



Local History Factsheet:

Researching the history of your home

For many people a house is more than a building. They are homes in which families are raised, joys celebrated and troubles shared. Our homes are our special places where we create memories and stories, and where we seek security from the world around us and refuge at the end of a busy day. It is not surprising then, that those with older places can find themselves thinking, who else has lived here, what has happened between these walls, what is the story of my place?

The purpose of this factsheet is to provide some tips on how to research the history of older homes and buildings in Charles Sturt. The tips provided can also be used for family history investigations. The factsheet has been compiled from a number of different resources most specifically the document 'How to research the history of your house' from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Some points for starting out

- The City of Charles Sturt does not have files related to the history of individual properties. If you would like to know the history of your property, you will have to do the research.
- Don't be surprised if you don't find a comprehensive history of your property. Most places, unless significant, do not have a lot of information recorded about them.
- Researching the history of your property takes time and effort. Available information is not found in one place so you will need to consult a range of different resources.
- Start with the information you do know, ie the name of the property, full address, previous owners, builders, any information that you may have obtained through conversations with family, friends or neighbours.
- If possible, contact any previous owners that you know about. They may have researched the property's history (and save you the job) or, at the very least, may have some interesting or important stories to tell about their experiences at the property.
- The resources listed below are not the only way to find out more about your property – think like a detective and investigate all the possible avenues that may open up to you as you undertake your research.
- Keep an open mind during your research – don't believe everything contained in documents without consulting more than one source, and watch out for changes to street numbering and names, including suburb names (refer Local History Factsheet – 'Our changing suburbs').
- Consider sharing your historical discoveries with us – you never know it may help someone else with their research!

Research tips and key resources

- Approximate dates of construction can be determined by searching Certificates of Titles, South Australian Directories and Council Rates Assessment Books.
- Certificates of Title – provide details of ownership of the land only. Used in conjunction with other sources, Certificates of Titles can help to narrow down the date range of construction of buildings. For example, the land may have been sub-divided in 1920, meaning that buildings were constructed after the subdivision date.

Andrew Peake's South Australian History Sources (Gould Books, 2007) gives advice on how to research at the Lands Title Office in the chapter titled Land Records.

The Lands Title Office website also provides guidance on historical searching:

http://www.landservices.sa.gov.au/1Public/Historical_Searching/AboutHistoricalSearching.asp#records

- South Australian Directories - provide details of occupiers (not owners) of properties, including their occupation. Often called Almanacs in the early years, they began publication in 1839 and ceased in 1973, when Sands & McDougall was the publisher. They evolved to contain an alphabetical listing of residents and their addresses as well as street by street listings of buildings and their principal tenants. For the period prior to house numbering, you will need to work back from when numbers started and use adjoining houses and Council rates assessment books to help track the house you are researching. This requires special care, as sometimes houses temporarily 'disappear' from the directories when they are unoccupied.

Directories and almanacs are held by the State Library and State Records and those for 1839-1934 are available on microfiche.

- Council Rates Assessment books – provide details of property occupiers, their occupation, length of occupation, neighbours and the property owner. They also provide descriptions of structures on a property and therefore, when compared over time, can indicate when a building was erected. An increase in the rateable value of the land will also indicate when it changed from vacant to occupied and when buildings were enlarged. To search the books successfully it helps to know the original lot or section number of land.

Rates Assessment books for the City of Charles Sturt, comprising the former Hindmarsh, Woodville and Henley & Grange Councils are held at State Records: www.archives.sa.gov.au

- Property files, containing correspondence relating to a property including complaints, court orders and development applications, are retained by council for 15 years. After this time, they are required to be transferred to State Records. To inspect retained Property Files a 'Freedom of Information' application must be lodged (and associated costs paid) with council. People and businesses can opt to not allow release of any information relating to them.
- Heritage listed properties - If your property is State Heritage listed, contact the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for information they have on file regarding the

significance of the building. Information can also be obtained from the Australian Heritage Places Inventory: www.heritage.gov.au/ahpi/index.html

If your property is local heritage listed, contact the City of Charles Sturt for information contained in the relevant heritage survey.

- If your property was previously owned or managed by a State Government agency (ie Housing Trust) contact that agency to determine if they still retain relevant records. Alternatively, records may be held at State Records.
- Maps and aerial photographs may reveal the early settlement of your area. On some more detailed maps your house may actually appear as a 'dot'. The old Fullers maps held at the Lands Titles Office give information relating to the subdivision of the Adelaide metropolitan area. Official aerial photography generally only dates from the late 1940s.

Mapland (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) sells a range of maps and aerial photography. These can be viewed and ordered on line:

www.environment.sa.gov.au/Do_It_Online/Mapland

- Searching historical newspapers may locate advertisements or articles about the subdivision or sale of your property. It may also turn up interesting facts about former residents and local events. The National Library of Australia, through its *Trove* database, has made historic newspapers available for searching online: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
- Unless a significant building, individual photographs of your property are unlikely; however photographic collections held by institutions across Australia, including the State Library of South Australia, can be searched online at www.pictureaustralia.org.
- Local history information will give you an overview of the history of the Charles Sturt area, including how suburbs have developed, the local community and important local economies.
- The Hindmarsh Historical Society operates a museum in the Old Fire Station, Hindmarsh Place (off of Manton Street). The museum contains an extensive photographic collection of the Hindmarsh district, comprising Bowden, Brompton, Ridleyton, West Croydon, West Hindmarsh, Renown Park, Ovingham and Hindmarsh. The Society can also assist with general local history enquiries.

The Museum is open every Wednesday morning from 9am to 12noon and on the first and third Sunday of each month from 2pm to 4pm. The Society secretary can be contacted by phone: 8296 1265 or email: pmporter@senet.com.au

- The Henley & Grange Historical Society is based at Henley Beach and holds a large photographic and ephemera collection for the Henley Beach, West Beach and Grange area. The Society produces an annual journal of history articles on the local area. Copies of the journals are held in the Henley Beach Library.

The Society can be contacted by post at PO Box 56, Henley Beach SA 5022.

- The Woodville Historical Society operates a display at Fisherman's Wharf Markets, Port Adelaide. The Society can provide advice and assistance with historical information on the Woodville area.

The museum display can be visited every Sunday and holiday Mondays from 9am to 5pm.

The Society can be contacted by phone: 8445 9670 or email:

enquiries@thebrocasmuseum.com.au

- The City of Charles Sturt library service runs training courses on researching local and family history resources on the internet that may provide some useful research tips. A list of online family history resources is also available:

www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Family_History_Resources.pdf

- Other local history resources are available from the City of Charles Sturt library service, specifically:

A History of Woodville by Susan Marsden, 1977 (and update, 1987).

Hindmarsh Town by Ronald Parsons, 1974.

From Park Lands to Sea Coast by Mary Geyer with Peter Donovan, 1996.

Further Reading and other useful resources

Our Home in Australia: a description of cottage life in 1860, by J Elliott, 1984.

House Styles in Adelaide: a pictorial history, by JN Persse & DM Rose, 1993 edition.

The Adelaide House 1836 to 1901: the evolution of principal dwelling types by S Pikusa, 1986.

The National Trust Research Manual: Trace the History of Your House or Other Places, edited by Celestina Sagazio, 2004 .

How to trace the history of your house, by Des Regan, 1990.

Australian houses of the '20s & '30s, by Peter Cuffley, 1989 (reprinted 2007).

Australian houses of the '40s & '50s, by Peter Cuffley, 1993.

The Federation house: Australia's own style, by Hugh Fraser, 1986.

Terrace houses in Australia, by Trevor Howells, 1999

What house is that? website interactive by the Victorian heritage department is a fantastic resource for identifying your style of house: www.dpced.vic.gov.au/heritage/heritage-places-and-objects/What-house-is-that

Old magazines such as *Australian Home Beautiful* often provide great information about style and interior design relevant to your house.