



Home Research in Glendale

Prepared by Sean Bersell, The Glendale Historical Society

This guidance is designed to help you locate information about older properties, owners and residents, and architects. Many resources are now available online, as noted below.

1) Request the **Address Pack** from the City of Glendale's Planning Department at <https://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/community-development/permit-request-form>.

This should have the **original building permit**, which will indicate the original owner and the builder, and *maybe* (but not usually) the architect. It will also include records of permitted alterations to the property.

NOTE: **pre-1920 building permits** for Glendale were destroyed (reportedly in a fire) and therefore are unavailable. The City also does not have original building permits for properties that were not part of Glendale at the time of construction, for example, houses built in the Casa Verdugo neighborhood before 1926.

2) Check the Glendale Property Portal <https://csi.glendaleca.gov/csipropertyportal/>. If a **historic resource evaluation** has already been prepared for your property, you may find it here as a pdf.

3) Because you will need the Assessor's parcel ID number (AIN), tract, block, and lot number to apply for the Glendale Register and Mills Act, look those up on the **LA County Assessor's** website by searching your own address: <https://portal.assessor.lacounty.gov>

If you want to look at the **original subdivision map**, go to LA DWP's Land Records Information: <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/smpm/landrecords/TractMaps.aspx>.

4) For buildings built **from 1909-1922** check **Southwest Builder & Contractor** to see if it has a notice of construction at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012477768> (1909-1917) and <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012477763> (1917-1922). You can only search one volume at a time. It is advisable to search by the address, original owner and builder (if known), and tract. This is often the only way to discover an architect, because Glendale permits usually did not record that information. A property built in 1923 may be referenced in the 1922 volume.

For **buildings constructed in 1923 or later**, you must search through microfilm at the Los Angeles Central Library. (Fair warning, it is incredibly tedious, as one has to go week by week and locate the Glendale section.) However, PDFs of most of the Glendale pages in the 1920s are available upon request.

NOTE: in 1918 the street numbering system in downtown Glendale switched from being centered on Glendale Avenue and what is now Lexington Avenue to being centered on the intersection of Brand Boulevard and Broadway. Several street names changed and most street numbers did as well. Sean developed a system for crosswalking the pre-1918 addresses to the 1918 and thereafter numbers. Please contact TGHS for further guidance if this issue arises.

5) Go through **Glendale City Directories** and look up your property by address for each year since it was built. It should tell you who the residents were. Also look up the residents in the alphabetical portion—sometimes this gives you more info on their occupation and family members.

Searchable, digitized directories are available at **Archive.org** (fully searchable) and **Ancestry.com** (searchable only if you know the name). Archive.org has most extant directories; Ancestry.com includes some missing issues including some from the 1930s. Archive.org is free; you can find the URLs for all their directories at <https://glendalehistorical.org/glendale-directories>. Ancestry.com requires a subscription, but the Library Version of Archive.org can be accessed for free at Glendale and LA library branches.

Hard copies of directories are also available in the **Glendale History Room** at the Glendale Central Library (check with staff to schedule an appointment).

6) Check for your property and previous owners and residents in the **Glendale News Press**. The GNP is a trove of information; it is digitized and searchable from **1905-1923** at <https://tinyurl.com/VintageGlendaleNewspapers>.

From 1923, The Glendale History Room has microfilm copies of the News Press. If one is searching for a particular event with a known date, these can be useful. However, manual searching is required and can be quite tedious.

7) Ask the **Glendale History Room** staff if they have files on the original owner, builder, architect, and residents. (They keep clippings in file cabinets in the back.)

8) Run a **Google search** on each of these people. Also run a **Google Books** search for the street address. (If you don't limit to google books, you are likely to get a plethora of real estate listings.)

Additional Ideas:

To dig deeper on the people, you can use **Ancestry.com** again. The Census records are particularly helpful. **FamilySearch.org** is a free service similar to Ancestry.com. Ancestry.com has more records and a better search function, but you will sometimes find records on FamilySearch.org that do not come up on Ancestry.com.

You can search for news stories about these people in the **LA Times historical database** (via **Proquest**, available for free thru the Glendale Public Library website, either in library or remotely with a library card at <https://bit.ly/2JEQmR5>).

Other sources are the Library of Congress's "Chronicling America" collection of historical newspapers (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>), the California Digital Newspaper Collection, which has the LA Herald until about 1920 (<https://cdnc.ucr.edu>), John Calvin Sherer's 1922 history of Glendale (<https://archive.org/details/historyofglendal00sher>), and the Digital Public Library of America (<https://dp.la/>).

Historical photos of Glendale, including houses, are found in the following collections:

- Los Angeles Public Library: <https://tessa.lapl.org/photocol.html>
- USC Digital Library: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/>
- Huntington Library: <https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p15150coll2>
- Digital Public Library of American: <https://dp.la/>

These search tips should turn up ample information on your property. In the rare case it doesn't, as a last resort you can look in the **Assessor's Map Books** in downtown Los Angeles or the **original building description** in the Assessor's Office in Sylmar. The physical Map Books (unlike the electronic ones referenced above) record who the owner was every year of assessment. You will need the Assessor's parcel ID number, tract name, and map book and page number (see above). The original building description should contain the name of the original owner and basic information about the property, such as the number and types of rooms, materials used, and quality of construction.

If you are looking for information about architectural styles and character-defining features, Virginia Savage McAlester's **A Field Guide to American Houses** is a standard reference work.