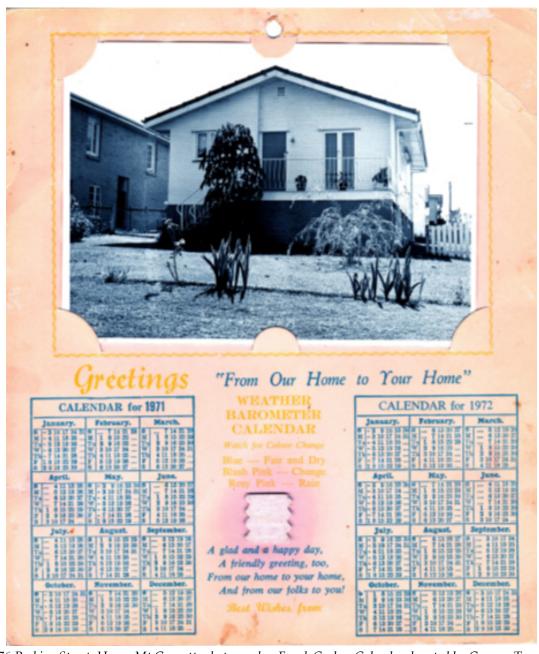
# THE FRANK CORLEY HOUSE PROJECT:

# PHASE ONE

## **SEPTEMBER 2015**

This project of the Annerley-Stephens History Group Inc. (ASHG) has been generously supported by Community Plus+ Annerley and Yeronga.



76 Perkins Street, Upper Mt Gravatt, photographer Frank Corley. Calendar donated by Graeme Tann.

## ASHG PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

The Frank Corley House Project has been a great benefit to individuals and to community organisations. In particular, young new home owners have been able to identify the history of their property and trace the architectural style, through the *State Library of Queensland (SLQ) images*.

The project has captured the imagination of Brisbane residents via radio broadcast and newspaper articles.

Denis Peel has done a tremendous job in researching within the SLQ and coordinating teams of volunteers in the suburbs, to locate and identify houses within the former Stephens Shire Council (1886 – 1925) and the current suburbs covered by the *ASHG*.

This project will benefit the Queensland community well into the future and help spread a growing interest in local history.

Trevor McKell ASHG President

The *ASHG* was established in 2013 and aims to promote the history of the suburbs within the former Stephens Shire Council. The group is undertaking a range of local history projects including the Frank Corley House Project. The *ASHG* meets on the 1st Thursday of each month at the Community Plus Community Hub at 556 Ipswich Road, Annerley at 6.30pm.

If you would like to find out more about the Frank Corley Project, contact Project Manager Denis Peel by mobile on 0408 001 362 or via email on denpaul@tpg.com.au.

# THE FRANK CORLEY HOUSE PROJECT: PHASE ONE

# PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Denis Peel has had a forty year career as a teacher, actor and musician, community arts worker and writer. Together with his wife, Pauline, they have walked many thousands of kilometers in Australia and overseas. After walking on the Camino Mozarabe in Southern Spain in 2012, and being captivated by the depth of history they encountered, they began developing a community history walk in Fairfield, Brisbane. They still conduct the walk regularly. While researching the Fairfield Walk they noticed four photographs of houses in Fairfield within the *State Library of Queensland's* online collection, *Picture Queensland*, that are attributed to the Corley Collection.

#### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers who have worked on identifying, cataloging, and photographing houses in the Annerley, Fairfield, Yeronga, and Yeerongpilly areas:

Trevor McKell, Em James, Kath Chown, Glenda Sheaffe, Stephen Sheaffe, Moreton Porrill, Mark Crocker, Tracey Walker, Patricia Joynes, Daniel Joynes, Scott Newman, Kate Dyson and family, Margaret Andrews, Noel Andrews, Vanessa Neilson, Kevin Culla, Chad Ryan, Shirley Peadon, Lyn Duncan, Karen Cheyne, Melinda McInturff, Gerry Bebendorf, Nev Bebendorf, and Steve Capelin, and apologies to anyone that I have omitted.

Thanks to Louise Booth and BoDal Graphic Design for layout assistance.

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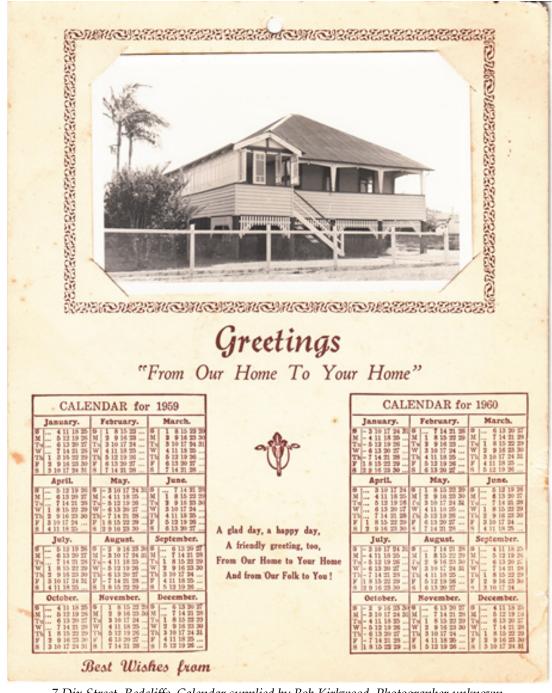
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## 1. FRANK CORLEY

Francis Huia Miller Corley was born in Christchurch, New Zealand on 15 January 1913. TMcK<sup>1</sup>

In a life full of entrepreneurial activities Frank owned and managed transport businesses, caravan parks and a lolly shop. A fascination for photography led to the formation of Pan American Studios. Street photography in particular photographing houses was his big passion.  $DS^2$ 

At various times in Brisbane since at least 1958 commercial photographers had sold individual house photos inserted into calendars. Some businesses also used home photographs as an advertising technique. However it is unknown whether anyone else ever operated on the scale of the "Pan American Home Photographic Co."



7 Dix Street, Redcliffe. Calendar supplied by Bob Kirkwood. Photographer unknown.





Coupon Furniture Company advertising postcard, 1965, supplied by Mrs Dulcie Russell, photographer unknown.

Working with a team of photographers, printers and sales people including his wife, Frank would roll into town with a convoy of vehicles including darkroom caravans, staff cars and his beloved Cadillac.

The method of photographing houses consisted essentially of a "drive past" with the exposure being made at the appropriate moment. Frank demonstrated his technique to me once using a Illf Leica with rapid film advance lever attached. He bragged about steering with his knees.

The images would then be processed printed and then the foot slogging salesman would door-to-door sell the prints.  $DS^3$ 

Patrick O'Callaghan worked as a door-to-door salesperson driving one of Pan American's Mini-Minor vans in 1970. At that time Corley was based in a house in Aspley and Patrick would pick up a bundle of photographs from his home each day. Frank Corley was a shrewd business operator.

Patrick explained that by selling the calendar with an individual house photo inserted into it each item was different. Therefore an expensive "hawking licence" was not required. *POC*<sup>4</sup>

Any unsold photographs were kept so that he had evidence for the taxation department when he claimed for the sales tax on the unsold print paper.  $DS^5$ 

Patrick O'Callaghan estimated that in the two to three months that he worked for Pan American he sold about two-thirds of each bundle, operating in the suburbs of Ashgrove and Clayfield. He was paid on a commission basis and thought that the amount he earned wasn't a bad wage, but when he got engaged to be married he felt he needed the stability of a permanent job. He joined the Public Service (Qld Govt) in 1970. *POC*<sup>6</sup>

Frank and his second wife moved to 94 Franklin Street, Annerley, during the 1970's.

Doug Spowart operated *Images Gallery* in South Brisbane in the 1980's and early 1990's where he marketed Leica cameras. Frank, now retired and widowed, was a regular visitor, not so much a customer but more someone looking for company with whom he could talk photography.

During these discussions Doug became aware that there were many thousands of house photos in boxes in the shed in Frank's backyard. He suggested to Frank that rather than being lost after Frank's passing on, that they be bequeathed to the State Library of Queensland.

In June 1995 Frank Corley presented the photographs to the John Oxley Library.

Frank Corley died at Coolum on 19 October 1995 aged 82 years.

# 2. THE CORLEY COLLECTION – JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION



73 Newcastle Street, Fairfield. Photographer Frank Corley, 1970 © John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland



73 Newcastle Street, Fairfield. Photographer Denis Peel, 2015

About eighty of the Corley photographs have been chosen to represent some of the interesting architectural forms present in South East Queensland houses on the *Picture Queensland* online site. The house pictured above is one of them.

The entire collection of sixty-seven boxes is housed in the John Oxley storerooms and two boxes can be ordered at any one time. Each box is numbered and the suburbs or towns listed.

The prints from approximately fifty reels are in each box. As a rough guide, if half of the prints have been sold there remains twenty-five prints per reel, therefore somewhere around one thousand plus photos per box.

At the start of each reel there is a marker in the form of a piece of cardboard cut from a photographic paper box which gives the reel number and the location of the first photo that was taken on that reel. This photo in some cases will have been sold. Some cards carry more instructions.

#### It is believed that the negatives of the photos no longer exist.

A *State Library of Queensland* volunteer, ex-CSIRO scientist John Wilson worked on identifying some of the photos, particularly the first few houses in each reel between 2001 and 2003. After each field trip he wrote the address in pencil on the back of the prints that had been located.

John Wilson also created a *finding aid* which was located in Box 9859.

Unfortunately, the whereabouts of this box is unknown. It probably was misplaced during the transporting of the collection around the time of the 2011 floods.  $SLQ^7$ 

Architect Don Watson has also used the collection for his research into the architectural history of Queensland.

Frank Corley used a street directory to record where he had gone when filming, and to communicate with the sales team.

The street directory is not part of the collection and probably no longer exists.

For the door-to-door sellers, navigating was easy because they had every house in the reel and only had to look at the next photo to see where to go next.

## NAVIGATING THE COLLECTION NOW

Finding the houses today is a lot more difficult because of the gaps in the collection. Many photos were sold and a number of the houses have been removed or demolished or significantly altered by renovation since the 1970's.

#### A PERSONAL STORY:

When the first box carrying a Fairfield (where I live) label was delivered to me in the John Oxley Library I immediately started to look for my house. The name of my street did not appear on any of the cardboard reel marker cards. I began looking at the reels of nearby streets and fairly quickly located one house in my street. Working forward and backward from there I had found four of the houses on the other side of my rather short street. I continued on and found the first house on my side of the street, then one other house that I didn't recognize and finally the last house in the street.

What was that stray photo doing in there? I looked again and felt a strange emotion. It was a very different version of the house we have lived in since 1991 and I had failed to recognize it. I was embarrassed and wistful at the same time. When I showed it to my wife her reaction was immediate "I want it back like that!"

There is a lot of important detail captured in the Corley prints. Local knowledge is invaluable in searching for the houses today.

A lot of house construction in Fairfield occurred between 1946 and 1960. Increasingly, fewer of the original home occupiers remain in the suburb. The Corley Collection images are a tool for engaging those residents and getting their perspectives on their own homes, lives, and neighbourhoods.

Walking the street to identify the houses from the Corley images is also a meaningful way of engaging local people of all ages. In so doing they consider the changes to their neighbourhoods that have occurred, and also imagine changes that lie ahead.

# 3. USING THE CORLEY COLLECTION TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

The ASHG began the "Corley House Photos Pilot Project" in August 2014.

The aims of the project were to:

- Gauge interest in the task of identifying the houses
- Engage volunteers in actively participating in a study of the Annerley, Fairfield and Yeronga photos
- Stimulate interest in local history
- Create conversations within neighbourhoods to enhance community spirit and awareness
- Study the type and degree of change that has occurred in these suburbs
- Trial some models for finding volunteers to identify and record the address and condition of the houses today
- Record oral histories from residents engaged by the project.

Our first attempt to make contact with local residents was at *ANNERLEY UNCOVERED* an *Annerley Community Plus*+ event on 23 August 2014. Given the popularity of forensic science dramas we took the following approach:

#### **ANNERLEY HOUSES UNCOVERED IN 1970**

#### WHAT ARE YOU LIKE AS A DETECTIVE?

#### **COULD YOU FIND THESE HOUSES TODAY?**

#### WE NEED YOUR HELP FOR THIS COMMUNITY PROJECT!

We are attempting to locate the houses today that were photographed by a commercial photographer Frank Corley in the early 1970's. While Corley photographed nearly every house in Brisbane the record is incomplete. About half the photos remain. Your house could be among them. We need your local area knowledge to help us find the houses in your street, as the collection is not catalogued.

#### IF YOU CAN HELP LEAVE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS WITH EM OR DENIS.

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE FRANK CORLEY COLLECTION, JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

We asked people to try to identify some local houses from the collection. There was a high degree of interest. This approach worked and has been repeated at a number of community events since.

A press release from ASHG to the local Quest newspaper resulted in an article  $Q^8$  in the Southside News on 7 October 2014. This article created a snowball effect.

ABC local radio 612 4QR, ran an interview on morning radio on 15 Oct 2014.

The Sunday Mail published an article *SM*<sup>9</sup> on 9 Nov 2014.

4BC radio conducted an interview on the afternoon of 10 Nov 2014.

The pilot project launched on Saturday 8 Nov 2014 with volunteers being asked to gather in Lagonda Park, Annerley. A group of 20 assembled and after briefing headed off in four directions each group with a proof sheet of a Corley reel. After walking the streets and identifying and photographing the surviving houses, the group reassembled for a debrief in *Sunbeam Gallery* where the owners Nick and Peta Stilgoe had very kindly invited the group to have morning tea.

The *Sunbeam Gallery* has been converted from the former Sunbeam Store. Sunbeam Street runs east to west straddling the South Coast railway line. A wooden traffic bridge over the railway line was removed after the time of the Corley photos (probably around 1973). This would have impacted on the business. The shop continued to trade for a few more years.



Be part of uncovering the history of our local area by matching 1970's house photos to today's streets! Throughout the 70s, Frank Corley photographed every house in Brisbane. The photos were then sold door-to-door throughout the suburbs, and those that didn't sell are now stored at the State Library of QLD.

You're invited to join the Annerley-Stephens History Group in walking the neighbourhood to match photos to houses. Along the way we'll be speaking with long-term residents and recording their stories and recollections. Each month we will focus on a different area.

Next meeting: Saturday the 8th November, 8:30am for a 9am start Where: Lagonda Park picnic shed, Lagonda and Clive St, Annerley. Contact: Denis Peel on 0408 001 362 or email denpaul@tpg.com.au.

This project is supported by Annerley Community Plus+ and Annerley-Stephens History Group. The History Group meets on the first Thursday of every month, from 6:30pm at Annerley Community Bookshop — all welcome. The group would also appreciate any information, copies of photos or memorabilia you have on the Annerley-Stephens District area. In the debriefing volunteers were:

- Very positive about the activity. They had enjoyed walking with the proof sheets and searching for the houses. Most houses were found and photographed.
- Surprised by the degree of change to existing houses and the amount of demolition or removal occurring in some areas.
- Keen to do more identifying around their own neighbourhoods.
- Easily able to engage residents in helping locate photos and found that they would often freely tell the stories of their own houses and streets.

Over the next few weeks a number of volunteers began working on the reels of their own neighbourhoods and by the end of 2014, over 20 reels (about 500 houses) had been catalogued.

There was also interest outside the local area. Vanessa Neilsen began looking at the Chelmer/Graceville area, and from that has emerged a research topic for a Masters in Urban Planning thesis. The working title is "An Analysis of the Factors Impacting the Preservation of Residential heritage Architecture in Brisbane City Since the 1970's."

Some activity began in the West End/South Brisbane area.

Allan Waller of Coopers Plains Local History Group and Rohan Huguenin catalogued four of the Salisbury reels.

Daniel Joynes an architect and Yeronga resident developed a classification system that was adopted for the current status of the houses in the collection:

- **E** extant
- A altered
- VA very altered
- D demolished or removed

Daniel was able to make more accurate assessments and identifications by using Brisbane City Council Detail Plans. Some of the Detail Plans can be viewed online, the others are accessible through the BCC Archives.

Daniel and his mother Pat, who has added a lot of local historical knowledge, have donated a huge amount of time to the project and are responsible for cataloguing most of the Yeronga section of the collection as well as parts of Fairfield and Annerley.

# 4. IDENTIFYING HOUSES IN THE CORLEY COLLECTION

Volunteers have been given either A4 proof sheets of 12 houses to a page or have downloaded the images digitally.

We prepared a number of hints for beginning the task of finding houses.

#### ANNERLEY-STEPHENS HISTORY GROUP INC.

Tips on identifying houses in the Corley Collection.

- Each reel has 50 or so house photos.
- They are numbered from 1 to 50 approx.
- A cardboard marker gives the start point and sometimes other instructions eg "right into Ipswich Rd". This marker has been photographed and numbered "0" to begin the start of each reel.
- About half of the photos in the Stephens area were sold so these houses are missing from the collection.
- Mostly the address of the first photo in a reel will be given.
- Corley was in a big car so he mostly went down one side of a street and may have turned round and come back but often went round a corner.
- When you have identified a house look at the number of the next photo. That should tell you how many houses to count forward to find that next house.
- Check the slope of the road in front of the house
- Check house features like roof slope and number of gables, location of stairs, doors and windows. Type and shape and number of windows and awnings. Ornamentation particularly on house fronts and verandahs.
- If all else fails look for the point where the electrical mains wires join the house. Even if the house has changed extremely the connection point is normally the same.

An easy way to record the **condition of the house in 2014** in relation to the 1970 photo has been provided by Daniel Joynes of Yeronga:

E = Extant/minor alterations

A = Alterations

VA = Very Altered

D = Demolished

To collate the data an Excel spreadsheet was created based on a SLQ model used in another historical collection project.

The example below is one of the more than ninety completed spreadsheets.

Spreadsheet compiler: Kate Dyson

BOX#	REEL#/IN	HOUSE #	STREET NAME	SUBURB	CONDITI(HOUSE NAME	DESCRIPTION	
9852	D92-0	No 64 ST Hamlet R-Cavan R- Percy					
	D92-2	58	Hamlet St	Annerley	VA	Raised and built under	
	D92-3	54	Hamlet St	Annerley	VA	Side extension and carport	
	D92-7	31	Hamlet St	Annerley	VA	Raised and built under, carport	
	D92-8	34	Hamlet St	Annerley	VA	Carport in front of verandah	
	D92-9	32	Hamlet St	Annerley	A	Open porch, stairs changed	
	D92-11	24	Hamlet St	Annerley	A	Carport to front	
	D92-12	20	Hamlet St	Annerley	Removed	Units on site	
	D92-13	16	Hamlet St	Annerley	E		
	D92-17	5	Cavan St	Annerley	VA	Front verandah spanning house, Built under	
	D92-18	9	Cavan St	Annerley	A	Carport to side	
	D92-20	17	Cavan St	Annerley	E	awining changed	
	D92-22	25	Cavan St	Annerley	A	Verandah open, 1/2 built under	
	D92-24	39	Cavan St	Annerley	E		
	D92-25	?43	Cavan St	Annerley	VA	no 43 on photo, completely different front, open verandah extension, built o	
	D92-27	55	Cavan St	Annerley	A	Built under	
	D92-28	67	Cavan St	Annerley	VA	Raised, built under	
	D92-29	71	Cavan St	Annerley	VA	Raised, built under, open porch, stairs changed, side extension	
	D92-31	79	Cavan St	Annerley	VA	verandah open, side extension, no windows, stairs different	
	D92-32	83	Cavan St	Annerley	A	Open porch, extension at back	
	D92-35	35	Percy St	Tarragindi	E	Flats	
	D92-37	43	Percy St	Tarragindi	E	Brick painted	
	D92-38	45	Percy St	Tarragindi	A	Carport	
	D92-39	47	Percy St	Tarragindi	E		
	D92-40	?49	Percy St	Tarragindi	VA?	if 49 not recognisable, very altered from front	
	D92-42	50	Percy St	Tarragindi	E		
	D92-44	44	Percy St	Tarragindi	A	Carport to front added in same style	
	D92-48	24	Percy St	Tarragindi	VA	Front verandah opened up	
	D92-49	20	Percy St	Tarragindi	A	Carport/covered verandah to side added	

The Frank Corley House Project

# 5. DATING THE PHOTOS

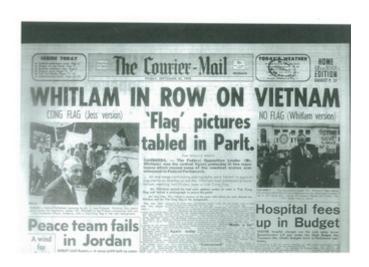
Images of corner shops provide some clues to when the photos were taken.



Quelhurst's Corner Store, Corley Collection, Box 9847 Reel B37 Print 20 © John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

The two newspaper advertising posters in the wire stands at the front of the shop read: *Telegraph: Gretel Miracle Pix* and *The Courier Mail: Whitlam in Vietnam Uproar.* The corresponding newspapers are from Friday 25 Sept 1970.





Advertising banner headlines for newspapers can be used to search the SLQ microfilm records. So far we have identified that:

- Box 9847 Reel B37 20 Fairfield Road corner Ashby Street was taken on Fri 25 September 1970
- Box 9847 Reel B41 34 Annerley Road corner Wilkins Street was taken on Mon 28 Monday September 1970
- Box 9848 Reel B58 3 Wilkie Street, Yeerongpilly was taken on Wednesday 30 September 1970.

This period of four working days covers the twenty-two consecutive reels B37 to B58. There may have been other reels taken before or after these on the same days, so a minimum of four reels (approx. 200 houses) on average were being photographed each day that Corley operated.

Calendars themselves give an indication of the year the photos were taken:

- 1970/71 Calendar 460 Earnshaw Road, Nudgee
- 1971/72 Calendar 76 Perkins Street, Upper Mt Gravatt.

#### COLLECTING CORLEY PHOTOS THAT WERE SOLD

Some of the calendars that were sold still remain in family collections. Digital images of the calendars have been donated by:

David MacDonald (Nudgee), Robyn West (Fairfield), Dulcie Russell (Coorparoo), Bob Kirkwood (Redcliffe), and Graeme Tann (Upper Mt Gravatt).



76 Perkins Street, Upper Mt Gravatt, photographer Frank Corley. Calendar donated by Graeme Tann.

The 1970's calendars included a "litmus paper" type barometer that was supposed to change colour from blue to pink as humidity increased. The children of some families invented a trick to make the colour change. They would suck their finger and then rub their wet finger on the barometer!



Rear of calendar from 1971/2 donated by Graeme Tann.

This Corley calendar was sold for 85 cents, probably an affordable price for the majority of households at the time.

# 6. ANALYSIS – What have we learnt?

#### **Database of Corley spreadsheets:**

The data base provides the means for residents to find if the Corley photo of their house is in the John Oxley Library and where it is located.

The spreadsheets are a source for providing quantitative information on the degree of change in the four suburbs catalogued to date.

A future analysis could provide the percentage of houses that have disappeared from discrete neighbourhoods, individual suburbs, and the area as a whole.

The value of the database as a tool for collection of oral history is demonstrated by some of the stories that are emerging as we make it accessible to residents.

#### Some of the stories to emerge so far include:

M grew up in Cowper Orphanage, Grafton. He came to Brisbane and worked in a wooden coat hanger factory in Red Hill but they didn't pay him enough. He had built his own house in Turner Avenue, Fairfield, of which he is very proud. M invented his own machine to make coat hangers and set up in business. In four years he had cornered the market nationally, and Woolworth's in Queen Street would display them in a window for a week every year – just coat hangers, the whole window.

J says "That's W's motorbike in the photo." It was featured in Wheels magazine and was the first bike in Australia to have a Cortina car engine put on it. "And that house next door (Victoria Tce, Annerley), round that time was owned by the Salvation Army. It was a refuge for destitute families." W is now a leading winemaker in Victoria.

**R** progressed up the ranks from cleaner to fireman to train-driver. He was the fireman the night at the Gabba when a car came between the flagman and the engine. In rage, the flagman threw his bell through the car windscreen. The car driver jumped out and squared up to the flagman, but as **R** and the guard and train-driver approached he jumped in the car and took off, with a broken windscreen – and a bell on the front seat.

**K** is a contemporary Brisbane author. In her award-winning memoir she has written a very evocative description of the house in Annerley that her family lived in round about the time of the photo.

#### The major identifiable differences between the 1970's and 2015 are:

- 1. Vegetation Brisbane of 2015 is a much greener environment than 1970's Brisbane. Many house fronts are now partly or totally obscured by trees and shrubs.
- 2. High fences A lot of 1800 millimetre and higher fencing has been built in recent years and this makes viewing the architecture of the front of some houses difficult or impossible.
- 3. Renovations There is a wide variation from restoration at one end of the spectrum to absorption into new development at the other. Many front verandahs of pre World War Two houses have had aluminium windows enclose them. There is a high rate of building-in underneath by raising or excavation. On the other hand some of the workers cottages that had previously had their front verandahs enclosed have now had the fibro and louvres removed and railings and trim restored.
- 4. Building since 1970 Many of the houses that we have catalogued as "D" demolished or removed have been replaced by unit complexes, town houses or road/freeway construction.

#### What Corley didn't photograph:

There are a number of houses and streets that were not photographed. They tend to be:

- Split level streets that would have been difficult to photograph from a car
- Houses in very poor condition
- New unit developments
- Narrow streets that were hard to access in a Cadillac e.g. Sharp street Fairfield has a Crow's Ash tree growing in the middle of it.

#### Value of the Corley Collection:

The availability to the public of the Corley Collection in the State Library of Queensland is a unique legacy. There is a great deal more potential for research in this community-based way.

## **LESSONS FOR NEXT PHASE:**

Set clear time limits for volunteers to work on each reel. Two weeks would be a reasonable time to complete the task, or to identify difficulties such as finding Corley's route.

A large master map is needed to map Corley's route as each reel is completed. This would quickly cut down the confusion faced in attempting to follow Corley's pattern of work.

Work intensively on a small target area e.g. no more than six consecutive reels at a time.

Ideally have the master map and the spreadsheets accessible on-line.

# END NOTES.

- 1. Trevor McKell, personal research Dunedin Library 05/03/2015.
- 2. Doug Spowart, PHOTO-Graphy, The Man Who Photographed Every House In Australia, 6/11/1995.
- 3. Doug Spowart, ibid.
- 4. Patrick O'Callaghan, interview 10/11/2014.
- 5. Doug Spowart, ibid.
- 6. Patrick O'Callaghan, ibid.
- 7. State Library of Queensland, various sources?
- 8. Quest Newspapers, Southside News, *Photos Fortify Past Links*, Felicity Caldwell, p8, 07/10/2014.
- 9. The Sunday Mail, p36, Snapshot of City In 1970, Melanie Burgess, 09/11/2014.

The Frank Corley House Project