

A quick guide to researching education at archives

These notes are based on visits to Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies Library, but methods and holdings are likely to be similar at other local authority archives.

Of primary interest for family historians will be the school registers. There is a standard format. The registers comprise a name index with a number, at the front, followed by a list of children in number order. The name index is just a grouping by first letter of surname and is not alphabetical within that, although they may be within a year of entry. The main part of the register is in (first) admission date order and gives date of admission, date of re-admission (if any), name of child, date of birth, evidence of birth, address, parent's forename, last school, any exemption, then several generally unused columns for medical inspections, date of withdrawal and any reason given.

Evidence of birth might be DP; declaration by Parent, DG; Declaration by Guardian, CB; certificate of birth, IF; we don't know what that means, Inf Sc; supplied by infant school. Withdrawal might be because they left the parish, were medically unfit, or they reached sufficient age, and sometimes the school they went on to is named.

At Waltham Forest Archives school admissions register entries, less than 80 years old are restricted to staff access only (due to Data Protection), but staff can check entries from this period for the enquirer's own entry, or another person who must provide written consent if information from his/her own entry is to be released to the enquirer acting on his/her behalf. A 100 year rule applies for access to school punishment books.

Within school registers there are some useful pieces of information. There is however much more in the catalogue:

School log books

School magazines

Diaries of holidays

School board records, including minutes, certificates, letters about the running, opening and closure of schools, buildings, and inspections.

School plans

School photos - Photos are held by both Waltham Forest Archives and Vestry House Museum photo collection, and which they are in will depend on whether they were acquired with archive records or not.

South West Essex Technical College & School of Art records, and those of predecessors and successor, including lists of certificates.

Log books & magazines can give quite an insight into the culture of a school and if a relative was particularly good at something, name what awards they might have got. Teachers are also likely to be listed. There is an interesting diary of a school trip to the Lake District at Waltham Forest Archives. The Old Monovians Association also published a Who's Who among Old Monovians (1966) which gives details about some alumnae.

School Board records can be routine and uninteresting, but they sometimes name staff starting and leaving and unusual occurrences. For anyone researching an ancestor who was a teacher, or the history of a school, these could be interesting records. The records should be restricted to facts, however they can contain entertaining letters and minute book entries to read.

At Waltham Forest Archives there is a map with schools past and present plotted on it which can be used to help locate the school someone might have attended. The map a good starting point, but you may need to check registers for more than one school. If visiting the archives to look at school registers, you should let the archivist know when and approximately where the person you are interested in lived so that availability of registers can be checked.

The above doesn't cover University education for which there are limited alumnae records available on-line. Universities have their own archives, and records about individuals may still be held by the university registry. Anyone looking into the education of women would

make a good start by reading Jane Robinson's book "Bluestockings". It's easy to read and sources are listed in case you want to research yourself.

Useful places on the web

Education in Chingford:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol5/pp97-114#h3-0009>

Education in Leyton:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol6/pp233-240>

Education in Walthamstow:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/essex/vol6/pp304-317>

School records at The National Archives:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/schools/>

Lambeth Palace Library: National Schools:

<http://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=ns>

British & foreign School Society Archive

<http://www.bfss.org.uk/archive/>

Alumni Oxoniensis (1715-1886)

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Alumni_Oxonienses:_the_Members_of_the_University_of_Oxford,_1715-1886

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