

Brighton Historical Society

A Guide to Tracing the History of Your House at BHS

Introduction

Tracing the history of your house is a fascinating and rewarding experience. It adds depth and colour to your family history and provides a pathway to exploring the rich social history and architectural context of your local area. Typical questions about your house might include:

- When was the house built?
- Who designed the house?
- Who built the house?
- What factors influenced the location and style of the house?
- Who were the earlier owners and occupiers?
- Has the house been altered over the years?

Answering these questions can sometimes be time-consuming and challenging. However, Brighton Historical Society can help get you started on your journey.

Sources at BHS

BHS has a range of sources available to help flesh out the history of houses in Brighton. These include:

- Street and House Files
- *City of Bayside Heritage Review* (1999)
- Maps
- Rate Notices
- Postal Directories

Street and House Files

A good place to start is to consult our street and house files. BHS collects information about houses and other buildings in Brighton. In some cases, the history of a house may have already been documented by researchers. BHS also has files on notable individuals who have lived in Brighton. If you know the name of previous occupants or owners it may be possible to find information about the house in our people files.

City of Bayside Heritage Review 1999

Another excellent resource is the *City of Bayside Heritage Review*. The review, commissioned by the Bayside City Council and conducted by Allom Lovell and Associates Pty Ltd in 1999, includes useful accounts of many heritage structures, precincts and landscapes within the City of Bayside (including the former City of Brighton). The review comprises five volumes. It includes a historic overview of the area

since survey and settlement and assesses buildings and streets identified as historically significant. It includes a schedule of all heritage places, including individual buildings, areas and landscapes recommended for heritage overlay protection. You may find your house listed and described here, or it may be included within a number of heritage precincts: areas where a number of buildings, streets or landscapes have a collective historic significance.

This review can also be found in the Bayside Libraries (Brighton, Hampton, Sandringham, Beaumaris), the City of Bayside Corporate Centre and can be accessed online through the Bayside City Council website (search 'heritage') or the Bayside Library Service Catalogue (search 'City of Bayside Heritage Review').

For houses built in the inter-war and post-war periods, another study may prove helpful. In 2008 David Wixted and Simon Reeves prepared the *City of Bayside Inter-War and Post-War Heritage Study* (vols 1 and 2) for the Bayside City Council. This study can also be accessed online through the Council and Bayside Library websites.

Maps and Plans Collection

BHS has a number of maps and plans dating from the 1870s which could prove useful in your search for information about your property. These include the 1876 'Maxwell' Map of Brighton, maps from the 1930s and a number of Melbourne Municipal Board of Works (MMBW) plans. Some of these maps and plans show the names of landholders of the original subdivisions of the 1850s. The collection also includes some twentieth century subdivision plans and aerial photos of Brighton in the 1980s and 1990s. The maps have been digitized and catalogued and relevant sections can be printed for a small fee.

Postal Directories

Postal directories are a very valuable reference source for identifying the occupants of addresses in Melbourne. BHS has two sets of directories available for researchers to examine:

- *Sands & McDougall Postal Directories, 1862-1974*. These directories are available to view on microfiche or on disk. The collection also includes a set of original volumes from 1890 to 1974.
- *Victorian Municipal Directory, 1903-1986*. Original volumes.

These directories can be used to identify the occupants of addresses in Melbourne. Researchers can search by surname or geographically by street address within a specific municipality. The directories also include a separate trade index. By the time the directories were published the information was usually a couple of years out of date. They show the 'occupants' rather than the 'owners' of buildings. However, they are not an accurate guide to dating a house. Municipal rate books are more reliable for this purpose.

Rate Notices

Council rate books can provide a much more accurate means of dating a house. Old Brighton Council rates books are held at the Public Record Office of Victoria and have been microfilmed. BHS holds the following microfilms of rate books:

- Reel 1 1861-1880
- Reel 2 1881-1891
- Reel 3 1892-1896
- Reel 4 1897-1900

BHS also has a Brighton Property Valuation book for 1884

Where to Next? Sources Beyond BHS

The resources held at BHS can get you started on your house history research. However, you may need to search further afield to flesh out the story of your property. Detailed accounts of how to research your house history can be found in the books below:

The National Trust Research Manual: Trace the History of Your House or Other Places
Celestina Sagazio (ed.). Broadway, N.S.W., Halstead Press, 2004 (Bayside Library: 720.994 NAT)

How to Trace the History of Your House

Des Regan and Kate Press. Penguin, Ringwood, 1992 (Bayside Library: 994.00722 REG)

Background reading

Some background reading of the history of Brighton and surrounding suburbs can help provide useful and interesting historical context to the story of your house. The *City of Bayside Heritage Review* (discussed above) provides a useful overview. However, a much more thorough account of Brighton's history can be found in Weston Bate's *A History of Brighton* (available from Bayside Libraries - 994.51 BAT). BHS also has several copies of this and other local histories.

Can BHS research my house for me?

BHS can research and write up a history of your house if required. The fee for this work will depend upon the amount of work required to uncover information specific to your house. Please come and talk to us about what you would like to know about your house and we can advise you on what may be required.