

Caldwell Public Library House History Research Guide
Created by Librarian and Archivist Jessica Stauffer (April 2014)
Contact librarian@caldwellpl.org or 973-226-2837 for more information

1. Locate the House by Location and Date

- a. Check current Tax Assessment Records
 - i. Borough website: <http://www.caldwell-nj.com/> From the Borough website, go to the menus on the left side of the page and hover over 'Caldwell Tax/Zoning Maps'.
 1. Use the Key Map to find the Detail Sheet number and Block Number for your house.
 2. Select the Detail Sheet to get the lot number and size.
 - ii. NJ Association of Tax Boards: <http://www.njactb.org> From the NJACTB website, click on Records Search on the top left menu.
 1. Change first step 'Select Database' to 'Deed/Sr1a List'; Select 'Essex' County; Select 'Caldwell Boro'; enter the Block number under search criteria; click 'Submit Search'.
 2. Choosing 'Deed/Sr1a List' gives information on the most recent deed transactions, including the book, page, date, price, grantor, and grantee.

2. Identify Past Residents

- a. Use the City Directories available in the Caldwell Library Local History Room downstairs: 1920s-1971 (not all years available). Call or email the Library to make a reservation.
- b. Find past owners by doing a deed search at the Essex County Hall of Records in Newark in the Essex County Register's Office (Room 130). Phone number: 973-621-4960

3. Explore what the Lives of the Residents were Like

- a. Find past residents in the Federal Census – you can search at familysearch.org to get the person's details. To see the census record, visit the Caldwell Family History Center (209 Mountain Ave, North Caldwell, NJ. #973-226-8975. Hours: Tu 9-noon and 7-10pm, Th 9-noon, and Sat 9-noon.
- b. Search newspaper databases for articles: Newspaper Source Plus through Jersey Clicks.
- c. Find obituaries: identify death dates (directories, SSDI, searching newspapers for obituaries).
- d. Examine wills of people who died while they owned the house
 - i. New Jersey Index of Wills (LOCAL HISTORY 929.3 NEW), available at West Caldwell Public Library – stop by the Reference Desk.
 - ii. Probate records at familysearch.org (not indexed)
- e. Interview neighbors and past owners (or descendants) for memories, documents and photos

4. Search Photographs

- a. The Caldwell Public Library's Local History Collection has some photographs of local houses that have been digitized. Call or email the library to request help.

5. Identify the Architectural Style of Your House (check the Library catalog)

- a. *Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia & Lee McAlester (917.3 MCA)
- b. *The New Jersey House* by Helen Schwartz (917.3 MCA)

6. Compile the History

- a. Document your sources: include photos, maps, and excerpts from documents and newspapers
- b. Compile the information in writing for yourself, your family and future inhabitants
- c. Donate a paper copy of your document to the Caldwell Public Library