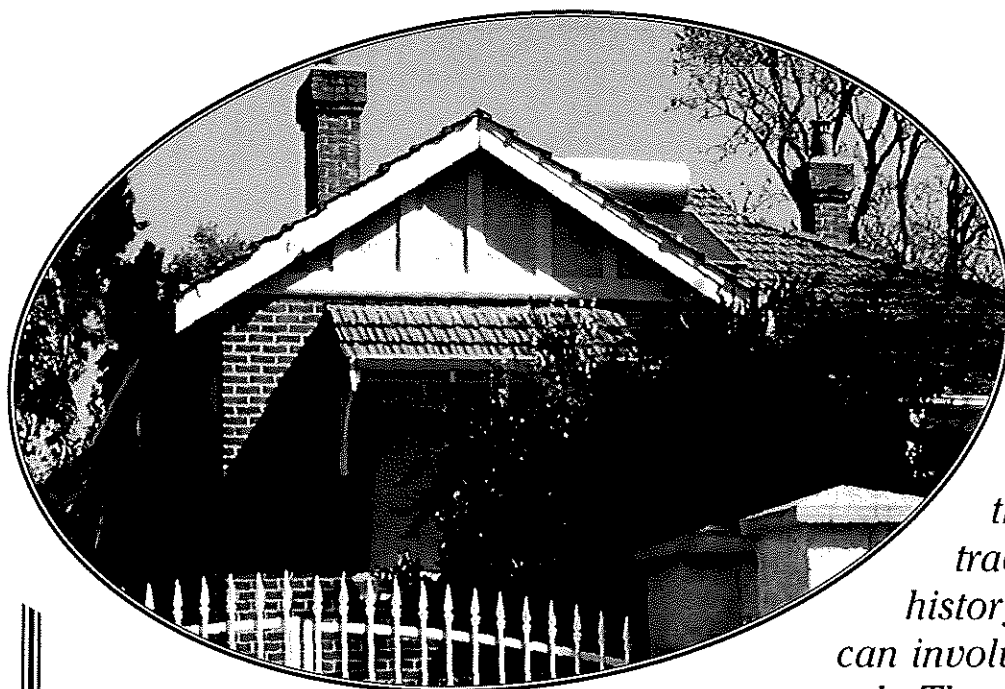


How to trace the history of your house

A BRIEF GUIDE



This guide has been compiled to assist you in the process of tracing your house's history, a process that can involve extensive research. The types of sources you'll need to check and organisations you'll need to visit, are listed inside.

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Bibliography

Further Reading

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Local Studies Librarian

Bassendean Memorial Library

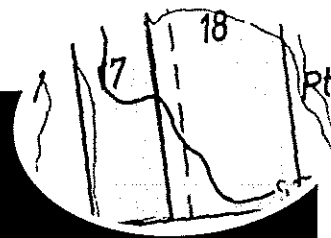
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to Lise Summers, State Records Office and Ruth Andrew, Midland Library, for their assistance.

CONTACT DETAILS

- Bassendean Memorial Library Local Studies Collection
46 Old Perth Road
Bassendean
Tel: 9279 2966

A MAPS AND SUBDIVISION POSTERS



These are helpful in creating a profile of the history and development of your house's neighbourhood and of the past and present characteristics of the suburb in which it is situated. In addition, constant referral to maps and plans whilst searching land transfer documents such as titles and memorials, is extremely important. This is because without access to the reference numbers cited on these plans, it is easy to lose track of the links that will ultimately connect the most recent property owners with the earlier ones.

Types of maps include:

DISTRICT MAPS

District maps are the most basic maps available and are produced by Landgate (formerly the Dept. of Land Information). They are very important because they record the first transfers of Crown portions or allotments from the Crown, to named individuals. 'Crown grants' refer to the transfer of Crown land to individuals, whether as a free grant or as a purchase. Maps will usually only give name of grantee—to find dates one must consult indexes held by Landgate. Early district maps are called cancelled public plans.

Where to go to find district maps:

- Landgate (formerly DLI, Department of Land Information, and DOLA, Department of Land Administration)
1 Midland Square, Midland, WA 6056
Tel: 9273 7373
Email: mailroom@landgate.wa.gov.au

Landgate has microfiche copies of the cancelled public plans and can provide a copy from the microfiche format.

Website: www.landgate.wa.gov.au

N.B. It is well worth looking at this website. Landgate is a most important organization for assistance with discovering land

history and the history of the land on which your house is situated, is often integral to the history of the house itself. Their website gives an excellent review of the services offered, how to access those services and the fees charged

N.B.—Landgate recommends that you submit your enquiry by e-mail and that you don't visit their offices without a prior appointment. Copying charges only will apply if the records you need can be retrieved quickly via Landgate's database.

- State Records Office
Ground Floor, Alexander Library Building
Perth Cultural Centre
Francis Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel: 9427 3360
Website: www.sro.wa.gov.au

N.B. Exploring this website is highly recommended, as many of the information sources required for house searching are housed with SRO.

The State Records Office has the original records for cancelled public plans. You can obtain scanned copies of them or bring in your own camera. It is advisable to ring 2-3 days in advance to request the retrieval of plans, as many of them are stored offsite. Research at SRO is free because you carry it out yourself. Fees only apply for copying.

CADASTRAL PLANS

These maps often carry reference numbers that are useful in the context of title searching. They also sometimes have application numbers and subdivision plan numbers.

Where to go to find cadastral plans:

- Battye Library of West Australian History
3rd Floor, Alexander Library Building
Perth Cultural Centre
Francis Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel: 9427 3291
Website: www.liswa.wa.gov.au

Battye has printed copies of cadastral plans. To search this source, enter your search terms in the "Search Our Catalogue" bar on the State Library of WA's home page. On the next screen, select "Map Collections" from the right-hand, drop-down menu.

- Landgate.

ESTATE AGENTS SUBDIVISION POSTERS

When blocks of land initially went on sale for the purposes of residential development and settlement, estate agents often produced subdivision posters. Typically, such posters showed the layout of lot numbers and surrounded it with a colourful advertisement which expounded the future delights of living in the proposed suburb. As such they can provide a lively and interesting background to the history of your house and its area.

Where to go to find subdivision posters:

- Bassendean Memorial Library Local Studies Collection
46 Old Perth Road
Bassendean, WA 6054
Tel: 9279 2966
- Battye Library of West Australian History

B LAND TITLES AND MEMORIALS



*The name of the first owner of a block of land will often be on the district plan. It is possible to work forward from the original Crown grant or backward from your own property, i.e. from the larger piece of land to the smaller or vice versa, keeping track of the change of ownership. The links in the chain between the original Crown grant and the current title of your property are **intermediate titles** or **memorials**.*

Land Transfer Systems in Australia—there have been **two** types.

1) Old Law or General Law System

Operated prior to 1875 in WA. Each time land was sold, a deed was drawn up and all the deeds forming the chain had to be given to the purchaser. The sale of land was a private matter between seller and purchaser and the transaction did not have to be registered with a government agency. A duplicate memorial could be registered if it was felt prudent to do so, but it was not compulsory. Therefore there will often be gaps in the chain of title prior to 1875. In addition, because indexing was often only under name of purchaser, the chain of title can only be traced forwards and not backwards.

2) Torrens Title System

Introduced in WA in 1874, with the first title under this system being registered in 1875. Under this system, all land transfers had to be registered at the Titles Office and be open to public scrutiny. With the advent of the Torrens System, memorials and intermediate titles were replaced by **titles** and **transfer documents**.

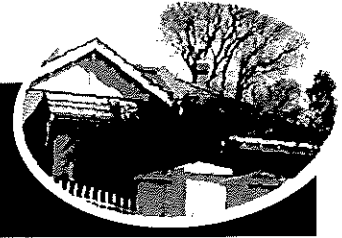
As far as historical research is concerned, the great advantage of the Torrens System is the fact that a given title refers to the title number of the larger piece of land of which it forms part. The earlier title is known as the **parent title**. That parent title in turn has its own parent title and so on, all the way back to the original Crown grant. It is also possible to work forward, because each title document lists the later titles that derive from it. Thus, if a Crown grant occurred after the introduction of the Torrens System, a complete chain of title may be easily constructed.

Begin tracing back using the volume and folio number on your Certificate of Title. If you don't already know the volume and folio number, you can find out by looking at rates or water board notices. These will give you the plan of the subdivision number and lot number. Landgate has an index that converts lot numbers into volume and folio numbers. Alternatively, you can ring up your local council and give them the street address of the property in which you are interested. They should be able to supply the subdivision plan number and lot number.

Where to go to look up intermediate titles, memorials, titles and transfer documents:

- Landgate.
- State Records Office — has indexes and copies of memorials on microfilm to 1986 and holds copies of original grants.

C HOUSE STYLES

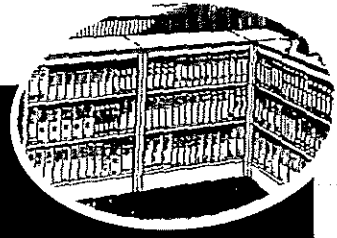


Trying to date your house can be a difficult and imprecise process. Changes in house styles often evolved very slowly over a considerable period of time and some builders never altered their style over many years. To compound the problem, many houses have been extensively altered, extended and modernised, further disguising the original architectural style.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to assign a particular house to a certain era. Useful sources to help you do this are:

- *How to trace the history of your house* by Des Regan and Kate Press. (Ringwood: Penguin, 1990), p. 46-64. (Bassendean Memorial Library has a copy of this).
- *The development of Western Australian Houses, 1829-1980*. (wall poster). (Perth: The Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 1985). (Bassendean Memorial Library has a copy of this).
- *Australian Houses of the Twenties and Thirties* by Peter Cuffley. (Knoxfield, Vic: Five Mile Press, 1989).
- *Australian houses of the Forties and Fifties* by Peter Cuffley. (Knoxfield, Vic: Five Mile Press, 1993).
- *Australian House Styles* by Maisy Stapleton and Ian Stapleton. (Mullumbimby: The Flannel Flower Press, 1997).
- Look for other books about the domestic architecture of Western Australia in your local library or at the Battye Library.
- State Housing Commission and War Service homes. State Records Office has plans for State Housing Commission homes and the Department of Housing and Works holds the indexes. If your house is a SHC dwelling, you can ring the department and they will be able to tell you which type of plan was used.

D STREET DIRECTORIES

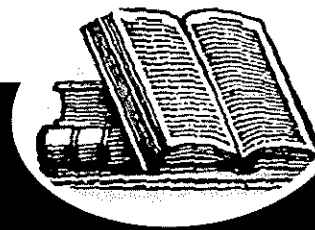


Early post office directories can be a useful source for tracing previous owners. This is done by checking the section that provides street listings of suburbs and districts. The post office directories for Perth cover the years 1895 to 1949, but some of the early editions do not have street listings and merely give alphabetic listings. Street numbers were not included until the mid 1920s. Bassendean is listed for the first time in the 1923 edition of Wise's Post Office Directories, Western Australia. Start with the most recent year that is of interest to you and check backwards to the earliest relevant year. Remember that directories listed occupiers of premises, so those persons may not necessarily be the owners. In addition, people may have had to pay to be included in the directories, making the coverage less complete. Also remember that the street address of your house may have changed and therefore it is a good idea to look at the whole area in which your house is situated and not just at individual streets.

Where to go to find early street directories:

- Battye Library of West Australian History
- Online at www.slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/battye/pods/Post_Office_directories_Contents.html

E COUNCIL RATE BOOKS

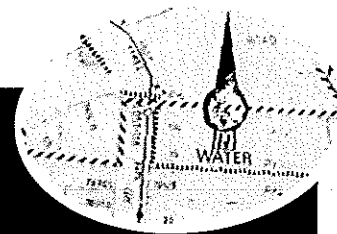


Rate books are the registers that record the property taxes levied by local councils. Those in the Bassendean Memorial Library's Local Studies Collection mostly give the name of the owner, the latter's address, the lot and assessment numbers, the situation of the property, as well as a brief description, e.g. residence, business, farm or mine. Rate books may be at your council offices or in the local history section of your public library. Some rate books will have been deposited with the State Records Office. As with directories, work backwards, concentrate on whole areas, not only specific streets and work from the known to the unknown.

Where to go to consult rate books:

- Bassendean Memorial Library, Local Studies Collection. The library has rate books dating from 1910 to 1963. Some earlier volumes have been indexed.
- State Records Office
- Enquire at the
Town of Bassendean Customer Service Centre
35 Old Perth Road
Bassendean, WA 6054
Tel. 9377 8000

F WATER BOARD RECORDS



Plans drawn up by local sewerage authorities will often include useful information, e.g. the original plan outline before alterations.

- Sewerage plans—may include house numbers, outline plans of dwellings and their outbuildings and the individual house number.
- Field books—these provide slightly more information than the sewerage plans as they may include a not-to-scale diagram of the rooms of a house.

Where to find Water Board plans:

- State Records Office

Sewerage plans cover the period 1901–1955 approximately. There are two sets, one in the Public Works Department plan sets, circa 1901 and the other major sequence is from 1911–1995. They are available on microfilm.

SRO also has field books.

G

BIRTH, DEATH AND MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES, BURIAL RECORDS AND WILLS

*Births
Marriages
Deaths*

These documents are useful if you are interested in augmenting your house's history by tracing information about the individuals and families who have lived in the house since its construction.

Where to find birth, death and marriage certificates, burial records and wills:

Birth, death and marriage records

- Registrar General's Office
Level 10, Westralia Square
141 St. Georges Terrace, Perth, WA 6000
Tel: 1300 305 021 Website: www.justice.wa.gov.au
- State Records Office
- Battye Library of West Australian History
- Western Australian Genealogical Society Library
5/48 May Street, Bayswater, WA 6053
Tel: 9271 4311 Website: www.wags.org.au

Burials

- Metropolitan Cemeteries Board
Houses records of people buried at Karrakatta, Fremantle, Guildford, Midland and Pinaroo.
Website: www.mcb.wa.gov.au
Email: mcb@mcb.wa.gov.au

Wills

- Probate Registry
14th Floor, National Mutual Building
111 St. Georges Terrace, Perth, WA 6000
Tel: 9421 5152 Website: www.supremecourt.wa.gov.au
- State Records Office
Indexes to wills and Letters of Administration on microfilm. Those wills that don't go through probate won't be held at SRO. Precis wills and Letters of Administration to 1947 are also held on microfilm.

Bibliography

How to trace the history of your house by Des Regan and Kate Press.
(Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1990)

Further Reading

A Heritage handbook; edited by Graeme Davison and Chris McConville,
for the Monash Public History Group. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991)