

Helen Smith

Title

Friendly Societies and Family Historians

Summary

Friendly Societies were mutual aid organisations designed to help people protect themselves against hardship. Subsidised health care was only one of the services offered by Friendly Societies to our ancestors as Friendly Societies played an integral part in many of our ancestors' daily educational and social world.

Abstract

This presentation discusses what Friendly Societies (FS) were and why they were needed. It talks about the types of Societies and the differences between the societies such as was temperance, on-temperance, Catholic, Protestant or Native Son (born in Australia). While the FS were a form of medical and funeral insurance, we discuss the other impacts such as the social and educational activities. The Independent Order of Rechabites in Queensland even acted as bankers by giving home loans to their members.

Then have a discussion on the types of records to be found: membership records, clearance certificates, funeral registers, medical and pharmacy payments, subscription rolls and more.

And then, where to perhaps find these records. This can be difficult as they are non-government organisations and record survival can vary and they may be found in many places including Local History libraries, University Archives such as the Noel Butlin Archives, family history societies, local museums and even under people's beds!

There will be discussion about the clues that tell someone their ancestor was in a FS such as ephemera found around the home, a medal, a photo of their ancestor wearing regalia or even the regalia. Another way is seeing the funeral notice stating the deceased was a member of the MUIOOF or IOR and what the abbreviations mean.

Audience

Intermediate