

HIGHLIGHTS:

What's Happening in the Archive Spaces - Feilding & Districts Community Archives

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The community archive in Feilding (FDCA) began in 2009 at the Coach House Museum. In 2007 Manawatu District Council (MDC) was approached by three community groups, the historical society, the genealogy branch of NZSG and the museum. MDC was grateful to see this enthusiastic approach and assisted establishing a purpose-built archive that would retain all 'non-council' archival material. This was at a time when central government was legislating local government bodies to focus on their core, and retention, of 'council-only' records. In previous years there was an MDC accumulation of material, some informally collated, stored in places such as the public library. There had been a period of council management where community records were handled in a formal procedure of collation, cataloguing and storage but this had lapsed in intervening years.

Funding was found, grants obtained and twelve years on the archive is housed at the museum in a purpose built, humidity and temperature-controlled area. There is a pool of twenty workers, all volunteers, who work to ensure the community history is in safe-keeping. From the start, Archives New Zealand 'Continuum' has been the 'go-to' guide. FDCA remains community based and is administered by the trust board of the museum.

The current projects are the publication of two texts, one old and one new. 'Swamps, Sandflies and Settlers' was published in 2000 as the history of emigrant settlers in 1874 and their families while a valuable reference it is out of print. This third edition is being rewritten to include further information and high-quality photographs thanks to the modern digital age twenty years on since it was first published.

The second book, 'Hearths of Feilding Families' has evolved because a major proportion of research queries concern local families, places and their history. This book has chapters on Feilding houses built between 1874 and 1899. It is the 'why, what and who' of each house.

Being a stable, rural community some of the homes have been occupied for successive generations of the same family. Both publications are a 'win-win' for the FDCA utilising material already stored, authenticating facts, enhancing records and compiling this into readable, published history that reaches beyond the confines of the archive.

While the FDCA is a non-council, community-based organisation it is enhanced by the proximity of other archive and museum resources in the Manawatu. Archives Central, the regional council facility, has digitised needed ratebooks for us to research. Palmerston North and Feilding libraries both have readily accessible heritage websites and helpful archival advice. Archives at Massey University and Te Manawa Museum also provide opportunities to network, advise and engage.

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www.feildingarchive.org.nz www.coachhousemuseum.org.nz