

[View in browser](#)**MHNSW**

Collections eNews

History.
Not as you
know it.

The latest events and information about Museums of History NSW collections, incorporating the State Archives Collection, the Caroline Simpson Library Collection and museum collections.

New online index



Selected Immigration Records Index

We are delighted to announce that, in partnership with Ancestry.com, we have been able to make available on our website an index with digital images of selected records relating to immigration, currently covering the years 1838–87.

The records in the index may provide additional information to that found in passenger lists. This includes payments for passage, information about an

immigrant's employer in the colony, or their destination on arrival.

Records included are:

- NRS-5244 Register of applications for assisted passages to NSW, 1884–87
- NRS-5268 Remittance list refunds, 1855–68
- NRS-5277 Payments from employers to Colonial Treasurer, 1854–55
- NRS-5324 Persons authorised to import migrants, 1838–42
- NRS-5269 Papers re persons proceeding to the colony under remittance regulations, 1856–58

Search the index by first name, last name, ship or date.

Search

Across our collections



The architectural pattern books of Elizabeth Macquarie

Most students of Australian history attribute the architectural achievements of Governor Macquarie's era to Macquarie's architect Francis Greenway.

However, the evidence collected by Commissioner Bigge during his inquiry into the state of the colony of NSW, submitted to the British Parliament in July 1823, includes a number of direct references to the involvement of the governor's wife, Elizabeth Macquarie, in matters architectural.

The Reverend Samuel Marsden, for example, told Bigge that Mrs Macquarie had explained that the plan for the Parramatta Orphan School was 'drawn upon the plan of a gentleman's house in Scotland'. Greenway himself reported that a house in Macquarie Place for the Governor's Secretary, built before Greenway's appointment as Acting Civil Architect in March 1815, came from 'a book of cottage architecture' owned by Mrs Macquarie.

The book in question was Edward Gyfford's *Designs for elegant cottages and small villas*, published in London in 1806, a copy of which



Reading Room display

The next time you visit the [State Archives Reading Room](#), be sure to check out the small display that we have created on the Earl Grey immigration scheme.

Between 1848 and 1850, more than 4,100 Irish female orphans were transported to the Australian colonies via this British Government scheme.

Sisters Mary and Catherine Naughton were just two of the many young women who arrived in NSW via the scheme in 1849. Although the sisters – who arrived on different vessels just two months apart – were sent as orphans, their father was still alive, and already living in NSW.

Edward Naughton had been living in the colony for almost two decades by this time. He had been separated from his wife, Bridget, and four children when he was transported as a convict in 1832. Previous attempts at reuniting his family, including an application to the Colonial Secretary for them to receive free passage to Australia, had failed, and in the meantime Bridget had died.

Mary and Catherine both married soon after arriving, and it was Catherine and her husband who

is in the [Caroline Simpson Library Collection](#).

[Read more](#)

succeeded in applying to have another Naughton sibling (also Bridget) brought out under a government-assisted immigration scheme in 1853. Sadly, the last sibling – Anthony – was denied passage and remained in Ireland.



Hearing the music of early NSW

A new website documents an exciting partnership between MHNSW and the University of Sydney in an exploration of Indigenous song and European settler vocal and instrumental music in early colonial NSW.

The website, [Hearing the Music of Early NSW](#), reveals approaches to First Nations song renewal as well as historical sources that include Australia's earliest surviving settler music scores, and evidence of early concerts and popular song making as found in newspaper reports and other contemporary accounts. It also contains reimagined musical performances, new publications and presentations, and a web version of MHNSW's *Songs of Home* exhibition, originally shown at the Museum of Sydney in 2019.

[Read more](#)



House photo albums

The Caroline Simpson Library collects historical images of domestic buildings – both exteriors and interiors – and their gardens.

Some of the historical images are contained in photograph albums depicting private homes in NSW mostly from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some volumes are in published form and others consist of photographs pasted into albums.

Today these albums provide a valuable visual record of how Australians in the past built, furnished and lived in their homes. You can view them in the [Caroline Simpson Library catalogue](#).

[Read more](#)

Webinars



Webinar: Soldier Settlement in NSW

Online, Thursday 24 April, 10.30am–11.30am

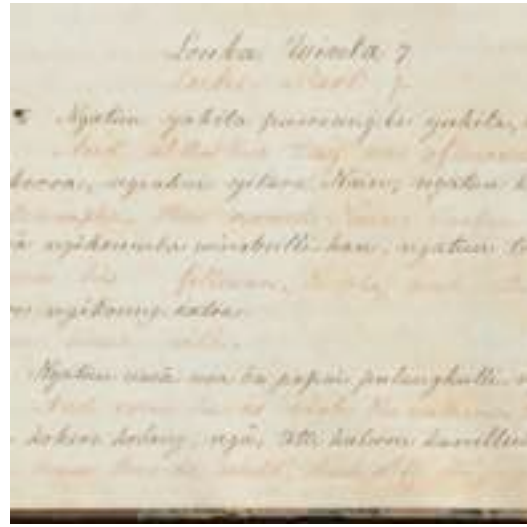
The *Returned Soldiers Settlement Act 1916* allowed the settlement of returned soldiers on Crown and Closer Settlement lands.

Soldier settlement repatriation schemes were promoted as a pathway for some of the 300,000 returned servicemen and women to secure land ownership and financial independence. Although 40,000 men and women took up the offer of farming land through these schemes, fewer than half remained on the land 15 years later.

This webinar will explore records in the State Archives Collection that tell the stories of these soldier settlers. Learn more about the individuals who participated in the scheme, and how you can research these men and women in our collection.

Free; registration required

[Register now](#)



First Nations Community Access to Archives: Bridging Now to Next

Online, Friday 30 May, 10.30am–11.30am

Reconciliation Week takes place every year from 27 May to 3 June. The theme this year is 'Bridging Now to Next'. Reflecting the ongoing connection between our past, present and future, this theme urges us to continue the journey of reconciliation together and move forward with the guidance of past lessons.

For this year's Reconciliation Week, the First Nations Community Access to Archives team will host a free online event to discuss how improving access to archival material can support the revitalisation and reclamation of First Nations languages and cultures.

Free; registration required

[Register now](#)

Interesting indexes



Colonial Secretary's letters relating to land, 1826–56

This index covers requests from individuals for land – leases and purchases – received by the Colonial Secretary's office between 1826 and 1856.

The papers include letters from individuals, memoranda, reports, applications and petitions relating to the grant, purchase, rent or lease of land in the colony. Some letters were originally addressed to the Surveyor General and passed on to the Colonial Secretary.

They can be accessed on microfilm reels 1081–1200 in the State Archives Reading Room, as well as on Ancestry.com.

Search



Court of Claims (Land) Index, 1833–1922

In 1833 the Court of Claims was established to hear claims relating to land grants in NSW. In the 45 years since the establishment of the colony, many people had been promised land grants but, for a range of reasons, were not in possession of the title. In other cases, land was in the possession of people other than those it had been promised to.

The [Court of Claims \(Land\) Index](#) includes the names of people involved in disputed land ownership claims heard in that court between 1833 and 1922.

Search

What's on



Seeing Sydney, Knowing Country

Museum of Sydney, opens 17 April, open daily (closed Good Friday), free entry

Today, Sydney is known for its iconic harbour, scenic foreshores, bushland reserves, and ever-growing urban and suburban areas. But how were its landscapes experienced and understood in the past?

This exhibition depicts the development of the NSW colony through a selection of historical maps, plans, sketches, artworks and objects. Inscribed over this colonial perspective is an innovative artistic intervention, led by Dharawal and Yuin artist and designer Alison Page, with input from the Sydney Coastal Aboriginal Women's Group, that layers First Nations understandings of Country. Traditional owners' knowledge of Country, developed over 60,000 years, offers a way to gain a deep appreciation of the landscapes we encounter in Sydney today.

[Plan your visit](#)



Hope garden workshops

Hyde Park Barracks, daily until 27 April (closed 18 April), 11am–3pm

Experience the transformative power of art and community with *Hope garden*.

Join us for a series of drop-in facilitated workshops in which participants create intricate, nature-inspired blooms from upcycled textiles and other materials that will be added to an evolving, immersive garden installation.

Fostering mindfulness through wrapping, knotting and binding fabric, these workshops are a unique opportunity to slow down, nurture creativity, share stories and learn more about the history of the Hyde Park Barracks.

Free; no bookings required

[Plan your visit](#)



History Kids – The Hunt for Clues

Elizabeth Farm and Vacluse House, various dates and times

These school holidays, step into the past and become a history detective!

Visit [Elizabeth Farm](#) and [Vacluse House](#) for *History Kids – The Hunt for Clues*, where little adventurers can dress up, search for clues and solve puzzles as they uncover fascinating stories about these historic houses, the families who lived there, and the First Nations custodians of the land.

Get hands-on with fun activities, explore the houses in a whole new way, and complete your adventure with a refreshing drink and treat.

Are you ready to crack the case?

General \$15, members \$12.

[Learn more](#)

Watch anytime



Webinar: Murphy Wallpaper Collection

The recent donation to the Caroline Simpson Library of thousands of wallpapers in the John and Phyllis Murphy Collection means that MHNSW now has the largest holding of historical wallpapers in Australia. As we explore the collection, it's starting to reveal its riches.

This webinar illustrates the – perhaps surprising – riot of colour and pattern with which Australians decorated their homes in the 19th and early 20th centuries and also considers what these wallpapers can tell us about the aspirations of Australian homeowners in the past.

[Watch now](#)

1. Detail from Album of Addresses presented to Lord Carrington as Governor of New South Wales – From the Committee of the Art Society of N.S. [New South] Wales April 1886, signed J R Ashton [Julian Rossi Ashton]. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-20455-1-1-1-16; 2. From *Designs for elegant cottages and small villas*, Edward Gyfford, London, 1806. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; 3. Photo © MHNSW; 4. 'Evening dress', from *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions &c*, R Ackermann, London, series 2, vol 7, 1819. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; 5. Rippon Grange, Wahroonga, published in *Our beautiful homes, N.S.W.*, Series 2, photographer unknown, c1910. Caroline Simpson Library Collection, MHNSW; 6. Batlow Soldier Settlement – a married settlers home, 1917. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-4481-3-[7/15904]-M5464; 7. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-13705-1-[5/1123]; 8. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-907-[2/7957]; 9. Sydney, St Philip's Parish – Copy of a sketch prepared to illustrate the report of the Court of Claims on the memorial No 26 of Ann Whittaker and showing the proposed line of Essex Street. State Archives Collection, MHNSW: NRS-13886-1-[X752]-Volume-2-6-10; 10. *Panoramic views of Port Jackson* (detail), Major James Taylor, artist; R Havell & Sons, engraver; c1821. State Library of New South Wales: DL Pg 18; Image overlaid with *Tracks of the Ancestors* songline, Alison Page, 2024. © Alison Page, commissioned by MHNSW; 11. Hiromi Tango. Photo ©

MHNSW; **12.** Photo © James Horan for MHNSW; **13.** Phyllis Murphy. Photo © Simon Milder for MHNSW

Museums of History NSW



Museums of History NSW cares for, and provides access to, significant historic places, collections and archives in NSW and is responsible for promoting knowledge and appreciation of history. It is a statutory body, principally funded by the NSW Government.

Copyright © 2025 Museums of History NSW

Our address:

Museums of History NSW
The Mint
10 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

Western Sydney Records Centre
161 O'Connell Street
Kingswood NSW 2747 Australia

Our website: mhnsw.au