



THE OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1898

House & Building History

The Oregon Historical Society's Research Library has a variety of resources to help you document the history of your house or building. **Before beginning your work here, we suggest that you also:**

- Look at your abstract and note the various people who owned the property and later the building;
- Ask your neighbors about previous owners, changes to the property, and neighborhood history;
- Check with the City's Office of Planning and Development Review, 1900 SW 4th, 1st floor (<http://www.portlandonline.com/bds/>), for information about the builder, owner (if different from builder), architect (if there was one), materials, and original cost, or for early building permits or plans;
- Look at your property tax statement for the legal description;
- Ask your title company to do a title search. Fees vary depending on type of search and time needed to compile the information;
- Find the date of construction and the ownership history of an existing structure by searching the microfilm records at Multnomah County Division of Assessment and Taxation Office, 501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 125. See: <http://www2.co.multnomah.or.us/jsp/Public/EntryPoint?ch=6e561c5808c57010VgnVCM1000003bc614acRCRD/>. Be sure to have the exact address of the property.

At the Historical Society you can use the following resources to research:

OWNER, OCCUPANT, ADDRESS, LEGAL DESCRIPTION, AND DATE BUILT

Historic Resource Inventory of Portland, 1984. (REF 720.979549 H673). Arranged by street address, this multi-volume work covers every neighborhood, and includes a bibliography for each building. It gives the legal description, date built, style, first owner, etc., for each entry.

Block Books (REF 912.7911 P852, 2 vols.) give the land ownership (not occupancy) for the year 1907. If you do not know the name of the addition (section of the city) or its location, you can consult the *1907 Portland Block Book User's Guide* (located at the Reference Desk; ask a librarian to show you how to use this). Some street names have changed, and addresses were changed by ordinance in 1890-91 and in 1931 (see below).

The *Portland Realty Atlas* (REF 912.79111 P8522p 1914 Oversize; ask a librarian for assistance) shows ownership of Portland-area properties as of 1914. While this early edition may not be copied, subsequent editions of the Realty Atlas (1922 and 1928) are on microfilm and may be copied.

Find the pre-1931 address of your house by looking at the *Directory of Streets and Street Numbers* (REF 979.11105 D593d).

Pages 67 through 121 of the 1892 *Portland City Directory* contain pre-1890/91 addresses for Portland properties.

Starting in 1930, **Portland City Directories** added a reverse address section. The names listed in this section can be traced back in earlier directories through the alphabetical section.

COMPOSITION, PLAN, AND STYLE

Microfilmed copies of the **Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps** are helpful in determining the location and composition of structures within the city at 10 to 20-year intervals. The reels are located in Drawers 8 and 9 in the microfilm cabinet closest to the reference desk.

The **Multnomah County Metsker Atlases** (1927, 1936, and 1944) show property ownership for large lots of land and gives the name of the Real Estate Addition in which a particular street is located. They also provide a list of real estate additions and where those additions were located in the city. Please note that because these maps are oversized, they may not be photocopied.

The Research Library holds a number of collections of **architectural plans** and drawings by local architects in its manuscripts collection. Most plans are indexed in the manuscripts card catalog in the Research Library by name of architect or architectural firm, name of original owner, and/or street address. In addition, a few large collections will soon be entered into our online catalog. Since many of these plans are stored offsite and require special arrangements for viewing, please check with the reference staff well in advance of your visit.

Photographs of some Portland houses and buildings are available in the Research Library's Photo Collections. We have assembled another handout to help you locate images, and copies are available at the reference desk.

Books containing generic house plans are available in the library. These provide details on types of houses built around the U.S. in various eras:

Houses by mail : a guide to houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company

728.37 S847h

Small houses built in most U.S. cities (especially Portland) in the 1920s and 30s

Redimade homes, 1924

PAM 728,37

R317r

Small houses from pre-cut parts, made by a company with a Portland branch, 1924

BACKGROUND HISTORY

Vertical Files, listings in the Biography Index, and online scrapbook citations may provide leads or information to help you in your search. You might also consult general Portland histories, the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, and reference books on the architecture of this area. Be sure to consult the *Library Association of Portland Newspaper index* (on microfiche; 1851-1979 and 1980-1984) and the *Oregonian's* own print index (1850-1909 and 1904-1929, **REF 979.1007 O166**) for additional biographical and historical information.