

LOCAL HISTORY MATERIALS

by
C. G. Sheehan

Local history and family history in the last few years has become quite a boom industry. The most visible evidence of this has been the development, at the local level, of societies and museums which seek to collect a rapidly disappearing heritage, "to preserve the materials collected and to exhibit them for the education and enjoyment of the present and future generations. There has also been an increase in publications relating to local history - books, periodicals, and pamphlets relating to specific historical topics, and guide books on the methodology of local history. This article will give a brief guide to these handbooks; it is not meant as an exhaustive listing, but rather those which are currently available and would be of practical assistance to societies.

Many of the titles listed will be American or English; very few Australian (and even less specifically Queensland) publications have been produced. The overseas guides adapted to local conditions, will be of use to societies.

Local History Associations

The American Association for State and Local History was established to assist local historians and local historical societies and museums throughout the United States and Canada. The Association has an active publications programme, producing a series of bulletins, technical leaflets and books on different aspects of local history and museum work.

There is no equivalent Association in Australia. In Queensland there is no regional grouping of historical societies as exists in some other States. Historical societies can affiliate with the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. The Museums Association of Australia was established to improve communications between museums and to increase the professional standing of museums in Australia. The Association publishes a quarterly newsletter and an annual journal. A Queensland Branch of the Association has been established, and regional chapters have been proposed for the Branch. A North Queensland Chapter (issuing a newsletter *Regional Museum*) and a Far North Queensland Chapter have been established. Historical interests in railways are adequately covered by the Australian Railway Historical Society (which produces a monthly bulletin) and its Queensland Division (publisher of the *Sunshine Express*); there are also specialist railway societies such as the Light Railway Research Club of Queensland (publisher of *Narrow Gauge Review*) and the Australian Narrow Gauge Railway Museum Society (publisher of *Durrundur Railway Bulletin*). The Queensland Maritime Museum and the World Ship Society's Queensland Branch (publisher of *Queensland Maritime Bulletin*) will deal with matters of shipping. The Aviation Historical Society of Australia produces an annual journal and its Queensland Branch publishes a newsletter. The Brisbane Tramway Museum Society publishes a journal *Baby Dreadnought* .

Establishment and Management

Information on the establishment of a society can be found in Clement M. Silvestro, *Organizing a Local Historical Society*, rev. edn. (Nashville, Tenn., American Association for State and Local History, 1977) and Dorothy

Weyer Creigh, *A Primer for Local Historical Societies* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1976). The John Oxley Library has produced *Guidelines for Setting Up a Historical Society* and a leaflet reproducing a document on the constitution of private museums prepared by the Scottish Federation of Museums and Art Galleries, are available upon request. Financial management for the small museum or society is discussed in Malvern J. Gross and William H. Daughtrey, *Museum Accounting Handbook* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978). The library organization of local history collections is discussed in Enid T. Thompson, *Local History Collections: A Manual for Librarians* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978), Alice Lynes, *How to Organize a Local Collection* (London, Andre Deutsch, 1974) (Grafton Basic Texts), J.L. Hobbs, *Local History and the Library*, rev. edn. by G. A. Carter (London, Andre Deutsch, 1973). Many of the ideas and principles enunciated in these books can be simplified for use in organizing small collections. Libraries will find it necessary to adapt English and American library techniques and practices to Australian usages and requirements.

Museums

Many societies in Queensland also operate a small museum as part of their service. The role of these small museums is an important one as each protects part of the national heritage. Societies are referred, in the first instance to the publication by the Queensland Museum - *The Small Museum: Papers Relating to the Operation of Local and Regional Museums: Seminar - Workshop, May 20-21, 1978*. The papers cover such topics as the establishment of a museum, the small museum building, the collections of the museum, documents and documentation, display of the collections, community involvement and extension work. Further publications which will augment and complement these papers would be E. W. Dunlop, *Local Historical Museums in Australia* (Sydney, Ro 1 Australian Historical Society, 1968), Carl E. Guthe, *The Management of Small History* 2nd edn. (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977), G. Ellis Beercau, *Introduction to Museum Work* (Nashville, A.A.C.L.H., 1978), Arminta Neal, *Help! for the Small Museum* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977). Further references on exhibitions for small museums can be found in Arminta Neal, *Exhibits for the Small Museum: A Handbook* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978) and William Scale, *Recreating the Historic House Interior* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1979). The use of photographs in the small museum is dealt with in this article in the section on photography. Display of historical costumes is adequately discussed in Karyn J. Harris, *Costume Display Techniques* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977). The procedures associated with the registration and cataloguing of museum collections are discussed in the *Small Museum* and further information may be found in Robert G. Chenhall, *Museum Cataloguing in the Computer Age* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978) and Daniel B. Reibel, *Registration Methods for the Small Museum* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978).

Care and conservation of the collections is one of the most important components of the museum's custodial function. Basic procedures have been outlined in the *Small Museum* and may be complemented by Western Australian Museum, Department of Material Conservation and Restoration, *Conservation and Restoration for Small Museums* (Perth, the Museum, 1979), Per E. Guldbek, *The Care of Historical Collections: A Conservation Handbook for the Non-Specialist* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1979), Queensland State Archives, *Basic Restoration Notes* (available on request) and Orin M. Bullock, *The Restoration*

Manual (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977). Museum security is discussed in Robert G. Tilden, *Museum Security* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978) and Caroline Krek, *A Primer on Museum Security* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1978).

Oral History

Oral history is an area of increasing importance in national, State, and local history; it is an area to which local historical societies can make a significant contribution. Oral history involves much more than recording a conversation with an elderly resident. The Society will find its effort in preparing for the interview and then in following up the interview will be rewarded in the amount of information which will become available to the society.

A useful introduction to oral history for local historical societies in Willa K. Baum, *Oral History for the Local Historical Society*, 2nd edn rev. (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977). *Oral History from Tape to Type*, comp. by Cullom Davis, Kathryn Back, and Kay Maclean (Chicago, American Library Association, 1977) is a practical, step by step guide to the whole field of oral history. A more detailed guide to the post-interview aspect of oral history can be found in Willa K. Baum, *Translating and Editing Oral History* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977).

Photography

Local historical societies are uniquely placed to collect significant historical photographs as the society is located in a specific location; in addition; the knowledge of society members of the area will enable photographs to be properly identified so that they may be more effectively used as documentary information sources.

Photographs are assuming an increasingly important function in historical research as they present the most accurate and unbiased account of the past. For a local society, photographs serve a double function - an important historical resource relating to the district and an attractive and informative source of displays. A leaflet has been prepared by the John Oxley Library on the importance of photographs - *Photographs as History* (available upon request). The best comprehensive guide to photographs as history and the use and curatorial requirements of historical photographs is Robert A. Weinstein and Larry Booth, *Collection, Use and Care of Historical Photographs* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1977). *Caring for Photographs: Display, Storage, Restoration* (Verona, Time Life International, 1973) is another guide on the maintenance of a photographic collection. These books will also provide information on how to obtain the best effects with photographs and should be read in conjunction with those works, referred to above, dealing with museum display.

Publications

It has been pleasing to note the increase in the number of publications on local history which have been published in the last few years. Many of these have been compiled by local historical societies or members of societies have been closely associated with their production. The John Oxley Library has produced a leaflet which may be of assistance to societies

planning a publication. This is supplemented by Thomas E. Felt, *Researching, Writing, and Publishing Local History* (Nashville, A.A.S.L.H., 1976). The consistency of editorial style in a publication is highly desirable. A useful guide is a *Style Manual for Authors ... of Australian Government Publications*, 3rd edn (Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978). Publications produced by local historical societies may be eligible for a rebate from Commonwealth Book Bounty and sales tax. Both these rebates are claimed by the publisher. A leaflet on these rebates can be obtained from the John Oxley Library.

Local History Materials

Guides to material available on Queensland local history are few. A general bibliography on historical materials has been published - W. R. Johnston, *A Bibliography of Queensland History*, (Brisbane, Library Board of Qld., 1981) which lists the principal printed and non-printed materials held in the collections of the John Oxley Library and the Fryer Library. This publication can be supplemented by the detailed listing in regional bibliographies such as Maurice French, *A Bibliography for the History of the Darling Downs and Adjacent Regions* (Toowoomba, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, 1979), Olivia Abbay, *Rockhampton: A Bibliography to 1975* (Rockhampton, Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education, 1980), Marjorie I. Walker, *North Queensland Towns and Districts: A Bibliography Compiled from Sources in the John Oxley Library* (Brisbane, John Oxley Library, 1975) and Geoff Wharton, *Researching North Queensland* (Townsville, James Cook University, 1978), work is in progress at the History Department of James Cook University on a comprehensive bibliography of historical materials relating to North Queensland. This, when published, will be a welcome addition to historical and bibliographical studies. Specialized subject bibliographies are listed in a *Bibliography of Queensland History*.

A general guide to resources available in local history is Philip Geeves, *Local History in Australia: A Guide for Beginners*, 2nd edn (Sydney Royal Australian Historical Society, 1977). This is a general guide to local history in Australia with little specific information relating to Queensland. This publication has been partially supplemented by a leaflet prepared by the John Oxley Library - *Sources in Local History*. The Queensland State Archives have prepared brief guides to the following records series - Companies and firms, State electoral rolls, Government buildings, Hotels, Immigration, Inquests, Insolvencies and liquidations, Naturalization, Ownership or leasehold of land, Railway records, Shipwrecks, and Wills and intestacies. Guides have also been prepared on genealogical searches, local history, maps for genealogical and history research, and school histories, as well as a guide to the records held. These leaflets are available upon request.

The methodology of dating residences is set out in Donald Watson, *Dating Your House: A Guide to Establishing the Date of Your Own Home* (Brisbane, National Trust of Queensland, 1978). The National Trust of Queensland has also produced a *Manual of Architectural History Research* which can be consulted at the Trust Office in Brisbane.

Family History

The tremendous increase in interest in family history, both in Australia and overseas, has resulted in the establishment of genealogical societies which assist people interested in researching their family history. In

Queensland the Genealogical Society of Queensland has established branches throughout the State and the Queensland Family History Society is a State wide organization based in Brisbane. The Genealogical Society of Queensland publishes ten newsletters a year and four issues of the journal *Generation*. The Society has produced an annual directory of surnames. Some of the branches of the Society publish newsletters, such as *Norbane River News*, the newsletter of the North Brisbane Branch. The Queensland Family History Society produces ten newsletter a year and is preparing a directory of surnames.

A number of books have been published on the procedure of 'tracing your ancestors'. A basic introduction is Nancy Gray, *Compiling Your Family History: A Guide to Procedure*, 6th edn (Sydney, Society of Australian Genealogists, 1979). Other works include Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Roots and Branches: Ancestry for Australians* (Sydney, Collins, 1979) and Murial E. Runting, *Ancestors for Australians: A Guidebook for Beginners ...*, ed. by B. R. Blaze (Melbourne, Genealogical Society of Victoria, 1975). None of these books deal specifically with Queensland. The brochure by the Queensland State Archives (referred to above) and articles in the publications of the genealogical societies will be of assistance.

Gravestones often provide a valuable source of information. Reference should be made to Lionel Gilbert, *A Grave Look at History: Glimpses of a Vanishing Form of Folk Art* (Sydney, John Ferguson, 1980) for the informational content that gravestones can provide as well as a guide to the transcription of inscriptions.

Addresses

The addresses of organizations referred to in this article:

American Association for State and Local History,
1400 Eighth Avenue South,
NASHVILLE, Tennessee, 37203
U.S.A.

Australian Narrow Gauge Railway Museum Society,
P.O. Box 270,
NORTH QUAY, Q. 4000

Queensland Division,
Australian Railway Historical Society,
P.O. Box 682,
BRISBANE, Q. 4001

Brisbane Tramway Museum Society,
McGinn Road,
FERNY GROVE, Q. 4055

Genealogical Society of Queensland,
Box 610, P.O.,
TOOWONG, Q. 4066

John Oxley Library,
State Library of Queensland,
William Street,
BRISBANE, Q. 4000

Ms. J. Sluce,
Secretary/Treasurer,
Queensland Branch Interim Committee,
Museums Association of Australia,
14 Morton Street,
KURANDA, Q. 4872

Queensland Family History Society,
Box 171,
P.O. Station Road,
INDOOROOPILLY, Q. 4069

Queensland Maritime Museum,
P.O. Box 197,
HAMILTON, Q. 4007

Queensland Museum,
Gregory Terrace,
FORTITUDE VALLEY, Q. 4006

Queensland State Archives,
Annerley Road,
DUTTON PARK, Q. 4102

Royal Australian Historical Society,
History House,
8 Young Street,
SYDNEY, N.S.W. 2000

Royal Historical Society of Queensland,
G.P.O. Box 1811,
BRISBANE, Q. 4001

Society of Australian Genealogists,
Richmond Villa,
120 Kent Street,
OBSERVATORY HILL, N.S.W. 2000