

# Find your house's history!



Property research can be difficult and tedious. The best records for understanding property ownership are kept in Oregon at the county level. Before you make the trip into the county clerk's office to scroll through microfilm, here are some tips on how to get started researching property in Marion County. Use the resources below to help you fill out the attached property fact sheet.

## 1) Online County Assessor's Property Records

<https://mcasr.co.marion.or.us/>

Search your address to find current owner, date they bought the property, deed reference numbers, when the buildings on the property were built, the legal description of the property and follow the link to GIS and Assessor's Map information. Inside city limits, the legal description should also give you the addition to the original city plat in which your property was added. This can be useful for searching later on.

## 2) Online County Surveyor Graphic Index

<https://gis.co.marion.or.us/surveygraphicindex/>

This is an online resource that gives you access to all recorded surveys in Marion County. Search by address and get a list of clickable, digital images. In addition to gaining information about the property boundaries, you can also sometimes extrapolate some information for your ownership timeline based on the date the surveys were ordered. Remember that these surveys can be for other property than yours, so be discerning.

## 3) City Directories

Think of city directories like a phone book, even before there were phones. They list individuals living in an area, their address and occupation. Starting in 1932, the Salem area directories included a reverse directory, so you could look up an address and see what was there. This is super helpful in creating a timeline of occupation. Good collections of directories can be found at the Willamette Heritage Center research library and at the Salem Public Library.

## 4) Historic Property Databases

City of Salem - <https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/find-salem-historic-buildings.aspx>.

State Historic Preservation Office - <http://heritagedata.prd.state.or.us/historic/>

Search by address to see if your house is considered historic or is within an historic district. Oftentimes the applications for these designations include a lot research – already done!

## 5) Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

<https://login.ezproxy.ccrls.org/login?url=http%3a%2f%2fsanborn.umi.com>

These maps were put out by the Fire Insurance Company and show an outline of all structures at a specific time. Salem Public Library has a subscription. If you have a Salem library card you can access at home, otherwise you will need to go into the library.

## 6) Online Photo Sites

Oregon Historic Photos Database: <http://photos.salemhistory.net/>

Oregon State Library Photos Database: [https://ccrls.ent.sirsi.net/client/en\\_US/oslpublic](https://ccrls.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/oslpublic)-- click on Photograph Collection. These are searchable databases of historic photos. Sometimes you can get lucky!

## 7) Oregon Digital Newspaper Project

<https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/>

Searches for names of past residents, City Additions, or street names can provide additional clues for property history.

## 8) Google Earth

<https://www.google.com/earth/>

Free and powerful tool. When looking up an area, you can often scroll through past aerial photography. Depending on the location, you can go back to images from the mid-1990s.

## 9) GLO Records

[www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/search/)

Ever wonder who owned your property before your house was built? In Oregon, much of the land was “claimed” starting in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century by settlers pouring in on the Oregon Trail. Their claim records are searchable online. If you know the legal description of the property (Township, Range, Section), you can search using the Government Land Office records through the Bureau of Land Management. Within city limits, you can derive this information from the County Assessor’s map tax lot number. The first 6 – 7 digits will give you Township, Range and Section of your property (i.e. 073W34AB11300 is Township 7 S, Range 3 West, Section 34). Remember a section is a square mile (640 acres) and most land claims weren’t regularly shaped or always within a section. Also click down on the tab below that reads “Surveys” and enter the legal description to get surveys of the land from the 1850s and 1860s.

## 10) Museums and Other Historical Societies

There are a number of museums and other historical societies in the area that may have information that pertains to your house, the property around it or the people that lived there. Remember different institutions index collections differently. At the WHC we are more likely to find photos indexed with people names than just addresses. The Willamette Heritage Center has staff on hand to help you with your research questions every Tuesday – Friday 12 pm - 4 pm at 1313 Mill St SE. Check out the list of other resources throughout the county here: <https://www.willametteheritage.org/whc-research-resources/>.

## 12) City of Salem SPLASH

[https://splash.cityofsalem.net/AMANDA5/eNtrprise/Salem/public/public\\_query\\_permit.jsp](https://splash.cityofsalem.net/AMANDA5/eNtrprise/Salem/public/public_query_permit.jsp)

Building permits are a goldmine of information on the history of your property. You can search these by address online on the City of Salem’s Permit Search Website.

## **II) Other Clues**

Architecture, construction styles, old newspapers stapled to the rafters, even the stories from your neighbors or folks that used to live there can help build the history of your house. If you find something or hear something, write it down!

## **Marion County Property Records**

Property records for the City of Salem reside at the Marion County Clerk's office. They are on microfilm and can be accessed in the Clerk's Office, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Courthouse Square 555 Court St NE, Salem, 97301 - Website for hours: <https://www.co.marion.or.us/CO/Pages/default.aspx#>

Be aware, these records are kind of difficult to work with. The records are indexed in two ways – direct indexes and indirect indexes to property deeds which give either the buyer or the seller's names in alpha order for a specific time period. It can be time consuming to go through each of the periods checking for the info you know to see if the house was bought or sold in that time period, but it will provide you with the best information about ownership changes.

For early property records, you can access these indexes and some of the deeds through the [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org). You will need to register with the site (free) to access the materials, but this can provide a way to look up the deed numbers you are going to want to access prior to your visit so you can make the most of your time there. Also, for those who get a little motion sick scrolling through microfilm.

Marion County Records on Familysearch direct link:

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/image/index?owc=https://www.familysearch.org/service/cds/recapi/sord/collection/2071970/waypoints>

# Property Fact Sheet

**Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Legal Description:**

Block: \_\_\_\_\_ Addition: \_\_\_\_\_

Township: \_\_\_\_ Range: \_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_

**Assessor's Records:**

Property ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Last Sale: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Deed Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation Land Claim**

Certificate No. \_\_\_\_\_

Claimant: \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:**

**Resident Timeline**