

Her Natural Destiny: Finding Women in Educational Records in the nineteenth century

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Because girls were more likely to be educated at home or not at all, the records are widely dispersed and more difficult to find. It is useful to know something of the history of female schooling to facilitate more targeted research. Women taught in state schools, private schools, church schools, Sunday schools, technical colleges and in teacher training institutions in the 19th century. Girls also sat in the same classrooms as boys from the first days of state schooling. But, girls kept at home to help with housework and look after younger children, some left to work in dressmaking or domestic service, and middle class girls were educated at home. Many girls were not formally educated at all - this included Aboriginal girls, the disabled, those living in very remote places and girls who were 'judged' immoral, neglected or in need of institutional care. This latter category were incarcerated in state and private industrial and reformatory schools (opened in the 1860s) and women living today, both indigenous and non-indigenous, who were placed in these institutions in the 1970s, are only now beginning to tell their stories. Education records and child welfare records are often linked together. In addition, records that focus on the family, women's lives, charitable organisations and social welfare will all have some aspect of schooling, education or childhood experience recorded.



In general it is more difficult finding information about female pupils than it is for female teachers. Some information can be found in punishment or enrolment books if these have survived. You can check whether individual school records have survived at the New South Wales State Records. The online index can be accessed on their website at:

http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/indexes_online_3357.asp
See - Schools and related records, 1876-1979
Arranged alphabetically by school name. Individuals are not listed

Included in this list are the Orphan Schools and Randwick Asylum for Destitute Children both of which are useful for finding information on the institutional schooling of girls (and boys).

Finding records that provide a name or specific detail about children is difficult. Children rarely leave anything for the historian to find. We write about childhood when we are adults.



In addition, government bodies and private institutions were much more interested to record the detail of their employees: the teachers, the administrators, the gardener, the matron, the nurses, the medical visitors. But, children's lives are missing. The researcher requires tenacity, lateral thinking and hard work to find the few records that do survive and tell us about the childhood of girls. The following is a brief list of possible sources to help the family historian to begin their research of the myriad of educational records associated with the lives of women and girls.

Archival and Library Sources:

School of Arts Minute Books and other records (useful for lists of subscribers who were generally more likely to be women who borrowed books more often than men).

New South Wales, Board of National Education, 1848-1866 NSW State Records (NSWSR)

New South Wales, Council of Education, 1866-1880 NSWSR

New South Wales, Denominational School Board 1848-1866, NSWSR

New South Wales, Department of Public Instruction, 1880-1915,

Department of Public Instruction, Annual Reports, 1880-1920, (Access these at NSW State Library, Fisher Library at the University of Sydney)

Reports of the Council of Education, 1866-1879, (Access these at State Library NSW)

Check the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and local newspapers, *School Magazines*, *Directories*, school histories, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*,

Other Sources/Strategies for Research:

- Birth, death and marriage certificates
- Local records, especially local newspapers, records associated with their work
- Look at work colleagues, women friends, sisters, neighbours, the community in which she lived -
- Oral history
- For female immigrants, (e.g. the governess)
- Other sources - (e.g. letters, diaries, trophies/ book prizes, obituaries, divorce records, electoral rolls, pioneer registers, women's organisations)

Books to help with beginning research:

Austin, A. G. *Australian Education, 1788-1900*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1961.

Barcan, Alan, *A History of Australian Education*, Oxford University Press, 1980.

Barcan, Alan, *A Short History of Education in New South Wales*, Martindale Press, Sydney, 1965.

DeBartolo Carmack, Sharon, *Discovering Your Female Ancestors: Special strategies for uncovering hard-to-find information about your female ancestors*, Betterway Books, Cincinnati, 1998.

Fletcher, J. and Burnswood, J. *Government Schools of New South Wales 1848-1976*, Department of Education, New South Wales, 1977.

Fogarty, R. *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1940 Vol 1 and Vol 11*, Melbourne University Press, 1946 and 1959.

Humphries, Steve, Mack, Joanna & Perks, Robert, *A Century of childhood*, A Channel Four Book, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1988.

Jones, H. *Nothing seemed impossible: Women's Education and social change in South Australia 1875-1915*, University of Queensland Press, 1985.

Kingston, B. *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1975.

Kociumbas, Jan, *Australian childhood: A History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997.

Kyle, Noeline, *Her Natural Destiny: The Education of Women in New South Wales*, New South Wales, University Press, Kensington, 1986 (available from the author, see website: <http://www.familyhistorywriting.bigpondhosting.com>)

Kyle, Noeline, *We Should've Listened to Grandma: Women and Family History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

La Trobe University, *Private Secondary Schools: A List of their publications*, Library Publications No. 8, Bundoora, 1975.

O'Donoghue, Sister Mary Xaverius, *Mother Vincent Whitty: Woman and Educator in a Masculine Society*, Melbourne University Press, 1972.

Ramsland, John, *Children of the backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in colonial New South Wales*, NSW University Press, Kensington, 1986.

Reassembling Female Lives, A Special Issue of the National Genealogical Society Quarterly, Volume 88, Number 3, September 2000.

Theobald, Marjorie R., and Selleck, Richard J. W., eds *Family School & State in Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990.

