Each house holds a story. Someone cleared the land it stands on. Someone sketched out its design. Someone dug a trench and laid the foundation stones and put up the walls. Someone paused while shingling the roof to look out over the surrounding houses and maybe caught a glimpse of the bay and listened for a moment to the barking of the sea lions. A family moved into the house. They cooked their meals there and argued and snuggled on the couch on a Sunday afternoon and worked on jigsaw puzzles and hung stockings over the fireplace for the holidays. A teenaged daughter re-painted the walls of her room purple. Her father added a sun porch out back. The family moved away, and another family moved in, and then another, each one stamping their own mark on the house. Your house. Are you curious about its story?

This guide gives you a list of resources you can use to find out more about your Monterey house. The list includes resources available within the Monterey Public Library as well as elsewhere.

**How to Use This Guide**

If you have a specific question about your house, go to Part 1: “What Do You Want to Know?” The guide poses a series of questions, and for each question suggests a list of resources you can use to answer that question. You can then go to the suggested resource in Part 2 to find out more.

If you are just generally curious about the resources available for house research, you can browse the list of resources in Part 2. The guide starts with resources available at the Monterey Public Library and moves on to resources further afield. There’s a table of contents at the beginning of Part 2 to help you find a particular resource quickly.

Let’s get started.
Part 1: What Do You Want to Know?

For each question you might have about your house, this guide suggests avenues you can explore to find the answer. The suggestions are listed in order of usefulness. If the first suggestion doesn’t lead you to the answer, move onto the next. For more information on a particular suggestion, see the expanded description of the mentioned resource in Part 2 of this guide.

When was my house built?

1. Ask to see the “property jacket” for your house at the City of Monterey Permit and Inspection Services Department (Section J, “Government Resources”). If the City issued a building permit for your house, that permit will show the date of construction. For older houses that pre-dated the permit process, the property jacket might include other information to help you date your house. (Note that not every house has a property jacket.)

2. Check with the County of Monterey Assessor (Section J, “Government Resources”) to see when the property first incurred taxes for “improvements”.

3. If you have an older house that might be considered historic, see if the house is included in one of the Historic Surveys (Section C). The survey often includes at least an estimate of the age of the house.

4. If your house is in the city core, look at the Sanborn maps (Section B, “Maps”) to see when the structure first appears. The maps weren’t updated every year, but you can narrow down the construction period to the range of years between one map update and the next.

5. If you can’t find more definitive data, you can often date the house by its style. See Section I, “Architectural References”.

Who was the original owner? The subsequent owners/occupants?

1. Build a “chain of title” for your house. The chain of title is the list of owners of a property. To build the chain of title, you start with the current owner (you)
and work backwards. From whom did you buy the property and when? Then, from whom did that person buy the property? Each transaction is represented by a deed/title that’s on file with the County of Monterey Recorder (Section J, “Government Resources”). Each deed/title you find takes you one more step back in time. The person who sold (or otherwise transferred) the house (the “grantor”) at some previous time was once the buyer (or recipient, the “grantee”), and that previous transaction gives you the name of that grantor, who in turn was once the grantee, and so on. For more details on finding records in the Recorder’s office, see the expanded notes for that resource in Part 2, Section J.

2. Use the Directories (Section A) to look up your address and see who was living in your house over the years. Note that some addresses have changed.

3. If you have a house with some historic value, see if your house is included in one of the Historic Surveys (Section C). Some surveys or historic reports include information about the early owners.

4. Census records (Section D) can give you the names of people living at your address from 1850 to 1940. Finding the address in the enumeration lists can be tedious because there is no reverse index by address.

5. Check with neighbors about their memory of previous owners and occupants.

How can I find out more about the life of a previous owner?

1. Check out the resources listed in Section G, “Biographies”. You can find biographies of early settlers and prominent citizens. Obituaries and yearbook records also add to the story.

2. If the previous owner was an artist or author or had a role in civic affairs, look in the Clippings File (Section E).

3. Census records (Section D) let you build a picture of a family over the years.

4. For people who don’t make the news, reviewing genealogical records is an effective way to learn about them and their family history. You can consult the Monterey County Genealogy Society (Section K) for tips on genealogical research in Monterey. Or visit the Monterey Family History Center (Section K), where volunteers are available to guide your research. The Monterey Public Library also has a genealogy guide on its website. Check with the staff if you have more questions.

5. Talking with family and neighbors (Section L) is often a great way to learn about previous owners.
Who was the architect? The builder?

1. Ask to see the “property jacket” for your house at the City of Monterey Permit and Inspection Services Department (Section J, “Government Resources”). Blueprints and building permits often include the name of the architect and builder. (Note that not every house has a property jacket.)

2. Ask to see the “address file” for your house at the City of Monterey Planning Department (Section J, “Government Resources”). Any zoning changes for the property might include the name of the owner among the paperwork (though the owner’s name is incidental to a zoning change).

3. Use deed/title records in the Recorder’s office to build the chain of title as described above in “Who was the original owner?” If your house was part of a development, the builder will show up on one of the early deeds, usually along with a mortgage holder. Look for a transaction where a person buys bare land and then resells it with new improvements.

4. If you own a house with historic value, check the Historic Surveys (Section C) for a reference to your house. These surveys sometimes report the name of the architect and builder.

What style is my house?

1. The book “Architecture of the Monterey Peninsula” (Section I) shows some of the common local architectural styles.

2. Another reference, “A field guide to American houses” (Section I), provides a more complete description of architectural styles found in houses across the United States, including here in Monterey. Finding the style of your house can also help you date it.

3. If your house was part of an Historic Survey (Section C), you can often find the style noted in the survey.
How has my house changed over the years?

1. Ask to see the “property jacket” for your house at the City of Monterey Permit and Inspection Services Department (Section J, “Government Resources”). Building permits give an idea of significant changes to the house. Note that not all owners were diligent in taking out the required permits for modifications, and not every house has a property jacket.

2. Ask to see the “address file” for your house at the City of Monterey Planning Department (Section J, “Government Resources”). Any requests for changes to zoning (for example, a variance to build a fence close to the road) will show up in the address file.

3. Consult the Sanborn maps (Section B) to see how the footprint of your house might have changed.

4. For historic houses, the Historic Surveys (Section C) often chronicle the changes to the house over time.

5. Family and neighbors (Section L) might have memories of remodeling work to the house.

How does my house fit into the history of the neighborhood? The city?

1. Check with your neighborhood association (Section L) to get some first-hand insight from other residents near you.

2. If you live in one of the city’s older neighborhoods, consult the Historic Surveys (Section C). The surveys usually describe historically significant houses in the context of the history of the neighborhood.

3. The book “Architecture of the Monterey Peninsula” (Section I) takes a broad brush to the architectural styles of the local area and includes a sense of the history of residential housing.

What’s next?

If you want to dig deeper into the story of your house, you will want to browse the resources listed in Part 2. For example, the photograph collections in the California History Room at the Monterey Public Library, the Monterey County Historical Society, and elsewhere could include a picture of your house or one of its owners. Or an article in Game & Gossip magazine might have referenced your house. Because some of these resources aren’t indexed, your search will take time, with no assurance of finding what you’re after. But along the way you’ll surely find something unexpected and delightful that will enrich your connection to our Monterey community.
Part 2: Resources

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A. Directories

1. Polk Directories
   Polk's Monterey Peninsula directory: including Monterey, Carmel, Del Rey Oaks, Pacific Grove, Sand City and Seaside.
   by R.L. Polk & Co.
   Publisher: South El Monte, Calif. : R.L. Polk & Co.
   917.9476 POL[K]
   A forerunner of our familiar telephone books, these directories not only listed residents by name but included a reverse directory by address (and later by telephone number) in back. To see who was living in your house at a particular time, use the reverse directory. (Note that some addresses have changed over the years.) Then look up the name listing for that person to see additional information, such as occupation or spouse. By extending your search to nearby addresses, you will get a sense of the socio-economic character of your neighborhood over the years.

2. Haines Directories
   Haines Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz city & suburban criss-cross directory.
   by Haines and Company.
   Publisher: Union City, Calif. : Haines and Co.
   917.9476 HAI
The Haines directories, picking up from where Polk has left off, provide a reverse directory by address for the years 1976 to present. The directory gives the occupant name and telephone number and notes whether the address is for a business and/or a residence.

3. **Hill-Donnelly Directories**  
   Hill-Donnelly cross reference directory for Monterey & San Benito Counties, California.  
   by Hill-Donnelly Corporation.  
   Publisher: Tampa, Fla. : Hill-Donnelly Corporation, 19-- -  
   917.9476 HIL  

4. **Directory of Monterey (various publishers)**  
   Directory of Monterey, Pacific Grove, Seaside, Vista Del Rey and Del Monte Grove [1905/1906; 1907]  
   by Perry, T.F.  
   Publisher: Compiled and published by T.F. Perry ; Printed at the Office of the Daily Review, Pacific Grove, Calif., 1905-  
   Directory of Monterey, New Monterey, Del Monte Grove, Seaside, Vista del Rey, Del Monte Heights: 1911  
   Publisher: [s.l.] : Weybret-Lee Co., c1911  
   Directory of Monterey, Del Monte Grove, Seaside, Del Monte Heights, Carmel: 1913  
   by Rust, E.C.  
   Publisher: [s.l.] : Weybret-Lee Co., c1913  
   A directory of Monterey, Del Monte, Pacific Grove, Carmel-by-the-Sea and Seaside [1916/1917]  
   by -- City Directory Company; Monterey Daily Cypress  
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif.; City Directory Company, 1917-  
   Directory of Monterey, Pacific Grove, Carmel, Del Monte, Pebble Beach and Seaside for 1922-1923  
   by -- Peninsula Directory Co  
   Publisher: [S.l.] : Peninsula Directory Co., 1922  
   917.9476 DIR(E)  
   These early directories of Monterey and the Peninsula are indexed by name only. If you already know the name of an owner of your house in the early-20th Century, these directories might provide additional information about that person. If you don’t have a name, you must go page by page to find an address.
B. Maps

1. Sanborn Maps

Printed version-

**Map of Monterey, Monterey Co., Cal.**

by Sanborn Map Company.

Publisher: San Francisco, Calif. : Sanborn Map Company, 1926

MAP/2-10 (2/1926); MAP/2-11 (8/1926 corr 12/49 & 9/56); MAP/2-12 (8/1912 corr 2/24); MAP/2-13 (8/1926 corr 2/56); MAP/2-14 (8/1926 corr 1/59 & 5/60)

Microfilm version-

**Sanborn fire insurance maps; city of Monterey and other California cities**

by Sanborn Map Company; Chadwyck-Healey, Inc.

Publisher: Teaneck, NJ : Chadwyck-Healey, Inc., 1983

MIC 917.9476 SAN (Reel 37: Maps of Monterey include: March 1885; May 1888; March 1892; May 1905; August 1912; August 1926; 1962)

These detailed early maps of the city core of Monterey were originally intended to help fire insurance companies assess liability. The maps show the footprint of all structures, with color coding to indicate construction materials, so they are a great resource for tracking new construction and remodeling work over the years.

One caveat to using the Sanborn maps is that the company updated their maps by cutting and pasting new hand-drawn overlays onto an earlier base map. So, for example, the page might say 1926 (the year of the base map), but the structure could have been pasted in for a correction released in 1949. Only by looking at the first page of each set of maps, where you can find the index of corrections, can you be sure of the range of possible construction dates for a structure on the map.

The Library’s printed versions of the Sanborn maps are very fragile and are accessible only by appointment with Archivist.
To see the microfilm version of the Sanborn maps, ask at the Front Desk. The microfilm version is in black-and-white, so the information portrayed by the original color coding is lost, but a greater range of years is available on microfilm. Since the microfilm reel contains maps for more than just Monterey, first find the first map in the Monterey series and then navigate to the date you want.

2. Other Map Resources

The Monterey Public Library’ California History Room holds hundreds of maps and plans of the city, dating from the earliest years to present. Check the library catalog or consult with the Museums and Archives Manager to find maps that show your house in relation to the broader neighborhood and city over the years.

For subdivision and other recorded survey maps, see the section on maps under the listing for the County of Monterey Recorder (Section J) later in this guide.

Some commercial Internet resources offer historical maps for a fee. Two examples that have old Monterey maps are:

- Historicaerials.com
- Terraserver.com

C. Historic Surveys

The City of Monterey’s rich collection of historic buildings has been the focus of many heritage surveys. Some of these surveys address entire neighborhoods, giving an overview of each building of possible historic significance, while others concentrate on a single house. The surveys often include the cultural and social context of the area as well. The California History Room at the Monterey Public Library maintains a collection of most publicly available surveys. Surveys commissioned by the City are available on its Historic Preservation website. The most useful surveys for researching the history of your home are listed here.

1. **Key to the city**
   by Howard, Donald M.
   Publisher: Pacific Grove, Calif. : Monterey Peninsula Historiography Press, 2002
   979.476 HOW
   These four volumes (1a, 1b, 2, and 3) trace land development in old Monterey through maps and deed records from about 1835 through 1935. Howard has gathered a trove of information on successive owners for each parcel, including some biographical notes and news clippings. Finding a particular property in these
volumes can be challenging. Start by referring to the separate “Visual Index to the Historic ‘Keys’ of Donald M Howard” (979.476 HOW) to locate the city block with your house. Then go to that block in Howard’s volumes. You can also use the separate index by Shirley Ray (see next resource), which provides a glimmer of hope for finding information in Howard’s “Key”.

2. **Index to Key to the City by Donald M Howard**  
   by Ray, Shirley.  
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : Monterey Public Library, California History Room, 2003  
   979.476 RAY  
   Unlocks the information buried in Howard’s four volumes. You can look up either a street name or block number, and Ray’s index points you to the volume(s) and page(s) in Howard’s “Key”.

3. **McCray's City of Monterey, February 1884 map - a total study**  
   by Howard, Donald M.  
   Publisher: [s.l.] : Monterey Peninsula Historiography Press : author; 2006  
   979.476 HOW  
   Starting with the Assessor’s map of Monterey drawn in 1884 by surveyor F. P. McCray, Howard uses deed records to trace the evolution of city lots well into the next century. This resource complements Howard’s “Key to the city” with additional information on deed records.

4. **National Historic Landmark District and Downtown Area Context Statement and Reconnaissance Survey, Monterey, California**  
   by Architectural Resources Group, for the City of Monterey.  
   Publisher: San Francisco, Calif. : Architectural Resources Group, 2012  
   Available online at:  
   https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43709878/NHLD-Downtown_HCS_%26_Survey_Final_Adopted_Feb%202012_w_Reso.pdf  
   This recent historic survey provides an illustrated history of the City of Monterey to give context to buildings of the downtown area. Survey sheets provide details on individual buildings, and the report lists which buildings might quality as historical properties.

5. **Report for the Monterey citywide survey: downtown area**  
   by Circa: Historic Property Development; Monterey (Calif.).  
   Publisher: San Francisco, Calif. : Circa: Historic Property Development, 2001  
   720.9476 CIR  
   Though older than the previous survey – the report was issued in 2001, but evaluations were done earlier (in the 1990s) – this historic survey offers another perspective on historic buildings in the downtown area.
6. **Reconnaissance historic survey: lower old town**  
   by Archives and Architecture: Heritage Resource Partners.  
   Publisher: San Jose, Calif. : Archives and Architecture, 2005  
   720.9476 ARC  
   Also available online at:  
   This historic survey documents the historic buildings in Monterey’s core (Lower Old Town).

7. **Draft Monterey Upper Old Town historic context statement and reconnaissance survey**  
   by Circa Historic Property Development  
   Publisher: San Francisco, Calif. : Circa Historic Property Development, 2007  
   711 MON  
   Also available online at:  
   This survey first gives the historic context for the neighborhood between Clay Street and the Presidio and then lists the properties in this 22-block area and evaluates their historic significance.

8. **A new look at old neighborhoods: historic resource survey**  
   by Brovarney, Dot.  
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : Planning Department, 1987  
   711.5 BRO  
   This pair of historic surveys – Volume 1 for Old Town and Volume 2 for New Monterey – is somewhat older than other surveys but still includes valuable information about historic houses in these two neighborhoods.

9. **Washboard Alley to Lighthouse Ave. : the old New Monterey, 1847-1937**  
   by Howard, Donald M.  
   Publisher: Pacific Grove, Calif. : Donald M. Howard, 2001  
   979.476 HOW  
   If your house is located in New Monterey, this resource can show you the change in ownership over the years as the area developed from the original Mexican grants to its current pattern.

10. **New Monterey historic context statement and reconnaissance survey**  
    by Architectural Resources Group; Monterey (Calif.) Planning Dept.  
    Publisher: San Francisco, Calif. : Architectural Resources Group, 2013
Tracing the History of Your Monterey House

720.9476 ARG
Also available online at:
www.dropbox.com/s/qkwo2nnqsmgih/14_1222_New_Monterey_HCS_and_Survey_Report_WEB.pdf?dl=0

This survey traces the history of the New Monterey area and surveys the historic houses that dot this neighborhood.

11. Final Cannery Row cultural resources survey report
by Architectural Resources Group; Monterey (Calif.) Planning Dept.
Publisher: San Francisco, Calif. : Architectural Resources Group, 2001
720.9476 ARC
Also available online at:

This historic survey catalogs the buildings in the Cannery Row area of Monterey and provides the historic context for the development of that neighborhood. Much of that area is dominated by commercial and industrial buildings, but the report includes the few residential structures as well.

12. Final historic context statement and reconnaissance survey for the Oak Grove neighborhood
by Pacific Municipal Consultants; Monterey Planning Commission.
Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : PMC, 2007
979.476 PMC
Also available online at:
http://monterey.org/Portals/1/peec/historic/Oak_Grove_HCS_Combined.pdf

This survey outlines the historic context of the Oak Grove neighborhood and catalogs the buildings in the area, giving more detail for those properties with historic significance.

13. Historic buildings survey
by Nomellini, Elizabeth.
Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : 1982
917.9476 NOM

This historic survey covers the main Monterey buildings only and has limited use for residential research. However, the survey includes many photographs, which can help in identifying house styles.

14. Pacific Grove Historic Resources Inventory, 2004
by Pacific Grove Heritage Society
Publisher: Pacific Grove, Calif. : City of Pacific Grove, 2004
979.476 PAC (Pacific Grove Public Library)

This historic survey covers houses in the City of Pacific Grove.
15. **Pacific Grove historic home tour.**

    Publisher: Pacific Grove, Calif. : Pacific Grove Heritage Society, 1982
    728.370976 PAC

The Heritage Society of Pacific Grove mounts annual home tours of historic properties in that town. The accompanying booklets for the tours include detailed information about the houses, focusing on their historic significance. The Monterey Public Library holds copies of these tour guides for the years 1982 through 1999, collected in two volumes (v.1, 1982-92; v.2, 1995-99).

16. **Other Surveys and Reports**

Some historically significant houses have been the subject of an Historic Preservation Report or Historic Structure Report. Usually prepared by an architectural consultant or preservation specialist, these reports provide a detailed description of the home and a chronicle of its previous owners. The report might also contain photos, news clippings, floor plans, and other items that give context to the house and its neighborhood. Unfortunately, very few houses in Monterey have been surveyed at this level of detail, and the Monterey Public Library doesn’t have all of these reports, some of which were privately commissioned. Still, if you think your house is historically important, you can search for a possible historic report in the library catalog under the name of the first owner or the address. See also Section J, “Governmental Resources”.

D. **Census Records**

1. **U.S. Census of California**

    by U.S. Bureau of the Census
    MIC/317.3 UNI

The Library holds eight reels of microfilmed census records, one for each decennial census from 1850 through 1930 (excepting the 1890 census, which was lost in a fire at the Federal Commerce Building in 1921):

- 1850 Reel 29/T-6
- 1860 Reel 60/M-653
- 1870 Reel 74/M-593
- 1880 Reel 69/T-9

Excerpted from: 1900 US Federal Census of Monterey County
Ask at the Front Desk for access to these reels.

Census records provide a wealth of information about each person residing in the city, including age, ethnic origin, occupation, marital status, immigration status, and any family members living with them. The census area is divided into districts, and census-takers fan out to enumerate each household in that district. You can flip through the records page by page to find the street address for your house and see who was living there on the date of the census. (Be aware that some street numbers have changed over the years.)

The 1940 Census has been published, but the library doesn’t yet have the microfilm for this year. These records are available online at the U.S. National Archives or through one of the genealogical services (e.g., familysearch.org or ancestry.com). See also section K, “Historical Societies”.

2. Great registers of Monterey County

The Great Registers are early voter lists, and though they don’t include as much information as a full census (and exclude people who weren’t eligible to vote, such as women), they do provide some limited biographical data about people residing in Monterey County in the last half of the 20th Century.

1866-1867 poll list
by Monterey Public Library California History Room.
Clipping File: Census before 1990

1879 great register of Monterey county
Publisher: Salinas, Calif. : Monterey County Clerk.
929.3 EIG

Great register of Monterey County, State of California, 1890
by -- Monterey County Genealogy Society
Publisher: Salinas, Calif. : Monterey County Genealogy Society, 1993
929.3 GRE

Great register of Monterey County, State of California, 1894
by Pacific Grove Heritage Society.
Publisher: Pacific Grove, Calif. : Pacific Grove Heritage Society, 2009
Pacific Grove Public Library Ref/917.94 PAC
E. Clippings File

The California History Room of the Monterey Public Library maintains an extensive collection of newspaper clippings organized by subject in a bank of file cabinets. The clippings come mostly from the Monterey County Herald newspaper but include clippings from other newspapers as well. Most of the clippings date from before 1995.

For researching the history of your house, these subject headings might be most useful:

- **Architects**: If your house was designed by a local architect, look under his/her name in the Architects clipping file.
- **Artists**: If an artist once lived in your house, look under his/her name in the Artists clipping file.
- **Authors**: If an author once lived in your house, look under his/her name in the Authors clipping file.
- **Biography**: If a well-known person once lived in your house, look under his/her name in the Biography clipping file.
- **Neighborhoods**: This file includes clippings on Monterey’s 14 distinct neighborhoods.
- **New Monterey**: Includes clippings specific to the New Monterey neighborhood.
- **Oak Grove**: Includes clippings specific to the Oak Grove neighborhood.

To consult the clipping files, ask at the Front Desk for access to the California History Room.

F. Photographs

Photographs often reveal surprises unrelated to the photographer’s subject. You might find a particular house or person in the background. At the least, the photograph will suggest something about the lifestyles and economic conditions of the time. Aerial photos help trace changes to land use as the city developed.
1. **California History Room Archives**  
   Monterey Public Library

   The Monterey Public Library’s California History Room includes over 27,000 historical images of Monterey and the Monterey Region in its archival repository, including postcards, panoramas, aerials, and other formats. Photograph research is by appointment with the Museums and Archives Manager.

2. **California Views**  
   - **The Pat Hathaway Photo Collection**  
     469 Pacific Street  
     Monterey, California 93940-2702  
     831-373-3811  
     www.caviews.com/

   This private, fee-based photo archive includes over 22,000 photographs of Monterey County as well as photographs from elsewhere in the State. A selection of these images are represented on the California Views website, which also has information about licensing fees.

See also the listing for the **Monterey County Historical Society** (Section K) for information about their collection of some 30,000 photographs of Monterey County.

G. **Biographies**

1. **Biographical indexes to Monterey County histories.**
   by Guinn, James Miller; Watkins, Rolin G; Barrons, Henry D; California Pioneer Project.
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : Library, 2001
   979.476 BIO

   At the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th, five histories of Monterey County were commissioned by prominent citizens, most of whom paid to be included. This index helps you locate a biography within those five histories.
2. **El Susurro. (Monterey High School Yearbook)**  
   by Monterey High School.  
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : The School, 1910-1937.  
   373.05 MON  

   The Library holds most annual Monterey High School yearbooks from 1908 to present. If a previous owner of your house went to high school in Monterey or worked at the high school, you can find early biographical information in these school yearbooks.

3. **El Paisano— words and pictures. (Monterey Peninsula Community College Yearbook)**  
   by Monterey Peninsula College.  
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : The School, 1949-1959.  
   378.05 MON  

   The Library holds Monterey Peninsula College school yearbooks from 1949 to 1959 (with some years missing). If a previous owner of your house went to the community college in Monterey or worked at the college, you can find early biographical information in these school yearbooks.

4. **Obituaries**  

   For most of us, the obituary will be the only time our life story will be summarized in print. Obituaries, generally written by a friend or relative of the deceased, vary widely in the scope and reliability of biographical information, but a good obituary can give you a sense of the character and deeds of the person. An obituary also provides clues about further research, such as family connections. Obituaries are a great resource for finding out about previous owners and occupants of your house.

   For people who died in Monterey County in the last 100+ years, any obituary would have been published in the local newspaper: the *Monterey County Herald* (and its early incarnations, the *Monterey Daily Cypress*, the *Monterey American*, the *Peninsula Daily Herald*, and the *Monterey Peninsula Herald*). If you know the date of death, you can browse the obituary page of the *Herald* over the subsequent several days. Ask at the Front Desk for access to the *Herald* on microfilm.

   If the person you’re researching died after the early 1990s, you can find a shortcut to the obituary by searching the *Monterey County Herald Obituary Index*. This index directs you to the specific date and page of the obituary, saving you the trouble of browsing the newspaper.

   The Obituary Index is available online at:  
   www.pacificgrovelibrary.org/herald-index (January, 1995 onwards)

   or in print form in the California History Room:  
If you don’t know when the person died, you can get that information from the California Death Index, which is available online from various free genealogy sites, including familysearch.org and rootsweb.ancestry.com. These online sites let you quickly search the Death Index for California deaths between 1940 and 1997. For earlier deaths (1905-1939), familysearch.org provides digital images of the original paper records. These index records list the deaths in alphabetical order, and you can browse the records page by page until you find the name you’re looking for.

5. Other Biography Resources

Researching a person’s life story is a treasure hunt, and the information on the lives of most people has not been summarized in a single published biography. You will find biographical information scattered throughout many of the resources described elsewhere in this guide. Take special note of the Directories, Census Records, Clipping File, and Periodicals. And don’t forget the Historical Societies section, where you’ll find information on genealogy research.

H. Periodicals

1. Monterey County Herald (formerly Peninsula Daily Herald and Monterey Peninsula Herald)

   (no call number); latest six months in paper, earlier issues on microfilm; pre-1923 issues under the name of the Herald’s predecessor: Monterey Daily Cypress

   The Monterey Peninsula’s daily newspaper offers a wealth of information on daily life in the area since the early years of the 20th Century. You can browse the real estate section for a perspective on the changing local architecture over the years, look at display ads and classified ads for an idea of what things cost, and generally scan the pages for a glimpse into the social context over the life of your house. To browse the newspaper, ask at the Front Desk for access to the Herald on microfilm.

   To research a particular name or subject in recent issues (1995 to current), you can use one of two indices. The Monterey County Herald Obituary Index catalogs local news articles for the period from January, 1995, through the end of June, 2003. This index is available online at:
   www.pacificgrovelibrary.org/herald-index

   The NewsBank database, available through the Monterey Public Library’s website, offers full-text searching of the Herald’s pages from 2002 to present.

   Note: For earlier newspapers, the Monterey Public Library holds copies of various local papers dating back to the first days of the town. These papers include the Monterey American, Peninsula Advocate, Monterey New Era, Monterey Evening
Tracing the History of Your Monterey House

*Herald, Monterey Daily Express, Monterey Argus, and California Star*. Most issues are available on microfilm, but some are in facsimile. For help with early newspapers, ask at the Front Desk.

2. **Monterey life.**
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : Alarcon Communications Group.

   Billed as "The magazine of California's spectacular central coast", this magazine has articles and advertisements that can give you sense of Monterey life in the 1980s, the years for which the library has holdings. The lack of an index makes it difficult to find specific information about a person or house.

3. **Game & gossip.**
   Publisher: Los Angeles : [s.n.], 1926-
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : [s.n.], 1950-1976
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : June Sorentz, 1977

   Originally billed as “social and sporting news”, with emphasis on the upper social classes of the Del Monte scene, this magazine slowly broadened its social and geographical scope to include middle-class society throughout the Monterey Peninsula. Also published under the titles “What’s Doing” and “California Life”, the magazine has little information on houses but gives a particular view of local social customs.

4. **Noticias de Monterey: Monterey History and Art Association quarterly.**
   by Monterey History and Art Association (Monterey, Calif.).
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : Monterey History and Art Association

   This historical association quarterly includes articles on early pioneers and history, with some information on notable early buildings, though few houses. The Monterey Public Library holds bound volumes of the newsletters from 1990 to 1999. A table of contents at the end of volume 1 lists articles from 1957-67, and a separate bound volume indexes articles from 1968-2000.

5. **The Board and batten newsletter of the Pacific Grove Heritage Society.**
   by Pacific Grove Heritage Society (Pacific Grove, Calif.).
   Publisher: Pacific Grove, Calif. : Pacific Grove Heritage Society

   For house research in Pacific Grove, this newsletter includes articles on many historic properties. A separate index helps locate information. The Monterey Public Library holds issues from 1986 through 2002 in bound volumes and then as individual newsletters to current (published intermittently).
I. Architectural References

1. Architecture of the Monterey Peninsula,
   by Janick, Richard; Boone, Laurie; Seavey, Kent
   Publisher: Monterey, Calif. : Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, 1976
   720.973 MON
   This survey of local architectural styles covers some of the most common styles
   from the missions to the present.

2. A field guide to American houses
   - The definitive guide to identifying and understanding America's domestic
     architecture
   by McAlester, Virginia Savage.
   Publisher: New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2013
   728.0973 MCA
   This guide provides descriptions and illustrations of architectural styles of ordinary
   houses across the United States, with tips on how to distinguish one style from
   another.

J. Governmental Resources

1. City of Monterey Permit
   and Inspection Services
   Department

   580 Pacific Street, Room 4
   Monterey, CA 93940
   831-646-3890

   The Permit and Inspection Services Department
   maintains information on all
   properties within the City of
   Monterey in multiple forms.
   The older information may
   be found in a "property
   jacket" (folder) for most
   properties in the city. Each
   “property jacket” includes
the history of building permits for that property and might include such supporting materials as blueprints (stored on microfiche), engineering reports, and correspondence. The permit history is a great way to track changes to your house over the years. The earliest “property jackets” are archived on microfilm. Later “property jackets” are physical paper folders, and starting in the mid-90s much of the information has been computerized. The Permit and Inspection Services Department has started digitizing the most recent permit documentation.

You can ask to see the “property jacket” for your house by stopping at the front desk of the Permit and Inspection Services Department during office hours. The building official will retrieve the “property jacket”, in whatever form it’s available, and help you understand the material and notes in the file. If the “property jacket” is on microfilm, you can use the film reader right in the office. You can also ask for copies of the materials (except for copyrighted documents).

2. **City of Monterey Planning Department**

570 Pacific Street (Colton Hall, ground floor)
Monterey, CA 93940
831-646-3885

The Planning Department maintains a separate file for many houses in the city. These so-called “address files” include information on any exception issued to the house’s zoning, such as a variance or use permit. Supporting documentation might include blueprints, news clippings, staff reports, or meeting minutes from various commissions. Though the Planning Department doesn’t keep owner demographic information per se – the focus is on the house, not the occupant – some supporting material might include information about the owner. Houses that have had an architectural review have an additional file with material from the Architectural Review Commission (ARC). (The Planning Department is in the process of consolidating the “address file” and ARC file into one single file.)

For houses designated as historic or potentially historic, the “address file” will include more information. Since alterations to potentially historic houses must meet certain preservation standards, the file will contain information about those alterations. The file for a house designated as historic will include copies of any historic report or survey and documentation of the reasons for the historic designation. Alterations to an historic house must go through an historic preservation review process, so the file will include details on alterations to the house.

In addition to the “address file”, houses designated as historic have documentation prepared by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). These reports, which are maintain in binders organized by street name, generally contain more historical
information than you can find in the “address file”. One example is an early blueprint that might be too fragile or rare to be kept in a folder that gets heavy use.

You can ask to see any available “address file”, Architectural Review Commission report, and Historic Preservation Commission report for your house by stopping at the front desk of the Planning Department during office hours. The planners will pull up all materials specific to your house and help you understand the information in the reports. You can also ask for copies of the materials (except for copyrighted documents).

3. **County of Monterey Assessor**

Monterey County Government Center Administration Building
168 West Alisal Street, 1st Floor
Salinas, CA  93901
831-755-5035

At the Assessor’s office, you can ask for a “building report” for your home. This report includes all of the documentation that the Assessor used to determine the value of your property, including size, rooms, condition, and any sketches. The cost is $1 per page. (Basic information about a property is available in a “property characteristics” report, which you can order for $8. This report doesn’t include the sketches, and you’re generally better off asking for the full “building report”.)

For information about the previous sales and list of owners for your home, use one of the self-service computers at the Assessor’s office to bring up an Assessor Inquiry. To make the inquiry, you’ll need the Assessor Parcel Number (APN) for your property, which is available either on your tax bill or from one of the Assessor clerks. The Assessor Inquiry shows all of the information about a single property. To see the list of owners, go to the Ownership History tab. On other tabs you can see the sales for this property and the transfer tax paid. Here’s a hint: divide the transfer tax by .0011 to calculate the purchase price. If you’re not comfortable with using the self-service computers, one of the Assessor clerks can bring up the information on their computer and show you.

4. **County of Monterey Recorder**

Monterey County Government Center Administration Building
168 West Alisal Street, 1st Floor
Salinas, CA  93901
831-755-5041

**Titles, Deeds, and Other Documents**
The place to view actual documents related to the history of your home is the County Recorder’s office. There, you can use a public access computer to find any
recorded document, such as titles, deeds, liens, restrictions, and judgments. (There are two computer systems to choose from: one, the easiest to use, has documents going back to 1978, and the other lets you see older documents.) The documents are organized by owner name (“grantor/grantee”). You can use the ownership history you got from the Assessor’s office to search for documents under those names. Or, you can start with the name of the person you bought your home from and find previous deeds and owners stepping back over the years from buyer to seller. Whichever way you manage your search, the owner name will lead you to a list of documents associated with that name. You can then view the actual document on the screen. If you want copies, the Recorder clerk can make them for $2 per page.

For some older documents, the scanned image is not legible. For these, the Recorder clerk can order the original bound book for you to look at.

When searching for documents by owner, keep in mind that a person might have owned more than one property. You need to review each document to make sure it pertains to your property. Also, the owner name can be different on different documents. For example, one document might have the grantor as “SMITH JOHN” and another document might show it as “SMITH JOHN T”. The computer generally will find these variations, and you can pull up the documents associated with each variation.

The computerized official records of the Recorder’s office from 1978 to present are available on the Recorder’s website. You can search the records from any computer with Internet access, but you can’t view the actual documents. For that, you need to go to the Recorder’s office.

Maps
The Recorder’s office is also a great source for maps. Here, you can find the original subdivision map for your property and perhaps other maps as well. Since maps are not indexed by property, you need to do a bit of searching. Basically, you look through each of the documents you discovered in your owner search and check the property’s legal description for a reference to a map. That reference will give the book (or volume) and page, and you can take this information to a Recorder clerk, who can show you how to view the information on one of their computers. You can get copies of maps for $5 per sheet.
Vital Records
Information on vital records – births, marriage licenses, and deaths – is useful for finding out more about previous owners. Though the County Recorder maintains files of vital records for Monterey County, indexed by name, very little of this information is accessible by the public. For a vital event that happened within the county, you can see only the date of that event.

K. Historical Societies

1. Monterey County Historical Society
   Boronda Adobe History Center
   333 Boronda Road
   Salinas, CA  93907
   831-757-8085
   http://mchsmuseum.com/salinas/

   Founded in 1933, and incorporated in 1955, the Monterey County Historical Society is a non-profit organization maintains a collection of archival materials. These documents are available to the public. For example, the collection includes a building lot survey (Solares) of Monterey completed in 1838. From the American period, the collection has early court records, great registers, wills, and other civil records. The archives also house a wide range of some 30,000 photographs of Monterey County from the mid-1800s to the 1930s (available for purchase), old newspapers, and a variety of miscellaneous historical documents.

   The Society’s website has indexed some information online, including a name index. To use the archives, you can make an appointment by calling the Society.

2. Monterey County Genealogy Society
   PO Box 8144
   Salinas, CA  93912
   http://mocogenso.org/

   The Monterey County Genealogy Society offers support and research assistance to family history researchers, including people looking for biographical information about previous owners of their house. The Society also maintains a few archival documents, such as Monterey County birth records. The Society works closely with the Monterey Family History Center (1024 Noche Buena Street, Seaside; 831-394-1124), where you can find an extensive collection of printed and microfilmed genealogical material, as well as computers for Internet research. Volunteers are available to guide your research.
3. Monterey County Local History Directory of Archives and Resources

www.co.monterey.ca.us/library/MCLHD.html

A project of the Monterey County Historical Advisory Commission in conjunction with the Monterey Regional Collections Roundtable, this online directory lists local archives and local resources for Monterey County history and give an idea of the holdings for each resource. This online directory is a great resource for people who want to extend their house research to a broader historical context.

4. The Heritage Society of Pacific Grove
605 Laurel Avenue
Pacific Grove, CA  93950
Mailing address:
P.O. Box 1007
Pacific Grove, CA  93950
831-372-2898
www.pacificgroveheritage.org

The Heritage Society of Pacific Grove raises awareness of the town’s history and encourages restoration and preservation of its historic buildings. The Society maintains a museum – Ketcham’s Barn – which houses historic artifacts and a collection of architectural heritage photos and other historic photos. The Society also publishes a quarterly newsletter.

L. Family and Neighbors

Consider contacting the previous owners or their descendents to find out more about your house. They might have photographs of the house before it was remodeled. Or they might be able to relate anecdotes of what it was like living there in earlier years.

Likewise, your neighbors, especially those who have lived in the neighborhood a long time, probably have stories about your house and its previous occupants. And have you checked your neighborhood association? The City of Monterey comprises 16 separate neighborhoods, many of which have a neighborhood association where neighbors band together to promote the quality of life in their neighborhood. You can contact the association for your neighborhood to see what other people know about your house as well as to get a better perspective of residential issues in your area. You can find the contact information for your neighborhood association on the City of Monterey’s website at http://monterey.org/en-us/Residents/Neighborhoods. Or check with the City Clerk's Office.
M. For Further Research

1. General References on House Research

Houses and homes: exploring their history.
   by Howe, Barbara; Fleming, Dolores; Kemp, Emory; Overbeck, Ruth Ann
   Publisher: Lanham, Md. : Altamira Press, 1997
   307.336 HOU

For those wanting to dig deeper, this book provides research techniques for researching a house history, starting with a historical framework and working onto the house itself, to see how social, cultural, and technological forces shaped the history of a particular house. The book provides ideas for amateur sleuths as well as the professional. Extensive bibliographies help you take house research to the next level of detail.

Did you find what you were looking for?

We hope this guide helped with your research. Did you run into any stumbling blocks? Can you think of any way we can improve the guide to make it more useful? Please let us know. You can reach us by email at libchr@monterey.org.

Monterey Public Library
California History Room
December, 2015