

**Local History Consolidation Feasibility Study for the
South Pasadena Public Library**

Summary of Research

by Mike Shea

© October 2006

At the beginning of this project, initially developed by Rebecca Ryan, a Librarian at the South Pasadena Public Library, the purpose of the study was to determine the ways in which local history records and resources, specifically those relating to homes and other structures in the city, could be made a part of the library's local history collection. Incorporating these records, it was assumed, would make the research process for those patrons wishing to explore the history of their homes an easier (and more successful) one. The study would employ two methods of gathering data, from which best practice recommendations could be determined. The first method involved surveying librarians about their current practices in regards to collecting local history and government records, and the services they provide for patrons regarding local history resources. I conducted the survey in July 2006 through an online survey service. I invited librarians to take part in the survey through the CALIX and LIBREF-L listservs. The significant information derived from survey responses dealt with the questions regarding local agencies that collect local government, building, and neighborhood information.

The second data-gathering method involved researching the local history resources and services provided by five neighboring libraries. Three of the libraries, San Marino, Sierra Madre, and Monrovia, are similar in size and structure to the South Pasadena Public Library. A fourth library, San Gabriel, is itself a small library, yet it is a branch in the County of Los Angeles Library

system. The fifth library I visited is the Pasadena Public Library. Larger than the other four libraries, the Pasadena Public Library was the only one of the five to provide significant insight into ways in which South Pasadena could better provide services for patrons seeking information on the history of their homes.

While the other libraries in the study tend to have little or no local history resources beyond general histories of the town in which they are located (one exception being Monrovia's collection of building permits on microfiche), Pasadena's library truly reflects its city's dedication to celebrating its history, from its own index of local newspapers to biographical resources for local architects. Local history research at the Pasadena Public Library is truly special, and the patrons who are able to use the collection have a wealth of information at their fingertips. An important element in Pasadena's local history collection, however, is the understanding that the library cannot and should not collect "everything." However, the librarians are aware of the types of records they do not collect and know where to direct patrons to find them. In terms of records related to homes and other buildings in the City of Pasadena, the two repositories to which patrons are directed are the Pasadena Museum of History and the City Clerk's office. While the City Clerk and the Planning and Building Departments maintain Pasadena's collection of building permits and other official documentation, the Pasadena Museum of History is a private institution that acts as the city's historical society. As such, the collection of materials relevant to a patron's house research tends to focus more on old de-accessioned records, directories, photographs, news clippings, and other "unofficial" records.

Rather serendipitously, my research there led to my meeting the previous archivist for the Museum, Tim Gregory. Since leaving his post as archivist, Tim has spent most of his professional life researching homes on behalf of homeowners and realtors. Having done so for many years, Tim has researched hundreds of houses in Pasadena, South Pasadena, Los Angeles, and many other cities and towns in Southern California, mostly in the Los Angeles County area. After discussing his work with him and going on a few research trips for homes in Pasadena and South Pasadena, I looked at the study I was doing and realized that I needed to refocus the goal of the study if it was to have a positive impact on the South Pasadena Public Library. Moreover, seeing the value that the study could have for additional libraries, I decided that I would frame my report in such a way that it would have application beyond South Pasadena. The result is the creation of two distinct house research guides.

The first, *Researching Your House in South Pasadena*, will assist library patrons in conducting research on their South Pasadena homes. It provides descriptions of the types of records house researchers should look for, as well as contact information for the city and county offices that are most likely to have those records. It also delineates which resources may be found in the South Pasadena Public Library and contains research worksheets to assist patrons in documenting sources and trips to city and county offices.. The second guide, *Creating a House Research Guide for Your Library*, is intended for librarians to use in creating similar house research guides for their own libraries. It includes advice on making the most of a library's own collection of genealogical and local history materials, as well as tips for locating the important city and county

agencies that hold key house research information. Included in this latter group are agencies recommended by respondents in the survey I conducted in July.

Ultimately, this study, while not necessarily successful in revealing a feasible way for the South Pasadena Public Library to consolidate house and building information from numerous city and county agencies, led to the creation of a valuable tool to assist library patrons in performing successful, efficient research. It is my hope that both guides will benefit patrons and libraries throughout California and beyond. To make this possible, I intend to submit my research for presentation at a future California Library Association conference. Further, I will submit my second guide, *Creating a House Research Guide for Your Library* to library periodicals and journals for future publication.

I would like to extend my thanks to Amigos Library Services, Inc., and the Amigos Fellowship Program for making this study possible, and to Laura Kimberly, Associate Director and Manager of Continuing Education Services, for her patience and support.

Researching Your South Pasadena House

**A Guide to Unlocking the History of
Your Home**

By Mike Shea

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Acknowledgments

This guide was created with the support of the Amigos Library Services, Inc. It is the result of a "Library Local History Information Consolidation Feasibility Study" initially proposed by Rebecca Ryan on behalf of the South Pasadena Public Library and funded by the Amigos Fellowship Program in 2004.

My thanks to Ellen Fusco of the Anaheim Public Library and Richard Beebe of the South Pasadena Public Library for their encouragement and advice, and to Tim Gregory for sharing his extensive knowledge and experience in home research.

Introduction

There are a variety of reasons to research your home. Often times, the discovery of important facts about your home (famous residents, significant architectural elements or styles, involvement in a historical event) can increase its value. In other cases, discovering such information can result in a building's becoming eligible for historic or landmark status. And, if nothing else, learning the history of your house can be an enjoyable experience. After all, you probably spend a lot of time there; wouldn't it be nice to get to know your home?

This guide is meant to provide you with the information you need to uncover your house's history. In the guide you'll find contact information for the many places in the City of South Pasadena and Los Angeles County that contain pieces of the puzzle. It also provides tips on what to look for when you visit those places, how to document the information you find, and what to do with the information once you've gotten it.

There are essentially two groups of questions for which you will be seeking answers when researching your home. The first group of questions deals with the house itself:

- Who designed and built the house?
- When was it built?
- Is it of a particular architectural style?
- How much did it cost?
- How has it changed since it was initially constructed?
- Who was the first owner, and were there subsequent owners?
- Were there any additional occupants, such as renters, boarders, etc.?

The second group of questions deals with historical and genealogical issues *about* the house, its owner(s), and its occupants:

- What were the various previous owners and residents like? What did they do? Were they famous? Did they have an impact on South Pasadena?
- What was the reputation or legacy of the architect who designed the house?
- What other buildings did the architect design?
- What other buildings are of the same architectural style?
- Was the house significant, either for its style or because of one of its past residents? Did the house have a name?
- Is the house eligible for landmark status or inclusion on a list of historic places?
- In what neighborhood or district is it located? And does that neighborhood or district have any historical significance?

Before you begin your research, take a little time to read through this guide completely; much of the information you find along the way will be useful in more than one research step, and many repositories you visit may, in turn,

provide you with information in more than one area of your research. Knowing what to look for when visiting a library or city building may keep you from having to make second and third trips to the same place.

It is also important that you make note of the places you visit and the resources that you consult. Be sure to include notes on repositories and resources that do *not* turn up any useful information as well as those that do. Include in your notes what you were searching for, even if you did not find the desired answer or document. Good notes will not only allow you to review specific steps of your research that yielded information, they will also help you avoid duplicating steps that you have already taken.

The guide is divided into three parts. Part I details the steps you'll take to do your research, presented in the order that you'll probably want to follow. It includes tips on where to find certain pieces of information and how to use facts you find along the way to find even more information. Part II provides a detailed list of resources at the repositories you are most likely to visit, including the South Pasadena Public Library and the South Pasadena Planning and Building Department. Part III provides three appendices, containing 1) a contact sheet for the repositories and agencies listed in this guide, 2) the Home Research Worksheet, which will aid you in gathering and consolidating information about your house, and 3) a Resources Worksheet to help you keep track of the places and materials you use over the course of your research.

Good luck!

Part I The Research Process

Step 1: Starting Your research

Before driving to a library or city building, fill out the attached Home Research Worksheet with as much information as you know. Start with the information in your possession, such as building permits, realtor paperwork, property tax bills, and any other materials that may provide information regarding your home. Talk with neighbors who have lived in the neighborhood longer than you. They may have information about previous owners or tenants, the neighborhood, and even home improvements or additions that took place before you bought your home. Keep in mind that a lot of the information will be discovered over the course of your research, so do not become discouraged if you don't know a lot of the answers immediately. Know also that some information that you find along the way may refute some of the stories you've heard about your house. Be willing to keep an open mind and be sure to examine as much evidence as possible. This way, you're more likely to discover the true history of your home.

Prior to visiting any of the agencies listed throughout this guide, call in advance to make sure someone knowledgeable will be there to help you, explaining what sort of information you will be looking for. Be sure also to bring money for copies or printouts, and ask for the current fees associated with these services when you call. Bring your Home Research Worksheet with you on all your research trips; there's a good chance that you will either need information you already have written down, or you will learn new information and will want to write it down before you forget it. The Home Research Worksheet is a handy way to keep all the information in one place.

Assessor's Identification Number

The Los Angeles County Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) is a unique number assigned to each property in Los Angeles County. The number will come in handy throughout the research process, so it is recommended that you retrieve it early on in your research. There are a few ways to determine your AIN. The number is located near the top of your Annual Property Tax Bill or Supplemental Property Tax Bill (the AIN is represented by the first ten digits only). Property owners can also retrieve the Assessor's Identification Number for their property from a computer by visiting the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office web page (<http://assessor.lacounty.gov/>). Clicking on the Property Maps & Data link (on the right near the top of the page) opens a page whereby one can search by street address. The search results page provides the AIN and the address searched. Clicking on the AIN will open a page with more information about that property (discussed in detail in the next step). Note that the website will not give the names of previous owners of a property. That information must be retrieved by going to a Los Angeles County Assessor's Office. The East District office, which

maintains the records relating to buildings in South Pasadena, is located in South El Monte, CA.

Step 2: Getting Information About Your Home

A fair amount of information about your home is located on the various building permits that refer to the construction, renovation, and expansion of your home, including dates of construction, the owner of the property at the time of the construction, architects and contractors involved, and the cost of the work described. In the case of the original permit, the information may indicate the initial cost of the house, the architect or contractor, and the year the house was built. The South Pasadena Building and Planning Department maintains the building permits issued within the city. The permits are organized by street name and address, so homeowners can look at all of the permits available that pertain to their home by asking for the packet at the front counter. Photocopies can be made for a small fee. Acquiring copies is certainly worthwhile, as they may indicate significant construction activity on your house over the course of its history, and you may wish to refer to the information on the permit more than once. The Building and Planning Department also keeps a copy of 1947 Sanborn maps and 1937 aerial maps. See the discussion of the Building and Planning Department in Part II of this guide for more information regarding these map books.

In addition to being an easy way to access the Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) for your property, the Los Angeles County Assessor's website is a great place to view maps and other information about your home. Use your AIN or house address on the Property Maps and Data search page (<http://assessormap.co.la.ca.us/mapping/viewer.asp>) to access this information. Click on the "Assessor's ID No." for your address to open the data page with information about your property. The important information regarding your house research given on this page includes:

- Assessor's Identification Number (AIN)
- Legal Description (including the tract of which your property is a part, as well as the lot number)
- Year Built/Effective Year Built
- Square Footage
- Links to the most recent Assessor's map for your property's tract

Visitors to the Los Angeles County Assessor's East District Office can access additional information, most importantly the previous owners of the property, including the years of ownership. This information can be retrieved from the computer terminals located within the office. The Property Database is searchable by the AIN. The search results list the names of owners in reverse chronological order. The date is given on the right side of the screen, normally in the format "YY/MM/DD" (two digits for the year, followed by two for the month and two for the day). Information is available from the 1970s up to current ownership. Property owners may also retrieve a copy of the Building Description

Blank from the desk at the East District Office. The document describes the makeup of the house and may have a copy of the floor plan or other notes written on the back of the page. Note that only the owner of the property or an authorized agent (written authorization) may request this information from the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office.

In some cases, you may need to access alternate information regarding the construction and early history of your home. If, for instance, there was no original permit for your home at the South Pasadena Building and Planning Department, or if information was inconclusive in the Property Database, you may still be able to find the names of previous owners and the year of your home's original construction. A wealth of earlier information, in addition to the Property Database, can be found in the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office in downtown Los Angeles. Database terminals and current map books (dating back to the 1970s and earlier) are located in Room 205 of the Hall of Administration building. Your Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) is the key to finding the correct map. The AIN is composed of the map book number, page number, and parcel number. For example, the AIN 1234-007-023 means:

1234	007	023
map	page	parcel
number	number	number

The first four digits refer to the map book number; ask the person at the help counter to retrieve the book for you (note that it may take up to a half hour for the book to be retrieved). When you have gotten the book, turn to the page (your AIN's second set of numbers) with your parcel (AIN's third set of numbers). Normally, the page opposite the map will provide a list of owners for the property for the various years covered in that map book. Also, toward the bottom of the map on the left side is a reference to the previous map book and page number for that map (be sure to write this information down for the next step). All superseded map books are kept at the County Archives, which is located in Room 103 of the same building. Ask at the help desk in Room 205 for directions to the County Archives, as the Hall of Administration building can be confusing on the first visit.

The worker at the front desk of the County Archives will retrieve map books for you (you will need the map book and page information from the current map book in Room 205). Use these old map books to track the owners of your home. As you look through each map book, take note of both owner information and references to even earlier map books, repeating the process until you reach the year of first assessed improvement (the year your house was built). Be aware that the Archives are closed at lunch time (which varies depending on who is working at the front desk). Also, the room is quite large and musty, so you may not want to wear clothes that you would not want to get dusty.

Ultimately, Step 2 of the research process should provide you with: the date of first assessed improvement (year of construction); original owner and subsequent owners and the dates of ownership; additional repairs, additions, or alterations; and architects or contractors associated with various phases of construction. Note that you may not need to visit all of the places listed above; do as much research as you need to find the information you are looking for, but avoid duplicating your research unnecessarily.

Step 3: Getting Information About the Architects and Architectural Style

The amount of information regarding an architect can vary widely based on his or her body of work. In some cases, a tremendous amount of information will be available; in others, there may only be brief biographical information available. The South Pasadena Public Library has some information regarding local architects in its local history collection, as well as a small collection of general architecture materials. The general architecture materials might be a good place to read about your home's architectural style. A few recommended books are listed in Part II for the South Pasadena Public Library. You may also search the library's catalog for the subjects "Architecture" or "Architects" to see what books are available.

The Pasadena Central Library has a sizeable collection of architecture materials. The important resources that relate to local and regional architecture are located in the library's Centennial Room. Much of the collection centers on architecture within the City of Pasadena. However, many architects who have designed buildings in South Pasadena may also have buildings in Pasadena. As such, some of the Pasadena-specific architectural materials in the Centennial Room may have relevance to your South Pasadena search, including the Pasadena and Vicinity Biography notebooks and the Pasadena News Index.

The Pasadena Public Library also has a selection of architecture resources in its general collection. Visit the library's website (<http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library/>) to find more information, peruse the catalog, or contact a librarian. Finally, the Los Angeles Public Library maintains a collection of current and historical architectural materials. Items available for checking out may be delivered to your local LAPL branch library (see the list of nearby Los Angeles Public Library branches in "Repositories You May Wish to Visit" toward the end of this guide). Most materials that do not circulate will be located at the Central Library in downtown Los Angeles.

Step 4: Getting Information About Previous Owners and Occupants

Once you have discovered all of the information about your house (who built it, who owned it, what subsequent construction activity took place), you may choose to find out more information about the people who were involved with your home

along the way. There are a couple of ways to determine the names of the previous owners or occupants of your home. The Los Angeles County Assessor's Office (the Regional office is located in South El Monte) features computers that are searchable by the Assessor's Identification Number (AIN). Search results will list the names of owners of the property and the years of ownership. Please note that this information is only available by going to the Assessor's office.

Tracing occupants (including renters or other residents who did not own the property) can be done by looking through the South Pasadena City Directories. The South Pasadena Public Library has microfilm copies dating back to the 1890s at the reference Desk. From around 1926 until 1974, many of the city directories feature a "reverse lookup" feature, whereby residents are listed alphabetically by street name and number. Using reverse lookup, simply find your address, and the residents for that year are listed immediately after. In some cases, the name will be the same as the owner; in others, the name listed in the directory will be different from the owner's name. This is likely the name of a renter.

A good place to begin your search for information about the past owners and occupants of your home, once you've determined their names, is in the local newspaper. Obituaries often contain a fair amount of valuable information about an individual, his or her profession and hobbies, and any surviving family members. In some cases, obituaries may be the only source of biographical information. See Online Resources in Part II of this guide for websites that can assist in determining death dates for individuals who may have played a part in the history of your home. The South Pasadena Public Library has an obituary index to the *South Pasadena Review* (up to the 1940s) and a subject index to the *Quarterly* (a South Pasadena periodical published 4 times a year) available at the Reference Desk. The library also has a variety of local history resources, including books, photographs, and A/V materials (see "Resources in the South Pasadena Public Library" later in this guide for more detailed information).

The Pasadena Public Library and the Los Angeles Public Library are also great resources for finding obituaries and other local information about individuals who lived in the area. Keep in mind that many residents of South Pasadena may have lived and worked elsewhere in Los Angeles County, so they may very well appear in other libraries' local history collections. The Pasadena Public Library has a fine collection of local history materials, including their Pasadena News Index (dating back to 1880) and a collection of local biographical information. See "Resources Located Elsewhere in Los Angeles County" later in this guide for more information regarding Pasadena Public Library materials.

Genealogical Research of Past Residents

It is possible to go beyond the local history materials and newspaper indexes, to find even more information about past residents of your home. Genealogical research involves looking through various types of vital records, Federal census schedules, church and court documents, and other records that help determine

the facts about a person's life. If you have ever done genealogical research, you know that, while the process of finding out about the lives of ancestors can sometimes be difficult, the result can often be tremendously satisfying. If you have not done genealogical research before, it might be useful to obtain a beginner's guide to genealogy before you begin searching. The South Pasadena Public Library has the following titles available for check out:

- *First Steps in Genealogy: A Beginner's Guide to Researching Your Family History*, by Desmond Walls Allen (Call #: 929 ALLEN)
- *Unpuzzling Your Past: The Best-selling Basic Guide to Genealogy*, by Emily Anne Croom (Call #: 929 CROOM)
- *Ancestors: A Beginner's Guide to Family History and Genealogy*, by Jim Willard (Call #: 929.1 WILLARD)

Other titles available for checkout will have the call number 929 or 929.1. Additionally, the library's reference collection has a few titles available for in-library use. These books will have a call number of REF 929 or REF 929.1. Check the library's catalog to find more titles by searching the subject "Genealogy."

Books are also available through the Pasadena and Los Angeles City and County library systems. Your local bookstore or favorite online book dealer may have a selection of genealogy instruction guides available for purchase as well.

The Los Angeles Public Library maintains one of the largest collections of genealogical materials on the West Coast. Included are numerous materials related to Southern California and Los Angeles County history. While most books and microform materials must be viewed at the Central Library in downtown Los Angeles, many of LAPL's databases can be searched from home or branch library. See "Resources Located Elsewhere in Los Angeles County" later in this guide for more information regarding Los Angeles Public Library materials.

Other local repositories with useful genealogical information, records, databases, or advice include the Pasadena Family History Center and the South Pasadena Historical Museum. See Part III for contact information.

Part II: Repositories and the Information They Contain

Following is a list of the most prominent repositories that you should consult during the home research process. In some cases, you may need to consult a repository's collection for more than one step in your research. Consult this list before making your visit, as you will have a better understanding of what sort of information you may be able to find.

Resources in the South Pasadena Public Library

Information about houses and other buildings:

- *City of South Pasadena Cultural Heritage Inventory* (available at the Reference Desk). This resource lists all buildings by street name and address, and may provide any of the following types of information regarding the building's use, type, and neighborhood: architect, builder, original owner, style and name (if any) of the building, district in which the building is located, cultural heritage status, and other miscellaneous information.
- *Historic Resources Survey, Draft Final Report, Phase II* (available at the Reference Desk). This resource is similar to the Cultural Heritage Inventory, but may contain additional information, such as photographs and maps, and comments from the surveyor. Unlike the Cultural Heritage Inventory, the Historic Resources Survey covers select buildings in the city.
- Documentation of Historic Districts & Individual Properties
- Permit registers, 1904-1929
- South Pasadena Maps and Streets Index. A collection of maps and information on street names in South Pasadena. Please speak with the reference librarian to access these indexes.

Information about people and/or the City of South Pasadena:

- South Pasadena High School Yearbooks. Copies of the "Copa de Oro," as the yearbook is named, are available dating back to 1909. Please see the Local History Librarian at the Reference Desk to review a particular yearbook.
- South Pasadena City Directories. The library has copies of the *South Pasadena City Directory* for the years 1893 to 1894, then most years from 1904 forward. Many of the directories feature reverse look up (residents listed by street address) beginning in 1926 and continuing into the 1970s. The directory is available on microfilm. Ask the reference librarian for the years you'd like to search.
- *Quarterly* magazine. A local periodical published four times a year, the *Quarterly* covers a variety of topics, from local biographies to organizations, to buildings and homes. Previously known as the *South*

- Pasadena Quarterly*, the complete holdings date back to 1991. Indexes to the *Quarterly*, by subject or issue, are available. Please speak with the reference librarian to get access to the indexes.
- South Pasadena Newspapers (non-current issues available at the Reference Desk). The library maintains a collection of South Pasadena's newspapers dating back to 1893. It is available on microfilm at the Reference Desk. There is currently no general index available; however, an index to the obituaries is available into the 1940s. The index is also available at the Reference Desk.
 - South Pasadena Public Library Local History Collection. The Library maintains a collection of materials that relate to the history of South Pasadena, including newspaper clippings, flyers, advertisements, and other items, detailing prominent people, places, and events in the city's history. Please ask to speak with the local history librarian at the Reference Desk regarding specific resources in the collection.
 - *South Pasadena: A Centennial History, 1888-1988*, by Jane Apostol. This book is available in the reference section or at the Reference Desk, and may only be used within the library. It is a nice resource profiling the history of the City of South Pasadena from its initial settlement into the 1980s. Architects and buildings of note are mentioned.
 - Historic Photographs Collection. Currently, the library's collection of historic photographs is sorted into subject binders and may be viewed within the library. Please ask to speak with the local history librarian at the Reference Desk to look through the collection. The library plans to make the collection available on the library's website in the near future.
 - The library also maintains a collection of local and regional history books and audio/visual materials. Please search "South Pasadena History" in the library's catalog or speak with the reference librarian to find out more about our collection.

Resources Located Elsewhere in the City of South Pasadena

City of South Pasadena

Planning and Building Department

1422 Mission Street

South Pasadena, CA 91030

(626) 403-7220

<http://ci.south-pasadena.ca.us/planning/index.html>

The Planning and Building Department maintains the following materials that may be useful in your research:

- Permits for every building in the city. Permits are sorted by street name and address.
- Historic index of roughly 2,500 buildings within the city

- Additional files of documents for houses and buildings in the city (such as cultural heritage and landmark status paperwork).
- 1947 Sanborn Maps. From 1867 to 1970, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company made maps for most cities in the United States. The maps indicated the layout of homes and streets, property lines, and often locations of water or gas lines. The 1947 book of maps for the City of South Pasadena is available for viewing, and photocopies can be made for a nominal fee. Additional years of Sanborn maps can be accessed through the Los Angeles Public Library's website (www.lapl.org).
- 1937 Fairchild Aerial Maps. Like the Sanborn maps, the Building and Planning Department's collection of aerial maps is contained in a large book that visitors can peruse and have photocopied by a Department staff member. The photographs were taken from directly overhead, showing plots of land, structures, and streets as they were laid out at the time.

The Building and Planning Department is also where residents should begin the process of having their homes considered for Cultural Heritage of landmark status.

Resources Located Elsewhere in Los Angeles County

Pasadena Public Library

285 East Walnut Street

Pasadena, CA 91101

(626) 744-4066

<http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library/>

The Pasadena Public Library has a variety of local history materials that document the City of Pasadena, primarily. However, some of the resources in their collection may prove useful in researching your South Pasadena home:

- The Pasadena Master Index. A name and subject index to photographs, architectural materials, biographical materials, newspaper clippings, and other items maintained in the Library's Centennial Room. Some of the materials found in the Index must be requested from the Reference Desk, which is located directly outside the Centennial Room. Instructions are posted above the card catalog regarding how to retrieve both open and restricted materials. Be sure to write down all information contained on the index card to give to the reference librarian. The Master Index stopped being updated after 1996.
- The Pasadena News Index. After 1997, articles from Pasadena newspapers, including the Pasadena Star News, may be searched via this index. Prior to 1997, patrons can use the Pasadena Master Index to search for newspaper clippings located in the Biography Notebooks.
- Pasadena and Vicinity Biography notebooks. Located in the Centennial Room, this collection of newspaper and magazine clippings, pamphlets, and other materials may be searched in the Pasadena Master Index.

- Pasadena Architecture Notebooks. Indexed in the Pasadena Master Index, materials in this collection are kept in closed stacks and must be requested at the Reference Desk.
- Historic Photographs. A selection of photographs is available for viewing via the library's website, but many must be viewed in the library. These photographs are indexed in the Pasadena Master Index.

More information regarding the Pasadena Public Library's local resources is available at <http://cityofpasadena.net/library/local-resources.asp>

Los Angeles Public Library

Arroyo Seco Regional

6145 N. Figueroa Street

Los Angeles, CA 90042

(323) 255-0537

<http://www.lapl.org/>

The Los Angeles Public Library has a variety of resources that may be useful to researchers, including databases for genealogical and historical research. Key databases include Los Angeles Times: Historical Archives and the California Index. From the LAPL homepage, click on "Databases," then click on History, Geography, and Genealogy to see more useful databases. Some of the valuable databases are:

- Ancestry Library Edition, which includes census schedule information
- *Gale's Biography and Genealogy Master Index*
- The California Index
- HeritageQuest Online, which also includes census schedule information
- *The Los Angeles Times*, Historical Archives
- Sanborn Insurance Company maps database

Note that while some databases can be searched from a home computer, others may only be accessed at a LAPL branch. Moreover, some databases may only be accessed from the Central Library. Patrons with Los Angeles Public Library cards can check out books online and have them sent to the Arroyo Seco (or any other branch) library for easy pick up, and may also return them to any LAPL branch.

Los Angeles County Assessor's Office

East District Office

1190 Durfee Avenue

South El Monte, CA 91733

(626) 258-6001

<http://assessor.lacounty.gov/>

Using the Assessor's Office website, researchers can access current information on individual properties, including the Assessor's Identification Number (AIN),

current year tax roll values, the most recent Assessor's map image, and recent sales information. Note that the AIN given for each property is composed of a map book number, page number, and parcel number. For instance, the Assessor's Identification Number 5313-005-011 corresponds to map book number 5313, page 005, and the property is indicated as parcel 11. The search page can be accessed directly at <<http://assessor.lacounty.gov/extranet/DataMaps/Pais.aspx>> or by selecting the Property Maps and Data link on the Assessor's home page.

Visitors to the East District Office can access additional information, most importantly the previous owners of the property. This information can be retrieved from the computer terminals located off to the right side of the main entry into the building. The database is searchable by the AIN. Information is available from the 1970s up to current ownership. Property owners may also retrieve a copy of the Building Description Blank from the desk at the East District Office. The document describes the makeup of the house and may have a copy of the floor plan or other notes written on the back of the page. Note that only the owner of the property or an authorized (in writing) agent may request this information from the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office.

This information can also be accessed from the main headquarters of the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office in Downtown Los Angeles, and older materials and superseded maps may be viewed in the Los Angeles County Archives in the same building. See Part III for address information.

Online Resources

- Google Maps (<http://www.google.com/maps>). Retrieve satellite images by entering your home's address into the search box. Please note that some of the images may be a few years old.
- The Librarian's Index to the Internet (<http://lii.org>) has an ever-growing collection of links on Architecture and other subjects that may be relevant to your search. Search "Architecture" for websites that have been selected by librarians for inclusion in the Index.
- RootsWeb California Death Records Index (<http://vitals.rootsweb.com/ca/death/search.cgi>) searches death records from 1940 to 1997.
- California Deaths Database (http://www.vitalsearch-ca.com/gen/ca/_vitals/cadeathm.htm) is another database that can help determine death dates. Some searches are limited to Premium members (subscribers to the service).

Part III: Appendices

Repositories You May Wish to Visit

South Pasadena Public Library

1100 Oxley Street
South Pasadena, CA 91030
(626) 403-7340
<http://ci.south-pasadena.ca.us/library/index.html>

South Pasadena Building and Planning Department

1414 Mission Street
South Pasadena, CA 91030
(626) 403-7220
<http://ci.south-pasadena.ca.us/planning/index.html>

South Pasadena City Clerk

1414 Mission Street
South Pasadena, CA 91030
(626) 403-7232
<http://ci.south-pasadena.ca.us/government/cityclerk.html>

South Pasadena Historical Museum

Meridian Iron Works Building

913 Meridian Street
South Pasadena, CA 91030
(626) 799-9089
<http://www.sppreservation.org/museum-home.htm>
Open Saturday, 1-4 pm and Thursday, 3-8 pm

Pasadena Public Library

285 East Walnut Street
Pasadena, CA 91101
(626) 744-4052
<http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/library/>

Los Angeles Public Library

Central Library	Arroyo Seco Regional Branch
630 W. 5 th Street	6145 N. Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90017	Los Angeles, CA 90042
(213) 228-7700	(323) 255-0537
http://www.lapl.org/	http://www.lapl.org/

Los Angeles County Assessor's Office

Headquarters

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration

500 W. Temple St., Room 205

Los Angeles, CA 90012

(888) 807-2111

<http://assessor.lacounty.gov/>

East District Office

1190 Durfee Ave.

South El Monte, CA 91733

(626) 258-6001

<http://assessor.lacounty.gov/>

County Archives

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration

500 W. Temple St., Room 103

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Pasadena Family History Center

770 N Sierra Madre Villa

Pasadena, CA 91107

(626) 351-8517

Home Research Worksheet

Basic Information:

Address _____
Neighborhood/District _____
Name(s) of house (if any) _____
Original permit: Date _____ Number _____
Year built _____ Cost \$ _____
Los Angeles County Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) _____
Architect _____
Builder/Contractor _____
Original Owner _____
Original residents (if different) _____
Style _____ Stories _____

Known Major Renovations (list chronologically):

1. Year, Description, Architect/Contractor Information:

2. Year, Description, Architect/Contractor Information:

3. Year, Description, Architect/Contractor Information:

Other owners or residents (list chronologically):

1. _____ Dates or residence: _____
2. _____ Dates or residence: _____
3. _____ Dates or residence: _____
4. _____ Dates or residence: _____

Resources Worksheet

List the resources that you have used and the information that you have found in them. Be sure to list the resources that did not contain useful information as well; doing so will keep you from returning to those materials unnecessarily.

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

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What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

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When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

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When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

**Creating a House Research Guide
for Your Library**

by Mike Shea

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Acknowledgments

This guide was created with the support of the Amigos Library Services, Inc. It is the result of a "Library Local History Information Consolidation Feasibility Study" initially proposed by Rebecca Ryan on behalf of the South Pasadena Public Library and funded by the Amigos Fellowship Program in 2004.

My thanks to Ellen Fusco of the Anaheim Public Library and Richard Beebe of the South Pasadena Public Library for their encouragement and advice, and to Tim Gregory for sharing his extensive knowledge and experience in home research.

Introduction

There are a variety of reasons for people to research the history their home. Often times, the discovery of important facts about a house (famous residents, significant architectural elements or styles, involvement in a historical event) can increase its value. In some cases, discovering such information can result in a building's becoming eligible for historic or landmark status. And, if nothing else, it can be an enjoyable and educational experience for anybody who has ever wondered about how their home came to be built, and what the people who lived there were like. Who better to help people in their research process than the local library? This guide is meant to assist the librarian in developing a manual for researching houses and other buildings in his or her particular community.

With few exceptions, performing home research requires visiting at least a few different repositories within the city or county where the house is located. While the library can provide a significant amount of the information the researcher will need, other city and county agencies tend to have a more complete collection of building documentation, such as building permits, maps, historic resource surveys and reports, and previous owner information. While each particular city or county may collect and archive information differently, the information that a patron will need to access remains the same. This guide provides a description of the various types of information patrons will need to unlock the history of their homes. It also provides a list of the various city and county agencies most likely to have current and archived building documentation and information. Finally, at the end of this guide are examples of useful worksheets that will help patrons document their research process properly, thereby assuring a more successful and enjoyable research experience.

This guide is based on my experiences in creating *Researching Your South Pasadena House*, a guide for the City of South Pasadena, which is located in Los Angeles County. Much of the following information, therefore, draws specifically on the processes involved with performing home research within Los Angeles County and will be directly applicable to other home research guides for libraries located within the county. Note that other county policies may differ from those of Los Angeles County. Moreover, take into account that terminology might vary from county to county as well. Be sure to speak with people at the relevant agencies in your county to ensure that the instructions and terms in your guide reflect current county practices.

Part I: Building Records & Documentation

Start at Home

The first step in locating information about one's home begins, not surprisingly, in the home. Before heading out to City Hall or into the stacks of the local library, researchers should take the time to go through their own records, including realtor paperwork, property tax bills, permits and other official documentation, and any other miscellaneous records that might contain information regarding construction, expansion, or ownership history. Neighbors who have lived in the neighborhood longer than the researcher can also be a good source of information about previous owners and major and minor construction activity.

County Assessor's Number

In Los Angeles County, the County Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) is an important tool in the research process. It is used to search for information (such as building descriptions and previous owners) on County Assessor databases and on the Assessor's website. The AIN can be retrieved from property tax bills and through the County Assessor's website. Much of Los Angeles County's records and databases are arranged or searchable by the AIN, so knowing that number is very important from the very beginning of the research process.

It is also worth noting that the composition of the 10-digit LA County AIN refers to the property's parcel map book, page, and parcel number (parcel maps are discussed below). For example, the AIN 1234-007-023 means:

1234	007	023
map	page	parcel
number	number	number

Check to see if the Assessor's parcel number for buildings in your county is similarly composed. Such information will be quite useful at later stages in the research process.

Permits

Building and construction permits may contain both building history and owner information. In the case of the original building permit, it should contain some or all of the following key information: names of the original owner, architect, and contractor; year of construction; cost of the building or property; description of the original layout of the house; size of the original parcel; and original street name and address number. Other permits may contain names of original or subsequent owners, contractors, and/or architects, as well as descriptions of major or minor changes to the house and the dates on which these changes occurred. Permits are normally kept at the city level, often at the city's

Planning and Building Department. Some libraries and historical societies also maintain a collection of building permits, often in microfilm or digital form. It is important to determine how complete and how current these collections are before directing patrons to use a library or society's collection of permits; the city's planning and building agency will normally be the most complete collection available.

Building Description Blanks

A building description blank is another document that contains basic information about a building and may include the date of construction; owner, architect, or contractor information; and drawings of the original floor plans. In Los Angeles County, the building description blank is available for viewing at the regional County Assessor's Office by requesting the document at the service counter. Note that researchers must visit the specific office designated for their region in order to get information about their homes.

Important note: At the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office, building description blanks may be requested by the owner of the property or an authorized agent of the owner. Written authorization may be requested in the case of anyone other than the owner seeking information about a specific property.

Property Databases

Property databases (also referred to as property tax or property assessment databases or rolls) are an important resource for tracing a building's ownership history. In Los Angeles County, the information is searchable by the property's Assessor's Identification Number (AIN), and is available exclusively at a County Assessor's Office (either the main headquarters or a regional office). The database returns search results in reverse chronological order, providing the year of assessment and the corresponding owner of the property. By scrolling through the search results for a specific property, researchers can create a list of owners and their years of ownership.

Maps

Parcel maps provide a few useful pieces of information. Current maps show the property lines for a given parcel, and may note recent changes to the property. The map may also provide owner information and a reference to previous parcel maps. By looking through recently superseded and older maps, researchers can document the changes to their house and property, noting changes in property boundaries, street names and addresses, and the size of the actual building. Going through the maps can also help fill in ownership gaps when the information retrieved from property databases is incomplete or unclear.

Parcel map books are normally retained at the county level, and may be found at the county assessor's office or in a county archives. In Los Angeles

County, current map books are located in the County Assessor's Office in Downtown Los Angeles, and older map books are kept in the County Archives in the same building.

Sanborn Maps were created from 1867 to 1970 by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company and show the layouts of homes, streets, property lines, and, often times, the locations of water and gas lines. Maps may be searched via the Sanborn Maps 1867-1970 database on the Los Angeles Public Library website (<http://www.lapl.org>). In South Pasadena, a large book of 1947 Sanborn Maps are available for viewing and photocopying at the Planning and Building Department. The Department also owns a book of aerial maps from 1937. Both books are useful in that they show the layout of homes and streets before any subsequent alterations.

Other repositories that may have valuable map collections include historical societies, museums, academic libraries, city housing departments, city and state archives, and cultural heritage commissions.

Reports & Surveys

In many cities, planning or cultural heritage departments have conducted inventories of properties, cultural heritage surveys, and other reports and indexes that contain valuable information about the houses and commercial buildings located within that city. In South Pasadena, there are two such reports available at the public library and the Planning and Building Department. The *City of South Pasadena Cultural Heritage Inventory* lists every address in South Pasadena, alphanumerically by street address. The year of construction, neighborhood, architect, builder, architectural style, name (if any), cultural heritage status, and other miscellaneous information may be listed for each property. Not every field for each address is complete. The *Historic Resources Survey, Draft Final Report, Phase II*, is similar in scope to the *Cultural Heritage Inventory*, providing more information but covering significantly fewer buildings in the city. Resources of this type can help researchers find a fair amount of information in one location, thereby saving patrons time and eliminating trips to multiple agencies around the city.

Architectural Materials

Home owners are often interested in determining the architectural style of their homes, as well as information regarding other buildings and structures designed by the same architect. In some cases, your library may have a reasonable collection of architectural resources. In that instance, it would be worthwhile to reexamine the collection, with home research in mind, and create a pathfinder or annotated bibliography of the materials best suited to help patrons researching their homes. Important resources include: architecture periodicals; general guides with information on architectural styles and prominent architects; regional guides that discuss popular architectural movements for your city, state, or region; and resources with biographical information for local architects.

For libraries with small or limited architectural collections, or even those with larger collections, it might be worthwhile to look to other public and academic libraries in the area. Often, these neighboring institutions may have additional resources and existing guides prepared for patron use. Including these resources in your own guides will cut down on background research for the patron. In the case of the *Researching Your South Pasadena House*, patrons are directed to the Pasadena Public Library's collection of architectural notebooks and periodicals, as many of the architects featured in Pasadena's collection designed buildings in South Pasadena as well.

Part II: Owners and Occupants

Once researchers have gathered most of the documentation regarding their homes, they will probably want to find out more information about the people who lived there. The first step in this process involves determining the names of residents and owners, as well as the years of occupancy. In the previous step, property assessment databases and maps made it possible for researchers to create a list of owners and the years of ownership. While this is an important start, it does not necessarily represent a comprehensive list of every person who lived in a house throughout its history. There are a variety of local history resources that contain more information about the names that have already been found, and still others that will help the researcher to determine the names of other occupants.

Directories

City directories often date back to the 19th century, and are a great way to trace occupancy back through time. Older directories often contain the resident's name (normally the male head of household), occupation, and name of spouse (normally the wife). Many directories also feature a reverse-lookup feature, which allows researchers to look up the names of residents by street address. This feature is especially helpful when the patron has been unable to determine the names of the previous owners of the property. By using the reverse-lookup section of the directory, the researcher can create a list of people who resided at the specific address and the years they lived there. In the case of renters or boarders, the list created from the city directories will not match the list created from parcel maps or property databases. Where the two lists are in agreement, the owner is also the occupant of the residence.

Directories can normally be found in public libraries, historical societies, local history museums, and genealogical societies and repositories, and may be available in print, microform, or digital copy.

Local History Materials

Once names have been determined, researchers may want to begin gathering biographical information about the various individuals and families who shared their address. At this point, the research process moves from house research into local history and genealogical research. Any library with a reasonable local history collection will be a valuable resource for the researcher during this phase. Again, the important task for the librarian, in developing a home research guide, is to look at the collection in terms of its relationship to the specific information sought by a patron doing house research. The notable resources would be those providing biographical and historical information about city residents and neighborhoods. Useful resources and collections include: indexes to local and regional newspapers, obituaries, and other local publications; city and county histories; historic photographs; local history clippings and loose leaf files. Local History materials can be found in public and

academic libraries, historical societies, local history museums, and genealogical societies and repositories.

Part III: Repositories and the Information They Contain

This section provides a brief list of the agencies that will most likely play a part in your patrons' research. Every city has its own particular organizational scheme: determining which agencies have useful home research information requires first determining that scheme, then contacting those agencies that might be relevant. Further, understanding the relationship between the city and the county will help determine which materials are maintained at the county level and which may be located within the various city agencies mentioned in this guide.

After determining the correct agencies to include in your guide, make appointments with each repository to interview a representative who might show you all of the relevant materials the agency retains. During your visit, be sure to inquire about the procedure for records that an agency collects—where do the records originate, and do they ultimately go to another location or agency for archiving? Determining the chain of custody for record groups might uncover additional useful repositories for your guide, or it might eliminate the unnecessary inclusion of agencies that do not retain property records for a reasonable time frame. When gathering information about a city planning department, be sure to get complete contact information, including phone number, physical address, and e-mail address, as well as hours of operation, service fees (for photocopies or printouts) and payment options, and any restrictions or procedures that patrons will need to know in advance of their visit. Finally, peruse the website for any agencies you have included in your guide to determine what services are available over the Internet—many patrons may not be able to visit city departments during weekday business hours, so web options may help researchers a great deal.

County Assessor's Office

The County Assessor's Office is normally the agency responsible for maintaining the county's property tax assessment information, and is an important resource for home researchers. As mentioned above, visitors to the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office can find the Property Database, their building description blanks, and parcel maps. In the case of Los Angeles County, the Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) is composed of the parcel map book, page, and parcel number. This makes accessing the correct map book quite simple when visiting the County Assessor's Office. For those in other counties, check with the assessor's office about any similar mnemonic device for their identification procedures.

The County Assessor's website can also be a good resource for finding additional basic information, including the size and legal description of the parcel, year built, and parcel maps. The amount of information available, and whether or not it is free, depends on the specific policies of each individual county. The LA County Assessor's website (<http://assessor.lacounty.gov/>) provides free access to the information described above, as well as the location of

the regional Los Angeles County Assessor's Office that retains the physical records for the neighborhood of the house being searched.

The City Planning Department

The Building and Planning Department is the agency in South Pasadena that maintains the building permits, historic indexes and surveys of buildings, and much of the Cultural Heritage Commission's documentation. The name of this agency can vary by locale, but each city or county should have one. Individual planning departments might also have additional resources available, such as collections of maps and other historical materials.

Libraries

In addition to your own library, be sure to look at the collection of other libraries in the area, including school and university libraries and museum libraries. Additionally, any architectural institutions may have a fair amount of architecture resources available for public use. Be sure to check the circulation and use policies of special or academic libraries, as access may be restricted to members or students of the parent institution. Library materials that may be useful for home researchers include high school or college yearbooks, pamphlet files, historic photographs, genealogical collections (including local vital records and obituary collections), local history materials and biographical resources.

Other Repositories

Again, each city and county is unique, so many of the records that are found in one city's planning department will be somewhere else in another city. Some of the other repositories that may provide valuable home research information include:

- City or County Website
- City Clerk
- County Recorder
- Cultural Heritage Commission
- Realty Offices
- Local Newspaper Offices/Archives
- City Housing Department
- Chamber of Commerce
- City, County, or State Archives
- Historical Society
- Museums
- Land Records Office
- Courthouses

Part IV: Worksheets

On the following pages are examples of research and documentation worksheets that will help the users of your home research guide to collect information and document their sources easily. Keeping all of their important information in one place will contribute to a more efficient and pleasing research experience, and may help limit the amount of unnecessary repeat visits to city and county buildings.

The first document, the Home Research Worksheet, is a simple one-page summary of all the information that patrons will need for a basic summary of their house's history. It is based on the South Pasadena home research worksheet; be sure to change any terms to those employed by your own city or county.

The second document, the Resources Worksheet, is provided in the South Pasadena guide as a convenient worksheet for patrons to document the places they visit and the resources they use during the research process. Again, the goal is to help researchers keep all of their information in one place: the research process can take time, and consolidating notes after the fact may prove difficult.

Home Research Worksheet

Basic Information:

Address _____
Neighborhood/District _____
Name(s) of house (if any) _____
Original permit: Date _____ Number _____
Year built _____ Cost \$ _____
Los Angeles County Assessor's Identification Number (AIN) _____
Architect _____
Builder/Contractor _____
Original Owner _____
Original residents (if different) _____
Style _____ Stories _____

Known Major Renovations (list chronologically):

1. Year, Description, Architect/Contractor Information:

2. Year, Description, Architect/Contractor Information:

3. Year, Description, Architect/Contractor Information:

Other owners or residents (list chronologically):

1. _____ Dates or residence: _____
2. _____ Dates or residence: _____
3. _____ Dates or residence: _____
4. _____ Dates or residence: _____

Resources Worksheet

List the resources that you have used and the information that you have found in them. Be sure to list the resources that did not contain useful information as well; doing so will keep you from returning to those materials unnecessarily.

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

Name of Resource: _____
When & Where I used it: Date: _____ Place: _____
What information was I looking for? _____
What information did it (or did it not) provide? _____

