

GLEN ROCK HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY
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TIPS FOR RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HOUSE

Your house does not have to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places to have a history. Even if your home was built a few decades ago, it can be interesting and fun to trace its history. After all, your home is a large investment – you might as well know something about how it came to be! Following are some tips to help you on that journey.

1. Identify the style of your home.

Different styles were popular in different eras and particular building techniques and materials were used during specific times. These can give you a clue to your home's lineage. Check resources such as [A Field Guide to American Architecture](#) by Virginia & Lee McAlester (Glen Rock Library Call Number 728 MCA).

2. Talk to your neighbors.

Verbal histories of your neighborhood or even of your specific house are wonderful ways to gather information for further confirmation. Just keep in mind that memories may distort the facts a bit, so listen intently but follow up for fact checking. George Washington stopped for high tea under the copper beech tree in your backyard while retreating across New Jersey? Probably not.

3. Visit Borough Hall.

Stop by the Building Department and ask for a copy of your property card. This will show you a history of what has been done on your house (at least the work that required – or received – building permits). If you bring your Block and Lot number with you, it makes the card search easier.

You can also get a copy of your Assessment Card from the Tax Assessor's office if you call ahead and let them know that you are coming (201-670-3962). If you ask nicely, you may be able to get a copy of the current deed for your property that is in your assessment file; some properties may even have older deeds available in that file as well. Please be kind and do not ask for this extra service during tax season when the office is very, very busy.

4. Take a trip to Hackensack.

To really step back into time, visit the Bergen County Registry of Deeds & Records located at 1 Bergen County Plaza (across from the Courthouse) in Hackensack, Room 150, Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. Bring the name of the property owner, a notebook and a pencil (no pens are allowed in the Records Room). Here you can trace the chain of ownership from Grantor to Grantee, going back to the beginning of the sales. The same room holds Mortgage Records and historic maps. There is a wealth

of information to be found here. The best way to find what you seek is to ask one of the knowledgeable staffers for help once you are there.

Some records are computerized but these still must be accessed on site. The records cannot be searched by property location, but are listed by grantor and grantee (there are indexes available).

5. Stop by the Ridgewood Library's Bolger Heritage Center.

Located on the second floor of the Ridgewood Public Library, you will be able to find such resources as City Directories, Erie Railroad Directories, New Jersey and U. S. Censuses, local newspapers and more available for searching on microfilm. These materials may provide names of residents with occupations and street addresses, as well as local businesses and advertisements plus the occasional map. The Bolger Heritage Center holds county and town histories and records plus genealogies for many of the more prominent area families. Stop by the Reference Desk and they will be glad to set you up on the microfilm reader or sign you in for the Heritage Center. Please note that the materials in the Heritage Center do not circulate, so bring a notebook and a pencil (no pens allowed) and some time for study; laptops are allowed.

To find out additional information on the past owners of your house, check the Federal Census records available on Ancestry Library edition in the Heritage Center.

6. Check the NJ Association of Tax Boards on-line.

Go on-line to <http://www.NJACTB.org> . Click on Record Search in the top row. Switch view to Deed/Sr1a list to find most recent deed transactions, including book, page, date, price, grantor and grantee information.

As you gather all of your information, make sure to document your sources as you write it down. Share your findings with your family; maybe leave a copy for the next people to live in your house. Make sure to donate a copy to the Glen Rock Historical & Preservation Society, too!