



Local History Guide

Family history research



Family history research

Family tree and genealogical research is arguably the most popular field for amateur historical investigation in Australia. The family history resources available through Woollahra Libraries provide some of the information to begin research into your family history both in Australia and overseas.

Getting started

Often with family history, the best and most convenient place to begin is with yourself and members of your extended family. The photographs, diaries, letters, school books, official documents as well as personal stories and recollections of family members can provide an enormous wealth of information, and suggest directions for further investigation. Seemingly insignificant items – an old birthday card, a sports trophy or a certificate – can also give insight into an aspect of a person's life. Even if you have no immediate plans to research or write family history, it can be useful to begin to collect items, or make audio recordings of personal stories, that you think may be valuable.

Family history research guides

Woollahra Libraries holds a number of published guides to researching family history, which can provide useful 'how to' style information about most aspects of investigating your family's past. Some titles held in our collection include *How to find shipping and immigration records in Australia*, *Tracing your family history online for dummies*, and *Genealogy: essential research methods*.

Records held by Woollahra Libraries

The records held in Woollahra Libraries' local history collection contain much of the raw data that can be used to piece together details about the lives of your ancestors. Most of these records are in microfilm format and can be accessed within Double Bay Library.

During the 19th century, the majority of New South Wales' population growth came from immigration. Immigration records can thus be a valuable resource for researchers. The local history collection holds lists compiled by the Shipping Master's Office of all passengers arriving in New South Wales by sea between 1854-1900. Assisted migration arrivals – who moved to New South Wales from the United Kingdom through a variety of subsidised immigration schemes – are listed in separate records that run from 1828 until the late 1800s. Immigration deposit journals (held for the years between 1853-1882) list funds deposited in New South Wales by people who wished to sponsor the immigration of a nominated person, usually either a relative or a worker they intended to employ.

The local history collection also contains tickets of leave issued by the Chief Superintendent of Convicts in New South Wales between 1827-1849. These tickets functioned as a form of parole, offering convicts a limited amount of freedom, including the right to work for themselves, as a reward for good behaviour. The ticket of leave butts held in the local history collection record information such as a convict's name,

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number, age, height, their date of arrival in the colony, the ship they arrived on, their place of birth, the details of their offence and conviction, and the date on which their ticket of leave was issued. Records of New South Wales convicts given absolute pardons, as well as those recommended for absolute pardons, are held for the years between 1791-1846.

Woollahra Libraries holds a range of other records relevant to family history researchers. The register of coroners' inquests lists people in New South Wales who had inquests held into their deaths between 1845-1942, usually in the event of sudden or unnatural deaths, or if a deceased person's body was unable to be identified. Indexes of certificates of naturalisation issued by the Colonial Secretary record the names of those who opted to become naturalised citizens of New South Wales in the second half of the 1800s. Certificates of publicans' licences (held for the years between 1832-1861) detail people to whom licences to run hotels and pubs were issued. The local history collection also holds copies of admission and departure books for children in orphans' schools between 1812-1833, as well as a copy of the first New South Wales census in 1828.

Other resources held by Woollahra Libraries may also potentially provide useful information for your research. Our collection of research files collates work that has already been undertaken by local history staff on particular topics, and includes material on prominent members of the local population as well as particular places, streets and properties. Published books and other works in our local history collection often contain similar information. Our collection of rate records can also reveal much about property owners and development over time throughout the Woollahra area.

Online family history resources

Membership of Woollahra Libraries allows you to freely access a number of online databases orientated directly towards family history researchers.

Ancestry is one of the world's most popular genealogical databases, and contains over five billion documents including census and enrolment records, information on births, deaths and marriages, and immigration, travel and military documents. Ancestry records are drawn from Australia as well as other mostly English-speaking countries, and although the version of Ancestry available to library members does not provide access to some of the databases included in the commercial version, it is still possible to access an extensive amount of material. Ancestry's website also contains guides on how to navigate and use the site. Library membership also allows free access to Find My Past, a genealogical database that functions in a similar way to Ancestry.

The New South Wales Family History Document Service holds over 30,000 digitised documents specifically relating to family history in New South Wales between 1850-1920. Using material drawn from the State Library of New South Wales, the University of New England and State Records, the site contains records concerning miners and mining leases, petitioners to the government, friendly society

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members, farmers and rural workers, as well as teachers and a variety of civil servants employed by the New South Wales government.

These databases can be accessed within any of the three branches of Woollahra Libraries. From the library homepage, simply click on 'databases' then select 'family history' under the subject listing.

Several other online databases can also be accessed freely by all members of the public. The Sands Sydney, Suburban and Country Commercial Directory was published between 1858-1932, and listed the names and addresses of householders, businesses and institutions throughout the entire Sydney region. As a result, it is one of the most useful resources available for researching family history in Sydney. More information on using Sands can be found in our 'Sands Directory' local history guide.

Trove, run by the National Library of Australia, aggregates records for content from nearly all libraries, museums, archives and other research and collecting organisations across Australia, and allows for them to be searched through one catalogue. Trove also contains over 20 million digitised pages from over 1,000 Australian newspapers from the early 1800s until the present (although most records extend up until the mid-1950s), all of which are fully searchable by keyword. Trove can be found online at:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

How we can help

Other research guides produced by library staff can be useful for finding more information. Library staff are also available to provide advice on how to conduct your research and access library resources. Alternatively, staff are able to undertake research on your behalf for a fee. Fees can be viewed on our 'fees and charges' page.