

EVERY HOME HAS A STORY
Napa Valley Genealogical Society
February 17, 2022

Kathy Nielsen
knielsen68@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Ever wondered about the history of the houses and the land where your ancestors lived?
Curious about the history of your own home?
Every home where you lived has a story.
Every home where your ancestors lived has a story.
This is where you and your family have lived, loved, laughed, cried, and maybe even died.
These homes left their mark on your family and on you.
And you and your family left your mark on that house or that land.

TWO CASE STUDIES

1. Research the house...in particular your house
2. Research the family of your ancestors and look at the house where that family lived

RESEARCHING YOUR HOUSE

Questions to Ask

1. When was your house built?
A Field Guide to American Houses by Virginia Savage McAlester
2. What is the architectural style of your house?
3. Who was the architect? The builder?
4. Who was the original owner? Who else owned and lived in the house?
5. How has the house changed over the years?
6. How does your house fit into the history of the area? Of the time?

Architectural Style

1. Colonial 1625-1840
2. Sod prairie 1800s
3. Folk Houses 1850-1930
4. Romantic Houses 1820-1880
5. Victorian Houses 1860-1900
6. Craftsman 1905-1930
7. Spanish Revival 1915-1940

8. Monterey House 1925-1955
9. Minimal Traditional 1935-1950
10. Ranch House 1950's
11. Mid-Century-Organic 1950s

Create a Timeline

Sources of Information

1. Neighbors
2. Local historical society and public library
3. Directories
4. Deeds
5. Maps
6. County Recorder and Assessor's Office
Keep a research log when visiting the County Recorder and Assessor's Office

RESEARCHING YOUR ANCESTOR'S HOUSE

Questions to Ask

1. What was your ancestors' daily life like?
2. What was it like to live in their town at the turn of the century?

Records that Help Pull your Ancestors' Story Together

1. Architectural references
2. Neighbors
3. Census
4. Voter registration
5. Directories
6. Maps (Zillow, Google Maps, Google Earth, Survey, Sanborn, Plat Maps)
7. Deeds (County Recorder, Assessor's Office)
8. Wills
9. Local Newspapers
10. Photos
11. Local histories (libraries and local historical societies)
12. Historic Registers

Monterey Public Library, California History Room "Tracing the History of Your Monterey House"
<https://files.monterey.org/MPLibrary/Documents/HistoryRoom/Your%20House.pdf>

"Facts get recorded. Stories get remembered. So what's your [home's] story?"
Deborah A. Abbott PhD, Genealogist, RootsTech, 2018

©Katherine Nielsen