

The Baptist Church Archives, Qld. - a Guide

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As people become more conscious of the value of historical records, the Archives of the Baptist Union of Queensland take on greater importance. There are also other reasons for a denominational archive – including planning, and legal. However, like other collections, the Baptist Church Archives has its own character. Intending users should be familiar with the nature of the collection before they can take advantage of its holdings. This brief guide is meant to fill that need. Other material on Queensland Baptist history is to be found at the John Oxley Library, South Brisbane; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Malyon College library at Gaythorne. Contact those institutions for further details.

Full details of interstate Baptist material may be found in *The National Guide to Australian Baptist Historical Resources and Services* published by the Baptist Heritage Qld. The book, *Baptists in Queensland*, also published by BHQ, provides a useful overview of the background, beliefs and structure of the denomination. The most recent histories of Baptists in Queensland are *Pressing on with the Gospel* (2005) and *Something more than Gold* (2012). These and many other useful resources are available from Baptist Heritage Queensland.

Physical details

The Archives are housed at the Queensland Baptists Centre, (the main offices of Baptist Union of Queensland), 53 Prospect Road, Gaythorne, Q 4051. The Archives comprises storage and working areas, with photocopying, computer, microfiche reading and phone facilities. No smoking, eating or drinking is permitted in the Archives or in proximity to any Archives material. There are refreshment facilities at the nearby Brookside Shopping Centre and other outlets in the vicinity.

Usage

The material in the Archives is not on open access. It may be used only by appointment with the honorary Archivist. The Archivist works on a voluntary basis, but may be contacted by phone via the Baptist Union office (Phone 07-3354 5600 ext, 5642) and at archives@qb.com.au. Some sensitive and fragile material in the collection is not available for use.

The Users' Register at the Archives must be filled out for each visit, with details of material used, purpose and personal information. By signing the Register, users indicate their agreement with the rules of the Archives (posted in the Archives and summarised in this guide) which have been established to ensure the preservation of the material and its accessibility to users. Under no circumstances may any material leave the premises. Permission must be sought beforehand for using, quoting and publishing in any form any material from the Archives. When used, the material must be identified and the acknowledgment given in the form: *Used by permission, The Baptist Church Archives, Queensland (date)*.

Finding aids

The material has been classified and is indexed on a computerised system controlled by the Archivist. In addition there are computerised indexes to the photograph collection and to the state Baptist periodical. Computerised church membership figures and growth patterns are also available on request. Depending upon the amount and type of information needed, a donation may be requested for access to this service.

Fees

No set fees are charged for using the Archives; however it is expected that expenses such as phone calls, postage and photocopying will be reimbursed. Donations to cover these services and to assist in supporting the Archives are requested. Short searches may be carried out by the Archivist without charge, but a donation of \$25 per hour or part thereof (plus costs) is requested for larger searches of Baptist church and family history.

Contents

The Archives are the primary repository for the historical records of the Baptist Union of Queensland. They include both traditional paper and digital records. The major part are the minutes, correspondence, reports and publications of the Union executive, assemblies, departments and committees. Individual member churches of the Union have charge of their own material and make their own arrangements about storage and access. This includes the oldest churches such as City Tabernacle, Ipswich, South Brisbane and Rockhampton whose records are often in demand. Microfiche of 19th century records of some of these churches are available in the Archives. Partial records of some older churches are in the Archives and also the remaining records of defunct churches. For the rest, enquiries must be made of the relevant church whose phone number can be found in the appropriate directory under the heading, Baptist Union of Queensland or Baptist Churches

Denominational documents in the Archives include board/executive, council and assembly minutes (including many of the earlier committees) from the establishment of the Association/Union in 1877. There are also copies of the official Yearbook from the beginning of its publication in 1907. Also there is the earliest periodical, *The Queensland Freeman*, covering the years 1881-88. Unfortunately, there are large gaps in the holdings of its successor *The Queensland Baptist*; copies held are from the years 1890-1913; 1923-31, 1951+. The early issues are on microfiche and also on searchable CD-ROM, while recent editions are also available in digital form.

An important feature of the Archives is the collection of local church histories. These are usually small printed booklets published at a jubilee or centenary. Some churches are now old enough to have published more than one such volume. Other information on Baptist church history may be found in denominational files such as the records of the Home Mission or Mission to Queensland, and in the pages of the *Queensland Baptist*.

Official histories of the Baptist Union were produced at the jubilee of Queensland Baptist life in 1905 and at the centenary of the formation of the Union in 1977 and for the 150th anniversary in 2005. Copies of these publications are available for reference in the Archives. They contain accounts of denominational work as well as some details about the early churches. The denominational theological college has also published histories for its 75th anniversary and centenary.

Other material includes, books and brochures published by the Baptist Union and its personnel, a few personal papers and some miscellaneous related and unrelated items. There are copies of the Baptist Union of Australia *Handbook* from 1929 onwards, but as a policy, material relating specifically to other state Baptist Unions, the Australian Baptist missionary organisation and overseas groups is not collected.

Various aspects of the history of the denomination have been covered in books published by the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland and by other individuals and groups. These include the Mission to Queensland, Baptist camping in Queensland, early churches and pioneer ministers and families. Many of these works are available for purchase and are accessible for reference in the Archives.

The Archives also holds a few classic books on Baptist heritage and history published in UK and USA, as well as official histories of Baptists in some of the Australian states. But a fuller collection of this type of material can be found in the Malyon College library.

Photographs and Recordings

The Archives contain a number of photographs (including digital), movies, videos and slides, only some of which are identified. They include ministers, churches and various official and informal functions. Audio recordings (reel to reel and cassette) and CD/DVDs of some Assembly addresses also exist. A lot of this material is not properly classified due to the lack of identification.

Family History

Family history is currently a popular activity, but the Archives collection will not be specially useful in this area. For one thing, researchers into family history usually need details of a personal nature which are more likely to be found at the local church rather than in a denominational archive. Furthermore, unlike some other denominations, Baptist churches do not generally retain extensive baptismal, marriage and death records. In any case, baptismal records in the Baptist denomination are of no help in providing *birth* details! Church membership rolls may help the family researcher, but usually they only contain a list of names, dates of membership and perhaps addresses.

The Baptist Church Archives Qld does hold some marriage and membership registers and other marriage registers are being computerised. Furthermore, the personal details of some well known church identities and denominational leaders may be found in yearbooks and denominational periodicals on the occasion of their taking or completing office or at their death. Some biographical works, published by the Baptist Historical Society of Qld. and other institutions and individuals, are also available for reference or purchase.

The Baptist Historical Society of Qld has a number of publications of interest to family historians, including the practical manual, *So your Ancestor was a Baptist in Queensland*, *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland*, biographies of some leading families and listings of the records all Baptist cemeteries in Queensland.

For further information

Requests for basic information can be handled but extensive research is usually not possible. The inclusion of a large stamped, self-addressed envelope and donations and reimbursement of expenses within the guidelines listed above, are invited.

Compiled by Dr David Parker (rev. 03/12)