

Bellingham Public Library



Bellingham Public Library
Reference Desk
210 Central Avenue
360-778-7323
www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org

Library Resources for Researching the History of your Home or Property

- **Polk City Directories** list names, spouses, and occupations of property residents. The library's holdings include 1890, 1899 – date. Beginning in 1931, cross-indexed by address.
- **Information on donation** land claims (includes index to applicants' names, birthplace, when arrived in WA Territory, children—if any, and physical description of the property).

[Washington Territory donation land claims : an abstract of information in the land claim papers of persons who settled in Washington Territory before 1856.](#)
Seattle, Wash. The Society, 1980.

- **Local history collection** provides community history, town leaders, etc.
- **Bellingham newspapers on microfilm** are the diaries of the community and its early pioneers with social events, legal entanglements, and obituaries.
- **Bellingham Herald** (microfilm) includes special real estate features for many houses (a partial index is available at the Reference Desk of the main library). October 27, 1906 – November 16, 1907 (“Bellingham Beautiful Home Series”).
- **Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps** provide detailed structural information on buildings by address, block number and property boundaries. They include a footprint of the structure and its function (e.g. dwelling, stable, warehouse, etc.), type of construction, location of windows and doors and other features. The original volumes were updated with “pasteovers” that masked earlier features, but these were recaptured by microfilm copies of those earlier volumes for the towns of Bellingham, Fairhaven, Sehome, Whatcom and New Whatcom.
- **Census and genealogical information** is available in two databases and printed volumes.
 - **Ancestry® Library Edition** – An online database which includes census, vital, church, court, and immigration records for the U.S. and United

Kingdom as well as records from Canada and other countries. Only available at Bellingham, Fairhaven and Lynden libraries; no remote access.

- **Heritage Quest** – This online database assembles genealogies, local histories, primary source materials, and genealogical and local history serials. U.S. census information is now available for 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1910, 1920 and 1930. Available via Bellingham Public Library website (www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org) and requires library card number (either BPL or Whatcom County Library System) to login.
- **Whatcom Genealogy Censuses and Indexes**
 - Marriage – Records of Whatcom County, 1890-1909 (print copies only)
 - Cemetery – Records of Whatcom County, thru 1985 (available in print and on cd-rom)
 - Whatcom County Federal U.S. Census, 1860-1930 (available in print and/or microfilm)—a major drawback was the nationwide destruction of the 1890 census
 - Whatcom County Territorial Census, 1871, 1885, 1887, 1889

- **General guides** with clues for researching property:

Green, Betsy J. Discovering the History of Your House and Your Neighborhood
Santa Monica Press LLC. Santa Monica, CA. 2002

Howe, Barbara J. et al. Houses and Homes: exploring their history.
Walnut Creek, CA. Altamira Press. 1997.

Light, Sally. House Histories : a guide to tracing the genealogy of your home
Spencertown, N.Y. Golden Hill Press, 1989.

- **Guides to architectural styles** are also available with information on how to differentiate various residential styles and dates of construction (e.g. A Field Guide to American Houses by Virginia and Lee McAlester; and How Old is this House? by Hugh Howard). Many titles also focus on specific styles such as Victorian and Craftsman.