

BOOK REVIEWS

American State Archives: Posner, Ernst. Chic., Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1964. \$7.50

This book was written as the result of a comprehensive and detailed study made in 1962 and 1963 of state archival agencies and their programmes in the U.S.A. The author is a Fellow and a past president of the Society of American Archivists. He was formerly state Archivist of the Prussian Privy State Archives in Berlin and, after 1939, professor of history and archives administration and for two years dean of the Graduate School at the American University.

The book is divided into four sections. The first thirty-six pages is a historical sketch of American record-keeping activities. It touches on the attempts, or lack of them, made by the early Colonists to preserve official records, and points out that, even in those Colonies where legislation provided in a reasonable way for the preservation and safe-keeping of records, many were lost through negligence and the lack of adequate buildings. Interest in Public records as source material of historical research led to concern for archives at a national level. From the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Association came the first bibliography of the contents of American archives. With this emphasis on history, the notion of archives as an administrative problem of the state governments was not to be widely recognised until the 1930's and it was not until December 1936 that the Society of American Archivists became a body distinct from the American Historical Association.

The second section, by far the largest, deals with each state in alphabetical order. Here we have the direct result of two years of research. It gives, in commendable detail, the current controlling body of Archival administration, a history of the legislation dealing with the preservation of government records, and the present state of the programme. Of special interest are the practical comments concluding the survey of each state, giving the author's unequivocal opinion of the shortcomings of the official programme, or of the professional staff situation. It is interesting to read that "Practically all elements of a sound program in records management and archival administration are lacking in Iowa, and no remedial action seems to be in sight", and in Louisiana, "Major parts of the program of records management and archival administration, as authorised in the act of 1956, still remain to be implemented."

The summary of findings, comprising chapter three of the book, gives the author's objective criticisms of the existing situation with regard to the legal authority, budgets, staff, etc. He discusses here, too, many of the practical problems of day to day archival work including preservation and rehabilitation of records, photo-reproduction and accessioning and reference services. His emphasis is at all times on the importance of archives as a function of government. 'Historical activities' is listed among the 'Related functions'.

In chapter four, 'Standards for state archival agencies', the author has provided a short (28 pages) but useful handbook for archival organisation. His experience both as a practical archivist and as professor of history and archives administration should ensure that these 'standards' be considered seriously by everybody with practical interests in this field. His standards of course are high, and some, especially those dealing with personnel, and with physical facilities, are likely to cause a quiet smile at least in this country. One point is particularly noteworthy:—

"Inasmuch as the archival agency serves all branches and agencies of the government, and inasmuch as it should be professionally staffed and directed on a nonpartisan basis, it is best given the status of an independent agency, governed by a board or commission."

The pertinence of the subject-matter of this book to Australian conditions, and its importance to Australian governments and archive bodies is too obvious to need dwelling upon. It should be no comfort that indifference to and neglect of this important field occurred frequently in the U.S.A., or that even now some state governments have not seen fit to legislate adequately for the preservation of their records. Australian history was just beginning when the Archives Nationales was formed in Paris, but it is idle to speculate on what effect this might have had on record keeping in this country. It is highly unlikely that the founding fathers of the Australian Colonies ever considered themselves as such. The important thing now is that no more time is lost. This book should be compulsory reading not only for Archives personnel, who will probably read it anyway, but for all legislators, and all public servants. In a few years their work could well be being incorporated in their state archives, and immortality could be theirs.

A. L. Green.

Guide to the Public Records of Tasmania: Section 3; Convict Department record group, by P. R. Eldershaw. Hobart, State Library of Tasmania, 1965. [Processed]. 10/-

There is probably no aspect of Australian history that springs so readily and so inevitably to the public mind when one mentions that his work is amongst historical records, as the convict system. The publication of the third section of Tasmania's excellent *Guide to the Public Records* confirms the lay impression, if any confirmation were needed, as to the detail and the bulk of records that go to make up the documentation that one Colony found necessary in order to keep track of its felony.

Those who have studied the two parts of this series issued previously (the guide to the Colonial Secretary's Office record group issued in 1957, and that to the Governor's Office record group issued in 1958) will not be surprised to learn that the introduction is a scholarly treatise which succinctly traces the development of the convict system in Van Diemen's Land from 1803 until its painful demise in 1877, 24 years after convicts had ceased to arrive in the Colony. Peter Eldershaw is to be congratulated on the thoroughness of the research that has gone into the preparation of these introductions, as well as on the clarity and precision of his expression.

The record group itself is apparently extremely disparate. Some of its elements, indeed, are so varied in both provenance and function that one may well question whether or not they belong to the same group. Is it conceivable, for instance, that a Commandant's letter book from the Macquarie Harbour penal settlement (CON 85) belongs to the same record group as the Minutes of Meetings of the Officers for Reviewing Convict Expenditure (CON 103)? One would like to see an organisational chart for the Department which would show at a glance the central organisation and all its branches and divisions. To this the Tasmanian archivists may well reply that the organisational chart for one period would be totally different from that in another period. It would surely be a fair comment, however, to say that, unlike the departments whose records have been described in previous sections of the *Guide*, this one lacks cohesion.

There was a period when the Chief Police Magistrate seems to have had responsibility for all convict matters in the Colony. This overlaps with the period when there was a Principal Superintendent of Convicts, yet it is not clear whether the C.P.M. was responsible to the P.S.C., or *vice versa*. In the early 1840's, the one man appears to have been Chief Police Magistrate and Director of the Probation Department according to the Appendix (Appendix 1) and Principal Superintendent of Convicts according to the Introduction (p. 12). This same man (Matthew Forster) became Comptroller-General of Convicts in 1843, inheriting both his former functions as Director of the Probation Department (and presumably some of those he carried out as Chief Police Magistrate) and also those performed by Joseph Milligan for twelve months as Inspector of Convict Discipline (Sep 1842 to Sep 1843).

After the Introduction, the *Guide* is arranged in parts, each dealing with a particular category of records; basically the arrangement is functional, and this appears to be the one best suited to these records. Thus there are parts devoted to correspondence, assignment lists, indents, description lists, etc. There are no separate introductions to these parts, but in the descriptive paragraph for the first series in each part there are notes which tell exactly what significance attaches to the particular category of records being described.

Some thirty pages of the *Guide* are devoted to appendices. There is an Appendix entitled "Succession of Officers in Charge of Convict Administration"; there are various lists of convict ships, major and minor; there are useful tables showing the numbers of convicts who arrived, and the proportion of convict inhabitants to the whole population. Appendices 6 to 8 are lists of important documents which relate to the record group, but which are not to be found amongst the items in the group. Fortunately, most of these are either available in microfilm copies (the originals being preserved in the Mitchell Library and the Dixson Library in Sydney), or else they are contained in other record groups in the Tasmanian State Archives. Finally there are reference aids to enable the searcher to make more sense of the comprehensive registers and conduct registers, both of which are bulky and difficult to handle, and without some advice from the initiated might well deter the research student.

This is an excellent *Guide*, and one which must make the task of research into Tasmania's fascinating penal history very much simpler.

R. C. Sharman.

Queensland Heritage. Published by the Oxley Memorial Library Advisory Committee for the Library Board of Queensland. Volume 1, No. 1. November, 1964.

For too long now both custodians of records and research workers have complained of lack of readily available information about the holdings of the various records repositories in this country. Apart from brief lists of manuscript accessions which have appeared in *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* annually since 1940, little was done to remedy the position until comparatively recently. However, within the last five years work has begun on compilation of a *Guide to Collections of Manuscripts relating to Australia* at the National Library and the first issue of *South Australiana* a journal for the publication and study of South Australian historical and literary manuscripts, published by the Libraries Board of South Australia, appeared in 1962. The Library Board of Queensland is to be congratulated on their decision to add to knowledge in this field by publishing *Queensland Heritage*, which is to be devoted to the study of Queensland literary and historical manuscripts. In his introduction to the first issue, F. W. Robinson, Chairman of the Oxley Memorial Library Advisory Committee, states that through the journal it is hoped scholars will not only obtain information about the variety of historical records in the Oxley and the State Archives but also that they will gain greater understanding of the methods of arranging these materials and making them available for use.

It would certainly seem that the contents of this first issue fulfils these aims in an admirable way. There is first of all an illuminating article by R. B. Joyce on *Editorial Problems in Presenting Trollope's Views on Australia*, which, in telling of these problems, makes the reader hope it will not be too long before the new edition of *Australia and New Zealand* will be available. A portion of the manuscript journal of Lucy Gray follows, in which she describes the overland journey from Cleveland Bay to Hughenden in 1868. This delightfully written journal has been provided by the editors with a brief introduction and explanatory footnotes. Then comes a contribution by Queensland's Archivist, R. C. Sharman, giving a short account of the records in the State Archives and describing problems connected with their housing and arrangement. This is a heartening article as from it we learn how little has been lost from Queensland's early records despite the delay in forming an archives department and how much has been accomplished in the five years since active work in this field began. There is finally a list of recent acquisitions to the Oxley Memorial Library.

All the articles are illustrated with copies of contemporary sketches and facsimiles of manuscripts. The journal is attractively produced but its size is inconvenient for the private bookcase.

Queensland Heritage will appear twice a year in May and November. The subscription rate is one pound per annum or ten shillings per issue. Intending subscribers should apply to the Public Library of Queensland, William Street, Brisbane, Queensland.

To readers of *Archives and Manuscripts*, whether archivists, librarians or those with a general interest in Australian historical records I would say — get a copy of *Queensland Heritage*. There will be something for you in it.

M. F. F. Lukis