

## **Histories of Queensland: A Bibliographic Survey**

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## **Histories of Queensland: A Bibliographic Survey**

### **Introduction:**

This paper examines histories of Queensland, asking why they were written, what is their general thrust, and what impact they have had. Twenty-eight histories have been identified, with two appearing since 2007 and another due in 2010. For inclusion in this survey, a 'history of Queensland' must logically: 1) take an overview of Queensland's history bringing that story more or less up to the time of writing; 2) cover a range of social, political, cultural and economic elements, and show how conditions, at time of writing, evolved; 3) have some narrative rather than simply dates, incidents, statistics, anecdotes, biographies etc; 4) use some original material and/or analysis rather than merely reiterate/precis earlier histories; and 5) be primarily about Queensland rather than about Australia, albeit including Queensland. These criteria have been applied without judgement about quality of writing or depth of analysis, although observations are drawn. Inclusion does not imply 'good' work, nor does exclusion imply 'bad' work.

Material was located by searching the John Oxley, Fryer, Mitchell and National libraries, by contacting other historians, and through serendipity.<sup>i</sup> Of the histories examined, 28 were deemed to fit the above criteria, and these will be described briefly in chronological order, then conclusions will be drawn.

### **A Chronological Survey of Histories of Queensland**

1) 'A Brief Outline of the History of the Moreton Bay Settlement', by Theophilus Pugh (1858).<sup>ii</sup>

Pugh (1831–96) immigrated to Brisbane in 1855 where he worked as a journalist, editor and avid campaigner for an independent Queensland. Pugh offered a prescient warning;

‘Difficult indeed will be the task of the historian who hereafter attempts to chronicle the events connected with the early days of this now important settlement.’ Pugh sought

to collate, in concise form, a few particulars relative to the early settlement of the district in which we live, — particulars which, although they will be anything but new to many of our readers, may yet convey desired information to the majority. (p. 2)

This history, without references or index, begins with Cook’s ‘discovery’ then ignores the Aborigines who were actively being displaced. Pugh sought to make citizens of the soon-to-be formed colony of Queensland take seriously their responsibilities and opportunities. ‘Soon, very soon we hope — the now nameless colony will be proclaimed by Her Most Gracious Majesty, and then — our destinies will be in our own hands.’ In a semi-utopian vein Pugh asserted,

If we use wisely and well the gifts which God and nature have showered upon our splendid territory, we cannot but be otherwise but a happy and prosperous people. It is for us to ... transform a spot which was once regarded as a “hell upon earth” into a fair and smiling Eden. (p. 95)

2) *History of the Colony of Queensland from 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881*, by William Coote (1882) <sup>iii</sup>

Coote (1822–98) was an architect, civil engineer, political agitator, journalist and editor who immigrated to Queensland in 1860. Of Coote’s two-volume history, only volume one survives intact along with two chapters from volume two. Coote wrote, providing neither references nor index, at a time when many key actors were still alive but accessible archival sources were few. He published partial drafts in 1867 and 1879, and acknowledged these were instrumental in developing his text. <sup>iv</sup>

While Coote’s first volume covers economic, political and social conditions up to separation, his second volume takes the history up to the time of writing. <sup>v</sup> It is unclear if volume two was ever published as a book. One historian claimed, ‘We know that Coote

did write a second volume ... and we know that it went to a publisher', <sup>vi</sup> while another historian disagreed, 'the existence of a second volume is highly improbable'. <sup>vii</sup> In the surviving chapters of volume two, Coote discussed education, religion, cultural establishments, Aborigines and development.

Coote's history is arguably the most influential of the histories examined here. In 1956, Alan Morrison, Senior Lecturer in History at University of Queensland, wrote 'History of Queensland, Volume I has for decades been the standard work for the period prior to 1859' because it not only provided 'a connected story of growth from a penal outpost to a separate colony, but also for orderly marshalling of the facts'. <sup>viii</sup> Coote's work still offers valuable insights into the pre-separation era with a recent *Queensland History Journal* having five articles within which Coote was referenced ten times, considerably more than any other text. <sup>ix</sup>

### 3) 'Historical Sketch of Queensland', by William Traill (1886) <sup>x</sup>

Coming to Queensland in 1861, Traill (1843–1902), a journalist, editor, public servant and politician, wrote 'Historical Sketch of Queensland' while Editor of *The Bulletin* where he devised its (in)famous slogan 'Australia for the Australians'. Traill dismissed Aborigines as, 'degraded tribes [who] ... never reached the point where they were able by human contrivance to neutralise the precariousness of the earth's spontaneous supply of food.' (Preface) Traill's images employed racially emotive captions: 'A Night Attack by Blacks' and 'Native Troopers Dispersing a Camp' (showing an Aboriginal being shot). This book is thematically organised under headings such as 'The Labour Difficulty', 'Assisted Immigration and Settlement on the Land' and 'Present Prospects'. Traill focused on key actors and events, without references or index.

4) *Aldine History of Queensland* (two volumes) by William F Morrison (1888) <sup>xi</sup>

Morrison (1837–97) was a medical practitioner, writer, publisher and entrepreneur who came to Australia in 1884. It is unclear how much of this material he wrote or, more likely, was Editor and Publisher to un-named, commissioned authors. In his Preface, Morrison explained why he compiled this history.

The facts and statistics of each succeeding generation can only be preserved for the people following by putting them upon the printed page—while, therefore, we are glad to pay due court to others who have gone before us, we realise the need of a history for popular use, fully illustrated, to meet the wants, and be a fitting memorial of this Centennial Year.

*Aldine History of Queensland* begins with Alexander the Great and ‘allusions to a great Southern Land by geographers and historians of that time’ (vol. 1, p. 2), then examines European exploration. Morrison’s chapter about Aborigines is relatively benign.

There has been a great deal written about the “blacks” of this fair land, some of which has been extravagant in its laudation, and, on the other hand, much has been said adverse to them equally wide of the mark. Between these two classes of writers we may expect to find the truth somewhere. (vol. 1, p. 28)

Volume one is descriptive, with little analysis, in thematic chapters about politics, resources, religion, work and recreation, while volume two describes districts, towns, hotels and important men. Morrison provided no sources and only a cursory biographical index. For Morrison,

The fountain sources of all reliable facts in the early history of a young country are the experiences and observations of the early settlers. A considerable number of such still live, whose recollections serve to make our knowledge of the past more accurate. (vol. 2, p. 432)

*Aldine History of Queensland* was reprinted and bound into one volume the following year, and retitled *Jubilee History of Queensland*. <sup>xii</sup> With different covers and a few

different illustrations, it was printed using the same plates so is not considered a separate work.

5) *Genesis of Queensland*, by Henry Stuart Russell (1888) <sup>xiii</sup>

Russell (1818–89), from a wealthy British family and educated at Harrow and Oxford, came to Australia in 1840 where he became an explorer, grazier and member of the NSW Legislative Council. He wrote *Genesis of Queensland* while living in Sydney. One historian believed Russell wrote

as a commercial proposition, one intended to exploit the reputation of its author ... as an educated man, explorer, squatter, politician, and a man who at one time had been wealthy and conducted a flamboyant lifestyle. <sup>xiv</sup>

*Genesis of Queensland* is roughly chronological, with idiosyncratic thematic coverage of social and cultural life. Russell copied shamelessly from explorers' accounts, before ending with a triumphalist blast. Much of this book is personal and anecdotal. Russell provided neither sources nor index but claimed to have accessed primary sources, thanking officials for 'obtaining for me the perusal of many official documents'.

6) *In the Early Days*, by John Knight (1895) <sup>xv</sup>

Coming to Queensland in 1884, Knight (1863–1927) became a journalist, editor and manager. A founding member of the Historical Society of Queensland, he was widely known and respected in Queensland. Knight called himself not an historian but 'a compiler and only as such do I enter upon the task of making the past present and bringing the distant near'. (p. v)

Although most of *In the Early Days* finishes in 1859, Knight continued with superficial coverage up to the time of writing offering a readable mixture of anecdotes, humour,

politics and myth. He included a chronology but neither references nor index, although asserting he searched 'official documents' and used the Parliamentary Library and that of John Hayes<sup>xvi</sup>, as well as interviewing old residents and accessing newspaper files. (p. vi)

7) *Geographic History of Queensland*, by Archibald Meston (1895) <sup>xvii</sup>

After coming to Queensland in 1870, Meston (1851–1924) became a politician, public servant, journalist, sugar-planter, tourism-promoter and self-styled expert on Aborigines. In spite of its title, this well-written book includes social, cultural, economic and political information and uses a critical approach to interpreting history. In some ways Meston was ahead of his times as an historian. He explained his methods and motivation;

Geography and history being two of the most important branches of human knowledge ... it seems peculiarly desirable that a book devoted to both subjects should be made interesting, and appear something more than a monotonous list of names and cold bare facts. ... All is from original sources ....  
The author's acquired qualification for the work is represented by twenty-two years' residence, an intimate personal knowledge of all parts of Queensland, and complete acquaintance with the historic and geographic literature of Australia from the earliest period to the present time. (Preface)

*Geographic History of Queensland* is organised under themes such as, 'Government and Constitution', 'School System' and 'Church Statistics'. Meston wrote at length about Aborigines, land degradation and political incompetence, included a chronology and a simple index, but no references.

8) *Australian Pioneers and Reminiscences 1849-1894*, by Nehemiah Bartley (1896) <sup>xviii</sup>

Bartley (1830–94) came to Queensland in 1854 then became a journalist, businessman and 'one of Brisbane's best known eccentrics'. <sup>xix</sup> After Bartley died, this manuscript was edited and published by his friend, John Knight. *Australian Pioneers and Reminiscences 1849-1894* is an idiosyncratic combination of personal memoir, observation, archival

materials and analysis. Bartley 'relied on the memories that wove a spell around him. If at times his memory leads him astray, it never bogs down in a morass of error or speculation'.<sup>xx</sup> The material is organised semi-thematically within chapters such as 'The Youngest Colony' and 'The Capital of Queensland'. With no references, little analysis and only a cursory index, it is nevertheless colourful and readable.

9) *Queensland Past and Present*, by Thornhill Weedon (1896)<sup>xxi</sup>

After coming to Queensland in 1863, Weedon (1849–94) became a senior public servant. Like Bartley, Weedon died before *Queensland Past and Present* could be published, so John Knight undertook the final editing. *Queensland Past and Present*'s chapters are about geography, history, population, education and social matters. Weedon wrote under instruction from 'the Honourable the Home Secretary' and sought to write history which will 'not only prove useful to residents of Queensland, but also to persons outside the colony desirous of information as to the conditions and resources of this portion of Empire'. (Preface) *Queensland Past and Present* is tediously descriptive with a minor triumphalist drive. Weedon provides no references even for detailed tables of data, but offered the first comprehensive index.

10) *Queensland, 1900*, by John Knight and Reginald Spencer Browne (1900)<sup>xxii</sup>

Spencer Browne (1856–1943) came to Queensland in 1877 where he worked as a journalist and editor, and served with distinction as a senior officer in the Boer and First World wars.

The first 193 pages of this history are followed by 177 pages containing 164 biographical accounts of Queensland men, plus one woman, Dr Lilian Cooper. The authors devoted



several pages to aboriginal cultural practices, albeit patronisingly written. Lacking references and index, the authors promoted Queensland's potential.

The vast territories held under lease from the Crown shall be of greater value ... than they now are, and ... closer settlement, less waste of capital through drought effects, and the fuller realisation of the possibilities of the land will bring about a condition of things which were the lode star of Henry George's theorising in 'Progress and Poverty'. (p. 167)

11) *Our First Half-century* (1909) <sup>xxiii</sup>

This book, with neither sources nor index but 95 pages of appendices, bores readers today just as it must have done a century back. The anonymous public servants who wrote this book recounted Queensland's development in a triumphalist manner, with little analysis. It elucidates social and cultural matters as revealed statistically. The authors' intentions were 'to furnish the reader with a succinct review of the salient facts of Queensland progress, first as an autonomous British colony of the Australian group, and second as a State of the Commonwealth of Australia'. (Preface)

12) *Jubilee History of Queensland*, by Edward Barton (1910) <sup>xxiv</sup>

Barton (1854–1937) worked as a journalist and editor after arriving in Queensland in 1862. His Preface explained:

The aim of ... this work has been to present a comprehensive review of the fifty years just completed [and] ... bring past events into true perspective, and preserve a just proportion in regard to their relative importance. The story ... if intelligently studied, may be of inestimable value by enabling us to form sound opinions, in passing through the present ... to the unknown future.

Barton's chapter titles range from 'Discovery of Moreton Bay and Brisbane River' to 'Social and Religious Conditions', and are treated more thematically than chronologically. Some of this material may have been 'lifted' from the histories of Coote, Russell and

Knight with no acknowledgement. Barton provided a chronology but neither index nor references.

13) 'Chronicles of Queensland', by Joseph Forde, aka 'Old Chum' (1911–13).<sup>xxv</sup>

Forde (1840–1929) came to Australia in 1860, was a founder of the Australian Historical Society, and worked as a journalist for *Truth* newspaper. 'Chronicles of Queensland' was published in *Truth* newspaper over two years but was obviously written as a book, with chapters logically laid out but bearing no relationship to the newspaper serialisation. There is no evidence this book was published. Forde wrote in an engaging manner following a rough chronology, divided into chapters such as 'Freedom! 1840', 'Early Theatrical Enterprises' and 'A Chinese Invasion'.

14) 'Early History of Queensland', by 'Survivor' (1915–17)<sup>xxvi</sup>

The anonymous author claimed, 'with my own eyes have I seen and with my own ears have I heard all that here pertains to later times', therefore this 'unpretentious history may claim to be impartial'. (3/1/1915, p. 11) This author wrote 'social history', the first writer using that phrase. (31/1/1915, p. 12) Material is organised in chapters such as 'Old Brisbane' and 'Police and Prisons'. As the witty subtitle, 'The Sad, Bad, Mad, but Sometimes Glad Old Days' suggests, this author adopted a cynical, witty view of Queensland history in 'these random and gossipy recollections' (16 May 1915, p. 12). For example, the author joked about George Appel, a leading citizen of German extraction, who 'was probably growing tired of being a German'. (30 May 1915, p. 12) This history starts off well but deteriorates into disconnected anecdotes.

15) *Queensland Politics During Sixty (1859–1919) Years*, by Charles Bernays (1919)<sup>xxvii</sup>

Bernays (1862–1940) was the first of these authors born in Queensland, where he became a senior public servant and Clerk of Parliament. Bernays published an earlier version in *Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, but that was too narrowly focused to include in this survey.<sup>xxviii</sup> Bernays included social, economic and cultural materials relating to soldier settlement, education, health and transport, all examined along political lines. His analysis was perfunctory, without references but with a sophisticated index.

16) Matthew Fox et al. (eds), *History of Queensland* (1919, 1921 & 1923)<sup>xxix</sup>

This work is often incorrectly credited to Matthew Fox, as author. Volume one was edited by Phillip Champion de Crespigny and Ernest Emerson, volume two by Andrew Grant, and volume three by G.G. Swann. Volumes two and three were ‘compiled’ by Matthew Fox. Nameless ‘writers specially versed in their respective subjects’, produced ‘articles from able pens dealing with a variety of subjects’. *History of Queensland* adopts an upbeat tone,

Practically all that holds Queensland back is the lack of people to turn its potential wealth into actual riches. Tens of millions could find prosperity and happiness where now there are but hundreds of thousands. The object of this work, which is encyclopaedic in information, is to represent Queensland and the Queensland people as they are to-day, and to stimulate a world-wide interest in them. (vol.1, Preface)

With 2790 pages, but no references and only a brief biographical index, this is the longest history of Queensland – but contemporary historians find it riddled with errors.

17) *Queensland History*, by Alexander Melbourne (1925–28)<sup>xxx</sup>

After coming to Queensland in 1913, Melbourne (1888–1943) lectured in economics and history at University of Queensland. He was a founder, active member, secretary and president of the Historical Society of Queensland and, at its inaugural meeting in 1913,

presented a paper, 'Methods of Historical Research', probably the first time a professional historian spoke and wrote about historiography in Queensland. In it, Melbourne criticised journalists, bureaucrats and 'gentlemen' who had written earlier Queensland histories because 'they did not make use of original sources of information' since 'the past must be correctly described, ... analysed, and correct conclusions must be drawn.' Historians needed 'a sound historical training [and it] is the work of the universities to give this training.'<sup>xxx</sup>

*Queensland History* is organised under themes such as 'Separation', 'Boundary Controversy' and 'Constitution'. The approximately 150,000 words reflect a sophisticated historian explaining complex issues to a general audience. Published in a newspaper, there was neither references nor index. Melbourne obviously intended publishing this as a book but when, in 1928, he won a Rockefeller Fellowship to undertake PhD research in London, *Queensland History* ceased. After receiving his PhD in 1930, Melbourne returned to University of Queensland, became Associate Professor but, unfortunately, never finished *Queensland History*.

18) 'Brief History of Queensland' (1936)<sup>xxxii</sup>

The anonymous author dismissed Queensland's convict era because 'it is needless to dwell on the darkest pages of Queensland's history.' (p. 5) This history, only eighteen pages long, covers social, cultural, economic and political history with little analysis or depth, and neither sources nor index.

19) *Triumph in the Tropics*, by Raphael Cilento and Clem Lack (1959)<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Cilento (1893–1985) was a medical practitioner and administrator who came to Queensland in 1923 while Lack (1900–72) was born in Queensland, educated at University of Queensland, then worked as a journalist and public servant. Both were avid historians and active members of the Historical Society of Queensland where Lack is commemorated by the ‘Clem Lack Oration’.

*Triumph in the Tropics* has three sections: ‘Discovery, Exploration, Occupation, Separation’; ‘Queensland’s Expanding Frontiers: The Story of a Century of Progress’; and ‘Civic, Political and Economic Growth’. Chapter titles include ‘The Guerrilla War along the Fragmentary Aboriginal Frontiers ...’ and the eponymous “Triumph in the Tropics: The Conquest of Climate and Disease”. The authors told, ‘the story of the triumph of the white man over a tropical and subtropical environment’ (p. XIII), and argued that Queenslanders, having mastered their climate, were bound for greatness. With a reasonably sophisticated index, this is the earliest work in which at least some sources are referenced.

20) *Queensland Centenary*, by Arthur Smout and Leslie Slaughter (1959) <sup>xxxiv</sup>

Arthur Smout (1906–) was a journalist and publisher, while Leslie Slaughter (1895–1960) was an active member of the Historical Society of Queensland and a prolific local historian writing about suburbs, towns, churches, organisations and businesses.

*Queensland Centenary*, with an idiosyncratic mixture of historical information and analysis, tourist attractions, maps and journalistic articles, is breathlessly written, designed to appeal to tourists and school children.

21) *Illustrated History of Queensland*, by Hector Holthouse (1978) <sup>xxxv</sup>

Holthouse (1916–91) was born in Queensland where he trained as a sugar chemist and developed a passion for Queensland history. Holthouse wrote a ‘pageant of Queensland history in a pleasantly comprehensible form, as vigorous and colourful as the great State of Queensland itself’. (inside front cover) His writing is simplistic, presumably aimed at high school students and tourists. He presented material both chronologically and thematically under well-illustrated chapters wittily entitled, e.g., ‘Leichhardt’s Marathon’ and ‘The Soaring Twenties’. Holthouse included an index but no references, with his triumphalist subtext predicting Queensland becoming an economic giant.

22) *Call of the Land*, by Ross Johnston (1982) <sup>xxxvi</sup>

After coming to Queensland in 1959, Johnston (1939–) lectured in history at University of Queensland until retirement, and remains an honorary research adviser. In Johnston’s engaging narrative, ‘the land provides a focal point in understanding how the history of the state of Queensland has been shaped’, while revealing the ‘intellectual and social framework with which those who have wielded power (political and economic) have been able to operate, and it shows how those outside the mainstream have had to cope’.

Johnston sought to demonstrate ‘the evolution of the mind — or rather the minds — of Queensland’. (inside front cover)

Johnston’s theme of ‘land’ suggested chapter titles such as ‘A Timeless Land’, ‘The Fight for the Land’ and ‘Digging Up the Land’, then concluded with the sombre epilogue, ‘The Fading Dream’. *Call of the Land* focuses not only on the interactions between people of different classes and races, but also between people and their natural environment, the first time this approach had been adopted in a history of Queensland. Twenty-eight years after publication, Johnston’s well-indexed and referenced history remains useful and readable.

23) *From the Dreaming to 1915, and History of Queensland*, by Ross Fitzgerald, (1982 and 1984) <sup>xxxvii</sup>

Fitzgerald (1944–) came to Queensland in 1977 to lecture in history at Griffith University. Retiring in 2005, he remains Professor Emeritus at Griffith University and Professorial Fellow at Australian Catholic University.

Volume one follows themes such as ‘Pastoralism’, ‘The Chinese’ and ‘Politics of Progress’, while volume two follows themes such as ‘Economic Development’ and ‘Civil Liberties’. Threatened legal action forced the second volume to be edited and reprinted. This well-referenced work, with a comprehensive index, reads easily and has much to recommend it to contemporary readers.

24) *Documentary History of Queensland*, by Ross Johnston (1988) <sup>xxxviii</sup>

Although most of this book consists of transcribed primary documents, it is included because the documents were selected, organised and introduced in such a creative way that a comprehensive narrative emerges. Material is organised into themes such as ‘Convicts and Early Settlement’, ‘Developing the Land’ and ‘People at Work’. Primary documents and inter-connecting text are supported with photos. A sophisticated index makes this a very useful book, particularly when used in conjunction with texts such as Johnston’s *Call of the Land*, Fitzgerald’s *From the Dreaming to 1915 and History of Queensland*, and Evans’ *History of Queensland*.

25) *Pictorial History of Queensland*, by Terry O’Connor (1996) <sup>xxxix</sup>

O’Connor (1945–) came to Queensland in 1973 and became a soldier and salesman before taking up journalism. He was motivated to write *Pictorial History of Queensland* after discovering a horde of unused images in Queensland Newspapers’ library. O’Connor

organised this book around themes such as ‘Slavery by Stealth’, ‘Droughts and Flooding Rain’ and ‘Life, Leisure and the Arts’, with his text connecting and contextualising photos. Lacking index and references, O’Connor listed main sources and provided a useful timeline. Excellent photos make this book useful to contemporary historians, and popularises Queensland history. O’Connor published an enlarged and updated edition in 2009.

26) *History of Queensland*, by Raymond Evans (2007) <sup>xl</sup>

Evans (1944–) came to Queensland in 1949, lectured in history at University of Queensland until retiring in 2002, and is now Honorary Professor at University of Queensland and Adjunct Professor at Griffith University.

The rear cover describes this well-researched and well-written text as

a remarkable story of the state’s Aboriginal history, the convict years, free settlement and more recent urban and rural growth. It takes the reader through the tumultuous frontier and Federation periods, the world wars, the Cold War, the controversial Bjelke-Petersen era and into the new millennium. It reveals Queensland as sprawling, harsh and diverse; a place of conflict, forged by bitter struggles of race, class and gender, and intense political and environmental dispute.

*History of Queensland* follows a chronological order with periods wittily entitled to capture their essence, with 1820–40 called ‘Confinement’, 1906–39 is ‘Battle’ and 1968–89 is ‘Hubris’. This work is carefully referenced, with an extensive index, is analytical but not turgid, hence it is popular with contemporary historians.

27) *Made in Queensland*, by Ross Fitzgerald, Lyndon Megarrity and David Symons (2009) <sup>xli</sup>

Megarrity (1971–) is a Queensland-born historian with a PhD from University of New England, while Symons (1967–) came to Queensland in 1983 and studied history at



Griffith University. *Made in Queensland* was lavishly funded by the Queensland Government as part of Sesquicentennial celebrations but the manner of financing ensured a jaundiced reception. It is divided into ten chronological chapters with titles such as 'Building and Rebuilding 1881–1901', 'From Brisbane to Mt Isa: New Horizons 1960–1982' and 'Queensland in the New Century, 2001–2006'. *Made in Queensland* is well written, carefully referenced and thoroughly indexed, however it lacks the analytical depth of Johnston's *Call of the Land* or Evans' *History of Queensland*, and is probably not held in such high esteem by historians although probably more popular with general readers.

28) *Queensland Historical Atlas*, by Peter Spearritt et al., (2010) <sup>xlii</sup>

Spearritt (1949–) is a Queensland-born Professor of History and Director of the Centre for the Government of Queensland, at University of Queensland. *Queensland Historical Atlas* was funded by an ARC grant administered by Queensland Museum and University of Queensland. Its core focus will be on interrelationships between Queensland's environmental and cultural history. It will comprise a large book and much larger, interactive website, both organised along fourteen themes: Distinctiveness, Perceptions, Queenslanders, Movement, Pathways, Separation, Conflict, Imagination, Memory, Curiosity, Exploitation, Transformation, Survival and Pleasure. The text has been written by numerous professional and amateur historians and geographers, and edited by a team of academics. Both book and website will be richly endowed with photographs, maps and charts and emphasise 'the significance of eco-historical and environmental factors in actively shaping Queensland's history'. <sup>xliii</sup>

Because the web version of *Queensland Historical Atlas* will be interactive it can be continuously updated, so this might become the last, but ever-evolving History of Queensland.

## **Summary:**

These 28 histories of Queensland range in length from the mind-numbing 2790 pages of Fox's *The History of Queensland: its People and Industries* (1919–23) to the anonymously terse eighteen pages of *Brief History of Queensland* (1936). Prior to 1975, these histories adopted a more-or-less uncritical, progressive approach to narrating the peaceful settlement of Queensland by white men. Meston (1895) is a partial exception because, from within his late-Victorian mindset, he nevertheless addressed issues of class oppression, racism and environmental destruction. Likewise, but to a lesser extent, Morrison (1888), Forde (1911–13), 'Survivor' (1915–17) and Melbourne (1925–28) were mildly critical in addressing issues of inequality, oppression and political corruption. Since 1975 all histories have taken a somewhat critical approach. The commercial histories by Holthouse (1978) and O'Connor (1996 and 2009) have been the least critical while Fitzgerald, (1982 and 1984), Evans (2007) and, to a lesser extent, Johnstone (1982) have been more critical. From all these histories, however, it can be argued that certain facets of Queensland's history remain grossly under-explored such as sexism and gender-identity, socialism, utopian communes and environmental destruction.

Nineteenth-century works such as Pugh's 'Brief Outline of the History of the Moreton Bay Settlement', Coote's *History of the Colony of Queensland*, Knight's *In the Early Days* and Meston's *Geographic History of Queensland* are worth reading because the authors experienced many of the events and knew many of the people about which and whom they wrote in a lively, engaging manner. Russell's *Genesis of Queensland* and Bartley's *Australian Pioneers and Reminiscences*, although poorly researched and written, are worth reading because of the idiosyncratic personal details included. These are important

primary documents in their own right, and are invaluable to contemporary historians, particularly those engaged in social and cultural rather than political history research. Even when boring or tedious they offer valuable insights into the period when they were written.

Of early twentieth-century works, Barton's *Jubilee History of Queensland*, and Cilento and Lack's *Triumph in the Tropics* are worth dipping into just to savour their optimistic and triumphalist assumptions, and their confidence in the inevitability of 'progress'. Arguably, this mindset has been critical in forging Queensland culture. Forde's 'Chronicles of Queensland', Melbourne's *Queensland History*, and Bernays' *Queensland Politics During Sixty Years* are somewhat turgid but provide contemporary historians with valuable insights although they lack the first person anecdotal evidence found in the above-mentioned 19<sup>th</sup> century histories.

Queensland has been well-served by recent histories. Fitzgerald's *From the Dreaming to 1915* and *History of Queensland*, and Evans' *History of Queensland* address the oppression of minorities and seek redress through debunking myths and stereotypes. Johnston's *Call of the Land* does, and Spearritt's *Queensland Historical Atlas* will, help people understand how our bio-physical environment interacts with social, cultural and political factors. Holthouse's *Illustrated History of Queensland* and O'Connor's *Pictorial History of Queensland*, both popular rather than academic histories, emphasise the importance of visual evidence and promote a general public interest in history.

**Why were these Histories Written?:**

Motives are hard to infer but it appears that writers such as Pugh, Coote, Meston, Bernays and Bartley felt it to be their duty to capture the historical events of which they had been a part, and record their version for posterity. Writers such as Russell, Traill, Fox et al., Forde, Holthouse and O'Connor appear to have written for financial gain. For Weedon and Barton, writing was an extension of their public service employment, while Melbourne, Johnston, Fitzgerald, Evans and Spearritt wrote histories as part of their academic duties.

### **Impact?:**

Perhaps one ought to question what, if any, impact these histories have had on Queensland and Queenslanders. Did Pugh contribute to the sense of Queensland becoming a viable political, social and economic entity, or merely reflect the enthusiasm surrounding separation? While the optimistic, progressive theme of Barton and Cilento and Lack is obvious, did they reflect their zeitgeist, contribute to it, or both? Does the exploration of the maltreatment of Aborigines in Fitzgerald's and Evan's works make Queenslanders more conscious of their racially-troubled past, or merely reflect a general humanitarian cultural awakening? Historians like to believe that their works not only record and analyse the past but also help shape the future—but this is not self-evident.

In *Conjuring Australia* Nadine Kavanagh pointed out how historical texts are integral to the cultural creation of nation states.<sup>xliv</sup> In her insightful analysis of *Australian Encyclopaedia* (1925), Kavanagh argued that not only did that work capture and interpret information about Australia but, more importantly, was instrumental in the cultural-creation of Australia as an independent nation. Can the same be claimed for these histories of Queensland? Did Pugh's 1858 history help people identify with the new colony of

Queensland? How important were turn-of-the-century histories by Knight, Meston, Bartley and Weedon in helping Queenslanders identify as members of a state within an independent nation? Will recent histories by Evans, Fitzgerald et al., and Spearritt help Queenslanders attune to a terrorism-conscious world, dominated by China? Indeed, one could ask if this is even a sensible goal for historians.

### **Conclusion:**

All the histories of Queensland referred to are worthy of study even though they collectively provide a far from consensual narrative. Although the latest history of Queensland, Spearritt's (2010) *Queensland Historical Atlas*, through being interactive, has the capacity to become the final history, if kept up-to-date, this is unlikely to deter other historians from taking dramatically opposing viewpoints and using very different forms of discourse. There will no doubt be other histories of Queensland but hopefully not written for another decade or so.

### **Endnotes:**

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<sup>ii</sup> Theophilus Pugh, *Pugh's Moreton Bay Almanac*, Brisbane, Theophilus Pugh, 1859, pp. 47–95.

<sup>iii</sup> William Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland from 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881*, Brisbane, William Thorn, 1882.

<sup>iv</sup> William Coote, *History of the Colony of Queensland: From its First Discovery in 1770 to the Close of 1866*, Brisbane, F.W. Walker, 1867; and *History of the Origin, Rise and Progress of the Colony of Queensland: from the Discovery of Eastern Australia by Cook in 1770, to the Close of the Year 1879*, Brisbane, 'Papers for the Times' Office, 1879.

<sup>v</sup> William Coote, 'History of Queensland, Book II.—After Separation', *The Week*, 5 August 1876, pp. 137–8; 12 August 1876, pp. 167–8; 19 August 1876, pp. 195–6; 9 September 1876, p. 281; 16 September 1876, pp. 312–3; 23 September 1876, pp. 337–8; and 30 September 1876, pp. 367–8.

<sup>vi</sup> Allan Morrison, 'William Coote', *Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1956, p. 1218.

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- vii Christopher Robertson, *Re-Evaluation of Three Queensland Histories*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Honours Thesis, 1994, p. 22.
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- <sup>xliii</sup> Marion Stell, pers. com., 21 August 2009.
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