



How to Research a Historic Home or Building

Starting a National Register Nomination Form or just researching the history of your home or neighborhood can seem overwhelming. The National Park Service wrote a bulletin on how to begin the process; the first step of which is to clarify what information you are looking for:

- Who built the building and when?
- What did the original building look like inside and out?
- Who owned and lived/worked in the building?
- What was happening both locally and nationally at the time the building was constructed?
- What changes have been made to the building and when were they made?

To find this information plan on visiting:

- Bureau of Conveyances: Deed Information
- Department of Permitting and Planning: Project Permits
- State Historic Preservation Division: Survey Information and Eligibility Determinations
- State Archives: Old City Directories, Fire Insurance Maps, Census Records, Māhele Book, Genealogical Information,
- State Library: Newspapers, Contextual History, Databases

Begin with the information that you already know about the property, such as the address. In Hawai'i all properties have a Tax Map Key Number which identifies it in records. The TMK number is located on the Real Property Tax Bill or from the real property assessment division of the County. Using this number you can find the buildings permit history, which may help you to find dates of alterations, names of owners, possibly the name of the architect, and floor plans. You can look up some permits online via your county's Planning Department website, or visit the Planning Department in person to see the entire permitting history for your home.

The real property tax records should be part of your research as well; they will help you establish a "chain of title" that shows who owned the building and when transfers of ownership occurred. Records at the State Bureau of Conveyances will also help establish a "chain of title," as this is where the original deeds are located.

The next step is to find information about the building's architect, individuals who lived or worked in the building, and the building's original appearance. The Hawai'i State Archives has old

Historic Hawai'i Foundation

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Historic Hawai'i Foundation was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historic buildings, sites and communities on all the islands of Hawai'i. As the statewide leader for historic preservation, HHHF works to preserve Hawai'i's unique architectural and cultural heritage and believes that historic preservation is an important element in the present and future quality of life, environmental sustainability and economic viability of the state.

photographs, old city directories that list people's names and occupations, maps, and other historical materials that may provide this information.

Hawaii's public libraries also offer old newspaper and map collections, and reference materials which can be used to better understand the social, economic, and political history of your neighborhood and individuals associated with your home. Other libraries, museums, and historical societies are good places to conduct research as well. The Hawaiian Historical Society, local historical societies, the State Archives, and the State Historic Preservation Division also have site files for some historic properties.

Speaking with former residents, neighbors, and past occupants who may have older photographs of the home or who may be able to provide information regarding changes to the building will be helpful as well.

Resources and More Information:

National Park Service National Register Bulletin No. 39: Researching Historic Properties
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb39.pdf>

Check out Historic Hawai'i Foundation's Resource Center for more information!
<http://historichawaii.org/resource-center-2/>

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