

Historical research about a house and its landscape

(Note: Italicized words are defined in the Vocabulary Definitions)

What is a historical investigation of a house and its landscape? A historical investigation of a house and its landscape is somewhat like an archeological investigation - the more you dig, the more you find. It's fun, and it's easy. Here's how:

First, choose a house. Walk or drive around your community and look for old historic houses or choose your own home (house, apartment, mobile home, etc.). Even if it is a new home, it has a story and its landscape has changed.

Second, ask yourself:

1. What do I already know about the house and its landscape?

Put that information in written form or take or draw pictures of all sides of the house and any unusual details on the outside of the house or in the landscape. (See the Elementary Worksheet)

2. Whom can I ask about the house?

You can interview your parents, grandparents, current occupants, previous owners, neighbors, gardeners and more

- a. Ask if you may interview them about the history of the house and its landscape.
- b. Set a date.
- c. Develop a list of questions you want to ask them. This is a very important step to do before you do an interview. (See the oral interview worksheet for secondary students)
- d. Bring a recorder or write down their answers.
- e. Ask to see and copy photographs of the house and its landscape taken over time (before and during the time the house was built to the present).

3. What kinds of historical resources are there?

- Oral resources are people's remembrances of the past.
- Written resources include letters, legal documents like wills and deeds, insurance policies and diaries.
- Visual resources include the building, land and landmarks around it, drawings, maps, paintings, photographs and videos.

4. Where else can I go to find out about the history of the house?

- Local library
- Local history museum
- Internet search of recommended sites. (See Resources)

5. What do I do with the historical resources I've gathered?

- a. Write and/or illustrate a story of the history of the house and its landscape.
- b. Make a PowerPoint presentation about the house.
- c. Make a video about the house.
- d. Share your history of the house with your classmates, family, friends and other interested persons.