

State Records NSW: Sources for the history of the Chinese in regional NSW.

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State Records NSW is the repository of New South Wales state government records dating from early in European settlement. The files listed here are among those which can be used to find out about particular Chinese-Australians or about the activities of Chinese residents at particular times and/or places. To find out how to access the files visit the State Records NSW (<http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/>)

General

Births, Deaths and Marriages (to 1945)

Easy access via fiche at State Records NSW offices or on the Internet <http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au> to records up to 1945 (Births to 1905 only)

Colonial Secretaries Correspondence (1788-1982)

Basic correspondence of nineteenth century NSW governments covering a wide range of topics.

Summary of material: This series contains the main correspondence of the NSW government up until the early twentieth century. It includes letters, reports, notes, drafts and petitions relating to government administration and legislation. Chinese related material includes that concerning immigration, anti-Chinese incidents, requests for exhumation of bones and naturalisations, as well as contacts with police, prisons, lunatic asylums and other government bodies. Special bundles which combine files in topics are listed separately in the guide *Colonial Secretary Correspondence 1788-1982*.

Value or use of material: The value of this material lies in its diversity, with each letter or report leading to more details about individuals and the times in which they lived. Most material is handwritten, often with marginal notes and attached documents that are not hinted at in the indexes. 'Chinese' is always a separate heading in the indexes.

Regional NSW perspective: Most material is indexed by an individual. However some subjects lend themselves to regional research. Police, municipalities, goldfields, hospitals, inhabitants (concerning petitions), gaols and courts are all subjects listed in the letter index that are subdivided by location and consequently allow for a specific town or region to be researched.

Problems/limitations to material: Government in the nineteenth century was concerned largely with law enforcement and health. The result is a predominance of files on prisons, trials and placements in

lunatic asylums. These are all areas with which the great majority of Chinese people, along with most NSW residents, were not involved. As well, not all files have survived. For example, the years 1881 to 1885 have very few files. Details about which years are intact are in the guide *Colonial Secretary Correspondence 1788-1982*.

How to access? There are three indexes associated with this correspondence:

* *Correspondence, 1788 to 1825*. On microfilm, this is an alphabetical index by name and subject which refers you directly to another microfilm reel as all of this material has been copied onto microfilm. (Very little Chinese related material).

* *Indexes to letters received, 1826-1900*. A name and subject index for each year. This gives you a letter number, Once you have found a letter number you go to the *Register of letters received, 1826-1900*.

* *Register of letters received, 1826-1900*. This lists all letters in their number order and gives a summary of the contents and a file location

Having found a letter of interest in the *Index* and looked it up in the *Register* the next step is to determine the location of the actual file by getting its file number. This you do by looking in the last column of the *Register* headed 'destination'. This column could tell you one of two things about the file number:

1. If the entry is blank or says 'putby,' then the file number is the same as the letter number. For example, if you were looking at the *Index* for the year 1872 and followed through on letter number 4324 and found 'putby' in the *Register* the file you want would be 72/4324.

2. If instead of 'putby' or a blank there is another number you must look up that number in the *Register*. If the number 88/8977 is written then you go to the *Register* for 1888 and look up letter number 8977. You keep doing this until you find a blank or 'putby'. If an 'M' is in front of the number you must go to the Governor's correspondence. If another department is referred to you must follow through in their series of files.

3. With a file number you go to the guide *Colonial Secretary Correspondence 1788-1982* for a shelf list. This will tell you the location number for the bundle in which the file you want is placed. For example, file 72/4324 is located at 4/324. The number 4/324 is what you write on the request form. The file or letter you are looking for should then be in number order within this bundle.

Governors Correspondence

Correspondence and reports from the Secretary of State in London and other colonial governments. Separately indexed and often cross referenced with the Colonial Secretaries Correspondence.

Votes and Proceedings of NSW Parliament

Everything laid before the NSW Council or Assembly is included and ranges from departmental reports and Royal Commissions to petitions and letters received concerning issues of the day.

Business related

Bankruptcy Records (1888-1893)

Indexed by name and in blocks. One block from 1843 to 1887, another from 1887 when the Act changed.

Companies Registration (1875-1937)

Deceased Estate Files (1880-1958)

Record of all deaths involving payment of duties between 1880 and 1958. Indexed differently depending upon date of death/payment of duty. Records provide a summary of an individual's property at time of death.

Summary of material: This series contains sworn affidavits about the property and debts of deceased people. The records also occasionally contain copies of wills and letters relating to disputes over inheritance or debts owed. Funeral and hospital expenses are often listed as part of the debts of the estate.

Value or use of material: Apart from information on particular people, the details of property, savings and goods owned by particular occupations can be obtained. Also the value of land and other goods. Lists of debts owned can reveal connections with other people.

Regional NSW perspective: The material is indexed by name although specific locations can also be easily sought as locations are always included on the index cards.

Problems/limitations to material: It is not clear who was required to make these affidavits and for what purpose at different times. Only people with property are included and it is not known if evasion was usual or if the assessments were honest.

How to access? A guide to this material is available entitled *Deceased Estates*.

There are 4 separate series to the material;

- * 1880 to 1922 - Z Series;
- * 1923 to 1939 - Pre 'A' Series;
- * 1939 to 1948 - A Series and
- * 1949 to 1958 - B Series.

All but the first, the Z Series, are accessed in the same way.

* **Pre 'A', A & B Series:** For these series you simply locate a reel number appropriate to the name and year of death for the person you are looking for in the Deceased Estate guide. The card indexes are arranged alphabetically. Once you have the name card of the person you note the file number and

write this on the archive request form.

* **Z Series:** This series is in fact accessed in the same way as the others but the same period (1880 to 1922) is also indexed by three other series which need to be searched if your person does not appear on the Z series. These are:

1. Interstate (1880-1900); **2.** Public Trustee (1914-1922); **3.** Duty Paid (1887-1923).

The difference with these is that they are located by the date the duty was paid (not by date of death) and this date must be included when you request the file. Otherwise the person is looked up alphabetically on the reel in the same manner as the other series.

Dissolved Companies (1876-1945)

Probate Index (1800-1984)

Index by name of all wills lodged with Supreme Court between 1800 and 1984.

Criminal

Corrective Services (Photographic Description Books)

Sets of photographs dating from 1862 with cross referencing to court cases. Compiled according to Gaol and the individual concerned. There are indexes for individual gaols and a general index.

Police Gazettes (1862-1950)

Weekly reports outlining crimes committed, trials, and prisoners released in NSW. Later editions have descriptions of articles stolen and photographs. Chinese people are frequently mentioned.

Summary of material: A weekly gazette containing lists of crimes committed, trials, and prisoners discharged. Later versions contain descriptions of goods stolen and photographs. Chinese people are easily identified by name and are often identified by the gazettes themselves.

Value or use of material: A complete listing of all crimes reported against Chinese people, of all Chinese people put on trial, and of all discharged from prison is possible from the 1860s to the early twentieth century. Descriptions of goods and an assessment of patterns of crimes is also possible.

Regional NSW perspective: Locations are always listed for the various crimes. Trials and prison discharges usually include the place the original offence took place.

Problems/limitations to material: The gazettes provide a record of reported offences only.

How to access? Gazettes from 1862 to 1900 have been microfilmed. From 1900 to 1950 they are in hardcopy only and are at Kingswood. Consult the shelf list for the years to obtain a reel or location number.

Police Magistrates Bench Books, Courts of Petty Sessions

Accounts of cases, evidence given and sentences imposed. Cover disputes under the Master and Servants Act, small debts, misdemeanours etc.

Summary of material: Records of cases, sentences and evidence given for disputes under the Master and Servants Act, small debts, misdemeanours etc. Often written in the language as it was spoken in the court. The entries are extremely varied and can reveal intimate details of individuals' lives. The most useful material is often in the depositions and the incidental material about lifestyle, living conditions, and relationships.

Value or use of material: A glimpse of details not usually found in any other source.

Regional NSW perspective: Bench books survive from a variety of NSW locations.

Problems/limitations to material: Survival is quite patchy in terms of both years and locations. The material is not usually indexed and the handwriting can be extremely difficult to read.

How to access?

A listing of the bench books that have survived for different locations and years is contained in the *Concise Guide*. The entry will give the microfilm reel number.

Research example:

1. From the *Concise Guide* listing under 'Courts of Petty Sessions', the Armidale Police Magistrates Bench Books of 1878 to 1879 was identified in reel 2977.

2. This Bench Book was not indexed and it was necessary to scan through it looking for Chinese names. None were found until a whole page of Chinese people appeared arrested for gold mining on crown land without a license. In the pages following appeared a case of a man trashing a Chinese store and of a Chinese man appearing as a witness in an 'insulting words' case.

Quarter Sessions Minute Books

Minute books of trials held, including names, offence, jury list and sentences imposed Occasional details concerning interpreter. Listed by location.

Supreme Court Trials (1823-1896)

Supreme Court trials were held in Sydney but were usually listed by the location of the original deposition. Include criminal and civil proceedings and interstate estates

Supreme Court Transcripts (1899-1960)

Transcripts of trials listed by Judge presiding, area of law (Equity, Divorce, Probate, etc) and year.

Health

Coroners' Inquests (1809-1922)
Listed by district.

Hospital records (Gladesville, 1846-1899 and Lazaret)

Master of Lunacy (1846-1909)
List of patients admitted 1846-1909.

Immigration, Naturalisation and Settlement

Census Collectors Books (1891 and 1901)
Entries for each householder records the locality, name of the householder, number of people in the household, and number of Chinese or Aborigines.

Summary of material: These are the collectors books for the 1891 (microfilm) and 1901 (microfiche) NSW Census. They contain a map of each district and lists of localities or street names, the name of the householder, and the total of persons in each house by gender. Chinese and Aboriginal people are counted again separately. People of 'mixed descent' are often separately identified.

Value or use of material: Numbers of Chinese people in very specific locations can be accessed, including streets within towns. Also mixed Chinese and non-Chinese households can be determined and areas that had no Chinese people living in them. The names of people listed as heads of households are provided.

Regional NSW perspective: This material is specific to regions and quite small areas.

Problems/limitations to material: Children are not separately identified.

How to access? Consult NSW Records Short Guide No. 7 which is available on line at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publications/publications.htm>.

Naturalisation records (1834-1903)
Terri McCormack has indexed the Chinese names entered in these records. A copy of his database is available in the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW.

Passenger lists (Inwards and Outwards)
Name, gender, destination, deck class and age of passengers entering and leaving the Port of Sydney until 1923. Passenger lists after 1923 are held in the National Archives.