

## HOW TO BE A HOUSE HISTORY DETECTIVE

Uncover the past of your home

BY LAURI SERAFIN

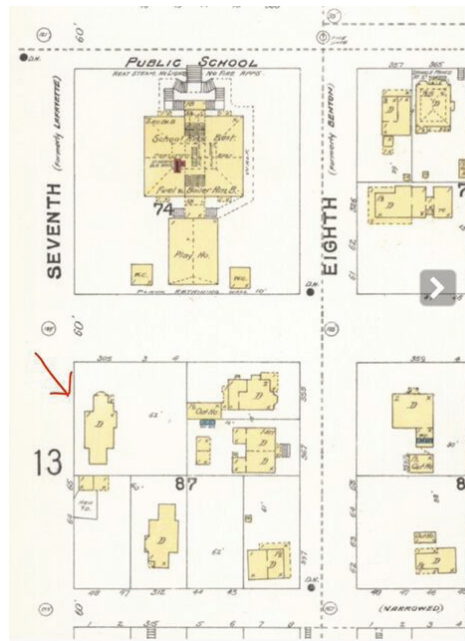
Becoming familiar with the history of your home can add depth and perspective to an old house experience and your place in the chain of ownership.

I have a desire to know who lived and died in my house, but also details of their lives. In this column, I'll discuss how to become a house history detective and do the research.

There are two basic principals to effective research: start with what you know, and work backward.

Primary sources are the best source of information. A primary source is created at the time of the event. Secondary sources interpret and analyze information from primary sources.

Before you begin, know your historic



Library of Congress

A Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Astoria, in the area of Seventh Street and Grand Avenue.

street addresses. Street names changed in Astoria around 1895. Astoria changed the house numbering system around 1955.

I found it easiest to locate the old address using Sanborn maps, city directories and a census. A legal description of the property is helpful. This might be expressed as an addition name, or block and lot number. Names of previous owners or occupants are also extremely useful.

### County land records

These essential records document sales and are generally organized by an index of grantor (seller) and grantee (buyer).

You can use the index to look up records in the correct deed book. Clatsop County records are available free of charge on microfilm from the time the county organized to 1909. They can be found in the Family History Library Catalog at FamilySearch.org.

Look up Clatsop County and you will have access to land records. This research process may take a few hours. Document the chain of ownership and read the record. It might contain descriptions of structures and a price.

Note, it is common in Northwest Oregon for land sales to be recorded in the wife's

MORNING ASTORIAN, AST

### REALTY TRANSFERS

Ole B Olson and wife to Knud A Bendstrup, lots 9 and 10, block 23, Adair's; \$1000.

William Porter to Elemar E and Fred W Bradley, lot 3, east half of lot 4, south half of NW 4 and SW 4 of SW 4 of S 2, T 7 N, R 6 W; with certain reservations for life; \$100.

Archibald E Cann and wife to Toivo Forsstrom, lots 1 and 2, block 87, Olney's; \$100.

Western Cooperage Co to James

A newspaper clipping from 1909, documenting a real estate sale.

name. I traced our property transactions from McClure in Clatsop County to the Warren family; to Capt. Archibald Cann, and Dr. Forsstrom in 1909.

### Sanborn maps

Sanborn maps are detailed maps for fire insurance purposes. They were done at various time intervals and provide an outline of structures on a property, the street address and other information.

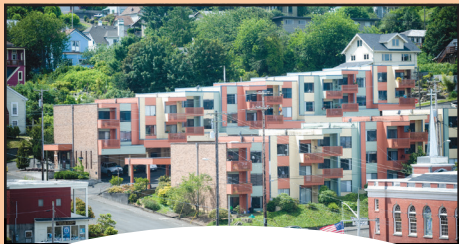
The earliest map I can find of Astoria is dated for 1884 on the Library of Congress website at loc.gov. The maps can be viewed

at multiple websites and on microfilm at the Astoria Library. There are multiple pages and you will need to explore to find your map.

### City directories

City directories were typically created annually and list names, occupations and addresses of residents. They are arranged alphabetically by surname. Reverse directories are available for Astoria as early as the year 1931. City directories for Astoria

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