

How to Research the History of a House in Los Gatos

Any house that was built before 1941 is considered historic by Town law.

If the house number is a 4-digit number, it is a Campbell address.

If the house is a 5-digit number, it is a County address (but some of these were pulled out of the County system and made into Los Gatos addresses).

1. Look in **Patrons' Inquiries binder #3** under Residences, which is located on the shelf above the computers in the History Room. These are houses that were already asked about in the past, and there is a chance the house you are searching for can be in this binder, with all the sources checked already.
2. Look in the **Residences** drawers of the Vertical File, filed alphabetically by street, then numerically by street number. Any photos here would be helpful for the patron.
3. There is a file titled "**Bellringers**" at the beginning of the Residences file in the History Room and there are some newspaper articles about the genesis of the Bellringer program. There is a list of the 100 Bellringers (houses that were built before 1900 and awarded) in this file.
4. A list of 20+ years of the Museums of Los Gatos **Historic Homes Tours** is to be found in the Resource Guides bin on the shelf above the computers. If listed, find the house in the Tour Program for the year it was shown. Programs are in Cabinet #11.
5. The **1941 Tax Assessment Survey** is in blue binders in Cabinet #11. This is an assessment of houses that existed in 1941. The listings are alphabetical by street. An entry will tell you how old the owner thought the house was in 1941, which won't always be accurate. By Town decree, any house built before 1941 is considered historic, and an owner must get permission and permits to change any exterior characteristics.
6. Part of **Anne Bloomfield's Survey of 1991** is in white binders in Cabinet #11. These homes are listed by neighborhood. This is another assessment of houses that was done in 1991, and additional information can potentially be found here.
7. The **Sanborn Maps** are bound in a book that lies on top of the microfilm file cabinet. These maps only indicate outlines of buildings in 1884, 1888, 1891, 1895, 1904, 1908, 1928 and 1944. (1944 maps have been relabeled and appear BEFORE 1928 maps.) These maps will show proportions of buildings and structural significances.
8. **Polk's Directories** are in Cabinet #12. We have volumes 1925-1974, some years missing. Most of these directories have reverse listings so you can look up the street address for owner, and sometimes the owner's occupation. The yellow section is like a telephone directory, and the pink section lists the streets and house numbers and who lived there.
9. Searching on **ancestry.com** (available free only while inside the library) can be helpful if looking for a relative.
10. **Business and telephone directories** are in Cabinet #12, as early as 1881-82.
11. **Books** that are helpful: *History of Los Gatos* by George Bruntz (979.473); *As it Was* by Dora Rankin (in Cabinet #11, R979.473 R21 Los Gatos); *Los Gatos Observed* by Alistair Dallas (979.473); *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia Savage McAlester (728 M11).
12. For additional information, refer the patron to the Planning Department or to the County Recorder's Office at 70 W. Hedding Street in San Jose.