

SOURCES FOR THE SOCIAL HISTORY
OF
AUCKLAND

A report to the Department of History

University of Auckland

Clyde Griffen and Sally Griffen

June 1985

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from
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PREFACE

The concerns of the new social history shape this report and our investigation of the sources for local history in Auckland. We looked primarily for those kinds of records which provide systematic information on the entire population, or large portions of it, so that individual careers may be traced. We have tried to identify the sources' potential usefulness for different types of research projects, to indicate limitations in reliability or comprehensiveness, to name those scholars, archivists, librarians, and officials of organizations or government departments who know most about these sources or may be helpful in gaining access to them. We also have noted any special conditions affecting their using, such as confidentiality or limited working space.

We have provided citations to useful analyses and descriptions (including some very informative and helpful articles done by genealogists) of particular sources and also to some published work making major use of them. But we don't aim to be comprehensive. We append a list of theses done previously on the history of Auckland and its suburbs. While most of these theses do not attempt to reconstruct social patterns from individual-level data, they can assist such reconstructions by providing valuable perspective and supplementary evidence, notably in their accounts of institutions and in their gleanings from newspapers, literary sources; and published quantitative analyses like the census.

The general scheme for the organization of our report is as follows: (1) some questions for investigation; (2) descriptions of Archives; (3) sources; (4) some proposed projects; (5) list of theses.

This organization means that the general description of holdings at certain major archives and libraries, like the Auckland Institute and the Public Library, will be briefer than might be expected. Some of their important collections will be discussed or referred to under particular categories of sources, e.g. those on voluntary associations (for the Institute), on directories and electoral rolls (for the Library), and maps and photographs (for both institutions). Similarly, sources for the investigation of land ownership and its valuation are grouped together although they are held by a variety of depositories, including the Public Library, the Auckland City Council, Lands and Deeds Registry, and the National Archives Record Center.

We have deviated from this scheme of organization at a number of points because it seemed more sensible to discuss certain sources in conjunction with the Archives which holds them. We have done this for sources important for a particular religious tradition, like the Catholic census of 1871. With the exception of valuation records, we have discussed the holdings of the Auckland City Council in our description of that Archives. And we have also deviated from our scheme in the case of isolated but invaluable records, such as the Time and Wages books of G.A. Coles (held by the Institute) which permit systematic analysis of the workforce of an individual factory over time.

Because of lack of time and our own lack of expertise, we have not tried to investigate the resources for certain kinds of local history essential to any balanced social history of the city. Six areas, in particular, have been neglected, but for most of them, fortunately, expert consultants are readily available within the university community.

(1) Business history. In his Makers of Fortune (1973), R.J.C. Stone has provided a fine history of the Auckland business community before the 1890s and has made skillful use not only of the records of individual firms, but of court records and land and deed records. Professor Stone will know what new archives for business history are becoming available through his membership on the Northern Archives and Records Trust Board which is intelligently and aggressively promoting the preservation of business firm records for the Auckland region. (Professor Griffen wishes to note here the pleasure and benefit he has derived from his association with the Board during this visit and from the knowledge of central-city redevelopment of its President, Jolyon Firth.)

(2) Close examination of the social history of politics for both municipal and parliamentary elections in particular areas within the city has yet to be done. But a very useful foundation has been laid in the overview by E.P. Aimer, "The Politics of a City: A Study in the Auckland Urban Area, 1899-1935" (M.A. thesis, Auckland, 1958) based on polling booth returns (published from 1908 onward in the Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives and before that date in newspapers). On the institutional evolution of municipal government in Auckland, Graham Bush's history of the Auckland City Council, Decently and in Order, is indispensable. (Professor Bush fortunately has bequeathed the research notes for that book - conveniently arranged by subject in card files - to the Public Library's New Zealand - Pacific Room where they are located next to the reference desk. Other investigators can benefit from the rich mass of evidence he gathered, especially from the Council Minutes and other records and from newspapers.) Yet to be done for Auckland is any systematic analysis

of the changing social origins of elected officials and of staff of municipal government departments and how both change over time. Professor Bush and Dr Aimer, both in the Department of Political Studies in Auckland, can direct students to what has been done and their already mentioned studies provide an introduction to some of the important records and the periods of time for which they are available.

(3) Any study of the social character of particular areas within Auckland should pay attention to their architecture, professional and vernacular. The former has been treated ably in a number of studies by John Stacpoole, and he could also advise students on how to go about describing and evaluating vernacular architecture, especially the ubiquitous villa and bungalow styles in less expensive residential construction before the 1940s. The photographic record for Auckland, discussed under sources, is unusually rich.

(4) Historical geography. We have benefited from reading the substantial literature in this field for Auckland: monographic (like the work of Linge on manufacturing and Dahms on the journey to work), survey (Curson, Pownall, Bloomfield, Robinson, Rankin, and Taylor on demographic history and the growth of both population and manufacturing), and bibliographical and other aids (like Bloomfield's books on the maps of Auckland and on change in local body boundaries). Since the interests of the new social history and historical geographical intersect at so many points, students working on the social history of Auckland will want to consult with members of the Department of Geography who have written about the Auckland region; Warren Moran, Head of Department, Professor Neville and Dr Rankin.

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(5) A variety of resources exist for the study of high and popular culture in Auckland, including the records of voluntary associations concerned with the arts. But we have not had time to explore them. M.R. Dunn of the Art History Department at Auckland has been recommended as a consultant.

(6) We have not investigated the sources for trade and labour union history partly because the Archives' graduate students are likely to know best the University Library, has the strongest holdings in the city, and Herbert Roth knows them well. Theresa Graham in the New Zealand Room has inventories. The largest collections (donated by McAra) seem richest for the 1930s onward.

The most interesting questions in social history involve consideration of attitudes and perceptions as well as the external traits and behavior which are recorded in the kinds of individual-level data to which we have given most attention. For subjects within reach of living memory oral history is essential, and Professor Judith Binney will be most helpful here. On the general problem of how to do as much justice as possible to particular groups of historical actors and their perspective upon the world - as distinguished from the ways in which they appear to us through enumerations and other record they do not prepare themselves - Professor Ian Carter, Head of Sociology, can be very helpful.

One fundamental limitation of our investigation and report is the absence of material on the Maoris in Auckland, with the exception of some sources related to housing held by the National Archives. We had hoped to do a little more than we have, but time did not permit. For the period before the Maori wars, when Maoris played so important a role in the provisioning and everyday commercial life of Auckland, this is a peculiarly sad defect. We feel less apologetic about the absence of attention to the growing presence and importance of Maoris in the life of the city in recent decades since, in general, our investigation of sources has not pushed beyond the 1940s. But what we have provided is a report on sources for the social history of pakeha Auckland.

A concluding word about the proposals for possible projects based on some of the sources described in the report. These proposals are meant to be exemplary only, to give some idea of the range of possibilities for feasible and desirable projects in the general area of our concern. We have thought of many more individual projects worth doing with the records we examined, but believe that individual interest should prevail in defining thesis topics. For example, we happen to think that investigation of the social transformation of Karangahape Road over time would be a peculiarly exciting project which could contribute much to our perspective on change in the city as a whole. But both nearby Ponsonby and Freeman's Bay are equally exciting possibilities for different reasons. In talking about studies of occupational groups, we have focused on clothing workers and on the work force of a Newton shoe factory, but equally interesting would be an investigation of freezing plant workers, given the importance of the meatpacking industry as a large-scale employer in Auckland, and especially of Maoris since World War II. Our hope is that we have said enough about different kinds of records and their uses so that students in the Department will have a better foundation for imagining projects in the city's social history which they might want to undertake. Graduate students undertaking projects on Auckland will wish to consult with directors of major projects on other cities and their suburbs, notably the Caversham project directed by Erik Olssen and Tom Brooking at Otago, the study of Fendalton and North Richmond by members of the Canterbury Department of Sociology (contact Bob Hall or David Thorns), and the seminar on Wellington history (contact David Hamer at Victoria).

As foreigners who have had to familiarize themselves with the ways records are kept in New Zealand and how the rules affecting them have changed over time, we are bound to have made mistakes in so varied an exploration. We will appreciate hearing about any errors you discover as well as any other suggestions and criticisms you offer, so that the Report may be improved by amendment later.

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