

Research Guide

House History Hunting in Logan, Utah

When researching the history of a building, there are generally two types of information that people may search for: 1) architectural facts, such as the date of its construction, the name of the architect, or physical changes of the building over time; and 2) historical facts, such as information about the original owner or other residents over time and interesting events associated with the building or area. The history you are interested in may include either of these types or a combination of the two.

Examine each of the following research ideas to determine if it will help you answer the questions that you have.

Examine the House

To begin, take a close look at your house. Make sure to take careful note of its identifying or unusual features, the materials used in its construction, the shape of the house and its roofline, etc. You may use this information to identify the architectural style of the house which can give an idea of its construction date. When examining the house, also pay attention to any modifications that have been made to the house. It is also important to look at nearby buildings to see whether they contain similar features which will also help to date your property. Finally, examine the inside of your house, checking any areas such as closets, basements, attics, cupboards, etc. that may hold clues to the history of the house.

Talk to People

Talk to anyone who may know something about the history of your house, making it a topic of conversation with people at work, church, clubs, etc. Older neighbors are often an invaluable resource. Ask about who the previous owners were, the land upon which the house was built, what existed at that location prior to construction of the house, and the history of the town/community. If the property has been owned by your family for awhile, check any family resources such as letters, scrapbooks, diaries, and photo albums for possible clues.

Chain of Title Search

When an individual buys a piece of land or a building, there is a legal document called a deed drawn up which transfers ownership of land and property. These deeds are registered with the county recorder. It is therefore possible to learn the names of previous owners of your house over time by examining these records. In addition to providing the names of property owners, deeds can also provide information on construction dates, changes in value and use, and even plot maps. Begin with the deed for the current owners of the property and work your way back from one deed to the next, with each deed providing details on who conveyed the

property to whom. This list of property owners in succession is known as the "chain of title." Contact the Cache County Recorder to begin this search.

Mike Gleed, County Recorder

435-755-1530 or <http://www.cachecounty.org/recorder/contactinfo.php>

Legal Occupants

As it is today, often times the individuals living in a house are not the legal owners of the property. This can be the case if the house is being rented. It may also be the case that your property was inherited and a change of ownership was never officially recorded with Cache County. Finding these former occupants of your house could lead to a goldmine of information. Search the following resources:

1. Phone Books and City Directories

Old phone books and city directories can be useful to create a timeline of former occupants, and possibly provide you with extra details such as occupations. As you search, it is important to keep in mind that your home may have had a different street number, and your street may have even had a different name. City and phone directories, in combination with old maps, are usually the best source for these old street names and numbers. Come to the Logan Library for help with these resources. You may also need to go to the Special Collections at Utah State University.

2. Census Records

The United States has taken a census of its people every ten years since 1790. Although looking at censuses for that early a date will not help in your search of homes in Logan, more recent censuses can. They will include information such as the names, occupations, origins, age, etc. of each of the occupants. These records up to and including the 1930 census have been digitized and are available online through Ancestry.com. Come to the Logan Library to access this resource free of charge. You may also access this resource at the Logan Regional Family History Center in the Historic Logan Tabernacle basement.

Previous Owners or Occupants

Once you have information about the previous owners or occupants, the next step may be trying to contact them. You may be able to track them down by searching the internet or using one of the many commercial people-locator services available. If the owners or occupants are dead, it may be possible to contact their children or grandchildren. Use the census to learn about their children and search for these names. Talk to older community members to see if they know how to contact previous owners. Speaking with those who came before you may allow you to get a better image of the original house. Ask them about changes over time to the

house, its occupants, and the neighborhood. If you are able to contact previous owners, they may have a photograph of the house they would be willing to share!

Other Historical Documents

There may also be other historical documents that could give you additional information about your house. The following documents could be useful:

1. Building Permits

If finding out more about alterations that have been made to your home over time interests you, contact the Community Development department at the City of Logan. They may be able to help you locate permits that have been given for construction projects on your house in the past.

2. County Assessor's Office Records

Another good place to look is at the Cache County Assessor's Office. The assessor keeps records of the taxable value of the buildings in the county, and there may be old appraisals on file that describe the house in great detail.

3. Local Histories

There have been a number of histories written that give some background for the historic homes in Logan. Come to the Logan Library to peruse these sources. It could be that someone has been interested in your home and done some work already.

4. Newspapers and Obituaries

Although few of the historic newspapers in Logan have been indexed, it may be possible to find tremendous information in this resource. Collect the dates for significant events related to your home, then come and look at the newspapers for that date. Obituaries may also be available and could tell you a wealth of details about the former occupants of your home. Come to the Logan Library to search these newspapers.

5. Sanborn Maps

There are several Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps available for Logan. These maps were created to give the fire department a good overview of neighborhoods in the city, the building materials of the structures, and so forth. They are accessible online through the University of Utah's website (http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm4/az_details.php?id=0) or come to the Logan Library to view a hardcopy of each of these maps.

6. Vital Records

Vital records or birth, marriage and death records may also be an important resource. These records could give you important information about past owners or occupants of your home.

Be tenacious and creative. You may find a treasure trove of information or very little, but you will learn something about local history through a study of your house. Once you've completed your search, consider donating a copy of your findings to the Logan Library. Your efforts could be useful to another generation of house history hunters in the future!

Jason Cornelius

Local History Librarian

Logan Library

435-716-9143

Jason.cornelius@loganutah.org