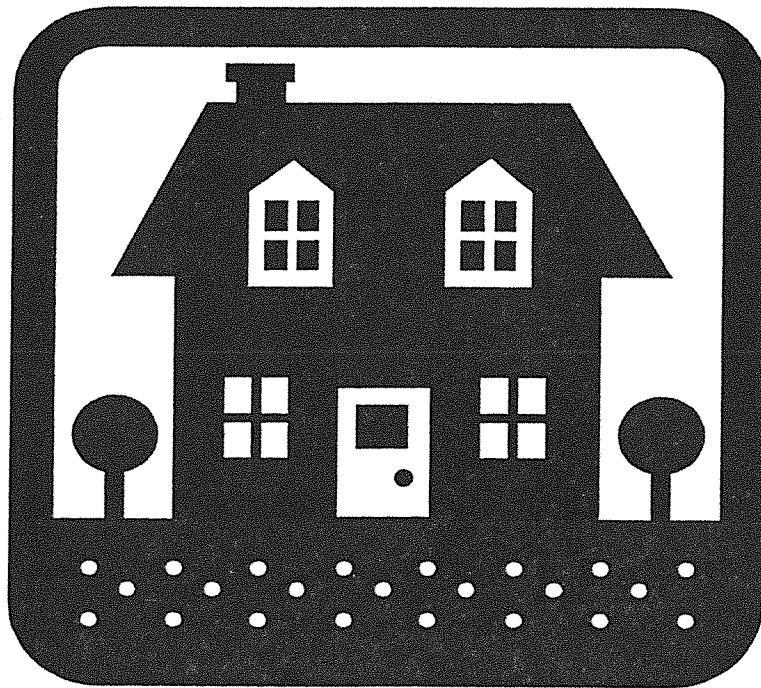


Researching Your House

a guide to tracing the history
of your Morris County home



Morris County Library
Reference Services
30 East Hanover Avenue
Whippany, N. J. 07981
973-285-6969
mocolib1@gti.net

Researching a House: a Guide to Tracing the History of Your Morris County Home

Just as many people are interested in researching their family tree, others in an older house may be interested in finding the history of their house. When was it built? Who lived there previously? Was it the site of an important historical event? Each house research project is different since some searches will reveal many historical details, while other searches will only result in a short list of different owners. This bibliography is a general guide to sources and suggests what questions you may want to ask and the sources that may answer them to complete a history of your house.

Books

How should I start my house history search? These books provide a good introduction.

NJ907.2 Gre
Green, Betsy J.

Discovering the history of your house and your neighborhood.
Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2002.

RT 917.2 GRA

NJ728.37 Lig
Light, Sally

House histories: a guide to tracing the genealogy of your home.
Spencertown, N. Y.: Golden Hill Press, 1989.

NJ721.072 Chi
Chidley, George A.

How to research the history of a house.
Trenton, N. J.: Historic Preservation Office, 2003.

NJ728.028 How
Howard, Hugh

How old is this house?
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989.

NJ728.0722 T698
Travers, Jean

Guide to resources used in historic preservation research.
Washington: Preservation Press, 1978.

State Historical Landmark Status or National Register Listings

Is my house listed on a state or federal register?

New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo>

The listings itemize the building, structures, sites, objects and districts listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

Morris County Historic Sites Survey

NJ 974.974 (town abbreviation) Mor

Covers sites from 1700-1940 and also includes brief development history of each town. Each listing has a description and a photograph. Even if your house is not listed these are useful for identifying neighborhood development and architectural styles prevalent in specific towns.

Deeds/Tax Records

What official tax or ownership records exist for my house?

For an overview of Morris County tax records see:

N. J. Property Values and Taxes – Morris County, N. J.

<http://www.mclib.info/realty.html>

The online records will only reveal the current owner of each property.

Morris County Clerk's Office holds complete historical record of all owners of each property. You must visit the office in person to conduct your own research or hire a title searcher. The only records that can be requested by mail are certified copies if the book and page of the original document is known.

Morris County Clerk

Administration and Records Building, First Floor

Court Street

Morristown, N. J. 07963-0315

<http://www.clerk.morris.nj.us>

Phone: Registry 973-285-6130 Phone: Records Room (Vault) 973-455-9826

Hours: Monday-Friday 8-4 and night hours until 8 on Wednesdays for the Vault

The Registry area of the County Clerk's Office has the responsibility of reviewing deeds, mortgages, maps and all other land related documents for accuracy. A copy of every deed and mortgage recorded in Morris County is on file in the Records Room (Vault). The deed records begin in 1785 and the mortgage records begin in 1765. These records are available for use by the general public to conduct their own searches. Staff is available to help you begin your search, but will not conduct it for you. In addition to deeds and mortgages and their related documents, there are also liens, foreclosures and cancellations of mortgages. However, no surveys are kept here. Sometimes the surveyor is noted on a document or map and the surveyor's office can be contacted for information. Records are computerized from 1968 to present, but earlier records can be searched using print sources. To search these records the full name of grantor or grantee (seller or buyer) must be known. The records can not be searched by property location.

Bring a pencil (no pens allowed) and paper if you wish to take notes. Photocopying is 25 cents a page with higher fees for certified copies. For fees see:
http://www.clerk.morris.nj.us/html/registry/schedule_fees.html

Wills

Was my house or its contents listed in a previous will? You will need the names of previous property owners since the wills are not indexed by property location.

Morris County Surrogate Court
<http://www.morriissurrogate.com>
Administration and Records Building
5th Floor, P.O. Box 900
Morristown, NJ 07963-0900
Phone: 973-285-6500

By appointment only. Administers wills, trusts and estates for Morris County residents and is fully computerized. Microfilm reader-printers are available for reading or reproducing wills and other probate documents.

Morris County Heritage Commission, Morris County Archives
<http://www.co.morris.nj.us/mchc/archives.html>

Morris County Cultural Center
300 Mendham Road
Morris Township, NJ
Phone: 973-631-5455

By appointment only. The Morris County Archives contain records of the Surrogate such as wills, inventories, administrator's sales of land and estate files from 1793 to 1962. Researchers are encouraged to use microfilm at the Surrogates Office first. Microfilm of documents before 1800 is available only at the County Archives.

NJ 929.3 New

New Jersey. Dept. of State
New Jersey Index of Wills.

Baltimore, Genealogical Pub. Co, 1969.

Indexes wills prior to 1901 in the office of the NJ Secretary of State. All indexed wills are held in the NJ State Archives.

New Jersey Public Records and Archives
<http://www.njarchives.org>

NJ 929.3749 Sme

Smeal, Lee

Index to New Jersey Wills, 1689-1890: the Testators.

Salt Lake City, Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems, 1979.

NJ 974.9 New (NJ Glass Case)

Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey.

Archives of the State of New Jersey. (other title)

New Jersey Archives (spine title)

Some volumes in this series contain Abstracts of New Jersey Wills which include wills, administrations and letters of guardianship filed or recorded in the Office of the Secretary of State at Trenton. Includes index of names of persons, and index of place names, but no actual property locations are indexed.

Atlases or Local Maps

Does my house appear on an old map? Some historic maps show property owners, location of buildings and property boundaries.

Atlas 912.74974 Beers

Atlas of Morris County, New Jersey: from actual surveys.

Morristown, N.J.: Morris County Historical Society, 1979.

NJDesk912,74974 Bee

Beers, F.W.

Every-name index for the Atlas of Morris County, New Jersey.

Budd Lake, N.J.: Legacy of America.1994.

Atlas 912.74974 Ins

Insurance maps of Boonton, Summit, Dover.

New York , N.Y.: Sanborn Map Co., 1924.

Includes Dover, Boonton Twp., Boonton, Summit, Dover, Mountain Lakes, Montville, Wharton, and parts of Rockaway Twp.

Atlas 912.74974 Ins

Insurance maps of Morristown, Morristown suburbs, Whippany, Morris Plains and Mt. Tabor.

New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1918.

NJRef 912.74974 Robin

Robinson's atlas of Morris County, New Jersey: compiled from official records, private plans & actual surveys.

New York: E. Robinson, 1887.

Microfil 974.9 (NJ microfilm drawer #9)

Sanborn fire insurance maps. New Jersey. (microfilm)

Teaneck, N. J.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1983.

Includes Morristown, Montclair, Moorestown, Mount Ephraim, Mount Holly, and Mullica Hill.

For additional maps:

NJDesk 912.74974 Map

Maps in the New Jersey collection of the Morris County Library.

Whippany, N.J.: Morris County Library, 1993.

NJ912 Mor

New Jersey map drawers index.

Morris County Library (Whippany, N.J.) 2002.

FYI: Maps and Atlases

<http://www.gti.net/mocolib1/maps.html>

Street / City / Phone Directories

Blue Books or Social Registers

Road Returns

Who was at my address in the past and who were the neighbors at that time?

Street Address Directories for Morris County

These are also known as “criss-cross” directories and list residents on each street by house number including a phone number. Names of residents with unlisted phone numbers are not included, but each house number is included in the directory so the information may still be useful for approximate dating of newer houses. You can work back through the directories to find the first listing for your house.

NJ917.497 Nat (most recent edition is at the Reference Desk)

Consumer and business guide for Morris County, New Jersey and vicinity.

Morris County street address directory with portions of Somerset and Sussex County.

(variant title)

Rochelle Park, N.J.: National Telephone Directory Corp., 19--.

Years owned: 1984 to present

City Directories for Morris County Towns

Not all towns have city directories, but those that do are valuable to researchers because they include names, addresses and occupations for most adult residents of a city. If the building was occupied by renters these may not be listed. Not all towns have city directories. Morris County Library also owns more city directories for other New Jersey locations not listed here.

NJ917.49 Mad

Madison, Chatham, Chatham Township (Morris County, N.J.) city directory.

Newark, N.J.: Price & Lee, 19--.

Years owned: 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971

NJ917.49 Mor

Morris County (New Jersey) directory, 1908-1909: containing a general directory of all places listed on next page, together with a complete business directory of the county, and a list of farmers.

Yonkers, N.Y.: W.L. Richmond, 1908.

Years owned: 1908-1909

NJ917.49 Mor

Morristown, Dover, Madison, Rockaway, Wharton and Morris Plains directory (New Jersey).

Yonkers, N.Y.: W.L. Richmond, 19--.

Years owned: 1917, 1918

NJ917.49Mor

Morristown (New Jersey) city directory.

New York: R.L. Polk, 19--.

Years owned: 1929, 1930, 1943, 1947-48, 1949, 1952-53, 1955, 1962, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1976, 1979, 1982, 1982

NJ Collection

Microfilm Drawer #10

City directories and business directories (various cities in New Jersey) 1835-1861

(microfiche)

NJ Collection

Microfilm Drawer #18

City directories Jersey City, Newark, Paterson 1861-1901 (microfilm reels)

City directories Morris County area: 1883-1898, 1902-1905, 1906-1909 (3 reels)

City directories Morristown, NJ various years from 1885 to 1982 (17 reels)*

*(these reels may cover other towns in Morris County)

Phone books for Morris County

Phone books from 1974 to the present (for the Morris County area only) are owned at the Morris County Library in the New Jersey Collection.

Blue books or Social Register for Morris County

These are lists of middle-class and upper-class residents of a community that sometimes include club memberships. These publications may also be street indexed so you can get an idea of the residents on a street.

NJ917.49 Dau

Dau's New Jersey blue book: containing the names and addresses of twenty thousand prominent residents and much other valuable social information.

Dau Publishing Company, 1912.

Morris County towns included are: Boonton, Chatham, Convent Station, Dover, Madison, Morris Plains and Morristown.

NJ920.074974 Soc

Social list of Morristown, Morris Plains, New Vernon, Basking Ridge, Green Village, Convent, Mendham.

Morristown, N.J.: arranged by Alice G. Fanshawe, 1938.

NJ920.074974

Social list of Morristown and vicinity.

Morristown, N.J.: Shirley Gardner Delmonico, 1970, 1981, 1982.

Road Returns

Morris County, N.J. road returns.

These documents record the layout of surveyed roads with a description of each. The names of owners of property along each route are mentioned. Keep in mind that the roads as they exist now may not have followed the same patterns as earlier roads or the names of roads may have changed. The full records from 1741-1915 are at the Morris County Heritage Commission Archives which can be visited by appointment only. The Morristown Public Library Local History Collection owns *Book A: 1760-1795* and *Book B: 1795-1812* on microfilm which can viewed whenever the library is open.

Census Records

Can the family name of previous owners be traced through past census records?

AncestryPlus online database contains census records from 1790 to 1930 as well as other types of historical records.

There are also Federal and New Jersey State Census records on microfilm in the New Jersey collection.

Oral Histories

Does anyone in the neighborhood have stories about my house or the people who lived there? Interviewing your neighbors who have lived in the community for a long time can provide you with information not found in books. Check with local historical societies. They may have taped interviews with older residents.

NJ974.974 Mort Tur

Turkington, Cheryl C.

Setting up our own city: the black community in Morristown: an oral history project.

Morristown, N.J.: Joint Free Library of Morristown and Morris Township, Local History and Genealogy Department, 1992.

Newspapers

Is there an obituary of a previous owner, story on the architect or builder, or sale advertisements on my house?

Star Ledger (Newark)

MCL owns 1945 to present, indexed from 1989 to present

Daily Record (Morristown)

MCL owns 1900 to present, but not indexed. Morristown Public Library has done an index from 1994 to present with obituaries indexed from 1930-39, 1942 to present

Madison Eagle (Madison)

Not owned at MCL, but indexing available online from 1882 to present

<http://www.rosenet.org/library/eagle-search-dir.htm>

microfilm owned at the Madison Public Library

The New York Times

MCL owns from 1851 to present, in print and online formats

Custom Newspapers Database

Includes local newspapers such as the *Star Ledger*, *Bergen Record* and *New York Times* from January 1, 2000 to present, available at MCL and as a database from home

For lists of other newspapers held at local libraries in Morris County see:

<http://www.mclib.info/papers.html>

<http://www.mclib.info/papersalpha.html>

Haunted Houses

Are there local legends about my house or the surrounding area?

R133.10973 Hau

Haunted places: the national directory: a guide book to ghostly abodes, sacred sites, UFO landings, and other supernatural locations. (New Jersey pages 273-279).

New York: Penguin Books, 2002.

<http://www.haunted-places.com>

NJ001.9409749Wei (Local History Glass Case)

Weird N.J.

Bloomfield, N.J.: M. Scurman, 1992-

Issues from 1992 to 2005 have articles on N.J. folklore, legends, ghosts and curiosities.

NJ001.9409749Pon (Local History Glass Case)

Pontolillo, James

The Weird N. J. index.

Bloomfield, N. J.: Weird, N.J., 2005.

Index of issues 1-23

NJ001.9409749Sce (Local History Glass Case)

Weird N.J.: your travel guide to New Jersey's local legends and best kept secrets.

New York, N.Y.: Barnes & Noble: Silver Lining Books, 1993-

Scene of the Crime Houses

Does my house have an unfortunate past?

NJ364.1523 Tom

Tomlinson, Gerald

Seven Jersey murders.

Xlibris Corp., 2003.

NJ364.1523

Tomlinson, Gerald

Murdered in Jersey.

New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

NJ364.1523Mur

Murder did pay: 19th century New Jersey murders.

Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1982.

New Jersey Vertical File

Use subject heading "Crime and Criminals" for newspaper clippings on local crimes.

Newspapers

Use local indexed newspapers to verify crime reports. Only useful if the name of criminal, victim or date is known.

Building Contracts/ Mechanic Liens

Do architectural drawings exist for my house?

For documenting building construction and design, there are six types of records to explore: building contracts, indexes to building contracts, mechanic lien filed papers, mechanic lien recorded (or docketed) claims, indexes to mechanic liens, and (after 1930) mechanic's notices of intention. The notices of intention describe work that was contracted for, but not yet carried out.

For a good overview of this topic see: *New Jersey's Building Contracts and Mechanic Liens* by Robert W. Craig in *New Jersey History*, vol. 116, nos.1-2, Spring/Summer 1998, pp. 81-90.

The Morris County Heritage Commission, Morris County Archives

Archivist (973) 829-8114 (by appointment only)

Building contracts (1853-1972) These are contracts between owner and contractor for construction of a building that were filed with the County Clerk for buildings for public occupation, such as churches, railroad stations, schools, etc. Private buildings were occasionally filed as well. Building contracts provide information on materials, design and workmanship of structures. In a few instances, plans or drawings are included. These are being microfilmed in Trenton. There is an index by building location and property owner at the Heritage Commission.

Mechanic Lien Claims (1851-1930) These claims briefly describe properties.

Architectural Styles of Houses

Can I identify the style of my house? Was it built by a famous architect? How does it fit in the neighborhood or area? This may help to date the home and note if it is of architectural importance.

HR728 Bai

Bailey, Rosalie Fellows

Pre-revolutionary Dutch houses and families in northern New Jersey and southern New York.

New York, Dover Publications, 1968.

NJ728 P888

Pratt, Dorothy

A guide to Early American homes.

New York: Bonanza Books, 1956.

NJ728 Rae
Rae, John Warden
Mansions of Morris County.
Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 1999.

NJ728.0974 Emb
The Dutch colonial house: its origin, design, modern plan and construction; illustrated with photographs of old examples and American adaptations of style.
New York: McBride, Nast and Company, 1913

NJ728.09749 Sch
Schwartz, Helen
The New Jersey house.
New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983.

NJ728.37 Sti
Stickley, Gustav
Craftsman homes: architecture and furnishings of the American arts and crafts movement.
New York: Dover Publications, 1979.

NJ728.370974 Gut
Guter, Robert P.
Building by the book: pattern architecture in New Jersey.
New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

NJ728.373 Ste
Stevenson, Katherine Cole
Houses by mail: a guide to houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company.
Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1986.

NJ728 Sur
Surdam, Charles E.
Beautiful homes of Morris County and northern New Jersey: containing photographic reproductions....with a brief description from colonial days to the present time.
Morristown, N.J.: Pierson and Surdam, publishers, (19--?).

See also the "Images of America" series that has photographs and memories of many New Jersey towns.

Journals

Was there an article on the historic district where my house is located? Perhaps an article on the history of an area or a family would aid your historic house research. Some suggested journal titles and indexes are:

New Jersey History: a magazine of New Jersey history

(MCL owns Spring 1967 to present. Indexed from 1967 to present by PERSI)

New Jersey Heritage

(MCL owns Winter 2002 to present. No index available)

Early American Life: traditions, period style, antiques, architecture, history

(MCL owns from 1970-April 1996, February 2001-April 2003, December 2003 to present under this title. Under title change *Early American Homes* MCL owns June 1996-December 2000). Indexed from February 1988 to present by ProQuest online periodical database.

This magazine has an excellent overview article on starting your house research, see: *Tracing Your Home's History* by Gregory LeFever in *Early American Life*, February 2006, pp.64-69.

(CD-ROM) New Jersey Collection RefNJ2 Computer

The *Periodical Source Index*, or *PERSI*, is the largest and most widely used index of articles from genealogy and local history periodicals. It can be searched by locality, keywords, surname and periodical title.

New Jersey Collection Vertical File

Are there any clippings from local newspapers that might have house information?

File cabinets containing pamphlets and clippings of historic interest are in the New Jersey Collection of the Morris County Library. Use the subject headings "Morris County – Historic Houses" and the names of specific towns.

Local libraries in Morris County may have similar files with clippings from their town newspapers. For a list of Morris County local libraries see:

<http://www.mainlib.org/libraries>

For a list of Morris County local libraries and their archives collections (including vertical files) see:

<http://www.co.morris.nj.us/MCHC/directory-archives-libraries.html#1>

New Jersey Collection Archives Cabinets

Are there local Morris County documents or manuscripts that might have information on my house or the families that lived there?

NJ974.974Mor Box44 Archives

Local history of the Morris County area ca. the 18th and 19th century (maps, historic houses, family histories).

For a listing of the contents of the Archives Cabinets located in the Quiet Study Room of the Reference Department of the Morris County Library see:

Desk 016.9749Mor

Archives Room finding aid and inventory.

Morris County Library (Whippany, N.J.). Reference Services, 2005.

<http://www.mclib.info/archives.html>

Local Historical Societies or Preservation Associations

Has a local historical association already compiled information on my house? The Chatham Historical Society, for example, has an "adopt-a-house" program where local volunteers research the histories of a selected list of Chatham's older homes.

Morris County Heritage Commission

<http://www.co.morris.nj.us/MCHC>

This commission has a leading role in the preservation of Morris County's historic records and can be visited by appointment only. The Morris County Archives is the county's official depository. For a list of "What's in the Archives Vault?" see:

<http://www.co.morris.nj.us/MCHC/archives.html>

see also their Directory of Historic Morris County online at:

<http://www.co.morris.nj.us/MCHC/directory-archives-associations.html>

or in print:

NJ974.974 Mit

Mitros, David

Directory of historic Morris County, New Jersey: a guide to historical resources: museums, historical associations and archives; with an extensive bibliography of local history.

Morristown, N. J.: The Commission, 1995.

NJ970.0025 Dir

Directory of historical organizations in the United States and Canada.

AASLH Press, American Association for State and Local History, 2002.

The League of Historical Societies of New Jersey

<http://www.lhsnj.org>

Morris County Preservation Trust

<http://www.morrispreservation.org>

Preservation New Jersey

<http://preservationnj.org>

Public Buildings

Was my house used for another purpose in the past? Was it a tavern, rectory or other public building?

NJ 647.94749 Tav

Tavern licenses, 1797-1893.

This list is arranged chronologically and then by name without addresses. Only useful if you know the name of a past owner of your house within a specific time period. Note: There are a number of inaccuracies in this list and a corrected version will be reprinted in 2007.

NJ270.0974 Mor

Morris County churches: 18th and 19th century: with a date of organization and a listing of such vital records and cemetery inscriptions as are available at the Morristown Library.

Morristown Library, 1981.

Hire a Professional to Search

I want to know about my house, but don't have the time to work on this project. Who could I hire to research parts of my house history?

Title Companies

Search the Yellow Pages or the Reference USA database for title companies who would look through property records and search chains of title.

House Historians

These can be located through museums, historical societies, and state historic preservation agencies.

Architectural Historians

The Society of Architectural Historians includes people interested in the study, interpretation and protection of historically significant buildings, see:

<http://www.sah.org>

Preservation New Jersey maintains an online building industry network that includes lists of architectural historians and preservation consultants, see:

http://preservationnj.org/building_network/bin_directory.asp

Compiled by Donna Burkey

Reference Librarian

May 2006



2007 Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Margaret Nordstrom, *Director*, John Inglesino, *Deputy Director*, Douglas R. Cabana,
William J. Chegwiddden, Gene F. Feyl, John J. Murphy, Jack Schrier