

Queensland Day 6 June

On the sixth day of the sixth month Royal Historical Society of Queensland celebrates the birth of the new colony of Queensland, a name graciously agreed to by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The original Letters Patent document was signed by her on 6 June 1859, and the day is now celebrated each year as Queensland Day in recognition of the event. The Letters Patent of 1859, with the Order-in-Council of 1859, are Queensland's primary founding documents. They comprise the legal mechanism for the separation of a new colony of Queensland from the Colony of New South Wales, and for the appointment of the first Governor. The Letters Patent appeared in the New South Wales Government Gazette on 29 November 1859 and in the first issue of the Queensland Government Gazette on 10 December 1859, the day the new Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, arrived in Brisbane.

RHSQ has a portrait of Queen Victoria showing her in her royal robes painted by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, the court painter of many Royal families of Europe from 1835 when he was commissioned to paint the portrait of Grand Duke Leopold of Baden. This one, the original of which is now in the Royal Collection, was completed in 1859, the year when Queen Victoria signed the papers to create the new colony of Queensland. She was 40 years old at the time and had been on the throne for 22 years. She had already borne her nine children and had welcomed her first grandchild on 27 January 1859, the son of her daughter Victoria familiarly referred to in the family as "Vicky". The baby was later to become Kaiser Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany.

On the top floor of the Commissariat Store in the showcase there are documents relating to the birth of the colony of Queensland. The Society also has a copy of the first *Gazette* issued 10 December 1859.

1859 was a momentous year for Queensland but not many of the population of 23,520 people were aware of its significance. There were moves towards establishment of a new colony during the 1850s and John Dunmore Lang was passionately in favour of a new colony named Cooksland. Perhaps the citizens were unaware of the new name of Queensland until the steamer *Clarence* sailed into Brisbane on 10 July with the word *Separation* painted on its hull and was greeted by a jubilant crowd, a 14 gun salute, and fireworks.

The first legislature consisted of three barristers – Herbert the first premier, Ratcliffe Pring the first Attorney-General and John Bramston, a member of the Legislative Council. Alfred James Peter Lutwyche was appointed the first resident judge. The first Brisbane Municipal elections were held and the first Council meeting was held in the Police Office in September with John Petrie as the first mayor. During the year the new Anglican Diocese of Brisbane was formed with Bishop Tufnell as first Bishop and the Catholic Diocese was also formed then although the newly appointed Bishop Quinn did not arrive until 1861. Walter Hill was appointed as the first Colonial Botanist and the first Superintendent of the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. Augustus Gregory was appointed Surveyor-General. The Queensland Philosophical Society and the first Masonic body the North Australian Lodge, English Constitution, were formed and the Queensland Club was opened in Mary Street in December.