

Family History

Employment: trades, professions, and vocations

Where can I find out what my ancestor did for a living?

The following resources may help you discover information on your ancestor's working life.

- Electoral rolls
- Census records
- Birth, death and/or marriage certificates
- Obituaries in the newspaper
- Passenger lists and convict registers
- Published professional registers & directories
- Commercial directories and almanacs
- Dictionaries of trades and professions

What information will these resources give me?

Electoral rolls

Many of the electoral rolls held by State Library record the individual's profession. For a list of our holdings of electoral rolls please consult our *Research Guide – 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 snapshot of people in a particular place and time. As well as recording the names of people residing in a particular dwelling, they usually provide other personal details such as age and trade. For further information on census records refer to our *Research Guide – Censuses and musters*.

Birth, death and/or marriage certificates

Certificates can often reveal details of how an individual earned a living. Most marriage certificates record the trades of the bride and groom as well as those of their respective fathers.

Obituaries in the newspaper

Obituaries can provide the researcher with a wealth of personal information that is often not recorded in any government generated record, e.g.

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 Woolloongabba 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 Brisbane, becoming a first-class sergeant in July 1932 ...*”

For more information on using newspapers for family history research, see our *Research Guide – Newspapers and Family History*

Passenger lists and convict registers

Some immigration records and convict documents list the individual's trade or vocation.

Commercial directories and almanacs

You may find ancestors who ran their own businesses listed alphabetically by trade in commercial directories.

Example from **1901 Queensland Post Office directory**

DRAPERS – “Campbell, Mrs. Edwin, 53 Queens st., Bris”.

For more information on directories please see our *Research Guide – Directories, almanacs and gazetteers*.

Published professional registers and directories

State Library holds many published professional directories. Examples include:

- *Clergy list* (later *Crockford's Clerical Directory*) REF 283
- *Queensland hotels and 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 the One Search online catalogue, <https://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au/>, for additional titles.

Dictionaries of professions and trades

Industrial changes have made many former trades obsolete. Dictionaries of trades and professions can help you find out what your ancestor's work involved, e.g.

- *Twist Hand* -a person who operated a lace machine

State Library holds: *A dictionary of old trades, titles and occupations*/ Colin Waters. REF 331.700941 1999. Check the One Search online catalogue, <https://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au/>, for additional titles

What information is available on the Internet?

Some websites to try are:

Queensland State Archives online *Professions* indexes [Search the indexes | Recreation, sport and arts | Queensland Government](#) These include:

- Civil servants 1865-1867
- Register of Seamen 1882-1919
- Dental Board records 1900-1932
- Pharmacy Apprentices 1861-1964
- Nurses examinations 1912-1925
- Teachers 1860-1905
- Mariners' certificates 1877-1939

State Library

- *Licensed Victuallers index 1900-1914* [compiled from government gazettes]. Information provided includes publicans' names, dates, districts, and hotel names.
- *Persons called before Queensland Government Committees, 1860-1920*. An index to the names of almost 8000 people from all walks of life who gave evidence before Queensland Government enquiries. Includes links to the text of witness statements.

Search these indexes by name in our One Search catalogue <https://onesearch.slq.qld.gov.au/>

Need further information?

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