

# Editorial

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Welcome to the 2022 issue of *Provenance*, the free, annual, online journal of Public Record Office Victoria (PROV). *Provenance* is a forum through which both professional and non-professional researchers who make use of the extensive collection of records held by PROV and other archival and historical collections can publish their research and writing. Authors have the option to have their work anonymously peer reviewed within scholarly conventions, or to publish a more informal or general interest article based on their research findings or research journey.

This issue includes four original articles based on research of Victorian archival collections. Several draw on records of government activity within the state's collection held at PROV—including urban planning, resource management and public health—to explore the ways in which the ideas, processes and decisions of public officials have influenced the development of Victoria in distinct ways.

In his peer reviewed article, 'The two fishery inspectors: managing the Victorian fishery, 1885–1894', David Harris highlights a relatively understudied area in the history of the management of Victoria's environmental resources: government oversight of the colony's fisheries in the late nineteenth century. Harris examines the priorities and focus of two successive fishery administrators through close examination of a key extant source of government activity relating to Victoria's fisheries from this period: Outward Letter Book, Inspector of Fisheries and Game, 1885–1894.

The correspondence and reports contained in this letter book reveal the competing ideas of government officials and interested parties about the preservation, use and management of fisheries and Victoria's marine resources. Access to sustainable commercial fish stocks, the introduced practices of European fishing communities, the dietary habits of colonial Victorians, legislative protections and the move to industrialise the local fishing industry by the end of the nineteenth century are among the various topics covered in the letter book. Harris's article helps trace debates and concerns about the sustainable management and legislative protection of Victoria's fisheries to the earliest decades of the colonisation of Victoria.

Sebastian Gurciullo's article, 'Reclaiming the slums: the Housing Commission of Victoria's plans for inner Melbourne', draws on his research of the PROV collection that focuses on planned urban infrastructure projects that did not eventuate, or that were significantly adapted

in response to community lobbying. Another article from this research, 'Deleting freeways: community opposition to inner urban arterial roads in the 1970s', is published in the 2020 issue of *Provenance*.

Gurciullo's article contrasts two aspects of the Housing Commission of Victoria's (HCV) far-reaching plans for the revitalisation and transformation of the inner suburbs of Melbourne during the 1960s and 1970s: the construction of high-rise towers to house lower-income residents, and the proposed demolition and redevelopment of large parts of the inner city considered as slums. As Gurciullo demonstrates through case studies of Debney Meadows Estate in Flemington and the proposed Carlton Redevelopment Zone, records of the HCV reveal the thinking behind its responses to concerns about substandard housing, homelessness, and the social and economic conditions of lower-income families. However, while the construction of high-rise towers met the housing needs of thousands of people, large-scale suburban reconstruction was not in tune with the feelings of an already changing demographic, which had begun the process of small-scale regeneration of these inner-city neighbourhoods alongside the HCV's public housing initiatives.

Lucinda Horrocks' article, 'Discovering an archive', provides a fascinating window into what happened after a significant collection of records documenting the history of the Mission to Seafarers was discovered underneath a stage in its heritage-listed building in Flinders Street, Melbourne, in 2007. Horrocks became aware of the archive in 2018 when the Mission to Seafarers commissioned her film company, Wind & Sky Productions, to produce a short documentary film about the Ladies Harbour Lights Guild (LHLG), a group of women who fundraised and organised social events and activities in support of sailors' and seafarers' welfare. Within the boxes was a collection of photographs and documents related to the activities of the LHLG from its foundation in 1906 through to the 1960s when it ceased to operate. Through this experience, Horrocks witnessed the ongoing work of volunteers and staff in the mission community to document, digitise and catalogue the archive, and in so doing learn more about the significance of the work of this group of remarkable women. Many of the records are now catalogued in the Victorian Collections online portal.

Meaghan McKee revisits the case of Sarah Hanks, who died in the small goldmining settlement of Walhalla during a smallpox outbreak in Victoria in 1868–1869. Her article, 'The story of Mrs H, case number 35: a victim of smallpox or fear?', brings together research covering a

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wide range of sources (e.g., public records, newspaper reports and local history) to investigate Sarah's experience in the context of recent renewed local interest in her story, including questions about the possible location of her gravesite. McKee's research explores some of the ways in which fear and a lack of understanding impacted on how people suffering with smallpox were treated at this time, including attempts to contain and isolate those thought to be suffering from the disease, and even how their bodies were treated after death. McKee also raises questions about the notoriety associated with smallpox, noting the tendency to diagnose chickenpox cases as smallpox, as well as a singling out of the Chinese population for vaccination to prevent possible outbreaks. In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is timely to consider some of the experiences of the Victorian community during the mid-nineteenth century, when smallpox and chickenpox outbreaks were a frequent occurrence.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles in this issue.

Tsari Anderson  
*Provenance* editor