



History lives on

Gloria Grant has discovered the past through the eyes of our ancestors.

WITH a magnifying glass in one hand and a 19th century dictionary in the other, Gloria Grant began the arduous task of transcribing a faded manuscript which is now the earliest Queensland novel to be written, published and printed in the Sunshine State.

Tom Hurstbourne or A Squatter's Life was penned by John Clavering Wood, a distant relative of Gloria's friend Gerard Benjamin, in 1865. But until recently it was an unknown and unpublished treasure hidden in a Melbourne home.

"It was almost by chance that I became involved in this book," Gloria, a QUT education graduate recalls.

It started when Gerard was hunting for information about his great-great grandfather John Clavering Wood (1837-1910), and was handed a manuscript by a distant cousin.

"This is where Gloria comes into the picture, with her trusty magnifying glass," Gerard said.

"To do the transcription she would dictate each word to me, as I would type it on the keyboard."

Gloria jokes the book took six months to transcribe and she wore out two magnifying glasses.

The friendship between Gloria and Gerard was forged some time ago when the duo worked tirelessly together to

compile an historical account of New Farm – *Reflections on New Farm*.

The book, listed as a best-seller at New Farm's Mary Ryan bookshop, captures the spirit of the people, places, landmarks and events through the eyes of residents who remember how the area once was.

"We are both ex-teachers and both share a love of history," said Gloria, who in 1945 studied at the Kelvin Grove Teachers' Training College, one of QUT's predecessor institutions.

"As a child I always wanted to be a teacher," Gloria said, "much the same as boys always say they want to be firemen."

And after a decade teaching at schools across the state, Gloria discovered she also had a passion for writing.

Now with three books under her belt including one recounting her own family history, Gloria is a keen advocate for keeping family records.

"At a certain age many people become interested in their own history and being able to record that history means their story lives on forever," she said.

- Sandra Hutchinson