

## **RESEARCHING YOUR NEWPORT HOUSE**

Bert Lippincott, Librarian at the Newport Historical Society, tells us that the Top of the Hill neighborhood in Newport is “architecturally and historically important, especially because of the density of late Victorian Queen Anne shingled cottages.”

Are you interested in discovering your house’s unique history, or in learning more about our Top of the Hill neighborhood and the rich and colorful history of the City by the Sea?

The NHS Library, at 82 Touro Street, is a valuable source of information, and is the best place to start your research. You might begin by visiting the Newport Historical Society’s webpage:

<http://www.newporthistorical.org/>

Under “Collections and Resources”, you will find information about the NHS Library and its usage. The Library is open to the Rhode Island resident public to use free of charge, although membership is encouraged and donations are welcome.

Researchers should make an appointment in advance (846-0813), to ensure staff availability and security for the archival materials, and to avoid overcrowding in the library. Please note that no food or drink is permitted.

Here, also, you’ll see “House History and Marker Program”; staff at the Library can do house and genealogical research for you, for a fee, if you prefer.

### **A Brief Rundown of Resources at the NHS:**

- **City Atlases: were published in 1876, 1883, 1893, 1907, and 1921.**  
Atlases include information about the owners of Newport properties and square footage of the lots, and they typically show the footprint of the buildings. They also can include a color-coded indication of the material the building is made of, to identify the building for insurance purposes. (Yellow = wood, red or brown = brick) The atlases also show trolley lines, sewer lines, and other utilities as they developed. Visitors may use their own digital cameras to photograph atlas pages, with or without flash, but may not photocopy from them out of concern for damage to the book’s spine.
- **Historic District Survey Sheets**  
These are Architectural studies of buildings. They were done in 1970 and 1989, and show elements like style, windows, doors, etc. They are an Inventory rather than a history.

### **Resources outside the NHS:**

All Newport records after 1779 are at City Hall.

- **Recorder of Deeds Office on First Floor:**

**Land records**

**Probate records:** If the property was willed to an heir at some point, there may not be a deed. If you run into a hole in the chain of ownership, it may have passed from person to person via a bequest.

- **Tax Assessor's office on Second Floor**

Their documents show the chain of ownership from 1910, by plat and lot numbers.

**Good luck! The History Group (note contacts on the TOH website under "History") would be pleased to hear about your research experiences, and to know what you have uncovered.**