

Every house has a story – discover yours

How to research the history of your house



Image by J.G Park House Auction, George Street, Leichhardt, 1920s

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Introduction

This guide will help you trace the history of your house in the Inner West Council area. Following the steps in this guide can help you find out:

- When your house was built
- Names of owners and occupiers
- Whether your house had a name
- Changes relating to your house
- Name of the subdivision

The research steps outlined in this guide can be carried out at the Inner West Council Libraries. The guide also lists additional resources that can be researched, depending on the type of information required. Researching your house history requires you to piece together a puzzle and be an investigator, it is not a quick process so be prepared to dig.

Specialist staff are available to assist with research enquiries at the following times:

Ashfield Library Monday and Tuesday 10am-1pm

Level 3, 260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield

Phone: 9392 5108

Balmain Library Friday 10am-1pm

370 Darling Street, Balmain

Phone: 9392 5938

Leichhardt Library Tuesday and Thursday 2-5pm, Friday 10am-1pm

Piazza Level, Italian Forum, 23 Norton Street, Leichhardt

Phone: 9392 5226

Marrickville Library Monday and Wednesday 2-5pm

Corner Marrickville and Petersham Roads, Marrickville

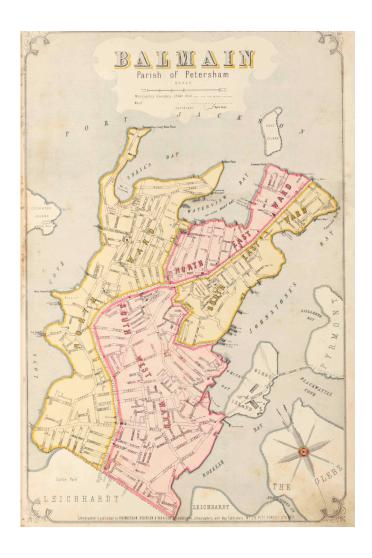
Phone: 9335 2167

Email: history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Before you start researching

- Make a list of what you already know about your house including street address (current or previous), Council ward, nearest intersection, cross street or lane, or house name. Note any names of adjoining houses, prominent buildings nearby that may be older or similar in age to the house, or features such as parks.
- Take a closer look at your house. Features, details and building materials can help you identify
 the architectural style of the house. The house style can help you to broadly date it, if it has
 been built in a style popular at a particular time. Check Australian architectural styles or
 guides available online or books such as A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture:
 styles and terms from 1788 to the present by Richard Apperly, Robert Irving, Peter Reynolds;
 photographs by Solomon Mitchell.
- Talk to neighbours, former owners or long term residents in the street. They may know about former owners or people who lived there. They may even have photos of your house or of the street.
- Gather any papers you have relating to your house such as certificate of land title, deposited plan (DP) and lot numbers or photos of the house.
- Use the Library's online catalogue to search for photos or reports about your house or street.
 Search for the street name or suburb to locate photos or information. You can find a link to the Library's online catalogue from the Favourites on the History computer.
- Information about heritage properties is available on the NSW State Heritage Inventory. You
 can find a link to the Inventory in the Favourites on the History computer. The Library holds
 heritage reports about some of these properties. They can be found using the Library's online
 catalogue.
- Heritage Studies conducted by the former Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils can also provide information about some houses. These can be found using the Library's online catalogue.
- If the house is in Haberfield, look at *Tours of Haberfield Past and Present (Parts 1, 2 and 3)* by Vince Crow. These books include information about a large number of houses in Haberfield. They are available at Ashfield and Haberfield Libraries.

Identify the historic Council and ward your house was located in



Use the Parish of Petersham Maps to identify which historical Council and ward your house was in. You'll need this information to use the Council Valuation and Rate books.

You can find the Council ward maps on the History computer desktop.

Houses in the former Marrickville Council area

Use the 1969 Council Ward map located in the History area to work out which of the following historical Councils your house was in prior to 1949: Petersham, Marrickville, St Peters, Camperdown or Newtown Councils .

Once you've worked out the historic Council, refer to the Parish of Petersham Map for the appropriate Council to identify the ward your house was in.

Houses in the former Leichhardt Council area

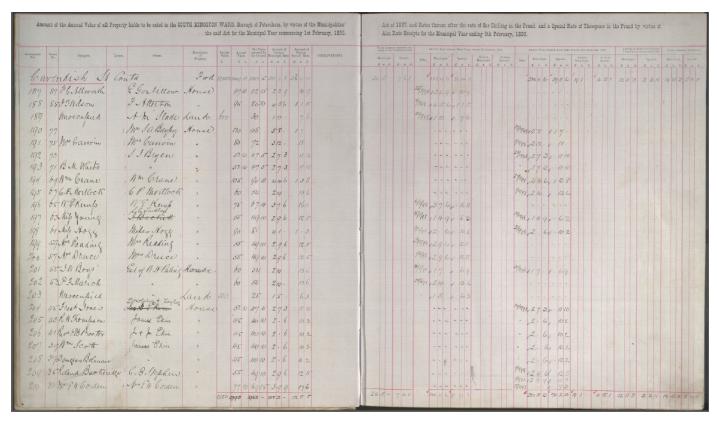
Refer to the 1892 Parish of Petersham Maps for Leichhardt and Balmain to identify the ward your house was in.

Houses in the former Ashfield Council area

Refer to the Parish of Petersham Maps for Ashfield to identify the ward your house was in.

Note: Some street names may have changed since the Parish of Petersham maps were created. Some main streets or roads are Council or ward boundaries. Some streets are included in several Councils eg. Stanmore Road is included in Newtown, Marrickville and Petersham Councils.

Search the relevant Council Valuation assessment or Rate books



1898 - 1899 Petersham Council Rate Book

Valuation assessment and Rate books record basic information about a property including: number, lot, section, land dimensions, description of the property, house name, assessed value and rates due. Property owner details are recorded including name and contact address. The property occupant's name and occupation are sometimes recorded.

Valuation assessment books record the valuation of properties. Rate books record the annual payment of rates to the Council. Rate books normally contain less information than the Valuation assessment books. Valuation assessment and Rate books were compiled either annually or triennially.

Valuation assessment and Rate books are organised chronologically, by ward. Streets are listed in alphabetical order (eg. Ashfield and Marrickville Councils) or by geographical area (eg St Peters and Petersham Councils). Properties are listed by property number - odd numbered properties are listed together and even numbered properties together. Cross streets are also recorded.

Note: house numbers are not always recorded in the early Valuation assessment or Rate books.

You can find the Valuation assessment and Rate books on the History computer desktop.

- Starting with the most recent books, work backwards until you find the dates you are looking
 for eg when the property description is recorded as Land, or when you reach the year your
 relative lived in the house.
- Record details about the property as you go including: owner's name, occupant's name, house name, or change in house number.

Note: Houses were renumbered at various times. There was significant renumbering of houses throughout Marrickville Council area during the years 1923 to 1925. The old numbers were crossed out and replaced by the new number. It is important to systematically work backwards from through the books to ensure you are researching the correct house.

If there is no house number, use the house name, the owner's name, names of neighbouring houses or owners, to locate your house.

Rates & Valuation books held

- Annandale Council 1894 1920*
- Ashfield Council 1872 1984 (hard copy from 1928)
- Balmain 1908-1920*
- Camperdown Council 1885 1908
- Leichhardt 1872-1920*
- Marrickville Council 1886 1984 (hard copy from 1926)
- Newtown Council 1866 1949*
- Petersham Council 1872 1948 (hard copy from 1924)
- St Peters Council 1884 1947 (hard copy from 1924)

*Note – only Rates books are held for some Councils. There are no Valuation assessment books held for the former Annandale, Balmain, Leichhardt or Newtown Councils.

We don't hold every Valuation assessment or Rate book for every Council and ward. Some books are missing.

Council Valuation assessment books from the mid-1920s to the mid-1980s for the former Ashfield and Marrickville Councils, are held at the Council Archives. These records are in hard copy. Access is by appointment only.

To make an appointment, contact the Council Archives history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Troubleshooting

I can't find the street in the Valuation assessment or Rate books

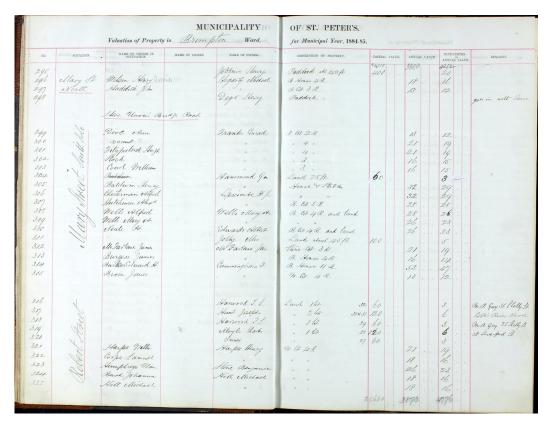
 Check the street existed and hadn't changed its name. Use the Historical Council ward maps to confirm.

A list of street name changes in the former Marrickville Council area can be found in the book *Marrickville: Rural Outpost to Inner City* by Richard Cashman and Chrys Meader, held in the Library .

- If your house is located at an intersection, check if it is listed with the houses on the cross street
- If your house has or had two street frontages, check if it is listed under the other street name
- Check adjoining Wards as boundaries may have changed over time

I can't find my house (or house number)

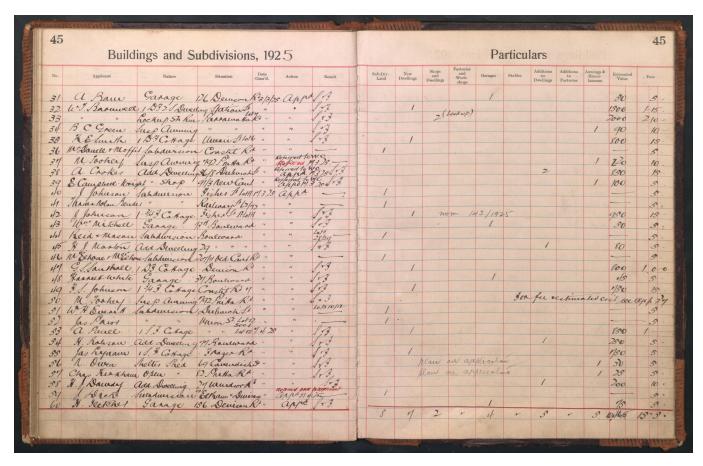
- Check you are looking in the correct Ward. Long streets may appear in more than one ward
- House numbers may not be recorded in early Valuation assessment or Rate books.
 The property owner's name, house name, section and lot number or owners of neighbouring properties can be used to help identify your house
- You may have skipped a year when searching the books and overlooked a transfer of ownership or renumbering of houses. Retrace your steps. Locate the book recording the house and work backwards systematically from there.



1884 - 1885 St Peters Council Valuation book

- House numbers the early books may not record street numbers. Street numbers are recorded
 for one side of the street at a time. All the odd numbers will be together, and the even numbers
 together.
 - Note house numbers may change over time. Where house numbers are changed, the old number is crossed out and replaced by the new number.
- Street names are written horizontally or vertically along the left hand side of the page.
 Note some street names changed over time. A list of street name changes in the former Marrickville Council area can be found in Marrickville: Rural Outpost to Inner City by Richard Cashman and Chrys Meader, held in the Library
- Cross streets and lanes are often noted eg Here Unwins Bridge Road
- House names were not always recorded. House names may also change over time
- Surnames are sometimes spelt differently in different valuation assessment books
- Changes of owner are indicated by the original entry being crossed out and the new details written in
- Occupant details are sometimes recorded, mainly in the earlier books
- Assessment numbers are given to each property. A property may not have the same assessment number in successive years
- Description of property is usually limited to house, cottage, shop, factory or land. Other
 property uses are not usually recorded. Abbreviations are also often used eg Bk (brick), WB
 (weatherboard), Ctg (cottage). Sometimes the number of rooms is recorded.
 Note: Descriptions can vary between assessors.

Building Registers



1925 Petersham Council Building Register

Building Registers were compiled by Council and record applications submitted to Council for approval of building works or subdivision of property. The Registers can be used to confirm construction dates or that works were approved by Council.

Building Registers record applications for:

- Construction of new buildings such as houses, garages or factories
- Alterations to existing buildings such as conversion of a house to flats
- Subdivision of land

The Building Registers usually contain the following information:

- application number
- applicant's name
- property address
- description of the building work
- date the application was submitted
- Council meeting date at which the application was considered
- whether the application was approved, referred to a Committee, subject to conditions or not granted
- · whether the work was started or finished
- Council ward (former Ashfield Council and St Peters Building Registers)

You can find the Building Registers on the History computer desktop.

Building applications are arranged by year and application number. Building application numbers are recorded in the Valuation assessment Books.

Note: most building plans earlier than 1950 have not survived

Building and subdivision registers held

- Ashfield Council 1909 1997 (hard copy from 1981)
- Marrickville Council 1922 1997 (hard copy from 1957)
- Petersham Council 1911 1949
- St Peters Council 1919 1948

Subdivision Plans



Subdivision plans were produced by property developers and real estate agents to promote land sales during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Subdivision plans contain the name of the estate, size and number of lots, date and location of the auction. Subdivision plans often included local landmarks, houses or buildings that existed at the time of the subdivision. Subdivision plans can be used to help you identify when an area was settled and when houses were constructed.

You can find subdivision plans and an index to the plans on the History computer desktop. Use the index to search by street name or suburb if you don't know the Subdivision name.

Note: We do not hold every subdivision produced. There may not be a subdivision for your street, the section or side of your street.

Additional subdivision plans can be found on the State Library of NSW website. You can find a link to the State Library of NSW's subdivision plans from the Favourites on the History computer.

Photos of houses or streets

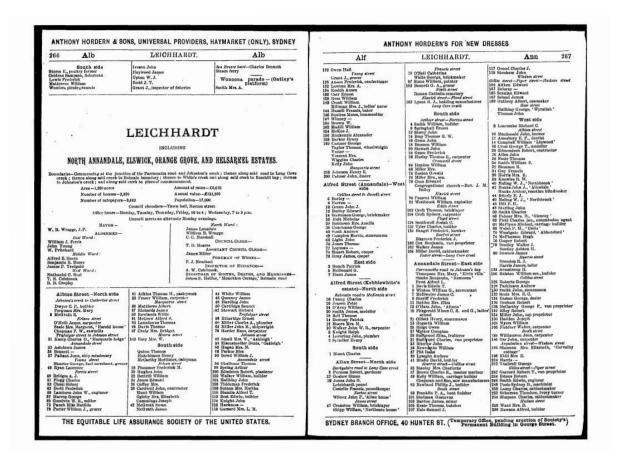


< 27/40 > Peter Reynolds Collection : Norton House, 33 Johnston Street, Annandale. The Library's photo collection contains photos of houses, buildings and streets. You can use the Library online catalogue to search for photos. Search by street name or suburb.

Note: the photo collection doesn't contain photos of all houses or streets. If you have a photo you'd like to loan or donate to the Library, please talk to History staff at the Library or email history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

You can find a link to the Library catalogue from the Favourites on the History computer.

Sands Sydney Directory



Sands Sydney Directory records occupants of residential and commercial properties. It was published annually between 1858 and 1932. The Directory covers every Sydney suburb and is arranged alphabetically by Council area.

You can use the Sands Directory to cross reference information found in the Valuation or Rate books or to fill in gaps if books are unavailable for particular years.

What information is in the Sands Directory:

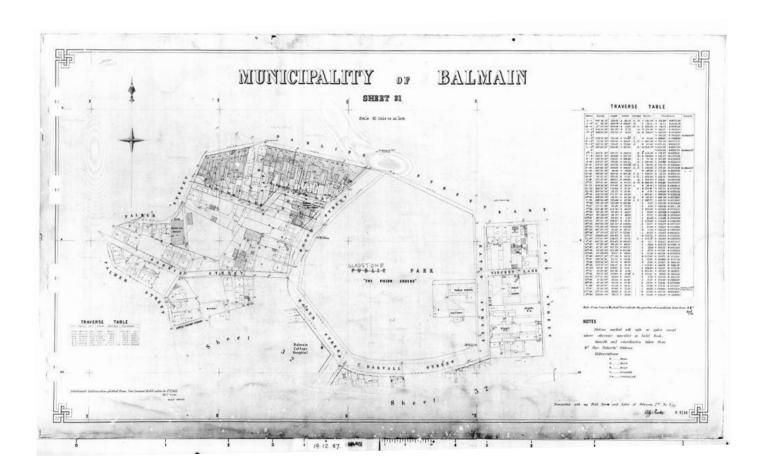
- Names of people who lived in a building. Note the directory doesn't indicate whether the occupants are tenants or owners
- Occupations of occupants (sometimes recorded)
- Type of building eg shop or factory
- House name (sometimes recorded)
- A directory of trades, professions, commercial businesses and organisations

You can find a link to the Sands Directory from the Favourites on the History computer.

Sydney Metropolitan Detail Series plans & Water Board plans

If your house was built prior to 1899 you can use the Metropolitan Details Series plans or the Water Board plans to view the exact building footprints of houses and other buildings. The maps date from approximately 1880s – 1890s.

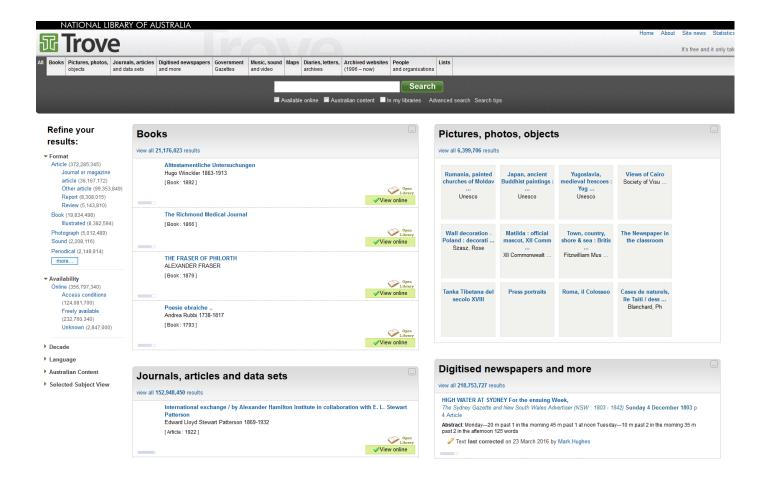
Metropolitan Plans are only available for the some suburbs and streets. You can find a link to the Sydney Metropolitan Detail Series Plans from the Favourites on the History computer.



Trove

You can use TROVE to search for photos, maps, newspaper articles related to your house, the people who owned or lived in the house, the subdivision and more.

You can find a link to TROVE from the Favourites on the History computer.



Six maps

Six Maps provides access to aerial maps of houses, streets and suburbs in NSW. You can use Six Maps to view 1943 and current aerial images of your house.

You can find a link to Six Maps from the Favourites on the History computer.



Council Archives

The Council Archives holds some property related records including Valuation lists of the former Ashfield and Marrickville Councils, dating from the mid-1920s onwards.

Access to the Council Archives is by appointment only. To make an appointment contact the Archives at history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au or phone the Archives.

Former Ashfield Council Archives

Ashfield Library Level 3, 260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield Monday & Tues 10am-1pm by appointment Phone: 9392 5108

Former Marrickville Council Archives

Petersham Town Hall 1st Floor, 105–107 Crystal Street, Petersham Wednesdays 9.30am-5:00pm by appointment Phone: 9335 2185

Paid house history research service

If you don't want to, or can't carry out research yourself, you can pay for staff to do it for you.

The fee for house history research is first half hour free then \$100 per hour, or first half hour free then \$50 per hour, for Pensioner Card/Health Card Holders.

Email history@innerwest.nsw.gov.au to make an enquiry.

Development and Building applications

To access Development and Building application records relating to your house, contact the Council on council@innerwest.nsw.gov.au or 9392 5000.

Other sources of information

NSW Land Registry Services (formerly the Land Titles Office)

NSW Land Registry Services holds a wide range of property records and information relating to properties including land titles, associated plans and historical land grants. http://www.nswlrs.com.au/

Newtown Project

This website features historical Council records, information, photos and subdivision maps of the former Newtown Council.

http://www.newtownproject.com.au/