



Researching your family home

State Library of Victoria

From the Library's [website](#), you can search the library [catalogue](#), request items that are held in storage, browse digitised collections and online research guides.

Library membership is free, and gives you access to over five million books, photos, maps and manuscripts. Victorian members can also access many of the library's [eresources](#), from home, including databases, eBooks, online newspapers and journals. Join the library [here](#).

Online Research Guides

The State Library Victoria has produced over seventy [online research guides](#) on a variety of subjects. The most useful guides for researching property are -

- [Researching buildings and houses](#) with links to books, heritage databases, indexes and information on architectural drawings.
 - [Researching your Victorian ancestors](#) with links to directories, rate books, wills, electoral rolls, land records, newspapers and family and local history societies.
 - [Maps for local and family history](#) with information on parish plans, MMBW plans, street directories, historical maps, pastoral runs and auction plans.
- Browse our full collection of [Family History research guides](#).

Public Record Office Victoria

The [Public Record Office Victoria](#) (PROV) is the archive of the State Government of Victoria, it also holds many local government records. At PROV you can find a range of land and property records. Go to -

- The PROV [Researching land and property](#) website, for information on their key land collections, including Rate books, Soldier Settlement Scheme, Land Settlement, Historic plans collection, Pastoral runs and Valuation registers.

Or browse their online publications -

- [Researching Your Historic Home in Victoria](#)
- [Lands guide: researching records of Crown land in Victoria \(eBook\)](#) by Phillippa Nelson and Lesley Alves.

Trove

Use [Trove](#) to explore the collections of Australian libraries, archives and museums. Through Trove you can locate books, manuscripts, photographs, maps and thousands of digitised items.

Trove newspapers

Use the [Trove Newspaper database](#) to access over digitised copies of over 350 Victorian and 1000 Australian newspapers from 1803 to 1954.

(Search tip: When searching for an exact phrase on Trove, be sure to enclose the relevant

keywords in quotation marks i.e. Jackson "Bridge Road Richmond")

Public Libraries

Many public libraries have separate research collections of local history material. Visit the relevant public library and talk to staff about the resources that are available.

Historical societies

Historical and family history societies have unique collections of material local to the area, including published and unpublished works, local indexes, guides, histories, photographs and maps. Most of these societies are staffed by volunteers who have in-depth knowledge of the area, and can offer expert advice.

The following lists can help you to locate a society -

- [Federation of Australian Historical Societies](#) – a list of historical societies in Australia
- [Societies and Groups](#) – a gateway to historical and family history societies, developed by family history expert Cora Num.

Local councils

Many local councils have produced websites or guides on researching houses. Here's an example of a guide produced by the [Moreland City Council](#). Check your local council website to see what's available.

Recommended records

Land titles

Landata

A range of land certificates can be purchased from the Victorian Government's [Landata](#) website, including -

- A *Title History Search Statement*. This document provides the history of the title (not the property) and displays a record of dealings, an image of the paper title, previous land descriptions and proprietorship details.
- A *Register Search Statement (Title)*, this is a text only version of a copy of the Title. It lists the current registered proprietors, any encumbrances, caveats or notices that apply to the land, but does not include a sketch of the plan

Copies of **Property Sales History reports** (1972 onwards) and **valuation reports** can also be purchased from [Landata](#).

Land titles

Public Record Office Victoria

Copies of titles can also be viewed in the Reading Room of the **Public Record Office Victoria (PROV)** To view the relevant title at PROV you need to know the relevant volume and folio number.

Early land titles, deeds and application numbers can also be obtained from PROV. Information on how to access these records can be found on their [Certificates of title \(1862-1996\)](#) website.

Directories

Post office and telephone directories are useful for confirming when and where a person resided at a particular address.

A range of directories, including early Port Phillip directories (1839-1867) and the Sands and McDougall directories (1857-1974) are held at the State Library Victoria. One out of every five years can be accessed online through our [Popular digitised collections](#) page.

A section of directories can be found in the Ancestry database, within the collection *Australia, City Directories, 1845-1948*. You can also access digitised copies for 1868-1899 through the University of Melbourne [Digitised collections](#).

Go to the [Directories](#) page of our *Researching your Victorian ancestors* research guide, for a list of directories and access information. On the research guide you will find a PDF document that lists the State Library's holdings of regional Victorian directories.

Rate Books

Rate books usually contain the names of the owner and the occupant, their occupation, address, date, description of property and rate assessed.

A number of Victorian rate books are held at the State Library Victoria. A selection of rate books for Melbourne and regional Victoria can be found on the Ancestry database.

Go to the [Rate Books](#) page of our *Researching your Victorian ancestors* research guide for further information, including a PDF document of rate book collections held in other locations.

Rate book collections are also held at the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV). For more information, go to the PROV Rate records [website](#).

Many councils have copied their collections of rate books. Check with the relevant local public library or local/family history society of the area you are researching to see what's available.

Parish plans

Township, parish or county plans record information about the transfer of land from the Crown (the Government) to private ownership or lease-hold. These plans show the boundaries of each property and mark the first owner/lease-holder to take possession of the land, but **do not** indicate the names of subsequent owners or leaseholders.

The State Library of Victoria has an extensive collection of over 10,000 plans, many of which have been digitised. Go to this [page](#) of our *Maps for local and family history* research guide for instructions on how to find plans in the catalogue.

The Public Record Office also holds an extensive collection of plans. The following guides will help you access their records.

- [Parish and township plans](#) – for viewing their Parish maps collection
- [How to find parish plans](#). A guide to finding parish plans using the PROV Map Warper program.

Google Maps

[Google Maps](#) can be really useful if you're researching a property from another era, and would like to verify that it still exists today. You can also use it to browse nearby streets and see how the area may have changed over time.

MMBW plans

From 1895 until the mid-1950s, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) surveyed the whole of metropolitan Melbourne. These plans outline the building, roads and other features of suburban Melbourne. More information can be found [here](#).

The State Library holds an extensive collection of MMBW plans, many of which have been digitised. Search our [catalogue](#) using the names of two cross streets and the word MMBW. Or search for a suburb, a street and the word MMBW i.e. *MMBW "Burke Road" Camberwell*.

Auction plans

The State Library holds many auction posters created by real estate agents to promote land sales around Melbourne and, to a lesser extent, across the state. These plans include maps, promotions for new housing estates and sometimes suggested house designs. Search our [catalogue](#) using the name of your street, suburb and the keyword auction i.e. *Linsey Coburg Auction*. Find out more about Auction plans [here](#)

Street directories

The numbering and names of streets may change over time. Street directories are useful for identifying these changes.

The State Library holds many directories including [Moulton's](#) (1911-1916), [Morgan's](#) (1917-1971), [Collins'](#) (1922-1952), [UBD](#) (1955-) and [Melway](#) (1966 -).

Many editions of the Moulton's, Morgan's and Collins' directories can be viewed [online](#) through the State Library website. Find out more about our Street directories collection [here](#).

The University of Melbourne has digitised copies of the [Melway street directory](#) from 1966 onwards.

Probate documents

These documents may disclose information on the value of a property, a description of the land and buildings and relevant dates relating to the land title.

Will and Probate records are held at the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) and records from 1841-1925 are available online. Further information can be found on the PROV [Wills and Probate](#) webpage.

Newspapers

Newspapers contain information on land sales, real estate developments, specific buildings and designs. They may also contain articles on the people who lived in a particular property. Try searching the [Trove digitised newspaper database](#) for the address of the house i.e. "23 Malvern Road Armadale". In many cases street numbers were not included in articles, so you try searching for just the street and suburb. If you've already verified the names of previous owners try including their name i.e. Jones "Dorset Road Boronia".

Or try a broader search for the name of the street and/or suburb together with such keywords as property, house, homes, estate. Then limit the results to the year that you are researching.

The State Library collects all Victorian newspapers, including suburban, regional and country newspapers. If you cannot find anything on Trove and you have an estimated date and event, you can arrange to view microfilm or hard copy historic newspapers in the library. More information can be found on our [How to find newspapers](#) research guide.

Photographs and images

The State Library's picture collection documents the pictorial history of Victoria and its people from the early years of the colony to the present day. These images can show you how towns or streets looked in an earlier time and may include nearby landmarks, hotels and shops, churches and parks.

Search the State Library's [catalogue](#) or [Trove](#) digitised images of the street or town where your property is situated. Also look for books on the history of the town as they are likely to contain further images of the area.

Public libraries and historical societies often have wonderful collections of images for their area, including many images that have not been digitised. Be sure to explore their collections.

Architectural drawings

If you know the name of the architect, try searching for records in the State Library's [catalogue](#), in [Trove](#) or the University of Melbourne's Architecture, Building and Planning Library [catalogue](#). The [University of Melbourne Archives](#) also holds collections of architectural drawings.

Detailed information on accessing architectural records can be found in the [Researching buildings and houses](#) research guide.

Building permits

Building permits and plans may be held at your local council, however full building plans were only required to be submitted after 1916. Holdings may vary from council to council.

Historically significant buildings

There are several databases that provide information on significant Victorian buildings and places, including the [Victorian heritage database](#). You can find a list of key databases and resources on our [Researching buildings and houses](#) research guide. It is also worth contacting your local council for details of conservation and heritage studies for that area.

House styles

Many books have been written on Australia's architectural history and house styles. If you know the period and style of your house and you'd like to know more, try searching the State Library's [catalogue](#), [Trove](#) or your local public library's catalogue.

Search for the housing style or period i.e. Edwardian, Federation, Art deco, Mid-century, together with the keyword architecture or "house style" From the list of results you can refine your records down to images, books, online resources etc.

The following publication provides an excellent introduction to Australian house styles. Check to see if it is available in your local library -

[Australian house styles / Maisy Stapleton & Ian Stapleton.](#) Mullumbimby, N.S.W. : Flannel Flower Press [2010]

Or view the following online publications.

- [What house is that?](#) - Heritage Council of Victoria
- [Pamphlet of useful information for persons wishing to either build, borrow, or invest.](#) Universal Building Societies. Melbourne: Banks & McDougall, 1883.
- [Our Inter-war Houses: how to recognise, restore and extend houses of the 1920 and 1930s.](#) Bryce Raworth. National Trust of Australia.
- State Savings bank design books -
[Design book : brick dwellings, containing 28 standard types / the State Savings Bank of Victoria](#)
[Design book : timber dwellings / the State Savings Bank of Victoria](#)

Home and architecture magazines available on Trove.

- [The Australian home builder](#) (1922-1925)
- [The Australian home beautiful: a journal for the home builder](#) (1925-1954)
- [Building: the magazine for the architect, builder, property owner and merchant](#) (1907-1942)
- [Australian Women's Weekly](#) (1933-1982)

Explore the local history of the area

Once you have researched your home, we recommend you consider researching the history of the town or region where the property is situated. This will give you a better understanding of what life was like for the people who lived in that area at a particular time.

Search the State Library's [catalogue](#) and [Trove](#) for books on the history of the area and its early settlers. Read about the key events and people that shaped the town.

When searching catalogues try a variety of keywords, such as *Bendigo history*, *Bendigo pioneers*, *Bendigo settlers*, *Bendigo families* or *Bendigo "social life"*.

Use the [Trove digitised newspaper database](#) to browse through the relevant local newspapers for the area. Read what life was like in a particular era. Maps and photographs can be also used to illustrate how a place has changed over the years.

Visit the public library, family history society or local history society for the town or region. Their unique local history resources will help to bring the history of area to life.

Case study – video

In the video [Ask a Librarian: If these walls could talk: uncovering the history of houses and buildings](#), librarians examine the history of three buildings and unlock the secrets of their past using resources such as maps, photographs and newspaper article

State Library Victoria – What's on

[Finding families](#) In this introductory webinar, learn the principles of family history research and find out how to access family history resources through the State Library Victoria.

[Newsworthy](#) learn how to navigate the Library's extensive newspaper collection in this live and interactive online session. You'll dive into the millions of words printed on both current and historical articles in our online databases, and discover how to find specific newspapers in hard copy, online and on microfilm.

State Library Victoria - Contact us

Visit the Newspapers and Family History Reading Rooms

Send us your question using our [online form](#)

Or call the library on: 03 8664 7002

[Opening hours](#)