



TRACING THE HISTORY OF YOUR SAN LEANDRO HOME

The following sources of information can help you determine the exact or approximate year of your house.

PROPERTY ABSTRACT

➤ **Most properties have a chain of title** that has been prepared by a professional abstractor. The abstract is a brief outline of the essential information about a piece of property. Included in the abstract are all references to deeds, mortgages, wills, probate records, court litigation, and tax sales - in other words, the legal proceedings that affect property ownership. This listing reveals who owned the lot of the house, how long an individual owned it, and how much the property costs. Sources for the property abstract include the property owner or the mortgage holder.

➤ **If a property abstract is not available**, then one can obtain the *legal description* (the lot, block & plat number) of the house. This can be obtained from any legal document you possess on the house (such as a deed) or can be obtained from either the Recorder's Office or the Assessor's Office at the Alameda County Courthouse. This information can then be used to trace the chain of title of your house.

- Alameda County Clerk-Recorder's Office
 - (510) 272-6362 (or 272-6363)
 - located at 1106 Madison St., Oakland
 - Note: *you must be prepared* to visit the County Courthouse offices and do the research yourself!! When you do go in, check with the clerks at Public Files and they will instruct you how to trace the chain of title of your home by using the *Grantee index* and the *Grantor index*.

- Alameda County Assessor's Office
 - Main Office (510) 272-3787
 - Public Records Office (510) 272-3800
 - located at 1221 Oak Street, Oakland
 - Note: the Assessor's Office can also help you with the legal description of the home, however, this office cannot help you in determining the age of your house as the older assessor's maps are stored off-site.

OTHER LEGAL RECORDS

➤ **Estate records:** estate records include wills which can indicate whether or not a family member inherited a lot or a house and when.

- Alameda County Court Clerk's Office
 - need name of deceased person to obtain a will
 - telephone: (510) 272-6793
 - located at 1225 Fallon Street, Rm. 109, Oakland

➤ **Building permits:**

- City of San Leandro Building Regulations Dept.
 - building permit history dates back to late 1940's; also have hand-written ledgers that date to the 1920's.
 - ask for a property file search for any work permits made on house
 - telephone: (510) 577-3423, Michelle Smith at Info Kiosk

MAPS

➤ **Fire Insurance Map of San Leandro.** The library has the following:

- *microfilm* (1 reel): Alameda County Maps 1, East Bay (1884-1908); located in the microfilm collection (last cabinet, top drawer) on second floor.
- *oversized book*: 1928 edition with some updates (1947-53 and 1956) included; call number is CA 979.468/FIRE located in the San Leandro History Room.

➤ **Surveyor's maps, tract maps and recorder's maps:**

- Alameda County Public Works Agency
 - their archives also include maps on unincorporated areas
 - maps date back to 1864
 - archives are open to the public; hours are Mon-Fri, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm
 - telephone: (510) 670-5560
 - they are located at 399 Elmhurst Street, Room 240 in Oakland

PHOTOGRAPHS

➤ **Archived photos:** the San Leandro Library has a large collection (over 2,000) of old photographs.

- Photos can provide clues such as: street signs, what's in the background, outbuildings, activities, etc. to help determine the age of your house.
- There is a hard copy collection in the San Leandro History Room as well as a digitized collection available via the online catalog.

NEWSPAPER ARCHIVES

➤ **Local newspapers** can provide clues about your house. Notices of tax sales, sheriff's sales, or auctions may mention your house which then can help date the age of your house. San Leandro Public Library has no newspaper index to the older local archived newspapers, so you will have to have an idea of what years to search.

CITY DIRECTORIES

➤ **Polk's Directories** came out on an annual basis. It lists residences and businesses in a single listing first by street name and then by address number. Names are given of residents as well. The San Leandro Public Library has a collection of the Polk's Directories in the San Leandro History Room. The catalog number is: CA 979.468/POLK'S. The years covered are 1924-1965, with some gaps in the years.

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

➤ These documents, which include letters, diaries, business papers, insurance files and personal finance accounts of the home's owner, architect, or contractor, may help to date the house. These papers might be found in the house itself.

BOOKS, ARCHITECTURAL JOURNALS

➤ Illustrations may show homes that were "in vogue" for particular periods. This may help to roughly date the home.

PAMPHLET FILES

➤ The San Leandro History Room in the Library has articles on Bay Area historic architecture in its pamphlet files. Look under "Architecture, Domestic."

INTERNET

- **"Guide to Researching the History of a House"**
 - provides resources for researching the history of a house
 - address: www.ipl.org/div/pf/entry/76687
- **"House History Checklist"**
 - Kansas State Historical Society provides a very useful checklist of resources
 - address: <http://www.kshs.org/genealogists/househistorychecklist.pdf>
- **"Researching the History of Your House"**
 - provides links and list of sources to help you in your search
 - address: www2.lib.udel.edu/subj/hist/resguide/house-bib.htm
- **"Architectural Style Guides and Dictionaries"**
 - provides a listing of guides to help you determine the architectural style (and period) of your house
 - address: www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb39

OTHER SOURCES

➤ ***Official and Historical Atlas Map of Alameda*** has beautiful illustrations of showplace homes that existed in Alameda County prior to 1872. Two sources for this map include the following:

- San Leandro History Room (510) 577-3971
- UC Berkeley Bancroft Library: (510) 642-2997

➤ ***Census records*** can also provide clues. The library has records dating from the 1870's to 1920's in microfilm format.

mlb
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SAN LEANDRO HISTORY ROOM



San Leandro Public Library, ca. 1909

The Collection

- More than 7,000 books on California and San Leandro history
- More than 2,500 photographs of San Leandro
- Maps
- Pamphlets and newspaper clippings
- Documents from the City of San Leandro

The San Leandro History Room, which is temporarily closed to the public due to staff reductions, has an impressive collection of books and materials on California history and local history. Some of materials located in the History Room include:

- Old Hayward/San Leandro city directories dating from 1925, which can provide clues for tracing the history of your old house.
- The Historical Photograph and Document collection, which consists of many images dating from the late 1800's, and which provide a fascinating glimpse into San Leandro's past.
- An extensive collection of yearbooks from San Leandro High School, Marina High School, Pacific High School and San Lorenzo High School, as well as Bancroft Middle School and John Muir Junior High School, which can help you find old classmates.

Please call the Information Desk at (510) 577-3971 or visit the desk to request information from the History Room.

Copies of the photographs in the Historical Photograph and Document Collection may be checked out, but all other History Room materials are for library use only.

San Leandro Public Library

300 Estudillo Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • (510) 577-3971 • www.sanleandrolibrary.org

San Leandro Historical Photograph & Document Collection Online

(Directions for using the online collection with a public or home computer.)



WHAT IS THE SLHPDC ONLINE?

The San Leandro Historical Photograph & Document Collection contains about 2,500 photographs, mostly of San Leandro in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The 8 x 10 black-and-white photographs are kept in the San Leandro History Room at the Main Library, and many have duplicate copies that may be checked out. The entire collection has been digitized, and now you can access it online!

TO GET TO THE DATABASE

1. Using a public or home computer go to the library website www.sanleandrolibrary.org.
2. In the list on the left, under "San Leandro Public Library", click on "Online Resources".
3. From the new list under "San Leandro Library Online Resources", click on "History".
4. Click on the link for the photograph database listed 2nd from the top, titled "San Leandro Historic Photograph & Document Collection".

NOTE: To log into the database, on the next screen enter: Username = ptfs Password = ptfs. The username and password information is also provided under the link for the database.

The Horizon Digital Library Database should now be open. The best search field to start with is "Title Keyword". Enter a search term and click on "Go". Click on the title of a record to show the photograph. Once you have retrieved a record, you will find yourself in the Horizon Digital Library database, and searching is now different from searching the catalog.

SEARCHING IN THE HORIZON DIGITAL LIBRARY DATABASE

In the left-hand column where it says "Keyword Search", click on the drop-down arrow to choose the type of search you want to do. You have three choices:

1. **Boolean** searches exact keywords (not as a phrase). This is the only search that allows operators. See the back of this sheet for operators that can be used in the Boolean search.
Example 1: "peralta house" retrieves records with both words exactly as typed (no plurals), somewhere in the document.
Example 2: "wom_n" retrieves records with woman or women.
Example 3: "00000548" retrieves photograph number 00000548.
2. **Concept** searches synonyms. Example: "car" retrieves car, automobile, auto and their plurals.
3. **Pattern** searches for a pattern of letters similar to the word(s) you enter. Particularly helpful when you do not know how to spell a word. Example: "estudilo" retrieves Estudillo and even estuary.

RESULTS


Note the number of documents and the number of pages listed below the "Keyword Search" box.


Navigation symbol buttons:

<< Takes you to the first page Takes you to the last page >>
< Takes you one page back Takes you one page forward >

Search results are listed in the main section of the page. Click on the Title of the photograph to view it. While viewing a photograph you can return to the search results page by clicking on the "Back to Search Results" button (left side of screen).


THE PHOTOGRAPH OR DOCUMENT


 This symbol opens the photograph in a separate window.

 This symbol means "menu" and displays the photograph and fields without the Horizon Digital Library menu on the left side; click on it again to bring the menu back.

Show All Fields will display all of the photograph's record and text information including the photograph identification number.

Show Document will hide all of the photograph's record and text information displaying a photograph.

 Advances to next photograph

 Goes back to previous photograph

THE ADOBE ACROBAT TOOLBARS

Depending on the version of Adobe Acrobat your computer is using, the toolbar shown above the image display will be different. The Adobe Acrobat toolbar will allow you to save, print, e-mail, copy, paste, zoom-in, zoom-out, rotate and resize the image on display.

BOOLEAN OPERATORS

Wildcards	Description	Example
-	match one or zero characters	colo_r = color, colour
@	match exactly one alpha character	gr@y = gray, grey
#	match exactly one numeric character	#600
\	take the next character literally, not as an operator	name\@ptfs.com
*	match anything or nothing	comput* = computer, compute, computing
?	match exactly one character	wom?n = woman, women
^	match any character except the next character	199[^7] = 1977, 1997, 2007
[]	search expression; can include a hyphen to indicate a range of letters or numbers; will match only one character within the brackets	199[1-5] = 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995

**Questions and Answers on the City of San Leandro's
Updated Historic Preservation Ordinance**



What is the purpose of a historic preservation ordinance?

Historic preservation ordinances help communities preserve their local history by protecting buildings with historic value. Communities benefit from the special qualities of their historic buildings, and ordinances help focus attention on the unique, historical aspects of communities.

Why does San Leandro need a Historic Preservation Ordinance?

San Leandro has important buildings that represent key periods in California history, such as Spanish and Mexican settlement, early American settlement and the post-war boom. And San Leandro's own development history is reflected in buildings throughout the city, as are the lifestyles of notable early San Leandro residents. By preserving the city's historic buildings, San Leandro's history will be preserved.

Why did the City update its Historic Preservation Ordinance?

The previous ordinance was adopted in 1974 and contains limited protections for historic structures in San Leandro. Since the time the original ordinance was passed, some buildings that were identified as historic or that could have been designated historic (many older downtown buildings, for instance) have been lost due to modifications or demolition. The updated ordinance was adopted by the City Council in December 2003 and is aimed at increasing protection of San Leandro's historic buildings.

What are the major components of the updated ordinance?

The updated ordinance lists criteria that would be used in determining what buildings in San Leandro are historic. Procedures are described for how a building or area could be designated as a historic structure or district. A public review process would also be established for evaluating any alteration, relocation or demolition of a designated historic structure.

The updated ordinance identifies three types of historic designations: City Landmarks, Merit Resource and Historic District.

City Landmarks are considered as either exceptional examples of San Leandro or regional history or excellent examples of a certain building style. These types of buildings would generally be acknowledged by the community as historically significant structures.

Merit Resources are considered to be prime examples of San Leandro history or architecture, but are not as historically significant as landmark buildings.

Historic Districts are areas where a majority of the buildings either reflect significant eras or development patterns or embody a particular architectural style. Significant buildings within a Historic District would be identified as Historic District Contributors.

Who can initiate consideration of a structure or area for a historic designation?

- **City Landmark** – Only the building owner, the City Council or the Library-Historical Commission can initiate consideration of a building for designation as a Landmark Building.
- **Merit Resource** – Only the building or resource owner can initiate consideration of a particular resource for designation as a Merit Resource.
- **Historic District** – The consent of 67% of property owners within a proposed district is required to initiate consideration of a Historic District.

Does the updated ordinance allow for historic buildings to be altered?

Any exterior changes to a designated historic building that require a building permit would be subject to review by the Library-Historical Commission or City Council. Such changes could include exterior additions, new roofs or new windows. Changes to a building's color, changes to the interior of the building or ordinary maintenance would not be subject to review. Any proposed changes would be reviewed in terms of their impact on the character-defining features of the building. (For example, a one-story addition to the back of a two-story home would have less impact on the historic nature of the home than removing the front porch.)

Changes to Merit Resources and Historic District Contributors that are insignificant in nature can be approved by the Secretary to the Library-Historical Commission, instead of the full commission.

Are there benefits to owning a building that has been designated historic?

Yes. Direct benefits in the form of incentives will be developed by the City to encourage property owners to designate their property as historic. Such incentives may include state tax credits, partial or complete waiver of the real estate transfer tax, residential and commercial financial assistance for property upgrades and reliance on the California Historic Building Code for building alterations (provides for alternative standards such as those for handicap access, internal electrical wiring and stairs). Owners of historic-designated buildings often see an increase in property values as a result of the designation, which can benefit owners when a property is sold.

My house is 50 years old. Does this mean it will be designated as historic?

No. The particular age of a building does not qualify it for historic status. A home would only be considered historic if either (a) you, as the property owner, nominated it for Merit Resource status and the Library-Historical Commission approved the designation based on a defined set of criteria, or (b) your house is so unique that the City Council would deem it a Landmark Building.

Can my building be designated as historic without my permission?

A property can be designated as a City Landmark by the City Council without a property owner's permission. However, only a small number of buildings in San Leandro potentially qualify for landmark status and most are already on San Leandro's historic list. The City Council recently designated 20 City Landmarks that were on the City's existing Historic Register. Future designations will be considered on an individual basis with the involvement of property owners.

If my building is within a historic district, is it considered historic?

Not necessarily. A building within a historic district (and not already designated as a Landmark Building or Merit Resource) is only considered historic if it is specifically identified as a Historic District Contributor. This designation requires the approval of the property owner.

What if my building is located next to a building that is a City Landmark?

Changes to buildings located within 300 feet of a designated City Landmark could be subject to review by the Library-Historical Commission if the project involves an exterior change that requires a zoning permit or approval. For example, a proposal to add a second story to a home would require a zoning permit and therefore would be subject to review by the Library-Historical Commission to ensure that the project will not adversely impact the setting of the neighboring historic building.

Need More information?

For a copy of the ordinance or for more information, please call David Bohne, Library Services Director, at 577-3980, or Hanson Hom, Community Development Director, at 577-3415.