

Customs House, Brisbane

The Moreton Bay district of what is now the state of Queensland was officially opened to free settlement in 1842 and growth of the Port of Brisbane quickly followed. The Colony of New South Wales declared Brisbane a 'Port of Entry and Clearance' in 1846. The original Custom House was built in 1849 at a bend in the Brisbane River known as Petrie's Bight. It was demolished in 1886 at the commencement of construction of the new Custom House, which was completed in 1889. This building was used for Customs operations in Brisbane for the next 100 years. Originally referred to as 'Custom House', it has been referred to as 'Customs House' since Federation in 1901.

The changing face of Customs House

The building has had minor changes and repairs over its life, with major internal alterations in the late 1940s and a major restoration in the early 1990s. The National Archives office in Brisbane holds a number of plans, files and photographs that document the changes in Customs House.

Plans and drawings

Selected series of plans detailing architectural work, siting, design, repairs, maintenance and alterations relating to Customs House are listed below. Digital copies of plans held in series [BP 374/1](#) may be viewed on our [RecordSearch](#) database.

Collection references

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Architectural plans	1863–1948	J2774
Architectural plans	1878–1959	J2698
Architectural plans	1959–88	J344
Original drawings, prints, negatives, tracings and sketches of plans of works carried out for Commonwealth Departments in Queensland	1878–1971	BP227/1
Plans of customs buildings – Queensland	1896–1942	BP365/1
Plans of Brisbane Customs House*	1950–72	BP374/1

* Digital copies can be viewed on RecordSearch.

Repairs and alterations

The Brisbane office holds correspondence files relating to the Department of Works, and the Property and Survey Branch. They document various works carried out on Commonwealth buildings and include specifications, alterations, improvements and repairs. The series below contain records relevant to the Brisbane Customs House.

Collection references

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Specification of works	1869–1913	BP269/1
Property correspondence files	1902–98	J56
Works files	1939–50	BP243/1
Director of Works job files	1949–76	BP881/1

Photographs

Because of the prominent location and iconic status of Brisbane Customs House, photographs – including images of the original building – are found in a number of photographic collections held by the National Archives. Selected samples are listed below.

Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Photographs of Brisbane Customs House	1890–1976	J2218

Brisbane

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
Historic photographs collected by the Postmaster-General's Department, Queensland	1846–1992	J3109
Photographic collection of postal and telegraphic services in Queensland	1880–1991	J2364

Further information

Further information on the National Archives' holdings of records relating to Customs Houses is available in:

- *Fact sheet 23 - Customs House, Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 92 - Customs Houses in South Australia*
- *Fact sheet 93 - Customs House, Port Adelaide, South Australia.*