



School Records South Australia

In December 1836, Walter Bromley, for twenty-five years an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which had founded the first school in North America in 1813, decided to migrate to South Australia. He arrived on the *Duke of York*, and it was near Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, in December 1836, that he conducted South Australia's first school, when he assembled twenty-four children under a tree at Reeve's Point. He left for the mainland in May 1837.¹



The first school established on the mainland was probably opened by Mr J.B. Shepherdson who was sent out by the *South Australian School Society* which was formed in 1836 and had its headquarters in London. Upon his arrival a public meeting was held, presided over by the Governor, where arrangements were made for commencing a school. According to applications received, he anticipated having about 100 pupils.

Early schools in South Australia grew with the support of the *South Australian School Society*, however due to poor economic conditions, the Society closed in 1843. Early schools included Miss Nihill's Ladies School and a school established by Rev TQ Stow, (Congregational Church) which was followed by a Lutheran missionary school for Aboriginal children in 1839.

The Education Act 1851 saw the promotion of education, including payment to teachers, the building of schools, the establishment of a book depot, and oversight of assisted schools. In 1878 public education in South Australia became the responsibility of the State Government. Prior to this, licenced teachers and schools were run by a Central Board of Education. Very few records exist for these early schools.

In 1908, a number of secondary schools opened, prior to this, secondary education was primarily available at colleges such as St Peters College and Prince Alfred College.

Genealogy SA has microfilmed and collected the records of some 350 government schools and 16 private schools.

The records are mainly Admission Registers which list the teachers and students along with their admission date, date of birth, and the name, address and occupation of their parent or guardian. Also included maybe

an indication of where the student had been prior to this school and where they were intending to go upon leaving and the reason for their departure.

Other records include Inspectors Reports or School Journals which do not list pupils but give some societal history of the times.

Private schools and colleges usually have their own archives. Local history groups and friends of some school groups may retain records or these well used but fragile documents may not have endured our often harsh conditions.

Volunteers at Genealogy SA are now indexing these records with a number of schools now indexed on the Members PC (MPC) viewer database which is accessible with a visit to Genealogy SA. Many more will be added as they are completed.

A new database is being created by a volunteer listing Government schools, covering their origin, location (GPS if possible), photos and plans. These include early home or church schools which later became government schools.

State Records also has a large collection of school records including plans of the schools.

Many histories of schools have been written – the list is in Andrew Peake’s book “South Australian History Sources”. This list does not cover those school histories which are included as part of town or district histories.

Useful Links

- State Library of South Australia
<http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/manning/sa/edu/comments.htm#comments>
- <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1071>
- State Records of South Australia <https://www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/education>
- History SA
- <http://boundforsouthaustralia.com.au/for-schools.html>

¹. Taken from Geoffrey H. Manning's *A Colonial Experience*