



THE OREGON  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
FOUNDED 1898

## How to Locate Photographs of Your House

While there are thousands of photographs of Portland neighborhoods and residences in the Oregon Historical Society's Research Library collections, the odds of finding an image of your house may be limited. First, someone had to take a photograph of the house, the photograph then needed to be saved, and finally, given to the Society for its collections. If you do not locate a photograph of your house, you will likely find related images under architectural style or neighborhood scenes.

### Houses in Portland

#### 1. If you only have the address

Your search for photographs will have more chance for success if you begin by using the Portland city directories to locate the names of owners and residents of your house.

Beginning in 1930, there is a reverse directory by address in the back of each volume. Find the address of the house you are seeking; the name of the resident in the house will be listed following the address. Record the name of each resident at the address over time to give you multiple access points for searching for photographs of the house.

Here are some tips for using the city directories:

- To avoid looking at each volume, check every five years to see if the name listed for the house is the same. When the name changes, then you can check year by year to determine when the owner or resident of the house changed.
- Take the name listed with the house for 1930 and check earlier years under that name in the directories. You may find that the same person lived in the house for several years prior to 1930.

You may have additional names of owners of the house from documents such as a title search or building permit. Be sure to bring these names with you when you visit the Research Library.

## **2. If you have a list of owners**

Once you have a list of owner/resident names for the house, go to the Reference Desk to request photographs. There are several different groups of photographs that may include images of your house.

### **Photographs Card Catalog**

This catalog provides access to individually cataloged photographs as well as photograph collections. For every individually cataloged photograph, there is a photo-bearing card.

There are three types of cards in the Photographs Card Catalog:

1. **Cards with a 4x5 photograph attached;**
2. **Cross reference cards** that do not have a photograph attached, but lead you to the photo-bearing card through a "See" reference. For example, the photo card for a residential street scene that includes three identified houses may be filed under the neighborhood, with a cross reference card for each identified house. The "See" reference on the cross reference cards filed by name of residence would direct you to:

**Portland  
Neighborhoods  
St. Johns  
(cards filed by date)**

3. **Organized Lot cards** do not have a photograph attached. Instead, they refer to a collection or group of photographs. The title will give a brief description, such as, "12 photoprints showing interior and exterior views of the Frank J. Cobbs House, ca. 1918-1920s. See inventory 535." The inventory number is the same as the Organized Lot number at the top of the card. If the card directs you to see an inventory, they are located in notebooks located in the bookcase at the end of the table reserved for photographs research. Once you've located the correct Organized Lot inventory, bring it to the Reference Desk to have staff retrieve specific folders. If the card does not direct you to see an inventory, go to the Reference Desk with the Organized Lot number.

In the Locations section (drawers with green labels) of the Photographs Card Catalog, there are four drawers labeled Portland – Residences. In each drawer, the cards are filed alphabetically by keyword within the hierarchical form, for example:

**Portland  
Residences  
(keyword=)Pittock**

The Photographs Card Catalog also has a section for Portland neighborhoods. The neighborhood boundaries are determined by a gridded reference map created specifically for this catalog. The map is on display at the end of the catalog, with an additional copy located at the Reference Desk. Find the neighborhood name for the location of the house and look in the Photographs Card Catalog under Portland – Neighborhoods. They are divided according to Portland’s five sectors: SW, NW, N, NE, and SE. The majority of these cards will be cross reference cards. A “See” reference below the title will lead you to the photo card, for example:

**See:  
Portland  
Residences  
(keyword=)Cobbs**

### **Self Indexing Files**

These files contain loose photoprints arranged by subject. A notebook contains the list of file headings. There are 44 files for Portland neighborhoods, arranged by general neighborhood names within each sector of the city. For any neighborhood that does not have a specific file, there is a miscellaneous file, for example, Portland – Neighborhoods – SE – Miscellaneous. To request folders, enter the folder number(s) on the call number line on a collection retrieval form.

The photographs in the Self Indexing Files **do not** duplicate those in the Photographs Card Catalog.

### **Searching Online**

There are some house and neighborhood photographs that are cataloged only online. To conduct online searches, select the Simple Search option and, in the keyword field, enter the name(s) for the house, street name, and/or neighborhood.

Your search results may include Organized Lots for which you’ll need to check the corresponding Organized Lot inventory in order to request folders.

Other search results may include photograph albums. If so, click on the entry to get the photograph album number for the collection retrieval form.

Search results may also include descriptions of individual photographs that are not in Organized Lots, nor in photograph albums. Many of these can be found in the Photographs Card Catalog under the subjects described. Please ask at the Reference Desk for assistance in locating these images.

If your search results in a large number of hits, you may use quotation marks around your search term to limit results. In addition, you can limit the search to photographs in the Simple Search function by clicking on Show Search Options just below your entry. In the Limit This Search To option, Choose Collection – click on Photographs.

We are working toward providing digital images online for selected photographs.

### **3. If You Have No Owner/Resident Names or Exact Address**

You may be able to locate photographs by looking at images of the neighborhood, although your chances are decreased compared to having owner/resident names. We recommend that you look at the neighborhood files for all house photograph searches. In addition, if the house is located close to a public building or space, such as a school, church, park, etc., check the Self-Indexing Files and the Photographs Card Catalog under the name of that building.

#### **Houses Outside Portland**

Check under the name of the town in the Photographs Card Catalog, the Self Indexing Files, and Online.

For the Photographs Card Catalog, go to the Locations section and the Residences subsection for each town, for example:

#### **Pendleton Residences**

The cards are arranged alphabetically within the Residences section. Follow the procedures for locating the photo-bearing card from a cross reference card.

For the Self Indexing Files, request the town by name. Depending on the number of files for the town, there may be a separate file for residences. In some cases you will be given files for towns by their older names, such as Cutler City, Delake, Oceanlake, Nelscott, and Taft for Lincoln City, or Oswego for Lake Oswego. For very small or unincorporated towns, you may be given the county file.

For searching online, select the Simple Search and enter the names for the house, or the name of the town in the keyword field.