

## Research Your House History

### Step 1 – Property Information

Go to the [Skagit County Assessor's website](https://www.skagitcounty.net/Search/Property/) (<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Search/Property/>). Enter the address you wish to research and then note the Parcel, Block, and Lot number(s). Parcel Number is above the owner information with a format similar to "P12345," and block / lot information is in the Current Legal Description. To facilitate the title search, you should record your neighborhood plat name, which can be found on the .pdf map under Map Links of the Assessor's Parcel. The thick purple lines show the plat boundaries and names are in red with a four digit number afterwards. (e.g. Bowman's Central Ship Harbor Water Front 3776).

### Step 2 – Construction Date Window

The construction date on Assessor's Property Search webpage will need to be validated through other records. To narrow your construction date window, start by determining if Sanborn Fire Insurance maps were made for your neighborhood. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, which are available at the Anacortes Museum and the Skagit County Historical Museum in La Conner, were drawn for the Sanborn Insurance Company in the early part of the 20th century, are very detailed and show the footprints of all buildings. Determining construction window(s) will be useful as research continues, especially if referencing archived tax records, which cover different dates. Pay attention to shape and placement of building footprints on the Sanborn Maps, which will help determine if your current home was in place on the map date. A home built in the 20's may be the second or third building to have been built on your property.

### Step 3 – Title Chain of Ownership

There are two options to research transfer of ownership. You can go to any title company and pay them to research your property using their records, or you can go to the County Auditor's office to look up all the public property records on microfiche. The title companies have records sorted by block number, so should be able to conduct the research in 1-2 hours. The county microfiche records are not compiled in a single location (microfiche) and will require more effort. If your house straddles more than one lot, finding out when all lots were owned by the same person will help identify the construction date.

The Skagit County Auditor's Office is located on the 2nd floor of the Administration Building, 700 S 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Mount Vernon. Go to the Records Division and request to look at the microfilmed deeds relating to your property. A microfiche index will identify volume and page numbers (or file number) of the deed transfers. For a small fee, you can obtain photocopies of the deeds you find, and the Auditor's clerks will also do your research for a fee. and can be difficult to read. Make sure you get all tips on use of the microfiche machine from the Auditor's Office staff.

### Step 4 – Assessor Records

This step is optional, but may give you some useful data. Go to the County Assessor's office on opposite end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and ask to see the 1973 "Blue Books." These books contain data from 1973 including a photo of the building and a drawing that includes the exterior dimensions.

## Step 5 – City Directories

The Anacortes Museum has a number of city directories, including some Polk Directories for Skagit County, which are a very useful research aid. Once you have a name and date associated with your property, you can use a directory to gather additional information about the owner, including his/her occupation, where they worked, whether they owned the home or were boarders (residents) and the date of their affiliation with a particular address.

Sample entries from Polk directories:

- Mattice, Wallace J. - assistant cashier Citizen's Bank (Georgia M) h 10th nr L
- Brinck, Chas J. (Desire) lab, AL&B Co, home 1219 10th.

h = home owner; r or b = a boarder or resident (not a home owner); a guide to abbreviations is usually located in the front of the directory.

The Anacortes Museum has Polk directories for 1902, 1905, 1911-12, 1917, 1921-22 and beyond. The State Archives on the Western Washington University campus in Bellingham has a Polk Directory for 1908. Skagit County Historical Museum also has some Polk directories, but you will need to call for an appointment ahead of time.

## Step 6 – Anacortes Museum Photo Archives

You should search street names and residents' names associated with your home in the Anacortes Museum photo archives (Wally Funk Collection). The photo descriptions may include additional details or a glimpse of your house with a known date of the photo. A link to this site can be found on the City of Anacortes Museum webpage.

## Step 7 – Tax Records

If unable to confirm the construction date, the tax rolls of Skagit County (Real Property Tax Rolls of Skagit County, State of Washington for the Year of ----) are located at the [Archives in Bellingham](#) are your best resource. These books are sorted by date with pages organized by block and lot number. Often you can pinpoint the date your house was built if a sudden jump in value occurs based on property improvements. You'll need an appointment and should bring a camera to quickly record the pages.

## Step 8 – Other Resources

Filling in the gaps: For those who wish to do further research, there are a number of additional resources located at the Anacortes Museum and at the [State Archives in Bellingham](#). For example, cemetery records located at the Museum usually provide an individual's date of death and sometimes date of birth and other information. The Museum also maintains files on a number of early residents so you can gather additional information on an owner's life. Other interesting resources include census, marriage, and birth records, as well as the Social Security Death Index for Washington that are available on-line at the [Digital Archives](#). [Family Search](#) is another free, on-line source of this kind of information.