

# Harrison Memorial Library

## Henry Meade Williams Local History Department

### Reference Guide - Researching homes or buildings in Carmel

The following resources have been identified as useful when helping library patrons research homes in Carmel:

- Polk's City Directories: These are located on the shelves in the bookcase in front of the librarian's desk. The Polk's were not published every year. We have a complete run of what they did publish for this area. The Polk's City Directories contain information on where the person lived and sometimes what their profession/job was. If the home is inside Carmel proper it will not have a normal address it will say something like "Santa Lucia 2SE of Dolores street W side" or "Camino Real btw Ocean and 4th avs." The second example is not very helpful because it is so vague, but the first one can be used to pinpoint where the house is/was using a map.
- Bell Telephone Directories / Carmel Cottage Guides: These are located in the same glass case as the Polk's City Directories, on the slim middle shelf. We only have a short run of the Bell Telephone books, but they can sometimes fill in gaps that the Polk's miss. The Carmel Cottage Guides 1934 and 1937 are maps printed with the names of Carmel Cottages and sometimes the owner. These were each part of slim telephone books that are located on that middle shelf as well.
- Historic Resources Inventory: Contained in two binders located on the shelf above the librarian's desk. The Historic Resources Inventory was created by the planning department and is a compilation of all of the residential and commercial properties in Carmel-by-the-Sea that have been deemed historic. Each property has a report that gives information about the property such as the architectural style, architect, builder, previous owners, etc. The properties are in order by block number. If you don't know they block number, but you do know the house/building name you will have to skim through to look for that.
- Building Permits 1920-1933, 1939-1940: Located in a binder above the librarian's desk. These were records that were kept by City Clerk, Sadie Van Brower. They are in order by date. If you think you know when the house was built this is a helpful organization scheme, if not, you can skim through and look for either the person's name who would have filed the building permit, or the block and lot numbers.
- List of Deeds of Property, Carmel Development Company Papers, 1903-1935: During the 1930's there was a dispute between certain business owners who wanted to sell alcohol and the CDC, who had a clause in their deeds prohibiting the sale of liquor. However some properties were actually sold by Santiago Duckworth, before the CDC was formed by Devendorf and Powers. To settle the dispute the judge ordered the CDC establish which deeds of property it had sold since its inception. It is arranged by date. Located in the same binder as the building permits above the librarian's desk.
- M.J. Murphy estimates/costs for home building/projects 1915-1917: These are M.J. Murphy's handwritten estimates for projects around the peninsula. They are arranged in alphabetical order by the name of the property owner. Located in the same binder as the building permits.

- Carmel Encyclopedia of Cartography, Volumes I-VII, by Don Howard: These books are located above the librarian's desk in between the Historic Resources Inventory binders and Building Permits binder. Don Howard has compiled Sanborn maps, early building permit information, and other maps and information. It must be searched by lot and block number. Each volume corresponds to a different section of town.
- Carmel Preservation Society Collection C363: Fourteen boxes located in the vault. Carmel Preservation Foundation, was named in 1988 by mayor Ken White to come up with an architectural preservation ordinance. The group comprised of 30 members under preservationist and contractor, Enid Sales leadership, surveyed over 2,000 properties in Carmel. Approximately three hundred structures or sites and 4 districts were identified as having historic significance. CPF compiled their information from city files and took exterior photographs of each structure surveyed, and this became the Historic Resources Inventory (see above). This collection is comprised of all of the research (articles, maps, etc.) that volunteers did, plus block books 1916, 1930, 1946 (dates are approximate) for the city that list who held the property at that time. See finding aid for more details about the contents of each box and folder.
- Sanborn Maps: Located online on the Local History Page Research Resources, or on microfilm, or as part of C363 (see finding aid for more details). Though the Sanborn maps were not done every year, it is helpful when pinpointing dates that houses / buildings first appeared on a certain lot and block. Additions can also be traced using these maps.
- Local History Index (card catalog) / A Tribute to Yesterday / Creating Carmel: The Local History Index is the card catalog located in the Local History Department. All of the Local History Collections have been indexed in the card catalog, as well as *A Tribute to Yesterday* and *Creating Carmel*, and the Carmel Pine Cone. *A Tribute to Yesterday* and *Creating Carmel* are books that are both located on the shelf above the librarian's desk. These resources can be used to look up biographical information about previous homeowners, builders, architects, and the houses / buildings themselves.
- Planning Department: Located at City Hall, Monte Verde between Ocean and 7th. The Planning Department holds many of the building files on everything built or remodeled in Carmel-by-the-Sea, which includes building permit information, plans, correspondence, etc. By no means are the files comprehensive and they only encompasses the one square-mile of Carmel. When referring researchers to the Planning Department be sure that they have at the very least the block number of the home they are looking for and if possible the lot number. Some homeowners have their APN (Assessor's Parcel Number) which is very helpful for the planning department. They cannot search by resident's name. If the home is not within the boundaries of Carmel-by-the-Sea then the person must go to the County Assessor's office in Salinas.
- Monterey County Assessor's Office: When all other resources have been exhausted or someone is looking for information on a property outside of Carmel proper offer them the contact information for the Assessor's Office. Located on the first floor of the Monterey County Government Center, 168 W. Alisal Street, Salinas, CA Phone: (831) 755-5035 or email [assessor@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:assessor@co.monterey.ca.us) They will need to have their APN (Assessor's Parcel Number) or at the very least know the exact location of the property. The patron can figure out the APN online by searching the assessor's webpage [http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/assessor/intro\\_asmt-query.htm](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/assessor/intro_asmt-query.htm) ..

Here are the two most common house / building related questions that the Local History Department receives:

Question: *We are visiting town for the week and we are trying to locate the house that our relatives used to own. Can you help us locate the house?*

1. Using the name of the relative, start by looking them up in the Polk's City Directories to find an address. As mentioned previously, Carmel addresses can be tricky. Sometimes the Polk's give detailed information and sometimes it does not. Researchers need to be reminded that homes and properties have likely changed since their relative lived here, so the structure may not be standing any longer, may have been remodeled, or lots combined.
2. If you don't find anything, it could be that the researcher's relative only stayed briefly, which would explain why they wouldn't be in the Polk's. If they rented a house this can also make them trickier to find since there is less likelihood of a paper trail.
3. If the researcher thinks that their relative was here in the early days of Carmel and you have an approximate address, at the very least, two potential blocks that the house could be on, you can either check Don Howard's books to see who originally owned the property, or check the block books from the Carmel Preservation Foundation Collection.
4. Unless you have discovered a potential block that the house was on, don't send them to the Planning Department because the Planning Department will not be able to help them if they do not have a block number at the very least.

Question: *We just purchased a house in Carmel and we want to know the history of it. Can you help us figure out who used to live in our house and if it is historically significant?*

1. In this situation, the first thing to do is find out where the researcher lives and whether or not they have already been to the Planning Department.
2. If they have been to the Planning Department and have information that they received there, such as names of previous owners, you can start by looking these people up in the Local History Index to see if there is anything on them in the Pine Cone, Nixon Files, or any other local history resources. If there is nothing on the previous owners in the index at the very least you can try the Polk's City directories to see if they list a profession. Another thing that you can do is to look the person up in the Social Security Death or the California Death Index, just to see if anything comes up. If you can figure out a death place and date you can usually track down an obituary, either in the Pine Cone, if the person died in Carmel, or refer the researcher to Monterey or Pacific Grove Public Libraries if necessary.
3. If the researcher has not been to the Planning Department you begin your research by looking up the location of the home in the block books from C363 or Don Howard's books. This usually yields up the name of the original owner. Then you can begin to do everything in step 2. If you aren't able to locate anything on the house or its owners at all, send them to the Planning Department.

Sometimes we just don't have any information on that particular house / building. Take down their contact information and tell them that the Local History Librarian will contact them if anything is found in the future.