THE BUILDING
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TIPS FOR RESEARCHING BUILDING HISTORIES
IN GLENDALE

1. <u>Ask former owners and neighbors</u> (but be careful!)

2. <u>Check for existing research</u>

    2a. The most local planning department for lists of historic resources, building files, etc. In Glendale, contact: https://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/community-development/planning-division/historic-preservation   A list of Glendale's recognized historic resources can be found at: https://www.glendaleca.gov/home/showdocument?id=19528 The Glendale CHRID appears to be unreachable at the moment. Warning: Don't assume a building is not significant if it doesn't show up on a list or in a file—it may simply mean the City hasn't gotten around to surveying or evaluating it yet!

    2b.The most local historical society and historic preservation organization. In Glendale they are one and the same: Ask the Glendale Historical Society if they have files that may have been compiled for tours or for architectural reference. Contact www.glendalehistorical.org

    2c. The most local public library's local history collection. The Glendale Public Library's Special Collections Room has indexes, directories, biographies, architectural books, clipping files and periodicals on buildings, and much more. Contact: https://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/library-arts-culture

If, after steps 1 and 2, you find you need to research your building from scratch:

400 E. California Blvd. #3 ❖ Pasadena, CA 91106-3763
(626) 792-7465 ❖ timgregory@sbcglobal.net
www.buildingbiographer.com

3. Find building permits

3a.Your local building department. Permit records for the City of Glendale can be e-mailed to you from the Building Department upon request at no charge.   The request form is available at: https://www.glendaleca.gov/home/showdocument?id=18355. If you don't hear back from them after ten days, send a reminder e-mail via the "contact us" link on the Building Department's website.

Houses built in neighborhoods before they were annexed into the City would have been permitted by the County. But the County only issued building permits starting in October 1927. Permits issued before the early 1950s are often missing.

3b. If you still have little or no information using step "a" above, try consulting the *Southwest Builder and Contractor* (published under various names weekly 1895-1965) which listed building permit summaries and announced design and building projects by many Southern California architects and contractors. Located on microfilm at the Los Angeles Public Library (history department— some years missing) and in hard-copy at U.S.C. in the Wyatt Architecture Library (years 1920-1965; library card needed).

Hathitrust has digitized issues of both the *Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* and the *Southwest Builder and Contractor* 1909-1922 which are available in a word-searchable database on-line at: https://www.hathitrust.org/

4. Find the name of the original owner(s)–this is the one characteristic of a building that never changes and is often what photographs and magazine articles are indexed under. While you're at it, identify subsequent owners as well (chain-of-title) if a title company has not already done this for you as an owner or Realtor.

4a. Parcel information on-line at: https://portal.assessor.lacounty.gov/ This will give you the Assessor's Parcel Number (APN), legal description, square footage, year built, room count, but not ownership. Print out the "Parcel Map/Map Index."

4b. Los Angeles County Assessor's Reference Library for current ownership and back about thirty years (on computer or from current hard-copy map-book): Room 225, County Hall of Administration (Hahn Building), 500 W. Temple St., downtown Los Angeles.

4c. Assessor's Archives for earlier map-books to trace owners back to 1902: Room 103 (basement), Hall of Records, 320 West Temple Street, downtown Los Angeles (closed Fridays). Take current map-page print-out which identifies earlier map book and page numbers at which you will start your search for owners and improvement dates. Finding the actual construction year of your building may surprise you!

OR **4d**. Consult reverse sections of city directories to trace residents (but they may be tenants, and not owners!) Glendale directories had reverse sections only from the mid-1920s to 1977.

5. Find building records at the Los Angeles County Assessor's district office. (For Glendale: 13800 Balboa Blvd., Sylmar.)   A wonderful, little-known source of information on the original appearance of the property and how it has changed over the years, with or without permits. Building permit numbers and dates are often recorded, as are prior addresses. (For missing County permits this may be your only source for the building permit number and date issued.) You will need signed authorization from the owner to see these records. An authorization form is available on the Assessor's website: https://assessor.lacounty.gov/agent-authorization-form/ choose the "fill and print" option.

6. Search for photographs, plans, etc.   Surprisingly few plans and photos have survived and are often still in the hands of the families of former owners or the descendants of architects and builders. A lot of serendipity may be involved. The Art Museum at the University of California, Santa Barbara has a large collection of the papers of major architects. Also, try: local library and historical society files; Los Angeles Public Library photo database; Huntington Library; U.C.L.A., Special Collections; U.S.C. Digital Archive; California State Library; and On-Line Archive of California (OAC). Photos and mini-floor-plans were sometimes published in architectural journals or home magazines and were often indexed (usually by designers' or owners' names) in *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals* and *Art Index* or in specialized indexes.

7. Search newspapers   Word-searchable newspaper databases can sometimes reveal interesting articles about houses being built and the people who lived in them. Entering an address can even reveal old for-sale ads.

The *Los Angeles Times* Historic Database is available through most major public libraries. A library card is often needed to access.

Glendale News-Press newspapers are on-line from 1905-1914 (weekly) and 1915-1925 (daily) at: https://archive.org/details/glendalelibrary?and%5B%5D=subject%3A%22Glendale+%28Calif.%29--Newspapers%22&sort=date

8. Look at Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps   They can show a bird's-eye-view of the footprint of your building and those of the surrounding neighborhood as they appeared at various times up until the 1950s (available on-line at the Los Angeles Public Library's website)

9. Search for biographical information on former owners, architects, builders, etc.

9a. If you are looking for information on architects, three websites in particular can be helpful:

American Institute of Architects Historical Directory of American Architects: https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/AHDAA/overview

Pacific Coast Architecture Database (PCAD): http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/

Architecture Week Directory: http://www.architectureweek.com/today.html

9b. Local "people" indexes and city directories at your public library, historical society, etc. Early directories included information on people's spouses, professions, places of business, etc.

Word-searchable Glendale city directories from 1908 to 1971 are on-line at: https://glendalehistorical.org/glendale-directories

9c. California Index at the Los Angeles Public Library; on-line at: https://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/visual-collections/california-index

9d. Gale Biography and Genealogy Master Index (on-line through many library websites, but a library card may be needed to access).

9e. California Death Index (CDI) to find death dates from 1905 to 2000:http://www.vitalsearch-ca.com/gen/ca/_vitals/cadeathm.htm

For death dates 2000 to 2014, check the Social Security Death Index: https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/ssdi/

You can then search newspapers published on or after the death-date to see if there was an obituary.

9f. *Avery Index* (see 6 above)--search under architect's name

9g. Census records, passport applications, etc. via www.Ancestry.com

8h. Googling on names and addresses is becoming increasingly useful.

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