

# Occupations : family history

## Info Guide 3.22

### Where can I find out about my ancestor's occupation?

The following resources may be helpful in discovering how your ancestors worked for a living.

- Electoral Rolls
- Census Records
- Birth, death and/or marriage certificates
- Obituary notices in the newspaper
- Passenger lists and convict registers
- Published occupational registers
- Commercial directories and almanacs
- Definitions of occupations

### What information will these resources give me?

#### Electoral rolls

Many of the electoral rolls held by the State Library record the individual's profession. For a list of our holdings of electoral rolls please consult our *Info Guide 3.7: Electoral rolls*.

Example from the **1903 Queensland (Commonwealth) electoral roll**

- *Morthensen, Niel Christen – Peel Street, Mackay. **Cordial-maker***
- *Needham, William – Shakespeare Street, Mackay. **Fireman***

#### Census records

Censuses provide a snap-shot of people in a particular place and time. As well as recording the names of people residing in a particular dwelling, they also usually supply other personal details such as age and occupation. The census collectors would also visit businesses, factories, schools, asylums and prisons. For further information on census records refer to our *Info Guide 3.19: Censuses and musters*.

#### Birth, death and/or marriage certificates

Purchasing certificates can often help find a person's occupation. Most marriage certificates list the couple's occupations as well as the occupations of the couple's fathers.

#### Obituaries in the newspaper

Obituaries can provide researchers with a wealth of personal information on their ancestors. They often contain information that wouldn't be recorded in any government generated record. Some provide details on the deceased's previous occupations as well as volunteer works

Extract from obituary published in the **Western Star** (Roma) newspaper on 26 June 1937, p.2.

*"...Sergeant Tate...joined the police force in October 1906, at the age of 22, and served at Woollongabba and many country centres. When transferred to Ingham he was promoted to the rank of second-class sergeant. In North Queensland he saw service in several bitter industrial disputes. He was transferred to Roma, and later to Brisbane, becoming a first class sergeant in July 1932..."*

For more information on using newspapers for family history research, see our *Info Guide 3.9: Newspapers and Family History*.

#### Passenger lists and convict registers

Some immigration and convict documents list the individual's occupation.

## Published occupational registers

The State Library holds many published professional directories. Listed here are a few examples:

- **Clergy list** (later called **Crockford's clerical directory**) REF 283  
Holdings: 1870-1905; 1907; 1909; 1911; 1913; 1915; 1948-1951/52; 1959/60; 1963/64-  
CD-ROM (QCFS 283.42025): 1858, 1868, 1897, 1932
- **Queensland hotels & publicans' index 1843-1900** / researched by Merle Norris  
[microfiche] MFC 647.940994 1996
- **Queensland railway employees 1889-1940** [CD-ROM] QCFS 929.3943 2004

Check our One Search online catalogue for further titles <http://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au>

## Commercial Directories and Almanacs

If your ancestors ran his/her own business you may find him listed in a commercial directory. These directories are often set out like our current yellow pages as each trade or profession is listed in alphabetical order. For more information on directories please consult our *Info Guide 3.14: Directories, almanacs and gazetteers*.

Examples from the **Queensland Post Office Directory** for 1901

### 1. DRAPERS

"Campbell Mrs. Edwin, 53 Queen st, Bris."

### 2. SASH & DOOR MANUFACTURERS

"Galbraith John, Logan road, Woollongabba, South Bris."

## Definitions of occupations

Over the years many occupations have become obsolete due to a constantly changing industrial age.

Examples:

- *Twist Hand* – a person who operates a lace machine
- *Town Husband* - employed by the parish to collect the money from the fathers of illegitimate children for their upkeep
- *Peruker* – a wigmaker

Occupational dictionaries can be useful to genealogists when trying to define their ancestor's occupation. The State Library holds:

**A dictionary of old trades, titles and occupations** by Colin Waters (REF 331.700941 1999)

Check our One Search online catalogue for further titles <http://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au>

Occupational dictionaries available on the Internet include:

- **Hall Genealogy Website. Old Occupation names**  
[www.rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html](http://www.rmhh.co.uk/occup/index.html)
- **Genealogy Quest's glossary of occupations**  
[www.genealogy-quest.com/glossaries/occupations1.html](http://www.genealogy-quest.com/glossaries/occupations1.html)

## What information is available on the Internet?

Some websites to try are:

- **Cyndi's List – Occupations** <http://www.cyndislist.com/occupatn.htm>
- **Occupations in Australia** <http://www.coraweb.com.au/occsites.htm>
- **Queensland State Archives online indexes**  
<http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/research/indexes.asp>  
Queensland State Archives have a number of indexes for specific occupations.

## Need further information?

### State Library of Queensland

Queensland Cultural Centre, Stanley Place, South Bank, Reference Services

t. +61 7 3840 7810, w. [www.slq.qld.gov.au/enquiry](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/enquiry)

Visit [www.slq.qld.gov.au/about/pub/info\\_guides/collections/fh](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/about/pub/info_guides/collections/fh) to access all family history Info Guides.