Researching Local History

Interested in learning more about the history of your town, neighborhood or home? The Upper Dublin Historical Commission suggests the following sources for further information. In most instances, staff can direct you to appropriate resources for your inquiry or, for a fee, can conduct research on your behalf.

For properties in Philadelphia, Jefferson Moak's ***Architectural Research in Philadelphia*** is highly recommended (available from the Athenaeum of Philadelphia).

For Deed & Will Research

Deed Research or "Chain of Title"
The best way to begin is with the current (or relatively recent) owner's name. Use the online link below or access at county deed offices, which should have a complete set of records on microfilm. Use the correct deed index to get the deed book and page number. Order the deed book or microfilm and use the "recitation of ownership" in this deed to get the previous deed book and page number. Continue this process back to 1784 in Montgomery County. Prior to 1784, use Philadelphia County deeds, patents, and warrant books. Mortgages can be researched the same way. Deeds provide names, location, occupations of owners, land survey data, names of neighbors, and references to buildings, topography, and water rights. Each name opens doors to further research.

In Montgomery County, recent deeds, filed since 1972 can be searched online by name or address: http://www2.montcopa.org/mway/cwp/view,a,3,Q,10564.asp

Post-1784 deeds, wills, inventories, sheriff's dockets, orphan court records, road dockets, land divisions, legal records are located in various offices and buildings. Documents prior to 1784 must be researched in Philadelphia County.

Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds
One Montgomery Plaza
3rd floor - Suite 303
Swede and Airy Streets, P.O. Box 311, Norristown, PA 19404
Tel. (610) 278-3000 or (610) 278-3289
http://www.montcopa.org

Montgomery County Archives/Records Department
A full listing of historical records available is listed here:
http://www2.montcopa.org/montco/cwp/view,a,3,q,14582.asp
2000 Old Arch Road, Norristown, PA, 19401
phone: (610) 278-3441, fax: (610) 292-4966
e-mail: Archives@montcopa.org

The archives have many materials, including estate papers beginning in 1784, marriage records starting in 1885 and deed books from 1784 through 1917. For a complete listing see webpage listed above.

Federal Historic Preservation or Genealogy Information Resources

The **National Park Service** offers Preservation Brief how-tos for everything from repairing historic mortars to rehabbing your old windows for energy efficiency (also available on the UD Township web site), tax credit information, National Register nomination instructions and more: http://www.nps.gov/history/howto.htm

National Archives Mid-Atlantic, 900 Chestnut Street between 9th & 10th Street, Philadelphia, 19107, (215) 606-0100
The National Archives - Mid Atlantic maintains the historically significant Mid Atlantic federal records from 1790 to the present. The historical records, as well as select court bankruptcy records, are open to the public.

The **Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record** (HABS/HAER) is a federal effort, established under the WPA, to document significant buildings, structures, and landscapes. Digital files are available at the National Archives. You'll find high resolution photographs and detailed drawings of buildings in Ambler and the area. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/index.html

National Register documents are available for review via **Pennsylvania's state historic preservation** page. National Register nominations often provide detailed information about a specific house, district and history of a person or area.
PA SHPO:
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&mode=2&objID=1426
ARCH database: http://www.arch.state.pa.us/

Local Societies and Archives

Local historical societies are available to help you, with maps, and other documentation.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (215) 732-6200, Fax: (215) 732-2680, www.hsp.org. Genealogy sources, city directories, Hexamer and Sanborn map surveys, fire insurance surveys and more.

The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 219 S. 6th Street Philadelphia, PA 19106-3794, (215) 925-2688, www.philaathenaeum.org. The Athenaeum's nationally significant collections are used by graduate students and senior scholars, architects, interior designers, museum curators, and private owners of historic buildings. It provides the Philadelphia region with a resource of first resort on matters of architecture and interior design history, particularly for the period 1800 to 1945. It offers the online geohistory database of historic maps as well as the useful Architect & Buildings database.

Historical Society of Montgomery County, 1654 DeKalb Street, Norristown, PA, 19401, (610) 272-0297, www.hsmcpa.org.

Fort Washington Historical Society, The Clifton House, 473 S. Bethlehem Pike, Fort Washington, PA, 19034, (215) 646-6065, website: http://www.amblerhistory.com/

[Note: The Central Branch of the Philadelphia Free Library has an excellent collection of maps and aerial photographs]

Local History Books and Online Resources

Lower Merion's HARB (Historical Architectural Review Board) has published a preservation brief on researching historical properties. Access it via this link at the Lower Merion Historical Society: http://www.lowermerionhistory.org/harb.html

There are numerous books available, many of which may be found through the Montgomery County Library system (www.mclinc.org). The Upper Dublin Branch of the Library also has a special resources section sponsored by the Upper Dublin Historical Commission with information, periodicals, resources and guides on historic preservation.

Arcadia Publishing offers "Images of America" series features several books of local interest, including *Upper Dublin and Fort Washington.* www.arcadiapublishing.com.

A Brief History of Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: From Farmland to Suburb, by Lewis Keen and Trudy Keen, available from Amazon.com and the Fort Washington Historical Society
> Revolutionary War historians know Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, as the site where George Washington successfully repelled the British before moving on to Valley Forge. The Fort Washington of that day featured a landscape dominated by farmland, but the beauty of the area and its proximity to burgeoning Philadelphia ensured that it would not remain rural for long.
> Less than a hundred years after the crack of Patriot muskets reverberated through Fort Washington, the area grew into a thriving summer resort, and was well on its way to becoming an early Philadelphia suburb. As a playground for elite Philadelphians before the end of the nineteenth century, Fort Washington became the location for lavish summer homes and year-round estates. Soon a thriving middle class developed, changing the face of Fort Washington and producing dozens of grand Victorian homes that survive to this day.
> Drawing on a wealth of original documents, this look at Fort Washington's colorful past provides an account of the people, events, homes and businesses that have made this area of Pennsylvania a prosperous and vibrant community.

Yesterday's People, The Upper Dublin Story, by Suzanne Hilton for the Upper Dublin Township Bicentennial Committee; The Winchell Company; 1975.

In honor of Montgomery County's 225th Anniversary, the Historical Society of Montgomery County is offering members the opportunity to purchase *Montgomery County: the Second Hundred Years* at a dramatically reduced price through December 2009. This history of Montgomery County is spread over two volumes, 1600 pages. It is fully indexed, illustrated and has been called "the first stop for any serious research into this county's history." Intended as a follow up to *Theodore Bean's History of Montgomery County*, this history was written as a collaborative effort of the Federation of Montgomery County Historical Societies. Normally $40, the Historical Society has them available for pick up at $25 or direct shipped for $35. Call (610) 272-0297 or see the website www.hsmcpa.org.

Thanks to efforts of the Fort Washington Historical Society, there is now online access to **the Ambler Gazette from 1895**. Access at your local library or online at :
http://205.247.101.31:2005/cdm4/search.php

Places in Time, "historical documentation of place in greater Philadelphia" online archive:
http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/frdr.html

ALSO:

Philadelphia Land and Vital Records System: A subscription-based system of the Philadelphia Department of Records which has scanned images of Philadelphia's deed books from 1682 to 1974. Though the images are not fully indexed, it is fairly easy to use for those familiar with Philadelphia deed records.

Philadelphia Parcel Explorer: A subscription-based system that provides interactive geographical searches for official current Philadelphia property maps as well as scans of the historical Philadelphia deed registry maps which trace property division and consolidation from the 1865 to the present.

PhilaDox Historical Index Info: A free system that contains images of the Philadelphia Deed Book Indexes from 1682 to 1976 and the Philadelphia Deed Registry Ledgers which details property ownership changes from 1865 to 1955 by Deed Registry plan and plot numbers.

PhillyHistory.org: A free system that contains images from the photograph collection of the Philadelphia City Archives as well as other resources, such as a database of Philadelphia street name changes.

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network (PhilaGeoHistory.org): A free system that contains an expanding collection of historical maps and property atlases of the Philadelphia area and other sources such as city directories, industrial fire insurance surveys and historical aerial photographs.