

HSTY3902 Project Proposal and Bibliography

Community Work

I am undertaking work for the North Parramatta Residents' Action Group ('NPRAG'). My main contact is Suzette Meade, President of NPRAG. Her contact details are: email— smeade@nprag.org; phone—0412 990 880.

NPRAG is a group of Parramatta residents, which formed in January 2015 in response to UrbanGrowth NSW's Parramatta North Urban Renewal Project (which seeks to build several apartment blocks on the site). NPRAG's work primarily involves campaigning against this proposal, by contacting members of parliament and local representatives, and encouraging public discussion about the project and its implications. Although not a historical association, NPRAG is concerned that the proposal will compromise the heritage value of the area, and is working to suggest other ways to protect the precinct's history while also making it economically viable.

The work I am undertaking for NPRAG revolves around their campaign and re-branding of the site into (what they term) the 'Fleet Street Heritage Precinct'. NPRAG wants to shift their profile from a political/activist group to a more proactive and cooperative one, and the area from being under-used, to a cultural and historical 'hub'. So far, I have been helping them organise their symposium (to be held October 12), through which NPRAG hopes to begin this 'shift' and encourage further public discussion about the area's historical significance. This has included researching relevant community and individual contacts to invite to the symposium, as well as designed and compiled the symposium program. This work has taken place at home, since NPRAG does not have a central office.

I will also be filming the symposium, and interviewing attendees. This will help document the discussion, and will be used by NPRAG as promotional material.

Major Project

I envision that my major project will consist of a short documentary-style video. Ideally, this video will document not only the symposium and the views expressed, but also the public submissions to UrbanGrowth's proposal (which I have read through as part of my work), footage and photos of the site itself, and information about the site's history. I will continue liaising with NPRAG to determine exactly what sort of work would be most useful to them, but this content could alternatively be published as a series of 'video blogs' ('vlogs'). NPRAG has recently registered a website for the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct; I hope to publish my video (or vlogs) on this website as a way to promote the historical value of the area, community attitudes to that history, and why such history must be protected.

Although this final project may only be tangentially related to the administrative-style work I have been doing for NPRAG, my intention and ideas behind it arose from this work and my liaising with NPRAG. What I find compelling about NPRAG and the upcoming symposium is the awakening of a public consciousness, which seems keenly sensitive to any threats to a community 'possession'. In this case, this community 'possession' is community history; and a development proposal which threatens to compromise and potentially remove that history has invigorated a distinctive community possessiveness over such history.

My primary aim in creating my video would thus be to document such community passion, and to explore the importance of community history. The kinds questions I anticipate will arise from this line of inquiry are *'How do community perceptions of, and engagement with, history take place?'*, or, *'Does community interest in history lie dormant in social consciousness, only awakened by the threat of loss?'*

Most primary source material will arise from the symposium. This will include videos and interviews (akin to oral histories) (see Bibliography for specific interviewees). In particular, I will focus on perceptions of the site's historical importance, as well as personal relationships with the site's history. Furthermore, I will be using extracts from and refer to the written submissions to UrbanGrowth's proposal. I will also be taking photos and videos of the site as further documentation (perhaps with some archival photos also).

The secondary sources I use will inform me about the site and its colonial and indigenous history. Other academic sources will assist in facilitating the conceptual line of enquiry I am considering throughout this project, and in developing questions about historical significance (see Bibliography). News articles may also be a useful source, both of secondary information about the site but also a source detailing or perhaps expressing community attitudes to history.

The use of video, instead of more traditional text-based entries, is purposed to engage a wider audience in the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct. I believe the video medium will be effective for the new website, particularly if I compose shorter vlogs which will provide easily accessible information. My areas of concern surround the use of video (filming and editing), with which I have had some experience but feel I will need to further practice and develop these skills.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Primary sources I anticipate I will use include:

- Oral interviews and histories. The people and groups I anticipate I will be able to speak to directly, or obtain their opinions through video footage, include:
 - Elected representatives from the Parramatta area, including Dr Geoffrey Lee MP, Julie Owens MP, Penny Sharpe MLC
 - Speakers for the day, including Peter Phibbs, Bryan Powyer, Charlotte Allen, and Cameron Logan
 - Members of NPRAG: Suzette Meade, Jon Hillman
 - Members of Friends of the Parramatta Female Factory
 - Members of the public
- Written submissions to UrbanGrowth's proposal, written by various organisations and individuals. These can be found at:
http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=6814
- Photo and video footage of the site and its surrounds

Some questions I intend to ask these interviewees include:

- What are your thoughts about the proposed development, and how do you see it impacting the site?
- What are your concerns about the site's history?
- How would you like to see the area used, and particularly how do you believe the history and buildings should be preserved?
- What are your perceptions of community engagement with the areas history? Do you see this as something which needs to be encouraged, or is it already strong in the Parramatta community?
- What is your personal relationship with the site? Why or how did you become invested in the site's history? Do you have any personal or family ties to its colonial or indigenous heritage?

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources I have found useful so far are mainly those from our class on Community History (Week 5). These have provided some inspiration for the concept underpinning my major project, through focusing on the community history and engagement of Parramatta and NPRAG. In particular, these relevant sources are:

- Graeme Davison, "Community", in Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (2000), 197—220.
 - I found this article's discussion of the shift towards more community histories (away from professional histories which dominate discussions of a national past) particularly relevant. In a way, the way in which the community is mobilising to save a historic site mimics the reinvigoration of this type of history, as it seeks to assert autonomy and identity on a smaller, local scale, instead of finding voice through more dominant narratives (197—199).
 - Particularly pertinent is Davison's discussion of how such community history is often the outgrowth of communal conservationist or

preservationist attitudes, encouraging public outcry against threats posed to ‘grand old houses’ and local history in the face of external intrusion (209—210). Similarly, history is often a ‘powerful ally’ to residents’ groups and community politics in the face of development plans (214). This is highly relevant to the case of Parramatta and UrbanGrowth’s proposal.

- Frank Bongiorno and Erik Eklund, “The Problem of Belonging: Contested Country in Australian Local History,” in *New Scholar: An International Journal of the Humanities, Creative Arts and Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2014), 39—53.
 - This article’s reference to the difference between ‘vernacular’ histories (oral histories from local residents) and more traditional (academic) histories offers an interesting perspective which relates to the interviews I will be conducting, and the way that residents talk about the history of their community and local area (40). Perhaps the oral histories I gather will be defensive and responsive, reflecting a sense of ‘marginalisation’ and ‘exclusion’ from not only larger historical narratives, but also from society and politics as represented by development groups and political parties who do not understand the meaning of this community history (40).
 - This article also raises the issue of Aboriginal history and culture as marginalised from mainstream Australian histories and historical discourse. This has prompted me to think about how knowledge of, interest in, or views about the Aboriginal history of the precinct (of which there is apparently a long and significant history, with the site housing original Aboriginal ‘birthing rocks’) may be expressed by my interviewees (or perhaps will be little known) (41—44).
- Mark McKenna, *Looking for Blackfella’s Point: An Australian History of Place* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2002).
 - Like Bongiorno and Eklund’s article (above) this text also discusses the often tense and unresolved relationship between Aboriginal and mainstream (or colonial) Australian histories (133). It has therefore also helped in prompting me to think about the relationship of Parramatta residents to the Aboriginal history of the Fleet Street Heritage Precinct, and the greater Parramatta region. As my possible research questions (aforementioned) suggest, is interest in local Aboriginal history something which only lies dormant, ignited only when it is threatened with removal? Or is it something that people continually seek to engage with and learn about?
- Lorina Barker, “The History of Local History,” from HIST 330, Local and Community History Unit of Study, University of New England, 2014.
 - Barker’s more general discussion of the shift from traditional (predominantly political) national histories, to the emergency of local histories and the history of lower classes (or the marginalised) is another relevant source to my consideration of community history (pp. 1—2).

Other sources I may use to help with my general knowledge of the area, as well as my major project and the information it, includes:

- Peter West, *A History of Parramatta* (Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst: 1990).

- Michael Kelson, *Parramatta: The Early Years* (View Productions, Sydney: 1984).
- James Jervis, *The cradle city of Australia: a history of Parramatta, 1788-1961* (Council of the City of Parramatta, Parramatta: 1963).
- Annette Salt, *These outcast women: The Parramatta Female Factory 1821-1848* (Hale & Iremonger, Sydney: 1984).
- Claire Butler, "Parramatta Female Factory: Opportunities for the 'Australian Curriculum: History'", in *Teaching History* 47, no. 4 (2013), 76—77.
- Parramatta Female Factory website: <http://www.parragirls.org.au>
- NPRAG website: www.nprag.org

News articles are another source I could draw on in the creation of my video, as expressions of local attitudes to community history and the treatment of such issues in the media:

- Sarah Gerathy and Claire Aird, "Push to Protect Parramatta Female Factory convict site from developers, call for world heritage listing: A petition to nominate Parramatta's Female Factory for the UNESCO World Heritage List draws 10,000 signatures", in *ABC Premium News* (20 August 2015).
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/docview/1705319790?pq-origsite=summon>
- Melanie Kembrey, "Female Factory Precinct for National Heritage List consideration", in *The Sun* (30 July 2015).
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/docview/1700402467?pq-origsite=summon>
- Kylie Stevens, "Female Factory considered for heritage listing", in *The Sun* (5 August 2015).
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/docview/1701982309?pq-origsite=summon>
- Bonney Djuric, "A question of integrity: Renewing the Parramatta Female Factory Precinct", in *ArchitectureAU* (22 September 2015).
<http://architectureau.com/articles/a-question-of-integrity-renewing-the-parramatta-female-factory-precinct/>