	5%	1%	
RHS	14	33	32	26	2	3	-	90
%	16%	37%	36%	29%	2%	3%		
UTS	3	4	4	6	-	1	-	17
%	18%	24%	24%	35%		6%		
RTS	-	1	6	3	-	-	-	10
%		10%	60%	30%				
UPH	1	3	-	3	-	-	-	7
%	14%	43%		43%				
RPH	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	3
%			33%	67%				
ROH	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
%			50%	50%				
UGS	4	11	20	14	1	1	-	40
%	10%	28%	50%	35%	3%	3%		
RGS	1	5	7	2	-	-	-	12
%	8%	42%	58%	17%				
UIH	2	4	4	4	1	1	-	14
%	14%	29%	29%	29%	7%	7%		
UHM	4	4	10	8	-	-	1	26
%	15%	15%	38%	31%			4%	
RHM	5	13	9	6	2	2	-	31
%	16%	42%	29%	19%	6%	6%		
Total SA	60	169	178	147	12	20	4	480
%	13%	35%	37%	31%	3%	4%	1%	

DX Challenges accepted views of the past

DY Encourages pride in country or state

DZ Tells how life really was in the past

EA Helps us learn from the past

EB Helps us forget present-day problems

EC Helps to unify different elements of society

ED Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response

Table 53. Was 'life simpler' thirty years ago?

Group	Yes	No	Both	Neither	Number Respondents
UNT %	18 82%	4 18%	-	-	22
RNT %	78 76%	23 23%	1 1%	1 1%	102
UHS %	79 84%	11 12%	-	4 4%	94
RHS %	70 82%	14 16%	1 1%	-	85
UTS %	17 100%	-	-	-	17
RTS %	9 90%	-	-	1 10%	10
UPH %	4 80%	1 20%	-	-	5
RPH %	2 67%	1 33%	-	-	3
ROH %	2 100%	-	-	-	2
UGS %	30 86%	4 11%	-	1 3%	35
RGS %	9 82%	2 18%	-	-	11
UIH %	12 86%	2 14%	-	-	14
UHM %	24 96%	2 4%	-	-	25
RHM %	24 80%	5 17%	1 3%	-	30
Total SA %	378 83%	67 15%	3 1%	7 1%	455

Table 54. Suggested reasons South Australians have become interested in the past in the last thirty years

Group	EE	EF	EG	EH	EI	EJ	EK	EL	Total no. respondents
UNT %	7 28%	9 36%	3 12%	2 8%	-	4 16%	2 8%	1 4%	25
RNT %	41 38%	46 42%	21 19%	12 11%	7 6%	14 13%	8 7%	7 6%	109
UHS %	31 33%	27 29%	16 17%	9 10%	7 7%	17 18%	3 3%	3 3%	94
RHS %	31 34%	30 33%	20 22%	6 7%	7 8%	11 12%	2 2%	5 6%	90
UTS %	5 29%	5 29%	1 6%	2 12%	3 18%	1 6%	1 6%	1 6%	17
RTS %	5 50%	-	2 20%	-	3 30%	-	-	-	10
UPH %	2 29%	1 14%	1 14%	-	1 14%	1 14%	-	-	7
RPH %	-	-	1 33%	1 33%	-	1 33%	-	-	3
ROH %	1 50%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
UGS %	10 25%	13 33%	9 23%	2 5%	4 10%	4 10%	-	1 3%	40
RGS %	6 50%	6 50%	1 8%	-	1 8%	2 17%	-	-	12
UIH %	7 50%	5 36%	3 21%	1 7%	1 7%	2 14%	-	-	14
UHM %	7 27%	4 15%	7 27%	-	3 12%	3 12%	1 4%	-	26
RHM %	12 39%	7 23%	6 19%	-	1 3%	5 16%	2 6%	2 6%	31
Total SA %	165 34%	153 32%	91 19%	35 7%	38 8%	65 14%	19 4%	20 4%	480

EE An increased feeling of Australian identity

EF An increased feeling of South Australian identity

EG Commemorative events

EH Historical dramas on film and television

EI An increased amount of leisure time

EJ A realisation that the world is changing rapidly

EK A distaste for the current state of society

EL Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response

Of special interest to this study is the notion that South Australians have considered, and still believe, that the history of their state is unique, particularly because South Australia was settled without convicts. As Table 55 shows, a striking 80% of respondents considered that South Australian history has differed from the history of the other states. Of those who thought this, 71% claimed it was because South Australia never had convicts. The next highest number of respondents (17%) attributed it to the fact that South Australia was a commercial settlement, followed by the presence of different ethnic and religious groups (14%) (Table 56). Thus, it doesn't matter that by the 1850s South Australia differed little from the other states. The data supports the contention that South Australians do believe that their state has had a unique history and is different from the other Australian states.¹⁵

While not being conclusive, this survey of members of historical societies gives an understanding of the reasons individuals join historical organisations, and allows a glimpse into the composition of such groups. Members tend to be older, long-time residents of an area, are Australian-born, and have roots in South Australia that go back to the last century. They are well educated and work in white-collar occupations. In rural areas membership of historical organisations comes from towns rather than outlying farms. Members of historical organisations also participate fully in their community and belong to many other groups. They are more religious than the average South Australian, with a high percentage of members belonging to the Uniting Church. The survey casts doubt on some unsupported assertions, in particular that discontent with the state of society has encouraged people to turn to the past. In contrast, it shows that people are drawn to history for positive reasons. The data indicate that South Australians celebrate their past because of a growing sense of local and national pride, and a greater feeling of Australian identity.

¹⁵ Derek Whitelock has written a history entitled *Adelaide, 1836-1976: a History of Difference*. St. Lucia (1977). See also Beverley Kingston, "The Use and Function of Local History" in *Locating Australia's Past: A Practical Guide to Writing Local History*. Kensington, NSW (1988), pp.5-6.

Table 55. **Has South Australian history differed from the history of the other states?**

Group	Yes	No	Both	Number of Replies
UNT	18	2	5	25
%	72%	8%	20%	
RNT	90	15	4	109
%	83%	14%	4%	
UHS	81	6	7	94
%	86%	6%	7%	
RHS	71	14	5	90
%	79%	16%	6%	
UTS	11	5	1	17
%	65%	29%	6%	
RTS	7	2	1	10
%	70%	20%	10%	
UPH	7	-	-	7
%	100%			
RPH	2	1	-	3
%	67%	33%		
ROH	1	-	1	2
%	50%		50%	
UGS	31	6	3	40
%	76%	15%	8%	
RGS	9	3	-	12
%	75%	25%		
UIH	12	2	-	14
%	86%	14%		
UHM	22	3	-	25
%	88%	12%		
RHM	19	10	1	30
%	63%	33%	3%	
Total SA	381	69	28	478
%	80%	14%	6%	

Table 56. Reasons for this different history

Group	EN	EO	EP	EQ	ER	ES	ET	EU	EV	EW	Number of replies
UNT	16	2	1	3	4	2	-	-	1	2	23
%	70%	9%	4%	13%	17%	9%			4%	9%	
RNT	67	10	1	11	13	4	3	1	5	30	94
%	71%	11%	1%	12%	14%	4%	3%	1%	5%	32%	
UHS	63	4	1	13	13	5	-	-	5	27	88
%	72%	5%	1%	15%	15%	6%			6%	31%	
RHS	48	8	-	13	16	4	1	-	-	28	76
%	63%	11%		17%	21%	5%	1%			37%	
UTS	8	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	8	12
%	67%			17%	17%					67%	
RTS	6	2	-	3	1	1	-	-	1	2	8
%	75%	25%		36%	13%	13%			13%	25%	
UPH	5	2	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	1	7
%	71%	29%		14%	29%	14%				14%	
RPH	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
%	50%				50%					50%	
ROH	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
%	50%				50%					50%	
UGS	28	1	-	3	7	6	-	-	2	6	34
%	82%	3%		9%	21%	18%			6%	18%	
RGS	6	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	9
%	67%	11%		22%					11%	11%	
UIH	8	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	5	12
%	67%	17%		8%		8%				42%	
UHM	16	4	-	3	3	1	-	-	1	7	22
%	73%	18%		14%	14%	5%			5%	32%	
RHM	16	4	-	4	6	-	-	-	-	9	20
%	80%	20%		20%	30%					45%	
Total SA	289	40	3	59	69	25	4	1	16	128	409
%	71%	10%	1%	14%	17%	6%	1%	-	4%	31%	

EN No convicts

EO Climate and terrain

EP Architecture

EQ Influence of different ethnic and religious groups

ER Commercial settlement

ES Idealistic beginnings

ET Less bureaucracy

EU More regionalised

EV Freedom of religion

EW Other

*Rows do not always add up to 100% because some respondents gave more than one response and others gave no response

CONCLUSION

In the United States, Australia and South Australia amateur historians formed societies to commemorate and celebrate the history of their region. This happened at various times and was prompted by different stimuli in each of the regions. By the late nineteenth century amateur historians in the United States had formed many organisations to record the story of their past. The major historical societies preserved the history of states while smaller groups concentrated on towns and villages. The majority of societies were in the New England region, but Americans in the Midwest also established societies, often before their regions gained statehood. The fundamental impetus for the founding of most societies was a wish to preserve details about important events or the early days of settlement before these were lost. Some amateur historians and preservationists converted preserved historic houses to museums to perpetuate the memory of statesmen and others who had played an important part in the founding of the nation. Americans also published works that recorded the history of local areas and the pioneers who had established towns in the wilderness. While pride prompted the formation of many historical societies, preservation groups, museums and the writing of local history, fear spurred some Americans to band together in nativist organisations based on birth or participation in some event seminal to American history. By emphasising history and glorifying the past, members of these hereditary groups hoped to Americanise a growing number of immigrants who they believed were undermining their beloved American way of life.

Australians generally could not look back with the same degree of pride on the founding of their country. Nevertheless, in the late nineteenth century some Australians realised that their colonies had a past that they could commemorate, and from the beginning of the twentieth century they increasingly united to do so. Despite their British heritage, they looked not to England for examples on how to do this but to the United States of America. Residents of the eastern states modelled many of their efforts to preserve the past on initiatives originating in America. These local historians valued the colonial attachments to Britain and still regarded her as the mother country, but when commemorating their local history they emulated the other settler society in the new

world. While the United States and Australia had experienced different beginnings, in both countries white settlers had forged a European society out of a wilderness. During the nineteenth century social conditions in Australia came to increasingly resemble those in America. In the presentation of the past, as in many other aspects, Australia followed the United States, although the celebration of the past in Australia retained distinctive characteristics.

Both similar and different stimuli spurred the development of historical, museum, genealogy and preservation societies and the writing of local history in the United States of America and Australia. As mentioned, in the United States pride in achievement was the principal motivating force, although its manifestations differed in the various regions of the country. In the north-eastern states individuals formed the early societies both to save the works of the founding fathers and to revere them. In the western states pride stemmed not from past glorious deeds but from expectations of success in taming the new land. Because the first settlers wished their descendants to remember them and their exploits, all frontier state historical societies aimed to write the history of their respective regions.¹ State rivalry prompted local historians to use their work to defend and advocate the historical priority of their own locality. Thus societies in the South attempted to counter the hegemony the North had assumed over the presentation of the past. State and local historical societies exercised increasing influence as local and regional pride heightened. As the celebration of the past gained in importance members of prominent families rushed to form or to join these societies to ensure their domination of the presentation of the past and the place of their family in that past.² From the formation of the first societies patriotism was present in all interpretations of the past presented by amateur historians in the United States.

While overt patriotism was not so obvious in the presentation of history in Australia, nationalism was a significant ingredient in both the United States and Australia. In both countries state allegiance took precedence over national loyalty for local historians, but historical societies formed only after the inhabitants of each country

¹ David Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past*. Chicago (1960), pp.96-97.

² Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York (1991), pp.272-273.

had developed a sense of belonging to a nation with its own past and its own national characteristics. In the United States, bolstered by the underlying pride in the Pilgrim Fathers, the revolutionary war against England in 1776 provided a definite foundation for a national affiliation. Australia lacked such exemplary beginnings or a clear-cut defining point. The nationalism of the 1890s, followed by the federation of the colonies in 1901 laid the groundwork for a national consciousness. Australia's participation in the First World War, particularly at Gallipoli, provided the sacrificial bloodletting considered essential as a foundation of a nation. While these events were essential to the formation of a national consciousness, they did not of themselves stimulate Australians to initiate societies to honour the past. This was unlike the situation in the United States where many historical societies formed to commemorate auspicious happenings. The first historical societies in Australia formed for prosaic reasons, such as a dispute over the laying of a foundation stone of a church. Concentration on such minute details allowed Australia's early amateur historians to forget the large picture of the past.

Australians had to come to terms with their convict origins, and because of these beginnings Australians lagged behind Americans in the formation of historical organisations and in the writing of local history. Paradoxically, the first historical societies in Australia developed on the east coast, which had the largest number of reminders of the convict past and the most descendants of those convicts. And this was precisely because of those ancestors who were initially such an embarrassment. These unwilling convict immigrants had had little affection for Britain, and, combining with the equally anti-British Irish free settlers and their descendants, they had initiated the first stirrings of an Australian nationalism. As Russel Ward explained, "Irishmen convicted and transported under English laws, or forced to emigrate by the appalling poverty which they felt to be 'made in England', were likely to be doubly and trebly Anglophobe".³ In the late nineteenth century this undercurrent of nationalism permeated to the upper levels of society and encouraged some members of the social elite, who still retained an affection for England and respected the colonial ties, to form the first state historical societies in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Gradually, as time and growing

³ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*. Oxford (1983), p.53.

national sentiment promoted an interest in their past in an increasing number of Australians, smaller local history groups formed. Amateur historians in these societies, a small number of whom still came from the local elite but with many more drawn from a broad cross-section of the community, salvaged the nation's convict settlers, who became symbols of pride rather than opprobrium.

Americans showed greater concern for preserving buildings than did Australians. Initially the preservations saved only the homes of revered heroes, which they hoped would instil pride in old Americans and help to Americanise new immigrants. In the twentieth century preservationists sought to save buildings simply for their architectural worth. In the 1930s some Americans realised the importance of preserving entire districts and established historic zones in long-settled cities and towns. Conversely, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most Australians disregarded the built heritage, principally because many early buildings had convict associations. Until the 1950s Australians fought few battles to save old buildings. Nevertheless, a National Trust to fight for the preservation of historic buildings formed in Australia several years before a similar body was established in the United States. Women played a prominent role in the early preservation movement in the United States, whereas in Australia they were less influential. In both countries the social elite founded and controlled the preservation groups and national trusts, and despite their high-sounding rhetoric no group achieved much in saving the built heritage until their membership broadened. This happened in both countries in the late 1960s and early 1970s when spreading industrialisation and suburbanisation threatened working-class neighbourhoods and native bushland. Ordinary people then began to support the work of the preservation groups, and governments began to listen.

Australians, like Americans, formed societies based on descent. Again, as with historical societies and the National Trust, the first such groups formed in New South Wales. And again, like the early historical societies, the Australasian Pioneers' Club largely ignored the convict foundations of the country. Descendants of convicts were not officially prohibited from joining, but the most desirable members, who held the highest positions in the club's executive, were descended from the colonial elite. Unlike the

situation in the United States, the descendants groups in Australia exerted little influence outside their own membership. But nor did they wish to. Until the second half of the twentieth century immigrants to Australia came mainly from Britain, and so the hereditary groups had no need to Australianise the newcomers. Even when southern European and non-European immigrants began arriving no historical group felt threatened or regarded it as necessary to use Australian history as a bulwark against a potential undermining of the Australian way of life.

Australians trailed Americans in their formation of historical museums. In the United States from the mid-nineteenth century federal, state and local government and private individuals supported the development of museums dedicated to the early history both of the nation and of individual towns and villages. Australia was not so fortunate. Despite many requests from individuals and historical organisations state governments in Australia refused to finance historical museums. The federal government has only recently agreed to fund a national historical museum. Wealthy individuals in Australia have similarly ignored the importance of history, and Australia has no benefactor to equal Ford or Rockefeller in the United States. State historical societies in Australia have generally been poorer than their American counterparts, so they too have been unable to finance historical museums. From the 1960s many small historical societies in Australia established museums of local history, but few of these equalled those established in the United States.

The support by governments in each country to the founding of historical societies is interesting. In the New England region of the United States historical societies formed without government assistance, although from the late nineteenth century state legislatures often allocated grants to these groups. In the midwestern region state historical societies would probably have foundered if it had not been for the financial and other support given by state governments. Elected officials in the newly settled midwest regarded the formation of historical societies as one of the marks of civilisation and hence supported their establishment. In America history governments regarded an understanding of national, state and local history as essential to the development of culture and of national consciousness, hence the support given to historical museums and

other history-based organisations. In Australia it was otherwise. Individual members of state governments joined historical groups and championed the cause of history, but state governments reluctantly gave only small grants to assist in specific projects. However they did not completely ignore the evidence of the past. The New South Wales government supported the copying of colonial records and in 1888 sponsored a centennial history. In all states governments collected documents relating to early settlement and established archives. Thus they incorporated some of the functions of the state historical societies in the United States, particularly in the New England region. Recognising the importance of retaining evidence of the past, state and federal governments in Australia followed American precedent and introduced legislation to protect both the natural and the built environment. But Australian governments never accorded the same pre-eminence to history as did their American counterparts because they did not see it as their duty to foster a national sentiment through a study of the past.

In South Australia the development of a historical consciousness moved even slower than in most other Australian states, and South Australians lagged behind Americans and their fellow Australians in founding societies to commemorate and preserve the past. They remained convinced of their superiority to other Australians because theirs had been a planned settlement, and no convicts and few Irish had been sent to their shores. It did not matter that South Australia resembled its neighbours even before transportation had ceased, South Australians distanced themselves from those states infected by the 'convict stain' and lower-class Irish. Beginnings that should have encouraged the celebration of the past among the whole population in fact inhibited it. With no convicts and few Irish to sow the seeds of nationalism most South Australians clung to their colonial ties. This attachment continued long after it had become unfashionable elsewhere in Australia to view Australian history as an extension of that of England. While the inhabitants of the other states overcame the shame of their foundations by developing an Australian identity that gradually encompassed the miscellany of Australia's first settlers, many South Australians remained locked in a time-warp and remembered an idealised 'home' in Britain.

This did not mean that South Australians ignored their past. As in the United States and the rest of Australia, South Australians published histories of their state. Several founders of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch attempted to incorporate the word Historical in the title and have the society devote equal attention to the recording of history. While this move failed, a few members remained interested in history. Through their efforts the society fulfilled some of the functions of the state historical societies that had formed in the United States and elsewhere in Australia. Those in the Royal Geographical Society who were interested in history knew of the American societies. They also knew of the state historical societies in Australia and occasionally co-operated with them in commemorating the past. Yet, despite admiring the work accomplished by the American societies and those from the other Australian states, they lacked the confidence to establish a dedicated historical society in South Australia. They remained convinced that Adelaide's population was too small to support such a group. Additionally, few academic historians showed interest in recording the history of the state. In South Australia amateur historians lacked the guidance given by university historians to the major societies in the United States and Australia.

Not surprisingly, given the adulation accorded to early settlers and explorers, the first successful history-based society in South Australia was a descendants' group. The founders and leading members of the Pioneers' Association of South Australia came from the social elite. They dominated South Australia's social life and controlled commerce and investment.⁴ Members from this same group belonged to the executive of the Royal Geographical Society and in the 1950s established and led the National Trust of South Australia. Although the National Trust of Australia (NSW) predated it by five years, the founders of the South Australian Trust ignored their fellow Australians and turned to the English National Trust for guidance and advice. In the absence of a central historical society the National Trust of South Australia assumed the mantle from the Royal Geographical Society and became the *de facto* state historical society.

⁴ Derek Whitelock, *Adelaide. From Colony to Jubilee: A Sense of Difference*, Adelaide (1985), p.214.

Other historical groups also formed. In 1947 members of the Royal Geographical Society finally established a separate historical division. However, the society was never entirely successful and the group folded in 1968. Societies dedicated to preserving the German heritage of South Australia also formed. But in the main, non-German South Australians initiated these moves because of the negative experiences of those South Australian Germans who had celebrated their history in the 1930s. During the 1960s and early 1970s the National Trust branch network continued to expand. Residents in local government districts, first in rural areas and then in metropolitan Adelaide, also formed historical societies to record the history of their area. Prompted by changing technology, enthusiasts initiated societies dedicated to preserving outmoded forms of transport. In other instances employees established societies to protect and preserve the history of their workplace. In 1965 the state government introduced legislation to protect the remains of Aboriginal society and also evidence of European settlement prior to 1865. Both rural and urban South Australians established local historical museums. They also began to appreciate the beauty of their early buildings and to call for their preservation. Thus by the early 1970s South Australians had caught up with Americans and other Australians in their celebration and preservation of the past. They had formed local historical societies, preservation groups and genealogical societies, had established many small local history museums and had written histories of their towns. But they still had not formed a state historical society.

This was because of the influence of the social elite. Until the mid 1960s members of this group had dictated how South Australians recorded and revered their past. Its members were antiquarians rather than historians who venerated explorers and successful pioneers. Lacking the influence that the descendants of the convicts and the Irish had exerted on the elite in the other states, encouraging in them a sense of Australian nationalism, South Australia's elite continued to emphasise the state's British past. But in the 1960s attitudes slowly began to alter. While in country districts the rural elite usually led the National Trust branch or the local historical society, membership came from a wide cross-section of the community. These members were interested in the lives of their own ancestors, not just the doings of the prominent early settlers. In

emphasising the part ordinary people had played in the settlement of their districts they began to democratise the presentation of the past in South Australia.⁵ Thus rural South Australians were the first in their state to acknowledge their unique Australian past.

In metropolitan Adelaide the elite also lost control of the presentation of the past. In the 1960s, as a result of increased industrialisation and more diverse immigration, Adelaide began to alter.⁶ The downfall of the Playford government in 1965 heralded further change, and during the years of Don Dunstan's premiership Adelaide metamorphosed from an inward looking and wowsery society to one with a more cosmopolitan outlook.⁷ This shift in the social composition of the city and in the outlook of its inhabitants flowed through into the history movement. While the National Trust was still the major historical group and attracted members from the social elite, those from the educated elite were no longer satisfied with the history perpetuated by the Trust. Some members of this educated elite, dismayed that South Australia was the only state without a state historical society, worked to remedy this lack. The formation of the Historical Society of South Australia in 1974, the first state-wide organisation to form without a substantial membership from Adelaide's social elite and with a prominent academic presence, was the culmination of the democratisation of the past in South Australia.

Despite the differing gestation periods of the historical society movement in the United States, Australia and South Australia, from the 1960s membership in historical organisations in the three regions exploded, as did the number of such groups. While many commentators have made blanket statements to account for this growth in interest in history, such statements must be treated with caution. Although the expanding interest in the past occurred in the three regions over a similar time span, reasons for this interest differed between and within each area. Industrial development, spreading suburbanisation and increasing population density influenced urban dwellers to join historical

⁵ However, some people remained dissatisfied with the attention that historical societies devoted to ordinary settlers. In the 1980s they rectified this situation by forming family history groups to research the history of individual families.

⁶ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Melbourne (1964), p.56; Dutton, "My Adelaide", p.28.

⁷ See Whitelock, pp.294-305; Blewett and Jaensch; Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience (eds), *The Dunstan Decade: Social Democracy at the State Level*. Melbourne (1981).

organisations both to fight against further development and to preserve aspects of the past before they were lost. Conversely, lack of development and a shrinking population prompted rural dwellers to form groups to recover the history of their towns. By researching into their history townspeople and members of local government, who often sponsored and gave financial support to these groups, hoped to record the local history before their towns died. They also hoped to bolster community spirit by emphasising past achievements.

As many commentators have suggested, anniversaries have often acted as stimuli for the formation of historical groups. Interestingly, state anniversaries have had minimal impact on the formation of historical organisations in the three regions. The Bicentennial appears to have exerted a much greater influence in America than did the Bicentenary in Australia on the formation of history-based societies. However in both America and Australia the national celebrations were important in increasing membership in existing organisations. In South Australia the Bicentenary acted neither as an impetus for the founding of historical organisations nor for an increase in their membership. Local anniversaries proved to be of greater import, particularly in South Australia. These varying reactions to similar stimuli reinforce the point that broad generalisations explaining the rise in the number of historical organisations should be treated with caution.

Notwithstanding the different incentives for their formation, membership of historical societies in the United States, Australia and South Australia is now remarkably similar. While men were influential in initiating the first historical organisations in each of the three regions, and in the United States and Australia formed the majority of members of the early societies, women are now in the majority in most societies in all three regions. Older people are also more likely to belong to historical groups in the three regions. In each region, insufficient members and an ageing or dying membership are major problems. Thus, it appears that this formal expression of interest in history is waning and membership of historical organisations has peaked in each of the three regions.

Despite the pronouncements of commentators such as Lowenthal and Toffler, who bemoan the current state of society and claim that anxiety about the present and fear of the future have encouraged people to turn to the past, the major influence prompting individuals to join historical organisations in each of the three regions appears to be the wish to preserve evidence of the past for future generations. In Australia and South Australia ordinary people have probably shown such a great interest in the past over the last 30 years because of the length of settlement. Realisation that they could look back several generations encouraged people in the belief that they have a history worth celebrating. For all three regions, a growing sense of national pride bolstered the wish to commemorate the past. In South Australia this came to the fore when ordinary South Australians gained control of the celebration of the past. They threw off their subservience to Britain, and acknowledged and celebrated their own history.

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